

New England Town Greens: Preserving Landscape Identity

Honors Thesis

Presented to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Landscape Studies
of Cornell University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Research Honors Program

by

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May 2009

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Acknowledgements

Undertaking a research project like this can be a very daunting task, although rewarding in the end for the extensive knowledge that may be obtained. I would like to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of Professor Dan Krall to see me succeed in this pursuit. The weekly meetings and conversations with Dan narrowed my focus from New England Towns to New England Town Centers to New England Town Greens until I had a clear and succinct direction for my research. For keeping me on task for the last several months and seeing this research through to the end I would like to thank Professor Dan Krall.

I would like to thank my parents for instilling in me the discipline and motivation to do well in whatever endeavors I undertake. I would also like to thank them for allowing my sister and me to grow up in a small New England town just west of Boston where we could “see” history, both of New England and the United States of America.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my grandmother, Marion Rich Valpey, for introducing me to genealogy. For seven years we have been compiling a family tree that extends several dozen generations spanning over fourteen centuries. It is through research of our family history that I became interested in understanding more about the community where I grew up and the larger region, known as New England. My first New England ancestors – William Brewster, Stephen Hopkins, and William White – came to New England aboard the Mayflower in 1620. The history of my family and the history of New England are therefore intertwined.

Abstract

The two primary objectives of this research were to (1) explore the threats that are jeopardizing the landscape identity of New England town centers and especially town greens, and (2) to develop a methodology by which New England towns may assess development, how that development affects or manipulates its character, and the potential management strategies needed to preserve town greens.

Research into the early history and settlement patterns was undertaken as a tool for understanding the unique landscape identities of New England towns. An investigation of the historical background established the role of New England town greens as the religious, governmental, and social center of New England towns. The implications of this analysis justified the exploration of possible preservation methods.

Case studies of four New England towns in eastern Massachusetts – Holliston, Natick, Wellesley, and Wayland – concluded the research. A study of their individual town greens addressed site orientation and layout, circulation, focal points, vegetation, and site amenities. Summaries of existing conditions were coupled with recommendations for improvements pertaining to the five design categories.

The conclusions drawn from these case studies may be used as examples of how other New England towns may address threats, their repercussions, and the management strategies necessary for mediating these threats.

[Keywords: town greens, New England character, landscape identity, Holliston, Natick, Wellesley, Wayland]

“Landscape is history made visible.”

J. B. Jackson

Introduction

Residential and commercial development over the last several decades are rapidly altering the centuries-old iconic landscape identity of New England towns, threatening the historic character that has physically shaped and guided the development of these towns for centuries. In particular jeopardy are town centers – the historic nuclear centers from which all towns arose and spread throughout the region. They are the heart of each community where government and citizenry join together for the collective good of society. The designation of Massachusetts as a “commonwealth” was no accident where citizens are united by a common interest in which supreme power is held by the people.

These radical beliefs at the time would lay the groundwork for the founding of the United States of America. Settled well over a century before the signing of the Declaration of Independence, New England developed a regional identity and character that still persist today. Although generations have come and gone and immigration from Western Europe flooded the traditionally English region, during New England’s nearly four centuries historians have remarked on the region’s cultural influence. Thomas Jefferson caustically observed that New Englanders “are like the Jews with such a perversity of character.” Jefferson’s remark is likely due to New Englanders’ stubbornness and early secessionist threats in America’s infancy as the region struggled to coalesce with the movement to create America’s emerging collective identity. Long before secessionist threats led to the separation of the Confederacy in the mid-nineteenth century, New England harbored the strongest disunionist sentiment. In *Imagining New England* Joseph Conforti writes:

“Long before the run-up to the Civil War, the cultural and political encounter between New England and the South heightened Yankee regional self-consciousness. Drawing on New England’s historic invocation of the New Israel and on regional leadership of resistance and revolution, descendents of Puritans in the early republic often trafficked in the politics of virtue as if they had cornered the market... Decades before a powerful, defensive southern regional identity emerged, it was New Englanders who inherited, republicanized, and asserted in the context of national politics the new nation’s most well-defined sense of regional distinctiveness and cultural superiority. Furthermore, long before the South was evangelized and transformed into America’s Bible Belt, New Englanders occupied the nation’s most churchied region. Shaped by Puritan tradition and the communalism of regional life, New England’s moralistically inflected republicanism confronted a more secular Southern, Jeffersonian variant – a republicanism steeped in the rhetoric of individual rights and opportunity, rather than communal order...” (81).

The goal of this research is to identify and analyze the issues that threaten the physical character of this region. The particular focus of this study will be “town greens” which are symbolic landscapes at the hearts of historic town centers. This document will help to establish a method by which towns may assess development within and adjacent these sites, how that development affects or manipulates its

character, and what further steps may be taken to allow zoning and planning boards to institute bylaws that will direct future development in such a way that a town's character is preserved. The "historic character" of a place refers to the sum of all visual aspects, features, materials, and spaces associated with the history of a cultural landscape. The United States Department of the Interior defines preservation as "the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property." Before any analyses may occur, it is first necessary to understand some of the history surrounding the founding and settlement of New England and how New England has evolved throughout its history. This historical perspective will occur in Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 will address the threats jeopardizing the character and landscape identity of New England town greens. Many of these threats have existed for decades or longer while others are more recent developments. Chapter 4 will discuss possible methods for dealing with these perceived threats. Specific towns serve as examples for discussion in the form of case studies. These will suggest strategies by which town governments and citizens might address the threats facing their own communities.

CHAPTER 1
Historical Background

The Idea of “Landscape”
Site Selection for Settlements
European Immigration
Municipal Designations and Terminology

The Idea of "Landscape"

While the American wilderness was breathtaking to the new colonists, it was also a source of fear and terror. As immigrants to a new land, the Puritans brought their own conceived notion of what "landscape" should be, sharply contrasting with that of the Native Americans. Much of this difference lay in the particular notions of what purposes a "landscape" should afford its inhabitants.

In *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx makes reference to a "favorite New England Puritan epithet" defining wilderness: "Wild, hostile nature is the appropriate setting for these unfortunate 'red men,' often referred to at the time as 'vanishing Americans' or an 'extinct race' because progress foretold the inevitable 'conquest' of the wilderness and its imminent transformation into a garden" (Marx 68). The connotation of "wilderness" in this case is negative and the Puritan ideal of the creation of the landscape as a garden is clearly articulated. Denis Cosgrove gives further support to this idea of "landscape:" "As a term widely employed in...environmental design and planning, landscape carries multiple layers...landscape denotes the external world mediated through subjective human experience in a way that neither region nor area immediately suggest. Landscape is not merely the world we see, it is a construction, a composition of that world. Landscape is a way of seeing the world" (Cosgrove 13). Cosgrove suggests that landscape is, first of all, human-impacted and secondly, it is a perception – a human-constructed ideology of what landscape should be. He proposes that landscape is a subjective construction of the human mind, closely linked to one's own experience with nature. It is not purely a physical construction, but rather a construction of the

mind that manifests itself in a physical form. This informs our understanding of the different ideas of the Native Americans and the Puritans. Based on their perceptions of what landscape should be, as determined in the embodiment of their prior English homes, the Puritans' development of the New England landscape was guided by their own psychological construct of what landscape should be.

Site Selection for Settlements

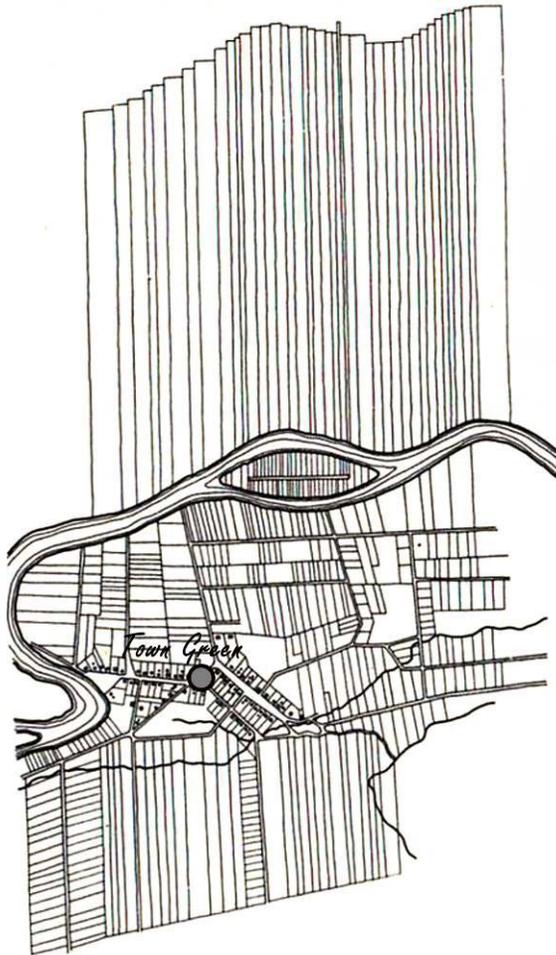
New Englanders have long maintained a special connection with the landscape. By the time the earliest Puritans arrived at Massachusetts Bay, their former English towns and cities had been well established for centuries, and in some cases, exceeded a millennium in age. In contrast, the North American landscape had not been developed to such an extent by the Native Americans.

Villages built by Native Americans were small and clustered strategically amid the wilderness while agricultural land was limited to only what was considered necessary. A network of trails throughout the forests connected these compact developments. When the Puritans arrived, this relatively untouched landscape provided a palette of opportunities for their own future development. The landscape served primarily a utilitarian purpose in early New England and did not fully gain an aesthetic appreciation until early in the nineteenth century.

Between 1620, the arrival year of the Pilgrims, and the mid-eighteenth century, New England towns saw a shift from the nuclear town, where the entire population lived in a highly compact and dense center, to the range town where the population began to spread outward from the nuclear center (Lenney 118). This

shift may be attributed to the new entrepreneurial spirit of many colonists. This also led to the division of several Massachusetts towns such as Marlborough from Sudbury. In the mid-seventeenth century when new settlers arrived in Marlborough, they desired a range township that catered to individualistic pursuits as opposed to the medieval-era nuclear town. Nevertheless, this transformation from nuclear to range allowed for the preservation of many nuclear town characteristics, such as that of the town center and the “town green.” The nuclear town may be defined as a settlement in which a meeting house and “town green” are located at roughly the geographic center of a town’s land grant as determined by royal charter from the Massachusetts General Court. Around this center are located the homesteads of all citizens and encircled by the common fields. Essentially, this early form could be described as a central point at which the meeting house is located, surrounded by a ring of homesteads with infields belonging to each homeowner, surrounded by a ring of common outfields. This basic layout is typical of the some sixty towns settled prior to 1650 (Lenney 105). The nuclear town was typical of the East Anglia towns of England – the region from which a large percentage of Puritans emigrated – and was a logical model for new towns in New England to follow. Furthermore, a nucleated population meant that governmental authority, which was dictated by theocratic principles, could be exercised most effectively. In the nuclear town format, it was required by the General Court that houses be located within a half-mile radius of the meeting house. As is the case with many rules, exceptions were permitted. The exception to this town model allowed for the construction of millhouses and farmhouses outside the half-mile radius but only to those

FIGURE 1: Nuclear Town Plan of Wethersfield, Connecticut, 1640



Source: Adapted from *Town Planning in Frontier America* by John Reps

individuals who also maintained a personal dwelling within the half-mile radius of the town center like all other citizens. These legal requirements imposed by the Commonwealth were “intended in part as a measure of defense, in part to accord with the English village template, and in part as conducive to a certain type of ecclesiastical polity” (Lenney 104).

Christopher Lenney’s assertions regarding the legal requirements of home construction in these early New England towns are certainly plausible. Mechanisms for defense would have been a vital design factor considering the

growing tensions between the colonists and the Native Americans as evidenced by King Phillip’s War in the latter half of the seventeenth century. In his historical novel *Mayflower*, Nathaniel Philbrick gives statistical data documenting this war as the bloodiest on American soil in terms of percentage of Americans killed of the total population. The defenselessness of range towns is observed in the abandonment of northern New England towns following the end of King Phillip’s War. Colonial towns in southern New Hampshire (the northern boundary of English settlement at the

time) such as Dover, New Hampshire were abandoned due to the conflict between the Puritans and the Native Americans. A lack of knowledge of their new surroundings coupled with the “spread out” development of range towns left the Puritans in a precarious situation. Nevertheless, a transformation of nuclear towns into the range town model persisted.

In the early manifestation of the range township, the outfields, which were preserved as common land in the nuclear town model, were divided among new private owners with the owners permitted to enclose their personal land holdings. This shift in town planning may be due to the newly-found entrepreneurial spirit of many New Englanders. As populations increased, the nuclear model became less practical and more difficult to enforce. Homesteads grew up on agricultural fields some distance from the town center. Lot sizes were significantly larger than the usual four to ten acres provided to each “head of household” in the earlier model. Following King Phillip’s War and the early eighteenth century, defensive demands became less of a priority for colonists as much of the “wilderness” was explored and documented, and the Native American population was significantly decimated during the war. In order to comply with the laws of the Commonwealth, new towns that were settled by the range town model during this period provided an additional lot of land located within the legal half-mile radius from the meeting house to each household located in the former outfields. Although communal agricultural practices were becoming outdated, common pastureland and forest persisted well into the eighteenth century.

A feature recognized on many early maps of New England towns is the “town brook.” Typical requirements for town sites included pastureland for cattle, broad hills for defensive measures, and a source of fresh water. In these brook-side towns, the town center along with the surrounding house lots often bordered the brook, giving not only communal access to this resource, but also equal custodianship. Although a characteristic of typical New England towns, the “town brook” did not acquire the prestige of the “town green.” Brook-side locations became a model for determining appropriate sites for inland towns. If one examines a map showing the settlement dates of New England towns, one would notice the earliest dates occur among coastal towns. They provided adequate pastureland for cattle on the salt marshes as well as increased potential nutritional sources such as fishing. Brook-side locations provided an additional source of food, and in some cases, navigable waters to the Atlantic. With the Massachusetts Bay Colony at the heart of New England, maps of early settlement outside of the Puritan town of Boston reveal patterns that radiate north, west, and south. This generalization of broad New England settlement patterns gives some insight into localized patterns of settlement and the subsequent formation of new towns. Figures 2 and 3 reveal settlement paths and dates of settlement respectively. There is a clear relationship between the two maps showing a radial pattern of settlement originating at the coastline and the earliest of settlements occurring within the ring surrounding Boston, Massachusetts.

FIGURE 2: Settlement Paths

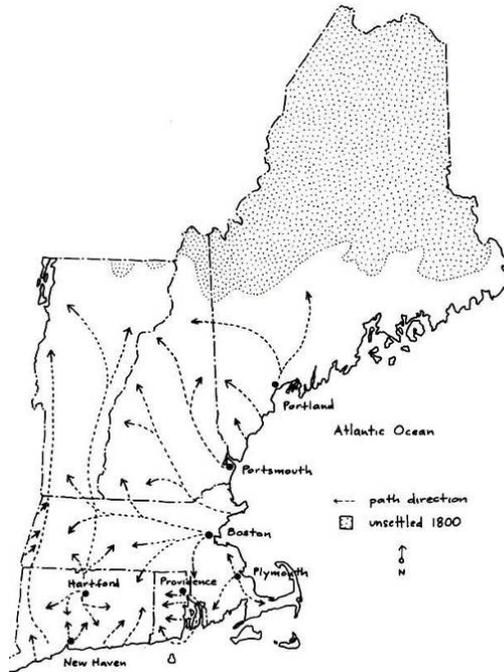
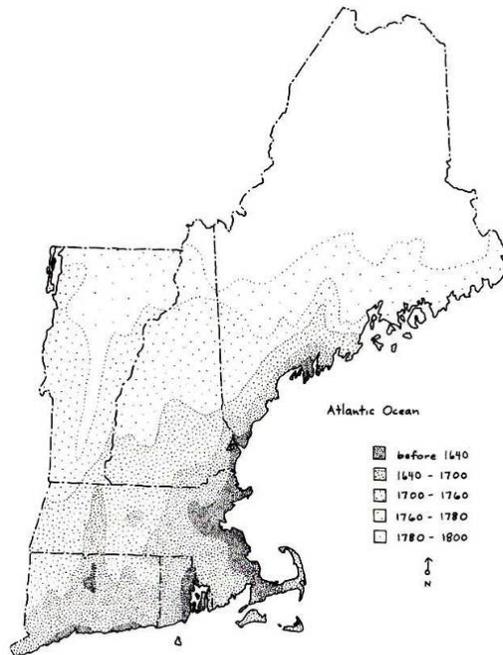


FIGURE 3: Settlement Frontiers 1620-1800



Source for Figures 2 and 3: *Sightseeing* by Christopher Lenney

Christopher Lenney cites some examples of brook-side towns in eastern Massachusetts including Bridgewater where it was “laid out in six-acre so-called house or garden lots...that stretched back from both banks of the Town River” (Lenney 126). The towns of Concord and Medfield, Massachusetts were similarly seated along their respective “town brooks” in the seventeenth century. Additionally, many of these brook-side sites were located on the remains of old Native American settlements or fishing weirs.

Similar to the sites selected for brook-side villages, many inland towns were laid out at junctions, or crossroads, some of which were centuries old pathways traversed by the Native Americans from village to village. This existing infrastructure reduced the need for additional clearing of the “wilderness” while simultaneously providing justification for particular town sites. In fact, these crossroads are significant today as they provide direct connections to most surrounding towns, creating a network of roughly north-south and east-west roads radiating from Boston.

It appears that most towns in the Metrowest region of suburban Boston are laid-out at the junction of two main roads (“main” referring to well-travelled roads). In the twentieth century, many of these roads were given numerical designations as part of the state highway system of Massachusetts. Towns such as – Holliston, routes 16 and 126, Hopkinton, routes 135 and 85, Framingham, routes 135 and 126, Natick, routes 135 and 27, Sherborn, routes 16 and 27, Medfield, routes 27 and 109, Millis, routes 109 and 115, Wayland, routes 126, 27, and 20, Wellesley, routes 16 and 135 – are examples of this phenomena. Additionally, there is a clear pattern not

only regarding the similar locations of settlement at crossroad intersections, but also their rough geographic and temporal spacing from one another. Table 1 lists approximate driving time and mileage between the town centers of adjacent towns.

