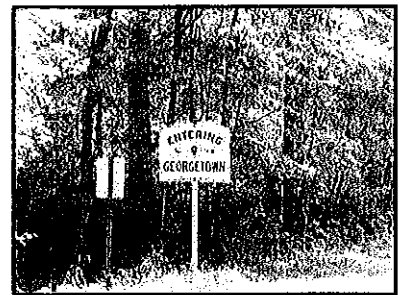


GEORGETOWN MASTER PLAN

OCTOBER 2007



Appreciation is extended to the following individuals and organizations for their participation and assistance on the Georgetown Master Plan.

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Special thanks are extended to the local business community that provided the financial support to the Town to expand and update its 2004 Community Development Plan into a complete Master Plan for the community.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Master Plan Overview

Chapter 41, 81D of the General Laws of Massachusetts states that the Planning Board shall make a Master Plan to provide a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the community. This law requires that the Master Plan include nine chapters:

- (1) Visioning (2) Land Use (3) Housing (4) Economic Development
- (5) Historic and Cultural Resources (6) Natural Resources, Open Space & Recreation
- (7) Public Services and Utilities (8) Transportation (9) Implementation.

In June 2004, the Georgetown Planning Board and Georgetown Master Plan Committee completed a Community Development Plan with state funding for six of the nine required chapters. In October 2006, local contributions allowed the Planning Board to hire a consultant to complete the final three chapters. The now complete Master Plan is expected to be finalized by the Planning Board in October, 2007.

The goals and policies of the Master Plan have been formed with the participation of town officials, town committee members and residents. Many visioning and public working sessions were held during the 2004 process. During the 2007 process, the Planning Board solicited comment at three public meetings, aired on the local cable TV. A website was created that elicited active public comment and reinforced the 2004 vision and concerns.

The 2007 Plan has three new sections:

- (2) Land Use, (7) Public Services and Utilities, and (9) Implementation.

In addition three sections received significant updates from the 2004 plan:

Section 6 due to the recently completed 2006 Open Space Plan,

Section 5 due to the contribution of the Historic Commission, and

Section 4, whereas the Planning Board asked the consultants for more detailed economic development recommendations than had been previously included.

The Master Plan presents a five to ten year plan for the Town, including specific recommendations rooted in research and best practice, as to how to accomplish town goals.

Benefits

The benefits to the Town of Georgetown for having a Master Plan are considerable. The Plan sets down the vision of residents for the future of the Town and provides a thorough documentation of community data and trends. In the Plan are defined strategies to assist the

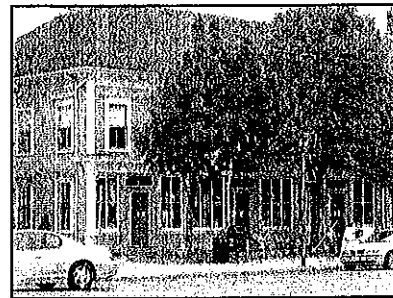
Town in achieving its goals and prioritization of recommended actions for a proactive shaping of the community, Having a Master Plan contributes to a positive bond rating for the Town, bonus points on State grant applications, and a clearer bargaining position to negotiate with developers on residential, commercial, and industrial proposals.

A Summary of each of the Chapters of the Georgetown Master Plan

(1) Vision Statement

The Vision Statement is a broad set of themes identifying what type of community residents would like to have in the future. The Vision Statement is what residents would like to see in Georgetown in the Year 2023.

Georgetown remains a predominantly residential and family-oriented community with a semi-rural, small town identity. Through careful planning, the Town has retained much of the visual character of its rural heritage of fields and woods balanced by a lively historic downtown and a small sector of clean industry. Georgetown has an involved, civic-minded population and an excellent school system. The Town has been successful in shaping change to protect its livability and natural beauty while accommodating growth and reflecting the community's essential values:



- The Natural and Cultural Heritage
- The Variety of Housing that Complements Town Character
- Economic Development
- Ease of Moving Around Town and
- Civic Strength: strong schools, community, & leadership

(2) Land Use

This chapter provides an overview of the town's land use patterns, existing zoning, and historic and potential future development patterns. The Town has defined three overarching Land Use goals, with suggested strategies for each one.

