



A Window to Ware's Future

The 2016 Master Plan



Town of Ware
126 Main Street
Ware MA 01082
www.townofware.com



A Window to Ware's Future

The 2016 Master Plan

Adopted by the Ware Planning Board

September 21, 2016

Planning Board:

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John Chabot, Alternate

Master Plan Steering Committee:

George Staiti, Chairman
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Mary Durr, Clerk
Denis Ouimette
Roy St. George
Luke Wright

Town Staff:

Stuart Beckley, Town Manager
*Karen Cullan, AICP, Director of Planning &
Community Development*
Judi Mosso, MPA, Assistant to the Director

The Members of the 2012 Ware Studio Class, University of Massachusetts,
Amherst, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning:

<i>Belen Alfaro</i>	<i>Stephanie Molden</i>
<i>Bruno Carneiro</i>	<i>Meagen Mulherin</i>
<i>Margaret Engesser</i>	<i>Russell Pandres</i>
<i>Katie Fox</i>	<i>Vinicius Pereira</i>
<i>Evadne Friedman</i>	<i>Brian Reid</i>
<i>Timothy Inacio</i>	<i>Pedro Soto</i>
<i>Anita Lockesmith</i>	<i>Jennifer Stromsten</i>
<i>Christina Mills</i>	

Professors: Elisabeth Hamin, PhD and Bob Mitchell, FAICP






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Cover: Karen Cullan, Jack Cascio

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Covered Bridge,
by Michael Cebula

*Second Place Winner -
Master Plan Art Contest*

Intarsia wall hanging

"A representation of the covered bridge such as the one connecting Ware and Gilbertville."



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Introduction



A master plan for a town - what is it? What's it for? Why do we need it? These are common questions about this important document. Conceptually, a municipal master plan is similar to a business plan, a family's vacation plan, or any other type of plan. Planning, any planning, is a multipart process that begins with an identification of common values (or vision) which lead to the formation of goals, an assessment of where we are today, and a strategy laying out how to reach our identified goals - where we want to be tomorrow, next year, or at some point in the future.

A town's master plan is produced by first creating an inventory of all current and pertinent information regarding the community. This is followed by an analysis of the potential problems and issues. Goals for the development of the community and resolution of perceived problems and issues are discussed. From these discussions, alternative solutions are weighed before establishing policies for achieving the goals. Finally, the desired steps required to implement the policies are identified.

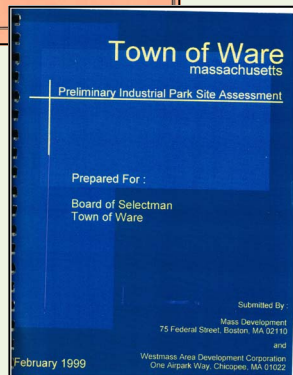
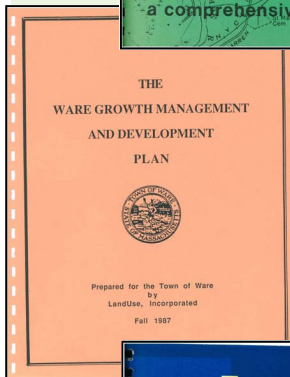
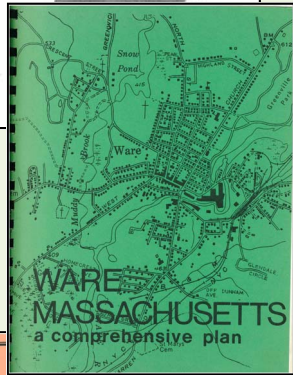
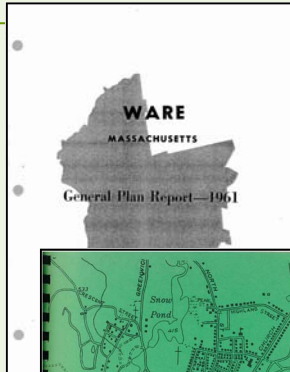
Ware has gone through this process many times in the past. The list on the following pages includes the various plans that have been done over the past four decades. Some of the problems identified in the earliest plans remain concerns today. This is partly a function of Ware's position in the regional and state economy: the Town remains relatively poor and unable to put the resources into addressing some of the issues, and the business climate continues to suffer due in part to that economy, the town's geographic location, and the lack of desired infrastructure (such as natural gas). Likewise, housing conditions in the downtown area where the majority of older units exist continue to deteriorate as property owners lack the resources to maintain and improve their buildings.

Yet the Town remains optimistic for the future. With the completion of the Visioning, Branding, Wayfinding, and Business Development Plan in 2015, there is a renewed sense of energy in the community, and more people are recognizing the value the Town has. As more citizens roll up their sleeves to help implement the recommendations made in this master plan, many of which have been consistently called for in previous plans, the community at large will indeed begin to see that Ware really is *Somewhere Worth Being*.

"[A master] plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality."

MGL Ch. 41 §81D

A History of Planning



General Plan Report; 1961, Theodore Bacon Jr, planning consultant - study of the town's existing conditions and recommendations for managing future growth, primary recommendation was to adopt zoning.

Comprehensive Plan; 1975, UMass LARP¹ - noted problems with the supply of decent affordable housing, the need for redevelopment of the Millyard, and a desire to revitalize the downtown.

Functional Tourism & Rural Town Revitalization: Townscape Analysis; 1985, Cynthia Beairsto, Graduate student, UMass LARP

Growth Management and Development Plan; Fall 1987, Landuse Inc. - noted lack of decent and affordable multi-family housing, continued need for redevelopment of the Millyard as well as need to revitalize downtown.

Open Space & Recreation Plan; Fall 1987, Landuse Inc. - addressed the need for land preservation and facility planning, including the development of the Ware River Greenway bike path (rail trail).

Route 32 Corridor Study; 1992, UMass LARP - examined traffic, water and sewer, and land use to determine pre-emptive measures to manage growth in the corridor.

Ware Recreation Facilities Plan; Fall 1994, UMass LARP

Comprehensive Market Analysis and Business Assessment for Downtown Ware; April 1996, Cullinan Engineering with Northern Economic Planners

Ware River Valley Greenway Trails Project – A site assessment report; June 1997, J. Gieo Pensoneault, MLA, UMass LARP

Open Space & Recreation Plan; 1998, Justin Berthiaume and Vera Kalias (consultants, UMass LARP graduate & graduate student)

Preliminary Industrial Park Site Assessment; Feb. 1999, Mass Development with Westmass Area Development Corporation

EOAA Build-out Analysis; 2000, PVPC² - part of a statewide effort to identify buildable land and potential residential growth.

-
1. *University of Massachusetts Dept. of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning.*
 2. *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission*

Ware Millyard Site Assessment & Economic Development Plan; June 2001, Lake Hitchcock Development Corporation with Architectural Insights, Inc. - assessed the physical and business conditions in the Millyard and offered recommendations to foster economic growth and redevelopment of the complex.

Guiding the Future of Ware – A Strategic Plan for the Next Five Years; June 2002, PVPC - strategies were developed to address concerns ranging from preserving the environment to economic development efforts.

Quabbin Sub-regional Housing Plan; 2002, PVPC - guides the implementation of regional measures to increase the affordable housing supply; for Ware these included programs for housing rehabilitation, homeowner programs such as creative financing and sweat equity projects, land trusts, limited equity ownership, and revision of the zoning bylaw.

Community Development Strategy; 2002 with updates through 2014, PVPC and Town of Ware - identifies the town's development goals, presents an action plan consistent with the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles, and prioritizes community development projects.

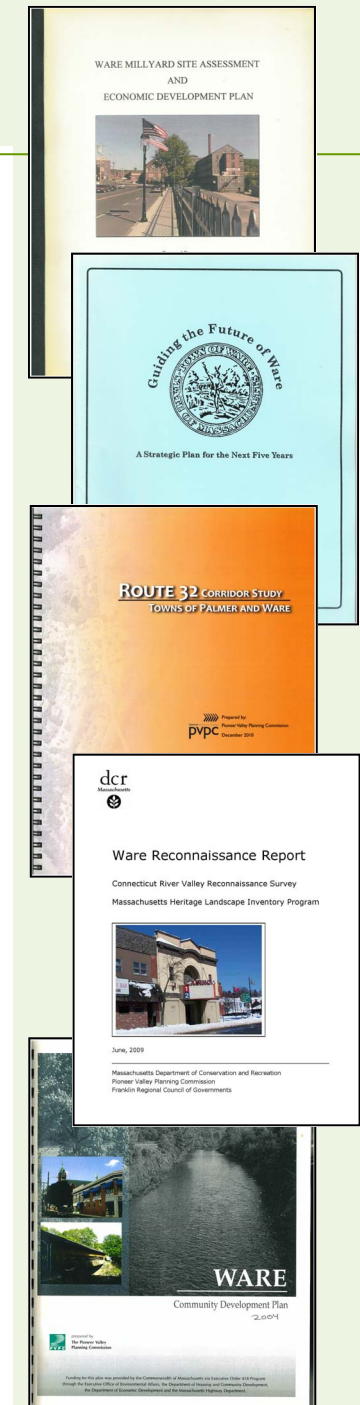
Ware Community Development Plan; 2004, PVPC - an extension of the 2002 strategic plan. Of the eight strategies chosen as priorities, three have been completed and one tried but unsuccessful.

Open Space & Recreation Plan; 2007, Town of Ware & PVPC - emphasizes four major goals: providing a broad range of high quality recreation programs, managing open space and recreation cohesively and effectively, acquiring new lands for recreation and open space, and increasing public awareness of open space and recreation resources.

Heritage Landscape Inventory; June 2009, MA Dept of Conservation & Recreation and PVPC - identified the downtown with its historic buildings and park, other public parks, historic farmsteads and the Ware River and covered bridge.

Route 32 Corridor Study; 2010, PVPC - assessment of existing conditions and recommendations of land use controls for three alternative growth scenarios.

Downtown Parking Study; 2012, Town of Ware - inventoried parking spaces, analyzed existing parking demands, and projected future demand based on full utilization of the existing buildings. The results showed a surplus of spaces, but inadequate distribution, signage, and parking management. The study includes recommendations for next steps to address these issues.





Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Plan; 2014, PVPC - identified opportunities related to housing market stability, housing affordability and fair access to housing in the Pioneer Valley in order to create a region in which all residents are able to choose housing that is affordable and appropriate to their needs.

A Mill Town's Downtown: Assessing the Needs of Ware's Main Street; 2013, Christina Mills, UMass LARP graduate student - created a database of the downtown – what the businesses and other occupants are, how much space they use/need, what physical space is vacant and available to other businesses, and what types of businesses are missing yet desired by the general public.

Downtown Organizational Models; 2014, Mary Vilbon (consultant), Town of Ware - project in which experts from other communities presented the most common organizational models for downtown businesses trying to help improve the downtown environment. This led to the formation of a group of highly motivated upper management level business people who are now undertaking other efforts to improve downtown Ware. So far they have initiated seven projects, ranging from beautification on Main Street using window boxes and planters to commercial property utilization, which will hopefully result in occupancy of vacant spaces on Main Street.

Property Assessment and Reuse Planning Project (PARP); 2014, Community Opportunities Group - identified and examined 47 of the worst residential properties in the target area and recommended best uses (in some cases commercial), estimated costs for rehab of structures, and financing strategies to help property owners get these units, many of which are vacant, back to occupiable condition.

Visioning, Branding, Wayfinding, & Business Development Plan; March 2015 - Arnett Muldrow & Associates Inc. - defined a vision statement for Ware, identified the image the community wishes to project, performed a market analysis and identified gaps in the mix of businesses in Ware, and designed a wayfinding system to help people find their destinations in town.

Hazard Mitigation Plan; 2016, PVPC and Town of Ware - recommends actions that can be taken to reduce long term risk to people and property from natural hazards such as flooding, storms, high winds, etc.

Open Space & Recreation Plan; 2016, PVPC and Town of Ware - this update of the 2007 plan includes a comprehensive database of property in Ware that is in some form of open space, a listing of the recreational resources in town, and recommended actions to address the needs identified by the community for both open space planning and recreational opportunities.

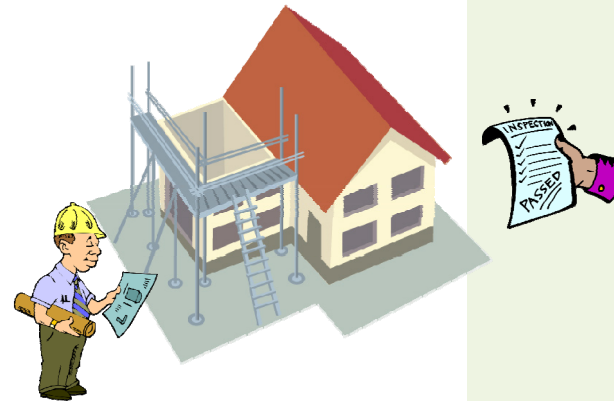
A History of Implementation

Of the 228 separate recommendations made in the previous strategic and master plans (1987, 2002, and 2004), 59 have been successfully completed, attempted, or the town determined they were unrealistic or otherwise undesired. This section highlights some of the 53 that have been successfully implemented.



1987 Recommendation to hire a full time Building Inspector.

Ware established a full time Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer in 1990. This has helped to ensure that buildings are safe and that our zoning, which represents Ware's desired development pattern, is followed, for the purpose of protecting everyone's health, safety, and general welfare.



1987 Recommendation to promote the concept of a local land trust to conserve land.

The East Quabbin Land Trust was formed in Hardwick in 1994 to address concerns about the loss of farmland and wildlife habitat in the region. To date the Trust has protected over 4,000 acres in the region by working cooperatively with property owners, government agencies, conservation groups, and other land trust organizations.



