

# 5

## Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources

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### Introduction

Natural and cultural resources are a fundamental aspect of the town's character, beauty and environmental well being. Charlton is rich with resources such as water, fish and wildlife, scenic roadways, and vistas, historic and archeological features. Of special concern is the rate of development throughout the town, as shown in Chapter 1. Innovative regulatory tools, advancing planning and creative development are the keys to preserving those treasured resources.

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### Natural Resources

The section below, describing Charlton's existing natural resources, is largely derived from the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Updates have been provided where the information is available at the writing of this Master Plan Update.

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### Water

Ponds, lakes, streams, brooks, rivers and wetlands exist throughout Charlton. In fact, as reported in Chapter 1, water represents nearly 700 acres (3 percent) of Charlton's land area – no small amount. This abundance of water bodies and streams adds to the pastoral charm. Water resources provide means for recreation, views, and conservation. Many of these areas are man-made and are the result of old industrial operations or farms.

The eastern slope of Charlton is drained by a series of streams into the Little River upper tributary of the Thames River watershed. McKinstry Brook drains the western section of town. Along its course are numerous waterfalls and rapids. Cady Brook rises in Spencer and flows south emptying into the Quinebaug River; Cady Brook is also the main drainage outlet from Charlton. Over 20 mills were located on this stream, two of which remain. Many mill sites and dams can be found in this corridor.

Water resources are identified on **Figure 5-X**, **[does the town have a figure showing this?]**. Although aquifer recharge areas exist within town, there are no accurate maps. The town should work with the state to identify these aquifer areas as well as other water resource areas to develop guidelines for their protection.

Charlton is located almost equally within the French and Quinnebaug Watersheds; a small northwestern portion of the town is located in the Chicopee Watershed.

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## Surface Water

Privately-Owned Ponds  
(no data currently available):

- Putnam Pond
- Snow Pond
- Cranberry Meadow Pond
- Lambs Pond
- Jones Pond
- Wee Laddie Pond
- Hultered Pond
- Sibley Pond
- Blood Pond
- McIntyre Pond
- Ashworth Pond
- Dodge Pond

The following section describes the surface water resources in Charlton.

### Baker (Gore) Pond

An enhanced Great Pond of approximately 169 acres, Baker Pond was created by the construction of a dam for water power in the 1830's. Its shoreline is populated with approximately 41 homes and an additional 30 plus home are situated within 500 feet of the shoreline. A diagnostic feasibility study was completed in 1987 resulting in a winter drawdown for weed control. In addition, the pond was treated for blue-green algae. The pond exhibits a serious phosphate loading problem that should be addressed before the problem spreads downstream.

### Granite Reservoir

A 198-acre great pond, Granite Reservoir has a maximum depth of 14 feet and an average depth of 8 feet. It is privately owned and used for swimming and boating.

### Buffumville Lake

A 488-acre man-made lake, Buffumville Lake was constructed in **XXXX** for flood control purposes. It is publicly-accessible and used for swimming, boating, and fishing.

### Pikes Pond

Pikes Pond is 32 acres and without great pond status. A man-made water body, it is privately owned and used for passive recreation and fishing.

### Little Nugget Lake

Little Nugget Lake is man-made and publicly accessible.

### Glen Echo Lake

An 11-acre lake without great pond status, Glen Echo Lake has a maximum depth of 25 feet and an average depth of 12 feet. It is heavily built-up on all shorelines and exhibits various water quality problems. Man-made and publicly accessible, Glen Echo is used for fishing, boating, swimming and other recreational water activities.

#### Prindle Lake

A 71-acre lake without great pond status, Prindle Lake is man made and publicly accessible.

#### Pierpoint Meadow Pond

Pierpoint Meadow Pond is a 90-acre great pond with a maximum depth of 14 feet.

#### Flowing Water

##### Cady Brook

A moderately flowing stream with an average width of 15 feet, Cady Brook runs from Charlton to Southbridge parallel to Route 169.

##### Little River

A gradual flowing stream with an average width of 15 feet, Little River runs for approximately 400 feet starting south of Route 20. This stream has open access for fishing with occasional large open pools.

##### McKinstry Brook

A shallow, low-flowing stream averaging 10 feet in width, McKinstry Brook runs for 200 feet. With a depth ranging from 4 inches to 8 inches, it occasionally dries up except for a few small open pools.

##### Potter Brook

A 200-foot stream with an average width of 6 feet, Potter Brook contains several small rock dams causing the creation of large deep pools. It has easy access for fishing.

