



Town of Rochester
Massachusetts

Master Plan
April 2009

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Town of Rochester
Master Plan Committee

Town of Rochester, Massachusetts
Master Plan
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PLANNING THE TOWN WE WANT

BACKGROUND

The town of Rochester last updated its Master Plan in April of 2000. In April 2005, the Planning Board appointed a Steering Committee and the process of updating the 2000 Master Plan was begun. The Steering Committee solicited volunteers from the community to spearhead focus groups on the various components of the Master Plan.

The focus groups were asked:

1. to review the 2000 Master Plan;
2. to provide an evaluation of whether the goals and action items of that Master Plan had been met;
3. to evaluate whether those goals and action items were still appropriate;
4. to make recommendations for goals and action items going forward.

The various focus groups met frequently and conducted various public outreach activities. Proceeding with these contributions, the Steering Committee has prepared this updated Master Plan.

WHY PREPARE A MASTER PLAN?

When approached, most people question why a Master Plan is prepared for a community. The simple answer is that the entire process is an opportunity for the community to evaluate what it has become, to explore what it would

like to be and to develop a plan to guide it towards the intended destination. The resulting Master Plan can then be used as a guide by all of the boards and committees to help them shape actions, zoning by-law and rules and regulations to achieve the desired goal.

The process of preparing the Master Plan is extremely useful. It is a time for people to pause, review the goals that people had established in the prior exercise, evaluate whether those goals are still appropriate, given present conditions and the makeup of the community, and finally to establish a pathway for the future.

The land, its blessings and limitations, has brought us through the past to the present. That which we decide to save and change is all-important in preserving what we like most about the place we call home.

*The 2000 Rochester Master Plan
Committee*

WHAT'S IN THE PLAN?

The Master Plan of 2000 identified *The Town We Want* as rural. That objective holds true today as the country setting and rural, residual flavor is why people continue to savor the life style and why outsiders continue to move into Rochester.

Like the previous Master Plan committee, the people that participated in the preparation of this Master Plan all echoed the same sentiment that is they liked the town

"the way it is". When asked to define what that meant, many people gravitated towards the use of the word rural. It is clear however, that "the way it is" refers to something that cannot be condensed to a single word, rather involves a feeling which more closely resembles the essence of the community which in turn involves many facets of the community.

Coincidentally, the various components that are required of a Master Plan which include land use, community facilities, economic development, housing, natural resources, open space, circulation and historic preservation are the same components that make up the essence of the community. If we use the word rural to describe the essence of the community, by inference, we mean that each of the components also has a rural flavor.

The use of the word rural as a descriptor of each of the components will have slightly different meanings for each. For example, from a land use perspective, rural is the condition which exists as uncharted wilderness only begins to yield to an agrarian economy: winding roads through deep woods, occasional fields and pasture, farm buildings abutting the roads and occasional villages with the residences nestled closely together. Cottage industry is mixed with purely residential use as people conduct an assortment of businesses from a homestead. Farm animals abound and the presence of wild creatures, the spring peepers, the deer as well as the woodchucks and coyotes, is very evident. Likewise, rural as a descriptor of schools may mean

smaller facilities with students getting more personal attention than the larger municipal and regional school systems. Rural as a descriptor of town government may mean less central government with more division of responsibility among elected officials thus providing more direct responsibility to the citizens.

Maintaining the concept of rural as a descriptor of the essence of the community will allow us to define *Planning The Town We Want* as "the way it is." In doing this we will try to maintain the appearance of our town from the streets we use to go to work, get groceries or take the kids to lessons. Tree lined streets with the stone walls left over from farms are important, as are sections of woods and/or fields. A barn or two at the street level, like the one on Rounseville Road west of Vaughan Hill says "rural", as does an antique house set closer to the road than current zoning permits. Of course, cranberry bogs and pump houses also help to set the tone. Beyond appearance, the rural objective includes a diverse, cohesive and cordial population. Accelerated growth in a community which mostly works outside of town can cause isolation and a loss of a sense of the cohesiveness present in a rural community. In addition, without intervention, the economics of housing drives a community to a monolithic "up scale", suburban flavor which is so evident in many towns.

We actually enjoy most of *Planning The Town We Want* criteria right now. This Plan attempts to define the

specific challenges to retaining what we have, to identify the steps necessary to do so, and to respond to the inexorable outside pressures for change with planning and grace.

MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAW

Massachusetts General Law charges the Planning Board with the responsibility to create a Master Plan and to keep it current. The Board is charged by Chapter 41, Section 81 D which states that a Planning Board -- "shall make a master plan -- and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan. ---. Such plan shall be made, and may be added to or changed from time to time, by a majority vote of such Planning Board and shall be public record. ---". Paragraph 9 of that section provides for implementation as follows: "An implementation program element which defines and schedules the specific municipal actions necessary to achieve the objective of each element of the master plan."

As this excerpt suggests, a Master Plan is never "in cement" but is intended as an on-going set of planning objectives and implementation tasks. In the *Implementation* section at the end of this document, the Planning Board identifies a dynamic process of implementation and/or re-evaluation of objectives.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

As can be seen from the above sections, this plan is simply the sum of its parts. Each of the remaining sections in this plan presents a description of each of the components (*Land Use, Community Facilities, Economic Development, Housing, Natural Resources, Open Space, Circulation and Historic Preservation*) that represent the essence of the community. For each of these components, the discussion is presented with regard to the goals, objectives, and recommendations of the previous Master Plan, as well as a summary of the present status and recommendations for future actions. Each of these components has been studied and recommendations given, keeping in mind the community's desire to maintain a rural essence.

Because of the pressures from surrounding towns and the economic "drivers" which impact development, it is crucial that all of the Master Plan recommendations contained herein be pursued proactively. In order to facilitate the implementation of this plan, the final section of the Master Plan presents a plan for the implementation of the recommendations contained herein. This section should be considered to be the critical steps necessary to maintain and achieve *Planning The Town We Want*.

LAND USE PLANNING

HOW IT INFLUENCES OUR LIVES

Land-use planning is a tool for towns to guide the way land is developed which in turn affects the way the town looks and feels. Decisions about how residential, recreational, commercial and industrial uses interact are made based on the resident's desires as well as the socio-economic goals of the community.

To some extent, our land use is a reflection of who we are and what we like. Most people locate themselves in areas that meet their personal goals and needs. Many of us fish, hunt, ride horses, dirt bike or just use empty spaces to commune with nature and achieve "spacing" from life's pressures. As kids, many of us used the woods and fields as spacing from structured "authority" while trying to decipher who we are.

Self-determination is a major element of land use planning. To some extent, the public can pass rules and regulations to guide the evolution of the town we live in and how it feels as a sense of "Place". These come in the form of the Zoning By-Law, Rules & Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land, plus local Board of Health and Conservation Commission regulations. Mostly these local constraints are justified on the basis of protecting the health, safety and welfare of the populace; but they also allow for a level of self-determination.

The rules and regulations need to be carefully crafted and reevaluated from time to time to fully reflect the will of the residents and property owners as perceptions and objectives evolve over time. The Planning Board and Board of Appeals need to have confidence that it represents all parties, or at least it is working on an acceptable set of compromises. The "drivers" most of us feel are varied but include economics, fashion, and a strong preference for country living. Fashion and economic realities evolve with time and

circumstances. For example, possible significant changes in global circumstances resulting from reduced availability of liquid and gaseous petroleum and/or global warming may impact what residents want and need. Good planning can anticipate some change and should attempt to do so.

All but about 20% of the land in Rochester is privately owned, belonging to individuals or business entities. For some, it's an investment with a calculated return; for others it's a long term holding with longer term, and maybe even elusive objectives. Regardless, it is clear that 80% of the land in Rochester is privately owned and therefore, is potentially developable, or able to be re-developed, and consequently has the potential to change the place we live. This potential for change requires wise land use planning to guide it in a direction that we all want.

Failure to take aggressive steps will result in what one perceptive author described as the *Geography of Nowhere*: James Howard Kuntzler, in his book of that title describes how the automobile has created an amorphous wall-to-wall suburbia and strip-mall geography with no unique distinctions from town to town. Rochester can do better *but we must work aggressively and immediately*.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

Most of the town is zoned for mixed residential--agricultural use with only a small area in the Rounseville Road area and in the northeast corner zoned for business and/or industrial. Where residential in use, Rochester has a two-acre minimum lot size with much of the balance of town either in cranberry farming or remaining as yet undeveloped.

So what do Rochester residents and landowners really want? In the Master Plan of 2000, residents were concerned about becoming suburban with the uniformity of large lots and seemingly no regard for the unique features of each parcel. They sought to preserve the landscape features

which “defined country”. People were ambivalent about multi-family facilities, affordable housing, cluster zoning and village style development. The Implementing Actions in that Master Plan called for zoning by-laws requiring preservation of the unique features of a parcel, the creation of multiple zones of various building densities, provisions for flexibility in lot size, frontage and setback requirements, active steps to promote farming, increased protected acreage and the hiring a Town Planner.

There are selected successes in achieving the objectives of the Master Plan of 2000 but many challenges remain. The achievements are: creation of the Flexible Development by-law with provisions to honor the specific features of the parcel involved, creation of a Special Residential Development by-law allowing increased density in selected circumstances, formation of a Farming Commission and preservation of large acreage from the Church’s, Linc Rounseville’s estate, and Eastover Farm. A Town Planner has been added to the staff.

WHERE WE WOULD LIKE TO BE

During the preparation of this Master Plan, the public’s opinion was solicited in many ways. The public identified their dominant goals along with some generic objectives as follows:

1. Enough space to be ourselves;
2. Sufficient undeveloped acreage to avoid a sense of claustrophobia;
3. Preservation of farm and cranberry activities;
4. A property tax base with sufficient non-residential tax revenue sources to “keep the lid on increases”; *Note: Non-residential means business, commercial or industrial uses which generate significantly less municipal costs such as police, fire and schools.*
5. Some level of convenience in shopping for daily essentials;
6. Safety for kids to get about in

- recreation and to school;
7. Availability of some living units for moderate wage earners to allow adult children to remain in Rochester;
8. Retention of a location for the Country Fair and other Town Center functions;
9. Keep Rochester user friendly from a traffic safety and driving comfort perspective;
10. Recreation opportunities, both formal and informal;
 - a. Ball fields
 - b. Dirt Bikes
 - c. Horseback riding
 - d. Birding
 - e. Playing in brooks, puddles and streams
 - f. Bicycling, hiking and walking
11. A town center that generates pride and positive identity;
12. And some less apparent objectives
 - a. Preserve water quality in our aquifers
 - b. Minimize noise pollution
13. The Encouragement of diverse socio-economic population

NECESSARY ACTIONS

So what can we do? We need to be proactive with our planning instead of reactive. The following are land use objectives which are designed to help Rochester evolve with some country flavor while addressing the other “wants”. Some of the land use “wants” are more appropriately addressed as *Infrastructure/Circulation, Economic Development and Housing* and the reader is referred to these sections.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS

PLANNING BOARD CHALLENGES:

1. Develop and recommend a Tradable Development Rights (TDR) By-Law to save the illusion of "country" on the roads we use daily. *Note: TDR's provide a legally binding way for a landowner to sell By-Right development opportunities for a buyer to use somewhere that's less conspicuous.*
2. Sponsor an Open Space Residential Development by-law to provide a place for TDR development rights to transfer into.
3. Provide recommendations to rezone more territory for commercial activities (See *Economic Development* section).
4. Consider "revamping" the by-laws for the Commercial District and Limited Commercial District to accommodate mixed use but exclude stand-alone residential units.
5. Manage development to create Open Space with specifications on approved plans.
 - a. Especially encourage preservation of existing agricultural use and existing fields
 - b. Public access is desirable, casual access should be accommodated.
6. Zone to encourage "Inventoried Affordable" by DHCD criteria plus provisions for financially accessible living facilities for moderate-income populations.
 - a. Recommend amendments to the by-laws to define an accessory apartment concept and require them to qualify as *Inventoried Affordable* under the State DHCD

rules. (See *Housing*)

- b. Recommend amendments to the by-laws to permit more densely settled districts to enable moderate income living.

7. Develop a comprehensive town center plan.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH PLANNING BOARD TASKS:

1. Make the town more "people friendly" with walking and bicycle paths and selected sidewalks.
2. Assemble a list of potentially attractive and economically viable projects as candidates for the large Chapter 61 properties. This may possibly position the Town to make acceptable plans to acquire such properties within the allowable 120 day decision "window" provided by statute should the owner exercise the right to request release. *Note: Chapter 61 of Mass General Laws provides tax breaks for owners of farm, woodland and selected recreational acreage. When the acreage is sold, the Town gets first refusal at the P&S price with 120 days to decide.*

COMMUNITY FACILITIES, CIRCULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Facilities, circulation and infrastructure are fairly broad categories to describe the physical buildings, equipment, roadways and land improvements necessary for the operation of the community. Facilities include buildings that house public functions such as schools, town hall, fire and police departments, libraries, highway departments, recreational facilities and senior centers. Infrastructure is a general category to describe physical items needed to provide and distribute services to the residence. Typical infrastructure items include roads, water distribution systems, electric power, telephone and cable service, emergency communications for fire and police, and gas service.

ROADS

As of 2008, there were approximately 79.61 miles of town roads in Rochester. This includes approximately 9 miles of unaccepted roads, 6.36 miles of Mass. Highway roads, and 64.25 miles of town-accepted roads.

Included in that total is .23 miles of interstate (Rt. 495), 13.89 miles of rural major collector roads (Rt. 105, Rt. 28, Mary's Pond Road, and New Bedford Road), and 10.25 miles of minor collector roads (Mattapoissett Road and Walnut Plain Road). All other roads in Rochester are classified as local.

Lacking other means of transit, virtually all transportation is by motorized vehicle whether private personal vehicles or major

commercial agricultural vehicles, earth removal vehicles or other business traffic. Rochester itself is predominantly well dispersed single-family residences, interspersed with home businesses and agricultural activities, mostly but not all in cranberries. Except for approximately 2% of the population in agriculture, almost all work out of town traveling by private vehicle.

Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) studies indicate that Rochester roads are adequate for the foreseeable future with few identifiable safety or capacity problems. The Highway Department maintains them well on a fairly modest budget.

All of this may seem satisfactory but problems exist and will grow with the build-out of Rochester and the neighboring towns:

1. The new Wareham shopping center will draw traffic through the town center with little interest in Rochester except to get beyond. Professional estimates are an increase of one to two vehicles per minute.
2. Growth in the form of new subdivisions has cut off shortcuts for kids to move about forcing them to use the adjacent roadways.
3. Because of ever increasing aggressive traffic, children must be driven to ball fields, lessons and activities.
4. Increased traffic on the roads makes cycling increasingly dangerous and this compounds the traffic load as children are transported to various activities.
5. Rural objectives have historically avoided sidewalks and bicycle paths as out of character with town persona.
6. Multiple non-traditional (less than 90 degree intersections), left over from

horse-and-buggy days, are causing an increased level of accidents with increased local and through traffic.

Some of Rochester's roads may be too wide, too straight and too conducive to aggressive, through traffic to meet the objectives of *Planning The Town We Want*. New Bedford Road, Mary's Pond Road, North Avenue and Mattapoisett Road may qualify here. Special attention and strategies for remediation are required to maintain a quiet, rural town image.

The remaining narrow, winding and tree-lined country roads contribute to Rochester's rural flavor and should be preserved through careful, proactive planning. Some trade-offs exist relative to emergency preparedness associated with evacuation planning, and with tree limbs putting power lines at risk in wind and ice storms. Compromise is necessary.

SCHOOLS

Several years ago, the Town formed a Rochester Memorial School Building Committee to address the school needs as a result of growth within the town. In 2004, the committee concluded that additional classrooms are needed at the Rochester Memorial School. At the time, due to the discontinuance of the State Building Assistance Bureau funding, there were no state funds available to assist building. The issue went to town meeting where funding was approved for design of the addition. The proposition 2½ override election to support the funding, however, did not pass.

In 2006 the new school building funding source was formed by the Commonwealth to aid cities and towns in meeting school demands. After developing revised

application procedures, the responsible agency began accepting applications. In early 2008 the town was informed that it would potentially be eligible for funding up to 55% of the cost of construction. Eligibility criteria require that a feasibility study be conducted to determine whether expansion of existing facilities or building a new one makes the most sense. As of this writing, the process is continuing.

The Old Rochester Regional High School and Junior High School have recently undergone extensive renovations and it is felt such renovations should be sufficient for at least the next five years.

As in the previous Master Plan, Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School serves Acushnet, Carver, Lakeville, Mattapoisett and Rochester. At this writing there continues to be adequate space to accommodate these towns.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Rochester Police Department is located in a new facility on Dexter Lane. No new construction is required.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Fire Department's main station is located at the corner of Hartley Road and Pine Street in a building originally the Waterman School when Rochester had multiple small schoolhouses in each village. There is an auxiliary station located on Ryder Road as part of the new Highway Barn which houses three trucks, a tanker, a ladder truck and a brush breaker. A third station on Neck Road, almost at the Middleboro town line houses one pumper-

engine. The Fire Department shares communications with the Police Department in the Dispatch Center on Dexter Lane due to a recent upgrade.

Because it is a converted schoolhouse, the main facility is not fully suitable for efficient firehouse operation and should be replaced sometime in the future. A slightly more centralized location would be optimal. The Neck Road facility is on a long-term lease from the New Bedford Waterworks and houses one engine. It's location serves an important function to establish that most of the town is within 3 miles of a fire facility; an important statistic as Fire Rating services determine fire insurance rates for the residents.

Fire apparatus should be updated with a combination rescue/pumper truck to replace a 1976 pumper and a 1981 rescue truck in the near future. The 1992 ambulance should be replaced due to wear and obsolescence. Longer term, the 1974 ladder truck should be updated.

