



Master Plan *for the* Town of Sherborn



2019

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Town of Sherborn
19 Washington Street
Sherborn MA 01770

<https://www.sherbornma.org/>

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Introduction



Sailing on Farm Pond

Source: T. Trainor

Purpose of the Master Plan

Planning process and community participation

Guiding principles and vision

Organization of the plan

Purpose of the Master Plan

Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 41, Section 81D) directs the planning board of each city or town to generate and adopt a Master Plan. The law states: "Such plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality." To keep the Master Plan relevant and useful, the law specifies that it should be updated periodically. For the Town of Sherborn, the last update was its "General Plan" adopted in 2001.

The state law defines general subject areas that a Master Plan should include: goals and policies, land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, circulation, and implementation. A Master Plan does not include plans for operation of local or regional schools, but the overall impact of education costs is included as an important component of the town's economic sustainability. This Master Plan is adapted for Sherborn's unique situation and needs. For example, like the 2001 General Plan, it includes a section focused entirely on the Town Center.

A current, updated Master Plan provides a reference for decision making by all boards, committees, departments, and town meeting, and it serves the town in other ways. If consistent with the recommendations of the plan, it can support the town's applications for state funding of specific projects and initiatives. Although a Master Plan is not legally binding, it can strengthen the town's position in legal disputes.

Planning Process and Community Participation

Since 2014, Sherborn has seen a burst of planning activity aimed at defining our common goals and guiding the town's immediate and long-term future. The boards and committees responsible for these planning documents have worked in close collaboration to assure that their goals and recommendations are consistent with each other.

In 2014, the Planning Board launched the process of creating a new Master Plan by sending a town-wide survey to all 1,500 Sherborn households, 44 percent of which responded. Its topics were wide ranging and included questions on specific issues and preferences, overall priorities for change, and current satisfaction with life in Sherborn. The community opinions and values expressed in this survey served as touchstones throughout the Master Plan process.

The Planning Board then organized three working groups charged with generating draft visions and long-term goals, with recommendations and specific ideas for future action. The working groups were made up of interested volunteers from the community along with Planning Board* representatives. The Land Use Group focused on natural resources and open space, agriculture, recreation, and cultural resources; the Built Environment Group focused on Town Center, housing, and circulation; and the Fiscal & Economic Group analyzed the overall financial health and sustainability of the town.

Planning Board

John Higley, *Chair*
Marian Neutra
Addie Mae Weiss
Chris Owen
Will Dunham
Chris Tullmann (to 2016)
Eric Johnson (to 2016)
Grace Shepard, *Associate*
Gino Carlucci, *Town Planner*

Town of Sherborn Planning Board Working Groups

Built Environment	Land Use	Fiscal & Economic
John Higley*	Marian Neutra*	Eric Johnson*
Grace Shepard*	Chris Tullmann*	John Stevens*
Mark Brandon	Richard Antell	Greg Garland
Gene Crowley	Jean Bednor	George Hunnewell
Kent Fitzpatrick	Andrew Lauterback	Michael Lee
Matt Neutra	Peggy Novak	Paul Leitch
Chad Parmet	Art Schnure	Chee Chong Tai
Robin Perera	Tom Trainor	Bill Vaughn
Jane Pusch	Susie Wheelwright	
Heather Willis		
Wes Wirth		

* Planning Board member

Meanwhile, in 2015 an Open Space Committee was formed to update the Town of Sherborn's 2007 **Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)**. Several members of the Planning Board's Land Use working group joined this effort, and a Planning Board member served as chair. To ensure that the new OSRP would be consistent with the Master Plan, the draft open space and recreation-related goals, recommendations, and proposed actions generated by the Land Use group were reviewed and revised by the Open Space Committee and incorporated into the new OSRP. The committee then assembled the additional text, maps, and documentation for the OSRP, which was completed and approved by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services in late 2018.

In 2016, prompted by the need to respond to the commonwealth's affordable-housing mandate, a Housing Partnership Committee, also chaired by a member of the Planning Board, was formed to produce a **Housing Production Plan**. Having such a plan in place provides evidence to the state that the town is making a serious effort to achieve the state goal of 10 percent affordable housing and gives the town some control over large developer-initiated projects that are inconsistent with Sherborn's character and natural resources. To complete the plan in a timely manner, the Housing Partnership Committee engaged a consultant and drew on the work of the Built Environment group and the housing goals and recommendations of the draft Master Plan. The completed Sherborn Housing Production Plan was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development in June 2017.

Open Space Committee

Marian Neutra,* Chair
Leo Cavanaugh
David Killeen
Kelly McClintock
Seth Molloy
Tom Trainor
Laura VanBlarcom

*Planning Board member

Housing Partnership Committee

Addie Mae Weiss,* Chair
Neil Kessler
Mark Brown
Chris Decker
John Hudson
Steven Tsai
Elizabeth Yon

*Planning Board member

Throughout the process of producing this Master Plan, the Planning Board solicited input from many other town boards and committees. Draft sections of the plan were reviewed in detail by relevant Sherborn boards, committees, and organizations, and their input resulted in many revisions and improvements. Some of these groups also contributed to completion of the implementation tables, and agreed to assume responsibility for specific actions.

Additional participating boards, committees, and organizations

Agricultural Commission	Public Safety Committee
Board of Health	Recreation Commission
Conservation Commission	Select Board (Board of Selectmen)
Department of Public Works (CM&D)	Sherborn Forest & Trail Association
Farm Pond Advisory Committee	Sherborn Rural Land Foundation
Historical Commission	Town Center Water Options Committee
Land Acquisition Committee	Town Forest Committee
Land Management Task Force	Traffic Safety Committee

There were also opportunities for broad citizen participation. Early in 2017, two community forums were organized jointly by the Sherborn Planning Board and the Open Space Committee. One focused on natural resources, open space conservation, and agriculture; the second focused on recreational resources, including open space as a recreational resource, and organized recreational facilities. At each forum the draft vision, goals, recommendations, and actions were presented and discussed. The forums were televised live and made available on YouTube. A well-attended community workshop on housing provided community input on the Housing Production Plan as well as the housing section of the Master Plan. The Planning Board also hosted focused discussions concerning the Town Center section of the Master Plan, and citizen comments were constructive, contributing ideas that significantly improved the plan. The guiding principles and goals of the entire Master Plan were posted on the town website and presented at the 2017 spring Town Meeting. The town voted to approve the major goals with the understanding that the detailed recommendations and proposed actions were still being refined. Together, these events provided community input and raised awareness of the Master Plan process.

In summary, the writing of this Master Plan has been an inclusive, transparent, and iterative process through which the Planning Board has tried to capture the town's vision of its future and to chart the path forward. After approval, the complete Master Plan will be available at Town Hall, the library, and on the Town of Sherborn website. Online readers will have access to supplementary information through links provided within the plan.

Guiding Principles and Vision

The Master Plan working groups began their work by re-examining the fundamental values that should guide any planning process. The 2014 survey, working group discussions, and subsequent community events confirmed that the great majority of Sherborn citizens place highest value on the town's rural environment, historic homes, and excellent schools. These are the features most often cited as "reasons we live in Sherborn." Residents define "rural environment" as typified by quiet scenic roads, farms,

open space and forests, Farm Pond, and clean water resources. These priorities have been sustained and repeatedly documented over the course of many decades, including in the 2001 General Plan. The Planning Board concurred that any actions recommended in the Master Plan must be consistent with preservation of these valued features of the town.

It is also acknowledged that many residents desire some positive changes, such as a more attractive and walkable Town Center and more diverse housing options for elders and youth. Other changes are inevitable and not wholly under town control, such as state-mandated affordable-housing development. Still others are needed to assure the financial viability of the town. The challenge is to manage these changes while preserving the fundamental values that make Sherborn the special place it is.

Based on these general guiding principles, the Planning Board and Working Groups developed a vision of the Sherborn we hope will exist 20 or 30 years from now. Each of the major sections of the Master Plan is founded on a specific aspect of our shared vision.



Barred Owl

Source: R. Novak

Housing ■ Housing options in Sherborn will accommodate residents of diverse ages and economic resources while preserving the town's semirural atmosphere, environmental health, and sustainability.

Town Center ■ Sherborn Town Center will maintain its legacy as a historic rural village with inviting gathering places, safe pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes, and successful small businesses that contribute to the social vitality and fiscal stability of the town.

Circulation ■ Sherborn will continue to be a semirural town, known for scenic, tree-shaded roads and interconnected bicycle routes, walkways, and trails that promote a healthy lifestyle. Roadways and roadsides will be designed to be shared safely by all users—vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians.

Natural Resources and Open Space ■ Sherborn's clean water sources, forest ecosystems and biodiversity, scenic open spaces, and agricultural heritage will be actively protected, maintained, and improved to support the health and quality of life of Sherborn residents and environmental health throughout the region.

Recreational Resources ■ Sherborn's trails and open space recreational resources will be protected and promoted as major assets of the town. Sherborn will maintain diverse recreational resources, facilities, and programs that contribute to the health and community engagement of residents of all ages.

Cultural Resources ■ Sherborn will continue to depend upon and benefit from volunteer citizen participation in government, community resources, and social supports for all residents. The town will preserve its rich legacy of historic homes, landscapes, and stone wall-lined scenic roads, and will reap the economic, educational, and cultural benefits that these historic assets provide.

Organization of the Plan

The first section, Overview of Sherborn, provides basic information and analyses that are important for understanding the state of the town today. We start with a broad view of current land use and zoning and discuss how zoning laws may be modified to support our long-term goals. This is followed by a summary of the town's financial and economic situation, including the taxation and spending trends that may impact our ability to sustain our rural character and great schools and to pursue the goals recommended in the plan.

The subsequent sections focus on specific aspects of the town. Each section includes background information as well as major goals, recommendations, and action plans presented in outline form, which is organized as follows:

I, II, III... GOALS	consistent with our vision and guiding principles
A, B, C... Recommendations	realistic and actionable, guided by the goal
1, 2, 3.... Strategies	practical approaches to fulfill the recommendation
a, b, c.... Detailed Actions	specific implementation steps

Finally, we include an Implementation Plan that, for each specific action, suggests who will lead the effort, who will assist, when it should be initiated, and the source of funding, if needed.



Summary of the Master Plan



Overview of Sherborn: *Land use and zoning — Economic sustainability*
Major sections and goals

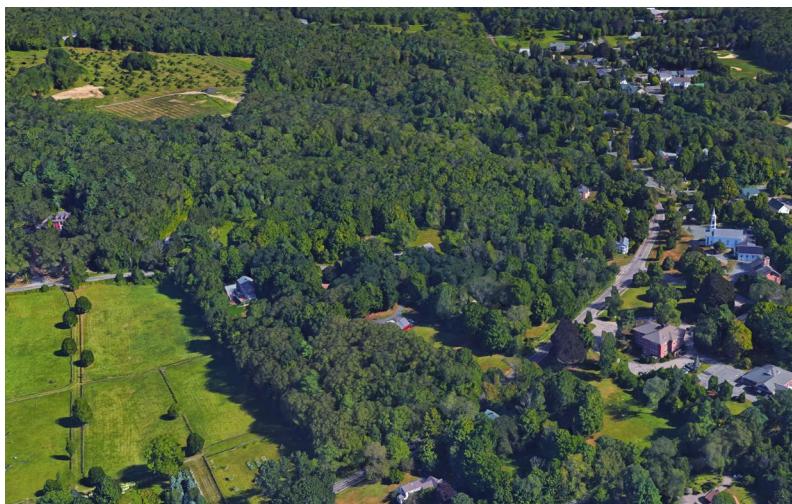
Overview of Sherborn: Land Use and Zoning

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn's zoning by-laws will continue to protect our rural atmosphere, open space, and water resources, while guiding limited development in support of housing diversity.

Sherborn's zoning bylaws reflect the desire of residents to maintain the "rural character" and scenic beauty of the town, and the need for protection of crucial groundwater resources. Land use in Sherborn today consists primarily of single-family residences on large variable lots along major streets and scenic roads, conventional subdivisions with uniform lots, businesses in a small town center, small farms, and significant areas of open space.

For many years, Sherborn's population growth and rate of land development were gradual. The town is now entering a new period of development including denser housing and multi-unit residences, driven by a shortage of housing in Greater Boston, the availability of large tracts of underdeveloped land in Sherborn, and the state-mandated affordable housing requirement. The ongoing challenge is to manage



development to minimize loss of the environmental, health, and recreational benefits that open space provides.

Today, about 27 percent of Sherborn has relatively strong protection from development, and another 21 percent is temporarily protected by inclusion in MA Chapter 61 programs. However, there are still many relatively large private properties with significant open space that could be developed.

The current residential zoning laws favor continuation of a low-density housing pattern with single-residence lots on a 1- to 3-acre minimum. To accommodate limited increases in housing density at specific locations, an Elderly and/or Affordable (EA) by-law allows denser and/or multi-unit residential developments on specific parcels, with 25 percent of the parcel protected as open space. Overlay districts specifically protect flood plains, town center public water supplies, certain historic structures, and sites for cell phone towers and a ground-mounted solar array.

Implementation of certain recommendations detailed in this Master Plan will require changes in Sherborn's zoning by-laws. As examples, some of the proposed changes would:

- Increase the vitality of Town Center by easing certain restrictions on businesses, allowing mixed-use housing alternatives, and establishing standards for walkability.
- Favor land development options that preserve open space and environmental health.
- Require an affordable housing component in all multi-unit developments.
- Protect important historic structures by controlling unnecessary demolition and deterioration.

Overview of Sherborn: Economic Sustainability

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn will achieve and maintain economic sustainability through prudent decision making, fiscal restraint, and carefully guided development while preserving the town's rural atmosphere and excellent schools.

This section of the Master Plan summarizes financial decision making and the overall demographic trends, economic trends, and issues that face Sherborn and comparable towns in the region today and in the near future. To preserve the most valued features of Sherborn and to execute the recommendations in this Master Plan, Sherborn must carefully manage its resources. Here we take stock of our current fiscal situation and consider ways to achieve economic sustainability and vitality over the long term.

Sherborn residents want to maintain the community's excellent schools. They also value other features that make Sherborn an attractive place to live: scenic country atmosphere, open space recreation, services that assure public safety, and infrastructure ranging from the library to scenic roads. All of these assets are associated with costs. The town's income derives almost entirely from residential property taxes, as few commercial sources of tax revenue are in place. Thus the tax rate (per 1,000 of assessed value) is among the highest in the state. High property taxes adversely impact real estate sales prices and property values relative to those of other towns.

Meanwhile, some recent housing development trends are likely to have both positive and negative economic impacts on the town's ability to balance tax revenues with the cost of schools and maintenance of town services. Proposals for different types of development must be carefully evaluated to predict the potential effects on school enrollment and our community's long-term economic and financial health.

Major portions of the town's tax revenues are used to fund the operation of the schools and retirement benefits, including pensions and health care, for town employees. We discuss the challenges of covering debt obligations including bonded debt from capital expenditures and unfunded benefit liabilities. These costs significantly impact our balance sheet, financial health over time, and ability to meet infrastructure needs. Looking ahead, both increasing our tax base and diligent budgeting are critical to controlling the tax burden on residents. Goals and recommendations include:

- Maintain municipal budget discipline and hold the line on spending.
- Do not increase the tax rate.
- Fund employee benefits and look for opportunities to pay down our unfunded future pension and post-employment benefit commitments.
- Develop a Pine Hill School and Dover-Sherborn Regional School District Enrollment Forecast that includes effects of housing development, and a School Infrastructure Contingency Plan that includes the enrollment impact of potential housing development and other factors affecting school costs and budgeting.
- Guide housing development to benefit the financial health of the town. Favor development that increases tax revenue while having minimal impact on operating expenses and school enrollment.
- Throughout the implementation of this Master Plan, evaluate each Goal, Recommendation, and Strategy to ensure alignment with Sherborn's long-term financial sustainability.

Housing

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Housing options in Sherborn will accommodate residents of diverse ages and economic resources while preserving the Town's semi-rural atmosphere, environmental health, and sustainability.



Sherborn's housing consists primarily of single-family residences on large lots along with a few affordable and/or age-restricted housing complexes. There are few housing options for residents living on low/moderate incomes, downsizing retirees, elders, and town employees. In addition, the Ch. 40B affordable housing mandate drives an ongoing need for new affordable housing. The challenge is to meet changing local- and state-mandated housing needs while ensuring protection of Sherborn's greatest assets: its healthy, spacious environment and its outstanding schools.

Affordable housing is recognized as a local need, but it is made more pressing and challenging by the fact that it is currently driven primarily by state, rather than local, requirements. Until the state's goal of 10 percent affordable housing units is met, towns are limited in their ability to control large, dense housing projects that may be inconsistent with the character and needs of the town.

Goal I is to manage and guide the development of affordable housing to fulfill state requirements in a manner that maximizes local initiatives and minimizes adverse economic and environmental impacts.

A vibrant community of mixed ages and resources requires the availability of housing in a range of types and costs. Age-restricted and state-mandated affordable housing developments do not fulfill all of Sherborn's housing needs. The town's low population density, high land values, lack of industry, and large investment in education together result in high property taxes. Young adults, families, and others who would contribute to a strong community often don't qualify for state-defined affordable housing and cannot afford Sherborn's large single-family homes. At present, few other housing options are available.

Goal II is to increase the diversity of housing options in Sherborn to accommodate residents of different ages and economic resources.

Sherborn's healthy, forested environment is an asset with local and regional climate-mitigating effects. Protecting this asset while fulfilling housing needs is an immediate and long-term challenge. On a broader scale, housing and the environment are closely related: eco-friendly building and energy use practices can lower greenhouse-gas emissions. Over time, this may mitigate climate change and reduce the threat of extreme weather events that can damage housing and increase energy costs.

Goal III is to ensure that all new housing is consistent with preservation of the town's scenic rural character and natural resources as well as regional and global environmental sustainability.

Town Center

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn Town Center will maintain its legacy as a historic rural village with inviting gathering places, safe pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes, and successful small businesses that contribute to the social vitality and fiscal stability of the town.

There is broad agreement that the Town Center should remain small, but many also want specific changes that would enhance the village atmosphere, such as safer pedestrian and bicycle access, improved appearance, and increased social vitality with more places for people to meet and interact. Planning for change in Town Center is complicated by existing infrastructure constraints and a lack of community consensus on the degree of change desired.

The Town Center's historic buildings, monuments, and other tangible evidence of the town's history are a legacy to be maintained for future generations. In addition to its historical assets and landmarks, Sherborn Center today has many positive features that are worth preserving and maintaining.



GOAL I is to preserve the most valued features of the existing Town Center.

Safe and pleasant connections for pedestrians and bicyclists among Town Center destinations and informal meeting places are fundamental to the village atmosphere that we seek, but the Town Center is not presently designed to make pedestrian or bicycle travel easy. Sherborn's recreational trails and scenic roads are nearby but lack connections to the Town Center. With incremental changes, the Town Center could enable recreation and social interactions and support Town Center businesses.

GOAL II is to enhance the social vitality and function of the existing Town Center through incremental improvements.

Sherborn's current Town Center could be made more attractive and user-friendly with better consistency of signage, walkway, landscape, and frontage space, and shared parking lots. Limited infrastructure improvements could bring existing businesses into compliance with health regulations and allow them to accommodate customer needs better, expand capacity, and thrive.

GOAL III is to support current businesses and consider new business and housing opportunities in the Town Center within existing infrastructure constraints.

Before embarking on making significant changes, we need to define and agree upon specific additions that are consistent with a shared vision of the future Town Center. Addition of housing or businesses will likely require a Town Center water supply and/or wastewater system, but the prerequisite data for this decision—including technical feasibility, cost/benefit analysis, financing options, and long-term economic impacts on the Town—are incomplete. This goal is aimed at putting these prerequisites in place, establishing a process for making decisions, and moving forward toward our shared vision.

GOAL IV is to develop a realistic, agreed-upon plan for the Town Center that addresses those challenges selected for action but not met not by the incremental changes in Goals I-III.

Circulation

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn will be known for scenic, tree-shaded roads, interconnected bicycle routes, and walkways and trails that promote a healthy lifestyle. Roadways and roadsides will be designed for safe sharing by all users: vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians.

Heavy traffic in the town center can make moving around and through Sherborn challenging. Travel on narrow scenic country roads can be hazardous when they are shared by cars, bikes, runners, pedestrians, and horses. Sherborn's circulation system should be designed for safety of all modes of travel throughout the town. In 2016, Sherborn adopted a Complete Streets policy that promotes use of design principles to ensure safety, comfort, and accessibility for all the users of streets, sidewalks, and trails.

The convergence of main roads in Town Center causes congestion that is exacerbated by inefficient, often dangerous intersections. Improved intersection design could improve traffic flow and safety.



Goal I is to improve roadways and intersections for safe and efficient movement of vehicles.

Bicycle travel is popular in Sherborn, but our main roads do not have designated bike lanes and narrow local roads can be hazardous for cyclists. For both children and adults, bicycling to school, to visit friends, or to Town Center is impeded by the lack of safe bicycle lanes or roadside bike paths. Sherborn also will benefit from connections to nearby regional bike trails.

Goal II is to design roadways and intersections for safe sharing by vehicles and bicycles.

Sherborn provides a beautiful environment for walking, running, and horseback riding thanks to its extensive trail system. However, addition of key connections among sidewalks, walkways, and trails will improve safe routes between neighborhoods and to Town Center. To encourage healthy, low-impact travel on foot, walkways and trails should be easy to navigate and safe from vehicle hazards.

Goal III is to encourage and support traveling on foot as a safe and pleasant way to move around Town Center and throughout the town.

Sherborn's scenic roads are an integral part of the town's rural atmosphere and recreational infrastructure. Narrow turns and roadside trees promote slower vehicle speeds and safety for all users, while the tree canopy cools the air. Maintenance challenges include disease and death of canopy trees that affects power lines, vehicular safety, loss of shade, and unbudgeted expenditures.

Goal IV is to maintain roads in a manner that preserves the scenic, rural character of the town.

Natural Resources and Open Space

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn's clean water sources, forest ecosystems and biodiversity, scenic open spaces, and agricultural heritage will be actively protected, maintained, and improved to support the health and quality of life of the town's residents and environmental health throughout the region.

Sherborn residents consistently place high value on the town's rural character characterized by tree-lined scenic roads flanked by meadows and forest, small farms, and trails. But open space is more than just scenery. It should be considered part of the town's infrastructure because it provides clean water resources, climate control, and recreational resources, and it supports the physical and psychological health of the community. Our natural landscapes and forests also contribute to the environmental health and sustainability of the entire region.

Sherborn's near-total dependence on wells makes protection of water quality and quantity crucial to residents' health as well as the economic development and sustainability of the town. Our underground water resources are largely unmapped, however, and may be impacted by contaminants from local and distant sites.



GOAL I is to maintain the long-term quality and quantity of Sherborn's water resources.

The abundant forest cover in Sherborn is important for recharging groundwater and for filtering and cooling the air. Our wetlands, waterways, uplands, fields, and forests provide habitat for numerous plant and animal species, some of which are rare or endangered. Unspoiled landscapes and open spaces also provide a sense of well being and connection to nature that is unique in the area. However, poorly planned development and land use decisions may result in forest and habitat fragmentation as well as loss of environmental resilience and open space.

GOAL II is to protect Sherborn's forests and overall biodiversity.

GOAL III is to preserve Sherborn's rural character and scenic beauty by protecting and maintaining open space.

Agriculture has been an integral part of Sherborn's heritage since its settlement in the 1600s. Today, a handful of farm businesses and many private farms benefit all residents by providing scenic vistas and a rural atmosphere as well as fresh, locally grown agricultural products and recreational horse riding. Keeping a small farm economically sustainable in this region has many challenges, however, and the seasonal nature of farming also makes it difficult to sustain a farm.

Goal IV is to formulate and implement policies that promote the retention and economic sustainability of agricultural lands.



Recreational Resources

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn's trails and open space recreational resources will be protected and promoted as major assets of the town. Sherborn will maintain diverse recreational resources, facilities, and programs that contribute to the health and community engagement of its residents of all ages.



The easy availability of healthy outdoor recreation is a valuable asset that sets Sherborn apart from neighboring, densely developed towns. Recreational opportunities are often cited by residents as being among the reasons they choose to live here. In general, recreation in Sherborn is dominated by active outdoor exercise that includes organized sports and informal enjoyment of the trails and scenic roads.

The extensive trails through our open spaces are distributed throughout the town, offering opportunities for exercise and exploration of nature at close hand, often as nearby as just out the door. The trail system promotes the health of residents who use them for hiking, biking, horse riding, and cross-country skiing. Nevertheless, the trails are lightly traveled and many residents are unaware of their locations, extent, or beauty. Raising awareness and enjoyment of this irreplaceable resource among Sherborn residents will increase public support for its

preservation and improvement. Sherborn's scenic roads are popular routes for recreational bicyclists, but they can be hazardous as cyclists and drivers compete for space. With minimal investment Sherborn could implement strategies to promote safe sharing of the road.

GOAL I is to protect, improve and expand the use of open space as a recreational resource.

Sherborn's recreational fields and facilities are not extensive, but they are heavily used and play an important role in the health of adults, the development of children, and the sense of community enjoyed by residents. Organized recreation in Sherborn depends on the town's Recreation Commission, a small, dedicated group of volunteers and part-time support staff that manages a diverse and successful program including team sports on three town-owned recreational fields, tennis in Town Center, swimming at Farm Pond, as well as yoga and meditation at indoor locations. The commission manages maintenance of the town's recreational facilities and fields at modest cost to the town through a complex system of funding. Despite the remarkable breadth and depth of the recreational programs available, the town needs a plan to ensure financial stability, improvement in facilities, and accessibility in the coming years.



GOAL II is to maintain and improve Sherborn's organized recreational facilities and programs.

Cultural Resources

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn will continue to depend upon and benefit from volunteer citizen participation in government, community resources, and social supports for all residents. The town will preserve its rich legacy of historic homes, landscapes, and stone wall-lined scenic roads, and will reap the economic, educational, and cultural benefits provided by these historic assets.

Sherborn has an extraordinary tradition and culture of volunteerism, which is evidenced by the many evening meetings at Town Hall, where citizen boards and committees are engaged in the community

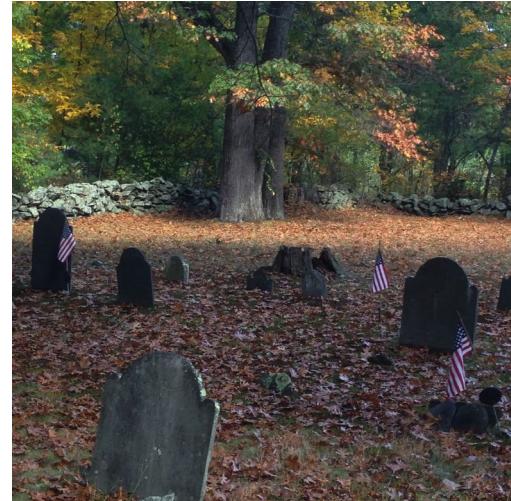
decision-making process. Sherborn's cultural activities revolve around the schools, the library, three religious institutions, the town's two restaurants, and many home-grown organizations that enrich social and cultural life. The 1858 Town House is an important node of Sherborn cultural life. Outdoor recreation plays a cultural role as well, with open space, trails, and Farm Pond being among the important community resources.



The town's cultural organizations include those integrated into town government, such as the Council on Aging and the Historical Commission, as well as citizen-driven organizations, such as the Sherborn Forest & Trail Association and Friends of the Sherborn Library.

The town's many historic assets date from the 1600s and are cultural resources that deserve active protection. They include historically significant homes, public buildings and churches, historic burying grounds and landscapes, antique farmhouses, and the ubiquitous stone walls that line scenic roads and meander through fields and forests.

Nevertheless, most of these historic houses, barns, and stone walls have no legal protection and are vulnerable to tear-down or renovations that ignore their historic value. Our historic burying grounds are not sufficiently appreciated as witnesses to our past. Historic preservation involves difficult challenges and requires continuous effort and planning. Thus, this section of the Master Plan is focused on a single overarching goal.



GOAL: Promote preservation of Sherborn's historic assets.

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Overview of Sherborn



Land Use and Zoning

Economic Sustainability

Land Use and Zoning

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn's zoning by-laws will continue to protect our rural atmosphere, open space, and water resources while they guide limited development in support of housing diversity.



As the Master Plan serves as the town's basis for decision making, it is essential that our zoning by-laws and regulations be in harmony with the goals, recommendations, and actions proposed herein. This will require ongoing review of Sherborn's zoning by-laws and consideration of appropriate changes. In this section we identify broad zoning and land use issues and summarize recommended revisions to specific zoning by-laws found in the various sections of this plan.

Sherborn's zoning by-laws specify larger lots (from one to three acres) than those in surrounding towns. This has been justified by the need for groundwater protection and local geologic and hydrologic constraints. Our zoning by-laws also reflect the desire of residents to maintain the "rural character" and scenic beauty of the town while protecting the right of property owners to develop their land. There is broad support for preservation of our small farms and scenic open space, but the extent to which these aesthetic and cultural assets contribute to property values and their potential economic benefits to the town are difficult to quantify.

An optimistic view is that over the long term, as the surrounding region becomes more densely developed, Sherborn's relative wealth of open space, recreational resources, and small town atmosphere will increase its desirability and fiscal health. Sherborn's zoning by-laws should reflect the balance we seek to maintain between open space and water resources, appropriate housing development and the need for tax revenue.

Development Trends and Current Land Use

Year	Population
1850	1,043
1920	1,558
1930	943
1950	1,245
1960	1,806
1970	3,309
2000	4,200
2010	4,119
2016	4,255

TABLE O.1 — Changes in Sherborn population, 1850–2016

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017

Over its history, Sherborn's land has evolved from native forest to small farms with most land cleared for pastures and orchards, to a green, reforested suburb that seeks to preserve its rural heritage. Land use in Sherborn today is primarily for single-family residences, including homes on large, variable lots along major streets and scenic roads, conventional subdivisions with uniform lots, and significant areas of protected open space. The growth in population since 1850 was accompanied by corresponding loss of open space. In the 1920s, the population declined sharply due to transfer of Sherborn land to Framingham. Loss of farmland and open space accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s with a burst of subdivision development accompanied by rapid population growth. From 2000 to 2017, Sherborn's population did not increase dramatically while the number of households grew from 1,451 in 2000 to 1,539 in 2017, reflecting an increase in older residents without children. The vast majority of residents occupy single-family homes.

The town is now entering a new period of land development driven by a shortage of housing in the greater Boston region, the availability of large tracts of underdeveloped land in Sherborn, and the state-mandated affordable-housing requirement, which applies to all towns. This new development brings with it denser housing and multi-unit residences (see this plan's Housing section). Inevitably, this will result in loss of some open land. The ongoing challenge will be to manage and guide development to minimize this loss and to preserve the environmental, health, and outdoor recreational benefits of open space.

Protected Open Space

Sherborn encompasses an area of about 16 square miles, or 10,328 acres. Today, about 2,489 acres of open lands (or 24 percent of Sherborn) have relatively strong protection from development. These include lands owned by the town and managed by the Conservation Commission or Town Forest Committee, lands owned by nonprofit organizations, and federal and state lands that protect flood plains or underground infrastructure. Another 350 acres (about 3 percent of Sherborn) are privately owned but protected from development by durable conservation easements. (For details, see the [2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan](#).)

MA Chapter 61

These programs offer a property tax break for landowners who are willing to commit to keeping all or part of their land undeveloped for a specified period of time. The three Ch. 61 programs are:

- 61: Forestry—10 acres (minimum),
10-year term
- 61A: Agriculture—5 acres (min.), 1-year term
- 61B: Open Space/Recreation—5 acres (min.),
1-year term

If any land under Ch. 61, 61A, or 61B is converted to a different use while enrolled, or within one year of being removed from the program, five years of back taxes must be paid. If proposed for sale with a change of use, the town then has the option to match a bona fide offer to purchase the property.

An additional 2,172 acres (21 percent) are temporarily protected by inclusion in MA Chapter 61 programs, which give landowners an opportunity to reduce their property taxes in exchange for keeping open land undeveloped. The rationale is that undeveloped land provides valuable public benefits including clean water, wildlife habitat, wood products, food products, rural character, and outdoor recreation as well as requiring fewer town services. Lands enrolled in the Ch. 61 programs remain vulnerable to development, however, especially when ownership changes. (For a map of lands with conservation protection, see this report's Natural Resources and Open Space section.)

Many relatively large private properties in Sherborn consist mostly of open space. Some could be developed once withdrawn from Ch. 61 protection; others could be sold and developed at any time. Taken

together, they contribute significantly to the town's rural atmosphere and scenic views. A recent inventory by Sherborn's Land Acquisition Committee identified more than 20 privately owned parcels of 20 acres or more that include open space that could accommodate potentially significant additional development. Uncontrolled conversion of these lands to conventional subdivisions or to dense housing under Ch. 40B law would result in degradation of Sherborn's unique scenic ambience and fragmentation of forested areas and wildlife corridors that provide environmental resilience in the face of climate change.

Current Zoning Districts

Sherborn's zoning districts define sections of town based on environmental characteristics, settlement patterns, and residents' desire to maintain the rural character of the town. Zoning districts also reflect geologic and hydrologic conditions and the need for safe and effective septic systems. As Sherborn has no municipal water supply and no town-wide wastewater treatment system, all residences and businesses (with a few exceptions) have their own private water well and septic system. Residents have demonstrated no desire for town-wide utilities, and they have forcefully expressed their desire to maintain the present residential water supply of individual private wells. Since the continued viability of local private wells cannot be guaranteed over the long term, zoning regulations must be consistent with protection of the town's limited groundwater supplies.

Responsibility for reviewing and acting upon land development proposals is shared by the elected Planning Board and the appointed Zoning Board of Appeals. The Planning Board reviews and approves subdivision plans, formulates and proposes changes in the zoning by-laws for approval by Town Meeting, and leads the long-term planning process that produces the Master Plan. The Planning Board can also issue special permits for variations on standard zoning rules. The Zoning Board of Appeals can issue certain types of special permits, such as those for nonconforming uses or structures. The Zoning Board of Appeals also represents the town in the state's Chapter 40B affordable-housing process and issues Ch. 40B comprehensive permits, appeals, and variances.

Residential Districts

The current residential zoning districts promote overall continuation of the present pattern of large one- to three-acre single-family lots. Each residential district also includes multiple parcels of protected open space. To accommodate limited increases in housing density at specific locations, the town has adopted and recently amended an Elderly and/or Affordable (EA) by-law that allows denser and/or multi-unit residential developments on specific parcels with 25 percent of each parcel preserved as open space. An Open Space Subdivision by-law passed in 1996 makes possible subdivisions of one-acre lots that include at least 40-percent protected open space by special permit from the Planning Board, but no such subdivisions have been built.

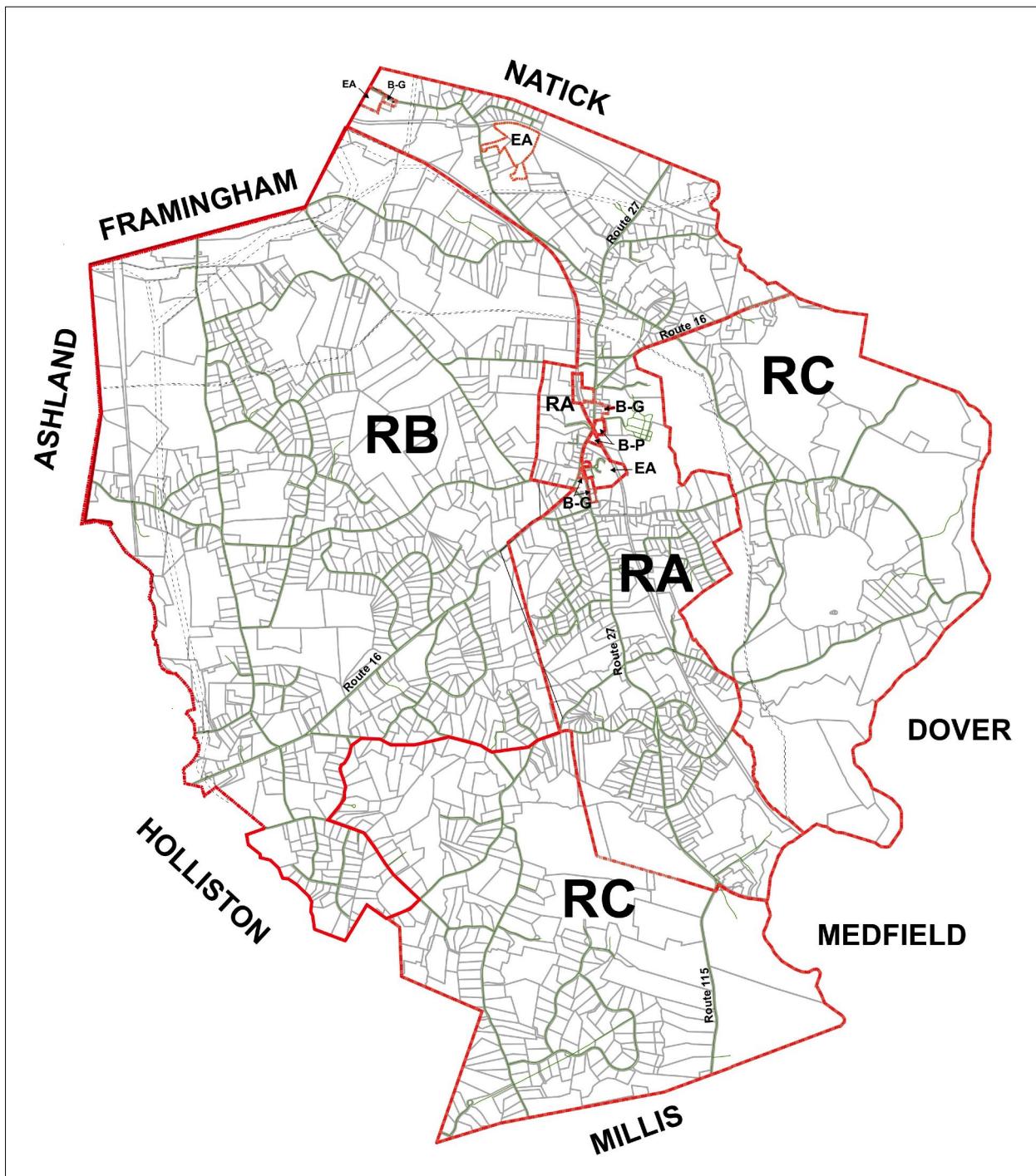
Residence A (RA) ■ The Residence A (one-acre minimum) district describes an irregular corridor from the northern border of the town to the Medfield border in the southeast. Embedded in this district are several denser overlay districts including EA housing, and multi-unit housing developments currently planned under the Ch. 40B affordable-housing law. The Town Center business districts and municipal buildings also fall within the boundaries of the RA zone. Despite these pockets of density, the rural character of the town is maintained within this zone thanks to significant open space (Peter's Hill), recreation fields (Laurel Farm Field, Jameson Field), and farms (Sunshine, Columbia, Dowse Orchards).

Residence B (RB) ■ The Residence B (two-acre minimum) district roughly covers the western half of town. Its environmental characteristics and topography are diverse, ranging from forests at the town's highest spot (Brush Hill, 396 feet above sea level) to low-lying brooks and wetlands, and meadows along Western Avenue. The area is primarily glacial till, with rocky soils layered on dense silt and clay deposits that result in high water tables. Thus house lots generally require a substantial area to locate both a private well and septic system. There are also small areas of mixed sand and loam soil deposits on the western side that support agricultural uses.

The Dopping Brook aquifer lies under the western edge of this district, and portions of it fall within the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) approved Zone II water-supply protection areas for two municipal wells just over the town line in Holliston. A watershed boundary divides the Residence B zone: its northern portion drains to the Sudbury River watershed and the southern area to the Charles River. Many of the town's protected open spaces are located within this region, including the Barber Reservation, the Bailey Trail with its Swan Pond, and a large part of the Town Forest. The Bay Circuit Trail passes through several of these open spaces.

Residence C (RC) ■ Two areas of town are designated as Residence C (three-acre minimum lot size): the Charles River zone in the south, and the Farm Pond zone in the east. Much of this area is characterized by glacial till, thus requiring substantial area to locate both a private well and septic system. Its most prominent feature is Farm Pond, which is a "Great Pond" (as defined by the commonwealth statute as a pond containing in its natural state more than 10 acres). The areas north and south of Farm Pond and along the Charles River have the only high-yield aquifers in Sherborn, and they merit strict protection. A significant portion of the district lies within the MassDEP-approved Zone II for a municipal well in Medfield. Water in this area of town flows to the Charles.

The eastern RC district holds Sherborn's major scenic open space and recreational resources, including Farm Pond, Little Farm Pond, historic farms, Mass Audubon's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary, Rocky Narrows Reservation, and portions of the Town Forest. Although the southern RC district has less protected open space than other parts of town, no major trail systems, and no active recreational fields, abundant forest cover on private residential lands is found here.



MAP O.1—Sherborn zoning districts

KEY: Residential zones: **RA** (1-acre minimum); **RB** (2-acre min.); **RC** (3-acre min.); **EA** (Elderly-Affordable)

Business zones: **B-G** (General); **B-P** (Professional)

Source: Town of Sherborn, Town Planner

Residence Elderly-Affordable (EA) ■ With its goal of enabling housing diversity, EA zoning may be applied to specific parcels of six acres or more anywhere in town. An EA district is essentially an overlay district that encompasses one or more properties, each of which must be approved by a two-thirds vote at Town Meeting. EA zoning, as last amended in 2017, allows denser housing (four units/acre) that may be either age-restricted (over 55) only, affordable (age-unrestricted with 25 percent “affordable” units by Ch. 40B standards), or both (i.e., age-restricted with at least 10 percent affordable units). At least 25 percent of an EA property must remain undeveloped open space.

The town currently has four EA developments, all of which consist of multi-unit residences. Three contiguous properties in the Town Center comprise Sherborn’s largest EA district. Woodhaven and Leland Farms are both age-restricted and affordable, while the recently completed Abbey Road is age restricted. An additional EA age-restricted, multi-unit condominium complex is on a parcel adjacent to Sunshine Farm on the town’s northeast border with Framingham. In 2017 an additional EA parcel on Coolidge Street was approved and now is in the planning stage.

40B Affordable Housing ■ Affordable housing developments permitted under the State Law Chapter 40B may be located in any zoning district and do not require Town approved rezoning. At this writing, Sherborn has 34 housing units that qualify as “affordable” under State criteria, in three age-restricted housing developments. Additional non-age restricted 40B developments are partially constructed or in the planning stage. These promise to greatly diversify Sherborn’s housing stock by adding multi-unit rental apartments as well as duplex and triplex housing units. (for details, see Housing section)

Business Districts

(See the map in the TOWN CENTER section.)

Business General (B-G) ■ The B-G district allows for a wide range of businesses, including restaurants, retail stores, and gas stations as well as municipal uses and housing. Currently, the Town Center hosts two widely separated B-G districts.

Business Professional (B-P) ■ The B-P district allows only offices and certain shops. It does not allow restaurants, retail establishments, service stations, drive-through windows, or assisted living facilities.

Both business zones allow single-family dwellings by right and accessory apartments by special permit. Mixed commercial and housing developments are allowed on the periphery of both the B-G and the B-P districts, but they are arranged through the planned unit development (PUD) by-law, which stipulates that 25 percent of the land parcel exists within a business district. At present Sherborn has no PUD developments, but the Town Center section of this Master Plan recommends using this provision to enhance Town Center’s vitality. Agricultural businesses and home offices are allowed throughout town.

MA Chapter 40B

This law addresses the state-wide shortage of affordable housing by allowing local zoning boards of appeals (ZBA) to approve affordable-housing developments under Massachusetts rules rather than under local zoning and other regulations. To qualify, at least 25 percent of the proposed units must be affordable—that is, reserved for families earning 80 percent or less of the median family income for the metropolitan Boston region and use 30 percent or more of their income for housing. The ZBA can deny Ch. 40B developments without review if 10 percent of the town’s housing already qualifies as affordable, or if sufficient yearly progress toward that goal has been demonstrated.

Overlay Districts

Flood plain districts ■ The flood plain districts in Sherborn cover lands subject to periodic or seasonal flooding, defined as Zones A and AE (100-year base flood elevations) on the maps periodically issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These overlay districts prohibit building or other encroachments that would interfere with the natural water-storage capacity of the land, the natural flow of water, and would increase flooding in adjacent communities and within wetland areas. About 92 acres of flood-prone land is protected from development through ownership or easement by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Water-supply protection districts ■ Water-supply protection districts are areas designated as Zone I or Zone II by MassDEP for protection of community water-supply wells. The intent is to ensure public health by restricting use of lands that function as recharge areas for shared water-supply wells and to prevent contamination of drinking water supplies. These zones prohibit underground storage tanks holding any petroleum products and construction of wastewater treatment facilities.

Photovoltaic solar district ■ This overlay district allows and regulates the installation of large-scale, ground-mounted commercial and municipal solar photovoltaic facilities and restricts their location to minimize negative visual and environmental impacts on the scenic, natural, and historic resources of the town. It applies to installations with a minimum capacity of 250 kW (DC). Because of the large land area needed for such high-capacity installations and the lack of appropriate locations in town, at present they exist at only one site: the Sherborn portion of the Adesa parking lot on Western Avenue.

Wireless communications districts ■ These overlay districts allow the town to regulate the use of commercial and municipal personal wireless communications facilities, and restrict their location to minimize negative visual and environmental impacts. These facilities include towers, antennas, receiving or transmitting equipment or structures, access ways, and landscaping. The wireless communications overlay districts (WCOD) were adopted as part of the wireless communications facilities by-law in 1997. The WCODs include all of the electric transmission-line corridors and two locations within the Town Forest. Wireless communication installations at locations outside the WCODs are allowed without a special permit if they use existing structures and are “essentially not visible.” As a result, only a single new tower has been constructed since the by-law was approved in 1997; it is within the Town Forest and has little visibility. Two other towers that predate the by-law also exist. Additionally, Sherborn is served by several virtually unseen facilities within steeples and cupolas and on electricity-transmission towers.

Historic districts ■ (see map in Cultural Resources Section) Although the Sherborn Center Local Historic District is not an official zoning district of the town, it functions as an overlay district. Its goal is the preservation of the historic features of individual properties and maintenance of the district’s overall integrity and character. This local historic district, established under MA General Laws Chapter 40C, includes 25 properties and is administered by the Sherborn Historic District Commission, which reviews proposed changes and additions that would be visible from a public way. Building-permit applications for such changes require review by the commission.

Two additional National Register Districts that partly overlap with the local historic districts are located in and near the Town Center, each of which includes multiple historic structures. National Register designation alone does not assure historic preservation; it provides only limited protection under federal law (see Cultural Resources Section).

Zoning By-law Changes Recommended in This Master Plan

Implementation of certain recommendations detailed in this plan will require changes in Sherborn's zoning by-laws. It is important to note that citizens can propose a change in the zoning by-laws by following the rules described in Mass General Law Part 1, Title VII, Chapter 40A, Section 5. Any change in the substance or language of a Sherborn zoning by-law requires debate by the town's Planning Board and other relevant boards, public hearings to gather citizen input, presentation of the proposed change as a Town Meeting warrant article, a two-thirds-majority vote by the citizens at Town Meeting, and approval by the state before the change can go into effect.

State laws sometimes prioritize housing development over the state's own goal of environmental preservation, making protection of water resources particularly difficult for towns that lack municipal water or sewer systems. For example, Massachusetts' current zoning law allows for the division of private parcels that have sufficient street frontage to create additional building lots through the Approval Not Required (ANR) mechanism; it also allows development of open land into conventional subdivisions consisting of standard, uniform lots with unlimited lawn and pavement areas. Both types of development contribute to suburban sprawl—the dispersal of single-family homes across the landscape at the cost of functional open space. Current state laws allow both of these “by right,” although a standard subdivision does require local planning board approval.