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### Flood Hazard Areas

Flood hazard areas within Charlton are limited due to the hilly topography which limits flood zones to those areas immediately surrounding water bodies. Federal Environmental Management Authority (FEMA) maps shown in the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan **CONFIRM** portray an accurate description of Charlton's flood-prone areas.

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### Wetlands

Little mapping exists of Charlton's wetland resources, other than the areas identified in general on the USGS topographic mapping data. However, the Commonwealth is undertaking a detailed mapping through its Wetlands Conservancy Program. These

maps will soon be available for the town of Charlton which will provide significant benefit to the town for future resource protection planning efforts. **[DID THIS HAPPEN? WHERE ARE THE MAPS?]** [Yes, Karen has the maps. Just reference done by EOE.](#)

### Aquifer Recharge Areas

Although aquifer recharge areas exist within the town, there has been no comprehensive and up-to-date mapping of aquifer recharge areas. In 1966, the consulting firm of Whitman and Howard, Inc. presented a potential groundwater yield of 1 million gallons per day in an area near Buffumville Lake (see Map #4 of the 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan). **However, as part of an analysis of additional sources of potable water, the town should work with the state and appropriate consultants to update this study, identify aquifer areas and develop guidelines for their protection. [DID THIS HAPPEN?]** [At this time, the town water and sewer commission is working with their engineering consultant \(Tighe & Bond\) to identify aquifer areas for a potential town water system.](#)

### Vegetation

#### Native Hardwood Species:

- Beech
- Sugar Maple
- Birch
- Oaks
- White Pine
- Hemlock (wetter areas)
- Black Cherry

The vegetation in Charlton consists of farmland, forests and vegetated wetlands. The farmland is dominated by the remains of once productive or still operating dairy farms, such as Dresser Hill Farm located in south-central Charlton, Cooks Farm located in northeast Charlton and Kaszowski Farm located in western Charlton. Regardless of their current productivity, these areas typically consist of open fields used for grazing or the production of hay or other grain for consumption by cows. Even on those farms that are no longer in production, the remaining fields are kept open through yearly harvesting.

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#### Native Wetland Species:

- Red Maple
- Speckled Alder
- Canadian Serviceberry
- Silky Dogwood
- Eastern Hemlock
- Jack-in-the Pulpit
- Sedge
- Sweet Pepper
- Winterberry
- Arrowwood
- Spice Bush
- Sensitive Fern
- Cinnamon Fern
- Swamp Honeysuckle
- Pussy Willow
- Highbush Blueberry

Forested areas are scattered throughout Charlton; although the predominance of uninterrupted forested areas are found on the outskirts of Town. As of 1985, approximately 70 percent of Charlton is covered by forest. Charlton has been listed in the Department of Environmental Management's Urban Forestry Program's Champion Trees of New England as home of the largest Black Cherry (*Prunus serotina*) tree in Massachusetts.

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Wetland vegetated areas are interspersed throughout the Town and associated with the numerous water bodies and streams discussed above. The species noted in the list at left are taken from the *National List of Plant Species that Occur in Wetlands*:

As discussed in Chapter 1, this higher proportion of forested land can be attributed to data from MassGIS, which identifies land coverage based on aerial photography and thus differs from Assessor's parcel-based data which categorizes land use based on actual land ownership and use.

*Northeast*, distributed by the Fish and Wildlife Service, U. S. Department of the Interior.

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## Fisheries and Wildlife

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### Fisheries

Charlton has diverse and abundant aquatic habitats consisting of cold water and warm water streams and ponds. These habitats are home to many fish species, both native introduced and stocked. Angling opportunities are excellent due to ample public land access.

#### Warm Water

Warm water habitats include: Buffumville Lake (good public access), Granite Reservoir, Prindle Lake, Glen Echo Lake and Gore Pond (all limited public access), as well as a number of other small warm water ponds. Water depth, chemistry and aquatic vegetation varies from pond to pond. This variation results in different quality and quantity of fish species composition. Some shallow smaller ponds are subject to oxygen depletion during winter months and breeding stress in spring/summer resulting in some fish mortality. Generally, Charlton ponds have good fish production capability. Northern Pike have been stocked in Buffumville Lake in 1984, 1988 and 1994.

#### Cold Water

Trout fisheries are primarily confined to streams and brooks. The many brooks in Charlton have excellent native trout species, of which Eastern Brook Trout is the primary species. The Department of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) stocks trout in Little River, South Fork of the Little River, Potter and McKinstry Brooks.