TABLE 1: Distances Between Town Centers of Adjacent Towns in Eastern Massachusetts

ORIGIN	DESTINATION	DISTANCE (mi)	DRIVING TIME (min)
Holliston	Sherborn	4.30	9
Holliston	Ashland	5.21	11
Holliston	Hopkinton	6.37	14
Holliston	Medway	4.75	12
Holliston	Millis	4.79	11
Sherborn	Medfield	5.42	10
Sherborn	Framingham	5.27	12
Sherborn	Natick	3.65	9
Sherborn	South Natick	4.16	9
Sherborn	Ashland	6.06	17
Ashland	Framingham	3.58	10
Ashland	Hopkinton	4.31	10
Natick	Framingham	3.68	9
Natick	Wayland	6.21	17
Natick	Wellesley	5.12	10
South Natick	Wellesley	3.50	10
Wellesley	Newton	5.69	13
Wellesley	Needham	3.94	11
Wellesley	Dover	6.01	16
Wellesley	Weston	5.54	15
Weston	Wayland	3.16	7
Weston	Waltham	3.83	9
Waltham	Newton	3.69	11
Newton	Brookline	5.68	14
Newton	Needham	5.89	15
	AVERAGE:	4.91	11.64

Source: Driving distances and times are courtesy of *MapQuest* (www.mapquest.com)

The data in Table 1 show that the average distance between town centers of adjacent towns is about 4.91 miles while the relative driving time is 11.64 minutes. Additionally, the range for geographical distances between nuclear centers is roughly 3.5 to 6 miles while the spread for driving time is roughly 10 to 15 minutes (New Englanders are more likely to express distance in time rather than mileage). This information sets up the basic framework around which much of eastern Massachusetts has been settled. Because intense town planning was not practiced according to specific regulations such as those in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, these distances and travel times are more likely the result of convenience – convenience in the sense that these distances were not great enough to prevent citizens of any town from travelling to the meeting house for the Sabbath each week.

Although one might look at a map and question the irregular pattern of towns in New England, there was deliberate justification for each location, whether it be a source of water or a position in the web of inland land transportation. These strategic locations have allowed the Massachusetts Bay Colony to survive for nearly four hundred years. The geographical relationships shared between the towns of eastern Massachusetts are symbolic of the region's settlement patterns and indirectly reflect once again the influence of Puritan theocracy in the early settlement of New England. They also suggest some of the reasons for the creation and longevity of town centers, the focus of this research.

European Immigration

In order to understand the character of New England, it is first necessary to understand the circumstances around which New England was settled. While Plymouth Colony is traditionally accepted as the first colony in New England, it should be noted that it was actually the first *successful* colony in New England. Other small colonies had been organized along the northern New England coast prior to the Pilgrims' arrival but they failed within the first years of their settlement. Plymouth Colony, however, would influence the founding of other successful colonies in New England in one particular aspect – the founders' pursuit of religious freedom. The Pilgrims, or Separatists as they were known, built their small community in the New World during the harsh winter of 1620 believing that the Anglican Church of England had strayed too far from the written Scripture. They sought to therefore “separate” from the Anglican Church with the intention of creating their own religion based solely on the teachings of the Bible.

The Pilgrims are often incorrectly referred to synonymously with the Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Although similar in beliefs, the Puritans acknowledged the Anglican religion as an agreeable model from which they would “purify” that particular Protestant denomination until it resembled the “church” they believed was led by Christ as described in the Bible. Although the direct descendent of the Puritan church is the Congregational Church, it is often referred to as “First Church” or “First Parish” likely referring to both the “first church” as created by Christ two millennia ago and the fact that these churches were the first religious institutions to grace the New England landscape. Similar to the intentions

of the Pilgrims, the Puritans organized their colony of Massachusetts Bay in 1630 with the intention of pursuing religious freedom. The City of Boston today stands at the metaphorical center of the Puritan colony thirty-seven miles north of Plymouth. While the Pilgrims sought to create a small, compact community of like-minded believers, the Puritans imagined creating a vast colony in the wilderness where their ideology would flourish – a response to the intense oppression they experienced in England. In the charter of 1691 Plymouth Colony merged with the more powerful Massachusetts Bay Colony and the two became one.

The Puritans sought to create a colony that served as a model of theocratic government whose success would be judged by its prosperity. According to John Winthrop, the first governor of Massachusetts, his people envisaged the New World as a beacon of religious light, a model of spiritual promise, “a city upon a hill” (Heimert and Delbaco 89). Whatever defensive measures would be necessary to protect this agenda would be undertaken by the Puritans as history would note. It was not uncommon for families or individual residents to have their behavior judged by the community and a subsequent punishment undertaken. The Salem Witch Trials of the 1690s are a testament to the extent to which the Puritans would protect their understanding of the common welfare of their communities. Usually, dissenters were excommunicated and sent elsewhere in New England. One example is the founding of Rhode Island by dissenter Roger Williams with the influence of Anne Hutchinson.

Although this research does not seek to vindicate nor justify the actions of New England’s Puritans, it may be agreed that without their presence, the founding

of Massachusetts Bay's sister colonies might have been successfully undertaken by the Dutch who controlled Manhattan and the Hudson River region. Likewise, the French, who controlled Québec to the north of New Hampshire and Maine, might have also undertaken colonization efforts. Without the influence of the Puritans, the unique cultural and landscape identities of New England might not exist as we know them today.

Municipal Designations and Terminology

The unique terminology of New England's landscape units is considered somewhat of an anomaly today. It is ironic, however, since any historian can demonstrate the influence of the New England town model in the settlement patterns of many regions of the United States that were later settled by New England Puritans. Regions such as upstate New York, which was long ago settled by expatriate Yankees, find their roots in the New England tradition, although much altered over the years.

For the purpose of this research, Massachusetts will serve as the model for New England settlement patterns due to its early history and its influence over the settlement of the other five New England states. There are, however, a few deviations in northern New England from the Massachusetts model which will be discussed later. In Massachusetts today, there exist just two legal terms for the land controlled by a local governmental body – town and city. When compared to one another, towns and cities are exactly the same except for the form of government used to operate the civic entity.

Approximately ninety percent of municipalities within the bounds of New England are towns. All cities in New England today were formerly incorporated as towns. New England towns are incorporated municipalities with legal authority granted by the General Court of Massachusetts upon their dates of incorporation. Towns and cities in New England share equal legal rights under state government, which differs from the governmental hierarchies of most states. New England towns are conceptually similar to civil townships, which are a more typical unit of local government in the United States, in that all territory in a particular state would be completely encompassed by them. Even so, the New England town does not have a direct counterpart in other U.S. states. While all the territory of southern New England – Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island – was incorporated by the early nineteenth century, some unincorporated land still exists in central Maine as well as near the Canadian border with a few pockets occurring in northern New Hampshire.

The United States Census Bureau further perpetuates this confusion by consistently classifying all New England towns as “Minor Civil Divisions” or MCDs. MCDs are typically used to designate unincorporated places and under which the Census Bureau classifies civil townships. This designation results from the fact that New England towns are not based around concentrated populations, though this is the primary means by which the federal government organizes incorporated places. While “township” is a typical name used to describe specific units of government throughout the nation, it is never employed when referring to New England towns. State government documents consistently use the term “town.” Likewise any local

New Englander would be quick to question anyone using the term “township” in conjunction with New England. For this reason, the term “town” will be used from here on.

New England towns have the same governmental authority that cities would typically have in much of the rest of the United States. Although counties are a part of New England’s past, they have little or no governmental authority today. Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts have abolished their county governments, some as recently as 1997. The boundaries of each county are still recognized but only for historic geographical purposes. Their presence as geographic boundaries may be due in part to the typical organizational patterns of governmental bodies throughout the rest of the nation. With this in mind, the governmental hierarchy of Massachusetts, and most of New England, falls between the state government with both towns and cities equal to one another but subordinate to the state in legal powers. Due to the lack of county government, most services typically offered by counties in other states are administered by individual towns. In areas where counties still exist such as in northern New England, their roles are relegated to menial tasks such as administrative and judicial services. Autonomy is a defining characteristic of most New England towns and cities, where their governmental affairs are not dictated, nor influenced, by the affairs of surrounding towns or cities. This autonomous relationship stems from New England’s theocratic history and is preserved in the independent nature in which Congregational Churches were formed. Each church operates independently under the direction of God only and no other earthly institution.

The primary difference between towns and cities in New England lies within the form of government that operates the local municipality. Towns are traditionally governed by a “Town Meeting,” which has its roots in the governmental authority exercised by Puritan communities beginning in the seventeenth century. Cities are governed by a City-Council form of government where a mayor or city manager is the head of government along with a city council. In most regions of the United States population size or density dictates the type of government of an incorporated territory, where cities maintain the largest populations. This is not the case in New England. Instead of population as a determining factor, citizens of a town contemplating a title change from “town” to “city” will vote at Town Meeting for the change. Once a change occurs, only the form of government is changed. The only reason that a town would change its status to “city” would be due to the ineffectiveness of the Town Meeting government when a population becomes excessively large. Because this decision occurs at the town level and not the state level, there is no correlation between population and “town” or “city” status when one looks at the statistics. This is the reason that Framingham, Massachusetts has a population of 66,910 people (2000 U.S. Census) and is still a town, while North Adams, Massachusetts is a city, but with a population of only 14,681 people (2000 U.S. Census). This inconsistency can be seen in all the other New England states as well as Massachusetts. The smallest New England city by population is Eastport, Maine with only 1,640 people (2000 U.S. Census).

All cities in New England were once towns. Boston has the distinction of being one of the earliest of the major U.S. cities. Although it was incorporated as the

Town of Boston in 1630 by the Puritans, Boston remained a town for nearly two hundred years before being reincorporated in 1822 as the first city in Massachusetts. Therefore, the town model of settlement is also the origin of the city model of settlement in New England, predating the city model by nearly two centuries.

To further complicate the distinction between towns and cities, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts officially recognizes 351 incorporated municipalities, which in total cover the entire land area of the state. Of these 351 municipalities, 301 are officially “towns” and 50 are “cities.” Of the 50 cities, however, 11 of them still verbally consider themselves “towns.” Essentially, they are cities because they use the City-Council form of government but the citizens voted to have the “city” referred to as a “town.” To accommodate this request, the Commonwealth refers to those cities as “The City known as the Town of...” To create further confusion, many of the 50 cities are still colloquially referred to as “towns.” Even the City of Boston is sometimes referred to as a town as in the common remark “We are driving into town today.”

Although the two legal municipalities in Massachusetts are reduced to “town” and “city” models and are generally reflective of New England, there are a few exceptions. The term “plantation” describes incorporated municipalities with limited self-government as granted by the state. Because of the limited self-government of the “plantation,” its status is subordinate to towns and cities in the State of Maine, and is often found in relatively unsettled areas of the state. This municipal designation today is unique to Maine, although its origin probably comes

from Massachusetts where it was once used and because Maine was once part of Massachusetts before achieving statehood. Plymouth Colony was originally incorporated as Plymouth [Plimoth] Plantation before being reincorporated as the Town of Plymouth once Plymouth Colony merged with Massachusetts Bay.

The term “borough” is also used in limited circulation in Connecticut where it is an incorporated entity located in an area of high population concentration. Only nine exist today in Connecticut, but were originally organized to have a more responsive government at the local level. Many municipal operations which are undertaken by towns in the rest of New England are the responsibility of the parent town for each borough in Connecticut.

The term “village” when applied to New England warrants a deeper investigation. A village in New England is generally referred to as an unincorporated territory located within a town or city. Villages have no government and are therefore governed by their parent town or city. The only exception to this definition occurs in Vermont where villages are similar to “plantations” in Maine in that they are incorporated but maintain a subordinate status to towns and cities with limited self-government. For the rest of New England, the general definition of “village” stands true. Villages are located in compact areas with high population concentrations and usually have their own name. “Hamlets” in the State of New York are similar equivalents to “villages” in New England. Along with higher population concentrations than the rest of their parent town or city, villages are usually located where small commercial centers occur. For this reason, the traditional “town center” in New England is often referred to as a village. Semantics can be confusing

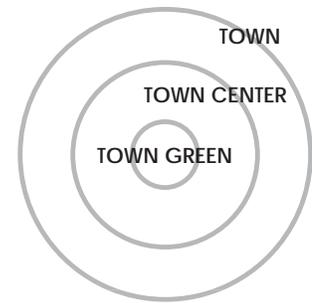
however. The City of Newton, Massachusetts has roughly a dozen villages with names such as Newton Centre, Newton Highlands, Waban, and Chestnut Hill. While Newton Highlands, Waban, and Chestnut Hill represent “villages” because of their nuclear settlement, they have no authoritative control, since all control belongs to the City of Newton. Instead, these villages promote a more localized civic identity for their particular region. Newton Centre, although referred to as a “village” is also the traditional “town center” that is located in each New England town. The town center is located around the town’s original meeting house, or Congregational Church, and the “town green.” It is also traditionally the center of government for each town or city in New England. The Town of Wayland, Massachusetts has two “villages” that are recognized by its citizens. These include Wayland Center, which is the historic governmental and religious center of the town (“town center”) and Cochituate Village which was historically a commercial center of the town, geographically separate and socially distinct from Wayland Center.

Semantics can cause confusion when trying to understand the terminology of governmental units in New England. Villages in New England, with the exception of those in Vermont, are generally not recognized entities by the State, the United States Census Bureau (in most cases), and the United States Postal Service.

Numerous books written by non-native New Englanders often use the term “village” incorrectly and create additional confusion. Phrases that refer to the “picturesque New England village” refer to “town centers” and misidentify “town” with “village.” To draw parallels beyond the boundaries of New England, “villages” or “town centers” in New England are more closely related to what many would refer to as

FIGURE 4: A Typical New England Town

New England towns typically have a strong central nucleus that consists of the town green. Around the town green exists the commercial development of the town center. Encompassing the town center as well as the land extending to the borders of adjacent towns is considered the "town."



“downtown” in other U.S. cities where they describe the concentration of commercial and public buildings.

In this study, the focus will be directed toward “town centers” and “town greens” and their roles in New England towns as centers of religion and government. Town greens are the iconic landscapes that define the physical character of New England and are the most visually recognizable scenes that non-New Englanders associate with the region. Furthermore, they are also the strongest representatives of the union between the cultural and landscape identities of New England.

CHAPTER 2
Town Centers

Common Land
The Town Green
Conceptual Rebirth of the Town Green
Preservation Efforts

Common Land

Little documentation exists today regarding the development of common land in New England towns. The basis of their origins has been a question among historians for decades, although it is relatively well-accepted that the integration of common lands into the townscape was a tradition carried by the Puritans from their English roots. The terminology when referencing common lands in New England can be a source of confusion because of misuse of specific words. This research will address the appropriate terminology with the intention of alleviating any confusion.

Along with the construction of the meeting house, which was both the governmental and ecclesiastical headquarters in each community, land was set aside for the common use of the citizens of these newly formed settlements. Common land always existed in close proximity to the meeting house but was not solely limited to this locale. Historians believe the origin of common land in New England may be attributed to the local customs of small English towns. Ronald Fleming quotes John Stilgoe's assertion that "hidden in the ancient laws of English kings are clues to the present-day uses of New England town greens...The eighth- and ninth-century legal codes form part of what English barristers call the 'common law', – the law of common people, not nobles. Much of English common law focused on land-use rights, and sovereigns merely confirmed the regulations created and long accepted by peasants" (Fleming 7). English common law recognized the "common of pasture" right. Each town in England had an abundance of land, typically agricultural or forested, that was owned by the reigning monarch who granted permission to the householders of each town to utilize this land for their

needs. Since the first Europeans to settle in New England were Puritans from these English towns, they are likely the progenitors of this concept in the New World. This idea is even immortalized in the official name of the New England state “The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.”

The terms regarding the phrase “town common” have changed over the last several centuries. In early New England communities, common lands were organized both in the center of towns, adjacent to the meeting house, but also took the form of both agricultural and forested land surrounding the nuclear town center. The Puritans envisaged a nuclear village centered about the meeting house and common, surrounded by outlying agricultural fields. These common lands served various purposes – surrounding agricultural land was to be used by property

owners in town for their

own livelihood while

town forests provided

lumber and fuel for

constructing and heating

homes. Early New

England towns most

often divided their lands

to accommodate only the

original settlers, having

little regard for population influxes. Due to this reality, common land on the

outskirts of towns were carved away and divided among new families, until it no



FIGURE 5: Lincoln, Massachusetts

Despite an increasing population, Lincoln has retained stone walls and rolling fields that are emblematic of its rural character.

longer existed. In contrast to the fate of outlying common land, the common land set aside in town centers still exists in some three hundred towns and cities in New England, though many of these sites have witnessed drastic changes. Whereas the collective term for the common lands of New England was known as the “Town Common[s],” common lands in town centers were identified as the “town green” to which they are still referred by New Englanders. Often visitors and non-native residents use the term not entirely incorrectly, but in a way that differs from the original terminology. For this reason, “town green” will be used to refer to common land located in town centers.

The Town Green

The town green is a symbol of New England’s heritage. It represents the coming together of communities and the Puritan philosophy of shared resources. Much as it is expected for houses to have yards, the town greens serve as the front yards to ecclesiastical and governmental establishments. It is the landscape representation of the country’s most democratic form of government, the site of the early meeting houses, and often the location for military enlistments for many of our nation’s wars. The New England town green has a long history that is integral to the histories of all the towns in which it still exists today. Its influence has extended to many upstate New York communities and Midwestern towns as New Englanders moved westward, carrying with them their New England traditions. An overwhelming majority of planned townships elsewhere in the country employ some type of “common” in their designs, although different in origin from those that

dot New England. Even early twentieth century planned townships in northern New Jersey integrated “common land” into their designs. These are possible examples of the pervasive influence of the New England town green and are notable reasons for preserving this iconic landscape of New England.

Town greens served utilitarian needs such as providing a place for cattle and sheep to graze en route to outlying pastures, provided a place for securing horses while parishioners attended the Sunday services at the Congregational Church (meeting house), and proved to be ample space for militia drills. More importantly, however, is the symbolic nature of the town green as a unifying force between church and state, community and God. Town greens embodied the Puritan emphasis on the community-based nature of religion. They were places where citizens, regardless of wealth and community status, could come together for a common purpose. Their role also asserted the dominance of local Puritan government.

Ronald Fleming writes:

“Ecclesiastical pragmatism guided the founders, too; a common land system meant that every member of the community would be guided by the will of the community elders, who could enforce religious conformity by threatening to withdraw rights to use common land. Such pragmatism worked, at least in the first decades of settlement. Town elders carefully interviewed families asking to settle, and “cast out,” off to Rhode Island or the West Indies, families unwilling to abide

by town regulations. Its founders intended New England to be a social, religious, and agricultural Utopia” (Fleming 10).

The image of the town green has undergone several rebirths but has steadfastly held a prominent status in the public image of New England. In their earliest forms, they were regarded as “meeting house lots” due to their juxtaposition to the centrally located meeting house. It should be noted that “Puritans deliberately avoided the word ‘church’ when speaking of the building in which they worshipped; for them, ‘church,’ ‘congregation,’ and ‘town’ were synonymous for the close-knit, smoothly functioning community they hoped to create” (Fleming 16). The meeting house always occupied part of the “green,” and usually maintained an axial relationship with the common space as a way of denoting the structure’s prominence in society. The meeting house lot was divided into various sections to accommodate particular purposes. Space was reserved for the cemetery, or “central burying ground,” the common New England terminology, in addition to space allotted for military exercises, which was typically required by local law. Puritans worshipped twice a day on the Sabbath – for several hours in the morning and then again in the afternoon. The town green provided a place for families to rest between services if their homesteads were a good distance from the meeting house. On these occasions, families would often pack large lunches for midday picnics on the “green.” Thus the town green proved to be a much needed amenity.