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

A new building located off of Ryder Road to house the Highway Department was constructed in the past five years. That building, in combination with the former building at the intersection of Robinson and Cushman Roads provides adequate facilities for the Highway Department.

LIBRARY

The library has always played a small but important role in the town. That role has grown as the library increased its hours, expanded services and improved the

collection. Formerly located at the Town Hall, the current library building was donated in 1976 by Dorothy Plumb in memory of her late husband Joseph. It is governed by an elected board of six Trustees and run by a Library Director appointed by the Trustees. There is a small full-time staff and a group of dedicated volunteers who donate time to assist with projects and chores.

An extensive expansion of the facilities was proposed in the Fall of 2002, but both this proposal and a revised plan in 2003 were rejected by special town meetings in respective years. In the light of these rejections, creative efforts have been undertaken to renovate the existing building. With relatively modest money the library has achieved a new roof, HVAC, and renovated lavatories. A new and spacious entrance is the latest improvement.

The Trustee's objectives include expanded hours of operation and increased depth of library programs plus growth in the library collection. No further building expansion is contemplated in the near future.

WATER SUPPLY

Rochester is caretaker of the region's water supply. The communities of Marion, Mattapoisett, Fairhaven and New Bedford all draw water from Rochester's plentiful aquifers. Rochester has cultivated a strong relationship with its regional partners on both the Mattapoisett River Valley Water Supply Protection Advisory Committee (MRVWSPAC) and the Mattapoisett River Valley Water District Commission (MRVWDC). The MRVWSPAC organization grew out of concern for the aquifer underlying the Mattapoisett River watershed, from which Fairhaven, Marion,

Mattapoisett, and Rochester draw water supplies. The MRVWDC was formed to oversee the financing, design, construction, and maintenance of the recently constructed \$16.5 million dollar water treatment facility located in the Town of Mattapoisett.

Most residences in Rochester have private wells for their domestic water source, with the exception of many residences on Mattapoisett Road, New Bedford Road, Marion Road and County Road. These dwellings are connected to the municipal water supplies of Marion or Wareham. The Town Hall, Plumb Corner Mall, Police Station, Senior Center, and Town Hall Annex are all connected to the Marion water supply.

The existing municipal infrastructure (owned by the Towns of Marion and Wareham) and private wells appear to be adequate for Rochester residents. However with accelerated regional development and an unlined landfill, the Town would be prudent to explore its options. Through the years, Rochester has negotiated inter-municipal water agreements with the City of New Bedford, the Town of Marion and most recently with the Town of Wareham (legislation pending). In order to protect Rochester's interests, these agreements should be reviewed and renegotiated on a regular basis. And installation of municipal wells may also be a consideration.

The specifics of these options are as follows:

Obtain proper DEP permits for a Town of Rochester public water supply and ask Town Meeting for funding to obtain real estate and drill a well or multiple wells. Among the issues raised for this option are:

1. Exclusively Rochester wells are limited to the Sippican River aquifer as the Mattapoisett River Valley is

controlled by the Mattapoisett River Valley Water District Commission. Although Rochester is a member, the Commission has jurisdiction.

2. Identification of suitable locations within the Sippican River aquifer will be challenging given existing development, and could become prohibitive as development progresses in each subsequent year.
3. Such a step anticipates significant town investment in infrastructure such as pipes in the roadways, pumps, testing facilities and the creation of a Rochester Water Department with staff.

Renegotiate with the City of New Bedford as the current off take permits from Great Quittacus Pond expires in the year 2011. The town could seek contingency sourcing of water and treatment plant throughput. With the decline in manufacturing in New Bedford, the city has not utilized its full allotment for many years. Utilization of such a source would require costs of infrastructure similar to that associated with drilling municipal wells, excluding the wells per se and the associated real estate.

Renegotiate the inter-municipal deal with Marion. Marion maintains several wells in Rochester and agreed that Rochester is entitled to 50% of the off take from these wells. Currently Rochester residents using Marion water pay the same water rate as Marion residents. This includes a share of all the infrastructure within Marion. Some residents feel this is inappropriate as all they enjoy is the water and benefit of minimal piping and some pumps which are in Rochester. With a revised inter-municipal agreement, more Rochester residents may be interested in using Marion water.

Wareham has recently installed water mains along the entire Rochester-Wareham town line along County Road with stubs at High Street and Mary's Pond Road. These were installed against the possibility that Rochester may want to tap into the Wareham Water District in the future. Rochester may want to negotiate an inter-municipal agreement to pave the way for participation in this source.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

The entire town is serviced by individual on-site subsurface sewage disposal systems. Although the need for municipal sewer systems is not envisioned at this time, the possibility of shared systems in future could be necessary in order to support cluster housing or villages.

A shared municipal sanitary system could be desirable for the greater town center area should growth overtax conventional subsurface disposal systems. If the town were to approve denser residential development to achieve Invented Affordable living units as defined by the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Communities Development, or increased commercial activity, in areas of municipal water supply (Marion's supply), the resulting sanitary issues may require such a shared facility.

TOWN OFFICES

Our handsome late Victorian 1892 Town Hall replaced an earlier block-house style building from much earlier. History records that the block-house style building illustrated in the painting in Town Hall burned beyond recovery. Even before the

blockhouse, an earlier building is believed to have been situated within the current Rochester Center Cemetery Corp. burial ground. The current building was given to the Town by Mrs. Charles Leonard and contained both Town Hall and Library. The library portion is currently the Assessor's Office. The Town Hall portion was designed to have a cathedral ceiling and exposed varnished beams. Much of the original ornamentation still exists in the attics and crawl-ways. To accommodate growth through the years, it has experienced multiple renovations and revisions with the last extensive upgrade in 1974. There are still people in town who remember when this facility was serviced only by outhouses. Of course, careful husbandry and routine minor upgrades have brought it to the current serviceable but somewhat overused status.

In 1994 the town of Rochester and the First Congregational Church exchanged land, permitting expansion of the Town Hall. A late 1990's feasibility study conducted by Durland & VanVoorhis, New Bedford architects, recommended renovating the Town Hall and construction of attached office facilities in the back. The Annual Town Meeting of 2000 denied funding for the project which resulted in significant crowding until 2005.

In that year the permitting departments and their staff (Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission and Building Commissioner), moved their offices to rented facilities at the Rochester Women's Club that has become known as the Town Hall Annex. This has helped with overcrowding and assisted the permitting departments to coordinate activities. The current Town Hall, however, is in need of expansion and upgrading. The existing

office layouts are suboptimal. This upgrade should include improved accessibility by disabled persons, addition of conference rooms and offices, and the possible restoration of the original cathedral ceiling

As one of only a few anchor points in the town center, the Town Hall is a symbol of who and what Rochester is about. As such, it is important to restore and maintain its traditional grace as well as achieve functionality.

In addition, it may be appropriate for the town to investigate the acquisition of the Rochester Women's Club facility and surrounding land for future expansion of town offices and functions.

PARKS AND RECREATION

The recreational area on Dexter's Lane has recently received upgrades of lighting and sanitary facilities. In addition, the town has a regulation Little League field and one practice field at Raynor Gifford Memorial Park with picnic area and restrooms. An ad hoc committee to investigate the creation of a resident's beach at Mary's Pond was initially delayed as protected Coastal Plain Pond species such as Plymouth Gentian and Philadelphia Panic Grass required special permits. These have been available for sometime now. However, the committee also discovered that bathhouse and sanitary facilities at such an area are very expensive.

COUNCIL ON AGING

Established in 1971 to address the needs of the elderly population, the Rochester Council on Aging continues to be quite active. A Council is appointed by the Selectmen which hires a Director to manage

the facilities and multiple programs. The construction of a Senior Center on Dexter's Lane in 2002 has proved extremely effective in promoting senior activities and sociability. It is felt that the elderly population in the town will continue to grow rapidly.

In addition to the current need for transportation, there is a need for nursing facilities at varying levels plus availability of affordable elderly housing. Consideration for construction of affordable senior housing should be investigated. Also, some investigation is appropriate into feasibility and desirability of providing senior daycare services. Regionalization of some services may generate better service at lower expense.

CEMETERIES

The Rochester Cemetery Commission oversees six active cemeteries in the town: Ashley Cemetery (North Ave.), Hillside (Off High St.), North Rochester (North Ave), Sherman (Pine St), Union (Walnut Plain Road), and Woodside (County Road). There are a few smaller and less used cemeteries located throughout town. The six major cemeteries have little room for expansion and the town should explore the possibility of future locations.

The cemetery on Dexter Lane is a separate organization called Rochester Center Cemetery Corp. which also has some, but limited capacity.

In addition, there is a need for water resources at each major cemetery. This can be accomplished by installation of wells and some type of pump system (i.e. electric or hand pumps) along with a supply of portable water containers. It is felt the Highway

Department could assist in the installation of these pumps.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

1. Provide adequate and accessible community facilities for public use.
2. Protect the Town's rural character while providing necessary services
3. Maintain fiscal stability while managing growth.
4. Encourage *Planning The Town We Want* as a cohesive, mutually respectful "community".

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS

The following actions have been identified to carry out the above goals and objectives:

ADMINISTRATOR:

1. Continue to seek all grants to supplement funding initiatives for town services.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

1. Implement the recommendation of the 1999 Town Hall Renovation & Expansion Study.
2. Design, construct, or renovate the Town facilities in keeping with the rural character of the town.
3. In conjunction with Council on Aging and Planning Board, provide affordable housing for the elderly.
4. Continue to practice fiscal responsibility while maintaining community facilities.

5. Explore future possibilities for public transport for the disabled and others unable to drive private vehicles.

CEMETERY COMMISSION:

1. Install wells and pump systems at each of the six main cemeteries.
2. Consider future locations for cemetery expansion.

HIGHWAY SURVEYOR:

1. Develop a prioritized schedule for building to implement intersection design and pursue necessary funding.
2. Consider adding painted crosswalks at town center.
3. Address increased traffic on roads leading through Rochester center with configuration changes and increased safety features to enhance community friendliness including intersections to be as close to traditional 90-degree intersections as possible and including sidewalks.
4. Identify design and seek funding for roadway drainage problems throughout town.

LIBRARY TRUSTEES:

1. Continue to expand the collection of printed and non-printed materials (music, videos) for circulation.
2. Expand outreach for awareness of library services.

3. Renew library 5-year plan per imminent Trustees schedule

PLANNING BOARD:

In conjunction with the Highway Surveyor recommend Scenic Road status to a town meeting as provided by MGL Chapter 40, Section 15C for selected in-town roads.

GENERAL:

As community members, we all should observe posted speeds and hazard signs and generally behave throughout town as if each person was operating in his/her own front yard.

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND GOVERNMENT

BACKGROUND

The town of Rochester continues to offer our citizens a broad array of municipal services. These services are in need of growth as the town population increases. Indeed, the need to balance the demand for municipal services with the desire to keep the town's rural character and curb rising taxes presents a challenge. This update addresses those services in immediate need of revision or expansion during the ensuing five years.

SCHOOLS

The Rochester School Committee continues to address the needs of growth within the town.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Organized according to state law, it is headed by a Chief of Police appointed by the Board of Selectmen who reports on a day-to-day basis to the Town Administrator. In addition, there are 6 full time patrolmen, 3 full time sergeants, 4 part-time officers for cruiser details and 4 reserve officers for details which are not filled by full timers. All officers belong to the Rochester Police Brotherhood union. It is felt efforts should continue to obtain grants for the Police Department. Rochester is fortunate to have a low crime rate. Expansion of the department should be considered if the need arises.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Fire Chief is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. He continues to direct the department according to state law and is

responsible for appointing and removing call personnel. In addition, one EMT staffs the ambulance seven days a week during the day shift. The Fire Department shares communications with the Police Department in the Dispatch Center on Dexter's Lane.

Rochester's geographic location from the two closest hospitals puts the citizens at risk in a health emergency. Transport time from door to hospital can exceed twenty minutes from various locations in the town. The current yearly call volume for the ambulance is not sufficient to support EMTs trained to the Paramedic Level in skill retention or finances. However, it is felt crucial for the well being of the citizens to upgrade to EMT Intermediate Level.

We currently have a mutual aid agreement with bordering towns to provide Paramedic service. Upgrading will enhance that Paramedic intercept service.

At this time, the call department is capable of handling the volume of calls. Any change in the current call vs. full-time firefighters will need to be addressed by special study.

WATER SUPPLY

The majority of homes in the town continue to be serviced by private wells. The town is blessed by a highly productive aquifer. In addition, Rochester is part of the Mattapoissett River Valley Water Authority and has water rights through this resource if needed. At this time, no significant change is envisioned for Rochester's water supply system. However, it is prudent that the town's Water Supply Commissioners continue to maintain water quality and supply for the future.

SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL

Rochester has curbside collection by a private contractor which is disposed of at SEMASS Waste to Energy Plant. In addition, there is a regional refuse disposal center on Route 28 near the SEMASS plant which accepts refuse and recyclable materials. The Highway Department handles recycling. Certain days are designated for certain areas for pickup. The town of Rochester is in great need of scheduled pick-up of large, non-toxic items which the regular refuse disposal will not handle. It is hoped that scheduling such a service will prevent the disposal of such items on the roadsides and in the woods and less populated areas. A periodic volunteer collection activity done by any of a number of organizations such as the Boy Scouts might help.

PUBLIC HEALTH

There is a three member Board of Health. In addition, the town presently shares a Regional Sanitarian with Marion who witnesses the percolation tests, reviews proposed septic plans, and inspects septic systems during construction. In addition, public health services provides licensing of food establishments, investigation of housing code violations, smoking cessation programs, monitoring of landfill groundwater quality and landfill gas, and coordination of rabies clinics.

We feel there is a great need for better enforcement of animal control issues including fines and violations for uncontrolled domestic animals.

PARKS AND RECREATION

This is a three member elected board which manages the parks and recreation areas.

COUNCIL ON AGING

Established in 1971 to address the needs of the elderly population, the Rochester Council on Aging continues to be quite active. It provides many services to senior citizens.

VETERANS SERVICES

The town of Mattapoisett, by agreement, continues to serve the needs of veterans and their dependents in Rochester. They provide assistance and advice to veterans to insure they receive the help to which they are entitled. Staff and services continue to be sufficient at this time.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Although not usually included in the Master Plan, the original plan addressed the organizational structure. The current organization is heavily reliant on volunteers and part-time elected officials. Although volunteerism is certainly needed in many areas of town government, there is a need for a thorough review of the town's organizational structure and revision as necessary. Such a review with revisions will provide a clear and concise understanding for all publicly held offices and encourage interdepartmental communication and accountability. In addition restrictions must be placed on the number of offices a currently elected/appointed official can hold.

VOLUNTEERISM

It is felt there is a need for the members of the Board of Selectmen to encourage and seek out volunteerism among the town's citizens. Often there are town residents who feel their voices will not be heard above the voices of longevity. It is, however, imperative to blend new ideas with those currently successful and operational ideas in order to maintain town conditions and standards that meet the needs of all residents. This could be accomplished in educating new residents as well as long time residents on the benefits and needs of volunteering. Providing a booth staffed with town representatives at the annual town fair to seek out interested parties and encourage them to become more involved in their town is just one of many ideas to meet these goals.

TOWN MEETING

Rochester practices the New England tradition of Open Town Meeting which is the legislative body of the town. As the town continues to grow, it will be necessary to consider a Representative Town Meeting format. However, these changes will most likely not be necessary for at least five years.

ELECTIONS

The town elections take place prior to the Annual Town Meeting.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Provide adequate and accessible community facilities for public use.
2. Protect the town's rural character while providing necessary services.

3. Maintain fiscal stability while managing growth.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION TASKS

The following actions have been identified to carry out the above goals and objectives:

ADMINISTRATOR:

1. Continue exploration of regionalization agreements to cut the cost of services.

HIGHWAY SURVEYOR:

Initiate a volunteer project for collecting large, non-toxic items for disposal. A nominal fee would be charged. The metal items could be sold for scrap.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

1. Evaluate regionalization of emergency medical services to enable upgrade of Emergency Medical Technician status to the status of Intermediate Level of care.
2. Fully evaluate public water supply options for broad dissemination to residence. Take appropriate action.
3. Continue to practice fiscal responsibility while maintaining community facilities

BOARD OF HEALTH/PLANNING BOARD:

Develop conceptual plans for a town center-wide treatment plant concurrent with development of town center activities.

COUNCIL ON AGING:

1. Develop new volunteer opportunities for COA participants and identify candidates for:
 - a. Staffing and managing meals programs such as the current breakfast activity.
 - b. Website and other technical and how-to programs at Council on Aging.
 - c. Teaching and instruction on a broad array of Council on Aging arts and informational-material programs.
2. Expand outreach efforts to attract more senior resident participation.
3. Conduct feasibility analysis to identify or build senior daycare space.
4. Host a biannual welcoming meeting in the spring and fall for new residents. This would be sponsored by the Rochester Council on Aging. The benefits of such a gathering would serve many purposes. It would provide new residents with information regarding the town, an opportunity to volunteer, and would also provide a venue for vendors. In addition, it would blend new residents with long-time residents and elderly with youth.
5. Conduct an annual program survey of the Council on Aging constituency seeking updates on evolved interests and needs.

TOWN CLERK:

1. Distribute animal control regulations annually during licensing and enforce such regulations by means of fines for violations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Residents might say or think: *We don't want Economic Development; after-all, Rochester is a "bedroom" community and we don't want much commercialism in our residential "hideaway".* Reality is however that, unless we properly provide for a source of tax revenues, our bedroom community will become unaffordable to the average person.

