

Groton 2020 Planning Directions

Plan Overview
**A Summary of the
Comprehensive Plan for
Groton, MA**
April 1990

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The Planning Board of the Town of Groton would like to formally acknowledge and thank the dozens of people who assisted in the preparation of this plan. There were over 200 people who attended Groton 2020 meetings and almost 1000 households who participated in our townwide mail survey. We believe that this plan represents the will of Groton's residents.

Once again, thank you to all those who participated in preparing the plan. Now we must make it happen.

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INTRODUCTION

This report, *Planning Directions* is the lead document for *Groton 2020: A Comprehensive Plan for Groton, Massachusetts*. The plan also consists of the following:

- *Groton 2020: Background Data*, a series of data inventory and analysis memoranda,
- *Groton 2020: Alternatives Analysis*, a review of the various planning paths open to the town,
- *Groton 2020: Planning Actions*, a set of specific steps to implement the plan including new zoning proposals, and
- a variety of maps that support the plan.

At the broadest level, *Groton 2020* describes a future for the town wherein the small town character is retained, where open spaces and the environment are protected for generations to come and where these objectives are managed within the overall process of the town potentially doubling its population over the next 75-100 years. The town's overall planning goals describe that future in clear terms:

Goal: To continue and enhance our tradition of being a community where small town values are encouraged and where people fit within, rather than dominate over, the landscape.

Objectives:

1. To maintain Groton's rural landscape.
2. To maintain Groton's small town community values.
3. To be primarily a residential town.
4. To integrate development within the landscape.
5. To be a community with housing opportunities for people at all stages of their lives.
6. To protect the natural environment for future generations.
7. To stand as an example to other communities of how a town can grow without losing its character.
8. To protect the town's historic resources.
9. To continue to provide high quality and efficient town services within a program of sound fiscal management.

This portion of the plan presents the goals, objectives and general directions for action necessary for the town to reach the year 2020 with its character intact. The overall horizon for the plan is 30 years. The horizon for action is 10 years. Times will change, growth pressures will change, but it is the Town's intent to use this document in a way that will provide a clear, consistent direction to assist in managing those changes.

Each element of the plan is examined in the pages that follow: housing, business, open space, the environment, town services, transportation, historic preservation, agriculture, land use administration and the villages of West Groton, Lost Lake and Groton Center. For each element, two or three alternative planning directions are presented. These alternatives flow from the document Alternatives Analysis, and they are intended to clarify for the reader the potential paths open to the town, and the path chosen by the town to pursue in its planning. The chosen path is indicated in bold face type.

The action recommendations then lay the groundwork for implementation. The action statements provide a clear direction for town boards and departments to follow: What kind of zoning should be prepared? Should our planning process be examined? The details of implementing the actions

is the final phase of the plan. *Groton 2020: Planning Actions* (Summer 1990) will consist of specific steps the town can take to follow-through on the action recommendations of this document.

PLAN PREPARATION METHOD

Groton 2020 was begun in June of 1989 following the appropriation of funds by the Fall 1988 Town Meeting and a search for a consultant during the spring of 1990. Over the next 10 months, 11 public meetings were held wherein over 200 different people attended and participated. Meetings were held throughout town, summaries were prepared of each meeting and most meetings were taped on cable TV. Mailings were sent to every person who attended a meeting. In addition to the public meetings, the Planning Board met with the consultant for 13 additional meetings as well as holding over 15 other meetings to carry on the day to day work of administering the planning and development process. The consultant also attended six other meetings with various town boards and departments.

The overall process consisted of defining and shaping the plan from June 1989 to January 1990, and then in refining and detailing the plan from January to April 1990.

This plan was prepared through a process that balanced direct citizen participation with analysis of objective data, expert opinion, community wide opinion survey, past successes and failures of town planning efforts, Planning Board input and consultant direction. Each of these elements are reviewed below.

1. **Direct Citizen Participation:** As described above, twenty-eight meetings open to the public were held over the 10 month plan preparation period. The Board encouraged the participation of all attendees and responses were recorded in notes and on cable TV. A 24 hour a day call in line was available for citizens to express their opinions and ask questions.
2. **Data Analysis:** Previous data and new data was collected and analyzed. Memos were produced on housing, business development, open space, the environment, town facilities, growth projections and the feasibility of the bypass.
3. **Expert Opinion:** A total of 60 personal interviews were held with board members, department heads and community leaders to determine the issues they felt were most crucial for the Comprehensive Plan. These interviews provided the consultant with an indepth background on the town's planning history and current problems.
4. **Community Opinion Survey:** A questionnaire was sent to every post office patron in Groton (approximately 3000). A total of 986 responses were received and tabulated. Response rate was very even across the town. The survey collected basic demographic information and measured opinion on a range of planning issues. The results of the survey played a strong role in testing the directions developed during the public meeting process.
5. **Past Efforts:** Through interviews and reviews of past planning studies, the recommendations of *Groton 2020* were compared with past planning efforts to determine the likelihood of public acceptance and the likelihood of implementation.
6. **Planning Board Input:** The Planning Board participated directly in the process and responded to town concerns. Meetings on specific topics were held with the board. The board reviewed all written materials and spent two full Saturdays editing the final plan draft line by line. The Planning

Assistant, Michelle Collette played a critical role in managing the process and providing day to day contact with the community.

7. **Consultant Input:** The consultant performed several roles. First, the consultant collected all data and wrote all materials for the project. Second, mapping was coordinated and performed by the consultant. Third, the consultant acted as a referee and facilitator for all public workshops and Planning Board meetings. Fourth, the consultant challenged the town with provocative and controversial ideas to test the limits of the town's planning policies. Finally, the consultant acted as a partner with the town in managing the project.

State statute authorizes the Planning Board to prepare and adopt the Comprehensive or Master Plan. In addition to fulfilling this requirement, the Planning Board also presented the Comprehensive Plan to a Special Meeting of the Spring 1990 Town Meeting.

HOW DOES THIS PLAN COMPARE WITH PAST PLANS?

Groton has a long history of planning: zoning was adopted several decades ago, the local historic district was one of the first in the state, a master plan was prepared in 1963 and the town is known throughout the state for its innovative zoning. How does this plan fit in with the town's past planning efforts? Each of the town's major plans is reviewed below for the purpose of comparison.

The Eliot Plan: 1963

- Goals: Protect rural character, focus development toward villages, create a clear road plan
- Major Recommendations: Create historic district, construct Groton Center bypass, adopt conservation district (precursor to wetlands regulations), zone business areas at ends of bypass, and target southeastern corner of town for future village development.

The Character of Groton Report: 1979

- Goals: Protect rural character of the town
- Major Recommendations: Link density to the capacity of the land, protect scenic roads, protect hilltops and landforms, provide housing the forms neighborhoods, protect the village-rural pattern of development, provide housing at all income levels. This project resulted in the adoption of the town's flexible development bylaw and development rate limitation bylaw.

The Strategic Planning Project: 1988

- Goals: Provide affordable housing by increasing densities in the Center.
- Major Recommendations: Increase density in Groton Center, transfer density from scenic areas to Groton Center, require closer groupings of homes in scenic areas, require certain percentage of new units to be affordable, construct the bypass and loosen requirements for increasing the number of units in existing structures.

The Groton 2020 Plan

- Goals: Protect small town character, strengthen environmental protection efforts, preserve open space, provide housing opportunities for a range of people, support existing businesses, provide for limited expansion of the business base, and protect the villages.

