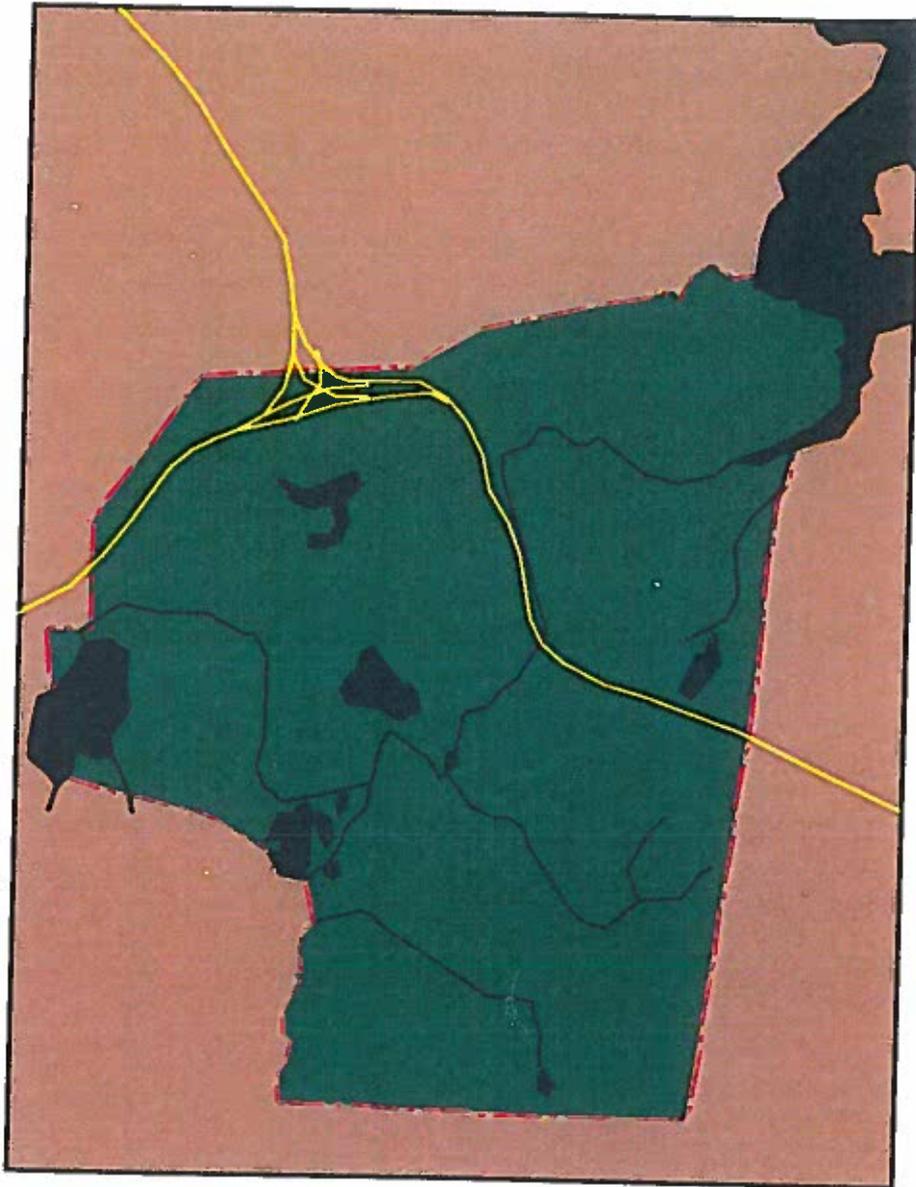


BRAINTREE MASTER PLAN

April 1998



Prepared for:
Town of Braintree
Planning Board

Prepared by:
The Cecil Group, Inc., with
Bonz/REA
Connors, Bliss & Courville
Fay, Spofford & Thorndike

Town of Braintree

Master Plan

Prepared for theTown of Braintree

**The Cecil Group, Inc. with
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Fay, Spofford & Thorndike**

Braintree Master Plan

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
APPROACH TO DEVELOPING THE MASTER PLAN	1
SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES	2
ORGANIZATION OF THE MASTER PLAN	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
LAND USE PLAN	12
INTRODUCTION	12
OVERVIEW	12
ACTION PLAN	18
HOUSING PLAN	22
OVERVIEW	22
ACTION PLAN	23
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN	26
OVERVIEW	26
ACTION PLAN	27
NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES PLAN	30
NATURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW	30
NATURAL RESOURCES ACTION PLAN	31
CULTURAL RESOURCES OVERVIEW	33
HISTORIC RESOURCES ACTION PLAN	34
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN	36
INTRODUCTION	36
OVERVIEW	36
ACTION PLAN	42
SERVICES AND FACILITIES PLAN	45
PUBLIC FACILITIES OVERVIEW	45
SERVICES AND FACILITIES ACTION PLAN	47
WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM OVERVIEW	48
WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM ACTION PLAN	49
WASTEWATER OVERVIEW	50
WASTEWATER ACTION PLAN	50
CIRCULATION PLAN	51
OVERVIEW	51
ACTION PLAN	54
IMPLEMENTATION PLAN	64
OVERVIEW	64
RECOMMENDATIONS	65

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION TABLES	73
MASTER PLAN ASSESSMENT AND UPDATE	81

APPENDICES

CONSERVATION COMMISSION EASEMENTS

COST AND FUNDING OF BRAINTREE CIRCULATION PROJECTS

FACILITIES SUMMARIES

“FINAL REPORT, EVALUATION OF SURVEY AND REGISTRATION
ACTIVITIES, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES FOR THE
BRAINTREE HISTORIC COMMISSION.”

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

MAIN STREET PROGRAM

MUNICIPAL INCENTIVE GRANT PROGRAM

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT

PROPOSED ZONING AMENDMENTS

SCOPE OF WORK - 10 YEAR TOWN-WIDE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

LIST OF MAPS

Existing Land Use Map
Conceptual Land Use Map
Existing Open Space and Recreation
Conceptual Open Space and Recreation System
Proposed Roadway Functional Classification
Proposed Sidewalk Improvements

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

“Braintree at a Crossroads”

Braintree, like many other towns in the Greater Metropolitan Boston Area, has changed radically in its character in the years since World War II. Residents still recall and indeed wish to reclaim some of the Town's former rural character. With this in mind, two factors play a significant role in shaping the approach to Braintree's future. These are the fact that the Town is nearly fully developed and that it lies only ten miles from downtown Boston at a major confluence of the regional highway system. Thus, the challenge facing Braintree is to take full advantage of the opportunities inherent in this situation while at the same time minimizing the costs imposed on residents of the community. In other words, the opportunity at hand calls for the Town to position itself so that it is managing development rather than having development dictate the character of the Town and the quality of life of its residents.

In response to this challenge, this Master Plan has been developed which seeks to maximize the Town's capacity to manage development, derive maximum short and long term benefit from such development, and provide guidance to the Town in addressing a number of specific problems. The obvious key to the efficacy of this plan lies in the feasibility of its implementation. Consequently, the plan outlines specific action strategies, identifies those responsible, and suggests a mechanism for monitoring and revising the plan on an annual basis.

This Master Plan is intended to provide a framework for decision making and action for the Town of Braintree over the course of the next five years. The Master Plan addresses issues facing the Town in the areas of Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Services and Facilities, Circulation and Implementation.

Approach to Developing the Master Plan

This Master Plan represents the culmination of the third phase of the Master Planning process. It was developed in an iterative process, building on the documentation of existing conditions found in The Findings Report and reflecting the consensus achieved with Town Officials and citizens in discussions of three alternative futures for the Town found in the Alternatives Report.

The Findings Report documented existing conditions in the areas of Land Use, Housing, Economic Development, Natural and Cultural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Facilities and Services, and Circulation. The information contained in the Findings Report was gathered from a variety of sources, including existing reports and mapping, field studies, and perhaps most importantly from the Town Planning Board, Department Heads, Planning Staff, and citizens who participated in a series of public meetings and workshops. A number of public workshops were held in 1997 to solicit input from the Town's residents regarding key issues facing the Town. The first workshop focused on Circulation Issues, the second on Land Use and the third on Services and Amenities. The consultant team also used these workshops as opportunities to confirm impressions developed in the course of their research.

The Findings Report emerged from the first phase of work and served as a resource for the consultant team in developing a series of three alternative scenarios for the future of Braintree as described in the Alternatives Report. That report served as a tool in gaining an

understanding of the implications of pursuing one direction or another. The Alternatives were used to illustrate how priorities would be established in each of the general planning areas, i.e. Land Use, Economic Development, Housing, Open Space and Recreation, Natural and Cultural Resources, and Circulation and Transportation. Underlying the evaluation of the Alternatives and the development of this Master Plan were the Goals and Objectives as developed by the Planning Board and refined during the planning process. (See Appendix.) These goals are:

Braintree should provide for orderly growth and development aimed at enhancing Braintree's quality of life, which recognizes the natural characteristics of the land, its suitability for development, the availability of existing and proposed public services and facilities and the fiscal ability to provide such services. To achieve this Comprehensive Plan, Braintree should...

Implement an overall growth management plan for all uses so that desirable uses and intensities are achieved in an orderly pattern that can be adequately served through minimal changes in the infrastructure that serves the Town.

