

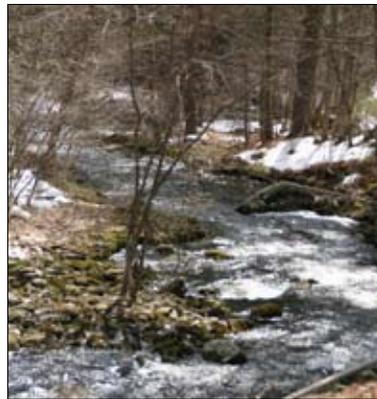


# PETERSHAM RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

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## UPPER QUABOAG WATERSHED AND NORTH QUABBIN REGION LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

### MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM



**Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership**

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**Spring 2008**

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## CONTENTS

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<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>PART I: Heritage Landscape Inventory</b>	
<b>Local History</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Priority Heritage Landscapes</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Petersham Common and Center Village	
Nichewaug Inn and Academy	
North Main Street Corridor	
Nichewaug Village and the East Branch of the Swift River	
Eastern Agricultural Area	
<b>Petersham Priority Heritage Landscape Map</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>PART II: Planning for Heritage Landscapes</b>	
<b>Inventory and Documentation</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Planning and Zoning Tools and Techniques</b> .....	<b>31</b>
<b>Implementation Strategies</b> .....	<b>37</b>
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix A: Heritage Landscapes Identified by Community</b> .....	<b>41</b>
<b>Appendix B: Preservation and Planning Tools</b> .....	<b>47</b>
<b>Appendix C: Works Cited</b> .....	<b>63</b>

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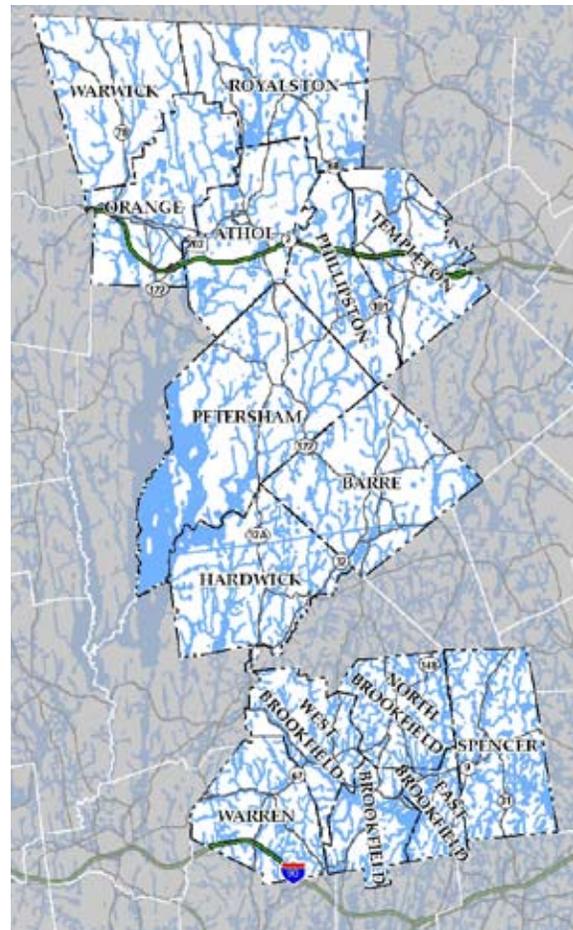
## INTRODUCTION

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Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving, reflect the history of a community and provide a sense of place. They show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns and often have scenic qualities. This wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character, yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first step toward their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature or an important river corridor.

To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and its regional partners, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program to fifteen communities in central Massachusetts. The goals of the program are to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected, and to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The communities within the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin region of central Massachusetts share a common dispersed settlement pattern as well as an early agricultural economy and later shift into manufacturing. Developed along a series of major waterways and their tributaries, including the Millers, Quaboag and Ware Rivers, this region contains vast cultural and historic resources and uncommon natural beauty. The heritage landscapes in the participating communities reflect the agrarian and industrial past while providing recreational and educational opportunities for today. From scenic town commons and natural areas to civic buildings and burial grounds, the heritage landscapes within the region collectively tell the story of their varied and often turbulent, history.



*Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region  
Heritage Landscape Inventory project area*

## **Methodology**

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a pilot project conducted in southeast Massachusetts. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land*, which has provided guidance for the program since its inception. In summary, each community organized a heritage landscape identification meeting during which residents and town officials identify and prioritize the landscapes that embody the community's character and its history. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team, accompanied by interested community members. The final product for each community is an individualized Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report. This report outlines the community's landscape history, discusses broader land planning issues identified by the community, describes the priority heritage landscapes and issues associated with them and concludes with preservation recommendations.

## PART I: HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

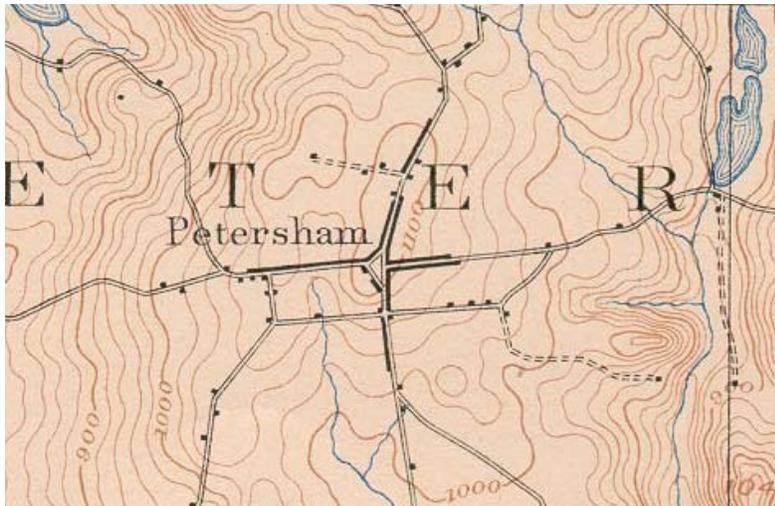
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### LOCAL HISTORY

Petersham is the third largest town in the state, with over 54 square miles of beautiful forested and agricultural land, and another 14 square miles beneath the surface of the Quabbin Reservoir. Thanks in part to the importance of that water supply and philanthropy, well over 50% percent of the town is in permanently protected for conservation purposes. The rest is in private hands, many of which are carrying on centuries old traditions of farming, forestry and small business. Though lacking easy access to major employment centers, residents remain because they value this place and its rich history, and the way that history is revealed in the landscape as a tangible reminder of days gone by.

For thousands of years before European settlement, Petersham was inhabited by the Nipmucs , who likely roamed the hills and valleys seasonally for hunting, fishing and gathering activities, but had no large settlements. The section of town known as Nichewaug contains evidence of a native planting field, and hunting and fishing camps likely occurred along streams and at Pottapaug Pond. While sparsely settled, the landscape was managed to a limited degree through the use of fire.

In 1733 the town was granted as “Volunteers Town” to a group of 71 proprietors as payment for their service in the French and Indian War. Following the usual pattern of colonial development in New England, township “six miles square” was divided among the proprietors, each of whom got a 55-100 acre home lot on the central ridge, as well as an equal share in outlying divisions. Settled beginning in 1736, Volunteers Town grew to at least 47 families by 1754, when it was incorporated as Petersham.



1889 USGS Map - <http://docs.unh.edu/nhtopos/nhtopos.htm>

After the Revolutionary War, Petersham began its greatest period of growth, which continued through the 1830s. Like most of the surrounding towns, this expansion was driven by the flourishing market for farm products as cities and mill towns expanded to the east. As transportation improved, products shifted from beef, pork and cheese to more perishable foods like milk, butter and vegetables. As a result, improved pasture and

mowing land increased from 1378 acres in 1771 to 13,667 acres in 1831, some 61% of the town's total area. By 1840, 80% of the town was in agricultural use, and the town had reached its peak population of 1,775 residents.

During the same period, numerous water-based industries grew up along the streams and rivers of the town. Lacking major rivers with reliable water flow, most of these were small affairs. The most notable of Petersham's industrial sites were at Factory Village, in the section known as Nichewaug, and Slab City, a village near Connor's Pond. Both depended on the waters of the East Branch of the Swift River. With the 1873 opening of the Springfield-Athol Railroad along the Swift River in Dana, the focus of transportation and industry shifted. Today, while the dam at Connor's Pond remains, all the mills and surrounding villages are gone.

Likewise, after its agricultural heyday in the early 19th Century, much of Petersham's farmland was gradually abandoned. The opening up of the Midwestern states created a cheaper source of many agricultural products and an irresistible lure for young farmers to migrate west. Population steadily declined, falling to a low of 642 persons in 1920. As the abandoned fields grew in with stands of White Pine, there was a new boom in commercial logging for the manufacture of boxes, which peaked from 1880 to 1910.

The center of community life, from colonial times to the present day, is the Petersham Common. This was chosen as the site of the original 1738 meetinghouse, and grew into a lively commercial and institutional focus through the 19th century. The center also housed many cottage industries and a cheese factory from 1860 through the 1880s. Despite six fires around the common throughout history, which claimed churches, businesses, homes and two town halls, the community always rebuilt.

Much of the impetus for the growth and protection of the center was the development of a thriving summer resort economy, which began in the 1850s and continued for almost a century. Relatively wealthy city folk bought up the old farmsteads and fine homes around the common, and found some relief from the summer heat of Boston. Perhaps no one was more important in the growth of the summer colony than James Brooks, who was born in Petersham in 1833 and returned in the 1860s after making his fortune as a Shoe Manufacturer, lawyer and diplomat. Brooks became a gentleman farmer, and promoted the town among his city acquaintances. He purchased the Petersham Hotel, built on the common in 1884, and when it burned commissioned the grand Nichewaug Inn, which opened in 1899. From 1890 to 1910 he also bought up almost seventy properties, including parcels around the common and many abandoned farms, especially along the East Branch of the Swift River. Before his death in 1912, he served on the board of The Trustees of Reservations, and with their help established the 2,000 acre Harvard Forest. His heirs were

instrumental in setting aside the Brooks Woodland Preserve and the North Common Meadow. The Swift River Reservation was acquired through the generosity of other philanthropists.

One of the most significant events for the town's landscape was the completion of the Quabbin Reservoir, created to provide drinking water to metropolitan Boston. In 1936 about 10,000 acres, formerly part of the town of Dana, were added to Petersham. At the same time, a significant portion of Petersham's land was claimed for watershed protection/conservation; today one quarter of the town is under the control of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. This has made Petersham part of one of the largest areas of relatively intact forest in central New England, a 3,000 square mile region stretching from the Quabbin to Cardigan Mountain in New Hampshire.

Today Petersham is mostly residential, with much of the population commuting to work in other communities or working at a diverse range of home-based small businesses. The town's principal businesses are farming and tourism, with a growing number of home-based businesses, artists and writers. While there are many small farms scattered throughout the town, the largest working farm is on Maple Lane, where the Perkins family raises livestock. Thousands of acres of protected land attract people for hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, birding, camping and the general enjoyment of this pristine area. The central village is included in a mile-long Historic District and remains as a living museum of 19th Century townscape. With just over 1300 residents, the community continues to grow at a manageable rate, but faces continued challenges in protecting its unique character and sense of place.

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## PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Petersham is experiencing significant growth pressure and will need to determine how it will affect the rural character of the community and the heritage landscapes that the community finds valuable. In the public identification meeting, participants identified priority landscapes in town that define the heritage of the community. These heritage landscapes provide a cross section of the types of landscapes that contributed to the historical development of the town and together tell the story of Petersham's past. The following text describes the unique value that each of these landscapes provides to the community and a set of recommendations for its preservation and protection.

### Petersham Common and Center Village

The Common and Center Village became the focus of town life with the construction of the first meeting house and the settling of the first minister in 1736. For most of the colonial period, the Center was sparsely settled, as most people lived on their farms in outlying areas and only came to the village for Sunday Meeting. As the town grew, the village gradually filled in with homes and businesses, but both the common and the buildings around it were probably designed more for functionality than beauty.

The gracious lawns, trees and beautiful buildings we admire today were largely built after the town reached the zenith of its growth in the 1830s and 1840s, and reflect the Greek Revival style then in vogue. A fire in 1845 and the "West Side Fire" of 1847 wiped out the old town hall, school rooms, businesses, tavern and houses, but made way for the 1850 Town Hall and the first Nichewaug Inn. By 1878, when the village improvement society was founded, the Common had evolved into a park surrounded by fine houses. The first bandstand was constructed in 1885 to



*View of Common across Common Street and Main Street toward the Country Store and Town Hall*



*The edge of the Common is eroding from vehicle parking, stormwater runoff and snow storage*

accommodate what has become the oldest continuously performing brass band in the country. Change came again in the 1890s with two more major fires, which led to the construction of the present Nichewaug Inn and clearing of lots across the street for a golf course. Together with the 1891 Petersham Memorial Library and several new residences designed by Providence-based architect and summer visitor Edmund Willson, the common was updated in what was then considered a modern style.

