

### **Section 3**

#### **Community Setting**

##### **3A. Regional context**

Stow is only one of a handful of communities within Rt. 495 that has managed to retain a largely rural character with many prominent open lands, farm and orchards which contribute to the town's character and economy. Surrounding towns in all four directions are significantly more developed. Stow's population, originally agrarian, has changed over the recent decades to include workers in the high technology industries of electronics and biotechnology as well as many people who work from home in home-based businesses. Its socioeconomic level is generally middle to upper middle class.

Stow is within the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord (SuAsCo) Watershed. The Assabet River forms the main drainage area for most of the Town of Stow. The areas of highest elevation in Town are the bedrock and glacial till areas in the northwest corner of Town. Other major topographical heights include drumlins such as Spindle Hill, Birch Hill, Pilot Grove Hill, Spring Hill, and Orchard Hill.

No major highways pass through Stow. However, Routes 117 and 62 are heavily used by commuter and commercial traffic. These two roads carve the Town roughly into thirds. These main roads, as well as back roads which connect to adjacent towns of Acton, Sudbury, Maynard, Boxborough, Harvard, Bolton and Hudson, form the primary local road network. There are no public transportation systems in Stow. North on Boxborough Road is Minute Man Air Field, which has grown over the years but still accommodates only small aircraft.

Stow has several light industries; the major ones include Bose and Radant Corporation. Small businesses are clustered around the Lower Village Common (the eastern end of Route 117), scattered along Route 117, and in Gleasondale in the old mill complex.

The southeastern corner of the Town contains the former US Army Fort Devens Sudbury Annex, consisting of 1036 acres within Stow. This area was taken by the Army during World War II and contains considerable open space including Puffer Pond. With the closing of Fort Devens, this land has been transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and now forms Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge, a significant open space and recreational resource. Just across the Assabet River which forms the northwestern boundary of the Assabet Refuge is the Gardner Hill Conservation Land (the Town Forest) which encompasses 326 acres. This area is traversed by Elizabeth Brook which stems from Delaney Pond in the northwest corner of Stow. Elizabeth Brook passes down from Delaney Pond into Wheeler Pond near the center of Stow and then on to the Gardner Hill land emptying into the Assabet River just opposite the Assabet Refuge. In the center of Town is Minister's Pond which is flanked by Route 117 and a portion of Crescent St.

In the southern section of Stow is Lake Boon (Boon's Pond). Although originally surrounded by summer cottages, it now has mostly year-round residents. The Town Beach (31 acres) is located on the eastern side of the lake. Due to the increase in population around the lake, some pollution has occurred due to failing septic systems or cesspools. Over the last few years most of these systems have been upgraded and residents around the lake have worked diligently to decrease the pollutant load to the Lake. Nearby is White Pond, which is controlled by the Town of Maynard which prohibits recreational activity to protect water quality for the nearby municipal wells. Sudbury State Forest is nestled among the Wildlife Refuge, White Pond and the Lake Boon area.