- *Undertake actions that enhance the quality of life for residents by retaining the scale and character of a town rather than becoming a city.*
- *Take advantage of its strategic location that protects the livability of its residential neighborhoods while providing a strong tax base through commercial uses.*
- *Ensure the quality of Braintree as a business location through actions that support appropriate uses and locations for new businesses, and reinforce the quality of this location for existing businesses.*
- *Recognizing that open space is a key asset of Braintree; the environmental qualities and recreational opportunities of open space should be enhanced.*
- *Undertake a coordinated capital improvements plan to ensure the timely provision of services and utilities to match changes in land use and the needs of the residents and businesses of the community*

Summary of Alternatives

The first Alternative was "Emphasis on Amenities and Quality of Life;" the second focused on Infrastructure improvements; and the third emphasized taking advantage of Braintree's location in promoting the Town as a Regional Resource. It was not intended that a single alternative would be selected as the preferred alternative. Rather, it was assumed that the priorities established in the Master Plan would reflect a sort of composite "alternative" aimed at reaching the Town's agreed upon goals. It is important to note that the priorities described under each Alternative were not mutually exclusive.

Alternative 1: Emphasis on Amenities and Quality of Life

In this scenario, the ultimate priority was maximizing and enhancing the quality of life of residents of the Town of Braintree. Key here was achieving an understanding of how the Town manages its resources in support of this desired community vision. Important issues were related to:

- promoting “Town-like” characteristics and qualities;
- minimizing conflicts in land uses that diminish the quality of life in Braintree;
- protecting and enhancing Braintree’s open space resources;
- preserving and enhancing the identity of Braintree’s residential neighborhoods;
- revitalizing Braintree’s neighborhood and district commercial centers;
- enhancing the image of the Town; and
- preserving and enhancing the Town’s natural and cultural resources.

Alternative 2: Emphasis on Infrastructure Improvements

This alternative called for a focused program of infrastructure improvements aimed at better serving the Town’s current residents and businesses, and ensuring adequate capacity to meet the demands of likely future residential and commercial development. Key issues to be addressed included:

- ensuring the adequacy of the roadway system;
- improving the level of service of the water and sewer systems;
- ensuring the high quality of the local school system; and
- promoting handicapped accessibility of all public facilities and improvements.

Alternative 3: Protecting and Enhancing Braintree as a Regional Resource

Taking this approach, the Town would seek to capitalize on its strategic location as a regional resource. Important issues would be:

- strengthening the tax base;
- attracting new businesses and supporting existing businesses;
- ensuring adequate public services and facilities to support new and current businesses;
- ensuring the adequacy of the roadway system;
- providing incentives for the redevelopment of underutilized commercial and industrial parcels; and
- enhancing the climate for business.

The Alternatives Report was the first step in conceptualizing these Alternatives. They were further developed and refined with input from the consultant team in response to comments from the Planning Board as well as the community in a series of three workshops: (1) with representatives of the business community at a meeting of the Braintree Business Council of the South Shore Chamber of Commerce; (2) with the Civic Associations; and (3) with the general public. The result of that dialogue is this Master Plan. In the Master Plan, the Consultant Team has sought to develop a framework within which the Town can move forward in a series of steps toward a vision that embodies the Goals and Objectives refined in the course of this planning process.

The vision driving this Master Plan is a composite of the three Alternatives. It is oriented toward achieving the highest quality of life for the Town's residents, while recognizing that this will require an emphasis on infrastructure improvements, and acknowledging that this will demand that the Town strengthen its tax base by promoting its assets. Fundamental to this vision is the premise that Braintree must maintain a *regional* perspective in order to protect and enhance its *local* resources.

Organization of the Master Plan

The Master Plan assumes a five year time frame and is structured as a *Strategic Plan*. As such, it describes a series of specific actions aimed at achieving the Town's agreed-upon goals and objectives as expressed in an overarching vision of the future of the Town. The Master Plan is organized according to the nine categories of issues prescribed by State legislation that establishes a common basis for all comprehensive plans for communities in the Commonwealth: Goals and Objectives; Land Use; Housing; Economic Development; Natural and Cultural Resources; Open Space and Recreation; Services and Facilities; Circulation; and Implementation.

A critical component of such a plan is the Implementation Strategy. This section of the Master Plan is organized as a series of regulatory and non-regulatory actions, scheduled over a five year time period, aimed at making the vision of Braintree articulated by its residents in this Master Plan a reality. Estimated costs are assigned to each action according to whether they are "low," i.e. less than \$5000, "moderate," i.e. between \$5,000 and \$50,000, or "high," i.e. more than \$50,000. When information is available on potential sources of funding, it is found in the Appendices. While the Master Plan does not resolve all outstanding issues, one of the purposes of the Implementation section is to provide sufficient information to allow the Town to help establish priorities. A proposed set of "first steps" is further identified in a summary table. Finally, the Implementation component addresses the issue of monitoring progress in the implementation of the Master Plan, and modifying the Plan in response to changing conditions and priorities.

Summary of Participants

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Vision

The vision of Braintree guiding the direction of this Master Plan is that of a town which affords a high quality of life for its residents as reflected in the appearance of the public realm of the Town and measured in the provision of public services and quality of infrastructure. It is a town of single-family neighborhoods effectively buffered (visually and physically) from the impacts of commercial and industrial development, and adequately served by neighborhood commercial districts. Basic among the amenities provided is a functional and efficient system of public infrastructure. This includes roadway, bikeway and sidewalk networks, as well as water and sewer systems. This vision acknowledges that Braintree is in a position to spread the fiscal burden of the provision of such services and amenities to the business community, by managing development in the Town in ways that maximize benefits and minimize negative impacts on the Town.

This vision sees the Town not as a set of discrete elements, but as a system of coherent systems, each with a clearly defined vision. For example, rather than looking at the Town's open space as a set of individual parks and playgrounds, this approach sees an open space system, the cohesion and interconnectedness of which is promoted through such means as linkages (pedestrian and bikeway) and a coherent signage system. This vision also calls for a coordinated approach to the implementation of the Master Plan as evidenced in recommendations regarding the Capital Planning Process and monitoring and updating of the Master Plan.

Plan Overview

In accordance with the Commonwealth's enabling legislation, this Master Plan addresses a number of key issues: Land Use; Housing; Economic Development; Natural and Cultural Resources; Open Space and Recreation; Facilities and Services; Circulation and Implementation.

Land Use

Braintree's land use patterns are well established. Consequently, this Master Plan does not suggest a major overhaul. Rather, the Plan seeks to refine and enhance existing land use patterns. The persistent ideal which has emerged in the public meetings and workshops held in the course of this planning process, has been of a town of single family neighborhoods served by revitalized district commercial centers with historic character. The reality of the development pressures on the Town is often at odds with this ideal. To address this situation, in the area of *Land Use*, this Master Plan makes recommendations aimed at minimizing the impacts of commercial development on residential neighborhoods, better managing commercial growth, concentrating high intensity commercial uses in areas with proximity to the regional highway system and revitalizing and reinforcing the identity of the neighborhood commercial districts.

In support of such objectives, this Master Plan recommends a thorough review of the Zoning By-law and consideration of other tools for managing development. Recommended revisions to the Zoning By-law include:

- revising the Use Table;
- adding a Landscape Ordinance;

- creating a Village Center Ordinance unique to each Town square;
- tailoring buffer strips to specific standards;
- revising the site plan review process with the introduction of evaluation criteria;
- creating Limited Commercial Redevelopment Zones;
- and creating subcategories of uses within the Highway Business designation.

Housing

In the area of *Housing*, Braintree has a clear commitment to preserving and enhancing its single family residential neighborhoods. In support of this objective, zoning should be amended to include guidelines which measure any impact of proposed construction on the scale and character of existing neighborhoods. The vision guiding this Master Plan seeks to promote the cohesion of Braintree's neighborhoods. To this end, a number of strategies will be explored including traffic management devices. Consideration should also be given to exploring the potential for increased streetscaping and landscaping of public lands, and historic preservation efforts aimed at achieving this objective.

A number of approaches to addressing the issue of infill housing are considered, including the feasibility of transferring development rights or the Town's purchasing development rights outright from property owners intending to develop infill projects. This would be done in an open process according to very carefully crafted criteria in order to avoid any potential abuses. The Master Plan also calls for more stringent enforcement of existing subdivision regulations, as well as the elimination of the current practice of approval of undersized lots by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

In support of promoting a range of housing opportunities in Braintree, the Master Plan recommends providing staff support to the Braintree Fair Housing Committee and establishing a long term goal of public/private collaboration aimed at providing a range of housing opportunities through a variety of means.

Economic Development

The Town of Braintree, unlike many other New England cities and towns, has not had to aggressively promote itself as a desirable location for economic development because of its proximity to Boston, and regional highway access. On the contrary, Braintree's challenge is to maximize the benefits of such development to the Town, while at the same time minimizing negative impacts.

A first step toward this end would be to reinvigorate the Town's Economic Development Committee and establish a proactive economic development position on behalf of the Town. Membership should be reviewed to ensure that the Committee is comprised not only of key representatives of Town government, but also active and influential members of the business community. A critical element in such an effort is the identification of champions who will take a proactive stance in promoting the Town's interests.

A second critical element is adequate professional staff. The Master Plan recommends that a professional position be created within the Planning Department separate from its regulatory functions for a Community Development Planner. This individual would be responsible for staffing the Town's Economic Development Committee and Fair Housing Committee, as well as taking the lead in grant writing. This professional would bring continuity, initiative and sustained support to the efforts of these two Committees, and

could take a proactive role in soliciting outside funding for Town initiatives. The duties of this position would be clearly defined so as to avoid conflict with the Planning Department's regulatory responsibilities.