Courtesy of EQLT

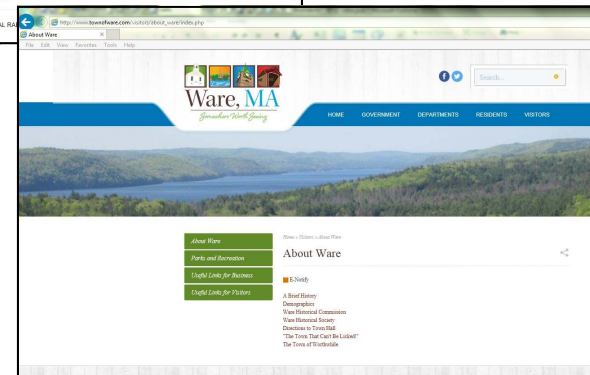
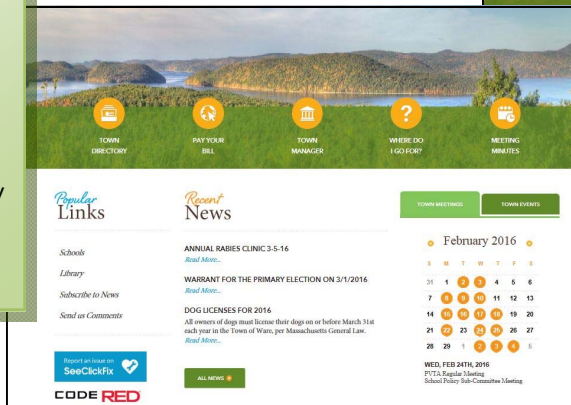




1987 Recommendation to increase elderly housing.
 The lack of safe, affordable housing for Ware's elderly residents has been recognized for many years. In 2007, HAP Housing renovated the historic 1893 Church Street School into 29 units which are now highly sought after by area residents.

Source: HAP Housing

2004 Recommendation to create a Town website.
 In order to better serve residents, businesses, and visitors, Ware established a town website in 2005. Recently upgraded and redesigned, the website provides information on town departments, meetings, events, and news, and allows residents to pay bills online and report issues (such as potholes).



1987 Recommendation to create a DPW.
Ware's Department of Public Works strives to provide the town with safe roads throughout the year, deliver safe potable water to residents, provide sewer service, and provide water for fire suppression through the network of hydrants within the water service area.



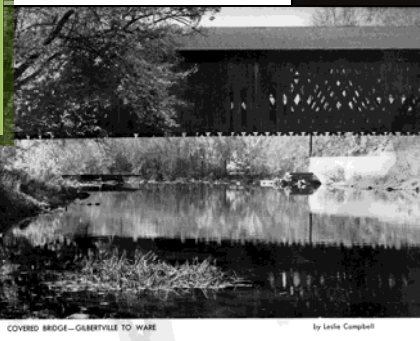
1987 Recommendation to prepare an updated study on traffic lights and pedestrian crosswalks in the downtown.
After numerous studies and a safety audit, the town began working in 2015 on a redesign of Main Street. This project is currently scheduled for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding in 2019 to replace the traffic lights, adjust the traffic patterns on Main Street, and reconstruct the sidewalks downtown.

1987 and 2002 Recommendations to continue working to create the Ware River Valley Greenways Trail.
For many years, people in Ware have dreamed about and planned for a rail trail; the Ware River Valley Greenway Trail. In 2015 a major hurdle was overcome with the installation of two bridges on the southern section of the trail. Stone dust was applied where needed, and the trail is now open for use between Robbins Road and the Gibb's Crossing shopping center (1.8 miles).





1987 Recommendation to establish local historic districts. Ware has many historically important places, a few of which have protections that will ensure they remain intact for future generations to enjoy. Ware designated four historic districts in town which provide the basis for the future establishment of local historic districts with better regulatory oversight and protection.



© Jack Cascio www.NEAP.Biz

1987 Recommendation to reestablish the Conservation Commission and to identify wetland violations and enforce the regulations. In addition to reestablishing the Conservation Commission, the Town has employed a conservation agent since 2007.



2002 Recommendation to upgrade the facilities in Grenville Park.

This park has been the pride and joy of Ware for over 100 years. Over time, the park has been upgraded and the facilities expanded to accommodate the needs of town residents. Most recently, the bandstand was renovated and ramps added to improve accessibility, the playground was upgraded, and in 2016 the roads throughout the park will be repaired.

1961 Recommendation to adopt zoning and 1987, 2002, and 2004 Recommendations to amend the zoning bylaw in numerous ways. Ware adopted a very limited zoning bylaw in 1971, the first iteration of a "modern" zoning bylaw in 1980, and a truly comprehensive zoning bylaw in 1987. After dozens of amendments over the ensuing years, the town adopted a new zoning bylaw in 2012. Many of the recommendations made in the various master plans were addressed in this major rewrite.



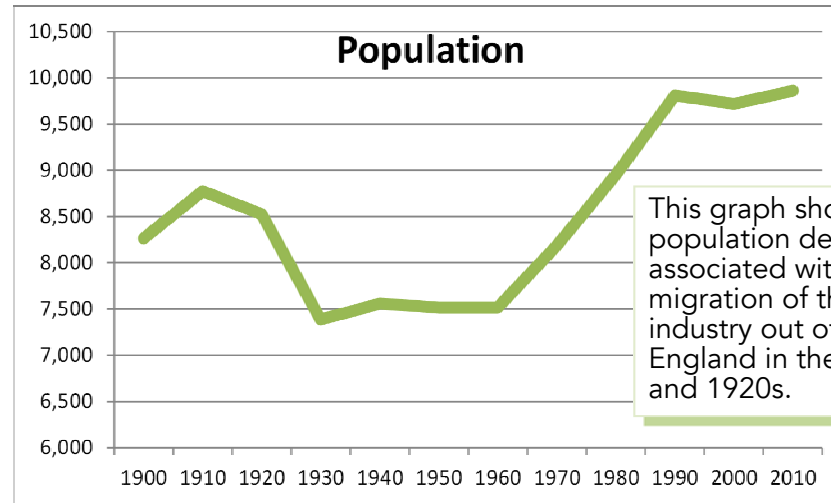


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A Snapshot of Ware



Ware's population has been stable at just below 10,000 for 30 years. Ware has only about 1,000 more people than it had during the height of the manufacturing boom in the early 1900s. The average household size and composition has changed since the 1950s, when the household size was 3.09; it is now 2.39. The size of the household corresponds to lower birth rate and a greater number of single person and single parent households.

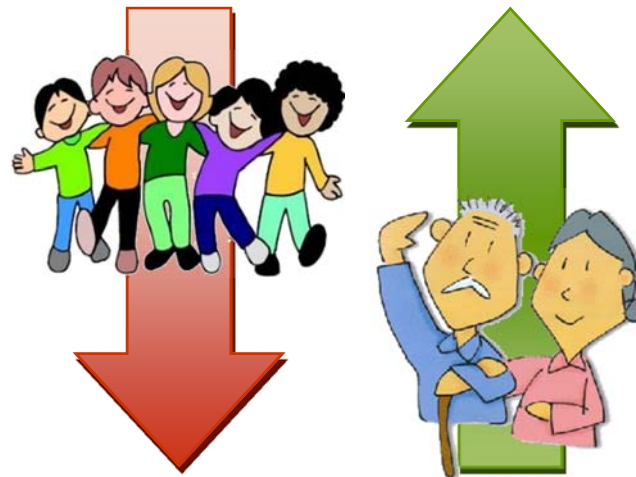


This graph shows the population decline associated with the migration of the textile industry out of New England in the 1910s and 1920s.

This section gives a brief snapshot of who we are, where we live, how we make a living, how we spend our leisure time, and how we get around. Detailed information is presented in the appendix.



Our household size in 2010 was 2.39, significantly lower than the 3.09 we had in the 1950s, and below the national average of 2.58.



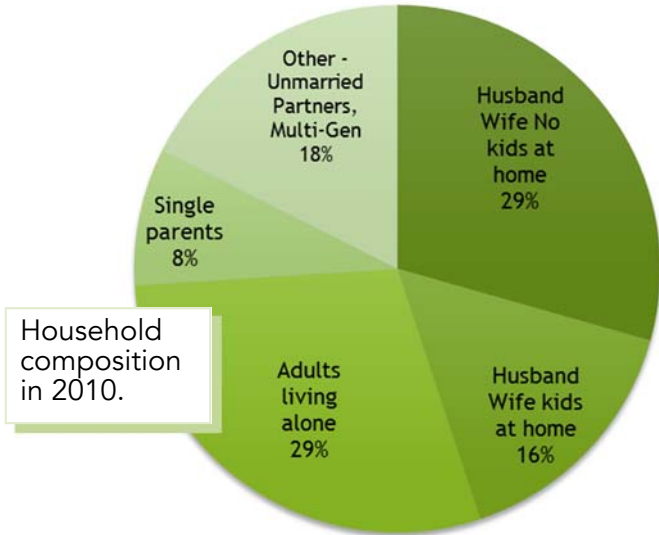
Like many small New England towns, population growth is most notable in the 45 and older age groups while the population of under 19 is declining.

Demographics - The People of Ware

Ware's population, like most small New England towns, has changed significantly since the 1950s. At that time, the average household size was 3.09 people per household, and today it is 2.39. The size of the household corresponds to lower birth rate and a greater number of single person and single parent households. This means the same size population requires more housing units to shelter them.



27% of our households include someone age 65 or older.



Household composition in 2010.



Ware's ethnic heritage is predominantly French, Polish, and Irish.

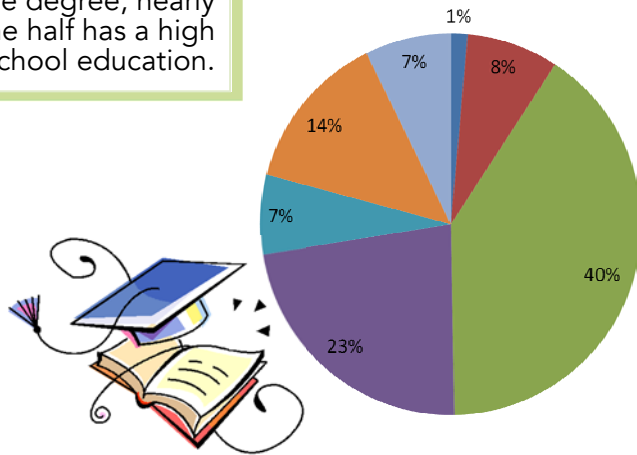


Over one third of our households have only one adult.



A bit more than one quarter of our population age 25+ has a college degree; nearly one half has a high school education.

Educational Attainment, Age 25+



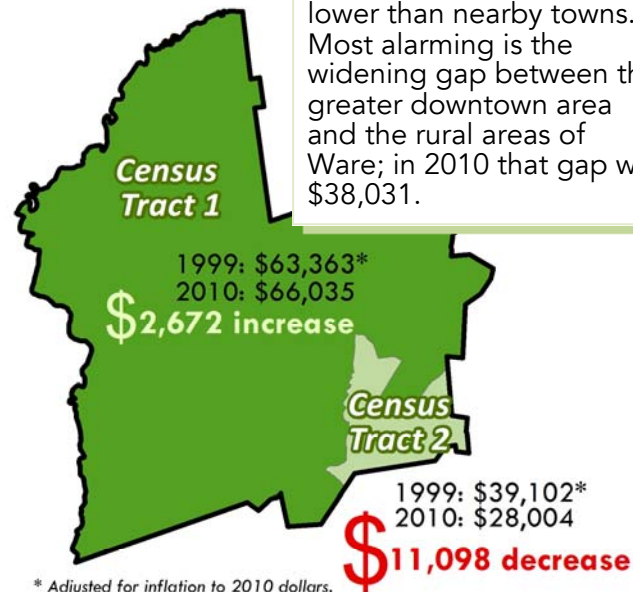
- Less than 9th grade
- 9th to 12th grade, no diploma
- High school graduate (includes equivalency)
- Some college, no degree
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Graduate or professional degree



More than half of our labor force works in just a few industries: education, health care, social services, retail trade, and manufacturing.



Our household income is lower than nearby towns. Most alarming is the widening gap between the greater downtown area and the rural areas of Ware; in 2010 that gap was \$38,031.



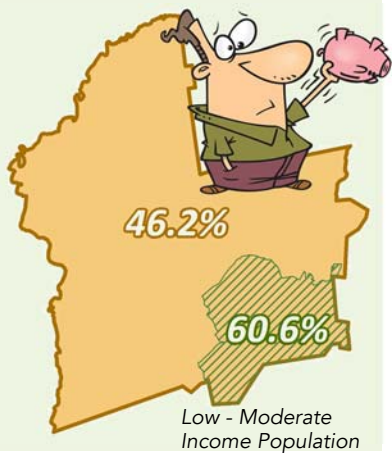
* Adjusted for inflation to 2010 dollars.
Sources: 1999: 2000 Census, Summary Tape File 3
2010: 2006-2010 ACS Selected Population Tables

Ware also has an increasing percentage of elderly residents, which corresponds with the Baby Boom generation. This trend can be seen across the nation, with some variation in the proportion of the population depending on the amenities available in the community.

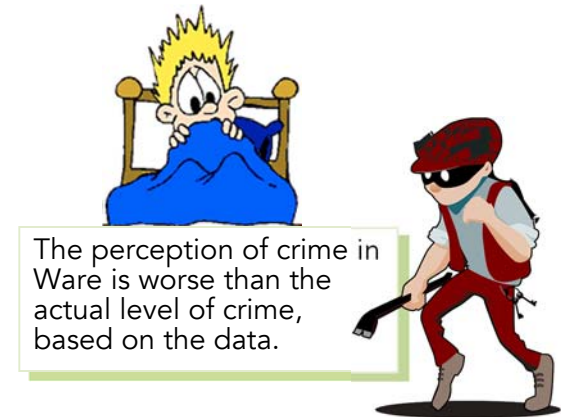
While over 99% of the population is white, ethnicity remains a cultural factor in Ware.

