

Groton 2020 Update

Planning Directions



Smith Social Pavilion

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Plan Overview:

**A Summary of the Revised Comprehensive Plan for Groton, Massachusetts
Filed with the Town Clerk on April 12, 2002**

Bonnie Biocchi, Town Clerk

Date

Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Introduction.....	5
Plan Preparation Method.....	6
How Does This Plan Compare With Past Plans?.....	7
Planning Directions—The Natural Environment	10
Goal.....	10
Objectives.....	10
Action Plan.....	11
Action Items	11
Achievements, 1990-2001	14
Planning Directions—Open Space and Recreation	15
Goal.....	15
Objectives.....	15
Action Plan.....	16
Action Items	16
Achievements, 1990-2001	18
Planning Directions—Agriculture	19
Goal.....	19
Objectives.....	19
Action Plan.....	20
Action Items	20
Achievements, 1990-2001	21
Planning Directions—Lost Lake.....	22
Goals	22
Objectives.....	22
Action Plan.....	23
Action Items	23
Achievements, 1990-2001	24
Planning Directions—West Groton.....	25
Goal.....	25
Objectives.....	25
Action Plan.....	26
Action Items	26
Achievements, 1990-2001	27
Planning Directions—Groton Center.....	28
Goal.....	28
Objectives.....	28
Action Plan.....	29
Action Items	29
Achievements, 1990-2001	30
Planning Directions—Housing	32
Goal.....	32
Objectives.....	32
Action Plan.....	33
Action Items	33
Achievements, 1990-2001	35

Planning Directions—Business Development	36
Goal.....	36
Objectives.....	36
Action Plan.....	36
Action Items	37
Achievements, 1990-2001	38
Planning Directions—Town Services and Facilities	39
Goal.....	39
Objectives.....	39
Action Plan.....	40
Action Items	41
Achievements, 1990-2001	43
Planning Directions—Historic Preservation.....	45
Goal.....	45
Objectives.....	45
Action Plan.....	45
Action Items	45
Achievements, 1990-2001	46
Planning Directions—Traffic and Transportation	48
Goal.....	48
Objectives.....	48
Action Plan.....	49
Action Items	49
Achievements, 1990-2001	50
Planning Directions—Land Use Administration.....	51
Goal.....	51
Objectives.....	51
Action Plan.....	51
Action Items	51
Achievements, 1990-2001	51

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The Board thanks Planning Board member Carolyn Perkins for taking the beautiful photographs used in the plan. The Board acknowledges the extraordinary contribution of the Town's Planning Administrator, Michelle Collette, without whose tireless dedication, encyclopedic knowledge, and firm guidance this plan could not have been completed.

The Groton Planning Board

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Introduction

The Groton Planning Board requested funding at the 1999 Annual Town Meeting “for consultation and other expenses arising out of the preparation of a revised comprehensive master plan...” The Town Meeting approved the funding, and the Planning Board advertised a Request for Proposals. The Board interviewed seven consultants and selected Kenneth M. Kreutziger, FAICP, as the lead consultant. Mr. Kreutziger’s consulting team included Ralph Willmer and Ezra Glenn of McGregor Associates, and John Schmid, P.E. of Judith Nitsch Engineering, Inc.

At the broadest level, Groton 2020 Update, describes a future for the town where 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 50 years. The town's overall planning goals describe that future in clear terms.

1990 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.

1990 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 goal and set of objectives have not changed substantially since the Groton 2020 plan was adopted in 1990. This update of the plan will examine how the Town has achieved its goals objectives since 1990, how some goals of objectives may have to be changed, and what future action items are needed. In addition, the action items will be assigned to the department or departments that have jurisdiction for implementation.

Each element of the 1990 plan was re-examined: 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.

The action items 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? Are changes to the general by-laws and other regulations needed? The final phase of the Comprehensive Plan Update is the implementation plan. The Planning Board has begun part of the implementation with the amendments to Site Plan Review and other zoning amendments adopted at the 2001 Annual Town Meeting. The Planning Board and other departments will continue working on the implementation phase of the plan on an ongoing basis.

Plan Preparation Method

The Board provided the consultants with copies of all previous studies and planning documents to research during the initial phase of the plan. At the initial public forum held on November 10, 1999, four citizen volunteer committees were organized to research and prepare recommendations on various aspects of the plan including Growth Management, Economic Development, Infrastructure, Natural Resource Protection and Recreation. The Committees presented their reports to the Planning Board in February 2000.

In August 2000, the Board established a fifth Committee to prioritize lands for acquisition by the Town for open space protection and other municipal uses. The Committee's final report was presented in October 2001.

The Planning Board sponsored public forums on the following topics:

November 10, 1999	Orientation at the Country Club
March 16, 2000	Interim Reports on Growth Management, Economic Development, Infrastructure and Natural Resource Protection and Recreation
May 18, 2000	Open Space, Natural Resources & Growth Management
May 25-26, 2000	Randall Arendt "Growing Green" presentations, co-sponsored by the Nashua River Watershed Association
June 22, 2000	Environmental Protection, Traffic & Transportation
July 20, 2000	Housing & Historic Preservation
August 17, 2000	Town Services & Infrastructure
October 26, 2000	Lost Lake Area
February 8, 2001	Master Plan Update
October 17, 2001	Land Acquisition Committee Report
January 30, 2002	Public Hearing on Comprehensive Master Plan
February 28, 2002	Public Hearing on Comprehensive Master Plan
March 28, 2002	Public Hearing on Comprehensive Master Plan
April 2, 2002	Planning Board voted unanimously to adopt the plan
April 29, 2002	Annual Town Meeting

How Does This Plan Compare With Past Plans?

Groton has a long history of planning: the first Planning Board was elected in 1946, the first Subdivision Regulations were adopted in 1950, zoning was adopted in 1956, 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: Establish zoning districts, create historic district, construct Groton Center bypass, adopt conservancy 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 that 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 – 1990

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 of the 1990 plan are incorporated in the Groton 2020-Update below.

The Groton 2020 Update – 2002

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 appropriate expansion of the business base, and protect the villages.

