

## **D – LAND USE**

146?

## D. LAND USE

### D-1.0 Introduction

The future use of land in North Smithfield is influenced by many considerations. Significant among these are the following:

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- The nature of and existing distribution of uses.
- Current zoning controls which were developed as the result of prior comprehensive planning studies.
- Physical constraints imposed by topography and soils.
- The location of aquifers and their recharge areas and existing and potential surface water supply reservoirs and their watersheds.
- Drainage and flooding systems along wetlands, streams and rivers.
- The need to set aside areas for conservation, recreation, open space, schools and public buildings and facilities.
- The present or proposed availability of sewer and water services.

Land use and traffic circulation are inextricably tied to each other; the nature and density of land uses will have an influence on the volumes of traffic which may be anticipated along given sections of the roadway system. The availability of roadways with excess capacity and convenient links to a broader region influences the location of commercial and industrial development.

146

The Land Use Element becomes a major tool for implementing the goals and policies of other elements of the plan through direct changes of use or as a result of revisions in zoning or other development regulations. Zoning changes, for example, become a major tool for implementing the Housing Element. Economic growth opportunities are furthered by the allocation of land areas for commercial, manufacturing or other job and tax base enhancing development. Water resources in underground aquifers or surface reservoirs can be protected, in part, by land use decisions within recharge and drainage areas. When asked to name the two most important land use and development issues facing the Town over the next decade, respondents to the 2001 Community Survey indicated that management of growth in undeveloped and partially developed areas and the need to promote commercial and industrial activities are the most important. Seventy-nine percent of respondents felt that the town should encourage permanent open space.

North Smithfield's strategic location with respect to the Providence, Worcester and Boston metropolitan areas and the major expressway system which connects them is a significant land use determinant. Adjoining communities, which have better access to I-295, may have some advantages in attracting certain types of economic development; on the other hand, the consequences of excessive traffic-generating activities can detract from the quality of the living environment.

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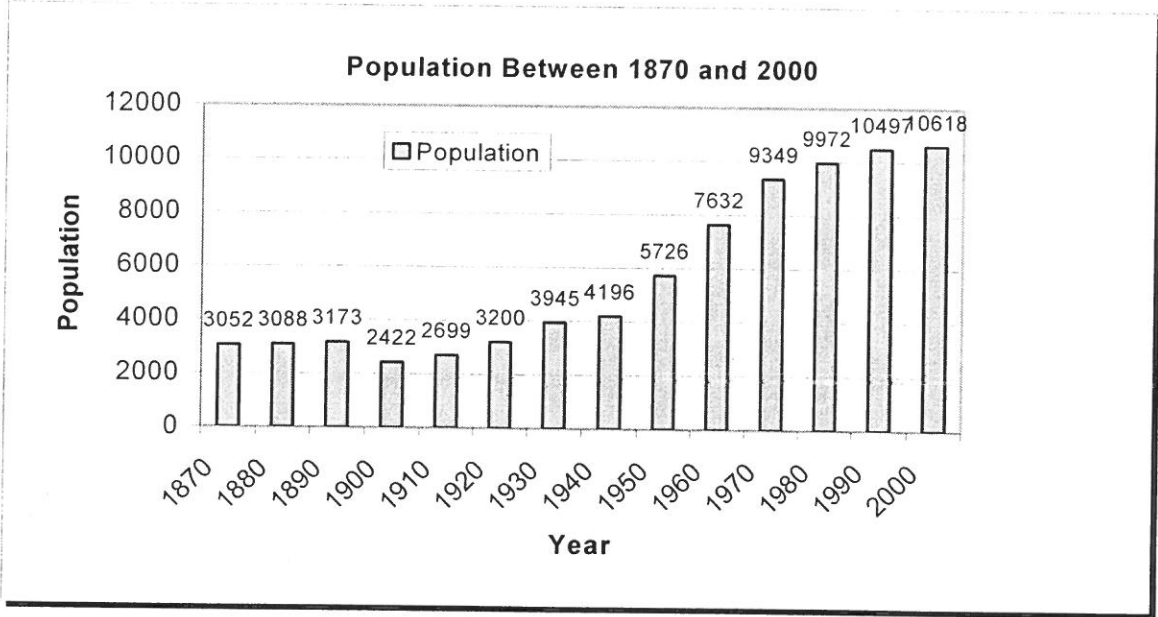
*North Smithfield is fortunate to be located near the crowd but not in it. With careful land use planning, the Town can have the best of both worlds -- being a good place to live and a good place to work.*

**D-1.1 Population**

**D-1.1.1 Past Trends**

Since 1950, North Smithfield's population has climbed from 5,726 to 10,618 (based on final count data from the 2000 U.S. Census). Whereas the numerical growth of the population between 1980 and 1990 was only 525 persons, the number of housing units increased from 3,526 in 1980 to 3,835 in 1990 - a net increase of 309 units and a percentage growth of 8.0 percent. North Smithfield's population has increased 1.15% (121 people) during the most recent census period of 1990-2000, while housing units increased 6.1% (235) town wide for that same time frame. Growth in North Smithfield has historically been occurring at a decreasing rate - from a high of 36.5% in the 1940-1950 decade, to 6.6% between 1970 and 1980, to 5.0% between 1980 and 1990 and 1.15% between 1990 and 2000.

**Chart D-1.1.1 Population Between 1870 & 2000**



Between 1990 and 2000, average household size continued its decline from 2.7 to approximately 2.6. This compares with 2.9 for 1980 and 3.3 for 1970.

In the last census period North Smithfield was ranked 28<sup>th</sup> for rate of growth in the State of Rhode Island. North Smithfield's growth rate of 1.15%, translates to an average increase of only 12.1 people per year for the past ten years. In contrast, for this same census period, West Greenwich had a population increase of 45.6%, while Middletown experienced a population decrease of 10.9%. The adjacent communities of Burrillville and Woonsocket both experienced

loses in their population of 2.7% and 1.5% respectively, while Lincoln, Cumberland, Glocester and Smithfield all saw fairly high increases in their populations of 15.8%, 9.6%, 7.8% and 7.6% respectively.

There are several reasons for this increase in population. Census figures show that there were 235 new housing units added to North Smithfield from 1990 through 2000, for a total of 4,070 housing units, while the average household size decreased from 3.05 to 2.61 persons per household. The new housing units (h.u.) figure of 235 coupled with the average of 2.61 persons per household would seem to yield a population increase of 235 h.u. X 2.61 persons/h.u. = 613.3 people. However, this is not the case because of recent shifts in demographics occurring in North Smithfield as well as the rest of Rhode Island and across the nation. This is due, in part, to the increase in single parent households, and divorce, as well as an increase in the median age (from 38.8 to 42. years) with more householders living alone (23.1% increase in North Smithfield). Additionally, households in Town, with a female as head of the household with children under the age of 18, also increased by 22.7% from the previous census period. Vacant housing units for this time-period totaled 116, making up 2.9% of the Town's housing stock. Contributing to this shift in demographics, there was also an overall negative natural increase (decrease) where deaths exceeded births in the community for the decade by an estimated 51 people. (Louis Berger Group, Inc. North Smithfield Growth Management Program, Phase I, Assessment Study, January 2002).

According to US Census Bureau figures, North Smithfield presently ranks 12<sup>th</sup> in the State of Rhode Island for low population density with approximately 442 people per square mile. Within the Northern Rhode Island Region, only Burrillville and Glocester have lower population densities with approximately 284 and 181 people per square mile respectively. Cumberland and Lincoln both have population densities of just over 1,000 people per square mile, Smithfield has a density of 775, and nearby Woonsocket has a whopping 5,606 people per square mile. More demographic data can be found in the Housing and Services and Facilities Elements of this Update.

#### **D-1.1.2 Population Projections**

In 1989 the Rhode Island Division of Planning estimated that an average natural increase (births minus deaths) of 15 per year along with an average of 40 new dwelling units per year would produce an average annual population increase of 175. This led to a 1990 estimate of 11,120 which was 623 higher than the actual 1990 U.S. Census figure of 10,497.

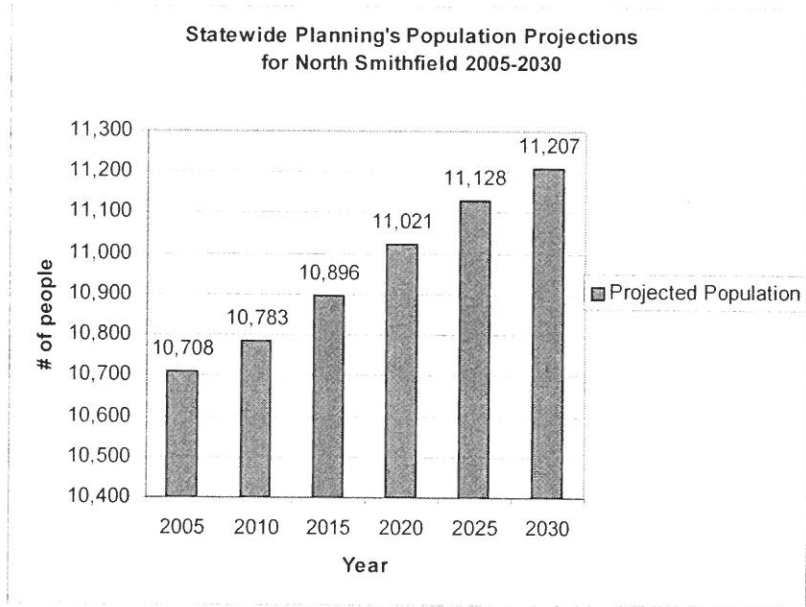
The overall negative natural increase during the most recent census period, the shrinking household size and factoring in the actual number of new dwellings built during the 90's resulted in Statewide Planning's overestimating the 2000 population by approximately 900 people. According to the U.S. Census, North Smithfield's population in the year 2000 totaled 10,618.

Preliminary population projections from the Statewide Planning Program show a continued slow growth rate for North Smithfield with a 1.6 percent increase projected between 2000 and 2010. These projections are based entirely on past trends and may prove quite inaccurate if compared



with current market trends. Additionally, in light of the need to rezone certain areas to encourage affordable housing production, there may be land development opportunities that may also result in higher population figures.

Chart D-1.1.2 Statewide Planning’s Population Projections 2005-2030



The 1992 Comprehensive Plan suggested that the current and proposed land use regulations, the lack of sewers serving undeveloped residential areas, the constraints imposed by extensive ledge and high groundwater conditions, the declining out-migration from Woonsocket, and other considerations such as a death rate in excess of the birth rate and decreasing family size pointed to a continued slow rate of growth through the 2000’s. However, the build-out of 509 approved market rate condominiums, age-restricted units and elderly units is expected by 2007. Another 348 units in three other projects are expected to be constructed by 2011, which will drastically increase the Town’s population.