Given the number of changes proposed in this plan, it is anticipated that consideration of zoning by-law revisions will be ongoing over the next several years. Some of the zoning changes identified during the Master Planning process have already been proposed by the Planning Board, debated in public hearings, and adopted by Town Meeting vote. Two were also recommended in the 2017 Housing Production Plan.

The first change was adopted in 2017 at Town Meeting. This EA zoning by-law revision facilitated development of affordable housing under town regulations rather than Ch. 40B criteria. The previous by-law specified that such multi-unit developments could be *either* age-restricted *or* affordable, and they must be within a mile of Town Center. The revised by-law adds a provision for age-restricted housing with an affordable component and permits EA developments at any location in town.

In 2018, the second Town Meeting vote to revise zoning by-laws made three changes:

1. Restrictions on accessory apartments were eased in order to create alternative housing options for those who cannot afford or no longer can manage a large, high-maintenance property. Rental of apartments of limited size is now allowed within homes or accessory structures in all residential zoning districts.
2. To enable economic sustainability of agricultural businesses, agricultural properties may be used for a limited number of nonagricultural events providing that noise limits are observed to protect abutters.
3. The third change allows businesses in Town Center to host outdoor events with entertainment to support their economic sustainability; limits on noise levels and abutter impacts also apply here.

The following is a brief overview of the additional zoning by-law changes that may be considered in the course of implementation of this Master Plan. The rationale for each proposed zoning change and the challenge it is meant to address are described in more detail in the various sections of the plan.

Town Center

1. Create planned unit development (PUD) overlay district to allow mixed use in the entire business districts (B-G and B-P).
2. Revise PUD zoning to allow multiple businesses in one PUD zone, including one anchor that has a larger footprint than currently permitted.
3. Enable affordable-housing alternatives in the Town Center including mixed use, accessory apartments, and multifamily housing.
4. Within design-review guidelines, modify setback requirements for businesses.
5. Ease restrictions on business types, number of employees, number of parking spaces required, and outdoor events.

Housing

1. Allow open space (also called cluster or pocket-neighborhood) developments with limited numbers of housing units and with 60 percent protected open space within regulations established by the Board of Health and the Conservation Commission.
2. Institute low-impact development (LID) by-laws that apply to all new developments to maximize groundwater resources and preserve open space.
3. Require inclusionary zoning (state-qualified affordable units) for all new multifamily developments.
4. Allow conversion of existing single-family homes to multifamily housing that is consistent with the character of the neighborhood.
5. Formulate and adopt design-review guidelines and Dark Skies lighting-fixture regulations.
6. Require development plans to maximize climate-mitigating features and to include long-term maintenance plans that outline energy consumption and savings.

Natural Resources and Open Space

1. Require site plan review to consider forest and habitat connectivity, natural landscape features, and preservation of scenic viewscapes.
2. Revise open space subdivision by-law to promote cluster developments that protect open space or agricultural land (as in Housing, above).
3. Allow farms to provide housing for farm workers and interns on site.

Cultural Resources

1. Establish a demolition-delay by-law for historic assets to allow time to consider preservation options.
2. Establish an affirmative maintenance by-law to prevent deterioration of important historic assets.
3. Allow historic preservation easements by special permit.
4. Extend local historic-district protection to selected properties on the Historic Asset Survey.

Economic Sustainability

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn will achieve and maintain economic sustainability through prudent decision-making, fiscal restraint and carefully guided development, while preserving the town's rural atmosphere and excellent schools.

Introduction

Sherborn's Master Plan is grounded on a thorough understanding of our economic environment and financial resources. Sherborn must carefully balance the growth and change needed in our community to address our future financial stability while still preserving what we cherish. The goals and recommendations in this plan must be achievable within financial constraints and using prudent decision making that will insure Sherborn's long-term economic sustainability. This section of the Master Plan looks at the overall demographic and economic trends and the fiscal issues that Sherborn and comparable towns in the region face today and in the near future. Here we take stock of our current fiscal environment and describe a set of economic and town-management strategies that can assure economic vitality over the long term.

Financial Decision-making in Sherborn

Each year at Town Meeting we vote on our annual budget for the services and infrastructure we want, including estimated operating expenses and special capital outlays. Our tax-assessment process, based on the annual budget, calculates how much each taxpayer must pay as a percentage of the value of their property (the tax rate). The town collects and manages the funds from property taxes, fees, excise taxes, and other sources.

Since 1982 the state has limited increases in tax revenue to 2.5 percent relative to the preceding year. However, that limit—the “levy limit”—can be overridden if the majority of voters at Town Meeting decide it is in the best interest of the town. In addition, voters can decide to borrow money for specific capital projects for which debt payments are excluded from the calculation of the annual levy limit. These “debt exclusions” increase taxes for the duration of payments on the debt. The combined budget, including operating expenses, nonexcluded and excluded debt service, capital budget, town employee salaries and benefits, and school expenses makes up our total annual budget.

The Select Board is primarily responsible for managing town finances, and the School Committee is responsible for school finances. The Advisory and the Capital Budget

Data sources for this section

The Master Plan Financial and Economic Working Group compiled data using U.S. Census (1990, 2000, 2010 and ACS reports), DOR Local Databank, 2018 Massachusetts Department of Education report, Town of Sherborn annual reports and financial statements, MAPC Demographic Studies/Forecasts, and other sources. Some demographic data was drawn from two other long-term planning efforts: the Town Center Housing Study completed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in 2016 and the Sherborn Housing Production Plan from 2017. Also see Supplementary Financial Information at www.sherbornma.org.

committees, among others, advise the Select Board and Town Meeting on finances. Voters at Town Meeting are solely responsible for approving the budget, borrowing for capital projects, and deciding about overrides. For our long-term financial sustainability, the town must examine each annual budget to ensure the expected services are funded, the buildings and infrastructure are maintained, and that funds for unexpected contingencies are in place.

The Regional Context

To provide perspective on how the town has changed over the past decades, Sherborn was compared over the past 25 years (1990–2015) to a benchmark group of communities in the arc west of Route 128 that share similar geographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Towns were chosen for comparison based on average assessed home value in 1990, average household income in 1990, population density, proximity to Sherborn, and community commitment to public education. None is an exact match for Sherborn, and they range from moderately dense (e.g., Needham and Wellesley) to less dense (Dover, Lincoln, and Carlisle). Very dense (Newton, Belmont, and Winchester) and very wealthy towns (Weston) were omitted.

Comparison with other Boston suburbs is instructive because all face common challenges, but some are in stronger financial condition than others. Relative to this benchmark group of towns, over the past quarter-century Sherborn residents:

1. have become less affluent, on average;
2. live in homes that have appreciated in value more slowly;
3. pay the highest residential taxes within this peer group, with a property tax rate of almost \$20 per thousand of assessed value;
4. provide significant financial support for a high-quality school system, and have funded a 35-percent growth in enrollment since 1990; and
5. are demographically less diverse.

This section critically examines the economic viability of Sherborn as a town that supports its excellent schools and values its country atmosphere, scenery, and open space recreation, but lacks tax revenue from commercial or high-density housing sources. We begin by reviewing demographic and development trends and their economic implications, especially the impact of demographic trends on the cost of schools and town services. We then review how the town spends its money, which includes the major obligatory costs, such as our bonded debt from capital expenditures and our unfunded liabilities derived from promised past and present town-employee pension and health care benefits. These costs significantly impact our balance sheet, our financial health over time, and our ability to meet infrastructure needs. We also examine sources of revenue and the balance between income and expenses. Finally, we consider the impact of potential development on our community's long-term economic and financial health (also see Supplementary Financial Information).

The Take-home Message

These analyses lead to some important conclusions that are consistent with summaries made by the Select Board and Advisory Committee in recent annual reports and Town Meetings. The conclusions form the basis for our recommendations for the future.

The town faces important challenges...

1. The town's financial stability is challenged by spending patterns and the growing proportion of our annual budget that must be spent on retiree benefits earned over the past decades but not prefunded.
2. The high property-tax rate continues to impact property values adversely relative to our peer group. If this continues, it will be increasingly difficult for Sherborn to raise sufficient revenue to keep pace with escalating budgets for education, public safety, public infrastructure, and other amenities that make Sherborn an attractive place to live.
3. This funding challenge is aggravated by the lack of the kinds of development that produce tax revenue without increasing school costs, such as commercial development and housing for empty nester households.
4. The financial and economic working group recognized that, without low-impact growth, annual increases in property value no longer can be relied upon to fund schools, municipal services, and employee benefits.

...but, if managed well, certain recent trends may be positive:

1. In the current decade Sherborn has managed to comply with the Proposition 2½ limit, in contrast to prior budget practices.
2. The regional demand for housing has reached Sherborn and can be guided toward the town's financial advantage.
3. There is potential new development in Town Center that could add tax revenue, have no impact on school costs, make the Town Center more vibrant, and benefit the town overall.
4. New growth can also be guided to assure preservation of the open space resources and rural atmosphere that define the town and may enhance property values in the future.

Recommendations

1. Maintain municipal budget discipline and hold the line on spending growth.
2. Do not increase the tax rate.
3. Fund employee benefits and look for opportunities to pay down our unfunded future pension and post-employment benefit commitments.
4. Develop a Pine Hill School and Dover-Sherborn Regional School District enrollment forecast that includes effects of housing development.
5. Develop a school infrastructure contingency plan that includes the enrollment impact of potential housing development and other factors that affect school costs and budgeting.
6. Support Sherborn's housing production plan to guide housing development in a way that benefits the financial health of the town. Favor development that increases tax revenue with minimal impact on operating expenses and school enrollment.
7. Require town budgets and expense requests to be consistent with the goals and recommendations of this Master Plan and evaluate them for their financial impact on current tax rates.

Demographic and Development Trends

As described in the Housing section of this Master Plan, Sherborn is considerably less populated and less dense than surrounding towns due to a combination of factors, including large lots, large areas of potential open space (more than 25 percent of the town), and an abundance of wetlands.

In the past three decades, Sherborn's population has grown very slowly—just 3 percent from 1990 to 2010 (FIG. O.1). Since 2000, however, despite small changes in population numbers, the number of households increased 7 percent, which reflects shrinkage in household size and an increase in average age of their residents.

Recent development activity and developers' interest in Sherborn as a town with available land strongly suggest that these patterns are changing.

Sherborn's percentage of residents over 65 is average in comparison to our benchmark towns (FIG. O.2).

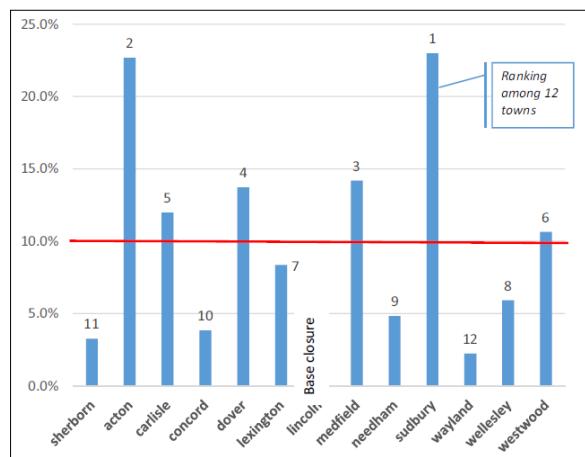


FIGURE O.1—Population growth, 1990–2010 (red line indicates the mean)

Source: U.S. Census

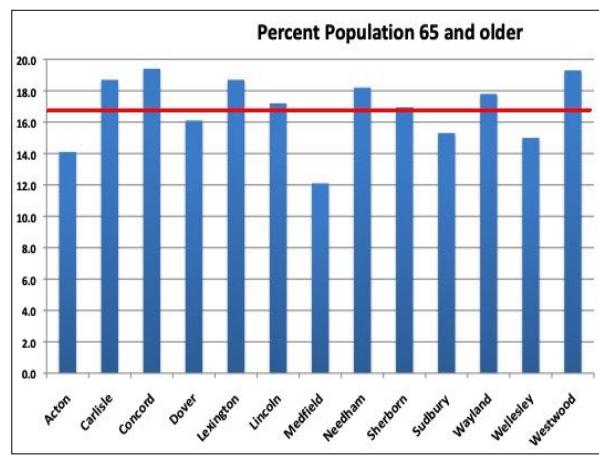


FIGURE O.2—Percent of population age 65 and older (red line indicates the mean)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2017

Development Trends: Impact on School Enrollment and Costs

How do these demographics and potential changes affect the town's financial health? Housing projects now in construction and being planned may add 425 or more new residents over the next decade. New housing types will influence the demographics and hence the economic impacts of this population growth on the town. Types of housing being added or proposed include:

- Large single-family house. When these add school-age children, the cost burden on the schools can be greater than the real estate tax revenue gained.
- Housing designed for residents over 55, such as townhouses and apartments; these add real estate tax revenue but do not affect school costs.
- State-subsidized (Ch. 40B) affordable-housing development, which is typically high density and can include both market rate and affordable units. It can range from age-restricted, which does not impact school enrollment, to multibedroom units appropriate for families with school-age children.

To predict and prepare for housing impacts on the schools, the demographic implications of these different types of housing developments must be forecast. Given the length of the planning horizon for expanding school-building capacity, coupled with the coordination challenge when a capital project spans three municipal entities (DS Regional Schools, Town of Dover, Town of Sherborn), this plan recognizes regional school capacity as an infrastructure risk with a significant operational and financial impact. From needs assessment to final occupancy, the physical expansion requires approximately eight years to complete.

Single-family homes currently represent 92 percent of Sherborn's housing stock, and they are attractive to households with children. When coupled with a well-deserved reputation for excellent public schools, this leads to high enrollments. In 2015 and again in 2017, *Newsweek* ranked Dover-Sherborn Regional High School as #16 in the nation and #1 in Massachusetts. As a result, in 2018, Sherborn had the highest number of public school students per capita among the benchmark group (FIG. O.3).

Maintaining excellent schools is a guiding principle of the town, and our schools attract home buyers and indirectly support property values, but high enrollment places a burden on the municipal budget. In Sherborn, education consumes well over 70 percent of spending on municipal services, and property-tax rates are the highest in the region and among our peer group of towns.

Although Sherborn's percentage of residents over 65 is average among comparison towns (see FIG. O.2), there is a demand for age-restricted housing. As stated in the Housing section of this plan, addition of accessory apartments and age-restricted housing choices will benefit the town's economic situation by attracting and retaining seniors who contribute to the tax base without adding to school enrollment. State aid for public education does not provide a financial buffer for Sherborn, as it is directed primarily to low- and middle-income communities.

That Was Then, This Is Now

Why have the impact of a limited tax base, high cost of schools, and other factors on Sherborn's economic sustainability been felt only recently? In 1990 our town was financially stable. Sherborn's school enrollment was at a nadir. (The last "baby boomers" had exited Dover-Sherborn High School in 1982.) Thus the tax base was sufficient to cover expenditures and the low commercial base was not a problem.

From 1990 to 2018, however, school enrollment grew by 35 percent, but Sherborn's total assessed property values lagged behind other towns in the region (FIG. O.4). This may be because many of today's homebuyers prefer easy connection to urban centers and vibrant town centers. As the prices rise, fewer buyers have the financial capacity to afford Sherborn's properties and taxes. Meanwhile, municipal-employee benefits costs have risen much faster than inflation, as described below.

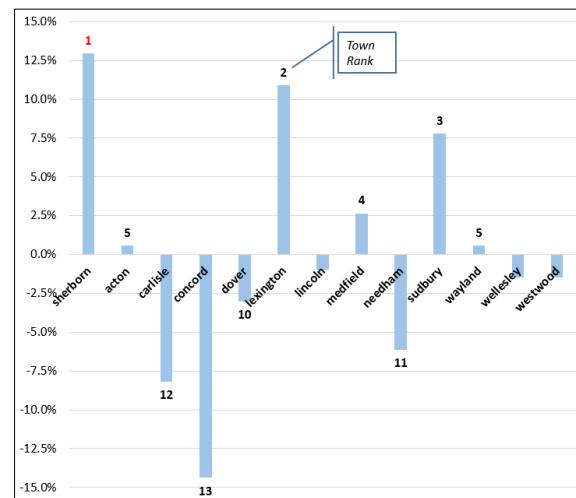


FIGURE O.3—Public school population per capita, above/below benchmark group average.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Education, 2018 School and District Profiles

Master Plan for the Town of Sherborn

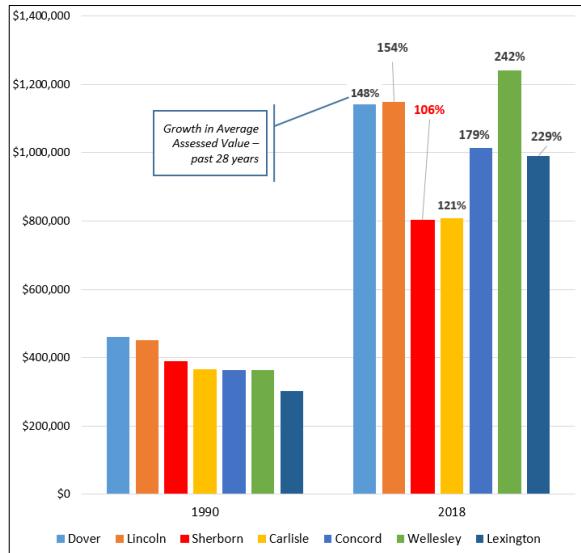


FIGURE O.4—Changes in average assessed values in selected towns, 1990 and 2018

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Due to the confluence of high per capita school enrollment, dependence on a limited property-tax base for revenue, and increasing benefits costs, Sherborn's taxes are high relative to other towns (FIG. O.5). In some towns, the added tax base from commercial properties provides a buffer. Measured on a per student basis, nine of the thirteen benchmark communities have a property-tax base higher than Sherborn's. In each of these towns between 60 and 75 percent of the municipal budget supports public education, but there is vastly different taxing capacity to support this budget priority.

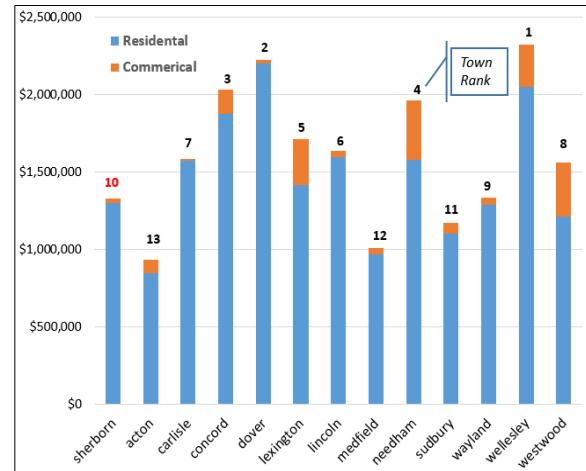


FIGURE O.5—Property tax assessment per student in Sherborn and comparison towns, 2018

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue and Department of Education

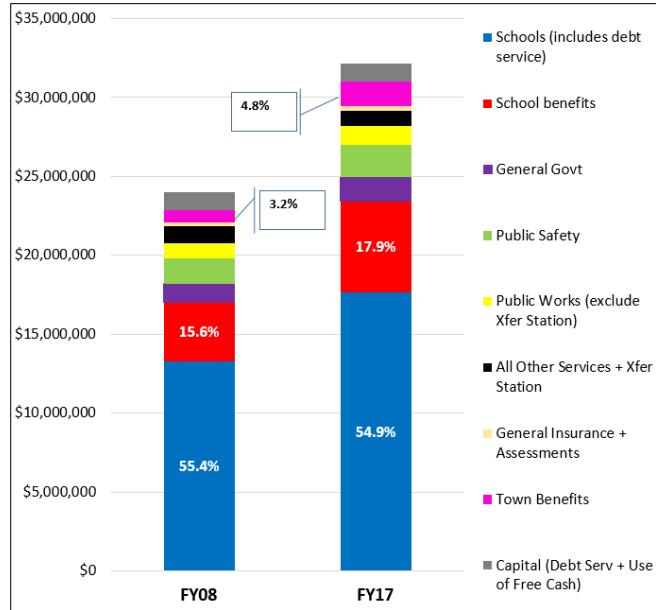


FIGURE O.6—Allocation of funds to provide town services, FY 2008 and 2017

Source: Data were consolidated from the Accounting Standards Board Financial Statements produced by the town and regional school auditors, the town's annual report, and the regional school financial statements.

Spending Trends

Sherborn's town budget defines how we spend our funds. Our budget is a major policy-making tool for the community that aligns the funding of town government services with our community priorities. It includes expenses for daily operation and capital expenditures. Daily operating expenses include employees' salaries, debt service, and community maintenance costs. The budget also funds pensions, health care, liability insurance, and Sherborn's share of the Dover-Sherborn Regional School budget (FIG. O.6).

Beginning in 2009, the town's prior spending patterns were recognized as unsustainable, and since then good progress has been made to contain costs. The town stopped using tax

overrides to meet the needs of the growing municipal and regional school budgets. Tighter budgeting practices were introduced in 2010 and, as a result, the annual increase in inflation-adjusted spending was 3.0 percent from 2000 to 2010, and only 0.7 percent from 2010 to 2017.

Significant portions of overall spending are difficult to control, however, as they are determined by the town's legal obligations to fund capital debt service and retirement benefits, as described below.

Capital Project Debt

When the town borrows money to pay for a big project, repayment can take years. It has been Sherborn's practice to increase property taxes temporarily until the loan is paid off. In the past Sherborn has incurred capital debt expense to build the police station and Department of Public Works building, renovate the fire station and Town Hall, and expand Pine Hill School. Sherborn shared debt expense with Dover to build the Dover-Sherborn Regional Middle School and renovate the high school.

Sherborn's annual debt expense has decreased in recent years as projects have been paid off. By 2017 the total capital debt owed by Sherborn, including a pro-rata share of the regional school debt, had decreased to \$9.4 million. As a percent of the annual operating budget, debt outstanding was 40 percent in 1991, peaked at 92 percent in 2006, and now, at 34 percent, is at its lowest point since the mid-1990s. Of our comparison towns, only Dover has a lower debt-to-operating budget ratio. In the future, added school capacity may be required as a consequence of new housing development. If the town considers implementing municipal water and/or sewer utilities in the Town Center, capital debt costs would be incurred although utility charges to private parties would help offset the cost. Going forward, all new capital projects must be considered in the light of their benefits, including new tax revenue, weighed against the associated capital debt expense and the impact on our taxes and available funds.

Employee Retirement Liabilities

The town's efforts to contain spending and control the property tax rate face into a headwind: the inexorable rise in the cost of state-mandated employee retirement benefits (FIG. O.7).

Sherborn, like the state itself and all Massachusetts communities, is responsible for providing retirement income (pensions) and other post-employment benefits (OPEBs), such as health care and life insurance, for eligible town employees. In this context, the term *town employees* includes all town employees, except for school teachers and administrators, as well as Sherborn's share of the Dover-Sherborn Regional School staff who are not teachers or administrators. The state funds retiree benefits for teachers and administrators at Pine Hill and Dover-Sherborn Regional Schools.

Sherborn pays into pension funds and benefit funds for this purpose. These are essentially trust

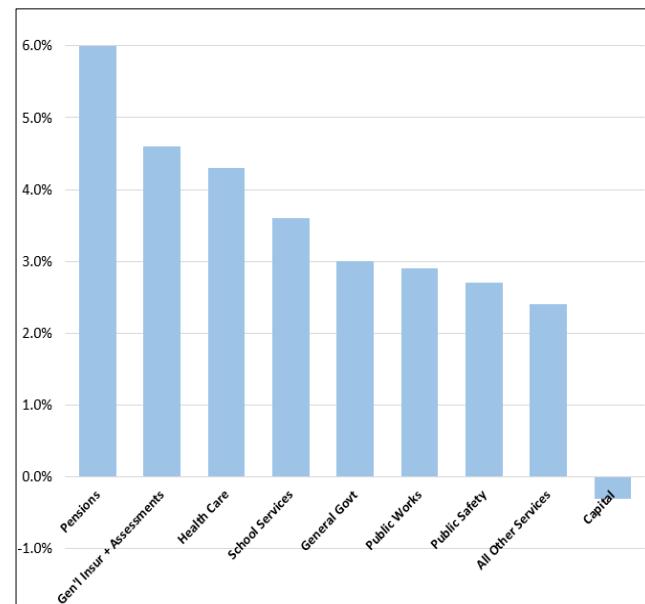


FIGURE O.7—Annual growth in spending from FY 2008 to FY 2017 (selected categories)

Source: Town of Sherborn, annual financial statements

funds intended to cover the town's current and future obligations to retired employees. Ideally, retiree pension and benefit payments would come entirely from the accumulated assets of pension and benefit funds that are sufficiently large and well invested to keep up with present needs. Future obligations would be met by regular town contributions along with employee contributions that would keep those funds "fully funded." The goal of all retirement plans is to set aside enough money each year that, with prudent investment, all benefits could be paid from fund assets.

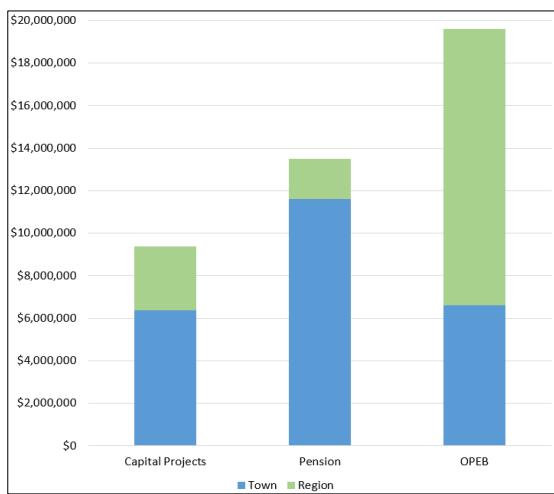


FIGURE O.8—*Summary of debt: capital projects, pension funds, and OPEBs*

Source: Town of Sherborn and Dover-Sherborn Regional School System, 2017 annual financial statements

employee contributions and employer contributions are governed by Chapter 32B of the Massachusetts General Laws. OPEBs have not been sufficiently prefunded on local, state, or national levels. Statewide, Massachusetts OPEBs are underfunded by an estimated \$46.7 billion, and benefits are currently funded on a pay-as-you-go basis. Medical care costs are rising faster than inflation, however, and Sherborn's ability to collect revenues is limited, so pay-as-you-go is not sustainable. In April 2010, the town established an OPEB trust fund to provide funding for future employee health care costs and, as of 2017, it is 10 percent funded. The Dover-Sherborn Regional School has not established a trust fund and presently has a 0-percent funding status.

As shown in figure O.8, at present Sherborn has less than \$10 million in capital debt and a debt of \$33 million in retirement benefits for current and future retirees. Sherborn takes pride in its AAA credit rating, but to maintain this premier financial grade, the town should take action to reduce pension and OPEB debt and the associated debt expense.

What can be done? When revenue exceeds spending, the balance of our free cash and stabilization fund increases. In the past, free cash has been used to balance the budget and avoid an "override," i.e., a raise in taxes above the 2.5-percent limit. Sherborn should continue prudent budgeting and allocating available free cash to contribute to benefit and pension trust funds and to reduce our future liability.

Pensions ► Sherborn makes pension payments to the Middlesex County retirement system for its town employees and Pine Hill support staff. The Dover-Sherborn Regional School makes payments to the Norfolk County retirement system, a pooled pension plan for all small and midsize towns in Norfolk County, and Sherborn then is responsible for its share of the regional school payment. Contributions to these funds have not been adequate to maintain full funding. Although total pension fund assets grew to \$11.6 million by 2017, our total pension liability, including our share of the Dover-Sherborn Regional School's unfunded pension liability, exceeds \$13.5 million (FIG. O.8).

Other post-employment benefits (OPEBs) ►

In addition to pensions, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and its municipalities must pay other post-employment benefits—the nonpension benefits, mostly health insurance and life insurance, for retired government employees. Benefits, benefit levels,

This Master Plan also recommends advocating for reform at the state level to make OPEB requirements more affordable. Such reforms should preserve important benefits to retirees, support our ability to recruit and retain qualified members of our municipal and school workforces, and maintain the services needed to fulfill the goals of this Master Plan. Without reform to OPEB, jobs and services likely will be reduced. Sherborn should join with other communities to explore ways to gradually increase retirement health care contribution rates and limit eligibility for benefits as a way to balance employee benefits with the community's financial health and sustainability.

Revenue and taxation trends

Principally, Sherborn's revenue comes from property taxes. Smaller portions come from state and federal aid and other local receipts (FIG. O.9).

From 2000 to 2010, overrides of the state 2.5 percent limit resulted in property taxes increasing at 6.5 percent annually. Since 2010, the growth in property tax revenues has slowed to 3.0 percent annually. Despite a "no override" policy adopted in FY2009 and prudent fiscal practices, however, the tax rate remains high.

This can be attributed to falling home values following the real estate crash of 2007–2008, and a lack of commercial or industrial sources of tax revenue. Property values in Sherborn have recovered more slowly over the past 10 years than in many other MetroWest suburbs. As a result, Sherborn's tax rate of just under \$20 per thousand of assessed value now exceeds all other towns in our benchmark group (FIG. O.10), and has negatively impacted real estate values.

Revenue calculations also include the state's contribution to pensions for educators and administrators at Pine Hill and the regional schools. The teacher-pension subsidy is an important source of revenue for all communities in the commonwealth.

Sherborn should look for ways to increase revenues without increasing taxes on existing homes and businesses. Grants, usually tied to specific needs, can bring money into the town. In some cases existing residences and businesses are improved, which in turn generates an increase in tax revenue. New residential and business

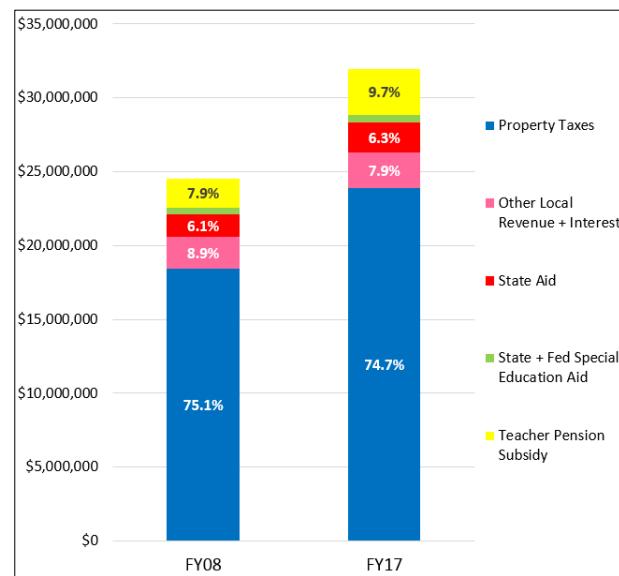


FIGURE O.9—Share of Sherborn revenue from taxes, state and federal aid, and other sources for Fiscal Years 2008 and 2017.

Source: Town of Sherborn, annual financial statements

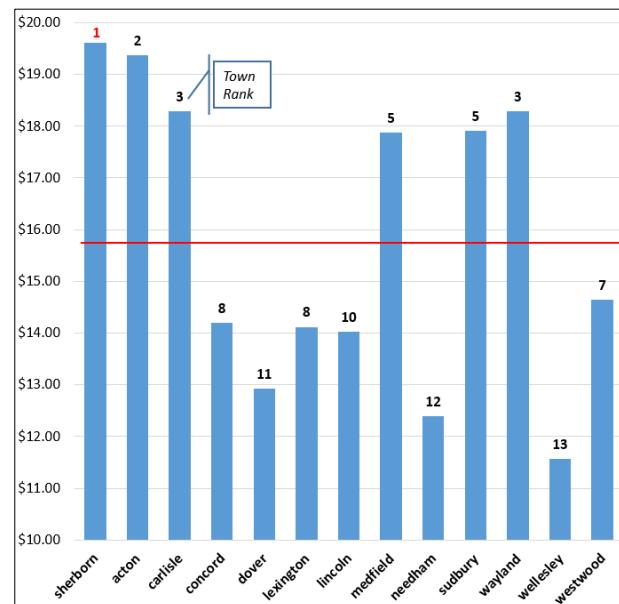


FIGURE O.10—Property tax rate per \$1000 assessed value; Sherborn and comparison towns.

Source: Annual reports for 2017 from each surveyed town

development that can generate tax revenue should be evaluated along with the associated expenses and impact on the town to insure they are consistent with the guiding principles and goals of the Master Plan.

Planning for the Future: Infrastructure

Looking ahead, diligent budgeting and devising ways to increase our tax base are critical to reducing the tax burden on residents. This will require planning for the impact of changes in our housing and population, the state and national economy, and federal income tax laws. Likewise, it is important that we plan for the financial impact of debt service for infrastructure capital costs and infrastructure-related expenses as well as the completion of funding of past projects.

For example, given the long planning horizon for expanding school-building capacity coupled with the coordination challenge when a capital project spans three municipal entities (Dover-Sherborn Regional Schools, the Town of Dover, and the Town of Sherborn), this plan recognizes regional school capacity as an infrastructure risk with operational and financial impact. Physical expansion of schools requires years of planning, and short-term contingency options should also be planned in advance.



Sherborn Town Meeting, 2016

Potential upcoming infrastructure and capital projects and costs include:

- Capacity needs of Dover-Sherborn Regional School District and Pine Hill School predicted by enrollment changes due to housing development.
- Road maintenance work in excess of state aid.
- Short- and long-term planning for municipal buildings including completion of the public library.
- Federally mandated storm-water infrastructure improvements required by regulations not included in the operating budget for the Department of Public Works.
- Short-term environmental-impact costs, such as tree mortality.

- Engineering and planning for road and sidewalk improvements in the town.
- Planning and engineering studies and potential construction of Town Center water and sewer utilities in coordination with private development.

Implementation tables for each section of the Master Plan identify who is leading and supporting the goals and strategies; they also identify the necessary financial resources needed to make sure planned actions are realistic and able to be successfully completed. These plans and implementation tables should be referred to during budgeting, Advisory Committee hearings, and at Town Meeting. Throughout the implementation of this Master Plan it is important to evaluate each goal, recommendation, and strategy to ensure its alignment with Sherborn's long-term financial sustainability.

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VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Housing options in Sherborn will accommodate residents of diverse ages and economic resources while preserving the Town's semi-rural atmosphere, environmental health and sustainability.

Housing



GOALS

- I. Affordable housing**
- II. Diversity of housing options**
- III. Housing and environmentally sustainability**

Sherborn Housing in Context

Sherborn's early history as a farming community has shaped its later development as a semi-rural, residential "commuter community" of Boston. Sherborn's rural heritage is apparent everywhere: winding "scenic roads," stone walls, open fields, woods, wetlands, farms, stables, orchards, and historic cemeteries. The town tends to attract people who appreciate a quiet, unspoiled environment and opportunities for open space recreation and excellent schools. Virtually all residents agree that the rural beauty of the town, open spaces, and farms should be preserved and that the crucial natural resource of safe drinking water must be protected.

Today, Sherborn's land use pattern consists primarily of single-family residences on large, variable lots along major streets and scenic roads; conventional subdivisions with uniform lots; and significant areas of open space. This pattern is supported by the current zoning law, established in 1954, that defines three residential districts requiring minimum lot sizes of one (RA), two (RB), and three acres (RC), respectively. This promotes low-density housing development and allows only minimal provisions for encouraging diversity in housing options or affordable housing. An exception is the Residence EA (multi-dwelling) zoning provision, which allows denser affordable and/or age-restricted housing on specific parcels approved by Town Meeting vote. The way Sherborn has managed the use of land for development or for open space is discussed further in the Overview of Sherborn section.

The Sherborn public schools are the primary reason many move to Sherborn. Both the local public elementary school (Pine Hill) and the regional public middle and high schools (Dover-Sherborn Regional, in Dover), receive strong support because of a shared commitment to education and because the excellence of the schools supports residential property values. The large ongoing investment in education, along with relatively low population density and high land values, result in high property taxes, which tends to work against encouraging economic and housing diversity in the town.

Evolution of Sherborn Population and Housing Patterns

From 1850 to 1950, Sherborn's population increased by only about 200 people. A sharp decline in the 1920s was due to transfer of Sherborn land to Framingham. Sherborn experienced a period of substantial population growth and new housing construction from the mid 1950s to the mid 1970s, and accelerated growth in the 1960s and 1970s was due to subdivision development. From 2000 to the present, Sherborn's population has been relatively stable, but the number of households grew from 1,451 in 2000 to 1,539 in 2016. This reflects an increase in smaller households, primarily older residents without children (TABLE H.1).

According to the June 2017 Sherborn Housing Production Plan (HPP), roughly 92 percent of households (ca. 1,300) own their homes, and about 8 percent (± 118 households) rent their homes.

Year	Population
1850	1,043
1920	1,558
1930	943
1950	1,245
1960	1,806
1970	3,309
2000	4,200
2010	4,119
2016	4,255

TABLE H.1 — *Changes in Sherborn population, 1850–2016*

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017

Demographics, Housing, and Finances

Sherborn's population is considerably less numerous and dense than those of the surrounding towns (TABLE H.2). This can be attributed to a combination of factors that include large lots, large areas of protected open space (about 25 percent of the town), and an abundance of unbuildable wetlands. As the relative stability of the population since 2000 suggests, housing development has been gradual, with a handful of single-family housing units added each year. However, this is now changing as larger, multi-unit housing developments are currently under construction or planned.

Lower density of housing units means that there are fewer taxpayers to provide the revenue required to support schools, administration, infrastructure maintenance, salaries, benefits, and other community services. As the town has relatively few commercial establishments and no industry, private property taxes are the major source of revenue. As a result, Sherborn property tax rates and average property tax bills are the highest in the region (TABLE H.3; also see Overview of Sherborn section).

With one of the highest levels of household income in the state (TABLE H.4), Sherborn is considered an affluent or upper-middle class community. About 73 percent of Sherborn households have annual incomes in excess of \$100,000, and more than 39 percent surpass \$200,000.

Community	Population	Area (mi ²)	Density (per mi ²)
Framingham	70,743	26.4	2,679.7
Natick	35,385	16.1	2,197.8
Ashland	17,420	12.9	1,350.4
Holliston	14,324	19.0	753.9
Medway	13,135	11.5	1,142.2
Medfield	12,510	14.6	856.8
Southborough	9,968	15.7	634.9
Millis	8,110	12.3	659.3
Dover	5,864	15.4	380.8
Sherborn	4,255	16.2	262.7

TABLE H.2—Population and density of Sherborn and surrounding communities, 2016

Source: U.S. Census 2012–2016 American Community Survey

Municipality	Residential assessed values	Single-family parcels	Single-family average value	Residential tax rate	Average single-family tax bill
Ashland	\$2,258,966,961	3,776	\$419,948	16.70	\$7,013
Dover	\$2,351,519,338	1,806	\$1,113,148	13.05	\$14,527
Framingham	\$6,447,434,328	13,454	\$367,321	16.71	\$6,138
Holliston	\$2,102,147,508	4,402	\$436,914	18.52	\$8,092
Medfield	\$2,391,021,224	3,523	\$623,374	16.89	\$10,529
Millis	\$977,361,759	2,169	\$359,864	18.42	\$6,629
Natick	\$6,001,827,900	8,517	\$529,607	13.49	\$7,144
Sherborn	\$1,114,133,970	1,321	\$753,929	20.46	\$15,425

TABLE H.3—Local property taxes in Sherborn and surrounding communities, 2016

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Databank: Regional Communities FY 17

Year	<i>Ashland</i>	<i>Dover</i>	<i>Framingham</i>	<i>Holliston</i>	<i>Medfield</i>	<i>Millis</i>	<i>Natick</i>	<i>Sherborn</i>
2010	\$92,974	\$164,583	\$64,061	\$103,600	\$126,048	\$85,472	\$87,568	\$145,250
2016	\$103,700	\$189,265	\$70,706	\$110,295	\$147,630	\$97,591	\$104,372	\$158,250

TABLE H.4 — *Median household income, 2010–2015*

Source: U.S. Census, 2010 and 2012–2016, American Community Survey: Regional Communities FY 2017

(Note: American Community Survey data are based on samples and subject to variability.)

About 18 percent of Sherborn’s households live on low to moderate incomes, however. The definitions of low/moderate income are based on household size: in the Middlesex County area, the income threshold for a two-person household to qualify as low/moderate income is currently \$58,450. Because of high property values and high local property taxes, many of Sherborn’s existing low/moderate income residents spend too much for housing relative to their household income.

In addition, the median age of Sherborn residents has been increasing steadily since 1980, and it was above 45 in 2016. As the population of adults without children along with retirees and elders increases, the need for greater housing options, including affordable units, multi-family rental units, townhouses, and cottage-style single-family houses on smaller lots is increasing. These needs apply to young Sherborn adults who want to stay in town and employees of the town, schools, and businesses. Thus Sherborn has present and future housing needs that are not served by the existing housing stock.

Opinions differ about how much new growth Sherborn can sustain without losing its rural atmosphere and where denser housing developments should be located. Some feel that the Town Center should be the focus of new growth, where it will support local businesses and create a more vibrant center. In many towns, dense housing in or near the center is considered “[smart growth](#),” as it allows walking access to public transportation, jobs, and shopping.

However, Sherborn Center has no public transportation, few shopping choices, and no municipal water or sewer. Others prefer limited development of new housing distributed throughout the town, but this can result in loss of scenic and environmental resources. In recent years, the town has approved dense housing developments both in Town Center and on the periphery of town.

The overarching housing goal is to meet changing local- and state-mandated housing needs while ensuring protection of Sherborn’s greatest assets: its healthy, spacious environment and outstanding schools. This is difficult in the face of increasing regional pressure for housing development and the need for property tax revenue to sustain our highly ranked public schools. The recommendations outlined in this Plan are based on the premise that with proactive planning, these challenges are surmountable.

GOAL I ► Manage and guide the development of affordable housing to fulfill state requirements in a manner that maximizes local initiatives and minimizes adverse economic and environmental impacts.

Affordable-housing Policy

Affordable housing is recognized as a local need, but it is made more pressing and challenging by the fact that it is currently driven primarily by state, rather than local, requirements. In response to the state-wide

need for affordable housing, the Massachusetts Legislature adopted General Laws Chapter 40B Section 20-23 (Ch. 40B) with the goal of ensuring that at least 10 percent of the housing units in all Massachusetts municipalities include those that are affordable to low/moderate-income households, or that affordable housing accounts for at least 1.5 percent of total land area. “Affordable” units, as defined by Ch. 40B, must be sold through a state-controlled lottery process to buyers whose income is 80 percent or less of the median income in the region. Until that goal is met, towns are limited in their ability to control large, dense housing projects that may be inconsistent with the character and needs of the town.

MGL 40B allows developers of projects that include at least 25 percent of subsidized low/moderate-income housing units to apply directly to the local zoning board of appeals (ZBA) for a Comprehensive Permit, thus bypassing the usual local board and committee approvals. Through a Comprehensive Permit, developers of qualified housing developments can request waivers of local by-laws. In Sherborn, this means that the town’s stricter-than-state regulations that protect our groundwater resources and open space do not apply to Ch. 40B developments. If the ZBA denies the application or imposes uneconomic conditions, and if the town has not reached or made sufficient progress toward the 10 percent goal, the developer may appeal the decision to the Massachusetts Housing Appeals Committee. By subsidizing construction of qualified affordable-housing units, the state provides an incentive for developers to use the Ch. 40B process. To track progress toward the 10 percent goal, the state maintains the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), an official list of each town’s qualified affordable units.

Affordable Housing in Sherborn

Based on the 2010 census, Sherborn had a total of 1,479 housing units; of this number, only 2.3 percent were SHI affordable units as of 2016. The total housing units in town will be counted again by the state during the upcoming 2020 census. In the meantime, Sherborn has made an effort to increase affordable housing, with one project breaking ground in 2012 and as many as five other developments proposed under MA Chapter 40B from 2015 to 2018. The town seeks to encourage multifamily rental developments with 25 percent affordable units because, if a rental



project includes 25 percent affordable units, the state includes 100 percent of the units on the SHI inventory of the town. For Sherborn, this is the most efficient use of land resources and the fastest way to reach the 10 percent goal.

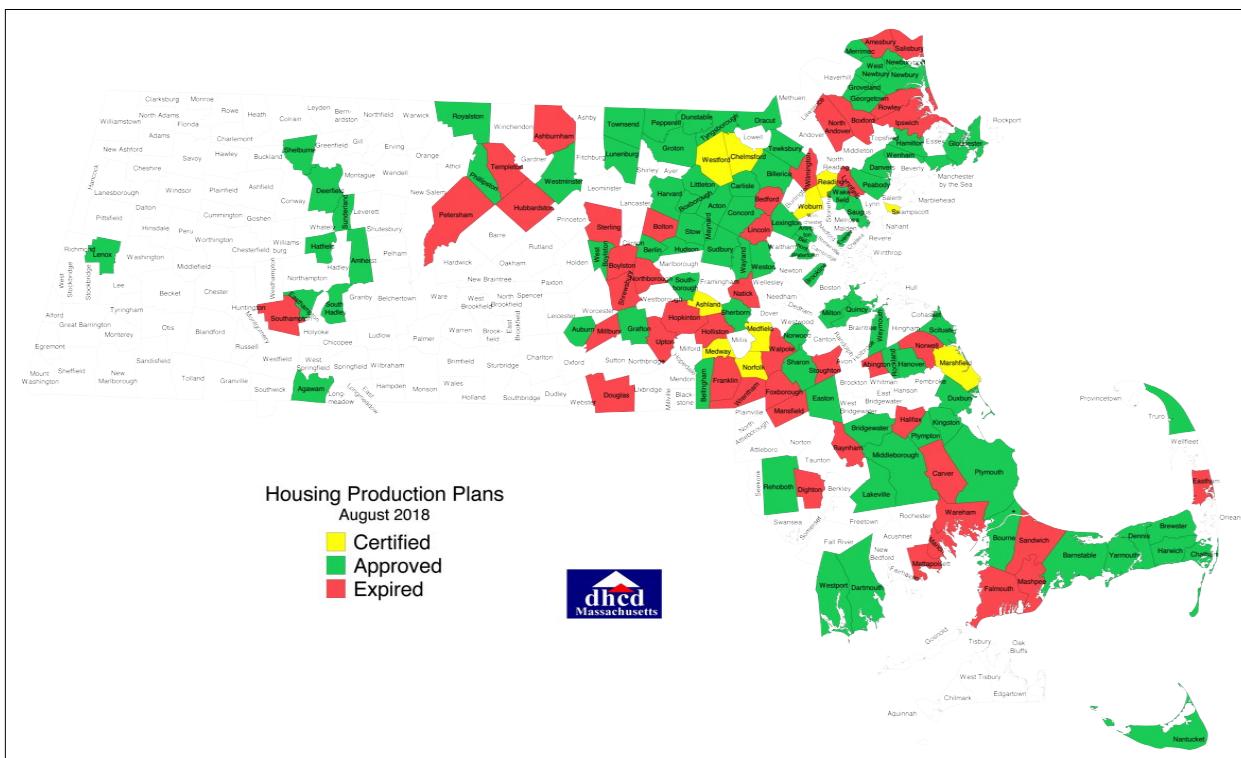
After several years of inactivity, Sherborn reconstituted the Housing Partnership Committee in 2016. It consists of seven town residents appointed by the Select Board, most of whom serve on other boards and commissions, including the Planning Board and Conservation Commission. The Housing Partnership Committee oversaw the writing of the 2017 Housing Production Plan (HPP, see box), which lays out a strategy to achieve the state’s goal under MGL 40B. An approved HPP allows the town to limit Ch. 40B projects as long as a clear effort to add SHI units is demonstrated.

