

# BURLINGTON

## *Comprehensive Master Plan Summary*



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*The Comprehensive Master Plan was prepared with the participation of hundreds of residents and stakeholders who attended forums, meetings, and workshops, completed surveys, and added their perceptions, ideas, and visions for the future of Burlington. Their contributions are gratefully acknowledged.*



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# INTRODUCTION

The *Comprehensive Master Plan* for Burlington conveys the community-based vision for the its future and provides guidance for the realization of its aspirations. This *Master Plan* is built upon a foundation of information and analysis, so that the recommendations are framed with an understanding of past and present conditions, and with projections of future trends. Focused on the next ten years, the *Master Plan* will assist its citizens and municipal government in purposefully managing change, while preserving the character and qualities that distinguish Burlington as a valued place to live, work, and visit.

This *Master Plan Summary* articulates the vision for the future, conveys key findings from research and analyses, and contains all *Comprehensive Master Plan* recommendations. This document also indicates how the recommendations can be implemented, noting key roles, responsibilities, tools, and methods that will contribute to success. A companion document, the *Master Plan Elements*, provides expanded information and technical analyses that were used to reach its findings. The companion document also provides an expanded description of the implementation process.

This document fulfills all the standards for municipal comprehensive plans established by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. In combination with the companion document, it includes supplemental topics and information that go beyond the basic requirements so that it can be an even more useful source of guidance and information for key issues and opportunities in the future.

The timing of this master planning effort is important. Although many aspects of Burlington appear to be fixed and stable, demographic, economic and environmental circumstances are changing.

The 21st century is bringing changes to which Burlington must adapt, if it is to sustain the advantages of its residential quality of life, prosperous business environment, and a high quality natural environment. The economy is rapidly evolving, shifting where and how people choose to shop and work. Demographics are shifting, with a larger proportion of active senior citizens and young people seeking housing and communities that offer a greater variety of housing choices, amenities, and services. Residents and employers increasingly favor communities that are walkable, bikeable, and have strong transit links. Environmental sustainability has growing challenges, including the potential implications of climate change that need to be considered.



The *Comprehensive Master Plan* is organized according to this consistent structure:

- Vision and Guiding Principles
- Elements
  - Land Use
  - Transportation
  - Housing
  - Economic Development
  - Natural and Cultural Resources
  - Open Space and Recreation
  - Town Center
  - Services and Facilities
- Implementation

Burlington is a community that values its past and enjoys many current assets. The planning process placed the prospect of change in view of the past and present, as its citizens can choose the most appropriate way to manage Burlington's future. To formulate the *Master Plan* recommendations in a complete context, the planning process considered each of the Elements from three perspectives:

- **Hindsight about the past.** Understanding Burlington's heritage and the incremental changes that have shaped the community are important foundations of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.
- **Insights about the present.** Through discussions and analytical studies, the *Comprehensive Master Plan* establishes a shared information resource about current conditions and perceptions of Burlington.
- **Foresight about the future.** This *Comprehensive Master Plan* frames recommendations for community aspirations in the context of trends and changes that can be anticipated.



## PROCESS

This *Comprehensive Master Plan* has been prepared under the leadership of the Burlington Planning Department, with the dedicated assistance of a *Master Plan Steering Committee* specifically formed to provide advice and guidance.

The planning process was organized around an extensive community participation. Over a three-year period, The Planning Department and the Steering Committee undertook a community-based process involved residents, community organizations, institutions, and businesses discussing their ideas about how to maintain and build on Burlington's best features. The stakeholders of Burlington's future participated in numerous public workshops, public forums, expert panel discussions, and community conversations. Information about the master plan was distributed through social media and through announcements and links on the Town's website. On-line surveys were conducted to learn about community perspectives on housing and about the visual characteristics of Burlington.

The *Burlington Comprehensive Master Plan* is the culmination of the synthesis of the intentions, priorities, and actions identified through this process.

A team of professionals assisted in preparing this Plan. The team was led by the planning studio of Harriman, which was formerly the planning practice of The Cecil Group. Specialized assistance was provided by FXM Associates (economic development), TEC (transportation planning), and RKG Associates (housing). Innes Associates assisted the Town with the final layout and edits of the Plan.



From the Public Workshops







## VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

This shared *Vision* expresses aspirations of the community for Burlington's future. It informs all of the elements in this town-wide, *Comprehensive Master Plan*. The *Vision* is accompanied by *Guiding Principles* that serve as the framework for the specific ideas and recommendations that compose the *Comprehensive Master Plan*. The *Vision* and *Guiding Principles* draw upon the many contributions of those who have been engaged in the planning process as part of community conversations, workshops, surveys and meetings. They reflect the perspectives contributed by the *Master Plan Steering Committee*. The planning process used hindsight to understand how the past will influence future choices. The planning process created insights regarding the key opportunities and challenges facing Burlington. The *Comprehensive Master Plan* then used foresight to set goals and strategies that will allow the Town to align the future and achieve the shared vision.

### VISION STATEMENT

Burlington will continue to be a well-balanced community that is an excellent place to live within a variety of established, walkable neighborhoods linked to its protected, sustainable natural environment. Complementing its residential dimension, Burlington will continue to be an excellent, region-leading setting for successful businesses and services that contribute to the quality of life of its citizens and help support the superior public services they enjoy.

Offering a rich civic life, Burlington will also continue to be a welcoming community that provides supportive lifestyle choices for its ethnically and racially diverse population of all ages. Through broad participation, its residents, businesses, and institutions will be engaged in Town government and civic endeavors, finding common ground for their interests and activities.

Burlington will be an adaptable community that incorporates new technology and innovative approaches to its infrastructure, land use, open space, and services so that it retains its balance in the midst of economic cycles and a changing region.





### **Hindsight: Foundations for the Future**

Burlington's origins as a small agricultural community are scarcely visible today, but remnants persist in roads that still crisscross its hilly terrain and in a few, prized historic properties. The remaining historic buildings once served as farm houses, taverns, homes, and schools along the winding roads when Burlington was a sparsely settled corner of a Boston-centric region. The rural characteristics of the community persisted from its settlement in 1641 for nearly 300 years. By 1950, the census recorded only 3,250 residents. But suddenly, Burlington was transformed by powerful shifts in regional economics, demographic and transportation during the second half of the twentieth century.

From a position of relative isolation, Burlington became directly linked to a dynamic regional economy as the expansion of Route 3 and Route 128 reached the town, providing access to fast-growing residential development of family-oriented neighborhoods to jobs and shopping. New schools and other town facilities kept pace with the growth. In the twenty years between 1950 and 1970, the population grew each year by nearly 1,000 new residents.

Burlington became a magnet for commercial and retail development near the highway interchanges. Convenient, attractive, and centrally located in the region, large parcels of land along the highways were converted to high value developments. The growth drew thousands of workers and shoppers driving to and from their destinations. Ultimately, however, easy access and open roads diminished as congestion increased. But as its growth stabilized, Burlington enjoyed a rarity among suburban communities: a very strong commercial tax base of highway-oriented commercial uses, helping to support the services for a predominately single family residential community.

In the early phases of its suburban growth, there were few limits on the conversion of open land and natural resources into residential or commercial development. But as environmental regulations began to take effect and open space was preserved through public acquisitions, Burlington retained important natural land assets.

### **Insight: Taking Advantage of Opportunities to Overcome Challenges**

Burlington today is an attractive and desirable place to live in a growing and prosperous region, a status which is reflected in relatively high property values and housing costs. There are many distinct single-family neighborhoods that were created by subdividing large parcels that are connected to the Town's arterials with streets adapted to cars. But the great majority of these streets lack sidewalks, and bicycle facilities are rare.



Burlington's residential population is also becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse, in keeping with the changing demographics of the region. However, as housing prices rise and as the age composition of the citizenry shifts, some senior citizens have difficulty matching their needs with the housing stock. Young families that in the past might have favored Burlington as a place to live may find Burlington's family-friendly neighborhoods attractive but too expensive relative to their incomes.

Burlington is also a highly valued location for commercial and retail enterprises within the highway-served areas, which have been largely developed with auto-oriented uses. There are more employees in Burlington during the day than there are residents at night. The proportion of high value commercial land to residential property provides a solid tax base that the Town has translated into excellent public services and facilities, providing amenity and resources for the residential population. However, buildings and site improvements occupy most developable land; new real estate investment is seeking opportunities to expand within existing developments or to replace outdated buildings with new uses in other areas of the Town, as the private sector adapts to a changing economy.

Traffic congestion has become an unwanted by-product of the patterns of development and the transportation infrastructure that serves it. It effects the quality of life of residents and the competitive advantage of the businesses in Burlington.

The natural resources in Town vary in environmental quality and quantity. Some of the open space is in large preserved parks, conservation areas, including some with deed restrictions. However, many of the resources are contained in remnants of wetlands and undevelopable fragments bordered by highways, development, and neighborhoods. Enhanced public stewardship can further protect and enhance the environmental benefits of these resources.

### **Foresight: Fulfilling the Vision**

The residential neighborhoods that are at the heart of Burlington's identity need to be enhanced as places to walk and connected to the natural and civic assets of the community. Additional housing choices need to be available to existing and new residents as they change in age and lifestyle, augmenting that which is available today. Shared places and civic activities should be expanded, including those clustered with a well-defined Town Center. Thoughtful investments and Town management should continue to translate the strong tax base into excellent facilities and services that the townspeople have come to expect.

Burlington will need to support the private sector's adaptations to a rapidly evolving economic climate if it is to sustain its advantageous tax and employment base over time. New commercial and residential development must be balanced against the reasonable capacity of the infrastructure and natural systems. This capacity can be enhanced through innovative investments in transportation, traffic management, and traffic calming. The capacity can be

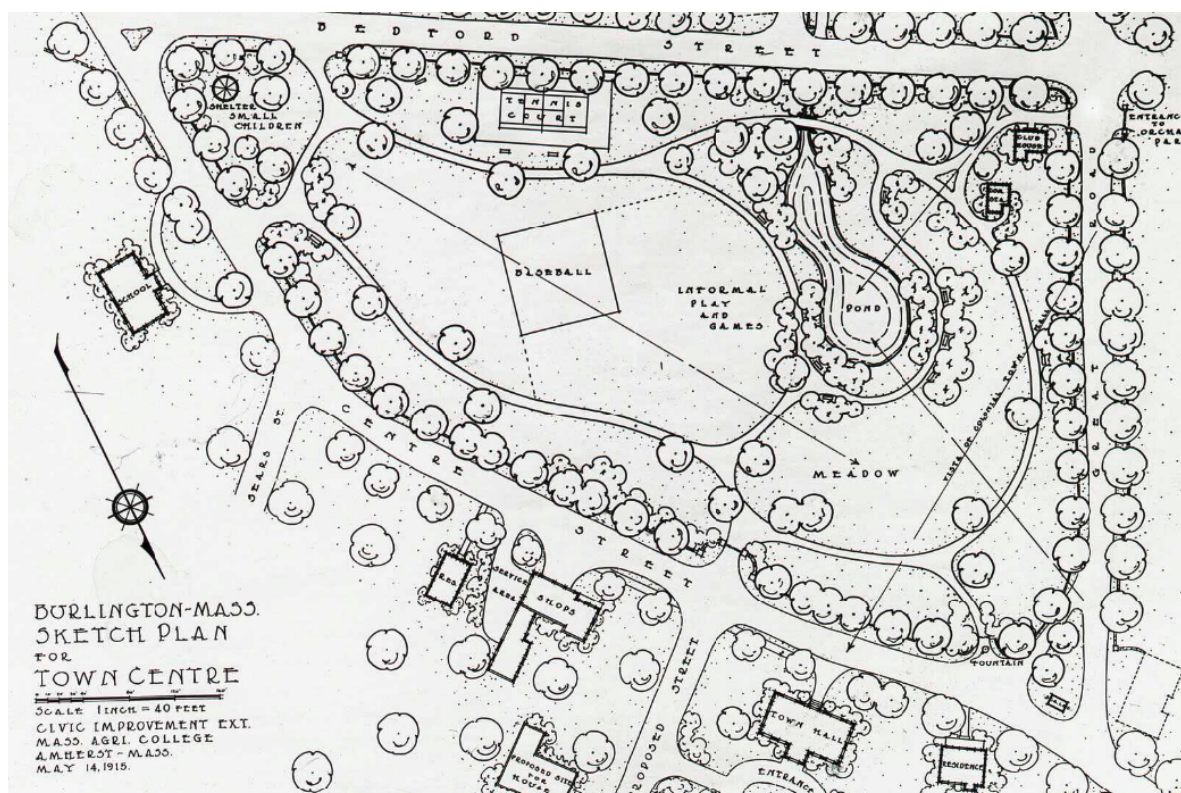




enhanced substantially through the expansion of walking and bicycling connections, providing mobility without cars. Environmental capacity can be expanded through innovative technologies and state-of-the-art practices such as those associated with Low Impact Development.

Burlington should expand its environmental stewardship through policies and actions that preserve and enhance its natural resources and diminish negative impacts that affect the environment within the community and beyond. The Town should actively enhance its resiliency from future storms and climate-related events in concert with emerging studies, programs, and projections.

By coordinating its municipal policies and actions through planning and foresight, Burlington should manage that which must change, and preserve that which should not.



Source: Burlington, Mass.: Sketch Plan for Town Centre, May 14, 1915. Frank A. Waugh Papers



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles have been used to establish the recommendations within the *Comprehensive Master Plan*, and should serve as a reference as the Town creates policies, programs, and actions to fulfill the Vision. The principles have been applied across many Elements, and serve as binding themes that join them.

- **Support environmental stewardship** through municipal programs and actions that manage land and infrastructure for long-term benefit, reduce dependency on non-renewable fuels and consumption of resources without offsetting benefits, protect natural resources, and by improving our environment fulfills our responsibility to future generations.
- **Distinguish Burlington as a destination** for global organizations, regional companies, individuals, and families.
- **Nurture local culture** by supporting and advocating for the arts and non-profit organizations and encouraging the delivery of cultural programming and services.
- **Celebrate the distinctive diversity of our residents** to maintain our quality of life that is a strength of our community and economic competitive advantage.
- **Conserve the value of lands and buildings** including the protection of our natural resources and the prevention of blight or pollution.
- **Expand and enhance an attractive and vibrant town center** that boasts a mix of uses, services, civic and cultural destinations, and activities.
- **Develop and apply regulations to match town goals** including balancing potential benefits with municipal costs, respecting the capacity of natural resources and infrastructure system, and the preserving historic resources.
- **Promote local businesses** that enhance and contribute to Burlington's town-scale character with jobs, goods and services for its residents and other enterprises in the community.
- **Promote healthy civic engagement** by inviting participation and respecting multiple opinions.
- **Preserve open space** through acquisition or other measures to protect and link natural resources to contribute to the Town's character.
- **Build partnerships** among residents, businesses, landowners, institutions, and the Town for the long-term mutual benefit associated with sharing interests.
- **Sponsor and promote municipal programming and services** for veterans, senior citizens, children and teenagers, disabled and disadvantaged community members.



- **Expand transportation choices** by supporting new infrastructure for walking, bicycling, transit, and improved connections among all modes of travel both within the town and with other parts of the region.
- **Provide excellent education and all other municipal services** with programs and effective facilities through responsible fiscal management of costs, revenues and debt that avoids undue burdening of residential taxes.
- **Provide diverse recreational opportunities** including both passive and active recreation.
- **Provide a supportive environment for businesses and institutions** that contribute to the economic base and quality of life for Burlington residents.
- **Provide choices in the type and cost of housing** to support a range of lifestyles, family sizes, and ages as the needs and preferences of Burlington residents change over time.





## ORGANIZATION OF THE *BURLINGTON MASTER PLAN*

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 41, Section 81D requires any community with a local planning board to develop a master plan for its community. Because the town and region have experienced many changes since the preparation of Burlington's preceding plans, including the Burlington Community Development Plan (2004), the Burlington Planning Department decided to create a new plan to reflect the current state of the community and its vision for the future. The law also outlines a series of elements, or topics, that must be addressed in the plan. To facilitate its use, the plan was divided into two complementary components that have the same, parallel organization.

- *Master Plan Summary*. This document contains the core of the Burlington *Comprehensive Master Plan*. It includes all essential aspects of a state-compliant plan. The *Master Plan Summary* contains the goals for the community, embodied in the Vision and Guiding Principles. Each Element is addressed, including key recommendations. A discussion of the implementation strategy is at the end of the document, and includes a reference list with all of the detailed recommendations.
- *Master Plan Elements*. This companion document is intended as a reference resource. It includes expanded technical planning data and analyses associated with each Element. This includes helpful background and reference information for future studies and implementation efforts. Finally, it provides an expanded implementation guide that can be used to set priorities, seek financial resources, and assign responsibilities.





## ELEMENTS

Each Element reflects the historical context, describes current conditions, assesses opportunities and challenges, and then provides recommendations for future actions based on the Vision and Guiding Principles. The associated recommendations are listed at the end of each Element for easy identification and reference.

Accordingly, the *Burlington Comprehensive Master Plan* documents are organized based on the following contents:

- **Land Use.** Provides an analysis of land uses in Burlington, presents a future land use plan, and identifies where changes in land use will provide important benefits.
- **Transportation.** Assesses transportation modes and circulation networks in Burlington to identify challenges and opportunities.
- **Housing.** Presents existing housing conditions and characteristics, analyzes affordability, and considers methods to increase housing choice.
- **Economic Development.** Examines economic conditions, trends, and potential actions to preserve the town's strengths and address its challenges.
- **Natural and Cultural Resources.** Provides strategies to protect and enhance Burlington's natural, historic, and cultural resources.
- **Open Space and Recreation.** Outlines the town's outdoor spaces and recreational facilities and presents strategies to support their protection, management, and expansion.
- **Town Center.** Provides an analysis of the Town Center for placemaking and as a community resource and suggests actions to foster it as a destination area and improve connections.
- **Services and Facilities.** Analyzes existing and forecasted needs for municipal services and facilities and provides strategies for future service needs and high quality facilities.

Each *Element* reflects the historical context to understand the influence of the past, presents current conditions, assesses opportunities and challenges, and then provides recommendations for future actions based on the *Vision* and *Guiding Principles*. The recommendations are summarized at the end of each Element for easy identification.





# LAND USE

## EVOLUTION OF THE TOWN: LAND AND ITS USE

Burlington, once part of Woburn, was incorporated in 1799. Urbanizing development bypassed Burlington because it was located some distance away from the larger valleys that channeled transportation or could provide water power to feed the industrial revolution which transformed the regional and national economies. While Boston, Lowell, and some nearby towns grew expansively, Burlington remained a rural, agricultural community.

Substantial farmsteads persisted through the 18th century on large tracts of land spanning the hills and lowlands. Burlington's reputation in these early times included its crops of hops, which were shipped to the beer breweries of Boston. This agricultural heritage is a visible and valued part of the Town's past, represented by preserved houses and open lands.

A scattering of small industrial and commercial establishments eventually organically emerged in the town. These included a cluster of mills and businesses along Vine Brook near the Lexington Town Line.



**3rd Avenue Development**

Source: Google Maps



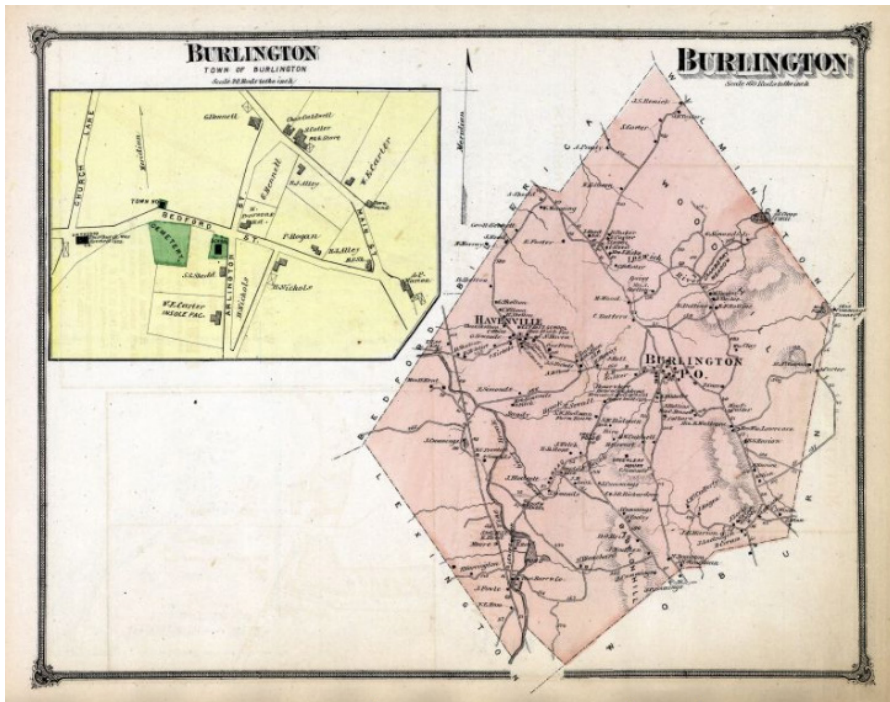


By the mid-20th century, the slow development of land in town became a great economic asset. The economic and population booms beginning in the 1950s coincided with a literal drive to the suburbs by a new type of middle-class settlers. Train travel and trolley car lines were replaced with networks of highways that allowed rapid access by auto, and urban ways became suburban lifestyles. After 300 years as a quiet village, Burlington became the center of a boom that transformed the land in just a few decades. Between 1960 and 1970, Burlington's population rose by five times its size to 25,000, the fastest growing suburb in the Commonwealth at the time.

Burlington's town fathers at the time were visionary, embracing the emerging military technology along the highway corridor and creating the southern commercial district. This district protected from residential encroachment at the time allowed Burlington to thrive as a commercial hub.

**Figure L-1: Burlington Historical Map from Middlesex County 1875**

Source: Historic Map Works





The sand and gravel pits that were dug to build the highways continued operation as development continued. Burlington became home to many trucking companies due to its proximity to the highway. Technology companies soon found homes in Northwest Park in the 1950s, building single story concrete buildings with narrow windows to conceal the state-of-the-art technology during the cold war. Burlington was home to a Nike missile sites.<sup>1</sup> The Van de Graaff generator was created in Burlington, in the area that is now Van de Graaff Drive and home to Oracle.

By the late 1960's the gravel pits were being replaced. Most notable was the construction of the Burlington Mall in 1968 (later expanded in the 1970s and 1980s). The Burlington Mall identified Burlington as a major retail destination on par with Shopper's World in Framingham. In an era with relatively few environmental land use controls at all levels of government, many wetlands were filled and streams placed in culverts. Open space consisted of any land that had made its way into public hands, large properties that remained in private hands, or areas where it was too expensive develop. Expansion of development slowed considerably with the advent of wetlands legislation and with the preservation of open areas through a variety of parks and conservation measures, until most of the developable land in Burlington was improved.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the transformation of trucking terminals on Middlesex Turnpike into retail space, and the Belfram, High Voltage superfund sites and Houghlin Mifflin sites into remediated Class A Office areas, attracting high tech companies of Oracle, Genuity and Nokia. Infrastructure upgrades to the sewer system and careful planning to fend off the "big box" wave of the 1990s were key policy decisions. Burlington became a center for the region, with retail and commercial development along the highway edges, while low-scale residential neighborhoods filled available tracts.

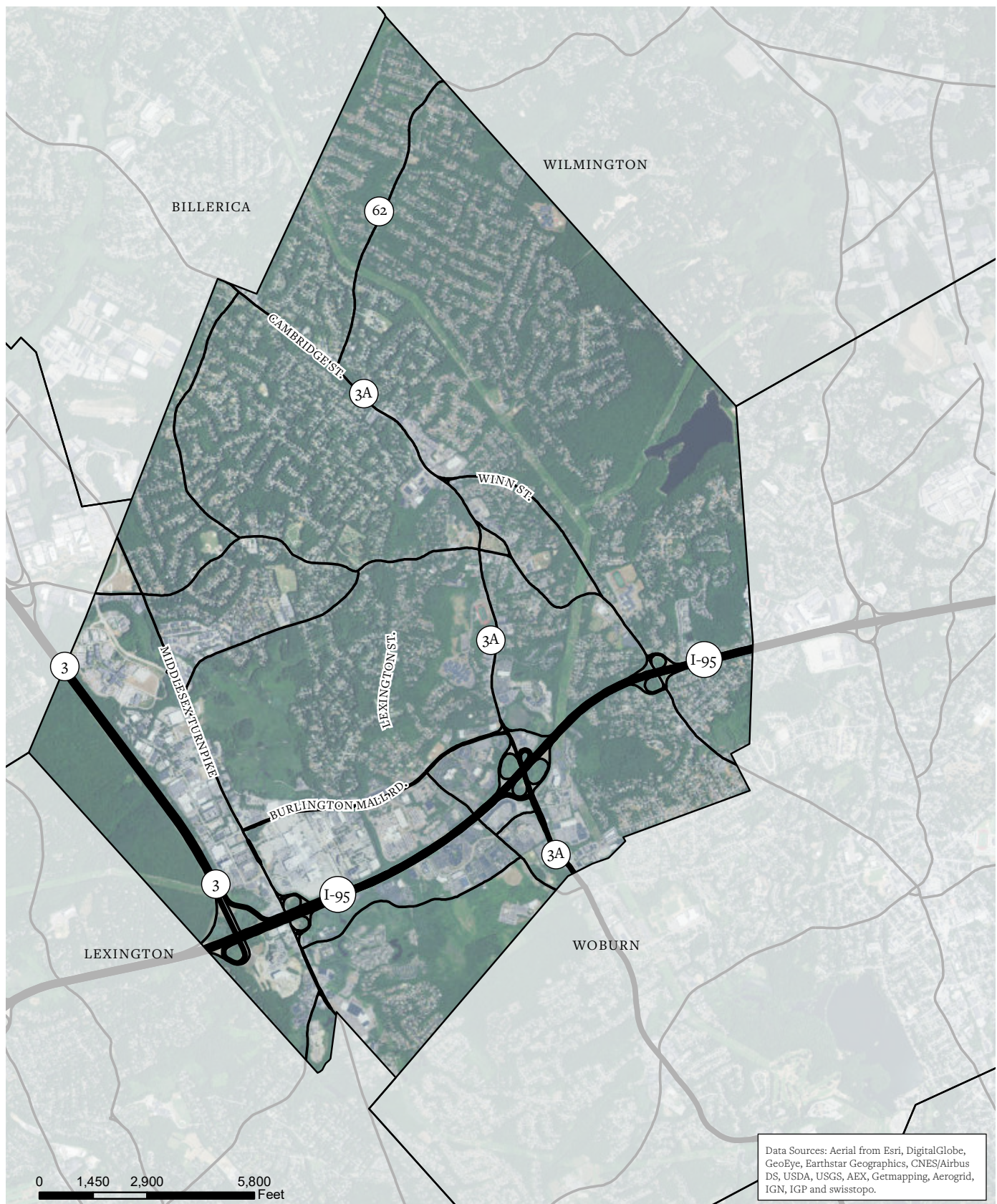
More recent development includes a broad mix of restaurant options. Two new hotels are under construction: a Residence Marriott Inn in The District, and the Archer Hotel in the 3d Ave portion of Northwest Park. In addition a 130,000 square foot Lifetime Fitness Center is also being built in the mixed-use section of Northwest Park.

Northwest Park has completed 180 units of housing with 120 additional units under construction. These units leased at record speed as compared to the region. The addition of housing and other non-office uses has opened up a part of Burlington where residents rarely visited. Today the Northwest Park neighborhood is always bustling, especially around Wegman's Supermarket.

<sup>1</sup><https://burlingtonretro.com/2017/09/21/straight-shooting-about-nike-missiles/>



Figure L-2: Burlington Aerial Photograph with Boundaries





While Burlington has done a good job in some areas of Town to encourage continued investment through regulatory changes, other areas require analysis and potential regulatory changes to ensure their continued viability. The main focuses are the existing General Business and General Industrial Zoning Districts. These districts do not offer the mix of uses and dimensional standards and use definitions to respond to today's workplace and retail environments.



## CURRENT LAND USE

The overall land use pattern has resulted in a balance of developed land and open space that is largely confined within regulatory standards and ownership patterns. Against this backdrop, however, marginal changes to the existing land use patterns become prominent topics of community debate. Discussions about ongoing development, developable areas, and land conservation have contributed to this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.

## CLASSIFICATION AND PATTERNS

### Land Use and Development Patterns

The character of the land use in Burlington can also be understood as a set of easily identifiable physical development patterns. They mark the qualities of different parts of town, forming distinct neighborhoods, districts, corridors, and places. These development patterns influence the quality of life of the citizens of Burlington and are strongly related to many elements of this *Comprehensive Master Plan* – including transportation, housing, economic activity, and the environment. The land use planning process identifies where these patterns are beneficial now and where modifications can be made to create a more beneficial future. Although a few places have traces of Burlington’s rural past, the current patterns are mostly those associated with suburban communities, including the following:





Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities



### Single-family neighborhood development

Residential neighborhood in Burlington, Source: Bing Maps

Much of Burlington was developed with subdivisions of large parcels into relatively small lots with houses surrounded by yards. They are arranged along streets that feed into the original network of meandering roads that pre-dated the post-War boom in housing. Auto-dependent, most subdivisions in Burlington lack sidewalks. Lot size in residential areas is predominantly 20,000 square feet per lot and the Town has only one single-family zoning district.



### Office Park

District Avenue near Burlington Mall, Source: Bing Maps

The office park developments are composed of separated office buildings and adjacent parking located in a landscaped setting with a limited number of access points onto nearby arterial streets. The office environments range from single-story concrete 1950s- and 1960s-era research and development buildings to the modern office towers of the 1990s.



### Mixed-Use Commercial Park

Northwest Park, Source: Bing Maps

The office parks are composed of mostly office buildings, with supporting amenities (retail, restaurants, fitness) and mixed uses. Some instances include residential uses within the mix.





Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities



### Suburban Institutional Complex

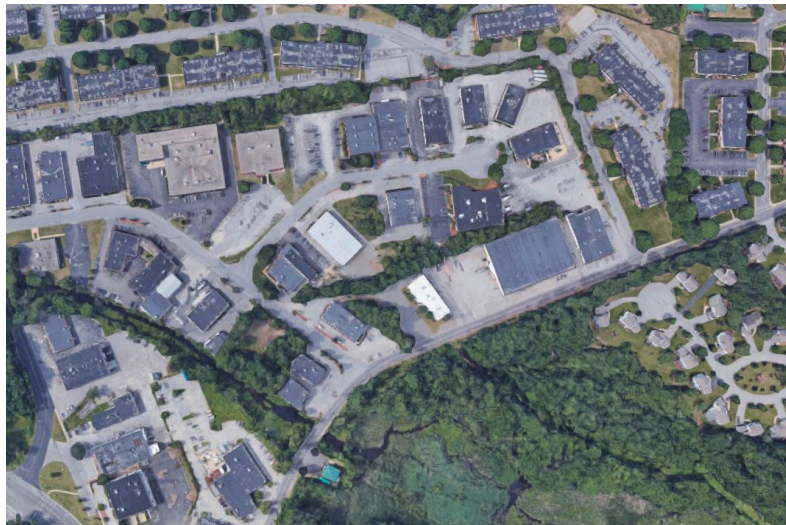
Lahey Hospital and Medical Center,  
Source: Bing Maps

In a suburban setting, hospitals and other institutions adopt a land use pattern similar to office parks.