#### Fish Species:

##### Warm Water

- Bass
- Pickerel
- Perch
- Sunfish
- Bullhead
- Minnows
- Dace
- Shiners

##### Cold Water

- Eastern Brook Trout
- Brook Trout (stocked)
- Brown Trout (stocked)

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### Wildlife

Diversity and variety of wildlife are the strong factors of Charlton's environment. Wildlife habitat includes upland forested areas, numerous wetland types, early successional brushy fields, active agricultural fields, and suburban backyards. All habitats are high quality, as reflected by significant wildlife production.

Wildlife species found in Charlton are common to all of central Massachusetts. Occasionally, uncommon animals are seen in Charlton. Moose, Turkey Vulture and American Bald Eagle have large home ranges and expanding populations. A

complete listing of wildlife species including mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles and amphibians is too extensive to be noted here.

**Wildlife Species (sample):**

- Raccoon
- Whitetail Deer
- Cottontail Rabbit
- Gray Squirrel
- Red Fox
- New England Coyote
- Songbirds – various
- Ruffed Grouse
- Turkey
- Ring Necked Pheasants (stocked)
- Moose
- Vulture
- American Bald Eagle

**Private Lands**

Most of the wildlife habitats on private land consist of suburban backyards and farmland. The abundant and diverse wildlife species can adapt to this changing habitat; however, adaptability to humans can present problems at times. Crop damage, livestock predation, property damage and health and safety concerns result from the interaction of people and wildlife.

**Public Lands**

The DFW and the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) are major land stewards in Charlton. Bennett Wildlife Management Area – 281 acres of old fields and forest – is open to the public for wildlife related recreation. Wildlife species such as Whitetail Deer, Ruffed Grouse, Gray Fox, Coyote and Turkey benefit from forest habitat management conducted on state and private lands. Hunting is popular on state lands for Whitetail Deer and stocked pheasant. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stocks about 140 Ring Necked Pheasants annually on open covers and suitable habitat in Charlton. These birds are hunted during the fall upland game season.

Capen Hill Nature Sanctuary

This 72-acre farm was gifted to the town by Ruth Wells in memory of her husband and has served the people of Charlton since 1977. Its purpose, as outlined in its charter, is to protect the wildlife refuge and natural resources, to maintain unspoiled areas for the general public to enjoy, to further the scientific and aesthetic study of birds, plants and all wildlife, and to provide environmental education to present and future generations. Capen Hill has membership of almost 2,000 members and has provided summer nature camp for about 200 children yearly. Capen Hill also operates the only wildlife rehabilitation facility in the state accepting injured and orphaned wildlife with care provide by a state and federally licensed wildlife rehabilitator.

[Fay Mountain Farm](#)

[TAKE FROM ED Brochure](#)

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**Rare Wildlife**

Estimated habitats of rare wildlife are located in northeast Charlton along the Little River corridor down to Buffumville Lake, as well as in southern Charlton near East Baylies Road and another area in northwest Charlton. Prime habitat areas for wood



- A F. Putnam/Partridge Hill - intensely maintained remnant of an early farm is maintained by one of the land's descendants.
- Dresser Hill - view awarded from this high drumlin can not be exceeded by anywhere in southern Worcester County. A series of farms are located on this hill, which represents the most intensely developed agricultural land in town.
- ~~Denjeld-Denfield~~ Road - remnants of once prosperous farms provide insight into the labor required to bring stony acres under cultivation.
- Carpenter Hill/McIntyre Road - a series of former farms here show the possibilities of agricultural uses on stony ledge land.
- Heritage Golf Course/McKinstry - these agricultural lands have been converted to greens for golf courses, but retain open landscape features.

Charlton contains numerous open meadows and fields. These sites are existing open fields maintained to supply their adjacent farms with hay crops. In addition, two sites are institutional establishments which provide produce and supplies to their facilities.

Charlton has two primary stream corridors:

- The eastern slope of Charlton is drained by a series of streams into the Little River upper tributary of the Thames River watershed.
- McKinstry Brook drains the western section of town. Along its course are numerous waterfalls and rapids, a boon to the fisherman and a delight to the hiker.

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## Geologic Features

Charlton's land form also boasts geologic features, such as numerous hills, many of which are open. Geologic features are described as follows:

### Open Hilltops / Scenic Views:

- Stedman's Hill
- Doane Hill
- Osgood Hill
- Curtis Hill
- William's Hill
- Little Muggett
- Tavern Hill
- Hammond Hill
- Eastman Hill
- Muggett Hill
- Home Hill
- Conlin Hill
- Wolfe Hill
- Dresser Hill
- Masonic Home Hill
- Carpenter Hill

- Brookfield Road/Bond Sawmill Road - an erratic boulder with a large concave area used as a rock shelter.
- McKinstry Farm/Capen Hill - a bear den and a jumbled mass of boulders containing many small cavities. This location was the site of the last bear sighting in Charlton.
- Upper/Lower Gorge of Little River - streams cut deeply through ledges forming waterfalls and rapids.
- Beech Falls - small stream with a spectacular fall in the midst of a deep beech grove off of Northside Road.

