



ATHOL RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

UPPER QUABOAG WATERSHED AND NORTH QUABBIN REGION LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM



**Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership**

PROJECT TEAM

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr, *Commissioner*

Joe Orfant, *Director, Bureau of Planning & Resource Protection*

Patrice Kish, *Director, Office of Cultural Resources*

Wendy Pearl, *Director, Historic Landscape Preservation Initiative*

Jessica Rowcroft, *Preservation Planner*

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

Adam Burney, *Associate Land Use Planner*

North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership

Jay Rasku, *Partnership Coordinator*

Project Consultants

Dodson Associates, Ltd.

Peter Flinker, *Principal*

Sarah la Cour, *Project Manager*

Reid Bertone-Johnson

Hillary King

Public Archeology Laboratory (PAL)

Virginia Adams

Holly Herbster

Coordinating Local Project Coordinators

David Ames, *Town Manager*

Susannah Whipps

Local Heritage Landscape Participants

Deb Blanchard

David Blattenberger

Carol Blattenberger

Daniel Bolton, *Friends of Tully Lake*

Carolyn Brouillet, *Historic Commission, Open Space Committee, Board of Planning & Community Development*

Paul Daniello, *Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust*

Tom Ellis, *Historical Society*

J.R. Greene, *Athol Historical Commission*

Brian Hall

Jane Hillis

Fred Hillis

Nancy Hillis

Jerome Noyes

Sherry Patch, *Hardwick LPC*

Shelley Small, *Athol Historic Commission*

Dave Small, *Open Space Committee, Board of Planning & Community, Development, Bird and Nature Club*

Spring 2008

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS • EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston MA 02114-2119
617-626-1250 617-626-1351 Fax
www.mass.gov/dcr



Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lt. Governor

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary, Executive
Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Commissioner
Department of Conservation & Recreation

CONTENTS

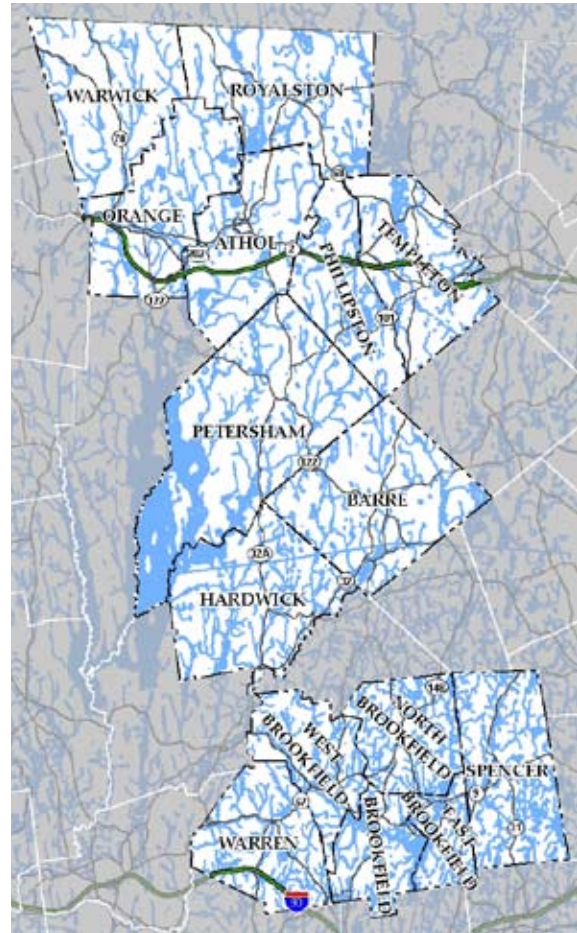
Introduction	1
PART I: Heritage Landscape Inventory	
Local History	3
Priority Heritage Landscapes	5
Downtown Commercial District	
Cass Meadow and Tully Brook	
Mill Brook Corridor	
Highland District	
Chestnut Hill and Tully Lake Area	
Athol Priority Heritage Landscapes Map	25
PART II: Planning for Heritage Landscapes	
Inventory and Documentation	27
Planning and Zoning Tools and Techniques	29
Implementation Strategies	34
Conclusion	35
Appendix A: Heritage Landscapes Identified by Community	37
Appendix B: Preservation and Planning Tools	41
Appendix C: Works Cited	57

INTRODUCTION

Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving, reflect the history of a community and provide a sense of place. They show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns and often have scenic qualities. This wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character, yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first step toward their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature or an important river corridor.

To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and its regional partners, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program to fifteen communities in central Massachusetts. The goals of the program are to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected, and to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The communities within the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin region of central Massachusetts share a common dispersed settlement pattern as well as an early agricultural economy and later shift into manufacturing. Developed along a series of major waterways and their tributaries, including the Millers, Quaboag and Ware Rivers, this region contains vast cultural and historic resources and uncommon natural beauty. The heritage landscapes in the participating communities reflect the agrarian and industrial past while providing recreational and educational opportunities for today. From scenic town commons and natural areas to civic buildings and burial grounds, the heritage landscapes within the region collectively tell the story of their varied and often turbulent, history.



*Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region
Heritage Landscape Inventory project area*

Methodology

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a pilot project conducted in southeast Massachusetts. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land*, which has provided guidance for the program since its inception. In summary, each community organized a heritage landscape identification meeting during which residents and town officials identify and prioritize the landscapes that embody the community's character and its history. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team, accompanied by interested community members. The final product for each community is an individualized Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report. This report outlines the community's landscape history, discusses broader land planning issues identified by the community, describes the priority heritage landscapes and issues associated with them and concludes with preservation recommendations.

PART I: HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

LOCAL HISTORY

Athol's landscape can best be described as a series of rolling hills, forests and meadows, streams, ponds and wetlands. Foremost of these natural resources that have shaped Athol is the Millers River which winds east to west through town and was the source of much of its history and development. Athol was part of a larger Native American settlement in Northfield; the Squakeag had seasonal camps on the rivers, ponds, lakes and brooks throughout town for fishing and hunting. The land was purchased from the Squakeag in the late 17th century, and the native population left their settlements in the area and moved north.

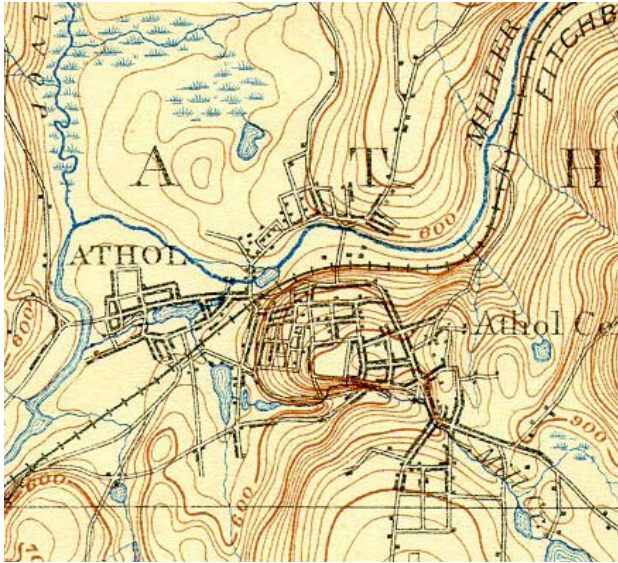
In 1734, the town was divided into a collection of 50-acre house lots, with an additional 8 acres set aside for a meetinghouse and burial ground on the north bank of the Mill Brook. Five families moved to the area in 1735 and the community survived on a primarily agricultural economy. By 1760 the town had established a gristmill on the Millers River and several mills started populating the Mill Brook.

From the late 18th century through the mid-19th century, the town's civic and transportation center was located at what is known today as the Uptown Common. The village became a significant regional transportation center, with a tollbooth and major stagecoach stop located near the Uptown Common and the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike ran through town in the early 1800s.

The Vermont and Massachusetts Railroad was established in Athol along the Millers River in 1847. With better access to Boston and Brattleboro, manufacturing developed near the rail on the Mill Brook and Millers River. With the growth of textile, boot, machine tool, wood and paper industries, the town's population doubled in the second half of the 19th century. Commercial and residential development surrounded the new industry and the focus of town moved toward what is now recognized as Athol's downtown area. Other, smaller industrial settlements grew around town during this period; one at the western border of town (Partridgeville), two along Tully River in the north (Pinedale and Tully Mill), and a small



Aerial view of Athol along the Millers River



1894 USGS Map - <http://docs.unh.edu/nhtopos/nhtopos.htm>

hamlet in the south with some woodworking industry (South Athol).

The late 19th century brought another railroad to town, this time running from the downtown area to South Athol and Enfield. At this time an electric streetcar service ran from the center west into Orange and east to Phillipston, Templeton and Gardner. Industry continued to grow throughout the period, and the downtown also became a major commercial destination. Residences were built around Silver Lake and recreational cottages developed on Lake Ellis' islands, around White's Pond and along the eastern shore of Lake Rohunta.

The town continued to grow through the early 20th century, though at a much slower rate. Today, Athol still enjoys many of its historic landscapes, though they are threatened by growth, abandonment and deterioration. Pieces of several of the 18th century Cass family farms still exist. The downtown area retains many historic buildings dating from several historic periods and the Uptown Common area retains its historic character. Many citizens in town continue to advocate for this history and are making great strides to keep it alive.

PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Athol is experiencing significant growth pressure and will need to determine how it will affect the rural character of the community and the heritage landscapes that the community finds valuable. In the public identification meeting, participants identified priority landscapes in town that define the heritage of the community. These heritage landscapes provide a cross section of the types of landscapes that contributed to the historical development of the town and together tell the story of Athol's past. The following text describes the unique value that each of these landscapes provides to the community and a set of recommendations for its preservation and protection.

Highland (Uptown Commons) District

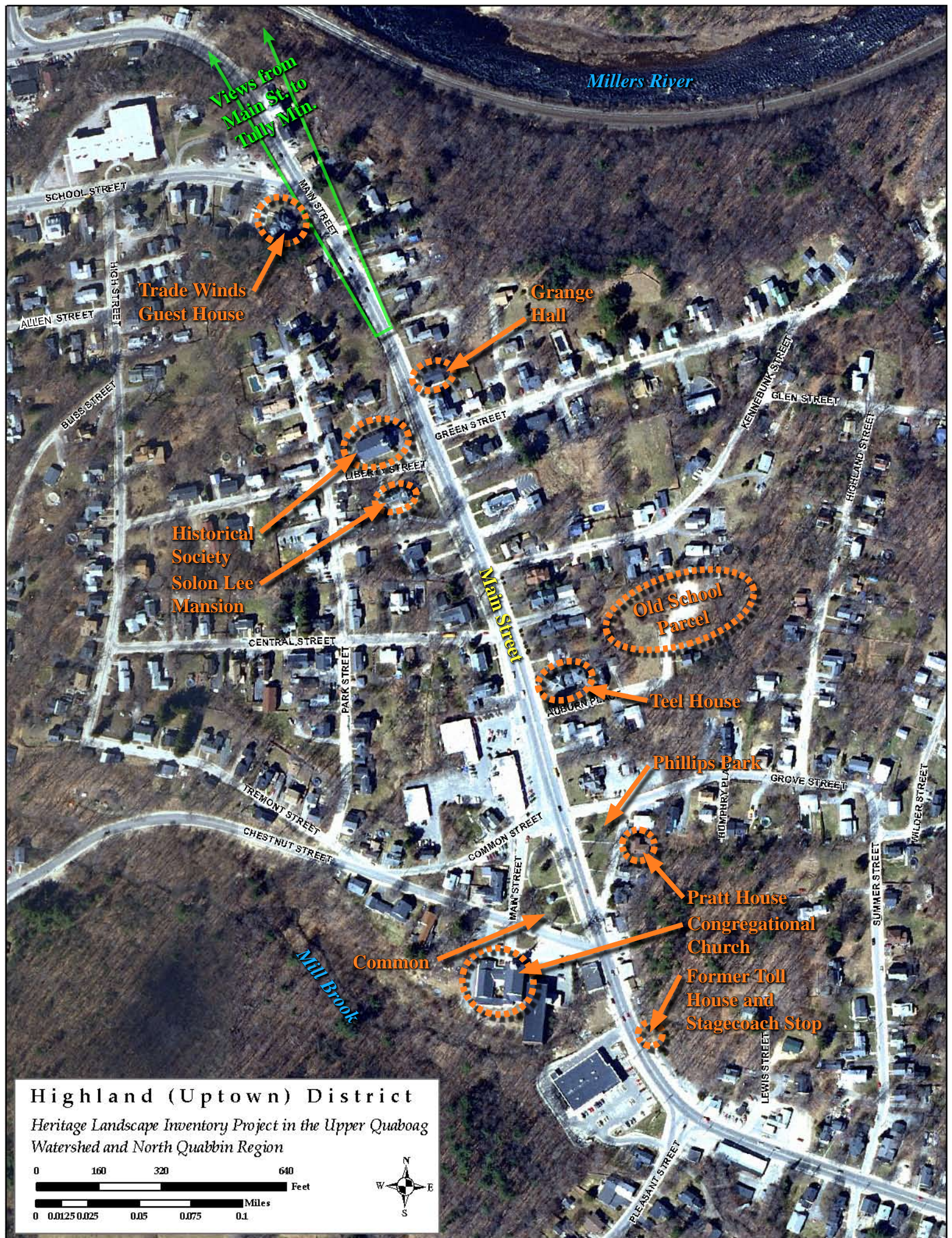


19th century homes on Main Street

Historically the center of civic and commercial activities in Athol, the Highland District (listed as the Uptown Commons District with the Massachusetts Historical Commission) contains the original town common, several former civic and institutional buildings and a 19th century residential neighborhood. Running along upper Main Street from School Street to Pleasant Street, this area includes several buildings that served as early schools, the first town house and the first post office.