· Major Recommendations:

1. Maintain the town's overall planning density of two acres per housing unit.
2. Take an active stance of protecting open lands through cooperative efforts between landowners, not-for-profit land organizations and the Town.
3. Protect sensitive environmental areas, open lands, hilltops and significant views through special zoning or through purchases of easements and land.
4. Develop strong regulations that guide the development process in order to protect the character of the town as well as address the financial objectives of the town's longtime landowners.
5. Link the town's conservation and open space holdings with trails and additional land acquisitions.
6. Support and provide incentives for the continuation of farming in Groton.
7. Protect Groton Center's character by maintaining controls on density and new construction.
8. Examine the potential for the area west of Main Street to meet business, parking, housing and open space needs and as a means to complement traffic management strategies on Route 119.
9. Do not build the Groton Center bypass, instead direct and manage traffic along Route 119.
10. To the degree possible protect neighborhoods from commuter traffic.
11. Prepare a townwide road plan that improves safety while protecting the town's scenic character and environment.
12. Do not expand the Groton Center sewer system.
13. Examine alternative wastewater treatment technologies in the event of widespread septic system failure in specific areas.
14. Gradually provide water service to all areas of town.
15. Maintain the current balance of business and manufacturing zoning to residential and agricultural zoning.
16. Do not allow the commercial strip development of Route 119.
17. Strengthen the protection of historic resources through a variety of means including expanding the historic district to encompass all, rather than just part, of the lots currently within the historic district.
18. Explore means for direct town action to alleviate neighborhood problems such as abandoned structures.
19. Examine planning and development review processes that increase communication and cooperation between boards.
20. Keep most government services within Groton Center. Maintain control over public buildings.
21. Plan for a new elementary school early in the next century.
22. Re-evaluate and strengthen the Town's growth management techniques.
23. Link the Comprehensive Plan to town regulations. Use the Plan to clarify the development review process.
24. Examine the appropriateness of current zoning strategies to meet the Plan's objectives.

Position of *Groton 2020* in relation to other town studies and plans:

1. *Historic Preservation in Groton: A Guide to Planning*. 1989. Boston University.

Groton 2020 supports the recommendations for filling out the historic district, protecting structures outside the district, examining the appropriateness of a locally controlled historic district in West Groton and integrating historic preservation within overall land use planning. *Groton 2020* does not support the recommended creation of a historic preservation buffer district around the current district.

2. *A Survey of School Building Needs. Groton-Dunstable Regional School District 1987*. George J. Collins Educational Associates.

Groton 2020 supports the projected need for additional elementary school space. *Groton 2020* does not support the pace of projected growth (10,550 people by the year 2000) and instead predicts a slower pace of growth (8300 people by the year 2000).

3. *Town of Groton: Municipal Space Needs and Site Analysis*. 1988. Kitchell CEM.

Groton 2020 supports the recommendations and subsequent action that resulted in the new public safety building and the move of the Highway Department. This plan does not support the recommendation that the current site of the Groton Electric Light Department is the most appropriate site. Instead, the plan recommends moving the Light Department to another area in order to free up land for public, commercial and housing uses along Station Avenue. *Groton 2020* does not recommend whether the Town Hall or Prescott School should function as general government buildings, only that general government be maintained within the Center.

4. *Facilities Planning Report*. 1982. Dufresne-Henry. (Wastewater management plan.)

Groton 2020 supports alternatives that address areas of failed septic systems with alternative waste disposal options serving only the area of need and that do not open up major areas of town for sewer service due to the presence of interconnecting sewer lines.

5. *A Diagnostic/Feasibility Study for the Management of Lost Lake/Knops Pond, Croton, MA. Draft Report*. 1989. Baystate Environmental Consultants, Inc.

Groton 2020 supports all the recommended actions for managing weed growth, preventing pollution and managing septic system impacts.

6. *Municipal Groundwater Resource Analysis and Protection Study, Groton, MA*. 1983. IEP, Inc.

Groton 2020 supports all recommendations of this study and also recommends action to complete the implementation of future well sites.

Goals, Objectives, Alternative Plans and Actions

HOUSING DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To guide future housing development and future use of existing homes in a manner that complements the physical landscape of Groton, meets the needs of people at all stages of their lives and encourages the continuation of Groton's character as a town of individuals and families who feel that they are a part of a community.

OBJECTIVES

1. To protect the overall character of the villages.
2. To provide housing for Groton retirees and elders.
3. To avoid the creation of projects or areas of affordable homes¹ that carry with them any stigma of being different.
4. To integrate affordable homes with new market rate homes.
5. To plan for housing that meets the special needs of residents (health needs, locational needs or scale needs.)
6. To work to keep the homes that are affordable today, affordable into the future.
7. To provide information on the current needs and options available for builders and homeowners to provide less costly housing.
8. To ensure that a range of types of homes are available in Groton.
9. To have zoning and other land use regulations that provide sound planning.
10. To encourage and require that housing development be designed so as to fit within the environment rather than overpower the environment.
11. To encourage and require that housing development be designed so as to complement the historic character of the town.
12. To pursue and maintain housing policies that guarantee the construction of sound and safe homes.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Based on the above goal and objectives, what are the alternative approaches or plans that emerge? The following plans are three viable paths for the town of Groton to pursue. The greater the injection of resources, the faster the objectives can be attained.

1. Current Policies
Maintain the overall density of one unit per two acres of land across town. Follow current policies of gradual affordable housing gains and uniform flexible development across town primarily encouraging single and two family housing. Guide sensitive development through flexible development regulations. Adopt regulations to provide more protection for sensitive environments and scenic landscapes.

¹ Affordable Homes - For this plan, "affordable" shall refer to housing cost that falls within the means of Groton's housing target groups. In the town's 1988 housing plan, two target groups were defined: retirees and families with incomes of \$25,000 to \$40,000.

2. **Regulatory: Flexibility. Moderate Local Funds**
Maintain the overall density of one unit per two acres of land across town. Change zoning requirements to better meet the above stated objectives. Create a housing resource position to work with landowners and those with housing need. Explore moderately funded means to assist with problems of undersized lots, abandoned housing, wastewater disposal problems and balancing open space protection with landowners' return.

3. **High Local Financial Investment in Housing**
Maintain the overall density of one unit per two acres of land across town. Working with funds from real estate transfer taxes or a local housing bond, explore high investment approaches for the following programs and developments: a) town sponsored affordable lot/small home subdivision, b) Groton Redevelopment Authority, c) more housing for elders, and d) affordable home maintenance program with local banks.

ACTIONS

- H1. Adopt Alternative #2: Regulatory Flexibility, Moderate Local Funds. With the modification that as the town's financial burden eases and the housing market stabilizes, it should consider pursuing elements of Alternative #3.
- H2. Maintain two acre lot size as the underlying base density for the entire town.
- H3. All housing should be sited away from critical landscape character elements: hilltops, active farmland and vistas. Clustering with more flexible lot provisions in these areas might be considered. Consider zoning to protect scenic and distinctive uplands.
- H4. Review the flexible development bylaw² and the degree to which it meets town objectives. Explore the potential for allowing closer groupings of homes so as to protect more open land without increasing the overall density of the project.
- H5. Continue mixed densities and uses in the villages.
- H6. Maintain incentives and requirements for keeping housing away from arterial and collector streets³. Consider adoption of scenic corridor districts to protect roadside vegetation.
- H7. Adopt clearer site design standards as part of the Planning Board's regulations.

² Flexible Development Bylaw - This current town zoning bylaw allows the Planning Board to authorize a project to site individual houses on lots of 1 acre or more. to protect the remaining open land and overall not allow for any more additional homes than would have been allowed if each house were sited on 2 acres of land. The result is projects that fit more flexibly into the landscape.