Charlton contains many open hilltops which highlight these land forms and create some of the most scenic views to and around town. These open hilltops include:

[\[SHOULD WE ADD ANYTHING HERE?\]](#)

Much of the visual character of these rural hillsides is provided by private, undeveloped land that has little or no long-term protection as open space. As a result, many are and will continue to come under pressure for development.

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## Historic and Archaeological Resources in the Town of Charlton

The Town of Charlton has a rich history represented in physical cultural resources, its historic and archaeological resources, which include buildings, structures, objects, burial grounds, landscapes, and archaeological sites. These historic and archaeological resources provide a valuable material record of the history of Charlton and significantly enhance the quality of life in the town. They enhance the scenic qualities of the landscape, establish community character and identity, and in large part define what is unique about the Town of Charlton. The historic properties and sites that comprise the cultural landscape in Charlton are both finite and non-renewable. Once destroyed, they are lost forever. Therefore, this section of the Master Plan presents a plan to assist in the management of Charlton's rich and varied historic resources.

The following section of the Master Plan contains four separate components associated with the preservation of historic and archaeological resources in the Town of Charlton: (1) Identification and Evaluation of Historic and Archaeological Resources; (2) Preservation-Related Tools and Programs; (3) Historic Preservation Goals and Objectives; and (4) Recommendations. The first section provides a brief overview of the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth as well as the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and notes the properties and districts in Charlton that are included in both the State and National Registers. The second section describes tools and programs that could potentially be utilized by the Town for historic preservation purposes. The third section delineates more specific goals and objectives related to issues defined by the Town of Charlton, and the fourth section provides overall historic preservation recommendations.

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## Identification of Historic and Archaeological Resources

The identification and documentation of historic and archaeological resources in the Town of Charlton is a fundamental research and preservation planning process designed to provide basic information on the current location, appearance, and condition of historic resources throughout the community. Evaluation of their significance and resultant recognition through their listing in the State Register of Historic Places and National Register of Historic Places is an important additional

step. Properties that have been documented on state inventory forms are, after acceptance by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, included in the Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (the Inventory). Properties that have been evaluated and are determined significant through an official review and approval process (local landmarks and districts, National Register-listed properties, properties with preservation restrictions) are listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Only properties that have been determined significant through a state and federal nomination and approval process are listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The Inventory and State and National Registers of Historic Places are described below.

As noted in more detail below in the Preservation-Related Tools and Programs section, the National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The State Register of Historic Places was established in 1982 as a comprehensive listing of buildings, objects, structures, and sites that have received local, state or national designations in Massachusetts based on their historical or archaeological significance. The Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth includes all buildings, structures, sites, and objects that have been recorded on inventory forms in the Commonwealth, not all of which have received an official designation.

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## Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets

The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets (the Inventory) is a statewide list that contains information about all properties that have been documented on a MHC inventory form. In order to be included in the Inventory, a property must be documented on one of several types of MHC inventory forms, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as MACRIS, is now searchable online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>.

According to the MACRIS, Charlton's Inventory documents nearly 200 properties ranging from the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the late-20<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the inventory was completed in the 1970s when the town undertook a village survey in preparation for establishing the Northside Village Historic District and was further supplemented in the 1990s in preparation for establishing the Charlton Center Historic District.

Charlton has 14 prehistoric and 18 historic period archaeological sites. One of the historic period archaeological sites (the Bates-Randall Homestead Site, CRT-HA-10) has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion D, which refers to the site's potential to yield important information. Due to the known information about other regions as well as the apparent prehistoric and historic

period activity in Charlton it is likely that there will be more archaeological sites identified in the future.



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## State and National Registers of Historic Places

The Town of Charlton has a number of structures that are listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The first National Register listing in Charlton was in 1976 with the individual listing of the Rider Tavern, followed by the John Spurr House later in the same year. In addition to these two individual listings, Charlton has 2 National Register Districts – Northside Village Historic District and Charlton Center Historic District. All of these properties are automatically listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Three local historic districts – Northside Historic District Central, Northside Historic District East, and Northside Historic District West – also are listed in the State Register. Additionally, the Northside School is a contributing element to the Northside Village Historic District. Two of the abovementioned properties – Rider Tavern and Northside School – are protected by preservation restrictions drawn up in accordance with MGL Chapter 184, Sections 31-33. A preservation restriction (PR) runs with the deed in perpetuity and is one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties that have preservation restrictions filed under the state statute are also automatically listed in the State Register.