Until the 1830s, the town green was an emblem of the complex relationship between church and town. For the first two centuries of European settlement of

New England, all legal aged Massachusetts residents paid taxes directly to the Congregational Church, whose worshippers were commonly descended from Puritan families. These taxes financed local transportation infrastructure and supported the town clergy – the Congregational minister. Prior to the separation of Church and State, the town meeting was invariably held in the meeting house to vote on town affairs which were always governed by Puritan doctrine. Today, it would be easy for one to question the juxtaposition of such activities as military exercises adjacent to a sacred burial ground on the meeting house lot. But in an age where government affairs were intertwined with the sacred teachings of religion, it occurred to no one to question such a situation.

Conceptual Rebirth of the Town Green

In their earliest forms, town greens were not well-kept expanses of lawn that are generally envisioned as the New England town green today. Considering the multiple uses of early “greens,” one could easily imagine the existence of unkempt common land. John Warner Barber was a prolific visual historian of town commons in the early nineteenth century. His 1830 sketches and engravings of the town greens of Branford and New Canaan, Connecticut reveal a barren landscape littered with tree stumps and swampy marshes. Soon after these images were published, beautification projects were begun in New England with the centrally located town green at the heart of these endeavors.

The representation of village “greens” as we see them today is a Romantic manifestation that serves to legitimate the ideas of New England’s Puritan past. In

essence, these “commons” serve as landscape memorials that glorify the Puritan ideals of self-government, active community involvement, and democratic values. Influential writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau made Massachusetts their home and subsequently wrote about it. Enlightened writers romanticized the landscape seeking to reconnect the human condition with the landscape (Wood 41). This writing was in response to the increasing urbanization of rural towns and the growing desire for mass-produced goods. Emphasis on this landscape reconstruction took hold in small town centers where residents sought to preserve their local history. Preservation societies thus came into vogue. Town greens were groomed and manicured, planted with trees for shaded cover, and often times encircled by a fence to further protect the space from encroachments as well as to assert the importance of such a “rural” space bounded by a growing urban periphery. The Victorian period in the late nineteenth century also looked to beautify town greens, adding elements that were not necessarily original but are, nonetheless, protected elements of town greens today.

Although romantics may be challenged for their role in fabricating the idea of the “New England village,” they may be credited with the first effort in preserving New England’s landscape history. Without their poetical descriptions of New England life, the preservation of the New England landscape that is appreciated today might never have become as prominent and important in the last two centuries.

Preservation Efforts

New England has been the focus of preservationists for nearly two centuries. These individuals have to some degree re-shaped and re-interpreted the landscape character of New England. The first major preservationist movement occurred in the 1830s when Romantic writers were flourishing. One of their efforts in particular focused on the beautification of town greens in particular. These plots of open land in the heart of town centers were enclosed with fences to protect them from road encroachment and from being traversed by vehicular movement. In the 1830s, horse-drawn carriages proved to be a menace against efforts toward protecting town greens. These fences also served this same purpose a century later when the automobile became more readily available to the general public. Town greens were planted with specimen shade trees and the lawns were well-kept. In her book *Preserving New England*, Jane Holtz Kay describes the transformation of town greens: “From the seventeenth century, when common land surrounded the meetinghouse, to a more urban nineteenth, when it was bounded by fences, framed by elegant houses, and groomed from pasture into park, the common was a conscious creation, garden more than untamed land, plaza more than natural preserve. “The trees possess a domestic character. They have lost the wild nature of their forest kindred, and have grown humanized by receiving the care of man as well as by contributing to his wants,’ Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote” (Kay 130). The preservation efforts perpetuated by the Romantic writers, such as Emerson and Thoreau, guided the transformation of these communal spaces from unkempt “wild”

land in the center of towns into oases in the midst of an increasingly urban environment.

The second major preservation effort occurred in the Victorian era of the late nineteenth century. New England fell into a state of decline during the middle of the century where towns became sites of factories that seemed to appear overnight. Industrialization changed the character of many towns from rural escapes into large commercial towns that saw drastic shifts from the nuclear town center as their core to industrial outposts. Populations of small New England towns swelled with waves of immigration. Large groups of Irish and Italian immigrants infiltrated the particularly homogeneous English population that had dominated the ethnic identity of the region. Even today, statistics of most towns, especially in eastern Massachusetts, show that the majority of residents report Irish ancestry. The next largest ethnic populations are reported as Italian and English respectively. This represents a major shift in the demographics of New England. Following this period of decline and immigration, the Victorian period experienced a renewed interest in preserving the landscape identity of New England. During this period, preservationists once again focused on the central “green” in town centers as the iconic landscape that was the most deserving of protection. Furthermore, the centennial of the United States in 1876 influenced preservation efforts during this period. Americans sought to restore their collective identity as well as their local identities. Only in New England, however, did this movement for the preservation of local or regional identities play a paramount role. While the 1830s witnessed the transformation of town greens from overgrown, unkempt plots of land into



FIGURE 6: Minuteman Memorial

This iconic monument was designed by Henry Hudson Kitson to commemorate the minutemen who fought in the Revolutionary War. The monument anchors one of the corners of the Battle Green in Lexington, Massachusetts.

fashionable common grounds with park-like qualities, the late nineteenth century may be credited with restoring the regional memory of New England.

Monuments were erected to commemorate historic events not only for the

nation but for New England as well. Individual towns erected memorials to the minutemen who heroically fought for American independence from Britain as well as memorials to the Union soldiers who fought in the Civil War. The minuteman statue gracing the famous Lexington Battle Green in Massachusetts is perhaps the most famous of these local monuments to history. In terms of preserving regional identity, Plymouth Rock, where legend always told of the landing of the Pilgrims, was recognized by the construction of a temple-like structure enclosing the massive granite boulder from the elements. Unlike the preservation movement of the 1830s in New England, the preservation efforts of the Victorian period and the American centennial occurred on a national scale.

The progressive era of the early twentieth century, as epitomized by the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt, spurred a period of colonial revivalism. Major preservation societies, in particular the Society for the

Preservation of New England Antiquities, better known as SPNEA, were organized. The progressive era saw a change in preservation movements regarding involvement. Historians had typically focused on written records as sources of history. The Colonial Revival, however, was the result of an interest in the everyday life of the American colonists. In his biography of SPNEA and its founder William Sumner Appleton *Preserving Historic New England*, James Lindgren writes “What pushed SPNEA into the museum movement was the realization that there were glaring holes in the historical picture. For too long scholars had almost solely relied on the written records of once-famous Yankee men, thus slighting the more numerous settlers who left little or no written record” (Lindgren 153). An interest in the common people and everyday life – unique characteristics that could be attributed to every New England town – guided a shift from preserving just town greens to include architectural preservation. In a publication distributed by the historical society of Holliston, Massachusetts commemorating the town’s 275th birthday, the introduction cites an article in a local newspaper dated from 1894:

“Many cities have sprung into existence because of their advantageous situations. The prosperity of Holliston is solely due to the genius of its people. A visit to such places stirs the blood, quickens the pulse and produces an enthusiastic desire to have a share in the developing good times. Massachusetts may be Whittier’s land, and the region from Marblehead to Amesbury may be full of legendary and spectral armies, and witchdom, and Buddha knows what, but the imaginative

and the poetical must submit to the rights of the commonplace. The commonplace is honeycombed with the uncommon heroisms of the patient, everyday existence that make up the life of such plucky towns as Holliston. These are the things that the average man is most interested in. Average life is but a portfolio of views of struggles with the commonplaces of everyday existence” (Hulbert 6).

Holliston historian, Joanne Hulbert, comments on this article: “Perhaps this is so, for there was no great moment in history to mark the founding of this town; even the name Holliston was in a way a donation from the Great and General Court. Be that as it may, the town of Holliston has become a reflection of the accomplishments of the inhabitants of this place for more than three hundred years, and although the town had to admit to no magnitude of greatness to rival Boston, Lexington, or Concord, Holliston did define itself as a home to heroes of the commonplace” (Hulbert 6). This transition, therefore, claimed that properties owned by the common people were just as valuable to history



FIGURE 7: Lexington Battle Green

The town green in Lexington, Massachusetts is one of the most visited town greens in New England because of its history as the starting place of the Revolutionary War.

as those owned by their more famous counterparts. In the case of landscapes, the Lexington Battle Green is rightly preserved because of its famous significance to American history. But the “Battle Green” also served the same purposes exercised by the town greens of all New England towns, and therefore, under the preservation theory held by SPNEA, all those less famous town greens are as deserving of preservation efforts. The preservation movement of the early twentieth century shifted the belief that history could only be told through written records from the past. Instead, as Lindgren confirms, “preservationists most valued historic sites for the heroic deeds and inspirational values associated with them” (Lindgren 153). History would therefore be preserved through its material manifestations.

The next major preservation efforts took place, again on a national level, in the 1970s and 1980s around the time of the American bicentennial. Since the preservation efforts of the prior century, the automobile had completely transformed American society and daily life. Following World War II, automobiles became a common staple of the typical American household. With a growing population and increased vehicular traffic in New England town centers, road widening was a necessity. This activity, however, came at the expense of the landscape identity of New England. House lots in town centers were reduced in size as road widths increased. Town greens in some cases were jeopardized by road widening. With an increased number of vehicles on the road additional parking was necessary in town centers. On a national scale, demolition of buildings for the conversion of those sites into parking lots was heralded as the best form of urban revitalization in the 1960s. In consequence, however, this resulted in the loss of

significant architectural and landscape history of many towns and cities, not just in New England, but in the nation as a whole. In an effort to reverse the actions of “urban renewal,” many New England towns organized preservation societies. Historical commissions were established to exercise authority over new development or any re-development in regions of New England towns where residents believed their historic identity could be seen, and town centers in particular. Historical societies, in contrast to historic commissions, had no governmental authority. These groups served the sole purpose of promoting the cultural histories of towns in an effort to advance knowledge of the local surroundings and to create interest in preserving those surroundings. Today, historic commissions and historical societies are still major actors in the preservation endeavors of New England towns.

CHAPTER 3
Threats to Landscape Identity

Threats to the New England Character
Typical Layouts of Town Greens
Threats Faced By Town Greens

Threats to the New England Character

Many of the threats that plagued the New England landscape during the four distinct preservation periods over the course of a century and a half still exist today. Observations show that these threats occur in cycles but the way in which they are addressed may vary each time they resurface. Demolition of historical buildings continues to be one of the leading causes of the loss of New England landscape identity. Despite strict preservation efforts of the 1970s and 1980s to curb demolition, new development, which in many cases is the basis for demolition, further separates the New England of today from its significant past. The conclusion that architecture and landscape in New England are not mutually exclusive is highlighted by research discussing the colonial development in the region. This particular connection between architecture and landscape is severely threatened by the insensitive construction of ubiquitous developments in place of New England's rich architectural and landscape history. These historically inaccurate or inappropriate substitutes are transforming New England into *Anywhere, USA*. Although demolition and new construction can be significant threats, this research will focus primarily on the threats specifically facing town greens.

It is important to first ask what role the field of landscape architecture might assume in providing leadership in this predicament. It should be noted, however, that although architecture is traditionally seen through a building perspective, architecture itself can be a reflection of the landscape. Landscape architects generally integrate architecture into the landscape through their skills in site

planning. This is particularly applicable when addressing methods for preserving the town centers embedded in the physical and cultural New England landscape.

In the historic development of New England towns, the juxtaposition of nuclear concentrations – or town centers – encircled by open common lands and a low density of architectural development has been made clear. This result of early planning, or lack thereof, is no anomaly. Instead it was the norm for development in much of New England. This conclusion is especially true among the suburbs which embrace the City of Boston on the north, south, and west. New suburban developments are destroying any resemblance of New England's agrarian past and history of open space. While architectural developments that have been constructed during the last ten to twenty years could be critiqued for their ubiquity and insensitivity to the character of place, this research will not attempt to address this issue. What may be addressed, however, is the manner in which these developments are sited within the context of the landscape in contrast to the historical development of these places. Many towns within the Metrowest region of suburban Boston have only just begun to address this issue through new legislation at the local level.

Typical Layouts of Town Greens

Although the loss of historic buildings and construction of insensitive housing developments are reminders of the progressive war being waged against history, landscape architects can play a leading role in the preservation of landscapes that are unique to the historical character of New England towns. Of

particular importance are the iconic “town greens” of New England. Town greens have been the object of many restoration projects throughout the last two centuries. While some local governments have been highly successful at thwarting future threats to their characters, others have been less successful. Even so, many town greens have unfortunately received little attention and continue to be victims of construction, encroachment, and general lack of management by the local community.

Before discussing some of the threats to these town greens it is necessary to first provide some overview of the typical characteristics of these spaces. It is well-known how these common landscapes have become iconic symbols of Puritan New England. However, each “green” manifests these characteristics differently. It can be concluded that no two town greens are exactly alike and therefore, each town green is a reflection of the surrounding community in which it is located. The town green or “town common” as is the better known terminology of non-New Englanders, is probably the most common element of colonial town planning. However, only 15-25% of towns and cities within the six-state region actually contain a town green. Of the six states, Massachusetts possesses the majority with approximately 42% of municipalities having such sites (Lenney 137). Christopher Lenney’s research, it should be noted, only examines town greens which are owned by a town and not those still owned by the Congregational Church. For instance, the First Congregational Church of Holliston, Massachusetts retains ownership of the town green. Parishioners often refer to the location as the “church green” even though the church welcomes usage by anyone, not just parishioners.

In *Sightseeking: Clues to the Landscape History of New England*, the author asserts that there are three distinctive shapes of New England town greens. Before addressing the characteristic qualities of each town green, Lenney highlights generic qualities of town greens stating “Shape is an early, albeit not reliably permanent attribute of commons [town greens]...More stylish traits, such as species and layout of trees (whether lombardy poplar, elm, white ash, or maple), as well as fences and monuments, were imitable marks of civic prestige with datable vogues...As people traveled to other towns and cities for business and pleasure, there arose a shared vocabulary of fashionable design amid a climate of rivalry and emulation” (Lenney 138). The most common form of town green and arguably the most prevalent in eastern Massachusetts is the “wedge common” or three-cornered form or layout. Although this shape had precedent in England, Lenney defines its probable origin as the result of obvious practical

justification “because the road-net of a town was a spider web centered on the meeting house, and not a gridiron, the triangle and not the square is more characteristic of any random road-bounded parcel...Thus there was nothing rustic in the placement of the first Lexington meeting house in the fork of what is today Massachusetts Avenue and Bedford Street; such sites

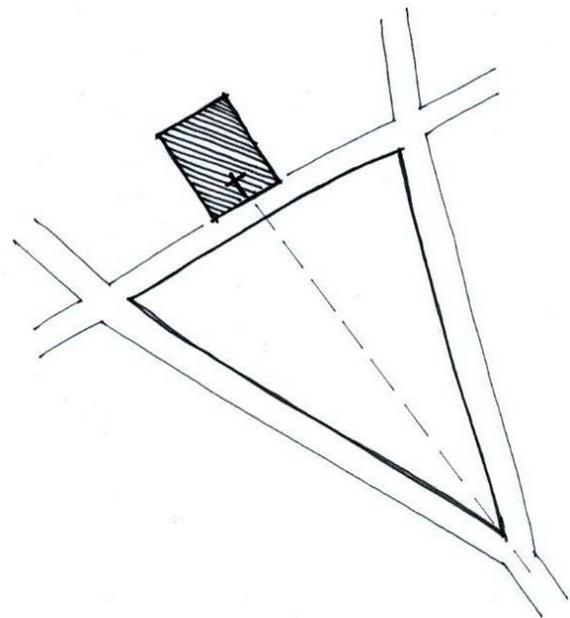


FIGURE 8: The “Wedge” Green

The wedge-shaped, or three-cornered, town green is one of the most common town green layouts in New England.

were undoubtedly the genesis of many a wedge common” (Lenney 139). The author’s assertions are confirmed when one looks at the development of New England towns over the course of nearly four centuries. The desire for more direct vehicular routes led to the formation of informal dirt roads across large swaths of common land. Due to heavy usage, these once larger commons were reduced to the significantly smaller town greens we see today. We may offer our gratitude to the foresight of nineteenth century preservationists who erected fences around these common lands which effectively limited vehicular crossroads from further encroaching and disfiguring town greens. The reality of the wedge common further relates to the “accidental” planning that seems to be a characteristic of the New England landscape.

With utilitarian necessities at the forefront of any planning, roads often took precedence over any concerns regarding the landscape. Lenney also describes the

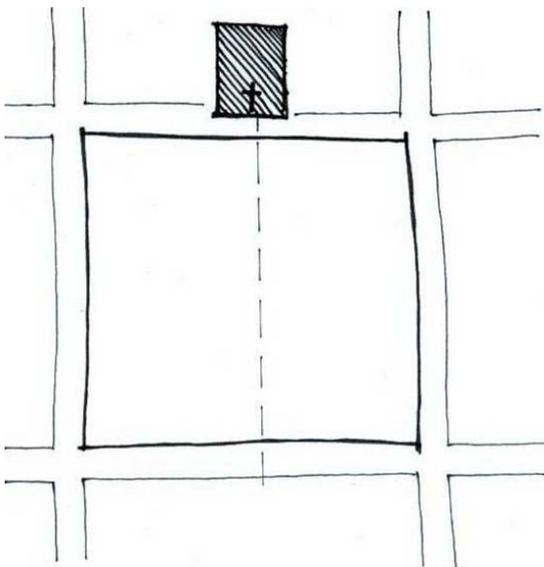


FIGURE 9: The “Square” Green

The square- or rectangular-shaped town greens are some of the least common layouts.

“square common” which is often seen in towns laid out at a crossroads. This form, however, is significantly underrepresented in the New England landscape and is more reflective of the courthouse squares seen in Midwestern towns. Nevertheless, some examples include the town green in Natick, Massachusetts and the famous “square common” of New Haven, Connecticut

laid out in 1638. The formality of these commons shares little with the settlement patterns of New England which is perhaps why the informal “wedge commons” are the most prevalent.

In the early nineteenth century a third form, oval-shaped commons, became fashionable and appeared in western Massachusetts and the states of Vermont and New Hampshire. These were laid out during the first preservation movements in New England and were most likely a byproduct of peoples’ efforts to reclaim New England’s identity.

More recently towns that have undertaken revitalization projects in their town centers have also allocated funds for the creation of town greens where none previously existed. Norfolk, Massachusetts is one example of a town that has developed a new town green as

recently as 1996. These new commons are often integrated into the rearrangement of traffic infrastructure and the urbanization of formerly rural towns. In Norfolk, two small roundabouts were built in the town center to avoid traffic lights and now anchor two corners of Norfolk’s town green. In close proximity to the “green” are the historic Federated Church of Norfolk, the public library, and the town offices.

