Section

3

Section 3: Community Setting

Sturbridge is a suburban-rural community located at the junction of Interstate 84, Interstate 90 and US Route 20 in south-central Massachusetts on the Connecticut-Massachusetts boundary. A major tourism destination, the Town is noted for its historic character and natural beauty.



TOWN HALL

A. Regional Context

The Location:

Sturbridge is surrounded by the Towns of Brimfield, Charlton, East Brookfield, Holland, Southbridge, Union, CT and Woodstock, CT. Sturbridge sits in a strategic "area of influence," with Worcester being 22 miles to the northeast, Springfield 23 miles to the west, Providence and Hartford each 40 miles to the south, and Boston 55 miles to the east. Sturbridge's location and highways provides convenient access to the Town and helps to support the tourism and

hospitality industry. In addition to various tourism-related businesses, the Town promotes its favorable location for other forms of economic development.

The Economy:

Residential development has slowed in Sturbridge as it has in communities around the region due to the lagging economy and abundance of housing units on the market. However, Sturbridge experienced its own housing boom between 2000 and 2009 when 708 building permits were issued for new housing starts. That was more than twice the number issued during the 1990's. Many residential subdivisions were also approved during 2000-2007. In fact, there were 238 residential lots approved within eight different subdivisions during that time period. Of this amount, 43 lots remain to be built upon. It is expected that once the economy begins its recovery, Sturbridge will again see high rates of development due to its convenient location, its exceptional services and schools, and its quality of life factors.

The Commercial and Industrial areas are generally located along Routes 20 and 131 and at the intersection of I-90 and I-84 through the central and eastern parts of town. Much of this development consists of retail shops and professional offices with the Sturbridge Business Park and the Sturbridge Technology Park anchoring both ends of Route 20.

The Commercial Districts, of which there are four (Commercial Tourist, Historic Commercial, Commercial and Commercial II) all allow for mixed use development to occur in some fashion. There is also a Special Use District located along Route 15 that allows for Planned Unit Business Development and hospitals or medical treatment buildings.

Retail development in Sturbridge is a combination of tourist specialty stores, a few small shopping plazas, and a larger shopping center that contains several national retail stores and restaurants. There is also a shopping plaza on Route 131 (south of the Town Common area) containing a Shaw's Supermarket, JC Penney and some smaller stores, primarily supplying goods for local residents. Ocean State Job Lot and Tractor Supply recently renovated a 60,000 square foot vacant retail space in this plaza and Grand Opening celebrations were held the weekend of March 26th.

The chart below shows employment by industry in Sturbridge over the past seven years. Of note is the over 50% decline in manufacturing jobs.

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total, All Industries, All Ownership	5,307	5,271	4,995	4,845	4,852	4,646	4,737	4,654
Total All industries, Private Ownership	4,715	4,666	4,400	4,273	4,278	4,060	4,124	4,027
Construction	94	83	82	89	113	109	99	75 450
Manufacturing	1093	804	598	479	482	465	467	430
Wholesale Trade	83	76	69	79	53	34	46	54
Retail Trade	1,149	1,224	1,194	1,196	1,194	1,160	1,095	1,097
Transportation & Warehousing	61	68	51	53	48	54		40
Information	14	14	14					10
Finance & Insurance	87	84	105	115	119	124	146	144
Real Estate & Rental and Leasing	40	45	49	40	36	32	30	28
Professional & Technical Services	73	66	73	75	114	126	136	153
Administrative & Waste Services		21	22	20		143		
Educational Services					10	11		
Health Care & Social Assistance	198	199	209	218	205	204	247	245
Accommodation & Food Services	1,462	1,548	1,504	1,500	1,372	1,291	1,348	1,301
Other Services, ex. Public Admin	68	76	77	93	87	83	118	113
Total, All Industries, All Ownership, Average Weekly Wage		\$518	\$518	\$517	\$523	\$543	\$569	\$590

Town leaders believe that restoring at least some of the manufacturing jobs within the community is vital to the long term economic health of the community in terms of employment statistics and a diversified tax base.