Sherborn's Housing Partnership continues to work on housing policy closely with the Planning Board and other groups. As of this writing, very few Massachusetts towns have state-certified HPPs because towns are primarily dependent on developers and market conditions to build affordable housing.

The challenges of achieving Safe Harbor status and guiding affordable housing toward the town's housing goals are many. The town has no dedicated funding source for building affordable housing. The town has not adopted the Community Preservation Act, does not receive any federal community-development or HOME funds, and does not have a municipal affordable-housing trust or similar entity. Sherborn is not alone in facing these challenges.

Housing Production Plan (HPP)

The Sherborn HPP was approved by the state as of June 9, 2017, from which date it remains good for five years. If the town adds 0.5 percent—or 7—SHI units within a calendar year, the HPP will become "certified" for one year; adding 1 percent (15) SHI units will cause plan certification to last two years. When the HPP is certified, the town achieves Safe Harbor status, which allows the town to reject any additional housing developments proposed under Ch. 40B if they do not fit the town's goals.



MAP H.1—Status of housing production plans for Massachusetts cities and towns, 2018

Source: Mass. Dept. of Housing and Community Development.

Summary of Challenges

- Sherborn has no local funding for town-initiated affordable-housing development.
- Large private properties in town, when sold, are vulnerable to Ch. 40B developments that are inconsistent with Sherborn's HPP.
- Sherborn's lack of amenities, such as public transportation, local food and other stores, and local job opportunities makes it less attractive to some potential buyers.
- Sherborn is dependent on individual wells, but Ch. 40B developments need not comply with Sherborn regulations that protect groundwater resources.

Recommendations

A. Agree upon a shared vision of future housing patterns in Sherborn and preferences for affordable-housing development over the short and long terms.

1. Support efforts to get the 2017 Sherborn Housing Production Plan (HPP) certified and keep it updated.
2. Continue to monitor citizen preferences for types and locations of affordable housing through public meetings, communications, and opinion surveys.
3. Ensure that all affordable-housing projects apply the “70-percent local preference” requirement to applicants for affordable-housing units, as defined by Mass Housing.
 - Reach consensus on Sherborn’s local-preference priorities.
 - Ensure that the ZBA enforces them during the initial lottery process and in the future.
4. Systematically analyze the potential economic and functional impacts of different types of affordable-housing development on tax revenue, schools, municipal services, and town operating expenses.

B. Manage the immediate and ongoing challenges of current active and anticipated developer-initiated MA Ch. 40B affordable-housing projects.

1. Develop a nimble and efficient process for negotiation and communication with developers of proposed 40B projects.
 - Negotiate with 40B project developers early and actively throughout the project-planning process.
 - Advocate use of the Local Initiative Program (LIP), in which town officials work collaboratively with the developer to facilitate an agreed-upon affordable-housing development as an alternative to 40B.
2. Work with developer(s) to build affordable single and/or multifamily homes, condominiums, and/or apartments outside of the 40B process, as guided by a housing production plan (HPP).

- For all non-40B, non-LIP multi-unit housing projects, negotiate inclusion of the maximum possible number of affordable units.
 - Apply an inclusionary zoning requirement for all multi-unit developments.
- 3. Apply the economic and functional impact analysis in item A.4 (above) to anticipate and plan for increased demands on town resources and infrastructure from large 40B housing projects in the pipeline.

C. *Control the rate of affordable-housing development over the short term by reaching Safe Harbor status as defined by MGL 40B affordable housing–development laws.*

1. Raise public awareness of the MA Chapter 40B affordable-housing law and the importance of a certified HPP to build public support for appropriate projects.
2. Consider a variety of strategies to reach Safe Harbor as rapidly as possible, including but not limited to the options in the HPP.
3. Facilitate proposed projects that will allow rapid certification of the HPP and Safe Harbor.

D. *Maintain Safe Harbor status over the long term through town-initiated or collaborative affordable-housing developments guided by the town's housing vision and consistent with its semirural character.*

1. Use a combination of strategies to continue adding affordable-housing units each year sufficient to maintain Safe Harbor status, including but not limited to the options in the HPP.
2. Review and, where appropriate, revise town zoning by-laws to facilitate development of affordable housing under town regulations rather than MA Chapter 40B criteria.
3. Review and, where appropriate, revise Board of Health regulations to prevent unnecessary devaluation of land due to septic constraints that incentivize developers to use the 40B mechanism as long as the revisions are scientifically justified and the long-term health of residents is protected.

E. *Continue to support regional efforts to update state laws related to affordable housing in a manner that recognizes the limitations of water resources and infrastructure of small towns, such as Sherborn.*

1. Propose that 40B projects on lands recently withdrawn from MA Chapter 61 set aside and permanently conserve a portion of the land in accordance with natural resource–protection goals.
2. Support a legislative change of Ch. 61 so that, when land is withdrawn and sold, 10 percent of the sale price will be set aside for that community's implementation of its housing production plan and/or preservation of open space.
3. Allow adjacent communities to share affordable housing–development quotas and regional assets such as transportation and open space recreational resources.
4. Support other modifications to the 40B law that support preservation of water resources and open space as a regional resource for climate mitigation, recreation, and sustainable agriculture.

GOAL II ► Increase the diversity of housing options in Sherborn to accommodate residents of different ages and economic resources.

The Need for Housing Diversity

A vibrant community of mixed ages and life stages requires the availability of housing in a range of types and costs. In Sherborn, the current housing stock is dominated by expensive, single-family homes on large, high-maintenance lots. The 2011–2015 American Community Survey estimated that 92 percent of Sherborn housing units were detached, single-family houses. In 2016, the average assessed value of a single-family home in Sherborn was \$753,929 and the median sale price was \$746,000, the second highest value (behind Dover) among the surrounding communities. In addition, ongoing costs of ownership are burdened by high property taxes. Although 8 percent of the housing stock are rental homes or units, typically all are occupied. Thus, for an individual or family of moderate income who searches for housing today, Sherborn real estate is generally out of reach.

Homeowners already established in Sherborn also face housing challenges. An analysis of Sherborn households by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) estimated that about 18 percent of total households pay more than 30 percent of their income toward housing, and thus are considered “cost-burdened.” MAPC has estimated that this describes the situation of 20 to 30 percent of the elder households in town.

The proportion of the adult population 65 years old and over has been increasing steadily in Sherborn as well as the region as a whole. According to the UMass Donahue Institute’s population projections (UMass Donahue Institute, n.d.) it is expected to grow to 26 percent of the total population by 2035. This is consistent with forecasts by MAPC. Often, people in this age group are retired on a fixed income and may be unable to stay in Sherborn due to the high property taxes, maintenance costs, and upkeep requirements of their present homes. Sherborn’s seniors represent a large volunteer base serving in many capacities for the benefit of all who enjoy living here. Retaining this population in town is an important part of planning to ensure housing diversity.

Age-restricted Housing in Sherborn

In an effort to respond to this need, the EA (Elderly and Affordable) zoning district by-law was created in 1991 and amended in 2017. EA zoning allows denser housing that may either be age-restricted (over 55), affordable (age-unrestricted with 25 percent “affordable” units that are SHI qualified by Ch. 40B standards), or both (age-restricted with at least 10 percent affordable units). Multi-dwellings—buildings with two or more housing units—are allowed by special permit in EA districts, with up to four housing units per total parcel acreage and eight units per building.

EA zoning may be applied to specific parcels of six acres or more anywhere in town. Each EA property is essentially an overlay district on a specific property for a particular development; both the property and the preliminary project plan must be approved by a two-thirds vote at Town Meeting. A minimum of 25 percent of the property, excluding setback areas, must remain undeveloped open space, with some flexibility provided for oddly shaped EA parcels. Most important, local environmental regulations apply. Thus, affordable housing developed under Sherborn’s EA by-law is a better alternative for the town than 40B developments.

The town currently has four EA developments, all of which consist of multi-unit residences. Three contiguous properties in the Town Center comprise Sherborn's largest EA district. Woodhaven is both age restricted and affordable, Leland Farms is affordable, and the recently completed Abbey Road is age restricted. Sherborn Meadows, an EA age-restricted, multi-unit condominium complex was built on a parcel adjacent to Sunshine Farm on Kendall Avenue. In 2017, an additional EA development on Coolidge Street was approved and presently is in the planning stage.

The Planning Board may waive the eight-unit maximum per building if the building fulfills the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and qualifies as having handicapped access. The building also must be deemed "harmonious and appropriate for the particular location and consistent with the architectural traditions of the Town." This exception enabled construction of Sherborn Meadows.



Abbey Road

Source: R. Murchison



Sherborn Meadows

Source: Sherborn Planning Board

Other Housing Needs

Age-restricted and state-mandated affordable-housing developments do not fulfill all of Sherborn's housing needs. Young adults, families, and others who would contribute to a strong community often don't qualify for state-defined affordable housing and can't afford Sherborn's large single-family homes. At present, few other housing options are available, but several approaches that have some support among Sherborn residents were documented in the 2017 Housing Production Plan:

- Rental apartments, including accessory apartments and multifamily homes, at all market levels.
- More affordable homeownership options including small cottage-style homes in cluster developments, condominiums, and townhouses.

Zoning bylaws have recently been re-examined and/or revised to enable these options.

Accessory apartments can serve multiple purposes. They can provide owners the additional income necessary to maintain a home that is more than they need or can afford, provide support to a family member, help with maintenance, or enable home improvements. Newcomers and young adults seeking to join the community, for whom home ownership is a longer-term goal, could find a smaller rental apartment in an existing home affordable and appropriate. Accessory units can also provide housing for the local labor force. Accessory dwellings are consistent with our goal of open space preservation; they increase affordable-housing options without the land consumption and new infrastructure required for new single-family or multi-unit homes (Massachusetts Smart Growth Smart Energy Toolkit, 2015).

Until recently, Sherborn homeowners were not allowed to charge rent for accessory apartments and occupants were limited to family members and on-site domestic or farm workers. At the 2018 Annual Town Meeting, Sherborn amended zoning provisions to lift these restrictions, thereby allowing an owner to charge rent for an accessory unit and to rent it to anyone limiting just the size of unit and number of occupants.

While accessory apartments can provide affordable-housing options, they are unlikely to assist with meeting the 10 percent Subsidized Housing Inventory affordable-housing goal. The state Division of Housing and Community Development guidelines for "counting" affordable accessory apartments on the SHI require communities to appoint a local program administrator and establish a state-approved affirmative marketing plan for accessory apartments in order to prove compliance with the federal Fair Housing Act. These administrative requirements and documentation procedures deter homeowners from registering apartments as SHI units.

Mixed-use development in Town Center is currently allowed and could be encouraged. Current zoning laws permit flexibility of design and use of buildings in and adjacent to the business districts in Sherborn Center. If 25 percent of a property lies within a business district, it is eligible for a planned unit development (PUD) by special permit. A PUD may include a combination of housing and businesses, providing an alternative to traditional business development and considerable flexibility in site design and mix of uses. Mixed-use development of business with residential uses provides developers with an opportunity to add apartments or multifamily buildings with low maintenance costs to the town's housing stock.

Cluster subdivisions ■ In 1996, the town adopted an open space subdivision by-law intended to allow an alternative design for subdivisions. Under this special permit, the number of houses that would be allowed on a specific parcel in a two- or three-acre zoning district under conventional subdivision rules can instead be built on one-acre lots, preserving at least 40 percent of the property as open space. Although this provision was intended to preserve vistas, woodlands, and trails, the one-acre lot size doesn't permit close groupings of houses and no such subdivision has been built in Sherborn. At this writing, the Planning Board is crafting a revised open space subdivision by-law based on the cluster-development or "pocket-neighborhood" concept. It would allow clustering of smaller homes with no minimum lot size, and preservation of at least 60 percent of the property as open space, with no special permit required. Such housing might be particularly attractive to families with children and elders who are downsizing.

Summary of Challenges

- Seniors who want to downsize but do not qualify for SHI units have limited housing options.
- Expensive, single-family homes on large lots do not promote age and economic diversity.
- Addition of denser housing in Town Center is limited by lack of water and sewer infrastructure.
- If not proactively planned, multifamily housing, denser developments, and new subdivisions throughout town may result in loss of the town's rural atmosphere, scenic assets, and environmental resilience.

Recommendations

A. Increase the quantity and diversity of housing in the Town Center.

1. Encourage and enable housing with pedestrian access to Town Center businesses, services, schools, library, etc., in support of the center's walkability rating.
2. Consider a zoning-overlay district for Town Center that, like the PUD, provides greater control of development and more diverse housing-development opportunities.
3. Include an inclusionary-zoning requirement for all multi-unit developments in Town Center, in accordance with HPP goals.
4. Add water and/or sewer utilities in the Town Center to enable development of diverse housing options (see Town Center section).

B. Enable more housing diversity in residential zoning districts throughout Sherborn.

1. Monitor the effects of the 2018 accessory apartment by-law revision on expansion of housing options and total housing-unit inventory.
2. Design and pass a multifamily-housing by-law that would allow by special permit moderately priced two- or three-unit residences through new construction or conversion of existing residences.

3. Encourage moderately sized and priced housing in cluster or open space developments by creating additional incentives for developers.
4. Consider special permitting that will allow flexible farm-housing arrangements for farm workers and interns who are needed for sustainable farm businesses.
5. Explore opportunities to enable use of the state-subsidized “starter home” or “workforce housing” initiatives that could add to options for young families and downsizing elders in Sherborn.

GOAL III ► Ensure that all new housing is consistent with preservation of the town’s scenic rural character and natural resources as well as regional and global environmental sustainability.

Thinking Globally

Massachusetts has joined many countries and states in a commitment to work toward long-term targets for lowering greenhouse gas emissions, improving energy efficiency, and increasing use of clean technology at the municipal and community-wide levels. It is now widely accepted that these goals should be integral components in decision making in the governance of the state and its towns and cities.

Although Sherborn is a small town, its low density and intact, carbon-sequestering and climate-mitigating forests gives the town an advantage in environment-friendly living. Sherborn could be known in the Boston region not just as a spacious, leafy suburb, but rather, as a community that supports and promotes environmentally friendly building and living practices—one that actively works toward mitigation of climate change.

Acting Locally: Energy Conservation Efforts in Sherborn

In 2010, the Sherborn Energy Committee was formed to research and implement strategies by which the town can make significant reductions in energy consumption while, at the same time, reducing its energy expenses. The committee’s first task set was to attain Green Community status for Sherborn under the Massachusetts Green Communities Act (Green Communities 2019). In 2011, Sherborn met Green Community criteria, including establishment of an energy-consumption inventory. This qualified the town to receive a grant of \$137,450 from the Department of Energy Resources to apply toward energy-conservation projects.

The town’s Energy Committee produced the Energy Reduction Plan (ERP), which focused on energy use by municipal buildings and departments, and it was adopted in 2011 as well. Its recommendations include ensuring that energy efficiency be a major factor in town government purchases, acquisitions, and new construction, such as the library renovation and expansion project. The Energy Committee partnered with neighboring towns to access better planning and

Energy-saving changes supported by the ERP and Green Communities program

- Efficient lighting in town buildings.
- Improved insulation and HVAC at the Fire Station.
- Window replacements at Pine Hill School.
- Anti-idling devices on municipal vehicles.
- Solar PV panels on the DPW Garage and Fire Station.

purchasing power through the Massachusetts Association of Planning Commissions. By the end of fiscal year 2014, the town had achieved a 14 percent reduction in municipal energy consumption when compared with fiscal year 2009. Energy-saving changes supported by the ERP and Green Communities program may serve as models for individual Sherborn homeowners.

Because the ERP focused solely on the town's buildings and infrastructure, it did not envision means for the town to reach out to Sherborn residents and encourage energy conservation improvements in individual homes. In 2013 the Energy Committee initiated the Sherborn Solar Challenge, modeled after the Solarize Massachusetts program, to encourage the installation of photovoltaic (PV) panels on private homes in town. By the end of the challenge, in January 2014, 34 new PV installations were under contract. Residents' interest in solar capacity remains high, and potential exists for more rooftop PV installations in town. In 2013, a large ground-mounted solar array site was approved for the town transfer station, but is not yet economically feasible. In 2017, a 4.2-megawatt carport-canopy solar installation was approved and installed at the Adesa facility on Western Avenue. A 2018 citizen proposal to allow additional large, ground-mounted solar installation locations was not supported as it would have run counter to state solar guidelines protecting forests and farmlands.

Additional Regional Collaboration

In addition to the state's Green Communities Program, Sherborn is involved in regional efforts to address climate change. Predictions suggest that the potential impacts in New England could include hazardous weather patterns that would affect housing through flooding and storm damage. Sherborn is participating in Massachusetts' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program, which provides a process and support for cities and towns in the commonwealth to plan proactively for resiliency and to implement key climate change adaptation actions. In 2017, the Town of Sherborn was awarded a \$15,000 MVP grant to fund the planning stage of this process. Representatives of the town, working with a certified MVP provider, held a workshop in 2018 that developed a comprehensive baseline climate change and natural hazard vulnerability assessment and a list of priority actions for the town. Sherborn is now eligible for further MVP grants to support high-priority projects that anticipate and mitigate the effects of climate change. Greater coordination of resources, projects, and community outreach among the Energy Committee and other concerned citizens will enhance Sherborn's energy sustainability and preparedness for climate change.

Summary of Challenges

- The climate-cooling and water-saving effects of natural forest and shade trees are often disregarded in new construction that favors large lawns and landscaping.
- Energy-saving features may entail higher construction costs and be a disincentive to builders of affordable housing.
- Older houses in Sherborn are difficult and expensive to retrofit for energy efficiency.
- There is no town-wide incentive and support program in place to assist residents in maximizing energy-efficient living practices and reducing their "carbon footprint."
- Better communication and coordination of efforts among interested committees and groups is needed.

Recommendations

A. *In considering plans and making permitting decisions on new housing and housing developments, place high priority on their potential impacts on natural resources. (also see NATURAL RESOURCES section)*

1. Make a data-based analysis of potential impacts on the long-term sustainability of water resources an obligatory part of permitting decisions.
 - Require implementation of low-impact development (LID) strategies in housing developments to minimize storm-water runoff and maximize groundwater recharge.
 - Require incorporation of LID features in all special permit applications and reviews as an obligatory part of special permitting decisions.
2. Require development plans to minimize the loss of climate-mitigating features of the site, including the energy-saving effects of tree cover and the carbon-storage capacity of intact forest ecosystems.
3. Minimize the potential impacts of dense housing development on local air quality and long-term climate change by considering project-specific transportation options as part of each development project.

B. *Establish energy-efficient building standards for all new construction in Sherborn and provide incentives for installation of clean energy technologies.*

1. The town should continue to apply Stretch Code building code innovations for new buildings and new substantial additions.
2. Ensure that town governing bodies promote voluntary application of higher energy-efficient building standards, such as the LEED Green Building Rating System, the SITES Initiative or the Building Challenge, for all new construction in Sherborn.
 - Ensure that everyone involved in construction or renovation projects—including property owners, builders, developers, landscape designers, contractors, and town officials—are familiar with the higher building-rating systems cited above.
 - Direct all permit-issuing departments, boards, and town officials to provide substantive guidance for working toward energy conservation goals when advising residents and developers who seek permits for new construction, land clearing, septic and well installation, etc.
 - Consider requiring inclusion of a long-term maintenance plan that outlines energy costs and savings in any plan or permit application for new construction.
3. Encourage a wide variety of sustainable-construction methods and energy-efficient features that go beyond the minimum standards, including but not limited to:
 - To cut dependence on fossil fuels, installation of renewable-energy technology or generation, such as photovoltaic solar panels to produce electricity, solar hot water panels, passive solar, and geothermal.

- Use of on-site and local resources as well as recycled/reusable products.
 - Use of existing plants or new plantings to increase climate mitigation, such as shade in summer; windbreaks and improved solar reception in winter.
 - Site-development features to reduce impervious surfaces, improve storm-water control, mitigate climate effects, and reduce auto emissions.
 - Water-saving plumbing features; energy-efficient lighting, heating, and cooling equipment; rainwater collection systems; and efficient insulation.
- 4. Promote the economic advantages of energy-efficient construction and LEED or similar certification, and provide additional incentives for voluntary certification.
 - Promote the value of LEED or similar energy-efficiency certification for ongoing energy costs as well as resale of individual properties.
 - Use the town's commitment to energy-efficient housing to promote Sherborn as a desirable place to live and to boost property values overall.

C. *Promote and encourage increased energy efficiency and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions throughout Sherborn.*

1. Provide incentives for all residents to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
 - Institute a local award program modeled on the state's "Leading by Example" awards, which honor institutions, groups, and individuals responsible for initiating programs that result in significant and measurable environmental and/or energy benefits.
 - Advertise the availability of state subsidy and rebate programs for installation of energy-saving features and renewable-energy sources in existing homes.
2. Implement a gradual transition to green sources of electricity and heating fuel purchased through the Mass Energy Consumers Alliance or similar nonprofits dedicated to making energy more sustainable and affordable.
3. Promote [Mass Save energy audits](#) that provide free energy audits for existing homes and ideas on ways to reduce energy costs.
4. Work toward a percent carbon-neutral goal that includes transportation, energy consumption, materials of construction, and recyclable materials and trash goals.
5. Charge for disposal of materials according to environmental impact and work toward elimination of the sale of unnecessary packaging and nonrecyclable materials.

D. *Create a climate-literate community.*

1. Educate the community with frequent programs, town-website postings, and social media announcements regarding energy conservation opportunities and incentive programs.
2. Use social media sites, such as Nextdoor Sherborn, to inform residents of energy-efficiency tips that can be easily implemented.

3. Integrate the teaching of the science of energy use and climate change at Pine Hill School and Dover-Sherborn regional schools with enrichment activities focused on local energy use and conservation.
4. Create a scholarship for a college-bound Dover-Sherborn student whose senior project promotes energy savings in the community.
5. Raise awareness among Sherborn residents that we are a [**Green Community**](#) and of the environmental and financial impacts of grants from this program.

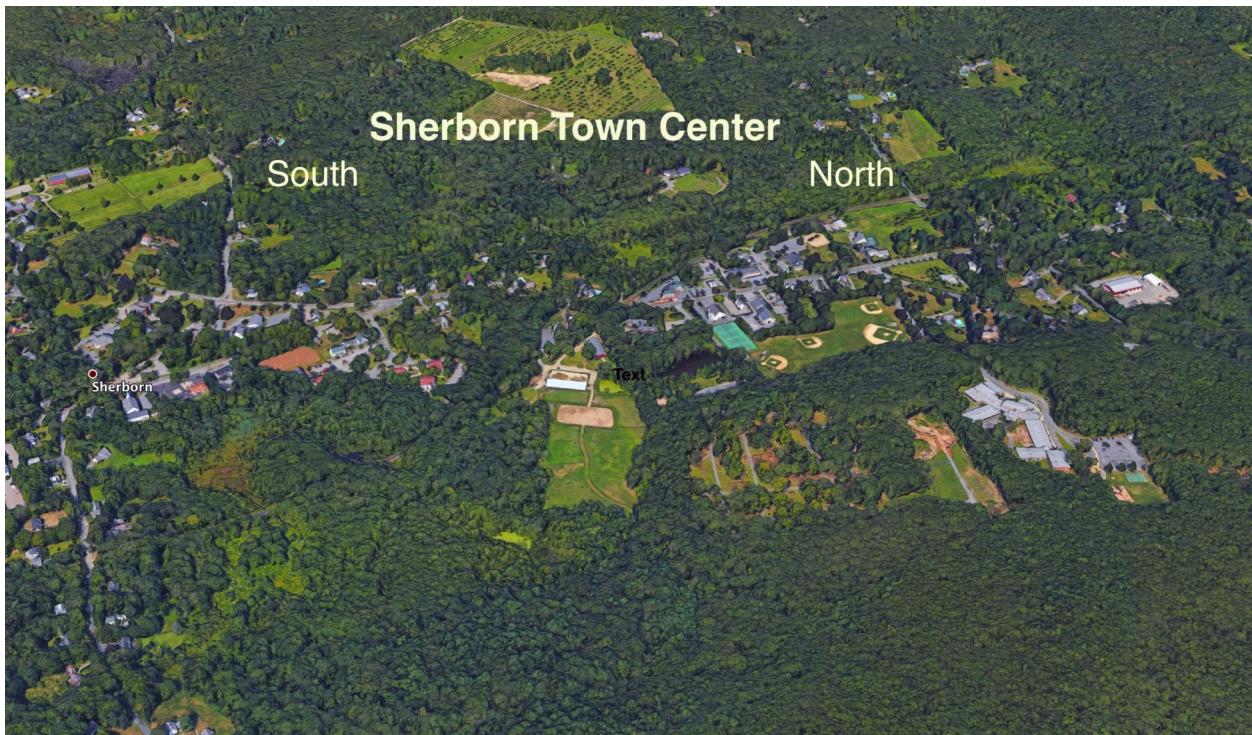
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VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn Town Center will maintain its legacy as a historic rural village with inviting gathering places, safe pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes, and successful small businesses that contribute to the social vitality and fiscal stability of the town.

Town Center



Source: Google Maps

GOALS

- I. Preservation of valued features**
- II. Social vitality and function**
- III. Opportunities within current infrastructure**
- IV. Comprehensive long-term plan**

Sherborn Town Center in Perspective

Sherborn Town Center in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries comprised a collection of houses, small shops, taverns, and inns along a dirt road. Through its more than 300-year history, it has continued to evolve, as it does up to the present day. In recent decades the Community Center, Town Hall, fire station, Clark House, the old library, and historic homes were restored and, in some cases, repurposed. Elderly- and affordable-housing complexes, Woodhaven and Leland Farms, the police station, Pine Hill expansion, 20 N. Main commercial building, and a few individual private homes were added. The Abbey Road age-restricted development is a recent example of positive change in the Town Center. At the same time, a small market and a sandwich shop, both valued services and meeting places, have been lost. Recognizing that change is inevitable, the goal is to guide it toward our shared vision of the future Town Center.

Today, Sherborn Town Center is an eclectic cluster of parcels that serves as the town's core of commerce, governance, and cultural institutions. It is not a single cohesive area but, rather, is bisected by busy roads and roughly divided by the railroad track into northern and southern areas. The South Village—the municipal and institutional center—includes Town Hall, the Community Center, library, religious institutions, a small business area, and three multi-unit housing complexes. The North Village is primarily commercial, with small businesses, offices, restaurants, and an inn as well as municipal components, such as the fire station, post office, and town recreation fields and playgrounds. Private residences are interspersed throughout the area and, although they are not fundamental to the Town Center's functions, many are attractive historic structures that contribute to its character. The nearby scenic roads and conservation lands also add to the village atmosphere.

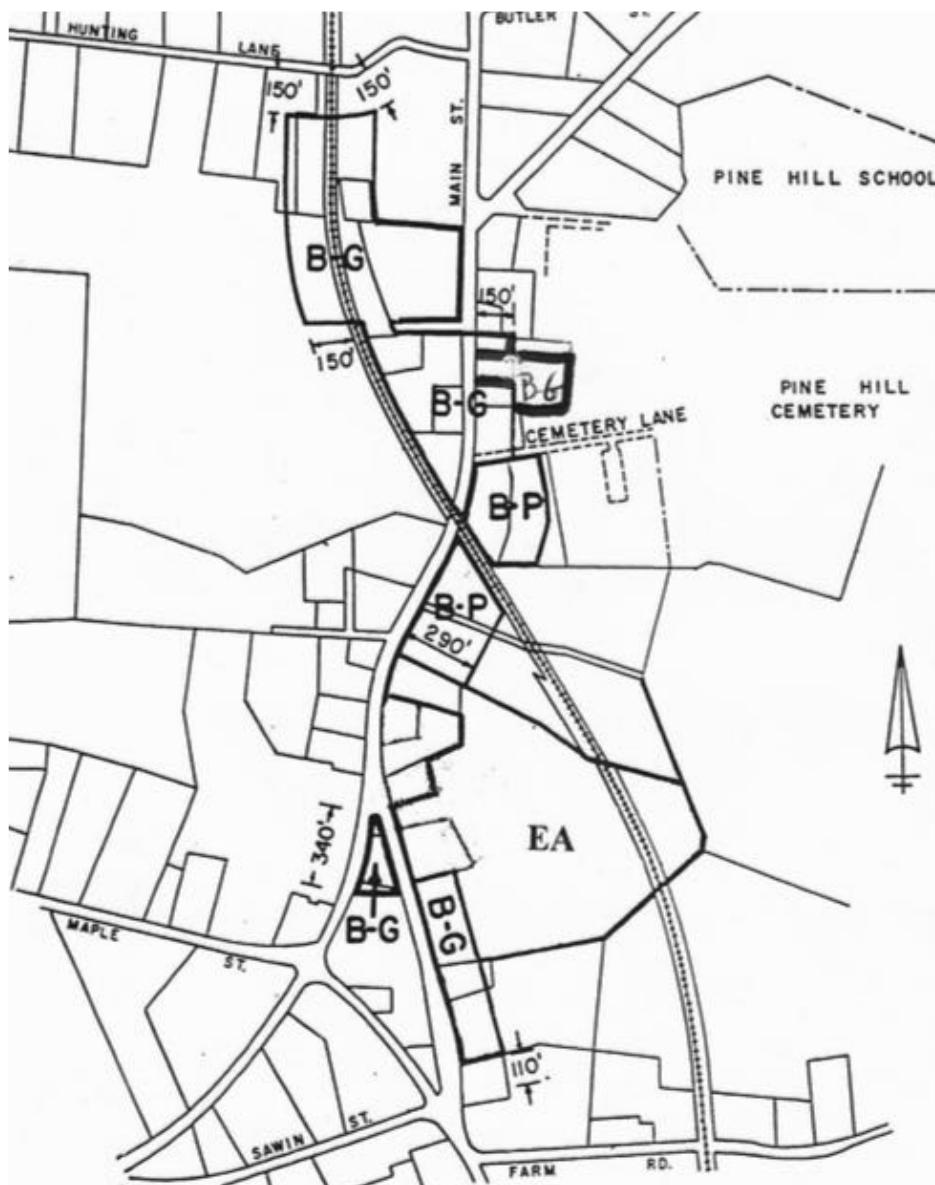


Clark House

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Town Center Zoning

The official Town Center area includes 46 parcels on an area of 7.1 acres of land. Privately owned parcels dedicated to commercial activities must be located within either the Business General (B-G) or Business Professional (B-P) zoning districts (MAP T.1). While B-G zoning allows a wide variety of business and retail uses, B-P zoning allows offices and certain shops but no gas stations, drive-through windows, or restaurants. Both business zones allow single-family dwellings by right and accessory apartments by special permit. The Town Center area also includes parts of the three residential zoning districts of the town.



Town Center overlay districts

Under Sherborn's Planned Unit Development (PUD) by-law, mixed commercial and housing developments are allowed on the periphery of B-G or B-P districts if at least 25 percent of the land falls within a business district.

Other overlay districts within the Town Center include Elderly and Affordable (EA), and Wireless Communications Overlay District (WCOD-2; not shown).

MAP T. 1 — *Zoning districts, Sherborn Town Center*

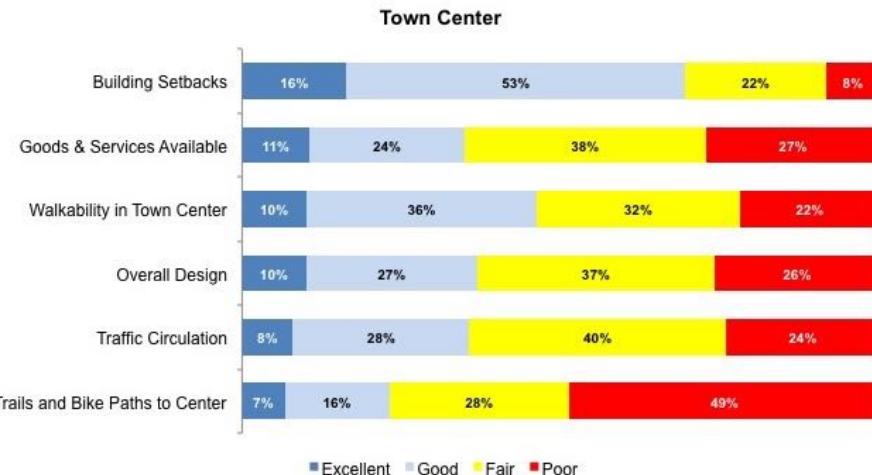
Source: Town of Sherborn, Town Planner

Charting the Future

Surveys conducted over the past decade have shown broad agreement that the Town Center should remain small and retain its New England–village atmosphere. In particular, the historic homes and buildings provide an enriching link to the past and are highly valued components of the area. A majority of survey respondents also favored specific changes, however, which include safer pedestrian and bicycle access, improved aesthetic appearance, and increasing the social vitality of the Town Center by adding more places for the community to meet and interact. Many residents expressed a desire for additional amenities and resources here, but none favored large businesses. Among respondents to the 2008 Town Center survey, a clear majority favored expansion or addition of small businesses within the current business district (Town of Sherborn 2008). In the 2014 Planning Board survey, a majority rated the goods

FIGURE T.1—Results from the 2014 residents' survey

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board



and services available in Town Center “fair” or “poor” (FIG. T.1; Town of Sherborn 2014). Both included commonly cited desires for a coffee shop/cafe for informal gatherings, additional small restaurants, and a small grocery or general store.

These opinions are not new. Indeed, beginning with the 1958 Master Plan, they have driven many planning efforts aimed at improving the social and financial vitality of Sherborn Town Center. Over the years town boards and committees have repeatedly grappled with these issues, as evidenced by the 1971 Town Center Study, the 1975 Master Plan, the 1981 report of the Zoning Study Committee, the 1989 Town Center Master Plan, both the Livability Charrette and the General Plan of 2001, the 2004 Community Development Plan, and the 2007 Final Report of the Town Center Water District Workgroup. In 2011, the Planning Board produced a draft report, “Sherborn Town Center: At a Crossroads,” which analyzed in detail the constraints and possibilities for addition of businesses and housing. In 2016, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) analyzed possible options for additional housing in the Town Center. (See References for links to some of these documents.)

Plans for enhancement of the Town Center repeatedly run up against now-familiar constraints. For example, the area is served by multiple wells and septic systems that are not sufficiently separated. This represents a potential health risk for existing businesses and homes and leaves little room for expansion. Despite ongoing fact-finding and analysis, the best options for assuring the safety of Town Center water supplies remain unclear. In addition, most Town Center properties are not town owned, and business owners naturally have their own priorities. Finally, no town-wide consensus exists regarding the type and extent of change desired.

The ongoing challenge is to move from long-range planning to specific, realistic actions that can be taken to materially improve our Town Center in the short, medium, and long terms. To that end, Goals I, II, and III of this section of the General Plan follow a practical progression that begins with preservation, moves to readily feasible improvements, and then to positive changes that are possible within the present water and septic infrastructure. Finally, Goal IV seeks to establish a logical framework for evaluating and agreeing upon the more significant changes that residents desire. A prerequisite for such change is a detailed definition of the costs and benefits of a Town Center water and/or wastewater infrastructure and to determine how to move forward. The goals and recommendations outlined below are guided by the overarching principle that any change must be consistent with our vision of a vibrant Town Center with an inviting village atmosphere.

GOAL I ► Preserve the most valued features of the existing Town Center

Historic Legacy

As one approaches Sherborn Center along the main roads, a series of well-maintained historic houses and buildings present the “face” of the town, visually communicating Sherborn’s long historic legacy and traditional semirural character. The contribution of historical buildings in the Town Center to Sherborn’s atmosphere, attractiveness, and overall property values, while hard to quantify, is intuitively understood. The Town Center’s historic buildings, monuments, and other tangible symbols of the town’s history form an important legacy to be maintained for future generations.

Preservation requires legal protections and vigilance. The most robust protection at present is provided by the town’s Local Historic District, which is protected under Chapter 40C of Massachusetts General Law and administered by the Sherborn Historic District Commission (see Cultural Resources section). The law requires that proposed changes and additions visible from a public way must preserve the historic features of the property and maintain the district’s overall integrity and character. The Sherborn Center Local Historic District includes 25 properties (see Cultural Resources section, MAP 1).

Sherborn also has two National Register Districts—the Edward’s Plain–Dowse’s Corner Historic District, which encompasses 33 properties, and the Sherborn Center Historic District, with 35 properties. A National Register District (NRD) is part of the National Register of Historic Places, a list of individual buildings and sites that have received federal designation for the significance of their history, architecture, or archaeology. The NRD confers recognition, but very limited practical legal protections. Structures designated as historically significant are protected only if state or federal funding or licenses are sought for renovations or alterations. Given these legal limitations, historic preservation must rely on the education and awareness of Sherborn residents, business owners, and governing bodies about the vulnerability of our irreplaceable historic assets. (See also Cultural Resources section.)

Village Character

In addition to its historical assets and landmarks, Sherborn Center today has many positive features that are worth preserving and maintaining. It retains a village scale, consisting of a linear collection of public and private buildings along the road with adjacent elementary school, cemetery, playground, playing fields, and tennis courts. Town Center businesses are appropriately small and contribute to the sense of community by serving as informal meeting places. The municipal buildings are clustered in a “campus” that bustles with meetings of our many volunteer boards, committees, and self-organized community groups. The town library, long an architectural asset and the town’s primary cultural center, is currently under renovation and expansion so it will be able to provide new resources and opportunities for community activities. Heavy vehicular traffic along the main roads has a significant impact on the village atmosphere, however, and this would be improved by more safe, pleasant pedestrian connections.

Summary of Challenges

- Most Town Center properties, including historic buildings and homes, are privately owned, and the town has little control over design or appearance.
- Historic District designation does not apply to all historic buildings in the Town Center, and National Register designation provides only limited protection. It is difficult to decide which historical assets to protect, change, or restore.
- Heavy traffic and congestion detract from the village atmosphere of Town Center.

Recommendations

A. *Actively promote the preservation of those selected historically significant private properties in the Town Center district that are important in telling Sherborn's "story."*

(See Goal I in CULTURAL RESOURCES section)

1. Homes
2. Former homes used as businesses
3. Churches

B. *Maintain historic municipal buildings and structures to ensure the preservation of their appearance and function into the future.*

1. Town Hall
2. Community Center
3. Cemetery, monuments, and memorials
4. Stone walls, historical signage
5. Shade trees throughout Town Center

C. *Continue to support the integration of recreational fields, resources, and activities in Town Center.*

1. Measure and improve the Town Center's "walkability score" using the [MAPC Local Access program](#) as a source of standard criteria.
2. Keep the recreation fields integrated with the Town Center as attractions and support for food vendors, other facilities, businesses, and parking.

D. Consider roadway changes to preserve scale and feel of a rural village.

(See CIRCULATION section)

1. Study options for vehicle turning lanes and/or bike lanes within the constraints of current pavement widths and to the extent allowed by state regulations.
2. Consider new traffic-light technology to facilitate traffic flow at critical intersections of major streets.
3. Maintain historic configuration of streets, in some cases changing intersections to increase walkability, safety, and function.
4. Add shade trees, roadside curbing, landscaping, and sidewalks to enhance small town atmosphere and encourage safe flow of pedestrians and traffic.

E. Protect Sherborn's village character by establishing design-review guidelines for renovations and new buildings and structures in the Town Center.

(Also see GOAL IV, Recommendation F)

1. The guidelines must be consistent with the town's long-term vision yet respectful of private property rights.
2. The design-review guidelines must be clear to property owners and developers so they can understand requirements for development and the guidelines must be achievable.
3. Design a process for adopting and implementing the guidelines.

GOAL II ► Enhance the social vitality and function of the existing Town Center through incremental improvements.

Moving Around the Town Center

While there is mounting evidence for the value of walking for health and prevention of obesity, our Town Center is not presently designed to make pedestrian travel easy or pleasant. The social vitality of the center would also be enhanced by increased pedestrian traffic. An integrated pedestrian walkway system throughout the entire center would increase pedestrian contact with shops and services and reduce the impetus for short-distance driving. For example, presently a resident doing errands at the post office, drug store, and Town Hall is apt to drive and park three times. Ideally such a trip would involve parking once and walking to all three destinations, in the course of which the resident will be likely to run into acquaintances along the way and stop to chat in a small, pleasant "pocket park." It is important that visitors, residents, elders who live in the Town Center, and schoolchildren feel safe and comfortable as they circulate throughout this central district on foot.

The merging of Routes 16 and 27 creates a bottleneck that slows vehicular traffic and has long been considered a negative feature of the Town Center. It is generally agreed, however, that widening Main Street is not a solution, as this narrow road provides a disincentive for potential increases in through-traffic and serves to maintain the village character of the area. While the town cannot control



Sherborn Center at rush hour

Source: Sherborn Planning Board

application to the commonwealth's Complete Streets Program that resulted in formal adoption of a Complete Streets Policy by the Select Board (SB; formerly the Board of Selectmen). The policy directs decision makers to consistently plan, design, and construct streets that will accommodate all of their anticipated users including pedestrians of all ages and abilities, bicyclists, and motorists. In 2017 the town won a grant supporting a professional analysis and a draft prioritization plan for improvement of Sherborn's streets and intersections, especially those in Sherborn Center, with the goal of safety for all users. It now qualifies Sherborn to apply for significant grant funding to implement needed changes and ensure safe sharing of roads and walkability throughout the center. In 2018, the first grant applications for three pedestrian-oriented projects were approved. (Many of the recommended actions are described in this plan's Circulation section.)

Integration with Open Space Recreation

Sherborn possesses some of the most scenic country roads and trails in the Greater Boston area. These resources attract cyclists and hikers from the entire region, and they could benefit Town Center businesses if connections among byways were easy and safe. Sherborn's extensive trail system includes the regional Bay Circuit Trail that passes within a short stroll from Town Center, yet no indication of how to access this recreational connection exists there. Many Sherborn residents do not know about the town's extensive trails and conservation lands, in part because of the lack of information at Town Center sites.

traffic congestion during rush hour, Town Center businesses could find ways to exploit it better. Businesses might gain sales volume by offering goods and services for handy pickup to commuters on the way home. Other contributing factors include clear signage, easy access, and parking.

The safety, predictability, and flow of vehicular traffic through the Town Center are compromised by four difficult intersections that frustrate drivers and add difficulty for vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians alike. To address these problems, in 2016 the town planner submitted a successful



Cyclists gathering in Town Center

Source: www.stevethebikeguy.com.

Sherborn is also in the middle of a popular region for recreational bicyclists, and our scenic roads are listed in books and shown on bike club maps detailing bike routes in eastern Massachusetts. Although two bicycle shops are located in Sherborn Town Center, bicycle travel on Routes 27 and 16 into and through the area is unprotected and must compete with motor vehicle traffic. With incremental changes guided by the Complete Streets Program, the Town Center could serve as a centerpiece for these roads and trails, encouraging recreational use, enabling social gatherings, and supporting Town Center businesses.

Summary of Challenges

- The Town Center has few safe walkways and crosswalks linking businesses, public buildings, and residences to one another and to surrounding neighborhoods.
- The Town Center lacks attractive outdoor resting or gathering places where people can informally meet and socialize.
- No readily accessible central information sources in Town Center inform people about the historic sites, trails, or bike routes throughout the town.
- The Town Center offers no publicly accessible restrooms or drinking water sources to recreational users, visitors, and residents.
- No marked bike trails or bike lanes—either to or through Town Center—are present, and no signs advise vehicles to share the road with bikes.

Recommendations

A. Create a more walkable Town Center guided by the Complete Streets Program.

1. Link all Town Center destinations by sidewalks and crosswalks.
 - Install sidewalks on both sides of main streets in both North and South Villages, as feasible.
 - In the South Town Center, install pedestrian crosswalks connecting businesses with the library, Community Center, and churches.
 - Install improved, safe pedestrian walkways to connect South Town Center businesses to the adjacent elder- and family-housing communities.
2. Formulate a long-term plan for incremental addition of paved bike/walking paths that link North and South Town Centers and provide alternative routes that avoid busy roads. For example:
 - On the east side: behind the recreational field at the end of Cemetery Lane, link Pine Hill School, the Clark House, Abbey Road, Woodhaven/Leland Farms, and Farm Road.
 - On the west side, along the railroad line: Unpaved route from the Bay Circuit Trail to Hunting Lane; paved route from Hunting Lane to behind the buildings on the business district's west side.

3. Improve pedestrian safety and accessibility throughout the Town Center.
 - Incorporate Complete Streets design standards for accessible crosswalks and sidewalks.
 - Consider the needs of students from the Pine Hill School, seniors in South Village, and citizens with disabilities.
4. Develop safe, established linkages from the town-wide trail system to Town Center through existing and new trails, sidewalks, and paths.
 - Give priority to destinations that include Town Center businesses, Pine Hill School, the ball fields, and routes used by schoolchildren.
 - Provide alternative access routes to Pine Hill School to encourage alternative healthy physical activity and safe walking and bike routes to schools.
 - Use existing easements and negotiate new ones.
 - Ensure consistency with Sherborn's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

B. Make Sherborn Town Center truly bicycle friendly.

1. Create well-marked bike corridors into and through the Town Center as well as on roads that connect to it.
 - Work with local and regional bike clubs and local businesses to arrive at ideas for improving safety and enjoyment of biking through Sherborn and its Town Center.
 - Avoid widening existing roads. Revise pavement lines for safer road sharing; for example, add dashed lines with bike-lane logos on both sides.
 - Link the Town Center to other towns and regional trails via roads and trails.
2. Improve bicycle safety in Town Center.
 - Place signs in Town Center and elsewhere to remind drivers to share the road with bikes.
 - Improve safety by alerting drivers to look out for cyclists by adding signage, bike lanes, or bike-sharing symbols in vehicle lanes along N. Main to Natick.
 - Add signage that warns cyclists to obey bicycle rules of the road.
 - Provide road markings showing the location of bicycle travel paths at busy intersections.
3. Install paved paths that provide cyclists easy access to North and South Town Centers and Pine Hill School (see Recommendation A2, above)
 - Install bike-friendly sidewalks on S. Main and N. Main between Farm Road and Eliot Street.
 - Build a paved bike path from the gas station and Ride Headquarters to Ward Park, the tennis courts, and on to Pine Hill School.
 - Link or extend these paths to secondary roads (Green Lane, Hunting Lane, Farm Road) to allow access to the two bike shops and other businesses, meeting places, and amenities in Town Center for cyclists riding through town.

C. *Enable social gathering in the Town Center through design and built-environment features.*

1. Create pocket parks (i.e., inviting meeting and interaction places that include seating, shade, and/or green space).
 - Include benches, possibly a gazebo and, where appropriate, a bike rack.
 - Pocket parks should be accessible to and integrated with businesses, municipal buildings, and recreational sites.
2. Link pocket parks to bike/walking paths, sidewalks, and crosswalks and, when needed, seek cooperation and assistance from Town Center property owners.
 - Encourage local businesses to provide outdoor seating with easy access to bike and walking paths.
 - Make a zoning change to include the pocket park as a requirement of PUD, and/or consider a future PUD-like overlay district that covers entire B-G and B-P districts.
3. Increase the number of benches in North Town Center.
4. Create a permanent, safe outdoor gathering place in the South Town Center on town land or, with the cooperation of business owners, on private commercial land.
5. Actively support the efforts of businesses to provide meeting places and restroom facilities for customers.

D. *Improve the resources and amenities in Sherborn Center for all users.*

1. Establish or improve car parking for shoppers and users of recreational resources.
 - Encourage greater use of parking areas that presently are practically vacant.
 - Enlist business owners' cooperation to encourage cyclists and walkers to park on private commercial property, particularly where it could increase business in the Town Center area.
 - Encourage use of the Ward Park parking area off Cemetery Lane.
 - Provide signage on N. Main Street to indicate potential parking areas for recreational users.
2. Promote using Sherborn's cultural and recreational resources by installing informational kiosks at key locations in Town Center.
 - Use kiosks to provide maps of trails, bike routes, and historic landmark tours.
 - Collaborate with Town Center businesses to include information regarding sources of food and drink as well as available restrooms in municipal buildings or businesses.
3. Make the maps and information described above available in digital form via multiple platforms.
 - Promote the updated digital version of *Sherborn Walks* on the [Sherborn Forest & Trail Association website](#).
 - Include easy-to-find recreational information and maps on the [Town of Sherborn website](#).

