



IMPLEMENTATION ELEMENT

At the outset of the Master Plan process, residents said they hoped this plan would be more useful than a report that “sits on a shelf.” Ultimately, the success of any plan depends on its feasibility and a town’s ability to balance near-term interests with long-term needs. The role of an implementation element is to provide balance by bringing all of the key recommendations into focus and organizing them into a plan of action. The schedule can be altered if the town needs to respond to unforeseen opportunities, but the overall sequence of actions implies that some steps have a higher priority than others, and some steps need to occur sooner rather than later.

In Princeton’s case, most of the major master plan proposals call for zoning amendments that can help local officials exert more control over the town’s physical evolution. As Princeton works to improve upon its present zoning, some areas described in the Land Use Plan may need to be adjusted once the town’s GIS parcel map is corrected and usable (2007).

Princeton will contend with a number of master plan implementation challenges because the town is so small. It has neither the staff nor financial resources to carry out multiple initiatives all at once. As a result, implementation will most likely require several years, patience, and periodic reassessments of the implementation schedule as local priorities change over time. In addition, Princeton found it difficult to implement past master plans, yet several of the earlier recommendations remain relevant today. Like other small towns, Princeton has a history of tension about how far local government should go to manage growth and change. Many residents would like the town to stay just as it is, yet Princeton has already

changed in ways that are obvious from a review of historic maps, photographs and reports.

On one level, Princeton has so much going for it that public disdain for growth is easy to understand. On another level, Princeton has needs that have been deferred for financial, policy or other reasons. Princeton also has physical characteristics that contribute to its beauty and simultaneously constrain its choices. Finally, master plan implementation in Massachusetts is difficult because planning has such an ambiguous legal position. Here more than in most states, the propensity of master plans to “sit on a shelf” can be attributed, at least in part, to the limited, obsolete tools that local governments have to control their destiny.

Despite these challenges, Princeton has many resources to bring to the process of master plan implementation. Its winding, tree-lined roads, scenic vistas and fine historic buildings define the character of the entire community. Moreover, Princeton residents love their town, and this applies equally to long-time residents and newcomers. They value the services they receive from town government, and they appreciate the traditions that make Princeton an unusually pleasant place to live. The town also has talented officials and staff, so even though the small size of Princeton’s local government limits how much can be done in any given year, the capacity for competent master plan implementation is very strong. In fact, Princeton’s will to address issues identified during the master plan process could be seen long before the plan was completed, for some of the actions identified in this implementation plan are already underway. This bodes well for the master plan, and for Princeton’s ability to achieve its goals.

GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

PHASE/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	APPLICABLE MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
Phase I			
I-1	Establish Master Plan Implementation Committee.	All Elements	Select Board, Planning Board
I-2	Adopt an Open Space-Residential Design Bylaw.	Land Use, Open Space & Natural Resources, Housing	Planning Board
I-3	Adopt a Back-Lot Development Bylaw.	Land Use, Open Space & Natural Resources	Planning Board
I-4	Update and Strengthen the Site Plan Review Bylaw.	Land Use, Transportation	Planning Board
I-5	Adopt the Community Preservation Act.	Historic Preservation, Open Space & Natural Resources, Housing	Historical Commission, Open Space Committee, Select Board
I-6	Fund the Six-Year Roads Plan.	Transportation, Community Facilities & Services	Select Board, Roads Advisory Committee
I-7	Seek financial and technical assistance to support Princeton's historic preservation efforts.	Historic Preservation, Community Facilities & Services	Historical Commission
I-8	Establish criteria to guide the town's response to Chapter 61 or 61A notices and other open space opportunities, and set aside funds to acquire priority open space.	Open Space & Natural Resources, Land Use, Community Facilities & Services	Planning Board, Open Space Committee
Phase II			
II-1	Develop a master facilities plan to meet municipal, educational and cultural needs, and institute asset management policies for town-owned property.	Community Facilities & Services, Historic Preservation	Select Board, Advisory Board
II-2	Adopt regulations to facilitate home occupations and home-based employment.	Economic Development	Planning Board
II-3	Amend the Zoning Bylaw and Zoning Map by establishing an East Princeton Village District and a Worcester Road Village District.	Land Use, Economic Development, Housing, Transportation	Planning Board
II-4	Adopt Off-Street Parking Regulations.	Land Use, Transportation	Planning Board
II-5	Develop an inventory of existing trails and prepare a town-wide trails plan.	Open Space & Natural Resources, Land Use	Open Space Committee, Planning Board
II-6	Appoint a Public Safety Building Committee to oversee design and construction of a new Public Safety Building.	Community Facilities & Services	Select Board
II-7	Adopt a Scenic Corridors Overlay District.	Land Use, Open Space & Natural Resources	Planning Board

PHASE/ ACTION	DESCRIPTION	APPLICABLE MASTER PLAN ELEMENTS	PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY
II-8	Provide professional staff support for the Planning Board and other boards with development review, permitting and planning responsibilities.	Community Facilities & Services, Land Use	Planning Board, Select Board
II-9	Establish a limited mixed-use overlay district in the Town Center.	Land Use, Economic Development, Housing	Planning Board
Phase III			
III-1	Adopt the Scenic Roads Act and a local scenic roads bylaw.	Open Space & Natural Resources, Transportation, Historic Preservation	Planning Board
III-2	Commission a study to determine the appropriate boundaries and regulations for a Wachusett Mountain Overlay District, and amend the Zoning Bylaw.	Open Space & Natural Resources, Land Use	Planning Board
III-3	Replace the existing Business-Industrial District on Hubbardston Road with a Rural Business District.	Land Use, Economic Development	Planning Board
III-4	Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow conversions of older single-family homes to multi-family dwellings within ½ mile of the Village Districts and the Town Center.	Housing, Land Use	Planning Board
III-5	Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow accessory apartments.	Housing	Planning Board
III-6	Prepare a corridor study of Route 140, in conjunction with Sterling and Westminster.	Transportation	Planning Board, Select Board, Roads Advisory Committee
III-7	Establish policies and guidelines for managing Chapter 40B comprehensive permits.	Housing	Planning Board, Select Board
Ongoing			
O-1	Identify and institute effective ways to recruit, train and keep volunteers to serve on town boards and committees.	Community Facilities & Services	
O-2	Wherever possible, hire and train municipal personnel to serve more than one function.	Community Facilities & Services	
O-3	Establish a systematic process for reviewing user fees and charges in order to generate revenue for municipal operations.	Community Facilities & Services	
O-4	Pursue regional service delivery wherever feasible and appropriate.	Community Facilities & Services	

LAND USE PLAN

The Land Use Plan is central to every master plan because it provides the foundation for all of the plan's major proposals. Princeton's Land Use Plan is comprised of five components, as shown on Map 9-1, the Land Use Map, and summarized in the table to the right. Together, they reflect several policies to guide the town's future development:

- Princeton will be a rural-residential community with large tracts of open land and low-density housing as the preferred form of development.
- In outlying parts of town, views from the road should be protected through land acquisition and regulatory techniques, with incentives to set homes back from the street and minimize the number of driveway openings.

