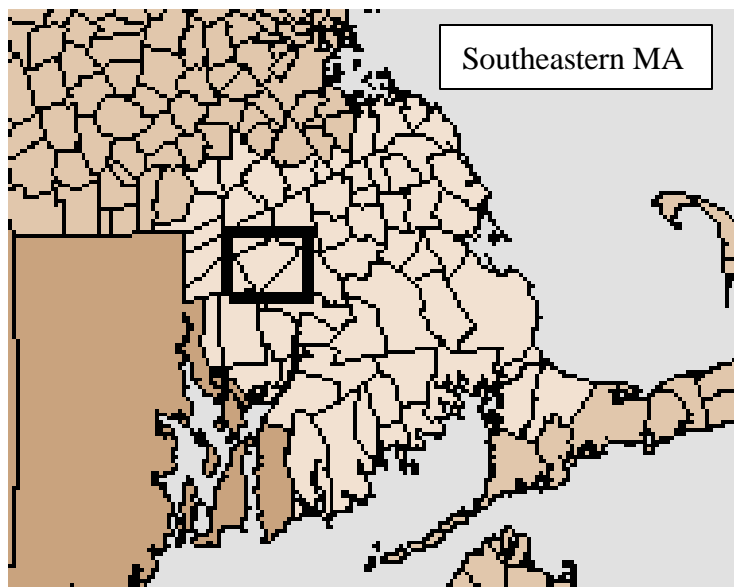


SECTION 3 Community Setting

The Town of Norton, Bristol County, Massachusetts is located approximately 30 miles south of Boston and 18 miles north of Providence, RI. Norton has a land area of 29.0 square miles. Norton is easiest reached by the major transportation Routes 123, 140 and 495. The town has a rural character and suburban convenience. The town's population is now 18,036 people.

Regional Context

The Town of Norton is located in southeastern Massachusetts within the Atlantic Coastal Plain. This inland community is characterized by five major rivers, large water bodies, many streams and extensive wetland areas (over 50% of the land mass) formed by glacial action over 10,000 years ago. Several square miles of floodplain, generally associated with the river systems, are also found within the town. The Towns of Easton and Mansfield to the north, the City of Taunton to the east and southeast, the Town of Rehoboth to the south and southwest and the City of Attleboro to the west, border Norton.



Like the adjacent communities, Norton's land use has been greatly influenced by Route 495. The placement of Route 495 through Norton has been a blessing as well as a curse. The highway has provided residents with easy access to neighboring communities, major cities, increased employment opportunities to other communities with shorter commutes, and increased commercial activities directly adjacent to the ramps. The highway has also brought an increase of traffic traveling in the center of town particularly because of the lack of a southbound exit to Route 140 from Route 495. Similarly, an increase in residential developments has occurred due to

the housing market and cost of land in and around Boston.

Another factor influencing land use in Norton is the availability of drinking water sources. The Canoe River provides Norton as well as Sharon, Foxborough, Mansfield and Easton with most of the available drinking water. The cooperation to protect this resource throughout all five towns has lead to larger lot sizes within the watershed and restrictions on commercial/industrial uses. The Canoe River watershed is listed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern and a Sole-Source Aquifer and is the main focus of the five town's open space and land protection efforts. Norton shares with Attleboro and Rehoboth the Hemlock Swamp and islands. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program describes this large wetland area as an outstanding ecological community due to the geographical extent of upland islands scattered throughout an evergreen swamp. Over 150 acres of this swamp are owned and protected by the Norton Conservation Commission, the Land Preservation Society of Norton, and the Attleboro Conservation Commission. The areas abutting the swamp are under pressure of residential development in all three communities.

Norton has been diligently working toward the Norton Reservoir Dredging Project for a number of years. The restoration of the 550-acre water body will complement regional recreational opportunities of the lake and pond system of neighboring Taunton. This project is described in detail in Section 4.

The Great Woods sections of Norton and Mansfield have been regional hot spots for nearly two centuries. The forestry resources of the Great Woods have provided Massachusetts with the mast for the U.S.S. Constitution. Located within the former portions of the Great Woods are the Tweeter Center and the newly constructed Tournament Players Club (TPC) golf course. The Tweeter Center (formerly the Great Woods Center for the Performing Arts) in Mansfield provides recreational and cultural opportunities for the region while the TPC golf course is scheduled to host major Pro Golf Association events. And while it seems as though the majority of the “woods” within the Great Woods have been cleared for recent commercial development, large portions of the Great Woods remain due to the conservation efforts of both communities. The Norton Historical Society, Norton Conservation Commission, Land Preservation Society of Norton, and the Mansfield Natural Resources Trust own large tracts of land containing several miles of walking trails and a wildlife habitat corridor.



History of the Community *contributed by Ruth Goold, George Yelle and Christopher Cox*

The area that in 1711 became the Town of Norton came partly from the tract purchased from Plymouth County in 1637 by the founders of Taunton and surveyed in 1640 by Myles Standish. The northern point of that tract is Cobbler’s Corner, now in Mansfield, where the surveyors stopped to repair a shoe. The largest part, however, came from a portion of a second Taunton tract purchased in 1668, called the North Purchase. Originally this included what are now Easton and Mansfield, but the former was set off as a separate town in 1725, the latter in 1775.