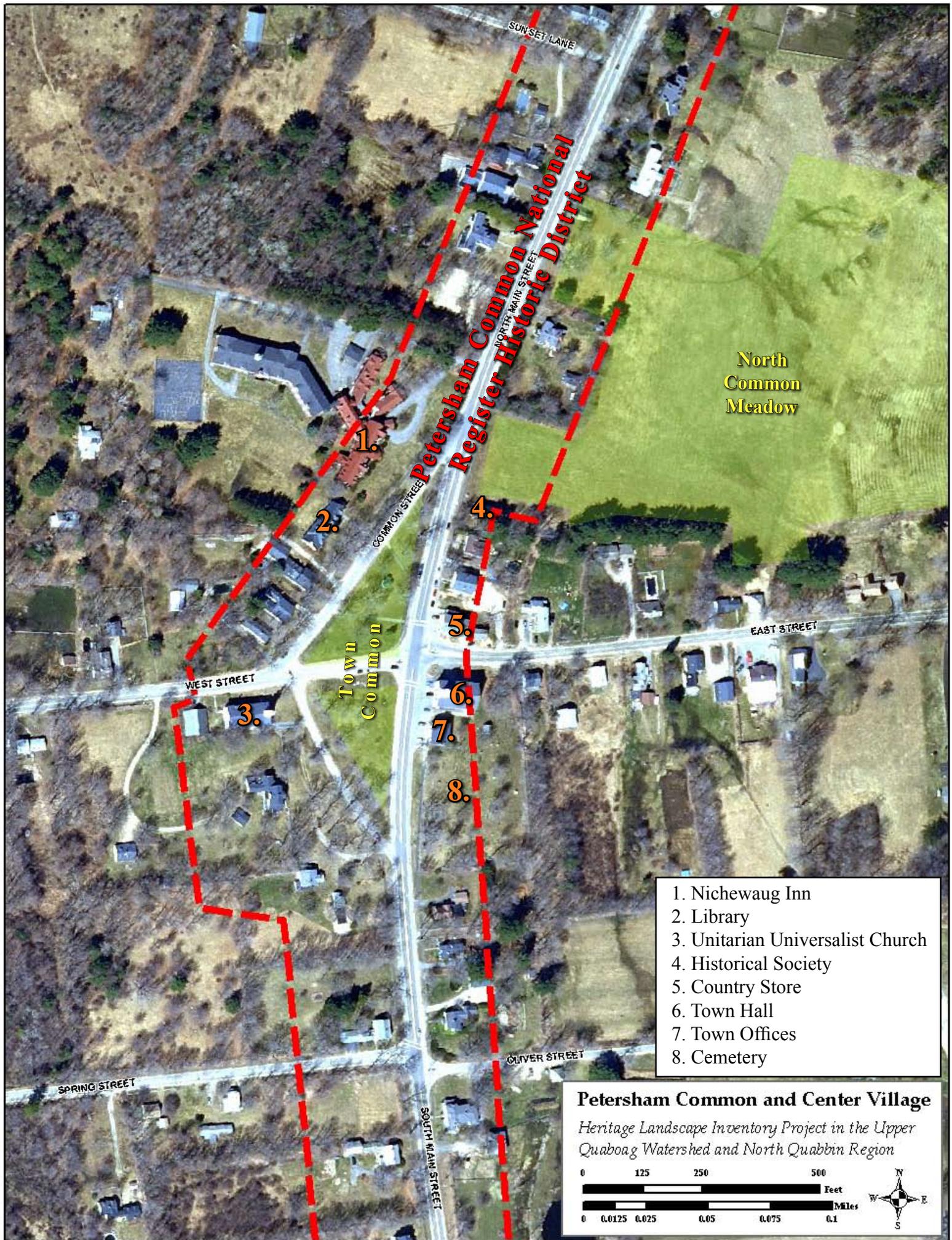
All of this was largely preserved intact through the 20th Century by a combination of limited growth pressure and dedicated stewardship by town residents. Today, among other public and private buildings, the Center Village includes the two-story 1st District Schoolhouse (1848, now Town Offices), the 3rd District Schoolhouse (1867, now a residence), a wheelwright shop (1830s, now a residence), the country store (1840), a law office (1830), the Village Cemetery, the Library (1891), and the Historical Society (1923). In 1967 a local Historic District was established. In 1982 the Center, including 45 buildings, was listed with the National Register of Historic Places. The churches, town hall, country store and town common continue to serve as important community gathering spaces, and the band continues to play every summer as special events.



The Nichewaug Inn is a significant landmark within the center village, and has a series of its own opportunities and issues. So while it is still a part of the center village heritage landscape, it has also been addressed as an independent priority heritage landscape and is not addressed specifically in the opportunities, issues and recommendations below.

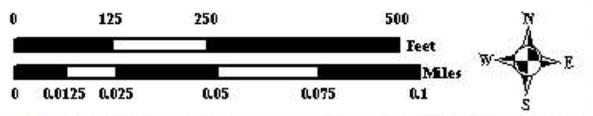
#### *Opportunities:*

- The Center Village contains the oldest continuously functioning country store in New England (since 1840).
- Extraordinary natural and cultural history of Petersham and the larger Quabbin region make this an ideal location for heritage tourism and eco-tourism.
- Power and telephone lines buried under the common and off road behind buildings in '20s and '30s.
- Hiking trails and conservation land for public access lie adjacent to the common.



- 1. Nichewaug Inn
- 2. Library
- 3. Unitarian Universalist Church
- 4. Historical Society
- 5. Country Store
- 6. Town Hall
- 7. Town Offices
- 8. Cemetery

**Petersham Common and Center Village**  
*Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region*



*Issues:*

- Common itself not likely to be affected by development due to the protection of the Local Historic District regulations, but there is some development potential on parcels one step back.
- Soil constraints are requiring expensive repairs to individual septic systems.
- Tight town budget is causing some neglect of public buildings maintenance and infrastructure around the center
- Handicap accessibility remains an issue for some public and business buildings
- There is public interest in more appropriate street lighting
- MassHighway has jurisdiction over Route 32/Main Street so parking, posted speed limits, and use issues arise on occasion.
- People park on road shoulders and grass for events, and erosion is getting worse.
- Most trees on the common are memorials, making any changes controversial

*Recommendations:*

1. Town should pursue a Master Plan for renovation and maintenance of the common area, including a plan addressing parking for the Library, Town Hall, and events on the common; tree care and replacement, and lighting.
2. Establish seasonal restrictions on grass parking to limit damage.
3. Explore possible development of a shared wastewater treatment system, possibly in conjunction with redevelopment of the town-owned Nichewaug Inn (see the Nichewaug Inn priority landscape discussion).
4. Work collaboratively between the town and state (MassHighway) on Route 32 use issues
5. Explore grant funding particularly for renovation and maintenance of historic public structures (for example: Bandstand, town offices, Hearse House & Nichewaug Inn). Town owned buildings in the historic district are eligible to apply for Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund grants, and privately-owned, income-producing properties are eligible for the State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program.
6. Review and consider an extension of the LHD boundary to address the threat to development of parcels one beyond those which surround the common.
7. The Planning Board should investigate adopting zoning amendments that could address future growth issues within Petersham Center and throughout town. Some zoning tools may include: a Demolition Delay Bylaw, Transfer of Development Rights, Smart Growth Zoning, Village Center Zoning, Design Review (see *Part II, Planning and Zoning Tools and Techniques* of this report for more about these zoning tools).

## Nichewaug Inn and Academy

The Nichewaug Inn is an integral part of the center village heritage landscape, but was addressed here independently due to its significance, the threats it faces, and the need to look at this particular piece of the larger landscape more closely.

The Nichewaug Inn was built in 1899 by James W. Brooks, replacing the first Nichewaug Inn built in 1850. It would be a successful summer resort for nearly fifty years, including a period when it was among the first Treadway Inn properties. Designed in the Shingle Style by Rhode Island architect and part-time Petersham resident Edmund Willson, the Inn originally had 170 rooms, totalling 44,000 square feet. In 1951 it was purchased by the Sisters of Maria Assumpta for a parochial girls school, and in 1952 a 55,000 square foot classroom and dormitory wing was added. The Academy closed in 1972, after which it was used as a retreat center. Starting in 1985, the Inn



*Original section of Nichewaug Inn*



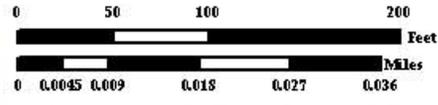
*Northeast section of the Inn showing the Chapel and kitchen/laundry wing*

was owned by a succession of realty trusts and private owners, and while there were a series of redevelopment proposals, none came to fruition. In 2002, local residents formed “Friends of the Nichewaug Inn” to pursue preservation and redevelopment. They successfully nominated the property for designation as one of the 2003 Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources by Preservation/Mass. Unsuccessful in bidding for the property at an auction in 2004, the Friends watched as plans for a private hotel/condominium project again came to naught. After a foreclosure auction in March, 2007, another opportunity arose for the town to take ownership. With the help of The Trustees of Reservations and the Friends group, the property was purchased for \$100,000 and given to the town, which accepted the gift at a town meeting in June, 2007. A task force was established to continue planning for the future of the property.

The fate of the Nichewaug Inn remains a key issue for the town, which has studied numerous alternatives in order to identify uses which

# Nichewaug Inn and Academy

Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper  
Quabog Watershed and North Quabbin Region



- 1. 1899 Hotel
- 2. 1920's Addition
- 3. Chapel
- 4. Kitchen/Laundry Wing
- 5. 1950's Addition
- 6. Tennis Courts

Approximate Property Boundary

Septic Area

Library

Town Common

North Common Meadow

WEST STREET

EAST STREET

COMMON STREET

NORTH MAIN STREET



would complement the town center. At 99,000 square feet, the facility is in some ways too large for many potential uses, so most of the alternatives explore selective demolition. Redevelopment would focus on the most historic buildings, and would likely include a combination of private and public uses. While asbestos contamination and the cost of demolition and reconstruction have perhaps hampered progress, the recent downturn in real estate and construction may prove a boon to the town in getting necessary work done and readying the site for redevelopment. After more than 30 years of this property lying dormant and unused, this is an important moment in the history of the property and a unique opportunity to meet local needs and interests while possibly renewing tax revenue for the town.



*1950's Parochial School Addition to Nichewaug Inn*

#### *Opportunities:*

- Key focus for positive influence on the town center.
- Potential economic and tax revenue generator; strong interest in possible redevelopment for housing - particularly for senior citizens.
- Town needs space for a possible senior center and other municipal uses.
- Demonstrated town commitment, with dedicated volunteers working on planning.
- Original section of the Inn designed by Providence-based architect Edmund Willson, also architect of the library, the center school and several nearby residences.
- The original 1899 hotel, 1920s addition and chapel are included as part of the 1982 Petersham Common National Register Historic District as well as the Local Historic District

#### *Issues:*

- 99,000 square feet of space makes it challenging to identify feasible reuse options.
- Asbestos remediation needs increases the expense of any renovation.
- Needs thorough structural and architectural analysis.
- One wing is too close to the library.
- Town lacks expertise or money to pursue renovations on its own – needs a developer as partner.
- Water in basement of the 1952 school building continues to be a threat.
- Vacant buildings are an “attractive nuisance” – recently had to be boarded up to prevent access.
- The 1952 school building is not included in the National Register Historic District or local historic district boundaries.

*Recommendations:*

1. Incorporate planning for needs of the entire center village to look for synergies: parking, wastewater treatment, recreational facilities, municipal uses and housing.
2. A detailed structural analysis, stabilization plan, schematic design, and cost estimating needs to be completed to weigh future alternatives. This can be funded through Community Preservation Act funds, or as part of the National Register Historic District, the town could apply for Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund grants to help cover these planning and design costs.
3. Consider writing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for potential short-term tenants or long-term developers. Also consider models such as the DCR Historic Curatorship Program for renovation possibilities.
4. The town and Friends should jointly host tours for regional planners, state representatives, etc. to maintain visibility.
5. Partner with The Trustees of Reservations and others to organize conference on revitalization of institutional properties in small towns.
6. The Local Historic District Commission should consider expanding the boundaries of the local historic district to include the entire Nichewaugh Inn property.

## North Main Street Corridor

The North Main Street Corridor is one of the principal gateways to the community, leading from the Athol border into the Petersham Common Historic District. It is an important scenic resource, both for residents going about their daily lives as well as visitors arriving for the first time. The corridor retains the historic pattern of Petersham's rural roadsides, with forest alternating with farms, open vistas and scattered dwellings. This is valuable both as a historic record of the town's past, as well as for the simple beauty of a varied and interesting landscape. This can easily be lost however,



