



TOWN *of* PETERSHAM
AFFORDABLE HOUSING PLAN

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Prepared by the
PETERSHAM AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE

OVERVIEW

The Town of Petersham (population 1,180) is situated in the Chicopee River Watershed*, whose vast tributaries drain directly into the Quabbin Reservoir. To suggest that its landmass is ecologically fragile and of direct import to the state's drinking water, is an understatement. In the Winter of 2003, the town, in conjunction with the Metropolitan District Commission (now, the Division of Conservation & Recreation) retained the Daylor Consulting Group to develop a comprehensive and cohesive master plan and open space plan which attempts to accommodate both growth and ecological protection. The combined plans (200+ pages) contains an affordable housing component, whose specifics have been recompiled, condensed and supplemented as per the *Guidelines for Planned Production Regulation under MGL Chapter 40B, 760 CMR 31.07(1)(i)*.

This Affordable Housing Plan is designed to create affordable housing for the community, while balancing competing and often conflicting objectives. It makes every possible effort to realize an increase in its number of low or moderate income housing units by at least 3/4 of 1% each year of the contemplated phase-in. It seeks to produce housing in the most appropriate areas with full knowledge that the town offers no public water or sewer, and its low permeability of soils has led to malfunctioning on-site wastewater systems in its most densely populated areas (viz, the town center).

SECTION I. COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Community Demographics;

A. Population

The town's population (1,180 residents¹) grew 4.3% during the 1990s; as compared to a growth rate of 5.8% for Worcester County and 5.5% for Massachusetts. Although the town grew slower than most of the towns to the south and east, it grew faster than many towns located to the north and west. This is not surprising given the proximity of major employment centers in Worcester, Boston, and the Route 128 and I-495 corridors.

Population projections and regional growth trends indicate that development pressures from eastern and central Massachusetts will lead to continued growth in Petersham.

Table 1 - Population Growth and Projections for Petersham and Worcester County, 1940 - 2010²

Year	Petersham	% Change	Worcester County	% Change
Population	From Previous	Population	From Previous	
1940	923	—	504,470	—
1950	814	-11.8	546,401	8.3
1960	890	9.3	583,228	6.7
1970	1,015	14.0	638,114	9.4
1980	1,024	0.9	646,352	1.3
1990	1,131	10.4	709,705	9.8
2000	1,180	4.3	750,963	5.8
2010 (projected)	1,319	6.2	715,091	-4.8

* The town is also an integral component of the North Quabbin Landscape, one of the state's largest, best connected, and most intact network of native habitats and ecosystems.

Table 2 - Population Growth for Petersham and Surrounding Towns, 1990 - 2000³

Town Population	1990	2000	% Change
Athol	11,451	11,299	-1.3
Barre	4,546	5,113	12.5
Hubbardston	2,797	3,909	39.8
New Salem	802	929	15.8
Orange	7,312	7,518	2.8
Petersham	1,131	1,180	4.3
Phillipston	1,485	1,621	9.2
Royalston	1,147	1,254	9.3
Templeton	6,438	6,799	5.6
Warwick	740	750	1.4

N.B., The Town of Petersham is located within the Non-Metropolitan Worcester County Metropolitan Statistical Area.

B. Household Characteristics

Petersham experienced a greater percentage of *household* growth (12%) during the 1990s than either Worcester County or the state, even though its population grew slower (4.3%) than the county and the state.

On average, Petersham households were larger than the state average in 1990, but smaller than the state average by 2000. This statistic suggests the town either experienced an influx of smaller households (such as elderly persons, childless couples, or single-parent households), or witnessed a lower than average influx of families with children, or both.

Table 3 - Trends in Household Growth, 1990-2000⁴

Year	Petersham Households	% Change From Previous	Worcester County Households	% Change From Previous	State Households	% Change From Previous
1990	391	—	260,153	—	2,247,110	—
2000	438	12.0	283,927	9.1	2,443,580	8.7

Table 4 - Trends in Average Household Size, 1990-2000⁵

Year	Petersham	Worcester County	Massachusetts
1990	2.62	2.62	2.58
2000	2.48	2.56	2.51

In 2000, most Petersham households (60%) consisted of married couples. This figure far exceeded the state average of 49% of households. Petersham also has a relatively high proportion of elderly householders (65+) living alone and lower proportions of single-parent households and non-family households than the state average.

Table 5 - Household Composition⁶

	Petersham	Massachusetts
Married Couple Families	60%	49%
Female Headed Families	5%	12%
Male Headed Families	3%	4%
Householder 65+ Living Alone	11%	10%
Other Householder Living Alone	16%	18%
Other Non-Family Households	5%	7%

C. Age Characteristics

Petersham's population is much older than the state as a whole. In 2000, 36% of the state's population was 45 or over, while 46% of Petersham's population was 45 or over. This gap had widened even further by 2003. Between 1990 and 2003, the number of Petersham residents aged 45-64 (which includes the "baby boomer" generation) increased by almost 70%, to comprise 31.2% of the Town's population.

