

Protecting our Past
Preserving our Rural Character

*

Hatfield's Master Plan For the Twenty-First Century

✧

Shaping our Future
Enhancing our Economic Base

Dear Fellow Hatfield Residents:

At the start of our planning process, we used a mail survey and a series of community meetings to elicit your concerns about Hatfield. You told us that you most valued Hatfield's:

- **Rural character**
- **Open space**
- **Working farms**
- **Local schools**
- **Easy access to I-91**

You told us that your top goals are:

- **Preserve town character**
- **Support the schools**
- **Maintain a low municipal tax rate**
- **Protect our natural resources**
- **Maintain working farms**

Although pride in Hatfield was everywhere in evidence, about half of the 330 households responding to our survey said that recent growth and development had changed the town for the worse.

In our initial presentation to town meeting, we emphasized some of the things a Master Plan can do for Hatfield:

- **Help manage growth and development**
- **Maintain the character of the community**
- **Protect critical natural, historical, and cultural resources**
- **Plan for major capital expenditures**
- **Ensure adequate services to residents and businesses**
- **Discover issues of importance to the community that have never been articulated in public**
- **Allow for a free and open discussion of major decisions facing the town, in a public process accessible to all citizens**

This plan accomplishes these goals in a way that we hope reflects your values and desires.

Sincerely,

The Hatfield Master Plan Committee

Daryl Williams, Chair

David Dulong, Vice Chair

Frank Abarno
Peter Allison
Martha Armstrong
Terry Blunt
Ellen Bokina
Thomas Carroll

Joan Cocks
Michael Coffey
Paul Davis
Bryan Nicholas
Mark Stein
Bob Wagner

Please note: Our committee decided to cede responsibility for school issues to existing groups, committees, boards, parents, and personnel in town already working on this very important area of concern, because we felt that these groups have much more expertise on the question of local schools than we do.

Table of Contents

- I. Explanation: Why Hatfield Needs a Master Plan
- II. Executive Summary: The Plan in Brief
- III. The Plan in Detail
 - A. Public Participation/Goal Setting
 - B. Growth and Development
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
 - C. Economic Character
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
 - D. Agriculture
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
 - E. Natural Resources
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
 - F. Open Space and Recreation
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
 - G. Historic Preservation
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
 - H. Infrastructure
 - 1. Facts
 - 2. Issues
 - 3. Strategies
- IV. Implementation
 - A. Bylaw Changes
 - B. Other Recommendations
 - C. Publicizing the Plan
 - D. Updating the Plan
- V. Endnotes

Appendices

List of Recommendations

Summary of Public Survey and Visioning Sessions

I. Explanation: Why Hatfield Needs a Master Plan

Hatfield's Current Situation

Compared with nearby communities, the region, and the state, Hatfield is thriving. The town has plenty of open space, productive farmland, intact neighborhoods, and a beautiful main street. Residents are economically well off, the tax base is stable, the infrastructure has met residents' needs, and the town enjoys a balance of commercial and industrial enterprises. The town is small enough that it can govern itself by town meetings and elected boards.

Why shouldn't Hatfield simply continue to do in the future what it has done in the past? Why the need for a new Master Plan?

Regional pressures make it necessary for the town to take specific new actions to control its fate. Hatfield needs updated zoning regulations to preserve its rural character and enhance its economic base without overstepping private property rights. The town does not have adequate tools to attract new business to town while preventing over-scaled, poorly sited, or ill-designed commercial and industrial buildings.

In addition, Hatfield lacks housing opportunities for elderly residents and for children of Hatfield families who wish to buy their first homes here. It lacks standards for clustered residential development that might help preserve open space. The town's water supply is strained by residents' needs in the summer and is threatened by development occurring over the aquifer. Houses on large lots are being built on some of the world's richest farmland, while land currently zoned for industrial and commercial growth is criss-crossed by wetlands.

Zoning and Planning

Zoning by-laws map out the ways a community can change in the future. Zoning determines not only where development should occur, but also what it will look like, and how it will be laid out in the landscape. Zoning is the single most important force influencing the future shape of a town.

Hatfield's zoning regulations were last amended in 1990. They do not provide the town with the ability to deal with the types and intensities of development that can be anticipated in the new millennium. For example, Hatfield's zoning map is notable for the scattered nature of the commercial and industrial zoning districts in town. While this reflects a positive integration of small businesses and homes, it can have negative consequences with intensified commercial and industrial growth. Many undeveloped, industrially zoned parcels are accessible only over small rural roads. If these industrial parcels were fully built out, truck traffic would strain rural roads and transform the character of residential neighborhoods along them. Moreover, without adequate buffers, neighborhoods adjacent to commercial and industrial development would likely suffer a decline in quality.

Hatfield needs updated and improved zoning regulations as well as other tools to achieve the type and character of development residents want. In addition, the town must address the relationship between provision of public facilities and infrastructure on the one side, and growth and development on the other. Until this point the town has avoided, almost by accident, many of the growth pressures that have transformed towns in the Pioneer Valley. Hatfield's relatively outdated infrastructure has made it less attractive than surrounding communities to new development. If Hatfield moves to upgrade its infrastructure, a move that would save the town money in the end, the upgrade, especially of sewers and roads, could spark an influx of development that will need to be managed.

II. Executive Summary: The Plan in Brief

Hatfield's last Master Plan was completed in 1986. In 1998 the Town of Hatfield, as represented by the actions of the Select Board, decided to launch a new master planning process. In 1999, the Hatfield Select Board formed the Master Plan Committee (MPC). The committee consists of 14 volunteers, all residents of Hatfield. The town hired the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to aid in the plan's development.

Public Participation/Goal Setting

The MPC identified the common objectives of the community by reviewing past plans, talking with community leaders, and soliciting residents' ideas via a public survey and a series of public visioning meetings. Through this process the MPC learned that, while residents are content in Hatfield, they are concerned about three key areas:

1. Managing growth and economic development
2. Preserving agriculture, natural resources, open space, and historic neighborhoods—the “rural character of Hatfield”
3. Providing infrastructure (water, sewer, schools, and roads) or determining how the town meets its responsibilities to residents

Residents want Hatfield to maintain its vitality at the same time that it preserves aspects of daily life that make Hatfield attractive to its residents and an exceptional example of the New England small town. More specifically, residents want new growth and development adequate to support the town's financial needs, but not so much that the town loses its farmland, natural resources, beautiful open spaces, and historic character.

Chapter 41, Section 81D of the General Laws of Massachusetts provides the legal basis for the creation of master plans. This act creates the requirement for a community Master Plan “. . .to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality.” The Planning Board is charged with the creation of the Master Plan, which should include goals, policies, and an implementation section, as well as seven substantive elements: land use, housing, economic development, natural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and transportation.

Process

The MPC developed seven working papers addressing these key areas of concern. The “Plan in Detail” section summarizes these papers, which describe what is happening in Hatfield now, what might happen, and how Hatfield can best achieve its goals. The “Implementation” section lays out a detailed process for taking action on the solutions the plan proposes. Below are summarized the findings in the three key areas noted above, including the recommendations described in the plan and a summary of plan implementation.

1. Growth, Development, and Economic Character

Hatfield has experienced steady but relatively modest growth over the past three decades. Residential growth has largely been limited to existing lots on existing town roads. The reluctance of many landowners to sell open land and the absence of sewer access in many parts of town have limited larger-scale developments. Because of zoning changes that followed adoption of the 1987 Land Use Plan and a strong market for larger homes, the number of acres under residential development, which has risen from 748 in 1971 to 1,131 in 1997 (a 150 percent increase), has actually increased more sharply than the number of new homes. Business development, often attracted by Hatfield's easy access to I-91, has almost doubled in this same period. The number of acres under business or industrial development has risen from 92 in 1971 and 124 in 1985 to 186 in 1997.

While three-quarters of Hatfield's total acreage remains undeveloped, the growth along existing town roads has meant a rise in truck and vehicular traffic, and a decline in the sense of open space. A strong regional housing market, prime real estate, and an attractive school system make Hatfield a tempting target for residential development. A growing regional bottleneck at the Coolidge Bridge on Route 9 and the exhaustion of available real estate along the Route 5/King Street

commercial corridor in Northampton are causing increased commercial and retail interest in Hatfield's West Street neighborhood. Hatfield's zoning mandates large lot residential development, which encourages the conversion of open space to housing lots and limits opportunities for first-time homeowners and the elderly.

Hatfield's existing zoning regulations are inadequate to protect the town's character in the present environment. One cannot assume that landowners who have kept their land out of development will continue to do so in the face of a very attractive market or changes in their own life circumstances. Development that is not carefully managed can easily degrade existing neighborhoods. Large-scale commercial development especially feeds on itself, because once one property owner sells his land for such uses, neighbors will be more likely to do so as well.

Hatfield is not a self-contained economic unit. Twenty-one percent of residents work in town, but the majority do not. Conversely, many people from out of town work in Hatfield. Only some of Hatfield's commercial establishments expect to conduct most of their business with residents. Although some residents might welcome a bank and more shopping opportunities in the old town center, the widely dispersed, relatively small population makes such development unlikely, irrespective of land availability or zoning constraints. Hatfield has a general interest in the strength and diversity of the economy in Western Massachusetts, but the town must focus on enhancing its own tax base to provide financial resources for such important public services as its schools. Further economic development is in the town's interest if the positive contribution to the tax base outweighs the negative consequences, increased traffic, neighborhood disruption, demands on town infrastructure and services, and environmental degradation.

An analysis of existing zoning regulations shows that much land currently zoned for commercial and industrial development is too environmentally sensitive for such development. The business-zoned land is also so broadly scattered across the community that its full development would seriously threaten the character of the town. Hatfield needs more targeted development and more say over the shape of that development. At the same time, some town regulations should be modified to ease the burden both on new enterprises and on existing businesses that may wish to expand.

The Master Plan recommends that the town:

- **Adopt site plan review/approval for all commercial and industrial uses.**
- **Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act and establish a local preservation fund.**
- **Review and amend zoning and subdivision regulations to manage development.**
- **Develop zoning regulations to promote a diversity of housing opportunities.**
- **Manage residential development.**
- **Adopt commercial and industrial design guidelines.**
- **Adopt commercial and industrial performance standards.**
- **Promote limited business development as infill in the town center.**
- **Adopt Transfer of Development Rights bylaws.**
- **Educate younger generations about the need to preserve the rural character of Hatfield.**
- **Create a new light industrial and technology park district.**
- **Create a new satellite business center district.**

2. Rural Character: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Open Space, and Historic Preservation

The town of Hatfield is at a turning point in which it must act aggressively to maintain its identity as a small, beautiful, agricultural community in the face of increasing regional growth and development pressures. People who live in Hatfield talk about the community's "rural character." This term encompasses four aspects of this Master Plan: agriculture, natural resource protection, open space and recreation, and historic preservation.

The first component of Hatfield's rural character is its farming heritage. According to *National Geographic*, Hatfield has the seventh best agricultural land in the world. The community strongly identifies with its agricultural heritage and wants to see farming continue as a central part of the town's economic life. While the quantifiable loss of farms and farmland in Hatfield is modest, the trend is not positive. Excluding forest land, the total loss of farmland in the town between

1971 and 1997 was about 220 acres, or 5.7 percent. Continuing pressure in the real estate market for larger lot home sites close to I-91, along with the educational, cultural, and economic amenities of communities like Amherst and Northampton, could easily tip the balance against Hatfield's working farm landscapes. Hatfield needs to assist farmers who wish to protect their land from future development, and find ways to promote its agricultural economy. Hatfield also has very little land enrolled in the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, with only two farm parcels protected, compared to 41 protected farms in neighboring Hadley.

The second and third components involved in preserving Hatfield's rural character are natural resources and open space. Adopting zoning regulations to safeguard floodplains, rivers, wetlands, watersheds, and wildlife habitats will sustain Hatfield's ecological richness while helping to control flooding and protecting the town's water supply. It will also help the town direct new commercial and residential growth toward less environmentally sensitive lands. Hatfield's forests similarly have a value above and beyond the diversity reflected in the 135 species of trees and shrubs identified in the town's 1989 Conservation and Recreation Plan. They reduce flooding and protect river corridors from runoff of oil, fertilizers, and other chemicals. Most critically, much of the forested land in West Hatfield provides crucial absorption and filtration of water runoff that would otherwise reach the town's water supply.

Finally, rural character encompasses historic preservation—most importantly, preservation of the integrity of all Hatfield's historic neighborhoods. The town of Hatfield is fortunate to have two outstanding organizations committed to documenting, preserving, and protecting Hatfield's historic heritage and its culture: the Hatfield Historical Commission and the Hatfield Historical Society. Together, these two organizations, fueled by the energy of numerous volunteers and very limited staff, are doing an exemplary job. Even so, lack of resources and space limitations are threatening the town's ability to protect its past.

The Master Plan recommends that the town:

- **Establish a community-based “agricultural advisory commission” to represent farming issues at the local level.**
- **Ensure that zoning and other bylaws reflect “farmer-friendly” approaches.**
- **Make farmland preservation a priority.**
- **Actively encourage farmer participation in the state's Agricultural Preservation restriction (APR) program.**
- **Adopt a Sensitive Natural Areas Zoning Overlay District and review current zoning district boundaries.**
- **Add performance standards to zoning regulations for watershed and critical areas.**
- **Implement a stormwater management bylaw.**
- **Adopt an Environmental Impact Analysis requirement for large development projects.**
- **Encourage adequate vegetated buffer strips between developed areas and wetland areas.**
- **Institute a well-monitoring program.**
- **Acquire greenway corridors along streams.**
- **Increase use of the Chapter 61 program while assuring that Chapter 61 conversions are reviewed by the town.**
- **Revise existing floodplain regulations.**
- **Update the 1989 Open Space and Recreation Plan.**
- **Improve substandard recreational facilities.**
- **Expand the review responsibilities of the Hatfield Historical Commission.**
- **Research the utility of creating an historical overlay district in Hatfield.**

3. Infrastructure: How the Town Meets Residents' Basic Needs

Achieving a balance between protecting rural character and enhancing economic prosperity is referred to as growth management. The final piece of the growth management pie is a community's infrastructure. A big reason why Hatfield has not yet been too negatively affected by growth and development pressures is that the town has outdated infrastructure. Limited sewer lines, unpaved roads, and an increasingly strained water supply in the town of Hatfield may give some developers pause when they look around the Pioneer Valley for sites to build their office parks and retail

centers. It is important to acknowledge explicitly the connection between provision of infrastructure and how a community grows. Where the town invests its limited tax dollars will affect where development occurs.

Hatfield has excellent drinking water, but under current pricing and distribution conditions, peak summer use is testing the limits of the supply. In addition to concerns about supply, dead end lines and undersized pipes severely compromise town firefighting capabilities. The Department of Public Works believes that the town's commitment to gradually meter all users will encourage conservation, but addressing flow requires physical improvements. Others see physical improvements, like improving town roads or extending sewers, though desired by some, as steps that encourage growth. Infrastructure improvements can increase the residential and commercial value of undeveloped land and hence the pressure to develop open space. Fully maintained, dirt roads cost the town more than paved roads. Paved roads, however, can increase unwanted traffic. Many homeowners fear the costs of meeting new septic system standards. Others believe their existing systems will continue to work and do not wish to pay for town sewer.

The Master Plan recommends that the town:

- **Develop a Master Plan for town water and sewer systems with a corresponding development schedule and expand facilities only to those areas planned for future development.**
- **Develop a prioritization schedule for infrastructure system upgrades and expansions.**
- **Work with businesses to research available funds to meet the infrastructure needs of businesses on Routes 5/10.**
- **Investigate alternative methods of reducing peak demand for water in summer months.**
- **Allocate resources to improve school facilities.**
- **Reduce traffic impacts from industrial uses on residents of North Hatfield.**
- **Amend subdivision regulations to require underground utilities for residential projects.**
- **Adopt a telecommunications bylaw.**

4. Where Do We Go From Here? A Summary of Plan Implementation

The Hatfield Master Plan is being developed in three phases. Phase One (visioning and goal-setting) and Phase Two (data collection and analysis and plan development) are now completed. Phase Three (launching implementation) runs from January 2001 to July 31, 2002.

The Master Plan includes 37 recommendations designed to maintain and improve the quality of life in the town. They were identified out of a preliminary list of hundreds of possible actions the town could take to protect and maintain its rural character while at the same time maintaining residents' unusually high quality of life. (An additional 23 recommendations are described in the "Endnotes" section of the plan.) To assure implementation of the recommendations, the Master Plan Committee has classified each recommendation according to the following four criteria:

- What is the type of recommendation: regulatory (zoning or subdivision regulation change) or non-regulatory?
- What is its level of importance on a scale of 1-3? (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)
- Who has primary responsibility for implementation?
- When should this recommendation be acted upon?

Many of the Master Plan's 37 recommendations may be acted upon swiftly and simultaneously. However, 20 of them require changing Hatfield's zoning regulations. Such changes necessarily take time and must be adopted at town meeting. The Master Plan Committee plans to work with the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, and the Select Board to bring zoning changes to the town for approval at the May 2002 town meeting. Yet, in an effort to maintain the momentum that has been built up in Hatfield surrounding the development of this Master Plan, the MPC will work with the Planning Board to bring at least two and possibly three items to the townspeople at the May 2001 town meeting, including a site plan review zoning change, creation of a Hatfield Community Preservation Fund, and creation of an agriculture advisory committee.

III. The Plan in Detail

A. Public Participation/Goal Setting

The Hatfield Master Plan Committee used a combination of public meetings (visioning sessions) and a survey mailed to all residents to solicit public involvement in the master planning process. Results of these efforts were used to determine the topics of the six working papers, essentially the backbone of Hatfield's Master Plan. Once the Master Plan Committee chose the six topics for the working papers, members shifted gears toward getting the public involved in researching and writing the plan.

Survey

Three hundred and twenty-seven residents responded to a mail survey conducted in April 1999. Survey results indicated community interest in preserving the rural character of Hatfield (63 percent of respondents indicated the rural character of Hatfield is the most valued feature). For a list of survey results, see Appendix.

Visioning

Sixty-nine residents participated in three public visioning sessions conducted over a three-week period in June 1999. Participants identified, discussed, and ranked issues in the community. For a list of issues, see Appendix.

Application

The combination of a mail survey followed with visioning sessions allowed for public identification of issues combined with public ranking of the importance of the issues. The issue of economic development illustrates the nuances that were uncovered through the combined process. In the survey, respondents preferred economic growth that would not radically alter the physical landscape of Hatfield. For example, when asked what new economic opportunities the town should encourage, agriculture (87%), arts and crafts (68%), small in-town shops, and home-based businesses (64% and 61% respectively) were the most supported economic initiatives in the survey. Strong opposition was voiced against smokestack development (89% against), highway strip mall development (81%), "big-box" retail (80%), and fast food restaurants (77%). In the visioning sessions, economic development, particularly commercial development along Routes 5/10, was evaluated more fully. Ideas expressed included designating Routes 5/10 as a commercial corridor, yet limiting sewer infrastructure expansion and requiring design and performance standards to minimize negative impacts. In addition, promoting farm-oriented and locally grown marketing initiatives as a way to continue farm viability in Hatfield, and thus preserve farmland, was an economic development initiative suggested in the visioning sessions.

Public Outreach and Education

After the results of the survey and visioning sessions were integrated into the work of the Master Plan Committee, members continued to encourage public involvement in the Master Plan process, focusing on public education. Residents were recruited to serve on working paper sub-committees and encouraged to attend Master Plan committee meetings. Members of the MPC appeared on local public access television and made presentations to various community groups. The MPC also published a series of community newsletters, summarizing results of the working papers and status of the Master Plan. Copies of the newsletter were mailed to all households in Hatfield.

B. Growth and Development—How Land is Used

1. Facts

The topic heading “Growth and Development” could include almost all aspects of a community Master Plan. For Hatfield’s purposes, the term will address residential and commercial development and related land use. Hatfield’s geographic location between the Connecticut River and an interstate highway, its abundance of wetlands and floodplains, and the town’s relatively old-fashioned infrastructure have worked together to insulate the town from some of the more overwhelming development pressures other Pioneer Valley communities have been facing in the last ten years. At the same time, the town’s rich soil and healthy agricultural industry, combined with easy commute distances to many major regional employers, including the University of Massachusetts, have left Hatfield with functioning farmland and a relatively well-educated and well-employed population. The town government has been successful at balancing revenue with expenditures, and the town has been successful in attracting a healthy commercial and industrial base.

An analysis of community-specific trends in residential and commercial/industrial development offers a view of a possible future for the town. Projecting possible results of existing growth and development trends reveals a conflict between the vision of Hatfield articulated by community residents in 1999 and the development path the community is currently taking.

The most important external force affecting Hatfield’s future land use is regional growth pressure. The most important internal force is the inadequacy of Hatfield’s zoning regulations.

Residential Growth

The Pioneer Valley region is experiencing growth in residential development. The assessors offices of the region’s 43 communities report that from FY 1993 to FY 1998 the number of single family residences grew from 125,492 to 129,979, a 3.6 percent increase, or an annual growth rate of 0.7 percent. Hatfield’s experience is slightly different from the region—an increase of 37 parcels, or 4.2 percent for an annual growth rate of 0.8 percent.

Table One. Number of Single Family Residence Parcels 1993-1997 1996-1997

Community	1993-1997			1996-1997				
	1993	1997	1998	# of parcels	%	Annual rate	%	Annual rate
Hatfield	891	919	928	37	4.2%	0.8%	9	1.0%
Hadley	1,377	1,430	1,435	58	5.5%	1.1%	23	1.6%
Northampton	5,209	5,265	5,308	99	1.9%	0.4%	43	0.8%
Southwick	2,327	2,502	2,549	222	9.5%	1.8%	47	1.9%
Pioneer Valley	125,492	129,171	129,979	4,487	3.6%	0.7%	808	0.6%
Avg. /Community	2,918	3,004	3,023	104	3.6%	0.7%	19	0.6%

Overall, residential property values in the Pioneer Valley (Hampshire and Hampden counties) have declined slightly. From 1993 to 1997, the median sale price of a residential property in the region declined by 1.6 percent. Hatfield’s experience is different from the region. From 1993 to 1997, the value of residential property increased at an annual rate of 5.5 percent, from \$107,912 in 1993 to \$133,500 in 1997.

Table Two. Median Sale of Residential Property 1993-1997 1996-1997

Community	1993-1997			1996-1997				
	1993	1996	1997	\$\$	%	Annual rate	\$	%
Hatfield	107,912	123,500	133,500	25,588	23.7%	5.5%	10,000	8.1%
Hadley	126,00	125,000	139,900	13,900	11.0%	2.7%	14,900	11.9%
Northampton	122,000	122,900	127,000	5,000	4.1%	1.0%	4,100	3.3%
Southwick	99,900	124,000	124,000	24,100	24.1%	5.6%	0	0.0%
Hampshire Co	111,000	115,000	117,000	6,000	5.4%	1.3%	2,000	1.7%
Pioneer Valley	102,812	96,163	95,744	(6,438)	(6.3%)	(1.6%)	(419)	(0.4%)

In FY 1998 the average tax bill for a single-family residence in the Pioneer Valley was \$1,835, compared with Hatfield's average bill of \$1,778. Hatfield's annual rate of increase, 2.8 percent, is much lower than neighboring communities of Hadley and Northampton, but slightly higher than the Pioneer Valley annual rate of increase of 1.7 percent.

Table Four. Average Single Family Residence Property Tax Bill

Community	FY 93	FY 98	\$\$	%	Annual rate of increase
Hatfield	1,549	1,778	229	14.8%	2.8%
Hadley	1,207	1,796	589	48.8%	8.3%
Northampton	1,583	2,066	483	30.5%	5.5%
Southwick	1,518	1,814	296	19.5%	3.6%
Pioneer Valley	1,546	1,835	289	18.7%	1.7%

Hatfield's residential property tax rate is lower than the regional average (1.18 versus 2.98) and has been increasing slower than the regional average and much slower than neighboring communities. The region's communities increased their residential property tax rate by 4.2 percent over the previous fiscal year, to \$15.87 per \$1,000 of assessed value, but Hatfield's rate increased by half that: 2.1 percent, to \$12.13 per \$1,000 in 1998.

Table Five. Residential Property Tax Rate

Community	FY 93	FY 98	\$\$	%	Annual rate of increase
Hatfield	10.95	12.13	1.18	10.8%	2.1%
Hadley	9.55	13.31	3.76	39.4%	6.9%
Northampton	12.24	14.58	2.34	19.1%	3.6%
Southwick	13.14	14.88	1.74	13.2%	2.5%
Avg/Community	12.90	15.87	2.98	23.1%	4.2%

Commercial/Industrial Growth

There was one sale of a business/industrial property in Hatfield during the period under study, May to November, 1999. The sale price was \$180,000. As of November 18, 1999, there were no current listings of business property for sale in Hatfield.