Major Recommendations:

1. Maintain the town's overall average planning density of two acres per housing unit.
2. Encourage development of a variety of housing types to ensure availability of affordable housing for senior citizens, families, and individuals.
3. Take an active stance toward protecting open lands and natural resources through cooperative efforts among landowners, not-for-profit land organizations, the Town, and the Commonwealth.
4. Protect environmentally sensitive areas, open lands, endangered species habitat, hilltops and significant views through special zoning or through purchases of easements and land.
5. Develop strong regulations that guide the development process in order to protect the character of the town.
6. Link the town's conservation and open space holdings with trails and additional land acquisitions.
7. Maintain an appropriate balance of open space and recreational fields in residential areas.
8. Support and provide incentives for the continuation of farming in Groton.
9. Protect Groton Center's character by maintaining controls on density and new construction.
10. 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.
11. Do not build the Groton Center bypass proposed in 1963, instead direct and manage traffic along Route 119.
12. To the degree possible, protect neighborhoods from commuter traffic.
13. Prepare a town-wide road, bike path and sidewalk improvement plan that improves vehicular and pedestrian safety while protecting the town's scenic character and environment.

14. Expand the Groton Sewer District only to provide sewer service to existing residences experiencing wastewater problems. Examine alternative wastewater treatment technologies.
15. Gradually provide water service to all areas of town in accordance with the Groton Water Department and West Groton Water Supply District's master plans.
16. Maintain an appropriate balance of business and manufacturing zoning to residential and agricultural zoning.
17. Do not allow the commercial development along Route 119 other than on land currently zoned B-1.
18. Strengthen the protection of historic resources through cooperative efforts with the Historic Districts Commission, Historical Commission, Historical Society, and Massachusetts Historical Commission.
19. Continue to fund town action to alleviate the problem of abandoned structures.
20. Continue to examine planning and development review processes that increase communication and cooperation between boards and committees.
21. Keep most government services within Groton Center. Maintain Town control over public buildings.
22. Link the Comprehensive Plan to town by-laws, regulations, and policies. Use the Plan to clarify the development review process by referencing the Plan's objectives in the land-use decisions.
23. To maintain and enhance areas for recreation.
24. Examine the appropriateness of current zoning and other regulatory strategies to meet the Plan's goals and objectives.

State statute, MGL Chapter 41, §81-D, authorizes the Planning Board to prepare and adopt the Comprehensive or Master Plan by a majority vote of the Planning Board. On April 2, 2002, the Planning Board voted unanimously to adopt the revisions to the Comprehensive Plan and filed the plan with the Town Clerk on April 12, 2002. In addition to fulfilling the statutory requirement, the Planning Board presented the Comprehensive Plan at the 2002 Annual Town Meeting.

Planning Directions—The Natural Environment

Goal

The diverse natural environment of this region plays an integral part of defining Groton's character. Rivers, lakes and wetlands along with geological features such as drumlins and eskers provide ideal habitats for a great number of animal and plant species. Development should be planned in such a way as not to be disruptive to special environmental features and should contribute to the preservation of Groton's natural resources.



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Objectives

- To strengthen efforts to protect the fundamental parts of a healthy environment: air, water, rare and endangered species and their habitat, plant life, wildlife, soil and landscape.
- To continue the rehabilitation and protection of the Nashua River.
- To continue the protection of the Squannacook River.
- To continue town efforts to protect all public water supplies.
- To work to protect the water supplies of private well owners.
- To protect all wetlands, streams and ponds.
- To protect agricultural lands.
- To protect important geological features such as drumlins and eskers.
- To strengthen the town's enforcement efforts.

- To evaluate baseline levels of environmental quality in order to understand long-term environmental trends.
- To move toward long-range waste water solutions that will protect Groton's environment and recharge groundwater.

Action Plan

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. Appropriate funds each year for environmental protection. Steadily protect or purchase lands around water bodies and protect specific upland areas from development.

Action Items

Groundwater

1. Continue the public well development program in order to bring new wells on line to keep up with existing demands and provide for future water supply needs.
2. Work with the state to examine options for monitoring all known and future hazardous waste and materials areas so as to prevent groundwater pollution. Continue to support the Conductorlab Oversight Committee as an active participant in the Public Involvement Plan established by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for the Conductorlab site.
3. Periodically review and amend the Water Resources Protection Districts by-law and map for consistency with DEP's Guidelines and Policies for Public Water Systems requirements.
4. Consider measures to protect private wells.
5. Review Board of Health procedures for preventing agricultural pollution.
6. Pursue programs to prevent pollution from hazardous household materials.
7. Examine the town's road salting policies and their impacts on wetlands and drinking water supplies.
8. Improve enforcement efforts of current and future groundwater protection mechanisms.

Rivers, Streams, Ponds, Wetlands

9. Strictly maintain and enforce the current Floodplain District Regulations, local Wetlands Protection Bylaw and state Wetlands Protection Act.
10. Continually monitor potential pollution sources and integrate this effort within ongoing planning.
11. Ensure compliance with state, federal and local water protection mechanisms.
12. Consider the creation of a position to monitor and enforce compliance with environmental laws and regulations, and to work with landowners to promote good environmental practices within the town.
13. Continue to implement the recommendations of the Diagnostic/Feasibility Study for the Management of Lost Lake/Knops Pond/Whitney Pond/Cow Pond Brook area. In particular, maintenance of the dam, control of weeds, reducing runoff of nutrients into the ponds and pollution prevention practices.
14. Encourage participation in cleanup and stewardship programs such as the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Adopt a Stream program.



Carmichael Swamp

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Special Wildlife and Vegetative Habitats

15. Work with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement to identify and protect vernal pools and upland habitat areas.

16. 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

Vistas and Scenic Resources

17. Consider proposing zoning amendments to protect drumlins, scenic hilltops and steep slopes by guiding development that is proposed above specific elevations or on land with steep slopes. Development should be located below the key elevation level or buffered from extensive public view by natural vegetation or landforms.
18. Consider proposing 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.



Angus Hill

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Miscellaneous Actions

19. 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.
20. Strengthen efforts to identify and monitor underground tanks and other forms of hazardous material storage.