Table 6 Age Distribution, 1990-2000⁷

Age Cohort	1990			2000		
	Petersham	%	Mass %	Petersham	%	Mass %
Under 10	132	11.7	13.2	132	11.2	13
10-19	142	12.6	12.6	147	12.5	13
20-29	123	10.9	17.8	85	7.2	13
30-44	306	27.1	24.3	270	22.3	24.5
45-64	228	20.2	18.5	339	28.7	22.4
65 & over	200	17.7	13.6	207	17.5	13.5
Total	1,131	100.0	100.0	1,180	100.0	100.
Median Age	—	39.133.4	—	43.2	36.5	

Table 7 - Petersham Age Cohort Projections, 2003-2010⁸

Age	2003 Census Data		2010 Projected Data		Projected Change	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Under 10	127	10.2	163	12.3	36	28.3
10-19	164	13.2	204	15.5	40	24.4
20-29	83	6.7	133	10.1	50	60.2
30-44	253	20.4	260	19.7	7	2.8
45-64	387	31.2	369	28.0	(18)	(4.7)
65 & over	228	18.4	190	14.4	(38)	(16.7)
Total	1,242	100.0	1,319	100.0	77	6.2

D. Special Needs & Disabled

Table 7A - Disability Status of Petersham's Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population as per U.S. 2000 Census Data

	Total	Percentage
Population 5 to 20 years	214	100.0
With a disability	25	11.7
Population 21 to 64 years	696	100.0
With a disability	67	9.6
Percent employed	65.7	(X)
No disability	629	90.4
Percent employed	80.9	(X)
Population 65 years and over	198	100.0
With a disability	82	41.4

Petersham's elderly population (65+) has the greatest percentage of persons with special needs/disabilities. As per the previous *Age Cohort Projections*, this demographic is also expected to increase as more residents enter into their retirement years.

E. Income Distribution

In 1990, the median household income in Petersham of \$39,063 was 9.2% higher than the Worcester County median and 5.7% higher than the state median. This trend reversed in 2000, when the median household income in Petersham of \$47,833 was 0.1% lower than the Worcester County median and 5.6% lower than the state median.

A greater proportion of households in Petersham are considered "middle-class" than in the county or the state as a whole. In 2000, Petersham had a smaller share of households with annual incomes over \$100,000 but also a smaller share of households earning less than \$10,000 than in either Worcester County or the state as a whole.

While the proportion of households living in poverty increased in both Worcester County and the state between 1990 and 2000, this figure remained constant in Petersham during this time at 5.8%.

Table 8 - Household Income Distribution, 1990 and 2000⁹

Income	Petersham Households	Petersham %	Worcester County %	Massachusetts %
1990				
Less than \$10,000	23	6.0	13.5	13.4
\$10,000 - \$24,999	91	23.6	20.9	19.9
\$25,000 - \$49,999	133	34.5	34.5	32.4
\$50,000 - \$99,999	114	29.5	26.6	27.6
\$100,000 or more	25	6.5	4.5	6.7
Median HH Income	\$39,063	100.0	\$35,774	\$36,952
% Living in Poverty	-	5.8%	8.3%	8.9%

Income	Petersham Households	Petersham %	Worcester County %	Massachusetts %
2000				
Less than \$10,000	18	4.1	8.8	8.8
\$10,000 - \$24,999	76	17.4	17.0	15.8
\$25,000 - \$49,999	137	31.4	26.1	24.9
\$50,000 - \$99,999	145	33.3	33.3	32.9
\$100,000 or more	60	13.8	14.8	17.7
Median HH Income	\$47,833	100.0	\$47,874	\$50,502
% Living in Poverty	—	5.8%	9.2%	9.3%

F. Education Level

Petersham has a highly educated resident population, with 46% of its residents aged 25 and over having completed four years of college and over half of these having attained a graduate degree. These figures far exceed the Worcester County and state averages.

Table 9 - Educational Attainment, 1990 and 2000¹⁰

Location	% Completed High School		% Completed 4 Years College		% Completed >4 Years College Location	
	1990	2000	1990	2000	1990	2000
Petersham	90	95	43	46	19	24
Worcester County	78	84	23	27	9	10
Massachusetts	80	85	27	33	11	14

G. Race, Ethnicity and Total Population

Petersham's racial composition is homodeneous, as is typical with most small rural communities.

Table 10 - Race & Ethnicity: Total Population (2000 Census Data)

Race/Ethnicity	Total Population	Percentage of Total Population
American Indian/Eskio/Aleut	8	0.8%
Asian	3	0.3%
Black Population	7	0.7%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders	0	0.0%
Other Population	1	0.1%
Two or More Races	11	1.0%
White Population	1,065	97.2%
Hispanic Ethnicity	12	1.1%
Not Hispanic or Latino	1,084	98.9%

2. Existing Housing Stock Characteristics

A. Total Units

As of 2000, there were 474 housing units in Petersham¹. This represents an increase of 26 units or 5.8% from the 1990 total of 448 units. During this time, the number of housing units in Worcester County grew by 6.7% and while statewide growth was 6.0%. Thus, the Town's housing growth rate closely paralleled the county and state averages.

B. Age and Condition of Petersham's Housing Stock

More than half of Petersham's housing is over 60 years old. Visual surveys reveal that most of Petersham's housing stock is in good condition. Although many of the Town's houses are quite old, these surviving houses have generally been repaired and restored over the years.

Table 11 - Age of Housing Stock in Petersham, 2000¹¹

Year Built	Total Units	%
1939 or Earlier	253	53.4
1940 to 1959	60	12.7
1960 to 1969	24	5.1
1970 to 1979	49	10.3
1980 to 1989	40	8.4
1990 to 2000	48	10.1
Total	474	100.0

C. Housing Density

Petersham is a sparsely populated rural community with an average population density of about 21 residents per square mile, or about one resident per 30 acres. The most populated section of town is the center, including Hardwick Road, South Street, Spring Street, Oliver Street, West Street, East Street, and Main Street (Route 32).

Residential development elsewhere in the Town is a mixture of older farmhouses and other dwellings as well as newer houses, many of which are situated along major roads such as Popple Camp Road (Route 101), East Street, South Street, and Hardwick Road (Route 32A). Away from these paved roads, residential development is very sparse.