In Hatfield, 279 acres of land are zoned for business (commercial and industrial) use and, as of 1997, 71 acres of land (25 percent) were developed for commercial use. The 71 acres of developed commercial land is up from 34 acres in 1971, an increase of 103 percent in 26 years.

Furthermore, 1,047 acres are zoned for industrial use in Hatfield, including 764 in the industrial zone and 283 in the industrial A zone. As of 1997, 115 acres (11 percent) were developed for industrial use. The 115 acres of developed industrial land is up from 58 acres in 1971, an increase of 94 percent in 26 years.

The business district in Hatfield is divided into 29 separate land parcels or freestanding groups of parcels, which are scattered throughout the town. The industrial districts comprise 19 distinct parcels or groups of parcels, also scattered throughout town.

Table Six. Current Business and Industrial Zoned Acreage in Hatfield

TYPE	Acres Zoned	Acres Developed 1971	Acres Developed 1985	Acres Developed 1997
Business	279	34	49	71
Industrial	1047	58	75	115
Total	1316	92	124	186

Although Hatfield has significant acreage of industrial and commercial zoned land, large amounts of this land either are already developed or are constrained from future development due to floodplains, wetlands, river protection lands, and other environmental constraints. Some of the land zoned for commercial and industrial uses is protected from development by legislative acts, such as the River Protection Act that prohibits development of land within 200 feet of a

river (25 feet in urban areas). While this legislative protection is likely to exist into the future, other environmental constraints may not. For example, in today's real estate market in western Massachusetts, it is not cost effective to develop land that exceeds a certain slope. In other parts of the country where land is scarce and growth pressures are much greater than they are here, developers routinely build on steep slopes. Given existing constraints in western Massachusetts, of the 287 acres of commercial zoned land, 35 acres are unconstrained for future development. Of the 1,047 acres of industrial zoned land, 189 acres are unconstrained for future development.

Table Seven. Constraints on Land in Hatfield's Commercial and Industrial Zones

Status of land	Commercially zoned acres	Industrial zoned acres	Developed since 1985-commercial	Developed since 1985-industrial
Already developed	135.7	224.6	0	0
Protected (Includes municipal, federal, state-owned, APR, recreational, conservation restriction, or privately owned protected land)	14.2	28	1.5	3.5
Highly Sensitive (Includes all land within the 100-year floodplain, Mass DEP Zone 1, outstanding resource watersheds, wetlands and 100-foot buffer of wetlands, steep slopes, and MA Rivers Protection Act riverfront areas not already developed or protected)	48.8	334.5	1.8	17.5
Sensitive Natural Areas (Includes all lands within rare and endangered species habitat, active farmland, MA DEP Approved Zone II aquifer protection overlay zones, Interim Wellhead Protection Areas [IWPA], and Non-Transient-Non-Community Water Supply (NTNC) buffers not included in categories 1-4)	51.6	271.2	8.7	34.4
Open Water	1.6	0	0	0
Unconstrained for development	35.8	189.4	0	12.2
Total Acres	287.7	1047.7	12	67.6
<i>Note: These figures are approximate and should be used for planning purposes only.</i>				

Hatfield has been consuming commercial land for development at a rate of 2.3 acres per year since 1971, giving the town a 15-year supply of unconstrained commercial land. It has been consuming industrial land at a rate of 3.5 acres per year since 1971, giving the town a 54-year supply of unconstrained industrial land.

Table Eight. Available Supply of Unconstrained Commercial and Industrial Land

	Commercial Zone	Industrial Zone
Rate of Development (acres) 1971-87	2.3 acres	3.5 acres
Current Unconstrained Acres	35 acres	189 acres
Available Supply of Land (in years) at current development rates	15 years	54 years

Given Hatfield's current land use and the twin goals of maintaining rural character and strengthening the tax base, the town should re-zone some land to direct economic development to locations best suited for that use and should update existing zoning regulations to harmonize new development with the character of the town.

Population Growth

In the last 10-year period for which data is available, Hatfield's population base has been stable, increasing by 3 percent from 1980 to 1990 (3,095 to 3,184). At the same time, the median age of the population increased from 34 to 38, an 11 percent increase. Compared with the region and the state, Hatfield is almost exactly in the middle of the average change in population and median age.

Table Nine--Population Changes 1980-1990—Median Age

	Total	Population	% change	Median	Age	% change
Year	1980	1990		1980	1990	
Hatfield	3,095	3,184	3%	34.1	38	11%
Hadley	4,125	4,231	3%	32.9	37.7	15%
Northampton	29,286	29,289	0%	30.2	33.4	11%
Southwick	7,382	7,667	4%	28.0	32.9	18%
MA	5,737,037	6,016,425	5%	31.1	33.6	8%
Hampshire Co	138,813	146,568	6%	27	30.3	12%

While the overall population of Hatfield has remained relatively stable, Hatfield's population is aging. The percent of the population under age 18 declined by 14 percent and the population over age 65 increased by 28 percent, from 12.5 percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 1990. This will have an effect on Hatfield's economic character as older adults have different needs and make different contributions to their community than do younger people.

Regulatory Review

Hatfield's zoning regulations were last amended in 1990. They do not provide the town with the tools necessary to deal with the types and intensities of development that can be anticipated in the new millennium.

Key examples of problem areas in the zoning bylaw include:

- The dimensional regulations in Section 4.3 permit only large lot development in all zoning districts in Hatfield. Lot sizes range from 45,000 square feet to 60,000 square feet. This results in a problem known to planners as "prescribed sprawl," the gobbling up of open space by spread-out, suburban building patterns.
- The frontage requirements for all new building lots in town are universally 200 feet in each district, prescribing that lots must be spread over formerly open space along town roads.
- No performance standards exist for business development to ensure that new businesses will be constructed in ways that do not undermine the town's rural and historic character.
- The schedule of use regulations allows, by special permit, cluster development, elderly housing, multi-family housing, townhouses, and various business uses. However, there are no detailed regulations in the bylaw to guide the development of such projects. Given Hatfield's 1.5 acre lot requirement for residential development, it would be very difficult to create a successful cluster development project without new provisions for reducing lot sizes and protecting the saved open space.
- The floodplain district provides only very limited protection to prevent development in the floodplain. To get a building permit to develop land in the floodplain, applicants need obtain only flood elevation, in most cases. In addition, a variance in the current zoning allows development in the floodplain on lots of one-half acre or less.
- Hatfield's site plan review bylaw contains no criteria for reviewing and evaluating building projects, and no description of the type of decision to be made by the Planning Board (i.e. to approve, deny, or approve with conditions). This means that the Planning Board has no solid basis for reviewing projects, and that its decisions could be deemed arbitrary.
- Hatfield does not have a "non-criminal disposition bylaw" for zoning enforcement. Such a bylaw would be a helpful addition to the zoning bylaw, because it makes it easier for the town's Zoning Enforcement Officer to enforce the bylaw.

Hatfield's zoning map illustrates the town's zoning district boundaries. Hatfield's zoning map is notable due to the scattered nature of the commercial and industrial zoning districts in town. While this scattered development pattern reflects the positive integration of small businesses and residential neighborhoods characteristic of Hatfield, it may have

some negative consequences. Many undeveloped, industrially zoned parcels are accessible only by using small rural roads. If these industrial parcels were built out, truck traffic would threaten undersized rural roads and the rural character of adjacent neighborhoods. Moreover, without adequate buffers, neighborhoods adjacent to commercial and industrial developments are likely to suffer deterioration.

Hatfield’s business zoning regulations are also out of date. Currently, Hatfield’s business zoning regulations contain:

- some limited industrial performance standards (Section 3.61)
- some screening requirements for industrial uses only (Section 4.31)
- signage regulations only for industrial uses (Section 5.4)
- limited environmental performance standards for industrial uses (Section 5.4a)
- site plan review for all “buildings” (Section 5.0), which does not include any review criteria or standards
- parking standards (Section 5.2)

Hatfield lacks updated zoning standards for uses in its business districts, including signage bylaw, performance and design standards, landscaping standards, site plan review criteria, and environmental standards. Many communities in the region have adopted all of these basic business standards, and they are becoming standardized and accepted as part of business development. Currently, there is little in Hatfield’s zoning bylaw to prevent a business development from constructing any type of building or sign, with no landscaping or screening. Hatfield has significant needs for updating and improving its zoning regulations to achieve the type and character of development expressed by residents in the 1999 visioning process.

Changes in Land Use and Development Patterns

Land use patterns were first documented in Massachusetts through aerial photography by William MacConnell and the University of Massachusetts in the 1950s¹. In 1971, 1985, and 1997 aerial photographs of land use in Hatfield were taken again and mapped according to what was photographed. Table 11 identifies the most recent picture of land use distributions. Table 11 also shows the change in land use from the 1971 data.

Table Eleven: Land Uses in Hatfield 1971 - 1997

Land Use	Acres 1971	Use as % of Total	Acres 1985	Use as % of Total	Acres 1997	Use as % of Total	% change '71 - 85	% change '85-'97
Crop Land	3,754	34.9%	3,717	35%	3,478	32%	-1%	-6%
Pasture	73	0.7%	84	.8%	82	.8	16%	-3%
Forest	5,043	46.8%	4,868	45%	4,795	45%	-3%	-2%
Wetland	141	1.3%	141	1.3%	141	1.3%	0%	0%
Mining	15	0.1%	15	.1%	21	.2%	0%	39%
Open Land	149	1.4%	118	1%	139	1%	-21%	18%
Recreation	35	0.3%	30	.3%	30	.3%	-15%	0%
Multi Family Resid.	-	0.0%	2	.1%	2	0%	NA	0%
High Den Residential	2	0.02%	5	.1%	7	.1%	121%	30%
Medium Den Resid.	360	3.3%	396	4%	411	4%	10%	4%
Low Den Residential	385	3.6%	544	5%	711	7%	41%	31%
Commercial	35	0.3%	49	.5%	71	1%	42%	43%

¹ An important note should be made regarding this land use data. Because of the need to aggregate land use categories into those identifiable from aerial photography and comparable over several decades of analysis, some categories offer misleading information. A prime example of this is the category of “Wetland.” This MacConnell category clearly does not reflect the vast majority of acreage comprising bordering vegetated wetlands—one of the prime resource areas regulated under the Wetland Protection Act. Forested wetlands are also not included in this category and are included in the totals for “Forest.” In fact, much of the wetland acreage in Hatfield shows up as “Forest” land in the MacConnell survey due to the limitations of their methodology. The MacConnell wetland data is included here simply to offer a full accounting of the acreage total.

Industrial	59	0.5%	75	.7%	115	1%	28%	52%
Urban Open	45	0.4%	64	.6%	53	.5%	41%	-17%
Transportation	166	1.5%	170	2%	156	1%	2%	-8%
Waste Disposal	3	0.03%	8	0%	8	.1%	171%	0%
Water	479	4.5%	479	4%	479	4%	0%	0%
Orchard/Nursery	20	0.2%	-	0%	67	.6%	-100%	NA
Total Land	10,766		10,766		10,766			

Source: MacConnell Land Use Survey and Massachusetts Geographic Information System (GIS).

Residential, commercial, and industrial land uses gained the most acreage over the periods shown in Table 11. Since 1985, residential land use increased by over 180 acres. This represents an increase of approximately 35 percent, which is slightly less than the change during the period from 1971 to 1985. During that period, there was a 50 percent increase in residential land use. In 1997, approximately 12 percent of all land in Hatfield was used for residential purposes, up from 9 percent in 1985. Most of the conversion to residential uses since 1985 resulted in large lot, low-density development, which was facilitated by the R-O zoning change that occurred after adoption of the 1986 Land Use Plan. From 1985 to 1997, over 70 acres were converted for these purposes. This is an increase of 52 percent for industrial property and 43 percent for commercial property. There are two categories in which the greatest percentage of land was converted to support more urban uses: urban open lands (defined as vacant/undeveloped land, parks, and institutional green spaces) declined by 18 percent and farmland declined by nearly 10 percent since 1985.

Tables 12, 13, and 14 show that Hatfield's rate of growth is consistent with what has happened in other communities along the Connecticut River corridor. Of course, development pressures are not unique to the Pioneer Valley or Massachusetts as a whole. Because of the strong economy, the housing and real estate market has experienced a nationwide boom. The more intense growth pressures that have occurred in the neighboring towns of Hadley and Northampton will likely be felt in Hatfield in the future as land supply is constrained in those communities and the demand spills over into adjacent outlying areas. These anticipated pressures should be considered when determining the appropriate course of action to direct and accommodate this growth in a way that best benefits Hatfield.

Table Twelve

Agricultural Land Change (acres)				
Cropland & Pasture				
	1971	1997	Acres Lost	% Lost
Hadley	7,984	7,386	(598)	-7%
Hatfield	3,826	3,560	(266)	-7%
Southwick	4,631	4,330	(301)	-6%
Northampton	3,645	3,301	(344)	-9%

Table Thirteen

Residential Development—all (acres)				
	1971	1997	Acres Gained	%Gain
Hadley	1,121	1,658	537	48%
Hatfield	748	1,131	383	51%
Southwick	2,093	2,891	798	38%
Northampton	2,990	4,061	1,071	36%

Table Fourteen

	Commercial Development (acres)				Industrial Development (acres)			
	1971	1997	Acres Gained	%Gain	1971	1997	Acres Gained	%Gain
Hadley	136	283	147	108%	42	68	26	62%
Hatfield	35	71	36	103%	59	115	56	95%
Southwick	92	163	71	77%	6	35	29	483%
Northampton	343	416	73	21%	146	241	95	65%

Despite the continued land conversion in Hatfield, most of the land remains in forested and agricultural uses. Approximately 75 percent of the 10,766 acres of land consists of forest and agricultural lands. Generally, the remaining 25 percent of the land is used for residential and commercial purposes.

The several hundred acres of land that have been developed for new urban uses have fronted mostly along the public roads, including Linseed Road, Routes 5/10, Bridge Street, North Prospect Street, and King Street. This pattern of development is consistent with the way the town has traditionally grown. Such patterns have avoided substantial diminution of the most critical wetlands, forest, and water habitats. However, these traditional linear growth patterns that result in dispersed development can have negative impacts, including inefficiency in the provision of public water and sewer, and a decline in road maintenance, which can increase the cost of these government services. Other problems include congestion and corresponding environmental impacts.

What Does This Mean For Hatfield?

The current pattern of land development cannot be sustained without diminishing the natural environment in Hatfield. The continued development along existing roads, often on converted farmland or forestland, does not allow for the careful consideration or protection of natural systems. The amount of land developed in the last 30 years—250 acres of forestland and 266 acres of farmland—represents a trend that eventually will degrade Hatfield’s environmentally sensitive areas.

2. **GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT Issues**

- **Hatfield's Rural Character is Threatened**—The rural character of Hatfield is increasingly threatened through the loss of farmland, large-lot zoning which prevents efficient use of land resources, a scattered pattern of residential development that continues to convert agricultural and natural lands to residential use, damaging incursions into natural areas including water supply areas and floodplains, and the absence of barriers to out-of-scale commercial/industrial development.
- **Increased Negative Impacts of Development**—As new development arrives in Hatfield, it becomes harder for many citizens to ignore the negative impacts of this activity such as increased truck traffic along inappropriate rural roads, increase in vehicular traffic stemming from commercial corridor development (Rt. 5/10), increased non-residential noise, strains on local service capacity; the loss of open lands, and increased costs to the town for services, schools, and infrastructure. Conflicts between incompatible uses will become more apparent if the current sprawl pattern of development is allowed to continue.
- **Current Unconfined Zoning Districts Prescribe a Scattered Development Pattern**—The existing zoning bylaw and zoning map create a less than optimal environment for maintaining community character. Major issues include lands zoned for inappropriate uses, the absence of effective development controls to guide new growth and redevelopment; and a series of residential dimensional requirements that prescribe a sprawl development pattern in the town.
- **Antiquated Land Use Regulations**—The current zoning bylaw and subdivision regulations lack commercial performance standards, design standards, design guidelines, and landscaping and signage criteria. Review and approval processes are inadequate for establishing consistent benchmarks for developers, allowing projects of varying levels of quality to be developed. Overall, there are few effective tools in place to protect the rural character of the town.
- **Little Coordinated Planning for Future Infrastructure Development**—The town currently lacks a water/sewer expansion plan that is coordinated with growth planning goals. Planning for town facilities and services continues to occur without a cohesive set of goals and land use policies that could guide such planning. Without an overall plan for growth and development in the town, decision makers are forced to judge the merit of specific projects without comprehensive policy tools to guide them.
- **No Formal “Warning System” in Place for Accelerated Development Impacts** —Hatfield lacks the ability to measure the impacts of growth when it does occur. There are apparent—or agreed upon—benchmarks for measuring good growth versus bad growth. Without a system in place to measure the impacts of growth, the town remains vulnerable to intensive development that can quickly change the character of the community.
- **Large Areas of the Town Zoned for Industrial/Commercial/Residential Use are Constrained Environmentally**—Much of the land currently zoned for industrial and commercial use along the Routes 5/10 and I-91 corridors should not be fully developed due to environmental constraints such as the existence of wetlands, floodplains, watershed and water supply protection devices, riverfront protection areas, and rare habitats. The current zoning pattern encourages inappropriate development in these naturally sensitive areas while preventing the town from focusing its development and redevelopment resources on the most appropriate—and least constrained—lands in Hatfield.
- **Limited Housing Opportunities, Particularly for Young Families and Elders**— For residents seeking flexible, appropriate, and affordable homes—both owned and rented—the choices in Hatfield are limited. Multi-generational continuity is disrupted as elder residents and young families are forced to look outside Hatfield for housing. Without housing choices for these citizens, the town loses its ability to keep long-term residents with knowledge of, and commitment to, the neighborhoods and community of Hatfield.

3. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT Recommendations

Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act and establish a Hatfield Community Preservation Fund to acquire or protect land in environmentally sensitive areas.

The town should leverage its position in state and federal purchasing programs by establishing a local land acquisition fund (Community Preservation Fund). This fund can be used to match or “challenge” public and private dollars and increase the amount of purchasing power available to the community for these land acquisitions. Two types of acquisition should be pursued: both the fee-simple purchase of land and the purchase (or donation) of development rights. The purchasing of development rights and the establishment of conservation restrictions allow the town to limit inappropriate development in sensitive areas without owning the land itself. Landowners are reimbursed for the development value only, allowing private land ownership to be maintained. Acquisition and conservation restriction efforts should focus on areas such as the water supply protection areas, rare or sensitive wildlife habitat areas, forestlands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. Land adjacent to these critical areas should have development standards enforced that apply specific subdivision controls to protect the sensitive character of the area. This area should be designated for low-intensity residential uses.

The town should encourage the donation of lands or development rights to enhance the community’s natural resource protection strategy. The community should advertise the fact that it accepts these types of donations and provide a contact point (name, phone number, address) for those wishing to make a donation. Hatfield should continue to work closely with existing land trusts and land protection programs.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1+ (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: NOW! Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002, with a goal of presentation to town meeting in May 2001

Amend Hatfield’s zoning regulations.

While the MPC did review current zoning in the course of researching and writing this plan, the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) should spend some time reviewing all zoning with respect to the goals of this plan. In addition to the specific zoning-related recommendations that follow throughout the seven chapters of this Master Plan, the town may want to make additional changes to existing zoning, such as adopting a table of use regulations and overhauling and updating existing dimensional and other standards.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002.

Manage residential development.

As has been noted, the town of Hatfield has been lucky in that it has not yet experienced a major crush of new residential development. Regional growth trends, however, suggest such a push is likely to happen soon. Hatfield can manage where and how residential development happens by amending existing zoning regulations. This can be accomplished by various means, including, but not limited to the following: a) establishing special permit requirements for major residential developments to minimize impacts on key natural resource areas; b) adopting phased growth limits, which favor compact village center and cluster development over sprawling development in rural areas; c) adopting by-right farmland cluster zoning bylaws to be the development type of choice, if growth does have to occur in farmlands; d) limiting extensions of roads, sewer, and water lines into rural and agricultural areas; and e) matching lot size and frontage requirements to surrounding neighborhoods.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002.

Adopt Transfer of Development Rights bylaws.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) bylaws seek to preserve open space, farmland, and working farms while promoting compact residential or commercial development near town or city centers. TDR bylaws are intended to steer development away from open space and farmland targeted for preservation, and toward centers targeted for growth. A typical bylaw creates two new zoning districts: a Farmland or Open Space Preservation District (a Sending Area) and a Commercial or Compact Residential District (a Receiving Area). Development rights are purchased in the

Farmland/Open Space Preservation District and transferred to the Receiving Area District for use in residential, commercial, or industrial development projects. Benefits include: a) the bylaw provides an option for preserving farmland and open space, with no downside for farmers or property owners, b) farmlands and other open space involved in TDR transactions can be exempt from certain local regulations such as a building permit cap, thereby protecting farm property values, c) no state or federal government intervention is required, and d) developers benefit from the bylaw because they can purchase development rights to expand developments beyond existing zoning requirements.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002.

Educate younger generations about the need to preserve the rural character of Hatfield.

Long range land use planning begins with a caring and informed citizenry. In addition to learning about specific issues such as the function of wetlands and the business of agriculture, young Hatfield residents could benefit from learning to understand their community within a larger context. The town's schools can enhance students' knowledge and experiences regarding the town. Long-time residents should be invited to speak to students about the Hatfield of 25, 50, or 200 years ago, and young residents should be given opportunities to develop new ideas about how to maintain and enhance the town when they inherit this community in future years.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 3 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: School Department

When: In the next two to four years

Develop zoning regulations to promote a diversity of housing opportunities in Hatfield.

Hatfield does not provide a very wide range of housing options for such groups as elderly or handicapped persons, new homebuyers, and low and moderate income families. Hatfield should explore a range of options to promote a diversity of housing opportunities, including zoning for elderly and handicapped congregate housing; zoning for traditional neighborhood developments, inclusionary zoning, and accessory apartment bylaws.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002.

C. Economic Character

1. Facts

Planning to strengthen a community's economic base requires an analysis of the unique characteristics of the municipality in light of community business development and retention goals, and then a definition of appropriate strategies to meet these goals. Whether the economic priority is revitalizing a commercial center or retaining land-based economic activity, the enhancement of economic well-being has become an important function of local government.

Since economic change is often very rapid, local officials must be prepared to respond quickly to both problems and opportunities. Sound planning provides the foundation for this type of decision making. A plan that clearly delineates a community's economic goals and strategy gives local officials the direction needed to take a leadership role in retaining and developing, as well as recruiting, businesses to the town.

Key economic trends in Hatfield include:

- Hatfield's local economy is healthy, with per capita income increasing dramatically over the past two decades, decreasing unemployment rates, and a stable tax rate.
- Hatfield has substantial undeveloped land zoned for commercial or industrial use, although some of this land has environmental constraints to development.
- Businesses perceive Hatfield as a "business-friendly" community.
- Hatfield will be subject to increasing commercial and industrial growth pressures as development moves northward up the I-91 corridor.

Existing Business Districts in Hatfield

Hatfield has business districts scattered throughout all areas of the town. The business districts of Hatfield include the following:

- *South Hatfield—Route 5:*

This district is adjacent to the Northampton-Hatfield town line, and is the town's largest concentration of commercial uses, with some industrial uses mixed in. The district includes retail uses such as Rugg Lumber, Danish Inspirations, and Long View RV Superstores, and industrial uses such as Wilderness Mold and Mill Valley Molding.

- *Central Hatfield - Route 5:*

This district is located in the middle of the Route 5 corridor, with commercial and multi-family residential uses including FedEx, Diamond RV Center, and Penske Truck Rental.

- *North Hatfield—Route 5:*

A small commercial center exists along Route 5 in North Hatfield, including several retail outlets and a construction company.

- *Town Center:*

Hatfield's historic town center includes modest commercial uses combined with civic and residential uses. Across from Town Hall, the town's retail center is very small, consisting mainly of a convenience store and gas station. There is also a modest commercial area at Prospect and School Streets, which includes the Valley Advocate and Hatfield Market.

- *East I-91 Industrial Corridor:*

Virtually the entire east side of Interstate 91 in Hatfield has been zoned for industrial use. This area is home to Hatfield's largest employers, including C&S Wholesale Grocers and Brockway-Smith, and smaller firms such as Lesco and Lynx Window and Door.

- *Other Commercial Areas:*

Isolated businesses are scattered in many other locations throughout the town.