### Industrial Park

A Street off Terrace Hall Avenue,  
Source: Bing Maps

Industrial parks in suburban areas tend to be tightly packed with one-story buildings designed for light industrial or similar uses. The available land is filled with parking and truck access drives, and there is limited landscaping or open space.





### Regional Retail Center

Burlington Mall, Source: Bing Maps

The prototypical regional retail center clusters retail stores within large parking lots that are connected to arterial streets near highway interchanges. In the past, the sites were developed with limited landscaping, and pedestrian areas are concentrated along store frontages.



### Shopping Center

Shaw's Supermarket on Winn Street, Source: Bing Maps

The suburban shopping center is often called “strip commercial” development and has either single tenant or multiple tenant buildings in single-use structures. The buildings have with a foreground of parking and limited provision for landscaping or a pedestrian environment.





### Suburban Mixed-Use Corridor

Cambridge Street near Kinney Avenue, Source: Bing Maps

In suburban settings, heavily travelled corridors within the community provide a mixed-use environment. These corridors become locations for shops, services, and local institutions, with buildings adapted to fit the available land with adjacent parking lots along the street edges.



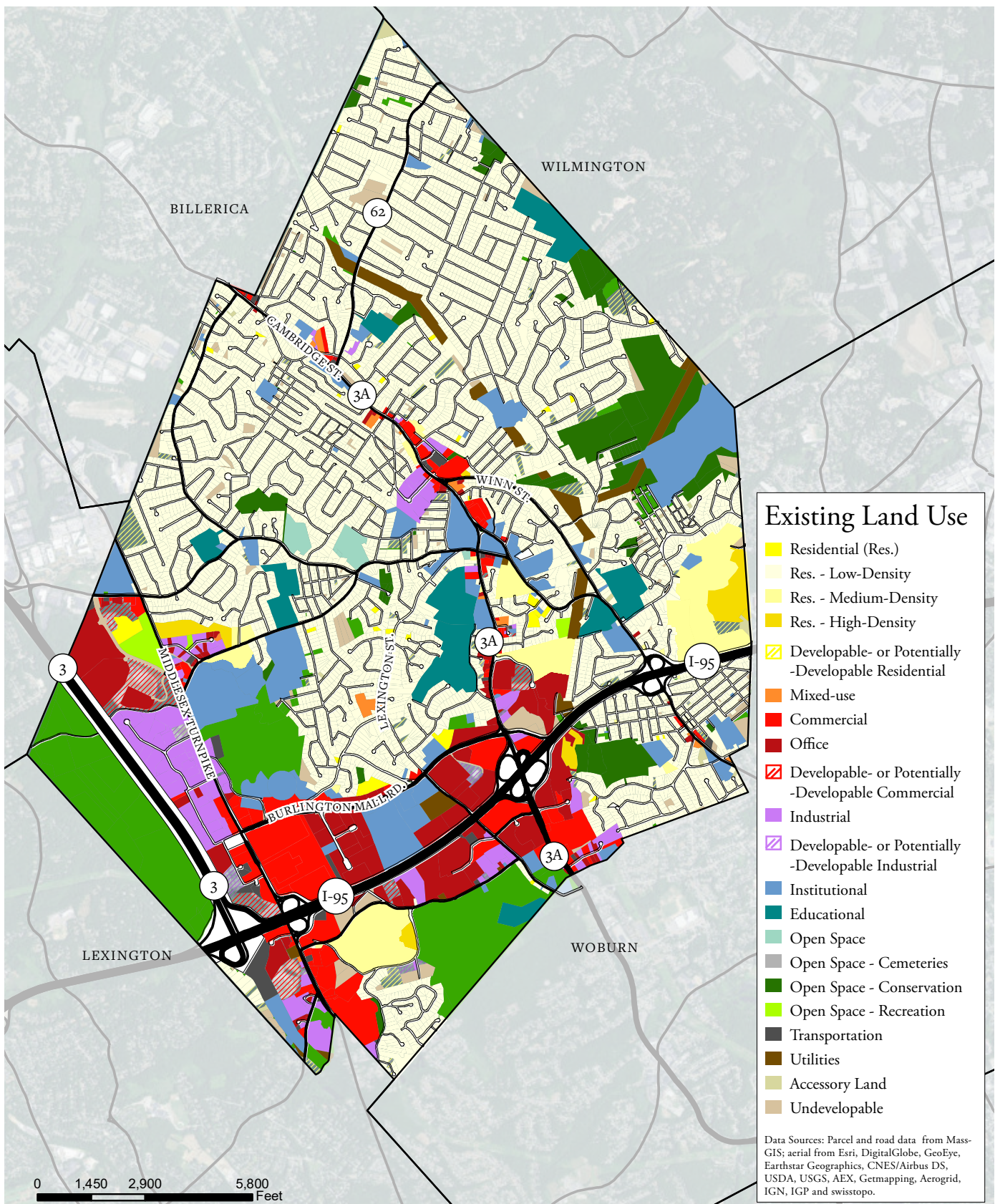
### Open Space

Vine Brook Wellfields, Source: Bing Maps

Open space persists in many forms. A prevalent pattern consists of wetlands with a combination of marshlands and bordering wetlands along the brooks and water channels. In many cases, development moved into the edges of these areas when filling of wetlands was prevalent; today, clear edges define these open space and development boundaries.



Figure L-3: Existing Land Use Map





## MAPPING LAND USE

Except for limited cases, the developable land in Burlington has been absorbed with buildings and site improvements wherever it has been practical and economically feasible. Similarly, the balance of open space to developed land is largely established, with a limited number of parcels susceptible to major changes.

The Land Use Map for Burlington provides a clear diagram of the contrasting characteristics of different areas of the community. It tells a tale of two towns – one largely devoted to residents with homes and open space, the other largely devoted to regionally oriented businesses and institutions.

Single-family neighborhoods occupy a great proportion of the land, comprising about 37% of the town. A very small proportion – about 2% of the land – is classified as multi-family residential.

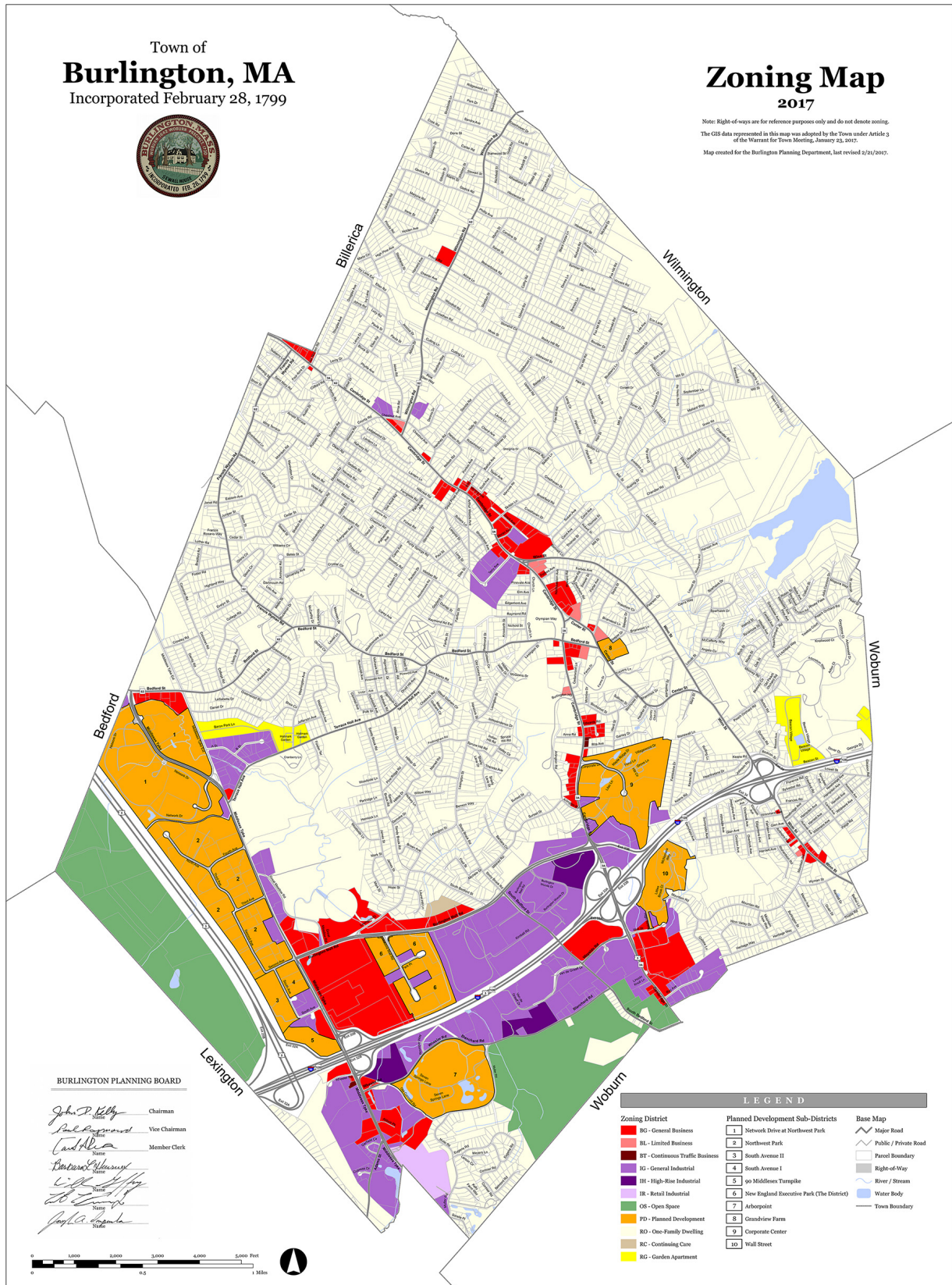
Open space comprises even more area than residential uses, constituting about 44% of Burlington.

The remainder of Burlington's land is classified as commercial, institutional, or industrial. These uses are largely concentrated in the southerly part of Burlington on large tracts of land, clustered in bands along the interstate highway and Route 3. With excellent access from major interchanges, the land has absorbed extensive development that benefits from its regionally-accessible characteristics. Because of this strategic location, this land is highly valued as real estate, and consequently valued by the Town for its contribution to the municipal tax revenues.

The Land Use Map reveals an important secondary pattern of commercial development. Locally-serving stores and services are clustered along Cambridge Street, an historic route that runs between the neighboring towns of Woburn and Billerica. The largest cluster occurs near the geographic center of Burlington. It includes grocery stores, restaurants, shops, and services – and a small concentration of industrial uses. This area, near the intersection of Cambridge and Winn Street serves as part of the town-oriented center. In combination with the nearby municipal uses and open space, this central part of Burlington has become a special focus of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.



Figure L-4: Existing Zoning Map



Source: Town of Burlington Website



## ZONING, REGULATIONS, AND LAND USE

Land use regulations have the single largest impact on the shape of the environment. Zoning and other municipal land use regulations shape land use when new projects or major improvements arise. The land use regulations are forward looking; existing uses typically persist as “non-conforming uses,” but changes are expected to conform to the pattern required by zoning standards.

A review of Burlington’s zoning regulations and maps indicates a high level of conformance between the zoning districts and the land use and development patterns. However, there is an apparent discrepancy associated with open space. A substantial amount of land is zoned for residential use, but is indicated as open space on the Land Use Map. However, because large areas of low-lying, privately owned lands are restricted by wetland regulations, they cannot be practically developed as the zoning would seem to indicate.

### LAND USE ISSUES

Burlington has become a series of separate enclaves of discrete uses, which is typical of suburbs. Well-defined pockets of similar uses have substantially filled the available land within the limits posed by past zoning practices. Participants in the planning process helped produce a map that identifies many distinct neighborhoods, districts, and use clusters that are geographically distributed throughout Burlington.

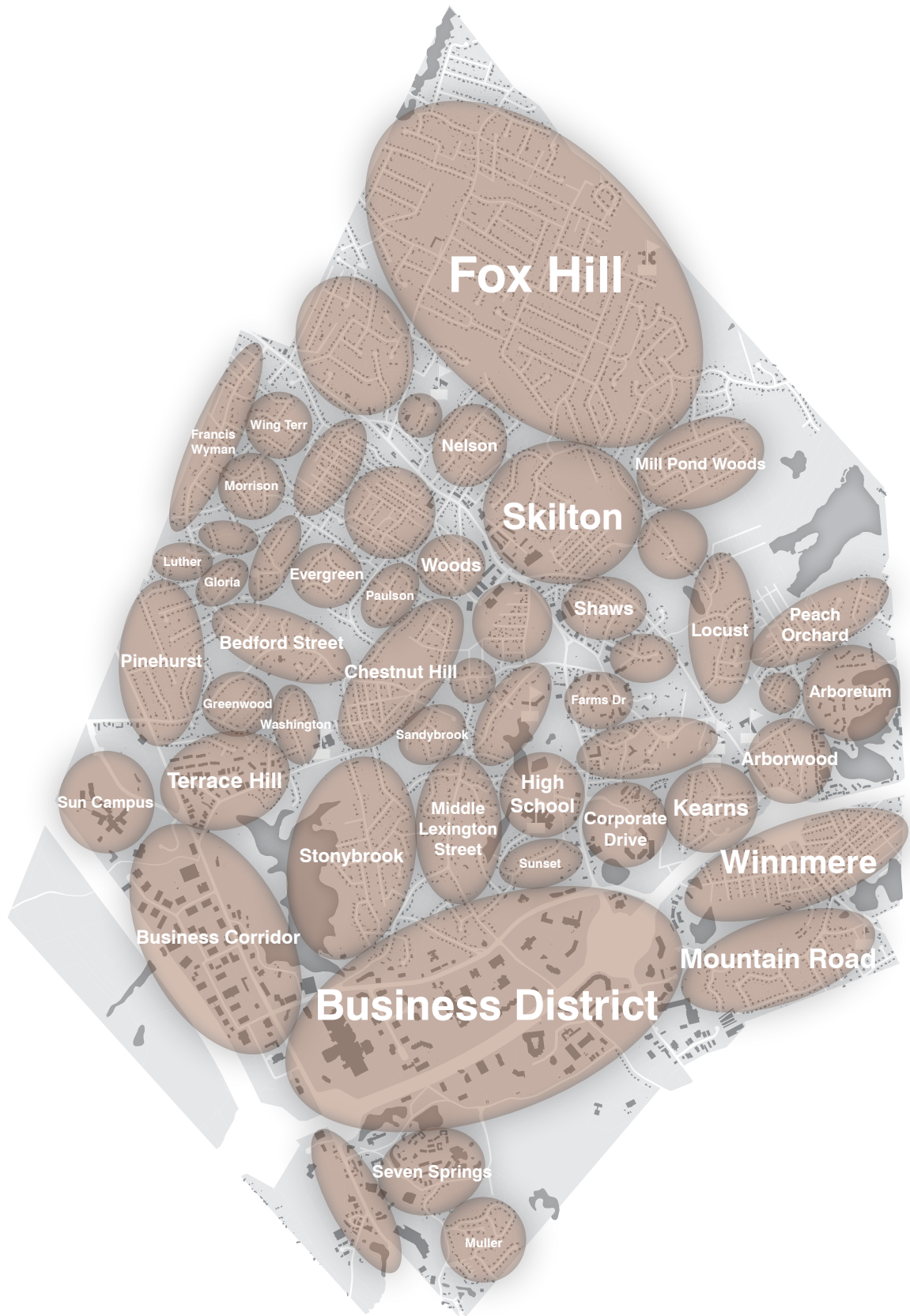
These separate use enclaves – residential, retail, industrial, and commercial, and industrial – are all dependent upon a limited network of arterial streets to connect them. As a result, the land use pattern places significant pressure on vehicle circulation.

The Town’s land and the image of the community are distinctively divided between the lower density residential neighborhoods and the large, contiguous business and institutional areas near Route 3 and Route 128. Although it provides an important tax and employment base, the vehicle-dependent uses near the major transportation corridors dominate segments of the arterial network, resulting in friction with the residential community.

The business and institutional uses in Burlington have been allowed to substantially fill buildable land with a combination of buildings, access, and parking lots. As a result, the adaptation of the land to new uses will largely need to occur through redevelopment.



Figure L-5: Diagram of Burlington Neighborhoods





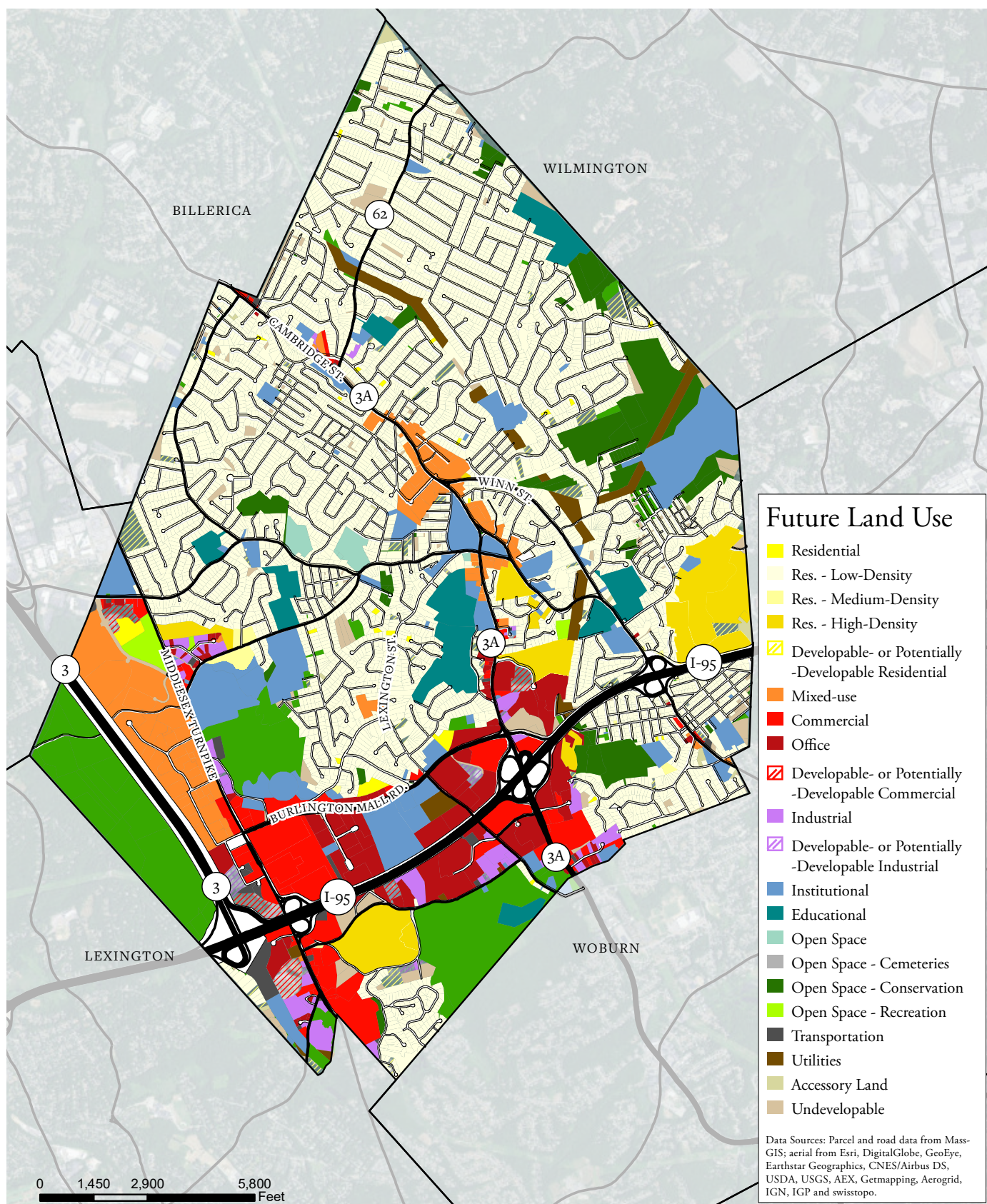
In the last 20 years, mixed-use neighborhoods replaced traditional single-use Euclidean zoning districts, predominantly through the use of the Planned Development District Zoning. Over the past decade Burlington has experienced a steady increase in medical device technology, security software, biotechnology, nanotechnology and advanced material sciences. Mixed-use is defined as having multiple functions within the same building, or the same general area through superimposition, or within the same area through adjacency. Benefits include pedestrian activity and traffic capture. Recent Planned Development Districts have transformed, Northwest Park, Network Drive and The District, formerly New England Executive Park and the previously M/A-COM property. These centers of life have attracted recent newcomers including Keurig, Desktop Metals, Conformis, the Kosta Center for Homeland Security at Northeastern, and MilliporeSigma. In addition, existing businesses, including Oracle, Microsoft, Sohpos, Nuance, SAP, DemandWare, LeMaitre and Lahey, have expanded their footprints and modernized their spaces in Burlington.

## LAND USE OPPORTUNITIES

Current market trends are favoring mixed use development patterns that are not typical of past suburban land use patterns. A mix of uses in close proximity to one another offers people broader choices of activities within more compact and connected areas. In part, this is due to the benefits of increased convenience and shorter travel times between places to shop, work, live or visit. Tenants, employers, and shoppers are also increasingly responsive to well-designed places that incorporate landscaping and amenities within an excellent pedestrian environment. Some of Burlington's land is adaptable to an increasing focus on mixed, compatible uses and more compact, environmentally responsive site development. Particular opportunities will occur where buildings and tenancies are outmoded. Parcels that are owned or can be reasonably assembled by single entities will become targets for redevelopment which can provide a better configuration of buildings, parking, and open space than occurred in the past.



Figure L-6: Future Land Use Plan





## PLANNING THE FUTURE

Burlington should continue to preserve and enhance its open space resources as a substantial proportion of its land. Through active acquisition and regulatory measures, the townspeople can continue to enjoy the benefits associated with the large proportion of open land that is part of Burlington's character.

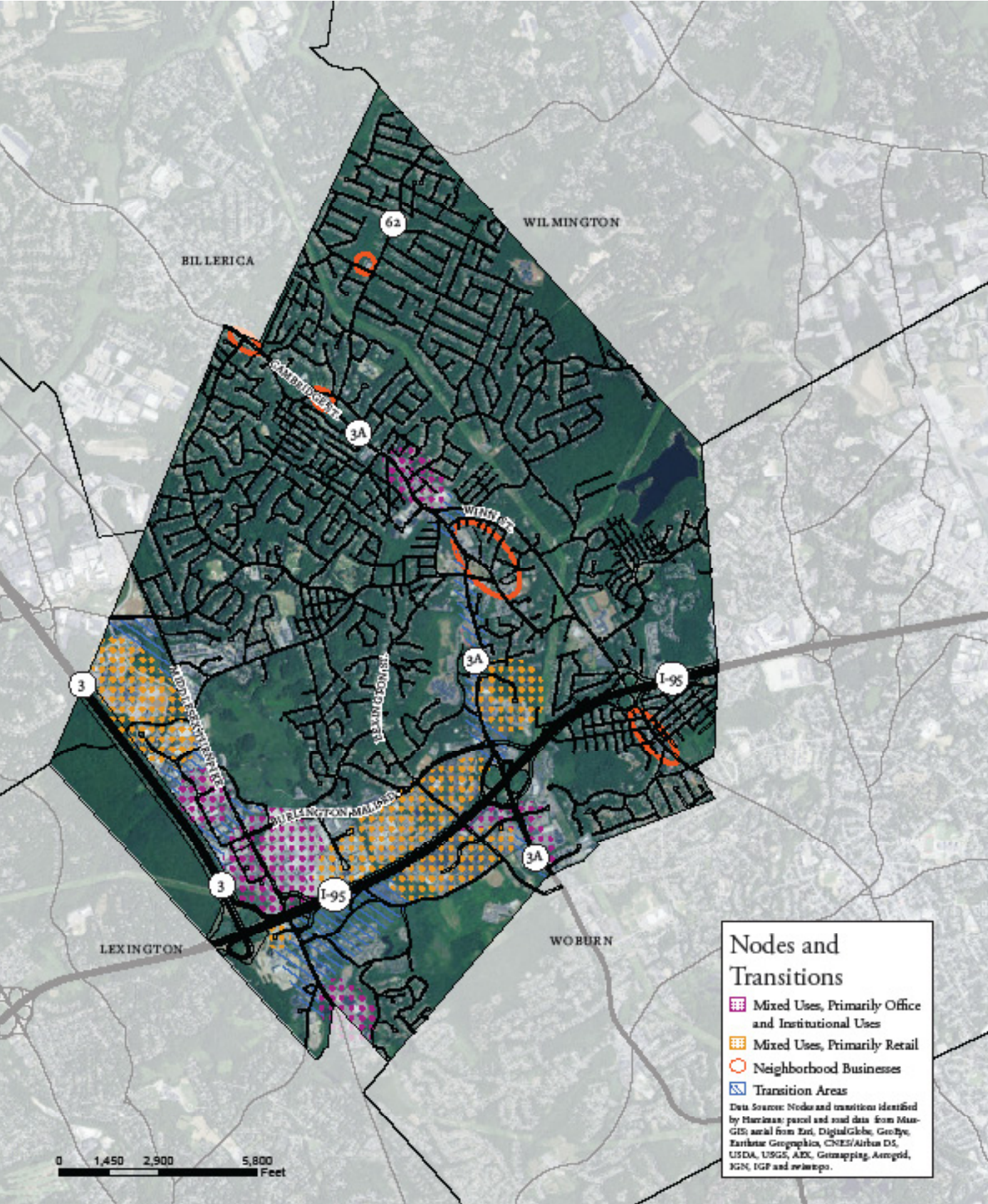
Burlington should remain a Town that preserves and enhances its many low-scale, high quality single family neighborhoods that is an essential part of the fabric of the community.

Burlington should encourage incremental modification of its commercial and industrial land areas to provide support for a broader range of complementary uses in close proximity to one another. These uses can be increasingly linked through circulation and transportation networks that reduce dependence on the strained roadway and street capacity. The amount of land devoted to surface parking and aging buildings can be reconfigured through redevelopment to provide a better allocation and orientation of green space and pedestrian connections, add to the range of uses, and provide opportunities for people to reduce their use of the automobile. Burlington can have more attractive community-oriented mixed use corridors along appropriate edges of Cambridge Street and some of its intersecting streets. Adding new uses in appropriate locations and reconfiguring auto-oriented site designs to better accommodate the pedestrian and landscape environment will add value to the entire town and provide convenient locations for residents to shop, work, and enjoy the civic life of the community.

The *Future Land Use Plan* provides a diagram of expressing this view of the future. It focuses changes in commercial, industrial and retail areas where an enhanced range of uses can benefit the Town, and would be reflected in changes to the zoning and other regulations through the implementation of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.



Figure L-7: Nodes and Transitions





Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities



**Burlington Mall**

Source: Rene Schwletzke CC





## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following land use recommendations provide the basis for actions that the Town should undertake to implement the *Comprehensive Master Plan*. These recommendations are herein provided in a summarized version. Please refer to the full *Comprehensive Master Plan* document and the Implementation section for more details.

**L1. Allow and encourage compact, well-organized development within commercial and retail areas of town.**

The Town should promote development patterns that have more densely clustered buildings, converting excess parking and paving areas into more valuable uses, and re-organizing sites so they provide more landscaping and a pedestrian-friendly environment.

**L2. Promote a broader mix of uses in areas where it will enhance efficient use of the land, increase the quality of life, and keep Burlington in pace with other communities as a great place to live, work, and visit.**

Rather than reinforcing past practice that isolated uses on separate parcels and districts, the Town can promote a more vital mix of uses in many of the commercial, industrial, and institutional areas. By placing opportunities to work, shop, visit and live in these areas in closer proximity to each other, convenience and quality of life can be enhanced.

**L3. Raise the design quality of buildings and site improvements so that they are more attractive and valuable from private and public perspectives.**

The Town should require new development projects to meet high standards of site, architectural and landscape design. It should promote design improvements to existing sites and properties where it will benefit the visible quality of the town and enhance the value of properties. Redevelopment shall enhance the environmental quality of sites through increased stormwater and environmental solutions.

**L4. Enhance the Cambridge Street corridor as Burlington's own "Main Street" providing convenient and community-serving businesses and institutions in a mixed-use setting along an increasingly attractive corridor.**

Cambridge Street should evolve to become an extended community-oriented corridor that provides a rich mix of shopping, service businesses, civic services, institutions, recreational open space, and a variety of housing choices. The entire corridor should be enhanced as a pedestrian, bicycle, and transit corridor that is connected to the neighborhoods of Burlington.





**L5. Promote sustainable land use practices throughout the community.**

Land use management in Burlington should explicitly include methods and requirements to limit negative environmental impacts of development using contemporary practices to protect habitats, enhance water quality and reduce dependence on nonrenewable resources.

**L6. Provide mitigation for negative impacts associated with development and provide positive amenities that will protect and enhance all areas of Burlington.**

Burlington should enhance its set of tools and methods so that new development bears reasonable costs and responsibilities for mitigating negative impacts on the community associated with expansion, new development, or changes in use. Similar tools and methods should be used to add amenities that become civic benefits and contribute to the value of the community as a whole.

**L7. Preserve and enhance the land devoted to open space.**

The Town should continue to recognize the importance of its existing open space assets as a land use requiring stewardship and management in concert with other uses. Smaller open areas add value to the adjacent developed areas and shall be considered as part of area plans within Town. This aspect of land use is amplified and specifically addressed in the related recommendations in the *Open Space Element* of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.

**L8. Clearly define and strengthen the community core of Burlington including the civic-oriented Common area and the business-oriented Town Center.**

Burlington should promote and invest in the community core districts of Town, leveraging the historic center and land devoted to commercial, retail, open space, and civic uses. These areas of Town are specifically addressed in the related recommendations in the *Town Center Element* of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.





# TRANSPORTATION

## FROM SETTLEMENT TO SUBURB

Settlers formed what we know today as Burlington as an agricultural outpost early in the history of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Formally incorporated as a municipality in 1799, the Town grew slowly and remained a predominantly agrarian community until the 20th century. As a farming town, Burlington was served by an internal network of rural roads [Add image: “Burlington Map 1799”]. An expanding transportation network reached the edges of Burlington when the Middlesex Turnpike was created as a toll road in the early 1800s. The road was designed to follow straight lines and connect growing commercial centers from Boston to Nashua. Although the turnpike failed as a commercial venture, it persisted as a roadway serving the farmers and subsequent small industrial operations that grew along Burlington’s watercourses in the 19th century. Over the next century, the Middlesex Canal and the Boston & Lowell Railroad bypassed the town to the east. The Bay State Railway Company built a streetcar line that connected Burlington to Woburn, Billerica, and Lowell. This line was short-lived. The community remained relatively unchanged with its lack of access and connectivity to transportation networks until after World War II.

Burlington’s relative isolation from the major transportation lines kept the town relatively undeveloped with substantial open land assets until the automobile and suburban explosion of the 1950s. The most transformative change at the time was the construction of I-95/Route 128, the first circumferential highway in the country, which passed through the southern portion of town. [Add Picture newly constructed highway near Mall/District]. The new highway made its way around the outskirts of Boston, connecting communities that were formerly dependent upon the aging Boston-centric roadway system with its limited speeds and capacity.