Teel House (32 Auburn Place) and the small mansard-roofed building associated with it, were the first post offices and the original Georgian-style former town house is now located at 1476 Main Street having been moved from the Uptown Common in 1850. Several former institutional buildings have been renovated for new uses including the Athol Historical Society (1307 Main Street) built in 1828 and the Grange/Odd Fellows Hall, built in 1873. Previously churches, both buildings retain their architectural integrity.

The residential structures lining the district were primarily built in the late 18th and 19th centuries and reflect a variety of architectural styles including Greek Revival, English Tudor and Victorian. Most were built as private residences by wealthy businessmen and prominent local families and many remain so. Others, however, have been renovated for different uses such as apartments in the case of the Solon Lee Mansion (1333 Main Street) and a restaurant in the case of the Pratt House (Main and Grove Streets). The Trade Winds Guest House (1179 Main Street) has come full circle. Built as a residence for Arthur Tyler in 1897, the building became a guest house in the





Teel House and barn, Post Office conducted here 1862-1869

1940s and then returned to a private residence in 1952 by Dr. John O'Hara.

At the junction of Main and Chestnut Streets, the Uptown Common is located on land deeded to the Town by early settler Seth Kendall. The Common is the historical center of the community and where the original town house and community activities were focused. Located on the south side of the common facing down Main Street, the Congregational Church provides a focal point at the edge of the district. Built in 1833, this building is considered the oldest building in town used continuously as a place of worship.

At the north end of the Common, a marker notes where the stagecoach stopped on its route through the community in the 18th and 19th centuries. Other landscape structures of note include the 1912 bandstand and the Twitchell Fountain. The fountain, donated by the Twitchell family in 1898 and maintained by the town, is fully operational and a distinctive feature. Opposite the Common on Main Street is Phillips Park.

Dedicated to WWI veterans in 1922, the Park is named for Edward Phillips who died in action in France.

No previously recorded archaeological sites are located within or immediately adjacent to the Highland District. This area, however, retains a moderate degree of archaeological sensitivity due to the existence of a variety of historic period resources, such as the historic foundation remnants seen in the photograph below. The Town Pound is located along Main Street and may contain remnant archaeological features associated with early nineteenth century land use.



Foundation of former Bullock Block building remains behind businesses on Main Street near Pleasant Street

Opportunities:

- The district, original common and many early buildings which remain are listed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and can interpret the early history of the town.
- Provides a gateway into town from Phillipston

Issues:

- Many absentee landlords which can cause problems/neglect
- Significant amount of rental housing
- None of the historic resources currently have any permanent protection

Recommendations:

1. Form a Local Historic District (LHD) Study Committee to explore the feasibility of designating the Highland area as an LHD through a local historic district bylaw. Include in the bylaw the issue and enforcement of neglect to exterior features and general maintenance requirements. (see page 32 for more about LHDs)
2. Passage of a Demolition Delay Bylaw and/or a Demolition by Neglect bylaw would assist efforts to protect the historic resources in this area, especially since there is a high rate of non-owner occupied buildings (see page 32 for more about Demolition Delay Bylaws)
3. The town should make property owners aware of the federal and state Investment Tax Credit opportunities available for certified rehabilitation work on income producing structures that are listed on the National Register
4. The town's Historical Commission should review and update the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) inventory forms for this area and submit to MHC with a request for an evaluation of eligibility for listing the area on the National Register Historic District.
5. If determined eligible by MHC, prepare nomination forms to the National Register of Historic Places for the Uptown Common and its environs as a district with significance as the earliest center of the community. Install interpretive signs that help provide a gateway to the community.



*Fourth Meeting House built 1827-8.
Renovated for use by the Historical Society*

Downtown Commercial District

The Athol downtown business district developed intensely in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as commerce and industry were beginning to thrive in the region. The Athol Machine Company opened in 1868 and became the L.S. Starrett Company in 1881. The development of this large industrial complex led the way for the building of civic structures, inns and boarding houses and early mixed use buildings with commercial and residential space. Being the largest employer in town, Laroy Starrett was also very civically minded and in 1913 donated land for a new Municipal Building. Completed in 1922, this building still houses Town offices and a community meeting space.



View of Main Street from the Library

A majority of the buildings along Main Street range in date of construction from the 1840s through the 1920s and reflect a variety of architectural styles including Greek Revival, Victorian Eclectic and Italianate. During this time, several large block buildings were built along Main Street including the mixed use Webb and Starrett Blocks and the Pequog Hotel Block. The

Pequog Hotel was built in 1895 on the site of an early inn and included several stores at the ground level and 130 guest chambers on the 2nd through 4th floors. The Hotel thrived until the 1950s and was then vacant until it was renovated for elderly housing in 1982.



Pequog Hotel (1894) and Athol Savings Bank (1927) on Main Street

In contrast to the mass and scale of the block buildings, Main Street has several small vernacular and unique buildings that provide an interesting variety to the streetscape. The Ellsworth House (362 Main Street) is a 2-story clapboard Victorian Eclectic vernacular structure. Built in 1857, the former residence and garage have been converted for

several uses over time but retains its historic character. Similarly unique in the downtown district is the Russell Smith House (304 Main Street) built in 1848 as a residence. Considered the first brick building erected in Athol, this building served as a Salvation Army barracks from 1924-1971 and is currently a real estate office with an upstairs apartment. Although significant remodeling

Downtown Commercial District

Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the
Upper Quabog Watershed and North Quabbin Region



0 200 400 800 Feet
0 0.02 0.04 0.08 0.12 0.16 Miles

Cass
Meadow

Starrett Company

Millers River

Pequoig Hotel

Russell
Smith House

Ellsworth
House

Fish
Park

Allen Rich
Environmental
Park

Millers River

Main Street

Main Street

Municipal
Building

Starrett
Block

Depot

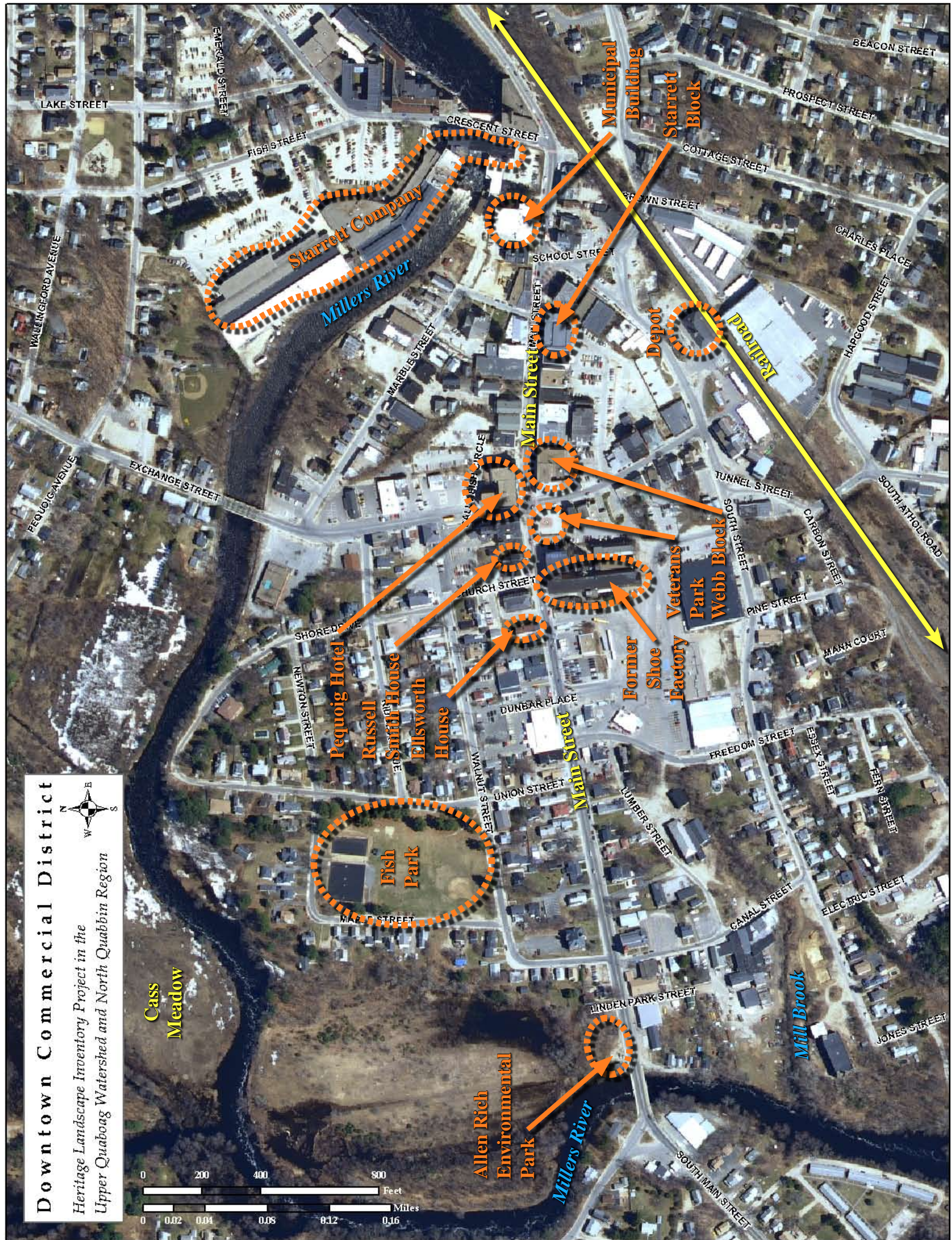
Booster

Veterans
Park

Webb Block

Former
Shoe
Factory

Mill Brook





Railroad Depot on South Street is still a transportation hub

has occurred, the building retains architectural detailing that created its original charm.

The advent of the Vermont and Massachusetts railroad played a significant role in the development of the downtown business district and increased industrial and economic activity. Starting in 1847 the train came through Athol and with increased business an Athol to Springfield line was added in 1870. It was with this new line that the need for a train depot became apparent. Starting in 1872, an elaborate 2-story Victorian railroad depot was built on South Street. When the upper floor burned in 1892, the building was reconstructed into a single floor structure with a new hip roof and clock tower. The depot was restored in the 1980s, and once again more recently. It is currently used as a local and regional bus terminal.

Two major industrial complexes remain within the downtown commercial area. The largest of these is the Starrett Tool Company complex at the eastern end of the district. With many original 19th century buildings still operational and the historic core relatively intact, this complex remains one of the largest, continuously operated manufacturers in the region. Farther west on Main Street is the former C.M. Lee Shoe Company complex, now housing workshop space for the Woodland Casket Company and storage space for the Plotkin Furniture Company. This complex has been divided over time and includes some portions that are currently vacant or used for storage. The primary brick building that runs perpendicular to Main Street is architecturally significant and retains its historic character.

Interspersed throughout the downtown business district are several outdoor public spaces that provide a respite from the strong architectural edge of the street. The pocket park next to the Pequig Hotel is owned and maintained by Athol Savings Bank but Veterans Park and Fish Park are owned and maintained by the Town. Fish Park was developed on land donated by resident Sally Fish to the local school district in 1857. It was turned over to the Town in 1920 and became a gathering place for the community with a bandstand, ball fields and tennis courts.



Temple Manor and Municipal Building

One historic period archaeological site has been recorded in the downtown Athol area just north of the commercial center along Main Street. The circa 1815 Factory Boarding House Site is located near the intersection of Fish and Crescent Streets on the north side of the Millers River. The building was originally located on Crescent Street and served as a boarding house and assembly hall for Starrett Company factory employees. The structure was moved to Fish Street in 1901, and has since been demolished - the site is currently in use as a parking lot. The Factory Boarding House Site is indicative of the types of nineteenth century sites that could be expected in Athol's downtown area. Despite nearly a century of subsequent land use, some locations could contain archaeological deposits associated with mills dams and support structures; factory buildings and stores; and communal dwellings such as the boarding house.