Hatfield has a number of large employers, including C&S Wholesale Grocers with about 1,000 employees, New England Telephone with 130 employees, Brockway-Smith with 110 employees, and Mill Valley Molding, Hatfield Equipment, and Hatfield Public Schools, all with 50-100 employees.

Economic and Employment Trends

From 1980 to 1990², Hatfield's population remained stable (3 percent increase)³ and income increased dramatically (per capita income by 156 percent and household by 128 percent)⁴. Hatfield residents seem to be relatively well off financially compared with residents in our comparison communities/groups (Hadley, Northampton, Southwick, Hampshire County, and the state average). Per capita income in Hatfield increased a full 30 percent more than it did for other communities in Hampshire County—or for the county as a whole. It is a little tricky to draw conclusions from median household income data, as they may mask a skewed distribution of income or the fact that households now have two wage earners instead of one. Still, the overall economic and employment picture for Hatfield residents is positive.

Not surprisingly, declining unemployment rates coincided with the increase in median household income. The unemployment rate in Hatfield peaked at 7.93 percent in 1992 and has been declining ever since to its last recorded rate of 3 percent in 1998. Hatfield's rate compares favorably with the regional and statewide unemployment rates, which are each hovering around 3 percent right now.

Types of Employment/Employers

The Massachusetts Division of Employment and Training reports the following division of employees in Hatfield. It is important to note that unemployment figures describe the people who live in Hatfield, while the data describing the types of employment in Hatfield refers to the people who work in Hatfield.

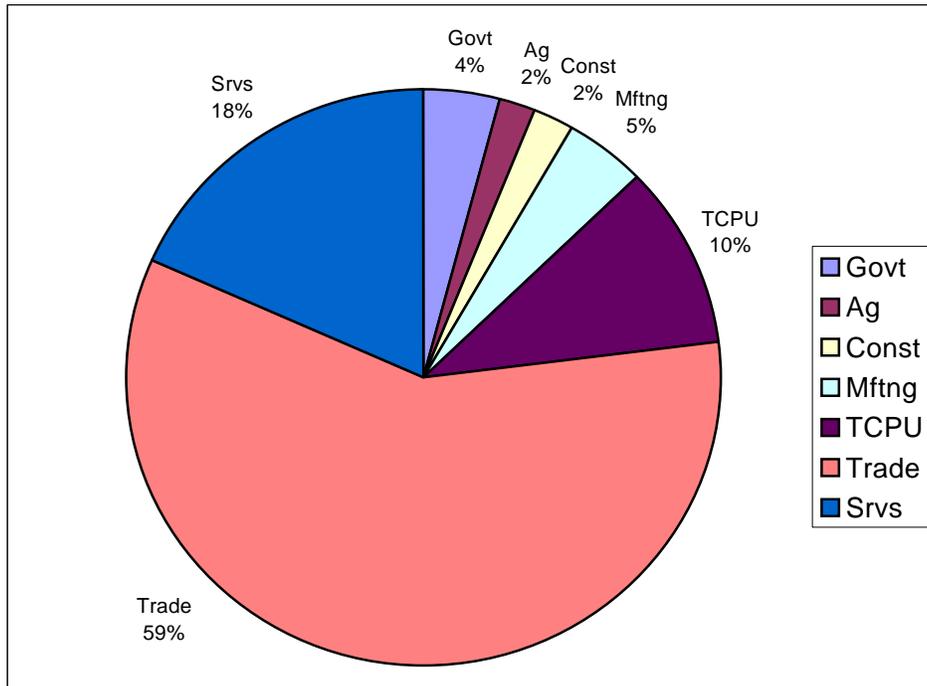
A full 93 percent of persons employed in Hatfield are working in service (versus manufacturing) jobs. Specifically, the majority of persons employed in Hatfield (77 percent) are working in the trade (59 percent) and services (18 percent) sectors. Jobs in the trade sector are defined as including “establishments or places of business primarily engaged in selling merchandise to retailers; to industrial, commercial, institutional, farm, or professional business users; or to other wholesalers, or acting as agents or brokers in buying merchandise for or selling merchandise to such persons or companies.” Hatfield's largest single employer, C & S Wholesale Grocers, falls under this category. Jobs in the service sector are defined as including “establishments primarily engaged in providing a wide variety of services for individuals, business and government establishments, and other organizations: hotels and other lodging places; establishments providing personal, business, repair, and amusement services; health, legal, engineering, and other professional services; educational institutions, membership organizations, and other miscellaneous services.” In Hatfield, businesses such as Hatfield Equipment Company fall under this category.

² 1990 Census data is most recent data available.

³ See Appendix for detail on population trends in Hatfield and comparison communities.

⁴ See Appendix for detail on income in Hatfield and comparison communities.

Chart 1. Sector Employment as % of Total: 1997

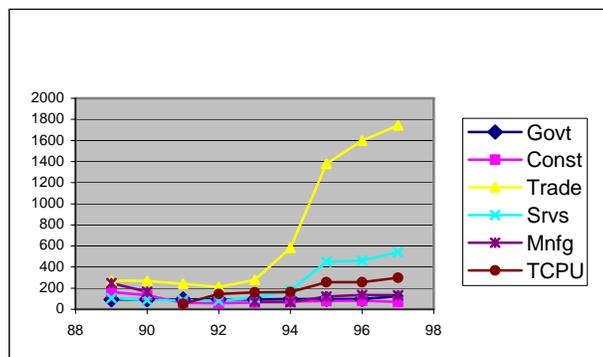


Ten percent of the remaining employees in Hatfield work in the transportation, communication, and public utilities (TCPU) sector. This sector is defined as including “establishments providing to the general public or to other business enterprises passenger and freight transportation, communication services, electricity, gas, steam, water, sanitary services, and the United States Postal Service.” FedEx and Penske Truck Rental fall under this classification.

Four percent of employees work in the government sector, which is defined as “the legislature, judicial, administrative and regulatory activities of federal, state, local, and international governments.” Two percent of employees work in the agriculture services sector, which does not equate to farming, but rather “includes establishments primarily engaged in performing soil preparation services, crop services, veterinary services, other animal services, farm labor and management services, and landscape and horticultural services, for others for a fee or contract basis, and establishments primarily engaged in the operation of timber tracts, tree farms, forest nurseries, and related activities.”

The remaining 7 percent of employees work in manufacturing jobs (5 percent), which “includes establishments engaged in the mechanical or chemical transformation of materials or substances into new products. These establishments are usually described as plants, factories, or mills and characteristically use power driven machines and materials handling equipment,” and in construction jobs (2 percent) which “includes new work, additions, alterations, and repairs.”

Chart 2. Percent Employment by Sector



As a result of the arrival of C&S Wholesale Grocers and other new industries, such as Wilderness Mold and Mill Valley Molding, the total payroll in Hatfield increased dramatically from an estimated \$2.9 million in 1994, the year of C&S's arrival in town, to over \$9 million in 1997—more than tripling in just four years.

Chart 3. Total Payroll

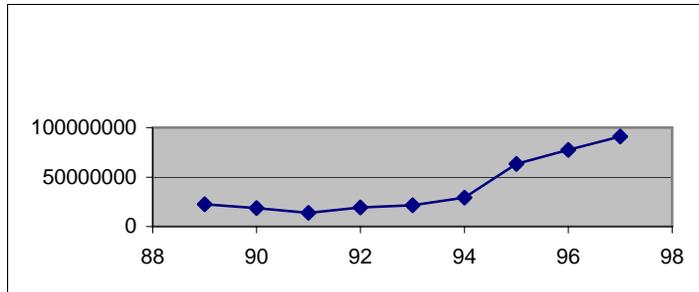
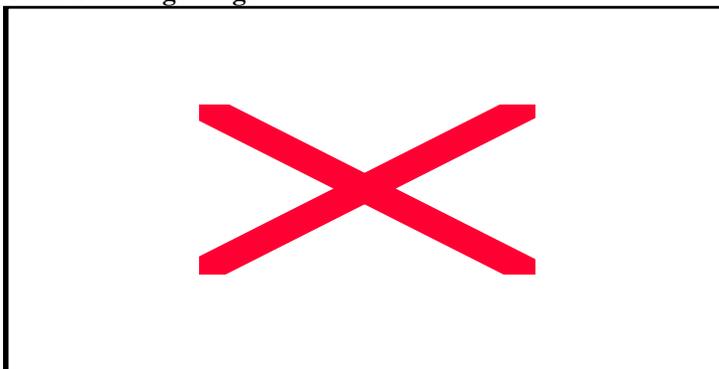


Chart 4. Average Wage



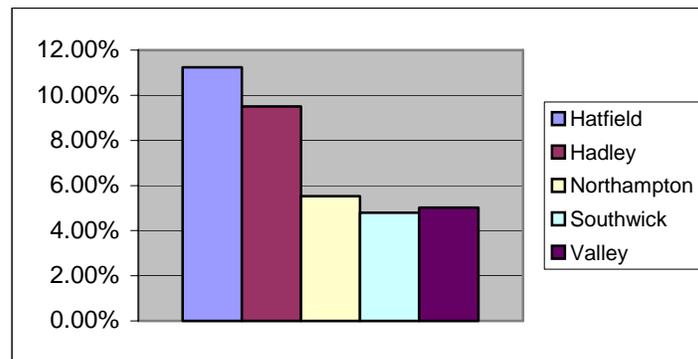
Average annual wage increased from \$24,766 to \$30,690 from 1994 to 1997, a 24 percent increase. The starting wage at C&S is \$12.50 per hour, which results in \$26,000 per year. This information is useful, as it is an example of the higher wage scales provided by industrial development versus commercial development. Commercial development typically houses retail businesses, which pay annual wages closer to \$8.00 per hour.

The specific effects of the arrival of C&S and other new industries on the town's economy cannot be determined from the information gathered for this plan, as we have no information on where the employees of these new industries live. Anecdotal information suggests that many C&S employees live outside Hatfield. What is known is that the town of Hatfield receives a significant portion of its tax revenue from C&S Wholesale Grocers (almost 6 percent of the town's total valuation). To avoid becoming overly dependent on one industry, the town might want to consider an effort to recruit and maintain medium-sized businesses.

Self-Employed

Hatfield has a larger than average percent of its labor force self-employed. This information needs to be factored into Hatfield's future economic character planning. It would be worthwhile to attempt to learn more details about the kinds of self-employment in which Hatfield residents are engaged. If people are farming, that will have a different effect on the local economy and demand different kinds of support from the town than if people are running Internet-based businesses out of their homes. If people are self-employed and running e-businesses, they are likely to be concerned about expanded digital telephone lines. If they are farming, they are more likely to be concerned about land use and the price of land.

Chart 5. Percent of Labor Force Self-Employed-1990



Farm Economy

As noted, census data on persons employed in the agriculture sector does not include people actually engaged in farming. To understand farming as a full-time enterprise, it is necessary to review assessor’s data. Many residents perceive Hatfield as having lost farm employment in the last 20 years. Reports from the assessor’s office show that, in the last 20 years, three of the 19 families that farm full-time in Hatfield have stopped farming. This translates to a 15 percent drop in full-time farming.

Table One. Trends in Farming

Year	# full-time farmers
1980	19
1990	19
1999	16

It is only in the last few years that the number of full-time farmers in Hatfield has declined, and the three farmers who are no longer farming had reasons other than economic viability for their change in employment status—one farmer retired, one died, and one who had land in both Hatfield and Hadley decided to move the farm to Hadley. Anecdotal information collected from interviews with Hatfield’s community leaders suggests that some residents still feel that loss of family farms is an important issue for the community to address. It may be that what has been lost in the last 20 years is the component of the economy (and community) that participated in part-time farming.

The viability of family farming is under threat due to the steady development of farmland for other purposes. Communities all along Interstate 91 to the south have seen their farmland disappear under parking lots and buildings. The results of the visioning sessions in the master planning process suggest that residents do not want to see this happen in Hatfield. It appears that it is not yet happening, as Hatfield has lost only 7 percent of its cropland since 1971. But the time is clearly ripe for planning to protect farmland.

Development Assets

Easy access to Interstate 91 and to rail service has made Hatfield an extremely attractive place to locate a business. When one adds Hatfield’s available land—properly zoned and a business-friendly (or at least neutral) town government—it is no wonder that Hatfield has prospered economically in the last 20 years.

The community’s attitude toward business development seems to account for some of the town’s economic stability. The town does not go out of its way to recruit new businesses, yet once a business is committed to Hatfield, the local government does a good job of making that business comfortable while at the same time enhancing the community’s tax base with new revenues. This is the approach Hatfield took when one of its biggest businesses, C & S Wholesale Grocers, moved into town in 1994. The town did not actively recruit C & S to set up shop in Hatfield, but once the business was committed, the town made an effort to meet its infrastructure needs. Hatfield successfully applied for and received funding from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to extend sewer service out North Hatfield Road so that

the C & S buildings would be served, and the town relocated and finished paving Plain Road so that C & S would have direct road access.

In addition to assessing and analyzing the current state of the economy in Hatfield, it is important to understand existing assets in the community that will affect development and the economic character of the town. Development assets are defined herein as the following: existing or planned infrastructure-- transportation, sewer, water, utilities, transit, and data/digital access; availability of land zoned for business use; cultural/environmental assets that might attract employers; raw materials; a skilled workforce; and economic development support services.

The town of Hatfield has a wealth of development assets: a solid transportation infrastructure including local roads, Routes 5/10 and Interstate 91, and access to a railroad; an extremely high quality of life that is perceived as both an untapped selling point to recruit businesses to Hatfield and as the most important aspect of life in Hatfield that residents want to preserve; functioning infrastructure; and access to many external support services, such as the Northampton Chamber of Commerce, the Western Massachusetts Economic Development Corporation, and the University of Massachusetts.

--Zoning

Community leaders in Hatfield perceive the town as having adequate amounts of land zoned for business purposes, but they are concerned about the distribution of the land zoned for business development. An unusual and perceived asset with respect to the town's zoning is the informal "mixed use" zoning that has emerged as a result of the slow and steady evolution of the town from a predominantly farm community to its current incarnation. Driving down Hatfield's streets, one is struck by the existence of small businesses in primarily residential areas. This phenomenon occurred as family farmers created informal business incubators for children who could not or chose not to work as farmers. Children were encouraged to set up small businesses in a portion of the family barn. Eventually, some of these small businesses grew into independent shops.

--Sewers

While the town has adequate sewer infrastructure in one-third of the community, there is clearly a need for expansion of the sewer infrastructure (detail on this in Chapter 7—Infrastructure). The decision of where to expand sewer service is not a simple one (see map for current sewer coverage and possible expansion). Sewer expansion will have a significant effect on the town's economic development, as a case can be made for the fact that infrastructure can drive growth. If a community has adequate infrastructure in some areas and not in others, development will occur where infrastructure is located.

Originally, Hatfield planned to expand sewer access south on Dwight Street to the town line and north on West Road up to Pantry Road. However, this expansion is projected to cost \$4 million and the town is only expected to receive \$2 million in state aid. Earthtek, a consultant from Concord, Massachusetts, working with the Hatfield Department of Public Works, has developed the estimate of the cost of proposed extensions and is applying, on behalf of the town, for Community Development Action Grant (CDAG) and Public Works Economic Development (PWED) funds. Because of the gap between available funds and the cost of sewer extension, Hatfield has some difficult decisions to make.

Businesses on the south end of Routes 5/10 are facing the threat of Title V problems with their septic systems. Title V requires a set amount of separation between septic systems and groundwater sources. If the businesses on Routes 5/10 do not get on town sewer, they will have to install costly raised systems, which will limit their ability to expand their businesses. They all want sewer expansion. At the same time, the town needs to connect future development to the existing sewer lines, which means that expansion must start at Dwight Street to Church Street. There is also some discussion of extending sewer lines to the Massachusetts Highway Department District office and to the State Police office, actually located in the city of Northampton. The extension might improve Hatfield's chance of receiving state funding if the town is bringing sewer services to state-owned buildings. At the same time that lack of sewers is affecting commercial development, it is also affecting residential development. The lack of sewer on Routes 5/10 has discouraged rampant, unplanned residential development along this corridor.

--Water

The Department of Public Works (DPW) has determined that Hatfield needs to take some steps to assure a long-term supply of quality drinking water for the town. Currently, one-third of residents have metered water use. Paying a flat rate for water means users have no financial incentive to conserve water—they pay the same amount no matter how much they use. The town's water supply is limited. The DPW has also raised concerns about residential developments on Mountain Road, near the intersection with Reservoir Road, that could have an adverse effect on the town's water supply. Finally, water mains are undersized, so if the town does start attracting large businesses, funds will have to be allocated for improvements in the existing water pipe system.

--Location

The proximity of Interstate 91 is perceived to be a major development asset. Land in the communities located to the south of Hatfield along Interstate 91 has already been developed, and the town sees itself on the doorstep of the northern I-91 development.

--Quality of Life

The overall quality of life is a major reason people want to live in Hatfield. While “quality of life” can be a difficult term to define, residents see key elements in Hatfield's quality of life as including proximity to the Connecticut River, rural character, farmland, open space, historic town center, proximity to jobs, shopping and cultural assets, and clean water.

Character and Design of Existing Development

Hatfield's existing businesses range from large industries to highway-oriented commercial establishments to small-town service businesses. The town has only modest business activity in its traditional town center, which is dominated by historic homes with only a handful of small convenience businesses. Larger retail and service businesses are concentrated on Routes 5/10. Industrial uses are concentrated along the I-91 corridor.

Commercial and industrial uses built in the past twenty years do not match, in design or architecture, the town's historic character, nor do they have any consistent design theme. They are a somewhat haphazard collection of structures, largely auto-oriented in nature. The town does not currently have any design guidelines or a design review process.

Interviews with Business and Community Leaders

Business Perceptions of Hatfield's Economic Character

Staff at the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission interviewed the owners or CEOs of Mill Valley Molding, Industrial Sheet Metal, and Sister's Convenience Store in order to glean a sense how businesses perceive the town. These responses are summarized below:

- *On how Hatfield's economic character can be described:*
The town is seen as being in good shape economically, with a desirable balance of business and residential uses. There is good separation between industrial uses along I-91 and residential uses around the town center. The town is becoming more economically dynamic. The town is seen as “an old farm town on the verge of explosive growth.”
- *On Hatfield's assets that affect economic character:*
The lack of sewer service in the industrial zone in west Hatfield is a key concern. Important assets include easy access to I-91, availability of skilled workers in the immediate area, availability of land for business expansion, railroad access, the Route 5 commercial corridor, and quality of life amenities such as farmland, open space, a pristine town center, and the Connecticut River.
- *On the types of business support needed:*
Businesses are largely getting the support they need. The University of Massachusetts, the Northampton Chamber of Commerce, and others provide necessary support.
- *On whether Hatfield is a “business-friendly” place:*
The town is generally perceived as business-friendly because it is not anti-business. Taxes are reasonable and zoning is not excessively stringent. Several businesses commented that Hatfield is friendlier to business than is

Northampton. The biggest concern expressed repeatedly is that the town has an extremely high building permit fee, which is a hardship for businesses wanting to expand.

- *On whether there is sufficient commercially and industrially zoned land in Hatfield:*
Generally, the perception is that there is enough land available now, but that in the future the Route 5 corridor should be examined for commercial and industrial growth. There is a demand for space for small business offices such as for medical and computer services. There is not a need for space for fast food restaurants and gas stations, which are available nearby in Northampton. There is a tremendous opportunity for growth, but also a need for balance. The town could see explosive growth, and it does not necessarily need to promote business growth. The lack of sewer service constrains some growth. There is a need to look at modest revisions to the Route 5 corridor zoning, but wholesale business zoning changes townwide are not needed. Business people and residents alike “want Hatfield to remain Hatfield.”
- *On the impact of business on Hatfield:*
Most businesses believe that their impact is positive. The west side industries help offset the residential growth elsewhere in town to balance the tax base. These businesses are clean, light industrial concerns.

Community Leaders’ Perceptions of Hatfield’s Economic Character

Interviews with a select number of community leaders, town staff, and volunteer members of town boards and commissions yielded some interesting and useful information about how community leaders perceive the town’s economic character. These responses are summarized below:

- *On how Hatfield’s economic character can be described:*
Hatfield is not an economically dynamic place, according to individuals surveyed, but it is moving in that direction, especially in the last five years. Hatfield is perceived as perched on the edge of a possible boom in economic growth, and community leaders see a need to control growth so that the town’s economic base can be enhanced while maintaining Hatfield’s small town character.
- *On Hatfield’s assets that affect economic character:*
The town’s location along Interstate 91 is perceived as an extremely important asset. The bulk of the land in communities south of Hatfield along I-91 has been developed, leaving Hatfield ripe for new economic investments in the region. Town leaders also perceive the availability of commercially and industrially zoned land as an asset. They would like to see development happen along Routes 5/10 and in the industrially zoned land east of I-91 along the railroad. Community leaders are not concerned about the availability of raw materials for industrial or manufacturing development, as they would prefer service industries to locate in the town. People interviewed did not identify any key cultural, recreational, or historic assets in the community, but instead pointed out that the general quality of life in the community is an asset that could be marketed to prospective businesses.
- *On the types of business support needed:*
Community leaders recognize that they will need assistance once they move to start implementing the economic character-related action items in the town’s Master Plan. The individuals interviewed had experience with the University of Massachusetts internship program, but not with any of the specific economic development resource agencies available.
- *On whether Hatfield is a “business-friendly” place:*
There was no consensus on Hatfield’s perceived business-friendliness. On one hand, people interviewed described Hatfield as unfriendly to business because the town has confusing “spot zoning”; a mostly volunteer staff, which means they are overworked and possibly under-trained; a cumbersome permitting process; and no plan to guide potential developers through the town’s development process. One-stop permitting was suggested as an improvement. On the other hand, subjects noted that the town does respond well once a business has committed to developing in Hatfield.
- *On whether there is sufficient commercially and industrially zoned land in Hatfield:*
There may be sufficient acreage zoned for commercial and/or industrial development, but it needs to be re-organized, and development needs to be guided by a planned process. The town must review the zoning of land in the community and re-organize zoning based on a community consensus of how land should be used to balance the improvement of Hatfield’s economic well-being with maintenance of its “small town” identity.
- *On the impact of business on Hatfield:*
Business is having a generally positive impact on Hatfield. Commercial and industrially zoned properties are allowing the town to maintain a relatively low tax rate and have provided the town with expanded revenues used to enhance existing town services, including adding music and art classes back into the school curriculum and

expanding library hours. Community leaders would like to see “clean” businesses coming in to Hatfield and prefer service businesses over manufacturing ones.

2. ECONOMIC CHARACTER Issues

Increasing Commercial and Industrial Development Pressures—As available land for business expansion in Northampton and surrounding communities becomes exhausted, pressures for growth will shift north to Hatfield. Already, several industries have moved to Hatfield from Northampton in search of areas for expansion. As traffic volumes increase on Route 5, other auto-oriented uses will be attracted. These “pressures” are perceived as both a danger and, if carefully managed, an opportunity.

Identifying Potential Areas for New Commercial and Industrial Growth—Opportunities for commercial infill in the historic town center are somewhat limited due to a lack of land. Hatfield residents have clearly stated that they do not want to see Routes 5/10 turn into a commercial strip similar to Route 9 in Hadley. Hatfield will experience more commercial and industrial growth in the future, and it must plan carefully now to envision and identify the location, form, and design of this development. Residents’ feelings about not developing Routes 5/10 may be in contrast with community leaders’ ideas of where development should happen.

Zoning Improvements—As noted previously, Hatfield’s business zoning standards are extremely antiquated and do not provide the basic protection adopted by most communities in the region. The most notable areas needing improvement are in signage and landscaping standards, site plan review criteria, and performance and design standards. Community leaders advocate eliminating the current spot zoning allowed in Hatfield and moving toward limited growth ordinances and a one-stop permitting process.

Design and Aesthetics of Commercial Development—The design and aesthetic qualities of commercial development along the Route 5 corridor do not reflect the historic character exhibited elsewhere in Hatfield, such as in the beautiful town center. However, Hatfield does not have to lose its historic character to corporate chain architecture or industrial sheet metal buildings.

Sewer Service in Route 5 Corridor—Business owners have identified the lack of sewer service in the Route 5 corridor as a significant problem, due to soil limitations and the cost of installing expensive mounded septic systems in new or expanded business uses. The town is working to address this issue and extend sewers. Providing sewer services to industrial areas will not only assist businesses, but will also help to protect the town’s groundwater from pollution due to industrial discharges. However, expanding sewer service can also increase growth pressures, so Hatfield should plan carefully and extend sewer service only to those areas planned and zoned for growth. Hatfield should have appropriate zoning controls in place before extending sewer service.

