



METHUEN MASTER PLAN 2007

Planning for Our Future

June 2007



Methuen Master Plan Steering Committee
William M. Manzi III, Mayor

Methuen Department of Economic and Community Development
Karen Sawyer, Director

Consulting Assistance Provided By:

Taintor & Associates, Inc. with

Community Preservation Associates, RKG Associates, & Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates

20 Unicorn Street, Newburyport, MA 01950 ☎ 978.462.0404

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Steering Committee would like to thank all those who participated in the Master Plan process.

Steering Committee:

Elected Officials –

Robert A. Andrew, City Councilor
Joseph M. Cosgrove, School Committee
Joseph A. Leone III, City Councilor
William M. Manzi III, Mayor

Appointed Officials -

Matthew J. D'Agostino, Zoning Board of Appeals Chair
Stephen F. DeFeo, Jr., Community Development Board Chair
Suzanne M. Lamoureux, Conservation Commission Chair

Business Community Representative -

William Buckley, Business Community

Special Thanks to:

Kathleen Colwell	Assistant Director of Planning
Karen Sawyer	Director of Economic & Community Development
Nancy Hudson	Secretary
Lynn Smiledge	Historic Planner

John Cena
Gerald Deschene
Raymond DiFiore
Clifford Gallant
Joseph Giarrusso
Matthew Kraunelis
Frank Russo
Joseph Solomon
Tina Touma-Conway
Dr. Jeanne Whitten

Municipal Appraiser
Building Commissioner
Director of Public Works
Fire Chief
Conservation Officer
Mayor's Chief of Staff
Director of Engineering
Chief of Police
City Clerk
Superintendent of Schools

Finally, the Steering Committee extends its appreciation to all those Methuen organizations and businesses who supported the visioning workshops through their generous donations:

Applebee's
105 Pleasant Valley Street

Borrelli's
322 Merrimack Street

Mann's Orchard
65 Pleasant Valley St.

Methuen Historical Society
37 Pleasant Street

Romano's Pizzeria
301 Merrimack Street

Romano's Macaroni Grill
90 Pleasant Valley Street

Rosario's 1859 House
12 Hampshire Street

Shadi's
58 Osgood Street

Stop & Shop
90 Pleasant Valley Street

Summit Place
142 Pleasant Valley Street

and the Santa Parade.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction – Planning For Our Future.....	1
Vision Statement.....	3
Priorities for Action.....	5
Land Use	9
Land Use Changes.....	11
Distribution and Density of Land Uses	11
Methuen's Neighborhoods	20
Regulatory Analysis	22
Smart Growth and Sustainable Land Use.....	24
Summary of Findings.....	24
Land Use Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	25
Population and Housing	29
Population	29
Households.....	30
Household Income.....	30
Housing Supply.....	30
Housing Sales and Apartment Rental Trends.....	32
Housing Affordability.....	33
Households Size, Tenures & Age Characteristics.....	34
Households in Poverty	35
Quantifying Low Income Households.....	35
Homeownership and Renter Affordability.....	37
Summary of Findings.....	39
Housing Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.....	41
Economic Development.....	49
Labor Force and Unemployment.....	49
Industry Employment and Wages	50
Employment Forecasts.....	52
Business Establishments	53
Major Employers.....	55
Tax Base and Tax Rate	55
Commuting Patterns	60
Regional Economic Development Planning Context.....	60
Summary of Findings.....	64
Economic Development Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	64
Fiscal Analysis.....	67
Municipal Revenue Trends	67
Municipal Expenditure Trends.....	68
Municipal Service Costs.....	68
Residential Revenue and Cost Comparison	69
Non-Residential Revenue and Cost Comparison	70
Summary of Findings.....	71
Fiscal Analysis Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	72
Transportation and Circulation.....	73
Miles of Roadway	73

Auto Ownership.....	73
Travel Patterns.....	74
Where Methuen Residents Work.....	75
Traffic Volumes.....	76
Key Corridors	78
Key Intersections	78
Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities.....	79
Transit Services/Park-and-Ride Facilities.....	80
Transportation and Parking Issues in the Zoning By-laws and Subdivision Regulations	81
Summary of Findings.....	82
Transportation and Circulation Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	83
Public Facilities and Services.....	87
City Administrative Offices	88
Schools.....	89
Public Safety.....	97
Other Municipal Facilities.....	101
Nevins Memorial Library	101
Council on Aging	103
Public Meeting Spaces	108
Utilities and Infrastructure.....	109
Methuen Water System	110
The Methuen Sewer System	111
Summary of Findings.....	112
Public Facilities and Services Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	115
Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation.....	119
Geology, Topography, and Soils.....	119
Water Resources	123
Wildlife Resources of Methuen.....	127
Summary of Natural Resource Findings.....	132
Open Space and Recreation.....	132
Recreation.....	135
Summary of Findings.....	137
Open Space Plan	138
Natural Resources, Open Space, and Recreation Goals, Objectives, and Strategies	142
Historic and Cultural Resources.....	144
Cultural Resources	144
Historic Resources	145
Summary of Findings.....	154
Historic and Cultural Resources Goals, Objectives, and Strategies.....	155
Implementation Plan.....	157
Action Table.....	157
Priorities & Time Table.....	157

INTRODUCTION – PLANNING FOR OUR FUTURE



Led by Mayor William M. Manzi III, the City of Methuen embarked upon this master planning process with the goal of bringing the community together to establish a comprehensive vision for Methuen's future, and to evaluate how its staff, elected and appointed officials, various plans, policies, and regulations might best be employed to achieve this vision.

The need for a Master Plan, in part, was also identified as members throughout the community expressed concerns that Methuen is changing in ways that threatened its character: traffic congestion is increasing; environmentally-sensitive lands and rural areas are being proposed for residential developments; housing growth without balanced economic development is shifting property tax burdens on residents; housing is becoming less affordable; and the maintenance and upgrading of public facilities is increasingly difficult to finance amid very restricted budget climates.

Methuen's last Master Plan was prepared in 1986. At that time, the impact of residential growth on Methuen's character, its tax base, and its natural resources was at the forefront of land use discussions. Though Methuen has witnessed substantial changes in population and land use over the past twenty years, the 1986 Plan's statement of intent largely remains true – and will be updated herein to respond to the City's current conditions.

In 1997, the Community Development Board updated the Land Use portion of the Master Plan, and took a close look at how land use choices affected the City's tax base. This analysis was especially timely, in light of the fact that the City was constructing 3 new elementary schools, expanding the Nevins Memorial Library, and improving various parks and recreational facilities. The 1997 plan included a growth

"The primary intent of the land use plan is to retain the predominantly residential character of the town while allowing ample opportunity for appropriate business and industrial development. An integral part of the plan is the establishment of an open space network which will serve as a buffer between development, provide flood protection, help retain the rural character of outlying portions of the town, and protect natural resources."

Methuen 1986 Master Plan

1986 Time Capsule:

- Reagan was President
- Space Shuttle Challenger exploded
- *Top Gun* was the biggest grossing film
- Nintendo was introduced in the U.S.
- Nuclear disaster occurred at Chernobyl

1997 Land Use Plan Strategies:

1. Set the stage for – and foster expansion of – Methuen's economic base.
2. Emphasize open space and natural/cultural resource preservation as major growth management tools.
3. Carefully monitor and enforce the concept of diverse residential settings with distinctive characters that each support a sense of neighborhood pride.

analysis that, coincidentally, projected that Methuen would reach residential buildout in 2006.¹

While the City has not reached residential buildout, it has reached many of the benchmarks as predicted in its nearly 10-year old growth projection: total population, number of housing units, and public school students are all at levels remarkably close to where officials thought they would be. Discussed further in the Land Use chapter, it would seem that Methuen has grown in a different manner and at a slower rate than forecasted, for both residential and commercial/industrial uses. There appears to be a correlation between the City's action to implement the 1997 recommendations and its pattern of development over the course of the past nine years.

In addition to the 1986 Master Plan and its 1997 Land Use element update, Methuen has prepared several specialized studies that will be referenced herein. These include a 2005 Community Development Plan (CDP), a 2004 Downtown Development Plan, and a 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

This Master Plan acknowledges and incorporates elements of these past plans as they relate to Methuen's future vision. In most instances, these limited-focus plans will contain greater detail on particular issues than the Master Plan will. Likewise, the amount of detailed input we received during the planning process is summarized herein – as a comprehensive look at all aspects of the City, the Master Plan attempts to find consensus among multiple constituencies, and makes specific recommendations with regard to priorities. While it can't possibly contain the breadth of all the comments made, we hope it has captured the essence of the conversations.

The Implementation Plan outlines tasks that will forward the vision of this Master Plan, and those most directly responsible for carrying forward the recommendations of this Plan. In a broader sense, however, all members of the Methuen community share in the responsibility in seeing this Plan realized. Elected officials should use the plan to guide their policy-making; Boards and Commissions should consider the Plan when making regulatory decisions; businesses should consult the plan (and be referred to it) when choosing to locate or expand their operations; and neighbors should be informed by the Plan when giving their input on land use decisions.

When responsibility for the Plan's implementation is borne by many, the greater the likelihood this will be a "living document," and the greater the odds of success.

¹ According to Methuen's current assessing database, there are 453 developable acres of residential land remaining, and 530 acres of potentially developable residential land.

VISION STATEMENT

While Methuen has welcomed 6,000 additional residents to its community over the past 20 years, newcomers and natives alike share a vision for the community's future that in large part remains consistent with the one articulated in 1986: to ensure that the City continues to be a "nice place to live," by protecting its natural and cultural resources, maintaining Methuen as a reasonably affordable place for residents, providing a high level of public services and facilities to serve its families and businesses, and fostering a vibrant downtown.

Methuen is hardly alone among Massachusetts cities and towns in wanting to preserve its quality of life for future generations. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is promoting the concept of sustainable development and Smart Growth throughout the state as it tries to assist city and towns with similar objectives. As this Master Plan outlines, adherence to Smart Growth principles will help the City in preserving and improving its quality of life. Methuen is distinctive, however, in the details of its intrinsic community character, and what steps the City might best take in ensuring that Methuen retains its local flavor.

Over the course of several public workshops, community members were asked to name their "top 3" favorite things about Methuen, and the "top 3" biggest obstacles that prevent the City from achieving its goals. Their answers form the core of this vision statement.

Many residents list Methuen's location, with easy proximity to Interstates 93 and 495, as one of its prime assets, but what people seem to value most about the City is its "small town feel." The remaining farm land, riverfront, open spaces, parks, and forested lands are important pieces of the community's self-image. While outsiders may characterize the City's land development pattern as largely suburban, Methuen residents frequently use the term "rural" when referencing outer-lying neighborhoods, and there is a general sense that this character is being lost as housing developments are being located on former farm lands and/or historic open spaces. Future development should be managed with the goal of conserving large tracts of open space wherever feasible, and taking scenic viewsheds into consideration.

With over 8 miles of frontage along the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers, Methuen's residents envision a future in which the City takes better advantage of riverfronts for recreation and public use purposes. People appreciate the passive and active recreational opportunities the City currently offers, including Forest Lake, the Town Forest, Riverside Park, the Bird Sanctuary, etc., and would like to see additional trails, athletic fields, and outdoor gathering places developed. To the extent that businesses are located near these resources, they should encompass uses that serve the public, such as restaurants, cafes, and/or other types of uses that support public use.

Methuen residents take their heritage seriously. An enthusiastic appreciation for the City's historic buildings, landscapes, and records knits the community together. The storied legacy of the Searles, Tenney, and Nevins families can be seen and felt throughout the City's walled neighborhoods, turreted bridges, grand public buildings, and formal parks and gardens. At least three formal groups steward historic resources in Methuen: the Historic District Commission, the Historical Commission, and the Historical Society. The Festival of Trees dedicates its annual profits to support historic preservation efforts in the City. A frequently repeated and passionately articulated theme from the Master Plan workshops was to continue to promote historic preservation in Methuen.

Methuen residents have long desired to have a downtown that serves as a community gathering place. They would love to be able to fulfill errands, have a meal, and shop for gifts in a downtown that is easily accessible by foot or by car. Solving issues such as parking supply, allowing for mixed-use in the Zoning ordinance, and attracting a good variety of tenants for existing buildings are among the issues that need to be addressed by the City.

Methuen's outstanding school facilities are a mainstay of families and a primary attraction for those looking to move into the community. On a related note, many people expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the public services Methuen government offers – from reliable road maintenance and trash removal to the exceptional Public Library and the ever-popular Senior Center. People conveyed a sense of comfort with the relative stability in fiscal affairs, responsive public officials, and a feeling that local government was well-managed. Identifying ways to maintain this level of public services and facilities, while keeping property taxes manageable, is of high priority. Increasing economic development activities is critical to keeping Methuen's tax base stable.

Supporting a variety of housing options for residents of all ages, incomes, and ethnicities is also at the forefront of the community's mindset. "Decent, unpretentious folk" account for Methuen's cherished community spirit, and their housing needs must be addressed to preserve the heart of the City. Amid a housing climate of increasingly unaffordable prices, residents stated their concerns for those whom the typical new subdivision home was not a good fit. Seniors and young families in particular are not well-suited to the majority of Methuen's housing options. Finding ways to provide affordable alternatives to expensive single-family homes is essential to this future vision.

Traffic and congestion are byproducts of growth. Increases of any amount of traffic are noticeable to long-term residents. Although a number of factors contribute to traffic growth, Methuen's traffic is still for the most part on the collector and arterial streets and not invading neighborhood streets, looking for a cut-through street to avoid congestion.

Methuen's changing demographics factor into transportation issues. Households have more vehicles per person than in years past, and the number of cars traveling local roadways has likewise grown. Commutes are longer, as are many weekend trips to popular destinations. Residents have expressed a strong desire to both reduce the amount of time spent getting around town, and the amount of stress involved in negotiating traffic. A key point for Methuen, however, is that traffic has not grown at the same rate as household growth.

Many new developments employ cul de sacs in lieu of connecting to a larger street network, which strains existing collector streets. Frequently, solutions that would improve traffic flow are difficult to implement when multiple property owners are involved, and may prove expensive in the short term. While some modifications have been made to increase capacity of existing streets and intersection operations, there have been relatively few efforts made to provide for other ways of circulation. Methuen's future should involve a concerted effort to think about long term improvements to its transportation network, including residents' use of sidewalks, bikeways, and transit (buses, trains, car pools) as a means towards this goal.

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Methuen's 2007 Master Plan is comprehensive, covering nine distinct elements and having a horizon of roughly 5-20 years. From discussions with the Master Plan Steering Committee, members of the public, and leaders in the business community, it is clear that Methuen's future quality of life is largely dependent upon its response to a few key issues it is facing. A brief analysis of these topics follows, at the outset of the plan, to orient readers' minds to these major themes as they proceed to review the plan in its entirety.

Keep Methuen in Business & Foster A Vibrant Downtown

Economic development offers numerous benefits to the quality of life in Methuen. By providing local places to work, residents have job opportunities close to their homes, thereby lessening commute times and fostering re-investment in the local economy. The opportunity to purchase locally-produced goods and services likewise supports a commonly-held goal of preserving Methuen's "small town feel." And, most importantly, the positive contribution Methuen businesses make to its tax base is critical to how the City can continue to provide excellent services without introducing undue financial burdens on its residents.

Nowhere is this goal better seen than in the City's oft-articulated desire to have a vibrant downtown. Whether it be enhancement of the existing downtown (roughly defined as the Gaunt Square area, stretching along Broadway, Hampshire and Osgood Streets) or the creation of a new district, residents clearly want to gather in a place that offers smaller-scale, more unique stores and restaurants than the Loop provides. A 2004 Downtown Development Plan reviews all past planning efforts that focus on the downtown area and proposes a multifaceted action agenda that seeks to accomplish this goal.

In 2006, the Harvard University Graduate School of Design's Advanced Management Development Program selected downtown Methuen as its case study focus. Four teams comprised of executive-level members with varied disciplines competed in a business plan presentation held in February 2007. The four presentations provide the City with some compelling suggestions and "food for thought" as the Master Plan seeks to help guide the future development of this critical part of the City.

The Master Plan affirms Methuen's efforts to revive its downtown – replete with historic structures, the success of downtown businesses could serve as a foundation for the public's renewed interest in historic preservation, volunteerism, and community pride.

Protect Methuen's Remaining Rural Areas and Open Spaces, and Preserve Its Historic Character and Small Town Feel

Methuen continues to wrestle with how to best manage applications for development on its last remaining areas of open space. Residential growth competes with economic development planning on a regular basis, requiring the City to think carefully about the implications of long-term land use decisions. The Community Development Board and the Zoning Board increasingly must seriously consider issues of impact assessment and mitigation as environmentally sensitive and/or otherwise marginal lands are being proposed for development.

The City's remaining agricultural land is being converted to other uses. The loss of farms is manifested in two key ways: scenic, open space is removed from the landscape, and community members lose the

ability to purchase locally-grown produce. The most recent example of this is the approved conversion of Mann's Orchards to a Target retail store and small residential subdivision. Although the City cannot, through regulation, prevent farms from being converted to other uses, it can tailor its regulations to encourage continued farm use and, in the event of a conversion, take measures to shape future uses that will not prevent an eventual return to agriculture by the alteration of topography, degradation of soils, etc. The City can also actively promote the use of tax incentives (Chapters 61A, 61B), purchase agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs)², and ease permitting procedures for accessory uses to assist farmers in continuing to prosper in Methuen.

To stem the loss of open spaces, Methuen should be vigilant in tracking proposed conversions of Chapter 61 land and consider acting on the right of first refusal option to purchase land that is highly valued for its contribution to "rural, scenic, small-town Methuen." In addition, the City should join the majority of the Commonwealth's communities in adopting a zoning provision for "open space residential developments (OSRDs)," which require the preservation of open space in exchange for flexibility in lot/home arrangement in a subdivision. The last time the City debated the merits of a similar idea called "cluster zoning," it decided against adoption for fear that an overall increase in housing density would ensue. By contrast, the OSRD will not increase density beyond what is already permitted in the district; rather, it will preserve large tracts of open space by allowing the same number house lots to be laid out in a more efficient pattern.

Methuen's historical legacy is critically important to its self-image, and is a unifying force among community members. The City recently added a historic preservation specialist to its Community and Economic Development staff, which has exponentially increased its capacity to implement recommendations made in its Historic Preservation and Historic Landscape plans. Increasing awareness of the City's historical structures and records through the completion of visible restoration work (such as the Library, Grey Court, the stone walls, etc.), event sponsorship and promotion (Festival of Trees, Music Hall concerts, Grey Court concerts), and via educational forums will help to ensure that these resources remain at the forefront of people's minds. To further buoy support, the City should consider how it might create incentives for preservation that could complement its regulatory efforts – small matching grants programs, promotion of the State's rehabilitation tax credit, and provision of zoning relief for historic structures (by special permit) are some examples of efforts that might help Methuen achieve even greater success in historic preservation.

Plan for Public Facilities, Including Strong Schools and Recreational Facilities

As it continues to add an average of about 180 housing units annually, the City must contend with the increased demand placed upon its public facilities and services. Historically, Methuen has planned well for impending growth – its new grammar (K-8) schools, renovated Library, and new parks and recreational facilities pay testimony to past efforts. Each administration has kept the taxpayer in mind as it balances residential growth by encouraging commercial and industrial development to offset increases in homeowner tax bills.

At this moment in time, Methuen has at least three primary community facilities needing substantial renovation or replacement: the High School, the Police Station, and the Central Fire Station. Preliminary estimates for these projects are well over the \$100 million mark. And while these projects are recognized as critical, numerous other needs will need to be addressed in the relatively short term,

² Methuen has a few APRs such as the one which exists on the former DeLucia farm in Pleasant Valley.

including elementary school overcrowding, fire department upgrades, and a variety of youth and elderly program demands.

The 1997 Land Use plan recommended Methuen manage its public facility and infrastructure needs by moderating residential growth through the use of a growth rate cap combined with an aggressive economic development policy. Policies that attract high-value commercial development, preserve open space, promote affordable housing, and budget for long-term capital expenditures are all important to maintaining the level of services residents have come to expect from local government.

Preparation of a formal Capital Improvement Program (CIP) would give structure to the financial management activities each administration has been undertaking, and would sustain a transition in management. Many Massachusetts communities have adopted such plans, but the State of New Hampshire mandates its preparation by local Planning Boards. An excellent explanation of the merits of a CIP can be found in Windham, NH's plan, and is excerpted below:

From the Windham, NH CIP - Advantages of a Capital Improvement Program:

- Stabilizes year-to-year variations in capital outlays
- Makes pre-emptive acquisitions more feasible and defensible (e.g., land for water supply, waste disposal, recreation)
- If used in conjunction with a pooled investment reserve fund, can offset a fraction of capital expenditures by reducing interest payments
- Enables the town to establish growth control measures (in conjunction with a master plan).
- Facilitates implementation of the master plan by scheduling proposed projects over a period of time. The program can eliminate duplication and a random approach to expenditures.
- Furnishes a total picture of the municipality's major needs, discourages piecemeal expenditures, and serves to coordinate the activities of various departments.
- Establishes priorities for projects on the basis of needs and cost, and permits anticipation of income and expenditures.
- Serves as a public information tool, explaining to the public the Town's plans for major expenditures.

Reduce Vehicular Congestion and Traffic by Increasing other Methods of Circulation and Through Land Use Management

Methuen's continued prosperity will depend in part upon the City's response to transportation-related issues that are central to the quality of life enjoyed by residents, employees, and visitors. Regional growth, coupled with an increase in the number of trips on local arterials, has caused circulation and traffic problems that negatively impact neighborhood life and business development alike.

Methuen residents named traffic congestion as the top threat to their quality of lives. As single-family subdivisions and Chapter 40B development projects have increased in the City's more remote locations in the east and west ends, its collector streets such as Routes 110, 113, Howe Street, Tyler Street, and Pelham Street are clogged. The Community Development Board frequently reviews plans that feature cul de sacs, which tend to exacerbate problems.

There are several potential avenues Methuen can consider to address this issue.

Through its regulatory/approvals procedures, the City can ensure that the full complement of transportation infrastructure (roads, intersections, signals, sidewalks, bike lanes, drop-off areas, etc.) is adequate to service proposed developments. Frequently, the interpretation of what is “adequate” is at the heart of the struggle to improve the status quo. Traffic engineers present findings that indicate their particular project will not substantially worsen an already failing condition. But, especially in the case of projects allowed only via special permit, the City can legitimately demand that projects contribute to a solution, without placing an undue burden on a single developer/proposal³. To a large degree, the City’s regulations already call for these measures to be included in proposals that are projected to have an impact on the surrounding transportation systems; the City merely needs to renew its practice of consistently requiring improvements. Specific recommendations follow in the transportation and circulation element of the plan.

The City itself can implement transportation management measures such as: including sidewalks and bike lanes in roadway maintenance projects wherever possible; supporting the use of transit for its employees; sponsoring walking and/or biking programs to increase awareness and participation in these modes of travel; working with regional providers to fine-tune bus routes to maximize the number of riders; and cooperating closely with the Merrimack Valley Regional Planning Agency in developing improvements to regional roadways and systems.

³ Massachusetts prohibits the assessment of “impact fees” by municipalities, a land use management tool that is allowed in many other states. Through case law, the Commonwealth has been clear in making sure that municipalities strictly confine their mitigation requests to the impacts directly caused by the project; as a result, municipal boards and commissions often feel limited in their power to shape issues that are external to the project site, as transportation improvements often are. Nevertheless, special permit and site plan reviews are authorized to impose reasonable conditions in mitigating impacts.

LAND USE

Preservation of Methuen's high quality of life amid several growth-related challenges is a central consideration in preparing a future land use scenario. To date, the City has managed to carefully direct residential growth in a manner that respects the natural environment and makes Methuen a desirable place to live. Future land use proposals should look to balance preservation with sustainable growth.

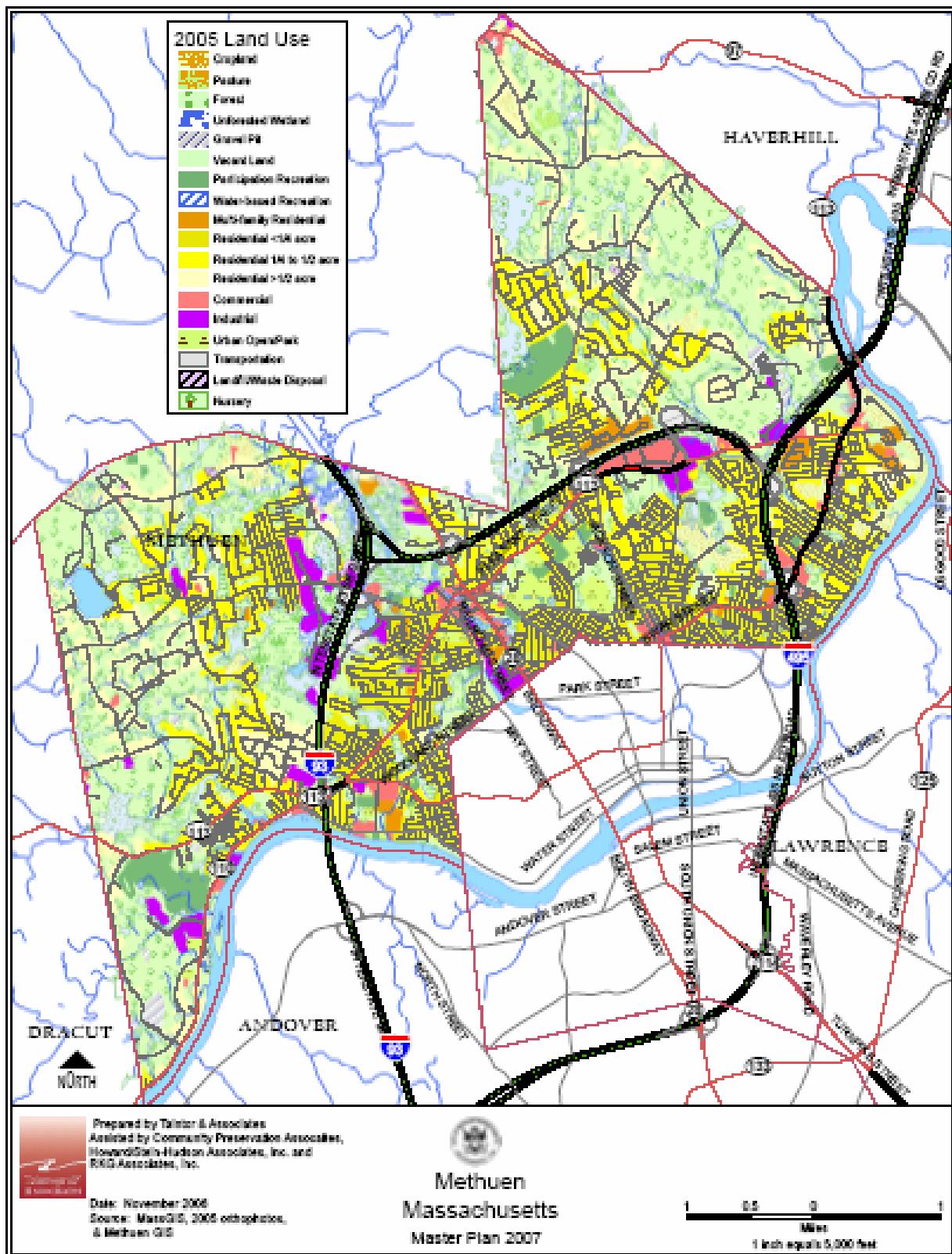
Methuen is a mature city with only limited amounts of land available for future development. Table 1 shows that just 5.3% of the town is vacant. 35.6% of Methuen's land is undeveloped but used for open activities such as pasture, crops, and forest resources. Some of this land is available for development but the remainder has development constraints, such as wetlands, steep slope, and unsuitable soil conditions. Some of this open land is protected, to various degrees, from development by legal restrictions, such as conservation easements. These are discussed in the natural resources and open space chapters. Residential uses account for 43.9% of land uses. Commercial and industrial uses, including gravel extraction, account for 6.1% of the town's area. Active agriculture accounts for only 3.1% of the city's area. Water accounts for only 0.6% of the city's area. Figure 1 depicts this information.

Table 1: Land Use in Methuen: 1985, 1999 and 2005

Land Use	1985		1999		2005	
	Acreage	%	Acreage	%	Acreage	%
Cropland	564.2	4.2	429.2	3.2	319.7	2.4
Pasture	197.1	1.5	121.7	0.9	33.3	0.2
Forest	4,408.0	33.0	3,890.2	29.1	3,554.1	26.6
Unforested Wetlands	738.0	5.5	797.0	6.0	782.5	5.9
Gravel Pit	102.0	0.8	80.1	0.6	75.2	0.6
Vacant Land	647.2	4.8	604.6	4.5	715.2	5.3
Participation Recreation	324.0	2.4	311.2	2.3	347.1	2.6
Water-Based Recreation	0	0	0	0	3.5	0.0
Multi-Family Residential	143.9	1.1	190.1	1.4	204.3	1.5
Residential under 1/4 Acre	1,189.7	8.9	1,209.4	9.0	1,236.4	9.2
Residential 1/4 to 1/2 Acre	2,397.6	17.9	2,657.8	19.9	2,749.8	20.6
Residential over 1/2 Acre	1,021.6	7.6	1,452.2	10.9	1,684.8	12.6
Commercial	347.7	2.6	314.3	2.3	379.9	2.8
Industrial	247.0	1.8	325.9	2.4	358.7	2.7
Urban Open/Park	397.8	3.0	391.3	2.9	339.9	2.5
Transportation	393.1	2.9	429.9	3.2	426.0	3.2
Landfill/Waste Disposal	72.1	0.5	18.5	0.1	24.4	0.2
Water	77.8	0.6	79.1	0.6	76.3	0.6
Nursery/Orchard	105.7	0.8	72.3	0.5	63.5	0.5
TOTALS	13,374.5	99.9	13,374.8	99.8	13,374.6	100

Source: MassGIS

Figure 1: 2005 Land Use Map



LAND USE CHANGES

1220.3 acres of land were converted from undeveloped categories to developed categories between 1985 and 2005. Most of these lands (1122.5 acres) were converted to residential uses. The developed land category that grew fastest was residential over $\frac{1}{2}$ acre (low density). It grew from 7.6% of all land in Methuen to 12.6%, a gain of 5%. The second fastest growing category was residential between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ acre (moderate density). It grew from 17.9% to 20.6%, an increase of 2.7%. The undeveloped land category that lost the most land during this period was forested land. It dropped from 33.0% of all land in Methuen to 26.6%, a loss of 6.4% or 853.9 acres.

Other developed land use categories are growing slowly. Commercial land actually showed a decline between 1985 and 1999, but picked back up by 2005 to show a slight increase over 1985 from 2.6% to 2.8%. This was largely due to commercial development in The Loop area. Industrial land grew from its 1985 level of 1.8% of all Methuen land to 2.7% by 2005. This is attributed to growth on new industrial areas in several parts of the City. Land for agriculture in 1985 accounted for 867 acres or 6.5% of all land. By 2005 this figure had been reduced to 416.5 acres or 3.1% of all land. Almost all development over the past 20 years has come at the expense of agricultural and forest lands. There are still substantial forest lands remaining (3,554.1 acres) much of which is not developable.

DISTRIBUTION AND DENSITY OF LAND USES

Figure 1 shows the distribution of land uses and shows residential densities. 73.4% of residential development is on lots of $\frac{1}{2}$ acre or less in size. Methuen's residential zoning has 13 types of districts. There is an agricultural-conservation zoning district that requires a minimum lot of 80,000 sq. ft. for a single-family home use. There are 5 single-family zoning districts with minimum lot sizes ranging from 8,000 sq. ft. to 40,000 sq. ft. There is a 2-family zoning district with a minimum lot size of 12,000 sq. ft. There is another 1 and 2-family district requiring 20,000 sq. ft. lots. There are 6 multi-family zones requiring from 8,000 sq. ft. to 130,680 sq. ft. (3 acre) lots. In 4 of the multi-family districts density bonuses for affordable housing are available that can increase densities up to 100%, at the discretion of the special permit granting authority. There is some question whether Methuen needs 13 residential zones. The Zoning Board of Appeals deals with many issues that could be simplified if there were fewer numbers of residential zones. Figure 2 shows zoning districts.

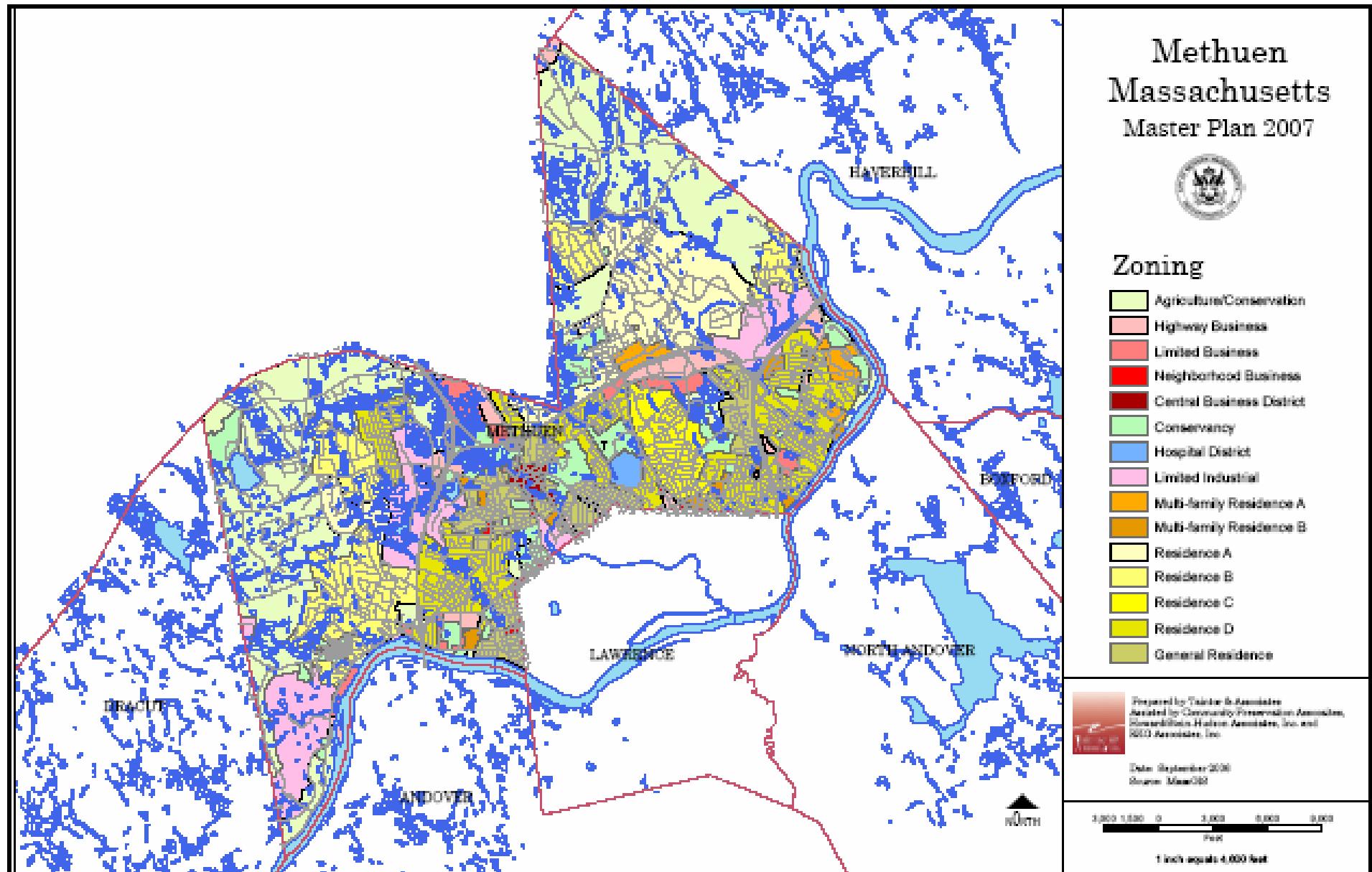
Most of Methuen is zoned for residential uses. The largest amount of land (32%) is designated AG-CON (Agriculture-Conservation) which allows single-family homes on minimum sized 80,000 sq. ft. lots (almost 2 acres). The second and third most extensive zoning districts are R-A and R-B (10%) each, single-family residential zones requiring 40,000 sq. ft. and 25,000 sq. ft. minimum lot sizes respectively. These lower density residential zones are located in the West and North Ends furthest from Downtown Methuen and outside the ring or beltway formed by the limited access highways I-93 – State Route 213 – and I-495. Inside this ring are found the higher density residential zones R-C and R-D (3% and 14%) requiring 15,000 sq. ft. and 10,000 sq. ft. minimum lot sizes respectively. There is one R-D zone in the West End outside the ring toward the north. There are several RG (General Residence) zones in Central Methuen inside the ring, which account for 6% of Methuen's land area. General Residence zones require 8,000 sq. ft. minimum lots for a single-family dwelling and 12,000 sq. ft. minimum lots for two-family dwellings.

There are two multi-family zoning districts in Methuen (MA and MB). The MA zone requires a 3 acres minimum lot size and a maximum density of 2 dwelling units per acre. The MB zoning district requires 1 acre as a minimum lot size and allows a maximum density of 4 dwelling units per acre. The MA and MB zones account for about 1% each of Methuen's land area. Almost all multi-family zones are located

inside the ring with the exception being one RA zone located along Washington Street just north of Route 213 and the Loop commercial area. There is another multi-family development (Spacket Commons) located in a Limited Business Zone (BL) along Hampshire Road on the New Hampshire border.

Downtown Methuen is zoned Central Business District (CBD) which requires 4,000 sq. ft. minimum lot sizes and allows retail and offices uses. It encompasses only 83 acres and accounts for less than 1% of Methuen's land area. Methuen does not have an extensive downtown area. Much of Methuen's business activities are located along arterial roadways and in the regional shopping plaza called The Loop, located along Route 213. Arterial roads with small business concentrations along them are Broadway north and south of the downtown area, Lowell Street in the West End and Merrimack Street in the East End. These businesses are in BN (Neighborhood Business, less than 1% of land area), BH (Highway Business, 4% of land area) and BL (Limited Business, 2% of land area) zones.

Figure 2: Zoning Map



Methuen has extensive IL (Limited Industry) zoning. 1,287 acres (or about 9% of the City) are zoned IL. As shown in Table 2 only 351 acres are used for industry, indicating there is lots of land zoned for industry but used for other purposes, such as the golf course in the West End along the Dracut border. Quite a bit of land zoned for industry is wet, limiting its development. Wetlands impose a serious limitation on quite a bit of vacant land, especially outside the ring. About 780 acres (6%) of Methuen's total land area is wetlands and some of the 3,554 acres of vacant forested land is wet (this land is however, identified only as forested in the land use survey).

There are two other types of zoning districts in Methuen. These are conservancy land (CN) and a Hospital District (HD). Conservancy land accounts for 7% of the City's land area and contains many of the City's schools and other public buildings and land such as parks and playgrounds. The HD zone contains the Caritas Holy Family Hospital and its grounds, located along East and Brooks Street. The HD zone accounts for less than 1% of Methuen's land.

Table 2 below shows Methuen's zoning districts, their acreages and % of total land area.

Table 2: Methuen Zoning Districts and Areas

Zoning District Name and Minimum Lot Size	Official Map Designation	Acres of Land	% of Total
Agriculture/Conservation (80,000 sq. ft. min. lot)	AG-CON	4738	32
Highway Business (10,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	BH	598	4
Limited Business (20,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	BL	335	2
Neighborhood Business (10,000 sq. ft. min. lot)	BN	33	0.2
Central Business District (20,000 sq. ft. min. lot)	CBD	83	0.6
Conservancy	CN	1091	7
Hospital District (80,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	HD	75	0.5
Limited Industry (40,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	IL	1287	9
Multi-Family Residence A (3 acre min. lot)	MA	186	1
Multi-Family Residence B (3 acre min. lot)	MB	149	1
Residence A (40,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	RA	1469	10
Residence B (25,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	RB	1403	10
Residence C (15,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	RC	364	3
Residence D (10,000 sq. ft. minimum lot)	RD	2011	14
General Residence (8,000 sq. ft. min. lot)	RG	832	6
Totals		14654	100

Source: MassGIS

Both the land use and zoning maps show a pattern of mixed uses. Within zoning districts there are mixed land uses also. Roadside development in BH zones is characterized by low density one-floor businesses with some housing interspersed between the businesses. There are also some small businesses scattered about in residential districts. Industrial development tends to be scattered about also. There are older traditional industries along the Spicket River which is where industry got its start in Methuen, and there are more modern industrial facilities along the limited access highway corridors. The question of mixed uses brings up the issue of impacts of land uses on each other. There are provisions in Methuen's Zoning Ordinance to provide buffers between land uses, but these need to be re-examined in light of projected further residential and business growth. 30 foot landscaped buffer areas are now required between industrial/commercial zones and adjacent

residential zones, but no buffer areas are required between industrial and commercial zones, or between industrial/commercial zones and mixed use zones that may contain residential uses. Major Industrial Overlay Districts are permitted in the Methuen Zoning Ordinance, which are subject to Site Plan Approval, under which additional buffer provisions may be required, but this is at the discretion of the Site Plan Approval Granting Agency.

Table 3: Assessed Value by Major Land Use Categories - Fiscal Year 2006

Major Land Use	Assessed Value	% of Total
Residential	\$4,267,426,852	87.5
Commercial	353,520,884	7.3
Industrial	153,055,220	3.1
Personal Property	100,709,550	2.1
Total	\$4,874,712,506	100.0

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

Residential Land Uses

Table 4 shows the types of residential land uses in Methuen and the number of parcels, their acreages, floor area of the housing, and total and average valuation of the properties.

Table 4: Types, Areas and Valuations of Residential Properties in Methuen; FY 2006

Type of Use	Number of Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Floor Area (s.f.) in Buildings	Total Assessed Value	Average Assessed Value
Single Family	10,491	5,725	34,651,576	\$ 3,262,342,365	\$ 310,966
Condominium	1,933	0	2,708,237	\$ 358,313,500	\$ 185,367
Two Family	1,043	283	4,871,358	\$ 342,448,780	\$ 328,331
Three Family	228	44	1,267,028	\$ 83,413,300	\$ 365,848
Multiple Housing on One Parcel	58	105	400,940	\$ 26,210,200	\$ 451,900
Apartments: 4 to 8 units	90	23	639,887	\$ 37,890,900	\$ 421,010
Apartments: More than 8 units	34	87	1,429,657	\$ 103,060,800	\$ 3,031,200
Primarily Residential Mixed with Some Commercial Use	65	194	449,845	27,726,267	\$ 426,558
Miscellaneous Residential	64	23	12,181	4,735,600	\$ 73,994
Vacant Developable & Potentially Developable Residential Land	430	983	-	52,563,900	\$ 122,242
Vacant Undevelopable Residential Land	927	832	-	\$ 17,945,700	\$ 19,359
Total Residential Properties	15,298	8,105	46,430,709	\$ 4,289,118,745	\$ 280,371

Source: Methuen Assessing Database

Methuen is largely a single-family residential community. Single-family acreage accounts for 71% of all residential acreage, including vacant land zoned for residences; and 69% of the number of land parcels devoted to residential use (including again, vacant parcels). Single-family homes pay 76% of the property taxes collected from residential uses. Seventy-five percent (75%) of all residential floor area is used by single-family homes.

Higher density residential uses including all non-single-family and condominium uses account for only 542 acres of land and 1,453 parcels of land. Condominiums account for 1,933 parcels and an unreported number of acres (because the Assessing Database doesn't assign any land to condominium

properties). Condominiums have the lowest average valuation, making them an attractive purchase for lower income buyers.

Residential Build-out Analysis

The assessor's data show 983 acres in 430 parcels of vacant developable residential land. Most of this land is located in the West and North Ends outside the ring roads. This land would support almost 1,700 new dwelling units, assuming an average density of about 1/2 acre per unit, and 15% of the land used for new roads and utilities. Assuming a future population per housing unit figure of 2.6, the total number of additional people that could reside in Methuen when all the developable vacant residential is developed is 4,420. If the remaining developable residential land is developed at higher densities the future additional population figure would be higher.

Commercial Land Uses

Table 5 shows the same information as Table 4, only for commercial uses.

Table 5: Types, Areas and Valuations of Commercial Properties in Methuen; FY 2006

Type of Use	Number of Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Floor Area (s.f.) in Buildings	Total Assessed Value	Average Assessed Value
Motels	2	7	101,016	\$ 4,536,200	\$ 2,268,100
Nursing Home	4	9	70,978	\$ 3,230,500	\$ 807,625
Storage, Warehouses	26	78	367,919	\$ 21,235,800	\$ 816,762
Shopping Centers/ Malls	12	116	1,030,276	\$ 103,114,500	\$ 8,592,875
Small Retail & Service (<10,000 sq ft)	61	34	466,991	\$ 28,925,180	\$ 474,183
Eating & Drinking Estab.	35	41	197,063	\$ 25,300,000	\$ 722,857
Auto Sales & Services	12	19	86,796	\$ 6,539,100	\$ 544,925
Other Motor Vehicles Sales	2	2	12,280	\$ 994,400	\$ 497,200
Auto Supplies & Service	2	1	177,728	\$ 715,400	\$ 357,700
Auto Repair	39	21	19,002	\$ 10,434,300	\$ 267,546
Fuel Service Areas	7	8	23,965	\$ 5,412,000	\$ 773,143
Gasoline Service Stations	15	6	15,724	\$ 5,380,200	\$ 358,680
Car Wash	2	4	42,563	\$ 1,534,400	\$ 767,200
Parking Lots	34	20	-	\$ 5,095,800	\$ 149,876
General Office Bldg	49	47	711,364	\$ 50,989,200	\$ 1,040,596
Bank	8	7	50,372	\$ 6,777,400	\$ 847,175
Medical Office Bldg	7	8	129,384	\$ 11,022,400	\$ 1,574,629
Commercial Condo	41	0	103,794	\$ 9,998,500	\$ 243,866
Medical Office Condominiums	5	-	15,117	\$ 2,490,800	\$ 498,160
Fraternal Organizations	3	1	5,072	\$ 584,000	\$ 194,667
Gymnasiums and Athletic Clubs	2	14	70,114	\$ 4,941,700	\$ 2,470,850
Miscellaneous Commercial Uses	14	18	124,521	\$ 7,579,500	\$ 541,393
Primarily Commercial with Some Residential or Other Use	47	458	372,359	\$ 25,594,751	\$ 544,569
Vacant Developable & Potentially Developable Commercial Land	21	40	-	\$ 6,886,600	\$ 327,933
Vacant Undevelopable Commercial Land	20	9	-	\$ 466,200	\$ 23,310
Total Commercial Property	423	510	4,212,466	\$ 344,331,931	\$ 814,023

Source: Methuen Assessing Database

The largest land use on this detailed list of commercial uses is shopping centers/malls. The Loop is the major shopping center in Methuen and dominates this category. The next largest categories in terms of both land area and assessed value are general office buildings, retail/service places of less than 10,000 sq. ft. and eating and drinking places. There is relatively little vacant developable commercial land

remaining in Methuen, about 40 acres, which is 9% of the total developed commercial acreage. Most of the vacant developable commercial land lies outside the road ring.

Industrial and Utilities Land Uses

Table 6 shows the amounts of land and buildings and their assessed values for detailed categories of industrial and utilities property.

Table 6: Types, Areas and Valuations of Industrial and Utilities Properties in Methuen; FY 2006

Type of Use	Number of Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Floor Area (s.f.) in Buildings	Total Assessed Value	Average Assessed Value
Buildings for Manufacturing	22	101	1,879,091	\$ 67,880,600	\$ 3,085,482
Warehouses to Store Manufactured Products	10	71	750,007	\$ 28,817,400	\$ 2,881,740
Office Bldgs for Manufacturing	1	6	32,638	\$ 3,180,200	\$ 3,180,200
Land Used for Manufacturing	6	21	-	\$ 2,412,400	\$ 402,067
Research & Development Facilities	5	51	305,309	\$ 19,992,600	\$ 3,998,520
Sand and Gravel	3	85	11,094	\$ 2,123,900	\$ 707,967
Electric Transmission Right of Way	11	35	-	\$ 1,666,600	\$ 151,509
Electricity Regulating Stations	4	20	3,579	\$ 2,152,600	\$ 538,150
Gas Pressure Control Stations	3	1	1,797	\$ 236,800	\$ 78,933
Water Tower	1	3	28,358	\$ 1,648,700	\$ 1,648,700
Industrial Developable & Potentially Developable Land	27	288	-	\$ 10,302,100	\$ 381,559
Undevelopable Industrial Land	15	91	-	\$ 1,426,000	\$ 95,067
Unknown Industrial	41	-	216,387	\$ 9,637,300	\$ 235,056
Total Industrial Property	149	772	3,228,260	\$ 151,477,200	\$ 1,016,626

Source: Methuen Assessing Database

In terms of assessed values manufacturing is the largest category of industrial uses, followed by warehouses for manufactured products, then research and development facilities. In terms of acreages manufacturing is still the largest, followed by sand and gravel operations. There are extensive vacant lands zoned for industry located mostly outside the road ring. Extensive vacant industrial lands are located along both interstate highways I-93 and I-495. The golf course and surrounding vacant lands located in the southern part of the West End is zoned for industry. Methuen's industrial zoning is labeled "limited industrial" which excludes the most noxious industrial uses. Methuen's zoning defines a "Major Industrial Overlay District" (MIO) which is contained within a Limited Industrial (IL) Zone. Provisions of the MIO district allow for flexibility in dimensional requirements not contained in the IL zone.

Agricultural Land Uses

Table 7 shows the four types of agricultural uses found in Methuen.

Table 7: Types, Areas and Valuations of Agricultural Land Uses in Methuen; FY 2006

Type of Use	Number of Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Floor Area (s.f.) in Buildings	Total Assessed Value	Average Assessed Value
Truck Farms, Vegetables	27	243	3,600	\$ 578,658	\$ 21,432
Orchards (pears, apples)	1	9	-	\$ 6,926	\$ 6,926
Pasture	5	23	-	\$ 2,700	\$ 540
Ag areas wetlands, scrub, rockland	3	23	-	\$ 879	\$ 293
Total Agricultural Property	36	298	3,600	\$ 589,163	\$ 16,366

Source: Methuen Assessing Database

The truck farms are located primarily in the East End and West End. Some are located on the flood plain of the Merrimack River. Those located in the West End are along the New Hampshire and Dracut borders, in the vicinity of Hampshire Road and Wheeler Street and Lowell Boulevard. Land used for pastures is located primarily in the North End along Hampstead Street. There is also some small scale truck farming in this area. There are only 298 acres used for agricultural purposes, while there are 4,738 acres zoned for agricultural and conservation uses (AG-CON). Much of the AG-CON zoned land in the North and West Ends has been used for large-lot (2 acre) homes. The exurban character of these areas is quite different from the suburban character of the smaller lot areas in the West, North and East Ends, and the denser urban character of the Center and area inside the ring roads.

