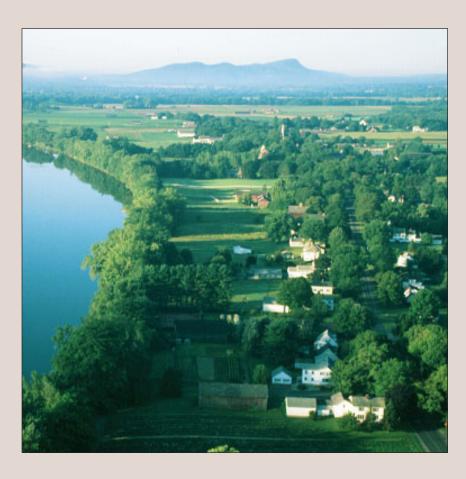
Hatfield's Master Plan

For the Twenty-First Century

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



April 2001

Dear Fellow Hatfield Residents:

At the start of our planning process, we used a mail survey and a series of community meetings to elicit your concerns about Hatfield. You told us that you most valued Hatfield's:

- Open space
- Working farms Local schools
- Easy access to I-91

You told us that your top goals are:

- Preserve town character
- Support the schools
- Maintain a low municipal tax rate
- Protect our natural resources Maintain working farms

Although pride in Hatfield was everywhere in evidence, about half of the 330 households responding to our survey said that recent growth and development had changed the town for the worse.

In our initial presentation to town meeting, we emphasized some of the things a Master Plan can do for

- Help manage growth and development
- Maintain the character of the community
- Protect critical natural, historical, and cultural resources
- Plan for major capital expenditures
- Ensure adequate services to residents and businesses • Discover issues of importance to the community that have never been
- Allow for a free and open discussion of major decisions facing the town,

in a public process accessible to all citizens

This plan accomplishes these goals in a way that we hope reflects your values and desires.

Sincerely,

The Hatfield Master Plan Committee

Daryl Williams, Chair David Dulong, Vice Chair Frank Abarno Joan Cocks Peter Allison Michael Coffey Martha Armstrong Paul Davis Terry Blunt Bryan Nicholas Ellen Bokina Mark Stein Bob Wagner Thomas Carroll

Please note: Our committee decided to cede responsibility for school issues to existing groups, committees, boards, parents, and personnel in town already working on this very important area of concern, because we felt that these groups have much more expertise on the question of local schools than we do.

WHY HATFIELD NEEDS A MASTER PLAN

Hatfield's Current Situation

Compared with nearby communities, the region, and the state, Hatfield is thriving. The town has plenty of open space, productive farmland, intact neighborhoods, and a beautiful main street. Residents are economically well off, the tax base is stable, the infrastructure has met residents' needs, and the town enjoys a balance of commercial and industrial enterprises. The town is small enough that it can govern itself by town meetings and elected boards.

Why shouldn't Hatfield simply continue to do in the future what it has done in the past? Why the need for a new Master

Regional pressures make it necessary for the town to take specific new actions to control its fate. Hatfield needs up-dated zoning regulations to preserve its rural character and enhance its economic base without overstepping private property rights. The town does not have adequate tools to attract new business to town while preventing over-scaled, poorly sited, or illdesigned commercial and industrial buildings.

In addition, Hatfield lacks housing opportunities for elderly residents and for children of Hatfield families who wish to buy their first homes here. It lacks standards for clustered residential development that might help preserve open space. The town's water supply is strained by residents' needs in the summer and is threatened by development occurring over the aquifer. Houses on large lots are being built on some of the world's richest farmland, while land currently zoned for industrial and commercial growth is criss-crossed by wetlands.

Zoning and Planning

Zoning by-laws map out the ways a community can change in the future. Zoning determines not only where development should occur, but also what it will look like, and how it will be laid out in the landscape. Zoning is the single most important force influencing the future shape of a town.

Hatfield's zoning regulations were last amended in 1990. They do not provide the town with the ability to deal with the types and intensities of development that can be anticipated in the new millennium. For example, Hatfield's zoning map is notable for the scattered nature of the commercial and industrial zoning districts in town. While this reflects a positive integration of small businesses and homes, it can have negative consequences with intensified commercial and industrial growth. Many undeveloped, industrially zoned parcels are accessible only over small rural roads. If these industrial parcels were fully built out, truck traffic would strain rural roads and transform the character of residential neighborhoods along them. Moreover, without adequate buffers, neighborhoods adjacent to commercial and industrial development would likely suffer a decline in quality.