³ Arterial and Collector Streets ~ Town and state owned streets that carry the traffic from neighborhood streets and driveways and connect between towns. Can be thought of as the high traffic streets.

- H8. Maintain a strong Historic District Commission to guide housing design in the Center. Expand the district in the Center and along Farmers Row to correspond with past historic district study recommendations. (e.g. move to back lot lines)
- H9. The Town should work with neighborhoods to remove or rebuild abandoned cottages and structures that present a health, safety or public welfare threat.
- H10. Consider mini-farms in open areas by allowing three to four unit structures by special permit with provisions for active use and protection of farmland.
- H11. Develop an outreach program for landowners that have not yet considered or are just beginning to consider development of their property. Working with the landowner and other non-town groups, the town can help facilitate a preservation or limited development program that will meet all parties' objectives.
- H12. Pursue a real estate transfer tax⁴ to protect open space and housing as voted at the 1987 Town Meeting.
- H13. Continue existing zoning policies: two family by right, temporary mobile homes for dependent family members on lots containing single family homes, individual mobile homes, conversions to two family by right, conversions to three family by special permit, concept plans for large multifamily projects, concept plans for large projects, conventional subdivision, flexible development and the growth rate control bylaw.
- H14. Support density transfers of development rights⁵ to protect open space. Examine the current transfers provisions in the zoning.
- H15. Examine allowing internal conversion⁶ to more units based on special permits with incentives for affordability.
- H16. Consider an inclusionary bylaw⁷ or impact fee/linkage program⁸. Examine cash payment to a housing trust fund as an alternative to construction of housing.

⁴ Real Estate Transfer Tax - This would be a tax levied on all property sales over a certain level. The seller would pay 1/2 to 2% of selling price as a tax. The monies would be used by the town for open space protection and/or affordable housing programs.

⁵ Transfers of Development Rights - This concept allows a property owner to sell or move the rights to build on his or her land to another parcel. The result is protected open land on the initial parcel and development at a higher density on the new parcel.

⁶ Internal Conversion - The interior remodeling of an existing home to create more living units than are currently within the structure.

⁷ Inclusionary Housing ,Bylaw - A bylaw that would require that developments over a certain size must contain a specified percentage of units that meet local housing objectives for affordability or housing type.

⁸ Impact Fee/Linkage Program - A local program where specific amounts of money are paid to the town by the developer in order to support programs that are needed directly due to the impacts of the development.

- H17. Determine legal means to extend the Development Rate Limitation bylaw into the future.⁹
- H18. Consider use of existing large public or institutional buildings for meeting town housing needs if the current use of those buildings becomes infeasible or outdated.
- H19. Provide a housing resources person as a part-time position. Home sharing, directing people to existing assistance programs, advice on development steps and other help could all be offered through this position. Work with the Housing Authority to provide partial funding.
- H20. Investigate alternative affordable housing strategies.
- H21. Ensure the long term affordability and public control of any public initiated affordable housing.
- H22. Write and update an affordable housing plan to conform with the town's housing goals and objectives.

⁹ Development Rate Limitation Bylaw - A regulation that limits annual construction LO a level consistent with the Town's ability to provide increased services.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To ensure that Groton's natural environment and the plant and animal life within that environment are protected and enhanced for future generations. To fit within the environment, not dominate it.

OBJECTIVES

1. To strengthen efforts to protect the fundamental parts of a healthy environment: air, water, plant life, wildlife, soil and landscape.
2. To continue the rehabilitation of the Nashua River.
3. To continue the protection of the Squannacook River.
4. To continue town efforts to protect all public water supplies.
5. To work to protect the water supplies of private well owners.
6. To protect all wetlands, streams and ponds.
7. To protect agricultural lands.
8. To protect important geological features such as the drumlins.
9. To strengthen the town's protection efforts and ensure that enforcement supports those efforts.
10. To evaluate baseline levels of environmental quality in order to understand long term environmental trends.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Current Plan- Moderate pace, strong commitment
Follow current policies of broad action, strong regulations and a financial commitment to problem solving and taking advantage of opportunities when they arise. Guide future efforts through a clear plan of action.
2. Faster Pace and Stronger Commitment
Follow the course set in Alternative #1, but add to it the designation of funds each year for environmental protection. Steadily protect or purchase lands around water bodies and protect specific upland areas from development.

ACTIONS

- E1. Adopt Alternative #2. This is a strengthening of current environmental protection efforts. The following recommendations are categorized by environmental concern.

Groundwater

- E2. Continue the public well development program in order to bring new wells on line as needed.
- E3. Work with the state to examine options for monitoring all known and future hazardous waste and materials areas so as to prevent groundwater pollution.

- E4. Periodically review and amend the Water Resources Protection Districts.¹⁰
- E5. Consider measures to protect private wells.
- E6. Review Board of Health procedures for preventing agricultural pollution.
- E7. Pursue programs to prevent pollution from hazardous household-materials.
- E8. Examine the town's road salting policies and their impacts on wetlands.
- E9. Improve enforcement efforts of current and future groundwater protection mechanisms.

Rivers. Streams. Ponds and Wetlands

- E10. Examine a river, stream and pond buffer zoning district to augment the floodplain district and place tighter controls on siltation, building placement and habitat disturbance.
- E11. Continually monitor potential pollution sources and integrate this effort within ongoing planning.
- E12. Ensure compliance with state, federal and local water protection mechanisms.
- E13. Consider the creation of a position to monitor and enforce compliance with environmental laws and regulations, and to promote good environmental practices within the town.
- E14. Strictly maintain and enforce the current Floodplain District Regulation, Wetlands Protection Bylaw and Wetlands Protection Act.
- E15. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Diagnostic/Feasibility Study for the Management of Lost Lake/Knops pond.¹¹ In particular, the dam underdrain, control of weeds, reducing runoff of nutrients into the ponds and pollution prevention practices.
- E16. Encourage participation in cleanup and stewardship programs such as the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Adopt a Stream program.

Special Wildlife and Vegetative Habitats

- E17. Work with the Natural Heritage Program at the Department of Environmental Management to identify and protect special habitats.
- E18. Study and better understand the wildlife movement patterns within the town to determine the need for special zoning provisions to protect areas for wildlife movement. Prevent development patterns that would clearly barricade wildlife movement

¹⁰ Water Resources Protection Districts - Zoning regulations that define uses and densities in areas near town wells and groundwater supplies.

¹¹ Draft Report. April 1989. Baystate Environmental Consultants. Inc.

Vistas and Scenic Resources

- E19. Consider a Scenic Ridge Bylaw to protect drumlins and views of hilltops by guiding development that is proposed above specific elevations. Development should be located below the key elevation level or buffered from extensive public view by natural vegetation or landforms.
- E20. Consider a Scenic Resources zoning provision whereby areas already designated as important by the state would require more sensitive site design and consideration of the visual impact of the development.

Air and Noise Pollution

- E21. Perform a baseline monitoring of air and noise pollution levels in town. Periodic testing will provide the town with important data on the long term trends in pollution. Explore means to address negative impacts.

Miscellaneous Actions

- E22. Strengthen efforts to identify and monitor underground tanks and other forms of hazardous material storage.
- E23. Examine an erosion and sedimentation bylaw to control soil loss, hillside slumping¹² and water pollution.
- E24. Develop an overall environmental quality measurement system that will rate the town's position and progress toward continually improved environmental quality.

¹² "Slumping" refers to the mass movement of soil on a hillside where the groundcover has been removed.

Open Space and Recreation Directions

GOAL

To ensure that Groton's existing natural, agricultural and recreational open spaces¹³ are protected and enhanced for future generations: To protect more open space to meet our open space and recreation objectives.