21. Continue to implement and enforce the erosion and sedimentation bylaw to control soil loss, to prevent hillside slumping, and to encourage sound stormwater management practices.
22. Develop an overall environmental quality measurement system that will rate the town's position and progress toward continually improved environmental quality.
23. Develop and implement sound lighting standards to prevent glare on abutting properties and public ways and to enhance the view of the night sky.
24. Support the applications to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for the designations of the Squannassit and Petapawag areas as Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).

Achievements, 1990-2001

- Soil Erosion and Control Bylaw, adopted in 1998, established new rules and regulations for slope stabilization procedures.
- State adoption of the Rivers Protection Act established a 200-foot buffer along rivers and perennial streams.
- Clean up of significant environmental hazards at Leatherboard Mill in West Groton.
- Approval at Town meeting for Hazardous Waste Collection day and money for construction of Paint Recycling Shed. These actions will keep hazardous waste out of the waste stream and help prevent illegal dumping of toxic materials.
- Personal Wireless Services Facility added to the Zoning Bylaw in 1998. This bylaw requires special permit approval from the Planning Board before a communication tower can be erected. Special permits shall be granted only if the proposed use will not have an adverse effect on either the town or the neighborhood based on the specified criteria, which includes impacts on the environment.
- Adoption of New Wetlands Bylaw in 2001. The intent of the new bylaw is to impose additional standards and procedures stricter than what previously existed. The revised version will protect the following: water bodies; vegetated wetlands not bordering water bodies; vernal pools; buffer zones; and resources areas defined by the Wetlands Protection Act.
- New requirements were added to Chapter 346 Subdivision of Land for the purpose of protecting the environment.

Planning Directions—Open Space and Recreation

Goal

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



Groton Place

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Objectives

- To maintain scenic vistas throughout the Town including the cultural landscapes of West Groton, the Center, Lost Lake and the overall rural landscape.
- To preserve open lands that define the existing villages.
- To provide public open space and facilities for active recreation and organized programs.
- To acquire lands through purchase, conservation restriction or other development restrictions to enhance the town's current holdings.
- To link current and future public land holdings with trails and additional holdings.
- To strengthen communication and cooperation between landowners and conservation/recreation organizations.
- To provide public recreation lands and amenities that support Groton's goal of bringing people closer to the natural environment.

- To protect lands and support private use of lands such that Groton's prime food producing areas are passed to future generations.
- To protect open land for its groundwater recharge value.
- To protect wildlife habitats and balance that protection with open space and recreation planning.
- To identify and prioritize parcels critical for future acquisition.

Action Plan

Identify areas defined by their special resource qualities such as, scenic vistas, recreation, natural resources, agriculture, open space or Town need and prioritize for acquisition. The Town should prepare a long term financing plan. We should continue cooperation among town and non-town organizations such as the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, the New England Forestry Foundation and the Groton Conservation Trust. In addition the Town should maintain and improve current recreational lands and examine the purchase of additional lands in areas of the town that are underserved.



Lawrence Playground

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Action Items

Open Space Actions

1. 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. Maintain the budget item for the Conservation Fund. Appropriate funds at Town Meeting to this budget item.

2. Investigate adoption of the Community Preservation Act as a mechanism to acquire land and protect open space.
3. Provide townspeople with a mechanism to financially contribute monies to town conservation efforts above and beyond taxes.
4. Target special efforts to protect the additional critical recharge areas for the Town's water supplies. Acquire land identified for future public well sites.
5. Update the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan as needed.
6. Augment the protection of the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers by completing the greenways within 300 feet of the rivers via purchase or other development restriction techniques.
7. Maintain town-owned access ways and open lands.
8. Ensure appropriate and adequate public access to public recreation and open space resources.
9. Through consistent and strong zoning, maintain areas of open and residential land between commercial areas to prevent the creation of strips of commercial development.
10. Link existing public land holdings by purchasing or gaining restrictions on key linking parcels.
11. Hold regular meetings of the area's open space protection organizations to ensure coordination and communication.
12. Periodically send materials to all landowners in an effort to increase awareness of open space protection organizations and options.
13. Update and implement a trail plan so that existing trails can be linked together through gradual easements and acquisitions.
14. 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.
15. Develop incentives to encourage landowners to protect open land, views and habitats in the ensuing development.
16. Develop a set of roadside reconstruction standards to guide the protection of roadside landscapes during road reconstruction or improvements.
17. Integrate Broadmeadow Swamp and Half Moon Swamp as visual and natural resources within the Center's planning.
18. Protect open land by encouraging the use of transfers of development rights (TDR's). Review the transfer provisions in the zoning bylaw to provide stronger incentives for the use of TDR's.

Recreation Actions

19. Create recreation areas in neighborhoods throughout the town when determined to be in sufficient demand and when needed to augment existing facilities.
20. Continue the development of the recreation areas and playing fields adjacent to the highway department lot and in other neighborhoods in the Town.
21. Continue efforts to maintain and improve grounds and facilities at existing recreation areas.
22. Maintain cooperation among the Planning Board, the Park Commission and Recreation Department in the process of integrating recreation areas within new developments.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- The Conservation Commission completed the Open Space and Recreation Plan in 1998.
- The Town has more than 5000 acres of protected open space as a result of efforts by the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, the Groton Conservation Trust, and the New England Forestry Foundation. Land was protected by a variety of methods including purchase, landowner donations, conservation restrictions, and agricultural preservation restrictions. More than 1100 acres have been protected as a result of the special permit process. Close to 500 of the 1100 acres were protected by TDR's.
- The Town Forest trail race sponsored by the Trails Committee has become a successful annual event. The Groton Road Race continues to be very successful. Other privately sponsored recreational opportunities (horseback riding, canoeing, biking tours, etc.) seem to be doing well in Groton.
- The Groton Country Club, purchased in 1989, has provided additional recreational opportunities for the Townspeople and neighboring communities.
- Town meeting approved a Recreation Director and budget for the recreation department. Squannacook Hall is used for recreational and community programs.
- The Groton-Dunstable Regional School District, in conjunction with the Littleton School Department, established a community education program for children and adults.

