Acknowledgments

Consulting services were funded through a Local Planning Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts’s E. O. 418 Community Planning Program, administered by the Interagency Working Group of funding agencies:

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- the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction.

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- Joanne Levenson
- Associate Member

Robert Mitchell, AICP, Director of the Amherst Planning Department served as project officer, and Associate Planner Niels laCour provided the GIS services.

Jeanne H. Armstrong of LandUse, Incorporated, served as facilitator and planning consultant to the 2003 Affordable Housing Plan Update.

Further acknowledgements for the 1999 Overall Economic Development Plan

The OEDP resulted from a joint effort of the Town Select Board and Planning Board, and the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce.

Amherst Community Development Plan

May 2004

LandUse, Incorporated
Further acknowledgements for the December 2003 University Drive Corridor Study

The Corridor Study was overseen by the Town’s Department of Public Works, Guilford B. Mooring II, Superintendent.

Dufresne-Henry, Incorporated, were the consultants who produced the Study. Robert Mellstrom served as project officer.

Further acknowledgements for the 2003 Open Space Plan

Peter Westover, Conservation Director, served as project officer.

Townspeople who served on the Conservation Commission during the course of the 2003 Open Space Plan were:

John Gerber       Bruce Griffin       Francesca Maltese       Eleanor Manire-Gatti
Barbara Mitchell  Nicki Robb          Otto Stein

GIS mapping services were provided by Dodson Associates, with Peter Flinker serving as project officer.
The May 2004 Community Development Plan [“CDP”] is a consolidation and update of previous planning documents relating to Housing, Economic Development, and Open Space & Recreation. The CDP also contains a new, consolidated set of GIS maps for each of these key components of life in Amherst. Finally, the CDP augments the Transportation component of Town planning with a Corridor Study for University Drive, a major roadway through an expanding portion of Amherst’s business base.

After an inventory and analysis of current housing supply and conditions, the 2003 Housing Plan Update outlines priority needs. Since demand is likely to continue to outstrip the market-provided housing supply, there is a pressing need to continue efforts to gain units that are cushioned against the forces of market inflation. The town and the academic institutions need to work together to gain more housing options for the academic communities on the institutions-on-campus and off-campus holdings. The need and demand for affordable rentals is particularly acute, especially rentals for families needing more than 2 bedrooms. There is both an opportunity and a need for continued condominium offerings of affordable rentals and starter homeownership. The Housing Plan Update details basic strategies to achieve the goals of Amherst’s Housing Policy: (1) Maintain current affordable units, and continue to pursue opportunities for affordable and accessible units on sites through the community; (2) Encourage and work with local institutions of higher education to provide housing to meet the needs of their respective campus communities, either on- or off-campus; and (3) Fit a range of accessible and affordable housing choices within Amherst’s evolving village centers. Priority actions are: (1) Encourage & work with the University to build housing on campus and off campus (including Olympia Drive) for students, faculty, and staff; (2) Conduct a broad-based, assertive, on-going community outreach and information effort; and (3) Marshal financial resources (including Community Preservation Act funds) directed toward maintaining and creating the desired range and quality of housing.

The 1999 Overall Economic Development Plan’s Goal #1 is to encourage appropriate economic development that contributes positively to Town character and is in keeping with the Town’s comprehensive planning process; and to encourage growth within the Downtown, Village Center areas and properties that present unique economic development opportunities. Goal #2 is to increase and diversify business employment opportunities for Amherst area residents. Goal #3 is to strengthen the Downtown as a retail, commercial, and social center of the community. Goal #4 is to broaden and diversify the real estate tax base and reduce dependence on residential property taxes. The CDP’s Economic Development Action Plan map locates the areas that are key to achieving these goals: the Downtown, Village Centers, professional research parks, and active farmlands.

The 2003 University Drive Corridor Study examines existing conditions, explores three improvement scenarios, and presents an evaluation matrix of the capital costs and relative gains of each scenario. The Study also evaluated alternatives for the University Drive/Amity Street intersection. Adding a dedicated left turn lane on the east approach, with appropriate signal modifications, was found to be a cost effective solution to address the excessive delays that are experienced at this intersection.

The CDP contains an updated series of GIS inventory, analysis, and action maps for the 2003 Open Space Plan. The action plan features protection of agricultural parcels, open space blocks, and trails and greenways. Recommendations and priorities steps are presented for a universal access trail, literary trail system, links between trails and subdivisions, trail maintenance, and acquisition of priority properties for outdoor recreation.
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*Note: For increased legibility, all maps are formatted for printing landscape style onto 11” x 17” paper.
Introduction

Amherst’s characteristic landscape and community life reflect its history as a classic New England college town. The map on the following page, *Protected Open Space and Institutional Lands*, shows the land use pattern that has evolved since the Town’s founding in the eighteenth century:

1. Compact and clearly defined Downtown and Village Centers, each with its own characteristic mix of land uses
2. Large blocks of outlying open space, featuring farm fields, orchards, water resource areas, and the forested expanse of the Mount Holyoke Range
3. Large landholdings of Amherst College, University of Massachusetts, and Hampshire College, each with its own plan of academic buildings and outlying open space

In the face of development pressures since the 1960s Amherst has increasingly become the community’s *intentional* landscape. A striking characteristic of the following map is how many of its features result from community decisions and passionate efforts:

- Relatively limited numbers of suburban, “cookie cutter” residential subdivisions
- Alternative site plans, such as the Echo Hill development on the eastern edge of town, which feature a mix of business and housing types in clustered site plans with conserved open space
- Large blocks of contiguous, permanently protected open space

One should notice that the main sign of “sprawl” in Amherst results from what the Town has very little control over: Approval Not Required [“ANR”] frontage lots.

Amherst’s landscape is not a lucky accident. Topography and history provided a good start with fertile soils, scenic vistas, and an evolving academic “industry” that supported the community’s economic and cultural base. In the 1960’s, however, the local “industry” began an exponential growth rate with continuous expansion at the University of Massachusetts and the founding and flourishing of Hampshire College. Since then the community has studied, debated, argued heatedly, and over time agreed enough to combat, shape, and to a large extent contain a strong housing market’s physical incursions into the landscape. Seeing that market forces were also changing the social landscape through elevated housing prices, the community also studied, debated, reached philosophical and practical decisions, and worked to maintain community diversity through diverse housing types, including affordable options. During all these years and debates, Town Meeting has consistently provided financial support for the plans, programs, land acquisitions, and facilities needed to pursue development and conservation goals.

The May 2004 *Community Development Plan* [“CDP”] took place in the context of a long line of studies, analyses, and plans. It is a consolidation and update of previous planning documents relating to Housing, Economic Development, and Open Space. The CDP also contains a new, consolidated set of GIS maps for each of these key components of life in Amherst. Finally, the CDP augments the Transportation component of Town planning with a Corridor Study for University Drive, a major roadway through an expanding portion of Amherst’s business base. The following sections of the CDP present each component. The final section consolidates the recommendations of the components, showing how they each contribute to Amherst’s intentional landscape.
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I. Introduction

A. Amherst Housing Policy & Focus of This Plan

At their October 21, 2002, meeting the Select Board adopted the following policy, which contains Amherst’s three goals regarding diversity and accessibility of housing:

Amherst Housing Policy

Whereas: The Town of Amherst values its diverse cultural community and acknowledges that to sustain it now and into the future requires preserving the existing stock of housing and promoting future development of a broad range of safe, accessible, affordable housing for our community,

To this end Amherst shall:

Actively support initiatives designed to preserve, develop and/or replenish its affordable housing inventory;

Actively promote access to housing for all persons, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, physical capabilities, marital or social-economic status;

Commit to educating the public on all housing conditions, current housing laws and regulations, and enforce housing laws and protections within the community.

The 2003 Affordable Housing Plan is an update of Amherst’s 1992 Fair Housing Plan, and its intent is to provide a basis for plans and actions that implement the Town’s Housing Policy. This update concentrates on the aspects of housing planning that relate to issues of affordability and ranges of housing choice that offer alternatives to large single family homes.

B. Process That Produced the 2003 Affordable Housing Plan Update

Working from this policy, the 2003 housing planning effort updated the 1992 Town of Amherst Fair Housing Plan. The first step in the update was to compile and review the most recent information available about the community’s housing and residents. This inventory is presented in Section II, below.
The Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee then convened two joint public forums of Town boards, other groups engaged in housing-related efforts, and the community at large. The first forum, held on September 10, 2003, reviewed highlights of the updated inventory and considered their implications for Amherst’s housing goals. Participants then discussed priority needs and suggested revisions to a draft set of potential strategies. The second forum was held on October 22, and participants first confirmed the Plan’s statement of priority needs. Participants then suggested the most promising strategies that they felt should be pursued next.

C. Acknowledgements

Much of the data reported in Section II of the Plan was provided by Town Departments. The Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee thanks Assessor David Burgess, Sanitarian David Zarozinski, Building Commissioner Bonnie Weeks, and their staff for the time and expertise they shared with the Committee and the project’s consultant. Additional important information was provided by Donna Crabtree and Pam Predmore at the Amherst Housing Authority, the UMass Commuter Services & Housing Resource Center, and former Amherst Senior Planner Connie Kruger.

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- the Department of Economic Development, and
- the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission administered the 418 planning grant at the regional level.
II. Current Housing Supply & Conditions

A. Introduction

The first step in this year’s housing planning effort was to prepare an assessment of Amherst’s current housing conditions and supply. The intent was to update the information presented in the 1992 *Fair Housing Plan* to provide a solid basis of information for further analysis, setting of goals, and agreement on action steps. Sources of the information presented in this inventory include:

- 1990 U. S. Census
- 1992 *Fair Housing Plan*
- 2000 U. S. Census
- The Planning Department’s December 2002 *Data Book* highlights of the 2000 U. S. Census
- Amherst Assessor records and reports
- Donna Crabtree & Pam Predmore at the Amherst Housing Authority
- UMass Commuter Services & Housing Resource Center survey of off-campus rental housing rates
- Survival Center records for the Food Box program
- Discussion and review of materials with Connie Kruger, former Senior Planner
- Interview with David Zarozinski, Sanitarian
- Interview and materials from Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner
B. Numbers and Types of Housing Units in Amherst

The 1990 and 2000 U. S. Census report the following numbers of housing units and the types of residential structures that contain them:

Figure 1: Units in Residential Structures, 1990 & 2000
Sources: 1990 & 2000 U. S. Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th># 1990</th>
<th>% 1990</th>
<th># 2000</th>
<th>% 2000</th>
<th>Change in #</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>4,229</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>4,683</td>
<td>49.7</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detached</td>
<td>3,655</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>4,148</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>496</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attached</td>
<td>577</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>(42)</td>
<td>(7.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifamily</td>
<td>4,415</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>4,739</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 units</td>
<td>514</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 4 units</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 or more</td>
<td>2,974</td>
<td>33.7</td>
<td>3,108</td>
<td>32.9</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>(165)</td>
<td>(97.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8,816</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>9,426</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Between 1990 and 2000 there were shifts in the exact percentages of units in different types of structures, but a striking characteristics of Amherst’s housing stock is that the majority of housing units continue to be located in multifamily and attached single family structures.

Figure 2: Proportions of Different Housing Types, 2000
Source: 2000 U.S. Census

1 There is a discrepancy in this column which may result from differences in the definition of “other”
C. Production of Housing Units Since 1980 and Age of Housing Stock

The following figure shows that since 1980 Amherst has seen fluctuating annual production of housing units, but consistently with a significant proportion of the units being in structures other than single family.

**Figure 3: Annual Production of Housing Units Since 1980, Comparing Numbers of New Single Family and Multi-family Units**

*Source: 2000 U. S. Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Units</th>
<th>Single Family</th>
<th>Multi-family *</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*) Multi-family includes apartments, conversions, duplexes, mixed-use units, and assisted living units.
As of June 2003 the records of the Amherst Assessor\(^2\) report the following numbers and characteristics of residential parcels and structures:

**Figure 4: Numbers & Characteristics of Residential Parcels & Structures, June 2003, NOT Including Units Owned by the Commonwealth, Amherst Housing Authority or Other Non-Profit Organizations**

*Source: Town Assessor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use code (^3)</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th># parcels</th>
<th># units</th>
<th>Median yr constructed</th>
<th>Median total assessed value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0101</td>
<td><strong>Mixed Use:</strong> 1/F &amp; business</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>$304,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0104</td>
<td>2/F &amp; business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>215,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0105</td>
<td>3/F &amp; business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1920</td>
<td>717,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0111</td>
<td>4-8/F &amp; business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>772,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0130</td>
<td>9+/F &amp; business</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1963</td>
<td>984,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1010</td>
<td>Single family</td>
<td>4,078</td>
<td>4,078</td>
<td>1967</td>
<td>204,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1020</td>
<td>Condominium</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>845</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>109,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1040</td>
<td>2/family</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>226,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1050</td>
<td>3/family</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>261,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1070</td>
<td>Assessor Apartments</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>262,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1090</td>
<td>Parcel w/ multiple houses</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>289,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1110</td>
<td><strong>Multi-family:</strong> 4-8 units</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>181**</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>306,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1120</td>
<td>9 and more units</td>
<td>246</td>
<td>2,280**</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>6,280,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200</td>
<td>Bed &amp; Breakfast</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1878</td>
<td>657,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1210</td>
<td>Rooming &amp; Boarding Houses</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1890</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1220</td>
<td>Fraternities &amp; Sororities</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>331,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1250</td>
<td>Other, e.g. Co-housing</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>140,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1300</td>
<td><strong>Undeveloped land:</strong> Buildable</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>572.34 ac.</td>
<td>Median 0.82 ac</td>
<td>76,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1310</td>
<td>Potentially buildable</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11.28 ac.</td>
<td>Median 0.61 ac</td>
<td>44,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1320</td>
<td>Not buildable</td>
<td>345</td>
<td>745.53 ac.</td>
<td>Median 0.45 ac</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Since number of units vary per parcel, requires search of each set of records

**Note:** Figure 4 does not include units that have received permits but have not yet been built or occupied. As of July 2003 these included 24 apartments on Gatehouse Road that are being converted from business units. As of July 31, 2003, there were outstanding building permits for the following numbers and types of housing units which are not included in Figure 4\(^4\):

---

\(^2\) Assessor David Burgess was very helpful in providing digital records of all residentially-related parcels and also in producing special computer generated analysis reports.

\(^3\) Assessor land use codes as specified by Mass. Department of Revenue.

\(^4\) Information provided by Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner.
• 1 2-family structure
• 335 units on Greenleaves Drive which are designed for “aging in place” living for persons 55 years of age and older: a mix of independent living, assisted living, and nursing home facility. This development will consist of a total of 335 units: 100 assisted living and 235 independent living.
• 1 single-family structure to replace one destroyed by fire
• 15 single-family structures [permits issued prior to 2000 but still outstanding]
• 59 single-family structures [permits issued 2000 or later, still outstanding]

Figure 4 shows that a striking number of Amherst’s residential structures were built more than 30 years ago. Figure 5 reports this characteristic in terms of residential units.