The first agenda item for this group would be the formulation of specific priorities reflecting the overall vision and objectives established in this Master Plan. A key objective would be to develop strategies to maximize the potential benefit of the development pressures on the Town, such as the growing office market. Through a more proactive Economic Development Committee, the Town may be able to more positively participate in the economic development process.

The second set of recommendations in the area of *Economic Development* involves zoning changes aimed at containment and better management of development pressures. In regard to retail development, this includes capturing current large commercial centers in narrowly designated commercial zones. To this end, subcategories must be established within the general designation of "Highway Business" in order to better focus development within those districts. Consideration is also given to the use of incentives and other means to provide the Town with greater control over development.

The Master Plan also recommends a number of strategies for revitalizing the Town's three squares. This includes the creation of village center ordinances specific to each area; the establishment of a "working group" comprised of representatives of Town agencies and the local business community to address mutual concerns; the creation of a Main Street program; and the use of design themes, design review, historic preservation, public programming and events to enhance the character and identity of these centers.

Natural and Cultural Resources

Braintree's priorities in the area of *Natural Resources* fall into several categories of concern, but as a whole reflect the vision of an overall coherent system. Key components of this approach include the conservation of a network of open spaces, protection of water resources, elimination of sources of pollution, and promotion of public education.

With regard to the conservation of open space, the Master Plan recommends that the Town develop a long term conservation and open space strategy; review and possibly revise the definition of the open space category in the Zoning By-Law; establish incentives for the preservation of large undeveloped parcels as open space; evaluate criteria for the acquisition of parcels; initiate discussions with owners of key parcels regarding re-zoning (by mutual consent) of these important properties; and maintain park and conservation lands to site-specific standards. The Master Plan also calls for restrictions on the removal of trees and the promotion of planting of public shade trees on both public and private property town-wide.

A second area of concern relates to the protection of the Town's sensitive water and wetlands resources. In this regard, the Town should develop policies and procedures to protect these resources that address such issues as the impacts of fertilizers, pesticides, road salt and de-icing chemicals and other chemicals on these resources.

With regard to pollution, the Master Plan recommends that the Town create a central inventory of all sources of pollution and sites determined to be polluted, as a first step in their management and elimination. This should be followed by a program for enforcement and penalties for violations.

Public education and action is a critical component of any environmental effort. In this regard the Master Plan recommends that the Town promote public awareness and action in the area of household hazardous waste management and disposal, resource conservation, recycling and waste reduction.

The Master Plan also recommends exploring a number of regulatory incentives and performance standards in service of the enhancement of the Town's natural resources, including wetlands protection, ground and surface water protection, clean air, and resource conservation, etc. In accordance with this recommendation, the Master Plan recommends a careful review and possible revision of the Wetland and Flood plain Protection Districts, Watershed Protection Districts, Environmental Standards and Earth Removal regulations.

With regard to *Cultural Resources*, the Master Plan promotes the perspective that the Town's cultural resources, which are primarily historic resources, are valuable in and of themselves, but should also be seen as an integral element in the in the "kit of tools" available to the Town in enriching the lives of residents, enhancing the vitality of its neighborhood centers and promoting the Town for desired types of development. To this end, the plan recommends that the Town complete the Historic Commission's inventory of historic resources currently in process; implement the recommendations of the Historic Commission's consultant; and consider a variety of means of promoting the Town's historic resources and character, such as themes for the neighborhood town squares or annual events.

Open Space and Recreation

The Master Plan calls for the implementation over the long-term of a coherent and integrated system of open spaces. As mentioned in the previous discussion of Natural Resources, a first step will be the review and possible revision of the definition of the open space category in the Zoning By-Law. Eventually, this townwide system will be connected by a network of pedestrian and bikeway linkages. In the short-term, this program of physical accessibility will be complemented by the use of a clear system of signage, which will serve to establish and promote a distinctive identity for this open space *system*. Both programs are intended to maximize public awareness and use, not only of specific parcels, but also of the park system as a distinctive and integrated "whole." Promoting physical as well as visual connections to the park system is intended to make the open spaces more legible to the public as a system.

The Master Plan's objectives with regard to Open Space and Recreation include protecting publicly-owned land, and acquiring and otherwise protecting, privately-owned open space; increasing access to public open space for passive recreation; and increasing opportunities for active recreation.

Specific actions aimed at protecting open space in the Town include: developing criteria for the acquisition of land as open space; completing and filing with the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs the Town's Open Space Study; providing incentives for owners of large undeveloped parcels to continue their maintenance as open space; and exploring with owners the potential for rezoning by mutual consent several important properties, which the Town has inventoried as "protected open space" to ensure their protected status.

The Master Plan also recommends several actions to promote access to passive recreation areas, such as improving signage and physical access to Pond Meadow Park, School Trust Land and Town Forest; and developing a plan for addressing handicapped accessibility town-wide.

With regard to increasing opportunities for active recreation, the Master Plan recommends assessing the potential for developing new facilities, such as Peterson Pool, the School Trust Land, Water/Sewer Commission property and the Riverfront Walkway; assessing the potential for expanding existing facilities at Henry Mattulina Park, Jonas Perkins Park and Marion Leary Park; determining the feasibility of acquiring additional property; and exploring the potential for regional cooperation.

Services and Facilities

The Master Plan recommends improving the Town's water capacity and distribution system and sewer system to meet current and future needs by continuing the reservoir dredging project and continuing the plan to upgrade the water distribution system. An important recommendation is to pursue other options, such as the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) supply sources or the Cochato River to address water supply issues. The Master Plan recommends continuing the Inflow and Infiltration (II) Program to address sewer system problems.

The Master Plan recommends continued investment in the Town's school system and public safety system, as well as policies and programs to provide adequate services and facilities for the growing elderly population.

Circulation

Again, the Master Plan articulates the need for a clear vision and clear program addressing circulation issues in a comprehensive manner. The Master Plan calls for a combined program of improvements and maintenance aimed at minimizing disruption to the community and maximizing access to state funding.

The Master Plan recommends a number of specific actions aimed at monitoring and mitigating negative traffic impacts of new developments including: developing a town-wide comprehensive traffic management plan; conditioning new development to the mitigation of negative traffic impacts; developing a traffic management strategy with surrounding communities; revising the traffic by-law; considering frontage roads and interchange modifications to Route 37; and making several revisions to the Town's "Rules and Regulations for Traffic. The Master Plan also recommends implementation of the Commonwealth's South Shore Roadway project.

Specific actions are also recommended to improve pedestrian safety and access; to call for increased spending on necessary roadway repairs and improvements; to consider tapping into the Commonwealth's Public Works and Economic Development (PWED) program regarding improvements in the neighborhood commercial districts; and to develop strategies to minimize "cut through" traffic in residential neighborhoods.

To support an aggressive position with regard to actively managing traffic, the Master Plan recommends the creation of a position for a professional Transportation Engineer or Planner within the Town Engineering Department. This person would work with the Engineering and Planning Departments to take the lead in initiating and carrying through all circulation-related efforts in Braintree.

Implementation

The Master Plan includes an Implementation Strategy which outlines specific actions, responsibilities and costs. Specific actions associated with the Implementation of the Master Plan include the reinvigoration and possible reconstitution of several of the Town's

standing committees, including the Fair Housing Committee, the Economic Development Committee, and the Capital Planning Committee, whose requirements should be strengthened and introduced into the Town's Zoning By-Law. As discussed above, the Master Plan also calls for the creation of two new professional positions, a Community Development Planner, and a Transportation Planner.

The Master Plan also recommends assessing the potential for the creation of a regional mechanism, such as a task force, to monitor issues and bring them to the attention of the appropriate Town departments. This recommendation recognizes the significant extent to which Braintree feels the impacts of development in surrounding communities. It is likely that residents would continue to experience development impacts, most notably traffic, even if Braintree were to establish a complete moratorium on development within Town borders.

In the end, effective implementation of the Master Plan will require a mechanism for capital planning, coordinating implementation efforts, monitoring their progress, and adjusting the plan as appropriate.

LAND USE

LAND USE

Introduction

Available land in Braintree is largely developed as a result of both the historical development patterns in the greater Boston area and the Town of Braintree's location within the regional transportation network. The nature of the local development pattern has resulted in a Town that is primarily residential in character. The bulk of non-residential development is concentrated along major transportation routes and secondary highways that cross the Town. Braintree is a community that is essentially urbanized with 58 percent of the Town dedicated to urban uses with at least an additional 25 percent (2,300 acres) permanently protected from development. This leaves 17 percent of the land within the Town as currently undeveloped. In reality, however, not all of this 17 percent is developable. Much of this land is privately owned and consists of land within the watershed protection overlay district, wetlands, flood plain and other land that is either environmentally sensitive, or marginally developable at best.