The first colonial settlement in Town was by William Wetherell in 1669. His house, located on the old Native American trail, and early colonial road called Bay Road, stood on the shore of Lake Winnecunnet near its outlet into the Snake River. Archaeological exploration before the building of Rt. 495 has indicated widespread Native American use of the area. A large formation of boulders near Lake Winnecunnet is said to have been the site of a lodge used by the Indian sachem Metacomet while hunting in the swamps and woods of what is now Norton. The rock formation is still called King Philip’s Cave. A skirmish between Native Americans and colonists was fought on Lockety Neck, the point of land at the junction of the Rumford and Wading rivers.

As early as the end of the seventeenth century, the Leonard family of Taunton, a branch of a family of skilled ironworkers, mined and forged bog iron in the Chartley section of Norton. Indeed, Chartley Pond it is said to have been the result of their excavating efforts. The grand Leonard house, a seventeenth century mansion, long the finest house in Town for over two centuries stood adjacent to the pond until, dilapidated, it was burned down by the Fire Department at the request of its owner. A local legend claims that in a ledge nearby are the marks of the Devil's footprints, made when he leapt out of the house bearing off to Hell Major George Leonard (a heavy man) who had sold his soul to Satan. As the story goes, only a pine log lay in the coffin that was buried in the graveyard.

In addition to working bog iron and farming, early Norton industries included gristmills and lumbering. The keel of the frigate "Constitution" is said to have been cut from oaks found within the Norton Great Woods. In the nineteenth century, textile mills, bleacheries, a wool-combing mill, home and factory manufacturing of straw hats, basket-making, jewelry manufacturing, and producing boxes for the jewelry trade flourished. On Taunton Avenue, a plant stamped out the copper disks from which the old-style large copper pennies were minted.



Photograph of Norton Center School 1902 provided by Christopher Cox

The Town of Norton once boasted five railroad stations—East Norton, Chartley, Barrowsville, Crane Street and Meadowbrook. Over one of Norton's railroad lines used to speed the boat trains, bringing passengers from the fancy Fall River Line steamships in Fall River to Boston. On the other, luxury expresses from New York sped down to Cape Cod. No train station was ever built in Norton Center, thus preventing it from ever becoming an industrial or commercial center. Judge Wheaton, then a mighty power in State and local politics, did not want smoky trains puffing by his splendid Main Street mansion. He did, however, endow Wheaton Female Seminary, which his daughter-in-law, Eliza Bayliss Wheaton for over sixty years capably and lovingly developed into a well-known school. In 1912, it became Wheaton College. Until about seventy years ago, trolley lines connected Norton with Attleboro, Mansfield and Taunton. Though never outstanding, Norton was a lively and prosperous town.

Resources on the history of the community:

- History of the Town Of Norton Bristol County, Massachusetts 1669-1859. George Faber Clark, Boston: Crosby, Nichols, and Company, George Clark 1859

- Norton Historical Society, 18 West Main St, Norton MA. www.nortonma.org
- Norton Historical Commission, 70 East Main St, Norton MA 02766

Population and Housing Characteristics

Demographic Trends/Housing *Contributed by Jim Hendrickson*

The table below shows certain population characteristics and trends within those characteristics. Some notable observations are:

- The overall population growth rate more than doubled in the 1990-2000 period to 3,771 persons relative to the 1980-1990 period, which saw an increase of only 1,575 persons. In percentage terms 1980-1990 grew by 12.4% while 1990-2000 grew 26.4%.
- The under 18 population which experienced a modest decline in the 1980-1990 period of 139 persons or (3.7%) grew 11% faster than the overall population in 1990-2000 with an increase of 1,260 persons or 35%. This is notable because this group tends to be frequent users of parks and athletic fields/facilities.
- The number of households rose by 1,231 units in 1990-2000 compared to the previous decade's 939-unit increase. Forty-nine percent of new households contained persons under 18 consistent with the 19 and under increase relative to the population as a whole.

Description	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990 % change	1990-2000 % change	1980-1990 nominal change	1990-2000 nominal change
Persons/sq. mi.	432	509	628	17.8	23.4	77	119
Population	12690	14265	18036	12.4	26.4	1575	3771
Female	7018	7628	9458	8.7	24.0	610	1830
Male	5672	6637	8578	17.0	29.2	965	1830
Under 18	3740	3601	4861	-3.7	35.0	-139	1260
18 +	8950	10664	13175	19.2	23.5	1714	2511
65 +	985	1188	1399	20.6	17.8	203	211
Households	3702	4641	5872	25.4	26.5	939	1231
With persons <18	1863	2007	2610	7.7	30.0	144	603
With persons >65	656	810	1001	23.5	23.6	154	191
Per sq. mi.	129.0	161.7	204.6	25.4	26.5	32.72	42.89
Persons per house	3.4	3.1	3.1	-10.3	-0.1	-0.35	0.00
Median income	21346	47349	71848	121.8167	51.74133	26003	24499
Median age	26.3	30.56	33.4				
Labor force				1980 % of population	1990 % of population	2000% of population	
Employed	6492	8150	10367	0.512	0.571	0.575	
Unemployed	140	62	834				

Sources: Massachusetts Municipal Profiles 1987-1988, 1991-1992, 2001-2002, Internal calculations.

Population

The table below compares the population and housing statistics of Norton with area communities. Some notable observations are:

- Norton's population has grown the second fastest over time and has been on a rising trend.
- Mansfield has posted the highest growth rate.
- Rehoboth has experienced an interesting consistency, and Foxboro although rising has low numbers.
- Easton and Plainville show consistently falling population growth rates.