The Russell Smith House (1848) at 304 Main Street

Opportunities:

- Main Street contains a unique collection of architecture
- The range of historic buildings provides a snapshot for interpretation of the community's industrial heritage and commercial growth
- The Downtown District and many of its buildings are listed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)
- The Downtown business district is the central cog that links the additional priority heritage landscapes

Issues:

- Many of the large buildings are underutilized
- There are currently no protective mechanisms in place for the historic resources
- Some commercial activity has been moving from the downtown to other portions of town causing some vacancies

Recommendations:

1. Form a Local Historic District (LHD) Study Committee to explore the feasibility of the establishment of the Downtown Commercial District as an LHD through a local historic district ordinance (see page 32 for more about LHDs)
2. Passage of a Demolition Delay Bylaw and/or a Demolition by Neglect bylaw would assist efforts to protect the historic resources in this area, especially since there is a high rate of non-owner occupied buildings (see page 32 for more about Demolition Delay Bylaws)
3. The Planning Board should review existing zoning and consider implementing a Downtown Revitalization Zone to help facilitate reuse of the underutilized large buildings in the district (see page 32 for more about Downtown Revitalization Zones)
4. Make property owners aware of the federal and state Investment Tax Credit opportunities available for certified rehabilitation work on income producing structures that are listed on the National Register
5. Pursue the designation of the Downtown Commercial District as a National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) District (See 2002 Master Plan, p.4-12 to 4-14 for a table of historic structures in this district)
6. Alternatively to designating the Downtown Commercial District to the NRHP, research and document individual buildings to the National Register including the Woodland Casket Co. and the Russell Smith House



The former C.M. Lee Shoe Company complex still stands on Main Street

Mill Brook

The Mill Brook is a true urban river that flows through the center of Athol and provides a significant natural and cultural resource for the community. Starting above Lake Ellis, the brook meanders down behind upper Main Street and through several residential neighborhoods. It then travels along Chestnut Street and into the downtown area where it travels to its confluence with the Millers River just south of the South Main Street bridge.



Building on Canal Street used to be a wooden toy factory

As it moves through the community, the Mill Brook can be categorized into three different sections. These include the urban, downtown section; the central, naturalistic section; and the eastern end which is more suburban. Each section has a very different character and context and therefore contains different natural and historic resources that serve a variety of ecological and cultural functions. An important waterway in the early industrial development of the town, there were a series of dams along the Mill Brook that powered the early mills.

The urban section of the brook that runs through downtown from the Millers River has development encroaching at its banks and places where it has been directed through a culvert underneath large parking areas. This portion is not easily accessible and its natural character has been compromised



Dam remnants on Mill Brook, Hapgood Street

by the structures and uses that line its corridor. Once across Tunnel Street, however, the Mill Brook becomes more naturalistic as it runs through open space areas and less dense development. Meandering along and under Chestnut Street, the brook travels through a large parcel of town-owned land between Sanders and Cottage Streets. Along this section are significant cultural resources including the Hapgood Spring where people can get water and the ruins of an early mill and dam.

From where it crosses Pleasant Street to Lake Ellis, the brook travels through several suburban neighborhoods and again through several town-owned parcels. Within this section there are also several early mill ruins and former mill ponds as well as the foundations for the former Gerry Factory at the intersection of Pleasant and Main Streets. The carriage house that remains from the Sawyer Mansion still exists on the Athol Memorial Hospital land bordering the brook. At Lake Ellis, the old dam gate and gate house remain which used to be used for monitoring the flow of the brook. The town has recently voted to restore the average flow of the brook with a new regulator at the

lake. Design and engineering work for this is currently underway.



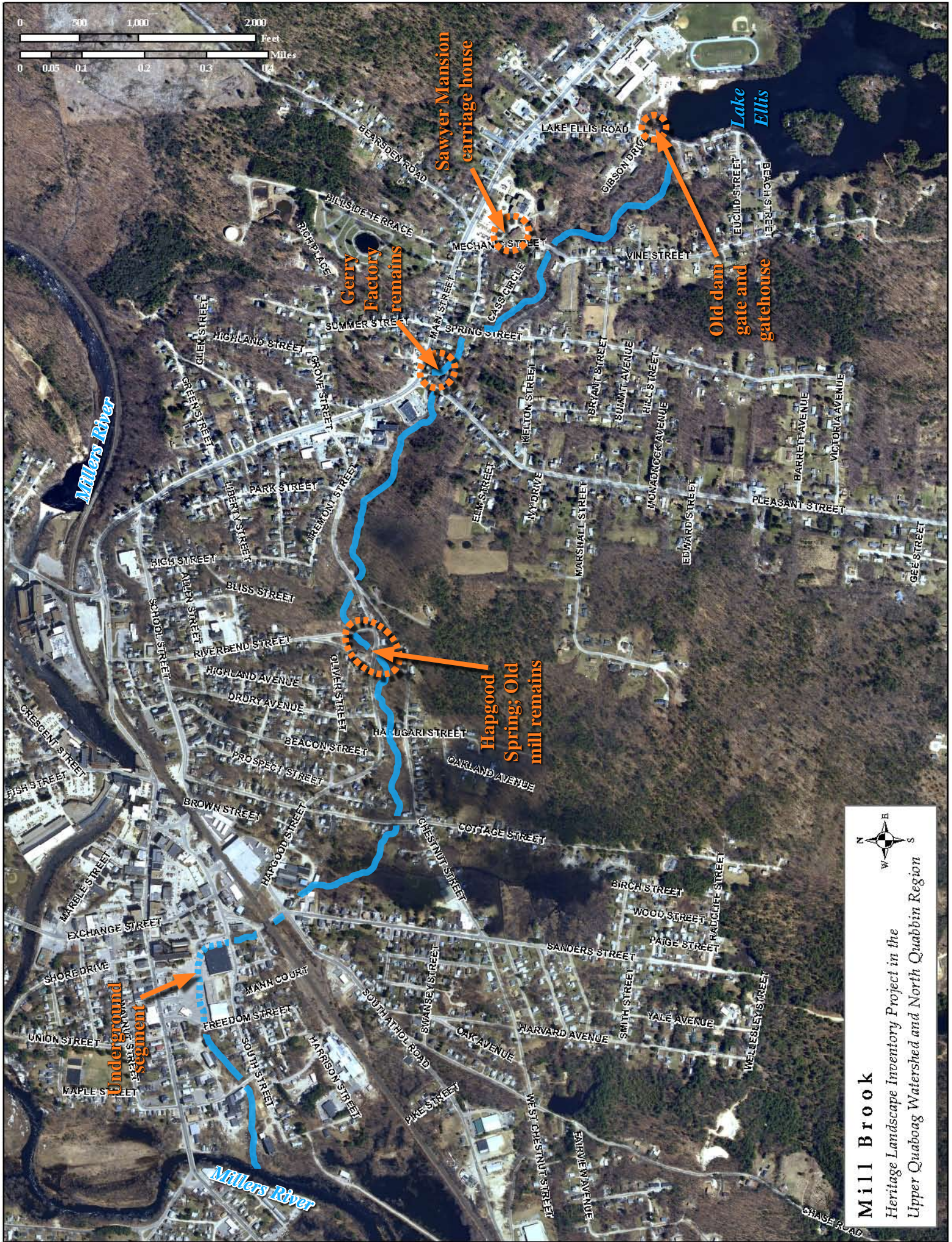
Vacant textile mill on Lumber Street

Two historic period archaeological sites have been recorded in the vicinity of the Mill Brook near the intersection of Hapgood and Cheney streets. The First Meeting House and Burial Ground sites were recorded by the Athol Historic

Commission and document the general location of the town's first civic and religious structure built circa 1741. While no above ground structural remains are present, the site area is largely undeveloped and there is a good potential that archaeological resources associated with the building and/or its use could be present. The burial ground that was located adjacent to the meeting house has not been delineated and individual graves are not marked. Local historical sources indicate that at least 40 grave sites were once visible in this cemetery, however that headstones that marked them are no longer present.

The possible ruins of a mill site are located between Hapgood Street and the Mill Brook in this same general area. The mill has not been recorded as an archaeological site but structural remains are visible in a wooded area adjacent to the road. Other late eighteenth, nineteenth, and/or early twentieth century mill/industrial sites could be present along the brook.

The Mill Brook also has the potential to contain unrecorded ancient Native American archaeological sites. Undeveloped areas located along the brook's banks and especially at confluences could be sensitive for archaeological resources associated with the pre-contact period.



Mill Brook
Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the
Upper Quabog Watershed and North Quabbin Region

Opportunities:

- Mill Brook is a significant natural landscape within the center of the community with different access potential than the Millers River
- The brook can serve as a natural corridor and wildlife habitat as a significant tributary to the river and the town conservation and education areas in the Cass Meadow area
- The central and eastern sections of the brook contain significant historic resources associated with the early mill operations in Athol that should be interpreted
- The meeting house and cemetery sites represent potentially important archaeological resources that should be protected and preserved.

Issues:

- The western section of the Mill Brook through downtown has been lost to development and growth with little access and narrowing of its natural corridor
- The significant natural and cultural resources along the brook corridor are not currently under any form of protection and could be threatened
- The loss of flow capacity over time may have changed the natural ecosystems of the brook

Recommendations:

1. Prepare a Mill Brook Management Plan that provides recommendations for reclaiming the natural corridor in the urban section and making it an amenity, with connections to downtown Athol and Cass Meadow
2. Document the remaining mill and dam ruins along the brook on MHC inventory forms and prepare interpretive materials for understanding the early industrial history of the Town. Investigate the purchase of Preservation Restrictions (PRs) on important identified resources (see page 33 for more about PRs). Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds could be used to facilitate this purchase (more about CPA can be found on page 31).
3. Make sure that the Conservation Commission is aware of the cultural resources within this area as well as their significance
4. The Athol Historical Commission should be consulted on impacts to the cultural resources for projects in this area.

Cass Meadow and Tully Brook



Trail to canoe access area, Cass Meadow

Located west of downtown Athol on the banks of Tully Brook and the Millers River is a large natural area locally known as Cass Meadow. This area was historically the farmstead and agricultural fields of the Cass family, who owned and operated several farms throughout town. Starting from the confluence of Tully Brook and the Miller's River, the Cass farm originally extended down the Miller's River on the north side of the South Main Street bridge. Cass Meadow is an important natural and ecological corridor that contains over one hundred acres of land involving many owners and varied levels of protection. The area is also rich in historic resources that include sites associated with Native American activities and the remnants of the 5th Massachusetts Turnpike.

In 1800, the 5th Massachusetts Turnpike opened to provide a road between Boston and Brattleboro. In Athol it split into two lines with one running through Cass Meadow and crossing Tully Brook. Approximately 1500 feet of the turnpike are discernible in the Cass Meadow field north of the confluence of Tully Brook and the Miller's River. There are also remnants of the stone and earth bridge abutments at Tully Brook. This is one of the few intact sections of this roadway left in Massachusetts and is listed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

