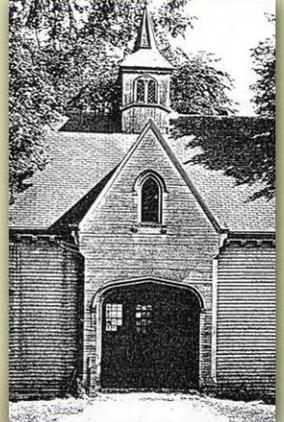


# Brookline

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2005-2015



TOWN OF BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS



# Brookline

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN | 2005–2015



Adopted by the Brookline Board of Selectmen - December 14, 2004  
Adopted by the Brookline Planning Board - January 13, 2005

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January 2005

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# 1

# SUMMARY & INTRODUCTION

# Summary & Introduction

**B**rookline's fourth Comprehensive Plan focuses attention on the highest priority and most complex issues Brookline faces. It is the result of a far-reaching and comprehensive public dialogue that has drawn input from every Brookline neighborhood. While focusing on high priority and complex issues, the Plan remains "comprehensive," dealing with all the planning elements defined in Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 81D. It is also designed to meet the requirements of a Community Development Plan under Executive Order 418.

## **VISION: BROOKLINE IN 2015**

Heir to a rich historic, cultural and landscape legacy, Brookline in 2015 is a vibrant community unique for its complex character. Encompassing urban and suburban neighborhoods, Brookline is a prosperous, diverse, safe, and well-managed residential community with thriving commercial districts.

Brookline in the twenty-first century shapes and guides change to promote the community's environmental, human, and financial sustainability:

- > as a community, protecting environmental, educational and cultural resources and providing excellent, cost-effective services and opportunities for all residents and business owners
- > as a group of residential neighborhoods, maintaining local character and a high quality of life while accommodating change
- > as a diverse place, where individuals enrich community life
- > as a responsible regional partner, actively collaborating with its neighbors to promote regional opportunities and solve regional problems

The Brookline Comprehensive Plan will help Brookline make choices about its future.

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## How do we want Brookline to look in 2015?

The Brookline Comprehensive Plan process established how residents want Brookline to look and feel in ten years. The Plan calls for balanced and carefully planned growth, accounting for neighborhood conservation and community diversity. It protects neighbor-



hoods and community character and outlines new initiatives such as affordable housing supported by an expanded commercial tax base. It imagines:

- Commercial growth focused primarily in the Route 9 corridor
- Annual creation of at least 25 units of affordable housing town-wide
- Initiatives to enhance community connections and preserve neighborhood character and
- Open space protection and enhancement

At its root, the Plan is based on the idea that the Town will continue to evolve and change. If the Town does not proactively plan for these changes, they will occur due to outside forces and the Town will not have any control over how they occur. On the other hand, taking an active role in shaping new development can improve the quality of life for residents.

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## How will we get there?

The Brookline Comprehensive Plan, through several rounds of public

## ***COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS***

**Neighborhoods and districts:** *The unique and attractive qualities of Brookline's neighborhoods and districts will be maintained. Town actions and policies should enhance the livability of the Town for residents. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Develop District Plans for Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village and Chestnut Hill
- > Develop Neighborhood Plans in other parts of Town where needed
- > Protect neighborhood character while accommodating change and Town-wide needs
- > Enhance commercial districts for the benefit of residents and visitors

**Affordable housing:** *To provide for the needs of residents and to help preserve and enhance the diversity of the Brookline community, an appropriate variety of housing by type and cost will be made available. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Promote affordable housing Town-wide
- > Produce 25 affordable housing units a year, preferably through conversion of existing market-rate units
- > Be sensitive to neighborhood character
- > Preserve existing affordable housing units

**Route Nine:** *Route Nine will not divide Brookline. The Town will work with all appropriate parties to minimize this division, both physically and in terms of perception, and to make the areas Route Nine passes through more attractive for residents. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Develop a Route Nine Plan to improve the quality of life in neighborhoods along the corridor
- > Advance mixed-use development in appropriate locations, including commercial development & affordable housing
- > Create attractive gateways to the Town at the east and west

**Historic resources:** *Brookline will continue to respect and utilize structures and landscapes with historic significance that are part of its legacy for the future. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Evaluate the potential of a landmarks by-law or single building local historic districts to preserve historic resources
- > Create incentives for adaptive reuse of historic buildings through zoning requirements
- > Make the demolition delay by-law more effective

**Natural resources, open space, parks and recreation:** *Public open space throughout the Town will be preserved and enhanced, and every opportunity will be taken to add new open spaces and programming. To the extent possible, efforts will be made to preserve and protect private open spaces. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Protect significant, unprotected open spaces such as Allandale Farm
- > Proactively plan for the future through the 2005 *Open Space Plan* and the *Recreational Facilities Management Plan*
- > Adopt a local wetlands by-law
- > Use zoning tools such as Greenway Open Space Residential subdivisions and open space zones to protect open space
- > Adopt a Town conservation restriction program

**Land use and housing:** *Any new developments proposed in Brookline will demonstrate that they complement existing uses and the character of the Town as a primarily residential community with a particular range of building types and densities. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Make sure that existing zoning matches the desired land uses and densities throughout Town
- > Include neighborhood residents in the development review process

**Economic development:** *Appropriate new mixed-use and commercial development will be encouraged. Businesses in commercial areas will be fostered. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Expand commercial tax revenues
- > Promote commercial growth in appropriate areas along Route Nine
- > Enhance existing commercial areas as lively, appealing and functioning community meeting places

**Transportation and mobility:** *The ability of Town residents and visitors to travel within Brookline and to other parts of the region will be maintained and alternatives to the automobile will be encouraged. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Improve the Town's capacity to develop a proactive transportation planning agenda
- > Support transit-oriented development that will minimize the traffic impact on residential neighborhoods
- > Identify bicycle and pedestrian priority routes

**Town, school and cultural facilities:** *The Town will continue to maintain and, where needed, improve its public facilities. To accomplish this, the Town will:*

- > Continue to invest in Town capital facilities and infrastructure to address evolving community needs and information technologies
- > Maintain excellent schools

forums, outlined an overall vision for the Town—the *Vision of Brookline 2015*, shown on pages 4 and 5—and then a vision statement for each of nine subject areas, or elements. These visions are ideas of where the Town should be in ten years- with the understanding that the Town may not be able to achieve these visions fully.

The Comprehensive Plan is not just about ideas, however. It is a practical document that recommends actions that will help the Town achieve its preferred future. From each vision statement, the Comprehensive Plan outlines **GOALS, POLICIES** and **STRATEGIES** that provide a framework by which future growth and change might be directed.

**GOALS** are broad statements on what the Town wants to achieve.

**POLICIES** are statements of intent that the leaders of the Town, both within government and outside of Town Hall, should use to guide their actions and decision-making.

**STRATEGIES** are steps the Town should take based on the vision, goals and policies. These strategies are a work program, in a way, for the next ten years. Some strategies are clear actions the Town should take; others are recommendations for additional planning work, more study or further public input.



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## Kinds of Strategies

There are three main kinds of strategies:

1. **Continuation of existing programs.** These strategies state that the Town should continue to do what works well.
2. **Proposed Zoning By-law amendments.** Some issues may require zoning changes to be addressed. In some cases, the Comprehensive Plan recommends a possible zoning change. Since many of the more sweeping changes will require an intensive public process, most often the recommendation is to consider a change, not simply put one forward.

3. **Planning efforts.** Some of the issues that need to be addressed in the next ten years require careful planning and study. For this reason, the Comprehensive Plan recommends several follow-up studies to help address an identified need. In many cases, the Department of Planning and Community Development has the capacity to conduct these studies. In other cases, resources will have to be identified, or a different Town department or state agency is the most appropriate lead organization for a study.

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## What About Other Town Plans?

The Comprehensive Plan is not the only planning document in Town Hall. The Town has conducted several other planning processes in the last few years, and will conduct more in the future. In these cases, the Comprehensive Plan builds on the work of other plans rather than replacing them. For example, the Town has an Open Space Plan that was drafted in 2000 and is now in the process of being updated. That document provided many of the recommendations in the Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation element.

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## Planning Process

Brookline has had three earlier Comprehensive Plans. The first plan was produced in 1959, the second in 1976 and the third in 1989. Over the years the Town has also produced a number of plans and studies focusing on specific areas, districts and issues. In 1998, nearly ten years after the 1989 Comprehensive Plan, the League of Women Voters held a “Future Search” event to identify residents’ concerns and hopes for the direction the community would take in the future. The Future Search made recommendations for a new Comprehensive Plan.

This Comprehensive Plan differs from those that preceded it in several ways. The focus of this Plan is on detailed strategies for implementing Town-wide goals and policies. At the same time, the Plan remains “comprehensive,” dealing with all the planning elements established in M.G.L. Chapter 41, Section 81D, the legal foundation for the authority, objectives, content and application of comprehensive plans.

In August 2000, the Board of Selectmen appointed the Comprehensive Plan Committee (CPC), made up of 21 representatives of Town boards, commissions, advisory bodies, committees, and citizen groups. The planning process has been directly supported by staff from the Department of Planning and Community Development, with assistance from other key Town departments. In the first phase of the Comprehensive Planning process (2000-2001), Town staff prepared

*Issues and Opportunities* reports, organized outreach and facilitated discussions in Brookline neighborhoods. For the second phase of the planning process (2002-2003), the Town engaged a consultant team made up of Goody, Clancy & Associates and Community Design Partnership to assist in preparation of a preliminary Plan. For a final phase of the planning process (2004), the Department of Planning and Community Development took the lead, with the assistance of the consultant team, in using public feedback to convert the preliminary Plan into the final document. This process is described in detail in the Appendix.

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## Structure and Organization

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into six sections:

- **Section 1:** Summary and Introduction.
- **Section 2:** Brookline Yesterday and Today provides a brief overview of the Town's evolution and provides key facts about today's Brookline.
- **Section 3:** Brookline Tomorrow represents the core of the Comprehensive Plan. It defines the Town's vision for the future, highlights major plan initiatives, and describes three key elements of the Plan:
  1. *Neighborhoods and Districts*
  2. *Affordable Housing*
  3. *Route Nine*
- **Section 4:** Other Plan Elements provides information on additional elements that make up the Comprehensive Plan: *Historic Resources; Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation; Economic Development; Transportation and Mobility; and Public Facilities.*
- The **Appendix** includes supplemental information
- The **Issues and Opportunities** reports provide background data about the Town. These reports were the foundation of information on current conditions for this planning process.
- The **Action Plan** is a separate document. It identifies specific time-lines and responsibilities for implementing initiatives identified in the Plan.

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## Action Plan

There are hundreds of recommendations in the Plan, and only ten years to make them happen. The next step will be development of an Action Plan that outlines a conceptual work program over the next ten years.

The Action Plan will be produced in early 2005, and will provide a clear description of how the strategies in the Comprehensive Plan will be completed in the next ten years. The Action Plan will be similar to a Capital Improvement Program, in that it will describe the timeframe, responsible party, and possible funding sources for implementing the strategies. For each strategy the Action Plan will include the following:

1. **Timeframe:** Strategies will be assigned a time period for completion, either **short term** (2005-2006), **medium term** (2007-2010), or **long term** (2011-2015). Some strategies that cannot wait for completion of the Action Plan may be listed as **already under way**. The Action Plan will focus on the **short term** actions, because they are the most pressing.
2. **Responsible Party:** Strategies will be tentatively assigned to a responsible party. This may be an appropriate Town department, a non-profit that agrees to take on the strategy, or, in some cases, Town Meeting or the public.
3. **Funding:** The Action Plan will identify possible funding sources, if needed, to implement strategies. In many cases the only funding required will be staff time. In other cases the Town will need to identify external sources of funding, such as grants.

The Action Plan will require the Town to make a significant commitment to proactive planning for its future. Successful implementation of the Comprehensive Plan will require the Town to dedicate resources—both staff and money—to its recommendations. Brookline citizens—both Town Meeting members and others—will also have to commit time and energy to make the ideas in this document a reality.

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## Plan Updates

From time to time this Comprehensive Plan will need updating to reflect changing circumstances, or, as the Plan itself recommends, in response to follow-up planning and studies. Such updates will undergo a public review and will need to be accepted by the Planning Board.

In addition, it is expected that the entire Plan will undergo an extensive review in five years. Such a process will help keep the document up to date and reflective of current conditions.



# 2

# BROOKLINE YESTERDAY AND TODAY

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## The Evolution of Brookline

Brookline today reflects the range of the Town's landscape and cultural history since European settlement. Brookline's drumlin hills, remaining wetlands and the planted fields at Allandale Farm recall the seventeenth-century hamlet of Muddy River and the agricultural settlement incorporated in 1705 as the Town of Brookline. Since 1635, many land grants had been given to Boston residents for pasture lands, but enough had settled at Muddy River by the end of the seventeenth century to form a new town. During the eighteenth century, Brookline was a farm town and, by 1775, a hotbed of revolutionary sentiment. The center of community life was the Town Green at Walnut and Warren Streets, where travelers going west from Boston passed on the Sherbourne Road. Traffic switched to the new Worcester Turnpike (Route Nine) in 1807 and Brookline's population shifted towards Brookline Village over the course of the nineteenth century.

In the early 1800's, the Town's proximity to Boston made it a prime supplier of fresh produce to the city, but that proximity also made Brookline attractive to wealthy Bostonians looking for weekend and summer country retreats. Two of these early estate owners expanded their lands into small communities for friends and relatives – Longwood and Cottage Farm. These were the first planned neighborhoods in Brookline.

The arrival of the Boston & Worcester Railroad in Brookline Village in 1848 and the extension of Beacon Street through Town helped focus the year-round population at Brookline Village. America's second electric street car line opened on Beacon Street in 1889. The railroad and streetcar drew Brookline closer to Boston, creating a market for the subdivision of many older estates and farms. The first apartment buildings in Brookline were built in the 1880s, and by World War I, Beacon Street was lined with luxury apartments. Brookline was known as the "town of millionaires." Estate development continued in central and southern Brookline, but as car ownership became more widespread by the 1930s much of South Brookline land was subdivided and many of the remaining estates were transferred to institutional owners after 1950.

Brookline's transformation from farm to suburb meant that, unlike many other Massachusetts towns, it never had significant industrial areas. While this transformation was occurring, Brookline retained significant open spaces and preserved ties to its earliest beginnings as a farm settlement. Brookline became a pioneer in the preservation

of land for open space and recreation, creating the nation's first public playgrounds in 1871 and the first country club in 1882. The Muddy River was integrated into Olmsted's Emerald Necklace. Allandale Farm has remained a working farm in the hands of descendants of an early land grant recipient. In addition, the Town retains historic buildings from its early days through Victorian and later eras, many of which are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The evolution of Brookline has given a distinctive character to the Town's residential neighborhoods and its humanly-scaled commercial districts. The overlays of landscape and history form an intricate and robust network whose fundamental values and quality of life have persisted through change under the stewardship of many generations of Brookline citizens. This Comprehensive Plan will provide the tools to guide Brookline in the 21st century, meeting new challenges and honoring the values that have made Brookline a unique community.

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## Brookline Today

Brookline today is a good place to live, to work, to visit, and to do business. It is a well-managed town with a strong fiscal position. Brookline residents enjoy an enviable quality of life, with access to vital neighborhood commercial districts, parks and playgrounds, cultural activities, regional transportation, and high-quality public services including schools, police, fire and parks. The Town's neighborhoods offer a variety of residential choices and unique environments. The Town prides itself on a commitment to education and diversity. The key challenge that the Town faces is how best to enhance residents' quality of life and further community values while managing change.

Specific issues and opportunities associated with every aspect of life within the town are fully described in the detailed *Issues & Opportunities Reports* issued in 2001 as the informational foundation for this Comprehensive Plan.

The following tables provide an overall context for understanding key aspects of Town life today:

## POPULATION—WHO ARE WE?

### TOTAL POPULATION (2000): 57,107

- population peaked at 58,886 in 1970

### AGE COMPOSITION

- 17 percent under 18 years old
- 32.3 percent 20–34 years old
- 12.4 percent 65 years and over

### TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS (2000): 25,594

- 47.8 percent are family households (households with children and married couples without children)
- 21.9 percent are families with own children under 18
- 52.2 percent are nonfamily households (households with unrelated or single persons)
- 36.7 percent are single-person households
- 22.7 percent include people under 18
- 20.2 percent include people 65 and over

### POPULATION DIVERSITY

- Racial/Ethnic Composition (race alone or in combination)
  - > 82.9 percent white
  - > 3.3 percent African American
  - > 13.8 percent Asian
  - > 2.4 percent other
  - > 3.5 percent Hispanic/Latino (of any race)
- Language spoken at home
  - > 29 percent speak a language other than English
  - > 9.6 percent speak English less than “very well”
- Disability
  - > 6.4 percent of people 5–20 years
  - > 11.0 percent of people 21–64 years
  - > 36.9 percent of people 65 years and over

### INCOME—1999

- median household income: \$66,711; median family income: \$92,993
- 32 percent of households have income \$100,000-plus
- 19.4 percent of households have incomes below \$25,000
- families below poverty level: 4.5 percent
- individuals below poverty level: 9.3 percent

### SCHOOL DIVERSITY—2000

- 69 percent of public school children are white, 17.1 percent Asian, 9.7 percent African American, 4.2 percent Hispanic
- 12 percent are eligible for free or reduced-price lunches
- 9.7 percent have limited English proficiency
- 18.5 percent are enrolled in special education classes

### WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Brookline's population has fluctuated between 54,000 and 59,000 since 1950. Compared to the population of Massachusetts as a whole, Brookline....

- has a smaller proportion of residents under 18 years old and 65 and older.
- has a greater proportion of residents between 20 and 34 years old.
- has a greater proportion of nonfamily and single-person households.
- has more diversity in terms of race and people with limited English proficiency.
- has a smaller proportion of people with a disability.
- has a higher median household and family income.
- has a lower poverty rate for families but the same poverty rate for individuals.
- has a more diverse student body in race/ethnicity.
- has a smaller percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.
- has a larger percentage of students in special education.

SOURCES: CENSUS 2000; MA DEPT OF EDUCATION

# HOUSING—HOW DO WE LIVE?

## TOTAL HOUSING UNITS (2000): 26,388

- 21.2 percent single-family homes
- 25.2 percent of units in buildings with 2–4 units
- 22.3 percent of units in buildings with 5–19 units
- 31.3 percent of units in buildings with 20 or more units
- 75% of residential land is zoned for single-family housing

## MEDIAN HOUSING PRICES

YEAR	ONE-FAMILY \$	CONDO \$
2001	725,000	329,000
2000	699,000	300,000
1999	590,000	243,000
1998	540,000	208,000
1997	445,000	186,500
1996	408,000	170,000
1995	427,750	152,750
1994	353,250	148,250
1993	350,000	134,100
1992	322,500	132,500
1991	335,000	130,000
1990	374,000	155,000
1989	368,750	165,000
1988	376,250	170,000

SOURCE: WARREN GROUP

## AGE OF HOUSING

- 52.7 percent of the residential buildings were built before 1940
- 19.1 percent were built between 1940 and 1959
- 21.9 percent were built between 1960 and 1979
- 6.4 percent were built between 1980 and March 2000

## LENGTH OF TIME IN CURRENT RESIDENCE

- 43.5 percent of the population lived in the same house in 1995 and 2000
- 12.2 percent lived in a different house in the same county (some possibly in Brookline)
- 44.3 percent lived somewhere else in 1995

## OWNERSHIP AND RENTAL HOUSING

- 45.3 percent of housing units are owner-occupied
- 54.7 percent housing units are renter-occupied

## AFFORDABILITY

- 2000 median monthly housing costs for owners: \$2,134
- 23.4 percent of owners pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income for housing
- 2000 median gross monthly rent: \$1,262
- 40.6 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of monthly income for housing
- 7.1 percent of housing units have affordability restrictions; almost all of these are rental units
- 7.6 percent of housing units are considered affordable by the state for the purposes of Chapter 40B, the “anti-snob zoning” law.
- March 2002 average rent: \$1,902

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Most Brookline households rent and live in multifamily buildings—and nearly a third live in buildings with 20 or more units.
- Most Brookline residents have lived here five years or less.

Housing is very expensive:

- 40 percent of renters pay more than 30 percent of their monthly income in rent.
- Brookline median housing prices are among the highest in Massachusetts.
- Fewer new housing units are being created than in previous years: The number of new units created 1980–2000 was less than one-third the number created 1960–1980.

SOURCES: CENSUS 2000; MA DEPT OF EDUCATION

# TRANSPORTATION—GETTING AROUND

## GETTING TO WORK (2000)

- 45.3 percent of workers drive alone (46% in 1990)
- 28.7 percent take public transportation (27% in 1990)
- 9.6 percent walk (11% in 1990)
- 7.2 percent carpool (8% in 1990)
- 6.9 percent work at home (5% in 1990)
- average travel time to work is 28 minutes

## VEHICLE OWNERSHIP (2000)

- 39,676 vehicles
- 1.5 per household
- 20.4 percent of households have no vehicle
- 51.3 percent of households have one vehicle
- 28.3 percent of households have two or more

## STREETS AND PATHS

- 176.25 miles of public roadway (of which 26.5 miles are under the jurisdiction of MassHighway, the MDC, or MassPike)
- One bike path (Riverway) and one bike lane (Harvard Street)
- 11 public footpaths—\$300,000 in improvements scheduled
- More than 150 miles of sidewalks—\$1 million scheduled for reconstruction through FY07
- 10 traffic-calming projects as of 2001—\$1.5 million in traffic calming scheduled through FY07
- 1,343 on-street parking spaces, metered and unmetered
- 482 off-street public parking spaces
- 23 streets have daytime resident-permit parking
- overnight parking ban townwide

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

- Four bus routes—highest ridership: #66 between Harvard and Dudley stations
- MBTA Green Lines C and D (and access to Boston's B Line)

- MBTA commuter rail station in West Roxbury and Roslindale

## TAXIS, LIMOS AND SHARED CARS

- Brookline has 175 taxis, three limos and four shared cars.

## TRANSPORTATION POLICY

- The unique Brookline Transportation Board, created by the state legislature in 1974, administers parking and transportation matters through the Traffic Rules and Regulations
- Six members appointed by the Board of Selectmen
- Responsible for issues such as handicapped parking, one-way streets, truck exclusions, parking meters, permit parking, turn restrictions, bus stops, stop and yield signs, traffic-calming projects, taxi service, tow zones, and general parking prohibitions.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Nearly half of Brookline residents drive to work alone.
- More than a quarter take public transportation.
- One-fifth of households don't have a vehicle.
- Brookline provides four free parking spaces to a successful and expanding car-sharing company that has many member-customers in town.

SOURCES: CENSUS 2000; ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES REPORT, 2001; TOWN OF BROOKLINE

# GREEN BROOKLINE—OPEN SPACE & RECREATION FACTS

## PROTECTED OPEN SPACE

- 506 acres protected public and private conservation and park land
- The Town Conservation Commission protects 12 parcels and the nonprofit Brookline Conservation Land Trust has protected four parcels

## UNPROTECTED OPEN SPACE

- 653 acres unprotected public and private open space
- Allandale Farm—last working farm in Brookline or Boston
- Private unprotected open space includes extensive institutional lands

## GREENWAYS

- Emerald Necklace—\$93 million Phase I restoration for Muddy River
- Charles to Charles Corridor—critical lands need protection
- Potential greenways identified by Conservation Commission

## WATER RESOURCES

- Muddy River, additional three open streams, plus six streams diverted to underground pipes
- Six ponds and seven major vegetated wetland systems

## WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

- The Town—US EPA consent agreement on the quality of stormwater discharged into the Charles River watershed; \$7 million through FY06 to implement the plan
- Phase I Muddy River Restoration includes dredging, stormwater management, flood control and maintenance projects, including restoration of three ponds
- Stormwater and Erosion Control By-law under development

## TREES: THE URBAN FOREST

- 10,791 street trees—approximately 160 new street trees added annually
- 150-year old European beeches on Longwood Mall
- Eastern hemlocks townwide, including Putterham Woods, Hoar Sanctuary, and Walnut Hill Cemetery—infested by wooly adelgid
- Native woodland trees and shrubs planted in Hoar Pond restoration project
- Tree Protection Ordinance under study

## RECREATION

- 28 parks with active recreation facilities—too few athletic fields
- Share agreements with private institutions to serve recreation and school programs
- Improvements scheduled for the golf course, swimming pool, recreation center, and other parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities through FY07
- Athletic fields proposed for post-closure Newton Street landfill.

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Brookline has *significant protected parks and recreation resources*, including some shared with neighboring communities.
- *Valued open spaces remain unprotected.*
- Implementation of *important stormwater management efforts* to improve water quality is underway.
- Demand is high for *town athletic fields and recreation facilities.*

SOURCES: ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES REPORT, 2001

# FINANCES—HOW ARE WE DOING?

## FINANCIAL POSITION

- Brookline is one of only 12 Massachusetts communities with a bond rating of Aaa from Moody's, the highest rating possible.
- Town fiscal policies guide the budget process and allow the Town to balance operating budget and capital budget needs.
- Deficits are projected to grow from \$2.4 million (1%) in FY 2005 to \$5.6 million (3%) in FY2009 due to a stagnant economy, lower state aid, health insurance and pension cost increases, and collective bargaining agreements.
- Over the last five years, the median tax bill for single-family homes dropped as a percentage of family income by more than 10% cumulatively (2004 data).
- The number of property parcels has increased by 4% since FY1999, driven by 10% growth in condos (to 55% of residential parcels) and despite a 4.6% drop in nonresidential parcels (2004 data).
- "New Growth" in the tax base increased 69% in the last five years, with an average of 29% of new growth generated by commercial properties.

## GENERAL FUND SOURCES (FY2005 PLAN)

- 69.2% from property taxes
- 1.0% from local fees/receipts
- 9.9% from state local aid
- 3.8% free cash
- 6.1% other

## PROPERTY TAXES

- Brookline has the fifth-highest total property value (EQV) in the state, and the fifth-largest override capacity in total dollars. The Town taxes to the full extent of its current levy limit (2002 data).
- Commercial/industrial/personal property declined from over 11% of assessed value to less than 9% due to faster growth in the value of residential property and a decline in the number of nonresidential parcels (2004 data).
- Brookline shifts the tax burden from residential to commercial property by the maximum amount allowed by the state (i.e., in 2004 C/I/P accounted for 15.6% of taxes levied, but only 8.9% of value).
- Brookline's average single-family tax bill of \$9,214 is the second-highest in the state. However, the average residential tax bill is \$5,898, the 22nd-highest in the state (2003 data).

## FY2005 PLAN FULLY ALLOCATED

### GENERAL-FUND SPENDING

- 52.3% Education
- 15.8% Public Safety
- 15.5% Town Debt & Benefits
- 6.8% Public Works
- 3.5% General Government
- 2.5% Cultural Resources
- 2.4% Reserves
- 1.2% Community Services

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Brookline's tax base and financial management are among the strongest in the state, as evidenced by the Town's Aaa bond rating and the relative ease with which it has adjusted the budget to a slow economy and reduced local aid.
- Affluent, "revenue-rich" Brookline can afford high-quality services. Yet, revenue increases are limited by Prop 2½, fixed costs are rising, and state aid levels are uncertain. Deficits are projected to grow over the next five years.
- The Town is fully utilizing its tax-levy limit but has considerable capacity to increase revenue by overriding Prop 2½ again. Residential tax bills, however, are already relatively high, and the Town cannot shift any more of the tax burden onto commercial properties.

SOURCES: CENSUS 2000; ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES REPORT, 2001; TOWN OF BROOKLINE

# FINANCES—HOW ARE WE DOING?

## SPENDING TRENDS (FY1999-2004)

- Operating budget outgrew inflation by 13%, driven by these categories: schools (+16%), debt and interest (+33%), benefits (+17%), and public safety (+5%).
- The number of Town department employees increased by only 20, but by 114 in the schools.

## EDUCATION SPENDING

- FY2003 spending of \$11,139/pupil was 16th among 241 nonregional districts in the state, and 6% above the median of the Aaa communities
- Town/School Partnership Agreement commits 50% of revenue above fixed costs to education.
- Since 1995, school funding has increased an average of 5% per year and more than 200 positions have been added while enrollment has remained relatively stable.
- 2005 plan calls for a 3.8% increase in school appropriations.
- Approximately two-thirds of debt service is for schools

## CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND DEBT

- Capital Improvement Program calls for \$74.6 million in spending over the next six years. Major projects include renovations of the Health Center, Town Hall, Runkle School, and the Devotion School; capping of

the Newton Street landfill and transforming it into a playing field; restoration of the Muddy River; acquisition of the Fisher Hill reservoir and its transformation into a playing field; and the reconstruction of Beacon Street.

- Total debt will peak in FY2007 at about \$105 million, with debt service of \$16 million.
- Brookline has the second-highest debt per capita among the 12 Massachusetts Aaa-rated communities, and it ranks 105th overall in the state (2002 data).

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Brookline prides itself on providing high-quality services, but the Town has correspondingly high costs. Fixed costs (debt, pensions, health insurance, etc) are increasing, and operating costs in total are rising faster than inflation and revenue.
- Brookline has made education a key priority. Spending per pupil is among the highest in Massachusetts, and schools account for just over half of Town spending. School operating costs are growing faster than Town revenues and the rest of the Town budget.
- Brookline has a relatively high level of debt, stretching out planned capital improvements in order to stay within the Town's debt guidelines.

SOURCES: CENSUS 2000; ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES REPORT, 2001; TOWN OF BROOKLINE

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## EMPLOYMENT OF BROOKLINE RESIDENTS

- 2,207 (6.9% of workers) worked at home (Census 2000)
- 2,722 (8.3% of workers) are self-employed in an unincorporated business (Census 2000)
- 69.7 % of the population over 15 is in the labor force (Census 2000)
- 1.2% unemployment rate for Brookline residents in 2000

## NUMBER OF BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYEES IN BROOKLINE

- Approximately 2,500 businesses, including home businesses
- 1,591 businesses (State Division of Employment & Training data, 2000)
- 16,434 employees (State Division of Employment & Training, 2000)
- 50% of jobs are in the service sector
- 24% of jobs are in the trade sector
- 14% of jobs are in government
- The 2000 average annual wage for Brookline jobs was \$35,871
- 7% of land is zoned commercial

## COMMERCIAL AREAS

- approximately 1,300 businesses in commercial districts:
  - > Coolidge Corner 36.5% of businesses
  - > Brookline Village 31.8%
  - > Washington Square 11.6%
  - > St. Mary's Station 9.3%
  - > JFK Crossing 5.6%
  - > Chestnut Hill/Putterham 5.0%
- Coolidge Corner has maintained a low vacancy rate of 7% and low rate of national chain businesses (only 22%).
- Since 1990, there have been five new commercial developments totaling 40,380sf.