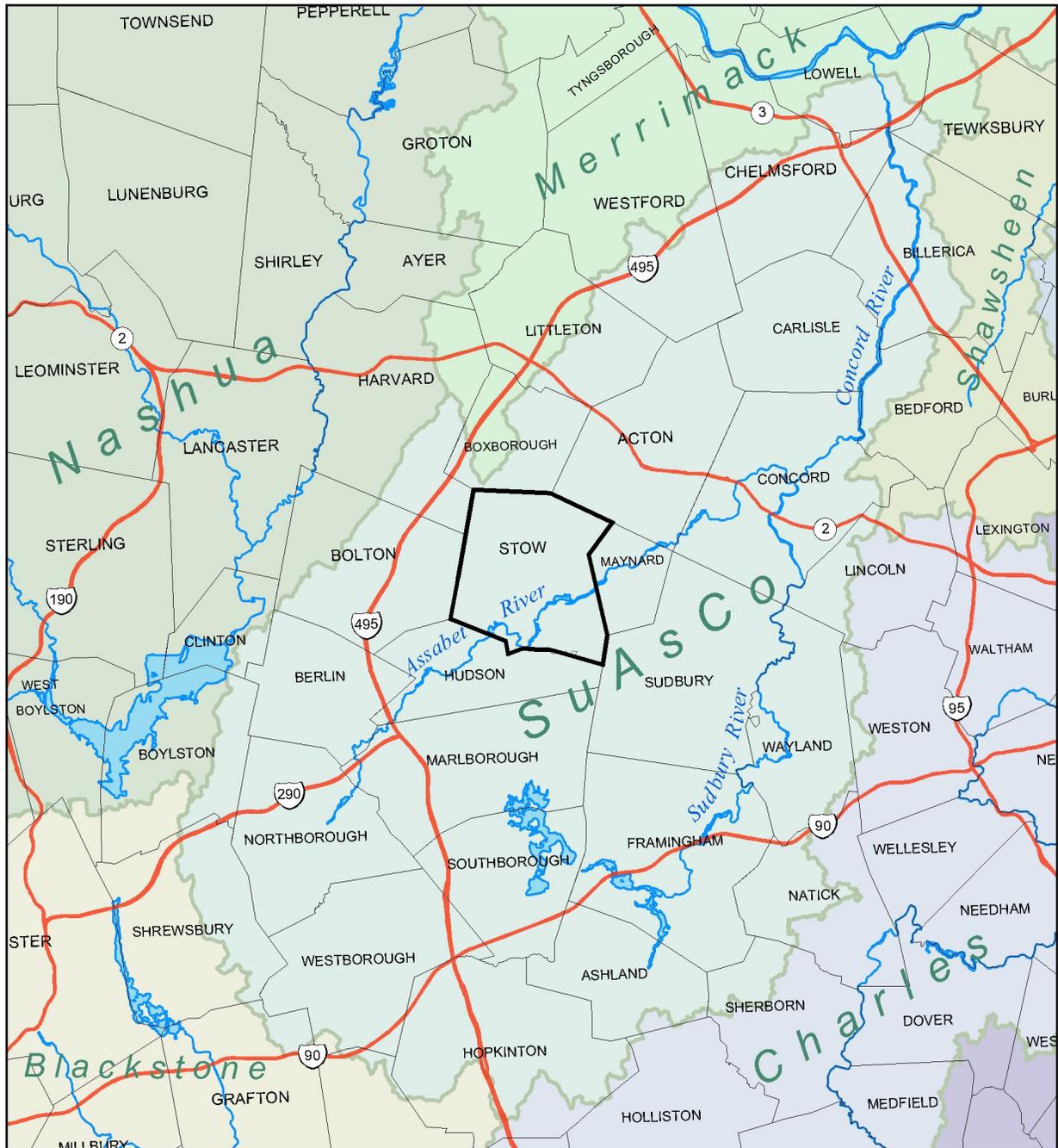
In the southwestern corner of Stow is a former private landfill which contracted its services to Stow and Hudson. This landfill was closed in 1996 and has been capped. This sector of Town also has a great deal of undeveloped land, only a small amount of which is permanently protected and some industry, e.g. Radant Corp and the new Bose facility. There are two new large developments in this area, the Villages at Stow 40B and the Arbor Glen Active Adult Neighborhood, but a large amount of undeveloped land still lies west of Hudson Road. Off more to the west is the Annie Moore land (27 acres) which connects to conservation land in Bolton.

The northwestern section of Stow is dominated by two main features, the Delaney Flood Control project and the Harvard Acres residential development. The Delaney Project encompasses 170 acres consisting of open water, seasonal shore marshes, and a perimeter of wooded or open conservation land. The north central region contains the Marble Hill Conservation Area (249 acres) which is close to but not immediately adjacent to the Delaney land.

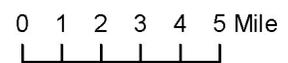
The northeastern sector of Stow is dominated by a major marsh system, Heath Hen Meadow, through which Heath Hen Meadow Brook meanders. Near this brook is the Captain Sargent Farm conservation area comprising 153 acres and the Flagg Hill Conservation Area (243 acres), both of which were acquired with assistance from the Self-Help Grant Program.