- Use the QR-code system to make maps smartphone-accessible at selected trailheads.
- 4. Explore alternative ways of making Town Center restrooms available to the public with current water and septic infrastructure. For example:
 - install and maintain portable toilets as part of the Ward Park fields/playground complex;
 - consider alternative-technology appliances, such as composting toilets; and
 - encourage businesses to provide access to facilities as feasible.
- 5. Encourage existing and future Town Center businesses to consider Sherborn recreational users and visitors a business opportunity (e.g., bike shops, restaurants) and to accommodate recreational customers by providing restrooms.

E. *Encourage continuation and expansion of multiple usage of underused or seasonally used public properties.*

1. Support additional use of the ball fields for other recreational activities.
2. Continue to use tennis courts for skating rinks.
3. Use of Pine Hill School parking lot for non-school activities and events.
4. Pine Hill Cemetery usage for walkers and joggers to promote the cemetery as a historic site and to increase its appreciation as a park.

F. *Improve existing Town Center roadways and sidewalks.*

(See CIRCULATION section for details)

1. Invest in traffic study to identify ways to facilitate flow of traffic:
 - Explore the possibility of left-turn lanes at key intersections, such as N. Main Street at C&L Frosty, N. Main northbound at Coolidge, and southbound on N. Main onto S. Main.
 - Reduce designated lane widths in the Town Center to reduce speeds, increase driver attention, and enable bike lanes.
2. Experiment with road design and traffic circulation changes on Sanger and Sawin Streets to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists.
3. Improve Main Street sidewalks to accommodate bikes and wheelchairs.
 - Add ramps and improve intersections.
 - Widen sidewalks in compliance with Complete Streets Program guidelines, where possible.
 - Legalize bicycle use on sidewalks, but limit speeds to < 10 mph (or walking speed when pedestrians are present).

GOAL III ► **Support current businesses and consider new business and housing opportunities in the Town Center within existing infrastructure constraints.**

Town Center Appearance

The historic buildings in and around the Town Center provide aesthetic standards and models for the New England–village ambiance that we value. Newer buildings that also are integral to the Town Center display diverse styles; some harmonize well with the historic village atmosphere, and others do not, but better integration of them all could be accomplished through incremental change and attention to visual detail. For example, the inconsistency among types of signage, walkway, landscape, and frontage designs detracts from the visual harmony and sense of place that can make a village a pleasant place to be.

Improvements in appearance, guided by an agreed-upon vision and coordinated among businesses and town officials, could enhance the viability of Town Center businesses.

Incremental design improvements should include redesign of the large spaces currently devoted to parking. Originally, the multiple parking areas in North Town Center were established piecemeal by individual properties to meet the legal parking space requirements. The resultant disconnected parking patchwork inhibits pedestrian contact with shops and services, leaves underutilized parking space, and contributes to congestion on the main roadways. Cooperative redesign could readily improve this situation, which would benefit businesses and customers alike.



Town Center businesses

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Current Infrastructure Constraints

More significant changes, such as expansion of capacity in current businesses, addition of restrooms to accommodate customers, and establishment of new businesses are severely limited by the current well and septic-system infrastructure. Indeed, the entire Town Center is vulnerable to major disruption because of the overlapping of wells and septic fields, which do not conform to current state regulations and threaten water supplies (see MAP 2).

In 2011 the Sherborn Planning Board used data from earlier water studies to complete a detailed analysis of possible sites to host expansion of businesses and housing in Town Center with both the current infrastructure and the addition of public water and wastewater systems. ([Town of Sherborn 2011](#)). The resulting draft report concluded that, within current water and septic system constraints, only very limited additional development is possible within the current North Town Center business zone. This development could be at 18 N. Main Street (with renovation and repurposing of a barn), 6 Powderhouse Lane (along the railroad tracks), and in a potential PUD zone at 41 N. Main. Alternative options for the

latter two properties are currently under consideration. The 2011 analysis also concluded that existing infrastructure prohibits more development of South Town Center. However, the town should continue to explore modest infrastructure improvements and regulation changes that allow existing businesses to accommodate customer needs better, expand capacity, and thrive.



Aerial view of North Town Center

Source: Town of Sherborn Planning Board

Summary of Challenges

- The current Town Center business district lacks a strong visual sense of place.
- Access to businesses often requires turns through heavy traffic and driving among multiple parking spots.
- Most businesses' expansion or improvement possibilities are limited by current water supply and/or septic system constraints.

Recommendations

A. *Explore market opportunities and financial costs/benefits that may be achieved both under current conditions as well as after specific improvements in the Town Center.*

1. Conduct a market study to determine what is commercially viable, both within current infrastructure constraints and with municipal water and sewer utilities.
2. Work with existing businesses and residents to understand their goals for expansion or improvement.
3. Estimate costs and the financial impact of the actions proposed in this plan as a return on the investment to current businesses and residents as well as the town as a whole.

B. *Make the existing Town Center more visually appealing.*

1. Design and implement a coherent signage policy that enhances the sense of place and defines the identity of Sherborn.
2. Consider additional plantings and green features along main streets.
3. Work with business owners to maximize both the visibility and legibility of Town Center signage.
4. Review setback requirements to maximize the Town Center's visual appeal.
5. Amend the zoning by-laws to ensure that any changes in building sizes, relationships, and landscapes are consistent with those of a traditional New England village.

C. *Maximize accessibility to all Town Center businesses and destinations while minimizing the need to drive between sites.*

1. Design and implement a Town Center-wide parking plan.
2. Coordinate parking design with walkway design.
3. Work with business and property owners to negotiate a community parking solution that includes revising the town's current parking regulations.

D. *Encourage and support the Board of Health in addressing current and potential water/sewer needs of individual properties in Town Center.*

1. Consider allowing composting toilets, gray-water systems, and innovative alternative septic technologies as regulated by the state.
2. Consider allowing shared septic systems and mounded systems for new construction in the Town Center.
3. Enable additional eating and meeting places within Board of Health regulations that protect the interests of the town's long-term health.

E. *To the extent allowed by current well and septic technology, enable new business and housing options in Town Center.*

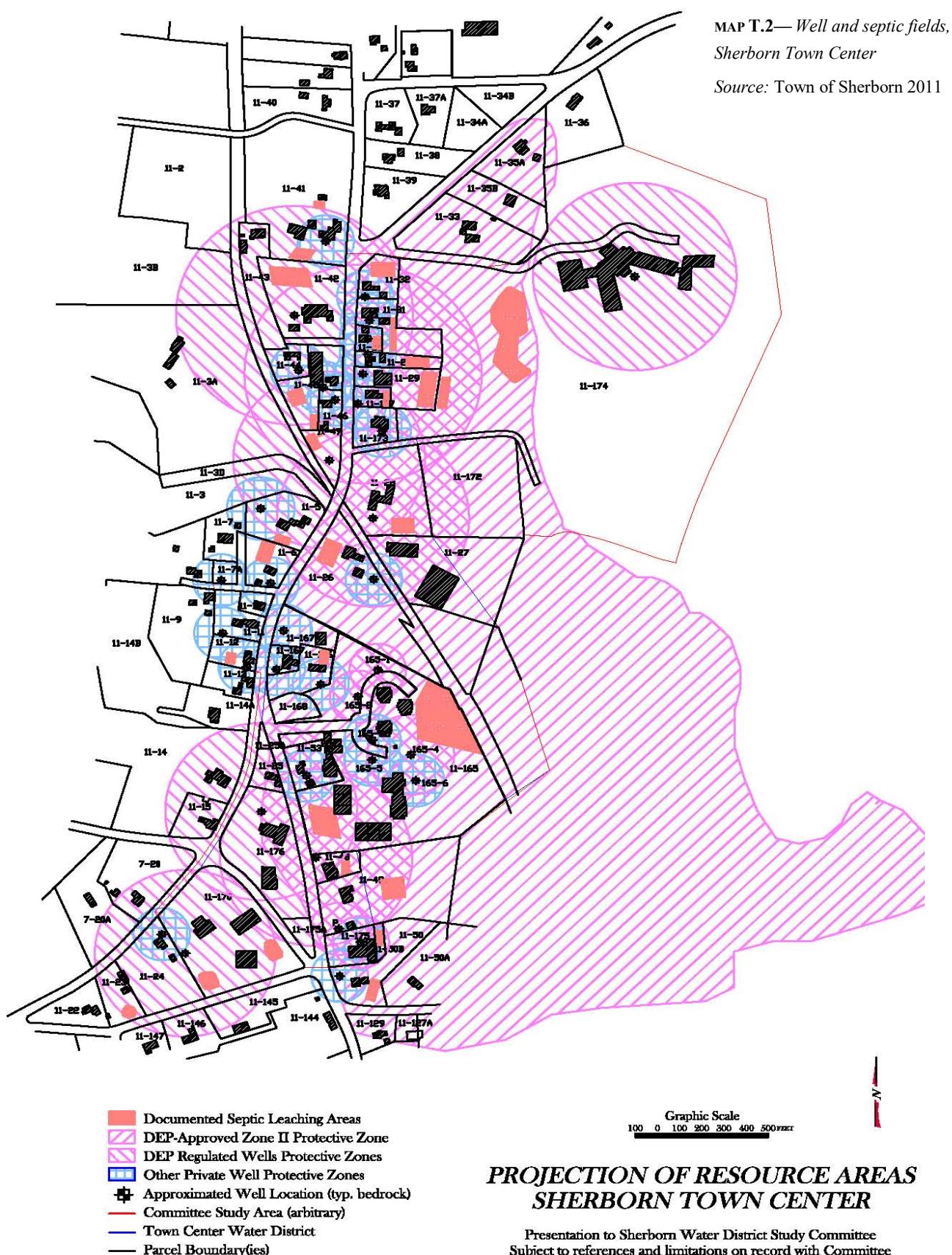
1. Allow limited expansion of the Town Center footprint toward the north:
 - On the west side to Hunting Lane; and
 - On the east side to Eliot Street.
2. Revise PUD zoning to allow multiple businesses including one anchor business that has a larger footprint than currently permitted.
3. Revise zoning by-laws to enable mixed use and/or multi-dwelling housing options within business and PUD zones of Town Center.
4. Enable historic structures to be repurposed for business, housing, or mixed usage in return for preservation of exterior appearance.

F. *Examine and consider changing certain zoning restrictions as they apply to Town Center businesses.*

1. Reconsider restrictions on allowable business types and number of employees.
2. Enable more outdoor events for all businesses.
 - Define the range of outdoor events that would be allowed by right and those that would require special permits.
 - Agree upon outdoor-event sound and lighting controls in consideration of Town Center residents.
3. Reduce the number of parking spaces required per square foot of business space based on:
 - day and night use and total spaces available; and
 - a mutually agreed upon contingency plan for expansion of parking.
4. Establish and enforce signage guidelines within the signage policy defined in Recommendation A1.

GOAL IV ► Develop a realistic, comprehensive long-term plan for the Town Center that addresses those challenges selected for action but not met by the incremental changes described in Goals I–III.

In surveys conducted over the past decade, many residents have expressed overall dissatisfaction with the amenities and resources currently available in the Town Center. All agree that large, so-called chain stores do not belong in Sherborn, but many feel that the addition of smaller businesses, such as a coffee shop/cafe, small restaurants, and shops would enhance Sherborn's vitality and attractiveness. The surveys reveal, however, a broad agreement that the Town Center should remain small and retain its New England–village atmosphere.



It is reasonable to assume that enhancement of social and commercial activity in its Town Center will support Sherborn's overall financial health by enhancing the desirability of the town and improving property values. However, plans for enhancement run up against the fact that commercial properties are privately owned and therefore not under town control. Residents' wishes aside, the potential viability of specific types of new businesses in Sherborn's small Town Center is not known. Most important, current capacity and future expansion of businesses are severely limited by the lack of a safe public water supply and wastewater systems.

Water and Septic Issues

For many years, especially since passage of Massachusetts Title 5 regulations in 1995, it has been recognized that some properties within the Town Center (businesses, residences, public buildings, and churches), although grandfathered under Title 5, have yet to be updated to meet current state regulations for separation of wells and septic systems. As is the case in many old New England villages, locations of many Town Center wells and septic fields, which were installed many years ago before today's stricter regulations were in place, no longer would be allowed, and they pose a potential health risk. Options for current businesses are limited as there is little room for expansion of septic capacity. Indeed, ground water supplies are currently vulnerable to contamination by existing septic systems. Map T.2, following, shows that almost all the septic leaching areas (solid red) in the Town Center area lie within the "protected zones" surrounding public or shared wells (cross-hatched pink) or private wells (cross-hatched blue). Under Title 5 regulations, new wells or septic fields with such overlap are not allowed. Septic contamination of Town Center well-water is not only a potential health threat, it could threaten town finances by forcing expensive emergency infrastructure remediation that is not included in the overall Town Center plan.

At the May 2007 town election, a nonbinding question on the ballot—"Shall the town encourage the formation of a public water and/or sewer system to service the current Business District?"—passed by a 2-to-1 vote. A report proposing a Town Center Water District was compiled and submitted by the Sherborn Business Association and interested residents to the SB. The report recommended the SB consider establishment of a water district and water delivery system within the Town Center that would alleviate that area's water quality and quantity challenges, which were posed by the private and public properties concentrated there.

In May 2014, the SB formed the Town Center Options Committee (TCOC) to study the technical and financial options available to add water supply and/or wastewater treatment systems. The committee continues to work with technical and legal consultants to provide data to the town's governing boards so that informed decisions can be made. On balance, the data show that the Town Center's further development is constrained by both septic disposal capacity and water supply. Data on the technical feasibility and costs of various options are under continued analysis. The town has a successful, but small, test well located off Morse Road in the Price Woodlands Conservation Land. It will require extensive testing at the requisite flow that complies with state regulations. A water system could include that well, a water tank on Pine Hill, and the existing fire main to deliver water to a water district restricted to the Town Center. Possible alternative sewage systems range from small-scale approaches that take the liquid from existing septic tanks to a remote shared recharge area via small plastic pipes to a wastewater treatment plant.

The successful solution will depend on the residents' ability to define and agree upon specific additions and changes that are consistent with their shared vision of the future Town Center. This vision must be tempered by realistic analyses of the short- and long-term costs of the required infrastructure, the market viability of desired new businesses and/or housing, and the overall financial impacts on the town. To this end, actions proposed below in Recommendations B, C, and D, may proceed concurrently. This goal is aimed at putting these prerequisites in place and reaching consensus on the way forward.

Summary of Challenges

- Sherborn residents hold widely differing visions of what comprises an “ideal” Town Center.
- The lack of a socially and economically vibrant Town Center diminishes Sherborn’s ability to attract buyers, who would enhance property values throughout town.
- Whether the types of additional small business that are desired are economically viable in the Town Center is not known.
- Fiscal implications for the town of adding specific business or housing options to the Town Center have not been calculated.
- Currently, insufficient data has been gathered to evaluate the potential impacts of Town Center water and/or sewer systems on the area’s development or the town’s finances.
- A fear exists about the idea that a common water supply for a limited Town Center district will not be legally defensible and will open the floodgates to unwanted and uncontrolled development.

Recommendations

A. *Develop a shared vision of the “ideal” Town Center that includes the range of desired improvements and changes.*

1. Conduct a public outreach campaign to gather data on citizen, business, church, and municipal service needs and preferences.
 - Conduct a community visioning process to reach consensus on long-term goals for the character and aesthetics of the Town Center. Define what we want to preserve and what we would like to change.
 - Conduct detailed surveys to assess the types of businesses the community would support.
 - Define the range of housing options that would be acceptable in the Town Center.
2. Prioritize the preferences expressed above for further analysis (see Recommendation B, below).

B. *Analyze how contributions of specific business types and housing options deemed desirable and viable will affect the long-term financial sustainability of the town.*

1. Invest in a professional market analysis to understand the market potential for specific types of businesses in Town Center.
 - Collect data from comparable small businesses in surrounding towns.
 - Consider future market trends in retail and restaurant usage.
 - Use available market analyses or consultants to predict business success.
 - Gather data from local and regional real estate agents on the current housing market and trends.
2. Analyze the potential impacts on taxes and property values throughout town.
3. Analyze the potential impact on town finances.
4. Identify the types, numbers, and sizes of businesses and/or housing opportunities that should be enabled and encouraged in the Town Center.

C. *Support and guide the TCOC with resources needed to complete the analysis of the technical feasibility and projected costs of installing and maintaining a public water and/or septic system within a strictly limited Town Center district.*

1. Determine technical feasibility of water and sewer systems serving the Town Center.
2. Define water and sewer districts and determine their legal defensibility.
3. Define the installation and operational costs of alternative water/sewer infrastructure options.
4. Continue to re-evaluate water and sewer options in the light of existing and new technologies.

D. *Evaluate the financing options for a public water and/or septic system within a strictly limited Town Center district.*

1. Explore funding options including state grants.
2. Evaluate the immediate and future costs of financing options.
3. Conduct cost-benefit analyses under alternative financing scenarios.
4. Determine how much the town can finance and how much must be funded through betterments or other sources.

E. Decide whether to proceed with development of Town Center water and sewer infrastructure as part of a broad Town Center plan.

1. Form a consortium representing multiple boards, interests, and skills to formulate a Town Center plan based on the information gathered in Recommendations A–D, above, that includes (or does not include) a public water and/or sewer system.
2. The consortium would guide the process of adoption and approval of the plan by Town Meeting.
3. If the town approves a plan, form a Town Center implementation committee and charge it with moving the process forward.

F. Ensure that any change to the Town Center is in harmony with Sherborn's overall character and its New England–village heritage.

1. Establish an advisory design-review board tasked with developing an architectural vision for the Town Center, establishing appropriate guidelines, and maintaining the vision over time.
 - Revisit previous Sherborn Town Center design proposals for inspiration and guidance.
 - Consult design review guidelines used in other New England towns.
2. Adopt new “character-based” zoning ordinances, where the form and scale of a development is considered in the context of place rather than just complying with land-use rules.
 - Consider zoning changes that provide more flexibility to Main Street property owners and potential developers.
 - Require any new construction or redevelopment to bring the buildings closer to the road, where appropriate, and to restrict most parking to the sides and rear of buildings.
3. Integrate Town Center design-review process and standards into Planning Board rules and regulations.
 - Enable implementation of design review through the permitting process.
 - Amend zoning by-laws and Planning Board rules and regulations to integrate design-review recommendations into the special-permit process.

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VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn will continue to be a semirural town known for scenic, tree-shaded roads, interconnected bicycle routes, walkways, and trails that promote a healthy lifestyle. Roadways and roadsides will be designed for safe sharing by all users: vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians.

Circulation



GOALS

- I. Efficient movement of vehicles**
- II. Roads shared by vehicles with bicycles**
- III. Safe walkways for pedestrians**
- IV. Scenic roads and rural character**

Circulation Overview

In the broad sense, the Sherborn circulation system includes our roads, sidewalks, pathways, and trails that facilitate movement of people and connect destinations.

Sherborn roads include two high-volume commuter roads—Routes 16 and 27—that merge through the center of town; several busy connecting roads such as Coolidge Street, Whitney Street, and Western Avenue; and many low-traffic neighborhood roads shared by drivers, walkers, runners, bicyclists, and equestrians. Major highways are one or two towns away. Taxis and internet-accessed ride sharing are available in Sherborn, but public transportation is not; rail and bus service, including a direct bus to Logan Airport, are located several miles away in Natick and Framingham.



Surveys show that Sherborn residents want the town to continue to be a semirural, green oasis, distinguished in the suburban-Boston region as a safe, healthy place to live. Sherborn's rural atmosphere is due in part to its beautiful, narrow country roads that are shared, sometimes precariously, among cars, bikes and pedestrians as well as the occasional horse. Residents returning from more urban areas often describe feeling increasingly peaceful and calm as they cross the town line and enter Sherborn's shaded, tree-lined roads.

Our roads are not designed for the high traffic volumes or speeds of larger regional roadways, and drivers are often required to share the road with nonmotorized traffic. If our roadways are to be safe for all users, visual cues are needed to alert drivers to slow their speeds and be on the lookout for pedestrians, equestrians and bicyclists. Busier roadways and intersections should be designed to enable slow, steady speeds and efficient movement through intersections to discourage diversion of traffic onto local roads not intended for high-volume traffic.

Sherborn's circulation system should also be designed for safe travel on foot and bicycle throughout the town. Ideally, the system should connect green spaces, schools, public buildings, and recreational areas as well as homes and businesses with a seamless network of safe trails, bicycle paths, and sidewalks. Our circulation policies should seek to reduce our carbon footprint and support environmental health by

facilitating low-impact transportation modes, such as walking and bicycling, and encouraging greater use of public transportation and green motor vehicles by Sherborn residents.

The Planning Board's [survey of 2014](#) documented that residents are not satisfied with many aspects of circulation in Sherborn, including commuter-traffic congestion in the Town Center, the lack of safe walking and biking routes within the Town Center, and poor access to public transportation. The recommendations of this section of the plan emphasize circulation-infrastructure improvements that will increase safety of all modes of travel while they reinforce the goals of other sections (Recreational Resources, Town Center) that address multimodal pedestrian and bicycle connections between neighborhoods, existing open space and recreation areas, and Town Center.

Complete Streets

In 2016 Sherborn adopted a [Complete Streets policy](#) that promotes an approach to community transportation using design principals intended to ensure the safety, comfort, and accessibility of Sherborn's streets, sidewalks, and trails for all of their users (FIG. C.1). In 2016, the National Complete Streets Coalition, a part of Washington, D.C.-based Smart Growth America, rated Sherborn's [Complete Streets policy second in the nation](#).

The Complete Streets policy directs decision makers to consistently plan, design, construct, and improve streets to accommodate all anticipated users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and emergency and commercial vehicles. The Complete Streets approach to road design has multiple benefits. It can:

- reduce crashes, injuries, and their related costs;
- reduce congestion by encouraging nonmotorized-transportation options, increasing road capacity, and decreasing consumer transportation costs and overall carbon footprint;
- provide accessible and efficient connections among home, school, work, recreation, and retail destinations by improving the pedestrian and vehicular environments throughout communities; and
- enhance safe walking and bicycling options for school-age children and all citizens, and promote physical activity.

Adoption of a policy is only the first step; concrete planning and implementation must follow. In 2017, the Complete Streets program funded and completed an assessment and recommendations study of Sherborn. The policy and the results of the Sherborn study serve as guidance for many of the goals and recommendations in this section of the Master Plan. Goal I proposes strategies that will improve motor vehicle flow and safe sharing of roads, especially in and around Town Center. Goal II focuses on improving the safety of bicycle travel, while Goal III looks at infrastructure improvements that will encourage travel on foot. Goal IV is concerned with maintenance of scenic roads to preserve the rural character of the town.

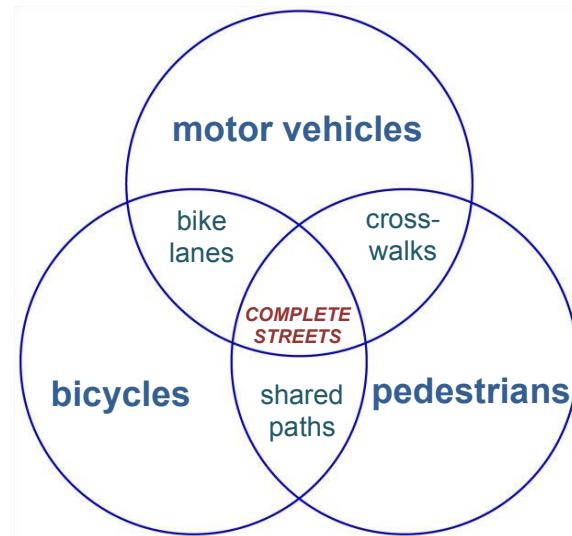


FIGURE C.1

Any proposed redesign of a road or intersection must give equal weight to the recommendations of Goals I, II, and III. Where the circulation-infrastructure needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists overlap or conflict, safety is the most important consideration. In addition, proposed changes should not detract from the town's quiet, rural atmosphere.

Sherborn is currently in need of many road, intersection, and pedestrian-pathway improvements. Still others will emerge from citizen input and future traffic analyses. Given the limited resources available, projects must be prioritized through an agreed-upon, flexible process involving the Planning and Select Boards, Traffic Safety and Public Safety committees, Department of Public Works (DPW), and others as needed. Prioritization should weigh multiple factors and, whenever possible, be founded on these data:

- potential improvement of vehicular traffic flow based on current data and post-project estimates;
- potential improvements in safety based on accident and incident data;
- estimated cost to the town;
- outside funding opportunities such as the Complete Streets program; the state-based Chapter 90 grants; and two programs within the Massachusetts Department of Transportation: the Small Town Road Assistance Program (STRAP) grants and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP); and
- input from Sherborn drivers, walkers, runners, cyclists, and equestrians.

It will be important to keep the public informed throughout the prioritization process and seek public support for each project through education and sharing of information.

GOAL I ► Improve roadways and intersections for safe and efficient movement of vehicles.

Challenges Facing Circulation Planning

The main streets through Sherborn's Town Center were once historic, unpaved country roads connecting Sherborn farms to neighboring villages, but today, at rush hour, they become major bottlenecks for motor vehicles. Two principal commuter arterials—Route 27 (North and South Main Streets) and Route 16 (Washington Street, North Main Street, and Eliot Street)—merge at the northern edge of Town Center and separate again at the southern edge. These roads become congested during commuting hours and create long delays exacerbated by inefficient and often dangerous intersections. Motor vehicle congestion drives frustrated commuters onto smaller secondary and neighborhood roads, thus creating hazards for pedestrians and cyclists.

Because the town has no public transportation options, Sherborn residents are very vehicle dependent, and this adds to the congestion. It takes a little more time to commute from Sherborn to work in Boston and elsewhere than from other nearby suburbs, which may have a dampening effect on property values. Indeed, since the 2008 economic crisis, towns that connect to business and urban areas via commuter trains and major highways have seen more rapid increases in real estate prices. Trains are available in four nearby towns, but their stations all have limited parking.

Circulation Problem Solving

Analysis of Sherborn by the Complete Streets program confirmed many of the opportunities for improvement in Sherborn's circulation infrastructure described above and identified a series of specific "fixes" that are feasible and realistic. They include improved intersection design for traffic flow and safety (FIGURE C.2), roadway design for safer vehicle and bicycle sharing, and interconnected pedestrian walkways and safer road crossings in Town Center. This provides a roadmap for the recommendations and strategies outlined in this section of the Master Plan. Sherborn currently receives engineering support for some of this work from the Complete Streets program.



FIGURE C.2—Eliot and North Main Street intersection-redesign option. Left photo: Existing; right: Proposed.

Source: Town of Sherborn 2016

It is difficult to measure circulation and even more difficult to predict or calculate the return on investment in infrastructure. In spite of these difficulties, present and future prioritization of infrastructure investments should be guided by data whenever possible. Thus, it is important to measure or estimate the value of infrastructure improvements using before-and-after traffic-safety data, motor vehicle counts, and public satisfaction surveys.

Looking ahead, Sherborn must monitor and respond to future transportation options, understand upcoming changes, and take advantage of new technology and strategies, all of which will require working with other towns and regional transportation-planning organizations. The impacts of driverless cars, vehicle-communication technology, and new traffic-control technology are not well understood, but a town and regional goal must be to move more people rather than more vehicles. Sherborn should support planning efforts for regional bus lines and other forms of shared public transportation. Future road design, policy, and technology should be examined through the lenses of public safety and mitigation of traffic congestion.

Summary of Challenges

- Motor vehicle congestion in the Town Center is a longstanding problem for residents and those travelling through town, and it leads to diversion of traffic onto smaller neighborhood roads.
- Town Center congestion makes access to businesses and services difficult and discourages Sherborn residents from using the Town Center.
- Major intersections in and near Town Center are not optimized for traffic flow and can be hazardous.
- Funds are limited for road-design improvement, road-maintenance support, and police enforcement services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. *Evaluate alternative road- and intersection-design options to improve traffic flow, relieve traffic congestion, increase safety, and reduce driver frustration in and around the Town Center.*

1. Conduct a traffic engineering study of the Town Center area to define alternative road-design changes that would mitigate traffic congestion, improve steady flow, and increase safety at major intersections.
 - Consider creating middle turning lanes at key locations.
 - Consider adding traffic controls such as “smart” traffic lights.
 - Consider other road-design features that encourage lower vehicle speeds near intersections.
2. Study and, if needed, modify the solutions for problematic Town Center intersections suggested in the analysis and report by the Complete Streets program.
 - North Main and Eliot Streets (see FIGURE C.2).
 - South Main and Washington Streets.
 - Washington and Maple Streets.
 - North Main and Coolidge Streets.
3. Establish agreed-upon parameters to measure the potential impact of each road- and intersection-design change on vehicle numbers per unit time, speeds, and safety.
 - Optimize roadway-incident data from town public safety professionals including fire and police plus the DPW and the Traffic Safety and Public Safety Committees.
 - Organize an incident database that allows ongoing, site-specific analysis of road and intersection safety before and after design changes.
 - Include steadier traffic flow (i.e., reducing vehicle stops and starts) as a measure of positive change.

- Use the number of vehicles diverted from Town Center arterials onto neighborhood roads as a measure of driver frustration.
- 4. Install visual and other cues that clarify for drivers that they are entering Sherborn Town Center.
 - Strengthen visual indications of the approach to Town Center, such as speed limit changes and historic district signage.
 - Install road-design cues, such as a change in pavement type, green islands, or roadside plantings.
- 5. Consider additional Town Center traffic-mitigation actions.
 - Reduce the number of curb cuts to increase safety when entering and exiting businesses.
 - Centralize North Town Center public parking and establish common entry and exit points.
 - Reconsider making Sanger and Sawin Streets one way to slow speeds and increase safety at intersections of Maple and Washington Streets and of South Main, Sanger, and Farm Streets.

B. *Evaluate alternative road- and intersection-design options to improve traffic flow and increase safety outside of Town Center.*

- 1. Identify road locations that experience a relatively high incidence of speeding, accidents, and perceptions of danger by residents.
 - Collect and analyze roadway-incident and traffic-citation data.
 - Collect citizen input on road hazards throughout town.
- 2. Install visual cues to alert drivers that they are entering a semirural town with narrow roads and strictly enforced speed limits.
 - Add active speed limit signage at problematic locations where drivers tend to speed.
 - Install additional speed limit and warning signs at locations where reminders are needed.
- 3. Identify deficiencies and opportunities for improvement of problematic intersections throughout town.
 - Collect citizen input on experiences and perceptions of vehicle safety and hazards at busy intersections.
 - Collect traffic-flow data for key intersections.
 - Analyze the contributions of sight lines, pavement angles, and other features at problematic intersections.
- 4. At high-priority intersections, design improvements that comply with Complete Streets policy.

GOAL II ► Design roadways and intersections that permit safe sharing by vehicles and bicycles.

Local motor vehicle use by residents could be reduced and healthy lifestyles enhanced by a greater reliance on walking and cycling. Bicycle travel is popular in Sherborn, but travel on our narrow local roads must be done with care. On main roads cyclists do not have designated bike lanes or roadside bicycle paths. Meanwhile, Sherborn's top-rated schools continue to attract families with school-age children who usually rely on motor vehicle transportation to get to school, visit friends, or participate in sports. Both growing school and senior populations in Sherborn will increase the future demand for safe walking and bicycling infrastructure.

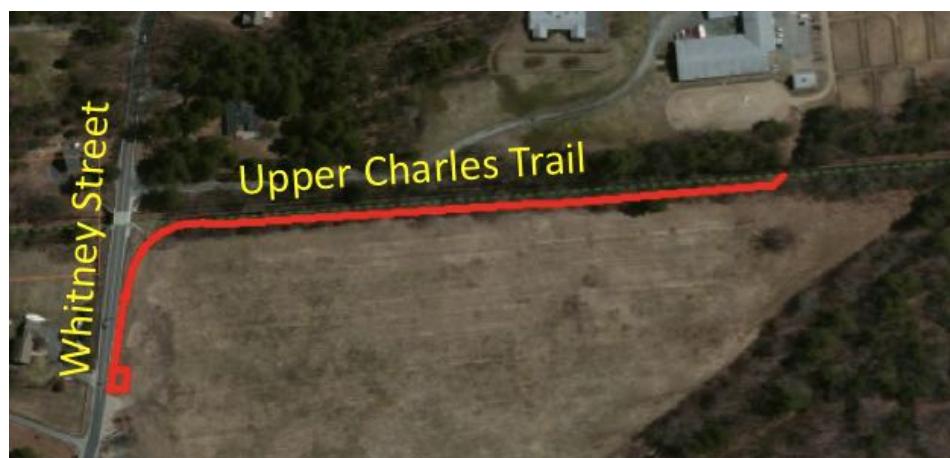
A dramatic increase in bicycling as a means of travel and recreation has occurred nationwide. A U.S. travel survey found that, as a percent of all trips made, trips made by bicycling or walking in 2009 had increased by 45 percent compared to 1994. The number of American workers who commute by bicycle increased by 60 percent from 2005 to 2013, the largest change among the reported types of commuter travel (U.S. Federal Highway Administration 2016, pp. 16–17). Closer to home, Massachusetts had a 63 percent increase in bicycle commuters between 2006 and 2016 (UMass Donahue Institute 2015). From 2007 to 2014, the city of Boston increased its total bicycle-lane mileage from 0.034 miles to more than 92 miles, resulting in a 140 percent increase in the percentage of commuters using bicycles. The statewide investment in bicycling infrastructure encourages recreational and commuter bicycling in Sherborn and its region.

Sherborn is a small town that lacks the urban density and college campuses that facilitate high-volume bike sharing and commuter use. However, most of our residential areas are within easy biking distance from Town Center, Farm Pond, other neighborhoods within the town, and Town Center destinations. Improvements in bicycling infrastructure and safety have the potential to alleviate road congestion by facilitating nonmotorized travel to other neighborhoods, recreation fields, and Town Center.

Most important, Sherborn has an vital recreational resource in its quiet, scenic roads and vistas, and they are popular among recreational bicyclists throughout the region. Connecting Sherborn to regional dedicated bike trails that currently are being developed in other towns will benefit our residents as well as regional neighbors. No such connections have in place until recently, but the planned extension of the Upper Charles Rail Trail into Sherborn will be a good beginning (FIG. C.3).

FIGURE C.3—Proposed ADA-compliant trail connection from a new parking lot on Whitney Street to the Upper Charles Rail Trail.

Source: Town of Sherborn 2016.



Summary of Challenges

- Roadways and intersections in town, especially in and near the Town Center, favor motor vehicles and can be unsafe for bicycles.
- Pavement widths on many roads are too narrow to accommodate a bike lane in addition to two lanes of vehicular traffic.
- Bicyclists as well as vehicle drivers may be poorly informed about rules for safe sharing of roads.
- Vehicle drivers often are not reminded to watch for bicycle traffic in Sherborn.

A *Modify alternative Town Center road- and intersection-design options for vehicular movement defined in Goal I to allow for safer sharing of roads with bicycles.*

1. Given existing pavement widths and other physical constraints, evaluate Town Center road-design changes to assess possibility of adding bike lanes or other bicycle safety features.
2. Add active speed limit signage and enforcement in school and recreation-field zones.
3. Provide visual guides to adjust driver behavior for safe sharing of vehicle travel lanes with bicycles.
 - Clearly painted bicycle images (“sharrows”) on pavement of shared lanes.
 - Roadside signs indicating that the road is shared with bicycle traffic.

B. *Improve the safety of selected roads and intersections throughout town for shared use by vehicles and bicycles.*

1. Create child-safe bicycle connections from neighborhoods to Town Center, Pine Hill School, recreational fields, and Farm Pond.
 - Widen and improve existing sidewalks and create additional sidewalks along major connecting roads where feasible, given existing right of way widths.
 - Create roadside walkways/bike paths parallel to traffic lanes that are designed for sharing by pedestrians and bicycles.
2. Provide visual guides for safe sharing of vehicle travel lanes with bicycles throughout town.
 - Create well-marked bike corridors on roads connecting to Town Center. Designate major bicycle roadways including Coolidge Street, Western Avenue, Lake Street, Maple Street, Farm Road North, and South Main and Eliot Streets.
 - On these designated roads, create bike lanes where possible.
 - Where dedicated bike lanes are not possible, add marked “sharrow” pavement signs to alert drivers to be on the lookout for bicycles, thus improving cyclists’ safety.

- Work with local and regional bike clubs and local businesses to enlist their ideas for improving safety and enjoyment of biking through Sherborn.
- Place signs reminding drivers and cyclists of the rules for sharing the road.
- Improve bicycle safety by providing “bike boxes” and signage at busy intersections.

C. Establish safe bicycle connections to neighboring towns and regional bike paths.

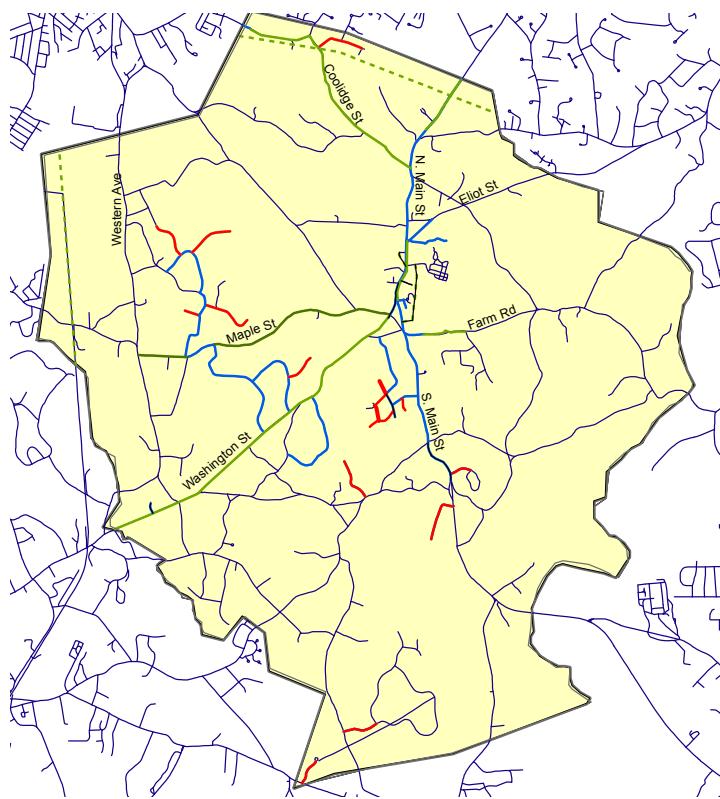
1. Extend the multi-use Upper Charles Rail Trail to link Sherborn to the region.
 - Add parking and a walkway that comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards near Whitney Street to provide access to the Upper Charles regional bicycle/pedestrian trail that links Sherborn to Holliston and Milford.
 - Extend the Upper Charles Rail Trail in Sherborn from its current terminus near the Holliston line to Whitney Street, north to Framingham, and west to Ashland. Consider adding a spur to provide access from Western Avenue.
2. Create shared-use sidewalks or off-road, bicycle-friendly pathways along North Main Street to the Natick town line, along Coolidge Street to Speen and North Main Streets, and to other adjacent towns.

GOAL III ► Encourage and support traveling on foot as a safe and pleasant way to move around Town Center and throughout town.

Improvements in pedestrian infrastructure could benefit the health of residents, the social vitality of the town, and the economic vitality of Town Center businesses. Ideally, an interconnected system of sidewalks, walkways, and trails should provide walking and running routes among neighborhoods and to a Town Center designed for movement of pedestrians of all ages and abilities. For many people, traveling on foot becomes an attractive alternative only when pedestrian routes are visually inviting, easy to navigate and, above all, safe.

Sherborn provides a beautiful environment for walking or running, but the safety challenges faced by pedestrians discourage foot travel. Our main and connecting roadways are not well designed to accommodate pedestrian traffic. Existing sidewalks form a discontinuous network, many are narrow and in need of repair, and some of the busiest roads have no sidewalk or roadside pathway of any kind. Most pedestrian crosswalks in or near Town Center are not signaled. Trail and horse crossing points are largely unmarked, so that trail crossings are not visible to fast-moving vehicles and can be dangerous for walkers, runners, and equestrians.

Pedestrian traffic also would benefit from improvement and connection of existing sidewalks, pathways, and trails, especially in and around Town Center. The current network of open space trails is extensive but fragmented. It could better serve residents if short connecting trails were added to connect them to other trails, sidewalks, and the Town Center, as described in the Recreational Resources section.



MAP C.1—Sherborn sidewalks: existing sidewalks are shown in blue; existing low-priority (low-use) sidewalks that are costly to maintain are red; and new roadside trails or sidewalks that are needed along major corridors are green.

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board.

Travel along roadways would be facilitated by upgrading existing prioritized sidewalks, eliminating low-priority ones and adding roadside pathways or sidewalks along major corridors, as shown in Map C.1.

For example, extending the existing sidewalk along Farm Road to Great Rock Road would connect a neighborhood and trail to the Town Center (FIG. C.4).



FIGURE C.4—Proposed Farm Road sidewalk extension (yellow) to Great Rock Road.

Source: Town of Sherborn 2016

Summary of Challenges

- Existing sidewalks and crosswalks are limited to the Town Center and a few quiet subdivisions.
- Many sidewalks are overgrown, in poor condition, and difficult to walk on for elders and citizens with disabilities.
- Crossing major roads in Town Center is often difficult and can be especially daunting for children and elders.
- Sherborn's sidewalks compete with roads and town-owned parking lots for limited maintenance resources.
- Trail crossings are largely unmarked and can be hazardous for hikers and equestrians.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Improve safety and ease of pedestrian travel in the Town Center.

1. Bring all existing Town Center sidewalks and walkways into compliance with Complete Streets—policy design standards for safety and accessibility.
2. Add new sidewalks to connect Town Center destinations (see TOWN CENTER).
3. Incorporate pedestrian-crossing safety features in the plans for improvement of all intersections in Town Center and its immediate area.
4. Assure adequate year-round funding for maintenance of the entire Town Center pedestrian system and plowing.
5. Add ADA-compliant bike/walking paths to connect specific Town Center destinations (also see TOWN CENTER).
 - Link North and South Town Centers by connecting Cemetery Lane to senior housing and South Town Center.
 - Add a safe path from a drop-off location on Cemetery Lane to Pine Hill School to encourage children to walk in accordance with [Healthy Community Design guidelines](#).
 - Link the Bay Circuit Trail to Hunting Lane and the North Town Center business district.
6. Consider establishing a 25-mph speed limit for all of Sherborn Town Center.

B. Improve safety and ease of pedestrian travel throughout town.

1. Add or improve sidewalks and walkways along high-traffic roads to connect neighborhoods and Town Center wherever possible, given roadway and property ownership constraints.
2. Where sidewalks are not possible, create roadside trails for walkers and cyclists to minimize pedestrian and bicycle traffic in vehicular travel lanes.

3. Take every opportunity to establish new trail connections and improve the town-wide trail network, as described in the Recreational Resources section of this plan.
4. Create safe pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to recreational sites:
 - sports fields and playground; and
 - via the Bay Circuit Trail to Farm Pond.
5. Require new housing developments to contribute to construction of pedestrian walkways connecting them to surrounding neighborhoods and/or Town Center.
6. Establish safe pedestrian crossings where sidewalks and roadside trails meet busy road intersections throughout town, as described for Town Center in Recommendation A.
7. Add signage at major vehicle entry points at town borders, to raise awareness of pedestrian traffic

C. *Improve road-crossing safety for users of the trail system and recreational fields.*

1. Make trail crossings and trailheads visible to motor vehicle traffic by installing consistent, easily recognized signage.
2. Install road signs warning drivers of upcoming trail crossings for hikers, bikers, and horses.
3. Install trail or road markings to guide trail users to appropriate crossing sites.
4. Consider user-activated crossing lights where popular trails cross main roads, such as the Bay Circuit Trail crossings at Eliot Street (Route 16), North Main Street (27) and Western Avenue.
5. Consider a user-activated crossing light on Western Avenue at Fessenden sports fields.

D. *Establish and improve pedestrian connections to neighboring towns and the region.*

1. Enable room for sidewalks on selected regional connecting roads.
2. Extend existing sidewalks to connect to neighboring towns.
3. Extend the Upper Charles Rail Trail to provide a pedestrian link to the region (see RECREATIONAL RESOURCES).
4. Improve the Bay Circuit Trail connections to Ashland and Medfield (see RECREATIONAL RESOURCES).

GOAL IV ► Maintain roads in a manner that preserves the scenic, semirural character of the town.

Value of Scenic Roads

Sherborn's scenic roads are an integral part of the town's atmosphere, or rural character, that is highly valued by residents. They are also part of the local and regional recreational infrastructure that places them on maps and guides of bike routes in eastern Massachusetts.

Sherborn has a history of working to preserve its roads with attention to the rural character of the town. The town still has four unpaved roads, many trail crossings, and relatively few street lights. Many "Scenic Roads" have been designated officially by vote at Town Meeting (TABLE C.1).

Scenic roads are protected under Chapter 40 section 15c of Massachusetts General Law, which enables preservation of designated scenic roads by protecting roadside stone walls and shade trees. It does so by specifying that any changes to stone walls and removal of trees within the public right of way along a route designated as a "scenic road" requires prior permission from the municipality's Planning Board. This includes making a driveway cut through a stone wall and cutting trees with a trunk diameter greater than 1½ inches. Public electric and cable utility companies also must acquire permission before cutting down or pruning trees. Sherborn has adopted a tree manual that provides guidance for the care and maintenance of public trees, and the town holds annual public hearings on the management of trees along both scenic and nonscenic roads.



Pleasant Street

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Sherborn Planning Board regulations affirm the objectives of the state's Scenic Road Act, including:

- maintaining the natural beauty that currently exists along scenic roads;
- maintaining and enhancing the rural character of the town and its compatibility with existing roadside features; and
- acknowledging that roads serve a transportation function for pedestrians, equestrians, and both nonmotorized and motorized vehicles.

Apple Street	Goulding Street E.	Maple Street	Snow Street
Ash Lane	Goulding Street W.	Mill Street	South Street
Brush Hill Road	Green Lane	Nason Hill Road	Western Avenue
Cross Street	Greenwood Street	Perry Street	Whitney Street
Curve Street	Hollis Street	Pleasant Street	Woodland Street
Farm Road	Hunting Lane	Prospect Street	
Forest Street	Lake Street	Rockwood Street	

TABLE C.1—*Sherborn's designated Scenic Roads*

Road Safety and Maintenance

Many of the features that make Sherborn's roads “scenic”—their narrow width, near-roadside trees shading the pavement, limited sight lines as well as the presence of pedestrians and bicycle riders sharing the road—are cues and indicators to drivers of motor vehicles to slow down and be alert. Pedestrians and cyclists also need to be aware of vehicles' sight lines and make every effort to minimize the hazards of sharing the road with vehicles. Roadside trees present other challenges: they may interfere with power lines and, along with telephone poles and stone walls, are among the roadside obstacles vehicles must avoid. Accidents on scenic roads often involve roadside trees, utility poles, mailboxes, and rocks, prompting the suggestion that accidents could be reduced by removing near-roadside trees and widening pavements.

On the other hand, such accidents are evidence that the driver has failed to adjust vehicle speed to accommodate the width and sight lines of the road. Roadside obstacles, such as trees, poles, and traffic safety signs, along with the twists and turns of narrow roads, are visual cues to the driver to slow down, thus making the road safer for all users (Ewing and Dumbaugh, 2009). Trees close to the road provide environmental and aesthetic value as well. They create a beautiful canopy over the road that keeps the road cool on sunny summer days, and they add to the rural character of the road and the town.