The US Census Bureau tabulates data for Ware as an entire town and for an area called the Census Designated Place (CDP, hatched area in map below).

In 2015, 46.2% of Ware's total population and 60.6% of the CDP population were low to moderate income, meaning they live in a household earning 80% or less of the area median income.



While our poverty rate is higher than the state average (13.7 % vs. 11.6%), our child poverty rate is 28.7%, a serious concern.

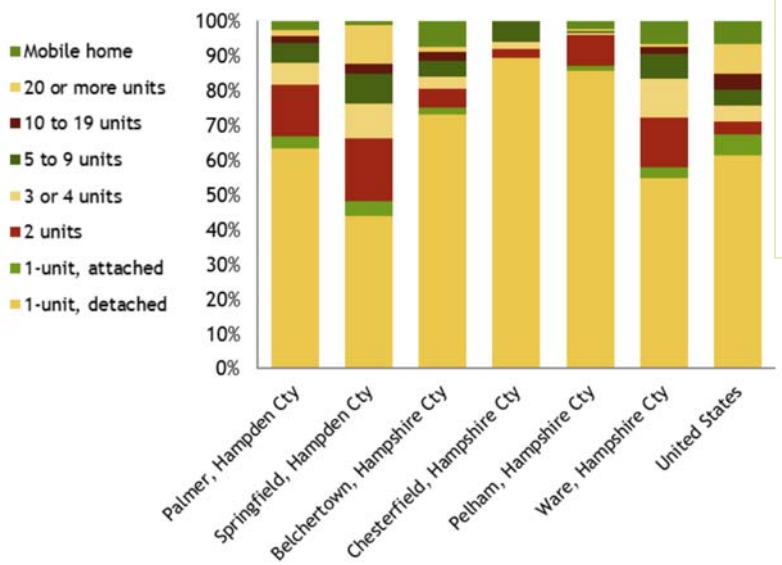


The perception of crime in Ware is worse than the actual level of crime, based on the data.

The perception of crime in Ware is higher than what may be the reality. In general, the crime index in Ware is lower than the state or nation and has consistently remained that way since 2005. It's possible that residents' concerns about crime are partly derived from a local police force that may be too small to meet the needs of a community of Ware's size with a history of urban issues such as drug use. Substance abuse is linked to higher rates of crime, poverty, poor health outcomes, and individual patterns of abuse, and can lead to unemployment, legal problems, and negative effects on mental health and family life. It is important to recognize that substance abuse such as the current opioid crisis is a national societal problem and is not unique to Ware. Yet local officials still have a responsibility to address the problem; the public must recognize they cannot solve it alone.



Housing - Where We Live

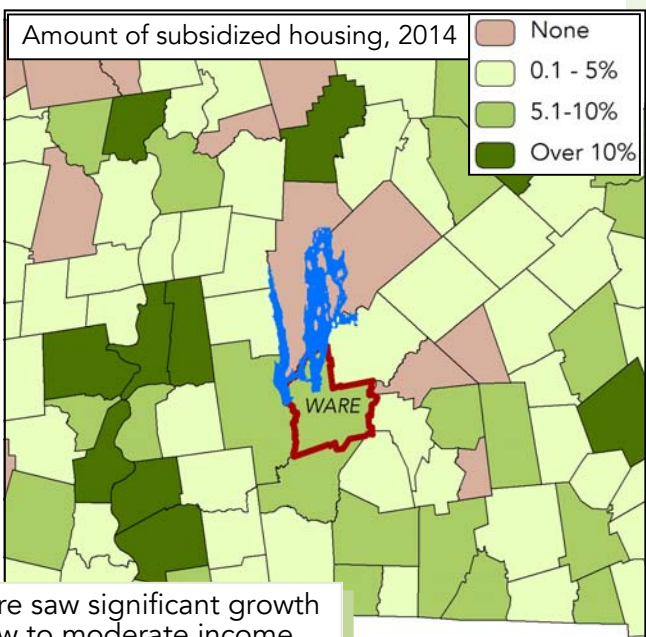


Ware had 4,503 housing units as of the 2010 census. Of those, 2,749 (61%) were single family homes and 1,754 (39%) units were in buildings with two or more units. There is much more variety of unit type in Ware than many area towns.

Ware is currently below the 10% threshold recommended by state law for income restricted housing – currently at 9.3%.

Dedicated low-moderate income units are removed from the list every year, so Ware is vulnerable to development of more subsidized housing with limited local control, under MGL chapter 40B.

While more clean, safe, and affordable housing is needed, the community benefits when such housing is located and designed in compliance with the local Zoning Bylaw.



In the 1970s Ware saw significant growth in housing for low to moderate income households with the construction of Valley View (76 units) and Highland Village (111 units), and again in 2003 with Hillside Village (80 units). In 2008, the Church Street School was converted into an elderly housing complex (29 units). Additional units reserved for such households are scattered throughout Ware.

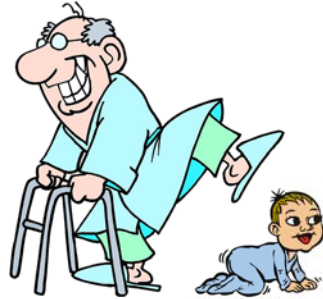


Ware has a very diverse housing stock with a good mix of housing types, but most duplex and multi-family units were built before 1950 and need upgrading.



Ware's elderly make up 20% of the population, but only 3.2% of the housing stock is designed for them.

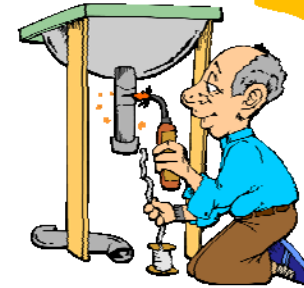
Many elderly residents are still living in their own homes and have difficulty paying for maintenance and necessary repairs or upgrades since they have fixed incomes. As the population of older residents continues to increase, more designated elderly housing units are needed, as well as a greater variety of housing types. Currently Ware has no options for residents in need of assisted living or higher levels of care.



The elder population (60+), as of the 2010 census, is 2,066, or 20% of the town's total. It is expected this population will continue to grow as the Baby Boom generation ages, in combination with longer lifespans and lower birth rates.



Elderly people often have specific needs for housing, such as wider doorways, no stairs, accessible kitchens and bathrooms, and doorknobs that are easier to open. Many homes in Ware cannot be easily renovated to comfortably accommodate these needs.

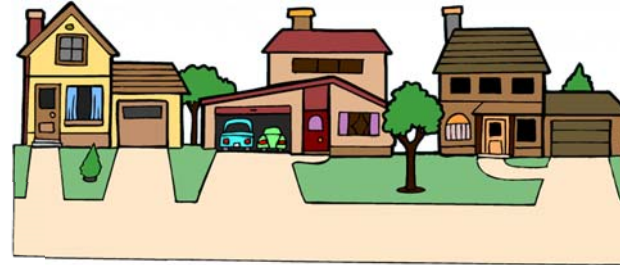


Elderly people have different needs than the general population, but they are still able to contribute to society. Housing located and designed to better serve their needs can also help them stay connected.

Given the high cost of building elderly housing, the lack of funding for such housing, and the relatively small market for it in any given town in this region, Ware should expect that housing needs will be met regionally. While this may not be ideal, it is realistic. Currently there are plans in Belchertown to build over 80 assisted living units, but more options are needed.



While Ware has relatively good diversity in house types, many of the single family housing created over the last 50 years are modest to large homes along the towns roadways. This development pattern has eroded the rural character which is so valued by townspeople.



A healthy community has a variety of housing types, giving people choices of how they want to live. While Ware has a good variety of housing types, new construction has been limited to single family homes on larger lots - driven by the lack of available buildable land located close to public water and sewer systems and within zoning districts where smaller lots are permitted.



Ware has had zoning provisions for cluster housing for ten years, but no developer has utilized the tool to date, for a variety of reasons. Cluster housing developments are sought after by "empty nesters" ready to downsize as well as young families wishing to avoid the isolation that large homes on large lots often brings.



Our Economy - Where We Work and Shop

Ware was once a thriving mill town, proud of its robust manufacturing industry. Now, the modern economy has shifted Ware to a town comprised of many industries, none of which present an obvious symbol or unifying identity the way the mills once did. Fortunately, the town possesses all of the necessary components for economic revitalization:

- ◆ an established downtown with room for new businesses
- ◆ an underutilized mill yard complex
- ◆ a robust healthcare industry

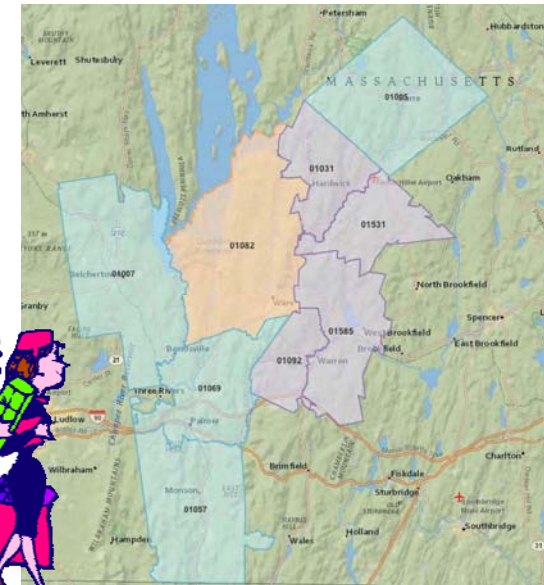
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Nearly three quarters of the employment in Ware is in retail trade, services, and healthcare and social assistance.

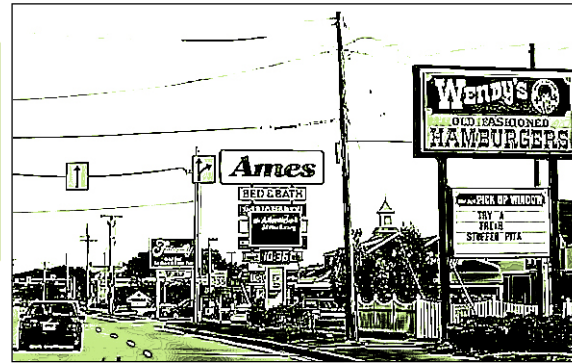
*Other includes Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate; Construction; Transportation, Communication, & Utilities; and Information.

There are 27,000 people in the primary (orange) and secondary (purple) trade areas, plus 50,000 in the tertiary (blue) trade area - there is significant opportunity for growth in the retail sector of the economy.



Arnett Muldrow & Associates

Strip commercial land use patterns were established in Ware long before zoning was adopted, leading to the Route 32 corridor between the Palmer town line and Ware's downtown being designated as the primary location for retail businesses .



- ◆ Quabbin Reservoir and the Ware River
- ◆ hundreds of acres of protected green space
- ◆ an able and ready workforce, and
- ◆ being a regional hub serving many of the retail and service needs for a much larger population.



Main Street Storefronts

Once the thriving business center of Ware and the region, Ware's downtown continues to face challenges in attracting enough customers and activity to regain the vibrancy of yesteryear. The recent re-establishment of a business and civic association has helped, and several of their initiatives should continue the upward trend. However, the downtown still has many vacant spaces: 40% of the commercial buildings on Main Street have at least one vacant space. As the pie chart shows, over half the storefront space (measured in linear feet) on Main Street is either vacant or "blank", meaning it has no interest or activity for pedestrians.



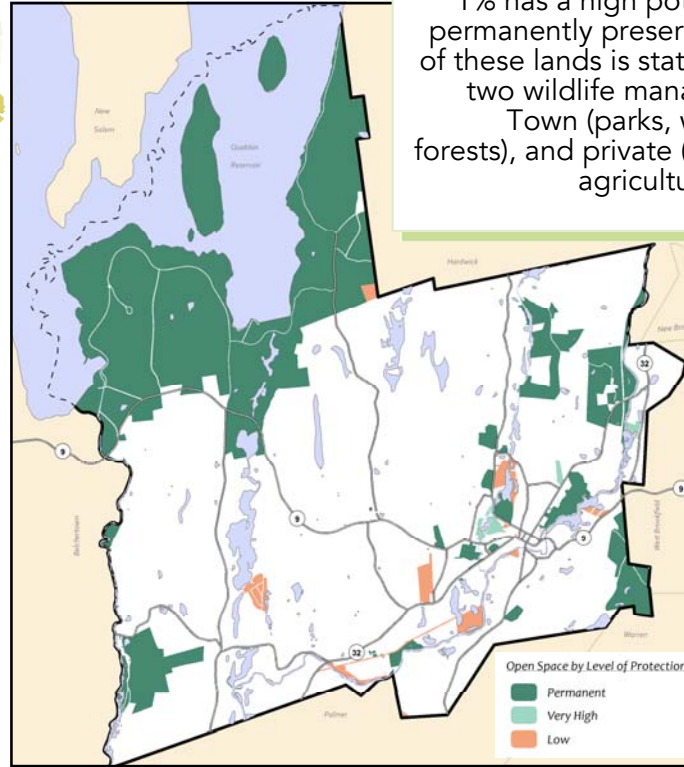
Main Street Ware, 1939

Manufacturing dropped from 20% to 12% between 2000 and 2010. However, with a major new manufacturer moving into Ware in 2015, this downward trend may slow or even turn around.



