TOWN OF SHIRLEY

Master Plan 2004

SHIRLEY PLANNING BOARD

Assisted by:

Community Opportunities Group, Inc.
Boston, Massachusetts

This project was supported by a grant from the Executive Order 418 Inter-Agency Work Group: Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Department of Housing & Community Development, Department of Economic Development, Executive Office of Transportation & Construction. Grant administration by Montachusett Regional Planning Commission.

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Master Plan 2004

Adopted by the Planning Board on October 21, 2004, following a public hearing held on August 12, 2004.

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Shirley Master Plan 2004

A master plan is a living document that must be revisited and revised periodically to reflect the constantly changing circumstances of a town. Master Plan 2004 seeks to build on the strengths of Shirley's previous master plans, including the Shirley Master Plan Update of December 1999. At the same time, it incorporates and reflects significant developments that have occurred in the Town and the region over the intervening years, such as the sewer project and the Devens redevelopment. Readers are referred to the December 1999 Update for the large amount of valuable background information and detail it contains, which this plan does not duplicate.

Master Plan 2004 was made possible in part by a grant from the Executive Order 418 Work Group, a collaboration of four state agencies: the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Economic Development, and the Executive Office of Transportation. The Town retained Community Opportunities Group, Inc., to update the land use, natural resources and open space, housing and economic development elements of the 1999 Master Plan, recommend a schedule and sequence of implementation steps, and prepare new maps. The Community Facilities & Services and Transportation elements were updated by Susan Snyder, Planning Board Assistant, and John Rounds, a former member of the Shirley Conservation Commission and current member of the Town's Zoning Bylaw Committee. The combined efforts of Community Opportunities Group, Ms. Snyder and Mr. Rounds are reflected in this document.

1. PLAN SUMMARY

RESOURCE PROTECTION GOALS

- Make open space and resource protection the point of reference for all planning and zoning decisions.
- Recognize the role that forests and views from the road play in defining Shirley's visual character, and protect roadside resources with compatible development and public safety policies.
- Preserve the historic form and pedestrian scale of Shirley Village through appropriate design and arrangement of uses suitable for a small rural economic center.
- Provide a regulatory and permitting environment that encourages creative land use and discourages monotonous forms of development, particularly in designated growth management areas.
- Set performance standards that reward distinctive, small-scale projects in neighborhood development areas.

Key Policies & Actions

- Promote cluster and planned unit development techniques to create quality neighborhoods, provide housing diversity and maximize the preservation of open space.
- Encourage infill development over new growth in outlying sections of Shirley, using sewer policy, capital improvements, zoning and other regulatory means to achieve these ends.
- Promote small-scale, attractive commercial development along Route 2A with a combination of rezoning, incentives, strong architectural design standards and site plan review.
- Through regulatory, tax and other incentives, promote re-investment in existing commercial and industrial buildings near Shirley Village.
- Implement coherent, internally consistent bylaws, regulations and policies so that boards and officials with a role in land development may synchronize their review practices and decisions.
- Adopt growth management policies that promote an orderly approach to land use diversity and achieve positive or neutral fiscal impacts wherever possible.

HOUSING GOALS

The 1999 Master Plan lists eight housing goals that were intended to address issues of housing quality and affordability on one hand, and the scale and rate of development on the other hand. Much like the land use and resource protection goals, the housing goals need to be updated and adjusted to meet Shirley's needs as they are understood today. The goals of Master Plan 2004 include:

- Encourage new residential development to provide both private and public benefits, such as housing affordability and open space.
- Provide housing choices throughout Shirley.
- Protect and enhance the historic, intimate character of existing neighborhoods, especially in and adjacent to Shirley Village.
- Use regulations effectively to promote neighborhood-scale design in new residential developments.

Key Policies & Actions

- Establish a local housing partnership to advocate for affordable housing that meets local needs and provide housing policy guidance to Shirley's development review and permitting boards.
- Adopt and implement bylaws and regulations to promote the inclusion of affordable housing units in residential and mixed-use developments.
- Encourage diversity of residential uses in new developments and the redevelopment/reuse of existing properties.
- Seek, obtain and use public and private resources to provide housing units that are affordable to and suitable for low- and moderate-income and middle-income families, and the elderly.
- Implement flexible development regulations that encourage investment and reinvestment in older housing stock, all toward preserving the architectural character, density and ambience of established neighborhoods while limiting growth in outlying rural areas.
- Encourage developers to design small, pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhoods that preserve the natural contours of land and existing vegetation, and connect to other neighborhoods with off-street trails and paths.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The last master plan identified six economic development issues and goal statements. The goals seem to call for more commercial and industrial development, but in a manner that would reduce Shirley's potential for "sprawl-like" growth, especially along Route 2A. The goals were developed in response to concerns about the limited size and diversity of Shirley's employment base, its lack of available commercial and industrial land, and the desirability of concentrating commercial and retail activity in Shirley Village. All of these issues remain important for the town and they should be addressed during the implementation of Master Plan 2004. Accordingly, the economic development goals for Master Plan 2004 include:

- Create commercial and mixed-use districts that encourage small businesses to thrive in Shirley.
- Promote new small business enterprises, including locally owned and home-based businesses.
- Develop and strengthen Shirley's employment base to provide regionally competitive wages.
- Make Shirley Village a strong, adaptable commercial node that serves a predominantly local clientele while offering specialty goods and services to regional markets.

Key Policies & Actions

- Design new zoning districts and adopt regulations to replace the potential for strip development along Route 2A with transitional and commercial development clusters that are safe, aesthetically pleasing, environmentally responsible, and suited to small-business activity.
- Provide suitable locations for light industrial, research and office development in Shirley, and encourage these uses through reasonable regulation, tax incentives, and marketing support from regional economic development agencies such as MassDevelopment.
- Encourage the business community to establish a tri-town economic development organization to advocate for the needs of local businesses in Shirley, Ayer and Harvard as the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone continues to develop.
- Adopt regulations and policies to retain and increase live-and-work space in Shirley.

FIVE-YEAR IMPLEMENTATION PLAN[1]

TIMELINE	ACTION ITEM	KEY LEADERS
2004-2005	Establish **Shirley Village District** • Amend Establishment of Districts • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Schedule of Dimensional Controls • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Amend Site Plan Review, including Design Guidelines • Amend Parking and Loading Regulations • Amend Sign Regulations • Amend Special Permits	Planning Board
2004-2005	Replace existing cluster bylaw with new **Open Space-Residential Development Bylaw** • Mandatory in Rural Residential District, by special permit • Voluntary in all other Residence Districts, subject to site plan special permit • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Amend Site Plan Review • Amend Sign Regulations	Planning Board, Conservation Commission
2004-2005	Establish **North Shirley Neighborhood Business Districts** (2) • Amend Establishment of Districts & Zoning Map • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Schedule of Dimensional Controls • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Amend Site Plan Review, Design Guidelines • Amend Parking and Loading Regulations • Amend Sign Regulations	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen

[1] Timelines are approximate and are intended to reflect relative order of priorities.

TIMELINE	ACTION ITEM	KEY LEADERS
2004-2005	Replace Rate of Development Bylaw with a **Growth Management Bylaw** • Delete existing Section 2.9 • Add new Section 2.9 • Add new Definitions • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Establish Growth Management Fund by home rule petition (concurrent action required)	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Building Inspector, Finance Committee
2005-2006	Complete **North Post Master Plan** in concert with MassDevelopment, Town of Ayer	Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Shirley representatives to Devens Open Space Committee
2005-2006	Adopt **Comprehensive Permit Policy** and prepare **Housing Production Plan** • Map preferred areas for comprehensive permit development • Identify housing needs and housing unit targets • Adopt unit production schedule • Compile and submit Housing Production Plan to DHCD	Planning Board, Board of Appeals, Board of Selectmen
2005-2006	Adopt **Inclusionary Housing** Bylaw • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Add new Definitions • Incorporate Comprehensive Permit Policy by Reference • Establish Housing Trust Fund by home rule petition (concurrent action required)	Planning Board
2006-2007	**Rezone Industrial District** between Leominster and Lancaster Roads **to Rural Residential** • Amend Zoning Map	Planning Board

TIMELINE	ACTION ITEM	KEY LEADERS
2006-2007	Adopt **Small Cluster Development** Regulations • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Amend Site Plan Review, including Design Guidelines • Amend Parking and Loading Regulations • Amend Sign Regulations • Amend Special Permits	Planning Board, Conservation Commission
2006-2007	Establish **Lancaster Road Business District** • Amend Establishment of Districts and Zoning Map • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Schedule of Dimensional Controls • Amend Site Plan Review, including Design Guidelines • Amend Parking and Loading Regulations • Amend Sign Regulations • Amend Special Permits	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen
2007-2008	Amend **Residential R-3** Regulations • Amend Zoning Map by extend R-3 as represented in the Land Use Plan • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations	Planning Board
2007-2008	Establish **Great Road Business District** • Amend Establishment of Districts and Zoning Map (change from "I" to "GRBD") • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Schedule of Dimensional Controls • Amend Site Plan Review, including Design Guidelines • Amend Parking and Loading Regulations • Amend Sign Regulations • Amend Special Permits	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen

TIMELINE	ACTION ITEM	KEY LEADERS
2007-2008	Reorganize and Update **Industrial District** Regulations • Amend Establishment of Districts and Zoning Map • Add new Definitions • Amend Schedule of Use Regulations • Amend Section 4, Special Regulations • Amend Schedule of Dimensional Controls • Amend Site Plan Review • Amend Parking and Loading Regulations • Amend Sign Regulations • Amend Special Permits	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen
2008-2009	Replace existing **IPOD at Shirley-MCI** • Establish Planned Development Overlay District between Shaker Road, Nashua Street, Devens, and the eastern boundaries of the Lancaster Road Business District, R-1 and R-2 Districts in this area. • Underlying zoning: R-1	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen
2008-2009	Update **Open Space & Recreation Plan**	Conservation Commission
2008-2009	Prepare **Five-Year Master Plan Update**	Planning Board

2. SHIRLEY TODAY

Shirley is a small town on the western border of Middlesex County. Separated by the Nashua River from its neighbors to the east, Shirley is bounded by the towns of Lunenburg, Lancaster, Harvard, Ayer, Groton and Townsend. Its 15.7 square mile (mi^2) area is served by 49 miles of roads, including two state routes that run across the central and northern ends of town.[2] Shirley has a number of character-defining features: large, contiguous forests, open farmland, a well-preserved historic center, and a compact industrial village set against the backdrop of the former Fort Devens. A distinctive landscape of high hills and low-lying valleys laced with streams defines the boundaries of three development zones (Map 1), each presenting a different sense of the community. Throughout Shirley today, however, the image formed by views from the road is that that of a rural enclave gradually evolving into a low-density residential town.

Shirley has grown and changed quite a bit in the past 30 years. Nearly half of its present homes were built after 1970, mainly in the central and northern sections of town.[3] In 1971, 49% of Shirley's residential land use was comprised of low-density development: single-family homes on lots of an acre or more. By 1999, low-density development accounted for 62% of all residential land use. Although Shirley remains largely forested, residential growth has gradually fragmented the town's open space and altered the roadside in many locations. A small amount of business and industrial growth has also occurred in Shirley since the early 1970s: pockets of commercially zoned land in Shirley Village and along Great Road (Route 2A), and both new and industrial reuse activity on Lancaster, Leominster, Shaker and Walker Roads, and Fredonian Street.[4] A striking aspect of Shirley's land use pattern is the presence of large, government-owned institutional uses. The state prison compound at the Shirley-Lancaster border, MCI-Shirley, was expanded and reorganized in the 1990s and now includes medium- and maximum-security facilities on about 200 acres of state-owned land. The larger government-owned area no longer qualifies as an institutional use, and its disposition will continue to present major public policy issues for Shirley and neighboring towns.

No event has had more influence over Shirley's recent history than the closure of Fort Devens in 1995. Established as a small military training camp during World War I, Fort Devens became a permanent installation of the U.S. Army in 1931. It was expanded over time, eventually covering more than 9,000 acres in Ayer, Harvard, Shirley and Lancaster. During the Cold War, the Army invested heavily in new training facilities, more barracks, on-post services, and family housing for military personnel, including 156 apartments in Shirley. At the height of the Vietnam War, more than 12,000 people lived at Fort Devens. By the time federal authorities announced in 1991

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[2] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, MassHighway, as reported by Department of Revenue, Municipal Data Bank.

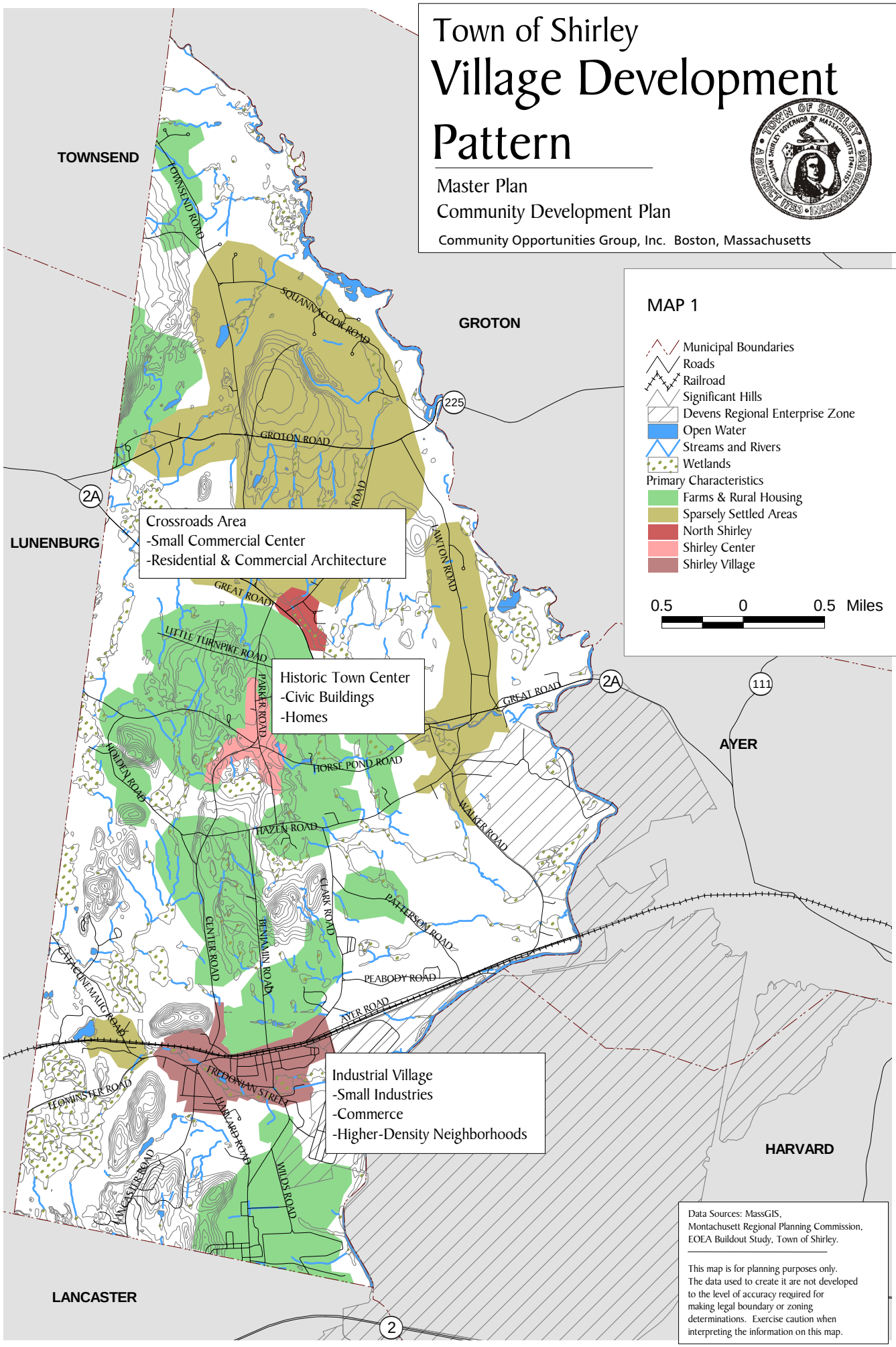
[3] U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table H34, <http://www.census.gov>.

[4] MassGIS, "Land Use," <http://www.state.ma.us.mgis/massgis.htm>. Photointerpretation and digitizing by University of Massachusetts, Department of Forestry, Resource Mapping Project.

Town of Shirley
Village Development Pattern

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



that Fort Devens would close,[5] Shirley's 702 acres had been put to use for multi-family housing, a small mobile home park, a classroom building, outdoor recreation facilities and a wastewater treatment plant. In 1990, more than 40% of the town's entire employment base was comprised of civilian jobs at Fort Devens, and nearly 13% of its school children were dependents of Fort Devens military and civilian employees.[6]

The Army's departure has been followed by a major reuse initiative in the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone under the direction of a quasi-public state agency, MassDevelopment. The Devens Regional Enterprise Zone includes approximately 4,900 acres of land in the North and Main Post sections of Fort Devens, which were transferred to the state in 1995. Under Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993, MassDevelopment is responsible for redeveloping the land in accordance with a plan approved by voters in Shirley, Ayer and Harvard in November 1994. In addition, the legislature assigned all of the permitting powers normally held by cities and towns – planning board, conservation commission, board of health, historic district commission – to a single development review board, the Devens Enterprise Commission. The affected communities have an oversight role in the redevelopment process through the Joint Boards of Selectmen (JBOS). Although it was originally anticipated that the Devens Reuse Plan would take several decades to complete, economic recovery and the investment of state resources at Devens has led to a much faster rate of redevelopment. Today, agency officials report that about 64% of all development authorized by the Devens Reuse Plan has been achieved.[7] Shirley, Harvard and Ayer officials are currently working with MassDevelopment to determine how the Devens Enterprise Zone will be governed in the future.

Development Trends

Table 2-1 reports 30-year land use changes interpreted from a series of aerial photographs that are periodically updated for the entire state. The land use classification system developed for this purpose measures the amount of land physically devoted to a use. As a result, "acres in use" is not the same as acres in parcels recorded and classified for tax purposes by the local assessor's office. In fact, residential development accounts for nearly 3,200 acres in Shirley, but the actual amount of land covered by homes, outbuildings, driveways and associated neighborhood roads is 1,437 acres. The difference is very important because "surplus" land not legally needed to meet zoning requirements may be subdivided and developed in the future.

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[5] The Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act (Base Closure Act) of 1990 produced the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC), which recommended the Fort Devens be closed in a report released on July 1, 1991.

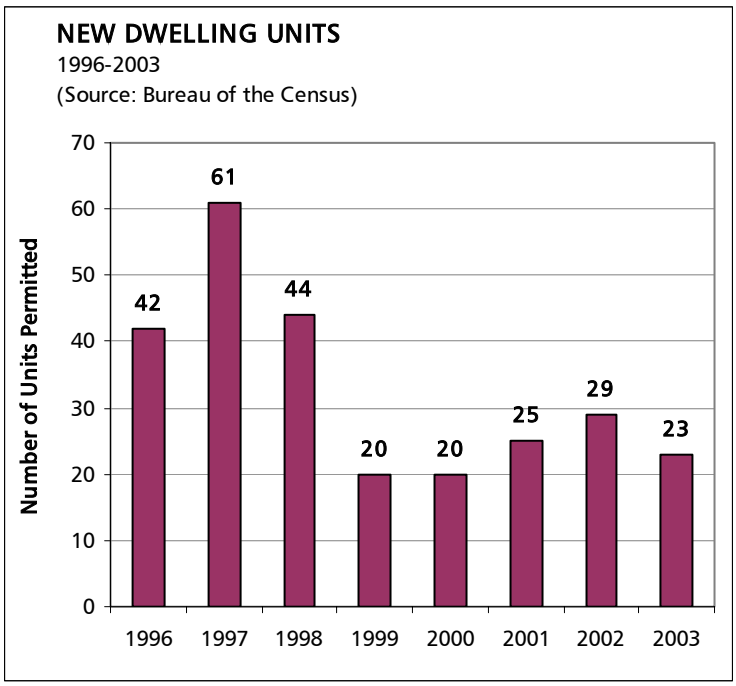
[6] U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Final Environmental Impact Statement: Fort Devens Disposal and Reuse (1995), 2-21 to 2-23, 4-5 to 4-25 passim.

[7] MassDevelopment, Devens Five-Year Review (March 2001), <http://www.devenscommunity.com>, Select News/Public Documents/Five-Year Review.

Table 2-1: Land Use Change in Shirley, 1971-1999

	Year			% Change
Land Use	1999	1985	1971	1971-1999
Agriculture	544.3	694.5	753.4	-27.7%
Forest	6,494.4	6,805.9	7,094.1	-8.5%
Wetlands	380.7	359.2	359.2	6.0%
Mining	100.0	77.3	52.1	92.0%
Open Land	544.5	527.9	526.7	3.4%
Recreation	27.7	42.6	49.4	-43.9%
Multi-Family	86.5	56.6	47.8	81.0%
Moderate-Density Residential	462.4	393.9	408.2	13.3%
Low-Density Residential	888.0	671.7	446.9	98.7%
Commercial	57.3	51.4	47.2	21.4%
Industrial	53.8	37.0	28.4	89.6%
Urban Open	206.2	136.8	88.2	133.9%
Transportation	88.1	77.4	74.1	18.8%
Waste Disposal	120.3	123.2	80.0	50.3%
Water	109.6	108.2	108.2	1.2%

Source: MassGIS, "Land Use." Statistics by author.



Although the information in Table 2-1 does not correspond to the method of property classification used by city and town assessors, it is very useful for mapping and analyzing a community's development pattern and the geographic distribution of new growth. Map 2 illustrates the locations of residential, commercial and industrial land uses in Shirley as of 2000.

A tour of the town today largely corroborates trends that are evident in the state's data. Of course, the same trends are well known to local officials and residents who have lived in Shirley long enough to observe land use changes in their town. While new single-family homes can be seen just about everywhere in Shirley, a considerable amount of the town's recent development is along major and minor roadways in the central, western and northern sections of town. Since 1990, the Planning Board has reviewed and approved subdivision plans with a combined total of more than 400 house lots and many of these projects are currently under

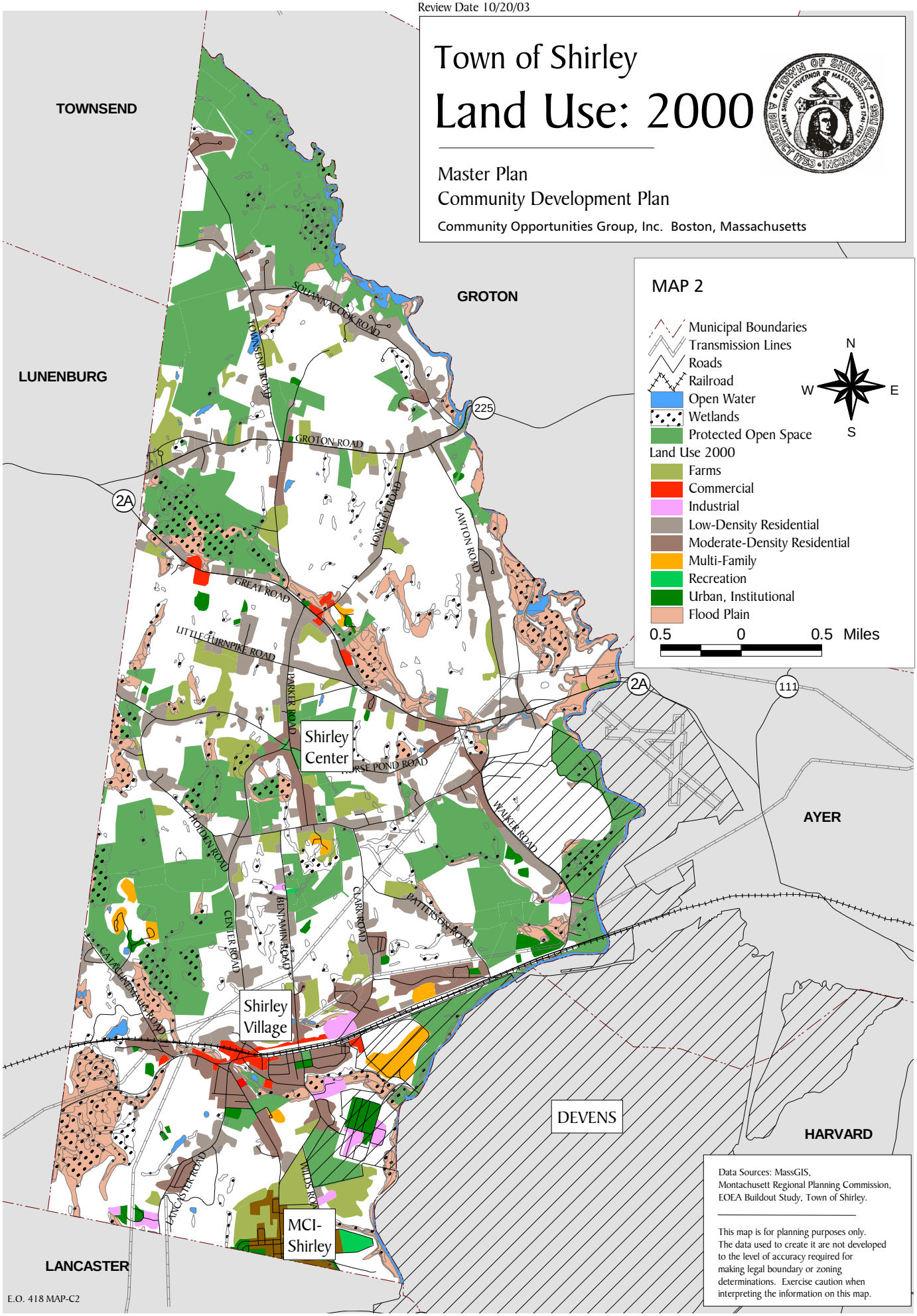
Review Date 10/20/03

Town of Shirley

Land Use: 2000

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



construction.[8] Moreover, between 1996-2003, Shirley issued building permits for 264 new dwelling units,[9] primarily on lots in subdivisions approved after the recession of the early 1990s and on "Approval Not Required" lots adjacent to an existing street. Population growth has begun to kindle new interest in business development, notably in Shirley Village. Infill uses and redevelopment will most likely accelerate in lower Shirley, for the town connected the entire area to public sewers when MassDevelopment upgraded and expanded the wastewater treatment facility at Devens.

Natural, Cultural and Open Space Resources

NATURAL RESOURCES

Natural resources include land, surface water, streams and wetlands, aquifers, wildlife habitat, open space and riparian corridors, and other ecologically sensitive areas such as occurrences of rare or endangered species. Shirley is unusual for the abundance, diversity and quality of its natural resources, particularly its open water, wetlands and rolling landscape. These features define Shirley's visual character and they have clearly influenced its development pattern.

