

**TOWN of GLOCESTER  
COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN  
FIVE YEAR UPDATE 2008**



**THE GLOCESTER VISION**

*“A guide to actions for sustained community development; for the community, the current and future residents and their families.”*

ORIGINAL PLAN ADOPTED

Planning Board - May 2, 1994

Town Council - June 16, 1994

First Five Year Plan Update Adopted – September 20, 2001

Second Five Year Plan Update Adopted – June 19, 2008

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**Resolutions of Adoption****PLANNING BOARD**

MOTION was made by Walter Steere III that the Gloucester Planning Board adopt the amended Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan Five Year Update 2008 in its entirety pursuant to the Rhode Island General Laws, Title 45, Chapter 22.2 with which the Comprehensive Plan is in compliance and for which public input was solicited and received through a public workshop and an advertised Public Hearing held by the Planning Board on April 21, 2008 and further that the Planning Board recommend that the Town Council also adopt the amended Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan in its entirety.

MOTION was seconded by Janine Pitocco

VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

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David Calderara

Planning Board Chairman

**TOWN COUNCIL**

MOTION was made by William Reichert that the Gloucester Town Council, upon recommendation by the Planning Board, adopt the amended Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan Five Year Update 2008 in its entirety pursuant to the Rhode Island General Laws, Title 45, Chapter 22.2 with which the Comprehensive Plan is in compliance and for which public input was solicited and received through a public workshop and an advertised Public Hearing held by the Town Council on June 19, 2008, and further that the Town Council adopt the amended Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan in its entirety.

MOTION was seconded by Michael Joyce.

VOTE: Unanimous

Respectfully submitted,

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Steven A. Sette

Town Council President

## Introduction

In 1988, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed the Rhode Island Planning and Land Use Act; Title 45, Chapter 22.2 of the Rhode Island General Laws. All Rhode Island municipalities must adopt a comprehensive community plan in accordance and conformance with this Act. Section 4 (6) of the Act states: “Comprehensive plan or comprehensive land use plan means a document containing the components described in this chapter, including the implementation program which is consistent with the goals and guidelines established by this chapter.”<sup>1</sup>

Fine, but what does this mean? A comprehensive community plan is a document that articulates a general future vision of the municipality. The future vision usually describes preferential means to attain the desired goals within the context of a five to twenty year plan framework. This plan will articulate a future vision for Glocester set within a five year time frame. It also means to provide for orderly, acceptable change within a community. The public should use this document as a general statement listing the town’s preferred actions to achieve the articulated future vision.

How can the public use this plan? In simple terms, the public should use this plan as a general reference source to determine whether public bodies are forming conclusions and acting in conformance with the content of the approved plan.<sup>2</sup> The plan must form the basis for all public body land use decisions. Should a conflict occur between a public body’s action and an action listed in the plan, either an official plan amendment must occur or the action should not be taken. This plan must not be confused with a zoning or subdivision ordinance which lists specific requirements and actions governing the use and development of land. This comprehensive plan is intended to be a general reference document that is policy oriented. Individuals may vary in their interpretation of the document and its applicability in a given situation. Isn’t the old comprehensive plan good enough for the Town? Glocester, like every other Rhode Island community, must adopt a new comprehensive community plan that is in accordance with R.I.G.L., Title 45, Chapter 22.2. This document represents Glocester’s compliance with this law.

The Town originally adopted a comprehensive plan in 1986, which stated:

*“The residents of Glocester will be forced to make some extremely important choices about the character and environment of their town during (the 1980's).*

*Growth will continue to occur in Glocester during the 1980's, but the nature of development will change and so will its dimensions. Paramount in this changing environment, is the need to keep Glocester a rural interlude in an ever expanding megalopolis.”*<sup>3</sup>

The 1986 plan was used as the foundation for this plan. Many of the concerns and recommendations contained in the 1986 plan can be identified in this latest plan. Our society’s changing attitudes and increasing knowledge base necessitated the presentation

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<sup>1</sup> Title 45, Chapter 22.2, Section 46), RIGL 1993.

<sup>2</sup> Title 45, Chapter 22.2, Section 13 (c) RIGL 1993.

<sup>3</sup> Comprehensive Community Plan, Glocester, RI 1986, pp 1.

of new concerns and ideas in this plan that had not been previously considered by the Town. In short, this plan represents the best and most appropriate parts of the old Plan, combined with the current demands and expectations of the community.

Should Glocester residents believe that this plan can provide for a sound and orderly future for Glocester? Community commitment to the goals and objectives articulated in this document can make the GLOCESTER VISION a reality. “This is the key to the success of the [Comprehensive] Planning Program for Glocester, as implementation of the (Comprehensive) Community Plan depends substantially upon the willingness of the community to accept and work towards its goals.”<sup>4</sup>

Since 1994, this plan has undergone review by State Agencies as set forth by the state Planning and Land Use Act. Review comments have been received and evaluated which have resulted in the drafting of certain amendments to the plan designed to resolve appropriate matters of concern. The State approved the Town’s Plan on December 20, 2001. In 2007, the Town prepared and adopted a 5-Year Update to the Community Plan. See discussion, below.

Additionally, since 1994 events have occurred which deserve recognition by and incorporation into the Plan. Such events of importance include the “Chepachet Village Planning Project” as prepared by the Community Planning Studio, Graduate Curriculum in Community Planning and Area Development, University of Rhode Island, in the fall of 1997. This document is a comprehensive plan and implementation strategy for the Chepachet Village area which provides “... for the protection, improvement, and enhancement of the physical, historical, natural, and economic environment of the Village...” Of importance to both this village plan and the community is the establishment of, and inclusion of Glocester within and as part of, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and Commission, which has rendered resource and partnership assistance to the Chepachet Village initiative and project as an appropriate and important regional planning institution.

This implementation strategy for the Chepachet Village Plan is comprehensive in scope, is being carried out and prioritized, and itself requires actions that need to be recognized by the Glocester Comprehensive Plan through its various elements, both as an extension of the comprehensive plan and to assure future consistency with the plan. The recommendation and implementation strategy of the Chepachet Village Planning Project need to be incorporated by reference into each related element of the Comprehensive Plan as appropriate. The Chepachet Village Plan itself was “... guided by the goals, objectives and policies of the Town of Glocester Comprehensive Plan” as stated in [its] “Vision Statement” of Chapter V “Recommendations and Implementation Strategy.”<sup>5</sup>

Another major planning initiative that has occurred since 1994 is the preparation of the “Glocester Wastewater Management Study” for the Town by Fuss & O’Neill, Inc., in 1997. This study serves as the RIDEM approved “Facility Plan” for the Town of Glocester, and contains a number of analysis and alternative recommendations for consideration and action by the Town. The importance of this study is also reflected in

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid Number 6, pp 33

<sup>5</sup> “*Chepachet Village Planning Project*,” Section V, Recommendations and Implementation Strategies, p. 95.

the Chepachet Village Plan noted previously, and has been the subject of ongoing deliberation and implementation evaluation by the Town Wastewater Management Commission as authorized by the Gloucester Town Council. The major findings and alternative recommendations of this study likewise need to be incorporated into the Gloucester Comprehensive Plan to support future implementation efforts, including but not limited to, the establishment of one or more Wastewater Management Districts in Gloucester and the purposes therefore.

Other issues which were identified as deserving further attention in the 2001 Comprehensive Plan in order to maintain its relevance to unfolding events are listed below in no particular order of importance. Each of these issues has been reviewed and is discussed in the 5-Year Update to the Plan.

- a. Scenic Roads – No State-designated scenic roadways have been created. See discussion in the Natural and Cultural Resources Element.
- b. Watershed Areas – The Town has not adopted Groundwater or wellhead protection overlay districts. See discussion in Land Use Element.
- c. Capital Improvement Program – The Town has adopted a requirement for a CIP. See Services & Facilities Element.
- d. Future Land Use – A Future Land Use Plan Map has been added to the 2007 Plan Update.
- e. Zoning
  1. Development Plan Review – The Town has adopted zoning requirements for development plan review. See Land Use Element.
  2. Special Regulations – The Town has incorporated Planned Districts into the Zoning Ordinance.
  3. Zoning Districts – The Town’s Zoning Map has been brought into conformity with the Requirements of the State Zoning Enabling Act.
  4. Flexible Zoning Techniques-The Town has addressed the use of conservation developments and adopted a rural residential compound ordinance. See Land Use Element.
- f. Subdivision/Land Development Projects
  1. Land Unsuitable for Development- A definition of land unsuitable for development has been incorporated into the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations. See Land Use Element.
- g. Recreation Needs – The Town has updated and increased the supply and type of recreation and open space in the Town. See Open Space and Recreation Element.

Specific actions are also incorporated into Section 10.1 Implementation of this plan to carry out the recommendations. The Goals and Policies Section are also revised accordingly. These sections have all been revised in the 5-Year Plan Update.

### **Conservation Development**

During 2007, the Town amended this Plan to reflect a stronger need to conserve open space and natural resources and to protect community character through the development review process. Specifically, the Plan was amended to provide the basis for revisions to the Zoning Ordinance and the Land Development and Subdivision Regulations providing for Conservation Development.

### **5-Year Plan Update**

The Rhode Island Planning and Land Use Act requires that all municipalities to periodically review and amend their Plans. The law states: “At a minimum, a municipality shall update its comprehensive plan at least once every five (5) years:<sup>6</sup> On June 19, 2008 the Town Council adopted the 5-Year Update amendments to the Plan. The Planning Board adopted these amendments on April 21, 2008 The State approved the Town’s 5-Year Comprehensive Plan Update on September 9, 2008.

See Process for a summary of the changes.

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<sup>6</sup> Title 45, Chapter 22.2, Section 12 (B).

## Plan Summary

The Planning Board composed a comprehensive community plan, which was approved by the State in 2001. Data collection, analysis and interpretation laid the foundation of this plan. From that base, a series of Goals, Objectives, Policies and Recommendations to achieve the Gloucester Vision were formed. Lastly, a program to implement the plan was devised by the Planning Board. This process and its findings are detailed in the text of this document. The format of the original 2001 Plan has been continued in the 2007 Five Year Plan Update.

This plan summary is not intended to replace the text version of the Plan. Rather, it is offered to acquaint the reader with the general findings, conclusions and recommendations contained in this Plan. Thus, this section is a supplement to the text and should not be used as the only source of information to determine the nature and direction of Gloucester.

In simple terms, Gloucester is a place held to be special by its citizens. It is the nature of Gloucester that attracts new residents and encourages existing residents to remain. Some of these desirable community attributes are described in the Plan as “a sense of place; its rural character; the abundant natural resources; the landscape and scenery; and its sensible living environment.” These attributes were scientifically quantified in the Plan using appropriate research methods. This information was used to establish the Goals, Objectives, Policies and Recommendations of the Plan.

Overall, Gloucester citizens want to retain the Rural Character, Sense of Place, Natural Resources, Sensible Living Environment and the Town’s role as a Greenbelt Oasis to the Providence metropolitan area. They wish to balance the need and demand for growth with preservation and conservation of the desirable community attributes. Gloucester citizens want a future that will allow for appropriate, well-planned growth and minimal disruption to the community’s desirable attributes.

The contents of this Plan provide an in-depth explanation of these general comments.

## **The Process**

### **The Gloucester Comprehensive Planning Process**

#### **1.1 Background**

The required elements of all community comprehensive plans (Plan) are set forth in Title 45, Chapter 22.2, Section 6 of the Rhode Island Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act (Act). The Act stipulates the contents, compilation and adoption process, communication medium and general planning requirements of the Plan. In 1992, when the Plan was first prepared, the Town of Gloucester has endeavored to not only meet the requirements of the Act, but to involve the entire community in a process to properly plan for the Town's future.

Gloucester has had a long-term commitment to comprehensive planning for the community. It was more than thirty-five years ago that the then-residents of Gloucester realized the need to properly plan for their community's future. A series of comprehensive community plans and specific issue studies have since been developed to provide for the orderly future development of the Town. This Plan update represents the latest effort in this ongoing community planning process.

#### **1.2 The Comprehensive Planning Process**

To provide for a thorough and accurate comprehensive-planning process, in 1989 the then-Glocester Town Council appointed a citizen group to compose a new comprehensive community plan for the Town. The Gloucester Comprehensive Plan Commission began its endeavor in earnest.

An extensive public outreach effort initiated the planning process. A series of workshops and planning charettes were conducted to obtain community-wide opinions and input. A grouping of preliminary goals and objectives was created by the consultant and Planner for the Commission. After several more meetings, the Commission endorsed goals and objectives for the Plan's required elements. Hours of public meetings and hearings were conducted by this group to obtain an accurate indication of the public's opinion regarding the Town's future. Eventually, this group submitted a report to the Gloucester Planning Board and Town Council concerning their findings. In October of 1993, the Gloucester Town Council authorized the Planning Board to prepare a revised comprehensive community plan.

Since much work and input had already been expended on the Plan's initial composition, it was decided by the Planning Board to use that previously generated information as a beginning. It was in this setting that the Town of Gloucester willingly embarked on its ambition to establish a new comprehensive community plan that would help guide the future development of the community in an orderly and rational manner.

Beginning in October of 1993, the Planning Board held a series of special meetings to review and comment on individual elements of the comprehensive plan concepts composed by the Comprehensive Community Plan Commission. Each of these meetings were advertised as workshops and open to the public for observation and participation.

As the plan progressed through the review process, the Town Planner made presentations to several community groups and governmental agencies regarding the contents of the Plan. On May 2, 1994, the Planning Board held a public hearing on the Plan to solicit input on the draft final version. Notice was made in accordance with the provisions specified in Title 45, Chapter 22.2 of the Rhode Island General Laws. This notice included public advertisements, copies of the draft final version Plan being distributed throughout the community and at public places, direct notice and solicitation for input to abutting communities in both Rhode Island and Connecticut, and direct notice to individuals that comprised the initial Comprehensive Community Plan Commission and local community groups interested in the Plan.

As a result of this public hearing, several changes were incorporated into the final draft version of the Plan. This final version was then discussed by and adopted by the Gloucester Planning Board on May 2, 1994. The Planning Board then submitted the adopted draft of the Plan to the Town Council for consideration and action.

On June 9, 1994, the Town Council held a public hearing to solicit input from the public regarding the contents of the Plan. Based on the testimony presented at this hearing, the Town Council considered adoption of the Plan, with several amendments and stipulations, at its June 16, 1994 meeting. Thus, on June 16, 1994, the Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan was officially adopted by the Town Council.

The amendments proposed for the Comprehensive Plan in 1998-1999 as a result of State Agency review and the additional plan update, have followed a similar procedure. In 1994, after adoption of the plan and commencement of review by the State of Rhode Island, the Gloucester Town Council established a “Comprehensive Community Plan Coordinating Committee”, made up of a representative of each Town Board and Commission with some responsibility for plan implementation, to oversee and coordinate plan implementation. The Gloucester Planning Board, with the assistance of this committee, has held a number of workshops in 1998 and 1999, which resulted in the 2001 Plan Update.

In 2006/2007, the Town set about to amend the Comprehensive again to meet the five-year update mandate. Given that most of the goals and policies in the 2001 version are still valid, this update is seen as a “technical” update that primarily addresses new or updated data. The US Census for 2000 and more reliable projections as well as more sophisticated GIS data were not available in 1998 and 1999. The public participation process is through the Planning Board that held a public hearing on April 21, 2008.

## **1.3 Summary of Changes in 2008**

### **PART I, GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.1 Land Use – Most of the policies are not changed. The biggest changes are in updated or new data and updated language to reflect the new findings and to support affordable housing, conservation development, impact fees and expanded home occupations.

4.1 Housing – Most of the changes are in support of the Affordable Housing Plan.

5.1 Economic Development – There were not many changes; mostly updates to reflect the new findings and to support Chepachet village plans, an added technique of BID, and development plan review.

6.1 Natural & Cultural Resources – There were not many changes; mostly updates to reflect the new findings and to support conservation development.

7.1 Services & Facilities – There were not many changes; mostly updates to reflect the new findings and to support impact fees.

8.1 Open Space And Recreation – The inventories of existing open space and recreation sites were completely updated. Goals were updated to reflect upgrading both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities. Land dedication policies are augmented with payments in lieu of dedication of land in situations where such payments make more sense, and conservation development is now incorporated as policies of the Town for future development.

9.1 Circulation – Updates include the 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), including improvements in Chepachet Village, and policies include new alternative ways for the Town to review and accept platted roads for developments proposing access in new subdivisions.

10.1 Implementation – The implementation matrix is updated to reflect new timelines and responsible agencies. As part of the 2008 Five-Year Plan Update, the original actions have been revisited and updated. Many of the actions originally recommended as part of the 1994 Plan have been completed, and many ongoing policies have been adopted and continue to be implemented as part of the Town's long-range growth strategy. The major actions completed are summarized as follows:

- 3.4.1 The Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance were brought into conformity with the Comprehensive Plan
- 4.4.1-3 Residential compound provisions have been adopted (Zoning Ordinance, Article X).
- 3.4.2 Historic District zoning has been adopted (Zoning Ordinance, Article IX).
- 9.4.11 The Town has begun the Chepachet Village improvement project in cooperation with RIDOT
- The Town has adopted an Affordable Housing Plan (2005) which addresses housing affordability strategies.

- 6.4. A.1 The has dropped the requirement for Resource Evaluation Statements as part of the Capital Improvement Program..
- 6.4.A.3; 6.4.A 5&6 The Town has not adopted a Natural Resources Protection Ordinance, but has adopted conservation development zoning and subdivision techniques and development plan review provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.
- 8.4.8-10 The Town has adopted conservation development zoning and subdivision techniques and has developed a Growth Impact Assessment Ordinance.
- 9.4.1 The Town has adopted requirements for access points to Town roads.

## **PART II, PLAN CONTENTS**

11.1 Land Use – This section is completely revised, with updated information on land use and demographics. The only table that is not updated is Table 11.3 Publicly Owned Undeveloped Land. But it is entirely possible that the table is still accurate perhaps with minor additions that can be added at any time. Also note that the Land Capacity Analysis (Section 11.6) has up-to-date figures on land within each zoning district. But the “constrained land” figures are largely based on the 1993 data, which most likely has not changed at all. The projected growth based on build out is changed substantially based on the current analysis, and is likely far more an accurate picture than the one projected in 1993.

12.1 Housing – Included is the entire Affordable Housing Plan as Appendix A.

13.1 Economic Development – This section is completely updated with new figures. The conclusions and recommendations are very different from the past efforts.

14.1 Natural & Cultural Resources – This element has been updated by the addition of a new inventory of natural and cultural features and new mapping.

15.1 Services & Facilities – This section is totally updated with new information from the School Department, Public Safety officials, libraries and others.

16.1 Open Space & Recreation – This element updates the Town’s recreation inventory and policies.

17.1 Circulation – This element updates the Town’s transportation characteristics, provides an inventory of public roads and sets forth proposed future traffic and transportation improvements.

## Regional and Historical Perspectives

### 2.1 The Regional Setting

The Northeast Region of the United States is the area between Boston, Massachusetts and Washington, D.C., which is densely populated, snarled with traffic congestion and often characterized by development sprawl rendering communities within the corridor indistinguishable from each other.

The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations lies within the Northeast Corridor. Due to its small size, Rhode Island is often seen as a highly urbanized state. This perception is not accurate. Of the thirty-nine communities that comprise the state's political jurisdiction, only eight are cities. The remaining thirty-one towns comprise over 89 percent of the state's entire land area, but support less than one-half of the state's population. Towns have a population density that is nearly 8 times less than the population density of the cities.<sup>7</sup> This fact establishes a distinct dichotomy between city and town. Rhode Island's towns are also very different from each other. Some are suburban communities characterized by sprawl development that obscures jurisdictional boundaries with urban areas. Other towns remain largely undeveloped and more representative of Rhode Island's agricultural past while supporting the needs of their modern day residents.

Glocester lies outside the urban perimeter of the Rhode Island metropolitan area, the Providence-Pawtucket-Warwick Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area. The towns that border Glocester are primarily characterized as rural. However, suburban growth is approaching Glocester from the east along the Route 44 roadway corridor. "When viewed in this very broad context the uniqueness and therefore the importance of Glocester, in conjunction with other western Rhode Island communities and eastern Connecticut, as a part of a rural interlude or oasis in a very extensive urban ribbon, becomes much more pronounced."<sup>8</sup>

Given its location within the regional corridor and its proximity to the Providence metropolitan area, market forces for additional development will be exerted upon Glocester; this fact is certain. And although the rate and intensity of this development pressure are unknown, Glocester must plan to manage these market forces in an orderly fashion or the market will shape the town's future character haphazardly. This Plan is the mechanism to ensure the future of Glocester.

Before this Plan describes how the community might achieve the central theme, it is a wise exercise to review the historical development of Glocester. With a proper understanding and appreciation of the community's past, its future development can be appropriately planned to reflect sensitively its historical culture.

### 2.2 Development History

Native Americans migrated through the area now known as Glocester for thousands of years before the first European settlers arrived. These people were generally

<sup>7</sup> US Census, 1990.

<sup>8</sup> Comprehensive Community Plan, Glocester, RI 1986, p 44

associated with migratory tribes that hunted, fished, gathered forest products and may have cultivated crops. Roger Williams received a deed to land in 1638 from the Narragansett tribe that included much of the area known today as Providence County. In 1660 this deed was surveyed to determine its boundary. “Land lying within a north-south dividing line drawn seven miles west of Fox- Point in Providence was known as the ‘inlands’.” The area from seven to twenty miles west of Fox Point-now comprising the towns of Burrillville, Foster, Glocester and Scituate-was referred to as the ‘outlands’ or the ‘Providence Woods’.<sup>9</sup> The current day eastern boundary of Glocester represents the Seven Mile Line.

The first evidence of permanent settlements occurred in what is now Glocester in about 1706. These first settlers concentrated their work on land clearing and cultivation. Agriculture related endeavors were the predominant economic activity during this early period. As settlements increased in the Providence ‘outlands’, calls for political independence from the then-Town of Providence collaterally increased.

In 1731, a division from the Town of Providence occurred that established a new town called “Gloucester.” At first the Town name used the English spelling to honor the Duke of Gloucester, after whom the Town was named. Shortly after its founding, a dispute with England resulted in the Town changing the spelling to Glocester in a desire to differentiate themselves from England. This division included the area which comprises present day Burrillville. In 1806, however, Burrillville was established as its own separate town. Thus, the boundaries of Glocester were instituted to their present configuration.

The town’s population and commerce activity grew rapidly in the early nineteenth century. Prosperous villages called Harmony and Chepachet evolved along the town’s primary roadway, the Putnam Pike. As the century progressed, the agricultural economy was being augmented by village-center commerce. Manufacturing and services began to have an economic presence in the town centers. Glocester began to evidence many of the national trends caused by the industrial revolution. Operating farms suffered from neglect as rural areas experienced population loss to villages and cities. Some of the manufacturing activities that located in Glocester included gristmills, sawmills, an oil mill, a tannery and textiles concerns.

Two matters of particular interest occurred mid-nineteenth century in Glocester; the Gold Mine endeavor and the Dorr Rebellion. Several attempts were undertaken to recover gold from the Durfee Hill area. Although some gold was reportedly obtained, the operation ceased by the end of the nineteenth century. Thomas Dorr and some of his followers took up arms against the established state government in 1842 over suffrage philosophy disagreements. The event caused the then-state militia to march into Chepachet and disband the rebels. Acote’s Hill marks the location of this historically significant altercation.

Many technological changes occurred in the early twentieth century that would have a lasting impact on Glocester. Without exception, the invention of the automobile

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<sup>9</sup> Historical and Architectural Resources of Glocester, RI: A Preliminary Report, RI Historical Preservation Commission, 1980, p 4.

and its subsequent evolution has impacted the town in numerous ways. First trolleys, then automobiles brought people to the ‘outlands’ in record-setting numbers. Growth rates of up to 50 percent a decade were measured with the advent of transportation improvements, both roadways and automobiles. People were said to have sought out Gloucester for its bucolic setting and many recreational opportunities. However, by mid-century many of these new residents commuted to urban areas for employment. The once numerous farms were being displaced for residential development and the village manufacturing entities eventually ceased to operate. By the late-twentieth century, the town’s economic base had shifted to a service dependent economy. Residents were often required to travel to the suburban and urban markets to obtain financially meaningful employment opportunities.

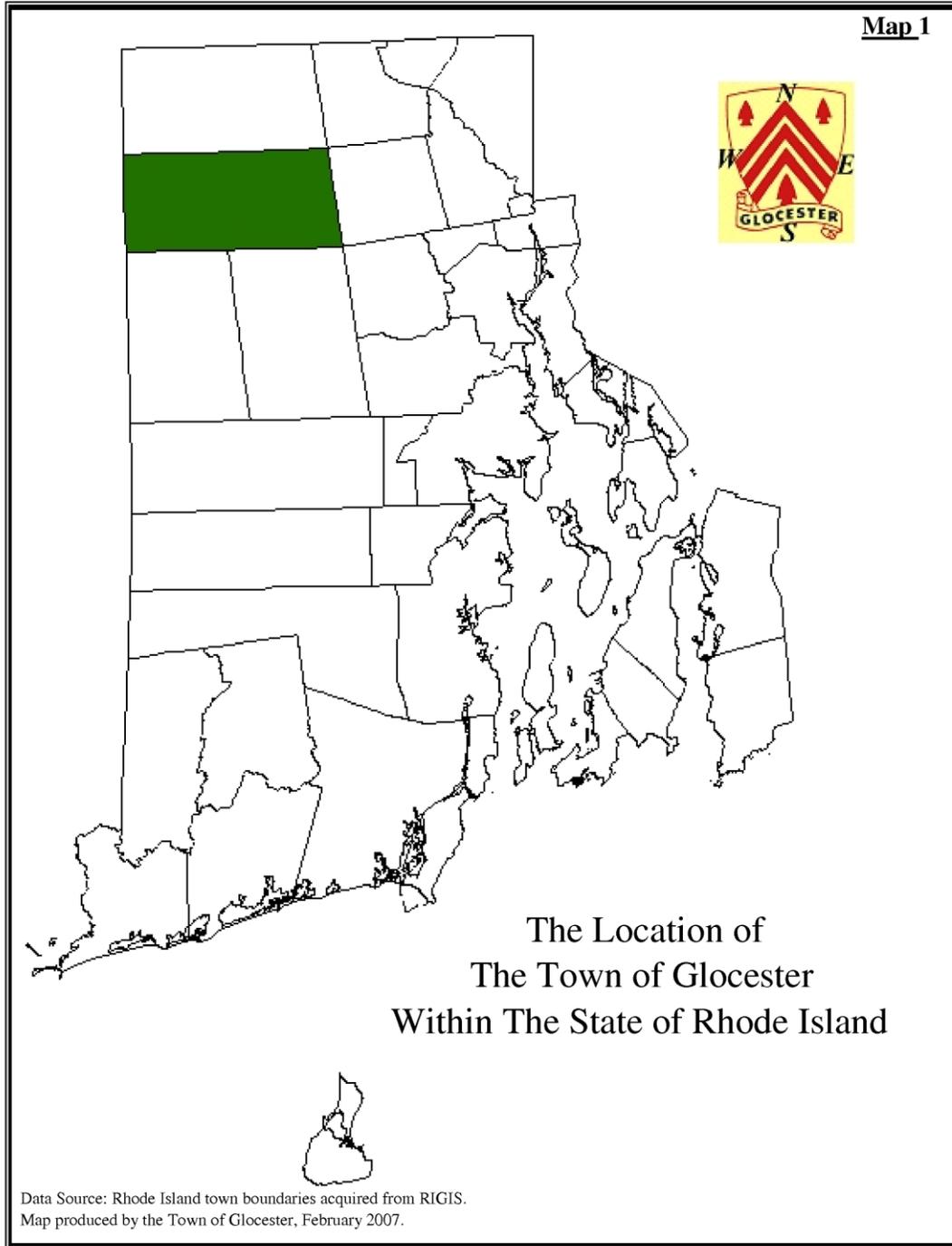
*“Gloucester today is essentially a suburban community in a rural setting. Chepachet, the hub of the town, has a small amount of industry and considerable commercial trade, but most town residents travel to work elsewhere and use Gloucester primarily as a place of residence. The town has changed considerably over the centuries.*

*“Overall, Gloucester’s cultural resources - its early dwellings, farm complexes, mills, schools, churches, and villages - bespeak a modest lifestyle which is manifested by its simple, unadorned, unpretentious buildings. This modest lifestyle has continued to the present; most new houses are being built for families of modest means. It is important to consider this character of Gloucester in planning for the town’s future.”<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid Number 11, p 14.

Map 1.1: The Location of the Town of Glocester



## **PART I GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***3.1 Land Use Element***

#### ***3.2 Goals***

1. Preserve, enhance and protect Gloucester's rural character and sense of place.
2. Encourage responsible land use decisions by public officials and public bodies.
3. Take steps that will enable Gloucester to be a pleasurable place in which to live, work and raise a family.
4. Prevent undesirable suburbanization and its related characteristics from occurring in the Town.
5. Allow Gloucester's rural way of life to be enjoyed by future generations.
6. Have the Town remain a "greenbelt oasis" in an otherwise intensely developed urban corridor.
7. Adopt land use and intensity standards that are based on the "carrying capacity" principle. (i.e. a principle that land use intensity be based on the ability of the land to sustain development).