WHAT DRIVES THE ECONOMY OF ROCHESTER

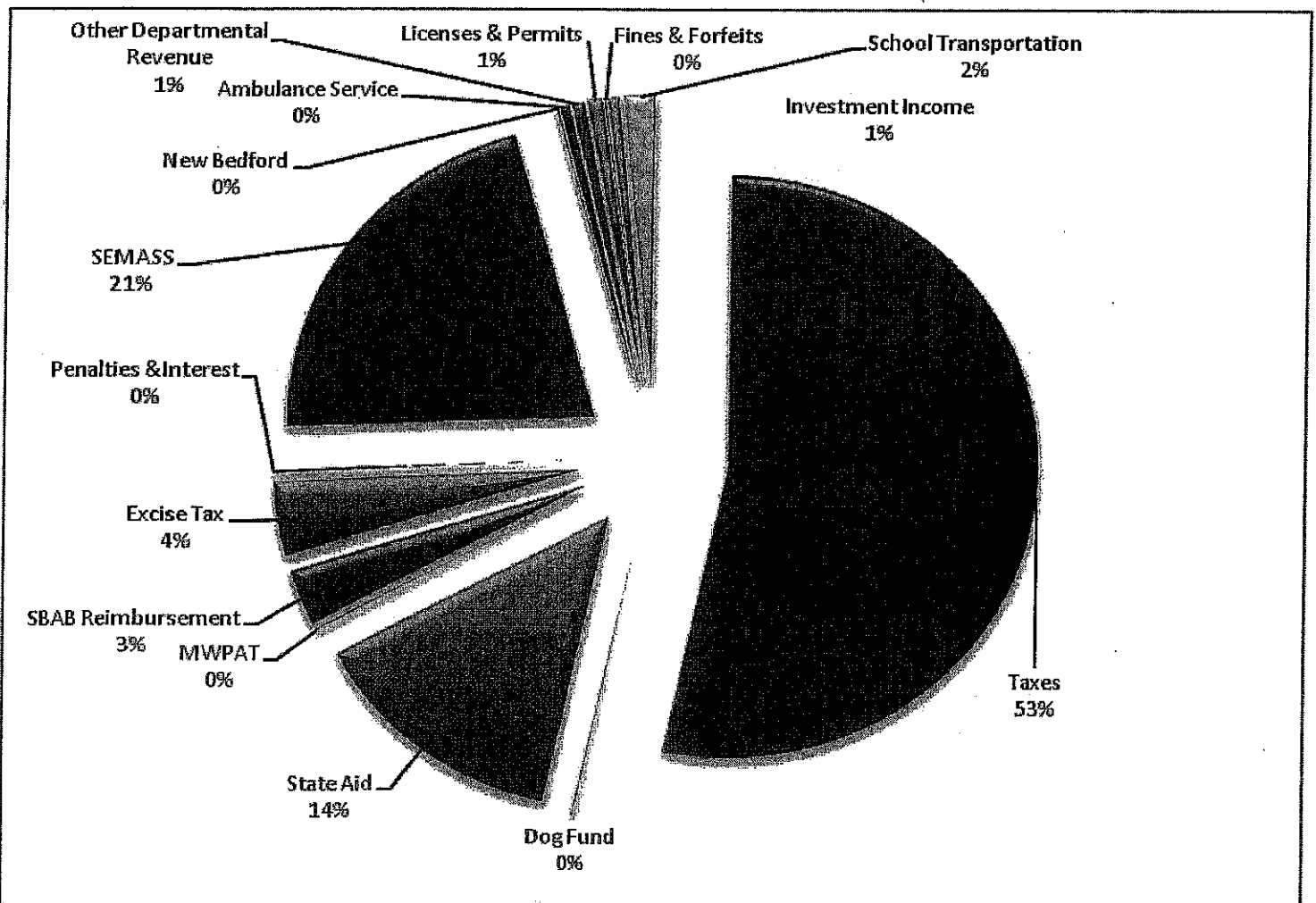
Rochester's economy on a macro scale, like that of any city or town, is driven by income and expenses. Our economy is

really not much different than the management of our personal finances or that of any business anywhere in the world. In very simple terms, our economy is driven by our ability to produce income and to control our expenses. In order to plan for our economic development we all must have a full understanding of our sources of income and the nature of our expenses.

WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

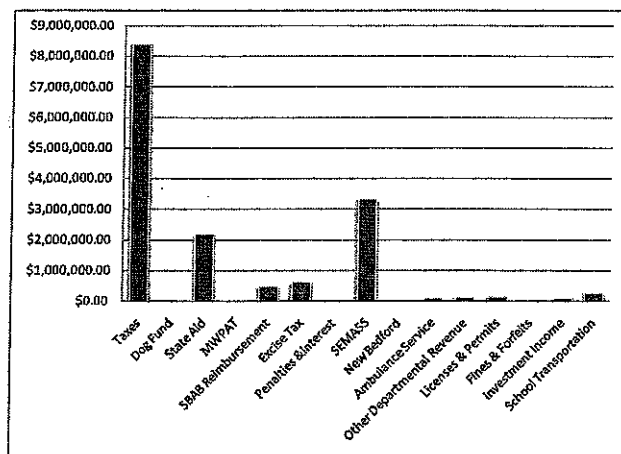
On the income side of the ledger, we have property taxes (or payment in lieu of taxes), excise taxes, fees from licenses and permit applications and reimbursements from state programs.

The chart below shows a breakdown of



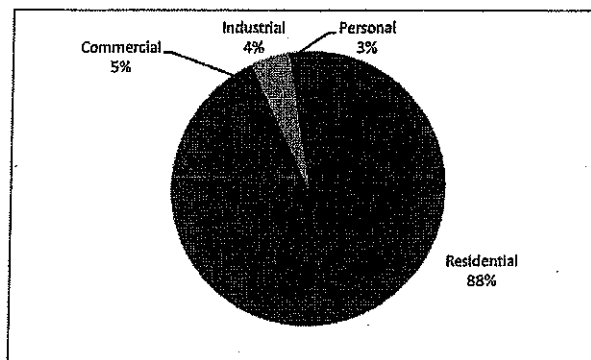
the fiscal year 2007 income. As can be seen, there are several sources of revenue to the town. However, five categories comprise approximately 95% of all revenue with three of those accounting for 88% alone. The 88% consists of real estate taxes, which account for approximately 53% of all income; payments in lieu of taxes from SEMASS at about 21%; and state aid accounts for approximately 14% of our revenue. The other two major revenue streams are significantly lower with excise taxes accounting for 4% and reimbursements from the School Building Assistance Bureau accounting for 3%. The remainder of the revenue streams generally represent 1% or less of the entire town budget.

The following chart presents the actual values for each of the categories discussed above.



As the following chart shows, of the approximately \$8 million that is generated through property taxes, 88% (or approximately \$7 million) comes from residential property taxes. The other 12% of our property tax revenues consist of commercial property at 5%, industrial property at 4%, and personal property

taxes at 3%. Clearly, this information demonstrates that the town of Rochester is highly dependent on residential taxes as a source of revenue to operate the town.



The information also shows the relatively high percentage of total revenue contribution (21%) by the SEMASS facility. It is a clear example of the advantage of attracting "tax friendly" industry to the town to provide a balance to our sources of economic funding. It is part of the essence of economic planning, to diversify your income sources so that no single source carries a disproportionate burden. It is however, also an example of poor business practice to place such a high reliance on a single revenue source. Should for some unforeseen reason major revenue source decrease significantly, the town would find itself in financial hardship due to the loss of such a significant source of its revenue.

This data clearly presents the need for more comprehensive planning in the town, particularly as it relates to economic development and financial matters.

WHERE THE MONEY GOES

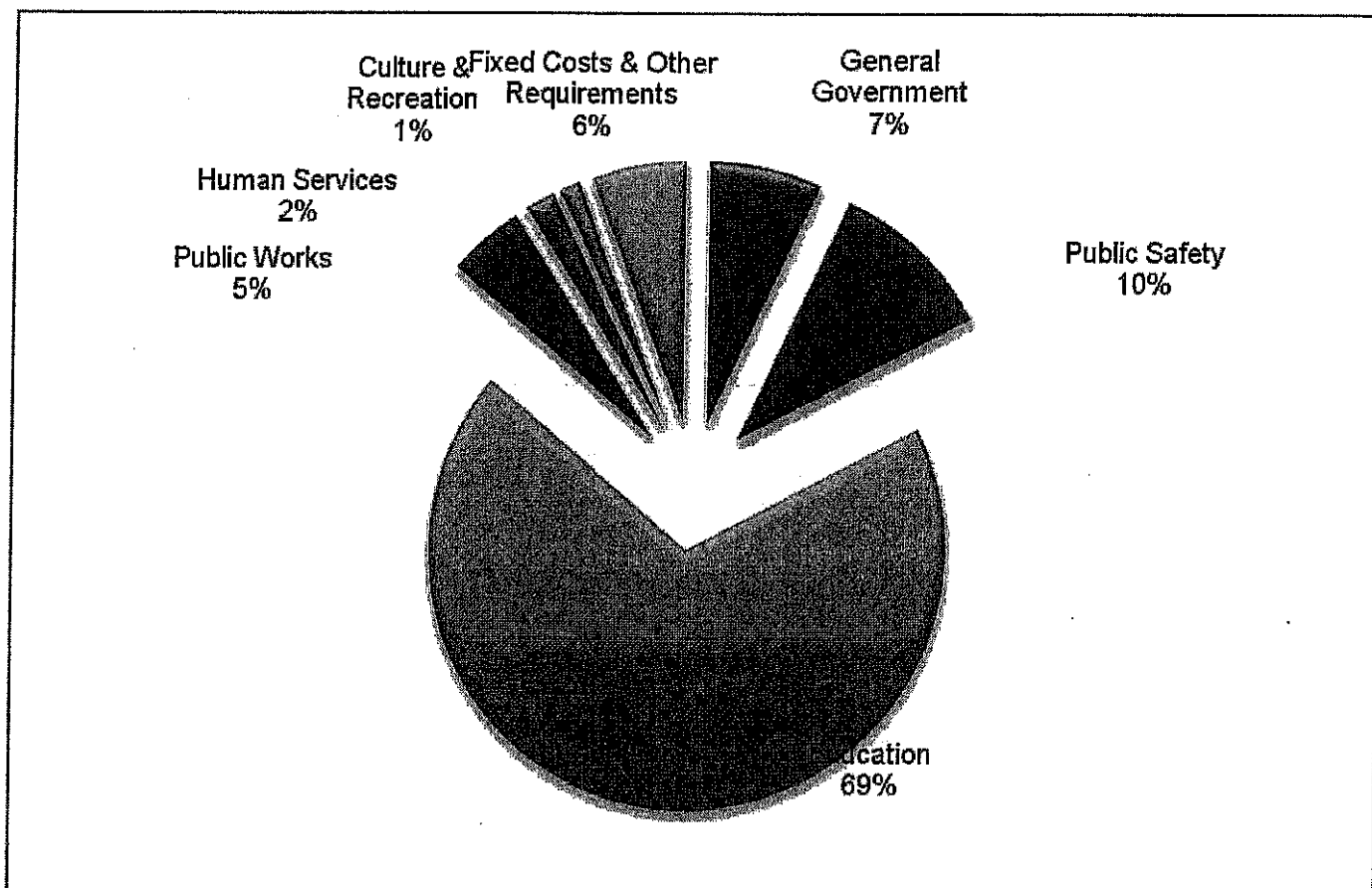
Evaluation of the expense side of the ledger reveals an interesting story. The graph below has been developed based on fiscal year 2007 expenditures. As can be seen, the predominant expenditure in the town of Rochester is for education where we spend approximately 69% of all of our funds. Public safety (10%), general government (7%) and public works (5%) are the next highest categories of expenditures.

While this distribution is somewhat uncharacteristic for the average community in Massachusetts, it is not uncharacteristic for smaller and evolving communities. The town of Rochester has been very frugal with its expenditures, focusing on the need to educate the children in the community. A lot of the

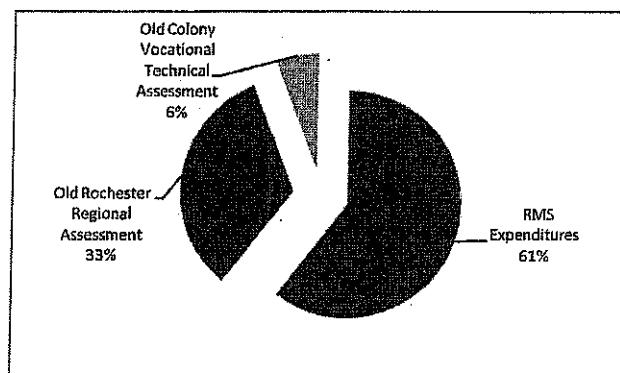
governmental functions have historically been provided by volunteers or by part-time individuals.

Unfortunately, the town's future growth is most likely to be residential and as that grows the demands on education will also increase. With town budgets already reaching the levy limit under the Proposition 2 1/2, it is not likely that enough funds will be available to meet all demands unless some sort of economic stimulus is provided.

Focusing on the educational expenditures, because it is the largest percentage of the entire budget, helps us to understand the delicate balance going forward.



The following graph shows the approximate breakdown of the town spending under the general educational category. As can be seen, expenditures for the Rochester Memorial School (Grades K-6) represents 61% of all expenditure for education with ORR expenditures representing 33%.



Old Colony Regional Vocational High School and the Old Rochester Regional (ORR) Junior High and High Schools have more than adequate capacity within the existing buildings. The upgrades to the ORR facility ensure that it is likely that no significant expenditures on infrastructure will be required within the next 20 years.

The conditions at Rochester Memorial School, however, are significantly different. As presented in the *Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure* section of this Master Plan, the school is woefully inadequate for the existing student population and at a minimum the building will need to be expanded. The potential exists that to be eligible for state funding and to provide for adequate capacity in the long run, a separate building may need to be constructed. Per student expenditures at the Rochester Memorial School are already approximately 30% higher than that for

the ORR students (\$11,500 vs. \$9000) and will likely rise as a result of new building construction.

While it is not possible to place an exact number on the cost associated with new residential housing that produces additional students in our school systems, it is clear that existing costs are between \$9000 and \$11,500 per student. Further, we know that additional students entering our system will require at a minimum, significant expenditures at the Rochester Memorial School.

Based on this discussion, it should be clear that for the town's economic health, we need to encourage new development to consist of the types of uses that would not place demands on our educational system. Traditionally, this means commercial or industrial uses. Realistically, we need to expand this category to include residential housing for singles, newly married, "empty-nesters", retirees and the elderly. We should also evaluate recreational types of uses that will both produce revenue and attract tourists to the community.

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

The Master Plan of 2000 identified 700 acres of the total 23,000 acres in Rochester as zoned for industrial or commercial development and that a small percentage of the population worked in town. This has not changed. That Plan suggested encouraging businesses to capitalize on waste energy from SEMASS, mixed use zoning to bring business along with housing people could afford, and an aggressive plan to encourage business growth, especially businesses compatible with farming and farming operations. It recommended reactivation of a defunct

Industrial Development Commission and expansion of the towns industrially zoned property.

Little has been achieved although some opportunities were explored relative to synergistic businesses to complement SEMASS and a brief "flurry" of attention to the Industrial Development Commission. We actually took steps backwards with regards to our industrially zoned property by changing the zoning designation on 60 acres of usable industrial property (representing approximately 10% of the total in town) from industrial to residential. This rezoned parcel was accessed off High Street and adjacent to A D Makepeace Bogs.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

As of early 2007, Rochester has a modest sized Industrial District and a tiny General Commercial District in the West Wareham section, now mostly developed. We also have a very modest sized Limited Commercial District in the town center comprised of the Plumb Corner Market and what was once the Gibbs Dairy. *(Note: Districts are defined on the Zoning Map which is included in the Figures section. The publication entitled Town of Rochester Zoning By-Law available at the Town Hall Annex or the Rochester website includes Lot Dimensions, the Permitted Uses and uses Permitted by Special Permit for each District.* So currently, aside from extensive cranberry businesses and a few other commercial ventures, Rochester is a bedroom community.

WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

It is clear that Rochester will be primarily a residential community. We do not have the infrastructure in the form of roads, water supply or sewerage disposal to attract light or heavy industrial users to locate in our town. The only areas suitable for that type of use have almost been completely developed based on the available upland land (or non-wetland) that can be used.

Due to the lack of any significant highway system running through the town linking us with densely developed areas, it is highly unlikely that any substantial commercial development will occur. It is likely that commercial development within the town will be limited to that which the population of the town can support. We can expect development in the form of small shops and convenience stores. However, these will not generate significant tax dollars nor will it produce significant jobs for our residents.

Because our tax rate will climb to support the governmental and educational structures necessary to accommodate the continued growth of the town, a lot of the larger parcels of land will be developed either because the owners cannot afford to pay the taxes or because the value of the land as development property is too good to pass up. This in turn will drive up the taxes in order to accommodate the growth. It's kind of a vicious cycle and unless we develop a plan for economic stability within the context of what we expect the town to become, we will see our town become so expensive a place to live that most modest-income citizens will not be able to afford to live here.

Opportunities for expanded commercial activity, if it can be attracted to Rochester, is most likely to be successful in proximity with existing businesses. This suggests the possibility of some commercial zoning adjacent to "grandfathered" current businesses such as Lloyd's Market at Cushman and Hartley Roads, adjacent to Adrian's at Mary's Pond and County, possibly extending to the Marion line, and County Road, possibly from the railroad to the Middleboro line. In addition, existing Plumb Corner commercial zoning might be expanded in the town center.

There is little likelihood of successful commercial business in other locations. Any zoning changes should be preceded by a town-wide assessment of the needs and appetite for expanded commercial zones.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

The town of Rochester's fate to be the farmland and bedroom type community was sealed several hundred years ago when our two villages that contained the waterfront and the location on the major highway (Route 6) connecting several densely developed communities became the towns of Marion and Mattapoissett. For decades now, many people within the town have been insisting that we develop industrial and commercial areas.