YEAR	NORTON	POPULATION MANSFIELD	(U.S. Census data) EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
1970	9487	9939	12157	6512	14218	4953
1980	12690	13453	16623	7570	14148	5857
1990	14265	16568	19807	8656	14637	6871
2000	18036	22414	22299	10172	16246	7683
2010 Projected	16751	24772	26716	11393	17809	8448
Percent change						
1980	33.76	35.36	36.74	16.25	-0.49	18.25
1990	12.41	23.15	19.15	14.35	3.46	17.31
2000	26.44	35.28	12.58	17.51	10.99	11.82
1970 - 2000	42.13	66.61	34.15	34.37	14.83	31.18

Number of Households

- Growth in 'households' has been at a greater rate than 'population growth' for all towns in the sample.
- As confirmed in the next panel this refers to a trend of fewer people per household.
- To the extent that new households consume open space this is a negative trend.
- The relationships between the towns in this panel are consistent with the comments in the population section.

YEAR	NORTON	NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS MANSFIELD	EASTON	(owners + renters) REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
1980	3702	4508	5001	2396	4656	2079
1990	4641	5940	6436	2870	5262	2642
2000	5872	7942	7489	3523	6141	3009
Percent change						
1990	25.36	31.77	28.69	19.78	13.02	27.08
2000	26.52	33.70	16.36	22.75	16.70	13.89
1980 - 2000	58.62	76.18	49.75	47.04	31.89	44.73

Average Population Per Household

- All towns have experienced a reasonably significant decline in persons per household over the '80 - 00 period.
- Over the '90 - 00 period only Norton maintained the same average, all other towns declined.

AVERAGE POPULATION PER HOUSEHOLD						
YEAR	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
1980	3.43	2.98	3.32	3.16	3.04	2.82
1990	3.07	2.79	3.08	3.02	2.78	2.60
2000	3.07	2.82	2.98	2.89	2.65	2.55
80 - 00 change	-0.36	-0.16	-0.35	-0.27	-0.39	-0.26

Norton - Age Distribution

- The age distribution has been reasonably stable with a modest shift from school age to adult.
- The median age has risen by 7 years over the period shown.

NORTON - AGE DISTRIBUTION						
# of Persons	0 - 5	5 - 17	18 - 64	65+	TOTAL	MEDIAN
1980	961	2779	7965	985	12690	26.30
1990	1094	2507	9476	1188	14265	30.56
2000	1444	3417	11776	1399	18036	33.40
% of Total	0 - 5	5 - 17	18 - 64	65+	TOTAL	
1980	8	22	63	8	100	
1990	8	18	66	8	100	
2000	8	19	65	8	100	

New Single Family (Sf) Housing Units And Condos

Source: Town of Norton Annual Report - Inspection Dept. report

NEW SINGLE FAMILY (SF) HOUSING UNITS AND CONDOS		
YEAR	SF	CONDO
1998	86	0
1999	159	0
2000	79	4
2001	50	10
2002	68	5
Total	442	19

Measures Of Wealth And Education

- Norton has the smallest per capita income change and the largest median household income change.
- This seeming disparity is connected to Norton having the highest average persons per household.

- Norton has the lowest per capita income but falls in the same class as Rehoboth and Plainville.
- Mansfield and Rehoboth had increases in the percent of the population in poverty.
- All other towns had decreases to varying degrees.

Wealth

	WEALTH					
1989 Data	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Per Capita Inc.	16023	18204	19016	17642	18329	16238
Median Household Inc.	43861	47080	50647	44967	45405	41758
# Persons in Poverty	718	615	738	161	647	338
% of population/poverty	5.03	3.71	3.73	1.86	4.42	4.92
1999 Data	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Per Capita Inc.	23876	27441	30732	26467	32294	25816
Median Household Inc.	64818	66925	69144	65373	64323	57155
# Persons in Poverty	663	998	401	313	503	309
% of population/poverty	4.65	6.02	2.02	3.62	3.44	4.50
Percent Change	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Per Capita Inc.	49.01	50.74	61.61	50.02	76.19	58.99
Median Household Inc.	47.78	42.15	36.52	45.38	41.67	36.87
Difference						
# Persons in Poverty	-55.00	383.00	-337.00	152.00	-144.00	-29.00
% Persons in poverty	-0.39	2.31	-1.70	1.76	-0.98	-0.42

Education - Level Attained (% Of Adults Over 25)

- Norton's population falls below average in education attainment. The deviation is larger in the college category.
- Norton, Rehoboth, and Plainville are similar. Mansfield, Easton and Foxboro are similar and more favorable.

	EDUCATION - LEVEL ATTAINED (% of adults over 25)					
2000 Data	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Population % HS grad	89.2	93.2	93.9	86.8	92.5	87.3
Population % Coll grad	30.8	42.1	39.6	32.1	37.5	28.3

Education - High School Graduates

- Norton has tended to have less high school graduates go on to college, the exception is Mansfield prior to 2001.
- Overall Norton has also had a smaller increase but, as with other towns the increase is significant.
- Norton and Mansfield have historically seen more high school graduates enter military service.

