

SECTION III: COMMUNITY SETTING

3.1 REGIONAL CONTEXT

3.1.1. Location and Physical context

Townsend occupies 32.83 square miles of land and surface water in western Middlesex County on the New Hampshire border, just north of the City of Fitchburg and east of the Town of Ashby. It is also bordered by Pepperell and Groton to the east, Shirley to the southeast and Lunenburg to the south. Townsend is located 39.5 miles northwest of Boston and provides convenient access to surrounding business, cultural, recreational and scenic opportunities. Middlesex County is located in the New England physiographic province of the Appalachian Highlands physiographic division, and Townsend is located in the Central Uplands. The Central Uplands cover extreme northwestern Middlesex County, extending eastward almost to the Nashua River. The landscape is characterized by steep hills dissected by deep, narrow, interconnected valleys. (See Map 1-Regional Context)

3.1.2. Socio-Economic context

As a suburban/rural town, Townsend is shifting from its historical agriculture-dominated local economy to one best described as a bedroom community. With the migration of business and technology growth to the Route 495 beltway, an increased demand for housing has placed residential development pressures in Townsend. However, there has been only a slight increase in business in town.

While Townsend has enjoyed higher income levels than the Fitchburg-SMSA (Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area), which extends to the south of Townsend to include the communities Fitchburg, Lunenburg, Leominster and Shirley, it has lower incomes than those obtained when averaging the incomes of households in Townsend, Pepperell and Groton. This difference within the region is likely to occur because: 1) Pepperell and Groton are closer to Route 495 and Boston than most of the SMSA towns; 2) Groton has historically been a wealthy town; and 3) many of the SMSA towns have historically been lower income towns.

For many years, Townsend has been viewed as a small, quiet town on the New Hampshire border. (See Figure 3.1 for a 2010 newspaper article about Townsend) Within the last twenty years, however, this vision of Townsend has begun to change. Between the years of 1970 and 1980, the population of Townsend increased by 68%; from 1980 to 1985 this population increase was also pronounced at approximately 14%; 1985 to 1990 showed a population increase from about 8,250 to 8,500 residents. The years 1990–1999 showed a slight decrease in the population and growth rate. 2000-2002 showed an overall population increase from 9,501 to 9,503 and from 2003-2009 we had a decrease in population from 9,415 to 9,326 residents.

With the closure of Fort Devens and its subsequent redevelopment in the towns of Ayer, Shirley and Littleton, more jobs have been created, and the higher cost of housing closer to Route 495 and Route 2 has created a demand for more affordable housing in Townsend. In 1999, there were four subdivision plans filed with the Planning Board. From 2001 to 2011 there were nine subdivisions endorsed by the Board:

- In 2001, plans for two 17-home developments were approved with 72 acres of open space.
- In 2004, an 11-home development was completed, with 25 acres of open space.
- In 2005 a 5-home and a 44-home development were approved and still being built with 6 acres of open space.

- In 2006 one 15-home development was presented and is still in process with 17 acres of open space.
- In 2007 one 20-condo multifamily development in 5 buildings was approved but has not yet started construction due to the economy, but gave 34 acres of open space to the town.
- In 2009 six house lots and a 58-acre equestrian farm was approved for construction and began in 2010 with 48 acres of open space.
- The Open Space Preservation Development Bylaw passed in 1986 and the Open Space Multifamily Development Bylaw passed in 1989 has provided 242 acres of open space to the town.
- In 2011 two 24-unit rental buildings were approved under the Chapter 40B provisions with no open space provisions.

3.1.3. Shared Resources

Townsend lies in the Nashua River watershed. It is drained primarily to the Squannacook River and partially to the Nissitissit River in Pepperell and Brookline, NH. Beginning in West Townsend at the confluence of three streams, the Squannacook travels through the town to the Harbor Pond, the historic dam and grist mill in the Harbor, then winds southeast to form the border between Shirley and Groton. It finally joins the Nashua River where the towns of Ayer, Shirley and Groton meet. Townsend's aquifer flows in a similar direction and for the most part follows the Squannacook River. Sharing the Squannacook and Nashua River watersheds with surrounding towns increases the need for cooperative protection strategies. Townsend's Conservation Commission is a member of and works closely with the Nashua River Watershed Association on preservation and protection projects and collaborations with other towns.