The reality, however, is that we will likely not see any significant industrial or commercial development due simply to the lack of access, infrastructure and demographics. There has been some industrial and commercial development in the north end of town along Route 28 in the Industrial District. As previously stated, however, most of the land that has not been developed is either wetland or not developable for an assortment of other

reasons. Another reality is that people live in areas that have been designated for industrial or commercial use and they do not choose to have those uses occur on their property or adjacent to their properties and as such, voice their opinions when the potential for change occurs. Our efforts would be best placed to recognize that we will be primarily a residential community and to encourage the types of residential uses that will have the least demand on town services. We should spend less of our effort in trying to completely change the natural progression of events and spend more of our effort on trying to shape the way that things progress.

Examples of things which may shape the way things are:

1. Encourage developments for "over age 55" such as the current Special Residential Development.
2. Allow modest two bedroom, non-expandable units in dense configurations with offsetting larger lots in "hard to perk" locations, thus limiting build-out.
3. Plan for Inventoried Affordable housing per the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Communities Development criteria sponsored by the Town through "LIP" (Local Initiative Petition to the State).
4. Buy more open space
5. Protect known agricultural resources for locally grown produce.

Many of us tend to think of commercial activity as incompatible with residential use. In the great swing of history, however, this is a recent perception. Until quite recently, a family made its living at or very

near where it lived. Only with cheap fuel and extensive public roads did the bedroom community mentality take hold.

Rochester has many examples of cottage industry as provided under Permitted Uses in the Zoning By-Law. These are one or two person businesses run from home. They are interspersed throughout Rochester and part of the town's unique character. Many other towns facing similar situations have decided that it is better to find a way to encourage and accommodate this cottage industry. As technologies progress, it becomes easier, for example, to work out of their homes rather than spending hours commuting to crowded offices. This enhances people's quality of life and provides for a sense of community.

A more concentrated version of this cottage industry concept is often called Mixed-Use which should be considered for inclusion in the Zoning By-Law. This name usually implies two-story buildings with living units over commercial establishments, whether retail or artisan's shops or artists lofts. It can also mean stand-alone individual or condominium facilities with light commercial interspersed with residential.

Mixed use as so defined can be an ideal location for Inventoried Affordable Housing per the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Communities Development criteria or just plain housing the average family can afford (See the *HOUSING* chapter).

As more people live in town, it is likely that there will be a demand for some commercial development in the town. We should develop bylaws to encourage the development in areas appropriate for that

use. This will in turn enhance and preserve the quality of life that people who live here chose as part of the process of selecting their residence.

It is possible that Rochester may attract a large company or institution wishing to create a campus like atmosphere to support its needs. That attraction will be possible if we preserve that which is important to everyone and maintain the qualities of the town that we all find important.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS:

PLANNING BOARD RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Develop a comprehensive land-use plan for the town based on the existing physical characteristics (i.e. surface topography, water supply, sewage disposal capabilities, roadway capacities and important physical features to preserve).
2. From the land-use plan identify areas that would be suitable to support one bedroom apartment or condominiums that can provide modest, cost effective housing for people while placing very little demand on municipal services.
3. Recommend a variety of new commercial venues through redistricting and/or creation of zoning overlay districts.
4. Reevaluate the Permitted Uses allowed in commercial/industrial zones to make them more conducive to business. Make recommendations.
5. Conduct a town-wide forum to discuss expansion of commercial

zoning and to identify Permitted Uses in any such expansion. Of course, existing residential uses would be fully "grandfathered" for all residential privileges.

6. Recommend a Mixed Use by-law and creation of Mixed-Use overlay districts.
7. Consider forming a Special Commercial/Agricultural District to allow unobtrusive commercial activity as well as agriculture in the areas where growers retain non-bog real estate.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

Reenergize the Rochester Economic Development Commission and Industrial Development Commission to be proactive about attracting revenue producing developments for Rochester.

Expand jurisdiction of Industrial Development Commission to include all potential Commercial activity

BOARD OF SELECTMEN/ AGRICULTURAL COMMISSION TASKS:

Growing food may become a local "growth industry" should the "oil crisis" exacerbate. In conjunction with the Agricultural Commission, evaluate need to preserve areas of known agricultural capability.

HOUSING

Market forces are working against Rochester's objectives of a diverse, multifaceted population. Home values are out of reach for a broad range of the population of the SouthCoast. Values had accelerated through 2006 so that building lots had "broken" the \$300,000 level and private residences had "broken" \$1,000,000. With the current sub-prime and financial uncertainty, prices for homes are more modest now but still "eye opening" at a median owner-occupied value of \$360,700 in 2008.

These forces will push Rochester toward a suburban social ethic and lead to more and more of the "keeping up with the Jones" kind of behavior. This is not the ideal profile for Rochester as outlined in the initial chapter of this Master Plan entitled *Planning for the Town We Want*.

THE PREVIOUS PLAN

The Master Plan of 2000 was pleased with a then recent formation of a Rochester Housing Partnership Committee which had an objective of requiring 40% of new developments to be Inventoried Affordable by the criteria of Massachusetts Department of Housing and Communities Development. It was concerned with an increase of retiring Baby Boomers, recommended formation of a Housing Development Action Plan, sought projects for persons of age 55 or older. All of the recommendations had an overall goal: "To be a community with housing opportunities for people at all stages of life, regardless of their economic status."

Unfortunately, the Housing Partnership Committee lost its chairman and fell into inactivity, the Housing Development Action

Plan was never assembled and the economics of development has lead us no closer to the stated "goal". We have eight living units which qualify as Inventoried Affordable by the relevant State agency. The 12 living units at the Annie Maxim House on North Avenue do not count despite being free to persons of very modest means. This is because these units were not created under the auspices of the Commonwealth program.

But the news is not all negative:

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED

The Planning Board implemented what is called a Special Residential Development which allows condominium-type residences for persons of 55 years or older. This has attracted several project applications and does allow a large land owner to realize value without generating the construction of more single-family residential homes and the associated municipal service costs. Unfortunately, the condominiums that developers find attractive to build are still out of the price range of ordinary people.

The existing by-laws do permit owners of residences which are older than five years to apply to the Board of Appeals for a Special Permit to become two-family. This often creates one of the units as a rather modest facility, thereby providing some source of diversity. Unfortunately, these Special Permits do not require qualification as Inventoried Affordable per the Commonwealth criteria.

THE PROBLEM

Remembering that a vibrant, cohesive community is built on a broad array of interests, incomes and skills, and also remembering that a large section of the population doesn't earn exotic livings, the availability of modest though respectable living facilities becomes urgent. Those families who's income is less than or equal to 80% of the median income of a geographic area enjoy some recognition

and respite from the Commonwealth. This is because developers can by-pass local zoning restrictions if they build projects in which 25% of the units are affordable by these people. Such projects are permitted by a Comprehensive Permit sometimes referred to as a "40B project" as that is the Mass General Law Chapter in which the law resides. Living units which qualify are said to be "Inventoried" as affordable by the Mass Department of Housing and Communities Development (DHCD).

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The term Inventoried Affordable by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts means that housing costs shall not exceed 30 % of the income of a household with total income at or below 80% of the area median income of a pre-determined geographic area. Rochester is included within a greater New Bedford group. The Commonwealth has set an objective that each municipality shall have a documented inventory of "Inventoried Affordable" living units equal to or greater than 10% of the total living units. Should the percentage fall below 10%, a developer is entitled to apply for a Comprehensive Permit allowing him to by-pass local zoning by-laws through application to the Zoning Board of Appeals in exchange for a project which generates at least 25 % of the proposed units qualifying as Inventoried Affordable.

As of Fall of 2007, Rochester has 8 Affordable living units or 0.48 % of the 1682 year-round living units. Clearly Rochester is at risk of Comprehensive Permit applications. To generate 10%, Rochester needs to add 160 units of Inventoried Affordable housing. And, since Comprehensive Permits usually can't make a profit with more than 25 % affordable, this would generate 480 additional market-rate living units for a total additional of 640 units,

or a growth rate of 38% if done in one year. Such projects are typically done at significantly higher density than conventional subdivisions and, in addition they will generate a need for increased municipal services and schools.

In the fall of 2006, Rochester Selectmen received a preliminary proposal from one of the Commonwealth's sponsoring agencies for a Comprehensive Permit for 146 units of housing. Following this the Rochester Board of Appeals received a formal application on October 30, 2007 for a Comprehensive Permit for 144 units of housing, 36 of which would qualify as Inventoried Affordable by the Commonwealth. Hearings are currently ongoing.

With this one exception to date, the economics of Comprehensive Permit projects have not attracted developers. Of course, this can change and Rochester should generate an Inventoried Affordable Housing Plan to manage generation of its 10% quota and to dampen the possible pressure for large projects.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

An Affordable Housing Plan will identify geographic areas most conducive for Inventoried Affordable housing, consider conducting a Commonwealth-supervised Housing Needs Analysis, evaluate committing to a Planned Production program and encourage Local Initiative Petitions for smaller projects, possibly promoted by Habitat for Humanities.

The Commonwealth program called Planned Production provides that if the Town generates 0.75%, or 12 units per year, it can deny a Comprehensive Permit for one year. Rochester would need to be proactive about generating 0.75% annually until 10% of the housing units were Affordable. Twelve units of Inventoried Affordable translates into a total of 48 additional units of housing. For the second year 0.75% is 13 units or 52 units in total so after two years Rochester would

have 33 units of affordable or 1.92 toward its quota of 10% and suffered an additional total increase of 100 living units or a 6% growth rate over 2 years without considering all the other building projects that seem to come along annually.

The Commonwealth does allow a town to sponsor its own projects in what is called the "Local Initiative Program" or the "LIP" program. This is really a "mini" and self managed 40 B project but Rochester Selectmen could sponsor a 100 % affordable project on some town owned property and possibly make the economic numbers work. The local chapter of Habitat for Humanity would be pleased to assist with such a project. The town should not consider doing this without a mature organization to manage it such as a resurrected Rochester Housing Opportunity Partnership or creation of a Housing Authority.

MODEST HOUSING FOR MODEST-INCOME RESIDENTS

Beyond the Commonwealth's Inventoried Affordable criteria, there remains a vast middle ground between what's Inventoried Affordable, as defined by the Commonwealth, and the market price of the single-family residential homes being built or offered for sale. Inventoried or not, Rochester should consider a plan to encourage more modest-cost housing. This can be achieved with increased density in the form of mixed-use developments with apartments or condos interspersed with small business, garden apartments, duplex units or very modest standalone residences. One or two bedroom units might tend to minimize associated increased municipal costs for services. By-law changes will be needed should this kind of initiative be adopted. Selected zones may be assigned or special permit circumstances defined. Working children of Rochester

families may seek to stay in town but don't qualify in the Inventoried Affordable category. Starter homes or condominiums may be really attractive to retain this group in the town of Rochester.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS

The following actions have been identified to carry out the above goals and objectives:

ADMINISTRATOR:

Form a comprehensive, proactive Affordable Housing Plan to promote and manage development of Inventoried Affordable housing as well as modestly priced housing for most of us with modest means.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

1. Reenergize the Rochester Housing Opportunity Partnership and charge that group with conducting a Housing Needs Analysis as defined by the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Community Development.
2. Assemble a committee to evaluate the incentives to creation of an approvable Planned Production Plan.
3. Initiate a program to build small Inventoried Affordable units on town owned land using the Local Initiative Program (LIP) option of the Comprehensive Permit law.
4. Encourage the Habitat for Humanity organization to achieve "Affordable" living units.
5. Evaluate incentives to create a formal Housing Authority.

PLANNING BOARD:

1. Explore strategies to offer housing solutions for living groups not qualified by earnings for Inventoried Affordable but still unable to "reach" the style of the present single family residential homes being constructed.
2. Enhance the bonus-lot provisions of the Flexible Development by-law for creation of Inventoried Affordable units and add an Affordable requirement to the SRD (over age 55) by-law.
3. Create an Open Space Residential Development Subdivision By-Law (Rural Subdivision Design) with bonus lots for creation of affordable units.
4. Proactively cultivate developers interested in utilizing the LIP provisions to achieve smaller Affordable housing projects.
5. After achieving an Affordable Housing Plan, and a Commercial Development Plan covered in the Economic Development section of this Master Plan, recommend economically viable projects as candidates for the large Chapter 61 properties including Inventoried Affordable projects where applicable. This may possibly position the Town to make acceptable plans to acquire such properties within the allowable 120 day decision "window" provided by statute should the owner exercise the right to request release. *Note: Chapter 61 of Mass General Laws provides tax breaks for owners of farm, woodland and selected recreational acreage. When the acreage is sold, the Town gets first refusal at the P & S price with 120 days to decide.*
6. The Planning Board in conjunction with Board of Appeals recommend an

Accessory Apartment Special Permit which requires qualification as Inventoried Affordable under Commonwealth rules to replace the current two-family Special Permit by-law.

NATURAL RESOURCES

BACKGROUND

Natural resources are the very stuff that supports life. Clean air, clean water, fertile soil and healthy habitats are essential to mankind's continued survival. As one of the remaining rural towns in Southeastern Massachusetts, Rochester holds at least one key to the good health of the area: Our watersheds provided drinking water for Marion, Mattapoisett, and Fairhaven, and are part of the watershed that supplies Acushnet and New Bedford. This circumstance alone is incentive sufficient to encourage protection of our resources. Add the significant contribution of healthy river systems to offshore fisheries, and our contribution to the physical and economic well-being of the region and the motivation becomes substantial.

Rochester has abundant natural resources that include pristine surface waters, high-yield ground water aquifers, wetlands serving as habitat for wildlife and as protection for our water resources, extensive forests, agricultural lands, and mineral resources. Most of these have been described in detail in the *Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Conservation Plan* and are briefly summarized below.

In addition, the Town is blessed with areas where existing vegetative patterns and the topography provide pleasing views. These areas, referred to as "viewsapes" will be discussed further below.

PERSPECTIVE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

The Master Plan of 2000 stated that our primary goal for natural resources is to protect and safeguard the ponds, groundwater, wetlands, wildlife, and scenic viewsapes that so strongly contribute to Rochester's character. It went on to recommend the creation of aquifer districts, develop zoning and site plan review regulations that encourage environmental protection, review and update the earth removal bylaw and aggressively pursue ways to preserve viewsapes.

In the interim period, Rochester has created the Groundwater Protection District defined on the Zoning Map and controlled by Rochester Zoning By-Law Section XVII, has installed a comprehensive Site Plan Review by-law, appointed a Soil Board Agent and continues to refine the Earth Removal By-Law. The Planning Board has drafted a Tradable Development Rights (TDR) by-law to enable preserving viewsapes in exchange for slightly higher density subdivisions and continues to work on the necessary details for such a concept to work.

Although there has been progress, the Goals and Objectives remain the same.

SURFACE WATER

Rochester's surface waters include eight great ponds larger than 10-acres. These are Great Quittacas, Little Quittacas, Snipatuit, Long, Leonard's, Mary's, Snow's, and Hathaway Ponds. Some of these ponds serve as water supplies for the City of New Bedford (Great and Little Quittacas). Others serve as reservoirs for agricultural uses and areas for fishing and recreation. Snipatuit Pond, a dominant feature of the northwest quarter of town, covers the largest area of all the lakes and ponds although it is very shallow and is

not of drinking quality. While it is popular for fishing and boating, it is not widely used for swimming. Mary's Pond, considerably smaller, is deep and clear. Long Pond, Snow's Pond, Leonard's Pond and Hathaway's Pond are also smaller, with little to no public access. Both Mary's Pond and Snow's Pond are believed to be "Kettle Holes" formed by glaciers as a large chunk of ice became buried in soil deposits and subsequently melted, leaving a very deep indent.

COASTAL PLAIN PONDS

Both Mary's Pond and Snow's Pond are classified as Atlantic Coastal Plain Ponds by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. These ponds occupy depressions in glacial outwash plains that are directly linked to the underground aquifer, creating unique shore environments. Both ponds host species judged to be endangered such as the globally rare but locally abundant Plymouth Gentian (*Sabatia Kennediana*) which grows from the shallow water across a broad expanse of sand.

GROUNDWATER

Rochester is blessed with an ample supply of good-quality water. It is unique in that two important aquifer recharge areas – the Mattapoissett and Sippican Rivers – comprise 50% of its total land area. The Mattapoissett River aquifer is the principal source of drinking water for Fairhaven, Marion, Mattapoissett and Rochester, and a secondary source for Acushnet. At the Annual Town Meeting of June 2002 the town adopted a Ground Water Protection

District to control potentially adverse uses of the Zone II watershed supplying the existing wells in the Mattapoissett River valley. The Sippican River aquifer is a source of drinking water for the town of Marion.

The Town of Marion owns five wells in Rochester. Three are located in the Sippican River basin, southwest of Mary's Pond; two are located in the Mattapoissett River basin. According to an agreement with Marion, Rochester is entitled to 50% of the water these well's produce.

The City of New Bedford owns an 850+ acre preserve fronting Great and Little Quittacas Ponds in the northwest corner of Rochester. The city acquired these parcels many years ago to protect its water supply. Collectively known as The New Bedford Water Works, this area serves as a reservoir for the city.

Particular attention needs to be given to preserving aquifer recharge areas, investigating nitrogen loading of ground water by on-site subsurface sewage disposal systems, and encouraging individual projects that ensure the most protection of resources while safeguarding the property rights of landowners. In some cases, this may mean outright purchase of a critical property, perhaps through a combination of grants, matching funds, and donations.

WETLANDS

Wetlands are generally recognized as lands that have water at or near the surface much of the year. They are identified by the presence and duration of water, soil types, and vegetative cover. Approximately 25% of Rochester's surface is covered by wetlands, including cranberry bogs. Major non-agricultural wetlands include Forbes Swamp, Logging Swamp, Towsters Swamp, Cedar

Swamp, and Haskell Swamp, which together constitute approximately 1,000 acres of land.