EDUCATION - HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES						
1985 #	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Total	120	174	268	n/a	202	n/a
2 Year College	28	20	31		32	
4 Year College	37	70	134		115	
Military	5	8	1		6	
1985%	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
2 Year College	23.33	11.49	11.57	n/a	15.84	n/a
4 Year College	30.83	40.23	50.00		56.93	
2 or 4 Year College	54.17	51.72	61.57	n/a	72.77	n/a
Military	4.17	4.60	0.37		2.97	
Other	41.67	43.68	38.06		24.26	
1991 #	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Total	130	123	213	n/a	159	n/a
2 Year College	30	18	46		23	
4 Year College	56	56	121		102	
Military	9	5	3		5	
1991%	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
2 Year College	23.08	14.63	21.60	n/a	14.47	n/a
4 Year College	43.08	45.53	56.81		64.15	
2 or 4 Year College	66.15	60.16	78.40	n/a	78.62	n/a
Military	6.92	4.07	1.41		3.14	
Other	26.92	35.77	20.19		18.24	
1997 #	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Total	108	195	186	n/a	138	n/a
2 Year College	25	17	30		19	
4 Year College	60	131	131		105	
Military	4	7	1		0	

EDUCATION - HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES CONTINUED						
1997%	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
2 Year College	23.15	8.72	16.13	n/a	13.77	n/a
4 Year College	55.56	67.18	70.43		76.09	
2 or 4 Year College	78.70	75.90	86.56	n/a	89.86	n/a
Military	3.70	3.59	0.54		0.00	
Other	17.59	20.51	12.90		10.14	
2001 #	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
Total	120	192	238	n/a	152	n/a
2 Year College	14	34	35		23	
4 Year College	75	130	177		107	
Military	2	7	1		2	
2001%	NORTON	MANSFIELD	EASTON	REHOBOTH	FOXBORO	PLAINVILLE
2 Year College	11.67	17.71	14.71	n/a	15.13	n/a
4 Year College	62.50	67.71	74.37		70.39	
2 or 4 Year College	74.17	85.42	89.08	n/a	85.53	n/a
Military	1.67	3.65	0.42		1.32	
Other	24.17	10.94	10.50		13.16	

Source for all data except as noted: Massachusetts Municipal Profiles; various years

Real Estate Taxes

- Mansfield, Foxboro and Plainville have had less reliance on residential taxes - more commercial and industrial taxes.
- These same towns also had the greatest increase in the residential share of the overall real estate tax levy.
- This may be an example of how commercial and industrial development eventually attracts new residential growth.
- All towns experienced greater growth in Residential such that; Commercial and Industrial levies fell as a percent of the overall real estate tax.

1993 Data

RESIDENTIAL				
1993 Data	Valuation	Rate	Levy	% of Total RE Tax
Norton	537,003,750	14.64	7,861,735	83.16
Mansfield	790,177,300	14.61	11,544,490	64.98
Easton	890,668,400	15.76	14,036,934	85.94
Rehoboth	505,036,100	11.27	5,691,757	91.86
Foxboro	704,651,044	13.49	9,505,743	72.94
Plainville	294,054,900	11.95	3,513,956	71.87
COMMERCIAL				
1993 Data	Valuation	Rate	Levy	% of Total RE Tax
Norton	71,253,100	14.64	1,043,145	11.03
Mansfield	91,525,200	16.67	1,525,725	8.59
Easton	83,076,139	15.76	1,309,280	8.02
Rehoboth	37,097,500	11.27	418,089	6.75
Foxboro	181,130,695	13.49	2,443,453	18.75
Plainville	62,368,200	11.95	745,300	15.24
INDUSTRIAL				
1993 Data	Valuation	Rate	Levy	% of Total RE Tax
Norton	37,466,100	14.64	548,504	5.80
Mansfield	281,704,200	16.67	4,696,009	26.43
Easton	62,589,600	15.76	986,412	6.04
Rehoboth	7,673,400	11.27	86,479	1.40
Foxboro	80,294,761	13.49	1,083,176	8.31
Plainville	52,717,700	11.95	629,977	12.88

2003 Data

RESIDENTIAL					% of Total
2003 Data	Valuation	Rate	Levy	RE Tax	
Norton	1,362,101,886	11.54	15,718,656	88.43	
Mansfield	1,602,941,991	15.68	25,134,130	78.06	
Easton	1,764,657,514	12.99	22,922,901	90.21	
Rehoboth	797,418,775	12.66	10,095,322	94.41	
Foxboro	1,280,843,571	13.74	17,598,791	81.62	
Plainville	584,092,900	12.6	7,359,571	82.95	
COMMERCIAL					% of Total
2003 Data	Valuation	Rate	Levy	RE Tax	
Norton	102,561,314	11.54	1,183,558	6.66	
Mansfield	118,488,809	15.68	1,857,905	5.77	
Easton	113,178,136	12.99	1,470,184	5.79	
Rehoboth	37,594,825	12.66	475,950	4.45	
Foxboro	229,955,726	13.74	3,159,592	14.65	
Plainville	79,671,400	12.6	1,003,860	11.31	
INDUSTRIAL					% of Total
2003 Data	Valuation	Rate	Levy	RE Tax	
Norton	75,640,400	11.54	872,890	4.91	
Mansfield	331,978,800	15.68	5,205,428	16.17	
Easton	78,434,300	12.99	1,018,862	4.01	
Rehoboth	9,619,000	12.66	121,777	1.14	
Foxboro	58,404,543	13.74	802,478	3.72	
Plainville	40,428,600	12.6	509,400	5.74	

Change from 1993 to 2003

RESIDENTIAL		COMMERCIAL		INDUSTRIAL	
93 - 03	Difference in % of RE tax	93 - 03	Difference in % of RE tax	93 - 03	Difference in % of RE tax
Norton	5.27	Norton	-4.38	Norton	-0.89
Mansfield	13.08	Mansfield	-2.82	Mansfield	-10.27
Easton	4.26	Easton	-2.23	Easton	-2.03
Rehoboth	2.55	Rehoboth	-2.30	Rehoboth	-0.26
Foxboro	8.68	Foxboro	-4.09	Foxboro	-4.59
Plainville	11.07	Plainville	-3.93	Plainville	-7.14