Topography[10]

Shirley is located at the eastern edge of the New England Upland physiographic province and lies entirely within the Nashua River watershed. Elevations range between 220 feet to more than 470 feet above sea level. Shirley's landscape is characterized by rolling hills and low-lying wetland areas. Its noteworthy topographic features include the Major Hills, Brattle Hill and Hunting Hill, Tophet Swamp, and floodplains associated with Squannacook River (Map 3).

Geology

The bedrock underlying Shirley consists of metamorphic and sedimentary rocks: metamorphosed siltstone and schist on the eastern side of town, and slate and phyllite on the west. In some areas, the bedrock forms outcrops or ledge at the surface of the ground. The surficial deposits overlying bedrock in Shirley are primarily unconsolidated deposits of sand, silt, and gravel. The glacial deposits are generally classified as glacial drift, till, glaciofluvial deposits, and glacial outwash. *Glacial drift* broadly refers to rock debris transported by glaciers and deposited either

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[8] Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Community Preservation Initiative, "Shirley Buildout Study," completed by Montachusett Regional Planning Commission in 2001, <http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/>, and Shirley Planning Department, June 2004.

[9] Bureau of the Census, "Building Permits," Manufacturing, Mining and Construction Statistics, select "Permits by County or Place," <http://www.census.gov/const/www/permitsindex.html>.

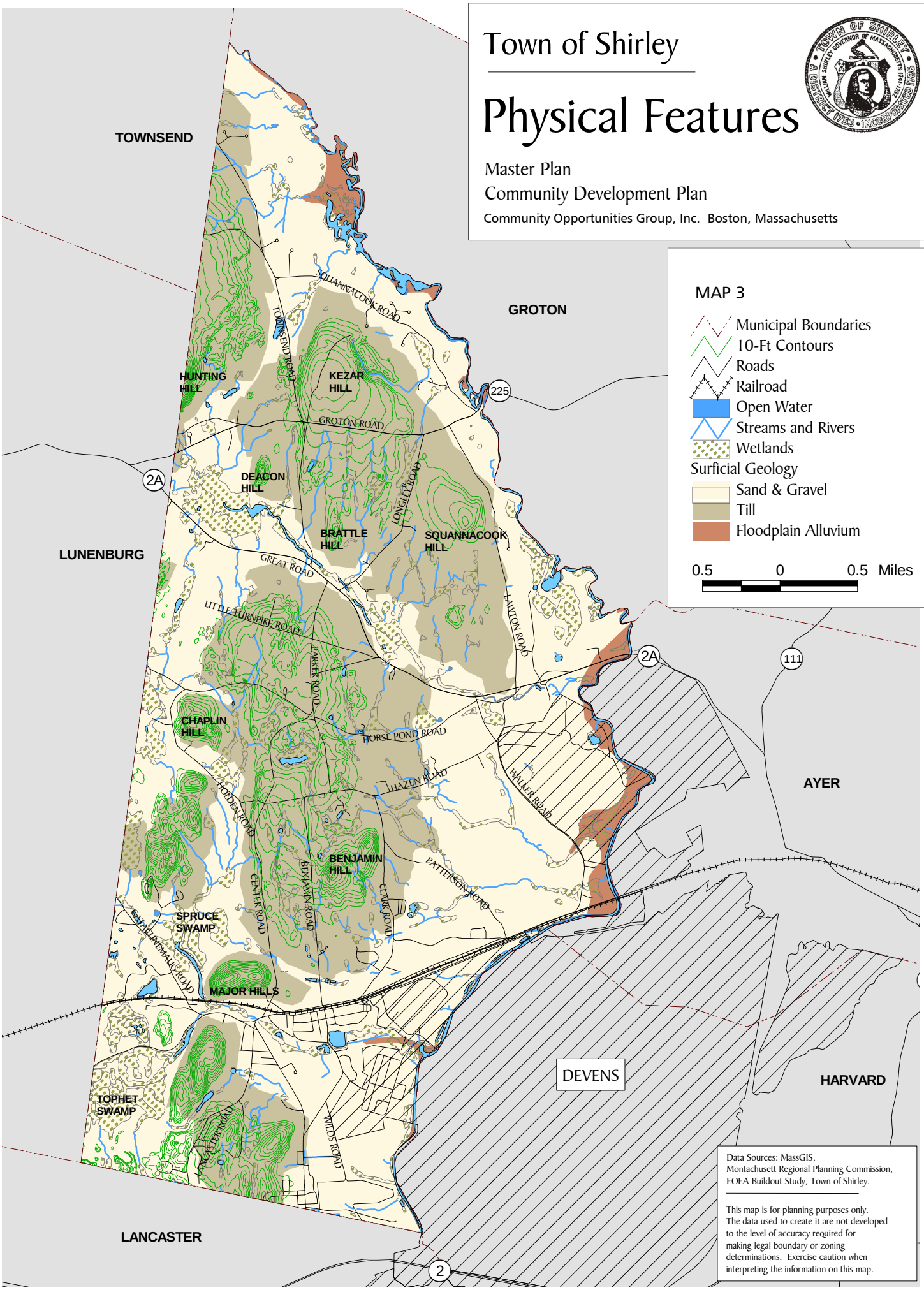
[10] Natural and cultural resources information condensed and summarized from ENSR, Shirley Master Plan (1999) and Shirley Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996).

Town of Shirley

Physical Features

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley.

This map is for planning purposes only. The data used to create it are not developed to the level of accuracy required for making legal boundary or zoning determinations. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

directly from the ice or from the melt water. *Till* is an unsorted, non-stratified glacial drift comprised of clay, silt, sand, gravel, cobbles, and boulders transported and deposited by melting glacial ice. Till deposits are characterized by low porosity and permeability, and as a result they pose sewage disposal problems for developers. *Stratified drift*, composed of well-sorted sands and gravels deposited by streams from a melting glacier, is common in valley systems. It occurs in several topographic features such as terraces, eskers, outwash plains, and small hills or *kames*. Thick sand and gravel deposits with a high potential for water supply are known as *aquifers*. Wells that draw from productive aquifers may yield up to 1,000 gallons per minute (gpm). More recently deposited sediments include *alluvium*, or floodplain deposits associated with major river valleys and the lower segments of tributary streams. Alluvial deposits consist of silt and fine sands.

Soils

There are four soil associations in Shirley. About half of the town is composed of well-drained soils underlain by impermeable hardpan that restricts the downward flow of water. These areas are vulnerable to surface water pollution and generally not suitable for development, particularly on-site wastewater disposal systems and leaching fields. About a third of the town is covered by well-drained sandy and gravely soils, and these areas are best suited for development. Not surprisingly, they tend to coincide with aquifers and recharge areas. Wetland soil types are found in about 10% of the town, and rest of Shirley is underlain by bedrock. The major constraints against development include wet soils, shallow depths to bedrock and steep slopes, which affect about 6% of Shirley's land area.

Prime farmland is defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as "land that is best suited to producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. The soil qualities, growing season, and moisture supply are those needed for a well-managed soil to produce a sustained high yield of crops in an economic manner. Prime farmland produces the highest yields and requires minimal expenditure of energy and economic resources, and farming it results in the least damage to the environment." Twelve of the soil types in Shirley have been identified as prime farmland soils. In addition, the NRC defines soils of statewide or local importance to agriculture as " . . . those that fail to meet one or more of the requirements of prime farmland, but are important for the production of food, feed, fiber, or forage crops. They include those soils that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. Some may produce as high a yield as prime farmland if conditions are favorable." Shirley has 14 soil types that are classified as farmland of statewide or local importance.

Water Resources

Water has played a central role in shaping Shirley's physical evolution and visual character. For example, water resources have largely determined the location of development nodes and the

roadways that supply access to them. About 440 acres of Shirley's total area are comprised of surface water: rivers, streams, lakes and ponds.[11]

As shown in Map 4, Shirley's eastern boundary is defined by its two most significant natural features: the main stem of the Nashua River and the Squannacook River. Although they were severely polluted not long ago, the Nashua River and Squannacook Rivers are clean enough today to serve as regional recreational resources. The Squannacook River and the streams within its sub-basin are classified as Outstanding Resource Waters under the Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers Sanctuary Act, which protects the river from new stormwater and wastewater discharges. In addition, two years ago the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs approved a 37,450-acre Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation that extends west of the Nashua River to the New Hampshire border, including the Squannacook River.[12] Shirley has an estimated 20 miles of continuous riverfront, much of it protected, open and publicly accessible.[13]

Shirley has a number of streams and brooks that drain into the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers, including:

- Mulpus Brook
- Catacunemaug Brook
- Trout Brook
- Walker Brook
- Trap Swamp Brook
- Pumpkin Brook

There are also several ponds in Shirley. Lake Shirley, the largest water body, is located mainly in Lunenburg and provides 1,500 feet of shoreline in Shirley. Squannacook Pond and Dead Pond are natural ponds while Leatherboard, Mill and Phoenix Ponds are examples of stream impoundments that were created to support Shirley's early industries. These water bodies are not used for public drinking water supplies.

Much of the town is influenced by wetlands and floodplains. Approximately 1,000 acres of the town are comprised of large swamplands and wetlands adjacent to ponds, rivers and streams. Floodplains extend along low-lying areas adjacent to the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers, the Catacunemaug and Mulpus Brooks, and the lower reaches of Morse Brook, Walker Brook, Bow Brook, and Trout Brook. Wetlands and associated setbacks under the Wetlands Protection Act and Title V, along with the 100-year flood plain mapped by the Federal Emergency Management

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[11] MassGIS, "Wetlands Conservancy Program Maps."

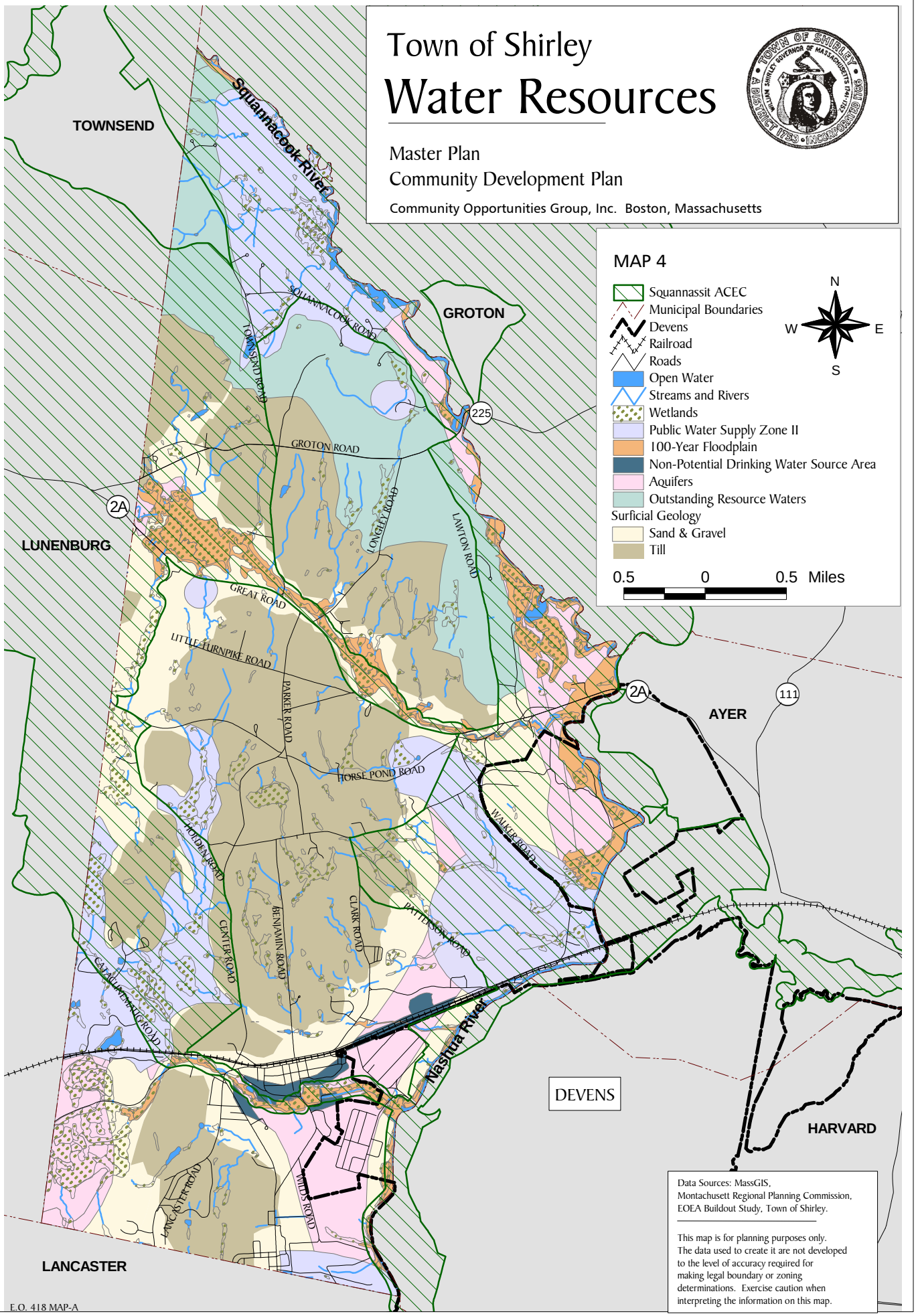
[12] ACEC Nomination

[13] Shirley Conservation Commission, Open Space and Recreation Plan (1996), Section IV, C-1.

Town of Shirley
Water Resources

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley.

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E.O. 418 MAP-A

Agency (FEMA), cover nearly 2,000 acres of the town's total area. According to records maintained by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), Shirley has seven certified vernal pools, three of which are located in the North Post section of Devens. Table 2-2 provides summary statistics about Shirley's wetland and water resources.

Table 2-2: Wetland and Water Resources[14]

Resource Area	Acres	Resource Area	Acres
Bog	28.6	Title V Setbacks	2,079.5
Deep Marsh	170.5		
Shallow Marsh	64.4	100-Year Floodplain	955.8
Shrub Swamp	256.6		
Coniferous Wooded Swamp	40.9	Open Water	438.5
Deciduous Wooded Swamp	331.3		
Mixed Tree Wooded Swamp	113.0		

Source: MassGIS.

Groundwater quality is very important to Shirley because it is the town's source of drinking water. Shirley's most productive aquifers are associated with thick deposits of glacial outwash sediments. Groundwater wells with the highest yields are found within the Nashua River valley where the thickness of porous, saturated glacial sediments ranges from 75-95 feet deep. Thin, fairly low-yield aquifers are found in smaller valleys, such as the Squannacook River valley. The Shirley Water District provides water to about 60% of the town's population, drawing from three supply sites: the Patterson and Catacunemaug wells and the new Walker Road well. Many homes in the northern end of town rely on private wells.

Through its Public Works Department, Shirley has established stormwater management regulations and has been working to implement them. Stormwater management policies are very important because by controlling construction and post-construction runoff and instituting best management practices for municipal operations, communities can reduce the risk of nonpoint source pollution to wetlands, surface waters and groundwater supplies.

Vegetation

The prevalence of open fields and forests is a key factor in Shirley's visual identity. Over half the town remains forested, although some of Shirley's large, contiguous forested areas have been fragmented by new development. The existing vegetation in Shirley generally consists of upland forests, wetlands and grasslands, and the mix within each of these communities is critical for wildlife habitat, flood storage capacity, reduced erosion and sedimentation, and a buffer from noise and wind.

[14] Data represented in Table 2-2 should not be added to arrive at a cumulative total. In general, acres listed as wetlands, open water and floodplain overlap with acres comprised of Title V setbacks. The purpose of Table 2-2 is to characterize various types of resource areas and their extent in Shirley.

The vegetation cover in Shirley is characteristic of northeastern Massachusetts. Oak-dominated woodlands are the most common forest type, along with white pine, red maple, black birch and pignut hickory. The thinner, relatively dry soils found on hilltops support some of these species as well as scarlet oak and black oak. The diversity of vegetative species increases in the moist soils found along the middle to lower slopes. Warm, south-facing slopes support oak, hickory, and black birch, while American beech, Eastern hemlock and white birch appear on the cooler, moister, north-facing slopes. The low-lying forests include red oak and white ash. Eastern white pine grows in virtually all upland habitats and some wetland habitats, and occurs in dense, homogeneous stands on former agricultural land.

Shirley's wetlands include swamps, bogs, wet meadows, and seasonally flooded areas. Most of the town's wetlands consist of forested red maple swamp. Some wetlands host vegetation communities that have adapted to the sustained high water and acidic conditions. For example, Spruce Swamp has leatherleaf, other ericaceous shrubs, sphagnum, sedges, and other species not otherwise commonly found in Shirley's region. Grasslands include hay fields, livestock pastures, old fields reverting to wooded habitat, and actively cultivated lands. In Shirley, there are notable grasslands along Townsend Road, Whitney Road, north of Route 225 near the Lunenburg town line, Center Street, and near Harvard Center Road. For the most part, Shirley's grasslands are indicative of areas that were cleared for agriculture in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the former farm fields are in various stages reforestation. Some of the hay fields along roadsides in Shirley contribute to the town's inventory of scenic resources.

Wildlife Habitat

Shirley's topography, soils, water resources and vegetation features provide habitat value for a wide range of wildlife and fish species. The town's primary habitat types are mature and successional upland forests and emergent, scrub-shrub and forested wetlands. The riparian corridors along the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife that depend on riparian habitat: otter, black ducks, muskrats, and white-tailed deer. Vernal pools are critical habitat for a diverse community of amphibians and invertebrates that depend on this environment for completion of their life cycle. In addition, the grassland environments in Shirley provide limited habitat for some grassland fauna.

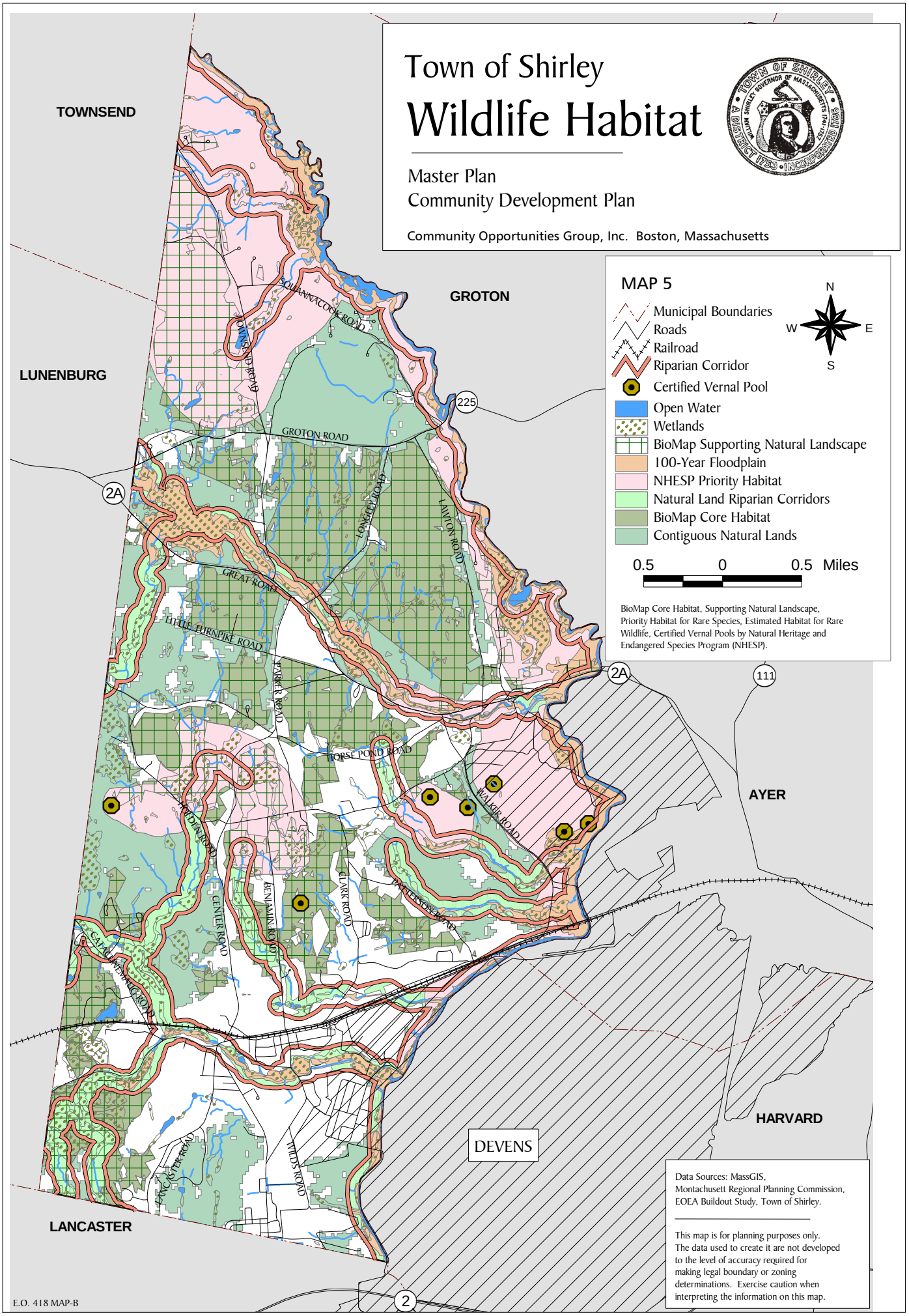
According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Shirley has several areas of estimated rare species habitat and priority rare species habitat: the Squannacook River, Spruce Swamp, and portions of Walker Brook, as shown on Map 5. The species of record in Shirley are listed in Table 2-3.

The Nashua River and its tributaries contain warmwater and coldwater fish species. Warmwater fish include largemouth bass, perch, dace, and several species of sunfish such as bluegill, pumpkinseed, and black crappie. The Squannacook River harbors coldwater fish, e.g., brook trout and brown trout. The Massachusetts Division of Fish and Game stocks trout in the Mulpus Brook, Bow Brook, Pumpkin Brook and Catacunemaug Brook, and small-mouth bass in the Squannacook River.

Town of Shirley
Wildlife Habitat

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley.

This map is for planning purposes only. The data used to create it are not developed to the level of accuracy required for making legal boundary or zoning determinations. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

E.O. 418 MAP-B

Table 2-3: Rare and Endangered Species Observed in Shirley

Taxonomic Group	Common Name	State Rank	Most Recent Observation
Fish	Bridle Shiner	Special Concern	1954
Amphibian	Blue-Spotted Salamander	Special Concern	1999
Amphibian	Four-Toed Salamander	Special Concern	1989
Reptile	Spotted Turtle	Special Concern	2000
Reptile	Wood Turtle	Special Concern	1997
Reptile	Blanding's Turtle	Threatened	2000
Mussel	Triangle Floater	Special Concern	1998
Dragonfly/Damselfly	Brook Snaketail	Special Concern	1939
Dragonfly/Damselfly	Kennedy's Emerald	Endangered	1939
Vascular Plant	Purple Milkweed	Endangered	1916
Vascular Plant	Climbing Fern	Special Concern	1911
Vascular Plant	Wild Senna	Endangered	1882

Source: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (2003).

CULTURAL & SCENIC RESOURCES

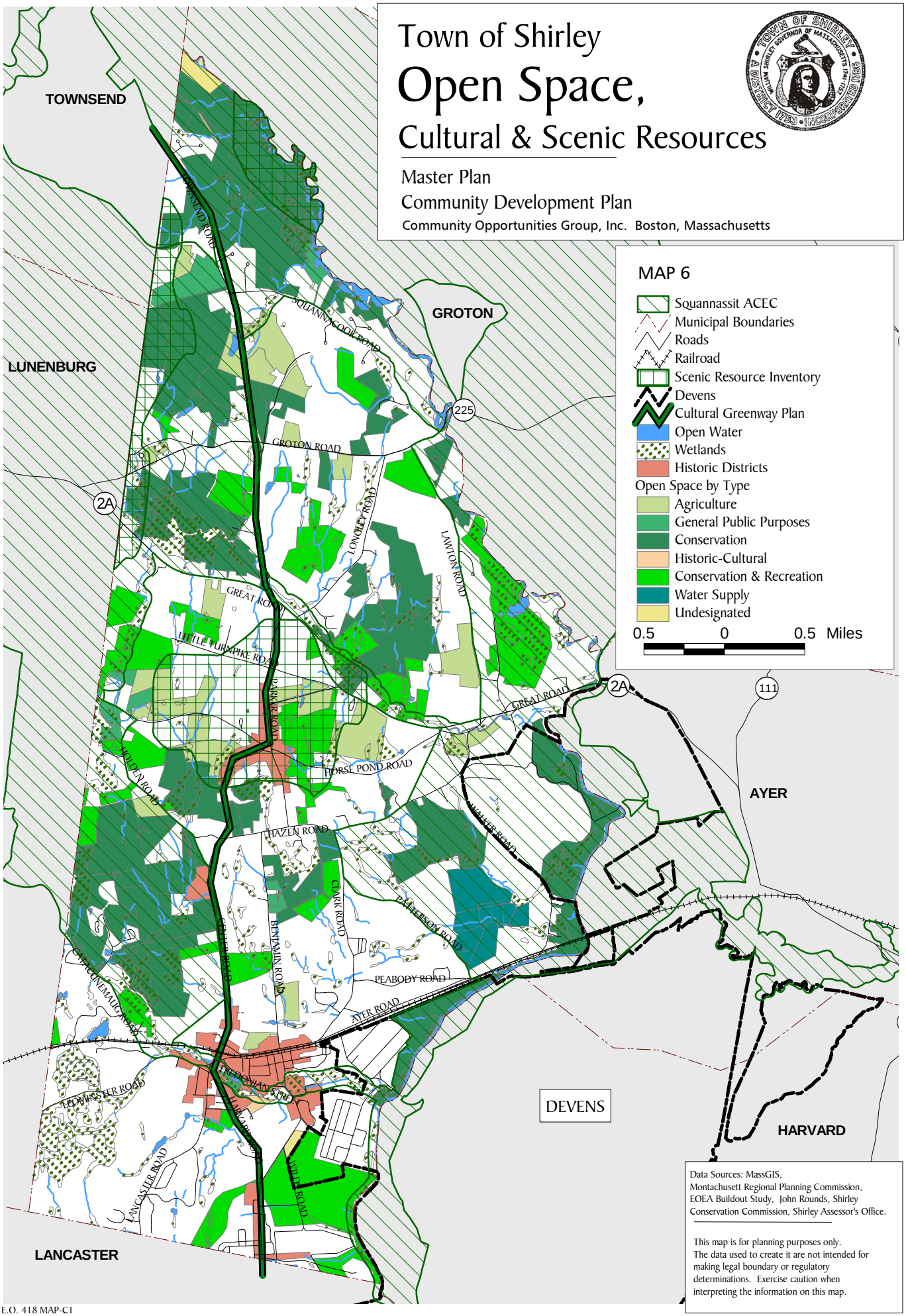
Cultural resources include historic buildings and their settings, agricultural outbuildings, archaeological remnants and features, and archaeologically sensitive areas. Landscape features such as stone walls and foundations, burial grounds and cemeteries, trails and historic trees are an important part of Shirley's history and they contribute to its cultural resource inventory. (See Map 6).