## COMPARATIVE TAX RATES (PER \$1,000)

	RESIDENTIAL		COMMERCIAL/ INDUSTRIAL	
	1990	2002	1990	2002
<b>BROOKLINE</b>	14.29	<b>12.90</b>	23.22	<b>21.07</b>
<b>CAMBRIDGE</b>	9.51	<b>7.22</b>	18.16	<b>18.16</b>
<b>NEWTON</b>	10.35	<b>9.94</b>	18.94	<b>18.77</b>
<b>BOSTON</b>	8.45	<b>11.01</b>	23.90	<b>30.33</b>
<b>BELMONT</b>	10.58	<b>11.19</b>	10.58	<b>11.19</b>
<b>WELLESLEY</b>	9.13	<b>8.10</b>	9.13	<b>8.10</b>

SOURCE: WARREN GROUP

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Brookline has *many small home businesses and sole proprietorships.*
- Brookline businesses are *mostly service businesses.*
- Most businesses are in *Coolidge Corner and Brookline Village.*
- *83% of real estate tax revenues come from residential property.*
- *17% of real estate tax revenues come from business property.*
- *7% of property is zoned commercial.*

SOURCES: CENSUS 2000; ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES REPORT, 2001; MASS. DET; TOWN OF BROOKLINE

# 3

# BROOKLINE TOMORROW

# Brookline Tomorrow

## VISION OF BROOKLINE 2015

Heir to a rich historic, cultural and landscape legacy, Brookline in 2015 is a vibrant community unique for its complex character. Encompassing urban and suburban neighborhoods, Brookline is a prosperous, diverse, safe and well-managed residential community with thriving commercial districts.

Brookline in the twenty-first century shapes and guides change to promote the community's environmental, human, and financial sustainability:

- > as a community, protecting environmental, educational and cultural resources and providing excellent, cost-effective services and opportunities for all residents and business owners;
- > as a group of residential neighborhoods, maintaining local character and a high quality of life while accommodating change;
- > as a diverse place, where individuals enrich community life; and
- > as a responsible regional partner, actively collaborating with its neighbors to promote regional opportunities and solve regional problems.

The overall Town-wide vision shown above represents where Brookline residents believe the community should be in 2015. It is the basis for the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan - neighborhood and community character conservation, but also new initiatives and affordable housing supported by an expanded commercial tax base. The Plan imagines:

- Initiatives to enhance community connections and preserve neighborhood character
- Annual creation of at least 25 units of affordable housing townwide
- Commercial growth focused primarily in the Route Nine corridor

The Brookline Comprehensive Plan reflects the multi-faceted—and sometimes conflicting—perspectives that need to be addressed in developing solutions to the challenges facing the Town. Many of the challenges that the Town faces involve addressing community—and regionwide needs—while being sensitive to neighborhood perspectives.

Meeting these challenges must take into account the needs of the Town. Brookline must be recognized as:



*...A COMMUNITY*

Brookline’s vitality and cohesiveness as a community is based on the liveliness of its public realm, the strength of its internal connections, the health of its environment, the quality of its school system and the soundness of its management and finances.



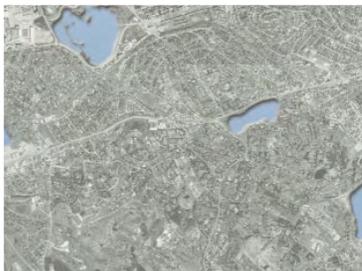
*...A GROUP OF NEIGHBORHOODS*

Brookline’s neighborhood quality of life is based on its commitment to embracing and sustaining the character of residential neighborhoods, while accommodating and managing appropriate changes that grow out of Town needs and shared community values.



*...A DIVERSE PLACE*

Brookline’s longstanding diversity—in income, age, ethnicity, race, and able-bodiedness—depends on a continuing and meaningful commitment to diversity in its school system and in housing.



*...A TOWN WITHIN A LARGER REGION*

Brookline actively promotes the welfare of Brookline residents and the values they believe in by effectively coordinating with its neighbors on significant regional goals, including enhanced alternatives to the private automobile, ensuring a healthy environment, restoring and protecting greenways and open space, promoting economic prosperity, and advancing housing affordability.

The Brookline Comprehensive Plan is designed to get the community to the future described in the *Vision of Brookline 2015*. Each plan element has its own vision statement that connects the overall Town-wide vision to the goals, policies and strategies in that subject area. While it may be impossible to fully achieve all of these visions, the actions recommended in the Comprehensive Plan will allow the Town to get as close as possible.

While all nine elements of the Comprehensive Plan are important to achieving the preferred scenario, three of the elements are considered the most important ones. These three elements are chosen because they were identified during the development of the Comprehensive Plan as the most important planning issues in Brookline in the next 10 years. They also cross traditional discipline lines and present multi-faceted problems and solutions. Only when each of these facets of a problem is addressed is it possible to create real solutions that can attract broad community support. These key elements are as follows:

- > **Quality of Life: Neighborhoods and Districts.** Zoning alone does not always provide a sufficiently complete context for defining what kinds of changes are desirable in individual neighborhood contexts or what unique elements of a neighborhood should be preserved. These discussions most frequently occur when a particular project is proposed. Neighborhood or district plans could provide a better context for managing growth and change.
- > **Diversity: Affordable Housing.** A broad cross section of Brookline residents have expressed strong support for expanded efforts to support the development of affordable housing. Yet individual development proposals for affordable housing have sometimes been controversial because of concerns about the appropriateness of a particular project to a specific neighborhood context or the number of market rate units that are proposed as part of the development. Strong affordable housing advocates have sometimes found themselves reluctant opponents of proposals that would add new units.
- > **Balancing Regional and Local Needs: Route Nine.** Many neighborhood residents have expressed general concern about traffic congestion along Route Nine and anticipated continued growth in regional traffic. Yet many of these same residents have voiced support for carefully planned mixed-use development along Route Nine that improves the physical character

and identity of gateway village areas to the Town at Chestnut Hill and Brookline Village. In addition, the corridor itself is under state ownership and serves as a high-volume regional roadway. There is widespread recognition in the Town that real solutions will only be possible if they simultaneously address both regional and local goals.

The other elements of the Comprehensive Plan are:

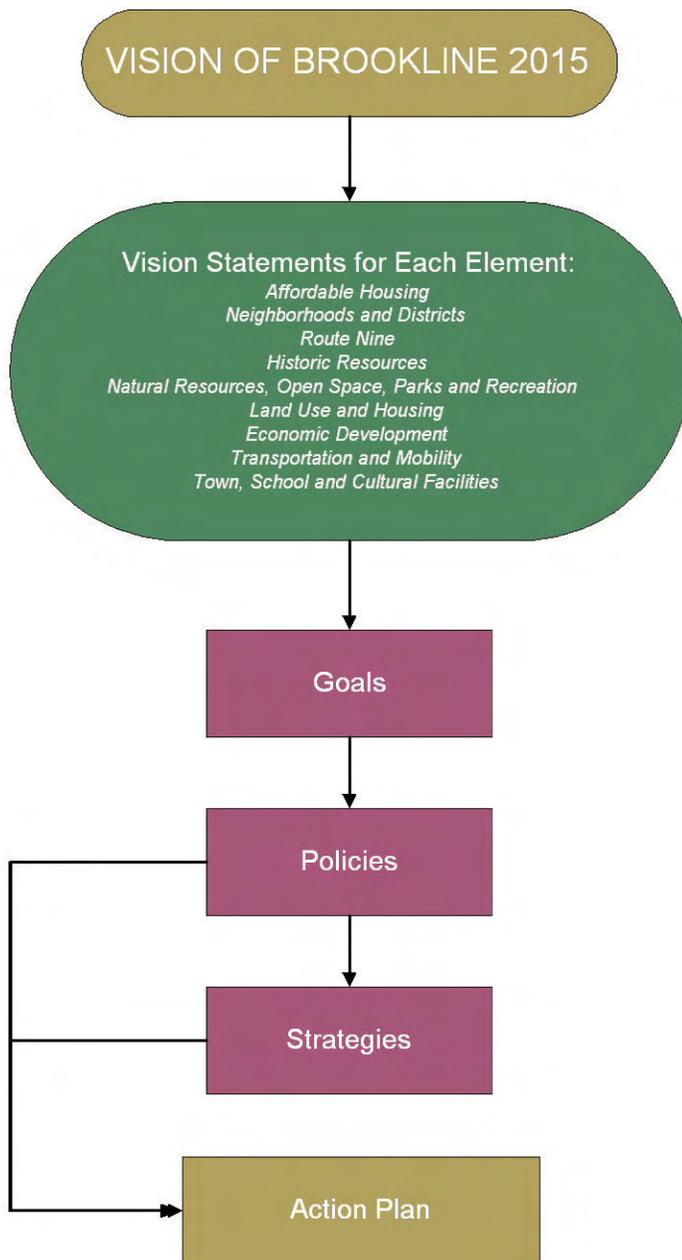
- > Historic Resources
- > Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation
- > Land Use and Housing
- > Economic Development
- > Transportation and Mobility
- > Town, School and Cultural Facilities

These additional elements are described in Section Four. The Appendix contains a description of how these various elements, tailored to the needs of Brookline, are consistent with the required elements of a comprehensive or master, plan in Massachusetts state law.

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## Brookline Future: Visions, Goals, Policies, and Strategies

The *Vision of Brookline 2015* described above naturally evolves into a series of vision statements about each element of the Plan, which in turn are the basis for goals, policies and strategies that will guide Town actions in the next ten years. These goals, policies and strategies are described in the three key elements below and the six additional elements in the next section. They serve as the basis for the Action Plan that will be developed to implement the Comprehensive Plan.



# Key Element: Neighborhoods and Districts

Quality of Life

SUMMARY

**B**rookline’s enviable quality of life derives from the interplay of diverse neighborhoods and housing types with commercial districts and open spaces—all on the foundation of a unique historic, architectural, cultural and landscape heritage.

Protection of the character, attractiveness, safety, and functionality of neighborhoods—while accommodating desirable changes—is a top priority. Residents’ access to the vitality of Brookline’s commercial districts and to open space creates the mix of experiences that defines Brookline’s balance of urban, suburban and semirural identity. The town’s quality of life also depends on fiscal health and continuing excellence in delivering municipal services to residents and business owners.

Throughout the Plan process—public meetings, neighborhood forums, discussions by the Comprehensive Plan Committee—the need to protect what makes Brookline a good place to live and work was a continuing theme. In addition, a Working Group on Quality of Life issues included members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee, the Brookline Neighborhood Alliance and the Economic Development Advisory Board, and meetings were well attended by members of the public from different neighborhoods.

## **NEIGHBORHOODS AND DISTRICTS VISION**

The unique and attractive qualities of Brookline’s neighborhoods and districts will be maintained. Town actions and policies will enhance the livability of the Town for residents.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

*OVERALL: Preserve neighborhood and district character and manage change in neighborhoods and districts through planning, participation, and communication.*

- > **Planning:** Create Neighborhood and District Plans with development and design standards and guidelines and coordinate those plans with townwide open space, housing, and historic preservation goals, policies and strategies.
- > **Participation:** Enhance neighborhood consultation in land use, density and design decisions through the planning and project-review processes and timely notifications.
- > **Communication:** Provide project proponents with development and design standards so that they know what is desired and acceptable, and enhance inter-board coordination and consultation.

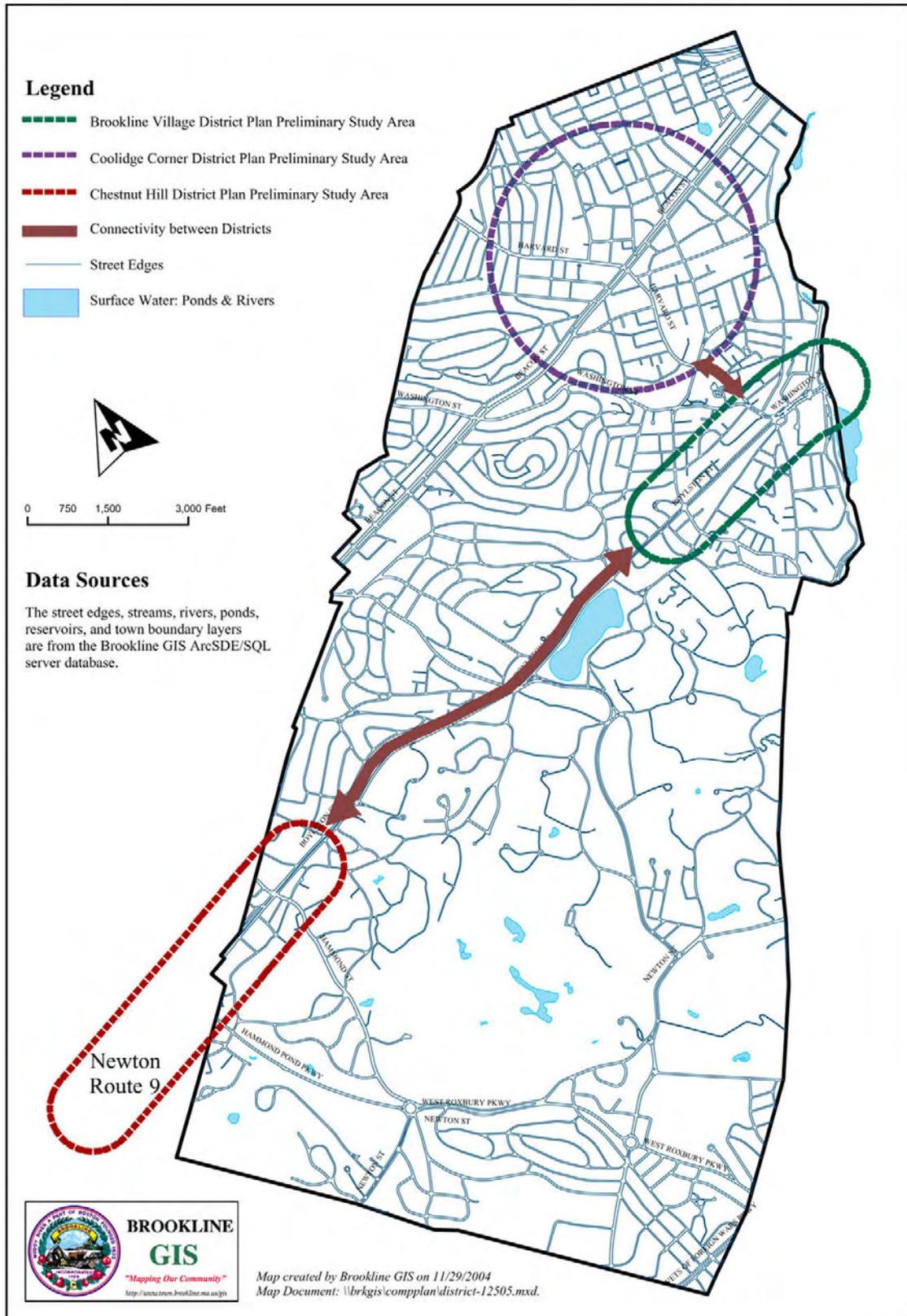
*COMMERCIAL AREAS: Enhance commercial districts as lively, appealing, and functional community meeting places that attract customers and visitors, and support a mix of businesses.*

*OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES: Enhance and maintain green open spaces and natural systems, building on Brookline's Open Space Plan and Climate Change Action Plan*

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION: Protect Brookline's historic heritage through incentives for preservation and adaptive reuse, public education, and support for continuing research for historic designations.*

*MOBILITY AND PARKING: Manage parking and transportation to promote alternatives to private cars, provide appropriate parking for residential and commercial areas, and calm traffic.*

# Map 1: Districts and Neighborhoods



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# Neighborhood and District Planning

Brookline needs new approaches to protecting community character and managing—and accommodating, when appropriate—change. Only neighborhoods in the town’s three local historic districts and buildings along the town’s principal historic thoroughfares have standards to shape alterations and new construction. As a result, the current process of responding to development proposals tends to be reactive, very site-specific, and very time-consuming. By building on the Town’s current development review regulations, Brookline can create plans that outline a set of standards for changes.

These plans should be created for both *districts*, or larger commercial and residential areas such as Coolidge Corner, and *neighborhoods*, or smaller areas that generally have a more residential feel. These plans should be created through a community-based planning process, developed within the context of the townwide policies and goals of the Comprehensive Plan, and approved as amendments to the Comprehensive Plan. These neighborhood standards will then communicate expectations to both residents and project proponents, making the development review process more transparent and efficient.

**GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Conserve neighborhood character while accommodating change and townwide needs.
- Make standards for development clear and consistent with local and townwide needs.

**POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Include neighborhood consultation early in the project development process.
- Identify standards of acceptable and unacceptable development for particular areas through neighborhood plans and make the development process more efficient by communicating these standards to project proponents.

## STRATEGIES

### Key Strategy

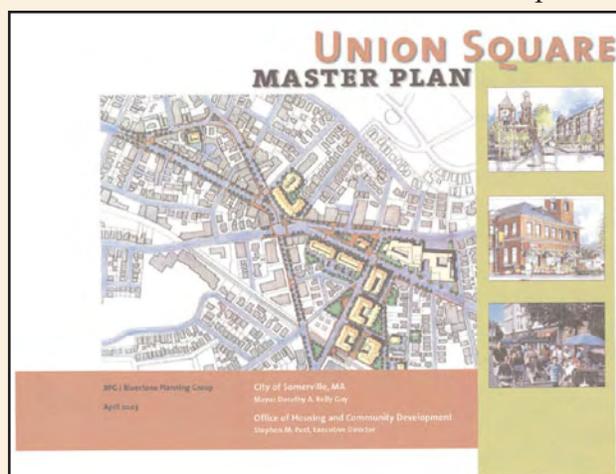
*Create Neighborhood and District Plans with development and design standards to help guide new development in a more specific and appropriate way than is available under traditional zoning. District Plans should be developed for Coolidge Corner, Chestnut Hill and Brookline Village by the Department of Planning & Community Development in the next five years. The exact timing of these efforts will be determined in the Action Plan, based on the workload of the Department and funding availability. However, the Coolidge Corner District Plan would be an early Action Plan item, taking place in the next year.*

These District Plans will look at the portions of Brookline where development pressure is more intense and the need for proactive planning is most needed. District Plans would each be developed

by a District Planning Council of neighborhood representatives, Town Meeting members, small business owners, property owners and Town officials. A study area would be defined for each district.

District Plans would conduct buildout analyses

and alternative development scenarios for each district, and then develop a vision for a preferred future of the district. The District Plans would then develop strategies for these areas in a variety of subject areas, including regulatory tools, development preferences, transportation issues, and open space priorities. District Plans would be managed by Town staff in the Department of Planning & Community Development, with the assistance of staff in other departments and consultants as needed and as funding is available.



**AN EXAMPLE OF A DISTRICT PLAN**

Where necessary to achieve the goals of the Plan, District Plans might recommend specific zoning changes or other regulatory tools such as the creation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts, neighborhood visions for sites likely to be redeveloped, capital improvements desired by the neighborhood that might be funded by new development or the Town, and other planning goals. For example, the District Plan for Coolidge Corner might consider whether rezoning some of the M districts behind Harvard Street to three-family districts might be appropriate. Each District Plan would be adopted by the Planning Board as an integral part of the Comprehensive Plan and used in development review and other planning processes.

There are many neighborhoods that are smaller than districts but still have unique characteristics. Neighborhood boundaries may or may not be defined by the presence of a commercial district or public transit.

They are likely to be influenced by natural or man-made physical barriers (topography, geography, freeways and arterials, etc.), architectural and urban design character, as well as social, economic and cultural characteristics. History also plays a significant role in the self-definition of a neighborhood, establishing a sense of time and place.

For these neighborhoods, particularly ones that are experiencing a high level of development activity, the Comprehensive Plan recommends development of a Neighborhood Plan. Such a plan would provide an examination of what makes that neighborhood unique and set up clear development guidelines for any future changes.



**INFILL BUILDINGS SHOULD RESPECT THE SCALE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS**

Brookline's Zoning By-law gives the Planning Board the authority to create design standards and guidelines for specific areas. The Neighborhood Plans should be consistent with overall Town Comprehensive Plan goals and objectives, include ways of dealing with projects that meet town-wide goals, and with projects that have impacts on town-wide resources. The purpose of these plans is to help the Town, neighborhood residents, and developers work together effectively to shape infill and redevelopment projects so that they have positive impacts on neighborhood quality of life. The plans will move Brookline towards what is called a "form-based" approach to development regulation. In contrast to traditional zoning, which focuses on what is not allowed, form-based zoning provides a guide to what is acceptable and desired in terms of building types, relationship to the street and other public areas, and mixtures of uses. Form-based approaches require a plan that sets out the vision for an area and graphic illustrations to communicate what is desired.

Typically, the guidelines from these plans would not be mandatory controls but would be used by the Planning Board, the Board of Appeals, and the Planning and Community Development Department to provide guidance to project proponents on preferred development and to make public improvements. However, the planning process may sometimes result in recommendations for zoning amendments. Neighborhood Plans should be focused first in neighborhoods most subject to growth and change, or where the existing zoning does not match the existing land uses. Some of the areas where Neighborhood Plans might be appropriate are defined in the *Issues and Opportunities* reports and in the element "Land Use and Housing," below. Residents of a neighborhood could petition the Planning Board for creation of a Neighborhood Plan in an identified area, or the initiative for a Neighborhood Plan could originate with the Town.

The Selectmen would appoint a Neighborhood Committee, including representatives of any neighborhood associations, park advocates, Town Meeting members and business associations in the neighborhood. This Committee would refine the plan area boundaries. The Neighborhood Plan would define the key elements of neighborhood, character and goals for the neighborhood, and important issues that need to be addressed in that neighborhood.

The specific issues studied would be tailored to the specific needs of the neighborhood being studied.

Neighborhood and District Plans would involve residents and businesses in outlining what is special about their parts of town. The Plans will also help potential developers by letting them know, before they begin designing a potential new development, what is considered acceptable and desirable in a particular part of town.

As part of these planning efforts, interim zoning districts might be enacted to insure neighborhood and open space protection during these important planning processes. An interim zoning district would be adopted for a specified period of time, no greater than twelve months, at an annual or special Town Meeting, in order to provide an opportunity to complete district or neighborhood level planning studies. The interim zoning regulations or design guidelines established during the study period will ensure that an area is not subjected to inappropriate development proposals. After the Neighborhood or District Plan is complete, the interim zoning might be replaced with new, permanent zoning consistent with the findings of the planning study.

District and neighborhood plans need to be consistent with the goals and policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. In some cases where a District or Neighborhood Committee concludes that it is unable to meet an expectation of the Comprehensive Plan due to limited resources or specific local conditions, the Committee may submit a well-argued case for seeking relief from doing so. Such a case will be considered by the Planning Board during the process of adopting a local plan. Any district or neighborhood plan—even with an agreed amendment—in all other respects will still need to be consistent with Town goals and policies.

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## OTHER STRATEGIES

There are a number of other strategies that the Town should pursue to accomplish the vision, goals, and policies of this element. These additional strategies are summarized below, and are described in more detail in other plan elements.

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## Commercial Area Strategies

Most districts and neighborhoods in Town center on a commercial area. The Economic Development element outlines the Town's overall approach to economic development and commercial areas, but there is a neighborhood benefit to commercial activity that goes beyond the overall benefit to the Town. Strategies for commercial areas that help protect districts and neighborhoods are:

- > *Advocate for businesses and facilitate communications with public and private entities.*
- > *Enhance visibility and promote business festivals, programming, and media.*
- > *Enhance the attractiveness of business areas through streetscape and other capital improvements.*
- > *Expand permitting assistance available to businesses.*
- > *Establish a design identity and design guidelines appropriate to each commercial area.*
- > *Attract customers to commercial areas by improving the business mix.*
- > *Attract customers to commercial areas through enhanced appearance, accessibility, and programming.*
- > *Retain and attract an appropriate commercial mix for each area.*

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## Open Space & Natural Resource Strategies

Brookline has notable examples of historic parks, greenways, sanctuaries, neighborhood pocket parks, and a sizable "urban forest" that define the character of the Town. These resources provide not only aesthetic value and opportunities for passive and active recreation, but also support the underlying natural systems that are needed for the sustainable future of the Town—such as clean air, clean water, protection from excessive heat, cold and noise, stormwater management, flood control and wildlife habitat.

Brookline's *2000 Open Space Plan*, which will be updated in 2005, is the foundation for the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations on open space and natural resource protection. Open space and natural resource recommendations encompass all parts of

Town and range from protection strategies for open space on large parcels or the creation of neighborhood pocket parks, and the protection of the urban forest.. The Plan element on *Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation* provides detailed information on the Town's overall approach to these issues. In this section, the focus is on open spaces that are parts of neighborhoods or districts and serve as part of that local community as a place to play, shop, relax, and live.

Neighborhoods and districts need to tailor open-space strategies to address different conditions and needs. For example, in some of the more densely developed parts of Brookline, there are fewer than three acres of open space per 1,000 residents, far below what is considered optimal. In other neighborhoods, there is enough open space in terms of acreage but it is not physically accessible or programmed with events or playgrounds to make it usable. The Project for Public Spaces, a national thinktank, has stated that properly programming open space is a key to its success. Strategies for open space and natural resources that help protect districts and neighborhoods include:

- > *Pursue a variety of financing strategies for open-space protection.*
- > *Avoid or mitigate the loss of existing private open space in densely developed parts of Town.*
- > *Use a full complement of available protection tools and strategies to protect the most important open spaces and natural resources as identified by the Open Space Plan.*
- > *Enhance programming of open spaces in areas where a need is perceived, regardless of the amount of open space in the area.*
- > *Create vest-pocket parks and neighborhood community greens with existing public and private resources, where possible.*
- > *Create and improve streetscape and open spaces in commercial areas, particularly in northern Brookline and Coolidge Corner.*
- > *Require ground-level open space in new development (not just balcony or rooftop space).*
- > *Preserve the visual character and contribution of privately owned open space throughout Brookline, particularly in higher density residential neighborhoods where both physical and visual access to open space is limited.*

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## Historic Preservation Strategies

The Historic Resources element outlines the Town’s overall approach to historic preservation. However, the historic resources in a neighborhood or district can be an important part of what makes it unique and attractive. Brookline has numerous historic buildings and landscapes, most of which are located in National Register Districts outside Cottage Farm, Graffam-McKay, and Pill Hill, the three local historic districts. Outside of these districts the primary regulatory tool for historic preservation is the Demolition Delay by-law, which allows up to a year for negotiation on a request to demolish a structure that the Preservation Commission designates a “significant building.” Public education on the historic significance of buildings and landscapes—individually and as ensembles that make up “historic character”—can also be a powerful strategy for promoting appropriate treatment of private properties outside the local historic districts.

- > *Make the Demolition Delay by-law more effective.*
- > *Evaluate the potential of a local landmarks by-law or single building Local Historic District to give additional protection to historic sites outside of the existing Local Historic Districts.*
- > *Create incentives for adaptive reuse of historic buildings.*
- > *Consider inclusion of heritage trees, landscape elements, and other structures (e.g., signs, curbs, sidewalks) in designation of historic resources or the evaluation of changes in National Register and Local Historic Districts.*

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## Mobility & Parking Strategies

Transportation and parking are some of the most difficult issues in Brookline. Although Brookline is less auto-dependent than most communities—20% of households do not have a car and 45% of workers do not use a car to get to work—the volume of traffic on the town’s narrow streets and its parking needs and parking policies underlie concerns about neighborhood preservation and how the town should best manage change and shape development.

Brookline’s on-street parking policies have been under discussion recently, with advocates for varied policies, including retention of present policies, extension of resident sticker on-street parking during the day, and provision of overnight resident on-street

parking. Current policies have many positive results, but they also can make achievement of other town goals more complex. Strategies that relate to neighborhoods and districts include:

- > *Adjust parking resources and policies in commercial areas to support both business and residential needs.*
- > *Review parking standards for commercial areas to evaluate possible changes for mixed-use buildings, shared parking arrangements, and transit-oriented development.*
- > *Seek opportunities for additional off-street parking and shared parking, primarily in Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village/Route Nine, and Washington Square.*
- > *Design and implement a consistent townwide signage program for parking in conjunction with streetscape improvements.*
- > *Continue providing public parking spaces for car-share companies (such as Zipcar) and encourage the same in private parking lots.*
- > *Provide new bicycle parking facilities through public improvements, and require reasonable bike facilities in new private development projects.*
- > *Consider alternative strategies related to on-street and overnight parking policies in light of Comprehensive Plan visions, goals, policies, and strategies.*

## **PLANNING FOR BETTER DISTRICTS AND NEIGHBORHOODS**

Much of planning involves looking at the small picture: the physical appearance of a street or building, what uses people want to see on a piece of land, or how you can get to the store to buy groceries. These are issues of urban design, which looks at the physical layout of a place and how individual buildings form a community. A Comprehensive Plan can't ensure good urban design, but it can be an advocate for it and set standards that should be met.

For detailed analysis of specific districts or neighborhoods, a more detailed study is needed to look at how to design and manage growth and change. For large commercial and residential districts, District Plans should be completed that look in detail at issues of land use, transportation, design, housing, and economic development. For smaller neighborhoods, Neighborhood Plans should be completed that look primarily at land use, density and design.

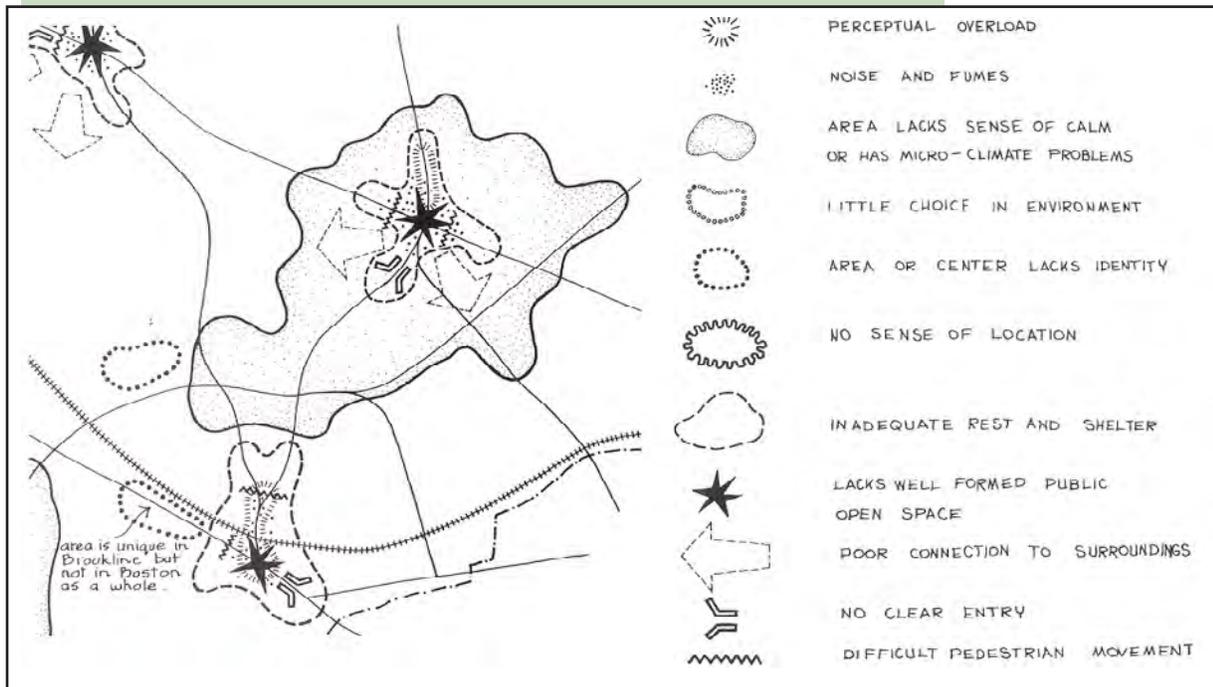
### **1 Brookline's Form**

Issues of urban design are not new to Brookline. Kevin Lynch, a respected urban designer, conducted a detailed Visual Analysis of Brookline in 1965. Since that time, some things have remained the same. Many people still see the town as a grid, with Commonwealth Avenue, Beacon Street and Route 9 as the major east-west roads and Harvard Street as the main north-south road. This perception helps simplify the geography in a way that people find understandable. Note that, to many people, the roads of southern Brookline are difficult to understand.