In addition to exemplary wildlife habitat, areas along the Squannacook River support activities such as fishing, hiking, hunting, canoeing, and swimming. Under the Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers Sanctuary Act (MGL Ch. 132A, Sec. 17) the Squannacook River and associated named tributaries are recognized as Outstanding Resource Waters of the Commonwealth. Townsend has accepted the Sanctuary Act as a zoning bylaw and added some provisions to create better local protections. The Act limits new point source discharges and construction within 300 feet of the Squannacook River and its tributaries.

The Townsend State Forest is located in northern Townsend along the New Hampshire border and covers a large expanse of land. Vegetative and wildlife habitats are supported, along with passive recreational activities and snowmobiling in this woodland sanctuary. The Willard Brook State Forest is located in southwest Townsend and is shared with the Town of Ashby. The area supports light recreational use in addition to a variety of habitats for plant and animal species. Pearl Hill State Park is located in southwest Townsend and supports camping, hiking, swimming, canoeing and other passive recreation. All of the State Parks in Townsend attract many visitors and tourists to the town. Townsend becomes a pass through town in the summer where Route 119, lined with antique shops, becomes a scenic roadway for many to drive all the way to the Vermont border.

Townsend also participates in a regional household hazardous waste consortium to allow residents to safely dispose of hazardous chemicals. There is a group of local citizens working to develop the Squannacook River Rail Trail on the abandoned rail line in Townsend and West Groton.

Figure 3.1 Article from Sentinel & Enterprise.

Locals: Townsend is quiet, affordable small town

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TOWNSEND — Driving on Route 119 in Townsend Friday afternoon, the town is alive with activity as temperatures hovered just above 60 degrees.

Once a roaring mill town, Townsend has become a getaway for its 9,687 residents who are far away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

According to recent Census data, Townsend is the most statistically average town. Its population of 9,867 people falls just below the typical community's numbers of 10,336. Its median income hovers around the average at \$86,000, while the median age is 39.

The small community also promotes a well-established school district and an affordable housing market.

And while the numbers may say it's an average town, Townsend's residents say it's anything but.

Karen Considine moved to the middle-class town nearly two decades ago to escape an overly commercialized Westford, where she grew up.

"I wouldn't want to live there now because it's just so overdeveloped and Townsend to me is exactly how Westford was before," she said Friday afternoon while shopping at the Family Dollar in town.

She said in Townsend "everyone looks out for each other, Everybody is nice and you got everything right here."

Considine said as the temperatures rise and summer arrives, more and more of the residents "will come out of the woodwork and come together as a community."

"It's your typical small town. In the spring, everybody knows what's going on because they drive through here and there's a fair going on, and that's how you know spring is here or the fall," said Considine a teacher at a local preschool.

She said the small-town fairs are great, with weekly band concerts on the common. "It's where you see all the little kids from school, where you can let them run around and not have to worry about them. Everybody looks out for each other. I love Townsend," she said.

Lee-Ann Davis of West Townsend said she moved here 11 years ago, to be closer to family.

"It's just perfect. It's quiet. It's peaceful. The school district is awesome and there's a lot of good people here," said Davis. "They have soccer, football, baseball. They have all

kinds of stuff and it's great."

With others, like Barbara Lamkin of Townsend, what started out looking for a house in town that she and her husband could afford in 1957, turned into a love of the simple life.

"It was just a nice country town with a home that we could afford at the time. I love it," she said. "It's extraordinary. It's very nice and great for children."

Continue down Route 119, and it's hard not to notice the developed downtown area, with a coffee shop, pizza store, a pharmacy, post office, and gas stations all positioned around the ever-popular gathering spot that is the town common.

Steve Call moved his family back to Townsend recently after his father passed away, and said that it's the place they want to stay.

"I've always liked Townsend," he said Friday as he prepared to go inside the post office. "It's always been a nice, quiet, traditional town. It's close to New Hampshire and Boston. It's a nice comfortable place to call home."

While the town doesn't have the same allure of major cities like Worcester and Boston, Call pointed to Townsend's many local attractions: Fishing holes, lakes, boating spots and hiking trails.

"There's a lot of opportunities to enjoy life and be comfortable here," he said.

Town Administrator Andy Sheehan, who has worked for the town for 10 months, said that while the numbers don't lie, there are many intangible things that speak volumes about the town.