Public and Institutional Land Uses

Table 7 shows the land and property values of public and institutional land uses in Methuen.

**Table 8: Types, Areas and Valuations of Public and Institutional Land Uses in Methuen;
FY 2006**

Type of Use	Number of Parcels	Acreage of Parcels	Floor Area (s.f.) in Buildings	Total Assessed Value	Average Assessed Value
State-Owned Property	14	106	25,600	\$ 4,370,700	\$ 312,193
Municipally-Owned Property	529	1,275	1,293,783	\$ 147,620,700	\$ 279,056
Charitable Organizations	39	74	284,171	\$ 67,720,100	\$ 1,736,413
Religious Organizations	74	268	642,415	\$ 43,948,900	\$ 593,904
121A Corporations	3	34	392,520	\$ 19,966,400	\$ 6,655,467
Housing Authority	17	27	344,713	\$ 23,261,000	\$ 1,368,294
Nonprofit	1	24	46,335	\$ 4,106,300	\$ 4,106,300
Total Public Properties	677	1,808	3,029,537	\$ 310,994,100	\$ 459,371

Source: Methuen Assessor's Office

These properties are tax exempt. They account for 1,807 acres or 15% of the area of the City recorded in the Tax Assessor's Office. The largest amount of land is owned by the City of Methuen for its operations such as schools, public works, general government and public safety. The average assessed value of individual properties owned by 121A corporations and non-profit organizations is quite high, averaging about \$5,000,000.

It is important to assure that institutional lands (and recreational lands such as golf courses) are properly zoned. Golf courses, like private educational land could be sold off. The Hickory Hills Golf Club in the West End is currently zoned IL (Limited Industrial), which precludes residential uses and allows commercial uses only with a special permit. The Merrimack Golf Course on Howe Street in the North End and Emerald Pines, a residential development on golf course property is currently being developed under the provisions of the Golf Course/Residential Zone in the Zoning Ordinance, which limits the number of residential units that may be built.

Methuen has four special overlay zoning districts, one for major industry, as mentioned above, one for flood plain protection, one for the Ashford School reuse and one for the Forest Lake Area. The Ashford School and Forest Lake zoning overlays are special provisions designed to control residential development on specific properties. The major industry overlay allows for variations in dimensional controls on industrial development. There is also a special section in the zoning ordinance governing the placement and use of telecommunications towers and equipment.

City Owned Vacant Land

According to a manual review of tax assessor's records the City of Methuen owns 529 parcels of land. A computer tally by the assessor's office staff shows 516 parcels of city owned land. These contain the city's buildings and facilities, parks, schools, utilities, cemeteries and public safety buildings identified and described in the Chapter on Community Facilities and Services. The assessor's records show that 424 city owned parcels are vacant. Many of these are adjacent to parcels that contain city buildings and facilities and are ancillary to them for such purposes as parking, materials storage, access and land for future city needs. Some other vacant parcels are identified for open space and conservation use.

Many parcels are undevelopable owing to physical conditions such as wetlands, steep slope, small size and odd shape. However, a good number are developable and could contribute to city objectives such as providing land for affordable housing, recreation facilities, additional committed open space, economic development, neighborhood beautification and local access. Methuen has a program for disposing of surplus land via periodic reviews and auctions by city agencies of their needs for land. The City uses the figure of \$16,000 in assessed value to distinguish high value land from low value land. Low value land is often sought by abutters to expand or buffer their property. A review of city owned land, as related to the goals and objectives of the Master Plan, should be done as part of the implementation of the actions proposed in the Master Plan. Before auctioning City-owned property, conditions established as deed restrictions, should be imposed for any property in which there is a City interest in controlling use and dimensional restrictions beyond those imposed by current zoning. These deed restrictions may affect the value of the property. This is a trade-off the City should make on a case-by-case basis as part of its review. Examples of deed restrictions the City may want to impose are keeping the property open, permitting only recreational or gardening uses; limiting the amount and type of materials that can be stored on property that is acquired by an adjacent commercial/industrial use; and requiring additional buffers such as sound and light attenuation devices and measures, beyond those required in zoning.

METHUEN'S NEIGHBORHOODS

In the broadest sense there are five sections or neighborhoods of Methuen; the Center, the Arlington Neighborhood which is a continuation of the Arlington Neighborhood in Lawrence, and the North, East and West Ends. There are smaller more localized areas such as Marsh's Corner in the West End, and Pleasant Valley in the East End, however, most local identity is associated with the five major sections of the City. In terms of land use the five sections of the City can be described as follows.

The Downtown/Methuen Center

Methuen's central business district and city offices and services headquarters are located in the Center. It is an area of small retail shops, offices and older institutional buildings and homes. It is a relatively dense part of Methuen and is entirely built-up. The central core area along Broadway and Charles and Osgood Streets has 3 and 4 story older buildings that are used for offices. Some of the buildings are historically significant. Homes surrounding the retail and office core are mostly single-family residences built on small lots. There are a few multi-family residential buildings on small lots. A narrow industrial corridor extends south along the Spicket River into the Arlington Neighborhood and on into the City of Lawrence. An institutional corridor extends from the center southeastward along Lawrence Street. The Center is bounded by Routes I-93 and State Route 213 on the east and north, by the Caritas Holy Family Hospital on the east and by the Arlington Neighborhood and the City of Lawrence boundary on the south. The Center is essentially urban in character.

F U T U R E

On the far southwestern edge of the Methuen Center area is the Rotary Interchange area where State Routes 110 and 113 meet at Interstate Route 93. The Mass.

P L A N S / N E E D S : Highway Department is conducting a study of the rotary for the purposes of improving traffic flow and traffic safety. The improvements there will increase the accessibility of connecting roads and will lead to more commercial development in the area. It will be important to manage this development so it does not result in unsightly and dysfunctional commercial strips which degrade the character of surrounding suburban residential development and defeat the purposes of improving traffic safety, flow and capacity. Creation of commercial corridor zoning overlays should be considered to manage the future development of the area.

The Arlington Neighborhood

This, as mentioned, is an extension of the Arlington Neighborhood in Lawrence. In Methuen the Arlington Neighborhood is characterized by dense 2 and 3 story multi-family homes on small lots, small shops on Broadway, and commercial/industrial development between Broadway and French Street. There are few recreational areas. It is bounded by the Center on the north, the Lawrence City Line on the south, French Street on the west and Lawrence Street on the east (*using the Methuen Neighborhood Community Development Block Grant Program definition*). It is the smallest of Methuen's neighborhoods in area and has the highest concentration of ethnic minorities in the City. The area is highly urban in character. In an Arlington Neighborhood master plan public workshop it was revealed that by far the number one issue the area's residents are concerned with is the need for additional activities – for children, youth and adults – a “third place” to go (besides home and school for children and the streets for adults). They requested this in the form of a Community Center and/or an Indoor Sports and Cultural Complex. In addition to housing a homework center and community center, the residents asked for a space to do sports, dance and cultural activities as well as restaurants and shops.

They were also very concerned with affordable housing, safety (especially gang and drug-related violence) and access to convenient public transportation. They cited several concerns with the streetscape including trash, vacant buildings and lots as well as the existence of too many auto body shops (14 on 12 streets) which some suggested be converted to housing units.

The East End

The East End is bounded by State Route 213 and I-495 on the north, by the Merrimack River on the east, by the City of Lawrence on the south and the Center on the west. It is primarily an area of modest homes built at moderate densities with a few multi-family developments, and scattered highway oriented businesses along Merrimack Street. It has an area of higher density multi-family homes on small lots along Swan Street, which are similar in character to development in the adjoining Arlington Neighborhood. There are a few small truck farms along the Merrimack River and in the center of the neighborhood along Baremeadow Street. The East End contains some major destinations in Methuen, including The Loop, and the High School complex. The East End is essentially suburban in character.

The North End

Boundaries for the North End are formed by the New Hampshire State Line on the west, the City of Haverhill on the east, and I-495 and State Route 213 on the south. There is no northern boundary because the area is a triangle. A small stretch of the Merrimack River north of the I-495 crossing completes the eastern boundary of the North End. The area is heavily forested with some small patches of crop and pasture land. Low density fairly high-end homes have been built in the southern part of the North End and in its north along the few streets that traverse the area. The area contains extensive wetlands that limit development. There are two large areas and two smaller areas that have Chapter 61B

recreational restrictions limiting development on them. The southern part of the neighborhood is more developed than the north, having some industry and multi-family homes. The northern part of the area is essentially exurban while the southern part is suburban.

The West End

The West End is bounded by New Hampshire, Dracut, the Merrimack River and the Center. It has some industrial land and moderate density residential areas just west of I-93. It also has extensive wetlands that limit development. Along the Dracut Town Line are areas of low density higher-end homes. This area is forested also. Forest Lake, an important recreational resource, is located in the northwest part of the West End, abutting the Town Forest. Most of the development in the West End is fairly recent. One area of older development is along the Merrimack River bordering Lowell Boulevard and Lowell Street. This is an area of smaller older homes mixed with roadside businesses and industry. The western half of the West End is exurban in character while the eastern half is suburban. Apart from Forest Lake, which is somewhat inaccessible, and the Hickory Hills golf course, the West End lacks recreational facilities. There is a private boat ramp on the Merrimack River, but no public parks. There are soccer fields belonging to the Methuen Soccer Association off Hampshire Road but access to them is limited by the association. There is also an unused small ski area in the northwest corner of the West End bordering Pelham and Salem, New Hampshire, with access from Hampshire Road. The property is owned by the City.

FUTURE

PLANS / NEEDS:

The southern part of the West End along North Lowell Street and Wheeler Street will be subject to pressures for higher density residential development if the proposed sewer service hookup with the Town of Dracut is completed.

Dracut and Methuen have agreed in principle to implement this project and it is currently in negotiation. One impact of the project will be to allow higher density residential development because septic systems would no longer be needed. Currently the land in the area is zoned Agriculture-Conservation which allows residential uses and requires a minimum lot size of 80,000 sq. ft. Sewer service will accommodate smaller lots. Rezoning would have to occur to permit denser residential development. The market for housing would likely support smaller homes on smaller lots than now exist in the area. The area is a very desirable neighborhood because of the high quality of homes and open exurban character of the land. Preserving this character while allowing higher density homes would be a challenge that could be met through use of open space residential zoning and selective conservation of key open space parcels in the area. There are about 60 developed and vacant parcels of land in the area which includes 5 large parcels that could be subdivided into multiple lots. Many of the smaller parcels could also be subdivided but only into one or two additional lots. Once negotiations are completed the sewer connector to Dracut on North Lowell Street could be operating within 1 or 2 years. This project could therefore impact the area in the short term.

The actively used Hickory Hills golf course is located in the area which, as noted, is currently zoned for industry. It is served by an existing sewer line in Lowell Boulevard. That line, if extended, could serve industry if it were developed on the golf course. In order to preserve the character of the area any industry would have to be carefully screened and buffered from surrounding land uses. Open campus-style carefully landscaped and adequately buffered industrial development could be compatible with the existing character of the area.

REGULATORY ANALYSIS

One of the primary questions for a Master Planning effort is how the community's goals, articulated in the public workshops and resulting vision statement, can be achieved through the City's public policy.

Zoning and subdivision regulations, to a large degree, are the main tools elected and appointed officials have in managing land development patterns,

How effectively a community's zoning ordinance reflects its desired land use pattern can be measured, to some degree, by looking at the number of variances that are sought and granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). If variances are frequently granted for a particular request, this can reflect a warranted zoning change. As part of this planning effort, we reviewed all Zoning Board Decisions from August 2003 to December 2006. Analysis of approximately 250 cases reveals the following:

- Residential use account for 90% of the cases before the ZBA;
- Almost 40% of the cases brought before the ZBA are in the RD or AGCON zones;
- Nearly 23% of the cases involve a lot split request that will leave one or more lots without the required lot area, frontage, and/or dimensional setbacks;
- The Board reviews on average 9 accessory apartment petitions each year, and has always granted these requests;
- Overall, an applicant has close to a 90% chance of being successful before the ZBA (the most frequently denied petitions is for a lot split, which the ZBA has denied in 30% of instances).

During the public workshops a member of the public noted that in 2000, Section X-H of the Zoning Ordinance was amended to reflect additional direction for ZBA decisions that request lot splits:

"Provided however, that the Board of Appeals shall not grant a dimensional variance on the basis on a hardship to any parcel in the following districts: AG/CON, RA, RB, RC, RD, or RG where such dimensional variance is granted for the purpose of creating from that lot two or more lots if the only existent basis for the hardship is a condition of the land which was readily observable at or before the time of purchase by the current owner. Provided further that the Board of Appeals shall not grant a dimensional variance, which would result in the creation of two or more lots where the original lot is smaller in size than the current lot size requirement for the district it is located within."

Using the City's Geographic Information System (GIS), a calculation of existing lot areas in Methuen's residential zones illustrates the context within the ZBA's decision-making takes place: the majority of lots in nearly every residential zone do not meet the minimum area requirements of the zone. Coupled with the Zoning Board's tendency to grant dimensional variances, this indicates that Methuen should closely examine dimensional requirements in each zone and confirm whether they are in concert with the Master Plan vision.

Commercial development in Methuen is largely regulated through the Site Plan Review provision of the ordinance in Section X-II. In response to an application, the Community Development Board must determine "that the proposed placement of buildings, provision of waste disposal, surface drainage and parking areas, driveways, location of buffers and the location of intersections of driveways and streets will constitute a suitable development and will not result in substantial detriment to the neighborhood." The Board has ample latitude to negotiate the terms of an appropriate site plan, but the lack of standards or guidelines that illustrate the expectations of the Board can result in misunderstanding as to what might be perceived as "acceptable." The City might think about creating a set of guidelines that will help achieve development that carries forth the Master Plan vision. These may include minimum landscaping requirements, pedestrian-connectivity, traffic and circulation management, etc.

The Community Development Board's Subdivision Rules and Regulations, revised through 1988, are outdated and need substantial amendment. The Board has already prepared a comprehensive draft amendment that addresses this need. Among the more critical areas requiring attention are: the treatment of stormwater to require best management practices (BMPs); requirement of a Community Impact Analysis and mitigation of identified impacts; and street design standards.

The Historic District Commission and the Conservation Commission also have important roles in regulating land use development. Their regulations are referenced in the Natural Resource and Historic Resource elements of the Plan. Further analysis of regulation affecting Housing, Economic Development, and Transportation can be found in those chapters as well.

SMART GROWTH AND SUSTAINABLE LAND USE

Methuen has made incremental progress over the past several years in adopting several policies, regulations, and practices that adhere to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' "Smart Growth" principles. Generally upholding the tenets of economic prosperity, environmental justice, and social equity, the goal of sustainability seeks to ensure that the current population is able to meet its needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet theirs.

Preservation and reuse of historic structures, promotion of mixed use and compact development, employing low impact development methods, fostering job growth, and providing transportation options are all means of achieving sustainability. Examples of smart growth in Methuen include reuse and sale of unused school buildings, promotion of rental housing and the housing rehabilitation program, using innovative economic development tools to attract and grow businesses, promoting downtown revitalization, and amending zoning regulations to reduce sprawl and support responsible housing growth.

This Master Plan makes numerous recommendations to build upon the City's strengths in this area. In so doing, the City will be positioning itself well to complement the State's goals, which will assist in expanding opportunities for State-City partnerships (via grant programs, transportation planning, etc.).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Specific land use goals identified by Methuen residents in public workshops on the Master Plan were to prevent the further loss of open rural and agricultural areas by purchasing development rights of existing farms, limiting the clear cutting of vegetation, especially trees, preserving and better maintaining conservation lands and designating more parklands. Preservation of Methuen's existing character was mentioned frequently and favorably in the public workshops in terms of keeping the wide diversity of land uses, combining the small town feel with big city advantages, maintaining and enhancing historic buildings, walls and landscapes, and preserving and improving the access to open spaces, the Merrimack River and Forest Lake. Another preservation goal expressed at the workshops was keeping and improving the character of different neighborhoods through selective adjustments in the Zoning Ordinance, such as changing some dimensional requirements such as lot frontages and building setbacks, and requiring that more open space be set aside in new residential development.

The public workshops also mentioned the desirability of improving the downtown area by increasing the number of well designed civic spaces and preserving the historic elements of the area. The 2004 Downtown Methuen Development Plan proposes several important initiatives that would substantially improve downtown and attract more people to it. One is creation of two "gateways" that would better delineate the downtown area and increase pedestrian and traffic safety. Another is creation of a better

and more attractive pedestrian circulation network including a “riverwalk” to feature the Spicket River and its falls. A third initiative is a series of redevelopment projects that would preserve important historic structures, demolish or adapt other existing structures to improve their marketability to businesses and rationalize parking and pedestrian access, and promote more mixed uses in the downtown to increase the numbers of people who reside there.

Finally, as detailed in the Economic Development chapter, Methuen needs to be vigilant in providing for expansion of commercial and industrial uses in order to maintain fiscal stability and affordability for Methuen residents.

LAND USE GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal LU-1: Create better, easier to administer residential zoning and subdivision regulations

Objectives:

- *Reduce the burden to review and approve variances for residential zoning.*
- *Ensure equal treatment for similarly situated land owners*
- *Allow desired residential development “by right”*

Strategies:

LU-1.1: Conduct a detailed review of residential zoning districts. Methuen has a complex land use pattern, developed over several centuries of growth. The City’s GIS system can help highlight where zones diverge from dimensional requirements and may result in some consolidation/ simplification of the number of residential zones.

LU-1.2: Redefine zoning and subdivision rules and regulations via a comprehensive revision, and involve private consultants as necessary. As part of this effort, incorporate Smart Growth principles where appropriate, including adoption of Low Impact Development (LID) in the subdivision and site plan regulations, consider the use of 40R and 43D districts in downtown and elsewhere, open space residential development, inclusionary zoning, and historic preservation and redevelopment incentives (special permits, density bonuses, “by right” zoning for transit-oriented development).

Goal LU-2: Preserve the remaining rural character of Methuen.

Objectives:

- *Protect existing agriculture and forested areas*
- *Encourage development that preserves large tracts of open space and discourage sprawl.*

Strategies:

LU-2.1: Identify parcels and potential investors for key agricultural and forested areas. Create a plan to identify and purchase areas. Take advantage of the right of first refusal on retiring Chapter 61A and 61B properties.

LU-2.2: Adopt an Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) ordinance that would protect large tracts of open space while maintaining existing densities. Use the Commonwealth's Model OSRD ordinance (part of the Smart Growth Toolkit) as a starting point, and refer to other municipalities that have experienced successes (Ipswich, Amesbury, Newbury, Hopkinton etc.).

LU-2.3: Limit clear cutting of vegetation including trees. Adopt a "no net loss" ordinance that would require replacement in caliper of mature tree removal associated with all new development.

Goal LU-3: Preserve important historic structures and landscapes.

Objectives:

- *Require more public review of proposals to alter historic structures and landscapes.*

Strategies:

LU-3.1 Pass a Demolition Delay law.

LU-3.2: Designate rural roads as "Scenic."

LU-3.3: Find economic uses for historic structures in commercial areas. Acquire easements or development rights from owners of important scenic and historic landscape properties.

Goal LU-4: Encourage the development and redevelopment of river frontage for public recreation and enjoyment.

Objectives:

- *Create outdoor and indoor viewing and access points to the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers*

Strategies:

LU-4.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Development Plan to create a complete riverwalk along the Spicket River and to provide a small boat ramp on it. Carry out that plan's further recommendations to redevelop property along the Spicket River to open up the backs of buildings to the Spicket River and to create indoor views from redeveloped buildings.

LU-4.2: In conjunction with implementation of the Downtown Development Plan, conduct a Flood Mitigation Hazard Study to determine how to best protect existing and proposed public and private investments as part of the Downtown Plan.

LU-4.3: Complete public access/park improvements to the former Bea's Sandwiches site along the Merrimack Riverfront (near the I-93/Rte. 113/110 interchange) using a \$450,000 state grant.

LU-4.2: Amend Site Plan Review ordinance to address all non-residential and multifamily residential development along the rivers to provide public access and scenic views to the rivers.

LU-5: Identify opportunities for additional economic development growth

LU-5.1: Explore areas such as Lindbergh Ave, Merrimack Street and Broadway with an eye for economic development. Develop site-specific goals for economic development/maximization of industrially zoned land, downtown development, and commercial corridor redevelopment.

Goal LU-6: Manage land uses in a manner that will incrementally improve transportation flow.**Objectives:**

- *Reduce the amount of projected future increases in vehicle trip generation from proposed projects and increase traffic safety.*

Strategies:

LU-6.1: Include vehicle trip generation reducing requirements in commercial and industrial zoning, e.g., require new commercial and industrial development to include bicycle racks and lockers and showers for bicycle users, in concert with the Merrimack Valley Transportation Management Association (TMA).

LU-6.2: Require employers to provide priority parking (most favorably located) for car and van pools. Encourage new commercial and industrial development to provide low interest loans for employees to purchase vans for carpooling. Require new commercial and industrial development to pay for off-site traffic safety and flow improvements if new traffic they will generate is expected to lower the level-of-service on adjacent roadways, or otherwise adversely impact the transportation network.

Goal LU-7: Reduce the unfavorable aspects and impacts of strip commercial development**Objectives:**

- *Increase flexibility in zoning to create more attractive and better functioning single and mixed use commercial areas.*

Strategies:

LU-7.1: Create a mixed use commercial corridor zoning overlay that permits smaller lots and reduces building setbacks so that mixed use shopping villages can be created along arterial roadways with parking to the rear and side. Set overall design principles in the overlay zone, but leave details of design to be determined and approved in the site plan and special permit approval process. Specifically consider the following areas: Broadway from Rosewood to NH State Line, Haverhill Street from 93/110 Rotary to Lawrence line, Merrimack Street in the Valley, Pleasant Street from Methuen Executive Park to lights at Jackson Street

POPULATION AND HOUSING

With a convenient location, new elementary schools, and an overall high quality of life, Methuen continues to be an attractive community for residential development. Some recent 40B developments and other subdivisions located on marginal lands have been cause for concern among residents. In addition, the increased number of units restricted to those over 55 years of age has raised the question as to what types of housing should the City be supporting, what densities are appropriate for which areas, and how can the City be in a better position to fulfill its housing needs.

The following summarizes demographic and housing characteristics within the City of Methuen and represents an update of data and information contained within the *City of Methuen Community Development Plan (2004)*. In order to complete this analysis, information was obtained from DemographicsNow (based on the 2000 U.S. Census), the City of Methuen, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The information presented profiles the City's population and household base as well as housing supply by type, tenure, age, value and related characteristics.

POPULATION

Methuen had an estimated 2005 population base of 45,476 which represents an increase of 1,687 (3.9%) since 2000. Between 2000 and 2005, the 55 to 64 (1,022 residents or 29%), 15 to 24 (816 residents or 17%), and 45 to 54 (649 residents or 11%) age cohorts experienced the largest growth in Methuen.

As shown in Table 1, Methuen's population is projected to increase by 1,561 residents by 2010 representing an increase of 3.4% (or approximately the same rate as between 2000 to 2005). Methuen's near senior (age 55 to 64) and senior (65 to 74) age cohorts are projected to experience the largest percentage increase over the 2005 to 2010 time period.

Table 9: Population by Age Trends & Forecasts

Age Cohort	2000	2005	2010	Percent Change	
				2000-2005	2005-2010
Less than 15	9,078	9,092	9,170	0.2%	0.9%
15 to 24	4,950	5,766	6,224	16.5%	7.9%
25 to 34	5,962	5,605	5,751	-6.0%	2.6%
35 to 44	7,625	7,077	6,216	-7.2%	-12.2%
45 to 54	5,908	6,557	6,934	11.0%	5.7%
55 to 64	3,547	4,569	5,578	28.8%	22.1%
65 to 74	3,089	3,025	3,548	-2.1%	17.3%
75 & up	3,630	3,785	3,616	4.3%	-4.5%
Total	43,789	45,476	47,037	3.9%	3.4%

Source: DemographicNow & RKG Associates, Inc.

Methuen's racial and ethnic composition is changing. As shown in Table 10, between 2000 and 2005, the number of African American residents almost doubled (93%), the number of Native American residents more than doubled (133%), and the number of Asians increased by almost one-third (29%). Projections indicate continued growth in Methuen's racial and ethnic population groups between 2005 and 2010.

Table 10: Racial and Ethnicity Trends & Forecasts

Race/Ethnicity	2000	2005	2010	Percent Change	
				2000-2005	2005-2010
White	39,126	39,387	39,595	0.7%	0.5%
African American	591	1,138	1,760	92.6%	54.7%
Native American	97	226	305	133.0%	35.0%
Asian	1,045	1,345	1,632	28.7%	21.3%
Other Race	2,131	2,412	2,683	13.2%	11.2%
Two or More Races	799	1,004	1,111	25.7%	10.7%
Hispanic	4,221	5,903	7,546	39.8%	27.8%
Non Hispanic	39,568	39,609	39,540	0.1%	-0.2%

Source: DemographicNow & RKG Associates, Inc.

HOUSEHOLDS

Methuen had an estimated 2005 household base of 45,476 which represents an increase of 16,732 (1.2%) since 2000. Projections between 2005 and 2010 indicate that Methuen's household base should increase by 159 representing an increase of 1% (a slightly slower growth rate than experienced between 2000 and 2005).

HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Median household income in Methuen in 2005 was estimated at \$54,035 representing an increase of 8.9% since 2000. This rate of income growth was approximately half of the growth in the Consumer Price Index (18%) over the same time period indicating that household incomes in Methuen were not keeping pace with the rate of inflation. Projections from 2005 to 2010 indicate that median household income should increase to \$59,468, an increase of 10%.

As shown in Table 11, nearly all the growth in households between 2000 and 2005 was attributed to households earning \$100,000 or more. In 2005, households earning \$100,000 or more accounted for 18.3% of Methuen's household base. Projections from 2005 to 2010 indicate households earning \$100,000 or more will account for all the growth over the next five years in Methuen.

Table 11: Households by Income Trends & Forecasts

Income Cohort	2000	2005	2010	Percent Change	
				2000-2005	2005-2010
\$0 - \$15,000	2,310	2,209	2,102	-4.4%	-4.8%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	1,620	1,493	1,381	-7.8%	-7.5%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,741	1,529	1,461	-12.2%	-4.4%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	2,658	2,498	2,129	-6.0%	-14.8%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	3,610	3,381	2,997	-6.3%	-11.4%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	2,382	2,557	2,451	7.3%	-4.1%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,627	2,229	3,037	37.0%	36.2%
\$150,000 +	584	827	1,324	41.6%	60.1%
Total	16,532	16,723	16,882	1.2%	1.0%
Median H'hold Income	\$49,611	\$54,035	\$59,468	8.9%	10.1%

HOUSING SUPPLY

Methuen had a housing unit base of 16,885 in 2000, of which 16,532 were occupied. Of the occupied housing base, 72% (11,881) were owner-occupied units.

Based on building permit data provided by the City of Methuen, between 2000 and 2005 building permits were issued for 1,089 housing units bringing the current estimated total base to 17,974 units. As shown in Table 12, between 2000 and 2005 approximately 48% (517 units) of the units permitted were single family structures, with another 48% (518 units) being multi-family units and 5% (54 units) duplexes. It should be noted that the City has permitted an average of 86 single family and multi-family units each year over the time period. However, while the number of single family units permitted each year has ranged between 61 and 127 units, multi-family unit development was primarily concentrated in 2001 (193 units⁴) and 2005 (302 units⁵).

Table 12: New Housing Production from Building Permit Activity

Year	Single Family	Two Family	Multi-Unit	Total
2000	127	6	19	152
2001	79	24	193	296
2002	89	10	0	99
2003	82	0	0	82
2004	79	4	4	87
2005	61	10	302	373
Total	517	54	518	1,089

Source: City of Methuen

Methuen's rental vacancy rate declined from 8.6% in 1990 to 3.9% in 2000. The home ownership vacancy rate declined from 1.7% to 0.8% in the same period. The vacancy rate includes those units which were vacant and for sale or for rent at the time of the Census, but does not include units that have been rented or sold and awaiting occupancy, seasonal units, or other vacant units that were being held off market or retained for other purposes.

Generally, housing vacancy rates of 5% for rental units and 2% for ownership stock are thought to be sufficient for accommodating reasonable housing choice. Throughout the region, the ownership and rental vacancy rates were below the desired averages (see Table 13). Factors that would account for this trend include regional employment growth, increased housing demand and a lag in housing production as well as the increased housing costs that result from a tight housing market.

Table 13: Regional Comparison of Occupied Housing Stock and Vacancy Rates in 2000

	Occupied Housing 2000			Rental Tenure %	Vacancy Rate 2000	
	Owner	Renter	Total		Owner	Renter
Methuen	11,892	4,640	16,532	28.1%	0.8%	3.9%
Haverhill	13,838	9,138	22,976	39.8%	1.0%	2.9%
Lawrence	7,869	16,594	24,463	67.8%	2.2%	3.7%
Dracut	8,208	2,243	10,451	21.5%	0.5%	2.9%
Andover	8,891	2,414	11,305	21.4%	0.7%	2.7%
North Andover	7,073	2,651	9,724	27.3%	0.8%	2.7%
Salem, NH	8,125	2,277	10,402	21.9%	0.6%	3.0%
Massachusetts	1,508,248	935,332	2,443,580	38.3%	1.0%	3.7%

Source: U. S. Census and RKG Associates, Inc.

⁴ Spicket Commons development.

⁵ Summit Place development.

HOUSING SALES AND APARTMENT RENTAL TRENDS

In terms of single family homes, 476 single family units changed hands in 2005 representing an increase of 185 (64%) units since 2000. Over 90% of the single family units that changed hands in 2005 were existing units representing an increase of fourteen percentage points since 2000. Through the first five months of 2006, 125 single family units were sold in Methuen suggesting a 35% decrease from the same time period in 2005 (see Table 14).

The average sale price for all single family units sold in Methuen in 2005 was \$353,286 representing an increase of \$134,127 (61% or about 10% per year) since 2000. Based on sales activity through the first five months of 2006, the average sale price for all single family units dipped modestly compared to 2005 by approximately \$10,000. Based on 2005 and 2006 sales activity, the average price for an existing single family unit in Methuen was in the \$325,000 to \$340,000 range, with new units at the \$500,000 price point.

In terms of condominiums, 245 units changed hands in 2005 representing an increase of 170 (227%) units since 2000. Almost all (98%) of the condominiums that changed hands in 2005 were existing units representing an increase of twenty-eight percentage points since 2000. Through the first five months of 2006, 75 condominium units were sold in Methuen suggesting a 27% decrease from the same time period in 2005.

The average sale price for all condominiums sold in Methuen in 2005 was \$222,112 representing an increase of \$89,000 (67% or about 11% per year) since 2000. Based on sales activity through the first five months of 2006, the average sale price for all condominiums increased compared to 2005 by approximately \$17,000. Based on 2005 and 2006 sales activity, the average price for an existing condominium unit in Methuen was in the \$210,000 to \$220,000 range, with new units at the \$500,000 price point.

Table 14: Single Family & Condominium Trends in Sales Activity & Average Pricing

Single Family Homes						
	Volume of Sales		Average Sale Price			
	All Sales	Existing Homes	New Homes	All Sales	Existing Homes	New Homes
2000	291	224	67	\$219,159	\$190,685	\$314,355
2001	294	241	53	\$249,489	\$230,066	\$337,812
2002	331	281	50	\$266,772	\$248,873	\$367,363
2003	421	370	51	\$303,298	\$285,141	\$435,026
2004	403	375	28	\$315,801	\$304,234	\$470,726
2005	476	433	43	\$353,286	\$337,331	\$513,948
2006 [1]	125	112	13	\$343,434	\$324,912	\$503,011

Condominiums						
	Volume of Sales		Average Sale Price			
	All Sales	Existing Homes	New Homes	All Sales	Existing Homes	New Homes
2000	75	53	22	\$133,128	\$119,694	\$165,493
2001	66	52	14	\$160,409	\$143,597	\$222,853
2002	105	77	28	\$177,584	\$159,826	\$226,418
2003	94	92	2	\$198,009	\$198,009	\$233,000
2004	179	171	8	\$305,068	\$306,606	\$272,200
2005	245	241	4	\$222,112	\$216,887	\$536,925
2006 [1]	75	67	8	\$238,927	\$208,033	\$497,663

[1] Through May 2006

Source: City of Methuen and RKG Associates, Inc.

Based on rent data provided by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), current (2005) fair market monthly rents in Methuen range from \$699 (studio unit) to \$1,323 (four-bedroom unit). Since 2000, fair market rents for apartment units in Methuen have increased annually between 3% and 10% depending on unit sizes. Table 15 shows fair market rent trends for Methuen between 2000 and 2005.

Table 15: Trends in Fair Market Rents [1]

Apartment Type	2000	2005	% Change
Studio	\$484	\$699	44.4%
One-bedroom	\$584	\$878	50.3%
Two-bedroom	\$735	\$1,075	46.3%
Three-bedroom	\$919	\$1,284	39.7%
Four-bedroom	\$1,130	\$1,323	17.1%

[1] Lawrence PMSA (50 percentile)

Source: US Dept of HUD & RKG Associates, Inc.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

This section estimates the demand for low-income housing in the City of Methuen. The methodology utilized in estimating the amount of low-income households that could qualify for rental assistance under the income guidelines of the Lawrence Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) was multifaceted. It included extrapolating various factors from Census 2000 data, such as household size, age, income and tenure characteristics. These factors were then applied to household estimates for 2005, so that the number of eligible households could be quantified between elderly (65 years and older) and family (ages 15 to 64) and by housing tenure (owner and renter).

Low-income eligibility is calculated as a percentage of the median family income (MFI) for a larger region and varies by the size of a household. HUD uses the MFI of the Lawrence PMSA as the region for determining income eligibility for households in the City of Methuen. These income limits are exhibited in Table 16.

Table 16: Income Eligibility Thresholds For Affordable Housing

Area Median Family Income [1]		\$75,700		
Household Size	Income Thresholds			
	Extremely Low (30%)	Very Low (50%)	Low (80%)	
1-person	\$15,900	\$26,500	\$40,600	
2-person	\$18,200	\$30,300	\$46,400	
3-person	\$20,450	\$34,100	\$52,200	
4-person	\$22,750	\$37,900	\$58,000	
5-person	\$24,550	\$40,900	\$62,650	
6-person	\$26,400	\$43,950	\$67,300	
7-person	\$28,200	\$46,950	\$71,900	
8-person	\$30,000	\$50,000	\$76,550	

[1] for the Lawrence MA-NH PMSA

Source: US Dept of HUD

As shown in Table 16, three classifications for low-income households are used, based on the area MFI (\$75,700) for 2005, and include *extremely low* (0-30%); *very low* (31% to 50%); and *low* (51% to 80%). Income limits are also based on family size.

HOUSEHOLDS SIZE, TENURES & AGE CHARACTERISTICS

The distribution of households by size in Methuen, adjusted for 2005, is presented in Table 17. Also exhibited are the percentages of different household sizes that were owners or elderly. As shown, 25.3% of households in Methuen were single-person households, another 30.6% contained two persons and another 17.3% were three-person households. The remaining 26.8% of Methuen households had four persons or more. About 53.2% of the one-person households were owners and approximately 13% of one-person households were elderly. Between 75% and 85% of the 2-person or larger households were owners, and 9% were elderly with most of these elderly households having only 2-persons.

Table 17: Households Size, Tenure & Age Characteristics (2005)

Household Size	Number of Households	% of Total	% Owners	% Elderly
1-person	4,235	25.3%	53.2%	12.7%
2-person	5,114	30.6%	77.9%	9.2%
3-person	2,893	17.3%	75.2%	3.0%
4-person	2,628	15.7%	80.9%	1.0%
5-person	1,292	7.7%	78.9%	0.0%
6-person	374	2.2%	85.9%	0.0%
7-person or more	186	1.1%	81.5%	0.0%
Total	16,723	100.0%	74.7%	25.8%

Source: US Census; DemographicsNow; & RKG Associates, Inc.

HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY

Another statistic that quantifies the most needy households in the City is the number of households that are below the poverty level.⁶ While detailed estimates for 2005 are not available, a review of Census 2000 data provides some insight into the amount of impoverished households residing in the City.

As shown in Table 18, there were nearly 1,310 households in Methuen with incomes below the poverty level. This figure equates to 7.9% of total households, and was slightly higher than the population poverty rate of 7.4%, as 3,200 persons were below the poverty level in 2000. As shown below, approximately 26% of the households in poverty were elderly (65 years and older) and another 9% were under the age of 25.

Table 18: Households by Type in Poverty (2000)

Age Group	Family Hholds	Non-Family Hholds	Total	%
Under 25 years	83	41	124	9%
25 to 44 years	383	169	552	42%
45 to 64 years	111	177	288	22%
65 years & older	98	246	344	26%
Total	675	633	1,308	100%

Source: US Census & RKG Associates, Inc.

QUANTIFYING LOW INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Using households by age and income estimates for 2005, coupled with tenure characteristics extrapolated from Census 2000, an approximation of those households that could qualify for rental assistance under the low-income thresholds can be estimated. Unfortunately, the income distributions are not strictly comparable to the income limits set by HUD. This same income information is not available by household size, so it is not possible to precisely determine how many households within various income groups would actually be income eligible for affordable housing.

⁶The U.S. Census uses a set of income thresholds that vary by family size to detect those who are poor. Poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but are updated annually for inflation. The weighted average income threshold in 2000 (and 2005) for one person was \$8,787 (\$9,570 in 2005); for a two-person family - \$11,234 (\$12,830); three persons-\$13,737 (\$16,090), four persons-\$17,600 (\$19,350); five persons-\$20,804 (\$22,610), and so on.

Despite these limitations, the age distribution of households within the lower income brackets provides a basis for estimating the distribution of households with affordable housing needs. From the household age-by-income data, it is possible to further segment and estimate a range of the number of elderly (65 years or older) and non-elderly households (age 15 to 64), as well as by tenure (owner and renter). Table 19 shows the percentage of households in each group depending on income level, age and tenure in order to quantify the amount of households that could potentially qualify for rental assistance.

Table 19: Estimated Low Income Households by Age & Tenure (2005)

Age/Income Cohort	Households			% Allocation of Eligibility		Estimated Low-Income Households			
	Total	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter	Total	% of Group
Non-Elderly/Family									
Less than \$15,000 [1]	1,273	351	922	30%	100%	105	922	1,027	81%
\$15,000 to \$24,999 [1,2]	861	560	301	20%	75%	112	226	338	39%
\$25,000 to \$40,000 [2]	1,658	1,250	408	10%	50%	125	204	329	20%
\$40,000 to \$59,999 [2,3]	2,454	1,458	996	5%	25%	73	249	322	13%
\$60,000 to \$74,999 [3,4]	1,715	1,389	326	1%	5%	14	16	30	2%
Subtotal	7,961	5,008	2,953	9%	55%	429	1,617	2,046	26%
Elderly									
Less than \$15,000 [1]	914	665	249	20%	75%	133	187	320	35%
\$15,000 to \$24,999 [1,2]	658	515	143	10%	50%	52	71	123	19%
\$25,000 to \$40,000 [2]	706	494	212	5%	15%	25	32	57	8%
\$40,000 to \$59,999 [2,3]	603	483	120	1%	5%	5	6	11	2%
\$60,000 to \$74,999 [3,4]	280	278	2	0%	0%	0	0	0	0%
Subtotal	3,161	2,436	725	9%	41%	214	296	510	16%
All Income Groups									
Non-Elderly	12,855	9,195	3,660	5%	44%	429	1,617	2,046	16%
Elderly	4,017	3,292	725	7%	41%	214	296	510	13%
Total Households	16,872	12,487	4,385	5%	44%	643	1,912	2,556	15%

Income Levels are equivalent to:

[1] Extremely Low (30%)
 [2] Very Low (50%)
 [3] Low Income (80%)
 [4] Moderate Income (120%)

Source: US Census, DemographicsNow RKG Associates, Inc.

As shown in Table 19, a total of approximately 2,560 households in 2005 would be income eligible for rental assistance based on the income criteria of the Lawrence PMSA representing about 15% of all households in Methuen. An estimated 2,050 households would qualify for family, or non-elderly (less than 65 years) housing, while the remaining 510 would be elderly (65 years or older). This amount of eligible elderly represents 13% of that cohort in the City, whereas the eligible non-elderly households reflect about 16% of the under-65 cohort.

Of the 2,560 qualifying households, 1,800 households with incomes of less than \$25,000 would be classified in the extremely low-income range. These households are more heavily distributed to the non-elderly (1,365) rather than the elderly (443), and combined, equate to 61.5% of all low-income households. Included in this group are 1,350 households with incomes less than \$15,000. These households equate to 52.7% of all low-income households. Methuen's households in poverty (1,310) represent 97.0% of the City's households with incomes under \$15,000.

Another 390 of the 2,560 qualifying households would be considered as very low income (\$25,000 to \$39,999), and these represent about 15.1% of the low-income households. About 85% of this group are families (330) with the remainder being elderly (60) households. The remaining 370 of the 2,560 qualifying households would be considered within the low to moderate income level, and represent another 14.5% of low-income households.

HOME OWNERSHIP AND RENTER AFFORDABILITY

Methuen's Community Development Plan (2004) completed an analysis of homeownership and renter affordability based on Census 2000 data. The analysis determined the minimum income needed to afford a home or rent an apartment based on home price ranges reported, dwelling costs and incomes reported in the Census. Due to the lack of updated available comparable housing cost Census data, this type of analysis has not been included in this plan.

However, as home values and rental rates increased by about 10% per year over the last five years, income levels have increased by less than 2% on average. This finding suggests that the lack of housing affordability in 2005 has become a problem for more households as compared to the previous estimate based on Census 2000 data.

Assuming an average single-family home value of \$300,000, household income would have to be in the \$80,000 to \$100,000 range to support this level, depending on the downpayment and typical financial criteria (see Table 20) – \$26,000 to \$46,000 more than the 2005 median household income estimate in Methuen. An income of between \$50,000 and \$70,000 would be required for a condominium with an average value of \$200,000.

Annual income of \$50,000 would be needed for a \$1,250 per month rental rate (the fair market rent for a two to three-bedroom unit) to be considered “affordable”, while annual income of \$36,000 would be required for a \$900 monthly rent (the fair market rent for a one-bedroom unit in Methuen) in 2005.

Table 20: Affordability of Owning and Renting (2006)

Ownership [1]			Rental [2]	
Unit Value	Low Income	High Income	Monthly Rent	Income
\$100,000	\$25,656	\$36,547	\$625	\$25,000
\$150,000	\$38,484	\$54,821	\$900	\$36,000
\$200,000	\$51,312	\$73,094	\$1,250	\$50,000
\$250,000	\$64,140	\$91,368	\$1,500	\$60,000
\$300,000	\$76,968	\$109,641	\$1,875	\$75,000
\$400,000	\$102,624	\$146,188	\$2,100	\$84,000
\$500,000	\$128,280	\$182,735	\$2,500	\$100,000
\$600,000	\$153,936	\$219,282	\$3,125	\$125,000

[1] Ownership Assumptions	Low	High
Interest Rate	6.0%	8.0%
Term	30	30
Downpayment	20%	5%
RE TAXES/\$1,000	\$9.28	\$9.28
Insurance /\$1,000	\$5	\$5
Cost as % of Income	28%	28%

[2] Rental Cost factored at 30% of gross income

Source: RKG Associates, Inc,

Therefore, it is likely that the 35% of renter households and 24% of owner households identified as paying more than 30% of their income for housing in 2000 would be greater in 2005, since incomes

have not kept pace with appreciating rents or values. It is likely that between 30% and 35% of Methuen households would be incurring housing costs in excess of 30% in 2005. This would equate to between 5,000 and 5,900 households.

Subsidized Housing

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains documentation of individual communities' progress toward meeting the State's 10% goal for the provision of affordable housing under M.G.L. Chapter 40B⁷. Although there are units in Methuen which are affordable without subsidies, only the units which receive direct subsidies from the State or Federal government are counted toward the 10% goal. According to DHCD and the City of Methuen Community Development Department, Methuen has 1,546 Chapter 40B units, representing 9.2% of the city's total housing stock.

Table 21 presents comparative information for Methuen and selected nearby communities relative to the number of existing affordable units and the progress each community has made toward reaching the State's 10% housing goal. Among the six nearby communities, two (Lawrence and Andover) have attained the 10% goal. According to DHCD, Methuen has over 90% of the required affordable units it needs to meet the 10% threshold. The towns of North Andover and Dracut have about half of the required units to meet the 10% threshold. The Town of Boxford has very little affordable housing.

Table 21: Chapter 40B Inventory: 2006/2007

Community	2000 Census Year Round Units	Chapter 40B Units	% Subsidized
Lawrence	25,540	3,775	14.8%
Andover	11,513	1,363	11.8%
<i>Methuen</i>	<i>16,848</i>	<i>1,546</i>	<i>9.2%</i>
Haverhill	23,675	2,047	8.6%
North Andover	9,896	584	5.9%
Dracut	10,597	586	5.5%
Boxford	2,602	19	0.7%

Sources: Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development & Community Development Department

Based on the above information, Methuen is approximately 139 units short of the required 1,685 units needed to satisfy the 10% goal, based on the existing housing supply in the year 2000. With future residential growth, the ratio of subsidized units needed will increase as well⁸.

⁷ A unit qualifies as affordable under Chapter 40B if it has (a) received a subsidy approval from the federal or state government, (b) the subsidy enables the unit to be affordable to people or families with incomes no higher than 80% of the PMSA, MSA or County in which the unit is located, and (c) restrictions or resale controls guarantee preservation of the subsidy beyond the minimum established time requirements.

⁸ Under current 40B regulations, all of the units constructed in mixed-income apartment (not condominium) housing developments qualify towards the 10% limit. Thus, for example, for a 200 unit rental project with 25% of units qualifying as affordable, all 200 units would count towards the 10% goal, not just the 50 affordable units.

Development Constraints/Carrying Capacity for Affordable Housing

Conditions that constrain development include local regulations, municipal services and infrastructure, and physical or topographic limitations. In terms of land use regulations, the City made minor revisions to its Zoning Ordinance in October 2006 in order to achieve the desired land use patterns. Revising the Ordinance will likely be required in the future in order to dovetail with this master plan. Other potential constraint areas include:

- Drinking Water Supplies – Methuen's water distribution system consists of a water treatment division, a water registrar, and a maintenance division in order to serve its 13,600 customers and 216 miles of pipe. Currently, the treatment plant has a capacity of 10 million gallons per day with current demand varying between 5 and 9 million gallons per day. There is currently a two to three year plan in place to increase capacity to 15 million gallons per day.
- Municipal Sewerage – Methuen is a member of the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District which includes Lawrence, Andover, North Andover and Salem, New Hampshire. The current system treats 30 million gallons of wastewater per day, and has a capacity to treat up to 52 million gallons of wastewater per day. Dracut is seeking to join the GLSD through Methuen.
- Police and Fire Services – The Methuen Fire Department is housed in four stations and consists of ninety-seven paid staff. The Police Department consists of 106 officers and support staff contained in the Quinn Building. Due to aging facilities with both the Police and Fire Departments, it is anticipated that new public safety facility will be needed to house both departments.
- School Department - Increasing enrollments are placing pressure on the existing elementary schools. While some of the students are not Methuen residents and are being asked to withdraw, population and demographic projections clearly indicate that a large percentage of the increasing students are and will continue to be Methuen residents. The School Department will have to review a number of options in order to increase capacity including:
 - build a new K- Grade 8 school
 - reorganize the existing schools so that there is a city-wide K- Grade 1 accommodated somewhere (if the option of clustering just Kindergartners is chosen, this has the advantage of being low cost because there are far fewer requirements, e.g. no need for a library, gym or auditorium and only need small cafeteria), freeing up the space taken up for these grades for Grades 2 - 8 at each of the four existing schools
 - re-introduce a middle school into the system taking grades 6-8 out of the four existing schools and building a new school elsewhere or
 - add portable classrooms on the sites of the existing schools (not all sites have the capacity accommodate portables)
- Available Land - Methuen is a mature city with only limited amounts of land available for future development. As shown in the Land Use Chapter of this plan, about 40% of Methuen's land base is undeveloped equating to about 5,400 acres. Although some of this land could be used for new development, portions may not be viable due to development constraints, such as wetlands, steep slopes, and unsuitable soil conditions. Also, some of this open land is protected to various degrees, from development by legal restrictions, such as conservation easements.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following points summarize the relevant population and housing findings:

- Methuen had an estimated 2005 population base of 45,476 which represents an increase of 1,687 (3.9%) since 2000;
- Between 2000 and 2005, the 55 to 64 (1,022 residents or 29%), 15 to 24 (816 residents or 17%), and 45 to 54 (649 residents or 11%) age cohorts experienced the largest growth;
- Median household income in Methuen in 2005 was estimated at \$54,035 representing an increase of 8.9% since 2000 - approximately half of the growth in the Consumer Price Index (18%) over the same time period indicating that household incomes in Methuen were not keeping pace with the rate of inflation;
- Methuen had a housing unit base of 16,885 in 2000, of which 16,532 were occupied. Of the occupied housing base, 72% (11,881) were owner-occupied units;
- Between 2000 and 2005 building permits were issued for 1,089 housing units bringing the current estimated total base to 17,974 units. Approximately 48% (517 units) of the units permitted were single family structures, with another 48% (518 units) being multi-family units and 2% (54 units) duplexes;
- Approximately 2,560 households in 2005 would be income eligible for rental assistance based on the income criteria of the Lawrence PMSA representing about 15% of all households in Methuen. An estimated 2,050 households would qualify for family, or non-elderly (less than 65 years) housing, while the remaining 510 would be elderly (65 years or older);
- Assuming an average single-family home value of \$300,000, household income would have to be in the \$80,000 to \$100,000 range to support this level, depending on the downpayment and typical financial criteria – \$26,000 to \$46,000 more than the 2005 median household income estimate in Methuen.
- Based on the findings presented in this chapter, a number of conclusions can be drawn relative to Methuen's housing position:
 - Based on the number of households most in need of housing (estimated at 1,310 or 7.9% of Methuen's household base), Methuen's supply of affordable housing (at 1,546 units) is meeting the need;
 - The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains documentation of individual communities' progress toward meeting the State's 10% goal for the provision of affordable housing under M.G.L. Chapter 40B. Although there are units in Methuen which are affordable without subsidies, only the units which receive direct subsidies from the State or Federal government are counted toward the 10% goal. According to DHCD and the City of Methuen Community Development Department, Methuen has 1,546 Chapter 40B units, representing 9.2% of the city's total housing stock. By the State government's measure, the City is close, but is not meeting its share of affordable housing and should add another 139 units to meet the 10% goal. It should be noted that this 10% target and/or the base of housing units (currently measured by the number of year round units in 2000) may change in the future;
- Based on the estimated 2,560 households that could be income eligible for housing rental assistance, at least another 1,000 units may need to be added Methuen's housing stock in order to satisfy demand.