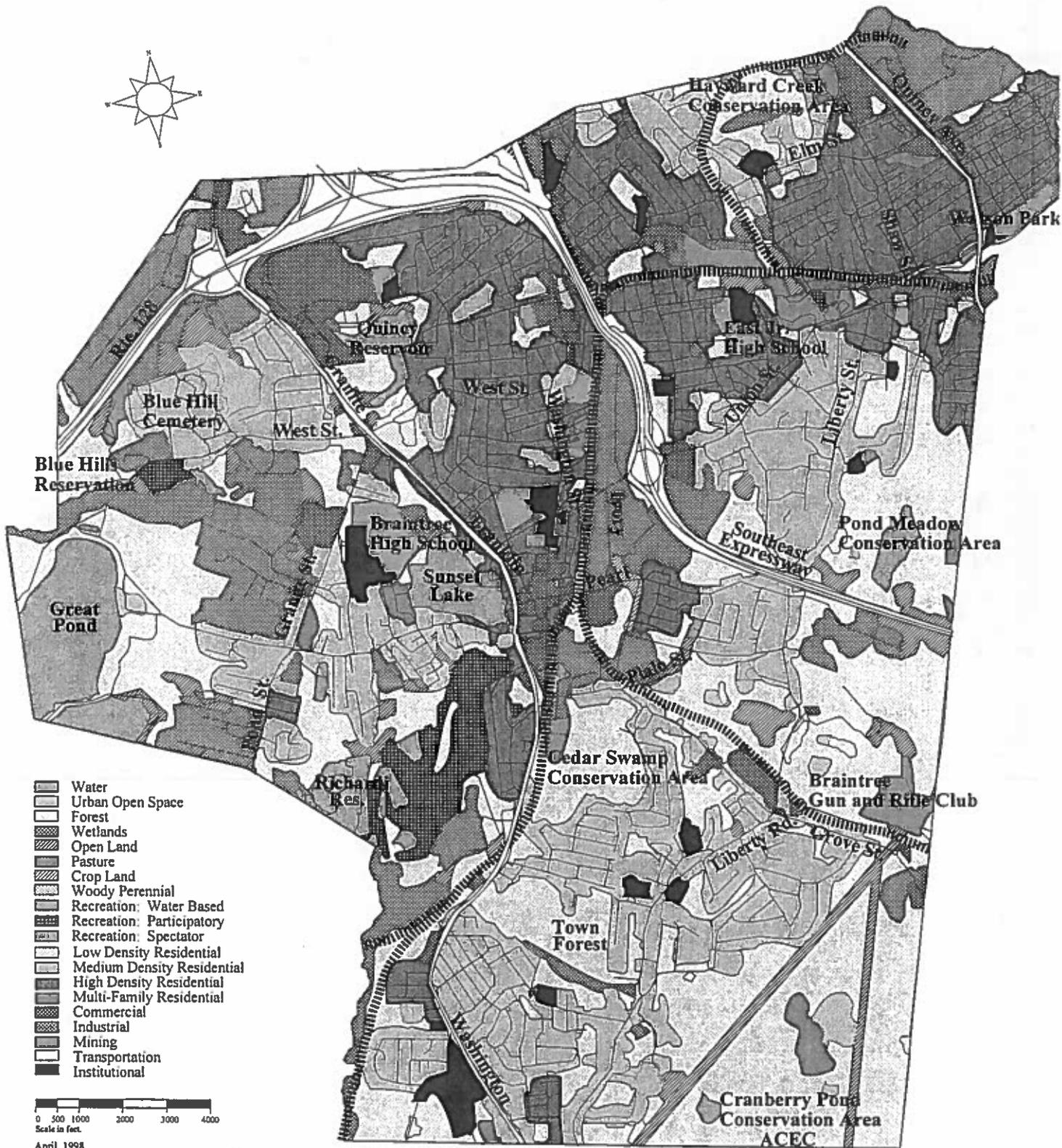
Overview

Residential land use is the dominant land use within the Town of Braintree. The bulk of the residential areas are developed and zoned at a typically urban density of 15,000 and 25,000 square feet per lot. The highest overall densities occur in the northeastern and north central parts of Braintree, those parts of town which were settled first. Lower density, suburban style development is the dominant subdivision pattern through parts of western Braintree and most of southeastern Braintree. This is where the bulk of new residential development has occurred. Additionally, much of the land in these areas is located within the Watershed Protection District which effectively eliminates higher density development within these parts of Town. Land zoned for residential use is largely developed leaving limited potential for the construction of new housing. Opportunities for residential development are limited primarily to areas suitable for minor subdivisions, infill development on previously platted parcels, and the subdivision of larger, developed residential parcels. There is the potential for approximately 500 additional housing units under current zoning, based on the Buildout element of the associated Findings Report

Although only 12 percent of the developed land within Braintree is dedicated to commercial, business and industrial uses, the intensity of land use and associated impacts exceed the relative proportion of land dedicated to these uses. The bulk of the traffic, and other impacts associated with these uses are focused along the Route 128 and Southeast Expressway corridor. Other concentrations of land used and zoned for these uses are along Washington Street, which remains an important business corridor, and along Granite and Pond Streets. Along the Braintree and Weymouth border is a concentration of parcels zoned Commercial and Highway Business that comprise a major portion of Braintree's potentially developable commercial and business parcels. While there is currently greater potential for business-related development than residential in Braintree, it does not necessarily follow that this would be the best course for the Town to take.

As noted in the Buildout Analysis (Appendix, Findings Report), and in the 1986 Braintree Master Plan, Braintree lacks strongly defined centers and districts. Three Town squares have the potential for development as centers for neighborhood and community oriented business, and civic activities within Braintree. These are Braintree Square, South Braintree

Existing Land Use



0 500 1000 2000 3000 4000
Scale in feet.

April, 1998
Sources: Massachusetts Geographic Information System
Town of Braintree

Square with its surroundings, and Weymouth Landing. The creation of special overlay districts that enhance characteristics unique to each of these areas could serve as a catalyst to realize this potential. An additional opportunity exists for creating a defined town center in the area of South Braintree Square as a focus for business, community and civic functions.

Finally, while agricultural land has ceased to have any present day meaning within the Town of Braintree, around 2,900 acres of the land in Town remain undeveloped. About 2,300 acres are permanently protected open space and recreation facilities, with the remaining acreage being undeveloped private land. Even though there is a large amount of open space, much of it remains inaccessible, lacks a connection to the greater whole, and is unevenly dispersed throughout the Town. The bulk of open and recreation space is concentrated in the western and southern portions of the Town. Even though much of it is classified as conservation land, recreation facilities are still concentrated in those parts of Town. An opportunity exists for Braintree to create a coherent network of open and recreation space throughout the Town to provide access to all of its citizens.

Approach

The Beta Engineering report, Town of Braintree, Massachusetts, Final Report: Water Master Plan on Water Distribution System Analysis, June 1995, (the most current information available) shows that all business and commercial uses total 7.346 million square feet, and that there are 12,460 units of housing. The Cecil Group buildout analysis indicates that under current zoning there is the capacity for an additional 5.6 million square feet of Highway Business development; 1.77 million square feet of additional Commercial development; 170,000 square feet of General Business development; and an additional 500 units of housing. This information, in combination with the fact that between 1993 and 1995 more than 1 million square feet of non-residential development was approved in Braintree, (nearly 800,000 square feet of which was for retail development), was a strong factor influencing the approach to Land Use proposed in this Master Plan. The approach, in brief, aims to reduce the capacity for additional Highway Business and Commercial development in areas where impacts would primarily affect residential neighborhoods.

Conceptual Land Use Plan

Braintree's land use patterns are well established. Consequently, the Conceptual Land Use Plan proposed here does not call for a major overhaul. Rather, the Plan seeks to refine and enhance existing land use patterns. Throughout the course of this planning process, residents of the Town have expressed their vision of Braintree as a town of single family neighborhoods, protected from negative impacts of commercial development, and adequately served by revitalized town squares with historic character. The reality of the development pressures on the Town, owing to the regional significance of its location, is at times at odds with this ideal. Another, somewhat complicating, characteristic of this vision of life in Braintree is the desire to minimize the fiscal burden on residents. The direction proposed here is to take advantage of the Town's assets and location to encourage appropriate types of economic development with minimal adverse impacts on residents.

To address this situation, in the area of *Land Use*, this Master Plan outlines a Conceptual Land Use Plan that proposes a number of zoning changes aimed at minimizing the impacts of commercial development on residential neighborhoods by limiting the potential for additional commercial development; reinforcing the residential character of the Town, particularly of Southeastern Braintree; concentrating regionally-oriented retail uses in locations with maximum ease of access to the regional highway system; revitalizing and

reinforcing the identity of the town squares; and minimizing the potential for increasing the intensity of currently underused commercial parcels.

To limit the potential for additional commercial development and reinforce the residential character of Southeastern Braintree, the Conceptual Land Use Plan recommends the rezoning of two parcels (approximated as areas 1 and 2 on the Conceptual Land Use Plan) currently zoned Highway Business and Commercial respectively, as Cluster II residential. Such a move would decrease the capacity for additional Highway Business development by 1,447,934 square feet and reduce the amount of potential commercial development by 482,370 square feet. A rezoning as Cluster II of these areas would allow the development of an additional 105 units of Cluster II housing.