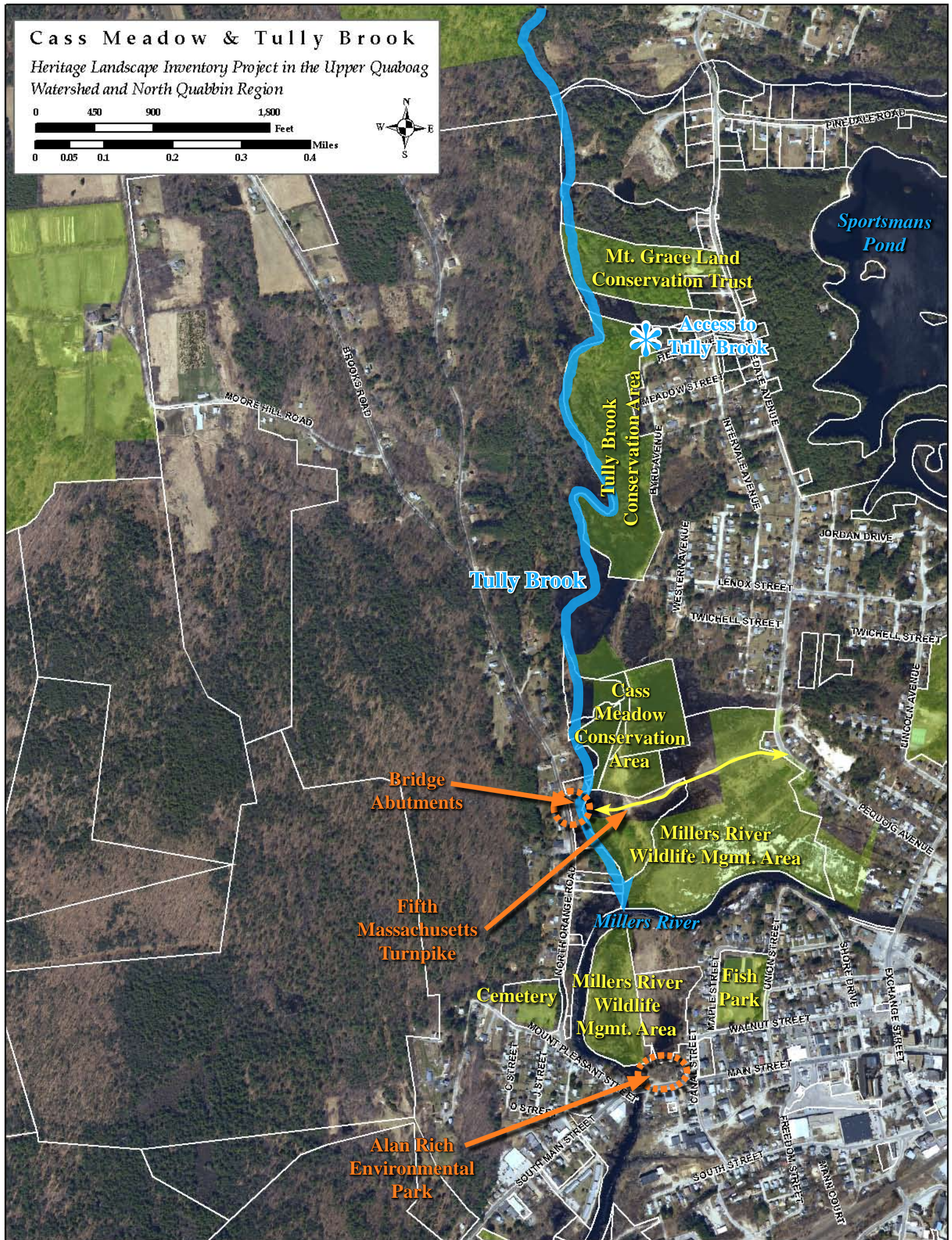
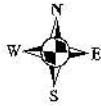
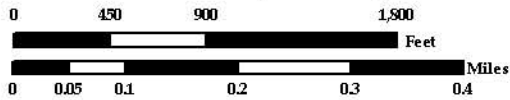
In order to protect the ecological resources within this area, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game owns several large parcels along Tully Brook and the Millers River as part of its Millers River Wildlife Management Area. The Town of Athol Conservation Commission also owns over 20 acres that is under permanent protection as the Cass Meadow Conservation Area. The town has also recently developed the Alan Rich Environmental Park on South Main Street. The Park provides access to the Cass Meadow Conservation Area and the Miller's River and is an important educational and interpretive component.



Trail through Cass Meadow, Little Tully Mountain in distance

Cass Meadow & Tully Brook

Heritage Landscape Inventory Project in the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region



The confluence of the Tully and Millers rivers would have provided rich resources for ancient Native American inhabitants, and several archaeological sites have been identified in this general area. Evidence of human activity spanning the past 7,000 years indicates the stability of this environment and its importance as a natural resource to people over a long period of time.

Opportunities:

- This is a critical natural and ecological resource that provides wildlife habitat, protects water quality and has significant cultural value.
- The Town and State already have significant portions protected and there is great linkage potential between these entities
- The 5th Massachusetts Turnpike provides a valuable historic resource for interpreting the early development of the region and state. The bridge abutments on North Orange Road have been identified with the MHC.

Issues:

- Despite the amount of permanently protected land in the Cass Meadow area, there are key portions that remain in private ownership and under no form of protection.
- Significant historic resources such as the turnpike are in danger of being lost to time and the elements

Recommendations:

1. The town should work with state agencies and the Mount Grace Land Trust to purchase outright or through Conservation Restrictions (CRs), the key parcels that link the already protected lands to form one continuous corridor - funding such as the Division of Conservation's LAND grant program should be explored to help facilitate land acquisitions. (see page 32 for more about CRs). Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds could be used to facilitate this purchase (more about CPA can be found on page 31).
2. Research and document the 5th Massachusetts Turnpike and prepare a Preservation Plan for its protection and interpretation. The Athol Historical Commission should review *Terra Firma #3 - Identifying and Protecting Historic Roads* (available on the DCR web site <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/histland/TerraFirma3.pdf>)
3. Research and document archaeologically sensitive areas on MHC inventory forms and pursue their permanent protection through the designation of an Archaeological Protection Overlay District (see page 31 for more about these districts) or the purchase of Preservation Restrictions (see page 33 for more about PRs).

Chestnut Hill

Chestnut Hill Avenue developed as a colonial agricultural area and retains many historic farmsteads and open agricultural fields. Running up and along the ridge from downtown Athol to the Royalston border, the road corridor has several intact 18th century farmhouses and fields, an 18th century cemetery and panoramic views to the east and west. This area was identified in the 2002 Master Plan as an Historically Significant Agricultural Landscape that has maintained its historic character for several centuries.

Chestnut Hill was originally settled by three brothers; John, Simon and Jonathan Haven in 1761. The 18th century homes of John Haven, Jr. and Jonathan Haven remain on Chestnut Hill Avenue at street numbers 1777 and 2239 respectively. Other settlers soon followed because the soil was of such good quality for farming although early subsistence included hunting and fishing as well. The Cass family also settled on Chestnut Hill and established several farms along the ridge. The barn of Cass Farm #3 remains on what is now the Wind n' View Farm. Other 18th century farmhouses from early families include the Willis House, the John Hill- Jacobs House, the Moses Hill- Lawton House and the John Drury House and Dairy Farm.



Wind-N-View Farm's barn remains from Cass Farm #3



Significant views west from Chestnut Hill Ave to Tully Mountain, Mount Grace

Behind the farmhouses along Chestnut Hill Avenue are either open farm fields or large tracts of forest that further enhance the beauty of the road corridor and agricultural character. A large portion of land just behind the roadway is owned by the state - the Department of Conservation and Recreation owns approximately 400 acres between Chestnut Hill Avenue and Old Keene Road and the Department of Fish and Game own over 1000 acres to the east as part of the Miller's River Wildlife Management Area. Of particular concern though, is a privately owned parcel adjacent to Tully Lake that has been proposed for a multi-unit residential development. This area is within the viewshed from Chestnut Hill Road as well as visible from Tully Lake and the dam.

The Chestnut Hill agricultural landscape and associated views are a unique heritage landscape

in Athol and represent the most intact collection of 18th century homes in the community. The historical and cultural significance of this area is tremendous and the Town is fortunate to have such an important set of resources remaining from this period as well as large, undeveloped tracts of land.

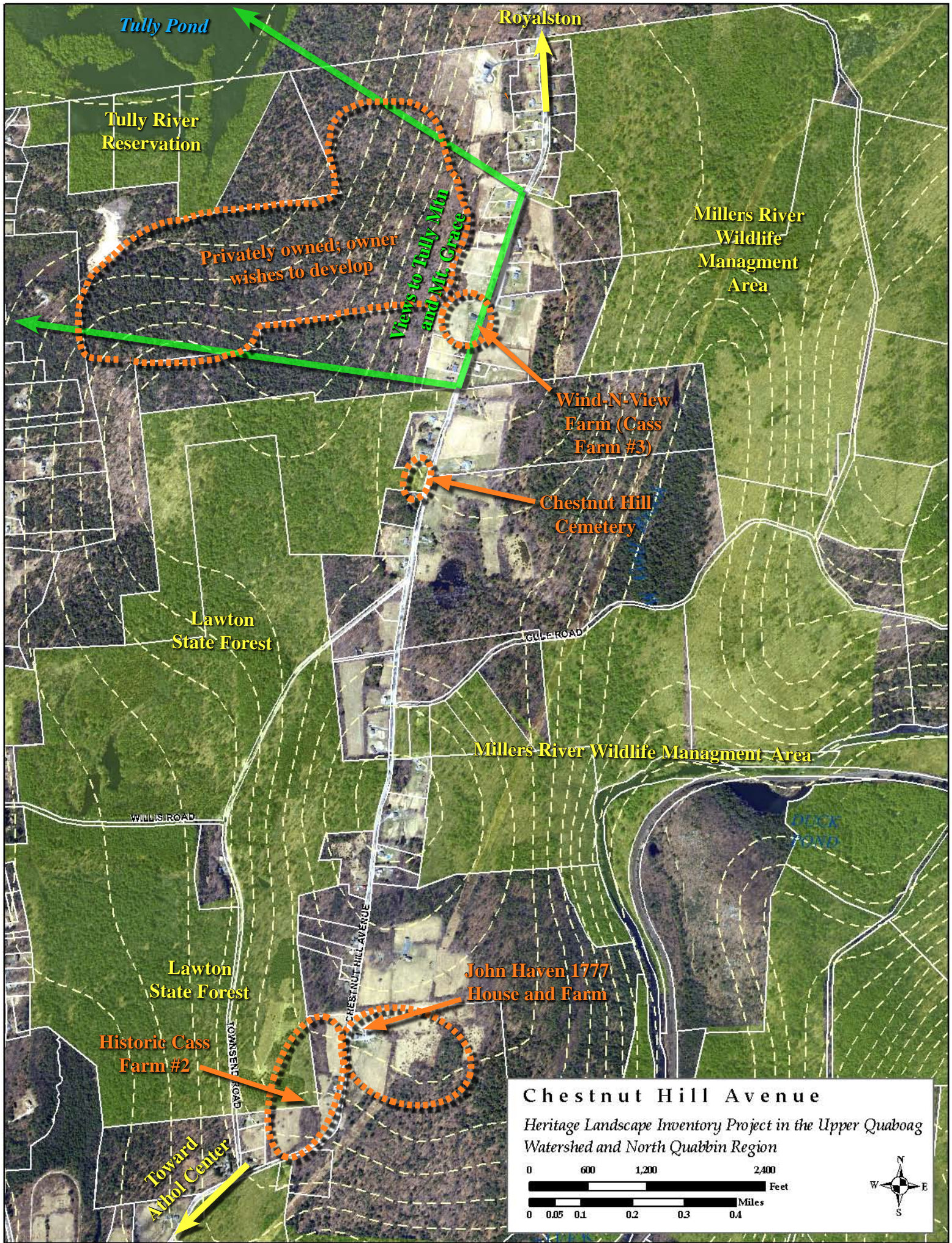
While no archaeological sites have been recorded within the immediate Chestnut Hill Avenue corridor, several small ancient Native American sites have been identified at the southern end of Tully Lake near the Athol/Royalston town boundary. The presence of these sites indicates that the environmental resources associated with the natural river valley were utilized thousands of years ago.

Opportunities:

- Chestnut Hill Avenue is a unique, intact 18th century landscape and has been identified and protected as a scenic road under the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act. A handful of homes have been listed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)
- There are significant large tracts of open farmland and forest areas
- The ridge on which Chestnut Hill Avenue runs extends into Royalston creating a regional landscape link
- A 25 acre farm in the area is listed under the Chapter 61A Program, providing the town with a right of first refusal, if it were to come out of that program.