Many of these conservation areas are close to being linked in a green belt throughout the Town. Numerous trails exist throughout Stow; however, they have not yet been linked. One of the goals of this Plan is to create a green belt and trail system throughout Stow, perhaps linking with adjacent towns.

### Stow - Regional Context and Watersheds



- SuAsCo - Sudbury / Assabet / Concord River Watershed
- Watershed Divides
- Highways



Hydrography, Town Boundaries, and Roads data provided by MassGIS.

Map produced June 2006.

Stow is a member of MAGIC, one of 8 subregions of the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission. MAGIC is a group of communities that meet regularly to discuss issues of common interest. The Sudbury Valley Trustees is a regional nonprofit organization that works on open space protection issues in the town of Stow, as does the Stow Conservation Trust, a local nonprofit land trust founded in 1978. The Assabet River Rail Trail is a regional greenway project which is located within the town of Stow.

### **3B. History of the Community**

The history of Stow has been compiled by several authors over the years. The first history available in book form is the Crowell history, published in 1933 for the 250th anniversary of the town. The most recent history of Stow was compiled by Ellie Childs and published by the Stow Historical Society Publishing Company as part of the Tercentenary in 1983. A brief summary of the histories is excerpted below.

An area of forest, wooded hills, streams and river, swamps and rock-strewn meadows ("meane land") comprised Pompositticut Plantation in the 1600s. We know this area as Stow today. The town in the eastern part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, 25 miles west of Boston, was centered in the cluster of communities of Concord, Sudbury, Marlborough, Lancaster, Groton (Groton) and Nashoboy (Littleton).

Matthew Boon of Charlestown explored Stow about 1660 and settled on Boon Hill which is adjacent to what is now known as Lake Boon. John Kettle settled in Stow about 1663. Both fled in the 1670s when hostile Indians were on the rampage.

The first action in establishing the settlement called Stow occurred in 1669 through the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. On May 16, 1683, twenty families were deemed the maximum the land could support and the town of Stow was incorporated. In the latter part of the century the Town had two main concerns: achieving self-sufficiency and finding a minister. Stow originally included portions of what are now Boxborough and Maynard. In the early 1700s some of the first bridges were built in Stow primarily to cross the Assabet River. In the late 1600s the first mill was documented on "Assibath Brook" (now Elizabeth Brook). Many other mills followed: "wherever there was sufficient flow of water one could expect to find a mill" (Childs, 1983).

One of the more notable citizens of Stow in the 1700s was Henry Gardner who in 1768 was unanimously chosen to go to Faneuil Hall in Boston to take "the state of our public affairs" into consideration. He was later appointed Receiver-General by the Provincial Congress to collect and hold the colonists' taxes in lieu of payment to the Crown. In 1775 he was unanimously elected Treasurer by the 3rd Provincial Congress.

On April 19, 1775, John Gates Diary officially recorded that "a civil war [the Revolution] began in this Province" (Childs, 1983). Dr. Samuel Prescott came galloping into Stow to warn the people and the 81 militia men that the British were coming.

After the Revolution, the Town of Boxborough was formed in 1783 with lands annexed from Stow and Littleton. The population of Stow was about 935 in that year. In the early 19th Century, the town of Maynard was formed from the area of Stow known as Assabet Village.

In 1786 there was a severe economic depression. Farmers were so desperate that in Western Massachusetts they started a revolt, Shay's Rebellion. Captain Nathaniel Sargent from Stow led a company to quell the revolt. Times were particularly hard after the Revolution so the Town built the Poor Farm still located on White Pond Road.

