

TOWN OF SHARON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Sharon Planning Board



Consultants

Community Design Partnership, Boston, MA
MapWorks, Norwell, MA

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Sharon Planning Board

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***Thanks to all the Sharon residents and Town staff and officials
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Sharon's Community Development Plan	6
Vision Statement and Process	8
The Context	16
Open Space and Natural Resource Protection	21
Housing and Residential Development	37
Economic Development	67
Proposed Land Use Plan	84
Appendix: Economic Data	88

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Funded by the state through the Executive Order 418 program, the Sharon Community Development Plan focuses on three areas of fundamental concern for Sharon’s future: Natural Resource and Open Space Protection, Housing, and Economic Development. The purpose of the state program is to help communities accommodate housing and economic development while protecting natural resources and open space. The Plan is a guidance document containing a vision and goals for Sharon’s future development and a set of policies and strategies to help Town decision makers and residents shape future development to achieve these goals.

The Town of Sharon is a mature suburban community with an unusual combination of assets ranging from a state park, a Massachusetts Audubon sanctuary, and an 845-acre lake to a handful of working farms, a viable town center and a commuter rail connection to Boston and Providence. Over a third of the Town is in protected open space, there are over 2,000 acres of wetlands and there is no public sewer system. The Town depends on local aquifers for its water supply. Much of the remaining open land potentially available for development in Sharon is either increasingly expensive to develop because of site conditions or tied up in institutional lands that are not expected to be open for development in the near future. This means that land use change in the future is increasingly likely to take the form of redevelopment – changes to areas that already have houses or businesses located on the land.

The Vision Statement for Sharon’s future that was created through this planning process emphasizes balancing development with preservation. Sharon faces several challenges in the future:

- How can the Town continue to ensure the quality and quantity of its groundwater and surface water resources?
- How can Sharon preserve town character while accommodating change?
- How can Sharon increase housing diversity, both in the type of housing and in affordability?
- How can the Town increase the nonresidential tax base and reduce the residential tax burden?

In order to meet these challenges and achieve Sharon’s vision for the future, the Town needs to balance goals to gain multiple benefits and understand when it is necessary to make trade-offs, recognizing that at times it is not possible to achieve one hundred percent of every goal. However, in some cases it will be possible to achieve multiple goals or solve more than one problem by applying a set of related strategies in the same location or project area.

Eight Key Strategies to Meet the Challenges and Achieve the Vision

Attract more investment to Sharon Center

Sharon can help meet several of its most important challenges simultaneously by finding a way to attract more investment to the Town Center, but it needs to solve the wastewater constraints on development. Intensifying the level of development in the Town Center is a strategy that can bring more housing choice and affordability as well as a greater variety of businesses to the Center and make it a livelier center of community life. Residents of new housing in the Town Center could take advantage of the commuter rail service without using their cars. At the same time, they would provide a larger market for any new businesses.

- Undertake a wastewater management plan for the Town Center and implement the plan
- Consider a mixed-use overlay district for the Center to attract both business and housing
- Promote small and medium-scale multifamily development, including empty-nester and senior housing
- Allow apartments above ground floor retail by right rather than special permit
- Allow more parking options for apartments in the Town Center

Establish a framework for more investment in nonresidential and mixed-use zones

Although the value of business investment and the number of jobs in Sharon have risen over the last 20 years, housing values have risen much faster, increasing the residential tax burden substantially. Residents tend to be reluctant to expand the areas where business is permitted, so efforts to increase the nonresidential tax base must focus on increasing the value of business investment in real estate.

- Rename the Development and Industrial Committee to be the Economic Development Committee and revive the membership. The goals of the EDC should be:
 - To strive towards an overall nonresidential tax base of 10% of total property value
 - To keep in touch with property and business owners in the business zones and work with them on expansions and redevelopment
 - To attract appropriate new development to Sharon's business areas, including the Town Center
 - To study the potential for expanding the area zoned for professional offices.
- Revise the Light Industry zoning requirement to permit more than 4 stories in 80 feet in order to accommodate office buildings
- Consider establishing Planned Development Overlay Districts for institutional properties that could be appropriate for mixed-use development by special permit of the Planning Board. Although these properties are not currently expected to be offered for development, it is important for the Town to think ahead about the potential.
- Potential for nonresidential development such as a conference center, corporate campus or spa

- Creation of a business tax base with uses that have limited impacts on residential neighborhoods
- Development of a bylaw that establishes required percentages of open space and provides design and other performance standards for development
- Detailed master planning by project proponents with close review by the Planning Board through a special permit process would allow substantial Town oversight

Create a housing policy framework with multiple strategies

Sharon residents have become increasingly conscious that the Town has a very homogeneous housing stock, with nearly 90% single family homes and rising prices. More variety in housing types and prices are needed to accommodate the changing housing needs of residents at different points in the life cycle. Sharon already has some of the tools it needs to meet the challenge of creating more affordable housing. This planning process has resulted in the reactivation of the Sharon Housing Partnership, new efforts to identify town-owned property that could be appropriate for affordable housing, and work to facilitate the success of desirable Chapter 40B affordable housing projects (“friendly 40Bs”).

- Continue efforts to revive the Sharon Housing Partnership to lead affordable housing policy.
 - Housing Partnerships are volunteer groups appointed by the Board of Selectmen and composed of people with expertise in housing, real estate, and affordable housing programs.
 - The Partnership will advise and assist the Town in developing and implementing an effective affordable housing policy
- Make Town property available for affordable housing and senior housing, including consideration of the Wilber School site
- Modify zoning to encourage housing diversity in type and cost, for example:
 - Affordable accessory apartments
 - Affordable duplexes and single family homes on nonconforming lots
 - Mixed use overlay districts in the Town Center and the Business B zones with affordability requirements for housing creation

Protect environmentally sensitive areas

Sharon faces the challenge of continuing to protect the environmental health of its water resources and preserving the Town’s attractive suburban character while providing more diversity in housing cost and type and attracting more business investment in order to reduce the residential tax burden. The Town has been careful to protect its drinking water supply through land use regulations and conservation efforts and has also implemented efforts to avoid pollution of Lake Massapoag and the Town’s other ponds, streams, and wetlands.

- Protect open space parcels within wellhead protection areas of potential future wells
- Seek conservation restrictions on remaining open space parcels adjacent to Lake Massapoag

- Continue to promote public awareness of environmentally sustainable best landscape practices on private property as they affect water and wetland resources.
- Promote protection and best management practices of areas identified as rare species habitat
- Make Conservation Subdivision Zoning the by-right, mandatory zoning for development sites of 5 acres or more to promote preservation of open space in large blocks.

Create a town-wide network of pedestrian and bicycle routes

Although Sharon has trail networks within open space areas, as well as portions of regional trails, the Town’s tremendous open space resources should be linked with other town destinations, such as schools and the Town Center, through a marked, town-wide network of routes for safe walking and biking.

- Build on the work of the Sharon Friends of Conservation
- Identify and provide small parking areas at trail access points
- Map out and provide signs for bicycle and pedestrian routes.

Guiding Principles for Land Use

In making decisions about future land use in Sharon, Town decision makers and residents can be guided by thinking of four categories of lands:

- ***Lands for permanent protection***
 - Potential future wellhead protection areas
 - Integration of protected common open space in conservation subdivisions into the Town’s open space network
 - Certified vernal pools
- ***Lands for enhanced management and outreach***
 - Raising awareness among private property owners, both residential and business, about best practices on upland buffers to streams, ponds and wetlands is very important. Private owners will always control lands adjacent to many of Sharon’s water and wetland resources and their actions will affect the environmental health of these resources.
- ***Lands for limited development***
 - Residential development sites of 5 acres or more should be designated for mandatory, by right Conservation Subdivision Zoning. The fact that there are not very many large sites left is in itself an argument for assuring that remaining residential development occur in a manner which promotes preservation of blocks of open space that can be integrated into the Town’s overall open space network.
 - Planned Development Overlay Districts can serve as a framework for limited development of institutional properties should they come up for development in the future.

- *Lands for development and redevelopment*
 - Resolve the septic constraints in the Town Center and encourage mixed use development
 - Establish mixed use overlay districts at Shaws Plaza and Heights Plaza to encourage combined residential and retail redevelopment
 - Work with property owners and business owners in the Light Industry zoning district to facilitate more business investment

SHARON'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

What is an EO 418 Community Development Plan?

As a result of Executive Order 418, issued by the Governor in January, 2000, all communities in Massachusetts became eligible for state assistance to create a Community Development Plan. Four state agencies, led by the Department of Housing and Community Development and working together in the Inter-Agency Working Group, created a program and a manual to guide communities in creating a Community Development Plan. The purpose of the program was to help communities plan to accommodate housing in an appropriate balance with protecting natural resources and open space, while providing for economic development and planning for transportation needs. The initiative was designed to build on the foundation of the state's program to provide every community with a series of maps showing the community's remaining capacity for new development under existing zoning – the "buildout analysis."

A Community Development Plan is not a full Master Plan. The state program focuses on the creation of a vision statement and identification of assets and liabilities followed by only four of the elements of a full Master Plan: Natural Resources and Open Space, Housing, Economic Development, and Transportation. In addition, under the EO 418 program, communities were permitted to submit existing plans as equivalent to one or more of the required EO 418 elements, in order to focus more of the effort and funding on the elements where there had been less local planning attention.

In 2002, the Town of Sharon asked the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to facilitate a visioning process as the first step in completing a Community Development Plan under Executive Order 418. In late fall 2002, after completing the Visioning Process, the Town of Sharon contacted the consulting team of Community Design Partnership (CDP) and MapWorks, who were pre-qualified by the state for EO 418 planning work, to help prepare the EO418 Community Development Plan. CDP assisted the Planning Board in creating a proposed scope for the project, which at the end of 2002 was submitted to the state Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) for approval. Because the Town's transportation issues were included in the regional transportation planning process and other elements of the Community Development Plan were of more immediate concern, the Town asked that the regional transportation plan be accepted as equivalent to the transportation element of the Community Development Plan. The request was granted and in late spring of 2003, the scope was approved by the IAWG.

Community Participation

The Sharon Planning Board took the lead in the planning process and functioned as the planning committee for this process. All of the Planning Board discussions for this plan occurred as part of the agenda of regular Planning Board meetings and were therefore open to members of the public, who were

free to ask questions and participate. Three town-wide meetings were also held. In July 2003, the Planning Board and the consultants began the planning process with a public meeting in the Recreation Center. Maps from the Town's GIS office and from the state's buildout out process were exhibited and fact sheets on existing conditions and trends, prepared by the consultants, were distributed. The Planning Board and the consultants explained the EO 418 process, and the consultants gave a PowerPoint presentation overview focusing especially on housing and economic development. The presentations sparked discussion among the approximately 30 people present. A second town-wide meeting was held in the Library in early February 2004 to focus particularly on housing issues, especially affordable housing. Approximately 25 people attended the meeting. A third town-wide meeting was held on June 16 to present the entire draft plan for public review. About 10 people attended the meeting. There was general support for the plan along with some discussion of the pros and cons of several of the plan's recommendations and suggestions to include several issues that need further attention from the Town.

VISION STATEMENT AND PROCESS

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In 2002, the Town of Sharon asked the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to facilitate a visioning process as the first step in completing a Community Development Plan under Executive Order 418. The resulting vision statement describes the future that residents of Sharon would like to see for their town. The remainder of this chapter is the report prepared by MAPC staff on the visioning process.

The Sharon Vision Statement

The Town of Sharon seeks a careful balance between the need for economic development, encompassing residential and non-residential uses, with the preservation of key natural, scenic, historic, and recreational resources.

To fulfill this vision, the Community Development Plan shall articulate a strategy that promotes:

- A climate that attracts and supports a variety of community service and business opportunities in the town center, along Route 1 and in other non-residentially zoned areas;
- Expansion of housing choices to meet the needs of various household sizes and income levels, while maintaining Sharon’s existing affordable housing supply;
- Effective management of water resources to ensure adequate quality and quantity for public consumption, recreation and wildlife;
- Augmenting the number, variety and maintenance of recreation areas, facilities and programs;
- Improved accessibility and awareness of recreation facilities/programs for all citizens;
- Maintenance and improvement of multi-modal transportation and circulation systems, to protect neighborhood integrity and promote safety, mobility and economic development;
- Strategies that reduce traffic congestion, including enhanced bus service, construction of sidewalks and multi-purpose trails, and traffic restrictions.

Context

In January 2000, Governor Cellucci issued Executive Order 418, an initiative that provides Massachusetts' communities with up to \$30,000 in planning services to complete a community development plan. The plan must address the open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation needs of a community, while considering future development options.

The Sharon Planning Board viewed Executive Order 418 as an exciting opportunity to articulate a community vision and create a blueprint for action. To kick off the process, the Planning Board sponsored a visioning workshop that served as a forum for Sharon's citizens to share their concerns, hopes and desires for the Town. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) was hired to plan and facilitate the workshop.

Preparation

A great deal of preparation ensured that the workshop was a success. MAPC staff met with the Planning Board to design the workshop and assign tasks. Planning Board members enthusiastically assumed specific roles, including outreach, the preparation of a visual tour of Sharon and publicizing the event through the distribution of fliers, press releases, and interviews on community access television.

Summary of the Event

At 8:00 pm on April 23, 2002, approximately 80 concerned citizens gathered at the Community Center for the two-hour event.

1. WELCOME

Gina Maniscalco, a representative of the Planning Board, welcomed everyone to the Visioning Workshop.

2. IMPRESSIONS OF SHARON

Ms. Maniscalco and Leah Kramer-Heyman, a local high school student, presented a visual tour of Sharon using photographs. Ms. Kramer-Heyman highlighted a 3rd grade planning experience, and discussed how it affected her views of Sharon and the need to proactively plan to reach desired goals.

3. INTRODUCTION TO GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The MAPC consultant team explained the buildout analysis, which was completed by MAPC in 2000 with funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The series of five maps portrays an approximate vision of what Sharon will look like once every parcel of buildable land is developed according to existing regulations. The buildout analysis acts as the foundation upon which the community development plan is built.

The MAPC team briefly outlined the agenda and discussed brainstorming ground rules.

4. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

Participants divided into subgroups to discuss one of four issue areas (Open Space/Natural Resources, Housing, Economic Development, Circulation/Transportation). The MAPC team facilitated the discussion, and enlisted individuals to act as scribes and spokesmen. Within a 40-minute time frame, each subgroup identified the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities of their issue of concern. Using the “Voting Dots” method, subgroup participants identified and ranked priority issues. The subgroup was then challenged to identify concepts for inclusion in a draft guiding statement.

5. REPORT BACK TO FULL GROUP

A spokesman from each subgroup presented his/her group’s most salient points and concepts for inclusion in the draft guiding statement. Additional thoughts were solicited from the full group.

The MAPC consultant explained that they will work with the Planning Board to craft a draft Vision Statement using the input gathered that evening. The vision statement is broad in concept and aims to capture the essence and consensus of the group. It articulates residents’ vision for the future, representing what the Town strives to become. The draft Vision Statement will shape the subsequent stages of the community development planning process. It will be further refined to incorporate additional public input and research findings, and the final Vision Statement will appear in the Community Development Plan itself.

6. NEXT STEPS

Ms. Maniscalco reminded participants that the Vision Workshop is only a beginning. She offered possible ways in which the conversations might continue, and asked if volunteers would be interested in working with the Planning Board and consultant to craft the draft Vision Statement. She explained that, within the next few months, the Planning Board will hire a consultant to guide the Town through the next phases of the community development planning process. Upon selection of a consultant and finalization of a scope of services, the planning process will take approximately 1 year and additional public input will be solicited.

In her concluding remarks, Ms. Maniscalco underscored the importance of proactive planning, so that citizens can ensure a high quality of life for those who live, work and play in Sharon now and in the future.

The Vision Statement

In two meetings, members of the Planning Board, interested volunteers and the consultant convened to draft the vision statement. (The Vision Statement can be examined on page 1).

Brainstorming Results

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Strengths

- Location-equi-distance Boston/Providence (19)
- Transportation/train (14)
- Open Space (13)
- Great schools (6)
- Lake (5)
- All Town Services (4)
- Diversity/cultural (4)
- Low crime rates (3)
- Lack of industry (2)
- Self-sufficient water supply (1)
- Existing business (1)
- Older buildings (1)
- Wildlife(1)
- Crescent Ridge (1)
- Clean air
- Trees

Weaknesses

- High taxes (10)
- Town hostility to industrial development (9)
- Competition from surrounding towns (8)
- Lack of long-term planning (8)
- Lack of industry (8)
- Lack of commercial development along Route 1 (8)
- Inability to be decisive – follow through on development (6)
- Lack of cell phone tower (4)
- Lack of office park zoning (3)
- Too much open space (3)
- Taxes too high for seniors (3)
- Lack of sewer system (2)
- Lack of downtown commercial development (2)
- NIMBY (2)
- Limited zoning options (2)
- Lack of rental stock (1)
- Lack of water capacity (1)
- Lack of affordable senior housing (1)
- Good breakfast restaurant? Where is it? (1)
- Decline in schools (1)
- Lack of parking
- Poorly planned street system

Opportunities

- Development along Route 1 (13)
- Relooking at Wilber School (as commercial space) (12)
- Survey for types of business (6)

- Re-develop Deb. Sampson property (6)
- Expand center of town development (5)
- Age restricted housing zone (4)
- Increase # of business uses within commercial zones (4)
- Relocate fire dept/town hall space subdivisions (3)
- Open space office park zoning (3)
- Open space subdivisions (3)
- Zone all proposed lots for industrial (3)
- Look at other towns as examples (2)
- Increase commercial tax rates (2)
- Expand Cobb Corner (2)
- Development of Rattle Snake Hill & Crescent Ridge (1)
- Add-on to Heights Plaza (1)
- Relocate commercial center to E. Foxboro Street

Goal Statement Concepts

- Work with what we have
- Maximize what we have
- Serious planning/Better analysis
- Maintain integrity/charm w/o sacrificing neighborhoods

OPEN SPACE/NATURAL RESOURCES

Strengths

- Trees/rural character (10)
- Walking paths (9)
- Moosehill/Borderland (6)
- Lake/beaches (6)
- Scenic roads (5)
- Historic sites (5)
- Working farms (1)
- Parks
- Tennis court
- Terrific recreational department
- Wildlife diversity
- Garden
- Beach improvement plan
- Public compost area

Weaknesses

- House development on open spaces (10)
- No bike paths (10)
- Paths (not maintained and not well-publicized) (7)
- No marked trails (conservation land) (5)
- Lack of wildlife management (4)
- Lake (water supply) (3)
- Water pressure (service/supply) (2)
- Resources (lack of awareness) (1)
- Pollution Gavins Pond (Geese) (1)

- Lack of funding for beach plan (1)
- No pet access to Moosehill
- Lack of open space in town center
- No grass on East soccer field

Opportunities

- Rattlesnake Hill (10)
- Rte 1-development (build where appropriate) (9)
- Additional exercise/nature trails (7)
- Extending recreational opportunities (more ballfields) (6)
- Need to preserve wetlands (5)
- Additional education on conservation (4)
- Education on water supply (3)
- Bounce board (Sacred Heart) (1)
- Additional gardens (1)
- Improve maintenance of beach

Goal Statement Concepts

- Preserve and enhance rural character of the town (i.e. walking paths, bike paths, lakes, beaches)
- Encourage ways to utilize open spaces (i.e. trail maps, open marking)
- Encourage cluster development to preserve open space
- Provide financial assistance for open space protection and enhancement of recreation opportunities

HOUSING

Strengths

- Natural, rural qualities (12)
- Town center -walkable, kid-friendly, neighborhood, transit-friendly (10)
- Community efforts to preserve open space (9)
- Good home upkeep, well-maintained (5)
- High property values (5)
- Beautiful open space (4)
- Large lot zoning (2)
- Proximity to Boston & Providence (2)
- Religious diversity (1)
- Limited amount of developable space
- Diversity of housing (i.e. historical - modern)
- We have low-income housing
- School system
- People's relationships
- No "bad areas"
- Very low crime rate
- Relatively low traffic
- Great potential to preserve and improve quality of life
- Quality of construction (due to bldg. dept.)

Weaknesses

- Lack of proactive planning (13)
- Over-development (8)
- Lack of affordable senior housing (7)
- Historically, few zoning choices available to developers (4)
- Lack of mixed -use in certain places (i.e. senior housing over supermarket) (4)
- Lack of community concern (3)
- Dilution of Municipal services due to homogeneous (single-family) development and sprawl (3)
- Lack of coherent approach to new houses (2)
- Lack of Diversity in the mix (1)
- Lack of non-residential tax base (1)
- Vulnerability to large new developments(1)
- Lack of affordable housing
- Senior housing not integrated
- Complex & adversarial relationship between town boards & developers
- High property taxes

Opportunities

- Re-zone for affordable age qualified owned housing (16)
- Continue preservation efforts (10)
- Wilber school (7)
- Higher-density development downtown (mixed-use) (6)
- Opportunity for light industrial zones (5)
- Allow larger homes to become 2-family homes (4)
- CSD Zoning By-law (3)
- Office suites, condos, apartments (1)
- Rezone to suburban zoning for multi-family (1)
- Smaller houses that would be affordable (1)
- Opportunity to zone smaller lots (1)
- Coordinate Re-zoning with neighboring towns
- Re-development for municipal use

Goal Statement Concepts

- Conservation
- Affordability of housing
- Proactive planning/zoning

TRANSPORTATION/CIRCULATION

Strengths

- Train network available - not only Sharon station (10)
- Rural road character (8)
- Access to major highways (regional impacts important also) (6)
- Abundant parking at station (train) (5)
- Senior citizen bus for pick-up (also disabled) – COA (3)
- Bus access at Cobbs Corner (3)
- Some areas of adequate sidewalk (3)
- Availability of cab service in town (1)
- The Ride (1)

- Frequency of train
- Free parking @ Wilber School

Weaknesses

- Congestion makes crossing town difficult/town to town (7)
- Lack of use of school bus transportation = too many cars (4)
- Missing adequate sidewalks in some areas (4)
- Inadequate pedestrian lighting (4)
- Thru-trucking on Main Street/EdgeHill as cut throughs to highways (4)
- Lack of transportation for children who do not drive afterschool to get to any location. (school events - outside school hours) (4)
- Lack of interconnected trails/bike paths and lack of bike racks for parking (3)
- Use of S.Walpole Street as cut thru due to Route 1 dividing (2)
- Poor response time for emergency vehicles- may be public safety issue of accessibility (i.e. Cottage & Woodland Streets) (2)
- Road striping causes faster traffic (2)
- If non-driver, hard to get across town (1)
- Loss of revenue due to free parking at Wilber School (1)
- Lack of bus service to Logan/Green Airports (public transportation) (1)
- Insufficient commuter (non-resident) parking
- Inordinate # of cul-de-sacs limit traffic flow, interconnectivity
- Need for more traffic lights - site specific

Opportunities

- Truck traffic restrictions (10)
- Shuttle bus – Shaw’s to center to Cobb’s, Massapoag Avenue to Center (7)
- Appropriate use of traffic-calming devices (5)
- Improve lighting (4)
- Add bike-friendly devices (racks & paths) (4)
- Design bike routes off main roads (4)
- Additional policing at critical traffic hours (3)
- Increase taxi/public transportation system (3)
- Possible second train station a good distance away to cut down congestion (1)

Goal Statement Concepts

- Build on strengths (train service, accessibility to Interstate)
- Improve weaknesses (accessibility of school age children, congestion)
- Opportunities (truck restrictions, public transportation, traffic calming)

ADDITIONAL WRITTEN COMMENTS:

- Schools did not come out as a significant strength. I believe because of the age of the population here tonight and the major focus of many of the participants to block re-zoning. The reason residential building is strong and our taxes are so high is because we value our schools. People move here because of the schools. Taxes are high because we support our schools. Please do not overlook schools.
- I feel that “schools” should be a topic of their own; perhaps “Schools and Services”.

THE CONTEXT

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A. POPULATION TRENDS

By the early twentieth century, Sharon was already in transition from a small farming and resort community to a commuter suburb. After World War II, Sharon's population grew rapidly during the postwar suburban boom. Between 1930 and 1970 the population tripled. While the growth rates have moderated since 1970, the population has continued to increase by 10 to 14 percent every decade. Sharon's population grew by 12 percent and 1, 891 people during the 1990s. Nearly half of that increase was accounted for by people under 20 years old. The number of households grew slightly faster than the population, 13 percent, reflecting a society-wide trend towards smaller households. The average household size declined slightly to 2.92 from 2.95 in 1990.

Population Change 1990-2000	
Town	Change
Canton	12%
Dedham	-1%
Dover	13%
Foxboro	11%
Medfield	17%
Milton	1%
Needham	6%
Norwood	0%
Sharon	12%
Stoughton	1%
Walpole	13%
Westwood	12%

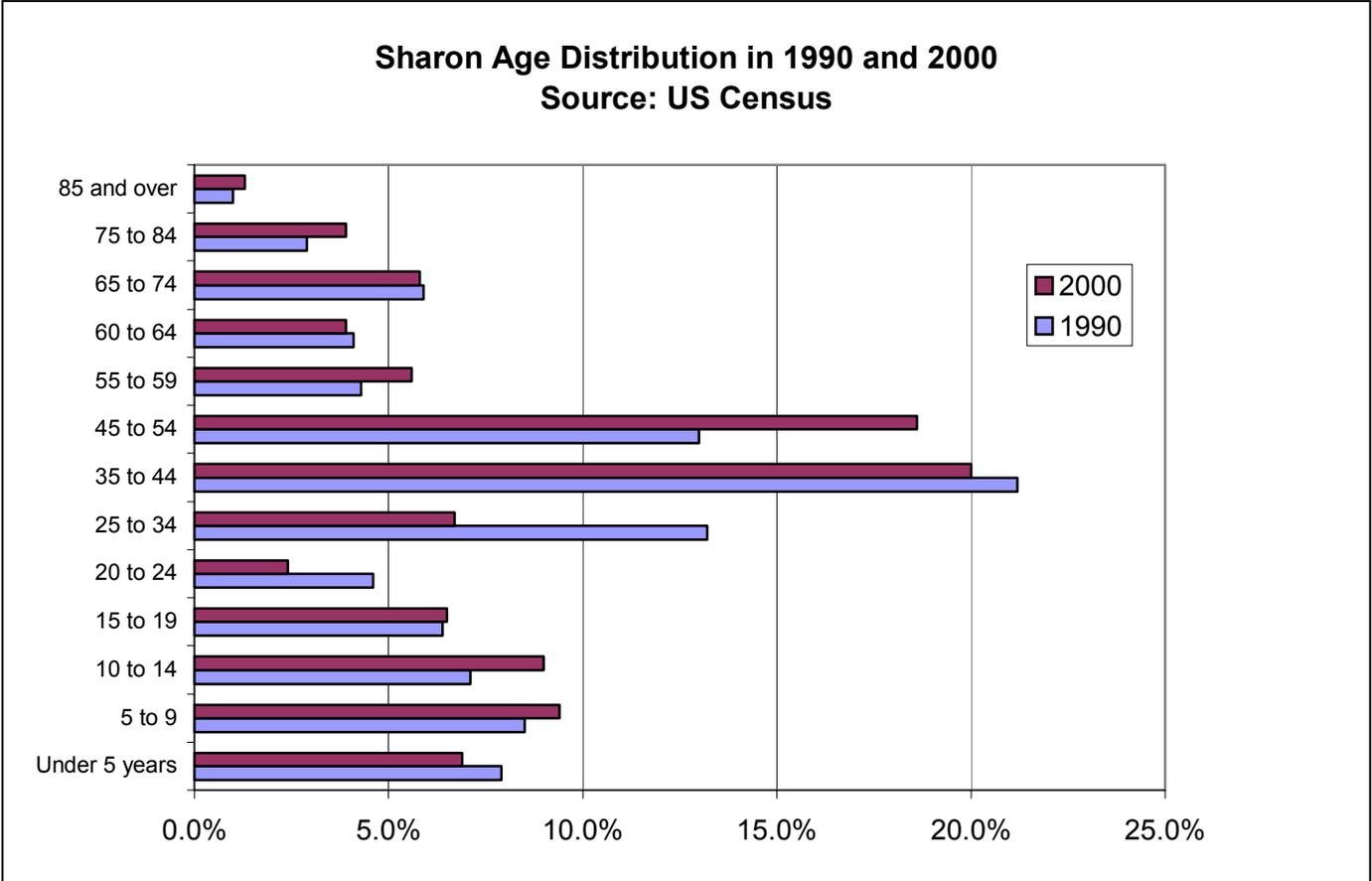
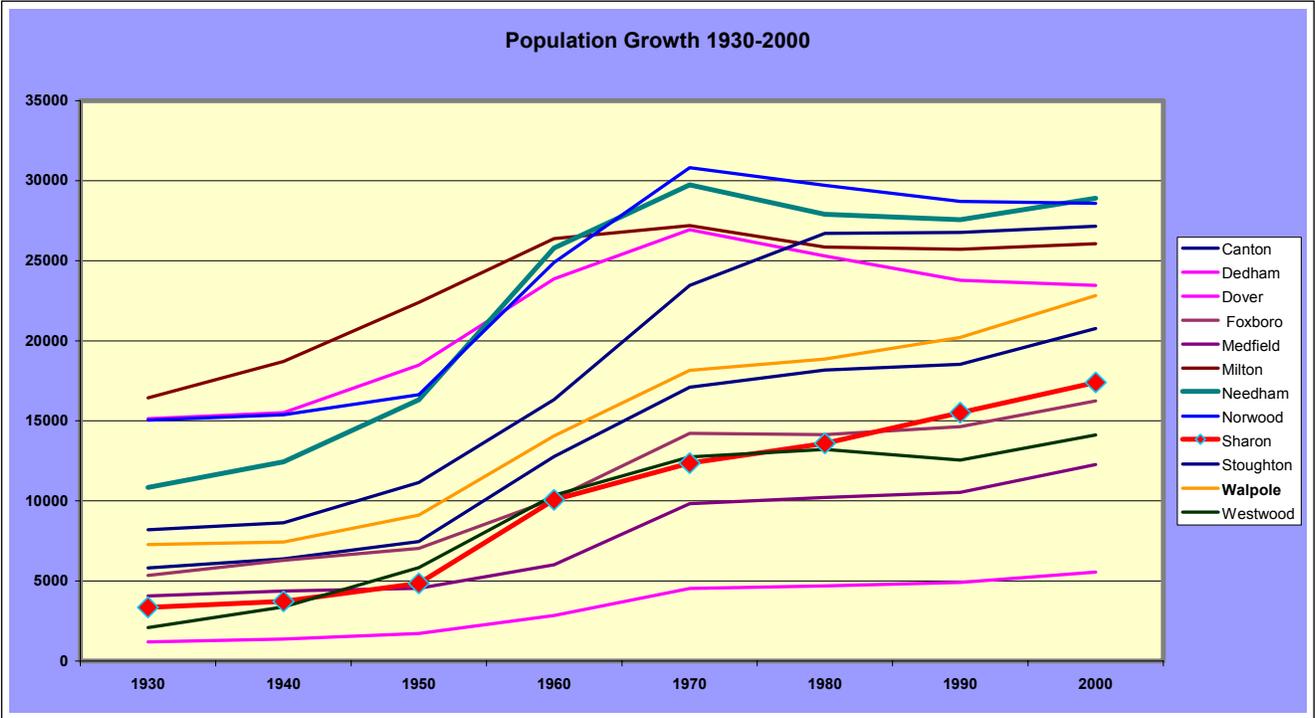
Source: US Census

Household and Age Composition

Sharon is a family community. Over 80 percent of households are family households (that is, persons related by blood or marriage) and 47 percent of households include persons under 18 years old. This is also reflected in the Town's average household size, 2.92 persons, and the average size of family households, which is 3.25 persons. Single person households make up 15 percent of all households and 8% of the total households are persons 65 years or older living alone.