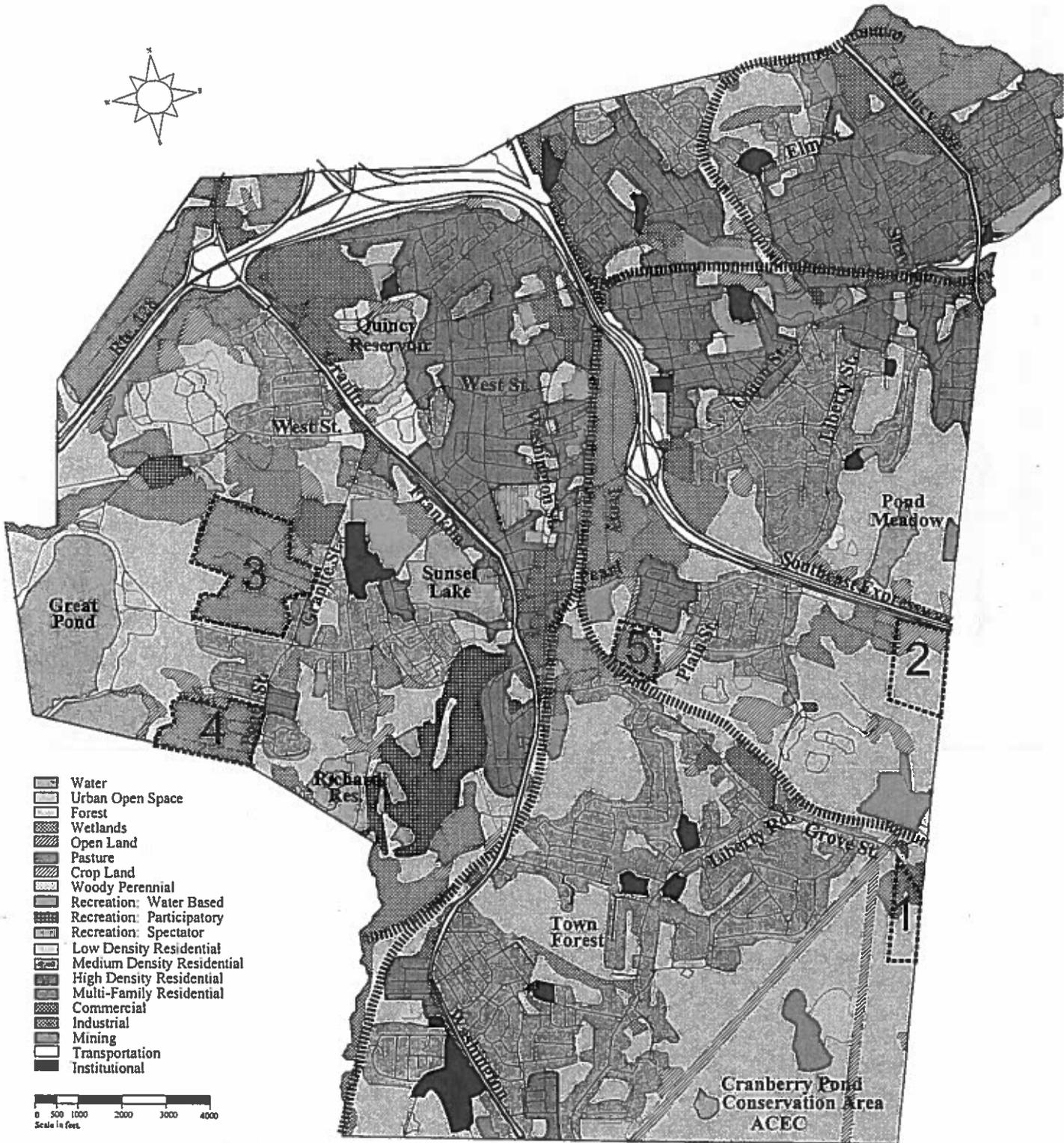
The following table shows a comparison of the various impacts among the uses under discussion. This illustration provides a "rule of thumb" allowing an assessment of the order of magnitude of the differences in impacts between the various uses. For example, the additional 105 units of housing allowed would generate 1050 vehicles trips per day. This contrasts with the 15,928 vehicle trips per day generated by the 1,447,934 square feet of Highway Business to be "replaced;" and 20,742 vehicles per day for the 482,370 square feet of commercial uses to be "replaced." At the same time, 105 units of housing would use 13,860 gallons of water per day per bedroom and generate 11,550 gallons per day per bedroom. This compares with 130,320 gallons of water per day, and 108,600 gallons of sewage per day for the Highway Business that would be "replaced." The 482,370 square feet of commercial uses would use 28,942 gallons of water per day and generate 24,118 gallons of sewage per day.

This comparison is not entirely clear cut, in that Braintree allows industrial uses in areas currently zone as commercial. Thus in support of presenting as informed a comparison as possible, the impacts of "industrial parks," (consisting of some combination of factories, warehouses, etc.) is also illustrated on the table. It is important to note that the water and sewage impacts indicated for industrial uses only applies to employees, i.e. it does not consider the operations of the industrial operation itself, which vary considerably depending upon the purpose of the plant.

In sum, the overall impact would be that residential development will make less demands on the water and sewer systems, and generate less traffic. Most importantly, such a change would serve to reinforce the residential character of the Town. At the same time, the types of housing likely to bring new school age children into the Town would have a net negative impact on the Town budget. The 105 units of housing could add approximately \$1,312,500 to the Town's annual school budget. This amount is equal to 2.5 students times the 105 new housing units, times a local average of \$5000 per student per year.

At the same time, there is likely to be continued demand for housing to meet the needs of Braintree's aging population. In this light, the Town might take steps to encourage assisted living and other types of housing to meet this demand. It is important to note that such

Proposed Conceptual Land Use



Sources: Massachusetts Geographic Information System
Town of Braintree

housing results in a net increase in revenue to the Town, with reduced demands on infrastructure and other public services, most notably schools.

Like many other older communities, a significant potential for development and its concomitant impacts is found in the **Redevelopment** of currently underused commercial parcels for more intense uses. The extent of this potential is more difficult to assess. There are three areas in particular, however, which are likely candidates for this type of redevelopment which are located in the immediate vicinity of residential neighborhoods, (approximated as areas 3, 4 and 5 on the Conceptual Land Use Plan). The Plan seeks to minimize any negative impacts on these neighborhoods resulting from an intensification of use, or the location of uses more onerous to neighboring communities, but allowed under current zoning. The Plan proposes that these areas should be re-zoned as prototypical Limited Commercial Redevelopment Zones. Such a proposal recommends that certain uses currently allowed, either by right, or special permit, would no longer be allowed, including:

- Warehouses
- Contractor Yards
- Public Utility or Public Works Storage or Repair Yards;
- Solid Waste Disposal Facility;
- Heliport;
- Open Storage, Boats or Recreational Vehicles;
- Parking Facility;
- Marine Dependent Uses.

In an effort to concentrate any additional regionally-oriented retail development in areas at present characterized by that use, this Master Plan proposed the breakdown of the current zoning category "Highway Business" into Highway Business Office, and Highway Business Retail. The latter would be comprised of two areas: the South Shore Plaza area, and the area around Grossman Drive.

A series of three Village Center Ordinance overlay districts are proposed for each of the Town's traditional squares are intended to establish and reinforce a distinct identity appropriate to each center, to better define its boundaries, and to revitalize each square as a well-functioning commercial district serving the surrounding residential neighborhoods. Further discussion of these neighborhood squares may be found in the Economic Development and Implementation components of this Master Plan.

Finally, in support of the comprehensive goal of ensuring that the Town realizes the maximum public benefit from any development in Braintree, with the minimal degree of adverse impact on the Town, this Master Plan proposes that the site plan review process be amended to call for a preliminary consultation with the proponent which would serve essentially as a scoping process. This scoping would spell out the impact studies required, as well as a list of submission requirements and the site plan review criteria. Such a process would allow the Planning Board to have sufficient information to effectively balance the relative benefits and burdens of any proposed development. A model for such a regulation is found in the Appendix. Further discussion of this proposal and other regulatory changes aimed at strengthening the Town's position in development review may be found in the Implementation component of this Master Plan.

	VEHICLE TRIPS (per day)	GALLONS OF WATER (per day)	GALLONS OF SEWAGE (per day)
 Residential (ITE Land Use Code 210)	10 Per Single Family home	132 Per Bedroom	110 Per Bedroom
 Office (ITE Land Use Code 710)	11 Per 1,000 square feet	90 Per 1,000 square feet	75 Per 1,000 square feet
 Commercial (ITE Land Use Code 820)	43 Per 1,000 square feet	60 Per 1,000 square feet	50 Per 1,000 square feet
 Industrial Park (ITE Land Use Code 130)	7 Per 1,000 square feet	24 Per Employee*	20 Per Employee*

SOURCES
 Vehicle Trips: ITE Trip Generation Manual, 6th edition, 1997.
 Sewer: 310 CMR 15.203, 15.210, 15.211
 Water: Sewer usage x 1.20

NOTES
 * Does not include usage due to any industrial processes.

Land Use Action Plan

The Conceptual Land Use Plan has been developed in support of the overall goals and objectives agreed upon with regard to Land Use in the course of this planning process. These overall objectives are:

- *Promote a balanced pattern of land uses that reduces conflicts that damage the quality of life or value of the land.*
- *Establish desirable patterns of development through appropriate land use controls on land that is undeveloped or likely to be redeveloped within the time horizon of this plan.*
- *Ensure that future development protects and enhances abutting or important open space resources that cannot be replaced.*
- *Reinforce the identity and quality of neighborhoods as the "building blocks" of Braintree's resident population.*
- *Reinforce vital neighborhood and town squares that primarily serve the needs of residents and local businesses.*
- *Enhance the image of Braintree by requiring attractive organization of sites, provision of appropriate landscaping, and through high quality building design.*

Objective: Minimize impacts of all new developments including Redevelopment on existing residential areas and open space.

Actions:

- Review Zoning By-laws for possible revisions addressing such issues as *re-development* of commercial, industrial and residential properties, development impacts, and land use regulations. To the greatest extent possible all business and commercial uses above a minimum threshold size (30,000 square feet is a typical figure) should be subject to Special Permit review with full disclosure of development impacts.
- Tailor buffer strips in response to specific settings and impacts, addressing the programming and design issues associated with transition areas between commercial and residential areas as well as open space.

Objective: Emphasize the highest and best long-term uses of land to maximize tax receipts while at the same time avoiding negative impacts on the quality of life in Braintree.