Affordable Housing *contributed by Terri Kennedy*

Norton's percentage of *affordable housing* is 5.42% (according to the Ch40B Subsidized Housing Inventory Listing maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, revised April 24, 2002). Since Norton's percentage of affordable housing falls below the state-mandated threshold of 10%, Norton is subject to the provisions of the Comprehensive Permit Law (G.L. c. 40 B, §§ 20-23 Effective Date: November 21, 1969 (Chapter 774 of the Acts of 1969, H5681)) also known as Chapter 40B.

The law allows a public agency, limited dividend partnership or nonprofit organization to apply for a comprehensive permit through the local Zoning Board of Appeals, in lieu of applying for permits from each applicable board, providing that the project they are proposing will offer at least 25% of its housing stock at an affordable rate. As part of the comprehensive permit process, the applicant can request waivers from local planning and zoning bylaws. Relevant town boards and commissions, for example, the Planning Board and Water and Sewer Commission, assist the ZBA in making its decision.

The comprehensive permit law does not relieve the applicant from obtaining state or federal permits necessary to complete the project. For example, the applicant has to apply for a wetland permit under the Wetland Protection Act or a Board of Health permit under Title V. Thus, the Conservation Commission and Board of Health would also review the application.

Aggrieved parties may appeal the ZBA decision to a court while the applicant would appeal an unfavorable decision to the Housing Appeals Committee.

Norton has been inundated with comprehensive permit applications. One project, Woodland Green on Maple Street, has been completed with forty-four units, eleven of which are affordable. Another project, Strawberry Fields on South Worcester Street, was approved by the ZBA but is being challenged in court by the Board of Selectmen and abutters. At least three other Chapter 40B projects have been proposed.

Local boards have become more vocal about the issues that face the community during the public hearing process and have increased their negotiating power by becoming more familiar with the language of the law. The Conservation Commission has obtained two conservation restrictions for four of the comprehensive permits, yielding a greater protection of the adjacent resource areas and preventing any further development in those sensitive areas.

In addition, Norton is taking a proactive stance on affordable housing by:

- Taking a leadership role in trying to change the Chapter 40B law at the state level to allow for a broader definition of affordable housing and giving communities the ability to declare a moratorium on Chapter 40B developments in order to allow their infrastructure to catch up.
- Passing a by-law requiring new developments to designate 10% of their housing stock as affordable.
- Through the Local Housing Partnership, exploring a friendly, Town-controlled Chapter 40B development on the recently purchased Slattery property on John Scott Boulevard. The LHP is working with a developer who is doing engineering work and developing a Master Plan for the Slattery property. The land will have multiple uses, including housing, organized sports, and Water Department storage/office facilities. By building affordable apartment buildings on the site, we hope to achieve our goal of 10 percent affordability, which is required under Chapter 40B.
- Working with Habitat for Humanity to build affordable housing.



There are some parcels in town that because of their environmental sensitivity should not be developed for affordable housing projects under Chapter 40B. These parcels include:

- The field to the east of the Rumford River on Route 123
- The kame terrace formation to the northeast of Taunton Avenue
- The large parcel of land containing extensive wetlands on Barrows Street
- The large parcels of land in the rear of Pine St. and Plain St.
- The current cranberry bog land on Bay Road

Resources on affordable housing:

- MGL Chapter 40B (MGL Chapter 40B, sections 20-23) – Comprehensive Permit, “Anti-snob law”
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Housing and Community Development
<http://www.state.ma.us/dhcd/>
- Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissioners. November/December 2001 newsletter.
<http://www.maccweb.org>
- Citizens’ Housing and Planning Association, Chapter 40B Task Force. <http://www.chapa.org>
- Town of Norton Annual Report 2003

Growth and Development Patterns *contributed by Dotti Freeman*

Norton has grown rapidly since 1960. Norton has changed from a rural or semi-rural community 50 years ago to a suburban community today. Norton’s growth is a reflection of the economic and population growth of the Boston Metropolitan Area over the same period and of the construction of I-495. Route 24 and I-95, which all provide easy access to and from Boston are all close enough to Norton. As Boston prospers, grows and becomes more dense, so does Norton. The Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) projects a 2010 population of 22,499 for Norton.

Year	Population	% Change
1960	6,818	--
1970	9,487	39.1
1980	12,690	33.8
1990	14,265	14.8
2000	18,036	26.4

As the population has grown, Norton like many communities has tried to cope with growth by passing regulations. Subdivision regulations were adopted in 1950's and zoning in 1974. State regulations of wetland and septic systems have also affected development patterns. But these efforts have had only limited success. Residential and commercial development is spread throughout the Town with only a weak relationship to environmental constraints or logic. In retrospect, it is clear that regulations have only marginally affected the location of development.