The Town's population is concentrated in the prime earning years of 25 to 54, with a median age of 40. However, over the last decade there were substantial increases in the population under 18

years old (a 51% increase since 1990) and in the population 65 or older (an 11% increase since 1990). By contrast, the number of people in their twenties living in Sharon dropped 42% since 1990. These changes reflect both general demographic trends and conditions more specific to communities like Sharon. The baby boom generation is aging and as it passes through the child-rearing years there is a "baby boom echo." At the same time, the generation now in its twenties is the small "baby bust" generation born in the 1970s. Although communities with good school systems, like Sharon, tend to be particularly attractive to families with children, the increasing housing prices in Eastern Massachusetts during the last decade have made such communities more difficult to enter for young people in their twenties who are just beginning to start families. An increasing elderly population is also linked to general demographic trends, and all things being equal, should continue to grow.



Racial Composition

Ninety per cent (90.0%) of Sharon’s population is white, according to the 2000 Census. Of the remaining population 3.4 are Black or African American and 4.9 per cent are Asian. Hispanics or Latinos, who can be of any race, accounted for 1.1 per cent of the population.

School Population

Sharon’s school population grew an average of 2 per cent a year between the 1996-1997 enrollment of 3,116 and 2003-2004 enrollment of 3,562. Projections based on town census data of the school age population made by a Planning Board member suggest that the 2003-2004 enrollment will be the peak and that enrollments will slowly decline towards 3,000 by the 2014-2015 academic year. Approximately 90% of Sharon’s children of school age go to the public schools. During 2003-2004, 3.8 per cent of the District was eligible for free or reduced priced lunch and 14.2 per cent were enrolled in special education programs.

Disabled Population

According to the 2000 Census, 37% of the population aged 65 years and over has a disability. In the population aged 5 to 20 years, 4.7 per cent had a disability, while among those age 21 to 64, 11.6% had a disability.

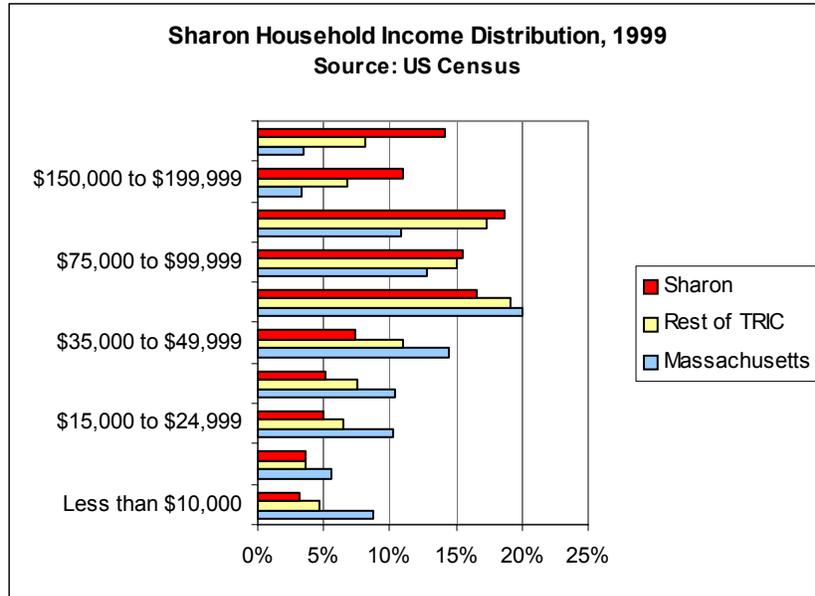
Sharon Household Income	1989 %	1999 %	% Change in Proportion of Total
<\$25,000	17.7	11.7	-33.9
\$25-49,999	20.9	12.6	-39.7
\$50-74,999	25.7	16.6	-35.4
\$75-99,999	17.6	15.5	-11.9
\$100-149,999	11.8	18.7	58.5
\$150,000+	6.3	25.1	298.4
	1989	1999	Change
Median household income	\$61,692	\$89,256	45%
Median family income	\$66,415	\$99,015	50%

Source: US Census 2000, 1990

Income Profile

Sharon residents did well financially during the 1990s. The median household income in 1999 was \$89,256, giving Sharon the rank of 24 out of 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. As is generally the case, median family income was higher at \$99,015. The increase of 45 to 50% was slightly above the 44% increase in the Greater Boston Consumer Price Index for the region during the 1990s. Sharon has proportionally more upper income households than the state as whole or its

subregional planning group, the Three Rivers Interlocal Council, which includes the towns of Dover, Needham, Medfield, Westwood, Milton, Sharon, Canton, Walpole, Foxboro, Dedham, Norwood, and Stoughton.



Demographic Trends

Projections of future population growth for Sharon envision a population that will stabilize and even decline slightly. The Massachusetts Institute of Social and Economic Research (MISER) projects a decline in Sharon’s population as early as 2010, projecting that fewer people will be moving to Sharon and natural increase (births over deaths) will be cut in half compared to the last twenty years. Projections by the regional transportation planning agency, the Central Transportation Planning Staff (which is associated with MAPC), foresee a small increase by 2010 and a small decline by 2020.

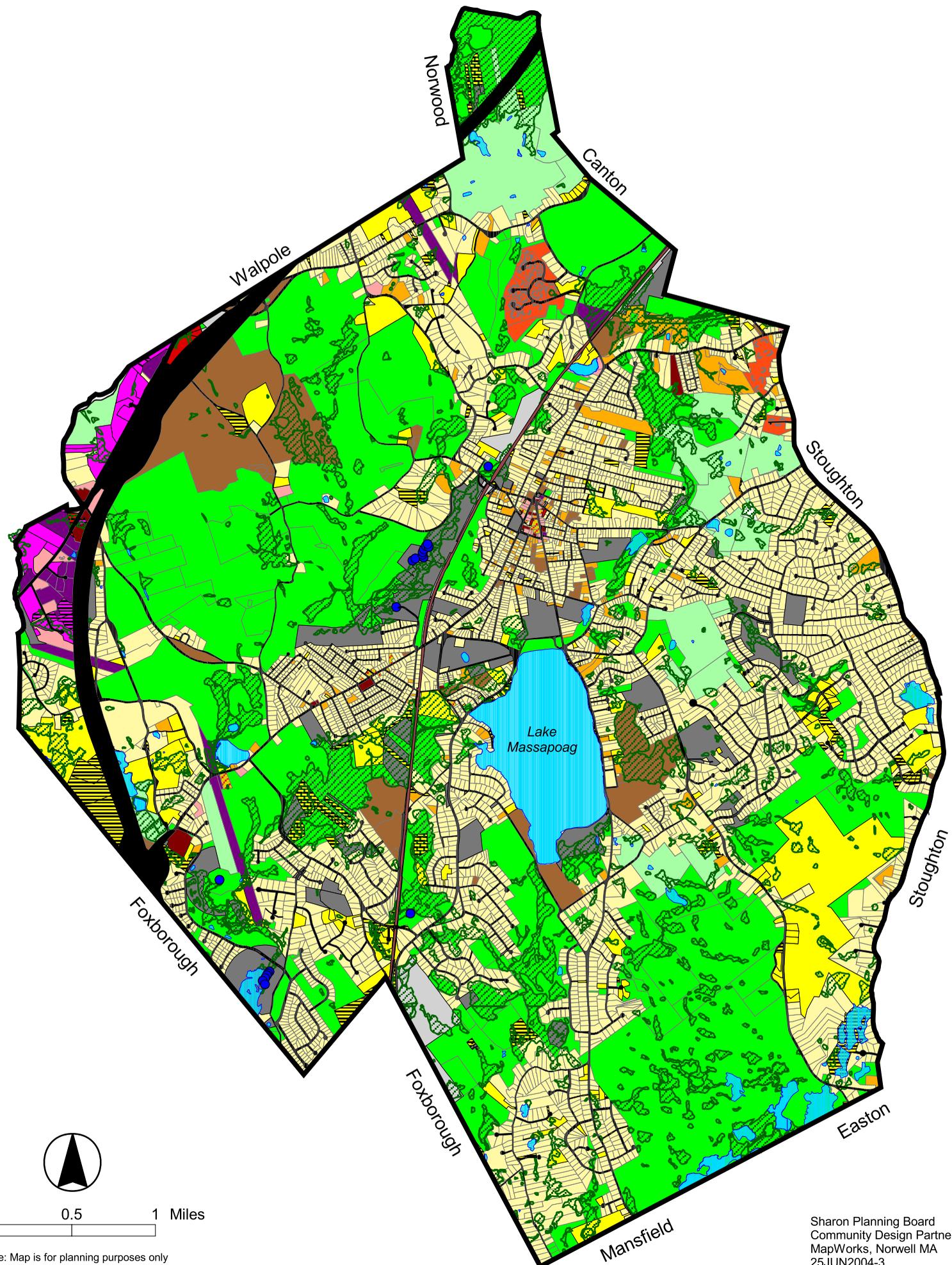
These projections reflect certain demographic and land use realities about Sharon. Although Sharon will continue to be attractive to family households because of its excellent school system, there will be fewer family households in the next generation and some of the Sharon population will “age in place,” increasing the number of smaller, empty-nester households. At the same time, the amount of land available for building is diminishing and is becoming more costly to develop. Even if the Chapter 40B housing projects that are now in the pipeline are built, it is likely that the average household size across all of these projects will be lower than the current average household size in Sharon.

Sharon Total Population and Projected Change	Decennial Census			MISER Projection		MAPC/CTPS Projection	
	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2010	2020
population	13,601	15,517	17,408	16,909	16,533	17,980	17,463
percent change		14.1	12.2	-2.9	-2.2	3.3	-2.9
net migration percent change		5.7	3.9	-6.2	-6.0		
natural increase		1,147	1,275	562	631		

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS MAPS

Map 1: Existing Conditions – Land Use and Infrastructure shows the different types of land uses in Sharon by parcel, according to information in the assessor’s database. The map shows how much of Sharon is permanently protected land. Most of the rest of Sharon is developed for single family homes, with a small number of parcels occupied by condominium or multifamily housing. With few exceptions, business uses are confined to the Town Center or the areas zoned for business west of I-95.

Map 2: Zoning shows the way that Sharon’s zoning scheme is generally organized with highest permitted density at the Town Center, half-acre lots in the zone surrounding the Town Center, and one to two acre minimum lot sizes in areas more distant from the Town Center. The majority of the one-acre lots are in the eastern part of Town that is not within either of the Water Resource Protection Overlay Districts. Minimum lot sizes within either of these districts must be 60,000 to 80,000 square feet, regardless of the underlying zoning district minimum. Business Zones are focused on the Town Center, the light industrial district west of I-95, and three very small business districts covering three parcels: Shaw’s Plaza, Heights Plaza and the professional office district on North Main Street at the Canton line.



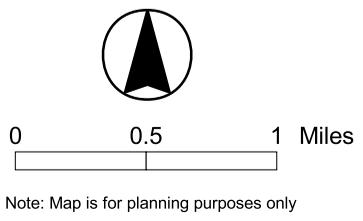
- Parcel Line
- Stream
- Wetland
- Pond

LAND USE BY PARCEL

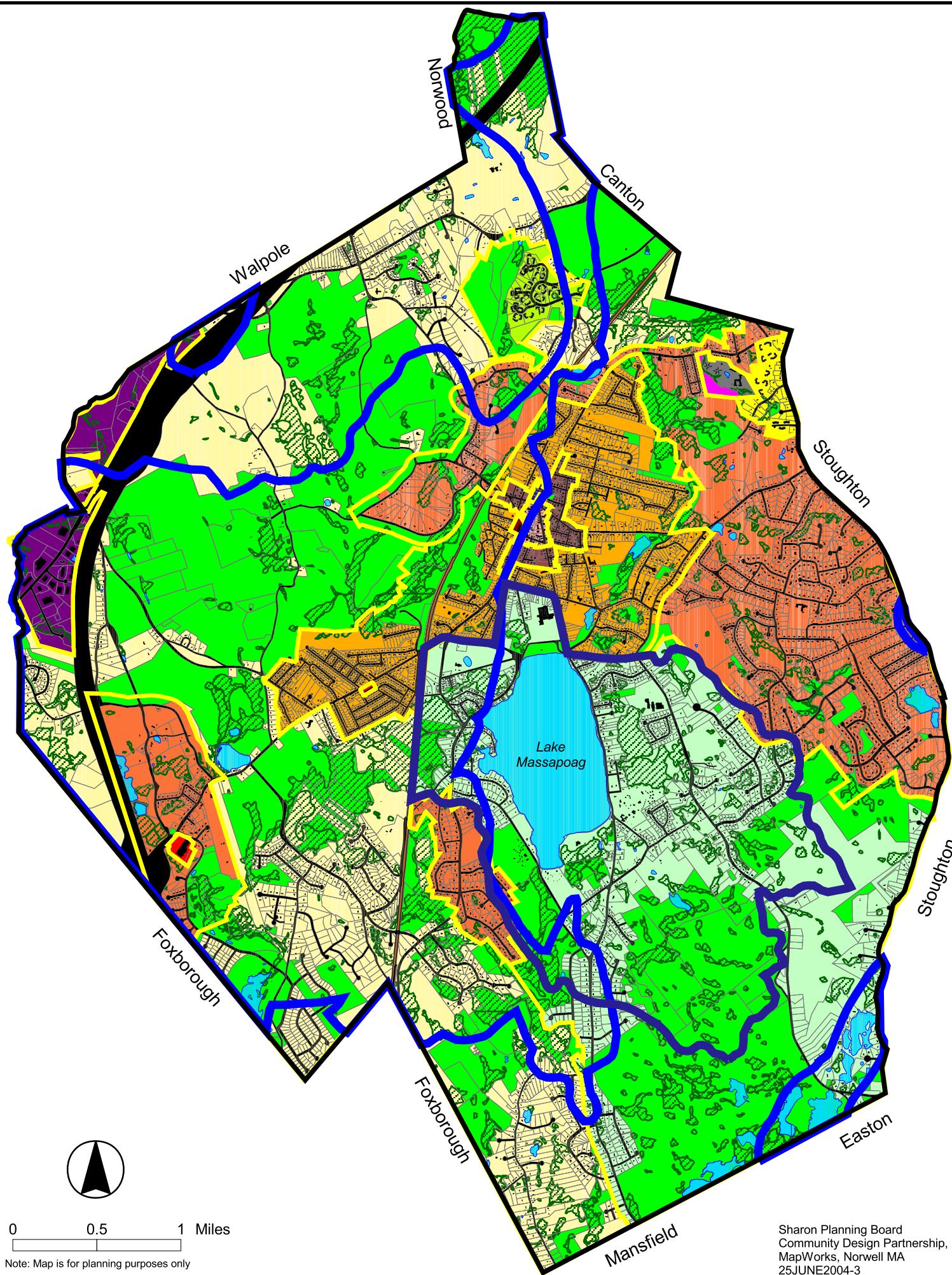
- Residential**
 - Single Family
 - Multi-Family
 - Condominium
 - Developable and Potentially Developable Residential Land
 - Undevelopable Residential Land
 - Mixed Use - Residential/Commercial
- Commercial**
 - Retail
 - Other Commercial
 - Developable and Potentially Developable Commercial Land
 - Undevelopable Commercial Land
- Industrial**
 - Industrial
 - Developable and Potentially Developable Industrial Land
 - Undevelopable Industrial Land
- Nonprofit Institutions (unprotected Land)**
 - Municipal (unprotected town land)
 - Government (state & county)
 - Nonprofit Institutions (unprotected)
- Open Space**
 - Temporarily Protected - Chapter 61, 61A, 61B
 - Permanently Protected (town, state or charitable)

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Road
- MBTA Railroad ROW
- Public Water Supply Well



Sharon Planning Board
 Community Design Partnership, Boston MA
 MapWorks, Norwell MA
 25JUN2004-3



- Zoning Line
- Parcel Line
- Road
- MBTA Railroad ROW

- Pond
- Wetland

Zoning District

- General Residence
- Single Residence A
- Single Residence B
- Suburban 1
- Suburban 2
- Rural 1
- Rural 2
- Housing Authority
- Business A
- Business B
- Business C
- Professional
- Light Industrial
- Ground Water Protection District
- Surface Water Protection District
- Historic Districts 1 and 2

**Minimum Lot Size
(Square Feet)**

- 8,000 2 Family: 10,000
- 40,000
- 20,000
- 40,000
- 60,000
- 60,000
- 80,000
- 40,000 (5,000 per dwelling unit)
- 8,000 2 Family: 10,000
- 8,000 2 Family: 10,000
- 8,000 2 Family: 10,000
- 20,000 2 Family: 10,000
- 40,000
- 60,000 } Supersedes underlying Zoning District
- 80,000 }

Open Space

- Permanently Protected (town, state or charitable)



0 0.5 1 Miles

Note: Map is for planning purposes only

Sharon Planning Board
Community Design Partnership, Boston MA
MapWorks, Norwell MA
25JUNE2004-3

Sharon Community Development Plan
Map 2
Existing Conditions
Zoning

NATURAL RESOURCE AND OPEN SPACE PROTECTION

.....➔



The Vision for Natural Resources and Open Space:

- *Effective management of water resources to ensure adequate quality and quantity for public consumption, recreation and wildlife;*
- *Augmenting the number, variety and maintenance of recreation areas, facilities and programs;*
- *Improved accessibility and awareness of recreation facilities/programs for all citizens;*

GOALS:

- Protect drinking water quality and quantity
- Protect surface water and wetland resources for environmental health, recreation, and wildlife
- Preserve environmentally sensitive, scenic, and historic environments and landscape features
- Create a town-wide network of pedestrian and bicycle paths and routes linking major open spaces and other town destinations

A. CURRENT CONDITIONS

This chapter is based on the Town of Sharon 1994 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the May 2002 Draft Water Demand Study prepared by Metcalf & Eddy and the January 2004 Final Hydraulic Model and [Water Supply] Master Plan Update prepared by Metcalf & Eddy, supplemented by public information on Sharon's natural resources and open space and discussions with the Conservation Agent and members of the Conservation Commission.

TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Sharon's diverse topography includes high points at Moose Hill in the northwest and at Rattlesnake Hill in the southeast. At elevations over 500 feet, these hills allow views of Boston and Cape Cod. Moose Hill is the second highest point between Boston and Providence. Lake Massapoag, with 353 acres of water, is the heart of a broad north-south corridor going through the town at a lower elevation. The rest of the town is characterized by gently rolling hills or flat lands punctuated by ponds, lakes, streams and wetlands. The town's surficial geology is glacial till.

Despite the development of much of Sharon into a bedroom suburb of Boston during the last fifty years, protection of large areas of natural landscape as well as the persistence of some working landscapes has helped the town retain a green and, in some places, rural character. Much of the western third of town is occupied by Moose Hill Sanctuary, owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, which has also preserved working farmland on South Street. West of Rattlesnake Hill, Borderland State Park in the southeast also contains stone outcroppings at higher elevations.

Twelve roads have been designated Scenic Roads. Any proposal to demolish stone walls or trees within the road right of way on these roads will be subject to a public hearing.

WATER RESOURCES

Sharon has exceptional water resources. From a water supply point of view Sharon is very advantageously situated at the head of both the Neponset and the Taunton river basins and receives no groundwater from any neighboring towns. In addition to Lake Massapoag, the town has a number of smaller ponds (some man made) and a network of streams and wetlands that serve to filter runoff and provide habitat for wildlife.

Streams and Watersheds

A series of streams originate in Sharon and drain into two major water basins: the Neponset and the Taunton River Watersheds. The tributaries of Lake Massapoag, School Meadow Brook, Spring Brook, Beaver Brook, Massapoag Brook, Trap Hole Brook and Hill Brook drain northeast into the Neponset River and ultimately, Boston Harbor. Billings Brook, the Canoe River, Rumford River and Poquanticut Brook, Queset Brook and Whitman Brook drain south into the Taunton River and Narragansett Bay.

Lakes and Ponds

Sharon has a number of lakes and ponds in addition to Lake Massapoag. Many pond names indicate their origin as man-made ponds used for small scale manufacturing in the nineteenth century. Massapoag Brook, which flows from the lake, passes through Hammershop Pond, Knife Shop Pond, Mann's Pond, and Trowel Shop Pond. Other important large water bodies are Sawmill Pond in the Beaver

Brook subwatershed and Wolomolopoag Pond, Gavin's Pond and Vandy's Pond in the Billings Brook subwatershed.

Occasional beach closings at Lake Massapoag before 1991 led the town to focus attention on the lake's water quality and the potential for nitrogen overload from homes on the shores of the lake. A Lake Management Committee established by Town Meeting in 1969 is made up of representatives of the Conservation Commission, the Planning Board, and the Board of Selectmen. The Committee is responsible for overseeing the water quality of Lake Massapoag and recommending management plans.

Wetlands

Wetlands cover approximately 2,050 acres of Sharon, 13% of the town's total area. The town's marshes, shrub swamps and forested swamps are associated with the streams and ponds and there are numerous isolated wetlands. The south side of town is home to one of the largest Eastern White Cedar Swamps in Norfolk County. Wetlands protect surface and groundwater, provide wildlife habitat, and play an essential role in control of floods, erosion and sedimentation, and pollution.

Sharon has a town Wetlands By-Law and Rules and Regulations setting policy for wetlands regulation by the Conservation Commission. The Wetlands Regulations are comprehensive and include the following:

- Preservation of as much as possible of the 100 foot buffer zone
- No building within the 100 foot buffer
- No disturb zones depending on the characteristics of the area:
 - Already disturbed land – 25 to 50 foot setback
 - Previously undisturbed land – 50 foot minimum
 - Special conditions (e.g., water supply protection, critical habitat, slope greater than 15%) – 75 foot minimum
- No alteration within 50 feet of any vegetated wetland or banks confining water bodies
- No new septic systems within 125 feet of a resource area
- No alteration of floodplain without compensatory storage
- No filling of wetlands except if wetlands replication is permitted
- The Commission may further limit lawn area and impose irrigation restrictions. Current restrictions are 2 times per week, 2 hours per day.
- Drainage plans for projects within the Groundwater Resources Protection District must not decrease total recharge

Public Water Supply Aquifers and their Recharge Areas

The Town of Sharon is a careful steward of its water supply. The Town commissioned a Water Master Plan in 1985, with updates in 1991, 1997, and 2004. This discussion of the town's water supply is based on the May 2002 Water Demand Study prepared by Metcalf & Eddy and the January 2004 Final

Hydraulic Model and Master Plan Update prepared by Metcalf & Eddy. A Water Management Advisory Committee appointed by the Board of Selectmen works with the Water Department.

There are three separate aquifers in three separate subwatersheds that provide water to Sharon: Beaver Brook/Massapoag Brook in the Neponset River Basin and Billings Brook and Canoe River Watersheds in the Taunton River Basin. The Beaver Brook subwatershed lies completely within the Town of Sharon and its upper reaches are within the protected Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary. The Billings Brook subwatershed extends from the Town of Sharon to the Town of Foxborough covering 5.09 square miles. Lastly, the Canoe River sub-basin is only partially located in Sharon. The rest of the sub-basin reaches into Foxborough, Mansfield and Norton.

The Town Water Department supplies 98% of the year round and seasonal residents of Sharon with drinking water from four gravel-packed wells (Well Supply Nos. 3,4, 5 and 6) and two naturally-developed well fields (Nos. 2 and 7). Three of the wells are within the Beaver Brook subwatershed. There are four storage tanks. According to the Water Department Master Plan Update, the estimated dependable yield (based on 20 hours of operations) is 2.97 million gallons per day (MGD) and the 24-hour well pump capacity is 3.58 MGD. The Town has begun to pursue developing another well. A small number of Sharon residents are served by Stoughton and Foxboro. Similarly, Sharon provides water to a like number of Stoughton and Foxboro residents.. There is some seasonal increase in Sharon's population with the addition of approximately 2,500 summer campers. Adjusting for seasonal population and use patterns, the study found that between 1995 and 2001, total water consumption (including residential, commercial, industrial, school, institutional and agricultural irrigation, as well as unaccounted for usage) averaged 86.9 gallons per capita per day.

The water distribution network is old and the higher elevations of the town's southeastern quarter are somewhat difficult to serve because of low water pressure. The town is considering high pressure water mains for this area.

Recharge is by infiltration and leakage from adjacent till and bedrock. Discharge is by leakage to rivers and ponds, evaporation, and water use (non-returned pumpage). The water department has instituted a number of water conservation programs ranging from routine leak detection and repair and a water rate structure that encourages conservation to summer water restrictions. The Water Management Committee is currently proposing additional conservation measures including the following:

- Requiring installation of low-flow toilets when buildings are sold
- Expansion of a rebate program for installation of water-efficient washing machines and toilets and free showerheads and faucet aerators
- Installation of pressure reducing valves wherever pressures exceed 85 psi to avoid wasted water

Over half the town is covered by groundwater or surface water protection overlay districts that place constraints on development. Certain uses are prohibited or allowed only by special permit in these areas. In addition, the overlay districts prescribe minimum lot sizes regardless of the requirements of the underlying zoning. In the Surface Water Resources Protection District the minimum lot area is 80,000

square feet (almost two acres) and in the Ground Water Resources Protection District the minimum lot area is 60,000 square feet (one and one-half acres). Cluster-style developments require the total land area per dwelling unit to reflect the same minimums under each of the overlays.

Future Water Supply Needs and Potential Water Supply

Despite increasing population, the average daily demand for water between 1991 and 2001 was 1.6 MGD and the maximum average daily demand was 3.1 MGD over these ten years. Both the average daily demand and the maximum daily demand peaked in 1994. The Draft Water Demand Study projected water demand based on the number of households at buildout projected by the EOE/AMPC buildout study (a total of 7,506 dwelling units) and a slightly higher estimate of average persons per household (3.07 persons per household). This would result in a total population of 23,041. Because the Town does not meet the Chapter 40B goal of 10 percent affordable housing, the Study also projected demand if Sharon gained 500 units in Chapter 40B projects added to the maximum number of units that could be built under current zoning. Using the average of 3.07 persons per household, this would result in an additional 1,535 persons, for a total population of 24,892. These assumptions are conservative, i.e., they may err on the side of higher water demand, and they assume a total population almost 7,000 greater than the highest population projection by regional agencies discussed in the first chapter. Housing development tends to slow down as communities approach buildout, and if some of the new housing units are not conventional single family homes but apartments, condominiums or over-55 units, the average number of persons per household in these units would likely be well below 2 rather than 3 persons per household.

Using these conservative assumptions, the scenario of buildout plus 500 units by 2020 resulted in average daily demand of 2.055 MGD and maximum daily demand of 4.110 MGD. This demand could be met if the eighth well being pursued at present is developed and permitted. In early 2004, the town's Water Management Advisory Committee recommended that the Department of Public Works begin water exploration activities at four sites in Sharon: Mountain Street, in the far southeast of town; north of Well #4 in the vacant parcel west of the railroad tracks near the Town Center; Canton Street west of the tracks in the northern part of town; the Gobbi property; and the South Walpole Street area west of I-95.

Water Budget and Impervious Surfaces

Sharon depends completely on septic systems (with the exception of one cluster development tied into the Foxborough system) so water is not transported out of the watershed by public sewers. The town sells about 10,000 gallons of water per day water to Stoughton, which represents about 0.5 percent of metered water consumption. The Department of Environmental Protection does not consider this a "Basin Transfer." The Neponset River Watershed Association has reported evidence of periodic low stream flows in the Massapoag Brook and Beaver Brook subwatersheds. Streamflow data is not available for any of the Sharon subwatersheds of the Taunton basin.

Nearly all of Sharon is served by septic systems. This means that nearly all water used during fall, winter and spring months and half of the water used during the summer months is returned to the aquifers underlying the town, although not necessarily within the Zone II's of the Town's production wells. Records show no decline in groundwater levels within production well Zone II's, and no increases in groundwater levels in areas outside of those Zone II's but within residential areas with significant numbers of septic systems.

There is substantial open space in the Sharon portion of both the Neponset and Taunton watersheds, including the forested areas in Moose Hill Wildlife Sanctuary and Borderland State Park and the substantial wetlands throughout the town. On a town-wide basis, the amount of land covered by impervious surfaces – roads, driveways and parking lots as well as buildings – is quite low for a suburban community relatively close to Boston, representing approximately less than 4% of total land area. Impervious surfaces are important because they keep rain and snow from percolating back into the ground. .

Estimating impervious surfaces using the methodology provided by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and the Charles River Watershed Association results in 4.9% effective imperviousness for the Town of Sharon as a whole. Town staff estimate the total impervious area, which includes roof tops, driveways, parking lots and roadways, in the town represent at most approximately 4% of total town area. Effective imperviousness takes into account the fact that some of the water runoff from impervious surfaces will go to permeable areas where it can percolate into the ground. Scientists have found that when impervious surfaces within a subwatershed increase over 10%, there can be significant effects on water quality, biodiversity and the stability of stream channels.¹

Sharon has already instituted a number of requirements to limit impervious surfaces and manage stormwater. All subdivisions built within the last 15 years, including the large Sharon Woods development, have been required to meet National Pollutant and Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) and DEP stormwater regulations which require pre-and-post development runoff rates to be identical by methods such as storm water retention/infiltration basins. This has the result of reducing the effective amount of impervious surface. In the Rural and Suburban residential zones, which require minimum lot sizes of 60,000 to 80,000 square feet, impervious surfaces are limited to 15% of the lot (including the structure) and at least 50% of the lot has to be in natural vegetation. This controls the amount of lawn, which is only slightly better than hard surfaces in terms of runoff rates and which is often managed with excessive amounts of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. In the water protection overlay districts the following limits affect new development:

- Maximum 15% impervious surfaces and minimum 40% natural vegetation (with the significant exception that this is not applicable to residential development involving four or fewer families)
- No increase in peak rate of stormwater runoff in a 10-year storm
- No increase in the total volume of stormwater runoff in a one-year storm

¹ “The Importance of Imperviousness,” *Watershed Protection Techniques* 1(3): 100-111.