For a list of Charlton properties that are listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, as well as those properties that are recorded in MHC’s Inventory, please see [Appendix \\_\\_\\_](#). Please note that no information concerning archaeological resources, especially their locations, can be disclosed in documents prepared for public review in order to protect the sites from possible looting or vandalism. For additional information regarding archaeological resources in the Town of Charlton, please contact the State Archaeologist at the MHC.

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## Preservation-Related Tools and Programs

Charlton already has important planning tools in place to document current conditions within the town, identify issues of concern to town residents, and to develop strategies for action. This section of the Master Plan identifies a variety of planning tools and programs (both voluntary and regulatory) that are available for preservation planning purposes in the Town of Charlton. Many programs exist at the local, state, and federal levels that are available to assist in the preservation of Charlton’s important historic resources. Three broad categories of preservation-related programs are described in this section including Local Planning / Protection of cultural resources; Federal and State Regulatory review, and Financial Programs and Incentives.

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## Local Planning / Protection

### National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the nation's official list of significant historic properties. Properties listed in the NRHP include sites, buildings, structures, districts, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. Contrary to popular perception, listing in the NRHP does not limit a property owner's right to alter, manage, or sell the property when using private funds. Instead, the designation acts as a key to access preservation programs and incentives at the federal, state and local level.

Some of the key benefits to NRHP listing include eligibility for federal and state rehabilitation tax credits, access to income tax deductions for the donation of historic preservation restrictions, and matching grant funds for preservation related projects. NRHP listing also requires consideration in federal, state, and some local planning projects.

NRHP properties must be at least fifty years old (unless they demonstrate exceptional significance) and must possess physical integrity by retaining enough of its original materials to exhibit its historic appearance during the time period of its historic significance. The NRHP recognizes properties associated with famous figures and events, but also acknowledges places that are associated with the history of important themes and trends in American history and pre-history. NRHP listing is accomplished through a nomination process initiated by an individual, or a private or public entity. Property owners may object to the listing through a certified letter to the Charlton Historical Commission. If 51% of the property owners within a district object to the listing through the certified letter objection process, the district will not be officially listed in the National Register. The number of properties owned by a single owner is immaterial; each property owner has one "vote". The nomination addresses the significance and integrity of the resource through a thorough report documenting its appearance and history. The report is reviewed by the MHC staff, the Massachusetts Historical Commission's state review board, and the National Park Service before final designation.

### Demolition Delay Bylaw

The objective of a demolition delay bylaw, which has been instituted in many Massachusetts communities, is to encourage owners of historic buildings to seek and consider alternatives to demolition and encourage preservation or relocation of significant buildings. The adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw by the Town of Charlton would add an extra level of protection to historically significant buildings by requiring demolition permit applications to be reviewed by the Charlton Historical Commission. Communities vary on the age and type of properties to be included in their Demolition Delay Bylaws, but communities typically require



## Certified Local Government Program

The federal Certified Local Government (CLG) program is designed to help recognize communities that value historic preservation as a community asset. The program is administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and establishes a set of basic requirements for local historic preservation programs, including the operation of a preservation commission or board and the maintenance of a survey of historic resources. In return, CLG status gives participating cities and towns exclusive access to at least 10% of Massachusetts' annual Historic Preservation Fund.

The funds are awarded to CLGs through a competitive survey and planning grant program on a percentage matching fund basis and can be used for preservation plans, comprehensive surveys, and National Register nominations. In addition to grant funds, the Massachusetts Historical Commission offers technical assistance to participating municipalities.

## Community Preservation Act

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a program instituted in 127 communities across Massachusetts since its inception in 2001. Used for projects that help develop or acquire open space, increase the number of affordable housing units, and support historic preservation efforts, the CPA is funded through a property tax surcharge of no more than 3%. If adopted, 10% of the funds must go toward open space, 10% toward affordable housing, and 10% toward historic preservation. The remaining 70% can be divided as the city or town determines among these three categories. The CPA ensures that funds will always be available for preservation activities. **Please see Chapter 6 (Open Space and Recreation) for more information about potential use of CPA funding for the Town of Charlton.**

Properties receiving CPA funding for historic preservation projects must be listed in or eligible for the State Register of Historic Places, or deemed historic by the local historical commission. Funded projects can be owned publicly, privately, or by a non-profit organization, as long as they provide a significant public benefit.