Natural Resources - Our Surroundings

Ware is nestled in the Quaboag Valley and is surrounded by natural beauty and resources. There are several prominent landscape features that run north-south, including the Dougal Range, a long wooded hill in the northeastern part of town; Coy Hill, a steep wooded slope in the southeastern part of town; Beaver Brook, flowing southerly from below the Goodnough Dike at Quabbin Reservoir; Beaver Lake in the western part of town; and the Ware River that snakes its way through the southeastern and southern parts of town.



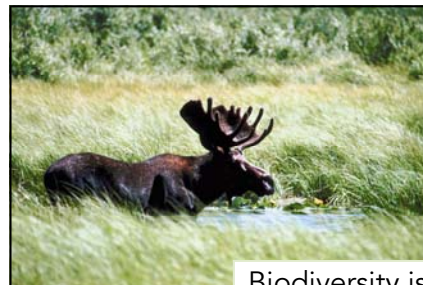
23% of the town is permanently preserved open space, and another 1% has a high potential for being permanently preserved. Ownership of these lands is state (Quabbin and two wildlife management areas), Town (parks, well fields, town forests), and private (conservation or agricultural restrictions).



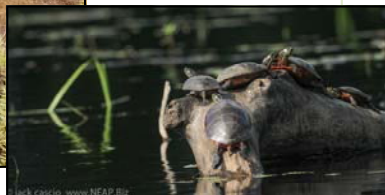
Ware owns 233 acres of permanently protected land, and 297.6 acres that are not permanently protected.



There are 3,900 acres of land within riparian corridors in Ware. These areas are subject to the River Protection Act which provides a measure of protection for this valuable habitat and the wildlife in them. In addition, there is an unknown amount of wetlands (most are not mapped). These areas, and the varied species within them, are protected by the Wetlands Protection Act.



Biodiversity is important to ensure stability of all plant and animal species. The Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program has developed a BioMap which identifies the habitats which are most in need of protection. In addition to the entire Quabbin Reservoir shoreline, key areas in Ware include Flat Brook, upper Muddy Brook, the Swift River, and the Ware River (except the downtown segment.)



Nearly two-thirds of the land area in Ware is forested. Although agriculture is declining in Ware, there are still approximately 48 working farms here.

Residents enjoy the quiet serenity of these features while accessing many of the amenities they have to offer. We have open space, bodies of water, parks, town forests, and farms.

Ware is a central hub that attracts people from surrounding towns. Whether you are hiking, biking, fishing, kayaking or boating on our beautiful lakes and rivers, the beauty of the outdoors is here.

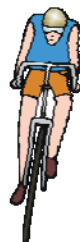
Recreation & Open Space - Where We Play

Ware has several athletic fields and opportunities for many recreational activities, yet several areas of concern still need to be addressed. Most of the recreational facilities are overused and additional playing fields would relieve stress on the existing fields (i.e. allowing time for the grass to recover). With many sports groups in need of fields for practicing and playing games, and multiple sports played on some fields, scheduling field time is complicated. More fields are needed to accommodate everyone.

Primary recreational facilities: Grenville Park, Memorial Field, Kubinski Field, Reed Pool, Beauregard Playground, and the ball fields at the school campus. Old Pennybrook, the Church Street water tank field, the Ware River Greenway rail trail, the Pines, and Veterans Memorial Park supplement these.

Public access to hiking trails on town owned land as well as privately held lands that require public access for hiking and wildlife viewing is inadequate. Most parcels are inaccessible due to lack of maintained trails, lack of parking facilities, lack of signage to inform the public about the trails, and lack of trail markers.





Additional options are needed for passive forms of recreation such as hiking, walking, fishing, kayaking, etc. More trails and river access would allow greater participation for all ages. Development of the Ware River Greenway rail trail will provide passive recreation opportunities. It will also allow safe travel along the southern corridor of Rt. 32 (West Street/ Palmer Road) and nearby neighborhoods for walking to school or shopping at the Gibbs Crossing shopping center.



Transportation - How We Get Around

Ware was once a booming mill town whose residents could fulfill all of their needs locally. Today, most of Ware's employed population commutes out of town to work; and mostly in single occupancy vehicles (91% of commuters). Ware is proximate and well connected to neighboring cultural and employment centers via Route 9 and Route 32, which provide access to I-91 and I-90. This connectivity and location on the edge of two regions give Ware the potential to be a major transportation hub. However, limited public transit,



More than half of Ware's employed residents commute to another town to work, and 40% of these workers have a travel time greater than 30 minutes. 95% of Ware's workers use a private vehicle to get to work, a result of both our rural location and the lack of other options. Just over 3% use "other means", including bicycle and walking, to get to work, while less than .5% use public transit.



Ware's location between two public transit catchment areas has resulted in inadequate service to the town. It takes from 2 to 4 hours to reach major service, employment, and education centers located in Springfield, Northampton, Amherst, and Worcester via public transit.

Question: On an average day, what is the overall feel of traffic that passes by your business?

Traffic Responses

88% say traffic is busy but good for business
81% feel traffic affects business *positively*
27% say too many cars, not enough pedestrians



7% feel it's dangerous for everyone
7% wish it would slow down
0% have voiced their concern to the town

Question: How are public parking options on Main Street?

Parking Responses

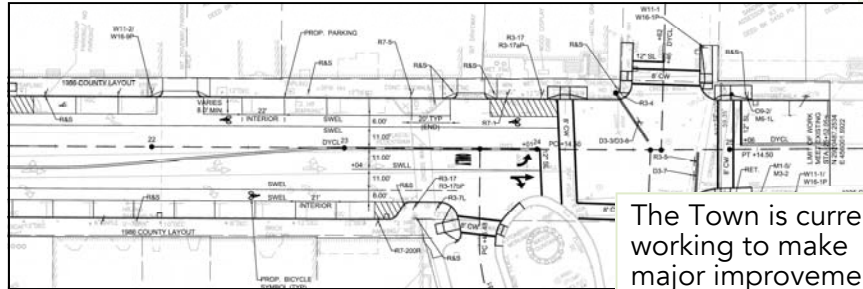
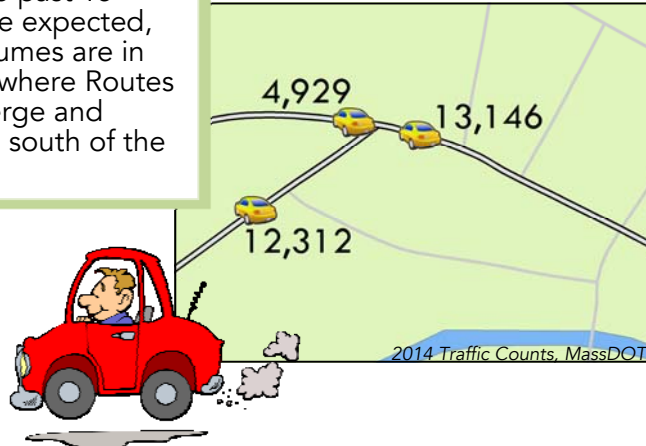
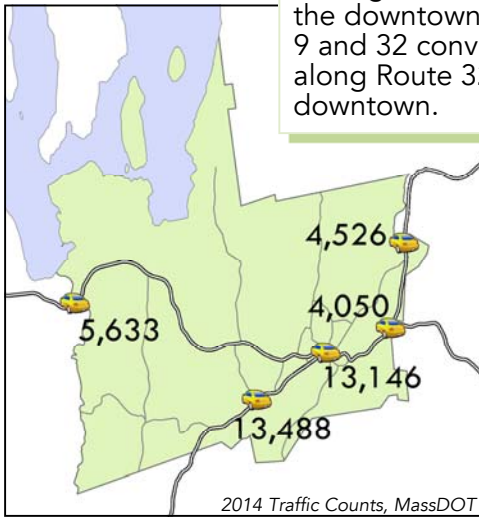
87% say never enough spaces to park
85% feel meters would be bad for business
55% say parking affects business *negatively*



40% say people often park for well over an hour
33% feel customers enjoy the free parking
7% have voiced concern to the town

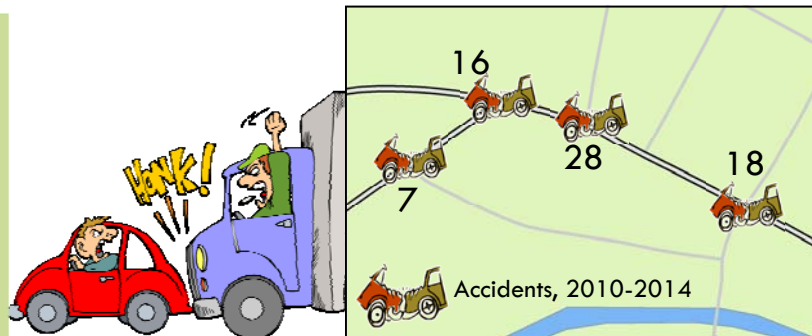
The majority of responses from business owners indicate that businesses enjoy the busy downtown traffic, but feel that parking is an issue, despite the fact that study data showed the parking space occupancy rate was an average of only 37%. Many business owners expressed that getting people out of their cars and on foot would be better for the downtown economy.

Traffic count data show little growth over the past 15 years. As can be expected, the highest volumes are in the downtown where Routes 9 and 32 converge and along Route 32 south of the downtown.



The Town is currently working to make major improvements to Main Street, including new traffic signals at the three primary intersections, the addition of bicycle lanes, and upgrades to the sidewalks and pedestrian facilities. Construction is expected to begin by 2020.

Data on traffic accidents in the downtown show a total of 69 accidents between 2010 and 2014. Very few involved large trucks, and 75% resulted in no injuries. No injuries were reported as incapacitating, and there were no fatalities.



untapped collaboration with regional providers and neighboring towns is hindering Ware's carless population, resulting in long commutes for these workers.

Ware has the location, connectivity, and potential to function as a regional transportation hub but

needs to collaborate more effectively with surrounding areas

in order to serve a population that

is heavily dependent on commuting, and to offer better opportunities to carless residents.

Public Utilities - How We Are Served

Ware has a public water supply system that provides potable water to 2,368 residential, commercial, industrial, and municipal accounts. It also provides water for fire fighting to 402 hydrants. The system consists of 42 miles of water mains and 2 storage facilities. The water is drawn from 6 groundwater wells in two locations.

The water supply has a capacity of 2.5 million gallons per day, and in 2014 provided over 217.8 million gallons of water to its customers. There is a 1.3 million gallon per day surplus, thus quantity is not an issue of concern for the foreseeable future.

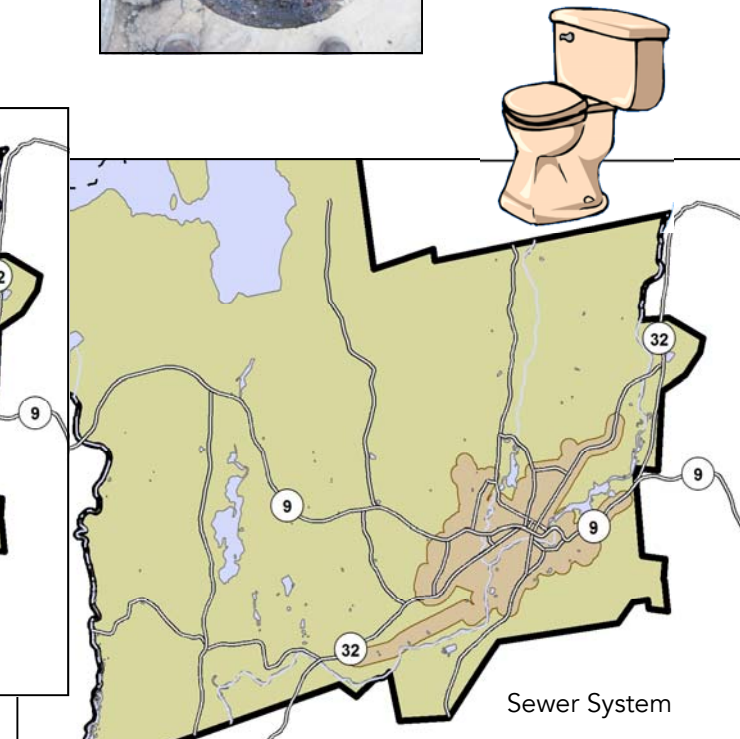
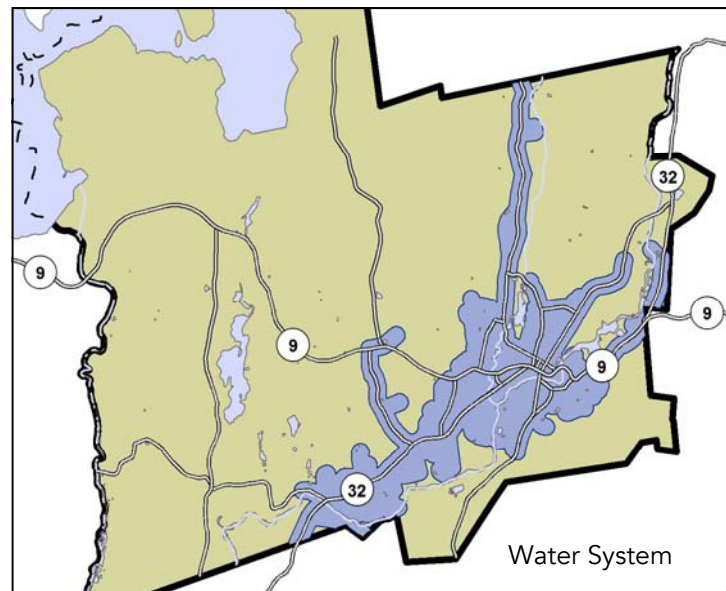


The Town began withdrawing water from the first well at Barnes Street in 1886. Gravel packed wells were added at Barnes Street in 1965 and 1978 and a gravel-packed well at Gilbertville Road was added to the system in 1999. Two wells at Barnes Street were replaced in 2015.