D. Housing Type

About 90% of the Town's 474 housing units are single-family detached houses. During the 1990s, the Town gained more single-family housing at the expense of two-, three-, and four-unit housing.

Table 12 - Types of Housing Units in Petersham, 1990 and 2000¹²

Type of Structure	1990 Units	2000 Units	% Change
Single-family (detached)	394	426	8.1
Single-family (attached)	6	13	116.7
Two-family units	22	14	-36.4
Three or four units	19	15	-21.1
Five to nine units	0	2	-
Ten to nineteen units	0	0	-
Twenty or more units	0	0	-
Mobile Home	5	4	-20.0
Other	2	0	-100.0
Total Units	448	474	5.8%

E. Housing Ownership and Occupancy

The home ownership rate in Petersham increased from 80.8% in 1990 to 82.6% in 2000. This is much higher than the state average of 62%.

While the total number of housing units in Petersham increased during the 1990s, the number of renter-occupied units has remained flat (75 in 1990 versus 76 in 2000).

The amount of unoccupied housing in Petersham dropped sharply during the 1990s, from 57 units to 36 units. Most of this drop is attributed to the re-occupation of formerly vacant units, though some is due to the conversion of seasonal or second dwellings into primary dwellings. This trend indicates a strong housing market where owners have substantial incentives to rehabilitate unoccupied units.

*Table 13 - Types Occupancy, 1990 and 2000*¹³

Category	1990		2000	
	Number	%	Number	%
Total Housing Units	448	100.0	474	100.0
Occupied Housing Units	391	87.3	438	92.9
Owner-Occupied Housing Units	316	80.8	362	80.0
Renter-Occupied Housing Units	75	19.2	76	17.4
Unoccupied Housing Units	57	12.7	36	7.6
Seasonal, Recreational, or Occasional Use	27	6.0	21	4.4
Other Unoccupied Housing Units	30	6.7	15	3.2

F. Vacancy¹⁴

Vacancy rate is an indicator of the availability of housing units. Generally, a vacancy rate of 5% is considered ideal because it allows occupants to move freely in the marketplace. A vacancy rate below 5% indicates that there is demand for additional housing. In Petersham in 2000, the homeowner vacancy rate was 0.8% as compared to 0.8% for Worcester County and 0.7% for Massachusetts. In 1990, the homeowner vacancy rate was 2.5% in Petersham, as compared to 1.8% in Worcester County and 1.7% in the state. These statistics indicate a “tight” housing market in Petersham as well as in the region and the state.

G. Sales Activity¹⁵

Petersham experienced a significant increase in home sales activity during the latter half of the 1990s, with home sales averaging about 4 units per year from 1993 through 1997, and about 15 units per year from 1998 through November 2002.

G. Housing Affordability

(i) Indices¹⁶

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines affordability as a household paying no more than 30% of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30% of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty

affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. This federal definition of affordable housing has become the generally accepted standard. A guideline used by banks when evaluating home mortgage applications is that monthly payments (including property taxes and insurance) should not exceed 30-33% of household income.

In 2000, the U.S. Census estimated that about 16.9% of Petersham homeowners spent 35% or more of their household income on housing costs; an additional 8.4% spent between 30% and 34.9%. The Census also estimated that at least 25.0% of renters in Petersham spent 35% or more of their monthly income on housing costs and another 3.6% of renter households spent between 30% and 34.9% on housing costs.¹⁰

To determine the affordability of ownership units for any given family, it is necessary to estimate the maximum price of a home that the family could afford if they are to spend no more than 30% of their income on housing costs, including mortgage payments, property taxes, and insurance. This calculation depends on many factors, including interest rates (which, in turn, are affected by the borrower's credit rating), length of the mortgage (e.g., 15-year vs. 30-year), and amount of the down payment. Based on assumptions for a typical home buyer, a family earning the 2000 median household income for Petersham of \$47,833 could afford a home costing about \$169,300.^{11, 12} This is just slightly less than the 2002 median sales price for single-family homes in Petersham, which was \$176,500.

(ii) Cost of Home ownership Units¹⁷

The cost of home ownership units in Petersham is examined in two different ways. Data from the Banker and Tradesman, which tracks real estate trends in Massachusetts, provide current (2002) figures and past trends related to the price of real estate that was bought and sold (see Table 13 and Table 14). These data provide an accurate representation of prices for those units that changed hands, but may not be totally representative of all the housing units in the Town. Data from the Petersham Assessor's Office, on the other hand, includes assessed valuation information for all dwelling units (Table 14). However, these figures are based on 2000 assessments and may not be an entirely reliable indicator of current prices. Both data sets, taken together, reveal the following trends about the Town's housing stock:

A. While Petersham is one of the most expensive towns in the north/east Quabbin subregion in terms of housing, it is still very affordable compared to most communities located closer to Boston and Worcester.

B. As of 2000, just under 10% of the Town's housing stock was considered affordable to low income households (those earning up to \$23,900 per year); another 28% was affordable to moderate income households (earning up to \$38,300 per year); another 52% was affordable to middle income households (earning up to \$71,750 per year); and the remaining 10% of the housing stock was affordable only to upper income households.

C. The cost of homes on the market in Petersham appears to have increased about 50% from 1995 to 2002, although it is difficult to establish this figure with much certainty since there are only a handful of real estate sales each year.