Shirley has three historic districts and one individually listed property on the National Register of Historic Places, and one local historic district established under G.L. c.40C. The Shirley Center National Register District is a beautiful, well-preserved example of a traditional New England village and is listed as a scenic area in the Massachusetts Landscape Inventory (1982). It is historically significant because it dates to 1753, when Shirley separated from Groton. Shirley Center retains the original character of a pre-Revolutionary farming community with predominately residential buildings and municipal buildings focused around a town common. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 and it includes 59 properties. It encompasses the Shirley Center Local Historic District, established in 1973, which includes 41 properties.

Shirley Center development pattern.

Town of Shirley
Open Space,
Cultural & Scenic Resources

Master Plan
Community Development Plan
Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, John Rounds, Shirley Conservation Commission, Shirley Assessor's Office.

This map is for planning purposes only. The data used to create it are not intended for making legal boundary or regulatory determinations. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

E.O. 418 MAP-C1

The Shirley Village Historic District is essentially coterminous with the area that local residents refer to as Shirley Village. It is a mill village in the southern part of town and was settled around the turn of the 19th century. The early mills supported clothiers, but they were rapidly outnumbered by the cotton and paper industries. Residential development is clustered around the mill sites and along Leominster Road, an important thoroughfare that provided access to the mills. The advent of the Boston to Fitchburg railroad in 1845 led to industrial, commercial, and residential expansion of the village. The village remains a relatively intact example of a New England mill village that developed and evolved between the seventeenth and twentieth century. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1992 and includes 441 properties.

The Shirley Shaker Village was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976. At that time, 14 buildings of Shaker origin were included in the historic district. Subsequent research, as well as the loss of one building to fire, has brought the total number of Shaker buildings in the district to 11. Of the 11 buildings identified as Shaker, seven are classified as having special architectural or historic significance. In 1995, the Massachusetts Historical Commission also determined that the North Family Office (Harvard Road, Lancaster), the South Family Office (Wilde Road, Shirley), and the Industrial School buildings within the MCI Shirley facility would all contribute to the National Register district. Archaeological features are also present within the Shirley Shaker Village Historic District, including various house and barn foundations, and ramps and the ice house foundations present along Harvard Road. In addition, a Shaker-era dump site was recently documented along an embankment abutting Harvard Road during an archaeological survey. Finally, the James Parker House at Valley Farm was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. It is situated on a large wooded property along Spruce Swamp Brook. The farm was built in two phases, ca. 1715 and then greatly expanded in 1797 to its current New England Colonial, center-chimney form. This prosperous farm once included a cider press, a hop house and barn.

Shirley has many historic transportation routes that offer a view from the road into the town's past. Town meeting has designated two roads under the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act, Parker Road and Center Road.

OPEN SPACE

Open space supports and links the built and natural environments. It consists of waterways, wetlands, woodlands and wildlife habitats, greenways, parks and conservation lands, working farms and forests, and wilderness. Including Devens Regional Enterprise Zone land that is within Shirley's corporate limits, there are nearly 3,950 acres of open space in Shirley, of which 2,443 acres are protected by local, state, and federal jurisdictions (Map 6). A summary of Shirley's open space inventory appears in Table 2-4.[15] The town itself owns approximately 920 acres of open space, mainly land owned and managed by the Conservation Commission. About

[15] See Appendix A for detailed open space and recreation land inventory.

9% of all protected open space in Shirley is privately owned but controlled by conservation restrictions held by the Conservation Commission and other organizations.[16]

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife maintains 364 acres of wildlife management area along the Squannacook River, where species common and rare to central Massachusetts can be found in residence or as seasonal visitors. The Division stocks pheasant and trout in this area and others in town for hunting and fishing. Additional town-owned parcels and utility easements in north Shirley further increase the available wildlife. The 97-acre Rich Tree Farm (purchased by the town in 1986 with a Self-Help Grant for open space, aquifer protection, and recreation) and adjacent open space areas serve as important wildlife habitat in the east-central portion of town.

Table 2-4: Summary of Open Space Inventory

Ownership	Acres	Protection Status	Acres
U.S. Government			
Devens	44.3	Permanently Protected	
Oxbow National Wildlife Reserve	195.8	In Fee	2,103.84
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	913.3	Conservation Restriction	339.39
Town of Shirley			
Shirley Conservation Commission	424.5	Temporarily Protected	
Shirley Parks Department	10.5	Chapter 61A	381.26
Shirley School Department	18.1	Chapter 61B	677.80
Town Property, General Purposes	346.8	Chapter 61	273.38
Shirley Water District	119.5		
Privately Owned	1,874.7	Unprotected	171.93
TOTAL	3,947.60		3,947.60

Source: MassGIS.

Population & Housing

Shirley's Census 2000 population includes 5,276 local residents and 1,097 prison inmates. Its 1990-2000 population growth rate of 4.2% is below the state average. In Shirley, however, growth rate is less important than changes in the composition of its population and households: changes that relate directly to the types of land use conversions that have occurred since the late 1980s. For example, according to the federal census, Shirley's housing inventory declined by 1.2% during the past decade. In fact, the town appears to have absorbed housing unit growth of about 6% from 1990-2000 – a rate equal to that of the state as a whole. The loss reported by the Census

[16] MassGIS, "Shirley Open Space Inventory," updated by author. Data expressed in acres represent acres reported by MassGIS and may not correspond to the town assessor's parcel records.

Bureau is an aberration caused by the decommissioning of 156 multi-family housing units at Fort Devens. Locally, i.e., outside the Devens Enterprise Zone, Shirley attracted a considerable amount of new development once the recession lifted in the early 1990s. The Bureau of the Census estimates that from 2000-2002, Shirley's population rose by about 3%, to 6,540 people.

POPULATION & HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS

Most of Shirley's 2,067 households are families: households of two or more people related by blood, marriage, or adoption. Compared to families across the state, Shirley's are somewhat smaller, yet a larger percentage of families in Shirley have children under 18. The town also falls below the state average for percentage of elderly households. However, in the immediate region – including the town itself and adjacent communities – Shirley ranks fairly high for its percentage of elderly households, and it has the largest percentage of elderly households comprised of women living alone (23.5%).[17] In addition, Shirley is surpassed only by Ayer for percentage of young (under 35) households and single-parent families. One of Shirley's interesting qualities is that for such a small town, it has a strikingly diverse population in its own right, excluding the statistical influence of a large state prison facility. Measured by age, income, household type, education or employment, Shirley's mix of people is unusual in non-urban areas of the Commonwealth. The mix seems to be shaped by Shirley's housing inventory and its position in the regional housing market.

Table 2-5: Comparison Population & Household Statistics

	Shirley	Middlesex County	Massachusetts
Population	6,373	1,465,396	6,349,097
Households	2,067	561,220	2,443,580
Average Household Size	2.55	2.52	2.51
Families	1,426	361,076	1,576,696
Percent Family Households	69.0%	64.3%	64.5%
Average Family Size	3.09	3.11	3.11
Percent Families w/ Children <18	49.5%	46.9%	47.5%

Source: Census 2000, Table DP-1.

About 35% of Shirley's homeowners bought their present house between 1990 and 2000, primarily after 1995, with a majority concentrated in the northern end of town (Map 7). The percentage of recently arrived homeowners in Shirley exceeds the averages for Middlesex County and the Commonwealth, but it is somewhat lower than in Ayer and Groton. Shirley also has a fairly large percentage of longer-term homeowners (30.8%), i.e., families that moved in more than 20 years ago. The same cannot be said for renters living in Shirley today, however. Less than 5% of the town's renter households have lived in the same dwelling unit for more than 20 years, a statistic that is very low for the region.[18]

[17] Census 2000, Summary File 1, Tables P-15, P-21, P-31, P-34.

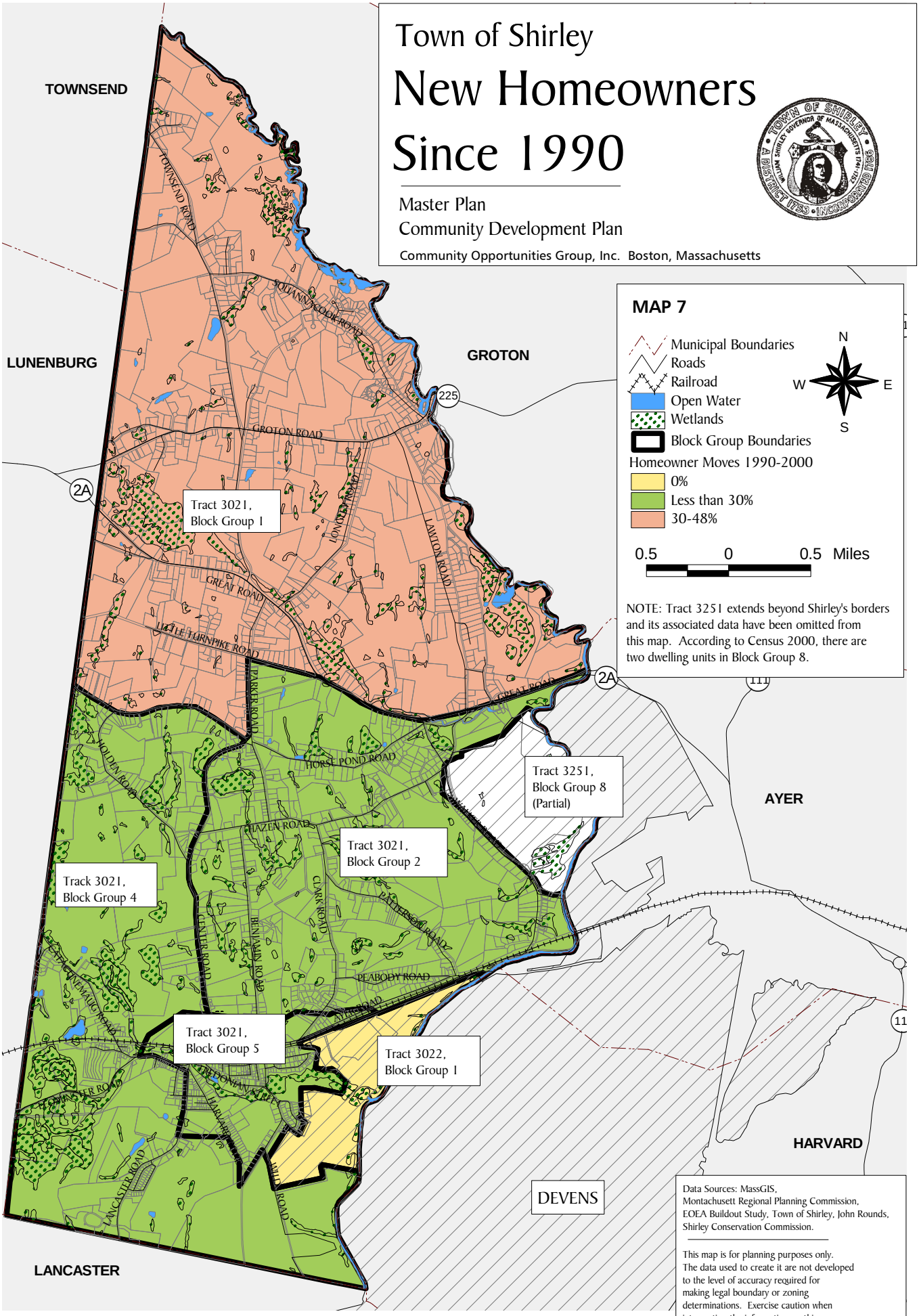
[18] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P-38.

Town of Shirley

New Homeowners Since 1990

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Since Shirley has many young families and new homeowners compared to most towns nearby, it is not surprising to find differences in the size and composition of its households. Shirley's largest households are found in homes purchased by the present owners during the 1980s. In all neighboring communities except Ayer, the largest households are recent arrivals: families that purchased their home in the mid- to late-1990s and already had children when they moved into town. Shirley seems to be attracting not only young families, but also young families that are first-time homebuyers. Nearly 80% of all homeowners in Shirley are family households, and 34% of them have school-age children. [19]

Very few of Shirley's residents work locally. Less than 13% of its employed labor force holds a local job, which is much lower than the percentage of in-town employment in Shirley's neighboring communities. Many residents work in Ayer or at Devens, however, and about 20% commute to one of four communities each day: Acton, Boston, Leominster or Groton. For the most part, they are employed inside Middlesex County, in communities all along I-495 and Route 128. Since they work primarily in suburban locations, it is not surprising to find that Shirley has the region's highest percentage of commuters who travel to work by car.[20]

Shirley's median household income of $53,344 is fairly low, both for the region and the state overall. Still, its state rank for household income has risen significantly since 1980, from 246 to 182 out of 351 cities and towns.[21] Approximately 41% of all households in Shirley have incomes low enough to qualify for state or federal housing assistance.[22] A particularly revealing aspect of Shirley's demographic profile is that young families – households headed by people between 25-34 years of age – have more economic advantages relative to the town as a whole than is true in most communities nearby. The median income of young households in Shirley is 1.17 times higher than the town-wide median household income. Table 2-6 provides a comparison summary of socio-economic indicators for Shirley and towns in the immediate region.

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[19] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables P-38, HCT-9; household size cross-tabulations by author.

[20] Bureau of the Census, "MCD/County to MCD/County Worker-Flow File," July 2003; Census 2000 Summary File 3, Table P-30.

[21] Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Revenue, "Indicators of Wealth," Municipal Data Bank, <http://www.massdor.gov/dls>.

[22] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, "Low and Moderate Income Persons by Non-Entitlement Community," <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/systems/census/lowmod/index.cfm>.

Table 2-6: Economic Position of Households in Shirley & Surrounding Towns

				Median Income		
Geography	Population	Households	Families	Households	Families	Married Couples w/ Children <18
Massachusetts	6,349,097	2,443,580	1,576,696	$50,502	$61,664	$70,827
Middlesex County	1,465,396	561,220	361,076	$60,821	$74,194	$82,620
Ayer	7,287	2,982	1,773	$46,619	$61,968	$69,833
Groton	9,547	3,268	2,568	$82,869	$92,014	$97,943
SHIRLEY	6,373	2,067	1,426	$53,344	$66,250	$71,827
Townsend	9,198	3,110	2,476	$61,745	$67,173	$71,114
Harvard	5,981	1,809	1,494	$107,934	$119,352	$128,971
Lancaster	7,380	2,049	1,552	$60,752	$66,490	$73,846
Lunenburg	9,401	3,535	2,668	$56,813	$63,981	$71,648

Source: Census 2000.

PHYSICAL & OCCUPANCY CHARACTERISTICS OF HOUSING STOCK

For a small town, Shirley has an unusual mix of homes. While most of its 2,126 housing units are detached single-family dwellings, 22% are in multi-family buildings of three or more units and slightly more than 10% are mobile homes. In the immediate region – Shirley and adjacent towns – Shirley is second only to Ayer for percentage of multi-family housing stock. Due to its relatively sizeable inventory of multi-family housing units and mobile homes, Shirley has a large percentage of households that rent the units they live in: nearly 30% of all housing units in Shirley are renter-occupied.[23] Table 2-7 is a summary-level profile of Shirley's housing stock compared to the surrounding area, Middlesex County and the state as a whole.

Shirley's new subdivisions are very attractive to families seeking housing in the North-Central region of the state.

[23] Census 2000, Summary File 3: Tables H-3, H-7, H-30.

Table 2-7: Physical Characteristics of Housing

	Housing Units (Total)	Single-Family Number	Single-Family Percent	Two-Family Number	Two-Family Percent
Massachusetts	2,621,989	1,374,479	52.4%	304,501	11.6%
Middlesex County	576,681	282,013	48.9%	88,579	15.4%
Ayer	3,154	1,380	43.8%	438	13.9%
Groton	3,393	2,843	83.8%	262	7.7%
SHIRLEY	2,158	1,221	56.6%	241	11.2%
Townsend	3,182	2,634	82.8%	87	2.7%
Harvard	2,225	1,835	82.5%	251	11.3%
Lancaster	2,141	1,674	78.2%	89	4.2%
Lunenburg	3,668	3,165	86.3%	178	4.9%
	Vacancy Rate (April 2000)	**Multi-Family* Number**	**Multi-Family* Percent**	**Mobile Homes, Other Number**	**Mobile Homes, Other Percent**
Massachusetts	6.8%	918,269	35.0%	24,740	0.9%
Middlesex County	2.7%	203,573	35.3%	2,516	0.4%
Ayer	5.5%	1,277	40.5%	59	1.9%
Groton	3.7%	276	8.1%	12	0.4%
SHIRLEY	4.0%	478	22.2%	218	10.1%
Townsend	2.4%	461	14.5%	0	0.0%
Harvard	0.7%	139	6.2%	0	0.0%
Lancaster	4.3%	378	17.7%	0	0.0%
Lunenburg	3.6%	213	5.8%	112	3.1%

Source: Census 2000.

Although many of the town's new homes are quite large, housing units in Shirley tend to be somewhat smaller than is the case in surrounding communities. For owner-occupied housing, the median number of rooms per unit in Shirley is the region's lowest, but Shirley has many owner-occupied mobile homes and they distort the statistic for the town as a whole. About 12% of all owner-occupied units in Shirley have eight or more rooms, which places the town near the regional low point for percentage of large homes. Shirley's rental units are also comparatively small, but this is largely due to the low percentage of single-family homes that are renter-occupied. In communities such as Groton and Harvard where more than half of all rental units are single-family homes, renters have access to larger units – but there are also fewer units, and generally much more expensive ones.

Approximately 21% of all housing units in Shirley were built between 1990-2000. Though seemingly large, Shirley's percentage of new homes is somewhat lower than that of communities nearby. Shirley is at the regional mid-point for homes built prior to 1950, and as would be expected given the town's development history, Shirley Village neighborhoods have the largest percentage of older housing stock. The same neighborhoods have a larger percentage of tenants than homeowners. Many of the renter households around Shirley Village are fairly small, but to some extent this reflects the relatively high percentage of elderly renters in these neighborhoods. Table 2-8 compares five sections of town by the physical and occupancy characteristics of their housing units, based on sampling reported by the Census Bureau.

Table 2-8: Characteristics of Housing in Shirley by Census Block Group

			Occupied Housing		Median # Rooms		% Single-
	Units	Vacant	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Family Homes
Tract 3021							
Block Group 1	570	0.0%	496	74	6.60	4.80	81.4%
Block Group 2	623	4.3%	482	114	6.20	3.90	53.1%
Block Group 4	359	5.8%	226	112	5.90	5.00	65.5%
Block Group 5	564	6.9%	250	275	5.40	3.30	32.1%
Tract 3022							
Block Group 1	42	0.0%	10	32	7.00	4.30	23.8%

Source: Census 2000.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Shirley has many lower-cost homes, but very few meet the definition of an affordable housing unit under state law. In Massachusetts and most states across the country, the term "affordable housing" means homes made affordable to lower-income households by a deed restriction or covenant that restricts sale prices and rents as the units are vacated, sold or leased to new tenants. Shirley has 57 units of housing that qualify as "affordable" under Chapter 40B,[24] a law that is highly controversial in most communities because it overrides local zoning regulations that make low- and moderate-income housing economically infeasible to build. The device that overrides local zoning is known as a comprehensive permit.

Chapter 40B

Enacted in 1969, Chapter 40B establishes a legal presumption of unmet housing needs when less than 10% of a community's year-round housing stock is affordable to households at or below 80% of median family income. Generally, communities that do not meet the 10% threshold must issue a comprehensive permit unless there is an unusual or compelling basis to deny one. Developers, in turn, may ask the state's Housing Appeals Committee (HAC) to overturn a local Zoning Board of Appeals decision. In most cases they negotiate a compromise with town officials, but HAC's overrides have left a lasting impression on communities and form the basis for most of the opposition from local governments today.

Shirley's inventory of low- and moderate-income housing includes 48 rental units and nine homeownership units. These 57 units are equal to 2.66% of Shirley's year-round homes. Across the Commonwealth, 8.53% of all houses and apartments meet the statutory definition of "low- and moderate-income housing units," yet only 31 of the state's 351 communities have produced enough subsidized housing to satisfy the 10% goal. Though cities top the list for affordable housing production, a few towns also exceed 10%. Subsidized housing as a percentage of all

[24] Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, April 2002. Since the Subsidized Housing Inventory is currently being updated, Chapter 40B statistics presented in this report may not reflect actual conditions in Shirley's region.

year-round homes in Shirley and neighboring communities does not vary significantly, as suggested by the data in Table 2-9. Regionally, there are 481 Chapter 40B units or 2.4% for the area as a whole. Ayer tops the list for both number (131) and percentage (3.76%) of Chapter 40B units. In rural economic centers like Shirley, the average percentage of Chapter 40B units is 4.25%.[25]

Table 2-9: Regional Chapter 40B Inventory

Community	Total Year-Round Housing Units	Total Development Units	Chapter 40B Units	% Subsidized Housing	Chapter 40B Gap
Ayer	3,141	131	118	3.76%	196.1
Groton	3,339	121	95	2.85%	238.9
Shirley	2,140	57	57	2.66%	157.0
Townsend	3,162	50	50	1.58%	266.2
Lancaster	2,103	74	74	3.52%	136.3
Harvard	2,156	33	33	1.53%	182.6
Lunenburg	3,605	54	54	1.50%	306.5
Total	19,646	520	481	2.4%	1,484

Source: DHCD (2002).

Other Measures of Affordability

By enacting Chapter 40B, the legislature intended to assure a "fair-share" distribution of low-income housing across the state, but housing policy analysts do not define affordable housing need on the basis of a fixed 10% standard. The national definition of housing affordability assumes that a home is affordable to its owners if they spend no more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs: a mortgage payment, property taxes, and house insurance. Similarly, an apartment is affordable when tenants pay no more than 30% of their monthly income on rent and utilities. In housing industry parlance, households that pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs are “housing cost burdened." The incidence of housing cost burden is usually highest among elderly and lower-income households. “Low-income” refers to households with incomes at or below 80% of area median income. In Shirley today, a family of four with income of $66,150 or less meets the state’s definition of “low-income household.”[26]

According to federal census data, 36.9% of Boston-area tenants are housing cost burdened, yet the same applies to only 27.5% of renters in Shirley.[27] Two factors may explain the town’s

[25] Affordable housing percentages derived from DHCD Subsidized Housing Inventory; “rural economic centers@ refers to 61 towns so defined in the Department of Revenue “Kind of Community” classification system.

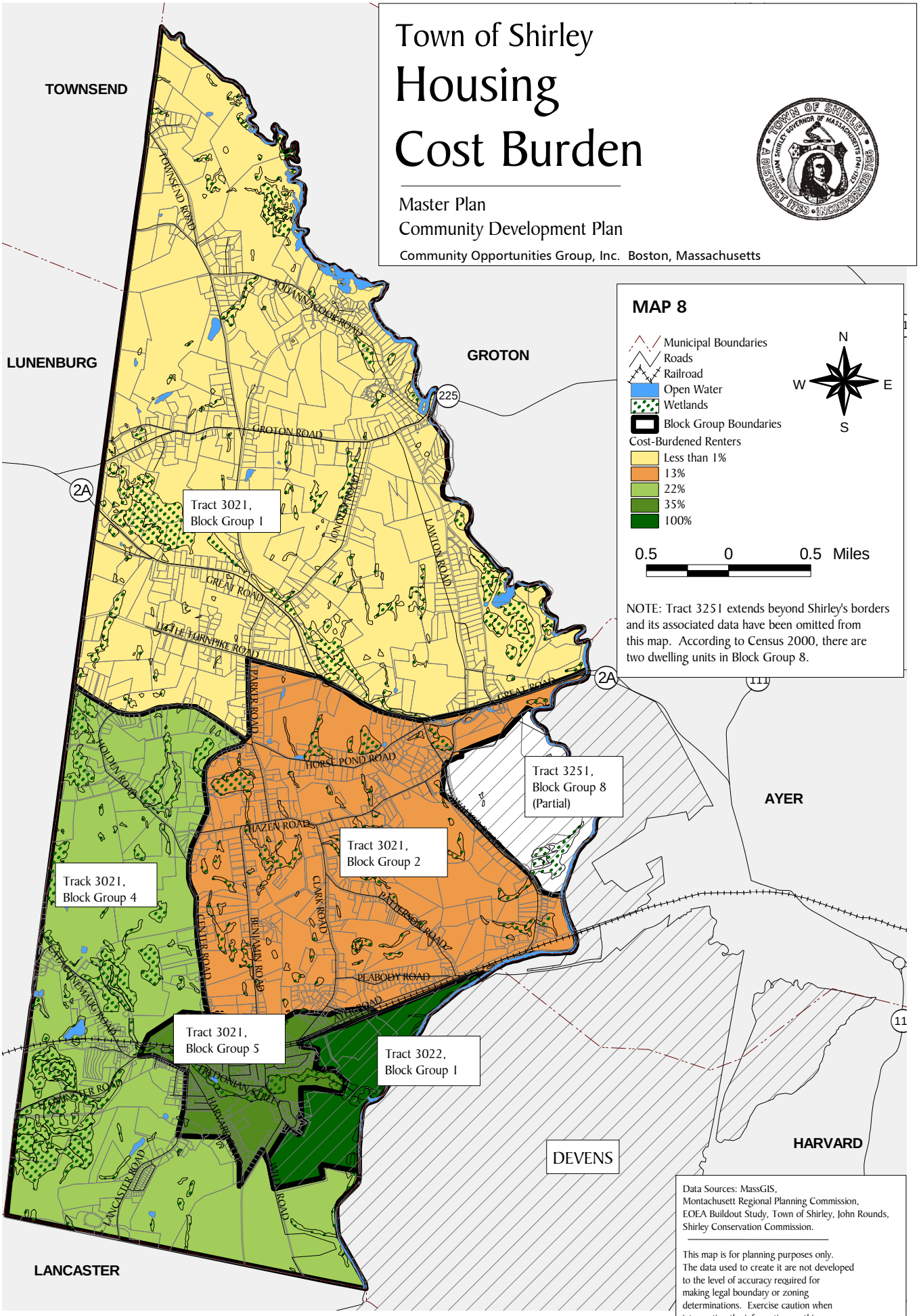
[26] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), “FY04 Section 8 Income Limits,” <http://www.hud.gov> select Library/PDR.

[27] Census 2000, Summary File 3, Tables DP-4 and H-84.