Actions:

- Further refine the Highway Business designation as Highway Business 1 (Office) and High Business 2 (Retail.)
- Create forums, using a variety of communications techniques (e.g. public meetings, media), for public dialogue on the development issues associated with the goal of maximizing public participation in this process.

- Initiate a collaboration between relevant Town agencies and the business community to mount a multi-dimensional campaign to market Braintree as a great place to work, live and visit. Such an effort would recognize that the short term benefits of commercial and industrial development incur serious costs to the visual and physical amenities of the Town which will in the longer term harm the Town and reduce benefits. Braintree's proximity to Boston and its access to regional transportation routes, combined with its historic character provide it with unique marketing potential.

Such an initiative might involve periodic meetings with leaders in real estate, commercial and industrial development in the metropolitan region to develop and sustain an ongoing assessment of market trends and demand. In essence this would amount to "market research" which would enable the Town to effectively position itself. Such an effort might also include an annual Land Use Conference with a regional focus. Finally, the Town might effectively market itself by taking greater advantage of the visibility that the internet allows to further these purposes.

Objective: Develop strategies for the managing the likely future redevelopment of underutilized industrial property to minimize adverse impacts on residential neighborhoods.

Actions:

- Establish Limited Commercial Redevelopment Zones to minimize the potential for some of the kinds of development allowable under existing zoning, that would have potentially negative impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods, while at the same time encouraging investment in vacant and underutilized commercial and industrial parcels. Prototypical zones are approximately noted as 3,4 and 5 on the Conceptual Land Use Plan.

Objective: Strengthen identity and amenities of sub areas and neighborhoods.

Actions:

- Implement the proposals of the Town's Historic Preservation Consultant (See Appendix) in support of the preservation of historic buildings in the Town's neighborhoods and sub-areas, as a further means of enhancing neighborhood identity.

Objective: Consider new uses and programs to improve the value and quality of neighborhood commercial districts.

Actions:

- Encourage close working relationships between Town agencies and the local business community to address mutual concerns, such as access, parking, signage guidelines, or perhaps design themes.
- Establishing a Main Street Program for the three Town squares.
- Institute the practice of design review to strengthen identity of the Town squares.
- Encourage activities and programs that will enliven these squares, such as activities for children or other cultural activities.

Objective: Limit new commercial development unless net benefits improve quality of life.

Actions:

- Re-Zone Areas 3, 4 and 5 from Commercial (which allows a number of onerous uses) as prototypical Limited Commercial Redevelopment Zones to allow uses potentially more compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Under consideration are three designated areas of commercially zoned and used property with older, commercial structures, and transit facilities being dominant.

The first of these areas is located along Granite Street between West Street and Bay State Drive with the bulk of activity occurring south of Farm River. Transit facilities comprise a significant portion of commercial activities.

The second area is located from Roc Sam Park Road south to the boundary of Randolph. The facilities in this area are also older and smaller facilities.

The third area is the former Armstrong Cork facility site.

- Re-zone as Cluster II, Area 1 as noted in the Conceptual Land Use Plan, the parcel south of Columbian Street on Weymouth line, currently zoned HB. This parcel is long and narrow, with several small pockets of wetlands located within it. Within Braintree the neighboring properties are open space and cluster residential. Immediately adjacent across the Town boundary in Weymouth is residentially used property.
- Re-zone as Cluster II, Area 2, as noted in the Conceptual Land Use Plan, the commercially zoned parcels at the end of Lenox Drive in a manner that minimizes impacts to neighboring residential properties and along site access roads which pass through residential areas (Pearl Street and Middle Street). This would serve the additional purpose of reinforcing the residential character of this section of Town.

Objective: Maximize the Town's capacity to effectively manage land use issues and decisions:

Actions:

- Develop a Geographic Information System (GIS) based land management data-base.

Such a data-base would combine the disparate land information data sources in one electronic location.

Data would include mapped data and parcel specific data.

This would allow for rapid updating of information changes and identification of potential constraints such as zoning, or environmental conditions.

GIS data-bases can be setup in a manner that is most appropriate for individual communities.

- Establish special overlay districts.

Special "Village Center" districts at Braintree Square, South Braintree Square, and Weymouth Landing.

Special "Commercial Redevelopment Zone" overlays that focus on areas for redevelopment and development priority.

- Maximize the Town's ability to control retail/commercial activities by concentrating regionally-oriented retail and focusing locally-oriented retail through a number of zoning changes.

Differentiate between highway business uses with the establishment of Highway Business 2 (Retail), primarily located in two areas: South Shore Plaza area and Grossman Drive.

HOUSING

HOUSING

Overview

Braintree can be characterized as a mature community with a housing stock comprised primarily of detached single family houses. The majority of residential housing development occurred in Braintree prior to 1980; there remains little undeveloped land available for residential development at the present time. The inability to develop new housing has led to unmet demand for housing in Braintree. While demand for new housing units appears strong, a large portion of the local housing stock was developed between the years 1940 to 1970. These single family units can be characterized as being relatively smaller, and somewhat functionally obsolescent compared to housing units more recently constructed throughout the metropolitan area. The disproportionate presence of these units in Braintree influence local statistics concerning housing prices and biases the relative strength of the housing market. In addition, the lack of new housing units is reflected in the limited number of units sold per year. This in turn, masks the extent of true demand for housing. Demand for the existing housing stock continues as evidenced by recent population trends. Braintree's housing stock appears to have recently completed a new cycle of home-ownership as so-called "empty nester" households sold their homes to younger families. The completion of this cycle should reduce the available supply of older for-sale units in Braintree in the near future and increase pressure for new development.

Demand exists for all types of residential housing in Braintree. The limited supply of residential units and the degree of development existent in the Town focuses potential development on less suitable land parcels. This is reflected in the current pattern of local households creating in-fill housing on their individual lots to benefit from increasing demand for housing in Town. By housing type, the following general characteristics can be observed. (Detailed documentation may be find in the Braintree Master Plan Findings Report.)

Single Family Homes

Demand for houses is up and consequently the prices are also increasing. Due to the age of a large portion of the housing stock, the median price paid for local units is less than the county median price. However, the prices paid for new housing exceed county averages. Demand for all single family housing units will continue with the demand for new units being especially strong;

Condominium Units

Similar pressures and market forces apply to the condominium market. Due to the relative newness of these units, local prices are higher than the county average of than prices paid in surrounding towns. Demand will continue and it is unlikely that the current production of units will satisfy that demand;

Rental Housing

Rental housing continues to provide an affordable alternative for local residents. Rental rates have increased significantly, but local household incomes have increased as well; maintaining a relatively affordability with regard to rental rates. However, increases in rental rates are beginning to price lower-income, non local residents out of the local rental market; and,

Senior Housing

The demand for senior, elderly housing of all types should continue, especially for assisted elderly living. An increase in the supply of elderly housing can dramatically effect the available supply of single family homes and translate into significant demographic changes. Given the changes occurring in housing prices throughout the metropolitan area, a number of local seniors may not be able to successfully exchange their current single family unit for other housing types. As mentioned, much of Braintree's housing stock consists of older and smaller homes. These units have comparatively less value in the current housing market. Seniors that live in such units will be at a financial disadvantage if they desire to sell their current units and move into other forms of housing.

Housing Action Plan

The Housing Action Plan was developed in response to the following Housing objectives drawn from the Goals and Objectives document:

- *Preserve and enhance single family neighborhoods as the core of Braintree's housing resource.*
- *Encourage the provision of the range of housing opportunities for all ages of Braintree residents.*
- *Protect the relative affordability of Braintree as a community with quality housing.*

Objective: Preserve and enhance single family neighborhoods

Actions:

- Housing guidelines should be developed to measure any potential impact of proposed housing construction on the scale and character of neighborhoods. Such guidelines would address issues such as the construction of homes on pre-existing lots in established neighborhoods; and the construction of additional houses on lots with pre-existing housing (in fill housing). Such guidelines should be incorporated in the Town Zoning policy to be administered by the Town Planning Board, and evaluated for consistency with the existing neighborhood.
- Support public and private (e.g. Civic Associations) initiatives to improve the appearance of residential neighborhoods, including the streetscape improvements and increased landscaping of other public lands to enhance the public realm within residential neighborhoods.
- Promote historic preservation of the Town's single family neighborhoods with land use and design controls and adoption of historic district programs.
- Strengthen the enforcement of existing zoning.

Objective: Develop strategies for addressing the current trend of developing infill housing.

Actions:

- Adopt baseline standards of acceptability regarding consistency with the scale of the existing neighborhood, and impacts in the zoning regulations. Major proposed projects should be subject to full review and approval by the Planning Board.
- Assess the feasibility of transferring development rights or the Town's purchasing of development rights outright from property owners intending to develop infill projects.

Objective: Develop strategies to minimize the effects of, or "buffer" residential neighborhoods from commercial development.

Actions:

- Amend Zoning By-Laws to require Special Use Permitting for commercial uses which are likely to have particularly negative impacts on surrounding residential neighborhoods.
- Establish and enforce standards for site planning review of commercial uses which address such issues as circulation, landscaping, buffering, signage, drainage, traffic control and parking.
- Use wetlands and other open space lands as buffers between residential and other higher intensity uses whenever possible.

Objective: Promote a range of housing opportunities.