"I think when you look at some of the harder to measure things, you can certainly draw the conclusion that we're an extraordinary town," she said. "When you look at the beauty of the community and the open space we have and the involvement we have from the community in terms of volunteering, it's great. We have so many organizations that don't get recognition."

While the members of the community make the town what it is, Sheehan said that the picturesque surroundings add to the value.

"Physically it's a beautiful setting with it's rolling hills," he said. "It's what you think about when you think of a New England community. There's the large common in the center of town flanked with a couple churches. Town Hall is a picturesque building. Those are some of the things that stand out."

3.2 HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

Originally, our town was part of an area called Wistequassuck by the Native Americans. This land, which was later named Townshend, then Townsend, was first surveyed by Jonathan Danforth in 1676. The land had been granted to Major William Hawthorn of Salem, and although the Major never saw the land, it became known as “Hawthorn’s Grant”.

By 1719, the House of Representatives decided to divide an area called Turkey Hill, of which Hawthorne’s Grant was a part, into North Town (Townsend) and South Town (Lunenburg). A Garrison was built to protect the early settlers, and the first meetinghouse to serve the 200 settlers of North Town was built in 1730 on Meetinghouse Hill. On June 29, 1732 the town was incorporated as Townshend, named after Charles Townshend (second viscount of Raynham, and a former British Secretary of State).

In 1733, a dam was built on the Squanicook River at the place now known as Townsend Harbor, and a gristmill and sawmill were erected deriving power from the river. The spelling of the river name later changed to Squannacook. The Conant Tavern (c. 1720), Grist Mill and Cooperage built around the pond are still standing today and are part of Townsend’s Historic District II. This part of Townsend was the first to be settled, even prior to the incorporation of the town. Throughout the 18th and early 19th centuries, Townsend Harbor was the industrial heart of the town.

Throughout the 18th century, the boundaries of the town changed. A triangle of land in the northeast part of town was lost to Dunstable. In 1741, a third of the town was taken when the New Hampshire border was moved south. The final change occurred about 1767 when the western boundary was moved to the east to make way for the town of Ashby.

Also in 1767, the Townshend Acts, proposed by Charles Townshend’s grandson, were passed by the British Parliament. These acts placed a tax on common items imported by the colonies. The colonists were infuriated by this additional tax, while they were suffering under the Stamp Acts of 1765. Eventually, most of the Townshend Acts were repealed, but the seeds for revolution had been planted. Townshend sent 73 soldiers to Concord on April 19, 1775, nearly 10% of the town population of 821 (taken from the 1776 census). As the war progressed and patriotism took root, the “h” began to drop from the town name in written record.

After the war, growth in Townsend began to move westward. Because of the earlier boundary changes, the geographic center of town had moved, and so the second meetinghouse, built in 1771, was moved in 1804 to Townsend Center. The first floor of the building was used as Town Hall until the 1890’s, when Memorial Hall was built to commemorate those residents that fought in the Civil War.

As the 19th century progressed, most commercial and manufacturing interests moved closer to the center of town as well, known now as Historic District I. These interests included the production of stockings, clothing, pails, and tubs. The major industry in town was the production of coopering stock. The B. & A.D. Fessenden Company became the largest employer in the town, running lumberyards and sawmills in addition to the coopering factory. The company closed in 1960 after many productive years.

The development of West Townsend, the third village in the town and location of Historic District III, was linked to the turnpike which passed through the area on its way to western Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Several taverns were built, and by 1806, the Joslinville Tavern on Main Street was a main stop on the Boston to Keene Stagecoach. In the 1830's the West Village Female Seminary was built, which helped West Townsend become the cultural center of town.

The railroad came to Townsend in 1846, and had a unifying effect on the town. Many of the goods manufactured in town were now shipped by rail, which further enhanced the development of industry. By 1900, three trains ran in and out of town each day. Each of the three villages of town had a railroad station.