#### ***3.3 Objectives and Policies***

1. Endeavor to recognize, restore, preserve, and enhance the heritage of Gloucester.
2. Enable local land use regulatory bodies to establish "greenbelts" as part of a development approval process.
3. Create a method to preserve, protect, enhance and maintain the noteworthy physical attributes of the Town, while allowing for appropriate development to occur.
4. Encourage public officials' understanding of traditional and contemporary methods of land use management and community planning techniques.
5. Implement a policy of balanced interaction between the people and environment.
6. Create a land development regulatory framework that can protect and enhance the unique natural features and historical nature of Gloucester while simultaneously providing opportunities for economic livelihood, affordable housing and remaining an affordable community.

#### ***3.4 Recommendations***

1. Revise the current zoning ordinance to comply with any changes in this Comprehensive Plan amendment, particularly as they may relate to affordable housing measures.
2. Consider the establishment and maintenance of historic district zoning for the villages of Gloucester.
3. Consider a mixed-use zoning district for the village areas as recommended in the Chepachet Village Plan.

4. Establish zoning, subdivision and/or land development regulations to address the following issues:
  - a) the preservation, protection and enhancement of surface and groundwater resources (GWPOD);
  - b) flexible zoning techniques to encourage resource and open space protection such as conservation development, residential compound and planned-district development;
  - c) building and site design standards site plan requirements and approval process;
  - d) encourage public input throughout the entire development review and approval process;
  - e) regulations to protect and promote agricultural uses and animal husbandry and prevent their being displaced or restrained by residential use;
  - f) standards for home occupations and accessory uses that do not disrupt the residential use or character of an area;
  - g) adoption of design site plan, review and performance standards for non-residential land use that considers the Town's review capabilities and promotes Gloucester's sense of place; while providing resource protection.
  - h) establish standards that consider site-specific and area wide environmental impacts resulting from any land development proposal;
  - i) establish zoning districts and zoning, subdivision and land development regulations that promote, protect, restore and enhance the desirable characteristics of the Town and its resources and promote the concept of a sustainable community which will implement this Comprehensive Plan, such as:
    - 1) to define land unsuitable for development by setting forth standards and criteria determining minimum buildable lot area for subdivision and land development purposes;
    - 2) to promote clear distinctions between neighborhood, village, and highway commercial zoning districts;
    - 3) to provide for an open space/conservation zoning district for open space, conservation, wildlife management, and recreation lands under public or non-public ownership, including areas reserved or devoted to natural resource protection. Identify need for cultural or natural resource overlay zoning district protection as appropriate;
    - 4) to set forth clear objectives and standards for permanent dedication of open space, protection of groundwater resources, scenic view protection, shared vehicular access where appropriate, development intensity, landscape treatment, impervious surface coverage, and drainage as flexible zoning techniques particularly for Planned Development, Residential Compound provisions, conservation development, and certain large scale

- development projects;
  - 5) to review and modify the objectives, criteria and standards for review of Historic District zoning requirements;
  - 6) to establish an appropriate commercial mixed use village zoning district such as recommended by the Chepachet Village plan with use, dimensional, and site plan regulations suitable to the Village as a special planning area, including allowing variable setbacks in Chepachet;
  - 7) to undertake further evaluation of and potential for implementation of the areas designated on the future land use map for possible zoning to non-residential use, open space, or village mixed use zoning categories;
  - 8) to develop a design manual (such as the South County Design Manual) of flexible land development techniques acceptable to the Town and meeting objectives of the Plan.
- j) create a new zoning district map that allocates land use according to available resources.
5. Evaluate the acceptability and appropriateness of establishing zoning regulations to address the following issues:
- a) large lots with insufficient frontage, sometimes referred to as “backlots” or “land locked parcels;”
  - b) “flexible” building envelopes for single-family lot development that encourages the retention of desirable site amenities and the protection of natural and cultural resources;
  - c) mechanisms to enable regulatory bodies to create greenbelts or natural corridors as a condition of the development review and approval process, and;
  - d) allow for an administrative development plan review process by designated Town officials.
6. Evaluate whether a growth management ordinance should be adopted by the Town that includes some of the following features:
- a) threshold criteria to activate the ordinance regulations;
  - b) regulations and standards that are uniform and applied by a formula basis with little, if any, discretionary powers granted to the administering body or agency;
  - c) designation of the Planning Board to prepare an annual report and capital budget request detailing Town compliance and conformance to the comprehensive community plan and proposed expenditure levels and improvements from the exaction account;
  - d) creation of quantifiable evidence to establish and justify the need to manage Town growth, including the type, location, level and features deserving management;
  - e) growth management techniques such as, a fair share development fund, or

impact fee needs assessment, either monetary or other asset-based, that are formula-derived and uniformly applied, to be placed in a restricted receipts account for use on predetermined acceptable activities;

- f) regulations and standards should manage the scale, level and intensity of growth using a normative format typically based on an annual cycle (e.g. no more than twenty building permits for new home construction shall be issued in any one calendar year), and;
  - g) perform a scenario outcome analysis of community indicators (i.e. tax rate, school population, road maintenance budget, etc.) on a managed v. non-managed basis for a predetermined time period, say five years, and evaluate the outcomes to help determine whether the ordinance is justified.
7. Form a liaison with institutions of higher education, that offer graduate or undergraduate programs in community planning or the URI Cooperative Extension service to establish a periodic educational workshop/training seminar for all town officials involved with planning, zoning or land use regulations or development decisions.
  8. Continue to amend the Gloucester Subdivision Regulations to comply with any changes in the Comprehensive Plan, including measures to provide for affordable housing and to incorporate new regulations that help Gloucester retain its desirable features and characteristics.
  9. Evaluate alternatives and adopt appropriate objectives and recommendations of the “Wastewater Facilities Management Plan” approved by the R.I. Department of Environmental Management.
  10. Evaluate alternatives and implement appropriate objectives and recommendations of the “Chepachet Village Planning Project” as they relate to land use issues.
  11. Encourage Town participation in and support for the objectives of the American Heritage River Program for the Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers, including the programs administered by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission.
  12. Consider the desirability of allowing home occupations by right, that include home based business with appropriate restrictions and standards of operation in all residential zones, as a way of creating an economic development option. (See also Economic Development Element).

## **4.1 Housing**

### **4.2 Goals**

1. Maintain, protect and enhance Gloucester’s desirable living attributes.
2. Allow a full range of housing options, including style, setting, cost and location.
3. Encourage the provision of innovative housing layout, design and living arrangements that allow affordability, choice and compliance with the state building codes for accessibility.
4. Remain flexible to current and future economic, social and environmental characteristics by allowing housing opportunities for all citizens.
5. Encourage the upgrade of deteriorating and substandard housing;
6. Provide opportunities for new housing that is geared to the needs of all segments of the population and;
7. Address the documented need for affordable housing opportunities.

### **4.3 Objectives and Policies**

1. Recognize, restore, preserve and enhance the historical nature and design of Gloucester’s housing stock.
2. Encourage retention of low-density housing development throughout most of the Town, while allowing other density and mixed-use options in the village areas.
3. Consider the special physical, social or economic needs of citizens when adopting housing design, density or locational regulatory provisions.
4. Balance the needs of citizens’ housing choices with the environmental development constraints prevalent in town.
5. Consider innovative or flexible housing design and layout regulations, such as those recommended in the Plan for Chepachet Village, that protect and enhance the unique living characteristics of Gloucester but that do not contribute to inflate housing cost unnecessarily.
6. Maintain Gloucester’s role as a “greenbelt oasis” for the region while allowing for a broad range of housing options: choice, layout, location and cost all being important considerations.

### **4.4 Recommendations**

1. As part of the Gloucester zoning ordinance revision, include the following actions:
  - a. monitor the effectiveness of the residential compound zoning provisions adopted in 2003 as a tool for flexible lot layouts and to offer an alternative to conventional subdivision design;

- b. review and if necessary, amend the Planned-District regulations for adequacy and acceptability to protect, preserve and enhance the Town's unique living characteristics and their ability to offer cost-effective housing options, and;
    - c. Adoption of conservation development provisions to encourage a range of housing densities and types
  2. Consider the acceptability and appropriateness of the following issues for future action:
    - a. the creation of a mixed-use village zone or special-use permit to allow residential and non-residential uses to occupy the same structure, provided the site meets adequate environmental performance standards, and;
    - b. review the Town zoning district map and consider whether additional special districts, such as floating, overlay or incentive zones, should be established, provided that such districts be based on suitability of the land.
  3. Facilitate the rehabilitation and change of use, as appropriate, of the existing housing stock, such as the rehabilitation and/or conversion of unused and underused village center structures for accessory or studio residential units.
  4. Support the efforts of Western Rhode Island Home Repair to upgrade the existing housing supply for eligible recipients.
  5. Determine whether the State Minimum Housing Code meets the code compliance needs of the Town. If not, State Housing Code amendments will be recommended to the State Building Official.
  6. Maintain a housing information center in the Gloucester Building Official's office and the local libraries for citizens to use as a reference source.

#### ***4.5 Affordable Housing Objectives and Policies***

1. Revise zoning to promote affordable housing and housing that meets the needs of Gloucester's residents. The Town has identified the following actions in its Affordable Housing Plan:
  - a. Adopt inclusionary zoning to allow the development of affordable housing as part of overall development taking place in the Town.
  - b. Adopt Commercial Mixed Use Zone as an incentive for encouraging affordable housing in commercial zones.
  - c. Allow Two-Family Housing with lower lot area.
2. Identify locations for affordable housing through rehabilitation, adaptive reuse and new construction.
  - a. Identify parcels for the construction of new affordable housing within the Town.
  - b. Conversion of housing within existing mobile home parks to LMI units.

3. Strengthen partnerships and build community support for affordable housing.
  - a. Create an Affordable Housing Advisory Board.
  - b. Establish the Northwest Affordable Housing Committee.
  - c. Promote educational and informative programs.
  - d. Seek out untapped community support for affordable housing.
4. Identify existing and new resources for affordable housing
  - a. Accessory Apartments: Revise the zoning ordinance to make it easier for the creation of affordable accessory apartments.
  - b. Tax Sale Properties: The Town will establish a procedure for tax sale properties to be sold to non-profit developers for affordable housing development.
  - c. Affordable Housing Trust Fund: Establish a fund specifically for the creation of affordable housing.
  - d. CDBG and Rehabilitation Tax Credit for Redevelopment: The town will adopt a tax credit program for substantial rehabilitation of housing within the town using CDBG funding.
  - e. Tax Exemptions: The town will establish an affordable housing exemption that is equal to the average of the low-income exemptions to elderly, low-income individuals and people with disabilities.
  - f. Building Permit Cap Ordinance: Establishing a building permit cap would be specifically on market-rate housing and would exclude LMI housing units. The permit cap would control the rate of development in the town and keep the number of LMI units needed to reach the 10 percent requirement in check.
  - g. Impact Fee Ordinance: As part of an ordinance requiring the payment of impact fees by developers, waivers will be applied to the proposed impact fee ordinance where any residential project containing newly constructed units or substantially rehabilitated housing units that are affordable for low and moderate-income residents.
  - h. Create a monitoring program for deed restricted affordable units: The town will create a program where all deed restricted affordable units will be monitored on an annual basis.
  - i. Identify and evaluate other affordable housing options: Other ways to create affordable housing will present themselves in the future. The town recognizes this fact and will carefully evaluate these opportunities as they may benefit Gloucester's affordable housing stock.
  - j. Identify and Maximize funding possibilities for new housing development, and rehabilitation and improvements of the existing housing stock.

## **5.1 Economic Development**

### **5.2 Goals**

1. Allow for future economic development to occur that does not conflict with or degrade the desirable attributes of the Town and that help to sustain the Gloucester Vision.
2. Prevent the traditional problems created by economic growth, such as environmental degradation, dramatic changes to community character, and unsightly highway strip development, from occurring in the Town.
3. Broaden and diversify the Town's economic base to reduce the residential sector's property tax burden.
4. Encourage efforts that use the natural features of Gloucester as an inducement to foster economic activity and growth.

### **5.3 Objectives and Policies**

1. Encourage the growth of economic activities that have a market focus at the neighborhood or local levels.
2. Recognize, preserve, protect and enhance the historical pattern of Town development by concentrating properly scaled and designed economic activities to designated, commercially zoned areas.
3. Prevent highway strip development from occurring within the Town.
4. Allow for alternative means of employment opportunities to be available to citizens, such as home occupations that are technology-dependent and which cause no noticeable disruption to the living environment of residential areas.
5. Support tourism initiatives that promote the historical, environmental, aesthetic and cultural aspects of the Town and in Chepachet Village.
6. Implement and support appropriate regional economic development initiatives that complement the Town's economic development goals.

### **5.4 Recommendations**

1. Use the resources of area colleges and universities to aid in the formation of an economic development program. Examples include providing data, studies and similar resources to enable the Town's economic development program.
2. Support the efforts of the Gloucester Economic Development Commission and the Chepachet Village Planning Committee to attract business to the Town by:
  - a) Implementing the goals and objectives of the Plan for Chepachet Village.
  - b) Implementing the goals and objectives of the Wastewater Facilities Management Plan approved by the Department of Environmental Management.
  - c) Encouraging the Gloucester Historic District Commission and the Chepachet

Village Planning Committee's efforts to revitalize and enhance the historic aspects of the Town as a means of tourism promotion.

- d) Consider the establishment of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Chepachet Village as provided in recently adopted state enabling legislation. This powerful tool allows for an assessment on property within a defined area. Revenues from this assessment are then directed back to the area to finance a wide range of services, including such things as security, maintenance, marketing, economic development, parking, and special events. A BID requires a self governing body made up of area businesses and property owners. The District must be established by Town Council Ordinance and must include the participation of at least 50% of all property owners in order to be considered. Once the Ordinance is adopted, participation is mandatory. A BID Board of Directors is elected from among the property owners with the District and such Board is empowered to levy the special assessment.
3. Gloucester should rely on the regional economy to provide employment opportunities for citizens, and work to encourage a more diverse local economic base that is sensitive to the Town's character.
  4. Undertake tourism promotion efforts that recognize and promote Gloucester's natural features and desirable living environment for active and passive recreational endeavors.
  5. Continue participation in the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor to encourage tourism visits to the Town.
  6. Include the following topics in the zoning ordinance revision:
    - a) create a home occupation use to allow, by right, citizens partial use of their residencies for economic gain, provided that appropriate standards are established to protect the integrity of residential areas from undesirable business activities, such standards to include (but not necessarily be limited to) hours of operation, noise mitigation, façade treatment and the like. Home occupations should be extended to nontraditional home based businesses, such as lawyers and accountants but consideration should be given to repair services, some storage of heavy equipments and some limited retail or commercial enterprises, as long as the residential character of the property shall be maintained;
    - b) establish design criteria for and require commercial site designs to be submitted for review and approval by the Planning Board as part of a development plan review prior to the issuance of a Building Permit, and;
    - c) restrict commercial zoning district map changes to areas properly located and suitable to support business uses without adversely affecting the Town's character. These areas can be existing commercial districts and areas considered to be growth centers.
  7. Consider the appropriateness and acceptability of the following issues for future action:
    - a) establish a Village Zone district or overlay district in designated areas to allow for

- mixed-use activities such as business and residential uses in the same building, alternative dimensional regulations and incentives for the rehabilitation and innovative use of historic structures such as recommended in the Chepachet Village Planning Project;
- b) evaluate the feasibility of creating a Commerce Cluster Zone that encourages appropriately scaled and designed business uses to locate in compact, clustered arrangements set back from a road, with one entrance and exit, and;
  - c) provisions to continue the support of agriculture and animal husbandry activities, such as a farmers market.
8. Support expansion of the Town's economic base in instances that are appropriate, compatible and consistent with the Goals, Objectives and provisions of this Plan.
  9. Encourage agricultural business in the Town.
  10. Fund business investment with low interest loans that will encourage investment into store façade improvements, streetscape, tree planting, planters, banners, appropriate signage, lighting and other general amenities.
  11. Consider amending the industrial zone to a business park that will allow mixed commercial and retail, but not big-box retail or residential, with mandated development plan review by the Planning Board.

## **6.1 Natural and Cultural Resources**

### **6.2 Goals**

1. To identify, preserve, enhance and conserve the many natural resources of Gloucester that give the Town its special character and sense of place.
2. To manage the Town's natural and cultural resources wisely in order to maintain Gloucester's character and role as a "greenbelt oasis" for the region and state.
3. To promote the wise and efficient use of natural resources.
4. To prevent the loss, destruction or misuse of natural and cultural resources in order to preserve the special character and sense of place of Gloucester.

### **6.3 Objectives and Policies**

1. Adopt land use and intensity standards that are based on the "carrying capacity" principle. (i.e. a principle that land use intensity be based on the ability of the land to sustain development)
2. Limit and manage the introduction of public and/or private facilities that would artificially alter the natural environment for the purpose of a particular use or intensity or group(s) of same.
3. Consider revising and clarifying performance standards for development that limit site disturbances and alterations affecting critical natural or cultural resources.
4. Protect the special cultural and natural resources that merit preservation with management controls to prevent inappropriate development actions.
5. Impress Gloucester elected and appointed officials, citizen activists, the business community, the youth and the general public with the importance of preserving and managing the Town's natural and cultural resources.
6. Understand and prevent inappropriate use of the land that exerts either direct or secondary detrimental impact on the natural or cultural environment of the Town.
7. Continue to maintain, protect, preserve, enhance and renew the cultural aspects that contribute to Gloucester's character.
8. Continue to promote and adopt the principle of balanced interaction between the people and the environment, as a means to assure that resources are conserved.
9. Maintain groundwater and wellhead protection strategies and enforcement techniques designed to protect the groundwater which is the Town's sole source of water supply.
10. Identify and protect environmentally constrained areas.

## 6.4 Recommendations

1. Suggest to the Gloucester School Committee and the Foster-Glocester Regional School Committee that instructional offerings be provided to students regarding the natural and cultural resources and history of Gloucester and the importance of the environment to the Town's quality of life.
2. Conduct workshops, perhaps as a lecture series or coffee hours, to involve public officials and the community at large to discuss proper ways to preserve and manage the cultural, historical and natural resources of Gloucester through conservation districts and watershed agencies.

### A. Natural Resources

1. Use the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and Capital Budget process to provide annual Planning Board input on the short and long- range needs of the community.
2. Maintain Town compliance with the R.I. Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Act and continue to assist the Building Official's Office to administer the Act locally.
3. Create a Natural Resources Preservation Ordinance for the protection and identification of critical natural resources deserving protection from inappropriate alterations and enumerate regulatory standards to enable the Town to control and manage development actions. Further study will be required to properly identify and map such critical natural areas. This ordinance might include features more stringent than current Individual Septic Disposal System standards or surface runoff water quality standards in areas where groundwater contamination is of concern. In addition, a Site Assessment could be required to list the specific natural features of a site prior to any development action and then use the gathered information to formulate an environmentally appropriate site-development plan.
4. Consider the adoption of the following natural resources protection standards in Zoning or other Ordinance updates: including but not limited to:
  - a. groundwater protection standards to prevent pollution of public groundwater wells, their drawdown and recharge areas as well as for private wells;
  - b. water quality standards to prevent pollution of recreational and potable surface water bodies from surface runoff or groundwater leaching;
  - c. design standards to allow flexible building-lot envelopes that preserve sensitive natural or historic resources, such as woodlands, wetlands, stone walls, cemeteries and wildlife habitats;

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## Natural and Cultural Resources

- d. regulations to encourage special or sensitive feature preservation, such as solar access, ridge line protection, scenic vistas and farmland use;
  - e. density and land use regulations, perhaps as overlay districts, that consider site suitability to support development, such as soil types, slope, grade, water table depth, wetlands and water bodies, and;
  - f. design requirements for all land uses to preserve the natural resources through limits to site disturbances and enhancement actions such as plantings and aesthetics.
  - g. conservation development planning techniques for new residential subdivisions and land development projects.
5. Amend the Gloucester Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations to address the following issues:
- a. require that all substantial subdivision proposals provide a site suitability evaluation as part of the subdivision approval process to help the Planning Board determine the ability of any site to support or “carry” the proposed development;
  - b. continue to evaluate the effectiveness of residential compounds, where flexible design standards are employed to allow an environmentally sensitive development, to preserve and protect sensitive natural resources from unnecessary loss, damage or alteration;
  - c. include site-design parameters that offer incentives for lot-configuration where innovative design is applied to preserve and protect special site features;
  - d. provide a process for Planning Board review of minor and pre-existing plats to require any replatted subdivisions to minimize site disturbance and preserve natural resources, and;
  - e. include performance and design standards and regulations in the Town’s Zoning Ordinance, either consistent with, or derived from, the Natural Resources Preservation Ordinance, for all development proposals.
  - f. amend the Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations to implement conservation development planning techniques.
6. Protect the natural environment-related recreational and conservation opportunities available in Gloucester from undesirable or inappropriate loss, disturbance or alteration, in accordance with the RI Forest Resources Management Plan, as follows.

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## Natural and Cultural Resources

- a. Use a cooperative approach between the Town, State government, and private organizations to identify, plan for, and protect valuable and ecologically sensitive forestland from development in critical areas.
  - b. Promote the current tax provisions of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space Act as a tool to conserve forestland.
  - c. Use all available means to conserve the Town's remaining forestland, including the purchase of development rights, promotion of the Farm, Forest, and Open Space program, innovative zoning techniques, and outright purchase.
  - d. Protect sufficient forestland to meet present and future needs.
7. Adopt a local ordinance to prevent the burial of any underground storage tanks (UST), including those containing residential home heating fuel and less than 1,100 gallons in size. This effort should be preceded by a town-wide inventory to determine the existing number and location of underground storage tanks. The local program will be coordinated, and is intended to be complimentary to the R.I. Department of Environmental Management's Leaking Underground Storage Tank ("LUST") program.
  8. Evaluate alternatives and implement the appropriate objectives and recommendations of the Wastewater Facilities Management Plan approved by the R.I. Department of Environmental Management as they relate to natural resource protection.
  9. Support Zoning and Subdivision and Land Development Regulations designed to protect and enhance surface and groundwater resources including measures to define and regulate land unsuitable for development, buildable lot area, open space, and conservation reservation, site plan criteria and review standards, and wellhead protection.
  10. Establish standards and guidelines for the management of the Town's tree resources through adoption of appropriate regulations and procedures, such as a tree protection ordinance.
  11. The Town will adopt local ordinances to provide guidance in times of drought, and will enforce local regulations/restrictions and state emergency orders as required.

### B.Cultural Resources

1. Cooperate with the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission to catalog and preserve the significant archeological sites and resources within the Town.

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## Natural and Cultural Resources

2. Support efforts to maintain and preserve the many historic Town cemeteries and strive to prevent development actions that cause significant disturbance, loss or alteration to these sites. Evaluate the feasibility of an ordinance regulating construction or ground disturbance within 25 feet of a recorded historic cemetery.
3. Perform the necessary surveys to determine the practicality of creating new historic districts, sites and interpretive programs in the Town.
4. Encourage agriculture-based operations, such as farms, equestrian centers, hayfields, woodland preserves and ranching through the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension, College of the Environment and Life Sciences.
5. Allow for cooperation between the Planning Board and the Historic District Commission through including the following issues as part of the zoning ordinance update:
  - a. standards to regulate the loss, disturbance or significant alteration of historically significant features such as stone walls, historic cemeteries and historical sites, places and landscapes;
  - b. regulations to require developers of “significant” projects to prepare and submit an historical features evaluation to the Planning Board that details the nature of the project, the expected changes resulting from the project and the anticipated impacts/effects upon Gloucester’s historical resources and submitted for review by the Historic District Commission;
  - c. consider a scenic roads zoning district, perhaps as an overlay or floating zone, that contains design standards to preserve and enhance certain roads of historic or scenic importance, and;
  - d. review the adequacy of the existing Historic District Zone for compliance with the latest state zoning enabling laws and to include appropriate standards and criteria for new construction as well as renovation, alteration, and signs within the Chepachet Village Historic District.
  - e. evaluate alternatives and implement appropriate objectives and recommendations of the “Chepachet Village Planning Project” as they relate to cultural resource issues.
  - f. identify and recommend scenic road designation where appropriate for participation in the State Scenic Roads Program and establish a local scenic roads program. (see also, 9.4.4).
  - g. encourage participation in and support for the objectives of the American Heritage Rivers program for the Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers, including programs administered by the

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## Natural and Cultural Resources

Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission  
as they relate to natural and cultural resources in Gloucester.

6. Adopt conservation development regulations to preserve the significant cultural features of a site being developed for residential subdivisions and land development projects.
7. Maintain compliance with the US EPA Phase II regulations through implementation of the Gloucester Stormwater Management Program Plan (SWMPP).

## **7.1 Services and Facilities**

### **7.2 Goals**

1. To provide for a planned, economically sound and functionally adequate community facility and service network for Gloucester's current and expected future community needs.
2. To be sensitive to the relationship between the level and type of community facilities and services and the municipal property tax burden.
3. Protect Gloucester's sense of place through the appropriate design installation, use and provision of community facilities and services.
4. Preserve, restore and enhance the natural environment of the Town through growth management, consideration of environmental impacts of development, and provisions for impact fees to defray the cost of new development.

### **7.3 Objectives and Policies**

1. Prefer that development projects be self-sustaining and not require future revenue expenditures, to the greatest extent practicable through measures, for example, that the Town establish development impact or fair share development fees.
2. Protect potable groundwater and surface water from contamination.
3. Evaluate methods to restore and protect surface water bodies that have been subjected to pollution from past development practices.
4. Be wary of accepting or obtaining public responsibility for facilities that could remain in private ownership or care.
5. Support the School Committee's efforts to provide every school-age child access to high-quality educational experience and environment.
6. Ensure that public safety services be readily available throughout the Town.
7. Provide community facilities, such as schools, recreational areas and community centers, to offer Gloucester's citizens opportunities for personal enjoyment, enrichment and growth.
8. Control property tax expenditures related to community services and facilities.
9. Support efforts to regionalize community facilities and services when deemed appropriate and feasible.
10. Establish local ordinances to implement growth management techniques and imposition of impact fees to defray the cost of development.

### **7.4 Recommendations**

1. Continue to support the efforts of the Wastewater Management Commission formed by the Town Council by implementing the Wastewater Facilities Plan approved by the R.I. Department of Environmental Management. For example,

- work to implement the recommendations of the Commission submitted to the Town Council for consideration and action, to the extent that it is in the best interest of the Town. Continue to support individual onsite wastewater disposal systems rather than connecting to other community's sewer system.
2. Adopt potable groundwater and surface water protection regulations, perhaps as part of the zoning ordinance update. Standards controlling septic material and surface water runoff quality should also be considered for adoption.
  3. Continually evaluate needs for local government services and facilities, municipal and educational, and articulate them in the Town Budget, the Capital Budget and the Capital Improvement Program for presentation, consideration and action at the annual Town Financial Meeting.
  4. Coordinate and evaluate the provision of all public safety services, paid and volunteer, through support of the Public Safety Committee, to ensure that service coverage and response times meet optimum levels.
  5. Encourage the continuation of the present volunteer firefighter system.
  6. Provide that every "major" private development proposal be required to perform a Fiscal Impact Assessment to determine the extent and cost (or benefit) that will accrue to the Town.
  7. Adopt an ordinance to establish impact fees following the required needs assessment in accordance with applicable state legislation.
  8. Continue the wellhead-protection program that includes potential pollution source inventory, protection strategies and contingency plans, all in accordance with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, Wellhead Protection Program.
  9. Provide for contingency plans that would assure potable water supplies to Gloucester citizens in case of need.
  10. Encourage the continuation of the current solid waste and recycling collection system.
  11. Support the operations of the Town libraries to provide Gloucester citizens with current and convenient library services.
  12. Continue to improve development plan review procedure to coordinate local review of large scale development proposals.
  13. Continue to improve the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) involving all Town departments and agencies, with approvals by the Planning Board for Comprehensive Plan consistency and by the Town Council for policy decisions.
  14. Adopt conservation development regulations to minimize the extent and impacts of new streets and infrastructure in residential subdivisions and land development projects.

## **8.1 Open Space and Recreation**

### **8.2 Goals**

1. Promote recreation opportunities for all citizens including outdoor active and passive recreation such as ball fields and parks, as well as indoor facilities for athletic activity.
2. Acquire, protect, preserve, conserve and manage the many unique natural resources in Gloucester, such as bogs, swamps, wetlands and woodlands, from loss, significant alteration or disturbance.
3. Protect open space in Gloucester from inappropriate alteration, loss or disturbance.
4. Remain aware of the limited nature of the natural environment, that the community's prosperity should be based on appropriate use of natural resources and that open space, conservation and recreation opportunities are dynamically linked to Gloucester's sense of place.