Building Permit Fees—Business owners have identified the high cost of building permit fees for new or commercial uses or additions as a significant burden. The fee was changed to a per-square-foot fee, resulting in very high permit fees for large business expansions. Hatfield may want to reconsider the desirability of this high fee.

Adjacent uses—One negative effect of Hatfield’s practice of spot zoning is the complex of adjacent uses in some areas. While small businesses exist harmoniously with nearby residences in many areas, the absence of buffer requirements in other cases has led to friction between the needs and desires of the homeowner versus the business owner.

3. ECONOMIC CHARACTER Recommendations

Adopt site plan approval or review for all commercial and industrial uses.

Site plan approval promotes better planned and designed business uses. Adopting a site plan approval bylaw would enable the Hatfield Planning Board to review and approve the layout of buildings, parking, landscaping, signage, access, traffic, and pedestrian circulation for all new business, commercial, and industrial uses. Site plan approval is also an excellent mechanism to ensure that new business uses meet commercial and industrial performance standards (see below).

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Spring 2001 Town Meeting

Adopt commercial and industrial performance standards.

Hatfield should control the expansion of emerging commercial strip development on Route 5 with the adoption of commercial performance standards, including buffer requirements. Commercial performance standards promote better building siting, design, parking, landscaping, signage, vehicular access, and environmental protection in the development of business uses. For example, communities such as Easthampton, Hadley, Northampton, and South Hadley have recently adopted commercial performance standards to control commercial strip development along major highways like Route 9 and Route 10.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Adopt commercial and industrial design guidelines.

Hatfield should develop a design guidelines manual for businesses, to promote architectural design and site layout. Design guidelines are not mandatory regulations, but rather design suggestions that the Planning Board can use to work with project proponents to get better projects. For example, the town of Southwick recently developed a design guidelines manual for all new commercial development projects; similar guidelines exist in Granby; and Amherst has adopted a design review process wherein architectural designs and signage are reviewed and approved by a design review board.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Create a new light industrial and technology park district.

Hatfield has an emerging core of clean, light, technology-related industry in the I-91 corridor. Hatfield should capitalize on this trend, and on its excellent transportation access, to promote growth in a new technology park zoning district. Such growth could provide jobs, taxes, and other benefits to the town, with a minimum of negative impacts. For example, Amherst and Westfield have adopted light industrial zoning districts, which promote clean, light technology industries and prohibit “smokestack” industries. Amherst has both a professional/research park district, intended to provide an open and attractive environment for office, research, and low-intensity industrial uses, and a light industrial district for light manufacturing, warehousing, and wholesaling. Westfield has an industrial park district, which permits manufacturing, fabricating, processing, packing, office buildings, and research laboratories and facilities.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Promote limited business development as infill in the town center.

Hatfield should create a limited business district on available open land to allow for neighborhood-scale small retail shops and offices. The town should also adopt stringent design guidelines to keep new business buildings consistent with the historic character of the town center. For example, Hadley has a limited business district in the village of North Hadley and along Route 47, which allows farmstands, retail, bank, and service uses up to a maximum of 2,500 square

feet of floor area but prohibits fast-food restaurants, junkyards, auto sales and repair businesses, and gas stations. This limited set of permitted uses protects the character of historic North Hadley.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 3 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Create a new satellite business center district.

Given that Hatfield's historic town center has only limited land available for commercial growth, Hatfield could create a new district as a focal point for commercial growth by creating a new business center. A new business center would afford Hatfield an opportunity to continue to grow, but with a mix of compact uses in well-designed buildings clustered in a pedestrian-friendly setting. For example, new village center business districts are currently under development in Southwick (adjacent to the existing town center), Amherst (new South Amherst village center), and Belchertown (on the former State School property). These are all mixed-use districts, promoting compact development with specific design standards to ensure well-designed projects.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

D. Farmland

1. Facts

The town of Hatfield is situated in the center of the Pioneer Valley Region of western Massachusetts⁵. The region is home to nearly a third of the state's farmland and 10 percent of the state's farming operations. Valley farmers, the vast majority of whom own and control their own farms, produce nursery and greenhouse crops, vegetables, dairy products, and tobacco worth over \$105 million on some of the richest and most productive soils in the region. The agricultural lands along the Connecticut River form a backdrop to the region's economic activity, natural environment, and small town atmosphere. The high quality of life in the Pioneer Valley is dependent upon, and in many ways defined by, the practice of agriculture.

Regional Context

In 1997, the three Pioneer Valley counties had 164,643 acres of land in farms, 83,683 acres of which were cropland. According to the USDA Census, between 1987 and 1997 the region lost 29,000 acres of land in farms. Some of this land was converted to permanent non-farming uses such as commercial and residential development. Other acreages were simply abandoned. In Hatfield, the loss of agricultural land during that period has been modest but noticeable with a 6 percent loss in cropland and a 3 percent loss in pasture land.

In the Valley, as across Massachusetts, farm viability is a major challenge. Farm families struggle to manage continually increasing expenses, with ever-slimmer profit margins. In 1997, average Valley farm production expenses were \$52,998, up 40 percent in the last ten years. Yet, at the same time, in 1997, net cash return per Valley farm was \$15,505—up 44 percent in the last ten years, but less than the state-wide average of \$24,260. In 1997, the number of Valley (and Massachusetts) farms with net gains and those with net losses was about equal. Farm income data at the town level is unavailable, because the Agricultural Census data is presented by county.

The average Valley farmer is 55 years old (approximately equal to the national average) and has operated his or her farm for 22 years. Nationally, there are twice as many farmers over the age of 65 as there are under 35. This creates a significant concern as farm families exit farming; the vast majority (one study estimates 98 percent) of farm families have no succession plan.

The Connecticut River Valley, primarily in Massachusetts and Connecticut, is listed as one of the twenty “most endangered agricultural regions in the United States” by the American Farmland Trust. The Trust notes in its analysis that “expansion of industrial and commercial facilities is rapidly using up prime farmland” and that “many small tracts are used as rural residences for occupants who are employed in cities and towns” (1997).

Sprawl development patterns throughout the region contribute greatly to this loss of farmland in the Pioneer Valley. The sprawl problem is primarily due to single family residential growth on large lots. Fully 85 percent of the building permits issued in the region for new construction between 1983 and 1993 were for single family residential construction, while only 5 percent were for non-residential uses.

The development of land for urban uses is accelerating over time in the Pioneer Valley. In the fourteen years between 1971 and 1985, a total of 15,542 acres of open land was converted to urban use in the region, a rate of 1,110 acres per year. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission estimates that, in the nine years between 1986 and 1995, a total of 13,430 acres of land was developed, a rate of 1,492 acres per year. Within the lifetime of many current residents, 34,000 acres of land in the Pioneer Valley region have been developed for urban uses, a 71 percent increase from 1952 to 1985.

Farming in Hatfield

While the quantifiable loss of farms and farmland in Hatfield is modest, the trend is not positive. Excluding forest land, the total loss of farmland in the town between 1971 and 1997 was about 220 acres, or 5.7 percent. Continuing pressure in the real estate market for larger lot home sites close to I-91, along with the educational, cultural, and economic

⁵ In discussing farmland concerns, the Pioneer Valley is defined as Franklin, Hampshire, and Hampden counties. Throughout the rest of this plan, the Pioneer Valley includes only Hampshire and Hampden counties.

amenities of communities like Amherst and Northampton, could easily tip the balance against Hatfield’s working farm landscapes.

A series of maps—created by PVPC for a project that is developing a strategic plan for agriculture in the Pioneer Valley—illustrates three key characteristics of farmland in Hatfield: Agricultural Value, Threat of Conversion, and Preservation Priority. These maps serve as a modest attempt at establishing mapping information that can be useful in developing policies, goals, and strategies for maintaining agriculture in the town.

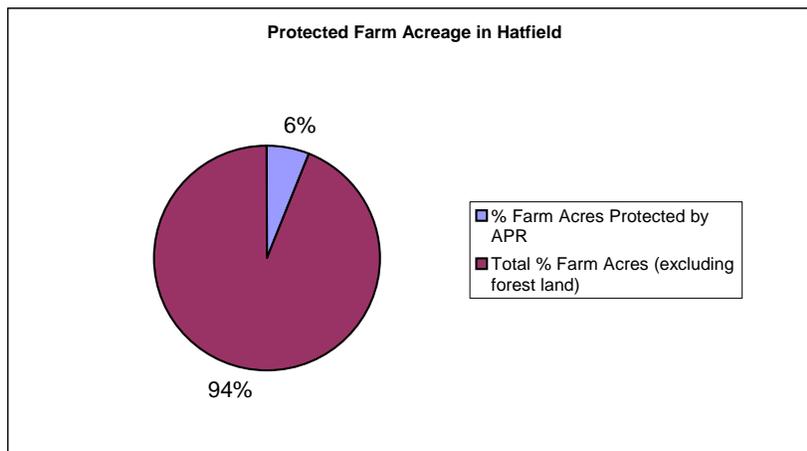
Hatfield’s visioning efforts in the spring and summer of 1999 clearly identified agriculture as a fundamental element of town character, culture, and economic activity. Issues revolving around rural character, farmland, and open space were mentioned in both the town-wide survey and the community visioning meetings.

Top issues identified by participants at the community meetings included:

- **Need to harmonize development with the rural character of Hatfield**
- **Preservation of open space**
- **Farm economy**
- **Farmland retention**
- **Protection of town appearance, character, and identity**
- **Preservation of working farmland**
- **Preservation of pristine forestland**

Many of the strategies and action steps identified by participants at these meetings included specific references to farmland preservation, rural character protection, and “right-to-farm” techniques.

Agriculture, as an industry, accounts for more than \$105 million in sales annually in the three counties of the Pioneer Valley. However, the value of viable agriculture to Hatfield and other rural communities cannot be measured solely in terms of farm products sold. The practice of farming provides much of the open land that defines the character of the community. Hatfield's history and culture derives, in large part, from the families who have maintained working farms that have provided sustenance, economic opportunity, and vitality to residents and newcomers. An important challenge for the town in the future will be to secure the opportunity for viable farming in Hatfield by ensuring that non-farm development is managed and located so as not to interfere with standard agricultural practices.



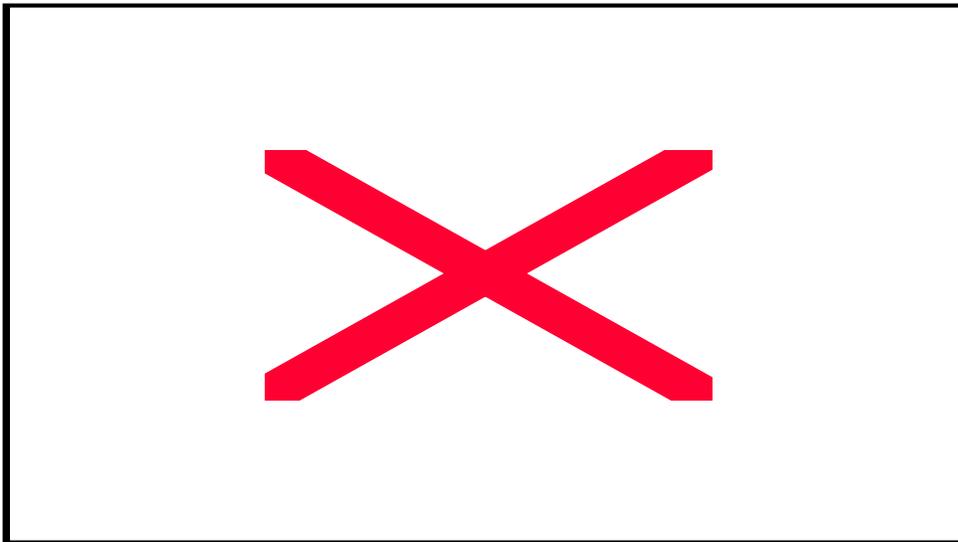
While more than one-third of the land in Hatfield is in farm use, only a small percentage of this land has been protected from development by the use of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program. Under the APR program, the Massachusetts Department of Food and Agriculture purchases development rights from farmers throughout the commonwealth, protecting thousands of agricultural acres in perpetuity. Participation by Hatfield farmers has been low while demand for this state-funded program elsewhere has been consistently high.

One reason discussed during the master planning process for the relatively low rate of participation has been the “under-valuing” of floodplain acreage in terms of potential development. Much of Hatfield’s rich farmland lies in the

100-year floodplain. This land is generally assigned a low development value, therefore making the value of the development rights lower than would be acceptable to interested farmland owners. To retain working farms in these areas, the community must consider the likelihood of development in the floodplain. If development of these lands increases, or is considered likely to increase in the future, then alternative land protection devices must be created that will maintain open landscapes.

**PVPC Region—Lands in APR Program (selected towns)
Aug 2000**

TOWN	# of APR Farm Properties	# of Preserved Acres
Amherst	28	1,607.66
Belchertown	2	372.00
Chesterfield	2	379.00
Hadley	41	1,686.83
Hatfield	2	240.65
Northampton	5	545.00
Southampton	6	692.60
Southwick	5	295.50
Wilbraham	1	68.00
Williamsburg	2	233.00
TOTAL PVPC REGION	94	6,120.24



2. FARMLAND Issues

- **Hatfield's rural landscapes are threatened.** Hatfield's rich, fertile farmlands remain unprotected from development, and the community is experiencing a slow but steady loss of farmland. This loss is being allowed to happen at the same time that current residents believe the character of the community is defined by agriculture. The town is missing opportunities to increase the visibility of agriculture in Hatfield. Indirect benefits of local agriculture that could be capitalized upon include:
 - provides rich, diverse wildlife habitats
 - offers pastoral landscapes and scenic views
 - helps preserve historic features such as houses, barns, stone walls, and the cultural identity of communities
 - offers educational opportunities for young people
 - provides a tourism and family destinations (pick-your-own, hayrides, petting farms, put-and-take fishing holes)
 - yields open land for hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, and birding
- **Hatfield is not taking advantage of all the tools available to protect farmland.** In addition to working with local zoning and subdivision regulations, there are other useful tools available to the town that can encourage the practice of agriculture. The town should be aggressive in requesting funds and technical help from state agencies such as the Department of Food and Agriculture (DFA). In addition to the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program for preserving farmland in Massachusetts by purchasing development rights, the DFA also sponsors the Farm Viability Program, which offers business and estate planning expertise to farmers. Currently, under the typical western Massachusetts local government structure, the agricultural perspective is not officially and regularly represented in local government. No officially appointed board or committee works to represent the concerns and wishes of farmers and farm industries. Land use policy, conservation priorities, business incentives, tax policy, and infrastructure development are all areas of concern to farmers in Hatfield. A comprehensive assessment of the agricultural issues in the community can only be successfully developed and implemented by an ongoing, locally-connected and locally-responsive group. A strong partnership with area land trusts will also allow the town to move quickly and effectively when lands become available for protection. The town should emphasize the importance of farming in Hatfield to new and current residents by promoting "farm friendly" behavior at both the individual and community levels. Educational efforts should focus on allaying conflicts between farming operations and houses in rural areas of town.
- **Long-time residents and newcomers have conflicting views of the purpose and place of agricultural activities.** Often, people move to a community seeking the rural amenities and quality of life provided by an agricultural landscape. Yet, before long, they complain about inadequate services and agriculturally-related nuisances. A "rural life" ordinance states that "services in a rural environment should only be provided where absolutely necessary and affordable to the taxpayers." New citizens are informed about the rural values of the town which may include less-than-perfectly maintained roads, limited water and sewer service, and a general lack of other urban or suburban amenities. Residents in a rural community will endure the slow-moving farm machinery on the road, early morning tractor noise, and perhaps unpleasant odors of natural fertilizers for the sake of maintaining working landscapes that add vitality and character to a place. The purpose of so-called "right to farm" and "rural life" laws is to limit the circumstances under which normal agricultural operations (e.g., odor, noise, chemical use, storm runoff) may be deemed a nuisance. Such laws do not shield farm businesses from negligence or misconduct, violations of state or federal environmental or other laws, or consequences of generally unacceptable farm practices within those areas.
- **Farm viability is affected by outside forces.** These include market as well as bureaucratic realities, which sometimes coincide to the detriment of the farm family.. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program methodology undervalues developable farmlands in the floodplain, thereby reducing participation.

3. FARMLAND Recommendations

Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act and establish a Hatfield Community Preservation Fund to acquire or protect land in environmentally sensitive areas.

The town should leverage its position in state and federal purchasing programs by establishing a local land acquisition fund (Community Preservation Fund). This fund can be used to match or “challenge” public and private dollars and increase the amount of purchasing power available to the community for these land acquisitions. Two types of acquisition should be pursued: both the fee-simple purchase of land and the purchase (or donation) of development rights. The purchasing of development rights and the establishment of conservation restrictions allow the town to limit inappropriate development in sensitive areas without owning the land itself. Landowners are reimbursed for the development value only, allowing private land ownership to be maintained. Acquisition and conservation restriction efforts should focus on areas such as the water supply protection areas, rare or sensitive wildlife habitat areas, forestlands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. Land adjacent to these critical areas should have development standards enforced that apply specific subdivision controls to protect the sensitive character of the area. This area should be designated for low-intensity residential uses.

The town should encourage the donation of lands or development rights to enhance the community’s natural resource protection strategy. The community should advertise the fact that it accepts these types of donations and provide a contact point (name, phone number, address) for those wishing to make a donation. Hatfield should continue to work closely with existing land trusts and land protection programs.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1+ (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: NOW! Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002, with a goal of presentation to town meeting in May 2001

Establish a community-based Agricultural Advisory Committee to represent farming issues at the local level.

An Agricultural Advisory Committee should be established to form a direct link between local farmers and town government. This committee can more clearly articulate issues facing Hatfield farmers and share those concerns with elected officials on a more formal and regular basis. The town should establish a clear set of preservation priorities for lands leaving the Chapter 61 program and have resources available to make purchases of lands or development rights. A regular presence by this commission at town meetings, Select Board meetings, and other relevant public forums and hearings will serve to heighten awareness of critical agricultural issues in Hatfield and give voice to a sector that is often lost in the debate over school funding, sewer rates, and road maintenance. One of the committee’s responsibilities will be to encourage participation in the state Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. In addition, the committee should raise awareness about the multiple benefits and realities of agriculture among local officials and throughout the community. Events and projects might include a community Farm Day, Farm Breakfasts (and other product sampling events), and a Farm Open House.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1+ (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: NOW! Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Actively encourage farmer participation in the state’s Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program.

Only two farm parcels in Hatfield have been protected to date under the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. This is a very low participation rate for a community with some of the Pioneer Valley’s best farmland, particularly when compared with neighboring Hadley, where 41 farms have APR protection. Hatfield needs an outreach program to educate farmland owners about the merits of the APR program, and to assist them in applying for the program.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Make sure that zoning and other bylaws reflect "farmer friendly" approaches.

A major recommendation of this Master Plan is the need to review zoning regulations to assure their ability to facilitate the town’s vision. An essential element of Hatfield’s vision is maintenance of rural character. Ways to make Hatfield’s

zoning bylaws farmer-friendly include a notice requirement informing current and incoming residents of the rights, responsibilities, and typical practices of farmers in the area; a buffer requirement to ensure that newer non-farm development is physically compatible with adjacent working farmland; provisions for dispute resolution outside the court system; and a broad definition of agriculture to allow diversity, flexibility, and innovation.

When defining agriculture, include uses related to agriculture, such as equipment dealers, veterinarians, and milling, by defining “agricultural accessory uses” in a broad and inclusive manner. In addition, special consideration should be paid to agricultural uses including allowing: adequate signage, including off-site signs to attract and direct customers; simpler site design standards for seasonal agricultural uses; flexibility in regulations such as expanded hours of operation, temporary signs, and parking near “pick-your-own” fields, and exemptions for agricultural structures from some building and safety codes designed for housing and commercial buildings. This is particularly important to preserve historic structures that function adequately for agricultural purposes and are an essential element of the rural landscape, but that may not be up to code.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Prioritize Farmlands for Preservation

The town should develop a series of maps (computer-generated maps or Geographical Information System, if practical) with a land parcel database, to map and prioritize farmland parcels for protection. Possible map themes: farmland value (a comparison of soils data, contiguous acreage, proximity to protected areas or other farm acreage), farm productivity (a comparison of farm operation values including revenue data), threat to farmland (existence of development infrastructure, surrounding inappropriate land uses, pending sale status, proximity to highway corridors/interchanges, current zoning), and farm protection priorities (a visual prioritization of farmland to be protected).

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee → AAC

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

E. Natural Resources

1. Facts

Water

Of the three sources of drinking water in the town of Hatfield, the community has come to rely heavily on but one—the Running Gutter Brook Reservoir. This surface water source provides most of the water reaching homes and businesses in the town. A filtration plant prepares the water for distribution to users in the town. Two public wells supplement the supply from the reservoir: the Omasta Well and the West Hatfield Well, neither source of which is treated with filtration or chlorination. Cost has dictated the choice of primary water supply from the reservoir as the operation of the filtration plant remains less expensive than the electrical power used to operate the two wells. The wells are used primarily in two situations: 1) to provide adequate water supply during peak demand hours (summer months), and 2) to bypass the reservoir supply during times of high turbidity (primarily after heavy rainstorms).

Water Source	Approximate Annual % Total Water Supply
Town Reservoir	70 %
West Hatfield Well	20 %
Omasta Well	10 %

This reliance on a surface water reservoir as the primary supply of water to Hatfield presents several problems:

- **Vulnerability and sensitivity to land use changes in the watershed**

Changes in land use that result in a degraded water supply area can directly, and quickly, affect the quality of the water supply. The removal of forest lands, wetlands, and other naturally vegetated areas can result in increased storm runoff and increased sediment in the reservoir. This leads to the turbidity problem during heavy rains.

- **Vulnerability to contamination by human activity**

Human activity, and development in particular, leads to an increased threat of contamination via failing on-site septic systems, hazardous waste spills (even motor oil and gasoline), and increased use of lawn chemicals (pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers). All of these threats can result in immediate contamination of the supply.

- **Capacity for growth**

There are limits on the number of gallons that can be affordably and practically provided to users of the water supply system when surface waters are the primary source. The current safe yield of Running Gutter Brook Reservoir is approximately .5 million gallons per day (mgd), while Hatfield's maximum daily demand can be as high as 1.0 mgd. Future growth in the town may be limited if Hatfield continues to rely on the reservoir as a primary supply source.

Threats to the water resource follow closely those to the watershed areas and waterways. They include:

- **residential development in sensitive areas—particularly in the forested water supply area feeding the reservoir**
- **clearing of vegetation that borders waterways**
- **alteration of stream conditions such as temperature, velocity and volume of flow, and turbidity (amount of particulate matter in the water)**
- **non-point source pollution from households, septic systems, roadways, agricultural operations, and industries**
- **overuse or misuse of recreational resources**
- **poor stewardship of forest lands through inappropriate timbering practices**

The development of residential lots in the upper reaches of the Running Gutter Brook watershed in recent years endangers the health of the reservoir. Continued removal of natural vegetation and replacement of this natural landscape with human residences increases stormwater runoff contaminated by lawn fertilizers, pesticides, de-icers, motor oil, and other damaging substances. Several studies completed over the past decade have reinforced the conclusion that development in the watershed results in a diminished watershed.

According to a 1999 report titled “Comprehensive Nonpoint Source Management in the Mill River Subwatershed, Hatfield, Massachusetts”:

“Many large agricultural land parcels are being converted to residential uses. This is evidenced by the number of withdrawals of Chapter 61A farm parcels from the farm use assessment tax programs. Several large, unused, easily developable agricultural parcels are located in the primary recharge area to Hatfield’s Omasta and Whately Wells. Without adequate land use controls, large subdivision development of this area could threaten the quality of Hatfield’s drinking water supplies....The watershed and recharge areas are extremely desirable locations for new homes.”

Threats to the aquifer recharge areas surrounding the town wells are similar to those in the water supply area feeding the reservoir. The 1994 report Developing a Regional Wellhead Protection Program notes:

“...hazardous wastes and petroleum present one of the greatest threats to aquifers. Only a few parts per billion of these contaminants can ruin an aquifer for human use...Subsurface oil or gasoline storage tanks in service stations, private residences, and businesses present a serious threat to groundwater supplies. Stringent preventive measures are justified, due to the considerable impairment of groundwater supplies from the many leaks and spills from petroleum products. The cost to restore contaminated aquifers can reach millions of dollars.”