- Runoff to be directed towards vegetated swales for surface infiltration except where infeasible
- If storm sewers and catch basins are necessary, use of anti-pollution devices, such as oil skimmers, and best management practices, such as stormwater detention basins
- 100-foot setback from wetland resources

HABITAT AND BIODIVERSITY RESOURCES

Sharon's forests, stream corridors, ponds and wetlands provide habitat for a variety of plant and animal species. The town has several areas that have been identified as especially important and sensitive for habitat and biodiversity.

Vegetation

Sharon uplands have mixed hardwood forests of oak, maple, beech, birch, black cherry and elm. White pine, hemlock, eastern red cedar and pitch pine are the typical evergreen species. The town's wetland forests or swamps are concentrated in the south side of town and dominated by red maple in addition to the eastern white cedar swamp mentioned earlier.

Fisheries and Wildlife

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stock Lake Massapoag and Massapoag Brook. Perch and bass can be found in the ponds at Borderland State Park. Sharon's abundant wildlife ranges from white-tailed deer to the American Toad. Notable species include an occasional Bald Eagle, some River Otters and the Eastern Coyote. The Moose Hill Sanctuary was the first Audubon Bird Sanctuary in New England and continues to provide a habitat for birds and other wildlife. Detailed lists of wildlife are available in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan, which is currently being updated.

Rare Species Habitat, Rare Natural Communities and Biodiversity

"Landscape Ecology" is a relatively new scientific field that provides useful ways to understand how different parts of a town or region, built and unbuilt, are related to one another. In the framework of landscape ecology, a landscape is a mosaic of repeating land uses, spatial elements, or local ecosystems. The landscape mosaic is made up of natural systems and human land uses and is entirely composed on three types of elements:

- Patch – a relatively homogeneous area, such as a woodlot or a subdivision
- Corridor – a strip of land that differs from the land on both sides and links patches, such as a road or a stream
- Matrix – the background ecosystem or land use type in a landscape, such as suburban development or forest

Sharon is a mature suburban community with concentrated human uses of the land along a broad corridor stretching from the northeast to the southwest in the center of town and in much of the eastern part of town. I-95, Main Street and the railroad tracks are the major corridors used by people, structuring a more fine-gauged network of primarily residential streets. This suburban landscape is the regional matrix, but Sharon also is fortunate to have a few large patches of open space and a substantial network of water resources to serve as a natural resource framework for the town.

Large Patches of Habitat

Moose Hill Sanctuary and Borderland State Park provide natural areas sufficiently large to provide “interior habitat” for species that require significant forested areas, in addition to the “edge habitat” to be found where forests abut more open areas such as meadows, fields, and suburban residential landscapes. Moose Hill Sanctuary’s variation in elevation, soils and moisture results in a variety of natural communities including oak forest, kettle hole bogs, pine barrens, swamps, boulder fields, cedar knolls, and grasslands. The agricultural fields on South Main Street that are part of the Sanctuary have some of the richest soils in Eastern Massachusetts. Borderland State Park also includes diverse ecological communities, from the glaciated cliffs and outcroppings in the northern part of the park to the six ponds in various stages of succession towards the town border with Easton. Other important protected areas include Conservation Commission uplands surrounding wetland areas.

In addition to these protected areas, unprotected patches of natural vegetation are found at Camp Wonderland, Camp Bennet and Horizons for Youth, all on the shores of Lake Massapoag; the Sharon Country Club and the Spring Valley Country Club; and the Rattlesnake Hill (Striar) property, whose ultimate fate remains unresolved as of this writing. The camps and country clubs experience more direct human impacts during the warm months of the year than the larger Sanctuary and State Park landscape patches. The Rattlesnake Hill property may become another example of residential development or it may become a part of Borderland State Park.

Corridors and Connectors

Wetlands and waterways provide the most significant wildlife corridors connecting open space parcels in Sharon. This protected network can shelter animals moving through residential neighborhoods from one large open space patch to another. Trails, utility easements, and the railroad corridor also provide narrow routes for wildlife but are subject to periodic disruption.

Wetlands, Water Bodies and Waterways

Water resources are rich habitat areas and waterways and their adjacent areas function as wildlife corridors. As noted earlier, Sharon has a rich network of wetlands and streams. This network

allows wildlife to move between ponds and upland open space areas relatively unmolested by human impacts.

Vernal pools

There are 23 certified vernal pools in Sharon, which means they are protected under the state Wetlands Protection Act (WPA). Vernal pools are wet depressions in the land that, by definition, are flooded only part of the year. Many rare and valuable species depend on vernal pools. Lacking fish populations and common wetlands vegetation, they support unique wildlife communities that have adapted to wet and dry cycles. As is the case with wetlands in general, protection of vernal pools must often preferably extend beyond the area defined in the WPA, because many amphibians that breed in the pools may move hundreds of yards away during the course of their life cycle.

Under the Sharon Conservation Commission Rules and Regulations no alteration of vernal pools or their 100 foot buffer zones is permitted. Migratory routes for salamanders have been identified in Sharon, notably Moose Hill Street. Protecting the pool itself and a 100' buffer may not be enough to ensure the survival of creatures like the spotted salamander, for example. Ideally, each pool must be examined in its context to determine the appropriate buffer size and management techniques that will ensure the continued survival of its inhabitants.

State biologists have analyzed aerial photographs to identify potential vernal pool sites. In Sharon there are numerous potential vernal pools of a size (100 feet wide) to be identifiable from aerial photos. Field investigation of these areas is necessary to establish the presence of recognized indicator species. Many smaller pools that could not be identified in the aerial photographs might be revealed by field studies. The Sharon Conservation Commission's policy is to presume that Potential Vernal Pools indicated in state data correspond with actual vernal pool habitat unless credible evidence to the contrary is presented

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

An ACEC (Area of Critical Environmental Concern) is an area designated by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs because of the significance of its environmental resources. ACEC designation requires greater state environmental review of certain kinds of proposed development meeting thresholds for state jurisdiction, but it does not eliminate development. In Sharon, there are two designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. In the extreme north of Sharon, 505 acres lie within the Fowl Meadow ACEC (1992), which includes a total of 8,350 acres stretching from the Blue Hills Reservation along the Neponset River floodplain and wetlands south to Sharon. This ACEC is home to at least 13 state-listed rare species. At the far south, 1,585 acres in Sharon fall within the Canoe River Aquifer ACEC (1991). The Canoe River Aquifer, Snake River, Watson Pond and Lake Sabbatia ACEC covers a total of nearly 17,200 acres in six communities and is adjacent to the Hockomock Swamp ACEC, which has another 16,950 acres. The Canoe River ACEC covers a system of over 100 rivers and streams, wetlands, flood

plains, and high yield aquifers within the Taunton River watershed as well as diverse upland habitats, including rare species habitat, and productive lands.

Estimated and Priority Habitat

Priority Habitat Areas show where the state Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) estimates the existence of habitat for state-listed rare species. These estimates are made on the basis of species population records, habitat requirements and landscape information. Priority habitats are not protected by law, but the rare species that may use these habitats are protected. Estimated Habitat areas are designated by the NHESP where state-listed rare species have been *documented* within the last 25 years in wetlands resources defined under the Wetlands Protection Act. Proponents of projects that come before the Conservation Commission that would affect this habitat must notify the NHESP, which will then determine if alteration of the area would have an adverse effect on rare species.

Twelve areas in Sharon are designated as Priority Habitat and all but three of these are also designated as Estimated Habitat:

- Wetlands centering on the Fish and Game Club land off East Street
- Wetland areas and adjacent upland centering on the conservation land north of Rattlesnake Hill and the northern portion of the Rattlesnake Hill private parcel, as well as some of the nearby residential streets
- Briggs Pond adjacent to Bay Road in the far southeast of the town
- A small wetland area in the southern part of Borderland State Park
- Wetlands in the far southern corner of town
- Lake Massapoag
- The large wetland area centering on the conservation land west of the railroad tracks in the vicinity of the Islamic Center
- The area around Lake Wolomolopog
- A small wetland corner on the Walpole border north of Commercial Street.
- A wetland east of Lake Massapoag centered on Camp Wonderland (not Estimated Habitat)
- Two additional areas in Moose Hill Sanctuary and the Kendall Property (not Estimated Habitat)

Most of these areas are protected by wetlands regulations, by conservation restrictions, or because they are located in otherwise permanently protected parcels. However, some of the wetland areas are surrounded by residential development.

BioMap Core Habitat and Supporting Habitat

NHESP created the BioMap to identify the areas most important to preserving biodiversity in Massachusetts based on existing information about habitat and species. Core Habitat, the most viable habitat for rare species and natural communities, is found in large, naturally vegetated blocks that are

relatively free from the impact of roads and development. Supporting Habitat buffers and connects the core habitat and provides habitat for more common Massachusetts species.

In Sharon, Core Habitat is found in Borderland State Park, the Rattlesnake Hill parcels, several parts of Moose Hill Sanctuary and, in the very south of town, the Canoe River wetlands. Supporting Habitat includes the rest of Moose Hill Sanctuary, the wetlands east of the Sanctuary and west of the railroad tracks, and wetland areas at the southern end of the railroad tracks.

Rare Plant Species

The NHESP keeps records of observations of rare species. The agency does not send staff to survey towns and depends to a great degree on observations submitted by the public or others. The fact that the most recent observation date is quite old in some cases does not mean that the species no longer exists. However, state wetlands and endangered species regulations only consider species with observation dates less than 25 years old when ruling on project reviews. Other rare and endangered species may well exist in Sharon, but they need to be documented to appear in state listings. Forms to report observations are available on the agency's web site.

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Rank	Most Recent Observation
Vascular Plant	<i>Asclepias purpurascens</i>	Purple Milkweed	E	1886
Vascular Plant	<i>Eupatorium aromaticum</i>	Lesser Snakeroot	E	1919
Vascular Plant	<i>Goodyera repens</i>	Dwarf Rattlesnake-Plantain	E	1894
Vascular Plant	<i>Houstonia longifolia</i> var <i>longifolia</i>	Long-Leaved Bluet	E	1894
Vascular Plant	<i>Linum medium</i> var <i>texanum</i>	Rigid Flax	T	1908
Vascular Plant	<i>Lygodium palmatum</i>	Climbing Fern	SC	1886
Vascular Plant	<i>Rotala ramosior</i>	Toothcup	E	1901
Vascular Plant	<i>Scheuchzeria palustris</i>	Pod-Grass	E	1992
Vascular Plant	<i>Senna hebecarpa</i>	Wild Senna	E	1886
Vascular Plant	<i>Sphenopholis nitida</i>	Shining Wedgegrass	T	1923
Vascular Plant	<i>Spiranthes vernalis</i>	Grass-Leaved Ladies'-Tresses	T	1921
E = Endangered T = Threatened SC = Species of Special Concern				
<i>Source: NHESP</i>				

Rare Animal Species

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Rank	Most Recent Obs
Fish	<i>Notropis bifrenatus</i>	Bridle Shiner	SC	1956
Amphibian	<i>Ambystoma laterale</i>	Blue-Spotted Salamander	SC	1995
Reptile	<i>Clemmys guttata</i>	Spotted Turtle	SC	1999
Reptile	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Blanding's Turtle	T	1995
Reptile	<i>Terrapene carolina</i>	Eastern Box Turtle	SC	2000
Mussel	<i>Ligumia nasuta</i>	Eastern Pondmussel	SC	2000
Beetle	<i>Cicindela duodecimguttata</i>	Twelve-Spotted Tiger Beetle	SC	1904
Beetle	<i>Cicindela purpurea</i>	Purple Tiger Beetle	SC	1904
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Callophrys hesseli</i>	Hessel's Hairstreak	SC	1988
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Hemileuca maia</i>	Barrens Buckmoth	SC	1934
Butterfly/Moth	<i>Satyrium favonius</i>	Oak Hairstreak	SC	1992

Agriculture

There are still two working farms in Sharon: Crescent Ridge Dairy, which delivers throughout eastern Massachusetts and operates an ice cream stand, and the Arguimbau Farm. Mass Audubon acquired farm fields on South Main Street which are protected and kept in agricultural use.

Sharon Permanently Protected Land	
Organization	Acres
Mass. Audubon	1966.7
Conservation Commission	1752.0
Dept. of Environmental Management	1145.5
Water Department	262.6
Town Parks	14.0
Town Historical Society	0.9
Town Cemeteries	252.1
<i>Total</i>	5393.8
<i>Source: Town of Sharon</i>	

Sharon Temporarily Protected Land	
Classification	Acres
Chapter 61 – Forestry	62.72
Chapter 61A – Agriculture	36.31
Chapter 61B -- Recreation	223.38
<i>Total</i>	332.41
<i>Source: Town of Sharon</i>	

OPEN SPACE

Permanently and Temporarily Protected Open Space

Approximately 35% of Sharon's land area is permanently protected open space at present. The Conservation Commission also reports that there are approximately 530 acres in Conservation Restrictions and an additional 650 acres coming under Conservation Commission control. These additions will bring the percentage of permanently protected land to 42% of land area. All wetland areas outside the permanently protected parcels are also protected under the Wetlands Protection Act.

Another 2.2 percent of Town land is temporarily protected under the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B tax abatement programs for open lands in forestry, agriculture or recreational uses. These lands include golf courses and farms.

At the Fall 2003 Town Meeting, the town approved a Proposition 2-1/2 override for \$7.5 million for half the acquisition price of the Rattlesnake Hill property, contingent on the state matching this amount, so that the property would become part of Borderland State Park. The additional \$7.5 million is included in the most recent state open space bond bill, but has not yet been released. At the same time, the potential developer of this property has appealed the decision of the Zoning Board of Appeals to approve 120 units in a 40B housing project rather than the 250 units the developer had proposed. Should this property become part of the State Park, over half of Sharon's land area would be protected open space.

Existing and Potential Greenway Trails

Sharon has six major trails or trail systems. Long distance trails include the Warner Trail and the Bay Circuit Trail. The Warner Trail begins at the Canton boundary and continues south through Moose Hill for 30 miles to Rhode Island. The Bay Circuit Trail and Greenway passes through Sharon as part of the 200-mile corridor linking 50 communities and 79 open space areas in an outer ring around Boston. The Massapoag Trail was established in 1966 and runs from the boat ramp on Lake Massapoag to North Main Street for 3.3 miles. The trail follows Massapoag Brook through an area with ruins of early mills and dams. King Philip's Rock Trail is a short trail from Mansfield Street to King Philip's Rock, where the Wampanoag sachem, Metacom, known to the English as King Philip, is said to have met with Indian leaders during King Philip's War against the English settlers in the seventeenth century. Moose Hill Sanctuary includes 25 miles of trails and Borderland State Park also has a trail system. A volunteer group, Sharon Friends of Conservation, helps maintain trails.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Protect drinking water quality and quantity

A. Protect open space parcels within wellhead protection areas of potential future wells.

Preservation of Sharon's drinking water supply is the most important natural resource goal. As Sharon explores the potential for new wells, the town should ensure that potential wellhead areas are not developed.

2) Protect upland buffer areas to streams and ponds

Sharon has established a number of regulatory strategies to protect surface water and wetland resources from stormwater and nonpoint source pollution, but in some cases, acquisition of significant conservation restrictions or acquisition of parcels will be necessary.

A. Seek conservation restrictions where needed, particularly on parcels adjacent to Lake Massapoag.

As one of the most important and most fragile environmental, scenic and recreational resources in Sharon, Lake Massapoag merits special attention in preserving the quality of its waters. Establishment of conservation restrictions on the remaining unbuilt parcels on the shores of the Lake should be a high priority.

B. Enhance public understanding of environmentally sustainable landscape practices on private property as they affect water and wetland resources.

Common landscape practices, such as excessive use of fertilizers and herbicides, or dumping of grass clippings in wetlands or streams, can be very harmful to water resources. Public agencies and nonprofit organizations have prepared materials explaining the cumulative impacts of these practices and describing alternatives. Distribution of these materials to property owners is a way to raise public awareness of how management of individual suburban landscapes can have a big impact on water resources that are important to the community as a whole.

3) Protect environmentally sensitive, scenic and historic environments and landscape features

A. Promote protection of areas identified as rare species habitat and BioMap Core Habitat

- **Seek conservation restrictions where practicable.**

Although many of the identified most sensitive habitats are already protected, measures to ensure protection of the remaining areas should be pursued where possible.

B. Inform landowners of the special habitat value of neighborhood lands, provide information on best practices, and promote the formation of informal stewardship groups.

In some cases, the important habitat areas are in wetlands surrounded by residential neighborhoods. Neighborhood-based stewardship groups can be effective in encouraging property owners to use best practices in order to preserve habitat.

C. Make Conservation Subdivision Zoning the by-right, mandatory zoning for parcels of 5 acres or more to protect open space.

Mandatory CSD can help insure that site design of subdivisions takes into account the existing and hoped-for open space network in the town.

D. Promote certification of vernal pools and documentation of rare species.

Vernal pool and rare species documentation is often done by volunteer groups. In many communities vernal pool certification has become a popular school science activity.

4) Create a town-wide network of pedestrian and bicycle routes.

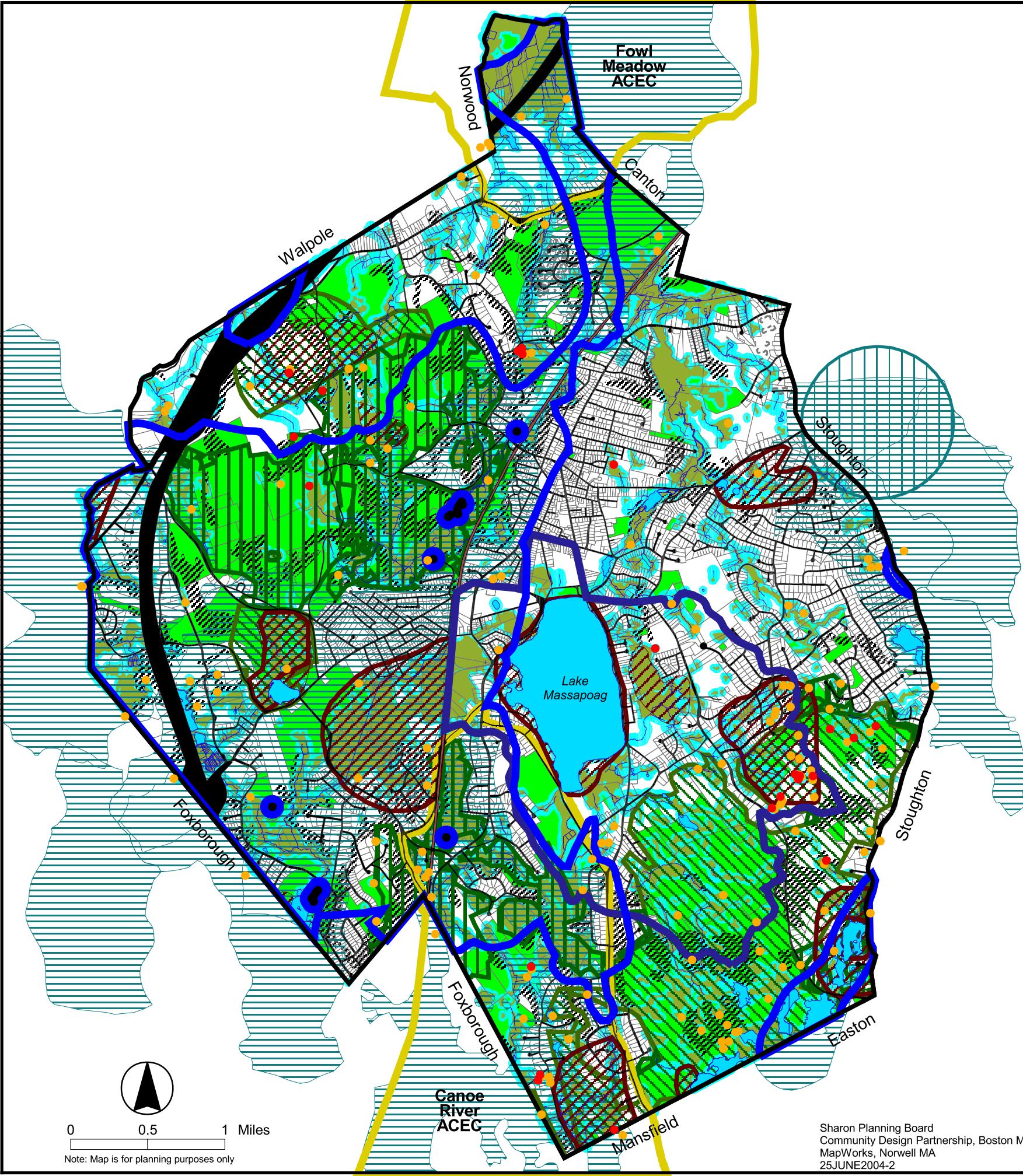
Sharon is very rich in open space resources and already has some trails that connect major destinations. A town-wide network of safe pedestrian and bicycle routes that links open spaces, schools, the town center, and historic sites would make it easier for residents to have enhanced access to the town's exceptional resources. Some informal paths may exist on public open space that could be upgraded and mapped. Signage and small parking areas provide access. Sharon Friends of Conservation has created a map showing the major trails and trail systems in town, but a map showing all the trails and access points would also be valuable. In other communities, Eagle Scouts or other youth groups have been active in trail maintenance, mapping, and public information efforts.

C. NATURAL RESOURCES AND OPEN SPACE MAPS

Map 3: Existing Conditions: *Natural Resources* shows the existing natural resources described in this chapter, particularly water and wildlife habitat resources, and protected open space.

Map 4: Land Use Suitability shows three categories of parcels according to existing zoning: built out parcels; vacant parcels that have been identified as developable or potentially developable by the assessor; and parcels that have a house or buildings on them, but include enough open land to be capable of subdivision [the map currently does not show the third category because the map data needs to be developed]. These parcels were then overlaid with protected environmental resources: permanently protected open space, wetlands, certified vernal pools, wellhead protection zones, and streams and ponds. Additional overlays show environmentally sensitive lands, some of which are subject to regulation under the Wetlands Protection Act or Rivers Protection Act and others which indicate areas that have been identified as especially important habitat areas. Implementation of the Recommendations should be guided by this map, which shows the areas where a concentration of natural resources should be the location of protection strategies.

Map 4 shows Sharon's complex natural resource profile combined with the fact that much of the town is built out. There are a handful of large parcels that could be developed. Some are currently the subject of Chapter 40B housing proposals. Some of them are parcels in one of the Chapter 61 tax abatement programs. Although a number of these parcels seem unlikely to be developed in the near future (the country clubs, for example), they are not protected and by establishing new zoning or pursuing conservation restrictions, the town can put them into a wider framework of limited development with open space linkages.



- Parcel Line
- Road
- Railroad ROW
- Protected Parcel
- Steep Slope (over 15%)

Water Resources

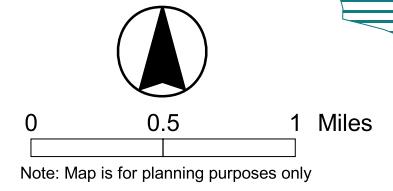
- Stream
- Pond
- Wetland
- 200 ft. Buffer Zone to Streams
 100 ft. Buffer Zone to Ponds & Wetlands
- Zone I - 400ft Radius to Public Water Supply Well
- Zone II Wellhead Protection Area
- Interim Wellhead Protection Area (Stoughton)
- Groundwater Protection District
- Surface Water Protection District

Habitat Areas (Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program)

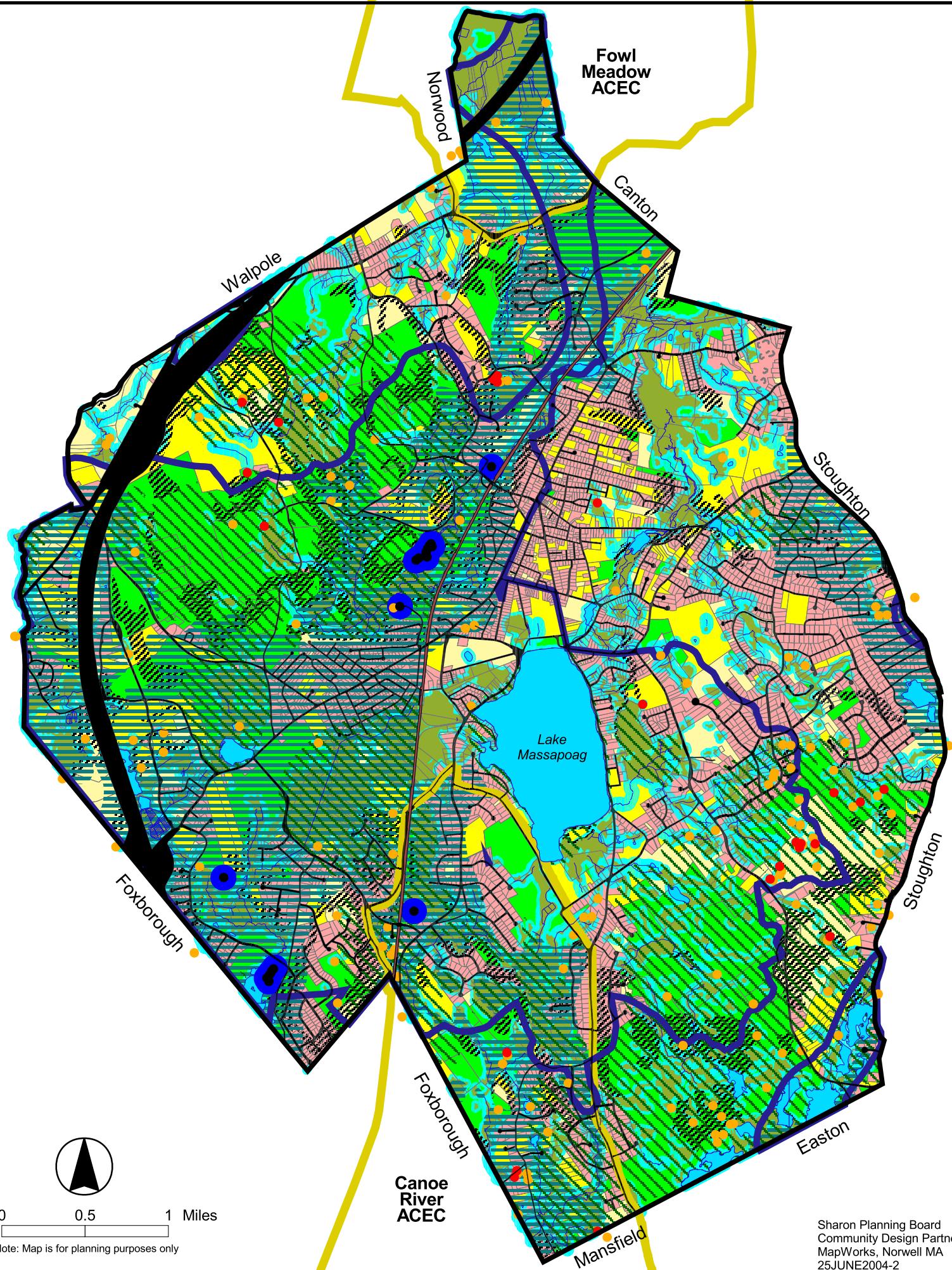
- NHESP Certified Vernal Pool - July 2003
- NHESP Potential Vernal Pool:
NOT Equivalent to Certified Vernal Pools
- NHESP 2003 Priority Habitat
for State-Protected Rare Species
- NHESP 2003 Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife:
For use with the MA Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10)
- NHESP BioMap Core Habitat
- NHESP BioMap Supporting Natural Landscape

Area of Critical Environmental Concern

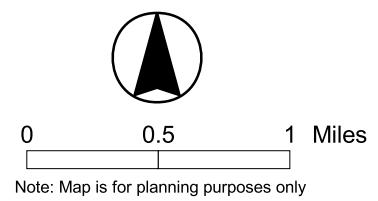
- Fowl Meadow ACEC Southern Boundary
Canoe River ACEC Northern Boundary



Sharon Planning Board
Community Design Partnership, Boston MA
MapWorks, Norwell MA
25JUNE2004-2



- Parcel Line
 - Road
 - Railroad ROW
 - Built Out Parcel
- Protected Environmental Resources**
- Protected Parcel
 - Stream
 - Pond
 - Wetland
 - NHESP Certified Vernal Pool - July 2003
 - Zone I - 400ft Radius to Public Water Supply Well
- Environmentally Sensitive Land**
- 200 ft. Buffer Zone to Streams
100 ft. Buffer Zone to Ponds & Wetlands
 - Steep Slope (over 15%)
 - Zone II Wellhead Protection Area
 - Water Supply Protection Districts
 - Habitat Area of Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
 - NHESP Potential Vernal Pool:
NOT Equivalent to Certified Vernal Pools
- Area of Critical Environmental Concern**
- Fowl Meadow ACEC Southern Boundary
Canoe River ACEC Northern Boundary
 - Open Parcel Suitable for Development
 - Built Parcels Subdividable Under Current Zoning



Sharon Planning Board
Community Design Partnership, Boston MA
MapWorks, Norwell MA
25JUNE2004-2

D. Natural Resources and Open Space Action Plan			Priorit y	Time Line	Responsibility	Funding
Goal	Policy	Action				
Protect drinking water quality and quantity	Continue water supply planning	Protect open space parcels within wellhead protection areas of potential future wells	H	S-M	Water Management Committee; Water Dept	Low to High
Protect surface water and wetland resources for recreation, wildlife and environmental health	Protect upland buffer areas to streams and ponds	Seek conservation restrictions where needed, particularly on parcels adjacent to Lake Massapoag	M	M	Conservation Commission	Seek donation
		Enhance public understanding of environmentally sustainable landscape practices on private property as they affect water and wetland resources	M	M	Conservation Commission; Friends of Conservation	None to Low
Protect environmentally sensitive, scenic, and historic environments and landscape features	Promote protection of areas identified as rare species habitat and BioMap Core Habitat	Seek conservation restrictions where practicable	H	M	Conservation Commission	Seek donation
	Use Conservation Subdivision Zoning to protect open space	Make CSD the by-right, mandatory zoning for parcels of 5 acres or more	H	M	Planning Board; Town Meeting	None
		Inform landowners of special habitat value of neighborhood lands and provide information on best practices	H	S-M	Conservation Commission; Friends of Conservation	None
	Promote identification and certification of vernal pools	Organize volunteers, e.g., school groups, to certify vernal pools	M	M	Friends of Conservation	None
	Promote documentation of rare species	Organize volunteers to identify and document rare species	M	M	Friends of Conservation	None
	Preserve scenic roads	Preserve trees and stone walls to conserve the rural character of roadways	H	On- goin g	Planning Board	None
Create a town-wide network of pedestrian and bicycle paths and routes linking major open spaces and other town destinations		Develop a conceptual plan for a town-wide route	M	M	Friends of Conservation	None to low
		Seek funding for layout and design of the route	M	M	Conservation Commission; Transportation Advisory Board	Low to medium

HOUSING AND RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



The Housing Vision

- *Expansion of housing choices to meet the needs of various household sizes and income levels, while maintaining Sharon's existing affordable housing supply*

GOALS

- Manage residential growth to preserve community character
 - Seek opportunities to promote housing development near the train station and the Town Center, in mixed use situations, and to facilitate conservation subdivisions
- Diversify housing options
 - Provide empty-nester and senior housing so that Sharon residents who wish to downsize from family homes can still stay in town
 - Provide a mix of affordable housing for seniors, town employees and young families

A. CURRENT CONDITIONS

EXISTING HOUSING STOCK AND RESIDENTIAL CHARACTER

Sharon is a predominantly residential town and most of its housing is comprised of owner-occupied single family homes. According to the Assessor, there are a small number of two-family homes and a handful of 3 to 8 unit buildings in the Town Center and along the major roads. The Stony Brook Court complex, owned by non-profit South Norfolk Elderly Housing Services is the only single parcel with more than 8 units. In addition, according to assessor's data, there are 335 condominium units in Sharon. The condo complexes include MacIntosh Farms, a development with units costing in the range of \$400,000 and up. Sharon Green, which used to be a rental complex, contains more modest two-bedroom condos.