Traffic near the Burlington Mall



Another significant divided highway was constructed parallel to the old Middlesex Turnpike, which remained an important arterial. The new Route 3 highway became a new link between 128 and southern New Hampshire, crossing I-495 (Boston's outer loop) and providing a connection with Lowell. This new convergence of major regional highways in the southern portion of the town created an attractive environment for retail and commercial development due to the increased access to a large and prospering population moving to the Boston suburbs.

As these new roadways provided increased access for retail and commercial growth, residential development occurred simultaneously. Throughout the 1960s, fields once used for agriculture were soon subdivided into residential lots with wide streets, curvilinear layouts, and cul-de-sacs. These meandering residential street layouts ultimately fed into the existing limited road network of former agricultural trade routes.

Much of the town's economic success can be attributed to the construction of Route 128 (later becoming a portion of Interstate 95) and Route 3. This confluence provided Burlington with a geographic advantage that the town, through thoughtful planning, took great advantage of by transforming itself into one of the largest regional economic centers outside of Boston while still maintaining its small-town roots.





## EVOLUTION OF A ROAD NETWORK

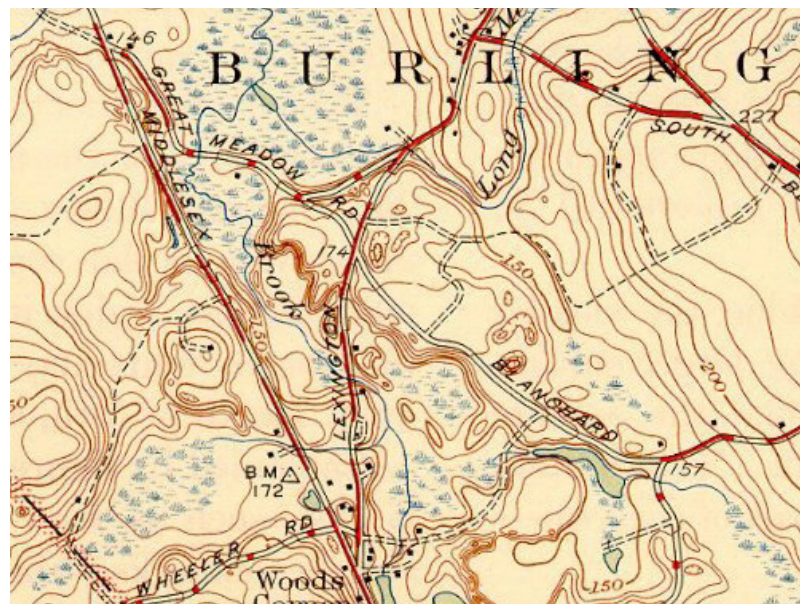
This sequence of maps demonstrates the conversion of a rural town to a suburban center, focusing on the area near the Route 3/Route 128 interchange.



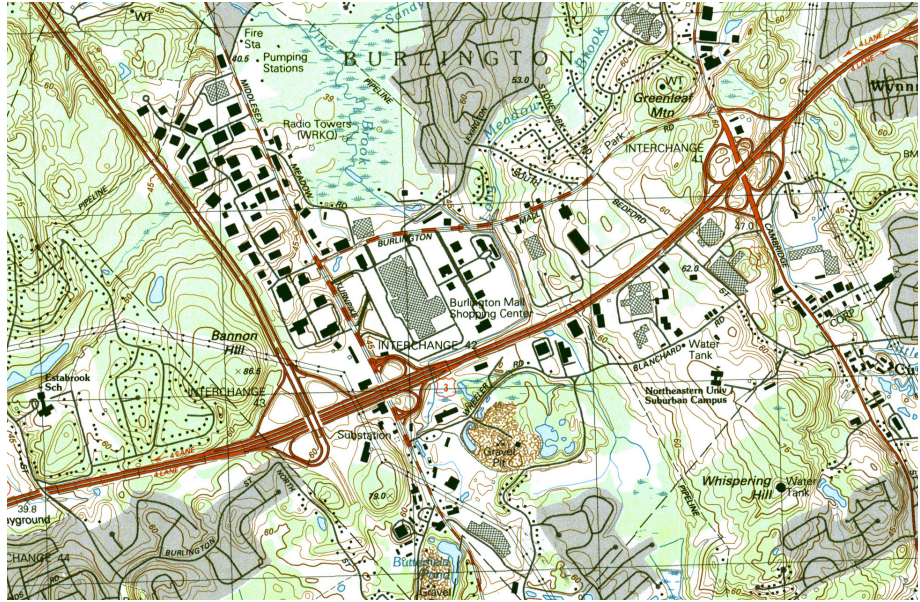
Mall area, 1875 - This map shows meandering rural roads that linked businesses, homes, and an early school. The only straight road is the Middlesex Turnpike.

Source: J.B.Beers and Co.

1946 - Most of the same roads are visible with limited changes, although they had been paved and adapted to automobile travel by this time. Source: U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) Quadrangle Map.







1995 – The construction of divided highways resulted in extensive reorganization of the local roads, filling of wetlands and the introduction of interchanges to connect the Town and expansive development areas to the highway. Source: USGS Quadrangle Map.



## TRANSPORTATION TODAY

Private vehicles dominate the transportation system within a community that has become largely auto-dependent. Located at one of the most critical interchanges of the regional highway network within an increasingly urbanized and prosperous region, Burlington enjoys relatively convenient access-- but suffers from the congestion brought by the large volumes of vehicle traffic. Although alternate modes of travel are present today, they are limited in quantity and quality.

An account of vehicle circulation is a tale of two sides of the town. One side of town constitutes the regionally oriented businesses and institutions that take advantage of virtually direct access to the highway network. The residential community is on the other side of town. Although it also uses the links to the regional highways, the residential community must also navigate an internal network of streets and ways not designed to promote convenience.

## THE REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON TRAFFIC

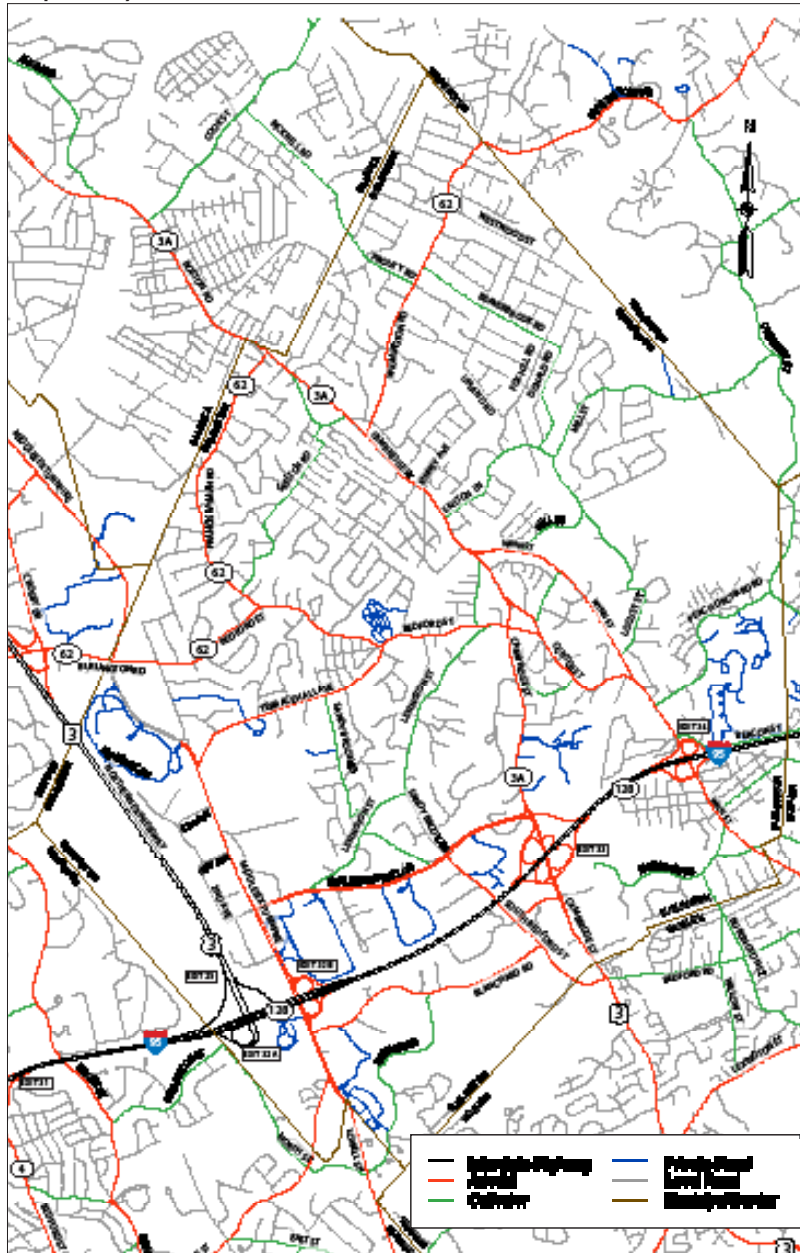
In the world of divided highways, interchanges become the gateways to commerce and communities. Burlington has access to Route 128/I-95 and Route 3 through interchanges at their junction. Two additional Route 128/I-95 interchanges provide direct access to Burlington to the east of the Route 3 interchange. Route 3 provides an interchange within neighboring Bedford, just outside its border with Burlington.

Three of these interchanges provide access to commercial, institutional, and industrial uses. These interchanges are linked to intermediate arterials that distribute traffic to bordering businesses, shopping malls, institutions, and office parks. These connectors absorb very high volumes of vehicles, including Middlesex Turnpike, Burlington Mall Road, South Bedford Street, and Blanchard Road.

During off-peak hours these roads have been designed and equipped with high-capacity intersections and adequate land to manage traffic efficiently. But peak conditions can slow operations with congestion. In particular, peak commuter and weekend traffic clogs the road segments and intersections that connect the Burlington Mall, the Middlesex Turnpike, and the highway interchange.

**Figure T-1: Roadway Inventory**

Prepared by TEC.



## ROADWAY INVENTORY

This map classifies all of the roads within Burlington and those that pass through the town. The diagram displays the divided highways Route 3 and Route 128/I-95 that cross through Burlington's west and southern sectors, accessed through a handful of interchanges connecting the highway to arterials that extend into neighboring communities. The arterial network traces the historic roads that were created during rural times. Most meandered between hills and marshes, except for the straight segments of Middlesex Turnpike on the western side of town. The local street system includes numerous cul-de-sacs and subdivision networks that rely on arterials and collector roads that concentrate traffic rather than distributing it. (Source: TEC, 2015).



## THE LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON TRAFFIC

Burlington has relatively few connections between the interior districts and outside communities; there are limited internal connector streets to distribute traffic within the town's borders. Because of this, residents experience congested traffic conditions as a regular imposition on their quality of life.

A significant proportion of the congestion on the internal roadway network is due to the traffic generated by residents channeled through an inherited street network of collectors and arterials with limited routing choices. Census-based statistics about commutes indicate that about 25% of the Burlington workforce is employed within the town. Other resident-generated vehicle trips are also concentrated in peak times, such as picking up and dropping off school children or weekend errands and activities.

The regional network (Route 128/I-95 and Route 3) provides direct access to the larger region for Burlington residents despite frequent congestion. This network has better links to employment and other destinations than many other suburban communities in the region. The Route 128/I-95 interchange at Winn Street skirts the commercially developed edge of Town, providing access to Burlington's residential neighborhoods and interior districts. At the other highway interchanges, Town residents and other local traffic must compete for space with those moving between the highways and highway-bordering development. This is not a significant issue during most periods. But during peak commuting hours and Saturdays, when many Burlington residents are trying to use these connections, congestion adds to their travel times and creates inconvenience.







All of the streets that connect Burlington to the south and east pass through highway interchanges. Access to the north is funneled along three main ways – Middlesex Turnpike, Cambridge Street, and Winn Street. Access to the east is limited to Mill Street and Peach Orchard Road, which are smaller, local connectors.

Burlington sits at the edge of the highways between surrounding communities that are also served by the sparse number of arterials and collectors that extend through Burlington. As a result, Burlington drivers experience substantial traffic generated by surrounding communities moving to and from the highway system. Notable “cut through” traffic routes have developed along Wilmington Road, Westwood Street, Fox Hill Road, Prouty Road, and Terrace Hall Avenue.

## **HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS’ PERSPECTIVE ON TRANSPORTATION**

On Wednesday, May 10, 2017, a survey was sent to the student population of Burlington High School to ask their opinions about what they thought of the Town of Burlington, and several of the questions pertained to transportation. The survey received 108 responses.

As is typical of the suburbs, most students travel by car. Students who do not have access to a car use the bus, walk, or bike. Out of all the students who completed the survey, only 27.1% own a car, but over half of the sample size would be too young to have a license. When asked how they travel to school, the students replied as follows:

- In elementary school, taking the bus was the most common way, with parents driving their children occasionally.
- Students in middle school were still dependent on the bus and some parental assistance.
- The largest group of students walked to school in Middle School. Some high-school students own cars, but the bus still plays a large role in transporting the students to school.

When asked about what makes driving conditions difficult in Burlington, the top response was traffic control, with the number of cars on the roads and the road conditions coming in second and third, respectively.





The survey also asked about public transportation, and students would like to see more routes and better tracking of the busses to help improve the public transit in town. When asked about more public transit, students were almost evenly split, with the no vote at 55.8%.

Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities



## TRANSIT ROUTES

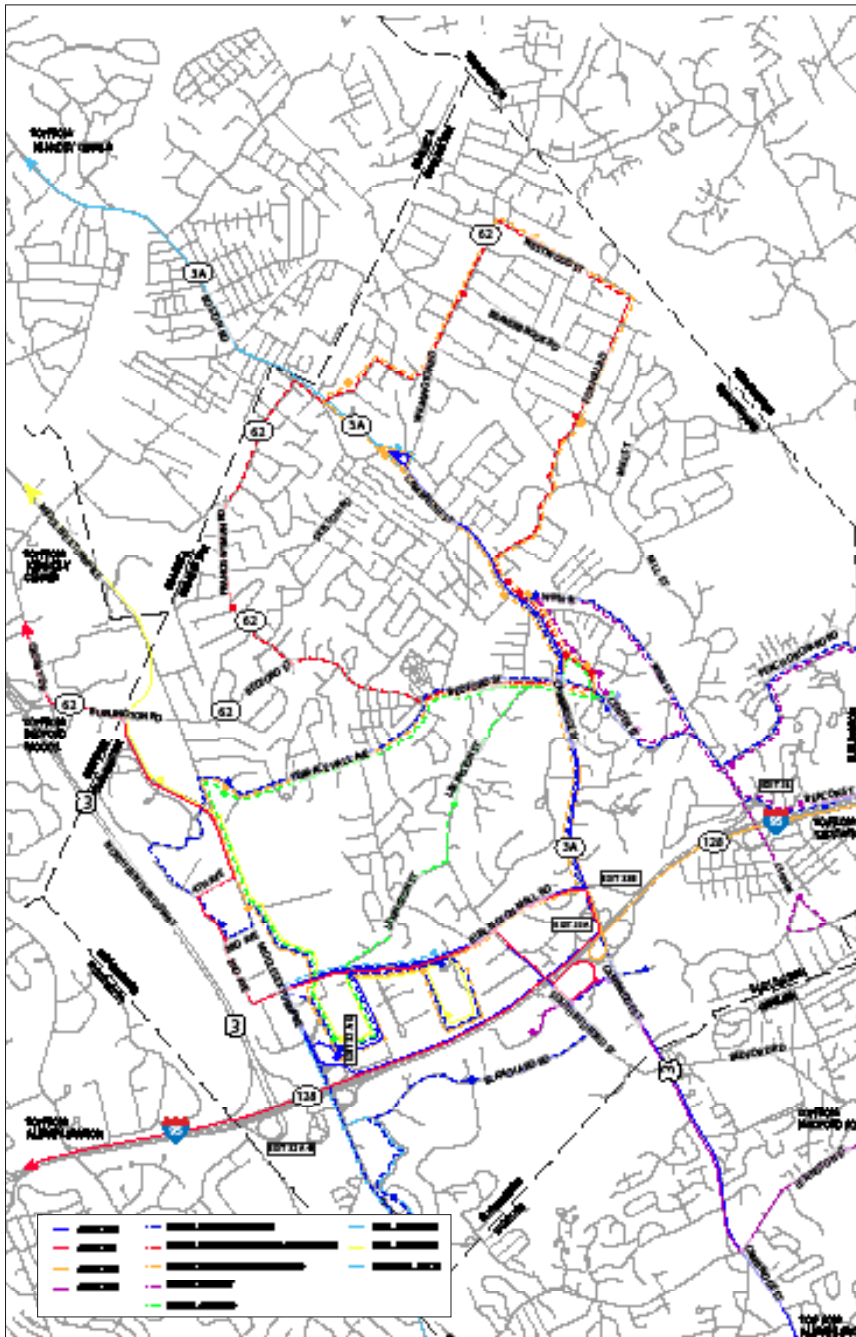
The local bus service routes operated by the Town (Burlington Public Transit) run along most of the arterial roads in Burlington and thus the borders of residential neighborhoods. These routes provide links to concentrations of stores, services, and employment centers. (Source: TEC, 2015). The regional bus services, operated by the MBTA and the LTRA, provide commuter links and access to major destinations. The stops on these lines are mainly concentrated near the highway interchanges and the large developments in the southwest quadrant of Town.





**Figure T-2: Transit Routes**

Prepared by TEC.



## TRANSIT ROUTES

The local bus service routes operated by the Town (the B Line) are traced along most of the arterial roads in Burlington. The routes run along the borders of residential neighborhoods and provide links to concentrations of stores, services, and employment centers. (Source: TEC, 2015). The regional bus services provide commuter links and access to major destinations. Operated by the MBTA and the LTRA, the stops are mostly concentrated near the highway interchanges and the large developments concentrated in the southwest quadrant of Town.

Land Use

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Housing

Economic  
Development

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Resources

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Recreation

Town Center

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Facilities



## SIDEWALK INVENTORY

This map displays the extent of the existing sidewalk network in Burlington. The thick red lines indicate streets and roads that have no sidewalks. A glance confirms the experience of pedestrians in most of Burlington; improved sidewalks are few and far between in the residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, and office parks. However, most arterial streets are bordered by sidewalks that will serve as important connections as pedestrian facilities are expanded in the future. (Source: TEC, 2015).

## LIMITATIONS IN CHOICES: MODES OF TRANSPORTATION

There is minimal use of transit, walking, or bicycles as modes of travel in Burlington. Based on 2014 American Community Survey estimates, Burlington's resident population has about 13,000 individuals in the workforce. About 90% of Burlington residents who are employed use private vehicles to get to and from work – and the vast majority of them drive alone (87%). About 3% use public transportation, and about 1% walk or bicycle to work. About 600 people, or about 5% of the residential workforce, are estimated to be working in their homes.

Burlington has a proportionately large number of people who work in Burlington, and most of them live in other communities – about 29,000 people work in the Town. About 95% travel to and from their Burlington jobs and work in private vehicles, while only about 3% of these individuals use public transit.

Several bus routes and services provide public transit, but patronage in Burlington is sparse.

The MBTA has five (5) routes that link a limited number of locations in Burlington to regional commuting and travel destinations; most of these lines provide frequent peak period service. The Lowell Regional Transit Authority provides two (2) routes with connections to commuting and other destinations to the north of Burlington, with bus frequencies ranging from 30 minutes to an hour.

Burlington has its own "Burlington Public Transit" bus service. This service is owned by the MBTA but is operated by the Town. Most of the five (5) routes focus on morning and mid-day service. These services connect various neighborhoods and destinations, but buses are somewhat infrequent, with one-hour periods between bus arrivals at stops along the routes.

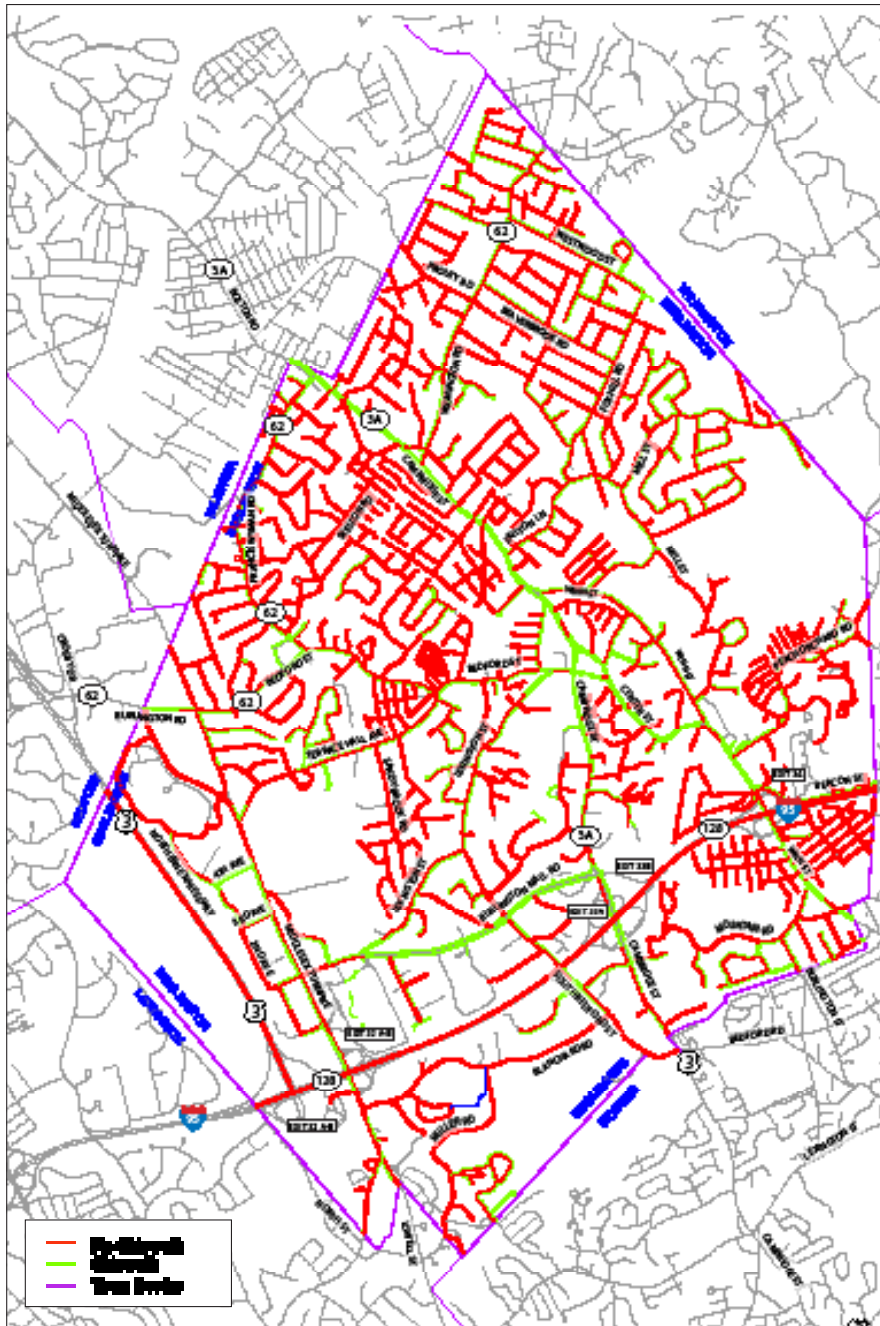
Burlington does not have direct access to commuter rail service, but such service is available in Woburn, Wilmington, and Billerica. Area businesses and large institutions have yet to invest in shuttle services to provide more commuting options for their employees.





Figure T-3: Sidewalk Inventory

Prepared by TEC.



Sidewalk Inventory

This map displays the extent of the existing sidewalk network in Burlington. The thick red lines are along streets and roads that have no sidewalks. A quick glance confirms the experience of pedestrians in most of Burlington; improved sidewalks are few and far between in the residential neighborhoods, commercial centers, and office parks. However, most of the arterial streets are bordered with sidewalks that will serve as important connections as pedestrian facilities are expanded in the future. (Source: TEC, 2015).

Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities



Basic facilities for pedestrians and bicycles are in very short supply. Sidewalk infrastructure is not comprehensive as there are many gaps in the system. While the potential for bicycling has been recognized, the Town does not have a network of paths, bike lanes, or marked routes to enhance safety and bicycle mobility.

## TRAVEL PATTERNS AND THE TRIP TO WORK

Respondents to a survey undertaken as part of this planning process confirmed the data and projections derived from U.S. Census data. Burlington residents overwhelmingly use cars to get to work. A limited number of people are making connections to the regional rail system or using buses. Although many Burlington residents work in Town, very few walk or cycle as part of their commute.

## SAFETY

Burlington's street infrastructure does not consistently meet contemporary standards and practices designed to decrease the potential of accidents occurring among vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Deficiencies include the lack of basic lane and intersection markings in some well-traveled corridors, pavement in poor condition, and overgrown vegetation invading sight lines that should be kept open. The crosswalk and sidewalk conditions have few or no provisions for handicapped accessibility in many locations. The Town has not yet taken advantage of advances in signalization and other techniques to slow traffic to manage pedestrian crossings and locations vulnerable to accidents.

## SCHOOL-RELATED TRAFFIC

Like many suburban communities, many vehicular traffic and congestion problems revolve around the Town's schools. Unlike past eras when many students walked or cycled, a substantial proportion of students are driven – or drive themselves – to school. The school's schedule creates a concentration of vehicular activity within a short timeframe.





## MANAGING TRANSPORTATION IN THE FUTURE

### TOWARDS A MULTIMODAL FUTURE

Transportation choices in Burlington should be significantly expanded. Burlington will benefit from more people using public transit. Better marketing and information about the services will help attract ridership. The Town can promote changes in routes, location of stops, and frequency of bus service to add convenience and respond to evolving demand. The public transit system could be significantly supplemented with shuttle services sponsored by Burlington employers and businesses.

Burlington's pedestrian network can be steadily expanded and improved by adding connections and reducing barriers. In the future, residents should be able to walk within their neighborhoods on sidewalks that are linked to nearby destinations and a more extensive sidewalk network. Municipal parks and open spaces with great recreational amenities should connect to this network. In the business and institutional areas, people should be able to walk between clusters of uses and find easy access to the more extensive pedestrian network.

Burlington should become bicycle-friendly. People should have access to safe routes to move between their residences or places for shopping, recreation, work, or other activities. Where practical, on-street bicycle lanes should complement off-street shared paths that link destinations and wind through open space. On-street routes should be recognized and made safer for bicyclists using contemporary best practices.

For those who cannot or prefer not to rely on private vehicle transportation, the additional mode choices via sidewalk and bike lanes provide an additional community asset and increase the quality of life. The convenient availability of alternative transportation modes tends to increase property values as places to live, work, or shop become more accessible. Alternate modes reduce overall environmental impacts and contribute to public health by supporting walking and biking. Over time, expanding alternate transportation modes will reduce automobile dependence and congestion within Burlington.

### CONGESTION VERSUS CONVENIENCE

During peak periods, capacity issues and congestion are likely to persist or worsen on the regional highway network. As highway use increases, Burlington as a business, institutional, and residential location will remain highly favored because of its regional vehicle accessibility. Paradoxically, if regional congestion increases, suburban areas like Burlington that are closest to major interchanges will have increasing competitive advantages to attract businesses, stores, services, or those looking for a place to live.



As the Town plans for the future, Burlington must contend with contradictory attitudes and aspirations about congestion and convenience.

On the one hand, the residents and businesses benefit from their relatively convenient access to the regional roadway network compared to other locations. But the congestion that occurs – most of which is directly related to the activities of the residents, employees, and business patrons who benefit from the relative convenience – reduces the quality of life and wastes time.

Roadway and intersection improvements could reduce congestion. Some residents are concerned that adding capacity will eventually increase traffic demand and even more congestion. This perspective suggests that increased road capacity would result in the attraction of new development. The new development would generate more traffic. Added to the traffic could be increased cut-through traffic from neighboring communities that would take advantage of new roadway improvements. In this view, increasing capacity could be counterproductive.

Burlington should benefit from increasingly coordinated planning, funding, and approvals to target improvements so that traffic flows match desirable development patterns. The vision for the future should reduce congestion but maintain the capacity of the existing street network so that it does not become constrained by desirable uses and investment. Improvements can be undertaken to reduce delays and safety for residents, enhancing the quality of life. Burlington should move to the forefront of contemporary traffic management technologies and practices to improve convenience and then limit the conditions that would result in a return to highly congested conditions.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

**T1. Actively encourage and support multi-modal transportation to reduce traffic congestion and encourage a sustainable, healthy, and livable community.**

The Town should promote modes of transportation that are alternatives to automobiles through proactive marketing and education. For public transit, pedestrian, and bicycle routes, the Town should provide user-friendly information resources and collaborate with advocacy groups to enhance community understanding of the choices available.

**T2. Support and facilitate expanded use of public transit in Burlington.**

Transit ridership can be increased through expanded routes with more stops and more frequent service. Through its operating role for the B Line and its advocacy with the MBTA and LRTA, the Town should seek expanded hours of operation and services that will be more practical and more convenient for bus patrons than other transportation options. Bus stops should have shelters and commuting stops should have convenient parking available.

**T3. Improve the experience and facilities for pedestrians in Burlington.**

To support walking as an alternative to driving, the physical facilities – paths, sidewalks, and crosswalks – need to be available continuously along the routes that people could and would like to use. As Burlington expands and connects segments in the pedestrian network, they should be well-designed to provide for a safe and visibly attractive route accessible by all.

**T4. Improve the experience and facilities for bicyclists in Burlington.**

The future bicycle network in Burlington should have a range of bicycle facilities and improvements corresponding to their intended use and context. This will include both off-street shared paths and on-street lanes and markings. The network should be improved as a series of connected segments passing through developed areas and public open spaces, with bike racks at destinations. The Town network should be linked to nearby regional facilities, including the Minuteman Bikeway and Tri-Community Bikeway.



**T5. Manage traffic demand to reduce congestion and provide alternative modes by promoting private sector solutions and regional coordination.**

The Town should collaborate with the owners of large-scale properties and operations in Burlington to manage traffic and congestion. The Town should establish a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) policy to apply to existing and future developments to manage vehicle flows and parking and provide alternative mode choices. The Town should expand its role and advocacy with existing Transportation Management Associations (TMA's) that support regional traffic management and alternative mode programs.

**T6. Provide for better traffic circulation and a more efficient street network through improvements and traffic management practices that also reduce congestion and improve convenience for the residents of Burlington.**

Congestion in areas of high demand can be improved by accomplishing strategic improvements to the street network and using contemporary technologies to manage traffic flows better. Town-generated street and intersection standards will lead to better design for circulation for all transportation modes. This should include access management planning and improvements to reduce conflicts and concentrations of traffic along major arterials and heavily used corridors. Where capacities should be enhanced to reduce congestion and support desirable development or land use patterns, traffic management practices must also be applied to avoid negative impacts on the residents of Burlington. Traffic circulation and management should also include measures to reduce and redirect cut-through traffic where possible.