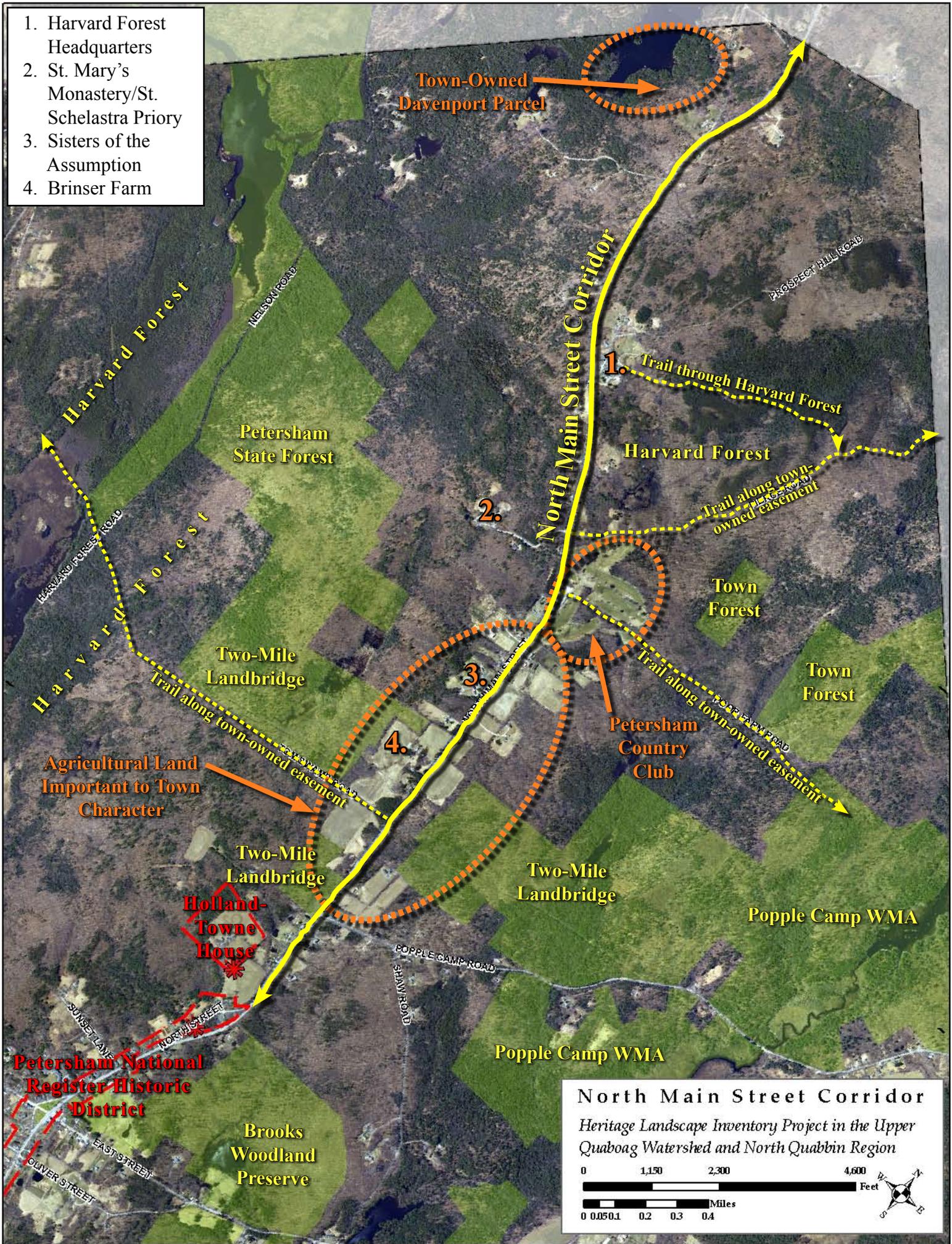
*Poor Farm Road, a town right-of-way through the Petersham Country Club was recently devastated by a logging operation.*

to suburban-style frontage development or residential subdivisions, which block views and create a monotonous roadside pattern. Also to be guarded against is allowing fields and meadows to grow up to brush and trees, which also cuts off views and tends to have less scenic value.

The North Main Street Corridor includes the main campus and properties of the Harvard Forest and the surrounding Prospect Hill Tract, which lines almost a mile of the corridor near the Athol town border. Established in 1907 for Harvard University's graduate program in forestry, Harvard Forest includes over 3,000 acres of land in five major tracts scattered around Petersham and extending into neighboring towns. The North Main Street parcel includes the main research center and the Fisher Museum, several historic structures, parking and access to recreational trails. A nearby interpretive trail provides access to the former Sanderson Farm, and is designed to reveal the history of the landscape over the last 160 years since it was farmed by John Sanderson. Half a mile south of the forest headquarters, Harvard Forest recently purchased a c.1840 farmhouse, outbuildings and eight acres of land from the estate of Richard Bryant. Future plans include clearing old pastures to allow for small scale farming.

In the late 1980's, the town received the 83 acre Davenport Property on Doe Valley Road due to non-payment of taxes. A town committee made a series of recommendations in 1999, followed by a Town Meeting vote of approval in 2002 and again in June of 2008. About 80 acres are being put aside for conservation/recreation, a single 2.65 acre parcel will be put to auction, and a small .6 acre parcel will be used for town purposes, servicing the conservation parcel with a parking lot, etc. This project is now in the hands of the Selectboard working with the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee.

1. Harvard Forest Headquarters
2. St. Mary's Monastery/St. Schelstra Priory
3. Sisters of the Assumption
4. Brinser Farm



**North Main Street Corridor**  
 Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper  
 Quabog Watershed and North Quabbin Region

0 1,150 2,300 4,600 Feet  
 0 0.05 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 Miles

The Petersham Country Club was established in 1922, and is managed by a non-profit corporation. It includes Poor Farm Road, which provided access to the town Poor Farm, which was active between 1826 and 1938. The road was officially discontinued in 1978, but remains as a public right-of-way trail for recreational use and fire protection. The golf course was designed by Donald Ross, who designed over 600 courses over the first half of the 20th Century, and is considered one of the most important golf course architects in America. With 192 acres, the Country Club is an important scenic and recreational resource to the town; in addition to golf it includes a popular sledding hill.



*Views into the Holland-Towne House Property from North Main Street*

With an active golf course, a conservation restriction on the wooded back land, and a public right-of-way over the discontinued road, many people assumed that the Country Club's scenic and recreational value was not threatened. However in January 2008, extensive logging by the Club's owner along the town-owned Poor Farm Road trail and surrounding forest stands demonstrated that land important to the Petersham's ecology and visual character can quickly change, greatly affecting the value of the surrounding landscape. The episode demonstrates that conservation restrictions and other approaches to protecting open space do not necessarily protect the valuable elements of that open space from the future degradation.

The beauty and tranquility of Petersham has long attracted religious groups to the community. From 1864 until 1897 a utopian sect called Adoni Shomo dwelt on an 800 acre farm on Doe Valley Road, which at its height accommodated 25-30 men and women. More recently, several religious orders have settled on North Main Street. In 1980, a group of Benedictine nuns established St. Scholastica Priory on 200 acres on the East side of North Main Street. The property includes a beautiful stone chateau. They share part of the facility with a twin community of Benedictine monks, known as St. Mary's Monastery.

#### *Opportunities:*

- Historic Donald Ross golf links at the country club managed by a non-profit corporation with a long-term commitment to the community.
- The Country Club and Curling Club attracts visitors to the town who bring revenue to local businesses.

- Discontinued town road through the Country Club property provides a hiking trail for public access.
- Doe Valley Road remains unpaved and non-wired country lane.

*Issues:*

- Logging at the Country Club violated terms of the conservation restriction and impacted that public right of way.
- Parking along the shoulder on Route 32 for the Country Club creates some safety concerns during high use days.
- Brinser Farm has a conservation restriction on the forest, but not the fields.
- Dickson/Wilder Farm (logging and cordwood) has significant frontage for potential A.N.R. development.
- There are possible development pressures just over the Athol town line (a 40B project and shopping mall development are under discussion in that town for Routes 2 and 32).

*Recommendations:*

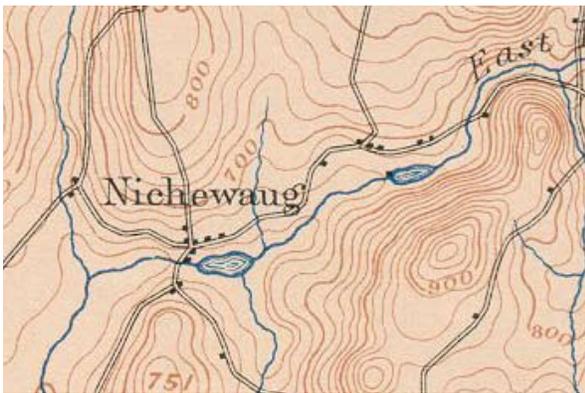
1. The town should work with DCR and local conservation organizations to investigate extending the Country Club conservation restriction in lieu of damages.
2. The town recreation committee should secure public parking for trails and a recreational easement for the sledding hill at the Golf Course.
3. Pursue permanent protection for St. Scholastica Priory property.
4. Develop final management and disposition plans for the Davenport property, and move forward with implementation per the final Town Meeting approval of 2008. The Petersham Selectboard, Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, and pertinent town financial committees and staff to work in partnership with Mount Grace Land Trust and the Forest Legacy Program for final implementation of the conservation parcel and the auction parcel.
5. The Planning Board should update management plans for other town-owned land in the corridor.
6. Work to strengthen the relationship between Harvard Forest and other non-profit groups and the town for partnering on projects and financial responsibilities (payment and/or services in lieu of taxes).
7. The Planning Board should investigate adopting zoning amendments that could preserve the character of the corridor. Some zoning tools may include: Open Space Zoning, a Scenic Overlay District, Site Plan Review (see *Part II, Planning and Zoning Tools and Techniques* of this report for more about these zoning tools).

## Nichewaug Village and the East Branch of the Swift River

Nichewaug – “The land between the fishing places” – was a name that early on was associated with the whole town, but later was applied to a settlement, which included a section know as “Factory Village,” along the East Branch of the Swift River near the former border with Dana. In prehistoric times, the areas was probably not a permanent native American settlement, but almost certainly included seasonal encampments. The earliest written reference to the area is found in the account of Mary Rowlinson, who was captured by Indian’s during King Philip’s War in 1675. She described a long circuitous journey through the hills of central Massachusetts, including a camp site which may have been near where power lines now cross Nichewaug Road.



*Historic Nichewaug Cemetery on Glen Valley Road*



*1889 USGS Map - <http://docs.unh.edu/nhtopos/nhtopos.htm>*

After colonial settlement of the town, small mills and associated homes grew up along the river, where a narrowing of the valley provided a good spot for a dam. “Factory village” included several early grist and saw mills, followed by a cotton spinning mill by 1814, a powder keg factory in the 1830s, and a small mill which produced satin, a fine cotton cloth made to look like satin, and cashmere, a woolen suit cloth. The largest mill built over the years was constructed by Elisha Webb in 1863, and produced lumber and wooden kegs. The village was noted for the Wheeler Elm, reported to have a spread of 180 feet.

With the establishment of the Quabbin Reservoir, all of the old industrial buildings and most of the residential structures in Nichewaug were bought up and removed, and others were simply abandoned. The floods of 1936 and Hurricane of ’38 scattered the remains further. Today, little remains on the site of Nichewaug/Factory Village but the haunting beauty of stone ruins scattered along the river and lost among the re-grown forest.

Factory Village was only one of several mill sites on the East Branch and its tributaries, which drops some 400’ from the town’s eastern border to Pottapaug Pond. Listed from highest to lowest elevation they are:

- Popple Camp Sawmill (1840s-1870s)
- Brown's Pond Grist and Sawmills (1810-1890's)
- Tannery/Cider Mill (1820-1920)
- Houghton/Moulton Sawmill (1830-1900)
- Dudley Sawmill (1830s-1895)
- Connor's/Williams's Pond Sawmills (1782-1890s)
- Carruth's Sawmill (1800-1970s)
- Elisha Webb Mill (1820-1890s)
- Parlin's Grist mill (1820-1895)



*East Branch of the Swift River at Glen Valley Road*

In addition to Nichewaug, two significant mill clusters were developed at Connor's Pond and Brown's Pond. Both were relatively small operations built by local families to mill grain and lumber. Connor's Pond was built at the site of a rapid or cascade along the river, and it was the first mill site in Petersham, possibly as early as the 1730s. The Worcester to Brattleboro stage road ran over the dam, and the confluence of transportation and industry fed the growth of a cluster small farms, homes

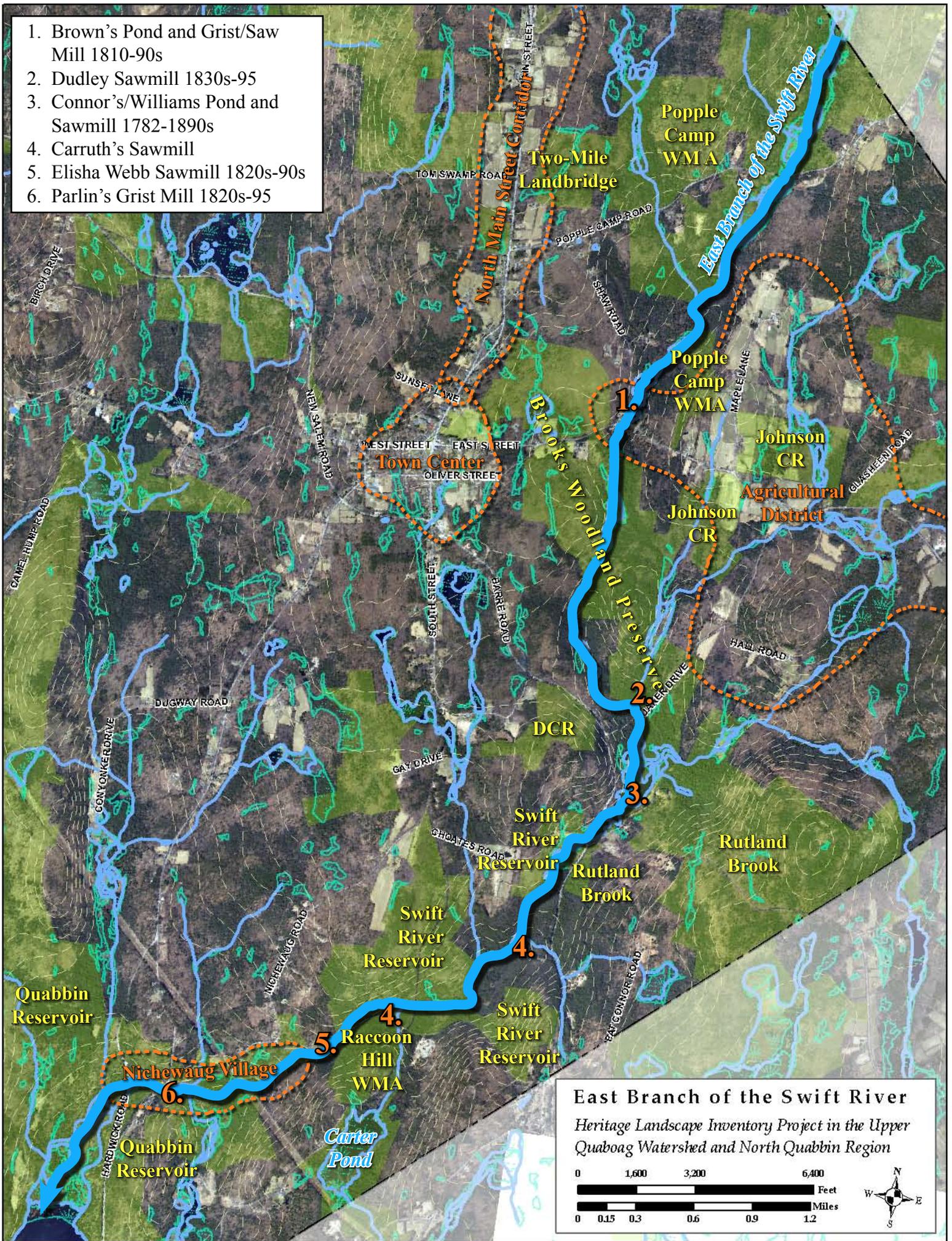
and manufacturing buildings. Most of these were long gone by the time James Brooks began assembling land around Connor's Pond and the valley below it known as Slab City in the early 1900s. Fifty years later, a coalition of conservation groups formed the Swift River Valley Trust to coordinate management of multiple parcels, and rebuilt the dam, which had been destroyed by the 1953 "Worcester Tornado" which began in Petersham. In 1983, the Trustees of Reservations created the Swift River Reservation, totaling more than 680 acres. Together with land owned by Harvard Forest, this creates a continuous greenway along the East Branch from the Quabbin to the northern part of the Brooks Woodland Preserve on East Street near Petersham center.