OBJECTIVES

1. To maintain the distinct landscapes of West Groton, the Center, Lost Lake and the overall rural landscape.
2. To use open lands to protect and define the villages.
3. To provide public open/recreation land where needed.
4. To acquire lands through purchase, conservation restriction or other development restrictions¹⁴ to enhance the town's current holdings.
5. To link current and future public land holdings with trails and additional holdings.
6. To strengthen communication and cooperation between landowners and open space/recreation organizations.
7. To provide public recreation lands and amenities that support Groton's goal of bringing people closer to the natural environment.
8. To protect lands and support private use of lands such that Groton's prime food producing areas are passed to future generations.
9. To protect open land for its groundwater recharge value.
10. To protect wildlife habitats and balance that protection with open space and recreation planning.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Current Plan
Follow current policies of purchasing open land as it comes on the market and attracts public interest. Continue cooperation between town and non-town organizations such as the New England Forestry Foundation and the Groton Conservation Trust. Raise public money as needed. Continue the policy of centralizing most active recreation facilities around existing public properties.
2. **General Acquisition Plan with Detailed Guidelines. Create New Recreation Areas**
Identify general areas and resource qualities by priority for acquisition and open space protection, and prepare a long term financing plan. Continue cooperation between town and non-town organizations such as the New England Forestry Foundation and the Groton Conservation Trust. Create a specific fund for open space protection. Enhance current recreation lands and also examine the purchase of additional lands in areas of town that are underserved.

¹³ Open Space - Land that is undeveloped. This shall include fields, forests, parks, playgrounds and wetlands.

¹⁴ Development Restrictions - A transfer of property development rights to another party or a limitation of future property development rights for all future owners. This is either a voluntary effort by an owner or the owner is paid for selling such rights.

3. Detailed Acquisition Plan
Same as #2, but identify specific parcels rather than following general guidelines. Prepare a long term financing plan for acquisition of the parcels.

ACTIONS

Open Space Actions

OSR1. Adopt Plan Alternative #2.

OSR2. Financially Support the Conservation Commission's efforts to work with landowners to plan for the eventual use and/or protection of their land. Encourage other conservation organizations to save and protect land in a similar manner.

OSR3. Pursue a real estate transfer tax to protect open space and housing as voted at the 1987 Town Meeting.

OSR4. Maintain the budget item for open space protection for the Conservation Commission. Annually contribute funds to this budget item.

OSR5. Provide townspeople with a mechanism to financially contribute monies to town conservation efforts above and beyond taxes.

OSR6. Target special efforts to protect the additional critical recharge areas¹⁵ for the Town's water supplies. Acquire land identified for future public well sites.

OSR7. Refine and resubmit the Town's open space and recreation plan. As a part of the plan, provide a map of the general open space areas needed to complete the town's greenways and water system protection areas.

OSR8. Augment the protection of the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers by completing the greenways along the banks via purchase or other development restriction techniques.

OSR9. Consider the adoption of a scenic rivers protection bylaw to guide development along the Nashua and Squannacook.

OSR10. Direct town moneys to protect fields rather than wetland and forest land. Encourage forest land protection through the New England Forestry Foundation or the Groton Conservation Trust. Spend town monies to protect fields and vistas.

OSR11. Maintain town-owned accessways and open lands.

OSR12. Ensure appropriate and adequate public access to public recreation and open space resources.

¹⁵ Recharge areas - Surface lands surrounding underground water sources that act as the "sponges" that soak up and transmit surface water back to the groundwater.

- OSR13. Through consistent and strong zoning, maintain areas of open and residential land between commercial areas to prevent the creation of strips of commercial development.
- OSR14. Link existing public land holdings by purchasing or gaining restrictions on key linking parcels.
- OSR15. Encourage participation in cleanup and stewardship programs such as the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Adopt a Stream program.
- OSR16. Hold regular meetings of the area's open space protection organizations to ensure coordination and communication.
- OSR17. Send periodic materials to all landowners in an effort to increase awareness of open space protection organizations and options.
- OSR18. Update and implement a trail plan wherein existing trails can be linked together through gradual easements and acquisitions.
- OSR19. Consider a Scenic Resources zoning provision whereby areas already designated as important by the state would require more sensitive site design and consideration of the visual impact of the development.
- OSR20. Develop incentives to encourage landowners to protect open land, views and habitats in the ensuing development.
- OSR21. Develop a set of roadside reconstruction standards to guide the protection of roadside landscapes during road reconstruction or improvements.
- OSR22. Integrate Broadmeadow Swamp as a visual and natural resource within the Center's planning.
- OSR23. Protect open land by encouraging the use of transfers of development rights. Review the transfers bylaw to determine needed improvements to the concept.

Recreation Actions

- OSR24. Create recreation areas in neighborhoods throughout the town when determined to be in sufficient demand and when needed to augment existing facilities.
- OSR25. Continue the development of the recreation areas adjacent to the highway department lot.
- OSR26. Continue efforts to maintain grounds and facilities at existing recreation areas.
- OSR27. Maintain cooperation between the Planning Board and Parks and Recreation Commission in the process of integrating recreation areas within new developments.

GOALS

To strengthen cooperation between local government and the residents of Lost Lake with the result being concrete solutions to the problems that threaten the quality of life in the area. To enhance and protect the qualities of Lost Lake that will continue to make it a neighborhood of many people drawn together by the secluded and natural beauty of the area.

OBJECTIVES

1. To increase cooperation and communication between the neighborhood and Town Hall.
2. To support neighborhood initiatives including the removal or repair of abandoned cottages and other quality of life and safety issues.
3. To move forward with lake weed control and pollution control efforts.
4. To plan long term for the potential wide scale failure of individual septic systems.
5. To prepare and implement a long term road improvement plan that improves road safety while also working to protect neighborhood character and environmental quality.
6. To provide a playing field in the neighborhood.
7. To provide a community meeting space in the neighborhood.
8. To maintain the residential character of the area while allowing for a very few businesses that can provide day to day goods and services. .
9. To protect the woods of Lost Lake.
10. To seek a mechanism to address the problem of significantly undersized lots.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Along with the specific approaches recommended in the following plans, each plan also assumes the continuation of the Town's steps towards addressing environmental problems in the Lost Lake area.¹⁶

1. Minimum investment
This plan would consist of the following general actions:
 - a. Make no town investments in improving the housing stock or undersized lots problems.
 - b. Maintain current fire station building.
 - c. Build no community building.
 - d. Develop no park.
 - e. Prepare and implement a road plan that balances safety and protection of neighborhood character.

2. Moderate Investment
 - a. **Explore methods for the Town to directly address lot size and cottage abandonment problems.**
 - b. **Expand the current fire station. Improve the facility and add community meeting rooms.**

¹⁶ Lost Lake - This term shall also include the environmental resources of Springy Pond, Whitney Pond, Cow Pond Brook, Lost Lake and Knops Pond.

- c. **Work with the neighborhood to reinvigorate the Mountain Lakes Club and arrange for a long term acquisition of the Club's field with short term investments by the Town in moderate recreational facilities. (i.e. basketball court and swings.)**
 - d. **Prepare and implement a road plan that balances safety and protection of neighborhood character.**
3. Most Costly Investment
- a. Finance the purchase and resale of rundown cottages and undersized lots.
 - b. Build a new fire station and community center on the site of the current fire station.
 - c. Acquire the Mountain Lakes Club recreation field.
 - d. Prepare and implement a road plan that balances safety and protection of neighborhood character.