HOUSING GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal H-1: Work to increase Methuen's inventory of affordable housing units which qualify under Chapter 40B.

Strategies:

H-1.1: Evaluate the feasibility of encouraging (through the negotiation of a development agreement) the use of any undeveloped parcels in Methuen as part of an affordable housing strategy.

The location of a moderate density, mixed-income, multi-family housing development with a high percentage of affordable apartment units will be an important strategy to help achieve the 10% Chapter 40B mandate (equating to the addition of another 139 units to the City's current affordable inventory). The City should consider actively working with qualified owners and/or developers of any available large sites for mixed-income (primarily) rental residential developments geared primarily towards low income families (non-elderly residents) and secondarily towards elderly residents.

In terms of an initial approach, the City should initiate one or all of the following:

- Open discussions with current property owner(s) relative to their future intentions for the site;
- Secure the services of a professional engineer or surveyor to survey sites to determine the amount of developable acreage;
- Secure the services of real estate, development and design consultants as needed to determine the fair market value and development potential of sites and provide advice to the City on suitable development options; and,
- If agreeable to the owner(s) and assuming a significant portion of sites could be used for development, negotiate and/or facilitate a development agreement for a mixed-income or affordable residential development.

H-1.2 Mandate affordable housing as part of new residential developments

One way of reinforcing the City's commitment to affordable housing (and achievement of the 10% affordable housing goal) is to require that new residential subdivisions, particularly those located in rural areas, contribute to the provision of affordable housing. The suggested system would require that new market-rate subdivisions or multi-family projects set aside a number of lots or units that meet the Commonwealth's definition of "affordable housing."

The proposed system is as follows:

Total Lots/Units	Required Set Aside for Affordable
0-4	1
5-14	2
15-24	3
25-34	4
35-44	5
45+	6

All lots or units set aside for affordable housing shall be maintained as affordable housing for at least twenty-five (25) years after their initial occupation date. If such a unit is sold within that twenty-five year period, it must be sold at a price that meets the Commonwealth's definition of affordable housing. The only type of development that would be exempted from this mandate would be assisted, supportive or other special needs housing.

H-1.3: Create an Affordable Housing Plan in accordance with the Planned Production regulation promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

Based on the information and data contained within the housing chapter of this master plan, as well as previous planning efforts (such as the City's Community Development Plan), the City should develop and adopt an Affordable Housing Plan for approval by DHCD. The information within an Affordable Housing Plan is contained within this chapter. The Affordable Housing Plan should contain three sections:

- 1) Comprehensive housing needs assessment;
- 2) Affordable housing goals and strategies; and,
- 3) Description of use restrictions.

Once the plan has been developed and adopted, the City can request certification of compliance from DHCD by demonstrating an increase of units that are eligible to be counted on the State Subsidized Housing Inventory of at least 126 units – equating to 0.75% of Methuen's year round housing units (based on the 2000 Census) pursuant to the plan. However, due to the City needing 139 units in order to satisfy the Commonwealth's 10% affordable threshold, the City should strive to prepare a plan to develop at least 139 units comprised of owner and renter units primarily geared toward non-elderly low income households. It is likely that this goal could be achieved in one year. In a certified community, decisions by the Zoning Board of Appeals, to deny or approve comprehensive permit applications will be deemed "consistent with local needs" (meaning that the decision will likely be upheld by the Housing Appeals Committee).

The goal of the affordable housing plan should be to develop 139 affordable housing units over the next year which will bring the total number of affordable units in Methuen to 1,685 units equaling 10% of Methuen's (2000) year-round housing stock.

In order to develop 139 affordable units over the next year, the City should implement the following strategies;

- 1) Work with private developers and land owners to develop a "friendly" Chapter 40-B affordable housing development of at least 120 units comprised of rental units with a mixture of one to three bedrooms (see Strategy H-1.1).
- 2) Revise the City's land use regulations to require that new residential subdivisions, particularly those located in rural areas, contribute to the provision of affordable housing (see Strategy H-1.2). It is anticipated that up to ten units of affordable housing could be added to the City's supply using this method.
- 3) As per Strategy H-3.1, the City should amend the current accessory apartment regulation to encourage the development of affordable accessory units. In order to encourage

affordable accessory units, the City may want to offer incentives to property owners interested in developing these units. Incentives might include:

- Reduction or elimination of building permit and/or associated development fees; and/or,
- Reduced assessment or property tax abatement (for a limited period) for accessory dwelling units.

All City-owned undeveloped parcels of ten or more acres should be identified and considered (see Strategy H-2.1) for the construction of an affordable housing development. The most preferable location would be nearest to the retail and service amenities of the downtown unto which the City's land use regulations may need to be amended to encourage mixed-uses including residential uses.

Other sites⁹ may include:

- Copley Drive;
- Sable Run Lane;
- Olympic Village Drive;
- Pelham Street; and,
- Danton Drive.

Any new affordable units created in Methuen will require a description statement of the long-term use restrictions that will be placed on the affordable units. Depending on the types of units created, such a statement may read:

Affordable units must serve households with incomes no greater than 80% of the area median income in which the unit is located. Units must be subject to use restrictions or re-sale controls to preserve their affordability as follows:

- *For new construction, a minimum of thirty years or longer from the date of subsidy approval or commencement of construction;*
- *For rehabilitation, for a minimum of fifteen years or longer from the date of subsidy approval or completion of the rehabilitation;*
- *Alternatively, a term of perpetuity is encouraged for both new construction and rehabilitation.*

Units are or will be subject to an executed Regulatory Agreement between the developer and the subsidizing agency unless the subsidy program does not require such an agreement. The units have been, or will be marketed in a fair and open process consistent with state and federal fair housing laws.

Goal H-2: Identify both municipally and privately owned undeveloped and underdeveloped parcels which could be considered suitable sites for the development of affordable residential units.

Strategies:

H-2.1: Make appropriate use of municipally-owned land for affordable housing

⁹ It should be noted that any or all of the sites listed will need to be assessed for potential development constraints and potentially be rezoned for multi-family residential development.

Two barriers to increasing the supply of affordable housing in Methuen are the escalating value and limited supply of developable land. To reinforce its commitment to providing housing opportunities for individuals and families of all ages, incomes and needs, the City can make use of public land to address the affordable housing situation. As of 2006, the City and Methuen Housing Authority owned 458 acres of undeveloped land on 201 parcels. Some of these parcels may have development restrictions, however, with an average parcel size of 2.2 acres, there may be some that are suitable for development of affordable units. Ideally, a parcel of ten-acres or more may be most suited for affordable housing, of which the City currently has thirty parcels (see Figure 3). The City should develop a strategic plan to identify and develop the most suitable municipally-owned parcels for affordable housing. Particular emphasis should be placed identifying parcels located near the downtown, near existing water and sewer infrastructure, or along public transportation corridors. Once a suitable site is identified, the City could initiate an RFP process to solicit development concepts for an affordable housing development on the site and eventually transfer the site to a prospective affordable housing developer.

Another issue to consider is the use of future tax-acquired property for affordable housing. If such properties already contain suitable dwelling units, they could be transferred at reduced costs to prospective homeowners meeting income qualifications. If tax-acquired lots are unimproved, the City could team with private or non-profit homebuilders to build affordable units on them.

If there are suitable city sites for affordable housing development that have infrastructure needs, the City could consider designating an Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) district.

Figure 3: Municipally-Owned Undeveloped Parcels of Ten Acres or More

Goal H-3: Encourage a mix of housing types, densities, prices, and ownership patterns that help to maintain a stable demographic base within the City and serve the needs of low and moderate income households, while preserving those characteristics of the community that are desired by most residents.

Strategies:

H-3.1 Expand Opportunities for Affordable Accessory Dwelling Units

A common way to increase the supply of affordable housing in rural areas (and work towards meeting the 10% affordable housing goal) is to ease the standards for accessory dwelling units. Doing this allows for the creation of additional dwelling units without developing new lots and often, without even altering the exterior of existing homes. Currently the City's accessory apartment regulation reads as follows:

The conversion, renovation or addition of not more than seven hundred (700) square feet in an existing dwelling for use as a separate housekeeping unit for a member of the family is allowable by special permit in certain districts provided:

1. *Such apartment does not have a separate outdoor entrance, except as may be required by the Building Commissioner for safety;*
2. *No such apartment shall be for rental; and*
3. *An accessory apartment, on original construction may be allowed by Special Permit on the same terms and conditions as listed above, excluding those references to existing dwelling.*

The above two stipulations are subject to inspection by the Building Commissioner on a yearly basis.

The City should consider amending the current accessory apartment regulation with the following proposed changes:

- Removing the restriction that limits accessory apartments to immediate relatives;
- Removing the restriction that restricts rental accessory units;
- Increasing the maximum unit size to 800 square feet or 40% of the primary residence's floor area;
- Requiring that accessory units meet the Commonwealth's definition of affordable housing units;
- Subjecting the addition of accessory dwellings to site plan review to ensure that they are respectful of the surrounding area.

According to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD) *Local Initiative Program Guidelines – November 2006*, in order to have accessory units added to Methuen's Subsidized Housing Inventory, the units must receive Local Action Unit (LAU) approval and meet the following basic requirements:

- Units require municipal approval;
- Units must be rented on a fair and open basis and will be subject to an affirmative fair marketing plan approved by DHCD;
- Units must be affordable to households at or below 80% of the area median income (up to \$40,600 for a one-person household in Methuen);
- Units must have their affordability secured by deeded use restrictions (between fifteen and thirty years) approved by DHCD.

Although the application process for municipalities interested in adding accessory units to their subsidized inventory is available in the DHCD's *Local Initiative Program Guidelines*, the following two points are required:

- Application for approval of accessory apartments by the municipality (available from DHCD) including the development of an affirmative fair marketing plan; and,
- Enact a zoning bylaw by the municipality that allows accessory apartments for low and moderate income households.

The benefits associated with increasing the affordable housing supply with accessory dwelling units include:

- Creation of housing units on existing improved parcels without the need to develop vacant land (smart growth);
- Units are more likely to be respectful of a neighborhood or surrounding area's design characteristics and scale;
- Added income stream to homeowners; and,
- Increase the supply of affordable units to meet the City's 10% threshold.

The challenges associated with increasing the affordable housing supply with accessory dwelling units include:

- Added administrative and enforcement burden for municipal officials; and,
- Increased financial risk (from deeded use restrictions), time investment and administrative burden for accessory unit owners.

In order to encourage affordable accessory units, the City may want to offer incentives to property owners interested in developing these units. Incentives might include:

- Reduction or elimination of building permit and/or associated development fees; and/or,
- Reduced assessment or property tax abatement (for a limited period) for accessory dwelling units.

The City's Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) currently approves about 9 permits for accessory apartments annually. Based on the recommended changes, it may be possible to increase the City's affordable housing inventory by up to ten units per year with qualified accessory apartments.

H-3.2 Explore the creation of 40R districts wherever affordable housing needs can be fulfilled.

MA Chapter 40R, also known as "Smart Growth Zoning," provides an avenue whereby Methuen can receive state funds if it encourages the development of housing at particular densities.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

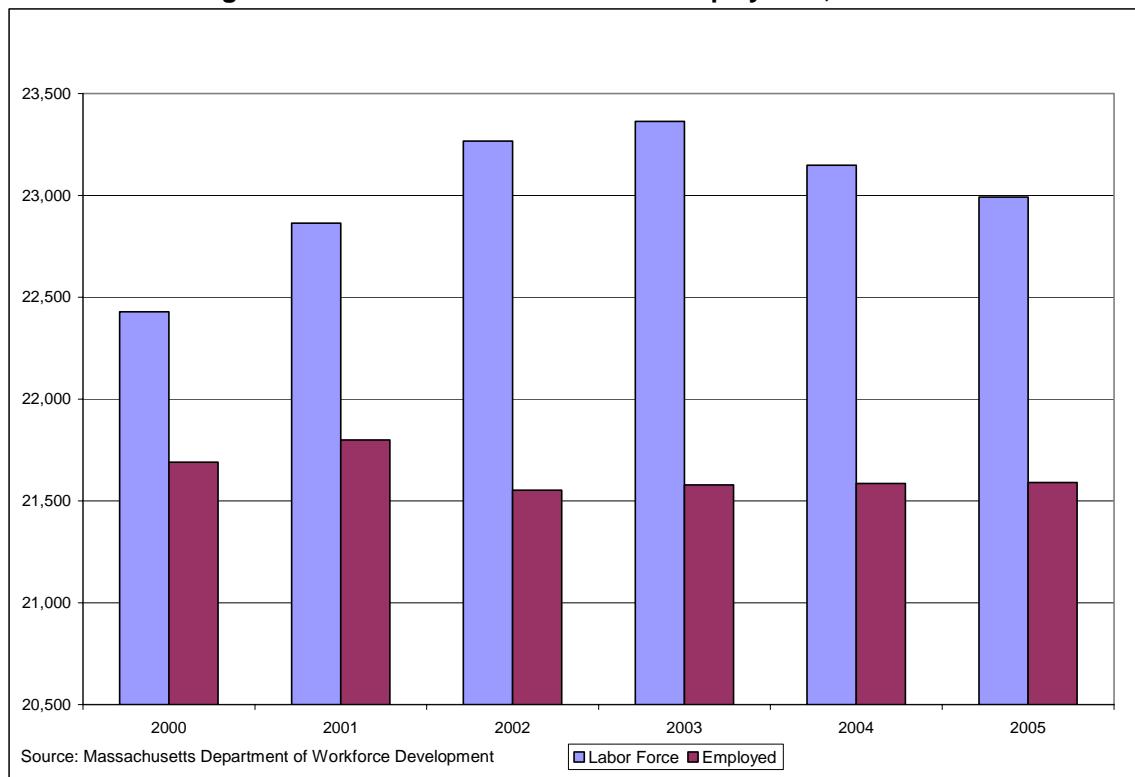
Attracting and retaining economic development within the City is a strong strategy to provide the City with additional fiscal resources without increasing residential taxes. The City's efforts to maximize the use of limited land area to support employment and taxable value while achieving a balance between residential costs and the taxable value of commercial and industrial uses will be examined herein.

The following section summarizes economic and fiscal characteristics of the City of Methuen and represents an update of data and information contained within the *City of Methuen Community Development Plan (2004)*. The information provided includes labor force and employment trends, characteristics of the local and regional economies and a profile of existing non-residential land uses in the town. The majority of this information is taken from published secondary sources, including the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training, the 2000 U.S. Census and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.

LABOR FORCE AND UNEMPLOYMENT

Growth in the size of the labor force is an important indicator of job creation needs in a community. Methuen had a labor force of 22,992 in 2005 representing an increase of 564 workers (2.5%) between 2000 and 2005. Over the same time period the number of employed residents (resident employment) declined modestly by 99 (less than one percent) from 2000 to a 2005 base of 21,690. Figure 4 shows labor force and employment trends in Methuen between 2000 and 2005.

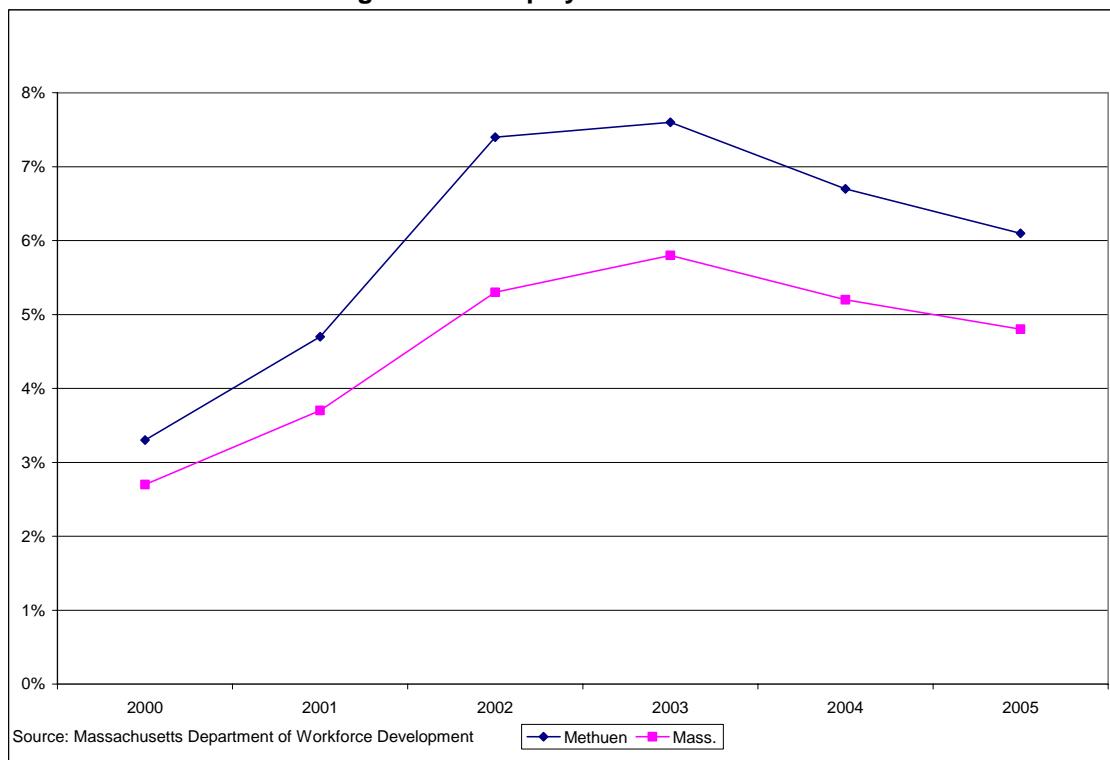
Figure 4: Labor Force and Resident Unemployment, 2000-2005



Overall, the total number of jobs available within the City are not sufficient in number to employ the number of workers that reside in Methuen. This correlates with Methuen's primarily residential character. In 2005, Methuen contained 0.64 jobs for every worker, a factor which has remained unchanged over the past fifteen years.

Figure 5 shows that the local and statewide unemployment rates peaked in 2003 and have modestly declined through 2005. Since 2000, Methuen's unemployment rate has been averaging 1.4 percentage points above the statewide. The most recent resident unemployment rate in Methuen (5.9%) was above the statewide average (4.7%) in August of 2006.

Figure 5: Unemployment Rate Trends



INDUSTRY EMPLOYMENT AND WAGES

In terms of the total regional employment base, Methuen is a significant employment center within the Region (Lawrence Metropolitan Statistical Area – MSA) containing about 15% percent of the total regional employment in 2004. This percentage of regional employment represents an increase of over two percentage points since 2001. The private employment base in Methuen in 2004 was 13,279 jobs representing an increase of 528 jobs (4.1%) since 2001. The increase in local jobs was opposite to the regional trend of a decrease of about 9,500 jobs (9.3%) over the same time period. Although Methuen has experienced solid job growth between 2000 and 2004, Methuen remains a net exporter of employees to other regional communities.

Employment change by industry group for Methuen and the Region is presented in Table 22. Methuen's job losses between 2001 and 2004 were concentrated in the manufacturing (224 jobs) and administrative and waste service (189 jobs) sectors. These job losses were offset by the creation of jobs primarily in the accommodation and food service (324 jobs), health care and social assistance (98 jobs), and professional and technical service (98 jobs) sectors. Over the same period, the Region experienced

employment gains in only half of its sectors with health care and social assistance (1,349 jobs), and professional and technical service (708 jobs) sectors experiencing the most growth.

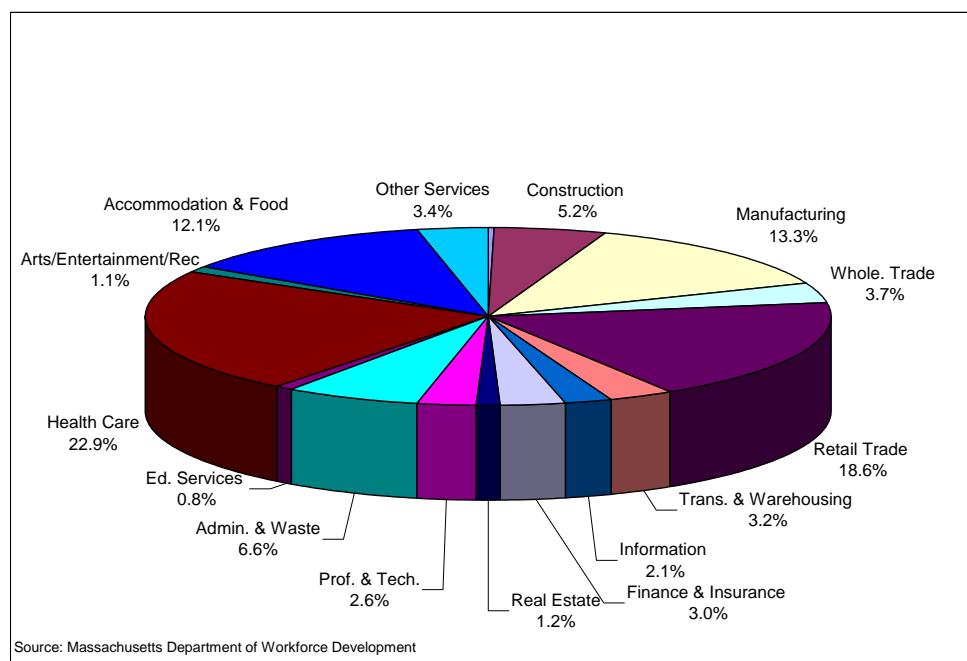
Table 22: At-Place Employment Trends by Industry: 2001-2004

	Methuen				Lawrence MSA			
	2001	2004	# Change	% Change	2001	2004	# Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	59	44	-15	-25.4%	173	98	-75	-43.4%
Construction	665	686	21	3.2%	4,354	4,181	-173	-4.0%
Manufacturing	1,981	1,757	-224	-11.3%	30,515	22,032	-8,483	-27.8%
Wholesale Trade	470	486	16	3.4%	4,126	4,110	-16	-0.4%
Retail Trade	2,374	2,452	78	3.3%	9,225	8,649	-576	-6.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	383	418	35	9.1%	1,385	1,241	-144	-10.4%
Information	211	277	66	31.3%	4,530	3,263	-1,267	-28.0%
Finance and Insurance	338	399	61	18.0%	2,529	2,840	311	12.3%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	131	163	32	24.4%	1,029	1,285	256	24.9%
Professional and Technical Services	245	343	98	40.0%	6,568	7,276	708	10.8%
Administrative and Waste Services	1,054	865	-189	-17.9%	7,307	6,119	-1,188	-16.3%
Educational Services	73	103	30	41.1%	1,840	1,920	80	4.3%
Health Care and Social Assistance	2,922	3,020	98	3.4%	14,413	15,762	1,349	9.4%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	134	145	11	8.2%	1,191	1,299	108	9.1%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,278	1,602	324	25.4%	6,024	6,476	452	7.5%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	360	446	86	23.9%	3,309	3,390	81	2.4%
Total	12,751	13,279	528	4.1%	101,845	92,349	-9,496	-9.3%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

Figure 6 shows that Methuen's largest employment sectors were the health care and social service (3,020 jobs or 23%), retail trade (2,452 jobs or 19%) and manufacturing (1,757 jobs or 13%) sectors in 2004. Similarly, these three sectors represented the largest components of the Region's employment base. In its three largest employment sectors, the Region had a larger proportion of jobs in the manufacturing (24%) sector, it had a smaller proportion of jobs in the health care and social assistance (17%) and retail (9%) sectors as compared to Methuen.

Figure 6: At Place Employment Distribution 2004



Methuen's business establishment base paid over \$448 million in wages in 2004. The average weekly wage (\$650) paid by Methuen firms was 25% lower than the average wage of the surrounding Region (\$864) but reflected a 5% gain from 2001. Selected industries including construction, information and arts, entertainment and recreation experienced a decline in wages during this period, but gains were evident in the other sectors such as administrative and waste services, agriculture, and health care and social services. A detailed distribution of Methuen's employment and wage base is provided in Table 23.

Table 23: Weekly Wage Trends by Industry: 2001-2004

	Methuen				Lawrence MSA			
	2001	2004	\$ Change	% Change	2001	2004	\$ Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	\$383	\$445	\$62	16.2%	\$330	\$388	\$58	17.6%
Construction	\$934	\$924	-\$10	-1.1%	\$948	\$945	-\$3	-0.3%
Manufacturing	\$885	\$949	\$64	7.2%	\$1,045	\$1,152	\$107	10.2%
Wholesale Trade	\$904	\$916	\$12	1.3%	\$1,258	\$1,248	-\$10	-0.8%
Retail Trade	\$414	\$442	\$28	6.8%	\$480	\$481	\$1	0.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	\$662	\$643	-\$19	-2.9%	\$668	\$663	-\$5	-0.7%
Information	\$1,044	\$841	-\$203	-19.4%	\$1,227	\$1,182	-\$45	-3.7%
Finance and Insurance	\$913	\$912	-\$1	-0.1%	\$945	\$1,091	\$146	15.4%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	\$527	\$565	\$38	7.2%	\$664	\$793	\$129	19.4%
Professional and Technical Services	\$803	\$848	\$45	5.6%	\$1,312	\$1,325	\$13	1.0%
Administrative and Waste Services	\$523	\$622	\$99	18.9%	\$526	\$641	\$115	21.9%
Educational Services	\$232	\$285	\$53	22.8%	\$684	\$721	\$37	5.4%
Health Care and Social Assistance	\$643	\$732	\$89	13.8%	\$614	\$703	\$89	14.5%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	\$463	\$392	-\$71	-15.3%	\$346	\$357	\$11	3.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	\$245	\$263	\$18	7.3%	\$283	\$301	\$18	6.4%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	\$429	\$443	\$14	3.3%	\$425	\$433	\$8	1.9%
Total	\$619	\$650	\$31	5.0%	\$832	\$864	\$32	3.8%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

In 2004, the average weekly wage in the manufacturing sector (\$949) was the highest followed by that in construction (\$924). The average weekly wage in accommodation and food Services (\$263) and education services (\$285) were among the lowest, most likely reflecting the relative number of part time jobs in these sectors.

The average weekly wage of \$650 in Methuen equates to annual earnings of nearly \$34,000. This income would support a monthly rent of \$845 in order to be "affordable", assuming 30% of income for housing costs. However, more than 47% of the private sector employment base in Methuen earn average weekly wages below this benchmark.

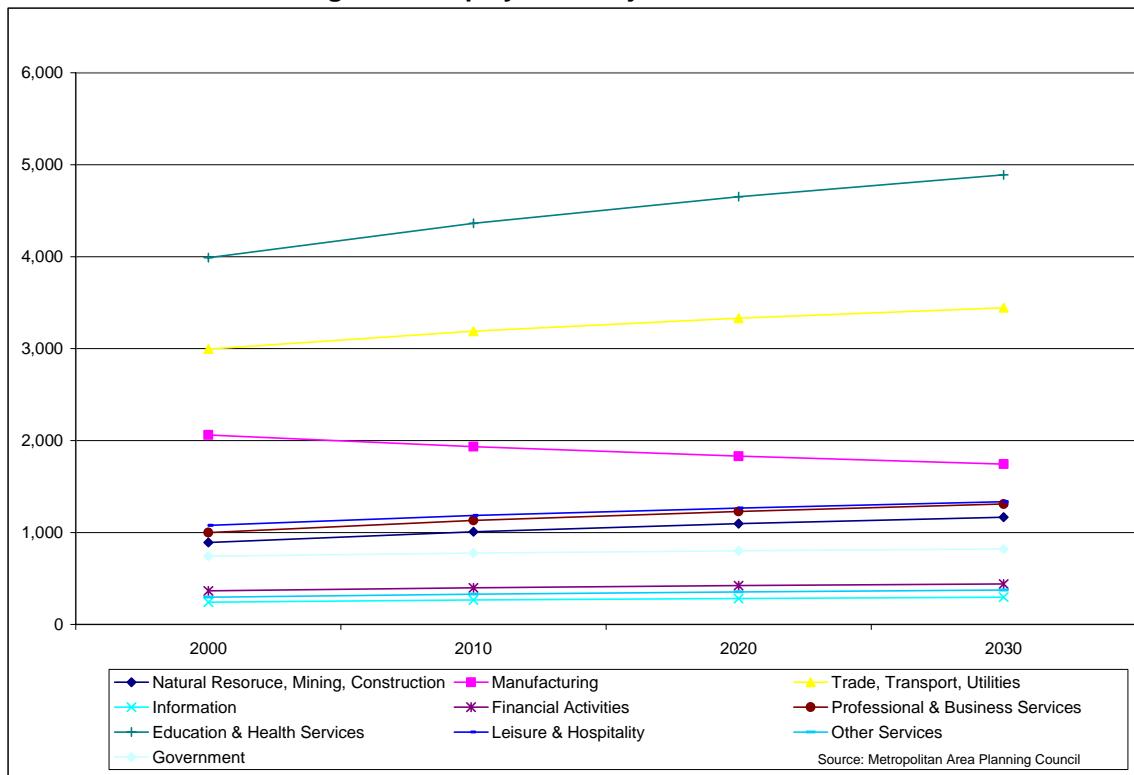
EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS

Methodologies for estimating long-range demand for future commercial, industrial or office space in a community or region generally rely on the use of employment projections. For the purposes of this analysis, employment projections to 2030, prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in January 2006, for the City of Methuen were utilized.

The MAPC projects that the number of jobs in Methuen could increase by approximately 2,161 from 13,663 in 2000 to 15,824 in 2030 – representing an increase of about 16%. Methuen should experience job increases in all sectors with the exception of the manufacturing sector (318 jobs or 15%). The education and health service sector is projected to increase by over 899 jobs representing about 42% of the total jobs added to the community's employment base. However, employment projections such as

these do not take into account community-specific constraints on non-residential development and as a result, may overstate the true growth potential. Figure 7 shows employment projections by industry sector for Methuen to 2030.

Figure 7: Employment Projections 2000-2030



BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS

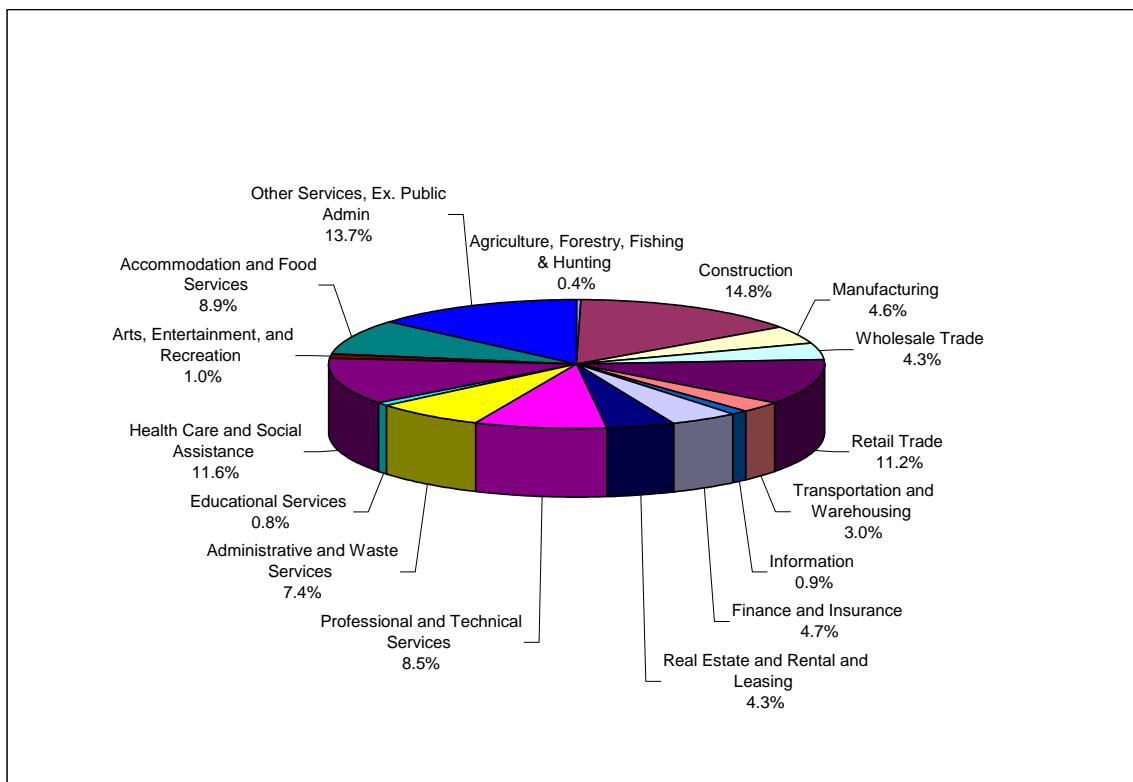
In 2004, Methuen had a business establishment base of 986 firms, an increase of 109 firms (12.4%) since 2001. The percentage growth in Methuen's business establishment base was 1.4 percentage points more than the Region over the same time period. Growth in the number of businesses in the other services, construction, professional services, and retail trade sectors accounted for 67% of this increase. Table 24 shows business establishment growth trends in Methuen and the Region between 2001 and 2004.

Table 24: Business Establishment Trends by Industry: 2001-2004

	Methuen				Lawrence MSA			
	2001	2004	# Change	% Change	2001	2004	# Change	% Change
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	4	4	0	0.0%	23	16	-7	-30.4%
Construction	124	145	21	16.9%	589	708	119	20.2%
Manufacturing	43	45	2	4.7%	422	391	-31	-7.3%
Wholesale Trade	37	42	5	13.5%	371	384	13	3.5%
Retail Trade	100	110	10	10.0%	607	663	56	9.2%
Transportation and Warehousing	24	29	5	20.8%	117	116	-1	-0.9%
Information	7	9	2	28.6%	127	107	-20	-15.7%
Finance and Insurance	43	46	3	7.0%	276	309	33	12.0%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	37	42	5	13.5%	187	229	42	22.5%
Professional and Technical Services	68	84	16	23.5%	774	851	77	9.9%
Administrative and Waste Services	68	73	5	7.4%	353	376	23	6.5%
Educational Services	9	8	-1	-11.1%	65	70	5	7.7%
Health Care and Social Assistance	106	114	8	7.5%	590	635	45	7.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	11	10	-1	-9.1%	70	85	15	21.4%
Accommodation and Food Services	83	87	4	4.8%	416	468	52	12.5%
Other Services, Ex. Public Admin	109	135	26	23.9%	737	948	211	28.6%
Total	877	986	109	12.4%	5,760	6,395	635	11.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Workforce Development

In 2004, manufacturing businesses accounted for less than 5% of the base, while construction firms accounted for 15%, other services 14%, retail businesses accounted for 11%, and health care business accounted for another 12% of the businesses in Methuen (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Distribution of Firms by Sector Methuen 2004

MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Methuen's largest private employer in Methuen is Holy Family Hospital, with approximately 1,800 employees (see Table 25).¹⁰ The City of Methuen, including its school department, employs approximately 1,200 people.¹¹

Table 25: Largest Private Employers

Employer Name	Establishment Type	Estimated # Employees
Holy Family Hospital & Med Ctr	Hospitals	1,000 to 4,999
3M Touch Systems	Computer Supplies & Parts-Manufacturers	250 to 499
Aulson Co	Roofing Contractors	250 to 499
Parlex Corp	Printed & Etched Circuits-Mfrs	350
Shaws Perishable Distribution	Wholesale	250 to 499
General Mills, Inc./Yoplait-Colombo	Food Manufacturer	200 +
Bugaboo Creek Steak House	Restaurants	100 to 249
Collins Building Svc	Laundries-Self Service	100 to 249
DeMoulas Supermarket	Grocers-Retail	100 to 249
Genesys Software Systems Inc	Computer Software	100 to 249
Home Depot	Home Centers	100 to 249
Mariner Healthcare Group Inc	Nursing & Convalescent Homes	100 to 249
Market Basket	Grocers-Retail	100 to 249
Nevins Nursing & Rehab Ctr	Nursing & Convalescent Homes	100 to 249
St Ann's Home	Non-Profit Organizations	100 to 249
Valley Medical Assoc	Physicians & Surgeons	100 to 249

Source: Reference USA

TAX BASE AND TAX RATE

The 2006 total assessed valuation in Methuen was approximately \$4.87 billion. Table 26 summarizes the existing distribution of assessed property valuation among taxable classifications. Based on property assessment data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Methuen's tax base is heavily reliant upon its residential properties with 88% of its total value attributed to residential properties. As shown, commercial, industrial, and personal property valuations contribute 12% to the total valuation.

Table 26: Assessed Value by Class: 2006

Classification	Assessed Value	% of Total
Residential	\$4,267,426,852	88%
Open Space	\$0	0%
Commercial	\$353,520,884	7%
Industrial	\$153,055,220	3%
Personal Property	\$100,709,550	2%
Total	\$4,874,712,506	100%

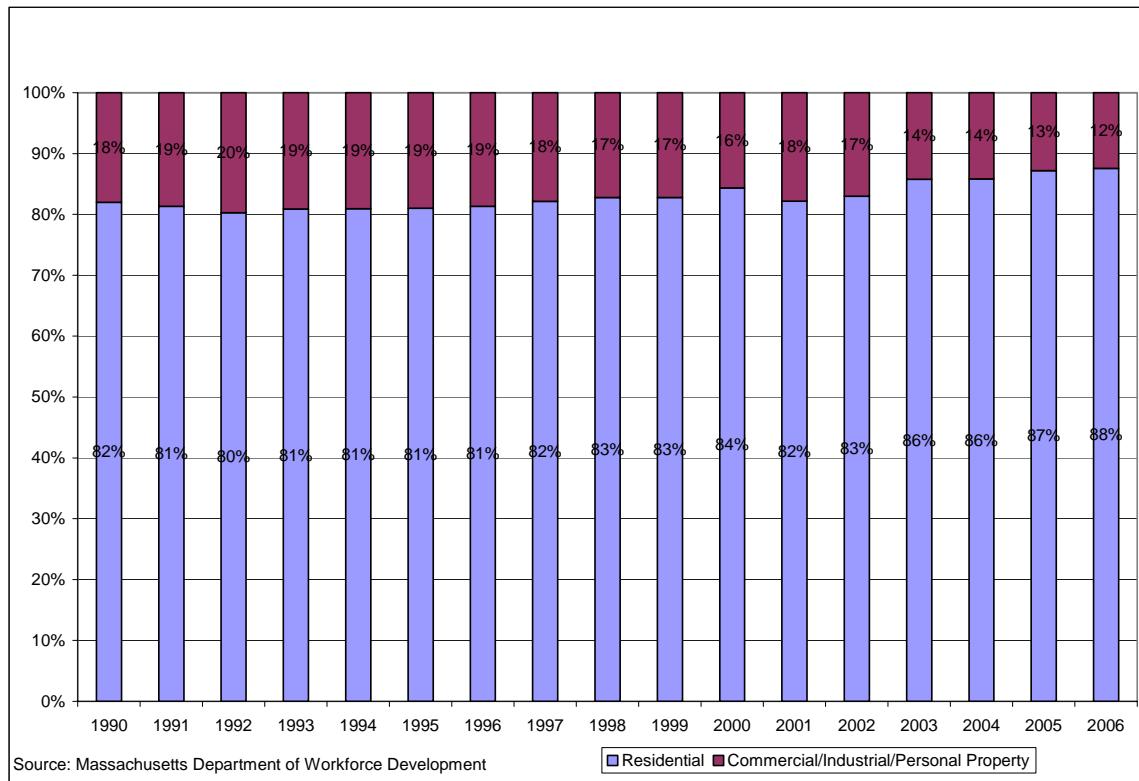
Source: Mass. Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services

¹⁰ Per phone discussion with Human Resource office.

¹¹ Estimate given by Human Resource department, roughly 400 employed with the City, and 800 with its School Department.

As shown in Figure 6, Methuen's residential proportion of its tax base (88%) has increased by six percentage points since 1990 representing an annual increase of about one-third of one percentage point over the time period.

Figure 9: Residential and Non-Residential as a Percent of Total Assessment Base

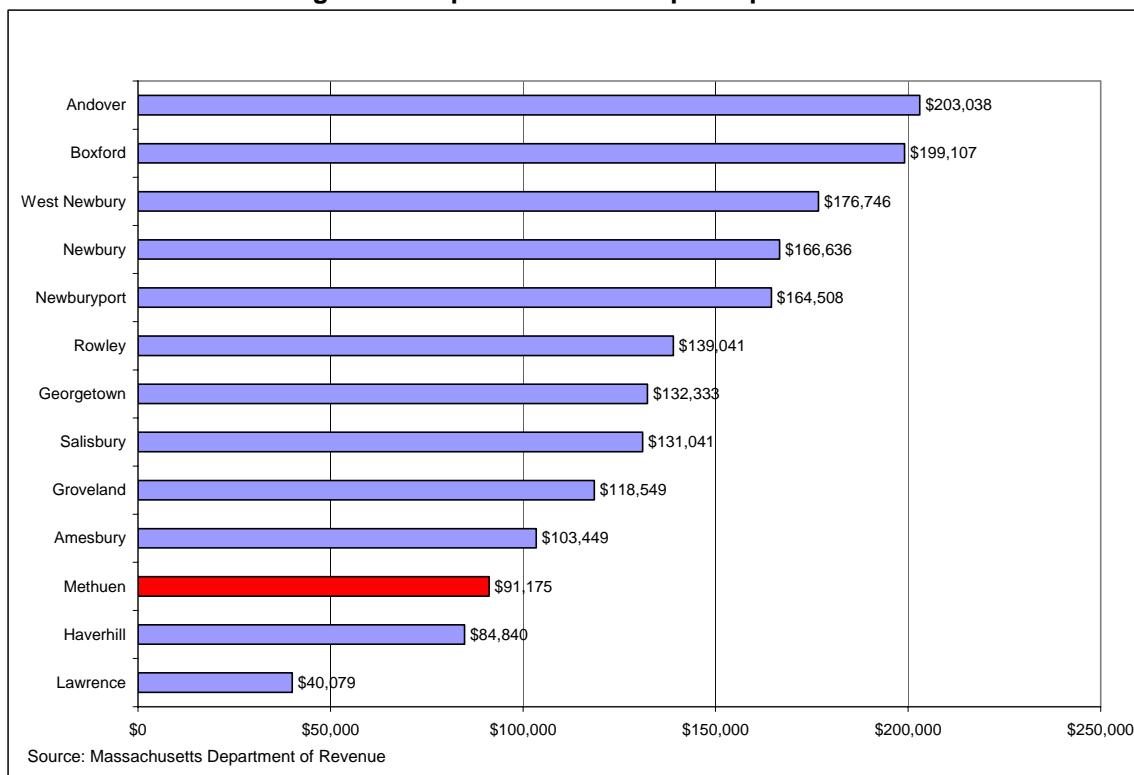


Although the community's equalized valuation (EQV) per capita rank compared to all other Massachusetts communities has risen ninety-nine places from 280th in 2002 to 181st in 2004, it is near the bottom of the list when compared to other communities in the region (see Figure 9). According to the Department of Revenue:

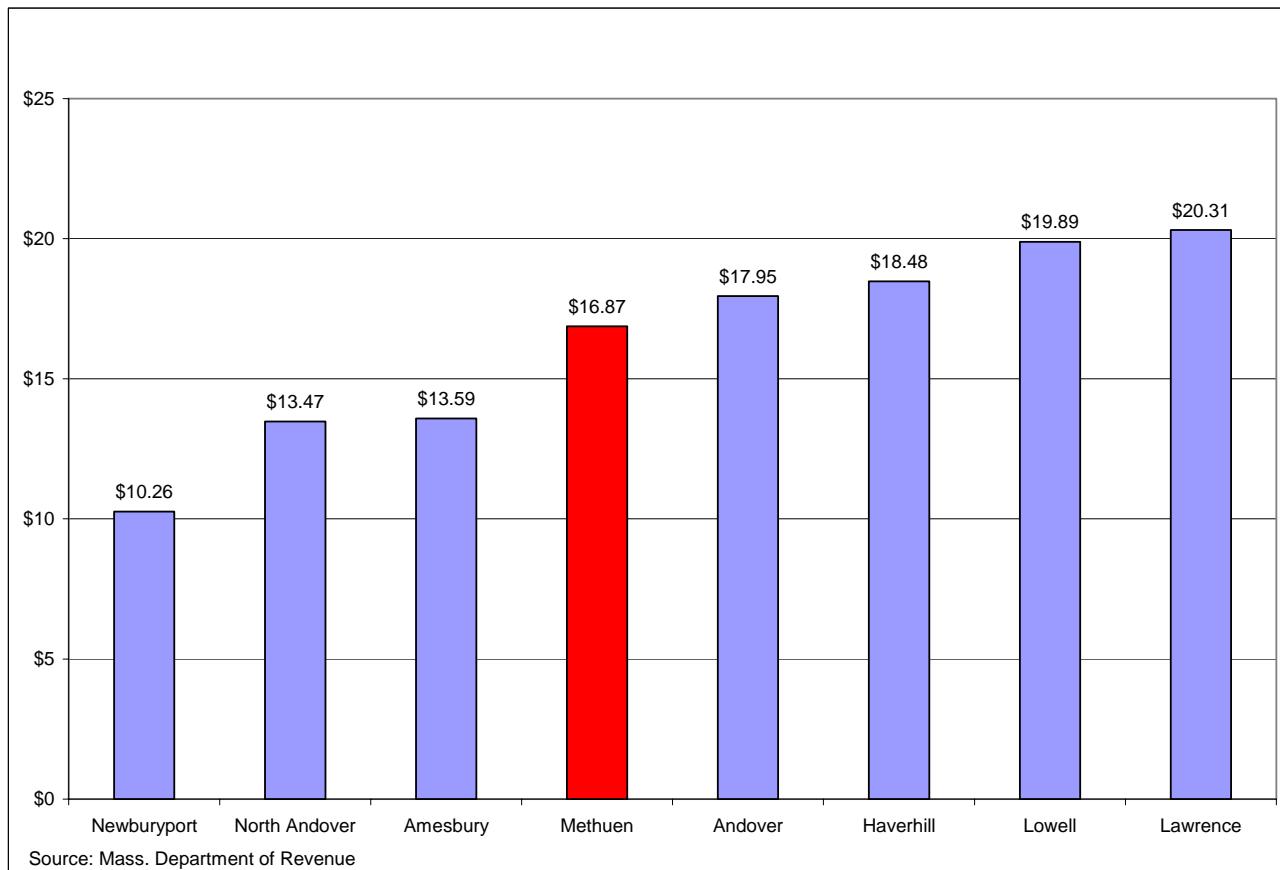
The EQV is a measure of the relative property wealth in each municipality. Its purpose is to allow for comparisons of municipal property values at one point in time, adjusting for differences in local assessing practices and revaluation schedules.

EQVs have historically been used as a variable in the allocation of certain state aid distributions, the calculation of various state and county assessments to municipalities, and the determination of municipal debt limits. EQVs are used in some distribution formulas so that communities with lower property values receive proportionately more aid than those with higher property values. In some assessment formulas they are used so that those with lower property values assume proportionately less of the cost than communities with higher property values.

Comparing EQV's on a per capita basis measures the community's fiscal ability to provide services for its population.