Table 14 - Median Sales Price of Single-Family Home Sales in Petersham, 1995-2002¹⁸

Year	Median Sales Price
1995	\$127,500
1996	\$99,000
1997	\$99,000
1998	\$138,500
1999	\$115,450
2000	\$170,000
2001	\$178,000
2002	\$176,500

Table 15 - Median Sales Price of Single-Family Home Sales, 2002 Petersham & Surrounds¹⁹

Town	Median Sales Price of Single-Family Houses
Phillipston	\$110,000
Athol	\$112,250
Ware	\$128,000
Templeton	\$130,000
Hardwick	\$133,800
New Salem	\$152,000
Barre	\$156,000
Petersham	\$176,500
Hubbardston	\$199,900
Average of Selected Towns	\$144,272

Source: Banker and Tradesman, 2002.

Table 16 - Approximate Cost of Housing in Petersham²⁰

Home Price Range	Affordability Range % of Median HH Income	Single-Family Units		Other Housing	
		Number	%	Number	%
Less than \$84,700	Less than 50%	23	5.5	22	42.3
\$84,700 - \$135,500	50% - 80%	121	28.9	12	23.1
\$135,501 - \$169,300	80% - 100%	107	25.5	8	15.4
\$169,301 - \$203,200	100% - 120%	75	17.9	6	11.5
\$203,201 - \$254,000	120% - 150%	48	11.5	2	3.8
\$254,001 - \$338,700	150% - 200%	35	8.4	2	3.8
More than \$338,700	More than 200%	10	2.4	0	0.0
Total		419	100.0%	52	100.0%

(iii) Cost of Rental Housing²¹

Rental housing in much of Massachusetts has become more expensive in recent years, but this trend has not affected Petersham thus far. In 1990, median gross rent in Petersham was \$586 per month, compared to the Worcester County median of \$522 and the statewide median of \$580. In 2000, median gross rent in Petersham was \$543 per month, compared to a county median of \$580 and a statewide median of \$684.

As discussed above, only about 17% of the Town's housing stock is rentals, and there has been essentially no net increase in rental housing over the past decade.

(iv) Housing Needs²²

The Town's very low percentage of residents in their 20s may indicate a shortage of suitable rental housing and "starter housing" for young single persons and young couples. Alternatively, this trend might primarily reflect the preference of many young people to live closer to the employment and entertainment opportunities of urban centers.

Petersham has a sizable population of baby-boomers in the 45-64 age group, as well as elderly residents over the age of 65. As these residents age, many of them will want or need housing specifically designed for the elderly or the frail elderly. If such housing is not available in Petersham, some elderly residents may be forced to move elsewhere. The Town currently has no *public* elderly housing or elderly affordable housing. The nearest such public facility is the Quabbin Nursing Home in Athol, which contains an Alzheimer's unit.

3. Development conditions and constraints and the municipality's ability to mitigate those constraints

A. Local Zoning Constraints²³

Petersham has single-district, "residential and agricultural" zoning. For conventional ANR lots, the Town has a minimum lot size of: (i) one and one half acres for the subdivision of two or less parcels, and (ii) two acres thereafter. Both require 150 feet of frontage on a town road. There is a provision for backland lots that conform to the same dimensional requirements, with only 40 feet of frontage. The Town also requires sufficient off-street parking for each unit.

B. Means to Mitigate Local Zoning: A variety of mitigation means are available in Petersham, including:

1. Uses allowed as of right:

- Conversion of a single family unit to a two family unit, provided the parking requirements are met.²⁴
- Rental four rooms (or less) to lodgers, boarders and tourists, provided no separate cooking facilities are maintained.²⁵
- All government, educational and religious uses and facilities are exempt; including those four religious "assisted-living facilities" in Petersham currently boarding 90 residents (approximately 7.5% of Town's population).²⁶

2. Uses allowed by special permit:

- Conversion of a single-family unit to a four family unit, provided the parking and setback requirements are met.²⁷
- Construction of a multifamily dwelling containing not more than six dwelling units or apartments, provided that all lot size, setback and parking requirements are met.²⁸

3. Appeals: Applicants may appeal (to the Zoning Board of Appeals) for relief from the above “specially permitted” uses if the use will not cause or give rise to noise, odor, dust, refuse, exterior lighting, traffic or other considerations which would be offensive or detrimental to the present or future character of the community. Applicants may also appeal (to the Zoning Board of Appeals) for a variance where a literal enforcement of the by-law would involve substantial hardship.

C. Rate of Development²⁹ Constraints: Petersham recently passed a Rate of Development Bylaw which expires at the end of 2009. This bylaw was implemented as an interim measure, providing the town sufficient opportunity to engage in a more thorough, and comprehensive review through its Master & Open Space plans. This bylaw applies to new construction only (hence the above units conversions are allowed) and variance/waivers have been issued by the town Selectmen in the past.

D. Protections for Water Resources & Exceptions³⁰: The critical role of the Quabbin Reservoir in supplying metropolitan Boston’s water has resulted in numerous regulations being enacted to limit pollution within the reservoir’s drainage area. These regulations are in addition to statewide regulations pertaining to wetlands and stream corridors. As a result, approximately 80% of the Town’s land, is undevelopable, due to:

1, Massachusetts Watershed Protection Act: The Watershed Protection Act (WsPA), otherwise known as the Cohen Act, regulates land use and activities within critical areas of the Quabbin Reservoir, Ware River, and Wachusett Reservoir watersheds for the purpose of protecting the quality of drinking water. Administered by the DCR’s Division of Watershed Management, the WsPA applies only within these watersheds. The WsPA regulations are contained in 350 CMR 11.04.