Funds can be used for a variety of project types. Examples of projects that could benefit the Town of Charlton include the purchase of preservation restrictions, preparation of NRHP nominations, or the installation of historic area signage. Charlton has not adopted the CPA, although past efforts have been made to adopt the act.

## Preservation Restrictions

A preservation restriction is a legal contract by which the property owner agrees the property will not be changed in a way that would compromise its historic and



architectural integrity. Any proposed changes to the property are reviewed by the organization to which the preservation restriction is donated or sold. The preservation restriction runs in perpetuity with the land and is binding on both the owner who grants it as well as on all subsequent owners. A preservation restriction allows the owner of a historic property to retain title and use of a property and, at the same time, ensure its long-term preservation. The owner retains the major interest in the property and can sell or will it to whomever he or she wishes.

Preservation restrictions are specifically tailored to the individual building and the elements being sought to be preserved. Some agreements only protect a building's façade, while some include stipulations to protect elements of the interior, significant architectural details, or significant landscapes. The terms of the agreement are negotiated between the qualified organization and the property owner. The owner of the property subject to a preservation restriction must secure approval before undertaking significant changes to the property, such as altering the building's historic elements or constructing an addition. The owner also agrees to repair and maintain the property to an agreed-upon level of maintenance.

Significant federal income tax benefits can result from the donation of a preservation restriction. If the property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the value of the development restrictions imposed by the preservation restriction is normally considered a charitable donation. Often a preservation restriction-holding organization will require a fee or endowment to provide adequate resources to monitor the preservation restriction in the future. According to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 184, Section 31-33, all historic preservation restrictions must be reviewed and approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. If the preservation restriction-holding organization is a private non-profit, the preservation restriction must also be reviewed and approved by the local municipality. Currently two properties have preservation restrictions in Charlton - Northside School and Rider Tavern, both of which are listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

### **Agricultural Preservation Restrictions**

Similar to Preservation Restrictions, Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR) are a specific type of conservation restriction designed to help farmers realize equity without being forced to sell their land for development purposes. The equity is often reinvested back into the protected farm by way of the purchase of more land, equipment, or buildings, and through the retirement of farm debt. Overall, the program is designed to protect productive agricultural lands by establishing permanent deed restrictions that would protect them from any use that might diminish the area's agricultural potential.

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## Regulatory – Federal and State

### Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (NHPA), was originally enacted to address the widespread loss of historic properties during federally-sponsored urban renewal initiatives and highway construction projects during the 1960s. The law requires that any project that receives federal funds or is required to obtain permits or licenses from a federal agency is required to be reviewed for its effects on historic properties. Section 106 review is required for properties that are both listed or *determined eligible* for the National Register. This determination is part of the review process if the property has not been previously assessed for its eligibility.

Typical examples of federal undertakings that do and can take place in the Town of Charlton are the requirements of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) permits for development projects and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) supported road improvement projects. If a property is determined eligible for the National Register or is already listed in the National Register, then the impact of the proposed project on the resource must be determined by the federal agency or its assignee and concurred upon by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. If the project is determined to have an adverse effect on the resource, the federal agency must consult with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) in order to determine mitigation options.

### M.G.L. Chapter 254

Chapter 254 of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L., Chapter 9, Sec. 26-27C, as amended by Chapter 254 of the Acts of 1988), like Section 106 at the federal level, requires that any undertaking involving state funds or licenses be reviewed to determine whether the proposed project will have an adverse effect on a property listed in the State Register of Historic Places. If it is determined that the project will have an adverse effect on a listed property, the state agency and/or the project proponent must consult with MHC to determine mitigation measures. Unlike Section 106, which considers NRHP listed and properties that have been determined eligible, Chapter 254 only considers properties or districts listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Chapter 254 could be relevant in the Town of Charlton if any area or individual property is listed in the State Register of Historic Places (this designation is automatic if the area were listed in the NRHP) and any state funds or licenses are used for projects such as road improvement, community development or residential and/or commercial development.

## Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA)

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) is a comprehensive review process that requires state agencies to account for the potential environmental impacts of projects involving state licenses, permits or financial support. This public process requires a thorough study of potential environmental impacts and the development of feasible mitigation options designed to avoid or minimize those impacts. Historic resources, both above and below ground, are included in the list of environmental factors that must be considered in the MEPA process.

If the project has a connection to state funds permits, or licenses, certain thresholds must be met in order to initiate MEPA review. For historic resources, the threshold is met if the project involves the demolition of any part of a structure listed in the State Register of Historic Places, or (as of 1998) the property is listed in the *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth*. A detailed project information statement, known as an Environmental Notification Form, must then be prepared to assess the impact of the project on the resource.