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, a section of the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, has recorded upwards of 2,700 wildlife species in Plymouth County. These include approximately 50 species considered to be threatened by development and recreation pressures or vulnerable because they occur only in rare or fragile habitats. Many of these rare, fragile habitats are located in Rochester and are listed in Section 4B of the 1996 *Open Space and Recreation Plan*.

FISHERIES

With its headwaters in Snipatuit Pond, the Mattapoissett River is essential to the survival of alewives in the tri-town (Rochester, Marion, and Mattapoissett) area. The herring run, one of the most productive in the Buzzards Bay watershed, is protected and managed by both state and local officials. In 1987 the State Division of Marine Fisheries constructed a fish ladder at Snipatuit Pond to better enable the migration of alewives up the Mattapoissett River to spawn.

MINERAL RESOURCES

Rochester's soil is notably fertile farmland composed of sand, gravel, and stone characteristic of glacial till. Its geologic setting is responsible for large deposits of sand and gravel. The single most limiting factor for agricultural use has been the "boniness" of soils, meaning difficult mixtures of gravel, rock and clay, and the tendency of some

of the more sandy soils to drain too readily during drought periods. A major trend in the recent past is the excavation and sale of sand and gravel followed by the creation of cranberry bogs on the excavated parcels.

There are five major soil types found in Rochester usually discussed in terms of their limitations:

1. The Peat –Scarboro-Sanded Muck-Brockton Association consists of poorly drained organic and mineral soils usually associated with swamps. This association accounts for 30% of the soils.;
2. The Essex-Gloucester firm substratum-Scituate Association (hardpan), which makes up 10% of the soils.;
3. The Hinkley-Carver-Merrimac-Windsor Association (35%) poses only slight limitations for development.;
4. The Gloucester Association (12%) is gravelly and stony and poses only moderate limitations for development.;
5. The Hollis-Charlton-Scituate Association (4%) is shallow to bedrock with some well-drained pockets.

Soil limitations and locations in Rochester are shown on the Soil Limitations Map in the *Open Space and Recreation Plan*. Approximately 40% of the soils in Rochester pose severe limitations for onsite sewage disposal.

WOODS AND UNDEVELOPED WILDERNESS

Undeveloped acreage is a recreational opportunity which defines who we are, either by how we use this resource today, or how we used it as children and young adults. It's where we went to escape authority as kids, where we go for hunting, horseback riding, walking or to just "take a constitutional".

There is an irreplaceable value to these experiences that make us what we are. For those of us who use it, the loss to development is tremendous.

EXISTING NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION PLANS

Several regulatory programs are charged with protecting the natural resources within the Town.

The Town of Rochester Conservation Commission has jurisdiction, under the state Wetland Protection Act, over activities within and adjacent to wetlands areas. The Conservation Commission may regulate construction within 100 feet of these areas. At the 2007 Fall Special Town meeting the town approved a 25 foot "no disturb" zone within the "Bordering Vegetative" boundary to wetlands, allowing room for variances in unusual circumstances.

The Towns of Acushnet, Fairhaven, Rochester and Marion have joined together to support the Mattapoissett River Valley Protection Commission. This Commission is entrusted with protecting the abundant groundwater resources within the Mattapoissett River Valley.

In 1996 the Town of Rochester formed a Soil Board to regulate activities associated with the extraction of earth minerals.

VIEWSCAPES OR SCENIC RESOURCES

Once an agricultural community, Rochester is still noted for its open fields, farmlands, and cranberry bogs which are highly responsible for

defining the town's character. The natural appeal of its scenic resources reflects this agricultural legacy. Rochester citizens have made it clear that the viewsapes are an important resource for their continued enjoyment of the Town

Our Town's rural character is of great importance. To retain even the illusion of our rural past, the remaining undeveloped spaces on the roads we all use daily must remain natural. Although retaining a large percentage of our backland undeveloped has an emotional appeal, it has little impact to most of us in our daily lives. Using many methods that are available to us and implemented in other towns, we must encourage permanent preservation of as much of our natural resources as possible in sensitive areas.

SUBSISTENCE RESOURCES

An author and prognosticator, James Howard Kuntzler, outlined a very serious, though possibly distant situation in his book *The Long Emergency*. His thesis is that liquid and gaseous hydrocarbon supplies are on the wane and even those supplies are controlled by unstable and/or unfriendly peoples. He believes that alternative energy sources cannot be developed soon enough or plentifully enough and that in twenty years, or maybe sooner, we will be back to the local land for food in the form of the Victory Gardens of World War II or such as Cuba's food programs under Castro after the Soviets departed.

According to the US Department of Agriculture, home food production hit an all-time low in 2005, down a full 20% from 2004. They found that ingredients for the average meal now travel 1500 miles from field to fork, 25% further than they did 2 decade ago using 17 times more fossil fuels than a meal made with local ingredients. Under severe fuel

constraints suggested by Mr. Kuntzler, this simply cannot continue.

Rochester is extremely well suited to handle such an unfortunate outcome, should it occur. With ample groundwater and many remaining open fields we could grow potatoes, turnips, etc. and even support livestock.

Noting that woods floor, once the trees are cleared, is good for little more than leaf crops for several years, our open fields and even the bogs, since with no fuel there would be little market for berries, would make ideal farms.

With two rivers which hosted multiple mills, Rochester has some harnessable natural energy source for if and when the lights go out.

Let's hope that James Howard Kuntzler is wrong. The better part of wisdom, however, suggests that we hedge our bets and pursue at least selected sustainability goals.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS TO MOVE TOWARD SUSTAINABILITY:

CONSERVATION COMMISSION:

1. Educate the public about the need for protection of all water resources, with regard to wetlands and surface water.
2. Educate the public about the environmental damage caused by conventional lawn care as well as the importance of maintaining wells including the implications of road salting.

3. Continue to pursue a broad array of land preservation activities through the Rochester Conservation Commission, the Rochester Land Trust and many interested citizens.

PLANNING BOARD:

1. Identify and save some undeveloped space for those who need "constitutionals" in wild space.
2. Propose a Tradable Development Rights (TDR) by-law allowing sale of development rights on undeveloped lots on public ways to save the important viewscapes.
3. Develop zoning, site plan review regulations, and special permit decision criteria that encourage environmental protection, preservation of natural vegetation, and special wildlife areas.
4. Study and recommend more Scenic Road designations as is specified in MGL 40 15D as a way to limit road widening and excessive improvements which encourage more aggressive and faster traffic.
5. Generate by-laws designed to retain parcels suitable for truck-gardens to provide local-source produce.
6. Protect Sippican River, the municipal wells therein, plus adjoining medium/high yield aquifers in parallel with the current Ground Water Protection District and strengthen the provisions.
7. In conjunction with Board of Health, begin promotion of wastewater recharge concepts for Rochester-source water currently discharged into Buzzards Bay.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

BACKGROUND

The Master Plan of 2000 expressed concern for preservation of Rochester's ties to the past. Concerns existed for saving the physical manifestations of former times such as buildings and stonewalls. Concerns also existed for possible fading of public awareness of the history and appreciation of the remaining manifestations of earlier features such as saw mills and stagecoach roads.

These concerns are still very real. In fact they are probably more severe than last identified as ever more people are almost totally focused on earning a living and caring for family.

Compounding the appreciation for artifacts is that many very interesting features "left over" from past paradigms are on private property and the owners seldom appreciate intrusions to their privacy.

Evidence of old mills and stage coach roads, long abandoned foundation holes or discontinued public roads are around but each interested individual must ferret out the information and personally befriend the owner. This is worth the effort but it takes genuine interest to get started.

Rochester has succeeded in forming a Rochester Center Historic District and achieved an act of the Massachusetts legislature to declare Marion Road, Rounseville Road, Robinson Road and portions of Cushman Road (in combination, this constitutes Route 105

for those who choose to by-pass local flavor for State designations) as a Scenic Way.

A BRIEF ROCHESTER HISTORY

Rochester's history can be traced back to seasonal native American settlements most likely located around the three major freshwater ponds and the moderate uplands of what is now the town center. Native Americans sought the more exposed coast (Mattapoissett, Marion, Wareham) during the spring and summer months, and, during the winter, came inland to what is now Rochester, seeking protection from coastal storms. Expanding European settlement from the Marshfield, Plymouth, and Scituate areas during the Colonial period (1675-1775) displaced the native population. Rochester's first European settlement node developed in the 1680s at the junction of Perry Hill (currently New Bedford Road), Rounseville, and Marion Roads. Rochester's Common was established in 1697, with the first meetinghouse built shortly thereafter and the First Church of Rochester established in 1703.

The town center was solidified in the 18th century through the development of local highways. The settlement pattern at that time concentrated in or near the town center. Dispersed farming continued along all major roads in the town. Sawmills developed near the rivers that supplied lumber to coastal shipbuilding centers.

During the 19th century, the secession of what is now Mattapoissett and Marion removed Rochester's two largest villages – which were also the town's two main business centers. The town's principal

product remained lumber. During the late 19th century, the rising popularity of cranberry growing added a needed supplement to Rochester's agricultural economy.

The northwestern part of town developed during this period. Residential development overall continued to concentrate around the town center, however. A particular style of cottage – a small, square, gable-roofed center-chimney cottage of one-room depth-developed at this time. Several examples still remain on Snipatuit Road.

During the early 20th century, the automobile brought greater travel freedom, paved roads, and additional residential development along existing roads. The Hartley Mill became the town's largest industry and the growing cranberry industry saw the consolidation of family-owned bogs into large companies. Residential development during the early 20th century included Craftsman, Colonial Revival, and Dutch Colonial Revival style cottages clustered in the western half of town.

During the mid-late 20th century, Rochester experienced its largest development. Between 1945 and 1979, the town more than doubled its population. Over 400 buildings were constructed during the 1970s alone. The town's industrial base diminished to one mill, which closed in 1964, and several cranberry bog operations, which continue to the present time. Residential development has included multiple subdivisions, with pressure for suburban development in outlying areas, especially near Snipatuit and Mary's Ponds.

Despite the new construction that occurred in the late 20th century, Rochester retains much of its historic settlement pattern and historic homes and structures. These give the town integrity of setting, feeling, and association with its long and rich history.

In 1998, the Historic District Commission was appointed by the Rochester Board of Selectmen to oversee changes to the town center.

Some of the most appreciated characteristics of our town are its historic public and private buildings. Although it is not always recognized, features such as stone walls and agricultural fields are also historic, representing some of the first activities of settlers in the New World. In Massachusetts, towns are authorized to designate any town roads as a "scenic road." This allows for Planning Board review of the cutting or removal of trees or the alteration of stonewalls on the documented layout.

We should also consider protecting our native American and sawmill sites. One way of accomplishing this is to include consideration of impact on archeological and historic sites in the town's special permit, site plan review, and subdivision plan decision criteria. Another approach is to designate a building or site as a local landmark to be approved by Town Meeting, or to apply for listing in the state or national registers of historic places.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Rochester's goals for historic preservation are about the same as in the Master Plan of 2000:

1. Preserve its historic center and rural town character, as expressed through its buildings, settlement pattern, historic, native American artifacts, and sawmill sites, big trees, and stonewalls.
2. Safeguard the character of Rochester's town center.
3. Protect viewsapes and scenic roads — also important components of the town's character.
4. Continue re-planting street trees lost to disease and caterpillar infestations.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS

The following implementing actions are appropriate:

HISTORIC COMMISSION CHALLENGES:

1. Cultivate an understanding of historic artifacts and their importance to our sense of "Place".
2. Research and publish accounts of historic artifacts such as stagecoach roads, early waterway projects, water-power mills and how they worked, etc.
3. Identify historic and archeological sites throughout town and take measures to protect them. Explore

such alternatives as local, state, or national landmark designation.

4. Explore funding possibilities for protection through regional, state, and federal sources.

PLANNING BOARD:

1. Recommend approaches to protect viewsapes (farm fields, stone walls, tree-lined roads, open views to woodland) throughout town.
2. Include historic and archeological impact in local special permit, site plan review, and subdivision control criteria.

OPEN SPACE

The term open space is sometimes treated as synonymous with Motherhood or Apple pie. Yes, open space is a marvelous concept which appeals to the American love affair with the new frontier. Solid, rational thinking, however, is required to put a good footing on the issue.

The value of open space to most adults is the vistas seen on the way to work and during chores. Formal recreation opportunities such as ball fields and tennis courts are the one exception. And, yes, there are a few who ride and walk on woods trails and explore open space "in the wild".

Mostly, we derive only indirect enjoyment of most acreage preserved off the "beaten path". Academically most of us understand that preserved wetlands and natural habitat ensure clean water and the relatively stable natural environment we all depend upon, but these issues are seldom in the forefront of daily thinking.

There are studies which suggest that buildable acreage purchased on the open market as open space actually pays for itself over the long run in avoided costs of servicing populations which would have lived there. This does presume that all taxpayers are "in it" for the "long haul" and have a reasonable expectation of being able to pay for it.

Children are a different story. They enjoy something of a universal passport when using vacant lots and privately owned woodlands, within limits. They also have the time and energy to actively

use much of the acreage officially open for public enjoyment.

Children also derive a sense of open space from all their surroundings as increased age, ability and maturity allows them the independence to bicycle to visit friends and to go to games and the candy store. They need safe bicycle access to make all of Rochester their open space. For many young families, that sense of open space is a substantial part of why they live in Rochester.

The Rochester Conservation Commission has sponsored a formal *Open Space & Recreation Plan* through a properly appointed Open Space Committee. This group conducted an extensive program of meetings, public forums and questionnaires. The result is a formal plan for adoption by the town and submittal to Mass DEP for acceptance. This Master Plan chapter has utilized research and findings of the new *Open Space & Recreation Plan* and it serves as a further resource for the interested reader.

In summary, everyone depends on open space in some way. It is aesthetic, it protects our very health and welfare, it offers recreational opportunities, both formal and individual, and it can be a long-term tax saving technique.

MEANS OF PROTECTION FOR OPEN SPACE

TEMPORARY TAX REDUCTION PROGRAMS

Approximately 6700 acres enjoy some property tax advantage as temporarily non-developable. Should any of this acreage be proposed for sale, the Town

enjoys first refusal. This program is enabled by Mass General Laws, Chapter 61 and protects farm and cranberry acreage as well as forestland and selected recreation lands.

CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS

Some 600 acres are protected by permanent conservation easements enabled by MGL Chapter 184, Section 31-33. Conservation restrictions vary depending on the specific agreement but most limit further development of acreage while the property remains with the existing owner and the public gains no right of usage. The owner gets significant tax benefits. Some conservation restrictions are agricultural in nature and are called APR's or Agricultural Preservation Restrictions.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

The Conservation Commission holds acreage acquired through gifts and Town purchase. Some acreage is designated for recreation and others held without designation. These are managed by the Commission and are not available for municipal use.

TOWN OF ROCHESTER

The Town "takes" property by a procedure specified in Mass General Laws for failure to pay taxes. It can also accept gifts as occurred with the open space provided by the Bogview Estates Flexible Development subdivision.

LAND TRUSTS

The Rochester Land Trust, the Mattapoisett Land Trust, Trustees of Reservations and the Wildlands Trust of

Southeast Massachusetts all own open space parcels in Rochester. The Mattapoisett Land Trust is in conversations to transfer its New Bedford Road tract next to Oldfield Farm to the Rochester Land Trust. Each of the other organizations, and possibly others, are actively cultivating opportunities for gifts or acquisitions.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

The MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife holds approximately 1300 acres of Rochester in the Haskell Swamp formerly managed as timberland by the Acushnet Sawmill Company. They also hold approximately 160 acres called the Church Wildlife Management Area on the west side of Mattapoisett River and 70 acres designated as "Wildlife Management Area" off Hartley Road.

The Massachusetts Farm Bureau Agricultural Preservation Corporation will hold approximately 400 acres of property in deed restriction similar to a Conservation Restriction as part of the Connet Woods Flexible Development subdivision. This property is under relatively severe restrictions set by the DEP NHESP (Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program) due to confirmed habitat for the Eastern Box Turtle, a species defined as "of concern". The acreage will be available for hunting, walking and exploring.

OTHER OPEN SPACE

Each residential subdivision which is permitted under the Rochester Zoning By-Law called Flexible Development (synonym for Cluster Zone) and Special Residential Development has open space not deeded to any one residence and

forms uncluttered visual spacing and public access depending on the specific documents involved.

OPEN SPACE SUCCESSES:

Rochester has been fortunate in achieving Open Space using a number of these vehicles. Several of the recent successes are:

1. **Rounseville Homestead South** conservation restriction of 113 acres south of Rounseville Road
2. **Church Wildlife Management Area.** - The George Church grant to Mass Fisheries and Wildlife of 163 acres west of and adjacent to the Mattapoissett River off Wolf Island Road entitled "Church Homestead Wildlife Management Area"
3. **A George and Katherine Church Grant** of almost 21 acres on the north side of Marion Road adjacent to The Pines at Hathaway Pond is owned outright by the Rochester Land Trust
4. **Rounseville Homestead North** conservation restriction of 164 acres comprising most of the interior acreage between Rounseville Road and Hartley Road.
5. **Gaumont** conservation restriction at the corner of Cushman and New Bedford Road of 7 acres.
6. **Red Barn Farm** conservation restriction of 60 acres off
- Vaughan Hill Road preserved as farm and woodland.
7. **Rounseville Recreation Area** of 6.9 acres is Conservation Commission land. It's a canoe launch site on the west side of the Mattapoissett River off Rounseville Road.
8. **Eastover Farm Land Preservation Project** is 380 acres of farm-field, woodland and cranberry bogs in Rochester, some owned by the Conservation Commission, some owned by the Trustees of Reservations, portions under APR programs and the balance is conservation restrictions held by an assortment of agencies. Combined with adjacent protected Marion acreage, this totals some 780 acres.
9. **Sperry** conservation restriction off Marion Road at the Marion Town Line is 13.5 acres of woodland.
10. **Mattapoissett River Valley Aquifer Protection Project** is 131 acres in four parcels which is Conservation Commission land, some south of New Bedford Road and some east of Cushman Road.

SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

The Rochester Park Commission, a three member elected board, schedules and maintains the Raynor Gifford Park ball fields and the new Dexter Lane playing fields, built with the help of an Urban

Self Help Grant in 1997-1998. The addition of the new fields has helped tremendously to ease the scheduling conflicts that constantly arose in the past at the limited playing fields of Raynor Gifford Park. Residents have expressed interest in seeing basketball and tennis courts constructed. It should be noted that although the Park Commission schedules use of the recreational facilities, it does not fund the sports played on the fields. Funding comes from "booster" or support groups. Little League has benefited from this kind of support for years. A Pop Warner Football League has been formed, and groups interested in sponsoring other sports are encouraged to do so. A skateboarding support group raised money to build the recently completed skate park at Dexter Lane.

According to the responses to the town-wide survey, there is interest in walking, biking and bridle paths and a need for information about existing available pathways. There are a number of walking trails open to the general public on town and state owned properties. An informational brochure is needed and has been a proposed project for the Conservation Commission since the last Open Space Plan. There are possible sites for additional paths behind the Dexter Lane fields and perhaps behind Memorial School. To provide more paths, access to large parcels needs to be available through outright acquisition of land or negotiation for access on private land.

The town acquired land on the western shore of Mary's Pond for a town beach a number of years ago. The Mary's Pond Beach Committee worked over a nine-year period to obtain environmental

permits to construct a resident's beach off Perry's Lane. These have been granted. The project is on hold pending full funding from a Town Meeting. A canoe/car top boat access has recently been constructed on town owned property by the Department of Fish and Game Office of Boating Access. It officially opened in June of 2007.

The Town of Rochester needs a standing "Open Space Action Committee" to initiate a public policy of inviting landowner discussion about issues concerning open space, resource protection, scenic preservation and land conservation. This committee would distribute educational materials and approach owners of critical parcels of interest to the town to discuss possible ways of protecting those parcels. The committee would also work with the Board of Assessors and local legislators to update state assessment laws to recognize the value of open space.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS suggested to realize the plan:

BOARD OF HEALTH:

On-going evaluation of pond and stream health.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION:

Identify people with enthusiasm to staff an Open Space Action Committee and recommend that the Selectmen create the committee with the following challenges.

- a. Build proactive relationships with owners
- b. Build proactive relationship with growers and other farming ventures
- c. Build relationship with Mattapoissett River Valley

- organizations and secure mutual objectives
- d. Understand/guide Assessor's options
- e. Advocate and pursue acquisition of open space, conservation restrictions, etc.
- f. Promote education and proactively identify and implement the following:
 - Address change to new self-image as suburban replaces rural
 - Value of wetlands
 - Value of farming and how to nurture
 - Recreational opportunities, walking trails, etc
- g. Proactively address need for sidewalks on busy roads to allow easier access to open space.
- h. Proactivley identify and implement preservation of public access to multiple existing woods trails.
- i. Specify a time frame and management plan for Mary's Pond Beach.

public access to privately owned open space.

PLANNING BOARD:

1. Develop and propose zoning By-Laws for:
 - a. Open Space Residential Development by-law (OSRD)
 - b. Tradable Development Rights by-law (TDR)
 - c. Refined cluster by-law maybe as preferred mode of development
2. Develop and implement:
 - a. Commercial project options for Chapter 61 land-release applications which include open space provisions.
 - b. Identify and implement liability management techniques for

GOVERNANCE

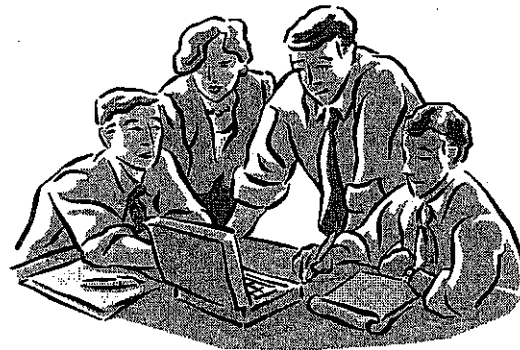
One of the main issues with looking at government is that it is frequently tempered by current issues rather than long-term development. Care must be taken that the Master Plan is not designed to 'fix' problems which might be temporary conditions. That being said:

TOWN VISION: There needs to be a clearly articulated town vision. The Master Plan provides a venue for such a statement. It identifies multiple Implementation Action Tasks that taken together can serve as the basis of a vision statement. The form and structure of government should then be developed to support that mission.

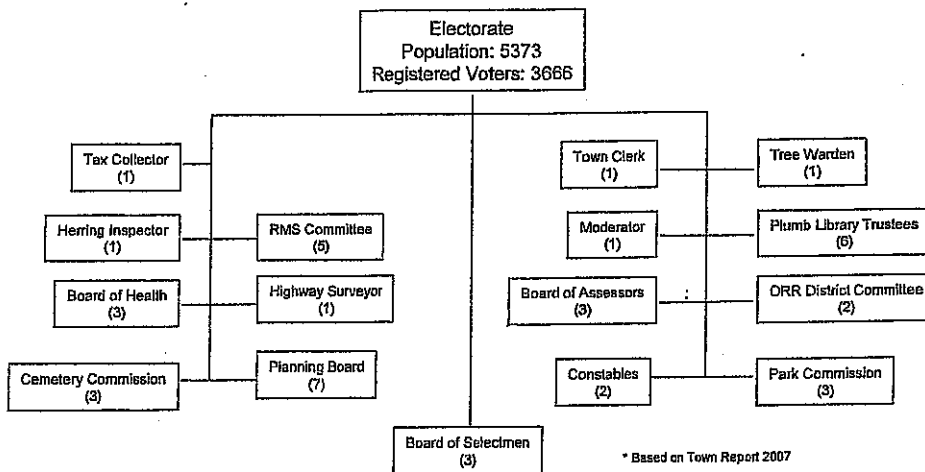
CURRENT FORM: Rochester operates under the Town Meeting form of government. Town meetings are open whereby each registered voter can attend and vote on matters pending before the meeting. In this form of government the voters are the legislative body of the town and are charged with passing by-laws and raising and appropriating revenue.

STRUCTURE: The town has an extremely decentralized organizational structure. Based on the 2005 Annual Report of Rochester there are seventeen independently elected officials and boards on which there are forty-six seats. These offices and boards represent one elected position per seventy registered voters. In addition, the Board of Selectmen appoints people to various positions and boards. Some of the appointed boards are standing boards; others are organized to work on specific

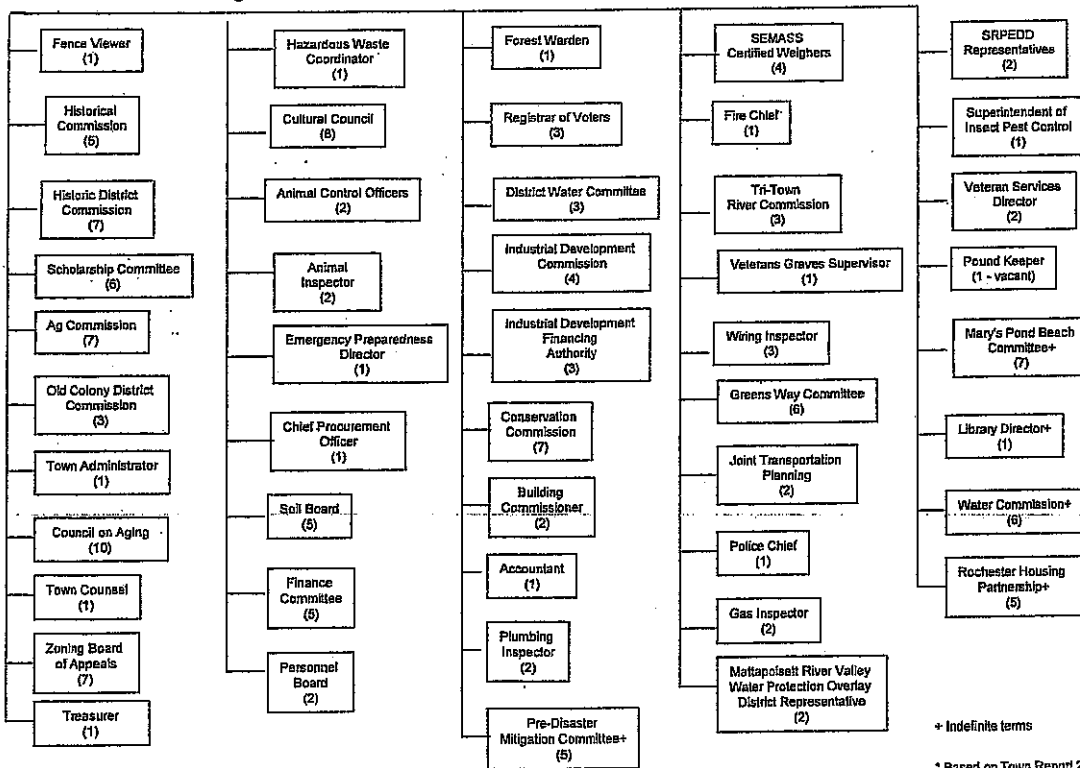
projects. Not counting the public safety personnel, these boards and offices are composed of 156 seats, or one appointed person for every twenty registered voters. The concept of checks and balances is provided by the semi-autonomous authority of each board. The voters, as the legislative body, provide oversight that policies and procedures are applied as intended. This is accomplished through access to meetings, access to minutes, as well as reports available in the Town of Rochester Annual Report. The following charts show the organizational structure of the current town government:



Current 2009 Organizational Structure of Elected Officials



Current 2009 Organizational Structure of Appointed Officials Under the Board of Selectmen*



VOLUNTEERISM: Many organizations rely on volunteers for their effectiveness. However, within the arena of governance, lack of volunteerism and public involvement has an unusually detrimental impact. The various elected boards rely on volunteers to run and subsequently serve as members. Rochester has been well served by having qualified citizens choosing to run for elected office or as appointed members. Unfortunately, reliance on volunteers being readily available as well as qualified has had its shortfalls. Many board members have served multiple terms because there were no candidates and positions would be vacant had they not placed their names upon ballots. Numerous candidates run unopposed for multiple terms as well. As the town grows, applying by-laws becomes more complex. Demands for services increases, and pressure for board members to be responsive becomes a burden many are not willing to accept. New laws as well as balancing application of current laws may require board members to have specialized skills. The likelihood of people with requisite skills also being willing to devote time on a board tends to diminish with town growth.

Going beyond serving, another aspect of volunteerism is the need to participate in the government process. Under the open meeting structure the registered voters are the legislative body. Each voter is given an opportunity to speak on any matter before the town prior to a vote being taken. However, although each voter has an equal say in matters, the participation level tends to be very low. In general, attendance at annual meetings is roughly 150 of 3200 registered voters. In other words 5% of

the voters actually fulfill the duties of the legislative body.

Alternate form of Town Meetings:

There are two forms of Town Meeting government. The original Town Meeting format, currently in use by the town, provides each registered voter an opportunity to speak on issues in an open forum and then all attending registered voters may cast their vote. The other type of Town Meeting is the representative form, where voters select a limited number of representatives to represent and vote for them in Town Meetings. Under state law, the representative form of government requires a minimum population of 6000 people. The independent nature of the early colonists and the sense of ownership-of-government is a hallmark of American democracy. It is unlikely the citizenry of Rochester will part from the open form of Town Meeting in the foreseeable future.

Alternate forms of positions: Some aspects of duties have evolved over time such that specific skill sets are required for success. The general increase in technology and lifestyle of the population has resulted in the demand for faster turn-around times for decisions to be made. There is also an expectation of faster cycle times for policies to be developed and implemented. Such expectations may result in various positions needing to be available on a full-time rather than part time (or less) basis. The increasing needs of a growing population, coupled with a general decrease in volunteerism have resulted in communities reducing the numbers of elected positions and relying more on appointed or hired positions.

An elected position is one in which the voters are asked to select the best qualified person. A person runs for office based on desire to serve in the position. Typically there are requirements to run for office such as minimum age as well as being a citizen of the town. While a position may require certain skill sets, there are no provisions to restrict candidates based on those skills. By default, the elected person is qualified for the position. If a person subsequently performs below the expectations of the citizenry the voters select a new person at the next election cycle. The citizenry also maintains the right of recall should they feel the incumbent has failed in their duties. In some instances a position for which there are no candidates may remain vacant, or may have someone designated as a replacement. It is unknown which elected positions within the town may remain vacant and which must be occupied. Nor is there an articulated policy on how such positions would be filled.

An appointed position is one in which some appointing body (usually the Board of Selectmen) selects the person. Typically any requisite skills and duties are defined in a call for volunteers. In the case of paid positions there is a more defined job description outlining skills, duties, and expectations. A search is conducted over a specified time. At the end of the search period the appointing body selects the best qualified person. The appointing body does not nominate a person for approval by the legislative body of the town. If the person subsequently performs below expectations the appointing body follows some process (usually identified within the contract in the case of paid

appointees) to remove the person. As with elected positions, in some instances a position for which there are no candidates may remain vacant, or may have someone designated as a replacement. It is unknown which appointed positions within the town may remain vacant and which must be occupied. Nor is there an articulated policy on how these positions may be filled without a formal search.

Many of the positions in town, appointed or elected, are filled on a volunteer basis. The incumbent may receive a stipend, or some other recompense for expenses. Some duties requiring more time are part-time, paid positions. There is only one full-time elected position (Highway Surveyor). Other positions requiring full-time effort (i.e. policemen, administrative positions etc.) are designated as appointed positions. Their time and effort is usually based on union or contracted agreements. Over time, the duties and expectations of some part-time positions has exceeded the time typically associated with part-time status. In other cases, it may be more efficient to combine positions such that two part-time positions are replaced with one full-time position. While such combinations may make sense from a time-of-effort perspective, they may actually cost more in terms of pay and benefits. On the other hand, the intangible value of a full time person being available more often may offset the costs.

Role of Regionalization: The town is fortunate in having good working relations with neighboring towns. We have historic ties to Marion and Mattapoisett. We already participate in various regional associations, notably

with regards to secondary education, water sources, as well as health-oriented committees. Regionalization is often touted as a sure means of reducing administrative overhead and operating costs as each participant provides some pro-rated share of costs. However, the other side of regionalization is that autonomy and control are compromised. The partner providing the greatest share of the costs tends to want the greatest level of control over the endeavor. Another aspect of the endeavor is that resolution of issues is not necessarily based on a local preference. For example, if Marion votes to accept the ORR budget and Mattapoissett votes to accept the ORR budget, then Rochester has no choice but to support the budget as well. None-the-less, regionalization does provide one avenue which should be explored for fiscal as well as policy soundness. While the town is fortunate to have a substantial aquifer, careful monitoring of water purity and septic systems should be undertaken. Regionalization opportunities for capital expenditures associated with water and sanitation should receive early study.

Current shortfalls: The primary shortfall with the town government is that it is extremely fragmented. The numerous boards appear to be at odds in establishing and enforcing policies; some of which are redundant, some of which appear to be conflicting. Town by-laws do provide some common ground. However, over time their interpretations have been modified through practice rather than through formal procedure. The effort to update and revise the by-laws may help alleviate differences in interpretation.

SUGGESTED TARGET STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT

While the decentralized nature of the current structure has served well it becomes more burdensome than effective over time. The intent of various by-laws becomes lost in implementation without periodic review. The self-ruling activities of boards, once providing checks and balances of power now results in redundant and sometimes contradictory actions. The following sections provide some potential changes which streamline structure for efficiency without yielding the influence of the individual citizen as a member of the legislative body.

Nomination-approval process: Over time many elected positions have developed specialized skill sets. Such skill sets are not inherent in all those who might seek such positions. The requirements for a position may not allow an unqualified person the opportunity for training regardless of good intentions. The way to ensure qualified people are available is through an appointment approach. However, the shift of positions from elected to appointed also reflects a fundamental shift in the ability of the legislative body to fill that position. For certain appointed positions the Board of Selectmen should nominate a person. The nomination should then be approved by the voters, perhaps through special election or town meeting. Such an approach provides the benefits of appointment as well as resulting in a person who has been approved by the voters. The Town should begin a review of which positions hold such an influence over the affairs of the town to warrant the nomination-approval

process. Initially, the Town Administrator, Treasurer/Tax Collector, Town Clerk, and Highway Surveyor should be so selected.

Town Moderator: Using the open Town Meeting form of government, an elected Town Moderator is required by law.

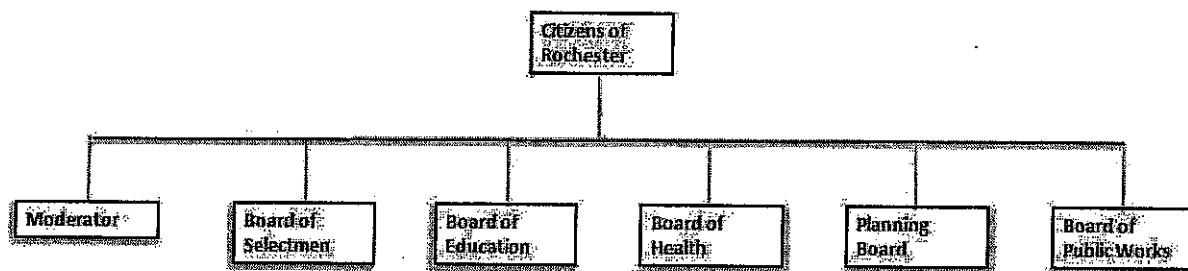
Board of Education: The school budget is the single largest budget item. Combining the various school-related commissions provides greater efficiency and consistency of actions. Members of the Board of Education can represent the town on regional school committees.