Town of Shirley
Housing Cost Burden

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



comparatively low incidence of rental housing cost burden. First, much of Shirley's renter-occupied housing is comprised of mobile homes and units in older buildings with fairly low rents. While market rents have increased in Shirley, regional market conditions have not succumbed to the same pressures that drive the housing market closer to Boston. Second, compared to surrounding towns and especially to communities near Boston, Shirley has a more balanced demographic profile. Although its median household income is the region's second lowest (above Ayer), its households are more evenly divided across income ranges. As a result, the economic position of many renters in Shirley is not significantly different from that of homeowners. Despite Shirley's relative affordability, however, a substantial majority of its elderly and low-income tenants pay more than 30% of their income on rent and utilities. In fact, Shirley has the highest percentages of cost-burdened elderly renters (67%) and low-income renters (90.7%) of all communities in the region. Moreover, regardless of age or income, cost-burdened tenants in Shirley are geographically concentrated in two areas, as shown in Map 8.

Shirley has more low- or moderate-income households than rental housing units, so it is not surprising to find a higher incidence of housing cost burden among homeowners.[28] Throughout the Boston metropolitan area, 23.4% of all homeowners pay more than 30% of their income on housing while in Shirley, the incidence of homeowner cost burden is slightly higher: 27.8%. It is significantly higher for moderate-income homeowners (51.3%).

Affordability Gap

Almost everyone in the United States aspires to own a home, and since the 1930s federal housing policies have subsidized homeownership through income tax deductions for mortgage interest and property taxes, federal home mortgage insurance, and more recently, low-interest loans and grants that help moderate-income people transition from renter to homeowner. Often, home-seekers have more resources than a mortgage lender requires, such as equity to invest from the sale of a previous home or a gift or loan from family members. However, households with only their savings to put toward a downpayment find homebuying more difficult. First, while saving to purchase a home they must also pay rent, and because apartments are hard to find, market rents have become increasingly expensive even though rents in Shirley have not accelerated to the same extent. Second, since the purchase price of a house usually determines the downpayment amount, first-time homebuyers end up saving toward a moving target: the sale price of homes in a very tight real estate market.

Under conventional loan underwriting standards, homebuyers at Shirley's median household income of $53,344 can afford a purchase price of about $158,610. For them, the town's median single-family home sale price of $255,000 (2003) translates into an "affordability gap" of $99,390, or the difference between the median sale price and the purchase price they can afford.[29] A sale price of $255,000 is also high enough to preclude 68% of Shirley's present households from

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[28] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development, "Low and Moderate Income Persons by Non-Entitlement Community," <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/systems/census/lowmod/index.cfm>.

[29] "Affordability" assumes a 30-year, fixed-rate mortgage at 7% interest and a 10% downpayment.

purchasing a house in town if they were first-time homebuyers today. Condominiums are often more affordable than single-family homes, and in Shirley this appears to be true. The median condominium sale price of $197,500 would be affordable to about half of Shirley's present households if they were first-time homebuyers today. Nonetheless, the condominium inventory is only 11.6% of Shirley's entire housing stock.[30]

Local Needs & Development Capacity

Most of Shirley's remaining vacant land is zoned for single-family homes on lots of 40,000-80,000 ft^2. These policies will limit the number of dwelling units that can be built in town, but they present challenges to protecting open space and providing for affordable housing. Shirley is under considerable pressure to absorb new residential development. The rapid transformation of vacant land to new homes has brought more people into Shirley and begun to change the demographic make-up of the town. The physical, economic and cultural changes that have occurred in Shirley make it very difficult for local officials to address the town's housing needs. High land values, a declining inventory of readily developable land, and concerns about the environmental and fiscal impacts of new growth all present challenges to housing choice.

As of last year (2003), 2.66% of all homes in Shirley qualified as "low- and moderate-income" housing units under Chapter 40B. Like most small towns and suburbs in Massachusetts, Shirley falls short of the 10% affordable housing threshold that determines whether developers can obtain comprehensive permits and bypass local zoning. Shirley is exposed to potentially large, unwanted comprehensive permits, yet the town has no zoning regulations to encourage or require affordable units in new residential developments and no policies in place to guide the review of comprehensive permit applications. However, while Shirley needs tools to manage the Chapter 40B permitting process, it also needs effective ways to preserve and increase its supply of affordable housing. Shirley has traditionally been home to people from all walks of life. Regional market demand, rising home prices and a shrinking supply of land make the town less affordable to a mix of households. Shirley's affordable housing issues are not limited to Chapter 40B. They include more difficult challenges such as housing for middle-income families, the elderly and young citizens, and housing quality standards.

Mobile homes make up a sizeable component of Shirley's housing stock, so it is important that they be maintained and well-managed for the benefit of mobile home residents and surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, mobile homes provide a form of affordable housing even though they do not meet the legal definition of low- and moderate-income housing under state law. Most of the town's mobile homes are occupied by senior citizens for whom conventional homes and apartments are too expensive, but many are also occupied by families. Although mobile homes are no longer permitted in Shirley, the existing mobile home parks are grandfathered. The town does not have any zoning regulations to replace these units with other types of affordable housing in the event that the mobile home parks cease to operate.

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[30] Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, "Parcels by Use Code," Municipal Data Bank, <http://www.dls.state.ma>.

Wayside Mobile Home Park, a senior citizen community on Walker Road in Shirley.

The need for incentives to create replacement affordable housing may be even more important to Shirley because the legislature is on the verge of adopting significant changes to Chapter 40B, one of which would classify half of a community's mobile homes as low-income housing. This could have a major impact on Shirley's percentage of low- and moderate-income housing and preclude large comprehensive permit developments in the foreseeable future. Of course, if the mobile home parks closed, Shirley's Chapter 40B status would revert to a much lower percentage. It is critical to plan now for capacity to increase the supply of Chapter 40B-eligible housing units in Shirley so the town can adapt to a change in use of land currently used for mobile home parks.

Even if the town were to meet or exceed 10%, however, Chapter 40B does not address the housing needs of families with incomes just over "moderate income," or 80% of area median family income (AMFI). Since federal agencies define the Boston metro area to include Shirley, 80% of AMFI is higher than the incomes of many local residents. A Boston-area household with earnings of $64,640 is "moderate income," but about 35% of Shirley's current households fall below regional income limits. Chapter 40B also does not address the needs of many elderly residents because often, their assets make them ineligible for a subsidized apartment or condominium. A well-rounded housing plan considers all market levels because a well-rounded community serves all income levels.

Economic Development

Most businesses in Shirley serve a local trade area: they are fairly small, not particularly diverse, and they meet needs for goods and services inside the community. Shirley does not have many large employers, and it also does not have a well-established cluster of related or spin-off industries. However, despite the prevalence of small businesses in Shirley today, the town has a vital economy that appears be to growing. It has very little vacant commercial space (<5%) and not much commercial or industrial land left for new development. Shirley's near-term commercial and industrial growth will be important not only for the tax base, but also for providing local employment opportunities. As housing development continues throughout Shirley's region, the town will most likely begin to see changes in its economic base. It will be important for Shirley to attract its fair share of regional economic development and have adequate policies in place to manage the impacts of more commerce and industry.

LOCAL EMPLOYMENT

Small businesses in Shirley Village.

When the last master plan was written, the Shirley Village Partnership and North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce had identified about 100 businesses in Shirley, including home occupations. Most of the establishments were located in Shirley Village and along Route 2A. In the same period (1997-99), the town commissioned a Shirley Village Business District Market Analysis and found that the village contained approximately 51,000 square feet (ft^2) of commercial space, about half of which was devoted to non-automotive retail, and eating and drinking establishments. Banking and office uses occupied approximately 9,000 ft^2, with the balance used for automotive and institutional uses. These percentages have changed somewhat since the late 1990s because the town has begun to absorb new commercial investment in Shirley Village, such as the recent construction of a new bank on Front Street.

According to data maintained and reported by the state, the total number of establishments in Shirley has increased by 50% since 1985, as shown in Table 2-10. More significantly, the total number of people employed in Shirley has almost doubled, with an increase of 99%. This is the largest relative increase of the six adjoining communities included in the comparative analysis. In 2001, 2,174 people were employed by local businesses in Shirley, including those employed by the town.

Table 2-10: Number of Establishments and Private Employers by Town

		Number of Businesses			Number of Employees		
Town	Population	1985	2001	Chg.	1985	2001	Chg.
Ayer	7,287	214	305	43%	5,969	6,328	6%
Groton	9,547	142	226	59%	1,693	2,969	75%
Harvard	5,981	108	178	65%	804	969	21%
Lancaster	7,380	97	147	52%	1,878	2,397	28%
Lunenburg	9,401	123	208	69%	1,288	2,468	92%
SHIRLEY	6,373	74	111	50%	1,091	2,174	99%
Townsend	9,198	104	176	69%	2,717	2,228	-18%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2004.

North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) data from the state reveal that in 2002, Shirley manufacturing companies employed a plurality of all people who work in town each day (15.3%). Of the remaining workers, 5.86% were employed in construction, 5.18% in heath care & social services, 4.39% in retail and 3.08% in wholesale trade. In Middlesex County, the percentages of workers in retail trade, information and services were significantly higher than in Shirley while employment in manufacturing was significantly lower than that found in Shirley.

Employment in Shirley contracted slightly between 2001 and 2003. Job opportunities decreased by 6% overall, with health care and social assistance decreasing by 78%, followed by administrative and waste services (-49%), transportation and warehousing (-19%), finance and insurance (-17%), and manufacturing (-12%). However, construction, real estate, and professional and technical services experienced modest growth, while other service reportedly grew by more than 300%. This, along with the dramatic drop in health care and social assistance employment, could reflect a mass reclassification of workers or a change in the reported address of businesses located in the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone.

Table 2-11: Average Annual Employment, Shirley and Middlesex County, 2002

NAICS Code	Industry	Average Employment		Percent of Total	
		Town	County	Town	County
11	Agricultural, Forestry & Fishing	0	1,375	-	0.17%
21	Mining	0	400	-	0.05%
23	Construction	120	40,857	5.86%	5.03%
31-33	Manufacturing	314	101,856	15.33%	12.53%
22	Utilities	0	1,900	-	0.23%
42	Wholesale Trade	63	43,299	3.08%	5.33%
44-45	Retail Trade	90	82,758	4.39%	10.18%
48-49	Transportation & Warehousing	18	21,097	0.88%	2.60%
51	Information	0	41,768	-	5.14%
52	Finance & Insurance	11	25,389	0.54%	3.12%
53	Real Estate	10	9,417	0.49%	1.16%
54	Professional & Technical Services	24	95,666	1.17%	11.77%
55	Management	0	21,780	-	2.68%
56	Administrative & Waste Services	19	45,587	0.93%	5.61%
61	Educational Services	0	85,035	-	10.46%
62	Health Care & Social Assistance	106	84,701	5.18%	10.42%
71	Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	0	9,306	-	1.14%
72	Accommodation & Food Services	0	50,137	-	6.17%
81	Other Services	7	25,441	0.34%	3.13%
92	Public Administration	0	25,159	-	3.09%
	Total Employment:	2,048*	812,926*	100%	100%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2004. **Confidential employment data has been included in total, but omitted from details.*

LABOR FORCE & UNEMPLOYMENT

Forty-eight percent of Shirley's total population (6,373) was part of the 2003 labor force as indicated in Table 2-12. Approximately 2,918 persons (or 93.7%) are presently employed. By comparison, in 2003, only 31% of Harvard's, and more than 63% of Groton's population were in the labor force. Shirley's percentage of the population in the labor force is slightly less than that of the state and most surrounding towns. Shirley's unemployment rate in 2003 was slightly higher than the state, but about average when compared to the surrounding communities, which ranged from 4.9% in Groton to 7.8% in Harvard.

Table 2-12: Employment Status of Select Towns

Geography	Population	In Labor Force (2003)		Employed	Unemployed (2003)	
	(2000)	Number	Percent	(2003)	Number	Percent
State	6,349,097	3,415,500	53.7%	3,217,200	198,300	5.8%
Ayer	7,287	3,738	51.3%	3,479	259	6.9%
Groton	9,547	6,022	63.1%	5,725	297	4.9%
Harvard	5,981	1,893	31.6%	1,746	147	7.8%
Lancaster	7,380	3,958	53.6%	3,751	207	5.2%
Lunenburg	9,401	5,321	56.6%	4,958	363	6.8%
SHIRLEY	6,373	3,115	48.9%	2,918	197	6.3%
Townsend	9,198	4,995	54.3%	4,708	287	5.7%

Source: Massachusetts Division of Unemployment Assistance, 2004.

In 2000, the unemployment rates for the state and Shirley reached an all-time low (2.2% and 2.6% respectively). Since then, both rates have risen rapidly. Shirley's unemployment rate accelerated to a high of 6.3% in 2003, only to decline slightly this year, yet the state has continued to experience unemployment growth as of early 2004. While high, these rates are half those of the recession of the early 1990s, and unlike that previous recession, the slow-down of the past few years has been kinder to Shirley than the state of Massachusetts.

TAX BASE

Shirley's tax base is a reflection of the town's zoning, its established land use pattern and the small size of its economy. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2004, about 10% of Shirley's tax revenue came from non-residential taxpayers. By suburban standards, 10% is a fairly small non-residential contribution, but in Shirley's region it is not atypical at all, as suggested by the data in Table 2-13. All of the region's communities are small towns and except for Ayer, they have neither a large employment base nor a considerable amount of land zoned for commercial or industrial use. In addition, Ayer is the only town that does not tax residents and businesses at the same rate, so its non-residential tax revenue constitutes a much larger share of the total levy.

As Shirley continues to develop, industrial and commercial growth will benefit the tax base and provide more local jobs. A very small percentage of Shirley residents work in town, and fewer still are self-employed. Only 15% of all households in Shirley have income from self-employment, and compared to other towns nearby, Shirley has the lowest percentage of home-

based employment.[31] Still, it will be important for the town to attract more diversity in its economic base An essential component of the Shirley Village revitalization strategy is the construction of sewer and wastewater treatment system for Shirley Village. The new sewer mains run along several major collector roads in Shirley Village including Front Street, Ayer Street, Lancaster Road, and Center Road, as well as a number of neighborhood streets. This system, opened in 2003, should act as a catalyst for additional investment and allow for business expansion. The availability of the sanitary sewer within the village area should also increase the value of properties that may have otherwise stagnated.

Table 2-13: Commercial/Industrial Property Tax Levy, Shirley and Region, Fiscal Year 2004

Community	2004 Total Tax Levy	Com./Ind./Per. Tax Levy	Percent of Total Tax Levy	2004 Tax Rates
Ayer	$12,338,520	$7,692,019	62.3%	$10.04/22.90*
Devens	-	-	-	$10.62/14.83*
Groton	$19,540,278	$887,194	4.5%	$15.44
Harvard	$11,015,004	$478,121	4.3%	$11.57
Lancaster	$9,374,698	$1,174,697	12.5%	$16.86
Lunenburg	$14,147,393	$1,243,714	8.8%	$14.20
SHIRLEY	$5,665,644	$564,262	10.0%	$11.87
Townsend	$9,910,602	$867,869	8.8%	$14.07

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue: Division of Local Services, and MassDevelopment, 2004.

DEVENS

Before Fort Devens closed in 1995, it employed about 8,400 military and civilian personnel and contributed approximately $260 million in annual wages and $445 million in annual sales to the local and regional economies. Many high-paying jobs were lost, causing further job loss throughout the region and a loss of income to area businesses. Since 1995, MassDevelopment has been responsible for redeveloping the former military base under the Devens Reuse Plan, which was approved by Shirley, Harvard, Ayer and Lancaster at special town meetings held in November 1994. The authority of MassDevelopment, the towns, and the Devens Enterprise Commission in the redevelopment process were established by the state legislature in 1993. At the same time, the legislature authorized $200 million of bonding authority for use by MassDevelopment to implement the reuse plan.

Although it was expected that the redevelopment of Devens might take as long as 40 years, three factors have led to a much faster rate of economic growth there: improvement in the state's economy, the efforts of MassDevelopment, and the unique "streamlined permitting" power of the Devens Enterprise Commission, which is authorized to issue a single development permit for all projects at Devens. This feature of the Devens legislation created a distinct marketing advantage for MassDevelopment. In addition, Devens offers an unusual economic development opportunity because it is close to Boston and offers highway and rail access, improved

[31] Census 2000, Summary File 3 Tables P-30, P-60.

infrastructure and large developable parcels. MassDevelopment estimates that today, the redevelopment of Devens is about 40% of the total amount authorized under the Devens Reuse Plan (including residential, commercial and industrial uses) and traffic remains well below trip generation rates predicted for the present level of activity.

Like Ayer, MassDevelopment has a split tax rate for residential and non-residential taxpayers. Its current tax rates are $10.62 for residential and $14.83 for commercial and industrial property. The residential tax rate at Devens is lower than that of surrounding towns, but compared to almost any municipality in the state, MassDevelopment's residential service demands are fairly limited because less than half of the 282 dwelling units authorized under the Devens Reuse Plan have been built. The commercial/industrial tax rates in Shirley and Harvard are significantly lower than at Devens, but Shirley has a very limited supply of industrially zoned land and Harvard has none. In contrast, industrial development is the predominant land use at Devens and the compound has established a base of public services geared to meet the needs of a major employment center: public safety and public works.[32]

MassDevelopment recently estimated that the disposition process for Devens may be completed by 2014. Conditional resolution of any outstanding issues about the disposition process is expected to occur during the next 18 months and will be negotiated by the Devens Disposition Executive Board. All of these time frames are estimates, of course, and the actual disposition schedule will depend on many factors: the state of the redevelopment process, MassDevelopment's goals, and decisions made residents of Shirley, Harvard and Ayer.

The redevelopment of the North Post, a portion of which is located on the east side of Shirley, is a significant concern. MassDevelopment has agreed to retain a consultant to work with its own staff and local officials in Shirley and Ayer to examine development possibilities for the North Post, including the feasibility of implementing them. The plan is expected to consider the existing zoning under the Devens Reuse Plan, which includes "environmental business" in Shirley and "innovation and technology business," and "special use II" in Ayer. The corridor along the Nashua River is zoned as "open space and recreation" and most of it is part of the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge. All of the North Post is located within the Squannassit ACEC. The limited and relatively difficult access to this part of the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone may hinder any significant development of the area, but the North Post has significant natural resource value and it is an ecologically sensitive area. Planning for its future use needs careful thought in order to balance the economic interests of MassDevelopment and the towns with the resource protection objectives of the ACEC.

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[32] The Devens Public Works Department employs 18 people for roadway, grounds and building maintenance. There is also a Devens fire department with 24 employees, an ambulance service and public safety dispatch, and MassDevelopment provides 24-hour police presence through a contract with the Massachusetts State Police. Public education for children at Devens is supplied through a contract between MassDevelopment and the Shirley Public Schools. This applies to all children at Devens regardless of whether the homes they live in are located in Shirley, Ayer or Harvard.

State economists predict that Middlesex County will experience considerable employment growth over the next two decades. In Shirley's region, most of the employment growth will likely occur at Devens, given the infrastructure improvements that have been made, access to the regional highway network, and large vacant parcels available to industry. Shirley has worked hard to make its own infrastructure improvements, in part to improve the economic viability of Shirley Village. It will be important for the town to assure that its zoning regulations encourage attractive, high-value development as its commercial and industrial areas fill in and redevelop in the future.

Land Use & Zoning

Land use refers to the amounts, intensity and physical arrangement of a town's residential, commercial, industrial and institutional development, along with open space, water and roadways. Since land use policy largely determines the need for public investments in facilities, infrastructure and services, it provides the legal and political foundation for all comprehensive planning in cities and towns today. Of course, most people do not use the term "land use" when they explain what a town looks like. Often, they refer to locally important landmarks and images that can be seen from the road. Describing Shirley Village as a dense cluster of homes, shops and old industrial buildings framed by roadways and the railroad, or Shirley Center as an enclave of well-preserved civic and residential buildings with a fine town common, is to characterize these areas by their land use patterns.

A master plan's most important function is to establish a land use blueprint for the future. Local governments rely on zoning to control land use by regulating the amount and location of development. Zoning is a tool for managing conflict; it balances private property rights with the public's interest in an orderly process of growth and change. As the primary agent of land use policy in cities and towns today, zoning is central to the implementation of a master plan. To assure that a community's zoning will meet its needs in the future, master plans always include a review of land use regulations and recommend ways to strengthen the ties between local planning goals and development outcomes. Many of the last master plan's comments about the implications of buildout under Shirley's present zoning remain true today. These issues need to be addressed so that Shirley can protect its natural assets and meet a variety of local needs as the town continues to grow. According to a buildout study prepared by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission three years ago, Shirley has enough vacant, developable land to support about 4,800 new dwelling units and 3.4 million square feet (ft^2) of new commercial and industrial development.

Zoning Districts

Shirley's zoning divides the town into four residential districts, two commercial districts and one industrial district, portions of which are subject to regulations in two overlay districts.[33]

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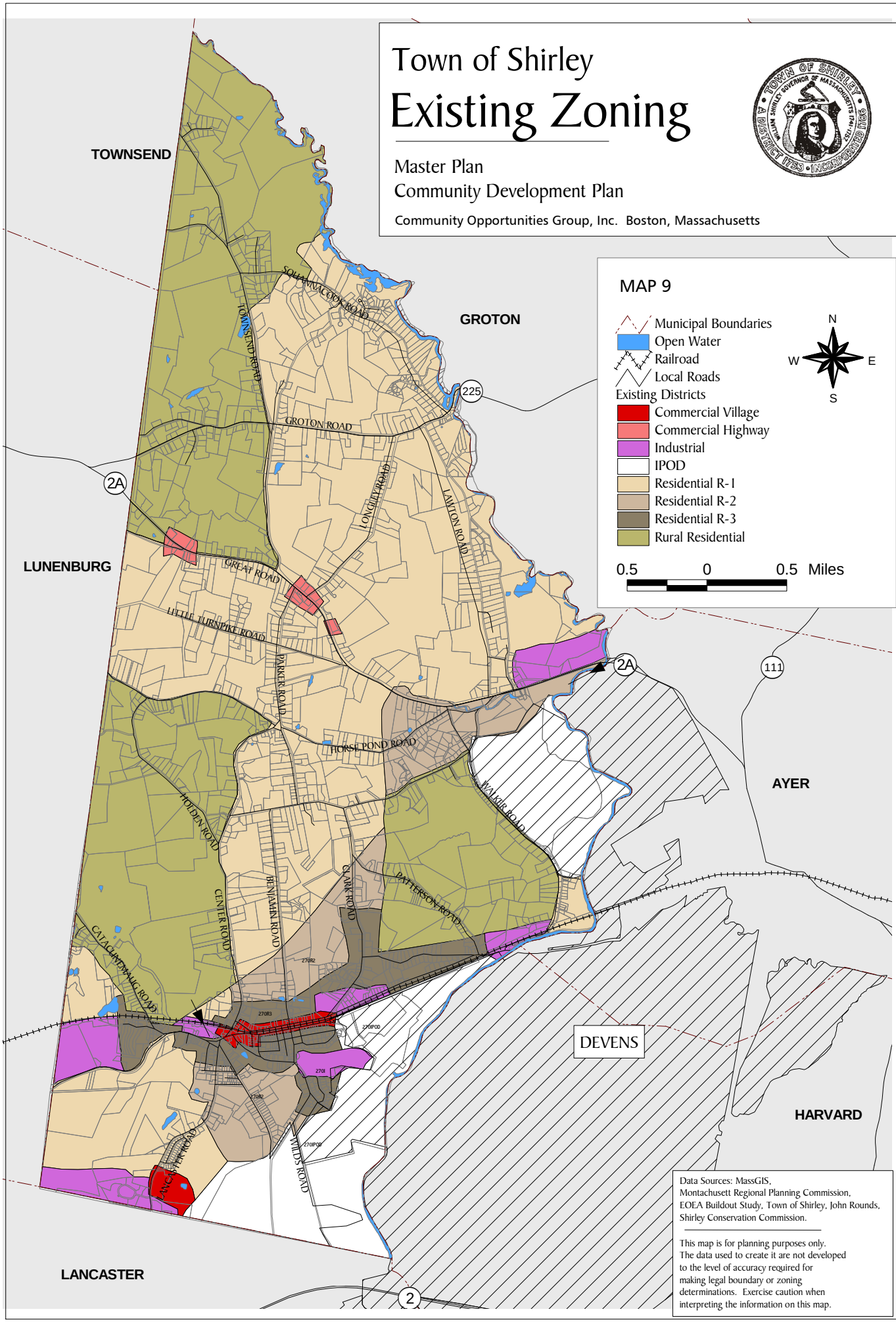
[33] Land inside the Devens Enterprise Zone is contained within a separate overlay district known as the Interim Planning Overlay District. However, development at Devens is governed by the Devens Zoning

Town of Shirley
Existing Zoning

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley, John Rounds, Shirley Conservation Commission.

This map is for planning purposes only. The data used to create it are not developed to the level of accuracy required for making legal boundary or zoning determinations. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Although the Zoning Bylaw does not include purpose statements for each zoning district, its use and dimensional regulations imply a series of planning intentions that generally make sense in light of the division of land on the Zoning Map (Map 9). The four residential districts – Rural Residential, Residential R-1, Residential R-2 and Residential R-3 – operate under different density and dimensional requirements, but the allowed and special permitted uses are very similar. In all four districts, detached single-family homes and two-family homes are allowed as of right while multi-family dwellings, whether by new construction or conversion of an existing single-family home, are allowed by special permit. Shirley also allows open space-cluster developments by special permit from the Planning Board in all residential districts. In fact, the residential use regulations differ only for accessory dwellings, which are allowed by right in all districts except R-3, and rooming houses, which are allowed by right in all districts except R-R. In both cases, the use may be allowed by special permit from the Board of Appeals.

Development in Shirley's commercial zones is also subject to similar requirements. Dimensionally, the Commercial Highway (C-2) District is more restrictive than Commercial Village (C-1), but the commercial use regulations are virtually the same. The noteworthy differences between C-1 and C-2 are, first, that the C-2 District allows some industrial uses by special permit, and second, multi-family dwellings are allowed by special permit in C-1. Finally, Shirley offers industrial development opportunities in seven locations, all under a common set of use and dimensional regulations for the Industrial District. Much of Shirley's industrially zoned land lies adjacent to the railroad tracks that cross through the southern end of town, but there is also a section of industrially zoned land on Route 2A near the Ayer town line, and in the southwestern part of town near the Tophet Swamp. Compared to zoning requirements in many communities, Shirley's industrial use regulations are unusually broad and the amount of development allowed per lot is unusually low.

Finally, Shirley's zoning includes a Water Supply Protection Overlay District and a Flood Plain District. Like many water supply protection bylaws in Massachusetts, Shirley's is similar to a model bylaw developed by the Department of Environmental Protection. Its purposes are to reduce the amount of development that can occur in areas that influence drinking water quality and provide a more stringent review process for land uses that pose a higher risk of groundwater contamination. In Shirley, the Planning Board has authority to grant special permits in the Water Supply Protection Overlay District. The Flood Plain District applies to all land within the 100-year floodplain identified on the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM). Its purpose is to prevent activity that would cause an increase in flood levels during a 100-year storm event. In Shirley, the Board of Appeals has authority to grant special permits for uses allowed in the underlying zone if the uses comply with protective standards outlined in the bylaw.