Maintenance of scenic and rural roads has practical challenges. Plowing, repairing, and repaving narrow roads are necessary to improve their drainage and reduce maintenance, but crews must work around roadside trees and stone walls. Repavement improves drainage, reduces puddles and ice, and reduces the amount of salt and deicers needed for safety; in turn this protects our groundwater quality and the health of roadside trees. Clearing roadside brush and small saplings is necessary for safety, but damaging young trees that are the next generation of shade trees must be avoided. Electric-utility companies prefer to protect their utilities and the reliability of electric supply and communication cables through tree removal. Trimming branches and adding insulation to cables and electric lines saves trees, but they are costly and require frequent inspection. Finally, death of canopy trees due to insect infestation presents a safety hazard and requires widespread tree removal. This results in loss of shade and rural character as well as unbudgeted expenditures.

Summary of Challenges

- Increased traffic congestion in the Town Center and major through roads increases vehicular traffic on narrow scenic roads, detracting from the rural character of the town.
- Proposals to widen narrow roads and reduce the number of trees close to the road and under utility lines conflict with the desire to preserve rural character.
- Improving the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, and horses on narrow roads is needed to encourage more nonmotorized circulation around town.
- Sherborn's sidewalks, trails, town-owned parking lots, and roads all compete for limited maintenance resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. *Support long-term planning to maintain and improve roads in ways that preserve rural character.*

1. Plan and fund ongoing maintenance of road surfaces, culverts, bridges, and storm-water control features that reduce the need for salt, mitigate erosion, and prevent more costly repairs.
2. Preserve narrow road widths both as a deterrent to speeding and for preservation of rural character.
3. Maintain existing unpaved roads as a reminder of our past while preserving safe shared use by vehicles and nonmotorized traffic.
4. Increase the perceived comfort and safety of pedestrians and cyclists on scenic roads through vehicle speed control and other safety measures (see Goals II and III).

B. *Ensure that new housing, especially multi-unit developments, are designed and built in a manner consistent with the preservation of scenic roads and rural character.*

1. Negotiate with developers and builders of all new-building construction to provide or contribute to trail and sidewalk connections to the trail network and to other important destinations, such as recreational facilities and Town Center.
2. Without changing road-frontage requirements, minimize the number of curb cuts and the amount of pavement by encouraging the use of shared driveways, where possible.
3. Ensure that roads, driveways, and walkways associated with new housing or business developments in the Town Center are designed to preserve village character.
 - Implement form-based zoning codes for slow, efficient vehicular travel and increased walkability in design of new developments (MassDOT 2018).

- Encourage centralized, shared, off street parking behind Town Center buildings and dense housing developments.
- New developments are required to bury electric utilities. Consider relocating electric utilities in Town Center if construction of below-ground utilities creates an opportunity.

4. Require design and site plans of new construction outside of Town Center to include features that preserve rural character.

- Minimize disruption of scenic views along all roads.
- Strictly enforce Massachusetts' Scenic Road Act provisions that govern roadside trees and stone walls.
- Require new-construction site plans to maximize preservation of existing mature shade trees throughout the property.
- Consider increasing setback requirements for new homes and dense home construction to preserve rural character of secondary and tertiary roads.
- Enable flexible lot dimensions and driveway setbacks if that enables better blending with the natural landscape and preservation of trees and stone walls.

5. Adopt a Dark Sky policy for Sherborn: require public and private streetlights and driveway and house lights to comply with [International Dark Sky guidelines](#).

C. *Preserve existing healthy shade trees throughout town and establish a process for tree replacement along both nonscenic and scenic roads.*

1. Consider establishing an evidence-based public shade tree policy regarding trees on public lands (including road rights of way, sidewalks, and trails) and private properties that minimizes risks while maximizing preservation of scenic rural character.
 - Review the existing literature and data sources on road width, roadside features, and tree placement relative to safety of motor vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
 - Invest in engineering advice to design and implement a controlled study of selected local roads to document and measure the impact of road width, trees, and roadside features on speed control and safety.
 - Collect existing information on the role of roadside trees in storm-water management and climate control.
2. Review all the data collected above before changing the tree manual or altering road characteristics.
3. Form a Shade Tree Committee to educate the public about and engage them in the importance of shade trees in Sherborn.
 - Adopt a shade tree policy to designate and protect shade trees for the benefit of the public. Designated trees may be on public or private property and may be along the side of scenic or nonscenic roads, sidewalks, and trails or in public places.

- Consider applying for the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA program to support both public awareness and opportunity for replacement tree support.
 - Organize volunteer effort to plant and maintain roadside trees.
- 4. Ensure that traffic-safety improvements to roads and intersections, as prioritized by Sherborn's Complete Streets policy, are designed in ways that do not detract from Sherborn's rural character.



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn's clean water sources, forest ecosystems and biodiversity, scenic open spaces and agricultural heritage will be actively protected, maintained and improved to support the health and quality of life of Sherborn residents and environmental health throughout the region.

Natural Resources and Open Space



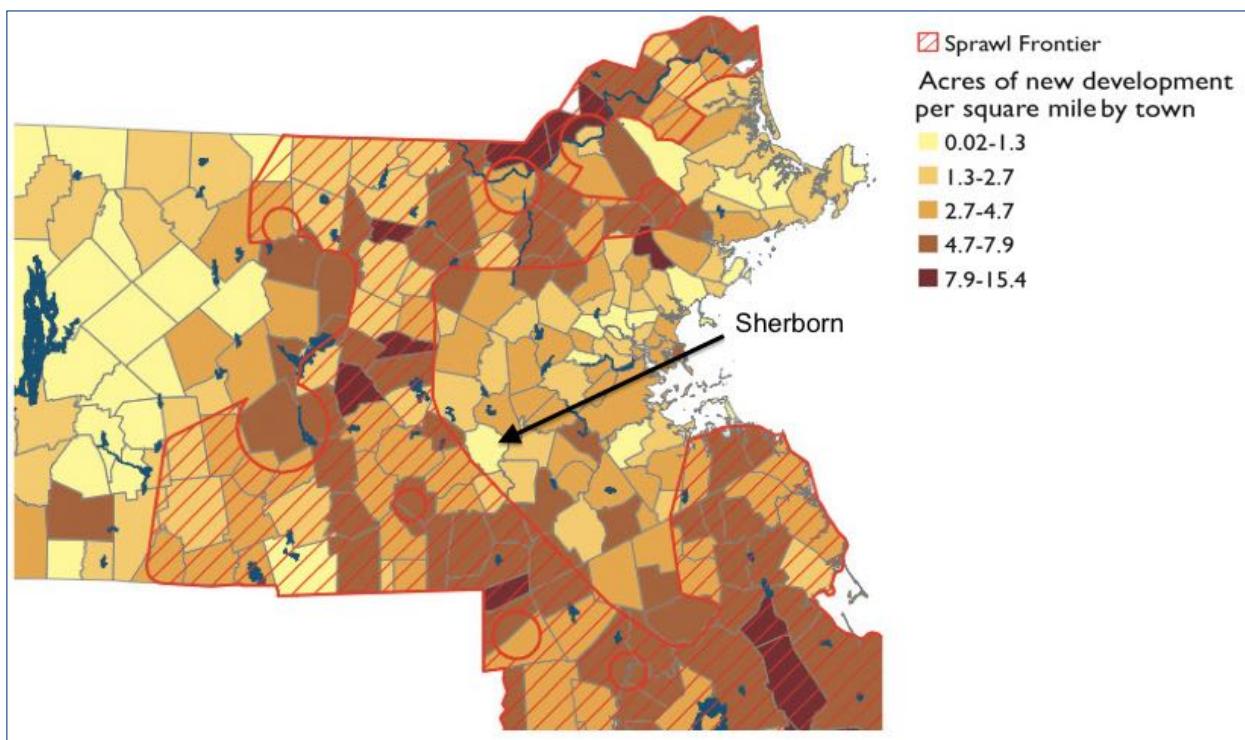
GOALS

- I. **Water resources**
- II. **Forests and biodiversity**
- III. **Open space conservation**
- IV. **Agriculture**

Value of Open Space

Open space is a general term that refers to the status of the land. It includes forests, open fields, ponds, wetlands, recreation fields, agricultural lands, and parks—in short, any lands that are undeveloped. Sherborn’s natural resources include groundwater resources, agricultural land, forests, and the biodiverse ecosystems they contain. The town’s open space is inextricably linked to clean water resources, climate control, recreational resources, and the health of the community. Our natural landscapes and forests also contribute to the environmental health and sustainability of the entire region.

Sherborn’s distinct character is evident as one crosses the town line from its densely developed neighboring towns. Surrounding communities and Boston’s entire Metrowest region have experienced rapid growth; indeed, between 2005 and 2013 the “sprawl frontier”—the front of rapid development and loss of open space—moved westward beyond Sherborn (MAP N.1).



MAP N.1 — *Boston Metrowest sprawl frontier as of 2013*

Source: Mass Audubon 2014

The preservation of Sherborn’s forests has palpable effects on local temperatures and will serve the town well as the Earth’s climate warms. Indeed, the cooling effect of tree cover that can be felt on any hot summer day has been measured and documented (see Goal II). In town-wide surveys, residents consistently placed highest value on the town’s “rural character”—its tree-lined scenic roads flanked by meadows and forests, small farms, and many trails for hiking, horseback riding, cycling, and cross-country skiing (Town of Sherborn 1998; Town of Sherborn 2014). Sherborn’s extensive open space makes it a healthy and enjoyable place in which to live and raise families.

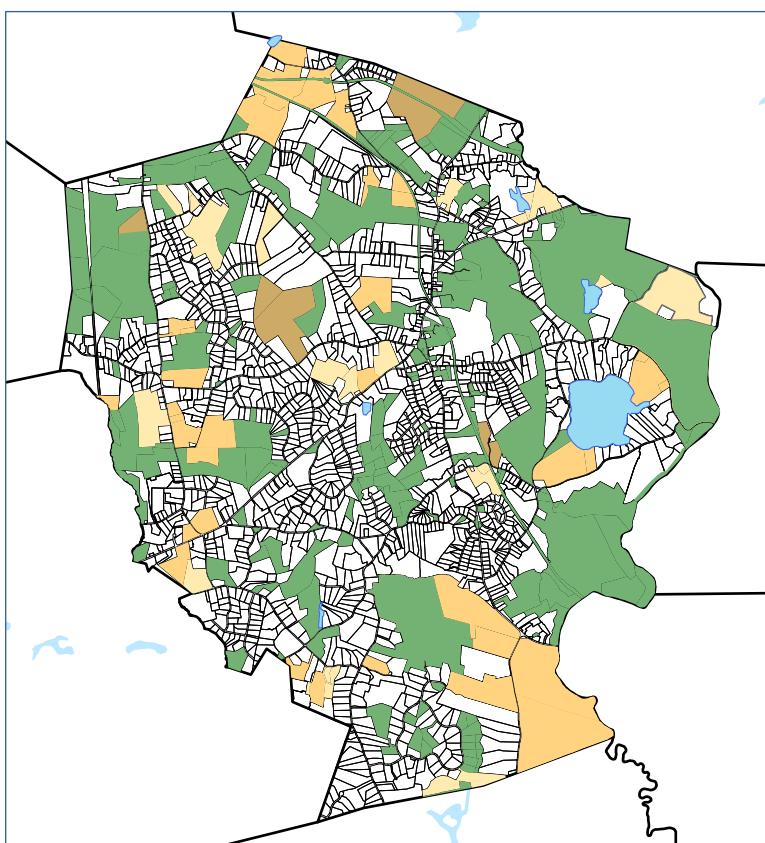
Preservation of Sherborn’s natural assets is by no means assured. Although relatively large tracts of land (about 30 percent of the town) are under permanent conservation protection, many of the large tracts of open fields and forest that contribute significantly to the town’s rural character are privately held. Some

of these properties enjoy temporary conservation protection under MA Chapter 61, but many large private properties are not legally protected at all (MAP N.2). This means that many scenic viewscapes and cooling forests that residents now enjoy could be lost to development.

Mechanisms of Natural Resource and Open Space Protection

To date, Sherborn has retained open space through a combination of means: land acquisition, conservation easements, federal and state environmental laws, and local zoning by-laws and groundwater protection regulations that take into account the underlying geological and hydrological constraints on the land.

Land acquisition and conservation easements ■ Approximately 30 percent of Sherborn's land area has strong or permanent protection from development. Landowners' important donations of land to the town created the Town Forest and other open space lands that now are administered either by the



MAP N.2 — Degrees of conservation protection for Sherborn lands

Green: Town of Sherborn nonprofit conservation organization or private with conservation easement

Tan: temporary protection under MA Chapter 61:

- light: 61 forestry
- medium: 61A agriculture
- dark: 61B conservation/recreation.

Source: Town of Sherborn, Town Planner

Conservation Commission (Con Com) or the Town Forest Committee. Additional town-owned open spaces include Farm Pond, the recreational fields, Pine Hill School, Ward Park, and the cemeteries. Protected open space in Sherborn has been augmented over time with purchases and easements held by national and state organizations including the Massachusetts Audubon Society, the Massachusetts Trustees of Reservations, the Upper Charles Conservation Trust, and the local Sherborn Rural Land Foundation (SRLF). Protection is not always permanent. For example SRLF may sell portions of their land in order to purchase and protect additional lands of high conservation value.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns an area of Sherborn within the Charles River Natural Valley Storage areas flood control lands, and additional conservation restrictions on private lands along the Charles are part of this project. (Details may be found in Goal III of this section and in the Sherborn 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan.)

Temporary protection under MA Chapter 61 ■ About 21 percent of Sherborn is temporarily protected by inclusion in MA Chapter 61 programs. These statutes allow towns to tax at a reduced rate forested land (Chapter 61), farmland (61A), and conservation or recreation land (61B) for parcels of six acres or more, which reduces pressure on landowners to sell or develop their open land. As of 2017, more than 2,172 acres in Sherborn are covered by this program and protected from development. Chapter 61 protection is not permanent, however: it must be renewed after ten years (for 61-forestry) or one year (61A-agriculture and 61B-recreation). It also can be cancelled at any time with payment of five years of back taxes.

Water resource protection ■ Significant open space protection is provided by Sherborn's extensive wetlands, natural brooks, drainages, and ponds. These surface water resources and their surrounding buffer areas are protected under federal and state environmental laws. To protect local ground water quality and the safety of the well water on which residents depend, Sherborn's conservation regulations extend the protected wetland buffer zones beyond state and federal requirements.

The need to protect groundwater resources is a major factor that has limited development and indirectly protected open space in all zoning regions. A few properties on the northern border of town are included in Framingham's municipal water system, but the vast majority of residents depend on wells, most of which draw water from unmapped bedrock fractures, and all residences have private septic systems for wastewater disposal and dispersion. Given current technology, septic system placement is often constrained by soils with poor filtration and high groundwater levels. The town's restrictive septic requirements were implemented due to Sherborn's critical dependence on limited drinking water resources. The Board of Health's (BOH) regulations governing wells and septic systems are intended to protect human health, but inevitably they serve to limit development in some locations. Thus, changes in septic technology and corresponding regulation changes could indirectly impact open space preservation in the future.

Protection through zoning ■ Zoning by-laws serve to maintain a relatively low density of development in Sherborn, but they must strike a balance among multiple needs including housing and economic sustainability as well as the community's character and rural heritage. Inevitably, current zoning laws have both positive and negative impacts on open space protection.

On the positive side, broad community support exists for maintaining current residential districts; lots in most areas are a minimum of two or three acres (see Overview section, MAP O.1). Agricultural uses of land are allowed in all of Sherborn's districts, including for-profit and nonprofit farms and stables, greenhouse-nurseries, and backyard animal husbandry. Such activities may take place with few restrictions on parcels of greater than five acres as well as those smaller parcels that have a required minimum setback. Zoning by-laws enhance open space by requiring subdivisions and multi-unit developments to install utility wires and cables underground, and the scenic or natural resource value of the land is considered in site plan review.

Zoning laws can also work against open space protection. As long as lot size, street frontage, and setback requirements are met, Massachusetts' current zoning law allows the subdivision of large private parcels into lots "by right" through the approval not required (ANR) mechanism. This promotes sprawl—the dispersal of single-family homes across the landscape at the cost of functional open space. Removal of the ANR provision is an important feature of the state's draft revised zoning law, but at this writing it has not yet been passed.

In an attempt to prevent sprawl and limit loss of open space by subdivision development, an Open Space Zoning Special Permit By-Law was adopted by Sherborn in 1996 to allow flexibility in the design of new subdivisions on large parcels of land. This by-law allows for somewhat smaller (one-acre) lots to be clustered, with 40 percent of the land maintained as open space, but single-acre lots still consume significant areas of open space. In addition, Sherborn's current by-laws allow conventional subdivisions to be built "by right," while open space subdivisions require a "special permit," which is a disincentive to developers. The Planning Board is currently drafting a zoning by-law revision based on current concepts of low-impact development (LID), which recommend close clustering of homes to leave the majority of the parcel undeveloped. This approach allows for preservation of vistas and trails, connected woodlands and fields, and the water filtration capacity of natural vegetation (Mass Audubon 2014, 14).

In summary, Sherborn's natural resources and diverse, predominantly forested landscape merit prudent stewardship. By comparison to other towns in our region we are natural resources rich, yet our forests and open spaces are finite, irreplaceable, and threatened by development pressures and environmental stresses. While some future growth and development are inevitable, zoning by-laws and other regulations must be periodically re-examined to ensure that they are compatible with protection of Sherborn's natural resources and historic agricultural and rural character. This section of the Master Plan provides a roadmap for achieving our natural resource and open space goals.

GOAL I ► Maintain the long-term quality and quantity of Sherborn's water resources



Sherborn wetland

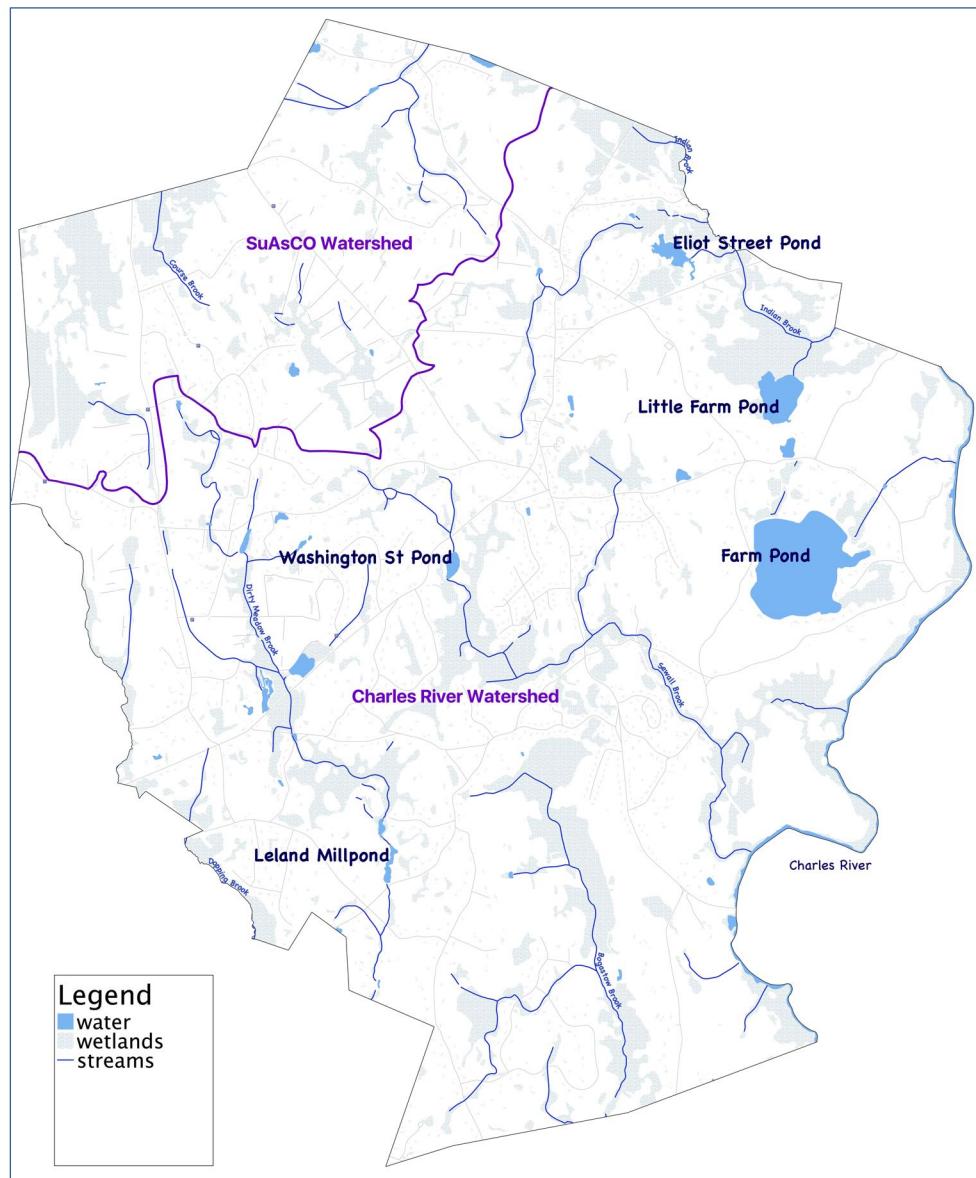
Source: R. Novak

Importance of Water Resources

The town's groundwater resources are the only source of water for almost all Sherborn residents, businesses, farms, and public facilities. Our near-total dependence on wells makes protection of water quality and quantity crucial to residents' health as well as the economic development and sustainability of the town. Sherborn is also entirely dependent on private subsurface disposal (septic) systems for treating wastewater. Thus there is a critical relationship between the design and placement of septic systems and well-water quality. The town's more restrictive septic requirements were implemented because of Sherborn's critical dependence on limited drinking water resources.

Over the past few decades the town has sponsored three major studies to examine and document Sherborn's water resources. In 1989, Lycott Environmental Research, Inc., completed *Water Resources Investigation: Town of Sherborn* (Lycott 1989). In 2003, the Sherborn Groundwater Protection Committee engaged

Woodard and Curran, Inc., to produce the detailed *Town of Sherborn Groundwater Protection Study*, a benchmark resource that remains valuable today (Woodard and Curran 2003). Most recently, the Farm Pond Advisory Committee sponsored the *Development of Farm Pond Management Plan*, a 2015 study prepared by Fay, Spofford and Thorndike (Fay, Spofford and Thorndike 2015). Together, these thoughtful studies describe in detail the underlying hydrogeology and land attributes that must be considered if we are to protect Sherborn's water supply for the future.



MAP N.3 — Ponds, brooks, and watersheds

Source: Mass GIS

The Woodard and Curran study describes how the patterns of water resources in Sherborn were established during the retreat of glaciers some 10 thousand years ago. Glacial retreat left stream valleys on the east and west flanks of town with water-permeable sand and gravel deposits that recharge underlying high-yield aquifers. In contrast, the central area of town is generally higher in elevation and perches atop shallow bedrock coated with compact soils that limit the infiltration and storage of groundwater. As a result, precipitation in the town center tends to move toward the flanks and then out of town. The wetlands in the central area are evidence of groundwater collected on dense soils and bedrock rather than underlying aquifers. These hydrogeological features explain many of the challenges in septic system placement in Sherborn: very rapid water “percolation” rates result in incomplete removal of contaminants, while very dense soils impede filtration, and shallow bedrock traps groundwater close to the surface.

Surface Water

⁷Sherborn lies within the Charles River Watershed and includes large bodies of surface water: the 125-acre Farm Pond (MAP N.4), the 23.8-acre Little Farm Pond and the Charles River itself, which forms the town's border with Medfield and Dover. Several brooks including Dopping Brook, Bogastow Brook, Dirty Meadow Brook, Sewall Brook, and Indian Brook drain groundwater into the Charles River.

The quality and clarity of the water in Farm Pond is exceptional by any standard, in contrast to the many degraded ponds and lakes in the upper Charles River basin. This is due in part to the natural protection of its forested and rather small (409.5 acres) contributing watershed. Based on its pristine water quality, Farm Pond could qualify as an Outstanding Resource Water (ORW), a designation conferred on certain water resources by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

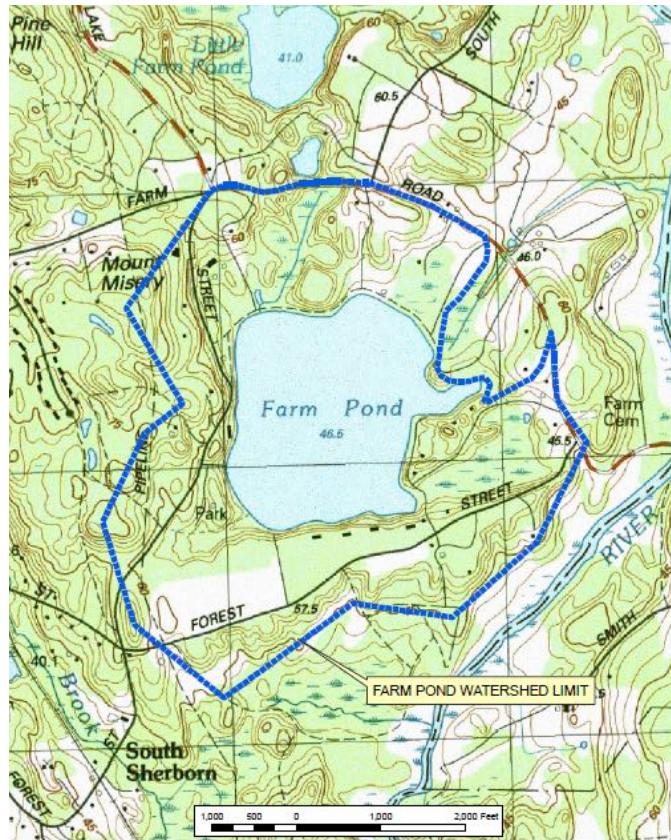
Historically, Farm Pond served as a local supply of drinking water and ice. It is valuable as a potential water source, a scenic gem, and a center of recreation activities. The Town of Sherborn maintains a beach, and the Sherborn Yacht Club, a private organization, supports sailing and boating activities.

Several smaller ponds dot the Sherborn landscape, such as Little Farm Pond, Ward Park Pond, and Lower and Upper Mill Ponds. A considerable portion (about 20 percent) of Sherborn is wetland, and close to two-thirds of this area is forested. Large wetland areas include those along the Charles River, various brooks, and the Broadmoor/Audubon area near Little Farm Pond. At this time, nine vernal pools in Sherborn have been certified by the state (see MAP N.7), but estimates set the total at close to one hundred.

Critical Water Resource Issues

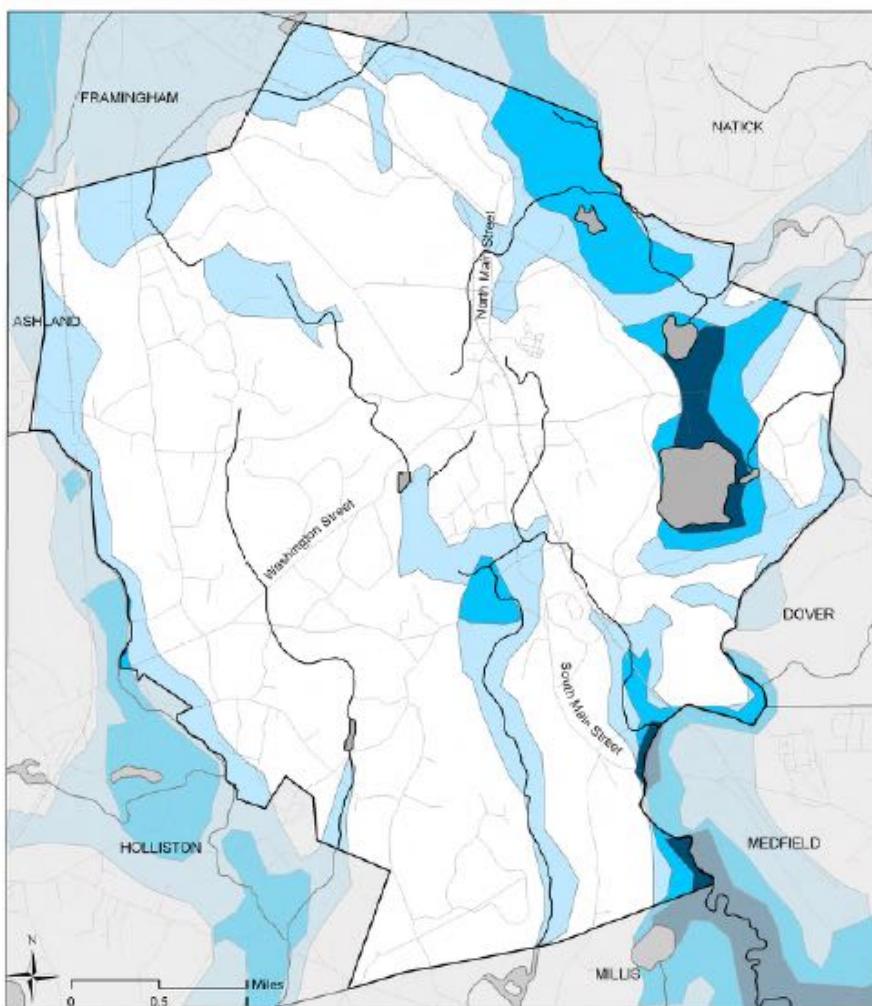
The studies by both Lycott (1989) and Woodard & Curran (2003) concluded that Sherborn's aquifers are not sufficient to provide a town-wide water system for the whole population. Most private wells in Sherborn are deep in the bedrock, drawing water from unmapped bedrock fractures and crevasses at various depths (MAP N.5). The Woodard and Curran report summarizes the challenges to Sherborn's water supply:

Sherborn is not rich in water resources because it lacks through-going aquifer systems, such as exist in Natick with the Sudbury and Lake Cochituate systems and in the Charles River system in the south



MAP N.4 — Farm Pond watershed

Source: Fay, Spofford and Thorndike 2015



MAP N.5 — Aquifers (blue) and their potential yields, from high (dark blue) to low (light blue)

Source: Town of Sherborn 2007; adapted from Woodard and Curran, 2003

near town lines are documented sources of toxic pollutants: the former General Chemical Company in Framingham and Cadillac Paint Company in Ashland.

Sherborn's groundwater quality and well or aquifer recharge capacity may also be compromised by construction of dense, multi-unit housing developments unless they are carefully placed and designed to prevent unsafe impact on water resources. This will require proactive planning, provision of adequate resources for the Con Com and BOH, and more detailed information about Sherborn's water resources.

The Town Center area of Sherborn has significant water needs, but it is not near a high-yield aquifer. Since the passage of MassDEP Title V regulations twenty years ago, it has been clear that properties within the town center (businesses, residences, public buildings, and churches) do not meet current regulations for well and septic system placement. These issues are addressed in the Town Center section of this Master Plan.

of town. The lack of readily available high yielding aquifers within the Town . . . makes the entire town a “working aquifer” of individual private wells for its predominantly residential population. The widely dispersed private water withdrawal points across Sherborn complicates the issue of groundwater protection. (Woodard and Curran 2003)

The report also warns that even “benign” residential and business septic systems can endanger the water supply. Other potential contaminants may come from roadways, rail lines, power lines and pipelines. Groundwater from densely developed surrounding towns moves freely across town borders, making Sherborn uniquely vulnerable to sources of pollution that are beyond our immediate control. For example, as of this writing two major MassDEP sites

Summary of Challenges

- Sherborn is totally dependent on groundwater resources. Our water resources are vulnerable to existing and future septic waste and other contaminants from human activity including large housing developments.
- Sherborn is potentially at risk from pollution from contaminated sites in neighboring, densely developed towns via shared aquifers and unmapped bedrock flows.
- The town lacks the hydrologic data needed to assess the impact on water resources of proposed high-density developments.
- No policy is in place to assess the quality and quantity of water from private wells.
- No comprehensive system is in place to monitor regularly the contaminants in surface water, aquifers, and wetlands.

Recommendations

A. *Compile existing information on all Sherborn's water resources and track changes over time.*

1. Compile and maintain an electronic database of public and voluntary private wells that includes data on water quality and quantity.
2. Use the database to generate a town-wide GIS map showing well locations, depths, and yields.
3. Use the information to assess the impact of short- and long-term threats including high-density development and climate change.

B. *Strengthen Sherborn's readiness to respond to potential or actual threats to water resources including drought and pollution, and to mount effective actions.*

1. Re-establish an active Groundwater Protection Committee to lead implementation of this recommendation.
2. Create and implement a regular testing program to monitor the quality and quantity of both shared and private water resources; document changes over time.
3. Promote and facilitate voluntary testing of private well water by residents.
 - Offer town-funded water testing by the BOH agent to residents whose wells are nearest to potential sources of pollutants.
 - Adopt and distribute water-testing guidelines for private wells.
 - Encourage reporting test results to the town for comprehensive monitoring.

4. Regularly monitor the water quality of Sherborn creeks and brooks, the Sherborn segment of the Charles River, Farm Pond, and all of our aquifers in collaboration with appropriate town committees, regional organizations, and state agencies.
5. Establish frequent, focused monitoring of aquifers and groundwater at the town borders and in areas adjacent to potential sources of pollution in neighboring towns; work with these towns to identify potential sources of aquifer and groundwater contamination.
6. Partner with active groups in adjacent towns to raise awareness and advocate for solutions to serious threats to water resources at the regional and state levels, including the Mass DEP and the EPA.
 - Continue to maintain active communication with adjacent town's governments and citizen groups regarding specific sources of pollution that threaten Sherborn's groundwater resources. (e.g., General Chemical in Framingham)
 - Provide input to the Select Board (formerly Board of Selectmen) and BOH as they work with officials in neighboring towns toward the goal of permanent protection of the aquifers that straddle town lines.
7. Continue to maintain working relationships with federal, state, and regional authorities concerned with water resources, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mass DEP, SouthWest Area Planning Committee (SWAP) and Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), SuAsCo Watershed Community Council, and the Charles River Watershed Association to ensure that Sherborn's concerns are represented effectively to relevant state/regional agencies.

C. *Ensure that water protection and conservation practices in Sherborn provide the best possible protection of shared water resources based on the best available technology economically achievable and best available scientific evidence.*

1. Support the efforts of the BOH and Con Com for staying current and obtaining needed information; for example by:
 - hiring consultants;
 - writing grant applications; and
 - attending conferences.
2. Ensure that our current regulations and practices support Sherborn's ability to protect its water resources.
 - Promote and encourage water conservation practices by all businesses, especially in the town center, golf course, farms, and other high water-usage applications.
 - Promote water conservation practices, such as water collection and storage, and encourage all private citizens to observe them.
 - Review water-protection and conservation practices at town facilities and on town-owned land, including roads, schools, the transfer station, the Highway Department's yard, etc.;

work with town officials to implement needed changes through education and/or enforcement.

3. Improve storm-water management town-wide, making Sherborn a regional leader in implementing the EPA's current Storm Water Management Plan.
4. Minimize salt use on Sherborn roads.
 - Use environmentally friendly alternatives that can be collected and reused.
 - Continue to support employment of best practices by Sherborn's Community Maintenance and Development Department (CM&D).

D. *Plan for the long-term sustainability of these resources by researching, evaluating, and when appropriate, adopting new approaches to water conservation and protection.*

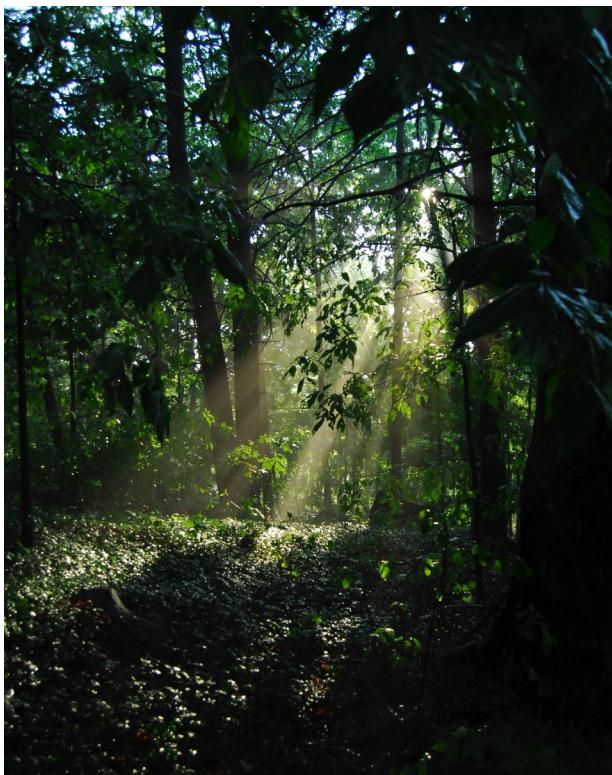
1. Given the long-term vision of Sherborn as a sustainable, ecologically and environmentally unique community, identify and address future risks to its water resources.
2. Charge the Groundwater Protection Committee with keeping abreast of new technological developments and approaches to water protection and conservation and evaluating their applicability to Sherborn, for example:
 - composting toilets;
 - gray-water systems; and
 - other natural and mechanically assisted systems.
3. Strictly protect identified aquifers through strong regulation and conservation practices.
 - Work with neighboring towns to formulate shared regulations that permanently protect the aquifers straddling town lines.
 - Advance an aquifer-protection overlay district in Sherborn to safeguard highest-yield aquifers, such as the one adjacent to Farm Pond. (See Town of Sherborn 2007; Fay, Spofford and Thorndike 2015)
 - Adapt regulations as appropriate for aquifer-overlay districts, if scientifically justified.
 - Facilitate donation to the town, acquisition by the town, or permanent protection of privately owned, nonbuildable wetlands, buildable recharge areas, and critical brook watersheds.
4. Strictly protect the Farm Pond Watershed.
 - Have the state designate this watershed as an ORW.
 - Implement the 2015 Farm Pond Management Plan.
 - Routinely inform Farm Pond abutters that Con Com approval is mandatory before new lawn areas or other alterations are allowed within 50 feet of the water's edge, thus allowing filtering to occur before fertilizer can reach the pond. Enforce compliance but offer rewards, such as assistance in restoring the buffer zone, for observing these regulations.

- Support efforts by the Farm Pond Advisory Committee to educate abutters about the importance to the town of the Farm Pond Watershed and its significance as a “sole source aquifer.”
- 5. Develop and promote LID zoning by-laws to protect those areas that are most important for the recharge and protection of groundwater.
 - Establish limits on maximum coverage by impervious surfaces that will become applicable to new construction or driveway expansion.
 - Promote LID building and landscaping practices, such as maximizing natural vegetation and limiting lawns.
- 6. Develop large-construction-specific regulations to protect the quality and quantity of groundwater resources.
 - Evaluate the need for new regulations intended to reduce groundwater pollution at large commercial and residential developments.
 - Develop specific strategies and regulations to control impact of dense development construction on water resources.

E. *Develop an ongoing educational and outreach program that promotes practices that are protective of the groundwater and surface-water supply.*

1. Develop education and outreach programs for private homeowners, municipal officials, and business owners on well-water protection, septic system maintenance, water conservation, storm-water-runoff control, environmentally conscious lawn care, and use and disposal of pesticides, petroleum, and automotive products.
2. Partner with regional schools to provide options for students’ science or community service projects that contribute to monitoring and protecting Sherborn’s water resources.
3. On the town website, include links to interactive and informative maps being developed by the state to protect water resources including aquifers, brooks, and intermittent streams and their watersheds; wetlands; small ponds and other major groundwater-recharge areas; vernal pools; and the Farm Pond and Charles River watersheds.
4. Use these maps to engage the community and schools in water protection and conservation.

GOAL II ► Protect Sherborn's forests and overall biodiversity



Sherborn Town Forest

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

important component of the town's infrastructure. As an example of climate improvements, in summer one appreciates the cleaner, cooler air when traveling into Sherborn from more densely developed surrounding towns. The significant cooling effect of the forested landscape and tree-shaded roads in Sherborn was documented by measurements of land surface temperatures in eastern Massachusetts on a hot August day (MAP N.6).

Studies have shown that larger areas of contiguous forests are most resilient, but smaller forests that are interconnected by forested corridors can also be hardy. Connected ecosystems do not distinguish land ownership, thus the health of the entire forest ecosystem in Sherborn will best be maintained if sound management plans are applied to public and private lands alike. Ideally, an effective Town Forest Management Plan will serve as a model that is applied by private landowners (Wildlands & Woodlands 2013).

Forest as Municipal Infrastructure

The abundant forest cover in Sherborn is unusual in the eastern region of the commonwealth. A healthy forest is more than just trees; it's a complex system including plants and animals and the rich network of soil, insects, microbes, and fungi that support plant growth. Forests provide many essential services that are important to the health and well being of Sherborn and the region, such as:

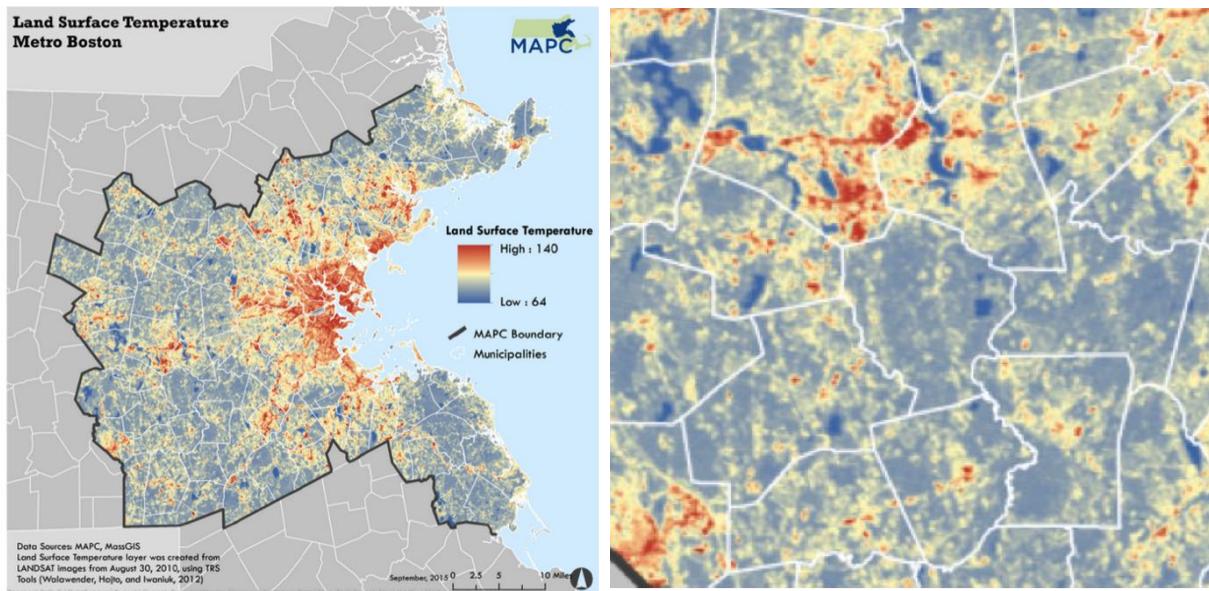
- water filtering, protection, storage and flood control;
- agriculture that supports pollinator habitats;
- firewood and nontimber products;
- climate improvement through shading and humidifying;
- carbon sequestration; and
- recreational resources for health and well being.

Because forests are important for the maintenance of groundwater supplies and climate control, Sherborn's forests should be considered an



Hawk at Abbey Road

Source: R. Murchison



MAP N.6 — *Land surface temperatures, Metro Boston, August 2010. The white lines indicate town borders; Sherborn is at the center of the photograph on the right.*

Source: MAPC

Wildlife, Biodiversity and Environmental Resilience

Sherborn's wetlands, waterways, uplands, fields, and forests provide habitat for numerous plant and animal species, some of which are rare or endangered. This wealth of plant and animal species not only enriches our recreational enjoyment, it is the foundation of biodiversity. A biodiverse habitat is resilient. It is better prepared to withstand damage during extreme weather and as a result of human impacts. It is also less susceptible to invasive species because its available niches are filled with native organisms, which are best suited to resisting invasion by nonnative plants, insects, and pathogenic micro-organisms. A biodiverse landscape also supports insect pollinators that, in turn, support plant health and the success of wildlife and agriculture.

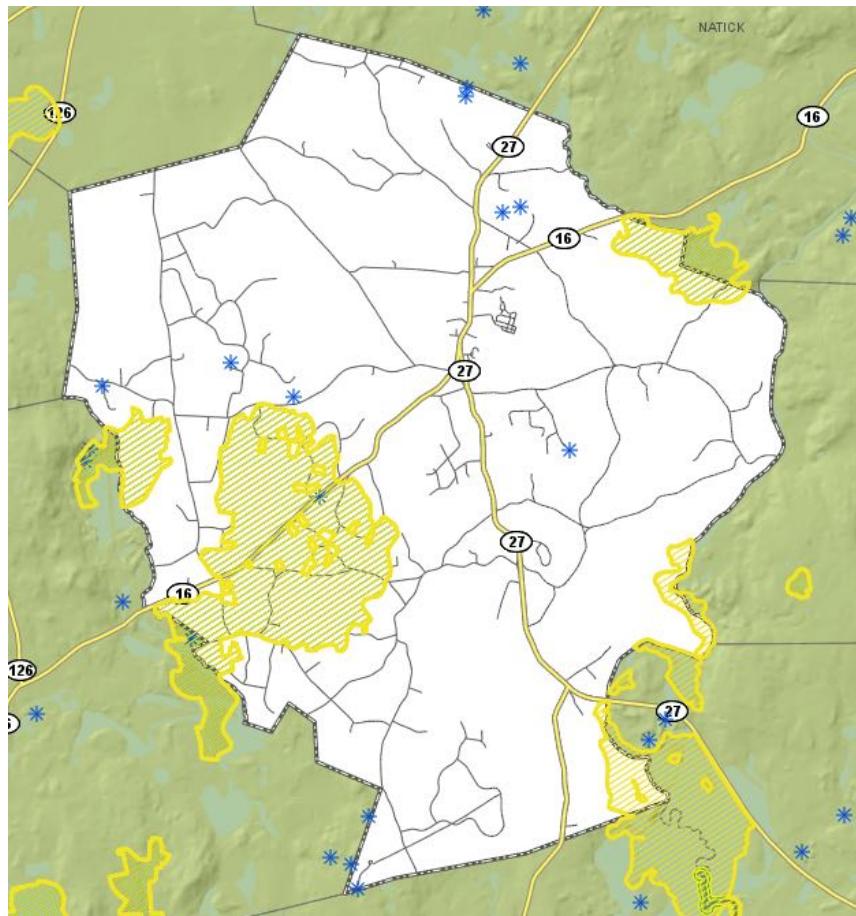
In Massachusetts, computer mapping resources have provided towns like Sherborn with valuable tools for visualizing and evaluating forest resilience and wildlife habitat. For example, for each municipality in the Commonwealth, the State of Massachusetts maintains Priority and Estimated Habitat maps, each compiled based on documented records of rare species, various spatial layers, and aerial photographs (MAP N.7).

The maps also play a regulatory role as they are used for screening projects and activities that may impact state-listed rare species and their habitats. Projects such as new housing developments located in such areas require review by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP).

More recently, additional mapping resources have been developed, some of which are enumerated in the box "Environmental mapping resources and links," which follows.