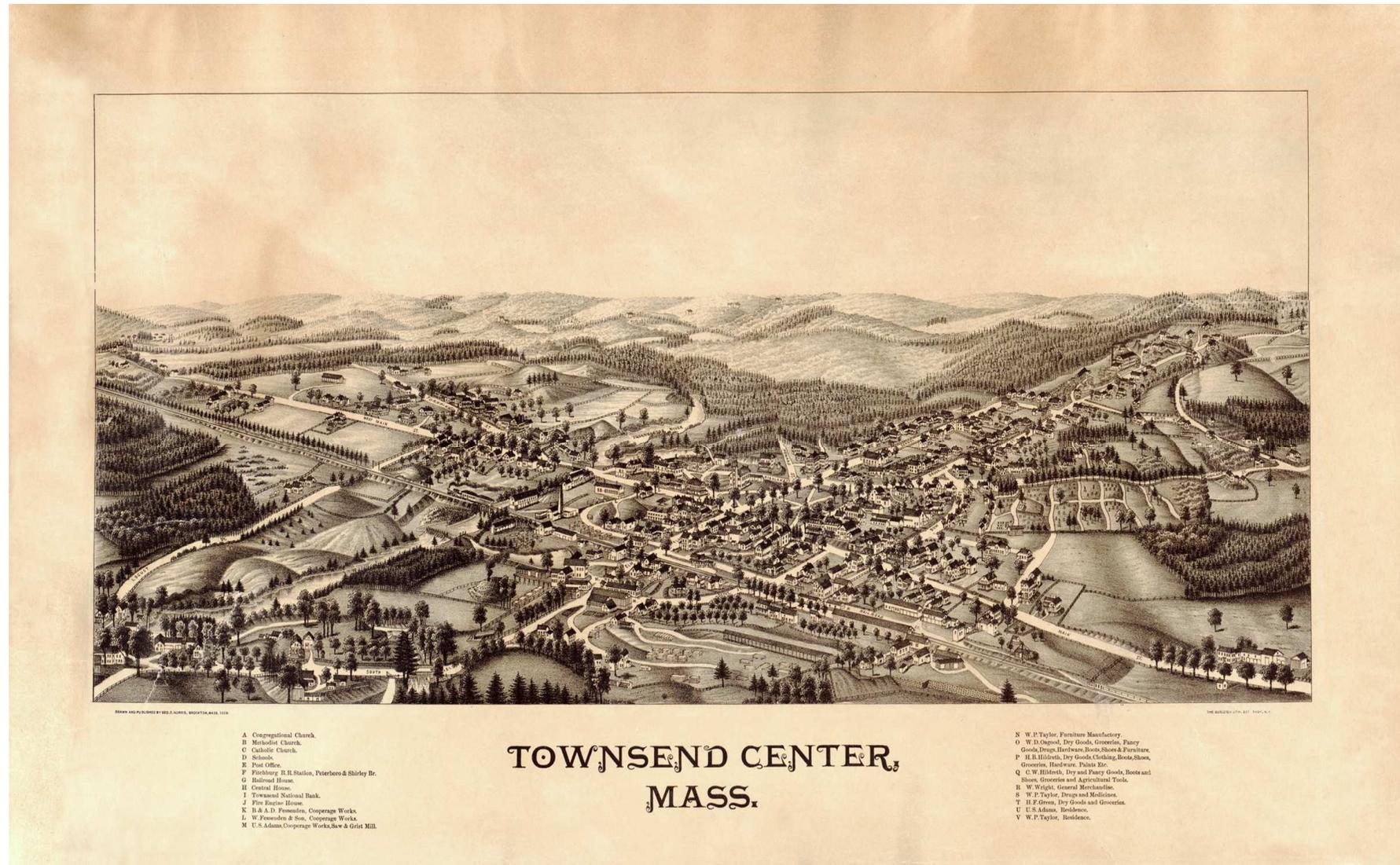
With swift shipping now available, the farms were able to increase their production. Cranberries were harvested from a bog near Spaulding Street, the Harbor Farm on Main Street produced milk, apples, and produce. Several poultry farms became major suppliers to the New England egg market. Many of these businesses lasted well into the 20th century.

By 1871, the town district schools made way for its first high school located near the center, which also housed primary and intermediate grades. The first bank was chartered in 1854, and the fire department was established in 1875. The first police department came fifty years later in 1926.

By the middle of the 20th century many of the manufacturing and agricultural businesses began to slow, as was true across New England. The train only ran three times a week. The Fessenden Company closed in 1960. The poultry industry waned until only one farm remained in operation in the 1970's. Boston and Maine Railroad left town in 1981. By the end of the century, Sterilite was the largest industry remaining in town.