The Town has taken a proactive approach in recent years in an effort to attract industry and other commercial enterprises. An Economic Development Committee (EDC) has been formed to act as a liaison between the business community and local officials. The EDC also works towards attracting business to the community. The Land Use Division has worked to streamline permit procedures and make the permitting process as easy and expeditious as possible. The Town has also adopted the provisions of Chapter 43D and has designated several Priority Development Sites as just one more way to increase the amount of manufacturing jobs available within the community, and to help diversify our tax base to insure a healthy local economy and a vibrant community.

The Resources:

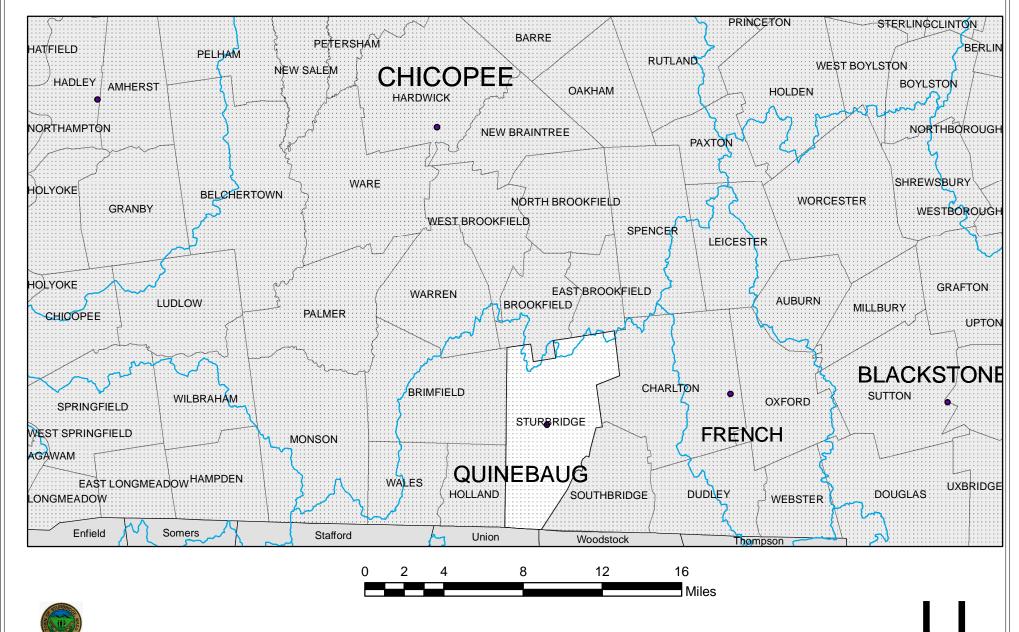
Sturbridge is rich in natural resources that serve important environmental and ecological purposes in addition to providing natural beauty and recreational opportunities. The Town is located

primarily within the Quinebaug River Watershed, which is in the southern part of Central Massachusetts. The watershed extends south into Connecticut and western Rhode Island and covers 850 acres². Additionally, The Quinebaug River and seven major open water bodies are within the town. The associated wetland and floodplain areas all help define priority areas for protection within the community.

Sturbridge's geographic location and natural amenities offer a unique opportunity to provide linkages in a regional open space corridor/multi-use trail greenway system. The Town has been active in these trail construction efforts. A notable project is the Grand Trunk Trail under construction at this time. This six mile segment travels east-west through town and for the most part is contained on the old rail bed for the Southern New England Railway, a division of the Grand Trunk Railway in Canada. This trails starts on the eastern border of Sturbridge and Southbridge at the Westville Dam. The trail continues eastward to the property at the East Brimfield Dam and continues south along Long Pond where it will someday connect to the Brimfield Trails. A more complete discussion on the Sturbridge Trail System can be found in Section 5 of this Plan.

² Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, http://www.mass.gov/Eoeea/docs/eea/watersheds-map.pdf

Town of Sturbridge Regional Context



B. History of the Community³

A little more than three hundred years ago, an Indian trader on his way to the Connecticut Region unexpectedly encountered some of the "Tantiusque Indians" who showed him some samples of a "black rock." These proved to be specimens of graphite (which was commonly called "lead" at that time as it is today in pencils). The discovery of the mine developed interest in what was then known as the "Lead Mine Region." Beginning in 1658, and for many years thereafter, the region was intermittently engaged in mining. In 1729, petition was made to the general court to open the land for settlement. The request was granted that year with the following stipulations, "in seven years time from this date to settle and have actually on the spot, fifty families, each of which is to build a house of eighteen feet square at least; to break up and bring fit to plowing seven acres of land; to settle a learned, orthodox minister..." This then was the beginning of the Town of Sturbridge which was named in honor of some of its early settlers whose origins were in the Town of Stourbridge, England. The town was formally incorporated as the Town of Sturbridge in 1738 and held its first Town Meeting in September 1738. From the Town's founding until well into this century, Sturbridge was primarily an agricultural community.