Figure 5: Age of Housing by Number of Units
Source: 2000 U.S. Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1939 or earlier</td>
<td>1,777</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940 - 1959</td>
<td>1,107</td>
<td>11.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 - 1969</td>
<td>1,797</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 - 1979</td>
<td>2,468</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 - 1989</td>
<td>1,428</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 – March 2000</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amherst’s aging housing stock raises the question of whether there is a pattern of deteriorated structures. The Town’s inspectors observes that when a building’s condition fails to meet Building Code requirements, windows are a relatively frequent reason. To meet code, a window must be weather tight but able to be opened, allow no drafts, have unbroken glass, and have screens in summer. Lead paint problems often surface around windows that were installed prior to 1978, because window sills, for example, are classified as “impactable and mouthable surfaces”. [Other problems noted less frequently include smoke detectors not in working order, mold, doors not functioning properly, and hot water not measuring between 110 and 130 degrees.]

The inspectors point out that big rental complexes are relatively well taken care of by management. Most instances of non-compliance occur in smaller rental properties: older single family, 2-family, and 3-family structures. Older residential structures have wooden windows, and this correlates closely with the problems described above. [The “median year constructed” column in Figure 4 confirms the pattern of aged 2- and 3-family structures, accessory apartments, and mixed use with residential components.] Another pattern that is noted by inspectors is that as a residential structure gets older, student tenants take poorer care of it, so the deterioration process speeds up.

From the perspective of safety and enforcement, the Building Commissioner reports that there is “massive non-compliance” relating to excessive numbers of residents in structures. There is the need to clarify the Zoning Bylaw’s definition of “lodging house”. At present a dwelling unit should be home to no more than 4 unrelated individuals, but with Amherst’s tight rental housing market, there is incentive for residents to increase the number of housemates for the sake of sharing expenses.

---

Interview with David Zarozinski, Town Sanitarian
D. Cost of Homeownership & Renting, Tenure & Vacancy

Owning or renting a home is more expensive in Amherst than in Hampshire County as a whole. In 2000 Amherst’s median home value was 24.3% higher, and median rent was 8.9% higher than the County’s. Amherst’s rise in house values has outstripped a similar rise throughout the county.

**Figure 6: Median Home Values in 2000, Comparing Amherst and Hampshire County**
*Source: 2000 U. S. Census*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>$177,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>$142,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 7: Median Monthly Rent in 2000, Comparing Amherst and Hampshire County**
*Source: 2000 U. S. Census*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amherst</td>
<td>$687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>$631</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8: Rise in House Values in Comparison with Rise in Median Family Income**
*Source: 2000 U. S. Census*
Compared to Hampshire County as a whole, Amherst provides a comparatively large proportion of rental units [see Figure 9]. Figure 10 shows, however, that Amherst has a consistently low vacancy rate for both rental and homeownership opportunities.

**Figure 9: Tenure and Vacancy in 2000, As Percent of Hampshire County’s Housing Units**

*Source: 2000 U. S. Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Vacant</th>
<th>Occupied</th>
<th>Owner occupied</th>
<th>Renter occupied</th>
<th>Total Units</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another key aspect of rental housing opportunity in Amherst is shown by the following figure. Despite the increases in multifamily units between 1990 and 2000, **Amherst gained a total of 2 rental units.** This apparent discrepancy is explained by the market for owner-occupied condominium attached units.

**Figure 10: Housing Units by Tenure & Vacancy, Comparing 1990 & 2000**

*Sources: 1990 and 2000 U. S. Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th># 1990</th>
<th>% 1990</th>
<th># 2000</th>
<th>% 2000</th>
<th>Change in #</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupied units</td>
<td>8,477</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>9,174</td>
<td>97.3%</td>
<td>697</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>3,436</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>4,131</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter-occupied</td>
<td>5,041</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>5,043</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacant units</td>
<td>339</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>(86)</td>
<td>(25.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For seasonal, recreational use</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total units</td>
<td>8,816</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>9,426</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>610</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental vacancy rate</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeowner vacancy rate</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This figure reiterates Amherst’s very low vacancy rate for both owner-occupied and rental units.

One crucial aspect of housing opportunities is the *number of bedrooms* in housing units, because this correlates with the type of household and size of household whose needs would be met by a given
housing unit. Figures 11 & 12 report information reported by the U. S. Census and Amherst Assessor records about numbers of bedrooms in rental and owner-occupied units.

**Figure 11: Numbers of Bedrooms by Tenure in 2000**

*Source: 2000 U. S. Census*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># Bedrooms</th>
<th>Total Occupied Units</th>
<th># Owner-Occupied</th>
<th># Renter-Occupied</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,721</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>1,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2,432</td>
<td>541</td>
<td>1,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,625</td>
<td>1,745</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,680</td>
<td>1,431</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 and more</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 12: Numbers of Bedrooms in Units in Apartment Structures With 4 or More Units, 2003, NOT INCLUDING Amherst Housing Authority & Other Non-Profit-Owned Units**

*Source: Special Report Generated by Amherst Assessor from Responses to Survey of Property Owners*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total units in structures on parcels with Assessor land use codes 1110 or 1120 [See Figure 4]</th>
<th>2,461</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># studios or efficiencies</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 1-bedroom units</td>
<td>798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 2-bedroom units</td>
<td>1,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 3-bedroom units</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># 4-bedroom units</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although they are based on different data, both Figure 11 and Figure 12 point to the relatively limited number of rental opportunities for families with children or other households containing more than 2 or 3 residents.

It should be noted that the supply of rentals appropriate for families is even more limited than may appear in these figures. If a family is participating in the rental voucher program, and their children are a boy and a girl, they are required to have a separate bedroom for each child. As a consequence, in a 2-bedroom rental the adults sleep in the living room.
Figure 13 summarizes the numbers of units administered by the Amherst Housing Authority. Note that these units are *not included* in Figure 12’s data, but *should be* reflected in Figure 11’s 2000 Census data. This also holds true for the units of family housing provided by the University of Massachusetts listed below.

**Figure 13: Housing Administered by the Amherst Housing Authority, July 2003**

*Source: Amherst Housing Authority*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type &amp; Location</th>
<th># Units</th>
<th>Funding Type</th>
<th>Date of Occupancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elderly/Handicapped</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chestnut Court Apts.</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2 accessible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ann Whalen Apts.</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3 accessible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Elder House *</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson Farm Apts.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Federal</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2 accessible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley St.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>State’</td>
<td>1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenks St.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olympia Drive</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 accessible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield St.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge St/Market Hill</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Handicapped</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John C. Nutting</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5 accessible)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreau House **</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 17 units leased to special needs, residential programs
** 8 units leased to special needs, residential program

In addition to the units listed in the figure above, the Amherst Housing Authority administers rental assistance programs under contract. These programs provide rental vouchers for subsidized rental of 448 units in private ownership.

- Federal Section 8 Rental Voucher Program 413 units
- Mass. Rental Voucher Program/Alternative Housing Voucher Program 35 units

Through the University of Massachusetts, the Commonwealth provides a total of 345 units of family housing: 240 in the North Village Apartments, and 105 in the Lincoln Avenue Apartments.
Each year the UMass Commuter Services & Housing Resource Center conducts a detailed survey of off-campus rental housing rates in Amherst and in surrounding municipalities. In almost all categories of units during the academic years 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2002-2003 Amherst rents were consistently higher than those for comparable units in surrounding towns and Northampton. The survey also documents that Amherst rents in all categories are rising, as summarized below.

**Figure 14: Changes in Average Contract Rents in Amherst, Comparing Academic Years 1999-2000 & 2002-2003**

*Source: University of Massachusetts commuter Services & Housing Resource Center*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Unit</th>
<th>1999-2000</th>
<th>2002-2003</th>
<th>% change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Houses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># bedrooms</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>$1,002.50</td>
<td>$1,085.00</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,112.00</td>
<td>1,451.09</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,398.48</td>
<td>1,594.12</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,512.50</td>
<td>2,125.00</td>
<td>40.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,131.67</td>
<td>2,533.33</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apartments in Houses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>514.00</td>
<td>612.50</td>
<td>19.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio w/heat</td>
<td>535.00</td>
<td>606.25</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>562.37</td>
<td>692.31</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 w/heat</td>
<td>650.97</td>
<td>733.86</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>818.54</td>
<td>887.33</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 w/heat</td>
<td>798.33</td>
<td>1,024.44</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,068.11</td>
<td>1,274.50</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 w/heat</td>
<td>1,125.00</td>
<td>1,350.00</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,446.00</td>
<td>1,510.00</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 w/heat</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,977.50</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apartments in Complexes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studio</td>
<td>517.50</td>
<td>512.50</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>568.47</td>
<td>668.28</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>753.82</td>
<td>873.43</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,138.50</td>
<td>1,294.23</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1,716.25</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rooms in Private Home</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen priv.</td>
<td>334.52</td>
<td>398.08</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No kitchen</td>
<td>350.36</td>
<td>379.17</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The assessor tracks all sales prices of properties in Amherst. The following figure shows these prices in recent years, comparing different types of structures. Note that these data combine all units, whether rental or owner-occupied.

**Figure 15: Recent Sales Prices for Residential Structures in Amherst, Comparing Different Types of Structures & Ownership**

*Source: Report by Town Assessor*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Total sales</th>
<th>Median sales price</th>
<th>Average sales price</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>S/F</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>$182,500</td>
<td>$223,954</td>
<td>April through December only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condo.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>106,474</td>
<td>Entire year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/Fam</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>210,000 [105,000/unit]</td>
<td>106,417</td>
<td>Entire year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>S/F</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>208,750</td>
<td>237,583</td>
<td>14.4% increase in median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condo.</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>116,000</td>
<td>118,785</td>
<td>11.5% increase in median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/Fam</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>235,000 [117,500/unit]</td>
<td>122,622</td>
<td>11.9% increase in median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>S/F</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>209,900</td>
<td>245,036</td>
<td>0.6% increase in median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condo.</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>125,000</td>
<td>130,610</td>
<td>7.8% increase in median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/Fam</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>252,588 [126,294/unit]</td>
<td>131,386</td>
<td>7.5% increase in median</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>S/F</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>246,000</td>
<td>262,604</td>
<td>17.2% increase in median, but note only partial year data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through June 27</td>
<td>Condo.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>110,600</td>
<td>133,313</td>
<td>11.5% decrease in median, but note only partial year data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2/Fam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Trend skewed by one sale @ $650,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These sales data show an active real estate market in Amherst. It is also clear that the market in condominium homes provides an important set of affordable options. The Town’s Director of Planning points out that there are homeowners who are buying into the upper price range in such areas as Amity Place and Upper Orchard. Meanwhile, first-time homebuyers and investors interested in rentals are purchasing condominiums in lower price ranges, for example at Salem Place, Meadow Street, and The Brook.

Two-family homes are also relatively affordable in comparison to single-family homes, although the number of such buildings for sale is small compared to the number of single-family and condominium homes that have been available for purchase since 2000.

Sales prices for all three housing types have risen sharply since 2000. With the exception of a slower rate of increase in 2002, the sales prices for single-family homes are rising significantly more rapidly than the prices for condominiums & two-family units. Single-family sales during the first half of 2003 indicate a surge that will make up for 2002’s slower increase and result in rises comparable to 2001.
E. Households Who Are Financially Stressed By Housing Costs

Mortgage bankers and public agencies concerned with housing use the rule of thumb that a household should pay no more than 30% of monthly income on housing costs. When a household pays more than this for housing costs, it means that they will be underfunded for other basic needs such as food, medicine, clothes, transportation, and education. For a homeowner the costs to be covered within this 30% threshold are mortgage [if any], certain insurance, property taxes, and utilities. For renters the “gross rent” costs are rent and utilities if they are not included in the rent. Here is what the Census reports about homeowners and renters who in 1999 paid more than 30% on housing costs:

Figure 16: Percentages of Homeowner Households’ Monthly Income Spent on Housing, 1999, Comparing Households With and Without a Mortgage, Highlighting Households Financially Stressed Due to Housing Costs

Source: 2000 U. S. Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% HH Income</th>
<th># HH</th>
<th>% of all Homeowner HH</th>
<th>With mortgage</th>
<th>Without mortgage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 10.0%</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.0 – 14.9%</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.0-19.9%</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>643</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.0%-24.9%</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.0-29.9%</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.0-34.9%</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.0-39.9%</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.0-49.9%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% or more</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not computed</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3,540</td>
<td>99.9</td>
<td>2,582</td>
<td>958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median % HH income spent on homeownership</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1999 640 homeowner households [18%] paid more than 30% of their monthly income on housing costs, and 252 [7.1%] of those households spent more than 50%. 129 of those financially stressed households did not have mortgage payments, that is, they were paying more than 30% of their income on utilities, property taxes, and housing-related insurance.

Figure 17 indicates that even more renting households were under financial stress due to housing costs.
In 1999 2,662 [53.3%] of reporting renting households paid more than 30% of their household income on gross rent, and 1,479 [29.6%] of these paid more than 50% of their income on gross rent.

In Amherst’s situation these figures are likely to be exaggerated by the presence of so many households comprised of students. The Census reported almost 1,700 non-family households with the “householder’s” age under 25, so these may account for a good portion of the households paying so high a percentage of income on rental costs. By the same token, however, this same market force of student rentals drives up rents for everyone.

The Amherst Housing Authority reports that as of June 2003 the Authority’s waiting lists include:

- 106 applicants for Elderly/Handicapped units. [This list is open for additional applicants.]
- 166 applicants for family housing. [This list is open for additional applicants.]
- 805 applicants on the Federal Section 8 voucher program. [This list includes applicants from throughout the state, and it is open for additional applications.]

For a person over 60 applying during the summer of 2003 for a unit in Housing Authority properties, the wait is likely to be about a year. A person between the ages of 50 – 59 with a disability would probably be able to move in with a wait of between 1 & 2 years. A person under 50 with a disability would need to expect a wait of up to about 5 years. The waiting period for family housing units varies by number of bedrooms needed, but the wait can be many years because units often are slow to “turn over”. In many cases families stay until the children are grown and leave the home. In certain documented emergency situations a person or family may be moved to the top of the waiting list.

Another indicator of households under financial stress is reported by the Amherst Survival Center’s Food Box Program, where during FY02 an unduplicated total of 376 Amherst households came at least once to receive food. To qualify for this assistance, a household must have a very low annual household income, for example a family of 4 earning $18,000/year.

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6 “Unduplicated” means that each household was only counted once, even though they may have made multiple visits.
7 Source: Nancy Gregg, President of the Survival Center’s Board of Directors.
F. Housing Units Whose Costs Resist Market Forces, and Their Location

Figure 18 reports Amherst’s official Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development “count” of units toward the Commonwealth’s target of 10% affordable units in each city and town in the state. Note that there are complex regulations that determine which units “count”, and that these regulations are under review as of July 2003. Also note that at present, it is the funding source or program under which units are constructed that determines eligibility to “count”, so – for example – all units in a qualifying rental development “count”, but only the guaranteed affordable ones “count” in a homeownership project. Also note that the Canterbury Farms affordable units that Amherst gained through the zoning permit process do not “count” because they did not result from one of the listed programs or funding sources, but rather from a market response to the zoning bylaw’s density and special permit incentives.

A final note is that the Town of Amherst appealed DHCD’s 10/1/2001 Subsidized Housing Inventory and gained 11 more “counted” units: 10 homeownership units from the Locally Initiated Project [“LIP”] of the Pioneer Valley Co-housing Community on Pulpit Hill Road, and 1 homeownership unit constructed by Habitat for Humanity on Pomeroy Lane. This raised Amherst’s “count” to 951 and qualifying percentage to 10.54%.