Maintenance of Forests and Biodiversity

Public protected land under the management of Sherborn's Conservation Commission and Town Forest Committee covers approximately 1,381 acres, and it is predominantly forested. Until very recently, no formal management plans existed for any public forests within town boundaries. In 2012 and 2014, however, a licensed professional forester developed a forest stewardship plan for approximately 365 acres of these public forests. These plans adopt an all-age forest management approach, which develops varying age classes within forested stands, thus improving long-term forest health, productivity, habitat value, and biodiversity. In 2014, a team of students from the Conway School of Landscape Design developed a management plan for Barber Reservation that includes its



MAP N.7 — Map from National Heritage and Endangered Species Program showing estimated habitat areas of rare and endangered species in Sherborn; state-certified vernal pools are indicated by blue stars.

Source: NHESP

Environmental mapping resources and links

BIOMAP 2, developed by the NHESP in conjunction with the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game and the Nature Conservancy, identifies two complementary spatial layers: Core Habitat for key species and intact ecosystems; and Critical Natural Landscapes, which are undeveloped and important for maintenance of resilience.

http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap/pdf/town_core/Sherborn.pdf

MAPPR (Mapping and Prioritizing Parcels for Resilience), developed by Mass Audubon in partnership with the Nature Conservancy and LandVest, combines data from BioMap 2 with many other metrics, such as forest connectivity, parcel size, and assessor parcel data from MassGIS. MAPPR identifies specific parcels that, if protected, could contribute the most to achieving the town's land protection goals. www.massaudubon.org/MAPPR

NHESP www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/regulatory-review/regulatory-maps-priority-and-estimated-habitats/

forested areas. The Conway plan serves as a model in that it balances all the interests served by the reservation: wildlife, recreation, and the utility companies whose easements cross the parcel in several directions. These plans are a step in the right direction, but more is needed.

The role of Sherborn's forested landscape in climate control and water resource protection will become increasingly important as the earth's climate warms. We need to appreciate and understand this complex resource as a basis for decision-making in the future.

Summary of Challenges

- Much of the remaining ecologically valuable land in Sherborn is privately owned and not protected from fragmentation and loss of forest cover and wildlife habitat.
- Most residents do not have a clear understanding of the value of town's forested lands for mitigating climate change and enhancing property values.
- Development plans and land use decisions by private landowners are generally made without regard to preserving the natural corridors important for ecosystem health. This results in forest and habitat fragmentation and loss of resilience.
- We lack a town-wide, coordinated natural resource management plan that includes both private and public lands and that is coordinated with regional planning.
- Invasive plants and insects are gaining ground across the landscape.

Recommendations

A. Know and prioritize what we have: Establish and maintain a comprehensive, accessible inventory of all forested and open land in Sherborn including information on forest composition, biodiversity, connectivity and invasive plants of greatest concern.

1. Prioritize the conservation values of town-owned and private undeveloped and forested properties.
 - Properties with permanent conservation restrictions
 - Town Forest and conservation land
 - Chapter 61 properties
 - Apply the same tools to document the conservation values of unprotected private forested properties.
2. Create a town-wide map and database that include:
 - The total area of Sherborn's natural landscapes including forest cover, meadows, etc.
 - A quantification of areas of public vs. private forest holdings
 - The description of broad forest characteristics, such as:

- approximate stand age and tree species composition;
- presence of rare species; and
- locations of vernal pools, fields, meadows, or other unique habitat types.

- Map locations of invasive plant and insect species.

B. Negotiate protection of critical undeveloped forested lands and wildlife corridors on private properties to preserve Sherborn's remaining natural landscapes and ecosystems.

1. Develop a proactive strategy for maintaining MA Chapter 61 protection and adding permanent protection to selected conservation-critical Ch. 61 properties.
 - Ensure that concerned boards and committees are kept abreast of changes in status of all Ch. 61 properties.
 - Support the Land Acquisition Committee's efforts to develop and maintain a prioritized list of Ch. 61 properties that ranks them by conservation value.
 - Develop a funding strategy and negotiate partnerships in advance, so that the town is poised to exercise its right of first refusal when critical parcels become available.
2. Work with private landowners to negotiate protection of critical natural landscapes especially those that provide forest connectivity and wildlife corridors that support biodiversity.
 - Implement an outreach program for owners of high-priority properties that informs them about conservation alternatives.
 - Establish updated open space (cluster) and low-impact housing as the preferred alternatives in all multi-dwelling developments and subdivisions.
 - Require that forest and habitat connectivity be considered in site-plan review.
 - Negotiate conservation easements on critical natural landscapes.
 - Recognize and enforce state protection of privately held land in areas designated on the NHESP map for Sherborn.

C. Lead by example: Work toward a land management plan for all public lands to maintain and improve ecosystem health, biodiversity, connectivity, and pollinator habitat.

1. Create a plan to coordinate the activities and goals of the various committees and groups concerned with ecosystem protection and health.
 - Consider creating a Land and Resources Manager position.
 - Clearly define the responsibilities and relationships of relevant committees and groups.
2. Adopt the Sherborn Land Management Task Force's guiding principles as a set of management goals and priorities for all public protected land (Davis and Tennis 2014, 1).

3. Adopt methods for forest management as described in the “Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices Manual” (MFBMPM 2013) and guidelines established by the Massachusetts Trustees of Reservations.
4. Develop a realistic plan that accommodates the periodic and routine monitoring of public forest conditions, cutting activities, and compliance with best management practices as well as oversees the spread and removal of invasive species on all Sherborn’s public forested lands.
5. Encourage the Town Forest Committee, Con Com, and members of other relevant boards to attend continuing education events that help to stay abreast of the latest research and best management practices.
6. Control and minimize the spread of invasive plants, particularly in recently disturbed forested areas and roadsides, which are highly susceptible to such colonization.
 - Invasive species should be inventoried and mapped prior to disturbance of public forests, fields, or roadsides.
 - The forester or the land manager should establish species-specific action plans prior to planned cutting or disturbances with an eye to controlling individual invasive plants.
 - Employ chemical-free control solutions whenever possible. Use mechanical, hand tool control and removal methods until proven ineffective.
 - Develop a plan for control and removal of invasive plants for public lands, rights of way, school grounds, playing fields, etc.
7. Maximize pollinator habitat on all town-owned lands and public properties.
 - Require that all new and restored landscaping on town land—including fields, schools, and public buildings—include native plantings wherever feasible.
 - Ensure that the managers of town lands are able to recognize existing pollinator habitats and know how to protect and restore them.
 - Support the efforts of the Con Com to establish guidelines for use (or nonuse) of pesticides on town lands.
 - Limit the creation of new lawns and reduce the size of existing lawns.
 - On lawns and landscaped areas, avoid use of pesticides that are threats to pollinators.
8. Develop a land management funding strategy for Recommendation C.

D. *Plan and implement public outreach strategies to promote sound forest management and protection of biodiversity and pollinator habitat on private properties, using the management of public lands as example.*

1. Encourage private owners of forests to employ sound ecosystem management approaches (as in Recommendation C, above).

- Town leaders should advertise and promote regional educational programs and existing materials that educate and encourage private landowners to apply the recommendations of the MFBMPM as well as generally sustainable land management practices.

2. Encourage landowners to minimize hardscapes and manicured-lawn areas, prioritize use of native plants in landscaping, reverse previous ecosystem damage by removing superfluous hardscapes and manicured areas, and restore natural areas.

- Engage the garden clubs to provide programs that emphasize the advantages of native plants in supporting beneficial insects and pollinators.
- Spread the word that native plantings are better adapted to local conditions and require less maintenance and water.
- Make available on the town website and advertise the wide variety of educational opportunities that are offered by regional organizations, such as the Harvard Forest, the Trustees of Reservations, and Mass Audubon, to educate Sherborn residents about biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.
- Support public programs, such as the Sherborn Forest & Trail Association's (SFTA) "Conservation Connections."
- Encourage Sherborn citizens with special expertise to offer "lifetime learning" sessions or contribute articles to local media about forested ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Work with teachers toward inclusion of local Sherborn environmental issues in the schools' science curricula. Create resources for the schools on the wildlife habitat, biodiversity, endangered species, and migration routes that exist in Sherborn.

GOAL III ► **Preserve Sherborn's rural character and scenic beauty by protecting and maintaining open space**

Open Space and Quality of Life

In opinion polls conducted over many decades, including the town-wide surveys in 1998 and 2014, residents have consistently cited the town's open space and semirural character as being among the primary reasons to live in Sherborn. As the remaining fragments of open space in surrounding towns are progressively released to development, Sherborn residents generally agree that the unspoiled landscapes, open spaces, and scenic roads of their town provide a sense of well being and connection to nature that is unique in the area. In the long term, the monetary value of this irreplaceable asset will likely increase and contribute to a town-wide rise in property values. In the short term, however, strong economic pressures work against open space preservation.



Pasture, Oldfield Drive

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

The value of open space is felt well beyond property values and economics as well as beyond the basic needs of clean water and climate control detailed in Goals I and II. Open spaces are also fundamental to the quality of life in Sherborn as they support the physical and psychological health of all residents. Sherborn's extensive trails through undeveloped, connected forests and meadows provide outdoor recreation and exercise opportunities that are important for the health of adults and healthy development of children. This goal is oriented toward open space preservation for maintenance of Sherborn's quality of life.

Significant areas of the town's land are protected from development by various mechanisms, which include municipal, state, and federal land ownership as well as easements, land trusts, and other nonprofit organizations (see MAP 2). Protection is not absolute, however. Some of these lands could be sold for other purposes that would benefit the community. Many private properties in Sherborn have temporary conservation protection under MA Chapter 61 including scenic vistas along rural roads, and they are among the jewels of Sherborn's open space. Nevertheless, these properties remain vulnerable to development.

Summary of Challenges

- Some of the most valued, scenic open space administered by the town does not have permanent conservation protection and could be used as a future source of revenue or housing.
- Many of the open spaces and scenic views that we now enjoy are on unprotected private properties, but no process has been established by which to work with key landowners toward open space protection.
- Lands registered under Chapter 61 are under temporary protection that readily can be reversed.

Recommendations

A. Protect existing conservation land and town-owned open space from development.

1. Develop and implement a plan to permanently protect strategically important open space, Town Forest and Con Com lands.
2. Rigorously enforce state requirements regarding replacement of existing protected open space with lands of comparable or greater open space and scenic value.

B. Identify and prioritize crucial parcels of privately-owned, scenic open land that contribute significantly to Sherborn's rural character.

Prioritize lands that are important for:

- linkage of outdoor recreation and open spaces valued by the community at large, such as trail connections, properties that enhance adjacent conservation land, or potential pedestrian connections to the town center; and
- scenic landscapes and viewscapes.

1. Identify high-priority private parcels through a collaborative effort involving the existing committees, organizations, and interest groups concerned with open space and conservation. These include (but are not limited to) Town of Sherborn groups, such as its Conservation Commission, Land Acquisition Committee, Land Management Task Force, Open Space Committee, and Town Forest Committee as well as nonprofit organizations, such as Sherborn Forest & Trail Association, Sherborn Rural Land Foundation, and the Upper Charles Conservation Trust..
2. Evaluate feasibility of and potential protection mechanisms for each parcel; develop an appropriate strategic plan for each, taking tax revenue implications for the town into account.
3. Maintain active communication among the Sherborn organizations (see item 1, above) to keep all participants abreast of alternative sources of funding and nonprofit-partnership strategies for land acquisition and/or protection.

C. *Protect lands identified and prioritized above, including private farms, MA Chapter 61 properties, and parcels with valued natural features, such as historic and aesthetically significant viewscapes and open space trail connections.*

1. Develop funding strategies and/or partnering mechanisms that will empower the town to exercise or transfer its right of first refusal on high-priority MA Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B lands when they become available.
2. Acquire key parcels or development rights by gift, conservation restriction, or purchase.
3. Exploit grant opportunities for acquisition and/or preservation of high-priority open space.

D. *Encourage landowners of large at-risk properties to favor development strategies that preserve scenic views, open space and trail connections.*

1. Proactively cultivate relationships with “crucial parcel” landowners and explore alternative zoning strategies that allow development consistent with Master Plan goals.
2. Inform owners of larger tracts of unprotected land about subdivision options that favor open space preservation, such as denser clustering of houses in exchange for preservation of a portion of the property as open space.
3. Revise zoning by-laws to favor:
 - open space subdivisions rather than convention subdivisions;
 - permit higher-density LIDs than currently permitted in exchange for a greater percentage of open space; and
 - site plan review criteria that value preservation of scenic viewscapes.
4. Adopt “dark skies” lighting standards as part of site plan review of all new construction.

E. Cultivate support among Sherborn's citizenry for the preservation of open space and aesthetically significant viewscapes.

1. Educate the public about the importance of protecting open space for the long-term maintenance of Sherborn's unique character, desirability, and property values.
 - Organize public programs, handouts, public relations campaigns in local papers, etc.
 - Provide links on the town's website that give access to informative maps of Sherborn's protected/unprotected open space resources and trail corridors, water resources, etc.
 - Use town-wide events, such as SFTA programs, the spring fair, grange fair, etc. as opportunities to advertise the open space resources of Sherborn.
2. Utilize existing communication tools and create new ones that will encourage the public to explore and appreciate the town's open space. (e.g., Sherborn Forest & Trail walking/equestrian/bicycle events and website content; *Sherborn Walks* by Arthur Schnure)
3. Encourage citizen volunteerism to further the enjoyment and maintenance of open space.

GOAL IV ► Formulate and implement policies that promote the retention and economic sustainability of agricultural lands

Sherborn's Agricultural Heritage

Agriculture is an integral part of Sherborn's heritage. Since its settlement in the seventeenth century, the town has been a farming community. Most of its soils were not tillable, but were appropriate for dairy farming and apple production. Apple trees grow well in Sherborn's rocky soils; indeed, by the 1890s one of the town's cider mills was advertised as the largest refined-cider mill in the world. "Champagne" cider from Sherborn was shipped as far away as Texas and even to Europe, and a railroad line was built into town to move large volumes of apples. The Dowse family has produced apples and cider here at Dowse Orchards for more than 230 years, and to this day apple picking and cider tasting are a traditional part of autumn in Sherborn. Two local dairy farms, which provided milk to the town well into the twentieth century, now are a fruit and vegetable farm and a large horse farm, respectively. These and other farms of varying sizes enhance the quality of life by providing scenic vistas and a rural atmosphere as well as fresh, locally grown agricultural products, and access to recreational horse riding opportunities.



Dowse Orchards Farm Stand

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Although few working farms remain in Sherborn, agriculture remains an important part of the town's character. Currently, it boasts six food-producing farm businesses, with a combined land area totaling about 444 acres. Several other farm businesses provide horse boarding and training. In addition to agricultural businesses, many private properties host small, noncommercial agricultural activities that contribute to Sherborn's rural atmosphere. Its residents maintain stables for horses and facilities for goats, alpacas and llamas, pigs, chickens and other fowl, and bees. Many produce fruits and vegetables in backyard gardens. Although they have not been documented or quantified formally, together these noncommercial agricultural land uses are significant.

Most residents agree that agricultural land use should be encouraged in Sherborn and that land use policies and zoning regulations should be consistent with this goal. Our current zoning by-laws support agricultural land use by allowing agronomic activities and related open space in all of Sherborn's zoning districts. Both nonprofit and for-profit farms, stables, and greenhouse-nurseries are permitted in all districts, with few restrictions on parcels of more than five acres in size. They are also allowed on parcels smaller than five acres with the caveat that farm-related buildings must have a minimum setback of 100 feet from any lot line.

The State of Massachusetts strongly supports small-scale agriculture and the economic viability of farming in the region; it has programs in place to assist with farm business planning and conservation of agricultural land. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) strongly supports continued farming in eastern Massachusetts. Its 2010

“MetroFuture” plan includes detailed recommendations for local communities to adopt farm-friendly regulations to address opposition from residential abutters, labor scarcity, limited markets, and other challenges. Sherborn has already taken measures to address such challenges, among them adoption of a “right to farm” by-law that reaffirms the preservation of agriculture as a community priority and establishment of an Agricultural Commission, which serves as a local advocate for farm operations in the community.

An economically sustainable farm requires skilled farmers, land, capital, labor, and access to markets, each of which brings its own challenges. Even with all these elements in place, however, farming's seasonal nature makes sustaining a farm in this region very difficult. Retention of land in agriculture and farm businesses is a major goal of this Master Plan. Therefore we must periodically re-examine the local policies that promote agricultural uses and businesses to consider the seasonal aspect and other challenges of farming in Sherborn.



Silverwood Farm

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Summary of Challenges

- Not all residents recognize the combined contributions to the rural atmosphere, scenic beauty, and cultural heritage of Sherborn made by commercial farms and small, private agricultural properties.
- The continuity of small family farms depends on the interest and willingness of younger generations to commit to a farming lifestyle, a path that may not be attractive or economically viable.
- It is difficult—perhaps impossible—for young people with training and interest in farming to start new agricultural businesses in Sherborn, where land is expensive and low-cost housing is almost nonexistent.
- Economic sustainability of agricultural businesses may be impeded by regulatory restrictions on uses allowed for land, opposition from abutters, and lack of labor and/or housing for it.
- When owners of agricultural land in Sherborn need to realize the potential value of their asset, sale to developers can result in the town’s losing the benefits of agricultural open space.
- Current local zoning by-laws do not permit creative development strategies that balance housing needs with preservation of agricultural land.

Recommendations

A. *Document the extent of agricultural lands and diverse agricultural activities to create a visual tool that highlights their contributions to Sherborn’s rural atmosphere and culture.*

1. Use the Massachusetts Agricultural Commission database to create a user-friendly map of agricultural properties and businesses in Sherborn, showing:
 - crop production (fruits, vegetables, trees, grains);
 - animal products (meat, wool, eggs, honey, etc.); and
 - recreation (horses, petting farms).
2. Survey and document properties with significant noncommercial, small-scale agricultural activities, such as backyard horse barns, chickens, orchards, etc.
3. Document other agriculture-related activities that contribute to residents’ health, education, and sense of community, such as:
 - community supported agriculture (CSA) ventures; and
 - riding programs.
4. Armed with this data, raise awareness agriculture’s contribution to overall property values and desirability of Sherborn as a unique community in the greater Boston region.

B. Support the long-term economic viability of Sherborn's existing agricultural businesses.

1. Ensure effective communication between the Town of Sherborn's Agricultural Commission and other town boards (e.g., Planning, Con Com, and the BOH) regarding land use matters that affect the economic sustainability of agricultural businesses. Ensure that any new by-laws and regulations take the potential impact on working farms into account.
 - Encourage the Select Board to include a representative from the Agricultural Commission when making appointments to the Con Com.
 - Institute a yearly forum of town boards and committees that focuses on issues faced by the agricultural community and its businesses.
 - Consider expansion of the Agricultural Commission membership to facilitate work on the strategies and actions proposed in this plan.
2. Consider allowing the long-term lease of selected open, nonforested public lands for agricultural purposes to strengthen economic viability of existing or new agricultural businesses while retaining these lands' other values, such as ecosystem health and resilience and open space recreation.
3. Organize an awareness campaign promoting local farms and encouraging residents to consume locally grown produce.
 - Describe and explain local farm products with publicity available in library displays, Town Office posters, and brochures available at Town Hall and other public spaces.
 - Promote the sale and use of Sherborn farm products to regional restaurants and markets.
4. Continue to highlight Sherborn's farm products and services at special events.
 - Encourage the Agricultural Commission to set up a booth at the Sherborn Library Fair to distribute information about local farms.
 - Support events—for example, Farm Days and the Grange Fair—that put the spotlight on local farms and products.
5. Given the seasonal nature of farming, encourage and allow alternative commercial and community uses of agricultural properties for economic sustainability of agricultural businesses (see Recommendation D, below).
 - Promote Sherborn as a location for filmmakers by registering the town's farms, scenic viewscapes, and historic rural landmarks with the Massachusetts Film Office.
 - Consider forming a Promotion Committee tasked with raising the profile of Sherborn's historic and scenic farms as tourist attractions.

C. Work with individual landowners to develop strategies for protecting their land and retaining its use for agriculture over the long term.

1. Educate agricultural landowners about the benefits of the Ch. 61A designation.

2. Exercise purchase rights when desirable Ch. 61A properties become available, through town funding, or through assignment of purchase rights to an appropriate conservation organization or land trust that will support its continued agricultural use.
 - Reconsider adoption of the Community Preservation Act.
 - Seek grant funding from state and other programs to leverage purchase.
3. Encourage landowners to work with local conservation organizations to place permanent conservation or agricultural restrictions on large parcels of property.
 - Assist farm landowners in identifying and communicating with appropriate nonprofit organizations.
 - If needed, assist with negotiating agreements that provide owners of agricultural land fair and adequate payment for development rights and preserve their right to sell in exchange for permanent protection of all or part of the land for agricultural use or open space.
4. Ensure that state programs designed to support agriculture are known and used by Sherborn farms; for example:
 - the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, a voluntary program that offers farmers payment in exchange for a permanent “agricultural viability” deed restriction ([APR Program](#)); and
 - the Massachusetts Farm Viability Program (FVP), which provides small grants and business consulting in exchange for temporary agricultural deed restrictions.
5. Continue discussion on potential use of transfer of development rights to allow the town to facilitate dense housing development in agreed upon, appropriate locations while preserving open lands in agricultural use.

D. *Adopt zoning by-laws, regulations, and permitting standards that promote preservation of current agricultural uses as well as allow limited development and alternative uses so that owners of agricultural lands have an economically viable alternative to sale and unrestricted development.*

1. Revise zoning by-laws to allow open space or cluster developments by right that also permanently protecting a significant portion of the land for agricultural or other open space use.
2. Working with local by-laws, explore innovative ways to preserve agricultural lands consistent with LID strategies.
3. Revise by-laws and regulations to permit secondary uses of agricultural properties, such as accessory rental housing, retail sales, agrotourism, restaurants or, subject to review and approval by relevant town boards, use for nonagricultural activities or events.
4. Explore possible revisions of by-laws and regulations that would allow farms to provide housing for farm workers and interns on site.

E. *Enhance appreciation of the history, science, and technology of farming by engaging the public, young and old.*

1. Encourage the Agricultural Commission and others to work with the local and regional school committees to provide outreach and education to students on farming practices and farm life.
2. Support efforts by the agricultural community and private initiatives to develop educational programs for all residents about the important role of farming in Sherborn, its place in regional history, and the science of sustainable farming.
3. Create community gardens.
 - Gauge the level of interest among residents, including those of multi-unit dwellings in the town center.
 - Identify potential locations on town land that would be accessible to age-restricted housing in the town center.
 - Seek information and guidance from other towns in creating and managing the gardens.

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VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn's trails and open space recreational resources will be protected and promoted as major assets of the town. Sherborn will maintain diverse recreational resources, facilities, and programs that contribute to the health and community engagement of residents of all ages.

Recreational Resources



GOALS

- I. **Open space recreation**
- II. **Recreational facilities**

Recreation in Sherborn

The extensive opportunities for recreation Sherborn offers comprise a signature feature of the town. The town's valuable asset of healthy outdoor recreation makes Sherborn unique among neighboring, densely developed towns, and it often is cited by residents as a reason they choose to live here. In general, Sherborn residents opt to live in this quiet, semirural environment and travel to nearby towns and Boston for entertainment and shopping. Despite the near absence of commercial entertainment in town, Planning Board surveys in 1998 and 2014 demonstrated that 95 percent of Sherborn's residents rated it as a "good" or an "excellent" place to live (FIG. R.1). This reflects in part the town's excellent outdoor recreational resources, but while most residents are satisfied with its open space recreation, many want to see more attention paid to the facilities for organized team sports.

Recreation in Sherborn is dominated by active outdoor exercise that includes both organized sports and independent recreational activities on trails and scenic roads. The numerous trails through our open spaces make up an extensive system that is widely distributed through the town, offering opportunities for exercise and exploration of nature at close hand, often just outside one's own door. The trail system promotes the health of residents, who use trails for hiking, bicycling, horse riding, and cross-country skiing. Even so, they are lightly traveled, and many residents are unaware of their locations, extent, and beauty. Goal I emphasizes the importance of raising awareness and promoting enjoyment of this irreplaceable resource among Sherborn residents and increasing local support for its preservation and improvement.

Sherborn's scenic roads are also popular routes for recreational bicyclists, which positions them as part of our recreational infrastructure. They are listed in cycling guides and shown on bike club route maps for eastern Massachusetts. Bicycle travel on our narrow roads can be hazardous, however, because cyclists

and drivers compete for limited space. Simply by implementing strategies and adopting guidelines proposed by the Complete Streets Program, such as adding signage, Sherborn could make minimal investments that will promote safe sharing of the road.

Sherborn's recreational fields and facilities, while not extensive, are heavily used and play an important role in the health of adults, the development of children, and



Riders in town forest

Source: to come

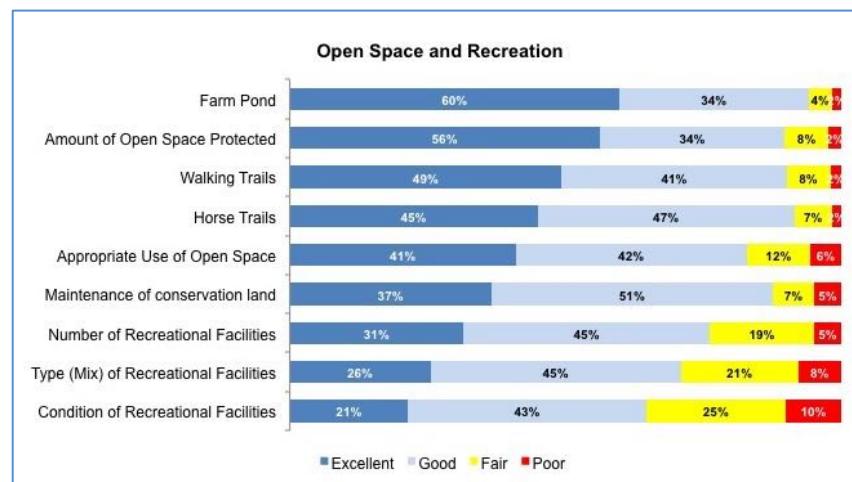


FIGURE R.1 — *Town of Sherborn Planning Board survey, 2014*

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

the sense of community of residents of all ages. The town's diverse and successful organized-recreation program is the work of the Recreation Commission, a small group of dedicated volunteers and part-time support staff that manages team sports on three town-owned recreational fields: tennis in the Town Center, swimming at Farm Pond, and yoga and meditation at several indoor locations. Through a complex system of funding, the commission manages maintenance of the town's recreational facilities and fields at modest cost to the town. Goal II summarizes the remarkable breadth and depth of these recreational programs and lays out a plan to ensure their viability and improvement in coming years.

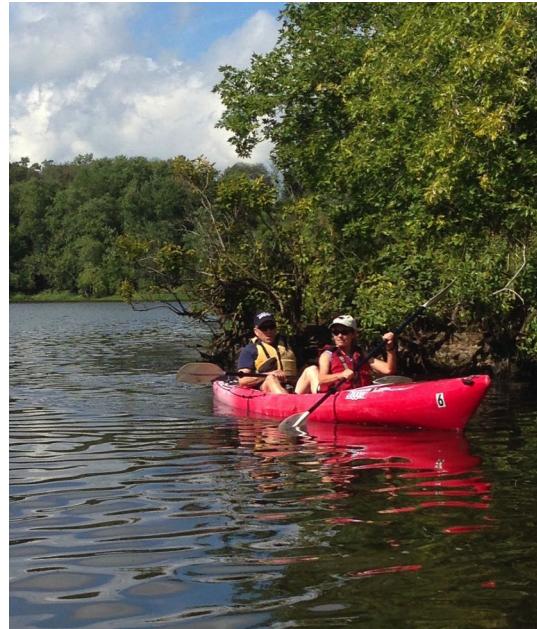
GOAL I ► Protect, improve, and expand the use of open space as a recreational resource.

Recreational Uses of Open Space

Sherborn has a wealth of open space recreational opportunities. Extensive trails through our conservation lands promote the health and well being of residents of all ages by offering opportunities for hiking, biking, horse riding, cross-country skiing, and nature exploration. Sherborn's protected lands provide residents with an enormous backyard playground fostering an active lifestyle and healthy development of children. Throughout the year, trails through Sherborn's open spaces attract nonresidents who seek to enjoy outdoor exploration and spot wildlife (MAP R.1). Farm Pond and the Charles River are beautiful, unspoiled venues for swimming and boating.

The town could enhance this resource by establishing new trail connections between existing open space parcels. For many years, trail enthusiasts have envisioned linking together Sherborn's own "Emerald Necklace"—a continuous band of interconnected trails encircling the town and connecting to a recreation-friendly Town Center via trail links. Extension of the existing trail network through easements or other conservation mechanisms will depend on strong public support enhanced by first-hand trail experiences. Many residents are unaware of the extent of our trails, however, and know neither how to find or access them nor methods for their navigation. To help address this issue the Sherborn Forest & Trail Association (SFTA) is producing a revised edition of the 1992 publication *Sherborn Walks*. The new book will include descriptions of 27 walks through the protected open spaces in town, including detailed color trail maps and information about landmarks and local flora and fauna. It will be available in both digital and print formats.

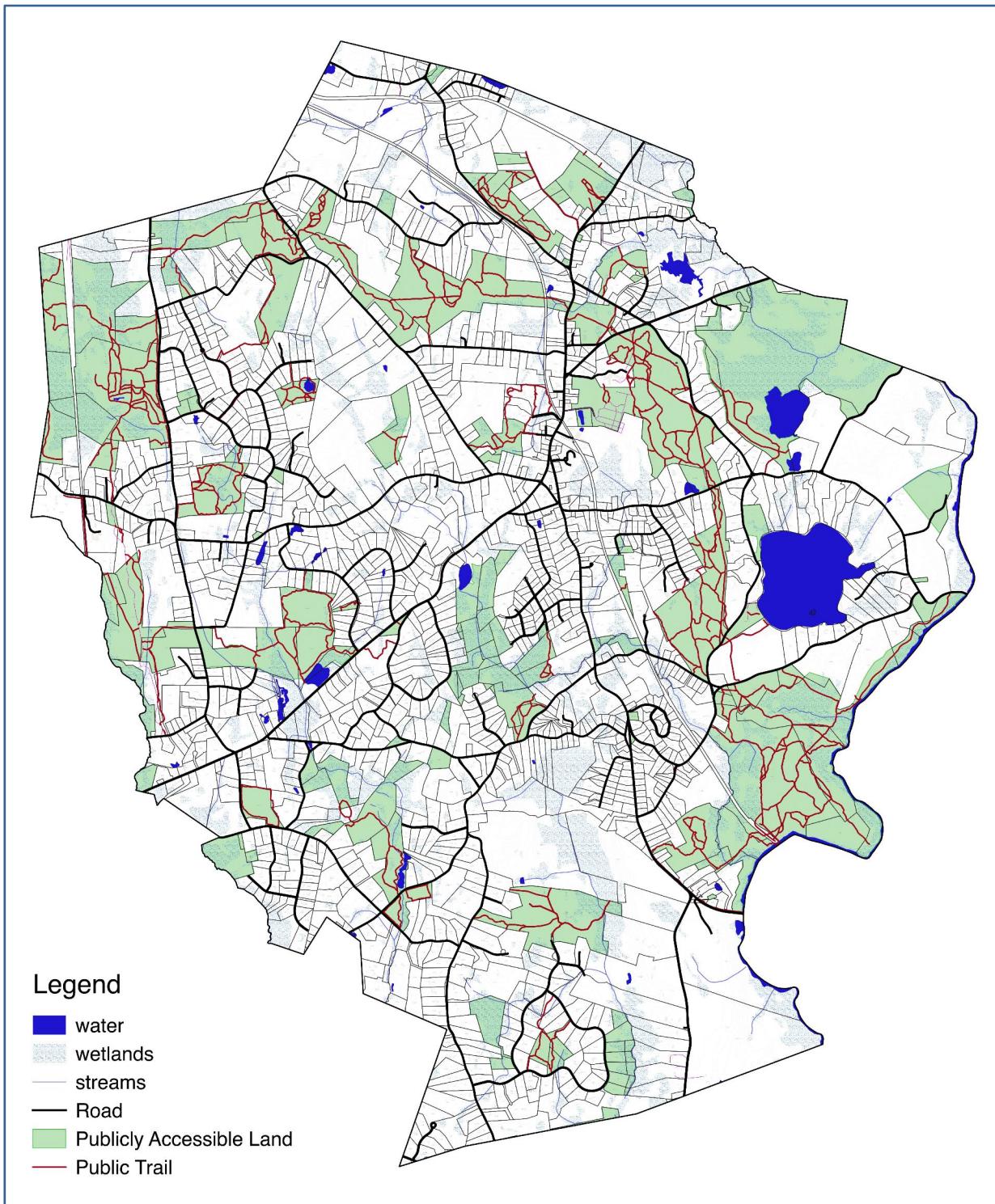
Sherborn's open space recreational resources will increase in value as the region loses open space to development. Given current attention to the health benefits of nonmotorized transportation and recreation, the time is right for Sherborn to improve open space and trail connections with neighboring communities. For example, a beautiful 11-mile segment of the Bay Circuit Trail passes through the forests of Sherborn



Canoeing on the Charles River

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

but its connections at town borders with Ashland and Medfield are difficult and unsafe. Sherborn and the region would also benefit from improvement of its segment of the Upper Charles Rail Trail, a bike trail now open from Sherborn to Milford.



Source: Seth Molloy, Sherborn Forest & Trail Association

Summary of Challenges

- Existing town trails are lightly traveled, and many are unknown to most residents.
- Many public open space parcels lack trail connections to each other and to the Town Center.
- Limited or no parking is available at most trailheads, few trailheads are marked with road signs, and most have no posted trail maps.
- Connectors from Sherborn's trails to those in adjacent communities are poor. The Bay Circuit Trail from Sherborn to both Ashland and Medfield requires some travel on busy, dangerous roads.

Recommendations

A. *Improve trail connections within Sherborn and with adjacent towns.*

1. Expand connectors from existing trails into neighborhoods by negotiating trail access agreements that permit passage through private lands.
 - Work toward completion of the Loop Trail—a continuous loop around Sherborn that will connect much of its open space.
 - Connect neighborhoods via trails to Town Center by completion of inner “spoke” connections from peripheral trail systems to the center of town.
 - Ensure that new trails are placed in ways that protect environmental resources including but not limited to wetlands, wetland buffer zones, and wildlife corridors.
2. Improve Bay Circuit Trail connections from Sherborn to Ashland and Medfield so that users no longer need to travel along busy roads.
 - Negotiate agreements with railroad companies and trail-access agreements with private landowners to complete safe connections.
 - Clearly mark rail line's deeded crossing at Rocky Narrows.
3. Extend and improve the Sherborn portion of the Upper Charles Rail Trail to establish a connection to the Bay Circuit Trail in the Barber Reservation.
4. Explore the feasibility of a “Rail with Trail”—a trail adjacent to the active rail line to the center of town—to provide an off-street connection to the Town Center.
5. Coordinate Sherborn's *Open Space and Recreation Plan* with those of neighboring communities and regional planning and recreation groups, such as the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon), and the Trustees of Reservations.

B. *Provide safe and improved walkability along roads throughout town for the health and enjoyment of residents.*

1. Create a system of roadside trails that provide safe travel for pedestrians and bike and horseback riders along roads that lack sidewalks to improve the walkability of the entire town.

- Establish priorities for roadside trails along roads abutting public land based on safety needs and potential usage.
- Negotiate agreements with owners of private property to extend and connect roadside trails where feasible.
- Support the efforts of SFTA to obtain the requisite permissions and organize neighborhood work groups for this purpose.
- Pave selected roadside trails to provide safe routes for children on bicycles and in strollers to travel within and between neighborhoods (see below).

2. Construct additional sidewalks annually, according to a predetermined prioritization plan.

- Restore funding for proper sidewalk maintenance for safety and accessibility.
- Prioritize locations that lack sidewalk connectivity to promote safety on busy roads, for example between Town Center and Farm Pond.
- Include paving and maintenance of selected roadside trails in town-wide sidewalk plan.
- Where sidewalks are not feasible, adjust lateral lane lines to permit widening shoulders and narrowing travel lanes, thus reducing vehicle speeds without widening paved roads.

C. *Create new easements and walkways to link Sherborn's trail system to Town Center trailheads and businesses.*

(Also see Goal IV in TOWN CENTER section.)

1. Create a multi-use trail along the railroad tracks, connecting the Bay Circuit Trail to the Town Center.
2. Extend pedestrian walkways and bike lanes to interconnect trail systems and neighborhoods with gathering places in Town Center.
 - Negotiate purchase or other kinds of agreements to provide new trail connections to Town Center businesses, churches, library, etc.
 - Build a walkway on the east side of Main Street from Village Way north to Pine Hill Lane and south to Pilgrim Church.
 - Build Town Center Trail—an off-street trail that runs behind buildings and connects Pine Hill School to Farm Road.
3. Wherever possible, connect unpaved walkways and roadside trails to create links from Town Center to adjacent neighborhoods and trail systems.
4. Add bike lanes and shared lanes for cyclists on main roads that connect to gathering places in Town Center.

(Also see CIRCULATION section.)

D. Promote public awareness and usage of, and support for existing open space and trail systems.

1. Support efforts to improve trail use and accessibility with upgraded signage and maps.
 - Establish and maintain online information and maps accessible to all potential trail users.
 - Maintain existing kiosks and establish additional ones at key trailheads.
 - Update and maintain current informational content in trailhead kiosks.
 - Where appropriate, provide signage indicating publicly accessible land.
2. Create easily visible, small-scale, unpaved parking areas at selected trailheads.
3. Improve selected trails to better accommodate a broader range of Sherborn residents, in particular those who are elderly and/or physically challenged. This effort is especially important near the Town Center, from which connections to 55+ developments will be improved.
4. Organize and support activities and events that promote the trails and encourage local and regional residents to use our open space.
 - Organize and encourage a variety of open space-oriented events to raise funds for trail maintenance.
 - Encourage incorporating the use of open space and trails into organized recreational programs.
 - Organize a series of “trail discovery” events that introduce specific trails to residents, especially newcomers.
5. Organize and support public trail workdays for trail maintenance and improvement.
 - Extend the trail volunteer network by partnering SFTA with other community organizations such as the Boy/Girl Scouts, garden clubs, bike clubs, etc.
 - Develop an advertising and outreach strategy that enlists volunteers and builds the constituency for open space and trails.
 - Enlist the collaboration of the town’s Department of Public Works (DPW) to facilitate volunteer efforts.

E. Improve and support management of existing publicly accessible open space resources including trail systems and Farm Pond waterfront.

1. Establish and maintain effective communication and collaboration among the town committees and organizations concerned with maintaining Sherborn’s open spaces and trail system as a recreational resource.
 - Organize an annual meeting of local organizations and others interested and/or responsible for the open space recreational resources of the town, including the:
Conservation Commission (Con Com); Farm Pond Advisory Committee (FPAC); Land Acquisition Committee; Open Space Committee; Recreation Commission; SFTA; Sherborn Rural Land Foundation (SRLF); Town Forest Committee.

Conservation Commission (Con Com); Farm Pond Advisory Committee (FPAC); Land Acquisition Committee; Open Space Committee; Recreation Commission; SFTA; Sherborn Rural Land Foundation (SRLF); Town Forest Committee.

2. Consider hiring a recreation manager to oversee the town's recreational infrastructure, including organized facilities and Farm Pond Reservation, and to support and facilitate the efforts of the Recreation Commission, Farm Pond Advisory Committee, and SFTA.
3. Establish a plan for long-term funding and management of public lands and trails.
 - Explore strategies used by other towns and implement a strategy appropriate for Sherborn.
 - Seek funding from the town for improvement of trail access points, parking areas, and informational kiosks.
 - Seek funding sources through grants, local organizations, and other sources.
4. Encourage public land and trail stewardship with local volunteers.
5. Maintain a user-friendly database for use by town officials, boards, and committees and a map of publicly accessible open space, MA Chapter 61B land designated as recreational, and other conservation-restricted properties.
 - Incorporate updated map in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (Town of Sherborn 2018).
 - Make updated maps easily available on the town website.
6. Use the Barber Reservation and other public parcels as "showcase" sites; improve and promote the trail systems on these parcels to demonstrate the value of well-maintained, well-marked trails.
7. Continue to protect Farm Pond's water quality and support current management of the public waterfront as a recreational resource for safe and healthy water-based recreation.
 - Continue to restrict use by nonresidents, guided by the FPAC's periodic review of environmental and infrastructure impacts.
 - Consider increasing the value of Farm Pond as a revenue source by collecting additional fees from out-of-town users.
8. Explore and evaluate ways to promote the Charles River as a recreational resource for Sherborn residents and visitors.

GOAL II ► Maintain and improve Sherborn's organized recreational facilities and programs.

Sports Facilities and Programs

Sherborn's organized recreational programs are heavily subscribed and successful, thanks to the efforts of the elected recreation commissioners and many volunteers. The commission organizes and manages all the organized recreational programs for the town, providing a user-friendly source of information and interactive activity registration system on the [Sherborn Recreation website](#). The commission also oversees the maintenance and financial sustainability of the town's recreational facilities. This task is challenging for what essentially is a small nonprofit business run with limited income or other financial resources.

<i>Sherborn recreational facilities</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Farm Pond Beach	swimming lanes
Fessenden Fields	2 soccer fields, practice field
Jameson Fields	4 baseball diamonds 3 soccer fields
Laurel Farm Fields	2 baseball diamonds 6 soccer fields
Pine Hill School	gym, playground
Sassamon Trace Golf Course	9-hole course
William C. Jameson Park	4 tennis courts, baseball fields
Ward J. Parks Recreation Area (Ward Park)	playground, skateboard park
Sherborn Community Center	yoga space
Unity Farm Sanctuary	yoga, meditation space

and indoor spaces at Pine Hill School and the Community Center. Youngsters have access to updated playground facilities at Ward Park on Cemetery Lane and at Pine Hill School. A private venue, Unity Farm Sanctuary, also provides indoor space for yoga.

Users fund all Recreation Commission programs, which also receive a small supplement from the municipal budget. The commission charges Sherborn residents modest user fees, and

outside groups are charged facility rental fees. Income is used to pay nonvolunteer instructors and, if needed, to pay fees for use of space (i.e., donation to Unity Farm Sanctuary; rental fee for Pine Hill Gymnasium). Programs are priced so that the commission receives a small profit, which it uses to cover any additional program costs including materials, uniforms, etc.



Ward Park playground

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board



Soccer game, Laurel Farm Field

Source: Town of Sherborn, Recreation Commission

The playing fields are used most by youth sports teams in the spring and fall. Sherborn user fees alone are not sufficient for maintenance of the playing fields, so the commission leases them to non-resident groups at an hourly rate. The commission allows early spring use in response to the needs of local teams and the need for revenue from field leases to nonresident groups, but this comes at the cost of damage to the wet, natural-grass fields. During summer and fall, Laurel Farm fields in particular suffer from heavy use, and recovery of the grass is hampered by the lack of natural irrigation.

In 2016, an excellent new playground was completed at Ward Park, thanks to the efforts of a Playground Committee of committed citizens along with more than 175 volunteers, who contributed financial support and participated in fundraising and building. Additional support was provided by the Sherborn Business Association, Sherborn Garden Club, Sherborn Fund, and Sherborn Community Center. The recently updated playground at the Pine Hill School is another resource for Sherborn's younger residents. Both are accessible to handicapped users.

Summary of challenges

- Current funding and management of recreational facilities is piecemeal; no comprehensive business and management plan is in place to fulfill the town's recreational goals.
- Staffing and funding resources for current Recreation Commission facilities and programs are inadequate for proper maintenance.
- Laurel Farm playing fields are not sustainable as currently used: they are difficult to maintain and not optimally designed for multiple uses.

Recommendations

A. Design a realistic management, personnel, business, and funding plan that can sustainably support current and future organized recreational programs and facilities.

1. Clarify and, if possible, simplify the complex system of revenue streams, funding mechanisms, and responsibilities currently in place for recreational facilities and programs.
 - Align the budget for recreation with that for town needs that cannot be self-funded.
 - Develop a clear management and communication plan to facilitate the work of boards and committees and avoid duplication of effort.
 - Provide resources when needed for evaluating outside funding proposals from businesses, private sports leagues, etc.
2. Consider hiring a recreation director to oversee the recreational resources of the town and to serve as manager for the town's organized recreation operations and facilities as well as for Farm Pond Reservation and the town's parks and trails.
 - Design a sustainable funding stream for this position through collaboration among the Select Board, Town Administrator, Recreation Commission, and FPAC.

- Clearly define and codify the funding sources and time commitments associated with these responsibilities so as to maintain the separate integrity of revenue sources and funds for Farm Pond and organized recreation and those for SFTA.
- 3. Explore possibilities of more user self-funding for certain programs and facilities.
- 4. Gauge the willingness of the town to build a regional sports facility to generate revenue to fund Sherborn's recreation programs and provide a revenue stream for the town (see Recommendation B: Laurel Farm, below).
 - Consider public-private partnership opportunities for facilities funding.
 - Weigh the costs and benefits of such partnerships and facilities in the context of the other values of the town, such as environmental conservation and rural character.

B. *Repair, maintain, and improve the recreational infrastructure at Laurel Farm to support current and future needs.*

- 1. Agree upon and implement a plan for maintaining resilient playing surfaces at Laurel Farm that will be sustainable over the long term, considering the costs and benefits of alternative options.
 - Option:* Maintain a healthy natural-grass playing surface by installing an irrigation system that includes a well, power, and an in-ground irrigation system.
 - Option:* Install a synthetic playing surface on all or part of Laurel Farm.
- 2. Adopt the Recreation Commission's plan for future redesign and renovation of Laurel Farm, and implement it in phases, as agreed upon by the town.
 - Maximize playing field surface area by relocating the parking lot.
 - Expand and diversify facilities to accommodate a wider range of uses (e.g., a designated dog park, fitness course, etc.) and users of diverse ages.
 - Improve options for spectators and other users, such as benches, picnic area.

C. *Make the Ward Park area on Cemetery Lane a central gathering place and welcome/information center for residents and users of recreational resources, both in Town Center and for town-wide trail systems.*

- 1. Assemble a Ward Park Working Group that includes representatives from the Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Playground Committee, Planning Board, DPW, and others, to make an agreed-upon plan for improvement of the Ward Park area. Among the options, consider:
 - regrading and, if needed, resurfacing the parking lot to manage storm water;
 - installing informational kiosk(s) with maps and information for walkers, cyclists, cross-country skiers, etc.;
 - enhancing the picnic area's barbecue and tables; and
 - installing composting toilets for year-round use.

(Also see TOWN CENTER section.)

2. Ensure that any proposed alterations are guided by low-impact development principles to maximize groundwater recharge, minimize storm-water runoff, and protect the park's pond.
3. Make the area near the pond a site for nature/environmental education.
 - Provide user-friendly information about the pond ecosystem and environmental aspects of the Ward Park design.
 - Use the pond area as an educational site for small children, e.g., add a pondside trail and small shoreline viewing platform that also protect its natural ecosystem.

D. *Establish and maintain effective communication and collaboration among town committees and organizations concerned with all of Sherborn's recreational resources.*

1. Maintain close collaboration between the Recreation Commission and the FPAC.
2. Explore ways to integrate organized recreational infrastructure and programs with open space recreational infrastructure, such as the trail system (e.g., trail running or cross-country skiing events).
3. Use the Recreation Commission's communication network to increase use and appreciation of the town's open space recreational resources.



VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Sherborn will continue to benefit from citizen participation in government, community resources, and social supports for all residents. The town will preserve its rich legacy of historic homes, landscapes, and stone wall-lined scenic roads and will reap the economic, educational, and cultural benefits that these historic assets provide.

Cultural Resources



GOAL

Historic preservation



Sherborn Town Hall

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Sherborn's Community Volunteer Culture

Sherborn is a welcoming town with a strong sense of community that is engendered in part by an extraordinary tradition of volunteerism. The town is governed largely by volunteer boards, commissions, and committees that are supported by a relatively small number of paid professional administrators and support staff members. The commitment of citizen-volunteers to the functioning of the town helps to engage the entire community in town affairs and to draw residents to Town Hall, the center of governance, for meetings and events. Most nights of the week Town Hall is busy with citizen meetings. It is the center of the community decision-making process and an important node of Sherborn cultural life.

