LEICESTER RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

BLACKSTONE VALLEY / QUINEBAUG-SHETUCKET LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor

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Cover Photographs: gravestone, Southgate Pasture Cemetery
Earle Street, Mannville
Johnson barns, Whittemore Street

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INTRODUCTION

The 22 Massachusetts communities within the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (BRV) and the Quinebaug-Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor (Q-S) are linked by a common heritage of agriculture and industry powered by the rivers and streams that dominate the landscape of south central Massachusetts. River Corridor towns extend from Mendon on the east to Brimfield on the west. While they range in size from the city of Worcester to the compact town of Hopedale, each is equally shaped by the interaction of nature and culture over time.

Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the history of a community and provide a sense of place; they show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. This wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character, yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first step toward their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature or an important river corridor.

To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the two National Heritage Corridors (BRV and Q-S) have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program to communities in south central Massachusetts. The goals of the program are to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected, and to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a pilot project conducted in southeast Massachusetts and refined in Essex County. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land*, which has provided guidance for the program since its inception. In summary, each participating community appoints a Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the DCR-BRV/Q-S consulting team. The LPC organizes a heritage landscape identification meeting during which residents and town officials identify and prioritize the landscapes that embody the community's character and its history. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, accompanied by interested community members. This group visits the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathers information about the community.

The final project for each community is this Reconnaissance Report. It outlines the community's landscape history; discusses broader land planning issues identified by the community; describes the priority heritage landscapes and issues associated with them; and concludes with preservation recommendations. Two appendices include a list of all the heritage landscapes identified at the community meeting and a reference listing of land protection tools and procedures.

PART I

LEICESTER'S HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

LEICESTER'S LANDSCAPE THROUGH TIME

Leicester, a rural town in Worcester County, is bordered by Paxton on the north, Auburn and Worcester on the east, Charlton and Oxford on the south, and Spencer on the west. Leicester encompasses an area of 24.68 square miles, or 15,900 acres. State highways 9 and 56 carry considerable amounts of traffic through the town to the Massachusetts Turnpike and to Worcester, the state's second largest city and the major employment center of central Massachusetts.

Leicester lies at the southeastern edge of Worcester County's upland plateau, with elevations ranging between 700 and 1200 feet above sea level. Higher elevations are located toward the north and from there a series of elongated drumlins extend in a southeasterly direction through the town, interspersed with long, narrow swampy valleys. The soil type referred to as Sutton Loam predominates toward the north side of town, being replaced toward the south with Charlton and Paxton Loams. All three types, where relatively free of stones, rank among the most agriculturally productive soils in the country – especially well-suited to grass and grain crops, as well as market gardens and orchards. The town's waterways feed three different drainage basins, including the Blackstone River to the east, the Quaboag River beyond the western border, and the French/Thames River south of town.

Native American occupation of the central Massachusetts region has been documented at least as far back as the Middle Archaic Period (8,000-6,000 Before Present), with habitation sites most often found in the vicinity of great ponds or significant river plains. Little is known of Native American presence within Leicester, although the original English name for the town – Towtaid – is of Nipmuc origin. By the Contact Period (1550-1620 AD) the Nipmuc, a group of allied bands of Algonquian Indians, were sparsely spread through much of central Massachusetts, many of them associated with significant villages in what are now Grafton, Sutton and Webster. Nipmuc presence in Leicester was more likely to have included seasonal visits to particularly rich natural resource areas, where small kin groups may have camped while they hunted, fished, or gathered other local resources.

The original Leicester township was an eight-mile-square region known as Towtaid when it was acquired by deed from the Nipmuc in 1686 and confirmed to a group of Roxbury investors as a colonial land grant in 1714. Significant settlement began about 1724, during the same period as other towns in the region, including Grafton. From the beginning, agricultural land in Leicester was characterized by dispersed farmsteads surrounding a central hilltop village. Leicester center saw significant development during the Federal Period (1775-1830) including the establishment of an academy, a card-making industry not dependent on waterpower, and a crossroads commercial area that served the Worcester & Stafford (CT) Turnpike as well as the Middle Post Road (Main Street) from Boston to New York.

Manufacturing began early in Leicester, due in part to its numerous brooks, which were better adapted to available industrial technology than larger rivers. Textile mills formed the core of villages in Cherry Valley on Lynde Brook (1814) and Clappville, later known as Rochdale at the confluence of Burncoat and Grindstone Brooks (1821). Three (textile) machine shops and a scythe factory also relied on stream power. Upland areas of town also benefited, however, from the American rush toward industrial self-sufficiency. Boot

and shoe production, as well as the card "clothing" for which the town was known, relied on foot-powered machines and provided employment for dozens of skilled craftspeople and off-season farmers.

Leicester's proximity to Worcester, the county seat, played a significant role in the town's development, through capital invested in Leicester's industries, and through the construction of numerous country houses built to take advantage of Leicester's fresh air, hilltop breezes, and still largely rural charm. The Western Railroad began service to Rochdale in 1841, an early date for Worcester County railroads. Ironically, that same proximity resulted in some more detrimental effects as the 19th century wore on. Major card clothing manufacturers removed their businesses from town to build in the heart of the city; Worcester acquired large tracts in the northeast of town, including much of the Kettle Brook drainage, to develop as reservoirs to bring water to the expanding city population.

There was an industrial resurgence in early 20th century Leicester as large, consolidated woolen mills benefited especially from wartime economic demands, but the expanded operations did not survive the Depression, and a majority of the mills that underpinned life in Cherry Valley and Rochdale closed down. Nevertheless, the town's population continued to grow despite industrial decline, due to increased suburban residential development, as well as increased lakeside summer cottage construction.

Since 1940, Leicester's suburbanization has increased dramatically. Its population has more than doubled, with approximately two-thirds of the town's residents living in owner-occupied housing. The town has responded to residential and consequent commercial growth by enacting a number of significant zoning bylaws including establishment of water resource protection zones, and establishment of neighborhood specific districts such as the recent Greenville Village Neighborhood Business District. A by-pass, South Main Street, was constructed in 1922 to reroute Route 9 away from the historic town center (subsequently designated a National Register Historic District).

At present Leicester is experiencing the same economic slow-down and reduced demand for real estate as are other towns in the region. Residents have expressed an awareness of the limited planning window this affords them, to address a complex mix of issues including open space and aquifer protection, economic development, historic preservation and agricultural survival.

COMMUNITY-WIDE HERITAGE LANDSCAPE ISSUES

Concern for heritage landscapes is not new to Leicester. The town's Open Space Plan, prepared in 1998, observes: *The combination of natural and historic features in the town should not be overlooked when the town is considering conservation techniques to best preserve the character and resources of the landscape*. Two historic resource surveys, completed in the late 1990s, documented the structural resources of the town center and the mill village of Rochdale.

Leicester's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by interested residents including many representing town boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on February 8, 2007. During the meeting, residents compiled a lengthy list of the town's heritage landscapes, which is included as Appendix A of this report. As the comprehensive list was being created, attendees were asked to articulate the value of each landscape and identify issues relating to its preservation.

Residents emphasized broad issues related to heritage landscapes and community character. These issues are town-wide concerns that are linked to a range or category of heritage landscapes, not just to a single place. In Leicester, three related issues stand out.

- **Protection of Open Space**: Open space is considered a major character-defining feature of Leicester, which is presently experiencing significant residential development in many areas. Residents are looking for mechanisms to limit the impact of development on the town's open space and agricultural lands.

- **Positive Incentives for Protection:** Residents are looking for ways in which private land owners and developers can be encouraged and supported in their efforts to:
  - continue agricultural production,
  - preserve undeveloped land as open space,
  - seek historically-sensitive solutions for adaptive re-use of structures and building complexes.

- **Balancing Protection and Growth**: Residents are looking for planning tools that will improve Leicester's ability to manage growth, encouraging economic development while protecting the town's heritage.

PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Based on information gathered at the community meeting, attendees identified a group of priority landscapes for the consulting team to focus on, through field survey, documentation and planning assessment. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued and contributes to community character. None of them has any permanent form of protection.

Leicester's priority landscapes range from a hidden cemetery to two of the town's best-known houses with their prominent settings. Hillside farms and a double drumlin with its vistas are indicative of the town's ridge-top settlement and strong agrarian roots, while a small manufacturing neighborhood echoes Leicester's historic reliance on water-powered industry.

The landscapes which were given priority status by Leicester's community meeting represent a range of scales and types of resources. Each landscape is also representative of other, similar properties in the town and each demonstrates the multiple layers of significance that are common to most heritage landscapes.

Natural and cultural features, individual and civic histories, combine to present property owners and concerned citizens with a complex combination of present-day issues and opportunities. The descriptions and recommendations that follow are intended to be first steps and constructive examples for what needs to be an ongoing process: to identify what is valued and irreplaceable in the community, and develop strategies that will preserve and enhance Leicester's landscape heritage.

Ballard and Tupper's Hills

Description: This privately-owned double drumlin in central Leicester includes over 200 acres of upland open space, stretching north to south between Rawson Street and Pine Street. Characteristic of drumlins, the land surface is smooth, generally covered by thick deposits of glacial till, a dense mix of boulders, gravel, sand and clay, which is relatively impermeable by water. The northern drumlin, Ballard Hill, drops off quite steeply on both sides and toward the southern end, creating a narrow valley between it and the southern drumlin, known as Tupper's Hill. The undeveloped areas include a 69-acre parcel on the north drumlin, seven narrow parcels in the valley between drumlins, and a 100 acre parcel on the south drumlin. A series of house lots along Charles Street marks its effective west boundary, while Town Meadow Brook flows in a valley that runs the length of the eastern side.

Ballard Hill is characterized by a wide swath of hayfield running north to south over its crest providing extensive views of the town in all directions, while the hill's sides are young deciduous woodland. Tupper's Hill is mostly covered by 30 – 40 year old mixed pine and hardwood, although at least one area of very steep pasture exists adjacent to Pine Street on its south slope. Pine Street is further defined by traditional stone walls, and has a number of recently developed single house lots.

The east slope of Ballard and Tupper's Hills is watershed land under the jurisdiction of the Leicester Water District. Much of the area does not pass percolation testing and

would, therefore, require construction of a pumping station and connection to town sewer at the base of the hill, in order to be developable for residential use.

Background: The Ballard Hill area was known as Mount Pleasant for many years before acquiring its present name. The only evidence of historic habitation sites are the foundations of one farm on the southern drumlin which, according to Washburn's 1860s history of Leicester, burned in the 1790s. During the 1930s depression, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) planted all of Ballard Hill to vegetables, down to Dutton Pond. The current owner has hayed the top of Ballard Hill for many years, but brushy growth east of the track that runs over the hilltop suggests that haying was discontinued on that side two to three years ago, while the west side was apparently not mown in 2006.