The WsPA defines two different resource areas, each of which has a different level of protection. (See **Figure 4-2** in the Master Plan for an approximate delineation of the areas within Petersham subject to the WsPA.) Within 400 feet of the Quabbin or Wachusett reservoirs or within 200 feet of tributaries and surface waters that drain to these reservoirs (the “Primary Zone”), any alteration of land or water resources is prohibited. “Alteration” includes a variety of activities, such as construction, excavation, grading, paving, and dumping. The generation, storage, disposal, or discharge of pollutants is also prohibited in the Primary Zone. Between 200 and 400 feet of tributaries and surface waters, and on land within flood plains, over some aquifers, and within bordering vegetated wetlands (the “Secondary Zone”), certain activi-

ties are specifically prohibited. These include the storage, disposal, or use of toxic, hazardous, and certain other materials; alteration of bordering vegetated wetlands; and other activities. The density of development in the Secondary Zone is limited by a requirement that no more than 220 gallons per day of wastewater per acre may be discharged by the development. For residential development, this is the equivalent of two bedrooms per acre. In addition, development may not render impervious more than 10% of the lot or 2,500 square feet, whichever is greater.

While these protections appear to be quite strong, it is important to note that the WsPA regulations contain a few key exceptions. The most notable of these is that the owner of any lot preexisting at the time the regulation was enacted (1992) is generally allowed to build a single dwelling unit on that lot, providing that other zoning, health, and environmental standards can be met. A preexisting owner-occupied parcel may also be subdivided to create one additional building lot. Minor changes to existing structures are also exempted from the regulations. While these exceptions do not allow for the large-scale subdivision of land to accommodate new development, they do allow some development within sensitive watershed protection areas.

2. Surface Water Supply Protection Zones Surface Water Supply Protection Zones are established under the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations (310 CMR 22.00) to protect active and emergency surface water supplies. Three protection zones are defined in the regulations: Zone A, Zone B, and Zone C. These protection zones are shown on **Figure D-2** of the Open Space Plan.

Zone A includes land between the surface water source and the upper boundary of the bank; land within 400 feet of the upper boundary of the bank of a Class A surface water source (such as the Quabbin Reservoir); and land within 200 feet of the upper boundary of the bank of a tributary to the water source.

Zone B generally includes land within one-half mile of the water source that is also within the source's watershed.

Zone C includes all land within the watershed of a Class A surface water source other than those lands designated as Zone A or Zone B.

To protect surface water sources, the Drinking Water Regulations prohibit potentially hazardous land uses within Zone A, such as underground storage tanks, storage of liquid hazardous materials, and sewage treatment or disposal works. In general, Watershed Protection Act tends to supercede the Drinking Water Regulations with stricter land use controls within the critical Zone A areas.

3. Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Wetlands have both human and ecological importance for pollution control, flood control, storm damage protection, wildlife habitat, fisheries, ground-water supply, and recreation. Wetlands in Massachusetts are regulated under the Wetlands Protection Act (310 CMR 10.00). Some cities and towns in the Commonwealth have supplemented these state regulations with local wetland protection bylaws or ordinances, but, to date, Petersham has not done so.

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act applies to activity within 100 feet of bordering wetlands (wetlands bordering ponds, streams, and other water features) and within certain isolated wetlands. The Petersham Conservation Commission administers this law, and considers applications for activities in wetlands and buffer zones. Generally wetland alteration is allowed only in small areas when there are no feasible alternatives, and is subject to the condition that an equivalent amount of wetland must be replicated elsewhere. In wetland buffer zones, work is often allowed subject to an Order of Conditions from the Conservation Commission. Although the Conservation Commission has some discretion in deciding how much development to allow in wetlands and buffer zones, the MA Department of Environmental Protection has the authority to override any Conservation Commission decision. The Wetlands Protection Act does **not** provide protection for many small isolated wetlands, or for vernal pools.

4, Rivers Protection Act: The area within 200 feet of the river bank plays an important ecological role by filtering sediment and pollutants out of runoff before it reaches the river; serving as the hydrologic recharge area for rivers; providing complementary habitat for riparian species requiring upland resources; and allowing riparian corridors to serve as wildlife migration routes. The Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act, incorporated into the Wetlands Protection Act in 1996, regulates development within 200 feet of perennial rivers and streams (defined provisionally as those streams that appear as dark blue lines on USGS topographic maps). The Petersham Conservation Commission administers this Act locally.

Typically, development is allowed within 100 feet of streams only under extraordinary circumstances, but certain types of development are sometimes allowed between 100 and 200 feet of streams. The areas regulated under the Rivers Protection Act are shown on **Figure 4-4** in the Master Plan. Areas within 100 feet of streams are considered to be absolute constraints to development, and are shown in pink; areas between 100 and 200 feet are partial constraints to development, and are shown in blue crosshatching.

E. Other Environmental Concerns:

Town Center: The first pertains to the treatment and disposal of wastewater in the town center, where the low permeability of soils has led to problems associated with malfunctioning on-site wastewater systems. While this problem has not reached the crisis stage, it does pose a potential health threat and contributes to pollution in the Quabbin watershed. Recently, the Board of Health has been discussing possible solutions to this problem. One idea that appears to hold promise is the construction of a large, shared septic system on a plot of land with suitable soils. The system could be funded entirely by its future users (i.e., property owners in the town center who currently have or may face problems with their on-site systems), although the Town could facilitate its construction. State regulations would limit the size of such a system to a maximum of 10,000 gallons per day (the equivalent of about 25 single family houses), which would prevent it from being a catalyst for future growth.

Town Generally: There is no centralized distribution of water and sewer to residents. Rather, each homeowner must provide (and maintain) their own well, pump, and septic, which increases building costs; as do the ubiquitous sloping hills, with grades steeper than a 25%.