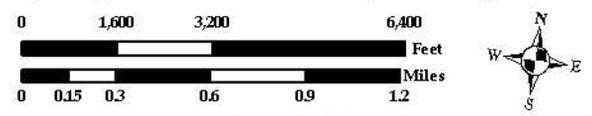
*Site of Prouty's Grist Mill on the East Branch of the Swift River near Glen Valley Road*

Unlike the land owned by the Trustees, the area around Brown's Pond has been less well researched and documented. The Day family owns three houses and Brown's Pond itself, and has placed conservation restrictions on part of the property. One house was recently rebuilt after a fire. Public access for swimming, fishing, and boating is allowed, informally, but there is no dedicated parking or facilities. While the extent of the Day Family conservation restriction is unknown, the Brown's Pond area

1. Brown's Pond and Grist/Saw Mill 1810-90s
2. Dudley Sawmill 1830s-95
3. Connor's/Williams Pond and Sawmill 1782-1890s
4. Carruth's Sawmill
5. Elisha Webb Sawmill 1820s-90s
6. Parlin's Grist Mill 1820s-95



**East Branch of the Swift River**  
 Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper  
 Quabog Watershed and North Quabbin Region



seems to be the last unprotected gap along the East Branch of the Swift River between the Brooks Woodland Preserve and the Popple Camp Wildlife Management Area.

*Opportunities:*

- Much of the Nichewaugh Village and the river corridor is already permanently protected and open to the public.
- There is a lot of opportunity for study and interpretation of Petersham's industrial history

*Issues:*

- Site of factory village on protected Quabbin land, but that does not guarantee the preservation of the historic remains. An inholding of private land remains to the south providing development concerns.
- Key unprotected gaps along Rt. 32, on the south side of Connor's Pond and Brown's Pond.
- Hillsides and ridgelines adjacent to the East Branch Swift River Corridor are unprotected, threatening potential ecological or visual impacts.



*Connor's Pond at Pat Connor Road*



*Dam and mill remains at Brown's Pond on East Street*

*Recommendations:*

1. Develop a Master Plan for the entire East Branch of the Swift River to map out natural, cultural and recreational resources and plan for additional protection needs and provide management recommendations that respect all resources.
2. Explore creation of trails with potential interpretive components that would link existing trails in the Brooks Woodland Preserve and Swift River Reservation to Nichewaugh and the Quabbin Reservation to the Southwest, and North to Popple Camp WMA.
3. Conduct an archaeological survey to identify the Native American encampment site.
4. Adopt a Scenic Overlay District to address the ridgeline development (see page 35 for more about scenic protection) and a Corridor Protection Overlay District to guide any new development along the Swift River Corridor (see page 34 for more about this type of zoning).

## Eastern Agricultural Area

The area along East Street is one of the last intact working farm landscapes in Petersham – a living museum of what the whole town looked like throughout much of the 19th century, before economic forces and the Quabbin Reservoir replaced most of the farmland with forests. The Eastern Agricultural Area includes examples of every era in the town’s history from stone chambers, cellar holes and miles of stone walls from the colonial era, to active dairy farms. This gives the area a palpable sense of history that has been little changed by recent development. This is changing, however, as little by little new houses are built on high points, and around the edges of the farms. Many old trees are in need of maintenance, as are old barns, school houses, and other vernacular structures that have outlived their usefulness.



*View into Perkins' Farm from East Street*



*Davis Farm at the end of Maple Lane*

One of the remarkable aspects of the area is the way a trip down East Street or any of its side roads reveals very different aspects of the whole, each with its own history and context. Climbing a steep hill from Brown’s Pond, the road crests at Ledgeville, where there is a small cluster of houses, a cemetery, and views of open farmland. Turning onto Maple Lane, the road follows a ridgeline for over a mile, past the Perkins Dairy Farm and dead-ending at the Davis Farm, which recently has been placed in a conservation restriction. With fields falling away from the road, there are beautiful long views across fields, especially to the south across the valley of the East Branch of the Swift River. Bobolinks and Sandhill Cranes are regular summer residents in the area.

Continuing on East Street, the road passes the 4th District “Ledgeville” School, which was the last functioning district schoolhouse, closing in 1943. It was used as a neighborhood social center for another fifty years, but today stands unused and in need of maintenance. To

the south is the Gross Farm. While the farmland is in Chapter 61A, several frontage lots have been split off along East St. just to the east, threatening potential frontage development.



*Schoolhouse #4 and Schoolhouse #5 on East Street*



*Historic Ledgerville Cemetery with a new residence built next door*

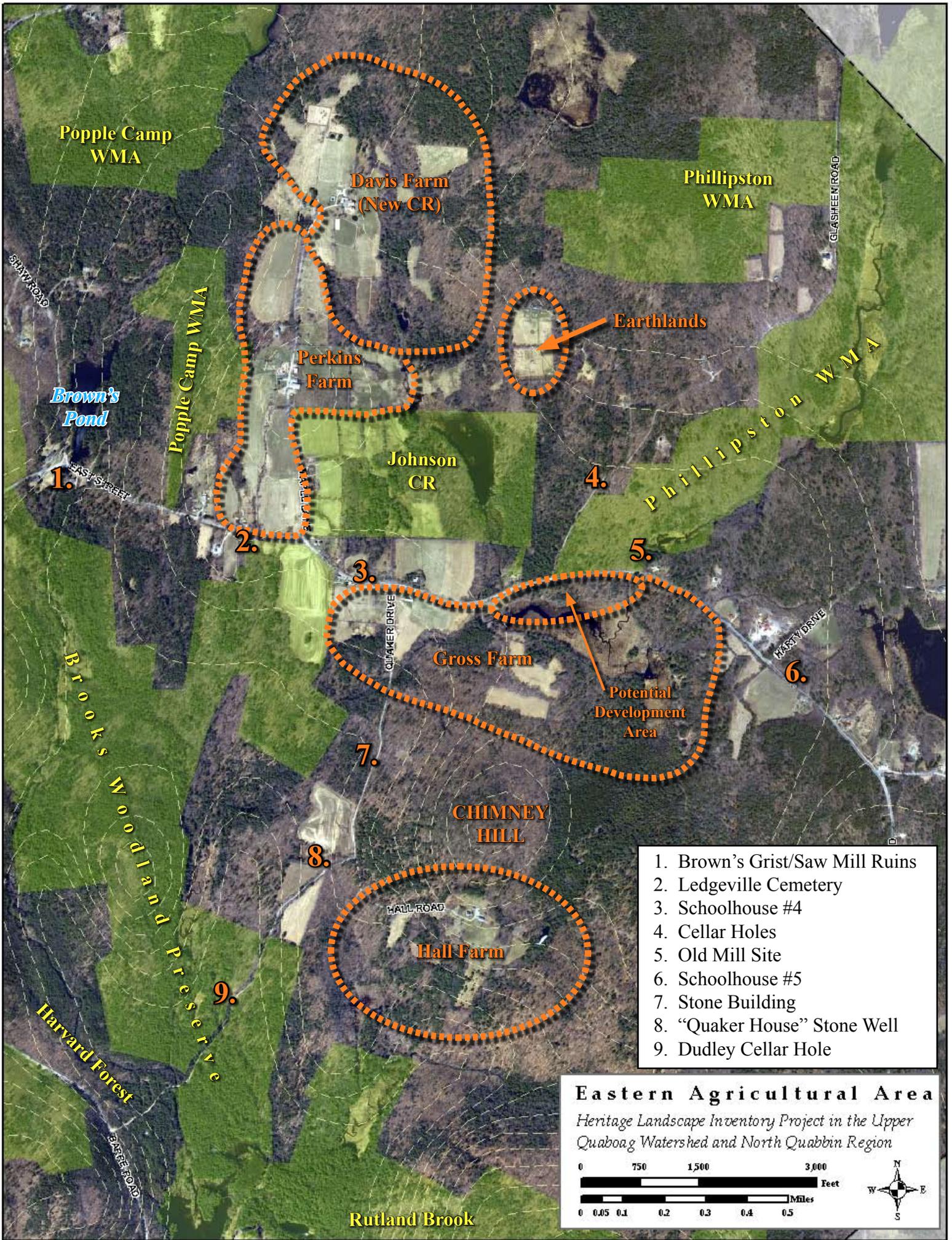
At the eastern end of the area, Schoolhouse #5, built in 1849, anchors another cluster of houses and small fields. Unchanged since it was last used, complete with school desks and other furnishings, the structure is slowly declining due to lack of maintenance. Trees surrounding it need to be trimmed or removed, and access is limited by a lack of parking. Views across the street of open fields could be lost to development of house lots. Around the corner on Harty drive, a late 20th Century sawmill is idle, and it is unclear if it will reopen due to safety and environmental concerns, especially noise. At the end of Harty Drive is another beautiful farm site backing up against the Phillipston Wildlife Management Area.

Several other side streets offer haunting glimpses of Petersham's past. On Glasheen Road, near the Earthlands Environmental Center, a number of mysterious stone chambers can be found among the trees. On

Quaker Drive, land preserved as part of the Brooks Woodland Preserve contains a series of well-documented 18th and 19th Century farm walls, cellar holes and other structures, including the Dudley farmstead, that offer a unique glimpse of early agricultural land use. Remains of the Brewer House and well, an old trout hatchery, and an ice house on Moccasin Brook provide other stories of life in Petersham.

*Opportunities:*

- Unspoiled agricultural area hearkens back to what the whole town used to be like.
- The Davis Farm donated a conservation restriction on 600-800 acres.
- Earthlands is a well-known environmental center, and dedicated to conservation and celebration of this unique landscape.
- Lack of major recent development has left the area largely unchanged.



Popple Camp WMA

Phillipston WMA

Davis Farm (New CR)

Perkins Farm

Johnson CR

Gross Farm

Hall Farm

CHIMNEY HILL

Brown's Pond

Earthlands

Potential Development Area

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

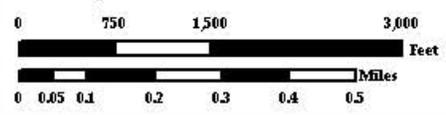
8.

9.

1. Brown's Grist/Saw Mill Ruins
2. Ledgeville Cemetery
3. Schoolhouse #4
4. Cellar Holes
5. Old Mill Site
6. Schoolhouse #5
7. Stone Building
8. "Quaker House" Stone Well
9. Dudley Cellar Hole

**Eastern Agricultural Area**

*Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper Quabog Watershed and North Quabbin Region*