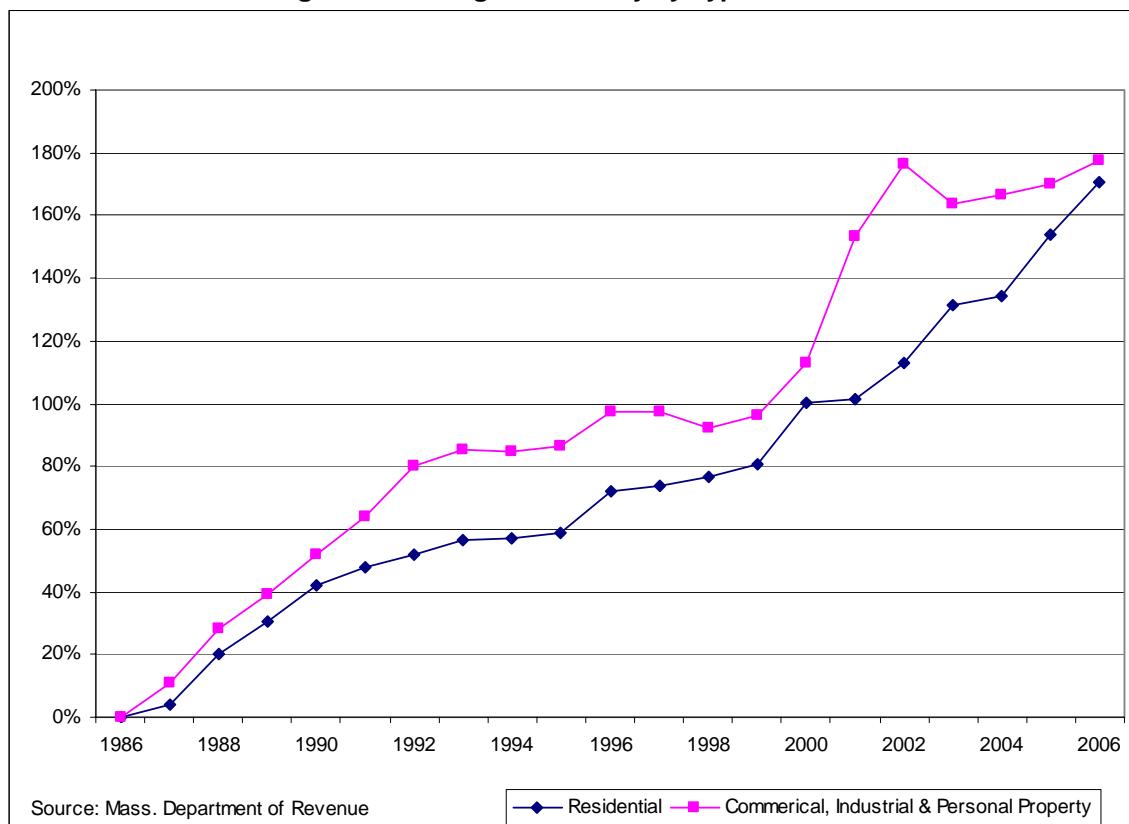
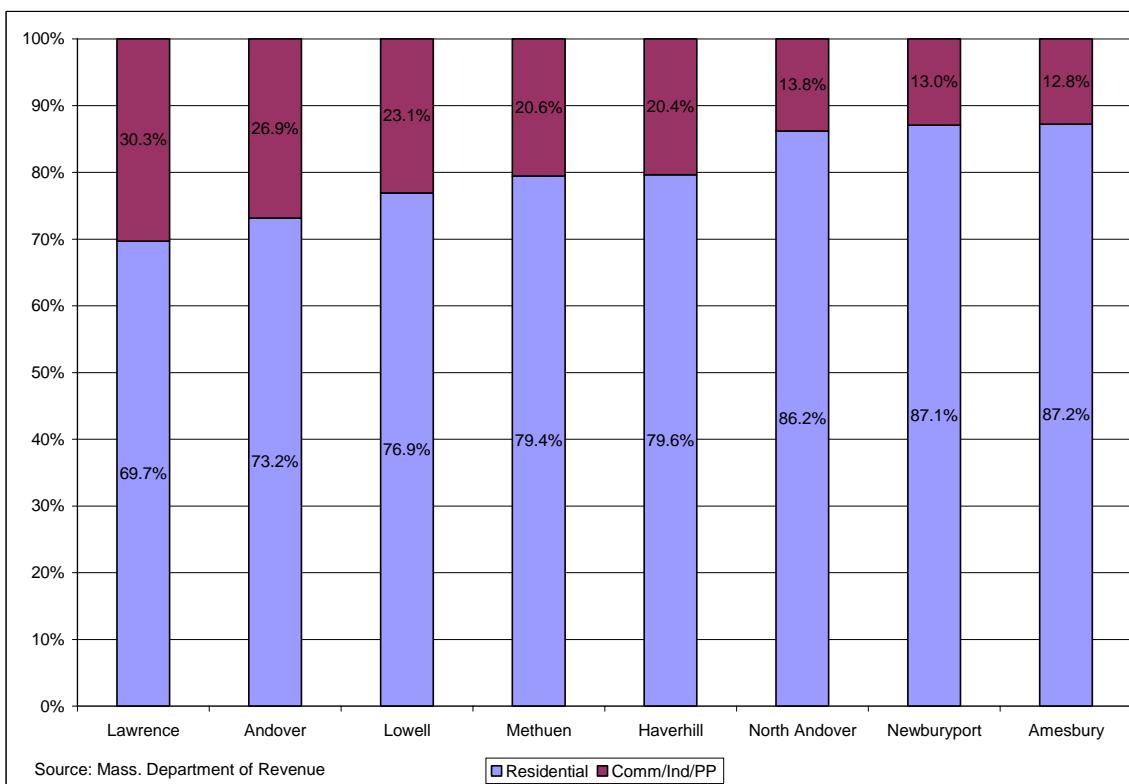
Figure 10: Equalized Valuation per Capita: 2004

Like the nearby communities of Haverhill, Lawrence, and Andover, Methuen has long implemented a split tax rate to help moderate the tax burden placed on residential land uses. For the fiscal year 2006, Methuen's tax rate for commercial, industrial, and personal property was \$16.87 per \$1,000 of valuation, while residential use was taxed at a rate of \$9.28. As shown in Figure 11, Methuen ranks fourth compared to other Merrimack Valley communities relative to commercial, industrial and personal property tax rates.

Figure 11: Commercial, Industrial and Personal Property Tax Rate 2006

As a result of the split property tax rate, in 2006, tax revenue from commercial, industrial and personal property accounted for 20.6% of the City's total tax levy (or about \$10.2 million). This proportion of the total tax levy is the second lowest share of the City's total tax levy since 1986 where commercial, industrial and personal property tax levy has ranged between 20.1% and 24.7% of the total tax revenue stream. The \$10.2 million collected in commercial, industrial and personal property taxes represents an increase of 178% (\$6.6 million) since 1986 – about seven percentage points more than the amount of residential tax levy collected over the same time period. Figure 12 shows the change in the amount of residential and commercial, industrial and personal property tax revenue collected in Methuen since 1986.

As shown in Figure 13, at 20.6%, Methuen ranks in the middle compared to the other Merrimack Valley communities relative to the percentage of tax levy revenue derived from commercial, industrial and personal property, with Lawrence (30.3%), Andover (26.9%) and Lowell (23.1%) having higher proportions.

Figure 12: Change in Tax Levy by Type from 1986**Figure 13: Distribution of Total Tax Levy by Class - 2006**

COMMUTING PATTERNS

According to the 2000 US Census, approximately 81% of Methuen residents commute outside of the community to their place of employment (see Figure 14) with Lawrence and Andover being the two largest destinations for workers. Of those employed within Methuen, 30% also live in the City, with commuters from Lawrence comprising the next highest group (15% - see Figure 15).

Figure 14: Place of Work for Methuen Residents

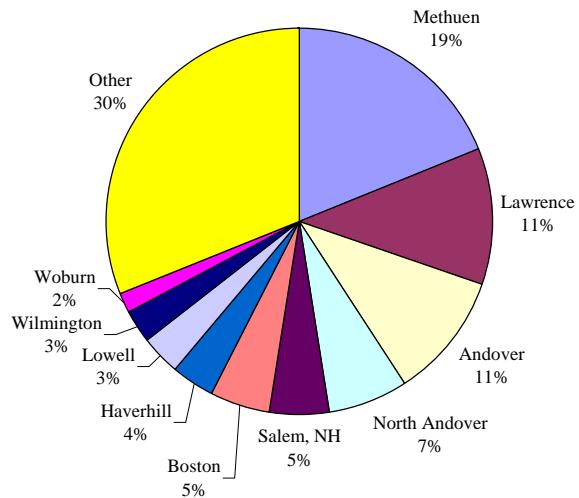
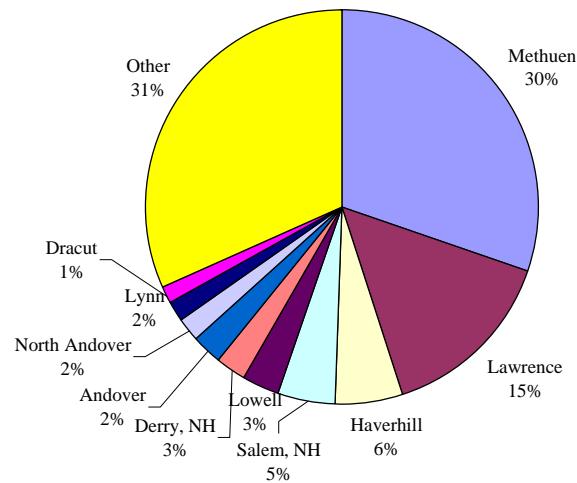


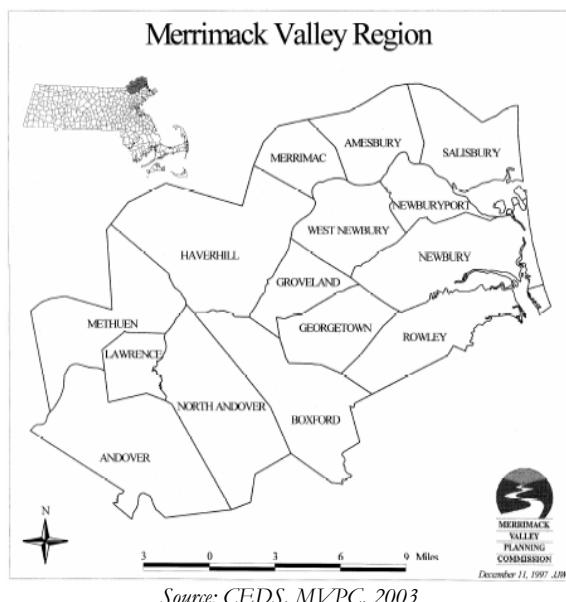
Figure 15: Place of Residence for Those Employed in Methuen



REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING CONTEXT

The issue of economic development is one rooted in a larger context than the bounds of a municipality, particularly for a suburban locale like Methuen. While specific strategies are targeted for the city's action, their relative success frequently, if not always, is tied to numerous factors that influence the region's economy.

Methuen is part of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) regional planning area which includes 15 communities in northern Essex County (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: MVPC Region

In 2006 MVPC completed a *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*. The CEDS, “assesses the region’s economic needs and prescribes a program to strengthen the economic base of the region” As its title indicates, the CEDS incorporates a comprehensive analysis of the area, containing detailed information on the regional economy as well as some Methuen-specific information. The following overview summarizes some of the central themes of the CEDS in order to establish a context for Methuen’s role and performance in the region.

The region’s major economic development assets are the Merrimack River, skilled and employable labor pool, strong surface transportation network and proximity to airports, availability of undeveloped industrial park sites with infrastructure improvements, and old mill buildings that provide incubator space for emerging industries.

The four regional economic development goals outlined in the CEDS are:

- develop a strong, diversified and sustained regional economy;
- create a balance between development and environmental interests;
- improve transportation and communication systems; and
- provide opportunity for economic advancement for low income populations¹²

The Merrimack Valley’s CED Strategy identifies the following as major regional economic concerns:

- Difficulty in assimilating unemployed and underemployed minority groups and recent immigrants into the region’s high skilled growth industries.
- The incidence of excess manufacturing and commercial space in the region’s central business districts, particularly old mill space and the difficulty in marketing such space for new economic activity.

¹² *Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*, p. 81.

- The stabilization and retention of the region's declining non-high-tech manufacturing base.
- The continued need for public investment in aging and new infrastructure to support continued economic growth.
- The short supply of affordable housing for the regional labor force.
- An uneven pattern of growth and development about the region.
- The competitive disadvantage of Massachusetts border communities in attracting new businesses and industry, vis a vis New Hampshire, because of the unsubstantiated perception of the high cost of conducting business in Massachusetts.
- Significant layoffs in the telecommunications sector.¹³

The CEDS defines five key export industry clusters, identified through an industry cluster analysis.¹⁴ Table 27 lists the key export clusters and the industries that comprise that cluster. These industries have a high share of regional employment, a high growth in employment, a high average wage, and a location quotient greater than one (indicating a higher ratio of employment regionally than nationally). Table 28 lists the emerging industries – those that have shown a high growth in share of the regional employment from 1997 to 2000.

Table 27: Export Industry Clusters in the Merrimack Valley

Key Export Clusters	Industries in that Cluster
◆ Computers and Communications Hardware and Defense	◆ Communications Equipment ◆ Electronic Components
◆ Diversified Industrial Support and Defense	◆ Miscellaneous Plastics Products ◆ Industrial Machinery
◆ Software and Communications Services	◆ Computer Programming and Data Processing
◆ Knowledge Creation	◆ Commercial Printing ◆ Research, Development and Testing Services

Table 28: Emerging Industries

◆ Miscellaneous Manufacturing Industries	◆ Furniture and Fixtures
◆ Food and Kindred Products	◆ Rubber and Miscellaneous Plastic Products
◆ Stone, Clay and Glass Products	◆ Printing and Publishing

Four action items for Methuen have been identified within CEDS relative to improving economic opportunities within the city. These include:

Rotary Improvement Project

Overview: A \$26 million construction project to smooth out the bottlenecked and accident-prone I-93-Route 110-Route 113 intersection was included in the 2004 state transportation bond bill. This action has helped spur the process of developing a plan for the rotary. A consultant has been retained to study baseline environmental and traffic impacts relative to this intersection and (as of January 2007) has

¹³ Ibid, p. 40.

¹⁴ *Merrimack Valley's Industry Cluster Analysis* prepared by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission with technical assistance from Professor Charles Tontar, Ph.D. Economics, June 2002.

identified design alternatives. From these design alternatives, a preferred alternative will be selected and analyzed (June 2007).¹⁵

Importance: The Methuen Rotary is one of the most congested and dangerous intersections in the State. It is likely that realignment of this intersection will improve traffic flow in the area and may provide potential economic development opportunities in Methuen and surrounding communities. Improvements are needed not only for safety reasons, but also to free up local traffic, which would make the area more attractive for economic development.

Danton Drive/Pelham Street Roadway Improvements

Overview: In order to provide better access to an underutilized industrial area near I-93, Methuen should seek roadway improvements at the intersection of Danton Drive and Pelham Street. In addition, the City is working with MassHighway to provide a dedicated right-hand turning lane to allow eastbound Pelham Street traffic to directly enter the on-ramp for I-93 without having to approach the existing traffic signal.

Importance: These projects would increase business and employment opportunities for Methuen and allow for greater ease of access and safety at the entrance to I-93.

Downtown Development Near the Spicket River

Overview: The City recently completed a Downtown Development Plan that envisions redevelopment of this area, spurred by public investment that takes advantage of the downtown's historic architecture and the beauty and recreational potential of the Spicket River. The plan includes an analysis of market conditions, and concludes that the town center has a comparatively strong core of services, particularly "high end" services such as business, professional, legal, and FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate).

Importance: Methuen's town center has the potential to support additional businesses and pedestrian activity, which would increase employment opportunities. In addition, the plan promotes infill development and urban revitalization, and has strong local support.

Extension of Sewer Infrastructure in Griffin Brook Industrial Park and Old Ferry Industrial Park

Overview: Griffin Brook Park is located between Routes 110 and 113 approximately one mile west of I-93, while Old Ferry Industrial Park is located off of Route 110 near the City's eastern border with Haverhill. Both are conveniently located near major roadways and have the potential to attract additional employers. Furthermore, there is potential for existing industrial park users to expand (Griffin Brook) their business operations, as well as provide opportunities and increase the potential for currently underutilized sites (Old Ferry). Methuen's Community Development Plan highlights the extension of public sewer as the biggest need in attracting additional private investment.

Importance: Methuen's industrial parks have enormous potential to create a wide range of new jobs for the region.

¹⁵ Information on the study is available at www.methuenrotarystudy.org.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following points summarize the relevant economic development findings:

- The private employment base in Methuen in 2004 was 13,279 jobs representing an increase of 528 jobs (4.1%) since 2001. The increase in local jobs was opposite to the regional trend of a decrease of about 9,500 jobs (9.3%) over the same time period;
- Methuen's largest employment sectors were the health care and social service (3,020 jobs or 23%), retail trade (2,452 jobs or 19%) and manufacturing (1,757 jobs or 13) sectors in 2004;
- Between 200 and 2030, the education and health service sector is projected to increase by over 899 jobs representing about 42% of the total jobs added to Methuen's employment base;
- In 2004, Methuen had a business establishment base of 986 firms, an increase of 109 firms (12.4%) since 2001;
- Methuen's tax base is heavily reliant upon its residential properties with 88% of its total value attributed to residential properties;
- Methuen's residential proportion of its tax base (88%) has increased by six percentage points since 1990 representing an annual increase of about one-third of one percentage point over the time period;
- At 20.6%, Methuen ranks in the middle compared to the other Merrimack Valley communities relative to the percentage of tax levy revenue derived from commercial, industrial and personal property, with Lawrence (30.3%), Andover (26.9%) and Lowell (23.1%) having higher proportions.
- Relative to the city's overall economic health, Methuen has had strong economic growth relative to jobs and businesses since 2001 – growth which has outperformed the region. However, the City has become heavily reliant on its residential property tax base for revenue, and should strive to increase the proportion of its tax base derived from commercial, industrial and personal property.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal ED-1: Strengthen the City's fiscal stability and stabilize its tax base through sustainable growth.

Strategies:

ED-1.1: Amend the City's land use regulations to "expand" the downtown central business district as well as encouraging increased mixed use density (building height and intensity of use) in the downtown¹⁶. Encouraging increased density within the downtown central business district would have three main benefits:

- 1) Fiscal benefits from the economies of scale as infrastructure (water, sewer and roads) are already in place rather than developing vacant land;
- 2) Methuen has experienced residential and non-residential development over the past decade, which will inevitably continue over the next decade. A portion of this inevitable growth should be encouraged within an expanded downtown core;

¹⁶ This concept is clearly defined in the Regulatory Actions section of the Action Plan chapter of the *Downtown Methuen Development Plan* (2004).

- 3) Encouraging densification within the downtown area will increase the critical mass of customers, residents and workers within the area which may contribute to the area's vibrancy and vitality.

ED-1.2: Pursue redevelopment of underutilized sites along commercial corridors (Route 110 [Haverhill Street], Route 113, 28, Pelham Street, and Pleasant Street at Jackson Street) and throughout commercially-zoned areas. Consider specific sites such as former Fox Nissan building on Pelham Street, the Gleason Street brownfield remediation site, Barrett Warehouse on Chase Street, Fram's Auto on Merrimack Street.

Goal ED-2: Provide strategies that will increase the potential for commercial, retail and industrial development to locate in Methuen.

Strategies:

ED-2.1: Consider acquiring or expanding an existing business park, or develop a new business park. Emphasis should be placed on developing "shovel-ready", pre-permitted¹⁷ sites as an incentive to attract light industrial, warehouse/distribution, office, and health service end-users. Although there is an extensive list of criteria used to select sites, the following basic criteria should be considered by the City in selecting a site (or sites) for an industrial or business park:

- Zoned for industrial or commercial uses;
- Limited wetland impact;
- At least ten acres of undeveloped area;
- Close proximity to an Interstate highway; and,
- Limited impact on abutters.

Potential industrial sites may include the redevelopment of the existing City DPW Yard garage on Lindbergh Avenue and parcels on or near Old Ferry Road.

Should developing a new business park be prohibitive, the City should consider subsidies and/or resources to improve and/or extend water and sewer infrastructure at an existing park to increase the amount of developable land available to new users. The City may also want to consider tax increment financing (TIF) or district improvement financing (DIF) for one or more of the business parks to help support additional public improvements. Finally, the City should consider utilizing the Commonwealth's MGL Ch43D (commonly known as Chapter 43D) program to provide an advantage to selected local sites as well as expedite the municipal permitting process¹⁸.

¹⁷ "Shovel-ready" sites are those that have infrastructure in-place and are available for immediate development. As many end-users within business parks are time-sensitive, the City should "pre-permit" at least ten to twenty broad industry sector uses (based on the North American Industry Category System) along with desired performance standards to ensure quick and comprehensive development approval.

¹⁸ Information on MGL Ch 43D available through the Massachusetts Economic Development Business Resource Team (www.mass.gov).

Goal ED-3: Encourage the City's responsiveness to industry needs and foster expansion of the City's established commercial and industrial base.

Strategies:

ED-3.1: Review and assess the City's development review process, including organizational structure. Ensure that the process is clearly defined, guarantees flexibility, projects a business friendly attitude, and encourages high quality developments. Repeat at 3-5 year intervals.

Goal ED-4: Provide economic opportunities for Methuen's residents, not just in the short term but also well into the future.

Strategies:

ED-4.1: Implement a customized Business Retention & Expansion program to cultivate and strengthen relationships with existing businesses.

ED-4.2: Leverage funds to encourage the repositioning of underperforming properties in the city. These include facilities that are not currently being operated at their highest and best use (for example underutilized upper floors in downtown buildings).

ED-4.3: Develop a marketing and promotional campaign to support the locational quality of life and business-friendly attributes of the City.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The following section summarizes fiscal conditions within the City of Methuen as well as provides a comparative analysis of average revenues and expenditures for residential and non-residential development. In order to complete this analysis, information was provided by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the City of Methuen's property assessment database. The information presented profiles the City's general fund revenue and expenditure trends, as well as a broad comparative fiscal "yardstick" which may be used to measure the basic fiscal conditions related to or derived from various residential and non-residential developments in the community¹⁹.

MUNICIPAL REVENUE TRENDS

The City of Methuen collects revenues for its general fund from a variety of sources including real estate and personal property taxes, intergovernmental transfers (from the State and Federal governments), as well as fees, fines, charges for services and other sources. According to fiscal data provided by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue, the City of Methuen had a total revenue base of \$100.6 million in fiscal year (FY) 2005 representing an increase of \$48.5 million (93%) since FY 2000. As shown in Table 29, taxes (\$52.1 million or 52%) and State revenues (\$39.2 million or 39%) represented the largest components of the City's revenue stream in FY 2005.

Table 29: General Fund Revenue Trends 2000-2005

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	\$ Change 00-05	% Change 00-05
Total Taxes (Net of Refunds)	\$40,511,259	\$42,546,206	\$46,151,667	\$49,424,018	\$48,998,478	\$52,096,015	\$11,584,756	28.6%
Total Charges for Services	\$1,345,596	\$1,504,421	\$1,260,755	\$1,544,332	\$1,745,239	\$1,892,864	\$547,268	40.7%
Total Licenses, Permits & Fees	\$845,853	\$774,562	\$1,033,095	\$779,383	\$1,064,133	\$1,085,498	\$239,645	28.3%
Total Federal Revenue	\$15,521	\$0	\$164,585	\$166,922	\$6,083	\$0	-\$15,521	-100.0%
Total State Revenues	\$6,239,378	\$34,616,307	\$36,540,121	\$36,014,457	\$36,709,784	\$39,247,303	\$33,007,925	529.0%
Total Revenues from Other Govts.	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
Total Special Assessments	\$108,126	\$63,581	\$59,555	\$93,498	\$93,903	\$76,812	-\$31,314	-29.0%
Total Fines & Forfeitures	\$272,484	\$247,930	\$225,897	\$277,479	\$353,363	\$364,627	\$92,143	33.8%
Total Miscellaneous Revenues	\$702,209	\$679,450	\$201,764	\$113,822	\$786,946	\$861,979	\$159,770	22.8%
Total Other Financing Sources	\$3,900	\$561	\$173,829	\$375,529	\$301,974	\$2,426,180	\$2,422,280	62109.7%
Total Interfund Operating Transfers	\$2,097,322	\$2,218,519	\$2,230,880	\$2,576,321	\$3,253,599	\$2,589,381	\$492,059	23.5%
Total Revenues	\$52,141,648	\$82,651,537	\$88,042,148	\$91,365,761	\$93,313,502	\$100,640,659	\$48,499,011	93.0%

¹⁹ It should be noted that this analysis should be considered as a generalized proxy for measuring the potential fiscal conditions related to various residential and non-residential land uses, and should not be substituted for a comprehensive fiscal impact analysis for a specific development program.

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

MUNICIPAL EXPENDITURE TRENDS

The City of Methuen had expenditures of \$97.6 million in fiscal year (FY) 2005 representing an increase of \$30.3 million (45%) since FY 2000. As shown in Table 22, education (\$50 million) comprised over half of the City's budget in FY 2005 with fixed costs (\$11.5 million) being the second largest component of the budget at about 12%. With the exception of other expenditures (\$835,000) and culture and recreation (\$232,000), all expenditure categories experienced growth over the FY 2000 to FY 2005 timeframe, with education increasing by almost \$19 million.

Table 30: General Fund Expenditure Trends 2000-2005

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	\$ Change 00-05	% Change 00-05
General Government	\$2,043,590	\$3,343,253	\$3,401,607	\$3,900,922	\$2,998,876	\$3,145,200	\$1,101,610	53.9%
Police	\$5,046,460	\$5,579,491	\$6,005,755	\$6,141,224	\$6,353,522	\$6,753,728	\$1,707,268	33.8%
Fire	\$5,156,657	\$5,405,460	\$5,706,516	\$5,875,914	\$6,098,357	\$6,257,556	\$1,100,899	21.3%
Other Public Safety	\$422,528	\$599,309	\$629,519	\$666,344	\$618,130	\$630,115	\$207,587	49.1%
Education	\$31,362,538	\$41,947,441	\$44,511,727	\$45,365,832	\$48,074,220	\$50,014,423	\$18,651,885	59.5%
Public Works	\$6,053,425	\$7,403,976	\$6,698,562	\$7,677,933	\$7,513,895	\$8,768,178	\$2,714,753	44.8%
Human Services	\$376,331	\$622,540	\$724,911	\$746,151	\$764,435	\$804,817	\$428,486	113.9%
Culture & Recreation	\$1,118,901	\$533,197	\$660,466	\$950,439	\$901,349	\$886,760	-\$232,141	-20.7%
Debt Service	\$7,846,263	\$8,063,617	\$8,623,025	\$8,622,028	\$8,304,881	\$8,001,358	\$155,095	2.0%
Fixed Costs	\$6,801,537	\$7,633,841	\$8,027,083	\$10,942,140	\$10,351,519	\$11,471,313	\$4,669,776	68.7%
Intergovernmental	\$298,814	\$353,618	\$360,204	\$409,809	\$969,530	\$898,268	\$599,454	200.6%
Other Expenditures	\$836,044	\$1,375,936	\$1,327,165	\$144,785	\$94,717	\$972	-\$835,072	-99.9%
Total	\$67,363,088	\$82,861,679	\$86,676,540	\$91,443,521	\$93,043,431	\$97,632,688	\$30,269,600	44.9%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue

MUNICIPAL SERVICE COSTS

The following analysis provides an estimate of how different land use types (both residential and non-residential) could potentially affect the City of Methuen's fiscal conditions. In order to calculate these affects and for the purposes of this analysis, three fiscal scenarios (low, medium and high) were developed. The low scenario does not include education costs but includes State aid and local non-tax revenue. This represents the minimum marginal cost derived from a development. The medium scenario includes education costs and State aid revenue, but does not include local non-tax revenue (representing a conservative cost estimate). The high scenario includes education costs but does not include State aid and local non-tax revenue. This scenario is one that represents the highest potential cost estimate.

Municipal expenditures in FY 2005 for residential use range between \$31.2 million and \$94.0 million depending on what municipal costs and revenue sources are used. Municipal expenditures in FY 2005 for non-residential use range between \$2.55 million and \$3.62 million, with a mid-point of \$3.2 million.

As shown in Table 31 and based on the fiscal scenarios, residential costs range from \$685 to \$2,066 per person, \$1,864 to \$5,622 per household, or \$0.67 to \$2.02 per residential building square foot (SF). Costs for non-residential development range between \$186 to \$264 per employee, \$2,626 to \$3,733 per business establishment, or \$0.34 to \$0.49 per non-residential building SF.

Table 31: Ranges in Average Municipal Costs by Use (FY-2005)

Residential			
Cost per	Low [1]	Medium [2]	High [3]
Person	\$685	\$1,210	\$2,066
Household	\$1,864	\$3,292	\$5,622
Building SF	\$0.67	\$1.19	\$2.02
Non-Residential			
Cost per	Low [1]	Medium [2]	High [3]
Employee	\$186	\$233	\$264
Business	\$2,626	\$3,299	\$3,733
Building SF	\$0.34	\$0.43	\$0.49

[1] W/O Education, adjusted for state aid & local revenue
 [2] W/Education; adjusted for state aid
 [3] Total Expenditures
 Source: RKG Associates, Inc.

RESIDENTIAL REVENUE AND COST COMPARISON

Based on property assessment data provided by the City of Methuen's property assessment database and estimated average household costs (as shown in Table 32), the average single family tax bill was approximately \$3,120, however, municipal costs ranged from \$1,870 to nearly more than \$6,700 (depending whether households or building square footage was used as a unit of measurement), representing a gap of up to \$6,500. As shown in Table 32, two and three-unit multi-family properties had an average tax bill of about \$3,300 and \$3,700, while municipal service costs for these properties ranged between \$3,100 and \$16,900. In nearly all cases, the medium and high average costs for municipal services exceed the average tax bill for that property type.

Table 32: Comparison of Average Tax Bill for Select Residential Properties with Range in Average Costs

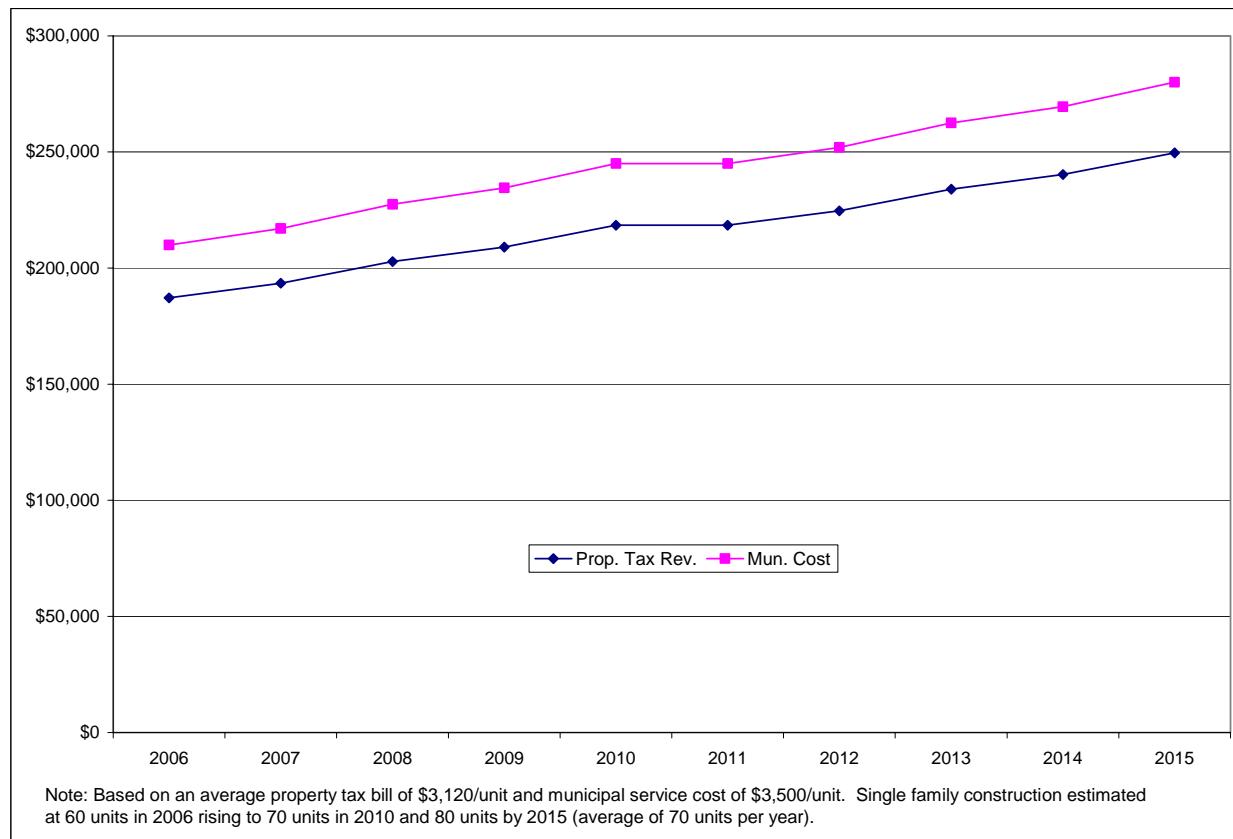
Type	Average Assessment	# of Households	Average Tax Bill (FY-2005)	Municipal Service Costs [1]		
				Low	Medium	High
Single Family	\$310,966	1	\$3,122	\$1,864	\$3,292	\$5,622
Condominium	\$185,367	1	\$1,861	\$1,864	\$3,292	\$5,622
Mobile Home	\$193,700	1	\$1,945	\$1,864	\$3,292	\$5,622
Two Family	\$328,331	2	\$3,296	\$3,727	\$6,584	\$11,243
Three Family	\$365,848	3	\$3,673	\$5,591	\$9,877	\$16,865
4 - 8 units	\$421,010	--	\$4,227	--	--	--
9 units or more	\$3,031,200	--	\$30,433	--	--	--
Type	Average Assessment	Average Bldg SF	Average Tax Bill (FY-2005)	Municipal Service Costs [2]		
				Low	Medium	High
Single Family	\$310,966	3,303	\$3,122	\$2,217	\$3,916	\$6,687
Condominium	\$185,367	1,401	\$1,861	\$940	\$1,661	\$2,836
Mobile Home	\$193,700	1,776	\$1,945	\$1,192	\$2,105	\$3,595
Two Family	\$328,331	4,671	\$3,296	\$3,134	\$5,537	\$9,455
Three Family	\$365,848	5,557	\$3,673	\$3,729	\$6,588	\$11,250
4 - 8 units	\$421,010	7,110	\$4,227	\$4,771	\$8,429	\$14,393
9 units or more	\$3,031,200	42,049	\$30,433	\$28,218	\$49,850	\$85,123

[1] Factored at \$1,864/household (low); \$3,292 (medium) and \$5,622 (high)

[2] Factored at \$0.67/building SF (low); \$1.19 (medium) and \$2.02 (high)

As it is shown that estimated average property tax revenue from a single family unit does not cover its associated municipal service costs, Figure 16 provides a forecast of property tax revenues and associated municipal service costs for new single family units in Methuen over the next ten years. Based on an average property tax bill of \$3,120, municipal services cost of \$3,500, and single family unit construction of 60 units in 2006 rising to 80 units in 2015 (70 units per year), Figure 16 shows the financial gap between revenues and costs for single family unit development in Methuen. The financial gap is projected to be approximately \$23,000 in 2006 rising to about \$30,000 by 2015.

Figure 17: Projected Property Tax Revenue and Municipal Service Costs for Single Family Units in Methuen



NON-RESIDENTIAL REVENUE AND COST COMPARISON

Similar to comparison of taxes generated versus the respective costs to service residential properties, this type of analysis was also completed for non-residential (retail, office and industrial) properties. As shown in

Table 33, retail properties had an average tax bill of about \$18,000, but had municipal service costs ranging between \$3,700 and \$5,600, a surplus of between \$12,000 to \$14,000 per property. Office properties had an average tax bill of about \$13,800, but had municipal service costs ranging between \$3,200 and \$12,400 or a surplus of between \$1,300 and \$10,500 per property.. Finally, industrial properties generate approximately \$23,600 in taxes, but cost the City between \$7,300 and \$15,500 in municipal services or a surplus of between \$8,000 and \$16,000 per property. In all cases, the revenue from the average tax bill exceeds the high municipal service costs, depending on the unit of measurement (per SF or employee).

Table 33: Comparison of Average Non-Residential Tax Bill with Municipal Service Costs

Type	Average Assessment	Average Building SF	Average Tax Bill (FY-2005)	Municipal Service Costs [1]		
				Low	Medium	High
Retail	\$985,779	10,664	\$18,059	\$3,669	\$4,610	\$5,215
Office	\$751,653	9,423	\$13,770	\$3,242	\$4,073	\$4,609
Industrial	\$1,287,627	31,638	\$23,589	\$10,886	\$13,677	\$15,473

Type	Average Assessment	Average # of Employees [2]	Average Tax Bill (FY-2005)	Municipal Service Costs [3]		
				Low	Medium	High
Retail	\$985,779	21	\$18,059	\$3,958	\$4,972	\$5,625
Office	\$751,653	47	\$13,770	\$8,743	\$10,984	\$12,427
Industrial	\$1,287,627	40	\$23,589	\$7,339	\$9,220	\$10,431

[1] Factored at \$0.34/SF (low); \$0.43 (medium); and \$0.49 (high)

[2] One employee per 500 SF (retail); 200 SF (office); 800 SF (industrial)

[3] Factored at \$186/employee (low); \$233 (medium); and \$264 (high)

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following points summarize the relevant fiscal findings:

- Methuen had a total revenue base of \$100.6 million in fiscal year (FY) 2005 representing an increase of \$48.5 million (93%) since FY 2000. Property taxes (\$52.1 million or 52%) and State revenues (\$39.2 million or 39%) represented the largest components of the City's revenue stream in FY 2005;
- The City of Methuen had expenditures of \$97.6 million in fiscal year (FY) 2005 representing an increase of \$30.3 million (45%) since FY 2000. Education (\$50 million) comprised over half of the City's budget in FY 2005 with fixed costs (\$11.5 million) being the second largest component of the budget at about 12%;
- In most cases, the amount of property tax revenue generated from single family and multi-family residential dwellings does not cover the municipal costs to service the residents within those units. For single family units, this gap between the property tax generated and the cost to service the units may be up to \$6,500 per unit;
- In all cases, the amount of property tax revenue generated from non-residential (retail, office, and industrial) development, exceeds the municipal cost to service those properties. Depending on the type of property, the financial surplus ranges from \$1,300 to \$16,000 per property.
- As Methuen's tax base has become more and more reliant on residential properties, it is critical that land use decisions be made on a sustainable framework – that being on social, environmental, fiscal and economic factors. From a fiscal perspective, it is critical that the City move away from being heavily reliant on residential properties and therefore understand how potential future land use decisions impact the City's fiscal health.

FISCAL ANALYSIS GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal FA-1: Strengthen the City's fiscal stability and stabilize its tax base through sustainable growth.

Strategies:

FA-1.1: Complete a comprehensive tax base analysis in order to determine and maximize the fiscal benefits of public and private tax base investments and stabilize the property tax rate. Sometimes communities concentrate their tax base investment focus on supporting new developments at the expense of its existing building stock. Targeted investment in existing neighborhoods and building stock is often more realistically achievable in stabilizing the property tax rate than encouraging new development alone. Based on the city's tax base, development trends and current market conditions, a strategic investment plan should be developed.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

Located in the upper Merrimack Valley, Methuen is approximately 26 miles from Boston and 5 miles from Salem, New Hampshire. The city is bordered by the state of New Hampshire and the City of Haverhill to the north, the Town of Dracut to the west, and the City of Lawrence, the Town of North Andover, and the Town of Andover to the south and southeast. Residents of Methuen have the benefit of convenient access to Route 28 and Interstates I-93 and I-495. Access to these major highway corridors enhances linkages between local routes as well as providing strategic connectivity between regional markets.

MILES OF ROADWAY

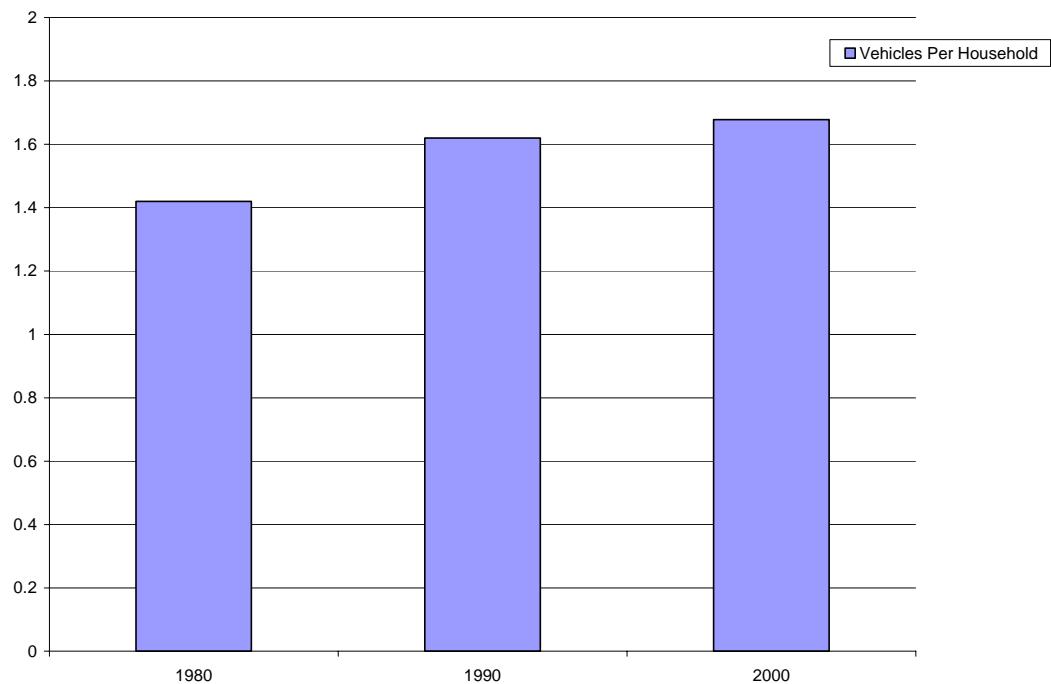
Methuen has approximately 200 total miles of roadway, with 165 miles of this total owned and maintained by the City. The extent of maintained roadway under the jurisdiction of Methuen is comparable to the other cities and towns of similar size in the region (see Table 34: Miles of Roadway.)

Table 34: Miles of Roadway

Town	Land Area	Miles of Roadway
Andover	32 Sq. Mi.	236.4 Mi.
Dracut	21 Sq. Mi.	148 Mi.
Haverhill	36 Sq. Mi.	370 Mi. (Est.)
Lawrence	7 Sq. Mi.	140 Mi.
Lowell	14 Sq. Mi.	260 Mi. (Est.)
Methuen	23 Sq. Mi.	200 Mi.
North Andover	28 Sq Mi.	150 Mi.

AUTO OWNERSHIP

An increase in vehicles per household is typically expected where household sizes are large. However, in Methuen over 55% of residents live in one- or two-person households, and the number of vehicles per household is still increasing significantly. Since 1980, the number of cars per household has increased by about 18%. The number of households with 2 cars increased the most—71%. The number of households with 3 cars increased by about 41% (see Figure 18). The average number of cars per household is close to 1.7

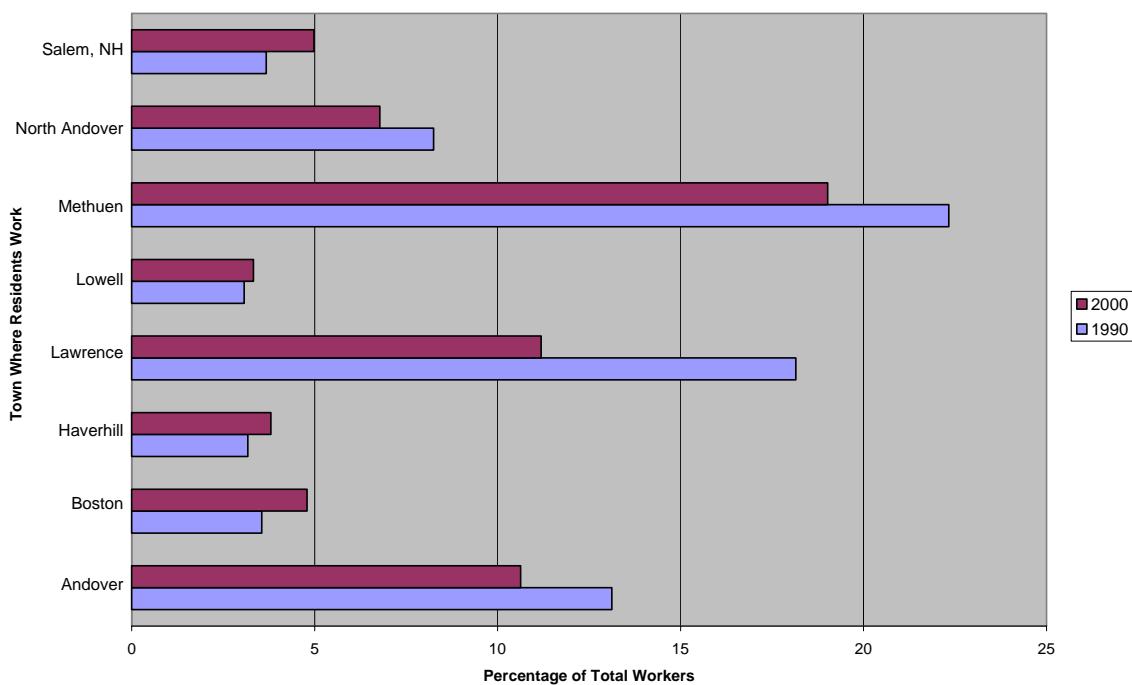
Figure 18: Vehicles per Household, 1980–2000

TRAVEL PATTERNS

Approximately 4,000 residents live and work in Methuen. The City's most notable employers include Holy Family Hospital & Medical Center and the City of Methuen. The City of Lawrence and the Town of Andover succeed Methuen as primary employment localities for Methuen residents.

Methuen residents spend more time commuting now than in 1990. The number of residents with commutes under 20 minutes has decreased, while the number of residents with commutes over 20 minutes in length has increased significantly.

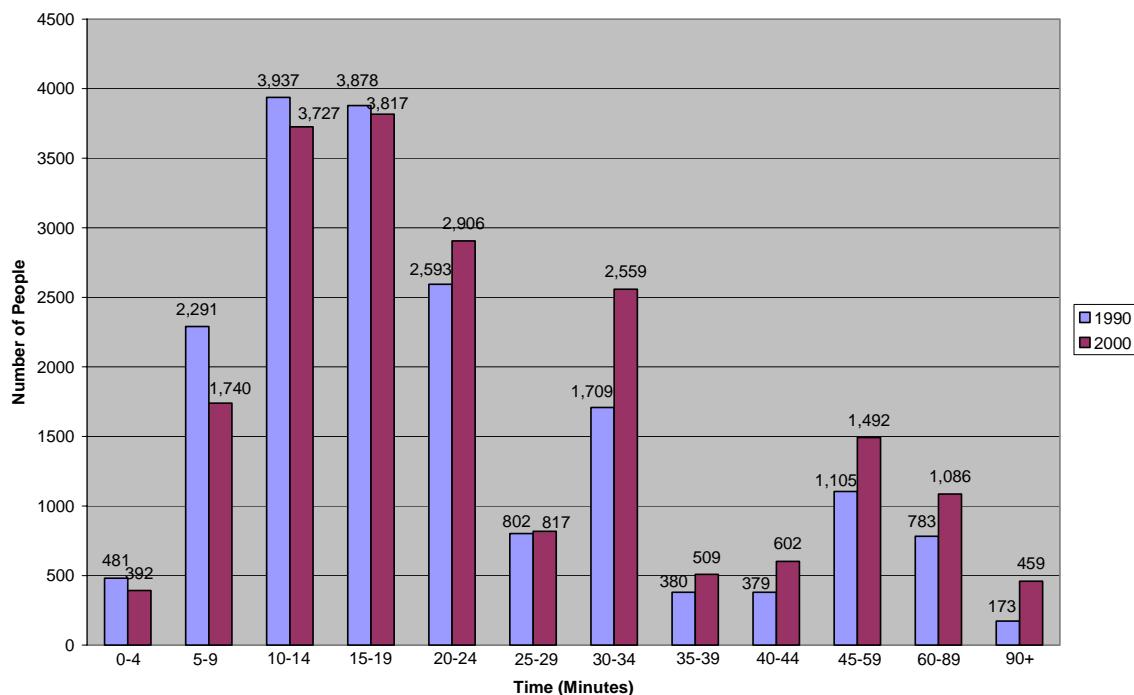
For Methuen residents, the location of their workplace is shifting (see **Figure 19**). Fewer residents work in Methuen now than in 1990, a decrease of over 3%, and more residents travel to Boston, Newburyport, Newbury, Salisbury, and other destinations 20+ miles away. The percentage of residents commuting to Boston increased by close to 1.5% (300 more residents) between 1990 and 2000, while other destinations decreased or stayed about the same. By the same token, more residents work nearby in Salem, New Hampshire, about 5 miles away, than in 1990 (327 more).

Figure 19: Where Methuen Residents Work

WHERE METHUEN RESIDENTS WORK

Methuen is an auto-oriented city. The excellent access to two interstate highways (I-93 and I-495) and several state highways provides easy access by automobile. Data from the 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census for Methuen demonstrate an increase in the number of residents switching from alternative modes of transportation to personal vehicles. The percentage of people driving to work has increased by almost 16% since 1980, while the percentage of people walking to work has decreased by almost one-half since 1980 (from 3% to 1.4%). Transit—Merrimack Valley Regional Transportation Authority and MBTA commuter rail in Andover and Lawrence—is not a major factor in mode to work. Transit use to work has stayed about the same since 1980—about 2% of Methuen residents take transit to work. This is considerably less than the percentage of transit users statewide (8.7%).

Local residents have raised the issue at the Visioning Sessions about the City being primarily auto-centric. The limited and unpredictable placement of sidewalks and an inadequate public transportation system supporting intermodal travel are examples of some of the transit-related issues Methuen residents are thinking about. Finally, Methuen residents have longer commute times than in 1990. The number of residents with commutes under 20 minutes has decreased, while the number of residents with commutes over 20 minutes in length has increased significantly. The number of Methuen residents whose commute is between 30 to 34 minutes increased the most (see Figure 20).

Figure 20: Travel Time to Work

TRAFFIC VOLUMES

As is true in most suburban communities, traffic volumes in Methuen on major corridors and roadways have increased over the last 15 years as population has grown. Using the most current data available from the Massachusetts Highway Department, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and the City, traffic volumes on 19 roadway segments were compared to assess trends in traffic between the 1990s and 2005. Table 35 summarizes traffic count data along with the percentage increase or decrease. The data show that of the 19 roadways studied, 10 experienced increases in traffic of more than 10%, considered significant and outside daily fluctuations typically observed. Only about half of the roadways with significant increases are local roads—the remaining are collectors or arterials that are intended to carry higher volumes of traffic.

One area in particular, the Route 110 and Route 113 intersection at I-93—the Rotary—is characterized by high levels of congestion, poor levels of service on the approaches, a high number of crashes, and significant levels of detouring traffic seeking to avoid Route 110. The Rotary was studied as part of the I-93 Corridor Study completed by the MVRPC in 2005, and seven improvement alternatives were examined. In 2006, the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) began a study that is looking in detail at three alternatives to improve operations and safety at the Rotary. The impact of land use changes in Methuen and Dracut is part of the analysis. No recommendations have been developed by EOT to-date, but the recommendations will include both short- and long-term actions for the State and affected municipalities.

**F U T U R E
P L A N S / N E E D S :**

The City should continue to work with EOT to develop a plan for the Rotary to make improvements that can be funded and implemented and will ultimately improve local roadway conditions.

An analysis of household growth suggests that the increase in traffic volume throughout the City would be higher than has actually been recorded. Since 1990, the number of households in Methuen has increased about 17.5%, and this would be expected to be accompanied by a commensurate increase in daily vehicle trips (about 22,500 new vehicle trips). However, traffic on local roads has not increased by that much. A few local roads have seen large increases in traffic—Burnham Road and Railroad Street, for example, but these roads had a lower base volume to begin with so the percentage increase is overstated. For the most part, traffic volumes on local roads have increased at a slower rate than households have increased. Two key factors are in play: Methuen's excellent highway access (routes I-93, I-495, 213, and 28) reduces the need for Methuen residents to wind through a lot of neighborhood streets to access the highway system which helps reduce the impact on local and neighborhood streets. In addition, smaller households drive significantly fewer miles per year than larger households (four or more persons). Methuen has a high percentage of single- and two-person households which translates into lower vehicle miles traveled than if the City were dominated by larger households.