### **8.3 Objectives and Policies**

1. Establish and support the use of creative and appropriate land strategies and conservation methods.
2. Encourage the efforts and involvement of private interests working for the public benefit, along with public efforts, to acquire, preserve, restore and manage open space, recreation and conservation sites and areas in the Town.
3. Consider measures that will control or reduce the financial burden upon Gloucester residents to manage open space, conservation and indoor and outdoor recreation activities.
4. Keep Gloucester eligible for participation in current and future state outdoor recreation, conservation and open space funding programs, so far as it is in the interest of the Town.
5. Support awareness of Gloucester citizens on the vital relationship between the land and people.
6. Support regional and statewide efforts to conserve open space, recreation and conservation opportunities in the Town.
7. Attempt to link open space, recreation and conservation areas in the Town to form the basis of a "greenbelt" network, using the findings of the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Project and the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project and RIDEM Greenspace Program.

### **8.4 Recommendations**

1. Submit the recreation projects listed in the acquisition schedule listed in Table 16.4 (updated to November 2006) for inclusion in the Capital Budget and Capital Improvement Program for consideration and action by the Town Meeting.

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## Open Space and Recreation

2. Encourage the designation of private-interest groups or individuals to “adopt” a specific public site or area to provide care and management.
3. Involve the Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission and Gloucester Land Trust on all projects involving open space, recreation and conservation actions.
4. Promote cooperation and coordination between education facilities and the Town for generalized recreation use.
5. Create a “greenbelt” system, perhaps radiating from the village of Chepachet that offers a series of walkways and bicycle paths among significant historic and recreation sites and areas. Utilize the findings of the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Project and the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project.
6. Support the efforts of the Gloucester Land Trust to acquire and maintain open space and areas throughout the Town and to promote “linkage” of sites into a comprehensive “greenbelt” system where feasible.
7. Encourage alternative means, such as conservation restrictions, development rights restrictions and easements, to gain control of or provide access to open space, conservation and recreation areas and sites.
8. Consider the following issues for inclusion in the zoning ordinance update:
  - a) include a provision for permanent land dedication or payment in lieu of dedication or development restrictions granted to the Town in “major” developments;
  - b) adopt environmental standards and regulations that limit site disturbance, loss or significant alteration of open space and conservation sites and areas; and,
  - c) enforce design standards and an administrative review process for building sites that enhance, restore and preserve the natural features of sites.
  - d) Adopt conservation development zoning techniques for new residential subdivisions.
9. Revise the Gloucester Land Development and Subdivision Review Regulations and Zoning Ordinance and other special regulations to require a public land dedication, or fee in lieu of reservation or other appropriate mechanism to provide recreational opportunities or to permanently preserve significant conservation or open space features. The use of conservation development planning techniques for subdivisions is recommended.
10. Consider adopting Growth Impact Assessment Ordinance regulations that establish either a fee, a dedicated fund or a dedication or a restriction for a public purpose and use, such as open space, recreation or conservation activities, from each “major” development project.
11. Provide for periodic update of Town recreation needs assessment in order to identify appropriate recreational opportunities in consideration of the needs for all residents and to provide for Town participation and inclusion in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan. (SCORP).

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## Open Space and Recreation

12. Establish the need for a public swimming facility perhaps in conjunction with the YMCA.
13. Apply for grants from RIDEM for open space and recreation acquisition and development, with support for a 50% match by the Town.
14. Adopt conservation development regulations to preserve open space in residential subdivisions and land development projects.

## **9.1 Circulation**

### **9.2 Goals**

1. Retain the character of Gloucester while also accommodating citizen and commerce transportation needs.
2. Create, maintain and preserve a safe and efficient multi-modal circulation system.

### **9.3 Objectives and Policies**

1. Use the transportation network to limit and manage growth throughout the Town.
2. Establish road design and use standards that support the preservation of the Town's character and provide orderly and safe circulation movements.
3. Support the creation of a multi-modal transportation network that complements the tourism and recreation efforts to attract visitors to Gloucester.
4. Limit and manage access points along all roadways.
5. Create road design and maintenance procedures that preserve, restore and enhance the natural environment with compatible road ways.

### **9.4 Recommendations**

1. Adopt a Highway Access Ordinance that would require the issuance of a Highway Access Permit by the Town. This regulatory process could be included in either the zoning, subdivision or growth-management ordinances. Features of such an ordinance might include:
  - a. limiting and managing the quantity, location and design of access points;
  - b. encouraging or requiring the establishment of shared driveways;
  - c. mandating the creation of frontage roads in commercial and/or residential areas;
  - d. managing the environmental impacts of the proposed access drive(s); and,
  - e. establishing design standards for the functional and aesthetic aspects of the proposed drive and its intersection with the existing road.
2. Consider alternative ways for the Town to review and accept platted roads for developments proposing access in new subdivisions.
3. Encourage the creation of new road design standards that address environmental quality and aesthetic impacts. For example, consider reduced road-width standards in "minor" subdivisions, flexible access standards for special types of developments distinguishing between private access driveways and private roads, an equitable policy for converting private roads to public roads with standards and procedures for public acceptance, separation of vehicle lanes from pedestrian or bicycle paths, and water runoff collection and distribution mechanisms that preserve and/or enhance water quality.

4. Participate in the State's Scenic Highway Program and/or establish a local scenic highway program to identify and protect existing roadways that are considered of unique value and significance to Gloucester's character. The Planning Board and the Historic District Commission should cooperate to determine whether a scenic roads overlay district should be established within Chepachet Village. This effort should complement and implement the scenic roads inventory prepared by the state, as appropriate;
5. Contribute information to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and State Planning Council, R.I. Transportation Improvement Program to manage state transportation activities within the Town.
6. Enable the Town to remain eligible to receive funding for transportation improvements, and Enhancement projects insofar as it is in the best interest of the Town by participation in the State Transportation Improvement Program process.
7. Continue to monitor the Public Works Overlay Management Program that lists a five-year overlay maintenance plan and budget for Town-owned roads. Proceeds from a growth impact or dedicated development fund for roadway improvements, if adopted, should be used to help fund this account.
8. Investigate the creation of alternative transportation network in Gloucester that might center in Chepachet and radiate outwards to Town- owned facilities, such as Gloucester Memorial Park, significant historical sites, natural features, and/or noteworthy conservation areas. This effort might encourage the establishment of bicycle and/or pedestrian paths, greenways, interpretive trails, and complement efforts for tourism promotion.
9. Work with Rhode Island Public Transit Authority to schedule more appropriate bus service to the Town that better meets commuter transportation needs, and to ensure that such needs are understood at all levels.
10. Provide input to the RI Department of Transportation road design and improvement endeavors in the Town to protect, preserve and restore:
  - a. the rural character;
  - b. historic structures, districts, landscapes, homes and resources;
  - c. vegetative cover and tree canopies;
  - d. Gloucester's sense of place, and;
  - e. travel safety.

For example, work with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation to implement the proposed two-lane upgrade of US 44.

11. Work with the RI Department of Transportation to implement the Chepachet Village Enhancement project.

## 10.1 Implementation

No matter the quality of this comprehensive plan, only its implementation by the Town will ensure that the ideas, goals, objectives, policies and recommendations come to fruition. The Town has taken the step to help realize the fulfillment of the Gloucester Vision by establishing a listing of actions, responsible individuals and agencies, and a task completion time line for each recommendation contained in this plan. This information is contained in the Implementation Program: Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan.

The Town gave consideration to the requirement that each implementation task should be assigned to a person or agency that was capable and qualified to perform the necessary work. Also, when a need for coordination between two or more agencies was required, the task was assigned as Primary and Joint Responsibility to avoid implementation confusion. Lastly, all tasks were defined as short-range, one to two years in duration; medium-range, three to five years in duration; and long-range, six or more years in duration. Any task defined as long-range will need to be addressed in the next update of this plan, which must occur in at least five years.

All capital and operating budget expenses necessary for implementation of the Plan shall be reviewed by the Financial Town Meeting. A long range Capital Improvement Program shall be implemented to review all major capital budget requests. An Operational Budget Program shall be used to process all operational expenses.

As part of the 2008 Five-Year Plan Update, the original actions have been revisited and updated. Many of the actions originally recommended as part of the 1994 Plan have been completed, and many ongoing policies have been adopted and continue to be implemented as part of the Town's long-range growth strategy. The major actions completed are summarized as follows:

- 3.4.1 The Zoning Map and Zoning Ordinance were brought into conformity with the Comprehensive Plan
- 4.4.1-3 Residential compound provisions have been adopted (Zoning Ordinance, Article X).
- 3.4.2 Historic District zoning has been adopted (Zoning Ordinance, Article IX).
- 9.4.11 The Town has begun the Chepachet Village improvement project in cooperation with RIDOT
- The Town has adopted an Affordable Housing Plan (2005) which addresses housing affordability strategies.
- 6.4.A.1 The has dropped the requirement for Resource Evaluation Statements as part of the Capital Improvement Program..
- 6.4.A.3; 6.4.A 5&6 The Town has not adopted a Natural Resources Protection Ordinance, but has adopted conservation development zoning and subdivision techniques and development plan review provisions in the Zoning Ordinance.
- 8.4.8-10 The Town has adopted conservation development zoning and subdivision techniques and a Growth Impact Assessment Ordinance.

- 9.4.1 The Town has adopted requirements for access points to Town roads.

The Implementation table is designed to illustrate specific actions to be taken, their corresponding objectives from the Comprehensive Plan, the parties responsible to take action and the time frame for their accomplishment. The first column contains an action item with a corresponding objective(s) or recommendation(s) that it accomplishes in the Comprehensive Plan. You will find the letters J, P and S in each of the next columns, which refers to the type of responsibility each group/ party has to accomplish the task (J- Joint responsibility, P-Primary responsibility). The final column lists the time-frame to accomplish each action item ( S-short is 1-2 years, M-Medium is 3-4 years, L- Long 6 or more years, O-Ongoing). As part of the 2008 Plan Update, actions which have been completed were deleted from the table. Actions which are still ongoing were retained in the table, and new actions have been added.

**10.1 Implementation Program:  
Glocester Comprehensive Community Plan**

**Legend:** TC Town Council; SC School Committee; TM Town Meeting; PB Planning Board; ZB Zoning Board; HDC Historic District Commission; ED Economic Development; CVC Chepachet Village Committee; RC Recreation Commission; WHR Western Home Repair; AHC Affordable Housing Committee; CC Conservation Commission; BZ Building/Zoning Department; DPW Director Public Works; LT Land Trust; WC Wastewater Commission; TP Town Planner; Time – Time Frame.

**Responsibility:** J = Joint and P = Primary

**Time Frame:** L = Long (6 or more years); M = Medium (3-5 years); S = Short (1-2 years); O = On-going current/active).

Action	TC	SC	TM	PB	ZB	HDC	ED	CVC	RC	WHR/ AHC	CC	BZ	DPW	LT	WC	TP	Time
3.4.1; 4.4.1-3 Zoning Ordinance Update	J			P												P	S
3.4.2 Historic Zone	J			J		P										P	S
3.4.3 & 4.4.2 Mixed-use Zone	J			J				J								P	S
3.4.4; 3.4.5; & 3.4.6, 5.4.7, 6.4A Resource Protection and Growth Ordinance	J			J			J	J			J			J	J	P	M

# Implementation

Action	TC	SC	TM	PB	ZB	HDC	ED	CVC	RC	WHR/ AHC	CC	BZ	DPW	LT	WC	TP	Time
3.4.7 Training Workshops	P		J	J	J	J	J	J	J		J	J	J	J	J	J	M
3.4.8 Subdivision Reg. Update				P												P	S
3.4.9, 5.4.3 Wastewater Program	J			J			J			J					P	J	S
3.4.10, 5.4.3, 5.4.8, 9.4.11 Chepachet Village Plan	J			J		J	J	P				J		J	J	J	S
3.4.11 American Heritage Rivers	P			J							J			J		J	M
3.4.1 & 4.4.2 Innovative Zones	J			J												P	S
5.4.1-9 Business Resources	J						P	J							J		M
5.4.1-9 Economic Initiatives	J			J			P	J							J		M
5.4.3-8 Historic Enhancement	J			J		P		J								J	M

# Implementation

Action	TC	SC	TM	PB	ZB	HDC	ED	CVC	RC	WHR/ AHC	CC	BZ	DPW	LT	WC	TP	Time
5.4.3-6 Tourism Promotion	J					J	P	J	J		J						M
5.4.7(b) Commerce Cluster Zone	J			J			P	J				J	J			J	M
6.4.1 & 2 Educational Opportunities	P			J		J			J		J			J	J		M
7.4.12, 8.42 Capital Improvement Program	J	J	J	P			J	J	J				J	J	J	P	S
6.4.A.2 Soil Erosion Ordinance	J			J							J	P	J				O
6.4.B.2-5 Historic Features Evaluation	J					P		J									M
7.4.1 Wastewater Plan	J			J			J	J			J		J		P	J	S
7.4.2, 7 & 8 Groundwater Protection	P			J							J		J		J	J	M
7.4.4-6 Fiscal Impact Assessment	P	J		J			J	J					J			J	M

# Implementation

Action	TC	SC	TM	PB	ZB	HDC	ED	CVC	RC	WHR/ AHC	CC	BZ	DPW	LT	WC	TP	Time
7.4.11 Site Plan Review Ordinance	P			J		J						J	J		J	P	M
8.4.1-5 Recreation Program	J			J					P		J			J		J	M
8.4.5 Greenbelt System	J			J	J				J		J			P		J	S
8.4.5 & 6, and 7 Open Space Preservation	J			J				J	J		J			P		J	S
8.4.8-10 Conservation Controls	J			P					J		J			J	J	J	M
8.4.11-12 Recreation Needs	J			J					P		J		J	J		J	S
8.4.10 Growth Impact Act	P			J			J	J					J		J	P	M
9.4.2 & 3 Road Use Policy	P			J			J	J					J			J	M
9.4.4 Scenic Highway Program	J			J		J	J	J	J		P		J			J	M

# Implementation

Action	TC	SC	TM	PB	ZB	HDC	ED	CVC	RC	WHR/ AHC	CC	BZ	DPW	LT	WC	TP	Time
9.4.5 & 6 RIDOT Program	P			J			J	J					J			J	O
9.4.7 Overlay Management	P		J	J									J		J		L
9.4.8 Alternate Transit Network	P			J				J					J			J	L
9.4.10 Road Design Coordination	J			P		J		J			J		J				S
4.5.1 Affordable Housing Zoning	J			J								J				P	S
4.5.2 Identify AH Locations				J						J		J				J	S-L
4.5.3 Strengthen Partnerships for AH										P							S
4.5.4 Identify Resources for AH	J			J	J					J						J	S-M- O

## **PART II, PLAN CONTENTS**

### **11.1 Land Use**

#### **11.2 Introduction**

“The Land Use Plan is the principal element of any local comprehensive plan. Since consideration of the use and treatment of land crosses the boundary into the purview of other required elements, it is essential that this element be formulated in coordination with the other elements, sharing goals, policies and certain implementation steps.

“As a minimum, the Land Use Plan must consider the allocation of land for residence, business, industry, municipal affairs, public and private recreation, major institutional facilities, mixed uses, open space and natural and fragile areas. Optimum intensities and standards of development must be established for each classification and location based upon current development, natural land characteristics; and projected municipal, regional and state services and facilities.

“Allocations of land use must consider impacts on surface and groundwater resources, wetlands, coastal features, and other sensitive and fragile natural resources. Judgments must be made on the ability of various existing and new land use controls to properly protect these natural resources.

“The characteristics, trends and projections of population and employment will be essential input to the allocation of land areas for use. ... The plan should show how the projections have been used to determine amounts of land needed for residential, commercial, industrial and other purposes. These quantitative relationships carry over to other elements of the plan in that certain facilities and services are needed to support the land allocated to each use.

“The ability of the regional transportation network to provide for the movement of persons and goods will exert an influence on the allocation of land for use.

“The Land Use Plan must be supplemented by a map that graphically portrays the policy of the town with regard to the planned treatment and use of land. The map must be of sufficient scale and accuracy to allow for

- visual determination of the policies and goals of the municipality for the future use and intensity of development of all land and water bodies
- a determination of consistency of the Land Use Plan with the State Guide Plan, and
- a determination of the consistency of the Land Use Plan with the current zoning ordinance and map, and use as a basis for the revision or replacement of inconsistent zoning requirements, subdivision regulations and other land use controls.

“It is expected that this land use plan map will show features from other comprehensive plan elements such as open space, recreation, economic development

community facilities, natural areas and others that project the allocation of land or special treatment.”<sup>11</sup>

### ***11.3 Land Use History***

Section 2.2 of the Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan provides a narrative of the Town’s historical evolution. From its inception, Gloucester has been considered the “outlands and Providence Woods.” It is uncertain as to the proper connotation of such terms, although many people infer this term to represent a remote and/or rural setting. This assumption may be accurate since most of the land in Gloucester has never been improved nor cultivated. Although most of the land in Town was never cultivated, agricultural use was the principal active land use for much of the Town’s history. Small, isolated areas supported commerce, transportation and manufacturing land uses.

Gloucester’s concentration on farming started ebbing from the late-1700's to the mid-1850's as the nation’s economy began to shift from agrarian to industrial. People left farms for occupational opportunities in the villages and the cities. Although Gloucester provided some manufacturing employment opportunities, farming remained as the predominant land use. From the mid-1850's through the next century, Gloucester’s land use activities and population count remained relatively stable. That all began to change dramatically with the advent of the automobile and the related transportation system improvements.

The transportation revolution that the car created significantly altered land use activities occurring in the Town. The once-active farms lay fallow as employment opportunities in the Providence metropolitan area came within automobile commuting distance. In addition, the abundance of available land and the convenient transportation network attracted many metropolitan dwellers to consider Gloucester for their residences. The technological and cultural changes occurring at this time introduced new demands for land use. Concepts such as leisure time, active and passive recreation pursuits and physical restoration brought people who were searching for a better living environment to Gloucester.

### ***11.4 Existing Conditions***

Prior to 1965 when Gloucester adopted its first zoning ordinance, land use, intensity and location were primarily determined by matters of commerce and personal choice. Villages grew near areas of manufacturing activity and/or transportation systems. Farms were scattered throughout the remainder of the community. Most of the land remained fallow or unimproved due to its physical limitations for farming or community development. High water tables, wetlands, slope and stoniness were the dominating features characteristic of Gloucester’s land that constrained and directed development activities.

The first zoning effort sought to establish a logical assembly and order of land uses. Due to the low-intensity development and rural nature of the Town’s historical development, the land area was zoned for low-density residential use with a small

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<sup>11</sup> Handbook Number 16, Handbook on the Local Comprehensive Plan, June 1989, Update 2003, pages IV-9 to IV-11

allowance for commerce uses around the village centers. Several evolutionary amendments were made to this original zoning ordinance. However, the historical pattern of development was affirmed through the first and subsequent zoning ordinances. Eventually, the Town upgraded portions of the zoning code to offer basic regulations to protect and enhance certain environmental features. Map 11.1 illustrates the current land use in Town.

Table 11.1  
LAND USE

Land Use Description Year	Area in Acres			Percent of Town Area	
	1988	1995	Change	1988	1995
Developed Land	3,888	4,254	366	10.7%	11.7%
Undeveloped Land	32,495	32,199	-296	89.3%	88.3%
<b>Total Land</b>	<b>36,383</b>	<b>36,453</b>	<b>70*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Town of Gloucester Planning Department.

\* The increase in overall land is due to the fact that the 1995 data were more accurate than the 1988.

In 1988, nearly 90 percent of the land in Gloucester was in an undeveloped state. Only 10 percent was devoted to developed uses. By 1995, developed land rose by 366 acres to almost 12% while undeveloped land dropped by 296 acres to about 88%. The rate of development is equal to almost 1% increase each year.

This fact is visually illustrated in Map 11.1, Gloucester Land Use Map. Development has focused in areas contiguous to arterial and collector roads, waterways and plains suitable for farming practices. Much of the land area of the Town was originally bypassed for development due to the stoniness of the soil, high groundwater table, wetlands, uneven topography and remoteness from supplies and markets. As technological improvements occurred that rendered some of the land's physical constraints less potent, the development potential of the Town's land area increased.

Hypothetically, most of the land area in the Town could be devoted to more intense, developed uses should the land be able to sustain such other uses, from a natural and regulated aspect, and should a demand exist. To determine whether this eventuality is possible, an examination of the current undeveloped land must occur.

Map 11.1: Existing Land Use

Table 11.2  
UNDEVELOPED LAND USES

Land Use Description Year	Area in Acres			Percent of Town Area	
	1988	1995	Change	1988	1995
Pasture	708	768	60	2.18%	2.38%
Cropland	784	789	5	2.41%	2.45%
Orchards/Groves/Nurseries	238	241	3	0.73%	0.75%
Idle Agriculture	151	149	-2	0.46%	0.46%
Deciduous Forest	17,281	17,048	-233	53.18%	52.95%
Evergreen Forest	1,535	1,514	-21	4.72%	4.70%
Mixed-Deciduous	2,501	2,467	-34	7.70%	7.66%
Mixed-Evergreen	3,421	3,359	-62	10.53%	10.43%
Brushland	165	166	1	0.51%	0.51%
Water	1,597	1,600	3	4.91%	4.97%
Wetlands	3,927	3,874	-53	12.08%	12.03%
Gravel Pits	129	152	23	0.40%	0.47%
Transitional Areas	58	73	15	0.18%	0.23%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32,495</b>	<b>32,199</b>	<b>-296</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: Town of Gloucester Planning Department GIS database.

The GIS data indicate that of the undeveloped land uses, about 16 percent are classified as water or wetland. From 1988 to 1995, the Town lost most of its undeveloped land in its forests and wetlands. This includes the loss of over 350 acres of forested land and 53 acres of wetlands. The “loss” of wetlands is likely a discrepancy in the data from 1988 to 1995, and not an actual loss of wetlands. Gains in other so-called undeveloped lands such as pasture, croplands, and gravel pits offset the losses for a net loss of almost 300 acres. Despite these losses, the combined forested areas still comprise some 76 percent of the undeveloped land use, which may involve the active cultivation and harvesting of timber and related products. It is possible to conclude that up to 100 percent of the Town undeveloped land area is committed to an existing land use. However, transfers of land use will likely occur if demand and regulation provoke change.

Table 11.3  
PUBLICLY OWNED UNDEVELOPED LAND

Site Name	Area in Acres	Percent of Area
George Washington	427	1.31
Durfee Hill	1,354	4.16
Killingly Pond	400	1.23
Sprague Farm	186	.57
Hawkins Pond	71	.21
Ponaganset Reservoir	249	.76
Phillips Farm	68	.20
Scotstun Town Forest	46	.14
Coomer Lake Reservoir	15	.04
Sandy Brook Estates	24	.07
Cora Kent Property	1.5	less than .01
<b>Total Land Area</b>	<b>2,841.50</b>	<b>8.69</b>

Source: Gloucester Planning Office 1993

Since the subset category of forest land comprises nearly 68 percent of the Town’s total land area and 75 percent of the undeveloped land area, it is imperative then to determine what amount of this land area is potentially available for conversion to another, more intense land use. Table 11.3 indicates that about 9 percent of the undeveloped land area is preserved for conservation through public ownership. It is further estimated that another 1 percent is privately owned for conservation purposes. In total then, about 10 percent of the undeveloped land area will not be converted to another use. In addition, by including the wetland and water body areas, a total of 16 percent of the undeveloped land is restricted from conversion. In theory, then, 27,295 acres or nearly 84 percent of the undeveloped land area are potentially available for future conversion. This estimate does not consider other physical or legal limitations to the potential future development of this land. That issue will be considered in the carrying capacity section.

In summary then, of the 32,495 acres of undeveloped land area, nearly 90 percent of the Town’s total land area, about 27,295 acres or 84 percent of the undeveloped land area may theoretically be transferred someday to a more intensive use. This theoretical development potential does not include adjustments for physical or legal considerations that may ultimately considerably reduce the amount of land area for the future. The carrying capacity section will discuss this matter in more detail and establish a realistic estimate of the undeveloped land area available for future development.

Table 11.4  
DEVELOPED LAND USES

Land Use Description Year	Area in Acres			Percent of Town Area	
	1988	1995	Change	1988	1995
High Density Residential (<1/8 acre lots)	8.0	12.3	4.3	0.21%	0.29%
Medium High Density Residential (1/4 to 1/8 acre lots)	244.0	244.0	0.0	6.28%	5.73%
Medium Density Residential (1 to 1/4 acre lots)	2,013.0	2,132.1	119.1	51.77%	50.12%
Medium Low Density Residential (1 to 2 acre lots)	321.0	382.5	61.5	8.26%	8.99%
Low Density Residential (>2 acre lots)	580.0	735.3	155.3	14.92%	17.28%
Commercial (sale of products and services)	179.0	179.4	0.4	4.60%	4.22%
Industrial (manufacturing, design, assembly, etc.)	34.0	35.3	1.3	0.87%	0.83%
Waste Disposal (landfills, junkyards, etc.)	62.0	66.6	4.6	1.59%	1.57%
Other Transportation (terminals, docks, etc.)	14.0	13.6	-0.4	0.36%	0.32%
Developed Recreation (all recreation)	320.0	327.1	7.1	8.23%	7.69%
Vacant Land	16.0	15.5	-0.5	0.41%	0.36%
Cemeteries	29.0	29.1	0.1	0.75%	0.68%
Institutional (schools, hospitals, churches, etc.)	68.0	81.5	13.5	1.75%	1.91%
<b>Total Developed Land</b>	<b>3,888.0</b>	<b>4,254.3</b>	<b>366.3</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Town of Gloucester Planning Department GIS Database.

Of the total developed land area, 3,506 acres or 82% was consumed for residential land uses in 1995. This is an increase of 340 acres from 1988. Within the subset of housing, 2,132 acres or 50% are the 1 to 3.9 dwelling units per acre category of medium density. This characteristic may appear inaccurate when considering the large amount of undeveloped land and the relatively high housing density. It is not; this apparent fallacy is explained by the seasonal camps that were located on one-half acre or smaller lots surrounding the Town's many water bodies which were eventually converted to year round residency. Homes on lots of two acres or more account for the second largest residential land use at 17% or 735 acres of the total residential land use.

The remaining 228 acres of the developed land is somewhat evenly distributed among a variety of other land uses, such as commercial, recreation and institutional categories. Of particular note is the less than 1 percent for manufacturing land uses and about 4.2% for commercial. This small amount of land area for commerce means the Town has a small economic base when compared to its residential counterpart. This trend towards increased residential land use is apparent when comparing 1988 to 1995. All residential land uses rose 11% while commercial and industrial rose only 1.5%. Interestingly, Waste Disposal (landfills, junkyards, etc.) accounted for a robust 7.5%

increase in the same period. However, the trend leader is in institutional land use that rose 20% from 1988 to 1995, from 68 acres to over 81 acres.

In summary then, 82% of the Town’s developed land area is consumed by residential uses, predominately 1 to 3.9 dwellings per acre. This trend has continued over the past twenty to thirty years and will likely continue well into the future. Many of these dwellings were formerly seasonal camps located on one-half acre or less sized lots along the many water bodies in the Town. Dwellings on lots of two or more acres in size account for the second largest residential land use, at 18 percent, and represent the newest form of residential land use demand. About 5% of the Town’s developed land area is devoted to commercial or manufacturing activities.

**11.5 Population and Employment Trends**

As a precursor to the buildout analysis, an evaluation of population and employment trends is required. This information can be used to gauge the level of demand for various land uses likely to occur over time and factor that demand into the availability of supply (i.e. potentially developable land area).

Table 11.5  
POPULATION

Year	Persons	Number Change	Percent Change
1960	3,300		
1970	5,200	1,900	57.6%
1980	7,550	2,350	45.2%
1990	9,227	1,677	22.2%
2000	9,948	721	7.8%
2005*	10,283	335	3.4%
2010*	10,561	278	2.7%
2015*	10,979	418	4.0%
2020*	11,445	466	4.2%
2025*	11,843	398	3.5%
2030*	12,134	291	2.5%

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census 2000 and Statewide Planning Program

\* Statewide Planning Projection

The population growth rate in Gloucester for the forty year period 1960 - 2000 was over 200 percent; an almost tripling of the population over the past forty years. The past decade of 1990 to 2000 evidenced a significant drop in the growth rate to less than 8%. The State’s population growth rate during this same decade was less than 5 percent. Despite the slower growth rate, Gloucester experienced population growth from 1990 to 2000 at almost twice the State’s rate during the same time period.

Statewide Planning offers a growth projection for all cities and towns. Gloucester’s rate is shown above for the years 2005 through 2030. The projections indicate a much slower rate for the next thirty years than for the previous decades. Whereas Gloucester grew by over 200 % from 1960 to 2000, it is expected to only grow by 22% by 2030.

Looked at another way, the average growth rate was over 33% every ten years leading up to 2000. Based on this projection, we can expect average growth rates of less than 4% every ten years.