While few conventional “cultural resources” are located within the town of Sherborn, its residents have access to a multitude of theaters, concert halls, and institutional resources in Boston and nearby towns. In Sherborn itself, cultural activities revolve around the schools, library, three religious institutions, two restaurants, and many homegrown organizations that enrich social and cultural life. Outdoor recreation plays a cultural role as well because many residents consider open space, trails, and Farm Pond to be important community resources.

Cultural Organizations

Some of the town's cultural organizations are integrated into its government. These include the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, Cemetery Commission, the Sherborn Library, Sherborn Council on Aging (COA), Farm Pond Advisory Committee (FPAC), and the Sherborn Arts Council. These groups' members work actively to preserve and support our culture and community. For example, the COA's professional director and staff are reinforced by a 10-member, volunteer board, appointed by the town's Select Board. The COA provides advocacy and support systems that assist seniors with maintaining and improving their independence and quality of life. A wide range of services and programs are provided to meet seniors' social, health, transportation, recreation, intellectual, and housing needs. The COA sponsors a Lifetime Learning program open to local citizens as well as those from neighboring towns. The Dover Sherborn Travel Club provides excursions to theater, concerts, museums, and occasional overnight tourism. Luncheons, exercise classes, and organized walks are among the planned activities. A voucher transportation program allows access to both local and Boston sites. A long-term goal of the COA's board is to generate support in the town for a future Senior Center, which will be a gathering place and venue for events.

Many nongovernmental, citizen-driven organizations reinforce the efforts of official town boards and committees through volunteering and fundraising. For example, the Historical Society supports a superb museum located in the lower level of Town Hall, where it is organized and maintained by an officially appointed town historian. Friends of the Library, Friends of the Council on Aging, the Sherborn Community Center Foundation, two garden clubs, and the community outreach activities of our three churches also fall under this general rubric. Active scouting programs are led by dedicated adults, and community-organized concerts, plays, lifetime-learning courses, and lectures on many topics serve to educate and entertain. The Sherborn Widows' and Orphans' Benevolent Society, founded in 1859, offers confidential assistance to those in need of material or moral support. The Sherborn Rural Land Foundation plays a leading role in environmental conservation and preservation of the town's rural heritage.

The Sherborn Forest & Trail Association (SFTA) is a good example of the active citizen-volunteer organizations that make our town a cohesive, supportive community. The SFTA celebrates and protects the beautiful open spaces of Sherborn by maintaining walking and riding trails. Led by a small group of directors, the SFTA includes dozens of member families that contribute money and effort. SFTA volunteers practice sound conservation practices as they clear and improve trails on public lands throughout town. They have sponsored canoe trips, "hunter pace" trail-riding events, picnics, walks, bicycle rides, and Conservation Connections, the biannual community party that includes an address by an environmentalist. SFTA is currently producing a revised edition of *Sherborn Walks*, which will include descriptions of 27 walks through the protected open spaces in town, all illustrated with detailed color trail maps, as it offers information about landmarks and local flora and fauna.

Cultural Infrastructure

Sherborn's oldest public building is the Sherborn Community Center, originally the Town House, which was built in 1858. This beautifully renovated and restored building is used for public and private meetings and events. In 1985 a group of concerned citizens founded the Sherborn Community Center Foundation, the mission of which is to preserve, maintain, and operate the building. The mission statement presents its purpose as, "to promote a sense of community by ensuring that the Community Center is available to and

used by Sherborn groups and organizations at minimal or no cost; and to fund, preserve, maintain, and schedule the use of this historic building.” Thanks to the vision and efforts of many volunteers who dedicate countless hours, the Sherborn Community Center continues to be a central meeting place, a historic landmark, and an extensively used community asset.

The town’s newest public building is the library. At this writing, the Sherborn Library is undergoing expansion and renovation to provide space and facilities to support its collections, resources, and cultural programs. The new enhanced library will serve as a community gathering place, a cultural destination, and a gateway to ideas for all ages. A children’s wing, public meeting room, and both indoor and outdoor quiet reading spaces are being included. It will provide an opportunity to explore the world through varied modes of communication, both old and new.

The project’s financing reflects the commitment of the entire community to its library: \$3.6 million from the state, \$3.8 million from private gifts, and \$1 million voted by Town Meeting. The project is slated for completion by late 2018. Until the reopening of the vibrant new library, it operates from temporary quarters on the first floor “Old Schoolroom” in the 1858 Town House—the building that served as the town’s library from 1860 to 1914. The library’s nine elected trustees stated the board’s intention for this major project in the 2001 Town of Sherborn General Plan, and now, as a new Master Plan is completed, the Board of Trustees has accomplished this goal.

Sherborn Town Center hosts three houses of worship—St. Theresa Parish, Pilgrim Church, and the Unitarian Universalist Church—each of which plays a significant role in the town’s social and civic structure. They allow use of their resources and buildings for public services ranging from COA functions, exercise classes, youth scouting programs, town-wide immunization clinics, and nursery schools. The Unitarian Church runs a popular “Good as New” thrift shop.

A common goal of many of the Town Center cultural organizations is an improved walking and parking infrastructure for the Community Campus. The Town Hall, Town House, library, police station, three churches, and two senior-housing compounds are closely grouped near the intersections of Routes 16 and 27 and of Sanger and Sawin Streets, but walking among them can be challenging. Most meetings and many activities of the various cultural groups occur in these buildings. A detailed discussion of this is found in the TOWN CENTER and CIRCULATION sections of this document.



The Town House, now the Sherborn Community Center

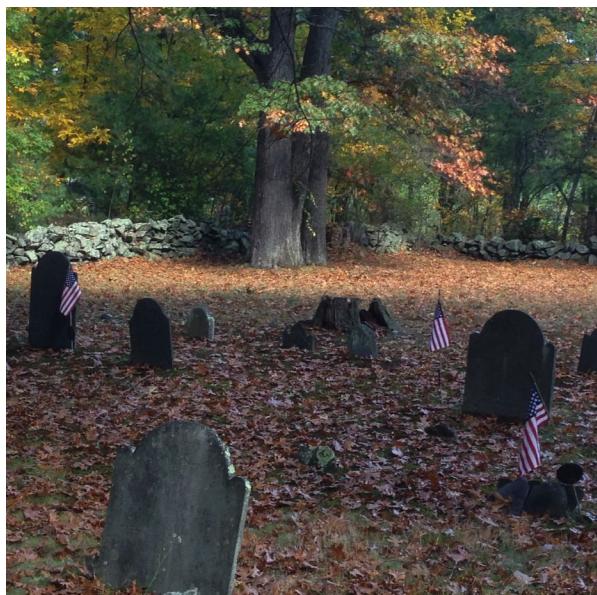
Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

Historic Assets as a Cultural Resource

The history of our community, which is reflected in its historic structures and settlement patterns, is a cultural resource that deserves the town's active protection. Sherborn's many historic assets are visual reminders of our history. They include well-preserved, architecturally significant homes, public buildings, and churches in the Town Center as well as historic cemeteries and landscapes, antique farmhouses, and the stone walls that line scenic roads and meander through fields and forests. Many remain in their original settings overlooking fields and rural vistas. Examples represent many periods of Sherborn's history from its settlement in the 1600s through the early twentieth century, and they demonstrate the diversity of architectural styles representative of those periods.

Historic preservation is a community goal involving difficult challenges and requiring continuous effort and planning. Thus this section of the Master Plan focuses on one single, overarching goal.

GOAL I ► Promote preservation of historic assets.



Perry Street Burying Ground

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

established by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Its purpose is to document buildings, landscapes, and monuments of historic, architectural, or archeological significance. Massachusetts state law charges local historical commissions with maintenance of such documentation and use of the information to assist and advise the town's planning bodies. As of this writing, Sherborn's Historic Assets Survey contains 284 properties that date from 1674 to 1960, but this number continues to diminish as historic

houses are replaced by new construction. In itself, Historic Assets Survey designation does not provide legal protection of a site, however, and since 1999 more than 20 historic buildings once

Sherborn's Historic Assets

Sherborn has eight historic "burying grounds," or cemeteries, that contribute to the historic character of the town. The most ancient of these, Old South Burying Ground on the west bank of the Charles River, dates from the early settlement of Boggestow Farms before 1660. (Information about individual historic graves and their occupants is available on line at www.findagrave.org.) Two state-owned cemeteries adjacent to the historic burying ground on Perry Street hold the remains of unclaimed female prisoners and their young children who died early in the twentieth century while incarcerated at the Sherborn Reformatory for Women.

The town's Historic Assets Survey was commissioned by the Sherborn Historical Commission in 1981 (updated in 1999) by professional historians following guidelines



Historic-home marker

Source: Town of Sherborn, Planning Board

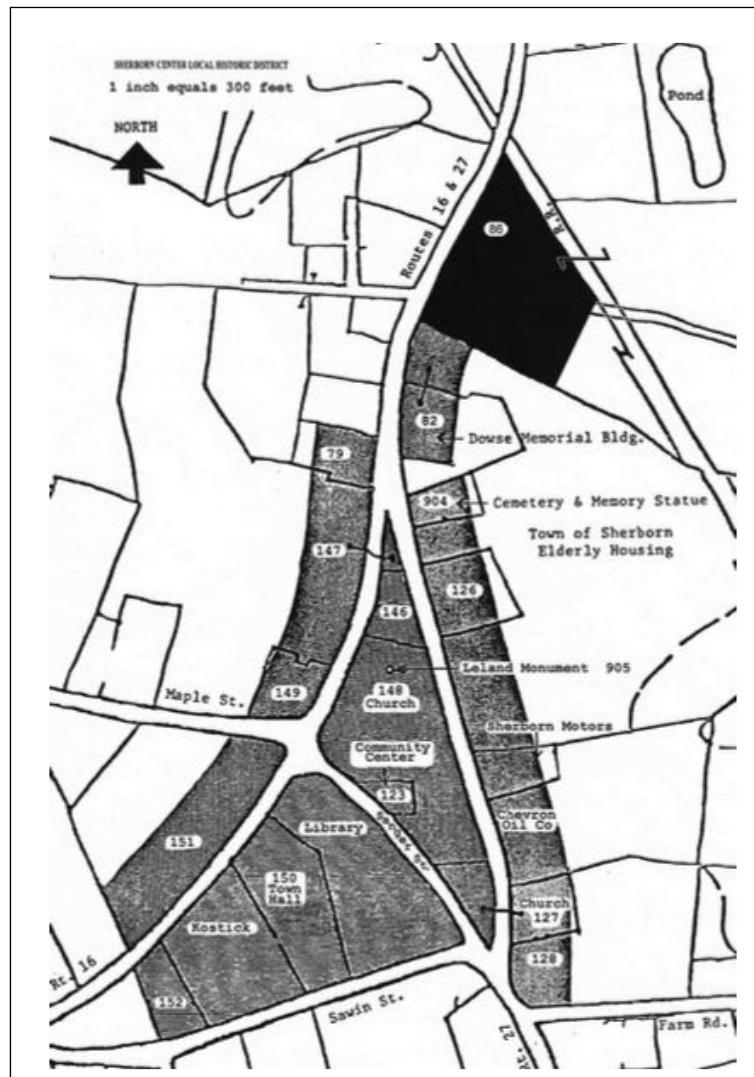
listed on the survey have been lost. Nevertheless, it serves as a valuable resource for community education and enrichment efforts.

Historic Districts and Preservation in Sherborn

Sherborn has three historic districts that include historically important properties. The Sherborn Center Local Historic District (MAP CR.1), which includes 25 properties, was established in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C (MGL 40C) and is administered by the Sherborn Historic District Commission. Using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Historic District Design Review Guidelines, the commission reviews proposed changes and additions that will be visible from a public way, with the goal of preserving the historic features of individual properties in the district and maintaining the district's overall integrity and character. Building permit applications for such changes require review by the commission before a permit can be issued. Thus, such designation provides significant protection.

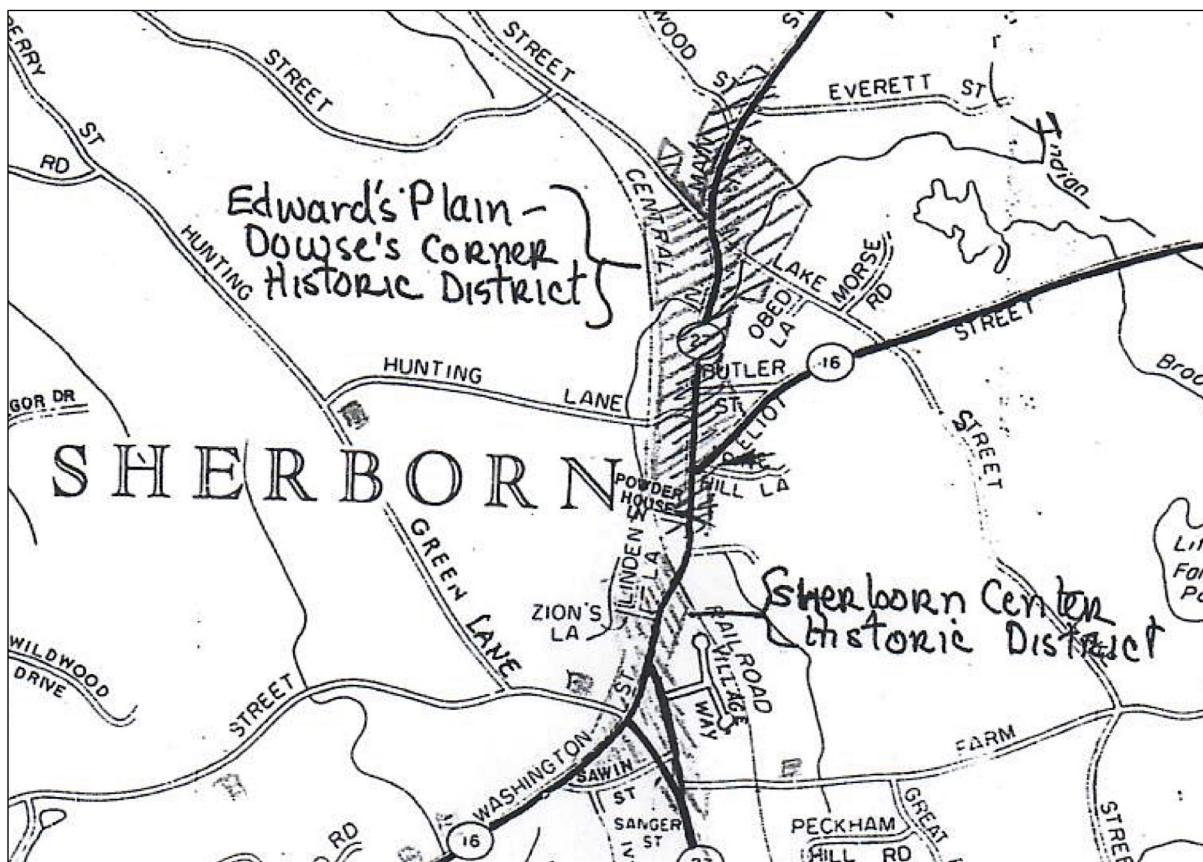
The town also has two National Register Districts (MAP CR.2): the Edward's Plain–Dowse's Corner Historic District encompassing 33 properties, and the Sherborn Center Historic District with 35 properties. A National Register District (NRD) is one that has been included in the National Register of Historic Places, a federal designation that consists of a list of individual buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts deemed significant for their history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. The Massachusetts Historical Commission administers Section 106 of the federal review process, which is part of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Recognition of an NRD offers it recognition, but

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MAP CR.1 — Sherborn Center Local Historic District

Source: Sherborn Historical Commission



MAP CR.2 — Sherborn National Register Districts

Source: Sherborn Historical Commission

objects, and districts deemed significant for their history, culture, architecture, or archaeology. The Massachusetts Historical Commission administers Section 106 of the federal review process, which is part of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Recognition of an NRD offers it recognition, but carries very limited practical legal protections because it protects historically significant structures only if state or federal funding or licenses are sought. If such funding is sought, review by the Massachusetts Historical Commission is required, and if it determines that the project will have an adverse effect on a historic property, mitigation to reduce the impact may result.

Sherborn's historic assets are monitored by the town's Historical Commission and the Sherborn Historical Society along with the town historian, who maintains a treasure trove of documents and artifacts in the museum at Town Hall. The historian also can provide a wealth of information on any request. These underutilized resources could be better appreciated and maintained with updated, searchable maps and online historic guides, neither of which are presently available.

If the current rate of demolition is sustained, Sherborn will lose a significant part of its historic legacy in the coming decades. Long-term preservation of Sherborn's rich historic legacy will require the ongoing, active engagement of the town's governing bodies and the Historical Commission and Historical Society as well as heightened awareness and appreciation on the part of Sherborn citizens.

Summary of Challenges

- Most of the historic houses, barns, and stone walls in town have no legal protection and are vulnerable to tear-down or renovations that ignore historic value.
- Approval of building and renovation plans for most homes and special permits for multiunit developments currently are not contingent on preservation of historic landscapes and settings, viewscapes, and stone walls.
- Town boards and officials, real estate agents, and citizens whose actions or decisions have impacts on historic preservation often are not aware of the historic significance of specific properties or of regulatory avenues available for preservation.
- Because historic burying grounds are not sufficiently well recognized as witnesses to our past, over time the gravestones that could otherwise have been repaired have been lost. Sherborn's oldest "Old South" burying ground is unmarked and generally unknown by most residents.

Recommendations

A. Update and expand documentation of Sherborn's historical assets in accordance with the vision of our historical legacy and character.

1. Use existing written histories and updated research to develop a narrative, or "Sherborn Story," that integrates and celebrates our historical legacy from presettlement to recent times.
2. Update and build on the 1981 and 1999 Sherborn [Historic Assets Survey](#) to document the present status of historic structures, sites and viewscapes, and their losses.
3. Create user-friendly maps using Google's Earth 3D and/or MassGIS resources to create historic assets maps with layers showing key historic features including structures, burying grounds, and stone walls, on a background of the existing topography, roads, and other structures.
 - Encourage participation by Dover-Sherburn High School (DSHS) students in constructing this model.
 - Provide a user-friendly link from each historic structure on the map to the Historic Assets Survey, which includes a brief historical summary.
 - Provide map links to the existing interactive database used by the Sherborn Cemetery Commission, which includes maps of historic burying grounds and links individual gravesites to early Sherborn residents and provides information about their family connections.
 - Better integrate historic asset information for planning purposes by leveraging current and newly developed visual technologies.

B. Promote educational efforts for increasing public awareness and appreciation of Sherborn's historic assets as a way to encourage preservation and stewardship of those assets.

1. Make information concerning the historic character of town- and privately owned historic buildings, structures, monuments, cemeteries, parks, and landscapes widely available in a variety

of formats (including the digital mapping tools mentioned in Recommendation A) so they can readily be accessed by residents and visitors.

- Improve public access to books, websites, and links that highlight local historical attributes, events, and personalities.
 - Expand awareness of and access to the educational resources available in Sherborn (e.g., the library, Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, Historical Society); of the Trustees of Reservations as a significant Sherborn property owner; of comparable organizations in neighboring towns (Massachusetts Historical Commission); and through private preservation organizations, such as Historic New England and the Massachusetts Historical Society.
- 2. Use the narrative and tools mentioned above to identify and highlight historic assets on the basis of their contributions to our historical narrative and the distinctive look and feel of the town.
- 3. Encourage the public schools to use the local historic narrative and sites as enrichment opportunities that promote understanding of the town's history both before and after the arrival of Europeans.
- 4. Educate key town officials and leaders in the use of the Historic Assets Survey and mapping tools.
 - Promote use of these resources for planning and governance purposes by the assessor's office, town boards and administrator, staff at Town Hall, the building inspector, and committees to assure that the Historical Commission and Historic District Commission are notified of proposals involving demolition or renovation of historic structures.
 - Demonstrate use of the Historic Assets Survey and mapping resources at selected meetings and venues.
- 5. Educate local realtors and encourage them to emphasize historic value when marketing properties. Provide all available historic information to realtors when significant properties are put on the market and to new owners when they change hands.
- 6. Provide the informational resources generated in Recommendation A to owners of key historic properties as encouragement for the preservation and stewardship of structures on the Sherborn Historic Assets Survey as well as of other local historic sites and landscapes.
- 7. Provide property owners with information, guidance, and assistance in establishing historic preservation easements on their property or on specific features or structures thereon.
- 8. Create an informal community group that supports and connects owners of historic properties to promote sharing of knowledge and resources.
- 9. Regionally cooperate and collaborate with other towns to document and celebrate our shared history, and to share educational resources.
- 10. Use the map resources suggested in Recommendation A to promote Sherborn regionally as a destination for historical tourism, and produce materials for self-guided tours by vehicle, bicycle, or on foot.

- Approach the state for assistance in developing brochures, maps, online media, and other materials that promote regional tourism and education.
- Use these materials to enhance appreciation and develop pride in Sherborn among residents.

11. Generate knowledge and appreciation of Sherborn's history by installing informational signage at significant landmarks and historic sites on public lands.

- Introduce roadside signage that indicates public access points to historic burying grounds.
- At burying ground sites, erect historically appropriate markers that show the name of the burying ground and year of its establishment.
- Use kiosks, signage, and machine-readable, optical-image labels (e.g., QR codes) at public buildings, trailheads, and viewscapes to provide information about the historical significance of the site.
- Assign and use optical-image labels to create links to online information about historic sites.

12. As street signs are replaced, include scenic-road designation on new signs.

C. Adopt local governance practices and bylaws that strengthen the town's ability to preserve existing historic assets and viewscapes.

1. Maintain clear lines of communication among the Historical Commission and relevant boards and committees (e.g., the Select Board [formerly Board of Selectmen], Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, the building inspector, director of the Department of Public Works, Cemetery Commission, and Board of Assessors) to increase awareness of the need for historic preservation.
2. Educate members of relevant boards about historical designations as well as preservation tools and procedures available at the local, state, and federal levels that apply to local permitting to ensure that all town officials understand the regulatory roles of historic commissions and historic-property designations.
3. Require identification of historic assets on plot maps submitted in connection with property-line alterations, subdivisions, and special permits.
4. Encourage the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, building inspector, and Select Board to consider historic preservation goals when considering proposals and issuing permits.
 - Upon receipt of a special permit application, the Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals should determine whether the property includes an asset listed on the Historic Assets Survey and notify the Historical Commission to solicit their input.
 - In appropriate cases, the Sherborn Historical Commission should work with the state's historical commission to enlist outside assistance and resources that may enable protection of important historic features of a property.
5. Review local by-laws and procedures that may be used to discourage demolition or neglect of existing historic structures.
 - Consider a “demolition delay” by-law that would be applied to structures included on the Historic Asset Survey, thus allowing time for the town, usually through the Historical

Commission, to work with property owners to find ways to preserve historically significant structures.

- Consider an “affirmative maintenance” by-law to protect historic assets from loss due to intentional neglect.
- 6. Create a historic preservation easement/special permit—provision in the town’s zoning by-laws to provide zoning flexibility that would preserve historic structures that might otherwise be demolished. Examples:
 - A historic house sits at the front of its lot, close to a main road. The owner would like to demolish the building in order to build a new house farther back. This provision would allow the historic house to be retained as well as the new house to be built—even though current zoning normally would allow only one house on the lot—so long as compliance with all other rules, regulations, and by-laws is observed.
 - A historic barn sits on a property that the owner wishes to divide into two lots. The barn sits too close to or straddles the proposed new lot line, so it must be torn down to divide the lot. This provision would allow the barn to remain on an easement by special permit.
 - This provision may also allow an historic building to be relocated and/or repurposed in order to preserve its outward appearance.
- 7. Explore ways to identify and protect historic cart paths, stone walls, and scenic landscapes that contribute to Sherborn’s historic, rural, and agricultural character.

D. *Expand the use of local, state, and national Historic District and Historic Register designations to highlight Sherborn’s assets.*

1. Evaluate the value and feasibility of including additional properties in the Town Center Historic District.
2. Extend local historic district protection to any property on the Historic Asset Survey when its owner expresses interest in inclusion or in adding the property to a current local historic district or creating a single-property “district” or landmark by means of the process described in MGL 40C.
 - Identify additional areas or properties where a historic-overlay district would be appropriate.
 - Expand local historic district protection to any property on the Sherborn Historic Assets Survey with a voluntarily initiated historic asset easement or preservation restriction.
3. Encourage owners of private structures designated on the Sherborn Historic Assets Survey to apply for a voluntarily accepted listing on the National Register of Historic Places and assist with the application process.

E. *Continue to support, protect, and maintain Sherborn’s public historic assets and resources over the long term.*

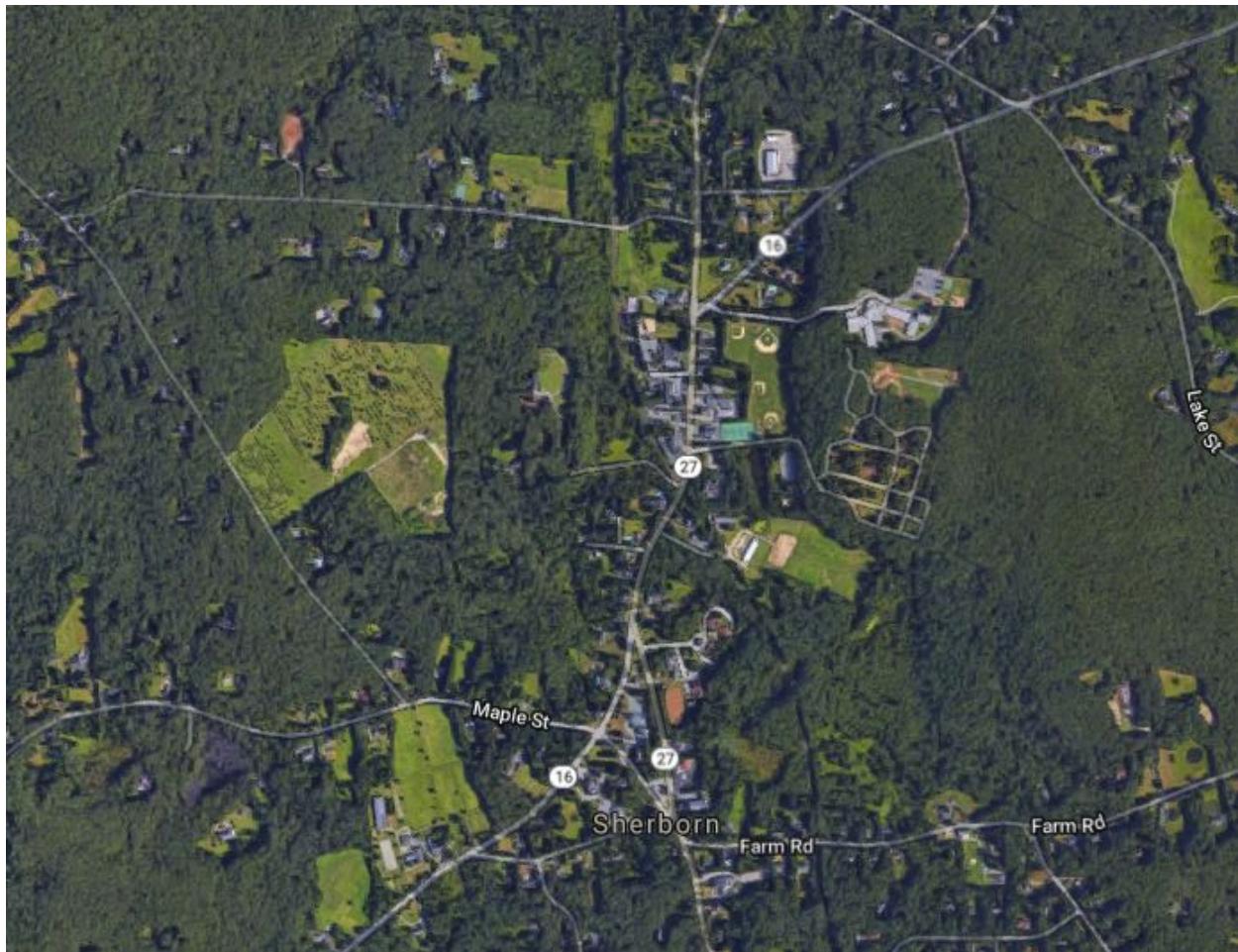
1. Support the restoration and maintenance of Sherborn’s historic burying grounds.
 - Preserve the historic gravestones and monuments that remain and support efforts to repair broken gravestones whenever feasible.

- Support the efforts of the Cemetery Commission to prioritize and document preservation and maintenance needs.
 - Support inclusion of a layer on the Historic Assets map that highlights historic burying grounds (see Recommendation A).
- 2. Support the Sherborn Historical Society and its museum for long-term preservation of the objects and documents in its collection.
- 3. Document and preserve remaining historic mill sites, factories, and evidence of pre-colonial life in Sherborn by seeking academic interest in and funding for archeological surveys and other research projects.
- 4. Plan for long-term funding of important town-owned historic assets.
 - Reconsider adopting the Community Preservation Act, in part to fund maintenance of the assets.
 - Consider use of the Sherborn Fund or support from other nonprofit organizations for this purpose.



This implementation plan summarizes the actions recommended in the Master Plan and identifies the leaders who have assumed responsibility for each action. It is intended to help the community track progress toward fulfilling the plan's goals.

Implementation



Implementation Process

The Master Plan is a living document to be used over a period of years as a reference and guide for all the officials and citizens of the town. It is understood that the plan must be updated and revised as conditions change, actions are completed, and objectives are met. Over time, priorities must be adapted to existing expenditures, staffing, and grant-funding opportunities. Revisions in the plan require a majority vote of the Planning Board, but they should be based on input from other relevant boards and committees and, most important, the community. The Planning Board will publicly notify the town and inform boards and committees of revisions to the plan; furnish a copy of the revised plan, report, or amendment thereto to the Select Board; and post a revised copy on the town website.

The following implementation tables are intended to facilitate keeping track of progress toward our goals. The boards, committees, and town departments named as leaders of specific actions have reviewed the tables and agreed to assume these roles.

How will we track progress and ensure that the Master Plan is kept current and useful?

- Planning Board representatives will periodically meet and review progress with each of the boards, committees, organizations, and officials who have assumed leadership roles in implementation.
- Progress toward completion of the Master Plan recommendations will be an integral feature of the town's planning and budgeting and will be summarized in the annual reports of individual boards and committees.

Implementation tables are available to the public on the town website and in print at Town Hall. As the various goals, strategies, and actions are completed or as the need arises to change the Master Plan, revised implementation tables will be posted.

Guide to the Implementation Tables

Organization. The tables include major goals and recommendations along with specific strategies or actions to be followed toward fulfillment of the goals.

Time targets. These estimate the time—after publication of this plan—within which actions might be initiated. Those marked “ongoing” will require sustained effort over time. Some actions have already been initiated.

Leader. This is the specific board, committee, or group most committed to “making it happen.” The leader—the initiator and driving force—may delegate or share the work involved as needed.

Others involved. Most actions will require the efforts of, collaboration with, and/or approval by multiple groups. (Table I.1 lists town boards, committees, and departments with their respective codes.)

Funding. Throughout the planning process, the town's fiscal constraints have been kept in mind. Many of the recommended actions can be done by volunteer boards and committees, and expenditure of taxpayer funds is not applicable (NA). “Town” indicates that, either (1) the work can be handled by existing town employees; or (2) a spending decision at Town Meeting will be required. “Grant” indicates projects that may be eligible for grant support, but the potential source is not specified because it depends on grant availability and program announcements from various funding agencies. “TBD” means “to be determined.”

TABLE I.1—*Town of Sherborn boards, committees, and departments involved with implementing the Master Plan*

Board, committee, department, etc.	Code
Advisory Committee	ADV
Agricultural Commission	AGC
Board of Assessors	BOA
Board of Health	BOH
Building Inspector	BI
Capital Budget Committee	CBC
Community School Association	CSA
Conservation Commission	CC
Council on Aging	COA
Department of Public Works (formerly CM&D)	DPW
Disability Advisory Committee	DAC
Dover-Sherborn Regional School Committee	DSRS
Elder Housing Committee	EHC
Energy Committee	EC
Farm Pond Advisory Committee	FPAC
Fire and Rescue Department	FRD
Groundwater Protection Committee	GPC
Historic District Commission	HDC
Historical Commission	HC
Housing Partnership Committee	HPC
Land Acquisition Committee	LAC
Land Management Task Force	LMTF
Library Trustees	LT
Open Space Committee	OSC
Planning Board	PB
Public Safety Committee	PSC
Recreation Commission	REC
Recycling Committee	RCYC
Select Board (formerly Board of Selectmen)	SB
Sherborn Boy Scouts	SBS
Sherborn Business Association	SBA
Sherborn Forest & Trail Association	SFTA
Sherborn Garden Clubs	SGC
Sherborn Historical Society	SHS
Sherborn Police Department	SPD
Sherborn Rural Land Foundation	SRLF
Sherborn School Committee	SSC
Town Center Water Options Committee	TCOC
Town Forest Committee	TFC
Traffic Safety Committee	TSC
Tree Warden	TW
Upper Charles Conservation Land Trust	UCCT
Water Commissioner	WC
Zoning Board of Appeals	ZBA

HOUSING	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I. GOAL: MANAGE AND GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO FULFILL STATE REQUIREMENTS IN A MANNER THAT MAXIMIZES LOCAL INITIATIVES AND MINIMIZES ADVERSE ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS				
I A. Recommendation: Agree upon a shared vision of future housing patterns in Sherborn and preferences for affordable housing development over the short and long term.				
1. Support efforts to get the 2017 Housing Production Plan (HPP) certified, and keep it updated.	ongoing	HPC	PB	NA
2. Continue to monitor citizen preferences for types and locations of affordable housing through public meetings, communications, and opinion surveys.	ongoing	HPC	COA	Town
3. Ensure that all affordable housing projects apply the "70% local preference" requirement to applicants for affordable housing units, as defined by Mass Housing.	ongoing	SB	ZBA	NA
4. Systematically analyze the potential economic and functional impacts of different types of affordable housing development on tax revenue, schools, municipal services, and town operating expenses.	2 yr.	HPC	various	Town
I B. Recommendation: Manage the immediate and ongoing challenges of current active and anticipated developer-initiated State 40B affordable housing projects.				
1. Develop a nimble and efficient process for negotiation and communication with developers of proposed 40B projects.	1 yr.	PB	SB, ZBA	NA
2. Work with developer(s) to build single and/or multi-family homes, condominiums, and/or apartments as guided by the HPP.	ongoing	PB, HPC	SB	NA
3. Apply the economic and functional impact analysis in A.4 (above) to anticipate and plan for the increased demands on town resources and infrastructure from large 40B housing projects in the pipeline.	3 yr.	HPC	DPW, SC, CBC, etc.	Town
I C. Recommendation: Control the rate of affordable housing development over the short term by reaching "Safe Harbor," as defined by MGL 40B affordable housing development laws.				
1. Raise public awareness of the State 40B affordable housing law and the importance of a certified HPP, to build public support for appropriate projects.	3 yr.	HPC	PB, SB	Town
2. Consider a variety of strategies to reach "Safe Harbor" as rapidly as possible, including, but not limited to, the options in the HPP	2 yr.	HPC	PB	NA
3. Facilitate proposed projects that will allow rapid certification of the HPP and "Safe Harbor".	1 yr.	HPC	PB	NA
I D. Recommendation: Maintain "Safe Harbor" status over the long term through Town-initiated or collaborative affordable housing developments, guided by the Town's housing vision and consistent with the Town's semi-rural character.				
1. Use a combination of strategies to continue adding affordable housing units each year sufficient to maintain "Safe Harbor" status, including but not limited to options in the HPP.	ongoing	HPC	PB	NA
2. Review and where appropriate, revise Town zoning bylaws to facilitate development of affordable housing under Town regulations rather than State 40B criteria.	2 yr.	PB	HPC	NA
3. Review and where appropriate, revise Board of Health regulations to prevent unnecessary devaluation of land due to septic constraints which incentivize developers to use the 40B mechanism, as long as revisions are scientifically justified and health of residents is protected.	1 yr.	BOH	PB, SB	Town

HOUSING	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I E. Recommendation: Continue to support regional efforts to update State laws related to affordable housing in a manner that recognizes the water resource and infrastructure limitations of small towns like Sherborn.				
1. Propose that 40B projects on lands recently withdrawn from Chapter 61 set aside and permanently conserve a portion of the land in accordance with natural resource protection goals.	ongoing	CC	SB	NA
2. Support a legislative change of Chapter 61, so that when land is withdrawn and sold, 10% of the sale price will be set aside for that community's implementation of the HPP and/or preservation of open space.	ongoing	HPC, PB	CC	NA
3. Allow adjacent communities to regionally share affordable housing quotas and regional assets such as transportation and open space recreational resources.	ongoing	PB	SB	NA
4. Support other modifications to the 40 B law that support preservation of water resources and open space as a regional resource for climate mitigation, recreation, and sustainable agriculture.	ongoing	HPC, PB	CC, BOH	NA
II. GOAL: INCREASE THE DIVERSITY OF HOUSING OPTIONS IN SHERBORN TO ACCOMMODATE RESIDENTS OF DIFFERENT AGES AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES				
II A. Recommendation: Increase the quantity and diversity of housing in the Town Center				
1. Encourage and enable housing located in the Town Center or within an easy and safe walk to the Center and in proximity to goods, services, schools, library, etc., in support of the Town Center walkability rating.	ongoing	PB	COA, HPC	NA
2. Consider a zoning overlay district for town center that, like the PUD, provides greater control on development and more diverse housing development opportunities.	2 yr.	PB	HC	NA
3. Include an inclusionary zoning requirement for all multi-unit developments in town center, in accordance with HPP goals.	2 yr.	PB	HPC	NA
4. Add water and/or sewer utilities to the Town Center to enable development of diverse housing options.	3-4 yr.	SB	DPW, WC	Town, grants
II B. Recommendation: Enable more housing diversity in residential zoning districts throughout Sherborn.				
1. Monitor the effects of the 2018 accessory apartment bylaw revision on expansion of housing options and total housing unit inventory.	ongoing	HPC	PB, ZBA	NA
2. Design and pass a Multifamily Housing bylaw that would allow moderately priced 2 or 3 unit residences by special permit for new construction, or for conversion of existing residences.	2-3 yr.	PB	HPC	NA
3. Encourage moderately sized and priced housing in cluster or open space developments by creating additional incentives.	2 yr.	PB	HPC	NA
4. Consider farm housing by special permit to allow flexible housing arrangements for farm workers and interns needed for sustainable farm business.	2 yr.	PB	ZBA, AC	NA
5. Explore opportunities to enable use of the State subsidized "Starter Home" or "Workforce Housing" initiatives that could add to housing options for young families and downsizing elders in Sherborn.	2 yr.	PB	ZBA, HPC	NA

HOUSING	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
III. GOAL: ENSURE THAT ALL NEW HOUSING IS CONSISTENT WITH PRESERVATION OF THE TOWN'S SCENIC RURAL CHARACTER AND NATURAL RESOURCES, AS WELL AS REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.				
III A. Recommendation: In considering plans and making permitting decisions on new housing and housing developments, place high priority on the potential impacts on natural resources.				
1. Make a data-based analysis of potential impacts on the long-term sustainability of water resources an obligatory part of permitting decisions.	2 yr.	BI, PB	CC, BOH	NA
2. Require development plans to minimize the loss of climate-mitigating features of the site, including the energy-saving effects of tree cover and the carbon storage capacity of intact forest ecosystems.	2 yr.	PB	EC, CC	NA
3. Minimize the potential impacts of dense housing development on local air quality and long-term climate change by considering project-specific transportation options as part of each development project.	2-3 yr.	PB	EC	NA
III B. Recommendation: Establish energy-efficient building standards for all new construction in Sherborn, and provide incentives for installation of clean energy technologies.				
1. Establish baseline minimum energy standards for all new construction in Sherborn. Energy Committee should continue to accept Stretch Code building code innovations for new buildings and new substantial additions.		EC	BI	NA
2. Ensure that Town governing bodies promote voluntary application of higher energy efficient building standards, such as the LEED Green Building Rating System, the SITES Initiative or the Building Challenge, for all new construction in Sherborn.	ongoing	BI, PB	CC	Town
3. Encourage a wide variety of sustainable construction methods and energy-efficient features that go beyond the minimum standards.	ongoing	BI, PB	EC	NA
4. Promote the economic advantages of energy efficient construction and LEED or similar certification, and provide additional incentives for voluntary certification.	ongoing	BI, PB	EC	NA
III C. Recommendation: Promote and encourage increased energy efficiency and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions throughout Sherborn.				
1. Provide incentives for all residents to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.	ongoing	EC		NA
2. Implement a gradual transition to green sources of electricity and heating fuel purchased through the Mass Energy Consumers Alliance or similar nonprofits dedicated to making energy more sustainable and affordable.	ongoing	EC	BOS	Town
3. Promote MassSAVE energy audits that provide free energy audits for existing homes and ideas on ways to reduce energy costs.	ongoing	EC		NA
4. Work towards a percent carbon neutral goal including transportation, energy consumption, materials of construction and recyclable materials and trash goals.	ongoing	EC,	RCYC	Town, grants
5. Charge for disposal of materials according to environmental impact and work towards elimination of sale of unnecessary packaging and non-recyclable materials.	ongoing	RCYC		NA

HOUSING	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
III D. Recommendation: Create a climate-literate community.		EC		
1. Educate the community with frequent programs, Town website postings, and social media announcements regarding energy conservation opportunities and incentive programs.	ongoing	EC	CC	Town
2. Use email distribution sites such as Nextdoor Sherborn to inform residents of energy efficiency tips that can be easily implemented.	ongoing	CSA	EC	NA
3. Integrate the teaching of the science of energy use and climate change at Pine Hill School and Dover-Sherborn regional schools with enrichment activities focused on local energy use and conservation.	ongoing	DSRS	EC	Town
4. Create a scholarship for a college-bound D-S student whose senior project establishes a new opportunity for energy savings, greater reuse, or enhanced recycling capabilities on the high school campus or in the community.	ongoing	EC		Town, donations
5. Raise awareness among Sherborn residents that we are a Green Community, and the environmental and financial impacts of grants from this program.	ongoing	EC		NA

TOWN CENTER	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I. GOAL: PRESERVE THE MOST VALUED FEATURES OF THE EXISTING TOWN CENTER.				
I A. Recommendation: Actively promote the preservation of selected, historically significant private properties in the Town Center district that are part of Sherborn's "story" (see Cultural Resources III: Historic Preservation).				
1. Homes.	ongoing	HDC, HC	PB	NA
2. Former homes used as businesses.	ongoing	HDC, HC	PB	NA
3. Churches.	ongoing	HDC, HC		NA
I B. Recommendation: Maintain historic municipal buildings and structures to ensure the preservation of their appearance and function into the future.				
1. Town Hall.	ongoing	DPW	HC	town
2. Community Center.	ongoing	CCF	DPW	CCF
3. Cemetery, monuments, and memorials.	ongoing	CEM	DPW	town
4. Stone walls, Town history signage.	ongoing	DPW	HC	town
5. Shade trees in Town Center.	ongoing	SB	DPW	town
I C. Recommendation: Continue to support the integration of recreational fields, resources, and activities in Town Center.				
1. Measure and improve the Town Center "walkability score" using the MAPC Local Access program (http://localaccess.mapc.org) as a standard criteria. .	ongoing	PB	SB	NA
2. Keep the recreation fields integrated in the Town Center as an attraction and support for food vendors, other facilities, businesses, and parking. .	ongoing	REC	SB	NA
I D. Recommendation: Consider roadway changes to preserve rural village scale and feel. (see also: Circulation section)				
1. Study the effects of altering current lane widths to a consistent width without widening the average road width and evaluate the feasibility of turning lanes.	3 yr	DPW	SB, PB	grants
2. Consider new traffic light technology to facilitate traffic flow at intersections and businesses.	3 yr	DPW	SB	grants
3. Maintain historic configuration of streets, in some cases changing intersections to increase walkability, safety, and function.	ongoing	DPW	HC	grants
4. Add shade trees, roadside curbing, landscaping and sidewalks to enhance small-town atmosphere and encourage safe pedestrian and traffic flow.	5 yr	DPW	PB	grants
I E. Recommendation: Establish design review guidelines to ensure that any renovations and new buildings and structures in the Town Center properties are consistent with Sherborn's village character (see also: Goal V).,				
1. The guidelines must be consistent with the Town's long-term vision.	3 yr	PB	SB, HC	MAPC
2. The design review guidelines must be clear to property owners and developers so they can understand requirements for development, and they must be achievable.	3 yr	PB	HC, HCD	NA
3. Design a process for adopting and implementing the guidelines.	3 yr	PB	SB	MAPC

TOWN CENTER	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
II. GOAL: ENHANCE THE SOCIAL VITALITY AND FUNCTION OF THE EXISTING TOWN CENTER THROUGH INCREMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS				
II A. Create a more walkable town center, guided by the "Complete Streets" program.				
1. Link all Town Center destinations by sidewalks and crosswalks.	5 yr	DPW	PB	grant
2. Formulate a long-term plan for incremental addition of paved bike/walking paths that link North and South Town Centers and provide alternative routes that avoid busy roads.	5 yr	DPW	PB, SB	grant
3. Improve pedestrian safety throughout the town center.	ongoing	DPW	PB, PS	grant
4. Develop safe, established linkages from the town-wide trail system to town center through existing and new trails, sidewalks, and paths.	5 yr	DPW	PB, SFTA	grant
II B. Recommendation: Make Sherborn Center truly bike friendly.				
1. Create well-marked bike corridors into and through the town center and on roads connecting to Town Center.	4 yr	DPW	PB, TSC	grant, town
2. Improve bicycle safety in Town Center.	4 yr	PS, DPW	PB, TSC	NA
3. Install paved paths that provide cyclists easy access to North and South town centers and Pine Hill School (see A.2 above).	4 yr	DPW	PB, TSC	grant
II C. Recommendation: Enable social gathering in town center through design and built environment features.				
1. Create "pocket parks," i.e. inviting meeting and interaction places, including seating, shade, and/or green space.	3 - 5 yr	PB	SBA	grant
2. Link "pocket parks" to bike/walking paths, sidewalks, and cross-walks, seeking when needed the cooperation and assistance of town center property owners.	3-5 yr	PB	SBA, SGC	NA
3. Increase the number of benches in North town center.	2 yr	DPW	SBA	NA
4. Create a permanent, safe outdoor gathering place in the South town center on Town land or with the cooperation of business owners.	5 yr	SGC	SBA	NA
5. Actively support the efforts of businesses to provide meeting places and restroom facilities for customers.	ongoing	SB	PB, SBA	NA
II D. Recommendation: Improve the resources and amenities in Sherborn town center for all users.				
1. Establish or improve car parking for shoppers, cyclists, and walkers.	7 yr	PB	DPW, SBA	TBD
2. Promote the usage of Sherborn's cultural and recreational resources by installing informational kiosks at key locations in town center.	4 yr	SBA	SB, SFTA	TBD
3. Make the maps and information above available in digital form via multiple avenues.	4 yr	SB	HC, SFTA	TBD
4. Explore alternative ways of making restrooms available to the public in town center with current water and septic infrastructure.	1 yr	SBA	BOH, REC	NA
5. Encourage existing and future town center businesses to consider Sherborn recreational users and visitors as a business opportunity (bike shops, restaurants) and to accommodate recreational customers by providing restrooms.	1 yr	SBA	REC, SFTA	NA