Table 35: Traffic Volumes

Route or Street/Location	1990–99	2000–06
Brown Street, east of Route 28	2,529	2,803
Forest Street, over I-93	2,772	3,492
110/Merrimack Street, east of I-495	16,592	17,195
Oakland Avenue, east of 113	4,389	4,896
Pelham Street, south of Hampshire Road	2,619	2,964
110/Haverhill Street, east of Route 113/Lowell Street	21,501	23,653
113/Pleasant Valley Street, east of Prospect Street	9,787	18,469
28/Broadway, south of Route 213	18,311	18,715
Burnham Road, north of Riverside Drive	2,529	5,477
East Street, east of Milk Street	7,800	13,435
Hampshire Street, north of Lowell Street	8,777	7,188
Howe Street, south of Rte. 213	16,223	24,364
Lawrence Street, north of East Street	16,245	16,167
Pelham Street, east of I-93	12,008	11,926
Prospect Street, north of Timber Lane	2,919	3,113
Railroad Street, south of Gill Avenue	4,270	5,561
Riverside Drive, east of Burnham Road	10,836	10,943
Tyler Street	N/A	1,328
Woodland Street, Lawrence Line	6,247	6,994

Source: MassHighway, MVRPC, City of Methuen

The Merrimack Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) identified 29 sections of roadway in the *Regional Transportation Plan* (2003) that experience congestion; of these, 7 are in Methuen (see Table 36).

Table 36: Roadway Capacity and Congestion

Severity	Roadway	a.m. Peak Hour	p.m. Peak Hour	Comments
***	I-93 northbound		✓	
***	I-93 southbound	✓		
***	Rte. 110/113 at I-93		✓	
**	Rte. 28 south of Rte. 213 to Hampshire St.	✓	✓	
*	I-495 southbound	✓		
*	Rte. 110/113 north of Rte. 113		✓	

	Howe St. north of Marston Corner	✓	✓	Potential problem.
***	Most severe. * Problem			
**	Severe			

KEY CORRIDORS

Methuen is strategically located near two interstate highways, I-495 and I-93, and is served by state Routes 28, 110, 113, and 213.

Route 28 (Broadway), a principal arterial, runs north–south connecting to Salem, New Hampshire, and Lawrence, Massachusetts, and points south. In Methuen, Route 28 is generally a two-lane, undivided road with residential and commercial development at downtown Methuen and along most of its spine. Average daily traffic (ADT) volumes are about 18,700.

Route 110 (Lowell Street), a principal arterial, connects to I-93 and I-495 and provides access to the southern parts of Methuen. The intersection of Route 110 and Route 113 at I-93 is listed as an area of “most severe highway congestion” by the Merrimack Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and has one of the region’s highest crash rates. The intersection is currently being studied by the Executive Office of Transportation. ADT is 14,690. Route 110 at the Dracut line is known as Lowell Boulevard for 1.2 miles. It was converted in the late 1990s from a 4-lane roadway to a 2-lane roadway with an 8-foot shoulder. ADT is 12,800.

Route 113 (North Lowell Street and Lowell Street west of Broadway; Pleasant Street and Pleasant Valley Street east of Broadway) runs northeast to southwest, providing access to I-93, Route 213 and The Loop, and Route I-495. The ADT on Route 113 east of Route 28 is 6,560 (7,710 on Saturday).

Route 213 (The Loop Connector) is a 4-mile, controlled-access highway connecting I-93 and I-495. Route 213 has 5 exits: I-93, Broadway, Route 113/Jackson Street, Route 113 (The Loop Mall), and I-495. It is called the Loop Connector because it connects I-93 and I-495. ADT is approximately 54,800.

KEY INTERSECTIONS

Accidents

Data from the 2003 MVMPO Regional Transportation Plan and the 2004 Massachusetts Highway Department Web site report that the top 5 intersections in Methuen with high accident incidents are as shown in Table 37

Table 37: Key Accident Locations

Rank	Intersection	Average # of Accidents
1	Howe St./Rt. 213 (Jackson St. exit)/Rt. 113 (Pleasant Valley St.)	22
2	Rt. 28 (Broadway)/Rosewood Road	22*
3	Rt. 110 (Haverhill St.)/Rt. 113 (Lowell St.)	19*
4	Rt. 113 (Lowell St.)/I-93 Rotary	12
5	Burnham Road/Rt. 110 (Haverhill St.)	7
6	Hampstead St./North St.	6
6	Green St./Rt. 110 (Haverhill St.)	6
7	East St./Lawrence St.	5
8	Arlington St./East St.	4

9	East St./Prospect St./Milk St.	3
10	Rt. 213/Rt. 28 (Broadway)	2

*Data from the 2003 MVMP report used to supplement data 2004 MVMP report.

PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE FACILITIES

Trails

Layered data cells from the MassGov GIS inventory show that Methuen residents have limited access to pedestrian and bicycle corridors, whether for commuting or recreational usage.

The City of Methuen has no existing town-wide trail network. Presently, there are two mapped off-road trails:

- Town Forest Area, and
- Uplands Area.

In addition to the lack of off-street bicycle trails, Methuen's infrastructure is not particularly inviting to bicyclists. Few bicycle racks are provided in the city, and for the most part the Methuen grammar and high schools do not have bicycle racks. In fact, children are not allowed to ride bicycles to school. The City has no specific programs to encourage children to ride bikes to school despite the School Department's Wellness Policy (June 2006) acknowledging that only 13% of schoolchildren walk or ride a bike to school and guidelines that encourage physical activity outside of the school day. Methuen has no designated bicycle lanes; only two roads—Route 28 and part of Route 110 (Merrimack Street)—are identified on the Eastern Massachusetts Bicycle Map (Rubel BikeMaps) as a "secondary bicycle route on roadway." None of Methuen's roads is designated a "recommended bicycle route on roadway" on the Rubel BikeMap.

FUTURE PLANS / NEEDS: The City has recently joined the Merrimack Valley Transportation Management Agency (Merrimack Valley TMA), a group that promotes alternate means of transportation in the region. This group is seeking funds through a Transportation Community Systems Preservation (TCSP) grant to develop a region wide bicycle and trail network map and identify future connections to encourage biking to work.

The City should continue to work with the MVPC and the Merrimack Valley TMA to identify and map areas for bike routes, bike lanes, and other non-motorized commuting options.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks are present in some older neighborhoods of the city, including the Arlington District, but are largely missing from many corridors that connect destinations. Many of Methuen's roads are fairly narrow, forcing pedestrians to walk in the street or on a narrow berm or shoulder.

Sidewalks five feet wide and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act are required on both sides of new roads in subdivisions. The Community Development Board may waive the requirement for two sidewalks and allow one sidewalk if no connection to two sidewalks is available. The Board generally seeks a donation to the City's "sidewalk" fund in an amount equal to the cost of constructing the sidewalk as an alternative to actual construction.

FUTURE PLANS/NEEDS: The City should create a policy outlining those situations under which the Board will consider waiving the sidewalk requirements, specify the costs associated with the construction of the sidewalks, and develop a list of priority sites for new and/or upgraded sidewalks.

TRANSIT SERVICES/PARK-AND-RIDE FACILITIES

Bus Service

Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) provides fixed-route bus service to Amesbury, Andover, Haverhill, Lawrence, Merrimac, Methuen, Newburyport, and North Andover. The following fixed-route buses serve the City of Methuen:

- Route 01 – Haverhill/Methuen/Lawrence;
- Route 36 – Lawrence/Holy Family Hospital;
- Route 38 – Hampshire Street;
- Route 40 – Methuen Square; and
- Route 41 – Lawrence/Lowell.

These routes operate approximately every 25 minutes during the week and every 45 minutes on weekends during peak periods. MVRTA operates on a flag policy only—there are no designated stops. To board a bus, an individual must wave to the bus operator as the vehicle approaches and be standing on the same side of the street as the bus. One-way fares are \$1.00; a 31-day pass available for \$27.00

MVRTA also provides an advanced phone request service called Methuen Ring and Ride. Ring and Ride provides service Monday through Saturday to the following locations:

- Holy Family Hospital;
- The Loop;
- Methuen Plaza;
- Methuen Square; and
- Merrimack Plaza.

Service to Salisbury Beach and Hampton Beach is available from The Loop during the months of July and August. Two buses are offered in the morning and two in the evening.

Boston Commuter Bus service is available from the Pelham Street Park-and-Ride Lot Monday through Friday. Three buses are available inbound and outbound daily. One-way fare is \$5.00.

FUTURE PLANS/NEEDS: The City should work with existing and new businesses, the MVRTA, the Merrimack Valley TMA and the State to establish convenient and effective connections between Methuen neighborhoods and the MBTA commuter rail stops in Lawrence and Haverhill, and to ensure that the bus routes are timed correctly and generally meet the needs of Methuen residents. The City should also insure that all public transit routes are well publicized on the city web site and all bus stops are clearly marked.

Commuter Rail Service

Commuter rail service to Boston is available in two neighboring communities:

- Andover. Travel time: 47–51 minutes.
Parking spaces available: 152.
Parking: \$2.00; one-way cash fare: \$6.25; monthly pass, \$210.
- Lawrence. Travel time: 52–57 minutes.
Parking spaces available: 400, in Senator Patricia McGovern Transportation Center Parking Garage.
Parking: \$3.00; one-way cash fare: \$6.75; monthly pass, \$223.

Methuen has one Massachusetts Highway Department designated Park-and-Ride lot, located on Pelham Street, east of I-93. Built in 2000 with Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds, this lot has 180 parking spaces available to commuters. MVRTA offers service from this lot to Lawrence, Andover, and Boston, with 3 trips per weekday.

FUTURE Several recent studies have recommended reestablishing commuter rail service to Methuen and reopening the downtown Methuen train station.

PLANS/NEEDS:

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING ISSUES IN THE ZONING BY-LAWS AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS

Methuen's Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance of 1989 allows for several parking and zoning strategies that provide flexibility and incentives for economic development by reducing parking requirements and encouraging uses that reduce the demand for transportation and parking:

Parking Requirements

Relatively low parking requirements for office uses (3.3 spaces per 1,000 square feet) in the Zoning Ordinance are appropriate to help prevent excess asphalt and land devoted to parking.

Small businesses requiring fewer than 6 spaces are not required to provide any parking, a measure intended to promote flexibility and encourage small business where providing parking would be an impediment. The Zoning Ordinance allows for parking reductions in the Central Business District (CBD) via a special permit from the Community Development Board. This special permit allows up to a 20% reduction in the required number of spaces and allows for off-site parking within 500 feet of the principal building or use. This permit acknowledges the denser nature of the CBD, availability of over 85 City-owned parking spaces in the CBD, and the ability to “park once” in one of the approximately 1,000 existing commercial parking spaces in the downtown area and move around on foot. However, as this shared parking is only allowed by special permit, the process of obtaining the permit may be a deterrent to the development community.

FUTURE The City should conduct a parking study in the downtown area to determine the parking needs of the existing businesses and use these results to revise the Zoning Ordinance accordingly. The Methuen Downtown Development Plan contains more detail on the topic of downtown parking and land use, and its recommendations are incorporated into the Master Plan by reference.

PLANS/NEEDS:

On the flip side, however, parking requirements for non-CBD uses required in the Zoning Ordinance work against the provision of a balanced transportation options for Methuen. For

example, the parking requirements for retail are excessive at 4 spaces per 1,000 square feet plus 1 space for every 2 employees. The result of this excessive requirement is excess pavement and disincentives to using alternative modes. The parking requirements for multi-family residential units are overly generous, as well, at 2 spaces per unit plus 1 guest space for every 5 regular spaces. This effectively is 2.2 spaces per unit, establishing no incentive to minimizing the number of cars per household.

Obviously, methods to restrict parking must be accompanied by programs, incentives, regulations, and policies that encourage walking, biking, sharing rides, and transit in order to make any difference.

Land Use and Transportation

The relationship between land use and transportation is central to efficient, well-planned development that minimizes impacts to natural resources and provides desirable communities in which to live and work. The Commonwealth has recognized this link as it promotes an agenda of “Smart Growth,” which seeks to help cities and towns responsibly manage development in ways will ensure a sustainable future. Among the State’s Sustainable Development principles are the goals to concentrate development and mix uses while expanding transportation choices.

Methuen’s land use policies have typically prohibited mixed-use development, as mixed-use developments are not allowed by right anywhere. In the BL district only, mixed use is allowed with a special permit. No provision for mixed use in the CBD—the traditional location for housing and commercial development—is provided. Please see the Downtown Development Plan for more detail on this issue.

More people living in the CBD can reduce parking demand and vehicle trips associated with commercial and retail establishments. The Zoning Ordinance provides some opportunity for increasing residential density in a mixed-use district, suggesting that density bonuses for affordable housing would allow up to 12 dwelling units per acre in the CBD.

**FUTURE
PLANS / NEEDS :**

The City should analyze and update the Zoning Ordinance using the Smart Growth initiatives of the State to promote mixed use in the downtown and to create a live/work environment.

Subdivision Regulations and Transportation Goals

The City’s Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land (revised 2/9/01) provide regulations to ensure safe and convenient travel, lessen congestion, allow access for emergency vehicles, and more. In light of comments from the public visioning sessions about the need for a balanced transportation system, the City should analyze and update the Subdivision Rules and Regulations using the Smart Growth and Low Impact Development initiatives of the State and the MassHighway 2006 project development and Design Guidebook.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Methuen is an auto-oriented city. Factors contributing to this include easy highway access, lack of alternatives, and land use policies and practices that segregate uses. Yet, despite the growth of households over the last 10 years, vehicle traffic in Methuen has not exploded. Certain key corridors are more heavily traveled now, but neighborhood streets are not overloaded with traffic. The Rotary

is a major point of congestion and safety concerns, and steps are being taken by the State to identify solutions there.

Other factors helping make Methuen a “driving city” relate to demographic shifts over years. The number of households with two or more cars increased over 70% in the last 10 years, and three-car households are growing fast, too. More cars translate directly to more driving and less support for transit, walking, and cycling. Further, residents are driving to work more than in the past, in part because they are commuting longer distances. Fewer Methuen residents work in Methuen than did in 1990, and the number traveling to Boston daily has grown.

Alternatives to driving are few. There is no coherent and useable sidewalk network and no trails or multi-use paths that could provide transportation alternatives. Transit is hard to use—buses have no presence on the street because they operate on a flag-stop basis. Using commuter rail requires most to drive and pay for parking and a one-way ticket that costs over \$6.00.

Comments at the visioning sessions identified problem intersections, corridors with congestion or high speeds, and safety issues. Larger issues for the longer-term Master Plan, on the other hand, focus on improving transit, sidewalks, establishing bike trails, improving the pedestrian environment through a variety of methods, and in general providing more and better ways to get around outside a car. The public also considered the role that segregating land uses has on traffic and congestion and the ability to do routine activities without using a car.

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal T-1: Address congestion and safety issues on arterial streets to minimize traffic diverting to local streets.

Objectives:

- *Work with the MVPC to monitor the impacts of regional traffic growth on local streets.*
- *Work with developers and MassHighway to provide improvements on state and regional roads to minimize impacts to local streets.*

Strategies:

- T-1.1: Continue to work with EOT to develop a plan for Route 110/113 rotary improvements that can be funded and implemented and will improve local roadway conditions.
- T-1.2: Work with MassHighway and MVPA to design and implement signal and roadway improvements at Howe Street/Washington Street/Rte. 113
- T-1.3: Conduct a city-wide traffic study to identify capacity constraints, connectivity issues, deficient signals and pavement markings, pedestrian crossing problems, issues constraining transit vehicles, and impediments to cycling. Establish a Task Force to help guide the study.
- T-1.4: Establish a project priority list and prepare Project Need Forms for MassHighway.

Goal T-2: Promote an economically healthy and walkable downtown, in concert with the Downtown Development Plan.

Objectives:

- *Encourage mixed-use development in the downtown and in emerging village districts.*
- *Provide sufficient parking to meet demand while minimizing the impacts of parking.*
- *Provide convenient and attractive pedestrian facilities.*
- *Manage traffic to ensure efficient traffic flow and to provide access to abutting uses.*

Strategies:

- T-2.1: Conduct a parking study in the downtown to assess occupancy rates, by time of day, and turnover.
- T-2.2: Develop effective incentives to encourage mixed-use development to have a significant number of people living in the downtown through implementation of the Downtown Development Plan recommendations.
- T-2.3: Revise the zoning bylaw to allow shared parking in the downtown.
- T-2.4: Revise the zoning bylaw to allow a parking reduction in the CBD based upon the parking study conducted in Goal T-2.1.
- T-2.5: Revise Section XI-D, Special Permits, to increase the maximum density in the CBD. Consider densities up to 15 to 20 units per acre, as consistent with smart growth guidelines.
- T-2.6: Upgrade signage in the downtown and villages to improve wayfinding by motorists and cyclists and pedestrians.
- T-2.7: Work with Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and the Merrimack Valley TMA to identify and map potential streets for bike routes, bike lanes and sidewalks.
- T-2.8: Work with developers to build sidewalks and improve connectivity between existing sidewalks and proposed sidewalks. See Strategy 4.2 as well.

Goal T-3: Provide more transit options for commuting and other trips.

Objectives:

- *Improve access to MBTA commuter rail.*
- *Reexamine MVRTA to increase and improve MVRTA service to expand access to work, recreation, shopping, and services.*
- *Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of regional public transportation.*
- *Support a mix of land uses to provide more options for residents to work and live in*
- *Reduce commute time and reduce the need to drive.*

Strategies:

- T-3.1: Continue participating in the New Hampshire I-93 Transit Study to maximize long-term transit benefits for Methuen from the I-93 widening project.

- T-3.2: Work with businesses, MVRTA, the Merrimack Valley TMA, and the state to establish convenient and effective connections between Methuen neighborhoods and MBTA commuter rail stops in Lawrence and Haverhill.
- T-3.3: Work with MVRTA and the Merrimack Valley TMA to investigate restoring service to West Methuen and improving service throughout the City. Investigate options for rail or bus shuttle service to Lawrence commuter rail station from downtown area.
- T-3.4: Work with MVRTA to post signs at all bus stops in Methuen with information on the destination and frequency of the bus.
- T-3.5: Promote transit options through the City Web site, providing links to MVRTA and MBTA.

Goal T-4: Promote bicycling and walking for transportation and recreation.

Objectives:

- *Provide safe and convenient ways for residents and workers to bicycle and walk.*
- *Provide education and incentives to encourage cycling and walking.*

Strategies:

- T-4.1: Develop a policy outlining those situations under which the Community Development Board will consider waiving sidewalk requirements in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations, specify the costs associated with the construction of the sidewalks, and develop a list of priority sites for new and/or upgraded sidewalks.
- T-4.2: Review site plan, zoning and subdivision ordinances to make them consistent with Smart Growth principles and low impact development. Promote more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly policies including bicycle parking requirements, roadway design standards, and easements/right-of-way for bicycle and pathway projects.
- T-4.3: Partner with the Commonwealth's Safe Routes to Schools program to get technical assistance including education and infrastructure improvements that promote walking to school.
- T-4.4: Develop a Town-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan to create a system of off-road paths, lanes, and trails that connect destinations and provide desirable recreation opportunities. The Plan should be the reference guide for discussions of mitigation by developers and other entities. It should:
 - identify bicycle and pedestrian needs and deficiencies,
 - develop standards for bicycle signage on roadways such as Share the Road,
 - provide estimated implementation costs and identify funding sources, responsibilities and phasing.
 - Identify education and support needed to promote cycling.
 - Teach cycling safety and skills in the public elementary schools.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

The City has responsibly planned for the maintenance and creation of community facilities for several years. Construction of its new elementary schools, renovation of and addition to the Nevins Library, a variety of parks improvements, and projects such as the installation of period lighting along Broadway all point to the City's conscious effort to provide on-going care for its facilities.

Methuen's growing population and emerging public demands require it to be proactive in its response to growth. Existing facilities and services may need to be adjusted and adapted to meet code, upgrades in technology, changes in available methods for increased efficiency and other improvements to the provision of services. New services and facilities may also be needed to accommodate a growing elderly population as well as other shifts in the demographics of the City including an increasingly ethnically diverse population. The elderly population of Methuen is not only greater than that of the surrounding communities, but is forecasted to grow, on a percent of total basis, more quickly than its neighbors.

Additionally, almost 20% of Methuen residents reported speaking a language other than English at home and of the population five years and older, 11% are foreign-born²⁰. Of these, more than one-third (38.1%) were born somewhere in Latin America, another third (31.3%) were born in Asia, and less than a third (21.1%) were born in Europe. Close to 10% of the population is now Latino and this percentage is expected to continue to increase. The number of low-income residents is also increasing. These trends in the population can be expected to affect services and facilities in a number of ways including the need for additional space at the schools, to the language(s) in which services are provided.

Other services, such as police and fire may need updated facilities in the future. These changes will impact the way in which services are provided, the buildings which house them, as well as their capital needs, and therefore, their impact on the City's budget.

The information presented is a compilation of a review of relevant previous studies, documents and other sources. Additionally, for each facility and service, at least one "leadership interview" was conducted (e.g. Police Chief, Superintendent of Schools, Director of the Library, Director of the Senior Center, etc).

According to the City's Assessing database, the City owns approximately 1,275 acres of land (529 parcels) which support public facilities, parks and conservation areas, and includes property taken pursuant to tax title proceedings. **Table 38** lists all Methuen-owned property which features a structure on it.

²⁰ U.S. Census 2000

Table 38: City-Owned Buildings, Sorted by Gross Living Area

#	Street Number	Location Street Name	Building	Year Built	Living Area (s.f.)	Total Assessed Value
1	1	RANGER RD	HIGH SCHOOL	1975	320,445	\$ 26,571,700
2	309	PELHAM ST	MARSH GRAMMAR SCHOOL	1997	194,352	\$ 26,073,000
3	100	HOWE ST	COMPREHENSIVE GRAMMAR SCHOOL	1989	172,396	\$ 23,718,500
4	75	PLEASANT ST	TENNEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL	1955	127,134	\$ 6,039,700
5	45	PLEASANT VIEW ST	TIMONY SCHOOL	1950	97,019	\$ 7,424,000
6	10	DITSON PL	CENTRAL SCHOOL	1900	54,923	\$ 4,429,000
7	476	BROADWAY	GREATER LAWRENCE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE	1960	51,820	\$ 2,443,100
8	41	PLEASANT ST	CITY HALL - SEARLES BUILDING	1904	41,042	\$ 1,930,200
9	90	HAMPSHIRE ST	MUNICIPAL BUILDING/ POLICE STATION	1950	35,432	\$ 3,191,500
10	129	HAVERHILL ST	STEPHEN BARKER SCHOOL (YMCA)	1940	28,627	\$ 1,426,100
11	33	LINDBERG AVE	HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT	1960	27,282	\$ 1,358,900
12	77	LOWELL ST	SENIOR CENTER	1985	19,246	\$ 1,124,200
13	125	OAKLAND AVE	OAKLAND AVE SCHOOL (ISLAMIC ACADEMY)	1930	18,540	\$ 1,616,600
14	180	PLEASANT VALLEY ST	PLEASANT VALLEY ST SCHOOL	1930	14,226	\$ 957,400
15	24	LOWELL ST	CENTRAL FIRE STATION	1930	14,078	\$ 845,500
16	11	HAMPSTEAD ST	HOWE SCHOOL	1914	13,962	\$ 777,600
17	25	BURNHAM RD	WATER TREATMENT PLANT	1983	13,209	\$ 3,198,600
18	480	BROADWAY	GREATER LAWRENCE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE	1960	6,586	\$ 645,800
19	36	HUNTINGTON AVE	HIGHWAY DEPT DEPT	1989	5,910	\$ 351,700
20	120	NORTH LOWELL ST	ELMWOOD CEMETERY	1968	5,280	\$ 389,200
21	36	BOYLSTON ST	CURRIER SCHOOL	1930	4,758	\$ 394,900
22	124	CROSS ST	WATER DEPARTMENT	1893	4,514	\$ 292,900
23	464	BROADWAY	GREATER LAWRENCE EDUCATIONAL COLLABORATIVE	1970	4,368	\$ 519,800
24	1	HAMPSTEAD ST	HAMPSTEAD & HOWE ST FIRE STATION	1984	3,484	\$ 559,300
25	4	BEAN ST	BEAN STREET FIRE STATION	1967	3,332	\$ 451,500
26	45	HUNTINGTON AVE	JACKSON PARK PLAN	1950	2,522	\$ 195,800
27	299	BROADWAY	NEVINS MEMORIAL LIBRARY	1900	2,439	\$ 160,300
28	154	SWAN ST	SWAN ST FIRE STATION	1930	2,392	\$ 184,300
29	960	RIVERSIDE DR	RAYMOND A MARTIN PARK	1983	1,800	\$ 532,200
30	LT B	GROVE ST	WALNUT GROVE CEMETERY	1950	1,341	\$ 129,000
31	3	GRANITE ST	WATER DEPT	1960	1,324	\$ 273,800
					Totals	1,293,783 \$ 118,206,100

Source: Methuen Assessing Database

CITY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

Searles Building

Methuen's City Hall is located in the Searles Building at 41 Pleasant Street in a very striking historic building that until 1953 housed the city's public high school. The building --one of Methuen's most impressive --was constructed in 1904 and is a premier example of the English Renaissance Revival style; some defining features include: tall rectangular windows, projecting bays, prominent chimneys, pointed Tudor arches and limestone trim contrasting with the red brick. The building is very well maintained and in excellent condition. The City Hall is open from Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm and on Friday from 8:30 am to 12 noon.

The following city offices are located in the Searles Building:

- Mayor's Office
- Accounting
- Office of Economic & Community Development
- City Treasurer/Tax Collector
- Credit Union
- Customer Service
- City Council's Office
- Assessor's Office
- Clerk's Office
- City Solicitor
- Veterans Affairs
- Engineering

- Water/Sewer (administration only)
- Accounting/Payroll/Retirement
- Human Resources)
- DPW (administration only)
- Recreation (administration only)

The Searles Building is now at capacity and while it is not crowded, it cannot accommodate any additional offices. The offices currently in the building have a need for additional storage.

Tenney Gatehouse

The Tenney Gatehouse, a relatively small historic building located next to the Searles Building, is owned by the State. It was renovated by students from the vocational technical high school and used by the Historical Society which has meetings in the building, holds events there, and uses it for displays of some of their historical collection.

F U T U R E

There are no immediate plans for any changes to the Searles Building nor are there any foreseeable future needs, with the exception of the need for additional storage.

P L A N S / N E E D S :

Converting the attic into storage for long-term archives could accommodate this.

Part of the attic is currently used in this way. Safe walkways are needed between the bays.

Quinn Building

The Quinn Building, also a city office building is located at 90 Hampshire Street. The following city functions are located in the building: Police, Health Department (including the City's Nurse and Animal Control Offices) Inspection Department, and Conservation.

The building was originally constructed in 1957. It is in need of repairs estimated at approximately \$750,000 – 1,000,000, which would include window replacements, repairs to the HVAC systems, a new roof and some interior repairs.

Additionally, the building was not designed to house a police department and this causes some difficulties. *The Police Department will be discussed separately under Public Safety.*

F U T U R E

As discussed under the section on Public Safety, discussions are currently taking place regarding the possibility of constructing a new Public Safety building on the

P L A N S / N E E D S :

site. The site is relatively large and could potentially accommodate a combined police and fire facility.

SCHOOLS

Public Schools

Methuen currently operates four large K-8 schools and one senior high school (grades 9 – 12) with a current total student enrollment of approximately 7,474. Approximately 88% of Methuen's school aged population is enrolled in the city's public school system (as compared to the statewide average of 88.6%). Since 1996, the City has issued an aggregate of \$76.5 million school construction bonds with which all of the City's primary school buildings have been renovated or reconstructed with 90% state reimbursement grants. As a result each of the four K-8 schools house approximately 1,200 to 1,500 students and have been built and/or extensively renovated in the last 15 years. While the new school facilities are in very good condition they are quickly reaching or have reached their capacity.

Methuen High School houses approximately 2000 students and is the only one of the City's schools that has not undergone renovation in recent years. The building is almost thirty years old and was designed with an open classroom plan, state of the art for its time, but no longer deemed optimal. In fact this feature was identified as a major accreditation concern. There are also some capacity issues.

In the year 2005 Methuen expended \$53,914,485²¹ on education. Methuen's school-aged children attend the following public schools:

Methuen Comprehensive Grammar School, (CGS) is located at 100 Howe Street, and accommodates grades K- 8. The school is organized into grade level teams with 50 homerooms for approximately 1200 students. The school also houses significant system-wide programs for bilingual students, language delayed students and students with severe special needs.

Marsh Grammar School is located at 309 Pelham Street, and accommodates grades K-8.

Tenney Grammar School is located at 75 Pleasant Street, and accommodates grades K-8. In addition to English, students attending the Tenney speak several different languages at home. The school offers an extended day program that provides additional academic support.

Donald P. Timony Grammar School is located at 45 Pleasant View Road, and accommodates grades K-8. The school is home to the 21st Century (after school) Program.

Methuen High School is located at One Ranger Road, and accommodates grades 9 – 12. This building is more than 30 years old. It is the only one of the school buildings currently being used that was not renovated or newly constructed. The building was originally designed with an open classroom design that was cause for concern for accreditation of the school. Additionally there is a need for additional space resulting from new mandated programs, special education, science labs, computer labs and technology in general; these needs were not present at the time the building was constructed. Also, the police department would like to practice lock down procedures and the open space design makes safety and security especially challenging. Approximately 100 students per year complete Kindergarten through 8th grade at the Methuen public schools and then go elsewhere to high school. School administrators have heard that some of this attrition is due to the fact that people do not like the facility.

Community usage of the schools is high. Cafeteria and auditorium spaces are available for public use as are the athletic fields which are owned and maintained by the City. The community at large also uses the ice arena at the high school.

Student Enrollment

School enrollment in Methuen schools has been steadily increasing especially following the completion of the school improvement program and a concurrent increase in the City's population. These two are not entirely unrelated as new schools probably made the City more attractive to young families.

²¹ from The Municipal Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, 2006.

Table 39: Actual Student Enrollments

School	2004	2005	2006
CGS	1,154	1,123	1,138
Marsh Grammar	1,427	1,391	1,397
Timony Grammar	1,429	1,463	1,457
Tenney Grammar	1,345	1,396	1,456
High School	1,945	2,098	2,014
Pleasant Valley	13	14	12
TOTAL	7,313	7,485	7,474

Source: Methuen School Department

The following table provides student enrollment figures by grade level for the past few years as well as those projected to the year 2008 (as reported in the 2005 Annual Report of the City of Methuen). These projections predict a decrease in enrollments over the next few years; however, since actual enrollments have been consistently higher than projections over the last few years, there is every indication and expectation on the part of the School Department that the trend is for enrollments to continue to rise.

Table 40: Public School Enrollment Figures (October 1)

Grade Level	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006 Projected	2007 Projected	2008 Projected
Preschool	98	112	84	105	104	96	96	112	112
Grades K-4	2,716	2,772	2,686	2,667	2,712	2,744	2,744	2,381	2,493
Grades 5-8	2,281	2,384	2,436	2,403	2,418	2,496	2,504	2,235	2,222
Grades 9-12	1,696	1,753	1,839	1,794	1,834	2,209	2,200	2,047	1,997
Special Education	112	102	107	128	122	102	102	87	87
TOTAL	6,903	7,123	7,152	7,097	7,190	7,647	7,646	6,862	6,911

Factors Affecting Future Enrollment and Facility Needs

While the elementary schools have new facilities designed to accommodate state of the art pedagogical methods, they have for the most part reached capacity. They are now at the point of facing decisions regarding how to make trade-offs in order to accommodate larger numbers of students. For example at the Tenney Grammar School enrollment is at almost 1,500, the highest it has ever been and there are no more available classrooms. The Principal is going to have to convert science labs and art rooms into classrooms in order to accommodate additional children. Class sizes are currently already exceeding the Department goals. The Tenney and Timony Schools are experiencing the most pressure. Some of the factors affecting future enrollment and facility needs include:

Population Projections

The percentage of school –aged persons (less than 18 years old) living in Methuen (24.7%) is slightly higher than that of the state overall (23.6%)²². According to MISER population projections, school aged children in Methuen are expected to continue to grow in numbers. The majority of the increase is projected to be in the younger years that may result in facility needs system-wide. The only age cohort which is not expected to increase in the near future is the high school aged students, however, when the younger students come through the system, they will place additional pressure on the high school as well.

Table 41: School-Aged Population

School Age Group	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Projection	2020 Projection
0-4 years old	2,188	2,759	2,749	2,873	3,055
5-9 years old	2,496	2,646	3,137	2,872	3,053
10-15 yrs.	3,026	2,573	3,192	3,181	3,325
15-19 yrs.	3,296	2,534	2,718	3,232	2,960
TOTAL	11,006	10,512	11,796	12,158	12,393

Source: MISER Population Projections for Massachusetts Cities and Towns

New Schools and Free Full Day Kindergarten Attracting Non-Methuen Residents

The “new schools” phenomenon frequently attracts families, that is, when new school buildings are built, this sends a message that the City is paying attention to education and many families either move to that municipality, have their children stay with “aunts and uncles” during the week in order to attend the new schools, or break the rules and cross over from surrounding cities and towns. “Crossing over” is reportedly occurring in Methuen and is probably due to a number of factors including the new schools, the fact that there is free full day kindergarten in Methuen (and not in all of the surrounding communities) and that in Lawrence they are accommodating large enrollments by having children attend school either in the morning or in the afternoon, a schedule that is difficult for working parents. The School Department is tracking non-Methuen residents attending the school on a weekly basis and turning away such students on a daily basis. For example, during September and October of 2006, thirty-six families were questioned, and twelve of these turned out to be non-residents and had to withdraw from the school system.²³

Class Size

Over the past few years the Methuen Public Schools have made a concerted effort to adhere to principles of best practice and reduce class size especially in the early primary grades. Increased enrollments have already begun to adversely affect the effort to reach the goal of 20+ children per classroom. (the low-20s for grades K-4 and upper 20s in grades 5-8).

Ethnic Diversity

As is evident in the table below, the number of students for whom English is not the primary language spoken at home and who have limited proficiency in English has been steadily increasing. In addition to Spanish there seems to be an increase in other languages spoken at the students’ home including

²² From Massachusetts Department of Public Health, MassCHIP, Kids Count Profile (incorporates Census 2000 figures and later population estimates)

²³ from School Superintendent’s Office.

Korean, Chinese, Italian, Portuguese, Arabic, Lao, Turkish, Gujarati, Hindi, Vietnamese and Haitian. These shifts in the city's population as reflected in the schools impact the city as a whole, but also influence space needs. In addition to the absolute numbers of students increasing, children with limited English Proficiency and who are bi-lingual often need additional support. This can translate into additional space needs such as the need for extra classroom spaces.

Table 42: Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) & Family Language Not English (FLNE)²⁴

Year	Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Family Language Not English (FLNE)
2000	280	768
2001	285	947
2002	305	1,095
2003	367	1,115
2004	406	1,154
2005	463	1,288
2006	445	1,350

Latino Student Enrollment

The Latino population has increased from 5.2% of the city's population in 1990 to 9.6% of the total city's population at the time of the 2000 Census.

The majority of minority students are of Latinos descent, and of these the majority are of Puerto Rican background (according to 2000 Census numbers 40% of Methuen's Latino population is Puerto Rican). A large number of these individuals look for seasonal employment opportunities in their land of origin, often bringing their children back and forth with them. This results in a fluctuating school enrollment, that is difficult to track and even more difficult to plan for.

²⁴ from Massachusetts Department of Education data on LEP and FLNE: 2000 - 20006

Table 43: Methuen Latino Student Population²⁵

Year	Number of Latino Students	Number of Total Students	% Latino Students of Total Enrollment
1996	839	6337	13.2%
1997	901	6465	13.9%
1998	920	6539	14.1%
1999	993	6728	14.7%
2000	1059	5553	19.2
2001	1152	7125	16.2%
2002	1098	7134	15.4%
2003	1130	7095	15.9%
2004	1247	7262	17.2%
2005	1307	7317	17.9%
2006	1412	7441	18.9%

Former Schools

As previously mentioned, the City undertook a major school improvement program during the 1990's, which included the construction and/or significant renovation of four out of the five currently, used schools. As part of this school improvement program the former schools were sold and/or reused in the following ways:

- *Ashford School*: Sold and converted to over 55 senior housing units and managed by the Housing Authority. The city still owns the grounds, which are used as baseball fields.
- *Barker School*: Leased to the *Merrimack Valley YMCA*; currently functions as a satellite YMCA to the main YMCA in Lawrence and is used for before and after school childcare. The City of Methuen contracts with the Merrimack Valley YMCA to provide a variety of after-school, summer break, and Saturday activities for low and moderate-income households. During 2005 the organization served 362 youths, 74% of which were from low and moderate-income households, and 14% of which were Latino. The activities offered include arts and crafts, rock climbing, book clubs, etc. and are geared at building teamwork, confidence, leadership, skills and general well being.
- *Oakland School*: Sold and converted to a private Islamic school and mosque.
- *Howe Street School*: Sold and currently being converted to private use.
- *Seargent School*: Sold and has been renovated into a medical office building

The City continues to own the following former Methuen public school buildings:

²⁵ Based on information from Department of Education Table 3: Enrollment by Race: 1996 - 2006

- *Central School*: Used by the Methuen School Department for the school administration offices. Head Start programs operate out of the building's basement.
- *Pleasant Valley School*: Owned by the City and used as a before and after childcare facility and a full day pre-school. The school is open from Monday through Friday, 6:00 am to 6:00 pm, and operates twelve months a year. Parents pay for the before and after school care on a sliding scale (according to need) for pre-school. The building was recently renovated including installing air conditioning, but it still does not have an elevator. There is a waiting list for the programs offered at Pleasant Valley School. The list is currently approximately 35 children and seems to be increasing as additional housing is being developed in the area. Possibilities for expansion include adding another "permanent portable" unit such as the one currently used for the pre-school or they could operate a satellite program out of another school facility.
- *Currier School*: Converted to the *Methuen Adult Learning Center*. The building was renovated in 1995 with a HUD grant for use for adult education. This is a School Department program (funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education) providing adult basic education (GED) and English as a Second Language classes. In 2005 there were students from 28 countries speaking 17 languages (the majority spoke Spanish, but there were many Asian and Middle Eastern languages as well). The City maintains the building and grounds and provides a small subsidy for operating costs. The Center is open from Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. and Monday and Wednesday from 6:00 pm – 9:00 p.m. There are 150 state-funded slots (classrooms seats used day and night) and 300 individuals on the waiting list at any one time. There is a need for additional classroom space as well as a significant need for computers (currently students must go to the Timony School to use computers there). Three partnerships between the Center and other City and State programs further the Center's services to a wider population:
 - Memorandum of Agreement with the Nevins Memorial Library and Literacy Volunteers who are trained to teach ESL classes to those who cannot be accommodated at the Adult Learning Center (currently there are 32 individuals benefiting from this partnership);
 - Memorandum of Agreement with Valley Works Career Center provides job search support and training to many of the Adult Learning Center students; and
 - Memorandum of Agreement with the Methuen Even Start Program run out of the YMCA provides ESL and early childhood intervention to parents and their younger than five year old children in a coordinated way. This program is funded by the State DOE.

Private and Parochial Schools

Approximately 12% of Methuen's children are enrolled in private and parochial schools (as compared to 11.4% statewide). There are five private schools located within the city; as shown in Table 44.

Table 44: Parochial and Private Schools

School/Grades	Address	Enrollment
Fellowship Christian Academy/ PK-12	1 Fellowship Way	91
Presentation of Mary Academy/ 9-12, all girls	209 Lawrence Street	278
St. Ann's Hope/ Special Ed., unspecified grades	100a Haverhill Street	153
St. Monica Elementary School/ K-8	212 Lawrence Street	231
The Islamic Academy/ PK-8	125 Oakland Avenue	110

Other Area Educational Institutions

Greater Lawrence Regional Vocation Technical High School located at 57 River Road in Andover is a regional vocational high school (grades 9 – 12) with a current enrollment of 1,473 students. Approximately 10% of these students are Methuen residents. The technical high school has recently completed a \$51,000,000 renovation and expansion of its facilities.

The *Greater Lawrence Educational Collaborative High School* located on Broadway near the State line is for students with learning and behavioral problems is also located in the city.

As previously mentioned the *Methuen Adult Learning Center (MALC)* serves 150 adults with GED and ESL classes both during the day and in the evenings.

The *Northern Essex Community College* also hosts community education programs in the evening at several Methuen schools. These are non-degree programs and include a variety of basic computer literacy, arts and crafts, life skills and other general adult education courses.

FUTURE PLANS/NEEDS While some projections predict a leveling off or even decline in the school enrollments, given the difference between projections and actual enrollments to date, it seems likely that the enrollments will continue to rise into the near future. At some point the increase will be self limiting as a result of the fact that Methuen will have reached build out capacity. The Superintendent has put together a Task Force that will look at school enrollment projections very carefully and will come out with the new numbers by the end of the year.

The School Department has filed a Statement of Interest Form regarding the need for major renovation of the high school with the Massachusetts School Building Authority and its Executive Director. The moratorium on state assistance will end in July of 2007. The School Department feels reasonably certain that Methuen is well placed to be considered in the first round of funding.

Increasing enrollments are placing pressure on the existing elementary schools. While some of the students are not Methuen residents and are being asked to withdraw, population and demographic projections clearly indicate that a large percent of the increasing student numbers are and will continue to be Methuen residents. The School Department will have to review a number of options including:

- build a new K- Grade 8 school

- reorganize the existing schools so that there is a city-wide K- Grade 1 accommodated somewhere (if the option of clustering just Kindergartners is chosen, this has the advantage of being low cost because there are far fewer requirements, e.g. no need for a library, gym or auditorium and only need small cafeteria), freeing up the space taken up for these grades for Grades 2 - 8 at each of the four existing schools
- re-introduce a middle school into the system taking grades 6-8 out of the four existing schools and building a new school elsewhere or
- add portable classrooms on the sites of the existing schools (not all sites have the capacity to accommodate portables)

Increasing Enrollments Spill Over Effects. If there are additional students to accommodate in the future this will also mean that there will be additional pressure to accommodate preschoolers, before and after school programs (e.g. Pleasant Valley School) and the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Inc. homework center.

Adult Education. Given the waiting lists at the existing adult learning sites and the projected increase in low income and ethnically diverse populations, there is a need for additional adult education services including high school equivalence, English as a Second Language, computer literacy and other basic skill acquisition courses. The existing facility at the former Currier School will need computers and additional classroom space in the near future. Appropriate additional locations may need to be identified.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Fire Department

Methuen's Fire Department is housed in four stations, the Central Station and headquarters at Lowell and Pelham Streets (Five Corners), one in the North End at Howe and Hampstead Streets, one in the East End at East and Swan Streets, and one in the West End on North Lowell Street at Bean Street. The locations of the stations provide response times of under seven minutes to any part of the City. While three to five minute response times are considered ideal, seven minutes as a maximum is an accepted standard by the National Fire Protection Association.

The Fire Department has only paid personnel and does not include volunteer fire fighters. Methuen's Fire Department staff consists of ninety-seven people. There are seventy-two fire fighters, sixteen Lieutenants, four deputy commanders, two captains, one assistant chief, one chief and one full-time and one part-time administrative aide. All but six of these personnel are trained for emergency medical treatment (EMT). The department operates on four daily round-the-clock shifts, each directed by a deputy commander.

Major equipment of the Fire Department consists of seven engine trucks equipped as pumper, one ladder truck, a rescue truck, a brush fire vehicle, a boat truck and boat, five automobiles, and three ambulances. Some of the engine trucks are more than 20 years old. The rescue truck is also more than 20 years old. All equipment gets very frequent use. There were 6,405 calls in 2005. 3,512 were emergency medical service calls and 2,893 were engine company calls. Emergency medical service calls are increasing because of the nursing homes in Methuen, an increasing number of vehicle accidents, and an increasing elderly population in the City.

There is a larger boat stationed on the Merrimack River that is shared by the Fire and Police Departments. It is used for rescue and fire fighting on the water. The smaller boat owned by the Fire Department and transported by truck is used for rescue on smaller bodies of water in the City, but is also used on the Merrimack River.

Communications systems in the Fire Department are currently in transition, shifting to wireless technology. There is a data base maintained by the Department showing items like roads, buildings and fire hydrant locations. Each fire truck has a wireless tablet with a touch screen to communicate with the data base. In addition the Department uses conventional radios and dispatchers to communicate by voice when vehicles are on the road. In Fiscal Year 2006 Methuen expended \$6,558,259 on the Fire Department and its services.²⁶.

FUTURE PLANS / NEEDS The Fire Department's most immediate needs are to replace the East End Fire Station, to replace the older trucks, and to provide additional storage space for the records that accumulate year to year. Currently the Department is making-do by storing files in bathroom space and in the attic of the Central Fire Station with a pull-down ladder. The Department keeps files for seven to nine years and keeps accumulating files, through the permitting operations for which it is responsible. The Department has a record scanning program in place to convert files from hard copy to electronic copy, but it still needs more storage space.

Built in 1918, the East End Fire Station is in poor condition and is too small to house the larger vehicles of the Fire Department. It was flooded with raw sewage during the recent floods, which is the 6th time the basement was flooded. The Central Fire Station was built in 1898 but is in better condition than the East End Station. However, the ladder truck is too heavy for the floor of the Central Station and the building's electrical system is quite old and needs frequent maintenance. The Central Station is one of Methuen's historically important buildings, and with its tower is a well known landmark in the City. It does however, get heavy use as the headquarters and base for an engine company of the Department. In the longer term the Fire Department should move out, and it should be preserved as an historic asset in the City. There is a possibility that the Fire Department and Police Department will combine their headquarters in a new public safety building, to be built possibly at the site of the existing Police Station.

Police Department

The Police Department has eighty-eight full time police officers (sixty-three police officers, twelve sergeants, seven lieutenants, four captains, one deputy chief and one chief). The support staff by major category and vehicle inventory are as follows:

²⁶ from Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, 2006 figures.

Table 45: Police Department Support Staff

Staff Category	#
Head dispatcher	1
Dispatcher	9
Principal clerk	1
Senior clerk	1
Head clerks	2
Confidential secretary	1
Administrative aide	1
Parking control officer	1
Total Support Staff	17

Table 46: Police Department Vehicles

Vehicle Type	#
Administrative vehicles	6
Light trailer	1
SSB vehicles	2
Speed board/sign trailers	2
Jet ski's	2
Detective cars	4
Boats	2
Undercover vehicles	6
All terrain vehicles (ATVs)	2
M/c trailer	1
Motorcycles	4
Firearms range trailer	1
Incident command vehicle	1
NSB cars	13
Patrol vehicles (including (school/traffic/cp/supervisors) several equipped for K-9 operations	13
Total	60

The Police Department is located in the Quinn Building on Hampshire Street just off of Broadway south of its intersection with State Route 213. The Department consists of:

- 1) The patrol division, located in the South Wing. This entails the Division Commander, the Commanding Officers office and the dispatch area and evidence retention area. Also located there are the squad room, locker room, and men's room/shower, and the holding area, which encompasses the male holding cells, female and juvenile holding cells. It also includes the booking area as well as the fingerprinting photographing and breathalyzer room.
- 2) The lower level has the evidence room and storage as well as police firearms room. The workout room is also on this level as well as a locker room. The first aid supplies are stored in a separate room. The garage is down stairs as well with storage areas built in. There is a room for the firearms maintenance as well as storage. The Special Operations Unit (SOU) occupies an area for equipment storage. There is an area for records storage in the garage area as well as in the hallway outside of the garage. There is also the alarm room and radio storage area on the ground floor.
- 3) Across the foyer from the South Wing is the North Wing. The records room is located in this area as well as IT, support services, detectives, The Deputy Chief and the Chiefs administrative aide. The Chiefs office and Personal Secretary are located in this area.
- 4) The neighborhood services office is on the second floor of the Quinn Building, which is approximately 500 sq. ft., as well as an office in the old engineering area that is approximately 150 square ft.

5) The Health Department and Conservation office occupies two areas on the upper level of the Quinn Building. The IT Department maintains a server in an office outside of the Building Inspectors area. The City Nurse has an office located outside of Sanborn Hall.

Over the last five years the number of calls handled by the Police Department has increased, although there was a drop in total calls from 2004 to 2005. Total calls and calls by major categories are shown on Table 47.

Table 47: Police Calls by Major Type 2001-2005

Type of Major Calls	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Crime Related	3,297	3,003	2,970	2,370	2,831
Medical	2,490	2,332	2,312	2,198	2,598
Alarms	3,073	2,948	2,482	2,457	2,208
911 Call Related	2,315	2,669	2,363	2,074	2,034
Motor Vehicle Accident	1,698	1,802	1,899	1,578	1,753
Total Major Calls	12,873	2,754	2,026	10,677	11,424
Total All Police Calls	30,663	30,755	35,515	52,634	44,713

The Police Department conducts special programs such as drug education and community outreach. The Department conducts several crime watch meetings throughout the City on a regular basis as well as having several public safety tables or booths at various events. The officers assigned to the schools also teach drug and alcohol awareness programs along with other safety programs such as winter safety, gun safety and how to handle dealing with strangers at the appropriate age levels.

FUTURE PLANS/NEEDS The Police Department is extremely overcrowded in its assigned space. The Department should have at least twice the square footage it has now. The Quinn Building is extremely outdated, for example there are not enough phone and computer lines to set up needed equipment. The lower level North Wing contains the Detective Division as well as the IT and Support Services Division and the Court and Licensing, all in small spaces. In addition the space is not efficient. The Detectives occupy two areas with the supervision in a separate office from the investigators. These two areas should be joined together. The Evidence area comes under Support Services. The Evidence room is both upstairs in a safe in the IT area and downstairs in the basement area. This is not conducive to good security or continuity. Evidence is also stored in the Court Supervisors safe. The locker rooms are spread over two floors as well as in hallways.

Security could be jeopardized with the number of doors into and out of the building as well as the condition of the doors. Bathrooms are small and in desperate need of renovations. There is still asbestos in the building though tests have been done on the air, the asbestos is still in view and could possibly become compromised. In general the Quinn building is in need of extensive renovations and repairs, such as the windows, roof. The Neighborhood Services Bureau (NSB) on the second floor was the computer crimes unit and drug officers work space needs phone and computer lines installed. The roll call room needs updating. There is also a need for an interrogation room with audio and video capability as well as the other items noted. Any large meeting the Department holds, such as full staff meetings and community meetings must be held in another building such as the Nevins Library. The roof has sprung several leaks over the past and the ceilings in the North Wing area are made of metal and continually fall down. The air-conditioning and heating systems are inadequate and make it nearly impossible to keep a consistent temperature in the building.