COMPONENT	PRIMARY USES
Open Space & Public Use	Open space, conservation areas, wildlife habitat, wetlands, outdoor recreation, agriculture and horticulture, trails; and municipal uses where appropriate.
Rural Residential	Single-family homes; average density of one unit per 2-2.5 acres, with accessory apartments by special permit. Regulatory flexibility for Open Space-Residential Design and Backlot Development.
Village Residential	Single-family homes; small-scale multi-family housing and senior housing by special permit; average density of one unit per 30,000 sq. ft. of land.
Village Centers	Mixed residential, commercial and institutional uses.
Rural Business	Offices, limited industrial, and space for construction trades, feed and lumber sales, other uses not suitable for a village center (but traditionally allowed in Princeton's zoning).

mercial buildings encourages building heights comparable to traditional homes, increases property values, and gives business areas a more residential "feel."

- In areas that already have a mix of community facilities, businesses and housing, Princeton should encourage the evolution of these areas as small village centers that differ visually and operationally from rural-residential areas. "Rural" does not mean "homogenous." Moreover, the villages are quite different, and the qualities that make them unique should be recognized.
- Princeton wants to remain a rural town with a small population, so the villages will evolve very slowly. For the most part, they will attract small, locally owned shops, offices or service establishments. To encourage quality building designs, attractive landscaping and places that make residents proud of their village centers, Princeton needs to allow some mix of commercial and residential uses. Including housing units in small-scale commercial buildings encourages building heights comparable to traditional homes, increases property values, and gives business areas a more residential "feel."
- Wherever possible, rural-residential areas should be connected to villages by walking trails as well as roads. In a rural community without a complex road hierarchy, it is difficult for roads to meet the dual (and often conflicting) needs of drivers, pedestrians and equestrians. Strategies to preserve Princeton's existing trails, to keep them open for public use and to connect them will be very important as the town continues to grow and change.
- By choosing to remain small, Princeton also chooses to be a town with limited public services and a government that depends on

See Appendix for the text of most zoning amendments described in this Implementation Plan.



civic-minded volunteers. Controlling growth by favoring extensive uses such as farming, forestry and outdoor recreation, and low-density residential development, means that Princeton will most likely retain its rural character. The same policies mean that Princeton will have to make tough choices about the services and facilities that local government can provide – and that residents can afford. By concentrating development in and around the villages and protecting as much open space as possible in outlying areas, Princeton will be in an optimum position to manage the cost of growth by preventing the cost of sprawl.



PHASE I: 2007-2009

Action I-1: Establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC).

Discussion: The Select Board and Planning Board should jointly appoint a Master Plan Implementation Committee (7-9 members) to steer and coordinate the master plan implementation process. The MPIC's charge should include the following tasks:

- Provide technical support and public outreach for proposed implementation measures;
- Advocate for funds to carry out actions that require a financial commitment from the town;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of actions taken to implement the plan; and
- Determine adjustments to the implementation schedule, based on available resources and the needs of the town.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-1

Addresses Master Plan Elements: All

Lead Responsibility: Select Board, Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action I-2: Adopt an Open Space-Residential Design (OSRD) Bylaw.

Discussion: Adopting a mandatory Open Space-Residential Design bylaw is among the master plan's most important recommendations. OSRD zoning could help Princeton protect natural resources, preserve views from the road and maintain established trail networks. It accomplishes these objectives by engaging landowners and developers to plan for open space by design in new residential developments.

An OSRD bylaw typically provides for a two-step approval process that begins with a concept plan,

PHASE I IMPLEMENTATION

- Establish implementation capacity: appoint a **Master Plan Implementation Committee**.
- Adopt an **Open Space-Residential Design** Bylaw and a **Back-Lot Development** Bylaw.
- Update and strengthen the **Site Plan Review** Bylaw.
- Adopt the **Community Preservation Act**.
- Make a consistent financial commitment to complete the **Six-Year Roads Plan**.
- Provide funding for **preservation planning** and **historic preservation projects**.
- Establish **land evaluation criteria** to guide the town's decisions about acquiring land for **public open space**.

followed by a definitive plan submission, which may be a subdivision or a detailed site plan (for projects not involving a subdivision). The concept plan allows developers to master plan a site and negotiate with town boards before incurring the expense of a definitive plan. It also encourages sensitive site planning because the concept plan process requires an analysis of each site's unique features and they, in turn, determine where construction will occur. The developer can still build what he could have built under a conventional plan, but in areas best suited for development.

Princeton should require a minimum amount of land to be protected as common open space. Many OSRD bylaws require 50% of a site while others set a somewhat smaller percentage and offer incentives (such as a modest density bonus) to save more land or to provide some additional public benefits, such as walking trails or senior housing. Also, a smaller percentage may be necessary to accommodate difficult-to-develop land. Finally, the allowable percentage of wetlands in common open space is usually based on the percentage of wetlands on the site as a whole,

but sometimes it makes good environmental sense to allow more wetlands in the open space. It is important to remember that the goal of an OSRD bylaw is to protect resources, not to stop development.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-2

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Open Space & Natural Resources, Housing

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action I-3: Adopt a Back-Lot Development Bylaw.

Discussion: Back-Lot Development will be very important in Princeton because it works best with small projects and provides an alternative to Approval Not Required (ANR) lots. Together, OSRD and Back-Lot Development should serve as a “package” of regulatory mechanisms to preserve open space within the context of large and small sites.

In a Back-Lot Development, the applicant may create the same number of lots that could be established through the ANR process (and sometimes a few extra lots), but all of the lots are



moved to the rear of the site and land along the road is protected by a perpetual conservation restriction. Since the lots have no frontage, back-lot zoning requires a special permit to waive frontage and other dimensional requirements so that

PRINCETON MASTER PLAN IN ACTION

Several actions that would have appeared in the Master Plan as implementation proposals were already underway when this plan was completed. For example:

COMMUNITY FACILITIES & SERVICES

- The Princeton Municipal Light Department (PMLD) is installing a wireless internet access network so that Princeton residents and businesses will finally have high-speed internet service. The new system requires several 80-foot utility poles to be stationed throughout town, including an antenna on the fire tower at

Wachusett Mountain. The project will cost approximately \$600,000.

- The Board of Selectmen has appointed an ALS Ambulance Services Study Committee to help develop a long-term ambulance policy for the town.
- The town has hired Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to digitize the assessor's parcel map for use with Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. GIS will help with future planning and simplify the process of updating the assessor's maps.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- At the 2006 Annual Town Meeting, Princeton established an Agricultural Commission to promote farming, provide public education and serve as a resource to farms, town officials and the general public. The Commission is working on proposed manure regulations, which would require adoption by the Board of Health.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

- The Princeton Historical Commission is completing a comprehensive town-wide survey to identify and document all of the town's historic resources.

homes can be clustered and served by a shared driveway. For Princeton, the proposed zoning regulations would bring any development with five or more lots under the purview of OSRD, and offer any development with fewer than five lots the option of pursuing a Back-Lot Development permit. The proposed back-lot bylaw also offers some incentives to make back-lot design preferable to ANR.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-3

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Open Space & Natural Resources

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action I-4: Update and strengthen the Site Plan Review Bylaw.

Discussion: Princeton needs to strengthen and improve its Site Plan Review bylaw. Through Site Plan Review, the Planning Board could establish standards for vegetation removal, clearing and grading, landscaping and architectural design standards, and rural design principles that must be met in any development made subject to the bylaw.

Site Plan Review usually applies to non-residential development and some types of residential development, though single-family homes are exempt unless it is necessary to bring a single-family home development within the purview of Site Plan Review. For example, the success of OSRD often depends on an effective Site Plan Review process. In addition, Site Plan Review could be justified to review the placement and orientation of single-family homes along scenic roadways. Site Plan Review is not a tool for approving or disapproving land uses. Instead, its purpose is to assure that developments are operationally and functionally safe, attractive, and carried out in a manner that reduces or mitigates adverse impacts on natural resources.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-4

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Transportation

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action I-5: Adopt the Community Preservation Act.