Over the centuries, Townsend has had some famous artists take up residence. Rufus Porter (1792-1884) was a traveling folk artist who decorated walls with stenciled images and original paintings throughout New England during the first half of the 1800s. Some of his work can be seen at the Reed Homestead in the Harbor and two other private homes in the area. Mr. Porter was also a prolific inventor, creating such things as an air pump, chair cane, a churn, fire alarm, life preserver, and rotary plow just to name a few. (Townsend Historical Society) Winslow Homer, the painter, visited his family in West Townsend in the summer of 1879 and chose a local girl to be the subject of one of his paintings, "Girl with Laurel".(Divinity and Dust) Samuel S. Thorpe, Jr.(1933-2005) was a well known and highly collected local artist. He kept an active studio in Townsend, MA and Kennebunkport, ME for many years and his work has found its way into many private and corporate collections throughout the country. Sam Thorpe was known for his classic New England scenes which include saw mills, fishing shacks, maple sugar houses, town commons, and seasonal landscapes.

Townsend has become a residential community with some services, while retaining its rural and historical character. In 2007, Townsend celebrated its 275th Anniversary with many activities, culminating with a grand parade in September of that year. About that same time, Mr. Albert Stone, Chairman of Sterilite Corporation, approached the town with an offer to build a new complex including an 18,000 square foot Library, a Senior Center, and a Meeting Hall. The Complex was dedicated on October 31, 2009. The gift to Townsend was the largest in its' history.



Bird's Eye View of Townsend, Massachusetts 1889 George F. Norris Library of Congress Reprint Old Maps West Chesterfield, NH 03466 www.old-maps.com

Map 2: 1889 Townsend. This charming old view of Townsend is one of a series of "bird's eye" views made of town centers in the late 1800s. These attractive lithographs were drawn as if the artist were suspended in a hot air balloon.

It has been proposed that more action be taken to protect immediately adjoining properties to the Historic Districts, as well as other areas that have significant historical interest. This is particularly important as other structures along Route 119 may contain historical significance while not being located directly within the Historic Districts. Since there are three distinct “centers” of town, it is difficult for residents to go from one end of Townsend to another as there are few sidewalks throughout the town and Route 119 is unsafe to bike or walk on for any extended distances.

More information on the History of Townsend may be obtained by the Townsend Historical Society.

3.3 POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

According to the census completed by the Town Clerk’s office, Townsend's population decreased to 9,126 in 2010. This compares with 9,501 in 2000 and 8,430 in 1990. The 2010 U.S. Census shows a population of 8,926 down 2.96% from the 9,198 persons in the 2000 U.S. Census. (See Table 3.1) The local census is completed every year and generally has a better response rate than the U.S. Census, which is only completed every 10 years.

Single family dwellings within Townsend show a decrease in building, however, affordable housing projects are a possibility. The most recent number of single family dwelling permits is 11 in 2009, 4 in 2010, and 7 in 2011. In 1989, 43 were issued. The decrease can be attributed to the downturn in the economy as well as the decrease of permits allowed in town. In 2004, the Town limited the number of available permits to 14 maximum limits for individuals, as well as for contractors. (Source: Townsend’s Annual Reports, Office Town Clerk and Building Inspector, Open Space and Recreation Plan-draft August 1997)

Employment differs between males and females. The top three jobs for males are in construction, computers/electronics, or professional science and technology, while the top three for females are in health, food or education. Major employers for Townsend residents are the North Middlesex Regional School District, Deluxe Corp. and Sterilite Corp. Deluxe is a \$1.4 billion company with locations in the United States, Canada and Ireland. They are a growth engine for small businesses and financial institutions as well as one of the top check producers in North America. Sterilite Corp. is the world’s largest independent manufacturer of plastic housewares.

Race in town consists of 96.2% white, 1.3% two or more races, 0.2% American Indian and 1.8% Hispanic. Ancestries include: 31.1% Irish, 18.0% English, 12.6% French, 11.5% German, 18.9% Italian, and 6.0% French Canadian. (Source-<http://www.ciy-data.com/city/Townsend-Massachusetts.html>)

According to the 2010 census, the largest population group is comprised of ages 45-49 (899), followed by ages 50-54 (867), and ages 55-59 (784). These three groups make up the majority of the work force. There are 3,240 households with 36.7% having children under the age of 18 and 20% having persons greater than age 65. The population density for Townsend is 269.7 people per square mile as compared to the State figure of 839.4 persons per square mile. This shows the rural nature of Townsend. In certain sections of town the density is higher; such as “Timberlee Park” a 500-home subdivision built in the 1970’s in highly dense clusters. Also, the density is higher along the two main roadways, Routes 119 and 13.