Issues

- Maintenance: The pleasant-ness of old Mount Pleasant (Ballard Hill) is largely dependent on its open environment and its long rural vistas. The open hilltop will grow in quickly if a mowing schedule is not maintained; invasive bittersweet vines on trees along the verges, as well as multiflora rose in unmown section, are indicators of the tangle of briar and vines that will take over the field and make walking, or even access, impossible. The young growth woods covering the hill's side slopes are indicative of the following stage of succession, and Ballard will eventually revert to forest as is now seen on Tupper Hill.

- Off-road vehicles: There is some evidence of snowmobile and ATV use on the track that extends over Ballard Hill, and there is a sanctioned snowmobile trail cutting through the dip between the two hilltops. Use of motorized recreational vehicles, especially in areas of steep slope or soft ground surface, results in erosion, damage to fragile habitat, and disruption of wildlife corridors.

- Residential development: At present, the infrastructure costs associated with developing Ballard Hill make it unappealing for residential development. How long this will remain true depends on development pressures in other parts of town, and from outside Leicester's borders. While the Leicester Water District overlay that includes the eastern side of Ballard Hill provides a greater measure of town control over construction in the area than might otherwise be true, the overlay does not preclude development of this very scenic hillside.

Recommendations

- Share the findings of this project with the property owner . The owner needs to know that this open-space parcel is highly valued by Leicester's citizens.

- Explore options for permanent preservation with the owner, including putting a Conservation Restriction (CR) in place.

- Leicester needs to explore the potential of encouraging the owner to transfer development rights to the parcel, or outright transfer of property to the town. Either of these mechanisms would be easier to accomplish financially if the town were to adopt the Community Preservation Act.

- Encourage the owner to lease out fields for haying, to keep them open.

- Develop town guidelines for access to water district lands, to help minimize environmental impact of off-road vehicles.

Southgate Pasture Cemetery

Description: This family burying place, lost in the woods by the mid-20th century, is located off Rawson Street near the Spencer line. It occupies a low-lying terrace and measures approximately 50 feet by 75 feet, part of a 6.2 acre L-shaped parcel belonging to a residence on Rawson Street. The cemetery does not now have public access, for it lies behind a second residential lot. It is a wooded site adjacent to undevelopable wetlands, and contains an undetermined number of unmarked small boulders used as headstones. A nineteenth-century record of the cemetery states unequivocally that there are sixteen burials at the site, and that there are rough stones at each end of the graves, but no inscriptions on them. In fact, at least one stone is roughly inscribed, with what is either I S or J S.

At the request of the Town Administrator, the parcel (estimated at 10,000 square feet) was assessed in 1996 at a fair market value of $1,320. The assessor noted: *this area has no frontage, no access, is wet with a small knoll where the cemetery is located and of a size too small to be considered a buildable lot.*

Background: The cemetery was set aside as a burying ground by the family of Richard Southgate Jr., an elder in the Baptist church. Known burial dates range from 1770 to 1799, which may have been the latest one. Interments include two Revolutionary War veterans, Jonas and Judah Southgate, as well as at least four people who are not identified as family members. The cemetery is not indicated on early maps of Leicester, but on a 1795 map, the area west of Burncoat Brook on Rawson Street is labeled *Small Society called Separate* – referring to the "Separatists", or Baptists, of whom Richard Southgate was an elder. Southgate's house stood a bit west of the cemetery, across the road, but was no longer standing in the mid-nineteenth century.

At the time the cemetery was in use, there was no pond on Burncoat Brook; the brook's flooding to create Cedar Meadow Pond by 1831 raised the water table and brought the wetlands much closer to the cemetery than they had originally been. It is likely that the Southgates laid out the cemetery at the downslope corner of their pasture – hence its name and its location behind a roadside house lot.

Issues

The town of Leicester has been weighing its responsibilities in the matter of this cemetery for over ten years. At issue are:

- acquisition of the property,
- public access to the cemetery,
- care of the property and its grave markers,
- suitable recognition of the burial place of two of the town's war veterans,
- protection of the grave sites.

Recommendations

The site is a rare survival in its simplicity, its unaltered state, and its associations with early Leicester history and genealogy. Useful guidelines for management of this property are found in DCR's publication, *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries*.

Chapter 114 of the Massachusetts General Laws addresses the issues associated with cemeteries and burials. 114:18 states that *any town having within its limits an abandoned or neglected burying ground may take charge of the same ... but no property rights shall be violated....*

- It would therefore be worthwhile for the Selectmen, Town Counsel, Veterans Graves Officer and Historical Commission to work together in an effort to acquire the cemetery parcel, or at least acquire public access to the parcel by negotiating a right of way in order to preserve and maintain it.

- Map the cemetery, including locations of known and probable memorial markers.

- Prepare and submit a Form E (Burial Grounds) to the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Mannville

Description: Mannville is a neighborhood of Leicester defined by the intersection of Mannville and Earle Streets and by the waterpower source of Kettle Brook. The area extends eastward at least as far as Mulberry Street, and is bounded on the west by Paxton Street (Rte 56). Nearly all of the parcels within the historic community of Mannville are now owned by the Worcester Department of Public Works, Water Bureau, and by the Worcester Airport. The site of the Mannville Village School is the only Leicester-owned land parcel, although the Town does own the roads that traverse the village. As a landscape, the area presently forms part of a much larger protected open space – estimated to include nearly 850 acres – controlled by Worcester as part of a watershed protection district for the man-made Kettle Brook Reservoirs that lie north and south of Mannville.

Background: While today Mannville is part of a larger environmentally protected natural area, it was once a busy industrial community. As early as 1739 a Quaker meeting house and cemetery (including headstones dating as early as 1748) were located here, as well as grist and saw mills south of Earle Street on Kettle Brook. Amos Earle's early (1838) card manufactory was enlarged and expanded in 1853 by Billings Mann and Albert Marshall, who developed the industrial potential of the brook, adding other mills upstream. Over time, houses were built along the street axes, forming a compact mill village. Before 1870, however, the City of Worcester began purchasing land adjacent to Kettle Brook, as well as Lynde Brook to the east, to create and protect reservoirs for supplemental water supply to the city. In a series of major civil engineering projects, Worcester built Lynde Brook Reservoir, as well as three reservoirs along Kettle Brook (one extending northward into the town of Paxton). The banks of Kettle Brook were cleared and channeled. All buildings on the watershed lands were razed by 1978, the surrounding lands were clear-cut and reforested to white pine plantations, and gates were erected across six discontinued public ways in the vicinity.

The only standing feature that remains in Mannville is the peaceful hilltop Friends Cemetery, surrounded by carefully laid, late-19th century stone walls, entered through an elegant wrought iron gateway. The cemetery is under the care of the Worcester-Pleasant Street Friends Meeting (Quakers), and was identified as one of Leicester's unique scenic resources in a townwide Open Space Survey conducted in 1998.

Thus Mannville is an unusually large and complex historic archeological site, that includes domestic cellarholes, foundations of civic, industrial and religious buildings, remains of waterworks, roadways, field walls and other features that document the area's extensive social and economic land use over a period of two hundred years.

Issues

- Lack of access: the Worcester Department of Public Works, Water Bureau, patrols area, refuses to allow public access despite roads still being public right-of-ways in the town.

- Neglect: historic and archeological resources are not being cared for.

- Interpretive potential: great potential for educational and interpretive uses, guided trails, signage.

- Jurisdiction: Leicester has no management authority over this large area of town; it receives no compensation for loss of taxes and reduced water supply.

Recommendations

There is a clear disjunction between the protective actions of Worcester's Water Bureau in clearing its property and blocking access, and the Town of Leicester's interest in preserving and interpreting this heritage landscape. Nevertheless, in order that the issues of Mannville's preservation and accessibility be addressed:

- It is essential that the municipalities of Leicester and Worcester open a dialogue about the area. Such a conversation might begin with a joint meeting of the Leicester and Worcester Historical Societies and Commissions and Preservation Worcester as well as the Worcester Friends Meeting, optimally including a site tour, to enlist the interest and support of Worcester's historical community.

- A feature article in the Worcester newspaper would draw sympathetic public attention to the locale.

- The dialogue might continue at the planning department level, to explore options for protecting watershed lands while still allowing public access to this beautiful recreational site which is also a fascinating example of landscape history. DCR water supply lands might be looked to as a model for public access policy.

- The Leicester Historical Commission needs to thoroughly document Mannville's history and cultural resources, through preparation of appropriate inventory forms for the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The neighborhood is potentially eligible for designation as a National Register District which, as with Leicester Common, will broaden awareness of the site. National recognition of Mannville's significance would also serve as a tool to further interpretive goals.

Swan Tavern and May House

These two historic structures on traditional village house lots serve as visual bookends for Leicester's Washburn Square – Leicester Common National Register Historic District. Since they are also the focus of current community concern in the village, this report will examine them and the issues associated with each one, rather than discussing the district as a whole.

Description: The **Swan Tavern** dominates the landscape at the southwest corner of Washburn Square. Its imposing colonnaded facade on Main Street, and its series of two ells stretching along Paxton Rd. clearly identify this as a historic area. The building's early use as a stage route inn, and its subsequent nineteenth-century gentrification are characteristic of post road property uses during two significant eras of the town's historic development.

The Swan Tavern landscape consists of a .82 acre house lot in the center of Leicester. It originally included a back field, likely accessed by a cartway next to the building, leading from North Main Street. Today the cartway is suggested by the lower of two stepped terraces, but is blocked from street access by a low granite block wall topped by cast iron fencing. The wall and fencing define the property's main street side, and curve around the corner onto Paxton Road. Ornamental plantings in the front yard include fairly recent rhododendron and holly, a magnolia and a Chinese elm. The yard is dominated by a large maple in poor condition, which has lost a central limb and shows a great deal of dead wood.

The building itself is a white painted clapboard structure with Greek Revival decorative elements. Its main, front section (1843) was built on a center-hall plan, two rooms deep with hip roof and interior side chimneys. A Doric colonnade extends across the front and wraps around both sides, overlooking a terraced side yard on the west. A short gable-roofed ell extends north behind the main block and projects slightly toward Paxton Road. A second ell continues the extension and includes a carriage-wide door at the north end. A separate, later, garden room also stands behind the house. A local informant indicated that the interior is in excellent condition with a high level of architectural integrity.

Background: Built in 1723 as a tavern for travelers on the Middle Post Road that ran from Boston to New York, the building was bought and enlarged in 1781 by Reuben Swan.