Rental housing in Sharon is limited. The nearly 600 units that were estimated to be rented at the time of the census undoubtedly included some single family houses or condominiums that were leased while their owners were temporarily away from home. Judging from the distribution of building types, there may be approximately 300 - 350 housing units in Sharon that are consistently managed as rental units, about 5 percent of the total number of housing units.

Sharon Housing Stock - 2000		
	Number	Percent
Total units	6,026	100.0
One unit detached	5,251	87.1
One unit attached	152	2.5
2 units	146	2.4
3 or 4 units	216	3.6
5 to 9 units	40	0.7
10 to 19 units	88	1.5
20 or more units	133	2.2
Unit types		
Single family	5,403	89.6
In multi-unit structures	623	10.3
Occupancy Status		
Occupied Units	5,934	98.5
Vacant Units	92	1.5
Tenure		
Owner-occupied	5,340	90
Renter-occupied	594	10
Vacancy Rates		
Owner-occupied		2.8
Renter-occupied		0.3

Source: US Census 2000 sample data

Trends in Residential Development

Creation of new housing. Before World War II, Sharon was a small community with an economy based on farming, small-scale manufacturing, and summer resort activities. Like so many other communities in metropolitan Boston, Sharon grew particularly fast during the 1950s, but it continued to add new housing at a steady rate until the end of the century. Over the course of the last 60 years, the town has added an average of about 83 housing units every year.

Judging from the somewhat lower number of units produced during the 1990s, the town may now be entering a period of slower growth in single family housing because the number of buildable parcels is dwindling. The annual average of single family building permits between 1995 and 2002 is 35. However, recent years have seen the construction of condominiums, which brings up the total number of new dwelling units.

Because Sharon has not reached the goal of 10% of housing units affordable to households making 80% of less of the regional median income, the Town is open to

Chapter 40B comprehensive permit projects, which typically include higher densities than permitted by zoning.

Residential Character

Building Permits, 1995-2002 (number of units)		
<i>Year</i>	<i>Single Family</i>	<i>Multi-Family</i>
1995	48	0
1996	46	17
1997	42	20
1998	29	0
1999	37	0
2000	40	0
2001	25	0
2002	16	0

Source: US Census, Town Annual Reports

Sharon's residential character reflects the layers of history and changing styles of building over many decades. There are two small Local Historic Districts, one near the town center and one at Cobb's Corner, and a Demolition Delay by-law that promotes adaptive reuse of structures over 100 years old that the Historical Commission deems preferably preserved. The smaller lots and intersecting streets around the Town Center reflect Sharon's historic village origins. Radiating out from the center, houses were built along the major roads. Cul-de-sac subdivisions with

Sharon Residential Building Types		
<i>Building Type</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Potential Rentals</i>
Single family	5,203	?
Condominium	335	?
Two-Family	116	58-116
Three-Family	5	10- 15
4-8 Unit	3	12 - 24
More than 8 units	1	192
	5,663	299-347+
<i>Source: Sharon Assessor's Data</i>		

larger lots are somewhat more common in the eastern and southern parts of town. Thirty designated Scenic Roads give some protection to stone walls and trees within the road right of way, which cannot be demolished without a public hearing before the Planning Board. Anecdotal evidence, as well as the increasing cost of newly constructed homes, suggests that the size of single family homes has been increasing, especially since 1990.

Zoning and Land Use Regulation

Age of Housing Stock		
<i>Build Year</i>	<i>Number of Units</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
Pre-1940	922	15.5
1940- 1959	1,509	25.4
1960-1969	854	14.4
1970-1979	980	16.5
1980-1989	952	16.0
1990-2000	717	7.6
<i>Source: US Census 2000</i>		

Sharon has a complex zoning by-law that provides for alternatives to conventional development and, to a limited degree for multi-family development. There are eight residential zoning districts and five non-residential zoning districts, all of which permit residential uses except the Industrial District. In addition, the Zoning Bylaw provides for special residential uses and flexible development options. Single family homes are permitted in all zones except Industrial, and two-family homes are

permitted in all the business zones as well as General Residence, which is the residential zone surrounding the Town Center's business district. Apartments are allowed by Special Permit in Business Districts, in conversion of municipal buildings, in Flexible Development projects, and in Conservation Subdivision Developments (CSD). Conservation Subdivision Development (CSD) zoning is allowed in all residential zones except General Residence and the threshold for CSD projects was reduced in fall 2003 from 10 acres to 5 acres. A Water Resource Protection District overlays approximately half of the town.

In practice, the zoning bylaw combined with market forces has resulted in single family homes, several luxury condominium developments, and a handful of CSD or cluster-style subdivisions. The two Suburban zoning districts are built out in condominium projects. Flexible Development appears to have been superceded by CSD, but both by-laws persist side by side.

ZONE	LOT AREA (Sq. Ft)	LOT WIDTH	FRONTAGE	FRONT SET-BACK	REAR/SIDE SET-BACK	MAXIMUM HEIGHT	MAXIMUM STORIES	PERCENT OF BUILDING COVERAGE	PERCENT OF NATURAL COVERAGE
Rural 1	60,000	200' * 175' (Local)	133'-4" * 116'-8" (Local)	60' and 80' * 50' and 70' (Local)	30'	35'	2.5	15% (2)	50%
Rural 2	80,000	200' * 175' (Local)	133'-4" * 116'-8" (Local)	60' and 80' * 50' and 70' (Local)	30'	35'	2.5	15% (2)	50%
Suburban 1	40,000	150'	100'	40' and 70' * 30' and 50' (Local)	20'	35'	2.5	25%	n/a
Suburban 2	60,000	175'	116.7'	50' and 70'	30'	55'	2.5	15%	50%
Single Residence A	40,000	150'	100'	40' and 70' * 30' and 50' (Local)	20'	35'	2.5	25%	n/a
Single Residence B	20,000	100'	66'-8"	40' and 70' * 30' and 50' (Local)	20'	35'	2.5	25%	n/a
General Residence	8,000 single fam. 10,000 two family	70' single family 80' two family	46'-8" single fam. 53'-4" two family	40' and 70' * 30' and 50' (Local)	20'	35'	2.5	40%	n/a
Business A/C	8000 10,000 two family	80' two family	70'	10'	20' residential 10' all other	40' residential 60' commercial	3 residential 4 commercial	To be determined by Planning board	30% (3)
Business B	8000 10,000 two family	80' two family	70'	10' 30' two family	20' residential 10' all other	40' residential 60' commercial	3 residential 4 commercial	40% residential 20% all other	n/a
Professional	20,000 10,000 two family	80' two family	70'	10'	20' residential 10' all other	40'	3	n/a	n/a
Light Industrial	40,000	150'		75' and 100'	100' residential 30' all other	80'	4	60%	20% (landscaped or openspace)
Housing Authority	40,000	n/a	n/a	30' and 50'	20'	35'	2.5	25%	n/a
	5,000 (1)								

Note: Lots located within the Groundwater Protection District have a minimum lot size of 60,000 sf.

Note: Lots located within the Surface Water Protection District have a minimum lot size of 80,000 sf.

Note: Lot Width is measured at the front set-back line.

* State or County Layout

(1) Per dwelling unit (4 persons in a group arrangement = dwelling unit)

(2) Includes paving and walks

(3) See 2463, Minimum Landscaped Open Space Coverage

Special Permit Residential Uses

- *Accessory apartments.* Accessory apartments are allowed in owner-occupied houses as long as the occupant is related to the owner and there is a common entrance.
- *Conversion to two-family.* Single family houses in existence before the zoning by law became effective may be converted to two-family homes.
- *Municipal buildings.* Municipal buildings may be converted to multifamily housing.
- *Apartments in business districts.* Apartments over non-residential uses cannot have more than 16 bedrooms per acre and must meet requirements for usable open space and on-site parking.
- *Flexible development and Conservation Subdivision Development (CSD)* allow multifamily units, with some constraints. CSD also provides for density bonuses for age-qualified units, below-market rate units, and public access to permanently protected open space.

Development Capacity / Buildout Potential

The buildout study prepared by state and regional agencies with town assistance in 2000 found that Sharon had approximately 2,500 acres of developable land that could produce another 1,480 single family housing units under current zoning and an additional 4,000 residents and 814 school children. At current single family housing growth rates and under existing zoning, the residential zones could be built out within 25 years. This analysis does not take into account potential multifamily housing or Chapter 40B projects.

The Town's most recent analysis found 2,530 acres of potentially developable land, 16% of the town, in January 2004. A significant portion of the developable land cited above is made up of country club and camp properties that are not currently expected to be offered for development. In addition, this land includes approximately 400 acres that are the subject of five different Chapter 40B housing development proposals with the potential of 552 housing units (of which 262 would be single family units). The assessor classifies open parcels as developable, potentially developable and undevelopable. Land assembly, new wastewater technology and other circumstances can sometimes make undevelopable land into developable land, but because Sharon has so much wetland area, that is not likely to make a big difference. Taking the developable and potentially developable land that is owned by private, non-institutional owners (i.e., not club, camp or nonprofit institution land), we find that there are 77 parcels over one acre in size totaling 779 acres of which only 14 parcels are over 10 acres in size. These 14 parcels account for 75% of this open land and a single 347-acre parcel owned by the Rattlesnake Corporation accounts for 44% of this open land. This area is the subject of one of the Chapter 40B proposals – in this case for single-family housing. Recently, the town approved a \$7.5 million dollar Proposition 2 ½ override to buy Rattlesnake Hill land for conservation. Another \$7.5 million must be raised through public or private funds, so this issue is unresolved.

Median Sales Price (\$)		
Year	1-Family	Condo
2002	359,900	382,000
2001	345,000	138,450
2000	308,900	244,500
1999	264,800	267,000
1998	229,500	105,000
1997	225,000	279,900
1996	208,250	220,000
1995	214,500	242,500
1994	193,950	212,450
1993	183,500	178,000
1992	189,000	76,500
1991	183,500	75,000
1990	200,000	266,400
1989	205,000	261,050
1988	216,500	100,750

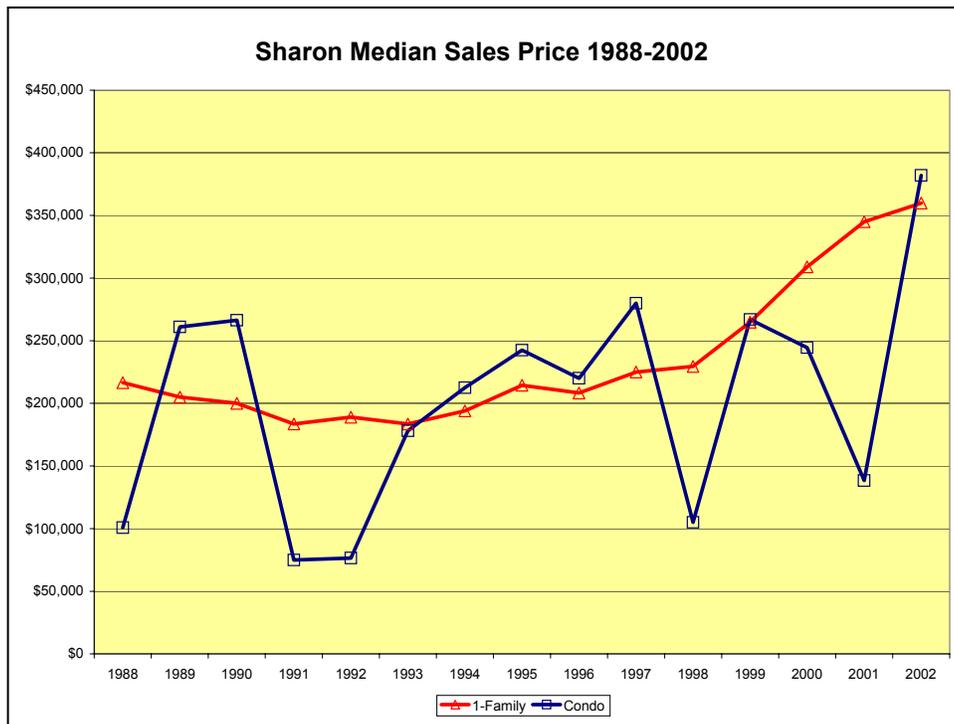
Source: The Warren Group

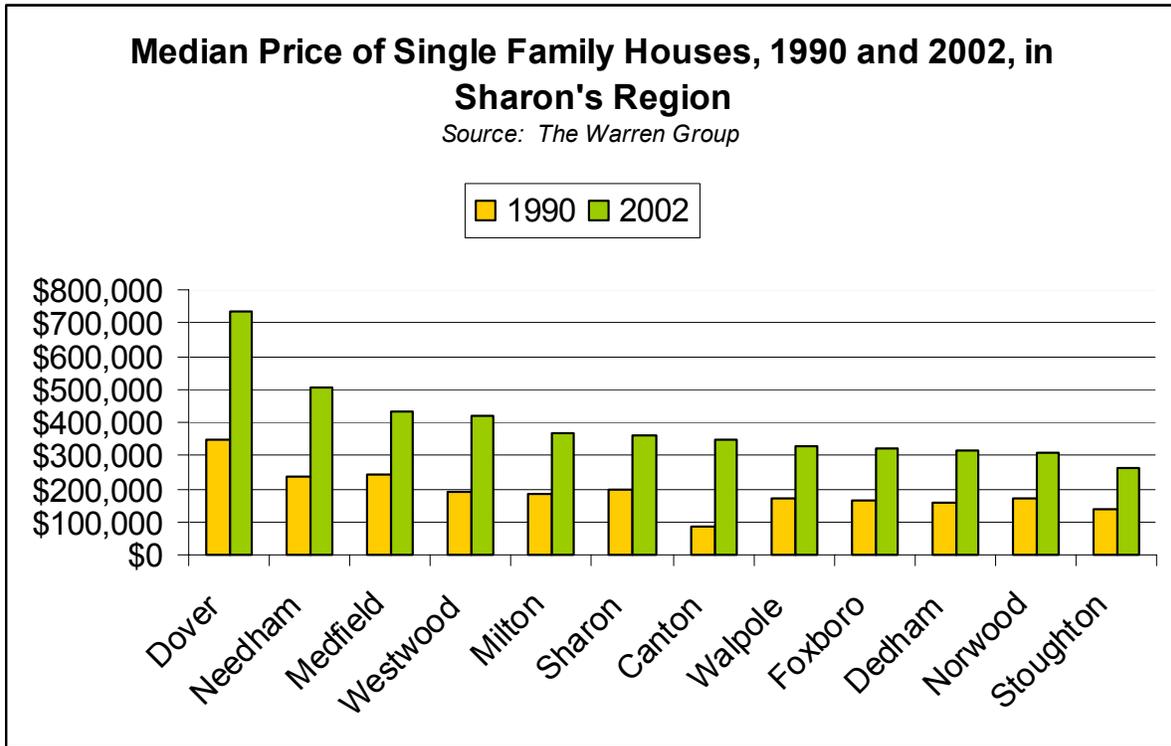
Housing Costs

During the 1990s, the median income of Sharon households increased somewhat more slowly than the rising cost of housing. Median household income rose 44.6% while the median sales price of a single family home increased 54 percent between 1990 and 2000. Over the course of the 1990s, the Boston metropolitan Consumer Price Index grew 44.7%. A recent study of 2001 housing costs in metropolitan Boston found that a family with the estimated Sharon median income in 2001 could still afford to buy a single family home at the median price.

There are signs that this balance between median incomes and median single family home prices may not persist. Single family home prices increased 16% between 2000 and 2002. Sales price data for

January through November 2003 show a median of \$405,000. In January 2004, of the 47 single family homes listed for sale, the lowest listed price was \$289,000. A quarter of the houses (12) were priced under \$350,000, 32% were listed between \$350,000 and \$500,000 and 42% were priced at over \$500,000 (including four for over \$1 million). Condominiums, which in some communities are entry-level housing, are now as expensive as single family homes in Sharon. The median price for a condo over the period between January and November in 2003 was \$408,750 – slightly higher than the corresponding single family house price. In January 2004, of the nine condos listed for sale, only one, at \$220,000, was priced below \$400,000.





HOUSING DEMAND

Population and Housing Unit Changes 1990-2000:

- Total growth in population: +12%
- Total growth in number of households: +13%
- Total growth in number of year-round housing units: +12%
- Growth in owner-occupied year-round units: +16%
- Growth in renter-occupied year round units: -7.6%

Source: US Census 2000, 1990

Vacancy rates in Sharon reflect a tight housing market. At the time of the 2000 Census, the vacancy rate for ownership housing was 0.3% and for rental housing it was 2.8%. Although the housing

market has softened somewhat since 2000, there is no reason to believe that vacancy rates in Sharon have changed significantly and housing prices are continuing to rise, indicating strong demand. The housing market appears to be quite stable, with moderate turnover. According to the 2000 census, 70 percent of the population was living in the same house in 1995.

Household Incomes

The income of Sharon residents kept pace with inflation over the course of the 1990s. The median household income increased 44% between 1989 and 1999, compared to the 44.7% increase in the Consumer Price Index. Families did slightly better, with median family incomes up 49% during the decade. Of course, income varies with age and the median household income in 1999 for people 65 and older was less than half (\$46,210) of what it was for people ages 35-54 (\$ 107,569). Median income is

even lower for people 75 and older (\$25,511). In 2002, 23 seniors participated in the Town's property tax work-off program. Only three percent of Sharon's population (including 105 families) in 1999 lived below the poverty line, but that still accounted for 527 people of whom one third were under 18 years old and over a quarter were 65 years old and older. The US Department of Housing and Urban Development has estimated that 19% of Sharon's population in 1999 lived in households with incomes at 80% or below median.

Spending on Housing

Although mortgage lenders often allow housing to account for 33% or sometimes more of the household budget, the standard used for affordable housing is that households should not spend more than 30% of their income on housing. Despite the fact that Sharon household incomes generally kept up with inflation during the 1990s, by the end of the decade many Sharon homeowners and renters were paying over 30% of their household income for housing costs.

Sharon Housing Costs at 30% or More of Household Income – 1999		
Percent of Income Spent on Housing	Owner Occupied	Renter Occupied
30 to 34 percent	7.5	3.2
35 percent or more	15.2	20.4
<i>Total</i>	<i>22.7</i>	<i>23.6</i>

Source: US Census 2000

Sharon and Its Neighborhood: Renter Cost Burden (Paying 30% or More of Household Income for Housing) - 1999						
	Renter Households	% Cost Burdened	Elderly Renters	% Cost Burdened	Income Below \$35,000	% Cost Burdened
Dover	94	10.6%	7	0.0%	14	71.4%
Foxborough	1,722	13.8%	503	42.5%	766	67.1%
Medfield	558	36.6%	112	50.0%	256	69.1%
Milton	1,422	33.8%	517	52.8%	644	63.5%
Norwood	4,975	30.8%	862	47.1%	1893	67.0%
Sharon	599	23.2%	241	30.3%	311	42.8%
Walpole	1,159	36.2%	355	48.5%	542	66.2%
Westwood	553	44.1%	395	49.1%	304	59.2%

Source: US Census 2000

Sharon's age composition also potentially tells a story about housing costs. Between 1990 and 2000 the proportion of 20 to 34 year olds declined in all communities, as the "baby bust" arrived at the stage when many people form families. However, Sharon lost a disproportionate percentage of the young adult group compared both to its subregion and to the Greater Boston region. Another striking characteristic of Sharon's change in age composition from 1990 to 2000 is the decline in the proportion of people 60 to 75. In both cases, these changes may be related to the relative lack of housing choice in

Sharon. Young people find it too expensive to enter the Sharon housing market while older people who wish to downsize cannot find suitable living space in town and end up leaving Sharon.

AGE GROUP	Sharon Age Composition			% of total Three Rivers Region population in 2000	Sharon % Above / Below TRIC in 2000	% of MAPC Region in 2000	Sharon % Above / Below MAPC in 2000
	% of total population in 1990	% of total population in 2000	% change in proportion of total 1990-2000				
<5	7.9	7.0	-11.4	6.7	4.5	6.1	14.8
5-9	8.5	9.2	8.2	7.3	26.0	6.4	43.8
10-14	7.1	9.0	26.8	7.4	21.6	6.2	45.2
15-19	6.4	6.7	4.7	5.8	15.3	6.1	9.8
20-24	4.6	2.3	-50.0	3.8	-39.5	6.9	-66.7
25-34	13.2	7.5	-43.2	11.5	-34.8	16.2	-53.7
35-44	21.1	19.0	-10.0	17.6	8.0	16.7	13.8
45-54	13	18.8	44.6	15.2	23.7	13.6	38.2
55-59	4.3	5.8	34.9	5.3	9.4	4.8	20.8
60-64	4.1	3.8	-7.3	4.1	-7.3	3.7	2.7
65-74	5.9	5.8	-1.7	7.5	-22.7	6.7	-13.4
75-84	2.9	3.9	34.5	5.6	-30.4	4.8	-18.8
85+	1.0	1.3	30.0	2.3	-43.5	1.8	-27.8
	100.0	100.1		100.1		100	

Source: U.S. Census; MAPC

A recent analysis of housing production and affordability in the 161 cities and towns of the Greater Boston area found that the median income household in Sharon in 2003 could afford the median-priced single family home. However, a first-time homebuyer household, assumed to make 80% of median income and able to put down only 10% rather than the standard 20% of the sales price, would not be able to afford the median-priced single family home.²

One way to evaluate Sharon's role in the regional housing market is to compare its share of population in the Three Rivers region with its share of currently listed Chapter 40B-eligible housing units. Sharon's population accounts for 6.61% of the regional population but only 4.64% of the total number of Chapter 40B affordable units currently listed for all the towns in the region. None of the towns in the region has attained the 10% affordable Chapter 40B goal.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

What is "affordable housing?"

The concept of affordable housing is based on three statistics: the median household income for an area, the appropriate percentage of household income that should be spent on housing, and the median cost of housing in the rental or ownership markets. Under most housing subsidy programs, the

² Bonnie Heudorfer et al., *The Greater Boston Housing Report Card 2003* (Boston: CURP, Northeastern University, April 2004), 28, Appendix B.

housing produced with government financial assistance is targeted to people whose household income is 80 percent or below the median household income for an area. (The median is the point at which half the households have higher incomes and half the households have lower incomes.) Median income levels by size of household are set by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) every year for entire metropolitan areas. Because Sharon is in the Boston Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA), it is this median income amount that is used in affordable housing projects, not Sharon's local median. For Fiscal Year 2004, the median income for all households was \$82,600 and 80 percent of median for a family of four was \$66,150. According to HUD standards, affordable housing for households with incomes at or below 80 percent of median should cost no more than 30 percent of total household income. An affordable home, therefore, could be one that a family of four making no more than \$66,150 a year could buy or rent with 30 percent of their income going to rent or mortgage payments. US HUD has estimated that 19% of Sharon's population is in households with incomes 80% or below the Boston Area Median Income.

**PMSA : Boston, MA-NH
FY 2004 MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME: \$82,600**

	I N C O M E L I M I T S – H O U S E H O L D S I Z E (N U M B E R O F P E R S O N S)							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
30% OF MEDIAN	\$17,350	\$19,850	\$22,350	\$24,800	\$26,800	\$28,800	\$30,750	\$32,750
VERY LOW-INCOME (50% OF MEDIAN)	\$28,950	\$33,100	\$37,200	\$41,350	\$44,650	\$47,950	\$51,250	\$54,600
LOW-INCOME (80% OF MEDIAN)	\$46,300	\$52,950	\$59,550	\$66,150	\$71,450	\$76,750	\$82,050	\$87,350

Chapter 40B – the Comprehensive Permit Law

The state Comprehensive Permit Law (Chapter 40B) includes a goal of 10 percent affordable housing in every municipality. Unless a town has deed-restricted housing units affordable to low- and moderate-income households in excess of ten percent of its current total year-round housing units, a developer can submit a Comprehensive Permit application to the Zoning Board of Appeals for an affordable housing project. The Comprehensive Permit consolidates all approvals into one process and allows a developer to bypass the local zoning bylaw and other Town planning regulations. Housing units created under Chapter 40B must meet four tests in order to be counted towards that goal:

- The units must be in a development that has been approved for direct state or federal subsidy, for example, through the Massachusetts Housing Finance Agency, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston, or the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). With the exception of the Local Initiative Program (LIP), the subsidies are financial. In the case of the LIP, towns work directly with developers but receive technical assistance from DHCD and receive standing as Chapter 40B

projects. LIP projects allow towns more flexibility in making decisions about the design and site plan of a project. The state merely has to approve the affordability elements of the project: the incomes of the persons to be housed, the minimum quality of the housing units, fair marketing, and a maximum level of profit.

- At least 25 percent of the units must be restricted to households having incomes at or below 80 percent of the area median income. The units must have rents or sales prices that are restricted to levels that households at those incomes can afford, with housing costs taking up no more than 30% of income. For newly-constructed housing, the affordability restrictions must be in place for at least 15 years.
- The development must be subject to use restrictions and deed restrictions insuring that the units will remain available only to people who have qualifying incomes and these requirements must be monitored by a public agency or a non-profit organization.
- The units must be openly marketed according to fair housing laws. However, within certain limits towns can establish a local preference for their own residents. Typically, potential buyers or tenants participate in a lottery, with extra points given to local residents, town employees or others with connections to the town.

Administrative Changes to Chapter 40B

The legal situation surrounding Chapter 40B is in flux. New regulations were issued in late 2002 that provide for more rapid counting of approved units and of more types of units; more leeway for a town to deny a permit or include conditions if it has an approved affordable housing plan and has made recent progress towards the 10 percent affordable units or if the project is very large in relation to the town's population; and consideration by the Housing Appeals Committee of a community's master plan and affordable housing creation efforts if a developer appeals a denial of a Comprehensive Permit.

A town may submit an Affordable Housing Planned Production Plan to the state Department of Housing and Community Development for approval. An approved affordable housing plan must include:

- A comprehensive housing needs assessment
- Affordable housing goals including the mix of housing, timeframes for the production of units, and the type of use restrictions to be used to insure affordability. The state will not approve a plan restricted to affordable housing for the elderly.
- An affordable housing strategy which may include
 - Zoning areas to be modified to accommodate residential development
 - Identification of specific sites for which comprehensive permit applications would be encouraged
 - Preferred characteristics of development (e.g., cluster development)
 - Identification of municipally-owned parcels for which housing development proposals would be sought

After the affordable housing plan is approved, the town has to show a certain level of production of 40B eligible units in order to receive certification of the plan. If the plan is certified, the town may deny or condition Comprehensive Permits for one year without appeal. Currently, certification requires the production in one year of $\frac{3}{4}$ of 1 percent of the total year-round census units. If 40B-eligible units are created in the amount of 1.5 percent of the total year-round housing units, the town can deny or condition Comprehensive Permits for two years without appeal.

In Sharon's case, certification of compliance with the plan would require production of approximately 46 units. In the absence of a certified plan, Sharon can benefit from having a master plan with an affordable housing component, which now can be considered by the Housing Appeals Committee if a developer appeals a denial or conditional comprehensive permit.

Potential Legislative Changes to 40B

A state Task Force on 40B issued recommendations in June 2003 and legislation incorporating those recommendations was filed in October 2003. Major elements of the proposed legislation include the following:

- Affordable ownership units will be counted twice. This provision is retroactive.
- Affordable housing built with Community Preservation Act funding will be counted towards the 40B percentage.
- Recent progress towards the 10% goal, defined as creation of 2 percent of eligible affordable housing, will give a community a one year moratorium on comprehensive permit applications.
- Communities with an approved affordable housing planned production plan may deny comprehensive permit applications for specified periods as follows:
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ % of total year round housing units – 1 year period
 - 1% of total year round housing units – 2 year period
 - 1.5% of total year round housing units – 3 year period
- A community that has approved 3 or more comprehensive permits of 20 or more units each in the preceding 12 months may deny the next application for a comprehensive permit.
- For projects on town borders, communities can have shared hearings, shared infrastructure and services costs, and shared counting towards the 10% goal.

In May 2004, the Massachusetts House of Representatives passed the bill but included amendments counting 50% of mobile homes and certain assisted living units towards the 10% goal. The state Senate is expected to vote on the 40B reform bill by the end of July 2004, which, if passed, may or may not be identical to the House bill. At this writing, it is anticipated that some version of the reform bill will become law.

Meeting the 10 percent Chapter 40B goal

The 10% goal for deed-restricted affordable units is calculated on the basis of census-year year-round units – in Sharon’s case, 6,006 housing units. This means the Chapter 40B goal for Sharon is 601 affordable housing units, of which 202 already exist. Given the average household size of approximately 3 persons, 399 additional units could bring 1,197 more people to town. Because the additional units would bring the total number of units up to 6,405 (if no other units were created), the 10% goal is effectively higher in the long term. Because changes in the way 40B units are counted may occur, for the purposes of illustration, we will assume the need for creating 400 affordable units by 2010.

Depending on how these units are produced, the goal might continue to increase as the total number of units grows. For example, if 400 affordable ownership units are produced in projects in which 25% of the units are affordable, that means that the total number of new housing units would be 1600, thus ultimately increasing the 10% goal to 761, assuming no other units were added in the Town. Rental projects and projects with higher percentages of affordable units do not have the same impact. Moreover, if the Chapter 40B reform legislation passes with the provision to count ownership units twice, the impact would change again if the affordable housing were ownership housing.

The arithmetic of single family ownership-only 40B projects is not beneficial to Sharon. By taking a more active role in shaping affordable housing production so that it meets Town goals, the Town can successfully meet its affordable housing needs without creating large amounts of single family housing that does not meet the goal of diversifying housing types.