Amherst accomplished this impressive list of subsidized housing principally through timely action that took advantage of state and federal housing funding when they were available. Some of the larger developments [for example, Rolling Green and Village Park] combined available public funding with the Town’s allowing rental developments by special permit with incentives and standards.
### Figure 18: Amherst Housing Units That Count Toward Massachusetts Chapter 40-B Subsidized Housing Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Number &amp; Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Funding Agency</th>
<th>Agency Program</th>
<th>Total # Units</th>
<th>40B Units</th>
<th>Year End</th>
<th>Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Watson Farm</td>
<td>630 Main St</td>
<td>HUD</td>
<td>PUBH</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Elderly/Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Chestnut Court</td>
<td>East Pleasant St.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>667-3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Elderly/Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Jean Elder House</td>
<td>9 Chestnut St.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>667-3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Elderly/Disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Moreau House</td>
<td>Sunrise Ave.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>689-2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. John Nutting Apts.</td>
<td>32-36 Chestnut Crt.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>689-1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Special Needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Amherst Neighborhood Homes</td>
<td>27 The Hollow</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>HIF</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Clark House</td>
<td>100 Main St</td>
<td>MHFA</td>
<td>Sec. 8</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>Mixed (19 elder)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ephraim Cushman Homestead</td>
<td>99 Bridge St</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>LIHTC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mill Valley Estates</td>
<td>New Hollister &amp; East Hadley Rds</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>SHARP</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>Perpetuity as condition of Comp. Permit</td>
<td>Rental 40% are affordable, 60% market rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Misty Meadows</td>
<td>Stanley St.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>HOP</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Misty Meadows</td>
<td>50-52 Stanley St.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>705-2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Housing Authority unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Outer Commons</td>
<td>Charles Ln</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>HOME FTHB</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. ABODES</td>
<td>34 Pomeroy Ln</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>HDSP</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>Co-op for disabled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Pufton Village IV</td>
<td>1040 North Pleasant St.</td>
<td>HUD</td>
<td>Preservation Vouchers</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Since expiration, only units with pre-paid vouchers count, so # will decrease as those residents move.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Rolling Green Amherst</td>
<td>Belchertown Rd.</td>
<td>MHFA</td>
<td>80/20</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>Approx. 2040</td>
<td>Mixed: 10 elder 20% affordable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Village Park</td>
<td>Village Park Rd.</td>
<td>HUD</td>
<td>236</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Pioneer Valley Co-housing</td>
<td>Pulpit Hill Rd.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>LIP</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Habitat for Humanity</td>
<td>Pomeroy Ln</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Chapter 705-3</td>
<td>Jenks St.</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>705-3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Chapter 705-1</td>
<td>Scattered sites</td>
<td>DHCD</td>
<td>705-1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Perpetuity</td>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The accompanying map [see next page] marks the location of affordable units in Amherst. It shows that affordable units are distributed throughout the community.

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8 Key numbers correlate with locations on the accompanying map [see next page].
[Note: For increased legibility, map is formatted for printing landscape style on 11” x 17” paper]
III. Needs and Priorities

A. Housing Need and Demand

There are daunting documented numbers of Amherst households under stress due to housing costs. The 2000 U. S. Census reports the numbers of Amherst households who in 1999 paid more than 30% of their monthly income on housing. Figure 16, above, shows that the 2000 U. S. Census counted 640 home-owning households stressed by housing costs. These comprised 18% of the homeowner households in Amherst at that time. One hundred twenty-nine of these households did not have mortgage payments, but were still paying more than 30% of their income on insurance, taxes, and utilities. Figure 17 reports that 2,662 [53%] of reporting rental households paid more than 30% of their income on housing, and 1,479 of these paid more than 50%. One could say that these numbers are inflated due to the number of renting student households in Amherst. Trying to account for this, one could assertively discount the rental numbers by assuming student households comprise the approximately 1,700 rental householders aged under 25. This would still leave approximately 1,000 rental households under stress due to the cost of housing.

A second daunting component of need and demand in Amherst is the regional pattern reported in the “Report of the Regional Commission on Affordable Housing Needs for Academic Communities”, OKM & Rolf Goetz, January 1990 [funded by EOCD]. This study found that when new units are constructed in Amherst, the vacancy rate does not reflect the increase in supply. Instead, there is an increase in vacancies in surrounding communities, because Amherst has such an attractive draw that renters and homeowners quickly move in to absorb new units. Since demand is likely to continue to outstrip the market-provided housing supply, there is a pressing need to continue efforts to gain units that are cushioned against the forces of market inflation.

A key element in the continued high demand is the presence of academic institutions in and near Amherst. These institutions heighten the demand directly through influxes of staff, faculty, and students. They also have an indirect effect through adding to Amherst’s attractiveness to others, including retirees. The Town and the academic institutions need to work together to gain more housing options for the academic communities on the institutions’ on-campus and off-campus holdings. This is not a one-sided need. The institutions are beginning to feel the pinch between what they can afford to pay faculty and staff, and the rising cost of housing. Good candidates are deterred by housing “sticker shock”. The University of Massachusetts, already the largest of the institutions, has recently announced the intent to increase the size of its student body. The Town needs to work with the University to meet more of its current and future housing needs on University property.

The need and demand for affordable rentals is particularly acute. The great majority of Amherst’s rental units were constructed by the late 1970s. Since then there have been changes in the Federal tax structure pertaining to investment housing, reduced public monies to support affordable rental construction, and a recent flourish in the market for condominium ownership. As a result, during the 1990s Amherst gained 610 units, but there was an increase of only two rental units. [See Figure 10, above.]

Particularly in short supply are rentals for families needing more than 2 bedrooms. [See Figures 11 & 12.] Family households are in direct competition with student households for the limited supply of family-sized units. It is no surprise that Figure 14’s information on rents shows high average rents for units of all types that contain more than 2 bedrooms.
Based upon its research, the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development provides the median income in Hampshire County for households of varying sizes. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts uses this HUD-generated table of County median incomes as Amherst’s “area-wide median income”. Figure 19 provides the HUD-generated median incomes for Hampshire County and the corresponding income thresholds for low, moderate, and middle income as defined by Massachusetts in mid-2003.

**Figure 19: Current Income Thresholds for Households as Defined by Massachusetts, Based on Hampshire County Median Incomes Defined by U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of persons in family</th>
<th>Median Income Hampshire County[^9]</th>
<th>Low income if at or below this annual income [50% of County’s median income]</th>
<th>Moderate income if at or below this annual income [80% of County’s median income]</th>
<th>Middle income if at or below this annual income [120% of County’s median income]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>$45,167</td>
<td>$22,583</td>
<td>$36,133</td>
<td>67,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>51,667</td>
<td>25,833</td>
<td>41,333</td>
<td>77,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>58,167</td>
<td>29,083</td>
<td>46,533</td>
<td>87,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>64,667</td>
<td>32,333</td>
<td>51,733</td>
<td>97,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>69,833</td>
<td>34,917</td>
<td>55,867</td>
<td>104,750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>75,000</td>
<td>37,500</td>
<td>60,000</td>
<td>112,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>80,167</td>
<td>40,083</td>
<td>64,133</td>
<td>120,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>85,333</td>
<td>42,667</td>
<td>68,267</td>
<td>128,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparing Figure 19 with average rents in Figure 14 shows the problem in a nutshell. A moderate income family of 4 earns no more than $51,733 annually. If they are to pay no more than 30% of their monthly income on housing, they must find a rental or homeownership opportunity that costs no more than $1,293/month. They could barely make the average 3-bedroom rental in an apartment complex, assuming they found a vacancy. The average 3-bedroom house rental or apartment in a house would be beyond their means. Meanwhile, a low income family of 4 earning no more than $32,333 “should” spend no more than $808/month on housing. This would cover only the average rent for studios or 1-bedroom apartments. To maintain its traditional component of working families in the community, Amherst has a pressing need to increase the number of family rentals that are cushioned from the forces of market inflation.

As reported in Section II, Amherst at present is experiencing a two-part condominium market. There are upper end priced units attracting retirees, professional couples, and others whose life-style preferences and income levels support these units. At the same time there is a lower priced component that is offering opportunities for rental investment and starter homeownership. There is both an opportunity and need for continued condominium offerings of affordable rentals and starter homeownership. New or renovated condominiums in multifamily structures can also fit with the Town’s land use planning efforts to encourage clustered village-style development over scattered, landscape-consuming development. Carefully designed new or renovated condominium structures could also be a satisfactory solution to the challenges of the foreseeable market demand to increase density of construction on comparatively large residential lots in established neighborhoods.

[^9]: Source: HUD web page
B. Implications of Amherst’s Current Situation

1. Amherst gained most of its affordable units through assertive use of public programs and funding, but at least in the current financial cycle, there is very limited public financing available to subsidize construction of affordable units.

2. There is limited remaining developable land in Amherst. Rather than building new structures, affordable housing efforts may need to concentrate on making best use of land or buildings already in public hands and existing private buildings.

3. There are many old residential structures in Amherst. Even “new” apartment complexes are 20 to 30 years old now. Upgrading the physical condition of existing residential structures may be an unmet need. A priority might be to bring into compliance with the Building Code windows in structures with fewer than 4 units. Inspectors report a pattern of such smaller, older buildings being less well-maintained than larger complexes with professional management.

4. Older structures [especially ones that the community regards as historic and/or integral to town character] often sit on “older” proportioned parcels, for example deep back yards in the center of town. These are ripe “tear downs” for redevelopment, especially as the parcel leaves the hands of long-time owners. The pressure for this will increase as Amherst approaches build-out of remaining developable land. While this trend will be distressing to the neighbors in established neighborhoods, the community needs to be prepared to guide the process and gain the most benefits possible.

5. The supply and cost of housing in Amherst is greatly affected by the local academic communities, including staff, students, and faculty.

6. If homes are built in Amherst, people will come from surrounding areas to live in this desirable town. Due to Amherst’s being so attractive, market forces will not provide affordable housing choices. The community will need to intervene actively in the development and redevelopment process to achieve the diverse and affordable choices we desire.

7. Rather than concentrating on numbers of units, Amherst’s housing planning may need to concentrate on:

   • the desired ranges of housing types
     [e.g. other than large single family homes on their own parcels]

   • the pattern of development and redevelopment on the landscape
     [e.g. the shape of redevelopment in established neighborhoods]

8. Being just above the 10% threshold, Amherst at present is not vulnerable to “unfriendly” comprehensive permits under Chapter 40B. To stay above the 10% threshold, the community will need to keep achieving affordable units to keep pace with creation of new market rate units.
At their October 21, 2002, meeting the Select Board adopted the following policy, which contains Amherst’s three goals regarding diversity and accessibility of housing:

**Amherst Housing Policy**

Whereas: The Town of Amherst values its diverse cultural community and acknowledges that to sustain it now and into the future requires preserving the existing stock of housing and promoting future development of a broad range of safe, accessible, affordable housing for our community,

To this end Amherst shall:

Actively support initiatives designed to preserve, develop and/or replenish its affordable housing inventory;

Actively promote access to housing for all persons, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, sexual orientation, physical capabilities, marital or social-economic status;

Commit to educating the public on all housing conditions, current housing laws and regulations, and enforce housing laws and protections within the community.

A. Strategies to Pursue the Goals of Amherst’s Housing Policy

The 2003 Housing Plan aims to implement the Town’s Housing Policy through the following strategies.

To preserve, develop, and/or replenish Amherst’s supply of affordable and diverse housing:

1. Examine Town-owned and Amherst Housing Authority-owned properties, and seek opportunities to create additional units.

2. Encourage the University of Massachusetts to create affordable and accessible housing both on and off campus, including a joint effort on the Town’s and University’s adjoining parcels off Olympia Drive. While continuing to plan in a
coordinated fashion for the Town’s and University’s Olympia Drive parcels, move forward on developing the Town’s parcel even if University action is delayed.

3. Establish and fund a Housing Trust Fund that can act quickly and effectively as opportunities arise to further Amherst’s housing goals.

4. Continue to request the Community Preservation Act Committee to commit each year a percentage of funds above the minimum to affordable housing so as to create a flexible, consistent stream of funding that is not tied in advance to specific projects.

5. Formalize a process that includes the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee in discussions relating to Town-owned land and buildings, and in deliberations during the review and permit process relating to development or redevelopment of privately owned land.

6. Gain gifts of affordable and/or diverse units within existing multi-family buildings.

7. Assess surplus and/or vacant town-owned properties to determine how their use or reuse might include housing units that add to the community’s supply of affordable and diverse housing.

8. Seek perpetuity for any affordability restrictions that may have dates of expiration.

9. Continue to pursue regional efforts to provide needed types of diverse, affordable, and accessible housing.

10. Acquire affordable housing restrictions through the development review and permitting process, as part of loan and grant programs, and through other means as possible. For example, require a percentage of affordable units in all proposed projects that are subject to Special Permit. Add this strategy to the subdivision process to the extent possible. Consider zoning strategies that allow construction of needed housing types by right with design standards.

11. Consider an expedited review and permitting process for development proposals that will create affordable housing units.

12. Consider allowing infill construction only if it includes an element of diverse, affordable housing. Also consider allowing such infill on lots that are currently unbuildable, with design standards.
13. Consider an amnesty program for illegal apartments as part of a program to bring them into compliance with safety codes.

To promote access to housing:

1. Continue to upgrade existing affordable housing units for compliance with building and accessibility codes, including continued use of outside grants funds.

2. Establish a Rental Assistance Revolving Loan Fund to assist with renter start-up costs of security deposit, last month’s rent, and finder’s fee.

3. Establish a First Time Home Buyer Revolving Loan Fund that assists with down payment and closing costs, with long-term deed restrictions to keep the homes affordable.

4. Gain more units that are accessible through review and permitting processes, through loan and grant programs, and through other methods.

To educate the public and enforce housing laws and protections:

1. Reach out to owners of rental units in older mixed use, one-family, two-family, and three-family and involve them in rehabilitation programs targeted to bring their buildings up to code. Create flexible & affordable loan programs for mixed use buildings, which often do not qualify for commercial funding through banks.

2. Create a website that is linked to the Town website to promote affordable housing, public information on Town Meeting articles pertaining to housing, position taken by the HP/FHC, Community Preservation Act Proposals, information on the Housing Trust Fund, and information on programs for renters and first-time homebuyers.

3. Carry out a campaign to educate the public about the need for affordable housing: guest speakers, interviews, press releases, speaking engagements, letters to the editor, public service announcements.

4. Reach out to “new housing allies”, such as teachers, local employees and employers, communities of faith, and others who are living the stresses created by Amherst’s housing situation. Engage them in efforts to publicize and deal with the community’s housing needs.
B. Housing Plan Map

The accompanying map illustrates the basic strategies that guide Amherst’s on-going efforts to maintain and increase affordable housing choices in ways that support the community’s desired future:

- Maintain current affordable units, and continue to pursue opportunities for affordable and accessible units on sites throughout the community.

- Encourage and work with local institutions of higher education to provide housing to meet the needs of their respective campus communities, either on- or off-campus.

- Fit a range of accessible and affordable housing choices within Amherst’s evolving village centers.
C. Priority Actions

On October 22, 2003, the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee convened a public forum to consider and confirm the findings and recommendations that had emerged from the 2003 effort to date. Special attention was placed on the recommended strategies, and participants were asked to suggest priorities and timing for putting the strategies into action.

As a group, participants confirmed the following 3 strategies as priorities, because they could accomplish the most toward implementing the updated Plan’s goals.