Table 3.1 Population Changes for Townsend

	1940	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020 (projected)
US Census				7201	8496	9198	8926	10,123
Local Census	2065	3650	4281	7610	8430	9501	9126	

Source: MISER Population Projections for Massachusetts, 2000–2020(completed in 2003 and Townsend Town Clerk)

Townsend residents with Bachelor’s Degrees came in at 19.4% which is less than the 38.3% statewide. Having much agriculture and manufacturing available as employment, higher degrees are unlikely in the older population. Younger people are more likely to seek higher education and leave the small rural town atmosphere. The median household income is \$74,047, which is higher than the Massachusetts median household income of \$64,509, but less than the Middlesex County median household income of \$77,377. The median family income is \$90,134. (http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml)

Those that have moved here over the past 20 years have done so to enjoy the rural satellite community, while having access to major interstate highways to work in urban jobs. Coming from other areas, they expect to have services provided that they were accustomed to. Safety, education and recreation draw people to live in Townsend.

3.4 GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

3.4.1 Growth and Development Patterns

As with many other towns in the area, Townsend's early economy was based primarily on manufactured goods produced in a number of mills in the area. The Squannacook River, for the most part, provided the power for the operation of saw and grist mills, a clothing mill, a machine shop and a large two-story factory which produced coopering stock for many years. The railroad came to Townsend in 1846, and had a unifying effect on the town. Many of the goods manufactured in town were now shipped by rail, which further enhanced the development of industry. Most of the residential development was along Routes 119 and 13 with some outlying farms and residences. By 1900, three trains ran in and out of town each day. Each of the three villages of town had a Railroad Station.

By the middle of the 20th century many of the manufacturing and agricultural businesses began to slow, as was true across New England. The train only ran three times a week. The Boston and Maine Railroad left town in 1981. By the end of the century, Sterilite was the largest industry remaining in town. As a result of the location of the railroad along Route 119, the commercial and industrial zoning districts are generally located in these areas. There are two small areas of Outlying Commercial District on Route 13 north at the New Hampshire border and on Route 13 south on the Lunenburg border. There is one small industrial park, two small shopping malls and several scattered small businesses along Route 119. There are a handful of businesses in the outlying areas that have been grandfathered as current zoning would not allow them. In the 1970s, residential building began to emerge outside of the Route 119 corridor. A 500-home subdivision locally known as Timberlee Park was developed, inviting families to Townsend for low cost. Workers were looking for rural places to live that were inexpensive and not too far to commute to work in and around the cities of Boston and Worcester.

In economically challenged times, especially when energy costs are high, communities furthest from job opportunities usually grow at a slower rate. This is due in part because the increased cost

of housing nearer the employment centers is offset by the lower overall cost of commuting the shorter distance. When the economy grows and the cost of housing near the job centers exceeds the cost of commuting, then the outlying towns begin to grow at a faster rate. Another change can happen when new job opportunities are added to the community or in nearby communities, such as those at Devens.

In 2000 the Assessors reported 2,604 single family housing units in town. By 2010, the number grew to 2,776, an increase of 172 in 10 years for an average of 17 single family homes per year. During that same time frame, the number of condominiums rose from 230 to 272, an increase of 42 for an average of 5 per year. The number of multifamily homes has remained fairly steady at about 55 units, partly due to the limited zoning to accommodate them. This development period included a building moratorium approved at Town Meeting in 2003 and effective 2004. While the need for such a moratorium was to allow the community infrastructure to catch up with the current rate of growth, the economy took a downturn in 2006 that provided an economic slowing of housing growth. (See Table 3.2 for development data)

Previous studies of Townsend and its rate of growth and development were projected without the current interest in creating more open space. Some of the open space land recently placed into protected status fell into the category of land unable to be developed, while other parcels were removed from the potential of residential development. As both conservation and development ebb and flow within various constraints, the intersect number of a “final build-out” will remain illusive. In the final analysis it appears that Townsend will always enjoy more open space than most communities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