These population projections will be used for future land use allocation planning purposes. In determining the land capacity model, these population projections will be compared to potential population absorption estimates. Discrepancies will be discussed, along with implications for future planning considerations.

Employment is also considered an indicator to help determine future land use consumption demand. To properly estimate potential future employment growth, an accurate understanding of the existing employment situation is required.

Table 11.6  
EMPLOYMENT TRENDS  
Labor Force Indicators

Labor Force	1990	2000	Numeric Change	Percent Change
Civilian Labor Force	5,144	5,727	583	11%
Employed	4,839	5,582	743	15%
Unemployed	305	145	(160)	-52%
Not in Labor Force	1,780	1,848	68	4%
Males 16+ in Labor Force	2,789	2,963	174	6%
Females 16+ in Labor Force	2,355	2,764	409	17%

Source: US Bureau of the Census 2000

Growth in the civilian labor force nearly parallels population-count growth. In addition, a significant trend of women entering the work force is evident from the more than doubling of the female labor force during a period when studies have show that the general population is evenly distributed between the genders. This information does show a significant increase in the civilian labor force. The demand for land consumption related to economic growth is related to the location of employment opportunities.

Of the 5,727 persons comprising the 2000 civilian labor force; only 282 were employed within the Town. The balance of 5,445 persons commuted at a mean travel time of 30 minutes. Of those employed within the Town, two-thirds of those opportunities were in the retail and service sectors; traditionally associated with low pay. The lack of employment opportunities available in Town is further evidenced by the less than one percent of Town land area consumed for commerce or manufacturing activities. Unless a change occurs, future employment opportunities in Town are expected to remain relatively low. Commercial use is not estimated to create a significant demand for future land use consumption and will not be considered a viable factor in the land capacity model.

In summary, the rate of population increase is considered to be the driving force for land use demand and use. It is estimated that population growth will level off in future years. Employment opportunities and growth are not considered to be significant factors in the demand for, or consumption of, land use in Town based on past trends. The Town

is anticipated to remain primarily residential with ancillary commerce to support the residential sector's basic consumption needs.

The transportation network historically has influenced the location of land uses and the population growth in Gloucester. In its early history, Gloucester seceded from Providence due to transportation-related issues (i.e. time and distance). The original commerce operations established in the Town were located either on waterways or turnpikes. But it was the evolution of the automobile and an improved roadway network that subjected Gloucester to significant population growth. Today, Gloucester's predominant developed land use is for residential activities. Commerce accounts for less than one percent of the developed land use. The automobile and the convenient local and regional roadway network enable most of Gloucester's resident labor force to commute to employment opportunities outside of the Town.

Within the Town, there are four arterials and thirteen collector roads (see Circulation Element for a detailed discussion). In addition, there are numerous local streets located throughout Town. The predominant type of development has been the "frontage lot," cut along these roadways. A major issue confronting the Town today is the question of how to access "back lots." A good amount of the road frontage has already been allocated to front lots. In some instances, "land-locked" parcels remain without adequate access to frontage roads. Future development of these "back lot and land-locked" parcels will be a major policy issue before the Town as less frontage land is available. This situation will have an implication on the availability and intensity of use of undeveloped and underdeveloped land. Flexible zoning techniques such as residential compounds and shared driveways should be evaluated as measure to allow for low density development of restricted parcels. In addition, conservation development zoning techniques should be employed in order to give the Planning Board flexibility in reviewing subdivision proposals to preserve outstanding site features and to minimize excessive road lengths and infrastructure requirements.

Another area of concern for future development is the prevalence of water bodies, wetlands, ledge, and other environmental constraints to development in Gloucester. Given the almost total dependence on groundwater for potable water supply and on subsurface individual septic disposal, the Town needs to be cognizant of such constraints in its formulation of land development regulations governing lot, parcel size, and area suitable for development in new developments. The establishment of appropriate criteria for defining and regulating buildable area in terms of environmental and physical constraints to development; of undevelopable land such as streets, water bodies and utility easements; and of protected sites such as historic cemeteries; is essential to guide future development to land that will support proper development.

In order to properly protect surface and groundwater resources; to mitigate potential drainage, soil erosion and sediment control impacts; to mitigate impacts to the natural and built environment; to mitigate traffic and circulation impacts; to assure proper landscaping screening and buffering for protection to adjacent properties, to preserve scenic, historic and cultural features; and to promote general adherence to the goal of preserving the rural character of Gloucester; land and development regulations should be developed to require site plans and a review and approval process for such plans, involving major or large scale developments and/or special use applications. Reasonable

criteria and an expedited review process will assure competent and timely review of such plans. The development of a design manual to assist in meeting these development objectives is encouraged.

### ***11.6 Land Capacity Analysis***

A land capacity analysis is a planning technique to project and gauge when “buildout” will occur. That is, given a defined set of growth parameters, when will all the available land be consumed by various land uses? From this knowledge, growth can then be managed and accommodated through planning. Policies regarding land use, amount of land “set-aside” for any particular land use and growth management plans typically originate once a land-capacity analysis has been performed.

A word of caution is needed on the use of the land-capacity model. The variables entered into the model will affect the outcome. Care has been taken to use reasonably accurate and realistic values to perform this function. However, it is not represented that this “buildout” is the only possible or most probable scenario. This experience is purely intended to be a planning function to establish one potential scenario and identify the future growth and planning issues related to that particular outcome.

For the purposes of this model, the following assumptions have been established:

- All land not used for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional or dedicated open space was defined as developable.
- To determine the development potential of the undeveloped land listed in the first assumption, current environmental regulations and conditions were considered to remove unusable land. This included wetlands, water bodies, steep slopes, soils with limited community development potential and flood zones.
- Residentially zoned land could be fully developed despite issues regarding access, water supply and property ownership.
- A housing occupancy count of 2.8 persons per dwelling unit was employed (Source: 2000 US Census).
- Existing minimum lot sizes per zoning district were used to determine lot availability per zoning district.
- Municipal water and sanitary sewer services are not and will not be made available in the future.
- Nonconforming lots of record were not included in this analysis since they constitute a minimal impact in the model’s outcome.

The land-capacity analysis involved the following steps and assumptions:

1. Mapping of environmental constraints, such as water bodies, wetlands, steep slopes and flood hazard zones. The principal source for this information was the Town;
2. A measurement of the developed and constrained land was taken to estimate the acreage of potentially developable land in Town;
3. An estimate of developable land by zoning district was then performed; a

further assumption was made that no zone changes would occur in the future to alter the current allocation or intensity of land use by zone;

4. An allowance of 15 percent was assigned to account for roads and utilities supporting development;
5. An estimate of future dwelling units was then made, based on the preceding steps and dividing the net buildable area by the minimum lot size for the particular zoning district, and;

A calculation of the potential “buildout” population was then established by multiplying the number of dwelling units times the occupancy per unit rate of 2.8.

Table 11.7  
LAND CAPACITY ANALYSIS

<i>Zoning District</i> <sup>A</sup>	<i>Current Acres</i>	<i>Constrained Land</i> <sup>B</sup>	<i>Net Developable Land</i> <sup>C</sup>	<i>Dwelling Units</i> <sup>D</sup>	<i>Population</i> <sup>E</sup>
<i>A-4 – 4 Acres</i>	<i>29,861</i>	<i>22,396</i>	<i>7,465</i>	<i>1,866</i>	<i>5,226</i>
<i>A-3 – 3 Acres</i>	<i>5,110</i>	<i>3,832</i>	<i>1,277</i>	<i>426</i>	<i>1,192</i>
<i>R-2 – 2 Acres</i>	<i>972</i>	<i>729</i>	<i>243</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>227</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>35,943</i></b>	<b><i>26,957</i></b>	<b><i>8,986</i></b>	<b><i>2,373</i></b>	<b><i>6,645</i></b>

Source: Gloucester Planning Office 2006

A= Current residential zoning districts.

B= Constraint soils; severe, high and moderate and .15 design factor.

C= Total land area (35,943) less constrained land area.

D= C divided by minimum lot size per zoning district.

E= D multiplied by the occupancy factor of 2.8.

Based on this land-capacity projection and combined with the population projection estimates, Gloucester can expect its buildout population to be almost 17,000. This is based on the 2005 population of 10,283 plus the projected 6,645 that the land capacity analysis shows. The farthest out that the state projects its population is 2030 when Gloucester is expected to reach 12,134 persons. This is well short of the buildout population of 17,000. Moreover, the state projections indicate that growth has leveled off; the double-digit rates from 1970 to 1990 have given way to an average increase of 4% since 2000. If that holds, Gloucester will not reach a community “buildout” until –well past the end of this century and perhaps into the middle of the next. This of course depends on building demand and regulatory approval rates. While this projection is speculative, it offers one possible scenario to assist Gloucester in its community development planning program.

Of particular note is the prevalence of environmental constraints present within the Town. According to the information gathered for the land capacity analysis, nearly 75 percent of the potentially developable land has some type of severe to moderate environmental constraint. No matter what type of development occurs in Gloucester, extreme care must be taken to regulate the nature, location and intensity of growth. In addition, standards should be created to account for these unique land characteristics.

Map 11.2: Future Land Use

### *11.7 Implications for the Future*

According to the estimates and projections contained in this Plan element, Gloucester can expect to experience continued demand for land consumption into the next century. This demand for land will be predominantly for residential housing activities. The primary issue facing Gloucester is not whether, but, what type of development will occur in the future. The Town cannot exclude growth; at best, it can plan and manage it to ensure that only appropriate development occurs.

The Town should consider the adoption of a plan to deal with the possible conversion of any federal or state owned conservation or recreation areas. Such a plan must consider the development potential of such properties and the resultant impact of such development on the Town's fiscal and rural character. Preservation of private land should also be further encouraged by providing property owners the option to place the land in an open space/conservation district. In this regard, a Farm, Forest, and Open Space Ordinance has been adopted and implemented by the Town. The Town must continue to monitor the newly enacted Earth Removal Ordinance to determine whether this law serves to accomplish its desired objectives. Also, the Town should evaluate performance standards and regulations for review and approval of telecommunications transmission facility applications. The Town should also consider the creation of a site plan review procedure with performance standards for all major development proposals.

The Town has in the past and will in the future support the needs of the mentally and physically disabled through the issuance of special use permits and dimensional variances. The Town will continue to remove zoning barriers, where applicable, that prevent the mentally and physically disabled from the property enjoyment experienced by the general population. In addition, the Town will continue to accommodate the special transportation and recreation needs of this population within the means and ability of the Town's resources. The Town will also continue to work cooperatively with the Department of Mental Health to meet the needs of the disabled.

Although the Town is mostly undeveloped or rural, the remaining undeveloped land area is characterized by many natural resources features that limit or prevent environmentally sound development practices. As a result, more than 27,453 acres of land potentially available for future development, 75 percent of the entire undeveloped land area, is restricted from future use. That leaves approximately 8,935 acres available for development, an area about double the current developed land area of 3,893 acres.

Traditional land-use practices to protect environmental features, such as large lot and homogeneous zoning regulations, may prove inadequate to manage and allow for planning of anticipated growth. The Town should consider adopting more contemporary techniques of environmental regulation to protect natural resources, like flexible dimensional regulations, conservation development, zoning use performance standards, alternate backlot access regulations, groundwater and surface water sources and wetlands, protection and provision of "greenbelts" to enhance and preserve the Town's sense of place, a growth management ordinance, impact fees, and updated subdivision regulations.

## Conservation Development

The Town has continued to explore ways to promote conservation of open space and natural resources, and to preserve its rural character. There is however, a danger that large-lot zoning may not be entirely effective in creating and preserving major community-wide open spaces, promoting a network of greenways and implementing key open space goals of the Plan. The use of conservation development subdivision planning techniques is recommended in order to preserve open space and important natural and cultural features on a site proposed for residential development, and to permit reasonable use of the land for residential purposes.

## Conservation Subdivision Planning

As a means of implementing the land use, conservation and open space policies contained within this Plan, the Town supports the concept of Conservation Development. This term describes a relatively new type of residential development, in which, exclusive of wetlands and other types of land unsuitable for development, the majority of flat, dry and otherwise buildable land is protected from clearing, grading, and construction by creating open spaces and by reducing lot sizes in order to achieve full-yield density. It is permitted under State enabling legislation as a Land Development Project, similar to cluster development. However, conservation design differs from clustering in three important ways:

1. First, it sets much higher standards for the quantity, quality and configuration of the resulting open space. Many cluster ordinances require a fixed amount of the gross area of the subdivision to be set aside as open space, conservation subdivisions require anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of the land to be permanent, protected open space. This percentage is linked to the zoning district density and the availability of public water and sewer systems. Unlike most cluster provisions, this percentage is based only on the acreage that is high, dry, flood-free and otherwise buildable.
2. Second, the Town can exercise greater influence on the design of new conservation subdivisions. This flexible approach requires the development plan to be based upon the natural and cultural site features, rather than upon the selection of the best building areas. Conservation design can be strongly encouraged or even required (mandatory) where the Comprehensive Plan has identified the type and location of noteworthy resources.
3. Third, the protected land is also configured so that it will, wherever practical, contribute to creating an interconnected network of open space throughout the community, linking resources areas in adjoining subdivisions and/or providing buffers between new development and preexisting sensitive lands or developed neighborhoods.

This technique is an important tool that should be used to preserve the rural character of the Town, a goal that is expressed very strongly throughout this Plan. By preserving large areas of open space, and by situating development in compact areas, the Town can create viable neighborhoods while at the same time avoiding sprawling, land-wasting suburban-type subdivisions.

The Town will also consider allowing the open space created in a conservation development to remain in private ownership if the use is limited to agriculture, habitat or forestry. In such cases, the Planning Board, as part of its review of a conservation development, will make positive findings as part of the record, setting forth the basis for such ownership.

The Town should also consider whether the lack of a commercial base is a policy concern. This is of particular interest since local governments, municipal and school operations, derive their principal revenue from the property tax base. Should the Town continue to develop with a predominantly residential base, and assuming that the property tax remains the primary revenue source for local government operations, this tax burden will not be shared? Although this issue is discussed in the Economic Development element, the allocation of land for future growth must consider this dilemma. Contemporary planning and zoning techniques such as mixed-use districts, historic zoning, and home occupations and the concept of a floating commercial district ordinances should be considered as creating a proper diversification of Gloucester's land use and tax base.

Based on the information described and discussed in this Land Use element of the Gloucester Comprehensive Community Plan, a future land use map was created (Map 11.2). This map is intended to illustrate what land uses would be supported in general areas of the Town. This map is not a zoning map that lists specific properties and allowed uses. Rather, Map 11.2 offers one concept of future land use by area, in a rather general format.

There are few or no inconsistencies between the future land use map for the Town and the current zoning map. Based on the comprehensive planning process used to establish this plan, the future land use map simply affirms the current general land use pattern and zoning district map. The Town wishes to retain and enhance its rural character and to encourage agricultural and animal husbandry operations through zoning regulations.

The Town wishes to give regulatory protection to its dedicated public land use and/or significant open space or natural resources where applicable, by creating an Open Space/Conservation Zoning District for such areas that are appropriate, with land use regulations designed to encourage certain compatible uses and the long term preservation of open space.

The Chepachet Village commercial area will be targeted for an evaluation of a village mixed use zoning district as suggested in the Chepachet Village Plan. Clearer distinction between neighborhood and highway commercial zoning districts should similarly be evaluated. Expansions of several existing commercial areas are identified on the map for future evaluation in reflection of Economic Development objectives, and to allow for the limited expansion of commercial use in areas where such use pre-exists as a matter of right. These areas identified for possible expansion are intended to reflect only the extension of existing commercial zoning and not the creation of separated or isolated parcels for non-residential use. The alternative concept of a floating commercial or a mixed use village Zoning District discussed as follows should also be evaluated as to

relevancy with the existing land use pattern of Gloucester, and with applicable Regulatory statutes.

The boundaries of land use on the future land use map are general and approximate. Deviations of boundaries may be anticipated to account for property lines, environmentally sensitive areas, or other constraints when drawing actual zoning district boundaries. A Floating Commercial Zoning district should be considered and evaluated to accommodate future commercial uses not currently zoned with this designation. This should be evaluated by the Planning Board, with input from other pertinent boards and commissions for appropriateness (environmental or other), conflict with neighboring land uses as set out in this Comprehensive Plan and pertinent State Guide Plans, such as the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Plan.

The Town must revise the current zoning ordinance to comply with this Comprehensive Plan and take into account future growth projections to manage growth properly, especially given the unique natural resources prevalent in Gloucester. In furtherance of this, the town may consider increased controls/restrictions with the establishment of performance standards to protect natural resources from the impact of inappropriate non-residential development as may be established through enacting a Groundwater Protection Ordinance and/or Site Plan Review Ordinance as set forth in this Comprehensive Plan.

The Town envisions a future community that is predominantly rural residential with a provision for ancillary commercial activities. Land use regulations that allow for appropriate development while protecting, preserving, enhancing and restoring natural and historical features are desired. Gloucester does not intend to compete with the regional or metropolitan markets for commerce or employment opportunities. Commerce would supply only the very basic needs of the residents. To this end, it is further envisioned that efforts should be made to improve the existing commercial areas. Also, the Town desires to discourage “commercial strip” development from occurring along the arterial and collector roadway network. “Commercial clusters” are preferred where access and visual impacts are reduced. This land use allocation is seen as an overlay or floating zone, restricted by certain location and performance criteria. No actual zoning district is thus indicated on the future land use map. In summary, the land use plan means to affirm the current land use pattern into the future. A new zoning ordinance is required, however, to devise improved regulatory mechanisms to manage and plan for future growth.

This element also considered the land use of the surrounding communities and their comprehensive plans. Direct notices of the Planning Board and Town Council hearings to consider the adoption of this comprehensive plan were sent to the abutting and surrounding communities to Gloucester to solicit their input. Each abutting municipality was contacted to obtain their input concerning the Plan. No abutting community offered any objections or suggested revisions to the Plan. Each abutting community’s land use was also considered and determined to be generally compatible with the Town’s. This plan also was drafted to be consistent with the state guide plan elements.

From this research component, the Town articulated goals, objectives, policies and recommendations to rectify identified areas of concern. These statements are in the

Goals section of this plan. The Implementation section of this Plan details the actions, processes, remedies and responsibilities to perfect the goals, objectives and recommendations.

Map 11.3: Existing Zoning

### *11.8 Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan*

The Comprehensive Plan, and particularly the Land Use Element, constitutes a policy statement based upon prevailing needs, the existing development pattern, underlying zoning, considerations of both man-made and natural constraints and opportunities for development, and accepted planning practices. Over a period of time, any of these variables are subject to change. Consequently, the Plan must periodically be reviewed and occasionally amended if it is to remain effective.

The State Comprehensive Planning enabling statute anticipates amendment by limiting the number of plan amendments on an annual basis to four, requiring the plan to be updated every five years, and also establishing a process for State review of such amendments. Although updating the Comprehensive Plan is required every five (5) years, requests for more frequent amendments may be likely, but should not be allowed to occur in a haphazard manner and should only occur after careful review of the request, findings of fact in support of the revisions, and public hearings. The statutory requirements which guided the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan should be followed for all amendments. Amendments may take place to both text and map provisions. The following findings shall govern the acceptability of any proposed amendment to this plan as may be applicable:

1. that the development pattern contained in the Land Use Plan inadequately provides appropriate optional sites for the use proposed in the amendment,
2. that the amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the Comprehensive Plan and is not solely for the good or benefit of a particular landowner or owners at a particular point in time,
3. that the amendment will not adversely impact the community as a whole or a portion of the community by:
  - a) significantly altering acceptable existing land use patterns;
  - b) requiring larger and more expensive improvements to community facilities or services than are needed to support the prevailing land uses and which, therefore, may impact development of other lands, or the Town;
  - c) adversely impacting existing uses because of increased traffic on existing systems, or environmental affects;
  - d) effect on the livability of the area or the health and safety of the residents, and
4. that the amendment is consistent with the overall intent of this Comprehensive Plan as set forth by its goals, policies, and recommendations.

Amendments to the Gloucester Comprehensive Plan may be initiated by the Town in accordance with the procedures, and requirements set forth by State Statute or may be requested by private or individuals or agencies.

If a Plan amendment is requested by a private individual or agency, it shall be the burden of the party requesting the amendment to demonstrate that the change constitutes

an improvement to the Plan and to demonstrate that the above findings may be achieved. It shall not be the burden of the Town to prove that an amendment should be denied.

## **12.1 Housing**

### **12.2 Introduction**

Although Gloucester was established early in our nation's history, it was not until the past four decades that the Town experienced significant growth (See Table 11.5, Land Use Section). This growth was influenced by an improved transportation network and system, the availability and cost of developable land, and prevalent social conditions. Gloucester's population nearly tripled during this growth period, which necessitated the creation of a significant amount of new housing units.

As evidenced by the Land Use Section, Gloucester's developed land use is predominantly consumed by residential activities. Of the developed land area, 81 percent is in residential use. This fact gives the Town a character that is highly valued by residents. This development has occurred mostly along existing roadways on "frontage lots," spatially located throughout the Town, with the exception of the village areas. Although the Land Use Section identified about 9,000 acres of land remaining for development, access to this land or "back lots" is difficult in many instances. This issue may increase the expenses of future subdivisions and also be passed along to the consumer in the form of higher priced land and homes.

This section will consider the Town's housing inventory, the needs and financial abilities of the current and projected future population, and the resources and steps to consider regarding Gloucester's housing supply and cost.

### **12.3 Existing Conditions**

As mentioned, Gloucester experienced significant population increase during the past four decades. These new residents constructed new homes to house themselves and their family members. Table 12.1 offers documentation on this activity.

The growth in the total housing stock nearly coincided with the population growth rate for the listed decades. Occupancy remained at the 94 percent level and owners exceeded renters by more than six to one. In fact, except for the most recent decade 1990-2000, renters steadily decreased over each decade as a percentage of unit occupancy, although the total number of rental dwellings increased in that same time period.

What are the types of housing and their ages? Table 12.2 provides information on these indicators.

Table 12.1  
HOUSING INVENTORY

	1970	1980	1990	2000
Total Units	1685	2829	3460	3786
Percent Change	NA	68	22	9.4
Occupied Units	1539	2446	3132	3559
Percent Occupied	91	87	91	94
Owner Occupied	1299	2110	2729	3078
Percent Owner Occupied	84	86	87.1	86.5
Renter Occupied	240	336	403	481
Percent Renter Occupied	16	14	13	13.5

Source: US Department of Commerce; Bureau of the Census, 1970, 1980, 1990 & 2000

Table 12.2  
HOUSING AGE AND TYPE

Year Built	Units	Percent	Type	Units	Percent
1990- March 2000	485	12.8	1 Unit, Detached	3372	89.1
1980-1989	477	12.6	1 Unit, Attached	84	2.2
1970-1979	915	24.2	2-4 Units	96	2.5
1960-1969	627	16.6	5-9 Units	66	1.7
1940-1959	634	16.7	10+ Units	26	0.7
1939 or earlier	648	17.1	Mobile Homes	142	3.8
Total	3786	100	Total	3768	100.0

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2000

49.6 percent of Gloucester's existing housing stock was erected in the past three decades. Only 17.1 percent is more than sixty years of age, some of which contains historically significant homes. Overall, Gloucester's housing supply can be characterized as young. Single family, detached residential housing units comprised nearly 90 percent of all housing design types in 2000. A small 4.9 percent, less than 188 units, of all housing types were devoted to multiple-family use. Although there is a young, plentiful supply of single-family homes available in Gloucester, there is a much more limited

supply for those in the rental or multiple-family home markets. In addition, although Gloucester’s Zoning Ordinance allows single-family housing by-right, multiple-family housing is allowed only by special permit. This situation further limits the supply of rental and multiple-family housing stock.

In addition to the supply, age and type of homes available in the Town, the condition of the existing housing stock is also important for current and future planning purposes. Table 12.3 provides information regarding the condition of Gloucester’s housing stock, in comparison with surrounding communities. The term “housing problem” is defined as households forced to spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing and/or living in substandard conditions. (Substandard conditions are defined as facilities without complete kitchen or bathroom facilities.)

Table 12.3  
HOUSING CONDITIONS: SURROUNDING AREA

Housing Condition Indicators	Percent of Total Units with Housing Problems			
	Glocester	Foster	Burrillville	Scituate
Total Substandard	24.9	23.4	24.7	19.7

Source: RI Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy; RIH, data current as of 2000

The total number of substandard housing units of 867, or 24.9 percent of the entire Town’s housing supply, merits concern. In the 2001 Comprehensive Plan, the Building Official noted that many of these dwellings lack central heating since these units are some of the many seasonally occupied summer camps located along the shores of Gloucester’s ponds and lakes. The Gloucester Affordable Housing Plan studied the issue of housing conditions in more detail.

### ***12.4 Housing Types and Surrounding Area Conditions***

The area comprising Gloucester and several surrounding communities once was considered the “Providence Woods or outlands.” Today, the communities of Gloucester, Foster, Scituate and Burrillville, formerly all part of the Town of Providence, share many common problems and characteristics. All are outside the Providence metropolitan area and are primarily residential communities; most of their civilian labor force commutes to the metropolitan area for gainful employment.

Table 12.4 indicates that the single-family home is the predominating domicile form for residents of the area communities. The housing supply is homogenous with few rental or multiple family units available. Housing choice between single and multiple-family designs is virtually non-existent. Only Burrillville has a heterogeneous housing supply, primarily a remnant of its former role as a mill town.

Table 12.4  
HOUSING TYPES: SURROUNDING AREA

Unit Type	Number / Percent of Total Units			
	Glocester	Foster	Burrillville	Scituate
1 Unit, Detached	3,372/89.1%	1,457/92.3%	3,941/67.7%	3,380/86.6%
1 Unit, Attached	84/2.2%	0/0%	142/2.4%	81/2.1%
2-4 Units	96/2.5%	51/3.2%	1,126/19.3%	347/8.9%
5-9 Units	66/1.7%	46/2.9%	167/2.9%	16/0.4%
10+ Units	26/0.7%	6/0.4%	209/3.6%	80/2.0%
Mobile Homes	142/3.8%	18/1.2%	236/4.1%	0/0%
Total	3,786/100%	1,578/100%	5,821/100%	3,904/100%

Source: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 2000

### 12.5 Housing Affordability

In the middle to late 1980's, Rhode Island experienced a housing-cost escalation phenomenon unlike any previous occurrence. Homes were bought and sold the same day for sizable profit. Home prices doubled and then tripled within short periods of time. During this time of housing inflation, personal income and purchasing power did not experience comparable increase. As a result, a significant number of would-be home purchasers were forced out of the ownership market. In addition, rental rates increased dramatically as rental properties were not immune from this housing-cost frenzy. People were being forced to devote more of their incomes to housing than customarily required. Housing became increasingly expensive during this tumultuous period.

As with pricing runups, there is typically an economic backlash. Rhode Island's housing market was no exception. At the close of the 1980's, home price increases were beginning to stall and, due to several other events such as the banking and credit union collapses, home sales slowed. By 1991, home prices had fallen, and sales levels were well below the past several years' record pace. These changes, however, left the overall state housing market significantly altered from a decade earlier. As result, many people were forced out of home ownership altogether, and some had to devote a significantly higher portion of their personal income to housing costs, both owners and renters. Housing affordability had become an important public policy issue.

In response to this affordability crisis, the Town has developed an Affordable Housing Plan<sup>12</sup>. This Plan was prepared as a response to the requirements of the Rhode Island Low and Moderate Income Housing Act, and was adopted by the Town Council and Planning Board in 2005. The Plan was approved by the State as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan on September 30, 2005. The Affordable Housing Plan is included in

<sup>12</sup> Town of Glocester Affordable Housing Plan, Town Council Adoption on September 26, 2005.

its entirety as a part of the 5-Year Comprehensive Plan Update completed in (insert date). Sections of the 2001 Comprehensive Plan which addressed the issue of housing affordability have been deleted and replaced by the Affordable Housing Plan. This Affordable Housing Plan is provided in Appendix A.

### **Rural Residential Compounds**

The Town has provided an alternative to the single family subdivisions that are platted using conventional zoning requirements and subdivision standards. In 2003, the option of developing a rural residential compound was added to the Town's Zoning Ordinance. Using this option, residential development may be approved by the Planning Board under less stringent conditions than required for conventional subdivisions. Compounds are permitted in A-4 and A-3 zoning districts, on properties having at least 20 acres or more, and at least 50 feet of road frontage. Each lot created must have at least 10 acres up to a maximum of four lots. A private common way (road) is created, which is not accepted for maintenance by the Town. Using the compound planning technique, the Town can avoid the creation of frontage lots along Town or state roads, and preserve the rural character of the community.

### **Summary**

In closing, Gloucester is limited in its ability to provide concentrated multiple-family communities. No municipal water or sanitary sewer facilities exist in Town. In addition, concentrated development is limited by the natural environment constraints prevalent throughout the Town. Low density and low-intensity land development would be the most appropriate type of housing development to occur to meet the identified housing needs and to be consistent with the land use section findings and policies.