Discussion: Town officials need to work together to promote adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), M.G.L. c.44B. Throughout the master plan process, members of the master plan committee and residents at large said many times that Princeton needs resources to acquire open space. The only mechanisms available to Princeton today rely in whole or in part on property tax revenue.

CPA provides a mechanism for cities and towns to fund projects that address three statewide needs:

- Open space and recreation
- Historic preservation
- Affordable housing

Since CPA is local option legislation, it applies only when a majority of the voters in a city or town agree to impose a surcharge on their property tax bills, the revenue from which is restricted to the statutory purposes of CPA. The law also allows communities to tailor their CPA program to local conditions, such as by setting an acceptable surcharge (up to 3%) or allowing exemptions for some taxpayers. In exchange for a self-imposed surcharge, communities receive matching funds from the state, which collects revenue for the statewide CPA trust fund through fees on real estate transfers. The amount of the match is tied to the surcharge percent, such that communities with higher surcharges receive a larger match.

Acquiring and protecting open space is an appropriate way to use CPA funds, but not all CPA revenue can be committed to open space. At least 30% must be dedicated to the three statutory purposes, i.e., 10% for open space, 10% for housing and 10% for historic preservation, with the remaining 70% available for any CPA purpose provided that the community preservation committee recommends it and town meeting appropriates the funds.

In fact, Princeton has significant historic preservation needs, such as renovating the second floor of Bagg Hall, resolving the fate of Mechanics Hall, and making repairs in the town's historic cemeteries. These kinds of projects often need a dedicated revenue stream even more than open space. Furthermore, Princeton's affordable housing inventory is limited to a small elderly rental development near the town center. The town could use CPA funds to acquire affordability restrictions on existing homes and increase its Subsidized Housing Inventory through means other than new construction and comprehensive permits.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-5

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Historic Preservation, Open Space & Natural Resources, Housing

<i>Lead Responsibility:</i>	Historical Commission, Open Space Committee, Planning Board
<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	0.5-3.0% annual surcharge on property tax bills

Action I-6: Fund the Six-Year Roads Plan.

Discussion: Princeton needs to complete the Roads Advisory Committee's (RAC) Six-Year Roads Plan. For several years, Princeton carried out a major roads reconstruction program primarily with non-local funds. Owing to the RAC's leadership and hard work, Princeton paid slightly more than 25% of the \$7.3 million cost to reconstruct 36 miles of roads, pursuant to a plan developed by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). Eventually, most of the roads eligible for federal funds were



rebuilt, and this meant that Princeton would need to finance the remaining road projects with tax revenue and (state) Chapter 90 funds.

In 2006, the RAC sought \$175,000 from the town to continue rebuilding roads under an extension of the original CMRPC Pavement Management Plan. Town meeting voted to appropriate the funds, but the appropriation depended on a Proposition 2 ½ override that failed in June 2006.

Deferred spending on infrastructure invariably leads to greater public expense in the long run. It has been hard for Princeton to juggle growth in school operating costs and debt service with its own municipal needs, but Princeton is not the only small town in this position. The town needs a long-range capital planning process that brings together all of the key town boards, including regional school committee representatives, to reach consensus about short- and longer-term improvement priorities well in advance of each town meeting.

However, planning without a commitment to funding does not benefit anyone. It leaves capital needs inadequately addressed, it contributes to the perception that plans "sit on the shelf," it discourages local government volunteers, and it runs the risk of transferring responsibility for current problems to future taxpayers. Princeton *does* have options. For example, the town traditionally leaves some of its tax levy authority in reserve. In FY 2006, the town's unused levy capacity of \$311,000

would have been enough to fund the local portion of the Roads Program.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-6

Master Plan Elements: Transportation, Community Facilities & Services

Lead Responsibility: Select Board, RAC

Estimated Cost: \$175,000-\$350,000/year over six years



Action I-7: Seek financial and technical assistance to support Princeton's historic preservation efforts.

Discussion: Strengthening Princeton's ability to protect historic structures is a central objective of this Master Plan. State grants exist to help communities carry out preservation planning and "bricks-and-mortar" preservation projects. To qualify for preservation grants, however, communities must provide all or a substantial portion of the necessary funds from their own sources. The state's match constitutes a reimbursement, such that once the community has expended local funds, it becomes eligible for reimbursements ranging from 40-50% of the total project cost (usually subject to a maximum dollar amount).

In Princeton, historic preservation has been a matter of stewardship by devoted volunteers and private citizens. However, Princeton has preservation needs that extend beyond what volunteers and homeowners can accomplish on their own. For example, the second floor of historic Bagg Hall is inaccessible to people with disabilities and it needs rehabilitation work. Mechanics Hall in East Princeton, the town's most at-risk historic building, continues to deteriorate because Princeton has not had the resources to restore it. While the Princeton Public Library was recently renovated, it needs attention to preventive maintenance and some modest repairs. A common problem in many towns is that following a major public building project, little if any funding is placed in reserve to maintain and protect the asset (see Action II-1).

Princeton has National Register districts, but no local historic districts under M.G.L. c.40C or the less-prescriptive alternative known as neighborhood conservation districts. Local historic districts offer the most effective legal protection against destruction of or inappropriate alterations to historic buildings. Princeton also lacks basic preservation tools such as a demolition delay bylaw. Finally, Princeton's preservation planning capacity is challenged by a shortage of funds.

Hiring a qualified preservation planner to prepare inventories or National Register nominations requires financial support. Moreover, the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program recently completed an analysis of Princeton's priority landscapes and made a number of important recommendations, but most of the follow-up work requires further investment by the town. To qualify for grants that can help to pay for additional planning, Princeton must commit some of its own funds to preservation planning.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-7

Master Plan Elements: Historic Preservation, Community Facilities & Services, Land Use

Lead Responsibility: Historical Commission

Estimated Cost: \$10,000-\$15,000/year for preservation planning
\$40,000-\$50,000 for Mechanics Hall feasibility study & disposition plan

Action I-8: Establish criteria to guide the town’s response to Chapter 61 or 61A notices and other open space opportunities, and set aside funds to acquire priority open space.

Discussion: Princeton has established a new Land Preservation Study Committee to explore the town’s options for protecting open space and to recommend evaluation criteria that may determine Princeton’s response to future open space acquisition opportunities. Residents want to preserve as much open space as possible, yet it is difficult to imagine how Princeton could afford to buy all of the land that residents want to protect. Princeton has many needs, and open space is but one of them. Although the zoning amendments in this plan will help to preserve many of Princeton’s open space features, zoning is not the best tool for protecting land that needs an absolute defense against development.

Saving open space through fee simple acquisition or purchasing a conservation restriction or an agricultural preservation restriction can be expensive, but no town should expect to save open space without investing public funds in preservation. Protecting the most important part of a site can sometimes be achieved through “limited development,” a strategy that works best when conducted by a non-profit land trust. Still, even these projects often need public funding to close the gap between a site’s acquisition cost and the proceeds from lot sales.

Partnerships with land trusts help because a community can assign its Chapter 61/61A right of first refusal to them. Regardless of whether Princeton adopts the CPA or finances open space with general revenue, however, the town needs to be selective. Properties such as those listed in Princeton’s Heritage Landscapes Inventory or land with known habitat value for rare or endangered species may be obvious preservation priorities, but together, they constitute a large list of sites. If Princeton tries to respond to every open space offer, whether by purchasing the land on its own or enlisting help from a land trust, it may be im-



possible to act when a very significant parcel is threatened by development.