In the diagram shown on page 40, he outlined some of the major challenges facing neighborhoods in Brookline in visual form. The section shown here is the corridor along Harvard Street from Coolidge Corner on the top right to Brookline Village on the bottom left. Generally, he found that some of the major districts suffer from a "lack of calm" and that some smaller neighborhoods have problems with "conceptual overload" or poor connections to their surroundings. In many ways the same problems remain today.

However, there are many ways in which Brookline has improved its urban design since 1965. Design review, sign regulations, and streetscape improvements have made many connections more understandable. The Town should be proud of the progress that has been made, while understanding that more remains to be done.

## A 1965 DIAGRAM OF THE COOLIDGE CORNER/ BROOKLINE VILLAGE CORRIDOR BY URBAN DESIGNER KEVIN LYNCH



## 2 Great Buildings and Great Streets

Urban design is really about making pleasing places. Great places are about great buildings, great streets, and great public places. Here we will focus on the first two.

### *What makes a Great Building?*

One part of a great street, and the one that is mostly developed by the private sector, are the buildings along the sides of the street. Making an attractive building can be a challenge that is sometimes made even more difficult by well-meaning regulations that unintentionally encourage poor design. Sometimes urban design can make such improvements without even reducing the density of a development or its number of parking spaces.

For examples of what good design can accomplish, look at the examples on the following pages. Each one represents a new development that is designed to respect its surroundings and create an attractive streetscape.

### *Streetscapes*

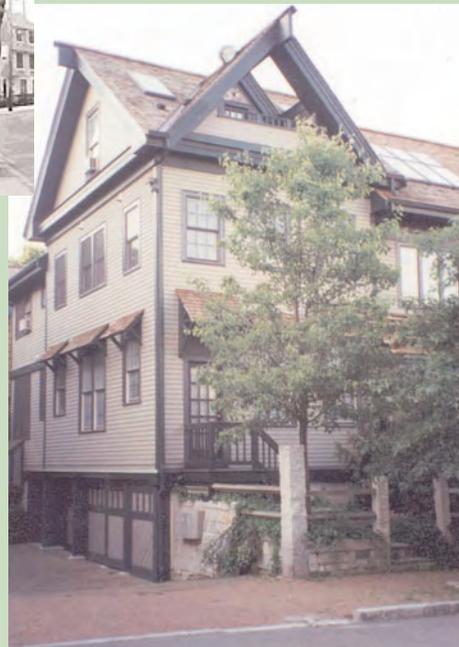
Buildings only form one part of the experience of being somewhere. When you walk down a street, you also experience sidewalks, roads, street trees, and other elements. These pieces of a public street form the “streetscape.”



**BY RESPECTING THE EXISTING PATTERNS OF DEVELOPMENT, NEW BUILDINGS CAN BE ASSETS TO A NEIGHBORHOOD. IN THIS CASE, THE FIRST FOUR BUILDINGS FROM THE LEFT ARE 19TH-CENTURY ITALIANATES, AND THE LAST THREE ARE PART OF A RELATIVELY DENSE, NEW MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT.**



**IN THIS CASE, A SET OF NEW TOWNHOUSES PROVIDES A FRIENDLY FRONT TO THE STREET AND AN APPROPRIATE SCALE FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**



**THIS RESIDENTIAL IN-FILL RESPECTS THE STREET BY PUTTING ITS GARAGE ON THE SIDE**

*“The public streets are a strategic opportunity, since their form is the result of public decisions, and so are most of their details: paving, signs, light, landscaping, even fencing and street furniture. At the same time, they are a visual foreground experienced by almost every citizen several times each day.”*

—KEVIN LYNCH, BROOKLINE VISUAL ANALYSIS, 1965

#### *What is a streetscape?*

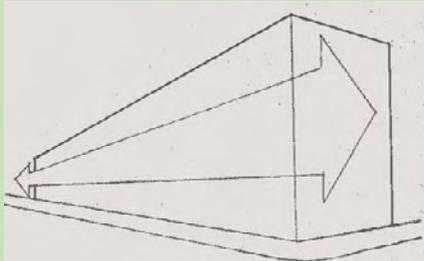
A streetscape is the space beginning at the front of a vertical element, such as a building (or fence) on one side of the street, and going to the front of a vertical element on the other side of the street. This is also referred to as the “building-to-building space.”

The development of a streetscape involves both private sector and public sector participation. The private sector generally contributes through the construction of buildings and street walls that define the edges of a street. Design elements that can affect the character and effectiveness of streetscapes include: building height, massing, scale, building materials, surface articulation, transparency, rhythm of solids and voids, and mix of uses. The public sector generally contributes to the streetscape by providing public infrastructure. This includes all elements within the public right-of-way: street width and capacity, street trees, sidewalks, lighting, signage, street furniture, and public spaces (plazas, parks, etc.).

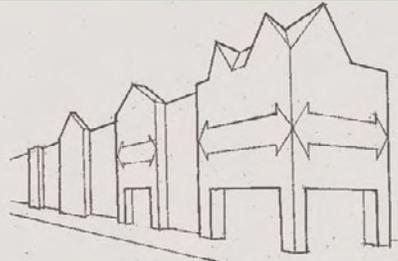
#### *What makes a great streetscape?*

Elements of great streetscapes include:

- Definition (street wall and proportions)
- Visual interest and activity
- Transparency
- Surface articulation (opportunity for light and shadow)
- Street trees (filtered light and shade; enclosure)

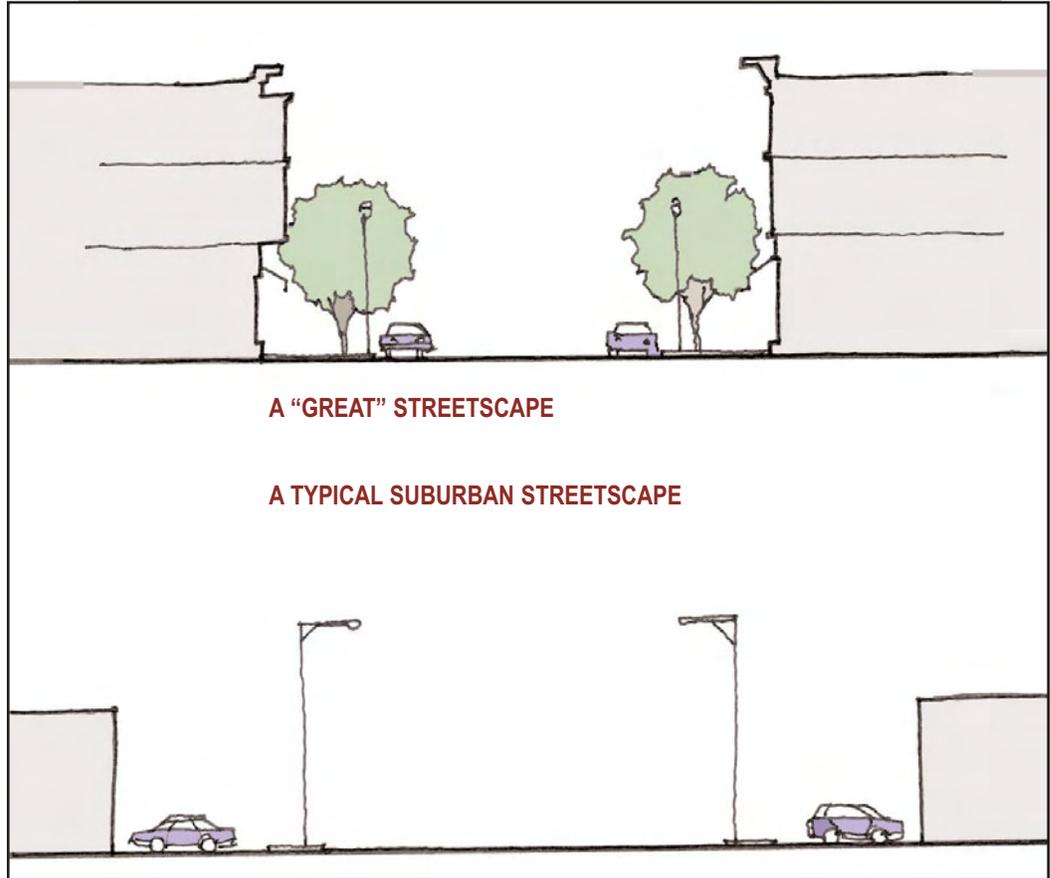


**A BLAND STREETSCAPE:  
NOT MUCH TO SEE OR LOOK AT**



**MORE INTERESTING:  
VARIATION IN THE STREET WALL**

The diagrams below show some of these elements in practice. The top diagram shows a “great” streetscape, with good definition and proportions and street trees. The second diagram shows a typical suburban strip streetscape, lacking most of these elements. In places where such streets exist, some re-engineering may be possible to at least add some of the elements of a great streetscape.



### 3 Applying these ideas in Brookline

On the neighborhood level, Brookline can use these ideas to make better places. In larger areas, Brookline can create “district plans” that set local goals that complement the Town-wide and regional goals discussed elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan. Where the neighborhoods are smaller, Brookline can create “neighborhood plans” that apply this same concept.

#### *What is a district and what is a neighborhood?*

District boundaries are most commonly defined by the presence of a concentrated commercial or institutional node and the relative walking radius to that specific node (generally a 10-minute distance). They are also defined by centrally located public transit stations, geography, landscape features, street patterns, architectural design, building form and orientation, and institutional facilities. Social, economic, and cultural characteristics also influence the definition of

districts and neighborhoods.

Elements that influence boundaries

1. Geography and topography (example: Brookline is defined by a series of hills, such as Corey Hill and Pill Hill)
2. Street pattern (traditional grid compared to a modern collector road system)
3. Architectural character and style (roof forms, prevailing building materials, details, etc.)
4. Building footprint, scale, height, and massing
5. Lot size, setback, and building orientation
6. Public transportation
7. Commercial nodes
8. Institutional facilities—schools, town halls, etc.

*“There is magic to great streets. We are attracted to the best of them not because we have to go there but because we want to be there.... They are symbols of a community and of its history; they represent a public memory. They are places for escape and for romance, places to act and to dream. On a great street we are allowed to dream; to remember things that may never have happened and to look forward to things that, maybe, never will.”*

—ALLAN JACOBS, GREAT STREETS

# Key Element: Affordable Housing

Preserving Diversity

## SUMMARY

A proactive and thoughtful affordable housing program is critical to preserving Brookline’s identity as a welcoming community that values diversity. In neighborhood forums, in discussions by the Comprehensive Plan Committee, and in meetings of the Affordable Housing Working Group, participants overwhelmingly recognized the availability of affordable housing as a pivotal issue for continuing the diversity in income, age, household type, ethnicity, and race that is a key element of Brookline’s identity as a cosmopolitan community. The Working Group, which met four times and focused on policies and strategies, included members of the Comprehensive Plan Committee and the Housing Advisory Board. Its meetings were well-attended by the public, including representatives of the Brookline Housing Authority and the Brookline Improvement Coalition.

The Comprehensive Plan Committee and the Working Group agreed that the Town should establish a numerical goal and timetable for affordable housing creation. Brookline housing policymakers had long identified 10% as a minimum goal for the proportion of townwide units with restrictions governing both rent or sales price and household eligibility. Furthermore, Brookline’s recent experiences with housing development applications under the state’s Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit Law have lent additional urgency to meeting the state’s 10% goal for municipalities, while being sensitive to neighborhood concerns.

Currently, 2,062 of the Town’s 26,224 dwelling units, or about 8%, are Chapter 40B-eligible. The deficit, from the state’s point of view, is 560 units. Between 1987—when the Town rededicated itself to affordable housing through the establishment of a Housing Advisory Board, Housing Trust, and inclusionary zoning policy—and 2004, the Town added a total of 172 affordable units, or an average of 10 affordable housing units each year. The Committee and the Working Group agreed on the importance of

working toward a minimum goal of 10%, and the need to more than double current production to achieve, through conversion and new construction, an average of 25 affordable units per year. While this rate would require 20 to 25 years to achieve state and local goals, it is also an ambitious goal that will require the commitment of additional resources to affordable housing.

This element of the Comprehensive Plan will serve as the basis of Brookline's submittal to the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development for its Planned Production Affordable Housing Plan. Its implementation will be a demonstration of Brookline's commitment to meeting the State goals and help the Town withstand appeals of denials, by the Brookline Zoning Board of Appeals, of inappropriate Chapter 40B projects

The Appendix to this Plan includes a *Housing Brookline* report, which provides additional information about the Town's general housing stock, and its affordable units, programs, and achievements. An *Issues and Opportunities* report on Housing is found under separate cover, providing background data on the issue.

In order to achieve the Plan's affordable housing goals in a way that is compatible with neighborhood character, Brookline must implement seven key recommendations:

### **KEY RECOMMENDATIONS**

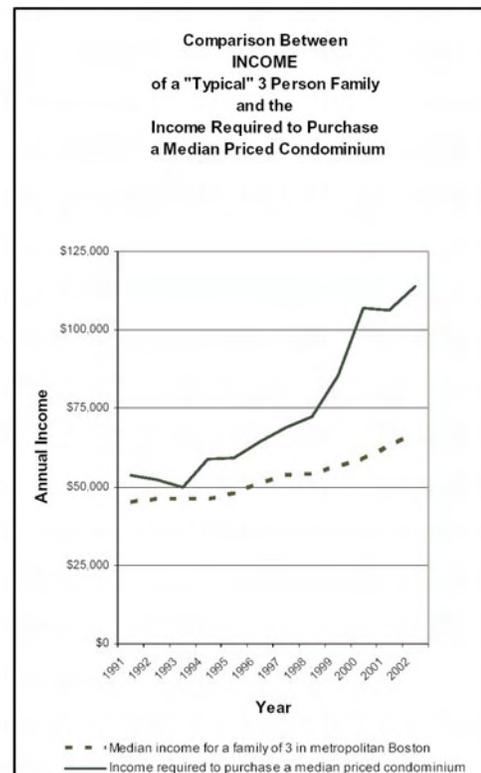
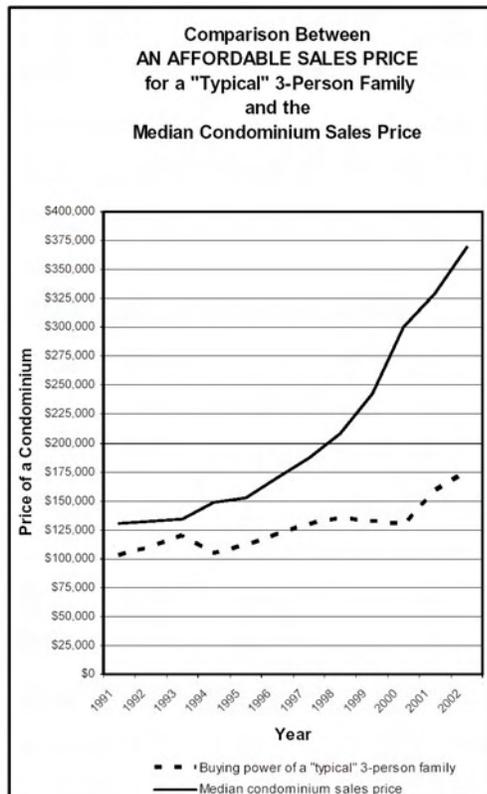
- > *Design in ways that are compatible with and sensitive to neighborhood character.*
- > *Preserve existing affordable units.*
- > *Convert existing market-rate rental units to affordable units.*
- > *Maximize the number of affordable units in new housing development projects.*
- > *Revise the Zoning By-law to enhance opportunities for affordable-housing creation in all parts of Town.*
- > *Identify and enact a predictable and dedicated local funding source for affordable housing.*
- > *Pursue legislative changes to promote state and federal affordable housing policies and programs that support Brookline affordable housing efforts.*

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING VISION

To provide for the needs of residents and to help preserve and enhance the diversity of the Brookline community, an appropriate variety of housing by type and cost will be made available.

### The Need for Affordable Housing in Brookline

Brookline's location close to Boston, its excellent public schools, and its overall high quality of life make it one of the country's most expensive communities. At the same time, Brookline is a community that prides itself on its diversity and its family-friendly atmosphere, assets that are increasingly placed at risk by the cost of its housing. It has become a truism that many of Brookline's current residents could not afford today to purchase their own homes, and while the typical firefighter or schoolteacher might once have been able to save and buy a home in Brookline, that is no longer the case.



Those who are economically excluded from the housing market are not just the low and moderate income families which housing programs—and the vast majority of the Town's current affordable housing inventory—have traditionally served. They are also households with incomes at or above the median income of the metropolitan area. A recent study of 2001 housing costs in 161 cities and towns of Greater Boston found that Brookline had the third highest median price for single family homes, after Weston and Lincoln. According to the latest U.S. Census in 2000, it took a family income of about \$110,000 to purchase a typical two-bedroom condominium in Brookline, which was more than the family income of half of current residents. For a typical single-family home, a family income of more than \$200,000 was required, more than the income of four out of five Brookline families.

These prices leave many families, even those with two incomes or with jobs related to the high-tech or medical industries, unable to remain in or move into the community. And the mismatch between income and housing costs only gets worse. Between 1991 and 2002, the median price of a condominium, the entry point for homeownership in Town, increased by 184%, while the median income in the Boston metropolitan area increased by 48%. To purchase a median-priced condominium in Brookline in 1991 required an income of 119% of the area median income; in 2002, it required an income of 170% of the area median. While the majority of Brookline's units are rental, the readily available information on home prices may be a proxy to what is happening in

## **WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING?**

*Affordable housing* is housing targeted to and affordable by individuals who meet specific eligibility guidelines. Income eligibility is scaled to the median income of the metropolitan area, a standard updated annually by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. Most state and federal housing funds are targeted to households with incomes at or below 80% of area median income—\$66,150 for a family of four in the Boston area in 2004—although the Affordable Housing Requirements of the Brookline Zoning By-law also recognize a target group at or below 100% of median. “Affordable” does not refer to the design, type, or cost of construction, but rather to the cost to the housing consumer to purchase or rent, and typically assumes housing that costs no more than 30% of the income of the target population. Affordable housing also often assumes deed restrictions, in order to preserve affordability for future generations.

the larger market. A survey specific to advertised rents for two-bedroom apartments in Brookline confirmed an increase of 29% between 1998 and 2001—from \$1,400 to \$1,800.

While discussion of housing needs tends to center on issues of cost, a diverse housing stock—including accessible housing, assisted living opportunities, units that can accommodate larger families—is also critical to assuring that the needs of a diverse community can be met.

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## Affordable Housing Supply

Eighty-six percent of Brookline's inventory of approximately 2,000 affordable housing units were developed prior to 1980. Almost half—921 units or 46%—are owned by the Brookline Housing Authority, built and operated with the help of subsidies from either the federal government or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The balance of the units were developed by for- or nonprofit owners using local, state, and/or federal subsidies, with the exception of 58 units created entirely through cross-subsidy by developers of market-rate units under the Town's inclusionary zoning by-law. Owners controlled by nonprofit corporations now own almost 60% of the nonpublic-housing affordable inventory. A small but growing number of units—22 presently occupied and 33 in the development pipeline—are condominium units with permanent resale restrictions, developed through inclusionary zoning and offered to income eligible homebuyers. Slightly more than half of the

**Brookline's Households by Income Group, Tenure, and Housing Cost Burden**

Household Income	Renters		Homeowners		All Households
	Elderly	Other	Elderly	Other	
<b>Total Households With Incomes Below 80% of Median</b>	1666	4473	700	995	7834
% with Cost Burden > 30% of income	61%	68%	71%	6%	67%
%with Cost Burden > 50% of income	36%	49%	54%	46%	46%
<b>Total Households With Incomes Above 80% of Median</b>	673	7252	1946	7914	17785
% with Cost Burden > 30% of income	25%	17%	14%	15%	16%
%with Cost Burden > 50% of income	4%	1%	3%	2%	2%
<b>All Households</b>	2339	11725	2646	8909	25619
% with Cost Burden > 30% of income	50%	37%	30%	21%	32%
%with Cost Burden > 50% of income	27%	19%	17%	7%	15%

*Source: 2000 Census and HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data*

## Chapter 40B (the Comprehensive Permit Law)

Chapter 40B, originally known as the “anti-snob zoning” act, was enacted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1969 in order to broaden housing opportunities by counteracting the exclusionary effects of suburban zoning. The statute sets a goal that at least 10% of the housing in each municipality be “affordable,” in accordance with state guidelines. As an incentive to develop affordable or mixed income housing, Chapter 40B enables a developer to apply for a “Comprehensive Permit” that overrides local zoning. Until the municipality has reached the state’s 10% affordability standard, the decision of the local zoning board about a Comprehensive Permit may be overturned on appeal to the State Housing Appeals Committee.

Chapter 40B provides developers an incentive to develop affordable housing by allowing greater density than otherwise permitted. Typically, the additional market-rate units help underwrite the cost of the affordable housing. If a 40B development is designed carefully and with regard to the surrounding neighborhood, it can be an asset to the community. In some instances, however, developers have proposed a 40B that does not fit in the surrounding neighborhood, either because it is poorly designed or because it is simply too large. In the long run, the best defense against such poorly designed projects is to have a preemptive housing policy that reaches the state’s 10% goal.

Other regulatory tools for developing affordable housing also exist. On the local level, Brookline’s Zoning By-law has an affordable housing requirement, typically referred to as “inclusionary zoning.” It also provides modest incentives for affordable housing under its public benefits section. On the State level, Chapter 40R provides municipalities with financial incentives to create zoning overlay districts that promote transit-oriented, mixed-income housing. More information on these tools are available in the Appendix.

entire affordable inventory specifically serves the elderly; about 5% serves individuals living in lodging houses; and approximately 2% serves individuals with special needs. Waiting lists for affordable rental housing are long, and some have been closed.

Among the Town's affordable housing developments are a number of so-called "expiring use" projects. These privately-owned developments have affordability restrictions with short remaining terms. Upon expiration of restrictions, affordable units typically are converted to market rate. The Town has worked with the owners of four developments during the past two years to significantly extend the length of terms affecting 368 affordable units (in buildings with a total of 602 units). The most critical outstanding expiring use development is the 116-unit Brookline Cooperative.

The Brookline Housing Authority currently manages 574 vouchers under the federal Section 8 program. This program provides vouchers to low- and moderate-income tenants to pay for rent in privately-owned units. Only 388 of these vouchers are used in Brookline, and of those, only 111 are used in privately owned housing that is not otherwise subsidized. The other vouchers are used in affordable housing developments. The federal government has recently explored changing the reimbursement provided under Section 8, lowering the amount that would be provided to landlords.

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## Current Strategies for Affordable Housing

Brookline's Housing Advisory Board (HAB) develops policies to encourage the creation and preservation of affordable housing. The Town employs a variety of strategies to do so, including negotiating the extension of affordability with the owners of "expiring use" affordable projects; collaboration with nonprofit developer/owners which acquire, rehabilitate, and operate rental properties as permanently affordable housing; collaboration with non- and for-profit developers of new affordable or mixed income housing on either privately- or Town-owned land; enforcement of the affordable housing ("inclusionary zoning") requirements of the Zoning By-law; and enabling, through financial and technical assistance, income-eligible households to purchase lower-cost condominiums.

Many of the recently developed affordable units are in private, mixed-income developments created as the result of inclusionary zoning. Under this requirement, adopted in 1987, developers of new projects with six or more units must offer 15% of the units at affordable prices or rents, except that developers of projects with six to 15 units may choose to make a cash

payment to the Housing Trust in lieu of providing such units. Between 1987 and 2004, this requirement will have produced 72 affordable units. While inclusionary zoning produces affordable housing at no monetary cost to the Town, from the point of view of neighborhood conservation, it is seen as inefficient, typically requiring five to six new market-rate housing units for each affordable unit produced.

From a financial point of view, inclusionary zoning will have provided approximately \$4.5 million in contributions to the Trust during the same 18 year period. The Town also has demonstrated a commitment to affordable housing by enacting a policy of contributing a percentage of free cash to the Housing Trust in any year in which free cash exceeds \$6 million. In addition to these two sources, the Town presently receives an estimated \$500,000 a year from the federal government through its participation in the WestMetro HOME Partnership



Consortium. Finally, the Town has committed varying amounts of its Community Development Block Grant allocation to affordable housing. By using funds from these sources, with the additional leveraging that these have brought from state and private sources, the Town has been able to achieve a modest increase in affordable housing through new development, as well as the redevelopment of existing market rate rentals.

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## Challenges to Affordable Housing Creation

Creation of affordable housing in Brookline faces significant challenges related to sites, costs, predictable funding resources, and neighborhood character issues.

### *Sites*

There is very little vacant or underutilized land in Brookline, especially in existing multifamily districts. In addition, there is limited turnover of existing multifamily buildings which might provide opportunities for redevelopment.

### *Costs*

Both land and buildings in Brookline are very expensive, increasing the financial challenges of underwriting affordable housing creation

through either the development of new units or the purchase of existing units. Rental buildings that do go on the market tend to be priced at levels only justified by market-rate condominium conversion. The cost of underwriting a typical affordable unit in Brookline is estimated at roughly \$300,000.

#### *Parking Requirements*

Brookline does not permit on-street overnight parking, requiring dedication of scarce developable land in any development for parking. Furthermore, the number of on-site parking spaces required by any new residential project, even in multifamily districts well served by mass transit, increases the already high costs of construction and/or encourages developments with fewer, larger units. Current parking requirements also make the addition of housing above existing retail all but impossible in most instances.

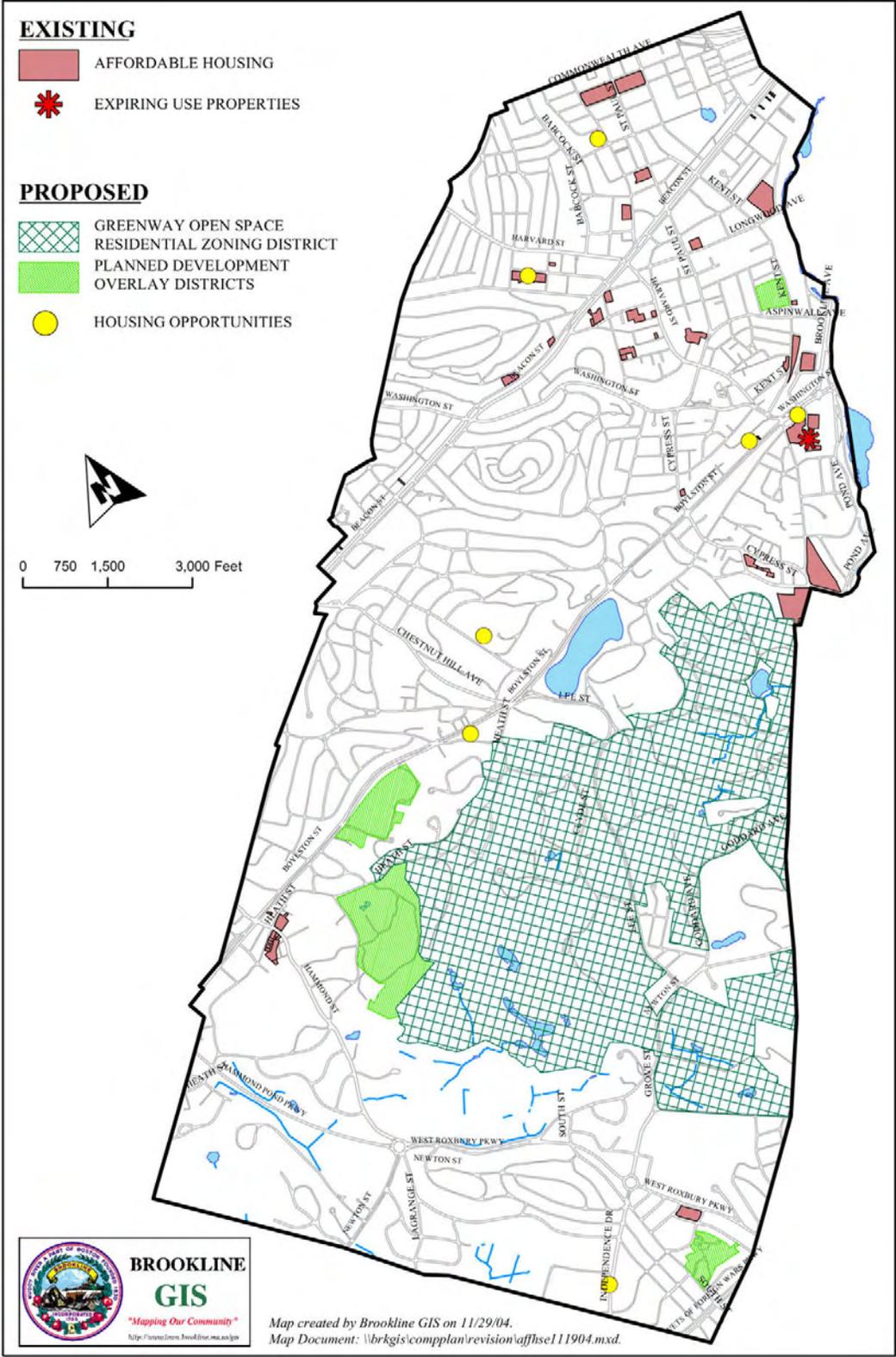
#### *Financial Resources*

The Town does not have access to sufficient and predictable funding for affordable housing creation, depending as it does on developer and free cash contributions to the Housing Trust, and annual allocations of federal HOME and CDBG funds. None of these funding sources is guaranteed in any year, while development is currently driven by opportunities that arise.

#### *Issues of Neighborhood Character*

Residents in all parts of Town are concerned about increased density and the appropriateness of new development with regard to number of units, overall project scale, and design. While the variety of housing types in many Brookline neighborhoods is largely seen as a positive attribute, it can also be used as a justification for proposing projects under Chapter 40B, or otherwise, which use the largest scale buildings as the standard. Keeping affordable housing developments, like all developments, in context with the character of a neighborhood, is essential for their acceptance as community assets.

# Map 2: Affordable Housing



## **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Work toward a minimum goal of 10% of the Town’s housing units being permanently affordable to households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median.
- Work towards meeting or exceeding the Chapter 40B affordable housing goal.
- Continue to add housing permanently affordable to households with incomes between 80% and 120% of the area median income.
- Work toward a goal of adding a minimum of 25 units of housing to the affordable housing inventory every year for the next 25 years.