The 19th century was a time of growth and change. The appearance of the Town was documented on the 1830 map of Stow. The woolen mill was built on the Assabet River in 1813. In 1823, Lucy Smith bought the Gibson Farm on Pompositticut Hill and eventually deeded it to her son-in-law, Isaac Maynard. Eventually this land became a part of the town of Maynard. "Half-mile trees" - elms - were probably planted before 1850 from Rock Bottom (now Gleasondale) to Stow Center. Dutch Elm disease has now destroyed all of them. The railroad came to Rock Bottom in June of 1850. It came from South Acton through Maynard eventually to Rock Bottom and ended in Marlborough. Near the Rock Bottom Mill was a shoe factory and cabinet makers

The Civil War drew a prompt response from the Stow militia. The townspeople had long supported abolishing the slave trade. Stow sent 112 men to fight. The Rock Bottom Mill prospered by supplying woolen goods.

Some of the more notable citizens of Stow of this period included John W. Brooks, a railroad magnate, Dr. Willena Peck, a distinguished physician, Alonzo Parks, an African trader, John Witt Randall, a learned scholar and collector, Col. Elijah Hale, businessman and politician, and Edwin Whitney, a lawyer and politician.

At the beginning of the 20th century, many changes occurred. Stow's population was 1002. The electric trolley line of the Concord, Maynard and Hudson Street Railway was installed through Stow. In 1923, the trolley was replaced with buses. Hudson Light and Power brought power to Stow in 1906. A little later the Marborough-Hudson Gas Company brought gas to the community. Indoor plumbing, a telephone in the Town Hall and running water were now in place. Wireless was available at every railway station. Shortly after 1912, radios were commonplace in households. The automobile appeared in Stow in the first part of the century.

The dam on Bailey Brook on Barton road enlarged Lake Boon and a few summer cottages were built around the Lake. A steamer ran around the shore to transport men to and from the train stop at Whitman's Crossing near what is now the corner of Sudbury Road and Barton Road. The Town took title to the Lake Boon dam in the late 1950s.

World War I had 77 Stow "boys" enlisted. After the war many immigrants arrived having fled Europe. In the Depression it was hard to make money but the citizens of Stow, good farmers, did not go hungry and inspired non-farming people to garden. The hurricane of 1938 did significant damage to the trees and buildings of the Town. Several sawmills were set up and worked for more than three years to convert the damaged trees into lumber. Then came World War II and many young men in Stow were drafted. Much of the stockpiled lumber cut from the trees felled during the 1938 hurricane was used to construct the barracks at Fort Devens in Ayer. After the war there was a great pressure to produce more food and Stow orchards constructed cold storage barns to handle the demand for increased quantities of fruit.

In 1952 the Planning Board was established. In 1961 the Conservation Commission, concerned with land acquisition and preservation of open space, was established. Since that time the Town, largely through the efforts of the Conservation Commission, has purchased or acquired many significant parcels of land in Town for conservation and agricultural preservation and actively manages much of this land for public use. Furthermore, the Town has obtained a number of conservation restrictions on privately owned property through donations, purchases and negotiation with developers.

The town's open space preservation efforts have been augmented by the Stow Conservation Trust, a private, nonprofit land trust in existence for more than 25 years. The Trust has been encouraging many of the larger land holders in the Town to protect their land especially through agricultural and conservation restrictions (CRs). The Trust has also made efforts to educate and provide non-

monetary assistance to private land holders so that they might realize the variety of different protection mechanisms that are available. This effort was instrumental in a number of recent efforts to preserve properties including Shelburne Farm, a local apple orchard preserved through the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program of the Division of Food and Agriculture. As part of the preservation package the Town purchased an adjacent woodlot for conservation/recreation land. An abutter donated a parcel of land to the Town to grant access to the conservation land and in addition, placed a permanent conservation restriction on an adjacent parcel. Subsequently, the Town has put together several other purchase/CR parcels linked to the Shelburne Farm area. Recent partnerships between the Town and the Stow Conservation Trust include the protection of the Red Acre Woodlands off Red Acre Rd. and South Acton Road and the Hale Woodlands parcel in southwest Stow. The Trust has also recently secured protection of the 32 acre Leggett Property along Rt. 62.