Table D-1.1.2 Build-out by Year of Major Permitted or Proposed Developments, as of 2005

Project Name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Total Units
Rockcliff	12	30	29					71
Dowling Village Condos				40	36			76
Silver Pines	54	35	39					128
Laurelwood	36	43	43	40				162
High Rocks		39	39	42				120
Slatersville Mills			30	38	60	60	40	228
Country Meadows		40	40					80
Total Units by Year	102	187	220	160	96	60	40	865

Given the amount of vacant land still available in North Smithfield (see the Build-out section of this Element), coupled with the current permitted or proposed projects and the rezoning that will be discussed later in this Element, the Town should expect to become home to another 16,500 people before it is built out. Based on the expected occupation of the permitted and proposed condominium units, the 144 building permits issued between 2000 and 2004, plus an average of 29 additional permits annually between 2005 and 2010 and assuming the average number of people per household remains the same as in the 2000 Census (2.61), by 2010 North Smithfield's population will have increased by approximately 2,962.

#### **D-1.2 Growth Management**

Although an analysis of the US Census data would suggest no need for alarm with a relatively modest population increase between 1990 and 2000 of 1.2%, the recent onslaught of proposals (850+ units since 2000) for mill conversions and multi-family housing suggests that the Town should better position itself to manage the services that these new units will require.

In 2002, the Louis Berger Group completed Phase I of a two-phase *Growth Management* study for the Town. While Phase I focused primarily on examining growth trends and the tools the Town has or could put in place, the Town Council's funding of the study signified the Town's recognition of the need to better prepare itself for its future.

#### **Natural Resource Protection**

The study recognized that land use controls such as Zoning could be strengthened and tools, such as clustering (or Conservation Development) and Wastewater Management Districts may better protect natural resources. Mapping of resources, and continuous mapping enhancement and use, is of course fundamental to making informed land use decisions. The report also recognized the need for improved partnerships, such as with the Land Trust.

#### **Facilities and Services**

Another aspect of managing growth is recognizing the capacity of the Town's infrastructure. The carrying capacity of the land – its ability to support development – is heavily dependent on how water and wastewater issues are addressed. The report strongly suggests the need to better understand the current and future status of the water and wastewater systems and suggests a diversity of tools that may satisfy the needs of the community. Recognizing the need to maintain certain standards in terms of schools and recreational facilities, the report recommends the exploration of impact fees, among other tools, for generating funds that anticipate the needs of the growing population. For other services, such as Police, Fire, roads and the Library – the report suggests further analysis is warranted. Specifically, Berger suggests that a local facility and service standard for each function must be established which will then allow the Town to determine whether there are current deficiencies that must be addressed and how to prepare for meeting the needs of future development.

The Town should proceed with Phase II of this study: the generation of specific regulatory mechanisms and land use strategies based on more rigorous community input.

## D-2.0 Goals, Policies and Actions

### 1. ENSURE THAT THE DENSITY AND DESIGN OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WILL RESPECT THE EXISTING NATURAL AND MAN-MADE ENVIRONMENT AND THE CAPACITY OF PUBLIC FACILITIES

- A. Concentrate urban single-family housing at densities of two dwelling units per acre in areas currently being served by public sewer systems.
- B. Concentrate suburban single-family housing at densities of one dwelling unit per acre in areas currently served by public sewer systems.
- C. Allow rural single-family housing at densities ranging from one dwelling unit per one and one-half acres to one dwelling unit per three acres which will not be served by sewers.
- D. Insist upon Department of Environmental Management (DEM) vigilance in its approval of Individual Sewage Disposal Systems (ISDS) in areas where sewer services will not be extended.
- E. Adopt flexible land use controls that encourage creative land planning concepts such as conservation development design,<sup>1</sup> encourage the preservation of open space, significant natural features and resources, rare or endangered species or habitat, historical structures and features and significant cultural features and other sensitive areas not otherwise protected by local, state, and federal law, based on, but not limited to, the priorities as set forth in the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Mapping Project (WGMP)<sup>2</sup>, See Map D-3 – D-6.
- F. In the review of subdivisions, elements such as streets and lots shall be designed so as to preserve natural features such as prominent trees, stone walls, rock outcroppings, natural land form and topography.
- G. Use conservation development design to locate houses and streets on the least productive farmland or on the least significant woodland habitat and locate septic sewage systems on soils best suited for that purpose.
- H. Amend other development regulations to specifically and effectively protect historic and cultural features, scenic viewsheds and restore degraded landscapes.

<sup>1</sup> Conservation Development Design – A development design concept that strives to avoid development in more sensitive areas of a site, provides for the dedication of a large percentage of the site as open space and often results in reduction of roads and other public infrastructure. By relaxing zoning requirements such as lot area and frontage, denser development is allowed in areas best suited to development while maintaining the overall site density which can be established by formula or through layout of a conventional design. In return for employing flexible standards, developers are required to dedicate as much as 65% of the developable site for open space or recreation purposes.

<sup>2</sup> Woonasquatucket Greenspace Mapping Project (WGMP)<sup>2</sup> consists of a series of maps that prioritize natural, cultural and recreational features of the Town.

- I. Require expanded Vicinity/Context Map as a checklist item for all subdivision applications.
- J. Consider adding a new section to the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development and Subdivision Regulations requiring new subdivision lots to have minimum contiguous buildable areas free of wetlands, steep slopes, utility easements etc.
- K. Develop a mixed use ordinance that encourages development in and adjacent to existing villages that recognizes the scale, density and need for affordable housing in primarily residential settings.
- L. Institute growth management controls as recommended in the pending update of the 2002 Growth Management Program. Controls such as building permit caps and impact fees should be considered.



**2. PROMOTE "SMART DEVELOPMENT" BY DIRECTING MEDIUM TO HIGH DENSITY HOUSING TO AREAS IN OR IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO ESTABLISHED VILLAGES**

- A. Concentrate urban multifamily housing at densities of up to four dwelling units per acre in areas currently being served by public water and public sewer systems. This could be accomplished by providing a density bonus of two additional units per acre, where one of the additional units is subsidized for low and moderate income residents in accordance with the requirements of the Low and Moderate Income Housing Act and the other is dedicated for persons 55 years of age or older.
- B. Ensure that adequate delineated pedestrian links to village centers are made between proposed medium and high-density developments and existing commercial, recreational and town facilities.

**3. PRESERVE THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL CHARACTER OF THE TOWN'S NEIGHBORHOODS AND VILLAGES**

- A. In the review of subdivisions, site plans, Special Use Permits and other development applications, Town boards shall give attention to preserving and/or improving the natural, topographic, cultural and historic characteristics which give local neighborhoods and villages their unique identity. This shall apply to projects in one neighborhood which could affect another, or even out-of-town projects which could have an impact on the living amenities of a particular area.
- B. Identify and rank key parcels for acquisition or protection based on criteria such as, but not limited to, size, adjacent protected parcels, significant natural resources, rare or endangered species or habitat, significant cultural features, development potential etc, based on, but not limited to, the priorities as set in the WGMP.



- C. Relate all Comprehensive Plan proposals for recreation, conservation, public facilities, circulation and historic preservation to the enhancement of the Town's living environment.
- D. Establish a Development Plan Review section within the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations that incorporates design review standards for industrial, commercial and multi-family housing based on sound site planning principals and best management practices and that incorporates the principals of village enhancement found in the *Slatersville Area Plan*.
- E. Allow for differing road widths based on AASHTO defined road categories and build-out potential of the area.
- F. Review all state/municipal infrastructure improvements and projects for compliance with all comprehensive plan goals and policies. Recommend design and material enhancements that best reflect the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, as amended.
- G. Require sidewalk design that includes a tree lawn separating sidewalks from roadways and including the planting of shade trees where practical.
- H. Adopt a commercial and industrial lighting ordinance as part of the Development Plan Review Regulations.
- I. Adopt a noise ordinance. 
- J. Consider Slatersville and the Branch Village area for designation as "Growth Centers".
- K. Adopt an ordinance that ensures water quality is tested before and after blasting, using groundwater quality standards and preventive action limits as set by DEM or other applicable regulations. 

#### **4. PREVENT INCOMPATIBLE NON-RESIDENTIAL USES IN RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOODS**

- A. All zone changes hereinafter proposed shall be in accordance with the recommendations of this Comprehensive Plan as it may be amended from time to time. A residential area change to a non-residential use shall be supported by findings that the use will be compatible with and supportive of the surrounding neighborhood.

#### **5. ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION OF LIGHT INDUSTRY, OFFICE AND RELATED COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT WHICH WILL PROVIDE SKILLED JOB OPPORTUNITIES AND EXPAND THE TAX BASE**

- A. Manufacturing is to be continued in the following areas: North Smithfield Industrial Drive; Great Road at Branch River; Canal Street; Stamina Mill site in Forestdale.

**6. ENCOURAGE CAMPUS-TYPE MIXED USE, LIGHT INDUSTRIAL OR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN AREAS ACCESSIBLE TO MAJOR ROADWAYS AND SERVED BY SEWER AND WATER SERVICES**

- A. Develop a mixed use ordinance that will allow the conversion of the Slatersville Mill complex, the Blackstone Smithfield Industrial Park (former Tupperware Mill), and the Branch River Industrial complex to mixed use including light industry, offices, housing, public and semi-public and other compatible activities.
- B. Consider the development of office, commercial, light industrial and/or research and development activities in the Quaker Highway/Central Street area and on North Smithfield Industrial Highway.
- C. Create a mixed-use office/commercial area that could include medical services, research and development activities, office space and limited retail of up to 40% of the built structures on the east side of Eddie Dowling Highway between the Landmark Medical/Fogarty Unit and Booth Pond.
- D. The Town should actively promote the reuse of the Slatersville Mill complex.
- E. Work with the RIEDC to coordinate and take advantage of regional development needs for such commercial and/or industrial development.

**7. ENCOURAGE GROWTH OF APPROPRIATELY SCALED RETAIL AND COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT NECESSARY TO SERVE NEIGHBORHOOD AND TOWN NEEDS**

- A. Develop an ordinance for a "Planned Village District" that would allow for limited expansion of retail and ~~commercial space to serve local neighborhood and Town needs and that forwards the concept of Heritage Economics.~~ ?
- B. Carefully evaluate retail and commercial options which may be available when designs are considered for the improvement of the Sayles Hill Road and Route 146 intersection.
- C. Discourage strip-type development along any road in the community - - particularly Route 146A and Victory Highway which will experience growing travel delays during peak hours. *ALREADY IS.*
- D. Create an Agricultural Business district that encourages the continuation of farming and agricultural operations with limited onsite retail sales of certain farm and farm-related products. *COUNTER INNOVATIVE.* *FIX INTERSECTION.*
- E. Develop size limits for retail structures that discourage "Big Box" retail development.

*DOWLING VILLAGE*

### D-3.0 Plan Description

Over the past twenty-five years, the Town of North Smithfield has received considerable land use planning assistance from State agencies; this has included comprehensive plan studies and technical assistance on special projects.