Rutland Brook

Brooks Woodland Preserve

Harvard Forest

Popple Camp WMA

Phillipston WMA

Slate Street

Glasheen Road

Slate Street

Quaker Drive

Westborne

Hall Road

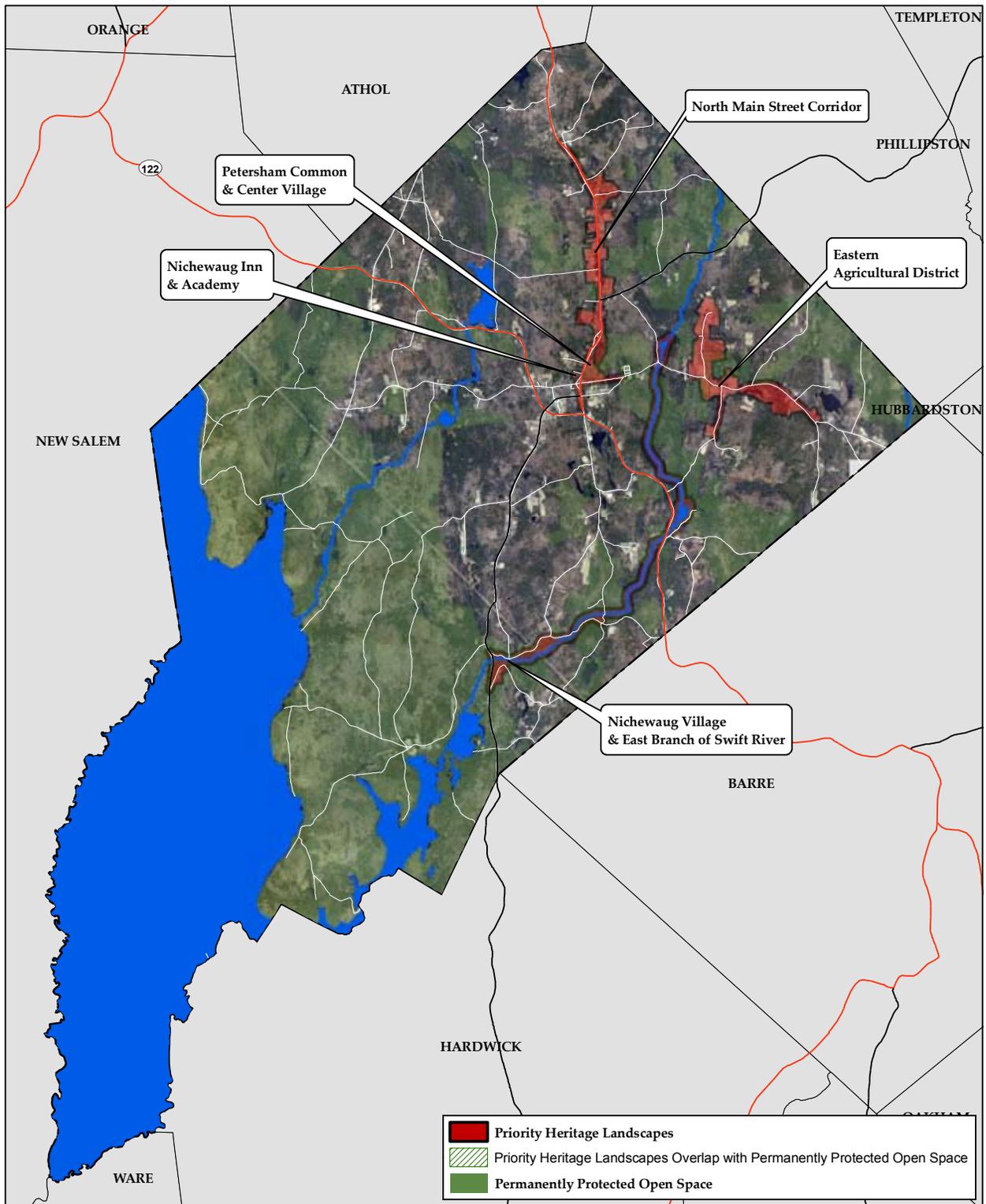
Slate Street

*Issues:*

- Town-owned Ledgeville (4th District) School and the 5th District School owned by the Historical Society are neglected.
- Closed Sawmill off Harty Drive – could be developed for house lots; noise from mill creates a problem for neighbors.
- Difficult economic times add stress to various working farms in the area, and there is concern about continuation of these important businesses in town.

*Recommendations:*

1. The Historical Commission and Planning Board should work with the Petersham Highway Department and Tree Warden on road and tree maintenance, stone walls, etc. to enforce the regulations of the scenic roads bylaw. These entities should review the DCR publication [\*Terra Firma #3: Identifying and Protecting Historic Roads.\*](#)
2. The Local Historic District Commission should explore the feasibility of designating Ledgeville and the Agricultural Area as an LHD. This should be sure to include Schoolhouses #4 & 5.
3. Explore zoning mechanisms that would help preserve the agricultural landscape of this area. These could include Agricultural Overlay or Open Space Zoning (see pages 32 and 35 for more about these types of zoning).
4. The Historical Society should pursue immediate stabilization work for the old school houses; prepare a Master Plan that explores potential reuse options for renovation and addresses accompanying potential access and parking needs. The Ledgeville area and the Schoolhouse #5 are listed with MHC; the Historical Society should pursue listing the 2 schoolhouses with the National Register of Historic Places (if an LHD designation does not occur), making them eligible to apply for Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund grants.
5. The Petersham Historical Commission should review [\*Terra Firma #5: Stones that Speak\*](#) and develop interpretation materials for stone walls, cellar holes and other features on Brooks Woodland Preserve, and tie it to the story of the entire area.
6. Pursue conservation of all agricultural lands through purchase or donation of land or easements, and support for working farms. The town should develop a strategy for acquisition of Chapter 61 parcels throughout town, should they change land use or ownership (see p. 34 for more about Chapter 61).
7. Form a local Agricultural Commission and adopt a Right-to-Farm bylaw for the town (see page 35 for more about the Right-to-Farm)



## Priority Heritage Landscapes

*Petersham, Massachusetts*

Prepared for: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region

Prepared by: Dodson Associates, Ltd., Landscape Architects and Planners  
Ashfield, Massachusetts

25 June 2008



"Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs"  
MassGIS 2005 Orthophotos

**For Planning Purposes Only**

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## **PART II: PLANNING FOR HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

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As our communities undergo rapid land use changes, heritage landscapes are particularly threatened because they are often taken for granted. There is a broad variety of resources that communities can call upon to protect these irreplaceable landscapes. What follows is a review of the tools that Petersham already has in place, as well as a number of recommended actions for the future. The measures already in place provide a strong foundation for heritage landscape preservation, but additional measures have been identified in the following text that will aid the development of a holistic preservation planning strategy. Appendix B includes extended descriptions of preservation measures. These tools should be considered in combination with those recommendations made in Part I for Petersham's priority landscapes.

### **INVENTORY AND DOCUMENTATION**

#### *1. Massachusetts Historical Commission Records*

We cannot advocate for something until we clearly identify it – in this case, the physical characteristics and historical development of the town's historic and archeological resources. The necessary first step is to record information about the resources at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets is a statewide list that identifies significant historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. In order to be included in the inventory, a property must be documented on an MHC inventory form, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), is now available online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>. Information on the specific locations of archaeological sites is not available to the general public in order to protect these sensitive and non-renewable cultural resources.

Current Listings: According to the MHC, Petersham's inventory documents over 92 cultural resources from the 18th century to the 20th century ranging from individual homes to civic buildings, and including landscape elements like the town common and the Quabbin Reservoir. Of the heritage landscapes identified by the community as priority resources, numerous sites in Petersham center, North Main and East Street are listed under MACRIS.

There are no documented archaeological sites recorded with MHC.

Recommendations: A comprehensive archaeological survey should be completed for the historic mill sites within the community. Funding assistance for this effort may be available from the MHC Survey and Planning grants.

## *2. National and State Register Listing*

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Listing brings a number of benefits including recognition, consideration when federally-or state-funded projects may impact the resource, eligibility for tax credits, and qualification for certain grant programs. Resources on the National Register and Local Historic Districts are automatically added to the State Register of Historic Places.

Current Listings: The Petersham Historic District was established as a Local Historic District in 1966, and expanded and listed on the National Register in 1982. Four buildings are listed individually on the National Register, including the Gay Farm, the Holland-Towne House, the Petersham Craft Center, and the Prescott Town House. National Register listing provides recognition of historical value, but not protection. The Local Historic District, however, provides for town review of proposed construction or demolition projects, under the oversight of the Historic District Commission.

Recommended Listings: As time goes by, the common working landscape of farms and forests that used to be taken for granted in central Massachusetts is increasingly rare. The East Street Agricultural Area is especially valuable as a largely-intact example of a 19th and early 20th century vernacular landscape. In light of its vulnerability to development, this area should be considered for listing as a district in the National Register as well as for a Local Historic District (LHD). Any LHD should include Schools Number 4 and 5.

## *3. Heritage Landscape Inventory List from Local Identification Meeting*

Each town involved in the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region Heritage Landscape Inventory held a local identification meeting to solicit input from a range of community members to identify potential heritage landscapes throughout the town. The lists were prioritized by the community, with help from the consultants, to create a list of five to ten priority areas, which were described in Part I of this report. The complete list of the town's heritage landscapes is included as Appendix A of this report and provides a sound resource list for future documentation activities and potential funding opportunities. Petersham's meeting was held on March 7, 2008 with 29 community members present.

## PLANNING AND ZONING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

### *1. Comprehensive, Open Space and other Planning Documents*

It is important that Open Space Plans, Master Plans, and other planning documents address heritage landscapes as vital features of the community, contributing not only to unique sense of place but also to environmental, recreational and economic health.

Current Plans: Petersham published a combined Master Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) in August 2004. The OSRP in particular is a valuable source of information for landscape character, significant natural and scenic resources, and a conservation and recreation lands inventory. This inventory includes a table of land ownership and levels of protection including lands in Chapter 61 and under permanent protection. A five-year action plan outlined a series of overall goals and strategic objectives.

Recommended Plans: Master Plans provide an important frame of reference for land use decisions, and incorporate all of a community's issues including economic development, housing and transportation into an integrated plan. Heritage landscapes need to be seen through the lenses of community character, historic preservation, environmental health, and economic viability and growth. Their future and the values they contribute should be addressed within these multiple perspectives, not solely as historical assets of the community.

In recent years, planning for natural resource systems has moved beyond conservation of specific habitat locations to identifying and protecting the functioning ecosystems that make that habitat viable. Heritage landscapes can also be understood as functional systems, analogous to natural ecosystems, that need to be preserved intact if they are to be kept alive and functioning. This is easiest to see with working agricultural landscapes, where structures, fields, roads, fences, animals, plants and people are all part of a single system. It also is present in places that are no longer being actively farmed, but which are still organized according to the systems that once functioned there. It can also be argued that the visual character of rural towns is a kind of cultural ecosystem, which has been organized and maintained to provide a beautiful setting for human life. More than many towns in Massachusetts, Petersham is uniquely suited to planning on the basis of natural and cultural ecosystems. As the town starts to plan for updating its Master Plan and Open Space Plan, this approach can offer a valuable way to better understand the landscape and set priorities for its protection.

## *2. Zoning Bylaws, Ordinances, and Programs*

Effective and innovative preservation tools exist in the legal and regulatory realm. These range from a wide array of zoning bylaws and regulatory mechanisms, to incentive programs and owner-generated restrictions on land use.

Current Zoning: Petersham has a single Residential-Agricultural District. Most development takes the form of residential structures on 1-1/2 acre lots with 150 foot minimum frontage. A Rate of Development Bylaw, originally set to expire in 2009 and extend until 2015 at the June 2008 Town Meeting, limits growth to six building permits per year. Under the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act, General Laws Chapter 40, Section 15C, Petersham has adopted Rules and Regulations Governing Scenic Roads, which provides a process of town review of any work within the right-of-way of a town road. Virtually all the roads in Petersham that are not numbered highways have been designated as Scenic Roads.

Recommended Tools: There are many additional zoning mechanisms and planning tools that could be helpful in the protection of Petersham's Heritage Landscapes. The Master Plan recommended replacing the single Residential-Agricultural zoning district with a set of three, including a town center district in the historic center, and a business district on 122. The town is considering this and other planning and zoning tools as part of implementing the Master Plan. The following list may include some of these, as well as others that have been used in Petersham to some extent; they are all included to provide a complete overview and identify additional resources that may prove useful.

### **Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR)**

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program is a voluntary program managed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. It is intended to provide a "non-development" alternative to farmers and other owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land. When faced with the inability to actively farm and rising tax assessments, this offers the farmer the opportunity to retain the property rather than sell it for development. The State purchased a permanent deed restriction on the property for the difference between fair market value and agricultural value. The deed restriction would preclude any use of the property that will negatively impact its agricultural viability.

### **Agricultural Preservation Zoning**

An agricultural preservation overlay zone can be created that will promote and protect the practice of farming. This can help to preserve lands on which farming is most viable, lands that maintain an adequate agricultural base in town and areas that preserve the culture and landscape of farming.

This can be accomplished in several ways including requiring all new large-scale residential development to be clustered on areas least suitable for agriculture and away from farms and views. An agricultural preservation bylaw can also use the site plan review process to require dedicated open space to remain as farmland and include that new development be located on least suitable soils for agriculture and be integrated into the existing landscape.

### **Archaeological Resource Protection**

Archaeological sites are non-renewable cultural resources that can be permanently altered or destroyed through unauthorized digging, artifact collection, and development. Protection of archaeological sites can occur through a number of different strategies and mechanisms. An important first step is the development of a town-wide archaeological resource protection plan. Based on a professional reconnaissance survey of resources in the community, this plan would recommend steps for their preservation. Options for protection include acquisition, preservation restrictions, site plan review, an archaeological review bylaw and public education. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs.

### **Community Preservation Act**

By enabling legislation created in 2000, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps communities provide funds for the preservation of open space and historic resources and the creation of affordable housing and recreational facilities. The funds are raised through a property tax surcharge ranging from 0.5% to 3% and are administered by a local Community Preservation Commission. A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: acquisition and preservation of open space, acquisition and preservation of historic buildings and landscapes and creation and support of affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses and for recreational uses.

### **Conservation Restrictions (CR)**

A permanent deed restriction between a landowner and a holder - usually a public agency or a private land trust; whereby the grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the purpose of protecting certain conservation values in exchange for tax benefits. Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Division of Conservation Services provides assistance to landowners, municipalities, and land trusts regarding conservation restrictions and has produced *The Massachusetts Conservation Restriction Handbook* as a guide to drafting conservation restrictions.

### **Corridor Protection Overlay District**

A Corridor Protection Overlay District is intended to promote appropriate development within a given corridor, serving to protect natural (and sometimes cultural) resources. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements. The Corridor Protection Overlay District can be used cooperatively by adjoining communities to help maintain continuous protection across town lines.

### **Chapter 61 Policy**

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61 was created in the 1970s when many farmers and forestland owners were forced to sell their land due to rising property values and taxes. The legislation became known as the Forestland Act but was quickly followed by Chapter 61A, the Farmland Assessment Act and 61B, the Open Space Act. This new legislation required towns to reduce assessments on farm, forest and open space lands as long as the owners made a commitment to keep their land in that use.

A major provision of this law allows the town the right of first refusal on these lands if the lands are to be sold for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. This provision provides the town with the opportunity to match a fair market value offer for the property. Adoption of a Chapter 61 Policy would outline a response process for the town to follow when these lands come out of the program. This may include a requirement for the select board to collaborate with other town boards, conservation groups and other interested parties, and hold a public meeting. For more information about the Chapter 61 Program and to see a sample Chapter 61 Policy, please see the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust website (<http://mountgrace.org/>), to download their Chapter 61 Handbook.