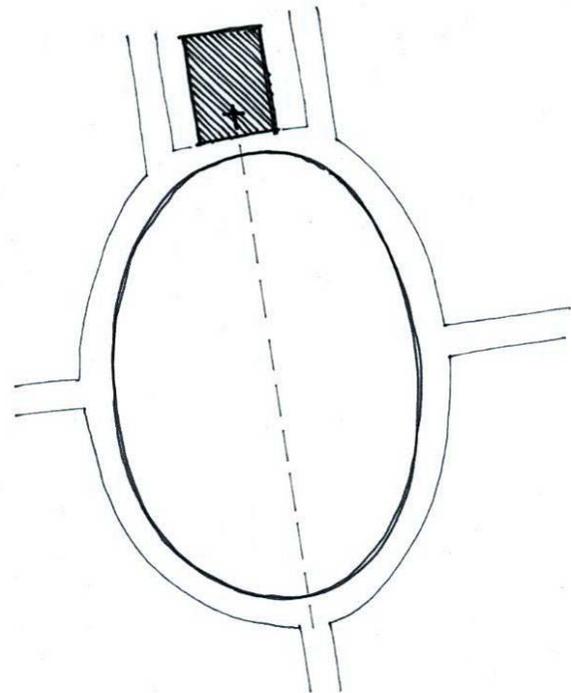


FIGURE 10: The “Oval” Green

The oval-shaped town green became a popular layout during the Victorian period of the late nineteenth century.



Visitors not familiar with the town would likely assume the town green has existed since the area was first settled in 1669.



Threats Faced By Town Greens

Now that the general structural configuration and arrangements of town greens have been discussed, it is critical to recognize the threats that jeopardize these spaces. In many cases, town



greens have been encircled by colonial era fences or fences erected by later preservation enthusiasts. With these fences in place, further encroachment upon the spaces has become less of a threat, especially when focusing on the common lands of the Metrowest suburbs of Boston. Therefore it is more important to address the threats to

FIGURE 11: Norfolk, Massachusetts Norfolk's town green was constructed in 1996 although it looks like it has existed in its location for many years. Surprisingly, the town green is located in the town center on a site where very little previously existed.

these individual town greens as they pertain to vegetation, construction materials, and site amenities. In his book *On Common Ground*, Ronald Fleming indicates many

of the threats he recognized facing town greens in the 1980s. Some of his analyses and suggestions still apply today and will be included in this discussion.

In reviewing vegetation, the American elm (*Ulmus americana*) was historically the shade tree of choice for town greens and is most likely the reason for its designation as the official “state tree” of Massachusetts. The elm’s tall, arching canopy provided adequate shade for the park-like setting while also providing views across the “green” to the picturesque church, town buildings, and homes surrounding the site. The combination of a tamed “wild” landscape surrounded by a more urban environment was created. With the devastation caused by Dutch Elm Disease, the American elm is no longer a practical selection for tree cover on town greens. In consequence, a variety of tree selections has been made in many cases that seem to reject the arching, canopy quality of the American elm in favor of smaller trees that no longer reinforce the relationship between architecture and the town green. While one might argue that any trees are better than no vegetation, the haphazard selection and placement of new vegetation threatens the historic character of these spaces.

Material and site fixture selections can further destroy the character of these spaces. The appeal for concrete and modern designs for benches, waste receptacles, and lighting caters only to lovers of contemporary art and once again rejects the historic character of a site. Unfortunately, many of these installations give these town greens the appearance of nothing more than a 1960s urban park rather than the centuries-old character they should truly possess. Inappropriate site amenities not only negatively impact the appearance of town greens, but also jeopardize the

character of streetscapes in New England town centers. In some cases, such as in Holliston, Massachusetts, a hodge-podge of fixtures has greatly diminished the visual quality of the town's core. This occurred in the following manner:

Holliston, Massachusetts was once heralded as the "quintessential

New England town." Intentions for beautifying Holliston Center led to a revitalization project that was completed in the fall of 2007. Though the intentions were admirable, the final product of the effort unfortunately highlights Holliston Center as an example of a beautification project that neglects the historic character of a town. As part of the project, Holliston removed all mature street trees in order to replace crumbling sidewalks. Although the sidewalk replacement – concrete edged with brick pavers and granite curbing – is successful both in terms of historical appropriateness, ADA compliance, and economics, the replacement of the mature street trees with an assortment of 2" caliper selections is unfortunate. The streets, once lined with American elms prior to the onset of Dutch Elm Disease, were planted with Green Ash (*Fraxinus pensylvanica*) that successfully grew into maturity and were considered a worthwhile alternative to the beautiful elms. These mature trees were the ones removed in 2007. The replacements consist of Zelkovas (*Zelkova serrata*), hybrid elms (*Ulmus* 'Accolade' and 'Homestead'), and Callery



FIGURE 12: Sidewalk Paving Detail

Concrete sidewalks edged with brick pavers and granite curbing is a cost effective, yet appropriate, design for the new sidewalks in Holliston Center.



FIGURE 13: New Lighting Fixtures

The two photographs above highlight two adjacent buildings in Holliston Center. The lighting fixture on the left is clearly out of scale with the adjacent building. The scale of the light fixture on the right appears to be an appropriate height when compared to the two buildings in the photograph. However, it should be noted that these are the two tallest buildings in Holliston Center.



FIGURE 14: Lighting Fixture Details

These two photographs highlight the lack of planning in Holliston Center's beautification project. On the left, the fixture head has been rotated to allow the overhead wires to pass between the glass bulbs unobstructed. The image on the right illustrates the eclectic assortment of lighting. Notice the older style street lighting connected to the telephone just beyond the new lighting fixture.

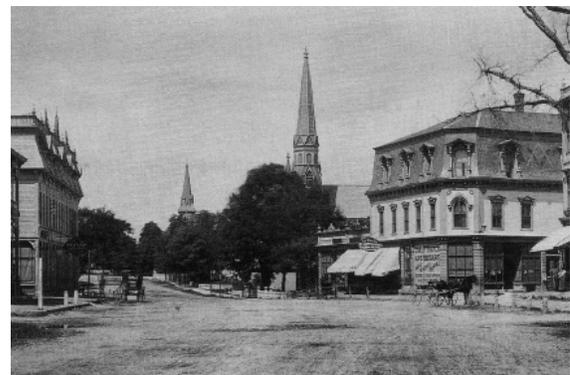


FIGURE 15: New vs. Old

The photograph on the left illustrates the view entering Holliston Center in 2009. The photograph on the right depicts Holliston Center circa 1886. Notice the lack of street trees in the left image. Source of 1886 photograph: *Images of America: Holliston*.

Pears (*Pyrus calleryana*). Unfortunately these selections do not replace the visual consistency of the street trees that once lined Washington Street. Another aspect of the revitalization project introduced new street lights to the town center. Again, admirable in intention, the fixtures are inappropriate not only in style, but most importantly, in scale. The fixtures are much too tall for the scale of the town center. While maybe appropriate in Cambridge, Massachusetts where their scale might compete with the elevated heights of the city's buildings, Holliston's buildings are much smaller and therefore overpowered by the new fixtures. Even more problematic, the fixtures were added to the existing 1960s style lighting attached to telephone poles. Now overhead wires hang precariously just above and around the fixtures of the new pedestrian lights. Like the mixture of new street trees, the street lighting in Holliston now lacks any consistency whatsoever. Unfortunately, the haphazard placement of vegetation and site amenities in Holliston highlights the lack of planning often undertaken in town greens and in a broader sense, town centers in many New England communities.

CHAPTER 4
Preservation Solutions

Introduction to Case Studies
Profiles of Case Study Towns
Preservation Guidelines for Town Greens
Town Green Analyses of Case Study Towns
Comprehensive Master Plans

Introduction to Case Studies

Many threats can alter the landscape character of New England. Although many towns and cities have yet to take substantial action addressing these threats, several towns, especially in Boston's Metrowest suburbs, have begun to consolidate their attempts to preserve their landscape identities. Some towns have passed new bylaws, often on a case-by-case basis, dealing with certain threats. One town in particular, however, has developed a comprehensive plan to fend off the threats that jeopardize the character of the town.

A review of several towns and their efforts will highlight this point. It is important to first acknowledge some background information necessary for understanding the history of each town and the threats each town faces. Four towns have been selected as case studies. All are located in the Metrowest region of suburban Boston and are representative of the typical settlement patterns of the area, being located roughly along the same ring of development that radiates from Boston. The four towns are: Holliston, Natick, Wellesley, and Wayland.

Profiles of Case Study Towns

[1] **Holliston** was settled in 1659 by Massachusetts Bay Puritans who moved westward from Boston. Originally comprised of land owned by residents of the Town of Dedham, which immediately borders Boston to the southwest, and the Town of Medfield, Holliston subsequently became part of the Town of Sherborn as understood by the settlement history of that town, and from which it finally separated. The town was officially incorporated on December 3, 1724 by virtue of

FIGURE 16: The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

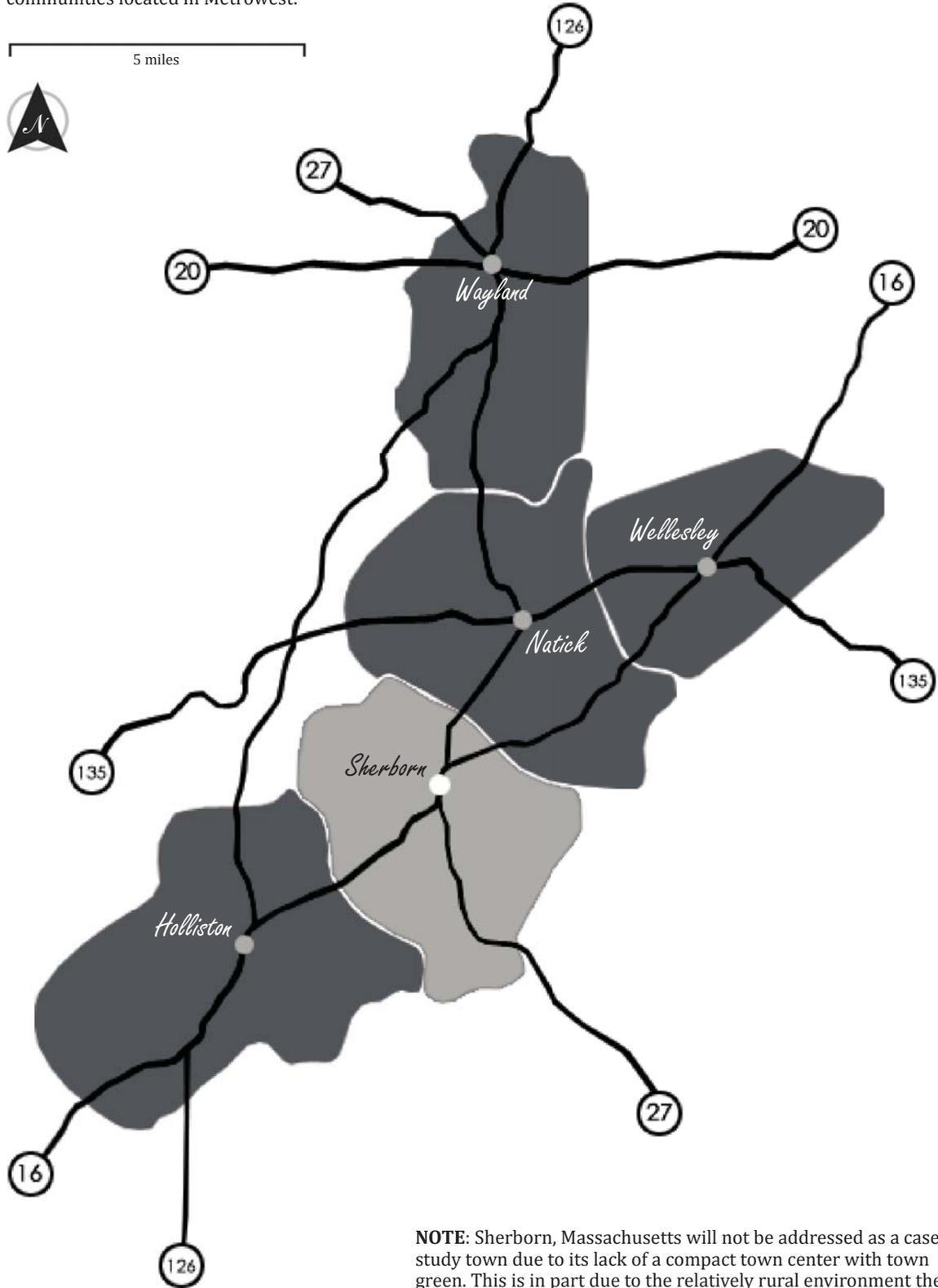
This map represents the locations of the four case study towns - Holliston, Natick, Wellesley, and Wayland - in relation to Boston. These towns are roughly located along one of the conceptual growth rings that radiate from the City.

20 miles



FIGURE 17: Locations of Case Study Towns

These towns represent a sample of the suburban communities located in Metrowest.



NOTE: Sherborn, Massachusetts will not be addressed as a case study town due to its lack of a compact town center with town green. This is in part due to the relatively rural environment the town has maintained despite the urbanization of surrounding communities.

approval by the General Court petition requesting that "the western part of Sherborn be a Town." The name was taken in honor of Thomas Hollis, Esq. of London, England who was an esteemed benefactor of Harvard University. Populated by farms until the latter part of the nineteenth century, Holliston has now transformed itself into a bedroom community for Boston and the Route 128 technology belt. This is true for most of Boston's western suburbs. Today, Holliston is known for its quaint town center with its general store, superette, numerous antique shops and boutiques, public library, town hall, and white-steepled churches. A number of white Colonial, Greek Revival, and Victorian homes with well-manicured lawns dot the landscape along Washington Street (Route 16) embracing Holliston Center and the town green in between – a scene reminiscent of the distinctive New England character.

The Town of Holliston has a population of 13,801 people with a density of 737.8 people per square mile according to the 2000 United States Census. The town is 19.0 square miles, of which 18.7 square miles are land and 0.3 square miles are water, located 24.6 miles west of Boston at the junction of state routes 16 and 126 just north of the Charles River. Holliston is bordered on the east by Sherborn, on the south by Millis and Medway, on the west by Milford and Hopkinton, and to the north by Ashland. The racial make-up of the town is 96.7% white, 1.2% Asian, and 0.9% African American. The three most reported ancestries include Irish (29.4%), Italian (18.3%), and English (17.8%). In the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 4,868 housing units with a density of 260.2 units per square mile. The median household income is \$99,880 (*The Boston Globe Community Statistics*).

[2] Natick was established as a plantation in 1651 by the Puritan missionary John Eliot who settled a group of “Praying Indians” on land granted by the General Court of Massachusetts that was part of the Town of Dedham and subsequently the Town of Needham. The original site of settlement is known as South Natick Center and sits along the banks of the Charles River. It was not until later that settlers moved northward to form the population concentration around what is now known as Natick Center. Although once a farming community, Natick boasted some of the most productive mills during the nineteenth century. It is now considered a high-tech suburb of Boston that combines quaint New England village life in Natick Center and South Natick Center with the high traffic bustle of shopping districts along the Route 9 (formerly “Boston Turnpike”) corridor.

The Town of Natick has a population of 32,170 people with a density of 2132.9 people per square mile according to the 2000 United States Census. The town is 16.1 square miles, of which 15.1 square miles are land and 1.0 square mile is water, located approximately 16 miles west of Boston at the junction of state routes 27 and 135 and adjacent to the Charles River. Natick is bordered on the east by Wellesley and Needham, on the south by Dover and Sherborn, on the west by Framingham, and to the north by Wayland and Weston. The racial make-up of the town is 90.02% white, 3.86% Asian, and 1.63% African American. In the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 13,368 housing units with a density of 886.3 units per square mile. The median household income is \$88,854 (*The Boston Globe Community Statistics*).

[3] **Wellesley** is the most recently incorporated of the four selected towns. Incorporated on April 6, 1881, it was originally known as West Needham. The incorporation date of the Town of Wellesley is deceiving in that it is not reflective of that region's earliest settlement. According to the Wellesley Historical Society, "More than 350 years ago, when a handful of men first settled the area around the Charles River that is now known as Wellesley, they were so delighted with their new town that they named it 'Contentment.'" First settled in the 1630s, Wellesley made up part of the larger Town of Dedham. Within 75 years so many families were living in the western part of Dedham that a new town split off and was christened "Needham." The western part of this new town, the part that was to become Wellesley, was called West Needham, and during the 18th and 19th centuries was a small, quiet farming community. Wellesley is known as the home of Wellesley College, an institution of higher learning dedicated to the education of women.

The only town of the four not located in Middlesex County (Wellesley is located in Norfolk County), it has a population of 26,613 people with a density of 2614.1 people per square mile according to the 2000 United States Census. The town is 10.5 square miles, of which 10.2 square miles are land and 0.3 square miles are water, located approximately 13 miles west of Boston at the junction of state routes 16 and 135 along the north shore of the Charles River. Wellesley is bordered on the east by Newton, on the south by Needham and Dover, on the west by Natick, and to the north by Weston. The racial make-up of the town is 84.6% white, 10.0% Asian, and 2.2% African American. In the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 8,861

housing units with an average density of 870.4 units per square mile. The median household income is \$145,224 (*The Boston Globe Community Statistics*).

[4] **Wayland** was originally settled as the Town of East Sudbury on April 10, 1780 but was reincorporated as the Town of Wayland on March 11, 1835 presumably in honor of Dr. Francis Wayland, president of Brown University at the time. East Sudbury was originally part of the Town of Sudbury, Massachusetts which was first settled in 1638 and incorporated in 1639. Today, Wayland is also considered a bedroom community of Boston but has retained much of its early rural character. An abundance of open space and undeveloped land owned and protected by the local government along the shores of the Sudbury River have benefited the town by reducing the potential for excessive development.

The Town of Wayland has a population of 13,100 people with a density of 859.9 people per square mile according to the 2000 United States Census. The town covers 15.9 square miles, of which 15.2 square miles are land and 0.7 square miles are water, located approximately 15 miles west of Boston. Wayland is bordered on the east by Weston, on the south by Natick, on the west by Framingham and Sudbury, and to the north by Lincoln. The racial make-up of the town is 92.21% white, 5.34% Asian, and 0.75% African American. The 2000 U.S. Census recorded 4,735 housing units with a density of 310.8 units per square mile. The median household income is \$126,412 (*The Boston Globe Community Statistics*).

Table 2 gives a comparison of the demographics of these four Metrowest towns and allows for additional analysis. The information may help in determining

how well these towns will be able to preserve their landscape character and serve as successful role models for other towns and cities in the New England region.