Actions:

- Provide professional staff for Town's Fair Housing Committee to provide leadership in the area of housing, to provide a forum for dialogue and action on these issues, and to promote public/private collaborative efforts to provide a range of housing opportunities in Town through a variety of means.
- Develop and/or associate with agencies that provide information regarding available financing opportunities for first time home buyers (reduced down payment requirements and reduced interest rates), for senior households (reverse equity mortgages), for families that earn less than the area median income (reduced down payment requirements and reduced interest rates). The dissemination of information can be made available by the Braintree Fair Housing Committee, or by distributing data packets at various government and service agency locations, by mailing out flyers or by organizing a housing fair that promulgates existing non-local housing finance options available to residents.
- Identify specific locations that might have development potential in meeting Braintree's affordable housing needs.
- Consider public policies and initiatives which would protect the affordability of Braintree's housing stock by broadening the range of housing opportunities, in response to the current trend toward the construction of larger, more expensive new homes.

Objective: Ensure the availability of a range of housing types as the population ages in place.

Actions:

- Consider public policies and initiatives which would protect the affordability of Braintree's housing stock by broadening the range of housing opportunities, in response to the current trend toward the construction of larger, more expensive new homes. This might include expanding the use of accessory apartments, or authorizing additional dwelling units in existing houses, as a means to continue to offer housing affordable to Braintree residents.
- Increase the numbers of units of assisted elderly and family housing in designs and locations acceptable to residents and neighbors.
- Explore potential locations for housing specifically geared toward an older population, e.g. independent living communities.
- Change zoning to allow density bonuses for development of desired housing types, multi-family, senior housing and affordable housing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview

Economic development in Braintree is influenced by general regional and metropolitan level demographic and economic trends; trends in consumer behavior; and the Town's location both at the metropolitan area's urban/suburban interface of Boston and at the confluence of several major commuter roads, Routes I-93, Route I-95/128 and Route 3. The degree to which each of these factors influences development in Braintree varies by the type of development under consideration. Therefore, local office markets and industrial markets are reviewed separately. In addition, retail development is further segmented into stores grouped in regionally-focused/mall districts and stores classified as locally-focused stores or neighborhood retail districts.

Office Development

The demand for office space has increased substantially at the regional and metropolitan level. Vacancy rates for virtually all types of office space are at historic lows and development pressures exist for new office space throughout the metropolitan area. Braintree's location adjacent to the Routes 93/95/128 highway system provides additional development attractions. The recent new office development being completed by the Flatley Company is one response to these trends. However, while Braintree does possess many attributes that are attractive to office development, these are not attributes unique to Braintree. A number of other local communities along the Route 95/128 circumferential highway are similarly poised to attract development, and a number of office projects are either underway or under consideration. The immediate advantages correlated with new office development need be tempered with the long-term potential of an oversupply of office space. Additionally, new office development has a direct impact on the area's peak hour automobile traffic.

Industrial Development

The industrial market has declined in importance at the national and regional levels. That decline has been even more pronounced at the metropolitan level where a relatively (in comparison to national and regional trends) large shift to service-sector employment has resulted in a greater decline in the industrial market. As a result, the rental rates and land values associated with industrial development are significantly less than comparative rates and values associated with the office and retail markets. Recent Boston area trends evidenced in the last two years (1996 and 1997), suggest that industrial rental rates and land values should increase in the next five years. However, industrial development should continue to be viewed as a "comparatively" less desirable option to the Town and limited to those areas where existing firms wish to expand or where other types of development are not feasible. In addition to the financial considerations associated with competing developments, the Town should also consider the specific type of development being considered and evaluate the transportation and other non-financial impacts of that development.

Retail Development (non-neighborhood)

Retail development in Braintree has accelerated due to a combination of increases in population in the metropolitan area, (specifically in those towns located in the southern and southwestern metropolitan area), and Braintree's location near Routes 93/95/128 which provides ease of access to Braintree and also results in a large number of automobiles crossing Braintree on route to other destinations. These trends as well as a continued

evolution in consumer shopping behavior which supports larger regional mall retail development has been manifested locally in a rapid development of shopping center space and the development of a number of new, larger stores. Future trends in economic and demographic indicators expected for the metropolitan area in general and the southern/southwestern portions of that area specifically suggest a continuation in the demand for regional retail shopping. The current retail market in Braintree should continue to evidence healthy behavior, and demand will continue for new retail space.

Retail Development (neighborhood)

Those trends which encourage the development and support of retail stores, in general, mitigate against the continuation of smaller independent retail stores and local districts. Increases in traffic and congestion will interfere with local residents' and non-local residents' ability to easily access any stores not located near the major arterial roads. This disincentive is exploited by regional centers and larger shopping areas that allow ease of parking and enable consumers to complete a wide range of shopping in a single area. The price benefits and economies of scale associated with large retail developments also put smaller stores in local districts at a price disadvantage. If local stores and shopping districts are to continue to be financially healthy areas, two options appear likely. These areas can remain viable if they emphasize stores and designs that fit current trends -- convenience restaurants and specific-destination stores with available parking, i.e. drug stores. A second potential option involves the districts both increasing their ease of access and creating some sort of identifying ambiance either through district design or through stores that distinguish these areas from other retail options. Local business districts must be seen as an *event* as well as a source of retail goods.

Economic Development Action Plan

The overall objectives driving this approach to economic development were defined in the Goals and Objectives document as:

- *Create an economic climate that increases quality job opportunities and enhances the Town's economic well being.*
- *Favor development strategies that produce secondary benefits to the Town in addition to enhanced tax base such as employment opportunities for residents and support for existing businesses.*
- *Provide initiatives that encourage redevelopment and improvement of underutilized parcels of land for more productive enterprises.*
- *Enhance the business climate within the Town's local commercial districts.*

Objective: Reduce the disproportionate emphasis on retail development.

Actions:

- Amend zoning to capture current large commercial centers, (South Shore Plaza, MVP Sports, etc.) in narrowly designated commercial zones, i.e. HB 2 (Retail). Limit development potential in areas immediately surrounding these areas.

Objective: Develop design guidelines and other strategies to enhance the identity and character of Town squares.

Actions:

- Consider the establishment of "design themes" for each of the Town squares, the development of streetscape and signage guidelines, and/or the practice of design review.
- Amend zoning to include Village Center Overlay District, which would institute the practice of design review (establish a Design Review Board) to strengthen identity and improve amenities of the Town squares and neighborhoods.
- Research how zoning or other regulations might contribute to the preservation of historic buildings in the Town's neighborhoods and squares.
- Pursue PWED funding for Washington Street improvements between and including Braintree Square and South Braintree Square.

Objective: Provide incentives encouraging the vitality of Town squares.

Actions:

- Encourage close working relationships between Town agencies and the local business community to address mutual concerns, such as access, parking, signage guidelines, or perhaps design themes.
- Provide shuttle service for elderly residents from community districts to senior centers, rental developments, etc.
- Establish a Main Street Program for the three Town squares.

Objective: Develop strategies and incentives to maximize the potential benefit of the growing office and retail markets.

Actions:

- Strengthen the Economic Development Committee, to establish a distinctive economic development presence in the area; Membership should include the Chamber of Commerce and representatives of key businesses; The Committee should develop a widely agreed-upon set of economic development goals for the Town, and play an active role in the process of economic development.
- Create a position for a professional Community Development Planner, whose responsibilities would include providing staff support to the Economic Development Committee.
- Create forums, using a variety of communications techniques (e.g. public meetings, media), for public dialogue on the development issues associated with this objective of maximizing tax revenues aimed at promoting community support for such actions.
- Review circulation patterns and road quality, including the existence of exits/entrances to Routes 95/128 and Route 3 to ensure ease of access for commercial and industrial uses.
- Initiate a collaboration between relevant Town agencies and the business community to mount a multi-dimensional campaign to market Braintree as a

great place to work, live and visit. A number of efforts would essentially serve to market the asset that Braintree is. Such an effort would recognize that the benefits of commercial and industrial development could not incur serious costs to the visual and physical amenities of the Town without eventually defeating its purposes. Braintree's proximity to Boston and its access to regional transportation routes, combined with its historic character provide it with unique marketing potential nationally.

Such an initiative might involve periodic meetings with leaders in real estate, commercial and industrial development in the metropolitan region to develop and sustain an ongoing assessment of market trends and demand. In essence this would amount to "market research" which would enable the Town to effectively position itself. Such an effort might also include an annual Land Use Conference with a regional focus. Finally, the Town might effectively market itself by taking greater advantage of the visibility that the internet allows to further these purposes.

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Natural Resources Overview

Landscape

The Town of Braintree has a predominantly flat landscape, most significantly marked by the presence of several rivers and associated waterbodies. The Weymouth Fore River is the main collector for several other rivers flowing easterly towards the Atlantic Ocean. Other significant landscape features include a "quaking bog" located in the southeast downstream of Cranberry Pond, and the Great Cedar Swamp located partially in the Monatiquot River floodplain.

Surficial Geology

The geologic structure of Braintree largely consists of till or bedrock including granite and some sandstone. A small percentage, about 10%, is sand and gravel deposits, which are rated as the most capable of supporting development. Floodplain alluvium soils also lace through Braintree in association with predominant waterbodies and wetland areas such as the Fore River, near the Richardi Reservoir, Hollingsworth Pond and north of Great Pond Reservoir near Blue Hill Cemetery. Most of Braintree's soils are well-drained at the surface but contain hardpan within two feet of the surface. These underlying layers of hardpan inhibit water from moving downward, thus the soil material above these layers becomes saturated quickly.