Planning Board: The Town is at a critical juncture in its history. There has been considerable growth in a relatively short time frame. There is increasing demand for services, facilities, and fiscal responsibility. There is potential for even more rapid growth. Growth cannot be stifled, nor can it be left unchecked. At the same time, there must be consistent actions to prevent costly

litigation against the town. The Planning Board, by its actions, tends to be the visible implementation of almost all aspects of the Master Plan. The Planning Board must ensure growth that takes place according to the wishes of the townspeople. To facilitate their duties, by-laws must be kept current by various commissions and committees with changes and updates automatically sent to the Planning Board.

Previously Elected Positions: Other previously elected positions are moved to serve under the Board of Selectmen. These positions should be filled by the current incumbents, and then filled by appointment, or nomination-approval if appropriate, as terms of office expire.

The proposed structure of the elected positions is provided:



RECOMMENDED COMBINATIONS

The initial combination should be the Tax Collector with the Treasurer position. This has been recommended in the 1996 Government study, the 2000 Master Plan, and more recently by the State Department of Revenue. The

current incumbents should hold their positions. Both incumbents term of office expire in 2008 at which time, or at any convenient interval thereafter, the new position may be created and filled. The actual hiring action must begin prior to the end of the current term to ensure there is no break. One of the current

incumbents may be designated as an interim fill should the hiring process extend beyond the end of the office term.

The position should be filled through a nomination-approval process suggested above.

The duties of Tree Warden should be combined into the duties of the Highway Surveyor. This position should then be designated as the Director of Public Works, along with creation of a Board of Public Works. The current Highway Surveyor should be designated as the Interim Director. At the end of the current term of office he may apply for the new position. This position should be subject to the nomination-approval process.

New Departments: Create a Public Works Department. The public works department will address the present demands of the highway department staff. It should be prepared to oversee future facility demands such as sewer and public water systems. General

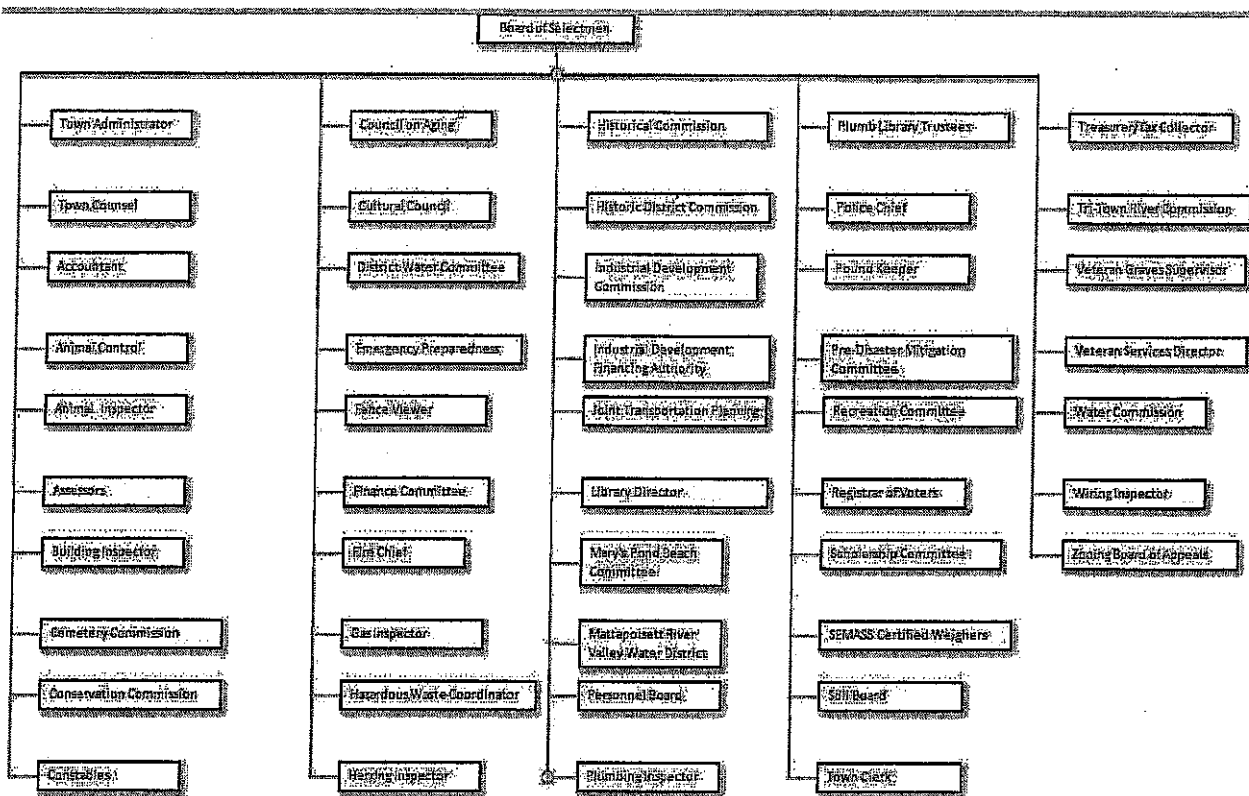
duties of the Highway Department include, but are not limited to:

1. Roadway construction and maintenance
2. Snowplowing
3. Maintenance of public grounds and buildings
4. Maintenance of parks, beaches, cemeteries
5. Provide recycling services

Create a Department of Inspection Services. This department would be under the supervision of the Building Commissioner. Other inspectors provide services in the areas of plumbing, gas and electrical inspections. The department head also fulfills the duties of the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

Rename the Parks Commission as the Recreation Committee. Expand its duties from facilities and athletic leagues to include planning events for all townspeople (youth, adult, senior).

A potential structure for the proposed changes is:



GOALS: Rochester goals for its governance are to;

1. Provide adequate services for the health and safety of the town
2. Provide services to meet current and future needs of a rapidly growing town
3. Effectively manage growth while maintaining fiscal stability

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS

Primarily the responsibility of the Board of Selectmen:

ADMINISTRATOR:

Maintain a 5-year capitalization plan outlining critical needs for capital expenditure to assist in long term planning.

BOARD OF SELECTMEN:

1. Town Counsel should review applicable rules and regulations to ascertain if there is a limit on concurrent elected positions (paid or unpaid) for an individual.
2. Undertake a study to determine which commissions can be combined for efficiency.
3. Determine which positions can be combined and the costs associated with it.
4. Combine the office of Tax Collector and Treasurer.
5. Combine Tree Warden and Highway Surveyor and rename it as Director of Public Works.

6. Create a Board of Public Works to oversee Public Works and the Director
7. Create a Department of Inspection Services
8. Rename the Park Commission as the Recreation Committee and expand its duties.
9. Begin early study to enter regionalization agreements for wastewater treatment and a public water system.

TOWN COUNSEL

1. Town Counsel should review appropriate sections of Chapter 41 to ascertain the process and procedures for conversion of elected to appointed positions.
2. Town Counsel should review applicable rules and regulations to develop a procedure to implement the nomination-approval method of appointing key personnel.
3. Each existing office/board should publish a short (one paragraph) statement of its purpose.

REFERENCED MATERIALS

Municipal Advocate, Vol 22, No. 2, Massachusetts Municipal Association, Boston MA, summer 2005.

Annual Report of the Town Officers, Town of Rochester, 2007.

Town of Rochester Master Plan, Rochester Master Plan Committee, April 2000.

Report of the Government Study Committee, Rochester Government Study Committee, January 2000.

IMPLEMENTATION

Master Plans are required by Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, Section 81 D which states that a Planning Board - - "shall make a master plan - -and from time to time may extend or perfect such plan. - - - Such plan shall be made, and may be added to or changed from time to time, by a majority vote of such Planning Board and shall be public record. - - -". Paragraph 9 of this law provides for implementation as follows: "An implementation program element which defines and schedules the specific municipal actions necessary to achieve the objective of each element of the master plan."

Each Master Plan section is followed by recommendations for specific implementation activities with specific responsibilities identified. These are labeled as IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS. A few are of the "motherhood and apple pie" variety but most call for specific activities, actions or detailed analyses. These have been summarized on the attached listing but reference to specific chapters is recommended for full comprehension of the purpose.

IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS:

have been prioritized as indicated under the column labeled Implementation Priority in the attached listing.

To ensure maximum possible movement toward the objectives expressed herein, a Master Plan Implementation Team is recommended.

Under the auspices of the Planning Board, the Master Plan Implementation Team will:

1. Promote achievement of the Master Plan by motivating and enabling elected and appointed town officials to perform the appropriate evaluations and activities.
2. Function as town-wide ombudsman in realization of the IMPLEMENTING ACTION TASKS identified in each of the ten sections and summarized herein.
3. Establish commitments to achieve results with polite but firm regular reminders and "prompts"
4. Recommend amendments, expansions or revisions of the Master Plan to the Planning Board as ensuing events and circumstances suggest.
5. Advocate broadly and aggressively to promote planned actions or recommend changes to the plan.

**THE MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION
TEAM:**

The team should be five residents who represent a broad array of interest an experience and share an abiding interest in Rochester's future.

A close relationship with the Planning Board is anticipated to discuss progress, problems and potential evolution in the Master Plan itself. A joint quarterly meeting is recommended.

Master Plan 2009

IMPLEMENTATION ACTION TASKS

(Please refer to the relevant Master Plan Chapter for the full context of each Task)

4/14/2009

Primary Responsibility	Master Plan Chapter	Implementation Action Task	Implementation Priority by Responsibility
Planning Board	Economic Development	Conduct a town-wide forum to discuss expansion of commercial zoning and to identify Permitted Uses in any such expansion. Of course, existing residential uses would be fully "grandfathered" for all residential privileges.	1
Planning Board	Economic Development	Re-evaluate the Permitted Uses allowed in Commercial/Industrial zones to make them more conducive to business.	1.1
Planning Board	Land Use	Provide recommendations to rezone more territory for commercial activities (See "Economic Development" Chapter).	1.3
Planning Board	Economic Development	Recommend a variety of new commercial venues through redistricting and/or creation of zoning overlay districts.	1.4
Planning Board	Open Space	Develop and implement Commercial project options for Chapter 61 land-release applications to include Open Space provisions.	1.5
Planning Board	Land Use	Consider "revamping" the two Commercial District by-laws to accommodate mixed use but exclude stand-alone residential units.	1.6
Planning Board	Housing	After achieving an "Affordable Housing Plan", and a Commercial development plan covered in the Economic Development section of this Master Plan, recommend economically viable projects as candidates for the large Chapter 61 properties including Inventoried Affordable projects where applicable. This may possibly position the town to make acceptable plans to acquire such properties within the allowable 120 day decision "window" provided by statute should the owner exercise the right to request release.	1.7
Planning Board	Economic Development	Consider forming a Special Commercial/Agricultural District to allow unobtrusive commercial activity as well as agriculture in the areas where growers retain non-bog real estate.	1.8
Planning Board	Land Use	Develop a comprehensive Town Center Plan.	2
Planning Board	Economic Development	Recommend a Mixed Use by-law and creation of Mixed Use overlay districts.	2.1
Planning Board	Economic Development	From the land-use plan identify areas that would be suitable to support one bedroom apartment or condominiums that can provide modest, cost effective housing for people while placing very little demand on municipal services.	3.1
Planning Board	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	In conjunction with Highway Surveyor, promote Scenic Road status or equivalent for all in-town roads.	3.2
Planning Board	Natural Resources	Protect Sippican River and adjoining medium/high yield aquifers in parallel with the current Ground Water Protection District and strengthen the provisions.	3.3

Primary	Master Plan	Implementation	Implementation
Responsibility	Chapter	Action Task	Priority by Responsibility
Planning Board	Housing	Create an Open Space Residential Subdivision (OSRD) By-Law (Rural Subdivision Design) with bonus lots for creation of "Affordable" units.	3.4
Planning Board	Land Use	Sponsor an "Open Space Residential Development" by-law to provide a place for TDR development rights to transfer into.	3.5
Planning Board	Open Space	Develop and propose zoning By-Laws for OSRD, TDR and Flex-Development as "preferred method of development".	3.6
Planning Board	Land Use	Develop and enact a Tradable Development Rights (TDR) By-Law to save the illusion of "country" on the roads we use daily.	3.7
Planning Board	Natural Resources	Propose a Tradable Development Rights (TDR) by-law allowing sale of development rights on undeveloped lots on public ways to save important Viewscapes.	3.8
Planning Board	Natural Resources	Study and recommend more Scenic Road designations as specified in MGL 40, 15 D as a way to limit road widening and excessive improvement which encourage more aggressive and faster traffic.	3.9
Planning Board	Open Space	Identify and implement liability management techniques for public access to privately owned open space	4.1
Planning Board	Economic Development	Growing food may become a local "growth industry" should the "oil crisis" exacerbate. In conjunction with the Agricultural Commission, evaluate need to preserve areas of known agricultural capability.	4.2
Planning Board	Natural Resources	Generate by-laws designed to retain parcels suitable for truck-gardens to provide local-source produce.	4.3
Planning Board	Historic Preservation	Include historic and archeological impact in local special permit, site plan review, and subdivision control criteria.	4.4
Planning Board	Historic Preservation	Recommend approaches to protect viewscapes (farm fields, stone walls, tree-lined roads, open views to woodland) throughout town.	4.5
Planning Board	Land Use	Manage development to create Open Space with specifications on approved plans: *Especially encourage preservation of existing agricultural use and existing fields *Public access is desirable, casual access should be accommodated.	4.6
Planning Board	Natural Resources	Identify and save some undeveloped space for those who need "constitutionals" in "wild" space.	4.7
Planning Board	Natural Resources	Develop zoning, site plan review regulations, and special permit decision criteria that encourage environmental protection, preservation of natural vegetation, and special wildlife areas.	4.8
Planning Board	Natural Resources	In conjunctions with Board of Health, begin promotion of waste-water recharge concepts for Rochester-source water currently discharged into Buzzards Bay.	4.9
Planning Board	Housing	Enhance the bonus-lot provisions of the Flexible Development by-law for creation of "Affordable" units and add an "Affordable" requirement to the SRD (over age 55) by-law.	5.1
Planning Board	Housing	In conjunction with Board of Appeals recommend an Accessory Apartment Special Permit which requires qualification as Inventoried Affordable under Commonwealth rules to replace the current two-family Special Permit by-law.	5.2

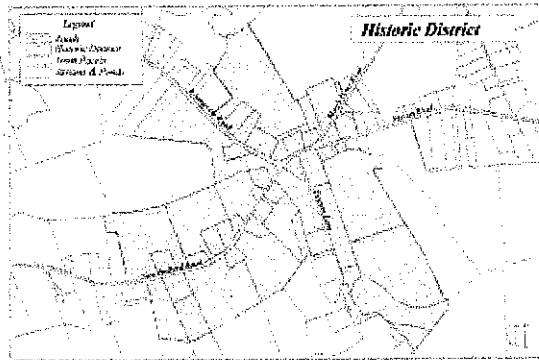
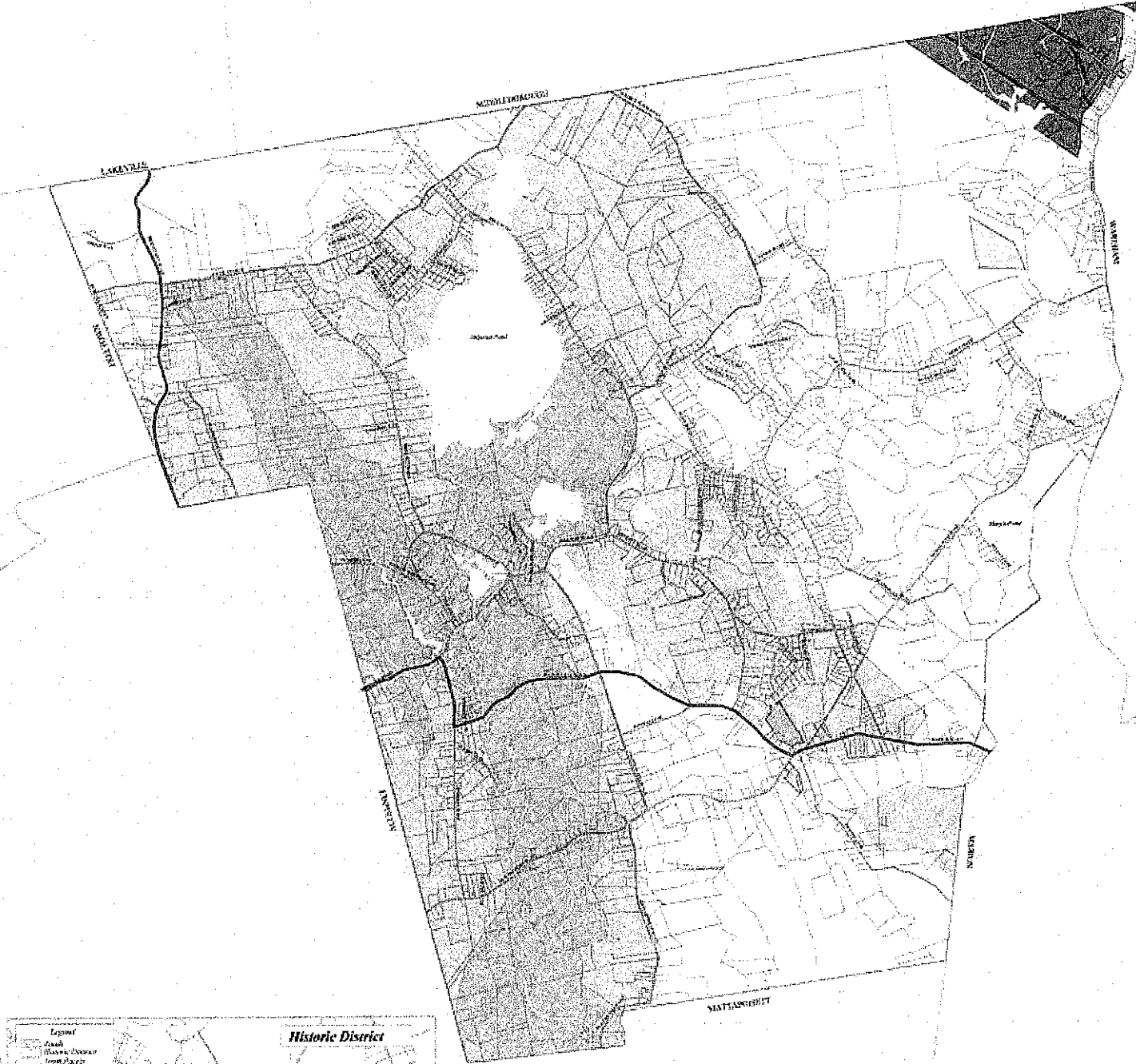
Primary Responsibility	Master Plan Chapter	Implementation Action Task	Implementation Priority by Responsibility
Planning Board	Housing	Explore strategies to offer housing solutions for living groups not qualified by earnings for Inventoried Affordable housing but still unable to "reach" the style of the present single family residential homes being constructed.	5.3
Planning Board	Housing	Proactively cultivate developers interested in utilizing the LIP provisions to achieve small "Affordable " housing projects.	5.4
Planning Board	Land Use	Zone to encourage inventoried Affordable by DHCD criteria and financially accessible living facilities. *Refine By-Laws to define an Accessory Apartment concept and require them to qualify as "Affordable" under the State DHCD rules. (See "Housing") *Refine By-Laws to permit more densely settled districts to enable moderate income living	5.5
Library Trustees	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Renew library 5-year plan per imminent Trustees schedule.	1
Library Trustees	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Continue to expand the collection of printed and non-printed materials (music, videos) for circulation.	2
Library Trustees	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Expand outreach for awareness of Library services.	3
Historical Commission	Historic Preservation	Identify historic and archeological sites throughout town and take measures to protect them. Explore such alternatives as local, state, or national landmark designation.	1
Historical Commission	Historic Preservation	Cultivate an understanding of historic artifacts and their importance to our sense of "Place".	2
Historical Commission	Historic Preservation	Research and publish accounts of historic artifacts such as stagecoach roads, early waterway projects, water-power mills and how they worked, etc.	3
Historical Commission	Historic Preservation	Explore funding possibilities for protection of viewsapes through regional, state, and federal sources.	4
Highway Surveyor	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Identify, design and seek funding for roadway drainage problems throughout town.	1
Highway Surveyor	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Consider adding painted crosswalks at Town Center.	2
Highway Surveyor	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Develop a prioritized schedule to implement intersection design and for building sidewalks and pursue necessary funding.	3
Highway Surveyor	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Address increased traffic on roads leading through Rochester Center with configuration changes and increased safety features to enhance community friendliness including intersections to be as close to traditional 90-degree intersections as possible and including sidewalks.	4
Highway Surveyor	Community Services Government	Initiate a volunteer project for collecting large, non-toxic items for disposal. A nominal fee would be charged. The metal items could be sold for scrap.	5