TABLE 2: Demographics of Four Metrowest Towns

	HOLLISTON	NATICK	WAYLAND	WELLESLEY
Population	13,801	32,170	13,100	26,613
Pop. Density (people/mi²)	737.8	2132.9	859.9	2,614.1
Land Area (mi²)	19	16.1	15.9	10.5
Housing Units	4,868	13,368	4,735	8,861
Housing Density (units/mi²)	260.2	886.3	310.8	870.4
% White	96.7	90.02	92.21	84.6
% Asian	1.2	3.86	5.34	10
% African American	0.9	1.63	0.75	2.2
Med. Household Income	\$99,880	\$88,854	\$126,412	\$145,224

Preservation Guidelines for Town Greens

When suggesting strategies or guidelines for preserving town greens, it is important to remember the initial purpose they served centuries ago. New England town centers integrated divergent rural and urban values by bringing aspects of the countryside into urban centers (Wood 43). This is the symbolic role that town greens served and should continue to serve today. Town greens also functioned as the “front lawn” of church and government; a symbolic feature representing the

existence of both governing bodies as one at the time most New England towns were incorporated. Following the “separation of Church and State,” town halls were constructed as separate entities from the meeting house (now referred to as the church). Many new town halls were located adjacent to the town green. Thus, the “green” continues to serve as the “front lawn” for both governing bodies, and also functions as a unifying space that reflects the former relationship between Church and State. In his book *On Common Ground*, Fleming asserts the central role of “greens” today stating: “Town greens remain a part of New England life, still at the heart of many communities, often revealing in their appearance and uses the people’s covenant with their shared space” (Fleming 36).

It is difficult to answer the question: How should town greens look? No two greens are identical in New England, although there are certain similarities between many “greens.” The way a town green has been shaped by each generation of New Englanders reflects the particular values associated with those generations and also the individual communities. Therefore, before making any suggestions for ways specific communities might preserve their town greens, an understanding of the site’s history becomes imperative. Fleming suggests “Based on the historical origins of the space, the nature of the architectural context, and the realities of current use, each community will arrive at a somewhat different solution to the question of how its green should look” (Fleming 37). Fleming states that simplicity is an important guideline to follow when restoring the historic character of town greens. He asks “Does the green have a focal point, or does it need one? Too many road signs? Not enough trees? Only after careful scrutiny of the green, perhaps accompanied by

research to discover the space's unique historical identity, can one decide what is appropriate and then propose changes" (Fleming 38).

[Layout + Orientation] When assessing the effectiveness of the current design of a town green, it is important to first address the site's relationship to the surrounding context. The prominence of the Congregational Church today is an important feature that should be maintained based on historical precedents. An examination of town greens in New England communities generally reveals a central, axial relationship between church and "green." It is also not uncommon for town halls to share this same type of relationship with the town green as the Congregational Church does. These axial arrangements should be embraced and highlighted as has been the case in some communities.

[Circulation] Walkways are necessary in public places and the New England town green is no exception. Walkways should, however, be limited to only what is needed and kept to a minimum in public "greens." Pathways can circumvent the "green" so as not to segment the site and can allow for a large green expanse to exist in the central space. Walkways can also link focal points within a site or connect two buildings opposite each other, such as a church and town hall. Walkways on town greens were historically utilitarian and therefore linear in form. Town greens should not become mini-recreations of Olmsted's Central Park, since the spaces serve very different purposes. This is not to say that designs cannot display any creative freedom; they should simply work with the character of the existing landscape.

Appropriate materials for walkways can be derived from historically significant or traditional materials such as stone and brick. Massachusetts and much of New England have an abundance of granite that is reflected in the historical landscapes of the region. Brick has also been a commonly used material in New England and is acceptable in the context of the town green. When deciding between granite paving and brick paving, one might look to the surrounding architecture and town center streetscapes for guidance. Some towns used a significant amount of brick in the architecture of their town centers so this consistency might be appropriate for the town green. Other towns used more granite while the centers of other New England communities have wood construction. In this case, it might be a matter of aesthetic choice and/or cost that determines material selection. Stone dust is also an appropriate choice for pathways on town greens although best for secondary or tertiary walkways not heavily-used. Stone dust is also somewhat reminiscent of the unpaved roads that were characteristic of town centers from the seventeenth century to the early twentieth century.

[Focal Points] While most town greens have just one focal point, larger greens are capable of supporting more. However, multiple focal points usually work best when sharing an axial relationship to one another. By no means should one focal point obstruct the view of another. For this reason, placing focal points at opposite ends of a “green” is more effective than placing a focal point in the center of a “green” that blocks views. Two buildings, such as the Congregational Church and the

Town Hall, are often focal points on a town green. Sometimes a monument or flagpole can serve as an additional focal point.

The use of monuments on town greens is an issue needing review. If a monument is to be placed on a town green, it should serve as a focal point. If the number of monuments becomes too great, each monument begins to lose value and the “green” becomes overcrowded. One example is Keene, New Hampshire where generous residents have overburdened the small common with stone fountains, a bandstand, Civil War statue, cannon and cannonballs, benches, and fences. This assortment of site objects becomes overwhelming and eclectic (Fleming 39). In contrast, the Battle Green in Lexington, Massachusetts is anchored by a statue of a minuteman by Henry Hudson Kitson. The simplicity and openness of the “green” relate to the historical qualities of the site while also establishing a focal point within the space of the “green.” For town greens that are not overwhelmed by monuments, it is much easier to prevent their future introduction. For those that are in the same position as the town green in Keene, New Hampshire, however, the issue of restoring the identity of the space becomes more complicated. Fleming simply recommends that some of these embellishments be relocated. But where would these memorials or monuments fit into the context of the town? Before removing any monuments, it might be beneficial to first investigate if they can be rearranged on site into a configuration that incorporates focal points, enhances sight lines, and fits into some sort of visual hierarchy within the site. If this cannot be achieved, one might suggest relocating some monuments to other locations within the town that maintain civic prestige. Town halls, public libraries, schools,

fire stations, police stations, and other civic buildings might be acceptable alternatives. If any of the monuments pertain specifically to the services provided by one of the organizations in these buildings, the relocation of that particular monument will have further justification. Holliston, Massachusetts, for instance, utilizes some street corners within the town center to commemorate particular events or individuals significant to the town without overwhelming the sites.

[Vegetation] The tall, graceful, arching structure of American elms historically allowed sight lines to be maintained (and thus axial arrangements acknowledged) while also providing necessary shade. Newer tree selections, however, lack this characteristic vase-like shape of the elms and instead obscure these vision lines. While flowering trees are certainly a pleasant sight in spring, their short, stout physical structure sharply contrasts with the spatial quality once provided by the elms. Furthermore, flowering trees are in bloom for just a few weeks out of the year. This type of tree might be appropriate when screening an unsightly view adjacent to the town green. In this case, shorter trees are the optimal choice. While not all trees possess the characteristic shape of American elms, continuous removal of lower branches will maintain sight lines and is a suitable alternative. Historically, vegetation selected for town greens was generally homogenous. This allowed for consistency and visual cohesiveness. Since insect-carried diseases have plagued specific species of trees throughout the last century, vegetation homogeneity may not be desired. Instead, the use of diverse species that share physical characteristics might be the most ideal. In such a case where one species is devastated by a

particular disease, the entire “green” will not be depleted of vegetation, as was the case with Dutch Elm Disease. Any trees that do succumb to a species-specific disease can be easily replaced with new species.

[Site Amenities] Site amenities such as lighting and benches are more difficult to recommend. It is important to note that consistency of site furnishings will give the “green” a more cohesive appearance rather than placing an eclectic arrangement of furniture styles and materials into a relatively small space. Fleming recommends that furnishings be selected in “traditional materials – cast iron, wood, granite” (38). This is a logical recommendation because of the prevalence and common usage of these materials in historic landscapes. If furnishings exist along the streetscapes of the town center, it also makes sense to promote this. When selecting lighting for town greens it is important that the fixtures reflect a human scale. Large, towering flood lights may be appropriate for parking lots, but not for “greens.” Minimum lighting should be installed since these spaces are not typically used at night. Summer concerts might be the only exception, but these occur in the months when daylight persists much later. Seating also needs to be addressed. As Fleming suggests, traditional materials tend to be more suitable for town greens and in more traditional styles. Modern and contemporary styles of furniture tend to reject traditional ideas and are therefore, less appropriate choices for furnishing town greens. The placement of site features may also maintain the historic quality of “greens” or disturb it. Limiting the decoration of town greens is more important than overloading and overwhelming the site with too many objects, including

monuments. Lighting is probably more appropriate when located around the perimeter of a “green” or at the entrances if a fence encloses the space. This will help maintain the open character and vision lines of the interior space. This positioning also respects other features of the “green.” Placement on the perimeter will not detract from the importance of the focal point or focal points that may exist. Benches should be placed around the edges of “greens” along walkways. Locating seating directly in the middle of a “green” segments the site and reduces the open feeling of the space. Seating along the edges allows individuals to enjoy views of the entire space. Like lighting fixtures, benches should be limited so as not to clutter the space. Town greens were commonly used as picnic spaces between religious services for parishioners on the Sabbath. Open lawn space can easily be used for flexible seating. Finding a balance between open lawns, adequate walkways, sight lines and axial relationships, with the inclusion of lighting and seating, can lead to the creation of a successful and cohesive central space in most New England towns.

As with any public project cost is always an issue. Town greens are generally open spaces that are owned by the citizens of the towns in which they are located. While adequate taxpayer dollars may not be allocated to the preservation of town greens by local governments, many citizens welcome the idea of private fundraising. This has proven to be successful for many public projects. Many long-time residents and families, as well as newer residents, desire a way to give back to their communities. One method includes requesting donations to finance a predetermined number of bricks and in return, the resident or family can have their

name engraved on one of the bricks. These bricks would then be used to pave new walkways on the town green. In this case, funds are raised for the project while residents have the opportunity to recognize, or memorialize, their families as part of the history of their town. Towns could also create an inventory of desired project materials, including site amenities, and residents can pledge the required amount to purchase the item. In return, a plaque recognizing the resident's donation will be attached to the object. This way, towns will receive donations of objects that are on their inventory lists, and therefore receiving what is actually needed. The new town green in Norfolk, Massachusetts is an example where private donations by local citizens financed the construction of much of the site. Strong community involvement has always been common in New England and this is just another way in which citizens can contribute to the preservation of their towns.



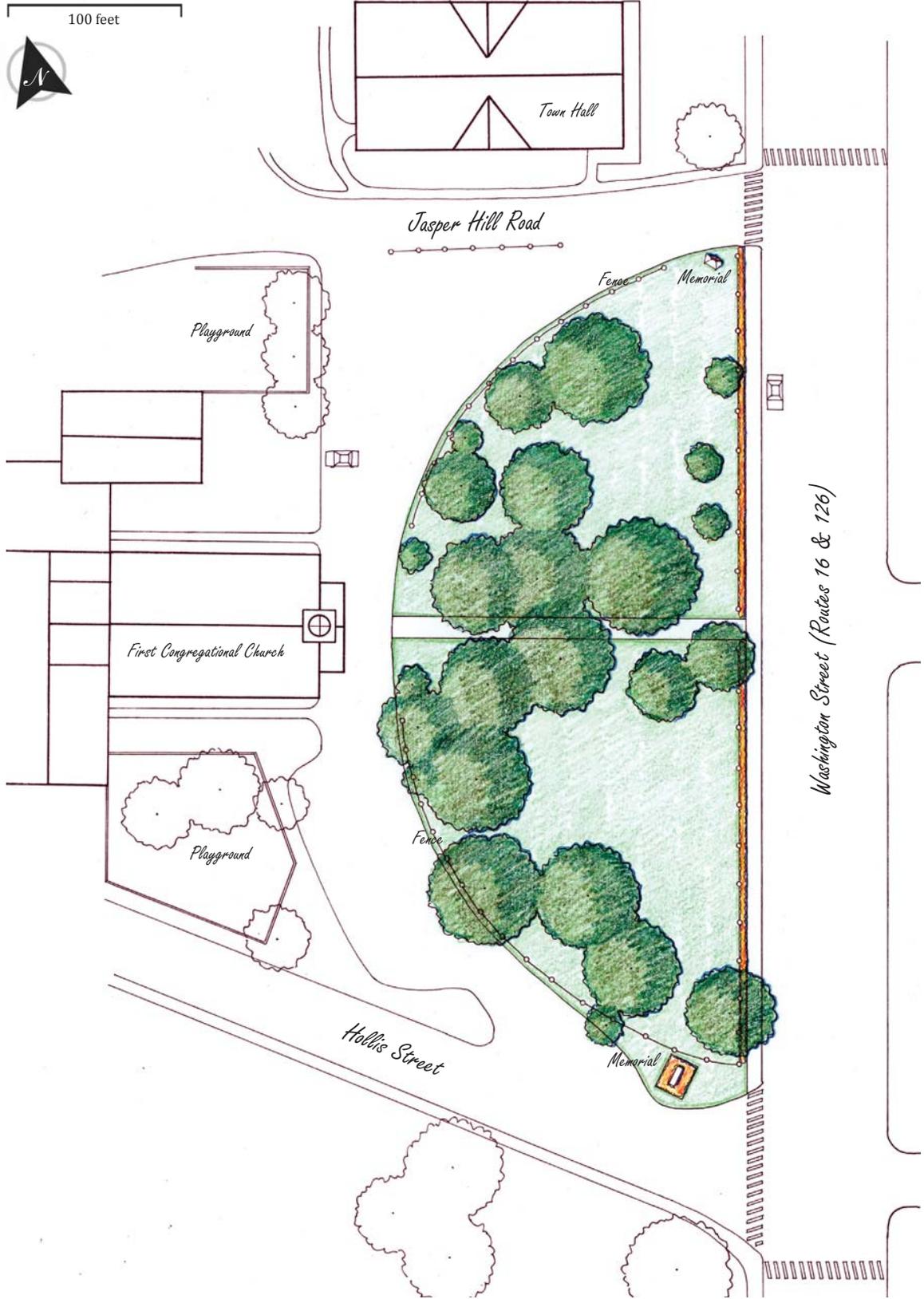
FIGURE 18: Donations

The construction of the town green in Norfolk, Massachusetts and the re-design of the town green in Natick, Massachusetts were dependent on the monetary gifts of private donors. The photographs above depict some of the methods of fundraising.

Town Green Analyses of Case Study Towns

The various design elements previously discussed will be addressed with each of the towns selected as case studies. The analysis for each town will provide examples for communities to use when assessing their own town greens and what changes might be necessary. The five categories, as previously outlined, include site orientation and layout, circulation, focal points, vegetation, and site amenities. Site orientation and layout refer to the physical layout of the town green as well as the placement of the “green” in relation to the surrounding architectural context; circulation relates to movement patterns around and within the site; focal points may relate to the site orientation but also areas of focus within the town green itself such as monuments, flagpoles, or bandstands; vegetation will be addressed in terms of selection and placement, and site amenities will include furniture, buildings, and lighting. These sections will combine information pertaining to the existing conditions of each town green with recommendations for how the “green” might be improved in the future.

FIGURE 19: Town Green in Holliston Center
Holliston, Massachusetts



HOLLISTON TOWN GREEN

Site Orientation + Layout

[Existing Condition] The half-circle town green in Holliston is positioned on an



axis with the town's First Congregational Church. Although other buildings surround the common, such as the Town Hall, clear emphasis is placed on the relationship between the Church and the "green."



[Recommendation] Because such a strong axial relationship exists between the First Congregational Church of Holliston and the town green it does not seem necessary to create a stronger relationship between the "green" and the Town Hall despite their odd relationship with one another. The Town Hall is positioned towards Washington Street rather than the town green so attempting to create an



additional axis with the context would be purposeless.

FIGURE 20: Site Orientation

Holliston town green is adjacent to the First Congregational Church in the top photograph and the Town Hall in the middle and bottom images.

Circulation

[Existing Condition] Three roads border Holliston's town green.

Washington Street, which is Holliston's main road through the town center, runs along the space's longest stretch.

Hollis Street and Jasper Hill Road meet at the "green's" two corners and extend perpendicular to Washington Street.

Along the periphery of the arc, which forms the town green's half-circle shape, is the driveway to the First

Congregational Church. The Church is centered along this driveway with the "green." Like most town greens in New England, this "green" is bounded on all sides by vehicular pathways. Spaces for parallel parking encircle almost the

entire town green's periphery. The spots along Washington Street are public parking spaces while those

along the arc and the driveway are typically devoted to Church members or visitors.

Only one single asphalt pathway exists within the boundaries of the town green and



FIGURE 21: Circulation

An outdated and materially-inappropriate walkway bisects the town green. The lack of curbing along the Church driveway is resulting in damage to the town green from winter maintenance of the road.

runs along the axis between the First Congregational Church and the “green” and perpendicular to Washington Street. This walkway effectively divides the “green” in half. A sidewalk runs between Washington Street and the town green and is the only sidewalk that borders the “green.” Three breaks exist in the fence that encircles the “green” – a large opening where the “green” meets the face of the Church, where the walkway meets the sidewalk at Washington Street, and at the corner of Washington Street and Jasper Hill Road near the Town Hall.

[Recommendation] There is very limited pedestrian circulation through the space on walkways. One would be forced to walk on the lawn in order to traverse through the space. There is also very limited access to the site through only a few openings in the fence surrounding the “green.” At the moment the town green is somewhat uninviting because of the lack of access. To increase circulation and to invite movement across the site, it is suggested that an additional opening be made

in the fence at the corner of Washington Street and Hollis Street. New walkways could be made from the two corners of the town green and converge where the existing walkway meets the driveway immediately in front of the Church.

These walkways will not detract from the axial relationship which already exists. Instead, they will promote

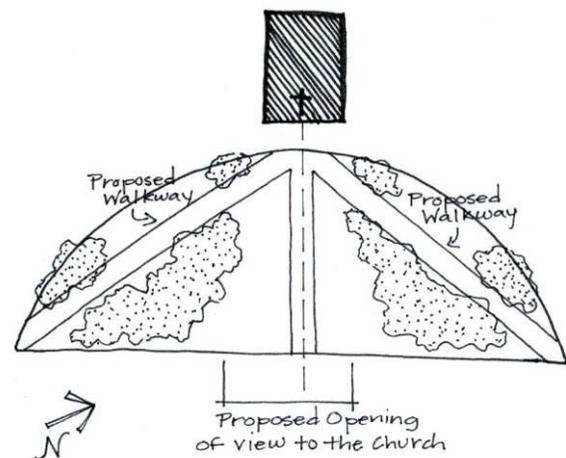


FIGURE 22: Design Proposal

Additional walkways and a clear view to the First Congregational Church will alleviate some of the issues associated with the current design.

entrance into the site from points within the town center – one near the Town Hall and the other at Washington Square where the town’s main commercial district exists. This will also reinforce the existing symmetry of the town green. Material selection for the walkways should follow the suggestions previously made. The existing walkway will need to be resurfaced to match the new walkways. Currently, the existing walkway is beginning to crumble from age.