The rear ell of the present house may have been the original Swan Tavern structure. In 1842 it was purchased by Hiram Knight, one of the town's successful card cloth manufacturers, who built another addition, updated the house, and constructed its present facade. It is likely that the side terracing, wrought iron fencing and granite block wall also date to the period of Knight's gentrification. Later owners included Dexter Knight the family of General Leonard Wood (commander of the Rough Riders; military governor of Cuba) and Oscar Paine, whose inventions included the 45 caliber Thompson submachine gun. The house was subsequently a part of Leicester Junior College, later Becker College, which used it as the president's house, later their administration building until recently, when it was sold to private owner. Becker retained ownership of the back field of the property, off Paxton Street, and the college continues to mow the field. According to assessors' records however, the present parking lot remains part of the Tavern parcel. An oval granite mounting block beside the parking area may date to the same period as the front granite wall.

The **May House** is situated toward the east end of the Becker College campus. This 1834 building stands at the top of a gradual slope above Main Street, where it appears at the same time removed from daily concerns and on a plane above them. The location may not have been coincidental: the house was built as a wedding gift to the town's Unitarian minister, the Reverend Samuel May and his bride from May's father.

The May House landscape is characterized by its situation at the southeastern edge of the hilltop on which Washburn Common is located. The transitional Federal house is set on a small terrace, and the building is framed on three sides by a pillared porch that further emphasizes its height. An indirect drive winds upslope past the house to the original site of a carriage shed, while fence posts sketch the curved line of a picket fence that originally enclosed the front yard. Pedestrian access came directly uphill to the front door, finishing at a set of cut granite steps at the terrace.

The building itself is a transitional Federal/Greek Revival style, two story wood frame structure with a steep-pitched hipped roof and tall interior chimneys. Clapboard walls are set off by elegantly detailed wood trim including corner boards, door surrounds and a frieze board beneath the roof lines. Two progressively lower ells extend toward the rear, at least one of which was evidently an original service wing. May House is currently used for storage by Becker College, the property owner. It is in sound condition, secured and

weather-tight, but it is missing significant architectural elements including porch pillars, shutters, and the fencing that appears in historic photos. Becker has stated that the college's intention is to preserve the building and reopen it as mixed-use facility, housing a designated Freedom Station (visitors center) of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, as well as offices and display space for local historical organizations, and a writing center.

Background: The residence was built ca. 1834 for the Rev. Samuel May Jr. (1810-1899), who was minister of the Leicester Unitarian Church, Secretary of the Massachusetts Abolitionist Society and active in other anti-slavery organizations. A passionate spokesman for abolition, May was asked to resign his ministry twice by his congregation, many of whose livelihoods were dependent on the card-making and cotton industries in Leicester and surrounding towns – industries closely tied to the Southern economic system. May never left Leicester and his family owned and occupied the house until it was purchased by Becker College.

Issues concerning Swan Tavern and May House

While the May House and the Swan Tavern are under different ownership (non-profit vs. private), and each faces some distinct issues, the ones of primary concern to the Town relate to both properties' continued preservation as icons of Leicester's development and significance. The town common area was identified as one of Leicester's unique scenic resources in a town-wide Open Space Survey conducted in 1998, and this was reinforced by the 2006 designation of the Washburn Square-Leicester Common area as a National Register District.

- Despite their proximity, Swan Tavern and May House are located in different zoning areas. The May House is in a Residential B district, while the Tavern is included in a recently approved Central Business District. To be discussed: while this poses a potential threat of inappropriate development, it could also support redevelopment of the structure for income-producing activity, such as a B & B or restaurant. Income producing properties in an NR district can qualify for Federal and State tax credits for appropriate rehabilitation.

- A second concern is owner ability to preserve the properties. The Swan Tavern exterior shows evidence of needed repairs, especially at ground level. The dying front-yard maple, adjacent to a public way, poses a serious liability issue and is in urgent need of pruning. The May House has obvious preservation needs, including replacement of the 4x4s that are currently supporting the porch roof; replacement of fencing; painting; and other exterior work in addition to substantial interior modifications to develop the space for museum and meeting use. A recently awarded (2006) $50,000 grant from the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism to begin exterior and interior preservation work was deleted from the state budget before it was actually issued. The grant's future is uncertain.

- A third concern is that of owner intentions for the future of these properties. At issue are the developable lot behind the Swan Tavern (Paxton Street) that is owned by Becker, and the May House structure if funding subsidies are not forthcoming. The college, while sensitive to historical issues, is in need of additional classroom and dormitory space, as evidenced by their considering the possibility of constructing a

replica of the original Leicester Academy building on other land owned by them in the vicinity.

Recommendations

- The May House, due to its National Register status, is eligible for preservation funding under the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (see Appendix B for further information).

- The Leicester Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, Town Planner, and Becker College need to establish an ongoing dialogue to ensure sensitive site expansion and planning at the College.

- A more stringent form of insurance, applicable to all of the Washburn Square - Leicester Common Historic District, is for the Town to further protect the area's resources through designation as a Local Historic District. (See below under Adding to Leicester's Toolkit and in Appendix B).

Johnson Farms, Whittemore Street

Description: The farmland worked by the Johnson family during much of the 20th century includes approximately 500 acres of land on both sides of an east-west ridgetop road above the village center. The land is a significant contiguous parcel of open space near the center. It offers long scenic vistas from Whittemore Street down to the valley below, and rural views of the farm land itself from Paxton and Whittemore Streets. The north side of Whittemore Street is very ledgy, its water table very close to the surface. This topography is characteristic of much of Leicester's upland, while other areas are covered by heavy clay soil.[1] The land consists of open, sloping fields, most planted to hay crops and separated by fieldstone walls. A 19th century white farmhouse is located on a rise north of the road, its front porch facing downslope to a walled lane which is a

[1] The town's recent (1999) Open Space Plan identifies 55% of Leicester as being incapable of supporting septic systems.

remnant town right-of-way that once led to a small mill neighborhood. Across a small yard from the house is an extended red barn complex, some of which is falling down. Other, more recent houses are located on the south side of the road. Two fraternal branches of the family own the property; one intends to maintain ownership of its portion of the land; the other branch has sold significant parcels of land for development – some as loops or cul de sacs north of the road; other parcels developed as a string of house lots fronting on the south side of Whittemore Street.

Background: Whittemore Street was largely settled during the colonial period by the Whittemore family who farmed here, as well as building a saw mill on a small brook downslope from the present street. Archeological remnants of the mill, as well as house foundations, still exist in the vicinity of the brook. The farmland at the eastern end of Whittemore Street has been owned by the Johnson family for a number of generations, and a Johnson marriage into an abutting farm family extended their family control of the agricultural lands to an extent comparable with the original Whittemore land grant. The farm was an active dairy operation until approximately thirty years ago.

Issues:

- Multiple owners with different stated intentions and eventual disposition of the property. There is currently no form of land protection in place on the family parcels. Only a small portion of the Johnson family acreage is under Chapter 61A, and there are no Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR). One owner is choosing to sell portions of his land for development, either with Whittemore Street frontage or with street access, and more than fifty new house lots have recently been built on or laid out on these parcels.

- Continued build-out in its present form would eventually have a major impact on town character, due to the large acreage that could possibly be developed, although it is likely that the soils and geological substrates of this area may limit the extent of possible residential development (neither sewer nor water lines extend to this street).

- Leicester's present zoning plan actually contributes to the potential impact of residential development on open space: this area of town has 80,000 square foot minimum lot size, with no provision for cluster or other open space alternative zoning. Consequently, the individual parcels that have been developed and subdivisions that have been constructed consist of houses distributed across a relatively large area, for a relatively low residential density but a relatively high environmental and scenic impact.

- Portions of Whittemore Street have already lost substantial scenic and historic value in the development process.

- No protection mechanisms are in place for preservation of the farm buildings.

Recommendations

- Share the findings of this project with the property owner. The owner needs to know that this open-space parcel is highly valued by Leicester's citizens.

- Consider Open Space Zoning for this area and others in town that need an additional layer of protection for agricultural land or scenic vistas. This would allow the same amount of development, but reorganized to better preserve open space.

- Enact Scenic Road Bylaw and include Whittemore Street to provide protection for significant roadside trees and extensive stone walls; consider Scenic Overlay District as measure of protection for the vistas.

- Encourage owners to at least expand Ch. 61A coverage; distribute information on APRs and CRs including the potential financial and/or tax benefits of these easements.

- Document the properties as a heritage landscape on an MHC Area Form, including a thorough survey of the traditional farmhouse and the barn/silo complex (a portion of which is badly deteriorated, but the rear bays of which are in apparently stable condition). This grouping of farm structures and stone-walled open fields is an increasingly rare composite picture of New England farm history.

Cooper's Hill Top Farm

Description: This ridge-top 200-acre dairy farm was singled out as one of Leicester's unique scenic resources in a townwide Open Space Survey conducted in 1998. Its major land tracts are located on both sides of Henshaw Street and consist largely of pasture for the Cooper family's dairy herd. A shingle-sided Four-Square farmhouse, built in 1917, with small lawn and outbuildings, sits on the west side of the road surrounded by a few mature trees. Immediately across the street is a one-story rustic fieldstone farm store with gambrel roof. A large 20th-century cow barn, silo, and equipment sheds stand nearby.

The fields extend downslope to mixed, predominantly deciduous woodlands on both sides of the ridge. The view is extensive and nearly uninterrupted by structures,

especially to the east. Henshaw Street is lined with mature trees, but the overall effect of the landscape is one of openness. The Cooper family maintains an active dairy operation, selling their own milk and ice cream in the farm store, as well as eggs and some milk from other farms. They log forested tracts of their property. Approximately 100 acres of their land is under Chapter 61A. Mrs. Cooper's son, the third generation of the family on this site, intends to maintain the dairy operation.

Background: The ridge along which Henshaw Street runs is one of the best agricultural areas in Leicester, and it is likely that Henshaw Street itself was laid out early in Leicester's history. The Worcester and Stafford Turnpike (now Stafford Street) was constructed by the early 19th century, crossing Henshaw at the foot of the ridge and providing easy access to regional markets for local farmers. As recently as the 1930s, two dairy farms were the only residences on Henshaw between Stafford and the intersection with Clark Street, although the whole southeast sector of Leicester was characterized by dairy and, to a lesser extent, poultry farms. One of the Henshaw Street farms belonged to the Coopers, who likely built the present farmhouse and what is now the store when they purchased the property.