The Police Department uses the two tier parking lot in the rear of the Quinn Building to accommodate all of its personal vehicles with the lower tier for cruiser parking to keep them out of the elements. A sally port is needed to bring prisoners in and out safely instead of through the upper booking area. Additionally the Department does not have any interview or interrogations rooms, has no waiting room, and as mentioned, has no space available to hold larger meetings. There have been attempts to use the Nevins Library for various meetings however, there is a heavy usage at the library and the Department has had difficulty obtaining a room during business hours. At the present time members of the public must wait in the front foyer area. There is no heat or air-conditioning and the area is unsuitable as a waiting area.

In summary, the top priority for the Police Department is a new facility that would accommodate a department of the size needed by the City of Methuen. In Fiscal 2006 \$7,285,317 was expended on the Police Department and its services.²⁷

OTHER MUNICIPAL FACILITIES

NEVINS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

The Nevins Memorial Library is centrally located at 305 Broadway in a beautiful historic building. The library is an example of Romanesque Revival architecture and has been cited as “possibly one of the best-preserved examples of late-Victorian library architecture in this country.”²⁸ It is on the National Register of Historic Places and in the Searles Tenney Nevins Historic District. The building, the books and an endowment to run the library were donated by the Nevins Family as a gift to the Town in the late 1800s. Since then the library is one of 66 libraries statewide, which is run as a private non-profit, that is, through a public-private partnership between the City and the Library Trustees who manage the Trust.

The Nevins Library runs on a diversified funding model with an overall budget of about \$1.2 million per year. Support from the municipality is a single-line item in the City budget (FY06 appropriation was \$800,000), which covers all utilities, some building maintenance, some materials expenditures, network member fees, office supplies and approximately 75% of staff salaries and benefits. Additional revenue for library operations comes from the State Aid to Public Libraries program, from library fines and fees, grants and gifts, and from the trust fund. Methuen residents have free access to the library, although it is not municipally owned and controlled, and the city can and does appropriate funds for its maintenance and enhancement.

The library completed a \$7 million addition and renovation project in 2002. In order to most efficiently raise funds for the library expansion the library building was leased to the City for a period of 25 years or until the bond is paid off. A new public entity -- the Methuen Board of Library Commissioners (made up of the Library Trustees) -- was established to oversee the construction and other building matters.

The renovations and new addition resulted in an additional 22,000 square feet to the original building (for a total of close to 40,000 square feet) including over 190 seats, 4 meeting rooms, 39 public

²⁷ From Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, 2006 figures.

²⁸ from The Nevins Memorial Library, Plan for Services, Facilities and Resources: 2007 – 2011, p.10.

computers, private offices for all managers, large work spaces for most departments, a silent study area, and areas for table seating and group study.

Following the renovation, the number of library staff almost doubled, circulation doubled, foot traffic tripled and interlibrary loan increased more than one thousand percent. The library currently houses 65 computers including 39 for public use, and 5 laptops for computer trainings. During 2005, 120,000 people visited the library, a 350% increase in attendance over the numbers recorded in the library's 1995 Long Range Plan.

The library is open Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm. Friday and Saturday from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm; it is closed on Sundays and holidays. There is public seating for 190 people throughout the building, excluding the four meeting rooms.

Meeting Rooms. The meeting rooms are the Hall, which has a full proscenium stage, a viewing balcony that holds 250 people, the Trustees Room on the Main Floor which is a conference room seating 10 people, the Garden Room adjacent to the Children's Room which seats a maximum of 60 persons and the Group Study Room in the Children's Room which seats up to 15 people. During the year 2004 more than 500 meetings and programs were held in the library's meeting rooms.

Collection

The library collection includes books, periodicals, tapes, videos, CDs, and audio books, Print holdings total 85,224 books. The library owns 3,534 video/DVDs, and 2,947 audio music and book titles. Periodical subscriptions number over 200. Overall the collection is considered undersized when compared with collection size for libraries in communities over 40,000 population. Most patrons do not realize or experience the small size of the collection due to the library's ability to access materials efficiently and quickly through the inter-library delivery system. Membership in the Merrimack Valley Library Consortium gives patrons access via the public access catalog, to 3 million holdings in the 30 libraries in the network.

Circulation

During the fiscal year ending in June of 2005 (NANCY: where is 06 data?), the Nevins Library circulated 256,917 items. This represented a 94% increase in circulation since 2002 (the year the new library opened). Included in this number of items circulated are 51,638 items that were loaned to, and borrowed from, other libraries, and handled through the statewide regional delivery service as well as items circulated to New Hampshire residents. The Library is also a member of the Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library System and is a participant in all regional activities, most significantly the Inter-Library Loan & Delivery System upon which the library depends for much of what residents ask for in terms of materials. The following table demonstrates the increase in circulation over time.

Table 48: Circulation Trends: Nevins Memorial Library

Year	1954	1984	1994	2004
Total # of Items	50,189	91,699	133,081	256,917

Programs

Adult programs include book clubs, writing workshops, knitting groups and lecture series. The library works with Methuen schools, local daycare providers, pre-schools and homeschoilers to provide a variety of children's programs. In FY04 the Library sponsored 296 programs for children with a total

attendance of 8,710. Children's programs include story times, after school programming and summer reading programs, homework help and computer availability for teens.

Staff

Staff members are employed by the Board of Trustees and are not City employees. Forty-two people are now employed by the Library including the Library Director, Administrative Assistant, Facilities Manager, 4 Department Heads, 8 staff librarians, 13 Library Assistants/Aides, 11 Pages, and 3 Maintenance Staff. Of the 42 staff members, 12 are full-time (35 hours per week).

F U T U R E

P L A N S / N E E D S :

As a result of the major renovation and addition to the historic library, there is currently enough space to house existing programming as well as additional collections and programs into the foreseeable future. There are however other service and facility needs as described in the Library's Long Term Plan; these include:

Short Term Needs

- the need for additional parking (up to double the existing for peak usage). Anywhere from 25-30 additional spaces are needed at least once a week and another 50-75 at peak usage.
- The library administration is actively working on completing a construction close out, that is, on addressing the various items left on the punch list resulting from a default on the part of the original contractor. These items include ADA compliance, but should be completed in the short term.
- The library administration is working on addressing concerns expressed in a community survey including the need for interior signage and the design of an exterior garden space.

Long Term Needs

- As the library is heavily dependent on a regional inter-library borrowing system and it is very likely that there will soon be restrictions especially on lending media and new materials, the library will need to acquire some of these materials in its own collection. It has the space to accommodate these in the foreseeable future.
- One of the library's long-term goals is to expand its collections and programs to represent the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of the community. Again the space is available.
- The library also intends on expanding its arts programming and programs for teens.
- The library is currently discussing with the Historic Commission the possibility of merging some of the more appropriate materials to display them at the library. This would require some specialty shelving, etc., but perhaps in the future a local history room could be added on to the existing building in order to house additional collections.
- Additional space may be needed for computers in the future as more and more people want to download audio and soon, video materials; lines are already beginning to form in the library for this service.

COUNCIL ON AGING

The Methuen Department of Elder Affairs provides programs, services and activities for Methuen's approximately 8,000 elders. The Council on Aging, a seven member board appointed by the Mayor, has among its main objectives to advocate on behalf of Methuen's seniors, to set policy for the operation of the Senior Center, to provide information and health services in cooperation with other City Departments, and to enhance the quality of life for senior citizens. The office of the Council on Aging is located at the Methuen Senior Activity Center.

Senior Activity Center

The Senior Activity Center is located at 77 Lowell Street in a one-story building constructed in 1974. It is one of the first such centers in the state designed as a senior center and has served as a model for many others. The building was privately financed and will eventually revert to City ownership. The City appropriates funding and maintains the building, covering almost 98% of the Center's costs; the remainder is covered through fundraising.

The Senior Activity Center is extremely active and popular with Methuen seniors. Approximately 2,000 seniors use the center – 250 – 400 people come by bus, drive or get dropped off every day (code limits the number of people in the building at any one time to 250). The building's spaces are laid out in such a manner so as to allow multiple activities to occur simultaneously:

First Floor	Basement
Large auditorium with stage	Lounge and kitchenette
Kitchen	Pool Room
2 classrooms	Shuffle Board/Computer Lab
Clinic	Woodworking shop
Thrift Shop	Ceramics/Kiln Studio
Gift Shop	
Conference Room	

Staffing

The Senior Center is managed by the Executive Director and three full time staff persons and two part time staff members (all paid by the City). In addition, more than 215 volunteers donate over 20,000 hours to help provide a wide range of services including Meals on Wheels, rides to medical appointments and friendly visitor home visits to the homebound.

Table 49: Volunteer Services: 2005

Program	Services Provided Annually
Meals on Wheels	41,411 meals
Congregate Hot Lunches	12,781 hot lunches
Rides to Medical Appointments	576 rides
Visits to Homebound Seniors	1884 visits

In 2005 the Center organized 91 special events with 9,247 seniors in attendance. More than 14,241 seniors participated in daily recreational activities such as shuffleboard, card playing, bingo and others.

Funding

Thirty-two senior volunteers are the Center's Trustees and they are engaged in fundraising for the upkeep and maintenance of the Senior Center. Funding is from the Operation Able through Elder Services.

Services

The Council on Aging which runs the Senior Activity Center provides the following services: benefits counseling, daily hot lunch program and meals on wheels, transportation for medical appointments, senior/disabled property tax relief program, financial and retirement planning workshops, lending library, gift shop, thrift shop, educational and life enrichment programs, choral group, advocacy workshops, trips, weekly visits to homebound, grief counseling, free health aid equipment loans (e.g.

wheelchairs, canes, walkers), information and referrals, exercise programs, outreach services, income tax assistance, intergenerational programs with Methuen schools, weekly health clinics, telephone outreach, and a range of social and recreational activities.

Social and Recreation Activities

The Council on Aging (COA) provides a wide range of social and recreational activities including an exercise program with a variety of offerings such as aerobics, fitness, yoga, dance, weight training and tai chi. All classes are offered on a first come, first served basis. The Center offers twelve exercise classes; attendance in these classes has been increasing significantly.

Health Care

The Council on Aging partners with other town departments and agencies to provide additional services to Methuen's seniors. The COA in conjunction with HomeCare VNA and the Methuen Health Department offers a comprehensive health clinic Tuesday mornings (9:00 – 11:00 am). Elders are served on a first come, first served basis. Health clinic services include vitamin B12 injections, prescription drug counseling, blood pressure monitoring, and nutrition guidance. Psychological counseling is also available.

Other health programs offered throughout the year include: cholesterol screening, vision and hearing screenings, nutrition workshops, flu shots, weight management programs, and health fairs. The Council on Aging also coordinates with the Public Health Nurse on an as needed basis.

The COA organizes volunteers to visit homebound Methuen elders. Volunteers also visit at nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

Hot Lunch and Meals on Wheels

The Methuen Senior Activity Center offers a hot lunch program Monday through Friday at 11:30 am. The meals are prepared at the Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational Technical High School and delivered hot to the Center every morning (which is why reservations are required). The Meals on Wheels Project is designed to provide a hot meal five days a week to those Methuen elders who qualify. Volunteers deliver meals each day between 11:30 am and 1:00 pm. Some frozen meals are provided to qualifying elders for the weekends. The Merrimack Valley Nutrition Project is in part funded by the Older Americans Act as granted by Elder Services of the Merrimack Valley, Inc. Approximately 40 – 60 people come daily for meals at the center and 195 meals are delivered every day to homebound seniors.

Transportation

Another important service provided by the COA is transportation for medical appointments. Rides are provided through the Northern Essex Elder Transportation (N.E.E.T.) Program. Drivers are volunteers who are reimbursed at a fixed rate per mile.

The City of Methuen also contracts with the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority (MVRTA) to provide busses and EZ Trans services (curb-to-curb services for citizens who cannot use the fixed route bus system due to disability). EZ Transit also offers non-ADA services to residents over the age of 60. Due to a significant decline in state subsidies, the MVRTA doubled the cost of ride coupons during the fall of 2002. The City reimbursed the Methuen Council on Aging with state grant funds so that it may provide lower cost tickets to residents in need. This program serves over 150 low and moderate-income seniors and eligible disabled individuals.

Services for Minority Seniors

The state office of Elder Affairs provided grant funding for a multi-lingual Outreach Worker. While the bilingual outreach staff member was contacted for help with citizen papers, for the most part minority seniors, especially Latino seniors attend the Lawrence Senior Center for social events. The Lawrence Center acts as a regional center for the Latino senior community and is where many of Methuen Latino seniors' friends are. Some minority seniors participate in programs at the Methuen Center and at the Arlington Neighborhood Services Building located at One Broadway.

Intergenerational Programming

The Center collaborates with the CGS grammar school for Pen Pals and the Methuen High School for the Adopt-a-Grandparent Program. The number of high school students participating has been increasing significantly. The Methuen Council on Aging was awarded the state "Fran Pratt Award" for outstanding intergenerational programming.

Shops

Somewhat unusual for a senior center is the existence of two shops in the center. The Gift Shop sells all homemade items made by Methuen seniors, items such as baby sweaters, quilts, afghans, and homemade dolls. Participating seniors help defray the cost of upkeep and maintenance of the Gift Shop by contributing 10% of their total sales for each month. The Gift Shop is open to the public Monday through Friday from 9:30 am until 3:30 pm.

The Senior Thrift Shop sells "gently worn" clothing, household items, books, etc. All items in the shop are donated and the proceeds are used to pay for maintenance, upkeep and utilities. The shop is staffed by a manager and more than 20 senior volunteers and is open from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. The Thrift Shop generates \$1,000 - \$2,000 per month in income.

Information Dissemination

Information regarding activities at the Senior Center is posted on the web site and a monthly "What's Up at the Senior Center" show that provides viewers with a detailed schedule of each month's activities.

F U T U R E

Short term

P L A N S / N E E D S : There are currently approximately 60 parking spaces; the Center reports needing double that amount. They have tried to purchase a house on an adjacent lot that was recently for sale, but the cost was too high. There is some on-street parking available, but also seniors do not wish to/are unable to walk long distances to the reach the center.

The Thrift Shop is very successful and could use double its existing space.

The Center will be remodeling the kitchen in the next couple of years and the downstairs air quality (including air conditioning) and plumbing need improving.

Long term

While the Center is extremely popular and well used, the new generation of aging baby boomers will have other expectations regarding aesthetics of the environment as well as programs.

- The center will need to phase out activities according to the degree of participation (e.g. the current woodworking shop may soon need to be converted to a fitness space with gym equipment

- In general fitness may be increasingly more in demand

Health needs will increase and therefore the clinic will be used more and will most likely need to be larger. Alternatively, the Center Staff could use a satellite location on the other side of town (this is how flu shots are currently handled).

Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Inc.

The Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Inc. (MAN, Inc.) is run by a non-profit Community Development Corporation that since 1995 has had as its sole focus programming for the children and youth of the Arlington neighborhood. MAN, Inc. responds to the problems many families in the neighborhood face as a result of their low incomes and other related circumstances by providing affordable childcare, a centrally located facility (most can walk to), activities, homework supervision, free meals and a safe haven for many children who otherwise would be alone while their parents are at work. For many children of the neighborhood their primary caretaker is a single working mother.

The building in which the center is located is deficient in many ways including the fact that it is in need of significant repairs and that it is not large enough to serve the growing number of children who need the services provided at the center. More specifically the MAN, Inc. facility provides:

Services

After School Homework Center

The facility operates as an after school homework center five days a week from 2:00 – 7:00 p.m. Approximately 70 school children attend the facility daily. Area college students, staff and volunteers offer their supervision and help to high school students arriving at 2:00, middle school students arriving at 3:00 and elementary school children arriving at 3:30. In addition to providing help with homework in English and Spanish (40% of the children are Latino, 20% are other minority groups including Vietnamese, Indian and African American), MAN, Inc. is able through a number of grants and donations, to provide school supplies for school projects for all of these children (which their families might not otherwise be able to afford).

Satellite Library

MAN, Inc. also acts as a neighborhood/satellite library receiving approximately 100 books per month from the Nevins Public Library (which rotate on a monthly basis). Dunkin Donuts has donated computers and reference materials for the children to use as most of them do not have these at home.

Saturday Activities

On Saturdays, MAN, Inc. provides movies, crafts and lunch to approximately 45 children. Children must be 5 years and older to attend or otherwise be accompanied by an adult.

Summer Recreation

For nine weeks during the summer the Center provides recreational programming and free breakfast and lunch to over 100 kids daily. Five college age youth from the Recreation Department and volunteers and staff from the MAN, Inc. staff the program. Grant funding for this is available as the numbers of low and moderate-income people in the neighborhood are increasing.

MAN, Inc. Center

The building, located at 1 Broadway near the Lawrence line, is a former pumping station. The facility is approximately 700 square feet., and its maximum capacity is 70 children. Frequently children are turned away or rushed to finish their homework to make room for others waiting.

The City procured the architectural services of David L. King Architects in the fall of 2005 to design the renovation of the existing neighborhood center and the construction of an approximately 1,000 square foot addition in the rear of the building. This option was rejected because it was determined to be too expensive (approximately \$600,000 for 1,000 s.f.).

FUTURE PLANS / NEEDS The Center is currently working with the Mayor's office to construct a new Community Center using modular construction at the Tenney Street Park located more centrally within the neighborhood, about 3 blocks from its current location. The Park has a number of recreational facilities including a handball and basketball court.

The plan is to construct a 3,300 square foot facility with \$500,000 in grant funds. Most of the building (2,300 square feet) will be used as a homework center, small library and kitchenette. In order to remain self sufficient, the plan is to rent out 1,000 of these square feet to a social service agency. The rent from this arrangement would then be used to pay for the utilities of the Community Center.

PUBLIC MEETING SPACES

The City of Methuen has a number of meeting spaces available for use by the public. They vary in capacity from small to medium to large.

Facility	Approx. Capacity (# of people)
Searles Building <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great Hall ▪ 2nd floor conference 	100 30
Quinn Building, Sanborn Hall	80
Nevins Memorial Library <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Great Hall/auditorium ▪ Trustees conference room ▪ Garden room ▪ Group Study Room 	250 10 60 15
Senior Center	??
High School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cafeteria + auditorium Field House * 	1,000
4 elementary school cafeterias & auditoriums	varies

* The High School field house was set up by the Red Cross as a regional emergency shelter during the recent flooding (spring 2006) and it accommodated approximately 1000 people.

Information Technology

The Information Technology Department, housed in the Searles Building manages the information technology of the City of Methuen. They provide the resources, systems and services needed by the City and help city departments to identify new information technology strategies that will enable them to best serve the city's residents.

The City of Methuen is relatively state-of-the-art in terms of the technological infrastructure as well as the technological services it provides. In 2005, the Information Technology Department completed the following:

- Updated the City website
- Installed citywide telephone system (all phones and controllers are from the same vendor)
- Upgraded infrastructure of municipal buildings to support new telephone and data requirements
- Installed citywide fiber network allowing unlimited growth for data, voice and video
- Maintenance and upgrades to city desktop personal computers
- Installed with Treasury Department, a new Tax/Collections System
- Provided new security from spyware
- Maintenance upgrades to the control room for city cable channel
- On-going performance upgrades of the network
- Upgraded firewall software
- Increased city web site content and provide new links to give citizens easier access to services
- Provided on-going improvement in Disaster Recover Plan for city's critical data

F U T U R E Short Term

P L A N S / N E E D S The Information Technology Department has the following short-term goals:

- Complete design and analysis for a cash receipts (point of sale) system
- Add necessary hardware to citywide fiber optic infrastructure for video security
- Improve software for channel 8 broadcasts
- Analysis of new building permits system for building, conservation and health
- Maintenance and upgrades to network, city desktop PCs, city servers, City Recovery Plan and make frequent database backups

Long Term

- Developing a plan on how to maximize usage of the citywide network and website could be a long-term goal.

Home for Historical Collection

The City has a large and varied collection of historical artifacts including artwork, statues, articles of clothing, maps, etc. and needs a place to store and display these. In the spring of 2006, the Mayor appointed a Task Force to look for a home for the historical collection.

F U T U R E

P L A N S / N E E D S : The Mayor's Task Force has identified several potential sites and is in the process of conducting a preliminary analysis of their appropriateness and feasibility for housing the City's historical collection.

UTILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The Methuen Department of Public Works is headquartered in the Searles City Hall Building and directs and coordinates the work of six divisions. It employs about 90 people. Under the Public Works Director are the City Engineer, the Superintendent of Water Distribution, the Superintendent of Water

Treatment, the Superintendent of Highways, the Superintendent of Fleet Maintenance and the Superintendent of Environmental Management. These divisions are responsible for the water and sewer systems, managing materials recycling, maintaining twenty-one parks and Forest Lake, maintaining the 34 acre Elmwood Cemetery, maintaining the City's vehicle fleet including police and fire vehicles, constructing, reconstructing and maintaining roadways and associated drainage under the jurisdiction of the City, and maintaining ten City buildings. The School Department builds and maintains its own buildings, but the Public Works Department maintains its vehicles. The ten buildings maintained by the Department of Public Works are:

The Searles (City Hall) Building
The Quinn Building (Police Station)
Four Fire Stations

City Yard Buildings
The Water Treatment Plant
The Water Distribution System Building

Some of the issues currently facing the Public Works Department include the following:

- The Osgood Street Park was destroyed during the May 2006 Flood. The City submitted renovation costs to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and is awaiting a decision. The City recently processed a large number of applications for emergency aid from private property owners who suffered flood damage.
- 175 City-owned vehicles are maintained by the Department of Public Works. Many of these, especially Department of Public Works and Fire Department vehicles need to be replaced.
- Contracts for trash and materials recycling have been secured through Fiscal Year 2009 with no adjustment for changes in fuel prices. There is no plan to relocate the transfer station or reuse the landfill, at least in the near term. Discussions have been held with Senator Baddour and MassHighway officials about possibly constructing ramps off of Route 213 that directly lead to the transfer station. This would reduce truck traffic on Howe Street and create the possibility of inviting other communities to utilize Methuen's transfer station (in an effort to regionalize this potential revenue-generating function).
- Eighty-five percent of City roads have been resurfaced using one of the following processes:
 - Reclamation and Overlay
 - Hot Topping in Place and Microsurfacing

Methuen recently passed a \$10 million bond authorization to support the road and drainage maintenance program for the 180 miles of City-owned roadways. In Fiscal Year 2006 Methuen expended \$8,763,791 on its public works department and programs²⁹.

METHUEN WATER SYSTEM

The Water Distribution System is headed by a Superintendent answering to the Director of Public Works. There are thirty-five authorized personnel dealing with water systems that answer to the Superintendent. The system has three major divisions; water treatment, the water registrar and a maintenance division. The water registrar is responsible for water metering. The system has 13,600 customers served by 216 mile of water pipe. Virtually the entire City is served by the water system

²⁹ from Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services

although there is a small area in the North End along the Haverhill border that does not have hydrants for fire fighting. It does have City water connected to homes in that area.

The system has 1630 hydrants that are inspected and flushed at least once a year and twice a year near schools. The Department of Public Works is implementing an extensive program of hydrant/valve replacement and repair. There are three water storage tanks. There are no low pressure areas in the City. The newest tank in the East District cost about \$4 million. This third tank increased water storage capacity by 4 million gallons. There are three active and one emergency pumping stations. There is an active maintenance program for replacement of water pipe. The City has spent \$1.2 million on the distribution system recently. There is also an active program of leak detection undertaken every other year. Leaks are not a big problem.

The Water Treatment System is headed by a Superintendent also answering to the Director of Public Works. The water source is the Merrimack River. Water is treated before being distributed. Currently the treatment plant has a capacity of 10 million gallons per day although current demand varies from 5 to 9 million gallons per day. There is a two to three year plan and program to increase the pumping and treatment capacity to 15 million gallons per day.

F U T U R E

The water system will continue its current program of replacing, installing and repairing water lines and hydrants as needed, and testing for leaks in the system.

P L A N S / N E E D S :

THE METHUEN SEWER SYSTEM

Methuen is a member of the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District which also includes Lawrence, Andover, North Andover and Salem, New Hampshire. The wastewater treatment plant for the District is located in North Andover, with discharges into the Merrimack River. The treatment capacity of the plant is 52 million gallons of wastewater per day. Currently it is treating about 30 million gallons per day. It also treats about 50,000 gallons of septic per day from its member communities and from other communities. In Fiscal Year 2006 Methuen paid \$2,638,097³⁰ to the District for wastewater treatment and disposal. In that year the District charged 99 cents per thousand gallons to treat sewage. Methuen has 105 miles of sewer lines to collect the wastewater and transport it to the treatment plant. Methuen does not have a Superintendent of Sewer Systems or a Sewer Division. It relies on its engineering staff to deal with small sewage issues, and the staff of the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District to deal with larger sewage issues.

F U T U R E

The sewer system will continue to hook existing and new development into the sewer network and to monitor inflow and infiltration of water into the pipes.

P L A N S / N E E D S :

Major maintenance will be done by the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District.

Negotiations are underway with the Town of Dracut to extend a sewer line along North Lowell Street in the West End of Methuen to allow Dracut to send sewage to the wastewater treatment plant in North Andover. Both Methuen and Dracut are committed in principle to this arrangement. Negotiations might take several more months and design and construction completed within one or two years after that. The primary impact in Methuen would be to allow for the possibility of smaller lot sizes and induce some more residential development in the Wheeler Street and North Lowell

³⁰ from the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District web site

Street area of the West End. However, this could only occur through rezoning as this area is now zoned Agriculture-Conservation, requiring an 80,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size.”

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following are some key observations to take into account when developing recommendations for the master plan.

Aging facilities will need to be renovated and/or newly constructed to support the provision of effective and efficient city services. Shifts in the demographics of the city, including a projected growth in the number of elderly residents as well as an increasingly ethnically diverse population will impact the types of services needed in the future.

Residents, when asked if they could do one thing to improve public facilities and services in Methuen gave the following top four answers:

- Upgrade the high school
- Public safety building and police sub-stations throughout the city
- Create a Visitor center
- Expand afternoon and summer programs for kids

Analysis of existing conditions and trends along with discussions with Methuen City staff and Department heads confirm these needs.

PRIORITY COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES NEEDED

- A renovated high school
- A solution to alleviate overcrowding in the elementary schools
- Improved police and fire facilities
- A new Community Center for the Arlington neighborhood

Schools

While each of the four **K-8 schools** have been built and/or extensively renovated in the last 15 years, school enrollment and other factors have resulted in the need for additional space. While the new school facilities are in very good condition they are quickly reaching their capacity in terms of student enrollments and in some cases have already exceeded it. The K-8 schools were cited repeatedly and consistently in public workshops as one of the aspects residents most appreciated about Methuen.

Actual enrollments have consistently exceeded projections. This is due to a number of factors including the fact that the new schools have attracted young families, some non-Methuen children “illegally” attending the schools, and an increasing Latino population. The number of children attending the schools with Limited English Proficiency and whose Family Language is Not English has been steadily rising over the last decade. There is every indication that enrollments will continue to increase over the next few years. In addition to the rising enrollment figures, student numbers fluctuate significantly throughout the year. This makes it difficult to plan and determine facility needs. The School Department has formed a Task Force which is developing new enrollment projections to assist in more accurate planning for the future.

The increasing number of school children and the growing diverse ethnic population places additional demands on space at the schools as well as creating a need for support services such as homework centers and other after school programs. The current ***Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Inc. facility*** is woefully inadequate to meet these needs; it is significantly undersized and requires more resources to serve the growing numbers of students who will need a safe haven and homework supervision after school. Residents participating in town-wide visioning workshops felt that this center provides an important service and should be expanded. At a workshop held with the residents of the Arlington neighborhood, participants unanimously felt that a new facility with expanded services was their number one priority.

The increase in the number of students will also result in an increase in the need for before and after school care services. Facilities such as the ***Pleasant Valley School*** will need to be expanded (there is already a waiting list for placement), and additional programs will need to be provided.

As the number of youth increase in the City, the need for a ***Youth Center*** may become more relevant.

Methuen High School is the only one of the City's schools that has not undergone renovation in recent years. In addition to capacity issues, the school's open space plan has created problems for accreditation and even safety and security issues. Approximately 100 students each year graduate from eighth grade in the Methuen public school system and then go elsewhere for high school. The need for a new or renovated facility was brought up in the public workshops as one of the main ways of improving the city overall and as the "number one thing" residents would do to improve community facilities in Methuen.

An increase in ***ethnically diverse population*** will result in additional need for Adult Learning services such as English as a Second Language and adult basic education classes. The current ***Methuen Adult Learning Center*** will be not be able to accommodate the anticipated future increase as it already has approximately 300 individuals on the waiting list at any one time and no computers to train and test students. In public workshops held for the purpose of soliciting resident input into the master plan, residents supported expanding the Adult Learning Center.

The ***Library*** was mentioned in town-wide visioning questionnaires as being among residents "favorite things in Methuen." Since the library's renovation in 2002, usage has increased dramatically (e.g. foot traffic tripled). The library will play an even larger role in the community in the future. It is in the process of making some changes to better reflect the changes in the ethnic, linguistic and religious make-up of Methuen's population. These changes include adding Spanish and other languages to the library's collection, conducting outreach to do programming for these newcomers and to provide English as A Second Language classes. The library may increasingly become the site for adult education and will therefore need more computers and related space. The change in these services will eventually impact the library's space needs, but the foreseeable future, the building is in a position to accommodate an increase in programs, collection and services.

With a significant increase in the Latino population of the City, it may be time to consider ***bi-lingual signage***; perhaps this will be an opportunity for all to learn two languages.

Police and Fire Facilities

In a visioning workshop held to solicit resident input on Community Facilities and Services, when asked "If you could do one thing to improve the community facilities in Methuen what would it be?" -- "a new public safety building" was the number two response (after "a new high school").

The existing Fire Stations, especially the East End, but also the main headquarters are inadequate in terms of space. The East End is in more immediate need of replacement as it is in poor condition and is too small to house the Fire Department's larger vehicles. The Central (headquarters) Station does not have adequate storage space for records and is in frequent need of maintenance. Record keeping has become an increasingly important part of the Fire Department's responsibilities because of its hazardous materials duties and emergency medical duties. The growing senior population in Methuen has resulted in an increase in the calls for service, especially for medical assistance.

The Police Station is located in the Quinn building, a building not designed to be a police station and one that does not readily support modern police functions, is overcrowded and is frequently in need of maintenance due to a leaky roof and failing HVAC system. The Police Department uses the two tier parking lot in the rear of the Quinn Building to accommodate all of its personal vehicles with the lower tier for cruiser parking to keep them out of the elements. A sally port is needed to bring prisoners in and out safely instead of through the upper booking area. If the Credit Union comes to the Quinn Building it will compromise the parking in front as well as creating a less controlled access condition to the building during the day. It will exacerbate the parking problem for the Quinn. Additionally the Department does not have any interview or interrogations rooms, and has no waiting room, and no space available to hold larger meetings. There have been attempts to the use the Nevins Library for various meetings; however, there is a heavy usage at the library and the Department has had difficulty obtaining a room during business hours. At the present time members of the public must wait in the front foyer area. There is no heat or air-conditioning and the area is unsuitable as a waiting area.

Seniors

The growing senior population will necessarily place pressure on the types, locations and amounts of services provided. While the current **Senior Center** facility is adequate to serve the needs of its current users, over time as the baby boomer population ages, services will need to be adapted to a different set of expectations. The center will have to retool itself in terms of the image, services and activities it offers so that it becomes more attractive to this new kind of senior. Adding more exercise classes, additional health care services (perhaps in a satellite location) and nighttime programming represent some of these possible changes.

Methuen will need to be more walkable, recreational facilities more accessible, and transportation services for handicapped elderly may need to be expanded.

When asked at the public forum what they felt might be needed for the elderly in the future, residents offered the following thoughts:

- Improved transportation for elderly and handicapped
- Assisted living facilities
- Expanded food service (e.g. Meals on Wheels)
- More intergenerational programming (e.g. work with the schools)
- Enhanced medical facilities/services

Public Utilities

Water supply, treatment and distribution are in good shape with adequate capacity to serve a growing population. The newest (3rd) water tank has aided in maintaining water pressure and increasing storage capacity. Water conservation is encouraged by the pricing system which charges lower per unit costs for

smaller consumption amounts. Water conservation is also aided by an active leak detection program throughout the system. There is a small area in the northeast part of town along the Haverhill border that lacks fire hydrants. With further development in this area this situation should be remedied by installation of hydrants by the City.

The wastewater disposal system is also in good shape, as part of a regional system with adequate capacity for growth. The one issue concerning wastewater disposal is an extension of a sewer line along North Lowell Street into Dracut to allow the eastern part of that town to be served by sewer. This extension will allow hookups to occur in Methuen in an area now served by private septic systems with large lot zoning (80,000 sq. ft. minimum lot size). There will be development pressures to reduce lot sizes governed by zoning bylaws, thereby creating a potential for more population growth than is currently anticipated this very desirable West End area of Methuen.

Solid waste disposal is currently handled by contract waste haulers taking trash to a regional waste-to-energy and recycling plant. Contracts have been secured for these services through Fiscal Year 2009 with no adjustment for changes in fuel prices. Methuen operates a transfer station for trash hauling at the old landfill on Huntington Avenue. There are no current plans to relocate the transfer station or reuse the landfill, at least in the near term. Discussions have been held with Senator Baddour and MassHighway officials about the possibility of constructing ramps off of Route 213 that directly lead to the transfer station. This would reduce truck traffic on Howe Street as well as create the possibility of inviting other communities to utilize Methuen's transfer station (in an effort to regionalize this potential revenue-generating function).

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

GOAL PFS-1: Continue to provide high quality services, facilities and infrastructure while balancing this with efficient resource management.

Objectives:

- *Upgrade and renovate aging facilities so that they support state-of-the-art provision of public safety services.*

Strategies:

PFS-1.1: Develop and implement a 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Update it annually.

PFS-1.2: Study various options for improving the police and fire stations including:

- New public safety building (combined police and fire)
- Renovate Quinn Building for Police Department
- Renovate the East End Fire Station
- Renovate the Central Fire Station
- Build a new building on the Quinn property

GOAL PFS-2: Continue to provide excellence in education, accommodate increasing enrollments and support learning with an appropriately designed school environment.

Objectives:

- *Ensure that the high school is an appropriately designed school that supports state-of-the-art learning.*
- *Ensure that the public schools are able to accommodate growing enrollments while keeping to small class size goals.*

Strategies:

PFS-2.1: Renovate or build a new high school.

PFS-2.2: Support the Superintendent's Task Force in their efforts to develop more accurate student enrollment projections. Study various options to determine how to alleviate perceived overcrowding at the elementary schools; options include:

- New elementary school
- Re-organize grades so that all Kindergarten is clustered together in a separate building
- Re-organize grades to include a middle school

GOAL PFS-3: Respond to accommodate a growing elderly population

Objectives:

- *Support the Council on Aging in its efforts to accommodate growing numbers of seniors.*
- *Meet the medical needs of the elderly population.*
- *Support the provision of affordable senior housing*
- *Expand affordable transportation options for seniors and handicapped individuals.*
- *Support the Senior Center in its efforts to expand and transform the services it provides to meet the different needs of baby boomer elders.*

Strategies:

PFS-3.1: Identify potential sites for a satellite senior center to be used primarily for medical purposes (e.g. clinic).

PFS-3.2: Consider developing town-owned/managed elderly housing.

PFS-3.3: Work with the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority and/or the Northern Essex Elder Transportation program

PFS-3.4: Renovate the Senior Center in order to provide more programming in the areas of physical fitness and medical services and to project a different image through a more modern aesthetic.

GOAL PFS-4: Respond to accommodate to an increasingly ethnically diverse population.**Objectives:**

- *Support the provision of English as a Second Language and other basic education courses.*
- *Improve communication with ethnic minorities living in the City.*
- *Determine alternative methods and strategies for the City to support the integration of ethnically diverse residents into the community.*

Strategies:

PFS-4.1: Support the expansion of the Methuen Adult Learning Center by identifying space and equipment needs and searching for alternative locations.

PFS-4.2: Explore additional ways of making connections between the Library, the schools, the pre-schools and adult learning opportunities.

PFS-4.3: Publish City materials describing facilities and services and other important messages in multiple languages. Consider bi-lingual signage in certain places in City buildings as well as throughout the City.

PFS-4.5: Hold visioning session, focus groups, and/or other outreach activities to determine what residents in the Arlington neighborhood feel are their most important issues.

GOAL PFS-5: Meet the needs of Methuen's youth**Objectives:**

- *Support and enhance their education.*
- *Provide opportunities for safe and supervised recreation and entertainment.*

Strategies:

PFS-5.1: Expand homework support and other before and after school programs.

PFS-5.2: Support the development of the new Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Center.

PFS-5.3: Increase coordination with the YMCA and other youth organizations.

PFS-5.4: Consider developing a Youth Center.

PFS-5.5: Provide more after school activities at the schools.

GOAL PFS-6: Improve communication between city departments as well as between the City and its residents.**Objectives:**

- *Develop a Communications Plan*

Strategies:

PFS-6.1: Determine how to maximize usage of the citywide fiber optic network and web site to disseminate and make accessible information inter/intra-departmentally as well as from the city to residents.

PFS-6.3: Establish an annual “Visit the Master Plan Meeting” inviting relevant Department Heads, Boards and Committees to discuss city-wide issues of concern.

NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION

One of the primary goals of the Master Plan is to determine ways to help preserve Methuen's character. Natural resources and the wildlife found in the city's open spaces and residential areas are defining aspects of that character and the quality of life of its citizens. Methuen is fortunate to have some remaining woodlands, a network of streams and wetlands and some other important remaining natural resource areas—including 3.4 miles of the Merrimack River along the East End and 4 miles along the West End, Forest Lake, Harris Brook, Bartlett Brook, Pine Island, Peat Meadow, the Spickett River, Reservoir Hill, Hawkes Brook, Bare Meadow Brook, Pie Hill, Lone Tree Hill, the Bird Sanctuary, several large forested areas, several wetland areas, and Daddy Frye Hill.

GEOLOGY, TOPOGRAPHY, AND SOILS

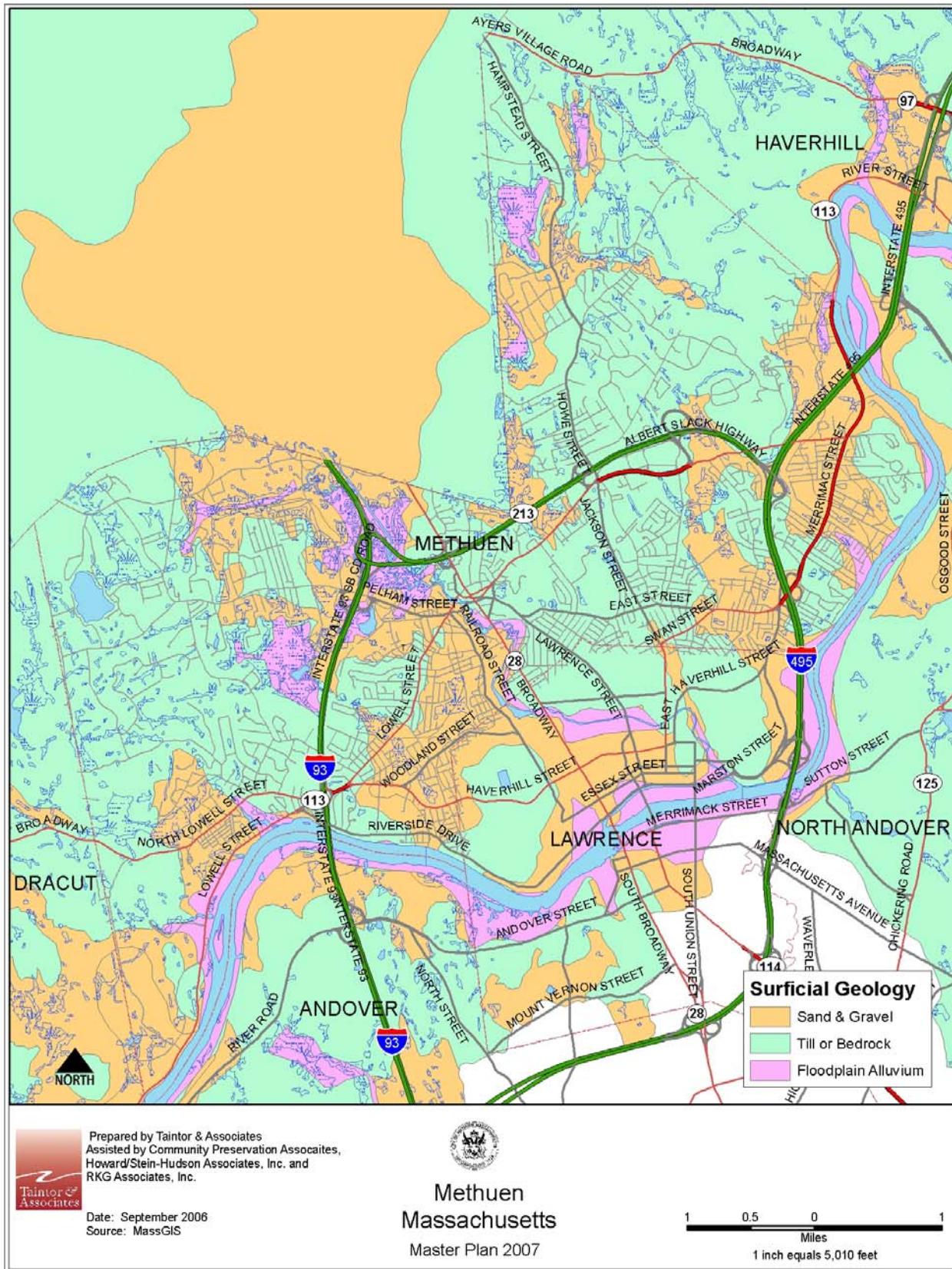
Surficial Geology

Surficial geology is the underlying basis for both natural systems and human development and provides important information about an area's environmental and economic potentials and vulnerabilities. The glaciers that covered New England more than 12,000 years ago left their mark on Methuen. The advance of the mile-thick layer of ice scraped some hills down to bedrock and its retreat left deposits of till, a mixture of stones, clay, and other material. Glacial till tends to have moderately or poorly drained soils with many stones and rocks. Areas of sand and gravel, which were deposited as outwash as the glaciers melted and retreated, lie between most of these till deposits and areas of bedrock. Floodplain alluvium deposits settled out onto flat areas or wetlands, like areas along the Merrimack River and the wetlands north of Pelham Street and east of I-93, after the glaciers retreated. These low-lying, water-borne deposits are generally not suitable for development. Because of the area's glacial legacy, many of the soils in Methuen tend to be poorly drained or rocky with the exception of those soils that developed over the sand and gravel and some till deposits.

Topography and Slope

Methuen has a maximum elevation of 374 feet above mean sea level on Poplar Hill in the northwest corner of the city. The lowest point is about 9 feet on the Merrimack River as it flows into Haverhill. Elevations of about 115 feet above mean sea level are more common throughout the city. Slopes over 15% are scattered around Methuen, especially the northern and western parts of the West End, and in various parts of the East End. Slopes over 15% (about 7.4% of the city's total area) provide some limitation to many types of development but usually none that can not be overcome.

Figure 21: Surficial Geology Map



Soils

The following map indicates that most of Methuen's unaltered soils fall into the Hollis-Canton and Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor groupings. Soil types and their limitations are as follows (note the lighter colors on the map indicate less limitations for development):

Soils altered by urbanization—These soils have been altered by different kinds of development and there limitations are subject to specific engineering investigations. 11.5% of Methuen is in this altered condition.

Canton fine sandy loam and Canton fine sandy loam—These soils have severe limitations for septic systems because of poor filtration and slight limitations for roads, residential or commercial development except in areas with slopes greater than 8% indicated in progressively darker colors. 12.7% of Methuen is classified as Canton fine sandy loam and 3.0% is classified as Canton fine sandy loam, extremely stony.

Swansea and Freetown mucks—These soils have severe limitations for all types of development because of wetness. 7.3% of Methuen is classified as Freetown or Swansea mucks.

Windsor loamy sand—These soils have severe limitations for septic systems because of poor filtration and slight limitations for roads, residential or commercial development except in areas with slopes greater than 8% indicated in progressively darker colors. Droughtiness is also a limitation. 7.2% of Methuen is classified as Windsor loamy sand.

Hinckley loamy sand—These soils have severe limitations for septic systems because of poor filtration and few limitations for other development other than slope. The darker color has slopes more than 15%. 4.7% of Methuen is classified as Hinckley loamy sand.

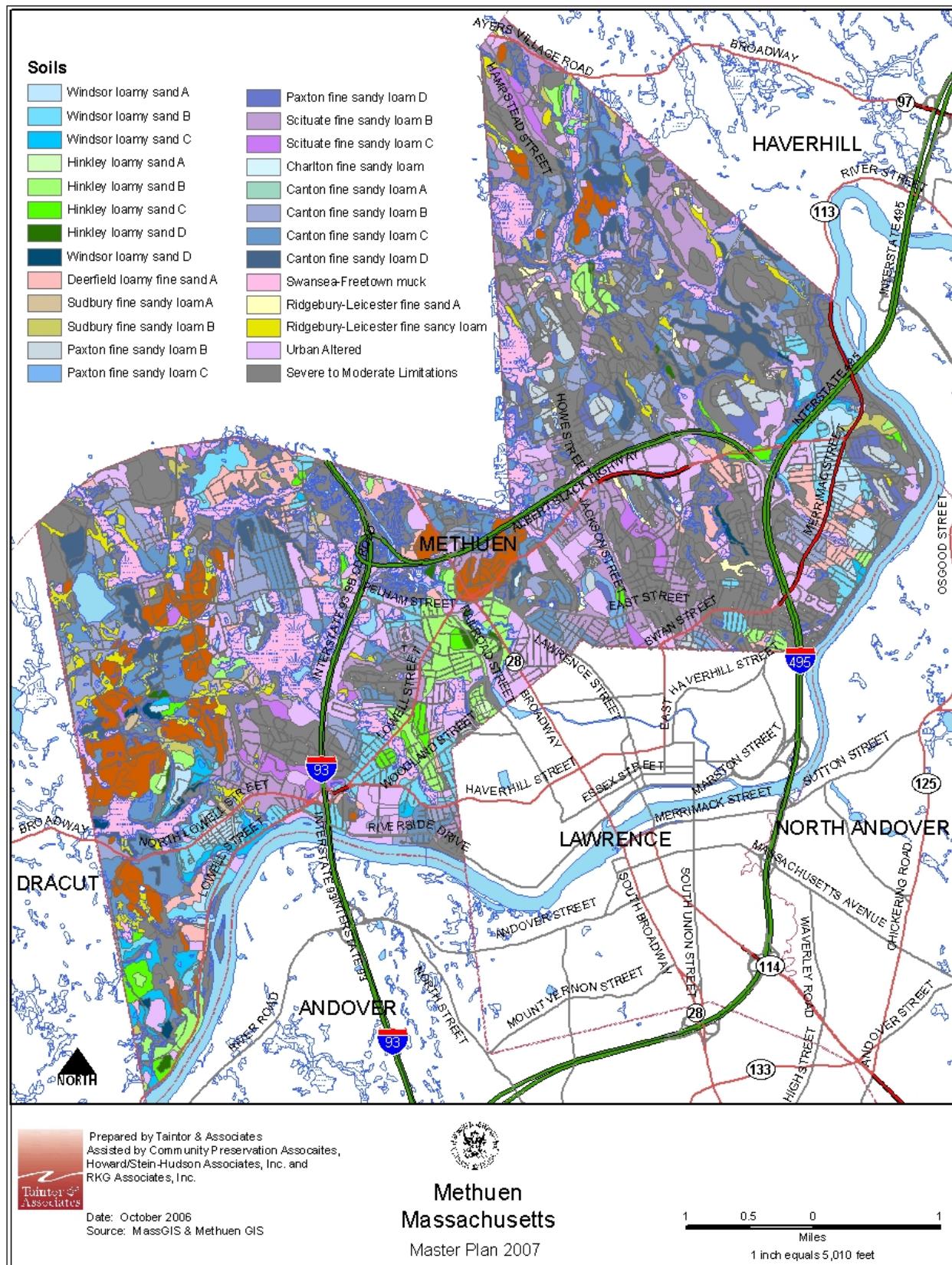
Scituate fine sandy loam—These soils have severe limitations for septic systems because of wetness and moderate limitations for roads, residential or commercial development except in areas with slopes greater than 8% indicated in the darker color that have more severe limitations. 4.3% of Methuen is classified as Scituate fine sandy loam.

Rock Outcrop-Charlton- Hollis complex—These soils have up to 90% rock outcrops and are generally unsuitable for most types of construction. 5% of Methuen is classified as Rock Outcrop-Charlton- Hollis complex.

Sutton fine sandy loam—These soils have moderate to severe limitations for development because of wetness. 4.1% of Methuen is classified as Sutton fine sandy loam

Montauk fine sandy loam—These soils have severe limitation for septic systems because of wetness and slow percolation and moderate to severe limitations for roads, residential or commercial development. 4% of Methuen is classified as Montauk fine sandy loam.

Figure 22: Soils Map



Scituate fine sandy loam—These soils have severe limitations for septic systems because of wetness and moderate limitations for roads, residential or commercial development except in areas with slopes greater than 8% indicated in the darker color that have more severe limitations. 3.9% of Methuen is classified as Scituate fine sandy loam.

Ridgebury and Leicester fine sandy loams—These soils have severe limitation for development because of wetness. 3.8% of Methuen is classified as Ridgebury and Leicester fine sandy loams.

Deerfield loamy fine sand—These soils have moderate to severe limitations for development because of high water table. 3.0% of Methuen is classified as Deerfield loamy fine sand.

Paxton fine sandy loam—These soils have moderate to severe limitations for development because of slow percolation and wetness. 2.0% of Methuen is classified as Paxton fine sandy loam.

Scarboro mucky fine sandy loam—These soils have severe limitations for development because of wetness. 1.7% of Methuen is classified as Scarboro mucky fine sandy loam.

Severe to Moderate Limitations—These soils include Sudbury, Whitman, Winooski, Walpole, Woodbridge, and a few other soil types and have severe to moderate limitations for development because of wetness and slopes.