Other: A more general concern in Petersham is nonpoint source pollution (NSP). This issue is of special importance within the Quabbin watershed, where waterborne pollutants contribute directly to the water supply. NSP refers to pollution generated by human activities on the landscape, rather than pollution emanating from a specific outfall pipe. Common sources for NSP include road salt, septic systems, runoff from paved surfaces, animal wastes, and lawn chemicals. The NSP impact of new development is greatly influenced by the style and layout of the development. For example, providing narrower roadways, managing storm water with vegetated swales and filters, and retaining native vegetation rather than replacing it with large lawns are all ways to reduce the NSP impact of new development.

4. The capacity of municipal infrastructure, such as schools, water/sewer systems, roads & utilities.

The town has a population of 1,180 residents¹, offering minimal services, no public transportation, no public water/sewer, and isolated commerce (e.g., no supermarkets.) It is staffed by an elected Board of Selectmen (three members), serving as the town's Chief Executive Officer. The Town also elects the Planning Board, Town Clerk and Board of Health. The remaining boards, including the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Conservation Commission, the Historic District Commission, and the Finance Committee are staffed by volunteers appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Petersham has 2 full time police officers, a three member Department of Public Works, and volunteer fire department. The Town has only one school (grades K-6) which was recently renovated. Grades 7-12 attend public school with the Mahar School District. There is no Town Planner or Local Housing Authority.

A. General Municipal Facilities³¹

The Town Hall - Consists of two large meeting spaces: a main level (used for annual and special town meetings and a variety of other meeting functions) and a lower level, which also has a kitchen. The main level is fully handicapped accessible, with a ramp from street level as well as a handicapped accessible rest room. The downstairs is not fully accessible.

Town Office Building - Marginally provides office space for most of the Town's departments, boards, and commissions. The building is woefully inadequate to meet the Town's current needs and lacks basic modern amenities such as central heating and adequate insulation. Many of the Town's boards and departments are hindered by not having sufficient space. A temporary handicapped ramp has been placed in front to provide some access to the first floor.

B. Schools³²

The Center School - consists of two connected buildings (the original 1906 two-story building and a new single-story building, completed in 2003.) Although the new (27,000 sq. ft.) addition has doubled the size of the school and the average class room, it has not increased the number of class rooms and has little excess capacity. The school currently employs both full and part-time faculty, with a staff of 26. Full-time staff positions include a library technician, media technician, nurse, and counselor. Other employees include a speech therapist, gym instructor, music instructor, and several part-time teachers' aids.

The Center School participates in a School Choice Program, which the Town must renew on an annual basis. The School Committee established a cap for each classroom (15 students), and School Choice students may not increase total enrollment above this level.

Table 17 - Historic Enrollment at Petersham Center School, 1996-2002³³

School Year	Petersham Enrollment	School Choice	Program	Total Enrollment
1996-97	64	31		95
1997-98	64	30		94
1998-99	67	22		89
1999-2000	68	35		103
2000-01	81	30		111
2001-02	91	18		109
2002-03	101	11		112

Mahar Regional School - The Ralph C. Mahar Regional School serves the towns of Orange, New Salem, and Wendell in addition to Petersham. It is comprised of a middle school (grades 7 and 8) and a comprehensive high school (grades 9 through 12). The total enrollment is approximately 873 with a faculty of 71 and an assisting staff of 40. The Mahar campus is located on South Main Street in Orange. In 2001, the four towns that comprise the Mahar Regional School district approved the construction of a new regional school, which will include two new middle school wings and one new high school wing.

Table 18 - Enrollment at Mahar Regional School, 2002-03³⁴

Town	Enrollment	%
New Salem	76	8.7
Orange	671	76.9
Petersham	69	7.9
Wendell	57	6.5
Total	873	100

C. Safety³⁵

Police Department: The office is located at 15 East Street and consists of the Chief's office, desks that are shared among the one full-time and seven part-time patrolmen, police equipment storage, and an evidence locker. The department does not have a lockup or holding room for suspects. The current facility is inadequate and is not handicapped accessible.

Fire Department: Situated on East Street, near the town center. Currently staffs one Fire Chief, one Assistant Fire Chief, two Deputy Fire Chiefs, two Fire Captains, 15 Firefighters, and two Junior Firefighters for a total department force of 23. All firefighters are volunteers. The department utilizes: (i) one Kovatch Mobile Equipment (KME) pumper, which carries 1,000 gallons of water, 1,500 feet of large diameter hose, has a pumping capacity of 1,250 gallons per minute, and carries other fire equipment as well, and (ii) one "Rescue Truck," Want of a public water supply has the firefighters looking to ponds, brooks, or even swimming pools to provide the necessary water source.

Highway Department: Responsible for plowing and maintaining the Town's road network. Its facility consists of an office, lockers, sink and storage space for equipment. The facility has six bays which house seven pieces of equipment; including a front end loader, three dump trucks, and a backhoe. The department currently employs three full-time workers and several part-time seasonal workers for winter snow plowing.

SECTION II. AFFORDABLE HOUSING GOALS & STRATEGIES

The combined Master and Open Space plans outline a homogenous set of objectives, with specific time frames for their implementation. As they relate to housing, they may be summarized as follows:

1. Housing Goals:

A. Encourage housing types that meet the needs of Petersham's demographic and socioeconomic mix and are appropriate to the Town's rural setting; including housing that will address the needs of the special needs and disabled in our community.

Solutions need to be found to enable children who grew up in town to return to raise their own families here, to provide housing alternatives to elderly residents who have spent much of their lives in town but now require alternatives to their oversized, single-family homes, to create housing for special needs/disabled populations and to offer families the flexibility of moving to larger homes as their families grow. The town should strive to create new environments to allow residents to remain in Petersham despite changing housing needs, but also to offer citizens with a wider range of interests and life-styles additional housing options such as conservation subdivisions, accessory apartments, and/or greater rental opportunities – all feasible within the context of the small town.