Princeton is not growing rapidly enough to appreciate what intense development pressure does to the supply and cost of land. The town should capitalize on its slow growth rate and conduct a neutral review of private land parcels, evaluating each site according to a set of agreed-upon criteria. A plan that justifies saying “no” to some acquisition opportunities in order to preserve funds for the highest-priority sites will help Princeton manage its limited resources and meet other master plan goals. Further, the discipline to make annual appropriations to a conservation fund (or CPA open space reserve) will help to assure that Princeton has resources available to acquire priority sites, pay for appraisals and grant applications, and manage public land.

SUMMARY: ACTION I-8

Master Plan Elements: Open Space & Natural Resources, Land Use Community Facilities & Services

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board, Open Space Committee

Estimated Cost: \$100,000/year to a reserve fund for purchasing open space

PHASE II: 2010-2012

Action II-1: Develop a master facilities plan and institute asset management policies for town-owned property.

Discussion: The Select Board should appoint a committee to work with an architect on a master facilities plan for the town, building on work done by the Community Facilities & Services Subcommittee for this master plan. The committee should include representation from the Select Board, Advisory Board, Planning Board, Parks & Recreation Commission, Historical Commission and Cultural Council, and staff with building management responsibilities: the Town Administrator, police and fire chiefs, and library director.

Princeton has basic systems in place to budget for capital improvements and routine building and grounds maintenance. However, annual appropriations for operations and maintenance are strikingly low considering the size and age of the buildings that Princeton is trying to maintain. The town needs a master facilities plan that includes a code analysis, a review of municipal space needs, capital improvement recommendations and preliminary cost estimates, and asset management policies for its main public facilities: Bagg Hall, Princeton Public Library, the Princeton Center Building, the Highway Department Garage and Salt Storage Shed, the Town Hall Annex, the East Princeton Fire Station, the Thomas Prince School, and the Public Safety Building (See also, Action II-5.)

Asset management policies need to be in place to guide decisions about property acquisitions, improvements, maintenance, and disposition. Factors such as adequacy of existing office space to accommodate near-term personnel requirements should be explored and planned for, such as Princeton's inevitable need for professional support in the Planning Board and Conservation Commission offices. Princeton also needs appropriate storage space for historical artifacts and documents. During the master plan process, it was noted that Princeton has no space for fine and performing

PHASE II IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop a **Master Facilities Plan and Asset Management Policy**.
- Adopt zoning regulations to encourage **Home Occupations** and **Home-Based Businesses**.
- Revise the present business districts by adopting new village district regulations for **East Princeton** and **Worcester Road** and amending the zoning map to reduce the amount of land zoned for non-residential uses.
- Adopt **Off-Street Parking Regulations**.
- Update or replace the present **Public Safety Building**.
- Develop a comprehensive **Town-Wide Trails Inventory and Trails Plan**.
- Adopt a **Scenic Corridors Overlay District**.
- Hire a part-time **Planner or Land Use Coordinator** to assist the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Board of Health and Board of Appeals.
- Establish a limited mixed-use overlay district in the **Town Center**.

arts events except for small productions held in the library. The town is blessed with many artists, and cultural appreciation is important to Princeton residents. Indeed, Princeton could capitalize on its appeal to the arts and its rural ambiance if the town had suitable events space that could be used by a variety of local and regional organizations on a fee basis. The master facilities plan should give consideration to the feasibility of providing performance and events space, possibly as part of planned renovations to second floor of Bagg Hall.

SUMMARY: ACTION II-1

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Community Facilities & Services

<i>Lead Responsibility:</i>	Select Board, Advisory Board
<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	\$75,000-\$85,000

Action II-2: Adopt regulations to facilitate home occupations and home-based self-employment.

Discussion: Princeton's home occupation bylaw needs a comprehensive revision that removes undue barriers to the ability of self-employed people or tele-commuters to work at home. Working at home is a basic feature of any rural economy. Today, home occupations or "zero-commute" jobs are widely recognized as a key tool for sustainable economic development. At-home employment allows residents to be in town during normal daytime hours and usually has minimal impacts on the landscape, natural resources, town infrastructure and residential neighborhoods. Since Princeton does not want major commercial or industrial development, it needs to provide other ways for residents to work locally without disrupting the lives of their neighbors.

Arguably, some types of businesses could have unwanted impacts on nearby residents. However, a bylaw that regulates all work-at-home activity the same way, without regard for differences in the operational characteristics of businesses, makes it very difficult to encourage low-impact businesses. Homogenous home occupation rules can discourage inconspicuous businesses simply because they are regulated the same way as businesses many people would consider disruptive or offensive.

Princeton should regulate work-at-home activity by grouping occupations into use categories, establishing appropriate rules for each class, and allowing some home occupation uses by right while controlling others through a special permit process. Further, the rules could be different in various zoning districts. For a home located in a business zone, it makes little sense to require the same type of "invisibility" that may be desirable in a residential district.

Finally, Princeton should consider modifying some of its existing rules, such as restricting employment to not more than one person outside the resident family regardless of the type of business.

The town could allow more than one non-resident employee by special permit, and there should be no restriction on employees working for a home-based business in a village or business district. Of course, a home-based business in a village zone should be subject to the same landscaping, parking and site design standards that apply to a business use.

SUMMARY: ACTION II-2

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Economic Development, Land Use

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action II-3: Amend the Zoning Bylaw and Zoning Map by establishing an East Princeton Village District and a Worcester Road Village District.

Discussion: Princeton should have mixed-use village districts in East Princeton and on Worcester Road. Today, Princeton has two nonresidential zones: the Business-Industrial District and the Business District. The Business-Industrial District includes a strip of land on both sides of Route 140 in the north end of town, and a second area on the west side of town, along both sides of Hubbardston Road. The Business District includes a very small area on Route 140 near East Princeton Road, and a longer strip on the lower end of Worcester Road. Today, the Business-Industrial District includes about 388 acres of land and the Business District, about 90 acres. In both cases, the existing use and dimensional regulations and the district boundaries are not conducive to small village nodes that relate well to their surrounding rural-residential context.

The proposed amendments would transfer much of the land currently zoned for business uses to the Residential-Agricultural District, provide more depth in the district along Worcester Road, and establish basic development standards for each district in order to encourage quality design. In traditional New England villages, buildings tend

to occupy space close to the road and the front of the building has features of interest from a pedestrian's point of view. Villages ought to be walkable, offering not only sidewalks but also pedestrian amenities that encourage people to linger and socialize. Walkable areas tend to be compact and relatively dense. For a rural community like Princeton, however, without water or sewer service and with many areas subject to the Watershed Protection Act ("Cohen Bill"), a walkable village district will be one that is quite small, ideally with a few small businesses, institutional uses and housing situated close together and near enough to the road to signal a change in the land use pattern.

Princeton's current zoning does not foster these objectives. It promotes very-low-density development town-wide and imposes the same dimensional requirements on business and residential lots. One consequence of this policy is that Princeton offers little incentive to improve older business uses, and a second is that new businesses must be pushed back from the road. As a result, Princeton's zoning all but prescribes strip commercial development, with the view from the road defined by asphalt, not buildings.