### **Demolition Delay Bylaw**

Demolition delay bylaws provide a time period in which towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. The local historical commission should work with MHC staff to develop a bylaw that would best suit the town and should work with other town groups to publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Most demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built more than 50 years ago. The most common delay of demolition is six months; however many communities are finding that a one-year delay is more effective. A demolition delay bylaw requires a majority vote of Town Meeting.

### **Design Review**

Design Review is a non-regulatory process that is undertaken by a town appointed Design Review

Board. The board reviews the design of new construction and additions – typically those taking place in existing neighborhoods. Recommendations are made to the planning board to help preserve appropriate building patterns and architectural styles, with the goal of maintaining the overall character of a given area. Design Review Boards often limit their review to exterior architectural features, site design and signage. While usually applied to historic districts and downtowns, design review can be useful in helping to blend new development into rural districts.

### **Open Space Zoning**

Open Space Zoning – also known as Open Space Residential Development – allows for flexibility in the design of a subdivision in return for preservation of open space. Typically the same number of homes that are allowed by current zoning for the parcel are built in the area of the site that is best suited for construction, while at least half the parcel is permanently protected. The most useful OSRD bylaws provide for a design process that first identifies the best land for conservation, then lays out roads and building lots in the remaining areas.

### **Right to Farm Bylaw**

A Right to Farm Bylaw asserts the rights of farmers to pursue agricultural activities, provides community support for farming activities and requires dispute resolution so that abutters cannot make nuisance claims. Agricultural landscapes are widely considered to be significant heritage landscapes for which there is constant concern of potential development. This bylaw serves to help active farmers remain just that - active.

### **Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw**

This is a preservation planning tool that seeks to protect the scenic qualities of mountains, hills and rolling terrain by requiring additional design criteria for new construction in these visually sensitive areas. A scenic vista protection bylaw can be created in the form of a scenic overlay district or address specific portions of a viewshed such as above a designated elevation and visible from public areas. A scenic protection bylaw is generally administered through site plan review and the development application process.

### **Shade Tree Act**

The Shade Tree Act is a part of MGL Chapter 87, which defines all trees within the public way as public shade trees. The municipal Tree Warden is responsible for the care, maintenance and protection of all public shade trees (except those along state highways). Trimming or removal of any public shade trees greater than 1.5” in diameter requires a public hearing. Chapter 87 applies to all communities; however, some communities have adopted their own Shade Tree Act Bylaws that provide stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 87.

### **Site Plan Review**

Site Plan Review provides the planning board (and other boards and committees, depending how the bylaw is written) with an opportunity to consider a variety of community concerns – such as impacts to vehicular circulation, scenic vistas, topography and natural resources – during the permit process. Boards may comment on site plans and request changes to the design. Site Plan Review is typically limited to large scale projects and tied to the special permit process.

### **Smart Growth Zoning – Chapter 40R**

Smart Growth Zoning (Chapter 40R) provides financial rewards to communities that adopt special overlay zoning districts allowing increased residential densities (at least 8 units per acre for single-family housing) in existing centers, areas near transit stations, or new mixed use center suitable for residential or mixed use development. Such zoning can help direct compact growth to areas that are already developed – such as historic village centers – thereby discouraging growth in less suitable areas.

### **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

TDR is a regulatory technique that allows a landowner to sell the development rights from a property, which are then purchased by a landowner or developer in a location where higher density may be more appropriate. In essence, development rights are “transferred” from one district (the “sending district”) to another (the “receiving district”). As a result, development densities are shifted within the community to achieve both open space preservation and economic goals without changing the total amount of potential development. This makes a lot of sense in towns like Petersham which may have a single zoning district, but where it would be desirable to reduce densities in sensitive forest, agricultural or scenic areas while allowing a few more homes in areas with better soils, roads and access to public services.

### **Village Center Zoning**

The goal of Village Center Zoning is to support the success of existing village centers and encourage the growth of new small-scale, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly districts. Typically this involves allowing compact development at a scale that is compatible with the neighborhood, usually with reduced front setbacks that bring the buildings up to the sidewalk. There may be a certain amount of parking on the street, but most parking is directed to the rear of structures. Village Center Zoning shares many similarities with Traditional Neighborhood Development, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

### **Wetlands Protection Bylaw**

The Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Chapter 131, Section 40) protects wetlands by requiring a careful review by local conservation commissions of proposed work that may alter wetlands. The law also protects floodplains, riverfront areas, land under water bodies, waterways, salt ponds, fish runs and the ocean. Communities may also adopt their own Wetlands Protection Bylaw, providing stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 131.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

### *Outreach, Education and Interpretation*

In order to create a community of advocates, we need to raise public awareness and broaden the base of support. This includes developing opportunities to learn about and celebrate the places and history of the town, as well as to care for them.

### *Collaboration*

Protecting community character, respecting history, and promoting smart growth are interrelated concerns that impact heritage landscapes and require collaboration across a broad spectrum of the community. This includes communication among town boards and departments, as well as public/private partnerships.

### *Technical Assistance*

Regulations and creative solutions for heritage landscapes are constantly changing and emerging. Public and private agencies offer technical assistance with the many issues to be addressed, including the Massachusetts Dept. of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts Historical Commission, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership.

### *Funding Opportunities*

Funding rarely comes from a single source, more often depending on collaborative underwriting by private, municipal, and regional sources. Each town also has a variety of funding sources that are locally-based and sometimes site-specific.

A list outlining options for the above strategies can be found in Appendix B.

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## CONCLUSION

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While Petersham's settlement and early growth was typical of many towns in central and western Massachusetts, its current appearance and rich quality of life is not. Due to accidents of history and geography, the town was largely bypassed by the industrial revolution, and the creation of the Quabbin Reservoir turned it into a community that has been called "centrally remote." Along the way a series of far-sighted citizens like James Brooks helped to preserve the historic town center and thousands of acres of land in the countryside. The result is a community which has changed little for a century, one with a rich sense of place and residents that are passionate about preserving what they love about the town.

Yet the isolation that protected Petersham is fast vanishing as job centers move further from Boston and the internet allows many people to work from home. While tempered by the current downturn, over the last decade these changing economic factors fueled a boom in exurban housing construction throughout the region. While new house construction has been moderate in Petersham, and is currently limited by a growth-rate bylaw, it is clear from recent experience that even a few new homes can impact the town's unspoiled visual character if they are poorly designed and built in the wrong place.

This Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report for Petersham is an initial preservation-planning document that identifies priority heritage landscapes and discusses strategies for their long-term protection. It provides a starting point for thinking about strategies that combine traditional historic preservation tools with creative approaches to planning and zoning. As time goes on, it will be harder for one person to have the impact on preserving Petersham that someone like James Brooks had. Increasingly, protecting what is special about Petersham will require a collaborative effort between town boards, elected officials and private citizens, rooted in a shared process of understanding both the existing landscape and alternatives for the landscape of the future.

Heritage landscapes cannot be understood, celebrated and preserved as isolated elements; they are all connected to each other, to the past and future of the town, and to every citizen. They are living landscapes that are home to vibrant plant, animal and human communities, and which continue to evolve and change over time. For planning purposes, it is useful to think of these heritage landscapes as functioning systems, analogous to natural ecosystems, which need to be preserved intact if their essential functions are also to be preserved. By protecting villages, scenic roads, important viewsheds, stream corridors and working landscapes as an intact system, social and economic change can continue without destroying Petersham's unique sense of place.

**The project team suggests that the following recommendations be the top three priorities for the Town of Petersham as it works to protect the heritage landscape character of the community:**

1. Adopt the Community Preservation Act.
2. Create an Agricultural Overlay District for the Eastern Agricultural Area.
3. Create a Master Plan for the Common and Central Village, with a focus on planning for how the Nichewaug Inn fits into the future of the surrounding common and properties.

## APPENDIX A: PETERSHAM HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Landscape Name

Landscape Notes

<b>Agricultural</b>	
<i>Chimney Hill Farm and Gross Farm</i>	Important agricultural landscapes; Chimney Hill contains significant early stone quarry; documented Indian trail to Mt. Wachusett; site of Nipmuck Indian lore, part of East Street Agricultural Area
<i>East Street Agricultural Area</i>	Important agricultural landscapes on Maple Lane, East Street, North Main Street, Quaker Drive, many continuously used since early settlement; Maple Lane drumlin a noted natural landscape
<i>Amidon Farm</i>	
<i>Carter Hill Farm</i>	
<i>Gay Farm</i>	well-preserved early farmstead
<i>Russell Farm and Out-Buildings</i>	West Road, characteristic New England farm in successional phase; out-buildings and diverse landscapes
<b>Archaeological</b>	
<i>Nichewaug Village on Swift River</i>	1927 Village; site of variety of water mills - Parlin's and Webb's Mills; range of early preserved cellar holes
<i>School House Cellar Holes (13)</i>	
<i>Indian Encampment</i>	noted Nipmuck Indian Village site in Nichewaug, local lore suggests 1676 trail of captive Mary Rawlandson
<i>Connor's Pond</i>	first mill site in town, along Swift River, also a noted natural landscape
<i>Foster Cellar Hole</i>	Nichewaug Road
<i>Russel Homestead Remains</i>	South Street
<i>Underground Caves</i>	Glasheen Road; part of East Street Agricultural Area
<i>Fever Brook Mill Complex</i>	
<i>Houghton Mill</i>	on Rutland Brook

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated "Priority Landscapes" by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

<b>Burial</b>	
<i>East Street Cemetery</i>	special blend of headstones, stonework, and landscape design, part of East Street Agricultural Area
<i>Women's Federated Forest</i>	
<i>South of Harvard Pond</i>	
<i>Center Cemetery</i>	original cemetery in town, part of Village Center
<i>Nichewaug Cemetery</i>	part of Nichewaug Village
<i>Howe Cemetery</i>	
<i>Flat Rock Cemetery</i>	
<b>Civic</b>	
<i>Common and Center</i>	historic district, unique heart of village; trees on common dedicated to citizens of town lost in wars (military landscape); many residential buildings remain (residential landscape)
<i>Ledgeville</i>	Along East Street; part of East Street Agricultural Area
<b>Industrial</b>	
<i>Brown's Pond</i>	best remaining example of 19th century Grist and Saw watermills, part of East Street Agricultural Area and along Swift River; also a noted residential landscape
<i>Web Mill</i>	

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated "Priority Landscapes" by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

<b>Institutional</b>	
<i>Nichewaug Inn</i>	100 year old historic structure
<i>Country Club</i>	nationally recognized Donald Ross 1920's golf course, along North Main Street; also hosts the Curling Club
<i>Library</i>	designed by Edmund Willson; south wing is a Civil War Memorial and memorial to those who served in other wars, part of the Village Center
<i>Center School</i>	1906 Agricultural High School, unique stone Victorian structure, surrounded by open lands
<i>Harvard Forest &amp; Fisher Museum</i>	World class research center and unique dioramas depicting land use history and forest management; museum and protected land along North Main Street; Harvard Forest land exists throughout town (also noted natural landscape)
<i>Craft Center</i>	
<i>Historical Society</i>	part of the Village Center
<i>Unitarian Church</i>	part of the Village Center
<i>Petersham Branch Alliance</i>	
<i>Congregational Church</i>	
<i>Catholic Church</i>	
<i>Brook's Law Office</i>	on TTOR property
<i>Convent/Priory/Monastery</i>	Four of such establishments in town
<i>Earthlands Environmental Center</i>	unique environmental center and former intentional community, part of East Street Agricultural Area
<i>Grange</i>	
<i>Lions Club</i>	
<b>Military</b>	
<i>Web Mill</i>	Manufactured powder keg barrels - Civil War
<i>WWII Conscientious Objectors Camps</i>	1930s-40s CCC and WWII workcamps

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated "Priority Landscapes" by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

<b>Natural</b>	
<i>Headwaters of E. Br. Swift River</i>	One of purest small streams in Central New England flowing into the Quabbin Reservoir; located east of historic Poor Farm foot paths
<i>Fever Brook System</i>	
<i>Harvard Pond/Tom Swamp Road</i>	Unique aquatic environment and well-preserved forest lands; stone watering trough on old road east of Rt 122
<i>Soapstone Hill</i>	
<i>Swift River Outcrops</i>	
<i>Moccasin Brook</i>	
<i>Riceville Pond</i>	
<i>Davenport Pond</i>	
<i>Stone Arch</i>	unique geological formation near Quabbin lands, Woodward Road
<i>Carter Pond</i>	unique 60-acre pond surrounded by preserved lands; remains of a model early 20th century fish hatchery
<i>Black Rock</i>	special exposed granite bedrock with farm family story, Oliver Street
<b>Open Space/Recreation</b>	
<i>North Main St. Ridge</i>	part of N. Main Street Corridor
<i>View from Maple Lane</i>	part of East Street Agricultural Area
<i>Trustees Properties</i>	including North Common Meadow which holds culturally unique sites of the village - Red Barn Pond, Brooks Law Office
<i>Sunset Lane Trail</i>	
<i>Sunset Lane Blueberry Patch</i>	
<i>Mountainbike Trails</i>	
<i>Davenport Pond Conservation Area Trails</i>	
<i>Ames Farm</i>	
<i>Carruth Road</i>	

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated “Priority Landscapes” by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

<i>Rutland Brook</i>	Mass Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary, first preserved land in Petersham; site of first working water dam in town
<i>Trail to Firetower in Phillipston</i>	
<i>Choate Ledge Views</i>	
<i>Women's Federation State Forest</i>	
<b>Residential</b>	
<i>Ledgeville District</i>	part of East Street Agricultural Area
<i>Old Maid's Mile</i>	
<i>Sunset Lane</i>	
<i>Clamber Hill</i>	
<i>The Ridge</i>	Mini English tudor mansion to George Eastman, Kodak; on West St
<i>Deer Farm</i>	site is home to a unique Europe model religious stone grotto; site of last skirmish of Shays Rebellion - noted military landscape
<i>Brandon School</i>	
<i>Mother Ann Lee House</i>	founder of Shaker movement; Popple Camp Road
<i>Spring Street</i>	
<i>Bachrach House</i>	
<i>Negus House</i>	Oldest house in town
<i>Spooner Homestead</i>	Proposed to be oldest building in town with preserved lands and views of Mt. Grace
<i>Woolsey Law Office</i>	well-preserved 1780 farmhouse and barn; summer law office of Judge Woolsey and former Prescott School House
<i>"Gibo's" Cabin</i>	1948 log cabin built by Fred Brouillett; pure stands of some of oldest primitive and second growth trees in Petersham
<i>Dexter House</i>	Former religious school with well-known stone grotto. Originally and currently a private residence

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated "Priority Landscapes" by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

<b>Transportation</b>	
<i>Quaker Drive, Glen Valley Road, Carter Pond Road</i>	Scenic Views
<i>Barre Woods</i>	on Route 122, south of Old Stage Road
<i>Rte 122 Corridor</i>	
<i>Monson Turnpike</i>	
<i>Old Stage Road</i>	early county stage road from Worcester to Brattleboro, special view into Swift River Valley and beyond

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated “Priority Landscapes” by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

## **APPENDIX B: GUIDE TO PRESERVATION & PLANNING TOOLS FOR HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

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Preservation planning is a four-step process: identification, evaluation, education and protection. Within the realm of protection, there is a vast array of tools that communities can call upon and that are most effective when used in combination with one another. Stewardship of these resources involves education and community support, planning with a clear set of goals, and regulatory mechanisms.