Issues:

- None of the remaining farmland along Chestnut Hill Avenue is permanently protected
- There are significant views that have not been protected and could be developed



Recommendations:

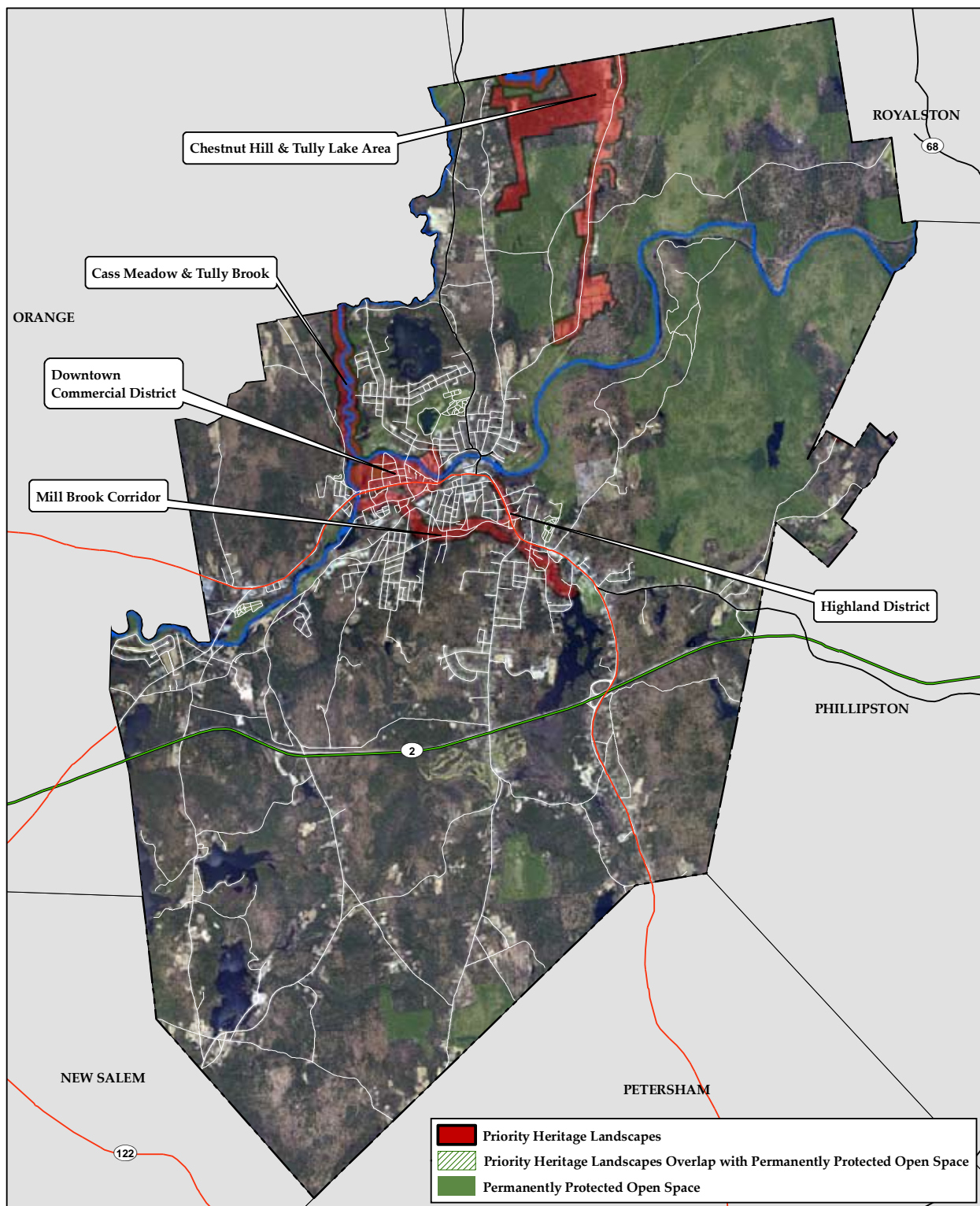
1. The town should recommend the use of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program (APR) for the remaining farms along the ridge (see page 30 for more about APRs). Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds could be used to facilitate this purchase (more about CPA can be found on page 31).
2. The Town should form an Open Space Committee and develop a strategy for acquisition of Chapter 61 parcels throughout town, should they change land use or ownership (see p. 31 for more about Chapter 61). The 25 acre property mentioned above should be on a priority list.
3. Form a local Agricultural Commission and adopt a Right-to-Farm bylaw for the town (see page 33 for more about the Right-to-Farm)
4. The town should adopt a Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw and consider the creation of a Scenic Overlay District for the agricultural landscape and scenic views from Chestnut Hill Avenue. Work with the Town of Royalston to pursue this from their side of the ridge as well (see page 33 for more about the bylaw)



View from Tully Lake to Chestnut Hill Avenue. Owner of large, white house wants to develop along this back slope.



Chestnut Hill Cemetery is no longer an active burial ground, stones date from 1786



Priority Heritage Landscapes

Athol, Massachusetts

Prepared for: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Heritage Landscape

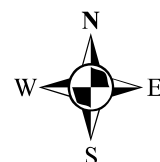
Inventory Project in the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region

Prepared by: Dodson Associates, Ltd., Landscape Architects and Planners

Ashfield, Massachusetts

25 June 2008

0 0.5 1 2 3 4 Miles



"Office of Geographic and Environmental Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs"
MassGIS 2005 Orthophotos

For Planning Purposes Only

PART II: PLANNING FOR HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

As our communities undergo rapid land use changes, heritage landscapes are particularly threatened because they are often taken for granted. There is a broad variety of resources that communities can call upon to protect these irreplaceable landscapes. What follows is a review of the tools that Athol already has in place, as well as a number of recommended actions for the future. The measures already in place for Athol provide a strong foundation for heritage landscape preservation, but additional measures have been identified in the following text that will aid the development of a holistic preservation planning strategy. Appendix B includes extended descriptions of preservation measures. These tools should be considered in combination with those recommendations made in Part I for Athol's priority landscapes.

INVENTORY AND DOCUMENTATION

1. Massachusetts Historical Commission Records

We cannot advocate for something until we clearly identify it – in this case, the physical characteristics and historical development of the town's historic and archeological resources. The necessary first step is to record information about the resources at the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets is a statewide list that identifies significant historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. In order to be included in the inventory, a property must be documented on an MHC inventory form, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), is now available online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>. Information on the specific locations of archaeological sites is not available to the general public in order to protect these sensitive and non-renewable cultural resources.

Current Listings: According to the MHC, Athol's inventory documents over 175 cultural resources from the mid 18th century to the 20th century ranging from individual buildings to farms, factories and historic districts. Many buildings and landscapes listed under MACRIS are within the heritage landscapes areas identified by the community as priority resources. These include many commercial and industrial buildings in the Downtown Commercial District, several institutional, civic and residential buildings in the Highland District and nine 18th century homes along Chestnut Hill Avenue.

Athol also has thirty documented archaeological sites recorded with MHC. Six of these are prehistoric and twenty four are historic. These resources reflect the Native American settlement

of the region as well as the early industrial development of the modern era. The number of prehistoric sites documented provides Athol with significant archaeological potential.

2. National and State Register Listing

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Listing brings a number of benefits including recognition, consideration when federally-or state-funded projects may impact the resource, eligibility for tax credits, and qualification for certain grant programs. Resources on the National Register are automatically added to the State Register of Historic Places.

Current Listings: The Fourth Meeting House (1828) on Main Street and Pequig Hotel (1895) are listed with the National Register of Historic Places. There are no National Register Historic Districts currently listed in Athol.

Recommended Listings: The Downtown Commercial District, Highland District and Chestnut Hill Avenue have all been identified as “Historically Significant Landscapes” in the 2002 Master Plan. The fact that they have all been identified during the process of this project and that they all contain a substantial number of MHC listings, further supports the call for an inventory toward National Register Historic District status (see Chapter 4 of the 2002 Master Plan for tables of historic sites in these areas and more detailed descriptions for each of the “Historically Significant Landscapes”).

3. Heritage Landscape Inventory List from Local Identification Meeting

Each town involved in the Upper Quaboag Watershed and North Quabbin Region Heritage Landscape Inventory held a local identification meeting to solicit input from a range of community members to identify potential heritage landscapes throughout the town. The lists were prioritized by the community, with help from the consultants, to create a list of five to ten priority areas, which were described in Part I of this report. The complete list of the town’s nearly 90 recognized heritage landscapes is included as Appendix A of this report and provides a sound resource list for future documentation activities and potential funding opportunities. Athol’s meeting was held on February 21, 2008 with 18 community members present.

PLANNING AND ZONING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

1. Comprehensive, Open Space and other Planning Documents

It is important that Open Space Plans, Comprehensive or Master Plans, and other planning documents address heritage landscapes as vital features of the community, contributing not only to unique sense of place but also to environmental, recreational and economic health.

Current Plans: Athol completed a Master Plan in 2002 that provides valuable information and recommendations for the identification and protection of important natural and cultural resources. The Master Plan contains in-depth analysis of the resources critical to the community and its future and identifies potential issues and threats. The document ultimately provides a guide for development activities in Athol that can support its future vision and preserve its historic character and fabric.

Following the preparation of the Master Plan the community took advantage of the State's Executive Order 418 Program and created a Community Development Plan (CDP). Completed in 2004, the CDP provides a series of strategies and action steps for housing and economic development. These strategies addressed issues and trends such as underutilized properties in the downtown area, slow and dispersed commercial growth and the loss of local manufacturing jobs.

In an additional move to address economic development issues, the Athol Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) was formed and prepared an Economic Development Plan in 2005. This plan discusses an initiative to develop the North Quabbin Business Park in the eastern end of Athol. The goal of the park is to provide opportunities for light manufacturing and other clean businesses that will add to the tax base and create jobs. The EDIC has continued to work towards this goal and promoting economic development activities in Athol.

In 2002 Athol participated in the Urban River Visions Program, an initiative of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The purpose of the program was to discuss the future of the Millers River, the surrounding buildings and landscape and potential connections to the town's neighborhoods and downtown. A workshop with town residents and officials was held that looked at connections to the river, river use and economic development. A graphically illustrated vision was prepared that contained short and long-term improvements and strategies for the Millers River in Athol.

Recommended Plans: Open Space Plans look holistically at the community—its history, demographics and growth patterns, and current conditions—to make recommendations that protect

open space and natural resources for ecological health and public benefits. The Heritage Landscape Inventory Program provides a framework for looking at these important resources, and this new understanding could be incorporated into an Open Space Plan.

2. Zoning Bylaws and Ordinances

Effective and innovative preservation tools exist in the legal and regulatory realm. These range from a wide array of zoning, bylaw and ordinance mechanisms, to incentive programs and owner-generated restrictions on land use.

Current Zoning: The entire town is designated a residential-agricultural zone. The town currently has a Conservation Development Bylaw and will vote on adopting Site Plan Review to their bylaws in May 2008. Athol has adopted the Massachusetts Scenic Roads Act, General Laws Chapter 40, Section 15C, and designated all roads in town, (with the exception of Route 78,) as scenic.

Additional mechanisms for Athol's landscapes:

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR)

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program is a voluntary program managed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. It is intended to provide a “non-development” alternative to farmers and other owners of “prime” and “state important” agricultural land. When faced with the inability to actively farm and rising tax assessments, this offers the farmer the opportunity to retain the property rather than sell it for development. The State purchased a permanent deed restriction on the property for the difference between fair market value and agricultural value. The deed restriction would preclude any use of the property that will negatively impact its agricultural viability. This program could benefit the remaining agricultural properties in the Chestnut Hill area, as well as other farms throughout Athol.

Archaeological Resource Protection

Archaeological sites are non-renewable cultural resources that can be permanently altered or destroyed through unauthorized digging, artifact collection, and development. Protection of archaeological sites can occur through a number of different strategies and mechanisms. An important first step is the development of a town-wide archaeological resource protection plan. Based on a professional reconnaissance survey of resources in the community, this plan would recommend steps for their preservation. Options for protection include acquisition, preservation restrictions, site plan review, an archaeological review bylaw and public education. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as Native Americans. The Town

of Athol may have significant archaeological resources located adjacent to natural waterways and those and others should be researched and documented for protection. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs.

Community Preservation Act

By enabling legislation created in 2000, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps communities provide funds for the preservation of open space and historic resources and the creation of affordable housing and recreational facilities. The funds are raised through a property tax surcharge ranging from 0.5% to 3% and are administered by a local Community Preservation Committee. A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: acquisition and preservation of open space, acquisition and preservation of historic buildings and landscapes and creation and support of affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses and for recreational uses. These are valuable funds for open space and historic preservation activities throughout the community.

Chapter 61 Policy

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61 was created in the 1970s when many farmers and forestland owners were forced to sell their land due to rising property values and taxes. The legislation became known as the Forestland Act but was quickly followed by Chapter 61A, the Farmland Assessment Act and 61B, the Open Space Act. This new legislation required towns to reduce assessments on farm, forest and open space lands as long as the owners made a commitment to keep their land in that use.

A major provision of this law allows the town the right of first refusal on these lands if the lands are to be sold for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. This provision provides the town with the opportunity to match a fair market value offer for the property. Athol should review the Chapter 61 land in town and develop a policy for determining priorities for acquisition if land becomes available. Adoption of a Chapter 61 Policy would outline a response process for the town to follow when these lands come out of the program. This may include a requirement for the select board to collaborate with other town boards, conservation groups and other interested parties, and hold a public meeting. The Town should also maintain a good working relationship with the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust as they may be able to offer some guidance with these preparations. For more information about the Chapter 61 Program and to see a sample Chapter 61 Policy, please see the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust website (<http://mountgrace.org/>), to download their *Chapter 61 Handbook*.

Conservation Restrictions (CR)

A permanent deed restriction between a landowner and a holder - usually a public agency or a private land trust; whereby the grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the purpose of protecting certain conservation values in exchange for tax benefits. Key parcels along the Tully Brook should be explored as CR candidates to ensure its future protection. EOEEA's Division of Conservation Services provides assistance to landowners, municipalities, and land trusts regarding conservation restrictions and has produced *The Massachusetts Conservation Restriction Handbook* as a guide to drafting conservation restrictions.

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Demolition delay bylaws provide a time period in which towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. The Athol Historical Commission should work with MHC staff to develop a bylaw that would best suit the town and should work with other town groups to publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Most demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built more than 50 years ago. The most common delay of demolition is six months; however many communities are finding that a one-year delay is more effective. A demolition delay bylaw requires a majority vote of Town Meeting. By instituting a waiting period before which a building can be demolished, many of the buildings discussed in the priority landscape areas could be preserved through and examination of alternatives.