Planning Directions—Agriculture

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

- To provide incentives for people to use their land for agriculture.
- 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.
- To avoid placing barriers in the way of the activities associated with agriculture.
- To increase awareness by Town residents of the importance of agriculture and encourage support of local farming efforts
- To facilitate a farmers' market to sell produce grown locally.



Whitney Acres, Boston Road

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Action Plan

Zoning should include strategies to provide farms with the flexibility to develop lands gradually and sensitively. Town policies should not place inappropriate barriers or expenses on farms attempting to stay in business. The Town should explore options for donating land and working with non-profit groups such as the New England Forestry Foundation. Town funds should be used to purchase land or restrictions on land in addition to other protections. The Community Preservation Act and annual allocations from the Town funds are both potential sources of revenue. Create programs to educate the general public about the importance of agriculture.

Action Items

1. Continue supporting farmers' applications to the state's Agriculture Preservation Restriction Program. Lobby to increase state funding to that program.
2. Explore zoning strategies that allow for clustering of homes and long-term protection of farmland.
3. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the Community Preservation Act and present information to voters at Town Meeting.
4. Support the efforts of non-profit organizations 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.
5. Explore zoning techniques to provide existing farms with protection from gradual residential encroachment and the associated nuisances of nearby homes.
6. 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.
7. Explore means to make the transfer of development rights and development rate control bylaw work more effectively to protect farmland.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- The Board of Selectmen and Planning Board sponsored several forums on farming and agriculture
- The Sign Committee adopted an agricultural sign program
- The Town sponsored an agricultural parade to celebrate Groton's agricultural heritage
- The Town and Department of Food and Agriculture purchased an Agriculture Preservation Restrictions on Fairview Orchards properties
- A new commercial farm stand was constructed at the intersection of Route 119 and Fitch's Bridge Road.



Hillbrook Orchard, Old Ayer Road

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Planning Directions—Lost Lake

Goals

Enhance and protect the qualities of Lost Lake that will continue to make it a neighborhood of people drawn together by the secluded and natural beauty of the area.



Duck Pond

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Objectives

- To increase cooperation and communication between the neighborhood and the Town.
- To support neighborhood initiatives including the removal or repair of abandoned cottages and other quality of life and safety issues.
- To continue with lake weed control and pollution control efforts.
- To prevent the potential wide scale failure of individual septic systems.
- To prepare and implement a long-term road improvement plan that improves road safety while also working to protect neighborhood character and environmental quality.
- To provide a playground and recreational areas in the neighborhood.
- To provide a community meeting space in the neighborhood.

- To maintain the residential character of the area while allowing for a very few businesses that can provide day-to-day goods and services.
- To protect the woods and natural resources of Lost Lake.
- To seek a mechanism to address the problem of significantly undersized lots such as adopting a special zoning district for the Lost Lake area.
- To develop and implement long-range waste water solutions that will protect Groton's environment and recharge groundwater.

Action Plan

Continue the Town's steps towards addressing environmental problems in the Lost Lake area. Explore methods for the Town to directly address lot size and cottage abandonment problems. Expand the current fire station. Improve the facility and add community meeting rooms. Support neighborhood organizations in their efforts to address community concerns (i.e. Mountain Lakes Club and Groton Lakes Association). Address recreation needs, including playground facilities and town-sponsored activities in the neighborhood. Prepare and implement a road plan that balances safety and protection of neighborhood character.

Action Items

1. Maintain efforts to manage Lost Lake, Knops Pond and the other water bodies in the watershed. These efforts should include the following:
 - Continue the weed control program;
 - Educate the public on the importance of septic system maintenance.
 - Prepare a road improvement plan to address public safety, water quality, and neighborhood character issues.
2. Work with the Housing Partnership to develop a local affordable housing program in order to protect affordability of homes in the area.
3. Explore the possibilities of working with the Mountain Lakes Club to utilize the Club's field for town recreation activities. Provide land and invest in facilities for a neighborhood playground.
4. Design and construct the addition to the fire station and community meeting room as approved at the 2001 Annual Town Meeting.

5. Investigate long-range wastewater solutions and build neighborhood support for a long-range approach.
6. Examine ways for town boards and departments to more directly address the area's problems of undersized lots and abandoned cottages including the adoption of a new zoning district.
7. Review and consider recommendations contained in past studies including the wastewater management plan and the Clean Lakes study.
8. Seek methods to improve present septic systems and avoid environmental and public health problems. Encourage innovative and alternative approaches to wastewater disposal.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- Money appropriated at the Spring Town Meeting of 2001 for plans to expand the Lost Lake Fire Station. Expansion should provide enough room to house all the Lost Lake fire trucks, one of which is currently sheltered in a private garage, and a community room.
- Town meeting has adopted several zoning amendments to address alteration and expansion on non-conforming lots of record.
- Money appropriated at Town Meeting Spring 2001 to begin a program to raze abandoned buildings, many of which are located in the Lost Lake area.

Planning Directions—West Groton

Goal

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

Objectives

- To improve traffic conditions in West Groton Square.
- To protect the historic community/social/economic functioning of the village, without rigidly preventing any physical change from occurring.
- To encourage a limited amount of retail/service activity in the village.
- To preserve the institutions and public buildings of West Groton (e.g. the Post Office, stores, churches, and Squannacook Hall.)
- To encourage the continuation of West Groton's currently active mills.
- To plan for the future use of land zoned for industry.
- To assertively protect West Groton's water supply.
- To maintain and strengthen the sidewalk system in West Groton.
- To develop and implement long-range wastewater solutions and build neighborhood support for a long-range approach.



West Groton Square

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Action Plan

The Town should leave zoning districts as they are today and continue to require a concept plan and Town meeting vote for zoning changes.