**T7. Improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.**

Burlington should institute a systematic approach to identify, prioritize, and implement projects that will correct deficiencies to improve safety by reducing the potential for accidents. The Town can employ traffic calming measures to slow traffic and provide a safer environment for pedestrians and bicyclists in residential and other areas. Safety improvements entail expanding accessible routes for the handicapped and focusing initial changes around schools and frequent crash locations. Over time, Burlington should meet contemporary standards for roadway and intersection safety.



# HOUSING

## EVOLUTION OF A RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY

Burlington has transitioned from an agricultural settlement with little industrial development, to a suburban town with a variety of commercial, residential, and open space areas. This transition occurred relatively recently; Burlington remained a town of 500 to 600 people from its incorporation in 1799 to the years following World War I. A surge in population and industrial growth followed with the completion of MA Route 128 in 1954. Burlington's growth, encouraged by increased automobile use and ownership, rose 650% between the years 1950 and 1974.

Today, Burlington is mostly built-out with over 38% of its land use categorized as residential. The design and layout of Burlington generally reflects its automobile-driven growth, resulting in a network of "loop and lollipop" streets. Over 85% of housing within Burlington was built before 1980. The majority of the housing units in Burlington are single family detached units. Burlington's housing is generally newer than that of the surrounding region (Bedford, Billerica, Lexington, Wilmington, and Woburn). With the greater demand for large modern homes increasing, so too will the trend to teardown and rebuild on existing residential lots.

## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Although Burlington's population is growing and changing, there are very few remaining buildable lots for single family homes. The town has seen a greater rate of population growth in comparison to the surrounding region. Within the surrounding region, Burlington and Lexington have a larger percentage of seniors and the most diverse communities. Burlington's median income reflects a socially diverse community.



## DEMOGRAPHICS

Burlington's population increased seven percent and the median age of its residents rose from 38.3 to 41.6 between 2000 and 2010. This population increase is expected to continue. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) forecasts an eight percent increase between 2010 and 2030 and the Massachusetts State Data Center forecasts as much as a 16% increase during the same period (see *Table H-1*).

The largest population segment within Burlington is people under 19 years of age (approximately 23% of the population).<sup>1</sup> Currently, 30% of Burlington's population is 35 to 54 years of age. These people are in their prime earning years and contribute significantly to the local economy. Seniors, or those people over 65 years, at 18% of the population, are another significant segment. Seniors typically have housing needs that differ from younger populations and desire amenities, such as shuttle service and convenient access to groceries, health care, and community centers. Seniors in Burlington are equally distributed throughout the town, which creates a level of difficulty when serving them.

More diverse than many of the surrounding towns, Burlington is continuing to become a more diverse community. The minority population increased from 14% to 20% between 2000 and 2014, largely due to growth in Asian Indian and Latino populations.<sup>2</sup> Currently 20% of the town's total population are foreign-born residents.

A "household," as defined by the US Census Bureau, is one or more people living in a housing unit. Therefore, "household" can include a variety of living arrangements. Reflecting a national trend, Burlington's households are projected to grow at a larger rate than its population. It is estimated that as the population increases, and the large Millennial generation ages into its thirties, household formation rates will rise in almost all suburbs of the Greater Boston area. MAPC has estimated that the number of households in Burlington will increase by almost 18% from 9,269 in 2010 and 10,933 in 2030.

The town's median household income of \$95,465 (2014\$) is roughly in the middle of those in the surrounding region. Burlington has a broad mix of household sizes, a higher percentage of young households, and more renters, all of which creates a socially diverse community.

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau. "B01001: Age." 2010 – 2014 American Community Survey, and RKG Associates, Inc.

<sup>2</sup> US Census Bureau. "B02001: Race" and "B03002: Hispanic or Latino Origin." 2010 – 2014 American Community Survey, and RKG Associates, Inc.





## AFFORDABILITY

Burlington has two types of affordable housing, affordably priced units and deed restricted units. Affordably priced units, which tend to be older and moderately priced, can help meet the need for affordable housing when the market allows for an affordable price. Affordable units with unrestricted deeds, may be purchased by any household, regardless of income. Deed restricted units are created under Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B, §20-23 (Chapter 40B) to provide for a regionally-fair distribution of affordable housing for people with low- or moderate-incomes. An affordable housing deed restriction limits resale prices and rents for many years, or in perpetuity. Households must meet low- or moderate-income eligibility requirements to purchase or rent these units.

The statewide goal established by Chapter 40B is for a minimum of 10% of the year-round housing units in every city or town to be deed restricted affordable housing. Burlington's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) indicates the town exceeds the 10% minimum by 52 units. *Table H-2* provides the surrounding region's Chapter 40B status.

Although more than 10% of Burlington's housing is deed restricted affordable housing, a significant number of low- and moderate-income households are burdened by the cost of housing. Housing cost burden, the condition in which low- or moderate-income households spend more than 30% of their gross income on housing, is a significant indicator of affordable housing need. Households with severe housing cost burden spend more than 50% of their gross income on housing. Burlington has 2,520 households with low- or moderate-incomes, of which 70% are housing cost burdened, and 42% of which are severely housing cost burdened. About 62% of the town's low- and moderate-income household homeowners are cost burdened, as are over 81% of renters. As presented in *Table H-3*, housing cost burden is not a condition unique to Burlington.





**Table H-1: Population Trends and Projections, Burlington and Surrounding Region**

| Geography         | 2000          | 2010          | 2020          | 2025          | 2030          | 2000-2010<br>Percent<br>Change | 2010-2030<br>Percent<br>Change |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bedford           | 12,595        | 13,320        | 14,680        | 15,248        | 15,856        | 6%                             | 19%                            |
| Billerica         | 38,981        | 40,243        | 42,675        | 42,896        | 42,857        | 3%                             | 6%                             |
| <b>Burlington</b> | <b>22,876</b> | <b>24,498</b> | <b>27,196</b> | <b>27,882</b> | <b>28,512</b> | <b>7%</b>                      | <b>16%</b>                     |
| Lexington         | 30,355        | 31,394        | 33,595        | 34,293        | 35,423        | 3%                             | 13%                            |
| Wilmington        | 21,363        | 22,325        | 23,751        | 24,095        | 24,414        | 5%                             | 9%                             |
| Woburn            | 37,258        | 38,120        | 42,861        | 44,665        | 45,922        | 2%                             | 20%                            |

Source: MAPC Projections, *Metro Boston Population and Housing Data*, UMass Donahue Institute, *Long-term Population Projections for Massachusetts Municipalities*, and RKG Associates, Inc.

**Table H-2: Chapter 40B Status, Burlington and Surrounding Region**

| Geography         | Census 2010<br>Year-round Units | 10 Percent<br>Target | Existing SHI Units | SHI<br>Percent | SHI Gap/<br>Surplus |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Bedford           | 5,322                           | 533                  | 902                | 16.9%          | 369                 |
| Billerica         | 14,442                          | 1,445                | 857                | 5.9%           | -588                |
| <b>Burlington</b> | <b>9,627</b>                    | <b>963</b>           | <b>1,015</b>       | <b>10.5%</b>   | <b>52</b>           |
| Lexington         | 11,946                          | 1,195                | 1,329              | 11.1%          | 134                 |
| Wilmington        | 7,788                           | 779                  | 820                | 10.5%          | 41                  |
| Woburn            | 16,237                          | 1,624                | 1,150              | 7.1%           | -474                |

Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, 2016

**Table H-3: Low- and Moderate-Income Households and Housing Cost Burden**

| Geography         | Low-Income<br>Households | Percent Cost<br>Burdened | Moderate-Income<br>Households | Percent Cost<br>Burdened |
|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Bedford           | 705                      | 86.5%                    | 470                           | 60.6%                    |
| Billerica         | 2,375                    | 74.5%                    | 1,125                         | 63.1%                    |
| <b>Burlington</b> | <b>1,765</b>             | <b>78.9%</b>             | <b>755</b>                    | <b>49.0%</b>             |
| Lexington         | 1,555                    | 84.3%                    | 620                           | 66.9%                    |
| Wilmington        | 950                      | 72.6%                    | 745                           | 39.2%                    |
| Woburn            | 3,725                    | 79.2%                    | 1,775                         | 57.7%                    |

Source: HUD, Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) Data, and RKG Associates, Inc.



## HOUSING STOCK

Burlington's housing inventory is not diverse; the most prevalent units within the town's housing inventory are single-family homes (71% of all housing) and large apartment developments (15% of all housing).<sup>3</sup> The lack of housing type variability and mixed use developments in well-defined areas, such as town centers or villages, sets Burlington apart from much of the surrounding region. While most of the housing in the northern portion of Burlington is single-family homes, multi-family developments are generally located along the MA Route 128 thoroughfare to the south.

Consistent with Burlington's suburban development history and the impact of regional highways, 71% of the town's housing was built after 1960. Housing built since 2000 is generally located near MA Route 128, which seems to reflect the real estate development (or redevelopment) opportunities that were available to investors in this part of Burlington. About 66% of the housing units in Burlington are owner-occupied (and generally found in the northern portions of the town) and 30% are renter-occupied (and generally located in the southern portions of the town), with a vacancy rate of two percent.

As Burlington grew, the size and value of its homes did, too. About 94% of single-family homes within Burlington have three or more bedrooms. As the town's housing stock ages, many homeowners are modernizing and expanding their units, which affects older neighborhoods. Modest ranches and split levels are becoming larger and more valuable as the pre- and postwar neighborhoods of Burlington experience teardown and rebuilding. In 2015, the median sale price for a single-family home was \$451,000.

Condominium developments within Burlington are typically one- or two-bedroom units, and are mostly located near MA Route 128 and commercial areas. Marketed to young professionals, small families, or sometimes as age-restricted housing, the median sale price was \$472,500 in 2015, which is higher than the higher median sale price for single-family homes. This partially reflects the newer age of the condominium units.

Rental housing within Burlington is typically single-family homes or multi-family apartment developments. The average monthly rent in 2015 was \$2,484 for a single-family home and \$2,293 for a multifamily apartment unit. Rent prices for single-family homes increased four percent between 2011 and 2015, which is slower than most of the surrounding region. However, rent prices for multi-family apartments increased 16 percent over the same time. The significant increases were also experienced in the surrounding region, and reflects the increase in new high-end apartment developments.

<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau. "B25024: Units in Structure." 2010 – 2014 American Community Survey, and RKG Associates, Inc.



## TOWARDS INCREASED HOUSING CHOICE

The predominant development style of Burlington's housing is the postwar single-family neighborhood. Subdivisions are typically found within a pattern of curvilinear dead-ends and cul-de-sacs ("loops and lollipops") designed for automobiles. There is a strong delineation between residential and commercial land uses, which encourages automobile use because amenities are not within walking distance of most homes.

During the planning process, many people expressed concern regarding the town's housing for seniors and options for retirees to downsize. Burlington currently has relatively expensive independent living and assisted living residences, and an age-restricted condominium development with fairly high monthly condo fees. It also has public housing for the elderly. While the design standards for subsidized elderly housing have not changed considerably, the lifestyles of downsizing seniors have. In addition, the needs of seniors are not simply limited to housing type. Similar to young householders, seniors need easy access to services and transit options.







Despite this need for increased variety in the town housing stock, development trends in Burlington do not seem to be shifting. For example, between 2012 and 2015, Burlington issued construction permits for 191 units, 187 of which were for single-family homes and three for small multi-family projects. The continued teardown and redevelopment of existing single-family homes and near-absence of other types of housing will make it hard to accommodate a variety of households. The lack of modest single-family properties and multi-family housing at lower price points may limit the town's ability to attract a younger demographic and desired labor force.

Burlington has attracted some large mixed-income apartment developments largely due to the absence of zoning that works for a range of multi-family housing types. Rather than a variety of smaller and mid-size buildings with multiple units, Burlington has attracted high-end townhouses and large footprint, higher-density developments. Redevelopment and infill of non-residential, office, and retail space could create short-term and longer-term housing that attracts young people seeking a walkable environment but in a suburban setting. Small-scale multi-family buildings in the transition areas identified in the *Future Land Use Plan* within the Land Use Element near the town's residential neighborhoods would also help increase housing choices.





Both sale and rental housing prices are prohibitive for many types of households. Although Burlington has an inclusionary zoning (IZ) bylaw which applies to multi-family dwellings, judging from the number of housing cost burdened low-and moderate-income households, it seems that IZ has not been very effective. Demand for rental units means rental developers have seemed willing to make concessions regarding affordable units to obtain permits from cities and towns. While it is harder to develop deed restricted units for sale, Burlington could integrate affordable housing into its neighborhoods either through inclusion of affordable units on site for proposed multi-family developments, or negotiate for off-site units. While the latter strategy is not very efficient, the “one-unit-at-a-time” approach is feasible and would protect the character of existing neighborhoods – a concern for many residents.





## RECOMMENDATIONS

### H1. **Preserve the quality of housing stock in the traditional family-oriented neighborhoods that provide the largest portion of housing in the community.**

The traditional neighborhoods of Burlington are composed largely of single family homes on individual lots. In total, these neighborhoods comprise over 70% of the housing stock in the community. The neighborhood scale and housing stock has served the community well. Over time, this housing will continue to support the family-oriented character of the town by attracting new residents as aging citizens seek alternative housing choices. The Town can reinforce the value and quality of these areas with streetscape and pedestrian enhancements, promoting improvements to nonconforming homes and duplexes, and generally enforcing the Town's rules and regulations in these districts.

### H2. **Diversify the range of housing options in Burlington to better serve the housing needs for different age groups and living circumstances.**

The types of housing provided in Burlington should keep pace with the changing demographics and needs of its residents. Young people cannot readily afford single family homes in Burlington as they were able to in the past because many modest homes are being torn down and rebuilt at a considerably higher price point. As a result, they will need to find places in other communities if they cannot find quality rental units that are also convenient to shopping, services, and transit. Many seniors today seek alternatives to the houses they have lived in as they age. They seek apartment-type housing that is part of a larger community that they enjoy and also has access to shopping, services and transit without long driving distances. The Town should support the addition of smaller-scale infill and senior housing choices. These units should be located in walkable areas close to amenities where they will be compatible with other uses and serve as a transition between single-family and commercial areas of town.

### H3. **Promote housing affordability for those who are part of Burlington's workforce, so that people who work in town can live in town and so that young families are not priced out of the community.**

In the same way that Burlington's business and commercial community should offer jobs that correspond to the range of skills, education, and preferences of its residents, those that work in Burlington should be able to find convenient and appropriately-priced housing that matches their needs within the community.

Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities







# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Burlington has continued to evolve with the changing environments and has had the ability to anticipate the emerging trends to stay ahead of the curve. The capital of Route 128, Burlington's early land use planning after the construction of the highways paved the way for a commercial mix of traditional retail, office and technology.<sup>1</sup>

## THE CONSTRUCTION OF ROUTE 128 AND THE BENEFIT OF LOCATION

New highway infrastructure, including the completion of MA Route 128 in 1954, combined with economic and population increases allowed Americans to move to suburban environments and enabled more industries to establish within Burlington. This quickly transformed Burlington from a quiet village into one of the region's strongest business centers.

The zoning districts introduced in the 1977 Zoning Bylaw helped focus the development and land use patterns, allowing the town to successfully utilize its business network and highway connectivity for economic development. The town benefits from good access to significant educational and healthcare institutions of the greater Boston region. As an "edge city" outside of the urban areas of Boston, Burlington's location at the junction of US Route 3 and MA Route 128 continues to help propel a variety of high quality companies and retail development.

The 1980s and 1990s saw the transformation of trucking terminals on Middlesex Turnpike into retail space, and the Belfram, High Voltage superfund sites and Houghlin Mifflin sites into remediated Class A Office areas, attracting high tech companies of Oracle, Genuity and Nokia. Infrastructure upgrades to the sewer system and careful planning to fend off the "big box" wave of the 1990s were key policy decisions which helped pave the way for the success we have had in the last 20 years. Mixed use neighborhoods predominantly through the use of the Planned Development District Zoning replaced Traditional single-use Euclidean<sup>2</sup> zoning districts over the last 2 decades. Over the past decade Burlington has experienced a steady increase in medical device technology, security software, biotechnology, nanotechnology and advanced material sciences. Mixed-use is multiple functions within the same building or the same general area through superimposition or within the same area through "adjacency..."

<sup>1</sup> Long term corporate residents include Oracle, Lahey Clinic, Sophos, LeMaitre and Nuance to name a few.

<sup>2</sup> Legal Definition of Euclidean zoning: a system of zoning whereby a town or community is divided into areas in which specific uses of land are permitted



from which many of the benefits are... pedestrian activity and traffic capture.”<sup>3</sup> Recent Planned Development Districts have transformed, Northwest Park,<sup>4</sup> Network Drive and The District, formerly New England Executive Park and the previously M/A-COM property. These centers of life have attracted recent newcomers including Keurig, Desktop Metals, Conformis, the Kosta Center for Homeland Security at Northeastern and MilliporeSigma. In addition, existing residents Oracle, Microsoft, Sohpos, Nuance, SAP, DemandWare, LeMaitre and Lahey have all expanded their footprints and modernized their spaces in Burlington. Lahey Hospital & Medical Center recently opened a new \$80 million emergency center on Burlington Mall Road, tripling the size of their emergency department. MilliporeSigma, a German-owned life sciences equipment manufacturer, is building a \$115 million campus to serve as its North American headquarters giving Burlington a dominant presence in the life sciences industry which will attract other companies from the urban core to the suburbs.

**Amenification of Burlington.** In this mixed-use day and age, office uses require amenities, including restaurants, entertainment, hotels, housing and fitness. Burlington has introduced a broad mix of restaurant options for the resident and visitor foodie alike. Island Creek Oyster house, Pressed Cafe, The Brancroft, Redstone Grill, DelFrisco’s, Tuscan Kitchen, Tavern in the Square, Tony C’s, Osteria Nino and Kimball Ice Cream have all opened their doors. Coming soon are Feng Shui, Black and Blue and The Friendly Toast. Two new hotels are under construction: a Residence Marriott Inn in The District, and the Archer Hotel in the 3d Ave portion of Northwest Park. In addition a 130,000 square foot Lifetime Fitness Center is also being built in that mixed-use section of Northwest Park.

Along with a mix of commercial and retail. Northwest Park has completed 180 units of housing with 120 additional units under construction. These units leased at record speed as compared to the region. The addition of housing and other non-office uses has opened up a part of Burlington where residents rarely visited. Today the Northwest Park neighborhood is always bustling, especially around Wegman’s Supermarket (Add picture).

While Burlington has done a good job in some areas of Town to encourage continued investment through regulatory changes, other areas require analysis and potential regulatory changes to ensure their continued viability. The primary focuses are the existing General Business and General Industrial Zoning Districts. These districts do not offer the mix of uses and dimensional standards and use definitions needed to evolve.

<sup>3</sup> As defined by The Lexicon of the New Urbanism <http://www.placemakers.com/2013/04/04/mixed-up-on-mixed-use/>

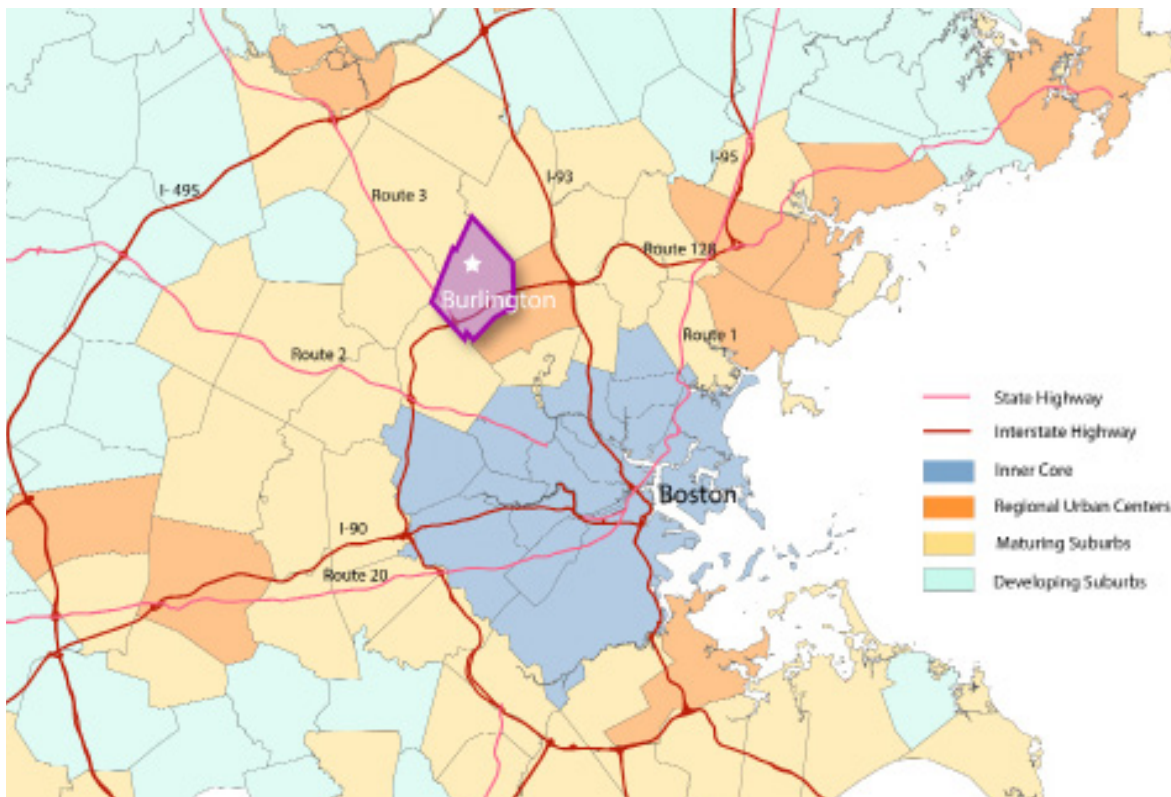
<sup>4</sup> <https://www.3rdaveburlington.com/>



## CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

One of the first technology hubs, and home to a range of local, national, and international businesses, Burlington continues to attract businesses of all types and sizes. In a town of about 25,000 residents, more than 40,000 employees work in a variety of industries. Within the surrounding region (see *Figure E-1*), composed of Bedford, Billerica, Burlington, Lexington, Wilmington, and Woburn, Burlington's businesses account for more than 20 percent of employment.

Figure E-1: Burlington and Surrounding Region





## LOCAL ECONOMY

The 2014 population estimate for Burlington was 25,668, which is 14 percent of the surrounding region's population (see *Table E-1*). The town experienced a population growth rate exceeding seven percent during the period from 2000 to 2010. This was considerably faster than the four percent growth experienced by the surrounding region. Projections of population growth for 2014 to 2019 estimate the town's growth at a five percent rate, while the surrounding area is estimated to grow at a 4.75 percent rate.

Burlington experienced an 11 percent growth in households between 2000 and 2010, which was higher than the household formation rate in almost all suburbs of the Greater Boston area. It is estimated that as the population increases, and the large millennial generation ages into its thirties, household formation rates will rise. Estimates are for a slower rate of household growth between now and 2019, but the rate will still be faster than that of population growth, indicating that household sizes will be smaller than the current estimate of 2.6 for Burlington and 2.7 for the surrounding region.

The estimated 2014 median household incomes for both Burlington and the surrounding region are high at \$92,000 and \$94,000 respectively. Household income distribution shows approximately 11 percent of households have incomes less than \$25,000, and over 22 percent of households have incomes over \$150,000.

Most of Burlington's economic activity is focused along the Middlesex Turnpike, Mall Road, Cambridge Street, and Blanchard Road. The town has a diverse range of industries, including Construction; Healthcare and Social Assistance; Information; Manufacturing; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; and Retail. As presented in the table over 2,600 businesses employ more than 38,000 people in Burlington. The two largest industries, Retail and Information, employ over a third of employees within Burlington.





Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities

Table E-1: Demographic Data Population and Household Projections

|                                     |                |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Population</b>                   |                |
| <b>2000 Census</b>                  | <b>22,962</b>  |
| <b>2010 Census</b>                  | <b>24,585</b>  |
| <b>2017 Estimate</b>                | <b>26,564</b>  |
| <b>2022 Projection</b>              | <b>27,868</b>  |
| <b>Population Growth</b>            |                |
| <b>Percent Change: 2000 to 2010</b> | <b>7.07 %</b>  |
| <b>Percent Change: 2010 to 2017</b> | <b>8.05 %</b>  |
| <b>Percent Change: 2017 to 2022</b> | <b>5.01 %</b>  |
| <b>Households</b>                   |                |
| <b>2000 Census</b>                  | <b>8,331</b>   |
| <b>2010 Census</b>                  | <b>9,308</b>   |
| <b>2017 Estimate</b>                | <b>10,137</b>  |
| <b>2022 Projection</b>              | <b>10,682</b>  |
| <b>Household Growth</b>             |                |
| <b>Percent Change: 2000 to 2010</b> | <b>11.73 %</b> |
| <b>Percent Change: 2010 to 2017</b> | <b>8.91 %</b>  |
| <b>Percent Change: 2017 to 2022</b> | <b>5.38 %</b>  |
| <b>Family Households</b>            |                |
| <b>2000 Census</b>                  | <b>6,388</b>   |
| <b>2010 Census</b>                  | <b>6,678</b>   |
| <b>2017 Estimate</b>                | <b>7,201</b>   |
| <b>2022 Projection</b>              | <b>7,558</b>   |
| <b>Family Household Growth</b>      |                |
| <b>Percent Change: 2000 to 2010</b> | <b>4.48 %</b>  |
| <b>Percent Change: 2010 to 2017</b> | <b>7.88 %</b>  |
| <b>Percent Change: 2017 to 2022</b> | <b>4.97 %</b>  |

*Source: Claritas 2017 Projections and FOM Associates*



Table E-2: Business Profiles

| NAICS | Business Type  | Town of Burlington |           |              | % Burlington |           |              |
|-------|--|--------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
|       |  | Number of          | Employees | Annual Sales | Number of    | Employees | Annual Sales |
| 31-33 | Manufacturing  | 81                 | 2,242     | 412.0        | 13%          | 9%        | 9%           |
| 23    | Construction   | 172                | 1,638     | 537.2        | 15%          | 16%       | 18%          |
| 42    | Wholesale Trade  | 75                 | 842       | 1,467.9      | 12%          | 6%        | 6%           |
| 44-45 | Retail Trade   | 456                | 8,227     | 1,803.9      | 30%          | 34%       | 32%          |
| 441   | Motor Vehicle and Parts Dealers                        | 9                  | 307       | 205.0        | 10%          | 21%       | 30%          |
| 442   | Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores                   | 30                 | 388       | 90.3         | 37%          | 46%       | 44%          |
| 443   | Electronics and Appliance Stores                       | 112                | 2,769     | 595.7        | 33%          | 37%       | 38%          |
| 444   | Building Material and Garden Equipment and Supplies    | 22                 | 151       | 42.8         | 13%          | 7%        | 8%           |
| 445   | Food and Beverage Stores                               | 34                 | 806       | 195.1        | 24%          | 23%       | 22%          |
| 446   | Health and Personal Care Stores                        | 36                 | 307       | 70.5         | 29%          | 28%       | 21%          |
| 447   | Gasoline Stations                                      | 9                  | 41        | 25.5         | 16%          | 16%       | 16%          |
| 448   | Clothing and Accessories Stores                        | 120                | 1,744     | 243.2        | 65%          | 67%       | 79%          |
| 451   | Sporting Goods, Hobby, Musical Instrument, Book Stores | 30                 | 438       | 68.3         | 34%          | 50%       | 50%          |
| 452   | General Merchandise Stores                             | 11                 | 899       | 193.0        | 28%          | 48%       | 48%          |
| 453   | Miscellaneous Store Retailers                          | 35                 | 347       | 57.7         | 19%          | 27%       | 26%          |
| 454   | Nonstore Retailers                                     | 8                  | 35        | 16.8         | 16%          | 4%        | 11%          |
| 48-49 | Transportation and Warehousing                         | 24                 | 298       | 23.5         | 9%           | 6%        | 3%           |
| 51    | Information**  | 78                 | 4,780     | 1,352.8      | 30%          | 60%       | 60%          |
| 52    | Finance and Insurance**                                | 165                | 1,218     | 441.9        | 23%          | 28%       | 31%          |
| 53    | Real Estate and Rental and Leasing**                   | 99                 | 746       | 174.6        | 21%          | 17%       | 18%          |
| 54    | Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services**     | 273                | 4,018     | 525.2        | 19%          | 19%       | 23%          |
| 55    | Management of Companies and Enterprises**              | 1                  | 4         | 4            | 10%          | 5%        | 6%           |
| 56    | Admin and Support and Waste Mgmt and Remm Services**   | 140                | 4,237     | 307.0        | 22%          | 43%       | 30%          |
| 61    | Educational Services                                   | 45                 | 951       | 29.4         | 18%          | 12%       | 47%          |
| 62    | Healthcare and Social Assistance                       | 718                | 3,265     | 405.6        | 37%          | 20%       | 23%          |
| 71    | Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation                    | 17                 | 800       | 4.7          | 10%          | 34%       | 4%           |
| 72    | Accommodation and Food Services                        | 120                | 3,433     | 225.7        | 23%          | 35%       | 34%          |
| 81    | Other Services (except Public Administration)          | 156                | 1,421     | 126.1        | 15%          | 22%       | 30%          |
| 92    | Public Administration                                  | 29                 | 286       | 0            | 21%          | 12%       |              |
| Total |  | 2,658              | 38,406    | 7,841.6      | 22%          | 22%       | 15%          |

\*Burlington plus Bedford, Billerica, Lexington, Wilmington, Woburn

\*\* Office-using sectors

Source: The Nielsen Company, Census Bureau's 2014 and FIRM Associates

## REGIONAL ROLE

As shown in *Table E-2*, Burlington accounts for 22 percent of the surrounding region's total employment and 15 percent of its annual sales. Burlington has a higher proportion of business activity in certain sectors in comparison to the surrounding region, which indicates that they are larger than average contributors to Burlington employment and sales. For example, Burlington has over a third of the surrounding region's Retail activity and, within Retail, over three-fourths of the annual sales of Clothing and Accessories Stores in the surrounding region. The Information sector is an even more important component of the Burlington economy, employing 60 percent of the sector's employees in the surrounding region and accounting for 60 percent of the sector's annual sales. Educational Services, while not a major employer in Burlington, account for almost half of total Educational Services sales in the surrounding region. Finally, Accommodation and Food Services in Burlington employ over a third of the surrounding region's employees in this sector and account for over a third of the region's sales.



## REAL ESTATE, DEVELOPMENT, AND THE TAX BASE

Younger households are more likely to rent housing compared to older households. Projections for the rental housing market in the Burlington market area (defined as the area within a 20-minute drive time of Burlington). However, over the next five years the greatest growth in households for all income categories is estimated to be in the age 55 to 74 cohort, while the age 25 to 34 category would actually lose households, and the age 45 to 54 would make relatively small gains.

Slightly before the housing bubble burst the tax ratio between residential and commercial was for the first time close to 50/50, down from an average ratio of 40% residential 60% commercial. Though development and growth lagged slightly through the Great Recession, development and redevelopment permit applications held steady in Burlington due to the diverse mix of industry. . During this time, Burlington undertook a major public private planning effort to rezone key areas of Town to ensure future viability for redevelopment in the future. The planning during this time has resulted in a rebalancing of the 40/60 revenue split through all of the economic success in areas such as Northwest Park, the District and the Keurig headquarters today.