Table 2-14 summarizes the dimensional and density requirements of each zoning district.

Bylaw, which is administered by the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC) under Chapter 498 of the Acts of 1993.

Table 2-14: Summary of Density & Dimensional Requirements, Shirley Zoning Bylaw

			BASIC REQUIREMENTS							
	Total	Percent	Minimum	Minimum	Minimum Setbacks			Maximum	Building Height	
Zoning District	Acres	Town	Lot Area	Frontage	Front/	Side	Rear	Coverage %	Feet	Stories
Commercial Village	82.29	0.8%	10,000	60	---	---	15	75	45	3
Commercial Highway	44.67	0.4%	20,000	100	30	30	15	25	45	3
Industrial	367.10	3.6%	60,000	100	30	50	15	25	45	3
Rural Residential (R-R)	3,227.82	31.8%	80,000	225	50	50/50	50	25	35	2 ½
Residential R-1	4,293.39	42.2%	40,000	175	50	23/17	50	25	35	2 ½
Residential R-2	672.32	6.6%	30,000	150	35	20/15	40	25	35	2 ½
Residential R-3	410.77	4.0%	15,000	100	30	20/15	30	25	35	2 ½
IPOD	1,064.42	10.5%	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

NOTES:

(1) Residential lot area and frontage requirements may be waived by the Planning Board in an open space-cluster development. (2) IPOD is the Interim Planning Overlay District that applies to land in the Devens Enterprise Zone. (3) Where the C-1 District abuts a residential district, the minimum side yard must be at least 50 feet. (4) For hammerhead lots, the Planning Board may waive the minimum frontage requirement in exchange for substantially larger lots. (5) Lots in Zone W-2 of the Water Supply Protection Overlay District must comply with a larger minimum lot area requirement of 80,000 ft^2.

Transportation

With surprisingly few exceptions, Shirley's roads are easily identified on maps dating from the early 19th century. Indeed, more miles of roadway shown on these maps are not in use today than have been added. Except for Great Road and Little's Turnpike, Shirley's roads developed to accommodate a modest amount of intra-community horse-drawn equipment. The widths, grades, sightlines, curves, and intersections adequate to those needs remain today, often firmly fixed and constrained by land contours, property lines, and house locations. However, these roads must now accommodate cars and trucks, pedestrians and bicyclists, in increasing amounts of, typically daily, inter-community travel.

While east-west travel is reasonably well-served by the two state arterials (Route 225/Groton Road and Route 2A/Great Road), Front Street (realigned and extended to Ayer in the 1950s), and Route 2, north-south travel is not. The challenge presented by the limited options for increasing the already taxed capacity of Parker, Center, Walker, and Lancaster Roads is a source of more headaches than inspiration. This situation will worsen as population continues to grow and more commuters discover the Hospital/Jackson Road pathway to Route 2.

MBTA commuter rail service runs through Shirley Village.

The commuter rail line, with its stop in Shirley Village, remains an extremely valuable opportunity, but the limited schedule, limited parking, and long (75 minutes to North Station) travel time result in low usage. The 2000 Census reports that for Zip Code 01464 (Shirley) 23 of 2,791 workers 16 and over travel to work by rail. The contrast with the MBTA's reported 151 daily inbound boardings at Shirley ("Fitchburg Line Existing Conditions," courtesy Peter Lowitt, Devens Enterprise Commission) suggests that most users come of the Shirley station come from out of town.

History provides a fourth challenge in a village laid out when most residents walked to work, leaving us with parking opportunities inadequate to the volume generated by Post Office, banks, convenience and other retail, and the commuter rail station.

Other issues that deserve attention include improving conditions for pedestrian and bicycle traffic in general, creating linkages with the trail networks emerging in the region, and providing adequate public parking in Shirley Village.

The Town, the Department of Public Works, the Planning Board, and other agencies have made constant and significant progress on each of these issues. Federal funding for improvements to Townsend Road have been secured. Plans for the realignment of the Patterson Road at grade crossing and the Front Street/Frost Street intersection are nearing conclusion. Preparations for the rerouting of the south terminus of Walker Road and the elimination of that at-grade crossing continue. Discussions about improvements to the Fitchburg Line continue with the MBTA, state agencies and the congressional delegation. The Planning Board and DPW have been very successful in getting developers to fund road, drainage, and other infrastructure improvements as part of their development projects. As a result, the goals and recommendations relating to each of these challenges listed in the Opportunities & Recommendations section are nothing new. Rather they recognize, encourage, and seek to further initiatives that are ongoing.

Community Facilities & Services

SCHOOLS

In October 2003, the Shirley Public Schools opened a new Middle School for grades 5 through 8. Grades 1 through 4 remain at the Lura A. White School, while kindergarten and preschool programs are offered in a leased facility at Devens, the Child Development Center. In addition, Shirley's Center School now operates a day care program. The Shirley School Department recently entered into a contract with MassDevelopment to provide educational services to school-age children living at Devens. High school options for Shirley students continue to be made available at Ayer High, Lunenburg High, and Nashoba Valley Technical High School in Westford and these arrangements will remain in effect until 2007. Shirley residents will soon be forced to address the issue of high school construction.

Table 2-15: Enrollment History and Projections

Year	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	Average Total
PreK-8	668	689	708	761	783	772	761	750	749	736	737.7
9-12	118	145	137	135	165	172	207	198	190	214	168.1
Sp.Ed.	N/A	4	9	9	12	12	21	26	25	25	14.3
Total:	786	838	854	905	960	956	989	974	964	975	920.1

INFRASTRUCTURE

Water System

The Shirley public water supply system is operated by the Shirley Water District. The water system provides potable water to approximately sixty percent of the town through a network of six inch and twelve inch diameter water pipes and is supplied from two groundwater wells, two reservoirs and one standpipe. The two groundwater supply wells are the Catacunemaug and

Patterson Road Wells. The Patterson Road Well supplies approximately 70 percent of all public water for the town. The supply system provides water primarily to the southern part of town, extending as far east as Patterson Road and as far north as Great Road. The remainder of the town is served by private well water. In 2002, a total of 112,329,000 gallons of water were pumped and distributed to customers of the Shirley Water District. This figure represents an approximate district consumption rate of 308,000 gallons per day to a population of 7,000 customers, an increase of approximately 9% since 1996. The water district employs one full-time superintendent and one full-time laborer, although the bulk of repair and expansion is contracted out to private contractors.

Sewer System

As of January 2004, all contracts for construction of the municipal sewage system have been completed. Of the 900 properties available for tie-in within the Sewer District, approximately 65% have done so. The sewer line will alleviate issues of groundwater contamination while providing increased economic development opportunities for the town. Sewers make possible future development in areas that might not have been considered for development in the past.

Other Utilities

Boston Gas Company provides natural gas to various parts of Shirley through a four-inch gas line. The Village is adequately served, and gas lines also extend along Lancaster Road, Parker Road and Center Road. Electrical service is provided throughout the town by Massachusetts Electric. While the majority of the town is serviced by above ground electric utilities, a portion of the Village has underground utilities as a result of a State funded grant in conjunction with Shirley Village Partnership.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Police Department

A new 7,500 square foot police headquarters building was constructed in 1997 off Hospital Road. The facility was designed to allow for additional square footage should staffing increases become necessary. Currently, the department is staffed by a Chief of Police, nine full-time officers, ten part-time officers, three part-time matrons and one office administrator. The current ratio of officers is 1.8 officers/1000 persons. The department has four marked and two unmarked cars. A fourteen year old base radio system is currently being updated to provide more adequate mobile communications throughout the Town. The department recently purchased a speed trailer with a Community Policing Grant to enforce traffic laws. In 2003 the department received a federal anti-terrorism grant for the purchase of gas masks, portable radios and an all-terrain vehicle. The current 2004 budget of $740,797 shows a slight decrease from the 2003 budget of $747,162.

Fire Department

The fire station at 8 Leominster Road was constructed approximately 30 years ago and is anticipated to meet future needs with proper maintenance. A sub-station is located at the new public works facility located on Great Road (Route 2A) at the intersection of Little Turnpike Road but is currently non-operational. Currently, the department is staffed 24 hours a day 7 days a week by six full-time firefighters. To provide additional response coverage, there are fifteen on-

call firefighters. The department operates three engines, one ladder truck, one rescue vehicle, two forestry vehicles, two boats, one department car and one Fire Chief car. The department provides primary firefighting services to the nearby Massachusetts Correctional Facility and also provides mutual aid services to Devens and other surrounding communities. The S.A.F.E Committee continues to provide a commitment to school children and citizens in fire related public outreach and education efforts. In 2003 the Fire Department responded to 1,313 emergency calls. The operation budget for 2004 is $347,063.

Ambulance Services

The Ambulance service is affiliated with Deaconess Nashoba Hospital and is housed in the Leominster Road Fire Station. The service is currently staffed 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Currently there are twenty EMT's on the Ambulance Service Roster. One ambulance provides ambulatory services for the Town and calls to the MCI facility in Lancaster. In 2003 the ambulance service responded to 454 calls. The Ambulance Service is self-funding with a budget increase from $58,587 in 2002 to $82,241 for 2004.

Communications (Dispatch) Center

The Communications Center is operated under the direction of a five-member committee comprised of the Chief of Police, Fire Chief, Ambulance Director, Public Works Director, and Board of Selectmen or their designee. The Chief of Police is responsible for staffing and daily operations. The Communications Center is located in the Police Station and is staffed by four full-time and two part-time dispatchers twenty-four hours daily and provides dispatching for Police, Fire, Ambulance, Public Works, and Water department emergencies. The 2004 budget is $147,751.

PUBLIC WORKS

A new 12,000 square foot public works facility located on Great Road (Route 2A) at the intersection of Little Turnpike Road was constructed in 1998. This facility will adequately meet the spacing requirements for the Town while currently housing eight major pieces of earth moving equipment and several smaller pieces of maintenance equipment. Four full-time and one part-time employees work at the department. The 2004 department budget of $315,337 includes wages, maintenance and operations, and vehicle and equipment fuel. An additional budget of $79,000 was expended for snow removal in 2004. The Public Works Department is responsible for a variety of work, including paving, painting and maintenance of roads, stormwater management, snow removal, public park and recreation area maintenance, and tree removal. The Public Works Department continues to maintain the former Highway Department property on Clark Road for out-of-season equipment storage and the recent addition of a federal and state approved salt storage facility.

Solid Waste

Shirley residents continue to approve town/tax funded curbside rubbish disposal services. Curbside recycling was incorporated into the weekly pick-up service in late 1999 and continues with much success. All residents with curb-side trash pick up were furnished with recycling bins. Residents without curbside pick-up (i.e. private complexes) may utilize the recycling center located at the former landfill on Leominster Road. Some bulky waste such as tires and televisions

are also accepted at the facility. Current costs to maintain the landfill/recycling area are approximately $19,000. For 2004 curbside trash collection and recycling cost the taxpayers $360,000 with a proposed $4,000 increase for 2005.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

The new Town Offices were completed off Hospital Road (adjacent to the new library and new police station) in September 1999 and houses the Town administration staff. Town officials were formerly housed in the Municipal Building across from the former library on Lancaster Road. The Capital Improvements Plan includes $150,000 for the Benjamin Hill Pool repairs, $50,000 for recreational fields, and $20,000 for sewer connections for Town buildings during FY 2004. In FY2006 the Center Town Hall will have interior painting at a cost of $25,000.

Shirley's new municipal building.

Table 2-16: Town Departments and Number of Employees, 2004

Department	Number of Employees
Accountant	2 full time
Board of Assessors	3 elected, 1 full time
Board of Health	3 elected, 1 part-time
Board of Selectmen	3 elected, 2 full time, 1 part time
Clerk	1 full time, 1 volunteer
Community Development	1 part time
Conservation Commission	5 appointed, 2 part time
Inspections	1 full time, 4 part time
Planning Board	6 elected, 1 part time
Recreation Commission	5 elected, 1 part time
Sewer Commission	5 elected, 1 part time
Tax Collector	1 elected, 1 part time
Treasurer	2 full time
Veteran's Agent	1 part time
Zoning Board of Appeals	5 appointed, 1 part time

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Recreation

The Recreation Commission oversees youth basketball, youth soccer, youth softball, and adult indoor volleyball. Lack of available playing fields remains a major challenge. In 2003, MCI-Shirley donated approximately 10 acres of land off Shaker Road for recreational use. Town Meeting authorized $50,000 to design and build the fields.

Senior Life

The Council on Aging administers programs for the elders of Shirley. A bus service is provided for seniors who need transportation to medical appointments. Areas in the Center Town Hall have been designated for senior use. Additionally, a "Meals on Wheels" program has been operating in Shirley for the past five years. The seniors are in need of a modern facility and organized activities and events.

Conservation Land

The Conservation Commission acquires and maintains open space for the Town. The land is valuable for passive recreation and for protecting natural resources and habitats. The Commission also holds conservation restrictions on private parcels. With the aide of local volunteers, the Commission sponsors hikes and is responsible for the maintenance of the trail systems running throughout the conservation land. Additionally, local volunteers recently researched and obtained state certification for seven vernal pools in Shirley.

Some of Shirley's permanently protected open space falls under the jurisdiction of state and federal agencies, such as the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries, Wildlife and Law Enforcement (DFWELE) and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife, which manages the Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge. In addition, non-profit environmental organizations such as the Trustees of Reservations hold conservation restrictions on privately owned land.

In 2003, the Conservation Commission purchased the Longley Farm on Whitney Road with the help of a $1,000,000 state grant. The purchase left the Commission's land acquisition fund very low for future purchases. A maintenance fund was established for the Longley Acres Conservation Area with proceeds from hay sales, donations, and poetry book sales along with other sources used to maintain buildings and conduct education programs.

Library

A new 10,300 square foot library was constructed in 1997 at a cost of $1.8 million. A $782,600 state construction grant helped defray the town's cost. Located at the corner of Front Street and Hospital Road, the library employees five part-time workers (Aides, Custodian, and Pages), and a Director, Assistant Librarian, and Children's Librarian. To date, the library has 33,000 titles (books, periodicals, audio-books, videos, DVD's), and nine public internet access computers. The library budget has grown from $113,950 in 1999 to $146,648 in 2004. The estimated budget for 2005 is $148,803 thus allowing for mandated state certification to continue public use and maintain levels for grant application and state aid.

Benjamin Hill Pool Committee

This Committee took over operation and maintenance of the Benjamin Hill properties in 2002 and continues to work hard to keep this important Town resource viable. Summer, 2004 will bring a newly renovated pool for use by the residents. Revolving revenue from the pool for the past two years was approximately $35,000. The Mystical Maze Playground and the run-down tennis courts will need serious attention soon. Volunteers and many important donations from local businesses and groups continue to support the upgrades and operations of the pool.

Cemeteries

There are two cemeteries located in town. The Center Cemetery, located in the Historic District, has no additional space. The Village Cemetery is located in Shirley Village and, due to a 1995 expansion, two acres were added to the site. Due to limited possibilities for future physical expansion, cremation has been used to ease demand on the facility. A vault or mausoleum should be considered to provide an urn repository for local use.

MUNICIPAL BUILDING REUSE

As of 2004, the former Fire/Police Station at the corner of Lancaster and Leominster Roads has been purchased by a private citizen with business interests in a nearby facility. The building has been completely renovated and houses storage areas for the nearby business, Ampac Enterprises.

The Center Town hall continues with limited use by private groups and the seniors as directed by the Council on Aging. The former Municipal Building on Lancaster Road has been rented by the Hands on Art Museum which provides guided programs emphasizing art to children. A recent rental contract has been signed for the former Hazen Library by Representative Eldridge and Senator Resor to house a regional area office.

CAPITAL PLANNING

Since 1998, Shirley's tax rate has decreased by 21%. Municipal expenditures increased by approximately 55% and school expenditures, which typically account for the largest line item in most town budgets, increased by 43% during the same period.

Table 2-17: Residential Property Tax Rates, Shirley & Surrounding Towns

Towns	Fiscal Year								
	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Average Rate	% change
Ayer	10.16	11.06	11.32	11.01	9.85	9.5	10.04	10.42	-1%
Groton	18.22	17.53	18.81	19.33	14.10	14.23	15.44	16.81	-18%
Harvard	14.52	13.29	13.80	14.96	11.67	11.45	11.57	13.04	-25%
Lancaster	13.96	14.38	15.11	15.99	15.07	15.04	16.86	15.20	+21%
Lunenburg	18.16	17.80	16.62	15.95	15.60	13.12	14.20	15.92	-28%
SHIRLEY	14.39	14.86	15.99	13.36	13.57	13.94	11.87	14.00	-21%
Townsend	17.83	17.45	17.26	17.80	16.75	13.77	14.07	16.42	-27%

Source: Mass. Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services. Of the towns listed in Table 2-17, only Ayer has a split tax rate, i.e., the rate for non-residential property exceeds that for residential property.

In accordance with the town's Capital Improvements Program (CIP), Shirley expects to spend approximately $1,907,250.00 over the next four years to repair and upgrade public services. Table 2-18 outlines expenditures currently planned in the CIP.

Table 2-18: Capital Improvements Program FY 2005-2008

Department	Item	Cost	Fiscal Year
Ambulance	Class 3 Ambulance	$122,000	05
Fire	Pumper	$329,000	06
	Engine Refurb	$77,000	08
Police	Cruiser	$30,000	05
	Cruiser	$31,200	06
	Cruiser	$32,500	07
	Cruiser	$33,800	08
Public Works	Pick-up Truck	$38,000	06
	Small Dump Truck	$49,000	06
	Dump Truck (35,000#)	$100,000	05
	Front Loader	$160,000	06
	Wood Chipper	$30,000	07
School	Electrical Upgrade	$144,200	06
	Center School Roof	$75,300	06
	HVAC Upgrade – Central HVAC	$192,250	05
	Lighting – LAW/Center School	$213,000	07
	Security/Intercom – LAW/Center School	$100,000	07
	Kitchen Renovation – LAW	$150,000	08
Total		$1,907,250.00	

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Substantial residential development is taking place in Shirley, mostly due to the addition of the municipal sewer system. Accordingly, the town has made determined efforts to update its zoning regulations in order to manage new growth. Additionally, Shirley continues to attract new commercial and industrial development. Local officials hope that attracting more businesses and industry will help to control long-term impacts on town and school services and reduce the rate of growth in residential property taxes.

3. OPPORTUNITIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Zoning for Sustainable Development

The last Shirley Master Plan (1999) identifies 18 land use issues and goals that culminate in a greenways plan. The greenways recognize two important community resources: natural assets and cultural assets. In spatial terms, these greenways are comprised of two corridors running in a north-south direction through town, interspersed by a number of neighborhood development areas. While the master plan documents the rationale for the location and extent of each greenway, it stops short of providing detailed proposals for land outside the greenways – not only the neighborhood development areas, but also areas classified as "management areas," i.e., undeveloped land with development potential.

The geography of the neighborhood development and management areas make sense in terms of the master plan's policy framework, which is based on principles of sustainable development. A sustainable community protects its natural resources and open space, and most of the techniques for achieving that end involve directing new development toward areas that can support it. In addition, a sustainable plan anticipates and provides for equally important public objectives such as housing choice, economic opportunity, walkable neighborhoods and business areas, and high quality design: the kinds of places in which people love to live or work.

LAND USE & RESOURCE PROTECTION GOALS

The 1999 Master Plan expresses a wide range of land use goals, many of them devoted to reducing the amount of new development in Shirley and protecting the town's natural resources. It is advisable to reorganize and condense them in order to frame a coherent vision of Shirley's future. The land use and resource protection goals of Master Plan 2004 include:

- Make open space and resource protection the point of reference for all planning and zoning decisions.
- Recognize the role that forests and views from the road play in defining Shirley's visual character, and protect roadside resources with compatible development and public safety policies.
- Preserve the historic form and pedestrian scale of Shirley Village through appropriate design and arrangement of uses suitable for a small rural economic center.
- Provide a regulatory and permitting environment that encourages creative land use and discourages monotonous forms of development, particularly in designated growth management areas.
- Set performance standards that reward distinctive, small-scale projects in neighborhood development areas.

Key Policies & Actions

- Promote cluster and planned unit development techniques to create quality neighborhoods, provide housing diversity and maximize the preservation of open space.
- Encourage infill development over new growth in outlying sections of Shirley, using sewer policy, capital improvements, zoning and other regulatory means to achieve these ends.
- Promote small-scale, attractive commercial development along Route 2A with a combination of rezoning, incentives, strong architectural design standards and site plan review.
- Through regulatory, tax and other incentives, promote re-investment in existing commercial and industrial buildings near Shirley Village.
- Implement coherent, internally consistent bylaws, regulations and policies so that boards and officials with a role in land development may synchronize their review practices and decisions.
- Continue to develop, strengthen and implement comprehensive stormwater management regulations for the Town.
- Adopt growth management policies that promote an orderly approach to land use diversity and achieve positive or neutral fiscal impacts wherever possible.

HOUSING GOALS

The 1999 Master Plan lists eight housing goals that were intended to address issues of housing quality and affordability on one hand, and the scale and rate of development on the other hand. Much like the land use and resource protection goals, the housing goals need to be updated and adjusted to meet Shirley's needs as they are understood today. The goals of Master Plan 2004 include:

- Encourage new residential development to provide both private and public benefits, such as housing affordability and open space.
- Provide housing choices throughout Shirley.
- Protect and enhance the historic, intimate character of existing neighborhoods, especially in and adjacent to Shirley Village.
- Use regulations effectively to promote neighborhood-scale design in new residential developments.

Key Policies & Actions

- Establish a local housing partnership to advocate for affordable housing that meets local needs and provide housing policy guidance to Shirley's development review and permitting boards.

- Adopt and implement bylaws and regulations to promote the inclusion of affordable housing units in residential and mixed-use developments.

- Encourage diversity of residential uses in new developments and the redevelopment/reuse of existing properties.

- Seek, obtain and use public and private resources to provide housing units that are affordable to and suitable for low- and moderate-income and middle-income families, and the elderly.

- Implement flexible development regulations that encourage investment and reinvestment in older housing stock, all toward preserving the architectural character, density and ambience of established neighborhoods while limiting growth in outlying rural areas.

- Encourage developers to design small, pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhoods that preserve the natural contours of land and existing vegetation, and connect to other neighborhoods with off-street trails and paths.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The last master plan identified six economic development issues and goal statements. The goals seem to call for more commercial and industrial development, but in a manner that would reduce Shirley's potential for "sprawl-like" growth, especially along Route 2A. The goals were developed in response to concerns about the limited size and diversity of Shirley's employment base, its lack of available commercial and industrial land, and the desirability of concentrating commercial and retail activity in Shirley Village. All of these issues remain important for the town and they should be addressed during the implementation of Master Plan 2004. Accordingly, the economic development goals for Master Plan 2004 include:

- Create commercial and mixed-use districts that encourage small businesses to thrive in Shirley.

- Promote new small business enterprises, including locally owned and home-based businesses.

- Develop and strengthen Shirley's employment base to provide regionally competitive wages.

- Make Shirley Village a strong, adaptable commercial node that serves a predominantly local clientele while offering specialty goods and services to regional markets.

Key Policies & Actions

- Design new zoning districts and adopt regulations to replace the potential for strip development along Route 2A with transitional and commercial development clusters that are safe, aesthetically pleasing, environmentally responsible, and suited to small-business activity.

- Provide suitable locations for light industrial, research and office development in Shirley, and encourage these uses through reasonable regulation, tax incentives, and marketing support from regional economic development agencies such as MassDevelopment.

- Encourage the business community to establish a tri-town economic development organization to advocate for the needs of local businesses in Shirley, Ayer and Harvard as the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone continues to develop.

- Adopt regulations and policies to retain and increase live-and-work space in Shirley.

COORDINATED STEPS

To implement these goals, Shirley should focus on five important land use initiatives:

- Better design and a mix of compatible uses in and adjacent to Shirley Village.

- A reorganization of the Commercial Highway (C-2) District.

- Improved open space-residential cluster regulations and strategies to encourage small cluster developments that preserve views from the road.

- Rezoning to align future development outcomes with the resource protection needs of ecologically significant areas in Shirley.

- Zoning to require affordable units in new developments and conversions of existing structures to multi-family housing.

The following analysis focuses primarily on the most important zoning issues that Shirley needs to consider in the near term: the use, dimensional and design requirements for commercial development.

COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Villages serve the social, economic and cultural needs of a community, but if these were the only functions of a village, it would not be a distinctive place and residents would not name the villages in their towns as recognizable landmarks. Moreover, village centers differ tremendously across the Commonwealth. There is not one village "formula" that applies uniformly to every town, yet as cultural institutions, villages serve similar purposes. The physical evolution and economic development of a town shed light on the physical form, building design and arrangement of land uses in its village areas. If the goal is to save the place without enslaving it to nostalgia, communities have to think carefully about the role they play as development regulators. Zoning can contribute positively toward defining a marketable product – land – in ways that align local goals for a healthy village with the goals of property owners and developers. However, zoning can also stifle or misdirect community investment decisions in ways that harm the long-term interests of an older village district.

Shirley has adopted a mixed-use development overlay district for the C-1 zone. According to the Zoning Map, Commercial Village C-1 applies to two areas: Shirley Village, and a small

commercial node on the southern end of town near the Lancaster town line. The new bylaw works toward several objectives implied in the 1999 master plan. Specifically, it calls for a mix of residential and commercial uses in a well-established area that has access to public water and sewer service. By allowing residential uses in a commercial zone, the bylaw has the potential to provide at least two public benefits: higher-value development and a pedestrian-oriented village.

Similar zoning is not available in the C-2 District, however. Under Shirley's existing land use regulations, the C-2 District is a highway-oriented zone with a fairly small minimum lot size and the potential to attract a wide range of uses, not all of which are compatible. Just as the town will benefit from adopting new, village-oriented regulations for Shirley Village, it needs a reconceived approach to managing development in the C-2 District.

Using Incentives to Align Local and Investor Goals

Enticing developers to use mixed-use regulations is more difficult than one might imagine, and producing great projects can be even more difficult. Many communities have adopted mixed-use development rules, only to find that commercial developers do not want to include housing units in their projects. Several factors seem to influence the effectiveness of a mixed-use development bylaw at attracting developer participation:

- The market
- The characteristics of available real estate in the mixed-use district
- The level of complexity of the mixed-use bylaw
- The advantages or disadvantages of the underlying district's development regulations, as perceived by the developer

In Shirley, the new mixed-use bylaw requires a special permit from the Planning Board in order for an applicant to combine commercial uses that the C-1 District allows as of right with housing units located above the ground floor. Since the overlay zone falls back on C-1 dimensional and density regulations, there appears to be no bonus or direct incentive for "more" development. Rather, the bylaw provides an indirect incentive, i.e., the ability to package multiple uses on one lot.