B. Meeting the 10% State standard for affordable housing:

There is currently a 10% (45.2-unit) gap between the State's affordable housing mandate and designated affordable housing stock in Petersham. Whereas no Chapter 40B comprehensive permit projects are pending, the town must produce the requisite number of units creatively and deliberately (see below).

C. Protecting the watershed

The acute sensitivity of the area mandates protection of surface water, ground water, and wetland resources. Hence, both plans call the implementation of: (i) storm water management techniques, (ii) wastewater disposal remediation, (iii) revised standards for subsurface wastewater disposal, (iv) lower salt areas on portions of state highways near sensitive water resources, and (v) regulations and standards that steer development away from sensitive water resource areas and minimize the destruction and fragmentation of the natural ecosystem.

In regards to regulations and standards, both plans call for the adoption of an townwide “Greenprint for growth” which maps the most environmentally sensitive lands throughout the Town, which developers should seek to protect by using flexible site layout options, such as conservation subdivision designs. The Greenprint does not confer any regulatory status to these lands, but it does encourage a system whereby development is built around pre-designated natural areas, with due regard to the larger natural system. See Figure 4-6 of the Master Plan.

D. Leveraging other public and private resources to the greatest extent possible.

Petersham’s size and demographics prevents it from receiving federal funding for affordable housing on an entitlement basis nor does it have large pockets of poverty which make it a target for state funding. As a result, the town must be creative in leveraging both public and private resources to make affordable housing development possible.

2. **Housing Strategies:** To meet these goals, the Town plans to:

A. Phase-in affordable housing over the next 15 years.

Due to the small number of housing units in Petersham (453*) the goal, at minimum, is to phase in growth at the .75% threshold over the next 15 years to achieve the 10 percent (760 CMR 31.07) requirement. A 15 year time frame was selected due to the sparsity of town resources, minimization of financial impact on such a small community (and ecological impact on the Quabbin Reservoir) and the necessity of implementing a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to assess, prioritize, and establish a funding schedule to meet the Town’s public facility needs. Once the 10% threshold has been achieved, the Town intends to reevaluate and update its plan to further comply.

The math is straight forward: 453 housing units * .75% = 3.39 units/year, or approximately 7 units every two years (3 low-income, 4 moderate-income, see, *Table 8 - Household Income Distribution, 1990 and 2000, infra*).

This phase-in will be implemented on a townwide basis with due regard to the aforementioned “greenprint.” Although zoning initiatives under the master/open space plans are currently pending, the phase-in can be accomplished in the immediate future, as per paragraphs A and B, below:

I. Creating affordable housing ownership and rental opportunities in *existing housing stock*

A. Zoning -- Petersham’s zoning by-laws are quite permissive in their current conversion policies, calling for multifamily units as of right (2 units) or by special permit (3 - 6 units). Many of these converted units are leased to residents, who fall within the region’s affordability range. Actively deed restricting such *multifamily rentals* as affordable *Local Initiative Units* (760 CMR 45) in exchange for zoning relief, provides housing for individuals, families, and persons with special needs (preferably 50% elderly and 50% other) with nominal impact on infrastructure and ecology. Other potential incentives to property owners include tax-abatements and/or the outright purchase of the deed restrictions (see, below). An informational program would to be implemented to educate residents on the available of this option.

* See, Exhibit A - Spreadsheet of .75% and 1.5% thresholds for each community.

N.B., The town is currently reviewing the *Local Initiative Program (LIP)* -- with emphasis on producing Local Initiative Units and adopting the Local Initiative General Program. This is in response to a local developer who is interested in creating affordable rental units in exchange for zoning relief. The two parcels identified thus far are situated at 15 West Street and 48 West Street, both of which are near the town center -- whose number of units are to be determined.

B. Sale of Town Land: The town holds several parcels of realty (Exhibit A) whose sale may fund the purchase of the "Affordability Deed Restrictions" previously mentioned. One particular parcel holds great promise. It is commonly known as the *Davenport Property* and was acquired in 1992 for nonpayment of taxes. This property is located on Doe Valley Road in the extreme northern corner of the Town. The anticipated yield ranges from \$63,000 to \$100,000, depending upon the acreage subdivided and sold. A grant application has been filed by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (working in conjunction with the town) to facilitate the demolition of structural remnants and the ultimate sale of this realty.

The town also anticipates compiling a public/private housing inventory (below) which identifies those parcels holding the most promise for sale and funding under the *Local Housing Partnership*.

C. *Proposed Zoning -- Accessory Apartments*: In addition to multifamily conversions, the master plan provides for the zoning of accessory apartments -- that is, secondary dwelling units, located within principal residential structures. By special permit, such accessory apartments are created by partitioning existing residences and are subject to minimum parking requirements. Actively deed restricting these *accessory apartments* as affordable *Local Initiative Units* (760 CMR 45) in exchange for zoning relief, provides additional housing with nominal impact on infrastructure and ecology. Such accessory units also uniquely integrate special needs/disabled populations into the community with minimum isolation and stigmatization.

2. Create affordable housing ownership and rental opportunities through new structures.

A. *Proposed Zoning -- Special Permit For Affordable Housing*: Under this initiative, the Planning Board may grant special permits for the construction of affordable dwelling units, on standard lots, provided:

- a. The unit shall be sold at a price affordable to a household or person in Worcester County earning not more than 80% of area median household income pursuant to the applicable guidelines of the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development.
- b. If the original applicant for the special permit will be the owner/resident of the dwelling unit, such applicant shall meet the income guidelines set forth above. If the original applicant intends to sell the dwelling unit, the buyer shall meet the income guidelines set forth above.
- c. The unit shall be deed restricted for a period of not less than thirty (30) years as an affordable dwelling unit.