Hatfield needs updated and improved zoning regulations as well as other tools to achieve the type and character of development residents want. In addition, the town must address the relationship between provision of public facilities and infrastructure on the one side, and growth and development on the other. Until this point the town has avoided, almost by accident, many of the growth pressures that have transformed towns in the Pioneer Valley. Hatfield's relatively outdated infrastructure has made it less attractive than surrounding communities to new development. If Hatfield moves to upgrade its infrastructure, a move that would save the town money in the end, the upgrade, especially of sewers and roads, could spark an influx of development that will need to be managed.

THE PLAN IN BRIEF

Hatfield's last Master Plan was completed in 1986. In 1998 the Town of Hatfield, as represented by the actions of the Select Board, decided to launch a new master planning process. In 1999, the Hatfield Select Board formed the Master Plan Commit tee (MPC). The committee consists of 14 volunteers, all residents of Hatfield. The town hired the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to aid in the plan's development.

Public Participation/Goal Setting

The MPC identified the common objectives of the community by reviewing past plans, talking with community leaders, and soliciting residents' ideas via a public survey and a series of public visioning meetings. Through this process the MPC learned that, while residents are content in Hatfield, they are concerned about three key areas:

- 1. Managing growth and economic development
- 2. Preserving agriculture, natural resources, open space, and historic neighborhoods—the "rural character of
- 3. Providing infrastructure (water, sewer, schools, and roads) that is, determining how the town should meet its responsibilities to residents



Residents want Hatfield to maintain its vitality at the same time that it preserves aspects of daily life that make Hatfield attractive to its residents and an exceptional example of the New England small town. More specifically, residents want new growth and development adequate to support the town's financial needs, but not so much that the town loses its farmland, natural resources, beautiful open spaces, and historic

Chapter 41, Section 81D of the General Laws of Massachusetts provides the legal basis for the creation of master plans. This act creates the requirement for a community Master Plan " . . .to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality." The Planning Board is charged with the creation of the Master Plan, which should include goals, policies, and an implementation section, as well as seven substantive elements: land use, housing, economic development, natural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and transportation.

PROCESS

The MPC developed seven working papers addressing these key areas of concern. The "Plan in Detail" section summarizes these papers, which describe what is happening in Hatfield now, what might happen, and how Hatfield can best achieve its goals. The "Implementation" section lays out a detailed process for taking action on the solutions the plan proposes. Below are summarized the findings in the three key areas noted above, including the recommendations described in the plan and a summary of plan implementation.

Growth, Development, and Economic Character

Hatfield has experienced steady but relatively modest growth over the past three decades. Residential growth has largely been limited to existing lots on existing town roads. The reluctance of many landowners to sell open land and the absence of sewer access in many parts of town have limited larger-scale developments. Because of zoning changes that followed adoption of the 1987 Land Use Plan and a strong market for larger homes, the number of acres under residential development, which has risen from 748 in 1971 to 1,131 in 1997 (a 150 percent increase), has actually increased more sharply than the number of new homes. Business development, often attracted by Hatfield's easy access to I-91, has almost doubled in this same period. The number of acres under business or industrial development has risen from 92 in 1971 and 124 in 1985 to 186 in 1997.

While three-quarters of Hatfield's total acreage remains undeveloped, the growth along existing town roads has meant a rise in truck and vehicular traffic, and a decline in the sense of open space. A strong regional housing market, prime real estate, and an attractive school system make Hatfield a tempting target for residential development. A growing regional bottleneck at the Coolidge Bridge on Route 9 and the exhaustion of available real estate along the Route 5/King Street commercial corridor in Northampton are causing increased commercial and retail interest in Hatfield's West Street neighborhood. Hatfield's zoning mandates large lot residential development, which encourages the conversion of open space to housing lots and limits opportunities for first-time homeowners and the elderly.