Presumably the town did not want to promote higher-density development or greater use intensity than the C-1 District already allows. However, Shirley Village offers an excellent opportunity to accommodate some higher-density housing and greater use intensity of commercial land. Policies that could substantially change the scale of development in Shirley Village would not be appropriate, yet ironically, Shirley's current zoning does not discourage large commercial projects. One way to make the overlay district more appealing without encouraging development that is out of scale or character with Shirley Village is to reduce the amount of development permitted by right in the C-1 District and make the existing C-1 dimensional regulations available only to applicants for mixed-use permits. Another way to encourage small- and moderate-scale mixed-use activity in Shirley Village is to allow it by right,

subject to site plan review, and adopt comprehensive development regulations for mixed-use projects by amendments to Sections 3 and 4 of the Zoning Bylaw.

A different set of concerns applies to commercially zoned land on Route 2A and Lancaster Road. First, there is a potential for use conflicts in areas zoned for C-2 development adjacent to the Mulpus Brook. This potential exists in part because of the wide range of uses permitted in the C-2 District, and in part due to the town's dimensional regulations. Second, although it makes economic, environmental and transportation sense to encourage small commercial nodes along Route 2A, the geography of the C-2 Districts is not conducive to village form. A village-scale neighborhood business district near Parker Road and Route 2A seems particularly appropriate, but the present boundaries of the C-2 District in that area, along with omissions in the C-2 District regulations, are more likely to spawn strip commercial development than attractive commercial projects that befit Shirley's small-town character. Third, there are no design standards to assure that new development and reuse investments will be architecturally compatible with surrounding, mainly residential uses.

Finally, there is an opportunity to create a larger, mixed-use business area on land currently zoned for industrial development on Great Road 2 near Ayer, but neither the C-2 District nor the Industrial District is appropriate for the potential of this site. Each business district needs distinctive tools that relate to its context while balancing the economic ambitions of the town with the expectations of surrounding residents and businesses. The same applies to the small C-1 business area on Lancaster Road, which differs significantly from Shirley Village and should not be regulated under the same set of dimensional and density requirements.

Compatibility of Uses

It is very important to promote uses that work together to support both a business- and pedestrian-friendly environment. It is no less important to promote design standards not only for site plans, but also for buildings. Although Shirley Village is largely developed in terms of land area, it has potential for greater use intensity through vertical (and in some cases, horizontal) expansion of existing structures. There is also potential for greater use intensity in the C-2 Districts – including areas where the town may not want to (and should not) encourage it.

Shirley Village. An issue for many overlay districts is the potential for conflict between the overlay district's goals and the development results allowed by regulations of the underlying zone. This applies to Shirley Village. Several uses in the C-1 District should be revisited for their potential to create future conflicts with uses in the mixed-use overlay district. Specifically, the town ought to consider amending the C-1 District regulations by prohibiting the following uses, which are presently allowed as of right or by special permit:

- Veterinary hospital
- Drive-through eating establishments
- Establishments selling new or used operable automobiles and trucks
- Mining or quarrying

- Dry cleaning plant

The town should also convert some uses presently allowed as of right in the C-1 District to uses allowed by special permit, such as:

- Funeral home or mortuary
- Gasoline service stations or repair shops
- Commercial sports or recreation (indoor or outdoor)

In addition, Shirley may want to re-think the merits of limiting mixed-use housing units to the upper-story of a commercial building. Countless mixed-use bylaws place the same restriction on residential uses, presumably to preserve a commercial district's function by saving the street for businesses. However, if one of the purposes of mixed-use zoning is to revitalize older villages and downtowns by bringing back the residents, the irony of today's mixed-use regulations is that most of them restrict the ability of elders and persons with disabilities to live close to goods and services. Upper-story housing units may be suitable for young citizens and families, but they are unattractive to many elders and by design, they are inaccessible to persons with mobility impairments. One way for Shirley to retain the street for business, remove housing barriers and possibly attract more interest in mixed-use development is to allow some ground-floor residential uses when two conditions are met:

- The entrances are located on the side or rear elevations of a commercial building.
- The parking associated with a housing unit is immediately adjacent to it or within a reasonable walking distance.

Accommodating ground-floor housing units will not be possible for many of the small-scale commercial buildings found in Shirley Village. Where possible, however, the use should be encouraged as an option for utilizing at-grade space without sacrificing the retail function of village storefronts.

In addition, the town could also consider placing some public benefit requirements on ground-floor housing units, such as: making the units:

- Make the units accessible to persons with disabilities.
- Limit occupancy to over-55 households or persons with disabilities.
- Make the units count on Shirley's Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory by restricting rents to limits set by the Local Initiative Program (LIP).

Finally, it makes sense to provide for some higher-density housing in an area adjacent to village commercial areas. To some extent, Shirley already follows such a policy by providing for multi-family housing and accessory dwelling units in the C-1 District and by zoning most of the neighborhoods around Shirley Village for small-lot residential development. The town could

also offer some options for small-scale, higher-density residential uses in and adjacent to Shirley Village by making two amendments to the Zoning Bylaw:

- Change conversion of a pre-existing single-family dwelling to a multi-family dwelling from a prohibited use to a permitted use by right in C-1 and R-3, subject to site plan review. (For conversion projects, the town may want to limit the number of multi-family units to a maximum of four.)

- Adopt infill development regulations for the R-3 District to allow a detached single-family home or a two-family home on a lot that conforms in area but not frontage, by special permit and site plan review from the Planning Board.

An infill development tool is similar to Shirley's existing "hammerhead lot" provision, but the implied public benefit is different. The hammerhead lot regulations provide for a frontage waiver in exchange for a considerably larger lot on the assumption that there is a public benefit in reducing the future development potential of land. However, an infill regulation assumes that the public gains by making more efficient use of land in a small- business area, first because foot traffic will benefit the businesses and second, because housing more people near goods and services offers social, economic and transportation advantages to residents. An additional public benefit could be obtained by requiring units on infill lots to be affordable as defined by Chapter 40B.

In support of these policies, Shirley should:

- Consider a modest expansion of the R-3 District.

- Establish a maximum number of dwelling units or a maximum percentage of gross floor area (GFA) on aggregate residential uses in the C-1 District. Although the town wants to encourage mixed-use development and residential uses are an essential part of village planning, it is important to promote and reinforce the primary purpose of the C-1 District: a village commercial area.

Other Commercial Areas. While many of the use regulations for development in the C-2 District make sense, Shirley should consider eliminating the potential for industrial uses in these zones. As currently conceived, the C-2 District creates the possibility for a close arrangement of industrial and residential uses where this kind of land use mix would not be appropriate. One of Shirley's commercial zones – the C-1 area on Lancaster Road – may be appropriate for small-scale, low-impact industrial uses. Unfortunately, Shirley's existing zoning does not classify industrial uses in a manner that would allow local officials to guide new industries to the most suitable locations.

Ironically, multi-family housing is prohibited throughout the C-2 District while single-family homes are allowed by special permit, yet the possibility of including multi-family units in a commercial project could make some sites very attractive for new investment. At the same time, a district in which detached single-family homes and industrial uses are regulated as equals could be very problematic for Shirley in the future. The town needs to redefine the economic

development objectives of its commercial and industrial zones, and tailor its use regulations accordingly.

Design

Architectural and site design guidelines are crucial for business districts. They should be enforceable through site plan review for uses allowed as of right in the underlying zone, and site plan approval for uses allowed by special permit in both the underlying zone and the mixed-use overlay district. Like most communities, however, Shirley has focused its regulatory attention on use and dimensional requirements that do not address the visual impact of development on the village itself, on nearby neighborhoods or on views from the road. Clear architectural design guidelines and site plan standards should be incorporated into the Zoning Bylaw so that new construction and major reconstruction projects accomplish the following objectives:

- Respect, reinforce and enhance the form and scale of Shirley Village.
- Provide high-quality architectural design and achieve appropriate scale of development in commercial areas along Route 2A and Lancaster Road.

Design standards can be accomplished by a supplement to Shirley's site plan review bylaw or by a separate design review bylaw, which would be administered by an appointed design review board. Since Shirley has so few volunteers trying to manage all of the tasks of planning and development review, the town should consider attaching design review to the existing site plan review process rather than establishing a separate Design Review Board.

Entrance to Shirley Village.

As infill and redevelopment activity occurs in Shirley Village, the area will benefit from design solutions that bring buildings closer to each other and the street, thereby creating a better sense of definition. When the town decided to invest Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in a streetscape project for Shirley Village several years go, the purpose was to initiate a process of reinvention. Specifically, the project imagined Shirley Village as a visually coherent, safe, pedestrian-friendly commercial district that attracts and retains high-quality businesses. It

sought to accomplish these ends by encouraging a logical, efficient movement of vehicles, recognizing that Shirley is a small town and most of its business patrons and employees would arrive in the village by car.

Investing in public improvements may set the tone and direction for revitalizing older business areas, but ultimately commercial strips large or small transform incrementally, over a long period of time, as private investment takes place. By subordinating parking to building form, consolidating and reducing the number of curb cuts, promoting continuous walkways, and using landscaping to define and strengthen a site's relationship to its surroundings, the town and developers will contribute positively to Shirley Village's appeal to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. In addition, it is very important to recognize the impact of architectural design on the district's visual identity. Bringing buildings closer to the street does not accomplishing much if a structure's design attributes are disproportional, monotonous or lacking in details that engage the eye from a pedestrian vantage point.

In Shirley Village, it is important for developers and their design teams to avoid unarticulated and monotonous building façades and window placements, regularity of spacings, and building placements that will be viewed from the street as a continuous wall. Buildings should have architectural features and patterns that provide visual interest at the level of the pedestrian. In addition, the elements of a building's elevations are critical to its overall architectural quality, its presence and contribution to the surrounding area. A two- or two-and-one-half story elevation is particularly appropriate for a small New England village center, and a pleasing, symmetrical arrangement of windows, entrances, trim, shutters and so forth, and the proportionality of these features, creates a rhythm that is characteristic of older New England buildings. Buildings should provide a sense of continuity and coherence for all who visit, shop or work in a village. Architectural diversity needs to be encouraged as long as individual design solutions are compatible with the redevelopment of Shirley Village as a compact, mixed-use area with a strong visual definition. Accordingly, varied roofline articulation and overhanging eaves should be encouraged, but a nearly flat roof is inappropriate and should be prohibited.

Relocating parking to the side and rear of a building creates opportunities to improve aesthetics, redefine a commercial area's visual image and providing engaging pedestrian features. It makes sense to bring buildings as close to the street as possible, devoting some of the front setback to landscaping or a small, accessible outdoor sitting plaza or patio. Bicycle facilities ought to be visible and separated safely from the vehicular path of travel. Shared access to adjoining properties – in the forms of joint and cross access – is preferable to individual driveways and their associated curb cuts. Aside from the aesthetic and public safety benefits they provide, common driveways and consolidated curb cuts typically generate less storm water because they reduce the amount of pavement required to service a commercial property.

Many of the same regulatory policies should be applied to business districts outside of Shirley Village, but there are noteworthy differences that have to be accounted for in writing design and site plan guidelines for development on Route 2A and Lancaster Road. Specifically:

- The C-2 areas near the Mulpus Brook in northern Shirley cannot be zoned for the kind of higher intensity of use that is appropriate in Shirley Village, and they are also not appropriate for a building line at the edge of the road. Shirley should create a new commercial zoning

district for both areas to address the following needs. The potential scale of development in these areas needs to be reduced by establishing a fairly low maximum gross floor area (GFA) per building and low floor area and building coverage ratios, while tailoring the height and rooflines of buildings to be more residential in appearance. With a carefully controlled mix of permitted uses, smaller-scale commercial development is feasible in these areas and it will occur – albeit gradually. Buildings should be clustered and they ought to be oriented toward the street, with generously landscaped parking located to the side and rear. Access management is also critical in both of these locations, but especially near Parker Road.

- The I District adjacent to Ayer can support a higher intensity of use and a wider range of uses, and it should be zoned accordingly. Here, a modest increase in minimum lot size would make sense in order to encourage somewhat larger, mixed-use projects, including a mix of retail, office and limited industrial uses. The design controls for development in this location should focus on scale, massing, façade treatments and building orientation, access management and shared parking. Views of the river, and potentially access to it, need to be considered as well.

- The C-1 area on Lancaster Road also can support a moderately high intensity of use, and its proximity to Route 2 suggests that businesses serving local and non-local customers ought to be encouraged here. The boundaries of the district establish enough depth to encourage small, well-planned commercial development that serves several businesses, although wetlands will continue to be a limiting factor. Due to its location, this area needs particularly careful attention to site standards for organizing vehicular and pedestrian movement.

Proposed Zoning District & Use Regulations[34]

The following recommendations to amend the Shirley Zoning Bylaw should serve as a foundation for achieving the land use, resource protection, housing and economic development goals of Master Plan 2004. Districts correspond to areas identified on the Land Use Plan (Map 10).

RURAL RESIDENTIAL DISTRICT

Purposes: The purposes of the Rural Residential District are to preserve Shirley's outlying areas and scenic landscapes, to reduce the environmental and fiscal impacts of development on the town, provide for residential uses appropriate to a rural setting, protect forested and agricultural land, and where applicable, to protect the resource interests of the Squannassit Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Permitted Residential Uses

- Detached single-family dwelling

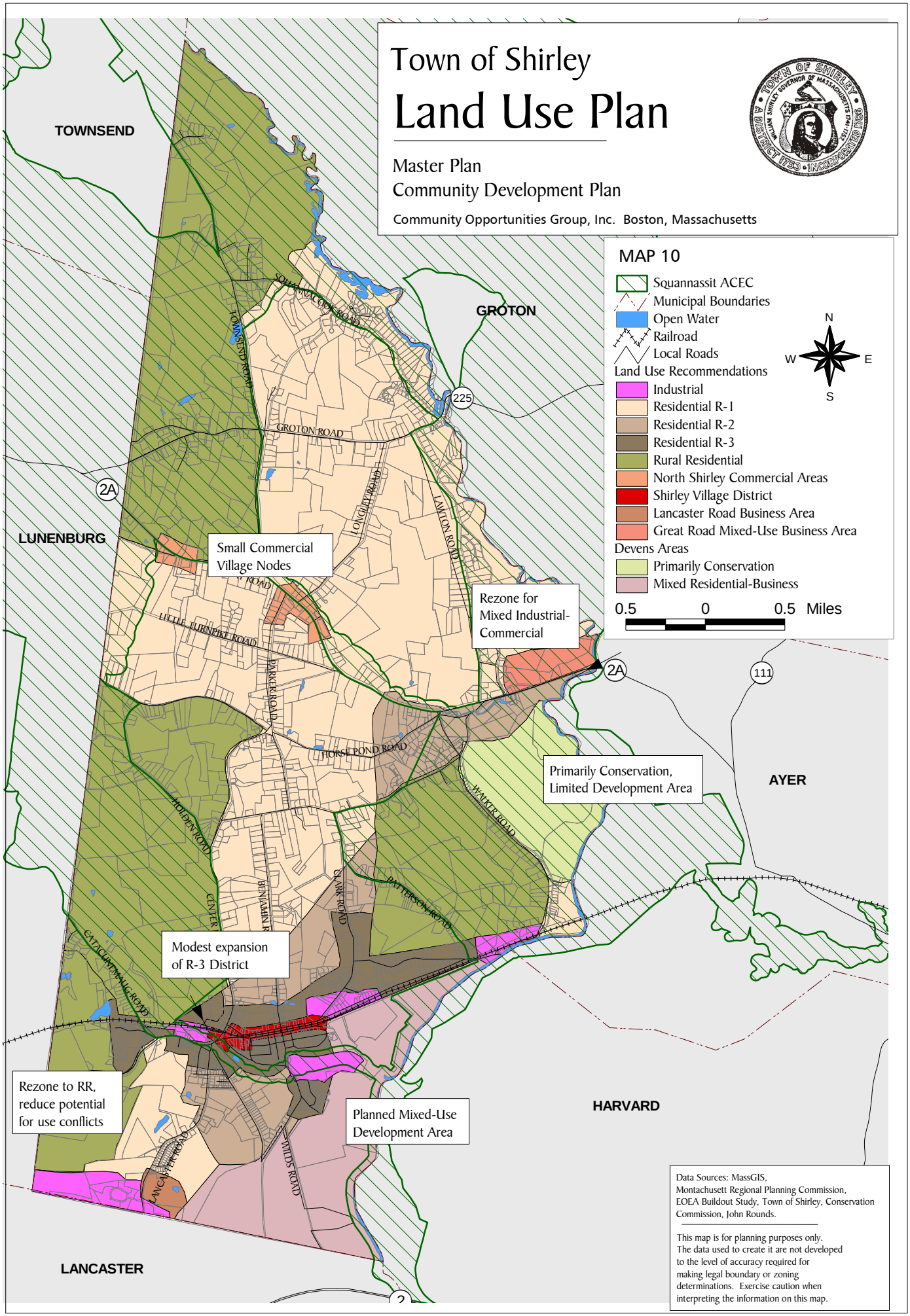
[34] All uses exempt under G.L. c40A have not been listed here in the interests of conserving space.

Town of Shirley

Land Use Plan

Master Plan
Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley, Conservation Commission, John Rounds.

This map is for planning purposes only. The data used to create it are not developed to the level of accuracy required for making legal boundary or zoning determinations. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

- Conversion of a single-family dwelling in existence on the effective date of this bylaw to a two-family dwelling

Permitted Accessory Uses

- Accessory dwelling unit in a detached single-family dwelling, subject to Sec. 4.5
- Home Occupations
- Professional office
- Personal service
- Business workshop

Permitted Commercial Uses

- Child care or day care center[35]

Special Permitted Uses

- Rooming house or boarding house for not more than four (4) lodgers
- Open space-residential development[36]
- Small-area cluster development
- Detached single-family dwelling on "hammerhead" lot
- Home Occupations
- Specialty retail, e.g., crafts, antiques

RESIDENTIAL R-1

Purposes: The purpose of the Residential R-1 District is to provide for conventional, predominantly single-family home neighborhoods in areas that form a logical connection between outlying sections of town and established villages or community service centers.

Permitted Residential Uses

- Detached single-family dwelling
- Rooming house or boarding house for not over four (4) lodgers

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[35] Use is exempt under G.L. c.40A, may be subject to site plan approval.

[36] Required for a development of six or more dwelling units.

- Two-family dwelling, provided its external appearance is not significantly different from a detached single-family dwelling
- Conversion of a single-family dwelling in existence on the effective date of this bylaw to a two-family dwelling
- Congregate residence or assisted living facility, up to ten units[37]

Permitted Accessory Uses

- Accessory dwelling unit in a detached single-family dwelling, subject to Section 4.5
- Bed and breakfast
- Home occupations
    - Professional office
    - Personal service

Permitted Commercial Uses

- Child care or day care center

Special Permitted Uses

- Open space-residential development[38]
- Assisted living facility of more than 10 units, or nursing home
- Multi-family housing
- Home Occupations
- Business workshop
- Specialty retail, e.g., crafts, antiques

RESIDENTIAL R-2

Purposes: The purpose of the Residential R-2 District is to provide a variety of housing near commercial areas, schools, public facilities and community institutions, in moderate-density traditional neighborhoods.

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[37] Subject to development regulations added to Section 4, SPECIAL REGULATIONS.

[38] Optional in all districts except Rural Residential.

Permitted Residential Uses

- Detached single-family dwelling
- Rooming house or boarding house for not over four (4) lodgers
- Two-family dwelling, provided its external appearance is not significantly different from a detached single-family dwelling
- Conversion of a single-family dwelling to a two-family dwelling
- Congregate residence or assisted living facility, up to ten units

Permitted Accessory Uses

- Accessory dwelling unit in a detached single-family dwelling, subject to Section 4.5
- Bed and breakfast
- Home occupations
- Professional office
- Personal service

Permitted Commercial Uses

- Child care or day care center

Special Permitted Uses

- Assisted living facility of more than 10 units, or nursing home
- Multi-family housing
- Home Occupations
- Business workshop
- Specialty retail, e.g., crafts, antiques

RESIDENTIAL R-3

Purposes: The purposes of the Residential R-3 District are to preserve the established development pattern and traditional neighborhoods around Shirley Village, to promote a wide range of housing choices in walkable neighborhoods, and to provide opportunities for new investment in areas with adequate infrastructure and services.

Permitted Residential Uses

- Detached single-family dwelling
- Rooming house or boarding house for not over four (4) lodgers
- Two-family dwelling, provided its external appearance is not significantly different from a detached single-family dwelling
- Conversion of a single-family dwelling to a multi-family dwelling, up to four units
- Congregate residence or assisted living facility, up to ten units
- Dwelling units above the ground floor of a lawfully pre-existing, non-conforming commercial building

Permitted Accessory Uses

- Bed and breakfast
- Home occupations
- Professional office
- Personal service
- Business workshop

Permitted Commercial Uses

- Child care or day care center

Special Permitted Uses

- Multi-family housing[39]
- Infill residential use[40]
- Home Occupations
- Specialty retail, e.g., crafts, antiques
- Assisted living facility of more than 10 units, or nursing home

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[39] Subject to a revised Section 4.1

[40] The Planning Board may grant a Special Permit to reduce the minimum lot frontage for a lot that conforms in area to the requirements of Table 3-1, provided the use of the lot is restricted to an affordable single-family or two-family dwelling.

SHIRLEY VILLAGE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT[41]

Purposes: To preserve and enhance Shirley Village as the town's primary commercial center, develop and sustain a vital local economy, provide goods and services that meet the needs of local residents and workers, and provide a traditional village that encourages people to live and work in Shirley.

Permitted Commercial Uses[42]

The following uses are permitted in a building of up to 3,500 square feet (ft^2) gross floor area (GFA):

- Retail sale of food items, dry goods, handicrafts, clothing and clothing accessories, hardware, appliances, furniture, furnishings, supplies, printed matter, pharmaceuticals, stationary, photographic supplies
- Specialty retail, antiques
- Retail sale of baked goods and manufacture of same for sale
- Professional office for dental, architectural, engineering, legal, medical, and other similar recognized professions
- Real estate, insurance and general business office, banks
- Hotel, inn
- Restaurant for the serving of food or beverages inside the premises or outside but on the premises, such as at tables on an adjoining deck or patio, excluding drive-through service
- Take-out food establishment or delicatessen where food is prepared and sold retail but not consumed on the premises, excluding drive-through service
- Barber and beauty shop, laundry agency, shoe and hat repair, bicycle and household appliance repair, dressmaking, dry cleaning and pressing or tailor shop where no work is done on the premises for retail outlets elsewhere
- Shop for custom work involving the manufacture of articles to be sold on premises
- Child care or day care center
- Theatre, museum, cinema, or other cultural establishment

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[41] Business and industrial district recommendations implement the Economic Development element.

[42] Uses are subject to Site Plan Approval by the Planning Board.

Permitted Residential and Accessory Uses

- Accessory dwelling units:
- Above the ground floor of a building occupied principally by commercial uses
- One accessory dwelling unit at grade, provided that (1) the entrance is on the side or rear of the building, (2) the unit has direct access to its associated parking, (3) the unit is fully accessible to persons with disabilities, and (4) the ground floor of the building facing the street is used for permitted commercial uses; subject to an affordable housing restriction.
- Conversion of a single-family dwelling to a two-family dwelling
- Bed and breakfast
- Home occupations
- Professional office
- Personal service
- Business workshop
- Specialty retail

Special Permitted Uses

- Uses listed as permitted uses, in a building of more than 3,000 ft^2 GFA but not to exceed 8,000 ft^2 GFA
- Drive-through service for a permitted commercial use, excluding food service establishments
- Automotive service station or filling station
- Indoor recreation or amusement facility
- Video tape rental and sales, and rental and sales of related equipment
- Laundromat
- Conversion and expansion of an existing single-family dwelling to single-room occupancy or multi-family dwelling, subject to affordable housing requirement[43]

[43] The affordable housing contribution for conversion uses should be tailored to the scale of the project.

NORTH SHIRLEY COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Purposes: The purposes of the North Shirley Commercial District are to encourage a limited range of small-scale, low-impact commercial uses that serve a predominantly local clientele, avoid the appearance and hazards of a strip commercial area, discourage "big-box" development, and encourage small businesses to locate and stay in Shirley.

Permitted Commercial Uses[44]

The following uses are permitted in a building of up to 3,000 square feet (ft^2) gross floor area (GFA):

- Retail sale of dry goods, handicrafts, supplies, printed matter, stationary, photographic supplies, food items
- Ice cream, candy shop
- Specialty retail, antiques
- Retail sale of baked goods and manufacture of same for sale
- Barber and beauty shop, shoe and hat repair, dressmaking, tailor shop where no work is done on the premises for retail outlets elsewhere
- Shop for custom work involving the manufacture of articles to be sold on premises
- Professional offices
- Veterinary clinic or animal hospital
- Child care or day care center

Permitted Residential and Accessory Uses

- Accessory dwelling units above the ground floor of a building occupied principally by commercial uses
- Conversion of an existing single-family dwelling to a two-family dwelling
- Congregate residence for the elderly or assisted living facility, up to ten units
- Bed and breakfast
- Home occupation

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[44] Uses subject to Site Plan Approval by the Planning Board; permitted up to 2,500 ft^2, otherwise by special permit.

- Professional office
- Personal service
- Specialty retail

Special Permitted Uses

- Commercial uses listed as permitted uses, in a building of more than 3,000 ft^2 GFA but not to exceed 5,000 ft^2 GFA
- Single-family dwelling
- Two-family dwelling
- Funeral home

GREAT ROAD MIXED-USE BUSINESS DISTRICT[45]

Purposes: The purposes of the Great Road Business District are to encourage a wide range of small- to medium-scale businesses and housing in a gateway location on Route 2A.

Permitted Commercial Uses[46]

The following uses are permitted in a building of up to 10,000 square feet (ft^2) gross floor area (GFA):

- Retail sale of food items, dry goods, handicrafts, clothing and clothing accessories, hardware, appliances, furniture, furnishings, supplies, printed matter, pharmaceuticals, stationary, photographic supplies
- Retail sale of baked goods and manufacture of same for sale
- Professional office for dental, architectural, engineering, legal, medical, and other similar recognized professions
- Real estate, insurance and general business office, banks
- Restaurant for the serving of food or beverages inside the premises or outside but on the premises, such as at tables on an adjoining deck or patio, excluding drive-through service
- Take-out food establishment or delicatessen where food is prepared and sold retail but not consumed on the premises, excluding drive-through service

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[45] To replace the existing Industrial District on the east end of Route 2A near Ayer.

[46] Permitted commercial uses in buildings up to 10,000 ft^2; otherwise by special permit.