In 1969, the first Comprehensive Plan for the Town was prepared with the assistance of the Planning Division of the Department of Community Affairs. In the mid 80's a second Comprehensive Plan was initiated by the North Smithfield Planning Board with guidance from the Division of Planning, Rhode Island Department of Administration, as its consultant; this Comprehensive Plan represents a continuation and completion of the earlier studies. Background data and information developed by the Division of Planning has been helpful in this current update of the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan.

The 1969 Comprehensive Plan established the framework upon which present land use regulations in the form of zoning controls and zoning districts were enacted. With some exceptions, the development which has taken place during the past twenty years has followed the general outlines laid down in the 1969 Comprehensive Plan.

History is an important land use determinant. First settled in 1666, what ultimately became the Town of North Smithfield in 1871, has experienced a gradual transition from a farming community to industrial development in the nineteenth century, and from both farming and industry to the present day combination of industry, business and suburban and rural housing.

Union Village initially flourished as a stage coach stop along Great Road (146A). Subsequent small-lot residential growth within and in areas to the north and south of Union Village represented an early outward suburbanization of Woonsocket which spilled into North Smithfield.

Slatersville, which was one of the Nation's first planned mill villages, was established in conjunction with the Slatersville Mill along the Branch River. Forestdale, Branch Village and Waterford were all Branch River valley communities near water powered mills.

These early influences are very apparent in North Smithfield today. Industry is still clustered along or near the Branch River. Small-lot housing, predominantly single-family with scattered two-family units, tends to be concentrated in and around the old mill villages and adjacent to the Woonsocket line. In contrast, the westerly and southerly sections of Town, which is broadly defined as Primrose, retain a rural and rural-residential character furthered by larger lot zoning requirements. Except for the industrial zone along North Smithfield Industrial Drive and the commercial development along Route 146 in the Sayles Hill Road area, virtually the entire land area to the south of the Providence and Worcester Railroad and to the west of Route 146 is zoned for residential development.

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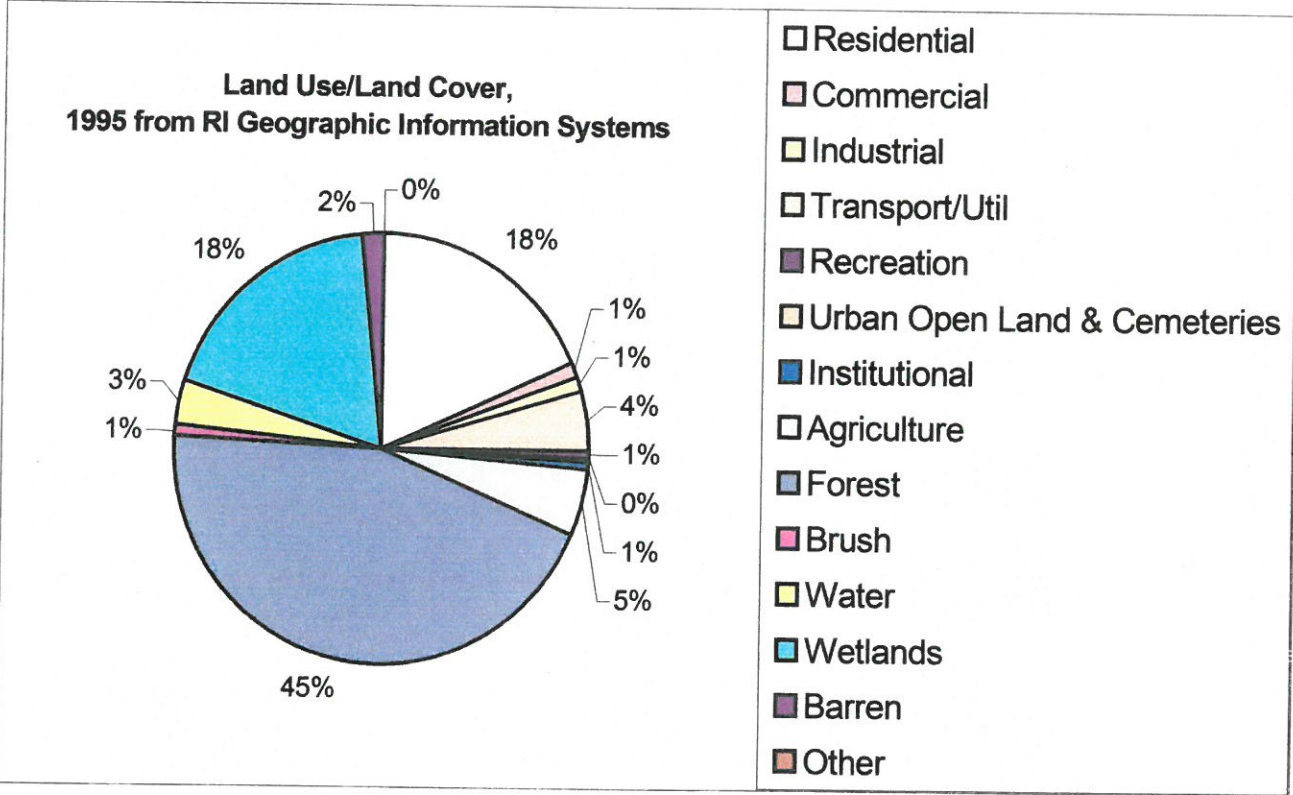
Although the villages had a few stores and shops to serve the mill workers, North Smithfield never developed what might be considered a downtown. Woonsocket served this function and at



one time trolley cars extended out to North Smithfield from downtown Woonsocket. Today there are about five clusters of commercial/retail activity in North Smithfield as follows: highway-oriented businesses along the non-limited access section of Route 146 between the 146A merge and the Lincoln Town line; Park Square area of Eddie Dowling Highway (Route 146A) which is a retail district straddling the North Smithfield/Woonsocket municipal lines; Branch Village area along Route 146A near St. Paul Street serving both local residents and transients; Carpenter's Corner (North Main Street and Route 146A) which is the locus of a shopping center anchored by a supermarket; and the Route 102/South Main Street intersection with highway-oriented business activities.

**Chart D-3.0 Land Use/Land Cover 1995**

As part of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan effort, the existing land use of every parcel of land in



North Smithfield, based on the Tax Assessor's records, was recorded on a set of Assessors Plat Maps. This information was further summarized for study and analytical purposes on a copy of the 1"=1,500 ft. lot line base of the Town. These maps have since been digitized and are available electronically. Maintenance of these electronic files and the Geographic Information System will require ongoing funding.

The Land Use Plan, shown on Map D - 1 is generally true to the land use pattern which has been established by historical development trends and zoning regulations. Where modifications have been proposed, generally they reflect a desire to encourage the development of affordable housing, tax base and employment generating industrial and business development or a need to

protect a natural resource of local or state-wide importance. Aerial photographs taken by the State in 2003/2004 are in the process of being converted into updated RIGIS Land Use maps. Once available, these maps will be incorporated into this Plan.

### **D-3.1 Residential Land Use**

As part of the 1969 Comprehensive Plan, North Smithfield was divided into four (4) residential land use areas of varying density. These were subsequently translated into residential zoning districts which continue to apply today.

In line with contemporary thinking and the overwhelming endorsement of the Citizens Advisory Committee in 1992, the participants of the 2001 survey and charette, other forums for public input, and discussions with the current Planning Board, the Comprehensive Plan recommends greater flexibility in developing residential areas to further the provision of affordable housing and encourages a better relationship between the natural and man-made landscape. Specific proposals for implementation are contained in this and other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

In general, the Land Use Element perpetuates the use and density patterns which have been historically established. The 2001 Community Survey results support maintaining the existing pattern as was evidenced by their response to certain “quality of life” issues. Eighty-eight percent of the respondents thought that protection of the water supply was of greatest importance; 73% thought protection of open space was critical and the third highest group of respondents (69%) thought it was important to maintain the small town character. The basis for proposed additions to or deletions from any of the density areas is discussed below.

#### **D-3.1.1 Urban Residential - Medium High Density**

Areas for Urban Residential are currently served by water and/or public sewer services. These areas are now included within the RU-20 zoning district which allows the following types of residential development: single-family homes on lots of 20,000 sq. ft.; two-family homes on lots of 30,000 sq. ft.; and multifamily dwellings by Special Use Permit from the Zoning Board of Review, with a maximum of 100 bedrooms at a density of 4,000 sq. ft. for each bedroom, providing the units are served by municipal sewers and water. Depending on the number of bedrooms per housing unit, the density could be as high as ten units per acre. Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance are suggested that would provide for the creation of a mixed use primarily residential district. Many of the RU-20 areas would be included in this district. Multifamily developments within this district would no longer require a Special Use Permit, rather they would be reviewed by the Planning Board under the Land Development and Subdivisions Regulations and a density bonus would be available for developments with an affordable housing component and an adequate water supply.

The designated areas for Medium High Density use are, in several cases, extensively developed with little space for new growth and therefore expansion of the zone in particular areas is needed. This applies in Slatersville, Forestdale, Union Village and in the Greenville Road area between

Routes 146 and 146 A. There is considerable vacant land in the northeast corner Waterford area; this was subdivided into small lots many years ago and is only recently being developed.

Additions to the RU-20 zoning district should be considered in villages that are served by sewers and in areas that are already substantially developed with lots of approximately one-half acre in size. The purpose of expanding the RU-20 district in these areas is to promote in-fill development and provide opportunities for the development of multi-unit and affordable housing. Expansion of the district boundaries is proposed along the following streets in the Slatersville/Forestdale area: Main St., North Main St., Lester St., McCann St., Homecrest Avenue, Ferrier St., Florence St., Carpenter St., Mechanic St., Highview St., Ethel St., Fillion St., Orchard St., Quaker Highway, School St., Halliwell Drive, Maple St., Wildwood Road, Kirby Lane, Roselawn Avenue, Litzen Street, Lorraine Avenue, Pacheco Drive. Other expansion areas include sewer areas along Mendon Road including Oberline Drive, Cynthia Drive, Deborah Avenue and Sharon Parkway; Branch Village area including Great Road and Branch Avenue.

#### **D-3.1.2 Suburban Residential - Medium Density**

Suburban Residential development at a density of one dwelling unit per acre for single or two-family homes is continued for unsewered sections of the Slatersville neighborhood, areas to the south of Slatersville along sections of the Providence Pike, Pound Hill Road and Woonsocket Hill Road. Portions of this area to the north of Victory Highway in Slatersville and to the south of Slatersville along and near Providence Pike have experienced problems with onsite septic systems.

Approximately two-thirds of the Suburban Residential land has been subdivided and developed.