A series of Goals, Policies and Objectives and Recommendations were created from the issues identified by the research contained in this section. In addition, an Implementation table lists the actions, responsibilities and timetable associated with the policy statements.

As part of the 5-Year Update, the Goals, Objectives and Recommendations of the Affordable Housing Plan were added to Part I, Section 4.1 Housing, as well as to Section 10.1 Implementation Program.

## **13.1 Economic Development**

### **13.2 Introduction**

Throughout most of its history, economic opportunities in Gloucester were linked to the land. Its early development was based on subsistence farming; this skill later evolved to an export market of food supplies for the Providence area population. As a transportation network developed to move the farm goods rapidly and conveniently from the Town to the marketplace, ancillary economic opportunities were created to support and supply the persons moving the goods to market. Taverns offered travelers food and rest while on their journeys.

In the nineteenth century, a change manifesting itself throughout the region began to occur in Gloucester, the industrial revolution. This change signified a shift from the agrarian economy of the early settlers to a manufacturing economy that was primarily located in developed, urban areas. This new economy also required a large pool of semi-skilled and skilled laborers to support their manufacturing operations. Many farm operations in Gloucester were abandoned as settlers moved to areas where economic opportunities were available. Some persons stayed to continue working on the farms or seek employment in one of the several manufacturing operations located in the Town. Local employment opportunities were few; as a result, Gloucester witnessed a dramatic loss of population into the early-twentieth century when another economic upheaval began to occur.

Transportation system improvements related to technological advancements had, without exception, the most dramatic effect on the Town's current economic situation. In the early twentieth century, people from the metropolitan areas ventured to Gloucester to enjoy its bucolic setting and outdoor recreation opportunities. These travelers were sampling a new aspect of a changing social order related to prevalent economic conditions -- leisure time. Most of these people, however, resided in urban areas and ventured to Gloucester only for seasonal and temporary visits. Still, a small and prosperous service economy began to emerge that supplied these visitors with provisions and comfort.

By the mid-twentieth century, the automobile was beginning to cause a social revolution in America. Gloucester was no exception to the phenomenon of "suburbanization," an exodus of people from the urban employment centers to outlying, primarily undeveloped areas. Contemporary social scientists labeled this post-World War II social movement by many Americans as the "search for the American dream," a concept which embodied the pursuit of a single-family home in a quiet, safe setting away from the complexities of high-density urban living. This social revolution spread to communities contiguous to metropolitan employment centers. Later, as the land in the communities near the centralized employment centers was used up and as roadway networks and automobile technology advanced, people moved further away from the centralized employment areas. Gloucester was one Rhode Island town which experienced this trend.

Since 1960, Gloucester has experienced a nearly tripled population. This occurred while the City of Providence was seeing population loss. People were moving from the centers of employment to primarily undeveloped outlying areas as "commuting" became

a standard of American social structure. Instead of visiting places like Gloucester in their leisure time, people chose to reside there and commute to the workplace.

During this same period, the basic functions of the American economy were beginning to experience dramatic alteration. America was shifting from a manufacturing to a service economy. Economic growth and expansion began to evidence this shift as early as the 1960's. This change allowed many employment opportunities to be relocated from urban areas due to the changing nature of the labor pool needs. Many of the mature suburban communities experienced economic base expansion as professional office centers, retail shopping plazas and food industry facilities found locations in areas already populated by the "exurbanites." While this trend invoked economic and social havoc in urban areas, suburban areas prospered as employment opportunities became readily available.

Populations increased in the suburban and rural areas as a result of this urban decentralization; local government responsibilities expanded proportionately. The property tax, a value-based *ad valorem* tax, was the principal financing mechanism for local government. Although federal and state governments have provided periodic financial assistance to municipal government, local tax revenues are the primary financing source. All local property (this includes real, personal and inventory properties) is valued, then annually taxed at a rate determined necessary to properly finance local government operations. A community economic base is composed of three principal sectors: residential, commercial, manufacturing. The municipal tax burden is proportionately distributed according to the local land use and development pattern. In an effort to reduce the property tax burden upon the residential sector, many Rhode Island communities endeavor to attain a pattern of local land use and development that includes about 30 percent of commercial and manufacturing activities. To achieve this objective, some communities take advantage of existing locational demand while others attempt to create demand through locational incentives.

### ***13.3 Existing Conditions***

As demonstrated in the Land Use element, about 88% of the land area in Gloucester was undeveloped in 1995.<sup>13</sup> Of the 12% that is developed, 82% is devoted to residential activities. The nonresidential 228 acres of the developed land is somewhat evenly distributed among a variety of other land uses, such as commercial, recreation and institutional categories. Of particular note is the less than 1 percent for manufacturing land uses and about 4.2% for commercial. This small amount of land area for commerce means the Town has a small economic base when compared to its residential counterpart. This trend towards increased residential land use is apparent when comparing 1988 to 1995. All residential land uses rose 11% while commercial and industrial rose only 1.5%. Interestingly, Waste Disposal (landfills, junkyards, etc.) accounted for a robust 7.5% increase in the same period. However, the trend leader is in institutional land use that rose 20% from 1988 to 1995, from 68 acres to over 81 acres.

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<sup>13</sup> 1995 was the last year that a comprehensive land use analysis was performed by the Statewide Planning Program

The economic base in Gloucester, then, is predominantly residential, with a small assortment of commercial and manufacturing operations. There are few vacant parcels of land zoned for commercial or manufacturing uses. Of that land area zoned for such non-residential uses, much may be constrained by natural features or the lack of adequate public services, such as water supply or sanitary sewers.

The Town's employed residents rose from 4,802 in 1990 to 4,896 in 2000, as shown in Table 13.1 below. While the labor force stayed virtually unchanged in 10 years, with a modest .4% increase, the total unemployed persons dropped by 31%, contributing to an increase in employment.

Table 13.1  
RESIDENT LABOR FORCE

	1990	2000	Change	% Change
Total Employed	4,802	4,896	94	2.0%
Unemployed	233	160	-73	-31.3%
Labor Force	5,035	5,056	21	0.4%
Unemployment Rate	4.6%	3.2%		

Source: RIEDC and US Census

In examining local employment opportunities, the Town's employment base reflected national and statewide trends with major shifts away from agriculture and manufacturing towards service industries. The following Table 13.2 shows the trends from 1990, 2000 and 2005.

Table 13.2  
TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRY SECTOR

	Yr 1990	Yr 2000	Yr 2005	Change	% Change
Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries	0	26	3	-23	-88%
Construction	54	99	139	40	40%
Manufacturing	20	27	34	7	26%
Transportation Communications & Utilities	27	47	70	23	49%
Wholesale Trade	11	15	12	-3	-20%
Retail Trade	212	328	209	-119	-36%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	30	60	53	-7	-12%
Service Industries	229	405	1,121	716	177%
<b>Total</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>1,007</b>	<b>1,641</b>	<b>634</b>	<b>63%</b>

Source: RIEDC and US Census

It is worth noting that the largest drops were in agriculture, followed by retail trade and wholesale trade. While manufacturing shows a modest increase, the numbers are small with only 34 manufacturing jobs in 2005. The biggest rise is in service industries at a 177% increase. This includes about 450 government jobs. In 2005, the RIEDC data show a finer breakdown of service industries that are not available for 1995 and 2000 for comparison. The next Table shows how the 1,121 service jobs are allocated within Gloucester.

Table 13.3  
SERVICE SECTOR EMPLOYMENT

Service Sector	Yr 2005	% of Total
Professional & Technical Services	102	9.10%
Administrative Support & Waste Management	63	5.62%
Health Care & Social Assistance	287	25.60%
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	19	1.69%
Accommodation & Food Services	153	13.65%
Other services (except Government)	47	4.19%
Government – Public Administration	450	40.14%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

Source: RIEDC and US Census

It is not surprising that government accounts for almost half of all service workers. A quarter of the service jobs are health care and social assistance, which also not surprising given that the health care industries represents among the highest employment in Rhode Island.

Among 2005 employment, service employment leads with over 63% of the total, with government accounting for a substantial share. The next Table shows such employment, in order of the numbers represented with percent to total.

Table 13.4  
EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR

Employment Sector	2005 Employment	Percent to Total
Service Sector	1,121	68.31%
Retail Trade	209	12.74%
Construction	139	8.47%
Transportation Communications & Utilities	70	4.27%
Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	53	3.23%
Manufacturing	34	2.07%
Wholesale Trade	12	0.73%
Agriculture Forestry & Fisheries	3	0.18%
	1,641	100.00%

Source: RIEDC and US Census.

Taking the top two sectors, over 81% of all local employment opportunities are in the retail trade and service industries divisions. These sectors of the economy are not considered by economic theorists as a basic industry source; but rather, non-basic economic activity. That is, these sectors typically are considered non-exporting activities and, as such, are not regarded by social scientists as contributing to economic expansion. Rather, these sectors reflect population growth, but will not encourage or foster labor-market opportunities. Opinion varies regarding the implications of an economy dependent on non-basic versus basic industries.

According to the US Census in 1999, the median household income in Glocester was \$57,537. More than 85 percent of the civilian labor force commutes to work outside of Town according to the 2000 Census information.

Glocester's economic base is small and concentrated on the non-basic services sector, as explained in the preceding paragraph. The typically low-paying employment

opportunities available in these sectors are not adequate for persons to reside in a median-priced Gloucester home, even should there be a two-income, average wage-earner household. The bulk of Gloucester's civilian labor force must commute to other labor market areas to find adequate income employment opportunities. It is the regional market that provides Gloucester's labor force with gainful employment opportunities and adequate income to assure economic survival.

Much of the resident survey information collected in earlier planning processes indicated that people moved to Gloucester for the living environment. The data on employment and economic base may provide evidence to justify this opinion. Based on this research, it can be accurately stated that people locate in Gloucester for reasons other than employment opportunities. Further, most Gloucester residents obtain income from sources not associated with local employment opportunities. The same survey information indicated a strong desire by respondents to keep Gloucester rural and to discourage inappropriate future commercial or industrial land-use activities. Also, there was opinion expressed that any new commercial or manufacturing uses should undergo rigorous scrutiny prior to becoming established in the Town.

### *13.4 Economic Development Needs*

Gloucester's economic base comprises less than 1 percent of the Town's total land area, only 5 percent of the developed land area. Residential land uses constitute over 82 percent of the developed land area and represent the largest single developed-land use sector. While a sizable amount of vacant land is zoned for residential use, few vacant sites zoned for commercial or manufacturing uses exist. In addition, of the vacant land zoned for commercial or manufacturing uses, much is constrained for development by natural features or inadequate public services. One innovative option to consider regarding local economic development is the advent of telecommunications and related technological advancements. Perhaps, as the automobile altered society in the 1950's, telecommunications may exert similar changes in the next century. Mechanisms should be considered to allow or encourage, the introduction of such technologically based economic opportunities at the local level. One such opportunity is the home-based business or satellite home office. These and other similar innovative employment options may properly address the relatively small economic base in Gloucester.

Gloucester residents must bear a sizable portion of the local property tax burden resulting from the relative absence of commercial or manufacturing operations. Because of current land use policies and regulations, no significant future employment opportunities are projected for the near future. This is primarily due to the absence of a locational demand in the marketplace. Only if Gloucester were to adopt and advocate locational incentives, might this anticipated future be altered. However, any such action must be cognizant of the current residents' desire to proceed carefully and thoughtfully regarding actions that may alter the Town's character and sense of place. Therefore, local policy makers must consider the residents' attitudes and social implications of the existing local economic situation and determine what type of decisions and actions are appropriate.

As set forth in the Land Use Element, new opportunities for economic growth should primarily occur in proximity to existing non-residential zoned areas in order to contain such growth and prevent haphazard “sprawl.” The only exception are certain areas designated in the future land use map for further evaluation of expanded commercial or industrial re-zoning based on a predominance of pre-existing non-residential activity in these areas, or the floating commercial zone concept.

In the Fall of 1997, the Town received a study of Chepachet Village prepared by the University of Rhode Island Graduate Curriculum in Community Planning and Area Development. This plan envisioned a comprehensive approach to revitalize and restore Chepachet Village to enhance economic development opportunities in the village. This objective would be accomplished through a variety of physical design and economic incentive actions. The goals and objectives of the Plan for Chepachet Village are incorporated by reference into this Plan. The recommendations for implementing these goals and objectives were submitted to the Chepachet Village Planning Committee which was a subcommittee of the Gloucester Economic Development Commission. It was to be implemented by the Town in partnership with the private sector. A copy of the Plan for Chepachet Village is on file in the Town Clerk’s office.

The Plan for Chepachet Village calls for a village mixed use zoning district, or overlay district, a design manual and a Main Street Coordinator. These and other actions in the Plan are still valid and should be undertaken by the Town in the near future. To implement the Chepachet Village Plan, The Town should consider:

- Village Overlay Zoning,
- Business Improvement District
- Design Manual, modeled after the South County Design Manual,
- On-site wastewater and storm-water demonstration project.

The Town also commissioned a Wastewater Facilities Study. This effort considered various solutions to resolve and prevent groundwater and surface water pollution town-wide, and the enhancement of development in Chepachet Village. Among the recommendations of this study were that new wastewater ordinances should be established, that a town-wide wastewater management district be established, that on-site alternatives should be evaluated for suitability and feasibility that a wastewater treatment set-aside for Gloucester at the Burrillville and Smithfield wastewater treatment facilities should be secured, and that a sewer feasibility study in the Chepachet Village, Echo Lake, and Waterman reservoir areas should be performed with consideration of alternative solutions. This study compliments the ISDS regulations of the R.I. Department of Environmental Management. The Town will also consider the adoption of a wastewater management district, groundwater protection regulations, applicable on a town-wide basis. The Town incorporates the goals and objectives of the Gloucester Wastewater Management Study into the Plan by reference. Alternatives to meeting these goals and objectives deserve further evaluation by the Wastewater Commission with advisory recommendation to the Town Council for implementation. The Study is on file in the Town Clerk’s office for public review.

Finally, the Town should consider creating a Business Park that will replace the existing industrial zone. This park should have mixed uses of commercial, office and retail, but not residential and “big-box” retail, design standards and development plan review by the Planning Board.

The determinations to these issues are articulated in the Goals, Objectives and Policies and Recommendations section of this plan. In addition, an action program is provided in the Implementation section.

## **14.1 Natural and Cultural Resources**

### **14.2 Introduction**

The natural resources of Gloucester have been both asset and liability over time. To the early manufacturers, the area's water resources provided a plentiful source of power for mill machinery. During the twentieth century, seekers of outdoor recreational pursuits enjoyed the abundant water bodies and woodlands located throughout the Town. Farmers, though, had to contend with stony and wet soils that impaired ability to establish and maintain adequate tillable acreage and crop yields. Some Gloucester homeowners are troubled by wet basements, poor site drainage, stony yards and large areas of unusable property due to the local features of the natural environment.

Gloucester experienced a significant amount of growth during the suburbanization period discussed in the Land Use element. However, during the comprehensive community planning process, many residents expressed a belief that a good deal of additional growth may have been "discouraged" by the Town's natural environment and its "remote" geographic location. Another factor that may have impeded land development could have been the established land development regulations that recognized the unique and sensitive aspects of the Town's natural features. These regulations guided growth away from areas deemed not suitable for development due to the presence of certain natural features. Other possible factors include land that may have been "readily available" for development in other communities, and that home buyers preferred to reside closer to employment centers.

Explanations aside, Gloucester's natural resources have played an important role in the Town's land-development decisions, the community's settlement pattern, the character of the Town and land-use practices by residents and visitors (See Map 11.3 Existing Zoning). So, too, have these natural resources helped to shape the Town's cultural resources. Throughout the community-planning process, many expressed a belief that Gloucester's residential attractiveness and the community's sense of place are inextricably linked to the natural environment. A dynamic inter-relationship does exist between the natural environment and the place that is called Gloucester. Furthermore, many of these same people also expressed a desire that the Town act to protect, preserve and enhance the local natural and cultural resources.

To establish local planning policies or programs to protect the natural or cultural environments, a proper assessment of the existing conditions is first required. What, then, are the natural and cultural features that contribute to Gloucester's sense of place and character?

### **14.3 Natural Resources Inventory**

#### **Water Resources**

Of the 36,454 acres of area that comprise the Town of Gloucester, Table 11.2, Undeveloped Land Uses, lists surface water area accounting for 1,600 acres and wetlands, including 3,874 acres; a combined total of 5,474 acres, representing 15 percent of the Town's total area. Flood storage capacity areas or flood plains are another

important local water resource. The proper functioning of these resources are critical to the environmental health of the community and safety of its citizens. In addition, 10,533 acres, or 29 percent, of the Town lies within the Scituate Reservoir watershed. The Providence Water Supply Board, owner and operator of the Scituate Reservoir water supply and distribution system, owns a mere 25 percent of this watershed area. The remaining watershed area is privately owned. In addition to these surface water resources are the subsurface or groundwater resources. The Town does not provide a public water supply or distribution network. All potable water in Glocester is obtained from groundwater, captured and distributed by private individuals or firms. Water quality preservation and enhancement including groundwater protection are of paramount importance to the well-being of Glocester's citizens and the nearly 60 percent of the State's population supplied water from the Scituate Reservoir.

### **Surface Water**

Watersheds are areas serving as the exclusive drainage basins for a particular surface-water body. For example, the Scituate Reservoir watershed is a drainage basin where all precipitation that falls upon that area of the earth is collected and eventually drained into the Scituate Reservoir. Thus, it is important to understand that the watershed area forms the geographic basis for land use and pollution-prevention policies and programs. In Glocester, there are four watersheds: the largest is the Blackstone River watershed, comprising two-thirds or about 66 percent of the Town's area; the Scituate Reservoir watershed is the second largest including about 29 percent of the Town's area; and, the Moosup River and Woonasquatucket River watersheds encompass the remaining 5 percent of the Town's area.

Within the watershed area is a dynamic natural water resource system comprised of rivers, streams, creeks, ponds, lakes, wetlands and floodplains. A stream, creek, pond or lake is an important part of the hydrological cycle. That is a process where precipitation from the atmosphere falls onto the earth; percolates into groundwater preserves; runs off or leaches from the ground water reserves into surface water bodies or wetlands; and is evaporated by the sun or transpired by plants back into the atmosphere. Surface water bodies, streams, creeks and wetlands serve two parts of this cycle. First, they serve to drain the surface of the land and, second, they are interconnected with groundwater movement.

Streams, creeks, ponds and lakes are prevalent throughout Glocester due to the natural and altered environment. In the Town's early history, waterways were important sources of power for manufacturing mills. Several of the Town's large waterbodies, such as Keech and Spring Grove Ponds and Waterman, Pascoag, Smith & Sayles, Burlingame and Bowdish Reservoirs, were originally created for this purpose. Later, many of these same waterbodies, along with other natural waterbodies, were used as sources of outdoor recreation activities. Swimming, fishing, boating and the scenic views were sought out by many seasonal visitors to the Town.

Inland surface water resources have been classified by the RI Department of Environmental Management regarding use and water quality. There are five levels of

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water- quality classification. Each Class is defined in the Wastewater Management Study, on file in the Town Clerk's office.

Table 14.1  
SURFACE WATER RESOURCE INVENTORY

WATER RESOURCE	
Chepachet River	Hunt Brook
Stingo Brook	Cutler Brook
Sucker Brook	Shinscut Brook
Brandy Brook	Nine Foot Brook
Mowry Meadow Brook	Mowry Paine Brook
Saunders Brook	Spring Grove Pond
Peckham Brook	New Pond
Huntinghouse Brook	Steeres Pond
Mosquitohawk Brook	Pascoag Reservoir
Peepetoad Brook	Bowdish Reservoir
Clarkville Pond	Whites Pond
Hawkins Pond	Killingly Pond
Lake Washington	Burlingame Reservoir
Tepee Pond	Ponaganset Reservoir
Stone Dam Pond	Brush Meadow Pond
Peckham Pond	Keech Pond
Smith & Sayles Reservoir	Shingle Mill Pond
Cherry Valley Pond	Lake Aldersgate
Coomer Lake	Waterman Reservoir
Ponaganset River	Windsor Brook

Source: RI Historical Preservation Commission;  
*Historical & Architectural Resources of Glocester, 1980*

Table 14.1 offers a listing of the major surface-water resources in the Town. A specific water-quality designation for any of these inland water bodies is contained in the Wastewater Management Study on file in the Town Clerk's office. Each water body is classified according to the RI Department of Environmental Management's water classification standards. The Town's Wastewater Management Study also lists each water body according to its water quality classification. Some minor tributaries and unnamed waterways have been excluded from this inventory. Their exclusion is unintentional. This research shall refer to the entire class of all surface water resources located in the Town. Of particular note is the public necessity to protect the Scituate Reservoir from pollution resultant from inappropriate land use within the watershed. The *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan* (State Guide Plan #125) recognized that growth and land development patterns posed a high risk to the reservoir's water quality. The Plan recommended that a watershed-based land management system be established to protect the reservoir. In furtherance of that recommendation, the Town is participating in a cooperative effort with the Towns of Foster and Scituate through a state and federally-sponsored initiative to protect the Scituate Reservoir and its watershed from unsuitable

development. The results of these efforts may be incorporated into the Plan and may be implemented as part of the Town's overall environmental quality planning program.

As mentioned, some of these waterbodies were created by alterations to the natural environment. As a result, some 15 dams were constructed. Most are privately owned and maintained. All are inspected periodically by personnel from either the RIDEM or RI Department of Transportation. Both the Burlingame and Ponaganset Reservoir's dams have been assessed as posing a significant downstream hazard, if breached. The Ponaganset Dam has since been rehabilitated by Providence Water, while the Bowdish Reservoir Dam is now scheduled for rehabilitation by the RIDEM. The Clarkville Pond dam has been deemed a high hazard, should a breach occur, to the downstream hamlet of Clarksville.

### **Groundwater**

As explained, groundwater is an integral component of the hydrologic cycle. Groundwater is contained in underground reservoirs called aquifers. Groundwater typically returns to the surface through wells and leeching into lakes, streams, ponds and wetlands. Thus, groundwater moderates surface-water flow by absorption during wet periods and discharge during dry periods. In addition to serving as reservoirs, aquifers also serve to filter water as it percolates from and to the surface.

In Glocester, 100 percent of the potable water supply is obtained from groundwater sources. Thus, aquifers are an important public resource. Map 14.2 provides an illustrative reference of the groundwater supply and distribution system. The RIDEM has estimated that the Town's primary groundwater reservoir occupies approximately 900 acres, with an associated recharge area of over 5,000 acres. This one aquifer area lies beneath about 16 percent of the Town's total land area. Other aquifers have been catalogued and evaluated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the US Geological Survey. They include aquifers surrounding the Keech Pond, Smith & Sayles Reservoir, Chepachet River, and Pascoag Reservoir. In general, aquifers are prevalent throughout the Town.

Similar to watershed-based planning for surface waterbodies is an aquifer-based planning program to prevent pollution. Since groundwater is the exclusive water supply source for Glocester's residents, extreme care must be exercised not to pollute aquifers through inappropriate land-use practices. The RIDEM has established a Wellhead Protection Program to "prevent contamination of groundwater resources that are used by public drinking water systems." This action is required by the EPA through the federal Safe Water Drinking Act. RIDEM and the RI Department of Health (RIDOH) define the term "Public water system" as a system for the provision to the public of water for human consumption through pipes or other constructed conveyances, if such system has at least fifteen (15) service connections or regularly serves at least twenty-five (25) individuals daily at least sixty (60) days out of the year. These water systems are shown on Map 14.2.

Notices of Violation have been sent to some owners of public wells for noncompliance with RIDOH directives to protect public health. Resumption of the water source was allowed in all but one case. Pollution sources included those naturally

occurring, contaminated surface water runoff and faulty septic systems. Gloucester has no public sewerage collection system or treatment facility. All septic waste is treated through cesspools or on-site septic systems. Although the state regulates well and septic system locations, improper local land use activities can lead to groundwater pollution.

### **Drought Management**

The Rhode Island Drought Management Plan (State Guide Plan Element 724) establishes coordinated procedures for the State of Rhode Island's response to severe drought episodes. It outlines the responsibilities of state, federal and local entities involved in water resources management, and defines the roles these key entities are to play in the state's response to a long-term drought. Although the Town relies solely on individual wells for its water supply source, it recognizes that municipal governments have a key role, particularly in public education, local water conservation regulation, and enforcement and will cooperate with state agencies and local water suppliers as required in developing coordinated response actions. See Section 6.4 for specific local recommendations on drought management.

## Map 14.2: Hydrologically Sensitive Areas

## Map 14.3: 100 & 500 Year Flood Plain

## **Wetlands**

Wetlands are generally defined as transitional areas between dry land and open water. They are areas of even topography, poor drainage and standing water, either on a seasonal or year- round basis. There are several federal and state agencies that define and regulate wetland areas. No universally accepted definition of a wetland exists. Every wetland is identified and ranked by the RI DEM based on its vegetation, water type, size, depth, soil type and wildlife habitat. Only a site specific evaluation by a trained professional can properly identify and define a wetland area. In addition, every wetland is ranked according to its ecological viability. Wetlands also affect the quality of water, the quantity of water and are important resources for overall environmental health and diversity. Destruction, loss or pollution of wetlands threatens the public safety and general welfare of the community.

In the Land Use element, the RIGIS identified that 3,927 acres of the Town's land area was comprised of wetlands. An individual mapping of every wetland existing in the Town is not supplied due to the need for site-specific evaluation. However, some known wetland areas include Dark Swamp, Brush Meadow Swamp, Mowry Meadows and Schwindel's Swamp.

## **Floodplains**

A floodplain or flood hazard area is defined as an area that has a one percent (1%) or greater chance of inundation in any given year, as delineated by the federal emergency agency pursuant to the National Flood Insurance Act of 1968, as amended (P.L. 90-448), 42 U.S.C. 4011 et seq. Map 14.3 illustrates the 100-year floodplains that exist in Gloucester.

## **FEMA**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency ("FEMA") requires local communities to regulate development within the 100-year floodplain for homeowners to qualify for federally subsidized flood insurance. The Town has adopted a set of regulations to meet the FEMA requirements. Section 350-55 of the Gloucester Zoning Ordinance regulates development within all flood-hazard areas in the Town. The Gloucester Building Official is given authority to require a development permit for construction within a flood-hazard zone. Special building code standards apply to structures erected in a flood-hazard area. Additional building standards are contained in the RI State Building Code.

### **14.3.2 Soils**

The soil is the uppermost weathered mineral and organic layer of bedrock or surficial deposits. Development of land often hinges on the type of soil and its characteristics found at any given site. The US Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service

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(SCS) has catalogued and surveyed the types and characteristics of soils found in Rhode Island. The *Rhode Island Soil Survey* was prepared by the federal government for a variety of users; planners, farmers, engineers and homebuyers can all benefit by using information contained in the report.

The RI Geographic Information System (RIGIS) manipulated the SCS soil information into three categories indicating the difficulty for community development. The categories are severe, moderate and minimal. These soils are illustrated on Map 14.4(a). As with wetlands, site specific evaluations must be performed to verify survey mapped data. However, Map 14.4 is considered a reliable reference source to obtain generalized information on a site and its surrounding area.

Table 14.2  
SOILS ANALYSIS

Soil Constraint Type	Area	Percent of Total
Severe	6,595	19
Moderate	9,973	30
Minimal	17,079	51
Total	33,647	100

*Source: RIGIS, 1991*

The total area with constrained soils is 33,647 acres of land or 92 percent of the Town's total area. The total constrained soils listed in Table 14.2 are different from Table 11.8. This is because Table 11.8 listed constrained soils present on residentially zoned land and Table 14.2 lists all constrained soils, regardless of zoning. It is also noted that there are approximately 6,502 acres of hydric soils in the Town, or 17.8 percent of the total area of the Town. Since such a large amount of the Town's area is characterized by soils that constrain community development activities, all development proposals must be carefully scrutinized to determine their impacts on the environment. Development of any land in the Town must include a site assessment to inventory unique and sensitive environmental features. No development should proceed without a comprehensive understanding of the site's features and an assessment of the project's impacts to the natural environment. Map 14.4 shows these soils constrained for development.

### Minerals

Also included in a soils inventory is an understanding of mineral resources present in the Town. Two sources, the RI Historical Preservation Commission and the Gloucester Bicentennial Committee, described such mineral resources as iron ore, granite and gold to be present in the Town. Early settlers forged tools from the iron ore and used the granite

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to erect structures. Gold was mined in the Durfee Hill area on several occasions. Today, sand and gravel extraction activities account for 152 acres of land area use. Interest in granite, gold and iron ore minerals is low at this time. However, extraction operations are currently active. Due to the environmental quality concerns related to these types of land use operations, the Town should continue to monitor and regulate the extraction of sand and gravel to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation pollution. The Gloucester Earth Removal Ordinance and the Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance are two important local laws to regulate these operations.