ACTIONS

- LL1. Adopt Plan Alternative #2.
- LL2. Maintain efforts to manage Lost Lake, Knops Pond and the other water bodies in the watershed. These efforts should include the following:
 - a. Weed control program
 - b. Public education on septic system maintenance.
 - c. Careful work on road improvements for water quality, safety and neighborhood character.
 - d. Examine town purchase and maintenance of the dam.
- LL3. Explore the feasibility of establishing a redevelopment authority¹⁷. Work with the Housing Partnership to develop programs whereby homes could be resold to participants in a local affordable housing program in order to protect affordability.
- LL4. Work with the Mountain Lakes Club to organize and maintain a recreation area on the Club's field.
- LL5. Plan an addition to the fire station for meeting rooms. Plan the project so that the current fire station can be improved in the future without disturbing the meeting room addition.
- LL6. Maintain awareness that increased septic system failure in the area could eventually require town intervention in the form of providing wastewater treatment of some type.

¹⁷ Redevelopment Authority - A Town Meeting created body (like the Housing Authority) that has the authority to buy and sell land, float bonds and manage property. The specific purpose of these authorities, as defined by their legislative mandate in M.G.L. c. 121 B is to assist in the planning and upgrading of areas that are in need of some form of redevelopment.

- LL7. Examine ways for town boards and departments to more directly address the area's problems of undersized lots and abandoned cottages.
- LL8. Review and consider recommendations contained in past studies including the wastewater management plan¹⁸ and the Clean Lakes study.¹⁹
- LL9. Seek methods to improve present septic systems and avoid environmental and public health problems. Encourage innovative and alternative approaches to wastewater disposal.

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West Groton Directions

GOAL

To actively protect and preserve the small town/neighborhood character of West Groton and its mixture of residences with some industry and businesses that serve local needs.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. To improve traffic conditions in West Groton Square.
- 2. To protect the historic community/social/economic functioning of the village, without rigidly preventing any physical change from occurring.
- 3. To encourage a limited amount of retail/service activity in the village.
- 4. To preserve the institutions and public buildings of West Groton (e.g. the Post Office, stores, churches, grade school and Squannacook Hall.)
- 5. To encourage the continuation of West Groton's currently active mills.
- 6. To plan for the future use of land zoned for industry.
- 7. To assertively protect West Groton's water supply.
- 8. To maintain and strengthen the pedestrian system in West Groton.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

- 1. **Minimal Change**
 - a. **Leave commercial districts as they are.**
 - b. **Continue with current system of requiring a concept plan and Town Meeting vote for zoning changes.**
- 2. **New Commercial Center. Gradual Conversion of Industrial to Residential**

¹⁸ Dufresne-Henry. 1982. *Facilities Planning Report*. Groton. MA. E.P.A Project No. C250750-01.

¹⁹ Baystate Environmental Consultants. Inc. 1989. *A Diagnostic/Feasibility Study for the Management of Lost Lake/Knops Pond*. Groton. MA. Draft Report.

- a. Relocate commercial center to another location in the village (through zoning and perhaps public investment).
 - b. Continue with current system of requiring a concept plan and Town Meeting vote for zoning changes.
3. Maximum Change
- a. Relocate commercial center to another location in the village (through zoning and perhaps public investment).
 - b. Allow mixed use for industrial buildings through a special permit.

ACTIONS

- WG1. Adopt Plan Alternative #1.
- WG2. Work with the state for the eventual repair or relocation of the bridge.
- WG3. Prepare and implement a road plan that balances safety and protection of neighborhood character.
- WG4. Commit to maintaining and upgrading the Tarbell School. Keep it in public use, preferably as an elementary school.
- WG5. Consider the adoption of a local historic district with a local commission in West Groton.
- WG6. Consider the adoption of a special zoning district around West Groton Village that would allow for a more tailored approach to zoning. Consider adoption of site design standards for development and conversions along Main Street.
- WG7. Maintain and upgrade the West Groton Water Company.
- WG8. Encourage new business development in areas where there will be minimal impacts on traffic.
- WG9. Examine the long term pros and cons of combining the West Groton Water Supply District and the Groton Water Department.

GOAL

To manage Groton Center in a manner that will preserve for future generations the historic qualities and quiet atmosphere of the Center as a place of homes, businesses, government and as a place to gather.

OBJECTIVES

General Objectives

1. To maintain the primarily residential physical appearance of the Center.²⁰
2. To protect the buildings and landscape of the Center.
3. To reduce and manage traffic congestion in the Center.
4. To maintain the strength of the Historic District Commission.
5. To guide limited business activity in the Center.
6. To protect the government and other institutional structures and uses in the Center. Keep public buildings either within town control or governed by restrictions that meet town objectives.

Main Street Objectives

7. To protect the businesses currently existing.
8. To define the uses, size and areas for any future uses through careful zoning.
9. To protect the residential areas along Main Street.
10. To protect the historic character of the Main Street area.
11. To maintain the current mix of businesses and residences.
12. To strengthen regulations to protect Main Street's character.
13. To review business zoned land currently in residential use.
14. To allow business development along Main Street only to the extent that it meets the other objectives of the area.

Objectives for Other Areas in Groton Center

15. To review the potential for new business districts off Main Street only within strict controls and guidelines.
16. To develop a comprehensive zoning and land use plan for any areas under consideration for rezoning to business use.
17. To balance business needs with residential needs in any rezoning efforts.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Protective Strategy

Carry out planned intersection changes to manage traffic in the Center and restore its pedestrian character. Maintain current zoning requirements on new construction and conversions. Expand the historic district to the rear lot lines of the properties currently within the district. Keep all government services in the Center.

2. Moderate Change. Moderate Cost Strategy

Consider rezoning a new area to residential and business use. Reconstruct and redesign a road along the railroad tracks for internal traffic movement. Expand the historic district to the rear lot lines of properties currently within the district. Allow conversions

²⁰ Groton Center - The area north from Old Ayer Road to Champney Street and from the railroad tracks east to Gibbet Hill.

by special permit for more units with incentives for affordability. Keep public functions in the Town Hall, Prescott School and Library buildings. Do not construct the bypass. Carry out planned intersection improvements, increase traffic officer involvement in traffic control and emphasize restoring pedestrian character to area.

3. Moderate Change. High Cost Strategy

This alternative is the same as #2, but it would include the added cost of moving ahead on the bypass.

ACTIONS

- GC1. Adopt Plan Alternative #2. Make changes to the Center that will clearly benefit the long term health of the area and assist in lessening traffic congestion.
- GC2. Do not pursue the bypass. Instead, work to manage future traffic flows and plan around periodic congestion. Monitor the way that intersection improvements in the Center affect the traffic problems.
- GC3. Work regionally to consider alternative means of managing commuter traffic flows. Consideration could be given to reinvigorating the I-190 proposal or for finding a route for a limited access parkway through the region.
- GC4. Consider zoning for a new business district off Main Street, but only within a clear plan of future land use and within strict controls and guidelines.
- GC5. Maintain the current Town Meeting concept plan requirement for rezoning along Main Street.
- GC6. Expand the historic district to the back lot boundaries of the properties currently within the district.
- GC7. Reconstruct a road running along the railroad tracks to provide additional access to the Main Street area and relieve congestion on Main Street.
- GC8. Explore new land use patterns, regulations and public uses for the area west of Main Street. Possibilities include the following:
 - a. Work to relocate the light industrial uses along Station Avenue and the railroad tracks to new locations. Provide town financial support for cleanup in exchange for reduced purchase price on properties. Redevelop into an area for housing for elders and businesses.
 - b. Create a common within the interior lot between Broadmeadow and Station Avenue. Incorporate a parking area. Encourage Main Street businesses to invest in rear facade improvements to give them double exposure along Main Street and along the interior Groton Common area.