The Town of Stow has active recreation facilities and assets managed by the Recreation Department and a paid Recreation Director. Actively used by residents and especially youth groups the facilities have grown over time. However, the addition of required facilities has not kept up with the usage and demand resulting in an active recreation facilities deficit in the town. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this Plan. The Stow Recreation Commission is an appointed body of 5 members, chartered to oversee the Recreation Department and Director. The Recreation Department mission is to provide recreation opportunities for residents of Stow as well as to maintain the Town's recreational assets. Under leadership of the Recreation Director, a mix of programs are run and overseen. Some programs, such as the active school age soccer program and baseball program are run by independent groups, such as Stow Soccer Club, and Assabet Little League. Other programs are run by the Department. Two examples are the youth basketball program and the management of the town beach personnel and swimming programs. Other varied programs are independently run, with groups and businesses paying for use of fields and facilities. There is a very diverse list of programs year round promoted through a mailing to every resident for each season.

In 2001 the Town voted acceptance of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and completed a Community Preservation Plan in 2002. The plan identifies the need to provide affordable housing as the community's most pressing priority. Because Stow currently only has about 7.5% of its affordable housing certified by the MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Town has been under threat of proposed Chapter 40B "affordable housing" development projects. With the approval of the Villages at Stow, a large 40B project along Rt. 117 at the intersection of Hudson Rd. and the completion of a DHCD-approved "planned production" plan, the town achieved protection from 40Bs for one year. The continuation of this "protection" is dependent on the construction timetable for this project and the town's ability to continue developing locally-sponsored affordable units. The town has adopted an inclusionary housing bylaw and CPA funds have recently been voted at Town Meeting for an innovative program to purchase deed restrictions on existing modest homes to keep them affordable. The overall aim of this approach is to provide additional permanent affordable units while also maintaining the rural character that is so highly valued by the majority of Stow residents. It is anticipated that additional projects using CPA funds to protect important open space parcels will be brought forward to town meeting in coming years. The Town has also recently created an Affordable Housing Trust, which will be able to expend revenues contributed by developers pursuant to the Town's Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw. This Open Space and Recreational Plan, and the ranking criteria developed by the Stow Open Space Committee should help guide those efforts toward protection of the most important parcels.

**3C. Population characteristics**

The population of Stow has increased from 5,144 in 1980 to 5,902 in 2000 and 6,385 in 2006. Although the ratio of adults to children was constant from 1980-1992, recently it has increased considerably (Table 1). This statistic, combined with documented crowded conditions at the town's existing ballfields, points to the need to provide additional playing fields. In contrast the elderly have declined in number, as has the remaining adult population. The racial mix in Stow is primarily Caucasian, however, there is a small representation of diverse minorities including Native Americans (Table 2); the racial mix has not changed much since 1992. The population is well educated with more than half of the adults having a college education (Table 3). This is also reflected in the distribution of occupations which indicates that more than half of the Town constitutes professionals and managers (Table 4). Notable is the declining number of individuals who list "agriculture" as their primary occupation.

**Table 1. Population distribution in Stow, 1992-2000.**

|                             | 1992 <sup>1</sup> | 2000 <sup>2</sup> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Children:                   | 1451              | 1700              |
| pre school                  | 433               | 510               |
| K-8                         | 646               | 866               |
| 9-12                        | 372               | 324               |
| College age                 | 318               | 270               |
| Elderly                     | 578               | 485 <sup>3</sup>  |
| Adults other than above     | 3264              | 3447              |
| Median age (years)          | 35.6              | 38.8              |
| Ratio of children to adults | 0.35              | 0.43              |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>5611</b>       | <b>5902</b>       |

<sup>1</sup> 1992 Stow Town Census  
<sup>2</sup> 2000 US Census  
<sup>3</sup> 65 years and older  
n.a. Data not available

**Table 2. Racial Make-up of Stow<sup>a</sup>**

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| White                  | 5635 |
| Black                  | 21   |
| Native American        | 11   |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 120  |
| Hispanic               | 84   |
| Other                  | 21   |

<sup>a</sup> 2000 US Census data.