Executive Order 418

Housing Certification through Executive Order 418 is a separate and distinct process from qualifying housing for the Chapter 40B affordable housing inventory or certification of an Affordable Housing Planned Production Plan. Housing Certification is a voluntary process. However, certain discretionary state grants, including Public Works Economic Development grants, will not be available to Sharon if it does not obtain EO 418 Housing Certification. In addition, housing certified communities receive bonus points in grant competitions for open space funds and other environmental grant programs. To be certified, communities must show that they have a strategy to provide housing for low, moderate and middle income households and they must actually create units for households in these income groups.

For the purposes of EO 418, qualifying units include not only those new units affordable to households with incomes 80 percent and below the median – the top eligibility threshold for permanent affordable housing – but also units affordable to middle-income families. New ownership units affordable to households with up to 150 percent of the regional median income and new rental units affordable to households with up to 100 percent of the regional median count towards EO 418 housing certification. In

the Boston Metropolitan Statistical Area, of which Sharon is a part, this means that middle income ownership units for a family of four can cost up to \$375,000.

Sharon's EO 418 certification will have to be renewed for FY 2004 and FY 2005 and will depend on the actual creation of eligible units, not simply planning activities. The certification process gives credit for affordable housing planning activities, for efforts to promote affordable housing creation such as identification of suitable sites and zoning changes, and for production of affordable and middle-income units. This EO 418 Plan will provide Sharon with the housing strategy. The state will also take into consideration how much housing has actually been created in deciding whether to grant certification.

TYPE AND LOCATION OF CURRENT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Sharon has 202 deed-restricted, permanently affordable housing units, all but one of them rental. The single ownership unit is a Habitat for Humanity house on Gunhouse Street that was built approximately four years ago. The majority of the rental units are limited to elderly and disabled persons. The Sharon Housing Authority owns 88 of these units and a nonprofit organization, South Norfolk Elderly Housing Services, owns 98 units in Stony Brook Court which are under state authority and follow federal guidelines. Both of these developments are located on Hixson Farm Road. In addition, the Housing Authority has 6 family units on Pleasant Street. Finally, the Housing Authority leases a deed-restricted building to the May Center with housing for 9 autistic persons.

Waiting lists

The Housing Authority's waiting list for elderly/disabled housing has 63 names, including four from Sharon. Given demographic trends, the Housing Authority director expects that the waiting list for elderly housing will grow longer in the coming years. The waiting list for the much smaller number of family affordable units is 64, including 6 Sharon residents and 58 from surrounding towns. Stony Brook Court has a waiting list of 26 persons for its elderly/disabled units and the typical wait for a unit is one year.

Chapter 40B eligible units

The 202 units described above are the only ones that qualify for the purposes of Chapter 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law. Sharon currently has 3.35% Chapter 40B qualified affordable housing units.

Current and future Chapter 40B projects

Approximately 408 acres of Sharon land is the subject of current or likely 40B projects. A large 40B project on Rattlesnake Hill was approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals for 120 units, less than the 250 units proposed. The developer is appealing the decision before the Housing Appeals Committee. The Town voted an override of \$7.5 million towards purchase and the legislature earmarked \$7.5 million

towards purchase and incorporation into Borderland State Park. Efforts are underway to persuade the state administration to release those funds. Although the Town has voted its preference to see this project not be built and the land incorporated into the state park, Town boards are working to facilitate other 40B projects, particularly the Avalon Sharon rental project.

Potential Chapter 40B Projects					
<i>Project</i>	<i>Total Units Proposed</i>	<i>Minimum Affordable</i>	<i>Counted for 40B</i>	<i>Counted for 40B if double counting of ownership allowed</i>	<i>Status</i>
The Estates at Borderland (Rattlesnake Hill) (ownership)	250	63	63	126	-ZBA ruled for 120 units (30 affordable); appeal pending
King Philip Estates (ownership)	12	3	3	6	Filed; ZBA meetings
Avalon Sharon (rental)	192	48	192	192	Pre-filing meetings
The Residences at Old Post Rd (over-55 condominium)	66	17	17	34	Filed; hearings to begin
Glendale Village (condominium)	32	8	8	16	Filed; hearings to be scheduled
Total Potential Units	552	139	283	374	

As noted earlier, the state Department of Housing and Community Development recently issued new regulations for Chapter 40B. These regulations provide for more rapid counting of approved units and of more types of units; more leeway for a town to deny a permit or include conditions if it has an approved affordable housing plan and has made recent progress towards the 10 percent affordable units or if the project is very large in relation to the town's population; and consideration by the Housing Appeals Committee of a community's master plan and affordable housing creation efforts. If a town shows that it has produced 40B-eligible units in the amount of three fourths of one percent of total housing units (about 45 units for Sharon), it can ask DHCD for certification of its plan. A Certified plan permits a town to deny a comprehensive permit, or grant one with conditions, for one year (two years if it produces 1.5 percent of total housing units). The recent 40B Task Force recommended that certification be available if the town produces ½ of one percent of year-round units (approximately 30 units for Sharon).

Potential Changes to the 40B Count

If the legislature passes a 40B reform bill in 2004 that allows double-counting of ownership units in 40B projects, the arithmetic of Sharon's 40B housing will change somewhat. If all the 40B projects in the table above are permitted (including the 250-unit version of the Rattlesnake Hill project), the double-counting provision would bring Sharon's 40B count to 576. If no other housing were to be built, Sharon would need an additional 80 units to reach 10%.

Nonprofit Housing Capacity

Sharon has a nonprofit housing group, the Sharon Affordable Housing Corporation. The board consists of members of the Housing Authority and Sharon residents. (The board is not identical in membership to the Housing Authority board.) The Affordable Housing Corporation was formed when an opportunity to create some affordable units seemed to be available, but the project was not successful. However, this group can be a resource for future efforts.

CONSTRAINTS TO DEVELOPMENT

Over a third of Sharon is permanently protected land. Sharon also has significant wetland areas outside permanently protected parcels and two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern are partially within Sharon. At the northern end of town, the Fowl Meadow ACEC covers 505 acres in Sharon and to the far south the Canoe River ACEC covers 1,585 acres. ACEC designation does not prevent development but provides a higher standard of review. The lack of a public sewer system and the fact that water resource protection districts overlay a substantial part of the town also function as constraints on the potential to increase density.

Wastewater Issues

There are no public sewers or wastewater treatment in Sharon. The Sharon Woods subdivision is tied into the Foxboro sewer system, with the wastewater treated in Mansfield and the large condominium complexes have package wastewater treatment plants. The Town's Board of Health Regulations are more stringent than the state's Title 5 regulations. Failing systems have been rebuilt to Board of Health standards. The Board is also open to the use of alternative septic systems. In addition, discussions are beginning over possible solutions to the wastewater constraints on additional development in the Town Center.

School Population and Capacity

Sharon is a family-oriented community and nearly half of the households counted in the 2000 Census included persons under 18 years old. In 2002, 87 percent of school-aged children attended public schools. Because of the high proportion of schoolchildren in the population and the high proportion who attend public schools, residents are concerned about the potential impacts of new development on school costs. Improvements have been funded at two elementary schools and the high school, and the School Committee is planning for repair and renovation of the Middle School. The School Committee expects a demographic "bulge" in the middle school years in the near future, but there is no expectation that this will put the school over capacity.

Areas suitable for higher density housing, considering existing and future sewer connections and capacity

Because there is no public sewer system in Sharon and significant portions of the town are in water resource protection districts, higher density housing will depend on private solutions or communal systems. This particularly true in the Town Center, where new housing could be advantageously located because of the proximity to the commuter rail station.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Sharon's fundamental housing goal is to diversify housing options in type and affordability while still managing residential growth to preserve the essential character of the Town as a green suburb. The Town should encourage future development to be different from the conventional single family house development pattern that now characterizes the Town and will continue to be the dominant type of housing. By making it a policy to promote the creation of more multifamily housing, rental housing, age-qualified housing, and housing developed through Conservation Subdivisions and other alternatives to conventional subdivisions, the Town will increase the diversity of its housing stock without fundamentally changing the residential character of Sharon. Because the goals of managing and shaping residential growth and diversifying housing options are interrelated, many of the strategies to achieve those goals need to be viewed from both perspectives.

1) Revitalize the Sharon Housing Partnership to focus on promoting affordable housing

Sharon's Housing Partnership had only one member when this planning process began. As a result of the discussions about the housing element of this plan, a second member has now been appointed and others are being sought, in order to reactivate the Partnership. Housing Partnerships are volunteer groups, usually appointed by Boards of Selectmen, which take the lead in planning for affordable housing. Membership should include people with appropriate interest and expertise, such as public officials, business and community leaders, attorneys, realtors, clergy, and Housing Authority representatives. The activities of the Housing Partnership would likely include the following:

- Establishing a charter for the organization to proactively approach the development of affordable housing
- Increasing public awareness through forums and other public events
- Establishing criteria to evaluate affordable housing proposals
- Making recommendations on the pros and cons of particular housing proposals
- Locating available land suitable for development
- Identifying public and private resources to develop elderly and affordable housing in Sharon

- Reviewing land use regulations and zoning bylaws
- Working with non-profit and for-profit developers of affordable housing
- Creating a timeline for affordable housing development
- Establishing appropriate sub-committees to the Housing Partnership such as a Senior Housing Committee.

2) Seek technical assistance from nonprofit groups and explore relationships with nonprofit developers and funding sources.

Sharon does not have to reinvent the wheel in order to create and implement a robust affordable housing strategy. There are many organizations, such as the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP) and Citizens Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) that offer resources and technical assistance. MHP has assisted many communities in creating effective Housing Partnerships and creating affordable housing that is compatible with community character. It also can provide pre-development funding, technical assistance, bridge financing and assistance to communities in working on Chapter 40B proposals. In addition, the Housing Partnership should reach out to regional nonprofit housing groups, religious congregations and others that may be interested in supporting affordable housing creation, including through possibilities such as land donations. The Sharon Affordable Housing Corporation can be the local vehicle for affordable housing production.

3) Inventory and study the feasibility of using town-owned parcels and buildings for affordable housing.

The high cost of land is one of the greatest barriers to affordable housing production. If the Town can contribute or donate land to a project, it makes affordable housing creation, as well as moderately priced market housing creation much easier. The Town does not have to develop the housing itself, but it can set the framework and standards for the kind of development it seeks. Through a Request for Proposals process, the Town can offer property for sale or for lease to developers subject to development in conformity with the Town's plan for the property. All town-owned sites, both large and small, should be evaluated for their potential. The town could combine affordable housing creation with other town needs. The Sharon Planning Board has identified 5 potential affordable housing development sites consisting of town-owned land. (See the table following Item 4.)

4) Work with the Conservation Commission to identify developable protected land that might be swapped with undevelopable Town-owned land for affordable housing development

The Conservation Commission controls many acres of land in Sharon, some of which abuts rental and/or affordable housing such as Hixson Farms. Further, there are town-owned parcels of land that cannot be developed for a variety of reasons that abut Conservation land. The Planning Board initiated discussions about the potential to swap undevelopable town-owned land for Conservation parcels that could be used to meet Sharon's diverse housing needs. These discussions will continue.

Town-Owned Property with Affordable Housing Potential							
PARCEL#	ADDRESS	OWNER	CO-OWNER	ACRES	Outside Buffer and Buildable	Zone	Comments
<i>Town-Owned Property with Affordable Housing Potential</i>							
121014001	1 HIXSON FARM RD	TOWN OF SHARON	TOWN OF SHARON	11.188	6.29	ha	Steep but buildable
091252000	75 SOUTH MAIN ST	SHARON HIGH	CHAS R WILBER SC	3.877	3.877	bus-c	Proposed reuse as town hall
079001000	45 SANDY RIDGE CIR	TOWN OF SHARON	BOARD OF SELECTMEN	41.962	23.4	sr-b	Near Well 3, Zone I overlaps, Steep ridge
063014000	156 MOUNTAIN ST	TOWN OF SHARON	BOARD OF SELECTMEN	34.867	3	r-2	Landfill lot
039095000, 039076002, 039076001	195 WOLOMOLOPOAG ST	TOWN OF SHARON	BOARD OF SELECTMEN	4.610	0*		Extremely Steep Topography but buildable with retaining walls or cut and fill; Proposed Water Tank Location; Poor Access Due To Slope, 039095000 use for access to 039076002 & 039076001 Only
	60R FURNACE ST	TOWN OF SHARON		5.440	4.1	r-1	
	235R WOLOMOLOPOAG ST	TOWN OF SHARON	BOARD OF SELECTMEN	11.303	0*		
<i>Conservation Commission Parcel with Buildable Area for Potential Exchange for Town-Owned Parcel(s)</i>							
091011000	25 PLEASANT PARK RD	TOWN OF SHARON	CONSERVATION COMMISSION	46.475	8.6	sr-b	Near Town Wells
<i>Town-Owned Nonconforming Parcels with Affordable Housing Potential</i>							
077008000	5 PINE ST	TOWN OF SHARON	COLLECTORS [TAX TAKING]	8.172	6.04	r-1	Abuts highway, only 45' of frontage on Pine St.-Rt. Angle Entry
023002000	71R MANSFIELD ST	TOWN OF SHARON	TREASURER [TAX TITLE]	4.701	1.19	r-1	Only 54' of frontage- one subdivision lot with roadway
<i>Town-Owned Parcels: Potential Exchange with Conservation Commission for Buildable Area for Affordable Housing</i>							
127009000	000 CANTON ST	TOWN OF SHARON	COLLECTORS OFFICE	22.517	0	r-1	No frontage in Sharon. Steep hill in SE corner
076004000	1300 GENERAL EDWARDS HWY	TOWN OF SHARON	COLLECTORS [TAX TAKING]	7.085	3.5	r-1	Montaup Power Lines- on lot only town by tax taking
074052000	100A HAMPTON RD	TOWN OF SHARON	BOARD OF SELECTMEN	6.433	1.4	sr-a	Not in WPD- Wetlands Crossing at Frontage
139001000	0 EDGE HILL RD	TOWN OF SHARON	COLLECTORS OFFICE	0.869	0	r-1	Completely within Wetlands Buffer
139002000	0 EDGE HILL RD	TOWN OF SHARON		2.855	0	r-1	Completely within Wetlands Buffer

5) Study the possible renovation of the Wilber School for elderly housing

The Wilber School is under consideration for several potential uses. Given the proximity to doctors, drug stores, Town Hall and mass transportation, the Wilber School would be an ideal site for elderly housing. Feasibility studies should be initiated to evaluate the site's potential for a combination of elderly housing and retail or professional units, or a combination of housing with town offices, a senior center or library. A public/private partnership could help the Town finance new uses for this underutilized property.

6) Explore the possibility of a "friendly 40B" or Local Initiative Program project on town-owned property or private property.

The Department of Housing and Community Development's Local Initiative Program provides technical assistance to local communities that produce affordable units and counts them towards the Chapter 40B inventory, while allowing a greater degree of flexibility than is available for projects with direct financial subsidies. The Sharon Planning Board is currently discussing "friendly 40B" developments with two developers.

7) Prepare a wastewater management plan for the Town Center that includes a feasibility study of options to support additional small and medium scale multifamily development in the Town Center and near the commuter rail station.

Without new approaches to wastewater management, both residential and business development in the Town Center will be severely constrained. Communal septic systems, solar aquatics systems, wastewater management districts and the potential to connect to the High School system should be investigated and their costs and benefits evaluated.

8) Modify zoning bylaws to encourage housing diversity in type and in cost.

In order to be successful in diversifying the type and cost of housing in Sharon, the Town must provide zoning that facilitates development of this kind of housing by avoiding special permit processes and providing incentives where necessary. With by-right zoning, the Town will continue to have oversight in design and function through the site plan review process.

A. Make Conservation Subdivision Development the mandatory, by-right zoning for parcels of 5 acres or more.

The Town recently reduced the CSD threshold to 5 acres. However, CSD is still a special permit process and most developers prefer the path of least resistance and good profits, which is conventional subdivision development. Since the state legislature recently allowed cluster subdivisions to be a by-right use, Sharon can now make CSD the only by-right use for remaining parcels over 5 acres. This would encourage preservation of the most environmentally sensitive and most scenic elements of a site, as well as integration of open space with town recreational and open space networks. Because site plan review still applies, the Planning Board can still require the CSD Design Process, Concept Plan, and other aspects of the current by-law to make sure that the subdivision design meets the standards for a conservation subdivision.

B. Consider eliminating the Flexible Development By-Law as redundant.

The Flexible Development By-Law appears to be superseded by the CSD by-law, particularly if CSD is made a by-right use. The existence of both by-laws is potentially confusing and problematic. However, if one of the purposes of the Flexible Development by-law was to provide the option for the builder of even a single house to be able to site the building in a more environmentally and aesthetically pleasing way than by-right zoning would allow, then Flexible Development should be rewritten to reflect that objective. It should remain a special permit process subject to site plan review and the permitting and site plan processes should be consolidated in the Planning Board, rather than making the Board of Appeals the special permit granting authority.

C. Establish inclusionary/incentive zoning for subdivisions.

Inclusionary zoning requires a developer to provide a certain percentage of affordable units within a development. Incentive zoning provides a benefit – typically a density bonus – in return for providing affordable units. In order to achieve more affordable units, the Town needs to make the development of affordable housing economically feasible for developers who might otherwise prefer a 40B application. The correct threshold number of units must also be considered. For example, if inclusionary zoning applies to all developments of 10 or more units but the incentives are insufficient, developers may prefer to build 9 bigger and more expensive houses – and recent experience indicates that they will have little trouble finding buyers. For small subdivisions, an inclusionary zoning by-law should also provide for the possibility of a payment to an Affordable Housing Trust in lieu of providing affordable units. (See below.) Particularly because most Sharon subdivisions are small, it is important that the Town evaluate the market and developer behavior when setting threshold levels, density bonuses, and in-lieu payments to an affordable housing trust. Inclusionary zoning might be incorporated into the current CSD by-law.

D. Amend zoning to promote affordable accessory units.

All accessory units currently require a special permit and are restricted to relatives. Affordable accessory units can be an excellent way to create affordable housing without significant change to neighborhood or community character. Although the Town is unlikely to gain large numbers of affordable units through accessory units, these units can be valuable on the margin. Sharon should allow permanently affordable accessory units to be created by right and allow all accessory units to be open to non-relatives. Templates for affordability agreements and simple monitoring protocols have already been established in several Massachusetts communities. The Sharon Housing Authority can assist with these issues.

E. Allow by right small-scale affordable single family homes and duplexes with one affordable unit on substandard, non-conforming lots, subject to site plan review.

Parcels that lack required size or frontage but that otherwise provide necessary wastewater capacity could be made legal lots for building affordable units or duplexes in which one unit is affordable. Housing of modest size, with the number of bedrooms limited to the septic capacity of smaller lots, can provide scattered-site affordable units that fit easily into neighborhoods.

F. Allow upper-story apartments above ground floor retail in the Town Center by right.

Instead of requiring a special permit process, allow apartments in the Town Center by right, subject to site plan review and the constraints of the wastewater system.

G. Allow and identify off-site parking options for apartments in the Town Center.

Allowing off-site parking through options for leased or shared parking in the Town Center can facilitate the creation of upper story apartments in small-scale buildings on constrained lots.

H. Create a mixed-use overlay district to encourage multifamily housing in conjunction with retail areas by special permit of the Planning Board.

Mixed-use developments that combine multifamily housing with retail are beginning to replace old-fashioned malls and strip shopping centers. A mixed use district applied over Shaw's Plaza, the Heights, and the Post Office Square area can promote redevelopment of these areas into more village-like environments. The overlay district should include a definition of acceptable uses and percentages of uses, design and development performance standards, and a requirement for 10% affordable units. In this case, because additional density will already be provided, a density bonus for affordable units would not be necessary.

I. Review the limitation on number of bedrooms in multifamily developments.

Sharon's current limits on the number of bedrooms in multifamily developments should be evaluated because it has the effect of constraining a full range of housing choice in the Town.

J. Clarify and change the definition of “below market value residence” in the zoning by-law to “affordable housing” or “housing affordable to low and moderate income households”.

The current definition refers to “the determination of below market value made according to Executive Order 418 or any superseding order or legislation.” EO 418 does not refer to “below market value” housing but to housing affordable to low and moderate income households (those making 80% or less of the area median income) and to housing affordable to middle income households (those making up to 150% of median for ownership units and up to 100% of median for rental units). These distinctions are based on formulas used for federal funding. Subsidies are available for housing affordable to low and moderate income households (80% and below area median income) and it is these units that also count towards the Chapter 40B inventory. The income eligibility levels for these units are set every year by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. An example of a more precise definition is below:

Affordable Unit shall mean any dwelling unit for which the rent (including utilities) does not exceed thirty (30) percent of the income of the renting household or for which the mortgage payment (including insurance, utilities and real estate taxes) does not exceed thirty (30) percent of the income of the purchasing household or other standards as may be established pursuant to any city, state or federal housing program designed to assist low and moderate income households. (Cambridge Zoning Ordinance)

9) Seek legislative permission to establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Many communities have established an Affordable Housing Trust, but the state legislature must vote permission. The Fund can receive donations from both public and private sources for affordable housing creation.

10) Offer an amnesty for illegal apartments in exchange for making them affordable units.

Converting existing illegal accessory units or apartments will not change the de facto number of housing units or residents, but will add to the number of affordable units. In some cases, conversion of these units might require the owners to bring the units up to code. Owners may be able to qualify through regional housing programs for assistance in code improvements if the apartments will become subject to affordability agreements.

11) Consider designating the Town Center for tax increment financing incentives under the new District Improvement Financing and Urban Housing Tax Increment Financing laws.

Recent state legislation allows communities to designate areas as small as a parcel but no more than 25% of the town for District Improvement Financing (DIF) and Urban Housing Tax Increment Financing Districts. If approved by state economic development officials, a DIF district allows the community to pay for planning and infrastructure improvements through a bond secured by a portion of future tax revenues from new investment in the designated area. A housing district would allow the Town to provide tax abatements to affordable housing developers over a specified number of years.

12) Adopt the state law on tax title properties that provides for forgiveness of taxes owed to developers of affordable housing.

Municipalities can adopt a state law that allows them to forgive taxes owed on tax title properties if a new owner will develop affordable housing. Although there may not be many opportunities of this type in Sharon, it is worthwhile to have this tool should an opportunity arise.

13) Explore the feasibility of tax abatements on existing homes occupied by income-eligible households in return for affordability agreements.

The Town of Marion is developing a program for local homeowners whose incomes are at 80 percent or below the regional median in which they would receive tax abatements in return for affordability agreements that would make the homes eligible for the 40B inventory. In this way the Town would be able to increase its supply of permanently affordable housing without increasing the total number of housing units. The program will require state approval.

14) Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act

Adoption of the CPA would provide a dedicated stream of funding for affordable housing, as well as open space protection and historic preservation. The tax surcharge combined with state matching funds has become increasingly important in helping communities shape the way that affordable housing is created in their localities. The CPA process promotes the possibility of projects that can successfully combine the three goals. Current fiscal conditions may make it difficult for the Town to consider adding new tax responsibilities, even if they are modest. However, the Town should study the benefits that the CPA has brought to communities that have adopted it and consider a plan to vote on it in a few years.

15) Create a Planned Production Affordable Housing Plan to submit to the Department of Housing and Community Development

A planned production plan must include quantitative targets for a mix of housing types. Goals for housing production are suggested below:

Affordable Housing: Unit Mix Goals	Average Units per year over 10 years	Total Units over 10 years	Rental per year	Ownership per year	Family-Sized per year	Over 55 per year
Single family	2	20	0	20	20	0
Multifamily and condo	22	220	11	11	3	3
Accessory apartments	1	10	10	0	n/a	n/a
Total	25	250	21	31	23	3

16) Study the potential for streamlining the variance process for small additions and changes by homeowners with nonconforming properties.

Many residential properties in Sharon are nonconforming in some way. This means that homeowners who want to make small renovations to their homes often need to seek a variance from the Zoning Board of appeals.

C. MAPS

Map 5: Housing Opportunities: The Housing Opportunities map identifies existing residential land uses and areas where new opportunities for housing development are possible:

- Conservation Subdivisions by right for parcels over 5 acres: Many, though not all, of these parcels are currently used by clubs and institutions and/or are in one of the Chapter 61 tax abatement programs for open space. Even if it is unlikely that some of these lands will be developed, it is important that, in case these parcels come up for development, the town put in place the kind of zoning that would make it possible to preserve unfragmented open space while accommodating new development.
- Locations where there is potential for mixed-use overlay districts
- Locations of potential 40B projects
- Town-owned land with potential for affordable housing development

Potential 40B

- Rental
- 192 total units
- 48 affordable

Potential 40B

- Over 55 Condos
- 66 total units
- 17 affordable

Mixed Use Overlay District

- Housing over Retail as a redevelopment option

Potential 40B

- Ownership - single family
- 12 total units
- 3 affordable

Housing Potential at Wilber School

- Study the feasibility of senior housing with affordable units
- Consider mixed use with a Senior Center, Library or other

Housing Authority Land

- Potential for affordable housing

Town Center Mixed Use Overlay District

- Housing over retail
- Wastewater management solution needed

Potential 40B

- Condos
- 32 total units
- 8 affordable

Potential 40B

- Ownership - single family
- 120 units approved by ZBA (30 affordable)
- 250 units proposed (63 affordable)
- Under appeal to HAC

Possible State Park

- Town Meeting approval of \$7.5 million towards purchase
- Legislative earmark of \$7.5 million towards purchase
- Disposition depends on State decision

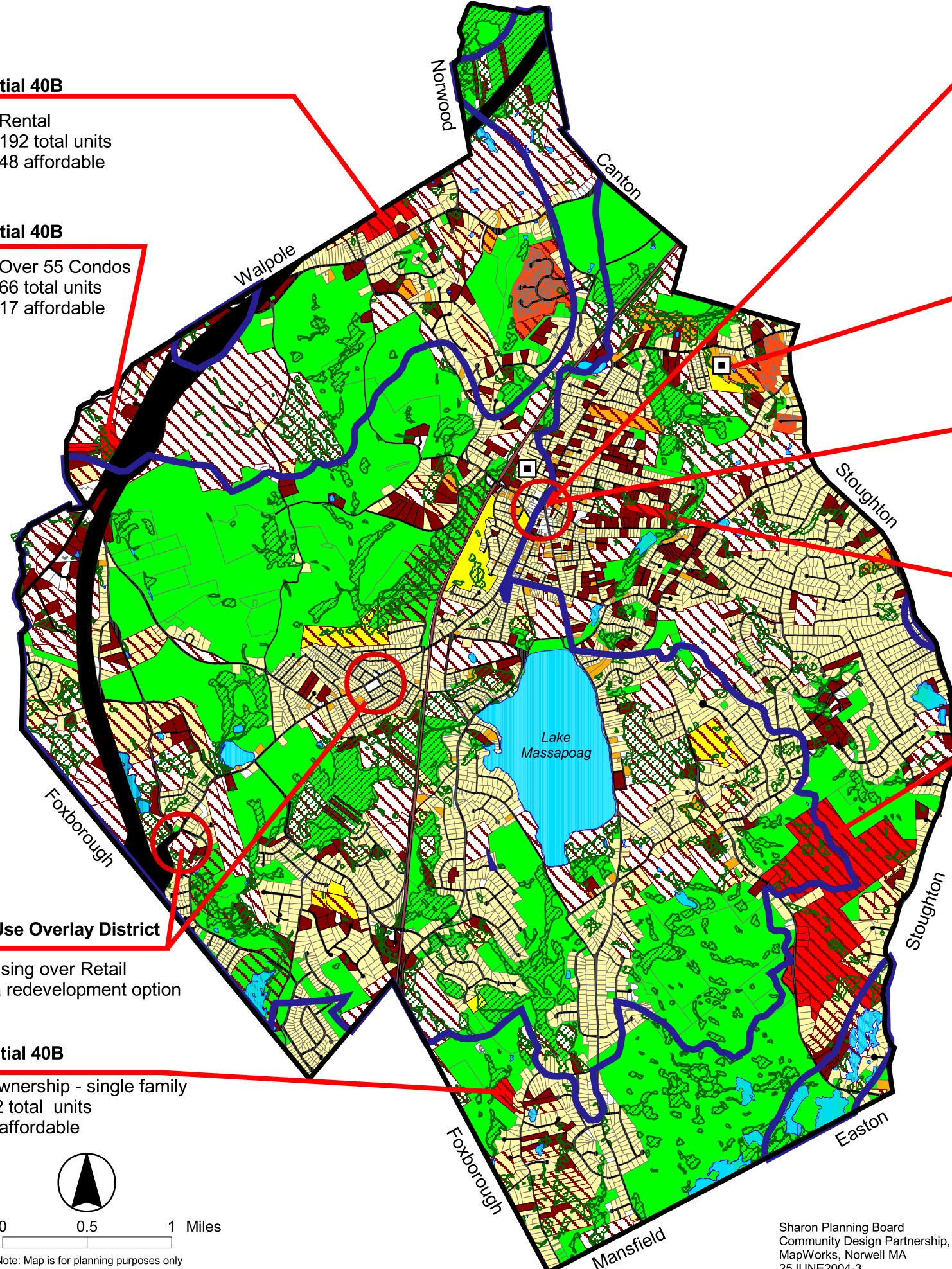
- Permanently Protected Open Space (town, state or charitable)
- Wetland
- Water Resource Protection District (Surface and Groundwater Protection)

EXISTING LAND USE BY PARCEL

- Residential**
- Single Family
 - Multi-Family
 - Condominium
 - Housing Authority and Nonprofit Agency Units

HOUSING POTENTIAL

- Potential 40B Project
- Town-Owned Land with Housing Potential
 - 4 sites totalling 36.79 buildable acres
 - 1 site with nonconforming frontage and 1.19 buildable acres
 - Wilber School
- Mixed-Use Overlay for Future Redevelopment of Housing over Retail
- Conservation Subdivisions by Right For Open or Subdividable Parcels of 5 acres or more (Mandatory)
- Developable and Potentially Developable Open or Subdividable Parcels under 5 acres
- Parcel Line
- Road
- Pond



D. Housing Action Plan			Priority	Time Line	Responsibility	Funding
<i>Goals</i>	<i>Policies</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	H (High) M (Medium) L (Low)	S (Short: to 2 yrs) M (Medium: 2-5 yrs) L (Long: over 5 yrs)		
Manage residential growth to preserve community character	Seek opportunities to promote housing development near the train station and the Town Center and in mixed use situations	Conservation subdivision zoning, mandatory and by right, for parcels of 5 acres or more, including institutional parcels	H	S	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	None
		Consider Mixed Use Development zones for Shaw's Plaza, Sharon Center, and Heights Plaza for multifamily/condo only with affordable component	M	M	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	None
		Consider eliminating the Flexible Development by-law as redundant	L	S	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	None
	Find a communal wastewater solution for the town center	Allow upper story apartments above ground floor retail in the Town Center by right	M	M	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	None
		Allow and identify off-site parking options for apartments in the Town Center	M	M	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	None
Diversify housing options	Provide a mix of affordable housing for seniors, town employees and young families	Revive the Sharon Housing Partnership	H	S	Board of Selectmen (BoS)	none
		Establish inclusionary/incentive zoning to create affordable housing	H	S	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	none
		Seek technical assistance from nonprofit groups and explore relationships with nonprofit developers and funding sources	H	S	Housing Partnership	none

D. Housing Action Plan			Priority	Time Line	Responsibility	Funding
<i>Goals</i>	<i>Policies</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	H (High) M (Medium) L (Low)	S (Short: to 2 yrs) M (Medium: 2-5 yrs) L (Long: over 5 yrs)		
		Inventory and study the feasibility of using town-owned parcels and buildings for affordable housing, such as the Wilber School and the Sacred Heart site	H	M	Housing Partnership; BoS	medium
		Explore the possibility of “friendly 40B” or Local Initiative Projects on town-owned or private property	H	S	PB; Housing Partnership; ZBA	none
		Amend zoning to promote affordable accessory units as a by-right use	H	S	PB; TM	none
		Allow by-right development of small scale affordable single family homes and duplexes with at least one affordable unit on non-conforming lots, subject to site plan review and wastewater constraints	H	S	PB; TM	none
		Seek legislative permission to establish an Affordable Housing Trust Fund	M	M	Housing Partnership; BoS	None
		Offer an amnesty for illegal apartments in exchange for making them affordable units.	M	M	BoS	none
		Adopt the state law on tax title properties that provides for forgiveness of taxes owed to developers of affordable housing.	M	M	Housing Partnership; BoS; TM	none
		Explore the feasibility of tax abatements on existing homes occupied by income-eligible households in return for affordability agreements.	M	M	Housing Partnership	none
		Clarify zoning language defining affordable housing in the by-law	H	S	PB: TM	none
		Study the results of CPA adoption in other communities and plan for a vote on adoption in two years.	M	M	Housing Partnership	None

D. Housing Action Plan			Priority	Time Line	Responsibility	Funding
<i>Goals</i>	<i>Policies</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	H (High) M (Medium) L (Low)	S (Short: to 2 yrs) M (Medium: 2-5 yrs) L (Long: over 5 yrs)		
	Provide empty-nester and senior housing so that Sharon residents who wish to downsize from family homes can still stay in town	Create a Senior Housing Committee or Subcommittee of the Housing Partnership to evaluate the market for senior housing in general and affordable senior housing in particular	M	M	Housing Partnership; Council on Aging	none

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Economic Development Vision Element

- *A climate that attracts and supports a variety of community service and business opportunities in the town center, along Route 1 and in other non-residentially zoned areas.*

GOALS

- Expand the nonresidential tax base
- Enhance the vitality of the Town Center

A. CURRENT CONDITIONS

Sharon is primarily a suburban residential community with a small business sector in two major locations, the town center and the industrial area on the west side of I-95, and several minor locations, Shaw's Plaza, Heights Plaza, and the east end of Main Street. While proximity to I-95 is an important asset, much of the available land has already been captured for commercial and industrial uses. The vast majority of the land on the east side of I-195 is protected. Because of the town's dependence on on-site septic systems, intensification of development in the Town Center faces wastewater constraints.