By 1742 the Town had organized its first school. Three schoolhouses were built by 1753. Eventually 13 school districts were established in town. About 1770, Colonel Ebenezar Crafts built the "hotel" now known as the "Publick House", which underwent a restoration in 1937, at which time a new front entrance of colonial design replaced the former front door.

By 1795, the Town was actively settled and contained 14 sawmills, 4 grist mills and shops producing carriages, pistols, chairs, tables and looms as well as thriving farms. In 1812, the Sturbridge Manufacturing Company started the first cotton mill in town, which operated until 1882 when it was struck by lightning and destroyed. In 1826, the Quinebaug Manufacturing Company was established and a mill was constructed in the Fiskdale section to produce cotton and woolen materials. In 1833, a second mill was built and several tenement houses were erected to house mill workers. In 1852, the Snell Manufacturing Company erected a factory in the Fiskdale section to produce augers and bits, which supplemented older buildings that had been operating on the same site. In 1895, fire destroyed two of the original buildings and in 1909 the third and newest building was likewise burned. These were subsequently replaced by the most recent Snell Manufacturing Company building, also located in Fiskdale.

From the Town's founding through the 19^{th} century, Sturbridge was primarily an agricultural community. Agriculture continued as a significant factor in the local economy through the 19^{th} century. The 1859 report of the Worcester South Agricultural Society lists 152 members from Sturbridge (compared with 48 members from Charlton, 10 from West Brookfield and 30 from

³ Excerpted in large part from the Town's 1971 Master Plan, with additions and corrections by Selectman Charles Blanchard and others. This section has been carried over from the 2005 OSRP.

Dudley). Of the 262 listings for real property in the 1875 Sturbridge Assessors' Report, 40% (or 106) list a farm as part of the valuation. An indication of the decline of agriculture in Sturbridge was included in the 1936 Selectmen's report which explains that the Highway Department work has now become a year round function "because we find now that we have living in the outside districts people who are dependent entirely upon our highways from transportation to and from the different industrial plants for their living."

In 1937, the "Quinebaug Village" was begun as a model New England Village of the year 1800. The Town of Sturbridge was selected as the locale for this model because of its charm and the beauty of its surroundings. In 1947, the project was taken over by "Old Sturbridge Village" and has experienced continual growth in scope since that time. In 1966, Old Sturbridge Incorporated acquired approximately 1,000 acres of land adjacent to the present "Village". In 2006, the Town and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife acquired 826 acres from the Village for Open Space protection.

Although Sturbridge's Commercial and Industrial tax base is remarkably high for a community of its size, more recently many have described the town as a "bedroom community." Located with quick access to Interstate 84, Interstate 90 (Mass Pike) and Route 20, Sturbridge offers an easy commute to a variety of employment locations. Based on 2000 Census data, almost three-quarters (74.5%) of Sturbridge workers aged 16 and older worked outside of Sturbridge. While this does not differ significantly from many of the Worcester county communities (region average is 69.2%), what does differ is the amount of travel time to work. Over half of Sturbridge workers (51.1%) spend 30 minutes or more traveling to work. This compares with 37.5% for Worcester County and 41.4% for the State of Massachusetts. The Town's scenic qualities and other amenities that are valued by today's residents could prove an incentive for additional residential development.