Action Items

1. Prepare and implement a road, bike path and sidewalk improvement plan that balances safety and protection of neighborhood character.
2. Keep the Tarbell School building in public use.
3. 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.
4. Maintain and expand the West Groton Water Supply District.
5. Encourage new business development in areas where there will be minimal impacts on traffic.
6. Examine the long-term pros and cons of combining the West Groton Water Supply District and the Groton Water Department.
7. Support the reclamation of the pond along the Squannacook River in West Groton square, and development of a park adjacent to the pond.
8. Investigate long-range wastewater solutions and build neighborhood support for a long-range approach.



West Groton Mill

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Achievements, 1990-2001

- The Town sold the Groton Leatherboard Mill to Capstone Properties for residential assisted living development. Units are expected to be open for sale during the fall of 2001.
- The Mill Pond is expected to be dredged this summer removing some of the eutrophication from the old paper mills upstream.
- Money has been appropriated for the purchase of the land adjacent to the Mill Pond currently used for parking. The land is expected to be converted to a park.
- New sidewalks have been constructed in the village area improving pedestrian safety.

Planning Directions—Groton Center

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

- To maintain the primarily residential physical appearance of the Center.
- To protect the buildings and historic landscape of the Center.
- To reduce and manage traffic congestion in the Center.
- To maintain the strength of the Historic District Commission.
- To support appropriate business activity in the Center.
- 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.
- To enhance the pedestrian nature of the Town Center.



Boutwell House

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Main Street Objectives

- To support existing businesses.
- To define the uses, size and areas for any future uses through careful zoning.
- To protect the residential areas along Main Street.
- To protect the historic character of the Main Street area.
- To maintain the current mix of businesses and residences.
- To strengthen regulations to protect Main Street's character.
- To review business zoned land currently in residential use.
- 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

- To review the potential for new business districts off Main Street only within strict controls and guidelines.
- To develop a comprehensive zoning and land use plan for any areas under consideration for rezoning to business use.
- To balance business needs with residential needs in any rezoning efforts.
- To work with landowners, the Groton Electric Light Department and the local businessmen on a plan to develop small businesses along Station Avenue to support the Department of Environmental Management (DEM) Rail Trail.

Action Plan

Consider rezoning a new area to residential and business use. Allow conversions 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 as proposed in the 1963 Master Plan prepared by Charles Eliot. Carry out planned intersection improvements, increase traffic officer involvement in traffic control and emphasize restoring pedestrian character to area.

Action Items

1. Make changes to the Center that will clearly benefit the long-term health of the area and assist in relieving traffic congestion.
2. 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.
3. Work regionally to consider alternative means of managing commuter traffic flows.

4. 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.
5. Maintain the current level of control for rezoning.
6. Explore new land use patterns, regulations and public uses for the area west of Main Street. Possibilities include the following:
 - Work to relocate the light industrial uses along Station Avenue to new locations.
 - Redevelop into an area for affordable housing, small business, and recreational activities.
 - Redevelop into an area of small businesses that support the recreational activities of the rail trail.
 - Consider improving access to the rail trail to provide additional access to the Main Street area and relieve congestion on Main Street.
7. Create a park within the interior lot between Broadmeadow and Station Avenue. Incorporate a parking area to serve users of the DEM rail trail. 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.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Ensure the long-term affordability and public control of any public initiated affordable housing within the Center.
11. Enhance the pedestrian character of the Center. Possible actions include reconstructing sidewalks, adding more landscape amenities and expanding the sidewalk system.
12. Provide adequate public parking in the Center. Work with the DEM and MHD to construct a parking area along the rail trail.
13. Encourage nomination of historically significant structures to the National Historic Register.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- Town Hall was completely renovated in 1998.
- A significant addition to the Groton Public Library was constructed in 1998
- The Fire Station is undergoing modest renovation.

- Prescott School was re-opened as an elementary school.
- A new hardware store was built in the Town Center.
- Funding for the Constance Wharton Smith Park was approved by 2001 Annual Town Meeting and work was completed in fall of 2001.
- DEM began construction of the rail trail in the summer of 2001.

Planning Directions—Housing

Goal

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



Brookfield Commons

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Objectives

- To protect the overall character of the three villages.
- To provide housing for Groton retirees and elders by ensuring that a range of housing types are available.
- To avoid the creation of isolated projects or areas of affordable housing, by integrating them into new market rate developments.
- To plan for housing that meets the special needs of residents (health needs, location needs or scale needs.)
- To work to keep the homes that are affordable today, affordable into the future.
- To facilitate rehabilitation of existing housing stock.
- To encourage conversion of large, older homes into multiple units to provide affordable, rental housing.
- To support the efforts of the Groton Housing Authority and the Housing Partnership to provide low and moderate income housing.

- To provide information on the current needs and options available for builders and homeowners to provide less costly housing.
- To encourage and require that housing development be designed so as to fit within the environment rather than overpower the environment.

Action Plan

Maintain the overall average density of one unit per two acres of land across town. Change zoning requirements to better meet the above stated objectives. Explore ways to assist with problems of undersized lots, abandoned housing, wastewater disposal problems and balancing open space protection with landowners' return.

Action Items

1. Maintain two-acre density as the underlying base density for the town.
2. Consider allowing higher density in the village areas if infrastructure is available to support such density.
3. Housing should be sited away from critical landscape character elements: hilltops, active farmland and scenic vistas. Encourage clustering with more flexible lot and multifamily provisions in these areas. Consider zoning to protect scenic and distinctive uplands.
4. Review the Open Space Residential Development and Major Residential Development provisions and the degree to which they meet 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.
5. Consider adopting a “conservation subdivision” by-law as described by Randall Arendt in his presentation sponsored by the Planning Board and the Nashua River Watershed Association (May, 2000).
6. Continue mixed densities and uses in the villages.
7. Maintain incentives and requirements for keeping housing away from arterial and collector streets.
8. Consider adoption of scenic corridor districts to protect roadside vegetation and scenic vistas.
9. Adopt clearer site design standards and parking requirements as part of the Planning Board's regulations.
10. Continue to work with the Building Commissioner, public safety officials, and neighborhoods to remove or rebuild abandoned structures that present a health, safety or public welfare threat.