Land Use Goal 1: Strengthen the Village Center

The goal of strengthening the village center is for the benefits of improved economic well-being of the village center, enhanced appeal of the village as a destination and community meeting place, increased tax revenue from a healthy local economy, and increased diversity of housing choice. Land zoned for business uses is limited and concentrated in the town center area of Georgetown. The Town could support more intense use of the existing business zone to accommodate future commercial expansion and development. Mixed-use development is an attractive approach that can provide for limited amounts of housing to serve as a redevelopment

incentive and provide additional housing choices in the community. This pattern reflects traditional models of rural villages and town centers, where small shops, stores and service establishments were often mixed with small apartments or living units on the same or adjacent parcels.

Strategies for strengthening the Village Center:

- A Village Overlay District
- A Design Review/Appearance Code
- A Small Scale Package Wastewater Treatment Plant
- Additional Pedestrian Connections in the Village

Land Use Goal 2: Preserve the rural character of the Town

The Town wishes to protect the rural character and appearance of the town. Actions are suggested here to protect the rural look and feel of the roads and countryside outside of the center.

Strategies for preserving the rural character of the Town

- Landscaping Requirements for Parking Lots and Buffer Areas
- A Scenic Overlay District
- Additional Scenic Road Designations

Land Use Goal 3: Ensure development occurs consistent with regulations.

Appropriate zoning shapes development by controlling uses, building size and design, and population densities. Zoning cannot achieve the planning goals without consistent enforcement. Inherent in the zoning recommendations is an associated requirement that Georgetown should also enforce its zoning by-laws. With zoning enforcement, the Town will be able to both protect and upgrade the community due to an ability to implement planning policies.

Strategy for Improved Zoning Compliance

- Definition of administration and enforcement procedures

(3) Housing

The Housing chapter provides a thorough review of current housing data and trends. Housing diversity and affordability have long been priorities of the Town. The Town has been active by taking steps to improve available housing options for residents. The Town has the following resources to affect housing development:

- An Independent Senior Housing Bylaw that includes 20% affordable units
- A Housing Balance Bylaw that mandates 10% affordable housing for Special Permits

- The Community Preservation Act that provides funding for affordable housing
- An Affordable Housing Task Force to manage affordable housing
- The Open Space Residential Development Bylaw that promotes both 10% affordable housing and the preservation of Open Space.

With the permitting of the 184 Longview Apartments under Chapter 40B of State Law, 13.9% of the town's housing units are now affordable (deed restricted.) As a result the Town is no longer subject to the state override of local zoning regulations embodied in Chapter 40B. In addition, both new affordable housing units and contributions to the Affordable Housing Special Revenue Account continue to happen as new subdivisions and special permits are granted.

Housing Strategies:

- To organize the management of existing affordable housing (inclusionary units), both the existing inventory and as new dwellings are permitted.
- To pursue increased diversity of housing options using the Village Center Overlay District
- Work with the Independent Senior Housing and the OSRD bylaws to promote flexibility and creativity in housing options.
- Explore making tax title properties available for family or senior housing with affordable deed restrictions

(4) Economic Development

This Chapter examines Georgetown's labor force, including where people work and the types of employment available in town. It also examines the impact on the tax base of existing commercial businesses in Georgetown and recommends steps to increase the commercial tax base while adhering to the residents' desire to retain the community's small town, rural character.

The Master Plan encourages economic development that maintains a balance between residents' preferences for limited, selective commercial/industrial growth while creating a vibrant, attractive, business- and pedestrian-friendly town center that offers a mix of uses and services. The business community should include a mix of thriving local companies, including resource-based businesses such as farming and nursery operations that are important to the character of the town, the conservation of open space, and the livelihood of local residents.