At present, Norton zoning and subdivision regulations are comparable to other communities in the region. A *Master Plan* completed in September 1998 recommended zoning changes which have been implemented. Norton comprehensively re-zoned the entire Town in the spring of 1999. The zoning map on the following page shows the adopted zones. There are now three residential districts requiring a minimum lot size of 40,000; 60,000; or 80,000 square feet. For the most part, the 60,000 and 80,000 square foot districts overlay the Zone III and Zone II of the *Water Resource Protection District* in an attempt to protect the aquifer that supplies drinking water to the Town. Norton now requires all new building lots to contain the minimum lot size in a dry, contiguous, regular shape. Norton has also created a Village Commercial zoning district that allows mixed commercial and residential development. The Village Commercial district also has design guidelines in an attempt to preserve the "New England" character of the area. The chart below shows the percentage of land within Norton in each zoning district. The Zoning Map is illustrated on Page 24.

Zone	Acreage	Percent
Residential-80	6,698	38
Residential-60	5,578	31
Residential-40	3,213	18
Village Commercial	155	1
Commercial	1,262	7
Industrial	899	5
Total	17,806	100

In terms of preserving "open space" through the development process, Norton has had some qualified success. In 1999, the Town approved the development of a golf course within the area known as the Great Woods. This area of 500 plus acres was zoned for commercial use. Instead, the Tournament Players Club has developed a golf course on some 400 acres of the site. The other 100 acres is still undeveloped and is being marketed for commercial development adjacent to the golf course. Although the golf course is certainly not comparable to undeveloped "open space". Given the commercial zoning of the property, use of the land for a golf course can be considered a "qualified" success as preservation of "open space".

Norton has also had success with "*cluster*" *development*. The zoning provides for "cluster" development which the Planning Board encourages and which has been extensively used by developers. Over the past 10-15 years more lots have been created within cluster developments than conventional subdivision. These include the Estates at Norton, Larson Farm, Misty Meadow, Christina Estates, Maple Common, Strawstone Estates, Longwood Estates and River Oaks. The latter two subdivisions in the area between North Worcester Street and Oak Street preserved some 100 acres of open space (including both dry and wetland). The conservation restricted area within Longwood Estates has already been transferred to the Land Preservation Society of Norton. The River Oaks conservation restriction should be completed in

late 2005 or early 2006. Since the two subdivisions are adjacent a continuous corridor of open space will be created.

Norton has made progress in controlling growth over the past few years. The Master Plan completed in 1998 estimated that if Norton were built-out under the zoning in place in 1999, Norton could add 21,250 persons to the current population (estimated at 16,508 in 1996, Norton Master Plan, page 2-11). Several years later, after zoning changes suggested in the Master Plan the Executive Office of Community Development estimated build-out would add 13,100 persons, a substantial decrease. These are at best rough estimates, but they indicate that the zoning changes have been somewhat effective in reducing the potential for growth.

In the final analysis, the best way to preserve open space is to buy it and take it off the market. The Town should re-consider the Community Preservation Act which provides authority for communities to establish a fund derived from a surcharge on local property tax with up to 70% of the accrued funds capable of being spent to purchase open space. The Town should also re-consider its restriction on cluster development with on-site septic systems. Section 6.8(3) of the zoning bylaw restricts reductions in cluster developments to no less than 40,000 square feet where on-site septic systems are used. This effectively negates the benefits of the “cluster” bylaw which promotes the preservation of open space. This restriction should be deleted from the bylaw.

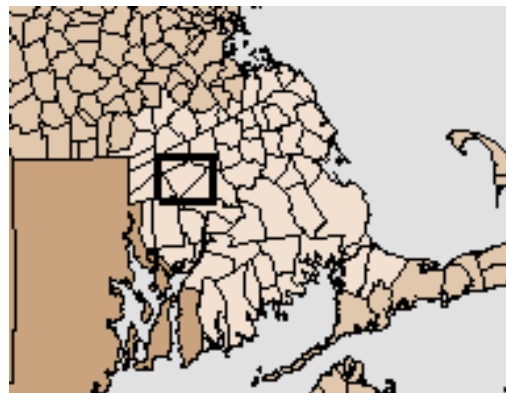
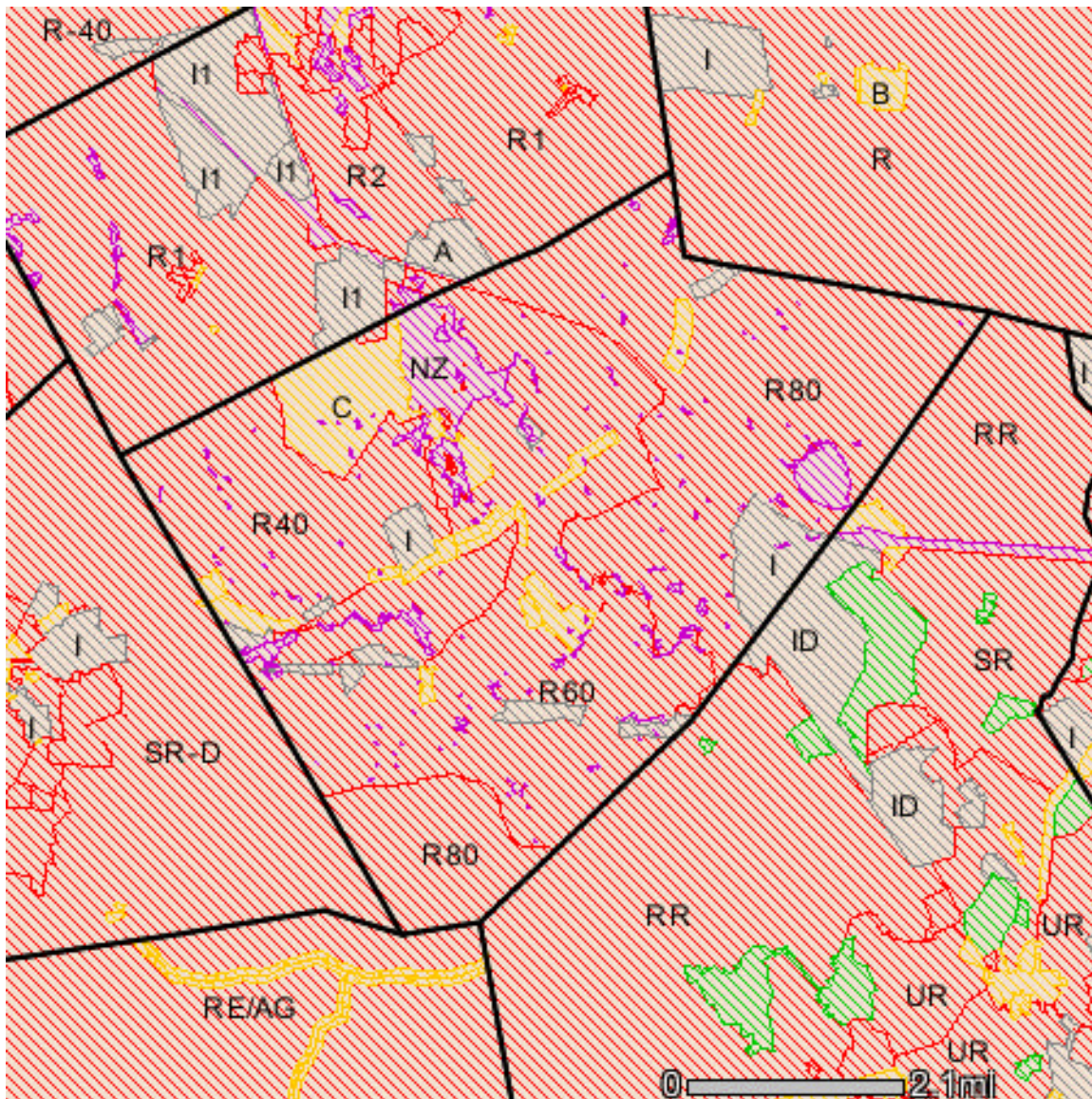
Infrastructure – Transportation *contributed by Pat MacLeod*