The proposed regulations for the East Princeton and Worcester Road Village Districts are not the same because these areas have distinctive qualities, and East Princeton is subject to many environmental constraints. The mix of uses and dimensional rules anticipate small commercial establishments and housing types that Princeton currently prohibits. In addition, the districts would require a special permit for some uses that Princeton currently allows by right, such as single-family homes, the purpose being to assure that areas zoned for business will be hospitable to goods and services establishments in the future. By reducing the total amount of business-zoned land (to about 230 acres) and creating districts with more logical boundaries, Princeton could have a few small, attractive business areas that meet the needs of Princeton residents and respect the rural-residential make-up of adjacent neighborhoods.

SUMMARY II-3:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Economic Development

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action II-4: Adopt Off-Street Parking Regulations and Design Standards.

Discussion: Off-street parking regulations should be instituted as part of a package of zoning amendments that include the East Princeton and Worcester Road Village Districts. Off-street parking is typically guided by a schedule in the zoning bylaw, e.g., a certain number of parking spaces per 1,000 sq. ft. of building area, based on the class or type of use. Since Princeton does not have any off-street parking standards today, it is impossible to determine the amount of off-street parking that a project may require. Depending on the mix of uses, the parking proposed for a given development could be excessive or very inadequate.

Business activity in Princeton currently consists of small enterprises, and the proposed zoning amendments anticipate that this will continue. While it is difficult to imagine that any commercial development in Princeton would need much parking, it is not difficult to imagine parking areas that detract from the visual character of a neighborhood. Princeton has no minimum requirements for parking lot design, e.g., standards for landscaping, lighting, location of parking on a lot, buffers between parking areas and adjacent homes, or the amount of lot frontage that can be used for a driveway or an access road. These issues should be addressed even if the town does not create village districts because the omission of parking regulations from the existing bylaw could be very problematic in the future.

SUMMARY II-4:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Transportation

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action II-5: Develop an inventory of existing trails and prepare a town-wide trails plan.

Discussion: A network of trails should be part of any plan for open space and circulation in Princeton. Toward that end, the Open Space Committee and Planning Board should develop an inventory of existing trails and prepare a town-wide trails plan. During public meetings for this master plan, many Princeton residents spoke fondly of the trails that run throughout the town. They worry that new development will prevent access to trails that cross private land. Unfortunately, it was difficult for residents to identify the approximate location of trails on a map, and there is no mapped inventory of the town's existing trails. The proposed OSRD bylaw would require applicants to identify on-site trails during the site analysis and planning phase for a new housing development. However, collecting trails information this way means that Princeton officials will have only a partial a trails inventory because not all residential developments would be subject to OSRD.

Princeton's region has active trail organizations such as Wachusett Greenways and the Mid-State Trail Association. In addition, CMPRC has prepared some regional trails plans, most recently the North Suburban Inter-Community Trail Connection Feasibility Study (2002). Existing data and maps from these organizations could help Princeton with its own plan, but the town has numerous unmapped and undocumented trails. The advent of GIS in Princeton means the town will have the technology to carry out some mapping on its own, or by contracting for additional GIS services from CMPRC.

Before a trails plan can be produced, Princeton needs a usable inventory of the existing trails. The Open Space Committee could reach out to other local groups with an interest in outdoor recreation, such as the Boy Scouts, or to the regional school district to identify high school students seeking a community service project. With a GPS unit and some training, anyone wishing to help

develop a trails plan could collect data points in the field. The data can be converted in any GIS application. Over time, the town would be able to document the location, condition and ownership of existing trails on private land, and plan some "done-in-a-day" projects such as blazing trails on public land.

SUMMARY II-5:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Open Space & Natural Resources, Transportation

Lead Responsibility: Open Space Committee

Estimated Cost: \$4,500 (GIS Services)

Action II-6: Appoint a Public Safety Building Committee to oversee design and construction of a new Public Safety Building.

Discussion: The Select Board should appoint a Public Safety Building Study Committee to oversee construction of a new facility or renovations to the existing facility, depending on the recommendations of the Master Facilities Plan. The existing public safety building, located behind Bagg Hall and last renovated in the late 1980s, is not adequate for modern police, fire and dispatch operations. It lacks space for new fire vehicles, it needs ventilation and mechanical system improvements, and it does not have appropriate facilities for officer training, booking and records storage. Although it is premature to determine all of the Master Facilities Plan's recommendations and priorities, there is no question that Princeton needs to replace the existing public safety building.

During the Master Facilities Plan process, Princeton will need to determine whether the present site in the Town Center can accommodate a major alterations and expansion project. The town should anticipate the likelihood that it will need suitable space for an ALS ambulance and ALS personnel in the near future, and office space for a full-time fire chief or full-time training officer.

SUMMARY II-6:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Community Facilities & Services

Lead Responsibility: Select Board

Estimated Cost: TBD-Master Facilities Plan

Action II-7: Adopt a Scenic Corridors Overlay District.

Discussion: A Scenic Corridors Overlay District would give Princeton a useful tool to protect views along roads that make a significant contribution to the town's rural character. Princeton residents seem to agree about the roads that qualify as scenic because in public meetings held at the beginning of this master plan process, nearly all of the participants identified the same roadways as having character-defining importance for the town. Moreover, many of the features they identified as memorable or significant about their own neighborhoods are located along these streets.

Unlike a Scenic Roads Bylaw under M.G.L. c.15C (Action III-1), a Scenic Corridor Overlay District is a zoning bylaw. In the overlay district, any construction within 300 feet of the street would require Site Plan Review by the Planning Board. The town needs to decide whether Site Plan Review is necessary for all of its scenic roadways, but consideration should be given to including as many as possible in the Overlay District. The regulations would encourage applicants to build homes more than 300 feet away from the road because if they do, they will be able to bypass Site Plan Review. Through administrative regulations, the Planning Board should institute a simplified application and review process for driveways leading to homes outside the overlay district.

SUMMARY II-7:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Open Space & Natural Resources, Historic Preservation

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action II-8: Provide professional staff support for the Planning Board and other boards with development review authority.

Discussion: Princeton should establish a staff planner position and request funds to hire qualified personnel for 20 hours per week *at minimum*. Town officials with responsibility for planning, development review and permitting operate without any professional staff. In this regard, Princeton is like many of the Commonwealth's small towns. However, most towns do not have as much at stake as Princeton has, and no community should base personnel decisions on practices elsewhere. The fact is that even though Princeton has a small population, the town itself is fairly large. Continued growth in Princeton and evolving state regulations and policies suggest that in the very near future, Princeton will need to hire a professional planner to support the work of several town boards, but principally the Planning Board and Board of Appeals, and the Community Preservation Committee if Princeton adopts the CPA.

In addition, Princeton should anticipate needs for inspectional services, monitoring and enforcement assistance for the Conservation Commission and Board of Health. Often, the salaries of professionals supporting these boards are financed in whole or in part with fees paid by permit applicants. It may be possible to provide health agent services on a regional basis, such as the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health that serves 12 small towns in North-Central Massachusetts.

SUMMARY II-8:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Community Facilities & Services

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board, Select Board

Estimated Cost: \$38,000-\$44,000 for a part-time staff planner (including employee benefits)

Action II-9: Amend the Zoning Bylaw to establish a limited mixed-use overlay district in the town center.