The Master Plan also provides a methodology for evaluation of Big Box Store proposals that might arise on properties with close access to Route 95. The Plan suggests some strategies by which the Town might take a more proactive approach with owners of industrial parcels located near Route 95.

Economic Development Strategies:

- Create an economic development committee with designated staff coordinator

- Investigate development incentives for businesses
- Conduct a feasibility study for National Avenue parcel
- Introduce design guidelines and design review process into the local zoning by-law to assure design consistency particularly in the town center
- Encourage façade improvements for local business owners
- Define appropriate home-based businesses and revise regulations if necessary

(5) Historic and Cultural Resources

An essential value in the Vision Statement is protecting and enhancing Georgetown's Natural and Cultural Heritage. In the visioning for the year 2024, residents projected that:

"The Town's most important historic resources have been identified and given landmark protection. CPA funds have been effectively deployed to protect historic as well as open space resources."

Georgetown has a number of historic buildings and sites that have local, state and national significance. This chapter provides a detailed review of existing cultural and historic areas and tables listing existing historic sites and proposed cultural sites.

The greatest threats to Georgetown's historic resources are the inappropriate development of adjoining or surrounding neighborhood properties to the existing historic resources; historically-inaccurate changes to structures; and lack of broad citizen awareness, appreciation and support. Residents note that historic resources are very important to maintaining the town's small town community character.

Key Strategies:

- Create two historical districts, the Elm Street District, and the Village District
- Develop a Preservation & Landscape Plan for Harry Murch Park on East Main Street
- Deploy signage and create a Tour Guide Map
- Restore Schoolhouse #3 on the Brocklebank Museum property
- Create a Minimum-Maintenance By-Law

The Historic Commission plans ongoing surveying and filing of historical buildings and sites with the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

(6) Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation

This Chapter represents a summary of the 2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan. It includes an inventory and analysis of Georgetown's natural resources, wildlife, and vegetation and recreation sites. The Town goals are to acquire Open Space land with consideration of habitat values, greenways, active recreation potential and historic landscapes; enhance and maintain existing passive and active open space within Georgetown; protect water resources including

public drinking water supply, wetlands, wildlife habitat, fisheries and recreational waters; and improve public access to conservation lands for passive recreational usage.

Strategies for Active Recreation:

- Build the Rail Trail
- Acquire 40 acres of active recreational space
- Upgrade the American Legion Park
- Establish a maintenance plan for athletic fields

Strategies for Open Space

- Undertake systematic review of all conservation lands and their access to identify deficiencies and to better provide greater public access to these lands.
- Prioritize upgrades of existing trails
- Address problems with invasive plant species
- Examine the creation of a private non-profit Land Trust
- Acquire additional lands to protect the existing water supply

(7) Public Services and Utilities

This section of the Master Plan discusses Georgetown's public facilities, services, and infrastructure based on information from previous studies and reports, and from discussions with department heads and other town employees. The purpose of this section is not to undertake a thorough analysis of the town's facilities and services, but to integrate existing available information into the overall master planning process so that the town's public investment decisions are consistent with the community's overall vision for the future.

Two major town facilities were recently significantly renovated: the Town Hall and the Library. The town also has a new middle/high school, though significant population growth has led to studies for a major expansion of the Penn Brook School. The Water Department recently made the connection of the third town well to the treatment plant.

Items on the Implementation Plan for section 7 include some remaining upgrades to Town Hall and the Public Safety Building, the planning for the new school, and an additional water tower and increased capacity at the water treatment plant. A low-flow analysis of the Parker River suggests the Town's water supply withdrawals may be a major cause of recurring low flows in the river and recommends a Safe Yield Analysis for the Town wells with regard to adequate flows in the river.