3.4.2 Infrastructure

Transportation: Townsend is bisected in all directions by the east-west Route 119 and the north-south Route 13; where Route 119 is owned and maintained by the State. Not including Route 119, there are approximately 87 miles of roads in Townsend. Automobile travel time in all directions has increased over the past decade, because of the increased number of commuters, both originating from town and passing through. A recent state-conducted traffic count for Route 119 showed average daily auto travel in excess of 13,500 vehicles and for Route 13 more than 9,000 vehicles. With limited lucrative job opportunities in the local area, most workers travel in excess of 20 miles. There is no public transportation located in Townsend, with the exception of the Lowell Regional Transit Authority’s “Road Runner Van” for the seniors. For a fee, the Van will transport seniors around town and to other locations by appointment. The closest public transportation spots are the MBTA bus and train service in Ayer (10 miles), the MBTA rail station in Fitchburg (8 miles) and the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority local bus services in Fitchburg and Leominster (8-10 miles) that have shuttle services to Boston and Worcester.

Townsend has sidewalks only in the center of town on Route 119 and north on Route 13 as far as the Police Station/Library/School Complex. Travelling by foot or bicycle is difficult and dangerous on both Routes 119 and 13 and is listed as a goal to improve this situation. The Squanacook Greenways organization is working towards installing a rail trail on the abandoned MBTA rail line from West Groton to the center of Townsend. This would alleviate the problems with travelling by foot or bike from the Shopping Center and High School located at the eastern edge of Townsend to the center of town.

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
<i>Assessor Data (Annual Report)</i>											
Single Family Housing units	2604	2631	2663	2651	2672	2698	2713	2751	2758	2765	2776
Average Tax Assess Value	\$139,300	\$151,600	\$166,500	\$209,000	\$211,900	\$237,700	\$266,300	\$270,200	\$268,800	\$275,700	\$248,492
Condominiums Residential units	230	230	231	258	258	259	259	272	272	272	272
Average Tax Assess Value	\$36,100	\$41,000	\$46,400	\$55,500	\$65,200	\$81,300	\$86,200	\$98,500	\$87,000	\$96,500	\$87,278
Multi-Family Residential units	60	60	59	56	57	56	57	57	57	55	55
Average Tax Assess Value	\$140,000	\$142,500	\$157,200	\$172,800	\$202,850	\$236,000	\$275,300	\$280,800	\$278,500	\$298,700	\$244,930
Commercial units	82	83	82	76	74	78	78	81	79	80	79
Average Tax Assess Value	\$262,200	\$275,900	\$269,900	\$279,400	\$280,600	\$297,800	\$352,300	\$353,200	\$356,300	\$351,400	\$330,443
Industrial units	28	28	27	27	27	27	27	26	26	18	18
Average Tax Assess Value	\$591,600	\$624,000	\$634,000	\$671,400	\$670,700	\$689,000	\$792,000	\$808,700	\$819,900	\$1,085,100	\$1,014,472
<i>Building Department</i>											
Housing Building Permits Issued	19	35	37	19	**28	30	24	22	11	11	5
			** Building Moratorium Phase in								
<i>Real Estate MLS</i>											
Residential New Construction only	11	13	17	14	14	11	14	15	9	6	5
Average Sales Price	\$277,670	\$344,683	\$306,966	\$339,031	\$373,669	\$375,075	\$385,327	\$385,606	\$355,300	\$352,950	\$361,180
Total Market Volume Sold/Year	\$3,054,370	\$4,480,880	\$5,218,423	\$4,746,440	\$5,231,367	\$4,125,825	\$5,394,580	\$5,784,093	\$3,197,700	\$2,117,700	\$1,805,900
Total Residential Sales (all types)				136	152	151	125	138	114	101	67
Total Market Volume Sold/Year				\$28,657,650	\$36,886,317	\$37,822,995	\$29,807,985	\$32,093,003	\$22,618,133	\$18,130,939	\$11,561,535

Table 3.2 Townsend Development 2000-2010

Water Supply: Townsend has a public water supply and private wells. The public water distribution system is currently controlled by the Townsend Water Department, as allowed in State Enterprise Fund rules. Townsend derives all of its public drinking water supply from groundwater. This refers to the water that occurs in the saturated portion of the subsurface. Many private wells are driven deep and may be tapping water often infused with undesirable minerals that need to be filtered out, such as radon.