11. Continue to encourage preservation of agricultural land and open space by allowing cluster development by special permit.
12. 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.
13. Evaluate the Development Rate Limitation bylaw to determine how effectively it is working. Propose zoning amendments to strengthen the by-law if indicated.
14. Support density transfers of development rights (TDR's) to protect open space. Consider methods to increase market value of TDR's so that landowners receive more monetary value for protecting open space.
15. Examine allowing internal conversion to permit more than three units based on special permits with incentives for affordability.
16. Continue utilizing the inclusionary bylaw. Evaluate the effectiveness of the current system of cash payments to the Groton Housing Authority as an alternative to construction of housing.
17. Determine legal means to extend the Development Rate Limitation bylaw into the future. Evaluate the effectiveness of the by-law including the amendments adopted at the 2000 Annual Town Meeting.
18. 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.
19. Continue the Groton Housing Authority's position of Housing Director in order to provide support to the Housing Authority and to assist people in need of services and programs.
20. To continue to provide low-cost loans to homeowners to improve sewage disposal systems under the "Septic System Repair Loan Program.
21. Ensure the long-term affordability and public control of any public initiated affordable housing by continued public ownership, limited equity deed restrictions and other methods.
22. Write and periodically update an affordable housing plan to conform to the town's housing goals and objectives and Executive Order 418.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- One affordable development with 24 units (Winthrop Place) was constructed with MFHA funding.
- In 1999, the Growth Management Advisory Committee was established “for the purpose of conducting research, compiling information, developing policies consistent with the town's Comprehensive Master Plan, and making recommendations to said Boards, Committees and Commissions, and, in collaboration therewith, to Town Meeting, relating to balanced growth and development issues facing the town....”
- The Town sold the West Groton mill to Capstone Properties. The abandoned mill has been converted to an assisted living facility with 15 of the 74 units set aside as affordable.
- The former Hale Village nursing home was converted to ten moderately priced units for people 55 years of age and older.
- The inclusionary zoning provisions of Open Space Residential Development have raised approximately \$300,000 to be used by the Groton Housing Authority for affordable housing in Groton in the last ten years.
- The Town accommodated improvements to structures on non-conforming lots of record because non-conforming lots and their structures generally are more affordable than new construction.
- The Housing Partnership was reactivated in 2001 to prepare and help implement the town's affordable housing plan.
- The Town received certification under Executive Order 418 from the Department of Housing and Community Development in 2000 and 2001.

Planning Directions—Business Development

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

- To support existing commercial and industrial businesses.
- 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.
- To prevent the Center from deteriorating due to business migration to other parts of town.
- 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".
- To encourage businesses that will fit within and enhance the community's small town character.
- To explore means to provide some land for large business uses that has good access to highways, is buffered from adjacent incompatible uses, protects the environment and creates local jobs.

Action Plan

General Zoning: Consider new zoning regulations to provide clearer, better defined standards (i.e. parking, setbacks, lighting, 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. Work with the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) and the Station Avenue Directions Advisory Committee on the re-use of the land at the end of Station Avenue.

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. Expand the business area in limited manner. Maintain rights, but design site planning standards to fit the area.

Outlying Areas: Allow business only by Town Meeting concept plan process.



Natural Market, Main Street

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Action Items

1. Adopt specific 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, landscaping, parking lot plantings and links to historic district requirements.
2. 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.

3. Consider potential for additional businesses in the Center to support DEM rail trail activities.
4. Encourage appropriate use of existing business-zoned land in West Groton.
5. Consider zoning additional land for commercial use adjacent to the B1 district on North Main Street.
6. Review Residential-Business (R-B), Business (B-1), and Manufacturing (M-1) district regulations for compliance with plan's objectives.
7. Review home occupation bylaw for compliance with plan's objectives.
8. Prepare an objective study of the needs and desires of local businesses.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- A new hardware store was constructed in the historic district that was a significant achievement for all involved.
- The former Fairview Orchard buildings, which had been vacant for several years, were bought and restored by their current owners.
- A new medical office building and pharmacy/variety store were constructed in the existing business district on Boston Road.
- DEM began construction of the rail trail in the summer of 2001.
- Site Plan Review provisions were revised in its entirety (1991 and again in 2001). The changes in 1991 clarified for business and commercial use what was expected of them for site plan review. It also required site plan review for all commercial development, regardless of size. The more recent changes gave more strength to the Town in ensuring that business and commercial development fit within the natural and historic landscape of Groton.
- Off-Street Parking and Loading provisions were revised in 1991 in conjunction with the site plan revisions.

Planning Directions—Town Services and Facilities

Goal

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



Town Hall

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Objectives

- Expand Groton Center Sewer District only to provide sewer service to existing residences experiencing wastewater problems. To plan to gradually provide water service to all areas of town that are practically accessible to such a future system.
- To prepare a long-term road improvement plan that provides safe public ways while also balancing the protection of town character.
- To adopt clear roadway improvement standards to insure that all roads in town are maintained as country roads in accordance with the Scenic Roads By-law.
- To ensure quality of public education and facilities in the regional school system.
- To keep town offices within the Center to provide day-to-day services for residents. To locate, as appropriate, emergency services in order to provide the most reliable and efficient emergency services.
- To establish a strong capital planning process in Groton.

- To provide emergency services throughout town.
- To continue to support and maintain the town's investment in services and facilities that strengthen local arts, cultural resources and recreational services.

Action Plan

Wastewater

Continue the existing policy of long-term reliance on septic systems outside of Groton Center, West Groton and Lost Lake areas. Investigate long-range wastewater solutions in these areas that will protect the environment and recharge ground water. Establish regulations to ensure that long-range solutions do not enable increased development density. Expand the Groton Center sewer district only to provide sewer service to existing residences experiencing wastewater problems.

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 densely populated areas such as West Groton or Lost Lake, investigate long-range wastewater solutions that will protect the environment without increasing development density.

Keeping the two-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.

This plan should 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.

Public Water Supply

Continue the existing policy of extending public water service to the entire town. 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.