(8) Transportation

The following statement was included as part of the Town's vision statement for long-term planning from the 2004 Plan:

"Moving Around Georgetown – In addition to Georgetown's pedestrian network of sidewalks and trails in open space areas, bicycle and pedestrian routes have been created on abandoned railbeds and on utility line rights of way. Improvements in traffic management at key intersections and physical improvements combined with enhanced enforcement have made local roads safer and eased congestion. Enforcement actions have made truck traffic less noisy for residents along truck routes."

Since 2004, the Town advanced, and in some cases, completed many transportation improvements, including the substantial redesign of Georgetown Square and East Main Street out to Elm Street and the pedestrian crossing light at East Main Street for access to the Middle/High School.

Transportation goals are to increase safe and easy access along roadways while preserving the rural character of Georgetown; and enhance safe bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the Town; and enhance access to public transportation.

Strategies:

Actions that the Town is promoting with Mass Highway Department:

- Implement Route 97 safety improvements
- Park and Ride at Carlton Drive and Route 95
- Intersection study, Routes 133 & 95

Town Actions:

- Develop a "Biking and Pedestrian Facilities Master Plan"
- Improve parking in the town center

(9) Implementation

This final section of the Master Plan gives guidance to the Town for the next five to ten years. In the Implementation Section, town departments give a timeframe to actions they are planning to undertake. This process coordinates the activities of the disparate departments and Boards and Commissions to support the unified town policy articulated in the Master Plan.

Key Strategies: Form a Master Plan Implementation Committee. This Committee should be appointed by and report to the Planning Board, and should include a representative from key town boards and committees, including, at a minimum, the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, and the Conservation Commission.

The Implementation Committee should report at least once a year to the Planning Board on the status of the actions listed in the Implementation Plan. The Planning Board should update the action timeframes as necessary and in response to input from the responsible implementing parties.

Table of Contents

1.0	VISION.....	1-1
1.1	Summary	1-1
1.2	Vision Statement.....	1-1
2.0	LAND USE.....	2-1
2.1	Summary	2-1
2.2	Goals & Objectives for Land Use.....	2-1
2.3	Regional Context	2-1
2.4	Land Use Patterns	2-2
2.4.1	Town Land	2-2
2.4.2	Town Development History	2-3
2.4.3	Land Use Changes (1971-1999)	2-4
2.4.4	Current Land Use	2-4
2.4.5	Full Buildout Analysis	2-5
2.5	Under Construction	2-8
2.6	Recent Progress	2-8
2.7	Land Use Strategies and Recommendations.....	2-8
2.7.1	Strengthen the Village Center	2-9
2.7.2	Protect the Rural Character of the Town.....	2-11
2.7.3	Enforce Zoning Regulations	2-12
3.0	HOUSING	3-1
3.1	Introduction.....	3-1
3.2	Housing Vision Statement.....	3-1
3.3	Housing Goals and Objectives	3-2
3.4	Georgetown's Housing Assets and Liabilities.....	3-3
3.5	Population	3-3
3.6	Housing Growth.....	3-4
3.7	Household Demographics.....	3-4
3.7.1	Household Size.....	3-5
3.7.2	Household Income.....	3-5
3.8	Housing Unit Inventory and Assessed Values	3-5
3.9	Housing Sales and Values	3-6
3.10	Housing Permit Data and Construction Trends.....	3-6
3.11	Age of Housing Stock.....	3-7