Downtown Revitalization Zoning

Downtown Revitalization Zoning seeks to encourage businesses to locate in downtowns. Zoning of this nature is typically written to be attractive to businesses of a certain kind that would work well within the given infrastructure and transportation needs, but can also incorporate some of the same elements as Village Center Zoning (see Appendix B), such as encouraging mixed use development at a pedestrian-friendly scale, with minimal setbacks and off site parking. The town should consider this zone to aid in stimulating the reuse of some of the Downtown Commercial District's underutilized historic buildings.

Local Historic Districts (LHD)

Local Historic Districts are designated through the adoption of a local ordinance that recognizes special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. These districts are the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources. They are adopted by a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting and are administered by a district commission appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Both the Athol downtown District and the Highland (Uptown) District may benefit from local historic district designation. For more information, review the Massachusetts Historic Commission's (MHC) guidebook, [*Establishing Local Historic Districts*](#), available on the MHC website.

Preservation Restrictions

Preservation Restrictions protect historic and archaeological properties from changes that may be inappropriate. A Preservation Restriction (easement) on a property restricts present and future owners from altering a specified portion of that building, structure, or site. A restriction can run for a few years or in perpetuity and may be included as part of the property deed. Preservation restrictions can be donated or purchased by a government body or private preservation organization and are enforced by the holder of the restriction. Charitable donations of easements on historical buildings or archaeological sites may qualify for federal income tax deductions.

Right to Farm Bylaw

A Right to Farm Bylaw asserts the rights of farmers to pursue agricultural activities, provides community support for farming activities and requires dispute resolution so that abutters cannot make nuisance claims. Agricultural landscapes are widely considered to be significant heritage landscapes for which there is constant concern of potential development. This bylaw serves to help active farmers remain just that - active.

Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw

This is a preservation planning tool that seeks to protect the scenic qualities of mountains, hills and rolling terrain by requiring additional design criteria for new construction in these visually sensitive areas. A scenic vista protection bylaw can be created in the form of a scenic overlay district or address specific portions of a viewshed such as above a designated elevation and visible from public areas. A scenic protection bylaw is generally administered through site plan review and the development application process. Some form of scenic protection bylaw should be created to protect the stunning panoramic views from the Chestnut Hill ridge looking to the west.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Outreach, Education and Interpretation

In order to create a community of advocates, we need to raise public awareness and broaden the base of support. This includes developing opportunities to learn about and celebrate the places and history of the town, as well as to care for them. The development of a walking tour through the historic districts, and a collaboration between the Historical Society and Millers River Environmental Center inviting the public to explore the Cass Meadow area may be good starting points.

Collaboration

Protecting community character, respecting history, and promoting smart growth are interrelated concerns that impact heritage landscapes and require collaboration across a broad spectrum of the community. This includes communication among town boards and departments, as well as public-private partnerships.

Technical Assistance

Regulations and creative solutions for heritage landscapes are constantly changing and emerging. Public and private agencies offer technical assistance with the many issues to be addressed, including DCR, MHC and the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission.

Funding Opportunities

Funding rarely comes from a single source, more often depending on collaborative underwriting by private, municipal, and regional sources. Each town also has a variety of funding sources that are locally-based and sometimes site-specific.

A list outlining options for the above strategies can be found in Appendix B.

CONCLUSION

The Heritage Landscape Reconnaissance Report for Athol provides an initial preservation-planning document that identifies priority heritage landscapes and discusses strategies for their long-term protection. Athol contains a rich diversity of heritage landscape types ranging from industrial complexes to 18th century farms, important natural resources and historic villages. These landscapes reflect the strong history and character of the community and are tangible pieces of the Athol story.

Athol is lucky to retain a significant amount of heritage landscape resources that range from its early 18th century settlement through the industrial revolution. Collectively, these resources provide snapshots through history of the patterns of settlement and development. The early agricultural and industrial heritage is still clearly visible in the buildings and landscapes of Athol.

This Report provides a starting point for preservation strategies but the heritage landscapes identified, especially the priority landscapes, will need additional research and documentation including the preparation of MHC inventory forms. Additional information allows for better consensus building and the support of the broader community in order to successfully implement the recommendations for these landscapes. Ultimately, preservation and protection implementation requires a collaboration of local boards and commissions, regional and state agencies and non-profit entities.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to various municipal boards and commissions involved in making land use decisions will assist Athol with an overall strategy for the preservation of its community's character. The breadth of action steps outlined in this document will require a cooperative effort and a variety of local groups to take the lead on implementation. Included in the recommendations are several suggested actions items that were initially identified in the Master Plan, such as strategies to preserve the town's historic buildings and areas. It is also recommended that the Community Preservation Act be adopted as well as Demolition Delay and a Chapter 61 Policy. The town should also work with local land conservation organizations for assistance with Conservation and Preservation Restrictions for key landscapes including the Mill Brook, Tully Brook, Cass Meadow and Chestnut Hill.

Public outreach that educates the local population regarding the community's heritage landscape resources is also an important tool for increasing awareness and support for their protection. This Report provides an important first step for Athol's preservation planning program and can provide the foundation for future historic preservation, conservation and recreation planning activities.

The project team suggests that the following recommendations be the top three priorities for the Town of Athol as it works to protect the heritage landscape character of the community:

1. Adopt a Demolition Delay Bylaw.
2. Adopt the Community Preservation Act.
3. Establish Local Historic Districts for the Highland and Downtown state registered historic districts.

APPENDIXA: ATHOL HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Landscape Name

Landscape Notes

Agricultural	
<i>Adams Farm</i>	
<i>Cass Farm</i>	Site of Cass Meadow, farm used to extend south from South Main Street Bridge
<i>Wind-N-View Farm</i>	On Chestnut Hill Ave, great views to the west
<i>Bidwell Farm</i>	On Partridgeville Road
<i>Pickard Farm</i>	
Archaeological	
<i>Mill Brook</i>	Including Chestnut Street Falls
<i>Haley's Meadow</i>	AKA Indian Meadow, south of Tully/Millers Rivers confluence
<i>Indian Crossing</i>	
<i>Sawmill Foundation</i>	on Doe Valley Road
<i>786 Pleasant Street</i>	Site of 1st Fort
<i>813 Pleasant Street</i>	First family well
<i>Old Rag Mill Ruins</i>	on Green Street
Burial	
<i>Chestnut Hill</i>	Historic Cemetery on Chestnut Hill Ave
<i>Doe Valley Road</i>	
<i>Pleasant Street Cemetery</i>	last burial was in 1890
<i>Mt. Pleasant Street</i>	
<i>Old Burial Ground</i>	Hapgood Street
<i>Silver Lake</i>	
<i>Highland Cemetery</i>	
<i>Calvary Cemetery</i>	
<i>Gethsemene Cemetery</i>	

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated “Priority Landscapes” by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

Civic	
<i>Downtown Athol</i>	Important area to the town, contains 19th/20th century development including commercial and industrial buildings and landscapes
<i>Highlands Historic District</i>	Includes the Town Pound and Historical Society
<i>Silver Lake School</i>	
<i>Town Common</i>	located in the Highlands District
<i>Site of 2nd Meetinghouse</i>	
<i>Town Hall, Library, YMCA</i>	located in Downtown area
Industrial	
<i>Mill Brook</i>	7 mile long corridor with important industrial history, also a natural landscape
<i>Industrial Area</i>	Lumber, Canal and South Streets
<i>Casket Factory</i>	on Main Street in Downtown Area
<i>Millers River in Downtown</i>	from the manufacturing dam to Starretts, includes 3 dams and a canal
Institutional	
<i>Athol Memorial Hospital</i>	Sawyer Mansion was located here, grounds retain the original carriage house - site is within the Mill Brook area
<i>Lyman Ward School</i>	
<i>Grange Meeting Hall</i>	located in Highlands District
<i>Poor Farm</i>	Templeton Road
<i>100 Main Street School</i>	Currently Environmental Center
<i>Starrett Tool Company Museum</i>	
<i>Athol Public Library</i>	located in Downtown area
<i>Old Athol High School/Jr. High</i>	
<i>All Churches</i>	includes Athol Congregational and Unitarian Churches
Military	
<i>War Memorials/Parks</i>	Includes Veterans Park and Vietnam Memorial
<i>Memorial Building</i>	AKA Town Hall, located in Downtown area
<i>American Legion Home</i>	
<i>786 Pleasant Street</i>	site of first Fort

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated “Priority Landscapes” by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

Natural	
<i>Parcel Southeast of Tully Lake</i>	On Chestnut Hill Ave, threatened by development?
<i>Millers River</i>	especially the area above manufacturing district and its associated properties (Bearsden Road)
<i>Cass Meadow</i>	also an open space/recreation landscape, located in Downtown area
<i>Sportsmans Pond</i>	
<i>Silver Lake</i>	includes a cemetery
<i>Lake Ellis</i>	also an open space/recreation landscape
<i>White Pond</i>	
<i>Sentinel Elm Area</i>	Tree is now gone
<i>South Athol Pond</i>	
<i>Ellinwood Brook</i>	
Open Space/Recreation	
<i>Silver Lake Park</i>	
<i>Nye Tree Farm</i>	
<i>Tully Brook</i>	Rod and Gun Club
<i>Fish Park</i>	also a civic landscape, in Downtown area, also near Tully Brook
<i>Sportsmans Pond</i>	
<i>Equestrian Park</i>	
Residential	
<i>Uptown Athol</i>	15 historic buildings from School Street to Pleasant St, part of Highland District
<i>Pequoig Hotel</i>	located in Downtown area
<i>Lower South Street</i>	Little Ireland - "The Patch"
<i>Lower Sanders Street</i>	Little Canada/Little Italy areas
<i>35 Moore Hill Road</i>	Oldest home remaining in town 1736
<i>Ward and Goddard St. Mill Housing</i>	for Athol Manufacturing
<i>Starrett Ave</i>	laid out in the shape of a wrench
<i>Lake Park Neighborhood</i>	AKA Silver Lake
<i>UTD Housing</i>	on Grove Street

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated "Priority Landscapes" by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

Transportation	
<i>Depot</i>	located in Downtown area
<i>Rabbit Railroad Bed to South Athol</i>	
<i>South Main Street Bridge</i>	located in Downtown area
<i>Exchange Street Bridge</i>	
<i>Railroad Trestle</i>	
<i>Views of Industrial Area</i>	along Main Street from School Street to the West
<i>Old Turnpike</i>	through Cass Meadow

Note: Highlighted landscapes have been designated “Priority Landscapes” by the town, or directly correspond to a Priority Landscape.

APPENDIX B: GUIDE TO PRESERVATION & PLANNING TOOLS FOR HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Preservation planning is a four-step process: identification, evaluation, education and protection. Within the realm of protection, there is a vast array of tools that communities can call upon and that are most effective when used in combination with one another. Stewardship of these resources involves education and community support, planning with a clear set of goals, and regulatory mechanisms.

Three useful documents to consult when planning preservation strategies are:

- ◆ Department of Conservation and Recreation, Reading the Land
- ◆ Massachusetts Historical Commission, Survey Manual
- ◆ Massachusetts Historical Commission, Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances

The following three sections detail the resources and strategies available for heritage landscape preservation - from documentation and evaluation, to public education, to regulating activities and finding the revenue necessary to fund the effort. These lists are meant to cover a variety of regional areas and opportunities, all may not apply to any given community.

INVENTORY AND DOCUMENTATION

Massachusetts Historical Commission Records

The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources on MHC inventory forms. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development.

Survey methodology has advanced since the early work of the 1980s. If a community had survey work done during that time period, it is time for an inventory update, looking at resources in a more comprehensive and connected way than may have been done at that time. Even if survey work is more recent, there may be a need to document more resources throughout the community.

Using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology:

- ◆ Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not thoroughly researched, beginning with heritage landscapes.
- ◆ Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.

- ◆ Make sure to document secondary features on rural and residential properties, such as outbuildings, stone walls and landscape elements.
- ◆ Record a wide range of historic resources including landscape features and industrial resources.
- ◆ Conduct a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey to identify patterns of prehistoric and historic occupation and to identify known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with these patterns. Known and potential precontact and historic archaeological sites should be professionally field-checked to evaluate cultural associations and integrity. A professional archaeologist is one who meets the professional qualifications (950 CMR 70.01) outlined in the State Archaeologist Permit Regulations (950 CMR 70.00).

National and State Register Listing

Survey work for the National Register of Historic Places, a program of the National Park Service includes evaluation of whether resources meet the qualifications for its listing. This will provide new information about the eligibility of properties. Using the information generated in the survey work and the accompanying National Register evaluations, expand your town's National Register program.