1. **Encourage & work with the University to build housing on campus and off campus for students, faculty and staff.** This is crucial not only in light of the current shortfall in such housing, but also in light of the University’s announced intentions of attracting 10,000 additional students and increasing major components of the campus, for example research.

2. **Conduct a broad-based, assertive, on-going outreach and information effort to raise the community’s awareness of why housing needs are so important to the community, and what the community may do about addressing the needs.** Information and strategies that were mentioned during the session and could be included in the information effort are:
   
   a. Where diverse, accessible, affordable housing fits in the Town’s priorities
   b. Needs and opportunities to balance Amherst’s housing, economic development, and conservation efforts
   c. Challenge the “political correctness” label with information about the real housing needs of Amherst’s residents, including long-time residents.
   d. Come up with a better name or phrase that sums up what Amherst’s effort is about [possibly SMART: Safe Mixed-income Accessible Reasonably priced Transit-oriented]
   e. Stress the positive assets that come from diverse, affordable, accessible housing
   f. Inform general public how zoning provisions regarding diverse housing could work for them
   g. Counter individual property owners’ fear/reluctance to come before boards for permits

3. **In the end it comes down to money to combat the impact of market prices.** Marshall financial resources directed toward maintaining and creating the range and quality of housing envisioned by the Affordable Housing Plan. Suggested options include:

   a. An Amherst Affordable Housing Trust Fund
   b. The University tapping its ability to bond, and directing the funds to a variety of strategies: construction units, a mortgage subsidy for faculty and staff perhaps with incentives to live where walking or transit replaces commuting by car
   c. Press for endowments of the area’s higher education institutions to invest some of their funds in housing construction/reconstruction, possibly via the Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Investment of pension funds should also be sought.
   d. Institute an Affordable Housing Preservation Restriction program similar to the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program. This would buy equity from owners of homes in exchange for a deed restriction that keeps the home affordable to subsequent buyers. [There are numerous examples of such covenants and deed restrictions, so the legal tools are there.]

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10 NOTE: sequence does not indicate priority among these three top points
**Other actions** that were suggested are:

1. Work for an active partnership with surrounding towns, both those that host academic institutions and those who serve as “bedroom communities” for those who commute to work and class at the colleges and University. Seek to provide needed housing that is linked with ecologically sound transportation.

2. Work with legislators to pass a State statute that enables towns to require a percentage of affordable units in all new housing projects.

3. Inventory and analyze the 345 lots that are categorized by the Assessor as “unbuildable”. Determine whether and how small infill homes might be allowed or encouraged in exchange for affordability deed restrictions.

4. Inventory all the outbuildings in town, for example garages, carriage houses, & barns. Determine whether and how these might be converted to include small affordable units.

5. Consider changing the lot size requirements for 2-family and 3-family homes. Is the required lot size too large? Consider whether smaller lots with site plan standards might create needed choice that would fit in the neighborhood.

6. Keep reaching out to recruit creative, energetic volunteers to work on Amherst’s housing effort.

**D. Implementation**

As of December 2003, the Town of Amherst is working on priority actions toward implementing the 2003 Affordable Housing Plan’s strategies:

For this year:

1. The Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee [HP/FHC] is working to complete a housing restriction agreement with the developer of Palley Village to secure four [4] new affordable homeownership units, under a contract zoning agreement.

2. With Community Preservation Act [CPA] assistance from Town Meeting, the Amherst Housing Authority [AHA] is moving ahead with plans to build two duplexes [4 units] of affordable rental housing on a Tamarack Drive property owned by AHA.

3. Using CPA funding, AHA has purchased and thereby preserved four [4] units of affordable rental housing in the Keet House, an expiring use property in Cushman Village.

4. Town Meeting also approved CPA funding for interim costs associated with AHA development of two [2] accessible affordable rental units donated by The Brook condominium complex.
For future years:

5. The HP/FHC and AHA are working together to establish a Housing Trust Fund [HTF]. The Fall 2003 Special Town Meeting approved CPA funding for a feasibility study to examine the concept in detail and to map out how an HTF would work in Amherst.

6. Town Meeting approved CPA funds to secure property on Main Street and carry out pre-development studies to determine the extent of possible affordable rental housing development [possibly 5 – 10+ units].

7. At HP/FHC’s request, Town Meeting Authorized the Amherst Select Board to seek a Special Act correcting and amending the eminent domain purpose of a property on Olympia Drive. This would allow the Town to pursue development of affordable housing on the property, as originally intended.

8. The HP/FHC continues working discussions with representatives of the University of Massachusetts regarding the potential construction of housing for the University community on University land both on- and off-campus, including Olympia Drive [see #7, above].
Town of Amherst
1999 Overall Economic Development Plan
[Excerpts]
& Action Maps
Created for May 2004
Community Development Plan
Amherst 1999 Overall Economic Development Plan: 
Goals, Objectives, and Implementation Steps

GOAL #1:

To encourage appropriate economic development that contributes positively to Town character and is in keeping with the Town’s comprehensive planning process. To encourage growth within the downtown, village center areas and properties that present unique economic development opportunities.

DISCUSSION:

COMMUNITY VISION

Building a community consensus about what should be preserved and what should be changed in Amherst is an ongoing process. Over the past two years the Town has been formally engaged in a Visioning Process as a way to clarify the collective vision of Amherst for the next twenty years. This has been a dynamic participatory process revealing areas of community consensus and conflict. The Vision Plan has created a useful context within which to frame strategic plans such as this Overall Economic Development Plan.

There is general agreement that economic development should be located in areas that are served by multi-modal transportation alternatives; be attractive and in harmony with the natural environment; respect the environment both in physical siting and operation; and provide jobs for local people in safe, healthy conditions with wages sufficient to support a family.

DOWNTOWN

Over the past five years Amherst has tried to focus more public and private attention on the Downtown through increased maintenance and investment in public improvements. There have been some successes. Private businesses have provided matching funds for the purchase of amenities such as benches, trash barrels, and kiosks. The restoration of the 1914 Sweetser Park, an Olmsted design, is a showcase project of civic pride. The Town/Commercial Relations Committee has acted to improve communication and cooperation between Town government and the business community.

Recent plans for a modest-sized municipal parking facility in the center of Downtown will help relieve a longstanding parking shortage. The vacancy rate for retail and commercial space in Downtown remains well under 5%. The low vacancy rate has helped sustain relatively high rents for commercial space, making economic viability challenging for small, independently owned operations. The seasonal nature of the business cycle in a college town poses another set of constraints.

The presence of a large number of college students, and the discretionary spending patterns they represent, is a local market opportunity. The retail mix, however, is not as diverse as permanent residents require. It forces them to shop outside of Amherst for needed goods and services.

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1 Garage was constructed in 2002
VILLAGE CENTERS

Like many New England communities, Amherst has a number of historic Village Centers. Village Centers offer a land use pattern that encourages compact mixed-use development. This is in keeping with the Town’s long-range vision of open green areas surrounding more densely developed commercial and residential centers. Village Center development discourages sprawl, makes more efficient use of developable land, and promotes the preservation of open space and farmland.

Currently the Atkins Corner Working Group, in conjunction with the Amherst Planning Board, is working on the development of a new zoning overlay district to allow attractive and innovative mixed-use development at Atkins Corner. The two major land owners, Atkins Country Farm Market and Hampshire College, are active participants in this collaborative endeavor.

PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH PARKS

Amherst has three areas zoned for professional research park use. One of these sites is partially developed, and one other presents significant opportunities for new economic development.

The Town has appropriated money to extend sewer service to the Larkspur Drive Professional Research Pak (PRP) site. A recent state grant will provide Amherst with almost $500,000 to realign the road leading to the Larkspur Drive PRP site.

The Amherst Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) has been working for the past two years to encourage development of the privately owned 100+ acre North Amherst PRP site. Currently the EDIC is working with a private developer to see this project through the planning stages.

Amherst’s research park sites, along with a few other important sites, represent the primary areas for locating new economic development activity. Any new development of significant size will need to address ways to decrease automobile dependency and encourage transportation alternatives. There is a high level of interest in the Amherst community in sustainable development; and it is hoped that new economic development initiatives will incorporate the principle of sustainable development into site planning, architecture and the operational practices of commercial facilities.

RETAIL INCUBATOR

Amherst needs to increase its affordable retail space. Monthly rents, now in the $1,500 to $2,000 range for even the smallest stores, make retail space beyond the reach of creative start-up stores. A retail incubator with 10 or more small businesses could provide manageable rents and technical assistance, financing, and shared services. A successful retail incubator has the potential to increase employment, expand the tax base, and provide a venue for small-scale entrepreneurs to establish a business in Amherst.

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2 Atkins Corner Sustainable Development Plan was completed December 2002.
3 Project completed 2002.
GOAL #2:

To increase and diversify business employment opportunities for Amherst area residents.

DISCUSSION:

Diversification of economic opportunity and employment has been a consistent theme in Amherst for some time. Most of the jobs in Amherst are concentrated primarily in one sector – education -- and in a handful of institutions. Career and job choices have been limited for local residents with vocational skills or a high school education. Even those with advanced degrees find the Amherst job market extremely competitive and “tight”. This has kept salaries below other areas with comparable housing costs. It has meant underemployment for some and unwanted relocation for others.

Because of the high cost of living and the lack of available non-academic employment within a reasonable commuting distance, many people leave Amherst in search of viable employment elsewhere. This results in a statistically low unemployment rate for Amherst, but the job market is not as robust as the statistics might suggest.

History shows that it is not prudent for a community to rely too heavily on a single employer or industry. Amherst has seen the negative consequences of its dependence on the fate of the University of Massachusetts. During the early 1990s the State Legislature dramatically reduced appropriations for the University of Massachusetts system, leading to staff and faculty reductions and salary freezes. During an already difficult economic time, this translated locally into an inability to adequately fund local capital expenditures. Amherst is still trying to catch up from the effects of deferred capital spending during this period of economic downturn.

Amherst’s real estate market quickly reflects periods of cutbacks or downsizing at the University with sudden increases in the number of houses put up for sale and depressed real estate values. While there is no guaranteed defense against economic hard times, a wider and more varied base of available employment opportunities will make Amherst more resilient during stagnant or recessive economic times. How to achieve this, given Amherst’s particular limitations to economic development, remains one of our foremost challenges and is addressed more specifically in the objective and strategy sections that follow.
OBJECTIVES & ACTION STEPS IN SUPPORT OF GOALS 1 & 2:

1. Increase and diversify business opportunities.
   a. Expand commercial and retail space.
      - Allow for more business uses in appropriate locations in zoning bylaws.
      - Make development permitting and approvals more responsive to businesses. Continue providing consultation and technical assistance from Town staff. Expedite and streamline permitting process, when feasible, without compromising environmental or health standards.
      - Develop a commercial space and downtown database.

      Action by: Planning Board
      Time frame: Ongoing

   b. Encourage retention of businesses and new business starts.
      - Continue to create a “business friendly” climate.
      - Provide technical assistance and seek funding for micro-enterprise loans to small business start-ups not traditionally eligible for government programs or private financing because of size. These services should affirmatively include under-represented populations in the business community.
      - Encourage locally owned and managed businesses. Support consultant and home based businesses.
      - Include Amherst in regional and statewide promotional information as an attractive area to locate a business.
      - Support an Economic Development Coordinator to carry out promotion and recruitment activities.

      Action by: Chamber of Commerce as lead, with support from Town government and community development resources sought as needed and available.
      Time frame: Short-term and ongoing. Immediate measures to be taken on identifying more resources for technical assistance and micro-enterprise loans.

2. Carefully assess larger-scale development projects. Make sure the few available sites are used in a way that best meets the Town’s economic development goals.
   - Encourage development of parcels currently zoned for Professional Research Park development.

      Action by: Economic Development & Industrial Corporation (EDIC)
      Time frame: Short-term

      - Continue to re-examine and improve Zoning Bylaws to ensure a high quality of site development.
      - Provide base data to assist developers in producing accurate and environmentally responsive site plans. Maximize use of GIS technology to provide site-related information.
Develop guidelines for sustainable development; amend building and land use regulations as needed to encourage “green” building and sustainable land use practices.

Action by: Planning Board and Planning Department
Time frame: Short-term to have GIS fully operational within two years, and to produce sustainable development guidelines for developers. Zoning revisions are ongoing as improvements are identified.

3. Support Village Center mixed-use and compact development.

- Continue to revise Zoning Bylaw to encourage well-planned mixed-use projects in Village Center areas.
- Encourage transportation alternatives at Village Center locations.

Action by: Planning Board with support from the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee.
Time frame: Short-term

4. Strengthen the local farm economy.

- Support development and promotion of agri-tourism.
- Support market development for local farm products, including initiatives to have the University and the Colleges commit to purchase local products.
- Provide guidance to encourage responsible and sustainable farming practices and value-added processing.
- Provide assistance to farmers about programs and resources available to them.
- Monitor effectiveness of Farmland Protection overlay zoning district, and make revisions as needed.

Action by: Farm Committee
Time frame: Short-term and ongoing

5. Increase the number of visitors and shoppers to Town.

- Encourage community events and activities that draw people to the Downtown.
- Preserve and enhance Amherst’s historic, cultural, recreational resources.

Action by: Chamber of Commerce, with support from Historic Commission, Leisure Services and Supplemental Education, Arts Council, and others
Time frame: Ongoing

6. Educate residents about the relationship between Amherst as a multi-cultural, income-diverse community and the provision of adequate employment opportunities and affordable housing options.
Action by: Overall Economic Development Planning Committee, with support from the Economic Development & Industrial Corporation and the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee.

Time frame: Short-term.

GOAL #3:

To strengthen the Downtown as a retail, commercial, and social center of the community.

DISCUSSION:

Downtown Amherst has been referred to as the “heart” of the Town. It is an important center of commercial and social activity. The condition of the Downtown is often a mirror of the overall condition of the community. Keeping Downtown vibrant, successful and well-maintained has been a focus of many of Amherst’s volunteer citizen boards and committees.

Some of the strengths of the Downtown are its compact development within a few blocks, with its “walkable” scale, as well as the aesthetically pleasing mix of historic buildings that define an interesting street edge. Municipal offices and other community services have been retained in the Downtown, and residents live in the immediate area and surrounding mixed-use neighborhoods. There is a lively level of human activity throughout the Downtown, while maintaining the cherished ambiance of a “picturesque college town”.

The retail mix in Downtown has declined in the past decade. The closing or relocation of a hardware store, a grocery store, a shoe store, and several retail stores have made Downtown less relevant to shoppers. Meanwhile, dining and coffee establishments have multiplied.

Over the past two years the community has been extensively involved in planning for the construction of a municipal parking facility of modest size to serve the downtown. It is generally agreed that adequate parking is a necessary component of a healthy Downtown. The lack of easily available parking is both a perceived and an actual deterrent to use of the Downtown.

The Amherst Cinema Committee has been successful in attracting state grant funds to conduct a feasibility study on the historic Amherst Cinema Building. While still functioning as a local movie house, it is badly in need of structural and cosmetic improvements, and it is clearly on its “last legs”. This property is in a key location and represents a valuable cultural resource for the community. There is great potential to redevelop this property to serve a range of community arts, performance, and recreational needs.4

Recent local appropriations for Downtown sidewalk reconstruction will increase handicapped accessibility and improve the overall design of the Downtown pedestrian environment. A Design Manual for Downtown sidewalk and streetscape guidelines is being developed. A multi-phase

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4 As of spring 2004 the project for a Cinema and Performing Arts Facility is about to enter a new planning and implementation phase.
pedestrian sign system is partially completed. Phased public improvements have been gradually strengthening the public infrastructure of the Downtown.\(^5\)

Additionally, major Downtown intersections are in the final design states for reconstruction and minor realignment. Bicycle lanes have been added where feasible through the Downtown with more bicycle accommodations in the planning stages.