Three useful documents to consult when planning preservation strategies are:

- ◆ Department of Conservation and Recreation, Reading the Land
- ◆ Massachusetts Historical Commission, Survey Manual
- ◆ Massachusetts Historical Commission, Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances

The following three sections detail the resources and strategies available for heritage landscape preservation - from documentation and evaluation, to public education, to regulating activities and finding the revenue necessary to fund the effort. These lists are meant to cover a variety of regional areas and opportunities, all may not apply to any given community.

### **INVENTORY AND DOCUMENTATION**

#### *Massachusetts Historical Commission Records*

The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources on MHC inventory forms. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development.

Survey methodology has advanced since the early work of the 1980s. If a community had survey work done during that time period, it is time for an inventory update, looking at resources in a more comprehensive and connected way than may have been done at that time. Even if survey work is more recent, there may be a need to document more resources throughout the community.

Using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology:

- ◆ Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not thoroughly researched, beginning with heritage landscapes.
- ◆ Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.

- ◆ Make sure to document secondary features on rural and residential properties, such as outbuildings, stone walls and landscape elements.
- ◆ Record a wide range of historic resources including landscape features and industrial resources.
- ◆ Conduct a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey to identify patterns of prehistoric and historic occupation and to identify known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with these patterns. Known and potential precontact and historic archaeological sites should be professionally field-checked to evaluate cultural associations and integrity. A professional archaeologist is one who meets the professional qualifications (950 CMR 70.01) outlined in the State Archaeologist Permit Regulations (950 CMR 70.00).

### *National and State Register Listing*

Survey work for the National Register of Historic Places, a program of the National Park Service includes evaluation of whether resources meet the qualifications for its listing. This will provide new information about the eligibility of properties. Using the information generated in the survey work and the accompanying National Register evaluations, expand your town's National Register program.

- ◆ Develop a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration a property's or area's integrity and vulnerability. Properties in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority. All sites listed on the National Register are automatically added to the State Register.

## **PLANNING AND ZONING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

### *Comprehensive, Open Space and other Planning Documents*

Communities use a variety of planning exercises and documents to define their goals and vision of the future, address community-wide issues, and recommend measures to respond to them. There are state mandates for towns to prepare Comprehensive or Master Plans and Open Space and Recreation Plans.

- ◆ Comprehensive or Master Plans provide an important frame of reference for land use decisions, and incorporate all of a community's issues including economic development, housing and transportation into an integrated plan. Heritage landscapes need to be seen

through the lenses of community character, historic preservation, environmental health, and economic viability and growth. Their future and the values they contribute should be addressed within these multiple perspectives, not solely as historical assets of the community.

- ◆ Like Comprehensive Plans, Open Space Plans look holistically at the community—its history, demographics and growth patterns, and current conditions—to make recommendations that protect open space and natural resources for ecological health and public benefits. The Heritage Landscape Inventory Program provides a framework for looking at these important resources, and this new understanding should be incorporated into Open Space Plans.
- ◆ Many communities have other plans that have been prepared as well.

### *Zoning Bylaws and Ordinances*

A wide range of laws, bylaws and regulations is available to protect heritage landscapes. Following are brief descriptions of some of the most widely used and/or most effective of these tools, arranged alphabetically.

#### **Adaptive Reuse Overlay District**

An Adaptive Reuse Overlay District is superimposed on one or more established zoning districts in order to permit incentive-based reuses of existing built properties. These districts can be created to allow for the adaptive reuse of properties of a certain kind, or within a specified area within a community. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements.

#### **Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR)**

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program is a voluntary program managed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. It is intended to provide a “non-development” alternative to farmers and other owners of “prime” and “state important” agricultural land. When faced with the inability to actively farm and rising tax assessments, this offers the farmer the opportunity to retain the property rather than sell it for development. The State purchased a permanent deed restriction on the property for the difference between fair market value and agricultural value. The deed restriction would preclude any use of the property that will negatively impact its agricultural viability.

### **Agricultural Preservation Zoning**

An agricultural preservation overlay zone can be created that will promote and protect the practice of farming. This can help to preserve lands on which farming is most viable, lands that maintain an adequate agricultural base in town and areas that preserve the culture and landscape of farming. This can be accomplished in several ways including requiring all new large-scale residential development to be clustered on areas least suitable for agriculture and away from farms and views. An agricultural preservation bylaw can also use the site plan review process to require dedicated open space to remain as farmland and include that new development be located on least suitable soils for agriculture and be integrated into the existing landscape.

### **Archaeological Resource Protection**

Archaeological sites are non-renewable cultural resources that can be permanently altered or destroyed through unauthorized digging, artifact collection, and development. Protection of archaeological sites can occur through a number of different strategies and mechanisms. An important first step is the development of a town-wide archaeological resource protection plan. Based on a professional reconnaissance survey of resources in the community, this plan would recommend steps for their preservation. Options for protection include acquisition, preservation restrictions, site plan review, an archaeological review bylaw and public education. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as Native Americans. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs.

### **Community Preservation Act**

By enabling legislation created in 2000, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps communities provide funds for the preservation of open space and historic resources and the creation of affordable housing and recreational facilities. The funds are raised through a property tax surcharge ranging from 0.5% to 3% and are administered by a local Community Preservation Committee. A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: acquisition and preservation of open space, acquisition and preservation of historic buildings and landscapes and creation and support of affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses and for recreational uses.

### **Conservation Restrictions (CR)**

A permanent deed restriction between a landowner and a holder - usually a public agency or a private land trust; whereby the grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the

purpose of protecting certain conservation values in exchange for tax benefits. Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Division of Conservation Services provides assistance to landowners, municipalities, and land trusts regarding conservation restrictions and has produced The Massachusetts Conservation Restriction Handbook as a guide to drafting conservation restrictions.

### **Corridor Protection Overlay District**

A Corridor Protection Overlay District is intended to promote appropriate development within a given corridor, serving to protect natural (and sometimes cultural) resources. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements. The Corridor Protection Overlay District can be used cooperatively by adjoining communities to help maintain continuous protection across town lines.

### **Chapter 61 Policy**

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61 was created in the 1970s when many farmers and forestland owners were forced to sell their land due to rising property values and taxes. The legislation became known as the Forestland Act but was quickly followed by Chapter 61A, the Farmland Assessment Act and 61B, the Open Space Act. This new legislation required towns to reduce assessments on farm, forest and open space lands as long as the owners made a commitment to keep their land in that use.

A major provision of this law allows the town the right of first refusal on these lands if the lands are to be sold for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. This provision provides the town with the opportunity to match a fair market value offer for the property. Adoption of a Chapter 61 Policy would outline a response process for the town to follow when these lands come out of the program. This may include a requirement for the select board to collaborate with other town boards, conservation groups and other interested parties, and hold a public meeting. For more information about the Chapter 61 Program and to see a sample Chapter 61 Policy, please see the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust website (<http://mountgrace.org/>), to download their *Chapter 61 Handbook*.

### **Demolition Delay Bylaw**

Demolition delay bylaws provide a time period in which towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. The local historical commission should work with MHC staff to develop a bylaw that would best suit the town and should work with other town groups to publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Most demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built more than 50 years ago. The most

common delay of demolition is six months; however many communities are finding that a one-year delay is more effective. A demolition delay bylaw requires a majority vote of Town Meeting.

### **Design Review**

Design Review is a non-regulatory process that is undertaken by a town appointed Design Review Board. The board reviews the design of new construction and additions – typically those taking place in already built-up areas. Recommendations are made to the planning board to help preserve appropriate building patterns and architectural styles, with the goal of maintaining the overall character of a given area. Design Review Boards often limit their review to exterior architectural features, site design and signage.

### **Downtown Revitalization Zoning**

Downtown Revitalization Zoning seeks to encourage businesses to locate in downtowns. Zoning of this nature is typically written to be attractive to businesses of a certain kind that would work well within the given infrastructure and transportation needs, but can also incorporate some of the same elements as Village Center Zoning (see below), such as encouraging mixed use development at a pedestrian-friendly scale, with minimal setbacks and off site parking.

### **Expedited Local Permitting - Chapter 43D**

Expedited Local Permitting (Chapter 43D) provides an efficient process for municipal permitting and grants for up to \$150,000 for such things as professional staffing assistance, local government reorganization, and consulting services. Participating towns benefit from marketing of their site and online promotion of their pro-business regulatory climate. In order to pursue Expedited Local Permitting, a town must have commercial and/or industrial zoning in place for the site, and there must be space for a building of at least 50,000 square feet of floor area.

### **Flexible Development Zoning**

Flexible Development Zoning allows for greater flexibility and creativity when subdividing land, to conform and work with the natural and cultural resources of a site and minimize alteration or damage to these resources, rather than follow standard requirements of subdivision regulations. While this does not prevent land from being subdivided, it does allow for the protection of some features, serves to preserve some undeveloped land, and promotes better overall site planning.

### **Local Historic Districts (LHD)**

Local Historic Districts are designated through the adoption of a local ordinance that recognizes special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. These districts are the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources. They are adopted by a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting and are administered by a district commission appointed by the Board of Selectmen. For more information review the Massachusetts Historic Commission's (MHC) guidebook, [\*Establishing Local Historic Districts\*](#), available on the MHC website.

### **Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (NCD)**

Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (sometimes known as Neighborhood Conservation Districts) are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of the neighborhood are important. They are less restrictive than Local Historic Districts in that they focus on a few key architectural elements and massing, scale, and setback in an effort to embrace overall neighborhood character. As in Local Historic Districts, changes are reviewed by a Neighborhood Architectural Conservation District Commission.

### **Open Space Zoning**

Open Space Zoning – also known as Cluster Development Bylaw, Open Space Communities Zoning, Open Space Development Overlay District, Open Space Preservation Subdivision, or Open Space Residential Development – allows greater density than would otherwise be permitted on a parcel, in an effort to preserve open space. Typically, construction is limited to half of the parcel, while the remaining land is permanently protected under a conservation restriction.

### **Preservation Restrictions**

Preservation Restrictions protect historic and archaeological properties from changes that may be inappropriate. A Preservation Restriction (easement) on a property restricts present and future owners from altering a specified portion of that building, structure, or site. A restriction can run for a few years or in perpetuity and may be included as part of the property deed. Preservation restrictions can be donated or purchased by a government body or private preservation organization and are enforced by the holder of the restriction. Charitable donations of easements on historical buildings or archaeological sites may qualify for federal income tax deductions.

### **Rate of Development Bylaw**

A town may slow the rate of its growth within reasonable time limits to allow the community to engage in planning and preparation for growth. This measure must be used for the purpose of conducting studies and planning for rational development, and not for restraining the rate of growth for a period of unlimited duration.

### **Right to Farm Bylaw**

A Right to Farm Bylaw asserts the rights of farmers to pursue agricultural activities, provides community support for farming activities and requires dispute resolution so that abutters cannot make nuisance claims. Agricultural landscapes are widely considered to be significant heritage landscapes for which there is constant concern of potential development. This bylaw serves to help active farmers remain just that - active.

### **Scenic Overlay District Zoning**

Scenic Overlay District Zoning protects scenic vistas by providing for a no-disturb buffer on private lands, thereby helping to maintain specific viewpoints. This type of zoning is more far-reaching than a Scenic Roads Bylaw (see below) and may be applied to numbered routes.

### **Scenic Roads Bylaw**

Local roads, owned and maintained by the Town, can be designated as Scenic Roads in order to preserve their rural and/or historic character. A scenic roads bylaw is an effective tool for the preservation of these significant heritage landscapes. Adopted as part of the local zoning bylaws, the scenic roads ordinance requires a public hearing by the planning board before any work is undertaken in a public right-of-way that would involve the cutting of trees or the destruction of stone walls. This bylaw only applies to trees and stone walls within the town-owned right-of-way and to local roads and not state routes.