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## Financial Programs and Incentives

### Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit

The Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit program encourages preservation of historic structures by allowing favorable tax treatments for rehabilitation through a 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of an income-producing NRHP-listed building. Since 1976, this investment incentive has proven to be one of the nation's most successful and cost-effective community development programs.

In order to be eligible for the credit, a building must be listed in the NRHP either individually or as a contributing structure in an historic district, or within a certified local historic district. The proposed project must also be a substantial rehabilitation costing more than \$5,000 or the adjusted basis of the property, whichever is greater. The building must be rehabilitated in a manner that meets the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and is reviewed through a series of applications by the State Historic Preservation Office (MHC) and the National Park Service.

For the purposes of the tax credits, income-producing buildings include commercial, agricultural, retail, and rental properties, but do not include owner-occupied residences or most condominiums.

Federal tax credits have helped encourage economic development in areas similar to Charlton Center Historic District, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition to the historic rehabilitation tax credits, a 10% Federal tax credit is

also available to non-historic structures (buildings not listed in the NRHP) built before 1936. The requirements for the type of rehabilitation for these properties are not as stringent as those mandated for the historic tax credit.

### **Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit**

The Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit allows up to 20% of the cost of the qualified rehabilitation of an income-producing historic structure to be credited on state income taxes. Many owners / developers use the state credit in conjunction with the federal tax credit to reach up to a return of 40% of approved costs in tax credits. Unlike the Federal incentive, the Massachusetts Historic Tax Credit program has an allocation cap of \$50 million per year, and credits are awarded via a competitive process. General requirements for eligibility are the same as for the Federal historic tax credits.

### **Survey and Planning Grants and Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)**

The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) and Survey and Planning Grants, administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, provide 50% reimbursable matching grants for preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Grants can be used for feasibility studies, design assistance and plans, acquisition and construction activities including stabilization, protection, rehabilitation and restoration. Non-profit organizations and governmental agencies can apply for the grants, which typically range from \$5,000 to \$30,000 for pre-development projects, and \$7,500 to \$100,000 for development or acquisitions. Acceptance of the grant requires that the recipients place and abide by a preservation restriction on the property that will protect its significant features in perpetuity. The Massachusetts Historical Commission should be approached regarding funding status for these programs.

### **Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (HLGP)**

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) sponsors the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program, which documents and analyzes unprotected historic landscapes throughout the state. The Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program provides matching grants to municipalities for preservation of public parklands. Properties must be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, with preference given to properties associated with friends' groups or citizen advisory councils. The Program supports inventory and planning projects, construction projects, preservation maintenance projects, and public education and stewardship activities. DCR is not currently awarding grants due to fiscal restrictions.

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## Goals and Objectives

- Goals for Natural, Cultural and Historic Resources – **Need Updating from 2000 Plan** (Protect Charlton’s water resources by addressing pollution problems and avoiding new degradation. KEEP)
- Goal: Preserve critical masses of wildlife habitat, to include greenway corridors. KEEP
- Goal: Preserve open land and scenic vistas. KEEP
- Goal: Emphasis on water resources and wildlife habitat, which got less attention in 2000 Plan.
- Goal: Integrate historic and archaeological resource identification and documentation into local preservation planning.  
Objectives:
  1. Support historic preservation initiatives within the Town of Charlton.
  2. Nominate properties and historic districts to the National Register of Historic Places.
- Goal: Develop and strengthen local planning and protection measures for cultural resources.  
Objectives:
  1. Identify and document historic and archaeological resources throughout the Town of Charlton.
  2. Seek funding opportunities through MHC’s Survey and Planning Grant program to conduct a community-wide architectural survey.
  3. Seek funding opportunities through MHC’s Survey and Planning Grant program to conduct a community-wide archaeological survey.
  4. Encourage zoning mechanisms such as a demolition delay ordinance, scenic road bylaw, and local historic districts to further preservation and community character objectives.
  5. Obtain local historic district status for both Charlton Center and the Town Depot Historic Districts
  6. Revise zoning to encourage more commercial/residential mixed use
- Goal: Incorporate specific historic preservation objectives in community revitalization and economic development efforts.  
Objectives:
  1. Encourage rehabilitation of historic properties through financial incentives such as the Federal and State Historic Tax Credit programs
  2. Encourage the adaptive re-use of historic properties in Charlton Center as a sustainable development tool to offset sprawl.
- Goal: Strengthen efforts for the preservation of Charlton’s rural historic landscapes.  
Objectives:
  1. Develop specific strategies for rural historic landscape preservation within existing open space programs.
  2. Incorporate historic and cultural resource preservation into broader conservation efforts.