The report goes on to document the location of the primary and secondary recharge areas in Hatfield, illustrating that most of the land west of I-91 lies in the secondary recharge zone. The primary recharge zone covers a swath of land in the upper reaches of Running Gutter Brook. Land uses that pose a high risk to the water supply in this area of Hatfield include auto service and repair facilities, fuel stations, auto body and auto repair shops, general agricultural use, major highways, railway tracks, commercial greenhouses/nurseries, operational equipment storage, road and maintenance depots, fertilizer/pesticide storage and application, on-site septic systems, and underground storage tanks.

A Zone II study of the West Hatfield Well, completed in January 2000, provides a more detailed and accurate delineation of the recharge area. This information should be used to update the current Water Supply Protection District boundary on Hatfield’s zoning map and ensure a safer source of public water.

Rivers, streams, flood erosion mitigation, and ground water replenishment

Approximately thirty-five linear miles of river and stream channels cross the landscape of Hatfield, including seven and a half miles of New England’s treasured Connecticut River. The Connecticut River forms all of the eastern and much of the southern boundary of the town and has influenced everything from settlement patterns to agricultural productivity.

Land use patterns along the Connecticut River in Hatfield show that most of the acreage within 2,000 feet of the riverbank is in agricultural use. At several points along the river, forestland provides a vegetated buffer to human activities although much of this forest area is quite narrow—less than 200 feet deep. The town center area parallels the river for approximately two miles, coming within 800 feet of the bank for much of this stretch. Most of this riverbank, however, remains unprotected from development.

Much of the land adjacent to the Connecticut lies in the 100-year floodplain (as determined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Flood Insurance Maps and corrected by analysis of the USGS topographic maps). This situation provides a high quality of agricultural soils in the area as evidenced by the land use data showing the predominance of agriculture in the town’s floodplain areas.

The entire land mass of the town is situated in the Middle Connecticut River Watershed Basin. All naturally draining surface water in Hatfield eventually finds its way to the river. There are three major sub-watersheds in the town as identified in the 1989 Hatfield Open Space Plan. These include:

Running Gutter Brook (west and south Hatfield)

This sub-watershed has its genesis in the upper reaches of West Hatfield along Mountain Road and includes the Hatfield Town Reservoir. The brook is also fed by inputs from Whately and Northampton. Two minor watershed areas in West Hatfield drain into Northampton, one of which includes Mountain Reservoir. About one-third of this 35-acre reservoir is in Hatfield’s far northwestern corner.

Mill River (central Hatfield)

This watershed is drained by the Mill River, a tributary of the Connecticut River that has its headwaters in the town of Conway. Running Gutter Brook joins this river just east of I-91 in south central Hatfield. Rich wildlife habitats are formed in the broad marshes resulting from the historic damming of the Mill River at Prospect Street.

Broad Brook (Northampton border)

This stream feeds into Running Gutter Brook from Northampton.

Old Connecticut Oxbow (northeastern Hatfield)

This area drains the remnants of an old Connecticut River meander—once an “oxbow lake”—including Great Pond and Cow Bridge Brook. The area is now a significant wildlife habitat area as well as a flood storage area for the Connecticut River.

Riverfront Areas (1996 Rivers Protection Act)

In 1996, Massachusetts amended its Wetland Act to include protection of a 200-foot buffer along all streams and rivers in the commonwealth. Development within this “riverfront area” is severely restricted to protect the natural quality of the waterway, its adjacent wetland areas, and its habitat and wildlife resources. The Rivers Protection Act established this additional resource area to be considered by local conservation commissions who must enforce the wetlands regulations. Waterways affected by these regulations include those that flow year round. Map 2 identifies those waterways in the town that are likely to fall under the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Act. Even with the Rivers Protection Act in place, it is probable that there will continue to be some development along waterways. Single lots of record in existence at the time the law was passed in 1996 are held to a less restrictive standard that allows development within the “outer riparian zone” (100’—200’).

100-Year Floodplain

The 100-year floodplain is defined as an area with a 1 percent chance of flooding in a given year. The floodplain serves as a critical habitat for many plant and animal species and provides some of the richest agricultural soils in the Pioneer Valley. Hatfield has not experienced substantial development of its floodplain areas yet, but these lands could be threatened in the future due to weak zoning restrictions. Areas in the 100-year flood zone in Hatfield are primarily those lands adjacent to the Connecticut River in the eastern part of the town and along the Mill River in central Hatfield. A portion of the floodplain extends northward along a portion of Running Gutter Brook into West Hatfield, as well. Much of this flood area is currently in agricultural production. Protective regulations and disincentives that limit development in the floodplain exist at several levels:

- Lending institutions may require flood insurance for those structures built in the 100-year flood zone. Although the consumer cost of this federally-supported insurance program is relatively inexpensive, some prospective homeowners simply do not want to take on this added burden. While this hesitancy to build is noticeable in some communities, it is not apparent in Hatfield. The town must, however, consider the role of the lender in guiding development in these areas and be proactive in its approach to educating the loan officers and boards of the effect of floodplain development.
- The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act limits the impacts of construction and alteration activities in the floodplain through its local enforcement by the Conservation Commission.
- Local zoning bylaws are an additional regulatory layer that can control development in these critical areas. Hatfield’s Floodplain Overlay District sets additional submittal standards for those wishing to build in the district but does not disallow underlying uses. This is a critical weakness in that it does not prevent residential development in these areas. A new regulatory strategy is needed to protect the floodplain in Hatfield and bring the current bylaw into compliance.
- The State Building Code requires the elevation of structures in the floodway—the floor of the lowest habitable area in the structure must be above the base elevation for floodwaters during a 100-year storm event. The code also reinforces the overlay district regulations by prohibiting any change in the flood storage capacity of the area.

An added urgency is brought to this discussion due to the character of much Hatfield's floodplain. Much of the land is in agricultural use—cleared of wooded, habitat areas—and ready for development. This condition perhaps makes these areas more vulnerable to development in the coming years.

Wetlands

Wetland areas are home to frogs, fish, freshwater clams and mussels, beaver, muskrats, great blue herons, waterfowl, and bitterns. Wetland habitats in town occur along stream and river corridors with some isolated ponds and pools in places like The Rocks in West Hatfield. In Hatfield, wetlands and water resources stretch from the hills in the west to the Connecticut River on the east and from Whately on the north to Northampton on the south and compose approximately 22 percent of the town. Wetlands include rivers, ponds, swamps, wet meadows, beaver ponds, and land within the FEMA-defined 100-year flood area. These wetlands and flood areas in Hatfield are shown on Map 2.

Riparian areas are the vegetated lands adjacent to water sources. This juncture of land and water attracts a range of species and tends to mark a transition zone between habitats. As such, these corridors link one habitat to another. In Hatfield, the riparian areas exist along the Connecticut River, Mill River, Running Gutter Brook, and Great Pond. Many of these riparian areas remain intact, aided by the Rivers Protection Act and regulations restricting floodplain development. However, floodplain regulations in Hatfield are not as effective as they could be. An ineffective floodplain overlay district requires revision or replacement with a bylaw that can decrease inappropriate development if the community wishes to do so.

Habitat and Wildlife

Hatfield's landscape has been, and will continue to be, a home for animals as well as people. General habitat types determine the wildlife species that exist in each area. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has delineated several habitat environments and resource areas. This information can be used to help define the location and type of future growth as well as areas subjected to environmental constraints. These areas are graphically defined in several maps. Map 2 shows the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain and the 200' buffer areas that are associated with the State Rivers Protection Act. Map 3 identifies the estimated habitat associated with rare and endangered species. Hatfield has three predominant habitats:

Grasslands and Open Fields

These areas are habitat for grassland birds such as meadowlarks, bobolinks, vesper sparrows, and mammals such as mice. These areas occur generally in the parts of Hatfield east of I-91 and include much of the town's agricultural lands.

Wooded Areas (Forestlands)

These areas are habitat for bears, coyotes, deer, grouse, woodpeckers, squirrels, porcupines, and deep wood songbirds such as wood thrush, scarlet tanager, and veery. The forest resources and woodlands in Hatfield lie primarily west of the I-91 corridor. Map 1 shows the extensive range of forestland, encompassing approximately 4,800 acres, which consists of 45 percent of the total land area in the town. There has been a slight decline of 75 acres, or 2 percent, in forested cover since 1985. The residential development that has occurred recently along Linseed Road and Mountain Road accounts for some of this land conversion.

The study for the Conservation and Recreation Plan completed for the town in 1989 catalogued approximately 135 species of trees and shrubs in this forestland, including those used for commercial application. The species defined as prime woodlands with commercial value are white pine and red oak that grow easily in the conditions in West Hatfield. Hatfield is in the enviable position of having significant forest resources that can benefit wildlife and residents of the community. Protecting and enhancing these resources can provide long-term economic benefits as well as protection for the diversity of wildlife species that are fully dependent on the forestlands.

The value of the forest resources to the community extends beyond lumbering and sale of Class I Prime forest species. Trees not harvested for their commercial application provide flood mitigation and water supply filtration. Benefits to residents and businesses alike include:

- **Flood control in upland forested areas, where treed slopes can slow stormwater runoff and minimize down-stream flood impacts on farms, residences, and businesses**
- **Flood control in lowlands, where trees can absorb run-off before it reaches surface water sources**

- **Water supply protection for public and private sources (trees and shrubs can absorb and filter pollutants prior to absorption into aquifers and surface water supplies)**
- **Air quality improvements**
- **Erosion control, which benefits downhill farming as well as water supply and surface water quality**
- **Recreational opportunities for hiking, biking, skiing, and hunting**
- **Visual buffers between uses**

In addition to the public health benefits of maintaining forest resources, the extensive forestland in the hills and along river corridors provides vital resources for wildlife. These include:

- **Protection and shelter for inland and water-based species such as bear, moose, duck**
- **Nutrient and food source for land and water species**
- **Nesting areas for indigenous birds such as osprey, duck, and heron**
- **Seasonal shelter and food source for migratory birds**
- **Protected breeding areas**

Without forested areas, floodwaters from heavy storms would run off more rapidly, raising flood waters and assuring more property and crop damage. Other environmental impacts such as air quality degradation, reduction of visual buffers from adjacent uses, and elimination of habitat could ensue as well. In particular, West Hatfield forested land provides important absorption and filtration of water runoff before it reaches the town's water supply reservoir. Protecting this supply will be crucial to the future commercial and residential growth of the town. Continued deforestation within the water supply recharge area could result in pollution of the supply as oil, fertilizers, and other chemicals are rapidly washed off developed areas to the surface waters.

Deforested areas in the hills also could cause impacts on down-gradient properties as the rapid runoff causes erosion of stream banks and hillsides, sending sediment onto farmland and other properties, and potentially causing greater damage to homes and businesses during major storm events. Erosion causes streams and rivers to fill with silt, resulting in oxygen deprivation to water plants and animal species, killing them and causing down-slope wetlands to deteriorate. This in turn would eliminate food sources for migratory birds and land animals. Finally, the loss of significant forested areas will visually alter the character of the community.

The value in maintaining vegetative cover and uninterrupted riparian corridors goes beyond wildlife preservation. These corridors and wetlands provide many other significant public health benefits for the entire community. These benefits include:

- **Flood mitigation for agricultural crops and structures by storing and slowing runoff**
- **Water supply protection, through filtration of pollutants (studies by the Environmental Protection Agency show that over 75 percent of phosphorus and nitrogen can be filtered in riparian areas adjacent to farmland)**
- **Erosion control by absorbing and slowing down storm runoff**
- **Groundwater replenishment**
- **Stormwater management and regulation of watershed water levels**
- **Open space corridors and recreational opportunities such as fishing, boating, and hunting**
-

A great diversity of species is dependent upon the wetlands and riparian areas in Hatfield. Appendix 2 contains a list of species that are commonly found in Hampshire County and that subsist on the wealth of these resources. Maintaining the integrity of wetlands and riparian corridors with vegetated cover is important to:

- **Provide shelter for various species**
- **Provide protected corridors for movement between and among adjacent habitats**
- **Provide food source**
- **Provide permanently flowing water sources**
- **Provide nesting and breeding places**

If these corridors are disturbed or interrupted, damage to habitat and species population will result. This holds true for common species as well as rare and endangered species. Man-made disruptions that have impacts on the habitat include:

- **Roads**
- **Parking lots**
- **Residential lots, where domestic animals can threaten wildlife**
- **Large commercial developments**
- **Manicured lawns, which minimize protected cover and generation of food resources**

Wetland and lowland areas such as Great Pond serve not only as vital species habitat, but also as flood and storm storage areas that absorb and slow stormwater to prevent major crop and other property damage in Hatfield. Substantial impairment or loss to this natural flood storage area could have tremendous impact on property damage throughout the town center area.

Wetlands are specialized habitat areas that are always wet or are wet for extended periods of time during the year. There are many types of wetlands, including:

- **Marshes—predominantly open waterlogged areas**
- **Swamps—predominantly wooded waterlogged areas**
- **Vernal Pools—confined depressions that fill seasonally (at least 2 continuous months)**
- **Ponds—naturally water-filled areas or areas created by dams**
- **Riparian Areas—where the water and the land meet**
- **Streams and river, including bordering vegetated wetlands identified and protected under the state law**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts regulates activities in and around wetlands in Hatfield through the Wetlands Protection Act, a state law enforced by the local Conservation Commission. Wetlands protected by the act are primarily those that border the streams, rivers, and ponds in the town. These “bordering vegetated wetlands” provide wildlife habitat and play a critical role in maintaining water quality by serving as natural filters for nutrients, toxins, and sediment that would otherwise move directly into surface and ground waters. Isolated wetlands—at least 1,000 square feet in size—are also protected by the state regulations.

Wetlands serve as temporary storage areas for floodwaters, allowing the water to percolate slowly into the ground rather than run off into streams and rivers quickly and violently. The Map of Wetland Areas prepared by the Hatfield Conservation Commission and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission shows approximate wetland areas in Hatfield in 1999. Map 4 illustrates the overlapping of several key sensitive areas along town waterways. These lands are located primarily along the banks of the Connecticut River; in the Great Pond area, and along the lower stretches of the Mill River and Running Gutter Brook. Much of the wetland habitat in the town is coincident with these waterway corridors.

The Hatfield Wetlands Protection Bylaw, adopted in May 1999, provides additional protection of resource areas in the town. The regulations require an applicant proposing disturbance of lands within 200 feet of perennial streams, wetland resources tributary to the Running Gutter Reservoir, ponds and lakes (the 200-foot zone), and lands within 100 feet of other resource areas (the 100-foot zone) to maintain continuous, undisturbed vegetative cover within a portion of the area. It is difficult to measure the success of the bylaw in Hatfield to date, but it is a positive step toward more thoroughly protecting the town’s wetland resources and indicates a level of concern among residents that can lead to sound resource policies.

Critical Habitats and Endangered Species

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program has mapped areas of critical concern for threatened and endangered species within the town of Hatfield. These areas are generally shown on Map 3. Approximately 493 acres are identified as priority habitats for these species. The plants and animals that fall within this classification are identified in Table 5. A more extensive list of species known to exist in Hampshire County is in Appendix 3.

Table 5: Threatened and Endangered Species of Hatfield

Species	Status
Shortnose Sturgeon	Endangered of extinction
Eastern Silvery Minnow	Special Concern, suffering decline
Eastern Pond Mussel	Special Concern
Triangle Floater (mussel)	Special Concern
Marbled Salamander	Threatened, likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future
Wood Turtle	Special Concern
Least Bittern (bird)	Endangered
Pygmy Weed (plant)	Threatened
Green Dragon (plant)	Threatened
Tufted Hairgrass (plant)	Endangered
Intermediate Spike-Sedge (plant)	Threatened
Frank's Lovegrass (plant)	Special Concern
Dwarf Wedge Mussell	Endangered
Sandbar Willow (plant)	Special Concern

Source: Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

These species are dependent upon habitat provided by riparian and wetland resources as well as forest resources. There are over 5,000 acres that provide productive habitat for wildlife species in Hatfield, including forest, open waters, and wetland. Approximately 500 of these acres include areas that are priority sites for rare and endangered species.

Preventing the extinction of these species is critical to maintaining biodiversity in the Pioneer Valley. A biologically diverse native ecosystem is important to ensure stability of all plant and animal species. On a global scale, it is essential for human health as well. As the number of species within an ecosystem declines, the remaining species become more dependent upon fewer resources for survival. In many cases, the elimination of one species leads to the demise of another or many others when such species cannot adapt to the reduction and change in their environment.

Development and natural resources

The various natural resources present in Hatfield provide a wide array of benefits for both the natural environment and the residential, farming, and business community at large. It is beyond the purview of this plan to provide an exhaustive identification of the carrying capacity of these resources. However, it is widely documented that substantial degradation or elimination of resources such as forest lands, wetlands, floodplain areas, and riparian habitat has profound implications on the communities surrounding these areas. If wetlands and floodplain areas are unable to perform their intended filtering and absorption functions, results such as increased weed growth and algae blooms will occur. A tremendous amount of oxygen is used by these blooms during their natural cycles. This massive consumption of oxygen leaves little for fish and other plant life, causing “fish kills” and ultimately affecting the entire food chain from plants to birds and animals that depend on aquatic life for sustenance.

Not only is the natural filtering and absorption eliminated, but what replaces the wetland is generally impervious surface, which speeds runoff.

2. **NATURAL RESOURCES Issues**

- **Increasing demand for water due to new residential development and recent economic growth in the town.** As available developable lands in surrounding communities become scarce, pressure for development in Hatfield mounts. New businesses and residential users in the town are placing increased demands on the public water supply. The current zoning regulations along Routes 5/10 offer few development restraints to those seeking developable commercial and industrial land. Such development could lead to severe water supply deficiencies in Hatfield in the near future. Because of this, the town's supply of fresh water could be a limiting factor in attracting appropriate economic activity to the town.
- **Encroaching residential development in the upper Running Gutter Brook watershed threatens water quality of the Running Gutter Brook Reservoir, Hatfield's primary public source of water.** The continued clearing of forest and forested wetland areas in the upper reaches of this critical water supply protection area could degrade the ability of natural systems to filter and "treat" surface waters as the rapid permeability rate of these soils exposes the groundwater to risk of pollution from residential development, and as clearing of forestland alters the hydrology of wetlands and waterways. Steep slopes, cleared during the development process, add to the problem as stormwater runoff gains velocity picking up particulate matter, soil, and any contaminants on the ground surface. Although there are several opportunities for contamination when development occurs in this area, on-site septic systems pose an especially serious threat to the watershed and water supply.
- **High-risk land uses continue in the Wellhead Protection Areas (Omasta and West Hatfield wells).** Although Hatfield has adopted a Water Supply Protection Overlay District, increasing development in and around the town reservoir area and the continued existence of high-risk land uses in the Interim Wellhead Protection Areas for the two town wells continues to pose a threat to the drinking water supplies in Hatfield.
- **Housing and business development is encroaching on sensitive habitat areas.** Land use data for the town show that acreage for new housing and new businesses is being taken from previously undeveloped natural areas and agricultural lands. Grasslands, open fields, and forested areas are being converted to residential use, often losing their habitat value in the process. Increased commercial and industrial development, and zoning regulations that encourage it, continue to threaten the wetlands and flood plain areas along the Mill River corridor, which passes through prime industrial land along Rts. 5/10 and I-91.
- **Wildlife corridors are threatened with interruption from incompatible development.** As development pressures expand north along the Rts. 5/10 corridor and as engineering solutions are applied to development in sensitive areas that were once difficult to develop, important links between wetlands, forested areas, and the Connecticut River will disappear. It is important to the long-term sustainability of wildlife within the town to protect these corridors for the free movement of species between habitat areas.
- **Existing short-range attitudes toward stewardship of forest lands may have unintended long term consequences.** Ongoing harvesting practices that fail to implement practical techniques for protecting forestlands will diminish the value of these areas for wildlife habitat and for human enjoyment. Roadbuilding and irresponsible use of all-terrain vehicles in forests will continue the fragmentation of the community's deep woods.
- **Earth removal, sand/gravel excavation, and rock quarrying is diminishing natural areas.** Earth removal operations, including sand and gravel removal and the quarrying of stone, are devastating activities occurring in important resource areas in Hatfield. The removal of natural vegetation, topsoil, and the layers of subsoil and sand that filter the town's drinking water supplies also violently alters the natural systems of the affected land and its surrounding areas.
- **Inadequate funding makes acquisition and protection of natural habitat areas difficult.** Existing public and private programs for land acquisition and protection are not funded at a level that would allow the town to protect all of its high-priority lands. The monies that are available are not leveraged to the extent that they could be with the use of local funds.

- **Residents are still not fully aware of the value of the town's natural resources.** Hatfield residents remain unaware of the full value of their abundant natural resources in the town and fail to make the critical individual and community-wide decisions that would protect these resources for themselves and future generations. The lack of a local educational program to inform citizens of critical natural resource issues facing Hatfield prevents the effective local implementation of core preservation policies.
- **Wetland areas in the town continue to be disturbed and destroyed.** New development and short-sighted stewardship practices continue to take their toll on local wetland areas in Hatfield. Wetland areas are being filled during development and redevelopment of residential and commercial sites. Shoreline vegetation along streams and rivers is being removed, leading to a degraded and less functional resource. Other activities, including the discharges of chemicals, fertilizers, sewage, and road salts into wetlands, ultimately diminish or destroy their habitat and natural restorative functions.
- **Floodplain areas are threatened by residential development and other man-made encroachments.** The floodplain serves as an important wetland habitat area as well as a natural flood control system. These low-lying areas along Hatfield's rivers and streams are increasingly the site of new residential development that destroys habitat value, diminishes flood control, and places residents (and property) in areas known to flood. In addition, the construction of dikes and other flood-control structures in the town prevents the natural functioning of the floodplain.
- **Hatfield's floodplain zoning does not adequately protect the resource area.** Several aspects of the town's floodplain zoning regulations fail to offer adequate protection to the floodplain. Currently the zoning district boundary does not reflect FEMA's FIRM maps, which define the floodplain for federal insurance purposes. Uses not conducive to a functional floodplain continue to be allowed under the bylaw. There are few restrictions on the design and placement of on-site wells and septic systems in Hatfield's floodplain, increasing both the likelihood of residential development and the chance of surface and groundwater contamination in the course of a flood.
- **More land is zoned for development than may be needed for the anticipated growth of the town.** There is substantial land available in West Hatfield for continued residential and employment growth. However, as shown in the current zoning map (Map 5), much more land is zoned for urban uses than is actually in use. Areas zoned for intense uses may be inappropriate, given the resource constraints where such land overlaps wetlands, forestland, and other environmentally sensitive areas. These zoning districts may contain more land for urban uses and densities than may be needed for economic growth or than is desirable from a natural resource protection standpoint. For example, 900 acres are zoned, but not yet built, for industrial use. This includes lands in estimated habitat of rare and endangered species and other wetland areas. Additionally, there are approximately 711 acres zoned for low-density residential uses, and there are over 2,000 acres of additional land zoned for R-O densities. This would allow for the development of over one thousand new homes in a dispersed manner, which would almost inevitably harm forest, water, and wildlife resources.

3. NATURAL RESOURCES Recommendations

Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act and establish a Hatfield Community Preservation Fund to acquire or protect land in environmentally sensitive areas.

The town should leverage its position in state and federal purchasing programs by establishing a local land acquisition fund (Community Preservation Fund). This fund can be used to match or “challenge” public and private dollars and increase the amount of purchasing power available to the community for these land acquisitions. Two types of acquisition should be pursued: both the fee-simple purchase of land and the purchase (or donation) of development rights. The purchasing of development rights and the establishment of conservation restrictions allow the town to limit inappropriate development in sensitive areas without owning the land itself. Landowners are reimbursed for the development value only, allowing private land ownership to be maintained. Acquisition and conservation restriction efforts should focus on areas such as the water supply protection areas, rare or sensitive wildlife habitat areas, forestlands, riparian areas, and agricultural lands. Land adjacent to these critical areas should have development standards enforced that apply specific subdivision controls to protect the sensitive character of the area. This area should be designated for low-intensity residential uses.

The town should encourage the donation of lands or development rights to enhance the community’s natural resource protection strategy. The community should advertise the fact that it accepts these types of donations and provide a contact point (name, phone number, address) for those wishing to make a donation. Hatfield should continue to work closely with existing land trusts and land protection programs.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1+ (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: NOW! Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002, with a goal of presentation to town meeting in May 2001

Adopt a Sensitive Natural Areas Zoning Overlay District, and review current zoning district boundaries to ensure that development is not being encouraged in sensitive natural areas.