Most of the area proposed for Suburban Residential use is now located within the RS-40 zoning district which allows the following: single-family homes on lots of 40,000 sq. ft.; two family homes on lots of 80,000 sq. ft.; and multifamily dwellings by Special Use Permit, with a maximum of 100 bedrooms at a density of 6,000 sq. ft. for each bedroom, provided the units are served by municipal water. For multifamily, depending on the number of bedrooms per dwelling unit and the adequacy of water supply availability, this could mean a density of up to 7 dwelling units per acre.

As discussed in the sections which follow, there will be deletions from the RS-40 near the intersection of Main Street and Route 102 to accommodate Professional Service. Two areas currently zoned RS-40 along Road Over Sayles Hill Road will be added to the RA-65 zone. A large area along Old Smithfield Road will be added to the REA-120 zone. Large areas in Slatersville currently zoned RS-40 which are served by municipal sewers will be changed to RU-20 to promote in-fill development. On Main Street, a 33 acre area was changed to RU-20 to accommodate the development of a condominium project. Additions to the area zoned RS-40 have been made along Comstock Road and Providence Pike to accommodate an age restricted development.



#### **D-3.1.3 Rural Residential - Medium Low Density**

Rural Residential areas were originally designated under the assumption that public sewer and water services would not be provided. The intent was to perpetuate a rural atmosphere in the southern, western and northern sections of the Town. As has been discovered in other communities, large-lot zoning does not necessarily create a rural environment, particularly where new houses are lined up at 200 foot intervals along country roads and the vacant lots between older homes are built upon. As such, the Town should revise the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations to allow for Conservation Development. Although discussed in further detail in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element, basically Conservation Development would encourage the better design of subdivisions and other projects, and thus be suited especially for the lower density zones in Town.

Under the RA-65 zoning district, which corresponds to the Rural Residential use area, single-family homes are allowed with lot sizes of 65,000 sq. ft. and two-family homes may be built providing the lot has a minimum of 130,000 sq. ft. Multi-family is allowed by Special Use Permit with up to 100 bedroom units allowed at a density of 20,000 sq. ft. per bedroom; approval is contingent upon the availability of municipal water services. Depending upon the number of bedrooms per dwelling unit, a multi-family density of up to 2 dwelling units per acre would be allowed.

Although less than one-third of the Rural Residential area is presently developed, substantial sections are not suitable for development due to wetness, ledge or excessive slopes.

The area currently zoned RA-65 will be reduced to place lands behind Landmark Medical Center in the Mixed Use- Office Commercial/146A zone. Two areas, one along Old Smithfield Road and one along Iron Mine Hill Road, currently zoned RA-65 will be rezoned to REA-120 for watershed protection. A 29 acre parcel on Buxton Street in the RA-65 zone will be rezoned to Agricultural Business. Developed areas in the Mendon Road, Harkness Road and Morning Star/Tall Timber neighborhoods will be rezoned to match developed densities.

#### **D-3.1.4 Rural Residential Conservation - Low Density**

The Rural Residential Conservation area covers land and water requiring conservation action. It includes major natural areas such as Todd's Pond, Cedar Swamp and Cedar Brook - - all sensitive areas where utilities should not be provided and open space preserved. The designated area also has been established as a buffer district along Trout Brook, Trout Pond, Dawley Brook/Pratt Pond and around the Slatersville Reservoirs. It is proposed that the buffer be increased to include the portions of the Reservoir's drainage area and the Slatersville Aquifer and aquifer recharge area between the Reservoirs and Pound Hill Road. This area encompasses the Landfill & Resource Recovery and Western Sand & Gravel EPA Superfund sites. Less than 10 percent of the Rural Residential Conservation area is currently developed.

A turf farm is proposed in the area generally bounded by Trout Pond and Brook, Pound Hill Road, the Burrillville Town line and the Slatersville Reservoir. Development proposals must take into account the constraints associated with the existence of the EPA Superfund sites and the need to protect the Slatersville Aquifer and Reservoirs.

Rural Residential Conservation currently helps protect and serve as a buffer district for Woonsocket's water supply facilities in the Town of North Smithfield including Reservoirs Number 1 and 3 and Crookfall Brook. Expansion of this district is proposed in the Crookfall Brook area along Old Smithfield Road and in the area around Reservoir #3.

Land on either side of the Blackstone River Gorge and along the Blackstone where property has been acquired by the State and the Town also are designated for Rural Residential Conservation. Consistent with recreational and open space recommendations for the Mammoth Mill site and the Paul S. Kelly Sports Complex, Rural Residential Conservation replaced the Manufacturing (M) District. These and other recreation and conservation areas owned by the State, Town and City of Woonsocket should be considered for inclusion in the proposed Open Space zone discussed in this Element.

The REA-120 District, except for the additions proposed above, is coincident with the Rural Residential Conservation area. Single-family housing is the principal allowed residential use; the minimum lot frontage is 300 feet and the lot size requirement is 120,000 sq. ft.

#### **D-3.1.5 Open Space**

The Zoning Enabling Act allows for the designation of an Open Space district. Town and State owned land currently used for recreation or conservation should be considered for inclusion in an Open Space zone. The Blackstone River Gorge and Paul S. Kelly Sports Complex which was rezoned in 1995 to REA-120 should be considered for inclusion in an open space zone given the level of Federal, State and local funding used to secure, develop and protect these sites.

Permitted uses in the Open Space zone would be those agricultural uses allowed in the REA-120 District, certain open recreation and public and semi-public uses. The primary intent of an Open Space zone is to ensure that land reserved as open space or recreation is not developed or used for other purposes. The Planning Board supports the future designation of an Open Space district in the Land Use Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. Further detailed study will be necessary prior to designating areas for inclusion in this type of district.

#### **D-3.1.6 Agricultural Business**

The Agricultural Business area is a new district that is intended to allow the continuation of farming and agricultural based business with limited onsite sales of farm and farm-related products. This district includes existing farms such as Wright's Dairy, Goodwin Brothers Farm Stand, Smith's Orchard, Trout Brook Equestrian Center, Acres Wild Equestrian Center, Marshall Equestrian/Animal Clinic, Jacques Farm/vineyard and the Wild Wind Farm.

Permitted uses in the Agricultural Business zone would be those agricultural and residential uses allowed in the REA-120 District, and would also include farm stands, retail sale of farm and related products, greenhouse or nursery, riding academy with accessory retail sales of tack and riding apparel veterinary clinic and farm stay. Provisions should be developed that would prohibit the offsite removal of earth materials beyond that which is necessary to sustain farming operations.

#### **D-3.1.7 Build-Out Analysis**

In June 2001, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (BRVNHCC) completed a build-out analysis of the 27 communities in the Blackstone River Watershed. A build-out analysis helps reveal a community's future layout if all undeveloped land were developed in accordance with existing zoning. The build-out is a tool for projecting and planning for a community's future population, households, commercial growth and demands for services such as water, garbage pickup and other municipal services and should not be construed to represent a desirable end state for the future. The build-out analysis conducted by the BRVNHCC was based on GIS mapping and community input. The maps illustrated existing zoning, developed areas, and permanently protected and unbuildable lands. Assumptions were made based on the existence of natural constraints and land needed for new infrastructure.

Based on less sophisticated data and techniques for conducting a build-out, the 1992 Plan suggested that another 2,100 dwelling units could be accommodated in Town. The BRVNHCC's 2001 study suggests this number should be much higher. Given current engineering practices and the zoning that was in place in 2001, more land is available for construction than was thought in 1992. The BRVNHCC 2001 found that the Town can accommodate another 5,110 dwelling units, or 4,525 residential lots.

However, it is clear that the 2001 study is also undercounting. The 2001 study took only a small portion of the potential mill conversion projects and other land development projects into account (totaling approximately 865 units as of 2005). Nor does it account for the rezoning proposed in this Updated Plan (which will result in approximately 200 units), or the possible density bonuses that may be granted in order to encourage the creation of additional affordable housing (estimated at 160 units). As such, a more accurate build-out, consistent with the proposed zone changes, the Housing Element, Natural Resources, Economic Development and Services and Facilities Element would result in approximately another 6,320 additional dwelling units. Assuming the average number of people per household holds steady at 2.61, the additional dwelling units could support another 16,495 people in North Smithfield.

Between 1990 and 1999, new housing units were created in North Smithfield at an average annual rate of about 46 units per year including elderly and other multi-family units. Between 2000 and 2004, an average of 29 building permits were issued annually. However, given the large number of approved and soon to be approved proposals and based on the previously discussed population estimates, it is anticipated that the rate could average around 200 new housing units per year over the next five years. New housing construction, at the growth rate estimated for the years 2000 to 2010, could utilize approximately 15% of the buildout potential.

### **D-3.2 Business and Commercial Land Use**

As previously noted, North Smithfield does not have a downtown area; most retail and business uses serving local shopping needs are to be found along Route 146A. The stores and supermarket at Carpenter's Corner (Slatersville Plaza) provides convenience shopping for the Town's northern neighborhoods as well as sections of Burrillville and adjoining communities in Massachusetts.

At Park Square, Job Lot, CVS Pharmacy (located in Woonsocket), Super Stop and Shop across from Eddie Dowling Highway in North Smithfield and other retail stores and restaurants combined provide a strong draw for both North Smithfield and Woonsocket residents.

Most commercial and retail development, other than the shopping centers at Carpenter's Corner and Park Square has been small scale and generally related to local needs and the service of transient traffic. "Dowling Village", a regional shopping center has recently been proposed in the Booth Pond area off of Route 146A. Development of this center would provide residents with a greater array of choices for comparison shopping and reduce the need to travel to nearby communities for larger ticket items.

In the Circulation Element, there is mention of an anticipated decline in traffic levels-of-service and peak-hour congestion along Route 146A in the area between Park Square and School Street. There is scattered retail and commercial development along the aforementioned section of 146A with the major concentration in the vicinity of St. Paul Street.

The Land Use Plan, Map D - 1, illustrates additions and deletions to the land currently zoned for business and commercial land use. A comparison of the economic development and land use proposals suggests that people filling the new jobs that will be generated as a result of rezoning could be accommodated in North Smithfield. There is sufficient vacant land and proposed rehabilitated mill building units to accommodate new employees. However, it is unreasonable to assume that all new jobs will be filled by North Smithfield residents, especially those that would be generated by the proposed Dowling Village development.

#### **D-3.2.1 Neighborhood Business**

Neighborhood Business, as currently embodied in the BN zoning district, is designed primarily to serve local needs for convenience shopping, personal services and small business offices. Neighborhood Business use is allowed in the following locations:

- Either side of Ironstone Street adjoining the Uxbridge, Massachusetts Town line.
- At and in the vicinity of the intersection of North Main Street and Victory Highway - Carpenter's Corner/Slatersville Plaza - - Brigido's (Eddy's Market).
- At the intersection of Route 5 and Main Street - - Town Hall to Slatersville Post Office.
- Immediately to the south of the Branch River along the west side of Providence Pike.
- Two locations along School Street; one in the vicinity of the VFW site and the other, a small concentration of businesses including the Forestdale Post Office.