Residents have two interests in advancing a new economic development agenda. One is the improvement of the Town Center so that it has a greater variety of retail and service options for residents and offers more activities. The other interest is in growing the nonresidential tax base to mitigate the increase in the residential tax burden in recent years.

NONRESIDENTIAL TAX BASE

Residential property makes up about 94% of the tax base, and has been increasing since the mid-1990s with growing housing values in Sharon and all over Eastern Massachusetts. For example, the value of non-residential property increased 18% between 2000 and 2003, but residential property value increased 47% in the same period. As a result, the residential share of assessed values – and therefore of taxes – increased from 93% to 94.3% in the same years. Although these changes show a small trend,

particularly in the last three years, over the course of the 1990s, the percentage of assessed value accounted for by nonresidential property varied from 7.8 in 1990, during the crash of the residential real estate market, to 6.8 in 1996. Since 2001, nonresidential value has dropped from 6.4 to 5.7 percent. The average nonresidential assessed value for all communities in the TRIC region in 2003 was 14%, with the range from 32% in Norwood to 2% in Dover. Sharon is one of five communities in this region at the low end of the nonresidential tax base with 6 down to 2 percent nonresidential tax value. The other communities are Dover, Norfolk, Medfield and Milton. In the same year, Dover, Medfield, Sharon and Westwood had the highest average single family house tax bill. Since 1990, Sharon has consistently ranked among the top 10% of towns in the state in terms of its average single family tax bill and most of the towns in that category have 90% or more of their assessed values in residential property.

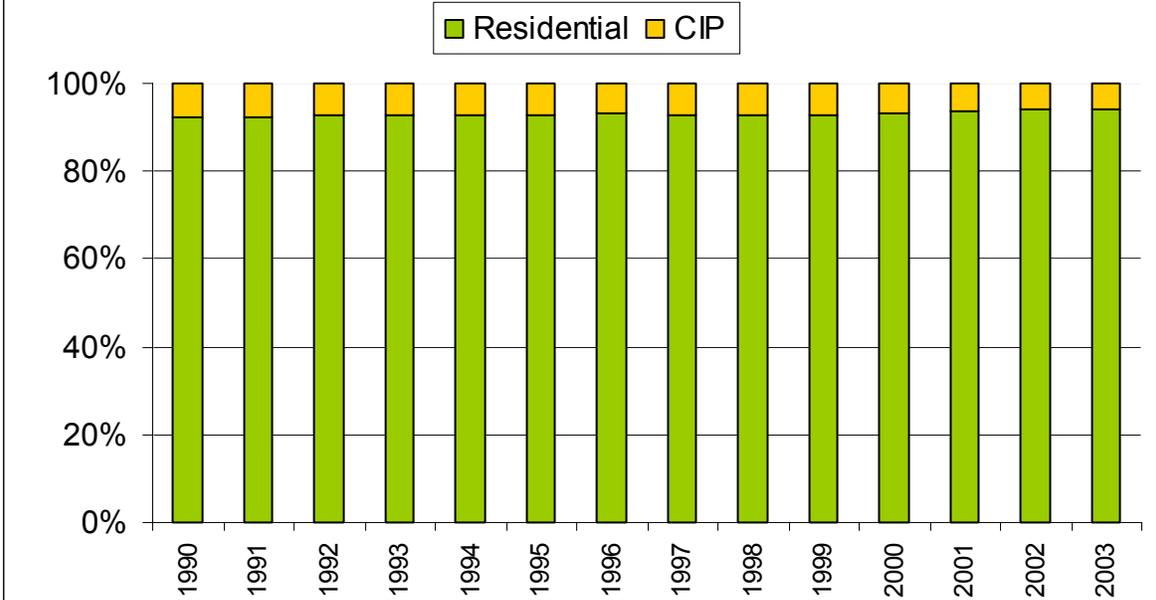
Sharon Assessed Values 1990 - 2003							
FY	Residential	Residential %	Commercial	Industrial	Personal Property	CIP %	Total
1990	\$1,092,027,200	92.2	\$45,445,108	\$30,681,000	\$15,765,800	7.8	\$1,183,919,108
1991	\$1,114,070,592	92.3	\$48,368,216	\$28,602,000	\$15,434,100	7.7	\$1,206,474,908
1992	\$1,010,174,300	92.9	\$34,808,200	\$24,848,900	\$17,651,400	7.1	\$1,087,482,800
1993	\$943,443,200	92.6	\$34,893,900	\$21,467,400	\$18,803,400	7.4	\$1,018,607,900
1994	\$960,591,100	92.7	\$35,091,000	\$21,357,000	\$19,688,100	7.3	\$1,036,727,200
1995	\$994,500,800	92.9	\$34,777,500	\$20,916,300	\$20,640,700	7.1	\$1,070,835,300
1996	\$1,023,390,300	93.2	\$34,299,400	\$19,873,800	\$20,898,100	6.8	\$1,098,461,600
1997	\$1,043,681,100	92.8	\$38,800,300	\$19,559,100	\$22,139,600	7.2	\$1,124,180,100
1998	\$1,167,547,000	92.8	\$45,626,900	\$22,434,300	\$22,959,000	7.2	\$1,258,567,200
1999	\$1,187,248,900	92.9	\$45,023,500	\$21,116,400	\$24,301,800	7.1	\$1,277,690,600
2000	\$1,203,330,600	93.0	\$45,263,900	\$21,131,300	\$24,128,600	7.0	\$1,293,854,400
2001	\$1,532,774,980	93.6	\$51,765,520	\$24,050,600	\$29,147,700	6.4	\$1,637,738,800
2002	\$1,609,856,100	93.9	\$51,812,200	\$23,704,000	\$28,559,400	6.1	\$1,713,931,700
2003	\$1,772,303,500	94.3	\$52,127,500	\$24,166,400	\$30,512,900	5.7	\$1,879,110,300

Source: MA Dept of Revenue

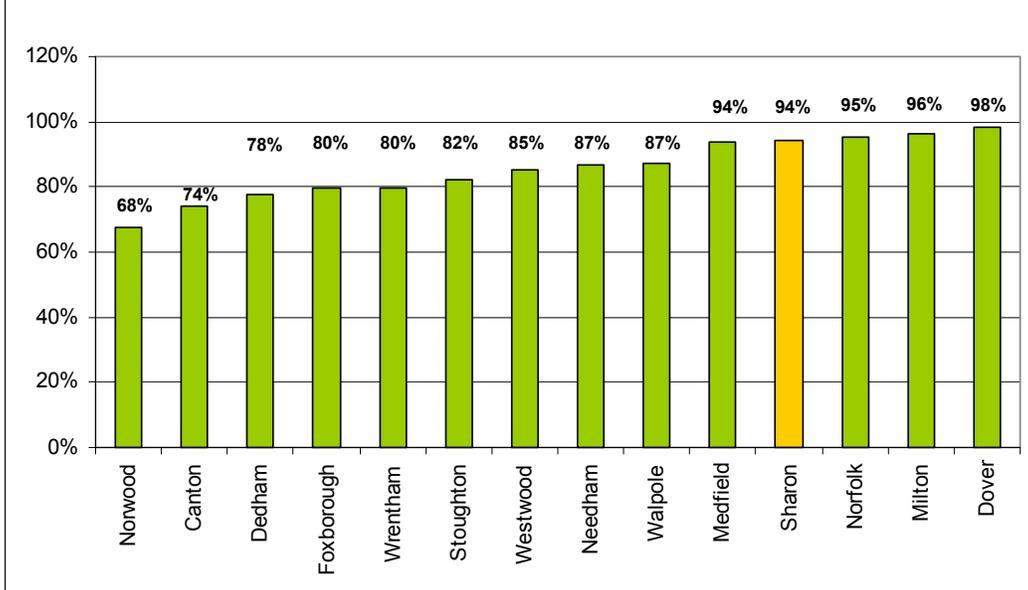
Sharon Residential Taxes Compared with State					
FY	State Median Single Family Tax Bill	Sharon Single Family Tax Bill	Sharon Rank in State	Single Family Average Value	Tax Rate
1990	\$ 1,504	\$ 2,605	30	\$ 212,134	\$ 12.28
1991	\$ 1,640	\$ 2,988	20	\$ 212,940	\$ 14.03
1992	\$ 1,663	\$ 3,201	18	\$ 195,532	\$ 16.37
1993	\$ 1,747	\$ 3,322	20	\$ 181,706	\$ 18.28
1994	\$ 1,808	\$ 3,424	21	\$ 182,717	\$ 18.74
1995	\$ 1,872	\$ 3,613	21	\$ 186,242	\$ 19.40
1996	\$ 1,959	\$ 3,662	24	\$ 188,786	\$ 19.40
1997	\$ 2,031	\$ 3,692	30	\$ 190,323	\$ 19.40
1998	\$ 2,121	\$ 4,012	27	\$ 210,916	\$ 19.02
1999	\$ 2,191	\$ 4,311	23	\$ 212,034	\$ 20.33
2000	\$ 2,297	\$ 4,425	29	\$ 213,974	\$ 20.68
2001	\$ 2,418	\$ 4,733	29	\$ 271,391	\$ 17.44
2002	\$ 2,577	\$ 5,082	27	\$ 284,717	\$ 17.85
2003	\$ 2,709	\$ 6,086	17	\$ 312,755	\$ 19.46

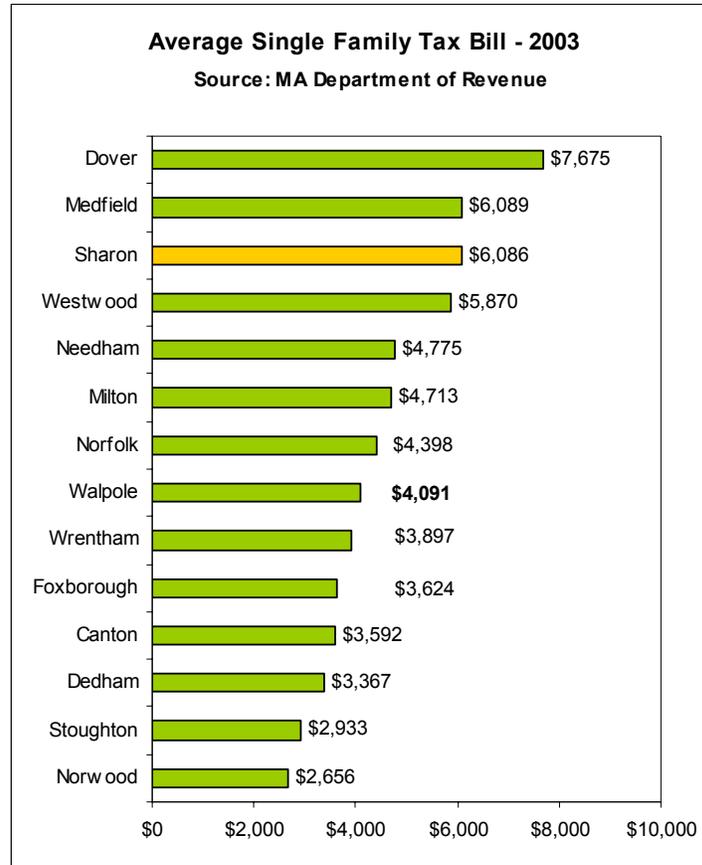
Source: MA DOR

Sharon Assessed Values of Residential and Non-Residential Property 1990-2003



Residential Share of Property Valuation for FY 2003 Source: MADOR

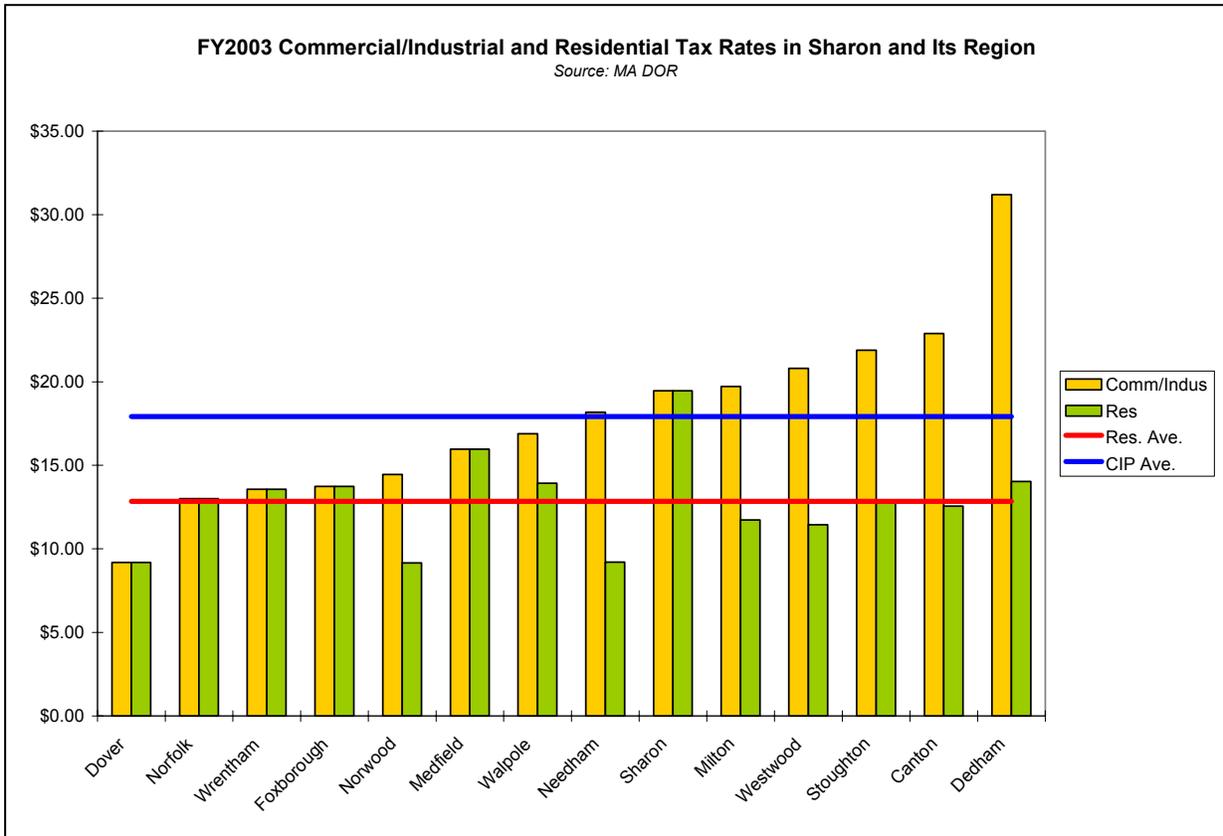




In order to reduce the relative burden of residential taxes, Towns can either try to shift some of the tax burden to business taxpayers, which is permitted up to certain limits, or they can increase the amount and value of nonresidential tax base. Establishing a “split” tax rate has consequences that need to be taken into consideration. There are basically two ways to increase the nonresidential tax base: expand the area zoned for nonresidential uses and try to attract new investment into those areas, or increase the value of existing or new business investment in existing areas where nonresidential uses are permitted.

Split Tax Rate

Although state law permits towns to shift some of the residential tax burden onto business, very few of the communities with less than 10% of the tax base in Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property (CIP) choose to have a higher tax rate for business than for residential property. Communities with more commercial development use split tax rates much more frequently. Many of the communities near Sharon have lower nonresidential tax rates, including some of those with larger commercial tax bases and split tax rates. This suggests that for Sharon, raising taxes on business properties might make the town less competitive as a location compared to its neighbors



Potential for Expansion of Business Zones

Commercial and industrial uses are currently permitted in a small part of Sharon. The Business A and Business C zones cover the small scale retail, services, and offices in the Town Center and Business B zone covers two lots, Heights Plaza on South Main Street and the Shaw's Plaza supermarket site on South Main Street near the I-95 interchange. The Professional zone covers only one lot on North Main Street at the boundary with Washington Street in Canton, where there are two shopping centers. The Light Industrial zone is on the west side of I-95 north of the Blair Circle neighborhood off south Walpole Street. There are a few other residentially zoned parcels in this area on Old Post Road. Unlike many communities, Sharon does not have industrial or commercial uses outside of the zoning districts that permit them, so there are no nonconforming business uses.

Non - Residential Uses Permitted in Sharon					
<i>Zoning District</i>	<i>By Right Non-Residential Uses</i>	<i>Special Permit Uses</i>	<i>Parking Minimum</i>	<i>Minimum Lot</i>	<i>Minimum Frontage</i>
Residential Districts	Agriculture, horticulture, floriculture	Animal hospitals; stables; home occupations; artisan shops	5 per 1000 sf gross leasable area on ground floor; 3 per 1,000 sf on additional floors	8,000 st 2-F: 10,000 sf	70 – 80 ft
Business A	offices, including medical, banks, retail, business and personal services; food service, including take out but not drive up; agriculture, horticulture or floriculture on parcels over 5 acres	SP if over 60,000 sf or more than 150 parking spaces; Theaters, clubs, bank drive-in	5 per 1000 sf gross leasable area on ground floor; 3 per 1,000 sf on additional floors	8,000 sf;	70 ft
Business B	same as A plus carpenters, plumbers, etc.	same as A plus gas station; car showroom; outdoor display of goods	50% of lot area	8,000 sf	70 ft
Business C	same as A	same as A plus artist's studio or gallery	5 per 1000 sf gross leasable area on ground floor; 3 per 1,000 sf on additional floors	8,000 sf	70 ft
Professional	None (single family residential is the only by-right use)	Business or professional office; medical or dental clinic for outpatients; signs as in Business A	5 per 1000 sf gross leasable area on ground floor; 3 per 1,000 sf on additional floors	20,000 sf	70 ft
Light Industry	Light manufacturing; R & D; warehousing and wholesale storage; office; retail; restaurants; medical offices and labs; clinics; business services for district; agriculture, floriculture, horticulture	SP if over 60,000 sf or more than 150 parking spaces; truck sales and service; motel or hotel;	4 per 1000 sf of gross floor area for office, financial, institutional, municipal and retail; 3 per 1,000 sf for light industry; 1 per 1,000 sf for warehouse	40,000 sf	no frontage requirement; 150 ft lot width

Although Sharon residents are concerned about the rising residential tax burden, they have proven reluctant to expand nonresidential zones in town. The configuration of land uses in Sharon means there are limited opportunities for expanding the area zoned for business. Much of the town is already occupied by residential uses or permanent open space and the remaining vacant lands are primarily located on collector or neighborhood streets in residential areas, making them unsuitable for business uses and unlikely to attract a business market.

When this planning process began, the Planning Board already had an effort underway to rezone two areas for nonresidential development. In the South Main area, close to the I-95/South Main interchange, the Board proposed rezoning to Business D (a new business zone) 21 parcels with 135.7 acres (known as the Gobbi parcels). Under current zoning, 45 single family homes could be built in this area and residential development is being contemplated. The proposed change envisioned retail development. Because of the proximity of I-95 and Shaw's Plaza, traffic and other impacts on most of

Sharon would be very limited. However, there are some residences in this area that might experience more adverse impacts from this kind of development.

The other rezoning proposal for economic development concerned the east end of Main Street at Cobb's Corner on the border with Canton. The Board proposed expanding the existing one-lot Professional zone by rezoning nearly 6 acres in 8 parcels from residential to Professional District zoning. Under current zoning, 8 single family homes are permitted. Across the border in Canton are two shopping centers.

These proposals for rezoning to expand the area for business uses in Sharon focused on two areas which are near existing retail centers, near major roads, and on the edges of the Town, so that it would not be necessary for trucks and traffic from outside town to travel throughout the Town to reach their destinations. Estimates of the potential tax revenue that could be added if the lands in the two areas under discussion were to be developed for retail and offices range from approximately \$1.5 million to \$2.4 million, which would represent approximately 3% to 5% of the town's \$50 million annual expenditures. However, in both cases, there are nearby residents who would likely experience somewhat more adverse impacts than other residents of Sharon.

The opposition from neighbors proved decisive and both of these zoning amendments were defeated at Fall 2003 Town Meeting. As a result, efforts to increase the non-residential tax base should focus on increasing the value of business investment in existing business zones.

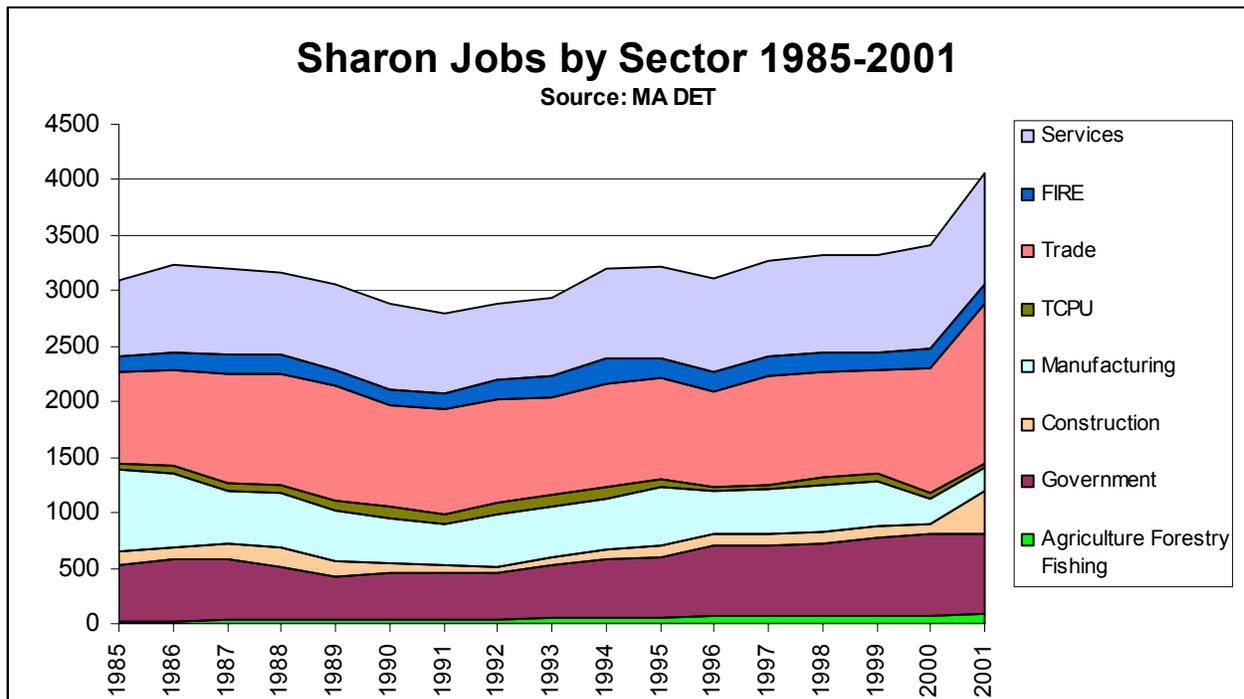
Sharon Town Center

The Town Center has a number of small businesses that primarily serve residents. The town's demographics were sufficiently strong to attract a small Starbucks. A number of the buildings were constructed during the last 30 to 40 years with parking lots at the street edge and other features that have tended to detract from the character of a traditional town center. There is potential for more efficient use of land, more pedestrian-friendly design, and more height (two to four stories), without overwhelming the small town character that residents prefer. Since 1996, the town has had a good set of design guidelines for the Town Center. One of the greatest constraints to new opportunities in the Town Center is the lack of additional septic capacity.