Focal Points

[Existing Condition] There are no existing focal points within the town green.

Emphasis is most certainly placed on the axial arrangement of the site with the First Congregational Church. Two memorials, however, do exist at the town green but are

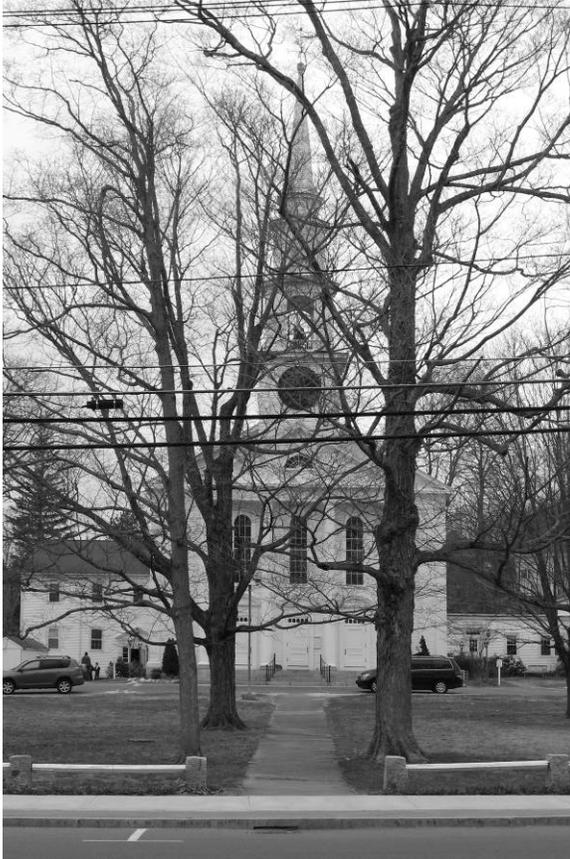


FIGURE 23: Focal Points

The town green is symmetrically aligned with the First Congregational Church as seen above. Unfortunately, the overhead wires obstruct the view.

commemorating the citizens of Holliston who have fought in America's wars. There is a small rectangular planting bed edged in granite surrounding the monument.

both inconspicuous. One is a large boulder about 4 feet tall by 2 ½ feet wide and deep with a bronze plaque marking the approximate location of Holliston's first meeting house erected in 1734. The monument was erected in 1909 and dedicated by the First Congregational Church. This stands at the corner of Washington Street and Jasper Hill Road near the Town Hall. On the opposite corner of the town green at Washington Street and Hollis Street

stands a granite memorial approximately 3 feet tall by 4 feet wide by 1 foot deep with a bronze plaque



[Recommendation] The strong relationship between the Church and the town green is such an impressive focus that it is unnecessary to incorporate any focal points within the site. These would essentially diminish the “green’s” relationship with the Church. The monuments on the town green are small, inconspicuous, and do not clutter the site. Their arrangements on either corner of the town green seem to anchor the site and are not arbitrary in any sense.

FIGURE 24: Memorials

Two memorials anchor the corners of Holliston town green. The top photograph illustrates the memorial at the corner of Washington Street and Hollis Street while the bottom two images depict the memorial on the corner of Washington Street and Jasper Hill Road.

Vegetation

[Existing Condition] Currently, there is an abundance of older shade trees – mostly maples – dotting the town green. Some younger shade trees have been planted within the last 5 years or so.

The trees seem to be randomly planted for the most part in clusters, especially along the central walkway and the perimeter near the First Congregational Church. Some stumps from trees that have been removed are visible in areas. A few dogwood trees are located along the fence near Washington Street. A small planting bed surrounds the war memorial in one corner of the “green.” A mixture of perennials and annuals are planted along the fence bordering the sidewalk on Washington Street.

[Recommendation] In spring and summer the large trees in the center of the green obscure the linear relationship between the Church and the town green. It is not suggested that these trees be immediately removed due to their large canopies. Instead, once they begin to die back they may be removed. Instead of replacing them



FIGURE 25: Vegetation

Several large shade trees dot the landscape of the town green. Expansive stretches of lawn weave through the trees providing adequate open areas.

in their current locations, they should be replanted in clusters toward the edges of the green so that they frame the Church instead of obscuring it. The few single dogwoods planted near Washington Street should be removed or transplanted elsewhere. Currently they appear out of scale with the existing large maple trees. If the public desires flowering trees on the “green,” the trees should be planted in a cluster for greater impact and in scale with the other existing vegetation and should be located along the driveway side of the space where they might obscure some of the parking for the Church. This would give them much greater purpose.

Site Amenities

[Existing Condition] Currently there is neither furniture nor lighting within Holliston's town green. A fence constructed of square granite posts and single white wooden rails encloses most of the "green."



FIGURE 26: Antique Fence

A fence that is a century old or more in age surrounds the town green in Holliston.

[Recommendation] The lack of furniture in the town green does not invite one to remain in the space. Usage might increase if places to sit were available other than on the lawn. Because the town green is located in the town center where there are many pedestrians, the space could serve as a perfect respite. Currently, black metal benches exist along many of the sidewalks in the town center. This style of bench could be incorporated into the town green. Placement should be near the

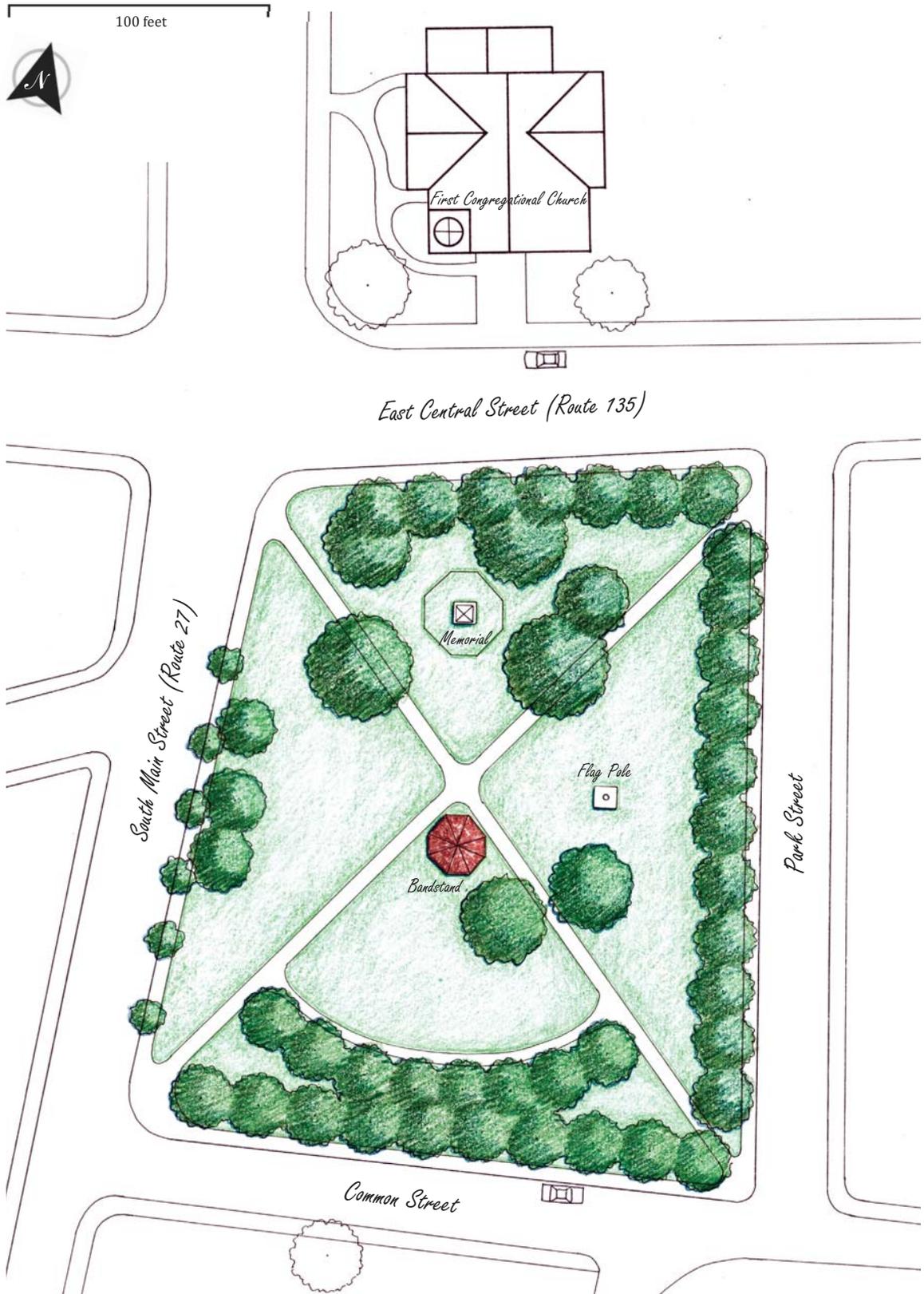
edges, or just off the walkways, of the “green” and should face inward to the “green” itself. Passive recreation often occurs on the town green and benches would be much appreciated by parents and spectators. An abundance of lighting is not necessary for the town green since its usage is meant to be minimal and generally during daylight hours. Where lighting might be appropriate is at the entrances – both existing and proposed – to the town green. Appropriately styled lanterns adorn the two walkways on either side of the First Congregational Church and would therefore be an appropriate choice for the town green as well. Similar styles for site amenities that already exist in the surrounding context will make the juxtaposition of the “green” copasetic with the ambiance of the town center. A few locations along the fence require repairs and the wooden rails are in need of fresh white paint.



FIGURE 27: Site Amenities in Need of Repair

One of the granite posts along the fence surrounding the “green” is in need of re-stabilization. It is likely that an automobile is at fault. Curbing along the Church driveway could prevent this type of accident from occurring in the future. The photograph on the right depicts the former locations of two dead trees that were recently removed. The lawn is in dire need of repair and future maintenance.

FIGURE 28: Town Green in Natick Center
Natick, Massachusetts



NATICK TOWN GREEN

Site Orientation + Layout

[Existing Condition] The square shape of Natick Town Green is not a typical layout of New England town greens but this particular “green” fits well among the surrounding building blocks and therefore speaks to the surrounding context. The town green is bounded by roads on all four sides and several buildings, both religious and governmental as well as retail. The First Congregational Church of Natick occupies a central location on the “green,” falling along an axis that bisects the site and aligns with the Baptist Church on the opposite side. The Natick Town Hall and the United States Post Office anchor the two corners on the east side of the “green.”

[Recommendation] The orientation of the town green in Natick fits well with the surrounding context. Therefore, there are no particular recommendations.



FIGURE 29: Site Orientation

The shape of Natick town green is a derivation of the “square” surrounded on all four sides by roads. The photograph on the right illustrates the view from the “green” looking down East Central Street (Route 135) at Natick Center. Approximately five miles down this street is Wellesley town green.

Circulation

[Existing Condition] Vehicular movement is unrestricted surrounding the town green and there is ample parking at the site at a cost of \$0.25 per hour. A concrete sidewalk runs along the exterior edge of the entire “green” along the four roads so that pedestrians may walk along the site’s periphery. Concrete walkways also connect opposing corners of the space, creating an “X” across the site. A single curving walkway forms an arc that faces towards the First Congregational Church.



FIGURE 30: Circulation

The top image indicates that wider sidewalks may be necessary. The bottom photograph depicts the “arc” walkway where it meets one of the “X” walkways.

[Recommendation] The existing walkways provide adequate access throughout the entire site. Although one might question why the fractured arc is just in one quadrant of the “green” and does not extend all the way around the space to form a circle, a visit to the site indicates that this would simply be too overwhelming for the site. Young children were observed riding tricycles along the loop and then along two of the bisecting walkways to the center of the “green” and back around the arc in one continuous loop. The size of this loop was small enough

for parents to maintain constant vision of their children while seated and yet long enough that the children did not seem to become bored. In terms of paving material, it is not recommended that the concrete be immediately replaced since it is currently in excellent condition. In the future, however, the town might consider replacing the concrete with brick paving. Many of the surrounding buildings are

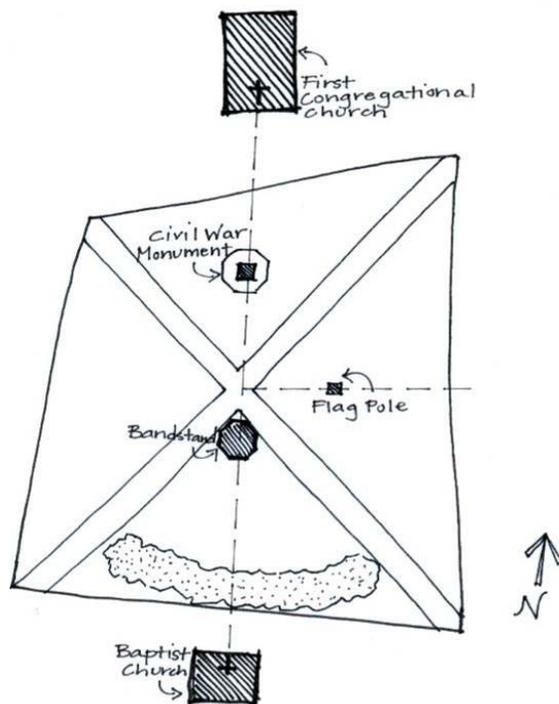


FIGURE 31: Site Arrangement

A strong linear relationship exists between the First Congregational Church, the Baptist Church, and the bandstand and Civil War monument in between.

constructed of this material and its use as a paving material would create further cohesiveness between the “green” and the surrounding town center. Additionally, the sidewalks surrounding the town green should be widened by about one foot because they do not appear to be wide enough to accommodate the amount of foot traffic they are expected to handle. The result is a one foot strip of compacted soil along the interior periphery of the sidewalk.

Focal Points

[Existing Condition] The First Congregational Church is clearly a focal point that exists off site. On site, however, a large octagonal bandstand is located in the center of the “green” where the two main walkways intersect. This structure is located along the axis between the First Congregational Church and the Baptist Church. Also along this axis, between the bandstand and the First Congregational Church, is a large Civil War monument surrounded by an octagonal planting bed and four



FIGURE 32: Focal Points

An axial arrangement connects the bandstand in the foreground to the Civil War monument and the First Congregational Church.

cannons. A flag pole with a monument honoring the soldiers who fought in the Spanish-American War is located in one of the triangles of the “green” along no apparent axis.

Two other small monuments have been erected on the “green” as

well. One monument consists of a small granite boulder about one foot high by 1 ½ feet long and deep with a plaque mounted on it marking the site of “The Wilson Tree” which was planted by Henry Wilson, a United States Senator from Massachusetts and former Vice President of the United States. The monument is located along Park Street in line with the row of trees planted along that side of the town green. The other small monument is designed in the same style as the one

commemorating “The Wilson Tree” but smaller and with a plaque commemorating the planting of a tree by local schoolchildren for Natick citizens who perished in war. This monument is located in the tree line along East Central Street.



FIGURE 33: Monuments

Small monuments like the one on the left are located inconspicuously on the town green while others like the Civil War monument in the photograph on the right are much grander in scale.

[Recommendation] The linear relationship of the Civil War Monument and the bandstand along the axis between the First Congregational Church and the Baptist Church appears to be a logical arrangement. Furthermore, the octagonal planting bed surrounding the Civil War Monument reflects the octagonal bandstand and provides further consistency. The placement of the flag pole does not align with any particular axis. Although questionable in placement, it is centered in one of the quadrants so it does not look entirely out of place and does not obstruct any other views.

Vegetation

[Existing Condition] A line of shade trees is planted along each of the four sides of Natick Town Green and enclose the space. Most of these trees appear to be oaks and have had their lower branches pruned so that sight lines to surrounding buildings are not obstructed in any way. Flowering cherry trees are planted along the arc near Common Street and obscure views to the Baptist Church except in the winter. Several large maple trees are located in the central space. The only planting bed on site surrounds the Civil War Monument. Large open areas are left as lawn, which is historically appropriate for “town greens.” These spaces are heavily used by families, individuals eating lunch, as well as parishioners from surrounding churches hosting outdoor services.



FIGURE 34: Vegetation

Large shade trees provide a canopy for families enjoying picnics on the lawn.

[Recommendation] The shade trees surrounding the “green” address the prominence of the site as well as define the “green” as its own space. The flowering cherry trees obscure views to the Baptist Church but are appropriate in this case since they prevent views of the contemporary-style church which contrasts significantly with the historic architecture of the “green’s” other surrounding buildings. These flowering trees also obscure much of the traffic and parking along Common Street and therefore serve dual purposes. The mature maples in the central space provide adequate shade over lawn areas without obscuring views along the central axis. Open lawn areas abound in the town green and are important features to maintain.

Site Amenities

[Existing Condition] Black lamps, manufactured to have a similar appearance to wrought iron, are located along the walkways in the space as well as along the sidewalks surrounding the “green” and match those in the adjacent town center. Several benches are located along the walkways in the site and generally face towards the middle of the space. They are constructed of black metal arms, legs, and accents with wood slats along the seat and back of the bench. Although these benches do not match exactly those located in the town center, they are very similar in style. In the town center, the seats and backs of the benches are black metal instead of wood. Trash receptacles are located at the corners of the “green” and all are cylindrical black metal containers except for one located at the corner of Common Street and Park Street. A black metal bicycle rack is located also on this corner. Two structures exist on site. The bandstand is situated in the center of the “green” and is constructed of wood and granite. The other structure is a bus stop that is located on East Central Street at the very edge of the town green. This is constructed of glass and brick. A sign that reads “Welcome to Natick Center” is located on East Central Street facing the First Congregational Church.

[Recommendation] The lamps and benches are in historically appropriate styles for the town green. All of the trash receptacles are also appropriate with the exception of the contemporary-style container near Common and Park streets. This receptacle should be changed to match the remaining containers. The bike rack is black to match the other fixtures on site, is inconspicuous, and engages another



FIGURE 35: Lighting Fixtures + Trash Receptacles

The existing light fixtures and trash receptacles are historically appropriate designs for the town green and they match the existing amenities in Natick Center.



FIGURE 36: Transportation Amenities

A bus stop is located on the side of the town green bordering East Central Street. On the opposite side of the “green” is a bicycle rack. The trash receptacle seen in the image on the right is mismatched with the other receptacles at the site and should be replaced with one that matches the far right image in Figure 35.



FIGURE 37: Seating and Signage

The photographs above depict the typical bench style on the “green” and a sign introducing the town center.

form of transportation to the site. Both structures on the town green are appropriate styles and constructed from historic materials that blend with the architecture of the surrounding context. The sign reading “Welcome to Natick Center” is a suitable, inconspicuous addition to the town green.

FIGURE 38: Town Green in Wellesley Center
Wellesley, Massachusetts



WELLESLEY TOWN GREEN

Site Orientation + Layout

[Existing Condition] Wellesley Town Green exists as three distinct “wedges” separated by roads. The first wedge is connected to the property of the Wellesley Congregational Church on one side and Central Street and Washington Street on the



other two sides. The other two wedges are completely surrounded by roads and form a south-north chain from the Wellesley Congregational Church to the United States Post Office.