Discussion: Without changing the Residential-Agricultural designation that currently applies to the town center, Princeton should establish an *overlay* district that creates some options for town center properties to include a mix of uses. Princeton Center presents an interesting planning challenge because many residents say they want the town center to be what it is today – a residential, civic and institutional area – yet they also want a coffee shop. People seem to yearn for a place to congregate, but they are reluctant to embrace change and they want as little new growth as possible. Unfortunately, a coffee shop will not survive without customers.

Perceptions of the town center are not entirely consistent with reality. The area already has a seamless mix of single-family homes and some multi-family units, municipal and institutional buildings, and until recently, a few business uses. Not so long ago, Princeton's town center had a few more small businesses, but the only way to establish a commercial activity there today is by obtaining a use variance from the Board of Appeals. Relying on variances as an alternative for allowing changes in use is problematic for a few reasons:

- By definition, granting use variances mean allowing uses that are prohibited in a zoning bylaw. Since zoning ought to reflect a community's master plan goals, it makes no sense to prohibit activities that are consistent with a plan. If residents really want to see a coffee shop in the center of town, both the master plan and the zoning bylaw should say so.
- The present statutory criteria for granting variances are obsolete, and they relate primarily to lots that fail to comply with a zoning bylaw's dimensional requirements. Unlike special permits, variances may not be regulated in a zoning bylaw. For example, a town's

zoning is prohibited from setting rules or standards for the issuance of a variance. The Board of Appeals may impose conditions on a variance, but the Board's decision to grant or deny one must be based solely on criteria in the state Zoning Act.

- Variances were never intended to serve as an alternative to planning or as a means to avoid controversial zoning debates at town meeting, but many communities in Massachusetts have come to rely on variances to solve land use problems that could not be addressed legislatively.

An overlay district literally sits on top of and does not disturb the existing zoning (in this case, Residential-Agricultural). Its boundary may be the same as or different from the boundary of the underlying district. By establishing an overlay district that applies only to properties in and around the town center, Princeton could allow a limited number of small-scale business uses, such as a coffee shop or sandwich shop, offices, an art gallery, or multi-family units by special permit. This approach would give Princeton the tools to control the overall mix of uses in the town center and also to establish clear standards for the issuance of a special permit.

SUMMARY II-9:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Economic Development, Housing, Historic Preservation

<i>Lead Responsibility:</i>	Planning Board
<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	None

PHASE III: 2013-2016

Action III-1: Adopt a scenic roads bylaw.

Discussion: The recently completed Princeton Reconnaissance Report (2006) stresses the importance of protecting the character of Princeton's rural roads. Princeton has *many* scenic roads, in fact most of the town's roads would qualify as "scenic" under any generally understood definition of "rural character." Collectively, Princeton's roads convey an array of images that make the town a visually engaging place to live, work and visit: long views, open fields and farm buildings, deep forests, water, and nodes of historic housing. Princeton also has unpaved roads that contribute to its timeless beauty.

Today, Princeton does not have any regulations in place to protect scenic roads. A proposed scenic roads bylaw failed at town meeting several years ago, apparently out of fear that scenic road regulations would compromise public safety and make it too difficult for the Highway Department to maintain Princeton's streets. Unfortunately, local officials did not have enough information to address these concerns, and the bylaw was defeated.

The town should implement the process outlined in the Princeton Reconnaissance Report: prepare an inventory and photo documentation of the roads that residents consider scenic – at least those identified as candidates for the Scenic Corridors Overlay District – and use the information to create a bylaw tailored to conditions in Princeton. The Planning Board should hire a consulting planner or landscape architect to assist with drafting the bylaw, or seek technical assistance from the Department of Conservation and Recreation's Urban Forestry Program or the Massachusetts Historical Commission. By assembling an inventory of the character-defining attributes of each road, the Planning Board will be able to establish criteria for projects that fall under the scenic roads bylaw. Written criteria will help the Highway Department plan road improvement projects and also help the Planning Board with its review.

PHASE III IMPLEMENTATION

- Adopt a **scenic roads bylaw**.
- Establish a **Mount Wachusett Overlay District**.
- Rezone a portion of the existing Business-Industrial District on Hubbardston Road to Residential-Agricultural, and change the remaining business land to a **Rural Business District**.
- Adopt zoning regulations to allow for **mixed residential uses** within walking distance of the villages and town center.
- Adopt zoning regulations to allow **accessory apartments** in single-family homes.
- In conjunction with the regional planning commission, prepare a **corridor study** for Route 140.
- Adopt policies and guidelines **to manage comprehensive permits** under Chapter 40B.

Adopting a scenic roads bylaw requires local acceptance of M.G.L. c. 40, § 15C, the Scenic Roads Act. Scenic roads may be nominated by the Planning Board, Historical Commission or Conservation Commission, and they must be designated by town meeting. The law exempts numbered routes unless the route is located entirely within the boundaries of the city or town and no part of it is owned by the state. The Scenic Roads Act provides that "any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work... shall not involve or include the cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof..." until the Planning Board has held a public hearing.

SUMMARY III-1:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Historic Preservation, Open Space & Natural Resources, Transportation

<i>Lead Responsibility:</i>	Planning Board
<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	\$10,000 (Consultant), if roads inventory and photo documentation tasks are conducted by local volunteers and/or town staff.

Action III-2: Commission an analysis to determine the boundaries and appropriate regulatory controls for a Wachusett Mountain Overlay District, and amend the Zoning Bylaw accordingly.

Discussion: Wachusett Mountain is a unique landscape and a major scenic and recreational resource for Princeton and the region. Managing the visual and environmental impacts of future development within the mountain's viewshed requires special strategies. A Wachusett Mountain Scenic Overlay District that applies to activity above the 1,000 foot elevation would help Princeton preserve the landscape and the town's rural character. Toward this end, the Planning Board should retain a consulting planner or landscape architect to delineate the boundaries of the overlay district and develop regulations for it. A steering committee or task force should be appointed to work with the consultant to refine the concept for this district and develop the proposed zoning.

SUMMARY III-2:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Open Space & Natural Resources, Historic Preservation, Land Use

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: \$18,000-\$25,000 (Consultant)

Action III-3: Replace the existing Business-Industrial District on Hubbardston Road with a Rural Business District.

Discussion: As part of a multi-year process for updating and improving Princeton's zoning, the town should reassess its existing regulations for the Business-Industrial District on Hubbardston Road. It makes sense to preserve a small business zone in this part of town, particularly since it already has a few business establishments. However, most of land north of Hubbardston Road and west of Gates Road is (or should be) protected open space. Princeton will continue to need areas for business uses that may not be appropriate for a village but are nonetheless important for a small agricultural community, e.g., sales and repair of farming equipment, feed and lumber stores, and so forth. Still,

the existing Business-Industrial District regulations should be updated and strengthened so the town has tools in place to control visual impacts and assure adherence to reasonable site standards.

SUMMARY III-3:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Economic Development, Open Space & Natural Resources

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action III-4: Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow conversion of older single-family homes to multi-family dwellings within a ½-mile radius of the Town Center and each Village District.

Discussion: Just about everyone who participated in this master plan process said that Princeton should have more types of housing. Today, the town's zoning restricts residential development to single-family dwellings on large lots, except that an existing single-family home can be converted to a two-family or three-family dwelling if it occupies a very large parcel. It may not be appropriate to allow mixed residential uses anywhere in Princeton, but the town should ease restrictions on small-scale conversions for single-family homes located near the villages.

Concentrating housing in and adjacent to designated village areas expresses a policy preference for people to live near goods and services. It is a rural expression of "Smart Growth." Princeton could limit single-family conversions to buildings of a certain age, mainly to control the pace of conversion activity, and the town also could limit the number of multi-family units created in a single conversion development. The existing cap of three units is too low for larger homes, which often are the best candidates for a conversion development.