Downtown retail and commercial enterprises are well represented. Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce members work cooperatively on a number of promotional and community events. The Taste of Amherst and the Teddy Bear Rally are two examples. Amherst’s business sector supports an assortment of civic activities from youth sports sponsorship to holiday lights. Downtown business owners are currently considering the formation of a Business Improvement District (B.I.D.). Many Amherst business owners are active participants in the fabric of community life in Amherst.

**GOAL #4:**

To broaden and diversify the real estate tax base and reduce dependence on residential property taxes.

**DISCUSSION:**

All communities aspire to increase their financial resources. There are always unmet needs, facilities that need to be built or renovated, teachers to be hired, or other aspects of the community’s quality of life that need improvement. This is a universal goal derived from the legitimate need to expand resources in response to community growth.

The most recent cycle of financial “good years” and “bad years” in Amherst has been a wake-up call. The cycles of limited resources have served to demonstrate clearly the link between sound economic development activity and the community’s ability to pay for the services and programs it values. A commitment to providing quality public education is a commonly held value. The ability to achieve this goal is related to the Town’s ability to maintain an adequate tax revenue base. Other programs and services, in addition to education, are also held in high esteem and have been locally funded year after year. Some of these include: farm land preservation, youth recreation, land purchases for conservation and open space, human services, and community planning.

While acknowledging Amherst’s need to expand its tax base, appropriate choices must be made in the way this is done. New and expanded commercial activity must be well designed and located in appropriate areas; businesses must adhere to strict environmental standards, work conditions must be safe and healthy, and pay adequate wages; and economic activities must complement the aesthetics and quality of life Amherst’s residents cherish. The discretionary judgments required to evaluate whether these standards are being met is often an area of public controversy and debate.

Amherst has endorsed the adoption of three Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs) under a state program to allow local communities to offer real estate tax incentives to retain businesses or to attract business

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\(^5\) As of spring 2004 the Town has constructed the first 2 phases of the Sidewalk Plan.
development. The three EOAs are located in Atkins Corner, the East Amherst Research Park, and the North Amherst Research Park.

The quality of life in Amherst remains its most valued asset. The preservation of Amherst’s quality of life is the lens through which all new economic development activity will be carefully scrutinized. The integration of sustainable development practices with sustained efforts to support responsible economic growth and development will hold the greatest hope for Amherst residents.

OBJECTIVES & ACTION STEPS IN SUPPORT OF GOALS 3 & 4:

1. **Maintain a strong, proactive Chamber of Commerce.**
   
   Action by: Chamber of Commerce, with support from the Town/Commercial Relations Committee
   
   Time frame: Ongoing

2. **Continue participation in marketing and promotion of regional tourism activities.**
   
   Action by: Chamber of Commerce
   
   Time frame: Ongoing

3. **Support improvement to Downtown transportation, streetscapes and open spaces.**
   
   • Support improvements and designs that strengthen Amherst as a “walkable”, pedestrian-friendly Downtown.
   
   Action by: Planning Board
   
   Time frame: Short-term

4. **Strengthen Downtown business activities.**
   
   • Complete construction of municipal parking garage.
   
   Action by: Select Board and Parking Garage Building Committee
   
   Time frame: Short-term *[Garage construction was begun in 2000 and is completed.]*

   • Implement Downtown parking plan including permit parking system.
   
   Action by: Select Board and Parking Commission
   
   Time frame: Short-term *[Permit system is in place.]*

   • Encourage in-fill development and expanded use of second and third floor space through zoning and financial incentives.
   
   Action by: Planning Board; Chamber of Commerce
   
   Time frame: On-going
• Expand existing cultural and historic tourism opportunities, including historic preservation and adaptive re-use.

  Action by: Historic Commission, Public Arts Commission, and Public Arts Council
  Time frame: Ongoing

• Restore and expand use of Amherst Cinema for multi-purpose community performance and arts space.

  Action by: Amherst Cinema Committee
  Time frame: Short-term [Feasibility Study was completed.] Long term: redevelopment of theater into community facility

• Diversify the types of goods and services available through incentives, local promotional activities, and business recruitment.

  Action by: Chamber of Commerce with municipal support
  Time frame: Ongoing

5. Complete the development of the Boltwood Walk Urban Renewal Area.

  Action by: Amherst Redevelopment Authority
  Time frame: [Garage construction was begun in 2000 and is completed.]

6. Educate Amherst residents about the benefits of economic development. Increase understanding of the correlation between economic activity, public revenues, and municipal services and quality of life.

  Action by: Overall Economic Development Planning Committee has lead role in coordinating other Town Boards and Committees involved in economic development activities.
  Time frame: Short-term and ongoing

7. Increase activities to capture benefits of the University of Massachusetts as a regional economic engine. Promote strong Town-Gown relationships for mutual benefit and increased economic activity.

  Action by: Town Manager and Select Board
  Time frame: Ongoing.
[Note: For increased legibility, map is formatted for printing landscape style on 11” x 17” paper]
[Note: For increased legibility, maps are formatted for printing landscape style on 11” x 17” paper]
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**Appendix A**  
*Drawings*

- Dwg. No. 1: Existing Conditions Plan | CS-12 |
- Dwg. No. 2: Improvement Scenario #1: Off-Roadway Modifications Only | CS-12 |
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**Appendix B**  
*University Drive/Amity Street Intersection Turning Movement Diagrams*
Section One
Introduction

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the transportation system performance of the University Drive corridor, from State Route 9 to Amity Street. This 2,500-foot long section of University Drive is owned, maintained and operated by the Town of Amherst. The study area is a major employment center and regional shopping destination, so providing access to the adjacent land uses is one of University Drive’s primary functions. However, as the main north-south route connecting State Route 9 to the University of Massachusetts campus, University Drive must accommodate a considerable amount of through traffic as well.

The first part of the study evaluates the corridor from an access management standpoint. Existing access-related safety and congestion issues have been identified. Possible strategies and solutions (i.e., “improvement scenarios”) to address these issues have been identified and developed to a conceptual level. An evaluation matrix has been prepared which compares these improvement scenarios to the existing conditions, and to each other.

The second part of this study takes a look at the performance of the University Drive / Amity Street intersection, where excessive delay and queues are common. This signalized intersection was analyzed based on peak hour intersection turning movement counts, and possible intersection geometry improvements were identified. The intersection was then analyzed again based on the identified improvements to see if the overall delay at this key intersection could be reduced.
Section Two
Existing Conditions

2.1 Roadway Cross Section

Within the study area, University Drive consists of two 11-foot travel lanes and two 1-foot shoulders. Curbing and numerous street trees are present along both sides. There is a 12-foot wide paved, multi-use path on the east side of University Drive, and a 5-foot wide concrete sidewalk on the west side. Right-of-way width varies, with the average width being about 95 feet (apparently to accommodate previous plans for a four-lane facility). The existing two-lane roadway is located in the western half of the right-of-way corridor.

One of the unique features of the University Drive corridor is the two-way service road (also called a “frontage road”) that runs along the west side, for almost the entire length of the study area. The width of the service road varies from 20 feet to 26 feet and the “outer separation” (i.e., the width of the area between the University Drive traveled way and the service road) is about 18 feet. This service road is outside of the University Drive right-of-way.

Refer to Drawing No. 1 in Appendix A for a general plan of the area.

2.2 Access to Abutting Properties

2.2.1 East Side Properties

There are four curb cuts along the east side of University Drive. The southernmost driveway, which services professional offices, is only about 225 feet north of the State Route 9 / University Drive intersection. The other three driveways, which service (1) an extended health care facility and an assisted living facility, (2) two office buildings, and (3) a shopping center, are well-designed and evenly spaced.

2.2.2 West Side Properties

A wide variety of land uses exist along the west side of University Drive. Proceeding from south to north, there is a restaurant, a large supermarket, a pharmacy with a drive-through window, a post office, an office building, a small shopping plaza, a small building which houses offices and a tavern, and another tavern at the corner of University Drive and Amity Street (Rafters). Another parcel is partially developed (a parking lot has been constructed), and additional development is occurring on the parcel that contains Rafters.

Access to these properties is provided via a two-way service road, which starts at the supermarket parking lot and runs north to the Rafters parking lot. Access to the service road is provided at three locations along University Drive: (1) in front of the supermarket, (2) immediately north of the post office, and (3) immediately north of the small shopping plaza. Presently, the service road is barricaded off between the two taverns.
2.3 Problem Areas

Three significant problem areas were identified during a field reconnaissance on October 7, 2003. All are located where there are connections between University Drive and the service road. The geometry of these “intersections” and the resulting number of conflict points create confusing, unsafe situations, the results of which, during peak hours, include adverse effects upon traffic flows along University Drive. Detailed descriptions of these problem areas are provided in the following sections.

The southernmost driveway on the west side of University Drive is also problematic as it is located very close to the “functional area” of the State Route 9 / University Drive intersection. However, addressing this deficiency was not considered a high priority due to the driveway’s isolated location and low traffic volumes.

2.3.1 Problem Area #1: University Drive / Service Road connection in front of the Supermarket

This is the most significant access-related problem area within the study area due to the high volume of traffic that passes through this “intersection.” The confusion created at this location frequently affects the flow of traffic along University Drive. The following factors contribute to the poor performance of this intersection:

- This problem area actually consists of several overlapping intersections (i.e., the three-way intersection between University Drive and the service road connection, the four-way intersection between the service road and the University Drive connection / supermarket driveway, and several proximate “T” intersections between the service road and the supermarket parking aisles), creating a complex pattern of conflict points.
- Due to the minimal outer separation between University Drive and the service road at this location - about 18 feet - a queue of only one vehicle waiting to turn onto University Drive adversely affects the other intersections described above.
- The geometry of the intersection formed by University Drive, the service road, and the connection between the two, makes maneuvering through this “H” shaped intersection difficult for automobiles, and even more difficult for larger vehicles.

2.3.2 Problem Area #2: University Drive / Service Road connection immediately north of the Post Office

The performance-reducing characteristics of this intersection are very similar to those present at Problem Area #1; these include:

- This problem area actually consists of three overlapping intersections (i.e., the three-way intersection between University Drive and the service road connection, the four-way intersection between the service road and the University Drive connection / post office driveway, and the three-way intersection between the service road and an office building driveway), creating a complex pattern of conflict points.
Due to the minimal outer separation between University Drive and the service road at this location - about 18 feet - a queue of only one vehicle waiting to turn onto University Drive adversely affects the other intersections described above.

The geometry of the intersection formed by University Drive, the service road, and the connection between the two, makes maneuvering through this “H” shaped intersection difficult for automobiles, and even more difficult for larger vehicles.

2.3.3 Problem Area #3: University Drive / Service Road connection in front of the Small Shopping Plaza

The volume of traffic that passes through this “intersection” is less than what can be found at Problem Areas #1 and #2; however, it is still significant enough to warrant consideration for improvements to this area. The following factors contribute to the poor performance of this intersection:

- This problem area actually consists of two overlapping intersections (i.e., the three-way intersection between University Drive and the service road connection, and the four-way intersection between the service road and the University Drive connection / shopping plaza driveway), creating a complex pattern of conflict points.
- Because of the awkward shape and misalignment of these intersecting roadways/driveways, 90-degree parking actually exists within the limits of the intersection, so backing vehicles create additional conflicts.
- The extensive width of the University Drive / service road connection - about 60 feet - contributes to drivers’ confusion in this area.
- Due to the minimal outer separation between University Drive and the service road at this location - about 18 feet - a queue of only one vehicle waiting to turn onto University Drive adversely affects the other intersection described above.
- The geometry of the intersection formed by University Drive, the service road, and the connection between the two, makes maneuvering through this “H” shaped intersection difficult for automobiles, and even more difficult for larger vehicles.
Section Three
Improvement Scenarios

Three possible improvement scenarios were identified, developed to a conceptual level, and evaluated. The following paragraphs provide brief descriptions of these improvement scenarios, and Drawings Nos. 2, 3 and 4 in Appendix A show the access modifications being proposed under each scenario. Section 3.4 contains an evaluation matrix, which compares the three improvement scenarios to the existing conditions, and to each other.

3.1 Improvement Scenario #1:
Off-Roadway Modifications Only

Under this scenario, no changes would be made to University Drive; instead, extensive off-roadway access modifications would be made. These are shown on Drawing No. 2 in Appendix A and include:

- Removal of the service road, except in the following locations: (1) between the supermarket and the post office, and (2) between the office building and its secondary parking lot.
- Extensive driveway and internal circulation modifications within the supermarket parking lot.
- A reconfigured driveway, with additional storage length and improved channelization, servicing the post office and the adjacent office building. A new curb cut on University Drive, allowing right-turn egress only and designed to accommodate tractor trailers, would also be constructed at the post office.
- A reconfigured driveway, with additional storage length and improved channelization, servicing the small shopping plaza and the adjacent office / tavern building.
- Two new curb cuts on University Drive to provide access to areas of future development.

The estimated construction cost of the actions proposed under this improvement scenario is $400,000. This amount does not include right-of-way or utility relocation costs.

3.2 Improvement Scenario #2:
Elimination of the Service Road and Construction of a Continuous Two-Way Left Turn Lane on University Drive

This scenario involves the elimination of the service road and the widening of University Drive, with the resulting cross section including two 11-foot travel lanes, two 1-foot shoulders, and a 12-foot wide continuous two-way left turn lane. All widening would occur on the west side, to avoid the wetlands present along the east side of the roadway, as well as the newly constructed multi-use path. Proposed access modifications are shown on Drawing No. 3 in Appendix A, and include:

- Extensive driveway and internal circulation modifications within the supermarket parking lot.
- A reconfigured driveway, with additional storage length and improved channelization, servicing the post office and the adjacent office building. A new curb cut on University Drive, allowing right-turn egress only and designed to accommodate tractor trailers, would also be constructed at the post office.
• A new curb cut on University Drive for the office building’s secondary parking lot.
• Replacement of the existing shared access driveway between the small shopping plaza and the office / tavern building with two separate driveways. (Space limitations preclude the continuation of the shared access arrangement.)
• Two new curb cuts on University Drive to provide access to areas of future development.

The estimated construction cost of the actions proposed under this improvement scenario is $1,020,000. This amount does not include right-of-way or utility relocation costs.

General advantages and disadvantages associated with the construction of a continuous two-way left turn lane are provided below:

**Advantages**
- Provides a high level of access for adjacent businesses.
- Enhances operational flexibility for emergency vehicles.

**Disadvantages**
- Not as safe as a raised median; increases the number of conflicting traffic movements.
- Does not provide refuge for pedestrians crossing University Drive
- Has more pavement and less greenspace.