- South side of Route 146A immediately to the east of School Street.
- Between Branch River and Mendon Road along either side of Route 146A.
- At the intersection of Route 104 (Greenville Road) and Route 146 A.
- Along Greenville Road at Cross Street.

Post offices, as in Slatersville and Forestdale, provide both functional and social benefits to neighborhood residents. Efforts to consolidate and relocate postal facilities to an impersonal highway location should be resisted.

#### **D-3.2.2 Business Highway**

Business Highway use areas are designed to serve specialized retail and commercial uses requiring high volumes of passing traffic. All except one of the proposed areas are located along four-lane highways (Eddie Dowling Highway and the non-limited access section of Route 146 near Sayles Hill Road) and are within the existing Business Highway (BH) District. On the west side of Eddie Dowling Highway from Park Avenue south, the Neighborhood Business District is proposed to be changed to Business Highway.

At the intersection of Route 102 and Main Street the present sites now located in the Business Highway (BH) District are continued in the Business Highway use area. On either side of Quaker Highway at the State line the Business Neighborhood zone and a portion of the Manufacturing zone is proposed to be changed to Business Highway.

In the Circulation Element, there is a recommendation for a RIDOT evaluation of the intersection at Route 146 and Sayles Hill Road. Feasibility studies should consider the impact of design options on present and/or potential uses along the highway. Such studies may suggest opportunities for additional land use changes at the time any intersection improvements are implemented.

#### **D-3.3 Professional Services**

Professional Service uses are currently found on the west side of Eddie Dowling Highway in the vicinity of Hanton Road. This area presently is in the Professional Service (PS) District. Allowed uses should include single-family detached dwellings with professional office space, hospitals and clinics, and office buildings.

A large area on the east side of Eddie Dowling Highway currently located within the PS District has been designated for Mixed Use- Office Commercial/146A in the Comprehensive Plan and will be discussed shortly within the context of a new mixed-use area. The office complex on Great Road near Rhodes Avenue is proposed for rezoning to Professional Service as is an area on 146A north of Old Smithfield Road.

### **D-3.4 Mixed Use**

A number of different types of mixed use districts should be considered in order to facilitate redevelopment of under utilized mill complexes, encourage development in and adjacent to existing villages, take advantage of highway access and infrastructure, and encourage commercial and industrial activities. Other specific objectives of mixed-use districts include:

- To allow for compatible mixed uses on a site, which are ordinarily not permitted together through conventional zoning.
- To coordinate architectural styles, building forms, and structural/visual relationships in an innovative, aesthetic, and functionally efficient manner.
- To provide flexibility of zoning in exchange for creative design and added amenities.
- To encourage land development and redevelopment (such as mixed-use developments) within Village areas that preserve their natural and/or historical features.
- To encourage the redevelopment and rehabilitation of deteriorated and/or underutilized historic or nonconforming structures and areas.
- To promote pedestrian friendly environments which provide both a safe walking atmosphere and a logical connection of destinations within and adjacent to existing village centers.
- To enhance the quality of life for the inhabitants, users, and/or workers who will be utilizing or otherwise benefiting from the provided amenities.

#### **D-3.4.1 Mill Rehabilitation**

With the diminishing number of tenants willing to occupy older mill buildings, mill owners are forced to explore mixed-use conversions in order to maintain historic mills. The Slatersville Mill site and Blackstone-Smithfield Industrial Park are both attractive sites for conversion with residential occupancy being the primary use. Other compatible uses such as commercial, recreation, light industry, or municipal uses would be allowed along with a public open space or river access component.

##### Slatersville Mill Site

The area is underutilized and, as described in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element, is within the Slatersville Historic District. The complex consists of several historic mill structures including a 2-story brick building built in 1894 with a total of 116,000 square feet of useable space, the 4-story granite "Bell Tower" built in 1826 with 48,000 square feet, and a 4-story granite building built in 1843 with 42,000 square feet. Three other buildings totaling 11,000 square feet of space make up the balance of the buildings on the site. Its location at the center of Slatersville along with views of the Branch River and Slatersville Stone Arch Bridge as well as the mill race that bisects the site make this a visually rich site and one that lends itself to residential conversion.

The Polytop Corporation has owned the site since the early 1990s and has leased the main brick mill and one of the smaller buildings and used some of the space for its own warehousing needs. The two granite buildings are vacant and are rapidly deteriorating. Any development should be

consistent with programs for the rehabilitation of the Slatersville Historic District and the adjacent Branch River Park. Present zoning is Manufacturing (M).

#### Blackstone-Smithfield Industrial Park

The northern Blackstone-Smithfield Industrial Park site, adjacent to Massachusetts, consists primarily of a three-story 1904 historic brick mill building (with a full basement) and a two-story metal building built in 1962 with subsequent additions. The metal building has approximately 110,000 square feet of leaseable space and the brick building has approximately 200,000 square feet of usable space not counting the basement. With the exception of a warehousing operation on the first floor, the 3-story, 1904 building has been vacant for most of the 16 years that the Blackstone-Smithfield Corporation has owned the site. Viable industrial uses occupy the metal building.

Proposed uses include a mix of light manufacturing, warehousing, limited commercial, public uses, residential and other complementary activities. Present zoning is Manufacturing (M).

Issues such as providing separate access for manufacturing and residential uses need to be addressed.

#### Branch River Industrial Park

The Branch River site includes approximately 100-acres bounded to the west by Route 146 and to the east by Route 146A. A 500,000 square foot industrial building, serviced by public water and sewers, currently occupies the site. Over the past few years, the owner has been expressing interest in further developing the property. Some site and market analyses have already been done. The findings suggest, on a very preliminary basis, that the site may be able to support another 500,000 square feet of new building construction. Already in 1991, this property was rated by The Maguire Group as one of the most attractive for industrial growth. The one drawback is that, like many other industrial sites in North Smithfield, it is located over a groundwater recharge area.

#### **D-3.4.2 Village Residential**

A village residential district should be created to accommodate residential development in areas served by public infrastructure. This predominantly residential district may also include limited commercial, public uses, recreational uses, and/or open space. The purpose of the district is to allow housing with limited impacts on Town services in areas in and immediately adjacent to village areas. Mixed residential developments might include age-restricted housing (e.g. retirement communities) with a clubhouse or other recreation facility or other appropriate service, light commercial or retail use and useable open space, assisted living facility with a health clinic and clustered multi-unit housing accompanied by light commercial or retail use.

#### **D-3.4.3 Mixed Use - Office/Commercial**

To take advantage of North Smithfield's access to Route 146, a mixed office/commercial district should be established to provide opportunities to develop campus-style executive office complexes. Three sites are identified; two on North Smithfield Industrial Highway/Pound Hill Road and one on Quaker Highway/Central Street that can take advantage of highway access along 146 and the North Smithfield Industrial Highway. These sites are suitable for the development of corporate offices, offices with light manufacturing and/or research and development, health care facilities, banking, restaurants, daycare facilities, and other uses that may be considered amenities to the main employment use.

#### **D-3.4.4 Mixed Use - Office Commercial/146A**

An area of approximately 200 acres around Booth Pond located on the Woonsocket/North Smithfield border east of Landmark Medical/Fogarty Unit has been identified for rezoning to Mixed Use Office/Commercial. District uses would include medical offices, research and development activities, office space and limited retail of up to 40% of the built structures.

This area is the site of a proposed retail, office and residential development known as "Dowling Village". This project received Master Plan approval and a Special Use Permit in 2004 and includes retail activities in several detached buildings, restaurants, office space and residential condominiums. The Master Plan is vested pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws, and no action may be taken by any Town board or official in derogation of such approval.

The property abuts Woonsocket and would be connected to Woonsocket's public water system and municipal sewers. Given the project's location in an important drinking water watershed, the presence of significant biodiversity at Booth Pond and the existing traffic pattern and volumes, special attention will need to be given to the project's design. Due to the environmental significance of Booth Pond and its associated wetlands, as other water bodies and wetlands in Town ought to be protected through buffers beyond those required by DEM.

#### **D-3.5 Manufacturing**

Manufacturing uses, generally in accordance with the provisions of the present Manufacturing (M) District are proposed in the following areas:

- Existing industrial site at north side of Route 146A and the Branch River.
- Along either side of North Smithfield Industrial Drive. This represents a continuation of present zoning.

The proposed uses are consistent with studies completed by the North Smithfield Industrial Development Commission. Generally, the uses allowed would be similar to those permitted under M District regulations. It is suggested that Design Standards be developed to preclude the construction or reconstruction of commercial or industrial activities which would adversely impact adjacent manufacturing uses or nearby residences.



The southern portion of the Blackstone-Smithfield Industrial Park site is currently occupied by manufacturing uses (primarily Atlantic Thermal Plastics) and is zoned for manufacturing purposes.

The northern portion of the Blackstone-Smithfield Industrial Park is currently used to generate hydroelectric power, and should be encouraged to continue as long as the operations do not cause any diminution of downstream flows. This property was discussed earlier and is proposed to be rezoned to promote the mill's rehabilitation by allowing certain mixed uses. Between Central Street and Quaker Highway land in the Manufacturing zone is proposed to be rezoned to Office/Commercial or Business Highway.

**D-3.6 Limited Commercial**

Portions of the land between St. Paul Street and the Branch River now located within the Manufacturing (M) District are designated as Limited Commercial. This use change acknowledges the limited industrial use, which has developed; most non-residential development is of a retail or commercial nature. Limited usable sites and nearby housing emphasize the need to preclude most types of heavy manufacturing. Allowed uses include light industry and certain types of retail and commercial development.

**D-4.0 Inconsistencies of Existing Zoning**

**D-4.1 Inconsistencies with Existing Zoning Map**

Nearly three quarters of the Town is zoned RA-65. The largest contiguous area is in the southwest, along most of the border with Smithfield and half of the border with Burrillville. The second largest zoning district is the REA-120 zone, which mainly covers areas of particular importance to the water supply quality. Both these zones allow for relatively large lot residential construction. They reflect the fact that North Smithfield is still, primarily, a low density, residential community. Closest to Woonsocket are the most densely zoned residential areas and commercial districts. Mill complexes (housing and industrial buildings) are located along the rivers, mainly in the north of Town and in relative close proximity to Woonsocket.