In addition, the town needs to reconsider its the minimum land area requirement (five acres for a three-unit conversion). Princeton may want to retain these requirements elsewhere in the Resi-

dential-Agricultural District, but it makes little sense to consume such a large amount of land for a single use so close to a village.

SUMMARY III-4:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Land Use, Housing

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action III-5: Amend the Zoning Bylaw to allow accessory apartments in owner-occupied single-family homes.

Discussion: Consistent with the theme of allowing more types of housing in Princeton, the town should have regulations to allow accessory apartments, by right or by special permit, in owner-occupied single-family homes. Accessory apartments offer a simple, low-impact way to provide housing diversity without new residential construction. Even in communities that have allowed accessory apartments by right for many years, the experience has been that homeowners create them for personal (family) reasons and there has been no proliferation of accessory apartments, town-wide or in particular neighborhoods.

Princeton has some options for designing an accessory apartment bylaw. For example, the town could:

- Limit accessory units to the interior of a single-family home or allow them in a detached building on the same lot, such as a barn or garage.
- Establish minimum eligibility standards, such as the age of the existing residence. There are legal issues with limiting accessory apartments to homes that already exist today, but requiring homes to be at least 10 years old on the date of the accessory apartment permit application should be sufficient to address concerns about too many units being created in a short period of time.
- Impose an upper limit on the allowable floor area of an accessory apartment, such as 900 sq. ft. or 25% of the total gross floor area of the existing house.

Accessory apartments meet a number of housing needs: families who need living space for an elderly relative or an adult child, seniors seeking some rental income in order to remain in their home, or two working parents who need a live-in child care provider. In addition, accessory apartments provide housing for people who cannot afford market-rate rents in suburban or urban apartment developments. Under current state policy, however, it is extremely difficult to regulate accessory apartments in a way that makes them eligible for listing on the Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory. While the units do not “count” for Chapter 40B purposes, they nonetheless provide affordable housing. Many Princeton residents have said the town needs ways other than Chapter 40B comprehensive permits to create affordable housing, mainly for seniors and for young people who grew up in Princeton and cannot afford to buy a home in town.

SUMMARY III-5:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Housing

Lead Responsibility: Planning Board

Estimated Cost: None

Action III-6: Prepare a corridor study of Route 140 in conjunction with the towns of Westminster and Sterling.

Discussion: Princeton should work with CMRPC and officials from Westminster and Sterling to prepare a corridor study of Route 140. In Princeton, Route 140 is fairly hazardous to drivers and pedestrians alike. It has a comparatively large number of accidents each year, particularly during the winter. In public meetings held for this master plan, many people cited Route 140 as a major public safety concern. They noted that residents of East Princeton find it hazardous to walk or bicycle in their own neighborhood because

of traffic speeds, lack of sidewalks or dedicated bicycle lanes, and the general challenge of accommodating pedestrians and cars along the winding, sometimes narrow segments of Route 140 on its journey through Princeton.

Planning for improvements to Route 140 will be challenging because on one hand it is well-traveled, yet on the other hand it is scenic in several areas. Portions of the corridor also have significant environmental constraints due to Keyes Brook and its associated wetlands. One problem with Route 140 is that for a road that carries a noticeable amount of through traffic each day, the surrounding land use pattern is fairly homogenous. Another problem is that some of the signage along Route 140 is masked by vegetation or simply in poor condition. In addition, the edge of the road is difficult to perceive in many areas due to a lack of sideline stripes or stripes that are worn and ineffective.

Allowing a modest increase in the amount of development in the East Princeton village area would help to slow the speed of traffic moving through that part of town, but drivers need to be able to anticipate changes in land use and level of pedestrian activity before they reach the village. A series of modest traffic-calming measures ought to be explored, particularly on approach to the intersections of Route 140/East Princeton Road and Redemption Rock Trail North/Fitchburg Road.

SUMMARY III-6:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Transportation, Land Use, Economic Development

<i>Lead Responsibility:</i>	Planning Board, Select Board, Roads Advisory Committee
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<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	***
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Action III-7: Establish policies and guidelines for managing Chapter 40B comprehensive permits.

Discussion: At the first public participation meeting for this master plan, residents said Princeton's

top weakness is lack of affordable housing – and the most significant threat to Princeton's rural character is "the 'bad' 40B," or a large, unwanted comprehensive permit development.

Princeton has some immunity to the types of comprehensive permits that many people fear. It has no public water or sewer service, it has difficult-to-develop land in many parts of town, and relative to the location of goods, service and jobs, Princeton is somewhat remote. In the past few years, however, several comprehensive permits have been proposed and either approved or appealed in Rutland, Westminster, Sterling and Holden. Princeton differs from all of these towns in noteworthy ways, but it is a mistake to assume that Princeton will never see a comprehensive permit application. In fact, towns smaller than Princeton have had to respond to unexpected comprehensive permits.

Princeton needs to prepare for Chapter 40B so that local officials understand their roles and responsibilities before a developer arrives in town with a comprehensive permit proposal. Instead of taking a hostile approach, Princeton should be prepared to say what it wants from a comprehensive permit development, such as open space and building design considerations, and realistic ideas about density and scale. The town also could adopt a policy that makes it easier for small developments to proceed through the comprehensive permit process. The Select Board and Planning Board should lead a process to develop comprehensive permit policies and guidelines, and the Board of Appeals needs comprehensive permit regulations, which should be prepared by Town Counsel.

SUMMARY III-7:

Addresses Master Plan Elements: Housing

<i>Lead Responsibility:</i>	Planning Board, Select Board
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<i>Estimated Cost:</i>	None
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ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION NEEDS

Some aspects of implementing a master plan require ongoing attention. They are difficult to associate with any particular phase of the implementation process because they do not have discrete beginning and end points. In fact, classifying them by phase could be very misleading because in some respects, these types of implementation activities never really end. Instead, they are integral to the operation and management of local governments everywhere. Princeton has identified some needs in this category, mainly tasks that relate to governance, operations and finance.

Action O-1: Explore, identify and implement effective ways to recruit, train and keep volunteers to serve on town boards and committees.

Discussion: By choice, Princeton has a small, decentralized government in which many boards and officials share responsibility for making decisions and delivering municipal services. This form of government has a number of advantages: it offers multiple avenues for residents to participate in running their town, it provides for democratic decision-making, and it can be fairly inexpensive because qualified volunteers help to control growth in municipal service costs. A disadvantage is that it requires many residents to share the workload. It also can be expensive; if volunteers without adequate training or support make innocent mistakes that create a significant liability for the town, responsibility for the cost of legal services, damages and so forth falls on the municipality. Further, accommodating many volunteers requires enough meeting space for boards and committees to perform their duties.

Like most towns, Princeton has a small corps of dedicated people who provide many hours of volunteer service. The town needs ways to involve more residents so that other volunteers do not have to shoulder as much responsibility or devote as many hours to town government. Involving more residents in civic life also increases the probability that government decisions will be accepted

RECURRING IMPLEMENTATION

- Recruitment, training and retention of **local government volunteers**.
- Hiring **employees who can perform more than one function**, where appropriate.
- Periodic **review of user fee schedules** to determine whether adjustments should be made to improve **cost recovery**.
- Regional approaches to service delivery.

by a wide range of people. It facilitates public education and consensus. However, the evolution of small towns from rural hamlets to bedroom communities has made it increasingly difficult to attract and keep local government volunteers just about everywhere.