### **Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw**

This is a preservation planning tool that seeks to protect the scenic qualities of mountains, hills and rolling terrain by requiring additional design criteria for new construction in these visually sensitive areas. A scenic vista protection bylaw can be created as a scenic overlay district to protect a larger area or can address specific views such as those only visible from a certain area or above a certain elevation. A scenic protection bylaw is generally administered through site plan review and the development application process.

### **Shade Tree Act**

The Shade Tree Act is a part of MGL Chapter 87, which defines all trees within the public way as public shade trees. The municipal Tree Warden is responsible for the care, maintenance and

protection of all public shade trees (except those along state highways). Trimming or removal of any public shade trees greater than 1.5” in diameter requires a public hearing. Chapter 87 applies to all communities; however, some communities have adopted their own Shade Tree Act Bylaws that provide stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 87.

### **Site Plan Review**

Site Plan Review provides the planning board (and other boards and committees, depending how the bylaw is written) with an opportunity to consider a variety of community concerns – such as impacts to vehicular circulation, scenic vistas, topography and natural resources – during the permit process. Boards may comment on site plans and request changes to the design. Site Plan Review is typically limited to large scale projects and tied to the special permit process.

### **Smart Growth Zoning – Chapter 40R & 40S**

Smart Growth Zoning (Chapter 40R) provides financial rewards to communities that adopt special overlay zoning districts allowing as-of-right high density residential development in areas near transit stations, areas of concentrated development, or areas that are suitable for residential or mixed use development. Such zoning can help direct compact growth to areas that are already developed – such as historic village centers – thereby discouraging growth in less suitable areas. Chapter 40S provides State funding for any net-added school costs that come from children living in newly developed housing within a Smart Growth District.

### **Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)**

TDR is a regulatory technique that allows a landowner to separate building or development rights from the property and sell them, receiving compensation for preserving land and allowing for the development to occur in areas selected for higher density projects. In essence, development rights are “transferred” from one district (the “sending district”) to another (the “receiving district”). As a result, development densities are shifted within the community to achieve both open space preservation and economic goals without changing overall development potential.

### **Village Center Zoning**

The goal of Village Center Zoning is to meet the needs of a small-scale, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area by encouraging compact development. New construction is required to be built at a scale that is compatible with the neighborhood and to have a reduced (or no) setback from the street. Parking may be directed to discourage large lots in front of buildings. Village Center Zoning shares many similarities with Traditional Neighborhood Development, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

### **Wetlands Protection Act and Bylaws**

The Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Chapter 131, Section 40) protects wetlands by requiring a careful review by local conservation commissions of proposed work that may alter wetlands. The law also protects floodplains, riverfront areas, land under water bodies, waterways, salt ponds, fish runs and the ocean. Communities may also adopt their own Wetlands Protection Bylaw, providing stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 131.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

### *Outreach, Education and Interpretation*

The best stewards and advocates for heritage landscape protection are members of the community. There are many ways to communicate the importance of these special places to the public, and to connect their preservation with the shared values and goals that community members have already expressed in various planning documents and forums.

Think creatively about how to educate the community about the values and threats to heritage landscapes, and how each town resident benefits from these special places. Use a combination of strategies to get the word out about heritage landscapes and preservation of community character, including:

- ◆ **Festivals and Tours** – Tours are a great way to draw attention to the history around us, and to engage more people in caring for it. Consider hosting a Heritage Celebration Day including tours and family-friendly activities, or plan a celebration around a particular place or area on a meaningful date. Make sure events are well publicized.
- ◆ **Signage and Banners** – Signs are a very effective way to announce special historic sites and districts. Banners can also bring attention to the significance of an area and make a celebratory statement about its contribution to the town.
- ◆ **Written Materials** – Clear, concise and engaging written material with engaging illustrations is a reliable way to relay information about community character and heritage landscapes. Make use of fact sheets and flyers to get the word out on particular issues such as a town ordinance that protects heritage landscapes, a threat that needs to be addressed, or an upcoming event.
- ◆ **School Curricula** – Start teaching at a young age. Children are very receptive to engaging stories, and there are no better stories to excite childrens’ imaginations and build pride of place than stories of their town’s past and present. Teachers have an opportunity to connect history with environmental issues through classroom study, hands-on history

projects, and field exploration of a town's heritage landscapes. Subsequently, students have an opportunity to teach their parents that preservation is everybody's business.

- ◆ **Lectures and Workshops** – Use these forums to raise awareness, educate at a deeper level about the community's history and its resources, and broaden the base of interest.
- ◆ **Website** – Keep Historical Commission and local historical organizations' entries on the town's website current, and include information about issues, proposals for preservation strategies, and upcoming events.
- ◆ **Press Releases** – Use all avenues including press releases to keep the public informed when a meeting or event is about to occur. Work with local reporters to develop special interest articles that highlight landscape resources.

Remember that bringing an issue or a heritage landscape to people's attention once will have only short-term effect. Outreach, education and interpretation must be ongoing concerns that involve preservation and conservation interests, teachers and community organizations in repeated projects to attract and engage the general public.

### *Collaboration Opportunities*

Because heritage landscapes encompass such a broad range of resources and issues—from preservation of town centers, scenic roads and river corridors to promotion of smart growth and economic development – stewardship of these resources involves many interests in a community. It is essential that there be good communication between the many departments and committees that address issues related to heritage landscapes. Collaboration between public and private partners is also an essential element in a successful preservation strategy.

- ◆ Broaden the base. Preservation, particularly preservation of landscapes, is not just for the Historical Commission. It is important that the cause not be marginalized by those who view preservation as opposed to progress, or to personal interests. A look at DCR's Reading the Land shows the range of organizations and viewpoints that value heritage landscapes.
- ◆ Nurture public-private partnerships. Friends groups, neighborhood associations, and local land trusts all have important roles to play to spread the word, and to expand the capacity of the public sector to care for heritage landscapes.
- ◆ Take advantage of forums created to share issues and ideas. For instance, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources offers a "cluster" format for monthly discussion and information exchange meetings among area farmers.
- ◆ Share resources across communities. Towns that lack funding for a town planner position, for instance, have found that "sharing" a planner with another community can be quite effective.

### *Technical Assistance*

Beyond DCR, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, technical assistance is available from many governmental and non-profit sources, most often free of charge to municipalities and non-profit organizations.

- ◆ American Farmland Trust: Clearinghouse of information supporting farmland protection and stewardship.
- ◆ Regional planning agencies are charged with assisting communities with local planning efforts:
  - Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Barre, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, North Brookfield, Spencer, Warren and West Brookfield.
  - Franklin Regional Council of Government serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Orange and Warwick.
  - The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Athol, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, and Templeton.
- ◆ The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership provides assistance and small grants to help protect ecologically, historically, economically, and culturally significant open space within the North Quabbin Region.
- ◆ The Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust is a regional non-profit organization that assists with conservation efforts of productive farm and forest land in parts of central and western Massachusetts.
- ◆ Citizen Planner Training Collaborative: Provides local planning and zoning officials with training opportunities and online information; they also hold an annual conference to support land use planning.
- ◆ Massachusetts Historical Commission: Provides technical assistance as well as grants to municipalities and non-profits for preservation planning and restoration projects.
- ◆ New England Small Farm Institute: A non-profit dedicated to providing technical assistance, information and training to farmers.
- ◆ The Trustees of Reservations: Offers conservation and landscape protection workshops, publications and connections through the Putnam Conservation Institute. The Trustees also manages a unique Conservation Buyer Program that links interested sellers with conservation-minded buyers and assists with establishing permanent property protection mechanisms.
- ◆ Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is the state agency dedicated to supporting the agricultural activities in the state through special initiatives, programs and technical assistance.

- ◆ The Trust for Public Land is a national non-profit that assists municipalities with land conservation efforts.
- ◆ DCR's Lakes and Ponds Program works with local groups and municipalities to protect, manage and restore these valuable aquatic resources. They provide technical assistance to communities and citizen groups, help to monitor water quality at various public beaches to ensure public safety, and provide educational materials to the public about a range of lake issues.
- ◆ Massachusetts Agricultural Commissions has recently launched a new website that includes helpful information both for communities with Agricultural Commissions and for those learning more about forming one.
- ◆ UMASS extension (NREC) – Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation) can provide assistance on issues related to land and water resource protection, smart growth/sustainability measures and forestry and farming management.
- ◆ The East Quabbin Land Trust provides assistance to protect ecological and historic landscapes through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters of 8 Central Massachusetts towns
- ◆ Opacum Land Trust provides assistance to protect ecologically and culturally significant open space within 13 south-central Massachusetts towns.

### *Funding Opportunities*

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing strategies to protect heritage landscapes. There are local, state, regional, national and non-profit funding programs and resources that can assist communities in preservation and land conservation-related issues. The availability of such assistance varies from year to year and private property is not always eligible for funding. Examples include:

#### **Local Funding Assistance**

- ◆ Towns that have adopted the **Community Preservation Act (CPA)** find it to be an excellent funding source for many heritage landscape projects. While tricky to pass in lean economic times, the number and types of projects that are benefiting across the Commonwealth makes the CPA worthy of consideration. Such projects include MHC inventory, National Register nominations, cemetery preservation, open space acquisition and preservation and restoration of public buildings. The CPA (M.G.L. Chapter 44B) establishes a mechanism by which cities and towns can develop a fund dedicated to historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Local funds are collected through a 0.5% to 3% surcharge on each annual real estate tax bill. At the state level, the

Commonwealth has established a dedicated fund which is used to match the municipality's collections under the CPA. The amount of the surcharge is determined by ballot vote at a local election.

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act, by a majority vote on a ballot question, fosters partnerships among historic preservationists, conservationists and affordable housing advocates. At least 10% of the funds must be used to preserve historic resources; at least 10% must be used to protect open space; and at least 10% must be used to advance affordable housing. The remaining 70% must be used for one of these three uses as well as recreational needs and can be distributed in varying proportions depending upon the projects that the city or town believes are appropriate and beneficial to the municipality. Additional information about the CPA can be found at [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org).

- ◆ Municipalities can establish land acquisition funds, increasing their revenue from sources such as an annual fixed line item in the municipal budget; income from forestry, farming and leasing of town-owned land; gifts and bequests; grants and foundation funding; and passage of the CPA, detailed above.

### **State Funding Assistance**

Funding for a variety of preservation projects, primarily for municipalities and non-profit, is available through the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), the EOEEA Division of Conservation Services (DCS), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and other state agencies. Further information on these programs is available on the agency websites.

- ◆ **MHC Survey and Planning Grants** support survey, National Register and a wide variety of preservation planning projects.
- ◆ The **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)**, administered through the MHC, funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.
- ◆ Towns that have a local historic district bylaw may apply for **Certified Local Government (CLG)** status which is granted by the National Park Service (NPS) through the MHC. At least 10% of the MHC's yearly federal funding allocation is distributed to CLG communities through Survey and Planning matching grants. To become a CLG, the town completes an application; after being accepted as a CLG, it files a report yearly on the status of applications, meetings, and decisions; in return the town may apply for the matching grant funding that the MHC awards competitively to CLGs annually. Presently 18 cities and towns in Massachusetts are CLGs. **NOTE:** CLG status is dependent in

part on a municipality having at least one Local Historical District as evidence of the community's commitment to historic preservation.

Open Space Plans, with a requirement of updating the plan every five years, make a community eligible for **Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) grants** and technical assistance programs through the Department of Conservation Services.

- ◆ The Massachusetts LAND Program of DCS assists local conservation commissions in acquiring land for the purposes of natural and cultural resource protection and passive outdoor recreation.
- ◆ The Massachusetts PARC Program, another DCS initiative, is geared toward assisting towns and cities in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes.
- ◆ DCS Conservation Partnership Grants assist non-profits in acquiring interests in land for conservation or recreation, and have also been used in the past to help protect active agricultural lands.
- ◆ The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, distributed through the DCS, can support heritage landscape protection by providing up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition or renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply.

The **Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)** administers a variety of grant programs that can help with heritage landscape preservation:

- ◆ Urban and Community Forestry grants fund projects which will result in sustained improvements in local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry management.
- ◆ The Recreational Trails Grant Program provides funding on a reimbursement basis for a variety of recreational trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects.

The **Department of Agricultural Resources** Farm Viability Enhancement Program works with farmers to develop sound business plans and funding assistance to implement them.

### **Regional and Non-Profit Funding Assistance**

- ◆ The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands and other natural places. TPL helps communities identify and prioritize

lands to be protected; secure financing for conservation; and structure, negotiate and complete land transactions. TPL's New England Office recently launched the Worcester County Conservation Initiative, to accelerate the pace of land conservation in central Massachusetts by helping communities plan and finance conservation projects.

- ◆ The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers a variety of financial assistance programs. Based on the availability of funding, the National Trust awards more than \$2 million in grants and loans each year for preservation projects nationwide.
- ◆ Regional planning organizations do not administer grants, but can work with communities to write grants or help them find funding:
  - Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Barre, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, North Brookfield, Spencer, Warren and West Brookfield.
  - Franklin Regional Council of Government serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Orange and Warwick.
  - The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Athol, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, and Templeton.
- ◆ The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership offers a Small Grants Program to eligible organizations. More information can be found at: <http://www.nqpartnership.org/sgp.htm>. The Partnership also provides technical assistance.

### **Federal Funding Assistance**

- ◆ The Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has protected 85 farms to date in Massachusetts on 6,335 acres with matching funds. Eligible organizations are federally recognized Indian tribes, states, local government, and nongovernmental organizations. They are required to provide 50-50 matching funds for purchase of conservation easements in land with prime, productive soils that are subject to a pending offer, for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses of the land.
- ◆ The National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program provides technical assistance to community groups and government agencies so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The program does not offer grants, but can provide staff to help identify needs, assist partners in navigating the planning process, and help with organizational development and capacity building. The program can serve as a catalyst for successful trail development and conservation efforts.

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