Property tax policy is one means by which communities can encourage or discourage commercial and residential growth. Burlington's ratio of 1.69 times as many jobs as people enables the Town to derive a high proportion of property taxes from commercial uses (60 percent compared to a 25 percent statewide average) and contributes to the relatively low residential tax rate. Among the surrounding regional towns, Burlington is the most dependent on the property tax for its revenue. However, the 60 percent contribution of commercial users to property taxes is the highest among surrounding towns, and the 40 percent derived from residential property taxes is the lowest. Its commercial tax rate is the third lowest of the surrounding region and the residential rate the second lowest.

Almost all rentable building construction from 2011 through 2014 in the surrounding region was located in Burlington. Office space is especially important to Burlington's employment and tax base, accounting for approximately 40 percent of jobs and 61 percent of commercial space town wide. According to projections based on 10-year historical trends, office-using industries are expected to account for more than 90 percent of employment growth and space demand over the next five years in Burlington and Middlesex County.



## COMPONENTS OF FUTURE ECONOMIC SUCCESS FOR THE TOWN

The town's industries are projected to grow from over 38,000 employees in 2014 to over 45,000 by 2020, for a growth rate of 17 percent, compared to a projected growth rate of three percent in Middlesex County. As displayed in *Table E-3*, industries anticipated to experience the most growth are Information (projected to increase 73 percent), Administrative Services (projected to increase 35 percent), and Accommodation and Food Services and Other Services (excluding public) (each projected to increase 19 percent). Of the growth sectors shown, Office-using industries are projected to account for the largest growth in employment between 2013 and 2020, as well as the highest average annual wage.

Much of the demand for office space has been, and will continue to be, growth in the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry, where companies compete sharply for labor. Regulatory changes should be considered to ensure that uses and definitions align with modern industry and technology uses and space demands. This desired labor force increasingly demands work environments that include opportunities to walk to restaurants, to access recreation opportunities outside the office, and to live near where they work. This live-work-play consideration is expected to become increasingly relevant for suburban communities like Burlington as more Millennials consider housing options. Burlington is well positioned for motorists, however not well served by alternative transit options. The Town should continue to explore options, such as transportation management associations, private shuttles as well as develop better walking and bicycling infrastructure to allow for people without access to a vehicle to travel to work.

While Burlington is well positioned within a variety of industries, continued growth and economic development depend on the Town's ability to incorporate this live-work-play concept into commercial corridors and districts. Throughout the MA Route 128 and Interstate 495 suburbs there are examples of major mixed use repositioning and new construction projects designed to attract young professionals and others who want a more walkable environment. The Town should consider zoning changes to enable developers to provide housing and retail/restaurant space as part of new construction projects and the rehabilitation of existing office park properties. For example, the nearby city Waltham was a pioneer in this regard dating to its Cronin's Landing major mixed-use project in the late 1990s. The city worked closely with the developer of the high density, 281-unit, mixed-use project throughout the zoning and planning process.





Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities

Table E-3: Projected Employment, Growth Industries in Burlington, 2013-2020

|  | Projected<br>Growth<br>2013-2020 | Number of<br>New Jobs<br>2013-2020 | Average<br>Annual Wage<br>in 2013 |
|--|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Office-Using Industries:                         |                                  |                                    |                                   |
| Information                                      | 73%                              | 4,000-4,700                        | \$ 119,000                        |
| Finance and Insurance                            | 12%                              | 150-370                            | \$ 100,000                        |
| Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services | 17%                              | 1,000-1,600                        | \$ 121,000                        |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises          | 15%                              | 80-90                              | \$ 138,000                        |
| Administrative Services                          | 35%                              | 1,000-1,500                        | \$ 44,000                         |
| <i>All Office (Using net of losses)</i>          | 38%                              | 6,240-8,260                        | \$ 107,000                        |
| Health and Social Assistance                     | 11%                              | 130-160                            | \$ 51,000                         |
| Accommodation and Food Services                  | 15%                              | 500-590                            | \$ 21,000                         |
| Other Services (excl public)                     | 19%                              | 130-240                            | \$ 34,000                         |

Sources: Mass Department of Labor & Workforce Development, ES202 data series, US Department of Commerce, Regional Economic Information System (REIS), and EXM Associates



Burlington office park. Source: Jennifer Davis



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- E1. Support the ability of Burlington's enterprises and institutions to adapt to changing market and service conditions, and maintain Burlington's status as a regional leader in the commercial, retail, and health sectors.**

The businesses and enterprises in Burlington must adapt to rapidly changing market and economic conditions to remain competitive. This will entail changing the Town's regulatory framework to broaden the range of uses and the way they are accommodated within buildings and sites. Burlington's business community must offer their employees and customers high-quality environments that provide more mixed-use environments that offer a range of places to "work, play, and live." The competitive business environments must provide additional amenities, flexibility, efficiency, and convenience than are typical of aging and outmoded suburban development and use patterns. This recommendation includes active support and promotion of small and entrepreneurial businesses and enterprises that employ the full range of skills and capabilities in Burlington's population that is part of the workforce.

- E2. Promote town-oriented businesses that provide services, employment, and market opportunities for small enterprises.**

The economy of Burlington includes the direct and indirect benefits and opportunities provided by services and businesses that serve the local market. These will primarily be in areas closely associated with the residential districts of town and in the Town Center, as described in the *Land Use* and *Town Center Elements* of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*. These enterprises can be supported through regulatory changes, infrastructure, and transportation enhancements, and strengthening the business environment by providing information to owners and promoting local businesses.

- E3. Encourage new investment in targeted areas of Burlington.**

By providing coordinated municipal regulations, programs, and investments, Burlington should attract and support significant reinvestment in existing, developed areas that are identified within the Land Use Element. This should include providing a regulatory environment that promotes a clear and predictable review and approval process for those types of projects and related improvements that it seeks. This process should provide for mitigation of potential impacts in concert with the Town's overall economic development and land use intent.



- E4. Support a high quality of life for the workforce in Burlington, including highly compensated employment opportunities, so that it is increasingly competitive in attracting and retaining the human resources vital to economic success.**

In today's competitive market, the success of businesses and institutions is directly related to their ability to attract and retain a highly skilled workforce. Employers are choosing locations or making improvements to their own facilities so that they offer amenities, services, recreation, and convenient access to housing. The Town should contribute to these changing needs through modification of its regulatory framework, expansion of transportation choices, and access to open space amenities. The availability of a diverse range of restaurants and food-related businesses is an important dimension of this trend, and should be actively encouraged by the Town.

- E5. Provide conditions to support market entry and incubation of new businesses.**

New small businesses provide an important and highly desirable dimension to Burlington's economic life. Burlington should preserve and promote conditions that support the success of new and small business enterprises. These include regulatory steps to preserve and expand the supply of relatively inexpensive spaces that can be adapted to innovative uses and operations, as long as they are compatible with the neighboring sites and nearby uses.

- E6. Promote locally-available education and training programs that serve businesses, institutions, and the workforce in Burlington.**

Both the workforce and the employers of Burlington need convenient access to ongoing education and training to keep pace with technology and the expanding access to information. Burlington can be an active supporter of business and professional programs and venues that provide education and training within the community. This can include coordination among its own school programs, the Massachusetts community college and higher education network, and other regional associations and institutions.



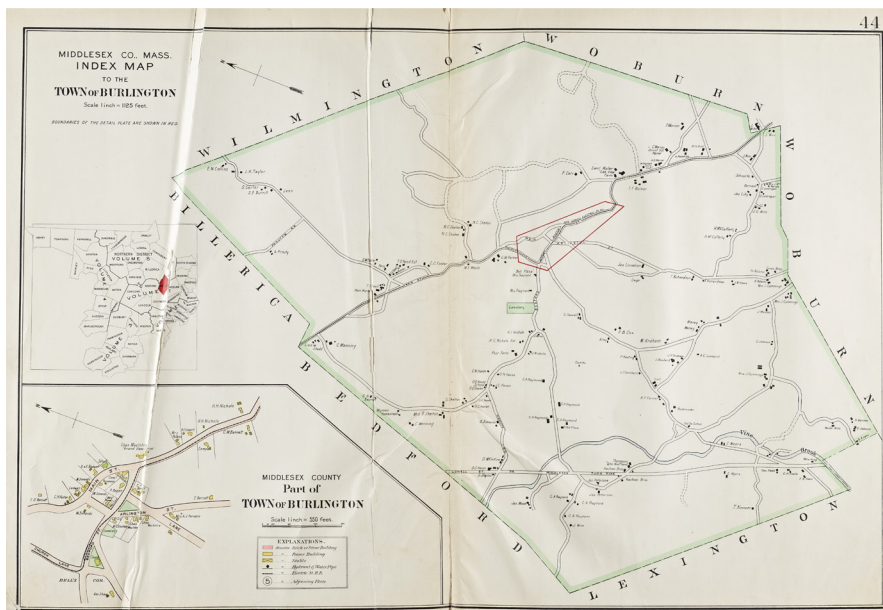




# NATURAL + CULTURAL RESOURCES

## RURAL ROOTS

The area that is now the town of Burlington has historically been agricultural. In the mid-1600s, the town's area was a portion of a grant known as Charlestown Village. Colonists from the Massachusetts Bay Colony established farmsteads in the hills throughout the area, and the abundant natural resources and topography of the land have been critical for the town's farming success. Following a few changes in governance, Burlington incorporated as an independent town in 1799. Throughout the industrial revolution, the geography of the town restricted most industrial uses, and the landscape continued to be used primarily for farming. The agricultural nature of the town and its open landscape remained until the 1950s when the network of roadways stimulated new industrial and residential development.



### Town of Burlington, 1906

Source: Massachusetts State Library, Atlas of Middlesex County, Massachusetts, Volume 2, published by Geo. H. Walker & Co., 1906



Burlington's rather recent transition from agricultural community to suburban town means large open spaces exist for recreation and natural resource protection. Lands unsuitable for farming were relatively untouched throughout the town's history. Most of the agricultural lands, which had been cleared of trees for farming, were eventually sold for residential and commercial development.

Protection of environmentally-sensitive areas did not occur until the mid-1900s. The town's Conservation Commission was founded in 1966 "for the promotion and development of natural resources and for the protection of watershed resources" and was given responsibility for administering the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act in 1972. Today, the Conservation Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and associated Bylaws; manages permanently protected Conservation Areas; and promotes environmentally-conscious residential, commercial, and industrial practices.





## RESOURCES TODAY

As Burlington developed and land use changes occurred, its natural environment has been noticeably changed. Agricultural use, urbanization, and development have resulted in alterations to the town's natural resources. The preservation and enrichment of its remaining resources is critical to maintain wildlife habitat, resource protection, and recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

Through efforts of the town and local associations, cultural and historical assets continue to be protected. The Town and local historical organizations have worked to preserve a variety of buildings and sites throughout Burlington.

### Natural Resources: Burlington's Environment

Burlington's hilly suburban character is a part of the Boston Basin Ecoregion. The flat areas within its rolling topography were once tilled for the numerous farms throughout the community, but are now mostly suburban developments.

The largest pond within Burlington, Mill Pond Reservoir, is the primary source of the town's water supply. This off-stream storage pond contains approximately 513 million gallons of water within a surface area of 64 acres. Its water originates in the Shawsheen River, approximately six miles north, with diversions during high flow stages of up to eight million gallons per day. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection's (MassDEP's) Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report for Mill Pond Reservoir noted that it is moderately susceptible to contamination, based on threats posed by nearby land uses.

Groundwater provides the remainder of the town's water supply through seven wells. The SWAP Report determined these wells have a relatively high susceptibility rating for contamination. This is due to the high threat land uses within the wells' water supply protection areas. For example, a small portion of the Middlesex Turnpike and a small portion of a commercial parking lot are within the water supply protection areas for two wells.

Smaller ponds, such as Butterfield Pond, are located along Vine Brook. There are also smaller retention ponds located in developed areas, such as Beacon Village and Seven Springs Apartments.

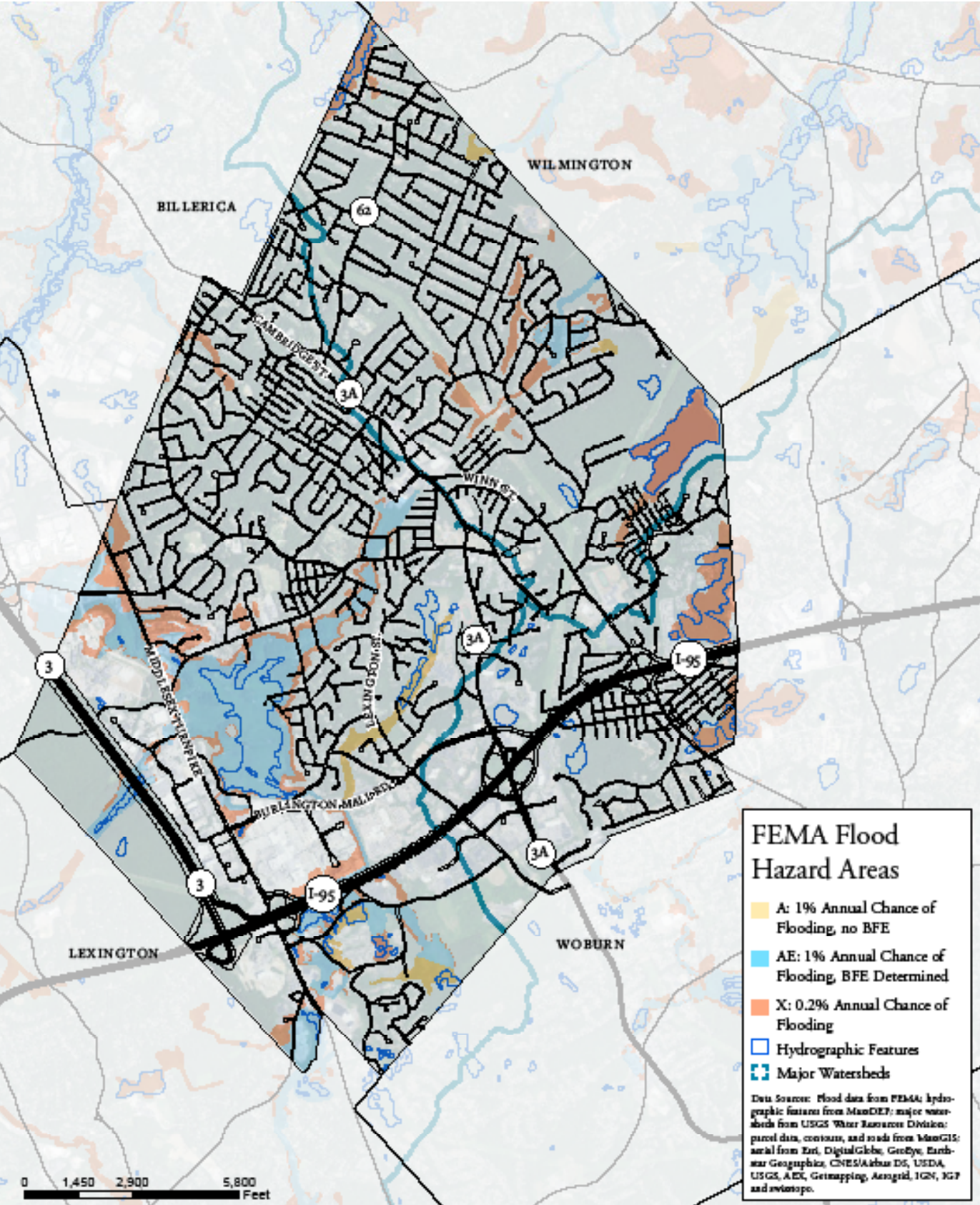


Mill Pond Reservoir

Photography by KarwanPhotos



Figure NC-1: Burlington FEMA Flood Hazard Areas





Burlington is within three watersheds:

- **Shawsheen River Watershed.** At approximately 78 square miles, this watershed is one of the smaller watersheds in the state. Through land generally urban in character, the Shawsheen River flows 25 miles from its headwaters in Bedford to its confluence with the Merrimack River in Lawrence.
- **Ipswich River Watershed.** This watershed encompasses approximately 155 square miles. The Ipswich River begins in the northeast corner of Burlington, flows through a variety of land uses, eventually ending at Plum Island Sound in Ipswich.
- **Mystic River Watershed.** This watershed covers approximately 76 square miles. The headwaters form at the Aberjona River in Reading, and then flow through suburban and urban land before emptying into the Boston Harbor.

Current regulations limit future development, but previous development along these waterways and affiliated wetlands has created flooding and pollution concerns. Within Burlington, inland wetlands, like streams, brooks, swamps and vernal pools, are areas where water is at or just below the surface of the ground. Burlington has 17 vernal pools that have been certified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and 30 potential vernal pools. These pools are small, seasonal wetlands that provide important wildlife habitat; they are best known for the amphibians and invertebrate animals that use them to breed.

As noted in Figure NC-1, there are several areas the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has identified within the town as likely to flood during various flood events. Areas along Vine, Sandy, and Long Meadow Brooks, and near Seven Spring Apartments were categorized as Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs), which are areas that will be inundated by a 100-year flood, defined as floods that have a one percent chance of being equaled or exceeded in any given. Areas near the Arboretum development and Mill Pond Reservoir were identified as moderate flood hazard areas, which are between the limits of the base flood and the 500-year flood (0.2 percent annual chance flood).





The primary habitat areas within Burlington are the Mill Pond Conservation Area, Mary Cummings Park/City of Boston Property, and the Landlocked Forest. These largely forested areas are mostly secondary succession forest, with a few pockets of mature forests.

The few wildlife corridors between habitat areas in Burlington are largely unprotected. Both Mary Cummings Park/City of Boston Property and the Landlocked Forest are, however, adjacent to land protected by Woburn and Lexington, respectively. The power line corridors owned or restricted by Eversource are the most extensive within the town. Though they are not managed for wildlife, they provide a somewhat natural connection between habitat areas in a mostly undeveloped environment.



**Eastern Box Turtle**

Photography by Liz Willey  
Source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program



**Oak Hairstreak**

Photography by JM. W. Nelson  
Source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program



**Variable Sedge**

Photography by Jennifer Garrett, NHESP  
Source: Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program



## The Cultural Opportunities in Burlington

Opportunities within Burlington include historic resources like districts, buildings, and sites, art in a variety of media, such as visual, musical, and performance, and all types of museums. During the planning process, community residents noted they value a variety of cultural resources, such as Concerts on the Common, the Burlington Players, and community celebrations. Many of these resources cross between private, nonprofit, and public sectors.

Historical preservation efforts by the Town—also valued by community residents—include the purchase of Marion Tavern/Grandview Farm and the West School. In addition to the Town's efforts, the citizen-composed Burlington Historical Society, initially incorporated in 1964, works towards the restoration and protection of local historic structures and areas. Burlington has several historic areas that are integral to the overall character of the town, including:

- **Town Common.** The historical and cultural heart of the town encompasses both the Town Common and Simonds Park. Numerous 18th, 19th, and early 20th century wood frame buildings in a variety of styles are found near this area, including Marion Tavern and the Woburn Second Parish Meeting House.
- **Center School/Burlington Historical Museum.** Built in 1855 and used as the grammar school until 1897, it was turned into and then functioned as, the public library until 1969. Recently restored, it now serves as the Historical Museum and contains many historical artifacts.
- **Francis Wyman House.** Built in 1666 to serve as a garrison house to which farmers in the vicinity could flee in case of Indian attacks, the Francis Wyman House is one of the three oldest homes in Massachusetts. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- **General John Walker House.** Built in 1780 and owned by General John Walker, one of the people who convinced the General Court in 1799 to allow Burlington to incorporate as a separate town.
- **Isaiah Reed House.** Built in the mid-1700s and purchased by Isaiah Reed in 1850, Reed heirs continue to reside in this historic home. The wood-framed buildings and detached barn are located at the site of a watering station along a street that was used for more than 100 years prior to the American Revolution by farmers travelling to produce markets in Boston.
- **John Wynn House.** Also known as the Hens and Chickens Tavern, this farmstead and Colonial tavern was built in the 1730s. It is Burlington's only 18th century Georgian Gambrel mansion.



- **Marion Tavern/Grandview Farm.** The original house was built in 1770 and connected to the property next door in 1840, this is Burlington's only surviving 19th century connected-farm complex. The five main structures are a series of connected houses and barns.
- **Old Burying Ground.** Land given to the Woburn Second Parish (predecessor of Burlington) for use as a burial ground in 1769. With some gravestones dating back to 1736, it contains some of the oldest gravestones in the area. The stone wall that runs the length of the front of the cemetery was funded in part by the estate of Ruth Wilson, who died in 1871.
- **West School.** Built in 1794, this one-room schoolhouse served as one of five schoolhouses until 1898. Originally located where Simonds Park is today, it was moved to its current location in 1839. It was acquired by the Town, and completely restored in the 1990s through the efforts of the Burlington Historical Society.
- **Woburn Second Parish Meeting House.** Built in 1732, and the only place of worship in the town for 206 years. On the National Register of Historic places, it is now occupied by the United Church of Christ.



**Francis Wyman House.**

Source: John Phelan



Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
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Town Center

Services +  
Facilities

The Town Common and Simonds Park are home to several cultural events throughout the year. The Burlington Parks and Recreation Department holds community-building events such as concerts, children's shows, and family movies throughout the summer and the Winter Carnival. Annual events such as Celebrate Burlington, Truck Day, and the Christmas Tree Lighting are also open to the public and held at the Common. Many residents participate in the annual Fourth of July festivities, which include a parade on Cambridge Street from Terry Avenue to the Town Common. All community groups, clubs, and organizations are invited to participate in the parade by marching, entering a float or vehicle, sponsoring, or volunteering.

A variety of community organizations and groups, such as the Burlington Area Chamber of Commerce, the Last Word Toastmasters Club, and the Burlington Quilters Guild host public meetings and events throughout the year. The Burlington Players, an adult, all-volunteer theater group, presents several productions during their performance season. The Burlington Players also run the Children's Theater Workshop for children in grades 1 through 7, with classes and workshops culminating in a springtime production.



**Burlington Minuteman in the 2014 Fourth of July Parade.**

Source: Burlington 4th of July Parade Committee





Burlington Cable Access Television (BCAT), a nonprofit television facility formed in 1987, provides community organizations access to equipment to enable the creation of community programming that is unique and locally relevant. Staff also produce BNEWS Weekly, a weekly newscast regarding events and issues of community importance. The BCAT website hosts a community calendar with upcoming and ongoing community events, such as events at the Burlington Public Library or at local businesses.

The Burlington Cultural Council (BCC) supports community-based projects and activities in the arts, humanities, and interpretive sciences. The volunteers who manage the BCC are appointed by the Select Board to administer public funds allocated by the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Past projects that have received funding include theater and musical productions, school activities, and historical preservation efforts.

## **ENRICHING THE TOWN'S RESOURCES**

Natural and cultural resources help preserve, protect, and enhance a community's character and quality of life. The historic and cultural assets tell the story of Burlington, and celebrate the town and what makes it unique. The continuing work of Town staff and citizen volunteers of protecting and preserving the community's natural resources is evidence of the value residents place on these resources. The participation of residents in the protection and enhancement of cultural resources enables the enhancement of the visual and cultural qualities of the community. The Town could increase funding for open space and historic preservation and protection by adopting the Community Preservation Act.



## Enhancing and Protecting the Natural Environment

Burlington can preserve the integrity of its natural resources while enhancing social and environmental benefits. For example, the town could protect a variety of natural resources by preparing to avoid and mitigate the effects of extreme weather events. The impacts of such events can cause large areas of flooding, overwhelm stormwater management systems, and/or cause wind damage. Local planning can build on the Conservation Commission's role in protecting wetlands to encourage natural resource protection.

The Conservation Commission could coordinate educating residents about the unique and interesting features of Burlington's environment. For example, they could inform residents about the town's natural resources and invasive plants, and best management practices related to invasive plants, such as removal, management, and restoration. The Town could develop an invasive species management plan that identifies priorities and recommendations for best management practices, and conservation permits could include requirements for invasive species management.

To protect mature trees on residential and commercial lots and ensure the adequate replacement of trees with development or redevelopment, the Town could create a Tree Protection Bylaw that sets minimum standards for tree replacement and ensures the protection of mature trees whenever possible. To create corridors to connect wildlife habitats, the Town could identify parcels that would create or contribute to these corridors and secure conservation restrictions or prioritize the acquisition of these parcels.

Many properties along wetlands and near waterways were built prior to current regulations that limited development in these areas. This development has created flooding and pollution concerns. The Town could support the use of low impact development (LID), the design and implementation of site-level practices to control stormwater and replicate the natural hydrologic character of the site (for example, through stormwater regulations that prioritize natural stormwater control and groundwater recharge).



### **Supporting a Diverse Cultural Life**

Like natural resources, historic and cultural assets contribute to a community's character, enhance the quality of life for residents, and create a unique environment for visitors. Various opportunities exist within the town, but they are not always organized or highly visible. Increased advertisement and cooperation with local organizations would spread awareness of the resources available to the public.

The Town could coordinate with local organizations to educate residents about the town's history and related sites. For example, to celebrate and highlight Burlington's history, the Town could hire a stagecoach for Burlington Day or other celebrations. In addition, the Heritage Trail, which was developed by the Burlington Historical Commission, could be expanded with the creation of a self-guided tour of key historical routes through town. The Town and historic-related organizations could create awareness of existing historic resources and buildings through advertisements and informational signage. The Town could work with advocates and historic-related organizations to identify further assets for preservation and protection, such as buildings and sites from the 1800s and early 1900s, or sites of Native American heritage.

Local planning can encourage landmark features that reflect elements of the town's history and character, such as stone walls or hip roofs, by ensuring they are incorporated into future developments and redevelopment. Such features would contribute to local identity.

To identify creative and cultural resources, the Town, including the Economic Development Office, could work with the BCC to conduct a Cultural Inventory that includes local artists, creative companies, cultural institutions, and non-profit organizations. The Town could create additional opportunities for community and public art through a Utility Box Mural Program, installations of crosswalk murals, or pop-up parks. Such community projects would engage the community and local artists and create public art at locations throughout the town. The Town and the BCC could work with the Burlington Players to fully understand their needs and assist with securing a permanent location for their operations.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### NC 1. Protect the town's clean water through actions and regulations that address both the groundwater and watershed resources.

Burlington is dependent on a clean water supply provided through the combination of the Mill Pond Reservoir and wells. The Town should continue to protect and enhance this municipal resource through measures focused on stormwater and groundwater management that would reduce the potential for contamination and provide for reliable supplies. This could be accomplished through coordination of development regulations and infrastructure projects that apply Low Impact Development (LID) and stormwater Best Management Practices in regards to water quality protection.

### NC 2. Plan for additional resiliency in areas that will likely be affected by flooding resulting from extreme weather and storm events in the future.

Many areas in town are located along wetlands and waterways that are subject to flooding; long-term projections suggest that the severity and frequency of flooding may increase over time. Renovations of existing and construction of new infrastructure and development should be designed to anticipate future flood events to limit potential damage to properties, roads, and utilities.

### NC 3. Protect and enhance the natural habitats and ecological systems within Burlington.

The Town's land management regulations and practices should be coordinated to protect and extend natural corridors. Expanded corridors offer increased habitats and conditions that support a diverse, rich ecosystem of plants and wildlife. The Town should coordinate the acquisition and preservation of open space and wildlife corridors that may be preserved or added within existing and new development. As a primary steward of the town's natural environment, the Town should use the guidance in the *Open Space and Recreation Element* of this plan to distinguish between public open space that is devoted primarily for recreation, and areas that should have limited access and use. Town regulations should guide new development so that it employs landscaping and site design practices that purposefully create new habitats and contribute to a diverse, sustainable natural environment. These measures should be accompanied with information and interpretive programs to support citizen's understanding and appreciation of Burlington's exceptional assets.

### NC 4. Preserve and interpret the Town's historic resources as a link to its heritage and as part of the community's identity.

The town will benefit from the preservation – and celebration – of the historic buildings and places that link the community to the rural and village-centered character that preceded, and stands in contrast with, the more contemporary development of Burlington. In part, this can be accomplished through programs and incentives to retain

Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities





and restore historic buildings. The Town should also work with the advocates and organizations devoted to the town's heritage to provide interpretation, information, and programs to convey the value of the past.

**NC 5. Actively support the creative economy in Burlington and promote the related contributions of individuals, businesses, and organizations.**

The creative economy is composed of those who provide services and products oriented towards the aesthetic and intellectual engagement of their clients. This segment of Burlington's economy would benefit through Town-supported programs that identify and promote creative businesses and individuals. This should include creating or co-sponsoring projects such as a Cultural Inventory with on-line information and links. This recommendation can be accomplished through proactive projects or support that might include special website and media outlets, displays, lectures, open houses, forums, and fairs held in the Town's public buildings and places.

**NC 6. Engage the community in a variety of accessible cultural events and programs through imaginative promotions, sponsorship, and support.**

The Town should be an active organizer and partner in the cultural life of Burlington. The Town should assemble a Public Arts Plan through a collaborative enterprise that engages arts-oriented organizations such as the Burlington Cultural Council and the Burlington Players. The Plan should set the stage for temporary and permanent public arts projects that are integrated into the design and implementation of public open space, streetscape, and municipal facilities. The Plan should provide a framework for events, information, promotion, and engagement. The Plan should establish the stewardship role and responsibilities within the Town as it determines the quantity, quality, and types of projects that the Town should promote, provide, and fund.

**NC 7. Make art a visible dimension of Burlington's townscape.**

The artistic and cultural dimensions of the community should be visibly expressed as part of the townscape of Burlington. Implementing its Public Arts Plan, artistic expressions should punctuate the experience of those moving through Burlington and visiting its civic destinations. The selection and placement should include temporary and seasonal components, as well as permanent installations that are integrated into the Town's historic interpretations, sidewalks and streetscapes, and public buildings.



# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

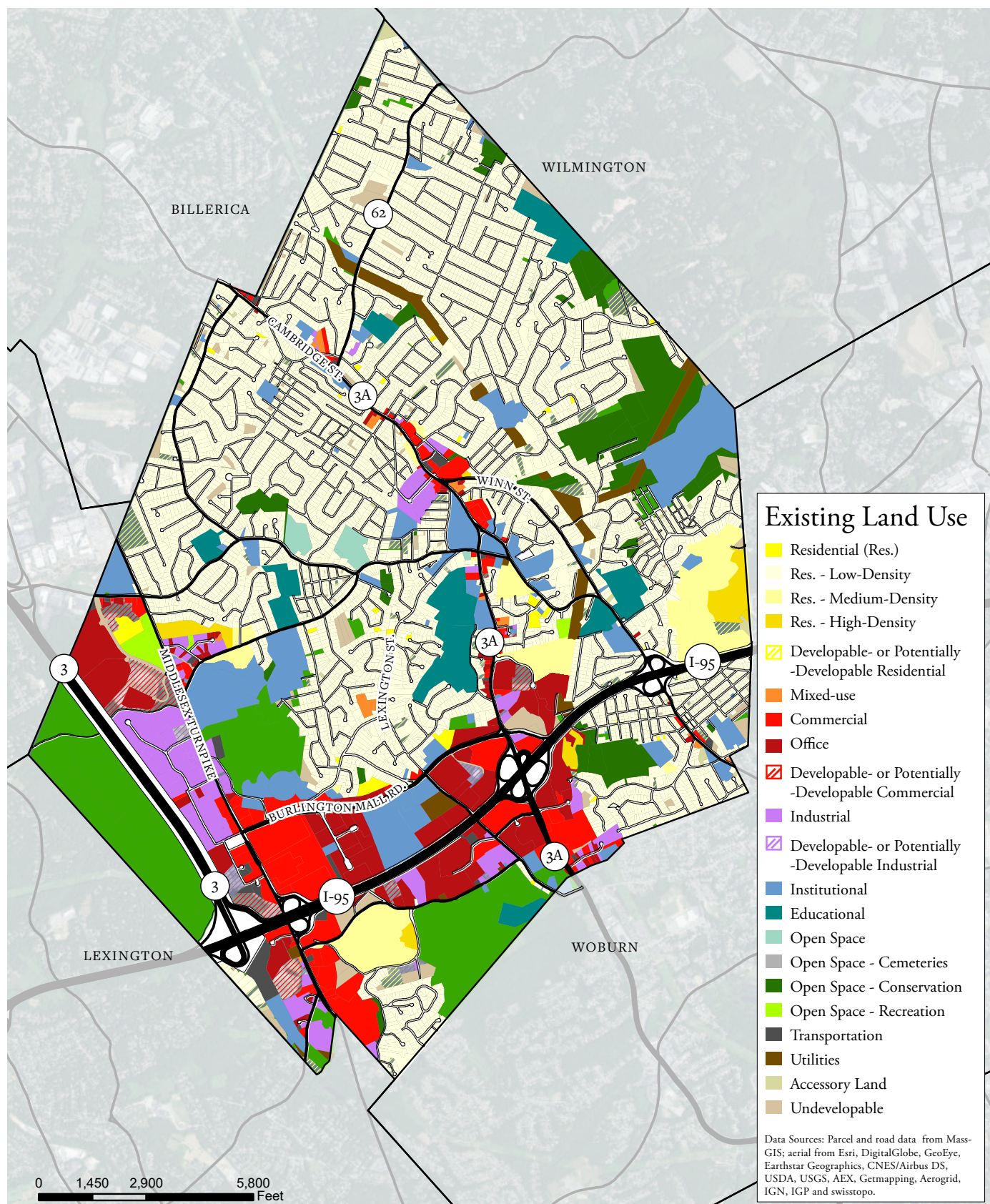
## OPEN SPACE HERITAGE OF A SUBURBAN COMMUNITY

Burlington's heritage as an agricultural community can be traced back to its founding as a farming enclave in the mid-1600s. While the community's governance shifted from a parish to an independent town in 1799, its agricultural basis remained constant. This agricultural landscape persisted until the first half of the 20th century when networks of highways and roadways traced their way to the town, better connecting it to Boston and the region. The most significant of these roadways was the widening of MA Route 128 in the 1950s. This newly constructed limited-access highway provided Burlington with quick access from all over the state, ultimately resulting in considerable residential and industrial growth. Farmland was sold off for development of residential subdivisions, office buildings, and retail centers. In the ten years between 1955 and 1965, Burlington was recorded as the fastest growing residential community in the state. Subdivisions added half-acre lots with ranch houses and split levels in areas that were once farmland. Large technology firms, many with military contracts, built sprawling business parks that attracted employees from all over the region.

Today, Burlington is known for its regional shopping and entertainment destinations, importance as a regional employer, and as a middle-to-upper income, residential commuter community. While most of the farmland is gone, the few large tracts of land and homesteads that remain reflect the town's open space heritage and are a result of protection efforts that were implemented in the latter half of the 20th century. Burlington's current open space speaks to its rural roots and commitment to sustainability for all those that live in and come to Burlington.



Figure OS-1: Existing Land Use Map







## OUTDOOR SPACES AND INDOOR RECREATION TODAY

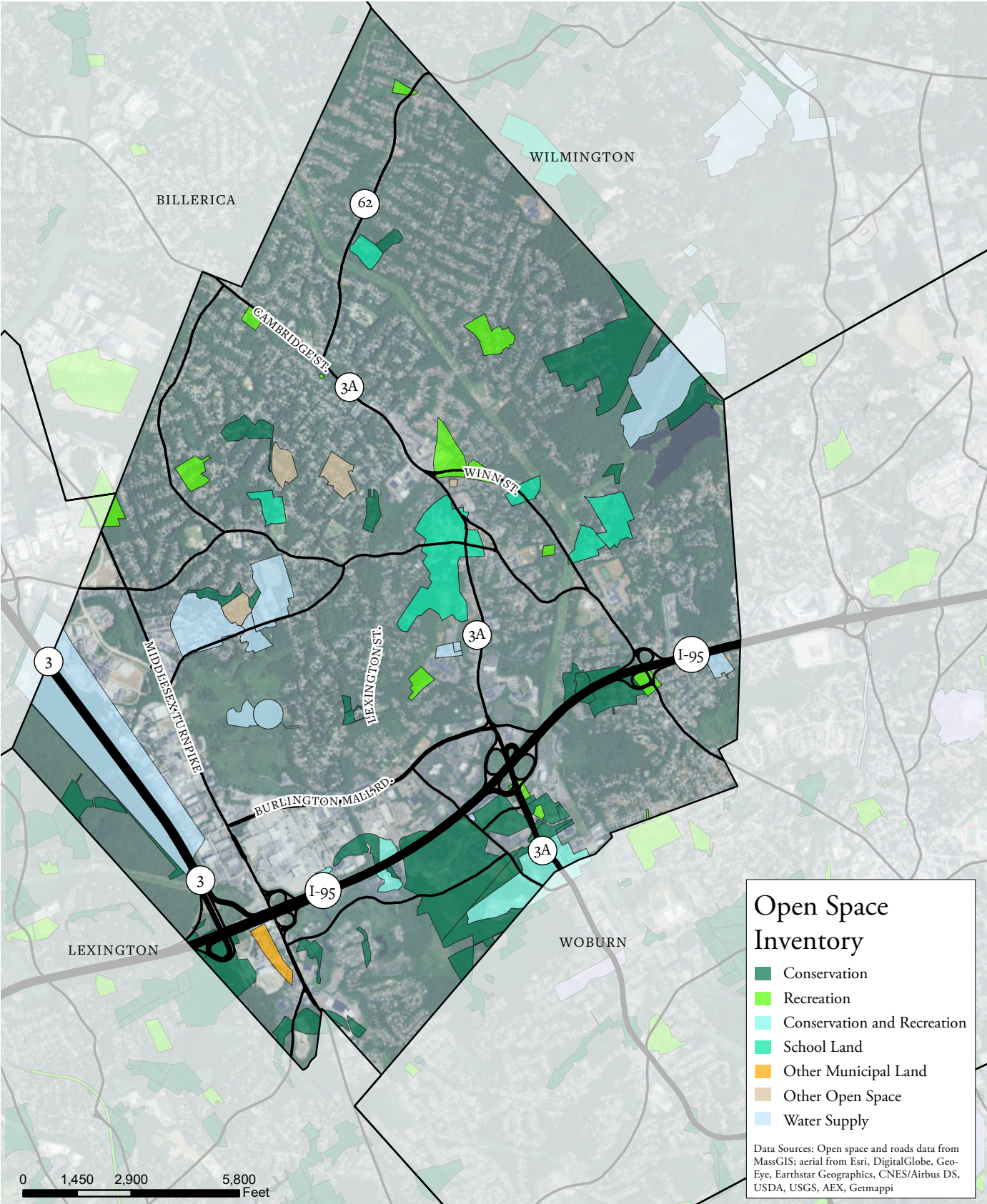
Burlington, as it stands today, is in the latter stages of the suburban development life cycle with little developable land left leaving the land use pattern relatively stable. Developed land and open space (*Figure OS-1*) depicts Burlington's development pattern of non-residential uses clustered along major vehicular routes, while open space and recreation-oriented land is often competing with residential land uses. The limited amount of vacant land is seen in gray.

This balance between the two is tenuous, however, as the pressures of development weigh on the existing land use patterns. With Burlington recently increasing its supply of multi-family living opportunities, residents are often looking for more organized recreational facilities and increased access to open space. The open space and recreation facilities in Burlington are being challenged on many fronts to provide more benefit to more people, within the same regulatory and ownership controls.

These trends have reminded citizens that these resources are finite prompting the creation of private citizen groups to act as stewards of these areas of open space. The formation of these groups is a clear indication that residents have placed an equal value on different types of open space recreational-type areas, open space areas, and natural resource areas while working to meet future demands of a changing demographic.



Figure OS-2 - Open Space Inventory Map







## OPEN SPACE AND PARKS

The social strength of a community is often dependent on equal distribution and access to the services it provides. Availability and use of land dedicated to conservation and to recreation are also essential. Proximity, availability of, and access to open space and recreational resources are known to positively affect sociological well-being. Members of the community should have equal access to a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities. The Town has worked extensively to provide a variety of options as the community's open spaces and recreational facilities are well distributed throughout the town.

### Open Space

Burlington is gifted with a significant amount of open space resources, each holding varying degrees of protection from development with the majority protected through either deed restrictions or Article 97. These lands are primarily controlled by the Town's Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, or Water Department.

At its essence, open space is any parcel or area of land or water, unimproved and set aside, dedicated, designated or reserved for public used and enjoyment.<sup>1</sup> These natural spaces are important resources for conservation, recreation, and agriculture that are truly an invaluable and irreplaceable community resource that bring environmental, social and economic benefits to a community.

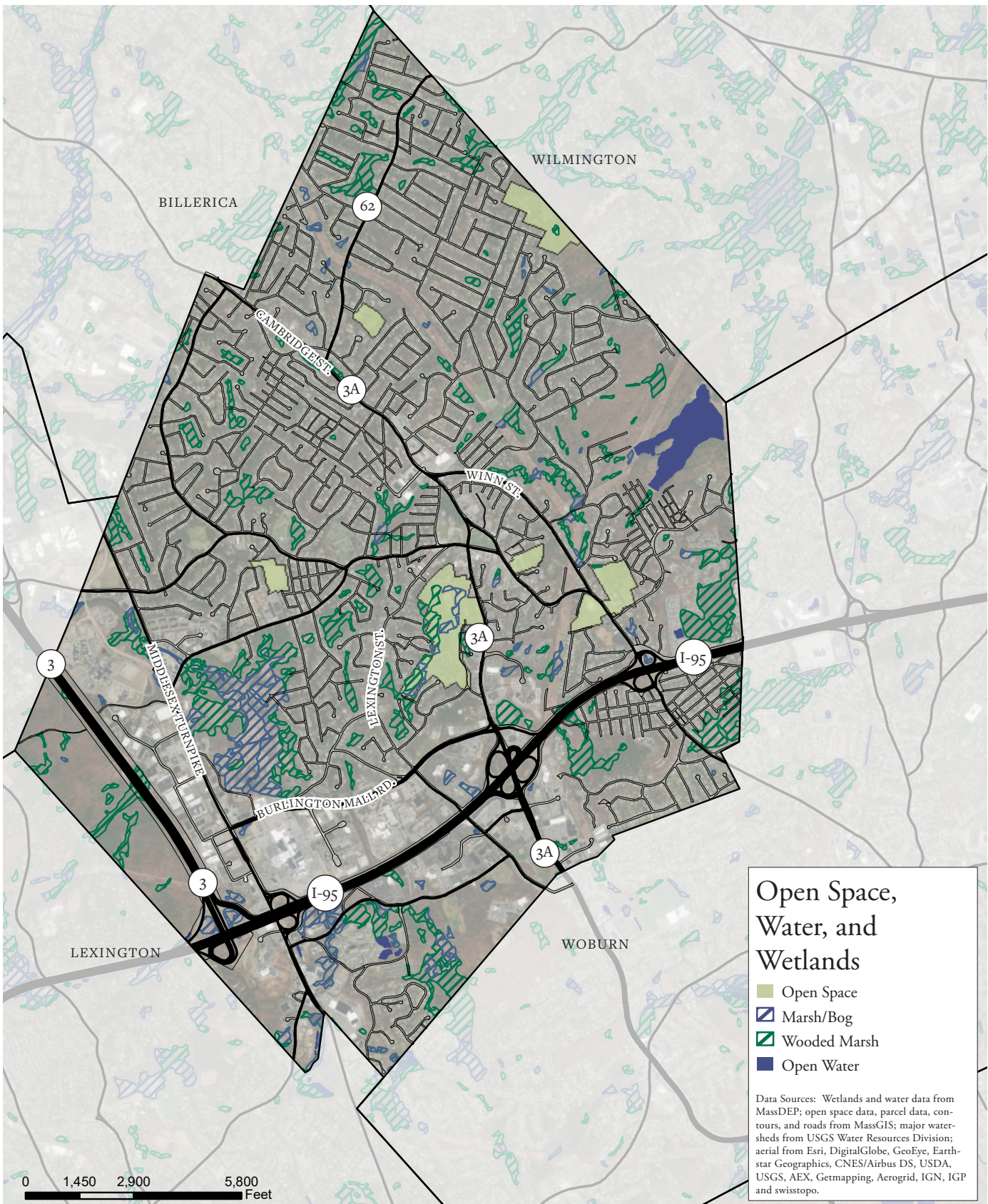
<sup>1</sup> Moskowitz, Harvey S., et al. The complete illustrated book of development definitions. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2015.



Band Pavilion in Town Common



Figure OS-3 - Open Space, Wetlands, and Topography







Notable properties of substantial size consist of the Landlocked Forest, Vine Brook Wellfields, Mill Pond, and the Town Common, all of which are owned by the Town. Other than the City of Boston's Mary Cummings Park, there are no open space parcels owned by state or federal governments, or non-profit organizations.

These properties mainly consist of second-growth forests with a few open clearings. For a town that was once covered with open farmland, very little remains. The largest of these is the 270-acre Landlocked Forest, which was rezoned to protected Open Space in 2016. Other large woodlands in town consists of the 140-acre Mill Pond Conservation Area which protects a portion of the town's drinking water supply and provides a circumferential walking path that is popular with dog owners as well as the 36-acre Little Brook, and 27-acre Sawmill Conservation Area. Both areas contain marked trails and are preserved under Massachusetts State Law Article 27. The town is also fortunate to have access to Mary Cummings Park, a two hundred acre public park on the Burlington-Woburn border owned by the City of Boston from land donated to the city in 1930 by Mary P. C. Cummings. An active trail network and athletic fields are the main draws to this natural preserve. The one remaining agricultural property is located at 82 Lexington Street. Pero Farm is a seven-acre parcel classified under MA State Law Chapter 61A (Agriculture) designed to encourage the preservation of the Commonwealth's valuable farmland and promote active agricultural and horticultural land use. The law provides significant tax benefits to the property owners but also provides the town with the right of first refusal should the property be put on the market.

Nearly one-tenth of Burlington is covered in wetlands. Until a few decades ago, wetlands were considered a nuisance to development and as a result, many suffered from degradation and elimination. In the early 1960s, the value of wetlands were finally realized as an important ecological asset for flood reduction, mitigation of pollutants and as vital wildlife habitats. In 1972, Massachusetts adopted the Wetlands Protection Act (Massachusetts General Law



Recreation fields at Simonds Park



Chapter 131, §40) to regulate work in and around wetlands. Burlington has also adopted their own local regulations and bylaws to ensure the continued health of the Town's wetlands. The largest of these areas is the well fields around Vine Brook (see *Figure OS-3*).

## Parks

Burlington has set aside 112.3 acres of land on 13 parcels for parks that are primarily located within the town's residential neighborhoods. The majority of these areas provide some type of play structure as well as athletic fields.

The National Recreation and Parks Association has a classification system for parks based on property characteristics. For example, "Tot Lot" describes a very small park with a playground for children twelve years old and younger. "Neighborhood parks" have some mix of active and passive uses, such as playgrounds, basketball courts, small playing fields, lawn areas and sitting areas, which serve residents within a half-mile radius. "Community Park" designates those that contain a mix of active and passive uses that are larger and draw users from a







broader area through community programs and civic activities. Burlington has a number of Tot Lots, most of which are located at the town's public schools. Only two in the system are designated neighborhood parks. Overlook Park is 20-acres in size and situated on top of a hill. It has only one sports court but is home to the Burlington Players, a non-profit theater company, and the Parks and Recreation Department maintenance garage.

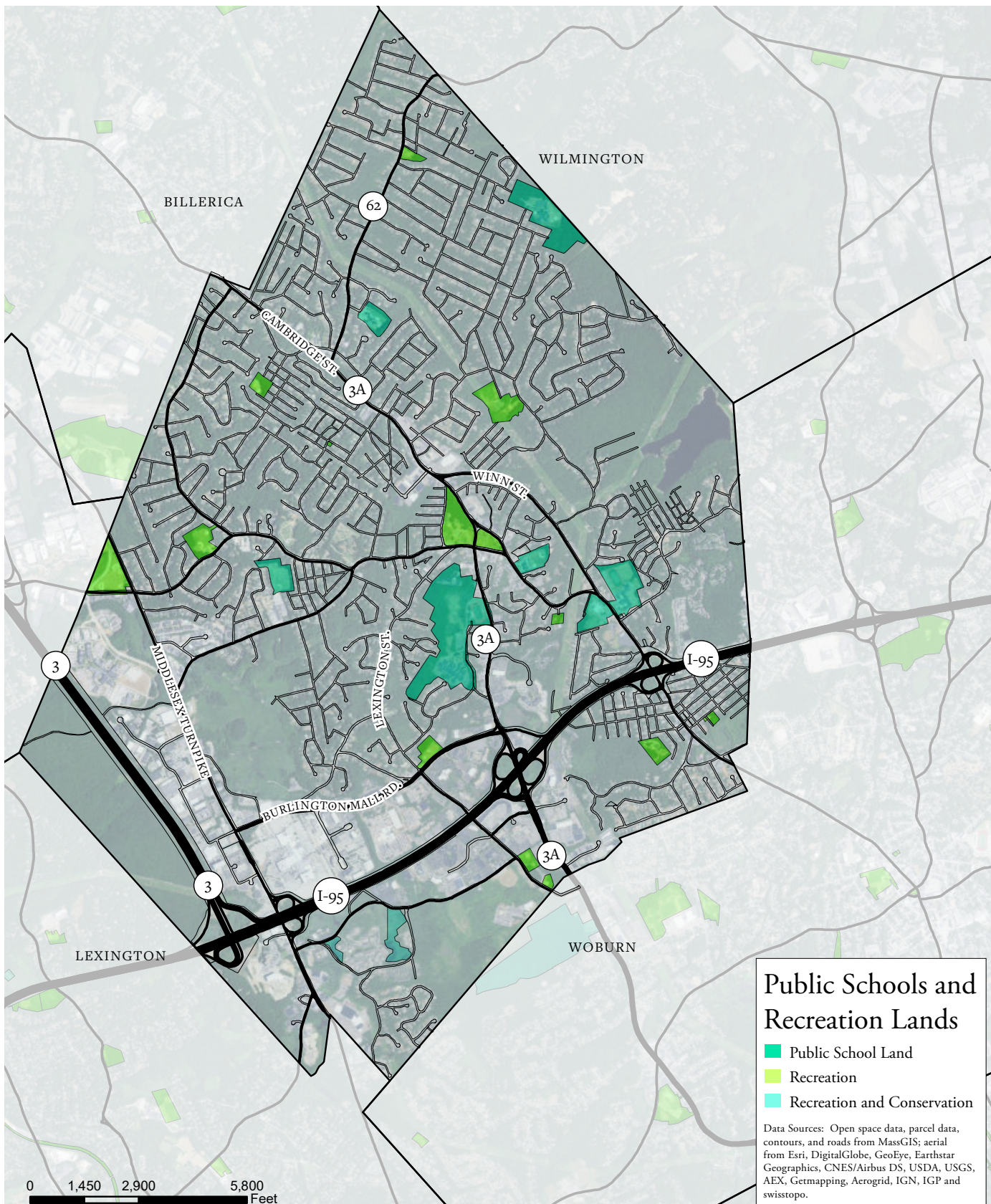
**Table OS-1 Names and Land Area of Recreation Resources**

| Facility              | Acres | Uses   |
|-----------------------|-------|--|
| Human Services Center | 10.0  | Multi-purpose field, playground  |
| Marvin Field          | 4.5   | Athletic field   |
| Mitre Corporation     | 5.0   | Athletic fields, Multi-purpose field   |
| Overlook Park         | 20.0  | Sports court, playground   |
| Pathwoods Tot Lot     | 0.5   | Sports court, playground   |
| Rahanis Park          | 15.0  | Athletic fields, sports courts, playground, picnic area, restrooms             |
| Regan Park            | 6.0   | Athletic fields, sports courts, playground                                     |
| Rotary Field          | 1.7   | Athletic field   |
| Simonds Park          | 22.0  | Athletic fields, sports courts, playground, skate park, concessions, restrooms |
| TRW Park              | 7.0   | Athletic fields, playground, walking path                                      |
| Veterans Park         | 5.5   | Athletic fields, sports court, playground                                      |
| Wildmere Park         | 3.0   | Sports court, playground   |
| Wildwood Park         | 12.1  | Athletic fields, sports courts, playground, picnic area, walking path          |
| Total                 | 112.3 |  |

Source: Burlington Planning Office, 2017

The largest and most popular park is the 22-acre Simonds Park property located in the center of town near the Common. This park is used for a variety of larger-sized recreational activities and community-oriented events sometimes in conjunction with the Town Common. Athletic fields, sports courts, a playground, skate park, and a wading pool all support active recreation.

**Figure OS-5 Buildings, Parcels, Parks, Open Space and Schools**





## RECREATION PROGRAMMING AND FACILITIES

Burlington has an established Parks and Recreation Department as well as a network of recreation areas that are popular with town residents and visitors. This network includes numerous playgrounds, athletic fields, a recreation center, community gardens, and some walking trails within parks. The Town supports this network with year-round programming that structures and manages the activities desired by residents when using the various recreation-based facilities.

### Programs

Burlington's Parks and Recreation Department, overseen by an elected Recreation Commission, manages over 362 programs and special events each year. Programs exist for all ages and abilities and include sports programs, music and visual arts, life skills, workshops and trips and tours.

The Parks and Recreation Department has played an important role in the Town's provision of recreation-based resources to its community and is popular with Burlington residents, many of whom participate in the extensive programs offered. This popularity and participation has placed a greater demand on the Department to develop more recreation facilities and provide additional programs for preschoolers, senior residents, and expand its Therapeutic Recreation programs.

### Facilities

Playgrounds and athletic fields are integral components of the overall recreation program a community offers its residents. Some of Burlington's playgrounds are located on school properties. Besides the school's population, the surrounding neighborhood residents also use these playgrounds. Many of the school facilities, as well as neighborhood parks, also integrate playing fields.

The Human Services Building, at 61 Center Street, houses the Parks and Recreation Department and acts as the Town's Recreation Center. The facility features outdoor and indoor spaces for programs, and is available to community groups on a space-available basis. There is a major league baseball diamond, adult softball field, multi-purpose field and bocce courts located outside and a gymnasium, function rooms and a ceramics room inside. This facility is also shared with the Council on Aging, which also provides programming for senior citizens. The Parks and Recreation Department provides year-round youth programming. From a summer program at Simonds Park, to youth yoga, computer programming, robotics and more, there is no shortage of activities for the youth of Burlington.





The Francis Wyman Elementary School is home to a community garden with leased plots for Burlington residents, a school garden for students at Francis Wyman Elementary School and a volunteer garden where the produce is donated to People Helping People, Inc., a community food pantry. There has been discussion about expanding the community gardens to address the garden space needs of the growing Burlington population living in apartments, condominiums, public housing, and assisted living facilities.

Trails within Burlington's open space resources typically take the form of multi-use pathways that can be used for walking, running, bicycling, and other activities. The Mill Pond Conservation Area is the largest and most visited conservation area for passive recreation in the town. The 140-acre property surrounds the Mill Pond Reservoir and offers scenic vistas along the numerous trails that meander through woodlands and wetlands. Pine Glen Conservation area also has well-maintained trails and is used by the nearby Pine Glen Elementary School for environmental education in the conservation area.

## **ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION**

The town's system of parks and recreation areas provide a variety of social gathering spaces for a variety of activities. Burlington should continue to preserve and enhance its open space and recreation resources. Together, these resources represent a substantial proportion of land, which demonstrates the value residents place on this community asset. These spaces provide a natural means to protect the community from storm events, guard environmentally sensitive areas from degradation, and maintain wildlife habitat that can be enjoyed by the entire community.

### **Improving Open Space**

While increasing the amount of open space in Burlington will be challenging going forward, it is a worthy pursuit given all the benefits that parks and open space provide. The Town should explore opportunities beyond land acquisition to increase its open space inventory. One example is reclaiming landscape at roadway intersections and streetscape improvements that would provide traffic calming. These improvements should be integrated into the town's roadway design guidelines. Additional opportunities could include pocket parks with small sitting areas or passive-use spaces.

Burlington should encourage incremental modification of its commercial and industrial lands to provide support for a broader range of open space sizes and locations. Land devoted to





surface parking and aging buildings can be reconfigured through redevelopment to provide a better allocation and orientation of green space and improve pedestrian connections.

As Burlington continues to manage development pressures, the next stages of land use changes in the town will need to provide even greater clarity of both expectations and outcomes. Regulatory and bylaw changes will need to provide greater opportunities to address on-going and anticipated open space and recreation needs. Balancing the need for additional open space and recreational amenities, while allowing development to occur, is and will continue to be a challenge for the town going forward. It is important for Burlington to maintain a healthy balance of both.

### Expanding Recreational Choices

Burlington already has a very robust and popular Parks and Recreation Department with a forward-looking capital plan for maintenance and programming, but improvements should always be considered. A facilities master plan developed for the Parks and Recreation Department would help establish an understanding of the population's needs. Such a plan would also develop the sequence, timeline, and costs of maintenance and renovation to the Town's recreation resources. Such a plan could provide inventory of desired locations and areas for access to existing and future recreational areas. This would involve working with utility entities, developers, and private landowners to provide land or easements. Burlington



Community gardens at Francis Wyman Elementary School.



Information board at the trailhead in Mary Cummings Park.



is active in the stewardship of its recreational resources. Additional funding will be required to expand this effort. The Town's adoption of the Community Preservation Act will provide an additional source of revenue for some of the initiatives required to improve the recreational resources Burlington provides now, and will need to provide in the future.



Landlocked Forest





## RECOMMENDATIONS

### OS1. Increase annual spending on stewardship of existing land and acquisition of new lands.

The Town should adopt the Community Preservation Act, create public/private partnerships, update the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and coordinate with organizations such as The Trust for Public Land for funding that would be used to acquire and maintain lands for conservation and recreation purposes.

### OS2. Improve access to and connections between open space and recreation resources for all citizens and visitors.

Establish greenway corridors to connect and guide users to the Town's open space and recreation resources. Construct wayfinding systems to better identify and delineate these routes. Encourage and invest in multi-modal transit infrastructure to provide greater accessibility to destinations near or at open space and recreation resource areas.

### OS3. Actively manage, maintain, and expand open space and recreation facilities.

Identify parcels of land, such as the area along Vine Brook that, if acquired, would significantly contribute to the Town's open space inventory. Prioritize, and where possible, acquire such lands. Expand regulatory controls that allow the Town to accept land donations or acquisitions.

### OS4. Improve awareness and use of open space lands and recreation resources.

Provide and promote additional programs, activities, and events at Town-owned facilities. Encourage more of such actions on privately owned land.

### OS5. Increase recreation-oriented uses and facilities.

Improve access to outdoor recreation facilities, increase awareness of and programming at indoor facilities, and implement renovations at both outdoor and indoor facilities.

### OS6. Promote the protection of wildlife habitat, woodlands, and water resource areas.

Review zoning bylaws to determine if open space provisions are sufficient. Wherever possible, acquire lands abutting streams and wetlands.

### OS7. Connect Burlington's diverse and dynamic public spaces and programs to create, inspire, and uphold inclusive social interaction.

Coordinate efforts to connect public spaces with other organizations and initiatives, such as the Historic Society and Department of Public Works roadway improvements, to ensure private and public efforts reach the greatest number of citizens.

Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities







# TOWN CENTER

## ORIGINS OF A CROSSROADS COMMUNITY

Burlington evolved as a dispersed agricultural community along the roads that connected it to surrounding communities. Clusters of homes, shops, and civic uses eventually merged at several crossroads. With a scattered population of only about 600 people, according to the 1885 Census, the Town had two small villages. One of them, located on The Great Road (to Lowell), which eventually became Cambridge Street, has become the Town Center area as it is recognized today.

As the town grew, it began to assemble the components of a more traditional center. The Town Government gathered several parcels, removed buildings in the triangle framed by the three intersecting streets, and converted the area into a park.



Town Commons 1973, Courtesy of the Burlington Archives, No. 81



The former Simonds farm and its land adjacent to the Town Common was willed to the Town in 1905. The land was converted into the large park, Simonds Park, that begins at the Common and follows the hillside along Cambridge Street as it leads north from the Town Center.

Like so many other parts of Burlington, the conversion of the Town Center to its current form coincided with the suburban expansion era of the 1950s and 1960s.

A Town Hall was added on its current site, facing the Common, as part of a municipal campus that included the Library and Fire Station. Other business and residential uses eventually gathered around the Common, serving the growing suburban population.

Meanwhile, down the hill from the Common, retail and commercial development filled the large sites that were carved out of the former agricultural lands. Development patterns were distinctly auto-oriented, catering to the suburban clientele. Multiple stores, shops, restaurants, and consumer services were built on flat parcels at the bottom of the Cambridge Street hill, about a half mile from the center of the Common. A small industrial and business park filled low land along Terry Avenue, also at the base of the hill.

## THE CENTER OF BURLINGTON TODAY

Burlington's center is composed of geographically separated clusters of uses, instead of the compact, traditional urban fabric typical of other New England communities. There are two major clusters – the civic-oriented area at the top of the hill, and a mixed-use commercial district at the bottom of the hill.

Cambridge Street connects the high point of the Common to the commercial clusters below. Simonds Park borders Cambridge Street to the west, and a cluster of retail and commercial uses that occupies the hillside parcels to the east.



Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities

Figure TC-1: Town Center Planning Area







## THE COMMONS AREA

The Common and the Town's municipal and civic campus dominate the high ground. The extended campus includes the Town Hall, Town Offices, the Public Library, Fire Station, Police Department, and Town recreation fields, set along an attractive landscaped park setting. A recent addition to this is the renovated Grand View Farm along the Center Street approach to the Common. The Town acquired this rare, intact 19th century connected farm complex and has converted into a meeting and event venue. The area remains an important crossroads within Burlington, accommodating significant traffic flows through the intersections of Cambridge, Bedford, and Center Streets.

A mixture of commercial uses, multi-family housing and the Post Office occupy sites along the approaches to the Common. Each of these developments has been designed and configured as stand-alone projects, with limited relationship to one another. The resulting development pattern results in limited foot traffic and activity along the street edges. However, there is a network of sidewalks along the main streets that include connecting sidewalks to the new uses that have been added to the Town Center during the last few years.