Lack of time contributes to the problem of attracting volunteers, but it is not the only factor. Busy people with limited hours to spare will choose volunteer activities that interest them and provide a source of self-satisfaction. It is hard to convince local government volunteers to remain committed when town meeting rejects their recommendations or refuses to fund a proposed program or project, or when the resources simply do not exist to accomplish what needs to be done.

Non-profit organizations often have staff members whose responsibilities include recruiting and managing volunteers. They screen applicants for volunteer positions, assess each applicant's skills and time availability, and try to align a new volunteer's interests with the organization's needs. They also provide training, support, and periodic recognition programs to reward hard-working volunteers.

Local governments could benefit from instituting a similar system, but in very small towns with limited personnel, recruiting new volunteers requires constant outreach by *existing* volunteers. Often, residents who would never submit a "talent

bank” or public service application form at town hall will respond to a personal request to serve on a board or committee. Prospective volunteers may have no interest in working on a committee, but they have special expertise and are willing to serve individually on an as-needed basis.

Recognition programs could help Princeton retain some of its volunteers, but recognition programs alone are not enough to counter the conditions that keep many people from volunteering in the first place, e.g., lack of time, lack of knowledge about local government operations, or fear of the criticism that often comes with public service.

For a small community like Princeton, plausible recruitment strategies would include any of the following:

- Posting volunteer opportunities on the town’s web site and public service announcements delivered through a “broadcast” email to all subscribers on PMLD’s new high-speed internet system;
- Personal networking;
- Outreach through the schools, including occasional civics programs that encourage participation by children;
- Consulting town meeting attendance records to identify residents who frequently attend town meeting but are not currently serving on a town board or committee, and making personal contact with those individuals;
- A “welcome” packet that is ready to distribute to prospective volunteers, with information about local government, service opportunities, current “hot topics” and community projects, and the names of three or four experienced local officials who are willing to serve as points of contact and mentors for new volunteers.

In addition, Princeton should continue to see that local officials have access to adequate information to perform their volunteer duties. Some readily available training and information resources include:

- The **Citizen Planner Training Collaborative** (CPTC), U-Mass Extension, provides annual conferences for local officials and individualized, on-site training at the request of cities and towns. <www.umass.edu/masscptc>
- The **Massachusetts Housing Partnership** provides training upon request, publishes extensive technical assistance on Chapter 40B, and pays consultants to help a Zoning Board of Appeals with its review of comprehensive permits. <www.mhp.net>
- “**Townboard**” is a comprehensive schedule of state, regional and national training programs and conferences for local officials and staff, on topics ranging from environmental law to planning and municipal management. <www.townboard.org>

Action O-2: When considering growth in staff, hire and train people to perform more than one function, wherever feasible and appropriate.

Discussion: Some of the same factors that make it difficult for communities to attract and retain local government volunteers have begun to affect paid or stipend positions, notably call firefighters. As fewer people work in their own towns or close by, it becomes increasingly difficult to provide adequate capacity for public safety functions such as fire protection or emergency medical services.

Princeton is not immune to these conditions. In some of the state’s smallest towns, local government employees double as firefighters, highway workers perform other traditional public works duties, and administrative and clerical employees are trained to move seamlessly from one department to another so they can respond to periodic

shifts in workload. If one of Princeton's master plan goals is to maximize opportunities for cross-training municipal workers, the town will need to examine (and possibly modify) its existing job descriptions, and screen applicants for their ability and interest to perform more than one job. Sometimes, the advantage of efficient use of personnel may be offset by the disadvantage of losing qualified applicants who do not wish to perform duties outside their particular area of expertise.

Action O-3: Establish a systematic process for reviewing user fees and charges in order to generate revenue for municipal operations.

Discussion: Some of Princeton's local government services are available to the public on a user-fee basis. For example, when residents need emergency medical care, their health insurance provider is billed for the cost of local ambulance response. In turn, Princeton retains the revenue from ambulance services to pay emergency medical personnel and build a reserve for vehicle maintenance and replacement. Other operations that charge fees for certain services include the Parks and Recreation Commission, the Board of Health, Building Department, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Town Clerk. In some cases the fees they charge are set by statute, but for the most part, local government revenue from user fees is based on a fee schedule set by the Select Board or another independently elected body.

Every town in the Commonwealth struggles with fee setting because local officials do not want to impose unreasonable charges on residents, yet there is relentless pressure to generate revenue from sources other than the tax levy. A common practice in many towns is to survey the fee schedules of nearby communities and set local fees within range of prevailing practices elsewhere. However, this approach masks the possibility that fees in other towns may bear little relationship to the actual cost of service delivery.

Local governments should approach fee setting with more precision than they do, particularly in

Massachusetts where municipalities have such limited taxation power. Here, the failure of a given user fee to meet the legal definition of a "fee" makes it a tax by default. Erring on the side of caution, towns often collect less revenue from user fees than they could, but the protocol for setting fees that capture actual full costs can be difficult and time-consuming unless communities have procedures in place to track all of the direct and indirect costs involved with delivering a service.

Princeton ought to review all non-statutory fees on a biennial basis at least, and perhaps annually for programs and services that serve many users, such as recreation activities. A methodology for setting and reviewing fees should be established jointly by the Town Administrator, Select Board and Advisory Board in order to assure consistency across municipal departments. The Department of Revenue has published a manual for this purpose, *Costing Municipal Services* (2005), which may be useful to Princeton in establishing its own fee setting protocol. In addition, the National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting and the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) have technical assistance resources on full cost recovery from user fees.

Since Princeton is so small and its local government is not a very complex organization, it is unlikely that the town will ever generate much revenue from fees. Still, wherever costs can be recovered from user fees, the result is reduced pressure on the tax levy.

Action O-4: Pursue regional service delivery wherever feasible and appropriate.

Discussion: Massachusetts does not have many successful models of regional service delivery or inter-local service agreements. The most common form of regionalization here is regional school districts, but in other parts of the country, regional service delivery is the norm. Its less common use in the Commonwealth means that the total cost of local government services runs fairly high on a per capita basis. For small towns like Princeton,

regional opportunities should be explored wherever possible. For example:

- Health agent services for Title V inspections, permitting, monitoring and enforcement could be provided through an inter-local agreement with neighboring towns. A good example of a regional health services consortium is the Nashoba Associated Boards of Health, which provides Title V support to local boards of health. It also performs restaurant and housing code inspections, and provides public health nurses to participating towns. The Franklin Regional Council of Governments offers similar services to several
- The towns of Hamilton and Wenham have some unusual inter-local agreements, including the state's only two-town public library and a joint recreation department.
- Animal control, technology and conservation agent services are other examples of local government functions that have been mentioned in Princeton as potential candidates for regional service delivery.

small towns in the northern Connecticut River Valley.

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LAND USE PLAN

- Village Center
- Rural Business
- Open Space & Public Use
- Rural-Residential
- Wachusett Overlay District
- Trails (Existing & Future)
- Village Residential Areas
- Town Boundary
- Open Water
- Rivers & Streams
- Railroad
- Local Roads
- Public
- Private or Limited Access



Town of Princeton, Massachusetts
MASTER PLAN

9.1 LAND USE PLAN

April 2007



Princeton Master Plan Steering Committee

Consulting Team:
COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES GROUP, INC.
Larry Koff & Associates
Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, inc.

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