FIGURE 39: Site Orientation

Wellesley town green is comprised of three pieces separated by roads.

[Recommendation] Access to Wellesley’s fractured town green can only occur through the use of crosswalks across streets. All three pieces seem fairly well connected to one another despite the heavy traffic of Central Street. However, no crosswalk exists between the Post Office and the town

green or the Town Hall property across Grove Street from the northernmost wedge. These are two potential access points into the site that should be acknowledged. A long expanse of “green” extends through the park-like setting of the Town Hall and

would make a logical extension to Wellesley Town Green, creating a greenway through the town.



FIGURE 40: Layout

Two pieces of the town green are separate wedge-shaped entities completely bounded by roads while the third is connected to the property of Wellesley Congregational Church.

Circulation

[Existing Condition] Vehicular access to the site is adequate. Parallel parking spots are located along two of the wedges toward the Post Office at a cost of \$0.25 per hour. Walkways extend throughout the three wedges and make logical connections between each piece so that they maintain some sort of relationship with one another. Few sidewalks surround the town green, however. A single asphalt, arc-like walkway traverses through the wedge nearest the Post Office. The walkways in the other two wedges are constructed from brick. The sidewalks that do exist are concrete edged with brick and granite curbing and match the sidewalks of the town center.

[Recommendation] The brick paving for most of the town green matches the building material of much of the surrounding context. The single asphalt walkway near the Post Office is out of place with the rest of the town green and should be



FIGURE 41: Circulation

Brick is the paving material for most of the walkways with the exception of one asphalt path on the wedge nearest the Post Office. Crosswalks connect each of the three pieces of the town green.

replaced with similar materials. This will bring further cohesiveness between the separate entities of the Wellesley Town Green. Although few sidewalks surround the peripheries of these wedges, the existing walkways instead draw pedestrians into the town green rather than affording them the opportunity to bypass the common space altogether.

Focal Points

[Existing Condition] The Wellesley Congregational Church is certainly a focal point of the “green” although it does not maintain an axial relationship with the space. A flag pole is located on the wedge immediately adjacent to the Church but does not seem to have any logical relationship with the site itself, although it is not obstructive. The flag pole is aligned with Washington Street (where routes 16 and 135 converge). When one drives west along this road, the flag pole serves as a landmark and focal point from the exterior of the town green. No monuments are currently located in the site.

[Recommendation] It does not seem necessary to create any new focal points in this site. The small size of the “green” does not afford the addition of any new objects. Furthermore, the unusual arrangement of the three wedges makes it difficult to create any axial arrangements in the site.

Vegetation

[Existing Condition] The town green is heavily vegetated with little space for lawn. Most of the shade trees appear to be oaks and maples although there are a few multi-stem birch trees and a couple of small flowering trees. The wedge nearest the Post Office is partially shaded by mature oak and maple trees with mulch spread out below. A small planting area near the corner by Rail Road Street is occupied with spring bulbs and a few perennials and shrubs. The central wedge is less shaded but receives some cover from oaks, maples, and birch trees. Lawn is present in the central area of this wedge and is surrounded by planting beds on the periphery. The mulched beds include many evergreen or semi-evergreen shrubs such as yews, hollies, rhododendrons, and boxwoods. The wedge immediately adjacent to the First Congregational Church is largely covered by a mulched planting bed with many of the same plant materials as those in the center wedge. A small lawn area occupies the space as well. There are a few tall shade trees on this corner as well as a flowering cherry and a crabapple tree.



FIGURE 42: Vegetation

Although Wellesley town green is particularly small in size, some large lawn areas do exist as depicted in the image on the left. A variety of plant material adorns the “green” including a few specimen trees and a mixture of evergreen and semi-evergreen shrubs.

[Recommendation] Although the town green is heavily vegetated in comparison to the amount of vegetation typical of historic town greens, it seems necessary in this context. The juxtaposition of the wedges to high traffic roads coupled with their small sizes justifies the need for “buffer” vegetation. This is designed especially well in the center wedge which is adjacent to the highest concentration of vehicular traffic. The planting along the periphery also obscures undesirable views of parked automobiles. Although flowering trees are not usually desirable on town greens because they can obstruct important sight lines, those in Wellesley are inconspicuously located so desirable views are not obstructed.



FIGURE 43: Vegetative Buffer

Planting beds in some areas provide a buffer between the “green” and parking spaces.

Site Amenities

[Existing Condition] The walkways within the town green are lined with lamps. The majority of these black wrought iron lamps match those in the town center. However, two located in the center wedge do not match the surrounding style. Benches are located in two of the three wedges. In the center wedge there are a few benches with black metal arms, legs, and accents with wood seats and backs. A picnic table with two benches in the same style as the nearby benches is located in the paved space in the middle of the center wedge. The section of the town green adjacent to the First Congregational Church uses three benches in three different styles. One bench matches the benches in the center wedge. Another bench is solid wood (arms, legs, seat, and back), while another is just wood as well but has no back nor arms. A couple of black metal trash receptacles are located in the wedges and are consistent with those found in the



FIGURE 44: Benches

Three different bench styles currently exist at the “green.” To maintain consistency, it is recommended that all benches match the style highlighted in the top photograph as this style is the most historically accurate.

town center. A long, black metal bike rack is located on the wedge nearest the Post Office. A granite retaining wall runs along the periphery of the wedge adjacent to the Church and separates both properties.

[Recommendation] Since only two of the lamps in the town green do not fully



match the other existing lamps it is recommended that they be changed so that uniformity may be maintained. With uniformity in mind, the two solid wood benches should be replaced with the same style benches as those in the center wedge (black arms and legs with wood seat and back).



FIGURE 45: Additional Site Amenities

Two different light fixtures are located in the site. The fixture on the left matches those in the surrounding town center and are therefore recommended. A long bike rack also adorns the site.

FIGURE 46: Town Green in Wayland Center
Wayland, Massachusetts



WAYLAND TOWN GREEN

Site Orientation + Layout

[Existing Condition] The town green in Wayland is divided into two distinct pieces separated by roads. One piece serves as the “front lawn” of the First Parish Church while the other is a triangular wedge bounded by roads on all three sides. With the exception of the piece in front of the First Parish Church, there is no geometric alignment with the surrounding context. Both spaces are small.



FIGURE 47: Site Orientation

Wayland town green is divided into two distinct pieces. One piece is immediately adjacent to the First Parish Church as seen in the photograph on the left. The other piece, depicted in the image on the right, is wedge-shaped and bounded on all three sides by roads.

[Recommendation] The pedestrian connection between the two pieces is very limited as well as the connection between the triangular wedge and the surrounding context. The addition of more pedestrian crosswalks to the sites might invite usage of the town green.

Circulation

[Existing Condition] Roads surround one of the pieces of the town green and just two sides of the pieces immediately adjacent to the First Parish Church. Parking is available in the parking lot for the First Parish Church and in the town center near the triangular wedge. Sidewalks only exist on the side of the triangular wedge that abuts Cochituate Road and on the section of Boston Post Road bordering the piece adjacent to the Church. No walkways currently traverse through the town green.

[Recommendation] The lack of pedestrian walkways and sidewalks makes the site particularly inaccessible to the people who would potentially use the site. For



FIGURE 48: Circulation

The two wedges are especially disconnected from one another. The view in the photograph above is taken from the section of the “green” adjacent to the First Parish Church looking towards the wedge-shaped piece.

sidewalks to be constructed a loss of land from the town green is likely to occur. Instead, walkways that traverse the town green would be a much better compromise. The triangular wedge could benefit the most from construction of walkways. Two walkways that cross the wedge to form an “X” like the “green” in Natick seems like a reasonable choice considering the small size of the site. This linear form is appropriate because it responds to the utilitarian ideas of Puritan New England. Granite or brick paving would be ideal materials for these walkways.

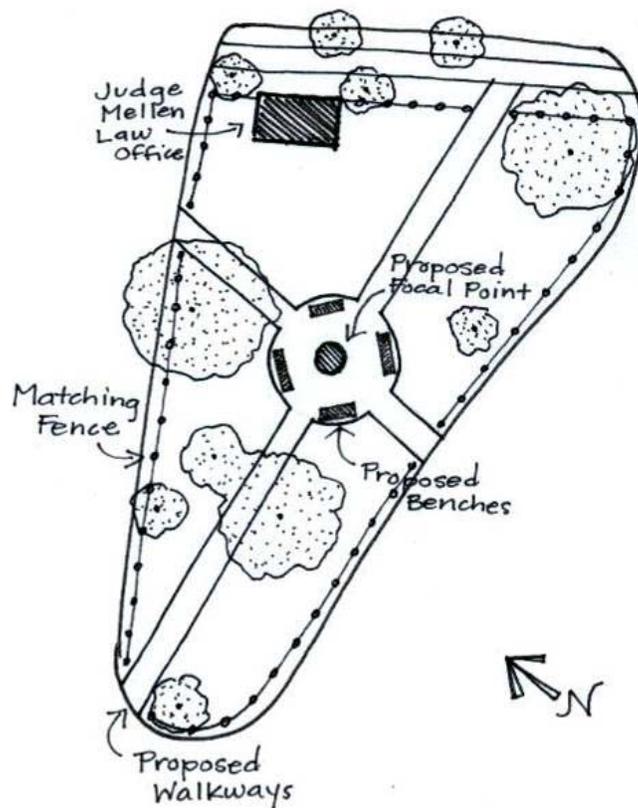


FIGURE 49: Design Proposal

Two crossing walkways are proposed with a seating area and focal point in the center of the space. The idea behind this hypothetical design is the need to attract visitors to the town green.

Focal Points

[Existing Condition] The First Parish Church acts as a focal point due to its prominence on the town green. Also located on this piece of the “green” is a monument made from a granite millstone with a plaque marking the George Washington Memorial Highway. On the triangular wedge a small, single-story, white building is located on one corner of the “green” on Cochituate Road. A small sign next to the doorway indicates the building as the law office of Judge Edward Mellen and states the building’s year of construction as 1826. Judge Mellen was one of the few residents living in Wayland when its name changed from East Sudbury in 1835. Although the building cannot be classified as a focal point considering it faces the street and not the “green,” it is an historic structure located on the common space, nonetheless.



FIGURE 50: Focal Points

The First Parish Church serves as a focal point. Located in front of the Church is a monument marking the George Washington Highway.

[Recommendation] The First Parish Church is clearly the focal point for the piece of the “green” abutting it so no further focal points are recommended. For the triangular wedge, however, a small focal point located in the center of the triangle near the “X” formed by the recommended walkways could give more interest to this piece of the common. This focal point could be some sort of small monument, garden, or seating area. The point is to invite pedestrians into the small space.



FIGURE 51: Additional Focal Points

A small building sits on the wedge-shaped portion of the “green.”

Vegetation

[Existing Condition] Only shade trees are located on the town green. There are several large trees and some smaller ones near the periphery of the “green” that have been planted more recently. Maples, oaks, and some Zelkovas occupy the two spaces. Lawn occupies all of the landscape beneath the trees. These two pieces of the town green do appear well-kept, though they are little used.

[Recommendation] There seems to be an adequate balance between lawn and tree cover. Planting any more trees will likely congest the town green and for this reason shrubs and smaller vegetation are not recommended.

Site Amenities

[Existing Condition] Neither seating nor lighting currently exists at Wayland Town Green. Bordering the section of the “green” adjacent to the First Parish Church is a fence constructed from square granite posts and white wooden double rails. Telephone poles and overhead wires currently run along Boston Post Road and the triangular wedge.



FIGURE 52: Fences

An historic fence surrounds the section of the “green” adjacent to the First Parish Church.

[Recommendation] The lack of seating in the town green prohibits use of the site. Historically appropriate benches should be located in both sections of the “green.” Appropriate locations could be near the monument in front of the Church where a seating area could provide respite and views of

the surrounding town and the center of the triangular wedge where seating would invite usage by pedestrians. Seating could surround a future monument at the crossroads of the suggested walkways. The existing fence surrounding the piece of the “green” adjacent to the Church is historically appropriate and should be replicated around the triangular wedge. This would develop a visual consistency between the two pieces while announcing that they are both part of the same entity. Decorative signage announcing “Wayland Center” could also be displayed on the town green as a way of educating commuters who are simply passing through town.

Comprehensive Master Plans

Town greens are not the only elements of New England town centers that are worthy of preservation. Town centers are larger units in the landscape that consist of a centrally located “green” surrounded by religious institutions, government agencies, residential plots, and commercial enterprises. They blend various land uses into a concentrated space at the heart of a community. Many communities within the last several decades have begun to pass new laws that are intended to preserve their landscape characters. In this case, “landscape” refers to the union between land and architecture as the landscape often influenced the style of architecture and orientation of buildings in New England’s historic landscape.

The work of historical societies has advanced the understanding of local histories at an educational level. In contrast, historic commissions maintain an authoritative role in which their missions are guided by the desire to protect significant architectural histories unique to each town. These organizations have been primarily responsible for the creation of “historic districts” since the 1970s. The boundaries of these districts surround entire regions of town centers that citizens feel embody the “history” of their town. In keeping with the democratic nature of New England local government, historic commissions are not given total authority when designating “historic districts.” Instead, entire communities usually offer input. In the final phase of developing an “historic district,” the occupants and/or owners of the dwellings located in the proposed district vote on whether or not they want their properties to be included. A vote of 75 percent in favor of the district’s creation is normally required for passage.

Zoning laws have existed for much of the twentieth century and have been substantially revised and extended over the subsequent decades. Zoning laws can be defined as regulations issued by local governments to control the size, type, structure, and use of land or building in designated areas. These laws divide towns into district areas, or zones, according to use. New England towns have successfully designed zoning laws in many cases that serve to protect their “landscapes.” In fact, Beth Hinchliffe, town historian for Wellesley, Massachusetts writes “Through the foresight of town fathers who in 1914 made Wellesley the first town in America to adopt zoning laws, Wellesley grew into a beautiful town.” Even today, Wellesley has some of the strictest zoning laws in the state. These regulations can be effective methods for protecting the character of certain areas of a town – especially those with specific historical significance to a town. Instead of simply restricting development altogether, zoning laws instead dictate where certain types of development might be appropriate.

Although government sponsored societies and commissions are specific systems related to the broad effort of preservation, one town in particular has taken a more thorough approach to preserving its landscape identity. In 2002, the Town of Wayland, Massachusetts commissioned the development of a Comprehensive Master Plan that was to replace an outdated plan from the 1960s. The reason Wayland town officials commissioned this new plan was not because the Master Plan from the 1960s was ineffective, but rather, the possible future threats outlined in the previous Master Plan had actually been avoided because of the Plan’s success. In the four decades following the creation of the first Master Plan new threats arose

as technology, population, and economic needs changed. The Master Plan, which was completed in 2004 after two years of analysis, has taken these new threats into consideration in order to continue the preservation success of the town.

Comprehensive Master Plans are plans that outline all physical characteristics of a town pertaining to the landscape, development, and the population. The first portions of these plans typically inventory all aspects of the town including such details as the number of dwellings located within the town. These plans are particularly important because in addition to inventory, the plans also illustrate potential threats to the town's vision and goals while offering possible strategies, or implementation plans, for mediating those threats. The eleven-member Master Plan Advisory Task Force was responsible for initiating Wayland's Master Plan. The group notes in the introduction to their Master Plan:

“In Massachusetts, a Master Plan is defined as a comprehensive Town-wide plan that contains the following elements: Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Public Services and Facilities, Transportation, and Implementation. The Wayland Master Plan includes all of these elements. In addition, the Plan examines Wayland's two centers – Cochituate and Wayland Center – in greater detail.”

The fact that Wayland's Master Plan focuses in great detail on the town's two centers is especially applicable to the focus of this research. A transcript of the

Master Plan's section that focuses on Wayland's town centers can be found in the Appendix.

Master Plans provide the broad starting point by which towns may begin to assess the existing conditions in the town and how they may be treated in order to meet the vision and goals of the town's citizens. Once a town has commissioned a Comprehensive Master Plan, it becomes much more effective to then allocate particular missions to historic commissions and other preservation societies headquartered in the town, therefore streamlining communication and preservation efforts of these sometimes divergent groups. In addition to focusing these organizations, these plans also engage the community, bringing together both government officials and citizens for a common cause. The introduction to Wayland's Master Plan best describes this relationship:

“Overall, Wayland's residents agree that the Town should continue to preserve its community, its landscape, and its way of life, while seeking to make improvements in areas such as transportation, affordable housing, and the layout of Wayland Center and Cochituate Village. The challenge is to decide how best to accomplish this, what combination of policies will be most effective, what tradeoffs are necessary, and how the Town can most effectively prioritize its efforts. Through the Master Plan, Wayland and its residents are answering these important questions.”

The path that Wayland, Massachusetts has taken to preserve its landscape identity is a model that may lead other New England towns toward successfully preserving their own landscape characters.

Conclusion

In the preface to *Sightseeking: Clues to the Landscape History of New England*, Christopher Lenney writes:

“In 1804 the traveler Timothy Dwight noted in his diary ‘When we had passed the line which divides Massachusetts from New York, the appearance of the country in many respects was changed in an instant. The houses became ordinary and ill repaired,’ while the people (generally intoxicated) were ‘rude in their appearance and clownish in their manners.’ More than a century later, the photographer-antiquarian Wallace Nutting made much the same observation about the New England-New York border: ‘the demarcation is almost as distinct as the color on the map’” (Lenney xiii).

Nearly four centuries have passed since Captain John Smith mapped the extensive Atlantic coastline of the New World, christening in 1614 the northern region of British North America with the name “New England.” The first form of colonial unification in the area occurred in 1643 in the form of the United Colonies of New England (commonly referred to as the “New England Confederation”), aligning the English colonies of Massachusetts Bay, Plymouth, Connecticut, and New Haven (Elson Chapter VI). This initial unification is essentially the foundation of the collective identity of New England today.

As generations of New Englanders come and go, history has the potential to disappear. New England is a region tucked in the northeastern corner of a great

nation whose very existence is much influenced by the culture of New England's earliest settlers. In fact, the constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is the world's oldest constitution still in use and was the document upon which much of the United States Constitution was based. The cultural and landscape identity of this history-rich region is embodied in the town green. They are the physical manifestations of the region's Puritan ideology of the seventeenth century.

The origin of town greens and their symbolic reference to the history of Puritan New England are features that justify the preservation of these common spaces. Town greens have been shaped by the events that have occurred in each New England town for centuries and are thus like history books, compiled generation by generation. They are unique landscapes that represent the histories of their respective communities – none two the same.