			Implementation
Primary	Master Plan	Implementation	Priority
Responsibility	Chapter	Action Task	by Responsibility
Council On Aging	Community Services Government	Conduct feasibility analysis to identify or build senior daycare space.	1
Council On Aging	Community Services Government	Expand outreach efforts to attract more senior resident participation.	2
Council On Aging	Community Services Government	Develop new volunteer opportunities for COA participants and identify programs.	3
Council On Aging	Community Services Government	Conduct an annual program survey of the Council on Aging constituency seeking updates on evolved interests and needs.	4
Council On Aging	Community Services Government	Host a biannual welcoming meeting in the spring and fall for new residents. This would be sponsored by the Rochester Council on Aging. The benefits of such a gathering would serve many purposes. It would provide new residents with information regarding the town, an opportunity to volunteer, and would also provide a venue for vendors. In addition, it would blend new residents with long-time residents and elderly with youth.	5
Conservation Commission	Open Space	Identify people with enthusiasm to staff an Open Space Action Committee, form a committee and charge it with broad array of challenges listed in the Implementation Action Tasks section of Open Space Chapter.	1
Conservation Commission	Natural Resources	Continue to pursue a broad array of land preservation activities through the Rochester Conservation Commission, the Rochester Land Trust and many interested citizens.	2
Conservation Commission	Natural Resources	Educate the public about the need for protection of all water resources, with regard to wetlands and surface water.	3
Conservation Commission	Natural Resources	Educate the public about the environmental damage caused by conventional lawn care as well as the importance of maintaining wells including the implications of road salting.	4
Cemetery Commission	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Consider future locations for cemetery expansion.	1
Cemetery Commission	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Install wells and pump systems at each of the six main cemeteries.	2
Board of Selectmen	Community Services Government	Fully evaluate public water supply options for broad dissemination to residence. Take appropriate action.	1
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Begin early study to enter regionalization agreements for waste water treatment and a public water system.	2
Board of Selectmen	Economic Development	Reenergize the Rochester Industrial Development Commission to be proactive about attracting revenue producing developments for Rochester.	3
Board of Selectmen	Economic Development	Expand jurisdiction of Industrial Development Commission to include all potential Commercial activity	4
Board of Selectmen	Community Services Government	Evaluate regionalization of Emergency Medical services to enable upgrade of Emergency Medical Technician status to the Intermediate Level of care.	5
Board of Selectmen	Housing	Encourage the Habitat for Humanity organization to achieve "Affordable" living units.	6
Board of Selectmen	Land Use	Assemble a list of potentially attractive and economically viable projects as candidates for the large Chapter 61 properties. This may possibly position the town to make acceptable plans to acquire such properties within the allowable 120 day decision "window" provided by statute should the owner exercise the right to request release.	7

Primary Responsibility	Master Plan Chapter	Implementation Action Task	Priority by Responsibility
Board of Selectmen	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	In conjunction with Council on Aging and Planning Board, provide affordable housing for the elderly.	7
Board of Selectmen	Community Services Government	Continue to practice fiscal responsibility while maintaining community facilities.	8
Board of Selectmen	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Implement the recommendation of the 1999 Town Hall Renovation & Expansion Study.	8
Board of Selectmen	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Design, construct, or renovate the Town facilities in keeping with the rural character of the town.	8
Board of Selectmen	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Explore future possibilities for public transport for the disabled and others unable to drive private vehicles.	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Undertake a study to determine which commissions can be combined for efficiency.	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Determine which positions can be combined and the costs associated with it.	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Combine the office of Tax Collector and Treasurer.	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Combine Tree Warden and Highway Surveyor and rename it as Director of Public Works.	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Create a Board of Public Works to oversee Public Works and the Director	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Create a Department of Inspection Services	8
Board of Selectmen	Governance	Rename the Park Commission as the Recreation Committee and expand its duties.	8
Board of Selectmen	Land Use	Make the town more "people friendly" with walking and bicycle paths and selected sidewalks.	8
Board of Selectmen		Note: Priority #8 for BOS is Level of Effort items requiring attention from time to time or at an undefined specific future event.	
Board of Health	Community Services Government	In conjunction with Planning Board Town Center Plan, develop conceptual plans for a Town Center-wide treatment plant concurrent with development of Town Center activities.	1
Board of Health	Open Space	On-going evaluation of pond and stream health.	2
Administrator	Housing	Form a comprehensive, proactive "Affordable Housing Plan" to promote and manage development of Inventoried Affordable housing as well as modestly priced housing for most of us with modest means.	1
Administrator	Housing	Assemble a committee to evaluate the incentives to creation of an approvable Planned Production Plan.	1.1
Administrator	Housing	Initiate a program to build small Affordable units on town owned land using the Local Initiative Program (LIP) option of the Comprehensive Permit law.	1.2
Administrator	Housing	Reenergize the Rochester Housing Opportunity Partnership and charge that group with conducting a Housing Needs Analysis as defined by the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Community Development.	1.3
Administrator	Housing	Evaluate incentives to create a formal Housing Authority.	1.4

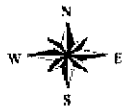
Primary	Master Plan	Implementation	Priority
Responsibility	Chapter	Action Task	by Responsibility
Administrator	Community Facilities, Circulation & Infrastructure	Continue to seek all grants to supplement funding initiatives for town facilities.	2
Administrator	Governance	Continue to maintain 5-year capitalization plan outlining critical needs for capital expenditure to assist in long term planning.	3
Administrator	Community Services Government	Continue exploration of regionalization agreements to cut the cost of services.	4
Town Clerk	Community Services Government	Distribute animal control regulations annually during licensing and enforce such regulations by means of fines for violations.	1
Town Counsel	Governance	Town Counsel should review applicable rules and regulations to develop a procedure to implement the nomination-approval method of appointing key personnel.	1
Town Counsel	Governance	Town Counsel should review appropriate sections of Chapter 41 to ascertain the process and procedures for conversion of elected to appointed positions.	2





Legend

Zoning Districts	Rail Lines
Residential	Roads
Limited Commercial	Scenic Road
General Commercial	Rivers and Streams
Industrial	Water Bodies
Rezoned Ag/Res. <small>(Repealed by Chapter 293A, § 2, 1997)</small>	
Mattapanisset River Valley Watershed <small>(1990, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003)</small>	
Groundwater Protection District	



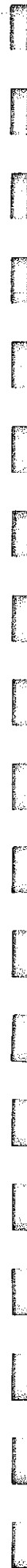
Town of Rochester **Zoning Map**

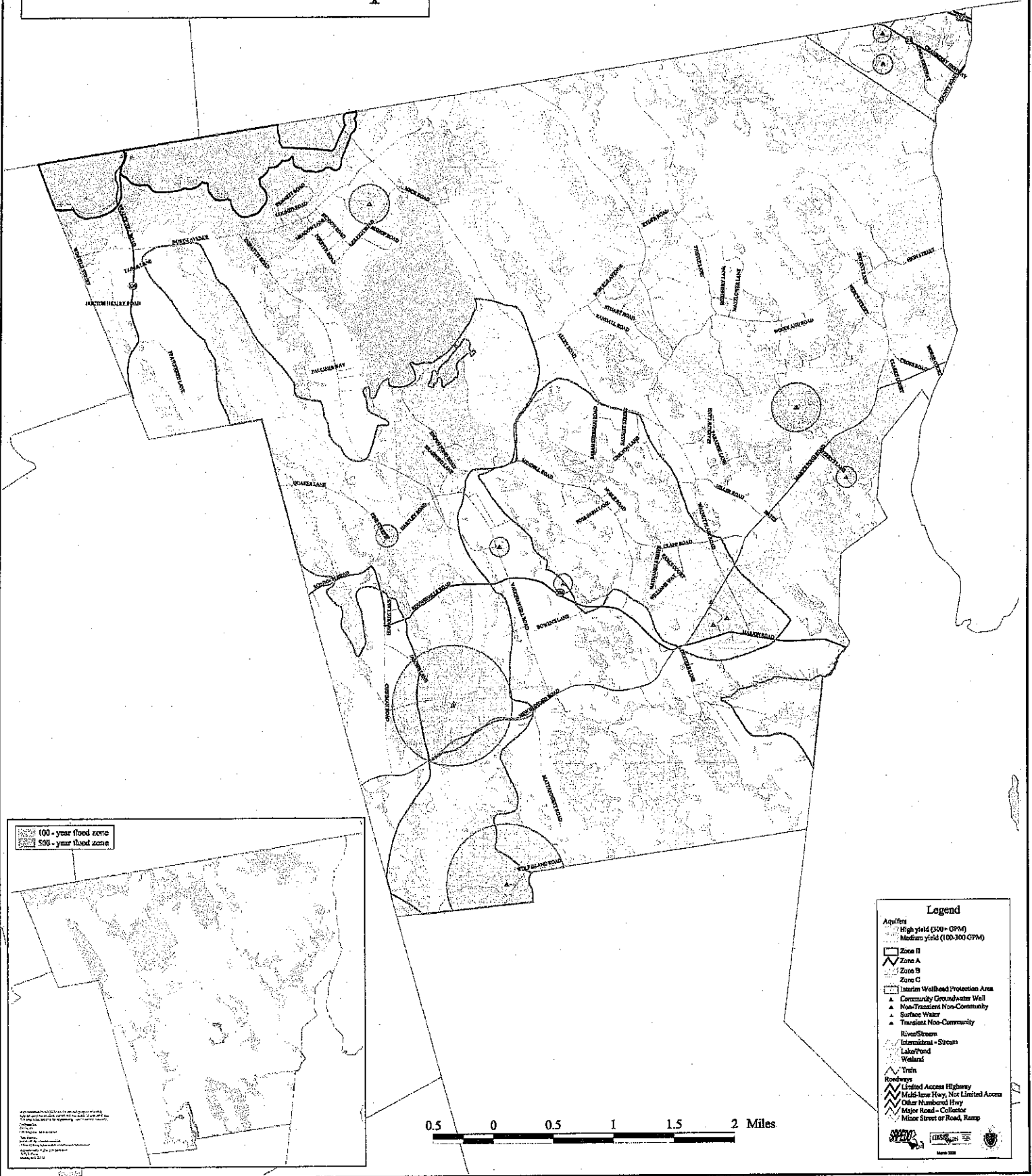
Scale: 1 inch = 1 mile

June 9, 2003

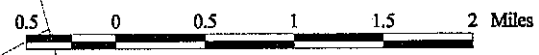
The Office of Planning and Development has prepared this map for the Town of Rochester, Massachusetts. The map is a representation of the zoning districts as of June 9, 2003. It is not intended to be a legal document. For more information, please contact the Office of Planning and Development.







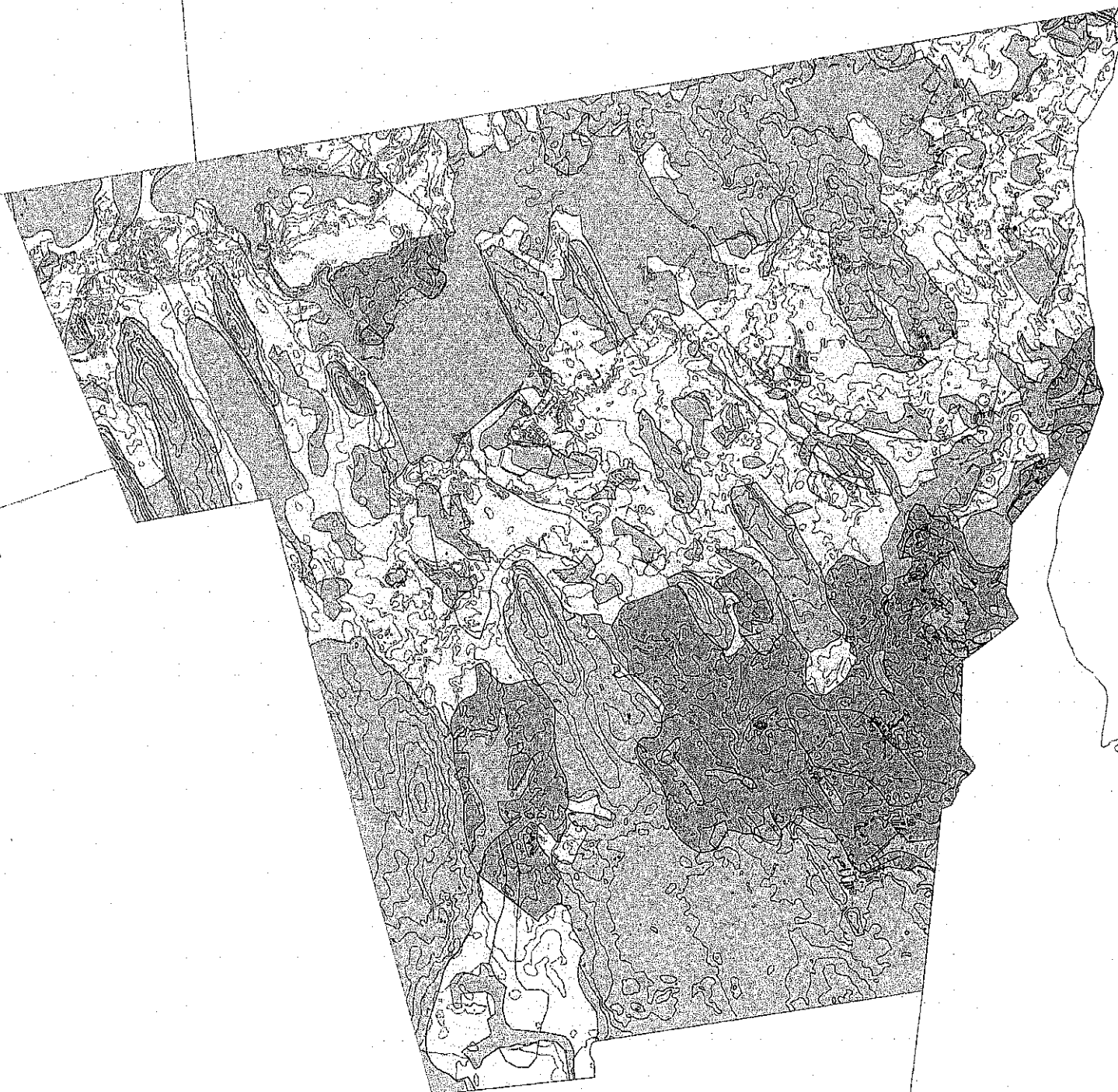
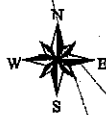




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Town of Rochester Surficial Geology



Legend

- 3 Meter Contour
- Surficial Geology
- Sand and Gravel deposits
- Till or Bedrock
- Large sand deposits where distinguished from sand and gravel deposits
- Floodplain Alluvium



March 2008

0.5 0 0.5 1 1.5 2 Miles

This map was produced by the State of New York Department of Environmental Conservation for the purpose of providing information to the public. It is not intended for use as a legal document. The map is not intended for use as a legal document. The map is not intended for use as a legal document.