Hatfield's existing zoning regulations are inadequate to protect the town's character in the present environment. One cannot assume that landowners who have kept their land out of development will continue to do so in the face of a very attractive market or changes in their own life circumstances. Development that is not carefully managed can easily degrade existing neighborhoods. Large-scale commercial development especially feeds on itself, because once one property owner sells his land for such uses, neighbors will be more likely to do

Hatfield is not a self-contained economic unit. Twenty-one percent of residents work in town, but the majority do not. Conversely, many people from out of town work in Hatfield. Only some of Hatfield's commercial establishments expect to conduct most of their business with residents. Although some residents might welcome a bank and more shopping opportunities in the old town center, the widely dispersed, relatively small population makes such development unlikely, irrespective of land availability or zoning constraints. Hatfield has a general interest in the strength and diversity of the economy in Western Massachusetts, but the town must focus on enhancing its own tax base to provide financial resources for such important public services as its schools. Further economic development is in the town's interest if the positive contribution to the tax base outweighs the negative consequences, increased traffic, neighborhood disruption, demands on town infrastructure and services, and environmental degradation.

An analysis of existing zoning regulations shows that much land currently zoned for commercial and industrial development is too environmentally sensitive for such development. The business-zoned land is also so broadly scattered across the community that its full development would seriously threaten the character of the town. Hatfield needs more targeted development and more say over the shape of that development. At the same time, some town regulations should be modified to ease the burden both on new enterprises and on existing businesses that may wish to expand.



The Master Plan recommends that the town:

- Adopt site plan review/approval for all commercial and industrial uses.
- Adopt provisions of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act and establish a local preservation
- Review and amend zoning and subdivision regulations to manage development.
- Develop zoning regulations to promote a diversity of housing opportunities.
- Manage residential development.
- Adopt commercial and industrial design guidelines. • Adopt commercial and industrial performance
- Promote limited business development as infill in the town center.
- Adopt Transfer of Development Rights bylaws.
- Educate younger generations about the need to preserve the rural character of Hatfield. • Create a new light industrial and technology park

• Create a new satellite business center district.



The town of Hatfield is at a turning point in which it must act aggressively to maintain its identity as a small, beautiful, agricultural community in the face of increasing regional growth and development pressures. People who live in Hatfield talk about the community's "rural character." This term encompasses four aspects of this Master Plan: agriculture, natural resource protection, open space and recreation, and historic preserva-The first component of Hatfield's rural character is its farming

heritage. According to National Geographic, Hatfield has the

seventh best agricultural land in the world. The community strongly identifies with its agricultural heritage and wants to see farming continue as a central part of the town's economic life. While the quantifiable loss of farms and farmland in Hatfield is modest, the trend is not positive. Excluding forest land, the total loss of farmland in the town between 1971 and 1997 was about 220 acres, or 5.7 percent. Continuing pressure in the real estate market for larger lot home sites close to I-91, along with the educational, cultural, and economic amenities of communities like Amherst and Northampton, could easily tip the balance against Hatfield's working farm landscapes. Hatfield needs to assist farmers who wish to protect their land from future development, and find ways to promote its agricultural economy. Hatfield also has very little land enrolled in the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program, with only two farm parcels protected, compared to 41 protected farms in neighboring Hadley.



The second and third components involved in preserving Hatfield's rural character are natural resources and open space. Adopting zoning regulations to safeguard floodplains, rivers, wetlands, watersheds, and wildlife habitats will sustain Hatfield's ecological richness while helping to control flooding and protecting the town's water supply. It will also help the town direct new commercial and residential growth toward less environmentally sensitive lands. Hatfield's forests similarly have a value above and beyond the diversity reflected in the 135 species of trees and shrubs identified in the town's 1989 Conservation and Recreation Plan. They reduce flooding and protect river corridors from runoff of oil, fertilizers, and other chemicals. Most critically, much of the forested land in West Hatfield provides crucial absorption and filtration of water runoff that would otherwise reach the town's water supply.



Finally, rural character encompasses historic preservation—most importantly, preservation of the integrity of all Hatfield's historic neighborhoods. The town of Hatfield is fortunate to have two outstanding organizations committed to documenting, preserving, and protecting Hatfield's historic heritage and its culture: the Hatfield Historical Commission and the Hatfield Historical Society. Together, these two organizations, fueled by the energy of numerous volunteers and very limited staff, are doing an exemplary job. Even so, lack of resources and space limitations are threatening the town's ability to protect its past.