Issues

- The dominant issues that concern Cooper's Farm are the same as those that concern most farmers, especially dairy farmers, in Massachusetts:
  - rising costs,
  - diminishing returns,
  - loss of parcels available to lease for silage crops.

- Owner intentions: given the present challenges of dairying, it is not surprising that the Coopers have refrained from placing an APR on their farm, but this fact should be of concern to Leicester's citizens, who have repeatedly stressed the significance of the property to town character.

- Preservation of views and historic buildings characteristic of early 20th century dairy landscape of central Massachusetts.

Recommendations

- The farm complex should be documented by the Historical Commission, including buildings and fields, on a Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Form. While this will not protect the property directly, it will generate additional information that can be used to convey the significance of this landscape.

- Encourage owner to at least expand Ch. 61A coverage; distribute information on APRs and CRs including the potential financial and/or tax benefits of these easements..

- See further discussion in Part II under Agricultural Lands.

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PART II

BUILDING A HERITAGE LANDSCAPE TOOLKIT

EIGHT TOOLKIT BASICS

As our communities undergo rapid land use changes, heritage landscapes are particularly threatened because they are often taken for granted. There is a broad variety of resources that communities can call upon to protect these irreplaceable resources. Below is a checklist of the basics. Each is discussed in the sections that follow and in Appendix B.

1. Know the resources: Inventory
We cannot advocate for something until we clearly identify it – in this case, the physical characteristics and historical development of the town's historic and archeological resources. The necessary first step is to record information about the resources at the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

2. Gain recognition for their significance: National Register Listing
The National Register of Historic Places is the nation's official list of cultural resources worthy of preservation. Listing brings a number of benefits including recognition, consideration when federally-or state-funded projects may impact the resource, eligibility for tax credits, and qualification for certain grant programs.

3. Engage the public: Outreach, Education and Interpretation
In order to create a community of advocates, we need to raise public awareness and broaden the base of support. This includes developing opportunities to learn about and celebrate the places and history of the town, as well as to care for them.

4. Think in context: Comprehensive and Open Space Planning
It is important that Open Space Plans and Comprehensive or Master Plans address heritage landscapes as vital features of the community, contributing not only to unique sense of place but also to environmental, recreational and economic health.

5. Develop partnerships: The Power of Collaboration
Protecting community character, respecting history, and promoting smart growth are interrelated concerns that impact heritage landscapes and require collaboration across a broad spectrum of the community. This includes communication among town boards and departments, as well as public-private partnerships.

6. Defend the resources: Zoning, Bylaw and Ordinance Mechanisms
Effective and innovative preservation tools exist in the legal and regulatory realm. These range from a wide array of zoning, bylaw and ordinance mechanisms, to incentive programs and owner-generated restrictions on land use.

7. Utilize the experts: Technical Assistance
Regulations and creative solutions for heritage landscapes are constantly changing and emerging. Public and private agencies offer technical assistance with the many issues to be addressed, including DCR, MHC, the Heritage Corridor and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission.

8. Pay the bill: Funding Preservation
Funding rarely comes from a single source, more often depending on collaborative underwriting by private, municipal, and regional sources. Each town also has a variety of funding sources that are locally-based and sometimes site-specific.

LEICESTER'S TOOLKIT – Current Status and Future Additions

What follows is a review of the tools that Leicester already has in place, as well as a number of additional tools that fall within some of the categories noted above. The tools already in place for Leicester provide a good foundation for heritage landscape preservation, but their efficacy as protection for the town's natural and cultural resources can be significantly improved by strengthening existing measures and putting others in place. Appendix B includes extended descriptions of preservation measures; the specific applications of those tools to Leicester's resources are described below. In addition, the appendix contains a full description of additional avenues and creative approaches that Leicester can consider in developing a multi-pronged strategy for preservation.

A tool that has been proven to be one of the single most valuable resources in protecting heritage landscapes has been the Community Preservation Act (CPA). Towns that have approved the CPA have been able to leverage funding for such activities as historic resource surveys, acquisition of conservation restrictions and open space, adaptive reuse of historic structures, and signage programs. More information about the CPA can be found in Appendix B under 6. Defend the Resources: Laws, Bylaws and Regulations and 8. Pay the Bill: Funding Preservation.

The tools below should be considered in combination with those recommendations made in Part I for Leicester's priority landscapes.

1. Know the resources: Inventory

Current: According to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the town's inventory includes documentation for 277 buildings, structures and sites, but all of these are confined to either the Washburn Square-Leicester Common National Register Historic District (noted below), or the mill village of Rochdale. In addition, Leicester has documented only one precontact Indian site and six historic archeological sites on MHC inventory forms.

Additions: The inventory process completed in 1997 for Leicester Center and Rochdale is only a beginning of documentation for the town's historic assets. It is vital that Leicester complete this process as soon as possible, by working with the Massachusetts Historical Commission to complete a town-wide historic resources survey. The survey should prioritize heritage landscapes such as those listed in this report. It should include representative and significant structures, features and landscapes from all periods of Leicester's history and from all geographic areas.

It is recommended that a similar, archeological survey be completed for the community. Known and potential precontact Native American and historic archaeological sites should be documented in the field for evidence of their cultural association and/or integrity. Funding assistance for this effort would also be available from the MHC Survey and Planning grants, as well as CPA funding.

2. Gain recognition for their significance: State and National Register Listing

Current: Leicester has 49 properties and features listed in the National Register. Forty-seven of these are within the Washburn Square-Leicester Common National Register Historic District (2006) ; the remaining two are post road mile markers listed as individual properties in 1971. All are automatically listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

The Copeland Memorial Library (11 River Street), the only building in town protected by a Preservation Restriction, is also listed on the State Register of Historic Places.

There are no local historic districts in Leicester.

Additions: Leicester's Master Plan identified three districts recommended by the town's Historical Commission for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Of these, only Washburn Square – Leicester Center has been so designated. Of the other two areas, Rochdale Village has been inventoried but no determination of eligibility has been made, while Greenville Village has not yet been inventoried.

The Historical Commission identified ten additional areas or sites considered particularly important to Leicester's heritage, including Southgate Pasture Cemetery and Mannville, two of the high priority landscapes described in this report.

It is recommended that the Leicester Historical Commission pursue designation plans with the MHC and revisit their prioritization of sites and areas for listing. Both Mannville and the Southgate Pasture Cemetery are potentially eligible for listing, but will need to be inventoried as a first step.

3. Engage the public: Outreach, Education and Interpretation

Current: With funding through the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority (MTA) and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Leicester's Historical Commission has begun an interpretive signage program. The BRVNHC signs in each of Leicester's four main villages identify the location and its association with the Corridor. Towtaid Park has an more descriptive interpretive sign.

The Historical Commission developed a driving tour brochure through a tourism grant from MTA. In addition, two Leicester Historical Commission members serve as uniformed rangers. They conduct walking tours and teach small group classes on specific topics. Might also mention the Corridor's walking tour brochure.

The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor has published a walking tour guide to Leicester Common and Washburn Square that describes the history and significance of a number of central village sites, as well as providing brief historical background to the town as a whole.

Additions*:* Leicester's Historical Commission is already more active in this area than many of their counterparts in other communities. However, continuing to develop ways to reach out to the public through the development of more interpretive tours is another way to reach out and keep these places in the public consciousness.

Preservation Mass, as the statewide preservation advocacy organization, is a source of support for advocacy. They have a program that annually identifies and publicizes the 10 Most Endangered historic resources in the Commonwealth, which is a good way to advocate for resources that are imminently threatened.

4. Think in context: Comprehensive and Open Space Planning

Current: Master Plan. The Town of Leicester adopted a Master Plan Update in 2000. Among its stated goals was to protect and enhance the small town character of Leicester, and to protect the unique and varied natural, cultural and historic resources in Leicester.

The Plan's study of development trends noted that, particularly west of Route 56 (vicinity of Johnson Farms and Ballard Hill priority landscapes), *development opportunities...are extensive,* although the plan went on to note that this would be so especially after new water and sewer infrastructure was put in place. This has not been done, and is not anticipated in the near future, as current sewer treatment facilities are at maximum operating capacity.

The Plan identified a number of specific issues of importance to natural and historic resource protection. Issues in this category included loss of trees and lack of a policy for their replacement, loss of stone walls, and unattractive streetscapes that were incompatible with the town's character.

The Plan's Action Program section recommended a number of activities to support and protect the natural, cultural and historic resources of the town, including zoning changes, public education efforts, development of regional partnerships, and resource inventory work. These activities and others are discussed below in *Adding to Leicester's Toolkit.*

Current: Open Space Plan. Leicester's Open Space Plan was adopted in 2000, and is currently being updated. The public survey conducted as part of the process indicated that few Leicester residents valued the remnant features and landscapes of the Industrial Revolution as heritage landscapes – an attitude confirmed by the community meeting held as part of the present inventory project – but the Town Common and a range of natural and agricultural landscapes were highly valued

As of 2000, 24% of Leicester's total acreage was enlisted in some sort of open-space program. Almost half of this (9.5% of the town), however, was not permanently protected but, rather, was temporarily protected under Ch. 61, 61A and 61B for agricultural, forestry, or recreational purposes.

Additions: A number of heritage landscapes that were prioritized by Leicester have already been, and continue to be, identified and discussed in planning exercises and documents. Now it is time to consolidate the recommendations for these places; prioritize their implementation, and proceed with an action plan to see them through.

5. Develop partnerships: The Power of Collaboration

See Appendix B for further information.

6. Defend the Resources: Zoning, Bylaw and Ordinance Mechanisms

Current Mechanisms

Demolition Delay Bylaw: Leicester adopted a Demolition Delay Bylaw in 2005, which provides for six months of time to consider alternatives to demolition of a historic structure. The bylaw applies to structures over 100 years old.

Special Area Plan: The town completed a Cherry Valley Special Area Plan in 2003 to identify strategies to reuse vacant or underutilized structures in this historic industrial village, particularly mill sites.

Flexible Development: Leicester's Senior Village Development allows builders to build at a higher density if they preserve open space. This, however, only applies to senior housing.

Village Center Zoning: Village Center Zoning is designed to support the character and business needs of small mixed-use commercial areas. Leicester has designated Greenville Village as a Neighborhood Business District

Additional Mechanisms

Three basic strategies have consistently proven effective as basic preservation tools in communities throughout Massachusetts.

While Leicester currently has a **Demolition Delay Bylaw** in effect, many towns have found that a delay of one year is a more effective time frame than Leicester's six month provision, within which to negotiate alternatives to demolition. Also, if there is concern about structures of historic significance that are between 50 and 100 years old, the town should consider lowering the age limit—many bylaws apply to structures built over 50 years ago, in accordance with federal standards.
****** Leicester could strengthen their existing bylaw by extending the delay period and lowering the historic cut-off date.

Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (NACD), further explained in Appendix B, are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected.
****** The Leicester Historical Commission should work with MHC staff to determine how an NACD can help to maintain the character of areas which have changed through time, but which retain a valued neighborhood "feel" that may be threatened by incompatible development. One area particularly facing this problem is the center of Leicester, especially along Route 9 from the intersection of Routes 9 and 56 westward to Rawson Street/Lake Avenue. The villages of Greenville and Rochdale would also be appropriate candidates for this protection.

Local Historic Districts (LHD), further explained in Appendix B, are also local initiatives and the strongest form of protection to preserve special areas with distinctive buildings and places.
****** Washburn Square-Leicester Common would benefit substantially from LHD designation, since the district involves such a variety of interests, pressures, resources and ownership.

Additional mechanisms specific to Leicester's landscapes

The following recommendations are organized by the types of resources that Leicester has, and measures that should be considered to strengthen their protection.

Mill Villages and Industrial Structures

A defining characteristic of the Blackstone Valley and Leicester in particular are the mill villages that exhibit the vestiges of the transformative power of the industrial revolution in mills, dams, mill worker housing and transportation elements such as the associated rivers, canals and railroads or rail traces. Leicester exhibits that history in the villages of Rochdale, Greenville and Cherry Valley.

Leicester should adopt an **Adaptive Reuse Overlay Bylaw** to allow flexibility in redevelopment of the town's mills. Such a bylaw was brought to Town Meeting in 2006 and passed over at that time. It is currently being considered again, in order to facilitate redevelopment of the town's mill buildings.

Agricultural Lands

Preservation of agricultural landscapes means preservation of the farming activities; otherwise, it simply is the preservation of land as open space. There are instances in which changing technology sometimes requires modifications to existing farm structures, or the addition of new ones. It is important to know what the features of an agricultural setting are and which features the community treasures in order to make a case for preservation of these settings.

Appendix B has a full list of regulatory tools that should be considered to protect agricultural land; the following highlights important measures to meet the needs of agricultural protection in Leicester.

1. Create an Agricultural Commission, a standing committee of town government created through vote at Town Meeting. This Commission would represent the farming community, promote agricultural-based economic opportunities, and work to protect and sustain agricultural businesses and farmland.
2. Strengthen public-private partnerships to preserve farmland through purchase of APRs or CRs.
3. Develop partnerships to raise funds, especially with local and regional land trusts, to purchase development rights on farms or to assist a farmer in the restoration of historic farm buildings for which the owner would be required to donate a preservation restriction (PR).
4. Make information about the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources programs available to farmers, including the Farm Viability

Enhancement Program (technical assistance, funding) and the Agricultural Environmental Enhancement Program (supports best management practices for agricultural operations to mitigate impacts on natural resources).

5. Adopt Open Space Zoning (also known as Cluster Zoning), as recommended in the Master Plan, which serves the dual purpose of allowing landowners to develop their property, while protecting substantive parcels of open space.
6. Document farms that are considered critical to the character of Leicester's community using MHC survey forms.
7. Adopt a right-to-farm bylaw which allows farmers to carry on farming activities that may be considered a nuisance to neighbors. Refer to Smart Growth Toolkit at: http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/bylaws/Right-to-Farm-Bylaw.pdf
8. Explore Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), a partnership between a farm and a community of supporters. Community members cover a farm's yearly operating budget by purchasing a share of the season's harvest. This relationship guarantees farmers a reliable market, while assuring the members high quality produce, often below retail prices.

Scenic Roads

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Leicester residents and visitors alike and were listed as a heritage landscape theme during the public meeting. Roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel and safety requirements as the only considerations. Leicester has not yet adopted the Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40-15C) nor designated roads for which there would be review and approval for the removal of trees and stone walls within the right-of-way. In addition to roadway issues, much of what we value about scenic roads – the stone walls, views across open fields and the many scenic historic buildings – is not within the public right-of-way. The preservation and protection of scenic roads therefore requires more than one approach.

1. Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each of the roads in Leicester considered to be scenic, including the character-defining features that should be retained.
2. Adopt a Scenic Road Bylaw and designate specific town roads protected by the bylaw. (The designation cannot be applied to state numbered roadways.) Add design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls.
3. Post attractive road signs that identify the scenic roads in town.
4. Coordinate procedures between Highway Department and Planning Board or Historical Commission.
5. Consider a Scenic Overlay District which may provide a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopt flexible zoning standards to protect certain views. Such bylaws would apply to the landscapes bordering state numbered roadways, which would not be protected under the scenic roads designation, as well as to landscapes bordering town roads.
6. Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstruction, which address scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the community may have to accept responsibility for certain costs to implement standards higher than those funded by Mass Highway Department.

Such standards should have a section addressing the way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads; for example, requiring a public hearing if any new pavement width is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can be adopted at Town Meeting through a bylaw. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths and posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

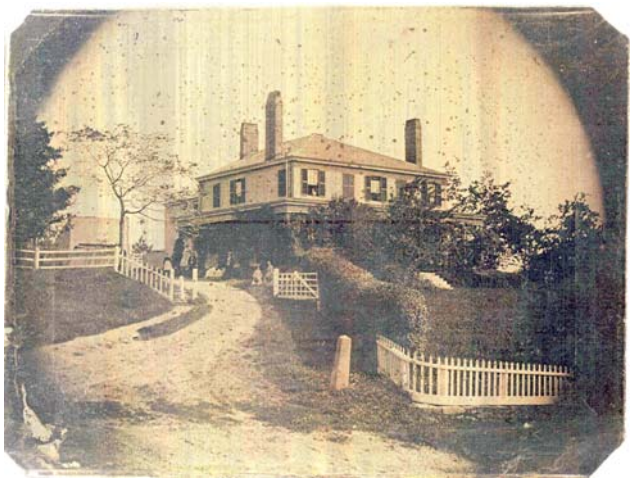
7. Utilize the Experts: Technical Assistance

See Appendix B for further information

8. Pay the Bill: Funding Preservation

Leicester has been designated as Preserve America community, which makes it eligible to receive technical assistance and matching grants related to heritage tourism. More on the designation and fundable activities can be found in Appendix B

A list indicating the full range of available governmental and non-profit sources of funding is found in Appendix B.



May House, undated stereo slide
(BRVNHC collection)

CONCLUSION

Leicester's residents have a strong sense of place, defined by the town's varied natural features and the historic land use patterns that grew out of them. The town has already begun to document and evaluate its most significant buildings and natural areas. It must now also look beyond these traditional resources to the landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the community's character. Like most municipalities, Leicester is facing multiple pressures for change that will have permanent impact on land-based uses and natural resources, especially its remaining farming areas. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

The Leicester Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the rich and diverse heritage landscapes in Leicester and in developing creative preservation strategies and partnerships. Leicester will have to determine the best ways and sequence in which to implement the recommendations discussed above. The town would do well to form a Heritage Landscape Committee, as described in DCR's publication, *Reading the Land*.

Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will benefit from further documentation in accordance with MHC guidelines. The documentation in turn will provide an information base for the local publicity needed to build consensus and gather public support for landscape preservation. Implementing many of the recommendations in this report will require a concerted effort by and partnerships among municipal boards and agencies, local non-profit organizations, and regional and state agencies and commissions.

There are no quick fixes for the challenges of managing growth and funding preservation. Many of the recommended tasks and approaches will require cooperation and coordination among a number of municipal, regional and state partners to be successful. They will require time and a good dose of patience, as volunteer schedules, legislative procedures, and funding cycles try to mesh.

Circulating this Reconnaissance Report is an essential first step. The recommendations should be presented to the Board of Selectmen, who represented Leicester in its application to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program. Copies of the report should be available on the town's web site and distributed to town departments and boards, particularly Leicester 's Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission and will also be useful for the Leicester Historical Society, neighborhood associations, local land trusts, and other preservation organizations. Finally, a reference copy belongs in the town library. All of these circulation efforts will broaden citizen awareness, and result in increased interest and support for Leicester's heritage landscapes.

Finally, the project team suggests that the following recommendations be the top three priorities for Northbridge as the town works to protect the character of its community:

1. Adopt the Community Preservation Act.
2. Work for passage of open-space residential zoning and adaptive reuse overlay.
3. Establish Washburn Square – Leicester Center as a Local Historic District.

APPENDIX A

LEICESTER HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

This list was generated by local participants at the Heritage Landscape Identification meeting held in Leicester on February 8, 2007 and follow-up fieldwork on March 13, 2007. **There are undoubtedly other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the name and location of the resource are in the first; notes about the resource are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Priority landscapes appear in bold. Abbreviations used are listed below.

APR = Agricultural Preservation Restriction
LHD = Local Historic District
CR = Conservation Restriction
PR = Preservation Restriction
NRHD = National Register Historic District
NRI = National Register Individual Property

Summary of Priority Landscapes:
Ballard and Tupper's Hills
Cooper's Hill Top Farm
Johnson Farms
Mannville
Southgate Pasture Cemetery
Swan Tavern and May House

Agriculture	
Cooper's Hill Top Farm 515 Henshaw St	working dairy farm; land under Chap. 61. Early to mid 20th cen. structures on historic farm site.
Johnson Farms Whittemore St	Historic property, some of which is well maintained, with open fields, some woodland. Other portion includes buildings in disrepair; land being sold off as house lots. Property includes remains of 1795 Whittemore Mill, a natural cranberry bog and pond, and abandoned roadways.
Maple Hill Farm 132 Marshall St.	aka Southwick Farm; built 1806 by Silas Earle. Working Christmas tree farm. Land on three sides of this owned by City of Worcester, taken by eminent domain for watershed protection. If Maple Hill Farm is also taken the building is expected to be destroyed.
Soojian Farm 1666 Main St.	Most of land recently sold to WalMart; cell tower on remaining parcel. Zoned commercial.