### Prime Agricultural Soil

Farming was the main economic activity in Gloucester up to the early 19th century. Only a few active farms now exist in the Town. The RIDEM and the Northern RI Conservation District maintains a voluntary register of active farms. Of the handful of farms in Gloucester on the register, most are apple orchards, vegetable farms, tree farms and small livestock operations. In addition, there are equestrian operations that raise and breed horses for show, work and racing use.

The US Soil Conservation Service identifies a total of 3,187 acres of prime agricultural soils present in the Town, or 8.74 of the total area of the Town. These soils are located throughout the Town. In addition, Farmland of State Importance is land that is nearly prime farmland and that produces high crop yields when subjected to modern farming methods. There are an additional 2,830 acres of these soils, or 7.76 percent of the Town's total area. Table 14.3 lists prime agricultural soils and Table 14.4 lists Farmland of State Importance Soils. Prime Agricultural Soils are listed on Map 14.4(a).

<b>Table 14.3</b>	
<b>PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS</b>	
<b>Map Symbol</b>	<b>Map Unit Name</b>
AfA	Agawam fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
AfB	Agawam fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
Bc	Birchwood sandy loam
BhA	Bridgehampton silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
BmA	Bridgehampton silt loam, till substratum, 0 to 3 % slopes
BrA	Broadbrook silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
BrB	Broadbrook silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
CdA	Canton and Charlton fine sandy loams, 0 to 3 % slopes
CdB	Canton and Charlton fine sandy loams, 3 to 8 % slopes
EfA	Enfield silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
MmA	Merrimac sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
MmB	Merrimac sandy loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
NaA	Narragansett silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes

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**Table 14.3**  
**PRIME AGRICULTURAL SOILS**

Map Symbol	Map Unit Name
NaB	Narragansett silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
NeA	Newport silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
NeB	Newport silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
Nt	Ninigret fine sandy loam
PaA	Paxton fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
PaB	Paxton fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
PmA	Pittstown silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
PmB	Pittstown silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
PsA	Poquonock loamy fine sand, 0 to 3 % slopes
PsB	Poquonock loamy fine sand, 3 to 8 % slopes
RaA	Rainbow silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
RaB	Rainbow silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
ScA	Scio silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
Ss	Sudbury sandy loam
StA	Sutton fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
StB	Sutton fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
Tb	Tisbury silt loam
WbA	Wapping silt loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
WbB	Wapping silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
WhA	Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
WhB	Woodbridge fine sandy loam, 3 to 8 % slopes

*Source: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006*

**Table 14.4**  
**FARMLAND OF STATEWIDE IMPORTANCE**

Map Symbol	Map Unit Name
BhB	Bridgehampton silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
BmB	Bridgehampton silt loam, till substratum, 3 to 8 % slopes
CdC	Canton and Charlton fine sandy loams, 8 to 15 % slopes
Dc	Deerfield loamy fine sand
EfB	Enfield silt loam, 3 to 8 % slopes
GBC	Gloucester-Bridgehampton complex, rolling
HkA	Hinckley gravelly sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
HkC	Hinckley gravelly sandy loam, rolling
HnC	Hinckley-Enfield complex, rolling
NeC	Newport silt loam, 8 to 15 % slopes
QoA	Quonset gravelly sandy loam, 0 to 3 % slopes
QoC	Quonset gravelly sandy loam, rolling
Rc	Raypol silt loam
Re	Ridgebury fine sandy loam
Ru	Rumney fine sandy loam

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Se	Stissing silt loam
Wa	Walpole sandy loam
WgA	Windsor loamy sand, 0 to 3 % slopes
WgB	Windsor loamy sand, 3 to 8 % slopes
Pp	Podunk fine sandy loam (Prime farmland if protected from flooding or not frequently flooded during the growing season)

*Source: USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 2006*

Development should be regulated to avoid disturbance of land containing prime agricultural soils or farmland of state importance soils. It is important to obtain site-specific information regarding soils types as part of the development review and decision-making process. An environmental assessment for each site could provide this type of necessary information to land use regulators and decision-makers as part of the development review and approval process.

## Map 14.4: Soil Constraints to Development

## Map 14.4a: Important Agricultural Soils

## 14.3.3 Natural Vegetation and Wildlife

### Unique Habitats

The Rhode Island Heritage Program identified several sites in Glocester for rare species habitats. They are presented in Table 14.5

Table 14.5  
UNIQUE HABITATS

Site	Unique Features
Bowdish Reservoir	Atlantic white cedar; black spruce, including dwarf mistletoe; highbush blueberry & bog cranberry.
Hemlock Ledges	Deciduous swamp & upland; hemlock forest; sandstone cliffs; rare flora & fauna; rare vertebrate habitat.
Pulaski/Washington Forests	Undeveloped woodlands of hemlock, white pine, laurel and deciduous trees.
Schwindel's Swamp	Sedge-dominated acidic fen; low shrubs; maple saplings; rare plants.
Smith & Sayles Reservoir	Damp mesic woodland, dominated by hemlock and tuliptree overstory; understory of several rare affinity plants.
Peckham Brook	Deciduous acidic woodland; mature oaks & maples; blueberry & catbriar.
Sprague Farm	Deciduous forest; cedar & hemlock; rare species of birds.

*Source: RI Natural Heritage Program*

Some of these sites are protected from future development. Steps should be taken to protect the areas subject to future development from inappropriate or environmentally degrading uses. Loss of any of these habitats or wildlife species should be avoided.

### Forest Resources

Including the Unique Habitat sites identified above, nearly 67 percent of the Town is forested. The Town's GIS 2006 data indicates that 24,388 acres of land in the Town have some type of forest cover present. Any significant change in the forest cover, such as loss related to logging practices, would have an impact on the character of the Town. Care must be exercised to establish regulatory mechanisms that allow for sustained development and natural systems protection.

The RI Forest Resources Management Plan (State Guide Plan Element 161) establishes a vision, goals, and policies and provides recommendations focused on the management of tree resources within the State of Rhode Island. When construed and applied in conjunction with the Rhode Island Urban and Community Forest Plan, (State Guide Plan Element 156, 1999) this guidance is intended to advance the effectiveness of public and private stewardship of the state's tree and forest resources towards the twin

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goals of a healthy, sustainable economy and environment. The Town of Glocester supports the use of a variety of tools and strategies designed to protect and preserve its forest resources. These are identified in Section 6.1.

## Endangered and Threatened Species

There are no known federally registered endangered or threatened species located within the Town. The RI Department of Environmental Management, RI Natural Heritage Program contains an inventory of species of animals and plants suspected of being rare or declining. This inventory is presented in Table 14.6.

Table 14.6  
ENDANGERED AND THREATENED SPECIES

Small Whorled Pogonia <sup>1</sup>	Large Round-Leaved Orchid <sup>2</sup>	Ground Hemlock <sup>3</sup>
Woodland Horsetail <sup>4</sup>	Bog Rosemary <sup>1</sup>	Northern Goshawk <sup>3</sup>
Black Spruce <sup>4</sup>	Closed Gentian <sup>4</sup>	Dwarf Mistletoe <sup>1</sup>
Eastern Worm Snake <sup>3</sup>	Dark-Eyed Junco <sup>4</sup>	Wild Lupine <sup>4</sup>
Mountain Spleenwort <sup>1</sup>	Pileated Woodpecker <sup>3</sup>	Smoky Shrew <sup>4</sup>
Maidenhair Spleenwort <sup>4</sup>	Bobcat <sup>2</sup>	Large Coralroot <sup>3</sup>
Hare's Tail <sup>5</sup>	Hobblebush <sup>4</sup>	Autumn Coralroot <sup>2</sup>
Early Coralroot <sup>3</sup>	Winter Wren <sup>4</sup>	Four-Toed Salamander <sup>4</sup>
Creeping St John's Wort <sup>2</sup>	Woodland Sunflower <sup>3</sup>	Striped Maple <sup>4</sup>
Bottle Gentian <sup>5</sup>	Pale Laurel <sup>2</sup>	Mountain Honeysuckle <sup>3</sup>
Swamp Pink <sup>4</sup>	Blk-Th'td Blue Warbler <sup>6</sup>	Lily-leaved Twayblade <sup>2</sup>
Climbing Fern <sup>3</sup>	Twinflower <sup>5</sup>	Eastern Ribbon Snake <sup>4</sup>
Anise Root <sup>2</sup>	Green Pyrola <sup>3</sup>	Grass Pink <sup>4</sup>

1 = State Endangered

2 = State Threatened

3 = State Interest

4 = Species of Concern

5 = Historical Species

6 = Extant Species

Source: RIDEM, Natural Heritage Program

These plant and animal species should be protected from unnecessary disturbance or loss. Regulations to manage these unique natural resources should be considered for adoption. Information regarding these resources should also be collected and provided to land use regulators and decision-makers. An environmental assessment for development

proposals could provide this sort of necessary information. However, care must be taken to protect identified species from vandalism or theft.

### ***14.4 Other Natural Resources Issues of Importance***

In addition to the natural resources information presented in this inventory, several land use activities exist in the Town that may/have caused contamination of the natural environment. Of particular concern are several land uses that have contaminated groundwater reservoirs in the Town. The USEPA, RIDEM and RIDOH have identified known or potential sources of groundwater contamination existing in the Town. The Town follows the state guideline for the handling, storage, transport, and disposal of all hazardous and toxic materials and wastes used or generated by the Town. Also, a Farm, Forest, and Open Space Ordinance has been adopted and a Soil Erosion Ordinance has been implemented by the Town to address erosion and sedimentation control.

#### **1.) CERCLIS Sites**

The Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA) was created by the US Congress to address a growing concern that environmentally harmful hazardous waste sites be closed, stabilized and restored to a safe condition. Part of this act required the establishment of an inventory of hazardous waste sites potentially covered by this law. This list is called the Comprehensive Environmental Response and Liability Information System List (CERCLIS). Once a site is placed on the CERCLIS, a comprehensive environmental evaluation of the site is conducted to determine the extent of pollution present and the danger posed to people and the environment. If the location is determined to represent an immediate threat to public health and safety, it is then placed on the National Priority List, commonly referred to as the Superfund List.

Several sites in Gloucester are on the National Priority List. They are:

#### **Davis Gloucester-Smithfield Regional Landfill**

Operating as a licensed landfill from 1974 to 1982, this 58-acre site is located on the Gloucester-Smithfield town line. Extensive testing of this site has been performed for the RIDEM, RIDOH and the USEPA. Many known toxic and hazardous materials have been identified on the site. The USEPA required an ecological characterization, a well-monitoring assessment, geophysical surveys and a Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Report. As of 2006, private parties have completed all remediation activity, which involved capping the site. After 5 years of monitoring and sampling of groundwater in

nearby wells, no evidence of contamination was found. This site is no longer considered a threat to the environment and is no longer under Superfund jurisdiction.<sup>14</sup>

### **Davis Liquid Site**

According to the USEPA, the Davis Liquid Site, located in the Town of Smithfield but near Glocester, was used as a hazardous waste disposal site during the 1970's. In the early-1980's, site investigations revealed chemical contamination in the ground and surface water adjacent to the site. In 1982, the site was placed on the USEPA's National Priorities List. Although this site is not located in the Town, care must be taken regarding the potential for pollution to travel beyond the site and contaminate areas of Glocester. As of 2006, solid waste, including tires and drums had been removed and contaminated soil had been treated on-site. Ashland, Inc. has been identified as the responsible party, and is currently conducting groundwater investigations, which must be reviewed and a determination made by EPA and RIDEM regarding future remediation work.

As part of the EPA proposed site clean-up, a public water distribution system will be installed to homes that may be affected or potentially affected by the water contamination.

### **The Glocester Town Landfill**

This is a 9-acre site located on Chestnut Hill Road. The RIDEM has monitored groundwater in the area and identified several hazardous materials present. RIDEM has recommended that additional listing and site inspections should continue under the CERCLIS program. According to RIDEM, in 2006 the Town had prepared a study of remedial action and a closure plan. This study was under review by RIDEM, and if approved, would allow the Town to start closure procedures to cap the landfill in accordance with DEM solid waste regulations.

### **Factory Mutual Research Facility**

This facility, which is located along the west side of Reynolds Road approximately 3.5 miles south of Route 44, is part of a 1,500 acres of property which was purchased by Factory Mutual since 1965, and was cited for operating an unlicensed landfill in 1992 by the RIDEM. At that time they conducted fire testing and currently continue to perform similar testing. In the past, wastes associated with this testing and other activities at the site were disposed of in an on-site landfill.

Investigations of the site, which began in 1992, revealed both soil and groundwater contamination. The groundwater had been impacted with various volatile organic compounds (VOCs), predominantly toluene. In December of 1995 a temporary

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<sup>14</sup> Source: Gary Jablonski, RI Department of Environmental Management, Office of Waste Management, telephone conversation, October 2006.

groundwater recovery and treatment system was constructed to address this contamination and continues to operate today.

In March of 1997 a Remedial Investigation at the site determined the need for an interim remedial action prior to closing the site with a landfill cap. The impacted area was capped with an impermeable liner in 1998. This liner will inhibit the infiltration of rain and other surface water into the contaminated media which thereby reduces impacts to groundwater. To augment the original treatment system a groundwater interceptor trench was installed around that time as well. The trench is approximately 185 feet long, 2 to 3 feet wide and excavated approximately 20 feet deep to the bedrock surface. The trench was filled with crushed stone from the water table to the bedrock surface (the saturated zone). The stone serves as a highly permeable material and will facilitate the collection of contaminated groundwater which travels into the trench. This water is then pumped to an on-site treatment system and remediated using granular activated carbon. This system still operates today and contaminant levels have gone down now that the source area has been addressed.

The site was never placed on CERCLIS, nor does it present a threat to contaminate any off-site groundwater at this time assuming the groundwater treatment system remains in operation.

### **2.) Non-Point Source Pollution**

#### **Individual Sewage Disposal Systems**

All septic waste is treated and stored in cesspools or Individual Sewage Disposal Systems (ISDS). These waste systems are located in the ground and have a potential to contaminate ground and surface water if improperly operated, functionally obsolescent or improperly installed or designed. Cesspools have been outlawed and can no longer be installed. Only pre-existing cesspools may be used to treat and store septic wastes. Poor design, siting, installation or maintenance can result in an ISDS failure.

The Town completed a Wastewater Management Facilities Plan in 1997. This report comprehensively covers the issue of wastewater management in the Town, complies with the RIDEM guidelines for facility plan adoption, and has been accepted as a qualified facilities plan. Among the recommendations of this study were that new wastewater disposal ordinances should be established, that the feasibility of the on-site alternative wastewater solutions should be explored, that a town-wide wastewater management district should be established, that a wastewater treatment set-aside for Gloucester at the Burrillville and Smithfield wastewater treatment plants be secured, and that a sewer feasibility study in the Chepachet Village, Echo Lake, and Waterman Reservoir areas should be performed. This study complements the RIDEM's ISDS regulations. This study is incorporated by reference into the Plan which is on file in the Town Clerk's office for public review.

## **Storm Water Management Program**

In 1972, Congress amended the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (commonly referred to as the Clean Water Act (CWA)) to prohibit the discharge of any pollutant to waters of the United States from a point source unless the discharge is authorized by an National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The NPDES program is designed to track point sources and require the implementation of the controls necessary to minimize the discharge of pollutants. Initial efforts to improve water quality under the NPDES program primarily focused on reducing pollutants in industrial process wastewater and municipal sewage. These discharge sources were easily identified as responsible for poor water quality.

Since 1984, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) has been the delegated authority to implement the NPDES program in Rhode Island (referred to as RIPDES). The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized on December 8, 1999, the Storm Water Phase II Rule, that requires operators of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4s) to obtain permits and establish a storm water management program that is intended to improve water bodies by reducing the quantity of pollutants that can enter storm sewer systems during storm events.

The Phase II Rule requires an operator of a regulated small MS4 to apply for a RIPDES permit. The RIPDES application must include a Storm Water Management Program Plan (SWMPP) that describes the Best Management Practices (BMPs) for each of the following six minimum measures:

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Involvement/Participation
3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Control
5. Post Construction Runoff Control
6. Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

The Town of Glocester is considered to be a small MS4, one of six municipalities in the State with a population of 1,000 to 10,000 and located within an urbanized area.

## **Surface Water Runoff**

Drainage from land development areas sometimes carries suspended particulate matter that is contaminated. This pollution can range from mere soil particles to soil particles containing metals or chemicals. Most often, this runoff is directed to existing drainage systems to be carried away. Surface water runoff pollutants can contaminate groundwater and the drainage system. For example, a study of Lake Washington determined that non-point source pollution has degraded the water quality of the lake. Although the prime source of pollution was identified as septic system leachate into the lake, surface water runoff was determined to be a contributing pollution source. Left

unmanaged, the pollution will eventually cause the “death” of the lake. Similar outcomes to other water resources are possible if surface runoff is polluted and not properly contained and treated. A net -0- additional runoff standard has been incorporated into Town Subdivision Regulations.

### **Soil Erosion**

Sediment loading of water courses increases turbidity, smothers benthic communities and sometimes reduces aesthetic values. As mentioned, sometimes this sediment can contain pollutants that will contaminate the receiving water body. The Town has a Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Ordinance to regulate and manage this activity. Several farms in the Town have taken advantage of the technical assistance provided by the Northern RI Conservation District to abate water quality threats related to soil erosion and runoff.

Glocester has adopted an Earth Removal Ordinance to control excavation and restoration associated with earth removal. In addition, the Town adopted a Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Ordinance in 1991 that complies with the state model ordinance. Both ordinances employ the use of best management practices as the basis of their regulatory structures. The Soil Erosion Ordinance is also integrated into the Town’s Land Development and Subdivision Regulations adopted in 1996.

The Town also participates in the regional soil erosion and storm water control inspection program. The local conservation district assists in the review of soil erosion and storm water control regulation. Large land development projects and earth removal operations are subject to periodic inspections by town officials. Developers must contact the local conservation district staff through the local building official to perform site inspections to verify ordinance compliance. Site inspection reports are also relayed to the Glocester Building Official’s office. Also, although no written standards exist, all town-owned storm water management facilities are maintained and serviced by the Town’s Department of Public Works.

### **Underground Storage Tanks**

Underground storage tanks were routinely used to house a variety of liquid products for personal or business consumption. The older style tanks were typically a single-walled iron or steel cylinder. Most often, fuel products such as gasoline, diesel fuel or home-heating fuel were stored in these tanks. Due to their design and construction, these tanks were susceptible to leakage, thus contaminating of the nearby soil. In some instances, the leakage was so great that groundwater and surface water sources were contaminated. In response to this public and environmental health crisis, the RIDEM initiated the Underground Storage Tank Program.

This program exempts all residents and farms with storage tanks of less than 1,100 gallons in size. All other storage tank users and owners must register their tanks and

provide such information as the age, composition material, spill provisions and proximity to waterbodies, proof of ownership, and a site drawing. Underground storage tanks pose special problems to the community because a leak can go undetected for many years or until serious harm is caused.

### **Junkyards and Abandoned Vehicles**

Uncontrolled spillage of fluids such as gasoline, motor oil, brake fluid, transmission fluid and anti-freeze coolant are potential pollution sources. These uses are regulated by the State and the Town. In addition, the *Scituate Reservoir Watershed Management Plan* recommends that new regulations be adopted to better regulate the operation of such facilities. There are no licensed automobile junkyards located in the Town. In addition, the Town Zoning Ordinance prohibits the location or operation of a junkyard anywhere in Town. Furthermore, no landfills, open dumps, or private stockpiling of road de-icing material is permitted.

### **Salt Storage Areas**

Salt storage areas and road de-icing practices that employ salt are activities that have the potential to cause pollution of surface and groundwater resources. Actions to reduce or prevent salt contamination include: covering salt storage piles; placing salt piles on impervious surfaces; containing and treating salt-laden surface runoff from salt storage areas; use of salt substitutes for de-icing of roads in areas susceptible to contamination; careful application of salt by application crews.

### **Other Pollution Sources**

Many households and small businesses contribute to pollution of the natural environment. Improper disposal of paints, household cleaning chemicals, solvents and waste oil can cause serious environmental pollution. In addition, improper application of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides can dramatically affect the water quality and the ecological viability of impacted areas. Proper disposal of household hazardous wastes and the careful application of lawn and garden chemicals is necessary to prevent environmental pollution or health threats. Natural or less toxic substitutes for these intended applications are available that as effective as the more toxic varieties.

### ***14.5 Natural Resources Summary***

Glocester has abundant natural resources throughout the Town. However, the presence of these resources makes much of the Town's environment susceptible to environmental pollution or damage. Care must be taken to use the land in a manner that is sensitive and representative of the land's ability to sustain use and intensity. Haphazard development or inappropriate management of land uses is detrimental to the natural environment and pose a threat to public health.

The Town should consider adopting zoning and other land development regulations, such as conservation development to protect environmentally sensitive areas, such as wetlands, high groundwater, steep slopes, flooded areas, or areas generally unsuited for community development. Standards should be developed for storm water management facilities maintained and serviced by the Town's Department of Public Works, as well as for Private development. In 2004, the Town adopted a formal site plan review process in Section 350-57 of the Zoning Ordinance. This ordinance regulates certain residential, commercial, industrial and recreational uses, and is required for uses requiring a special use permit, variance, zoning ordinance amendment or zoning map change. Criteria for evaluation of plans submitted under this section include environmental impacts, drainage and storm water management standards, traffic control, landscaping, and architectural style.

The Goals, Objectives and Policies, Recommendations and Implementation program list the methods to protect, preserve and enhance the natural resources of Gloucester.

### ***14.6 Cultural & Historical Resources Assessment***

Gloucester has a long rich history. From its time as a Native American encampment to the present, many notable events occurred to make Gloucester unique. Cultural resources are those actions or remnants of human activity that make Gloucester, or any place, different from all others. Cultural resources shape a community's sense of place, its character. During the comprehensive community planning process, Gloucester's residents identified three main attributes that contribute to the Town's unique nature. They are rural character, natural resources, and, historical resources.

#### **Rural Character**

As discussed in Section 1.4 The Central Concerns, Gloucester is considered rural; a place of quiet enjoyment where residents may rest and refresh their bodies and spirits. It is this very attribute that threatens its future. Many people have moved to Gloucester to live because of its rural character. If this population and development growth continues and is not properly accommodated, the Town's highly valued rural character may be lost to suburban sprawl.

Many planning techniques are available to address this dilemma. It will take strong action on the part of Gloucester officials and citizens to achieve the goal of protecting the rural character of the Town. The community can accommodate growth and preserve the rural character of Gloucester only if it is well-planned and managed by the Town.

#### **Natural Resources**

It is the abundance of natural resources present in Gloucester that offers many citizens a link with the natural environment. People are drawn to Gloucester as a place for residency. One of the many reasons for this attraction is the natural environment. Ponds,

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lakes, streams, wetlands and woodlands attract people to enjoy this natural beauty. Active and passive interests such as nature watching, hiking, boating, swimming, fishing and hunting are some of the activities pursued by residents and visitors.

In 1990, the RIDEM published the Rhode Island Landscape Inventory, a document that catalogues the state's most scenic images. Two classifications to rank these images were established: Distinctive and noteworthy. Several sites listed in that survey are located in Glocester. The landscape inventory document is incorporated into this plan to include these unique images as art of the natural resources inventory.

There is also available a list of scenic roads and vistas prepared by the state. This information is on file in the Town Clerk's office for review and is incorporated into the Plan. In addition, the Town intends to study this information and possibly include amendments to the zoning or land development regulations. The Town intends to use this information to ensure that future development is compatible and not injurious to these special resources, which will be administered through the development plan review process for all major developments, and through the adoption of conservation development zoning for residential development projects and subdivisions..

### Historical Resources

Glocester was inhabited by Native Americans well before the first European settlers arrived. In 1638, Roger Williams received a deed from the Narragansett Tribe for land that included the area known today as Glocester. The Town has had a rich history since its first European settlements occurred in the early eighteenth century. Many of the events and circumstances that have shaped Glocester are detailed in two reports: *The Historical and Architectural Resources of Glocester, Rhode Island*, prepared by the RI Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC, July 1980), and, *Glocester, The Way Up Country*, compiled by the Glocester Bicentennial Commission.

The RIHPC report identified historically significant buildings, sites and areas. This inventory will serve as the base source for all local historical preservation efforts. Map 14.5, Natural and Cultural Heritage, illustrates the many places in the Town which have historical significance. "...(Glocester) contains a large collection of outstanding, well preserved and maintained nineteenth century buildings..."<sup>15</sup> Several sites/districts of historical significance are included on the National Register of historic Places; other sites/districts have been identified as eligible for listing on the National Register. This listing is assembled and maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

National Register properties gain recognition, protection, and financial assistance for preservation or restoration. In Glocester, the following properties are listed in the RIHPC report as being on the National Register of Historic Places:

Chepachet Historic District

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid Number 9, p. 13

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Harmony Chapel, Putnam Pike

Former Gloucester Town Pound, Chopmist Hill Road

The following lists the properties which were recommended for consideration for placement on the National Register in the 1980 RIHPC report:

Lapham-Ballou Farm	Farnum Road
Farnum House	Farnum Road
Hawkins-Aldrich House	Huntinghouse Road
Former Evans Schoolhouse	Jim Evans Road
Former Burlingame Farm	Philips Lane
Thomas Cutler Farm & Site of Cutler's Tavern	Putnam Pike
Hunt-Farnum Farm House	Putnam Pike
Former Clarkville School	Putnam Pike
Peckham Farm	Snake Hill Road
The Mann Farm*	Snake Hill Road
C. C. Mathewson House	Tourtellot Hill Road

\*This site has been developed since publication of this report.

The RIHPC report emphasized that this is not considered an absolute or final list. As further research becomes available regarding the historical resources of the Town, other potential candidates for the Register may be identified. In fact, over 150 properties were identified in the RIHPC report as meriting further consideration regarding their historical significance and potential to be determined eligible for listing on the National Register.

Another facet of the historical resources inventory is archeological resources. The RIHPC maintains an inventory of noteworthy archeological sites. Most sites have not been thoroughly investigated and may contain significant artifacts. To protect these sites, the sites illustrated on Map 14.5 represent 20-acre blocs to obscure the actual site location. One site, the Cherry Valley Archeological Site, is the only archeological site in Gloucester on the National Register. Other archeological sites may be eligible for placement on the Register once further site research is completed. The RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission has identified three such archaeological sites on Putnam Pike: the Juniper House Site, Cutler Farm and Tavern Site, and Barnes Barn & Acid Works.

Other significant historical or archeological features in the Town include cemeteries, farm roads and stone walls. In addition, nearby presence of the Blackstone River National Heritage Corridor reflects the unique aspect of the region. Gloucester has historical linkages to the Blackstone River and Canal. These features contribute to Gloucester's sense of place and, as such, these resources should be preserved and restored whenever possible.

Gloucester's cultural and historical resources are continually threat-ened by natural and artificial activities. Weather, storms, and natural disasters pose the natural threat to these resources. Insensitive and inappropriate development are the artificial threats to the

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## Natural and Cultural Resources

cultural and historical resources. Regulations to protect and manage the cultural and historical resources of Glocester are necessary to assure their future existence. Private preservation efforts alone may not be sufficient to protect these resources. Measures such as historical area zoning or historical zoning regulations are possible options that the Town might employ to regulate the alteration, repair, or destruction of historical and cultural resources.

### **Conservation Development**

The adoption of conservation development regulations to protect and preserve important cultural resources, historical structures and features, scenic roads and vistas, and other sensitive areas not otherwise protected by local, state and federal law is recommended.

### **Historical Cemeteries**

The RI Advisory Commission on Historical Cemeteries recognizes approximately 150 historical cemeteries in the Town of Glocester. Some of the original inhabitants of Glocester are buried in these cemeteries in graves dating back to the mid 1700's. These people were the first settlers to farm the land, build houses, stores and civic buildings. The historical cemeteries in Glocester reflect the history of the town and the family heritage of many Town residents. The names of these cemeteries, their number listing and their locations in the Town is available from the RI Advisory Commission on Historical Cemeteries.

The Town recognizes the importance of preserving these cemeteries from damage or destruction. Chapter 23-18 of the Rhode Island General Laws authorizes municipalities to regulate construction or ground disturbance within 25 feet of a recorded historic cemetery. The Town will consider adoption of a local ordinance to protect these sites.

## Map 14.5: Natural and Cultural Heritage

## **15.1 Public Services and Facilities**

### **15.2 Introduction**

This element of the Plan provides an inventory of existing public services and facilities. However, recreation, open space and circulation facilities are discussed in separate elements. This information will be evaluated for its effectiveness in identifying any service or facility deficiencies. In addition, a forecast of future public services and facilities needs will be offered, based on the projections established in the Land Use and Housing Elements. Programming of the identified public services and facilities needs will be listed in the Implementation Element.