## **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Preserve existing affordable housing.
- Create affordable housing in all parts of Brookline.
- Encourage design of affordable housing that is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood context.
- Add new housing to the permanently affordable inventory by making existing units affordable and by creating new units.
- Include access to affordable parking in conjunction with affordable housing to the extent possible.
- Seek creation of affordable housing for Brookline's diverse households, especially those with the least access to existing affordable housing, such as families and seniors requiring assisted-living units.
- To the extent permitted by law, give preference to Brookline residents and people with ties to Brookline.
- Seek the maximum time period permitted by law for affordability restrictions.
- Use Brookline dollars in ways that best leverage other public and private funding sources.
- Insure ongoing compliance by owners with affordability requirements.
- Work with the Brookline Housing Authority, the Brookline Improvement Coalition, and other nonprofit and for-profit affordable housing developers to encourage the development of local capacity, where appropriate, with regard to the role of sponsor, developer, owner and/or manager, as well as to maximize resources for specific projects.
- Site affordable housing in ways that do not significantly increase discrepancies in socioeconomic composition or class size among Brookline schools.

## STRATEGIES

### Affordable units in existing housing stock

> *Preserve existing affordable units.*

The difficulty of identifying sites and financing affordable housing underscores the importance of preserving affordable housing that already exists through negotiation of the longest possible terms of affordability with owners of housing with expiring restrictions, such as the 116-unit Brookline Cooperative.

> *Convert existing market-rate housing into affordable units.*

Using the existing rental housing stock creates affordable housing within existing buildings without impacting the fabric of neighborhoods. The Town should continue to:

- Work with nonprofit and for-profit developers to purchase and rehabilitate existing rental properties.
- Explore an affordability “buy-down” program with owners of existing rental properties to make some portion of the units affordable.
- Explore the purchase of scattered-site condominiums for affordable rental or resale with permanent affordability restrictions.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to low and moderate income homebuyers.

> *Evaluate the feasibility of a program to promote the creation of affordable accessory units.*

The promotion and permitting of affordable accessory units, a strategy being tested in other communities, may create affordable housing without changing neighborhood character.

Although the absolute number of affordable accessory units that could be created in Brookline may not be large, each unit would contribute in a seamless way to affordable housing in Town.

### Affordable units in new development

> *Provide zoning incentives while being sensitive to neighborhood character.*

Zoning incentives need to be carefully tailored to particular sites and neighborhood contexts. Any new special permit incen-

tives for affordable housing creation must require explicit findings with reference to design and development standards.

- > *Support the development of small- to medium-scale projects that are compatible with neighborhood context and that include high proportions of affordable units.*

Affordable housing which does not require the addition of significant numbers of market-rate units, as well as typical projects developed by for-profit developers under Chapter 40B, or projects developed in compliance with inclusionary zoning, help achieve the goal of creating more affordable housing more efficiently from a land use perspective. A high affordability ratio may make an affordable housing project more competitive for state and federal housing resources. While requiring more financial resources from the Town, these could leverage more outside funding while creating a greater number of affordable units and minimizing neighborhood impact.

- > *Use Town and other publicly owned land as potential sites, where appropriate, for new affordable, mixed-income and/or mixed-use projects.*

Affordable housing should be considered in any planning process for development of surplus land such as the Fisher Hill reservoir. Town parking lots should also be considered as possible sites for developments that replace lost parking while achieving affordable housing and other Town goals.

- > *Make affordable housing incentives compatible with design and development standards in the recommended Neighborhood and District Plans.*

Incentives for affordable housing creation should be consistent with these plans.

- > *Include affordable housing in the "Public Benefits" sections of the Zoning By-law.*

Revise the public benefits section(s) of the Zoning By-law as they apply to the public benefit provided by affordable housing creation, extending their application town-wide, and to smaller sites. Clarify specific density, height, dimensional, and parking incentives, subject to performance standards, as appropriate to particular zoning districts and specific contexts.

- > *Establish Greenway/Open Space cluster zoning as of right in large-lot residential zones.*

Cluster zoning discourages subdivision of large lots into conventional, large-lot single-family properties, allowing the same number of units sited on smaller individual lots, and thereby preserving open space for the use of the entire subdivision or the public. Cluster zoning could provide an additional opportunity to apply inclusionary zoning, while providing the option of bonus market-rate units in return for the creation of affordable units that exceed the 15% requirement of inclusionary zoning. See the *Land Use and Housing* element for more information on this potential tool.

- > *Create Planned Development Districts as zoning overlays for institutional properties.*

Planned Development Districts would give the Town a greater role in shaping potential future development on institutional or other nonresidential properties through a special permit process. The districts would require the creation of an overall master plan that would include open space and affordable housing, and would be governed by specific design guidelines. See the *Land Use and Housing* element for more information on this potential tool.

- > *Establish targeted affordable housing overlay districts in commercial areas.*

Density bonuses, parking relief or flexibility, and other incentives should be made available in commercial districts to attract affordable housing above street-level retail and/or in new and existing mixed use buildings. Findings on area and site-specific development and design standards should be required.

- > *Consider creation of a standing task force representing open space, affordable housing, and commercial interests to balance these competing interests and set priorities with regard to specific parcels.*

Such a joint committee could enable the Town to respond proactively in a coordinated way to some of the difficult choices about trade-offs between these important public goods.

### **Funding for Affordable Housing**

The addition of an average of 25 affordable units annually, combined with an emphasis on creating some of those units through conversion of existing market-rate rental housing to affordable housing, will require the Town to identify more predictable funding sources. The current policy of applying a percentage of free cash to the Housing

Trust under certain conditions is not a predictable source of funding.

> *Fund affordable housing through a formula in the Capital Improvement Program and by an increased allocation of Community Development Block Grant funds.*

> *To the extent that these sources are insufficient, pursue alternative Brookline-based programs.*

While the Board of Selectmen and Town Meeting have demonstrated their reluctance to pursue the Community Preservation Act (CPA), it is worthwhile to consider Brookline-based programs that might provide sources of funding for affordable housing. For example, the Town should consider the creation of a condominium conversion fee, payable to the Housing Trust upon the conversion of a rental property, that excludes a fee for the unit, if any, occupied by the current property owner.

> *Adopt the option made available by recent legislation to abate taxes and penalties owed on tax-title properties that are converted into affordable housing.*

Although such properties are rare in Brookline, the Town should add this as a potential tool.

> *Designate commercial areas as Urban Center Housing areas that qualify for Tax Increment Financing.*

Recent state law allows municipalities to designate areas where they can grant tax exemptions for up to 20 years to developers of housing that meets a 25% affordability threshold. The Town should explore using the “UCH-TIF” to facilitate the development of mixed-income housing in specifically designated commercial areas.

> *Explore partnerships with institutions in the Longwood Medical and Academic Area to finance the creation of affordable units in existing or new housing.*

> *Advocate for maintenance of and increases to the funding for affordable housing provided by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the federal government.*

> *Explore the possibility of creating overlay districts under Massachusetts General Laws chapter 40R..*

Such overlays would require that 20% of housing in the district be considered affordable. In return, the state would provide the Town with funds from the state to pay for services. The interest of the Town in pursuing such overlay districts will be determined

by the regulations that are drafted for this new law, neighborhood interest in such overlays, and if and how the law is amended in future legislative sessions. See the Appendix for more information on 40R.

### **State and Federal Laws and Regulations**

> *Seek amendments to Chapter 40B that take into consideration the accomplishments and challenges of costly, built-up communities like Brookline, which already have significant amounts of land zoned for multifamily housing, and which already have made significant progress towards the goals of Chapter 40B.* Such amendments include a change in the basis for measuring the rate of progress toward the 10% affordability goal from 0.75% of the community's total housing inventory per year to 10% of the community's affordable housing deficit over two years; inclusion, in the community's affordable housing count, of affordable units that serve households with up to 100% of area median income, accessory units with appropriate restrictions, and 100% of the units in condominium developments that meet the 25% affordability threshold; and inclusion of impacts on adjacent sites when project appeals are under consideration by the Housing Appeals Committee.

> *Monitor federal rental subsidy policy under the Section 8 program and advocate to keep Section 8 subsidies at current rates or higher.* The federal government provides rental vouchers to some low- and moderate-income tenants under the Section 8 program. These vouchers can substitute for rental payments in privately-owned units. In order to ensure that landlords participate in the program, it is important that the vouchers provide as much rent as that provided by the market. Recently, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development has discussed revising the formula by which the amount of these vouchers is calculated, reducing the amount a voucher would be worth in Brookline. Such a change would reduce the number of landlords willing to participate in the program in Town, exacerbating the affordable housing shortage.

# Key Element: Route Nine

## Balancing Regional and Local Needs

### SUMMARY

The Route Nine corridor serves multiple functions: it is a regional transportation corridor providing access to Boston and the Longwood Medical and Academic Area; the primary link between the east and west portions of the town; an important civic space; and a corridor with the potential to support planned commercial and residential growth. The corridor experiences congestion in peak and off-peak hours, and regional traffic is expected to continue to grow. Despite the corridor's importance, the character of the corridor adjacent to Brookline Village and at Chestnut Hill falls short of community expectations. In the several public forums within the Comprehensive Plan process, including the Route Nine Working Group, improvements to the Route Nine corridor have been identified as a significant priority for the community. Creating an effective plan for the corridor's future will involve addressing each of its functions and creating integrated solutions.

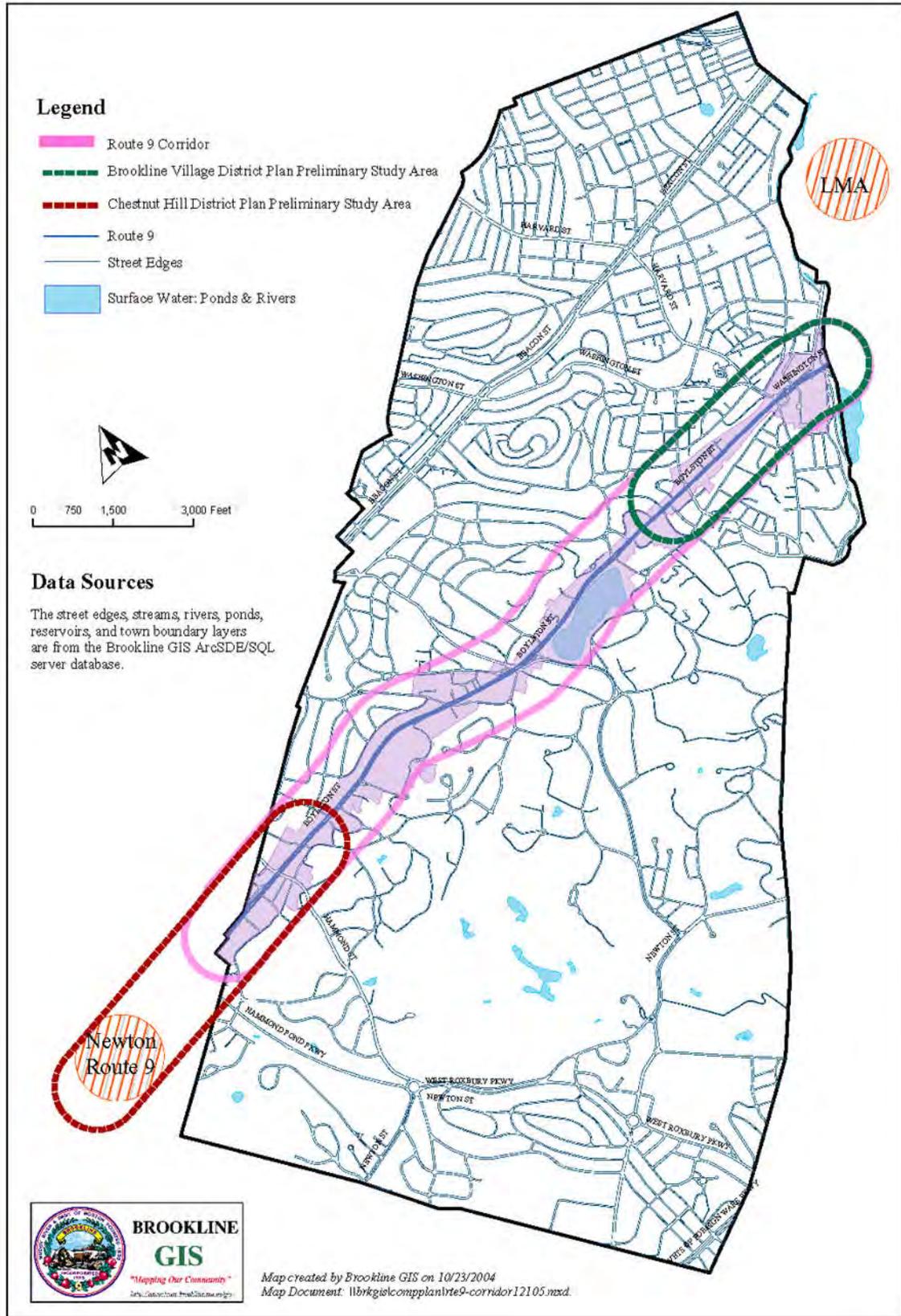
### **ROUTE NINE: VISION**

Route Nine will not divide Brookline. The Town will work with all appropriate parties to minimize this division, both physically and in terms of perception, and to make the areas through which Route Nine passes more attractive for residents.

#### **Key Recommendation**

- > *Develop a Route Nine Plan that looks at the corridor from a regional perspective with a focus on increasing the attractiveness and livability of the corridor.*

# Map 3: Route Nine Corridor



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## Route Nine: Corridorwide Issues

The future of the Route Nine corridor is of major importance to the Town of Brookline from a transportation, urban design, and growth perspective. Each of these issues ties into other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. However, key issues that relate to Route Nine are highlighted here. In addition, the *Issues and Opportunities* reports include background information pertaining to Route Nine.

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### Transportation

Areas of the corridor experience congestion in both peak and off-peak hours today as regional traffic flows continue to increase. Much of this growth is the result of significant development outside of the town's boundaries. This development is expected to continue, with major new projects planned in Boston and Newton over the next several years. Traffic volumes on Route Nine are large—with approximately 30,000 vehicles per day in the Cypress Street area and as many as 50,000 vehicles at Chestnut Hill. Regional traffic on Route Nine continues to grow, resulting in significant peak and off-peak hour congestion at key intersections. Delays are most significant at locations where important cross streets intersect the corridor—at Brookline Avenue, Washington Street, Cypress Street, Chestnut Hill Avenue, Hammond Street, and Hammond Pond Parkway. Regional traffic is anticipated to continue to grow based on continued employment growth in downtown Boston, in the Longwood Medical and Academic Area, in the City of Newton, and beyond.

Recent traffic studies by the state have focused primarily on potential improvements in Newton and other communities to the west, and have only minimally addressed issues related to the Town of Brookline. The Town of Brookline has initiated discussions with the state and regional bodies regarding undertaking a sub-regional corridor study for Route Nine in conjunction with surrounding communities. Such a study represents a significant opportunity to identify a regional approach to the future of the corridor. Brookline will be in a much better position to advance its agenda with the state if it presents its vision and goals supported by urban design and transportation data. As of the completion of this document, \$200,000 has been allocated in the state's 2004 Transportation Bond Bill for this study.

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## Urban Design and Open Space

The overall character of the Route Nine corridor has been cited by the Brookline community as one of the most persistent planning challenges facing the Town. Prior planning efforts aimed at enhancing these areas have focused primarily on creating zoning and associated design guidelines to shape future development. The Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity to create an overall urban design vision that integrates streetscape design, development, and transportation considerations. Accomplishing this goal will require an effective partnership with the state to identify improvements that are consistent with the town's overall vision and address the state's transportation goals for the corridor. Key urban design goals are:

- To create an attractive new gateway to the town at Brookline Village; strengthen connection to the Emerald Necklace
- To enhance the character of Route Nine between High Street and Smythe Street as an urban street; consider removing or enhancing the median
- To create Cypress Village, an attractive pedestrian-oriented node at Cypress Street to incorporate mixed-use development, including affordable housing
- To enhance the landscape character of Route Nine between Cypress Street and Chestnut Hill, with a particular focus on enhancing pedestrian safety and amenities and improved pedestrian and bicycle crossings at key intersecting streets, such as Chestnut Hill Avenue
- To strengthen the character and identity of Chestnut Hill Village through streetscape improvements and appropriately-scaled new development; strengthen the character of the village through provision of complementary new uses

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## Commercial and Residential Growth in the Route 9 Corridor

In the early 1990s, Town Meeting enacted several zoning changes within the corridor recommended by a Townwide development study. Several development projects have advanced within this framework, and other developments are now anticipated. In prior planning efforts within the town, Route Nine has primarily been envisioned as offering an opportunity for commercial development that can help to expand the community's tax base. Recent concerns have been expressed regarding residential expansion within the corridor, and the extent to which this limits the Town's potential to advance commercial development. Given the limited number of locations within the Town that can support either significant commercial or residential growth, however, development in the Route

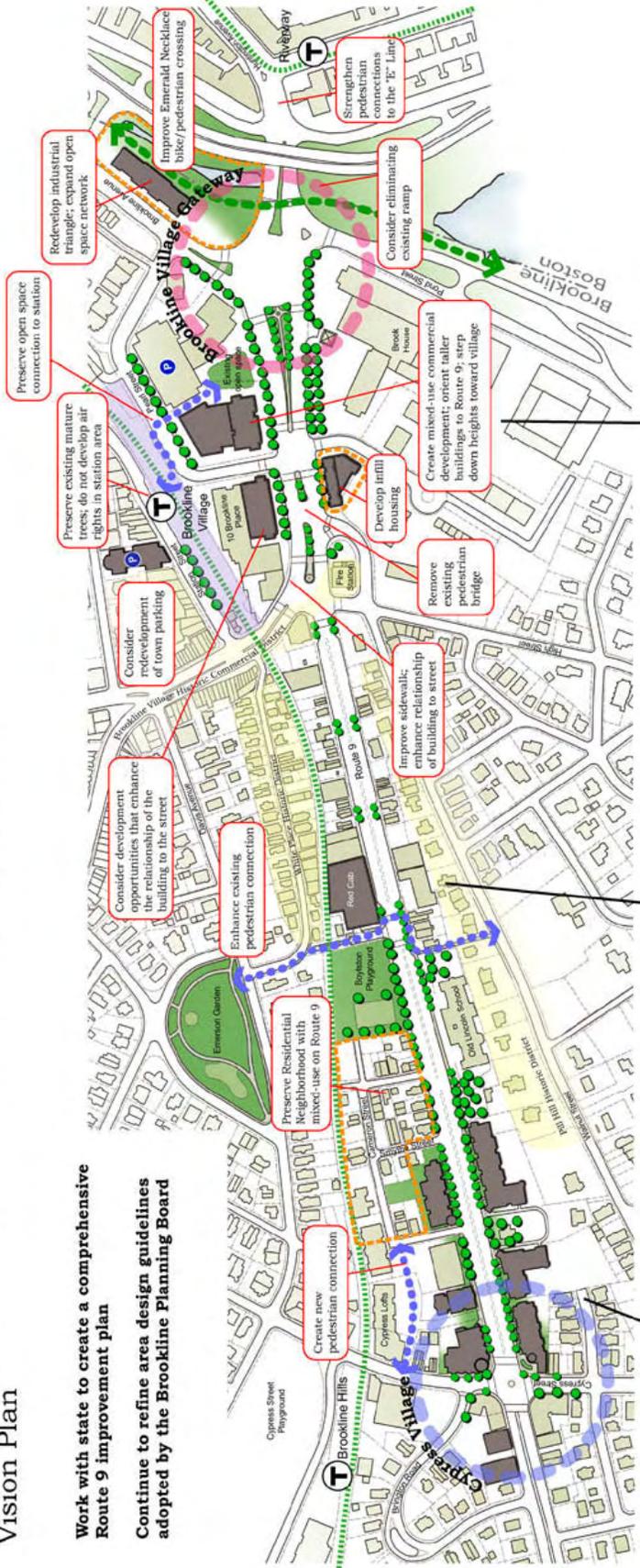
**GATEWAY EAST: VISION FOR ROUTE 9  
NEAR BROOKLINE VILLAGE**



# Gateway East: Brookline Village/Cypress Street Vision Plan

Work with state to create a comprehensive Route 9 improvement plan

Continue to refine area design guidelines adopted by the Brookline Planning Board



## Create Cypress Village (Brington Road to Snygthe Street)

- Redevelop key parcels near Cypress Street
- Encourage mixed-use development with a residential focus
- Include substantial affordable housing
- Promote shared parking -- enhance existing retail
- Widen sidewalks and enhance streetscape
- Improve pedestrian crossings of Route 9
- Eliminate cut-through traffic on Brington Road
- Establish transit oriented development district overlay

## Create a safe and attractive pedestrian environment; incorporate compatible infill development (Snygthe Street to High Street)

- Continue to support mixed-use infill development
- Consider removal or modification of median to change street character, reduce speeds
- Widen sidewalks where possible/ include bumpouts
- Include new pedestrian-oriented lighting
- Add street trees
- Retain on-street parking
- Expand off-street parking to serve Lincoln School
- Consider town involvement in any Red Cab site redevelopment; Possible Site for affordable housing, and/or mixed use

## Redefine Brookline's Gateway (High Street to Emerald Necklace)

- Extend the Emerald Necklace to High Street
- Work with state to explore alternative long-term roadway options
- Encourage additional development to increase critical mass
- Promote mixed-use with office/retail/restaurant focus; incorporate other public amenities/uses
- Incorporate active uses at street level
- Create wide, attractive sidewalk along Route 9
- Locate taller buildings along Route 9, stepping down to Village
- Enhance Pearl Street character/improve station environment
- Remove Route 9 pedestrian bridge and provide improved at grade pedestrian crossings
- Establish transit oriented development district overlay

Route Nine corridor should incorporate a balanced mix of both uses. Residential projects that contain significant elements of affordable housing are particularly desirable along the corridor.

The market for commercial and residential development within the Route Nine corridor is strong, and represents a unique opportunity to support new commercial and residential growth within the town. As change is likely to occur through acquisition and/or redevelopment of existing real estate, and sites are generally small by regional standards, development is likely to occur in multiple steps over the next decade. Planned development could be accommodated on multiple sites in the Brookline segment of the corridor, especially near Brookline Village and Chestnut Hill.

Such development has the potential to result in additional property tax revenues to the Town. However, the level of growth that may be achievable in Brookline is likely to be quite modest compared with anticipated new development in Boston and Newton over the next several years. A recent proposal in Newton included almost one million square feet of development at a single site, and several projects of this size are contemplated in Boston's Longwood Medical and Academic Area, where more than 2,500,000 square feet is being developed. The Brookline Village and Chestnut Hill areas are expected to accommodate the most significant portions of growth. Fortunately, both are served by good transit. In particular, the Brookline Village area offers good quality transit service from two branches of the Green Line. The Town should seek development proposals that maximize use of transit service, and consequently have lower off-street parking needs and avoid over-reliance on the roadway network in peak hours.

One site that is likely to be redeveloped in the next few years is the Infant Jesus-Saint Lawrence Church in Chestnut Hill. That church is slated to close under the Archdiocese of Boston's reconfiguration plan, and would be sold by the Archdiocese to a public or private entity for development. The site is currently zoned for residential use. The Town should seek redevelopment of this site that is consistent with the character of the neighborhood, the characteristics of the site, and the townwide needs identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Major new growth in the corridor will need to be supported by:

- A regional transportation plan for the Route Nine corridor
- Provision for public benefits
- Transportation demand management strategies to reduce vehicular travel on Route Nine
- Development of district plans for Brookline Village and Chestnut Hill, and neighborhood plans in other areas if appropriate

## **GATEWAY WEST: VISION FOR ROUTE 9 AT CHESTNUT HILL VILLAGE**



### **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

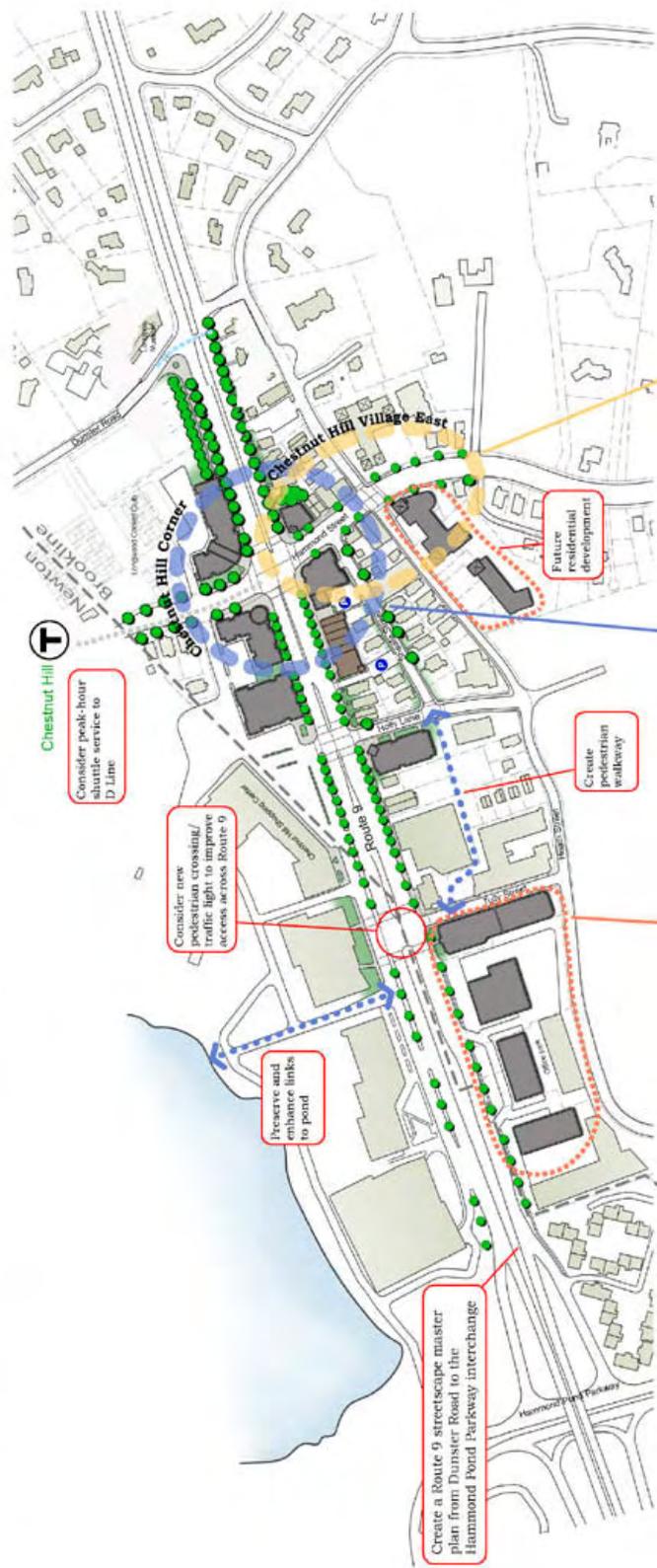
- Integrate neighborhoods such as Chestnut Hill that are divided by Route Nine.
- Convert Route Nine into an urban boulevard that has an active pedestrian and commercial frontage.

### **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Seek opportunities to create connections across Route Nine.
- Seek new commercial and mixed-use development opportunities on Route Nine.

# Gateway West: Chestnut Hill Village

## Vision Plan



### Work with state to create a comprehensive Route 9 improvement plan

- Realign street to expand sidewalks
- Enhance streetscape (sidewalks, street trees, lighting)
- Relocate utilities below grade
- Enhance intersection operations without widening roadways
- Rework Hammond Pond Parkway interchange to enhance southbound connections

### Work with City of Newton to shape long-term vision and residential uses that complement Village area

- Coordinate development plans
  - Advance Route 9 improvements
- #### Continue to refine area design guidelines adopted by the Brookline Planning Board; create guidelines for rezoned areas

- Amend 0-2 zoning to allow residential use
- Create pedestrian walkway between Tully Street and Holly Lane, linking uses

### Support development of the Hammond/Route 9 intersection as the core of the Village

- Promote redevelopment of corner sites on west side of Route 9 for mixed-use commercial development and amend existing zoning to G-2.0
- Improve pedestrian connections across Route 9
- Consider elimination of peak-hour left turns to Hammond Street southbound

### Strengthen the identity of the Village along Hammond Street east of Route 9 as a cohesive place

- Improve streetscape (trees, sidewalks, lighting) along Hammond Street
- Develop and strengthen a pedestrian network of alleys, pathways, and sidewalks
- Attract new uses to the Village area that serve the local market and are complementary to existing businesses
- Promote infill development of key sites
- Promote development/addition of upper floors for residential or commercial use

## STRATEGIES

- > *Work with state government, regional organizations, Newton, and Boston to create a regional transportation improvement and planned growth plan for Route Nine east of I-95—the **Route Nine Plan**.*
  - Assess the overall capacity of the corridor to support long-term growth in Boston, Brookline and Newton.
  - Encourage alternative modes of travel.
  - Assess the impacts of regional growth on the functioning of Route Nine within the town.
  - Gather data on current Route Nine deficiencies within Brookline to be addressed and considered through a regional study.
  
- > *Work with state government to incorporate urban design and open space improvements as integral elements of the Route Nine Plan.*
  
- > *Ensure that the physical character of the corridor is enhanced as part of the Route Nine Plan.*
  - Advance streetscape improvements that enhance village centers and other key locations throughout the corridor.
  - Improve pedestrian amenities and safety throughout the corridor; incorporate consideration of pedestrian issues in any regional transportation study; seek funding to advance improvements.
  - Consider relocation of utilities below grade.
  
- > *Advance planned mixed-use commercial development and affordable housing along Route Nine in targeted areas.*

Route Nine represents one of the few opportunities for the Town to advance significant growth in its tax base and affordable housing. Prior studies have focused on the potential of the corridor to support commercial development alone. This plan envisions mixed-use development with a major element of mixed-income housing. Key next steps include:

  - Amend zoning to support additional commercial and residential development in selected locations.
  - Amend O-2 zoning to allow partial residential use within the zone.
  - Amend zoning at the Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association to allow the development of residential uses within a campus environment.

- Revise zoning around the Route Nine/Hammond Road intersection.
- > *Create **Gateway East**—an attractive new gateway to the town at Brookline Village and reshape the overall character of the corridor between the Emerald Necklace and Cypress Street.*
- Create a visual gateway to the Town of Brookline at the Boston line with a signature new open space combined with new mixed-use development projects.
  - Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to and along the Emerald Necklace; consider the feasibility of closing the ramp from Pond Street to the Jamaica way.
  - Plan for the long-term redevelopment of the industrial triangle.
  - Promote redevelopment of key parcels adjacent to Cypress Street to create “Cypress Village” on Route Nine with a mixed-use residential focus.
  - Explore planned development and potential Town acquisition of the Red Cab site or cooperative efforts with owners to ensure redevelopment accommodates mixed-use development and parking needed to support use of Lincoln School as a “swing” space for Town use during building renovations, or other sites.
  - Redesign the streetscape with new lighting and street trees planted close to the roadway; consider elimination or modification of the median between High Street and Cypress to slow traffic speeds.
  - Adjust lanes, intersections, and signals to improve peak hour traffic operations.
  - Revise and illustrate design and development guidelines for Village Square and Route Nine between Cypress Street and Washington Street.
  - Advance planned development of 2 Brookline Place and 10 Brookline Place; revise zoning and design guidelines for this area.
- > *Create **Gateway West**: Strengthen the character and identity of Chestnut Hill Village as an important community and commercial destination.*
- Create a District Plan for the village area (see the “Neighborhoods and Districts” Key Element).
  - Work with the state to accomplish significant improvement in pedestrian character and safety; widen sidewalks; consider an adjustment to the right-of-way alignment to create an enhanced pedestrian environment.