This research has sought to extract from history an understanding of the initial European founding and settlement of New England while also acknowledging the significance of town greens to the identity of New England towns. The case studies in Chapter 4 seek to guide communities in the preservation efforts of their town centers, but especially their town greens. Five design categories – site orientation and layout, circulation, focal points, vegetation, and site amenities – were used as the framework for each case study. Although site planning as we define it today was not a priority when town greens were created centuries ago, design of management and preservation strategies is necessary for protecting these spaces today. The comparison of existing conditions and design recommendations accompanying these case studies hopefully provides a broad understanding of how

assessments can be made regarding the maintenance and management strategies of these spaces so that they continue to survive while serving as community resources.

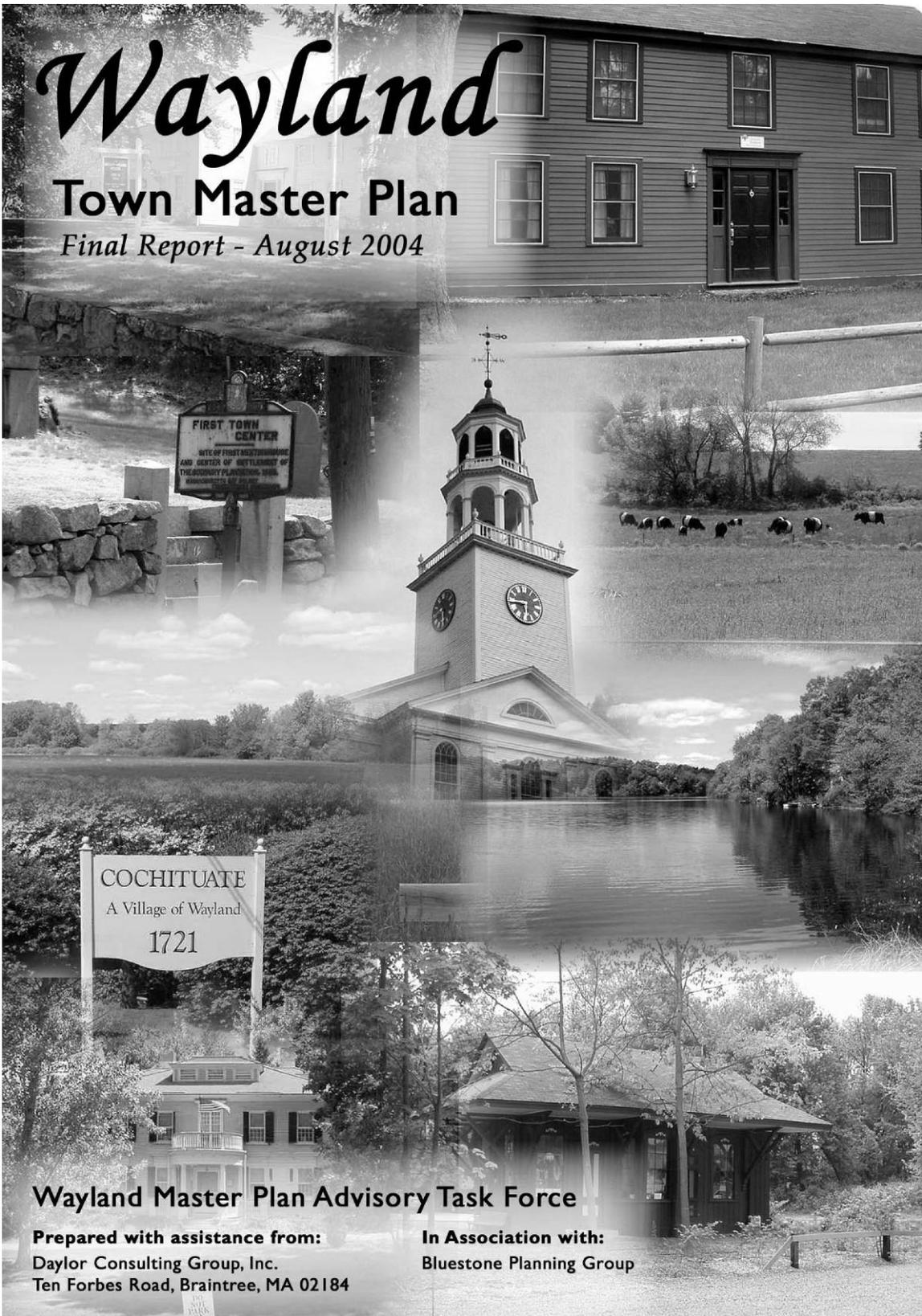
Education about these spaces, their influence, and their role in the formation of a new nation is necessary in order to sustain their existence. Historical societies aim to educate the public about the histories of individual towns. Children are young and impressionable individuals who curiously seek knowledge. The children of today will be the leaders of tomorrow who will be responsible for the preservation of town greens and the histories they personify. If the importance of preservation can be instilled into the public at an early age, these iconic landscapes will continue to persist for generations to come.

Appendix: Wayland Master Plan

Wayland

Town Master Plan

Final Report - August 2004



Wayland Master Plan Advisory Task Force

Prepared with assistance from:
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In Association with:
Bluestone Planning Group

Wayland

Town Master Plan

*Final Report
August 2004*



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Land Use Guide Plan
Wayland Master Plan

Source: MassGIS, Town of Wayland

Figure 10-2

Wayland01180.dwg.mxd

Wayland. The Town can further regulate lighting by adopting a Light Pollution Bylaw. Box 10-3 includes some possible provisions for inclusion in such a bylaw.⁵

Box 10-3: Regulating Light Pollution

An effective light pollution bylaw might include the following provisions:

Applicability: To maximize the effectiveness of the bylaw, it would apply to outdoor lighting on any site—residential, commercial, industrial, or public/institutional. Small outdoor lights such as porch, doorway, or lamp-post fixtures using incandescent lamps or other lamp types up to specified wattage could be exempted.

Types and Colors of Outdoor Lighting: Wayland may wish to regulate the type and color of lighting, which can affect the nighttime character of the Town as well as the amount of light pollution. Common prohibited light sources include mercury vapor lamps and searchlights. Filtering can be required for metal halide lighting in order to prevent the emission of ultraviolet radiation.

Lighting Design and Shielding: The core of the bylaw would be a provision to require outdoor lighting to provide shielding that prevents *light trespass* (light emitted from an outdoor fixture that shines beyond the boundary of the property) and *up-light* (light emitted by a fixture that strays above the fixture itself). One exception is streetlights, which would be permitted some light trespass.

Hours of Operation: Lighting would be of the minimum intensity necessary to ensure safety at any given time of the night. For parking lots at businesses and municipal facilities, this might mean reducing or eliminating lighting outside of the hours of operation.

Application and Review Procedure: The applicant would submit a lighting plan showing the type and location of outdoor lighting proposed, the intensity of illumination at ground level, and demonstration that light trespass and uplight will not occur.

10.4.4 Noise Pollution

For Wayland's residents, the gentle sounds of nature are an integral component of the Town's semi-rural character. However, sounds associated with modern day life come with development. Noise from lawn equipment, construction activities, automobiles, and even recreational activities are slowly intruding on the Town's character. While such sounds are not often a distraction, at ample volumes, these sounds can become a nuisance to residents. It is at this point that excessive noise is considered noise pollution.

In order to prevent noise pollution from becoming disruptive to residents, the Town could consider a Noise Pollution Bylaw that would address various situations that are associated with noise pollution. Such an ordinance could address types of activities regulated, hours of activity, and noise level thresholds.

10.5 Wayland's Centers

During the Master Plan process, residents identified Wayland Center and Cochituate Village as critical to the Town's character, image, and quality of life. These two centers serve many important functions, such as providing physical and symbolic central gathering places for the Town, hosting numerous businesses that residents rely upon, and contributing to Wayland's self-image of a small, friendly community. While both centers have numerous positive qualities, there are also some challenges that need to be addressed, ranging from the mix of uses, to the design and siting of buildings, to the layout of pedestrian and vehicular circulation routes.

To address some of these challenges in the Master Plan, considerable attention has been focused on Wayland Center and Cochituate Village. First, based on public input, the Plan developed a set of guiding principles for

⁵ Other Massachusetts communities that have adopted specific outdoor lighting bylaws include Plymouth and Winchester. Wayland may wish to consult these communities for advice on developing their own bylaw.

the two centers (see **Box 10-4**). These principles define the Town's overall goals and intent with regard to the centers, and are for consideration whenever any Town body is making a decision that might affect one or both of the centers. Second, the Plan delineates the boundaries of each of the two centers (see **Figure 10-2**). While the exact boundaries of the centers are somewhat subjective, these delineations will help the Town make future decisions with regard to the centers. Finally, the Plan includes a few specific zoning recommendations for the Town centers, which are described in the following sub-sections.

Box 10-4: Guiding Principles for Wayland Center and Cochituate

The future of Wayland Center and Cochituate Village could be guided by the following principles:

1. Role in the Town

Wayland Center and Cochituate Village will both continue to function as central gathering places for shopping, socializing, doing business, and attending events within Wayland. Both Wayland Center and Cochituate Village will function as centers for Town affairs and events and as centers for business and commerce. As the hubs of the Town, Wayland Center and Cochituate should be accessible, attractive, and welcoming to residents of all ages, interests, and income levels.

2. Types of Land Uses

In the tradition of New England village centers, Wayland's centers continue to contain a mix of residences, businesses, and public and semi-public institutions. In the commercial core of each center, ground-level space should be reserved for retail business use, with upper floor space used for offices or apartments. Surrounding the commercial core are residential neighborhoods, public and semi-public facilities, parks, and open space.

3. Site Design

Throughout both Town centers, buildings, parking, landscaping, and other features should be sited in a manner that is pedestrian friendly and gives visual emphasis to buildings and landscaping and downplays the visual impact of parking, vehicle circulation, and signage. In the commercial core of Cochituate, buildings should be sited close to the street and close to one another to create the atmosphere of a tight-knit village. In Wayland Center, where a more open feel is desired, landscaped setbacks should be promoted.

4. Building Design

Building design should take its cues from the historic character of the area. Through architectural detailing, larger buildings should be articulated into smaller segments or units that are in scale with surrounding structures. Building façades that face streets or sidewalks should be welcoming and visually interesting. Windows containing storefront displays or art are preferred; blank walls should be avoided except under exceptional circumstances.

5. Transportation and Circulation

The village centers should be easily accessible by foot, bike, or car. Future developments and road projects in the centers should incorporate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. Roads and parking areas, while essential, should not be allowed to dominate the centers. Creative solutions and flexible standards should be used to reduce the amount of off-street parking that is needed.

6. Public Investment

Whenever possible, public facilities should be sited in the Town centers. When facilities that are now located in the centers need more space (such as the Library or the Town Building), all expansion options within the centers should be fully considered and exhausted before sites outside of the centers are considered. The only exception to this principle is for facilities that are sited to serve specific districts of the Town (such as fire stations and schools), and for facilities that may be incompatible with village character (such as a public works yard). Other investments in public infrastructure, such as roads, trails, and water and wastewater services, should be planned and prioritized so as to promote these guiding principles.

10.5.1 Business Zoning in the Centers

Currently, business zoning in the Town centers consists of four different districts in Wayland Center (Business A, Business B, Light Manufacturing, and Limited Commercial) and two districts in Cochituate (Business A and Business B). (See **Figure 2-2**, the Town's existing zoning map.) This zoning framework could be improved in a few ways to better reflect the goals of the Town. First, the Business A and Business B districts are almost identical in the uses they allow, and thus create a somewhat confusing zoning patchwork. At the same time, they fail to provide a distinction between Wayland Center and Cochituate, which are somewhat different from each other in character. Second, the Light Manufacturing district allows a few uses that, in the

long term, may not be compatible with the desired village character of Wayland Center. Finally, more zoning flexibility is needed for the Wayland Business Center site (former Raytheon Site) in order to promote viable redevelopment there.

To address these issues, the Plan suggests reconfiguring the Business A and Business B Districts as shown on Figure 10-2 so that Wayland Center and Cochituate would each have its own distinct zoning framework. In Wayland Center, the recommended Business A District would replace the existing Business A, Business B, and Light Manufacturing Districts. In Cochituate, the recommended Business B District would replace the existing Business A and Business B Districts. Table 10-5 identifies some of the major differences between these two districts:

**Table 10-5
Recommended Business Zoning Framework for Wayland's Centers (Generalized)**

	Business A District (Wayland Center)	Business B District (Cochituate)
Areas Proposed for This District (see Figure 10-2)	Wayland Center Route 20 at Weston Town line	Cochituate: Route 30 at Route 27 Cochituate: West Plain Street at Route 27 Route 30 at East Plain Street
Allowed Uses	Generally the same as existing allowed uses in the Business A District, but excluding trade shops and including sit-down restaurants as well as multi-family housing on the upper floors of mixed-use buildings.	
Minimum Lot Size	About 25,000 sq. ft.	About 15,000 sq. ft.
Minimum Setbacks ^(a)	Front: 20 ft. minimum, 40 ft. max. Side & Rear: 20 ft. minimum	Front: 10 ft. minimum, 30 ft. max. Side & Rear: 10 ft. minimum
Maximum Intensity	65% maximum lot coverage ^{(b), (c)}	80% maximum lot coverage ^(c)
Parking Requirements	Add a special permit provision to allow for shared parking or reduced parking ratios for small businesses in the Town centers upon demonstration of a workable solution. No parking allowed between the street and a horizontal line extending parallel to the building façade, except in unusual circumstances.	

Other Standards

(a) See text below.

(b) Virtually all of the Wayland Center Business A District is within the Aquifer Protection Overlay District, which limits impervious surface to 30% of the upland area of a lot.

(c) The Master Plan suggests in Section 13.1.3 that the definition of lot coverage be changed to include all impervious surfaces, not just building footprints.

Setbacks and Parking

Currently, the minimum front yard setbacks in Wayland's business districts range from 30 to 60 feet, and parking is allowed in the setback areas. These regulations promote a conventional suburban development pattern where parking lots are located in front of the building, thus separating the building from the street and creating a more blighted appearance and a less pedestrian friendly street. This auto-oriented pattern is apparent in places such as the commercial areas on Route 20 near the Weston Town line. On the other hand, buildings located near the road help to define the street line, create a sense of scale to the street, and focus attention on the more interesting and attractive buildings rather than the parking lots. This more pedestrian-friendly pattern is currently found in parts of Cochituate.

During the Master Plan process, residents expressed support for a “village” style of development characterized by smaller setbacks. To achieve this, a 10 to 20 foot *minimum* front yard setback and a 30 to 40 foot *maximum* setback is recommended in the Business A and Business B Districts in order to promote this more pedestrian friendly development pattern. In addition, parking in the setback area might be prohibited, and instead any new parking lots would be located to the side or rear of buildings and would have new landscaping requirements.⁶ To encourage pedestrian activities, outdoor seating and patios could be allowed within the front yard. A special permit procedure is recommended to allow the setback and parking requirements to be varied based on unique circumstances. For example, a reduced setback would be allowed if an abutting building is closer to the street or a waiver of the setback requirements could be granted if it is necessary to site a septic system, when a septic system is the only means of waste water management.

Landscaping

Landscaping is an essential element of the design of a commercial area with respect to promoting the public health, safety, comfort, and beauty of the area. Landscaping is intended to lessen the impact of development on the environment by reducing glare and heat buildup, promoting the creation landscape islands for pedestrian safety, to break up large expanses of pavement, and to reduce storm water run-off.

Currently the Town’s Zoning Bylaw has no provision for landscaping in commercial districts. The development of commercial landscaping regulations is recommended. Such regulations could promote sustainable landscaping that utilizes native species, limited herbicide and pesticide application, and drought resistant plantings thereby limiting the need for irrigation systems.

Signage

Signs are an integral component of a business, not only promoting the name but also advertising the goods or services that the business offers to potential customers. Signs by their nature must capture the public’s attention, whether a pedestrian or driving in a vehicle. Poorly designed signs discourage business and have a negative impact on a community’s character.

A sign’s greatest effect comes when the overall design of the building, property and other signs nearby are considered together and complement one another. This not only means the placement, size, and materials used in the construction of the sign, but also the style, color, and method of lighting. When these elements are brought together they achieve the best possible effect – for both the business and the community. Given the importance signs have in enhancing a Town’s character, it is recommended that the Town amend its sign bylaw to provide guidance on issues relating to the placement, size, lighting, and construction of signs.

10.5.2 Wayland Business Center (Former Raytheon Site)

The Wayland Business Center, located just west of Wayland Center on the north side of Route 20, is a keystone site not just for Wayland Center but for the entire Town. This site was vacated by Polaroid and is in transition, awaiting a new owner and possibly new proposed uses. As Wayland approaches build-out, the

⁶ Many retailers prefer to have parking directly in front of their business because they believe it serves as a kind of “welcome” sign for prospective customers, promising a hassle-free visit. While this is probably true to some extent, many downtown centers in Massachusetts—such as Wellesley and Concord—thrive even though many businesses lack their own parking lot. The success of these areas is based, in part, on their ability to distinguish themselves from the generic “strip commercial” feel of so many business areas. In this regard, the visual benefits of making parking less prominent more than makes up for the loss of convenience associated with needing to find an on-street parking space or walking a short distance to an off-street lot.

Wayland Business Center site remains the only location in Town where there is the potential for large-scale business activities, significant commercial tax revenue generation, and large-scale redevelopment. In addition, the site, if carefully planned, has the potential to extend or complement Wayland Center.

The site is currently zoned as a Limited Commercial District, in which the allowed uses include offices, light manufacturing, research and development, and warehouse/distribution facilities as well as personal service facilities supporting any of the above uses such as cafeterias, banks and day care, all not to exceed 15,000 square feet. Special permits can be sought for buildings accommodating the same uses that exceed 15,000 square feet. This zoning framework is reasonable for the types of uses that existed on the site in the past, but a more flexible framework would provide opportunity for the type of redevelopment that the Town may view as appropriate for this site. Recently the Town Center Committee of the Planning Board conducted a community attitude survey that resulted in over 1,000 responses. Overwhelmingly, those who responded are looking for small scale retail including restaurants and personal services, all of which may be promoted through zoning and may bring new life to this large property. In addition, the existing zoning framework does not include any provisions to encourage development on the site to be tied into Wayland Center; on the contrary, a large perimeter buffer is required, which effectively isolates the site from Wayland Center.

To overcome these issues, and in recognition of the unique nature of the Wayland Business Center site in Town, a new zoning classification for this site is suggested: the Wayland Business Center District. The basic zoning provisions in this district could be the same as in the Limited Commercial District (thus not denying any activities that are currently allowed). However, an additional use—Planned Redevelopment Project—could be allowed by a special permit from the Planning Board, subject to the provisions of a new Planned Redevelopment Project (PRP) Bylaw. This bylaw would allow a wider range of land uses, greater flexibility for site planning, and a higher overall density in exchange for developing the site according to a comprehensive, consensus-based site plan and adhering to specified design standards. In this way, the PRP option could create a win-win situation for the Town and the owner/developer. Suggested guidelines for the PRP Bylaw are shown in **Box 10-5**.

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