### 3.3 Improvement Scenario #3:
**Elimination of the Service Road and Conversion of University Drive to a Two-Lane Boulevard with Raised Median**

This scenario involves the elimination of the service road and the widening of University Drive, including the construction of a raised median. In each direction, there would be a 12-foot wide travel lane flanked by 4-foot and 2-foot shoulders on the right and left sides, respectively. (These widths are necessary to provide for passage of a stalled vehicle.) The raised median would be 16 feet wide, narrowing to 6 feet wide in areas with left turn lanes. The median would disallow left-turn ingress and egress at several locations, reducing access to the affected properties. All roadway widening would occur on the west side, to avoid the wetlands present along the east side of the roadway, as well as the newly constructed multi-use path. Proposed access modifications are shown on **Drawing No. 4 in Appendix A**, and include:

- Extensive driveway and internal circulation modifications within the supermarket parking lot.
- A reconfigured driveway, with additional storage length and improved channelization, servicing the post office and the adjacent office building. A new curb cut on University Drive, allowing right-turn egress only and designed to accommodate tractor trailers, would also be constructed at the post office.
- A new curb cut on University Drive for the office building’s secondary parking lot.
- Replacement of the existing shared access driveway between the small shopping plaza and the office / tavern building with two separate driveways. (Space limitations preclude the continuation of the shared access arrangement.)
- Two new curb cuts on University Drive to provide access to areas of future development.
The estimated construction cost of the actions proposed under this improvement scenario is $1,320,000. This amount does not include right-of-way or utility relocation costs.

General advantages and disadvantages associated with the construction of a raised median are provided below:

**Advantages**
- The raised median will improve safety and mobility by directing left turns to designated turn lanes.
- The boulevard design is aesthetically pleasing and would aid traffic calming.
- The median could serve as a pedestrian refuge for people crossing University Drive.

**Disadvantages**
- The raised median will reduce access to adjacent businesses.
- The design encourages mobility rather than access. Additional through traffic may be attracted to the corridor as a result.
- The raised median reduces the operational flexibility for emergency vehicles.
- Additional maintenance would be required if landscaping is provided in the median.
3.4 Evaluation Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement Scenario</th>
<th>Improvement Scenario</th>
<th>Improvement Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1 Off-Roadway Improvements Only</td>
<td>#2 Elimination of Service Road and Construction of a Continuous Two-Way Left Turn Lane</td>
<td>#3 Elimination of Service Road and Conversion of University Drive to a Two-Lane Boulevard</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Capital cost**
- $400,000
- $1,020,000
- $1,320,000

**Issues Affecting Abutting Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of parcels affected</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net number of parking spaces lost</td>
<td>58 (50 spaces at supermarket, 8 spaces at office building)</td>
<td>50 (at supermarket)</td>
<td>60 (50 spaces at supermarket, 10 spaces at office/tavern bldg)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to abutting properties</td>
<td>Slight improvement (some properties would now have direct access from University Drive)</td>
<td>Slight improvement (some properties would now have direct access from University Drive)</td>
<td>Slightly worse (left turn ingress and egress would be disallowed at some properties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency access</td>
<td>Slight improvement (some properties would now have direct access from University Drive)</td>
<td>Slight improvement (some properties would now have direct access from University Drive)</td>
<td>Slightly worse (left turn ingress and egress would be disallowed at some properties)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorist safety (in driveways and parking lots)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (better channelization, number of conflict points reduced)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (better channelization, number of conflict points reduced)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (better channelization, number of conflict points reduced)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Safety and Congestion Issues along University Drive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congestion reduction along University Drive</td>
<td>Slight improvement (due to driveway improvements; offset somewhat due to three additional curb cuts)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (due to separation of turning vehicles and through traffic, and driveway improvements; offset somewhat due to three additional curb cuts)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (due to separation of turning vehicles and through traffic, and driveway improvements; offset somewhat due to three additional curb cuts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorist safety (along University Drive)</td>
<td>Slight improvement (due to driveway improvements)</td>
<td>Slight improvement (due to separation of turning vehicles and through traffic, and driveway improvements. Not as safe as #3 because of the increased number of conflicting traffic movements in the two-way left turn lane.)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (due to separation of turning vehicles and through traffic, and driveway improvements. Planted median would also “calm” traffic.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrian safety</td>
<td>Slightly worse (due to add’l driveway crossings.)</td>
<td>Significantly worse (due to add’l driveway crossings and additional pavement/ increased crossing width)</td>
<td>Slightly worse (due to add’l driveway crossings. Safer than #2 because raised island provides refuge for pedestrians crossing University Drive.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Other Issues**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>#1</th>
<th>#2</th>
<th>#3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Negligible difference</td>
<td>Slightly worse (additional pavement area)</td>
<td>Significant improvement (planted median would enhance appearance of corridor and aid traffic calming.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance Requirements</td>
<td>Negligible difference</td>
<td>Slight increase (additional pavement area)</td>
<td>Significant increase (planted median would require frequent maintenance)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section Four
University Drive / Amity Street Intersection Analysis

The Town of Amherst has expressed that delay and queue lengths may be excessive at this intersection. This analysis models the existing condition based on the counts collected, and attempts to identify what geometric or operational elements are causing these problems, as well as identify other problems not readily apparent. Possible improvements to the intersection were also modeled and measures of effectiveness were compared. Performance modeling was done using computer software, HCS2000, release 4.1d.

4.1 Background and Assumptions

This four-way intersection is currently signalized and has one-lane approaches on all legs. Lanes are 11 feet wide, with one foot shoulders. There is a bike path / pedestrian crossing on the east approach and pedestrian crossings on the north and south approaches. The signal phasing has concurrent pedestrian phases on three legs and an “advance green” on the east approach. The signal is actuated by the presence of vehicles on all approaches, but is not coordinated with other nearby signals. Actual signal cycle length, timing, or phasing is unknown, except for the parameters presented above, but is assumed to be near optimal given existing constraints.

Traffic turning movement volumes and pedestrian counts were collected in the peak morning and afternoon hours on December 2, 2003 by the Town of Amherst.

The traffic volumes were analyzed by Dufresne-Henry for the peak hour and adjusted for season. A growth factor of 1% per year was used to project these volumes to 2004 and 2014, based on historical growth on Amity Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

4.2 Analysis Results

A review of the collected volumes show that afternoon traffic exceeded morning traffic for each turning movement, in nearly all cases. Therefore, the analysis focused on the PM peak hour, as a worst case. Turning movement diagrams can be found in Appendix B.

The model results for the existing condition show acceptable average delay and corresponding levels of service (LOS). However, these traffic volumes are approaching certain limits of capacity, and may be over capacity at certain peak times of the season or year. Specifically, the volume/capacity ratios are near, or over 0.85, the level which indicates the approach is nearing saturation. See Table 1 on the following page.

As an alternative to the existing geometry, a dedicated left turn lane on the east approach was modeled, with the performance results shown in Table 2. Signal phasing for this model is similar to existing, however a new signal head for this additional lane would be required.
Table 1:
Intersection Performance – 2004 PM Peak Hour
Existing Geometry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersection Approach</th>
<th>Average Delay (seconds)</th>
<th>LOS</th>
<th>Average Queue (cars)</th>
<th>Volume/Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>36.3</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td><strong>28.9</strong></td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2:
Intersection Performance – 2004 PM Peak Hour
Add a Dedicated Left Turn Lane on the East Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersection Approach</th>
<th>Average Delay (seconds)</th>
<th>LOS</th>
<th>Average Queue (cars)</th>
<th>Volume/Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-thru/right</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-left</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>0.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>0.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td><strong>18.2</strong></td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These results show a significant reduction in delay, volume/capacity, as well as queue lengths on all approaches. This improvement is due to the shorter time required to clear the traffic on the east approach with an additional lane, and eliminating the inefficiency of lefts and throughs sharing a lane in the existing “advance green” situation. This additional time is then used by the other approaches, thus the entire intersection benefits.

A second alternative was developed that attempts to address the high number of right turns from the south approach. The performance results for this alternative showed little if any overall benefit, but a modest improvement in delay and queues on the south approach. Refer to Table 3 on the next page. The key element which explains this is that the volume on the north approach is higher (and thus more critical). Since the south approach shares this phase of the signal, no overall benefit is achieved.

To ensure that the alternative geometry (adding a dedicated left turn lane on the east approach) will perform well in the future, the projected 2014 PM traffic volumes were entered in the analysis with only minor reductions in performance and no change in level of service.
Table 3:
Intersection Performance – 2004 PM Peak Hour
Add a Dedicated Left Turn Lane on the East Approach and a Right Turn Lane on the South Approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intersection Approach</th>
<th>Average Delay (seconds)</th>
<th>LOS</th>
<th>Average Queue (cars)</th>
<th>Volume/Capacity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-thru/right</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East-left</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-thru/left</td>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>0.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-right</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.14</td>
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<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3 Recommendation

Given the analysis results detailed above, it appears that adding a dedicated left turn lane on the east approach, with the appropriate signal modifications, would be a cost effective solution to address the excessive delays and queue lengths that are experienced at this intersection. This solution would allow the signalized intersection to perform adequately in the foreseeable future. Queuing capacity for this dedicated lane should be six to eight cars (150-200 ft.). Amity Street would have to be widened east of the intersection to accommodate this lane, the approach taper, and through-lane shift. Some widening would also have to take place on the west approach to accommodate an appropriate lane shift to line up the existing lanes with the modified east approach configuration.
Drawing No. 3: Improvement Scenario #2: Elimination of Service Road & Construction of a Continuous Two-Way Left Turn Lane
Drawing No. 4: Improvement Scenario #3: Elimination of Service Road & Conversion of University Drive to a Two-Lane Boulevard
RAW COUNTS

PM PEAK HOUR 4:30-5:30

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U DRIVE--From North</th>
<th>Peds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thru</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Left</td>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Peds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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</table>

Rocky Hill Rd--From West
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Right</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
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<td>233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thru</td>
<td>1675</td>
<td>Thru</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>AMITY--From East</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>199</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>63</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

U DRIVE--From South
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Thru</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peds</td>
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<td>Thru</td>
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ADJUSTMENTS

Seasonal adjustment factor

0.97

2003 PM PEAK HOUR 4:30-5:30

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<td>Thru</td>
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<td>Left</td>
<td>36</td>
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<table>
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</table>

Rocky Hill Rd--From West
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Left</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Right</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thru</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>AMITY--From East</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>226</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>61</td>
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U DRIVE--From South
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<thead>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Thru</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>
Growth Rate: 1%

2004 PM PEAK HOUR 4:30-5:30

U DRIVE--From North

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Thru</th>
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<th>Peds</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Peds 1

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Thru</th>
<th>Right</th>
<th>Peds</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>16</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL 1641

Rocky Hill Rd

--From West
Right 62

63 265 120

Peds Left Thru Right

1

U DRIVE--From South

Growth Rate: 10%

2014 PM PEAK HOUR 4:30-5:30

U DRIVE--From North

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Right</th>
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<th>Left</th>
<th>Peds</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
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Right 66

68 284 129

Peds Left Thru Right

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U DRIVE--From South

AMITY--From East

Thru 228

195

AMITY--From East

Thru 244

209
Town of Amherst
2003 Draft Open Space Plan
[Excerpts]

& Maps
Created for May 2004
Community Development Plan
Summary of the Open Space Plan

Philosophy of Amherst Open Space, Farmland, and Recreation Planning, Protection, and Management

Protected land is essential to Amherst’s appearance, economy, and well-being. Conservation land helps maintain the Town’s rural atmosphere, provides adequate land area for traditional and modern forms of outdoor recreation, and protects important wildlife habitat for both game and non-game species. Protected farmland provides a permanent base on which present and future farm businesses depend, and helps businesses that support farming maintain a significant presence in Amherst and adjacent towns.

Amherst is tremendously diverse in its flora, landscapes, wildlife, and land use. Continued protection of a full range of types of open space and farmland will help maintain that diversity in the face of mounting development pressures.

Traditional resource-based economic activities such as agriculture and forestry, and traditional forms of recreation such as fishing and hunting continue to play major roles in Amherst. The Conservation Commission and Conservation Department need to continue to help keep those traditions and their associated cultural practices viable by working closely with farmers and farmland owners, encouraging the farm economy, carrying out ecologically sound forest and open land wildlife habitat management on Town watershed lands in four towns, and renting out fields for farm production and community gardening.

Open Space should be not just the space left over after development but space actively planned to contribute to the character and quality of the Town’s total environment, and to ensure the continued existence of a “critical mass” of land area needed to sustain traditional resource-based economic activities and recreation.

Setting aside conservation land and farmland in outlying areas of Town is one aspect of Amherst’s long-established planning goal: to direct new growth toward existing developed centers. This preserves Amherst’s historic pattern of development (village centers separated by open land) and reduces the need for continual expansion of expensive systems of public utilities and services.

Conservation land serves as an important amenity for those who do not have sufficient private land of their own on which to unwind and directly experience the outdoors. The provision of conservation land close to home can also keep residents’ money in the local economy – money that might otherwise be spent traveling out of town or out of state to parks, open space, or other distant recreational destinations.

The rate of open space protection should roughly parallel the rate of development in town, so that the two can complement each other. The protection of conservation land and farmland should go hand-in-hand with attention to other Town needs such as the provision of low- and moderate-cost housing; the establishment of adequate playground facilities in existing or growing developed areas, and active recreation sites for sports like soccer, golf, baseball, and swimming; and the protection and enhancement of historical sites and landscapes.
Summary of 2004 – 2009 Five-Year Open Space Goals:
A Blueprint for the Town’s 250th Anniversary in 2009

[The following goals guide Amherst’s on-going Open Space-related efforts.]

1. Protect and encourage productive farms and agricultural business on those farms through:
   • The completion of protected blocks of farmland in Amherst by the selective purchase of Agricultural Preservation Restrictions by the Commonwealth and the Town; and
   • The active support of farming through the work of the Farm Committee in refining town Farmland Conservancy zoning, in helping to eliminate or modify institutional and regulatory obstacles to farming, in educating the public about the role of farming in town, and in helping provide a forum among farm owners and others for discussion and resolution of certain local farm issues.

2. Complete partially protected blocks of open space by acquiring Conservation Restrictions or outright title to strategically located parcels.

3. Lessen the impact of new development by working with applicants and the Planning Board to secure open space, restrictions, and easements to provide scenic protection, future public recreation, trail access, and wildlife habitat protection as the development process takes place.

4. Improve the present multi-town trail system by:
   • Improving trail maintenance;
   • Rehabilitating or repairing damaged trail sections;
   • Clarifying and strengthening regulations governing trail use;
   • Expanding the trail system to provide new connections to residential neighborhoods, new loop trails on present conservation land, and new extensions to and connection with the Norwottuck Rail Trail;
   • Creating new off-road routes to replace short road sections of the Robert Frost and KC Trails; and
   • Preparing and implementing a universal access trail for the town.

5. Expand protection for the Robert Frost Trail, and KC Trail and sections of other present and future trails that cross private land by establishing permanent easements to replace unwritten oral agreements.

6. Protect wetlands and water supply sources through a combination of land management, land acquisition, and enforcement of regulations that protect wetlands and other water resources.

7. Protect scenic viewpoints from which to view important natural features such as the Lawrence Swamp, Mount Holyoke Range, Pelham Hills, ponds, rivers, open farmland, and others.

8. Enhance outdoor recreation possibilities, including:
   • Non-consumptive passive – hiking, cross-country skiing, bicycling, horseback riding, picnicking, pond swimming, birding, and nature study;
   • Consumptive atavistic – hunting and trapping in selected locations, fishing, and others; and
   • Active – pool swimming, team sports, and other activities that require facilities.
9. Manage Town land resources and facilities to maximize their value for wildlife habitat, recreation, scenery, and the enhancement of the town’s appearance and natural resource base.