**Table 3. Educational Attainment of Stow Citizens<sup>a</sup>**

|                              |      |
|------------------------------|------|
| 0-8 years of school          | 52   |
| 9-12 yr. no diploma          | 88   |
| high school graduate         | 746  |
| Some college                 | 625  |
| college graduates and beyond | 2451 |

<sup>a</sup> 2000 US Census data.

Table 4. Occupation distribution of adults in Stow as of :

|  | 2000 <sup>1</sup> |    | 1990 <sup>2</sup> |    |
|--|-------------------|----|-------------------|----|
|  | Number            | %  | Number            | %  |
| a. Management/professional & related         | 1952              | 56 | 1520              | 46 |
| b. Sales and office occupations              | 633               | 18 | See clerical      |    |
| c. Clerical <sup>3</sup>                     | n.a.              |    | 829 <sup>3</sup>  | 25 |
| d. Craftsmen/foremen/artists <sup>3</sup>    | n.a.              |    | 199               | 6  |
| e. Agriculture                               | 1                 | <1 | 50                | 2  |
| f. Service                                   | 277               | 8  | 261               | 8  |
| g. Construction/extraction/maintenance       | 133               | 4  | 162               | 5  |
| h. Production/transportation/material moving | 151               | 1  | n.a.              |    |
| i. Self-employed <sup>4</sup>                | 349               |    | 267               | 8  |
| Totals                                       | 3496              |    | 3288              |    |

<sup>1</sup> 2000 US Census data.

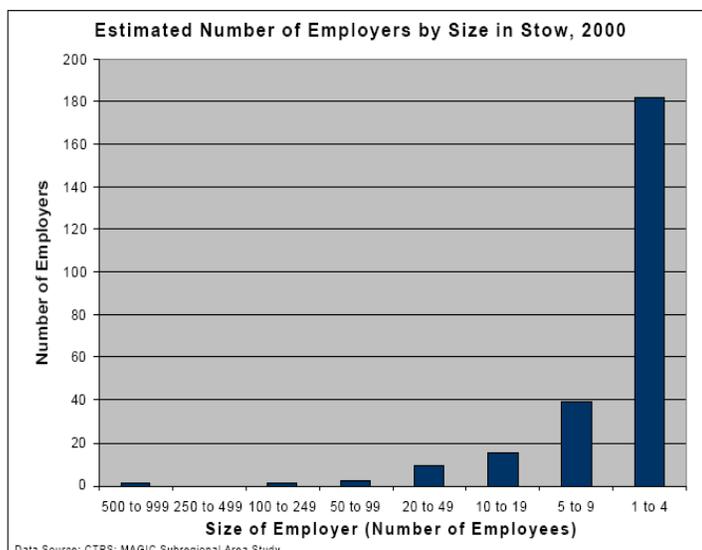
<sup>2</sup> 1990 US Census data.