The Master Plan recommends that the town

- Establish a community-based "agricultural advisory commission" to represent farming issues at the
- Ensure that zoning and other bylaws reflect
- "farmer-friendly" approaches.
- Make farmland preservation a priority. • Actively encourage farmer participation in the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)
- Adopt a Sensitive Natural Areas Zoning Overlay District and review current zoning district
- Add performance standards to zoning regulations for watershed and critical natural areas.
- Implement a stormwater management bylaw.
- Adopt an Environmental Impact Analysis requirement for large development projects.
- Encourage adequate vegetated buffer strips between developed areas and wetland areas.
- Institute a well-monitoring program
- Acquire greenway corridors along streams.. • Increase use of the Chapter 61 program while assuring that Chapter 61 conversions are reviewed
- Revise existing floodplain regulations.
- Update the 1989 Open Space and Recreation Plan. • Improve substandard recreational facilities.
- Expand the review responsibilities of the Hatfield **Historical Commission.**
- Research the utility of creating an historical overlay district in Hatfield.

Infrastructure: How the Town Meets Residents' Basic Needs

Achieving a balance between protecting rural character and enhancing economic prosperity is referred to as growth management. The final piece of the growth management pie is a community's infrastructure. A big reason why Hatfield has not yet been too negatively affected by growth and development pressures is that the town has outdated infrastructure. Limited sewer lines, unpaved roads, and an increasingly strained water supply in the town of Hatfield may give some developers pause when they look around the Pioneer Valley for sites to build their office parks and retail centers. It is important to acknowledge explicitly the connection between provision of infrastructure and how a community grows. Where the town invests its limited tax dollars will affect where development

Hatfield has excellent drinking water, but under current pricing and distribution conditions, peak summer use is testing the limits of the supply. In addition to concerns about supply, dead end lines and undersized pipes severely compromise town firefighting capabilities. The Department of Public Works believes that the town's commitment to gradually meter all users will encourage conservation, but addressing flow requires physical improvements. Others see physical improvements, like improving town roads or extending sewers, though desired by



some, as steps that encourage growth. Infrastructure improvements can increase the residential and commercial value of undeveloped land and hence the pressure to develop open space. Fully maintained, dirt roads cost the town more than paved roads. Paved roads, however, can increase unwanted traffic. Many homeowners fear the costs of meeting new septic system standards. Others believe their existing systems will continue to work and do not wish to pay for town sewer.

The Master Plan recommends that the town:

- Develop a Master Plan for town water and sewer systems with a corresponding development schedule and expand facilities only to those areas planned for future development.
- Develop a prioritization schedule for infrastructure system upgrades and expansions.
- Work with businesses to research available funds to meet the infrastructure needs of businesses on **Routes 5/10.**
- Investigate alternative methods of reducing peak demand for water in summer months.
- Allocate resources to improve school facilities.
- Reduce traffic impacts from industrial uses on residents of North Hatfield.
- Amend subdivision regulations to require underground utilities for residential projects.
- Adopt a telecommunications bylaw.

Where Do We Go From Here? A Summary of Plan Implementation

The Hatfield Master Plan is being developed in three phases. Phase One (visioning and goal-setting) and Phase Two (data collection and analysis and plan development) are now completed. Phase Three (launching implementation) runs from January 2001 to July 31, 2002.

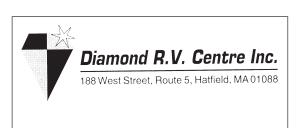
The Master Plan includes 37 recommendations designed to maintain and improve the quality of life in the town. They were identified out of a preliminary list of hundreds of possible actions the town could take to protect and maintain its rural character while at the same time maintaining residents' unusually high quality of life. (An additional 23 recommendations are described in the "Endnotes" section of the plan.) To assure implementation of the recommendations, the Master Plan Committee has classified each recommendation according to the following four criteria:

- What is the type of recommendation: regulatory (zoning or subdivision regulation change) or non-regulatory?
- What is its level of importance on a scale of 1-3? (1 = very important, 2 = important, 3 = relatively less)important)
- Who has primary responsibility for implementation?
- When should this recommendation be acted upon?



Many of the Master Plan's 37 recommendations may be acted upon swiftly and simultaneously. However, 20 of them require changing Hatfield's zoning regulations. Such changes necessarily take time and must be adopted at town meeting. The Master Plan Committee plans to work with the Planning Board, the Zoning Board, and the Select Board to bring zoning changes to the town for approval at the May 2002 town meeting. Yet, in an effort to maintain the momentum that has been built up in Hatfield surrounding the development of this Master Plan, the MPC will work with the Planning Board to bring at least two and possibly three items to the townspeople at the May 2001 town meeting, including a site plan review zoning change, creation of a Hatfield Community Preservation Fund, and creation of an agriculture advisory committee.