10. Establish small conservation areas in or near the Town Center and village centers for use primarily by residents of the immediate neighborhoods and other citizens, connected where feasible to other Town trail systems and transportation links.

11. Make use of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds for conservation, farmland protection, and recreation in a way that complements the other CPA goals of historical preservation and provision of low-income housing.

12. Accomplish the other goals outlined in the Five-Year Action Plan [see page OSP-6].

NOTE: The following two maps summarize Amherst’s Open Space Action Plan. Please see the Community Development Plan’s Appendix for the full set of inventory and analysis maps generated by the 2003 planning effort.]
Five-Year Action Plan

Agriculture Parcels to be Protected

The primary goal for the next five years for the protection of Amherst’s agricultural land base is to complete the major blocks of land now under Agricultural Preservation Restrictions. The Farmland Resource map identifies the 32 APRs (1,841 acres) currently in place, other land protected by Town ownership or Conservation Restrictions, farmland lost to development since 1950, other active farmland, and those parcels over which the Town hopes to secure APRs in the near future. With close to 2,000 acres under protection, Amherst has a significant agricultural base, but it is important to complete protection of the major farm blocks so as to maintain their integrity, prevent incursions by residents who might object to farm activities, noise, or odors, and provide an intact reservoir of available land as the local and regional farm economies change.

Funding for further APRs will have to come from a combination of Community Preservation Act funds (on average, 10 percent of each APR purchase), State APR funds through the Department of Agricultural Resources (formerly Department of Food and Agriculture), federal funds expected to be granted to that department to augment state funds, and possibly donated funds from the regional land trusts (Valley Land Fund, Kestrel Trust). In one or two cases limited development may be required to reach the appraised value of the APR; in other words, lots may need to be sold to help the owner reach the target total.

The principal areas of high priority are:

- **North East Street.** Two parcels (the 46-acre Hart Farm adjacent to the UMass Rifle Range property and the 160-acre Hess Farm just north of Amethyst Farm) are the only farms not yet under APR protection.

- **Meadow Street.** Three small parcels adjacent to the APRs already in place along Meadow Street and Russellville Road are still vulnerable, as is the 20-acre Andrews-LaVerdiere property just south of the auction barn property.

- **Sunderland Road.** The Mitchell and Szala properties west of Route 116 are not yet protected. Because of wet soils, lack of a Town sewer line, and possible difficulties arranging access from Route 116 (limited access), they are probably only marginally developable, but because of the current high price of house lots, they should not be considered safe without APR protection.

- **South East Street.** The 69-acre Gray property, the 50-acre Charles Thompson farm, and the 80-acre Cowles (Andrew’s Greenhouse) property are not yet under APR protection. Recent expansion of the Town sewer system makes the Gray property in particular more vulnerable to development pressures.

- **West Street.** The 200-acre Hampshire College Farm property is waiting for the College’s long-range planning before an APR will be completed. The College has indicated a tentative interest in assisting with the additional state purchase of APRs along South Maple Street and Bay Road in...
Hadley just west of College property. The 19-acre Nanartonis property, just north of Pomeroy Lane, is also vulnerable.

**Belchertown Road.** The Maplewood Farm and Ellis properties, adjacent to the Wisneski Farm (under a 1966 APR) and Amethyst Farm (1982 APR), are as yet unprotected.

**Pine Street.** The 40-acre Dziekanowski Farm, just north of the partially developed Barkowski farm, is not under an APR.

Altogether, this amounts to 16 possible APRs, the purchase of which will have to be spread over several years to allow for phased state and CPA funding.

**Open Space Blocks to be Protected**

Since 1963 Amherst has gradually acquired conservation lands that would eventually constitute a system of fully protected blocks of wildlife habitat and green space, with correspondingly high scenic, recreational, and educational value. The present five-year plan emphasizes the completion of those blocks as well as the protection (by fee purchase or Conservation Restriction) of other critical sites. Areas on the high priority list are:

**Pulpit Hill:** the area north of Pulpit Hill Road bounded on the west by the New England Central Railroad, on the north by the Leverett town line, and on the west by Route 63. Already protected are the 57-acre Eastman Brook Conservation Area, the 10-acre Cousins-Wood complex just east of the railroad, the 5-acre Parsons Conservation Area, the 40-acre Patteson property, and the 90-acre Cherry Hill Golf Course and adjacent Cherry Hill Co-Housing land protected by Conservation Restriction.

**Cushman Brook green belt:** the area along Cushman Brook between East Leverett Road and Market Hill Road. Already protected are the 51-acre Haskins Meadow Conservation Area (Amherst and Shutesbury) and a 5-acre parcel next to the brook midway along east Leverett Road.

**Plum Brook green belt.** The area along Plum Brook from Middle Street and Chapel Road north to Pomeroy Lane, Pomeroy Court, and West Street. Already protected are the 37-acre Plum Springs Conservation Area, the 8-acre Leslie Farm Conservation Area, nearly 30 acres of protected land in the Plum Brook Conservation Area south and north of Pomeroy Lane, the 180-acre Simmons Farm conservation Area off Middle Street (not to be confused with the proposed 12-acre Simmons purchase southwest of the South Amherst Common), and the Plum Brook South Conservation Area and Plum Brook Recreation Area south of Potwine Lane.

**The Holyoke Range,** including land south of Bay Road from the Belchertown line to the Hadley line. The original goal for purchases of state park land on the Range was to secure all land above the 450-foot contour line. Present goals are to add land below that line down to as near Bay Road as possible so as to prevent development that would significantly mar the area’s largest unbroken forested landscape, shared by Amherst, Granby, Hadley, and South Hadley.
Trails and Greenways to be Protected

The Town has an extensive trail system designed primarily for pedestrian use, with many of those trails usable by cross-country skiers, mountain bikers, and horseback riders. The system, which includes extensions into adjacent towns, totals more than 80 miles in length, with some 50 trails and more than 150 roadside trailheads.

The Conservation Commission’s goals for the system are the following. Implementation of all of these goals is in progress and in some cases began decades ago.

1. Provide sufficient trails to allow light, dispersed use and avoid over-trampling and congestion on trails.
2. Provide sufficient trail connections to allow as many people as possible to reach the system without having to drive.
3. Provide a mix of long trails (the 42-mile Robert Frost Trail and the 6-mile KC Trail), short out-and-back trails, and short loop trails.
4. Provide good trail connections to elementary schools, secondary schools, the colleges, and the University.
5. Provide foot access to areas of special scenery, habitat, and historical interest without a significant negative effect on wildlife, especially during breeding and nesting seasons.
6. Create a system of universal access trails that can be used by persons in wheelchairs, visually impaired persons, and others who might have difficulty with rough or steep trails.
7. Through the naming of trails for prominent authors and poets with present or past Amherst connections, create a “Literary Trail” system that recognizes the town’s rich literary history and the connection of many writers with the Town’s natural environment.
8. Provide connections to the Norwottuck Rail Trail for foot, bicycle, and pedestrian use so that the Trail is better able to serve as a link connecting protected land and other special areas.
9. Provide corridors or trail systems for special user groups like mountain bikers and horseback riders.
10. Provide all of the above without unrealistically challenging our maintenance capability, which relies heavily on donated funds to supplement Town funds.

The following are possible additions to the present system that will require planning, design, construction, and maintenance capability before being built, but conceivably could be put in place within the next five years. Some of these were proposed by the 1998 Greenways Project carried out for the Town by the UMass Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning.

- Connector from the UMass Renaissance Center (off East Pleasant Street) west to Marks Meadow School (foot and bicycle).
- Connector from the Renaissance Center south to Orchard Hill (foot).
- Connector from the UMass Rail Trail Connector north past the UMass athletic fields and the Mullins Center to North Amherst, probably via the “cinder Road” (bicycle and multi-use).
- Trails along Cushman Brook from Haskins Meadow and Leverett to the Bridge Street area near Market Hill Road (foot).
- Trail connector from the Robert Frost Trail east of the Market Hill Water Treatment Plan south to Henry Street (foot).
- Trail from Wildwood Elementary School north through Wildwood Cemetery (with Cemetery permission) to the Wildwood Conservation Area (foot).
• Trail from Parsons Conservation Area west to Route 63 and possibly to Route 116 near the Podick Conservation Area (foot).
• Trail from the Atkins Reservoir area south along Adams Brook and the backcountry east of Adams Brook south to the Amethyst Brook area (foot).
• Trail from Maplewood Circle off Strong Street south to Harvard Avenue via an underground sewer right-of-way (foot).
• Trail from the UMass coal pile area off Cherry lane north to the residential area near Blackberry Lane.
• Robert Frost Trail shortcut from Stony Hill Road at Harkness Brook Conservation Area to Stony Hill Road at Thistle Lane (foot).
• Trail from Pelham Road south to the Robert Frost Trail past Fort River School on the west side of the Fort River (foot).
• Trails from Station Road through and around Sycamore Stables farm east to the Norwottuck Rail Trail (foot).
• A trail from Middle Street through the Simmons property (proposed for Town purchase fall 2003) south of the South Amherst Common west to the KC Trail and the Plum Brook Conservation Area (foot).
• A trail from the MacLeod Field (Lawrence Swamp Conservation Area) west to South East Street through the back fields (foot).
• A trail from Pomeroy Court along Plum Brook, partly following an underground sewer line, to Route 116 near the Steigner Conservation Area (foot).
• A trail from the Misty Bottom Trail south across Amherst College fields to the Mt. Castor Conservation Area (foot).
• Robert Frost Trail shortcut from Hulst Road across significant wetlands to the field west of Warren Wright Road to avoid that road section (foot).
• Trail from Plum Brook just south of the Potwine Lane Recreation Area west to Route 116 via the Hebert property (foot).
• Trail from Mt. Pollux Drive over Mt. Pollux south to Blossom Lane (foot).
• Trail from Farmington Road south to the Eric Carle Museum via land of Hampshire College (foot and possibly bicycle).
• Trail along Mill Lane from the Rail Trail to Groff Park which, together with the Misty Bottom trail along Fort River, would make a viable loop and provide a better bicycle route than the rough gravel road surface (foot and bicycle).
• Trail from Applewood retirement center to Atkins Country Market, which is already in place but without permanent status (foot only).
• Possible multi-use trail on the old trolley line route from Atkins Corner south to the Notch, some of which would require private permission, easements, or land acquisition (foot and bicycle).
• Robert Frost Trail extension from the southern foot of Bare Mountain (South Hadley) west along the flats to Route 47 and the Connecticut River, to provide a new southern terminus for the trail.

Accessible (Universal Access) Trail Plan

Introduction. Amherst has the beginnings of an accessible, or universal access, trail system with the Kevin Flood Trail at the Mill River Conservation Area, the Kevin Dimock Trail at the Larch Hill Conservation Area (Hitchcock Center headquarters), the Norwottuck Rail Trail (extending to Belchertown, Hadley, and Northampton), a short trail from State Street to the fishing and swimming
area at Puffer’s Pond, and the Rail Trail Connector to UMass. Ideally, the system will be improved and expanded to include other routes potentially suitable for wheelchair use and use by visually impaired persons.

**Assessment of Need.** The Conservation Commission and Conservation Department hope to work with the Stavros Foundation, the Town’s Disability Access Board, and others to measure the potential demand for universal access trails within Amherst. We will draw on the experience of other towns, cities, and counties around the country that have put effort into this area to measure potential use and describe the types of trails and trail connections that would best serve those possible users. Tom McCarthy, accessibility coordinator for the Department of Conservation and Recreation (formerly Department of Environmental Management), Division of State Parks and Recreation (formerly Division of Forests and Parks), recommends using a figure of “more than 20 percent of the population” as an estimated pool of potential users, consistent with national figures.

**Advisory Group.** A universal access trail steering committee or working group should be set up to work with the Town on assessment of need, trail planning and design, funding for trail improvements, and town outreach. Possible consultants to the working group include Tom McCarthy (Mass Department of Conservation and Recreation, Amherst); Marcy Marchello and Kathy Lowery in his office; Peter Jensen, trail planner and consultant located in Great Barrington; and possibly other experts with experience working with municipalities and state government in accessible trail planning.

**Equipment.** The working group will investigate the possibility of acquiring and making available to interested users the latest in off-road wheelchairs, which could possibly be used on trails that have not been upgraded to universal access status.

**Funding.** The Annual 2003 Town Meeting approved $15,000 for planning and possibly some initial construction of universal access trails beginning with the FY 04 budget. That could be spread over the next 3 years, since the Town’s 5-year Capital Program now includes no accessible trail dollars for either FY 05 or FY 06. The Capital program lists $20,000 for FY 07 and $20,000 for FY 08, which could be used as seed money for possible state and private grant funds that could be for trail construction and improvement. All possible avenues for obtaining government and private funding for the system should be explored.

**Design and Cost Analysis.** Various handbooks are available to help with design and cost questions and to provide guidance in meeting federal ADA standards. The initial $15,000 could be used partly for design, layout, and preparation of construction details for possible grant proposals. The local steering group should also help with design questions for specific trails to be sure local needs will be met.

**Educational Function.** The Hitchcock Center and the local colleges should be consulted in the possible designing of interpretive literature and signs for the universal access trail system. The Advisory Committee to the Norwottuck Rail Trail has discussed various interpretive possibilities for the Rail Trail itself, and there may be ways of expanding on those ideas for local and connecting trails.

**Outreach.** Establishment of an extensive network of accessible trails would put the Town in the forefront of local governments around the country in providing trail access. Public recognition of the system would potentially bring users to town from other parts of the state and region. Literature describing the system and our efforts to continue its development and expansion could help bring additional funding to the project and could constitute a significant tourism draw. The working group
should consult with the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce in designing literature and other materials about the system.

**Staff Training.** Regional and national conferences on universal accessibility are held periodically, and the Conservation Department will send staff to applicable gatherings for education and training in accessibility planning.

**Signage.** Signs should be installed at trailheads to designate the degree of difficulty for challenged users of each trail that is either completely or partially universally accessible, or is considered to some degree negotiable by persons in wheelchairs and other persons with walking difficulties.

**Parking.** In some cases, universal access will require additional off-road parking at trailheads. That will require some additional funding.

**Possible Trail Routes.** Present Town trails that could be suitable for upgrading to universal access status include the following, which focuses on trails and areas that are also heavily used.

- The ½-mile main trail through the Amethyst Brook Conservation Area, which is flat, wide, heavily used, and easily reached from an off-road parking area at Pelham Road.
- The 200-yard path to the top of Mt. Pollux from the paved parking area at the Mt. Pollux Conservation Area.
- The ½-mile section of the KC Trail leading from Hop Brook Road (near Old Farm Road) across the railroad and through the Brickyard Conservation Area to the Norwottuck Rail Trail. This section is flat, fairly quiet and remote, and provides a good link with the paved, accessible state Rail Trail.
- The ½-mile main trail through the Lower Mill River Conservation Area from the Mill River Recreation Area fields to the long footbridge at Summer Street. This trail is also flat, wide, heavily used, and served by parking at the Mill River tennis courts and swimming pool.
- Part of the 1-mile trail loop at the Podick Conservation Area off Route 116. This trail is fairly level, with a few minor grades, and would provide access to a small viewing pond and some scenic open fields.
- The ½-mile trail around Puffer’s Pond, which is fairly level with some minor ups and downs. It would need to be widened and regraded, and access from the parking area at the Pond’s north beach would have to be graded and improved to eliminate the steep section near the north bank.
- A proposed 2-mile northern extension of the Norwottuck Rail Trail-to-UMass Connector from the University north to North Amherst, which would largely follow the “cinder road” from the DEM headquarters, staying to the west of the North Amherst apartment complexes to reach either North Pleasant Street or Meadow Street near the North Amherst light. This significant project would depend on state, federal, and possibly UMass funding assistance.