The Town currently has five wells serving about 2000 businesses and residences or approximately 50% of the population of Townsend. The most productive of these wells, the Harbor Trace well off of South Street, produces about 30% of the municipal water. The Main Street well in West Townsend produces about 23%, the Cross Street well in central Townsend about 20% and the two Witch Brook wells, currently servicing approximately 500 homes in the Timberlee Park area of southeastern Townsend, produces about 27% of the total amount of municipal water pumped. Through new acquisition of well sites and changes in zoning by-laws, it is thought that Townsend will have the capacity to provide water to current build-out projections. The challenge for any public water supply is the balance of expanding usage to more subscribers, maintaining the integrity of the current system, conservation and system-wide water quality protection, all within a reasonable cost, that is still cost effective compared to private wells.

Septic: All buildings in town are currently on private septic systems; however, there are certain areas of the town, particularly near its center, that could benefit from a public sewer system. The density of homes in some areas with limited lot size nearly negates the goals of current Title V subsurface septic disposal system designs in protecting the environment. The debate continues, as the population of the town continues to grow, public sewer may be mandated, but some fear that will mean the ability for greater density for future housing. In all cases, the protection of the public and private water supply will need to supersede all other concerns.

3.4.3 Long-term Development Patterns

Townsend’s area is 32.83 square miles or approximately 21,155 acres. Of this, 97% is residentially zoned, 2% is zoned industrial and 1% is zoned commercial. (See Map 3, Zoning Districts)

Zoning District Distribution	
97% Residential	
	54% Residential B – 2 acres
	43% Residential A – 3 acres
2% Industrial	
1% Commercial	
	0.6% Outlying Commercial District
	0.3% Downtown Commercial District
	0.1% Neighborhood Commercial District

Table 3.3 Zoning District Distribution

The Residential A district is overlaid by the Aquifer Protection District, which was voted as a zoning bylaw at Town Meeting in 1986. This bylaw offers protection of the aquifer from hazardous materials operations, as well as a number of other potentially polluting uses. Any new use containing hazardous or toxic materials is required to obtain a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Any existing use that is prohibited by this bylaw is a grandfathered use and requires a Special Permit any time there is a change or alteration to the use. Another zoning protection for Townsend’s water supply is the Groundwater Protection District Bylaw passed in 1998. This district, also called the Wellhead Protection District, contains the Zone I, II, and III

recharge areas of all five of Townsend's water supply wells. Several potentially hazardous uses are prohibited in this district. Some of the prohibited uses currently occur in the district and are grandfathered; however, a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals is required for any changes to these uses. Some potentially hazardous uses are allowed in the district by Special Permit.

Townsend also adopted an Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) Bylaw and an Open Space Multifamily Development (OSMD) Bylaw in 1986 and 1989 respectively. Both bylaws allow for development more harmonious with natural features and town growth policies and promote the maximum possible protection of open space and watershed protection. Townsend's Earth Removal Bylaw, passed in 1986, protects groundwater by prohibiting excavation closer than seven feet to the water table and requires a Special Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

As of the date of this report, Townsend has seven development projects in various stages of construction. Four projects were approved as an OSPD, one project was approved as an OSMD and two projects were approved by State Chapter 40B Permit. The OSPD projects allow for a total of 44 houses, with 105 acres of open space gained by the town. The OSMD project is a 20-unit multifamily development with 35 acres of open space gained. In addition to the open space developments, there are two Chapter 40B projects. The 40B site of Turnpike Village will be built as two 24-unit, 1-and 2-bedroom rental buildings providing 12 affordable units. This will provide no open space to the town. The other 40B project will have 41 houses in combination of multifamily condominiums and single-family homes providing 29 market rate homes and 12 affordable units, all with upgraded energy efficiency and solar advantage. This project will provide approximately 8 acres of open space designated as nitrogen credit land or Zone III land. Despite approval of these units of housing, the economics of the market dictate when the units will actually be built and absorbed into the community.

Each of these developments comes with a new roadway, stormwater structures, and potential school-age children, all of which strains an already under budgeted and understaffed town. The trade off is that all of the subdivisions in the 2000s were open space developments and a total of 250 acres of open space were gained in that time, including the ones mentioned above. The challenge is to now use that open space for a purpose, be it passive recreation or timber revenue or some other purpose. Residents have expressed a need for tennis courts, basketball courts, neighborhood parks, environmental education, bike trails and a recreation center. One of the suggestions was to encourage developers to include land for recreation or construct recreation facilities in subdivisions.