The limitations include high ground water, which may limit the installation of septic systems and basements; stones or boulders, which may increase construction costs; steep slopes, or shallow soils over bedrock, which may limit construction and increase costs. There are very few undeveloped areas with few limitations. Slope is more of a limitation for commercial development than it is for residential development.

WATER RESOURCES

Merrimack River and Other Surface Water Resources

One of Methuen's prize natural resources is the Merrimack River. More than six miles of the river's 7.4 (?? 74? 128??) miles run through the city. Beginning at the West End boundary with Dracut, this river corridor offers Methuen and other communities in the area opportunities for active and passive recreation, education, and habitat preservation. Importantly, it also serves as part of the city and region's water supply. It supplies water to Lowell, Lawrence, Dracut, Tewksbury and many other communities along its course. For many rivers in Massachusetts, water withdrawals can result in a low-flow problem in summer and winter months. This has not been such a problem with the Merrimack because of its large watershed. Water quality is another concern. The river passes through urban areas where storm run-off and other sources of pollution are important issues. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), regulates the public use of this water resource in Massachusetts. Protection and conservation of the water resources of the Merrimack River requires regional cooperation.

The Scenic and Recreational River Protection Act administered by the DEP establishes a protected two hundred feet wide corridor along each side of major rivers (limited to 50 feet in certain urban areas). This corridor limits certain activities and uses within the corridor in order to protect private and public

water supplies; to provide flood control; to prevent storm damage; to prevent pollution; to protect wildlife habitat; and to protect fisheries.

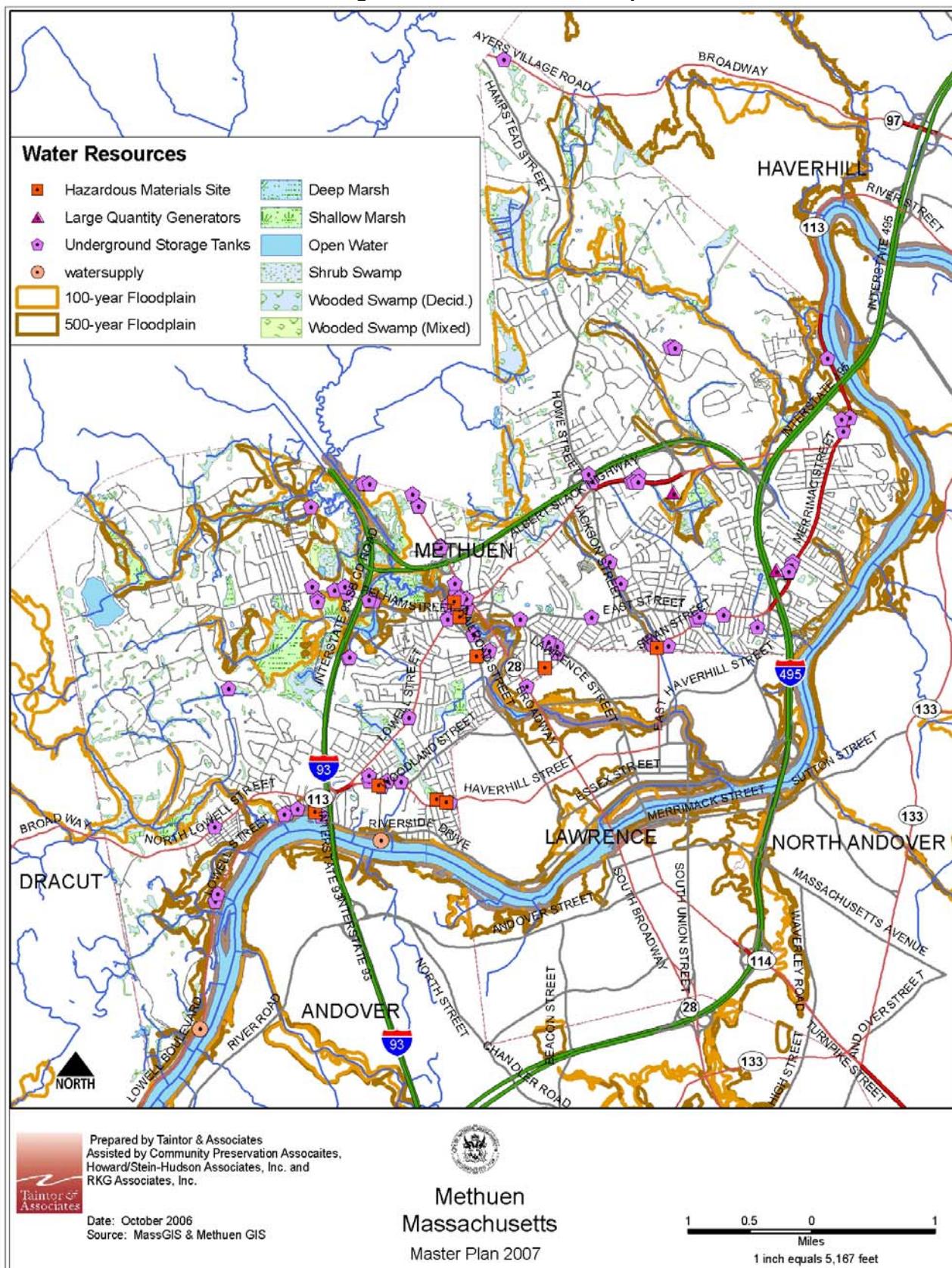
Other surface water resources in Methuen include: Forest Lake, Mystic Pond, Mill Pond, Searles Pond, and Hills Pond. The Spicket River is Methuen's other river and in heavy rains of May of 2006 it flooded its banks and did considerable damage. Streams include: Hawkes Brook, Bare Meadow Brook, Harris Brook, Bartlett Brook, Sawyer Brook, and Griffin Brook.

Water Supply

As noted above the Methuen Water Division withdraws water from the Merrimack River to supply drinking water to the community of Methuen, and provide some water to the town of Salem, New Hampshire, and the Kenwood Water District in Dracut. The Methuen water intake is located on the river off Riverside Drive. The Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards classify the Merrimack River as a Class B waterway. That means that the water withdrawn for drinking water purposes must be treated.

The Merrimack River flows for 78 miles through New Hampshire and for another 50 miles in Massachusetts, from Lowell to Newburyport and into the Atlantic Ocean. There are 1,200 square miles of watershed in Massachusetts in all or part of 24 communities. Upstream of the Methuen drinking water intake, the following communities are in the Merrimack River watershed: Andover, Tewksbury, Dracut; Lowell; Chelmsford; Tyngsborough; Westford; Dunstable; Groton; Ayer; Littleton; Harvard; Boxborough; Ashby; and, Ashburnham. Sixteen percent (16%) of the watershed in Massachusetts upstream of the Methuen intake is listed in DEP's Geographic Information System (GIS) databases as protected open space. The other 84% contains a mix of land uses such as residential homes, shopping malls, businesses, industrial processes, transportation corridors, agriculture, utility lines and recreation facilities.

Figure 23: Water Resources Map



As a Class B water source, the Merrimack River cannot have protection areas, as do Class A water sources. Instead, a 400-foot setback area along the river and all feeder streams, referred to as an “Emergency Planning Zone,” has been delineated. Land uses and activities within this zone are of particular concern for water supply protection and emergency planning because of their proximity to the water source. It is important to understand that a release of a contaminant may never occur provided facilities are using best management practices (BMPs). Many potential sources of contamination are regulated at the federal, state, and/or local levels, to further reduce the risk.

River drinking water sources are particularly susceptible to spills and accidental releases from public and private discharges; accidents related to vehicles, railroads, airports, boats; utility easements; fixed site releases at industrial and public facilities; inappropriate use of pesticides and fertilizers; improper disposal of hazardous household waste; and illegal dumping of a variety of substances. For these reasons, DEP monitors potential threats upstream of the Methuen intake including New Hampshire.

There is also a non-community water supply regulated by DEP on the river at Jimmy’s Restaurant. A non-community water supply serves 25 or more persons at one location such as a school, factory or restaurant.

Wetlands

Wetlands, including both forested wetlands and non-forested wetlands, are an important water resource in Methuen. They play a critical role in flood control and in maintaining water quality. There are extensive areas of wetlands including the area between Forest Lake and Harris Brook, Peat Meadow, an area of wooded swamp at the head of Hawkes Brook, and smaller areas along Bare Meadow Brook. Smaller wetlands are found scattered about Methuen. These wetlands provide visual variety, wildlife habitat, and help maintain a healthy environment. Carefully orchestrated access to some of these wetlands will increase community awareness of their value and interest as natural habitat. A good example is the existing and potential trails at the Bird Sanctuary property. More information on wetlands will be provided in the section on vegetation.

Hazardous Material and Underground Storage Tank Sites

The Water Resources Map also shows sites of known concentrations of hazardous materials and underground storage tanks. These sites are potential sources of contamination for water supplies. There are thirteen oil or hazardous material sites mostly concentrated along Haverhill Street and along the Spickett River in Methuen. Four Tier 2 sites are located either on Haverhill Street, two are on Swan Street, and the other two are on Riverside Drive and Lowell Street. Other sites include another on Swan Street (Tier 1D), one on Osgood Street (Tier 1D), one on Center Street (Tier 1D), another on Haverhill Street (Tier 1D), and one off Oakland Drive. All of these sites are under cleanup orders or their cleanup has been completed. Tier 1 sites require a state permit.

There are eighty-six known underground storage tanks located in Methuen. They are scattered in various parts of city. There are also two companies that have DEP licenses to produce and/or use large quantities of hazardous materials. One is located at 145 Milk Street (Parlex Corporation) and the other is at 126 Merrimack Street (Northstar Technologies).

Floodplains

Flooding in the floodplains along the Merrimack River, its tributaries, and their associated wetlands indicate the wisdom of keeping development out of wetlands and other low-lying areas. Many of these

areas serve as giant sponges that can soak up enormous amounts of water and protect downstream areas more suitable for development from more severe flooding.

WILDLIFE RESOURCES OF METHUEN

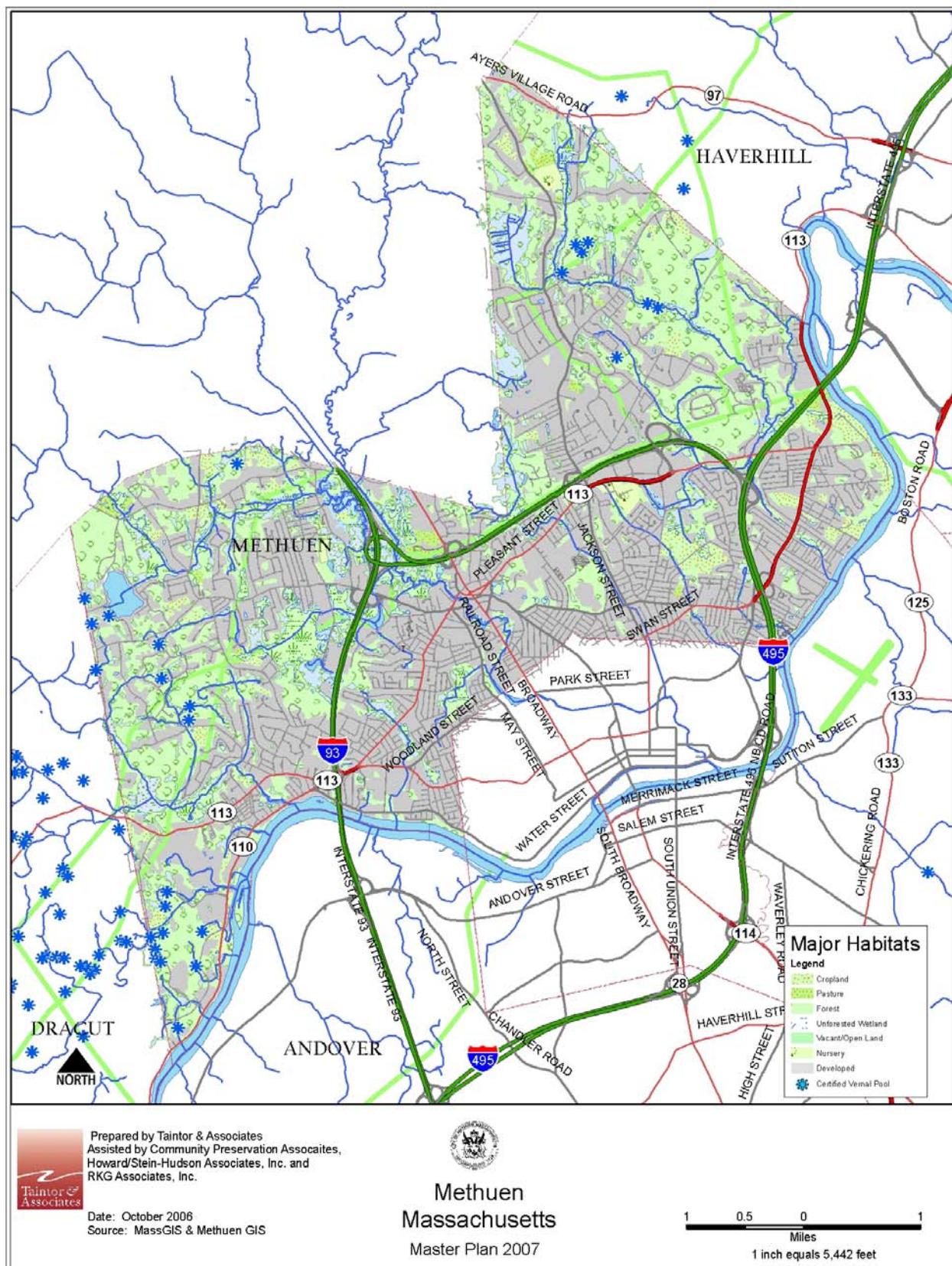
Many would look at the City of Methuen and perceive its undeveloped land, the few existing and former agricultural areas, forests, and wetlands as being the dominant land uses. In fact, this undeveloped land now constitutes less than 41% of the city's total area. In addition to being home to about 44,000 human residents, Methuen is home to a diversity of wildlife. Diverse wildlife is an indicator of the health of the environment and is a source of joy for children and grownups alike. As the forests of New England rebound after the abandonment of many farms in the 1800s, some species of wildlife have begun to move back into eastern Massachusetts. These include beaver, coyote, and fisher as well as others. The following describes the city's major wildlife habitats, agricultural land, open land, forests, and wetlands, and some of the more common wildlife likely to be found in them.

Agricultural Land

In the 2005 land use map the 320 acres of land identified as cropland and 33.3 acres of pasture and 65 acres identified as nursery or orchard (a total of 416 acres or 3.1% of the city's total area) are still important resources for the diversity of wildlife in Methuen. Most of the remaining agricultural land is located in the northern and eastern sections of Methuen—along Hampshire Street, the Merrimack River, and in the Grosvenor Corner area. There are also other small farm parcels scattered in other parts of city.

Grassland birds, like eastern meadowlarks and bobolinks, may still use some hayfields, meadows, and pastures in Methuen or other nearby towns. In many eastern Massachusetts towns, once plentiful fields are now too small and scattered to attract all but a few passing examples of

Figure 24: Major Habitats Map



these once plentiful grassland specialists. Many other bird species nest near these fields and use them as well as other habitats for hunting and feeding on seeds, insects, and small mammals. Many migrant songbirds, those that move between northern and southern latitudes with the seasons, can still be found feeding in farm fields in Methuen and other nearby towns during migration. Many hawks and owls, such as American kestrels and northern harriers rely on grasslands for hunting small mammals, while other hawks and owls, such as red-tailed hawks and great horned owls, hunt in these fields as well as the city's forested areas. In addition to birds, voles, white-tailed deer, woodchucks, coyotes, and eastern cottontail rabbits often use agricultural areas. Several snakes, such as the eastern hognose snake and the northern brown snake can also be found in fields and pastures.

Open Land

Power line corridors and unused open land, like agricultural fields that are no longer being cultivated, are also areas used by many of the same species of wildlife that use agricultural land and some species that specialize in using these areas. There are just over 715 acres of this type of habitat in Methuen (5.3% of the total area). Power line corridors are also often used as movement corridors for wildlife, providing a means of getting from one habitat to another.

The birds, mammals, and reptiles that use these open areas are likely to be the same as those that use agricultural areas in Methuen.

Forest Land

Methuen still has a considerable amount of forestland, but the effect of suburban development has begun to mask the visual impact of many of these remaining forested as large lots are developed along the city's roadways. The habitat map shows 3,554 acres of forest in Methuen (27% of the city's total area), including primarily the Central Hardwoods-Hemlock-White Pine association and relatively small areas of the Red Maple Swamp association. The Central Hardwood Forest type is located on generally drier outwash soils and tills. The most common trees are red oak (with mixtures of other oaks) and hemlock as well as red maple, aspen, hickories, and gray birch. White pine is common on more sandy soils. Common shrubs and herbs include blueberries, wintergreen, clubmosses, and hazel. The Central Hardwood Forest type is found in all parts of Methuen while the Swamp Hardwood Forest type is concentrated along streams or around ponds. The Central Hardwood Forest habitat type is likely to be the most threatened because it is often generally suitable for development.

Some of the common animals found in the Central Hardwood Forest include spotted salamander, redback salamander, wood frog, American toad, eastern milk snake, and eastern garter snake. Common birds include red-tailed hawk, Cooper's hawk, mourning dove, downy woodpecker, great-horned owl, northern flicker, eastern wood pewee, eastern phoebe, blue jay, American crow, white-breasted nuthatch, brown creeper, gray catbird, scarlet tanager, ovenbird, American goldfinch, yellow-rumped warbler, and Baltimore oriole. Common mammals include Virginia opossum, eastern chipmunk, woodchuck, gray squirrel, red squirrel, white-footed mouse, red fox, eastern coyote, raccoon, river otter, white-tailed deer, and striped skunk.

Swamp Hardwoods, found in the scattered wetland areas of Methuen and along streams, are so dominated by red maples that they are often referred to as Red Maple Swamps. Other common trees include American ash, cedars, and black gum. Wetland understory shrubs are common, including alder, viburnums, blueberries, and others. Herbs are abundant and include sedges, ferns, false hellebore, and skunk cabbage. These woodlands are an important component of the city's remaining forested lands and wetland laws generally protect them.

Some of the common animals found in the Swamp Hardwood association and not in the Central Hardwood Forest include northern spring peeper, gray tree frog, bullfrog, common snapping turtle, painted turtle, northern water snake, and northern ringneck snake. Birds common to this habitat and not so likely encountered in Central Hardwood Forest include great blue heron, green heron, wood duck, eastern screech owl, barred owl, tufted titmouse, Carolina wren, black-capped chickadee, American robin, northern mockingbird, cedar waxwing, red-eyed vireo, yellow warbler, song sparrow, and common grackle. Many of the same mammals found in the Central Hardwood association are also likely to be found in Red Maple swamps.

Forest Fragmentation

Many ecologists agree that one of the biggest threats to natural communities and biodiversity in Massachusetts and much of the rest of New England is the fragmentation of large expanses of uninterrupted forest habitats. Species of birds that are particularly threatened by forest fragmentation are underlined in the above lists. Many wildlife species, like these, depend on the interior of forests (areas far from an edge) for a significant portion of their life cycle and many biologists agree that the loss of large uninterrupted tracts of forest is contributing to the decline of many species of birds and mammals.

As a result, the remaining uninterrupted forests in Methuen and surrounding towns are particularly valuable for a broad diversity of wildlife. Four relatively large forest areas remain. One is along the city's western boundary, north of Rt. 113. Another is south of the Hickory Hills Golf Course runs along the western boundary of the city. The third is located on the steep slopes of Poplar Hill, north of Forest Lake. Much of this area is protected Town Forest. The fourth and largest area is located in the East End on either side of Hawkes Brook. These large uninterrupted forest areas are important habitat areas for wildlife.

Non-forested Wetlands

The habitat map identifies 783 acres of non-forested wetlands in Methuen (6% of the total area) and 76 acres of open water. The majority of the city's non-forested wetlands are found west of I-93 and around the intersection of I-93 and Rt. 213. These rich wildlife resources include meadows, shallow marshes, deep marshes, shrub swamps, and ponds. Other non-forested wetlands are located at scattered locations throughout Methuen.

Meadows are characterized by sedges and cattails, surface water depths to 6 inches in winter and early spring, and exposed but saturated soil surface in summer, and typically provide habitat for the following wildlife species: Northern leopard frog, big brown bat, star-nosed mole, and short-tailed shrew.

Shallow Marshes are characterized by persistent emergent vegetation such as cattails and water depths to 1.5 feet, and provide preferred habitat for the following wildlife species: Northern spring peeper, painted turtle, and northern leopard frog. Common birds may include great blue heron, green heron, American black duck, mallard duck, eastern screech owl, tree swallow, red-winged blackbird, and American goldfinch. Common mammals may include Virginia opossum, little brown bat, muskrat, mink, and raccoon.

Emergent vegetation and floating-leaved plants such as water lilies (*Nymphaea* and *Nuphar*), and water depths to 6 feet characterize Deep Marshes. They typically provide preferred habitats for the following species: Painted turtle, spotted turtle, and red-spotted newt. Common birds may include pied-billed grebe, and American coot. Common mammals include the same species found in Shallow Marshes.

Woody shrubs such as buttonbush, alder, silky dogwood, and red maple, and white ash saplings characterize Shrub Swamps. They typically provide preferred habitat for the following species: Black-crowned night heron, common snipe, glossy ibis, common yellowthroat, common grackle, song sparrow, swamp sparrow, and American goldfinch. Common mammals include Virginia opossum, little brown bat, eastern cottontail, and raccoon.

Ponds are small bodies of water that are characterized by emergent vegetation such as cattails or floating-leaved plants, or both. Vernal pools are small ponds that are not connected to streams or other water bodies. Thus, they depend on snowmelt and rainwater and usually become dry by late summer. Twenty-five Certified Vernal Pools are identified on the Habitat Map. Vernal pools are critical habitats for salamanders, wood frogs, and a wide variety of other wildlife. Salamanders and wood frogs migrate from surrounding forested uplands to these pools in the spring to breed. Without these vernal pools we would lose these animals. Many more potential vernal pools may exist, but have not been documented. Ponds and vernal pools also provide preferred habitat for the following wildlife species: Bullfrog, pickerel frog, eastern painted turtles, little brown bat, big brown bat, mink, and beaver.

Rare Species

The most recent list published by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program notes seven occurrences of rare or endangered plants and animals in Methuen. The two listed plants are alternate flowered milfoil (*Myriophyllum alterniflorum* 1883) and Andrews' bottle gentian (*Gentiana andrewsii* 1951). The gentian and milfoil are both listed as Endangered. The date after each species name indicates the last time the species was seen in Methuen.

The seven state-listed animal species that have been found in the city include: Endangered – bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus* 1999); Threatened – Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii* 2004) and a clubtail dragonfly (*Stylurus spiniceps* 2004); Species of Special Concern – wood turtle (*Clemmys insculpta* 2003), blue spotted salamander (*Ambystoma laterale* 2004), another clubtail dragonfly, called the cobra clubtail (*Gomphus vastus* 2004), and a dragonfly called the umber shadowdragon (*Neurocordulia obsoleta* 2004).

An intensive natural history inventory may find additional rare species have not been noted within Methuen. It is likely that there are other important wildlife habitats and many more vernal pools in Methuen. Such an intensive natural history inventory would give Methuen better information about its natural resources and should be done. The Conservation Commission could host a “bio-blitz” where a team of volunteers spends a weekend canvassing the town looking for special habitats and inventorying species.

Riparian Corridors

The Massachusetts Resource Identification Project designated “natural land riparian” corridors along waterways and wetlands. These 100-meter natural corridors are thought to provide avenues of movement for some wildlife species and fulfill other ecological functions.

FUTURE PLANS / NEEDS : Given the soil limitations as outlined above, especially the steep slopes the City should consider adopting a slope protection bylaw to reduce impacts of development on the remaining land in Methuen. A slope protection bylaw would also help to preserve the semi-rural quality of Methuen by reducing the visual impact of development on forested hills.

In order to preserve the natural resources of Methuen, the City should consider revising its Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations in accordance with the Low Impact Development (LID)

methods as outlined in the Smart Growth Toolkit as provided by the State of Massachusetts. As stated in the Toolkit, Low Impact Development is a more sustainable land development pattern that results from a site planning process that first identifies critical natural resources, then determines appropriate building envelopes. LID also incorporates a range of best management practices (BMPs) that preserve the natural hydrology of the land.

SUMMARY OF NATURAL RESOURCE FINDINGS

Methuen has a rich natural heritage worthy of recognition and pride. The following is a summary of some of the most important considerations for the development of the master plan.

Soil limitations, especially slope mean that many areas are poorly suited for development. Wetlands, streams, ponds and water supplies need to be carefully monitored to prevent contamination from contaminants.

Methuen still has some important agricultural areas that have not been developed and are in need of protection if the city wishes to preserve some of its agricultural heritage. These scattered agricultural areas are both important to wildlife and provide part of the distinctive character of the city. Several of the city's ponds and streams offer good fishing and serve as wildlife corridors. Access to these resources needs to be protected and in some cases improved.

The protection of upland forests will help preserve some of the city's character. Much of Methuen's wildlife diversity is a result of its variety of habitat types. Maintenance of that diversity requires protection of both small and large areas of different habitats; non-forested wetlands, forested uplands, open/vacant areas, and open space corridors that make connections between areas.

One vital aspect of retaining the city's semi-rural quality lies in retaining some of the visual impact of the city's forested land. Forests on hills are particularly desirable, since such land is both highly visible and highly vulnerable to development pressures and its concomitant erosion and runoff problems. Methuen's steep slopes and changes in topography contribute to the importance of these hills.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

Methuen completed an update of its Open Space and Recreation Plan in May 2001. The plan is briefly summarized below. A section on implications for the master plan will follow this summary of the open space plan.

Open Space and Recreation Plan – 2000-2005 Update

General Features

The Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan (Open Space Plan) was developed by an Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee with the participation of Community Development Department, the Conservation Commission, the Historic District Commission, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, the Recreation Department, the Forest Lake Association, the City Council, the mayor, and two representatives of concerned citizens. Protection of open space and historic resources was clearly viewed as an important means to maintain some of the character of the city's past.

The Open Space Plan reflects the residents' strong desire for protecting natural resources as a means of preserving some of the communities most recognizable open space assets, like wetlands, water bodies, forested areas, and meadows as wildlife habitats and areas for passive recreation and environmental

education. It also recognizes the importance of protecting less apparent, but equally important resources such as surface and ground water quality, endangered species habitats, and opportunities for aesthetic enjoyment of a diverse landscape.

Community Setting

The Open Space Plan notes that parts of Methuen are experiencing fast growth. As a whole the city has had an increase of more than 16% in the number of households since 1980. There is a diversity of housing types with about 30% of the housing units built before 1930. Dense 2 and 3-family homes are located in the Arlington Neighborhood and low-density single-family homes are located in the West End and East End. Growth has also varied with the area of the city, with decreases in population in central part of Methuen and increases in the West End and East End. There has also been an increase in the city's Hispanic population and in the portion of the population living below the poverty line. The population has also grown older in the past two decades. The implications for open space and recreation planning include:

- Increasing population means an increased demand for some recreation facilities.
- Diversity of neighborhood types implies different types of open space and recreation to meet local needs.
- An older population implies a need for more walking opportunities.

Environmental Inventory and Analysis

The Open Space Plan identifies Methuen's most important natural resources as its rivers, streams, ponds, and associated wetlands and the remaining large patches of natural vegetation in the city. It notes that protecting and enhancing the quality of water and wetland resources also improves wildlife habitat and provides recreational amenities. The plan also notes the importance of upstream areas in New Hampshire, especially along the Spicket River. Despite the increasing fragmentation of the city's natural areas, the existence of large patches gives Methuen the opportunity to plan now to create open space linkages and meet demands for recreational areas.

Potential environmental protection strategies include:

- Identification and protection of key remaining open space properties.
- Creation of green networks by linking isolated and fragmented open space resources.
- Protecting wetlands as a strategy for mitigating floods.
- Management of existing protected open space as appropriate for conservation, passive recreation, or active recreation.
- Mitigation of the environmental impacts of development on remaining natural resources through more detailed regulation.

Goals, Objectives, and Five-Year Action Plan

Based on its goals and objectives the Open Space Plan recommended a Five-Year Action Plan. These actions were intended to occur between 2001 and 2006.

Table 50: Summary of Open Space Action Plan from 2000-2006 Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

GOAL 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF EXISTING FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS	Year
OBJECTIVE: <i>Maintain and staff city recreation facilities in accordance with indicated needs and maintenance plan</i>	
Update and improve skate park at Burnham Road.	2002
Implement recommendations of Long-range Field Planning Committee to allow resting of sports fields for maintenance.	2005

Complete final phase of athletic field renovations.	?
Develop new park in West End.	?
Build indoor pool in community.	2005
OBJECTIVE: ·Continue to make facilities more accessible to all persons including those with physical disabilities..	
Provide handicapped parking and curb cuts at neighborhood/community parks.	On-going
Provide bridges/ramps at curbed play areas and substitute wood chips for loose sand and stone gravel surfaces.	On-going
Make bathrooms, concession stand, picnic, beach, and shelter at Forest lake accessible.	2001
Develop new park in West End.	?
OBJECTIVE: ·Continue to restore/preserve historic sites and features and incorporate these facilities into the city's open space and recreation network.	
Obtain easements as needed for repair of granite walls, turrets, gates, and fences in central area of the city, particularly at the following:	
Searles Bridge at Broadway near Organ Hall	2001
Tenney Estate Gates & Fences	2000
Pleasant Street	2002
Lawrence Street Cemetery area	2001
Tenney Wall (Behind Searles Building)	2002
East Street	2002
Restore Sands Stone Arch bridge off Hampshire Road	2005
Establish revolving fund for acquisition/preservation of threatened historic monuments and art/architectural works.	2003
Develop passive recreation area at Tenney Estate Park.	2002
Historic sites to be improved/maintained:	
Robert Rogers Birthplace	?
Lawrence Street Cemetery	2001
Searles Building	2002
Masonic Lodge	2001
Nevins Memorial Library	2001
Spicket River Falls Dam	2001
Methuen Mills Company	2001
Jute Mill	2001
Railroad Depot	?
St. Monica's Rectory	2001
Riverwalk Project (Phase I/II)	2001-2002
Lowell Street Bridge	2001
Cotton Spinning Mill	2001
Establish new historic district boundaries	2001
GOAL 2: PROTECT NATURAL AREAS THAT ARE OF UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTAL CHARACTER.	
OBJECTIVE: ·Create conservation areas to protect natural features, endangered species, habitat, and water supplies.	
Develop system of open space greenbelts along wildlife, river, and/or wetland corridors.	
Develop riverwalk along Spicket River connecting Organ Hall and lower Broadway area to Spicket Falls.	
Establish Methuen link to regional Merrimack River trail.	2002
Acquire greenbelts and conservation land through direct or partial (easement) acquisition.	On-going
Encourage open space regulatory mechanism that provides alternatives for subdivisions without density bonuses and with specific open space standards.	?
Preserve greenbelt along Hawkes Brook, Methuen upland off Washington Street, and Harris Brook.	On-going
Work with public and quasi-public organization devoted to open space conservation to increase their ability to assist in land acquisition. (Merrimack River Watershed Council, Essex County Greenbelt, etc.)	On-going
Encourage protection of farmland through Chap. 61 agreements	On-going

Encourage preservation of the city's 2 golf courses through zoning and/or acquisition.	?
OBJECTIVE: <i>Undertake public education to publicize the importance of Methuen's unique areas and promote policy tools for protecting these areas.</i>	
Prepare and distribute promotional material on historic district sites.	?
Improve signage at historic district, city forest, and parks	On-going
Undertake informational campaign on conservation of natural resources and regulatory options that encourage open space preservation	On-going
Train regulatory board members in administration/negotiation for open space in development reviews.	On-going
Identify and map wetlands	?
OBJECTIVE: <i>Preserve views and provide public access to the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers by acquiring land and limiting development along the riverbanks.</i>	
Provide public boat ramps at the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers	2001-2004
Expand Schruender Park and provide amenities along the Merrimack River.	2001-2004
GOAL 3: EXPAND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET USAGE DEMANDS OF A GROWING POPULATION	
OBJECTIVE: <i>Develop appropriate trail systems to make passive open space recreation areas accessible to the general public.</i>	
Continue trail development, improvements, and maintenance at Methuen Uplands, Town Forest, and Merrimack River Trail.	On-going
Continue the expansion of the Riverwalk at Spicket River.	2003
Acquire properties that would enhance and expand the town forest and other existing open space areas.	On-going
Develop passive recreation area at Tenney Estate Park.	2004
Establish new historic district boundaries.	2001
OBJECTIVE: <i>Make provisions for bike paths and sidewalks in transportation plans.</i>	
Work with utility companies (Tennessee Gas, MassElectric) on possibility of using easements for bike routes.	On-going
Install sidewalks, particularly on major connector streets—Valley, Washington, and Forest Street.	On-going
Widen shoulder areas for bike travel.	On-going
OBJECTIVE: <i>Expand youth programs and facilities.</i>	
Establish a community facility with recreational opportunities for youth including training programs.	
Work in partnership with non-profit organizations to acquire and develop recreational facilities (churches, neighborhood groups, etc.).	On-going
Continue implementation of recommendations of Long-range Field Planning Committee for the stadium irrigation, High School and Pop Warner Field renovations.	2004

RECREATION

The Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan noted that growing population would place more demand on existing recreation facilities. The plan included an inventory of existing playing fields and other recreational facilities.

Recreation facilities include trails at several of the city's conservation areas and parks, a handicapped accessible picnic area and town beach at Forest Lake; athletic fields and other facilities at Veterans Memorial Park, Sergeant Playground, Chase Street Playground, Chelmsford Street Playground, Ashford Field, Ranger Field/Nicholson Stadium, Neil Playstead, Shorty DeGaspe Park, Burnham Field, Tenney Street Playground, Potter Field, Gill Avenue Playground, Francis Morse Park, and at the various schools. There are also two private golf courses, the Merrimack Valley Golf Club and the Hickory Golf Club. The Methodist Church also provides three soccer fields on land they own off Hampshire Road. And several residential complexes have tennis courts, swimming pools or other modest recreation facilities for residents. The Merrimack River is also a recreation asset although access to the river is

limited. Also surrounding towns offer recreation opportunities that are used by many residents of Methuen. The Open Space Plan does not include a detailed inventory or an analysis of the adequacy of these facilities. Such an analysis compares the existing facilities' areas and types to recognized standards. The accompanying chart is a very brief analysis of Methuen's existing recreation facilities compared to the standards of the National Recreation and Park Association. The numbers for existing facilities are estimated from aerial photos and the inventory included in the Open Space Plan.

Table 51: Recreation Standards

Type	Standard	Suggested	Existing	Needed to Meet Standard
Playgrounds	1.5 acres per 1,000 persons	68 acres	34.9	33.1
Playfields	1.5 acres per 800 persons	84 acres	182	
Neighborhood Parks	2 acres per 1,000 persons	90 acres	96.3	
Community Park Min size 40 acres	3.5 acres per 1,000 persons	158 acres	94.4 Town Forest	63.6
Regional Park Min size 500 acres	15 acres per 1,000 persons	675 acres	Nearby State Forests	
Baseball/Softball Fields	1 per 1,500 persons	30	22	8
Trails	3 mile per 3,000 persons	45miles	Nearby State Forests	
Tennis Courts	1 per 1,500 persons	30	12 public	18
Soccer Fields	1 per 4,000 persons	11	8 incl. Church fields	3
Football Fields	1 per 4,000 persons	11	2	9
Picnic Areas	4 acres per 1,000 persons	180 acres	State Forests Forest Lake	
Golf Course	1 per 25,000 persons	1.8	2	
Indoor Recreation Center	1 per 10,000 persons	4.5	Schools	
Water Sports Rowing, Fishing	1 lake or river per 25,000 persons	2	2	

Standards suggested by National Recreation and Park Association.

A more thorough inventory of recreation facilities is needed and recommended. But based on the above estimates, Methuen meets or exceeds some of these standards. The deficiencies noted for playgrounds and community parks may be due to the lack of land that is called "parkland" rather than to a lack of actual facilities. For example, conservation land may provide for some of the needs for community parks although they usually do not include active recreation facilities. The deficiencies for soccer fields, football fields, tennis courts, and other ball fields probably indicates a real need for additional athletic facilities. While the table shows that adequate trails may be available in nearby state forests, a local network of trails could promote healthy exercise and better access to other facilities. The Open Space Plan update showed strong support for additional recreation facilities, especially ball fields, hiking and bike paths, and playgrounds in poorly served neighborhoods. While national standards are

useful they should not limit the desires of residents to improve their quality of life and they don't always apply to the unique circumstances of any particular community. Adequate recreation facilities are important for good health and enjoyment, but it is also important to recognize the quality of the city's facilities. Good maintenance and management are crucial.

**FUTURE
PLANS/NEEDS**

In order to preserve open space the City should identify, prioritize, and purchase development rights from owners of key agricultural and forested areas. The City should take advantage of the right of first refusal granted to the City on retiring Chapter 61A and 61 B properties. In order to fund the purchase of these rights and properties the City should consider adopting the Community Preservation Act, which would give the City the resources to acquire priority open space as this land becomes available. Currently the City has no funding mechanism to prevent key areas of open space from being purchased and built upon.

The City should also consider adopting an Open Space Residential Design (OSRD) bylaw as outlined in the State of Massachusetts's Smart Growth Toolkit. OSRD provides one of many tools that can help mitigate the impacts of urban sprawl. Focusing on open space preservation the technique is a form of subdivision design that maximizes resource protection through targeted resource set-asides.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan provides an excellent basis for developing the Open Space element of the Master Plan. It clearly articulates goals and objectives that will help shape the future of the city. It acknowledges the importance of improving access to and knowledge of the city's natural resources and open space lands.

Methuen has permanently protected 2.4% (345 acres) of its total area. The city owns an additional 871 acres (6.1% of its total area). The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns an additional 64 acres. In addition, the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Methuen Conservation Commission regulations effectively protect wetlands and a small buffer area around them. Providing additional recreation facilities and the future of Chapter 61 lands are the major open space issues that the city will face in coming years.

Ultimately, the environmental health of Methuen will depend on both local decisions and the landscape of surrounding towns. Each new development will reduce the remaining patches of natural vegetation and the area available for wildlife. Corridors that currently connect natural areas may disappear, further reducing the viability and population stability of both plants and animals. These impacts are cumulative and long-term. The city's ecosystems change over time and many impacts may be delayed and not fully realized until years or decades from now. The best strategies for maintaining the city's natural character and environmental health will be:

- To protect rare landscape elements, such as wetlands, vernal pools, riparian zones (the areas along streams, rivers, and wetlands), state designated "priority habitats," and large forested tracts.
- To retain large contiguous or connected areas that provide habitat for a diversity of wildlife. Guidelines published by the Environmental Law Institute³¹ call for at least 20% of a town to be protected natural habitat. They also recommend 140 acres (55 hectares) as a minimum

³¹ Environmental Law Institute, 2003, Conservation Thresholds for Land Use Planners, Washington, DC. www.eli.org.

contiguous size for a natural area. See the following discussion on corridors for improving connections between protected areas.

- To preserve/improve water quality and wildlife habitat protect riparian buffers. The Environmental Law Institute recommends a 330-foot (100-meter) riparian buffer to provide for wildlife habitat functions. A 25-meter buffer will provide nutrient and pollutant removal and a 50-meter buffer will provide bank stabilization.
- To minimize the introduction and spread of invasive, non-native species. Many non-native species of plants and animals are known to disrupt the functioning of native ecosystems and contribute to a decrease in biodiversity.

As noted above, Methuen falls short of national standards for recreation facilities in several categories. There is a lack of playgrounds, community parks, and several types of ball fields.

One potential source of funding that could help protect open space and improve recreation facilities is provided under the provisions of the Community Preservation Act. This statewide enabling act provides state funding (currently a 100% match) for towns that vote to add up to a 3% additional property tax for the specific purpose of acquiring and preserving open space, creating and supporting affordable housing, and acquiring and preserving historic buildings and landscapes. Currently 119 Massachusetts towns have passed local provisions and are qualified to receive the state match. A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues of the fund must be used for each of these three core community concerns. The remaining 70% can be allocated for any combination of the allowed uses, or for land or recreational use. This gives each community the opportunity to determine its priorities, plan for its future, and have the funds to make those plans happen. Property taxes traditionally fund the day-to-day operating needs of safety, health, schools, roads, maintenance – and more. But until the CPA, there was no steady funding source for preserving and improving a community's infrastructure. The Community Preservation Act can give a community the funds needed to control its future

OPEN SPACE PLAN

The Methuen Master Plan endorses the recommendations of the 2000 Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan (Open Space Plan). Additional development will continue to have major impacts on the city's open space unless it is carefully managed. Many of the city's protected open spaces could become isolated by future development of private lands. The Master Plan Open Space Map shows an open space system and potential corridor network. This map illustrates many opportunities and initiatives that were called for in the Open Space Plan. Many of the mapped opportunities and corridors will need further study and negotiation with private owners to become realities.

Open Space System

The proposed open space system shown on Map x-1 (??) includes all of the city's existing protected open space and recreation areas, all but a few isolated wetlands, potential corridors through currently privately owned Chapter 61 lands, linkages to state-designated priority habitats, golf courses, and additions to already protected areas both inside Methuen and adjacent towns.

Major Open Space and Recreation Opportunities

Figure 25 identifies several major open space and recreation opportunities. These areas (circled in green) include Chapter 61 lands, other private lands, and some areas of public ownership that remain largely undeveloped. They represent opportunities for open space and habitat protection and for recreation.

Chapter 61 lands have already been mentioned. These privately owned parcels are subject to future sale and development pressures. The city will be faced with challenges and opportunities as the current owners of each one of these properties consider their options. Preserving corridors and significant open space will be important considerations. New tools for guiding development of these lands will be proposed in the master plan's section on land use and zoning.

Acquiring additional riverfront land and improving access to the river were noted in the Open Space Plan as important goals and the city should continue to pursue opportunities to increase riverfront areas. Many communities have found public access and redevelopment along their waterfronts to be a key strategy for bringing new life to once neglected areas.

The city's two golf courses also contribute to the city's character and opportunities for recreation. Like other privately owned lands, their future use is not guaranteed.

Figure 25: Open Space Map



Natural Corridors

Wetlands provide important “natural corridors” that can be enhanced by careful planning. Methuen recognizes this potential by enforcing the 50-foot no-disturb buffer around its wetlands and reviews activities within an additional 50-foot area. The Open Space and Recreation Plan urges protection of lands adjacent to already protected areas. Another strategy for improving the value of these natural corridors would be to provide developers with incentives for protecting areas adjacent to wetlands and/or providing trails along the wetlands that pass through their developments. This would be especially valuable in situations where the corridor would serve as a link between already protected parcels.

Planning for Corridors

One of the Open Space Plan’s main goals is to develop trails and greenways to link open spaces and provide access. Trails can provide a healthful alternative to driving to the market or to a nearby recreation site. Trails have also been acknowledged as an important means to help improve good health. The Master Plan’s Open Space Plan Map shows numerous potential corridors. Each of these potentials links existing open space resources with other protected land and in many cases with areas that have been designated as “priority habitats” by the state’s Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. Many of the proposed corridors follow already protected wetlands and stream corridors or transmission lines. Some of these corridors serve as natural linkages between larger upland and wetland areas. Not all of these corridors are suitable for trails, but many may easily provide a trail linkage if a right-of-way were negotiated with the private owners or if the dedication of a right-of-way were made a condition of the properties’ development. In other cases trails can be routed along existing roads for part of their way. There may also be other potential corridors that are not identified.

Many of the potential corridors connect to or cross over Chapter 61 lands. These lands have been given a reduction in their property taxes as an incentive for being used for agriculture, forest, or recreation. In addition, the city has a 120-day option to buy these lands if the current owner wishes to sell. The city should prioritize these lands in terms of their importance for inclusion in the future open space system. Their role in providing potential corridors can be one more reason for the permanent protection of at least a portion of these areas.

Several of these potential corridors warrant special mention. The state and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments have proposed a trail corridor along the northern bank of the Merrimack River. This trail would connect downstream to the ocean and upstream to the Pawtucket Boulevard greenway in Lowell and potentially along the river to Nashua. The river itself is one of the “priority habitats,” designated by the state’s Natural Heritage Program. The Spicket River offers another potential that could connect the existing Spicket Riverwalk to the Merrimack River passing through Lawrence.

Corridors and greenways are beginning to be more recognized both as a means of providing wildlife habitat and opportunities for exercise, thus contributing to both the health of the environment and to the health of people. Research is showing that when mixed with large protected areas, corridors can play an important role in preserving a diversity of wildlife. The following is a set of design guidelines to achieve these goals:

- Wider is better. Corridors less than 150 feet wide do not provide meaningful wildlife habitat. Narrow corridors can be important for trail connections, but they may be inadequate for use by wildlife.

- Heavily used trails in corridors should be located along the edge rather than in the middle of the corridor. A wide trail in the middle of a 500-foot wide corridor can divide it into two narrow corridors and reduce its value for wildlife.
- Maintain natural cover and dead trees in corridors.

FUTURE

PLANS/NEEDS

As noted by the Open Space Plan, the City should preserve views and provide public access to the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers by acquiring land and limiting development along the riverbanks. Additionally the city should carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Development Plan to create a river walk along the Spicket River and to provide a small boat ramp on it. This Plan also recommends that any property to be redeveloped along the Spicket be required to open up the back of the building to the River and to create indoor views of the river to promote it as an asset to the community.

The Zoning Ordinance should be revised to require all non-residential and multifamily residential development along the rivers to provide public access and scenic views to the river. The Land Use section of this plan discusses this further.

In order to adequately protect natural corridors the City should clearly identify and prioritize those corridors to be protected and then work with the development community to preserve linkages or corridors between natural areas. Use of Open Space Residential Development ordinances, for example, (see LU-2.2), requires that these areas be identified during the subdivision process, and protected through more thoughtful site designs.

NATURAL RESOURCES, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal NOR-1: Preserve the remaining rural character of Methuen.

Objectives:

- Protect existing agriculture and forested areas.
- Encourage development that preserves large tracts of open space and discourage sprawl.

Strategies:

NOR 1.1: Identify parcels and potential investors for key agricultural and forested areas. Create a plan to identify purchase areas. Take advantage of the right of first refusal on retiring Chapter 61A and 61B properties. See also LU-2.1.

NOR 1.2: Consider adopting an Open Space Residential Development ordinance that would protect large tracts of open space while maintaining existing densities.

NOR 1.3: Limit clear cutting of vegetation including trees. Adopt a “no net loss” ordinance that would require replacement in caliper of mature tree removal associated with all new development.

NOR 1.4: Work with developers to preserve linkages or corridors between natural areas.

The potential corridors shown on Figure 25 generally follow wetland and stream corridors and the Conservation Commission already regulates a setback from these features. As developers or landowners seek permission to alter their land they should be made aware of these features and their potential to link other natural areas. In some cases the City may want to explore offering incentives in exchange for the landowner providing a trail easement along these corridors.

NOR 1.5: Pass the Community Preservation Act as a means of funding open space protection and improvements to recreation facilities.

Goal NOR-2: Encourage the development and redevelopment of river frontage for public recreation and enjoyment.

Objectives:

- Create outdoor and indoor viewing and access points to the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers.

Strategies:

NOR 2.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Development Plan to create a complete riverwalk along the Spicket River and to provide a small boat ramp on it. Carry out that plan's further recommendations to redevelop property along the Spicket River to open up the backs of buildings to the Spicket River and to create indoor views from redeveloped buildings.

NOR 2.2: Increase public access to the Merrimack River by requiring all non-residential and multifamily residential development along the rivers to provide public access and scenic views to the rivers.

Goal NOR-3: Expand recreation facilities to meet usage demands of a growing population.

Objectives:

- Develop appropriate trail systems to make passive open space recreation areas accessible to the general public.
- Make provisions for bike paths and sidewalks in transportation plans.
- Expand youth programs and facilities.

Strategies:

NOR 3.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan to increase open space and recreation facilities.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The City is involved in the preservation and promotion of cultural and historic resources in several ways: as a repository of information and artifacts, an owner, a funder/space provider, a regulator, an organizer, and a marketer/educator. Methuen is distinctive in its rich architectural legacy that stems from its agrarian and industrial past and from the Searles, Tenney and Nevins families and their contributions. Its historical collections are extensive, and in the City's possession.

The City's ongoing and steady support of these resources is critical to their health and well being, and more importantly, to Methuen's economic and cultural vitality. As articulated in this plan's Vision Statement, appreciation for the City's historic assets is a deeply felt and shared value that knits the community together. A continued commitment to historic preservation and an increased emphasis on "telling Methuen's story" to broader audiences will protect and enhance the City's quality of life.

Not only is the City's history important to its self-image, but thoughtful use of its historic resources will earn tangible economic rewards. Preservation can make a major contribution to efficient use of infrastructure, downtown revitalization and sustainable ("green") development. Historic neighborhoods today provide every principle upon which Smart Growth is based: mixed use, high density, community interaction, transportation choices, attractiveness, pedestrian friendliness, tree-lined spaces, diverse housing, open space, and reduced land consumption. Leveraging Methuen's past can benefit its future.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

There are several non-profit groups in Methuen dedicated to the pursuit of the arts.

- **Methuen Memorial Music Hall**
Methuen Young People's Theatre is open to all students in grades 4-12. Throughout each summer, the group rehearses a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta twice per week and performs in a fully staged, costumed and decorated production in September.
- **Methuen Arts Council** administers a grant program funded through the Mass Cultural Council. In 2006, the Council distributed 19 grants, ranging from \$295 to \$1,150, to local artists, non-profit organizations, and school groups.
- **North Regional Theatre Workshop:** Founded in 1978, this non-for-profit group is dedicated to providing musical theatre to communities north of Boston. Originally based in North Reading, the group has been performing in the Great Hall of the Nevins Library since 2004.
- **The Nevins Library:** Renovated and expanded in 2002, the Nevins Library is at the center of Methuen's cultural activities and is a major destination within its downtown. It offers a wide range of lifelong learning opportunities, and often provides meeting and performance space for community groups. A private non-profit entity, the Library and its resources are further discussed in the Public Facilities and Services section of this plan.