Table 1 - Sturbridge Population Growth

Year	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Population	1,573	1,772	2,227	2,805	3,604	4,878	5,976	7,775	7,837	9,300	9,800
10 Year											
Change		199	455	578	799	1,274	1,098	1,799	62	1,463	500
%											
Increase		12.65%	25.68%	25.95%	28.48%	35.35%	22.51%	30.10%	0.80%	18.67%	5.38%

Source: CMRPC Population Projections

Population Estimates, % Change per Decade

	1980-1990	1980-1990 1990-2000		2010-2020	
Sturbridge	30.10%	0.80%	9.63%	10.53%	
Worcester County	9.80%	5.67%	8.77%	9.84%	
Massachusetts	4.87%	5.53%	6.45%	6.76%	

Source: Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research

As well as looking at total population, it is important to examine the age distribution within a community. Different age segments will have differing recreation needs and differing opinions about open space. The numbers of Sturbridge residents in the various age brackets for the most part closely resemble the patterns shown in the Worcester County population and in the state-wide population. Census data (2000) shows 27.3% of Sturbridge population under the age of 20; 8.6% from 20 to 29 years of age; 14.2% from 30 to 39 years, 18.5% from 40 to 49 years; 13.4% from 50 to 59 and 18% 60 and over.

Population Density

Age Distribution, 2000

	Sturbridge town, Worcester County, Massachusetts	Worcester County, Massachusetts	Massachusetts
Household Composition			
Under 20 years of age	27.3%	28.2%	26.3%
20 – 29 years of age	8.6%	11.8%	13.2%
30 – 39 years of age	14.2%	16.5%	16.3%
40 - 49 years of age	18.5%	16.1%	15.7%
50 – 59 years of age	13.4%	10.9%	11.3%
60 years of age and over	18.0%	16.5%	17.3%

Source: US Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P8

Of these brackets, the only age segment where Sturbridge varies more than 3% from either Worcester County or Massachusetts is the 20-29 bracket, where Sturbridge lags behind Worcester and the State (8.6% for Sturbridge, compared to 11.8% for Worcester and 13.2% for the state). Simply examining population under forty or forty and over, Sturbridge has an almost even 50-50 split. Both Worcester and the Commonwealth have greater numbers of younger residents (rounding off decimals, 56% under forty versus 44% forty and over). In addition, not only does Sturbridge have an older population than its surrounds, but it is in this older bracket where the expected population growth is most heavily concentrated, based on MISER estimates (MISER estimates project 43% growth in the 60+ age bracket between 2010 and 2020; by far the largest increase). The growth in the Town's older population segments mirrors a phenomenon occurring across the nation: the "graying of America", that is, our nation's elderly population (defined as 65 years of age and over) is expanding at a faster rate than the younger population categories. Again, this trend is consistent with other area wide and state wide demographic trends and is an important consideration for open space and recreation planning. The increase in the Town's median age also bears this out. In 1990, the median age of a Sturbridge resident was 34.6 years of age; by 2000, the median age had increased to 39.3 years of age.

The demographic trends indicate that additional recreation facilities and activities for seniors will be needed during the next decade. The increase in the senior population spurs the need for passive forms of recreation such as walking trails and parks and this must be balanced with open space and recreational facilities for youth and families.

Household Characteristics

In addition to examining age characteristics, it is important to look at household characteristics when assessing open space and recreation needs. Household characteristics have a direct impact on the types of open space and recreation area that are required and/or desired by a community.

	Sturbridge town, Worcester County, Massachusetts	Worcester County, Massachusetts	Massachusetts
Household Composition			
Total:	3,066	283,927	2,443,580
1-person household:	23.4%	26.2%	28.0%
Male householder	9.8%	11.1%	11.4%
Female householder	13.6%	15.1%	16.6%
2 or more person household:	76.6%	73.8%	72.0%
Family households:	72.2%	67.8%	64.5%
Married-couple family:	60.7%	52.5%	49.0%
With own children under 18 years	27.6%	24.8%	22.4%
No own children under 18 years	33.1%	27.7%	26.6%
Other family:	11.5%	15.2%	15.5%
Male householder, no wife present:	2.8%	3.8%	3.6%
With own children under 18 years	1.5%	1.9%	1.5%

No own children under 18 years	1.3%	2.0%	2.1%
Female householder, no husband present	8.7%	11.4%	11.9%
With own children under 18 years	5.1%	6.9%	6.7%
No own children under 18 years	3.6%	4.5%	5.2%
Nonfamily households:	4.4%	6.0%	7.5%
Male householder	2.8%	3.5%	4.1%
Female householder	1.6%	2.5%	3.4%