## THE COMMERCIAL CENTER

The largest cluster of businesses that serve residents in town is located along the east side of Cambridge Street between Winn Street and Nelson Road. Sidewalks and crosswalks support pedestrian traffic, flanked on both sides by shops and commercial uses along the ground level. However, Cambridge Street is a major arterial roadway; not a traditional “Main Street.” In addition, the development along Cambridge Street is not traditional either, with shops, stores, and restaurants clustered on one side of the street only. Although there are pockets of multi-family and commercial buildings on the western side of the Cambridge Street, this side of the street is bordered by single family neighborhoods. The central segments of Cambridge Street are also much wider than is typical of “Main Street” environments. These segments have been expanded to accommodate traffic that flows through this area, with broad intersections and left-hand turn channels to manage traffic.

Parcels and blocks bordering the east side of Cambridge Street are predominately occupied by convenience retailers, restaurants, and consumer-related services geared to local residents, such as banks. Many of the sites have been developed as auto-oriented “strip commercial” developments, with multi-tenant buildings lining shared parking lots. Other sites have been developed as stand-alone retail establishments, each with their own parking areas. Some sites provide landscaping and sidewalks linked to other parcels, but most of the buildings and





parking areas are isolated from one another. As it is the case on the west side of Cambridge Street, single-family homes are located directly behind commercial and industrial parcels.

The land along Terry Avenue composes a specialized commercial subarea uncharacteristic of traditional Town Center type uses. A variety of light industrial and commercial businesses occupy the area. They have been constructed on parcels that are filled by one story buildings and the parking and loading areas that serve them. Landscaped front yards and a sidewalk along the south side of Terry Avenue contribute to the overall appearance of the area.

### **CAMBRIDGE STREET AND THE HILL**

Cambridge Street is the primary connection between the Commercial Center and the Common (Civic Center) area on the hillside that separates them. Wooded edges of Simonds Park flank the western edge of this Cambridge Street segment. Upland portions of the Park have been graded and terraced to create an array of athletic fields and recreation facilities within an open landscape that extends along Church Lane, Bedford Street and towards the Common. The eastern flank of Cambridge Street is the focus of a significant mixed-use redevelopment, including a more attractive and pedestrian-friendly orientation towards Cambridge Street with parking confined to a central court.





## GEOGRAPHY, IDENTITY, AND SCALE

The center of Burlington is more geographically attenuated and dispersed than traditional town centers. Successful mixed-use town centers offer a compact dense arrangement of buildings, streets, and places that support convenient pedestrian connections. The land area devoted to a traditional town center is typically contained within an area described by a quarter-mile radius. The average person can reach any destination within such a center in about ten minutes. Simple diagrams are useful to convey the planning implications. When drawing a quarter-mile radius around the middle of town centers, like Concord or Lexington, the core of the civic and commercial areas typically fit within this scale and are then bordered by residential neighborhoods. Applying the same scale to Burlington reveals that there are two distinct areas that have the size of traditional, walkable centers – the area around the Common and the commercial center to the north. From one end to the other, these areas span nearly a mile. As a result, the identity of Burlington’s “town center” is somewhat amorphous, because it is too extended and dispersed to provide the type of compact, walkable district associated with conventional planning models.

The topography of the terrain contributes to separate the Commercial Center from the Common (Civic Center) areas, both visually and functionally. There is no direct visual contact between the two areas. This underscores the important role that Cambridge Street plays as a connector, which could be enhanced through future streetscape and pedestrian improvements to support walking.



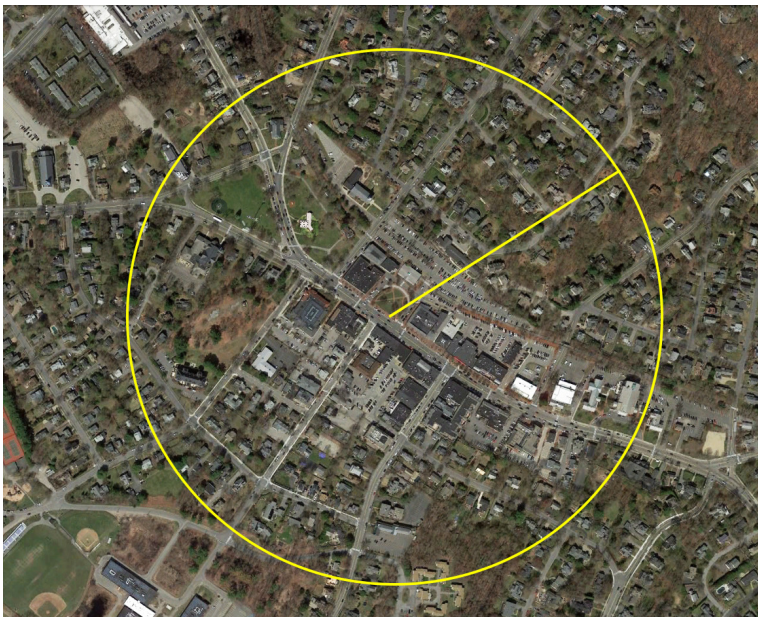


**Figure TC-2: Town Center Scale and Walkability**



**Burlington Common Area**

(Each circle has a quarter-mile radius, the distance of a 5-minute walk.)



**Lexington Town Center**





Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities

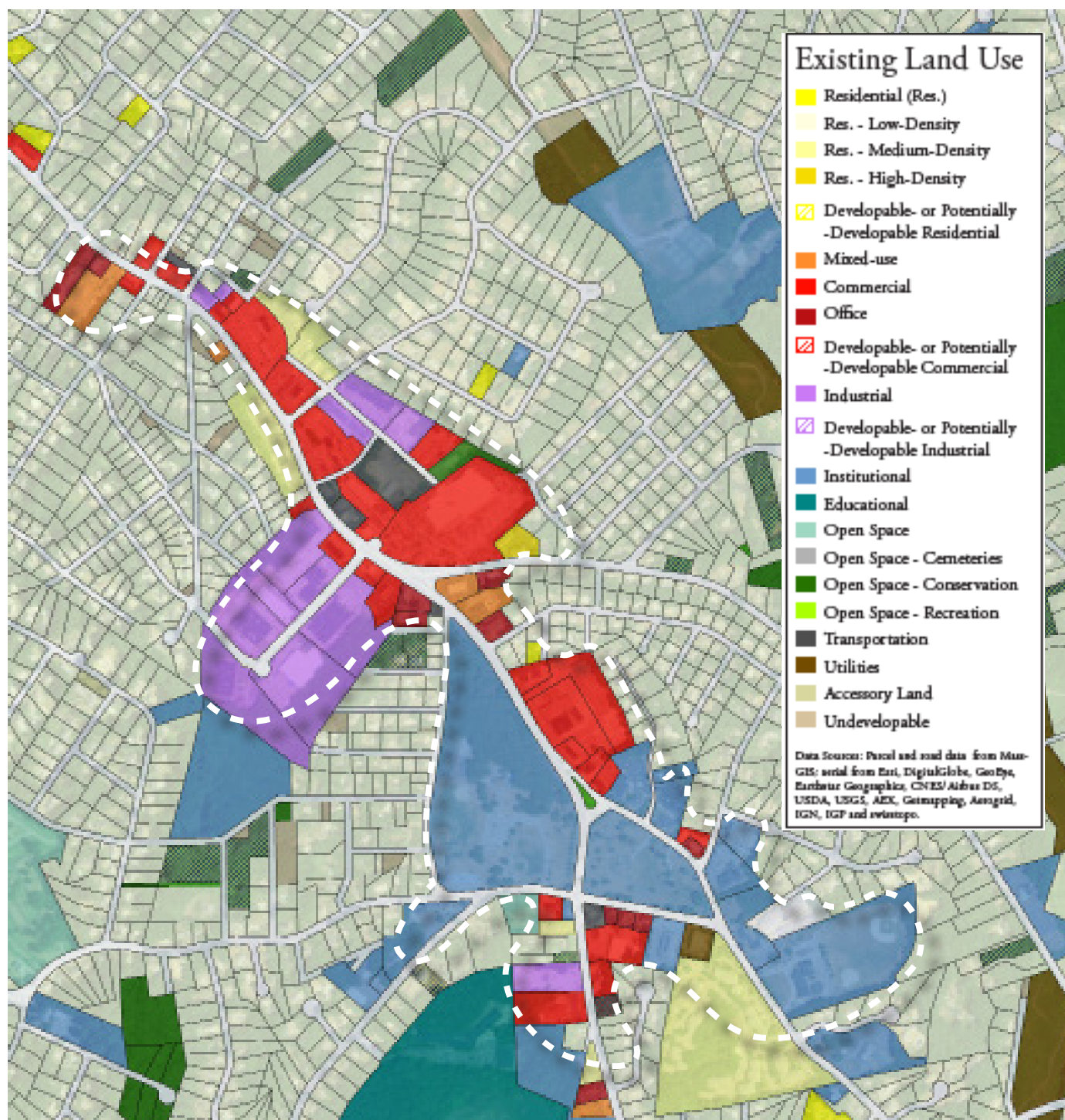


Burlington Center Commercial Area



Concord Town Center

Figure TC-3: Existing Land Use and the Town Center Planning Area







## LAND USE PATTERNS

The land use map for the areas in the center of the town shows the geographic characteristics and themes described in the *Land Use Element* of this Plan.

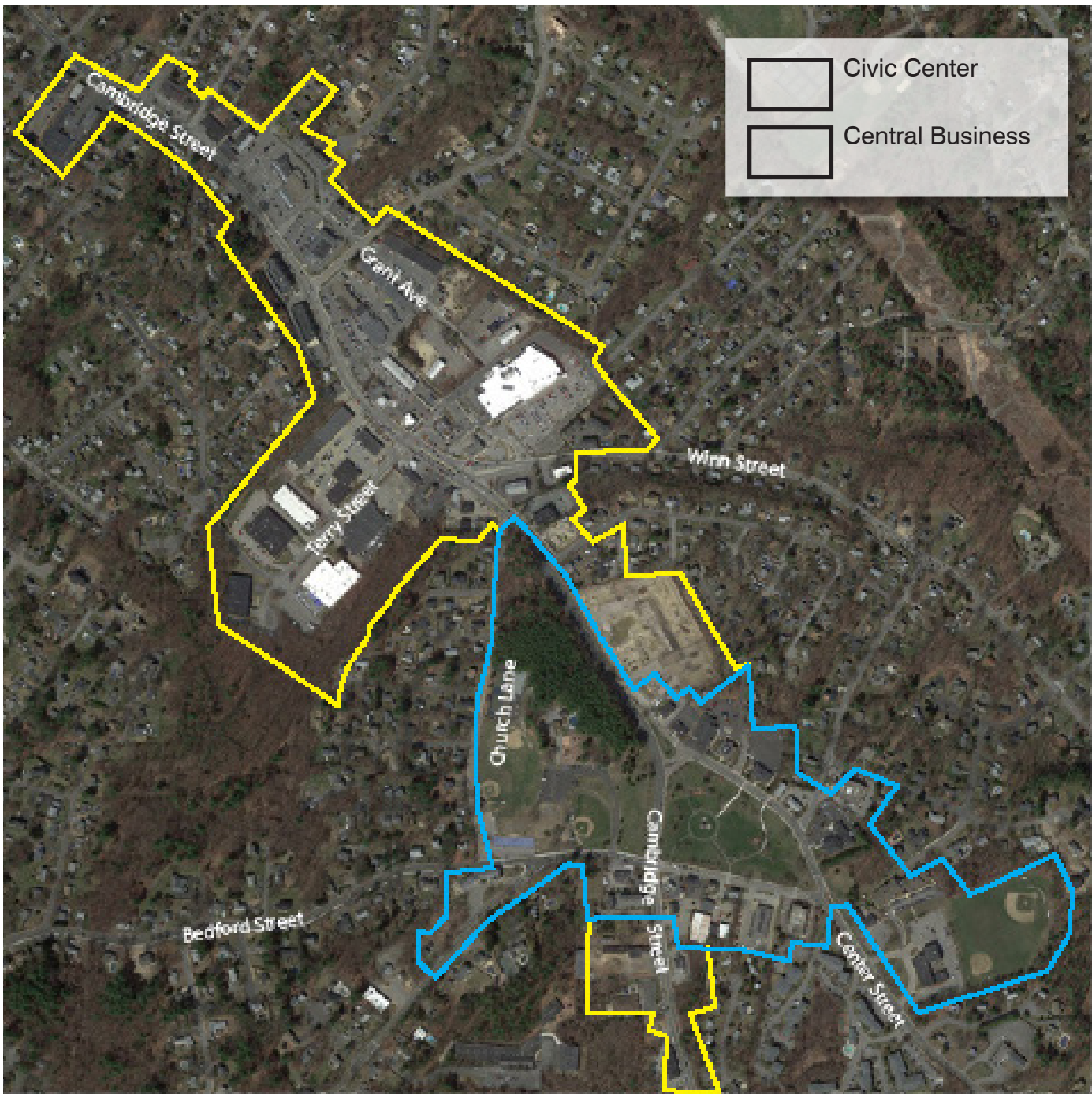
Single family neighborhoods and wetland corridors between them constitute the overall framework and bordering areas of the Town Center. The Common, Simonds Park, and the Town Recreation Fields dominate the southern portions of the area. Land near the Common includes a substantial proportion of parcels dedicated to utility, institutional, and recreational uses; much of the land uses within the “commercial” classification are, in fact, municipal offices.

In contrast, the northerly portions of the land use map clearly depict the scale and extent of the commercial areas that flank Cambridge Street. Two enclaves of industrial uses stand out along Terry and Grant Avenue.



The central commercial area today, Source: Google Maps

Figure TC-4: Town Center Overlay Zoning District







## ZONING

The underlying zoning in the Town Center area includes General Business (BG), Limited Business (BL), General Industrial (IG), One-Family Dwelling (RO), and Planned Development (PD) districts. The Town has established special overlay zoning, however, to strengthen the mixed-use character and bring desirable new development to these areas. There are two different overlay zoning categories – the Central Business District (CBD) and the Civic Center (CC) District. Each category is related to specific geographic areas, which are shown in *Figure TC-4*.

Among other purposes, the special Town Center zoning regulations were created to promote mixed-use, increased density where it is appropriate, encouraging infill development and reuse of obsolete properties using “Smart Growth” principles. The regulations also envisioned the possibility of multi-family housing on the edges to transition the single-family neighborhood to the commercial district along Cambridge Street. The multi-family that has been constructed since the adoption of the Town Center Overlay zone (CBD and CC districts) has successfully mirrored this vision, and new multi-family development without mixed-use commercial components is not permitted at this time.

The review and approval process includes site plan and design review for projects using the overlay zoning mechanism. The overlay zones provide a method to transfer development rights under certain circumstances within the Town, particularly where buffers between town center uses and residential neighborhoods might be increased. The overlay zones also broaden the range of uses that can be approved relative to the underlying zoning through special permit processes or as of right. This includes an array of housing and hospitality uses.

Dimensional standards provide for some increases in achievable densities relative to the underlying zoning, but the increases are relatively modest. The zoning allows maximum building heights ranging from 30 to 40 feet. It limits the maximum proportion of building area to ground area to between 33 1/3 percent to 40 percent. Based on a review of many of the sites and uses within the district, the overlay zoning may be an effective tool to manage the design and mix of uses on projects that replace outmoded buildings and sites. As a practical matter, however, zoning regulations do not provide adequate incentive for most property owners to replace existing buildings and uses with new development. Most of the existing parcels are effectively “built out” with buildings and associated parking areas, and most have active tenancy and uses.



## A STRATEGY FOR THE TOWN CENTER

### COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS AND ASPIRATIONS

As part of the planning process, participating community members expressed many aspirations about the town center areas. Many individuals indicated a desire for additional shops, restaurants, neighborhood services, and cultural and civic destinations along the major streets. Some underscored the benefit of having a broad array of community-serving businesses, including some small, local operations, in contrast to the character and offerings of chain stores. Many also indicated support for various types of housing within, and at the periphery of, the business and civic centers. A key theme that the committee echoed throughout the discussion was for support of the existing small family businesses within the Town Center and the need to balance redevelopment so not to displace the local business that exist today.

In general, community participants stressed the desire to have a livelier area around the Town Common that would attract people. Participants recognized that the central areas lack the desirable design qualities of a walkable district that can be found in other communities.

Planning discussions came to recognize a basic dilemma: it is not at all clear exactly where the “Town Center” is located. The shapes that the central areas have taken do not conform to the simple, central models evidenced in other communities.



In suburban communities today, the interior streets and circulation routes within retail and commercial centers are being configured to have many of the same qualities as traditional village centers, with parking lots located in peripheral but convenient locations. This approach has been used for Burlington’s 3rd Avenue project.

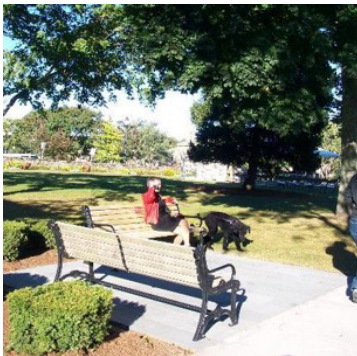


## CREATING A CLEAR ORGANIZATION AND IDENTITY

This *Comprehensive Master Plan* recognizes that no path will create a single, unified town center. Burlington, in fact, has the unusual opportunity to have two very different “centers” which are connected, but distinct. Rather than attempt to unify such a large and disparate area, the Town will benefit from a strategy that clearly organizes – but differentiates – the separate areas through Town initiative and leadership.

The organization and identity of these areas should be composed of three parts:

- **The Commons.** This is the precinct of Burlington Common and its surroundings. It will be marked by its generous public parks and the municipal campus and civic facilities. It will be punctuated by commercial and existing residential uses that complement the character of this area.
- **The Center.** The Center will be a lively hub of locally oriented stores, services businesses, and integral housing in a district that is walkable and a destination in its own right because of the range of activities it supports.
- **The Hill.** Cambridge Street should become an attractive and visually distinctive boulevard with generous landscaping, pedestrian paths, and bicycle routes with openings to the parkland and a mix of uses along its edges. It is important for this area to be an attractive, walkable link between the Commons and the Center.



The Town Common and its edges can be enhanced with additional amenities for pedestrians and places for special events.

Figure TC-5: Location of The Center, The Hill and The Commons







## THE COMMONS

The Commons can be strengthened as a destination and district through continued enhancements to the Town Common and the civic buildings and places that it flanks. Rather than being a static and passive campus-like setting, the Town's park and public facilities should incorporate special features that attract and support more activities that draw people to the area. By encouraging mixed-use reinvestment in existing properties around the perimeter of the Common, the district can present an increasingly active and value dimension.

- **The Civic Campus.** Burlington should shape its facility planning and improvements in the Commons to continue to expand the range of activities that it supports for its citizens. Burlington should continue to add pedestrian paths, lighting, and landscape amenities. Future building improvements should emphasize the design qualities that can be achieved. The Town could invite a mix of uses within its own land and premises, such as space for café or restaurant operations.
- **An Activated Common and Park.** Innovative design and programming can substantially enhance the Common as a destination. For example, looped walking paths are a major attraction if they are visible and well-designed; a new network of looped paths could be created linking the Common and Simonds Park. Innovative landscape improvements and public art programs can become distinctive components and attractions. Programs like the Farmer's Market, now staged on the Common, could be emphasized and expanded.
- **Strengthen the Edges.** Town Hall should continue to use zoning and other tools to encourage reinvestment in the private commercial properties near the Commons. Services and shops that serve the community are highly desirable, and the design of sites and buildings should add visual and economic value to the area, as they occur.





## THE CENTER

The Center should be incrementally improved through public and private investment. It should have an expanding range of uses within sites that are linked to one another within an environment designed for pedestrians. It must have adequate parking to support all the uses, but should, over time, have fewer uninterrupted asphalt fields of parking. Overall, attractive landscaping should mark the area.

Cambridge Street will remain as an arterial corridor, but will benefit from significant streetscape and landscape enhancements to calm traffic and emphasize pedestrian transitions. The internal street network in the district should become more village-scaled, with an excellent streetscape, lighting, and sidewalks.

- **A community-oriented village of shops, services, businesses, and housing.** The Center should be recognized town-wide as the primary location to find a broad array of convenience goods, groceries, banks, shops, and services oriented towards residents and their daily lives. For those who have an opportunity to live in housing within the Center or nearby, it should be a great place to walk, along streets and sidewalks that are geared to pedestrians.
- **A reshaped Center through incremental reinvestment.** The Center can be gradually reshaped each time there is a new development or alteration of existing buildings. The Town should actively support redevelopment through a clear review process, enhanced design guidelines, and zoning incentives that provide adequate economic benefit to accelerate the conversion of outmoded buildings and sites so that they are more supportive of the village center image that the community seeks.
- **The Terry Avenue area: innovation in uses and placemaking.** Like other communities that are finding new ways to use light industrial areas, Burlington can support innovative mixed-use of this area. The area can become more integrated into the life and economy of the Town Center if it offers opportunities for flexible use that can include retail sales, restaurants, or food service – like the brew pubs and tasting rooms that are proliferating in the region.
- **Streetscape improvements as a priority.** The Town can set the stage for reinvestment with a focused program of circulation and streetscape improvements to significantly enhance the appearance of the public realm in the Center.



## THE HILL

The transition area between the Commons and the Center can be improved and attain its own identity as the connecting corridor. It should become a more attractive landscaped link that provides a positive experience for those driving, walking, and biking.

- **Street and streetscape improvements as a priority.** The Town should advance a Complete Streets re-design along Cambridge Street between its intersections with Olympia Way and Winn Street. The connection can be thought of as a boulevard with landscaping, lighting, and design characteristics that frame the roadway and sidewalks. Some widening will be needed to accomplish this multi-modal approach.
- **Modifying the park edges.** The edges of Simonds Park can be modified to provide openings, path connections, and landscape features that would be readily visible from the street.
- **Marking transitions.** Streetscape design should help reinforce the transitions to and from the Commons and the Center, reinforcing the identity of each component.

## SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCY

Several aspects of the Town Center can contribute to Burlington as a sustainable community. The preservation and enhancement of public open space as a natural environment will be a positive factor. Landscaping and street trees within the Commercial Center can provide shade and a natural dimension for the sidewalks and parking areas as the district becomes more pedestrian-friendly.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

- TC1. Prepare and implement a comprehensive open space and streetscape plan to articulate and enhance the character of the public realm for three components of the Town's core: the Commons, the Center, and the Hill.**

The Town can strengthen the identity, walkability, and value of its central districts by undertaking a comprehensively-planned and designed program of circulation, streetscape, and open space changes. These should address the existing street system, provide design concepts for enhancing the Town Common and Simonds Park, and set the stage for future changes in the municipal campus and its facilities. Once planned, the improvements can be implemented incrementally.

- TC2. Undertake a specialized economic development evaluation of the Center and create incentives to support desirable redevelopment.**

The existing development pattern on many of the parcels in the Center is not conducive to the type of walkable, compact, mixed-use district envisioned by the community and sought by current zoning. The Town should undertake a focused economic and development study to better understand the real estate conditions, market trends, and development capacity, in collaboration with property owners. With this information, the Town can update its zoning and provide other incentives to attract beneficial private sector redevelopment.

- TC3. Create an identity and promotional program for the Town Center in collaboration with area businesses, institutions, and organizations.**

The Town should convene the stakeholders and advance a coordinated identity and promotional program for the Commons, the Center, and the Hill. This program should inform the public realm designs and be coordinated with the Town's initiatives on arts, culture, economic development and the creative economy, open space, and recreation.





**TC4. Prepare enhanced design standards and guidelines for the Commons and the Center.**

In concert with the economic development studies and identity program, the Town should enhance its existing Design Review Rules & Regulations to better support mixed-use development, pedestrian activity, and placemaking in the Town Center.

**TC5. Promote additional uses that will specifically contribute the to the vitality of the Commons and the municipal campus.**

As the stewards of the Common and the managers of its own municipal campus, the Town should proactively seek and support uses, programs, and activities that will draw more people to the Commons.

**TC6. Expand availability and schedule of bus transit routes serving the Town Center, and improve infrastructure for transit users.**

As some residents have expressed, bus frequency is not enough to provide reliable access to and from the neighborhoods. Expanded levels of service would be desirable to support an active and vibrant Town Center.

Land Use

Transportation

Housing

Economic  
Development

Natural + Cultural  
Resources

Open Space +  
Recreation

Town Center

Services +  
Facilities





# SERVICES + FACILITIES

## BUILDING ON THE PAST: MUNICIPAL ORIGINS

Municipalities in Massachusetts are responsible for the administration and delivery of almost all town services. These services, together with public infrastructure and municipal facilities, play a major role in the quality of life for residents and the function of the community. Examples of public services offered by municipalities include:

- Public safety
- Public works
- Water, wastewater, road maintenance
- Solid waste, recycling
- Health
- Education
- Library
- Senior services

Burlington has always strived to deliver municipal services and extracurricular activities at the schools without charging specific fees to residents. This challenges the Town to balance an increased demand for services with the desire to keep taxes from increasing. Burlington residents have enjoyed high-quality services while keeping residential taxes low by relying on the commercial tax rate.





## Services

Burlington has provided its residents with a variety of services to ensure the wellbeing of the community and for the betterment of the town, including:

- **School Buses.** First approved in 1899, the Town continues to provide free public school bussing to every student in Burlington, regardless of their distance to school.
- **Fire Department.** No fire department existed for the first hundred years of the town's existence. A tragic fire in the early 1900s that destroyed many historic landmarks prompted the community to found a volunteer fire company. The first modern department was established in 1951.
- **Water System.** To support residential development expansion, by 1949, the Town had formed a public water district to provide residents with water service.
- **Sewer System.** In the mid-1960s, the post-war housing boom and the desire for larger-scale commercial development due to the completion of Route 128 prompted Burlington to develop a complete sewer system.



School bus (later known as "the Barge") in 1902 Source: Burlington Archives, No. 418





## Facilities

The Town Center, adjacent to Simonds Park and the Town Common, has served as a gathering point for the community and features a cluster of public facilities.

- **Town Hall.** The first Town Hall was built in 1844 on a hill in Simonds Park. Following a fire in 1902, the second Town Hall was built in 1915 at 25 Center Street. In 1969, the third Town Hall was built at 29 Center Street, across from the Town Common. Renovated in 1999, this location continues to serve as the administrative building of the Town.
- **Town Hall Annex.** The facility at 25 Center Street was constructed in 1966 and renovated in 1997. It currently houses the land use-related departments, such as the Departments of Public Works and Planning, and previously served as a police station and public library.
- **Fire Station.** Originally constructed in 1958, the Fire Station is on the site of the former Wood Tavern at 21 Center Street. The current Fire Station was renovated and expanded in 1989.
- **Police Station.** The Police Station is at 45 Center Street, and is housed in the 1992 renovation and expansion of the Union School building (originally built in 1897).
- **Public Library.** Between 1879 and 1896, the library was housed in a room in the former Town Hall and then in the former Center School from 1897 to 1969. The current library on Sears Street, behind the Police Station, opened in 1968.



The second Town Hall. Source: Burlington Archives



## TOWN SERVICES AND FACILITIES TODAY

Most of Burlington's facilities are in good condition, but the consensus is that the Town is using every available inch of built space. Several departments are in the process of building new space or have requested new facilities as part of the 10-year Capital Improvement Plan. Burlington's near built-out condition makes it difficult for the Town to acquire new parcels for new or larger public facilities.

### Inventory of Services and Facilities

Burlington prides itself on the services it delivers to residents. Departments must be strategic about the delivery of services due to the large commercial sector. The town's weekend and evening population (more than 25,000 in 2014) is significantly different from the daytime population (approximately 75,000). This daytime influx of workers almost forces the town to behave as a small city. In addition, maintenance has been critical for the Town's buildings, many of which are older than those of other communities.

#### *Services*

- **Water and Sewer Service.** Two water treatment plants, with a combined capacity of 7.5 million gallons of water per day, draw water from both surface and groundwater sources. Both water treatment plants filter and clarify the water, provide fluoridation, corrosion control, and disinfection. This department maintains the water distribution system, hydrants, the sewer system and pump and metering stations.
- **Emergency Management.** As prescribed in Town Bylaws (Article XIII 3.0 Civil Defense) and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 639 §1 of the Acts of 1950, the department of Civil Defense prepares for and carries out emergency functions to minimize and repair damage resulting from disasters caused by hostile action, civil disturbance, or natural causes.

#### *Facilities*

- **Town Hall.** Functions as the heart of local government and is the primary seat of the Town's administrative functions. Located at 29 Center Street, across from the Town Common, departments housed here include Accounting, Archives, Assessors, Selectmen/Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and Tax Collector/Treasurer.
- **Town Hall Annex.** Serves as a single location for all land use-related departments (the Departments of Public Works (DPW), Building, Conservation, Engineering, and Planning). The Annex is located adjacent to the Town Hall, at 25 Center Street.



- **Police Station.** Operates as the prime location for law enforcement. Located at 45 Center Street, the facility opened in 1992 following the renovation and expansion of the former Union School. The facility includes dispatch operations, offices, classrooms, evidence storage, an armory, and a firing range.
- **Fire Station.** The headquarters for the fire department is situated at 21 Center Street, adjacent to the Town Hall Annex, the facility has a classroom, a dispatch room, administrative offices, bedrooms, and kitchens. There is also a second fire station with training facilities at 114 Terrace Hall Avenue that was completely rebuilt in 2019.
- **Human Services Building.** Serves as the primary location for human services-related departments. Located at 61 Center Street, it contains the Council on Aging and senior center, Board of Health, Youth and Family Services, Recreation Department and Center, Disability Access Commission, and Veterans Affairs.
- **Historical Museum.** Preserves and displays artifacts and murals related to the town's history. Located at the corner of Bedford Street and Cambridge Street, across the Town Common from the Fire Department. Built in 1855, it was a school and library prior to becoming the Historical Museum.
- **Public Library .** The town library and meeting location for community groups. At 22 Sears Street, it is adjacent to the Police Department. In addition to its book and media collections, the facility also includes conference and meeting rooms, study carrels, reference materials, and administrative offices.



Police Department (left), Town Hall (top right), and Library (bottom right). Source: Google Street View



- **Schools.** The town is served by four elementary schools (Fox Hill, Francis Wyman, Memorial, and Pine Glen Elementary), one middle school (Marshall Simonds Middle School) and one high school (Burlington Public High School). Primarily located throughout the central and northern portion of town, most of the public-school facilities were built in the late 20th century.