### **15.3 Public Services and Facilities; Inventory and Analysis**

#### **Schools**

Education is the most expensive public service provided by the Town according to the Fiscal Year 2005–2006 Budget. The education function is a two-tiered structure: the local Gloucester School Department and the Foster-Glocester Regional School Department. The Gloucester School Department operates two elementary schools comprised of Grades K through 5. The Foster-Glocester Regional School Department has a middle-school with Grades 6 through 8 and a high-school with Grades 9 through 12. The education function uses about 74 percent of the municipality's annual operating budget. Nearly 75 percent of the School Department budget is consumed by personnel expenses. In addition, about 34 percent of the Town's debt service is devoted to school facilities.

The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education indicated a 2005 Fiscal Year per pupil expense of \$12,644 for the local district, an increase of 106% from 1992 and a per pupil cost of \$9,407 for the regional district, an increase of 47% from 1992. The state-wide per pupil cost average at that time was \$12,036, an increase of 92% from 1992.<sup>16</sup> However, these per pupil expenses are not comparable since the Gloucester Schools have only grades K through 5 and the Ponaganset Regional School District have only grades 6 through 12. The state average represents per pupil expenses for grades K through 12.

The Gloucester School Department is comprised of two elementary schools; the Foster-Glocester Regional School Department is comprised of one middle and one senior high school. All four schools are in compliance with the state's Basic Education Program, which establishes basic standards for educational programs, services and conditions. The regional high school is accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

All four schools have been recognized by education peers as providing an excellent educational environment. Standardized national test score averages at the elementary, middle and high schools are all above the state and national averages. The Ponaganset

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<sup>16</sup> RIDE Infoworks, 2005.

middle was selected as one of four in the state to be a training and demonstration site for the Rhode Island Middle Grades Statewide Network and Training Project. A three-year program is designed to plan for the needs of children aged 10 to 15 that are students in the middle school. In addition, the US Department of Education selected the middle school as one of five sites in New England to serve in a five-year program as a technology education demonstration center. Ray to check this paragraph w/ school officials; statement may not be true today.

## **School Enrollment**

The Foster-Glocester School Department provides data on current and projected school enrollment for the Glocester and Foster-Glocester Regional School Districts to assist school administrators in their operational and facility planning. Table 15.1 lists the elementary school enrollment from 2002 to the present, with projections for 2007 and 2008. Table 15.3 lists the regional middle and high school enrollment from 2002 to the present, with projections for 2007 and 2008.

Table 15.1  
Glocester Elementary School Enrollment

Year	Fogarty Memorial	West Glocester	Total Elementary	% Change
2001/2002 Actual	385	424	809	
2002/2003 Actual	359	412	771	-5%
2003/2004 Actual	370	424	794	3%
2004/2005 Actual	349	405	754	-5%
2005/2006 Actual	330	388	718	-5%
2006/2007 Est. as of 10/1/06	310	362	672	-6%
2007/2008 Projected	298	352	650	-3%

*Source: Foster-Glocester Regional School District.*

Enrollment has been declining at an average rate of 4% per year. In 1992, it was estimated that Fogarty Memorial had a capacity for 470 pupils. At the same time, it was estimated that West Glocester had a capacity for 650 pupils. At the rate enrollment declined, it would appear that both schools have excess capacity. However, deferred maintenance requires that the Town take action immediately to remedy the physical plant at both schools. Fogarty Memorial requires a new roof that should be installed in the Spring of 2007. The Town's School Department developed a Five Year Capital for both schools that calls for an outlay of \$648,900 to take care of deferred maintenance. There are other needs at both schools that are addressed in the School Department's capital improvement plan. The following table summarizes the costs by year. Other than the big expense of replacing the roof at Fogarty Memorial, most other expenses address needed repairs for code compliance and refurbishment of older structures.

Table 15.2  
Glocester School Department  
Five Year Capital Improvement Plan

Year	Fogarty Memorial	West Glocester	Total
2005/2006	\$ 41,000	\$ 64,100	\$ 105,100
FY 2006	\$ 38,000	\$ 70,000	\$ 108,000
FY 2007	\$ 234,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 269,000
FY 2008	\$ 65,000	\$ 3,500	\$ 68,500
FY 2009	\$ 12,100	\$ 16,000	\$ 28,100
FY 2010	\$ 56,200	\$ 14,000	\$ 70,200
Five Year Plan	\$ 446,300	\$ 202,600	\$ 648,900

*Source: Glocester School Department*

Table 15.3  
Glocester Middle and High School Enrollment

Year	Ponaganset Middle	Ponaganset High	Total Regional	% Change
2002	736	881	1617	
2003	766	933	1699	5%
2004	757	929	1686	-1%
2005	702	986	1688	0%
2006	656	988	1644	-3%
2007	654	959	1613	-2%
2008	625	960	1585	-2%

*Source: Foster-Glocester Regional School District.*

The current Ponaganset Middle and High Schools have reached and exceeded their capacities. The existing high school, which was built in 1966 and added on to in 1991, was designed for approximately 800 students. In 2006, it houses 988 students. The existing middle school, built in 1963, and added on to in 1991, was designed for 733 students and in 2006 houses 656 students. The school exceeded its capacity in 2004 when the student body reached 757. Although declining enrollment has brought it under capacity, the middle school was not designed as a “team teaching” school, which is the current educational philosophy for a middle school model.<sup>17</sup>

Typical classrooms in the middle school are presently sized at 630 sq. ft. with approximately 26 students. RIDE recommendations are 750-850 sq. ft. for 20-30 students. At the high school, typical classrooms are 710 sq. ft., housing 24 students each, with RIDE recommendations being 750-850 sq. ft. for 20 students. The demographic projections for the next 25 years indicate that the schools' populations will steadily increase. The projections for the middle school and high school are 1,114 and 1,459 students, respectively.

<sup>17</sup> Source: RI Department of Education Request for Approval of School Construction, prepared by Aharonian & Associates Inc. for the Foster Glocester Regional School Committee, October 31, 2003.

Above and beyond solving the problems of overcrowding at each school, Aharonian & Associates' task was to examine the facilities for sizes of spaces, appropriateness of space available for classes, i.e. proper science labs, gym, computer rooms and cafeteria. Also reviewed were life safety issues, ADA and electrical and mechanical systems. As part of his investigations, Aharonian reviewed the existing 143-acre site for expansion with regards to soil types, wetlands & buffers, water, sewer and parking. The high school is installing a new septic system, having the capacity of serving up to approximately 1,400 students. This alone should meet the capacities of the High School population for the projected future. The middle school systems will need similar additions.<sup>18</sup>

The educational "tools" that administrators and teachers require to motivate students to higher learning, begin with the environment they work in. Space, natural light, color, mood and an adequate amount of space for all programs are essential to learning. Both the High School and Middle School currently have space constraints which adversely affect the teaching, safety and behavior of students. The New England Association of Schools & Colleges, Inc. Commission on Public Secondary School has requested a progress report to be submitted by March 1, 2004 addressing the "... commission's concerns regarding the inability of the current facilities to accommodate the anticipated increase in population." Also "...the commission noted aspects of the facility that have a negative impact on teaching and learning and the health and safety of the buildings occupants..."<sup>19</sup>

As a result of the Aharonian study, the Regional School District authorized spending of \$45,720,000 for a new middle school and renovations to the existing high school. The new middle school will accommodate 1,114 students on a separate campus, at a cost of about \$27,000,000. The corner of Snake Hill Road and Route 102 has been identified as a site.

Significant additions to the high school, including a new gymnasium, an enlarged auditorium, cafeteria, and library/media center, as well as renovations housing new science classrooms and laboratories and a link between the two buildings. The existing middle school will be renovated and incorporated into the high school which together will accommodate a capacity of 1,459 students. The balance of \$18,720 will be used for the high school refurbishment and expansion.<sup>20</sup>

### **Public Safety**

The Gloucester Police Department is the only municipally supported public safety service available in the Town. A Police Department headquarters was constructed and operations began in February 1990. Growth in general and increased demands on the Department

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Aharonian study.

staff are having an impact of the facility. Several minor modifications were made to the facility to accommodate the needs of the public, however as the Town continues to grow. The dispatch area was upgraded and remodeled in 2006/2007. There will be a need to alter and expand existing working space over the next ten years.

Current budget expenditures support a 20-person staff of 15 officers and 5 civilians. Recent expenditures by the Town have allowed this department to purchase new patrol vehicles regularly and to update a computer-reporting system. In addition, the department offers animal control services throughout the Town through a three-person staff; one full-time and two part-time employees. The Town also supports the operation of a municipal animal shelter located adjacent to the Town's transfer station, in accordance with the RIDEM Standards for Animal Health

In 2005, 1,704 crime complaints were filed with the Police department. Another 278 accidents and 15,480 calls for service were involved. In 1990, the number of complaints were 1,604. Crime, accident-rate incidents, and "calls for service" are monitored on an annual basis to provide comparative information for budgeting and management decisions. Since the last update of the Comprehensive Plan, when the crime statistics appeared to be less than now, the Police Department has computerized its data collection and has more accurate and reliable figures to report. For example, the Department tracks "calls for service," which is a category used when an officer or personnel has to perform a service that is not a crime or accident already accounted for in the monthly or annual report. Services such as notifications, traffic controls, monitoring for speeding cars in neighborhoods, assisting motorists with disabled cars are now tracked by the Police Department.<sup>21</sup>

Glocester provides neither fire nor rescue response service. These functions are offered by three private fire districts: Harmony, Chepachet and West Glocester. Map 15.1 illustrates the approximate boundaries of these fire districts. These fire districts are staffed by volunteers, with the exception of the Harmony Fire Station which has a paid Chief. To provide for revenues to cover operating expenses, fire districts have the power of taxation. Each district has an annual meeting to propose and establish an operating budget. Registered voters from each district are eligible to vote on budget and operating proposals. As a result of this situation, the Town does not directly involve itself with the activities or service-offerings of the fire districts.

Establishing a municipal fire department to supplement or replace the existing volunteer services has been considered on several past occasions by the Town. However, there was no support to undertake the expenses related to the establishment and maintenance of a municipal fire department. Thus, the Town has elected to leave the current fire and rescue service functions in place.

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<sup>21</sup> Updated information on the Police Department was supplied by Chief of Police Jamie A. Hainsworth.

Recognizing the shortcomings of a dispersed public safety service structure, the Town Council formed an Advisory Safety Commission to coordinate the various public safety functions. This Commission is composed of the three fire district Chiefs, the Police Chief, a member of the Gloucester Town Council, the Gloucester Public Works Director, the Gloucester Hazardous Materials Coordinator, the Gloucester Schools Transportation Coordinator, the Gloucester Civil Defense Director and two public members. This group is an advisory board to the Town Council and meets only if the Council directs them to meet on a particular issue or if one of the members brings up a matter to the Council's attention that must also require a recommendation from the Safety Commission.

The Town has determined that the current supply of public safety services meets the existing demand. However, this situation should be periodically evaluated.

### **Libraries**

The Town is served by two libraries, the Harmony Library and the Gloucester Manton Free Public Library. Each is privately owned and independently governed through its respective Board of Trustees, as are half of the public libraries in Rhode Island. Harmony Library and Gloucester Manton Library are members of the Library of Rhode Island (LORI) and the Cooperating Libraries Automated Network (CLAN). Compliance with the minimum standards set by LORI enables both libraries to secure state and federal aid. State aid (Grants-in-Aid) is received by both libraries in the amount of 25% of the town's allocation calculated from the previous two years. LORI also provides the libraries with professional training and workshops on technology, disaster planning, summer reading program, etc., and special services for the blind, hearing impaired, etc. As members of CLAN, both libraries provide patrons with access to library materials statewide and out of state and online databases covering general reference, business, health, and other subject areas. Computer support, maintenance, and purchasing are also provided through the CLAN consortium. The Gloucester Libraries have formed a library council to identify and eliminate all unnecessary duplication of library services to discuss budget needs, and to adopt a State approved 5 year long range plan.

On the local level, the Gloucester Libraries are members of the Ponaganset Regional Libraries Network. The network was established in 1992 to "promote awareness of library resources and services available to the residents and students of the Towns of Foster and Gloucester. This mission is achieved through resource sharing and interlibrary cooperation of the schools and public libraries." Other members of the network include: Ponaganset High School, Ponaganset Middle School, Fogarty Memorial School, West Gloucester Elementary, Captain Isaac Paine School, Foster Public Library, and Tyler Free Library.

Map 15.1: Location of Municipal Facilities

Library services to the residents of Gloucester continues to improve. More and more patrons take advantage of the public use computers to research health issues, work on high school portfolios, draft résumés, etc. Story times for children, summer reading programs, book discussions, computer instruction, etc. are just a few of the varied programs offered to patrons. Meeting space is also available for community groups and organizations. In 2005-2006, the Libraries circulated over 72,000 items. The costs of library services have increased however. The Libraries are responsible to raise 8-10% of their operating budgets through fundraising events, endowments, donations, patron appeals, and other grass root means. This has become more difficult over the past years as so many civic organizations are competing for the same resources. The Library Trustees recognize the need to maintain and continue to improve library services available to Gloucester residents in a financially responsible manner. The Libraries have requested the town for financial support, including modest budget increases to support salary increases, health and retirement benefits for full time staff, and increases in CLAN fees. Capital improvements are privately funded through grants, organizations and donations.

The Gloucester Libraries continue to work cooperatively with the Town of Gloucester and the public schools, to provide the residents of Gloucester with the best library service possible for their tax dollars.<sup>22</sup>

### **Community Facilities**

#### **Town Hall**

The Town Hall was relocated to a former school building in 1992. The current facility provides space for the various activities of the local government to function. One wing of this building is devoted to municipal government operations while the other wing is for the Ponaganset Regional School District and the Gloucester Public School offices. The two meeting rooms in this building are used by various bodies, boards, commissions and groups. The building is in substantial compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility requirements.

While the Town Hall mechanical systems still need attention, some upgrading of the facility has taken place since the last update of the Comprehensive Plan. Nonetheless there is an issue of space, whereby some departments are fairly cramped and need more space and there is a need for more meeting rooms.

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<sup>22</sup> This updated section was supplied by Gayle Wolstenholme, Gloucester Manton Library and Joan Hackett, Harmony Library.

### **Public Works**

The Town does not offer any sanitary sewer or public water supply services. All waste is either contained in cesspools or treated and stored in individual septic disposal systems (ISDS). Potable water is obtained from private or “public well” supplies. The term “public well” is defined by the RIDOH as any well that, “provides drinking water to fifteen or more service connections, or regularly serves an average of at least twenty-five individuals daily at least sixty days of the year.” Thus, a privately owned well may be regulated as a “public well,” but is not part of a municipal water supply system.

The Public Works Department is the second largest municipal government expense. This department is responsible for maintenance of the Town’s 96 miles of roadways (out of the total 147 miles of roads in the Town) throughout the year, including storm water management and snow plowing; maintenance of the Town's vehicle fleet, including that of the Police Department; maintenance of Town-owned buildings and grounds, with the exception of the school facilities; operation of the municipal transfer station, and performance of construction services for special projects. The regular department staff is adequate for normal situations. However, during snowstorms and other isolated incidents, additional staff and equipment are retained on a temporary basis.

The Town operates a municipal transfer station on Chestnut Hill Road. Debris that cannot be composted or recycled is separated and transported for disposal at the RI Resource Recovery Corporation's landfill in Johnston. Recyclables are also separated and delivered to the Material Recycling Facility at the Johnston site. Since the Town does not provide trash or recyclable collection services, most residents haul their waste to the transfer station. Commercial trash haulers are available to those who are unwilling or unable to haul waste themselves.

Town officials have determined that the current level and variety of services rendered by the Gloucester Department of Public Works are adequate to meet the present needs of the Town. The Public Works Director is of the opinion that the current highway garage should either be substantially renovated or replaced in the near future.

Streets in new residential developments should be designed to meet anticipated traffic volumes and safety considerations without loss of site amenities and neighborhood character. Street design should be related to housing type and subdivision design. When reviewing new residential subdivisions, The Planning Board should be give consideration to minimizing overall street length, to preserving site characteristics, and to requiring or protecting trees, open spaces and unique or valuable site features.

### **Other Community Facilities and Services**

The Town has no public water supply system. All drinking water is obtained from groundwater sources. The Town’s Planning Board had recommended a groundwater protection ordinance to complement the state groundwater protection programs, but it

was never adopted by the Town Council. However, the Town is cooperating with the towns of Foster and Scituate to establish watershed protection measures for the Scituate Reservoir and its watershed. The Town has also commissioned the Wastewater Facilities Study to consider wastewater treatment and disposal options. As a result of this study, new wastewater disposal ordinances and alternatives will be considered. Additionally, a town-wide wastewater management district was considered. Several other actions, such as establishing a wastewater treatment set-aside for the Town at the Burrillville and Smithfield wastewater treatment plants, a feasibility study for Chepachet Village, Echo Lake, and Waterman Reservoir, were under consideration. The goals and objectives of this study are incorporated into the Plan. Alternatives to meeting these objectives deserve further evaluation by the Wastewater Commission with advisory recommendation to the Town Council for implementation. The study is on file in the Town Clerk's office for inspection by the public. As a result of this study, it was determined that the town-wide wastewater system was too costly and that the Town favors ISDS and package systems to handle waste water.

The Town has many recreation and open space sites and facilities available to citizens. These sites are listed in detail in the Recreation and Open Space Element. In addition, the state maintains several facilities in the Town: a RIDOT Road Maintenance Garage, a RI State Police Barracks and the George Washington and Durfee Hill Management Areas, and other state open space and Nature Conservancy lands. In addition, the federal government maintains the Pulaski Memorial Park. These facilities and services contribute to form Gloucester's sense of place.

The Town has implemented a Capital Improvement Program and has a Capital Budget process to plan for and advance capital expenditure proposals. In this way, decision-makers and voters at the financial town meeting will have adequate information to make reasoned decisions concerning requests for new capital expenditures.

The Town also has an adopted Emergency Management Plan (the "EMP"), that is in compliance with the standards promulgated by FEMA for such plans. The EMP is incorporated into the Plan by reference and is on file for review by the public in the Town Clerk's office.

The Goals, Objectives and Policies and Recommendations are based on this research. The necessary actions to address identified deficiencies are listed in the Implementation Program.

## **16.1 Open Space and Recreation**

### **16.2 Introduction**

This element of the Gloucester comprehensive community plan will also serve as the Town's Local Outdoor Recreation Plan. The Standards For Local Recreation, Conservation, and Open Space Plans published in 1989 by the RI State Planning Council were used to supplement the open space and recreation element requirements for a local comprehensive plan. This effort will enable the Town to remain eligible for state or federal recreation, conservation and open space funding.

As described in section 1.2, The Comprehensive Planning Process, in 1993-94, the Town followed a planning process that sought public input, involved key local leaders, major system users and interest groups. This process also involved the review and consideration of relevant state plans and programs, coordination with the plans and programs of adjacent communities, and the use of valid data collection and system analysis techniques. This process has enabled the Town to assemble an accurate local outdoor recreation program that has broad support throughout the community.

Four basic steps were used to compose this element:

1. an inventory of existing recreation, conservation and open space resources, including an assessment of natural resources which the community wishes to protect;
2. an analysis of the public's need for outdoor recreation and open space opportunities;
3. the establishment of policies and strategies to fulfill identified needs, and;
4. the creation of an implementation program to carry-out the policies and strategies.<sup>23</sup>

As part of the Town's comprehensive community plan, this element will be reviewed and updated at least every five years.

### **16.3 Existing Conditions**

The Town of Gloucester has been referred to in state and local land use plans as part of a regional “greenbelt oasis” surrounding the Providence metropolitan area. In section 3.1 of this comprehensive plan, the Land Use Element, Gloucester affirms its desire to be part of this regional greenbelt concept. Goals, Objectives and Policies, and Recommendations list the various ways the Town will act to implement the greenbelt concept.

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<sup>23</sup> Source: Standards For Local Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plans, State Planning Council, 1989

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## Open Space and Recreation

During the past decade, over 700 new residents moved to or were born in the Town. However, nearly 88 percent of the resident labor force commutes to work outside the Town. These new residents are attracted to Gloucester by reasons other than employment opportunities. In community surveys and public hearings conducted during this planning process, many residents indicated the rural character and the natural environment, the Town's greenbelt role, as important community attributes that influenced their decision to reside and remain in the Town. It can be inferred that many, perhaps most, of these new residents are attracted to Gloucester for these same reasons. If true, then preservation of these attributes is of paramount importance to the Town's future viability as a greenbelt oasis.

Of the 9,948 persons residing in Gloucester in 2000, 2,664 were less than 18 years of age, representing almost 27 percent of the Town's total population. Typically, this age group is used to determine whether outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities are adequate. However, several contemporary lifestyle studies have shown that in the past two decades more persons remained active in outdoor recreation and conservation activities well beyond their teenage years. Age has begun to have less influence on the overall demand for outdoor recreation and conservation opportunities. Rather, age became more of a determinant regarding specific facility demand (e.g. need for ballfields, soccer fields, etc). If people reside in Gloucester due to its role as a greenbelt oasis, its rural character and the natural environment, it can be expected that a larger percent of the resident population than the norm for other communities will have an interest, perhaps active, in outdoor recreation and conservation activities. Care must be exercised to include overall demand when estimating supply adequacy.

Of the 36,454 acres of area that comprise the Town, 32,199 are listed as undeveloped, more than 88 percent of the Town's entire area. Most of this area, 67 percent, is comprised of forest. Another 5,474 acres contain water bodies or wetland areas. When combined with the forest lands, these uses comprise over 92 percent of the undeveloped land area in Town. In the developed land area of 4,254 acres, 82 percent or 3,505 acres are in residential use. In addition, while there are several areas of high-density residential development, particularly around several of the many water bodies in the Town, the residential development is mostly scattered throughout the Town's entire area. Of the remaining 749 acres of developed land, 214 acres, or 29 percent is used for commercial and manufacturing uses. Commercial and manufacturing uses, however make up less than one percent of the Town's total land area. This development pattern, few homes scattered throughout the heavily forested Town, creates the sense of place that Gloucester has a rural character with abundant natural resources.

# Open Space and Recreation

This geographically dispersed development pattern makes the creation of neighborhood planning districts impractical. Even the several areas of clustered residential development, such as the villages of Chepachet and Harmony or the Lake Washington and Waterman Lake enclaves, are spatially separate. Thus, the Town will be treated as one planning area with no geographic or neighborhood planning districts.

As part of this 5-Year Plan Update, the Town has completed an inventory of all outdoor recreation, conservation and open space areas. This information is summarized in Table 16.1 and shown on Map 16.1. The complete inventory is included as Appendix B.

<b>Table 16.1</b> <b>Inventory Summary</b> <b>Recreation, Conservation and Open Space</b> <b>Lands</b>	
Use Type	Area (acres)
Conservation	5,881.8
Multi-Use	780.8
Educational	412.5
Campgrounds	365.6
Religious Campgrounds	352.2
Golf Course	307.1
Recreation	43.6
Special	22.1
Town Beach	1.9
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8,167.6</b>
Ownership	Area (acres)
State	3,919.1
Land trust	2,043.3
Private	1,507.8
Town	697.4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>8167.6</b>

Source: Gloucester Town Planner's Office, 2007

As described in Table 16.1, the Town has a total of 8,167.6 acres of recreation, conservation, and open space lands. The single largest type of use is conservation lands, while the largest area by ownership is state-owned land. Appendix B, Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Facilities provides more detailed information on the Town's outdoor recreation sites.

The Town has a rich variety of outdoor recreation, conservation and open space opportunities. People with outdoor interests can usually find a place to enjoy themselves in Gloucester. In addition to this listing of formal sites, many of the large tracts of private property offer recreation and conservation opportunities to individuals. For example, many private property owners allow hunting on their property by permission. The people enjoying the sport of mountain or off-road biking use some private dirt roads in the Town. In addition, many boaters are allowed to enjoy the private lakes without property owner objection.

The Ponaganset Reservoir and its tributaries are part of the Providence Water Supply Board's Scituate Reservoir supply network. Other smaller streams and wetland networks also act to direct water to the Scituate Reservoir. Nearly one-third of the Town's total area is estimated to lie within the Scituate Reservoir watershed. In addition, Gloucester Memorial Park, the DiFonzo Beach and several other Town park system properties lie within an important groundwater aquifer associated with the Chepachet River. Recreation and conservation uses of these properties are appropriate to protect and preserve these drinking water supplies.

Conservation efforts by the Town and the Gloucester Land Trust have resulted in the acquisition and preservation of several unique habitats and visually distinctive landscape features. The intent of both groups is to establish links between the various conservation sites to afford citizens an uninterrupted natural experience. The Town has attempted to provide a wide variety of recreation, conservation and open space opportunities.

In order to maintain eligibility in the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) for grant assistance in acquisition and development, this element of the Comprehensive Plan should be updated periodically to meet the requirements of the Program. The most recent SCORP<sup>24</sup> does not contain specific outdoor recreation standards for local communities to follow. The Plan establishes state goals and policies and includes a 5-year action agenda.

The Recreation Commission, with assistance of the Recreation Director and Planning Office, have reviewed the Town's inventory of park, recreation and conservation lands (Table 16.1). In the future, as Town resources and staffing permits, the listing of sites by location will need to be updated and illustrated, a problem analysis of each site that reviews facility use, use frequency, size and condition will be necessary, and a detailed maintenance and improvement schedule for each site will be required.

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<sup>24</sup> RI Statewide Planning Program and RIDEM, Ocean State Outdoors: Rhode Island's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Report Number 105, State Guide Plan Element 152, 2003.

## 16.4 Supply and Need Analysis

The State Planning Council has established several standard classifications for recreation, conservation and open space facilities. This classification system is intended to provide a standardized format for comparative analysis of facility supply to user/population demand. Thus, a community can assess its provision of recreation facilities in an objective and valid manner.

The State standard facility classification is presented in Table 16.2.

Table 16.2  
PARK ASSOCIATION CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

FACILITY	SERVICE AREA (Radius)	DESIRABLE SIZE (Acres)	ACRES/1000 POPULATION
Mini-Park	Less than 1/4 mile	one or less	.25 to .50
Neighborhood Park/ Playground	1/4 to 1/2 mile	15+	1 to 2
Community Park	1 to 2 miles	25+	5 to 8
Regional Park	Regional	200+	5 to 10
Linear Park	No Standard	Variable	Variable
Special Use	No Standard	Variable	Variable
Conservation	No Standard	Variable	Variable

*Source: Standards For Local Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Plans State Planning Council, 1989*

To conduct a needs analysis, the outdoor recreation sites located in Gloucester have been aggregated into the various classifications. This data will be compared to the standards for each facility category to provide a comparative base for analysis purposes. For the purposes of the 2007 Plan Update, it was assumed that the recommended standards are no longer applicable to regional (state) parks, linear parks, special use areas and conservation areas. Table 16.1 indicated that as of 2007, there were a total of 6,930.7 acres in these categories. Table 16.3 provides an analysis of recreation facilities in the categories of Town-owned mini-parks, neighborhood parks and community parks. These figures include portions of school-owned property devoted to public recreation.. Table 16.3 provides the aggregated information. Appendix B, Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Facilities provides more detailed information on the Town’s outdoor recreation sites.

Table 16.3

# Open Space and Recreation

## RECREATION FACILITY CLASSIFICATION <sup>1</sup>

FACILITY CATEGORY	TOTAL NUMBER	AREA IN ACRES		Deficient/Surplus	
		Existing	Standard	2007 <sup>2</sup>	
Mini-Park	5	4.4	.25 to .50	in range	
Neighborhood Park	2	34.2	1 to 2	in range	
Community Park	6	205.8	5 to 8	surplus	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>244.4</b>	N. A.	zero deficiencies	

1. Table 16.3 only includes facilities in Town & Land Trust ownership.

2. 2000 population 9948 / 1000 = 10 times base standard

Sources: State Planning Program & Gloucester Town Planner's Office, 2007

Based on the information presented in Table 16.3, the Town has an adequate supply of each active outdoor recreation facility type.

Glocester has active recreation interest groups for Little League and soccer. In addition, there are Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and several other private - interest organizations that use the outdoor recreation opportunities available in Gloucester. Small groups and individuals enjoy the pursuits of boating, fishing, hunting, nature watching, hiking, biking, baseball, basketball, softball, soccer, golf, tennis, camping and many other outdoor activities. Based on the supply analysis, the demand interests of users and interviews and surveys of local recreation officials, the Town has a generally adequate supply of active outdoor recreation sites.

Although not specifically identified in the Recreation Facility Classification table, the town provides indoor recreation to the seniors, youth and other adults. These programs are run year-round in a number of facilities and include: Men's Basketball is at Ponaganset Senior High School, skating at Smithfield Ice Rink, as well as swimming for seniors. The Senior Center is another location that provides recreation to residents.

Resident survey data obtained in this planning process indicates that linear parks and walkways, conservation and open space acquisitions and improvements are the preferred desires for the Town's future recreation planning program. In local elections held in 1987 and 1990, the Town voters approved two open space acquisition and improvement referendums for \$500,000 and \$400,000, respectively. Based on the identified concerns in the Land Use and Natural Resources Elements regarding loss of the rural character and the undesirable spread of metropolitan suburbanization into Gloucester, preservation of the natural environment and rural character is strongly supported by the Town. Thus, future recreation acquisitions and improvements will be in the linear parks, walkways,

conservation and open space categories. While there are no specific standards that measure how much of these types of facilities a Town “needs”, the Town of Gloucester recognizes that it must continue to acquire, preserve and protect its open spaces in the future as the community continues to grow and as land becomes developed.