- GC9. Consider new zoning for the Center, specifically tailored for the area. Specify the kinds of uses, sizes of buildings and types of site guidelines to be required.
- GC10. Examine allowing internal conversion to more units based on special permits with incentives for affordability. Work with the HDC to adopt architectural guidelines for such work.
- GC11. Restore the Town Hall, Prescott School and Legion Hall.
- GC12. Ensure the long term affordability and public control of any public initiated affordable housing within the Center.
- GC13. Enhance the pedestrian character of the Center. Possible actions include reconstructing sidewalks, adding more landscape amenities and expanding the sidewalk system.
- GC14. Provide adequate public parking in the Center.
- GC15. Encourage placement of more structures within the National Historic Register.²¹

²¹ National Historic Register - The federal designation for sites and structures that are of important historic significance. Designation provides certain tax benefits and certain limitations on exterior changes to the building.

Business Directions

GOAL

To encourage moderate business activity, but only in a manner that fits within the natural and historic landscape of Groton and in a manner that assures the public health and safety of Groton residents.

OBJECTIVES

1. To support existing commercial and industrial businesses.
2. To manage Groton Center's business planning in a manner that allows Main Street to function as a through route for commuter traffic, provides protection for existing businesses, provides opportunities for a limited amount of business growth and protects the Center's historic character.
3. To prevent the Center from deteriorating due to business migration to other parts of town.
4. To encourage small retail and service businesses that will meet the needs of Groton residents and continue the town's tradition of having businesses that are "locally grown".
5. To encourage businesses that will fit within and enhance the community's small town character.
6. To explore means to provide some land for large business uses that provides good access to highways, is buffered from adjacent incompatible uses, protects the environment and creates local jobs.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Maintain Current Business Districts and Regulations
 - General Zoning: Work with the current amount of business zoned land. Examine business districts that have not been used for business activity.
 - Groton Center: Keep business expansion limited.
 - Route 119: Allow development only within the current clusters of business land: The Ranch, the Center, across from the golf course and at the Four Corners.
 - West Groton: Allow area to naturally evolve within current zoning.
 - Outlying Areas: Allow business use only by concept plan on a case by case basis.
2. Make Limited Changes to Current Districts and Regulations
 - **General Zoning: Consider new zoning regulations to provide clearer, better defined standards (i.e. parking, setbacks, landscaping) for different areas of town such as Route 119 versus West Groton. Continue concept plan rezoning process for new business areas. Maintain rights, but design site planning standards to fit different areas of town.**
 - **Groton Center: Consider separate regulations for areas on Main Street and those off Main Street. Consider rezoning land off Main Street.**

- **Route 119: Create separate regulations. Designate buffer areas between commercial areas. Maintain rights, but design site planning standards to fit the area.**
 - **West Groton: Create separate regulations for the village-**
 - **Maintain rights, but design site planning standards to fit the area.**
 - **Outlying Areas: Allow business only by concept plan process.**
3. Make More Extensive Changes to Current Districts and Regulations
- **General Zoning: Create new zoning districts to set aside land for future large scale business uses.**
 - **Groton Center: Same as #2. Consider separate regulations for areas on Main Street and those off Main Street. Consider rezoning land off Main Street.**
 - **Route 119: Create separate regulations. Allow business developments on sites abutting Route 119 where businesses would be deeply setback from the highway and all businesses would be grouped together and served by a common curbcut. Designate buffer areas between commercial areas where business development shall not occur.**
 - **West Groton: Create separate regulations. Expand the business area in limited manner.**
 - **Outlying Areas: Identify undeveloped areas suitable for future business use. Zoned areas to business or manufacturing district.**

ACTIONS

- B1. Adopt Plan Alternative #2.
- B2. Adopt specific business regulations that inherently address the following criteria:
- Size of building and site needed
 - Length of stay for typical customer
 - Pedestrian vs auto oriented
 - Frequency of use
 - Future expansion potential
 - Compatibility with uses associated with villages versus outlying commercial areas
 - Site design criteria such as signs, lighting, building coverage, parking location, parking requirements and links to historic district requirements.
- B3. Explore feasibility of using clear site design and intensity standards to allow expansion of existing businesses in the Center under a site plan review, not special permit or rezoning.
- B4. Consider potential for additional business land in the Center.
- B5. Encourage efficient use of remaining B1 land in West Groton.
- B6. Consider zoning additional land for commercial use adjacent to the B1 district on North Main Street.

- B7. Evaluate town owned land to determine feasibility of using limited areas for business use.
- B8. Review Residential-Business, MI and BI district regulations for compliance with plan's objectives.
- B9. Review home occupation bylaw for compliance with plan's objectives.

SERVICES & FACILITIES DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To manage government services in a manner that provides high quality and efficient services while also maintaining the small town character that defines the community.

OBJECTIVES

1. To contain the sewer system to its current boundaries.
2. To plan to gradually provide water service to all areas of town that are practically accessible to such a future system.
3. To prepare a long term road plan that provides safe public ways while also balancing the protection of town character.
4. To strengthen the quality of education in the school system.
5. To keep within the Center town offices and day to day services for residents. To locate as most appropriate emergency services so as to provide the most reliable and efficient emergency services. .
6. To encourage the continuation of a strong capital planning process in Groton.
7. To provide adequate emergency services throughout town.
8. To continue to support and maintain the town's investment in services and facilities that strengthen local arts, cultural resources and recreational services.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Alternative Wastewater Plans

Given the infeasibility of sewerage the entire town and the financial, management and density implications of supporting small wastewater treatment plants throughout town, these two options are ruled out as potential alternatives. This leaves the following alternative plans, both of which would forward town planning goals of protecting town character, the environment and the public safety.

1. Long Term Reliance on Septic Systems. Contain Sewer System and Set in Place Regulations that Ensure that Small Wastewater Treatment Plants result in No Net Density Increase
This plan would involve a clear policy of encouraging the use of on-site septic systems in all areas outside of the Center. This would prevent the negative impacts of having to provide sewer service to all areas lying between the Center and a problem area. Mandatory pumping should be considered in problem areas. In areas such as West Groton or Lost Lake, alternative waste disposal

approaches should turn first to community septic systems over treatment facilities. This approach uses the lowest cost, lowest technology means to treat wastewater. Keeping the 2 acre lot size is critical to this plan. Use of small wastewater treatment plants would only be used as a means to produce higher quality effluent and better site design. Strict regulations would be needed to prevent higher densities than would have been possible with on-site systems.

2. **Alternative #1 with the Addition of Requirements that Affordable Housing and or Open Space Protection be a Condition of Permits for Small Wastewater Treatment Plants**

This plan is based on Alternative #1, but it would place conditions on the use of treatment facilities so that the town benefited from their use through the provision of affordable housing or the protection of open space. Treatment plants become a tool for achieving other objectives under this scenario.

Wastewater Actions:

WW1. Adopt Alternative Plan #2.

WW2. Contain the sewers to the current sewer system area. Explore means to ensure this action is implemented. See recommendations #3 and #4.

WW3. Revise the sewer bylaw to make extensions dependent on capacity. Link the sewer system boundary definition to a zoning district definition.

WW4. Define new zoning districts in the Center that match the current sewer district. A separate district should be used to define the recent sewer system extension to the Partridgeberry Woods and Farmers Row subdivisions. Link these zoning districts to the town bylaw defining the boundaries of the sewer system.

WW5. Consider adopting a Small Wastewater Treatment Facility bylaw that governs the review process and standards for such facilities.

WW6. Consider adopting a zoning provision that defines linkage criteria for the use of small wastewater treatment plants.