- Consider options to improve vehicular operations at Hammond Street; consider the possibility of eliminating peak hour southbound left turns at Hammond Street and diverting these movements to a reconstructed Hammond Pond Parkway.
  - Strengthen the character of the Route Nine/Hammond Street intersection through streetscape improvements and planned development.
  - Prepare a plan for residential and commercial development that adds to the strength of the village as a community center.
  - Develop a community consensus around reuse of the Infant Jesus-Saint Lawrence Church if it does close, with a focus on commercial or affordable housing uses.
  - Improve pedestrian connections across Route Nine and links to area open spaces.
  - Allow limited residential use in O-2 zones.
  - Work with the City of Newton to coordinate city and town plans for the Chestnut Hill area and Route Nine.
- > *Develop amendments to the Zoning By-law that permit the development of Route Nine as envisioned in this section and in the Route Nine Plan*

## **VISION FOR CYPRESS STREET AT ROUTE NINE**



# 4

# OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

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## Plan Elements: Overview

This section of the Comprehensive Plan describes additional Plan elements. Each element is best understood in the wider context of the Plan and other key planning and public policy documents, such as the Brookline Capital Improvement Plan. Each section outlines an overall vision, goals, policies, and strategies. The sequence of plan elements is:

- A. Historic Resources
- B. Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation
- C. Land Use and Housing
- D. Economic Development
- E. Transportation and Mobility
- F. Town, School and Cultural Facilities

These elements and the key elements discussed in *Brookline Tomorrow* serve to satisfy the requirements of MGL c. 41, s. 81D for a comprehensive (or master) plan. They also satisfy the requirements of Executive Order 418 for a community development plan. A detailed discussion of how they meet these various state requirements is in the Appendix.

# Plan Elements:

## A. Historic Resources

### INTRODUCTION

**T**he historic resources of Brookline are a legacy left by the past to Brookline citizens of today through over three centuries of community change and evolution. The stewardship and enhancement of this legacy is critical if these resources are to be passed on to future residents.

### **HISTORIC RESOURCES VISION**

Brookline will continue to respect and utilize structures and landscapes with historic significance that are part of its legacy for the future.

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## Trends and Challenges

Brookline has a distinguished history stretching back to colonial times. The Town's historic buildings and landscapes form a textured fabric that tells Brookline's story. Background information on this issue is included in the *Issues and Opportunities* report on Historic Preservation and as part of the Town's 1983 Historic Preservation Plan.

Sixteen State and National Register Districts have been designated in Brookline, more than 80 individual sites have also been listed on the state or national register. The registers only confer limited protection on listed sites, and then only if they are affected by state or federal actions. In contrast, buildings within the Town's three Local Historic Districts—Cottage Farm, Graffam-McKay, and Pill Hill—are protected by the requirement that an owner who wishes to make exterior changes seek a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Preservation Commission. The upcoming Tercentenary offers an excellent opportunity for public education on the diversity and range of historic sites in Brookline and the limited protection that most of them have.

The major tool available to Brookline for preservation of historic resources outside the Local Historic Districts is the Demolition Delay By-law, which allows the Preservation Commission to require a one-year delay and search for an alternative to demolition. The pressures of the real-estate market are affecting more and more historic structures, creating the need for additional creative solutions.



Smaller homes of historic significance are being demolished and replaced by larger single-family homes in southern Brookline. In northern Brookline, older single-, two-, and multi-family homes in districts zoned for higher density are being demolished and replaced by larger multifamily buildings. Often property owners will work with the Preservation Commission, the Planning Board, and the Board of Appeals to seek alternatives to demolition, but in some cases the owners are not interested in preserving the historic building. If after one year no alternative acceptable to the property owner can be found, the building can be demolished.

The use of regulatory tools such as Local Historic Districts or the Demolition Delay By-law sometimes raise concerns about property rights—much as one was true of the zoning we now take for granted. Such concerns must be weighed carefully against the need to preserve aspects of our collective heritage. In addition, a property that has maintained its historic character over time may be worth more than a property that has not, particularly one in a district of comparably preserved residences.

Preservation is about more than preserving buildings. It is also about preserving the cultural present and past of our Town. The Brookline Public Library has a large collection of books, pictures, letters, and other historical documents and artifacts. The Town Clerk's office and the Brookline Historical Society have similar collections. Brookline Access TV has an archive of videos relating to Town government and affairs. These items present a vivid picture of Brookline's past. Planning and funding are needed to preserve these items and display them. A formal structure combining the collections of the Library, Town Clerk's office, the Brookline Historical Society, and BAT would ensure cooperation and knowledge regarding our important holdings within the Town.



### **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Conserve Brookline's historic character.
- Enhance public understanding of Brookline history, historic buildings, and the limited protection currently available to many historic buildings.

### **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Promote preservation of historic sites and resources through regulation and public education.
- Support an ongoing survey for identification of historic places and districts eligible for listing and local historic site designation.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Make the Demolition Delay By-law more effective.*
  - Define in greater detail what kinds of substantial exterior changes constitute demolition for the purposes of this law.
  - Consider providing regulatory and financial incentives to support reuse of historic structures.
  - Consider providing the option to extend a stay of demolition if the owner fails to demonstrate a good-faith effort that adaptive reuse has been seriously considered.
  - Consider buildings and sites that may be eligible for listing as single building Local Historic Districts. A single-building Local Historic District would be created by Town Meeting in the same way as a larger local historic district but would apply only to one or more single buildings of special historic significance.

- > *Evaluate the potential of a landmarks by-law to give additional protection to historic sites outside of the Town's local historic districts.*

Cambridge and Barnstable provide two different models of landmark laws. In Cambridge, ten citizens can petition for landmark status for a building, subject to a study and recommendation by the Historical Commission, or the Historical Commission can initiate the process.

- > *Consider pursuing additional preservation restrictions on the most important historic sites that are currently without Local Historic District protection.*

Preservation restrictions (MGL Chapter 184, sec. 31-33) are voluntary donations to a preservation organization of the right to enforce preservation of historically appropriate elements of a building—typically a local preservation commission. The restriction can be limited to exterior features or include some interior features or historically appropriate uses of the property. The exact nature of the restriction and the enforcement rights are negotiated at the time of the donation.

- > *Consider the use of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) in areas of Town with historic significance.*

NCDs are designated areas where modifications to structures must undergo some level of design review to minimize negative impacts to the historic character of the area. The level of review is generally less stringent than that of a Local Historic District.

NCDs have been used in Cambridge in areas where a Local Historic District is not an appropriate tool. NCDs are defined by a study report and would need to be approved by Town Meeting, similar to a change in zoning.

- > *Create incentives for adaptive reuse of historic buildings through zoning amendments and related requirements. These incentives could be used to promote adaptive reuse during the demolition delay period.*

Zoning requirements, particularly off-street parking requirements, can make adaptive reuse of historic buildings very difficult. The “public benefits” section of the Zoning By-law could be amended to give the Board of Appeals discretion to relax parking and other requirements in order to encourage the preservation and reuse of historic buildings.

- > *Evaluate inclusion of heritage trees, landscape elements, and other structures (including public property and infrastructure) as part of their designation of historic resources or changes in historic districts.*

Value is increasingly being given to preservation of historic resources as an ensemble, not simply as isolated structures. The designation of historic resources should include attention to landscapes associated with historic buildings, designed landscapes, appropriate signage, and infrastructure.

### **Management and Planning**

- > *Use the Tercentenary Year for public education on historic protection opportunities and for celebrations including local artists and arts institutions.*

- > *Create and distribute educational materials on historic resources for neighborhoods and property owners.*

The Preservation Commission has created brochures, walking tours, and other materials for historic districts and listed sites. During the Comprehensive Plan process, participants expressed a desire for educational materials or references that can help property owners understand the historic value of their properties and make changes appropriately.

- > *Support the organization of public and private programs to install historic markers and plaques on public and private buildings for the Tercentenary and beyond.*

Brookline has few historic markers and no program for providing plaques to private property owners. Typically, historic mark-

ers are installed by or under the direction of public bodies, such as the Preservation Commission. Plaques for private residences are often provided for a fee by historical societies, along with a history of the house. This kind of program has been very successful in Providence, where it has helped develop a strong historic-preservation constituency.

- > *Develop a system for climate-controlled preservation of historic documents and materials of significance to the Town.*

Brookline has many historic items not currently stored in ways that guarantee their long-term preservation. The Town should identify storage and maintenance needs for these items.

### **Design and Physical Improvements**

- > *Repair and restore Devotion House, the Putterham School, and Widow Harris House based on Historic Structures Reports.*
- > *Prepare a list of other at-risk, town-owned buildings, such as the gate house at the base of the Brookline Reservoir dam.*
- > *Develop a long-term program to bury utility wires within historic districts.*
- > *Develop a program to make sure public signage is designed and installed to be compatible with local historic districts to the degree possible.*
- > *Ensure that significant historic landscape features are protected.*
- > *Enhance the Commission's working relationship with the Planning Board and Board of Appeals for design review of historic structures and buildings in historic districts.*

### **Financial**

- > *Develop criteria for providing CDBG or other funding to assist rehabilitation for preservation of buildings affected by the Demolition Delay By-law that would include affordable housing or job-creating businesses.*
- > *Seek grants and other support for the continued inventory of historic buildings and sites.*
- > *Seek partnerships with private groups and consider fee-based services to promote education about historic resources, such as plaque programs, especially during the 2005 Tercentenary.*





# Plan Elements:

## B. Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation

### INTRODUCTION

Natural resource and open space protection are critically important to the future of Brookline. These resources are irreplaceable. Open spaces contribute to both environmental health and economic value. A diverse range of open spaces provide active and passive recreation opportunities for all neighborhoods. The quality of our air, water, wetlands, and microclimate are influenced by our extensive public and private open space system. Stormwater and flood control rely on open space and natural resource maintenance and management. Wildlife habitat is created by open space and greenways in both urban and suburban settings. The presence and vitality of open space as part of neighborhood and commercial streetscapes is essential to residential livability and the appeal of commercial areas.

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes the various challenges that face efforts to conserve natural resources and open spaces as well as create new opportunities. The Plan builds upon the prior work of the Town's Open Space Plan and its Local Action Plan on Climate Change. Background information for this section is included in the *Issues and Opportunities* reports on open space, recreation, sustainability, and water quality.

### **NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE, PARKS & RECREATION VISION**

Public open space throughout the Town will be preserved and enhanced, and every opportunity will be taken to add new open spaces and programming. To the extent possible, efforts will be made to preserve and protect private open spaces.

# NATURAL RESOURCES

## Trends and Challenges

Brookline's natural resources and systems have been significantly altered over the nearly four-century course of the town's development from a colonial farm settlement to the urbanized community of today. The town's seven drumlins range from 240 to 310 feet, marking the landscape and helping to create distinctive residential neighborhoods. Wetlands at Hall's Pond and Amory Woods recall the much larger Cedar Swamp of which they were a part. Although the majority of the



nine streams and brooks that once ran through Brookline have been channelized and piped below ground, the Muddy River remains Brookline's major natural resource corridor. Frederick Law Olmsted's design for the Emerald Necklace reshaped the Muddy River and its marshes in the late nineteenth century to help restore lost function as a flood storage area as well as to create a park and wildlife corridor. The remaining major wetlands in Brookline are located at Hall's Pond, Lost Pond, D. Blakely Hoar Sanctuary, Allandale Farm, Sargent's Pond, along Hammond Pond Parkway, and at Putterham Meadows golf course. Several smaller wetland systems remain as well. These wetlands continue to provide essential environmental services in the form of flood storage, filtration of polluted runoff, and habitat. The state Wetlands Protection Act governs activities in these wetlands. Nonetheless, some wetland resources are not protected and, in many communities, the oversight of activities in wetlands is greater than in Brookline. As a member of the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority,

Brookline does not depend on water resources within the town for drinking water or wastewater disposal, though some private septic systems still exist.

The urban forest we see today was created by Brookline residents, who planted trees in parks, along streets, and on private property. Although some natural systems have been compromised over time, many of the town's neighborhoods and parks are designed landscapes with ecological value created by sensitive development. Because they are man-made, these resources need ongoing management and stewardship. The challenge for the future is to maintain, enhance, and restore the remaining natural resources and systems in Brookline.

The main focus for natural resources planning is on improving water quality and on enhancing the ecological integrity and wildlife value of the town's remaining natural areas. The areas of most importance are:

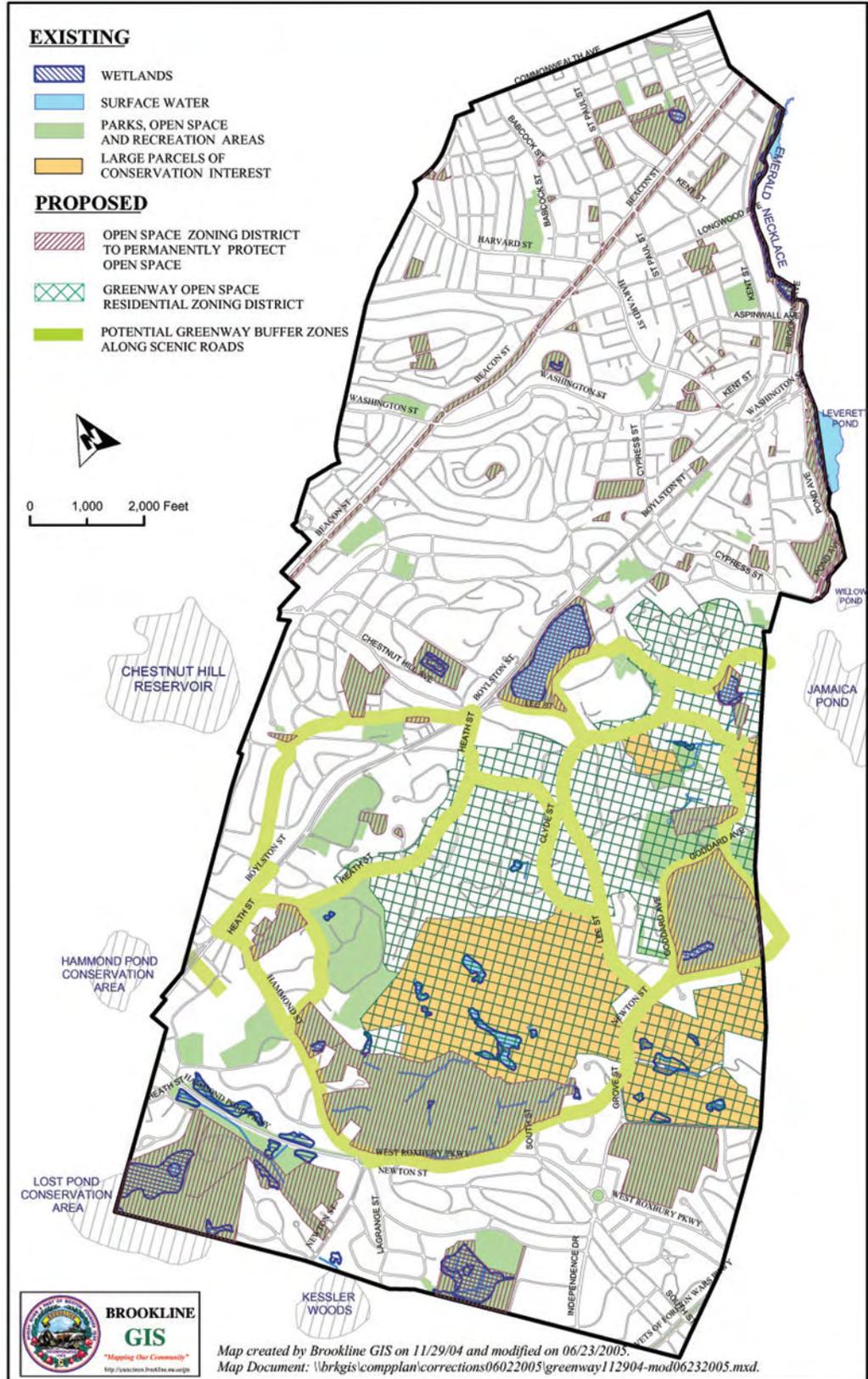
- *Stormwater management and minimizing impervious surfaces.*  
Development brings the expansion of pavement and other impervious surfaces that keep stormwater from infiltrating through vegetation in a cleansing process. Stormwater flowing over streets and parking areas collects pollutants and deposits them in streams, wetlands, and ponds, and in the storm drainage system, where they are piped to Boston Harbor rather than recharging the ground locally. The increased velocity of stormwater flowing from impervious surfaces contributes to flooding and to changes in stream channels. (Runoff from lawns is only slightly slower than from impervious surfaces, while ground cover, shrubs, and trees provide superior infiltration and stormwater control.)

- *Nonpoint source pollution.* Because the major, identifiable (or “point”) sources of water pollution, such as industries and sewer systems, are now highly regulated, “nonpoint” sources of pollution are now the biggest source of pollution to wetlands, streams, ponds, and the stormwater drainage system. In communities like Brookline, nonpoint source pollution results primarily from household landscape practices, such as the use of herbicides, insecticides, and fertilizers, and from stormwater carrying petroleum products, metals, salts, and other pollutants from streets, sidewalks, and parking areas.

- *Protection of upland edges of wetlands and the edges of sanctuaries.*  
The remaining wetlands in Brookline perform important environmental functions such as removal of pollution and flood control. Wetlands, ponds, and streams, particularly those within Brookline's conservation lands (the sanctuaries) also provide the most diverse wildlife habitat in the town. Development too close to the edges of these resources results in pollution, eutrophication, and the spread of invasive, nonnative vegetation. Eutrophication is the



# Map 5: Natural Resources



filling in of ponds when excessive nutrients (often resulting from stormwater runoff containing fertilizers and other chemicals) result in the growth of algae and other plants.

- *Environmental management of sanctuaries.* Because Brookline’s sanctuaries are located within a highly urbanized region, they require active environmental management to maintain their ecological and recreational value. For example, many invasive exotic plant species have low wildlife habitat value and crowd out more diverse native vegetation. If these exotics are not controlled, they create monocultures that reduce both plant and animal diversity.
- *Promotion of wildlife corridors and connections.* Continuous waterways and corridors of land in a natural state provide the most robust connected habitat for the widest diversity of wildlife. The Muddy River portion of the Emerald Necklace serves such a role in Brookline. However, connected, protected open spaces still play a very important role in urbanized areas, even if streets function as barriers to the movement of some kinds of wildlife. The Charles to Charles Corridor, which includes the Emerald Necklace and adjacent large public and private open spaces in South Brookline, serves as such a corridor. More modest vegetated linkages, such as continuous street trees also provide niches for wildlife.
- *Stewardship of the urban forest.* Brookline’s street trees, as well as trees in parks and on private property, contribute to the town’s environmental health by providing shade, removing carbon dioxide from the air, and providing other benefits. Because they live in harsh conditions, street trees need regular inspection, care, and replacement.
- *Preservation of hemlock trees.* Brookline’s urban forest contains many hemlock trees. Hemlocks in many portions of the East Coast, including Brookline, are being attacked by a destructive insect, the Woolly Adelgid. Advanced infestations are difficult to control but early observation and use of insecticides can slow, and in some cases halt, destruction.

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## Plans and Major Projects Underway

Since the late 1990s, Brookline has begun a series of important infrastructure and management projects that will have significant natural resources benefits:

- 1998 *Wastewater System Master Plan* and 1999 *Stormwater Management Master Plan*. These master plans are being implemented

to investigate, remediate, and rehabilitate storm-drain systems in order to remove potential sanitary-sewer connections, improve system capacity and discharge-water quality, and to rehabilitate the sanitary sewer system. Implementation of these plans includes meeting the EPA's Phase II Stormwater Standards.



- 2001 *Emerald Necklace Master Plan*, including the Muddy River Restoration Project. Implementation of this Plan in Brookline includes restoration and improvement of the Olmsted Park and Riverway, and remediation and restoration of Willow and Leverett Ponds.
- 2002 *Local Action Plan on Climate Change*. In April 2000, The Board of Selectmen passed a resolution for Brookline to participate in the Cities for Climate Protection Campaign. As a result of that commitment, the Town completed a Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory and Report in 2000, set a goal of reducing emissions in 2010 to 20% below 1995 levels, and completed the Local Action Plan. The Action Plan describes measures the Town has already taken to reduce emissions and proposed a variety of actions to further reduce emissions. Many of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan will advance Brookline towards implementing the Local Action Plan.
- 2002 *Town of Brookline Sustainability Inventory*. The inventory contains recommendations for Town actions to promote sustainability, such as promoting green building, increasing the procurement of environmentally friendly products, and encouraging green business practices. The Comprehensive Plan builds on many of the recommendations of the inventory, from increased affordable housing production to regional cooperation on watershed protection.

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## BROOKLINE OPEN SPACE

		NUMBER OF ACRES	PROPORTION OF TOWN ACRES
Permanently protected from development	<i>public</i>	457.76	10.5
	<i>private</i>	48.24	1.1
Unprotected	<i>public</i>	145.99	3.4
	<i>private</i>	502.7	11.6
<b>Total</b>		648.69	15.0

*Source: Open Space 2000*

## **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Improve the water quality of Brookline’s ponds.
- Protect remaining wetlands through management of upland edges of wetlands.
- Restore and maintain sanctuaries for wildlife and passive recreational use.
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat by managing waterway corridors and adjacent open spaces to provide niches for wildlife.
- Improve air quality by incremental implementation of Brookline’s Local Action Plan on Climate Change.
- Reduce energy consumption through town purchasing decisions.
- Protect Brookline’s urban forest.

## **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Minimize stormwater runoff and maximize infiltration of stormwater to reduce nonpoint source pollution.
- Control and eventually eliminate invasive exotic vegetation in sanctuaries.
- Seek linkages and connections for wildlife habitat.
- Continue and expand the public outreach and education program on best landscape practices for individual property owners.
- Continue collaboration with “Friends” groups, neighboring jurisdictions and agencies on shared watershed, conservation, habitat, and air quality resources.
- Promote “green” building.
- Seek to promote renewable energy and sustainability in town purchasing decisions.
- Implement the Local Action Plan on Climate Change.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Adopt a local wetlands by-law to enhance protection and oversight of remaining wetlands in Town.*
- > *Include promotion of green building standards in development review.*
- > *Consider adopting a sanctuary buffer zone by-law.*
- > *Include considerations of permeability, infiltration of stormwater, and nonpoint source pollution in any revisions of open space requirements and off-street parking requirements in the Zoning By-law.*
- > *Reconsider a Heritage Tree By-law based on recommendations of the Moderator's Committee*  
In 2004 Town staff expressed concerns about implementing such a by-law without additional personnel. This concern must be a factor in considering a Heritage Tree By-law; the decision should take into account the chances for fair and efficient implementation.

### Management and Planning

- > *Continue implementing the 1999 Stormwater Management Plan.*
- > *Adopt a Town conservation-restriction program.*
- > *Continue implementing the 1998 Wastewater System Master Plan.*
- > *Continue implementing the Emerald Necklace Environmental Improvements Master Plan.*
- > *Create a Street Tree Master Plan identifying locations, species, and management requirements.*
- > *Promote private conservation restrictions to protect wetland edges and other environmentally sensitive areas.*
- > *Promote formation of more "friends" groups. Hall's Pond, Lost Pond, and the D. Blakely Hoar Sanctuary already have such groups.*

- > *Identify and certify vernal pools.*
- > *Use conservation areas for a Town-based school environmental curriculum.*
- > *Continue the community education and outreach program on nonpoint-pollution reduction through private landscape best management practices, and expand the program to include information on backyard ecology and suburban/urban wildlife habitat. Materials are available from the state and environmental groups at: [http://www.mass.gov/envir/mwrc/pdf/More\\_Than\\_Just\\_Yard.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/envir/mwrc/pdf/More_Than_Just_Yard.pdf)*
- > *Promote and disseminate information on permeable alternatives to asphalt for parking areas.*
- > *Increase procurement of environmentally friendly products. Assistance in expanding an environmental procurement program is available from the state's Environmentally Preferable Products Procurement Program.*
- > *Promote municipal purchase of renewable energy through consortia of towns.*
- > *When new municipal vehicles are needed, purchase hybrid vehicles when possible.*

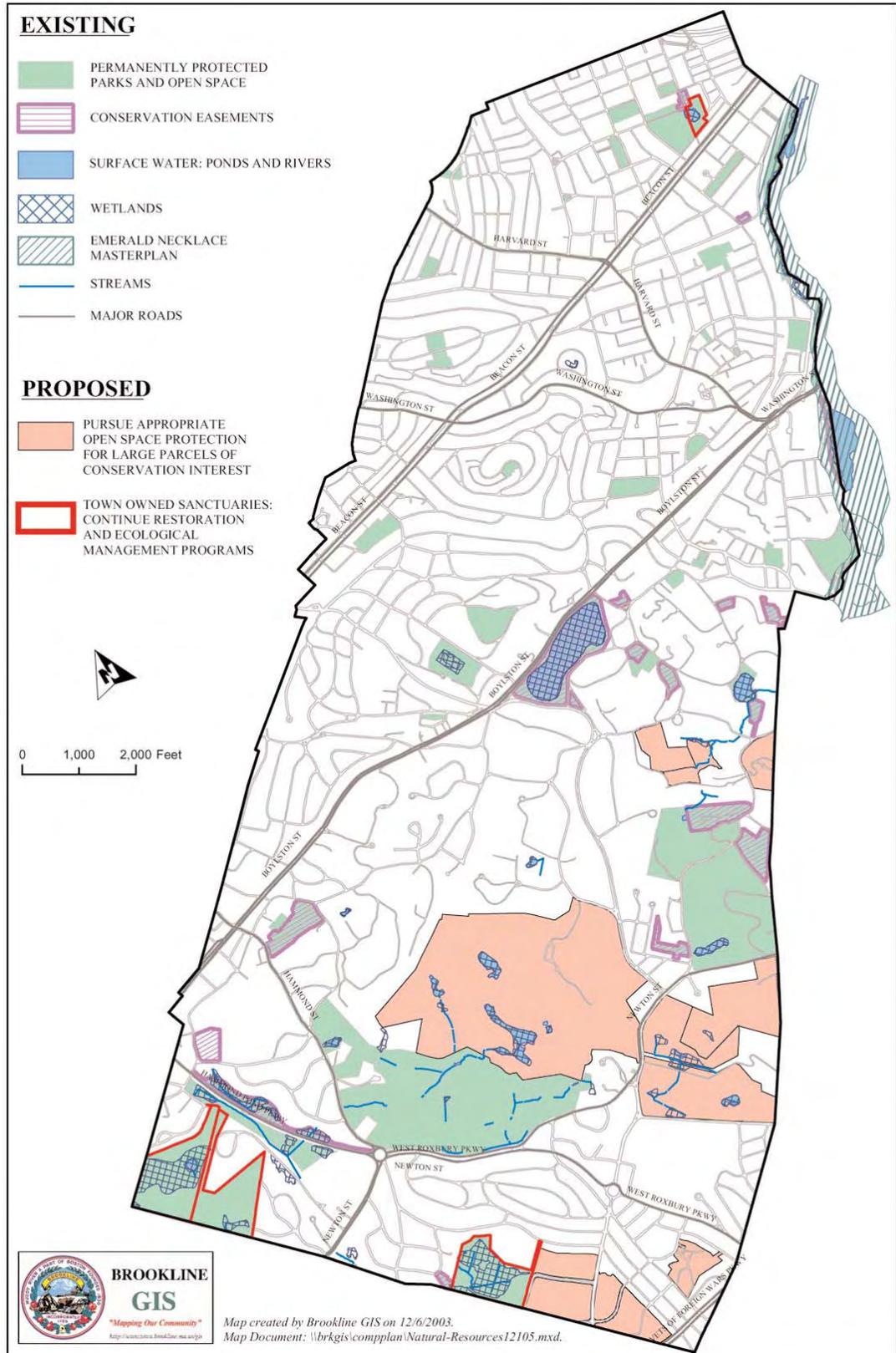
### **Design and Physical Improvements**

- > *Continue improvement and rehabilitation program for Lost Pond Sanctuary.*
- > *Rehabilitate the forest in conservation areas.*
- > *Analyze, improve, and repair the storm drain system.*
- > *Restore and improve small green open spaces program.*
- > *Monitor hemlock trees for woolly adelgid infestations, take action with early infestations, and remove hazardous hemlock trees.*

### **Financial**

- > *Pursue state and other grants as appropriate, as well as appropriating town funds.*

# Map 6: Open Space, Parks and Recreation



# OPEN SPACE AND PARKS

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## Trends and Challenges

*Open Space 2000: Analysis and Plan for Brookline Conservation, Parks and Recreation*, the Town's state-approved open space and recreation plan prepared by the Conservation Commission, is the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations on open space. The Plan identifies a total of 1,159 acres of open space, 26.6 percent of the town's acreage, including lands that are protected and unprotected, both public and private. There are 506 acres of permanently protected open space in Brookline, 11.6 percent of the town's land area. While most of this is publicly owned, the private nonprofit Brookline Land Trust owns 9.28 acres in four parcels and 38.96 acres of private property are protected in nine conservation restrictions. The 603.75 acres of publicly-owned open space, of which approximately 460 acres are protected, includes parks, playgrounds, conservation lands, cemeteries, and small spaces such as traffic islands, and constitutes 13.88 percent of the town's land area. In addition there are 502.7 acres of extensive open space in private institutions, religious organizations, agricultural land, and recreational land that is not protected from development. Most of this land is located in southern Brookline and not under immediate threat of development, but protection of the open space character of these areas is an important long-term concern.

At the same time, the smaller open-space resources in more densely-built parts of Brookline are equally significant to the town's quality of life. In addition to protecting existing parks and playgrounds in North Brookline and pursuing opportunities for new open space, other open space concerns focus on the relationship between public and private open space. These issues include the public's interest in seeing open space from public places, even if the open space is privately-owned, for example in the amount of ground-level open space required in private development projects.

Finally, although some fragile public open space resources may be appropriately protected from too much use, most of the town's public open spaces should be made as accessible as possible for the enjoyment of residents.



## GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

- Protect significant unprotected open spaces, such as Allandale Farm.
- Establish a network of open space corridors and greenways.
- Exercise stewardship through excellent maintenance of existing open spaces.
- Incorporate protection of open space in town development policies, regulations and guidelines.
- Maintain and improve recreational access to open space.

## POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS

- No net loss of open space Townwide.
- Balance Town interests in affordable housing, commercial development, and open space when opportunities arise.
- Enhance and maintain green open spaces in all parts of town.
- Protect priority open spaces identified by the Conservation Commission and Park and Recreation Commission through appropriate means, whether private, regulatory, or public.
- Provide safe and attractive pedestrian and bicycle access to all major open space destinations.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Create an open space zoning district for permanently protected open space.*

Many communities reinforce the protection of open space by putting all permanently protected open space in an open space zoning district. The zoning typically limits the amount and size of any buildings and restricts buildings and uses to those that support open space purposes.

- > *Create a greenway buffer zone on designated roads.*

The open space visual character of specific roads identified in the Recreation Map as part of the Brookline Heritage Greenway Trail should be preserved by requiring buffer zones in the

Zoning By-law that must be vegetated and kept free of structures and pavement, with the exception of some fences and driveways no greater than one lane wide. The size of the buffer zone should be determined after completion of a study of the affected land parcels.

- > *Create Greenway Open Space Residential (GOSR) cluster-subdivision zoning by right for existing one-acre and one-quarter-acre districts zoned for single-family houses.*

Construction of single-family homes to the extent permitted by zoning (conventional single-family development) on large parcels in Brookline would detract from the open space character of the area. Conservation-oriented development could allow the preservation of significant open space without requiring acquisition by the Town. Recently passed state legislation allows for cluster or open space residential development by right instead of through a special permit process with an underlying conventional zoning district. A revised Town zoning article focused on preserving open space character coupled with the site plan and design review process would provide the Town with a considerable role in shaping the character of a by-right residential development. This zoning tool would introduce a new environmental assessment process for a priority parcel or site prior to submission of a subdivision, cluster, or other residential development plan. Through this process, housing could be sited on less sensitive portions of the site.

- > *Create Planned Development District overlays.*

Planned Development District (PDD) overlays should be established as a special permit process for the large parcels of conservation interest that have been identified by the Conservation Commission. Although most of the institutional properties would be included under the GOSR by-right zoning districts described above, the PDD process would provide an additional level of flexibility to master plan these parcels by special permit. At the same time, the PDD would require an additional level of review on the part of the Town. The PDD by-law would include a series of standards and guidelines to be met in the areas of site planning, open space, affordable housing, building type, parking, and so on, while allowing for sensitive and innovative design of the site to accommodate a variety of uses and activities.

- > *Review requirements for open space in the dimensional requirements to assure the proper balance between vegetated/permeable open space and impervious areas; between ground-level open space and open space in terraces, balconies, or roof terraces; and in mixed-use projects.*
  - Currently, required open space is defined as “usable,” including “landscaped open space” as a subset of “usable open space.” In residential districts, usable and landscaped open space are required as a percentage of a building’s gross floor area.
  - Non-residential zoning districts do not have any open space requirements at present; such a requirement should be considered.
  - In special circumstances, consideration should be given to the provision of off-site contributions to the open space system in the Town.
  
- > *Review the public benefits sections of the Zoning By-law in relation to open space benefits and the 20,000 square foot minimum lot size required for granting of public benefits.*  
Define or illustrate with more detail the amount and kind of usable and landscaped open space that will qualify in order to inform project proponents of what kinds of benefits are desired.
  
- > *Review setback requirements adjacent to sanctuaries and other town-owned open space for possible increases.*
  - An increase in setback requirements at the borders of sanctuaries may be needed to enhance the extent of upland buffers to wetlands and to enhance their visual appeal.
  - Discretionary power could be granted to the Planning Board and the Board of Appeals to recommend and grant increased setbacks or other plan modifications when a development proposal abuts town-owned open spaces.
  
- > *Evaluate requiring a percentage of permeable open space on single-family zoned residential lots, potentially through using lot-coverage maximums.*
  
- > *Consider allowing vegetated parking areas that can support vehicles in developments whose parking requirements are lower than required by zoning. These are created by the use of innovative paving that is permeable and allows grass to grow.*

- > *Investigate strategies for purchase and transfer of development rights (TDR) as they might relate to open space opportunities.* TDR is a strategy to preserve open space by taking all or part of the zoned development capacity (floor area ratio or dwelling units) from one parcel, known as the sending parcel, and adding it to the existing development capacity of another parcel, known as the receiving parcel. Within a small and relatively built-up community like Brookline, a TDR strategy is most likely to be possible where the sending and the receiving parcels are in the same ownership and the additional development on the receiving parcel will not create unacceptable impacts on abutters.
- > *As part of the recommended district and neighborhood planning efforts, consider interim planning overlay districts to insure neighborhood and open space protection during these important planning efforts.*
- > *Recommend state legislative reform to repeal Approval Not Required (ANR) language in state law. This language permits many landowners abutting public ways to create small lots by right, without regard to the characteristics of the land or environmentally sensitive areas.*

## **Financial**

- > *Actively fund the existing Open Space Trust Fund.*
  - Towns capitalize their open space funds on an occasional basis, when Town Meeting wishes to appropriate capital improvement funds to acquire or conserve open space. Other towns have voted to bond funds up to a specific amount for protection of identified priority open spaces (which could be through acquisition or through measures such as purchase of development rights). Fees for special events or other uses of town open space, developer contributions, and private contributions could also go into an open space trust fund. The fund could also serve as a revolving fund for the purchase of development rights or transfer of development rights.
  - The Town has limited resources and many demands for free cash and other funding sources. However, the Open Space Trust Fund is an important resource that should be funded whenever extra resources become available.
- > *Seek state and private funding to match local funds.* Competitive grant funds are generally available for open space purposes from the state and, in some cases, from private groups.

- > *Work with “friends groups” to raise funds for improvements and protection.*

Brookline is fortunate to have a very active Greenspace Alliance and numerous “Friends” groups that take a special interest in particular open space areas. These volunteers are a crucial resource for hands-on work such as nature inventories, trail creation, some maintenance and clean up activities, and for fund raising.

- > *As part of the 2005 Open Space Plan, define an outreach program to private property owners that will include both strategies and incentives to enable land owner participation in open space conservation.*

- > *As part of the 2005 Open Space Plan, develop a program that will encourage and enable property owners to establish open-space conservation restrictions within designated greenways and on priority parcels.*

### **Management and Planning**

- > *Look for opportunities to create vest pocket parks or community greens from existing resources.*

Particularly in North Brookline, but in the town as a whole, it is important to seize opportunities to create small open spaces. These opportunities may arise in the case of demolitions on small lots, sale and new development of institutional properties, and public building and rehabilitation projects.

- > *Develop landscape standards as part of neighborhood and district plans.*

The proposed neighborhood and district plans should include landscape guidelines for new development, such as minimum standards for groundcover, shrub, and tree planting, for fencing, and for the use of permeable materials in unplanted open space areas such as pedestrian ways and patios.

- > *Develop and disseminate trail maps, including maps for the proposed Heritage Greenway Trail.*

Maps showing existing and proposed trails and pedestrian routes along with information on the natural and cultural heritage of Brookline can be developed with the assistance of volunteer groups such as the “Friends” groups and the Brookline Greenspace Alliance to create interest and support for enhanced trail access and open space protection. *Exploring the Paths of*

*Brookline* by Linda Olson Pehlke, a book published in 2001, is one model for this kind of work. Compact maps that can be carried while walking or biking would also be valuable.

- > *Update the Open Space Plan in 2005 to maintain state approval and eligibility for open space funding.*

The Conservation Commission should take the lead on this updating process. The Open Space Plan should seek to identify types of valuable unprotected open space and, where possible, parcels, along with the environmental and community values that make these spaces significant. These characteristics will assist in the development of the proposed Greenway Open Space and Recreation subdivisions, described above.

- > *Include boards and commissions with planning and regulatory responsibilities in the development of a system of interboard and commission notice and coordination for development review*

- > *Seek collaboration with neighboring communities in the management of common open space resources such as Lost Pond Conservation Area.*

- > *Preserve the visual character and contribution of privately owned open space throughout Brookline, particularly in higher density residential neighborhoods where both physical and visual access to open space is limited.*

- > *Consider creating a standing task force representing open space, affordable housing, and commercial interests to balance these competing interests and set priorities for specific parcels.*

Such a joint committee could enable the Town to respond preemptively in a coordinated way to some of the difficult choices regarding trade-offs between these important public goods.

### **Design and Physical Improvements**

- > *Create a Brookline Heritage Greenway Trail.*
  - This trail is proposed as a combined pedestrian and bicycle route to link all major open space, school, pedestrian path, and cultural destinations. After the route is laid out, simple early implementation phases, such as a trail map and basic signage, could help build support for later phases requiring more investment.

- The conceptual trail route would provide a way to link Brookline neighborhoods across the Route Nine and Putterham Circle barriers with signal adjustments, curb extensions, crosswalks in materials other than asphalt, and signage. Specific intersections would be identified during initial layout of the trail route.

> *Commercial open space, which consists primarily of sidewalks, street trees, and other pedestrian amenities, should be maintained and improved.*

The recommendations of the Commercial Areas streetscape master plan should be implemented.

## RECREATION

### Trends and Challenges

In 2001 the Brookline Recreation Department commissioned an assessment of recreation needs through a written survey, focus groups, and a public meeting. Among the major findings of this study are:

- The most frequently visited facilities are neighborhood parks and athletic fields.
- The majority of respondents have used the Larz Anderson Park Picnic Area.
- Over two-thirds of respondents indicated an interest in these areas (in order of popularity): performing arts, outdoor fitness, indoor fitness, arts and crafts, environmental activities, special events, aquatics, self-improvement, and sports and athletics.
- The most important needs are park beautification, nature areas, nature walks and hiking trails, a year-round fitness center, and restrooms.
- The most significant program needs are for summer concerts (which currently exist), programs for adults, and exercise classes.
- More than 50% of respondents believe Brookline needs a year-round fitness center, a multi-use central sports center, an outdoor pool, and athletic fields.
- Nearly 90% of respondents are willing to pay user fees for new recreational opportunities.
- Second only to lack of time, the greatest barrier to participation or attendance was lack of information.

Some existing facilities are used by relatively small numbers of respondents: the skating rink, tennis courts, Main Gym, golf course, and Soule Recreation Center. The consultants who prepared the needs assessment suggested that the level of usage for the existing pool and

skating rink and of the gym and Soule Recreation Center should be evaluated when considering new facilities. It may be possible to expand the way existing resources can meet newly identified needs before building new facilities.

Cooperative athletic-field-use agreements exist with four of Brookline's private educational institutions: Beaver Country Day School, Park School, Hellenic College, and Pine Manor College. An athletic field is planned for the landfill site, which should alleviate some of the competition for limited field space and times. In addition, a field is expected to occupy some of the open space portion of the Fisher Hill reservoir reuse site.

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## Existing programs and facilities

The Recreation Department offers a wide variety of recreation programs serving Brookline residents of all ages, such as the following:

- RAFT – Recreation Activities for Teens
- Brookline Golden Age Club
- Brookline Swimming Pool programs
- Summer Day Camps
- Putterham Golf Course
- Main Gym leagues
- Larz Anderson skating rink
- Soule Recreation Center
- Early childhood and after school programs
- Environmental Education programs

A recreation revolving fund program covers all costs of programming.

The Town has several new and ongoing master plans for important parks and recreational facilities:

- Larz Anderson Park
- Putterham Golf Course
- Emerald Necklace
- Newton Street Landfill

## GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

- Provide more outdoor fitness opportunities, such as hiking trails.
- Provide more indoor fitness opportunities.
- Provide additional performing arts opportunities.

## POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS

- Continue maintaining and beautifying parks.
- Expand the number of fields and availability of programs to residents of all ability levels.
- Expand outreach and publicity about recreational facilities and programs.

## STRATEGIES

### Management

- > *Prepare a Park and Recreation facilities master plan through collaboration of the Department of Public Works' Division of Parks and Open Space, Recreation Department, School Department, School Committee, Conservation Commission, and the Park and Recreation Commission.*
- > *Continue maintenance and beautification of parks.*
- > *Prepare a feasibility study for a fitness center.*
- > *Prepare a feasibility study for an outdoor pool.*
- > *Develop performing arts programs such as children's theatre, and classes for adults and children.*
- > *Implement the nine-year hole golf course capital plan.*
- > *Continue to pursue opportunities for access to recreational facilities and for joint public-private financing of recreational facilities.*

### Design and Physical Improvements

- > *Organize a collaborative process including the Preservation Commission, Conservation Commission, and private groups to*

*locate, develop, design, and sign a Brookline Greenway Heritage Trail as a townwide pedestrian and bicycle route.*

- > Maintain and reconstruct public paths when needed.*
- > Pursue master plans and improvement programs for parks including Monmouth Park, Larz Anderson Park, Riverway Park, Dane Park, Winthrop Square and Longwood Mall.*
- > Pursue playground and playing field improvements including upgrading equipment and fields.*
- > Rehabilitate and upgrade recreational facilities including the swimming pool, tennis courts, basketball courts, and the golf course.*
- > Identify a site for an indoor rink and prepare a feasibility study.*



# Plan Elements: C. Land Use and Housing

## INTRODUCTION

**B**rookline in 2015 will be home to between 56,000 and 61,000 people. These estimates can be compared to a population of just over 57,000 in 2000, and almost 59,000 in 1970.

The character and quality of life in the town's neighborhoods is one of the Brookline's key attractions, and maintaining that quality of life will depend on understanding and managing change in land uses in the Town. Brookline's many advantages as an appealing residential community close to Boston have made its housing among the most expensive in the state. These features also make the town attractive to developers – providing they can find land or redevelopment opportunities.

The discussion in this Plan Element focuses on the issues of market-rate and mixed-income residential development. Affordable housing is discussed in its own Plan Element. Commercial development is discussed in the Economic Development element. Much of the discussion in the Neighborhoods and Districts key element also pertains to land use issues.

### **LAND USE AND HOUSING VISION**

Any new development proposed in Brookline will demonstrate that it complements existing uses and the character of the Town as a primarily residential community with a particular range of building types and densities.

# Population Trends

Brookline’s population peaked in 1970 at 58,886 and its demographic profile has changed substantially over the last generation. Some of these long-term changes reflect national demographic trends, such as smaller household size, more single-person households, fewer family households, a reduction in the school age population, and increases in the pre-school age population. For example, the average household size in Brookline has dropped from 2.76 persons in 1960 to 2.18 persons in 2000. The senior citizen population grew as a proportion of the population during the 1970 to 1990 period but declined somewhat in a proportional sense between 1990 and 2000. Further details on these long-term trends are available in the *Issues and Opportunities* report on Housing.

## BROOKLINE POPULATION & HOUSING CHANGES, 1990–2000

	1990	2000	% Change
Total population	54,718	57,107	4.4
Total households	24,357	25,594	4.7
Total housing units	25,353	26,413	4.2
Total owner-occupied year-round housing	10,500	11,583	10.3
Total renter-occupied year-round housing units	13,857	14,011	1.1
Vacancy rate for ownership year-round units	0.7	0.5	-28.6
Vacancy rate for rental year-round units	1.5	2.1	40

Source: US Census 1990, 2000

In the 1990s, Brookline’s population grew modestly but the number of households grew slightly faster than the population, reflecting smaller household sizes. While a majority of housing units continued to be occupied by renters, the proportion of owner-occupied units increased significantly, while the number of rental units increased very little.

Family households (persons related by blood or law) in 2000 constituted 66% of all owner-occupied households and 34% of all renter-occupied households. Families with children made up 30% of all owner occupants and 17% of all renter households. Compared to the larger region, Brookline has fewer households with children, more single-person households, and more households made up of unrelated persons.

Brookline has a higher proportion of its population in the young adult (20 to 34) age group and a smaller proportion of children and of elderly than the metropolitan region’s 20 Inner Core communities. People in the retirement age group appear to be leaving Brookline.

**HOUSEHOLD TYPES, 2000 (% OF TOTAL HOUSEHOLDS)**

	Brookline	Greater Boston (161 Cities/Towns)
Single Person Households	37%	29%
Unrelated Person Households	15%	8%
Households with children under 18	22%	30%
Married Couples	39%	48%
Female-Headed Households with children	4%	6%

*Source: Greater Boston Housing Report Card, 2002*

**Growth Trends**

After a growth spurt during the 1960s, when Brookline added an average of 358 new housing units annually, the average increase in housing units every year has remained remarkably stable. Since 1970, Brookline has added an average of 107 units of housing every year. Housing growth over the course of the 1990s conformed to this model: 1,060 units created during the decade for an annual average of 106. If Brookline were to continue this average annual level of housing production until 2020, the number of housing units in Town would be 27,483 in 2010 and 28,553 in 2020.

**GROWTH IN HOUSING UNITS, 1970–2000**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Units</i>	<i>Average Annual Growth</i>
<b>1970</b>	23,213	357.6
<b>1980</b>	24,369	115.6
<b>1990</b>	25,353	98.4
<b>2000</b>	26,413	106

*Source: US Census*

In a broad statistical sense, Brookline did not grow more rapidly during the 1990s than in the previous two decades. There is no reason to expect that the pace of growth is likely to be substantially different over the course of several decades in the future. Higher growth could occur if large properties currently in institutional use or currently developed at low densities were to be redeveloped. Growth will also depend on market conditions, which in the late 1980s and late 1990s were very favorable for residential development, but softened in the early 1990s and early 2000s because of economic recessions.

**HIGH GROWTH PROJECTION, 2000–2025**

<b>High Growth Projection 2000-2025</b>		
	<i>Population at 2 persons per household**</i>	<i>Population at 2.18 persons per household**</i>
<b>2000 census</b>	n/a	57,107
<b>2010</b>	54,966	59,913
<b>2015</b>	56,036	61,079

\*\* 2000 Census, average persons per household = 2.18  
 Projections are based on the Brookline Department of Planning & Community Development's "Permitting and Construction Activity Report" for expected creation of units during the period 2000 to 2005. All housing units are assumed to be occupied.

The charts here project two growth scenarios—one based on long-term housing trends and one based on more recent trends. The higher-growth scenario is based on the census 30-year average annual growth trend in housing units (107 per year) and two slightly different assumptions about the number of persons per household. In 2000, there was an average of 2.18 persons per household in Brookline. Average household size, however, has been declining throughout the country in recent decades, due to the growth in single-person households and a trend towards smaller families.

Using 2.18 persons per household, a high-growth projection would result in a 2015 population of 61,079, assuming that all housing units are occupied, which is never the case. If we assume a decline in average household size to 2.0 persons per household and continue assuming 100% occupancy of housing units, the projected number of housing units in 2015 would result in a population of 56,036. This would still be below the high point of Brookline’s population during the last 73 years: the 1970 population of 58,886. Official projections from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) are roughly similar.

A more conservative growth scenario is based on the 406 housing units permitted and expected to be constructed during the five-year period of 2001 to 2005. This recent trend results in a lower average annual production of 81 new units a year. Using the same alternatives for average

**MAPC PROJECTIONS, 2000–2025**

	<i>Population</i>
<b>2000 census</b>	57,107
<b>2010</b>	57,281
<b>2015</b>	59,221
<b>2020</b>	61,046
<b>2025</b>	61,175

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## CONSERVATIVE GROWTH PROJECTION, 2000–2025

	<i>Population at 2 persons per household**</i>	<i>Population at 2.18 persons per household**</i>
<b>2000 census</b>	n/a	57,107
<b>2010</b>	54,396	59,292
<b>2015</b>	55,206	60,175
<b>2020</b>	56,016	61,057
<b>2025</b>	56,826	61,940

\*\* 2000 Census, average persons per household = 2.18

*Projections are based on the Brookline Department of Planning & Community Development's "Permitting and Construction Activity Report" for expected creation of units during the period 2000 to 2005. All housing units are assumed to be occupied.*

household size as in the previous scenario as well as the assumption of 100% occupancy of housing units, this scenario results in a 2015 population range of 55,206 (below the 2000 population total because of the lower assumed average size of households) to 60,175.

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## Composition of Housing Stock

Even if the overall trends in the creation of housing units show stability over the last generation, the composition of the housing stock—the distribution of different types of housing—could have changed. A comparison of 1990 and 2000 census data show that the proportion of housing units that are single-family or in multifamily buildings of different sizes has not changed significantly. More recent reports from the Town Assessor's office locate 48% of Brookline's housing units in buildings containing nine or more units, indicating a recent movement toward a greater proportion of units in larger buildings. While 17% of the town's housing is in single-family homes, 75% of Town land is zoned for single family residences.

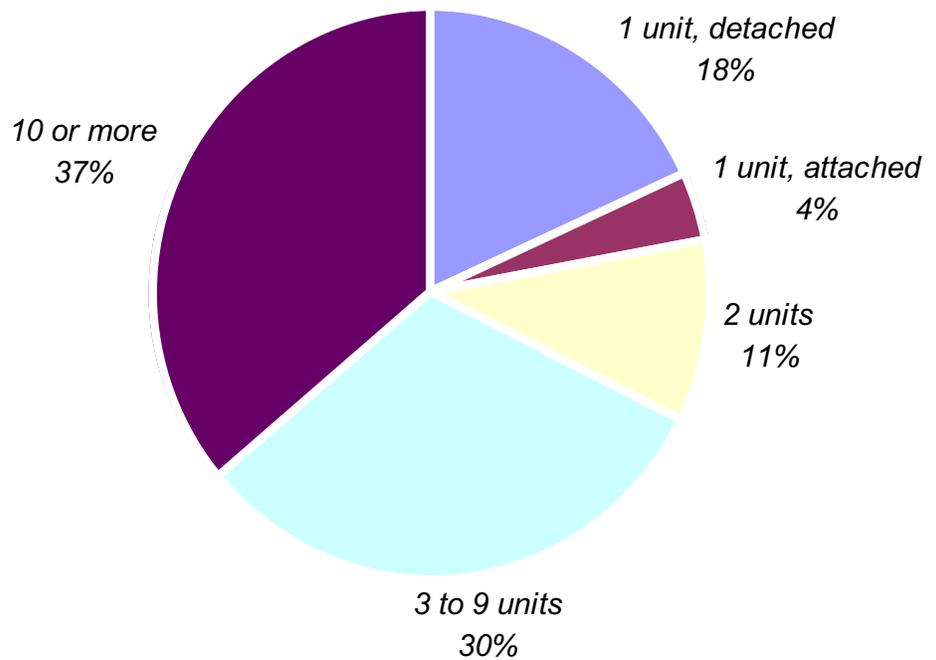
The majority of *housing units* are renter-occupied (55%), but a slight majority of *residents* (51%) live in owner-occupied units. The change that has occurred since 1970 is in the ownership profile of multifamily buildings. Rental apartments have been converted into condominiums and new condos have been built. Between 1980 and 2000, the number of condos increased 373% and by 2000 accounted for 29% of all housing units in Brookline. Nonetheless, the impact of the conversion of rental units to condominiums has been mitigated by the ownership of many condominiums by investors who continued to provide them for rental. As of January 2003, 34% of Brookline's 8,078 condos were occupied by renters and 19% of all renters were leasing condominiums.

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## COMPOSITION OF HOUSING UNITS, 2000

Type of building in which units are located (source: U.S. Census)

Renter households who have moved since 1995 account for 41% of Brookline's total households and half of these households are headed by persons between the ages of 25 and 34. In contrast, while the overall senior (65+) population in Brookline has declined over the past decade, this has affected homeowners and renters differently. Although there has been a small increase (5%) in senior owner-occupants, there has been a dramatic decrease (32%) in the percentage of senior renters.



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## Infrastructure

There are no significant water or sewer infrastructure barriers to development in Brookline. The school system has additional capacity overall, but individual schools are sometimes crowded and the impacts of individual developments on the schools would need to be studied as part of the development review process. The biggest constraints on development are road and parking infrastructure because of the potential traffic impacts of new housing. Management of these impacts is critical to sustaining the quality of life for Brookline residents.

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## Residential Development Density

Most use patterns are fairly well established and the usual discussion related to a development proposals, about whether a developer is proposing too many units or too much commercial space on a site. The guiding document to answer these sorts of questions is the Town's zoning by-law.

There are several maps in the *Issues and Opportunities* report on housing that show where development density exceeds that permitted by zoning, and where it is below the level currently permitted by zoning. Town residents and officials need to think carefully about whether the messages in the Zoning By-law match the vision for the future of the Town outlined in the Comprehensive Plan.

The challenges resulting from infill development, redevelopment, and potential subdivision include:

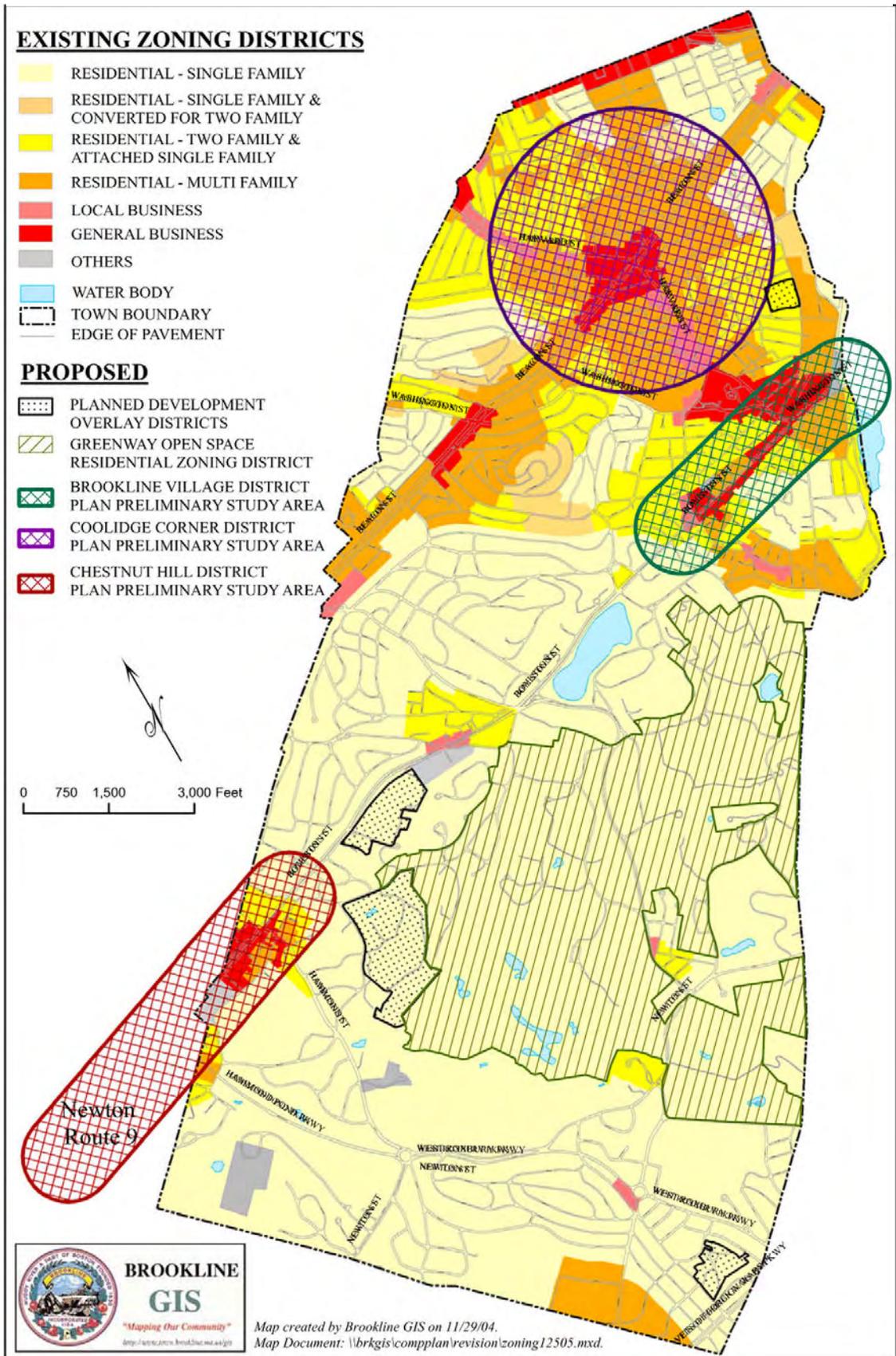
- *The sensitivity of neighborhoods to infill development.* Neighborhood concerns about height and bulk of new buildings, additional traffic, and loss of open space make all kinds of infill development, whether affordable or market, subject to intense scrutiny by neighborhood residents. In some neighborhoods that are zoned for multi-family housing, single-family, two-family and small multi-family buildings coexist. Redevelopment of a substantial number of single family or two-family homes into multi-family buildings can bring significant change to the character of blocks, streets, and entire neighborhoods. Residents value the diversity in building types and often seek to preserve a balance.
- *Constraints on upper-story housing development in commercial areas.* Mixed-use development in commercial areas, including upper story housing in buildings with ground floor retail has many benefits. It directs growth away from existing neighborhoods. It provides greater density of potential shoppers and clients for the shops and service providers in commercial areas. Because commercial areas lie on trolley and bus lines, there is greater likelihood that residents in these areas would not need to own cars. Despite this fact, parking would still be necessary, and one of the greatest constraints to this kind of development is the need for off-street overnight parking.
- *Protecting open-space character.* When new construction is proposed that encroaches on private open spaces, neighbors are often concerned about the loss of open space character as well as environmental impacts.
- *Tear-downs and “mansionization.”* A number of Boston-area communities are finding that in neighborhoods of smaller, single-family homes built in the 1950s and 1960s, land has become more valuable than houses and new buyers are tearing down the houses to build much larger homes. Brookline faces a different kind of “tear-down” phenomenon in which small multifamily buildings are demolished to build larger ones, or single- or two-family homes in multifamily districts are replaced by larger apartment buildings, changing the character of streets and neighborhoods. Although this phenomenon is not yet widespread in Brookline, it is becoming more common, affecting smaller homes. Indicators include increases in the number of special permits considered by the Board of Appeals and in the number of applications for demolition permits that the Preservation Commission has experienced.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Review existing zoning in parts of Town where the zoning does not match existing land use patterns or densities.*  
These areas should be studied as part of other projects, such as District Plans, or through separate zoning studies.
- > *Establish Greenway Open Space Residential (GOSR) cluster zoning as of right in the large-lot S-40 (about a one-acre minimum) and S-25 (about a half-acre minimum) residential zoning districts*  
See the “Natural Resources, Open Space, Parks and Recreation” element for more details on this strategy.
- > *Create Planned Development Districts (PDD) as special permit zoning overlays for institutional properties and large multifamily properties such as Hancock Village.*  
The PDD provides additional flexibility for master planning large sites. Basic standards for open space, building types, affordable housing, parking, and design would be laid out in the PDD regulations. In the permitting process the developer would work with the Town to create a unique development plan designed to fit the needs of the Town as well as the developer by specifying the distribution of uses, detailed design standards and acceptable materials.
- > *Permit multifamily housing in office and commercial districts with ground level retail and business uses.*  
Consider providing for flexibility in meeting parking requirements for upper-story residences in commercial districts within a half mile of public transportation stops by allowing a contribution to a parking fund in lieu of on-site parking.
- > *Consider implementing a lot-coverage maximum for single-family districts based on a study of prevailing neighborhood character as a way of moderating tendencies toward mansionization.*  
Current regulations use Floor Area Ratio measures to control the size of buildings, as well as constraints on heights and setback rules. However, control of the amount of the lot that can be covered by structures and paving is a more direct way of regulating the footprint of a building and restricting its size.