About 70% of Ware's population rely on the public water system, while no more than 60% rely on the public sewer system.



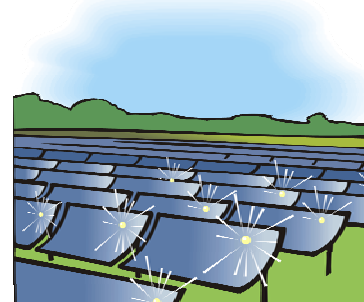
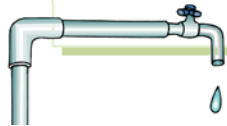
The primary concern today with the water system is the aging infrastructure and lack of funds to replace the oldest water lines, some of which date back to the late 1800s. Over time the pipes become blocked with mineral deposits, reducing water pressure and quality to unacceptable levels.



The public sewer system includes about 32 miles of pipes to collect and transport the wastewater from homes and businesses to the wastewater treatment plant on Robbins Road. Energy consumption is an issue at the wastewater treatment plant, given the aging, inefficient pumps.



In 2015, one of the major industries in town built a pre-treatment facility to remove materials from their wastewater before discharging it into the public sewer system. This has improved operations at the municipal plant. However, there are still upgrades that need to be done in order to continue to meet state and federal standards.



Ware is working to reduce the negative impacts of burning fossil fuels for energy generation. The Town has installed solar panels on the Fire Station roof, and is exploring the potential to build a solar field on town-owned land. In addition, Ware has purchased solar credits from two solar facilities in other towns. The Town is working toward Green Community designation and expects to apply for grant funding to convert street lights to LED and complete the weatherization of Town Hall.



More than half of Ware's population depends on fuel oil to heat their homes, and 17% use electric heat. 15% use propane, and the remaining 10% use other sources such as wood, solar, geothermal, or coal. With no natural gas lines in town, that popular source is not available to residents or businesses.



While not a major industry in town, Ware does have a hydro-power electric generation facility on the Ware River. Future development of such energy sources will contribute to a more sustainable energy profile and a cleaner environment for future generations.





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Our Vision, Our Aspirations



"Vision" means the overall image in words that describes what the town wants to be and how it wants to look at some point in the future.

"Visioning" means the process by which a town, with the involvement of citizens, characterizes the future it wants, and plans how to achieve it.

"Vision Statement" means the formal expression of its vision that depicts in words and images what the town is striving to become and that serves as the starting point for the creation and implementation of the local master plan.

From the American Planning Association, Growing Smart Legislative Guidebook, 2002 edition.

Since beginning the master planning process in 2013, we have sought out the opinions of residents, business people, and visitors. In 2014, the consulting firm Arnett Muldrow & Associates assisted us with the development of a vision statement. They met with many people in the community to talk about the future of Ware. In combination with the input we had already received from our outreach efforts, the consulting firm wrote the vision statement seen on the next two pages.

Our Vision

Ware, Massachusetts is a vibrant and growing community where our citizens are proud of the town we call home. Our hometown is one where we meet at unique shops and businesses in our revitalized downtown, where a growing diverse economy is being cultivated, where we respect the land and enjoy unrivaled outdoor recreation opportunities, and where our government and its partners work together to provide efficient and up-to-date services for all of our citizens. We are committed to revitalize and improve our community.

Our Aspirations

Growing a positive self-image by promoting what makes Ware a special place.



We Are Ware

- Destination** Ware is a destination for commerce, culture, and recreation, while providing an excellent quality of life for its citizens.
- Scenic** Ware is nestled amongst scenic hills, the Quabbin Reservoir, and the flowing waters of the Ware River.
- Aspirations** We are a community with high aspirations, where our citizens create positive change.

Focusing on reestablishing Main Street and the Millyard as the center of town.



Downtown

- Pleasant** The Town coordinates with businesses to create a pleasant environment with a clean, attractive, and well-lit streetscape.
- Diverse** Downtown becomes more diverse through enhanced marketing and business recruitment by stakeholders.
- Walkable** Downtown is more pedestrian friendly, with improved crosswalks, a rail trail, and an attractive streetscape.

Ware becomes more attractive for investment, whether it is the next large employer, independent businesses, or new residents.



Prosperity

- Collaboration** The WB&CA becomes the conduit for property owners and the Town to work collaboratively to better utilize properties.
- Infrastructure** Infrastructure improvements are made to our sewer lines, transit, streets, and sidewalks, and natural gas is added.
- Investment** The Town proactively plans for new investment through guidelines, regulations, and readiness for grant funding.

The community focuses on creating a town where people gather for enjoyable and informative events.



Vibrant

- Culture** The community supports expanded educational opportunities that provide a broad cultural base including arts and music.
- Education** The community coordinates with various partners to increase career opportunities, e.g. opening a college satellite campus.
- Gatherings** Ware becomes more active with a variety of opportunities for healthier living and spaces for socializing.

The community takes advantage of its outdoor adventure opportunities by marketing its regional recreational assets.



Adventure

- Greenway** The rail trail grows to connect Hardwick to Palmer; Ware and its downtown become the hub of an active trail network.
- Quabbin** Ware solidifies itself as the place where the Quabbin outdoor experience begins.
- Activity** Ware becomes the destination for outdoor recreation, with many activities and outdoor-based businesses.

The citizens of Ware become more active and involved in the future of the community.



Engaged

- Connected** Ware citizens increase engagement in civic functions, partnering with the Town government to improve our town.
- Awareness** People are aware of our improving local assets such as safe streets, active bikeways, and connection to the environment.
- Pride** Ware builds community pride through the active involvement of the people of Ware.

We are Ware, Somewhere Worth Being.



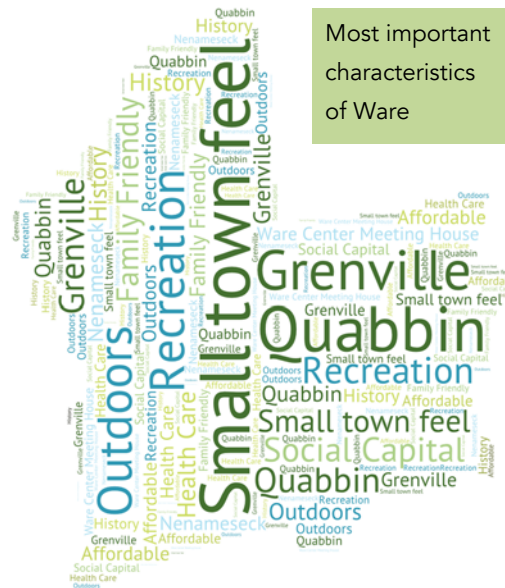
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Concerns and Issues



The success of a master plan - or any kind of plan - depends on the willingness of the people it impacts to implement the recommendations made in the plan. And that depends on how much the people agree with the plan. Thus, public outreach is done to provide a way for people to participate in the process of developing the recommendations, directly or indirectly. Public outreach also provides a way for the writers to educate people about the town - it's demographics, economy, and physical and natural resources.

Starting in 2012, the Master Plan Steering Committee embarked on a public outreach program to both educate and obtain input from people. The main themes we heard are illustrated in the two graphics below. The small town feel of Ware is the most important characteristic, followed by the outdoor recreation opportunities afforded by the Town and its location. When it comes to needs, downtown revitalization tops the list, followed by revitalization of the millyard, more bicycle facilities, and better choices for elderly housing. A thorough discussion of the public outreach program can be found in the Appendix.



Impacts of the Great Recession



The economic recession of 2007 - 2009 had a significant impact on the Town of Ware, not only from the immediate drop in home sales and prices, but in the lingering effects still being felt today. According to the National Bureau of Economic Research, this recession lasted from December 2007 until June of 2009. While more affluent communities saw huge drops in home sale prices, towns like Ware experienced modest decreases in prices, but they have yet to rebound to pre-recession levels. The average home price in 2006 was about \$165,000 in Ware, and today it is \$143,000. That said, with the low volume of sales, the average price is fairly volatile and quite dependent on what houses are sold in a given time period.



Compared to towns in the eastern part of Massachusetts, the real estate market remains somewhat depressed in Ware. This causes real estate tax revenues to remain somewhat depressed too. Unfortunately, expenses that the Town is responsible for are not remaining low, on the contrary they rise year after year. Town departments do as much as they can without compromising public safety to keep costs down, but with tax revenue not increasing at pre-recession rates, it is quite difficult for the Town to make ends meet.



Similarly, many households in Ware continue to have difficulty making ends meet. In 2000, 41.2% of the households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income (i.e. low and moderate income) were cost burdened, meaning they had to pay more than 30% of their income on housing. In the 2014 American Community Survey, the Census Bureau reported that in Ware's Census Designated Place (roughly the greater downtown area; see map in the Appendix) there were 2,550 occupied housing units. Of the 879 households with a mortgage, 54.8% were cost burdened, while only 17.5% of the 554 households without a mortgage were cost burdened. Of the 1,048 households that rent their home, 56.0% were cost burdened.



Another lingering impact of the recession is seen in subdivisions, in a couple of different ways. First, sales of lots for new home construction is a reflection of the poor economy: only 20% of the new lots created in subdivisions since 2000 have been built on. One subdivision with 63 approved lots has yet to have the roads built or any utilities installed. Four other subdivisions have yet to be completed by the developers to the point where the road can be accepted by the Town as a public way. In recent years, the unfinished

roads have become so problematic that the Department of Public Works was forced to stop plowing unless repairs were made and the Board of Selectmen approved the plowing prior to the winter season. Without the repairs, both the road and the plows are subject to damage, and the Town cannot take on such liability. While clearly the responsibility of the developer to maintain and plow the roads within these unfinished subdivisions, often times towns prefer to plow such roads to ensure that public safety vehicles can get to any houses on them.

In Ware, of the four unfinished subdivisions (that have been started), one is particularly problematic and illustrates the difficulties faced by both the Town and the developer. Approved in 1995, this ten lot subdivision had the road partially built and five houses built before the recession hit. Needing the money from the sale of lots to maintain the road in reasonable condition, the developer fell further and further behind in maintenance and the road began to fail so significantly that the Town will no longer plow the road. Meanwhile, the remaining five lots cannot be sold without approval of the Planning Board as part of the subdivision review/approval/construction process, and the Board is unable to grant such approval until the road is repaired and at this point that is a major expense since a large portion of the road will need to be completely rebuilt. Fortunately this is the only subdivision with these serious issues, but it is difficult for all parties to deal with - the Town, the developer, and the homeowners already living there.

One way to look at how the town's economy has fared since before the recession is by examining the real estate tax levy. The Massachusetts Department of Revenue keeps records of the tax levy for every municipality and has annual reports online from FY2002 through FY2016 (fiscal year is July 1 to June 30).

Ware's tax rate declined between FY02 and FY08, and then when the recession hit it started to increase again. Roughly the same thing happened with the change in the residential tax levy during those years; while the total residential levy increased each year, the amount of that increase went down each year from FY04 to FY09. During the recession the change in the residential tax levy remained low, and in fact it continued to remain low until FY14. Similar trends can be seen in the tax levy in more affluent communities



Main Street looking west, 1886



Main Street looking west, 2013

in the eastern part of the state, but the data also shows a faster recovery and more robust growth than in Ware since the recession ended.

Ware's residential tax levy increased an average of 7% per year from FY02 to FY08, then increased only 2% during the recession (FY09-10), and since then has only increased an average of 3% per year. Since the recession ended, Ware has had a modest increase in the residential and bigger increase in the non-residential tax levy (commercial plus industrial).

The commercial sector in Ware continues to ebb and flow, with the loss of one retail establishment, a new one generally moves into the vacant space within a year. A brand new Cumberland Farms opened in 2015, and a fast-food restaurant is working to build a new restaurant in 2016. But despite the availability of commercial property (including vacant land, residential properties ripe for conversion to commercial, and existing vacant commercial buildings), and the relative ease of Ware's permitting processes, commercial growth is low.

Downtown Ware has continued to have difficulty attracting businesses, for a variety of reasons. One is the perceived lack of parking for employees and customers - the reality is there are enough spaces, but they are not distributed within the downtown area to provide ideal parking for every property. Another reason is the condition of the sidewalks and streetscape - while not the worst, the general feel of the downtown is not the best either. The community is working to address these issues, and over the next few years significant improvements should be seen. Another, perhaps the most important reason is the condition of the buildings downtown. Most are old, the buildings were constructed between 1850 and 1986, and 21 of the 27 properties were built prior to 1940. Partly due to the economic decline stemming from the textile mills closing, property owners of the buildings on Main Street were unable to update their buildings to keep up with building codes, and today they are faced with serious financial difficulties to do so. Most buildings are in a situation where if the owner

desires to make some upgrades, based on the current building code they are required to make significant improvements to bring the structure up to code for energy, life safety, and accessibility. More often than not, the required improvements cost far more than the property will be worth after the improvements are made. There are very few owners that can afford to be “underwater” on their holdings.

Because of this, Ware is now seeing an increase in vacant properties, and the ramifications of not making improvements to structures hit home recently with the loss of a building in the heart of downtown to fire, most likely caused by old wiring and general lack of maintenance. While there were no fatalities, six apartments and three retail spaces were lost. This building is located next to one which suffered a collapsed roof several years ago; that building remains vacant although it has recently been sold and there is a possibility the new owner will renovate at least the two lower floors of the three story building.