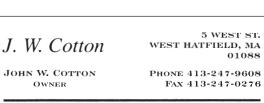
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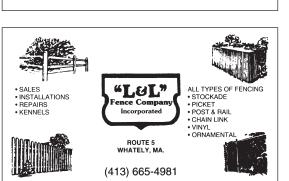
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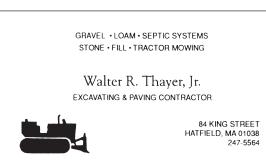
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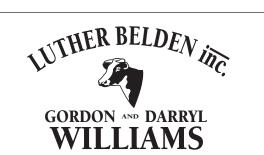




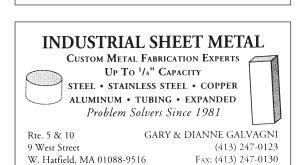
Title 5 Septic Systems Design - Installation - Repairs Perc Testing visit our web site: www.jwcotton.com



















Hatfield Zoning Districts

All land in Hatfield can be used for agricultural purposes, churches, and government-related uses. Storage in existing sheds is allowed on all land as long as the shed existed at By-law adoption.

A special permit is required for a riding stable or a public utility on all land.

Mobile home courts are not permitted.

FP Flood Plain

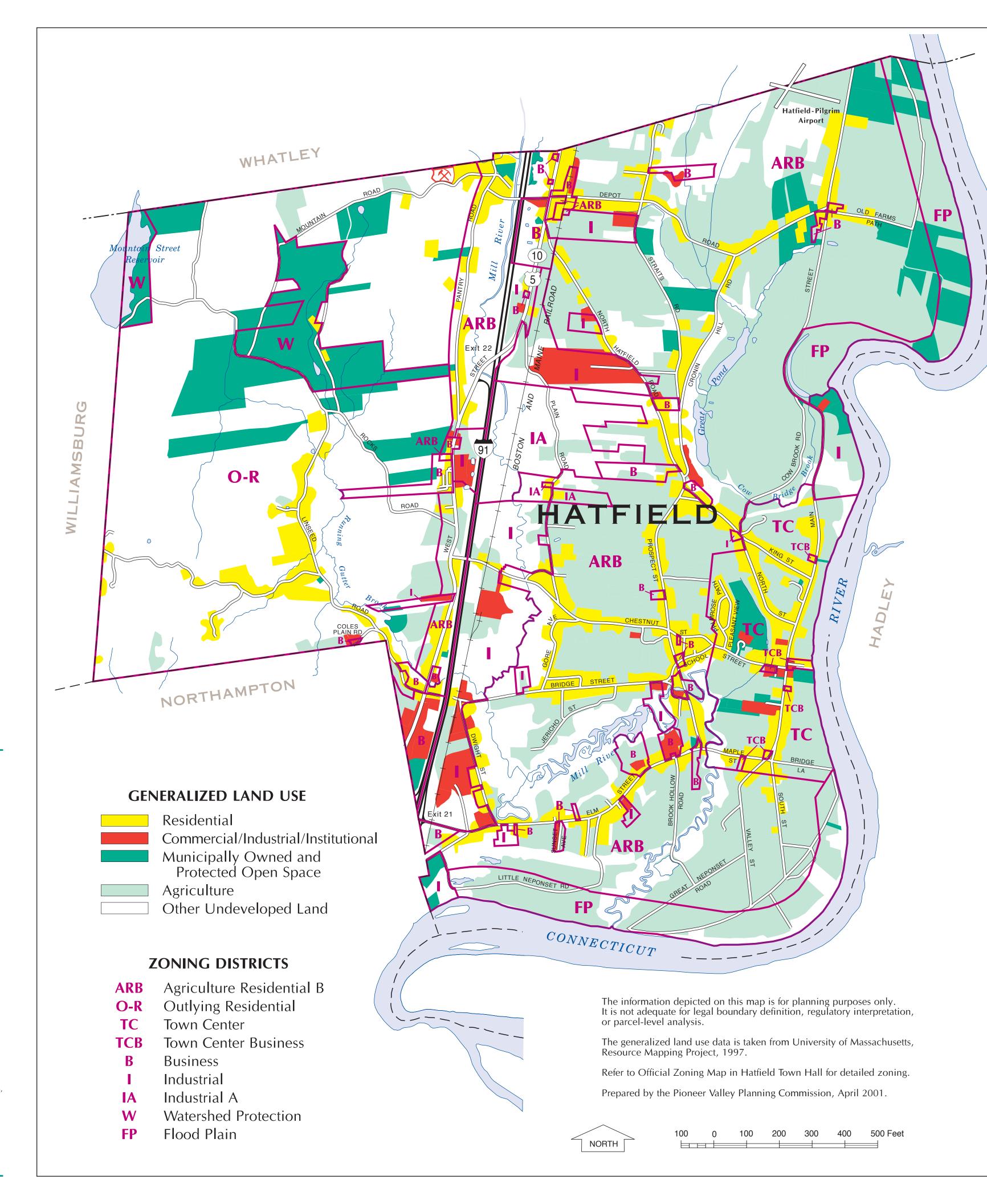
Zoning describes how land may be used. The town of Hatfield has seven standard zoning districts plus two overlay districts. This table explains the land uses permitted in each zoning district. A key recommendation that came out of the Master Planning process is that the Town of Hatfield needs to reassess its current zoning in order to maintain its rural character and preserve resident's quality of life. Most of Hatfield's land is unprotected.