The proposed Zone Changes described in this section will mainly result in zoning that better reflects the density of existing land uses and the availability of infrastructure to service existing lots. In many instances, the proposed Zone Changes will provide greater flexibility for the existing property owner and will reduce the number of cases that appear before the Zoning Board. Another goal of the proposed zone changes is to create more land for commercial and industrial uses, thus improving the tax base. Finally, some proposed zone changes are designed to help reduce the number of lots with split zones. As described in the Zoning Ordinance, zone lines are intended to follow lot lines. As discussed above and as shown on Map D - 2, Zoning District Changes, the following amendments will be required to bring the Zoning Map into compliance with the Land Use Plan:

**Table D-4.1 Proposed Zone Changes**

ID	Existing Zone	Proposed Zone	Location	Reasoning
1	BN/M/RS	BH	Quaker Highway	Includes highway garage, Flagg RV and Desper property and vacant residential prop.
2	M	Mixed Use-Office/Comm.	Quaker Highway, Central St	#1 site for Office Commercial per Industrial Site Survey
3	RS-40	Ag Business	North of Buxton Street	Smith Orchard/Christiansens
4	RA-65	Ag Business	South of Buxton Street	Jacques Farms/Vineyard
5	RS	Village Res	Buxton Street	Access to sewers near village, large lot
6	RS-40	RU-20	Slatersville- Victory Hgwy, N. Main, Main, Mechanic & Buxton/ Homestead, Quaker Hgwy	Id'd in hsg. plan for afford. Infill dev., sewerd
7	BN	Village Res	North Main Street	Rear portion of Plaza lot- Sewered
8	RS	Village Res	Mechanic Street	Large lot w/single house-Sewered
9	RS	Village Res	Central Street	Large lot w/single house-Sewered
10	REA-120	Village Res	Victory Highway & Mechanic Street	The Legion of Christ, Inc.-Religious Retreat
11	RU-20, REA-120, RS-40	Village Res & RU-20	School Street, Pacheco Drive	Colonial Village expanded to adjoining Halliwell Lot, Pacheco Dr. Builtout
12	RA-65	RU-20	Incl. Willerval, Brian & Patricia bordering Millville	Builtout neighborhood
13	RA-65	RS-40	Off of Martha & Esmond	Builtout neighborhood
14	REA-120	Open Space	Off of Harkness Road	Publicly-owned, Blackstone Gorge
15	M	Mill Rehab	Adj. to Blackstone off of Duncan	Former Tupperware Complex
16	RU-20	Village Res	Off of St. Paul Street	Deerfield Commons
17	RU	Village Res	St Paul Street	St Paul's School
18	REA-120	Open Space	On border with Blackstone, off of Canal/Mill Street	Kelly Sports Complex
19	RA-65	RU-20	Incl Cynthia, Deborah & Sharon Parkway	Builtout, sewerd
20	RA-65	Village Res	Mendon Road	Lantern & Gatewood- Elderly
21	RA-65	Village Res	Off of Mendon Rd. & Rhodes Ave.	St. Antoine residence, and adjoining lot potential afford. hsg., adj. to Woonsocket
22	REA-120	Village Res	Adjacent to Woonsocket	Town-owned, Spooner Property
23	RA-65	RS-40	Daniel St & Buckley Dr off of Mendon	Builtout, road access, has sewer, water soon, transition between comm. & less dense res.
24	BN	Prof Serv	Off of Great Road	Existing office complex
25	M	Mill Rehab	Off of Great Road	Branch River Mill
26	RS-40	RU-20	Forest Dale -School St., Halliwell Blvd., Lorraine, Roselawn & Maple	Forestdale neighborhood, has water/sewer, builtout, adj to RU-20
27	M	Mixed Use-Office/ Comm.	Intersection of 146 & NS Industrial Drive	Homestead Farm, adj. to ind. area, good road access
28	RS-40	Village Res VPD	East of Prov. Pike/Comstock Road	162 units -Laurel Wood, age-restricted
29	M	Mill Rehab	Railroad Street	Slatersville Mill mixed use proposal pending before town boards
30	REA-120 & RS-40	Open Space & RS-40	Church Street & Charon Drive	St. John Cemetery, Builtout neighborhood

ID	Existing Zone	Proposed Zone	Location	Reasoning
31	REA-120	Open Space & RS-40	Accessed from Chelsea Dr	Town/ private recreation area & split lots in adjoining subdivision
32	REA-120	Ag Business	Off of Tift Rd	Brookside Equestrian Center
33	RS-40	Open Space	Main St/Park View	Town-owned, Pacheco Park
34	RS-40	Village Res	North of Main St/Victory Hgwy.	128 units- Silver Pines Development
35	RS-20	Open Space	Off of Main St	Publicly-owned, OS Wellhead Protection
36	RA-65	RS-40	Morning Star Dr. & Tall Timber Tr./Greenwood Ln., Victory Hwy.	Adjacent to RU-20, extension of Main St. RU zone, Builtout neighborhood
37	RA-65	REA-120	Either side of Black Plain Rd, Slatersville Estates, Pound Hill Road, Hart Pond Dr.	District cuts thru lots, follow road instead, Woodworth Conservation Trust
38	RA-65	Ag Bus	Intersection of Ind Dr & 146	State to acquire dev. rights
39	REA-120	Ag Business	East of 146 Woonsocket Hill, Pound Hill Rd east of 146	Wright's Dairy Farm & Wild Acres Horse Farm
40	REA	Open Space	Smithfield Road	Union Cemetery
41	REA-120	Ag Business	West of Greenville Rd/Birch Hill	Marshall's Veterinary Clinic
42	REA-120	Open Space	Off of Village Way	Land Trust-owned
43	REA-120	Village Res	Off of Greenville Road/ Village Way	Country Meadows at Village Way-202 Elderly
44	BN	BH	Eddie Dowling Highway	Reflects land use
45	PS, BH RS, RA	Mixed Use-Office Comm/146A	Eddie Dowling Highway	Development already proposed
46	BH	PS	Eddie Dowling Highway	Office residential mix
47	RA-65, RS-40	REA-120	Off of Old Smithfield Rd	Watershed Protection
48	RA-65	Open Space	Off of Providence Pike	Audubon-owned, OS Protection
49	RA-65	Open Space	Off of Old Oxford Rd	Land Trust, Cedar Swamp
50	RA- 65/BN	Ag Business	West of Providence Pike/Primrose	Goodwin Brothers Farm
51	RS-40	RA-65	West of Rd Over Sayles Hill Rd	Poor soils
52	RA-65	REA-120	Ironmine Hill Road/ Old Road Over Sayles Hill Road	Watershed protection, poor soils adjacent to Crookfall Brook
53	RS-40	Open Space	Woonsocket Reservoir	Woonsocket-owned, water supply protection
54	RA-65, REA-120	Ag Business	North of Reservoir Rd & South of Iron Mine Hill Rd	Wild Wind Farm, Westwind Farm
55	REA-120	RS-40	2 parcels off of Pound Hill	Existing affordable Housing
56	REA-120	Open Space	Off of Victory Highway	State boat launch
57	BN	BH	South side of Victory Highway	Consistent with existing use and Town Council zone change
58	RA	Mixed Use- Office/Comm.	Between Old Pond Hill Road and N.S Industrial Highway	Good visibility from 146 and good access to Industrial Highway
59	RA	BN	Great Road @ Mendon Road	Existing Gas Station
60	RA-65	REA-120	Providence Pike	Electric transmission lines in between Audubon parcels
61	BN	PS	Corner of Main St. & Victory Highway	Consistent with zone change conditions
62	REA-120	Open Space	Cedar Swamp Conservation area 146 interchange	State owned conservation area

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#### **D-4.2 Zoning Ordinance Regulations**

Under the Land Use Element recommendations and those of other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, it will be necessary to amend the Zoning Ordinance in a number of ways as follows:

1. Revise the Official Zoning Map in accordance with the zone district changes described above and shown on Map D – 2. Periodic reviews of the Official Zoning Map should be conducted and, revisions to the map should be made where necessary to minimize inconsistencies between the map and actual land use and, to reflect changes in the Comprehensive Plan.
2. Create new zoning districts and the regulations and standards for their implementation as follows:
  - Mixed Use Mill Rehabilitation
  - Mixed Use Retail
  - Village Residential
  - Mixed Use Office/Commercial
  - Open Space
  - Agricultural Business
3. Adopt flexible residential development measures such as Conservation Development.
4. Revise the Zoning Ordinance to encourage the creation of more affordable housing and in conformance with the Housing Element.
5. Improve the Development Plan Review regulations and adopt Design Standards as part of the Subdivision and Land Development Regulations.
6. Where applicable, incorporate development review provisions which require special consideration of cultural and natural resource protection.
7. Establish clear, objective standards for each category of Special Use Permit.

It is recommended that all provisions of the Zoning Ordinance be given a comprehensive review so that the regulations will be more in line with contemporary zoning practices regulating parking and loading, signs, special land uses, encouragement of home occupations, district use regulations, etc.

#### **D-4.3 Zoning Ordinance and Map Amendment Process**

The Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act requires that "The land use plan should specify the process by which the zoning ordinance and the zoning map shall be amended to conform to the comprehensive plan."

Upon the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the Town Council, by resolution, will direct the Planning Board and the Planning Division to initiate ordinance changes and a public participation process leading to the adoption of the required amendments within a period of 18 months. The Council's resolution will request the Planning Board to prepare a timetable for the amendment process.

#### **D-4.4 Improved Design**

Another issue that will be referred to throughout this Updated Plan pertains to the preservation of the Town's character and raising the bar on matters of design. Consistent with the BRVNHCC's 2003 publication "Design Review Manual", the Town will ultimately be making revisions to its Ordinances and Regulations that govern the design of new subdivisions, land developments (including multi-family structures) new commercial and industrial structures, and redevelopment of existing mill buildings and other historic areas and structures.

#### **D-4.5 Preparation for Future Growth**

As John Mullin's 2001 report summarizing the charette's findings concluded,

"...North Smithfield is a beautiful community that still has the opportunity to protect and enhance its quality of life. It has been fortunate to date that its valued character is still intact. We believe, however, that changing growth patterns will have a tremendous impact on the community over the next decade. This can be positive if it is well planned. It can be catastrophic if it is left simply to market forces. The Town has no choice: it must plan or be planned upon. It is time to begin."

Beyond the updating of this Plan and subsequent revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations, the Town may need to explore other tools to help manage its growth. The 2001 Community Survey and charette demonstrated that many citizens are concerned that the Town is growing too rapidly and that unmanaged growth will adversely impact the community. Zoning that provides flexibility that leads to the preservation of historic structures and commercial development as a way to subsidize the tax base are steps in the right direction, but ultimately, the Town may need to consider more innovative means to preparing for its future. Additionally, the Town may wish to designate certain areas such as Slatersville and the Branch Village area as "Growth Centers", once the State's Land Use Guide Plan Update is completed, in order to provide a better focus for infrastructure investment.

#### **D-5.0 Consistency Statement**

The Land Use Element for North Smithfield furthers the goals of the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act and is consistent with the overall goals and the 114 specific land use policies for Rhode Island as presented in *State Guide Plan Element No. 121 – State Land Use Policies and Plan 2010*.

We cite the following strengths of the North Smithfield Comprehensive Plan with respect to State policies:

#### **General Land Development**

Land use proposals relate to historic development patterns, the availability of or lack of public utilities and services and the natural characteristics of the land.

Concentrated urban and suburban development is located in the northern and eastern sections of the community and rural residential densities are recommended for the balance of the Town. Options for flexible, land-compatible residential development are encouraged.