- ◆ Develop a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration a property's or area's integrity and vulnerability. Properties in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority. All sites listed on the National Register are automatically added to the State Register.

PLANNING AND ZONING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Comprehensive, Open Space and other Planning Documents

Communities use a variety of planning exercises and documents to define their goals and vision of the future, address community-wide issues, and recommend measures to respond to them. There are state mandates for towns to prepare Comprehensive or Master Plans and Open Space and Recreation Plans.

- ◆ Comprehensive or Master Plans provide an important frame of reference for land use decisions, and incorporate all of a community's issues including economic development, housing and transportation into an integrated plan. Heritage landscapes need to be seen

through the lenses of community character, historic preservation, environmental health, and economic viability and growth. Their future and the values they contribute should be addressed within these multiple perspectives, not solely as historical assets of the community.

- ◆ Like Comprehensive Plans, Open Space Plans look holistically at the community—its history, demographics and growth patterns, and current conditions—to make recommendations that protect open space and natural resources for ecological health and public benefits. The Heritage Landscape Inventory Program provides a framework for looking at these important resources, and this new understanding should be incorporated into Open Space Plans.
- ◆ Many communities have other plans that have been prepared as well.

Zoning Bylaws and Ordinances

A wide range of laws, bylaws and regulations is available to protect heritage landscapes. Following are brief descriptions of some of the most widely used and/or most effective of these tools, arranged alphabetically.

Adaptive Reuse Overlay District

An Adaptive Reuse Overlay District is superimposed on one or more established zoning districts in order to permit incentive-based reuses of existing built properties. These districts can be created to allow for the adaptive reuse of properties of a certain kind, or within a specified area within a community. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements.

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR)

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program is a voluntary program managed by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. It is intended to provide a “non-development” alternative to farmers and other owners of “prime” and “state important” agricultural land. When faced with the inability to actively farm and rising tax assessments, this offers the farmer the opportunity to retain the property rather than sell it for development. The State purchased a permanent deed restriction on the property for the difference between fair market value and agricultural value. The deed restriction would preclude any use of the property that will negatively impact its agricultural viability.

Agricultural Preservation Zoning

An agricultural preservation overlay zone can be created that will promote and protect the practice of farming. This can help to preserve lands on which farming is most viable, lands

that maintain an adequate agricultural base in town and areas that preserve the culture and landscape of farming. This can be accomplished in several ways including requiring all new large-scale residential development to be clustered on areas least suitable for agriculture and away from farms and views. An agricultural preservation bylaw can also use the site plan review process to require dedicated open space to remain as farmland and include that new development be located on least suitable soils for agriculture and be integrated into the existing landscape.

Archaeological Resource Protection

Archaeological sites are non-renewable cultural resources that can be permanently altered or destroyed through unauthorized digging, artifact collection, and development. Protection of archaeological sites can occur through a number of different strategies and mechanisms. An important first step is the development of a town-wide archaeological resource protection plan. Based on a professional reconnaissance survey of resources in the community, this plan would recommend steps for their preservation. Options for protection include acquisition, preservation restrictions, site plan review, an archaeological review bylaw and public education. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as Native Americans. Reasonable thresholds for local review of archaeological resources should be developed in consultation with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and interested groups such as the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs.

Community Preservation Act

By enabling legislation created in 2000, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) helps communities provide funds for the preservation of open space and historic resources and the creation of affordable housing and recreational facilities. The funds are raised through a property tax surcharge ranging from 0.5% to 3% and are administered by a local Community Preservation Committee. A minimum of 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: acquisition and preservation of open space, acquisition and preservation of historic buildings and landscapes and creation and support of affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses and for recreational uses.

Conservation Restrictions (CR)

A permanent deed restriction between a landowner and a holder - usually a public agency or a private land trust; whereby the grantor agrees to limit the use of his/her property for the purpose of protecting certain conservation values in exchange for tax benefits. Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Division of Conservation Services provides assistance to landowners, municipalities, and land trusts regarding conservation restrictions

and has produced The Massachusetts Conservation Restriction Handbook as a guide to drafting conservation restrictions.

Corridor Protection Overlay District

A Corridor Protection Overlay District is intended to promote appropriate development within a given corridor, serving to protect natural (and sometimes cultural) resources. As an overlay zone, all regulations pertaining to the underlying zone apply, except to the extent that the overlay zone modifies or provides for alternatives to the underlying requirements. The Corridor Protection Overlay District can be used cooperatively by adjoining communities to help maintain continuous protection across town lines.

Chapter 61 Policy

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 61 was created in the 1970s when many farmers and forestland owners were forced to sell their land due to rising property values and taxes. The legislation became known as the Forestland Act but was quickly followed by Chapter 61A, the Farmland Assessment Act and 61B, the Open Space Act. This new legislation required towns to reduce assessments on farm, forest and open space lands as long as the owners made a commitment to keep their land in that use.

A major provision of this law allows the town the right of first refusal on these lands if the lands are to be sold for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. This provision provides the town with the opportunity to match a fair market value offer for the property. Adoption of a Chapter 61 Policy would outline a response process for the town to follow when these lands come out of the program. This may include a requirement for the select board to collaborate with other town boards, conservation groups and other interested parties, and hold a public meeting. For more information about the Chapter 61 Program and to see a sample Chapter 61 Policy, please see the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust website (<http://mountgrace.org/>), to download their *Chapter 61 Handbook*.

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Demolition delay bylaws provide a time period in which towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. The local historical commission should work with MHC staff to develop a bylaw that would best suit the town and should work with other town groups to publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Most demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built more than 50 years ago. The most common delay of demolition is six months; however many communities are finding that a one-year delay is more effective. A demolition delay bylaw requires a majority vote of Town Meeting.

Design Review

Design Review is a non-regulatory process that is undertaken by a town appointed Design Review Board. The board reviews the design of new construction and additions – typically those taking place in already built-up areas. Recommendations are made to the planning board to help preserve appropriate building patterns and architectural styles, with the goal of maintaining the overall character of a given area. Design Review Boards often limit their review to exterior architectural features, site design and signage.

Downtown Revitalization Zoning

Downtown Revitalization Zoning seeks to encourage businesses to locate in downtowns. Zoning of this nature is typically written to be attractive to businesses of a certain kind that would work well within the given infrastructure and transportation needs, but can also incorporate some of the same elements as Village Center Zoning (see below), such as encouraging mixed use development at a pedestrian-friendly scale, with minimal setbacks and off site parking.

Expedited Local Permitting - Chapter 43D

Expedited Local Permitting (Chapter 43D) provides an efficient process for municipal permitting and grants for up to \$150,000 for such things as professional staffing assistance, local government reorganization, and consulting services. Participating towns benefit from marketing of their site and online promotion of their pro-business regulatory climate. In order to pursue Expedited Local Permitting, a town must have commercial and/or industrial zoning in place for the site, and there must be space for a building of at least 50,000 square feet of floor area.

Flexible Development Zoning

Flexible Development Zoning allows for greater flexibility and creativity when subdividing land, to conform and work with the natural and cultural resources of a site and minimize alteration or damage to these resources, rather than follow standard requirements of subdivision regulations. While this does not prevent land from being subdivided, it does allow for the protection of some features, serves to preserve some undeveloped land, and promotes better overall site planning.

Local Historic Districts (LHD)

Local Historic Districts are designated through the adoption of a local ordinance that recognizes special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. These districts are the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources. They are adopted by a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting and are administered by a district commission appointed by the Board of Selectmen.

For more information review the Massachusetts Historic Commission's (MHC) guidebook, [*Establishing Local Historic Districts*](#), available on the MHC website.

Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (NCD)

Neighborhood Architectural Conservation Districts (sometimes known as Neighborhood Conservation Districts) are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of the neighborhood are important. They are less restrictive than Local Historic Districts in that they focus on a few key architectural elements and massing, scale, and setback in an effort to embrace overall neighborhood character. As in Local Historic Districts, changes are reviewed by a Neighborhood Architectural Conservation District Commission.

Open Space Zoning

Open Space Zoning – also known as Cluster Development Bylaw, Open Space Communities Zoning, Open Space Development Overlay District, Open Space Preservation Subdivision, or Open Space Residential Development – allows greater density than would otherwise be permitted on a parcel, in an effort to preserve open space. Typically, construction is limited to half of the parcel, while the remaining land is permanently protected under a conservation restriction.

Preservation Restrictions

Preservation Restrictions protect historic and archaeological properties from changes that may be inappropriate. A Preservation Restriction (easement) on a property restricts present and future owners from altering a specified portion of that building, structure, or site. A restriction can run for a few years or in perpetuity and may be included as part of the property deed. Preservation restrictions can be donated or purchased by a government body or private preservation organization and are enforced by the holder of the restriction. Charitable donations of easements on historical buildings or archaeological sites may qualify for federal income tax deductions.

Rate of Development Bylaw

A town may slow the rate of its growth within reasonable time limits to allow the community to engage in planning and preparation for growth. This measure must be used for the purpose of conducting studies and planning for rational development, and not for restraining the rate of growth for a period of unlimited duration.

Right to Farm Bylaw

A Right to Farm Bylaw asserts the rights of farmers to pursue agricultural activities, provides community support for farming activities and requires dispute resolution so that abutters cannot

make nuisance claims. Agricultural landscapes are widely considered to be significant heritage landscapes for which there is constant concern of potential development. This bylaw serves to help active farmers remain just that - active.

Scenic Overlay District Zoning

Scenic Overlay District Zoning protects scenic vistas by providing for a no-disturb buffer on private lands, thereby helping to maintain specific viewpoints. This type of zoning is more far-reaching than a Scenic Roads Bylaw (see below) and may be applied to numbered routes.

Scenic Roads Bylaw

Local roads, owned and maintained by the Town, can be designated as Scenic Roads in order to preserve their rural and/or historic character. A scenic roads bylaw is an effective tool for the preservation of these significant heritage landscapes. Adopted as part of the local zoning bylaws, the scenic roads ordinance requires a public hearing by the planning board before any work is undertaken in a public right-of-way that would involve the cutting of trees or the destruction of stone walls. This bylaw only applies to trees and stone walls within the town-owned right-of-way and to local roads and not state routes.

Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw

This is a preservation planning tool that seeks to protect the scenic qualities of mountains, hills and rolling terrain by requiring additional design criteria for new construction in these visually sensitive areas. A scenic vista protection bylaw can be created as a scenic overlay district to protect a larger area or can address specific views such as those only visible from a certain area or above a certain elevation. A scenic protection bylaw is generally administered through site plan review and the development application process.

Shade Tree Act

The Shade Tree Act is a part of MGL Chapter 87, which defines all trees within the public way as public shade trees. The municipal Tree Warden is responsible for the care, maintenance and protection of all public shade trees (except those along state highways). Trimming or removal of any public shade trees greater than 1.5" in diameter requires a public hearing. Chapter 87 applies to all communities; however, some communities have adopted their own Shade Tree Act Bylaws that provide stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 87.

Site Plan Review

Site Plan Review provides the planning board (and other boards and committees, depending how the bylaw is written) with an opportunity to consider a variety of community concerns

- such as impacts to vehicular circulation, scenic vistas, topography and natural resources
- during the permit process. Boards may comment on site plans and request changes to the design. Site Plan Review is typically limited to large scale projects and tied to the special permit process.

Smart Growth Zoning – Chapter 40R & 40S

Smart Growth Zoning (Chapter 40R) provides financial rewards to communities that adopt special overlay zoning districts allowing as-of-right high density residential development in areas near transit stations, areas of concentrated development, or areas that are suitable for residential or mixed use development. Such zoning can help direct compact growth to areas that are already developed – such as historic village centers – thereby discouraging growth in less suitable areas. Chapter 40S provides State funding for any net-added school costs that come from children living in newly developed housing within a Smart Growth District.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

TDR is a regulatory technique that allows a landowner to separate building or development rights from the property and sell them, receiving compensation for preserving land and allowing for the development to occur in areas selected for higher density projects. In essence, development rights are “transferred” from one district (the “sending district”) to another (the “receiving district”). As a result, development densities are shifted within the community to achieve both open space preservation and economic goals without changing overall development potential.

Village Center Zoning

The goal of Village Center Zoning is to meet the needs of a small-scale, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly area by encouraging compact development. New construction is required to be built at a scale that is compatible with the neighborhood and to have a reduced (or no) setback from the street. Parking may be directed to discourage large lots in front of buildings. Village Center Zoning shares many similarities with Traditional Neighborhood Development, and the terms are sometimes used interchangeably.

Wetlands Protection Act and Bylaws

The Wetlands Protection Act (MGL Chapter 131, Section 40) protects wetlands by requiring a careful review by local conservation commissions of proposed work that may alter wetlands. The law also protects floodplains, riverfront areas, land under water bodies, waterways, salt ponds, fish runs and the ocean. Communities may also adopt their own Wetlands Protection Bylaw, providing stricter regulations than those mandated in Chapter 131.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

Outreach, Education and Interpretation

The best stewards and advocates for heritage landscape protection are members of the community. There are many ways to communicate the importance of these special places to the public, and to connect their preservation with the shared values and goals that community members have already expressed in various planning documents and forums.