- Shop for custom work involving the manufacture of articles to be sold on premises
- Shop of an electrician, painter, paper-hanger, plumber, upholsterer, carpenter or cabinet-maker and similar trades
- Indoor recreation or amusement facility
- Video tape rental and sales, and rental and sales of related equipment
- Drive-through service for a permitted commercial use, excluding food service establishments
- Dry cleaning and pressing or tailor shop, but not including work done on the premises for retail outlets elsewhere

Permitted Residential and Accessory Uses

- Accessory dwelling units above the ground floor of a building occupied principally by commercial uses
- Conversion of a single-family dwelling to a two-family dwelling
- Home occupations
    - Professional office
    - Personal service
    - Business workshop
- Bed and breakfast

Special Permitted Uses

- Hotel, inn
- Multi-family dwelling, subject to Section 4.1.
- Dry cleaning and pressing or tailor shop, including work done on the premises for retail outlets elsewhere
- Laundromat
- Auto sales, auto repair shop, auto filling station
- Drive-through for restaurant or take-out food service establishment

LANCASTER ROAD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Purposes: The purposes of the Lancaster Road Commercial District are to provide for a small retail and services node in the southern end of town, including businesses that serve highway travelers and commuters.

Permitted Commercial Uses[47]

The following uses are permitted in a building of up to 10,000 square feet (ft^2) gross floor area (GFA):

- Retail sale of food items, dry goods, hardware, supplies, printed matter, pharmaceuticals, stationary, photographic supplies
- Professional office for dental, architectural, engineering, legal, medical, and other similar recognized professions
- Real estate, insurance and general business office
- Restaurant, take-out food service establishment or delicatessen, excluding drive-through service
- Video tape rental and sales, and rental and sales of related equipment
- Dry cleaning and pressing or tailor shop, but not including work done on the premises for retail outlets elsewhere

Permitted Residential and Accessory Uses

- Conversion of a single-family dwelling to a multi-family dwelling, up to four units

Special Permitted Uses

- Hotel, inn
- Auto sales, auto repair shop, auto filling station
- Drive-through for restaurant or food-service establishment
- Dry cleaning and pressing or tailor shop, including work done on the premises for retail outlets elsewhere
- Laundromat

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[47] Permitted commercial uses in buildings up to 10,000 ft^2; otherwise by special permit.

INDUSTRIAL DISTRICT

Purposes: The purposes of the Industrial District are to provide areas for a range of employment opportunities, strengthen Shirley's tax base, and encourage high-quality industrial and office developments that make a positive aesthetic and economic contribution to the community while also protecting environmental resources.

Permitted Industrial Uses

- Establishments for research and development with associated professional offices, administrative and/or clerical offices, in a structure of not more than 10,000 ft^2 GFA.
- Light manufacturing and/or assembly with associated professional, administrative and/or clerical offices for the following types of industries, in a structure of not more than 10,000 ft^2 GFA:
    - Electronic and electrical products.
    - Robotics and precision instruments.
    - Computer related products.
    - Instruments and related products, or any other light manufacturing enterprise, provided that no activities will be offensive, injurious or noxious because of gas, dirt, sewage and refuse, vibration, smoke, fumes, dust, odors, discharge of harmful bacteria, radioactive material or chemicals into air, water or septic or site drainage systems, danger of fire or explosion, objectionable noise or other characteristics which are detrimental or offensive or which tend to reduce property values in the same or adjoining districts.
    - Furniture and fixtures.
- Health club, indoor athletic facility.
- Professional offices, medical offices or a medical center.
- Veterinary clinic, animal hospital.
- Recycling center, provided that such activities are not located within 100 feet of a residential zoning district, and a buffer area containing natural material will form an effective year-round screen between the industrial uses and the residential zone.
- Eco-industries

- Campus-style industrial development, on parcels of five or more acres (or smaller, contiguous parcels that together provide five or more acres of land)[48]

Permitted Commercial Uses

- Health club, indoor athletic facility
- Professional offices for dental, architectural, engineering, legal, medical, and other similar recognized professions, or a medical center
- Hotel, motel, inn
- Conference centers, with or without guest quarters
- Veterinary clinic, animal hospital

Permitted Accessory Uses

- Cafeteria for employees and other normal accessory uses such as a child care center, when contained in the same structure as a permitted use
- Showrooms and retail or service establishments primarily for employees and customers of the principal use
- Retail sale of products primarily wholesaled at the site

Special Permitted Uses

- Any uses listed as permitted industrial uses, occupying more than 10,000 ft^2 GFA.
- The following additional light manufacturing and/or assembly with associated professional, administrative and/or clerical offices for the following types of industries:
    - Primary and fabricated metal industries.
    - Machinery.
    - Transportation equipment.
- Printing and publishing.
- Contractor's yard
- Wholesale or retail sale of lumber and wood products.

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[48] A development of permitted industrial uses clustered on a site, with development set back from the road and from abutting residential or commercial zoning districts. This type of project requires development regulations tailored to the use, i.e., by amendment to Section 4.

- Warehousing and distribution
- Adult entertainment uses
- Any permitted or special permitted industrial use in a structure that exceeds the maximum height limitation in Section 3.1.

PROHIBITED USES[49]

- No use will be permitted that will produce a nuisance or hazard from fire or explosion, toxic or corrosive fumes, gas, smoke, odors, obnoxious dust or vapor, harmful radioactivity, offensive noise or vibration, flashes, objectionable effluent, or electrical interference which may affect or impair the normal use and peaceful enjoyment of any property, structure or dwelling in the Town of Shirley.
- Parks for mobile homes, travel trailers, tent trailers, auto dismantling, junkyards, privately developed and operated septage waste disposal/treatment facilities and refuse disposal facilities are expressly prohibited.
- No outdoor storage of more than one unregistered motor vehicle for more than ninety days, except on a farm.
- Any use not explicitly provided for in the Zoning Bylaw.

Proposed Density & Dimensional Regulations

See Table 3-1 (next page).

[49] General list of prohibited uses; applies to all zoning districts.

Table 3-1: Proposed Schedule of Dimensional Controls

Dimensional Requirements	R-R (1)(3)(5)*	R-1 (1)(3)(5)*	R-2 (1)(3)(5)*	R-3 (1)(3)(5)*	SVD (5)*	NSCD	LRCD	GRBD	I
Min. Lot Size (ft^2) (1)									
Single-Family	80,000	40,000	30,000	15,000	—	15,000	—	—	—
Two Family	100,000	60,000	45,000	19,000	15,000	20,000	—	—	—
Multi-Family (2)	—	—	—	25,000	20,000	—	—	—	—
Other Uses	80,000	40,000	30,000	15,000	10,000	15,000	25,000	30,000	60,000
Minimum Frontage (Feet) (3)	225	175	150	100	None	80	80	100	100
Min. Width Building Line (1)	225	175	150	100	60	70	70	90	90
Minimum Yards (1)									
Front Yard Min. Setback	50	40	30	25	—	20	20	30	30
Front Yard MAX. Setback	—	—	—	—	20	30	30	40	—
Side Yard Setback (4)	50	25	20	20	— (2)*	30	30	30	25 (2)*
Rear Yard Setback (4)	50	50	40	25	15	30	30	50	50
Maximum Lot Coverage	25	25	25	25	75	25	35	40	25
Maximum Floor Area Ratio	—	—	—	—	1.25	0.70	1.00	1.10	1.25
Max. Height, ft.	35	35	35	35	45	35	40	45	45
Max. Number of Stories	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	3.0	2.5	3.0	3.0	3.0

* (1) Minimum lot area, frontage, minimum width at building line, yard setbacks and building coverage may be waived by the Planning Board as provided for in Section 4.2 (Open Space-Residential Development) and Small-Area Cluster Development.

* (2) Subject to revised regulations under Section 4.1.

* (3) Minimum frontage may be waived by the Planning Board for Hammerhead Lots (Section 4.3) or Infill Residential Use lots.

* (4) For commercial and industrial districts except the Shirley Village District, the rear yard setback adjacent to a residential districtshall be 50 feet unless waived by special permit from the Planning Board.

Other Zoning Amendments

GROWTH MANAGEMENT BYLAW

On or before the expiration of the Rate of Development Bylaw (Section 2.9), adopt the following Growth Management regulations:

- Establish an upper limit on the number of new residential building permits issued per year (aggregate) and per applicant, with exemptions for the following uses:[50]
    - Dwelling units in an open space-residential development that preserves at least 10% more than the minimum required usable open space51
    - Deed-restricted affordable dwelling units that qualify for listing on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.
    - Accessory dwelling units in buildings used principally for commercial purposes
- For non-exempt residential developments, require phased construction or allow the applicant to pay a fee in lieu of complying with the phasing requirement.
- Deposit in-lieu-of fees in a growth management trust fund that may be used for open space acquisition or creation and preservation of affordable housing.[52]

LAND CLEARING & GRADING

Adopt a land clearing and grading bylaw that requires all non-agricultural clearances of 30,000 ft^2 or more to obtain prior review and approval by the Planning Board I order to protect mature trees and prevent erosion and sedimentation.

SMALL-AREA CLUSTER DEVELOPMENT

To protect views from the road, especially in the northern end of Shirley, provide flexibility for development of small parcels adjacent to a Scenic Road. Small-Area Cluster Development is intended as an alternative to a conventional division of land into "Approval Not Required" lots under G.L. c.41, Section 81P and to traditional policies governing "hammerhead" lots. Allow the Planning Board to grant a special permit to waive the minimum frontage and lot shape

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[50] The Town may wish to retain the existing 30-unit annual/5-unit individual caps.

[51] The open space-residential development minimum should be 50%.

[52] Establishing the Growth Management Fund requires a home rule petition.

requirements that normally apply to land in the Rural Residential District in exchange for the protection of open space, stone walls, mature trees and scenic views.

- The Small Area Cluster Development Bylaw should apply to a division of land into three to five lots for single-family dwellings.
- The parcel or contiguous parcels to be divided into new lots should have enough area so that each proposed lot meets the minimum lot area requirement of the Rural Residential District.
- At least 40% of the land in a Small Area Cluster Development shall be permanently protected as common open space. The open space shall be protected by a conservation restriction held by the Shirley Conservation Commission or a non-profit conservation land trust, and the restriction shall meet the requirements of G.L. c.184.
- Existing views from the road shall be protected by locating at least 60% of the common open space along and immediately adjacent to the designated rural corridor.
- Groupings of homes in a Small Area Cluster Development should be served by a common driveway in order to minimize disturbance to the open space.
- Minimum front yard setback: 75 feet from the road.
- Minimum frontage: 125 feet.
- Lot area: minimum required for Rural Residential District.
- No more than five reduced frontage lots in a development.

INCLUSIONARY ZONING

Adopt an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw, as follows:

- Require all developments of six or more units to provide affordable dwelling units that qualify for listing on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.
- Establish a base inclusionary requirement, e.g., 10% of all dwelling units in any project subject to the Bylaw.
- Offer developers a menu of choices to comply, subject to approval by the Planning Board:
    - Include units in the development.
    - Provide equivalent units in another location in Shirley.
    - Pay a fee in lieu of creating new units, the fee to be equal to the difference between an affordable purchase price as defined by DHCD's Local Initiative Program (LIP)

and the median single-family home or condominium sale price for the most recent fiscal year, as determined by the Board of Assessors.

- Donate to the town a parcel of land with equivalent development capacity, restricted for affordable housing use.

- Provide a density bonus by special permit to encourage additional affordable units the Residential R-2 and R-3 Districts.

- Condition the release of occupancy permits on the town's receipt of affordable unit documentation.

Affordable Housing Trust Fund

In conjunction with the Inclusionary Bylaw, establish a permanent Affordable Housing Trust fund by special act of the legislature for all revenue generated by the bylaw.

- Assign administrative responsibility for the trust fund to the Board of Selectmen, whose duties should include preparing an annual allocation plan for the expenditure of trust fund revenue, in consultation with the Planning Board.

- Place authority for approving the annual allocation plan with Town Meeting.

- Limit the use of trust fund revenue to the production of dwelling units that qualify for listing on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory as Local Initiative Program Units. "Production" should be defined to include new unit creation, preservation of existing affordable units, reuse and conversion of existing structures, and affordable housing restrictions placed on existing dwelling units.

INFILL DEVELOPMENT BYLAW

Amend the Zoning Bylaw to provide for modest frontage waivers by special permit in the Residential R-3 District, subject to the following requirements:

- An infill lot created with a frontage waiver must meet the minimum lot area for the district.

- Its use is limited to an affordable (Chapter 40B) single-family or two-family dwelling.

- The dwelling must be connected to the town's public sewer system.

Housing Recommendations

COMPREHENSIVE PERMIT POLICY

The Board of Selectmen and Planning Board should jointly adopt a comprehensive permit policy, as follows:

- Invite developers to use the Local Initiative Program ((LIP) comprehensive permit process instead of applying directly to MassHousing or MassDevelopment for a project eligibility letter.
- Be open with developers about higher-density housing areas that are most consistent with Shirley's established land use policies.
    - Identify and map areas that are most appropriate for higher-density housing, such as the Residential R-3, Shirley Village and Transitional Business Districts, where relatively small minimum lot sizes, two-family and multi-family uses are allowed by right or by special permit, and areas close to transportation service.
    - Identify and map areas that are least appropriate for higher-density housing, such as the north side of Route 2A in North Shirley Commercial District, land in the Groundwater Protection Overlay District, and the properties identified in the Shirley Open Space & Recreation Plan as priority open space protection areas.
    - Leave room for options to consider small homeownership developments (2-10 units) in other zoning districts.
- Describe the zoning waivers that Shirley is willing to consider, such as a realistic range of additional units per acre or a higher floor area ratio to accommodate affordable homeownership units.
    - When the minimum lot size allowed by zoning is 10,000-15,000 square feet (ft^2), consider a maximum standard of 8-12 dwelling units/acre in an area with access to sewer service.[53]
    - When the minimum lot size allowed by zoning is 20,000 ft^2, consider a maximum standard of 6 dwelling units/acre.
- For small projects in other areas, consider a density that does not exceed twice the density permitted by zoning unless the applicant agrees to beneficial trade-offs, such as the protection of roadside open space

[53] This is essentially consistent with the state's existing standard for homeownership developments.

- Identify trade-offs the town is willing to consider to encourage comprehensive permits in preferred locations, such as higher density in exchange for design elements compatible with surrounding buildings or green building certification.

- Identify housing needs that Shirley wants comprehensive permit developers to meet.

    - State government appears to be taking the shortage of family housing more seriously than it has for the past several years. For example, one of the competitiveness criteria for financing from the Priority Development Fund is the inclusion of units with three or more bedrooms. Rather than argue against any family units, ask developers to limit the number of rental units with three or more bedrooms to 10% of all units in a Chapter 40B rental development.

    - Ask developers to include some below-market (not Chapter 40B) units in addition to low- and moderate-income units in any comprehensive permit development designed for elderly households.

- Create a streamlined local review process for small comprehensive permit developments, e.g., 10 or fewer units.

- Prepare a "Small Project Application Package" and work with the ZBA to create an expedited review and decision-making process for small-scale projects.

    - If Shirley prefers small, scattered-site projects, it needs to make the permitting process faster and easier for them. Having a standardized application package will provide technical assistance to applicants who may not be seasoned developers, and the expedited process will result in a more desirable and useful comprehensive permit process.

- Designate an individual officer of the town to negotiate with comprehensive permit applicants during the permit process or, subject to Town Counsel's approval, retain an outside special counsel to assist with negotiations.

HOUSING PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

- Establish a Housing Partnership Committee; recruit and appoint qualified, interested residents.

- The Housing Partnership Committee should centralize, manage and increase the effectiveness of local efforts to address housing needs and bring technical assistance and other resources to the town.

- The Housing Partnership Committee should also serve as the initial point of contact for developers seeking to build affordable housing in Shirley.

Transportation Recommendations

- Challenge 1: Cope with constraints limiting traffic capacity
    - Emphasize traffic calming strategies to encourage safe speeds and steady flow (DPW)
    - Continue to cut brush back to improve sight lines and maintain verges (DPW)
    - Continue to evaluate roadway limitations and develop proposals for remediation of identified hazards and constraints (DPW)
    - Develop a matrix to identify problem intersections and evaluate improvements. Accident rates, level of service (LOS) and the impact of poorly designed intersections on surrounding intersections should be given prominence (DPW).
    - Continue to consider the impact development projects on problem intersections. Any anticipated substantial increase in intensity of use of any problem intersection should be carefully evaluated. Remediation of adverse impact should be included in discussions with the developer (Planning Board).
    - Continue to explore mechanisms, including Zoning By-Law and associated regulation changes, to manage curb cuts. Continue encouraging a campus approach for commercial and industrial projects.
    - Continue to require traffic analysis as part of larger development proposals.
    - Consider undertaking a traffic-shed analysis.
- Challenge 2: Improve Mass Transit Opportunities and Infrastructure
    - Continue the ongoing discussion with MBTA, in cooperation with neighboring towns and agencies, on improvements to the Fitchburg Line
    - Work with MART to examine the feasibility of providing fixed route service to Shirley as needs for this service increase.
- Challenge 3: Limited Parking in the Village
    - Continue review of relevant By-Laws and Regulations to insure that Village area development projects include provision of adequate parking
    - Develop a long-term parking plan for the Village that takes into account anticipated parking needs of both commuters using the commuter rail and patrons of local business. Continue to seek, examine, and pursue opportunities for improvement of Village area parking

  - Continue to work with MBTA to increase the number of parking spaces within their right-of-way.
  - Periodically review conditions surrounding a parking by-law in anticipation of the time when such might be worth-while

- Challenge 4: Improve Infrastructure for Pedestrians, Joggers and Bicylists
  - Periodically review regulations regarding sidewalks in residential developments
  - Develop a long-term sidewalk plan that identifies areas of high pedestrian travel. The plan would help the Town identify and prioritize areas where sidewalks should be constructed to enhance public safety.
  - Upon completion of this plan, identify funding sources, including the Town's Capital Improvement plan, for the specific recommendations
  - Develop a local bicycle plan to identify areas of bicycle travel and highlight opportunities to improve safety and develop connections within Town and to routes in other towns.
  - Road improvements should include provision of a designated bikeway wherever possible. Parking requirements should include provision of bicycle racks to encourage and accommodate bicycle use.

Community Facilities & Services Recommendations

In the next five years, Shirley needs to focus on the following community facility and service needs:

- Recreation fields, particularly in North Shirley
- Expanding the use of Benjamin Hill Park to include winter recreation activities
- Tennis courts
- Skate park facility
- Community Center
- Senior center
- Bike trails
- Activity director

- Increase capacity of Public Works and Public Safety departments with additional employees
- Rebuild the Conservation Commission's Land Acquisition Fund
- Maintain efforts to apply for and receive grants for community services

APPENDIX

A. OPEN SPACE & RECREATION LAND INVENTORY

B. MASTER PLAN 1999 GOALS & ISSUE STATEMENTS

C. VISION STATEMENT

D. LAND PROTECTION SUITABILITY MAP

E. LAND USE SUITABILITY MAP

Appendix A: Shirley Open Space Inventory[1]

Property Owner	Manager	Site Name	Acres	Purpose	Assessor's Map Identification			
					Map	Block	Lot	Lot ID
US Dept. of Defense		Fort Devens	44.27	Conservation & Recreation	26	A	1B	
US Fish & Wildlife		Oxbow NWR	124.15	Conservation	29	B	3	
US Fish & Wildlife		Oxbow NWR	71.61	Conservation	26	A	1	
Town of Shirley		Hunting Hills WMA	31.47	Conservation				
Town of Shirley	Board of Selectmen		2.84	General Purposes	40	A	1	2
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Squannacook Cons. Area	17.21	Conservation & Recreation	115	A	4	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Townsend Road Land	43.79	Conservation & Recreation	117	A	3	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Lyon Cons. Area	7.55	Conservation & Recreation	68	A	5	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Thompson Cons. Area	16.05	Conservation & Recreation	57	A	3	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission		0.97	Conservation & Recreation	27		1	
Town of Shirley	Parks Department	Fredonian Park & Nature Center	6.68	Recreation	16	D	15	1
Town of Shirley		Cons Land At Ayer/Shirley	1.96	Conservation & Recreation	47		2.2	
Town of Shirley		Benjamin Hill Recreation Area	7.63	Conservation & Recreation	40	A	1	12
Town of Shirley	Board of Selectmen	Groton Rd Land	10.95	Conservation	97	B	14/15	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Mitchell Conservation Area	0.96	Conservation	58	A	6	1
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Spruce Swamp Cons. Area	11.60	Conservation	60	A	2	1
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Rich Tree Farm	110.98	Conservation	43	A	9	1
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission		89.11	Conservation	37	A	1	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Holden Road Cons. Area	38.82	Conservation	38	A	2	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Holden Triangle	2.27	Conservation	54	A	4	
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Holden Road Cons. Area	13.37	Conservation	37	A	2	1
Town of Shirley		Pumpkin Brook	139.50	Conservation				
Town of Shirley		Rust Conservation Area	17.25	Conservation	96	B	1	
Town of Shirley		Hurd Property	21.13	Conservation	9/6		2/1	

1. _____

[1] CR=Conservation Restriction; WMA=Wildlife Management Area.

Property Owner	Manager	Site Name	Acres	Purpose	Assessor's Map Identification			
					Map	Block	Lot	Lot ID
Town of Shirley		Dow Parcel	16.46	Conservation	95	A	7	14
Town of Shirley		Rumbo Island	3.00	Conservation	103	B	2	
Town of Shirley		Executive Estates Open Space	15.13	Conservation	102	B	7	2
Town of Shirley		Benjamin Hill Cons Area	40.07	Conservation	40	A	1	11
Town of Shirley	Historical Commission		1.44	Historic	58	A	10	11
Town of Shirley	Parks Department	Shirley Center Common	2.34	Historic	60			
Town of Shirley		Shirley Center Cemetery	5.86	Historic	60	B	1	
Town of Shirley		Village Cemetery	11.84	Historic				
Town of Shirley	Conservation Commission	Cons. Canoe/Boat Launch	0.79	Conservation & Recreation	103	B	1	
Town of Shirley	Parks Department	Whitley Park	1.52	Conservation & Recreation	23	F	3	
Town of Shirley	School Department	Center School	3.99	Conservation & Recreation	65	A	1	
Town of Shirley	School Department	Lura A. White School	14.15	Conservation & Recreation				
Town of Shirley	Water District		0.19	Water Supply Protection	66	A	6	
Town of Shirley	Water District	Rich Tree Farm	45.68	Water Supply Protection	42	A	1	
Town of Shirley	Water District		1.98	Water Supply Protection	30	B	7	
Town of Shirley	Water District		8.75	Water Supply Protection	29	A	2	
Town of Shirley	Water District		4.98	Water Supply Protection	29	A	3	
Town of Shirley	Water District	Rich Tree Farm	5.45	Water Supply Protection	30	B	8	
Town of Shirley	Water District	Rich Tree Farm	4.97	Water Supply Protection	30	B	6	1
Town of Shirley	Water District		11.66	Water Supply Protection	30	B	6	
Town of Shirley	Water District	Rich Tree Farm	18.34	Water Supply Protection	27	C	1	
Town of Shirley	Water District		0.48	Water Supply Protection	28	A	2	2
Town of Shirley	Water District		0.35	Water Supply Protection	30	B	9	
Town of Shirley	Water District		16.68	Water Supply Protection	30	B	5	
Town of Shirley	Water District		0.03	Water Supply Protection	33	B	7	
Town of Shirley			19.19	Unspecified	123	A	1	
Town of Shirley			0.06	Unspecified	96	A	2	
Town of Shirley			0.78	Unspecified	94	A	4	
Town of Shirley			0.22	Unspecified	97	A	1	

Property Owner	Manager	Site Name	Acres	Purpose	Assessor's Map Identification Map	Block	Lot	Lot ID
Town of Shirley			0.06	Unspecified	82	C	6	
Town of Shirley		Longley Property	25.26	Agriculture	68	A	4	
Town of Shirley		Longley Property	30.90	Agriculture	67	A	1	
Town of Shirley		Longley Property	14.88	Agriculture	58	A	2	
MA Dept. Corrections		Mci Shirley	177.41	Conservation & Recreation	5	A	1A	
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	20.01	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	50.95	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	10.76	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	9.43	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	2.95	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	69.64	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	163.30	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	25.52	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Hunting Hills WMA	146.76	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Mulpus Brook WMA	20.57	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Mulpus Brook WMA	75.67	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Mulpus Brook WMA	22.51	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	6.77	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Mulpus Brook WMA	11.35	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Squannacook River WMA	4.21	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Mulpus Brook WMA	4.47	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Mulpus Brook WMA	54.49	Conservation				
MA DFWELE		Nashua River Access Area	36.52	Conservation				
Banks		Far and Near CR	80.47	Conservation	MANY		MANY	
Benjamin Builders			5.14	Conservation & Recreation	75	A	3	
Birchwood Hills Corp.		Birchwood Hills CR	60.71	Conservation	36	B	1	CR-B
Birchwood Hills Corp.		Birchwood Hills CR	19.67	Conservation	36	B	1	CR-A
Birchwood Hills Corp.		Birchwood Hills CR	5.60	Conservation	36	B	1	CR-C
Castrocastellanos			11.02	Agriculture	117	A	2	

Property Owner	Manager	Site Name	Acres	Purpose	Assessor's Map Identification			
					Map	Block	Lot	Lot ID
Catacoonemaug Trust			20.17	Conservation & Recreation	17	B	5	
Claydon			6.25	Conservation & Recreation	81	A	2	
Colburn		Colburn CR	6.67	Conservation	53	B	3	
Downey			2.17	Conservation & Recreation	68	A	6	
Downey			0.65	Conservation & Recreation	57	A	2	
Dupre			34.21	Conservation & Recreation	102	A	3	
Eddy			12.74	Agriculture	54	A	1	
Farnsworth			59.41	Agriculture	63	A	1	
Farnsworth			16.32	Agriculture	73	A	1	
Farnsworth			30.35	Conservation & Recreation	80	A	2	13
Farrar			17.06	Agriculture	24	A	2	
Farrar, J.			25.43	Conservation & Recreation	75	A	2	
Farrar, R.			37.77	Conservation & Recreation	92	A	1	
Farrar, R.			5.43	Conservation & Recreation	69	A	2	
Field	NEFF	Valley Farm Wildlife CR	98.32	Conservation	35	A	3	
Field		Valley Farm Area CR	4.36	Conservation	54	A	3	
Field		Valley Farm Wildlife CR	11.72	Conservation	38	A	1	CR-A
Field		Valley Farm Wildlife CR	83.92	Conservation	38	A	1	CR-B
Gould			5.39	Conservation & Recreation	72	A	6	
Gould Trust			8.80	Agriculture	22	A	8	
Griffin			27.98	Conservation & Recreation	57	B	1	
Griffin, A.			6.92	Conservation & Recreation	57	A	7	
Griffin, S.			9.99	Conservation & Recreation	35	A	2	
Grubb			11.70	Agriculture	97	B	16	
Haines, A.			0.96	Agriculture	110	A	4	
Haines, A.			21.38	Agriculture	107	A	1	1
Haines, A.			12.68	Agriculture	106	B	4	
Haines/Roberts			44.30	Agriculture	106	A	13	
Haines/Roberts			16.81	Agriculture	106	A	13	6