The reduction in the height of buildings has been a long time trend in Ware; as the upper floors of multi story buildings were damaged by fire or other causes, owners usually opted to remove the upper floor and leave one or two story buildings in place. This lowering of the buildings, coupled with the wide Main Street, has contributed to the loss of vibrancy - instead of an intimate and friendly atmosphere with a lot of pedestrian and shopper activity, the feeling one gets walking down Main Street is more akin to a strip shopping center, where the automobile dominates the scene. But Ware’s Main Street doesn’t need to continue this way - there is a lot of opportunity for a brighter future.

There are many reasons for this slow growth post-recession, and a full discussion of them is beyond the scope of this master plan. Some fairly obvious reasons include the location of Ware in the region in relation to infrastructure that is desired by the commercial and especially industrial sectors. Without ready access to an interstate highway, and without natural gas which has become the fuel of choice for many industrial operations (although



Main Street looking west, circa 1920s



Main Street looking west, 2011



Main Street looking east, 2011



These photographs illustrate some of the challenges in Ware's downtown: vacant lots which leave holes in the streetscape, chronically vacant buildings, and uninhabitable buildings.

like all fossil fuels that is not necessarily a sustainable fuel), and without an obvious skilled labor pool nor the housing choices and community amenities many firms are now looking for in the towns they choose to locate in, Ware is at a disadvantage in attracting new non-residential growth.

Nevertheless, Ware was the chosen location for a new industrial business that will create around 70 new jobs over the next few years; this business is located in the Millyard and will manufacture absorbent disposable products for the medical industry.

Ware needs a strong downtown economic development group. Downtown and the Millyard have issues and problems that are not shared by other commercial or industrial areas of the town, and needs a group dedicated to working with property and business owners to successfully address those issues. Most important among them is financial assistance to upgrade buildings to today's codes and today's technologies. Entrepreneurs look for clean, safe, and modern spaces located in communities with a lot of activity nearby. If Ware desires to attract new businesses, significant change needs to happen in both the public and private sectors.

In 2015 progress was made toward forming a stronger partnership between the Town, the Ware Business & Civic Association, and the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation. Progress is being made on several projects, spearheaded by the WB&CA. Among them is the opening in 2016 of the Quaboag Region Workforce Training and Community College Center in downtown Ware. In addition to providing better access to higher education for students in the region, it provides workforce training opportunities which will benefit the areas employers, many of whom have difficulty finding and keeping employees with the skills they need. The Center also creates an opportunity to attract new business entrepreneurs to downtown Ware.

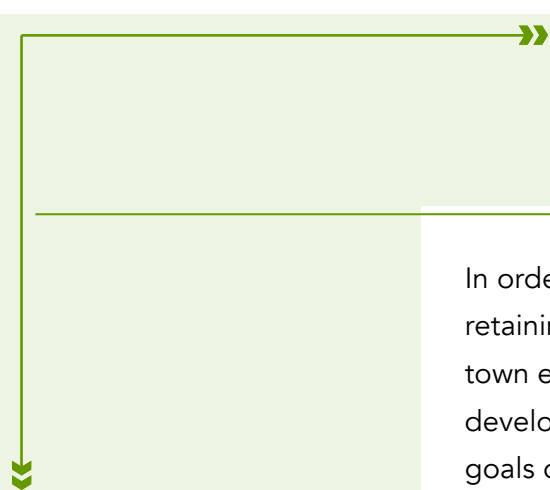
Ware also has an opportunity to establish a creative economy in the downtown and the millyard, building off the success of Workshop 13. Again, the physical spaces need to be accommodating for such enterprises. Artists who are priced out of more established creative economy communities could find a comfortable home here and help our town at the same time.

Even with the efforts made to date, there is still the lack of a cohesive and easy to picture vision of Ware's downtown and millyard in the future. Many communities have found greater success at attracting new investments in their struggling areas when they have a graphic depiction of what they are looking for. In Ware, we already have the vision, the branding work, and the business development work done in 2015 by Arnett Muldrow & Associates, but we do not have a literal picture of what we would like to see the downtown and millyard actually be in 20 years. Such a picture can be produced by a consulting firm which would come in to work with the community and, taking the information from the Arnett Muldrow work as well as direct input from townspeople, would literally draw pictures of what the area could look like when fully revitalized. Using that image (or images), a small poster would be produced that could be given to property owners, real estate brokers, investors, and developers. When presented with such a clear and concise vision of what we are seeking, these people understand the community is vested in the area and will be supportive of efforts and investments.

Similarly, the Route 32 corridor from Ware's downtown to the Palmer line has been the subject of at least two in-depth studies, neither of which have presented a clear, concise vision of what the community desires for the future land use patterns along that corridor. It is currently a mix of residential and commercial development, and it's future is currently driven by zoning. In 2012 when the town was working on the Zoning Bylaw rewrite, it was decided to maintain existing zoning districts for the most part, and to revisit the districts after such planning was completed. An in-depth planning process with a high level of public participation is needed to again provide a clear visual picture presented in easy to read and easy to distribute format that owners, investors, and developers can use to understand what will "fit" in our town.

Another impact on the potential for economic development in Ware is access to stable high speed internet, at speeds suitable for the advanced technologies being employed by businesses and industries to be competitive in tomorrow's economy. While (traditional) cable access is available in most parts of Ware, fiber optic cable is not. Efforts should be made to work with service providers and businesses to ensure the infrastructure is in place to allow Ware's businesses to have access to stable high speed internet service.





In order for all of these initiatives to be accomplished, in addition to attracting new businesses and retaining those already here, the town should be proactive and in order to do that, there is a need for a town employee dedicated to such work. If the town were to create a position for an economic development director, these types of projects could be completed in a timeframe that would allow the goals of this master plan - the vision of the community - to be attained much faster than if the town continues to depend on the limited staff currently expected to do such work. In addition, the town should consider creating a position for a grant writer to prepare grant applications for all departments, to help fund the many needs the town has. Such positions typically bring in far more money than the positions cost the town. For example, a grant writer who successfully obtains several grants a year can easily bring in several times their salary and benefits. While it often takes longer for a community to garner the benefits from an economic development professional, without such a person on staff, reaching the same result will either be impossible or at best will take much longer to happen. The result of having both a full time planner and a full time economic development professional on staff in Ware would likely be progress made on the revitalization of both the downtown and the millyard. The town must recognize that a single person acting as the planner, community development administrator, and economic development professional is not going to result in the achievement of the town's goals in a timeframe that most would consider reasonable.

On the residential side of the equation, the most likely reasons for slow growth since the end of the recession include an abundance of homes on the market - for example, in March 2016 there were over 160 homes on the market, 105 of which were listed for less than \$150,000 - and slow growth in employment in the areas outside of Ware that are easily reachable for commuters. Few new homes are being built, and as discussed earlier, no new subdivisions have been proposed since before the recession hit.

It is against this backdrop that Ware continues working to improve its future.

New Challenges

As in any community, new challenges arise as the world around us changes. This section discusses several challenges that Ware did not face when earlier plans were prepared: questions on the longevity of the hospital, the changing public health scene, the adverse impacts of the motor sports track in Palmer, and how to handle affordable housing. These will be discussed in turn below.

Mary Lane hospital opened in Ware in 1909 and joined the Baystate Health system in 1999. The hospital changed its name to Baystate Mary Lane in 2006. In 2015 the hospital had 31 beds for in-patient care, and offered outpatient care, emergency, medical, surgical, and pediatric services to the region. The hospital ended their obstetrics services in 2010. Baystate Health acquired Wing Memorial Hospital in Palmer, ten miles to the south, in 2014, and in 2015 they announced plans to end in-patient services at Baystate Mary Lane Hospital. In addition, the emergency services department at Baystate Wing is undergoing a major renovation and there is a possibility that the emergency department at Baystate Mary Lane will be shuttered when those renovations are completed. Early in 2016, a group of concerned citizens formed the Keep Care Local At Mary Lane Hospital Coalition and are working hard to get Baystate Health to answer questions about the future of the campus in Ware and to address the concerns of residents not only in Ware but in nearby communities that depend on Baystate Mary Lane for many of their medical services, especially emergency services. This is a public health and public safety issue for the region, as well as an economic development issue for Ware, as the potential for the hospital campus to be vacated has crossed the minds of many in the area. It has been suggested that some medical services may remain in Ware, including doctors offices, laboratories, and the like, and that new services might be added, including addiction recovery services, mental health services, and adult day care services. As of this writing, nothing is known about the long term future of Baystate Mary Lane, which leaves the community apprehensive, and rightly so.

Perhaps related to the changing situation at Baystate Mary Lane Hospital, the opiate addiction crisis the country is experiencing is a real problem here in Ware. In addition, the needs of many people in the community for mental health services is real. Both of these are national and societal issues, and Ware cannot solve these problems alone. However, there are steps that can be taken on a local level. The community



needs to identify initiatives and work on them. There is a strong social services network in Ware which can be most helpful in doing this, and they are taking the lead in a significant way. But the community cannot expect them to tackle the problems alone, especially with the limited funding they have available to them. As the saying goes, it takes a village... The same is true with these important issues that seem so much larger than our small community can deal with, but truthfully, every community across the country needs to start dealing with these issues or our society will not see improvement - people will continue to become addicted to lethal substances and deaths will continue to occur; those with mental health problems will continue to struggle to find their niche in society and lead productive lives. These issues impact public health and public safety for the community at large, not just for the families living in the midst of it.



Palmer Motor Sports Park

palmermsp.com

The third challenge facing Ware that was not in the picture the last time the town prepared a master plan is the motor sports track located on Whiskey Hill just over the town line in Palmer. The facility was permitted by Palmer in 2007 but not constructed until 2014, and operations began in 2015. According to the track's website, there are over 100 events planned between April and October in 2016. In accordance with the permits issued by the Palmer Planning Board, there can be no more than ten weekends with "high sound" events, and there can be no more than 1,000 attendees at any event and no more than 40 vehicles on the track at one time. In addition, the permit states this facility is to be operated as a private club and cannot be open to the general public without issuance of a new special permit (which has not been applied for nor issued). The permit also addresses noise through noise studies and potential mitigation to be imposed by the Palmer Planning Board. However, the track has created much controversy in Ware and Warren, the two towns bearing much of the impact of the facility.

Initially, residents close to the track feared they would lose all value in their homes due to the noise generated by the track. Once in operation, some found the noise levels to be



The track under construction, May 2015

thetrackimpact.wordpress.com

acceptable, while residents in certain areas in Ware found the noise to be much louder than they had expected. The reality of the way sound carries in this area means that there are pockets in a much larger area than was studied for noise impacts during the permitting process that are being impacted during the louder events at the track. Whether any noise mitigation imposed by the Palmer Planning Board will alleviate those issues remains an open question.

Other potential impacts that were considered during the construction of the facility have not created significant problems in Ware, such as traffic - whatever traffic is coming through town is light enough to go unnoticed. The track has had a record of creating environmental impacts which the MA Department of Environmental Protection has been addressing; to date no land in Ware is known to have been affected.

Ware needs to start considering the potential benefits to the community, in regards to attracting the track patrons to our town to shop, eat in our restaurants, and - if accommodations are built - to stay overnight. As it stands, there are not many such opportunities for visitors to this area, regardless of whether they are visiting the motor sports track or other attractions in the area. In addition, if the noise generated at the track continues to be a problem for Ware residents, the town should address the problems with the Palmer Planning Board and with the state. The Palmer Planning Board is addressing the noise issues at the track for the 2016 season.

The fourth major challenge facing Ware is the availability of affordable housing. While the market rate rents in Ware are generally quite low and affordable to people of moderate incomes, the vast majority of these units are not restricted to low-moderate income households. Mass. General Laws include provisions regarding affordable housing, chapter 40B. In a nutshell, this law allows developers to build at higher densities and with smaller lots than allowed in a local zoning bylaw provided they include at least 25 percent of the units restricted for households of low-moderate income. However, this is only available in municipalities that have less than ten percent of their year round housing stock restricted for low-moderate income households. As detailed in the appendix and mentioned in Chapter 2 of this plan, Ware is below this threshold. The Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) maintains a list (called



haphousing.org

Affordable housing in
Easthampton MA.

Affordable Housing: This graph shows the gap between the number of income-restricted housing units needed (red line) and what is projected to be provided (green line), based on current expiration dates and without new units being restricted.

the Subsidized Housing Index, or SHI) of the units which have rent or price restrictions on them in each municipality in the state; these are counted toward the ten percent threshold. Units with no deed restriction or which do not meet other criteria for inclusion on this list have no bearing on the ability of developers to use this law to construct housing developments in town, regardless of how low the rents are on the unrestricted units in the town.

In 2015, Ware had just under the required number of units to meet the ten percent threshold. Moreover, the number of units that qualify for inclusion on the SHI in Ware is diminishing each year. In the past, DHCD

allowed units that were rehabilitated under grant programs that benefited low to moderate income clients to be counted on the SHI. That is no longer the case, and as of 2020 Ware will no longer have any such units left on the list. In addition, the restrictions on two major housing developments in town with income restricted units will expire in 2033 and 2043. As the graph on this page clearly illustrates, unless new affordable units are created in Ware, the town will continue to have a growing deficit in the number of restricted units needed. One way to accomplish the goal is for developers to propose "chapter 40B" developments, which the Town would have limited control over. A better way is to plan ahead to increase the supply of such housing.



Affordable housing in Northampton MA.



Opportunities

Several opportunities for the Town to be proactive in land use and future economic development initiatives have arisen over the last decade or so. In some cases it may be too late for Town action, but in others if the townspeople are in favor of the initiative then the municipality should take steps to bring it to fruition.