Norton is served by two exits from Rt. 495. One exit is the northeasterly end of Town (Rt. 123 Interchange), and has exits and entrances for both the north and south directions of 495. The other is in the north-central section (Rt. 140 Interchange). This has entrances from both sides of Rte 495 but only the northbound side of 495 is accessible from Rte 140. The two major roads through Norton are state routes 123 and 140.

The MBTA Commuter rail has stations in Mansfield and Attleboro. Norton has a parking area where commuters using the MBTA may park for a small fee and take a bus to and from the Mansfield train station. GATRA buses run Monday-Friday from 6:15 am to 11:25, Saturday from 8:30 am to 12:00 midnight and Sunday from 12:50 pm to 9:45 pm. In addition to the MBTA parking lot GATRA runs a bus on a route through Norton with several set bus stops, following the above schedule that will get residents to the Mansfield station. This route starts at Howard Street and follows Route 140. The bus will also stop anywhere along the route to pick up and discharge passengers. The schedule of bus is based on arrival and departure times of the most popular trains; however, the scheduled bus stops near Wheaton College are seasonal.

Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences provided this map through Conservation Mapper.

Zoning Map Town of Norton



GATRA also runs a bus service from Attleboro to Taunton, giving residents a chance to get to the train station in Attleboro. This service runs Monday through Friday with some limited service on Saturday. GATRA provides Dial A Ride for persons with disabilities and for those over the age of 60. Norton is also serviced by an in-town taxi service.

Traffic *Information provided by Dotti Freeman*

The Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD) has compiled a list of traffic accidents taking place at intersections in Norton from 1999 to 2001 in the publications entitled “Norton: Intersection Accident Listing, 1996-2001” and “Norton: Road Segment Accident Listing, 1996-2001” (Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development, March 10, 2003). The vast majority of the accidents caused property damage only; however, there were several accidents listed as having injuries to passengers. The most accidents occurred at the intersection of Mansfield Ave (Route 140) and the Great Woods Marketplace, followed by the intersection at East Main Street (Route 123) and Howard Street. There were no fatalities listed at any of the accidents at any of the intersections. SRPEDD also compiled a list of all accidents occurring on any road for the same time period. The most accidents occurred on West Main Street (Route 123), East Main Street (Route 123) and Mansfield Ave (Route 140). These are also the major roads bisecting the town and the most heavily traveled so the highest number of reported accidents would logically be on these roads.

Only one of the intersections received further study. “The North Worcester Street @ Richardson Avenue, Norton, Safety Study” was completed by the Southeastern Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization and SRPEDD in August of 2001. The main problem with the intersection was found to be inadequate sight distance. The study recommended lowering the speed limit, increasing the sight distance by regrading the hill on the southeast corner and leveling the grassy slope on the northeast corner, and further study to a four-way stop control signal.