Think creatively about how to educate the community about the values and threats to heritage landscapes, and how each town resident benefits from these special places. Use a combination of strategies to get the word out about heritage landscapes and preservation of community character, including:

- ◆ **Festivals and Tours** – Tours are a great way to draw attention to the history around us, and to engage more people in caring for it. Consider hosting a Heritage Celebration Day including tours and family-friendly activities, or plan a celebration around a particular place or area on a meaningful date. Make sure events are well publicized.
- ◆ **Signage and Banners** – Signs are a very effective way to announce special historic sites and districts. Banners can also bring attention to the significance of an area and make a celebratory statement about its contribution to the town.
- ◆ **Written Materials** – Clear, concise and engaging written material with engaging illustrations is a reliable way to relay information about community character and heritage landscapes. Make use of fact sheets and flyers to get the word out on particular issues such as a town ordinance that protects heritage landscapes, a threat that needs to be addressed, or an upcoming event.
- ◆ **School Curricula** – Start teaching at a young age. Children are very receptive to engaging stories, and there are no better stories to excite childrens' imaginations and build pride of place than stories of their town's past and present. Teachers have an opportunity to connect history with environmental issues through classroom study, hands-on history projects, and field exploration of a town's heritage landscapes. Subsequently, students have an opportunity to teach their parents that preservation is everybody's business.
- ◆ **Lectures and Workshops** – Use these forums to raise awareness, educate at a deeper level about the community's history and its resources, and broaden the base of interest.
- ◆ **Website** – Keep Historical Commission and local historical organizations' entries on the town's website current, and include information about issues, proposals for preservation strategies, and upcoming events.
- ◆ **Press Releases** – Use all avenues including press releases to keep the public informed

when a meeting or event is about to occur. Work with local reporters to develop special interest articles that highlight landscape resources.

Remember that bringing an issue or a heritage landscape to people's attention once will have only short-term effect. Outreach, education and interpretation must be ongoing concerns that involve preservation and conservation interests, teachers and community organizations in repeated projects to attract and engage the general public.

Collaboration Opportunities

Because heritage landscapes encompass such a broad range of resources and issues—from preservation of town centers, scenic roads and river corridors to promotion of smart growth and economic development – stewardship of these resources involves many interests in a community. It is essential that there be good communication between the many departments and committees that address issues related to heritage landscapes. Collaboration between public and private partners is also an essential element in a successful preservation strategy.

- ◆ Broaden the base. Preservation, particularly preservation of landscapes, is not just for the Historical Commission. It is important that the cause not be marginalized by those who view preservation as opposed to progress, or to personal interests. A look at DCR's *Reading the Land* shows the range of organizations and viewpoints that value heritage landscapes.
- ◆ Nurture public-private partnerships. Friends groups, neighborhood associations, and local land trusts all have important roles to play to spread the word, and to expand the capacity of the public sector to care for heritage landscapes.
- ◆ Take advantage of forums created to share issues and ideas. For instance, the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources offers a "cluster" format for monthly discussion and information exchange meetings among area farmers.
- ◆ Share resources across communities. Towns that lack funding for a town planner position, for instance, have found that "sharing" a planner with another community can be quite effective.

Technical Assistance

Beyond DCR, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership, technical assistance is available from many governmental and non-profit sources, most often free of charge to municipalities and non-profit organizations.

- ◆ American Farmland Trust: Clearinghouse of information supporting farmland protection and stewardship.
- ◆ Regional planning agencies are charged with assisting communities with local planning efforts:
 - Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Barre, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, North Brookfield, Spencer, Warren and West Brookfield.
 - Franklin Regional Council of Government serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Orange and Warwick.
 - The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Athol, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, and Templeton.
- ◆ The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership provides assistance and small grants to help protect ecologically, historically, economically, and culturally significant open space within the North Quabbin Region.
- ◆ The Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust is a regional non-profit organization that assists with conservation efforts of productive farm and forest land in parts of central and western Massachusetts.
- ◆ Citizen Planner Training Collaborative: Provides local planning and zoning officials with training opportunities and online information; they also hold an annual conference to support land use planning.
- ◆ Massachusetts Historical Commission: Provides technical assistance as well as grants to municipalities and non-profits for preservation planning and restoration projects.
- ◆ New England Small Farm Institute: A non-profit dedicated to providing technical assistance, information and training to farmers.
- ◆ The Trustees of Reservations: Offers conservation and landscape protection workshops, publications and connections through the Putnam Conservation Institute. The Trustees also manages a unique Conservation Buyer Program that links interested sellers with conservation-minded buyers and assists with establishing permanent property protection mechanisms.
- ◆ Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources is the state agency dedicated to supporting the agricultural activities in the state through special initiatives, programs and technical assistance.

- ◆ The Trust for Public Land is a national non-profit that assists municipalities with land conservation efforts.
- ◆ DCR's Lakes and Ponds Program works with local groups and municipalities to protect, manage and restore these valuable aquatic resources. They provide technical assistance to communities and citizen groups, help to monitor water quality at various public beaches to ensure public safety, and provide educational materials to the public about a range of lake issues.
- ◆ Massachusetts Agricultural Commissions has recently launched a new website that includes helpful information both for communities with Agricultural Commissions and for those learning more about forming one.
- ◆ UMASS extension (NREC) – Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation) can provide assistance on issues related to land and water resource protection, smart growth/sustainability measures and forestry and farming management.
- ◆ The East Quabbin Land Trust provides assistance to protect ecological and historic landscapes through the conservation and stewardship of the farmlands, woodlands and waters of 8 Central Massachusetts towns
- ◆ Opacum Land Trust provides assistance to protect ecologically and culturally significant open space within 13 south-central Massachusetts towns.

Funding Opportunities

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing strategies to protect heritage landscapes. There are local, state, regional, national and non-profit funding programs and resources that can assist communities in preservation and land conservation-related issues. The availability of such assistance varies from year to year and private property is not always eligible for funding. Examples include:

Local Funding Assistance

- ◆ Towns that have adopted the **Community Preservation Act (CPA)** find it to be an excellent funding source for many heritage landscape projects. While tricky to pass in lean economic times, the number and types of projects that are benefiting across the Commonwealth makes the CPA worthy of consideration. Such projects include MHC inventory, National Register nominations, cemetery preservation, open space acquisition and preservation and restoration of public buildings. The CPA (M.G.L. Chapter 44B) establishes a mechanism by which cities and towns can develop a fund dedicated to historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Local funds are collected through a 0.5% to 3% surcharge on each annual real estate tax bill. At the state level, the

Commonwealth has established a dedicated fund which is used to match the municipality's collections under the CPA. The amount of the surcharge is determined by ballot vote at a local election.

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act, by a majority vote on a ballot question, fosters partnerships among historic preservationists, conservationists and affordable housing advocates. At least 10% of the funds must be used to preserve historic resources; at least 10% must be used to protect open space; and at least 10% must be used to advance affordable housing. The remaining 70% must be used for one of these three uses as well as recreational needs and can be distributed in varying proportions depending upon the projects that the city or town believes are appropriate and beneficial to the municipality. Additional information about the CPA can be found at www.communitypreservation.org.

- ◆ Municipalities can establish land acquisition funds, increasing their revenue from sources such as an annual fixed line item in the municipal budget; income from forestry, farming and leasing of town-owned land; gifts and bequests; grants and foundation funding; and passage of the CPA, detailed above.

State Funding Assistance

Funding for a variety of preservation projects, primarily for municipalities and non-profit, is available through the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), the EOEEA Division of Conservation Services (DCS), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and other state agencies. Further information on these programs is available on the agency websites.

- ◆ **MHC Survey and Planning Grants** support survey, National Register and a wide variety of preservation planning projects.
- ◆ The **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)**, administered through the MHC, funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.
- ◆ Towns that have a local historic district bylaw may apply for **Certified Local Government (CLG)** status which is granted by the National Park Service (NPS) through the MHC. At least 10% of the MHC's yearly federal funding allocation is distributed to CLG communities through Survey and Planning matching grants. To become a CLG, the town completes an application; after being accepted as a CLG, it files a report yearly on the status of applications, meetings, and decisions; in return the town may apply for the matching grant funding that the MHC awards competitively to CLGs annually. Presently 18 cities and towns in Massachusetts are CLGs. **NOTE:** CLG status is dependent in part on a municipality having at least one Local Historical District as evidence of the community's commitment to historic preservation.

Open Space Plans, with a requirement of updating the plan every five years, make a community eligible for **Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) grants** and technical assistance programs through the Department of Conservation Services.

- ◆ The Massachusetts LAND Program of DCS assists local conservation commissions in acquiring land for the purposes of natural and cultural resource protection and passive outdoor recreation.
- ◆ The Massachusetts PARC Program, another DCS initiative, is geared toward assisting towns and cities in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes.
- ◆ DCS Conservation Partnership Grants assist non-profits in acquiring interests in land for conservation or recreation, and have also been used in the past to help protect active agricultural lands.
- ◆ The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, distributed through the DCS, can support heritage landscape protection by providing up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition or renovation of park, recreation or conservation areas. Municipalities, special districts and state agencies are eligible to apply.

The **Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)** administers a variety of grant programs that can help with heritage landscape preservation:

- ◆ Urban and Community Forestry grants fund projects which will result in sustained improvements in local capacity for excellent urban and community forestry management.
- ◆ The Recreational Trails Grant Program provides funding on a reimbursement basis for a variety of recreational trail protection, construction, and stewardship projects.

The **Department of Agricultural Resources** Farm Viability Enhancement Program works with farmers to develop sound business plans and funding assistance to implement them.

Regional and Non-Profit Funding Assistance

- ◆ The Trust for Public Land (TPL) is a national, nonprofit, land conservation organization that conserves land for people to enjoy as parks, community gardens, historic sites, rural lands and other natural places. TPL helps communities identify and prioritize lands to be protected; secure financing for conservation; and structure, negotiate and complete land transactions. TPL's New England Office recently launched the Worcester County Conservation Initiative, to accelerate the pace of land conservation in central

Massachusetts by helping communities plan and finance conservation projects.

- ◆ The National Trust for Historic Preservation offers a variety of financial assistance programs. Based on the availability of funding, the National Trust awards more than \$2 million in grants and loans each year for preservation projects nationwide.
- ◆ Regional planning organizations do not administer grants, but can work with communities to write grants or help them find funding:
 - Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Barre, Brookfield, East Brookfield, Hardwick, North Brookfield, Spencer, Warren and West Brookfield.
 - Franklin Regional Council of Government serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Orange and Warwick.
 - The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission serves the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program towns of Athol, Petersham, Phillipston, Royalston, and Templeton.
- ◆ The North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership offers a Small Grants Program to eligible organizations. More information can be found at: <http://www.nqpartnership.org/sgp.htm>. The Partnership also provides technical assistance.

Federal Funding Assistance

- ◆ The Farmland and Ranchland Protection Program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture has protected 85 farms to date in Massachusetts on 6,335 acres with matching funds. Eligible organizations are federally recognized Indian tribes, states, local government, and nongovernmental organizations. They are required to provide 50-50 matching funds for purchase of conservation easements in land with prime, productive soils that are subject to a pending offer, for the purpose of limiting conversion to non-agricultural uses of the land.
- ◆ The National Park Service's Rivers & Trails Program provides technical assistance to community groups and government agencies so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. The program does not offer grants, but can provide staff to help identify needs, assist partners in navigating the planning process, and help with organizational development and capacity building. The program can serve as a catalyst for successful trail development and conservation efforts.

APPENDIX C: WORKS CITED

- Athol Economic Development Plan.* Athol Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, September 12, 2005.
- Chaisson, Kathryn A. *Athol's historic buildings and places : a partial inventory.* Athol, MA: Athol Historical Commission, c1986.
- Department of Housing and Community Development Community Profiles.*
<http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd>
- Hill, Moses. *Reunion at Chestnut Hill 1895, an historical essay.*
- Historic USGS Maps.* University of New Hampshire Library Digital Collections Initiative.
<http://docs.unh.edu/nhtopos/nhtopos.htm>
- Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS).* <http://mhc-macris.net/>
- Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey Town Report.* <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/TownSurveyRpts.htm>, 1982-1984.
- Town of Athol Community Development Plan; Housing and Economic Strategy.* Dufresne-Henry, Inc., 2003.
- Tuholski, Robert, Ph.D.. *Images of America: Athol, Massachusetts.* Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, SC. 1999.
- Urban River Visions Charrette and Plan Implementation.* Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/urv_web/Public_Site/athol.asp.htm