Archaeology	
Woodville Green & River Streets	Original village included schoolhouse and cluster of residences in vicinity of early mill on Barton's Brook (remains of mill visible from Baldwin St.).
theme: pre-industrial mill sites	- off Clark St: remains of saw and grist mills on Grindstone Brook - Earle St: dam, wheel pit, stonework and berm from pond of saw and grist mill on Kettle Brook - Earle St at Mannville St: power canal, wheel pit, stonework of Mann & Marshall Manufacturing Co. - Mannville St. north of Earle: earthwork from canal, dam and mill; second Mann & Marshall site; earlier location of Timothy Earle's sawmill. - Mannville St near Paxton St: dam & foundation, carding mill - Moose Hill Rd: wheel, dam & stonework, Bond Grist Mill - Pine Street: wheel, dam and stonework, Dutton sawmill and cider mill - Prior Road: dam and stonework, poss. of ropewalk - Watson St behind Shaw Pond: sawmill foundations - south of Whittemore St: dam and stonework from Joseph Whittemore sawmill.
Burial Grounds and Cemeteries	
Southgate Pasture Cemetery Rawson St.	land in private ownership; includes Revolutionary War burials. Last interment was in 1799. Looting issues, and headstones in poor repair. Current landowner wants to develop the parcel.
Society of Friends Burial Ground Earle St.. Mannville	Began to be used as cemetery in 1739 on the farms of Nathaniel Potter and Robert Earle. A Quaker meetinghouse was built adjacent to it, the site of which is marked. Located in former Mannville village; still in use but rarely; well-known wrought iron entrance gate. Owned and maintained by Worcester-Pleasant Street Friends Meeting.
Worcester Hebrew Cemetery Cemetery Rd.	Land mostly in Auburn with small portions in Leicester and Worcester. Well-maintained grounds, still in use. Cemetery Rd. (access road) in poor condition – most access site via Havana Rd. in Worcester.
Elliott Hill Burial Ground Marshall St	Taken by town in 1952; well maintained, burials include Revolutionary War veterans. First used about 1750, on farm of John Lynde Esq., later Joseph Elliot. Located in woods but there is public right of way to cemetery.
Towtaid Cemetery Towtaid St.	aka Cherry Valley Cemetery. Town-owned; still in use with occasional interments.
Rawson Brook Burial Ground 1200 Main St.	Privately owned; well-maintained by trustees. Begun about 1745; graves include many of Leicester's first settlers and prominent citizens.

Pine Grove Cemetery Pine St.	Privately owned; well-maintained and landscaped by trustees. Established when Rawson Brook Burial Ground became full.
Civic / Institutional	
Hillcrest Country Club 325 Pleasant St	was Pleasant View Farm; owned by Town.
Leicester Public Library 1136 Main Street	1896; architect: Stephen Earle; not included in Washburn Square-Leicester Common NRHD but located nearby.
Copeland Library River St.	Built as Greenville Fire Station in village of Greenville; PR 1996 and 1998.
School Administration Building 1078 Main St	Former post office and police station – built c1920. Soon to be sold by Town.
Becker College	Small 4-year liberal arts college, included in Washburn Square – Leicester Common NRHD; most of the dormitories are historic homes around the common.
Commercial / Industrial	
Silver Grille Paxton St.	aka Hot Dog Annie's. Original building totally burned 1967. Present building moved to site from Webster MA.
Castle Restaurant 1230 Main St.	Original building destroyed by fire 1966, rebuilt. Earlier building had been Montrose Dairy, then Morrow's Castle (owner Neil Morrow). Site of Sargent's Carding Mill, then trolley barn & power house for Worcester & Leicester Street Railway.
Rochdale Mill (Acme Plastic Machine Co.) Mill St.	Was Anderson's Mill, Clapp's Mill; R.S. Denny's; Rochdale Mills; Howarth & Sons; Manchester Knitting Mills (MKM). Houses multiple businesses but in poor condition; privately owned.
Watson's Mill Water St.	Very good condition; currently being rehabbed. Unusual in Blackstone River Heritage Corridor is its mansard roof (cf also Linwood Mill, Northbridge). Building at risk of demolition for commercial development.
Brick City Mill Chapel St.	Located on Kettle Brook, headwater tributary of Blackstone River. Rear warehouse burned; remaining mill damaged by vandalism. Last occupied by Worcester Spinning and Finishing Mill. Structurally sound but extremely expensive to rehabilitate. Currently unoccupied.
Clark's Mill buildings Pleasant St.	Mill in village of Greenville, destroyed by fire; remaining buildings are picker house (used by VFW) and materials warehouse (used by tank refurbishment service).
Smith's Mill Main St.	Built 1830s on Kettle Brook; renovated 1865, damaged by dam break 1876; repaired. Later known as Channing Smith Mill; later Elfskin (suede & leather-like products). Currently houses number of small businesses.

Valley Woolen Mill Chapel & Main Sts.	Oldest standing mill in town, ca. 1824; powered by canal from Kettle Brook to Blackstone River. Good structural condition but lacking historical integrity; houses Woodart, a wood display manufacturing company.
Carleton Woolen Mill Stafford St.	On French River; original brick mill building is still standing although various additions have been destroyed and rebuilt. Currently used for rental storage.
Leicester Drive-In 1675 Main St	three-screen theater, operated by several generations of the same family, located on Rte. 9.
Open Space/ Recreation/ Parks	
Ballard Hill (Rawson St) **& Tupper's Hill** (Pine St)	Over 200 acres of field and woodland in private ownership; caves, interesting history. Tupper is site of colonial farmstead destroyed before 1860; there is a dam on the property.
Mannville Mannville and Earle Sts	Historic village; includes discontinued roadways, house foundations, mills, dams and canals Most of land now owned by City of Worcester (airport; reservoirs). Zoned suburban/agricultural.
Towtaid Park & adjacent land Olney St.	Includes stone arch bridge and mill ruins on private land adjacent to the park – town is looking to expand the park to include this parcel .
Burncoat Park & Pond 1600s Main St to Rawson St	Pond & water privilege owned by homeowners' association. Former swimming beach area (now closed due to excessive weeds and lack of finances to address this issue). Early 19th c. dam visible from Rawson St. at causeway; present dam on Burncoat Lane.
Woodlands north of Rochdale Pond and east of Greenville bounded by Stafford St	Private ownership; undeveloped. Area includes Great Blue Heron rookery, streams, trails, stone walls and old farm fields in reversion.
Ridge west of Rochdale Pond	Originally part of Carleton estate on Grindstone Brook; old dam and gristmill site located east of Rte 56.
Burncoat Pond Wildlife Sanctuary Leicester and Spencer	Massachusetts Audubon sanctuary west of Burncoat Pond; 165 acres in Spencer, adjacent 15 acres in Leicester donated by Mainville family.
Bouchard's Pond Pine & Charles Sts.	Scenic landscape, privately owned – part of Armington property (see below)
Residential	
Swan Tavern Main & Paxton Sts.	Back of house built c1767. Formerly used as the President's House for Leicester Jr. College; then administration for Becker Jr. College. Included in Washburn Square – Leicester Common NRHD; currently for sale – parcel is zoned for business.

May House Main St.	Reuted to have been stop on underground railroad. Original owner, Samuel May, was a prominent abolitionist. Now owned by Becker College; included in Washburn Square – Leicester Common NRHD.
Henshaw House Henshaw St & Willow Hill Rd.	Built 1720 by Judge Menzies (Admiralty Court for New England). Henshaw was 5th owner, Secretary of the Navy. Privately owned; in very poor condition.
Carleton Mansion & millworkers housing	Classic mill complex including mill buildings, owner's home, and housing for mill workers. Also see under Industrial and Village.
Mt. Pleasant Mansion Mt. Pleasant Drive	Was elegant estate with orchards & outbuildings. Mansion remains in private ownership; much of land developed into residential neighborhood; remaining estate grounds not maintained.
Joshua Murdock Estate 1150 Main St.	Restored mill owner's mansion and carriage house.
Armington House Pine & Charles Sts.	Restored colonial house.
Transportation	
theme: scenic roads - Marshall Street - Pine Street - Rawson Street - Henshaw Street - Rte 56 north end	Marshall St – stone walls, pretty sugar maples Pine St and Rawson St both have arching tree canopy: "They look like Vermont."
Railroad Bridge over French River	Western & Worcester RR. Tracks upgraded but original stone abutments still in place.
Villages	
Greenville Village	Pre-industrial mill village. Includes number of old homes in good condition, Baptist Church, oldest cemetery in Leicester, Native American burial ground. See also Copeland Library (Greenville Fire Station) and Clarks Mill
Rochdale	Carleton Woolen Mill, Manchester Knitting Mills; Everett Carleton mansion (Stafford St); mill housing on Stafford and Mill Streets. Constructed ca. 1842-1920.

APPENDIX B

GUIDE TO PRESERVATION AND PLANNING TOOLS FOR HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Preservation planning is a four-step process: **identification, evaluation, education** and **protection**. Within the realm of protection, there is a vast array of tools that communities can call upon and that are most effective when used in combination with one another. Stewardship of these resources involves education and community support, planning with a clear set of goals, and regulatory mechanisms.

Three useful documents to consult when planning preservation strategies are:

- Department of Conservation and Recreation, *Reading the Land*
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Survey Manual*
- Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances*

The following eight sections – based on the Toolkit Basics – detail the resources and strategies available for heritage landscape preservation—from documentation and evaluation, to public education, to regulating activities and finding the revenue necessary to fund the effort.

1. KNOW THE RESOURCES: INVENTORY

The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources on MHC inventory forms. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development.

Survey methodology has advanced since the early work of the 1980s. If a community had survey work done during that time period, it is time for an inventory update, looking at resources in a more comprehensive and connected way than may have been done at that time. Even if survey work is more recent, there may be a need to document more resources throughout the community.

Using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology:

- Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not thoroughly researched, beginning with heritage landscapes.
- Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.
- Make sure to document secondary features on rural and residential properties, such as outbuildings, stone walls and landscape elements.

- Record a wide range of historic resources including landscape features and industrial resources.

- Conduct a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey to identify patterns of prehistoric and historic occupation and to identify known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with these patterns. Known and potential precontact and historic archaeological sites should be professionally field-checked to evaluate cultural associations and integrity. A professional archaeologist is one who meets the professional qualifications (950 CMR 70.01) outlined in the State Archaeologist Permit Regulations (950 CMR 70.00).

  NOTE: The Inventory of Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth contains sensitive information about archaeological sites. The inventory is confidential; it is not a public record (G.L. c. 9, ss. 26A (1)). Care should be taken to keep archaeological site information in a secure location with restricted access. Refer to the MHC article "Community-Wide Archaeological Surveys" which appeared in Preservation Advocate, Fall 2005, and which can be found at the following MHC link: http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/pafall05.pdf.

2. GAIN RECOGNITION FOR THEIR SIGNIFICANCE: NATIONAL REGISTER LISTING

Survey work includes evaluation of whether resources meet the qualifications for National Register listing. This will provide new information about the eligibility of properties. Using the information generated in the survey work and the accompanying National Register evaluations, expand your town's National Register program.

- Develop a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration a property's or area's integrity and vulnerability. Properties in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority.