Burlington High School (left), Fox Hill Elementary School (right)



Francis Wyman Elementary School (left), Pine Glen Elementary School (right)



Marshall Simonds Middle School (left), Memorial Elementary School (right)





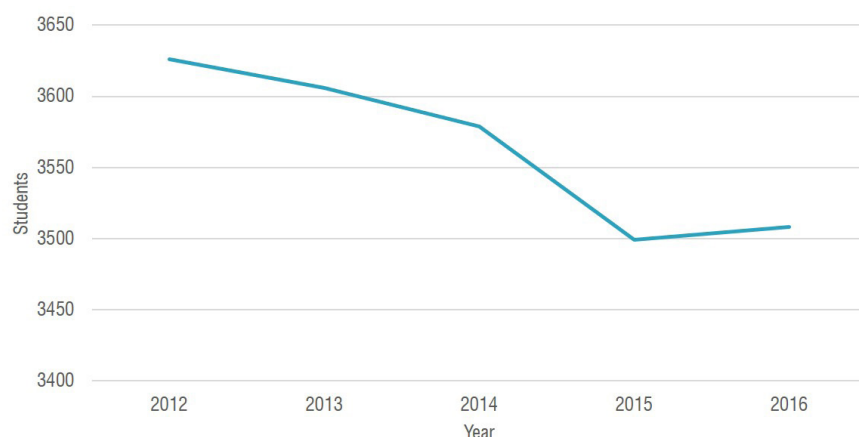
## Unmet and Projected Needs

Even with the Town's complete utilization of available resources, there are some service areas and facilities that still fall short of meeting the residents' and Town's needs. For example, the Town cannot meet summertime water demands, which has necessitated the issuance of water restrictions. A dramatic increase in outdoor water use by single-family homes is the main source of this demand. Despite an increase in the outdoor water price and a push to install secondary water meters with higher rates for outdoor usage, water use has not decreased.

Facilities with the highest need of maintenance or repair are the DPW and Recreation Maintenance facilities at Overlook Park. The current structures were built in the early 1950s and house much of the department's maintenance equipment. These facilities are not weather-tight which leads to damage of the equipment stored inside. One of these buildings also houses the Burlington Players, an important cultural resource.

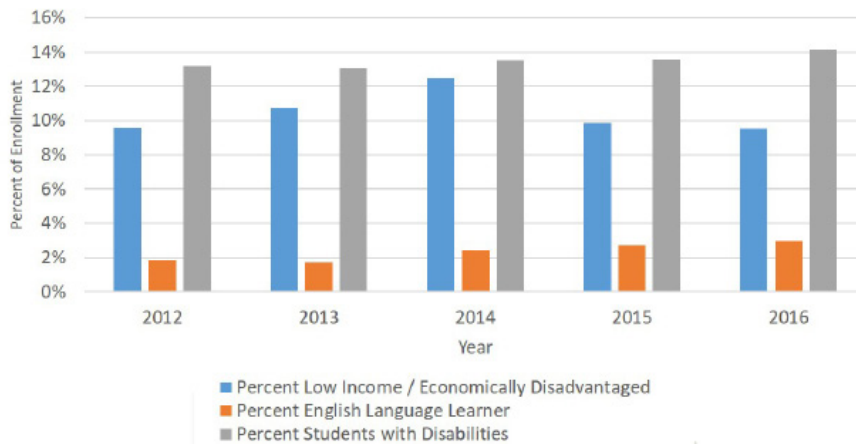
The public schools have a relatively steady total enrollment. Schools have seen an approximately three percent decrease in enrollment between 2012 and 2016 (see *Figure SF-1*). During the same time period, the percent of total enrollment of students considered to be from low income or economically disadvantaged households and students with disabilities remained constant. However, total enrollment of English language learners increased from two to five percent (see *Figure SF-2*). The 2016 to 2017 school year saw a higher demand for Early Education, before school-, and after-school care than the Town could accommodate.

**Figure SF-1: Burlington Public Schools Total Enrollment**





**Figure SF-2: Percentage of Low Income, English Language Learners, and Students with Disabilities Enrolled in Burlington Public Schools**



## MAINTAINING A QUALITY FUTURE

Burlington Town staff have done an outstanding job providing necessary municipal services while keeping residential taxes low and working in limited, and sometimes insufficient, space. Given that as the demand for municipal services is expected to increase however, the Town faces several short- and long-term challenges in meeting their service and facility needs.

A capital improvement program (CIP) serves as a guide for planning and funding municipal facilities and infrastructure. The CIP, which covers a ten-year period and is updated annually, contains a summary of anticipated needs and reflects the Town's best judgment of a balance between the level of services desired by residents, and the anticipated costs to taxpayers. These forward-looking plans developed through the CIP allow the Town to take the necessary time to weigh the various wants and needs against the associated costs.

### Future Trends and Service Needs

The flooding of residential areas and consequent need for improved stormwater management will increase with the anticipated higher frequency of storms. While redevelopment can improve site conditions to improve infiltration and decrease flooding, stormwater management will need to be modified to address increased requirements. Other disaster preparedness efforts should address the viability and accessibility of shelters, including larger disaster-proof facilities, and clear emergency routes.



Based on internal discussions with town departments, the Town should explore software products to improve information sharing and workflows across departments. The software should also include features for electronic permitting so that residents, contractors, and commercial applicants can submit, keep track of, and pay fees for permits online. Such tools would increase the departments' ability to respond to applicant requests, questions, and streamline the application process.

The Town's capacity to provide services is dependent on the availability of staff. Several municipal departments could more efficiently address community requests with additional staff. For example, a Geographic Information System (GIS) Coordinator/Manager position could be created to maintain the Town's GIS data. Additional staffing needs could be identified through a needs assessment for all Town departments.

Maintenance services can also be improved. For example, the community has expressed concern regarding sidewalk maintenance and plowing. In addition, community members should be able to report maintenance needs to a central contact, regardless which department performs the service.

### **Cost Effective, High Quality Municipal Facilities**

Towns across the state are facing a similar dilemma. As residents begin expecting a higher level of service from their local government, the age, integrity, and maintenance costs of aging facilities becomes a real burden today and into the future.

The fire station, one of the oldest municipal facilities, would like to upgrade their Basic Life Support service to an Advanced Life Support service. In addition, the Police Station needs significant renovation or replacement in 10 to 15 years. Construction of a shared Public Safety Facility would combine the police and fire station needs and improve efficiency among emergency services.

The community and school department have expressed a strong desire for a pool, and there is also a need for a recreation center. A cultural center and non-traditional community field would integrate the town's growing multi-cultural character. In addition, the Council on Aging is quickly outgrowing its space within the Human Services Building. A new Human Services Building and Recreation Facility would allow for new recreational programming and features, space for cultural activities, and an increased area and accommodations for seniors at the Council on Aging.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**SF1. Provide quality and cost-effective public services.**

Burlington can increase efficiency across Town departments by enabling communication and file sharing. By working with nearby communities, the Town can identify opportunities to coordinate service delivery and share service regionally. A needs assessment would help ensure all departments are sufficiently staffed.

**SF2. Promote water resource management and water quality protection to ensure availability and high quality.**

Efforts to reduce the quantity of outdoor water used by single family homes would help the year-round capacity. This could include limitation of in-ground irrigation, encouragement of greywater or rainwater irrigation and introduction of more efficient systems, and development of landscaping requirements that do not need irrigation. Flooding concerns can be addressed by actively acquiring land for flood storage capacity and increasing wetland acreage. Stormwater management improvement, including consideration of a stormwater utility, would increase the protection of surface water from an increased level of pollutants during storm events.

**SF3. Establish priorities for facility preservation, upgrades, and replacement.**

An inventory of the Town's facilities and their structural and functional needs would provide information that enables the prioritization of facility preservation. Burlington should maintain its municipal facilities to ensure the structural and functional reliability of the older facilities. Efforts to identify financing opportunities for the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) could help the Town gather additional resources to support facility preservation.

**SF4. Support and increase disaster and resiliency planning.**

The Town can increase its emergency preparedness through increased funding and support of the Emergency Management Department. This would help enable additional drills and training, the identification of priority roads for emergency routes, and the provision of adequate emergency shelters that are available to all residents.





# IMPLEMENTATION

## OVERVIEW

The *Comprehensive Master Plan* for Burlington establishes a coordinated municipal agenda for the future. Implementing the *Comprehensive Master Plan* recommendations will require translating this agenda into specific actions. The time horizon for undertaking these actions is ten years from the adoption of the *Comprehensive Master Plan*. The results and benefits will continue to accrue beyond that horizon.

Many of the recommendations can be achieved using the Town's existing governmental structure, budget capacity, and practices. Each of these recommendations would need to be advanced with normal public input that will be part of the associated deliberations, refinement, budgeting, and then approval. As each recommendation is advanced, its achievement will also depend upon the continued attentive stewardship and support of residents, businesses, organizations, and institutions that compose the entire Burlington community.

Accomplishing some of the recommendations will depend upon external conditions for which the Town can be prepared – but cannot control. For example, some of the recommendations are linked to broad economic and market forces that can change unpredictably. Other recommendations, such as infrastructure improvements, may be linked to the availability of state or federal funds, and will depend on the Town's competitive success in securing those funds.

For circumstances that the Town cannot control, the *Comprehensive Master Plan* can guide the Town's policies, regulations, and grantsmanship to place it in an advantageous position. Implementing some of the recommendations will require adaptation to evolving conditions, recognizing that alternate approaches may be needed to accomplish the goals articulated in this document.

Once approved by the Burlington Planning Board, the Town will have a Comprehensive Plan complying with the Massachusetts legal standards. These standards are provided under Massachusetts General Law Section 81D, which establishes the list of elements that must be addressed, all of which have been included in this document. An approved Comprehensive Plan is a positive factor considered by state agencies in funding for some programs and grants



## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The implementation of this *Comprehensive Master Plan* is dependent upon active advancement – and ultimately, support – of its recommendations within the framework of Town government. The recommendations will engage Town Meeting and many boards, commissions, and departments of Burlington at various times and for different topics within each of the *Master Plan Elements*. For most of these entities, the procedures and responsibilities will not vary from normal practice. However, it would be beneficial and appropriate for Town boards and commissions to formally recognize and endorse the *Comprehensive Master Plan* as a guidance document for setting agendas and considering policy directions.

The implementation will also benefit from focused coordination and monitoring of progress by the following participants:

- **Planning Board and Planning Department.** The Planning Board is responsible for approving the *Comprehensive Master Plan*. Through its review of the *Comprehensive Master Plan* implementation and its understanding of the evolving issues and opportunities in Burlington, the Planning Board will be responsible for scheduling amendments or updates in the future. The Planning Department will need to devote staff time and resources to advance the *Comprehensive Master Plan*'s recommendations, including the coordination that will be required within Town government other constituents of the Burlington community.
- **Master Plan Implementation Committee.** A *Comprehensive Master Plan* Implementation Committee could be established to serve as helpful stewards of the Plan's overall progress. Formed with diverse representation similar to the *Comprehensive Master Plan* Steering Committee, such a committee could monitor progress and prepare periodic progress reports to the Planning Board. Such a committee could host forums on topical issues and initiatives, and form subcommittees to assist Town staff, boards, and commissions where it might be helpful.
- **Open Space Stewardship Committee.** This *Comprehensive Master Plan* places a significant priority on expanding and enhancing open space assets in the community. This purpose is somewhat different from the missions of the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Commission. An organized committee could bring focus to advancing adoption Community Preservation Act provisions. It could help target open space acquisition by the Town. Such a committee could also seek and coordinate open space preservation through deed restriction programs and regulatory measures.
- **Town Center Stewardship Committee.** A dedicated committee should be formed as a stewardship team to help organize Town Center programs, attract participation by business owners, and provide advocacy for regulatory, open space, transportation, and infrastructure improvements. This committee should help coordinate Town and private initiatives for



improvements that will help fulfill the civic and economic promise of Burlington's Town Center vision.

## KEY TOOLS AND METHODS

The implementation of this *Comprehensive Master Plan* will require many different tools and methods available to the Town. Some of these will be prominent in accomplishing its recommendations, including:

- **Zoning.** Burlington's zoning can be beneficially updated to manage growth and redevelopment to respond to changing housing needs, support appropriate mixed-use development, and respond pro-actively to changing market forces so that it continues to benefit from a high value tax base and employment sources.
- **Infrastructure Improvements.** Burlington will need to attract and apply a variety of funding sources to enhance safety and mobility for all modes of travel. This will need to include coordinated and extensive improvements to the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities which will make the Town increasingly attractive as a place to live and work.
- **Design Standards and Guidance Documents.** Burlington will benefit from a coherent set of guidelines to establish the desirable visual character and design quality of its public realm (streets, sidewalks, and bikeways). Design standards for new development can clarify the characteristics of buildings, landscaping and other site improvements so that new development adds visual and economic value to the entire community and provide appropriate relationships to the residential neighborhoods.
- **Community Preservation Act Adoption.** By adopting the provisions of the Commonwealth's Community Preservation Act, the Town will be able to leverage its favorable real estate values and future transactions into a significant source of funds that can be applied to acquire open space, enhance historic resources, and directly manage the provision of affordable housing, all of which will help implement key recommendations of this *Comprehensive Master Plan*.
- **Enhanced Communication and Cooperative Initiatives.** Many of the recommendations will depend upon the formation of active, collaborative groups, committees, and programs that connect shared interests. The Town can serve as a catalyst to gather together working groups on cultural events, open space acquisition and protection, business retention and recruitment, Transportation Management Associations, Town Center improvements - and many other topics that are central to the quality of life and future of Burlington.



## MASTER LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTIONS

This master list assembles all major recommendations of the *Comprehensive Master Plan*, framed as municipal actions. Each recommendation is grouped according to the Element to which it is linked, and assigned an identifying number so that it can be tracked and easily referenced during the implementation process.

The supplemental *Master Plan Elements* document that accompanies the *Master Plan Elements* includes an expanded description of each of the items that is listed within this matrix. That matrix includes specific actions that the Town should take to accomplish each recommendation. The matrix indicates relative priorities among various recommendations and suggests leadership responsibilities within the framework of Town government. The expanded matrix associates actions with potential funding resources, and suggests the sequence for implementation actions. The expanded implementation matrix also indicates how progress and success can be measured for each action.





## LAND USE

- L1. Allow and encourage compact, well-organized development within commercial and retail areas of town.**
  - L1.1 Adopt mixed-use zoning to create a sequence of development nodes and transition areas along specific roadway corridors.
- L2. Promote a broader mix of uses in areas where it will enhance efficient use of the land, increase the quality of life, and keep Burlington in pace with other communities as a great place to live, work, and visit.**
  - L2.1 Ensure that new development and redevelopment respects and protects Burlington's single-family neighborhoods.
  - L2.2 Attract and support additional mixed-use development in areas indicated on the *Future Land Use Plan*.
  - L2.3 Identify areas of town that can support residential density and actively encourage denser development and redevelopment in amenity rich walkable areas to balance needs for housing choices.
  - L2.4 Encourage the addition of new retail and residential uses into existing industrial and commercial parks.
  - L2.5 Promote the development of live/work spaces as appropriate throughout the town.
- L3. Raise the design quality of buildings and site improvements so that they are more attractive and valuable from private and public perspectives.**
  - L3.1 Identify and direct the appropriate streetscape character for each of the areas and development patterns in town.
  - L3.2 Improve the aesthetic quality and design of new development and redevelopment projects.
  - L3.3 Encourage the inclusion of unique features, public art, and public amenities in large development and redevelopment projects.



- L4. Enhance the Cambridge Street corridor as Burlington's own "Main Street" providing convenient and community-serving businesses and institutions in a mixed-use setting along an increasingly attractive corridor.**
  - L4.1 Establish streetscape and development design standards that will strengthen the sense of continuity and orientation along this corridor.
  - L4.2 Coordinate the Town Center planning and implementation with the zoning and design for the entire corridor.
- L5. Promote sustainable land use practices throughout the community.**
  - L5.1 Conserve open land for future generations.
  - L5.2 Promote context-sensitive and sustainable land development in development and redevelopment projects.
- L6. Provide mitigation for negative impacts associated with development and provide positive amenities that will protect and enhance all areas of Burlington.**
  - L6.1 Support the existing fabric of single family neighborhoods.
  - L6.2 Protect single family neighborhoods from the encroachment of commercial areas.
  - L6.3 Regularly review the *Zoning Bylaw* and *Official Zoning Map*.
- L7. Preserve and enhance the land devoted to open space.**
  - L7.1 Complete an update to the *2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan* to affirm current conditions and to serve as the guidance document for incremental improvements to the Town's open space and recreation resources (consistent with recommendation OS1.2 of the *Open Space Element*).
- L8. Clearly define and strengthen the community core of Burlington including the civic-oriented Common area and the business-oriented Town Center.**
  - L8.1 Establish a standing working committee of citizens, business owners, and community leaders to become the stewards of coordinated Town Center planning and implementation (consistent with recommendation TC1.1 of the *Town Center Element*)



## TRANSPORTATION

- T1. Actively encourage and support multi-modal transportation to reduce traffic congestion and encourage a sustainable, healthy, and livable community.**
  - T1.1 Establish Town-wide multi-modal design policies.
  - T1.2 Coordinate multi-modal planning and implementation with Burlington's business and institutional community.
  - T1.3 Compile and provide user-friendly information promoting the availability of alternative transportation modes.
  - T1.4 Development a Walking and Bicycling Plan for Burlington.
  - T1.5 Actively encourage students to take buses, walk, or bike to school while improving conditions so that these are safe and attractive alternatives.
- T2. Support and facilitate expanded use of public transit in Burlington.**
  - T2.1 Prepare a comprehensive evaluation of transit needs to establish transit priorities and actions.
  - T2.2 Promote and provide additional public transit routes and service levels connecting areas within Burlington and to other parts of the region.
  - T2.3 Provide improved infrastructure for transit users.
- T3. Improve the experience and facilities for pedestrians in Burlington.**
  - T3.1 Extend the pedestrian network as part of every improvement project that is part of the publicly-accessible circulation system.
  - T3.2 Prepare detailed design standards and establish sidewalk improvement priorities in a Walking and Bicycling Plan for Burlington.
  - T3.3 Undertake a coordinated streetscape and pedestrian network improvement program.
- T4. Improve the experience and facilities for bicyclists in Burlington**
  - T4.1 Provide appropriate bicycle facilities in conjunction with Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plans for large businesses, institutions, and developments.
  - T4.2 Prepare detailed design standards and establish bicycle facility improvement priorities in the recommended *Walking and Bicycling Plan for Burlington*.



T4.3 Undertake a coordinated bicycle network improvement program.

T4.4 Improve regional bicycling connections.

**T5. Manage traffic demand to reduce congestion and provide alternative modes by promoting private sector solutions and regional coordination.**

T5.1 Establish a Town-wide TDM policy and program coordination.

T5.2 Evaluate models for providing public incentives to reduce vehicle trips.

T5.3 Promote and participate in Transportation Management Associations (TMA's) to achieve Town goals.

T5.4 Be an active advocate for regional solutions to reduce traffic congestion that impacts Burlington.

**T6. Provide for better traffic circulation and a more efficient street network through improvements and traffic management practices that also reduce congestion and improve convenience for the residents of Burlington**

T6.1 Establish typical street design standards for both public and private roadways that will achieve the Town's policies and goals.

T6.2 Coordinate utility corridor design with roadway design to diminish future circulation disruptions due to repairs or revisions.

T6.3 Evaluate street and intersection improvements that reduce congestion and meet other Town goals.

T6.4 Undertake capital and operational changes that meet Town goals.

T6.5 Reduce congestion due to access and street network patterns.

T6.6 Enforce traffic rules and regulations.

**T7. Improve safety for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists.**

T7.1 Reduce collisions and improve safety for all roadway users.

T7.2 Encourage lower traffic speeds in residential neighborhoods and work to reduce the amount of cut-through traffic on residential streets.





## HOUSING

- H1. Preserve the quality of housing stock in the traditional family-oriented neighborhoods that provide the largest portion of housing in the community.**
  - H1.1 Establish a long-term program to incrementally improve streetscapes, add sidewalks, and improve pedestrian connectivity and safety within neighborhoods.
  - H1.2 Promote improvements to existing single- and two-family houses that do not conform to existing zoning standards which are in residential zones where there are limited impacts on the neighborhood.
  - H1.3 Enforce existing zoning, building code, and other regulations to protect the value and quality of the neighborhoods.
- H2. Expand the range of housing options in Burlington to better serve the housing needs for different age groups and living circumstances, so that young people and seniors can find excellent housing in town that is affordable relative to their available income and resources.**
  - H2.1 Allow new townhouse and multi-family housing where it can complement existing uses, including locations where it can contribute to mixed-use development patterns as described in the *Land Use Element*.
  - H2.2 Allow housing within mixed-use buildings in the small commercial areas and as part of Planned Developments.
- H3. Promote housing affordability for those who are part of Burlington's workforce, so that people who work in town can live in town and so that young families are not priced out of the community.**
  - H3.1 Increase the availability of affordable "starter homes," either from existing housing stock or by developing new, smaller homes.
  - H3.2 Consider requiring a proportion of workforce housing within Planned Development housing projects to provide a supply of high quality affordable units in conjunction with new development.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- E1. Support the ability of Burlington's enterprises and institutions to adapt to changing market and service conditions, and maintain Burlington's status as a regional leader in the commercial, retail, and health sectors.**
  - ED1.1 Enable mixed-use development that will allow Burlington to be competitive in attracting and retaining employers and employees.**
  - E1.2 Provide increased flexibility in the regulatory framework to support emerging business types and operations that are compatible with neighboring uses and development patterns.
  - E1.3 Enable predictable development and permitting for business and institutions through changes in the regulations and proactive information programs.
  - E1.4 Support infrastructure and transportation improvements that allow Burlington's businesses and institutions to remain competitive.
  - E1.5 Promote the exchange of information and business collaboration through proactive programs and coordination with business-oriented organizations.
  - E1.6 Recognize the importance of diverse opportunities for employment for a variety of skills, training, and capabilities by preserving and attracting businesses that employ different segments of the Burlington workforce.
- E2. Promote town-oriented businesses that provide services, employment, and market opportunities for small enterprises.**
  - E2.1 Actively promote businesses that serve the local market through regulatory changes, information, and marketing support efforts.
  - E2.2 Provide and support infrastructure, streetscape, and design improvements in the areas of Burlington that are intended to be a focus for businesses that serve the local market, including enhancements contained in the *Land Use* and *Transportation Elements*.
  - E2.3 Advance the recommendations in the Town Center as an important aspect of the economy of Burlington.



- E3. Encourage new investment in targeted areas of Burlington.**
- E3.1 Provide the regulatory changes to target new investment opportunities within areas defined within the *Land Use Element* to promote the redevelopment of land and buildings to increase their value and competitive position.
  - E3.2 Provide a more predictable process for achieving approvals for projects that conform to the Town's goals, including mitigating potential impacts.
- E4. Support a high quality of life for the workforce in Burlington to be increasingly competitive in attracting and retaining the human resources vital to economic success, including highly compensated employment opportunities.**
- E4.1 Coordinate infrastructure, streetscape, open space, and design enhancement programs to provide an increasingly attractive environment and areas that combine the ability to "live, work, and play."
  - E4.2 Provide regulatory changes and use flexibility to promote a more diversified and convenient combination of services and amenities in business and institutional centers.
  - E4.3 Support the expansion and diversification of restaurant and food-oriented enterprises.
  - E4.4 Provide an increasing range of transportation choices as described in the *Transportation Element*.
- E5. Provide conditions to support market entry and incubation of new businesses.**
- E5.1 Actively promote Burlington as a business-friendly location through information and participation in businesses support programs.
  - E5.2 Support the adaptation of existing commercial and industrial areas and buildings into innovative and entrepreneurial business hubs.
  - E5.3 Provide incentives for the inclusion of small businesses that serve the local market within larger development complexes or projects.
- E6. Promote locally available education and training programs that serve businesses, institutions, and the workforce in Burlington.**
- E6.1 Attract and coordinate programs that provide convenient opportunities for the Burlington workforce to enhance its skills and capabilities.



## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

**NC1. Protect the Town's clean water through actions and regulations that address both the groundwater and watershed resources.**

NC1.1 Prepare a guide for Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect the municipal water supply for new and redevelopment projects that are appropriate for Burlington.

NC1.2 Prepare and conduct a public information program about the Town's groundwater and watershed resources, including environmentally sound maintenance and use practices for residents and businesses.

**NC2. Plan for additional resiliency in areas that will likely be affected by flooding resulting from extreme weather and storm events in the future.**

NC2.1 Seek funding for or seek inclusion in either a local or regional resiliency study to establish areas of vulnerability and to prioritize risks. This should include consideration of surface water flows and conditions that may be constrained by existing channels, culverts, bridges, and other structures.

NC2.2 Establish and apply Town design and engineering criteria for public and private property, roads, and infrastructure to reduce future flooding risk.

**NC3. Protect and enhance the natural habitats and ecological systems within Burlington.**

NC3.1 Conduct a public information program about the natural environmental resources in Burlington.

NC3.2 Prepare and promote the adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) tools to fund acquisition of open space or their development rights.

NC3.3 Create and implement a land preservation strategy for key land parcels that would significantly enhance the natural habitats and ecological systems in the town.

**NC4. Preserve and interpret the Town's historic resources as a link to its heritage and as a part of the community's identity.**

NC4.1 Enhance and actively promote public information and programs that celebrate the heritage of Burlington.

NC4.2 Include historic preservation actions within a local CPA mechanism.





**NC5. Actively support the creative economy in Burlington and promote the related contributions of individuals, businesses, and organizations.**

NC5.1 Sponsor and participate in a working group that convenes the organizations and advocates for the creative economy to promote information and networking.

NC5.2 Create a Cultural Inventory as an on-line resource of organizations, businesses and events associated with the creative economy.

NC5.3 Continue and coordinate proactive and coordinated programs to host displays, forums, and events in municipal facilities or with municipal support to promote creative businesses and individuals.

**NC6. Engage the community in a variety of accessible cultural events and programs through imaginative promotions, sponsorship and, support**

NC6.1 Prepare and implement a Public Arts Plan.

**NC7. Make art a visible dimension of Burlington's townscape.**

NC7.1 Create a policy for inclusion of public art in Town-funded projects.

NC7.2 Implement public art installations in keeping with the recommended *Public Arts Plan*.



## OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

### **OS1. Increase annual spending on stewardship of existing land and acquisition of new lands.**

- OS1.1 Establish a standing working committee of citizens, Town Department Heads, and community leaders to become the stewards of open space and recreation resources and planning and implementation efforts to maintain and improve those resources.
- OS1.2 Complete an update to the 2011 *Open Space and Recreation Plan* to affirm current conditions and to serve as the guidance document for incremental improvements to the Town's open space and recreation resources.
- OS1.3 Adopt the provisions of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to create a funding source for acquiring and enhancing Burlington's open space and recreational resources.

### **OS2. Improve access to and connections between open space and recreation resources for all citizens and visitors.**

- OS2.1 Create greater accessibility to open space areas and parks from neighborhoods, places of employment, and schools.
- OS2.2 Involve the private and non-profit sectors in protecting and providing access to conservation and recreation areas.
- OS2.3 Improve awareness of existing access and connections to open space and recreation areas.
- OS2.4 Connect Burlington's diverse and dynamic public spaces and programs to create, inspire, and uphold inclusive social interaction.

### **OS3. Actively manage, maintain, and expand open space and recreation facilities.**

- OS3.1 Provide additional mechanisms and resources for management and maintenance of open space and recreation resources.
- OS3.2 Clearly define and support Recreation Department operations and programs.
- OS3.3 Increase percentage of land within the Town devoted to open space and recreation purposes.
- OS3.4 Identify lands that would create or contribute to open space corridors and prioritize their acquisition or secure conservation restrictions.



**OS4. Improve awareness and use of open space lands and recreation resources.**

- OS4.1 Increase accessibility and use of recreation facilities for all members of the Burlington community.
- OS4.2 Increase awareness of the open space and recreation resources available in Burlington.
- OS4.3 Provide additional programming to expand the user groups.
- OS4.4 Support, promote and expand the seasonally-oriented special events that are offered.

**OS5. Increase recreation-oriented uses and facilities.**

- OS5.1 In conjunction with the recommended *Facility Improvement and Maintenance Plan*, explore potential adaptive reuse of Town owned land or facilities for recreational uses.
- OS5.2 Improve physical access and use of existing recreation facilities.
- OS5.3 Increase programming of municipal recreational resources.

**OS6. Promote the protection of wildlife habitat, woodlands, and water resource areas.**

- OS6.1 Continue the protection of existing resources from encroachment and impact from incompatible uses.
- OS6.2 Identify and protect resources that are most vulnerable to development pressures.



## TOWN CENTER

- TC1. Prepare and implement a comprehensive open space and streetscape plan to articulate and enhance the character of the public realm for three components of the Town's core: the Commons, the Center, and the Hill.**
  - TC1.1 Establish a standing working committee of citizens, business, and community leaders to become the stewards of coordinated Town Center planning and implementation for this and other topics (consistent with recommendation LU8.1 in the *Land Use Element*).
  - TC1.2 Complete a design, engineering, and planning study supported by professionals to serve as the guidance document for incremental improvements.
  - TC1.3 Compile the funding and incrementally implement the town center improvement programs.
- TC2. Undertake a specialized economic development evaluation of the Center and create incentives to support desirable redevelopment.**
  - TC2.1 Prepare a market-based evaluation of the redevelopment study of the potential for existing properties within the range of uses recommended within this plan.
  - TC2.2 Prepare and adopt zoning revisions or other tools to promote desired redevelopment with adequate incentives to help accomplish the Town's planning purposes.
  - TC2.3 Actively engage the existing property owners, businesses, and tenants in the Town Center in the redevelopment planning and implementation.
- TC3. Create an identity and promotional program for the Town Center in collaboration with area businesses, institutions, and organizations.**
  - TC3.1 In concert with the creation of related stewardship committees, establish a long-term working group to advance an identity and promotional program
  - TC3.2 Compile funding and prepare an identity and promotional program with professional assistance for the town center and its component parts.
  - TC3.3 Implement the identity and promotional program.





**TC4. Prepare enhanced design standards and guidelines for the Commons and the Center.**

TC4.1 Create more specific guidelines and standards in conjunction with the zoning and other implementation studies and steps.

TC4.2 Provide a consistent and focused design review process for projects in the Town Center.

**TC5. Promote additional uses that will specifically contribute the to the vitality of the Commons and the municipal campus.**

TC5.1 In conjunction with the recommended *Facility Improvement and Maintenance Plan*, prepare a study of potential lease or sale of portions of Town land or facilities for complementary uses.

TC5.2 Refer to the Town Center Stewardship Committee as a source of programmatic ideas for uses and activities that will activate the Commons.

**TC6. Expand availability and schedule of bus transit routes serving the Town Center, and improve infrastructure for transit users.**

TC6.1 Promote and provide additional public transit routes and service levels connecting the Town Center to other parts of Burlington and the region.

TC6.2 Provide bus shelters and schedule postings, together with wayfinding signage and information about nearby shops and amenities.



## SERVICES AND FACILITIES

### **SF1. Provide quality and cost-effective public services.**

- SF1.1 Provide effective communication to increase efficiency, availability of information, and quality of services.
- SF1.2 Establish measurable methods for delivery of public services that improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- SF1.3 Incorporate facility operation measures to ensure Town facilities are functioning efficiently and sustainably.

### **SF2. Promote water resource management and water quality protection to ensure availability and high quality.**

- SF2.1 Maximize water conservation efforts throughout the community.
- SF2.2 Protect the Town's water quality and supply.

### **SF3. Establish priorities for facility preservation, upgrades, and replacement.**

- SF3.1 Develop a strategic plan for service delivery and facility operation (a Facility Improvement and Maintenance Plan).
- SF3.2 Increase the communication of maintenance issue and funding for repair.

### **SF4. Support and increase disaster and resiliency planning.**

- SF4.1 Improve resiliency against climate change by protecting natural resources and the environment.