WW7. Continue to monitor septic system pollution throughout the town.

WW8. In the case of development in the Forge Village Road and Four Corners areas and the use of a small wastewater treatment facility, leave the option open for eventual hookup to the Lost Lake area.

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Alternative Water Plans

To achieve the town's goal of providing high quality water service, the following alternatives are possible:

1. No Growth in Water System. Future Reliance on Private Wells
This approach may limit the development of larger projects. It is unclear the degree to which the Water Department is committed to extensions. Completion of the Water Department Master Plan will be critical to making this policy decision.
2. Moderate Expansion of Water Systems
Under this scenario, the water system would be expanded beyond the current limits, but not to the entire town. Expansion would be based on ease of extension, target areas for development (if defined) and areas of potential groundwater pollution. As discussed above, it appears that water system service will either stay at current levels or reach most of the town. Until the Water Department Master Plan is complete, it will be unclear which areas are most likely to receive water. An orderly plan for expansion will be important in either case.
3. Water Service to the Entire Town
This option appears quite likely. Water as a limiting factor to development will no longer play such a role. (Its role has been modest to date, in any case.) A critical element will be an orderly and scheduled plan for system extension.

Water Actions

- W1. Adopt Alternative Plan #3
- W2. Require pipe sizing and dry piping in accordance with the size specifications of the Water Department Master Plan.
- W3. Use the buildout projections of the Comprehensive Plan to estimate potential demand on the West Groton Water Supply District.
- W4. Continue strong enforcement of the Groundwater Protection Bylaw.
- W5. Continue Groton Water Department system improvements to provide adequate fire flows and storage capacity for all areas of the current system.
- W6. Examine the pros and cons of a long term plan to connect the West Groton Water Supply District and the Groton Water Department.

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FACILITIES AND STRUCTURES

Alternative Facility Plans

1. Maintain a Core of Government Services in the Center. Distribute Emergency, Equipment-Based and Neighborhood Oriented Services to Areas of Most Efficient Location Throughout Town.
This plan would be the continuation of recent plans regarding the Highway Department and Public Safety Building. It would also support the movement of Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) equipment to an area outside the Center. An elementary school in the east would also make sense within this plan, as would a meeting space in Lost Lake. Town Hall, GELD business offices, the library, the Post Office and School Administration offices should stay within the Center under this plan. Elderly housing should stay in the Center. Neighborhood services such as the Tarbell School and Squannacook Hall should remain in their current locations.

2. Move Toward New Construction in all Public Building Improvement Plans. Focus on Distributing Government Services Throughout Town with an Eye Toward Efficiency and without a Policy of Centralizing or Grouping Services.
Under this scenario the Town Hall would be built anew outside of Town. The Post Office would shift to its new site on Route 119. School administration would move to the High School. The old Town Hall and Prescott School would be considered for non-government residential or business use. The Lost Lake meeting facility could be combined with a new school built in that part of town. No public monies would be spent to maintain outdated buildings such as the Tarbell School.

Facility Actions

- F1. Adopt Alternative #1.

- F2. Maintain and restore the Town Hall building.

- F3. Consider the acquisition of properties on Station A venue for future or temporary office space or elderly housing.

- F4. In order to open land for possible reuse, work with Groton Electric Light Department to find a site for its equipment and repair facilities outside of the Center. Keep the office in the Center.

- F5. Plan for a new school in the SanVeI/Forge Village area. Examine the need for a fire facility in the area.

- F6. Move ahead with a neighborhood meeting space and an addition to the Lost Lake Fire Station in order to provide meeting space for the fire department, other town departments and Lost Lake residents. Schedule regular town board meetings in this location.

F7. Maintain the Tarbell School and keep the building in public use, preferably as an elementary school.

F8. Maintain the Post Office in West Groton.

F9. Work with the Fire Department as its needs change to locate the station in an efficient site, whether in or outside of the Center.

F10. Support improvements to the transportation system for elders.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To preserve and protect the qualities of Groton's character that are based on structures, landscapes and natural resources that connect Groton with its past, and because of that past, represent the forces that shaped what Groton is today.

OBJECTIVES

1. To protect the historic resources of the Groton Center and Farmers Row historic districts.
2. To protect the historic resources of the entire town.
3. To balance the protection of these resources with other planning objectives such as a more active town center, reduced traffic impacts and open space preservation.
4. To maintain a strong Historic District Commission.
5. To strengthen the ties between historic district protection and zoning.
6. To integrate historic preservation concepts within landscape and development planning throughout town.
7. To recognize the importance that open space plays in the historic character of the town and to work to protect those open areas.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Current Plan
Focus work within the current historic districts augmented by public purchase of key lands outside the districts.
2. Expanded Regulation with focused purchases
Consider a local historic district for West Groton, deepen the Center and Farmers Row historic districts and integrate landscape preservation within overall town planning efforts. Make focused purchases of key lands outside the districts.

ACTIONS

- HP1. Adopt Plan Alternative #2, Expanded Regulation with Focused Public Purchases
- HP2. Expand the Groton Center historic district to the backs of the lot lines, as recommended in the Boston University study.²²

²² Boston University Preservation Studies Program. 1989. *Historic Preservation in Groton: A Guide to Planning*. Prepared for the Groton Historic Districts Commission and the Groton Planning Board.

- HP3. Expand the Farmers Row historic district to the backs of the lot lines, as recommended in the Boston University study.
- HP4. Consider other areas near the current districts for inclusion within the historic district.
- HP5. Consider a scenic overlay zoning district for the areas of Groton designated as noteworthy and distinctive by the state Department of Environmental Management.²³
- HP6. Consider establishing a local historic district for West Groton, to be governed by a West Groton Historic District Commission.
- HP7. Develop a site design standards manual that clarifies the types of site design desired by the community in the various parts of the town. This manual should provide examples of conceptual designs that protect the key resources of each area in the town.
- HP8. Adopt a demolition bylaw to provide the town with the time to intervene in demolition proceedings of historically significant buildings.
- HP9. Develop road improvement standards that can be applied to town roads over the next decade during the course of the town's roadway improvement efforts. Along with street safety, these standards should include considerations of roadside landscape protection and scaling of the street to expected development levels.
- HP10. Complete and update the historic district inventory.
- HP11. Expand the inventory to include more properties in the National Register of Historic Places.
- HP12. Include a provision in subdivision review and site plan review that requires consideration of archeological resources for larger projects.
- HP13. Review the impacts on the historic district of the "avoidance of uniformity" and "promotion of harmonious development" zoning provisions.
- HP14. Consider the creation of a program to provide information about preservation easements²⁴, as recommended by the Boston University Study.
- HP15. Review the existing Historic District Commission charter.

²³ See Statewide Landscape Inventory by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management.

²⁴ Preservation Easement - A donated or purchased restriction recorded in a deed that protects the property from structural alterations that would destroy the historic qualities of the property.

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To provide Groton residents with safe, convenient transportation routes while protecting the small town character of the community and the character of the neighborhoods.