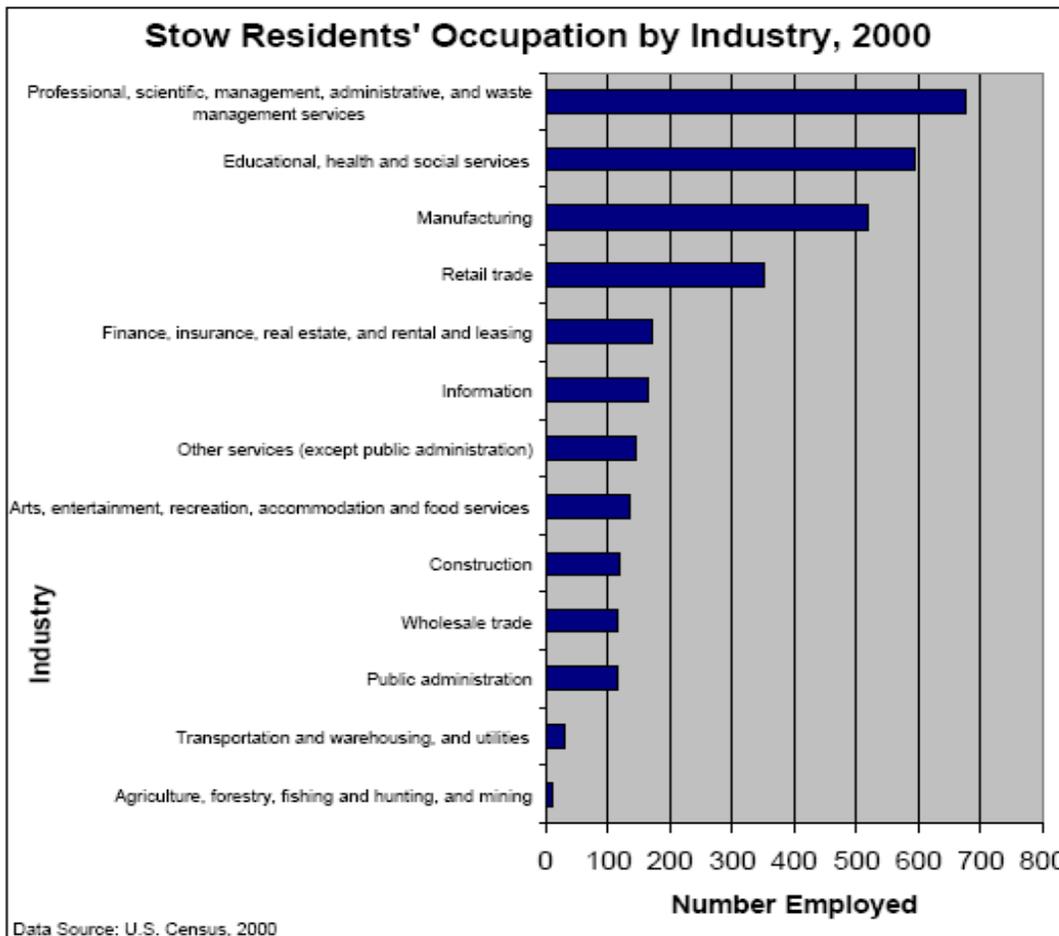
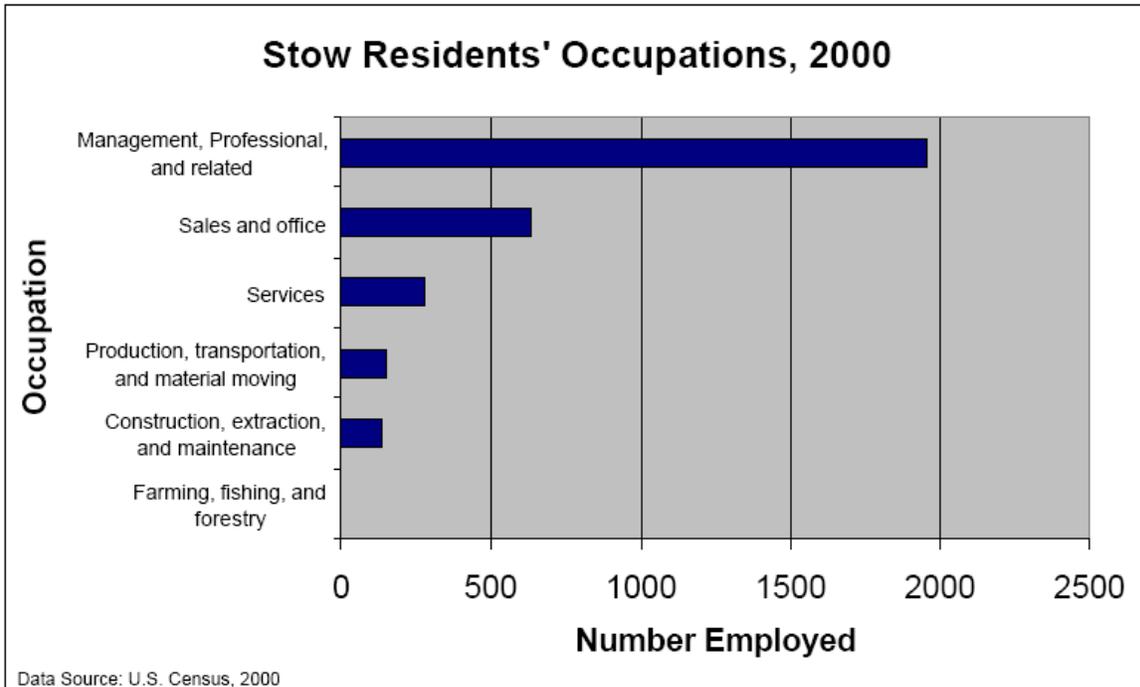
<sup>3</sup> Now merged into another category in the 2000 US Census data.