Zoning classifications should be evaluated to maintain an adequate supply of land for appropriate development in the town without threatening sensitive natural areas. District boundaries should be re-configured to avoid serious conflicts with natural resource protection goals. New categories of zoning could be added to the code to allow less consumption of land, leaving more sensitive areas protected for water supply and habitat resources. A Sensitive Natural Areas Overlay Zone, in which particular care and criteria are required for any human disturbance or development, should be adopted as well. Best Management Practices for sensitive areas should be defined and required in this zoning overlay area.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Add performance standards to zoning regulations for watershed and critical areas.

Performance standards regarding soils, drainage, proximity to floodway, percent impervious surface planned, and road design should be integrated into the town’s subdivision regulations. These regulations should be based on evaluating the performance of land once it is converted. Performance standards can help to accomplish several protection strategies, including reduced areas of impervious surface, greater distances between septic leach fields and water sources, maintaining buffers between human activities and water resources, and maintaining more natural vegetation on a site.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Implement a stormwater management bylaw.

A local stormwater management bylaw can be developed to ensure that off-site development impacts are mitigated, reducing the likelihood that sensitive resource areas such as wetlands, streams, and floodplain areas are damaged from storm runoff. This is also a regulation that could be categorized as a “good neighbor law” preventing future conflicts over soil erosion, sediment deposits, storm damage, and flooding. This regulation would supplement DEP standards already in place.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee with Conservation Commission

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Adopt an Environmental Impact Analysis requirement in the zoning bylaws.

An Environmental Impact Analysis (and report) should be made part of an application for large development projects to address concerns of environmental degradation, particularly in the aquifer recharge areas. Specific performance thresholds can then be established to maintain a high level of natural resource protection even in developed areas.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Institute a monitoring well program.

A monitoring well program in the Zone II delineated area should be established to allow the tracking of contaminants in the Water Supply Protection District.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee with DPW

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Acquire greenway corridors along streams.

So-called “greenway corridors” (or sometimes simply “greenways”) are contiguous linear stretches of protected land that often serve as wildlife corridors, watershed protection areas, and natural areas for recreation. Stream corridors are of particular importance because of the surface water protection afforded this type of resource protection strategy.

Establishing greenways requires a coordinated effort of land acquisition, conservation restrictions, and long-term planning. Working with the Valley Land Fund or other land trust organizations would bring additional assistance to the town in this effort. Because of the relatively large areas involved in this type of project, fee-simple acquisition is often combined with acquisition of use easements and conservation restrictions on lands not available to the town. The town should focus on protecting the most threatened greenway corridors, particularly along the Mill River.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Ongoing

Encourage adequate vegetated buffer strips between developed areas and wetland areas.

Vegetated buffer strips serve as areas of non-disturbance adjacent to wetlands. These buffer areas can help to maintain healthy wetlands and waterways by preventing soil disturbance, serving as a natural erosion control devices, limiting application of herbicides and pesticides near sensitive areas, and preventing the incidental encroachment of human activity into wetland areas.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Increase use of the Chapter 61 program while assuring that Chapter 61 conversions of land are reviewed by the town.

The town should encourage use of this real estate tax abatement program that helps to keep land undeveloped. The program also offers a window of opportunity for the town in the event that a participant chooses to sell their property. Within 120 days of being notified that the property is being sold and removed from the program, the town may choose to exercise its right of first refusal and make arrangements to acquire the property. This allows the community the opportunity to protect natural resource lands that might otherwise transfer to a private owner. In order to take advantage of the town’s right of first refusal ability, an organized and efficient review process must be established and followed so that properties can be assessed for their value to the community. The law does not provide much time (in municipal terms) to react to a conversion letter. The town should establish a scoring or ranking system for individual properties and maintain an up-to-date open space plan with acquisition priorities clearly stated (and mapped when feasible).

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Ongoing

Overhaul Hatfield's floodplain regulations to assure consistency with state law and federal regulations.

Hatfield's Floodplain District should be modified to reflect the FIRM maps published by the Federal Emergency Management Administration. These maps indicate, with some level of precision, areas threatened by rising or moving floodwaters. The current town zoning boundary does not follow these established lines and fails to adequately identify and protect areas subject to flooding. The town should enact bylaws that limit the amount and type of development that can occur in the most sensitive areas of the floodplain. Model floodplain bylaw language has been developed that will protect this resource, and the town should adopt similar regulations. The current bylaw is also somewhat confusing in its application of the Floodplain Overlay District, and it is unclear if this overlay accomplishes any protection of the floodplain. Revisions to the law, and to local Board of Health regulations, could also be used to tighten restrictions on wells and septic systems in the floodplain.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

F. Open Space

1. Facts

Much of the subject matter usually addressed in an Open Space Plan including natural open lands, forested areas, and farmland is covered in the Natural Resources Chapter. This chapter addresses issues regarding recreational lands and facilities in Hatfield. A discussion of the existing conditions and background information for this topic can be found in the Town of Hatfield's Conservation and Recreation Plan (1989), which, despite its age, continues to portray a generally accurate view of the town's open space and recreational assets.

Land Use

The National Recreation Association recommends that communities maintain no less than ten acres of recreational area per 1,000 citizens. A chart reproduced from Hatfield's 1989 Conservation Plan shows that, using this standard, Hatfield residents have an adequate supply of recreational land available for their use.

Chart 1 - Recreation Lands—Hatfield, MA

Site	Acres
Smith Academy Park	0.90
Breor School (playground, tennis courts, athletic fields)	8.30
Smith Academy (athletic fields)	37.08
Old Junior High School (Library)	6.10
TOTAL	52.38

While Hatfield has little trouble in meeting a generalized open space "acreage standard," its small-scale and decentralized, rural population make it difficult to provide many formal recreational amenities beyond those serving students at the local schools. However, Hatfield does provide a wide array of informal rural recreational opportunities.

Open Space and Recreation Resources Map

A map was developed to indicate open space and recreational areas and facilities in the town. This map may be useful in identifying areas of town that do not have sufficient access to recreation resources. The following items are mapped for identification:

-Protected and Town-Owned Lands (see map)

One of Hatfield's most prominent features is its landscape of open spaces and woodlands. Rich wetlands and floodplains, open meadows and agricultural fields, and healthy forest areas form the foundation of the community and provide an appealing backdrop to the historic villages and town center. Over the course of two decades, many of these acres have been permanently protected from development. Open vistas, working agricultural landscapes, and areas for active and passive recreation are now set aside in perpetuity because of the forward-thinking actions of town residents who understood the value of these resources. The town has persisted in purchasing and protecting parcels surrounding its surface water supply at the town reservoir. In doing so, it has provided a safer supply of drinking water and an area rich in wildlife and recreational opportunity. Although town-owned properties are not necessarily permanently protected from development, it is worth noting the areas over which the town exerts ownership control.

-Recreational Lands

Chart 1 presents recreational lands available to the residents of Hatfield. The majority of this land is located around the two community public schools, Smith Academy and Breor School. The lands at these facilities are primarily developed for organized athletic activities. Other recreational lands in Hatfield include the swimming/boating area known as the Bashan property in northeast Hatfield. Town-owned lands in the reservoir area of West Hatfield serve as a place for many active and passive recreational activities such as walking, hunting, and snowmobiling. These areas are identified on the Open Space and Recreation Resources Map.

-Parks and Playgrounds

Public parks and playgrounds are in limited supply in Hatfield. The Breor School hosts the town playground while the site of the former Smith Academy (at Main Street and School Street) serves as a town park but is owned by the Smith

Academy trustees. Both sites require updating and reconfiguring to meet the needs of citizens. The town park site could, with improvements, begin to function as a town common, an element present in most New England communities but noticeably absent in Hatfield. The existing layout of the site has been described by residents as uninviting. The sitting area is hidden from view and the signage is not very welcoming. The removal of shrubs that hide the center of the park and possible installation of a small gazebo have been suggested by residents to invite more vital use of this well-situated open space.

-Public Recreational Facilities

The athletic fields at Smith Academy, Breor School, and behind the old Junior High School serve the needs of both students and adults over the course of the year. Baseball, softball, soccer, and other organized team sports leagues utilize these fields with the permission of the respective schools. The only concern that surfaced about these playing fields is that scheduling for these activities can be difficult during the height of the playing seasons.

The tennis courts, located at the Breor School, are in severe disrepair and are not usable. Although there are no formal trails in the town, walking, hiking, and jogging remain very popular activities among residents. Public access to the dike along the Connecticut River continues to be important, as this provides a link in an informal “circuit hike” through the town center for many residents.

Complaints regarding the use of the dike by all-terrain vehicle riders, whose vehicles are causing erosion of the dike, is an area of concern. Motorized recreational vehicles figured as a prominent problem in the 1989 open space plan, and there continues to be a need to strictly enforce laws governing the use of ATVs on public roads, private lands, and—when operated unsafely or inappropriately—on public lands as well. Some residents have indicated an interest in a hiking/biking trail connecting Hatfield to Northampton, perhaps linking to the Norwottuck Trail in the future

-Semi-Public and Private Recreational Facilities

A few privately-controlled facilities in the town provide recreational opportunities for residents. The Lion’s Pavillion, next to the Breor School, is used by many in the town for parties and special events. In addition, many residents have constructed swimming pools, basketball courts, and other private facilities on their property for their own use.

Review of 1989 Conservation & Recreation Plan

1989 Plan Goals

The 1989 Conservation & Recreation Plan for the Town of Hatfield, prepared by Hatfield’s Open Space Committee, sets forth five major goals for open space and recreation in the town:

Retain Farmland for Farm Use and Town Character

Recommended Actions: Establish a town farmland preservation committee that would identify threatened farm parcels, develop an APR outreach program, encourage expanded use of the Chapter 61A tax provisions, and aggressively pursue protection strategies for parcels withdrawing from the Chapter 61A program.

Protect Wetlands and Floodplains

Recommended Actions: Improve town wetlands maps, consider adoption of enhanced protection status for prime wetlands, adopt local bylaw to create 30’ buffer around bordering vegetated wetlands and add additional protection for isolated wetlands, explore methods of enhanced access to local water bodies and wetlands, consider providing additional protection to rare wildlife species at Great Pond area and at Running Gutter Brook, and revise town floodplain maps to include known areas of flooding.

Protect Water Supply

Recommended Actions: Secure parcels of unknown ownership near watershed and well areas, utilize state grants to protect land in aquifer; consider prohibitions or restrictions on earth removal from watershed and recharge areas, encourage low salt/no salt policies on roads in or near water supply areas, designate Water Supply Protection Area and limit land uses in that area, abandon or discontinue Reservoir Road, and work with farmers/homeowners to develop fertilizer/pesticide best practices.

Protect Prime Woodlands

Recommended Actions: Encourage greater use of Chapter 61 program, study options for protecting prime woodlands, consider establishing town forest areas, establish a forest-owner cooperative, and encourage improved management of private forest lands.

Provide Adequate Recreational Space for Hatfield Residents While Protecting Sensitive Natural Areas

Recommended Actions: Explore establishment of a town swimming and skating areas, study the establishment of a town picnic area, seek ways of eliminating conflicts between recreation vehicle users and non-powered recreation users, post signs prohibiting recreational vehicle use in sensitive areas, and enforce/enhance (with strict fines) laws against improper use of recreational vehicles.

Accomplishments Since 1989

Hatfield has implemented only a few of the open space protection and active recreation resource strategies included in the 1989 plan.

1. The town has continued its efforts to protect open lands around the reservoir and in the forested areas west of I-91. The Forest Legacy program has provided a focused geographic area—and the funding—for woodland protection efforts in West Hatfield.
2. Agricultural land preservation in Hatfield—an effort that relies almost entirely on the state APR program—has virtually ceased.
3. Floodplain protection is minimal. With few agricultural restrictions in place on farmed floodplain land and a relatively weak Floodplain Overlay District in the zoning bylaw, Hatfield's open floodplains remain particularly vulnerable.
4. The town has adopted local wetlands regulations to supplement those established under the Wetlands Protection Act, giving the Conservation Commission additional tools with which to protect this resource area.
5. Establishment of town swimming, skating, and picnicking areas (areas of need cited by the 1989 plan and current residents) remains on the “to do” list, although purchase of the Bashin site provides for a natural, unsupervised swimming access area at the Connecticut River. Purchase of two ponds in the town of Whately by the Valley Land Fund provides a potential opportunity for a municipally-shared swimming facility similar to the Tri-Town Beach in South Deerfield.

Public Surveys

A citizen survey conducted in 1987 for the 1989 Open Space Plan indicates the most popular outdoor recreational activities of Hatfield residents:

Chart 2 - % of Citizens who participate in Recreational Activity at least once per month - May 1987

Activity	% who participate at least once per month
Walking	97%
Bicycling	75%
Swimming	72%
Picnicking	61%
Hiking	51%
Cross-country Skiing	46%
Canoeing	40%
Fishing	38%
Sledding	34%
Ice Skating	32%
Camping	31%
Birding	28%
Tennis	24%
Jogging	21%
Baseball/Softball	21%
Hunting/Trapping	18%
Mushrooming	17%
Motorboating	14%
Basketball	14%
Target Shooting	13%
Snowmobiling	12%
Trail Biking/ATV	11%
Soccer	11%
Horseback Riding	8%
Football	5%

In that survey, citizens overwhelmingly supported the development of a swimming facility in Hatfield. Skating and picnicking facilities followed closely. The two most popular activities listed in that survey can be accommodated in town without extensive facilities.

In the spring of 1999, a citizen survey was conducted to solicit community opinion on growth and planning issues in the town. Few questions offered the opportunity for citizens to express specific concerns about recreational facilities in Hatfield. However, the responses did indicate a strong desire by residents to maintain open spaces in town. Other responses noted a need to plan for the development, in and around the town center, of adequate recreational facilities such as small parks, enhanced playground facilities, and perhaps additional athletic fields. Responses to question #8 indicated a need for more elder housing in the town and hence, by implication, for recreational facilities with accessible designs to accommodate the elderly and other residents with special needs and disabilities.

Vision Workshops

The following open space and recreation issues and strategies were considered important by those who attended three public visioning meetings organized by the MPC in June 1999:

- **Public access to, and the preservation of, open space**
- **Create a dedicated open space fund; provide local tax breaks for open space donation**
- **Improve community space**

- **Improve recreation opportunities for young children**
- **Improve adult recreation (skating, tennis)**
- **Develop a town park (with facilities); gazebo, “center-park”**
- **Maintain parks within walking distance of residences where feasible**

Major Differences & Conflicts

The goals and strategies laid out in 1989 do not compete with those voiced ten years later. Hatfield residents wish to maintain the rural and open character of the town while improving recreational opportunities by building on existing assets and facilities. The town should pursue these improvements, not only to enhance recreational options, but to accomplish other complementary goals related to water supply protection, farm retention, and the maintenance of community character.

2. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION Issues

- **Traditional rural recreational activities are threatened by the increasing loss of natural open spaces.** The threat to forest areas, open fields, and wildlife areas decreases the likelihood that these areas will be able to support the recreational activities favored by many Hatfield citizens. Activities such as jogging, hunting, fishing, skiing, bird watching, walking, boating, cycling, and the operation of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles require contiguous—or linear—open areas in order to be enjoyed. Loss or degradation of existing open areas could destroy or severely limit the use of these recreational resources.
- **Greenway corridors are threatened with interruption from incompatible development.** As development pressures expand north along the Route 5/10, and as engineering solutions are applied to development in sensitive areas that were once difficult to develop, important links between wetlands, forested areas, and the Connecticut River will disappear. In addition to the threat to wildlife in these corridors, the community stands to lose natural and open connections between areas of town that can be used for recreational purposes.
- **Funding is inadequate to support acquisition and protection of open spaces.** Existing public and private programs for land acquisition and protection are not currently funded at a level that would allow the town to protect all of its high priority lands. The monies that are available are not leveraged to the extent that they could be with the use of local funds.
- **Current unconfined zoning districts prescribe a scattered development pattern.** The existing zoning bylaw and zoning map create a less-than-optimal environment for maintaining community character. Major issues include lands zoned for inappropriate uses, the absence of effective development controls to guide new growth and redevelopment; and a series of residential dimensional requirements that prescribe a sprawl development pattern in the town. Providing open space and recreational opportunities for an increasingly scattered population becomes more difficult, more expensive, and less likely to occur.
- **School facilities are suffering from inadequate resources to complete routine maintenance.** School recreational facilities serve, in most cases, as the only formal recreational facilities available locally. However, the strain on school resources translates into fewer dollars available to maintain playing fields, playground equipment, and indoor facilities.
- **The capital improvements planning (CIP) process remains invisible to many citizens and volunteers.** Effective planning for the capital costs associated with building, acquiring, or maintaining recreational assets is of critical importance in a small community. Urgent needs for town services can often overwhelm the needs of recreation and open space advocates—particularly during economic downturns.
- **The current Hatfield Open Space and Recreation Plan requires updating to allow the town access to state open space funding.** The current plan, adopted in 1989, requires updating to become compliant with Massachusetts standards for Open Space and Recreation plans. An approved plan allows the community to utilize “self-help” funds that can be used to acquire or improve open space and recreational land or facilities.

3. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION Recommendations

Update the 1989 Hatfield Conservation and Recreation Plan.

The town should work to update its Open Space and Recreation Plan so that state funds can be available for enhancing and protecting lands and facilities. This plan can also serve as primary tool for bringing focus to the community's efforts by setting goals and priorities for land protection, facility maintenance and construction, and program development and enhancement. The plan should address appropriate recreational use of land and water corridors—local streams, the Connecticut and Mill rivers, wildlife corridors, the flood dike, and the freight rail corridor should be maintained as contiguous areas whenever possible to reserve future opportunities for low-impact recreation. Use of the flood control dike as a walking trail should be acknowledged as a town amenity. If the Guilford Transportation railroad corridor fails to maintain a viable amount of freight (or passenger) rail traffic and is abandoned, the town should be prepared to pursue other uses of the corridor such as for biking and hiking trails.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Conservation Commission

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Improve sub-standard facilities as prioritized by residents.

The town should make improvements to the tennis courts and town park as prioritized by residents. Improvements to the town park (at School and Main Streets next to the Town Hall) should create an attractive open area in the town center that can serve a multi-use purpose as a place for special events, concerts, official ceremonies, and for gathering by residents and visitors.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Recreation Commission

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

G. Historic Preservation

1. Facts

Historic preservation planning for cultural resources can help a community ensure that preservation values are considered a priority in community development decisions. Community leaders may well recognize the importance of historic preservation and support related activities, but the specific policies may not be in place to ensure that preservation remains a priority in the long term. A municipality may have identified an historic district and adopted an ordinance, but how that district affects tourism, for example, or how that ordinance relates to other neighborhood revitalization efforts may not be clear. Evaluation of the interrelationship of various community policies as they relate to historic preservation becomes necessary when preservation values are integrated into local planning.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Historic Preservation Planning

The advantages of historic preservation planning are:

- **Develops historic preservation goals as part of the comprehensive planning process**
- **Requires identifying cultural resources which can lead to a better understanding of how those resources affect local quality of life**
- **Creates a framework for identifying and evaluating both formal and informal preservation policies**
- **Generates greater awareness of local historic resources and their role in addressing community goals**
- **Ensures that historic preservation goals are consistent with other community goals and objectives**
- **Defines the rationale for preservation activities such as designation of a local historic district or development of an ordinance**
- **Promotes greater understanding of preservation**

The limitations of historic preservation planning are:

- **Potential benefits of historic and cultural preservation activities may not be widely accepted, creating opposition to preservation goals**
- **Restricting certain owner's property rights is an element of preservation, but benefits are shared by the whole community, potentially creating tension between the two user groups**
- **Planning brings historic and cultural preservation concerns to the forefront but does not guarantee implementation**

Community Resources

The town of Hatfield has two outstanding organizations committed to documenting, preserving, and protecting Hatfield's historic heritage and its culture: the Hatfield Historical Commission and the Hatfield Historical Society. Together these two organizations, fueled by the energy of numerous volunteers and a very limited staff, are doing an exemplary job. Even so, lack of resources and space limitations are threatening the town's ability to protect its past.

The Hatfield Historical Commission is a government body composed of five members appointed by the select board of the town of Hatfield. Its primary function is to identify and preserve Hatfield's history. It does this through a variety of means, including providing housing for the town's collection of historical items; inventorying historic sites, buildings, districts, and landmarks; and community outreach and education.

The Hatfield Historical Society is a private, non-profit organization open to the public. Its purpose is "to bring together those persons interested in history, and especially in the history of Hatfield, Massachusetts; to discover and collect any material such as books, papers, manuscripts, genealogical records, paintings, photographs, and museum material, illustrative of life, conditions, events and activities of the past and present and pertinent to the history of Hatfield, Massachusetts and vicinity." Five years ago the Historical Society turned over its collection of historical items, some dating from the early 1700s, to the town of Hatfield because the Society did not have insurance for the collection. The collection is housed in the town museum, located in Dickinson Memorial Hall (where the town library is housed) and the Farm Museum (tobacco shed) behind the Dickinson building.

In addition to its primary purpose of collecting historical items, the Historical Society also works to educate residents about the town's past. Since 1983, both the Historic Commission and the Historical Society have collaborated with the Hatfield school system to promote the Foxfire research project, which requires eighth-grade students to research and write a paper on Hatfield's history. Lack of resources is the major obstacle hindering the Historical Society from accomplishing its mission. The Society has no computers, nor does it have a website.

Cultural/Historic Assets

Historic Districts

Historic districts are commonly defined as areas possessing a concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, or structures united historically or aesthetically whether by plan or spontaneous development. There are two types of designations of historic districts: National Register districts and districts designated locally.

A listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the nation's official list of historic and cultural resources, provides properties with a degree of protection from federally-funded projects or programs that could threaten or destroy historic character. Although National Register designation provides a high level of recognition and can qualify select property owners (commercial and rental property owners only) for certain beneficial tax credits or other preservation funding, it does not offer the same type of protection that a local historic district can provide. Hatfield has one single property listed on the National Register and four nationally registered districts that include approximately 75 historic buildings per district. There may be even more historic buildings within each district, because agricultural buildings were not initially included in the inventory of historic properties.

Historic districts designated at the local level are those protected from major changes through the adoption and enforcement of a local historic preservation ordinance. Historic preservation ordinances are flexible tools that can facilitate preservation through a variety of means. They are often used to encourage a wide range of preservation activities in historic districts depending on local preservation goals. Many ordinances encourage preservation by regulating alterations to building facades, exterior building materials, exterior architectural detailing, and building mass. New construction in historic districts can be encouraged to complement the existing character through design that is sensitive in terms of size, style, and placement. Through the designation of a local historic district and adoption of an historic preservation ordinance, municipalities can accomplish many goals, including guiding alterations to privately-owned historic buildings and delaying or preventing demolition of important resources.

The establishment of local historic districts can offer the following benefits:

- **Provides a means to protect identified local historic and cultural resources**
- **Provides a flexible approach to encouraging preservation**
- **Helps to stabilize property values and encourages general maintenance and upkeep, as well as rehabilitation and adaptive reuse**
- **Generates community pride, promotes community identity, and can supplement tourism efforts**

The following limitations may be associated with the creation of local historic districts:

- **Local historic district designation can restrict certain property rights, which can cause dissension between property owners and local officials**
- **Interpretation of ordinance provisions and the uniform application of design standards can be challenging**
- **Historic preservation goals can sometimes create a perceived conflict with economic development goals**

While the official designation of an historic area as a local historic district does offer significant protection, it is not necessary to have a legislatively-recognized district to preserve historic properties in an area. The Hatfield Historical Commission has favored the creation of an informal acceptance of Hatfield's historic neighborhoods, as recognized by the National Register of Historic places. In these targeted areas, the Historical Commission works with the Building Inspector and property owners to preserve the historic properties.

The Historical Commission does not believe that local historic district designation would enhance the town's efforts to identify and preserve historic properties. Commission volunteers believe that Hatfield residents who own historic properties are doing a good job of taking care of their own properties without government control. The Historical Commission feels they have developed an effective working relationship with the town Building Inspector, so that the Historical Commission is informed when there are proposed changes to historic properties. However, the Historical

Commission does recognize that some property owners do not know how to start preserving their historic properties and is therefore developing a pamphlet for historic property owners on how to preserve the historic and cultural characteristics of their property.