- d. Prior to the transfer of the dwelling unit, deed restrictions complying with the terms set forth above shall be approved as to form by the Board's legal counsel.
- e. The dwelling units shall comply with the provisions of the State Sanitary Code.
- f. The structure shall meet the setback, side and rear yard requirements for the district unless the Planning Board grants relief from such requirements.

B. Proposed Inclusionary Zoning -- Conservation Subdivisions with Affordable Housing Components:

A conservation subdivision situates dwellings on smaller, better-suited lots, with the remainder set aside as open space. Developers benefit from lower infrastructure costs and the Town benefits by protected open space.

Affordable Housing: The proposed inclusionary zoning provides for the creation of conservation subdivisions, so long as: (i) 10% of the units are affordable to persons or families qualifying as low income, as per the applicable guidelines of the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development; or (ii) 15% of the units are affordable to persons or families qualifying as moderate income, as per the aforementioned guidelines. This affordable housing component helps achieve low and moderate income housing on an ownership basis.

An "Affordable Unit" is defined as a dwelling unit reserved for occupancy, affordable to persons or families qualifying as low or moderate income. Such dwelling units shall be restricted for a period not less than thirty (30) years and the restriction shall be approved as to form by the Board's legal counsel. The restriction shall contain a right of first refusal upon the transfer of such Affordable Unit in favor of the Town or its designee for a period not less than 120 days after notice thereof.

The Planning Board may also award a density bonus to increase the number of dwelling units. For example, for every two dwelling units restricted to occupancy by persons over the age of fifty-five, one dwelling unit may be added as a density bonus.

C. Lastly, the town may bargain with developers, donating municipally held land in exchange for the creation of affordable housing, and/or issuing RFPs for the planned production of affordable housing, per DHCD guidelines. This would be one of the functions of the Local Housing Partnership (below).

3. Regulatory & Programmatic Considerations

Successful affordable housing production is contingent on planning, regulatory, and programmatic tools, enabling localities to improve decision-making, encourage appropriate development, and strategically invest both public and private resources.

To effectively execute the aforementioned strategies, the Town has established a Local Housing Partnership (recognized by the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund) to encourage the creation of affordable housing and oversee the development and management of those units that are created. This partnership operates at a strategic level, overseeing implementation.

The housing committee would be responsible for:

- A. Compiling/Maintaining a Housing Inventory. This would include both public and privately held land, suitable for subsidized housing. Examples include, vacant, under utilized, and/or deteriorated buildings.
- B. Creation of a Local Housing Program and/or adopting the Local Initiative General Program -- DHCD guidelines inclusive.
- C. Oversee 40B Applications & Compliance: The Housing Partnership will work with potential developers, as well as overseeing LIP *Unit Only* and *Comprehensive Permit* applications, as well as 760 CMR 45.00 compliance.
- D. Capitalization of the local housing trust fund: By securing working capital and subsidy funds, the town will have greater flexibility to pursue innovative affordable housing approaches, and to take advantage of opportunities as they emerge. Raising both private and public resources for affordable housing activities needs to remain a priority.
- E. Otherwise operate as per the guidelines issued by the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Fund (e.g., establishing criteria to evaluate affordable housing proposals, making recommendations on the pros and cons of particular housing proposals, locating available land suitable for development, reviewing land use regulations and zoning bylaws, working with developers of affordable housing and increasing public awareness through forums and other public events.)

SECTION III - USE RESTRICTIONS

Affordable housing shall be maintained through deed restrictions, whether they be in perpetuity or for 30 years (as was specified herein). This applies to both rental units and those held in fee. All restrictions shall contain a right of first refusal upon the transfer of such Affordable Units in favor of the Town or its designee for a period not less than 120 days after notice thereof. At minimum, the deed restriction shall include the following language:

Affordable units must serve households with incomes no greater than 80% of the area median income for which the unit is located. Units must be subject to use restrictions or re-sale controls to preserve their affordability as follows:

- *For a minimum of thirty years or longer from the date of subsidy approval or construction for new construction.*
- *For a minimum of fifteen years or longer from the date of subsidy approval or completion for rehabilitation.*
- *Alternatively, a term of perpetuity is encouraged for both new construction and completion of rehabilitation.*

Units are or will be subject to an executed Regulatory Agreement between the developer and the subsidizing agency unless the subsidy program does not require such an agreement. The units have been, or will be marketed in a fair and open process consistent with state and federal fair housing laws.

FOOTNOTES

1. Petersham Master Plan, Page 6.
2. Ibid
3. Ibid, Page 7
4. Ibid
5. Ibid, Page 8
6. Ibid
7. Ibid, Page 9
8. Ibid, Page 10
9. Ibid, Page 11
10. Ibid, Page 12
11. Ibid, Page 36
12. Ibid
13. Ibid, Page 37
14. Ibid
15. Ibid, Page 38
16. Ibid, Page 39
17. Ibid
18. Ibid, Page 40
19. Ibid
20. Ibid, Page 41
21. Ibid
22. Ibid
23. General By-laws of the Town of Petersham, Article XVI, S. 3
24. Ibid, S. 5A(b)
25. Ibid, S. 5A(f)
26. Ibid, S. 5A(d)
27. Ibid, S. 5B(i)
28. Ibid, S. 5B(j)
29. Ibid, S. 2A
30. Petersham Open Space Plan, Page 15, et seq.
31. Petersham Master Plan, Page 87, et seq.
32. Ibid, Page 90
33. Ibid, Page 91
34. Ibid, Page 92
35. Ibid, Page 92, et seq.