3.12	Housing Occupancy	3-8
3.13	Types of Households.....	3-9
3.14	Housing Demand Assessment & Needs Analysis	3-9
3.15	Georgetown's Regulatory Framework & Housing.....	3-10
3.15.1	Zoning Bylaws	3-10
3.15.2	Zoning Definitions	3-11
3.15.3	Subdivision Regulations	3-11
3.15.4	Independent Senior Housing Overlay District (ISH Overlay District) ..	3-12
3.15.5	Housing Balance.....	3-12
3.16	Housing Issues in Georgetown.....	3-12
3.16.1	Affordable Housing	3-12
3.16.2	Affordable Housing Resources.....	3-14
3.16.3	Open Space & Preserving Rural Character	3-15
3.17	Housing Recommendations and Implementation	3-17
3.17.1	Continue to work with Article VII of the Zoning Bylaw, Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) District.....	3-17
3.17.2	Zoning for housing in areas such as downtown	3-17
3.17.3	Tax Title Properties	3-17
4.0	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.....	4-1
4.1	Summary	4-1
4.2	Goals	4-1
4.3	Objectives	4-1
4.4	Georgetown's Labor Force	4-1
4.5	Journey to Work	4-3
4.6	The Number and Types of Jobs in Georgetown	4-5
4.7	Georgetown's Largest Employers	4-6
4.8	Economic Sector's Contribution to the Local Tax Base	4-7
4.9	Regional Economic Trends	4-9
4.10	Regional Retail Sector.....	4-10
4.10.1	Retail Trade Overview	4-10
4.10.2	Trade Area Analysis	4-12
4.10.3	The Issue of "Big Box" Retail.....	4-14
4.11	Preliminary Feasibility Analysis Methodology	4-15
4.12	Opportunities for Economic Development.....	4-16
4.12.1	The Massachusetts Economic Development Incentive Program	4-16
4.12.2	District Improvement Financing (DIF) Program	4-17

4.12.3	Merrimack Valley Chamber of Commerce	4-17
4.12.4	The Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)	4-18
4.12.5	The Industrial Services Program (ISP)	4-18
4.12.6	The Massachusetts Business Development Corporation (MBDC)	4-18
4.12.7	The Massachusetts Capital Resource Company (MCRC)	4-18
4.12.8	MassDevelopment	4-18
4.13	Impediments to Economic Development	4-18
4.13.1	Lack of Town-Controlled Industrial Land	4-19
4.13.2	Lack of Sewer Infrastructure	4-19
4.14	Economic Development Recommendations	4-19
4.14.1	Create Georgetown Economic Development Committee	4-20
4.14.2	Dimensional Setbacks in Georgetown's Commercial & Industrial Zoning Districts	4-21
4.14.3	Coordinate Development Activity with the Owners of Commercial and Industrial Land	4-21
4.14.4	Investigate District Improvement Financing	4-21
4.14.5	Economic Development Feasibility Study for the National Avenue Parcels	4-22
4.14.6	Establish Design Guidelines and a Design Review Process	4-22
4.14.7	Encourage Façade Improvements	4-23
4.14.8	Define Appropriate Home-Based Business Uses	4-23
4.14.9	Revise Regulations Concerning Home-Based Businesses	4-24
5.0	HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES	5-1
5.1	Summary	5-1
5.2	Key Goals and Objectives	5-1
5.3	Existing Cultural and Historic Areas	5-1
5.4	Historic and Cultural Recommendations and Implementation	5-6
5.4.1	The Creation of Two Historical Districts	5-7
5.4.2	Ongoing Survey and Filing of Historical Buildings and Sites with Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)	5-9
5.4.3	Creation of a Minimum-Maintenance By-Law	5-10
5.4.4	Restore GHC's School House No.3	5-10
6.0	NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION	6-1
6.1	Summary	6-1
6.2	Assets and Liabilities	6-1
6.3	Goals	6-1
6.4	Objectives	6-1