#### **Water Resources**

The Land Use Element includes proposals for the protection of major water supply resources in the community including, but not limited to, the Slatersville Aquifer, Slatersville Reservoirs, Woonsocket Water Supply Reservoirs #1 and #3 and Crookfall Brook.

Zoning, subdivision and other development regulations will be revised to reduce point and non-point sources of pollution which could degrade surface and groundwater quality.

#### **Energy**

Energy is being generated by a hydropower facility in North Smithfield; the Plan encourages continuation of this efficient form of power generation.

Percentage wise, North Smithfield, devotes more acreage to powerline and pipeline rights-of-way and easements than any other community in Rhode Island. As feasible, these should be utilized to provide pedestrian links between open space and conservation areas.

#### **Housing**

As a suburban community, the major emphasis is on single-family residential use. The Land Use Element recognizes the need to provide a greater diversity of affordable housing opportunities meeting the local needs of individuals and families of all age groups.

#### **Transportation**

The Land Use Element proposals have been carefully related to the existing and proposed vehicular circulation system. Sites have been suggested for pooled parking facilities served by public transit facilities.

### **Recreation and Open Space**

Proposals for land use have been related to the need to provide a range of recreational facilities and to protect unique or important open space areas.

The Land Use Element has been integrated with and related to State and interstate and Federal programs/plans such as the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Branch River Park Plan.

### **D-5.1 Adjacent Community Land Use Compatibility**

North Smithfield shares a common boundary with three towns and one city in Rhode Island and three towns in Massachusetts. Common sense, as well as state mandates, requires compatibility of uses in adjoining communities.

During the course of preparing the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Town Planner has been in contact with all adjoining communities. On February 14, 2005, the North Smithfield Planning Division sent letters to the planning agencies of adjoining communities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts requesting information on comprehensive plan proposals and zoning. The information provided in response to these inquiries was used in preparing this Land Use Element and served as the basis for further contacts through phone conversations or personal meetings.

The following is a discussion of land use compatibility along municipal boundaries:

#### **Burrillville, Rhode Island**

With one exception, the land along the municipal borders is zoned for single-family residential development; in the case of North Smithfield, the Land Use Plan continues residential use along the common boundary. The exception is the Western Sand & Gravel site on the Douglas Pike which is zoned M-2 Industrial in Burrillville. Although the site is located in both Towns, the North Smithfield portion is in the RA-65 Residential zone. EPA Superfund actions are discussed in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element.

Although not directly abutting the North Smithfield line, the commercial and industrial zoning and development between Route 102 and the portion of the Slatersville Reservoir in Burrillville could pose a threat to the water quality of the Reservoir. The Burrillville Comprehensive Plan proposes to reduce this concern through the extension of sewer services to the area and the continuation of aquifer protection district zoning. Burrillville is eager to work with North Smithfield on the proposed Northwest Bike Trail, as described elsewhere in this Update, and wished to encourage the Town to acquire rights-of-way as they become available.

#### **Smithfield, Rhode Island**

As in the case of Burrillville, there is one exception to the single-family residential zoning along the common boundary. Smithfield has a 2,400 acre industrial zone which abuts the RA-65 Residential zone in North Smithfield for about 2,500 feet immediately to the east of the Providence Pike. This industrial area is partially bordered by Route 7 and I-295 and is bisected in the south by Route 116. Full development of this area could have significant adverse impacts

(traffic, noise, fumes, etc.) on North Smithfield. The New Zoning Enabling Act requires contiguous municipalities to coordinate their land use proposals.

There is no basis for zoning adjacent land in North Smithfield for industrial use; consequently the Land Use Element continues residential uses along the common boundary. There is a basis for encouraging the Smithfield Comprehensive Plan to address industrial use and zoning along the border through district changes or appropriate buffering considerations.

#### **Lincoln, Rhode Island**

Crookfall Brook forms the common boundary between Lincoln and North Smithfield from Woonsocket Reservoir # 3 to the Blackstone River. There is general compatibility between residential zoning to the east of Route 146. On the east side of Route 146, business zoning in Lincoln abuts the RS-40 Residential district in North Smithfield. This does not appear to be a conflict given the general nature of Route 146 highway business development in both Towns.

The major conflict is Lincoln's ML 0.5 Limited Manufacturing district which abuts North Smithfield's REA-120 district from the Smithfield line to Reservoir Road. From Lincoln's perspective, this is a logical use of land isolated from the balance of the Town by Routes 146 and I-295. It appears that there is limited likelihood of any significant development of the land in Lincoln which could have serious impacts on the residentially zoned land across Crookfall Brook in North Smithfield.

#### **Woonsocket, Rhode Island**

Zoning and development along the Woonsocket line is more complex given the intense development which has taken place in the City. Existing and proposed residential, commercial and industrial usage appears, with one exception, to be compatible in the two communities. The one area that for years was incompatible between the two communities is in the process of becoming more compatible. This Plan Update includes a proposal for rezoning in the Park Square Area, near Booth Pond and behind the Landmark Medical Center. Proposed commercial retail development could span the communities of Woonsocket and North Smithfield in this area. Eighteen acres across the border in Woonsocket could be designated as a special economic development district that could eventually see the construction of 220,000 square feet of primarily commercial retail space. Another issue that is discussed in greater detail in the Services and Facilities Element involves the drinking water supplied to North Smithfield by Woonsocket.

#### **Blackstone, Massachusetts**

The proposals of the Land Use Element will change the zoning of the Blackstone River Gorge area in North Smithfield to Open Space. This zoning will abut residential zones in Blackstone. Land acquisition by the States of Rhode Island and Massachusetts along with the proposals of the 1992 Comprehensive Plan created a regional open space recreational resource at the Gorge. The proposals of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor call for protecting the Gorge through proper management and communication between the various parties and partners interested in the Park and improving public access to provide for multiple uses of the Park. In the vicinity of the Blackstone-Smithfield Industrial Park, the Manufacturing (M) zone also abuts



a fully developed residential neighborhood in Blackstone. There is no real inconsistency here as the residences were developed, in part, to serve as mill housing. In areas other than those mentioned above, the proposed land use and zoning of the two communities is compatible.

**Millville, Massachusetts**

Residential zoning applies to either side of the Town line except in a small corner west of Route 146. Here, Manufacturing (M) in North Smithfield abuts a small residentially zoned triangular corner of Millville formed by the Uxbridge and North Smithfield boundaries and Route 146. This Millville land is now used for non-residential use with access through the Town of Uxbridge. Consequently, there is no incompatibility.

**Uxbridge, Massachusetts**

In Uxbridge, the land along the common border is zoned as follows: to the west of Quaker Highway the zoning is Agricultural and to the east, it is Business. Essentially, these uses are compatible with North Smithfield's present and proposed land use and zoning of Neighborhood Business on the east side of Quaker Highway and Rural Agricultural - Medium Density (RA-65 zoning) on the west side.

BJ's Wholesale Club constructed three buildings: a warehouse/crossdock facility (614,626 square foot footprint), a security control center and a guard house with a total of 644 tractor-trailer parking stalls, 382 standard parking spaces, a truck queuing area and various site and utility infrastructure on land formerly owned by the Hood Companies at 869 Quaker Highway. This site was formerly a large sand and gravel operation on the west side of Quaker Highway and north of Cider Mill and Buxton Street. Noise from this 24-hour facility may have an adverse impact on the quality of life of many residents in North Smithfield.

Although there is a rational case for establishing that the uses across a municipal line should be compatible regardless of the existence of a state line, current planning and zoning enabling legislation in Massachusetts gives little guidance here. Rhode Island's Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act is more specific and requires ".... consistency with the comprehensive plans of contiguous municipalities ...". Presumably, considering Rhode Island's more enlightened approach, this includes municipalities in adjoining states.

North Smithfield, through its Town Council and Planning Department, should establish a dialogue with the Uxbridge planners to determine the nature of any future use changes in the area to the west of 146A.



MAP D-1  
LAND USE PLAN

Legend

- Lakes & Ponds
- Town Boundary
- Streams
- Superfund Sites
- Parcels
- Open Space
- Rural Residential Conservation - Low Density
- Rural Residential - Medium Low Density
- Suburban Resdential - Medium Density
- Urban Residential - Medium High Density
- Village Residential
- Agricultural Business
- Mill Rehabilitation
- Mixed Use - Office Commercial
- Mixed Use - Office Commercial/146A
- Professional Service
- Limited Commercial
- Business Neighborhood
- Business Highway
- Manufacturing



1 inch equals 3,042 feet



This map was prepared for the inventory of real property within the Town of North Smithfield. Users of this tax map are hereby notified that the public primary information sources, including record deeds and plats, should be consulted for the verification of the information contained on this map. The Town of North Smithfield and its mapping contractors assume no legal responsibility for the information contained herein.

Base-map and hydrographic features were provided by Rhode Island GIS as 1"=400' features derived from the 1997 National Grid USA/RIDOT Orthophoto Project.