Please take some time to look at the attached man so you can see how land is currently being used and how it could

	ake some time to look at the attac , based on current zoning.	ched map so you can see how land is currently being used and how it could
District Name		Permitted Land Uses
ARB	Agricultural Residential "B"	Above and single-family homes. With a special permit, any residential use, private club, institutional uses, public utility, water supply, kennels, veterinary hospital professional offices, and home business.
O-R	Outlying residential	Above and single family homes. With a special permit, elderly housing, public utilities, kennels, veterinary hospital and home business.
TC	Town Center	Above and single family homes. With a special permit, other residential uses, institutional uses, and financial institutions, professional offices and home businesses.
TCB	Town Center Business	Same as Town Center plus, commercial retail and light assembly and home business. With a special permit, restaurants, theatres, and hotels, automobile sales and repair, funeral homes, and light assembly.
В	Business	Above and commercial retail, restaurants, theatres, motor vehicle sales and repair, light assembly, nursing home, water supply, and warehouse. With a special permit all other commercial uses, some residential uses and limited industrial uses.
1	Industrial	Above and water supply, commercial retail, motor vehicle sales and repair. With a special permit all other industrial uses, some residential uses and limited commercial uses.
I-A	Industrial "A"	Same as I, but no commercial retail.
W	Watershed Protection	The Watershed Protection district is an overlay district, restricting the underlying land use to protect the public drinking water supply.

The Flood Plain district is an overlay district, restricting the underlying

land use because of the potential for flooding.



Recommended Bylaw Changes

- Review and amend zoning and subdivision regulations to manage development.
- Adopt commercial performance, siting, design, and landscape standards for new business development.
- Adopt Transfer of Development Rights bylaws.
- Create a new satellite light industrial and technology park district.
- Create a new neighborhood-scale business center district and/or a limited business district.
- Ensure that zoning and other bylaws reflect "farmer-friendly" approaches.
- Adopt a Sensitive Natural Areas Zoning Overlay District and review current zoning district boundaries.
- Require Site Plan Review for new construction within the Water Supply Protection Area and performance standards in subdivision regulations to protect critical natural areas.
- Implement a performance-based stormwater management bylaw.
- Adopt an Environmental Impact Analysis requirement for large development projects.
- Revise existing floodplain regulations.
- Amend sub-division regulations to require underground utilities for residential projects.

Recommendations Other than Bylaw Changes

- Establish and fund a Hatfield Community Preservation Fund to encourage land donations and conservation restrictions.
- Establish a community-based "agricultural advisory commission" to represent farming issues at the local level.
- Prioritize farmland for preservation.
- Increase use of the Chapter 61 program while assuring that Chapter 6 conversions are reviewed by the town.
- Educate younger generations about the need to preserve the rural character of Hatfield.
- Update the 1989 Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Improve substandard recreational facilities.
- Expand the influence and responsibilities of the Hatfield Historical Commission.
- Develop a Master Plan for town water and sewer systems with a corresponding development schedule and expand facilities only to areas planned for future development.
- Develop a prioritization schedule for infrastructure system upgrades and expansions.
- Work with businesses to research available funds to meet the infrastructure needs of businesses on Routes 5/10.
- Investigate alternative methods of reducing peak demand for water in summer months.
- Allocate resources to improve school facilities.
- Reduce traffic impacts from industrial uses on residents of North Hatfield.