TOWN CENTER	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
II E. Recommendation: Encourage continuation and expansion of multiple usage of underused or seasonally-used public properties.				
1. Support additional use of the ball fields for other recreational activities.	ongoing	REC	SB	NA
2. Continued use of tennis courts for skating rink.	ongoing	REC	SB	NA
3. Use of Pine Hill School parking lot for non-school activities and events.	ongoing	SSC	SFTA, REC	NA
4. Pine Hill Cemetery usage for walkers and joggers to promote historic awareness and appreciation as a park.	ongoing	CEM	SFTA	NA
II F. Recommendation: Improve existing Town Center roadways and sidewalks. (see CIRCULATION section)				
1. Invest in traffic study to identify ways to facilitate flows of traffic.	2 yr	PB	TSC	grant
2. Experiment with road design and traffic circulation changes on Sanger and Sawin Streets to increase safety for pedestrians and cyclists.	2 yr	DPW	PB, TSC, PSC	grant
3. Improve sidewalks along Main Street to accommodate bikes and wheelchairs.	4 yr	DPW	PB, PSC	grant
III. GOAL: SUPPORT CURRENT BUSINESSES AND CONSIDER NEW BUSINESS AND HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOWN CENTER WITHIN EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRAINTS.				
III A. Recommendation: Explore market opportunities and financial costs/benefits that may be achieved under current conditions and after specific improvements in the town center.				
1. Conduct a market study to determine what is and is not commercially viable, with current infrastructure constraints and with municipal water and sewer utilities.	1 yr	SB	PB, SBA, TCOC	town
2. Work with existing businesses and residents to understand their goals for expansion or improvement.	1 yr	PB	SB, SBA	NA
3. Estimate costs and the financial impact of the actions proposed in this Plan as a return on the investment to current businesses and residents and the town as a whole.	1 yr	PB	SB, SBA	NA
III B. Recommendation: Make the existing town center more visually appealing.				
1. Design and implement a signage policy that enhances the "sense of place" and defines the identity of Sherborn.	1 yr	PB	SBA	NA
2. Consider additional plantings and green features along main streets.	1 yr	SGA	DPW, SBA	NA
3. Work with business owners to maximize visibility and readability of town center signage.	1 yr	PB	SBA	NA
4. Review setback requirements to maximize the visual appeal of the town center.	2 yr	PB		NA
5. Encourage use and function consistent with a traditional New England village.	ongoing	PB	HS, HDC	NA
III C. Recommendation: Maximize accessibility to all town center businesses while minimizing driving between sites.				
1. Design and implement a town center-wide parking plan.	2 yr	PB	DPW, SBA	grant
2. Coordinate parking design with walkway design.	2 yr	PB	DPW, SBA	grant
3. Work with business and property owners to negotiate a community parking solution, including revision of current town parking regulations.	2 yr	PB	DPW, SBA	grant

TOWN CENTER	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
III D. Recommendation: Encourage and support the Board of Health in addressing current and potential water/sewer needs of individual properties in the existing town center.				
1. Consider allowing composting toilets, greywater systems, and innovative alternative septic technologies as governed by the State.	ongoing	BOH	SBA	NA
2. Consider allowing shared septic systems and mounded systems in new construction in the town center.	ongoing	BOH	SBA	NA
3. Enable additional eating and meeting places within Board of Health regulations that protect the long-term health interests of the town.	ongoing	BOH	SBA	NA
III E. Recommendation: Enable new business and housing options in town center to the extent allowed by current well and septic technology.				
1. Allow limited expansion of the town center footprint toward the North.	2 yr	PB	SBA	NA
2. Revise PUD zoning to allow multiple businesses including one anchor business that has a larger footprint than currently permitted.	2 yr	PB	SBA	NA
3. Revise zoning bylaws to enable mixed-use and/or multi-dwelling housing options within Business and PUD zones of town center.	2 yr	PB	SBA	NA
4. Enable historic structures to be repurposed for business, housing, or mixed-use in return for preservation of exterior appearance.	2 yr	PB	SBA, HC, HDC	NA
III F. Recommendation: Examine and consider changing certain zoning restrictions on town center businesses.				
1. Reconsider restrictions on business types and number of employees allowed.	2 yr	PB	SBA	NA
2. Enable more outdoor events for all businesses.	done	PB	SBA	NA
3. Reduce the number of parking spaces required per square foot of business space.	2 yr	PB	SBA	NA
4. Establish and enforce signage guidelines, within the signage policy defined in A1.	2 yr	PB	SBA	NA
IV. GOAL: DEVELOP A REALISTIC, COMPREHENSIVE LONG TERM PLAN FOR THE TOWN CENTER THAT ADDRESSES THOSE CHALLENGES SELECTED FOR ACTION BUT NOT MET NOT BY THE INCREMENTAL CHANGES IN GOALS I – III.				
IV A. Recommendation: Develop a shared vision of the "ideal" future Town Center that includes the range of desired improvements and changes.				
1. Conduct a public outreach campaign to gather data on citizen, business, church, and municipal services needs and preferences.	3 yr	PB	SB, others	NA
2. Prioritize the preferences expressed above for further analysis (see below).	3 yr	PB	SB, others	NA
IV B. Recommendation: Analyze the contributions of specific business types and housing options deemed desirable and viable to the long-term financial sustainability of the Town.				
1. Invest in a professional market analysis to understand the market potential for specific types of businesses in town center.	3 yr	PB	SB, SBA	town
2. Analyze the potential impacts on taxes and property values throughout town.	3 yr	PB	SB, ADV	NA
3. Analyze the potential impacts on town finances.	3 yr	PB	SB, ADV	NA
4. Identify the types, numbers and sizes of business and/or housing opportunities that should be enabled and encouraged in the town center.	3 yr	PB	SB	NA

TOWN CENTER	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
IV C. Recommendation: Support and guide the Town Center Options Committee with resources needed to complete the analysis of the technical feasibility and projected costs of installing and maintaining a public water and/or septic system within a strictly-limited Town Center District.				
1. Determine the technical feasibility of water and sewer systems serving the town center.	1 yr	TCOC	DPW	NA
2. Define water and sewer districts and determine their legal defensibility.	1 yr	PB, SB	TCOC	NA
3. Define the installation and operational costs of alternative water/sewer infrastructure options.	1 yr	TCOC	DPW	grant
4. Continue to reevaluate water and sewer options in the light of existing and new technologies.	1 yr	TCOC	BOH	NA
IV D. Recommendation: Evaluate the financing options for a public water and/or septic system within a strictly-limited Town Center District.				
1. Explore funding options including state grants.	1 yr	SB	DPW	NA
2. Evaluate the immediate and future costs of financing options.	1 yr	SB	CBC	NA
3. Conduct cost-benefit analyses under alternative financing scenarios.	1 yr	SB	CBC	NA
4. Determine how much the town is willing to finance and how much must be funded by betterments or other sources.	1 yr	SB	CBC	NA
IV E. Recommendation: Make a decision to proceed or not to proceed with development of town center water and sewer infrastructure, as part of a broad Town Center Plan.				
1. Form a consortium representing multiple boards, interests and skills to formulate a Town Center Plan based on the information gathered in A -D above, that includes or does not include a public water and/or sewer system.	1 yr	SB	PB, TCOC, others	NA
2. The Consortium would guide the process of adoption and approval of the Plan by Town Meeting.	1 yr	SB	PB	NA
3. If the town approves the Plan, establish a process for implementation.	2 yr	SB	PB, others	NA
IV F. Recommendation: Ensure that any change in the town center is in harmony with the overall town character and Sherborn's New England village heritage.				
1. Establish an advisory Design Review Board tasked with developing an architectural vision for town center, establishing appropriate guidelines, and maintaining the vision over time.	3 yr	PB	SB, HC	MAPC grant
2. Adopt new "character-based" zoning ordinances, where the form and scale of a development is considered in the context of place rather than just complying with land-use rules.	4 yr	PB	SB, HC	NA
3. Integrate town center design review process and standards into Planning Board rules and regulations.	4 yr	PB		NA

CIRCULATION	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I. GOAL: IMPROVE ROADWAYS AND INTERSECTIONS FOR SAFE AND EFFICIENT MOVEMENT OF VEHICLES.				
I A. Recommendation: Evaluate alternative road and intersection design options to improve traffic flow, relieve traffic congestion, increase safety and reduce driver frustration in and around the town center.				
1. Conduct a traffic engineering study of the town center area to define alternative road design changes that would mitigate traffic congestion, improve steady flow, and increase safety at major intersections.	1 yr	DPW	TSC, PB	Town, grants
2. Study and if needed, modify the solutions for problematic town center intersections suggested by the Complete Streets program analysis and report.	2 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grants
3. Establish agreed-upon parameters to measure the potential impact of each road and intersection design change on vehicle numbers per unit time, speeds and safety.	1 yr	TSC	SPD	Town, grants
4. Install visual and other cues to make it clear to drivers that they are entering Sherborn town center.	ongoing	DPW	-	Town, grants
5. Consider additional town center traffic mitigation actions.	ongoing	TSC	SPD	Town, grants
I B. Recommendation: Evaluate alternative road and intersection design options to improve traffic flow and increase safety outside of town center.				
1. Identify road locations with relatively high incidence of speeding, accidents, and perceptions of danger by residents.	ongoing	TSC	SPD	NA
2. Install visual cues to alert drivers that they are entering a semi-rural town of narrow roads and strictly-enforced speed limits.	ongoing	DPW	TSC	Town, grants
3. Identify deficiencies and opportunities for improvement of problematic intersections throughout town.	ongoing	TSC	SPD	Town
4. Design improvements at high-priority intersections in compliance with the Complete Streets policy.	5 yr	DPW	TSC	Town
II. GOAL: DESIGN ROADWAYS AND INTERSECTIONS FOR SAFE SHARING BY VEHICLES AND BICYCLES.				
II A. Recommendation: Modify alternative town center road and intersection design options for vehicular movement defined in Goal I, to allow for safer sharing of roads with bicycles.				
1. Evaluate town center road design changes for the possible addition of bike lanes or other bicycle safety features, given existing pavement widths and other physical constraints.	5 yr	DPW (hire consultant)	TSC	Town, grants
2. Add active speed limit signage and enforcement in school and recreation field zones.	5 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grants
3. Provide visual guides to adjust driver behavior for safe sharing of vehicle travel lanes with bicycles.	3 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grants
II B. Recommendation: Improve the safety of selected roads and intersections throughout town for shared use by vehicles and bicycles.				
1. Create child-safe bicycle connections from neighborhoods to town center, Pine Hill School, recreational fields, and Farm Pond.	5 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grant
2. Provide visual guides for safe sharing of vehicle travel lanes with bicycles throughout town.	2 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grant
II C. Recommendation: Establish safe bicycle connections to neighboring towns and regional bike paths.				

CIRCULATION	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
1. Extend the multi-use Upper Charles Trail to link Sherborn to the region.	3 yr	PB	DPW, SFTA, CC	Town, grant
2. Create shared use sidewalks or off-road bicycle-friendly pathways along N. Main Street to the Natick Town Line, along Coolidge Street to Speen Street and N. Main Street, and to adjacent towns.	10 yr	PB	DPW, SFTA, CC	Town, grant
III. GOAL: ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT TRAVELING ON FOOT AS A SAFE AND PLEASANT WAY TO MOVE AROUND TOWN CENTER AND THROUGHOUT TOWN.				
III A. Recommendation: Improve safety and ease of pedestrian travel in the town center.				
1. Bring all existing town center sidewalks and walkways into compliance with Complete Streets policy design standards for safety and accessibility.	5 yr	DPW	PB, SB	Town, grant
2. Add new sidewalks to connect town center destinations (see Town Center section).	5 yr	TSC	PSC, PB, DPW	Town, grant
3. Incorporate pedestrian crossing safety features in the plans for improvement of all town center and town center area intersections.	5 yr	TSC	PSC, PB, DPW	Town, grant
4. Assure adequate funding for maintenance of the entire town center pedestrian system, and plowing for year-round use.	1 yr	SB	DPW	Town, grant
5. Add ADA compliant bike/walking paths to connect specific town center destinations (also see Town Center section).	4 yr	DAC	DPW	Town, grant
6. Consider a 25 mph speed limit for all of Sherborn town center.	1 yr	TSC	DPW, SPD	Town, grant
III B. Recommendation: Improve safety and ease of pedestrian travel throughout town.				
1. Add or improve sidewalks and walkways along high-traffic roads to connect neighborhoods and town center wherever possible, given roadway and property ownership constraints.	10 yr	SB	PB, TSC	Town, grant
2. Where sidewalks are not possible, create roadside trails for walkers and cyclists to minimize pedestrian and bicycle traffic in vehicle travel lanes.	15 yr	SFTA	DPW, PB	Town, grant
3. Take every opportunity to establish new trail connections and improve the town-wide trail network, as described in the Recreation section of this Plan.	ongoing	SFTA	SB, CC, PB	Town, grant
4. Create safe pedestrian connections from neighborhoods to recreational sites.	5 yr	TSC	SFTA, PB	Town, grant
5. Require new housing developments to contribute to construction of pedestrian walkways to the surrounding neighborhoods and/or town center.	ongoing	PB	DPW	Town, grant
6. Establish safe pedestrian crossings where sidewalks and roadside trails meet busy road intersections throughout town, as described for town center in Recommendation A.	5 yr	TSC	DPW	Town, grant
7. Add signage at major vehicle entry points at town borders, to raise awareness of pedestrian traffic	3 yr	TSC	DPW	Town
III C. Recommendation: Improve road crossing safety for users of the trail system and recreational fields.				
1. Make trail crossings and trailheads visible to motor vehicle traffic by installing consistent, easily recognized signage.	3 yr	TSC	DPW	Town, grant
2. Install road signs warning drivers of upcoming trail crossings for hikers, bikers, and horses.	3 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grant
3. Install trail or road markings to guide trail users to appropriate crossing sites.	3 yr	DPW	TSC	Town, grant
4. Consider user-activated crossing lights where popular trails cross main roads, such as the Bay Circuit Trail crossings at Eliot (Rte 16), North Main (Rte 27) and Western Avenue.	5 yr	TSC	DPW	Town, grant
5. Consider a user-activated crossing light on Western Avenue at Fessenden sports fields.	3 yr	TSC	DPW	Town, grant
III D. Recommendation: Establish and improve pedestrian connections to neighboring towns and the region, as described for bicycles in				

CIRCULATION	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
Recommendation C.				
1. Enable room for sidewalks on selected regional connecting roads.	2 yr	PB	TSC, DPW	Town
2. Extend existing sidewalks to connect to neighboring towns.	10 yr	PB	TSC, DPW	Town
3. Extend the Upper Charles Trail to provide a pedestrian link to the region (see Recreation section).	1-2 yr	PB	SFTA, DPW	Town, grant
4. Improve the Bay Circuit Trail connections to Ashland and Medfield. (see Recreation section)	2 yr	SFTA	CC, SRLF	Town
IV. GOAL: MAINTAIN ROADS IN A MANNER THAT PRESERVES THE SCENIC, RURAL CHARACTER OF THE TOWN.				
IV A. Recommendation: Support long term planning to maintain and improve roads in ways that preserve rural character.				
1. Plan and fund ongoing maintenance of road surfaces, culverts, bridges and storm water control features that reduce the need for salt, mitigates erosion and prevents more costly repairs.	ongoing	DPW	SB	Town, grant
2. Preserve narrow road widths both as a deterrent to speeding and for preservation of rural character.	ongoing	TSC	SB, PB	Town
3. Maintain existing unpaved roads as a reminder of our past while preserving safe shared use by vehicles and non-motorized traffic.	ongoing	TSC	DPW, PB	Town
4. Increase the perceived comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicycles on scenic roads through vehicle speed control and other safety measures (see Goals II and III).	2 yr	TSC	DPW, PB	Town, grant
IV B. Recommendation: Ensure that new housing, especially multi-unit developments, are designed and built in a manner consistent with the preservation of scenic roads and rural character.				
1. Negotiate with developers and builders of all new building construction to provide or contribute to trail and sidewalk connections to the trail network and to recreational facilities and town center.	ongoing	PB	SB	NA
2. Without changing road frontage requirements, minimize the number of curb cuts and the amount of pavement by encouraging the use of shared driveways where possible.	ongoing	PB	DPW	NA
3. Ensure that roads, driveways and walkways associated with new housing or business developments in the town center are designed to preserve village character.	ongoing	PB	-	NA
4. Require design and site plans of new construction to include features that preserve rural character.	ongoing	PB	HC	NA
5. Adopt a Dark Skies Policy; require public and private street lights and driveway and house lights to comply with the Dark Skies policy.	2 yr	PB	-	Note general bylaw
IV C. Recommendation: Preserve existing healthy shade trees throughout town, and establish a process for the replacement of trees along both non-scenic and scenic roads.				
1. Consider establishing an evidence-based Public Shade Tree Policy regarding trees on public lands (including road rights of way, sidewalks and trails) and private properties, that minimizes risks while maximizing preservation of scenic rural character.	1-2 yr	PSC, TW	SB, PB, DPW, CC	NA
2. Review all the data collected above before changing the tree manual or altering road characteristics.	1-2 yr	PSC, TW	SB, PB, DPW, CC	NA
3. Form a Shade Tree Committee to educate and engage the public in the importance of shade trees.	1-2 yr	SB	CC, PSC, TW	NA
4. Ensure that traffic safety improvements on roads and intersections, as prioritized by Sherborn's Complete Streets policy, are designed in ways that do not detract from Sherborn's rural character.	ongoing	TW, DPW	-	NA

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE		TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I. GOAL: MAINTAIN THE LONG-TERM QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF SHERBORN'S WATER RESOURCES					
I A. Recommendation: Compile existing information on Sherborn's water resources and track changes over time.					
1. Compile and maintain an electronic database of public and voluntary private wells, including water quality and quantity.	2 yr ongoing	BOH	WC, GPC	grants, town	
2. Use the database to generate a town-wide GIS map showing well locations, depths and yields.	5 yr	BOH	WC, GPC	grant	
3. Use the information to assess the impact of short and long term threats including high density development and climate change.	5 yr ongoing	BOH	WC, GPC	town	
I B. Recommendation: Strengthen Sherborn's readiness to respond to potential or actual threats to water resources, including drought and pollution, and to mount effective actions.					
1. Reestablish an active Groundwater Protection Committee to lead implementation of this recommendation.	1 yr	SB	BOH, CC, WC	NA	
2. Create and implement a regular testing program to monitor the quality and quantity of both shared and private water resources, and to document changes over time.	3 yr	BOH	WC, GPC	grant	
3. Promote and facilitate voluntary testing of private well water by residents.	ongoing	BOH	GPC, WC	NA	
4. Regularly monitor the water quality of Sherborn creeks and brooks, the Sherborn segment of the Charles River, Farm Pond and all of our Aquifers in collaboration with appropriate Town Committees, State agencies and regional organizations.	ongoing	GPC	WC, CC, DPW	state	
5. Establish frequent and focused monitoring of aquifers and groundwater at the town borders, in areas adjacent to potential sources of pollution in neighboring towns, and work with neighboring towns to identify potential sources of aquifer and groundwater contamination.	ongoing	GPC, SB	WC	town, DEP, EPA	
6. Partner with active groups in adjacent towns to raise awareness and advocate for solutions to serious threats to water resources at the regional and state level, including the Mass DEP and the EPA.	1 yr, ongoing	SB	UCCT, WC, GPC	DEP	
I C. Recommendation: Ensure that water protection and conservation practices in Sherborn provide the best possible protection of shared water resources based on the best available technology economically achievable (BAT) and best available scientific evidence.					
1. Support the efforts of the Board of Health and Conservation Commission to stay current and obtain needed information.	ongoing	CC, SB	BOH, CC	town	
2. Ensure that our current regulations and practices support Sherborn's ability to protect its water resources, given our total dependence on groundwater.	ongoing	CC, BOH	WC, GPC	town	
3. Improve stormwater management town wide, to make Sherborn a community leader in implementation of the current EPA Stormwater Management Plan.	ongoing	DPW	CC, PB	town	
4. Minimize salt use on Sherborn roads.	1 yr	DPW	GPC	NA	
I D. Recommendation: Plan for the long term sustainability of these resources by researching, evaluating and, when appropriate, adopting new approaches to water conservation and protection.					
1. Identify and address future risks to Sherborn's water resources, given the long term vision of Sherborn as a sustainable, ecologically and environmentally unique community.	ongoing	GPC BOH	CC, WC, BOH	NA	
2. Charge the Groundwater Protection Committee with keeping abreast of new developments and approaches to water protection and conservation, and evaluating their applicability to Sherborn.	1 yr	SB	BOH, CC, GPC	NA	
3. Strictly protect identified aquifers through strong regulation and conservation practices.	ongoing	BOH, CC	GPC	NA	

NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE		TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
4. Strictly protect the Farm Pond Watershed.	ongoing	FPAC, CC	GPC	NA	
5. Develop and promote Low Impact Development zoning bylaws for protection of areas most important for the recharge and protection of groundwater.	1 yr	PB	GPC, CC, BOH	NA	
6. Develop Large Construction-specific regulations to protect the quality and quantity of groundwater resources.	1 yr	BOH, CC, PB	GPC	NA	
I E. Recommendation: Develop an ongoing educational and outreach program to promote practices that protect the groundwater and surface water supply.					
1. Develop education and outreach programs for private homeowners, municipal officials, and business owners on well water protection, septic system maintenance, water conservation, controlling storm water runoff, environmentally conscious lawn care, and use and disposal of pesticides, petroleum and automotive products.	ongoing	BOH, CC	RCYC, GPC	NA	
2. Partner with regional schools to provide options for students' science or community service projects that contribute to monitoring and protection of Sherborn's water resources.	ongoing	SSC, DSRS	FPAC, CC, CSA, GPC	NA	
3. Provide links on the Town website to interactive and informative maps being developed by the State to protect water resources, including aquifers, brooks, and intermittent streams and their watersheds, wetlands, small ponds, and other major groundwater recharge areas, vernal pools, the Farm Pond watershed and the Charles River watershed.	2 yr	OSC	GPC, CC, SB	NA	
4. Use these maps to engage the community and schools in water protection and conservation.	ongoing	OSC	CC, SFTA, CSA	NA	
II. GOAL: PROTECT SHERBORN'S FORESTS & OVERALL BIODIVERSITY					
II A. Recommendation: Know and prioritize what we have: Establish and maintain a comprehensive, accessible inventory of all forested and open land in Sherborn including information on forest composition, biodiversity, connectivity, and invasive plants of greatest concern.					
1. Prioritize the conservation values of town-owned and private undeveloped and forested properties.	ongoing	OSC, CC	RLF, TFC, LAC	NA	
2. Create a town-wide map and database that includes the total area of Sherborn's natural landscapes, a quantification of areas of public vs. private forest holdings, the description of broad forest characteristics, and the locations of invasive plant and insect species.	ongoing	CC	OSC, TFC	NA	
II B. Recommendation: Preserve Sherborn's remaining natural landscapes and ecosystems by negotiating protection of critical undeveloped forested lands and wildlife corridors on private properties.					
1. Develop a proactive strategy for maintaining Chapter 61 protection, and adding permanent protection to selected conservation-critical Chapter 61 properties.	1 yr	OSC	SRLF, LAC, SB	NA	
2. Work with private landowners to negotiate protection of critical natural landscapes, especially those that provide forest connectivity and wildlife corridors that support biodiversity.	ongoing	OSC	SRLF, CC, LAC, SFTA	NA	

II C. Recommendation: Lead by example. Work toward a Land Management Plan for all public lands to maintain and improve ecosystem health, biodiversity, connectivity, and pollinator habitat.				
1. Create a plan to coordinate the activities and goals of the multiple committees and groups concerned with ecosystem protection and health.	ongoing	LMTF	CC, TFC	NA
2. Adopt the Sherborn Land Management Task Force Guiding Principles as a set of management goals and priorities for all public protected land.	done	CC	TFC, LMTF	NA
3. Adopt methods for forest management as described in the Massachusetts Forestry Best Management Practices Manual (MFBMPM) and the MA Trustees of Reservations Guidelines.	1 yr	CC	TFC, LMTF	NA
4. Develop a realistic plan to periodically and routinely monitor public forest conditions, cutting activities, and compliance with best management practices, and to oversee the spread or the removal of invasive species on all public forested lands in Sherborn.	1 yr	CC	LMTF, TW, TFC	NA
5. Encourage the Town Forest Committee, Conservation Commission, and members of other relevant boards to attend continuing education events to stay abreast of the latest research and best management practices.	ongoing	CC	LMTF	NA
6. Control and minimize the spread of invasive plants, particularly in recently disturbed forested areas and roadsides that are highly susceptible to colonization by invasives.	ongoing	CC	LMTF, DPW	NA
7. Maximize pollinator habitat on all town-owned lands and public properties.	ongoing	CC	LMTF	NA
8. Develop a land management funding strategy for Recommendation II C.	2 yr	CC	SB	NA
II D. Recommendation: Plan and implement public outreach strategies to promote sound forest management and protection of biodiversity and pollinator habitat on private properties, using the management of public lands as an example.				
1. Encourage private forest owners to employ sound ecosystem management approaches, as in Item C above.	ongoing	CC	SRLF, LMTF	NA
2. Encourage landowners to minimize hardscapes and manicured lawn areas, prioritize landscaping with native plants, reverse previous ecosystem damage by removing superfluous hardscapes and manicured areas, and restore natural areas.	ongoing	CC	FPAC, OSC	NA
3. Make available on the town website and advertise the wide variety of educational opportunities that are offered by regional organizations such as the Harvard Forest, the Trustees of Reservations, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, to educate Sherborn residents about biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.	ongoing	OSC	CC	NA
4. Work with teachers toward inclusion of local Sherborn environmental issues in the school science curriculum. Create resources for the schools on the wildlife habitat, biodiversity, endangered species, and migration routes that exist in Sherborn.	ongoing	OSC	CSA, DSRS, SSC	NA
III. GOAL: PRESERVE SHERBORN'S RURAL CHARACTER AND SCENIC BEAUTY BY PROTECTING AND MAINTAINING OPEN SPACE.				
III A. Recommendation: Protect existing conservation land and town-owned open space from development.				
1. Develop and implement a plan to permanently protect strategically important open space, Town Forest, and Conservation Commission lands.	2 yr	SB	CC, TFC	NA
2. Adopt the Sherborn Land Management Task Force Guiding Principles as a set of management goals and priorities for all public protected land.	done	CC, SB	DPW, TFC	NA

III B. Recommendation: Identify and prioritize crucial parcels of privately-owned, scenic open land that contribute significantly to Sherborn's rural character.				
1. Identify high-priority private parcels through a collaborative effort involving the existing committees, organizations, and interest groups concerned with open space and conservation.	ongoing	SRLF, LAC	OSC	NA
2. Evaluate feasibility of and potential mechanisms of protection for each parcel; develop an appropriate strategic plan for each, taking into account the tax revenue implications for the Town.	ongoing	LAC	SB, SRLF	NA
3. Maintain active communication among the Sherborn organizations above to keep abreast of alternative sources of funding and nonprofit partnership strategies for land acquisition and/or protection.	ongoing	LAC	PB, SRLF, UCCT	NA
III C. Recommendation: Protect lands identified and prioritized above, including private farms, Chapter 61 properties, and parcels with valued natural features including historic and aesthetically significant viewscapes and open space trail connections.				
1. Develop funding strategies and/or partnering mechanisms that will empower the town to exercise or transfer its right of first refusal on high-priority Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B lands that become available.	1-4 yr	SRLF	SB, LAC	NA
2. Acquire key parcels or development rights by gift, Conservation Restriction, or purchase.	--	SRLF	SB, LAC	TBD
3. Exploit grant opportunities for acquisition and/or preservation of high-priority open space.	2-7 yr	SB		grant
III D. Recommendation: Encourage landowners of at-risk large properties to favor development strategies that preserve scenic views, open space, and trail connections.				
1. Proactively cultivate relationships with "crucial parcel" landowners and explore alternative zoning strategies that allow development consistent with General Plan goals.	ongoing	SRLF, OSC	PB	NA
2. Inform owners of larger tracts of unprotected land of subdivision options that favor open space preservation, i.e. denser clustering of houses in exchange for preservation of a portion of the property as open space.	ongoing	PB, OSC	SB, ZBA	NA
3. Revise Zoning Bylaws to favor open space subdivisions, low impact developments, and site plan review criteria that value preservation of scenic viewscapes.	1 yr	PB	CC. BOH	NA
4. Adopt "Dark Skies" lighting standards as part of the site plan review of all new construction.	2 yr	PB		NA
III E. Recommendation: Cultivate support among the Sherborn citizenry for the preservation of open space and aesthetically significant viewscapes.				
1. Educate the public about the importance of protecting open space for the long term maintenance of Sherborn's unique character, desirability, and property values.	ongoing	OSC PB	SFTA	NA
2. Utilize existing communication tools (and create new ones) to encourage the public to explore and appreciate the town's open space. (E.g. Sherborn Forest and Trail walking/equestrian/bicycle events and website content, Sherborn Walks book).	ongoing	SFTA	UCCT RLF CC TFC	NA
3. Encourage citizen volunteerism to further the enjoyment and maintenance of open space.	ongoing	SFTA	CC TFC	NA

IV. GOAL: FORMULATE AND IMPLEMENT POLICIES THAT PROMOTE THE RETENTION AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY OF AGRICULTURAL LANDS.				
IV A. Recommendation: Document the extent of agricultural lands and diverse agricultural activities, as a visual tool to highlight their contributions to Sherborn's rural atmosphere and culture.				
1. Use the Massachusetts Agricultural Commission database to create a user-friendly map of agricultural properties and businesses in Sherborn.	3-4 yr	OSC	AGC, BOA	NA
2. Survey and document properties with significant non-commercial, small-scale agricultural activities such as backyard horse barns, chickens, orchards, et cetera.	3-4 yr	OSC	AGC	NA
3. Document other agriculture-related activities that contribute to residents' health, education, and sense of community.	3-4 yr	AGC	OSC	NA
4. Use these data to raise awareness of the contribution of agriculture to overall property values and desirability of Sherborn as a unique community in the greater SBton region.	4-7 yr	AGC	OSC	NA
IV B. Recommendation: Support the long-term economic viability of Sherborn's existing agricultural businesses.				
1. Ensure effective communication between the Agricultural Commission and other town boards, such as the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Board of Health regarding land use matters that affect the economic sustainability of agricultural businesses to ensure that any new local bylaws and regulations take into account the potential impact on working farms.	ongoing	AGC	PB CC BOH	NA
2. Consider allowing the long-term lease of selected open, non-forested public lands for agricultural purposes to strengthen economic viability of existing or new agricultural businesses while retaining other values of these lands such as ecosystem health and resilience and open space recreation.	ongoing	SB	AGC, CC, TFC	NA
3. Organize an awareness campaign that promotes local farms and encourages residents to consume locally-grown farm produce.	ongoing	AGC, SBA	OSC	NA
4. Continue to highlight Sherborn's farm products and services at special events.	ongoing	AGC		NA
5. Given the seasonal nature of farming, encourage and allow alternative commercial and community uses of agricultural properties for economic sustainability of agricultural businesses (see D).	yr 1	PB	AGC	NA
IV C. Recommendation: Work with individual landowners to develop strategies for protecting their land and retaining its use for agriculture over the long term.				
1. Educate agricultural landowners about the benefits of Chapter 61A designation.	ongoing	AGC	OSC, LAC	NA
2. Exercise purchase rights when desirable Chapter 61A agricultural properties become available, through town funding or through assignment of purchase rights to an appropriate conservation organization or land trust that will support its continued agricultural use.	ongoing	SB	SRLF, LAC	TBD
3. Encourage landowners to work with local conservation organizations to place permanent conservation or agricultural restrictions on large parcels of property.	ongoing	OSC	LAC, SRLF	NA
4. Ensure that State programs designed to support agriculture are known and used as needed by Sherborn farms.	done	AGC	AGC	NA
5. Continue discussion on potential use of transfer of development rights to allow the town to facilitate appropriate housing development in agreed-upon, appropriate locations while preserving open lands in agricultural use.	yr 2	PB	AGC	NA

IV D. Recommendation: Adopt Zoning Bylaws, regulations, and permitting standards that promote preservation of current agricultural uses while allowing limited development and alternative uses to provide owners of agricultural lands an economically viable alternative to sale and unrestricted development.				
1. Revise Zoning Bylaws to allow open space or cluster developments by right while permanently protecting a significant portion of the land for agricultural or other open space use.	yr 1	PB	AGC, OSC	NA
2. Explore other innovative ways through local bylaws to preserve agricultural lands consistent with Low Impact Development strategies.	yr 1	PB	AGC, OSC	NA
3. Revise bylaws and regulations to permit secondary uses of agricultural properties such as accessory rental housing, retail sales, agro-tourism, restaurants, or use for non-agricultural activities or events, subject to review and approval by relevant town boards.	done; yr 2	PB	AGC	NA
4. Explore possible revisions of bylaws and regulations that would allow farms to provide housing for farm workers and interns on site.	yr 4	PB	AGC, BOH	NA
IV E. Recommendation: Enhance appreciation of the history, science, and technology of farming by engaging the public, young and old.				
1. Encourage the Agricultural Commission and others to work with the local and regional School Committees to provide outreach and education to students on farming practices and farm life.	ongoing	AGC	CSA, DSRS	NA
2. Support efforts by the agricultural community and private initiatives to develop educational programs for all Sherborn residents about the important role of farming in Sherborn, the place of farming in regional history, and the science of sustainable farming.	ongoing	AGC	SHS, CSA, SSC	NA
3. Create community gardens.	yr 3	SGCs	OSC, SB	NA

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I. GOAL: PROTECT, IMPROVE, AND EXPAND THE USE OF OPEN SPACE AS A RECREATIONAL RESOURCE				
I A. Recommendation: Improve trail connections within Sherborn and with adjacent towns.				
1. Expand connectors between existing trails and neighborhoods by negotiating trail access agreements through private lands.	ongoing	SFTA	SB	NA
2. Improve Bay Circuit Trail connections from Sherborn to Ashland and Medfield so that users no longer need to travel along busy roads.	2 yr	SFTA	CC, TFC	grant
3. Extend and improve the Sherborn portion of the Upper Charles Rail Trail to establish a connection to the Bay Circuit Trail in the Barber Reservation, and improve accessibility for all users.	1-2 yr	UCCT	SFTA, PB	grant
4. Explore the feasibility of a "Rail with Trail" – a trail along the rail line to the center of Town – to provide an off-street trail connection to the Town Center.	4 yr	PB, SFTA	SB	grant
5. Coordinate Sherborn's Open Space and Recreation Plan with those of neighboring communities and regional planning and recreation groups, such as the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the Audubon Society, and the Trustees of Reservations.	1 yr	OSC, REC	PB	NA
I B. Recommendation: Provide safe and improved walkability along roads throughout Town for the health and enjoyment of residents.				
1. Create a system of roadside trails that provide safe travel for pedestrians, bike, and horseback riders along roads that lack sidewalks to improve the walkability of the entire Town.	ongoing	SFTA	PB	NA
2. Construct additional sidewalks annually, according to a predetermined prioritization plan.	ongoing	DPW	PB	Town
I C. Recommendation: Create new easements and walkways to link Sherborn's trail system to Town Center trailheads and businesses (see also: Town Center section, Goal IV).				
1. Create a multi-use trail along the railroad tracks to the Town Center.	5 yr	SFTA	DPW	grant
2. Extend walkways for pedestrians and bike lanes for cyclists that connect trail systems and neighborhoods to gathering places in Town Center.	3-7 yr	DPW	PB	grant
3. Wherever possible, connect unpaved walkways and roadside trails as links from Town Center to adjacent neighborhoods and trail systems.	ongoing	SFTA	DPW	Town
4. Add bike lanes and shared lanes for cyclists on main roads that connect to gathering places in Town Center (see also: Circulation section).		DPW	PB	Town, grant
I D. Recommendation: Promote public awareness, usage, and support of existing open space and trail systems.				
1. Support efforts to improve trail use and accessibility through improved signage and maps.	1 yr	SFTA	CC, TFC	Town
2. Create easily-visible, small-scale, unpaved parking areas at selected trail heads.	3 yr	CC, TFC	DPW	Town
3. Improve a few selected trails to be more accommodating to a broader range of the Sherborn residents, in particular the elderly and physically challenged, especially near the Town Center, with connections to 55+ developments.	1-3 yr	DAC, DPW	COA, PB	Town, grants
4. Organize and support activities and events that promote the trails and encourage local and regional residents to use our open space.	ongoing	SFTA	OSC, LMTF	NA
5. Organize and support public trail workdays for trail maintenance and improvement.	ongoing	SFTA	OSC, LMTF	

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I E. Recommendation: Improve and support management of existing publicly-accessible open space resources, including trail systems and Farm Pond waterfront.				
1. Establish and maintain effective communication and collaboration among Town Committees and organizations concerned with maintaining Sherborn's open spaces and trails as a recreational resource.	ongoing	OSC	SFTA , LMTF	NA
2. Consider hiring a Recreation Manager to oversee the recreational infrastructure of the Town, including organized facilities and Farm Pond Reservation, and to support and facilitate the efforts of the Recreation Commission, Farm Pond Advisory Committee, and Sherborn Forest and Trail Association.	2 yr	SB, REC	FPAC	NA
3. Establish a plan for long-term funding and management of public lands and trails.	3 yr	CC, TFC	SB AC	NA
4. Encourage public land and trail stewardship with local volunteers.	ongoing	SFTA, LMTF	CC	NA
5. Maintain a user-friendly database and map of publicly-accessible open space, Chapter 61B designated as recreational, and other conservation-restricted properties for use by Town officials, boards, and committees.	1 yr	OSC	BOA, CC	Town
6. Use the Barber Reservation and other public parcels as "showcase" sites; improve and promote the trail systems on these parcels to demonstrate the value of well-maintained, well-marked trails.	ongoing	LMTF, SFTA	CC	Grants
7. Continue to protect the water quality of Farm Pond and support current management of the public waterfront as a recreational resource for safe and healthy water-based recreation.	ongoing	FPAC	CC	NA
8. Explore and evaluate ways to promote the Charles River as a recreational resource for Sherborn residents and visitors.	2 yr	UCCT	REC, SFTA	NA
II. GOAL: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE SHERBORN'S ORGANIZED RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS				
II A. Recommendation: Design a realistic management, personnel, business, and funding plan that can sustainably support current and future organized recreational programs and facilities.				
1. Clarify and simplify the complex system of revenue streams, funding mechanisms, and responsibilities currently in place for recreational facilities and programs.	2 yr	SB, REC	ADV	NA
2. Consider hiring a Recreation Director to oversee the recreational resources of the Town. (see Goal I, Recommendation E.2)	1 yr	SB, REC	FPAC	Town
3. Explore possibilities of more user self-funding for certain programs and facilities.	3 yr	REC	SB	NA
4. Gauge the willingness of the Town to build a regional sports facility for revenue generation, to fund Sherborn's recreation programs and to provide a revenue stream for the Town (see also: Recommendation B: Laurel Farm, below).	4 yr	REC	SB, ADV	Town
II B. Recommendation: Repair, maintain, and improve the recreational infrastructure at Laurel Farm to support current and future needs.				
1. Agree upon and implement a plan for maintaining resilient playing surfaces at Laurel Farm that are sustainable over the long term, considering the costs and benefits of alternative options.	4 yr	REC	SB	Town
2. Adopt the Recreation Commission's plan for future Laurel Farm redesign and renovation and implement in phases as agreed upon by the Town.	4-7 yr	SB	DPW	Town

RECREATIONAL RESOURCES	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
II C. Recommendation: Make Ward Park area on Cemetery Lane a central gathering place and welcome/information center for residents and users of recreational resources, both in Town Center and Town-wide trail systems.				
1. Assemble a Ward Park Working Group, including representatives from the Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Playground Committee, Planning Board, DPW, and others to make an agreed-upon plan for improvement of the Ward Park area.	1 yr	REC	CC	NA
2. Ensure that any proposed alterations are guided by Low Impact Development principles to maximize groundwater recharge, minimize stormwater runoff, and protect the pond.	ongoing	CC	PB, DPW	NA
3. Make the area near the pond a site for nature/environmental education.	5 yr	CC	CSA SGC	Town, grant
II D. Recommendation: Establish and maintain effective communication and collaboration among Town Committees and organizations concerned with all of Sherborn's recreational resources.				
1. Maintain close collaboration between the Recreation Commission and the Farm Pond Advisory Committee.	ongoing	REC, FPAC		NA
2. Explore ways to integrate organized recreational infrastructure and programs with open space recreational infrastructure, i.e. the trail system.	1 yr	REC	SFTA	NA
3. Use the organized Recreation Commission communication network to increase use and appreciation of open space recreational resources.	ongoing	REC	CC SFTA	NA

CULTURAL RESOURCES	TIME TARGET	LEADER(S)	OTHERS INVOLVED	FUNDING SOURCE
I. GOAL: PROMOTE PRESERVATION OF HISTORIC ASSETS				
I A. Recommendation: Update and expand documentation of Sherborn's historical assets in accordance with the vision of our historical legacy and character.				
1. Use existing written histories and updated research to develop a narrative or "Sherborn Story" that integrates and celebrates our historical legacy, from pre-settlement to more recent times.	1-2 yr	HC, SHS	PB	Town
2. Update and build on the 1981 and 1999 Sherborn Historic Assets Survey to document the present status of historic structures, sites, and viewscapes, and their losses.	ongoing	HC	SHS	Town, grants
3. Create user-friendly maps, using Google Earth 3D and/or MA GIS resources, to create historic assets maps with layers showing key historic features, including structures, burying grounds, and stone walls on a background of the existing topography, roads, and other structures.	2 yr	HC	CEM	Town
I B. Recommendation: Promote educational efforts that increase public awareness and appreciation of Sherborn's historic assets to encourage preservation and stewardship of those assets.				
1. Make information on the historic character of Town-owned and privately owned historic buildings, structures, monuments, cemeteries, parks, and landscapes widely available in a variety of formats, including the mapping tools in Recommendation A, that can be readily accessed by residents and visitors.	2-3 yr	HC, HDC	SHS	Town
2. Use the narrative and the above tools to identify and highlight historic assets on the basis of their contributions to our historic narrative and the distinctive historic look and feel of the Town.	ongoing	HC, HDC	SHS	Town
3. Educate key Town officials and leaders in the use of the Historic Assets Survey and mapping tools.	ongoing	HC, HDC	--	Town
4. Educate and encourage local realtors to emphasize historic value when marketing properties. Provide all available historic information to realtors and new owners when significant properties are put on the market and change hands.	ongoing	HC, HDC	--	NA
5. Provide the informational resources generated in Recommendation A to key historic property owners to encourage preservation and stewardship of structures on the Sherborn Historic Assets Survey as well as other historic sites and landscapes.	ongoing	HC	--	Town
6. Provide property owners with information, guidance, and assistance in establishing historic preservation easements on their property or on specific features or structures thereon.	ongoing	HC	--	NA
7. Create an informal community group that supports and connects owners of historic properties to promote the sharing of knowledge and resources.	1-2 yr	SHS	HC	NA
8. Regionally cooperate and collaborate with other towns to document and celebrate our history and share educational resources.	ongoing	HC	-	NA
9. Use the map resources in Recommendation A to promote Sherborn regionally as a destination for historical tourism and produce materials for self-guided tours by vehicle, bicycle, or foot.	ongoing	HC	PB, SB	Town
10. Generate knowledge and appreciation of Sherborn's history by installing informational signage at significant landmarks and historic sites on public lands.	1-2 yr	HC	SB, DPW	Town
11. As street signs are replaced, include scenic road designation on new signs.	ongoing	PB	DPW	Town
I C. Recommendation: Adopt local governance practices and bylaws that strengthen the Town's ability to preserve existing historic assets and viewscapes.				
1. Maintain clear lines of communication between the Historical Commission and the relevant boards and committees to increase awareness of the need for historic preservation (e.g. the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector, Director of Community Maintenance and	ongoing	HC	SB, PB, etc.	NA

Development, Cemetery Commission, and Board of Assessors).					
2. Educate relevant boards about historical designations as well as preservation tools and procedures at the local, state, and federal levels that apply to local permitting so that all Town officials understand the regulatory roles of historic commissions and designations of historic properties.	ongoing	HC, HDC	--	Town	
3. Require identification of historic assets on plot maps submitted in connection with property line alterations, subdivisions, and special permits.	ongoing	PB	HC	NA	
4. Encourage the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector, and Board of Selectmen to consider historic preservation goals if relevant when considering proposals and issuing permits.	ongoing	HC	PB, ZBA, BI, SB	NA	
5. Review local bylaws and procedures that may be used to discourage demolition or neglect of existing historical structures.	1-2 yr	HC, PB	BI	Town	
6. Create a Historic Preservation Easement/Special Permit provision in the Town Zoning bylaws. This would provide some flexibility in zoning in order to preserve historic structures that might otherwise be demolished.	1-2 yr	PB	HC	NA	
7. Explore ways to identify and protect historic cart paths, stone walls, and vistas valued by the public that contribute to Sherborn's historic, rural, and agricultural character.	1-2 yr	PB, HC	CC	Town	

I D. Recommendation: Expand the use of local, state, and national Historic District and Historic Register designations to highlight Sherborn's historic assets.

1. Evaluate the value and feasibility of including additional properties in the local Town Center Historic District.	2-3 yr	HC, HDC	PB, SB	NA
2. Extend local and historic district protection to any property on the Historic Asset Survey, whose owner expresses interest in being included, by adding to the current local Historic District or creating a single-property local "historic district" or "historic landmark" by means of the process described in MGL Chapter 40C.	ongoing	HDC, HC	PB, SB	NA
3. Encourage owners of private structures designated on the Sherborn Historic Assets Survey to apply for a voluntarily-accepted listing on the National Register of Historic Places and assist with the application process.	ongoing	HC	PB, SB	Town

I E. Recommendation: Continue to support, protect, and maintain Sherborn's public historic assets and resources over the long term.

1. Support the restoration and maintenance of Sherborn's historic burying grounds.	ongoing	CEM	HC, HDC	Town, grant
2. Support the Sherborn Historical Society and the Sherborn Historical Society Museum for long-term preservation of its collected objects and documents.	ongoing	HC	SB	Town
3. Document and preserve remaining historic mill sites, factories, and evidence of precolonial life in Sherborn by seeking academic interest in, and funding for, archaeological surveys and other research projects.	ongoing	HC	HC, SHS	Town, grant
4. Plan for long-term funding of important Town-owned historic assets.	ongoing	SB, ADV,	--	NA

References and Links

APR Program

“Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program Details.” www.mass.gov/service-details/agricultural-preservation-restriction-apr-program-details

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National Center for Environmental Health. “Healthy Community Design.” CS240921. U.S. Center for Disease Control, n.d. www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/toolkit/Healthy_Community_Design_Checklist.pdf

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Davis and Tennis 2014

Emily Davis and Brandon Tennis, *Listening to the Landscape: Managing the Barber Reservation, Sherborn, Massachusetts*. Sherborn, Mass.: Sherborn Conservation Commission and Land Management Task Force, 2014.

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Links to Additional Online Resources

International Dark Sky Association: <https://www.darksky.org>

Commonwealth of Massachusetts (mass.gov) sites

- **Status of Housing Production Plans in Massachusetts Towns and Cities (map)**
[http://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/08/07/HPP MAP 2018.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/08/07/HPP%20MAP%202018.pdf)
- **Smart Growth Smart Energy Toolkit, 2015**
www.mass.gov/service-details/smart-growth-smart-energy-toolkit-modules-accessory-dwelling-units-adu

Town of Sherborn sites

- **Energy Reduction Plan, 2011:**
<http://www.sherbornma.org/sites/sherbornma/files/uploads/everydayreduction.pdf>
- **Housing Production Plan, 2017:**
www.sherbornma.org/sites/sherbornma/files/uploads/sherbornhpp_060917.pdf
- **Master Plan Supplementary Financial Information, 2019:**
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