OBJECTIVES

1. To initiate regional efforts to decrease traffic congestion.
2. To make local efforts to decrease traffic congestion and improve traffic safety.
3. To decrease commuter traffic flows along side roads and through neighborhoods.
4. To provide Groton residents with easy access to the villages.
5. When considering alternative traffic routes, maintain adequate traffic flows through business areas so as to support local businesses.
6. To leave open options for future mass transit.
7. To expand and connect a trail and pathway system in town.
8. To ensure adequate emergency access throughout the town.
9. To prepare and implement a long term road improvement plan that improves road safety while also working to protect neighborhood character and environmental quality.
10. To provide street patterns that allow Groton residents the ability to avoid the congestion in the Center.
11. To plan for managing regional traffic on the existing Route 119 rather than a bypass.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Current Plan
Protect existing road systems and neighborhoods by making minimal roadway improvements, reducing the number of through streets in future developments and by routing most traffic through the Center.
2. **Improve Overall Roadway System. Do Not Direct Commuter Traffic Along Side Roadways**
Make steady improvements throughout town. Balance improvements with neighborhood protection. Direct most traffic through the Center. Make through street connections to ensure emergency access.
3. Develop New Road System
Develop a new system of roadways to handle future traffic flow by planning for a bypass to the Center, planning for a bypass to West Groton and planning for new east-west streets between Longley and Route 40, and Route 40 and Route 119.

ACTIONS

- T1. Adopt Alternative Plan #2, Improve Overall Roadway System, Do Not Direct Commuter Traffic Along Side Roadways.
- T2. Do not plan for or construct a bypass around Groton Center. The bypass should not be considered for the following reasons:
- a. Analysis indicates that there are no favorable routes to the east of Route 119.
 - b. A bypass route to the west of Route 119 will not alleviate the significant amounts of traffic moving from the Center to the east or north.
 - c. There are wetlands along or in the path of every potential route.
 - d. Any bypass will involve the purchase of many acres of land and the crossing of many properties.
 - e. The bypass will have a negative impact on the neighborhoods and intersecting streets surrounding the Center.
 - f. Improvements in Groton Center traffic management can assist in improving congestion during commuter hours.
 - g. Energy and attention should be turned to seeking regional solutions to this problem.
- T3. Develop and implement a long term roadway improvement plan for the entire town that improves safety throughout Groton.
- T4. Make improvements to Groton Center intersections, as recommended by the Montachusets Regional Planning Commission.
- T5. Use traffic police officers to manage commuting hour traffic flows. Place a priority on easing the impacts of commuter flow on the residents and businesses of Groton Center.
- T6. Improve traffic safety and provide greater pedestrian access to roadways by widening shoulders where possible.
- T7. Reconstruct a road along the railroad tracks in the Center to provide alternative access to the Center for residents.
- T8. Consider areas for parking and rail station use in West Groton.
- T9. Encourage park and ride options.
- T10. In conjunction with the Open Space and Recreation Direction of the Plan, work toward linking a comprehensive network of trails through the town.
- T11. Work toward developing bikepath links with the state bikepath.
- T12. Contact adjoining towns and support regional traffic solutions. Consider the creation of a compact with adjoining towns to seek such solutions.
- T13. Expand and provide information about transportation options for elders.

- T14. Work with the Highway Department and Conservation Commission to define standards or procedures for evaluating the wetlands impacts of correcting deteriorating and unsafe roads.
- T15. Enhance pedestrian access throughout Groton Center.
- T16. Develop a planned system of sidewalks along public ways.
- T17. Mark trails and paths.
- T18. Incorporate consideration of wildlife movement patterns when considering trails and street improvements.

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AGRICULTURE DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To maintain the working farmlands and forests of today and to increase the use of land for agriculture, horticulture and forestry in the future.

OBJECTIVES

1. To provide incentives for people to use their land for agriculture²⁵.
2. To provide means for property owners to receive a return on their farmland and forestry land investments while still protecting as much of the land as possible.
3. To avoid placing barriers in the way of the activities associated with agriculture.
4. To encourage residents to support local fanning efforts.
5. To increase the general awareness of the importance of agriculture to Groton.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. No Town Activity in Relation to Protecting Farmlands
This option involves no action or effort on the part of the town to protect agriculture. Instead it relies on the continued profitable activities of local farmers to keep land in production.
2. Non-financial Involvement on the part of the town in Protecting Farmlands:
This option includes zoning policies to provide flexibility to farmers to develop lands gradually and sensitively. Options for donating land or working with non-profit groups such as the New England Forestry Foundation will also be critical. It also includes programs to educate the general public about agriculture's importance. Town policies should all be consistent about not placing inappropriate barriers in the way of farmers attempting to stay in business.
3. Financial and Non-financial Involvement on the Part of the Town:
Along with the strategies presented in #2, this option would also involve some expenditure of town funds to protect farmlands. A real estate transfer tax or annual allocation from the general fund are both potential sources of revenue. Town monies

²⁵ Agriculture - For the purposes of this plan, this term shall include all forms of plant and animal production traditionally considered part of farming and forestry.

would be used to purchase land or restrictions on land. This would result in a monetary return for the farmer and the long term protection of farmland for the future of the town.

ACTIONS

- A1. Adopt Alternative #3.
- A2. Continue supporting farmers' applications to the state's Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program. Lobby to increase funding to that program.
- A3. Explore zoning strategies that allow for grouping of homes and long term protection of open space. One possibility is the regulation of minifarms.²⁶
- A4. Adopt a real estate transfer tax to protect open land and support affordable housing as voted by the 1987 Town Meeting.
- AS. Support the efforts of non-profit organization's to assist farmers to design limited developments that provide a financial return to the farmer while preserving at least some of the farmland for future agricultural use.
- A6. Explore zoning techniques to provide existing farms with protection from gradual residential encroachment and the associated nuisances of nearby homes.
- A7. Consider establishing a town program to purchase the development rights of key farmlands, thus providing a current return to the farmer, manageable payments for the town and long term protection of farmland for the future.
- A8. Explore means to make the transfer of development rights and growth rate control bylaw work more effectively to protect farmland.

²⁶ Minifarms - This is a development pattern wherein 3-4 units would be allowed in one large structure resembling a farmhouse and the remaining open land would be placed in permanent development restriction. A minimum of 10-15 acres would be required. Restrictions would be necessary to prevent densities that would not have occurred under normal development. This encourages the small scale use of farmland while providing the owner with rental income from the 2-3 apartments in the main structure.

LAND USE ADMINISTRATION DIRECTIONS

GOAL

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the town's volunteer and professional land use administration process.

OBJECTIVES

1. Increase communication between boards that address similar or identical projects.
2. Decrease duplication of reviews and decisions.
3. Increase communication between professional departments and land use boards and departments.
4. Clarify policies that affect more than one board.
5. Work toward systems that discourage burnout of volunteers and encourage participation of citizens in the process.

ALTERNATIVE PLANS

1. Current Plan
 - Maintain current land use structure
2. **Expanded Communication and Professional Support Alternative**
 - **Increase communication between boards and departments.**

ACTIONS

LUA1. Adopt Alternative #2.

LUA2. Continually implement, monitor and update the Comprehensive Plan.

LUA3. Create and hold an All-Boards Meeting every month wherein all department heads and representatives from land use boards attend and discuss previously defined items of common concern. Hold at 5:30 or 6PM to allow participation of town employees and volunteers. Meeting chair should rotate based upon an agreed schedule. One office should coordinate notices and agenda preparation.

LUA4. Create and involve in the development process a Development Review Committee made up of town professionals. This group would review all proposals and provide coordinated comments for the Planning Board on site specific concerns. This group should decrease the amount of detailed review and speculation on the part of the Planning Board and it should increase the speed of plan review.

LUA5. Adopt an informal dispute resolution method for inter-board or department conflicts. Bring in an outside mediator at a predefined fee to work with both sides to clarify disagreements and find common ground. (A neutral town citizen could also play this role.) The mediator would not judge who is right or wrong, just work to help the two sides settle their differences. Currently, there is no method for mending fences within the town's administrative structure.

LUA6. Adopt flexibility on the part of the various related boards to meet on the same evening and hold joint hearings for projects with overlapping concerns. The meeting could officially be divided into two hearings to provide for administrative clarity.