The Historical Commission has researched other bylaws and ordinances that can help with historic preservation. One that is currently being considered is a demolition delay bylaw. A demolition delay bylaw is effective at delaying the demolition of historically significant buildings. In most communities with demolition delay bylaws, property owners who are requesting a demolition permit through their Building Department must first receive approval from the Historical Commission. If the Historical Commission determines that the building is preferably preserved, a delay period is imposed. This period is usually six months. After the delay period has expired, the Building Inspector can sign the demolition permit. A demolition delay bylaw is effective at fostering public discussion and seeking alternative solutions to the demolition. It is not, however, a means to stop a demolition from ultimately occurring. Sixty-nine communities had demolition delay bylaws in 1999. Communities that seek to stop demolitions from occurring should pursue designation of a Local Historic District.⁶

Historic overlay zoning is another alternative for promoting historic and cultural preservation. It imposes different types of preservation measures depending on the local goals for a particular area or a particular resource. Instead of providing for architectural controls, historic overlay zoning usually modifies the area and bulk requirements of the underlying zone for the purpose of protecting historic resources and encouraging their preservation. An historic overlay zone can also modify the uses permitted in a district. The use of overlay zoning is highly flexible and may or may not be associated with a specific district. Hatfield does not currently use historic overlay zoning.

Hatfield's Historic Neighborhoods

The Historic Commission has identified six historic neighborhoods in Hatfield. Four of the six are listed on the National Register of Historic places: Lower Main Street (historic Main street), Upper Main Street, Bradstreet (farming), and North Hatfield (transportation/railroad). Elm Street and the Mill district are being proposed for designation on the National Register. The old community of West Hatfield is now being reviewed for inclusion as a seventh historic neighborhood. The purpose of the neighborhood identification is to preserve the integrity of these distinct neighborhoods. See Appendix for detailed narratives on the historic neighborhoods.

The Hatfield Historical Commission would like to acquire historic district signs and informational plaques to place at strategic locations in the six historic districts. See Appendix for a list of existing historic signs.

Historic Buildings

In the mid 1980s, members of the Hatfield Historical Commission did a site walk of all historic properties in Hatfield. They identified 350 properties. In the past twelve years, members of the Historical Commission and staff from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission have been studying these properties to determine their precise historical significance. Compared with other communities in the region, Hatfield is being effective in its efforts to identify and preserve historic buildings.

Historic Collections

The Hatfield Historical Society has a collection of thousands of historic items currently stored in over fifteen locations around the town. Ownership of this collection was recently turned over to the town for more secure keeping. Hatfield has a number of extremely valuable items in its collection of historic items. These range from a pre-1700 Governor Carver chair that was assessed at a value of \$25,000 fifteen years ago, to hand-held farm implements donated by current residents. The bulk of Hatfield's collection is currently housed at the Hatfield museum in Dickinson Memorial Hall. Because the building is being shared with the town's library, the space is inadequate and the environment of the building is harming some of the items. As discussed in the Infrastructure paper, this building can not be regulated for temperature and humidity. Consequently, books and other paper and cloth documents are not being preserved. Indeed, as each day passes, physical traces of Hatfield's history are disappearing. See the Appendix for a more detailed narrative on Hatfield's historic collection and museum.

Dickinson Memorial Hall was built in 1894 as the new Town Hall because the Commonwealth of Massachusetts passed a law requiring all town records to be housed in "fireproof" buildings. In 1930, the "new" Town Hall was built, and the Dickinson Memorial Hall became the town library and, eventually, museum. The Historical Commission and the

⁶ P. 42, "Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances" Massachusetts Historical Commission, July 1999.

Historical Society would like to use all of Dickinson Memorial Hall as the town museum and move the library to a different building. Dickinson Memorial Hall would require substantial remodeling if it were to house the whole museum collection. Specifically, a temperature- and humidity-sensitive space would have to be created for storage of paper and cloth materials.

Hatfield has recently completed development of an existing historic tobacco farm into a Farm Museum. The Farm Museum now is used to store a large portion of the historic collection and will be developed as a museum.

Town Records

The town of Hatfield has its own collection of historic documents composed of the town's records of business transactions since its formation in 1660. The Town Clerk has been working slowly, as limited funds and staff time permit, to transfer all existing records to a searchable database so the historic documents do not have to be handled and can be preserved. The Town Clerk estimates it would cost an additional \$7,500 to complete the work that has begun. In addition, town records are stored in a vault that could withstand fire for an estimated 30 minutes. This is not a safe environment for such important documents.

2. HISTORIC PRESERVATION Issues

- **Lack of adequate space to preserve the items in Hatfield's historic collection**—The Hatfield Historical Commission and Society both feel that Dickinson Memorial Hall would be a good site for the town's museum if the Historical Society could use the whole building. However, use of the building would require significant renovation to create a temperature- and humidity-controlled environment in at least a portion of the building for storage and display of paper and cloth materials.
- **Tenuous nature of town efforts to protect historic buildings**—The Hatfield Historical Commission and the Historical Society have developed a working method for historic preservation in the community that does not rely on government regulations or intervention. This arrangement is effective in that it protects the rights of property owners in the town while at the same time preserving Hatfield's historic character. However, if personalities change, this arrangement may cease to work. There is no institutional structure to maintain the arrangement, but property owners can put specifications in the deed.
- **Lack of funds**—The town does not have adequate funds to renovate existing buildings to safely store and adequately display Hatfield's collection of historic materials. In addition, the town has not allocated adequate funds to support the conversion of historic records to a searchable database so that the documents do not have to be handled.
- **Lack of information and education**—Many residents of Hatfield are not yet educated about the variety of historic neighborhoods in Hatfield and often think that only the Main Street district has a history to be valued and protected.

3. HISTORIC PRESERVATION Recommendations

Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act and use a portion of the receipts for historic preservation.

The Community Preservation Act enables communities to adopt, by community vote, a property tax surcharge ranging from 0 to 3 percent. Communities adopting the Community Preservation Act are eligible for state matching funds, subject to availability. Funds collected can be used for three purposes: open space protection, historic preservation, and affordable housing. A minimum of 10 percent of the funds collected must be used for each of these three purposes, and the remaining 70 percent of funds can be used for any of the three purposes. Hatfield should adopt the Community Preservation Act provisions, and dedicate a portion, at least 10 percent, toward the preservation of the town's outstanding historic resources.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1+ (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee and Hatfield Historical Commission

When: NOW! Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002, with the goal of presentation at Town Meeting in May 2001

Expand the review responsibilities of the Hatfield Historical Commission.

The Hatfield Historical Commission can provide useful guidance to the existing land use boards in the community. The commission might develop and implement tools that allow increased and formalized input such as non-regulatory design guidelines (with accompanying handbook), or design review (in overlay districts or at certain development benchmarks). The experience and knowledge of the commission can and should be used to enhance the historic character, aesthetic environment, and livability of the town, above all by demarcating the various historic neighborhoods of Hatfield, so that the integrity of those neighborhoods can be understood and preserved.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 3 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Historical Commission

When: In the next two to four years.

Research the utility of creating an historical overlay zoning district in Hatfield.

As a result of overlays, the regulations of both the underlying zone and the overlay zone must be adhered to. Overlay zones seek to protect a particular type of resource that is within the overlay area. Overlay zones are often used for environmentally sensitive areas such as aquifers, farmlands, wetlands, and river shorelines. However, they could also be used for historic preservation.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 3 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Historical Commission

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

H. Infrastructure

Infrastructure and Public Facilities includes the “hardware” a municipality owns, builds, manages, and maintains to meet the needs of its residents, such as roads, schools, the library, etc; and the services provided to residents, such as water, sewer, electricity, and the Internet. An important part of any master planning process is to assure provision of and maintenance for these vital services. As the town of Hatfield plans for its future, it will be important for residents to consider what infrastructure and public facilities are most important to them and make recommendations for how the town can, with limited resources, assure provision of these vital services.

1. Facts

Two big issues face the town of Hatfield with respect to infrastructure and public facilities. First, the town was able to get by with allocating only minimal funds to maintain existing infrastructure and public facilities when the infrastructure was all relatively new. Now that the infrastructure is aging, it will no longer be cost effective to defer maintenance. Second, the town must address the relationship between provision of public facilities and infrastructure, and growth and development. As was noted in the Economic Character section of this plan, the town has accidentally avoided many of the growth pressures facing towns in the Pioneer Valley by having a relatively outdated infrastructure that has made Hatfield less attractive than surrounding communities to new development. The first issue suggests the need for large-scale upgrading of Hatfield’s infrastructure to save the town money in the long run. However, such an upgrade of the town’s infrastructure, especially upgrades to the sewers and roads, could lead to a significant influx of new development.

Water Supply

The public water supply of Hatfield comes from three sources: the town reservoir (capacity of 500,000 gallons per day); the West Hatfield Well (capacity of 350,000 gallons per day); and the Omasta Well (capacity of 150,000 gallons per day). Water supplies are drawn primarily from the reservoir as the per gallon cost to operate the wells is higher than that of the reservoir, even taking into consideration that the well water does not require treatment.

Hatfield’s existing water treatment plant came on line in 1997. It is located at the reservoir on Reservoir Road in West Hatfield. Although the capacity of the reservoir is 1.5 million gallons, the actual safe yield rate is 500,000 gallons per day.

Usage - Current water use in Hatfield is 300,000 gallons per day (average per day annually). As in most communities, demand for water is highest during the warmest eight to ten weeks of summer. During this high use period, demand can reach a level of one million gallons per day, placing a severe strain on the system, particularly after summer storms render the waters of the reservoir cloudy with particulates from stormwater runoff. Currently, approximately 95 percent of the community is served by the public water system.

Distribution - Much of the current distribution system is composed of asbestos-cement (AC) pipe. In popular use from the 1940s through the 1960s, this material is susceptible to leaks. Small breaks or abrasions can become major pipe failures as the cementaceous material disintegrates over time. Locations where new lines are tied into existing AC pipes are particularly threatened. As long as the pipe material remains intact, it is not believed to be dangerous to public health. However, because of its brittle nature, this piping material is being replaced as portions of the system are upgraded. Ductile iron is the material of choice in current line construction.

The size and the layout of the pipes delivering water to Hatfield residents and businesses are not fully adequate. The line serving Routes 5/10 is a mere 6 inches in diameter, far short of the 12 inches preferred to serve businesses and homes. Adequate water for fire suppression is a main worry for users along Routes 5/10.

Three other areas in town require some modification in the layout of the water distribution pipes:

- Need to eliminate dead end water line at North Main Street
- North Street requires pipe size upgrade from 4 inches to 8 inches
- Need to continue 10-inch line from Depot Road

Expansion—Years ago, a proposal to expand the water line along Straits Road was defeated at town meeting. There are currently no plans to expand water services.

Metering of Users – One-third of the water users are currently metered in Hatfield. A plan has been approved that would install meters for all users of the system within four years. The current policy is that all new businesses and residences must be metered. It is generally assumed that one effect of metering will be to reduce overall water use in the community. This may provide some additional capacity.

Wellhead Protection - A 1994 report on developing regional wellhead protection states that Hatfield receives approximately 75 percent of its water supply from the town reservoir located north of Rocks Road, with the remaining water coming from the town wells (Omasta and Running Gutter Brook [Well #1]). Protective measures are encouraged in the primary and secondary recharge areas to prevent severe contamination of groundwater supplies:

...hazardous wastes and petroleum present one of the greatest threats to aquifers. Only a few parts per billion of these contaminants can ruin an aquifer for human use...Subsurface oil or gasoline storage tanks in service stations, private residences, and businesses present a serious threat to groundwater supplies. Stringent preventive measures are justified, due to the considerable impairment of groundwater supplies from the many leaks and spills from petroleum products. The cost to restore contaminated aquifers can reach millions of dollars.

The report documents the location of the primary and secondary recharge areas in Hatfield, illustrating that most of the land west of I-91 lies in the secondary recharge zone. The primary recharge zone covers a swath of land in the upper reaches of Running Gutter Brook. Land uses which pose a high risk to Hatfield's ground water include auto service and repair facilities, fuel stations, auto body and auto repair shops, general agricultural use, major highways, railway tracks, commercial greenhouses/nurseries, operational equipment storage, road and maintenance depots, fertilizer/pesticide storage and application, on-site septic systems, and underground storage tanks.

A Zone II study of the West Hatfield Well, completed in January 2000, provides a more detailed and accurate delineation of this recharge area. This information should be used to update the current Water Supply Protection District boundary on Hatfield's zoning map and ensure a safer source of public water.

Sewer

The wastewater treatment plant is 13 years old. It is located off Main Street on the Connecticut River and has a capacity of 500,000 gallons per day. Approximately one-third of the town is currently served by this system. Current demand is 250,000 gallons per day. Last year the town had to replace the gear reducers for the rotating biological contactors (RBCs) at a cost of approximately \$10,000. As the plant is now relatively old, it is likely that it will need ongoing maintenance and upgrades to avoid such costly repairs in the coming years. All customers now are on a flat fee system. The Department of Public Works (DPW) would prefer to shift the town to a meter fee based on water usage (water meter). This will involve the installation of the water meters as well as a re-structuring of the payment schedule to accommodate the meter data.

Some sewer lines are facing problems with infiltration and inflow (I & I). Some of the lines are cracked, and groundwater seeps in during heavy rain events. Thus, the plant treats groundwater and, during extreme storms, fills to capacity because of the inflow. The DPW has contracted camera work on the lines and knows where some of these inflow points are. They do not think that any significant amount of raw sewage is flowing out through these same cracks. At the May 2000 town meeting, the town approved \$50,000 for the DPW to hire a contractor to line the faulty sewer pipes. The consultant will be relining the pipes in stages, because \$50,000 will not cover the entire cost of fixing all the lines. The inflow problems consist of isolated areas where storm drains, footing drains, roof drains, and sump pumps are connected to the sewer lines. These sites are leftover from the combined sewer overflow (CSO) days. The consultant will be identifying the specific locations and working to eliminate these inflows.

The businesses located on Routes 5/10 are not connected to the town sewer. Each user maintains an individual septic. Recently, some of these have been discovered to have Title V (the state law that governs septic systems) problems. Several businesses on the southern portion of Routes 5/10 near the Northampton border asked the town to extend sewer from Dwight and Elm across I-91 so that they could tie in. The DPW is working with MassDevelopment, a regional economic development agency, to explore the costs and consequences of meeting this request. As is stated in

the recommended strategies section of this plan, it seems imperative that the town establish a system for responding to similar requests that meshes and balances town resident's desires to control growth and development with the desire for an enhanced economic base. Residential septic failures have been limited and are not a severe problem at present.

Solid Waste Services and Facilities

The town's landfill is capped. All solid waste is contracted through the Hilltown Resource Management Co-op and taken to Northampton's landfill. Estimates from the private contractor that provides curbside pick-up to some residents indicate that approximately 70 percent of the town residents bring their refuse and recycling to the transfer station while the remaining 30 percent utilize private contractors for curbside pick-up. The town recycles approximately 361 tons of material annually.

There is no curbside pick-up. All recyclables, waste, and yard waste must be delivered to the transfer station on Straits road. Yard waste is composted on site at the transfer station.

Telecommunications

Cable: Hatfield receives its cable TV service from AT&T Broadband (formerly MediaOne) and has a five-year contract with the company, last negotiated in spring 1997. Final details of a new contract have recently been discussed by the Select Board, school committee, and community cable access commission.

Internet service: Cable modem availability is widespread throughout Hatfield (except Mountain Road) for residential customers. There is no cable modem service available to commercial users yet. AT&T Broadband remains in the research phase of development of the infrastructure and technical support needed to serve this community. There is no established time frame for providing this service.

Under the terms of a contract signed in January 2000 between the state and Digital Broadband Communications, infrastructure to enable high speed, always-on Internet access to all public buildings will be supplied by summer of 2000. The cost of tapping this tool will be significantly lower than the market provides currently. The ability to tie into this system provides new opportunities for public outreach and networking within the town and with other communities. The schools currently receive free AT&T Broadband service.

Telecommunications towers: There is currently one commercial telecommunications tower located in the town. Five service providers have located facilities on this structure adjacent to I-91 since its construction. Hatfield needs to include a critical analysis of existing regulations on telecommunications towers in its zoning review. The town may need an updated bylaw to assure control of these devices.

Gas and Electric

Berkshire Gas Co. provides natural gas service to portions of the town.

Hatfield's site plan review for industrial projects includes a requirement for underground provision of utilities. No such requirement exists for residential projects. This results in above-ground electrical wires, which are a health and safety problem as well as an aesthetic one. Hatfield is unusual in this respect, for most communities in the region require underground utilities.

Transportation

Roads: The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission conducted a pavement management study for Hatfield in 1997. The study assessed the town's pavement maintenance needs and determined schedules and cost-effective solutions to improve the conditions of roadways. Pavement management information also assists in allocating resources to maintain eligible roads. The 1997 study indicates that the 32 miles of federal-aid eligible roads in Hatfield—including King Street, North Hatfield Road, Elm Street, Main Street, and Routes 5/10—are all operating at fair or better condition. Twenty-two percent of the roadway segments are in excellent condition, while 78 percent are in fair condition.

Local road projects demanding immediate attention include rebuilding Bridge Road at Gore Avenue; School Street; and Plantation Road where the new sewer main is located. The DPW plans to add storm drains when these roads are resurfaced. The proposed state budget earmarks Hatfield for this work; the town is waiting for final approval.

Beyond the immediate needs identified above, the town plans new overlays of Chestnut Street, Pantry Road, and Prospect Road. Other maintenance needs include paving the dirt roads in town (portion of Straits, Plain, and Scotland road). However, there is no consensus on whether or not dirt roads should be paved. Some residents want their dirt roads paved, while others do not because they fear that a paved road will attract cut-through traffic. Dirt roads can end up costing more than a paved road, as they require a higher level of maintenance. The improvement of the road surface on an existing public right-of-way does not affect the ability to develop along its frontage, although a paved surface may be seen by some potential homebuyers as an amenity when compared with a gravel surface treatment.

The Police Department has the responsibility of responding to all traffic calls and dealing with long-term traffic problems within the town. The police department will be asking the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to provide a new traffic count study on Plains Road and North Hatfield Street as soon as the counting “season” begins (spring 2000). The Police Department is working with C & S Wholesale Grocers to alleviate some of the traffic noise during the hours of the third shift. A traffic report was conducted within the last couple of years that shows a total of 3,000 vehicles per day travel on North Hatfield Street. The Police Department estimates tractor-trailer truck traffic at 1,000 per day.

The interests of residential and industrial property owners are in conflict along North Hatfield Street. Industrial users that depend on truck traffic and access to I-91 create traffic noise and congestion. This problem has been going on for five or more years without resolution. Access to the industrial park is part of the problem. Employees use North Hatfield Street, while trucks use Plains Road. C & S originally established these separate entry points to keep automobiles away from the 18-wheeler trucks. Plains Road may not be wide enough to handle two-way traffic of varying types of vehicles.

The DPW salt storage shed is relatively new and located at the highway garage on Straits Road, next to the transfer station.

No new roads are planned in Hatfield at this time.

Transit

The Franklin Regional Transit Authority (FRTA) provides limited bus service along Routes 5/10 four times a day. This service is designed to serve C&S. The town is not a member of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVRTA). The establishment of a PVRTA bus service along fixed or variable routes in Hatfield may be an affordable way of providing transportation services to elders, students, and local workers, yet it would add to traffic congestion.

Rail

Guilford Transportation Corporation operates the freight line that runs north-south through Hatfield along the I-91 corridor. At this time, there is no need to upgrade this facility. It may become difficult to cross the rail line, however, if more industrial sites are developed adjacent to the line that utilize the highway and rail lines for transport. Guilford Transportation Corporation can provide technical assistance in developing sites along the rail line for commercial or industrial use. The company will attempt to match potential users with available sites and can be an important ally in generating economic activity in appropriate areas along this line.

Flood Control Structures

The existing flood control earthen levee along the Connecticut River is not considered a major structural control device by emergency planners, but it does serve to prevent the river from rushing into town in a flood by forcing water to back up slowly into the fields adjacent to the river. The final functional status of the dike should be determined by flood control engineers at the Department of Environmental Management. However, the structure does not appear to play a role in flood control plans for the town or river basin. This type of device can actually serve to undermine the natural flood storage areas in the floodplain, thereby increasing the threat of damage to areas downstream.

Schools

The MPC decided to cede responsibility for school issues to existing groups, committees, boards, parents, and personnel in town already working on this very important area of concern, believing that these groups have much more expertise on the question of local schools. Following is a summary of current issues facing Hatfield's schools. While some communities in the region are struggling to provide adequate classroom space for increasing numbers of students, the Hatfield system does not face this growth pressure at present. Instead, the school buildings need better maintenance and upgrading.

Breor Elementary School

Hatfield's elementary school, located off of Main Street in the town center, serves 254 students from kindergarten through sixth grade. Constructed in 1960, the building has not aged well. Raw classroom space is adequate to serve the current K-6 student population. However, the building has no accessory space. More room is needed for special needs students, music and art, conferences, and gym classes. The Mount Vernon Group (educational facility consultants) is completing a feasibility "pre-study" to determine the best way in which the current structure can be modified to provide these additional spaces.

Smith Academy

The Smith Academy building was completed in 1980 to replace the original structure once located next to Memorial Town Hall. The building serves students of middle and high school age in grades 7 through 12. One hundred and ninety-nine students are enrolled at the school, which has an estimated maximum capacity of approximately 358 students. Proposed improvements to the building these upgrades to existing spaces and systems:

- Improved biology "wet lab"
- An auditorium separated from the gym
- Additional garage/storage space
- Replacement of 24 heat pumps (original to building)

If accomplished in a single project, this list would be matched with state funds at a rate of 67 percent. (town share of 33 percent of cost). An additional project, which is not considered a vital component of any improvement plan, is the repair of the existing chilling tower constructed in 1980 to provide air conditioning in the building.

Buildings Maintenance

Both the Breor and Smith Academy facilities suffer from the lack of routine maintenance. Regular building upkeep has been deferred due to a lack of sufficient funding for maintenance staff. Current daytime staff hours are split between the facilities, with five hours spent on maintenance at Smith Academy and three hours at Breor. The hours include preparing and maintaining the playing fields, thus greatly reducing the available hours to complete building maintenance tasks. Nighttime staff is employed to clean rather than to maintain the buildings. Deferred maintenance at both facilities saves the town money in the short term, but will result in greater expenditures in the long run as systems fail completely. Additional annual allocations would allow the schools to maintain facilities without requiring sudden emergency expenditures by the town.

Special Projects

The Smith Academy Trust, established originally to maintain the school structure, continues to operate under a board of trustees. The trust is able to use its funding to provide the system with valuable tools such as computer equipment. However, it is no longer involved in building maintenance.

Library

The building that houses Hatfield's public library was not built to be a library, and it is in disrepair. The roof leaks, the building is not handicapped accessible, and the front stairs seem to be leaking water into the basement. More important, there is not adequate space for the collection. The Historical Society would like the entire building for their purposes. Library staff and the board of trustees agree that the town needs a new library building.

In 1996, a proposed addition to the library failed to win approval by the town. Library staff and trustees speculate that the proposal failed because the addition was unattractive and out of scale with its surroundings. The town has approved funding (three times) to make the entrance handicapped accessible, but each time the board goes out to bid, none of the bids is within the approved budget, leaving the project on hold. In addition to the overall lack of space in the facility, the temperature and humidity fluctuations create an uncomfortable working environment for library staff as well as

hazardous conditions for the library's collection of books, maps, and other paper documents. Indeed, it has become impossible to take proper care of these documents.

In recent years, the board and staff have made changes to library services to comply with state requirements for libraries that receive financial support. The library is now open five days and two evenings per week, for a total of 20 hours per week. The town has increased the operating budget steadily in the last eight or so years to pay for these changes, from approximately \$50,000 to approximately \$74,000. The library has a staff of four: a director who works 24 hours per week, two library assistants at 15 hours per week, and one at four to six hours per week.

The library is considered comparable to libraries in similarly-sized communities, and it is being used especially by young children and adults. Middle and high school aged young people do not use the library as much as they might. Staff and volunteers speculate this is because, until recently, there was no computer available for public use and few planned activities targeted at this age group.