The Goals, Objectives and Policies and Recommendations are provided in Section 8.1 of this plan. In addition, the Implementation section details the responsibilities and agencies designated to carry-out the actions.

As new residential subdivisions continue to be built, land will become increasingly scarce and expensive. This may result in loss of open space and rural character. If development continues to occur predominantly in the form of frontage lots on existing roads, the perception of the Town as a rural community will gradually shift to that of a suburban community. The design of future residential subdivisions will have a profound impact on the visual appearance of the Town as well as upon its open space patterns and environmental quality. As part of its effort to protect and preserve open space, the Town should adopt conservation development planning techniques in its zoning and land development regulations. This technique can preserve anywhere from 50 to 70 percent or more of the land being developed as permanent, protected open space. The Town should also provide for the effective use and management of these open spaces by the appropriate public, nonprofit or private entity.

### ***16.5 Greenways and Greenspaces***

In cooperation with the Gloucester Land Trust, the Town will continue its efforts to obtain and preserve important open space for conservation, preservation, and/or public use and enjoyment. Linkage of open space and recreational parcels is seen as an important objective towards promoting a systematic program of open space acquisition and use regardless of ownership. This will encourage the establishment and use of trails and greenbelts and promote state recreation goals as well as local goals. The economic viability of acquiring open space has recently been demonstrated in both a regional and local basis by specific studies of fiscal impact. As applicable to Gloucester, the objectives and recommendations of the State Greenspace and Greenways Plan are also recognized and identified herein as areas deserving protection and/or restoration.

Woonasquatucket Greenspace Project - Designated as an American Heritage River, the Woonasquatucket and its tributaries flow through portions of six communities as diverse as the City of Providence and the rural town of Gloucester. Planning for open space conservation and recreational development in this varied landscape requires balancing a broad range of priorities held by residents in different areas with a recognition of the regional resources that are important to all. During 2003-2004, the Woonasquatucket

Greenspace Project set out to meet this need and to unite the diverse goals of local, state and federal players into a set of physical plans and action strategies for protecting the landscape and quality of life for residents throughout the region. The project started with a series of meetings in each community where residents helped the consultant team develop detailed resource inventories, and culminated in two regional summits where participants reviewed the results and developed an action strategy for resource conservation and recreational development. The process evaluated three distinct resource types: **natural resources**, such as wetlands, aquifers and wildlife habitat; **cultural resources**, such as historic sites, scenic vistas and rural landscapes; and **recreational resources**, like hiking trails, bike touring routes and water trails. Priorities for each of the three resource themes were mapped first, and then overlaid with each other to identify landscapes that are key to the Woonasquatucket region's visual character and quality of life.

The result of this effort was a set of local and regional maps that identify the most important areas and corridors for each of the three principal themes. In Gloucester, the mapping and resource analysis identified many areas and features that reinforce the Town's rural character and distinct heritage. These maps are shown in the publication Woonasquatucket Greenspace Protection Strategy, RIDEM, December 2004. Together, these maps and supporting documentation provide the information necessary for the Town and partner conservation groups to set specific priorities for action and make coordinated decisions about open space protection and management. In some cases, the plan identifies areas that should be protected (e.g. aquifers and riparian corridors) but, it also is meant to clearly show the networks of natural and cultural resources that exist, and to promote a vision of how they could be united into a permanent network of greenways and greenspaces. Two major areas with a high concentration of natural, cultural, and recreational resources which were identified in the Project are the Snake Hill Road corridor, and the village of Chepachet and surrounding landscapes.

The Town will use the results of the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Project to implement local open space preservation goals stated in this Plan. The Town will also coordinate its efforts with State agencies and with local and regional conservation groups. In planning for future greenways, the Town will also follow the guidelines and recommendations of A Greener Path, Greenspace and Greenways for Rhode Island's Future, State Guide Plan Element 155, November 1994. See Section 8.1 of this Plan for Goals, Objectives and Recommendations with regard to greenway planning for the Town.

Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project - In 2006, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management initiated the Scituate Reservoir Watershed Greenspace Project. The purpose of this project was to assist the five watershed Towns in

# Open Space and Recreation

identifying and mapping all the natural, cultural and recreational resources in these communities, to enable them to plan specific actions and resource protection priorities. Similar to the Woonasquatucket Greenspace Plan, the Town will investigate the feasibility of incorporating the findings and recommendations of this project into the Comprehensive Plan.

## **16.6 Action Plan**

The specific actions to carry out the goals, objectives and recommendations of this element are listed in this Action Plan, Table 16.4. This Action Program lists the Town's decisions regarding the timing, need and attainment of the recommendations established through the comprehensive planning process. This plan will comprise the five-year comprehensive plan period of 2006 through 2011.

Table 16.4  
RECREATION ACTION PLAN: 2006 - 2011

ACTION	PLAN YEAR					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Glocester Memorial Park	Skate park completed		Lights <sup>25</sup>			
Cora Kent Park	Proposal denied for Gazebo & Recreation office	Modify and Revisit proposal	Begin Project		End Project	
Recreation Park near new Middle School	Planning & Design	Seek Funding & Begin Project	End Project			
Protection of Unique Natural Features	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust
Conservation Sites Walkways	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust	Land Trust
Playground at the Town Hall <sup>26</sup>		Complete Project				
Senior Recreation Center	Project Completed 11/06					

<sup>25</sup> Glocester Memorial Park Lights: The Recreation Commission will reconsider adding lights to the baseball field at GMP if no other baseball field in the town has lights.

<sup>26</sup> Playground at the Town Hall: The Recreation Commission will consider a playground at the Town Hall if no other facility includes a playground. There is a need for at least one additional playground in town.

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ACTION	PLAN YEAR					
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
YMCA - Town Swim Facility <sup>27</sup>	Feasibility study	Seek Funding	Seek Funding	Begin Project		End Project

*Source: Gloucester Recreation Commission, November 2006*

Recreation Park near the new Middle School: There is a preliminary design for the development of an 18 acre lot that abuts the property of the new Ponaganset Middle School. The design includes a baseball field a softball field, basketball and tennis courts, a playground, a walking/cross country trail, and a concession stand. All fields and courts may be lighted. There is a project committee in place that is co-directed by Mike Joyce and John Mack. The Recreation Commission is seeking to fund this entire project through grants and donations. They may join forces with the Town of Foster, and make this a dual-town recreation facility that can be used by the public, the Regional Middle School during the day, and town leagues at night.

Cora Kent Park: A proposal was denied by the budget board in 2006 for the development of this property. The proposal included a building that would contain the recreation office, public bathrooms, and recreation storage. Stage two of the plan included a gazebo, for the outdoor summer concerts as well as other recreation events. Stage three of the project included the addition of a playground and possibly an outdoor ice rink. The problem with developing this land is that it is very wet, and there is a deed restriction which states that it must be used for town offices.

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<sup>27</sup> YMCA - Town Swim Facility: The Town is in the process (2007) of beginning a feasibility study to determine if the town can acquire a YMCA. The Town will consider creating a teen-center if the YMCA plan falls through.

## Map 16.1: Recreation, Conservation and Open Space Facilities

## 17.1 Circulation

### 17.2 Introduction

The circulation system is the means to move people and goods. Thus, the circulation system is a service that typically supports the local, regional and state transportation needs. Various modes of transportation, for example, automobiles or trucks, are used in the circulation system. Whether for commerce or pleasure, the circulation system is an integral component of the comprehensive community plan.

To determine the adequacy of the existing local circulation system, an inventory of existing conditions will first be performed. This inventory will include all modes of transportation used in the local and regional circulation system. This data will be analyzed in conjunction with the Land Use Element's future land-use demand forecast and compared for adequacy. In addition, an evaluation of circulation system ancillary features will be conducted. For example, such matters as whether enough on-street and off-street parking is available, whether air quality standards attainment are an issue, and the relationship between land use and the circulation system will be evaluated. A circulation system action plan and implementation program will then address any identified system deficiencies.

### 17.3 Existing Conditions

The earliest “roads” in Gloucester were laid out in the 1700's. These ways were used by farmers and travelers for commerce and pleasure. Some of these early roads were privately owned with toll stations along the route. Two such places existed on the Putnam Turnpike, Route 44; one was in Harmony, another, in West Gloucester at Cady's Tavern. In the early 1900's, electric trolleys operated between Providence and Gloucester. Eventually though, the automobile displaced all other modes of transportation. But it was the automobile and the supporting transportation network improvements that caused dramatic change to the historical settlement patterns and population of the Town (See the Land Use Element for a more complete discussion). For an explanation of the historical development of the Town and its circulation system, one reference source is *Gloucester, The Way Up Country*.

The RI State Planning Council has adopted a highway classification system that orders roads into a class for design function and for administrative responsibility. The functional classes are: *arterial, collector, and local*. The administrative responsibility classes are: *federal, state and local*.

Table 17.1 lists each class with a functional description.

**Table 17.1 Highway Functional Classification**

Functional Classification	Definition
<b>Arterial</b> Includes Interstates, other freeways and expressways	These highways emphasize a high level of mobility for through movement. They provide the highest level of mobility, at the highest speed, for long, uninterrupted travel. Arterials generally have higher design standards than other highways, often with multiple lanes and some degree of access control.
<b>Collector</b>	These highways provide a lower level of mobility but a larger level of property access than arterials. They are designed for travel at lower speeds and for shorter distances. Collectors typically are two-lane highways that gather and distribute traffic to and from the arterial system and the local system.
<b>Local</b>	These highways emphasize a high level of land access. They provide the highest level of property access, at the lowest speeds, and the lowest level of mobility. They generally have the lowest design standards and are typically two lane highways with no striping or other painted markings. They represent the bulk of the mileage in the public highway network.

*Source: Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, Highway Functional Classification System for the State of Rhode Island 2005-2015, Technical Paper 155, January 2005*

These functional classifications have been subdivided to categorize the rural area highway system. Thus, sub classifications for rural area highways systems are: *principal arterial, minor arterial, major collector, minor collector and local*. The Town will use the rural designations to inventory its roadway network. The classification system also enables standard design criteria to be applied to evaluate a highway's "functional adequacy," a roadway's ability to support existing and projected transportation demand. The functional adequacy of a highway is expressed in Level of Service designations ranging from a high of A through a low of F. A roadway's Level of Service is one of several indicators used to plan for highway improvements. Traffic volume and delay are factors used to determine Level of Service

**Table 17.2**  
**2005 - 2015 Functional Classification /Mileage**  
**Average Daily Traffic (ADT)**

Route	Segment Name	Miles / ADT		State/ Local
<b>PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL (RURAL)</b>				
102	CHOPMIST HILL RD	3.66		S
102	VICTORY HWY	1.17	Varies: 3,200 to 4,600	S
44	PUTNAM PIKE	0.55	Varies: 4400 to 14,900	S
		<b>Sum5.38</b>		
<b>MINOR ARTERIAL (RURAL)</b>				

Table 17.2 2005 - 2015 Functional Classification /Mileage Average Daily Traffic (ADT)				
Route	Segment Name	Miles / ADT		State/ Local
100	MONEY HILL RD	1.05	4,500	S
101	HARTFORD PIKE	0.48	5,300	S
44	PUTNAM PIKE	9.27		S
		<b>Sum10.80</b>		
<b>MAJOR COLLECTOR (RURAL)</b>				
	ANAN WADE RD	1.19		S
	OLD VICTORY HWY	0.31		S
	RESERVOIR RD	0.79		S
	SNAKE HILL RD	4.97	Varies: 1,500 to 2,700	S
94	REYNOLDS RD	5.51	1,000	S
98	HARRISVILLE RD	0.27		S
		<b>Sum13.04</b>		
<b>MINOR COLLECTOR (RURAL)</b>				
	CHESTNUT HILL RD	1.38		L
	COOPER RD	0.00		L
	PINE ORCHARD RD	1.56		L
	TOURTELLOT HILL RD	1.16		L
	TOURTELLOTTE HILL RD	1.24		L
		<b>Sum 5.34</b>		
<b>PRINCIPAL ARTERIAL (URBAN)</b>				
116	SMITH AVE	0.01		L
116	W GREENVILLE RD	0.36		S
44	PUTNAM PIKE	2.71		S
		<b>Sum 3.08</b>		
<b>MINOR ARTERIAL (URBAN)</b>				
	SNAKE HILL RD	1.71		S
	W GREENVILLE RD	0.70		S
		<b>Sum 2.41</b>		
<b>COLLECTOR (URBAN)</b>				
	COOPER RD	3.66		L
	SAWMILL RD	2.3		S
	SAWMILL RD	0.07		S
	SNAKE HILL RD	0.84		S
		<b>Sum 6.87</b>		
<b>Town Total</b>		<b>46.92</b>		

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program, *Highway Functional Classification, 2005-2015, Technical Paper155, January 2005*

All roads not included in Table 17.2 are considered to be local roads. According to pavement management system data maintained by the Department of Public Works, in 2006, there were .77.24 miles of Town-owned roads. In addition, there were 30.42 miles

of privately-owned roads, and 38.3 miles of state-owned roads. Including an additional 2 miles of park-access roads and driftways, there were total of 147.96 miles of roads in the Town. There were a total of 276 roads in the Town, of which 113 were Town roads; 12 were State roads; 148 were private roads (Note: Town services are provided on 67 of these); 2 were park access; and one is a driftway.

The local roads are classified into three subcategories: *local, suitably improved private roads for public use, and private*. The distinction between suitably improved private roads and private roads is that the former are approved by the Town Council. This approval entitles the property owner(s) along these roadways to apply for building permits. The Town has adopted a procedure to regulate the issuance of permits for properties fronting on these roads. Called “Exception to the Ordinance Regulating the Issuance of Building Permits”, this procedure allows the Town Council to issue a permit, after a public hearing, and after an advisory opinion from the Planning Board.

Based on the information contained in Table 17.2, the highest traffic volumes in the Town exist in Chepachet, at the intersections and overlaps of RI 102 & US 44, with 2004 average daily traffic counts of 14,900 vehicles. Individually, these two roadways are also the most traveled in the Town with traffic volumes ranging between 4,400 to 14,900 for US 44 and 3,200 to 14,900 for RI 102. Overall, US 44 has the highest average traffic volumes of any roadway in the Town.

In 1991, the RIDOT conducted functional adequacy studies of RI 102 and US 44 as part of the environmental assessments involving the upgrade of these state roadways. Those analyses included Level of Service (LOS) findings for both roadways. A LOS less than C is considered unacceptable. Table 17.3 lists the results of those studies.

Table 17.3  
LEVEL OF SERVICE: ROUTES 44 & 102

	Existing Alignments	
	1988	2010
<b>Route 44</b>		
Eastbound Lane	B	B
Westbound Lane	B	C
Two-Lane Section	D	E
<b>Route 102</b>	B	C

Source: *Environmental Assessments, RI 102, 1992 and US 44, 1991 prepared for RIDOT*

Traffic accident information is another factor used to determine roadway adequacy. Table 17.4 lists the accidents in the Town.

Table 17.4  
TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS 2001 - 2005

Accidents	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	5-Year Average
Glocester	287	312	299	311	269	296
Burrillville	356	405	360	335	308	353
Scituate	319	373	331	361	364	350
Foster	153	149	109	150	135	139

Source: RI Department of Transportation, 2006

Although the number of vehicle accidents fluctuated annually, the total number of vehicle accidents increased by 26 percent during the 1986 - 1990 period. Considering the nearly 150 miles of total roadways in the Town, this translates into a five-year average vehicle accident rate of .96 per road mile. A more detailed inspection of local accident data revealed that most mishaps occurred on three roads: Putnam Pike/ US 44, Snake Hill Road and Victory Highway/ RI 102. Table 17.5 provides this information.

Table 17.5  
ROADWAY ACCIDENT DATA 2001-2005

Roadway	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	5 Year Average
Putnam Pike	115	117	119	135	116	120.4
Snake Hill Road	29	44	36	38	29	35.2
Route 102 (Victory Hwy/Chopmist Hill Road)	31	31	24	24	30	28.0
Total	175	192	179	197	175	183.6

Source: Town Planner's Office, 2006

The total length of these three roadways in Glocester is nearly 25 miles. The three-year average accident rate translates into almost 4 accidents per road mile; significantly greater than the Town rate of .96 accidents per road mile. The most frequent location for vehicle accidents was in Chepachet at the intersections of US 44 and RI 102 through the village area.

Although nearly 88 percent of Glocester's labor force commutes daily to work outside the Town, few mass transit options exist for these commuters. Bus transportation offered by the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA) travels between Pascoag, Burrillville and Kennedy Plaza Providence only on weekdays. Table 17.6 lists the service schedule.

<b>Table 17.6</b>			
<b>RIPTA BUS SERVICE: ROUTE 44 AT CHEPACHET</b>			
<b>RIPTA Route #9 Outbound</b>			
<b>Bus operates to</b>	<b>Stop #1 Kennedy Plaza</b>	<b>Stop #5 Rte 44 &amp; Douglas Hook Rd (Chepachet)</b>	<b>Stop #10 Wallum Lake</b>
Wallum Lake	7:50	8:30	8:56
Wallum Lake	10:40	11:27	11:53
Wallum Lake	1:32	2:12	2:38
Bridgeton	4:15	4:55	-
Wallum Lake	4:45	5:26	5:52
Wallum Lake	5:15	5:56	6:22
Bridgeton	7:10	7:50	-
<b>RIPTA Route #9 Inbound</b>			
<b>Bus operates from</b>	<b>Stop #10 Wallum Lake</b>	<b>Stop # 15 Rte 44 &amp; Douglas Hook Rd (Chepachet)</b>	<b>Stop # 19 Kennedy Plaza</b>
Bridgeton	-	7:05	7:46
Bridgeton	-	7:34	8:15
Wallum Lake	9:25AM	9:51	10:36
Wallum Lake	12:17PM	12:43	1:28
Wallum Lake	3:30PM	3:56	4:41
Wallum Lake	6:01PM	6:27	7:06

Of the resident civilian labor force of 5,454 persons, 87.61 percent or 4,778 persons commute to other locations for employment. According to the U.S. Census of 2000, 84.9 percent of these commuters were in single-occupancy vehicles. In addition, mass transit trips accounted for only 0.3 percent of the commuter movement. Thus, about 4,658 persons commute daily to work alone. An additional 10.7 percent carpool, 3.1 percent walk or work at home, and 1.0 percent are classified as “other”. This situation warrants the establishment of a revised RIPTA bus schedule to offer service more in keeping with the commuter transportation patterns as they currently exist. For example, perhaps a more frequent bus schedule could be established using the newer “van-size” class of bus. Para-transit and demand-responsive transit services are also available on a private contract basis. RIPTA has recently begun to expand its service to non-urban areas through a new model called “Flex Service”. This service is modeled for communities with little or no fixed-route service. With Flex Service the vehicle (typically a 16 passenger vehicle) travels within an established FlexZone picking up and dropping off passengers anywhere within the zone and connecting to a fixed route service outside the zone. This service may be expanded to include Gloucester in order to address the local public transit needs without expanding fixed-route service at this time. If service is expanded in Gloucester through programs like Flex Service, it may be necessary to locate a Park n’ Ride area

within the town to enhance connections to fixed-route commuter service. As of September 2006, Flex Service had not been extended to serve locations in Gloucester.

The village of Chepachet serves most of Gloucester's commercial and service demand. Many of the village's business clientele must use on-street parking. No definitive study has been conducted to determine whether the existing supply of on-street and off-street parking is adequate to service the Chepachet business community. However, during the comprehensive planning process, citizens expressed a desire that the Town establish a public off-street parking facility to serve the Chepachet village commercial area. The 1997 Chepachet Village Plan identified improvement to off street parking and pedestrian facilities as priority recommendations. The issue of off-street parking will be addressed as part of the Chepachet Village Enhancement program, scheduled for 2008. See discussion in Section 17.4.

School bus transportation is controlled by the Gloucester and Ponaganset Regional School Districts. The Gloucester Director of Public Works indicated that school buses can safely negotiate all public roads in the Town. Sometimes though, winter snow removal practices partially constrict or obscure roadways and create dangerous travel conditions. This situation is evaluated regularly to avoid such occurrences.

There are two active traffic control devices located in the Town as of 1999, one. One traffic signal is located at the intersection of Snake Hill Road and Route 102, and a new signal is located at Rt.44 and 102 (Money Hill Road). Two flashing caution lights exist along US 44 and RI 102, at major intersections and at fire station locations. Also, flashing lights exist at Anan Wade Road and RI 101 and Pray Hill Road and RI 101. It is noted that at times, the light in Chepachet (102/44 north) has increased traffic congestion in the village at times. Traffic entering Chepachet from the north (102 & 98/100) converge and are delayed due to the signal. Traffic from the south is frequently backed up past Acotes Cemetery due to this signal.

There are no rail, marine or terminal facilities located in Gloucester. In addition, there are no pedestrian nor bicycle trails available for uses other than recreation. The State Department of Transportation has identified the Northwest Regional Bike Path as a potential future bicycle route in the Towns of Burrillville, Gloucester and North Smithfield. Preliminary study and development work has been included in the 2006-2011 Transportation Improvement Program<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> RI Statewide Planning Program, Transportation Improvement Program, Fiscal Year 2006-2007, approved August 11, 2005, amended through June 8, 2006.

US 44 also serves a regional commerce function as an alternative east - west route between the Providence and Hartford metropolitan market areas. Individuals and truck commerce using this transportation corridor contribute to the local traffic conditions and the demand for ancillary transit services.

Map 17.1 illustrates the major roadway network existing in Gloucester.

#### **17.4 Analysis and Conclusions**

Residential land development in the Town is expected to exert the greatest demand for use and change upon the local circulation system. Based on the population projections in the Housing Element, about 45 additional homes will be constructed annually in the Town during this comprehensive plan period. These new residents will generate an estimated 10 additional vehicle trips per day per home according to the Institute of Highway Engineers. These new vehicle movements will either be accommodated by the existing circulation network or involve the establishment of new local roads. However, as indicated in the Economic Development Element, the resident labor force actually declined during the period 1990-2000. Therefore, the continued development of new housing at the levels predicted in the Housing Element are not expected to generate a significant increase in traffic volumes on area roadways.

Individual examinations will be necessary to determine whether the existing road system is adequate to accommodate this expected demand. In addition, this growth will also foster market responses. As such, the Town will be faced with market demands to expand the existing commercial base, principally along highways. This very dilemma was mentioned throughout the comprehensive planning process as an undesirable growth outcome for the Town. The “undesirable spread of suburbanization” was considered to embody the traditional strip type highway-commercial development. The through traffic related to regional commerce will also add to this demand for commercial activities along heavily traveled roadways.

Not only is the commercial land use dilemma a problem; conflicts related to land use and transportation also occur. Numerous traffic movements in heavily traveled, high-speed or traffic- congested areas increase the likelihood of accidents and compromise motorist safety. So-called “curb cuts” on state and local roads for various land uses must be carefully reviewed and designed/located to avoid creating these unsafe travel conditions. In addition, inadequate consideration of land use demand on the transportation system can result in premature or unexpected circulation system deficiencies. Furthermore, inappropriate and insensitive roadway design standards can ruin the Town's rural character and sense of place.

Map 17.1: Roadways in the Town of Gloucester

The RI Statewide Planning Program Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) process has been revised to a statewide priority system for five year planning periods. Since 1992 the town has continually requested upgrades and improvements to US 44 and RI 102. These improvements are expected to address the identified roadway deficiencies. The Town intends to continue its participation in the TIP process and will provide the RIDOT and State Planning Council with input regarding state-road use and functional adequacy. The Town had requested that the Statewide Planning Council include the Plan for Chepachet Village in the 1998-2000 TIP. This proposal included the Chepachet Village Enhancement Project, a comprehensive proposal for the revitalization of the historic Chepachet Village center. This project has particular emphasis on economic development, scenic and historic values, tourism, streetscape, traffic, pedestrian improvements, and potential intermodal linkages. The Town will continue to participate in the TIP program by submitting its priorities for statewide review and ranking, and to pursue its local planning objectives.

The following transportation programs are included in the 2006-2011 TIP:

Bridge Improvement Program

Chestnut Hill Rd. Br. #951; System preservation; Start Date: 2008

Pavement Management Program

Route 44, West Greenville Road to Route 102; Construction; Start Date: 2007

Bicycle/Pedestrian Program

Northwest Regional Bike Path; Study & Development

Enhancement Program

Reuben Mason House Restoration; System Management; Start Date:2010

Chepachet Welcome Center; System Management; Start Date: 2011

Chepachet River park; System Management; Start Date: 2011

Chepachet Village Improvements; System Management; Start Date: 2008

The proposed TIP improvements located in Chepachet Village are consistent with the Chepachet Village Planning process which revealed a public desire to install a public off-street parking facility to serve Chepachet village. It was expressed that shoppers could use the parking facility to be safely separated from the traffic on US 44. This facility might also serve as a multi-modal transportation system link. Consideration should be given to the feasibility and desirability for this facility to form the focus and link among

private passenger vehicles, mass transit services, pedestrian and bicycle trails. Thus, the village will be the central focus of this activity and be available to offer commerce services to individuals using this facility.

Other enhancements will include the improvement of sidewalks with historic appeal, the establishment of “traffic calming” techniques in the village area, crosswalks with pavement separation, new curbing with review of curb cuts, and landscaping. RIDOT is encouraged to review and respect the Town’s interest in implementing the Chepachet Village Plan recommendations pertaining to preserving and enhancing the special historic and rural character of the Village. In this respect, inclusion of the village area in the state scenic road program, the provision of period lighting and furniture, underground burial of utility wires uniform and period signage, and design of a gateway entrance to the village are all transportation related issues deserving support and implementation as long range objectives of the village plan, as they would be implemented largely within the transportation corridor.

In addition, increased frequency and time-matched bus service from Chepachet to Providence should be considered by the Town and RIPTA, possibly through the establishment of Flex Service. The currently available bus service is inconvenient and not well-suited to the wider ranging workday. Several persons stated that ridership levels are low as a result of this inconvenient scheduling arrangement. If Flex Service is expanded to Glocester, it may increase ridership on the current fixed routes. Greater use of mass transit, fewer single-occupant vehicle trips, and alternative transit modes by Glocester residents will help to reduce area air pollution, provide energy conservation and help Rhode Island comply with the Clean Air Act. As noted previously, as of September 2006 Flex Service had not been provided to service Glocester.

The 2001 Comprehensive Plan noted that many private roads and platted rights-of-way exist in the Town. At that time, several Town officials expressed opinions that a review and acceptance policy was needed to establish these as public ways. There were no standard procedure or design guidelines existing to help Town officials evaluate and decide whether a particular right-of-way meets the definition of a public road. Also, subdivision road design standards were reviewed for adequacy regarding function, aesthetic and design integrity. It is expected that these two issues may result in similar road design standards for each separate approval and acceptance process. In new residential subdivisions and land development projects, including conservation developments and rural residential compounds, private streets should be permitted. Standards for the construction of these new streets, as well as requirements for their ownership and maintenance, shall be incorporated into the Land Development and

Subdivision Regulations. Provisions for the long-term enforcement of private street maintenance responsibilities should also be incorporated into the Regulations.

In response to this problem, the Town has adopted a procedure to regulate the issuance of permits for properties fronting on these roads, called “Exception to the Ordinance Regulating the Issuance of Building Permits”. See discussion above.

To manage its nearly 148 miles of roads, the Town uses a systematic maintenance and improvement process. All roads are catalogued and evaluated for condition by the Department of Public Works which has begun using a systematic pavement management program. An annual work program maintains and upgrades roads determined to be in need. This listing is contained in the Town's Capital Improvement Program and its operating and capital budgets prepared by the Budget Committee and Town Council and submitted to the Town Meeting for consideration and action. Money obtained by Gloucester from the Community Highway Improvement Program (CHIP) is dedicated to the capital-improvement schedule costs to upgrade local roads.

Transportation is also available to elderly residents of the Town through the Statewide RIDE program. In addition, the Gloucester Human Services Department and the Gloucester meal site both provide car and van service for Town residents aged 60 years of age and older or to those who are disabled. There is also a meal site in Town that provides residents in need of food with meals approximately three days per week. The meal site, currently located in a commercial building off Route 44 in Chepachet, is planned to be relocated to the new Senior Center in late 2006. Another service available to the elderly from the Department of Elderly Affairs is the pharmaceutical aid program. This assistance is available to qualified residents and can provide savings of up to sixty percent off regular prescription prices. The Town will make an effort to link all these services to the meal site through the transportation network.

The Goals, Objectives and Policies and Recommendations derived from this inventory and analysis are listed in section 9.1 of this plan and in the Implementation schedule.

APPENDIX A: Gloucester Affordable Housing Plan