Source: US Census 2000, Summary File 1, Table P18,

While the differences in household size and type do not appear overly dramatic, the significance can be seen in the lower numbers for Sturbridge of 1-person family households and non-married-couple families (single adults with children). An interesting data point is elementary school students per household. Based on 2000 data, Sturbridge has .24 elementary students per household compared to the national average of .45 (see Burgess Elementary School Feasibility Study). This smaller average number of students per household might lead to the conclusion that Sturbridge would have a smaller average household size. However, this is not true. The average household size in Sturbridge, based on 2000 Census data, is 2.55. This is just slightly larger than the average household size at the state level of 2.51, and very slightly smaller than the Worcester County average household size of 2.56.

Household Size, 2000

	1-person	2-person	3-person	4-person	5-person	6-person	7+ person
# of households	722	1075	499	507	192	52	19
percentage	23%	35%	16%	17%	6%	2%	<1%

Source: US Census 2000, Summary File 3, Table P14

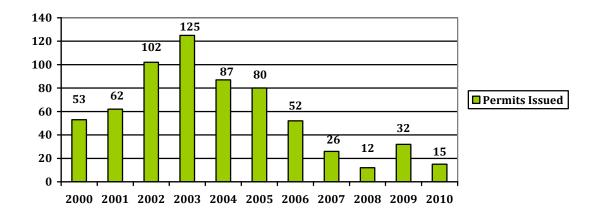
The US Census reports 2000 median family income for Sturbridge at \$65,649. Worcester County median family income is listed at \$47,874 and Massachusetts median family income is listed at \$50,502. The Table below shows a breakdown of income characteristics for the Town of Sturbridge.

Family Income

Subject	Subject Sturbridge, Massachusetts – Total Family Income								
	Households	Families			Nonfamily households				
		Total	Married couple families	Female householder, no husband present					
NUMBER									
Total	808	565	493	72	243				
Less than \$10,000	26	19	8	11	7				
\$10,000 to \$14,999	29	14	0	14	15				
\$15,000 to \$19,999	41	19	19	0	22				
\$20,000 to \$24,999	38	20	10	10	28				
\$25,000 to \$29,999	29	29	29	0	0				
\$30,000 to \$34,999	93	21	21	0	72				
\$35,000 to \$39,999	0	0	0	0	0				
\$40,000 to \$44,999	50	33	29	4	21				
\$45,000 to \$49,999	33	33	33	0	0				
\$50,000 to \$59,999	78	60	44	16	8				
\$60,000 to \$74,999	166	112	112	0	54				
\$75,000 to \$99,999	134	125	125	0	9				
\$100,000 to \$124,999	52	41	24	17	7				
\$125,000 to \$149,999	12	12	12	0	0				
\$150,000 to	11	11	11	0	0				

\$199,999					
\$200,000 or more	16	16	16	0	0
Median income (dollars)	56,806	65,649	66,563	43,125	33,060
Mean income (dollars)	60,237	67,802	71,055	45,531	40,424

Residential growth has slowed over the past five years, but remained fairly consistent and between 2006 and 2010 an average of 27 single family home residential building permits were issued per year according to the Sturbridge Building Commissioner (see chart below). However during the real housing boom years over 100 single family home building permits were issued in both 2002 and 2003 with the average permits per year between 2000 and 2005 numbering 85 annually. This rate of building meshes with Sturbridge current population count (Census 2010 population at 9,268) and shows the weakness in the MISER population projections.



Source: Sturbridge Department of Inspectional Services / Division of Code Enforcement

Population Density

According to the 2000 Census, the population density of the Town of Sturbridge is 209.5 persons per square mile of land area. The population density of Worcester County is 496.3 and Massachusetts is 809.8 persons per square mile.

D. Growth and Development Patterns

While residential development in Sturbridge used to be town wide and industrial development existed along the Quinebaug River, the introduction of the Turnpike and Interstate 84 along with several US Routes has changed this settlement pattern significantly. Residential areas are centered around lakes and ponds and along the collector roads, which run into the numbered highways. Less residential development exists on the outskirts of Town. However, with developable land becoming scarcer within the already developed areas, the Planning Department is receiving more inquiries about land located on the outskirts of town. These areas are located away from public services and a good distance from town recreation areas.