3. ENGAGE THE PUBLIC: OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

The best stewards and advocates for heritage landscape protection are members of the community. There are many ways to communicate the importance of these special places to the public, and to connect their preservation with the shared values and goals that community members have already expressed in various planning documents and forums.

Think creatively about how to educate the community about the values and threats to heritage landscapes, and how each town resident benefits from these special places. Use a combination of strategies to get the word out about heritage landscapes and preservation of community character, including:

- **Festivals and Tours** – Tours are a great way to draw attention to the history around us, and to engage more people in caring for it. Consider hosting a Heritage Celebration Day including tours and family-friendly activities, or plan a

celebration around a particular place or area on a meaningful date. Make sure events are well publicized.

- **Signage and Banners** – Signs are a very effective way to announce special historic sites and districts. Banners can also bring attention to the significance of an area and make a celebratory statement about its contribution to the town.

- **Written Materials** – Clear, concise and engaging written material with engaging illustrations is a reliable way to relay information about community character and heritage landscapes. Make use of fact sheets and flyers to get the word out on particular issues such as a town ordinance that protects heritage landscapes, a threat that needs to be addressed, or an upcoming event.

- **School Curricula** – Start teaching at a young age. Children are very receptive to engaging stories, and there are no better stories to excite childrens' imaginations and build pride of place than stories of their town's past and present. Teachers have an opportunity to connect history with environmental issues through classroom study, hands-on history projects, and field exploration of a town's heritage landscapes. Subsequently, students have an opportunity to teach their parents that preservation is everybody's business.

- **Lectures and Workshops** – Use these forums to raise awareness, educate at a deeper level about the community's history and its resources, and broaden the base of interest.

- **Website** – Keep Historical Commission and local historical organizations' entries on the town's website current, and include information about issues, proposals for preservation strategies, and upcoming events.

- **Press Releases** – Use all avenues including press releases to keep the public informed when a meeting or event is about to occur. Work with local reporters to develop special interest articles that highlight landscape resources.

Remember that bringing an issue or a heritage landscape to people's attention once will have only short-term effect. Outreach, education and interpretation must be ongoing concerns that involve preservation and conservation interests, teachers and community organizations in repeated projects to attract and engage the general public.

4. THINK IN CONTEXT: COMPREHENSIVE AND OPEN SPACE PLANNING

Communities use a variety of planning exercises and documents to define their goals and vision of the future, address community-wide issues, and recommend measures to respond to them. There are state mandates for towns to prepare Comprehensive or Master Plans and Open Space and Recreation Plans.

- Comprehensive or Master Plans provide an important frame of reference for land use decisions, and incorporate all of a community's issues including economic development, housing and transportation into an integrated plan. Heritage landscapes need to be seen through the lenses of community character, historic preservation, environmental health, and economic viability and growth. Their

future and the values they contribute should be addressed within these multiple perspectives, not solely as historical assets of the community.

- Like Comprehensive Plans, Open Space Plans look holistically at the community—its history, demographics and growth patterns, and current conditions—to make recommendations that protect open space and natural resources for ecological health and public benefits. The Heritage Landscape Inventory Program provides a framework for looking at these important resources, and this new understanding should be incorporated into Open Space Plans.

5. DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS: THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

Because heritage landscapes encompass such a broad range of resources and issues—from preservation of town centers, scenic roads and river corridors to promotion of smart growth and economic development – stewardship of these resources involves many interests in a community. It is essential that there be good communication between the many departments and committees that address issues related to heritage landscapes. Collaboration between public and private partners is also an essential element in a successful preservation strategy. National Heritage Corridor personnel are helpful guides to partnership opportunities for projects you may have in mind.

- Broaden the base. Preservation, particularly preservation of landscapes, is not just for the Historical Commission. It is important that the cause not be marginalized by those who view preservation as opposed to progress, or to personal interests. A look at DCR's *Reading the Land* shows the range of organizations and viewpoints that value heritage landscapes.

- Nurture public-private partnerships. Friends groups, neighborhood associations, and local land trusts all have important roles to play to spread the word, and to expand the capacity of the public sector to care for heritage landscapes.

- Take advantage of forums created to share issues and ideas. For instance, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources offers a "cluster" format for monthly discussion and information exchange meetings among area farmers.

- Share resources across communities. Towns that lack funding for a town planner position, for instance, have found that "sharing" a planner with another community can be quite effective.

6. DEFEND THE RESOURCES; LAWS, BYLAWS AND REGULATIONS

A wide range of laws, bylaws and regulations is available to protect heritage landscapes. Following are brief descriptions of some of the most widely used and/or most effective of these tools, arranged alphabetically.

Adaptive Reuse Overlay District
An Adaptive Reuse Overlay District is superimposed on one or more established zoning districts in order to permit incentive-based reuses of existing built properties. These districts can be created to allow for the adaptive reuse of properties of a certain kind, or

within a specified area within a community. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements.

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR)
This program, managed by the Department of Agricultural Resources, offers to pay farmers the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of farmland located on prime agricultural soils, in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. This program is different from the *Chapter 61* program, which provides tax incentives for short term restrictions.

Community Preservation Act
The Community Preservation Act is statewide enabling legislation that allows communities to assemble funds for historic preservation, open space protection and affordable housing through a local property tax surcharge (up to 3%, with some allowable exemptions) and state matching funds. These funds can support a wide variety of activities, including inventory and documentation of historic resources, restoration and acquisition.

Conservation Restrictions (CR)
A permanent deed restriction between a landowner and a holder - usually a public agency or a private land trust; whereby the grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the purpose of protecting certain conservation values in exchange for tax benefits. EOEEA's Division of Conservation Services provides assistance to landowners, municipalities, and land trusts regarding conservation restrictions and has produced *The Massachusetts Conservation Restriction Handbook* as a guide to drafting conservation restrictions.

Corridor Protection Overlay District
A Corridor Protection Overlay District is intended to promote appropriate development within a given corridor, serving to protect natural (and sometimes cultural) resources. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements. The Corridor Protection Overlay District can be used cooperatively by adjoining communities to help maintain continuous protection across town lines.

Demolition Delay Bylaw
With a Demolition Delay Bylaw, requests for a permit to demolish a historic building must first be reviewed and approved by the local historical commission. Demolition Delay Bylaws are either list-based (applying only to a specific list of buildings that have been previously identified), age based (applying to all buildings that are older than a certain age – typically 50 years), or categorical (applying only to resources that meet a specific criteria, such as having been documented on Massachusetts Historical Commission forms). If the historical commission does not approve of the demolition and deems a structure significant, it can impose a delay period, during which time the property owner is encouraged to explore alternatives to demolition. Delay periods of 6 months are common, although communities are increasingly adopting delay periods of up to one year.

Design Review
Design Review is a non-regulatory process that is undertaken by a town appointed Design Review Board. The board reviews the design of new construction and additions – typically those taking place in already built-up areas. Recommendations are made to the planning board to help preserve appropriate building patterns and architectural styles, with the goal of maintaining the overall character of a given area. Design Review Boards often limit their review to exterior architectural features, site design and signage.

Downtown Revitalization Zoning
Downtown Revitalization Zoning seeks to encourage businesses to locate in downtowns. Zoning of this nature is typically written to be attractive to businesses of a certain kind that would work well within the given infrastructure and transportation needs, but can also incorporate some of the same elements as Village Center Zoning (see below), such as encouraging mixed use development at a pedestrian-friendly scale, with minimal setbacks and offsite parking.

Flexible Development Zoning
Flexible Development Zoning allows for greater flexibility and creativity when subdividing land, to conform and work with the natural and cultural resources of a site and minimize alteration or damage to these resources, rather than follow standard requirements of subdivision regulations. While this does not prevent land from being subdivided, it does allow for the protection of some features, serves to preserve some undeveloped land, and promotes better overall site planning.

Local Historic Districts (LHD)
LHDs recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and their settings are preserved. They offer the strongest form of protection available for historic resources. LHDs are administered by a Local Historic District Commission (distinct from the community's Local Historical Commission), which reviews proposed exterior changes to buildings within the district. The kinds of changes that are reviewed vary according to the terms of the local bylaw.

Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (NCD)
Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (sometimes known as Neighborhood Conservation Districts) are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of the neighborhood are important. They are less restrictive than Local Historic Districts in that they focus on a few key architectural elements and massing, scale, and setback in an effort to embrace overall neighborhood character. As in Local Historic Districts, changes are reviewed by a Neighborhood Architectural Conservation District Commission.

Open Space Zoning
Open Space Zoning – also known as Cluster Development Bylaw, Open Space Communities Zoning, Open Space Development Overlay District, Open Space Preservation Subdivision, or Open Space Residential Development – allows greater density than would otherwise be permitted on a parcel, in an effort to preserve open space. Typically, construction is limited to half of the parcel, while the remaining land is permanently protected under a conservation restriction.

Rate of Development Bylaw
A town may slow the rate of its growth within reasonable time limits to allow the community to engage in planning and preparation for growth. This measure must be used for the purpose of conducting studies and planning for rational development, and not for restraining the rate of growth for a period of unlimited duration.

Right to Farm Bylaw
A Right to Farm Bylaw asserts the rights of farmers to pursue agricultural activities, provides community support for farming activities and requires dispute resolution so that abutters cannot make nuisance claims. Agricultural landscapes are widely considered to be significant heritage landscapes for which there is constant concern of potential development. This bylaw serves to help active farmers remain just that - active.

Scenic Overlay District Zoning
Scenic Overlay District Zoning protects scenic vistas by providing for a no-disturb buffer on private lands, thereby helping to maintain specific viewpoints. This type of zoning is more far-reaching than a Scenic Roads Bylaw (see below) and may be applied to numbered routes.

Scenic Roads Bylaw
The Scenic Roads Bylaw requires that a public hearing be held prior to the removal of any trees or stone walls that fall within the public right of way on a designated scenic road. Depending on how it is written, the bylaw may apply to a predetermined list of roads or encompass all roads in a community (other than numbered routes). The bylaw applies whenever there is any public or private impact to trees or stone walls within the right of way, including activities such as road widening, utility company work or creating private driveways.

Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw
Scenic Vista Protection Bylaws require additional design criteria for any proposals for new construction in areas that are determined by the town to be a scenic vista. Vistas may encompass natural, cultural and historic features.

Shade Tree Act
The Shade Tree Act is a part of MGL Chapter 87, which defines all trees within the public way as public shade trees. The municipal Tree Warden is responsible for the care, maintenance and protection of all public shade trees (except those along state highways). Trimming or removal of any public shade trees greater than 1.5" in diameter requires a public hearing. Chapter 87 applies to all communities; however, some communities have adopted their own Shade Tree Act Bylaws that provide stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 87.