The first of these is also the oldest: the future of the old South Street School. Built in 1901 as a school, it was renovated in 1951 and continued to be used as a school until the early 1970s. It was converted for use as the district courthouse which occupied the building from 1985 until 2005. Once the courthouse moved out, the building was left vacant and due to the high cost of maintaining utilities (including heat) has been left in a state of abandonment ever since. As with any building, it has deteriorated over the years and cost estimates to renovate it are well over \$5 million. Future use of this property will have a significant impact on the town in regards to land use, economic development, and potentially housing.

Over the past two years, the Town has taken steps to dispose of the property, but to date all offers to purchase it have been rejected by the Board of Selectmen or have been withdrawn. These include a proposal to convert the existing building and construct an addition for housing for low to moderate income families, a proposal to convert it into temporary housing for members of the Sports Car Club of America while they are in the area to use the Palmer Motorsports Park on Whiskey Hill, and a proposal to convert it into a single family residence.

In addition to these recent attempts to sell the property, there has been an ongoing debate regarding whether the Town should renovate the building for use as the municipal offices. There are pros and cons on both sides of this continuing debate, including key issues such as new uses for the existing Town Hall, moving a central part of the community out of the downtown, and the availability of parking at the former school. The bottom line, however, is the lack of funding to renovate either building. Since the community is divided on what the school property should be used for, it is understandably difficult for any Board of Selectmen to make a decision on what to do with the property. Added to this is the current situation with neighboring Baystate Mary Lane Hospital, which has caused serious concerns about its longevity.



D. Ouimette

The town should approach the potential changes at Mary Lane with the presence of the former school in mind, and should explore ways the two properties could be either combined into a larger campus for either an institutional or corporate use, or how the former school property could be occupied with a use that is symbiotic with the neighboring medical facilities. It is time to think outside the box - if Baystate were to pull out of Ware, could a specialty medical center be attracted, such as a cancer care center? The former school



This aerial image shows the proximity of the South Street School property to Baystate Mary Lane Hospital, and illustrates the importance of considering the future uses of both properties together.

Aerial image from MassGIS, 2014

could be converted into temporary housing for families of patients, and perhaps even with some low level of medical care where patients could live in close proximity to but not inside the hospital itself. While this may seem a wild idea, it takes such creative thinking to tackle this ongoing problem. With the lack of housing options for seniors in this area, another potential use for the former school - and perhaps the hospital campus too - is for senior housing. If both properties were utilized for this, a complete continuum of housing and care options could be made available for the development's residents. Another idea is to convert both properties into a corporate headquarters, perhaps for a company that values the small town atmosphere

and the presence of many outdoor recreation opportunities that is neither too close to nor too far from major metropolitan centers. And yet another idea is to demolish the former school and create a new recreational facility or park for the townspeople to enjoy.

The current uncertainty of the future of Mary Lane is an opportunity for the Town of Ware to engage in dialog with Baystate Health to ensure a positive use of the two properties, regardless of whether Baystate Health continues to own and operate a medical facility in Ware. Should Baystate commit to continuing Mary Lane as one of their facilities for the next ten or twenty years, then the Town should continue efforts to dispose of the former school. The Ware Board of Selectmen need to rely on the Zoning Bylaw in regard to protecting the neighborhood from incompatible uses on that property, and they should accept responsive

and qualified offers to purchase it. Virtually every proposal will meet with some objection from the community, but if every offer is rejected then the property will continue to sit abandoned and will continue to deteriorate. The cost of rehabilitation of the building is already very high and the financial feasibility of redeveloping it will continue to decrease, lowering the chances it will be redeveloped.

Finally, the most productive way to proceed at this time is to 1) engage in frank discussions with the upper management of Baystate Health to ascertain their commitment to remaining at the Ware campus, and 2) engage the citizens of Ware in a frank discussion of what they would like to see done with the property. Such discussions must include the reality checks - the cost of rehabilitation, issues related to vacating Town Hall, and compatibility issues with the neighborhood. Without these discussions and a consensus of the townspeople, any proposed use of the property will continue to be met with objections that the Selectmen may find difficult to overcome.

On the flip side of selling unused and unneeded real estate, the Town should be proactive in real estate acquisitions that would benefit the community in multiple ways. For example, the multi-family house adjacent to Town Hall on West Street has recently been offered to the Town, with the idea that the structure could be demolished and the area made into a parking lot to supplement the meager parking at the Town Hall. Unfortunately, as with the South Street School, there are no funds available for such a project, no matter how sensible the idea is. That said, the Town could be more proactive in seeking funding sources for such projects. Every community has made real estate decisions that they later come to regret, but without a readily available source of funds, such situations are inevitable. Nevertheless, communities across the state have come up with creative ways to accomplish their goals. Ware needs to look at such opportunities from a long range strategic point of view, with an eye toward implementing the goals of this plan which reflect the direction the community wishes to take. Often there are creative solutions to what seem to be insurmountable problems, and at the very least the Town should engage in serious discussions with the proponents of such ideas.

This aerial image shows the Town Hall and abutting "blue house" property.



Aerial image from MassGIS, 2014

Another opportunity the Town should pursue more aggressively than it has is the installation of a solar power generation facility on the capped landfills in town. While there are concerns regarding the impact of



wrenthamtimes.com

Solar facility on landfill in Norfolk MA

such facilities on the cap, the technology and construction techniques have evolved at this point to ensure the cap will remain intact. While Ware has an agreement to utilize power from a solar facility in another town, there is opportunity for the community to provide space for additional generation. Given the impacts on the climate and environment from the burning of fossil fuels, every community has the responsibility to contribute to the solutions, one of which is alternative sources of energy. Landfills offer an underutilized asset in that they can house solar power generation facilities with little impact to the earth. In addition to Ware contributing to these global efforts, there is opportunity for revenue generation from otherwise untaxed property.

Another opportunity the Town has is to provide incentives for people to use the Flexible Residential Open Space Development (FROSD) provisions in the zoning bylaw in place of standard large-lot subdivisions. By adding density bonus incentives, developers could gain enough on the profit end of the calculation to provide some kind of public benefit to the town. For example, offering up to ten percent more units in a subdivision that provided (for instance) 70 percent of the total acreage of the tract as common open space

which could be used for agriculture, recreation, community gardens for the residents, or other public benefit, or by providing ten percent of the units as deed restricted for low to moderate income households, or other similar benefits to the overall community. By encouraging use of this cluster development tool, Ware's housing stock could be further diversified. Cluster



100 acre wooded site with field, stream, and trail before development



Two-acre zoning; conventional subdivision (34 lots, no preservation)



Natural Resource Protection Zoning (14 lots, >75% preservation)

developments could be built to address some of the needs cited by residents, including new small houses on small lots, desirable for an aging population. Such developments can also be age-restricted and homeowner associations can handle all of the outdoor maintenance - landscape care, snow removal, etc. Cluster housing developments are also sought after by young families wishing to avoid the isolation that large homes on large lots often bring; many such families prefer the pedestrian scale and sense of community that these more compact developments offer. Finally, more people are moving toward a simpler lifestyle with fewer material possessions and consequently are seeking smaller houses which are easier and less expensive to heat and to maintain. While Ware has a good supply of such houses in the older neighborhoods, there are none that are new - none that meet today's more stringent codes for energy efficiency, electrical, plumbing, safety, and structural issues. We have often heard that people are seeking this type of housing, particularly residents nearing retirement who want to remain in their own home but know they will not be able to maintain and repair their aging homes on a retirement income.

Another opportunity the Town has is to place permanent protections on many of the 28 parcels (comprising



Aerial image from MassGIS, 2014

a total of just under 300 acres) the Town already owns that do not have such protections and thus are subject to future uses or sale that are not intended by the community. Such parcels include the "Old Pennybrook" site, the school campus, and the Banas Farm, among others. Many of the sites would be excellent recreational areas, and serious consideration should be given to establishing permanent protections for these lands. This can be done by a Town Meeting vote to place a deed restriction on the property. In some situations a conservation restriction may be appropriate, but in many cases that would not be so. Also, in some cases, e.g. the Old Pennybrook site, there may be opportunity to sell a few of the road frontage parcels to individuals for home construction to help fund improvements to the remainder of the site for recreational facilities.



Old Pennybrook Soccer Field



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Recommendations



A master plan is all about what a community can do to improve itself for its people both now and in the future. This section of the master plan lists the recommended actions the community can take to move toward the vision and aspirations. Some of the following recommendations will be easy and inexpensive to implement, while others will be difficult to accomplish for a variety of reasons. All of these actions should be undertaken within the next fifteen years to help Ware achieve its vision for a prosperous, healthy, and friendly community for generations to come.

Recommended Action	Responsible Party ¹	Cost	Priority ¹	Aspiration Category
Amend the zoning and subdivision regulations to encourage a greater diversity in housing types (e.g. housing to better serve the needs of young professionals, young families, and older residents).	PCDD	Low	High	Prosperity
Amend the Flexible Residential Open Space Development zoning regulations to encourage more sustainable designs in new housing developments.	PCDD	Low	High	Prosperity
Investigate the potential for developing affordable housing for the elderly on Town owned land.	TM, PCDD	Low	Low	
Investigate the feasibility of partnering with non-governmental entities to create affordable housing to increase the supply of income-restricted units, to increase Ware's Subsidized Housing Index.	PCDD	Low	Low/ Opportunistic	
Design and implement a Transfer of Development Rights program to protect important resource areas such as farmland while allowing housing at appropriate densities in areas of town with adequate infrastructure to support it.	PCDD	Low	Medium	Prosperity

Housing



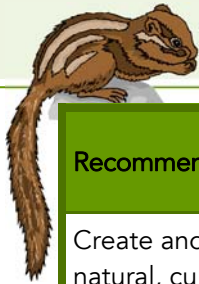
¹. See Key on page 55.



Land Use & Economic Development

Recommended Action	Responsible Party	Cost	Priority	Aspiration Category
Implement the recently designed wayfinding system to help people navigate to and within the downtown, including parking areas and various places of interest, and to learn about upcoming events and activities.	DPW, PCDD	Moderate	High	Downtown Vibrant Adventure Engaged
Support the Ware Business & Civic Association (WB&CA) in its function as a formal economic development organization to advance downtown revitalization.	PCDD, DPW, TM	Low to Moderate	High	Downtown Prosperity
Proactively plan for new investment through guidelines for the restoration of historic structures.	HC	Low	Low	Prosperity
Coordinate with the WB&CA and downtown businesses to create a pleasant environment with a clean, attractive, and well-lit streetscape.	DPW, PCDD	Moderate	High	Downtown Prosperity
Coordinate with the WB&CA and the Quaboag Valley Community Development Corporation (QV CDC) to enhance marketing and business recruitment to expand diversity.	PCDD, TM	Low	High	Downtown Prosperity
Create an ombudsman type position in town government to assist applicants in navigating the various permitting processes within local government.	TM	Low to Moderate	High	
Improve the pedestrian experience with improved crosswalks, an attractive and functional streetscape, and the completion of the rail trail.	DPW, PCDD, OSC	Moderate to High	High	Downtown Adventure
Collaborate with the WB&CA and property owners to improve utilization of existing non-residential space.	TM, PCDD	Low	High	Downtown Prosperity
Encourage businesses selling goods or services related to outdoor sports and activities to locate in Ware.	TM, PCDD, WB&CA	Low	Medium	Adventure





Natural, Cultural, & Recreational Resources

Recommended Action	Responsible Party	Cost	Priority	Aspiration Category
Create and implement a tourism plan which identifies recreational, natural, cultural, and historic resources of the town and includes marketing materials and techniques to increase tourism.	PCDD, HC, PRD	Low	High	Vibrant Adventure
Investigate the potential for protection of strategic parcels for recreation, waterfront access, scenic views, and open space; acquire such lands or easements when feasible.	PCDD, PRD	Low	Medium/ Opportunistic	
Improve both passive and active recreational opportunities as recommended in the Open Space & Recreation Plan, develop and implement an outreach and signage program to inform the public of such opportunities, and include non-sports youth activities in the overall recreation/activity program.	PRD, PCDD	Low to Moderate	Medium	Vibrant Adventure Engaged
Complete the rail trail to connect Hardwick to Palmer, with Ware's downtown becoming the hub of an active trail network.	OSC	High	High	Downtown Adventure
Market Ware as the primary location where visitors to the Quabbin should begin their outdoor experience .	WB&CA	Low	High	Adventure
Improve facilities to increase passive outdoor recreation including but not limited to hiking, bicycling, fishing, canoeing, and kayaking.	PRD	Low	Medium	Adventure Engaged



Services & Facilities



Recommended Action	Responsible Party	Cost	Priority	Aspiration Category
Provide alternative ways for citizens to participate in local government using new techniques and technologies and by providing the educational materials necessary for citizens to understand how local government works and how they can effectuate change.	TM, SD	Low	Medium	Prosperity Engaged
Design and implement extensions to the water and sewer infrastructure to allow higher density development.	TM, DPW	High	High	Prosperity
Expand access to the public sewage treatment system, especially in areas in close proximity to sewer trunk lines.	TM, DPW, BOH	High	High	Prosperity
Upgrade the wastewater treatment plant to ensure compliance with environmental regulations.	DPW	High	High	Prosperity
Update old water and sewer lines.	DPW	High	High	Prosperity
Modernize the water treatment plant.	DPW	High	High	
Repair or reconstruct streets and sidewalks.	DPW	High	High	Downtown Prosperity
Collaborate with transit providers in the greater region to enhance availability in Ware.	TM	Low	Medium/ Opportunistic	
Investigate and collaborate with utility companies to extend natural gas into Ware.	TM	Low	Medium	Prosperity
Work with service providers to increase access to broadband internet throughout the town and especially for industries and businesses.	TM, WB&CA	Moderate	High	Prosperity
Prepare plans and preliminary designs to ensure readiness for grant funding for infrastructure improvements.	TM, DPW, PCDD	Moderate	Medium/ Opportunistic	Prosperity
Collaborate with the library, schools, and other organizations to provide a broad cultural base including arts and music.	TM, SD, YMLA	Moderate	Medium/ Opportunistic	Vibrant

Recommended Action	Responsible Party	Cost	Priority	Aspiration Category
Coordinate with various partners to ensure the new Quaboag Region Workforce Training and Community College Center remains in Ware.	SD, TM, QVCDC, WB&CA	Moderate	High	Vibrant
Provide new gathering places and spaces (indoor and outdoor) to accommodate activities and opportunities for people to socialize.	PRD	Low to Moderate	Low	Vibrant
Provide land for community gardens and space for an enhanced farmer's market to increase access to opportunities for healthier eating and living habits.	PRD, BOH, WB&CA	Low	Low	Vibrant Engaged
Improve public outreach to ensure Ware residents are aware of our improving local assets such as safe streets, active bikeways, and a stronger connection to the natural environment.	TM, SD	Low	High	Engaged

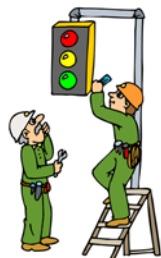


Responsible Party:

BOH = Board of Health
 DPW = Dept of Public Works
 HC = Historic Commission
 OSC = Open Space Committee
 PCDD = Planning & Community Development Dept
 QVCDC = Quaboag Valley Community Development Corp
 PRD = Parks & Recreation Dept
 SD = School Dept
 TM = Town Manager
 WB&CA = Ware Business & Civic Assoc.
 YMLA = Young Men's Library Assoc.