2. **INFRASTRUCTURE Issues**

- **The capacity and performance of the town wells—particularly the Omasta Well—cannot support peak demand water usage adequately or efficiently .** There is some anecdotal evidence that the Omasta Well is not performing up to its anticipated level of production. An increase in production at this facility would ease some of the pressure at the reservoir and provide for a more flexible balancing of water sources.
- **Peak usage rates in warm months are straining the system.** The rate of water usage in the town approaches one million gallons per day during the eight to ten weeks of peak use in the summer. The maximum safe yield of the system is also one million gallon per day. Any significant development that results in increased water usage could severely strain the system. Additional economic development may be constrained by this lack of capacity in the system. Without an increase in capacity, or a reduction in peak usage rates, the town could find itself with insufficient water supplies in the future.
- **Portions of the water distribution system are inadequate for current and future needs.** Undersized distribution pipes, inadequate system design (dead end lines that should be “looped”), and the existence of a substantial amount of asbestos-cement pipe in the ground warrant attention simply to make the current system adequate for users. Future needs are not being anticipated, as some commercial and industrial properties do not have the adequate supply pipe diameter to provide for process use or, more important, adequate fire suppression. The town cannot develop its business areas with the current distribution system.
- **Septic system failures among businesses along Routes 5/10 are forcing the issue of sewer expansion to this area.** In recent years, some businesses have discovered problems with their on-site septic disposal systems. In addition to the environmental damages, the economic impacts can be severe. Business expansion will be limited as long as businesses remain unconnected to the public sewer treatment facility. However, if sewer service is extended to this area, new growth could have a negative impact on the character of the area and, indeed, the entire town if the development is not controlled and properly planned.
- **Infiltration and inflow (I&I) problems exist in the vicinity of Colonial Acres/School Street.** Some I & I problems have been traced to this area of town. The continued treatment of non-wastewater at the treatment plant raises the cost of sewer service for everyone, and it decreases the life expectancy of the plant and its equipment.
- **The waste water treatment plant requires preventative maintenance and upgrading.** The 13-year old waste water treatment facility requires some preventative maintenance and upgrading to keep it functioning at an efficient level and to prolong the life expectancy of the facility. The tightening of federal clean water standards will likely continue to make the maintenance of the WWTP a sound investment for the town.
- **There is no existing mechanism to assure provision of cable access to renovated school and Town Hall buildings.** The town should plan for upgrades in the functional space and/or equipment for the cable community access station with any school and town hall renovations.
- **Some town roads are not paved and there is no consensus on whether or not they should be.** While rural in appearance, dirt roads cost more to maintain than hard-surfaced roads. Scotland Road, Mountain Road, Old Stage Road, and a portion of Straits Road are currently unpaved. Some residents want some roads paved for ease of access, while other residents want them to remain dirt to reduce cut-through traffic.
- **The town is dependent on Massachusetts’ Chapter 90 funds to maintain and repair roads.** Chapter 90 funding provides the resources needed by most communities to maintain their non-federal roadways. Hatfield is quite dependent on this funding for its regular road maintenance and repair program. When this funding is decreased, road maintenance is deferred.
- **There are no Hatfield projects in the Regional Transportation Improvements Plan (TIP).** The TIP is a regional prioritization plan for local transportation projects occurring on so-called “federal-aid” roads. No Hatfield

projects are listed on the TIP, as other projects in the region have been ranked as requiring more immediate attention.

- **Some local roads demand immediate repair but are awaiting adequate funding.** Hatfield awaits \$975,000 in funding to make the necessary repairs to Bridge Road (at Gore Avenue), School Street, and Plantation Road (where the new sewer main is located).
- **The rail line may be underutilized for freight traffic.** The town hosts the north-south Connecticut River Line of the Guilford Transportation Corporation, a primary provider of freight rail service in the region. Land owners adjacent to or in proximity to this line could take advantage of the rail service to develop commercial and industrial operations along this corridor.
- **School facilities suffer from inadequate resources to complete routine maintenance.** Funding for additional maintenance staffing at the town's two school facilities remains elusive. Part-time staffing during the daytime hours leaves regular building maintenance deferred. Eventually, deferred maintenance becomes an expensive repair.
- **School buildings require additional space and upgrades.** Breor Elementary School requires extensive modification to meet the needs of a modern school facility. Although the overall classroom space is adequate, special needs spaces are non-existent or woefully inadequate to serve students and staff. The Smith Academy facility requires a more modest level of work that can be classified as "upgrading," including the repair/replacement of the original 20-year-old heat pumps. Other possible improvements to Smith Academy include an improved biology "wet lab," the addition of an auditorium, and added garage/storage space.
- **The town library requires a new facility.** A new, expanded, or renovated structure is needed to support the needs of Hatfield residents and to protect the collection.
- **The Fire Department is affected by a reduction in the number of volunteers.** Although not an immediate threat, a reduction in volunteer firefighters could have an impact on the cost and effectiveness of this critical service in Hatfield.
- **Village-centered post offices are important centers of social activity in the neighborhoods of Hatfield.** Although not under immediate threat, these post office facilities are important to the community center they serve and provide valuable social meeting opportunities for neighbors. The town should demonstrate its support of these facilities against the growing trend of post office consolidation.
- **The capital improvements planning (CIP) process remains invisible to many citizens and volunteers.** Many, if not most, citizens remain unaware of the CIP and its role in fashioning financial policy for the town. This detachment from this critical planning process will continue to leave many residents questioning how and why funding priorities are established as they are.
- **High-speed data service is available in Hatfield, but with little viable competition among providers.** Although served by AT&T Broadband (formerly MediaOne) cable modem service for high speed data (Internet) service, Hatfield, like many communities in the region and in the nation, is provided this service in a relatively non-competitive environment. Without competition, this service remains too expensive for many residents and business owners.

3. INFRASTRUCTURE Recommendations

Develop a Master Plan for town water and sewer systems with a corresponding development schedule and expand facilities only to those areas planned for future development.

Developing system plans for the water and sewer systems in Hatfield is a critical step in maintaining control over growth and development in the community. The town should provide municipal services to appropriately zoned areas identified for future growth. This means, in part, adopting a policy that controls the extension of utilities (roads, water, sewer, and electric) within defined protected areas, i.e., those covered by the proposed sensitive natural areas overlay district. A corresponding development schedule can be used to anticipate capital expenditures for maintenance, upgrades, and new construction. Hatfield must coordinate infrastructure and public facility needs by consolidating capital improvements planning to include all possible expenditures

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: DPW

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Develop a prioritization schedule for infrastructure system upgrades and expansions.

The town should adopt a prioritization “test” for all proposed infrastructure improvements. Each request would be judged on the availability of funds to support the request and on the proposal’s ability to meet the following needs: minimum health, safety, and legal/environmental standards; threats to the infrastructure system that would result in no longer meeting minimum health, safety and legal/environmental standards; a demonstrated need, i.e., improvements for those requesting upgrade/expansion; economic development for existing businesses or for future commercial development areas; and improvements to undeveloped areas planned and zoned for compact residential and mixed use.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: DPW

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Work with businesses to research available funds to meet the infrastructure needs of businesses on Routes 5/10.

The town should work closely with businesses along the Routes 5/10 corridor to determine infrastructure needs and seek out funding programs that will allow these needs to be addressed. State economic development agencies should be involved at an early stage of planning to maximize the availability of public resources in any project undertaken along the corridor.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Select Board

When: Phase 3—ongoing = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Investigate alternative methods of reducing peak demand for water in summer months.

Conservation measures, including public educational efforts, should be instituted to ensure an adequate water supply in the near future. Although metered use should begin to reduce peak demand for water, the town should concentrate on educating users about the most efficient use of this resource (e.g., lawn and garden watering schedules, installation of water-conserving appliances, modification of daily water use habits, etc.)

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: DPW

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Allocate resources to improve school facilities.

The town should take steps to maintain its investment in its school facilities by appropriating sufficient funds for adequate maintenance staff at both locations. Proper routine maintenance cannot be deferred for substantial periods of time without direct consequences for the condition of the school buildings. This is an issue that must reach the floor of a town meeting so that voting representatives of the community can discuss and act on the issue. Improvements to the Breor Elementary School building should be a high priority for the community so that students and staff are provided

with functional and adequate space in which to complete their work. Upgrades at the Smith Academy building should be completed in the most cost-effective way possible using local funds to leverage available state matching grants.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 1 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: School Board

When: Ongoing

Seek to reduce traffic impacts from industrial uses on residents of North Hatfield.

The community should continue to pursue solutions to the increased level of truck traffic and automobile nuisance noise in this area of town. Non-infrastructure solutions such as increased enforcement of existing nuisance bylaws should be considered before any road realignment plans are implemented.

Type: Non Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee → town departments, especially police

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Amend subdivision regulations to require underground utilities for residential projects.

There are three primary reasons for requiring utilities to be placed underground in new developments:

Function: Fewer interruptions in service due to storm damage, automobile collisions, and other pole damage.

Public Safety: Placing electrical lines underground minimizes potential safety risks to residents and workers by making the lines less susceptible to storm and accident damage.

Aesthetics: The elimination of poles and lines can unclutter the landscape, remove line connections to buildings and structures, and allow a more natural growth pattern for street and roadside trees.

The town should adopt this requirement by amending the subdivision regulations.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

Telecommunications Tower Bylaw

Hatfield is located in an important telecommunications “corridor” for wireless service facilities along I-91, and should be prepared for an influx of applications for telecommunications towers. Hatfield should adopt a telecommunications tower bylaw to minimize the visual and environmental impacts of towers. Such bylaws can create a Special Permit requirement for telecommunications towers, encourage co-location or sharing of wireless service facilities to reduce the number of stand-alone facilities, establish design, camouflage and siting requirements, height limitations, and permitted zoning districts.

Type: Regulatory

Importance: 2 (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less important)

Who: Master Plan Implementation Committee

When: Phase 3 = February 1, 2001 to July 31, 2002

IV. Implementation

The Master Plan Committee (MPC) has now completed the first two phases of its work: 1) survey the needs of the community and 2) devise a plan of action to meet identified needs. This Master Plan includes a set of 37 recommended strategies set forth in the preceding seven sections of this document and summarized in the charts following. (Twenty-three additional recommendations are included in the “Endnotes” section. These additional recommendations for action to enhance quality of life in Hatfield surfaced in the course of researching and writing this Master Plan, but were deemed by the MPC to be of less pressing importance to the community than the 37 recommendations included in the plan.)

In January, 2001, the MPC will embark on the third and final phase of its mandate: it will translate the recommendations included in the plan into concrete proposals for action the citizens of Hatfield can review, modify, and adopt. When adopted, these proposals will become specific action steps to shape the future and create, or preserve, the kind of community residents want. This section describes how Phase III, the implementation phase, will unfold.

Bylaw Changes

Twenty of the 37 recommendations included in this plan address changes to Hatfield’s zoning bylaw. In Phase III, the MPC, with the assistance of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), will review the current bylaw and recommend specific changes based upon the general strategies set forth in this document. These strategies are summarized below:

- **Review and amend zoning and subdivision regulations to manage development.**
- **Adopt site plan review/approval for all commercial and industrial uses.**
- **Adopt commercial and industrial performance standards.**
- **Adopt commercial and industrial design guidelines.**
- **Manage residential development.**
- **Develop zoning regulations to promote a diversity of housing opportunities.**
- **Adopt Transfer of Development Rights bylaws.**
- **Create a new light industrial and technology park district.**
- **Create a new satellite business center district.**
- **Promote limited business development as infill in the town center.**
- **Ensure that zoning and other bylaws reflect “farmer-friendly” approaches.**
- **Adopt a Sensitive Natural Areas Zoning Overlay District and review current zoning district boundaries.**
- **Add performance standards to zoning regulations for watershed and critical areas.**
- **Implement a stormwater management bylaw.**
- **Adopt an Environmental Impact Analysis requirement for large development projects.**
- **Encourage adequate vegetated buffer strips between developed areas and wetland areas.**
- **Revise existing floodplain regulations.**
- **Research the utility of creating an historical overlay district.**
- **Amend sub-division regulations to require underground utilities for residential projects.**
- **Adopt a telecommunications tower bylaw.**

Since the contract with PVPC limits their assistance to ten bylaw changes, the first task of the MPC will be to prioritize the zoning recommendations and select the ten it deems the most important. These proposed changes will then be drawn up as warrants for town meeting and sent to the Planning Board for public hearings as required for any zoning change. As a result of the public hearings, the Planning Board may suggest modifications to the warrant. The final version will be presented for discussion and adoption at town meeting in May, 2002.

It will take approximately eighteen months to complete the planned bylaw change. Consequently, residents will have to wait until the May, 2002 town meeting to vote on proposed changes. In the meantime, however, there is one vital zoning change which the Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) will expedite in the hopes of having a partially revised bylaw ready for vote at the May, 2001 town meeting.

To this list, the MPIC will add the Major Development Review proposal which was adopted by town meeting in May, 2000, but which needs revision as a result of objections by the Massachusetts Attorney General. Site Plan Review provisions give the Hatfield Planning Board more power to review and control the impact of large commercial and residential developments on the town in general and on the water supply and other natural resources in particular. The Planning Board needs these powers immediately in order to facilitate in the next year-and-a-half the kind of development that Hatfield residents want.

Recommendations other than Bylaw Changes

The balance of the 37 recommendations propose changes to the way the town does business to better manage growth and protect Hatfield's rural character. They are:

- **Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Fund and establish a local preservation fund.**
- **Establish a community-based "agricultural advisory commission" to represent farming issues at the local level.**
- **Make farmland preservation a priority.**
- **Actively encourage farmer participation in the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program.**
- **Increase use of the Chapter 61 program while assuring that Chapter 61 conversions are reviewed by the town.**
- **Educate younger generations about the need to preserve the rural character of Hatfield.**
- **Institute a well-monitoring program.**
- **Acquire greenway corridors along streams.**
- **Update the 1989 Open Space and Recreation Plan.**
- **Improve substandard recreational facilities.**
- **Expand the influence and responsibilities of the Hatfield Historical Commission.**
- **Develop a Master Plan for town water and sewer systems with a corresponding development schedule and expand facilities only to those areas planned for future development.**
- **Develop a prioritization schedule for infrastructure system upgrades and expansions.**
- **Work with businesses to research available funds to meet the infrastructure needs of businesses on Routes 5/10.**
- **Investigate alternative methods of reducing peak demand for water in summer months.**
- **Allocate resources to improve school facilities.**
- **Reduce traffic impacts from industrial uses on residents of North Hatfield.**

During Phase III of Hatfield's master planning process, (January 2001 to July 2002) the MPC will consider specific steps that Hatfield agencies and citizens can take to implement these recommendations. The MPC has decided to expedite two of the recommendations because they are key steps in the preservation of Hatfield's rural character and because they lay the foundation for many of the other recommendations. The first of the two most pressing non-regulatory recommendations is the establishment of a Community Preservation Fund, which would facilitate many other recommendations in the plan that address the protection of natural resources in Hatfield. The second key recommendation is to establish an Agricultural Advisory Commission, which would take responsibility for implementing the agriculturally-related recommendations in the plan and for assuring consideration of the importance of agriculture in all that the town does.

As one of its first orders of business in Phase III, the MPC will spell out the proposed structure and function of these two new organizations and ask the Hatfield Select Board to draw up warrants authorizing their creation to be presented at the May 2001 town meeting

Making the Plan a Public Document

In order to value and use the plan, Hatfield citizens need to have access to it. The following are ways that the ideas in this Master Plan will be publicized:

Printed Copies: Printed copies of the completed plan will be distributed to every municipal board, commission, agency, or department. Elected leaders will receive their own copies to use when they assume public office. The library, senior center, schools, and other places where people may go to find information will receive copies of the plan.

Executive Summary: An executive summary stating the overall conclusions of the plan has been created and will be distributed to every household in Hatfield.

The Internet: The town is posting a PDF version of the Master Plan on its new website. Copies of the working papers have been posted on the website as the plan has been developed.

Updating the Hatfield Master Plan

This plan will need to be updated. How often depends on the specific circumstances in Hatfield—particularly the success and extent of the implementation process. Here are some good rules of thumb to use in determining when and how to update the plan.

Annual Review: A board, perhaps the Planning or Select Board, or the Master Plan Committee should review the document annually to check progress. Perhaps simply going over the Progress Chart at a public meeting would be enough to uncover any tasks that were neglected over the past 365 days. Minor course corrections in policies or goals can be made and publicized through a press release or fact sheet.

Five-Year Review: After five years, there is a good chance that enough things will have changed to make it worth the community's while to take a comprehensive look at the plan. Perhaps, at this point, it is wise to begin revising and updating the plan one topic at a time, or undertaking a public input process including surveys and other forms of citizen participation. An effort to revise selected sections of the plan would allow a relaxed review of the document over the course of a few years.

Ten-Year Review: At this point, the town needs to consider a comprehensive update of the plan. Hatfield residents should consider the development of a new document and definitely undertake a full public outreach process to establish public issues and concerns that have evolved, changed, or appeared since the last plan.

V. Endnotes

The following twenty-three recommendations emerged in the course of researching and writing Hatfield’s Master Plan. The MPC decided that they would not be included in the body of the plan, because the committee had to make choices about what they could reasonably accomplish in Phase 3. The MPC hopes that there are Hatfield residents, town staff, or existing groups ready willing and able to work on implementing these recommendations.

Growth and Development/Land Use

1. Develop a process with quantifiable benchmarks to assess the impacts of future development on the town.

The town should establish growth and development benchmarks to help local leaders in making key land use policy decisions. Subdivision applications, building permits, population trends, school enrollment, water usage, and other important indicators should be monitored regularly to highlight trends that might otherwise take years to notice. A growth and development “report card” can be created by the Planning Board or Select Board and completed on an annual basis. This report card can facilitate discussion between boards, between elected leaders, and at town meeting. When integrated with a Master Plan “implementation checklist,” the report card can be a useful way of bringing long-range planning issues into a dialogue that is normally dominated by the pressing issues of today. Additionally, the report card can be one way of charting the effectiveness of current planning tools such as the Master Plan or zoning bylaws.

Economic Development

2. Develop a peer-to-peer business development support program.

While there are external resources available to support business development in Hatfield, the Northampton Chamber of Commerce, the Western Mass Economic Development Council, and various departments at the University of Massachusetts, community leaders suggested a peer-to-peer business development support program as a way of strengthening Hatfield’s economic character.

Agriculture

3. Create economic development incentives that are appropriate to agricultural businesses.

State economic development incentives can be used by farm businesses but are not practically configured to benefit the farmers or communities that might use them. Local Tax Increment Financing (TIF) incentives are tied to geographically constrained target areas that are difficult or impossible to configure in a way that extends benefits to farm businesses without diluting the effectiveness of other non-farm business support. A newly designed, farm-friendly program might include:

- **Access to state investment tax credits with, or without, a local TIF**
- **Special status or recognition of agricultural support businesses when applying economic incentives outside of farmland zones**

Hatfield officials, including state representatives, should support modification of current state economic development incentives that allow farm businesses to access the same benefits enjoyed by other businesses in Massachusetts.

4. Identify the Pioneer Valley as an “Area of Critical Agricultural Concern.”

The American Farmland Trust recently listed the Connecticut River valley as one of the twenty “most endangered agricultural regions in the United States.” With support from local farming communities like Hatfield, the region should seek a state-recognized designation of the Pioneer Valley as an “Area of Critical Agricultural Concern.” This could be accomplished through special state legislation or through a governor’s Executive Order. This designation could then be used to seek additional APR funds, and to limit state-funded infrastructure (i.e. highway, sewer, water lines) expansion in farmland areas using Executive Order 385 (Planning for Growth).

5. Lobby for increased funding and legislative support, at all levels of government, for viable agriculture in Western Massachusetts.

A successful lobbying effort in Washington, Boston, and in each city and town hall in the commonwealth to increase funding and tailor laws to strengthen farmland retention requires an education and information campaign aimed at all citizens. Unless the electorate applies pressure on local representatives to take action on these matters, the program will continue to receive subsistence funding and minimal attention. The value—to the community of Hatfield—of a viable

agricultural economy needs to be highlighted in a way that moves beyond the benefits to the individual farmer or landowner.

Natural Resources

6. Increase public recognition of the water supply protection areas.

This area should be heavily signed to increase public awareness of the importance of maintaining a safe water supply. Signs stating “Public Water Supply” or “Water Supply Protection Area” should be placed along boundaries and heavily or moderately traveled roads and paths near the reservoir and public wells.

7. Limit non-landowner access to roads in the water supply protection area.

Gating of the access roads in the water supply protection areas should decrease vehicular access to these lands and reduce the threat of contamination of the water supply (Mountain, Reservoir, and Rocks Roads).

8. The Board of Health should review regulations requiring upgrading of older on-site septic systems in water supply protection areas.

Failing septic disposal systems and older on-site systems allow contaminants (predominantly nitrates) to leach into the surface and ground waters around the public supply. New Board of Health regulations could require septic systems engineered to remove these contaminants.

9. Increase educational efforts in the town to make residents aware of the value of natural resources in Hatfield.

Hatfield residents stand to gain or lose the most by protecting, or failing to protect, the valuable land and water resources in town. Enlightened self-interest may move many individuals to act on behalf of their sensitive lands, water supply, and wildlife areas. Safe drinking water, fertile agricultural lands, recreational resources, and local wildlife can be effectively protected when the majority of residents agree to do so. Educational programs should build a broad understanding of the issues while focusing attention on those problems facing the town in the immediate future. School programs should emphasize the local connection to the broader environmental subject matter. The town can use its newsletter, local cable access station, and town functions to communicate the need for safeguarding the natural environment.

10. Use local tax abatement to encourage agricultural uses in the floodplain.

The town should offer a low tax rate to agricultural uses in the floodplain—even those lands not currently enrolled in the Chapter 61 program—to encourage this use in the areas prone to flooding. Although agriculture uses can impact the flood zone, they are less likely to significantly alter the flow patterns of flood waters and less likely to diminish the water absorption function of a floodplain when compared to residential or commercial/industrial development.

11. Make local lending institutions aware of Hatfield’s improved floodplain regulations.

The town should proactively notify banks and other lending institutions of any improved floodplain regulations to discourage these businesses from providing construction loans for new homes and businesses in the floodplain.

12. Educate the public about the perils and true costs of living in the floodplain.

An effort to clarify the true meaning of “100-year flood event” may result in fewer individuals seeking to develop in the floodplain. The term, as popularly used, implies that one would expect a flood every 100 years when in reality a 100-year event indicates a 1 percent chance of flooding in any given year. In addition to semantic concerns, the town should integrate its natural resource educational efforts to more effectively build a base of local support for strategies that protect resources such as the floodplain.

13. Adopt a road salt policy statement.

The town should adopt a road salt policy statement to minimize salting of road surfaces in the Water Supply Protection District and other sensitive natural areas. Work with Mass Highway to reduce salting on state roads, particularly at the Omasta well near I-91.

14. Actively engage in certifying vernal pools with the State Natural Heritage Program.

Vernal pools are wet depressions, or seasonal ponds, that appear in the spring and generally become dry as the warm season progresses. These pools are critical habitat for many species such as frogs and salamanders that use these pools

for breeding and the early development of their young. Certification affords a status under the Wetlands Protection Act that allows the Conservation Commission to protect these delicate critical areas from direct development and the adverse impacts of off-site development.

Open Space and Recreation

15. Strictly enforce laws regulating the use of ATVs and other motorized recreational vehicles.

The town should seek strict compliance by residents who use these vehicles recreationally to ensure the safety and natural value of Hatfield's open spaces.

16. Create bicycle and walking paths on the side of but off major streets such as Routes 5/10, connecting to sidewalks and bike paths in adjacent communities.

Historic Preservation

17. Move the town's historic collection to a safe and environmentally controlled building.

18. Research and apply for funds to maintain and effectively manage Hatfield's historic collection, including funds to complete the conversion of the town's historic records to a searchable database.

19. Research the utility of a demolition delay bylaw for the town to delay the demolition of historically significant buildings.

In most communities with demolition delay bylaws, property owners who request a demolition permit through their Building Department must first receive approval from the Historical Commission. If the Historical Commission determines that the building is preferably preserved, a delay period is imposed so that the public can discuss the historic value of the building and seek alternative solutions to the demolition. It is not, however, a means to stop a demolition from ultimately occurring.

20. Aid the Historical Commission in its efforts to research, demarcate, and publicize, through signage, Hatfield's various historic neighborhoods.

Encourage the Commission to educate citizens, school children, and visitors about the town's architectural history, in order to raise public consciousness about the importance of protecting the integrity of all historic neighborhoods and thereby preserve the character of Hatfield.

Infrastructure

21. The town should highlight its Capital Improvements Planning so that citizen consciousness is raised regarding spending issues.

A more public process should be adopted to allow for maximum input into the plan. Public awareness of this critically important effort should be heightened through whatever means is necessary.

22. Plan for use of the rail corridor.

The town should take full advantage of the freight rail infrastructure that parallels the I-91/Routes 5/10 corridor. Any appropriate industries along this corridor that can utilize the services of the railroad should be identified as part of a town economic development policy. If this corridor fails to maintain a viable amount of freight (or passenger) rail traffic, the town should be prepared to pursue other uses of the corridor such as biking and hiking trails (in the event of an abandonment).

23. Seek appropriate location, design, and funding for a new or improved library facility.

The failing town library facility needs renovation or replacement. If the residents of Hatfield wish to have continued use of a local library, the current building must be substantially renovated and expanded. Alternate sites that maintain the proximity to the population center of Hatfield should also be considered for the development of a new facility.