# Map 7: Land Use and Housing



## GOALS FOR THE FUTURE

- Conserve neighborhood character while accommodating change and town-wide needs.
- Match land use regulations to desired land uses and densities.

## POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS

- Include neighborhood consultation early in the project development process.
- Identify standards of acceptable and unacceptable development for particular areas through neighborhood plans and make the development process more efficient by communicating these standards to project proponents.
- Make sure that zoning matches desired land uses and densities throughout Town through Neighborhood Plans, District Plans, and other planning processes.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Review the Zoning By-law for nonconformity conditions that serve no purpose and revise the by-law as needed.*  
For example, southern Brookline neighborhoods with a majority of 5,000-square-foot lots have a minimum zoning lot size of 7,000. This means that many property owners have to seek variances at the Board of Appeals for very minor changes.
- > *Review regulations that affect the edges between private spaces and the public realm of streets, sidewalks and public spaces.*  
For example, revise the by-law on fences, requiring design review if fences are (a) completely opaque and over 4 feet high, OR (b) over 6 feet high whether opaque or not. Provide standards and guidelines in text and graphics for a range of acceptable fences as-of-right and types of fences that require design review.

## **Management and Planning**

> *Create Neighborhood and District Plans.*

See the “Neighborhoods and Districts” section for more information on this strategy.

> *Enhance communication among neighborhoods, town government and project proponents in land use, density and design decisions.*

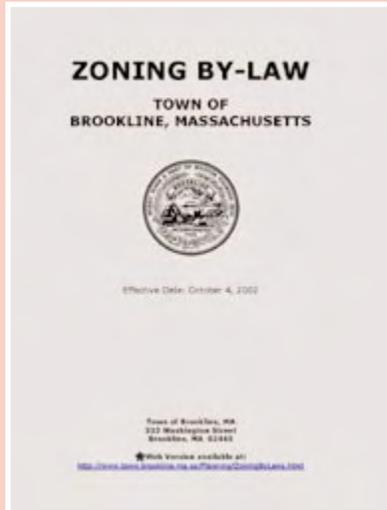
Provide timely notification of proposed projects or other development changes to neighborhood groups. Include neighborhood representation on Design Advisory Teams.

## ZONING TOOLS

The Comprehensive Plan recommends many new zoning tools that may help accomplish its goals. These zoning tools are summarized here.

### **Greenway Open Space/Residential Cluster Subdivisions**

Clustered development would allow the preservation of significant open space without requiring acquisition by the Town. Recently passed state legislation allows for cluster or open space subdivision development by right instead of through a special permit process with an underlying conventional zoning district. Conventional subdivisions are by right under state law, so developers tend to prefer using that tool rather than proposing a cluster subdivision. By allowing cluster subdivisions by right in appropriate locations, the Town will make it more likely that developers will use this tool. A revised cluster development law focused on preserving open space character, coupled with the site plan and design review process, would still provide the Town with a considerable role in shaping the character of a by-right cluster development. This zoning tool would introduce a new environmental assessment process for a priority parcel or site prior to submission of a subdivision, cluster or other development plan.



### **Open Space Zones**

Many communities reinforce the protection of open space by putting all permanently protected open space in an open space zoning district. The zoning typically limits the amount and size of any buildings and restricts buildings and uses to those that support open space purposes.

### **Planned Development Districts**

The PDD provides additional flexibility for master planning large sites. Basic standards for open space, building types, affordable housing, parking, and design would be laid out in the PDD regulations. In the permitting process the developer would work with the Town to create a unique development plan designed to fit the needs of the Town as well as the developer by specifying the distribution of uses, detailed design standards and acceptable materials, and so on, while allowing for sensitive and innovative design of the site to accommodate a variety of uses and activities.

### **Parking Districts**

Parking Districts would be a zoning overlays in primarily commercial districts in which required parking could be reduced or waived in exchange for payment-in-lieu-of parking provision. Payments would be placed in a fund and used to fund parking improvements. In order for such a Parking District to work, a viable location and plan for such parking improvements must already be in place.

### **Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Overlay Districts**

A Transit Oriented Development Overlay District would be a zoning provision put in place over an existing zoning district in a location where transit access is very good. The TOD Overlay District would provide incentives for developments to take advantage of transit use.

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

In general, a municipality can reduce the value of land by changing the zoning on it, but cannot remove all value from it. Traditionally, municipalities will lower the amount of development allowed on sensitive land, but will not eliminate all rights to develop it. A TDR system creates a system by which, rather than developing sensitive land, the owner can sell the value of that development to the owner of a different parcel of land that is located in a less sensitive area.



In most cases, the Comprehensive Plan recommends that new tools be studied by the Department of Planning and Community Development. During such a review, the Department may determine that the tool will not help accomplish the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. However, in cases where they are seen to be helpful, the Department would submit language creating the new tool to Town Meeting, where it would have to be approved in order to take effect.

In addition to these new tools, the Comprehensive Plan also recommends exploring a number of specific changes to the Zoning By-law, such as a changes from one zoning district to another or the expansion of certain existing tools.

## Design and Density

Density is a numerical measure of the number of people or buildings per acre of land. Dense development can offer a number of advantages over less-dense development: it can be more environmentally friendly, it can promote transit use, and it can contribute to the health of a community by providing customers for local businesses. However, because it is so often used to illustrate levels of crowding, congestion, and overuse of land, density has acquired a negative connotation for many. This connotation overlooks the positive contribution that well-designed, dense developments can make to quality of life.

Increased density is sometimes inconsistent with improving the quality of life in a neighborhood. However, there are reasons why a neighborhood may prefer density to its alternatives. Terms such as "suburban sprawl" are generally thought of as negative terms—but they also refer to less-dense developments.

There are at least five things that should be addressed in order to create a successful development, regardless of its density:

- > **PARKING AND ACCESS**—The development should have an appropriate amount of space to store vehicles, and should provide for safe access to and from that parking.
- > **PRIVACY**—The development should create a feeling among neighbors that their privacy is respected.
- > **PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT**—The development should make it safe and pleasant to walk by and through the area.
- > **PUBLIC SPACE**—The development must not detract from the public spaces nearby, and should seek to add public space of its own if it is going to add a lot of new residents to the area.



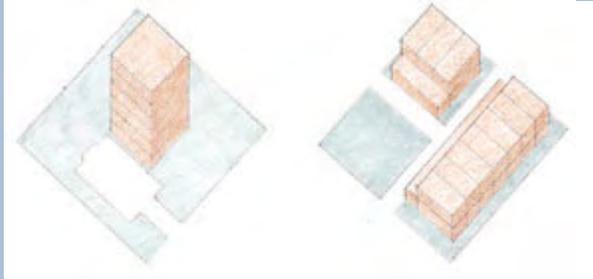
**VARIETY OF COLORS AND MASSING CAN MAKE A DENSE DEVELOPMENT AN ATTRACTIVE ONE**

> **FISCAL IMPACTS**—Some developments pay more in local taxes than they cost the community for provision of additional services. Others do not. The fiscal impacts of a development need to be examined, particularly in the case of relatively large developments where the impacts might be greater.

Think about what attracts people to Coolidge Corner. Generally, people like being able to walk from store to store, perhaps even from their own home. They like people-watching and being able to take advantage of cultural resources. They like being able to take transit. They also like looking at the attractive buildings and landscapes in the area. These characteristics that attract people to Coolidge Corner are only possible because it is one of the denser parts of Brookline. And while people may disagree about whether it should be allowed to become more dense—an issue that can be further explored during the Coolidge Corner District Plan—they also understand that without this density Coolidge Corner would be a less interesting place.

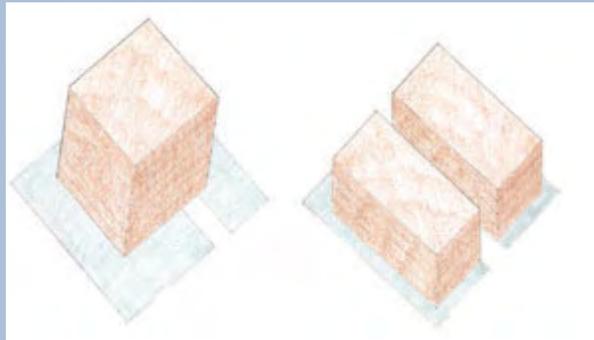
The way a development is designed can have a great impact on how it is perceived by its neighbors. Tall buildings set back from the street are generally less inviting than lower buildings that are located closer to the street and con-

tribute to the local streetscape. For example, look at the following sets of drawings.



**TEN DWELLING  
UNITS PER ACRE**

**FIFTY DWELLING  
UNITS PER ACRE**



Each set shows a specific density of development in two different ways. Within each set, the nature of the design is totally different. In one, the density is placed in a large building, leaving lots of open space around the edges. In another, the density is placed in lower buildings, closer to the street. Each design has some advantages; however, the experience a pedestrian would have on a nearby street is almost certainly better in the right hand drawing. It is not always just how dense a development is, but how it is designed to respect and fit in with the surrounding neighborhood, that really counts.



**DENSE NEIGHBORHOODS  
INCLUDE SOME OF THE MOST  
DESIRABLE PARTS OF THE  
BOSTON AREA**

# Plan Elements: D. Economic Development

## INTRODUCTION

One way to generate new revenue for Town services is through new development. In particular, new commercial development is a powerful resource for allowing the Town to maintain and improve its public services and facilities, for two reasons. First, commercial development is taxed at a higher rate than residential development. While less than nine percent of the total assessed value of the Town is commercial and industrial parcels, they provide over 15% of the taxes. Second, commercial developments generally require fewer services than residential developments. For example, commercial developments do not require additional resources in the public schools and have minimal impacts on other public resources like parks and libraries.

Local governments in Massachusetts are highly dependent on property taxes to raise money. Proposition 2½ limits the revenue that can be generated from existing development. However, it allows new revenue to be generated from new growth, and also permits overrides of its limits if approved by the electorate.

In the past five years (fiscal year 2000 through fiscal year 2004), \$681 million of new development took place in Brookline, of which \$150 million, or 22%, was commercial development. This new growth has added \$10.3 million of new tax revenues over these five years, of which \$3.24 million, or 31%, came from new commercial development.

These additional funds have allowed Brookline to maintain its school system, plow its roads, and provide other public services that it might not have been able to provide without new development. While new developments do present challenges, and are sometimes simply not appropriate to their context, it is important to understand that new development provides these benefits to the Town.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VISION

Appropriate new mixed-use and commercial development will be encouraged. Businesses in commercial areas will be fostered.

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### Trends and Challenges

Brookline's commercial districts are a vital part of the town's unique character. The Comprehensive Plan process focused on steps needed to sustain the businesses in these areas as well as opportunities to promote new commercial and mixed-use development within existing commercial areas and within underutilized areas, primarily along Route Nine. Background information on the element can be found in the *Issues and Opportunities* report on economic development.

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### Existing Businesses

The Town's Economic Development Office and the Economic Development Advisory Board have evaluated current trends and conditions in the Town's commercial areas in *The State of Brookline Business 2002*. This assessment documents current conditions and future needs as seen by commercial landlords and brokers, independent retailers, chain store managers, and consumers.

The areas of most importance highlighted by each of these groups were similar:

- *Inadequate parking supplies.* The limited availability of parking has been identified by both businesses and consumers as a factor affecting the continued vitality of commercial areas.
- *High cost of retail space.* Retailers have identified high costs in terms of rents and taxes as a cause for concern. These are especially important factors for the many independent retailers favored by town residents. Consumers have identified the high cost of products in the commercial areas as an obstacle to supporting local businesses.
- *Limited marketing budgets.* Brookline's independent stores/restaurants have highlighted the difficulty of reaching a wide audience in one of





the nation's top ten most expensive media markets. Chain stores can generally obtain better media penetration.

- *Limited public gathering areas and pedestrian amenities.* Providing enhanced opportunities for people to congregate and “people watch” within the commercial areas would provide an enhanced sense of identity and contribute to attracting more people to the commercial areas and extending their length of stay. Improvements in terms of maintenance, the physical condition of sidewalks, and vacant storefront were also seen as needed.

Advancing strategies to increase daytime shopping has also been identified by the Town as an important aspect of assisting businesses to increase sales.

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## New Development

Brookline has experienced modest new commercial growth over the last decade, reflecting the scarcity of suitable sites and their relatively modest size. These factors mean that the Town must play a very active role in promoting and supporting appropriate commercial growth if it is to be successful in increasing commercial tax revenues. Strategies will need to include outreach to businesses and landowners, provision of technical assistance, zoning changes, public improvements (including increased parking), and the use or redevelopment of Town property, primarily consisting of surface parking lots. Many of these strategies have recently been used to great success by the Town in advancing the development of the new Webster Street Hotel where the Town played a major role in advancing a project that is anticipated to contribute approximately \$600,000 in annual tax revenue. Potential new development falls broadly into two categories:



1. *Infill Development Within Existing Commercial Districts.* Infill development represents a unique opportunity to enrich the character of commercial districts, drawing in new investment, businesses, and residents. Infill development generally refers to small- to mid-size development within existing commercial districts. Development would typically occur as 3-4 story buildings with retail uses on the ground floor and office or residential uses on upper levels. Several of Brookline's existing commercial districts include single-story buildings located amid multi-story structures. Several locations in Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village, and other areas provide opportunities for accommodating infill development that can provide an opportunity for new businesses as well as attract new residents to upper floors within commercial districts. Very limited infill development has occurred in commercial areas as a result of the limited economic incentives to pursue smaller-scale development and the difficulties associated with finding adequate space to accommodate parking required by the Zoning By-law or desired by building occupants.
2. *Route Nine Commercial and Mixed Use Development.* The Comprehensive Plan process has highlighted the potential of the Route Nine corridor to support planned commercial growth and provide enhanced community commercial centers or villages. Several properties along Route Nine present redevelopment opportunities that can enhance the attractiveness of this corridor. Redevelopment of these properties can also enhance connections to surrounding neighborhoods, connections across the corridor, and expand the Town's commercial tax base.

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## Workforce Development

While many of the residents of Brookline have adequate training and education to find jobs in the Boston area, there are still residents who lack the appropriate workforce skills to find a good job. Since Brookline is so close to Boston, Cambridge, and other employment centers, the most effective way to ensure that these residents can find employment would be to provide job training. Brookline Adult and Continuing Education and Brookline High School currently provide some workforce training opportunities. In the next 10 years, the Town should make sure that these opportunities continue to exist and that new training opportunities are made available when necessary.

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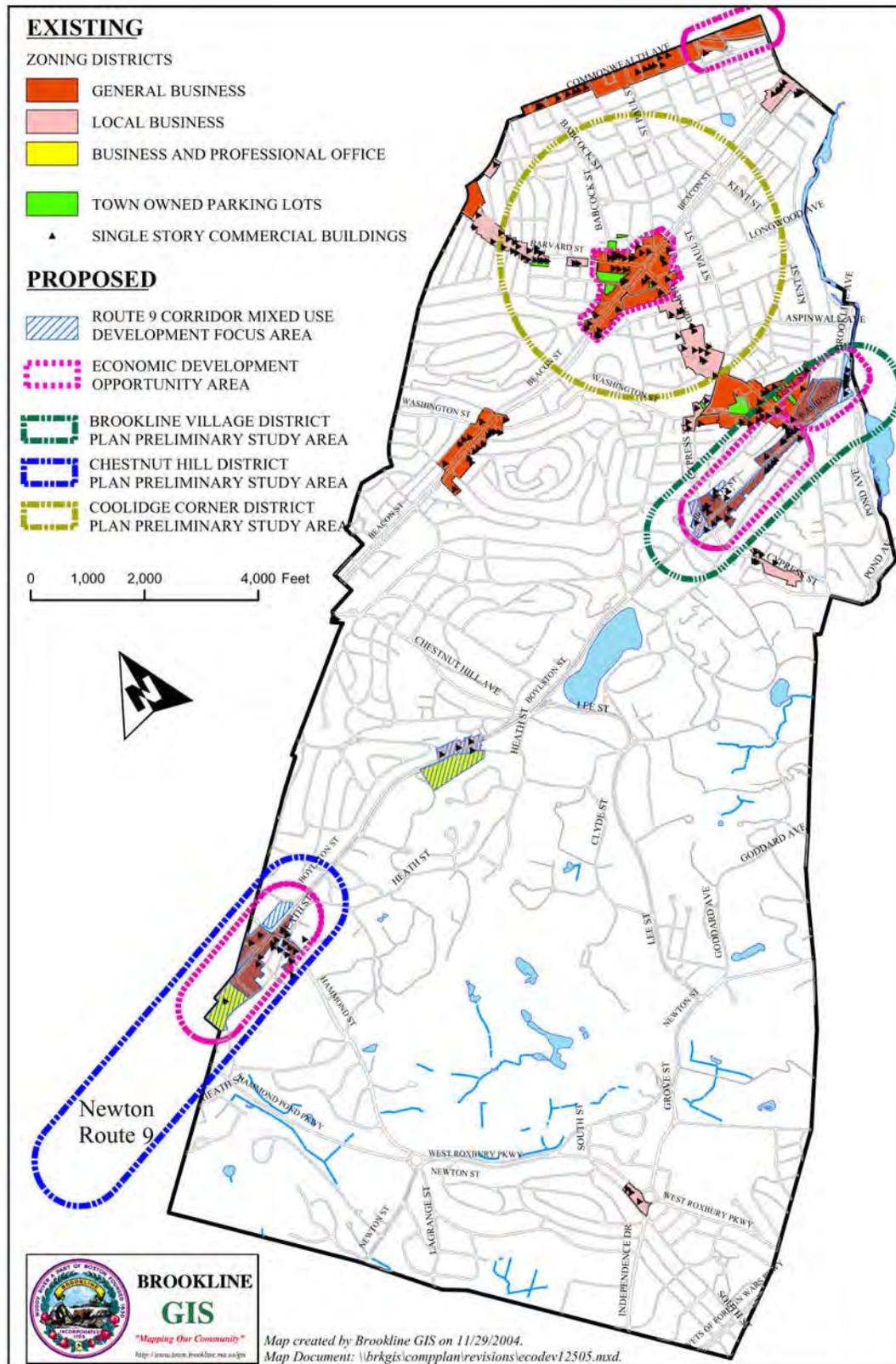
## Plans and Projects Underway

The Brookline Economic Development Office is working with the business community on several initiatives:

- Preparation of detailed design plans for streetscape and civic space improvements in commercial areas based on the Commercial Areas Streetscape Master Plan
- Development of a commercial area prototype kiosk and evaluation of siting options
- Funding support for the 1st Light Festival
- Façade Loan Program
- Business retention and attraction
- Public/Private collaboration for the production of marketing materials to support local businesses, such as a Coolidge Corner Merchants Map, a Brookline Village independent business information card, and *Experience Brookline, A Visitor's Guide to Brookline*



# Map 8: Economic Development



## **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Enhance and maintain existing commercial areas.
- Promote commercial development that serves the community and enhances the livability of the town.
- Expand commercial tax revenues.

## **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Encourage appropriate economic growth while preserving and enhancing the character of neighborhoods and foster the prosperity of businesses in commercial areas.
- Support appropriate new growth in designated areas along Route Nine and in Coolidge Corner, and longer term over the Massachusetts Turnpike.
- Seek opportunities to improve parking conditions in existing commercial areas.
- Support initiatives to enhance the public environment in commercial areas by implementing the Commercial Areas Streetscape Master Plan.
- Support efforts to enhance the visibility of the commercial areas through special events and marketing.
- Improve communications between Town Departments and businesses.
- Promote well-designed mixed-use infill development in existing commercial areas.
- Promote redevelopment of underutilized properties along Route Nine.
- Encourage workforce training for Brookline residents with a variety of skills and education levels.
- Encourage sustainability in economic development through promotion of mass transit use and environmentally friendly businesses and development practices.
- Pursue projects with positive impacts for the community: new services or opportunities; net increase in new revenues; manageable traffic impacts; new amenities.
- Balance business development and neighborhood preservation through predictable and open development and regulatory processes.
- Preserve and enhance commercial area character through respect for the historic and architectural fabric of neighborhood context and by preserving pedestrian-oriented scale and design of buildings.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Explore zoning incentives to support development of mixed-use infill development in commercial areas with commercial use at the sidewalk and first floor level.*

Consider a waiver from FAR and parking requirements for smaller development projects that conform with established height and setback conditions and regulations.

- > *Revise zoning to establish limits on the development of residential use on the ground floor in commercial districts to preserve the continuity of commercial frontages.*

Limit residential and parking uses to no more than 40% of the frontage of parcels in business zones.

- > *Revise zoning to provide additional controls on the development of retail and restaurant uses over 10,000 square feet in area in General Business Zones; allow these uses by special permit only.*

- > *Revise zoning in Chestnut Hill Village to advance future development in accordance with the Route Nine recommendations of this plan; revise Planning Board design guidelines.*

Revise zoning on selected parcels on the west side of Route Nine from G-1.0 to G-2.0; revise design guidelines for this entire area to incorporate the vision outlined in the Focus Area section of this plan; allow mixed-use development including residential use in O-2.0 zones.

- > *Revise zoning in the Brookline Village/Brookline Place area to advance development consistent with the Route Nine recommendations of this plan described in the Route Nine element.*

Amend zoning regulations and design guidelines at Brookline Place to allow increased building height, contingent on meeting public benefit incentives and design guidelines.

- > *As part of district plans, examine incentives for office development in Brookline Village / Route Nine and Coolidge Corner, including mixed-use development, and evaluate zoning changes suitable to attract this development.*

- > *Adopt a by-law to standardize the placement and maintenance of news racks in order to reduce clutter.*

## Management and Planning

> *Work with the state and the Town's neighbors to create a cohesive regional vision for Route Nine that accommodates the Town's desire for planned commercial growth that strengthens the character of established village centers.*

> *During the development of the Coolidge Corner District Plan, examine options for expanding parking in Coolidge Corner while also exploring the impact additional parking might have on the district.*

> *Initiate a study to assess the actions needed to promote infill development in commercial areas.*

This study should involve property owners, developers, business groups, and neighbors in evaluating the specific barriers to advancing infill development (from market, development feasibility, and community/neighborhood perspectives) and the concrete steps needed to overcome these barriers. Key issues to be evaluated will be the provision of parking (both from a zoning and development feasibility/financing perspective) and possible establishment of a parking fund that would be used by the Town to finance the development of parking to serve new infill developments. Potential Floor Area Ratio waivers might be considered for small infill projects where full development of the project would have a beneficial impact on the character of the surrounding district. Consideration should be given to a range of project use mixes (residential and/or commercial) and sizes.

> *Assess long term opportunities to advance air-rights development over the Massachusetts Turnpike that is compatible with Town goals and Comprehensive Plan priorities.*

Undertake the study in conjunction with the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority, the City of Boston, area landowners including Boston University and interested citizens and neighbors.

> *Create a formal referral process from the Building Department to the Economic Development Office.*

> *Advance a series of initiatives through the Economic Development Office to improve Brookline's "business-friendly" profile.*

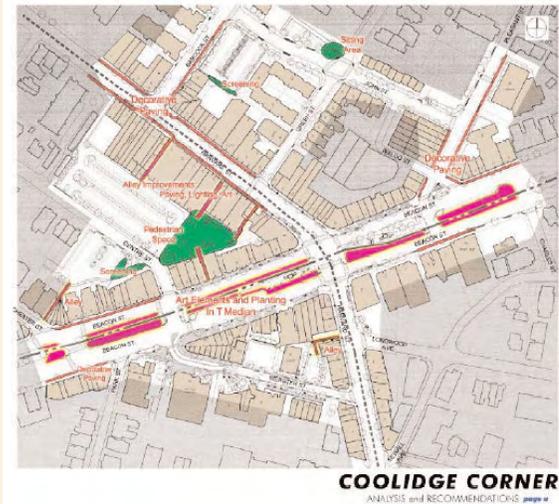
- Create a "How to Open a Business in Brookline" pamphlet.
- Publish a joint Guide to the Town's Commercial Areas Program and Facade and Sign Guidelines.

- > *Market to the Longwood Medical and Academic Area with transportation arrangements through the MASCO shuttle.*
- > *Create an office tenant recruitment plan to bring more daytime employees to commercial areas.*
- > *Work with local arts and other organizations to create events and programming and coordinate with businesses to benefit trade.*
- > *Prepare a market study and marketing plan for retail and service business recruitment.*
- > *Retain existing signage standards and review process but provide more assistance to businesses in the permitting process.*
- > *Create and periodically update a publication with examples of creative by-law-compliant signage.*
- > *Continue to pursue planning studies to understand the Brookline market better similar to the State of Brookline Business report and focus group interviews.*
- > *Recruit and facilitate projects: assist projects through construction.*
- > *Enhance visibility and promote businesses through festivals, programming, and media.*
- > *Explore the feasibility of creating additional office space through redevelopment of existing buildings as well as new construction.*
- > *Use the Brookline Adult and Continuing Education Program, Brookline High School, and other appropriate avenues to provide workforce training to Brookline residents*
- > *Consider creation of a standing task force representing open space, affordable housing, and commercial interests to balance these competing interests and set priorities with regard to specific parcels.*

Such a joint committee could enable the Town to respond proactively in a coordinated way to some of the difficult choices regarding trade-offs between these public goods.

## Design and Physical Improvements

- > Create new public gathering places and improved sidewalk areas pursuant to the Commercial Areas Streetscape Master Plan.
- > Develop a long term plan for burying utilities, especially in heavily-travelled parts of Town.
- > Consider a public art program in public works projects.
- > As part of district and neighborhood plans, evaluate the need for and seek appropriate opportunities for additional off-street parking and shared parking in Coolidge Corner, Brookline Village/Route Nine, Washington Square, and Chestnut Hill.
- > Design and implement a consistent, town-wide signage program for parking in conjunction with streetscape improvements.
- > Enhance the attractiveness of business areas through beautification programs: streetscape improvements; façade loans; kiosk design and placement; and plantings and green space.



## COMMERCIAL AREAS STREETScape MASTER PLAN

## Financial

- > Consider the feasibility of establishing a Business Improvement District (BID) to provide for maintenance, programming, and other business services in the Coolidge Corner area.
- > Secure funding for implementation of the Commercial Areas Streetscape Master Plan
- > As part of district plans, assess the need for public off-street parking and alternative funding strategies for its construction or relocation, especially in Coolidge Corner.



# Plan Elements: E. Transportation and Mobility

## INTRODUCTION

**T**ransportation and mobility are especially important factors in shaping the quality of life of Brookline residents. The Town's automobile, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian networks support local and regional trips associated with work, shopping, recreation, healthcare, and educational and cultural pursuits. Due to its proximity to Boston, Cambridge, and Newton, many of Brookline's primary streets are used to traverse the Town. State Route Nine is an especially important regional route that serves to divide the southern portion of the Town. Brookline is directly served by three branches of the MBTA's Green Line that provide access to employment centers in Boston and Cambridge. Connecting MBTA bus lines provide good transit access to most areas of the Town as well as to commuter rail in West Roxbury. Supplementary transit services are available for seniors and for persons with disabilities.

As a community within a larger urbanized region, Brookline acting alone has only limited ability to improve transit service or control congestion on heavily-traveled roadway corridors within the Town. Consequently, an important aspect of enhancing transportation and mobility involves initiating and participating actively in partnerships with neighboring communities and the state to create regional solutions. Local transportation initiatives can also play an important role in enhancing mobility and the quality of life within the Town. These include improvements to signalization, neighborhood traffic management, commercial area parking, support for transit-oriented development, and continued efforts to provide enhanced facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians.

The focus for the transportation element is on enhancing transportation and parking options for the entire Brookline community while minimizing impacts of traffic on residential neighborhoods. As there are limited opportunities to increase the capacity of the roadway network, the focus is on efforts to improve the overall efficiency of the system.

## TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY VISION

The ability of Town residents to travel within Brookline and to other parts of the region will be maintained and alternatives to the automobile will be encouraged.

### Trends and Challenges

Brookline's historic development along rail transit lines means that many Town residents enjoy excellent access to transit. Approximately 29% of residents, according to the 2000 Census, take public transportation to work, high by regional standards.

However, nearly 53% of residents drive (45% drive alone and the rest carpool), potentially reflecting dispersed regional employment patterns,

more limited access to transportation in some Town neighborhoods, congestion within the transit system, and personal preferences and needs.