Public Art and Sculpture

Four resources located within the City were inventoried in the early 1990's as part of a nationwide effort by the group Save Outdoor Sculpture (SOS), numbered and are catalogued by the Smithsonian

Institution's Inventory of American Paintings and Sculpture. Following is a list of these with owner information; more detailed descriptions are available at <http://www.siris.si.edu/>

Table 52: Public Sculpture in Methuen

	Sculpture	Artist	Owner/ Location	Description
1	Lion's Head, (sculpture).	Couper, William, 1853- 1942, sculptor	Presentation of Mary Academy/School campus	Marble Relief, Fountain, 1894. The reliefs are located on a fountain. The source does not specify whether the fountain was also created by William Couper
2	Attending Angel, (sculpture).	Couper, William, 1853- 1942, sculptor	Presentation of Mary Academy/School campus – Clock Tower	Bronze, 1900. Female angel in flight with a large cloak billowing out behind her. 14' tall.
3	Marston Forge Monument (sculpture)	Mann, Charles, sculptor	City of Methuen/Howe Street, near 213	Sculpture: iron; Base; granite. An iron anvil is bolted to the top of a circular granite base which rests on a flat square base. This monument, erected by Edward F. Searles, marks the site of a forge owned by the Marston family in 1775.
4	Methuen Civil War Memorial, (sculpture). Soldiers and Sailors Monument, (sculpture).	Unknown sculptor	City of Methuen/Wardell Square, corner of Pleasant and Charles Streets	Hallowell and Quincy granite; Eagle: bronze. 1888. An elaborate Hallowell granite monument consisting of a square shaft adorned with low relief panels that depict flags, cannon balls, field bags, cannons and other battle gear. Two granite lions face out from the north and south sides of the shaft. The monument is topped by a bronze eagle with its wings spread atop a polished Quincy granite globe. The monument was commissioned by Methuen entrepreneur Charles H. Tenney and was a gift to the town.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

Methuen's historic resources are vast and include its architecture, its archives, and its museum collection; the City's well-preserved architecture is a vital contributor to the community's character and aesthetic appeal. The City's Historic District Commission acts as the sole regulatory agency, with groups such as the Historical Commission, Historical Society, and Festival of Trees supporting preservation efforts through public education, promotion, funding, and other non-regulatory roles.

Preservation activities can be categorized into two primary functions: first, the assessment, or inventory, of resources and second, the protection of those identified resources. Generally speaking, these functions are sequential – that is, the resource must first be identified in order to facilitate its preservation. Methuen has been diligent in both its inventorying and planning efforts, which are further described below.

Inventory

Several existing sources provide detail as to the breadth and nature of the City's historic resources. With the assistance of grant funding, the City has been able to complete a number of inventory projects over the past three decades. These include:

- 1978: 240 Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) historic property inventory forms completed by Landscape Research Associates;
 - 1983: 98 forms updated.
- 1992: 120 MHC forms completed (some update previously existing forms);
- 1996: 103 new MHC forms completed (40 replace previously existing forms);
- 2006: 90 new MHC forms completed.

For the purpose of this report, the historic properties are categorized by the degree to which they are recognized by formal inventories and/or the level of protection they have been afforded.

Inventoried properties that receive state or federal funding, licenses, or permits (e.g. the CDBG housing rehabilitation program client homes) must undergo M.G.L. Chapter 9, sections 26-27C and/or Section 106 review to avoid any adverse impact on historic resources.

National Register of Historic Places Properties

Created pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register (NR) is a compilation of nearly 76,000 of the country's most significant historic resources. The NR program works to identify, evaluate, and protect the nation's historic and archaeological resources.

According to information retrieved from the National Park Service, Methuen has 44 listings, including 41 individual property listings and 3 historic districts (Arlington Mills, Pleasant-High Street and Spicket River) on the National Register of Historic Places.

The practical effect of listing a property on the National Register is three-fold: 1) any changes to listed properties that involve federal funding or permitting undergo review pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, 2) listed structures may receive special consideration or exemption from certain other regulations (i.e. energy conservation rules, ADA compliance, etc.) and 3) listed properties are eligible to receive certain tax credits, and other grants. State funded, permitted, and otherwise "assisted" projects must undergo review to avoid any adverse impact on the historic resource (NH RSA Section 227-C:9). In addition, Register listing provides official recognition of a property's historic significance, and may lend it added value (monetary or otherwise).

Following is a table of Methuen's NR-listings – Refer to Figure 26 for a view of the local historic district as it relates to the National Register listings.

Table 53: Properties Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

#	Resource Name	Address	Applicable Criterion	Period of Significance	# of Properties
1	Arlington Mill Historic District	Broadway			5
2	Barker, Stephen, House	165 Haverhill St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849	1
3	Buswell, J.E., House	535-537 Prospect St.	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
4	Daddy Frye's Hill Cemetery	East and Arlington Sts.	Event	1700-1749	1
5	Dolan, Terence, House	478 Prospect St.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
6	Double-arch Sandstone Bridge	Hampshire Rd.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849; 1850-1874	1

#	Resource Name	Address	Applicable Criterion	Period of Significance	# of Properties
7	Emerson House	58 Ayers Village Rd.	Architecture/Engineering	1750-1799	1
8	Emerson, Capt. Oliver, Homestead	133 North St.	Architecture/Engineering	1750-1799	1
9	Emmons, G.B., House	283 Broadway	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
10	First Baptist Church	253 Lawrence St.			1
11	First Church Congregational	Pleasant and Stevens Sts.	Architecture/Engineering	1850-1874; 1875-1899	1
12	Hardy, Urias, House	50 Brown St.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
13	Henry Preston House	15--19 Park St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849	1
14	Elbridge A. Clark House	10 Park St.	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
15	House at 113--115 Center Street	113--115 Center St.	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
16	House at 13 Annis Street	13 Annis St.	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
17	House at 136 Hampstead Street	136 Hampstead St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849	1
18	House at 23 East Street	23 East St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849	1
19	House at 262--264 Pelham Street	262--264 Pelham St.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
20	House at 306 Broadway	306 Broadway	Architecture/Engineering; Event	1825-1849	1
21	House at 4 Birch Avenue	4 Birch Ave.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
22	House at 491 Prospect Street	491 Prospect St.	Architecture/Engineering; Event	1900-1924	1
23	House at 50 Pelham Street	50 Pelham St.	Architecture/Engineering; Event	1875-1899	1
24	House at 526 Prospect Street	526 Prospect St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849	1
25	John W. Mann House	9 Park St.	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
26	Carleton, Joseph Warren – Johnson, Edward F. House	8 Ditson Pl.			1
27	Lawrence Street Cemetery	Lawrence St.			1
28	Methuen Memorial Music Hall	192 Broadway	Architecture/Engineering; Person	1900-1924	1
29	Methuen Water Works	Cross St.	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1

#	Resource Name	Address	Applicable Criterion	Period of Significance	# of Properties
30	Morse, Moses, House	311 Pelham St.	Architecture/Engineering	1750-1799	1
31	Nevins Memorial Library	305 Broadway	Architecture/Engineering	1875-1899	1
32	Nevins, Henry C., Home for Aged and Incurables	110 Broadway	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
33	Old Town Farm	430 Pelham St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849	1
34	Park Lodge	257 Lawrence St.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
35	Perkins, Joseph, House	297 Howe St.	Architecture/Engineering	1750-1799; 1825-1849	1
36	Pleasant-High Historic District	Roughly bounded by Broadway, High, Vine, Charles, and Pleasant Sts.	Architecture/Engineering	1800-1824; 1825-1849; 1850-1874; 1875-1899; 1900-1924	33
37	Searles High School	41 Pleasant St.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
38	Simpson, James E., House	606 Prospect St.	Architecture/Engineering	1900-1924	1
39	Spicket Falls Historic District	Roughly bounded by Spicket River, Railroad, Pelham, Hampshire, Broadway and Osgood Sts.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849; 1850-1874; 1875-1899; 1900-1924	18
40	Swan, Asie, House	669 Prospect St.	Architecture/Engineering	1700-1749	1
41	Tenney Castle Gatehouse	37 Pleasant St.			1
42	Turnpike House	314 Broadway	Architecture/Engineering	1750-1799; 1800-1824	1
43	Waldo, George A., House	233 Lawrence St.	Architecture/Engineering	1825-1849; 1875-1899; 1900-1924	1
44	Walnut Grove Cemetery	Grove and Railroad Sts.	Architecture/Engineering	1850-1874; 1925-1949	1
Total Properties					97

Sources: National Register Information System (NRIS) and the MA State Register of Historic Places

State Register of Historic Places

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is the repository of the State Register of Historic Places. Currently listing 265 Methuen properties, the State Register is another method of recognizing a property's historic value and promoting its preservation. Eligibility for listing is sometimes used as part of a pre-qualification process for grant programs, and criteria for listing are similar to those used for the National Register.

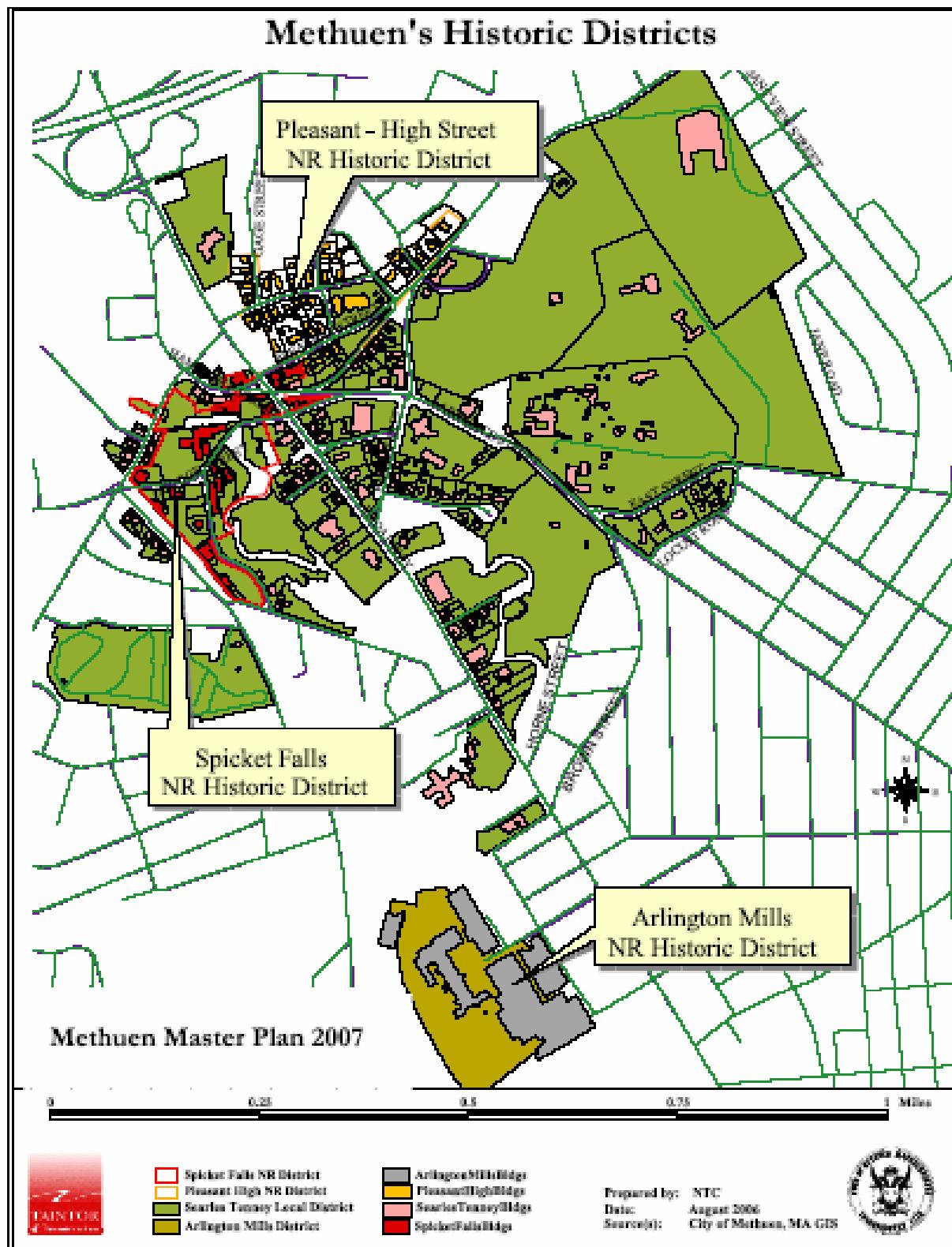
In addition, the Massachusetts Historical Commission has survey forms for 1,517 Methuen properties which document their historic significance.

Methuen Local Historic District

The City's most far-reaching historic designation involves those properties that fall within the boundaries of its local historic district. Adopted in 1991, the Searles Nevins Tenney Historic District is comprised of 169 properties. Exterior changes that are visible from a public way must receive Historic District Commission approval before being undertaken.

The Commission is made up of seven members and three alternates, and conducts business on the fourth Thursday of each month.

Figure 26: Methuen's Historic Districts



Preservation Easements (Restrictions/Covenants)

A preservation easement is the most effective regulatory measure used to preserve historic properties and structures. Recorded as part of the property deed, a preservation easement restricts present and future owners from making inappropriate alterations to the historic resource. An easement may be effective for a limited term or may be in perpetuity, and is enforced by the holder of the restriction – restrictions are often donated to or purchased by a government body or preservation organization and can be tax deductible.

Historic preservation/restoration grant recipients of the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) are required to record a restriction on their properties, the length of which varies in relationship to the amount received.

At present, the following 5 Methuen properties have 20 year preservation restrictions held by the City:

1. 266 Broadway – Perrault House – 1997
2. 5 Pleasant Street – Red Tavern – 1997
3. 275 Broadway – Masonic Hall – 1997
4. 30 Osgood Street – Methuen Co. Warehouse – 1997
5. 90 Broadway – All Saints/St. Andrew's Episcopal Church – 2000

According to the State Register of Historic Places, the following properties also have preservation restrictions recorded on them:

6. First Baptist Church & Parsonage – 1999
7. First Congregational Church – 1998
8. Lawrence St. Cemetery – 2001
9. Music Hall – 1998
10. Central Fire Station – 1997

Archaeological Sites

According to the Methuen Preservation Plan, 11 Methuen sites have been identified as having archaeological resources, and several artifacts that have been discovered in Methuen are kept as part of the collection of the Robert S. Peabody Foundation in Andover. As the Plan notes, all these identified sites are near major bodies of water; in Methuen, most are along the banks of the Merrimack and Spicket Rivers and Mystic Pond.

Additionally, the Preservation Plan notes: “The fact that a number of sites have already been identified in Methuen indicates that the area was well populated in prehistoric times and that there are likely to be a great many more sites that remain undiscovered.” Reports prepared for project sites reveal information about potential additional sites. Two other documents point to additional resources:

- *The Archaeological Reconnaissance Survey for the Northeast Settlement Project* (UMass Archaeological Service); and
- *An Intensive Archaeological Survey of the Appleton Estates Project Area, Methuen, MA* (Public Archaeological Lab, Inc., 1986).

Heritage Landscapes

In May 2005 the Essex National Heritage Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation undertook an effort to inventory all heritage landscapes in Essex County.

According to the Methuen Reconnaissance Report, there are 7 “high priority” landscapes in Methuen, and numerous others that were identified as part of this inventory.

Specific recommendations are made for each high priority landscape. Of these, several directly involve land use issues pertinent to the Master Plan, which are repeated here for consideration.

From the Methuen Reconnaissance Report:

1. Arlington Neighborhood

- Consider Neighborhood Conservation District designation for this large neighborhood where size and scale are more critical than individual design features of each property.

2. Merrimack River

- Develop plan for river protection and use by analyzing present and potential land use along banks.
- Identify designated access points and assume that public access does exist.
- Consider landscape improvements at access points to enhance access and signage.

3. Pleasant Valley Areas Farms

Agricultural Landscapes

Preservation of agricultural landscapes means preservation of the farming activities, particularly in Methuen where there are so few working farms remaining in a relatively densely developed area. It is important to know what the features of these agricultural landscapes are and which features the community treasures in order to make a case for preservation of these farms. Some preservation tools are available that can assist communities in preserving the actual farming activities. Although Methuen’s farmland is limited the city may want to consider the following options:

- Adopt a cluster ordinance that requires a buffer between development and farmland.
- Purchase development rights on farms.
- Determine areas where denser development would be appropriate and develop a transfer of development rights from the farms to certain areas that can sustain more density.
- Foster public-private partnerships to preserve farm land through purchase, conservation restrictions.

4. Spicket Falls Area including Osgood Bridge

- In order to preserve the integrity of these unique features develop partnerships with State agencies such as Mass Highway and Massachusetts Riverways Program administered by Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. Often the regulations are at odds with preservation of such infrastructure and it is important to maintain a dialogue to reach compromises that provide safety while honoring the historic fabric.

5. Sands Bridge and Robert Rogers Homestead Site Area

- Develop specifications for stabilization and preservation of this National Register property prior to seeking a contractor experienced with stone conservation and mortarless construction methods.

- Interpretive signs in the area around the Sands Bridge may help to inform the public about the significance of Robert Rogers and the proximity of his birthplace site. A plan for stabilization should be prepared prior to embarking on such a project.

6. Searles Bridge and Broadway Area

- Develop master plans for the preservation of key properties such as the Music Hall and the Searles Bridge and Dam.

7. Searles Estate/Sisters of Presentation of Mary

- Maintain dialogue with owner of estate to plan for any potential change in use.
- Investigate a Great Estates Ordinance that would permit alternative uses in order to prevent development into housing development if the present owner decides to sell.

FUTURE

Historic District Commission Oversight

PLANS / NEEDS : The local Historic District Commission is charged with overseeing the preservation of the Searles Tenney Nevins district and is credited with maintaining the historic character of the downtown. Issues faced recently by the Commission include the demolition of historic structures to make way for commercial redevelopment, building devaluation and loss of integrity through inappropriate replacement of historic building fabric (primarily windows and siding), and reconciling business owners' marketing needs with historic district signage requirements.

Expansion of the Searles Tenney Nevins District

The Massachusetts Historical Commission has accepted a preliminary study report for the addition of 68 properties to the local historic district. District expansion has been a priority for the Commission as it seeks to extend protection to properties abutting the district and to historically significant properties that are at risk (including the Stephen Barker House, the Thomas Eaton House (1720), and St. George's Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Church (1906). Particular attention is being given to ensuring that both sides of a street (specifically Broadway and Pleasant) are part of the district. Expansion of the historic district was prioritized in the Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan (2001).

Demolition Delay Ordinance

With the repeal of the demolition delay ordinance in March 2007, protection for historic buildings outside the Searles Tenney Nevins Historic District has been lost. The ordinance, which is imposed at the discretion of a City-appointed board only on highly significant buildings, delays demolition for a limited period of time in which the property owner and the City collaborate to find alternate uses for the property. Without this preservation tool, the City risks losing historically significant buildings and compromising its historic character.

Identification of Historically Significant Properties

A 2004 Essex National Heritage Commission grant was used to complete 90 inventory forms for properties abutting the Searles Tenney Nevins Historic District and in the Nevins Park and Fair Oaks areas of Methuen. Discussion of the establishment of new local historic districts and/or National Register Districts is taking place, especially with regard to the Nevins Park neighborhood.

Figure 27: Fair Oaks Historic District (Recommended National Register District)



Source: A Preservation Plan for Methuen, MA (p. 16)

Individual nominations are also being considered for the following properties:

- Searles Bridge on Broadway
- St. George's Primitive Methodist Ebenezer Church - 3 Carleton St. (Henry Vaughn/Searles)

Sands Bridge Restoration

Located along Hampshire Road just west of the I-93 underpass, this dry stone double-arched bridge dates to 1835, when it carried travelers over the Spicket River. This National Register property is in need of stabilization and restoration. The City is pursuing recommendations made in the Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report and the Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan by outlining a scope of work and identifying potential sources of financing and in-kind labor for the restoration of the bridge and creation of an interpretive site. The City secured a grant (Nov. 2006) from the National Trust for Historic Preservation to conduct a restoration feasibility study to be performed by the Dry Stone Conservancy.

Historical Records Collection – Preservation and Storage

In 2006, the City received a grant from the Essex National Heritage Corridor Commission to perform a preservation survey that identified environmental hazards to the collection and recommended strategies for preserving materials through preventive maintenance. The collection, which is temporarily being stored at the Masonic Hall, is under the stewardship of the Historical Commission. The Mayor established a Commission in 2006 to identify a new home for the collection, which is at high risk in its current environment.

Expansion of Cultural Opportunities

The Northeast Massachusetts Regional Library Systems Long Range Planning efforts have formulated several goals for the future of the Nevins Memorial Library that maintains and expands the library's role as the "recognized leader for the cultural development of the community." These include the promotion of life-long learning opportunities, enriching residents' exposure to the arts, and enhancing the library's collaboration with Methuen schools and other organizations.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Methuen is rich in historic resources which are vital to the community's sense of place. Compared with other area communities, it does a good job of planning around preservation issues, in large part thanks to the numerous organizations that share responsibility for these resources. Recently, the addition of a Historic Planner to the City's Community and Economic Development Department has substantially added to the community's ability to implement preservation-related initiatives and projects. And, most

importantly, the City now has a capable grant writer to pursue funding opportunities to support these activities.

Nevertheless, preservation goals and objectives occasionally are challenged despite their nearly universal support throughout Methuen. For example, during the Master Plan process the City Council acted to rescind the local Demolition Delay ordinance, which is among the few tools a municipality has in helping to preserve historic structures. In addition, although the City had a Preservation Plan completed in 1997, several of its recommendations continue to await implementation.

Improved communication between preservation interests and other land use boards, commissions, and elected officials will serve to help Methuen remain near the forefront of municipal preservation planning. Continued funding of a staff position will be critical to achieving continued progress.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND STRATEGIES

Goal HCR-1: Contribute to Methuen's sustainable development, cultural revitalization, and quality of life goals through historic preservation.

Objectives:

- Fortify support for the City's existing historic preservation programs
- Adopt new preservation programs and tools that protect Methuen's historic resources
- Enhance preservation education for community leaders, residents, developers, real estate professionals, and students
- Identify and document historic properties through inventory activities and National Register nominations
- Plan for and implement long-term preservation strategies for City-owned historic resources
- Provide adequate funding and staff resources to carry out needed preservation and curatorial activities

Strategies:

- HCR-1.1: Reinstate the demolition delay ordinance.
- HCR-1.2: Expand Searles Tenney Nevins Historic District.
- HCR-1.3: Establish new local historic districts (Nevins Park, Fair Oaks).
- HCR-1.4: Support Historical Commission educational initiatives in schools.
- HCR-1.5: Develop historic structures reports and preservation plans for the Searles Building and Central School
- HCR-1.5: Encourage developers to use State and federal rehabilitation tax credits.
- HCR-1.6: Target historic properties that could be adaptively reused (Howe School, Mt. Carmel Church, Central Fire Station).
- HCR-1.7: Rehouse the City Archives and collection in an appropriate, environmental controlled location.
- HCR-1.8: Consider adoption of Community Preservation Act as a means to boost funding for City preservation, open space, and affordable housing projects.
- HCR-1.9: Explore financial incentives for owners to restore their historic properties

HCR-1.10: Provide historic property owners with research on their houses/buildings

HCR-1.11: Conduct local architectural history and preservation workshops for real estate agents

HCR-1.12: Educate residents and promote Methuen's history through interpretive panels, historic markers, public installations, and publications

HCR-1.13: Improve or address deferred maintenance at historic sites listed in Methuen Open Space Plan:

- Robert Rogers Birthplace
- Lawrence St. Cemetery
- Searles Building
- Masonic Lodge
- Spicket River Falls Dam
- Methuen Mills Company
- Jute Mill
- Cotton Spinning Mill

Goal HCR-2: Continue to support the Nevins Memorial Library as the City's center for cultural resources.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The collective input and energy of the City's constituents, staff, and officials which produced this Master Plan is reflected in the ambitious agenda set forth in this chapter. Ensuring that the Plan's extensive recommendations and vision are carried out will require vigilant attention, long-term commitment, and strong public-private partnerships.

The Master Plan Steering Committee met over the course of 2 months to carefully consider how this Plan should be implemented; it endeavored to strike a balance between addressing the needs identified in the plan as efficiently and effectively as possible, while recognizing that the exercise of establishing priorities naturally means that some strategies must rank lower than others.

ACTION TABLE

As a means of organizing implementation efforts, this element is focused on a stand-alone table of strategies, accompanied by further detailed actions (where applicable), assignments of responsibility, and additional notes indicating the status, funding, or any other information that may be relevant to the task. This table may be used as a checklist of sorts, an easy to use reference for monitoring progress on the plan. It should be regularly reviewed, revisited, and revised as accomplishments are made and new challenges identified.

Some items contained in the Plan will be directly implemented through the Community Development Board – as a public entity, its meetings are all open to the public. Progress on items for which the Board is responsible can be easily tracked by interested parties.

Items beyond the Community Development Board's jurisdiction will likely be pursued through a variety of channels which are also open to the public. In many instances, progress may be linked to obtaining funding for a project, and venues such as the City's annual budget deliberations, the creation of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), the forming of public-private partnerships, and a variety of grant making opportunities can all be places where Master Plan strategies are realized.

PRIORITIES & TIME TABLE

As public discussion on the Master Plan took place, a number of priorities clearly emerged – these are summarized in the “Priorities for Action” section of the Plan.

The final public hearing on the draft plan asked participants to rank the 80+ proposed strategies in order of importance, both within the elements and across all categories. The Master Plan Steering Committee reviewed this input and divided the strategies into top, medium, and low priorities, and assigned each strategy a number from 1-3 accordingly. The Committee kept the principles of Smart Growth in mind as it weighed how the City might best go about implementing this plan – as a result, top priorities tend to address responsible and measured growth which promotes a sustainable Methuen community into the future.

In an effort to balance the workload this list presents, we attempted to limit top priorities to a manageable number and evenly distribute remaining strategies among the “medium and low” groups.

Among those in the top category are:

PFS-1.1: Develop and implement a 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Update it annually.

PFS-2.1: Renovate or build a new high school.

LU-3.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Development Plan to create a complete riverwalk along the Spicket River and to provide a small boat ramp on it. Carry out that plan's further recommendations to redevelop property along the Spicket River to open up the backs of buildings to the Spicket River and to create indoor views from redeveloped buildings.

LU-1.2: Redefine zoning and subdivision rules and regulations via a comprehensive revision, and involve private consultants as necessary. As part of this effort, incorporate Smart Growth principles where appropriate, including adoption of Low Impact Development (LID) in the subdivision and site plan regulations, consider the use of 40R and 43D districts in downtown and elsewhere, open space residential development, inclusionary zoning, and historic preservation and redevelopment incentives (special permits, density bonuses, "by right" zoning for transit-oriented development).

H-1.1: Evaluate the feasibility of encouraging (through the negotiation of a development agreement) the use of any undeveloped parcels in Methuen as part of an affordable housing strategy.

ED-1.1: The City should consider acquiring or expanding an existing business park, or develop a new business park.

ED-2.1: Review and assess the City's development review process, including organizational structure. Ensure that the process is clearly defined, guarantees flexibility, projects a business friendly attitude, and encourages high quality developments.

TC-2.2: Develop effective incentives to encourage mixed-use development to have a significant number of people living in the downtown.

TC-1.1: Continue to work with EOT to develop a plan for Route 110/113 rotary improvements that can be funded and implemented and will improve local roadway conditions.

HCR-1.7: Rehouse the City Archives and collection in an appropriate, environmental controlled location.

Time table assignments reflect target start dates (within a 5-year horizon) for strategy implementation and are intended to correlate with the priority ranking, as follows:

Priority 1	2007-2008
Priority 2	2009-2010
Priority 3	2010-2012

Where multi-year efforts are anticipated, end dates are extended. Several of the recommendations are noted as on-going efforts. These include policies regularly promoted by the City (e.g. Regulatory Relief Task Force), and some recent initiatives begun during the Master Plan process (design of the Arlington Neighborhood Community Center).

This order of priority should be flexible to respond to changing conditions in the City – in other words, as opportunities arise (e.g. available grant funding, options to purchase land, etc.) ranked items can be moved up in priority. Ideally, a Master Plan Implementation Plan committee could be appointed to provide annual updates to the City administration on the Plan's progress.

Strategy #	Strategy Description	Priority (1-3)	Time Table	Responsibility
LAND USE				
Goal LU-1: Create better, easier to administer residential zoning and subdivision regulations.				
LU-1.1: Conduct a detailed review of residential zoning districts. Methuen has a complex land use pattern, developed over several centuries of growth. The City's GIS system can help highlight where zones diverge from dimensional requirements and may result in some consolidation/ simplification of the number of residential zones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request MVPC assistance (GIS) Develop scope of work for consulting assistance Hire consultant 	3	2010-2012	Community Development Board; City Council
LU-1.2: Redefine zoning and subdivision rules and regulations via a comprehensive revision, and involve private consultants as necessary. Incorporate Smart Growth principles where appropriate, including adoption of Low Impact Development (LID) in the subdivision and site plan regulations, consider the use of 40R and 43D districts in downtown and elsewhere, open space residential development, inclusionary zoning, and historic preservation and redevelopment incentives (special permits, density bonuses, "by right" zoning for transit-oriented development).	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council
Goal LU-2: Preserve the remaining rural character of Methuen.				
LU-2.1: Identify parcels and potential investors for key agricultural and forested areas. Create a plan to identify and purchase areas. Take advantage of the right of first refusal on retiring Chapter 61A and 61B properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Open Space Committee Rank priorities Budget for purchases 	2	On-going	Open Space Committee; Planner; Assessor; City Council
LU-2.2: Adopt an Open Space Residential Development ordinance that would protect large tracts of open space while maintaining existing densities. Use the Commonwealth's Model OSRD ordinance (part of the Smart Growth Toolkit) as a starting point, and refer to other municipalities that have experienced successes (Ipswich, Amesbury, Newbury, Hopkinton etc.).	same as strategy	1	2007-2009	Community Development Board; City Council
LU-2.3: Limit clear cutting of vegetation including trees. Adopt a "no net loss" ordinance that would require replacement in caliper of mature tree removal associated with all new development.	same as strategy	1	2010-2012	Conservation Commission; Community Development Board; City Council

Strategy #	Strategy Description	Priority (1-3)	Time Table	Responsibility
Goal LU-3: Preserve important historic structures and landscapes.				
LU-3.1: Reinstate the Demolition Delay ordinance. See also HCR-1.1	same as strategy	1	2007-2008	Historic Planner; City Council
LU-3.2: Designate rural roads as "Scenic."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory scenic roads • Submit to Council for designation 	2	2009-2010	Engineering; Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; City Council
LU-3.3: Find economic uses for historic structures in commercial areas. Acquire easements or development rights from owners of important scenic and historic landscape properties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within Capital Improvement Plan, budget for easement/rights purchases 	1	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Historical Commission; City Council
Goal LU-4: Encourage the development and redevelopment of river frontage for public recreation and enjoyment.				
LU-4.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Development Plan to create a complete riverwalk along the Spicket River and to provide a small boat ramp on it. Carry out that plan's further recommendations to redevelop property along the Spicket River to open up the backs of buildings to the Spicket River and to create indoor views from redeveloped buildings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult Downtown Plan for details 	1	2007-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Community Development Board; City Council
LU-4.2: In conjunction with implementation of the Downtown Development Plan, conduct a Flood Mitigation Hazard Study to determine how to best protect existing and proposed public and private investments as part of the Downtown Plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding source (FEMA, Chapter 43D, CDBG) • Hire consultant 	1	2007-2012	Engineering
LU-4.3: Complete public access/park improvements to the former Bea's Sandwiches site along the Merrimack Riverfront (near the I-93/Rte. 113/110 interchange) using a \$450,000 state grant.	same as strategy	1	2007-2008	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
LU-4.4: Amend Site Plan Review ordinance to address all non-residential and multifamily residential development along the rivers to provide public access and scenic views to the rivers.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council

Strategy #	Strategy Description	Priority (1-3)	Time Table	Responsibility
LU-5: Identify opportunities for additional economic development growth.				
LU-5.1: Explore areas such as Lindbergh Ave, Merrimack Street and Broadway with an eye for economic development. Develop site-specific goals for economic development/ maximization of industrially zoned land, downtown development, and commercial corridor redevelopment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement via site plan review 	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council
Goal LU-6: Manage land uses in a manner that will incrementally improve transportation flow.				
LU-6.1: Include vehicle trip generation reducing requirements in commercial and industrial zoning, e.g., require new commercial and industrial development to include bicycle racks and lockers and showers for bicycle users, in concert with the Merrimack Valley Transportation Management Association (TMA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement via site plan review 	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; TMA; City Council
LU-6.2: Require employers to provide priority parking (most favorably located) for car and van pools. Encourage new commercial and industrial development to provide low interest loans for employees to purchase vans for carpooling. Require new commercial and industrial development to pay for off-site traffic safety and flow improvements if new traffic they will generate is expected to lower the level-of-service on adjacent roadways or otherwise adversely impact the transportation network.	same as strategy	2	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Community Development Board; Engineering Dept.
Goal LU-7: Reduce the unfavorable aspects and impacts of strip commercial development.				
LU-7.1: Create a mixed use commercial corridor zoning overlay that permits smaller lots and reduces building setbacks so that mixed use shopping villages can be created along arterial roadways with parking to the rear and side. Set overall design principles in the overlay zone, but leave details of design to be determined and approved in the site plan and special permit approval process. Specifically consider the following areas: Broadway from Rosewood to NH State Line, Haverhill Street from 93/110 Rotary to Lawrence line, Merrimack Street in the Valley, Pleasant Street from Methuen Executive Park to lights at Jackson Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop scope of work for consulting assistance • Hire consultant 	1	2007-2008	Community Development Board; City Council

HOUSING**Goal H-1: Work to increase Methuen's inventory of affordable housing units which qualify under Chapter 40B.**

<p>H-1.1: Evaluate the feasibility of encouraging (through the negotiation of a development agreement) the use of any undeveloped parcels in Methuen as part of an affordable housing strategy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage current owner(s) in discussion • Survey sites • Determine the fair market value and development potential of sites • Identify suitable development options • Negotiate and/or facilitate a development agreement(s) 	1	2007-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Community Development Board; Housing Authority Board; Mayor; City Council
<p>H-1.2: Mandate affordable housing as part of new residential developments. Use the Commonwealth's Model Inclusionary ordinance as a start, and see how Melrose, Barnstable, Newton, and others have achieved success using this tool. Potential funding for assistance can be sought from the Priority Development Fund (PDF) or its replacement.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt inclusionary zoning ordinance 	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; Zoning Board of Appeals; Housing Authority Board; City Council
<p>H-1.3: Create an Affordable Housing Plan in accordance with the Planned Production regulation promulgated by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Master Plan to develop plan • Submit to DHCD for approval 	2	2009-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Zoning Board of Appeals
<p>Goal H-2: Identify both municipally and privately owned undeveloped and underdeveloped parcels which could be considered suitable sites for the development of affordable residential units.</p>				
<p>H-2.1: Make appropriate use of municipally-owned land for affordable housing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify sites • Develop RFP • Solicit development proposals 	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Housing Authority Board; Mayor; City Council

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider development options, including UCH-TIF districts in the downtown area. 			
<p>Goal H-3: Encourage a mix of housing types, densities, prices, and ownership patterns that help to maintain a stable demographic base within the City and serve the needs of low and moderate income households, while preserving those characteristics of the community that are desired by most residents.</p>				
H-3.1: Expand Opportunities for Affordable Accessory Dwelling Units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore use of Local Initiative Program in conjunction with accessory apt. permitting 	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council
H-3.2: Explore the creation of 40R district in the downtown and wherever affordable housing needs can be fulfilled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider 40R when reviewing 40B proposals 	3	On-going	Community Development Board; City Council

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT				
Goal ED-1: Strengthen the City's fiscal stability and stabilize its tax base through sustainable growth.				
ED-4.1: Amend the City's land use regulations to "expand" the downtown central business district as well as allowing increased mixed use density (building height and intensity of use) in the downtown.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council
ED-1.2: Pursue redevelopment of underutilized sites along commercial corridors (Route 110 [Haverhill Street], Route 113, 28, Pelham Street, and Pleasant Street at Jackson Street) and throughout commercially-zoned areas. Consider specific sites such as former Fox Nissan building on Pelham Street, the Gleason Street brownfield remediation site, Barrett Warehouse on Chase Street, Fram's Auto on Merrimack Street.	same as strategy	2	on-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
Goal ED-2: Provide strategies that will increase the potential for commercial, retail and industrial development to locate in Methuen.				
ED-2.1: Consider acquiring or expanding an existing business park, or develop a new business park. Emphasis should be placed on developing "shovel-ready", pre-permitted sites as an incentive to attract light industrial, warehouse/distribution, office, and health service end-users.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form business park working group • Establish site selection criteria • Consider tools like TIF, DIF, and 43D districts to foster development 	1	2007-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; City Council

Goal ED-3: Encourage the City's responsiveness to industry needs and foster expansion of the City's established commercial and industrial base.

ED-3.1: Review and assess the City's development review process, including organizational structure. Ensure that the process is clearly defined, guarantees flexibility, projects a business friendly attitude, and encourages high quality developments. Repeat at 3-5 year intervals.	same as strategy	1	On-going	Methuen Regulatory Relief Task Force, Community Development Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev. and Code Enforcement
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------	---	----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Goal ED-4: Provide economic opportunities for Methuen's residents, not just in the short term but also well into the future.

ED-4.1: Implement a customized Business Retention & Expansion program to cultivate and strengthen relationships with existing businesses.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
ED-4.2: Leverage funds to encourage the repositioning of underperforming properties in the city. These include facilities that are not currently being operated at their highest and best use (for example underutilized upper floors in downtown buildings).	same as strategy	2	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Community Development Board; Mayor; City Council
ED-4.3: Develop a marketing and promotional campaign to support the locational, quality of life and business-friendly attributes of the City.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Community Development Board; Chamber of Commerce; Mayor and City Council

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Goal FA-1: Strengthen the City's fiscal stability and stabilize its tax base through sustainable growth.

FA-1.1: Complete a comprehensive tax base analysis in order to determine and maximize the fiscal benefits of public and private tax base investments and stabilize the property tax rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify funding & develop RFP Hire consultant 	2	2009-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Assessor; Auditor
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---	-----------	------------------------------------------------

TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION				
Goal T-1: Address congestion and safety issues on arterial streets to minimize traffic diverting to local streets.				
TC-1.1: Continue to work with EOT to develop a plan for Route 110/113 rotary improvements that can be funded and implemented and will improve local roadway conditions.	same as strategy	1	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Engineering Dept.
TC-1.2: Work with MassHighway and MVPC to design and implement signal and roadway improvements at Howe Street/Washington Street/Rte. 113.	same as strategy	1	2007-2008	Engineering Dept.
TC-1.3: Conduct a city-wide traffic study to identify capacity constraints, connectivity issues, deficient signals and pavement markings, pedestrian crossing problems, issues constraining transit vehicles, and impediments to cycling. Establish a Task Force to help guide the study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor establish Task Force • Identify funding & develop RFP • Hire consultant 	2	2009-2010	Mayor; Task Force; Engineering Dept.
TC-1.4: Establish a project priority list and prepare Project Need Forms for MassHighway. :	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Engineering Dept.; MVPC
Goal T-2: Promote an economically healthy and walkable downtown, in concert with the Downtown Development Plan.				
TC-2.1: Conduct a parking study in the downtown to assess occupancy rates, by time of day, and turnover.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop work plan • Identify funding source (e.g. Chapter 43D grant) • Hire consultant or use MVPC or volunteers to conduct study 	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
TC-2.2: Develop effective incentives to encourage mixed-use development to have a significant number of people living in the downtown through implementation of the Downtown Development Plan recommendations.	same as strategy	1	2007-2008	Community Development Board; City Council
TC-2.3: Revise the zoning ordinance to allow shared parking in the downtown.	same as strategy	1	2007-2008	Community Development Board; City Council

TC-2.4: Revise the zoning bylaw to allow a parking reduction in the CBD based upon the parking study conducted in Goal T-2.1.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Community Development Board; City Council
TC-2.5: Revise Section XI-D, Special Permits, to increase the maximum density in the CBD to 15 to 20 units per acre, as consistent with smart growth guidelines.	same as strategy	3	2010-2011	Community Development Board; City Council
TC-2.6: Upgrade signage in the downtown and villages to improve wayfinding by motorists and cyclists and pedestrians.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop wayfinding plan • Purchase and install upgraded signage 	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Engineering Dept.; DPW
TC-2.7: Work with Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and the Merrimack Valley TMA to identify and map potential streets for bike routes, bike lanes and sidewalks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare scope of work • Submit technical assistance request 	2	2009-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
TC-2.8: Work with developers to build sidewalks and improve connectivity between existing sidewalks and proposed sidewalks. See Strategy TC-4.2 as well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During subdivision and site plan review 	2	On-going	Community Development Board;

Goal T-3: Provide more transit options for commuting and other trips.

TC-3.1: Continue participating in the New Hampshire I-93 Transit Study to maximize long-term transit benefits for Methuen from the I-93 widening project. The Mayor and Community Development staff have been coordinating efforts with NY consulting team.	same as strategy	2	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Mayor Engineering Dept.
TC-3.2: Work with businesses, MVRTA, the Merrimack Valley TMA, and the state to establish convenient and effective connections between Methuen neighborhoods and MBTA commuter rail stops in Lawrence and Haverhill.	same as strategy	2	On-going	Mayor's Office; Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
TC-3.3: Work with MVRTA to investigate restoring service to West Methuen and improving service throughout the City. Investigate options for rail or bus shuttle service to Lawrence commuter rail station from downtown area.	same as strategy	3	On-going	Mayor's Office; Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
TC-3.4: Work with MVRTA to post signs at all bus stops in Methuen with information on the destination and frequency of the bus.	same as strategy	3	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.;

TC-3.5: Promote transit options through the City Web site, providing links to MVRTA and MBTA.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Mayor's Office
Goal T-4: Promote bicycling and walking for transportation and recreation.				
TC-4.1: Develop a policy outlining those situations under which the Community Development Board will consider waiving sidewalk requirements in the Subdivision Rules and Regulations, specify the costs associated with the construction of the sidewalks, and develop a list of priority sites for new and/or upgraded sidewalks.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use GIS to inventory existing sidewalk network and identify priorities • Draft policy for inclusion in subdivision regulations 	2	2009-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Engineering; Community Development Board
TC-4.2: Review site plan, zoning and subdivision ordinances to make them consistent with Smart Growth principles and low impact development. Promote more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly policies including bicycle parking requirements, roadway design standards, and easements/right-of-way for bicycle and pathway projects.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council
TC-4.3: Partner with the Commonwealth's Safe Routes to Schools program to get technical assistance including education and infrastructure improvements that promote walking to school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mayor establish Task Force • Develop Sidewalk Plan 	3	On-going	Mayor; Engineering Dept.; City Council
TC-4.4: Develop a Town-wide bicycle and pedestrian plan to create a system of off-road paths, lanes, and trails that connect destinations and provide desirable recreation opportunities. The Plan should be the reference guide for discussions of mitigation by developers and other entities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • same as strategy • Consultant or volunteer group 	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Conservation Commission

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES				
GOAL PFS-1: Continue to provide high quality services, facilities and infrastructure while balancing this with efficient resource management.				
PFS-1.1: Develop and implement a 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Update it annually. Include Auditor, Assessor, key Dept. Heads, and Council representative on CIP Committee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish CIP Committee; • Create CIP 	1	2007-2009	Mayor; CIP Committee; City Council
PFS-1.2: Study various options for improving the police and fire stations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding • Develop scope pf work and RFP • Hire consultant 	2	2009-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Police; Fire; DPW
GOAL PFS-2: Continue to provide excellence in education, accommodate increasing enrollments and support learning with an appropriately designed school environment.				
PFS-2.1: Renovate or build a new high school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify funding • Develop scope pf work and RFP • Hire consultant 	1	2007-2012	School Committee; School Dept.; City Council
PFS-2.2: Support the Superintendent's Task Force in their efforts to address student-teacher ratios. Study various options to determine how to alleviate perceived overcrowding at the elementary schools.	same as strategy	2	On-going	School Committee; City Council
GOAL PFS-3: Respond to accommodate a growing elderly population.				
PFS-3.1: Identify potential sites for a satellite senior center to be used primarily for medical purposes (e.g. clinic).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For working site selection group 	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Council on Aging
PFS-3.2: Consider developing City-owned/managed elderly housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form elderly housing work group 	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Housing Authority; City Council
PFS-3.3: Work with the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority and/or the Northern Essex Elder Transportation program	same as strategy	3	On-going	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Council on Aging

PFS-3.4: Renovate the Senior Center in order to provide more programming in the areas of physical fitness and medical services and to project a different image through a more modern aesthetic.	• Plan for renovation in Capital Improvement Program	3	2010-2012	Council on Aging; City Council
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------	---	-----------	--------------------------------

GOAL PFS-4: Respond to accommodate to an increasingly ethnically diverse population.

PFS-4.1: Support the expansion of the Methuen Adult Learning Center by identifying space and equipment needs and searching for alternative locations.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
PFS-4.2: Explore additional ways of making connections between the Library, the schools, the pre-schools and adult learning opportunities.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Library Trustees
PFS-4.3: Publish City materials describing facilities and services and other important messages in multiple languages. Consider bi-lingual signage in certain places in City buildings as well as throughout the City.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Mayor's Office
PFS-4.4: Hold visioning session, focus groups, and/or other outreach activities to determine what residents in the Arlington neighborhood feel are their most important issues.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.

GOAL PFS-5: Meet the needs of Methuen's youth.

PFS-5.1: Expand homework support and other before and after school programs.	same as strategy	3	on-going	School Dept.; School Committee
PFS-5.2: Support the development of the new Methuen Arlington Neighborhood Center.	same as strategy	1	2007-2008	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
PFS-5.3: Increase coordination with the YMCA and other youth organizations.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
PFS-5.4: Consider developing a Youth Center.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.
PFS-5.5: Provide more after school activities at the schools.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	School Dept; School Committee

GOAL PFS-6: Improve communication between city departments as well as between the City and its residents.

PFS-6.1: Determine how to maximize usage of the citywide fiber optic network and web site to disseminate and make accessible information inter/intra-departmentally as well as from the city to residents.	• Form interdepartmental work committee to implement	1	2010-2012	Mayor's Office; MIS
PFS-6.2: Develop multi-lingual materials.	same as strategy	3	2010-2012	Mayor's Office
PFS-6.3: Establish an annual "Visit the Master Plan Meeting" inviting relevant Department Heads, Boards and Committees to discuss city-wide issues of concern	same as strategy	2	2008-2012	Mayor's Office; Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.

NATURAL RESOURCES & OPEN SPACE					
Goal NOR-1: Preserve the remaining rural character of Methuen.					
NOR-1.1: Identify parcels and potential investors for key agricultural and forested areas. Create a plan to identify and purchase properties. Take advantage of the right of first refusal on retiring Chapter 61A and 61B properties.	• See L.U. 2.1				
NOR-1.2: Consider adopting an Open Space Residential Development ordinance that would protect large tracts of open space while maintaining existing densities.	• See L.U. 2.2				
NOR-1.3: Limit clear cutting of vegetation including trees. Adopt a “no net loss” ordinance that would require replacement in caliper of mature tree removal associated with all new development.	• See L.U. 2.3				
NOR-1.4: Work with developers to preserve linkages or corridors between natural areas.	• Use Open Space map to guide review • Via Subdivision and site plan review	2	On-going	Community Development Board	
NOR-1.5: Pass the Community Preservation Act as a means of funding open space protection and improvements to recreation facilities.	See also HCR-1.9	3	2010	City Council	
Goal NOR-2: Encourage the development and redevelopment of river frontage for public recreation and enjoyment.					
NOR-2.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Downtown Development Plan to create a complete riverwalk along the Spicket River and to provide a small boat ramp on it. Carry out that plan’s further recommendations to redevelop property along the Spicket River to open up the backs of buildings to the Spicket River and to create indoor views from redeveloped buildings.	same as strategy	1	2007-2012	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Community Development Board; City Council	
NOR-2.2: Increase public access to the Merrimack River by requiring all non-residential and multifamily residential development along the rivers to provide public access and scenic views to the rivers.	See also LU-4.4	2	2009-2010	Community Development Board; City Council	

Goal NOR-3: Expand recreation facilities to meet usage demands of a growing population.

NOR-3.1: Carry out the recommendations of the Methuen Open Space and Recreation Plan to increase open space and recreation facilities.	• See OSR Plan for details	2	On-going	Various (Conservation Commission, Community Development, DPW, City Council, etc.)
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------	---	----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------

HISTORIC & CULTURAL RESOURCES**Goal HCR-1: Contribute to Methuen's sustainable development, cultural revitalization, and quality of life goals through historic preservation.**

HCR-1.1: Reinstate the Demolition Delay Ordinance.	See also LU-3.1			
HCR-1.2: Expand the Searles Nevins Tenney Historic District	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Historic District Commission; City Council
HCR-1.3: Establish new local historic districts (Nevins Park, Fair Oaks)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint Study Committee (s) • Prepare District Study report • Shepard through 40C process 	3	2010-2012	Mayor; Historical Commission; City Council
HCR-1.4: Support Historical Commission educational initiatives in schools	same as strategy	2	2008-2012	School Dept.; School Committee
HCR-1.5: Develop historic structures reports and preservation plans for the Searles Building and Central School.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop scope of work; • Identify funding source; • Hire consultant to prepare 	3	2010-2012	Historic Planner
HCR-1.6: Encourage developers to use State and federal rehabilitation tax credits	same as strategy	2	On-going	Community Development Department; Assessor
HCR-1.7: Target historic properties that could be adaptively reused.	same as strategy	2	2009-2010	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.

HCR-1.8: Rehouse the City Archives and collection in an appropriate, environmental controlled location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess collection spatial needs • Create potential site list • Negotiate terms of relocation (lease, rent, etc.) 	1	2007-2008	Dept. of Econ. & Comm. Dev.; Historical Commission; Mayor's Office
HCR-1.9: Consider adoption of Community Preservation Act as a means to boost funding for City preservation initiatives, open space, and affordable housing projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form Committee to explore idea 	3	2010	City Council
HCR-1.10: Explore financial incentives for owners to restore their historic properties.	same as strategy	3	On-going	Historic Planner
HCR-1.11: Provide historic property owners with research on their houses/buildings.	same as strategy	3	On-going	Historic Planner; Historical Commission
HCR-1.12: Educate residents and promote Methuen's history through interpretive panels, historic markers, public installations, and publications.	same as strategy	3	2007-2012	Historic Planner; Historical Commission
Goal HCR-2: Continue to support the Nevins Memorial Library as the City's center for cultural resources.				