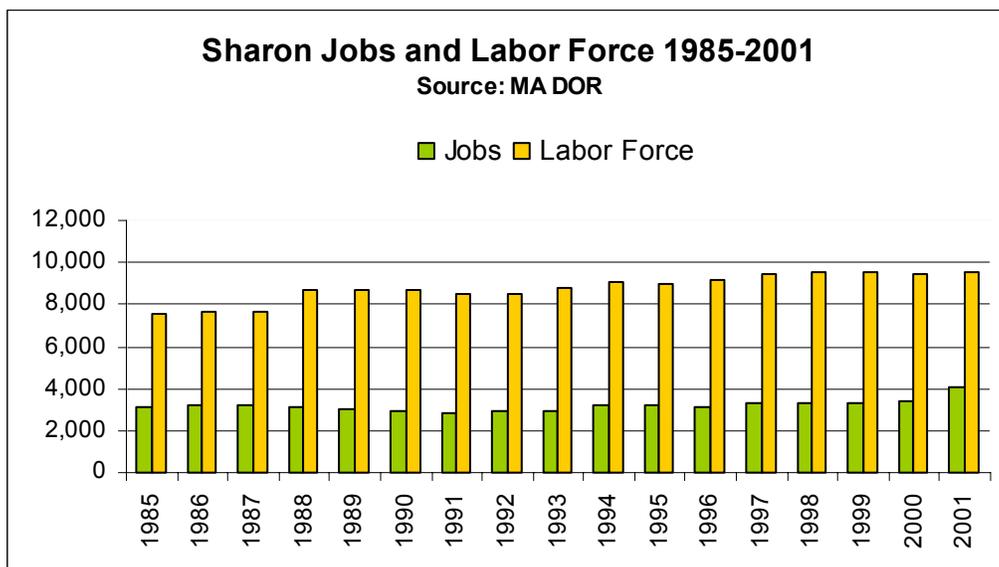
EXISTING BUSINESSES AND EMPLOYERS

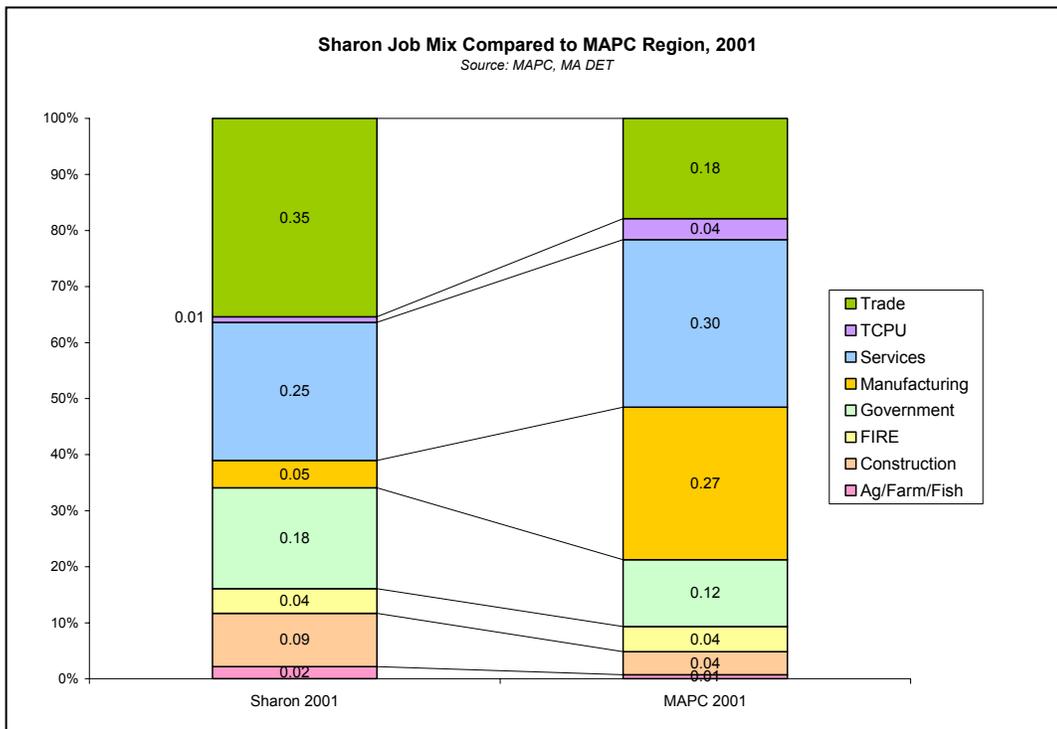
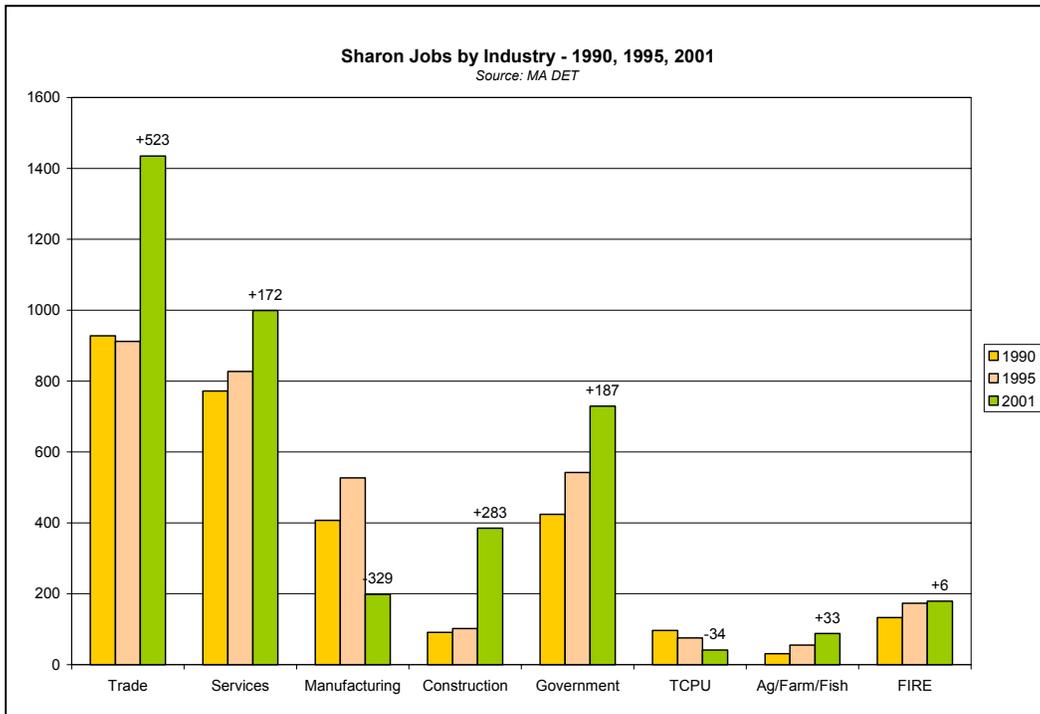
According to the most recent data available (2001) there are approximately 407 employers in Sharon, 46 "goods producing" businesses and 361 service providers. These employers provide about 4,058 jobs. Between 1985 and 2001 the number of business establishments increased by 39% and the total number of employees was up by 32%. Since 1985 every economic sector has gained jobs except for Manufacturing and TCPU (Transportation, Communications and Public Utilities). The biggest percentage gains were in the Agriculture/Forestry/ Fishing sector (which includes horticulture and

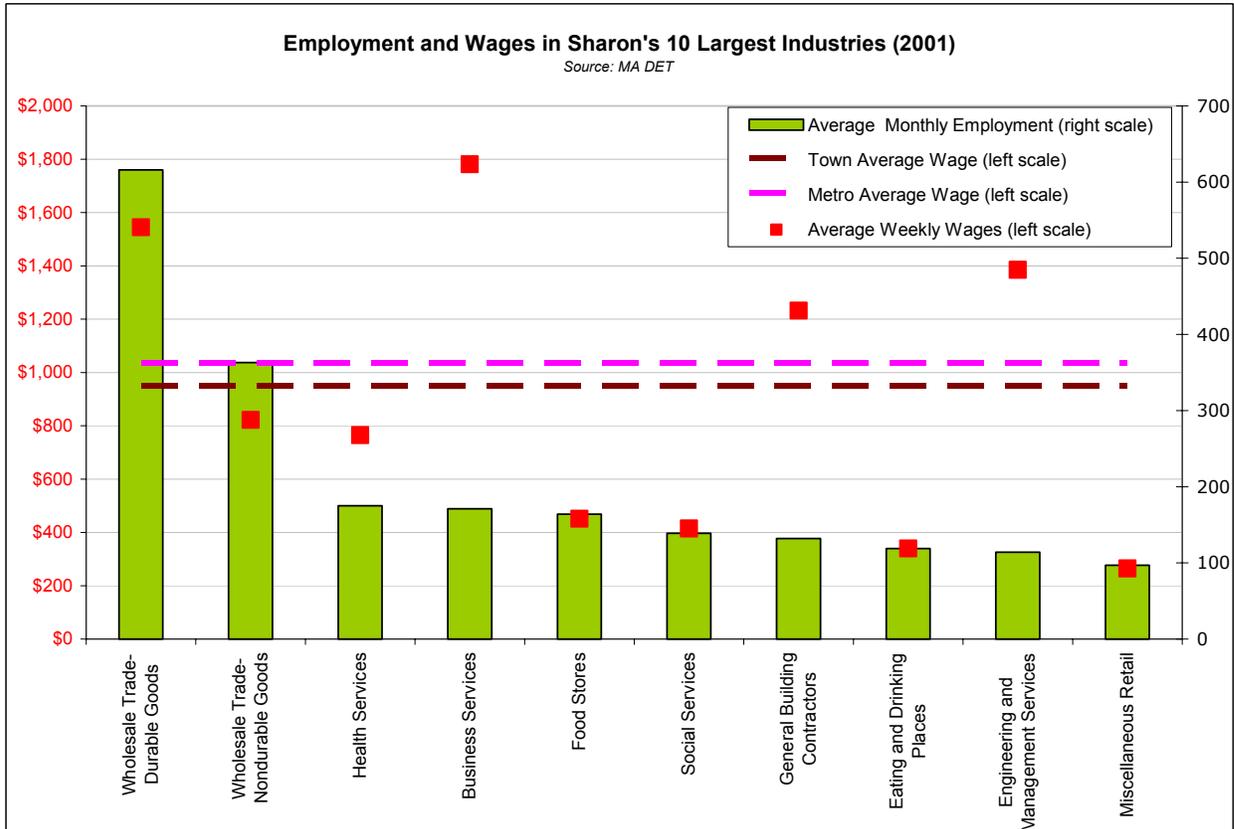
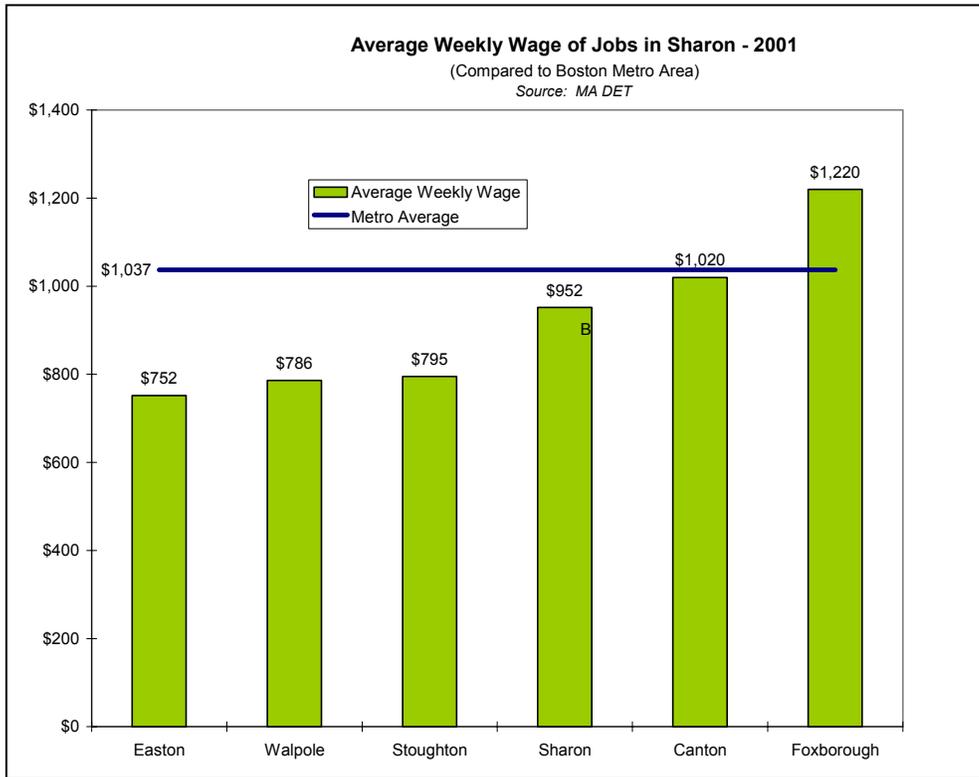
nurseries), Construction, and Trade. In 1985, Trade and Services together accounted for 49% of all Sharon jobs and by 2001 they accounted for 59% of the jobs in Sharon.



Sharon's labor force is more than twice the size of the number of jobs available in town, though in 2000, 1360 or 15% of the 8814 Sharon residents in the labor force worked in Sharon, 456 of them working at home. Since state employment data is based on reports of employers with payroll, it is likely that most of those 456 jobs are not included in the data for the number of jobs in Sharon. Thus, about 26% of Sharon's 3,417 jobs in 2000 were held by Sharon residents.



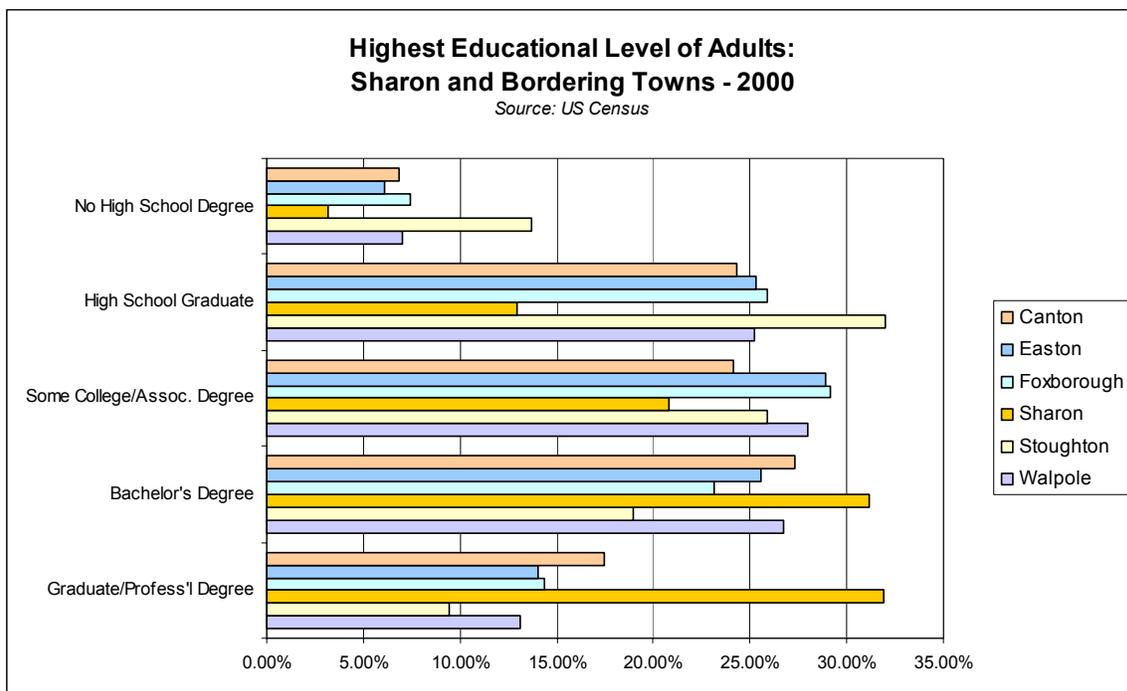




The more detailed statistical information we have on Sharon's businesses is dated. The new economic census taken in 2002 will soon have data available. Sharon's goods producing industries include manufacturers of fabricated metal products, industrial machinery and equipment, and instruments, but the category also covers general contractors and special trade contractors (who do specialty work, such as installing swimming pools, home alterations, etc.), and landscapers. The average weekly wage in Sharon was \$952 in 2001, higher than its immediate neighbors except Canton, which has more office and professional workers and Foxborough, which may be influenced by stadium and team jobs. Within the 2001 top ten employment sectors in Sharon for which data was available, the best average weekly wages were in Business Services, Engineering and Management, Wholesale Trade and General Contractors. Despite the small size of Sharon's commercial and industrial base, it is varied enough to provide jobs for people at a range of skills.

LABOR FORCE CHARACTERISTICS

Sharon residents as a group are well-off financially and highly educated. As noted in the first chapter, the 1999 median household income reported in the census was \$89,256, ranking Sharon at 24 out of 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts. The median earnings of full-time, year-round Sharon men were \$70,563, while Sharon women's median earnings were \$46,774. A third of Sharon adults over 25 hold a graduate or professional degree, a much larger proportion than in any bordering towns.



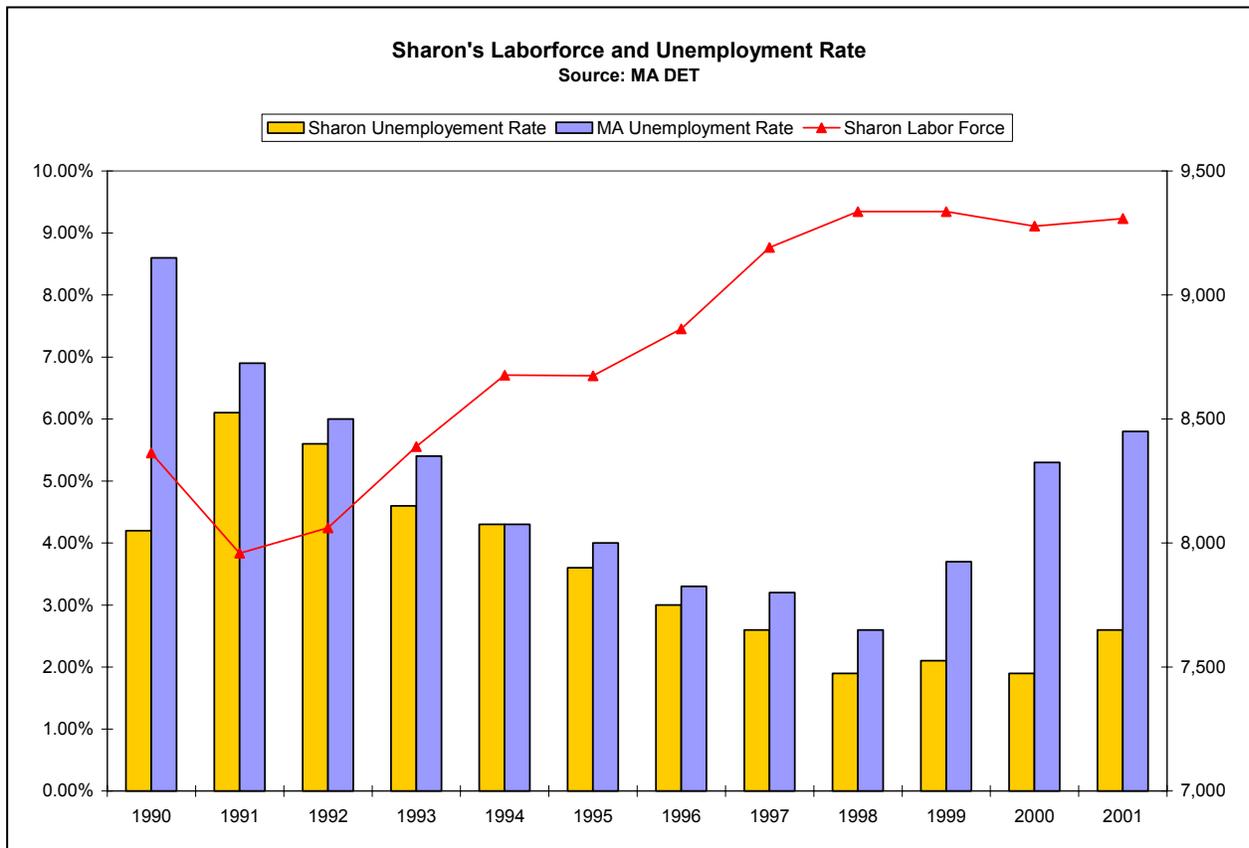
Sharon Commuters' Work Destinations 2000	
Boston	21.83%
Sharon	15.43%
Norwood	6.15%
Canton	4.86%
Quincy	3.70%
Stoughton	3.52%
Walpole	2.56%
Braintree	2.17%
Dedham	2.09%
Newton	2.08%
Cambridge	1.83%
Waltham	1.55%
Brockton	1.46%
Other	69.22%
Total	100.00%

Source: Census 2000

The Sharon labor force grew through most of the 1990s and then stabilized in recent years with the softening of the economy. The 2000 Census found that while 15% of Sharon workers are employed in the town, 22% travel to Boston, which is facilitated by the existence of commuter rail service. Of the remainder, another 23% percent work in nearby towns or South Shore employment centers such as Quincy and Braintree. Work at home has also increased. The 2000 Census found that 456 persons, 5.2% of Sharon workers 16 years and over, worked at home, an increase of 37% from the 332 persons (4% of workers) who worked at home in 1990.

EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Sharon workers are consistently more likely to be employed than Massachusetts workers as whole. Compared to the recession of the early 1990s, when the Sharon unemployment rate began to approach the statewide, unemployment in the economic downturn that started in 2000 appears to have remained much lower than in the state as a whole.



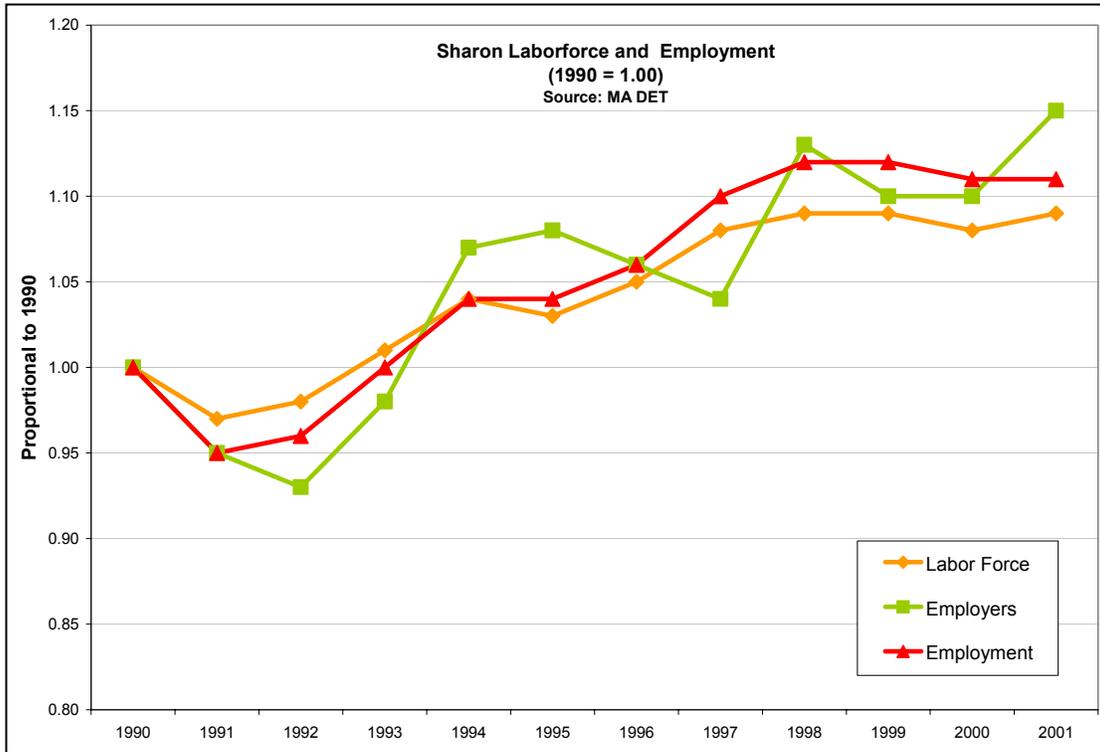
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND FUTURE PROFILE

Since 1990, the overall economic development trend in Sharon has been for a modest increase in the number of jobs, employers and the assessed value of non-residential property. Unless there is a significant change in public opinion, significant expansion of the areas zoned for business seems unlikely. The recommendations in this plan may result in a continuation of the incremental increases in employment that averaged 2% annually between 1985 and 2001. This could result in as many as 1,000 new jobs being created over a decade. Although some of the jobs may require high skill levels, many are likely to be retail and service jobs.

The trend for incremental change in economic development will probably continue over the long term as properties are redeveloped. However, as this plan is being written in the spring of 2004, the office, industrial and research & development real estate markets continue to be weak in Sharon's suburban market. At the end of the first quarter of 2004, industrial and R & D vacancies were approximately 20%. Sharon's location on 1-195 and Route 1 will continue to make its industrial area relatively competitive as the market improves, though the lack of a full I-95 interchange at the Light Industrial zone detracts somewhat from the value of the location. Both Sharon and Walpole have promoted construction of a full interchange to the transportation agencies, but the project has not yet been funded. Estimated costs are \$10 million and while most of the surrounding area continues to be residential, it is unlikely that the state will invest so much money in this location.

If Sharon is to increase the tax revenue that it receives from its existing business zones, the most important thing it can do is to promote wastewater treatment solutions that allow greater density in these small areas. This is particularly important in the Town Center, where redevelopment of small lots with more density depends on some kind of communal wastewater solution. A number of towns that depend on septic systems are facing the same quandary as they wish to increase the variety and value of economic activities in their Town Centers.

Another option that could potentially enlarge the nonresidential tax base is to create Planned Development Districts for the larger recreational and institutional properties in Town. Although these properties do not appear to be on the market, the Town should think ahead about what kinds of opportunities might be available should any of those properties be offered for development. A Planned Development District (PDD) would be a special permit district that allowed a mix of uses, mandated preservation of a certain amount of open space, and provided for other guidelines in terms of design and impact on neighborhoods. The PDD would allow for the detailed master planning of the site, subject to the framework of the PDD requirements and guidelines and to a special permit from the Planning Board. Possible nonresidential uses might be a conference center, a spa, a corporate campus, and perhaps some housing as well.



B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) Increase economic activities and investment in the Town Center

A. Commission a wastewater management study for the Town Center

A solution to the septic constraints in the town center can unlock development potential, new investment, and additional tax base that otherwise cannot be realized.

B. Consider a mixed-use overlay district for the Town Center

Additional housing in the town center will provide immediate customers for a wider range of businesses that can serve all of Sharon's residents.

2) Attract higher value investment to existing business areas

Because Sharon residents have been reluctant to expand the area zoned for business, an increase in tax base must come from higher value investment through eventual redevelopment of existing zones. Strategies to pursue this goal include:

A. Rename the Development and Industrial Committee as the Economic Development Committee and revive the membership.

The goals of the EDC should be:

- To strive towards an overall nonresidential tax base of 10% of total property value
- To keep in touch with property and business owners in the business zones and work with them on expansions and redevelopment
- To attract appropriate new development to Sharon's business areas
- To study the potential for expanding the area zoned for professional offices.

B. Revise the Light Industry zoning requirement to permit more than 4 stories in 80 feet.

The by-law permits buildings 80 feet tall, but limits them to 4 stories. Office buildings at 80 feet would have six or seven stories.

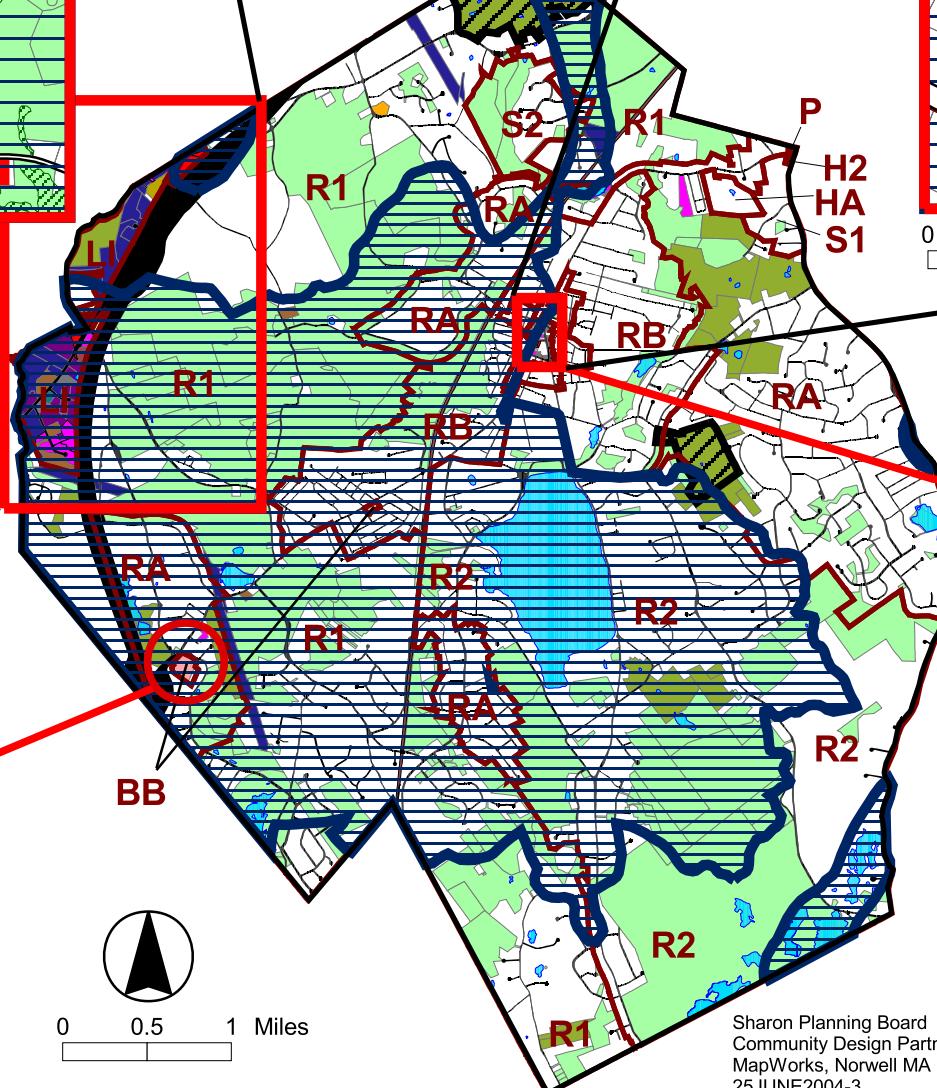
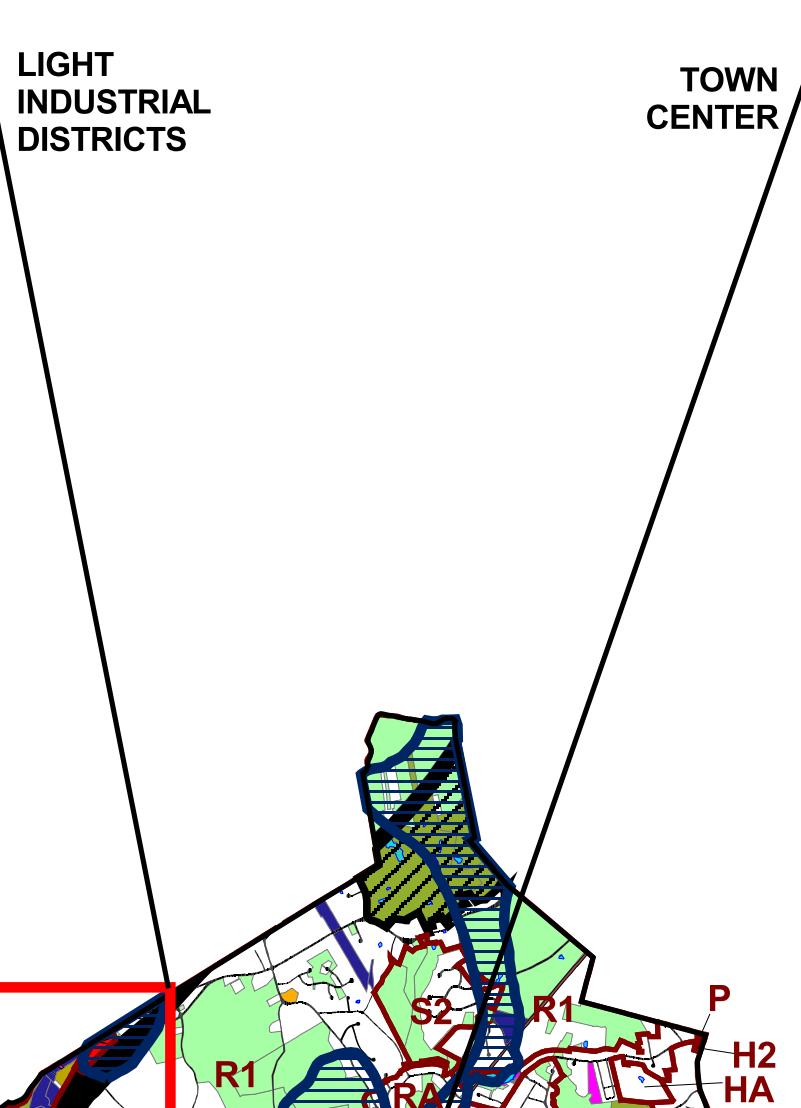
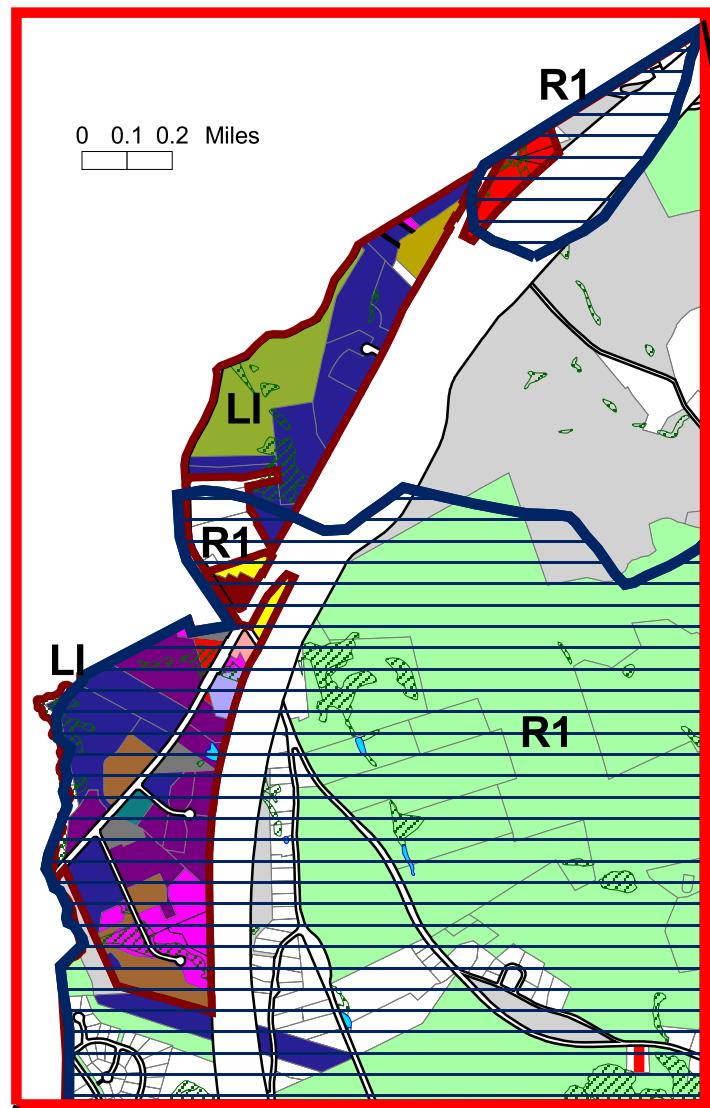
3) Consider establishing Planned Development Overlay Districts for institutional properties that could be appropriate for mixed-use development by special permit of the Planning Board.