There has been significant commercial development within the Town of Sturbridge. Approximately 478 acres are zoned General Industrial or Industrial Park; this is about 2% of the total land area. With an Industrial Park on each end of the town, the town has a significant number of clean manufacturing facilities located within each. Retail development is spread throughout Route 20 and portions of Route 131 as well.

There are 187 miles of roadways within the Town of Sturbridge. Of this amount 80 miles of roadway are public and 58 miles are private roadways that have not been accepted by the Town. MassDOT roadways include I-90, I-84, Route 20, Route 131, and Route 49, consisting of a total of 48 miles. Additionally, there is one mile of roadway contained in the State Park. Most of the roadways (66%) within the Town are classified as local roadways; 14% of the roadways are Interstate Highways; and Route 20 and Route 131 are classified as urban principal arterials since they serve as the primary links to the interstate highway system.

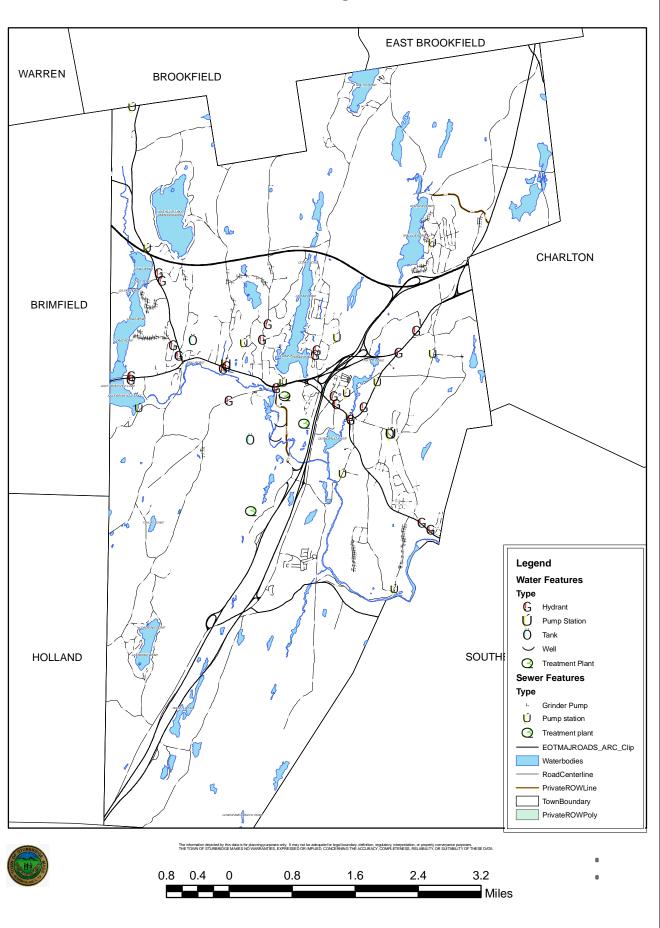
The major east-west roadways in Sturbridge are Route 131 and Route 20. The major north-south roadways are Route 148, New Boston Road, Route 15 and Route 49. Two interstate highways travel through Town. The Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90) is an east-west interstate that connects Boston to New York State. There is an interchange access point to I-90 located at the connection with Interstate 84 (I-84) in Sturbridge. I-84 is a north-south interstate that provides access to Connecticut and points southwest. The northern terminus of I-84 is at I-90 in Sturbridge.

Water and sewer service exists throughout the central section (urbanized portion) of Town. At present the system has expanded to include the majority of Main Street, beginning at Riverview Ave and proceeding easterly on Route 20 to the Route 20/131 intersection, then turning southeasterly on Route 131 to the Southbridge Town line. The system also serves the Tantasqua Regional High School on Route 148 approximately three miles north of Route 20. Other areas in Town that have water and sewer utilities to various degrees are: Fiske Hill Road, south of Summit Ridge; the perimeter of Cedar Lake; the perimeter of Big Alum; the Technology Park industrial area; and portions of Arnold Road, Cedar Street and New Boston Road.

A new Well # 4, a water treatment facility, and a new pipeline are currently under construction at 44 Shattuck Road. The site was chosen based upon a detailed study commissioned by the town and the land was acquired in 2006 for this purpose. The new well will improve the reliability of the Town's water system by providing additional water supply and a new treatment plant.