Waterbodies

The Town of Braintree has six predominant fresh waterbodies and numerous small ponds. The main waterbodies include Great Pond and Upper Reservoir on the southwest border of the Town shared with the Town of Randolph; the Quincy Reservoir located off Granite Street near the South Shore Plaza; Sunset Lake and Hollingsworth Pond, located in central Braintree; a pond located in Pond Meadow, in eastern Braintree; and Cranberry Pond, located in the southeastern corner of Braintree.

Waterways

The major waterway in Braintree is the Weymouth Fore River, a tidal estuary located in the northeast corner of the town which connects to the harbor. A major river, the Monatiquot River, flows from the southwestern extent of Braintree towards the Fore River. Several tributaries flow into the Monatiquot River: Farm River flows from Great Pond and the Upper Reservoir easterly, then circles south by Richardi Reservoir and north until it meets the Monatiquot River near Hollingsworth Pond. The Cochato River flows near Richardi Reservoir through Broad Meadow in a northerly direction until it meets the Monatiquot River also near Hollingsworth Pond. A tributary of the Cochato River is Cranberry Brook. This brook flows east until it meets Cranberry Pond. A "quaking bog" is located in the Cranberry Brook watershed.

A second tributary of the Fore River is the Smelt Brook, which flows from the south through Pond Meadow till it meets Fore River.

Aquifers

The Town of Braintree has several aquifer areas, including both medium-yield and high-yield aquifers. A large high-yield aquifer surrounded by a medium-yield aquifer is located

in central Braintree just to the north of Sunset Lake near Central Street. This aquifer extends southeasterly towards Hollingsworth Pond. A second large aquifer area is located from Sunset Lake running southwesterly to the Richardi Reservoir and extends past the Braintree boundary into Randolph. A third aquifer area is located at the northeast corner of the Great Pond Reservoir. This aquifer is primarily a medium-yield aquifer, with a segment of high-yield in close proximity to the pond.

Wetlands

Major wetlands are located near the Great Pond Reservoir and aquifer, and to the south of the aquifer near Hollingsworth Pond. Various other wetland areas are scattered throughout Braintree, primarily in the southeastern corner.

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) are designated by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs and the program is administered by the Department of Environmental Management. There is a large area in southeastern Braintree that has been designated an ACEC.

Approach

Most of Braintree's undeveloped land, with the exception of several parcels discussed in the Land Use component of this Master Plan already enjoy protected status. Consequently, Braintree's concerns in the area of Natural Resources focus on the preservation of these several parcels and the creation of an open space system organized around the Town's system of streams.

This approach is further discussed in the Open Space section of this Master Plan. The intent of such a concept is to provide additional opportunities for both active and passive recreation, as well as protecting groundwater and surface water resources and wildlife habitats.

Again, the concept in this case is to approach the Town's natural resources as a comprehensive system. Thus, the recommendations contained herein focus on continuing the Town's open space acquisition efforts; continuing to preserve and protect the Town's water resources; and promoting public education and action in areas of environmental conservation and protection.

Natural Resources Action Plan

This approach to the Town's natural and cultural resources has been developed in support of the Town's following objectives:

- *Develop specific programs to interpret and protect the Town's natural, historic and cultural resources*
- *Undertake actions that enhance the identity and importance of the historical buildings and locations within Braintree.*
- *Support the cultural institutions that serve the various age groups and community organizations throughout the Town.*

Objective: Protect the Town's Natural Resources.

Actions

- Take advantage of the rich variety of land conservation and water conservation programs, including conservation, historic preservation and recreation restrictions, gifts of land to non-profit land trusts, and public acquisition by the Town, or the Town with State support, of critical resource areas. The Town should develop a long term conservation and open space strategy in the form of an Open Space Plan.
- Provide incentives for owners of large undeveloped areas of open land totaling 222 acres across Town to continue to maintain such areas as open space. Such incentives might include tax breaks, or purchase or receipt of conservation restrictions or easements by the Town or a land trust.
- Revise the definition of the open space category in the Town's Zoning By-Law to only include protected open space, and exclude a number of public yard and storage area uses.
- Explore with the property owners the potential for re-zoning, by mutual consent, several important properties, which the Town has inventoried as "protected open space" to ensure this protected status, including The Rife and Pistol Club (currently zoned commercial), Thayer Academy (currently zoned as Residential B), and the Norfolk County Hospital (currently zoned as Residential B).
- Enhance the Town's conservation planning and implementation efforts through enforcement of existing regulations and promoting public awareness of conservation issues.
- Maintain park and conservation lands according to explicit maintenance standards and site-specific maintenance plans.
- Promote the planting of public shade trees on both public and private property throughout Town.
- Update Town's Wetlands By-Law and Wetlands regulations. Develop policies and procedures to protect the Town's sensitive water and wetlands resources that address such issues as the impacts of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals on Braintree's water resources.
- Create a central inventory all sources of pollution and polluted areas (21E sites) in the Town.
- Develop a program for enforcement and penalties for pollution violations.
- Develop a program to promote public awareness and action in the area of household hazardous waste management and disposal, resource conservation, recycling and waste reduction.
- Develop greenways and wetland and wildlife corridors.
- Explore a number of regulatory incentives and performance standards for the purpose of enhancing the Town's natural resources.
- Take every step to stop the further degradation of the Great Cedar Swamp.

Cultural Resources - Overview

Braintree's cultural resources, for the most part, lie in the Town's historic resources. A summary of the Town's history and of existing historic resources follow below. The approach taken in this Master Plan calls for the preservation and enhancement of these important resources because of the contribution that they might make to the quality of life for Braintree's residents. The Historic Commission's Preservation Consultant is in the midst of creating a detailed inventory of these resources. This is an effort that should be funded through its completion. The Preservation Consultant has also developed a set of recommendations for the Town aimed at maximizing opportunities for the preservation of the Town's historic resources.

Over and above historic preservation, this Master Plan recommends that the Town's rich history be celebrated and integrated into the lives of residents in a number of ways. Certainly promoting educational efforts is one route. Others include incorporating the interpretive potential of the Town's history and historic places in the programming of events and design guidelines associated with the three squares. This is further discussed in both the Land Use and Economic Development sections of this Master Plan. The Town's historic resources have tremendous potential to enhance the physical environment as well as the lives of Braintree's residents.

Historical Summary

Settled in 1634, Braintree was incorporated as a town in 1640. Originally the Town was called "Monoticut," meaning "abundance," in the language of the local Native Americans. Those original borders included the current towns of Quincy, Randolph and Holbrook in addition to the Town of Braintree. To clear title to the land, the Town purchased the area from Chief Wampatuck in 1655.

The Town remained predominantly agricultural until the mid-1800's. An ironworks constructed in 1644 also gave rise to shipbuilding, which played an important role in the local economy throughout the 1700's. In the mid-19th century the coming of the railroad brought with it the growth of local industries, such as shoemaking, textiles, paper and textile machinery. These industries tended to diminish by the end of the 19th century.

Historic Resources

The Braintree Historic Commission, established in 1974, took a significant step in its historic preservation efforts by retaining a Social and Architectural Historian to develop a program of action. In early 1995, the preservation consultant submitted a final report of recommendations to the Historical Commission. The consultant recommended a five-step effort to evaluate the Town's historic resources and the Historic Commission's earlier efforts to record and protect these resources. The final product of these efforts were recommendations for Historic Commission activities regarding the expansion of their inventory of historic resources and recommendations regarding the selection of properties for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The report notes that Braintree is represented in the Commonwealth's Cultural Resource Inventory. This includes documentation of three neighborhoods: the Fore River/Quincy Shipyard; the Center Historic District; and the South Congregational Church areas, as well as a number of individual buildings. Finally, this early survey research also included parks, a tree, archeological sites and bridges. Owing to the ages of these inventories, many of the forms do not meet current standards, and additional research was recommended. The

Historic Commission and its consultant are in the midst of conducting the comprehensive survey recommended in the Final Report.

The Final Report makes a series of recommendations to guide the Historic Commission in their preservation efforts. These include:

- Review and organization of the Historical Commission's files;
- Renew preservation activities begun in the 1970's;
- Review the relationship, with an eye toward efficiency and impact, with the Braintree Center Local Historic District Commission ;
- Consider becoming a Certified Local Government which would improve its access to federal matching grants;
- Conduct a comprehensive inventory of the Town's resources;
- Survey Braintree's "high priority" residential neighborhoods;
- Heighten local and state level awareness of the Commission's activities and the Town's Historic resources.

Historic Places

A number of properties in Braintree are listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Thayer Public Library at 2 JFK Memorial Drive and the General Sylvanus Thayer Birthplace, 786 Washington Street, are both listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Asa French House at 766 Washington Street has been identified as potentially eligible for inclusion in the Register. The Braintree Town Center Local Historic District was established in 1980. This district includes seventeen properties at Thayer Academy and along Washington Street.

Historic Resources Action Plan

Objective: Preserve and enhance the Town's Cultural Resources.

Actions:

- Complete the Historic Commission's inventory of historic resources currently in process.
- Consider recommendations of Historic Commission's preservation consultant, including:
 - Review and organize Historical Commission's files;
 - Renew preservation activities begun in 1970's;
 - Reconsider relationship with Braintree Center Local Historic District Commission;
 - Consider becoming Certified Local Government to promote access to Federal matching grants;
 - Survey Town's "high priority" residential neighborhoods;

Heighten local and state-level awareness of Commission's activities and Braintree's Historic resources.

- Consider a variety of means of promoting the Town's historic resources, e.g. as themes for neighborhood commercial districts, adding pictures to the written descriptions currently on the internet, as the themes for public events.
- Enhance the overall historic character of Braintree through project design review processes as part of an amended Site Plan review process.