- Goal: Heighten awareness, understanding, and appreciation of Charlton's historic and archaeological resources and their preservation.

Objectives:

1. Expand and develop illustrated individual brochures on historic, architectural, and archaeological characteristics of Charlton Center Historic District and Northside Village Historic District.
2. Establish walking and/or driving tours of historic districts and notable historic areas within the Town of Charlton.
3. Design and install outdoor interpretative signage.

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## Overall Recommendations

This section of the Master Plan offers general recommendations relevant to preserving the character of the community that would be applicable to a wide range of Charlton's historic and archaeological resources. Future preservation activities for the town need to focus on a combination of local programs that take into consideration planning and protection of these resources and the development of financial programs and incentives. The recommendations in this section of the Master Plan were devised by determining which of the available programs described in the section above were applicable and appropriate for the Town of Charlton.

Charlton's residents highly value the community's strong sense of place, which is created by its varied natural features and land use patterns that flow from the agricultural heritage. The town has already taken measures to document and evaluate its most significant buildings and historic districts (such as Charlton Center and Northside Historic Districts). It is now looking beyond these resources to the landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century neighborhoods, and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most municipalities, Charlton is facing multiple pressures for change that threaten historic land-based uses and natural resources. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

Preservation planning is a three-step process: **identification, evaluation, and protection**. Three useful documents to consult before beginning to implement preservation strategies are:

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

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below.

### **Village and Rural Neighborhood Character**

As described above, thorough documentation on MHC inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Several preservation planning strategies could be adopted by the town of Charlton:

- **Demolition Delay Bylaw** provides a time period in which the town can explore alternatives to demolition. Typical demolition delay bylaws provide a period of delay from 6 months to a year. Such protection measures, which provide time for both developers and the town to find alternatives to demolition, would require a majority vote of Town Meeting [to accept the bylaw](#).
- **Local historic districts**, adopted through local initiative, recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. Local historic district designation and regulation is one of the strongest forms of protection for the preservation of historic resources.

### **Agricultural Landscapes**

Preservation of agricultural landscapes means preservation of the farming activities and associated rural character, which is integral to the community's past. It is important to know what the features of these agricultural landscapes are and which features the community treasures in order to make a case for preservation of these farms. Some preservation tools are available that can assist communities in preserving actual farming activities even if only a few farms remain. Others are tools to preserve the landscape when the farm is sold.

- Document additional farms that may not presently be included in Charlton's inventory of historic resources, using MHC survey forms.
- Develop partnerships with conservation and land trust organizations such as the Quinebaug-Shetucket National Heritage Corridor, the Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust, and The Trust for Public Land to raise funds to purchase development rights on farms or to assist farmers in the restoration of historic farm buildings for which the owner would be required to donate a conservation or preservation restriction (PR).
- Develop public-private partnerships (also with organizations such as the Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust) to preserve farm land through purchase of conservation restrictions (CRs) or agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs).

### **Scenic Roads**

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Charlton residents and were listed as a critical concern. Charlton has already adopted the Scenic Roads Bylaw, which requires review and approval for the removal of trees and stone walls that are within the right-of-way. Yet, in addition to roadway issues, much of what is valued about scenic roads – the stone walls, views across open fields – is not within the public right-of-way. The

preservation and protection of scenic roads therefore requires more than one approach.

- Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each of the roads in Charlton including the character defining features to assist in review under the Scenic Roads Bylaw.
- Amend the Scenic Roads Bylaw by adding design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls; such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. Coordinate procedures between Highway Department and Planning Board.
- Consider a scenic overlay district which may provide a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopt flexible zoning standards to protect certain views.
- Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstructions, which address scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety.

#### **Funding of Preservation Projects**

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. The MHC and DCR have programs to assist communities in preservation-related issues including:

- **Federal and State Historic Tax Credit Programs**, administered by the National Park Service and the MHC
- **Survey and Planning Grants and Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) Grants**, administered by the MHC, support survey, National Register, and preservation planning work.
- The **Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)**, administered by the MHC, funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.
- The **Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (HLPGP)**, administered by DCR, funds planning, education, and stewardship projects focused on historic landscapes, including cemeteries.

Funding for state programs varies year to year. When planning any preservation planning programs, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

The Town of Charlton and other preservation advocacy groups (such as the Charlton Heritage Preservation Trust) should also encourage the use of historic tax credits by providing more information on federal and state rehabilitation tax credits to the general public. Appropriate town staff should be aware of the tax credits and be able to direct citizens to the appropriate literature and agency officials, including links to more detailed information on the Town's website. This effort should be augmented by including a discussion and explanation of historic tax credits in any public education efforts about promoting preservation.