Property Owner	Manager	Site Name	Acres	Purpose	Assessor's Map Identification Map	Block	Lot	Lot ID
Harrod, G. & L.			10.11	Agriculture	96	C	5	
Hayes Development		Longley Trace CR	9.12	Conservation	80	A	2	9CR
Hoddy Brook Camp		Hoddy Brook Camp	8.74	B	68	A	3	
Holdenwood Trust	Conservation Commission	Holdenwood Trust Cons. Area CR	14.99	Conservation	52	A	14	
Holdenwood Trust	Conservation Commission	Holdenwood Trust Cons. Area CR	2.72	Conservation	40	A	7	3
Holdenwood Trust	Conservation Commission	Holdenwood Trust Cons. Area CR	8.31	Conservation & Recreation	61	A	17	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	2.22	Conservation & Recreation	64	A	4	1
Holdenwood Trust		Holden Trust Conservation CR	7.79	Conservation & Recreation	82	A	6	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	5.95	Conservation & Recreation	65	A	8	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	46.07	Conservation & Recreation	65	A	9	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	6.23	Conservation & Recreation	65	A	7	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	1.15	Conservation & Recreation	60	B	2	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	8.67	Conservation & Recreation	60	B	3	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	6.72	Conservation & Recreation	61	A	3	1
Holdenwood Trust		Holden Trust Conservation CR	1.38	Conservation & Recreation	56	A	10	
Holdenwood Trust		Holdenwood CR	0.93	Conservation & Recreation	61	A	17	2
Holdenwood Trust		Holden Trust Conservation Land	3.85	Conservation & Recreation	18	A	1	
J&A Realty Trust			27.67	Conservation & Recreation	112	B	7	
J&A Realty Trust			9.66	Conservation & Recreation	97	B	7	
J&A Realty Trust			39.35	Conservation & Recreation	90	A	2	
J&A Realty Trust			23.15	Conservation & Recreation	90	A	1	
J&A Realty Trust			1.37	Conservation & Recreation	59	A	9	2
J&A Realty Trust			16.28	Conservation & Recreation	55	A	1	
J&A Realty Trust			21.30	Conservation & Recreation	74	A	18	3
J&A Realty Trust			5.73	Conservation & Recreation	86	A	3	1
J&A Realty Trust			9.45	Conservation & Recreation	81	A	4	1
J&A Realty Trust			18.38	Conservation & Recreation	81	A	3	
Jeannotte, R.			12.73	Conservation & Recreation	40	A	7	1
Lamoureaux, P.			16.55	Agriculture	71	B	3	

Property Owner	Manager	Site Name	Acres	Purpose	Assessor's Map Identification			
					Map	Block	Lot	Lot ID
Lamoureaux, P.			19.31	Agriculture	64	A	2	
Lorden, G.		CR	5.52	Conservation	62	A	12	4
Lyons, M.	Conservation Commission	Harriet Lyons Bird Sanctuary CR	13.36	Conservation	53	B	5	
McCarthy, E.			22.68	Conservation	54	A	2	
McNiff, S.			13.16	Conservation & Recreation	40	A	7	2
McQuillan, J.			1.28	Conservation & Recreation	56	A	4	
McQuillan, J.			4.47	Conservation & Recreation	56	A	6	
McQuillan, J.			4.09	Conservation & Recreation	56	A	7	
Mirkovic			36.91	Agriculture	58	A	10	
Mitton			5.30	Agriculture	68	A	2	
Morse			55.53	Conservation & Recreation	69	A	1	
Peters			18.05	Conservation	104	A	4	
Prescott, R. & J.			5.91	Agriculture	94	A	3	
Prescott, R. & L.			7.54	Conservation & Recreation	95	A	3	
RCAB			5.78	Unspecified	13	B	16	
Shirley Rod & Gun		Shirley Rod & Gun Club	39.85	Conservation & Recreation	101	A	2	
Shirley Rod & Gun		Shirley Rod & Gun Club	100.07	Conservation & Recreation	85	A	1	
Shirley Rod & Gun		Shirley Rod & Gun Club	2.77	Conservation & Recreation	86	B	1	5
Shirley Rod & Gun		Shirley Rod & Gun Club	3.39	Conservation & Recreation	86	B	1	
Smith, R.			190.34	Conservation	80	A	2	1
Soltesz			32.00	Conservation & Recreation	33	B	1	1
Unidentified			28.08	Conservation	107	A	2	11
Unidentified			1.40	Unspecified				
Verperwoods Dev.		Woodland Ridge CR	16.93	Conservation	103	A	1	CR-B
Verperwoods Dev.		Woodland Ridge CR	3.73	Conservation	103	A	1	CR-A
Warner			14.23	Conservation	89	A	4	
Wilkins			35.36	Agriculture	86	A	1	
Wood			9.89	Agriculture	48	B	2	
Wood/Warren			8.74	Agriculture	48	C	3	

Appendix B:
1999 Master Plan Issues and Goal Statements

HOUSING

Issue: Mobile homes make up a sizeable component of Shirley's housing stock.

Goal: Incrementally replace mobile homes with permanent units of single-family housing.

Issue: Clustering of new subdivisions can mitigate sprawl and preserve additional open space.

Goal: Encourage clustering in environmentally sensitive areas by rewriting cluster ordinance in zoning bylaws.

Issue: As Shirley grows and additional housing is developed, affordability for many families and elderly citizens is becoming increasingly difficult.

Goal: Provide rental or affordable owner-occupied units for single and young families, as well as provide senior housing and assisted living housing/disabled citizen housing.

Issue: Any long-term initiatives to construct elderly or affordable housing in Shirley will require the services of a full-time housing professional to apply for applicable state or federal funds, coordinate fund raising activities and oversee all stages of acquisition, design and construction.

Goal: The town should consider employing a full-time housing professional.

Issue: The Town should consider acquiring land for affordable housing to ensure those who cannot afford to purchase land on the open market may still live in Shirley.

Goal: Suitable land for a housing complex should be acquired.

Issue: Mixed use developments in downtown Shirley could foster additional development opportunities and provide housing alternatives for local residents.

Goal: Allow for more mixed-use development within the Shirley Village.

Issue: Large-scale subdivisions can overwhelm the Town's ability to adequately plan for and provide the necessary municipal facilities required to serve those new residents.

Goal: Limit the overall size of subdivisions based upon the Town’s infrastructure capacity.

Issue: As the Town continues to grow and new homes are constructed, methods should be found to offset increased public services (schools, policy, fire, etc.).

Goal: Implement Impact Fee Ordinance to offset municipal costs for new development to relieve the Town of absorbing short and long-term costs of new residential development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Issue: Diversify the tax base in Shirley to reduce the burden of property taxation upon local residents.

Goal: Identify areas in Town that are best suited for new or expanded economic development activities.

Issue: Revitalization of the Village Commercial Core of Shirley Village

Goal: Improve the visual appearance and economic diversity of the Village Business District

Issue: Current Zoning regulations are limiting growth opportunities in the Commercial Sector.

Goal: Develop a zoning strategy, for a new Village Business District, that will encourage compatibility of use, higher concentration of commercial/office use, housing opportunities and a business friendly environment.

Issue: Lack of Industrial Development growth opportunities within Shirley

Goal: Attract additional light industrial uses that will complement the existing and planned development activities within the Devens Commerce Center.

Issue: The current business density is insufficient to properly market and promote business in the Village Commercial District.

Goal: Increase the number of commercial establishments to provide a destination for local residents and workers to obtain needed goods and services.

Issue: Commercial sprawl along the major transportation routes should be contained.

Goal: Prevent the proliferation of commercial development along the major east/west thoroughfares primarily Route 2A through more restrictive zoning.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Issue: The build-out analysis has identified that significant residential development will likely occur in the future based on the current zoning regulations.

Goal: Prepare to meet the short and long-term public service infrastructure that will be required as phased increased residential, commercial and industrial development occurs.

Issue: No municipal transfer exists for Shirley residents within town borders.

Goal: Provide current and future residents with more convenient opportunities for efficient disposal of solid wastes.

Issue: Residents opting to recycle must currently bring recycled goods to the recycling center.

Goal: Provide a more convenient recycling program for local residents.

Issue: Recreational facilities should be expanded within Shirley as residential population increases.

Goal: Provide increased recreational facilities for children, adults and elders throughout the community.

Issue: Long-term groundwater supply may be jeopardized due to anticipated regional and local residential development.

Goal: Better identify regional and local groundwater supplies and determine better ways to protect and preserve aquifers from detrimental effects of development.

TRANSPORTATION, TRAFFIC & CIRCULATION

Issue: Due to increased residential development, many local roads are no longer adequate for pedestrians.

Goal: The Town should ensure that a sidewalk plan is designed to meet the needs of pedestrians walking between residential areas and the downtown. Adequate funding for the phased construction of sidewalks should be allocated as part of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

Issue: The village commercial district is very poorly lit at night and is a safety hazard for people shopping, strolling or utilizing the commuter rail line.

Goal: Additional public lighting should be provided in both the village and at several poorly lit intersections in town.

Issue: There are no dedicated bicycle paths in town. Due to increased development, many roads are no longer adequately safe for bicycle traffic.

Goal: The Town government should work with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission to develop a bicycle plan that will interconnect with other bike paths in neighboring towns.

Issue: Increased residential development and employment development at the former Fort Devens will likely increase demand for public transit in Shirley. Steps should be taken to increase parking capacity in Shirley Village to ensure that parking will be available as demand grows.

Goal: Increase the available parking in the Shirley Village for those utilizing the commuter rail.

Issue: Segments of local roads have poor sight lines, very sharp corners, and are too narrow in width. These concerns must be addressed by the Shirley Highway Department as they constitute a public safety hazard.

Goals: Town should work with Highway Department to identify and improve all segments on local roads where public safety issues exist.

Issue: The Town does not have an existing comprehensive system for studying intersection improvements.

Goal: Establish a system for studying intersection improvements and their effect on surrounding intersections.

Issue: As Shirley continues to experience increased residential development, the Town must consider the necessity of increasing public transportation options.

Goal: Additional public transportation services for the elderly and those on fixed incomes may be required due to increased residential growth.

Issue: Increased residential development will incrementally tax the carrying capacity of the local road network and place disproportionate financial demands on the local government to correct such transportation deficiencies.

Goal: The town and the local planning board should work to enact both a traffic shed analysis and Transfer of Development rights plan as a component of a growth management strategy to phase development in rural areas of town where the transportation network is currently inadequate to support residential development.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Issue: Grasslands have been disappearing gradually due to residential development.

Goal: Town should work to identify and protect sensitive grassland areas within town.

Issue: Vernal pools are an integral part of Shirley's wildlife habitat.

Goal: The Conservation Commission should proactively work to protect all remaining vernal pools in Shirley.

Issue: Existing and current pollution threats to drinking water supplies by point and non-point pollution sources and potential industrial development.

Goal: Prioritize land protection objectives to include the purchase of land parcels within the contribution zones of active and potential well sites.

Issue: Future biological integrity of the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers and associated riparian corridors.

Goal: Preserve the natural character of land along the Squannacook and Nashua Rivers, including floodplain and riparian buffer zones, to maintain water quality, wildlife habitat, and scenic values.

Issue: Fragmentation of existing forests by future development and its impacts on resident and migratory wildlife populations.

Goal: Protect large, unfragmented forest lands and other areas with high value for wildlife habitat. Establish connectivity between large, protected conservation parcels to maintain future habitat function and value of these areas.

Issue: Future development and its impact to documented rare species habitat and exemplary natural communities.

Goal: Further protect and buffer, if necessary, existing rare species habitats and exemplary natural communities identified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) through land acquisition or other means.

Issue: Development impacts to vernal pool habitat.

Goal: The Conservation Commission should identify and certify with the NHESP all vernal pools within the Town.

Issue: Development impacts to existing grasslands with high scenic, cultural and/or habitat value.

Goal: Identify all grasslands with significant scenic, cultural, and habitat value within the Town and prioritize for protection.

Issue: Non-point source impacts to water quality and fisheries.

Goal: Identify and implement management strategies that will minimize non-point source pollutants.

Issue: Preservation of Prime Farmland Soils.

Goal: Identify all areas underlain by Prime Farmland Soils and regulate land use in a way consistent with their agricultural value.

Issue: The future of land conservation in the Town of Shirley.

Goal: To be eligible for Self Help funds through the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' Division of Conservation Services and to increase the public awareness of land protection alternatives.

Issue: Development impacts to wetland resource areas.

Goal: Reduce the impacts of development to wetland resources by establishing more stringent construction setbacks and replication requirements.

Issue: Non-point source pollution remains a threat to the long-term viability of Shirley's fisheries.

Goal: The Town should identify and implement management strategies that will minimize non-point source pollutants.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Issue: Shirley possesses a rich legacy of historic cultural resources, including buildings, villages, landscapes, and archaeological sites worthy of conservation.

Goal: To protect and preserve Shirley's important historic building and village resources, landscapes, and archaeological sites.

Issue: The rural landscape dotted by distinct village areas creates the character of Shirley and are key elements that residents identify as defining the attraction of the town.

Goal: To preserve and protect the rural community character and quality of life that make Shirley a unique and identifiable town and an enjoyable place to live and work.

Issue: Expanded residential and economic development in Shirley are likely to alter the fabric and character of village and rural areas.

Goal: To ensure that future economic development of commercial village zones is in harmony with the historic character of the area, and that future residential, commercial/industrial

development in rural areas maintains important historic scenic and cultural landscapes, districts, buildings, and roads.

LAND USE

Issue: Shirley's rural character is being lost as traditional land uses and open spaces are converted to house lots.

Goal: Maintain the rural character of the town.

Issue: Recent regional development trends, installation of sewer service, and growth of Devens Commerce Center are creating an unusual wave of development.

Goal: Manage growth proactively to promote town goals over the long term.

Issue: Property tax policies can push land-owners into developing their land.

Goal: Use property tax policy to support private open space conservation.

Issue: Incremental Commercial development on Route 2A is creating a commercial strip.

Goal: Channel Rte. 2A development into distinct village centers

Issue: Growth and development is shaped by the zoning map and zoning bylaw, both of which have little to say about open space.

Goal: Create a shared, town-wide vision for open space that can become a reference for all planning and zoning decisions.

Issue: Implementation of the existing Shirley Open Space Plan has been effective, but relies heavily on a few individuals and is subject to varying levels of town support.

Goal: Make every citizen a partner in open space conservation.

Issue: Scenic roadsides are a key element in the rural character of Shirley, but vulnerable to change through residential and commercial development, town road management, and utility work.

Goal: Identify and conserve roadside resources while maintaining safety and efficiency.

Issue: Trails have been established on public and private conservation lands, but there are few town-wide links.

Goal: Create a town-wide trail network that links every home into a permanent open space system.

Issue: Areas for active recreation are limited, and require car transport for many residents and their children.

Goal: Expand opportunities for active recreation for all residents.

Issue: Potential impact of sewer on land use patterns, both good and bad, is not clear.

Goal: To understand implications of the sewer project for development.

Issue: Cost to town of improvements to and maintenance of roads and other infrastructure that must be made as a result of new development are not supported by that development.

Goal: Make development pay its own way.

Issue: Shirley Village's historic character and livable streets are its main asset and long-term drawing card; both are threatened by today's typical development standards.

Goal: Implement zoning that encourages appropriate economic growth while preserving the historic character of the village.

Issue: The railroad station provides a unique opportunity for non-automobile growth.

Goal: Build on commuter rail service to promote pedestrian-oriented growth in the village.

Issue: Shirley Village's historic character and small-town quality of life are threatened by traffic, road improvements, and growth at Devens.

Goal: Create a clear physical plan to guide development of the village over the long term.

Issue: Current use and density requirements promote a sprawling, monotonous pattern that is inconsistent with both rural and village areas.

Goal: Change zoning to promote development that fits into its context.

Issue: Cluster Development is not often used nor is it favored by some residents.

Goal: Make well-designed cluster/conservation development the first option for any project.

Issue: The development review process does not favor good design.

Goal: Tie approval of all forms of development to flexible performance standards and design guidelines rather than rigid rules and regulations.

Issue: Zoning and other regulations provide too little control on large, out of town developers, while needlessly restricting local residents.

Goal: Revise zoning and subdivision regulations to allow more flexibility for well-designed small projects, and to smooth the way for well-designed, environmentally-sensitive large projects.

Appendix C:
Vision Statement

SHIRLEY: TODAY AND TOMORROW

Shirley values land, water and wildlife resources and today, it benefits from a long history of conservation efforts by local officials and private citizens. The town works hard to balance its resource protection priorities with the need for homes and a vital local economy.

Shirley residents are proud of their community and its heritage. Those who choose Shirley as their hometown will find safe, pleasant neighborhoods, lots of open space, great schools and a close-knit community. Its local government is overseen by an elected Board of Selectmen, which carries out the will of town meeting and provides leadership to all town boards and committees. Shirley has devoted public employees, good roads, and recreation opportunities for people of all ages.

NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE

From the scenic landscapes of central and northern Shirley to the unspoiled beauty of the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers, Shirley has an abundance of land, water and man-made assets. Through stewardship and planning, the town has preserved many of its finest resources for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Its National Register Districts – Shirley Center and Shirley Village – help to preserve and memorialize significant milestones in Shirley's history. Watershed, farmland and forest protection are the central goals of Shirley's growth management policies.

LOCAL ECONOMY

Shirley Village is the town's social, commercial and civic hub. Shirley offers conveniently located goods and services to residents throughout town, but Shirley Village is the focus of local economic activity. Small, thriving businesses benefit from the loyalty of local customers while Shirley's industries provide many local jobs. Working with neighboring communities, MassDevelopment and other organizations, Shirley will attract its fair share of the region's economic growth at a pace it can absorb.

HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS

Shirley's homes are high quality, diverse and well maintained. The town does not exclude people and seeks to remain open to all age groups, family sizes and income levels. Toward that end, Shirley offers a wide range of housing choices – from farm homes to apartments and spacious single-family homes – in a variety of neighborhood settings.

Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley.

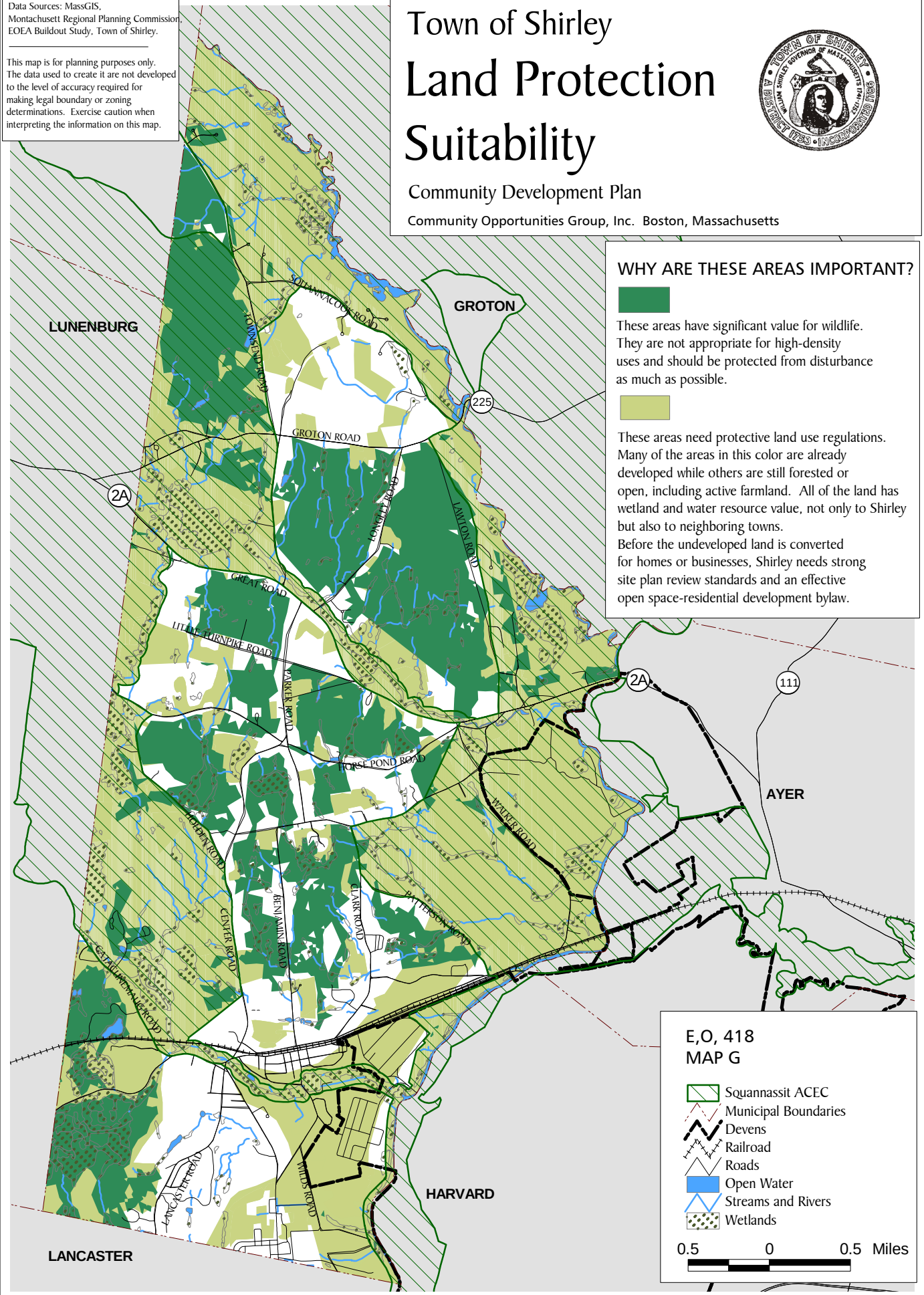
This map is for planning purposes only. The data used to create it are not developed to the level of accuracy required for making legal boundary or zoning determinations. Exercise caution when interpreting the information on this map.

Town of Shirley

Land Protection Suitability

Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts



WHY ARE THESE AREAS IMPORTANT?

These areas have significant value for wildlife. They are not appropriate for high-density uses and should be protected from disturbance as much as possible.

These areas need protective land use regulations. Many of the areas in this color are already developed while others are still forested or open, including active farmland. All of the land has wetland and water resource value, not only to Shirley but also to neighboring towns.
Before the undeveloped land is converted for homes or businesses, Shirley needs strong site plan review standards and an effective open space-residential development bylaw.

Town of Shirley
Land Use Suitability

Community Development Plan

Community Opportunities Group, Inc. Boston, Massachusetts

Data Sources: MassGIS, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, EOEA Buildout Study, Town of Shirley.

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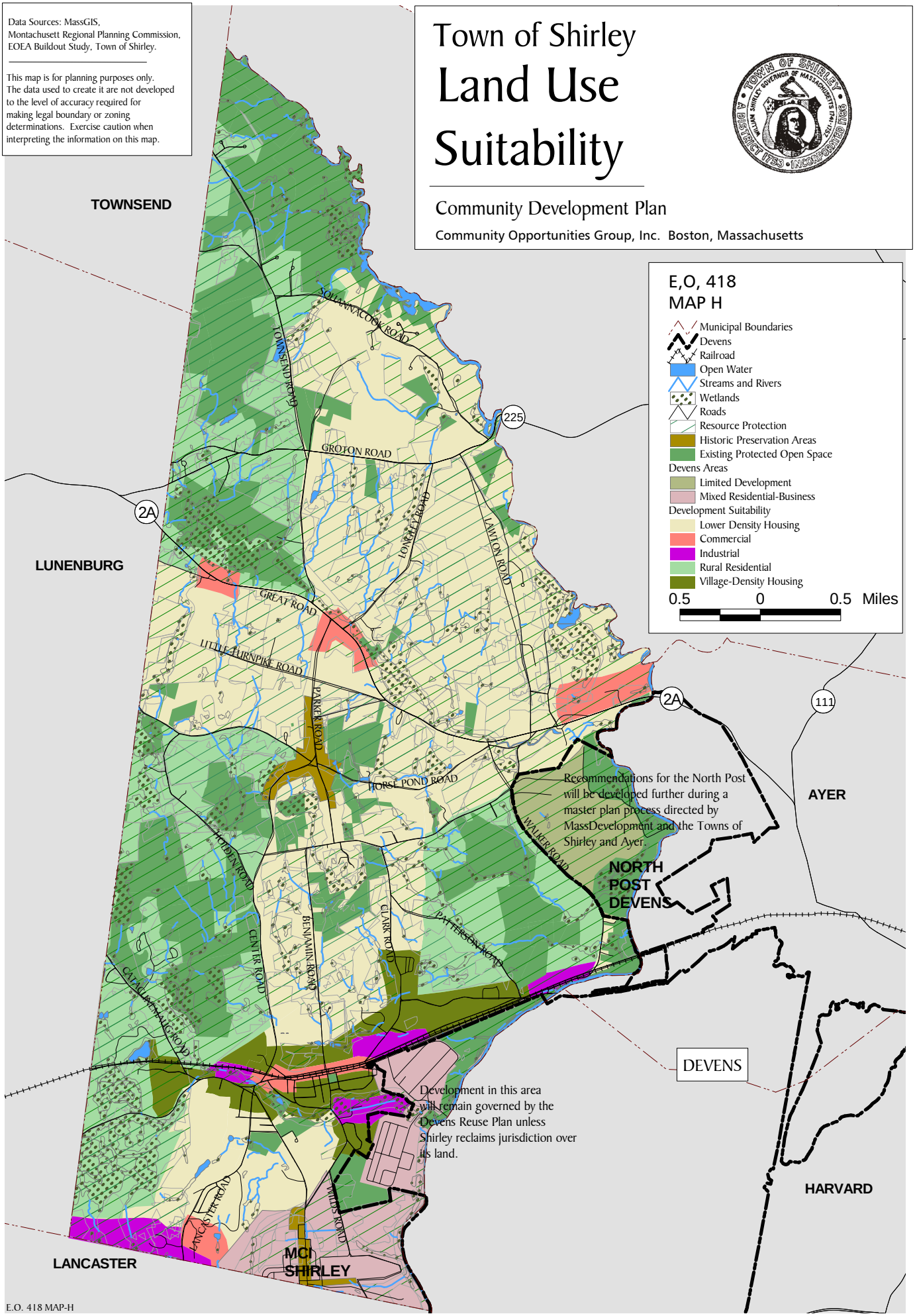

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