The Wastewater Treatment Facility located at 69 Route 84 is currently being upgraded to repair and replace aging and obsolete equipment, to provide additional capacity to address environmental concerns and population growth within the existing service area, and to ensure compliance with the existing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. According to reports prepared for the Town by Tighe & Bond, the new facility will reduce the discharge of phosphorous to the Quinebaug River by over 60% and will allow the town to reduce the amount of nitrogen discharged to the river by over 30%. The new plant will utilize new treatment technologies, including "Bio-Mag" which increases the amount of wastewater that can be treated in tanks and "Co-Mag" which removes phosphorous from wastewater.

Town of Sturbridge Infrastructure



An Open Space Residential Development Bylaw was adopted by the Town at the Annual Town Meeting in 2009. This bylaw provides an alternative to conventional subdivision design and is one of the tools that can help to minimize residential sprawl in communities. This flexible approach to subdivision design provides for a greater level of natural resource protection while allowing greater flexibility with regard to lot sizes and setbacks. Less land clearing occurs, the amount of impervious surface is reduced and at least 50% of the entire parcel is preserved as permanently protected open space.

Many of the Town's long-range planning efforts are being concentrated in largely undeveloped areas such as the Route 15 corridor, which runs north/south through town. The town wide survey for the Master Plan asked respondents to indicate if they favored or opposed specific listed uses along Route 15. The majority of respondents indicated that they either strongly favored or favored uses that are permitted under current zoning along this corridor. Planning efforts will now need to focus on a review of the current bylaw. Protecting scenic value along this corridor, which is an impressive gateway into Massachusetts from Connecticut, is very important.

Sturbridge's town center consists of a recently renovated and restored Town Hall and Center Office Building, a library, a post office, churches and a Town Common. The Town's commercial center of activity is located along Route 20 west of Interstate 84. There is a benefit having the Town's institutional/symbolic center "off of the beaten path." At present, the Town Common is used for community concerts (at the gazebo-style bandstand) and other local events, and is also used as a passive recreation area with benches. Because of existing and open lands around the center, there is an opportunity to create green areas that buffer and protect the center from the noise and presence of the highways just north and east.



Town Common

A comparison of land use maps from the years 1971, 1985 and 1999 shows the amount of land converted to residential use during a span of 28 years. Most of the land used for new development between 1971 and 1999 came out of forestlands and, to a lesser extent, farmlands. The data on the following chart is from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst from its most recent statewide land use mapping effort (1999) and its two previous efforts from 1985 and 1971. The classification "other" includes forested areas, vacant/unused land, wetlands (though water bodies are included in the last) and other land that does not seem to be actively used. Urban open land includes parks, cemeteries and other developed open spaces. Transportation is land used for transportation purposes. In Sturbridge, this represents the land devoted to roadway right-of-ways and would also include trucking terminals, etc. A comparison of the land use data indicates a substantial increase in residential, industrial and commercial development, and a substantial loss of forest and farmlands between 1971 and 1999.

LAND USE CLASSIFICATION

LAND USE	1971	1971	1985	1985	1999	1999	% Increase
	acres of land	% of land total	acres of land	% of land total	acres of land	% of land total	(1971-99)
Other	20,337	81.6%	19,754	79.3%	17,925	71.9%	-11.9%
Agriculture	983	3.9%	814	3.3%	707	2.8%	-28.1%
Urban open	192	0.8%	192	0.8%	192	0.8%	0.0%
Waste disposal	49	0.2%	49	0.2%	49	0.2%	0.0%
Water	961	3.9%	963	3.9%	963	3.9%	0.0%
Commercial	118	0.5%	154	0.6%	239	1.0%	+102.5%
Industrial	45	0.2%	57	0.2%	63	0.3%	+40.0%
Mining	83	0.3%	115	0.5%	95	0.4%	+14.5%
Recreation	134	0.5%	151	0.6%	177	0.7%	+32.1%
Transportation	697	2.8%	714	2.9%	723	2.9%	+3.7%
Residential	1,326	5.3%	1,886	7.6%	2,594	10.4%	+95.6%

Source: MacConnell "map-down" land use analyses, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

Town of Sturbridge Land Use