Site Plan Review
Site Plan Review provides the planning board (and other boards and committees, depending how the bylaw is written) with an opportunity to consider a variety of community concerns – such as impacts to vehicular circulation, scenic vistas, topography and natural resources – during the permit process. Boards may comment on site plans and request changes to the design. Site Plan Review is typically limited to large scale projects and tied to the special permit process.

Smart Growth Zoning – Chapter 40R
Smart Growth Zoning (Chapter 40R) provides financial rewards to communities that adopt special overlay zoning districts allowing as-of-right high density residential development in areas near transit stations, areas of concentrated development, or areas that are suitable for residential or mixed use development. Such zoning can help direct compact growth to areas that are already developed – such as historic village centers – thereby discouraging growth in less suitable areas.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)
TDR is a regulatory technique that allows a landowner to separate building or development rights from the property and sell them, receiving compensation for preserving land and allowing for the development to occur in areas selected for higher density projects. In essence, development rights are "transferred" from one district (the "sending district") to another (the "receiving district"). As a result, development densities are shifted within the community to achieve both open space preservation and economic goals without changing overall development potential.

Village Center Zoning
The goal of Village Center Zoning is to meet the needs of a small-scale, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area by encouraging compact development. New construction is required to be built at a scale that is compatible with the neighborhood and to have a reduced (or no) setback from the street. Parking may be directed to discourage large lots in front of buildings. Village Center Zoning shares many similarities with Traditional Neighborhood Development, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Wetlands Protection Act and Bylaws
The Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Chapter 131, Section 40) protects wetlands by requiring a careful review by local conservation commissions of proposed work that may alter wetlands. The law also protects floodplains, riverfront areas, land under water bodies, waterways, salt ponds, fish runs and the ocean. Communities may also adopt their own Wetlands Protection Bylaw, providing stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 131.

7. UTILIZE THE EXPERTS: TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Beyond DCR and the Heritage Corridors, technical assistance is available from many governmental and non-profit sources, most often free of charge to municipalities and non-profit organizations.

- American Farmland Trust: Clearinghouse of information supporting farmland protection and stewardship.
- Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission: The regional planning agency charged with assisting communities with local planning efforts in this region.
- Citizen Planner Training Collaborative: Provides local planning and zoning officials with training opportunities and online information; they also hold an annual conference to support land use planning.
- Green Valley Institute: Provides technical assistance about land use planning to communities within the Quinebaug-Shetucket Heritage Corridor. Web site and publications contain information of use to communities throughout the region.

- Massachusetts Historical Commission: Provides technical assistance as well as grants to municipalities and nonprofits for preservation planning and restoration projects.
- New England Small Farm Institute: A non-profit dedicated to providing technical assistance, information and training to farmers.
- The Trustees of Reservations: Offers conservation and landscape protection workshops, publications and connections through the **Putnam Conservation Institute.** The Trustees also manages a unique **Conservation Buyer Program** that links interested sellers with conservation-minded buyers and assists with establishing permanent property protection mechanisms.
- Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is the state agency dedicated to supporting the agricultural activities in the state through special initiatives, programs and technical assistance.
- The Trust for Public Land is a national non-profit that assists municipalities with land conservation efforts.
- DCR's Lakes and Ponds Program works with local groups and municipalities to protect, manage and restore these valuable aquatic resources. They provide technical assistance to communities and citizen groups, help to monitor water quality at various public beaches to ensure public safety, and provide educational materials to the public about a range of lake issues.
- Massachusetts Agricultural Commissions has recently launched a new website that includes helpful information both for communities with Agricultural Commissions and for those learning more about forming one.
- UMASS extension (NREC) – Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation) can provide assistance on issues related to land and water resource protection, smart growth/sustainability measures and forestry and farming management.

8. PAY THE BILL: FUNDING PRESERVATION

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing strategies to protect heritage landscapes. There are local, state, regional, national and non-profit funding programs and resources that can assist communities in preservation and land conservation-related issues. The availability of such assistance varies from year to year and private property is not always eligible for funding. Examples include:

Local Funding Assistance

- Towns that have adopted the **Community Preservation Act (CPA)** find it to be an excellent funding source for many heritage landscape projects. While tricky to pass in lean economic times, the number and types of projects that are benefiting across the Commonwealth makes the CPA worthy of consideration. Such projects include MHC inventory, National Register nominations, cemetery preservation, open space acquisition and preservation and restoration of public buildings. The CPA (M.G.L. Chapter 44B) establishes a mechanism by which cities and towns can develop a fund dedicated to historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Local funds are collected through a 0.5% to 3% surcharge on each annual real estate tax bill. At the state level, the Commonwealth has established a dedicated fund which is used to match the

municipality's collections under the CPA. The amount of the surcharge is determined by ballot vote at a local election.

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act, by a majority vote on a ballot question, fosters **partnerships** among historic preservationists, conservationists and affordable housing advocates. At least 10% of the funds must be used to preserve historic resources; at least 10% must be used to protect open space; and at least 10% must be used to advance affordable housing. The remaining 70% must be used for one of these three uses as well as recreational needs and can be distributed in varying proportions depending upon the projects that the city or town believes are appropriate and beneficial to the municipality. Additional information about the CPA can be found at www.communitypreservation.org.

- Municipalities can establish **land acquisition funds**, increasing their revenue from sources such as an annual fixed line item in the municipal budget; income from forestry, farming and leasing of town-owned land; gifts and bequests; grants and foundation funding; and passage of the CPA, detailed above.

State Funding Assistance

Funding for a variety of preservation projects, primarily for municipalities and non-profits, is available through the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), the EOEEA Division of Conservation Services (DCS), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and other state agencies. Further information on these programs is available on the agency websites.

- MHC **Survey and Planning Grants** support survey, National Register and a wide variety of preservation planning projects.

- The **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF),** administered through the MHC, funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.

- Towns that have a local historic district bylaw may apply for **Certified Local Government (CLG)** status which is granted by the National Park Service (NPS) through the MHC. At least 10% of the MHC's yearly federal funding allocation is distributed to CLG communities through Survey and Planning matching grants. To become a CLG, the town completes an application; after being accepted as a CLG, it files a report yearly on the status of applications, meetings, and decisions; in return the town may apply for the matching grant funding that the MHC awards competitively to CLGs annually. Presently 18 cities and towns in Massachusetts are CLGs. **NOTE:** CLG status is dependent in part on a municipality having at least one Local Historical District as evidence of the community's commitment to historic preservation.

- Open Space Plans, with a requirement of updating the plan every five years, make a community eligible for **Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) grants** and technical assistance programs through the Department of Conservation Services.

- The **Massachusetts Self-Help Program** of DCS assists local conservation commissions in acquiring land for the purposes of natural and cultural resource protection and passive outdoor recreation.

- The **Massachusetts Urban Self-Help Program,** another DCS initiative, is geared toward assisting towns and cities in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes.

- DCS **Conservation Partnership Grants** assist non-profits in acquiring interests in land for conservation or recreation, and have also been used in the past to help protect active agricultural lands.

- The **Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund**, distributed through the DCS, can support heritage landscape protection by providing up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition or renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply.

The **Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)** administers a variety of grant programs that can help with heritage landscape preservation:

- **Urban and Community Forestry** grants fund projects which will result in sustained improvements in local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry management.

- The **Recreational Trails Grant** Program provides funding on a reimbursement basis for a variety of recreational trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects.

The **Department of Agricultural Resources** **Farm Viability Enhancement Program** works with farmers to develop sound business plans and funding assistance to implement them.

Regional and Non-Profit Funding Assistance

- The **John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission's Heritage Partnership Program** supports projects in corridor towns that further the Corridor goals of historic preservation, community revitalization, ecological restoration, land use planning, riverway development and educating people about the Valley's heritage. Communities and organizations located within the Corridor are eligible to receive funding, subject to availability.

- **Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor** provides mini-grants to member towns, supporting preservation of heritage landscapes including projects involving sustainable agriculture, river clean-ups, open space planning and natural resource conservation.

- The **Greater Worcester Community Foundation** provides grants to non-profit organizations for community enhancements.

- **The Trust for Public Land** (TPL) is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands and other natural places. TPL helps communities identify and prioritize lands to be protected; secure financing for conservation; and structure, negotiate and complete land transactions. TPL's New England Office recently launched the **Worcester County Conservation Initiative**, to accelerate the pace of land conservation in central Massachusetts by helping communities plan and finance conservation projects.

- The **National Trust for Historic Preservation** offers a variety of financial assistance programs. Based on the availability of funding, the National Trust awards more than $2 million in grants and loans each year for preservation projects nationwide.

- The **Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission** **(CMRPC)** does not administer grants, but can work with communities to write grants or help them find funding.

Federal Funding Assistance

- The **Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program** of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has protected 85 farms to date in Massachusetts on 6,335 acres with matching funds. Eligible organizations are federally recognized Indian tribes, states, local government, and non-governmental organizations. They are required to provide 50-50 matching funds for purchase of conservation easements in land with prime, productive soils that are subject to a pending offer, for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses of the land.

- All of the communities within the Blackstone Heritage Corridor have been designated **Preserve America** communities, making them eligible to receive technical assistance and matching grants related to heritage tourism. Eligible grant activities include research, documentation (e.g., historic resource surveys and National Register nominations), interpretation and education (e.g., signage, exhibits and itineraries), planning, marketing and training. (Communities within the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor may want to pursue Preserve America designation in order to take advantage of these funding opportunities.)

- The National Park Service's **Rivers & Trails Program** provides technical assistance to community groups and government agencies so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The program does not offer grants, but can provide staff to help identify needs, assist partners in navigating the planning process, and help with organizational development and capacity building. The program can serve as a catalyst for successful trail development and conservation efforts.

LEICESTER
HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

Priority Landscapes

1. Mannville
2. Johnson Farms
3. May House + Grounds
4. Swan Tavern
5. Ballard Hill
6. Southgate Pasture Cemetery
7. Cooper's Hill Top Farm

Map Created By:
Hyla Ecological Services, Inc.
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www.hyla-ecological.com
HYLAecological

NOTE RE BOUNDARIES: Priority Landscape outlines are not legal parcel boundaries; they indicate local focus of concern. All other GIS data were obtained from MassGIS and may not include 2007 updates.

Priority Landscape
Linear Priority Landscape
State Register of Historic Places
State Register of Historic Districts
Major Road
Road
Conservation Restriction
Commonwealth of Massachusetts Lands
Non-Profit
Municipal
Land Trust

N

dcr Massachusetts

0 0.5 1 Miles