Priority:

High is 2016 to 2021
 Medium is 2022 - 2030
 Low is 2031 and beyond
 Opportunistic is when an opportunity arises



A Foundation for the Future

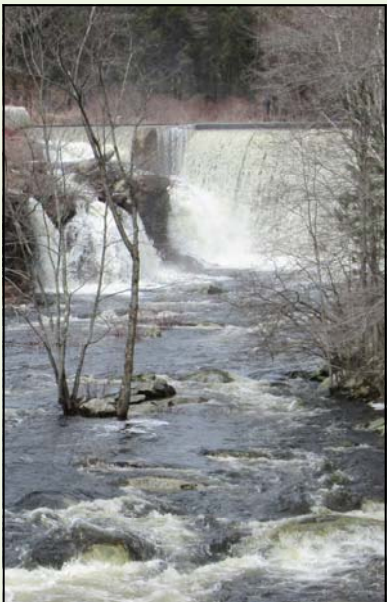


One question that people may ask is what will the town look like in 20 years... what will the land use pattern be? How different will it be from what we see today? In order to answer that question, we need to estimate how much growth is likely to occur, based on the regional and wider economy and needs as well as on the potential need of current residents and businesses. People and businesses are constantly moving in and out of Ware, babies are born and elderly people die - the population is not stagnant and neither is the local business profile.

Based on these factors, the issues raised in the previous chapter, and what has occurred over the past several decades, it is not expected that Ware will experience a significant increase in growth over the next five, ten, or even fifteen years. However, along with the potential for growth comes the need to plan for it in such a way that enables the town to manage it to prevent undesired consequences.

As is true for many towns, Ware's zoning map has been serving as a de-facto future land use map for many years. Previous plans have presented maps depicting what could occur in regards to residential, commercial, and industrial development, but none of those maps has proven particularly accurate in its predictions. The one exception is that all previous plans showed more commercial growth along the Route 32 corridor between downtown and the Palmer town line.

For this master plan, a perhaps more realistic approach has been taken toward creating a future land use map than simply expanding zoning districts. Using the existing land use patterns, existing zoning districts, existing infrastructure, and land development constraints (topography, significant natural areas such as wetlands and stream systems), the Future Land Use map was developed. The first step in this process was to identify the area where municipal sewage collection and treatment would be available - generally this was determined to be an expansion of the current system boundaries. The second step was to identify areas of significant land development constraints, which were considered as barriers which would not be crossed. For example, if there was a major wetland area, the "growth boundary" would not cross it. The reasoning for this was to protect the natural areas from further pressures of human use and development. Existing land use



patterns and topography were also considered in determining where the boundaries for each development category were drawn.

The result is a map of Ware that shows a fair representation of where the growth in town should occur over the next two or three decades, absent unforeseen changes in the world as we know it today. While the town should periodically update the master plan, this map depicts the land use pattern as it should occur for a longer period of time. The town should not change course significantly every ten years or so, and this Future Land Use map should be seen as setting a foundation upon which to grow.

The future land use map on page 61 shows the downtown at 75 acres, less than one-half a percent of the total area of the town. In order for the downtown to be sustainable, it must be kept small enough to allow a person to easily walk from one end to the other. While people may be used to driving in their car to get from place to place, successful downtowns depend very heavily on pedestrian traffic, and if Ware does not maintain a compact downtown area, it will be difficult to create and maintain a sustainable and successful downtown.

The commercial/industrial area, which as in previous plans is primarily along the Route 32 corridor through town, has 1,008 acres, just under four percent of the town. This area is and will continue to be auto-dependent, but caution must be exercised to ensure the corridor does not become one long strip of pavement with stores and parking lots and more cars than the road can handle. Thoughtfully crafted design guidelines would help ensure a more attractive and ecologically sound environment. Yet with substantial residential pockets within the corridor, and no consensus on the future of the corridor, the Master Plan Steering Committee strongly recommends that a “neighborhood plan” be completed - one that focuses on future land use and design, and most importantly on what the people in Ware desire for the future of this important corridor. Such a study must include a strong public participation component, with participants helping to design the future - both location of various land uses and the concept of what they will look like. Those will serve as a basis for new zoning and design guidelines.





The residential area shown comprises a bit over fourteen percent of the town, and includes areas that are currently undeveloped or which have mostly larger lots. These residential areas are where it is most sensible to encourage moderate and higher density residential development (i.e. single family homes on smaller lots, townhomes, and multi-family homes), as they are most likely to be connected to the municipal sewer and water systems. This includes the area around and to the northwest of Beaver Lake. Currently that area is dependent on on-site sewage disposal systems (septic systems and tight-tanks), but as residential development in the area continues to increase and more seasonal homes around the lake are converted to year round residences, it is probably only a matter of time before that area will need to either connect to the municipal sewage system or build a separate system somewhere near Beaver Lake. It is thought that the latter will be cost prohibitive and that despite the high cost to extend the sewer system out to Beaver Lake, that is more likely to occur.

The area to the northwest of Beaver Lake has been included in the residential category since the Quabbin Sunrise Co-Op (manufactured home park) is located there, and while they have a relatively new community on-site sewage disposal system, at some point in the future they will likely need to either replace it or connect to the sewer system. Just south of the Co-Op there is a large tract of land that has been approved for a subdivision with over 60 lots, each over 60,000 square feet; this tract remains vacant land - no roads or infrastructure have been built and in 2016 the land was for sale. If sewer service was available at this site, the potential for a more creative and environmentally sensitive development pattern would improve. That said, the site could be developed with a community on-site sewage disposal system that would allow flexibility in development, but with the higher cost of installing such infrastructure, more units would be needed to make it financially feasible.

It is interesting to look back at the 1961 plan, which includes a "Proposed General Plan" which is essentially a future land use map in that it depicts the areas of town where various types of land uses were expected. In that map, many of the roadways are shown to have a narrow strip of "Two Families per Acre" residential development. An analysis of the actual land use patterns today along those roads shows the average parcel

size is 1.9 acres, and only 20 percent of the parcels are one-half acre or less (i.e. two families per acre). Based primarily on the zoning in effect since 1987, new lot creation (whether done along roads with virtually no oversight or as a subdivision with Planning Board review and approval) has ensured that most new lots in town have been a minimum of 60,000 square feet (1.38 acres).

The rural area shown on the Future Land Use Map (which includes a substantial amount of residential development, all on lots over an acre) constitutes 12,654 acres, just under fifty percent of the town. It is expected and recommended that this area remain rural in nature. There are now and will continue to be pockets of houses throughout this area, and new large-lot subdivisions will continue to be created in various places throughout this area too. Obviously it will also be the area where the majority of agriculture and forestry is conducted. Such uses will continue to serve the important functions they have provided for centuries - food production, material production, and ecological benefits. Forests play an important role in climate change mitigation and in the conservation of biodiversity and of soil and water resources. And a significant amount of the passive recreation opportunities in Ware are located in the rural areas of town.

Finally, the Quabbin area on the Future Land Use Map follows the existing boundaries of the Quabbin Reservation and no development is expected within that area. Including the water area, it comprises 8,205 acres or just over thirty two percent of the town. This area serves not only important ecological functions, but also provides area residents with unsurpassed passive recreation opportunities.

It should be noted that there is no expectation that the areas shown as residential or commercial/industrial will all be developed as such within the next 20 years. This map is meant to set the stage for Future Land Use Maps, acting as a foundation for future growth and future land use planning.



J. Cascio



J. P. B. Mosso



J. Cascio



D. Ouimette



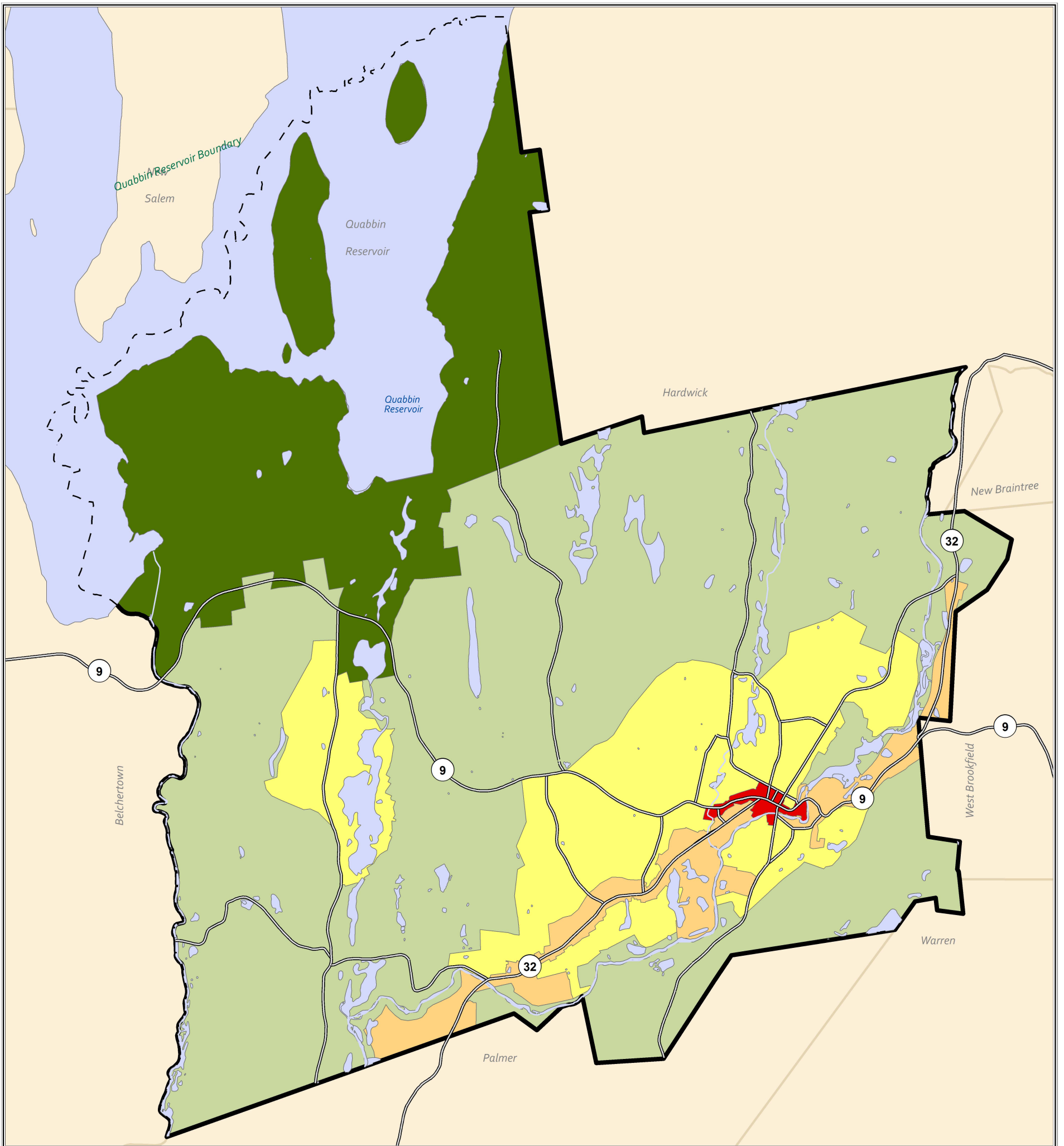
Ware: A Map for When You're Not Lost

by Judi Mosso

Third Place Winner - Master Plan Art Contest

Mixed Media

“A palatable Master Plan will encourage civic participation in both residents and businesses. To that end, “Ware: A Map for When You’re Not Lost” is a fun, lighthearted interpretation of a Ware map. As the Town moves forward and plans for its future, the map is an interpretation of what has stood the test of time and is still valued and therefore remembered by the community.”



Future Land Use

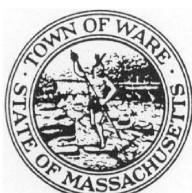
- Downtown
- Commercial/Industrial
- Residential
- Rural
- Quabbin

March 1, 2016

Future Land Use

Sources:

Future Land Use: Town of Ware
 Base Data (roads, water, towns): MassGIS



Ware's Future - 2015 Master Plan

Planning & Community Development Department
 Town Hall - 126 Main Street - Ware MA
www.townofware.com