6.5	Environmental Inventory and Analysis	6-2
6.5.1	Soils	6-2
6.5.2	Landscape Character	6-2
6.5.3	Water Resources	6-2
6.5.4	Biological Resources	6-4
6.6	Scenic Resources and Unique Environments	6-8
6.6.1	Inventory of Scenic Landscapes.....	6-8
6.6.2	Unusual Geologic Features	6-8
6.6.3	Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC).....	6-9
6.7	Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest.....	6-9
6.7.1	The Lufkin's Brook Area	6-9
6.7.2	The Great Ponds Area.....	6-10
6.7.3	The Jackman-Wheeler Brooks Area.....	6-10
6.7.4	The Georgetown-Rowley State Forest Area	6-10
6.7.5	Connections between Open Space Areas	6-11
6.8	Analysis of Needs.....	6-12
6.8.1	Environmental Protection	6-12
6.8.2	Recreation	6-12
6.9	Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation Recommendations and Implementation	6-13
6.9.1	Acquire 40 acres of active recreational space.....	6-13
6.9.2	Maintain and upgrade existing parks.....	6-13
6.9.3	Establish non-profit Land Trust.....	6-14
6.9.4	Acquire additional lands for water supply protection	6-14
6.9.5	Compile up-to-date database and review all conservation lands regarding access	6-14
7.0	PUBLIC SERVICES AND UTILITIES.....	7-1
7.1	Summary	7-1
7.2	Goals	7-1
7.3	Assets and Liabilities	7-2
7.4	Water System	7-2
7.4.1	Existing Systems	7-5
7.4.2	Long Range Plans for Water Systems	7-6
7.4.3	Water System Issues.....	7-6
7.5	Municipal Sewer System	7-7
7.6	Schools.....	7-7
7.6.1	Enrollment.....	7-7

7.6.2	Yearly Student Costs	7-9
7.6.3	Projected Facility Needs	7-9
7.7	Town Government	7-10
7.7.1	Town Hall	7-10
7.7.2	Police Department	7-10
7.7.3	Fire Department	7-11
7.7.4	Public Library	7-11
7.8	The Senior Population	7-12
7.8.1	Existing Conditions	7-12
7.8.2	A Senior Center Facility	7-13
7.8.3	Senior Center Costs	7-13
7.9	Public Services and Facilities Recommendations and Implementation	7-13
7.9.1	Address condition of school facilities for existing and future school population	7-14
7.9.2	Conduct safe yield analysis, relative to groundwater supply withdrawals	7-14
7.9.3	Implement water conservation strategies	7-14
7.9.4	Create a long-range plan for wastewater system	7-14
7.9.5	Address police and fire department needs	7-16
8.0	TRANSPORTATION	8-1
8.1	Summary	8-1
8.2	Recent Improvements	8-1
8.2.1	Access Road	8-1
8.2.2	Reconstruction of Roadways in the downtown area	8-2
8.2.3	Updating of Traffic Lights: Square and Central/Library Streets	8-2
8.3	Goals & Objectives	8-2
8.4	Existing Conditions	8-3
8.4.1	Roads & Intersections	8-3
8.4.2	Vehicular Safety	8-6
8.4.3	Transportation Plans	8-8
8.4.4	Land Use Laws & Transportation	8-9
8.4.5	Public/Alternative Transportation	8-10
8.5	Transportation Issues & Deficiencies	8-10
8.5.1	Roadway Congestion	8-10
8.5.2	Other Identified Issues	8-11
8.6	Transportation Recommendations and Implementation	8-12

8.6.1	Bailey Lane Bridge Engineering Study	8-12
8.6.2	Safety improvements	8-12
8.6.3	Develop Comprehensive Transportation Infrastructure Maintenance Plan.....	8-12
8.6.4	Develop a "Biking and Pedestrian Facilities Master Plan"	8-12
8.6.5	Define Transportation planning priorities in Georgetown Square and other problematic areas in Town	8-13
8.6.6	Repair Drainage system along Andover Street	8-13
8.6.7	Improve West Main Street from the Square to the Groveland line.....	8-13
8.6.8	Install Signage at Tenney Street, Woodland Street and Martel Way ..	8-13
8.6.9	Enhance Parking in the Town Center.....	8-13
8.6.10	Provide additional commuter parking in an additional Park & Ride facility located near I-95.....	8-13
9.0	IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	9-1
9.1	Implementation Matrix.....	9-2
9.2	Evaluation Program.....	9-9

List of Appendices

Appendix A – Existing Zoning

Appendix B – Preliminary Feasibility Analysis Methodology

Appendix C – Table T-11 of the 2004 Community Development Plan

Appendix D – Figures