Sharon has a number of club, camp, and other institutional properties that are zoned for residential development. Following the zoning recommendation in the housing chapter, their base zoning should be changed to mandatory CSD zoning. Although there is currently no reason to expect imminent

development of these lands, this plan is an opportunity to think ahead in case of change. The Town should consider if some of these properties might be appropriate for uses such as a conference center, corporate campus, or spa, with or without a limited amount of housing. A Planned Development District would allow a property owner or developer flexibility in creating a master plan for the project with the guidance and approval of the Planning Board through a special permit process. This could be a “floating” overlay district, with a definition of what kinds of properties it could be applied to. Other general parameters should also be included in the by-law including the range and percentage of uses, required open space percentages, design and development performance standards.

C. MAP

Map 6: Economic Opportunities: Economic opportunities are concentrated in the town center and the Light Industry zoning district. Additional mixed use development in the Town Center is dependent on increasing wastewater capacity and the two retail plazas could also potentially accept a mixture of uses. Several parcels with potential as Planned Development Districts are also indicated.



Allow more density in Light Industrial Zone

- Rename district to Business Park District
- Permit additional density for R & D and Office uses
- Revise parking requirements to reflect uses

Mixed Use Overlay District

- Permit housing over retail and commercial uses

Town Center Mixed Use Overlay District (Business A & C)

- Wastewater management study and solution
- Density bonus for desired new uses
- Promote redevelopment of underutilized areas
- Review parking minimums to promote flexible parking solutions

Note: Map is for planning purposes only

D. Economic Development Action Plan			Priority	Time Line	Responsibility	Funding
<i>Goals</i>	<i>Policies</i>	<i>Strategies</i>	H (High) M (Medium) L (Low)	S (Short: to 2 yrs) M (Medium: 2-5 yrs) L (Long: over 5 yrs)		
Expand the nonresidential tax base	Attract higher value investment to existing business areas	Revive the Development and Industrial Committee to keep in touch with property and business owners in the business zones and to work with them on expansions, redevelopment, or attracting new development.	H	S	BoS	none
		Revise the Light Industry zoning requirement to permit more than 4 stories in 80 feet.	M	M	PB	none
		Consider establishing Planned Development Overlay Districts for institutional properties that could be appropriate for mixed-use development by special permit of the Planning Board.	L	M	Planning Board (PB); Town Meeting (TM)	None
Enhance the vitality of the Town Center	Increase economic activities and investment in the Town Center	Consider a mixed-use overlay district for the Town Center	M	M	PB	none
		Commission a wastewater management study for the Town Center	H	S	BoS	medium

PROPOSED LAND USE PLAN

.....➔

A. MANAGING LAND USE

The Town of Sharon is a mature suburban community with many unusual assets. It is home not only to a state park but also to the first Mass Audubon Sanctuary, and permanently protected open space covers more than a third of the town’s area. At the same time that Sharon retains a handful of working farms, giving a few areas of town a certain rural feeling, the Town also has a viable small town center and a commuter rail connection to Boston. Sharon depends completely on groundwater for its drinking water supply and it has numerous ponds whose waters need protection. The most distinctive of the ponds is the enormous Lake Massapoag, which provides Sharon residents with a town beach and opportunities for boating and fishing. Much of the additional development capacity in Sharon is either increasingly expensive to develop because of site conditions or tied up in institutional lands that are not expected to be open for development in the near future.

Sharon faces two important challenges: continuing to insure the quality and quantity of its groundwater and surface water resources and providing more diverse housing options. The Town has been careful to protect its drinking water supply through land use regulations and conservation efforts and is currently exploring the potential for additional wells. Assuring water quality in Lake Massapoag and the Town’s other ponds and streams, as well as avoiding nonpoint source pollution to wetlands, are also continuing Town concerns. The potential wellhead locations should be the top priority for any additional land protection efforts, followed by pursuit of conservation restrictions on the remaining open land on the shores of the lake.

As Sharon approaches buildout, it is also worthwhile to make sure that additional residential development helps preserve remaining open space in larger, unfragmented patches that connect with wildlife corridors and permanently protected open space. The Town has already lowered the threshold for conservation subdivisions to 5 acres to encourage use of this site design option. Making conservation subdivisions by right zoning (with residential site plan review) and mandatory for all parcels of 5 acres or more will help preserve the Town’s open space corridors and green character.

Sharon residents have become increasingly conscious that the Town has a very homogeneous housing stock that makes it difficult for residents to stay in town if they wish to change the type of housing they live in. The Town’s low percentage of permanently affordable housing has also come into focus with the numerous Chapter 40B housing proposals. Nearly 90% of the Town’s housing units are single family homes and prices have been climbing. More variety in housing types and prices are needed to accommodate the changing housing needs of residents at different points in the life cycle. For example, Sharon empty-nesters who wish to downsize their housing after raising their families find very few options if they want to stay in Town. Similarly, town employees with modest incomes and first time homebuyers

cannot afford the increasing price of Sharon homes. Currently, Sharon has only 3.35% of its housing units eligible for the Chapter 40B list. Even if all the housing units currently being proposed in 40B projects were to be built and Chapter 40B reform legislation were to be passed, Sharon would still not reach the 10% goal.

Sharon already has some of the tools it needs to meet the challenge of creating more affordable housing. The Planning Board is already working with several of the 40B proponents to facilitate the projects, making them into “friendly 40Bs.” A Housing Partnership exists but needs to be reactivated. As part of this project, the Planning Board and others began to look for town-owned property where affordable housing could be located. Rather than expecting one or two big projects to “solve” Sharon’s affordable housing needs, the Town also needs to put into place an entire menu of affordable housing options as a way to encourage creation of affordable units of various types throughout the community.

The rising value of housing has created another challenge – the increasing residential tax burden. Residents in Town Meeting quite recently demonstrated that they do not want to increase the business zones in town if neighbors object, so efforts to increase the nonresidential tax base must focus on increasing the value of business investment in real estate. Although the presence of Route 1 and I-195 helps make Sharon somewhat competitive, the lack of a full interchange off I-95 at the area zoned for light industry makes the location less than optimal. Transportation projects such as bridge improvements on Route 1 have been funded, but the high cost of a full interchange – estimated at \$10 million – combined with the relatively small amount of business traffic that would be served in both Sharon and Walpole make it unlikely that this interchange project will be viewed as a high priority. Commuter rail, as the name implies, is managed to get workers from the suburbs into downtown Boston. The schedules preclude any serious use of the train to bring workers into Sharon in any significant numbers, even if residents were willing to accept a substantially more built-up Town Center.

However, Sharon can help meet several of its most important challenges simultaneously by finding a way to attract more investment to the Town Center. Intensifying the level of development in the Town Center is a strategy that can bring more housing choice and affordability as well as a greater variety of businesses to the Center and make it a livelier center of community life. Residents of new housing in the Town Center could take advantage of the commuter rail service without using their cars. At the same time, they would provide a larger market for any new businesses. More efficient use of surface parking areas combined with building three or even four story buildings within the Business A and Business C zones could expand opportunities for office uses as well as housing. By ensuring that new construction followed the design guidelines for Post Office Square, for example, bringing buildings to the sidewalk line and placing parking in the rear, the Town could create a more walkable and compact center.

The key to attracting this kind of development is to find a way to overcome the septic constraints in the Town Center. The potential for some kind of communal wastewater management system and the best ways to finance it can only be judged by a feasibility and financing study. Without this investment, the Town Center will not be able to support the housing and nonresidential development that could help Sharon meet its goals.

Over the long term, Sharon should consider the possibility that some of the institutional lands could change uses and the Town needs to think about preferred uses from a community point of view. These lands are currently zoned for residential use, but some may be appropriate for a mixture of uses that could bring Sharon more nonresidential tax revenue. Planned Development District zoning, which would not mandate, but would facilitate some of these options on a special permit basis, could give the Town the flexibility to accommodate new forms of nonresidential development that could fit well into the residential character of Sharon.

Guiding Principles for Land Use

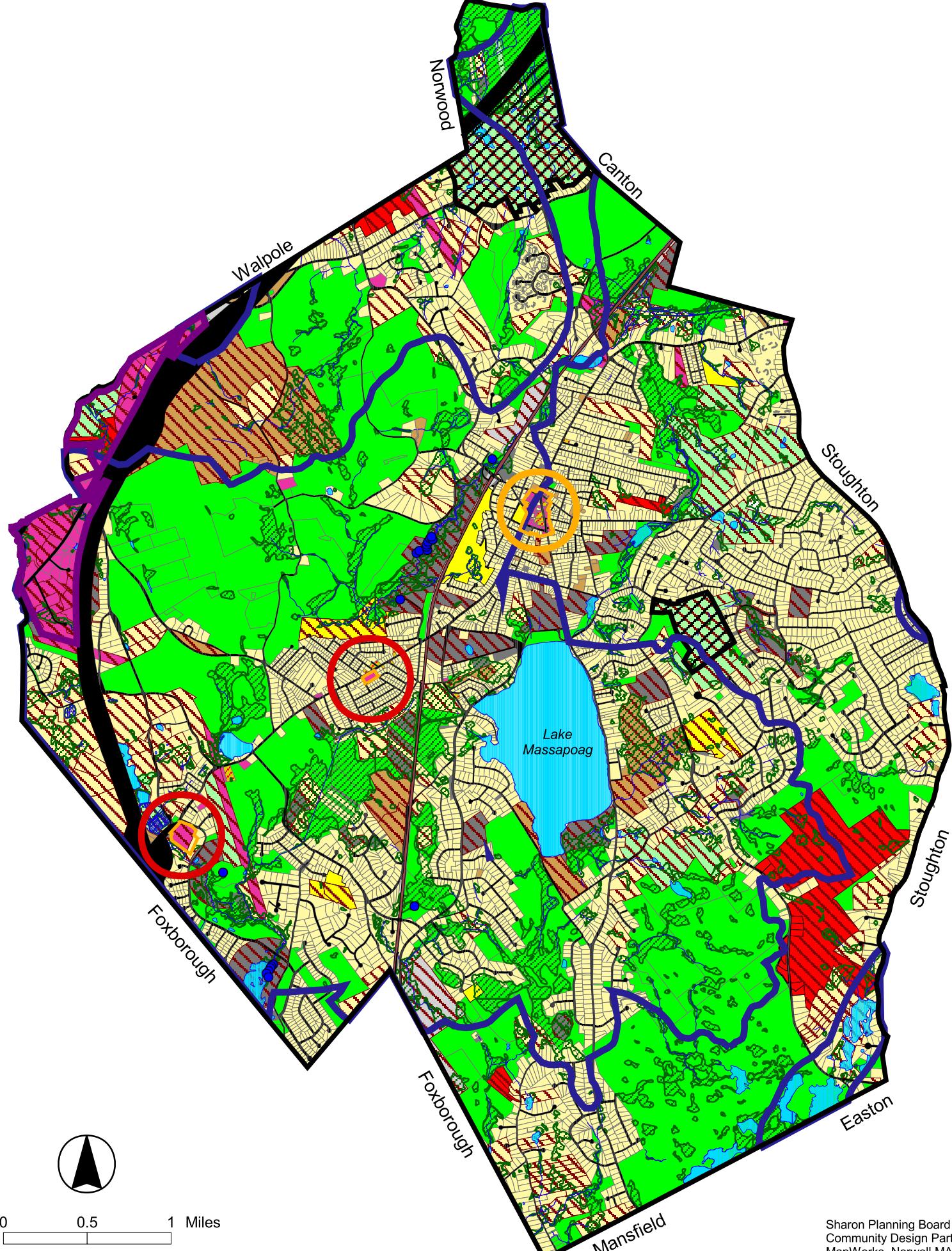
In making decisions about future land use in Sharon, Town decision makers and residents can be guided by thinking of four categories of lands:

- ***Lands for permanent protection***
 - Potential future wellhead protection areas
 - Integration of protected common open space in conservation subdivisions into the Town's open space network
 - Certified vernal pools
- ***Lands for enhanced management and outreach***
 - Raising awareness among private property owners, both residential and business, about best practices on upland buffers to streams, ponds and wetlands is very important. Private owners will always control lands adjacent to many of Sharon's water and wetland resources and their actions will affect the environmental health of these resources.
- ***Lands for limited development***
 - Residential development sites of 5 acres or more should be designated for mandatory, by right Conservation Subdivision Zoning. The fact that there are not very many large sites left is in itself an argument for assuring that remaining residential development occur in a manner which promotes preservation of blocks of open space that can be integrated into the Town's overall open space network.
 - Planned Development Overlay Districts can serve as a framework for limited development of institutional properties should they come up for development in the future.
- ***Lands for development and redevelopment***
 - Resolve the septic constraints in the Town Center and encourage mixed use development
 - Establish mixed use overlay districts at Shaws Plaza and Heights Plaza to encourage combined residential and retail redevelopment

- Work with property owners and business owners in the Light Industry zoning district to facilitate more business investment

B. MAP

Map 7: Proposed Land Use shows the recommendations made by this Plan for changes in zoning and land use. The proposals affect a relatively small amount of Sharon's land, because the vast majority is either built out at minimum lot sizes or permanently protected. However, it is often what happens on the last remaining pieces of open space, or on open space properties that people assume will stay open forever but suddenly come up for development, that creates the greatest anxiety. Some of the opportunities available to Sharon, particularly for business investment and for multifamily housing development, like in the potential for mixed use redevelopment in the Town Center and the Business B zoning districts. A clear understanding of potential changes and the establishment of a framework that allows the community to pursue its goals while working with property owners is essential for the future.



- Parcel Line
- Road
- MBTA Railroad ROW
- Water Resource Protection Districts
- Stream
- Wetland
- Pond
- Public Water Supply Well

EXISTING LAND USE BY PARCEL

- Residential
- Mixed Use - Residential/Commercial
- Commercial/Industrial
- Municipal (unprotected town land)
- Government (state & county)
- Nonprofit Institutions (unprotected)
- Temporarily Protected - Chapter 61, 61A, 61B
- Permanently Protected (town, state or charitable)

PROPOSED LAND USE BY PARCEL

- Conservation Subdivisions by Right, Mandatory - Sites of 5 acres or more
- Affordable Housing 40B Projects - 552 proposed units
- Town-Owned Land with Affordable Housing Potential
- Town Center Mixed-Use Overlay District (Subject to expansion of wastewater capacity)
- Mixed-Use Overlay Districts (2 Business-B Zoning Districts)
- Business Park District (old Light Industry Zone)
- Planned Development Districts



0 0.5 1 Miles

Note: Map is for planning purposes only

Sharon Planning Board
Community Design Partnership, Boston MA
MapWorks, Norwell MA
25JUN2004-2

Sharon Community Development Plan

Map 7
Proposed Land Use

Appendix: Economic Development Data

(Source: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training)

Businesses and Employers by SIC Code

Industries For Sharon in Order of Total Employment (2001)		
SIC	Industry	Employment
50	Wholesale Trade-durable Goods	616
51	Wholesale Trade-nondurable Goods	363
16	Heavy Construction, Ex. Building	***
80	Health Services	175
73	Business Services	171
54	Food Stores	164
83	Social Services	139
15	General Building Contractors	132
58	Eating And Drinking Places	119
87	Engineering & Management Services	114
59	Miscellaneous Retail	97
34	Fabricated Metal Products	***
60	Depository Institutions	83
79	Amusement & Recreation Services	78
65	Real Estate	71
57	Furniture And Home furnishings Stores	***
20	Food And Kindred Products	***
70	Hotels And Other Lodging Places	60
88	Private Households	55
07	Agricultural Services	54
01	Agricultural Production-crops	***
72	Personal Services	36
81	Legal Services	31
78	Motion Pictures	29
82	Educational Services	28
17	Special Trade Contractors	22
89	Services, Nec	***
42	Trucking And Warehousing	14
41	Local And Interurban Passenger Transit	***
52	Building Materials & Garden Supplies	12
64	Insurance Agents, Brokers, & Service	11
86	Membership Organizations	***
55	Automotive Dealers & Service Stations	10
47	Transportation Services	9
61	Nondepository Institutions	***

Industries For Sharon in Order of Total Employment (2001)		
SIC	Industry	Employment
27	Printing And Publishing	8
76	Miscellaneous Repair Services	***
14	Nonmetallic Minerals, Except Fuels	***
38	Instruments And Related Products	***
48	Communications	***
84	Museums, Botanical, Zoological Gardens	***
56	Apparel And Accessory Stores	***
62	Security And Commodity Brokers	***
75	Auto Repair, Services, And Parking	***
35	Industrial Machinery And Equipment	***
63	Insurance Carriers	***
67	Holding And Other Investment Offices	***

Sharon Service Producing Industries in Quarter Ending 1998				
SIC Code	Industry	Number of Employers	Employment	Average Weekly Wage
41	Local And Interurban Passenger Transit	***	***	***
42	Trucking And Warehousing	3	14	727.00
47	Transportation Services	3	9	467.00
48	Communications	***	***	***
50	Wholesale Trade-durable Goods	37	616	1,545.00
51	Wholesale Trade-nondurable Goods	18	363	822.00
52	Building Materials & Garden Supplies	4	12	2,023.00
54	Food Stores	4	164	451.00
55	Automotive Dealers & Service Stations	3	10	418.00
56	Apparel And Accessory Stores	***	***	***
57	Furniture And Homefurnishings Stores	***	***	***
58	Eating And Drinking Places	11	119	340.00
59	Miscellaneous Retail	10	97	265.00
60	Depository Institutions	5	83	770.00
61	Nondepository Institutions	***	***	***
62	Security And Commodity Brokers	***	***	***
63	Insurance Carriers	***	***	***
64	Insurance Agents, Brokers, & Service	5	11	1,231.00
65	Real Estate	12	71	907.00
67	Holding And Other Investment Offices	***	***	***

Employment and Wages in Sharon

Year	Total Annual Payroll	Avg Annual Wage	Establishments	EMPLOYMENT								
				Total	Agriculture Forestry Fishing	Government	Construction	Manufacturing	TCPU	Trade	FIRE	Services
1985	63249500	20495	300	3,086	19	506	124	735	65	826	132	680
1986	68417000	21175	325	3,231	22	551	107	676	60	875	158	781
1987	66963500	20906	344	3,203	29	551	139	478	64	996	169	777
1988	75102297	23751	355	3,162	36	477	173	488	69	1,012	170	737
1989	74768985	24458	380	3,057	29	391	143	458	92	1,027	141	776
1990	73204910	25401	365	2,882	31	424	91	407	96	928	133	772
1991	73723425	26443	346	2,788	28	427	69	368	93	942	154	707
1992	87372098	30233	339	2,890	41	424	43	471	115	933	168	690
1993	92570053	31401	356	2,948	47	486	69	461	94	880	196	710
1994	98107648	30535	389	3,213	56	523	82	462	113	930	231	810
1995	103988362	32365	395	3,213	55	542	102	527	75	912	173	827
1996	99488868	31969	386	3,112	63	644	96	385	42	868	171	843
1997	111235250	34006	380	3,271	69	640	96	400	50	981	167	864
1998	120673338	36293	411	3,325	62	659	113	422	64	955	164	883
1999	122254802	36669	400	3,334	77	705	105	394	70	927	170	883
2000	130910179	38311	400	3,417	78	725	87	240	50	1129	174	931
2001	168474403	41517	418	4,058	88	729	385	198	41	1435	179	999

TCPU = Transportation, Communication and Public Utilities; FIRE = Finance, Insurance and Real Estate

Note: Changes in industry definitions occurred in 1988, so data prior to that year are not strictly comparable to the more recent data.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Employment and Training (ES-202 Series)

Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment in Sharon					
Year	Laborforce	Employment	Unemployment	Unemployment Rate	Statewide Rate
1983	7,339	6,940	399	5.4%	6.9%
1984	7,570	7,283	288	3.8%	4.8%
1985	7,572	7,334	238	3.1%	3.9%
1986	7,642	7,410	232	3.0%	3.8%
1987	7,657	7,462	195	2.5%	3.2%
1988	8,648	8,488	160	1.9%	3.3%
1989	8,716	8,485	231	2.7%	4.0%
1990	8,730	8,363	367	4.2%	6.0%
1991	8,473	7,959	514	6.1%	9.1%
1992	8,539	8,061	478	5.6%	8.6%
1993	8,798	8,389	409	4.6%	6.9%
1994	9,067	8,677	390	4.3%	6.0%
1995	8,994	8,674	320	3.6%	5.4%
1996	9,141	8,863	278	3.0%	4.3%
1997	9,437	9,192	245	2.6%	4.0%
1998	9,518	9,336	182	1.9%	3.3%
1999	9,540	9,336	204	2.1%	3.2%
2000	9,455	9,278	177	1.9%	2.6%
2001	9,558	9,308	250	2.6%	3.7%

Source: MA DET

Sharon 2000 Labor Cost Statistics				
SIC Code	Industry Title	State Wage/ National Wage (%)	Area/ National Wage (%)	Area/ State Wage (%)
	Agricultural Production-crops	119.69	56.57	47.26
	Agricultural Services	130.82	92.22	70.49
	Nonmetallic Minerals, Except Fuels	106.34	80.72	75.91
	General Building Contractors	125.27	84.26	67.26
	Special Trade Contractors	128.53	113.31	88.15
	Food And Kindred Products	108.14	64.79	59.91
	Printing And Publishing	122.91	120.17	97.77
	Fabricated Metal Products	126.39	139.64	110.48
	Industrial Machinery And Equipment	142.98	71.08	49.71
	Instruments And Related Products	124.43	82.77	66.52
	Local And Interurban Passenger Transit	109.47	80.01	73.09
	Trucking And Warehousing	117.40	89.84	76.52
	Transportation Services	120.04	67.66	56.37
	Communications	107.74	46.88	43.51
	Wholesale Trade-durable Goods	141.91	130.11	91.68
	Wholesale Trade-nondurable Goods	116.08	92.63	79.80
	Building Materials & Garden Supplies	118.66	177.37	149.48
	Food Stores	107.38	127.39	118.64
	Automotive Dealers & Service Stations	114.25	67.21	58.83
	Apparel And Accessory Stores	129.35	43.96	33.98
	Furniture And Homefurnishings Stores	112.73	108.26	96.03
	Eating And Drinking Places	120.52	104.66	86.84
	Miscellaneous Retail	114.96	61.90	53.84
	Depository Institutions	129.75	98.58	75.98
	Nondepository Institutions	140.46	130.56	92.95
	Security And Commodity Brokers	95.49	75.18	78.73
	Insurance Carriers	116.94	115.10	98.43
	Insurance Agents, Brokers, & Service	113.91	147.43	129.43
	Real Estate	137.39	102.04	74.27
	Holding And Other Investment Offices	218.57	30.35	13.88
	Hotels And Other Lodging Places	118.58	108.16	91.22

	Personal Services	109.49	67.68	61.82
	Business Services	152.72	214.38	140.38
	Auto Repair, Services, And Parking	114.16	122.25	107.09
	Miscellaneous Repair Services	111.07	27.31	24.58
	Motion Pictures	64.67	34.48	53.32
	Amusement & Recreation Services	110.73	90.22	81.47
	Health Services	107.44	93.53	87.05
	Legal Services	108.89	93.84	86.18
	Educational Services	123.78	58.59	47.34
	Social Services	116.98	108.28	92.57
	Museums, Botanical, Zoological Gardens	104.79	216.79	206.87
	Membership Organizations	97.35	66.63	68.45
	Engineering & Management Services	135.66	95.79	70.61
	Private Households	108.69	109.84	101.05
	Services, Nec	90.91	72.44	79.68
	Wage Ratio for All Industries	127.59	108.66	85.17

Sharon 2000 Labor Cost Statistics				
SIC Code	Industry Title	National Average Weekly Wage	State Average Weekly Wage	Area Average Weekly Wage
	Agricultural Production-crops	361	432	204
	Agricultural Production-livestock	428	404	0
	Agricultural Services	391	512	361
	Forestry	522	473	0
	Fishing, Hunting, And Trapping	738	1,078	0
	Metal Mining	1,062	628	0
	Oil And Gas Extraction	1,267	831	0
	Nonmetallic Minerals, Except Fuels	804	855	649
	General Building Contractors	737	923	621
	Heavy Construction, Ex. Building	784	1,054	0
	Special Trade Contractors	675	868	765
	Food And Kindred Products	676	731	438
	Textile Mill Products	558	704	0
	Apparel And Other Textile Products	452	491	0
	Lumber And Wood Products, Except Furni	561	679	0

Furniture And Fixtures	577	671	0
Paper And Allied Products	883	866	0
Printing And Publishing	774	951	930
Chemicals And Allied Products	1,296	1,641	0
Petroleum And Coal Products	1,247	1,132	0
Rubber And Misc. Plastics Products	675	824	0
Leather And Leather Products	560	615	0
Stone, Clay, And Glass Products	768	836	0
Primary Metal Industries	867	844	0
Fabricated Metal Products	727	919	1,015
Industrial Machinery And Equipment	1,035	1,480	736
Electronic & Other Electric Equipment	1,096	1,284	0
Transportation Equipment	1,025	1,175	0
Instruments And Related Products	1,119	1,392	926
Miscellaneous Manufacturing Industries	638	743	0
Local And Interurban Passenger Transit	396	433	317
Trucking And Warehousing	627	736	563
Water Transportation	804	652	0
Transportation By Air	780	737	0
Pipelines, Except Natural Gas	1,241	974	0
Transportation Services	680	816	460
Communications	1,115	1,201	523
Electric, Gas, And Sanitary Services	1,181	1,372	0
Wholesale Trade-durable Goods	958	1,360	1,246
Wholesale Trade-nondurable Goods	809	939	749
Building Materials & Garden Supplies	484	574	858
General Merchandise Stores	339	379	0
Food Stores	338	363	431
Automotive Dealers & Service Stations	589	673	396
Apparel And Accessory Stores	334	432	147
Furniture And Homefurnishings Stores	543	612	588
Eating And Drinking Places	233	281	244
Miscellaneous Retail	416	478	257
Depository Institutions	798	1,035	787
Nondepository Institutions	993	1,395	1,296
Security And Commodity Brokers	2,832	2,704	2,129
Insurance Carriers	982	1,148	1,130
Insurance Agents, Brokers, & Service	858	977	1,265

	Real Estate	650	893	663
	Holding And Other Investment Offices	1,806	3,947	548
	Hotels And Other Lodging Places	389	461	421
	Personal Services	349	382	236
	Business Services	695	1,061	1,490
	Auto Repair, Services, And Parking	494	564	604
	Miscellaneous Repair Services	618	686	169
	Motion Pictures	665	430	229
	Amusement & Recreation Services	454	503	410
	Health Services	671	721	628
	Legal Services	1,153	1,255	1,082
	Educational Services	605	749	354
	Social Services	362	423	392
	Museums, Botanical, Zoological Gardens	443	464	960
	Membership Organizations	442	430	295
	Engineering & Management Services	1,057	1,434	1,012
	Private Households	254	276	279
	Services, Nec	1,226	1,115	888
	Nonclassifiable Establishments	728	0	0
	Average Weekly Wage For All Industries	\$679	\$866	\$738

Sharon 2000 Labor Statistics				
SIC Code	Industry Title	National Employment	State Employment	This Area's Employment
	Agricultural Production-crops	575,089	3,112	20
	Agricultural Services	1,099,308	19,026	57
	Nonmetallic Minerals, Except Fuels	112,179	1,356	3
	General Building Contractors	1,503,533	28,198	34
	Special Trade Contractors	4,228,820	86,187	53
	Food And Kindred Products	1,688,706	21,615	88
	Printing And Publishing	1,538,690	50,777	13
	Fabricated Metal Products	1,535,900	34,809	106
	Industrial Machinery And Equipment	2,110,949	62,349	29
	Instruments And Related Products	842,221	50,437	3
	Local And Interurban Passenger Transit	472,391	22,253	16
	Trucking And Warehousing	1,841,556	25,817	19
	Transportation Services	465,623	11,174	11
	Communications	1,658,869	35,160	4
	Wholesale Trade-durable Goods	4,189,230	108,030	357
	Wholesale Trade-nondurable Goods	2,813,389	69,690	351
	Building Materials & Garden Supplies	1,011,768	21,430	19
	Food Stores	3,476,619	95,781	145
	Automotive Dealers & Service Stations	2,407,760	45,449	13
	Apparel And Accessory Stores	1,196,242	40,489	2
	Furniture And Homefurnishings Stores	1,128,602	26,949	50
	Eating And Drinking Places	8,131,907	199,953	109
	Miscellaneous Retail	3,075,184	94,723	83
	Depository Institutions	2,029,708	60,523	81
	Nondepository Institutions	683,806	9,313	7
	Security And Commodity Brokers	754,290	51,239	2
	Insurance Carriers	1,461,001	44,841	1
	Insurance Agents, Brokers, & Service	758,674	20,359	12
	Real Estate	1,504,698	32,092	69
	Holding And Other Investment Offices	243,901	5,696	1
	Hotels And Other Lodging Places	1,881,479	36,070	54
	Personal Services	1,246,550	33,516	39
	Business Services	9,860,302	278,399	174
	Auto Repair, Services, And Parking	1,230,314	28,384	3

	Miscellaneous Repair Services	366,168	7,720	3
	Motion Pictures	590,300	10,204	30
	Amusement & Recreation Services	1,773,891	34,349	90
	Health Services	10,073,937	325,149	167
	Legal Services	1,011,616	29,851	26
	Educational Services	1,739,084	108,168	10
	Social Services	2,798,772	89,203	131
	Museums, Botanical, Zoological Gardens	106,500	5,077	6
	Membership Organizations	1,094,138	27,361	12
	Engineering & Management Services	3,440,457	131,564	115
	Private Households	420,468	14,483	54
	Services, Nec	52,200	934	19
	Total Employment for All Industries	110,064,902	2,866,348	2,691