**Other Trail Considerations**

**Literary Trail System.** Planning began in 2003 for a system of trails named for some 40 or 50 prominent authors and poets, both past and present, who have lived in Amherst or otherwise had strong connections here. The purpose of the project is to draw attention to Amherst’s rich literary history and especially to those writers whose literature related to the town’s natural environment. Planning is taking place in conjunction with the Jones Library and the Amherst Area Chamber of Commerce. A $5,000 grant from
Peoples Bank and other smaller gifts will allow the construction and placement of commemorative signs at each trailhead, the publication of a color brochure describing the system and giving biographical information about each writer, and the scheduling of special events to inaugurate the system (poetry readings, poetry walks, and other gatherings). The system began with the 42-mile Robert Frost Trail and the 80-foot steel Robert Francis footbridge. A permanent exhibit at the Jones Library will help visitors locate trails in the system and will acquaint them with the library’s extensive collection of local authors’ works.

Links Between Trails and Subdivisions. The following sidewalks are proposed for the Town’s long-range infrastructure expansion plan, to render the Amherst area trail system more complete, with pedestrian and sometimes bicycle connections that will allow residents to walk safely to trails from almost anywhere in town.

- Pine Street from East Pleasant Street west to State Street
- Old Sunderland Road from the North Amherst Library north to Route 116
- Middle Street from the South Amherst Common south a few hundred yards to the entrance to the Simmons property, proposed as a 2003 conservation land purchase

Others sidewalks may be proposed as opportunities emerge for linking residents with the trail system.

Trail Planning and Maintenance

The Conservation Department relies in part on advice and volunteer help from:

- a 30-plus member Ridgewalker corps, otherwise known as the Amherst Area Trails Committee, most of whose members have adopted trails in the system
- a small, informal horseback riding advisory group with whom we have discussed a possible system of bridle paths
- residents abutting trails and conservation areas.

In some cases, abutters regularly open and close locked gates at conservation area entrances (as with Mt. Pollux). In others, they call in about current conditions or signage needs, or help maintain water bars and distribute wood-chip surfacing materials.

The Department now has one seasonal trail crew, funded roughly 50% by Town funds and 50% from donations. Ideally, to maintain a further-expanded trail system adequately, the Department should develop two small, separate trail crews. One seasonal crew is necessary to do all the basic annual brushing out, moving, and other light, high-speed maintenance of trails in the system. Especially in a wet year, that work must go on constantly, especially in view of the aggressive invasive plants that overwhelm trails, especially those that are not in shaded forest settings (multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, winged euonymus or burning bush, autumn olive, glossy buckthorn, Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed, and others). A second crew, ideally a year-round group, would work on larger construction and maintenance projects such as bridge building and replacement, painting timber fences and steel bridges, construction of accessible trails, construction and placement of signs. Because of tight Town finances, we assume that much of the cost of the two trail crews will need to be borne by grants and donations.
Additional Recreation Program Locations

The Leisure Services and Supplemental Education Commission has identified the following properties or areas as high priority for future acquisition or dedication for the construction of outdoor recreation facilities.

- Amherst College land east of Groff Park on Mill Lane to enlarge the park for further ball fields or other uses.
- Hawthorne property, east Pleasant Street, for recreational facilities in the vicinity of Wildwood School and the Amherst Regional Middle School
- Kendrick Park, North Pleasant Street and Triangle Street, for in-town recreation
- Lots on Triangle Street to be added to Community Field
- The Old Landfill property, owned by the Town, off Old Belchertown Road and Wildflower Drive
- Part of the Poor Estate property on Pomeroy Lane
- Hall property off Belchertown Road between Gull Pond and the Valley Medical building

The LSSSE Commission also believe that it will be important to add:

- Small sites in various locations for the provision of playgrounds within walking distance of residential areas, and
- Trails connecting Town elementary and secondary schools with residential areas and open spaces.
Town of Amherst
Community Development Plan
Consolidated Recommendations & Implementation

May 2004
VI. Consolidated Recommendations of Community Development Plan

Overview

The four components of this Community Development Plan work together to continue Amherst’s tradition of being a vibrant New England community that is characterized by:

- Compact and clearly defined Downtown and Village Centers, each with its own characteristic mix of land uses
- Large blocks of outlying open space, featuring farm fields, orchards, water resource areas, and the forested expanse of the Mount Holyoke Range
- Large landholdings of Amherst College, University of Massachusetts, and Hampshire College, each with its own plan of academic buildings and outlying open space.

Physically linking residents with these amenities is:

- An expanding local and regional system of walks and trails that connect neighborhoods, cultural facilities, recreation areas, and conservation areas.

Crucial to each component of the Community Development Plan is:

- Outreach, information, community-wide input into deliberations & decisions, and broad support for actions.

As always, the community will need to marshal:

- Resources to carry out actions.

Listed below are the recommendations from the plans for Housing, Business, and Open Space. The recommendations are grouped to show how they work together to support and work within Amherst’s characteristic landscape, trail system, community deliberations, and marshalling of resources.

For details regarding the timing and responsible parties associated with each action, see corresponding component plans in previous sections.
Actions that will reinforce the Downtown and Village Centers

Housing

- Fit a range of accessible and affordable housing choices within Amherst’s evolving village centers.
- Consider allowing infill construction only if it includes an element of diverse, affordable housing. Also consider allowing such infill on lots that are currently unbuildable, with design standards.
- Consider an amnesty program for illegal apartments as part of a program to bring them into compliance with safety codes.
- Reach out to owners of rental units in older mixed use, one-family, two-family, and three-family and involve them in rehabilitation programs targeted to bring their buildings up to code. Create flexible & affordable loan programs for mixed use buildings, which often do not qualify for commercial funding through banks.

Business

- Expand commercial and retail space.
- Allow for more business uses in appropriate locations in zoning bylaws.
- Encourage development of parcels currently zoned for Professional Research Park development.
- Support Village Center mixed-use and compact development.
- Continue to revise Zoning Bylaw to encourage well-planned mixed-use projects in Village Center areas.
- Encourage transportation alternatives at Village Center locations.
- Increase the number of visitors and shoppers to Town.
- Encourage community events and activities that draw people to the Downtown.
- Preserve and enhance Amherst’s historic, cultural, recreational resources.
- Support improvement to Downtown transportation, streetscapes and open spaces.
- Support improvements and designs that strengthen Amherst as a “walkable”, pedestrian-friendly Downtown.
- Strengthen Downtown business activities.
- Complete construction of municipal parking garage.
- Implement Downtown parking plan including permit parking system.
- Encourage in-fill development and expanded use of second and third floor space through zoning and financial incentives.
- Expand existing cultural and historic tourism opportunities, including historic preservation and adaptive re-use.
- Restore and expand use of Amherst Cinema for multi-purpose community performance and arts space.
- Diversify the types of goods and services available through incentives, local promotional activities, and business recruitment.
- Complete the development of the Boltwood Walk Urban Renewal Area.
- Agree on and implement desired traffic improvements to the University Drive Corridor.
**Actions that will further conserve large blocks of outlying open space, featuring farm fields, orchards, water resource areas, and the forested expanse of the Mount Holyoke Range**

*Open Space*
- Strengthen the local farm economy.
- Support development and promotion of agri-tourism.
- Support market development for local farm products, including initiatives to have the University and the Colleges commit to purchase local products.
- Provide guidance to encourage responsible and sustainable farming practices and value-added processing.
- Monitor effectiveness of Farmland Protection overlay zoning district, and make revisions as needed.
- Continue to seek Agriculture Preservation Restrictions, especially in the principal areas of high priority:
  - North East Street
  - Meadow Street
  - Sunderland Road.
  - South East Street
  - West Street
  - Belchertown Road
  - Pine Street
- Continue efforts to fill in large blocks of conserved open space, with especially in the following areas:
  - Pulpit Hill
  - Cushman Brook green belt
  - Plum Brook green belt
  - The Holyoke Range

**Actions to expand the local and regional system of walks and trails that connect neighborhoods, cultural facilities, recreation areas, and conservation areas**

*Open Space*
- Continue to expand the local and regional system of trails and greenways through connections and extensions outlined in the *Open Space Plan*.
- Research, plan, and implement a system of Universal Access trails
- Expand upon the Robert Frost Trail to create a Literary Trail System
- Continue to create links between trails and subdivisions to render the Amherst area trail system more complete, with pedestrian and sometimes bicycle connections that will allow residents to walk safely to trails from almost anywhere in town, beginning with:
  - Pine Street from East Pleasant Street west to State Street
  - Old Sunderland Road from the North Amherst Library north to Route 116
Middle Street from the South Amherst Common south a few hundred yards to the entrance to the Simmons property, proposed as a 2003 conservation land purchase

- Seek small sites in various locations for the provision of playgrounds within walking distance of residential areas
- Add trails that connect Town elementary and secondary schools with residential areas and open spaces.
- Increase the Town’s capacity for trail planning and maintenance through a second, preferably year-round work crew.
- Over time acquire or dedicate parcels for the construction of outdoor recreation facilities, such as:
  - Amherst College land east of Groff Park on Mill Lane to enlarge the park for further ball fields or other uses.
  - Hawthorne property, east Pleasant Street, for recreational facilities in the vicinity of Wildwood School and the Amherst Regional Middle School
  - Kendrick Park, North Pleasant Street and Triangle Street, for in-town recreation
  - Lots on Triangle Street to be added to Community Field
  - The Old Landfill property, owned by the Town, off Old Belchertown Road and Wildflower Drive
  - Part of the Poor Estate property on Pomeroy Lane
  - Hall property off Belchertown Road between Gull Pond and the Valley Medical building

**Actions that will increase the positive impact of being host community to 3 large academic institutions.**

**Housing**
- Encourage and work with local institutions of higher education to provide housing to meet the needs of their respective campus communities, either on- or off-campus.

- Encourage the University of Massachusetts to create affordable and accessible housing both on and off campus, including a joint effort on the Town’s and University’s adjoining parcels off Olympia Drive. While continuing to plan in a coordinated fashion for the Town’s and University’s Olympia Drive parcels, move forward on developing the Town’s parcel even if University action is delayed.

**Business**
- Increase activities to capture benefits of the University of Massachusetts as a regional economic engine. Promote strong Town-Gown relationships for mutual benefit and increased economic activity.

**Open Space**
- Work with the institutions to formalize open space conservation priorities as identified in the Open Space Plan.
- Work with the institutions to formalize and improve sections of the local and regional trail system, for example along the “cinder road” at UMass into North Amherst.
Actions for outreach, information, community input, and broad support.

Housing

- Create a website that is linked to the Town website to promote affordable housing, public information on Town Meeting articles pertaining to housing, position taken by the HP/FHC, Community Preservation Act Proposals, information on the Housing Trust Fund, and information on programs for renters and first-time homebuyers.
- Carry out a campaign to educate the public about the need for affordable housing: guest speakers, interviews, press releases, speaking engagements, letters to the editor, public service announcements.
- Reach out to “new housing allies”, such as teachers, local employees and employers, communities of faith, and others who are living the stresses created by Amherst’s housing situation. Engage them in efforts to publicize and deal with the community’s housing needs.

Business

- Make development permitting and approvals more responsive to businesses. Continue providing consultation and technical assistance from Town staff. Expedite and streamline permitting process, when feasible, without compromising environmental or health standards.
- Develop a commercial space and downtown database.
- Provide base data to assist developers in producing accurate and environmentally responsive site plans. Maximize use of GIS technology to provide site-related information.
- Develop guidelines for sustainable development; amend building and land use regulations as needed to encourage “green” building and sustainable land use practices.
- Include Amherst in regional and statewide promotional information as an attractive area to locate a business.
- Support an Economic Development Coordinator to carry out promotion and recruitment activities.
- Continue to create a “business friendly” climate.
- Encourage locally owned and managed businesses. Support consultant and home based businesses.
- Educate residents about the relationship between Amherst as a multi-cultural, income-diverse community and the provision of adequate employment opportunities and affordable housing options.
- Maintain a strong, proactive Chamber of Commerce.
- Continue participation in marketing and promotion of regional tourism activities.
- Educate Amherst residents about the benefits of economic development. Increase understanding of the correlation between economic activity, public revenues, and municipal services and quality of life.
Strategies to marshal resources for these actions

**Housing**
- Examine Town-owned and Amherst Housing Authority-owned properties, and seek opportunities to create additional units.
- Establish and fund a Housing Trust Fund that can act quickly and effectively as opportunities arise to further Amherst’s housing goals.
- Continue to request the Community Preservation Act Committee to commit each year a percentage of funds above the minimum to affordable housing so as to create a flexible, consistent stream of funding that is not tied in advance to specific projects.
- Formalize a process that includes the Housing Partnership/Fair Housing Committee in discussions relating to Town-owned land and buildings, and in deliberations during the review and permit process relating to development or redevelopment of privately owned land.
- Gain gifts of affordable and/or diverse units within existing multi-family buildings.
- Housing units that add to the community’s supply of affordable and diverse housing.
- Seek perpetuity for any affordability restrictions that may have dates of expiration.
- Continue to pursue regional efforts to provide needed types of diverse, affordable, and accessible housing.
- Acquire affordable housing restrictions through the development review and permitting process, as part of loan and grant programs, and through other means as possible. For example, require a percentage of affordable units in all proposed projects that are subject to Special Permit. Add this strategy to the subdivision process to the extent possible. Consider zoning strategies that allow construction of needed housing types by right with design standards.
- Consider an expedited review and permitting process for development proposals that will create affordable housing units.
- Continue to upgrade existing affordable housing units for compliance with building and accessibility codes, including continued use of outside grants funds.
- Establish a Rental Assistance Revolving Loan Fund to assist with renter start-up costs of security deposit, last month’s rent, and finder’s fee.
- Establish a First Time Home Buyer Revolving Loan Fund that assists with down payment and closing costs, with long-term deed restrictions to keep the homes affordable.
- Gain more units that are accessible through review and permitting processes, through loan and grant programs, and through other methods.
- Maintain current affordable units, and continue to pursue opportunities for affordable and accessible units on sites throughout the community.

**Business**
- Provide technical assistance and seek funding for micro-enterprise loans to small business start-ups not traditionally eligible for government programs or private financing because of size. These services should affirmatively include under-represented populations in the business community.
- Continue to re-examine and improve Zoning Bylaws to ensure a high quality of site development.

**Open Space**
- Provide assistance to farmers about programs and resources available to them.
The following inventory and analysis maps were created for the Open Space Plan component of the Community Development Plan

*Note: For increased legibility, all maps are formatted for printing landscape style onto 11” x 17” paper.

Page APP-1 Agricultural Land
Page APP-2 Protected Open Space and Institutional Lands
Page APP-3 Scenic Resources
Page APP-4 Trail Corridors
Page APP-5 Unique Environments & Wildlife Habitats
Page APP-6 Water Resources
Page APP-7 Future Growth & Development