Town Facilities and Structures

Maintain a core of government services in the center. Distribute emergency, equipment-eased 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 relocation of the Groton Electric Light Department (GELD) facilities to an area outside the Center. Neighborhood elementary schools in the outlying areas would also make sense within this plan, as would a community meeting space in Lost Lake. Town Hall, and the library, should stay within the Center under this plan. Elderly housing should stay in the Center. Neighborhood services such as the Senior Center and Squannacook Hall should remain in their current locations.

Action Items

Wastewater

1. Expand the Groton Center sewer district only to provide sewer service to existing residences experiencing wastewater problems.
2. Make revisions to the Sewer Commission's bylaws to allow expansion of the district only as recommended by the Groton Sewer Commission and dependent on available capacity.
3. Consider a wastewater treatment facility bylaw that governs the review process and standards for such facilities.
4. Consider a zoning provision that defines linkage criteria for the use of wastewater treatment plants.
5. Continue to monitor septic system pollution throughout the town.
6. In the case of development in the Forge Village Road, Four Corners and Cow Pond Brook areas involving a wastewater treatment facility, make it a requirement for dedicated connection of the Lost Lake area.
7. In the case of development in the West Groton area involving a wastewater treatment facility, make it a requirement for dedicated connection of the West Groton area.
8. Develop and implement a "sewer bank" to regulate the allocation of available sewer capacity. Set aside capacity for existing residences within the district and immediately adjacent to the district experiencing wastewater problems.

9. Develop and implement an ongoing program to eliminate all illegal connections such as roof drains, sump pumps, etc. to the sewer system.

Public Water Supply

1. Require pipe sizing and dry piping in accordance with the size specifications of the Water Department Master Plan.
2. Use the build-out projections to estimate potential demand on the Groton Water Department and the West Groton Water Supply District.
3. Continue strong enforcement of the Water Resource Protection Districts Bylaw.
4. Continue Groton Water Department system improvements and expansion to provide adequate fire flows and storage capacity for all areas of the current system.
5. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of a long-term plan to connect the West Groton Water Supply District and the Groton Water Department.
6. Encourage conservation of water resources in all areas of the Town while maintaining the quality of both public and private water supplies.

Town Facilities and Structures

7. Maintain Town buildings and facilities properly.
8. Consider the acquisition of properties on Station Avenue for future municipal use or affordable housing.
9. Plan for new elementary schools in the outlying areas of Town. Examine the need for new fire stations.
10. 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.
11. Keep the Tarbell School building in public use.
12. Keep the Post Office in West Groton.
13. Work with the Fire Department as its needs change to site and construct new fire stations as needed.
14. Support improvements to the transportation system for elders.
15. Restore the entire area of the transfer station, Cow Pond Brook recreational fields and area north of Bridge Street.

Achievements, 1990-2001

Wastewater

- The Sewer District was expanded along Hollis Street to serve existing homes with failing sewage disposal systems.
- The new Groton Dunstable High School on Chicopee Row will be connected to the sewer system.
- The Sewer Department has identified and is in the process of addressing groundwater infiltration problems.

Public Water

- The Groton Water Department reconstructed the reservoir at the top of Gibbet Hill
- A redundant well was installed at the existing Whitney well site
- A new water main was installed in Route 40 to close a loop and improve the distribution system.
- Groton School completed significant improvements to the water system on its campus including closing the loop on Peabody Street.
- The Subdivision Regulations were amended in 1996 to require extension of Town water to new subdivisions located within 1500 ft of the public water system. Several developers have extended town water to serve new subdivisions in Groton and West Groton.

Town Facilities and Structures

- A new town web site, completed entirely with volunteer efforts, will greatly assist the ability of the Town to educate the public about on-going programs, events, opportunities, and concerns.
- The Town is assessing the need for a Geographic Information Services (GIS). This new technology will greatly assist the town employees in effectively and efficiently carrying out their jobs.
- Town Hall was completely renovated in 1998.
- A significant addition to the Groton Public Library was constructed in 1998.
- New transfer station and extensive recycling center were opened. The Town is in the process of capping the landfill.
- The Groton Dunstable Regional School District is constructing a new high school off Chicopee Row.
- The Town purchased the former VFW building in 1996. The building was converted to a new senior center greatly improving programs for seniors as well as making Squannacook Hall available for recreation programs.



Groton Public Library

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Planning Directions—Historic Preservation

Goal

To preserve and protect the natural and man-made qualities of Groton that connect its past to the present as well as its relationship to the state and the nation. These qualities may include, but are not limited to landscapes and resources, districts, sites, buildings, structures and artifacts from which actions and thoughts have occurred.

Objectives

- To protect the historic resources of the Groton Center, Hollis Street and Farmers Row historic districts.
- To protect the historic, archeological and cultural resources of the entire town.
- To balance the protection of these resources with other planning objectives such as a more active town center
- To maintain a strong Historic Districts Commission.
- To strengthen the ties between historic preservation and zoning.
- To integrate historic preservation concepts within landscape and development planning throughout town.
- To recognize the importance that open space and scenic vistas enhance the historic character of the town and to work to protect those open areas.
- To preserve and restore significant historic buildings throughout the Town.

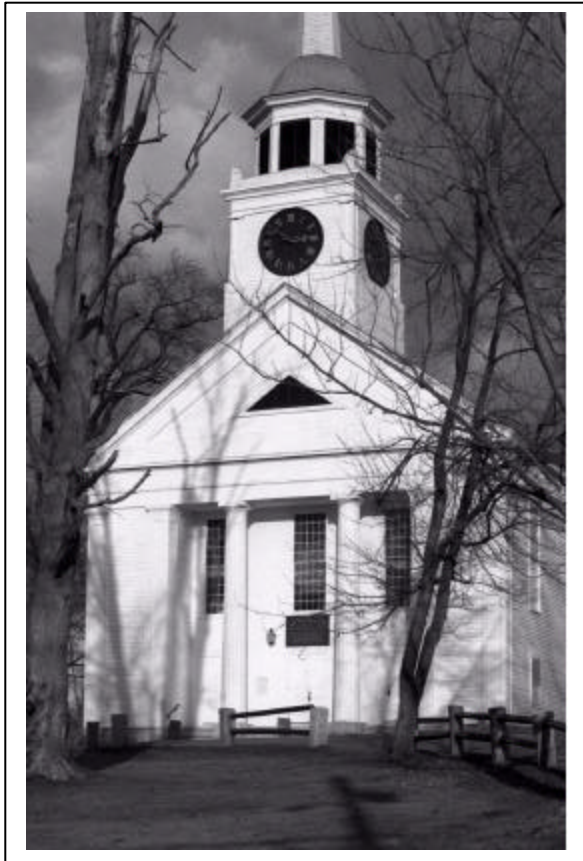
Action Plan

Focus work within the current historic districts augmented by public purchase of key lands and historic structures outside the districts.