Updated: September, 2003



NORTH SMITHFIELD, RHODE ISLAND



# **MAP D-2** **ZONING DISTRICT** **CHANGES**

SEE TABLE D-4.1

## **Legend**

- Zone District Changed
- Town Boundary
- Lakes & Ponds
- Streams
- Parcels

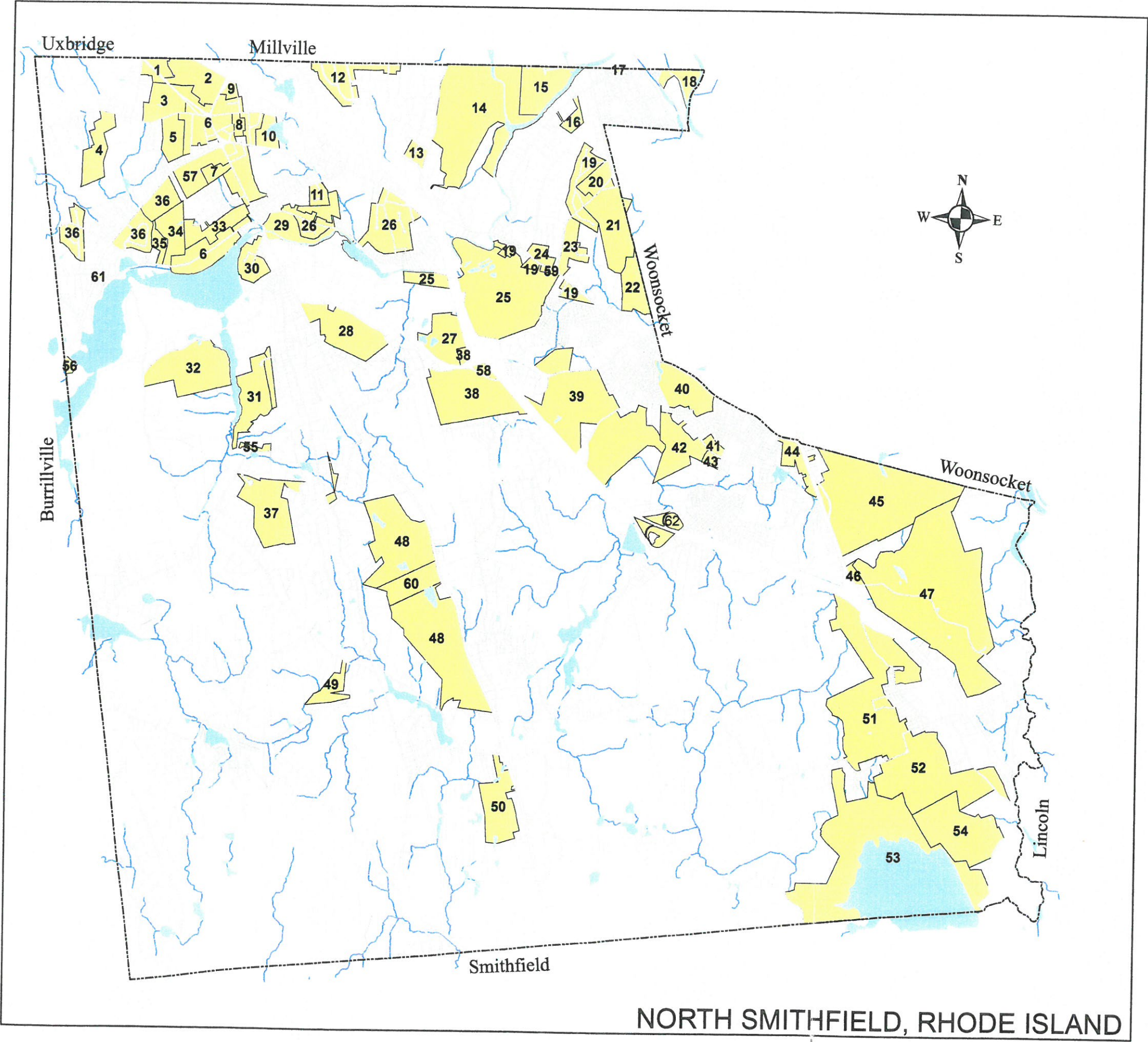


APPLIED GEOGRAPHICS, INC.  
Supporting People and Places

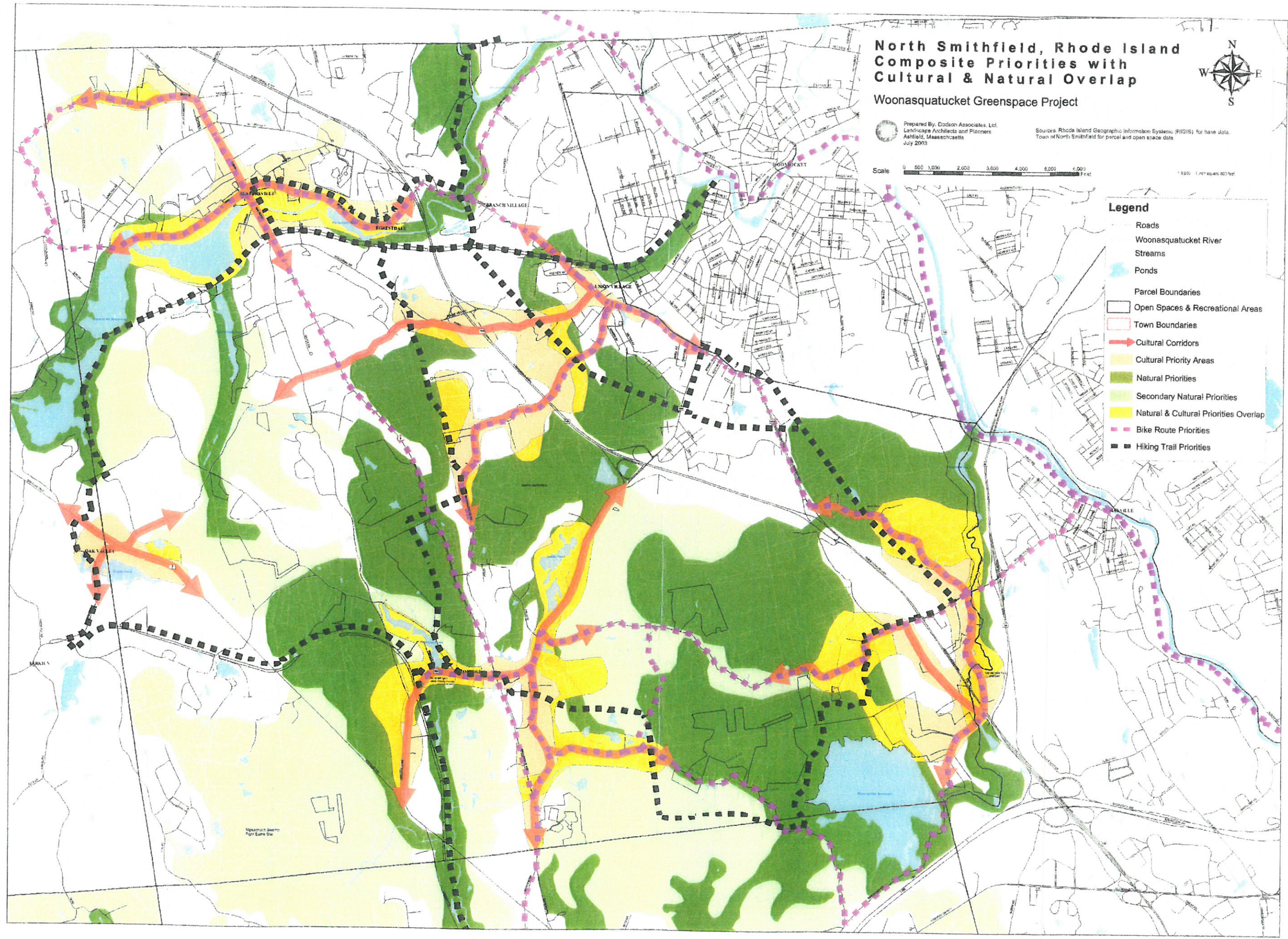
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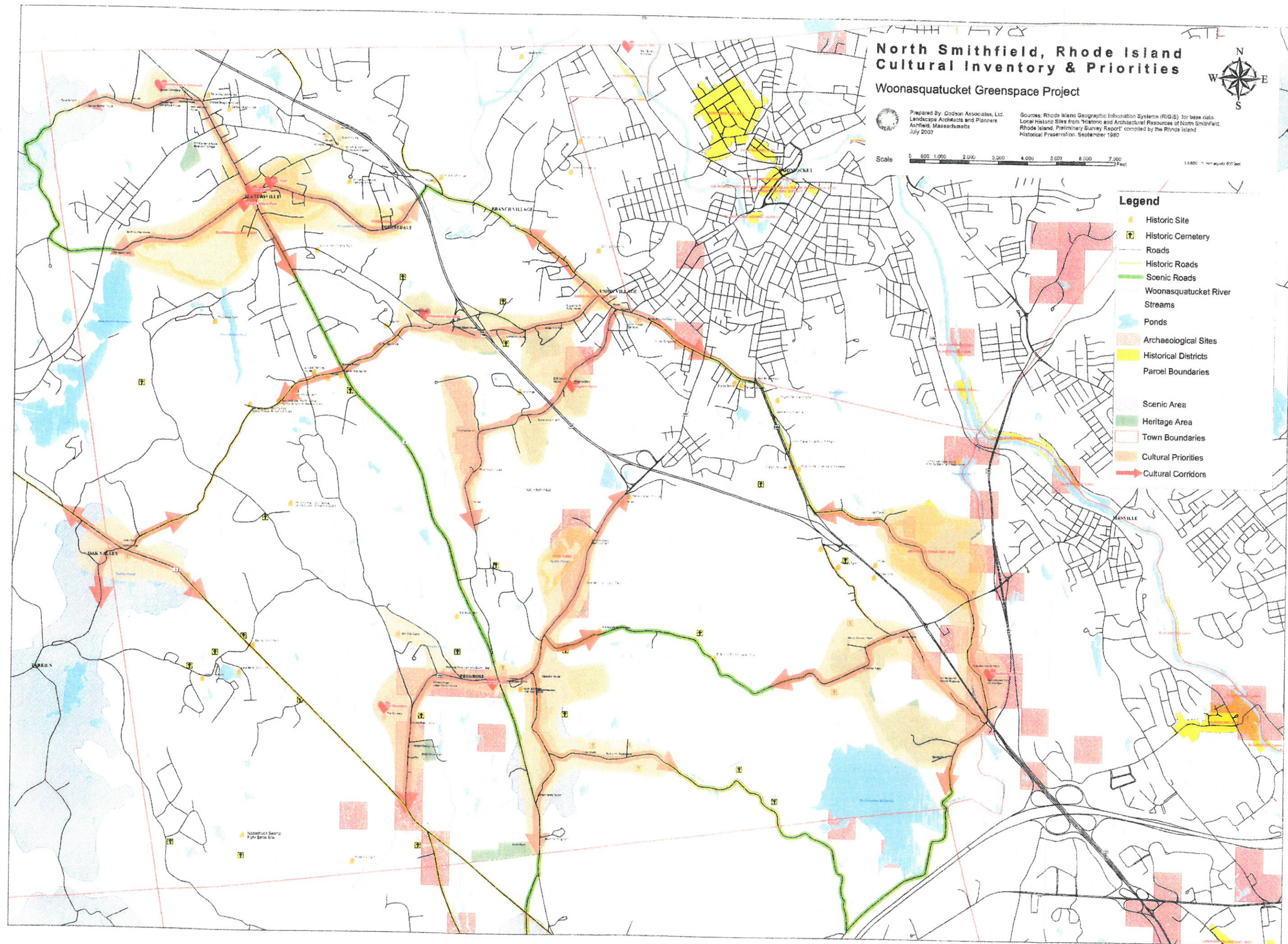
Updated: September, 2003













# Natural Inventory with Priorities of North Smithfield, Rhode Island Woonasquatucket Greenspace Project

Prepared By: Dodson Associates, Ltd., Landscape Architects and Planners  
Ashfield, Massachusetts, July 2003



Source: Rhode Island Geographic Information Systems (RIGIS) and Town of North Smithfield

Scale  
0 500 1,000 2,000 3,000 4,000 5,000 Feet  
0 250 500 1,000 Meters  
1:9,600  
1 inch equals 800 feet

## Legend

- Town Boundary
- Roads
- Streams
- Special Natural Features/Places
- Ponds
- Wells
- Public Water Supply Reservoirs
- Surface Water Protection Areas
- Rare Species Habitats
- Aquifer Recharge Areas
- Wellhead Protection Areas
- Wetlands
- Aquifers
- Parcel Boundaries
- Primary Natural Priorities
- Secondary Natural Priorities