Infrastructure - Water *contributed by Joan Guerrero with an interview with Duane Knapp, Water and Sewer Superintendent*

The existing water infrastructure consists of 140 miles of asbestos cement, cast iron and ductile iron mains. It currently services 5183 customers. The town-wide system supports 900 hydrants, providing fire protection to all areas serviced by the municipal system. At present there are plans to upgrade the present water mains throughout the system consisting of approximately 7 miles. The system is interconnected with the surrounding communities of Attleboro and Mansfield. Ninety-five percent is served by municipal water and fire protection. Water hookups are dependent on the water supply. The town is redeveloping its five current wells and hopefully, by 2004 a sixth well will be on-line. The town voters have moved to purchase water from a *desalinization* plant located in Dighton, MA to meet current and future needs. The town is permitted to withdraw a maximum capacity of 650 million gallons from the groundwater per year. The town is presently drawing 70 percent, or 475 million gallons of water per year. The Town of Norton’s water supply is currently drawn solely from the Canoe River Aquifer. The aquifer recharge areas within the town are protected through the zoning bylaw delineating the water resource protection district. The bylaw prohibits within the district any construction or development that has been deemed a potential detriment to the aquifer. The Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee, of which the Town of Norton is a member, successfully petitioned the US Environmental Protection agency to designate the Canoe River Aquifer as a sole source aquifer in a further effort to protect the source from any potential contamination. The water department will be moving forward toward adding further restrictions to protect its water resource district.

Infrastructure - Sewer *contributed by Joan Guerrero with an interview with Duane Knapp, Water and Sewer Superintendent*

The sewer system consists of 25 miles of both gravity and low-pressure sewer systems. Currently, there are 900 customers utilizing the system with the potential of approximately 1,000 homes when all eligible dwellings are tied in. The expansion of our sewers is limited due to the available capacity of the Mansfield Treatment Plant to which the effluent is deposited. The area sewered represents nearly 20% of the Town's properties having the municipal system available for their use. The Town of Norton is dependent on private septic systems for approximately 90% of the sewage disposal. This type of system has the potential of becoming a health hazard as well as a potential threat by aging and malfunctioning fields. A failing system is a detriment to surface waters within the town. For example, the major surface water in Town, Norton Reservoir, is not being used as a recreational feature. One of the major contributing factors to the demise of this water body is the effluent runoff from nearby failing systems. The recent construction of the multi-million dollar municipal sewer system around the Reservoir will assist in restoring this water body to the recreational prominence it once enjoyed. Similarly, sewer hookups continue to present day around Lake Winnecunnet. Norton's groundwater supply is generally protected from failing systems due mainly to the location of these systems with respect to the municipal well sites. The town is exploring, through a town-wide study called the [*Comprehensive Water Resources Management Plan*](#), options in wastewater and sewerage disposal to deal with Title V failures throughout the Town of Norton.

Build-out Analysis

At the Community Preservation Southeast SuperSummit of June 17, 2000, Norton received a copy of its Data Profile and Buildout projections. It is estimated from current zoning and state/federal laws that the town will reach a carrying capacity for development and resources, known as the [*buildout*](#). Buildout data was compiled by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs and presented to communities by the respective River Basin Team Leaders. Patrick Rogers, the Taunton River Basin Team Leader presented the buildout results to the Board of Selectmen in the summer of 2000. The Community Preservation Initiative also lists buildout information for Norton. From the buildout, the town can expect the population to grow to 31,136 people from the current population of 18,306. The number of households will increase to 10,526 while the 1998 data records only 5,581 households. The number of students enrolled in Norton public schools will increase from 2,252 (1999/2000) to 5,664 students.

Our natural resources will be stressed at the buildout capacity. The amount, of additional land that could be developed totals 10,181 acres. Additional solid waste generated will total 4,779 tons of non-recyclable solid waste and 1,942 tons of recyclable solid waste. Over 83 miles of roads will be built before Norton reaches its buildout capacity. We will need an additional 982,536 gallons/day of water for residential use and 1,324,010 gallons/day for commercial/industrial uses.

Information from the Buildout Analysis enables communities to be proactive in their preparation for water and wastewater issues, schools, and housing. From the buildout, Norton can evaluate the current schools and determine if additional classrooms and schools will be needed. Norton can evaluate the water usage of its residents. Water conservation education programs are already in use but can be dramatically increased knowing that available water sources are in short supply. The buildout analysis led to Norton residents agreeing to enter into agreements with the owners of the new desalinization plant in Dighton in order to be able to meet future water demands. The results from the buildout analysis may be scary and difficult to imagine but they also are giving us a jump-start in preparing for the future.

Smart Growth *contributed by Jim Hendrickson*

Smart growth as a concept intends development that serves the economy, community and environment in balance. Through well-developed research and resulting publication “smart growth” provides a framework for communities to grow economically and create a healthy environment with a range of housing, commercial and transportation options.

The Smart Growth Network is a coalition of 32 organizations that support smart growth. They developed a set of ten principals associated with healthy, vibrant and diverse communities. Within the ten principals are 100 policies and guidelines ranging from formal legislative efforts to somewhat informal plans and programs. Notably, achieving smart growth depends on realizing that no one policy is the magic answer but the collective policies in combination do provide a good base for success.

Listed below are the ten principles in order to give the reader a better understanding of the concepts.

- 1) Mix land uses
- 2) Take advantage of compact building design
- 3) Create a range of housing opportunities and choices
- 4) Create walkable neighborhoods
- 5) Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- 6) Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas
- 7) Strengthen and direct development towards existing communities
- 8) Provide a variety of transportation choices
- 9) Make development decisions predictable, fair and cost effective
- 10) Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Resources for growth and development:

- Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District.
- Getting to Smart Growth: 100 Policies for Implementation. Smart Growth Network. January 2002. <http://smartgrowth.org> and www.icma.org (International City/County Management Association). (The document may be downloaded for free but it is 104 pages long.)