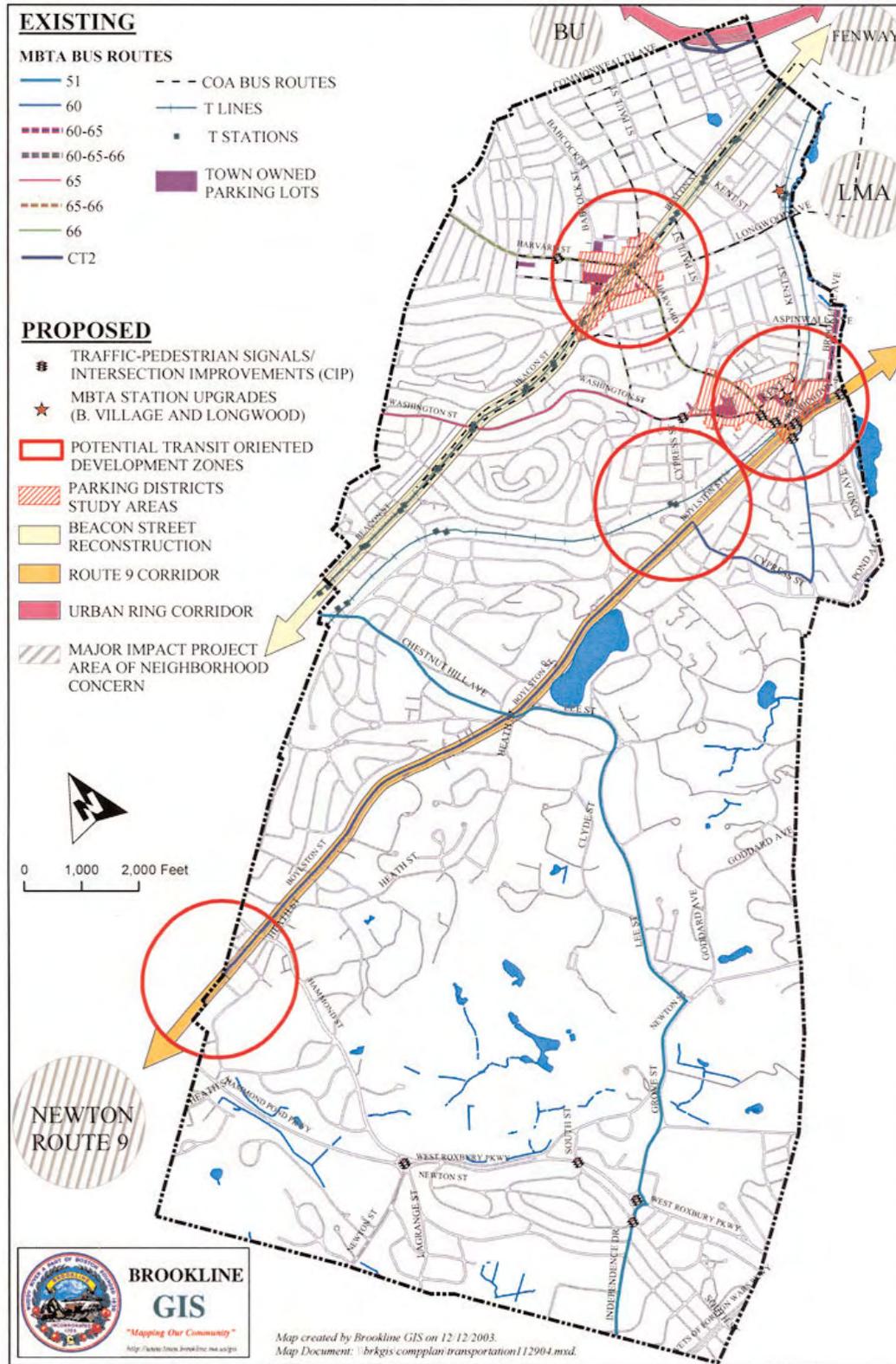
- > Brookline residents value access to public transportation. In a 1997 Town census, respondents rated access to public transportation as the #1 criterion for choosing to live in Brookline.
- > Brookline residents are highly-dependent on regional transit and roadway connections to access jobs with 82% of residents employed outside the Town. These transportation systems are increasingly strained largely due to regional growth factors outside of the Town's control. The quality of transportation systems in Brookline remains dependent on cooperative regional efforts with state government,



Destination	Number	Percent
All destinations	32,175	100%
Boston	15,114	47%
Brookline	5,634	18%
Cambridge	2,537	8%
Newton	1,262	4%
Waltham	664	2%
All other communities	6,964	21%

*Source: US Census*

# Map 9: Transportation and Mobility



- regional agencies, and neighboring communities to enhance transit service and preserve roadway capacity.
- > Traffic congestion within the Route Nine (Boylston Street) corridor, particularly during peak periods is a longstanding issue. Because it is a state route and because it provides connections to major employment centers, including the Longwood Medical and Academic Area and downtown Boston, regional cooperation will be needed to establish a comprehensive long-term plan for the corridor that addresses transportation goals in a manner that integrates land use/development, public transportation, pedestrian, urban design, and landscape considerations.
  - > Transit ridership on all MBTA lines serving Brookline has continued to grow and exceeds peak-period capacity. The Town will need to continue to work regionally to secure support for increased peak-period capacity and enhanced overall service.
  - > Full development of the MBTA's Urban Ring transit service (particularly Phase III) has the potential to increase transit use by Brookline residents, a significant benefit for Town residents.
  - > The shortage of commercial area parking, especially in Coolidge Corner, has been identified in numerous studies as a barrier to enhancing the vitality of Brookline's commercial areas. Shortages of short-term parking for customers, parking for employees, and overnight parking to serve local residents are all issues that need attention. The Town undertook a Commercial Areas Parking Study in 2001 and has already implemented most of the recommendations of that study related to meter timing, hourly rates, and enforcement to improve the availability of parking. The next step is to address the imbalance between supply and demand. Given the limited availability and high cost of available land, the Town must seek creative solutions to increase parking supply while remaining focused on alternative means of travel.
  - > Increased congestion on regional roadways such as Route Nine and other major arterials has the potential to increase cut-through traffic on local streets. Continued monitoring of potential cut-through locations and, where appropriate, implementation of traffic calming measures will be needed to limit impacts on residential neighborhoods.

Background information can be found in the *Issue and Opportunities* report on transportation.

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## Plans and Major Projects Underway

Currently planned or programmed transportation initiatives aimed at more efficient and safe pedestrian and vehicular operations include the following:

- Beacon Street Reconstruction
- The Town's Street rehabilitation program
- The Town's Sidewalk rehabilitation program
- Signal modernization
- Traffic management policies, including traffic calming

### **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Improve transportation options for all Brookline residents.
- Enhance transit service and capacity.
- Improve parking availability and accessibility.
- Control and minimize traffic impacts on residential neighborhoods.
- Support transit-oriented development.
- Enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety.
- Address the unique needs of transit-dependent groups, including senior citizens and the disabled.

### **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Work with state government and the Cities of Boston and Newton to create a long-term transportation strategy for the Route Nine corridor that balances local and regional needs.
- Work with the MBTA to explore potential near- and long-term transit options that serve Brookline.
- Play an active role in advancing development of the Urban Ring, particularly Phase III.
- Actively monitor major development proposals outside of Brookline that have implications for the Town; work with neighboring municipalities and the state to address issues of concern to the Town.
- Enhance accessibility of all Town facilities to meet the needs of seniors and the disabled and meet the requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); ensure provision of well located and designed handicapped parking spaces in public and private buildings.
- Improve the Town's capacity to develop a proactive short- and long-term transportation planning agenda.
- Promote TDM measures in new development to limit impacts on the roadway network.

- Increase the supply and accessibility of public parking in commercial areas (including handicap parking).
- Increase the overnight residential parking supply at appropriate public and private facilities.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

> *Revise the Transportation Studies section (Section 5.09) of the Zoning By-law and the related Transportation Access Plan Guidelines.*

> *Explore the potential for Parking Districts in Coolidge Corner and Brookline Village.*

Parking Districts would be zoning overlays in primarily commercial districts in which required parking could be reduced or waived in exchange for payment-in-lieu-of parking provision. Payments would be placed in a fund and used to fund parking improvements. In order for such a Parking District to work, a viable location and plan for such parking improvements must already be in place. Further analysis of this issue should take place during the district planning process.

> *Explore development of Transit Oriented Development Overlay Districts.*

Such a district would include a variety of measures to encourage transit use in locations with excellent transit access.

> *Require Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs as part of mitigation for new commercial development projects of more than 25,000 square feet.*

These TDM programs should include actions like the following:

- flex time
- discounted T-passes
- bicycle parking and showers for bicycle commuters
- car pooling and guaranteed ride home programs through MassRides or a similar organization
- telecommuting
- parking space for shared cars (such as Zip Car)

> *Review and revise parking standards for commercial areas to evaluate possible changes for mixed-use buildings, shared parking arrangements, and transit oriented development.*

- Parking standards for commercial and residential development in transit-served areas, especially medical uses that are required to provide 4 spaces/1000 square feet of development in G 2.0 zones, are significantly higher than comparable regional standards (including those applicable to the Longwood Medical and Academic Area). An adjustment to parking standards should be considered to provide an incentive for developers and employers to focus on attracting transit-oriented users and reduce traffic impacts associated with development.
- Establish specific standards and criteria for shared parking in mixed-use buildings. Section 6.11 (a) (3) of the Zoning By-law currently provides the Board of Appeal with the ability to reduce the requirements for mixed-use situations by special permit but does not provide specific standards that can contribute to predictability in development outcomes.

> *Incorporate new bicycle parking facilities in development projects.*

- Planning Board to establish guidelines for bicycle parking for all types of development for incorporation in the Zoning By-law.
- Transportation Board and DPW to develop plan for improved bike parking in commercial areas.

> *Promote alternative means of travel in special permit projects.*

## **Planning and Management**

> *Work with regional planning agencies, MassHighway, and the Cities of Boston and Newton to secure funding for a Route Nine corridor study that addresses near- and longer-term regional and local needs between Boston and Route 128.*

See the “Route Nine” key element above for more information on this strategy



- > *The Town should consider working with regional agencies to develop an Inner West Transportation Study.*  
This would include Newton, Allston, Brighton, Brookline, West Roxbury, and other areas that form a logical study area. This Study could be part of the Route Nine Plan or a separate project, depending on timing, funding, and other factors.
- > *The Coolidge Corner District Plan should explore the demand for and supply of parking, both today and in the future, to assess the need for additional or relocated parking, and whether existing parking patterns encroach on residential neighborhoods*
- > *Actively monitor large scale development/planning initiatives adjacent to its boundaries (see accompanying map) in order to ensure its perspective on transportation and other considerations are known to neighboring local governments and project proponents.*  
Key current or planned initiatives include:
  - Boston University campus growth
  - Longwood Medical and Academic Area planning/growth
  - Fenway Air-Rights Project/Fenway Neighborhood Development
  - Development along Route Nine in Newton
- > *Work with the MBTA to achieve peak-period capacity improvements on Green Line services.*
- > *Continue to participate actively in the MBTA's Urban Ring studies with a particular focus on Phase III and advocate actively for service that effectively meets the needs of the Town and neighboring communities.*
- > *Implement appropriate neighborhood traffic management measures based on identified needs and neighborhood support in keeping with Town traffic calming policies.*
  - Assess the implication of traffic calming on trip diversions to assess potential consequences of actions.
  - These traffic management policies and measures should be periodically reviewed with appropriate Town departments, including public safety officials.
- > *Prepare a bicycle/pedestrian master plan that outlines a system of connections between neighborhoods, activity centers, and public open spaces.*

- > *Consider local transit options—perhaps collaborating with Newton or the Longwood Medical and Academic Area shuttle system.*
- > *Continue to explore creative opportunities to incorporate the use of alternative fuel vehicles in the Town's vehicle fleet.*
- > *Incorporate the three-year construction period for Beacon Street (2005-2008) in Town transportation planning and traffic management.*

### **Parking**

- > *As part of Neighborhood and District Plans, explore the issues related to creation of additional off-street parking in Coolidge Corner, Washington Square and Brookline Village/Route Nine to meet commercial and residential needs.*
- > *Assist in marketing shared-car programs to Brookline residents and allocate additional parking spaces in Town-owned lots.*
- > *Seek Transportation Board review of current strategies to address overnight and daytime parking needs and consider strategies to meet the needs.*
- > *Consider a Town-administered outreach program for transportation demand management to serve small-scale businesses in commercial districts.*  
Evaluate the potential for the Town to take a leadership role in forming a Transportation Management Association (TMA) (or expanding the Longwood Medical and Academic Area TMA) that would serve commercial districts, employers, and residents; and estimate potential reductions in vehicle trips to determine viability.
- > *Improve the Town's transportation planning capacity.*  
Increase the Town's capacity to initiate pro-active transportation planning at the local and regional levels including implementation of Comprehensive Plan transportation initiatives.
- > *When additional assistance is needed to evaluate Transportation Impact and Access Studies as part of development review, the Town should seek funds from developers to pay for third-party assistance.*

The Planning Board should consider adopting the appropriate

language from Massachusetts General Laws c. 44 s. 53G to institutionalize this option.

- > *Improve the coordination between the Planning Board, the Board of Appeals, the Transportation Board, and their various professional staff members.*

### **Design and Physical Improvements**

- > *Design and implement a consistent, Town-wide signage program for parking in conjunction with streetscape improvements.*
- > *Evaluate the feasibility of reducing the number of lanes on certain streets where this can be accomplished while maintaining intersection and roadway capacity.*
- > *Implement the Brookline Village Closed Loop Signal System.*
- > *As finances permit, implement Signal Improvements to improve the efficiency of the Town's transportation system, including the following sites:*
  - Carlton/Mountfort Street
  - Independence/Beverly/Russett
  - 61 Park Street
  - Grove Street/Allandale Road
  - South/Grove Street
  - Washington/School/Cypress Street
  - Newton Street/West Roxbury Parkway
  - Horace James Circle Traffic Control Improvements
  - Harvard Babcock
  - Fire Station #6
  - Fire Station # 7
- > *Continue to evaluate sidewalk improvements and repair needs through the Sidewalk Rehabilitation program.*
- > *Address Traffic Calming Needs.*
  - Locations for studies and construction should be determined by the Transportation Board and DPW.
  - The Town should provide a town website-based or related method to monitor Traffic Calming projects.
  - The Town should continue to apply adopted Traffic Calming Policies and Process.
- > *Purchase replacement street lighting in selected locations.*  
Repair and replacement of conduits in Coolidge Corner, Washington Square and Brookline Village is a priority.

- > *Complete Beacon Street reconstruction.*
  - Roadway infrastructure improvements (including parking) should be completed and factored into planning in the 2005-2008 time period.
  - The Town should work with MBTA to improve landscaping, maintenance and management of MBTA right-of-way.
  
- > *Repair and reopen the Carlton Street footbridge.*
  
- > *Continue to assess street reconstruction through a management program that establishes ratings of surface conditions based on several criteria.*



# Plan Elements: F. Town, School and Cultural Facilities

## INTRODUCTION

**B**rookline has long been recognized as a community with excellent Town facilities, public schools, and services. Continued investment is needed in these facilities to ensure that high standards are maintained. The town allocates funding for improvements to municipal and school facilities through the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Significant recent spending has been allocated to several public schools (High School, Lincoln, Lawrence), the Main Library, and the Public Safety Headquarters.

Cultural facilities within the town are also recognized by residents as contributing to quality of life. Many of these cultural uses are dependent on ongoing fundraising to continue to support their programs and activities that are used by many residents. In order to continue to sustain the diverse range of cultural facilities and uses the Town is committed to provide assistance where possible to ensure the continued strength of Brookline's cultural communities.

### **TOWN, SCHOOL AND CULTURAL FACILITIES VISION**

The Town will continue to maintain and, where needed, improve its public facilities.

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## Trends and Challenges

Brookline is a well-managed community that provides high quality community services and facilities while maintaining the budgetary discipline necessary to maintain its Aaa bond rating (one of only 12 communities in Massachusetts to achieve this rating). Brookline rates in the top 15% of communities statewide for total spending on a per

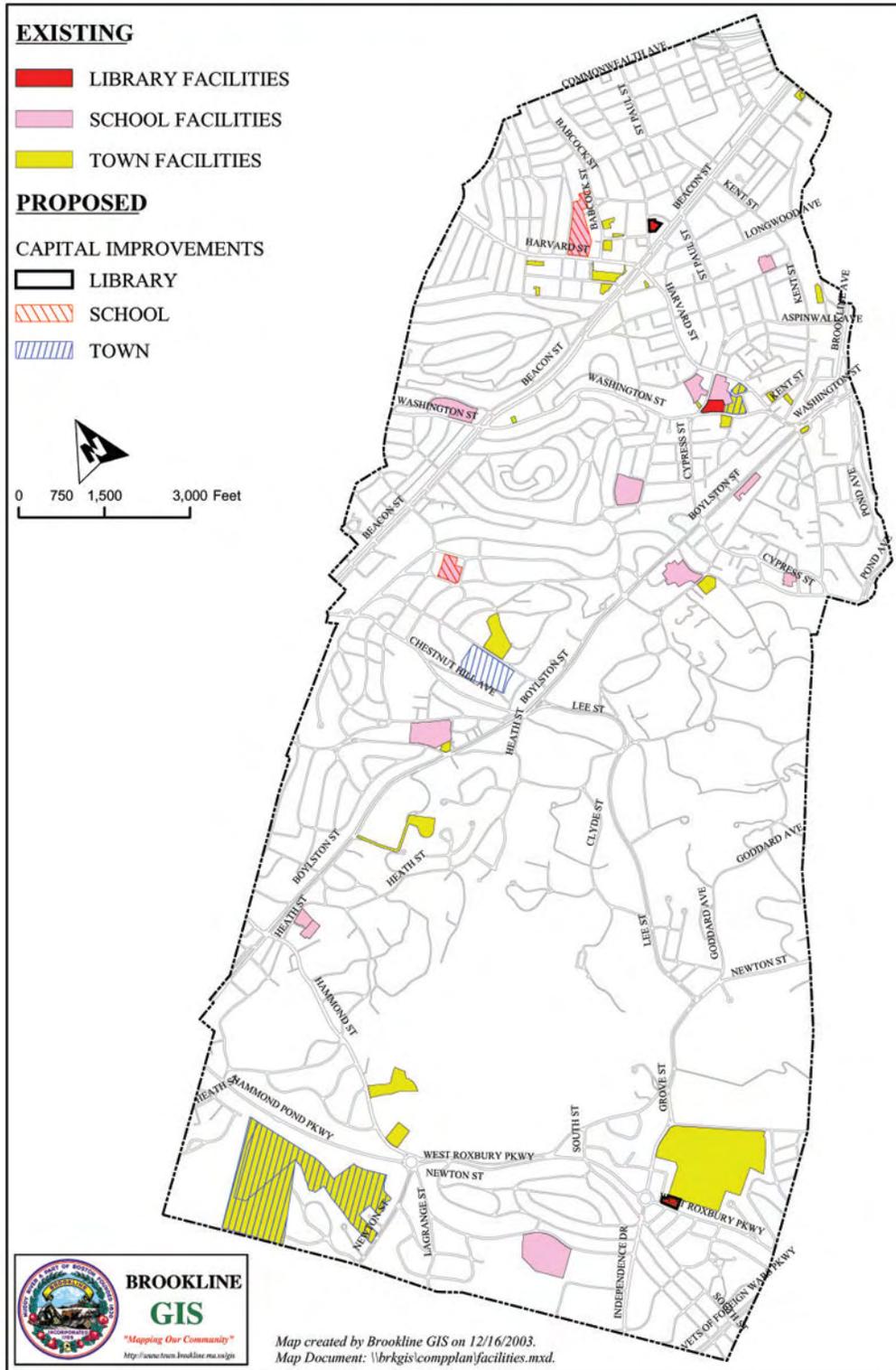
capita basis. School spending per pupil rates in the top 7%. In recent years Brookline has continued to invest aggressively in improvements to public facilities to ensure that residents have access to the high quality facilities and services that are seen as a characteristic of the community. The Town's 2003 Financial Trend Monitoring Report states that "debt service continues to absorb a larger part of the budget, evidence of the emphasis placed on the Capital Improvement Program (CIP)." Development of new or improved public facilities will need to be within the context of the Town's overall budgetary process.

- Continued efforts to ensure Town facilities meet applicable ADA standards represent a high priority item.
- Very little land is available in Brookline for development of major new facilities or programs. Consequently partnerships that incorporate use of private or institutional facilities for public use represent an important potential opportunity for expanding public amenities.
- Pursue implementation of a Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) program with Boston University and other tax exempt institutions that require Town services.
- The Town has continued to expand its E-Government and IT initiatives through the Town website and other means to provide residents with information on Town initiatives and services, and to facilitate enhanced participation in planning and development processes affecting the Brookline community. An expansion of programming on Brookline Access Television is another important vehicle for providing important information to the community together with increased access for citizens and non-profit organizations seeking to create programming on topics of public interest.
- Brookline's citizens are lovers of the arts, but there is no program for public art in Brookline and limited exhibition and performance space.
- The Brookline Arts Commission, which provides grants to individual artists, has also identified a potential need for affordable live/work space for artists.



Background information can be found in the *Issues and Opportunities* reports on town facilities; arts; and information technology, all available in the Appendix.

# Map 10: Town, School and Cultural Facilities



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## Plans and Major Projects Underway

Several public buildings have been identified as priorities for funding over the next several years:

- Town Hall
- Public Health Building
- Coolidge Corner and Putterham Branch Libraries
- Runkle School
- Devotion School

The Town has also created a Wireless Communications Committee to look at issues related to citizen and Town needs for wireless communications and develop a method for providing adequate access to wireless communication that is also sensitive to community character. This will be an increasing challenge and need in the next ten years. The potential for a Town-wide wireless network that provides access to the internet will also increase in the next few years as the technology that provides such access matures and becomes less intrusive.

### **GOALS FOR THE FUTURE**

- Maintain excellent schools.
- Support cultural activities.
- Any new development should have no net impact on the Town's finances unless it provides other community benefits, especially affordable housing.

### **POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS**

- Continue to invest in public school facilities to respond to evolving program and facility needs and continued development of partnerships with private schools to seek shared use of facilities.
- Continue to invest in Town facilities to address evolving community needs, regulatory considerations (including ADA), technology changes (E-government, IT plan, etc.) and maintenance considerations.
- Continue to support the development of partnerships with non-profit entities that provide services to town residents.
- Support the continued development of Brookline's diverse cultural organizations.

## STRATEGIES

### Regulatory

- > *Continue to enforce Sec. 4.09 Wireless Telecommunications Services of Town's Zoning By-law.*
- > *Consider the feasibility and evaluate impacts of telecom leases on Town-owned properties pursuant to Sec. 4.09 4. c. of Zoning By-law*

### Planning and Management

- > *Evaluate potential uses of the Old Lincoln School.*  
It is likely that the space will continue to be used as an alternative site for Town offices as other buildings are rehabilitated, at least for the ten year period 2005-2015. The Town should plan to meet anticipated parking needs for use of this building in this time period.
- > *Coordinate Town Parks and Recreation Master Plans with short- and long-term school improvements plans.*
- > *Continue to strengthen public/private school partnerships involving shared use of facilities and seek to secure long-term commitments around facility use.*
- > *Study elimination of overhead wiring along public streets, particularly in heavily-travelled parts of Town.*
- > *Implement the recommendations of the Moderator's Committee on Community Electricity Franchising.*
- > *Advance phased implementation of Commercial Areas Streetscape Master Plan, including public event kiosks.*
- > *Advance relocation and improvement of the DPW facility currently located at the Town reservoir as part of Fisher Hill Master Plan.*



- > *Consider rezoning of DPW Service Centers in South Brookline from Industrial Services to a new Municipal Services category.*
- > *Assess potential need for enhanced or expanded facilities and programs at the Brookline Senior Center. Relocate off-street parking from the Fuller Street lot to an alternative location.*
- > *Develop a strategic plan for short and long term programs and services for seniors as part of the 50 year anniversary of the Council on Aging.*
- > *Identify a location for a Parks and Open Space Office and Maintenance Facility.*
- > *Identify a location for a Building Maintenance Facility to serve Town and School facilities.*
- > *Create standards and procedures for maintenance and the review of repairs and alterations to Town-owned historic buildings and landscapes, including Putterham School and Devotion House.*
- > *Provide for ADA accessibility throughout Town facilities.*
- > *Implement microclimate study and Green Brookline plans and recommendations.*
- > *Study the need for affordable live/work artist space.*  
Affordable housing is a pressing need in Brookline and is difficult to provide under any circumstances. The Brookline Arts Commission should survey artists, perhaps with the assistance of graduate students in one of the region's public policy graduate schools, to gauge the extent of the specific need for artists' live/work spaces.
- > *Organize programs for art in public spaces, e.g., festivals, storefront displays.*  
The Economic Development Department and the Brookline Arts Commission should work together to encourage the display of art by Brookline artists in commercial districts. For example, the Somerville Arts Council sponsors storefront displays of art for several weeks each year in commercial districts.
- > *Develop a long-term plan to provide sustained funding for public art through the CIP.*  
Many governments and public agencies have recognized that

public art adds to the identity and vitality of public spaces. Some public agencies have a “1 percent for art” program through which one percent of any project’s cost is devoted to providing public art.

- > *Facilitate the creation of an interdisciplinary exhibition and performance space.*
- > *Incorporate public art into commercial district streetscapes, such as identity and gateway-marker programs.*
- > *Establish a plan for incorporating art in public places in the town.*
- > *Support Performing Arts in Brookline that were ranked highly in a recent attitude and opinion survey conducted for Parks and Recreation Commission.*
- > *Continue to support the Coolidge Corner Theater and consider relationships to the Coolidge Corner District Plan.*
  - Support ongoing capital improvements.
  - Incorporate potential needs in any redevelopment of the Centre Street parking lot.
- > *Continue to pursue strategies to identify facilities that would permit the expansions of early childhood education opportunities and other school programs requiring more space.*
- > *Continue Town investments in Information Technology and Telecommunications.*
  - Provide adequate facilities and programs to Brookline Access Television.
  - Continue to pursue E-Government initiatives.
  - Implement the IT plan and the recommendations of the Wireless Communications Committee.
  - Explore the feasibility of a Town-wide wireless network to provide access to the internet

### **Design and Physical Improvements**

- > *Advance school capital improvements in several facilities including major improvements to:*
  - Devotion School
  - Runkle School
  - Universal access to buildings

- > *Advance Town Hall Renovations.*
  - HVAC and window improvements are the highest priority.
  - Evaluate spatial locations of Town agencies and functions to improve public access.
  - Consider providing first floor meeting space that can remain open when the rest of Town Hall is closed.
- > *Advance Health Department Renovations.*
- > *Advance branch library capital improvement projects as finances permit.*

**Financial**

- > *Continue to pursue implementation of a Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes program (PILOT) with Boston University and other tax exempt institutions that require Town services.*
- > *Explore a Zoning By-law amendment requiring that all new residential developments over six units submit a fiscal impact statement regarding their net impact on Town finances and resources.*



# GLOSSARY

*This glossary is provided for the reference and convenience of readers and does not supercede any of the text in the main document of the Comprehensive Plan.*

**Affordable Housing**—Housing that is within the means of a low- or moderate-income household, as defined by state or federal legislation.

**AHTF**—Affordable Housing Task Force, a Town committee appointed by the Selectmen, and charged with increasing the supply of affordable housing in Brookline.

**BHA** — Brookline Housing Authority, the public housing authority for the Town. The BHA manages much of the affordable housing in Town. BHA members are elected.

**CDBG**—Community Development Block Grant, a federal program that provides the Town with approximately \$1.9 million a year (as of 2004) to provide low- and moderate-income residents with housing, public facilities, and social services.

**Chapter 40B**—Also known as the "Comprehensive Permit Law" or the "anti-snob zoning act", a state law that allows developments containing at least 25 percent affordable housing units to waive local zoning requirements. See the Affordable Housing section of the Comprehensive Plan for more information on 40B.

**Chapter 40R**—A state law passed in 2004 that provides incentives for municipalities to develop affordable housing in areas around transit.

**CIP**— Capital Improvement Program, the Town's five year plan for capital improvements such as rehabilitation of buildings and roadway repairs. The CIP is updated every year.

**Comprehensive Plan**— A long-range plan intended to guide the growth and development of a community or region. It typically includes inventory and analysis leading to recommendations for the community's future. Comprehensive Plans cover all issues relating to a community, including housing, land use, transportation, community facilities, open space, and economic development.

**CPC**— Comprehensive Plan Committee, the group that guided development of the Comprehensive Plan with support from consultants and Town staff.

**CPA**— Community Preservation Act, a state law that provides matching funds for open space, affordable housing, and historic preservation for municipalities that have agreed to increase their property tax levies by up to 3 percent as a match. To date, Brookline has not adopted the CPA.

**DAT**— Design Advisory Team, a group appointed as part of the development review process to advise developers, the Planning Board, and Board of Appeals on the physical appearance and layout of proposed developments.

**DCR**— Division of Conservation and Recreation, the successor agency to the Metropolitan District Commission. DCR owns and manages many regional open spaces and roadway, including the Riverway and Olmsted Park.

**Demolition Delay By-law**— A local by-law that permits the Preservation Commission to delay the demolition of a building that is considered to have possible historic significance. This delay can be for up to a year, and is designed to allow time for a discussion to occur about possible alternatives to demolition.

**EPA**— The Environmental Protection Agency, the federal agency responsible for regulating many issues related to clear air and water.

**EDAB**— Economic Development Advisory Board, a Town board appointed by the Selectmen to provide input on increasing the Town's commercial tax base in a way that is sensitive to the quality of life for residents.

**Executive Order 418 (EO 418)**— A state program that requires Massachusetts communities to demonstrate that they are taking steps to increase their supply of affordable housing. Municipalities must obtain housing certification to be eligible to receive certain state and federal grant funds. Executive Order 418 also provided funding and guidance for municipalities to complete “Community Development Plans,” plans similar to Comprehensive Plans but only including four elements (transportation, open space, economic development and housing).

**FAR**— Floor Area Ratio, the gross floor area of all buildings or structures on a lot divided by the total lot area.

**FTE**— Full-Time Equivalent, a measure of how many full-time jobs that exist, would be created, or are otherwise measured. Part time jobs can be converted into FTE jobs based on a ratio of the number of hours per week in the part time job to the number of hours per week in a full time job (usually 40).

**GOSR**— Greenway Open Space Residential subdivisions, a tool by which a parcel of land can be developed in a more flexible way. A GOSR subdivision might include the same number of residential units as a conventional subdivision, but would located them in a way that protects that better preserves any sensitive parts of the land.

**HAB**— Housing Advisory Board, an advisory board created by the Board of Selectmen in 1987 that advises them on the development of affordable housing.

**HOME**— Home Ownership Made Easy, a program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for the purpose of expanding the supply of decent, affordable housing for low-income families. Brookline participates in a consortium of nearby municipalities that work together on HOME programs.

**HUD**— Department of Housing and Urban Development, a cabinet-level federal agency that promotes housing and urban development in the United States through direct loans, mortgage insurance, and other programs.

**Local Historic District**— A district designated by the Brookline Preservation Commission within which the building and resources are of basic and vital importance. Local districts usually design review and approval for most exterior building changes or new construction.

**MAPC**— Metropolitan Area Planning Council, a regional planning agency representing 101 cities and towns in the Boston metropolitan area. Created by an act of the Legislature in 1963, it serves as a forum for state and local officials to address issues of regional importance.

**MASCO**— Medical Academic and Scientific Community Organization, Inc., a charitable corporation established in 1972 to plan, develop, and enhance the Longwood Medical and Academic Area (LMA) for the benefit of the general public and its members, and to create and implement programs that assist the institutions and individuals in the LMA.

**MBTA**— Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, the regional transit authority for the metropolitan Boston area. The MBTA provides three heavy rail lines (the Red, Orange, and Blue lines) and two light rail lines (the Green line, including the B, C, D and E branches, and the Mattapan Trolley). It also operates busses throughout the region, trackless trolleys, and one "Bus Rapid Transit" line, which operates large busses in a separate bus lane with limited stops along Washington Street in Boston.

**MDC**— Metropolitan District Commission, an agency that managed parkways and reservations and other open space resources in the Boston metropolitan area until replaced with the Division of Conservation and Recreation in 2003 (see DCR).

**National Register of Historic Places**— The official list established by the National Historical Preservation Act, of sites, districts, buildings, structures, and objects significant in the nation's history of whose artistic or architectural value is unique.

**Nonpoint-Source Pollution**— Pollution discharged over a wide land area, not from one specific location.

**Open Space**— Any parcel or area of land or water essentially unimproved and set aside, dedicated, or reserved for public or private use.

**PDD**— Planned Development District, an overlay district that allows more flexible development if the land owner(s) work with the town and other stakeholders to develop a conceptual master plan for development of the district. This tool is intended primarily for use in some of the institutional areas in southern Brookline as a way of ensuring that the land is not developed piecemeal.

**SRO**— Single Room Occupancy, a housing type consisting of one room, often with cooking facilities and with private or shared bathroom facilities.

**TDM**— Traffic Demand Management, strategies aimed at reducing the number of vehicle trips, shortening trip lengths, and changing the timing of trips out of peak hours.

**TDR**— Transfer of Development Rights, the removal of the right to develop or build, expressed in dwelling units per acre or floor area, from land in one zoning district to land in another district where such transfer is permitted.

**Zipcar**— A car sharing program that provides access to on-demand transportation, complementing other means of mobility. Users typically pay an hourly fee while the company covers the cost of gas and insurance. Members can reserve cars on-line or by phone, and access cars with a membership card. Many municipalities in the Boston area actively support Zipcar by providing public parking spaces for their vehicles.

**Zoning ByLaw**— A document that delineates zoning districts and the regulations governing the use, placement, spacing, and size of land and buildings.

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