Action Items

1. Adopt a demolition bylaw to provide the town with the time to intervene in demolition proceedings of historically significant buildings.
2. Develop road improvement standards that can be applied to town roads 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.

3. Complete and update the Town's inventory of historically significant structures and places.
4. Expand the inventory to nominate more properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
5. Include a provision in subdivision regulations and site plan review that requires consideration of archeological resources.
6. Review the impacts on the historic district of the "avoidance of uniformity" and "promotion of harmonious development" zoning provisions.
7. Consider the creation of a program to provide information about preservation easements, as recommended by the Boston University Study.
8. Review the existing Historic District Commission by-law.
9. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of adopting the Community Preservation Act and present information to voters at Town Meeting.



First Parish Church

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Achievements, 1990-2001

- Funding obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Town to determine whether it is feasible to pursue restoration of Fitch's Bridge.
- Funding obtained from the Department of Environmental Protection and the Town to begin the restoration of Williams Barn.
- Planning for the Town's 350th Anniversary in 2005 is well underway.
- Town meeting approval amended sign bylaw to make rules and regulations applicable to all signs across town, even those located in the Historic District.

Planning Directions—Traffic and Transportation

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

- To initiate regional efforts to decrease traffic congestion.
- To make local efforts to decrease traffic congestion and improve traffic safety.
- To decrease commuter traffic flows along side roads and through neighborhoods.
- When considering alternative traffic routes, maintain adequate traffic flows through business areas so as to support local businesses.
- To leave open options for future mass transit.
- To expand and connect a trail and bike path system in town.
- To ensure adequate emergency access throughout the town.
- To prepare and implement a long-term road improvement plan that improves road safety while also working to protect neighborhood character and environmental quality.
- To plan for managing regional traffic on the existing Route 119 rather than a bypass.



Route 119

Carolyn Perkins, 2001

Action Plan

Make steady improvements throughout town. Balance improvements with neighborhood protection. Direct most traffic through the Center. Make through-road connections to ensure emergency access.

Action Items

1. Develop and implement a long-term roadway improvement plan for the entire town that improves safety throughout Groton.
2. Continue to make improvements to Groton Center intersections, as recommended by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission.
3. 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.
4. Improve traffic safety and provide greater pedestrian access to roadways by widening shoulders where possible.
5. Design and construct a parking lot and access road off Station Avenue adjacent to the DEM rail trail.
6. Consider areas for parking in West Groton.
7. Encourage commuter park-and-ride options.
8. In conjunction with the Open Space and Recreation Direction of the Plan, work toward linking a comprehensive network of trails through the town.
9. Work toward developing bike path links with the DEM rail trail.
10. Contact adjoining towns and support regional traffic solutions. Consider the creation of a compact with adjoining towns to seek such solutions.
11. Expand and provide information about transportation options for elders.
12. Work with the Highway Department and Conservation Commission to define standards or procedures for evaluating the wetlands impacts of correcting deteriorating and unsafe roads.
13. Continue to reconstruct and expand the sidewalk networks in the Town Center and West Groton. Extend the sidewalk system along Route 119 from the Town Center to the Post Office.
14. Develop a planned system of sidewalks and bike paths along public ways.

15. Work with the Trail Committee to mark trails and paths throughout the Town.
16. Incorporate consideration of wildlife habitat movement patterns when considering trails and street improvements.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- A new Highway Department garage was built on Cow Pond Brook Road.
- Chapter 90 funds were used to repave the roads and sidewalks. More recently, those funds have been substantially cut at the State level.
- The Board of Selectmen, in conjunction with the Massachusetts Highway Department, prepared engineering design plans for a stop light at Four Corners.
- Engineering plans for improvements to the Route 40 and Route 119 intersection have been completed.
- A volunteer group prepared a sidewalk inventory which prioritized sidewalks needing repair and suggested areas where new sidewalks should be created. The Highway Department has repaired existing sidewalks and begun construction of new sidewalks.

Planning Directions—Land Use Administration

Goal

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

Objectives

- Increase communication between boards that address similar or identical projects.
- Decrease duplication of reviews and decisions.
- Increase communication between professional departments and land use boards and departments.
- Clarify policies that affect more than one board.

Action Plan

Improve communication between land use administration departments and the town. Obtain professional support as needed. Increase communication among all town boards and departments.

Action Items

1. Continually implement, monitor and update the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Hold a land use department meeting every month at which staff from land use boards and public safety officials can discuss previously defined items of common concern. One office should coordinate notices and agenda preparation. 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.
3. Encourage 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.

Achievements, 1990-2001

- The Administrative Officer holds monthly department head meetings to discuss mutual concerns.
- The Land Use Departments' staff meets periodically with public safety officials to discuss proposed and on-going projects.

- The Growth Management Advisory Committee, established in 1999, includes representatives of the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Health, the Capital Planning Committee, the Planning Board, the School District, and a member at large. The work of this Committee fosters discussion and open communication among departments.
- The Subdivision Regulations require pre-construction conferences with developers and contractors. Land use department staff and public safety officials attend these meetings.
- The Building Commissioner instituted a routing procedure requiring sign-off by other departments for all building permits for new construction.
- The Town's web site has facilitated communication among Town Boards and the Townspeople by enabling departments to post meeting agendas, meeting minutes, and other important notices.
- The Town Meeting appropriated funds for a Geographic Information System (GIS) needs assessment and implementation plan. A GIS system will enable the sharing of maps and data among land use departments, public safety officials, and the Townspeople.