<sup>4</sup> May overlap into some of the other categories; was not clear in 2000 US Census data.

n.a., data not available.

### Size of Employers in Stow





### 3D. Growth and development

#### *Patterns and trends*

The current population is about what was projected in the 1997 Open Space Plan. The earlier, rapid growth of the eighties slowed, but during the mid nineties increased again until the recent recession (Table 5 & 6). Slowing of the 1980s rapid growth was reflected in the drop in new housing starts and housing sales as well as in the drop in median sale price in the nineties, but this has now changed. Although the median house price dropped \$50,000 in the early nineties from its peak in 1987-88 (Table 7), it has now skyrocketed, in part due to the construction of ever-larger homes. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the number of school age children dropped but has now increased considerably putting more pressure on the school system. Housing starts have increased in the last couple of years as the economic recession has eased but are still low compared with other towns in the region. Although the median age of the town has increased, the elderly population has decreased. This may be due to increasing property taxes pushing people on a fixed income out of town.

The Town of Stow contains 11,311.4 acres of land and 167 acres of water. The population

density of Stow is 326.79 persons per square mile, compared with a density of 1946.9 in Maynard, 428.27 in Boxborough, 207.77 in Bolton, 222.14 in Harvard, 1532.28 in Hudson, and 1004.10 in Acton.

#### *Income Characteristics:*

In 2000, the median income for a household in the town was \$96,290, and the median income for a family was \$102,530. Males had a median income of \$75,758 versus \$40,911 for females. The per capita income for the town was \$38,260. About 1.5% of families and 2.7% of the population were below the poverty line, including 1.6% of those under age 18 and 1.7% of those aged 65 or over.

Table 5. Population of Stow: 1930-2003.<sup>a</sup>

|      |                   |
|------|-------------------|
| 1930 | 1142              |
| 1940 | 1243 <sup>b</sup> |
| 1950 | 1700 <sup>b</sup> |
| 1960 | 2573 <sup>b</sup> |
| 1965 | 3191 <sup>b</sup> |
| 1970 | 3984              |
| 1975 | 4678 <sup>b</sup> |
| 1980 | 5144              |
| 1985 | 5308              |
| 1990 | 5328              |
| 1995 | 5626 <sup>c</sup> |
| 2000 | 5902              |
| 2001 | 6110 <sup>c</sup> |
| 2002 | 6050 <sup>c</sup> |
| 2003 | 6079 <sup>c</sup> |

<sup>a</sup> US Census data unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>b</sup> MISER, University of Massachusetts Amherst.

<sup>c</sup> Stow Town Clerk; more recent numbers are suspect because some respondents are unwilling to list their children for security reasons.

<sup>d</sup> MAGIC projection, Stow 2000 Master Plan

Table 7. Housing and Construction in Stow.<sup>a</sup>

| Year | New construction <sup>b</sup> | Number of sales  | Median sale price |
|------|-------------------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| 1986 | 116                           | 118              | \$199,000         |
| 1990 | 65                            | 50               | \$178,500         |
| 1995 | 7                             | 109              | \$288,601         |
| 1998 | 25                            | 126              | \$383,592         |
| 2000 | 27                            | 123              | \$479,818         |
| 2002 | 21                            | 155 <sup>c</sup> | \$573,793         |

<sup>a</sup> Banker and Tradesman & local realtors.

<sup>b</sup> 1990 US Census data.

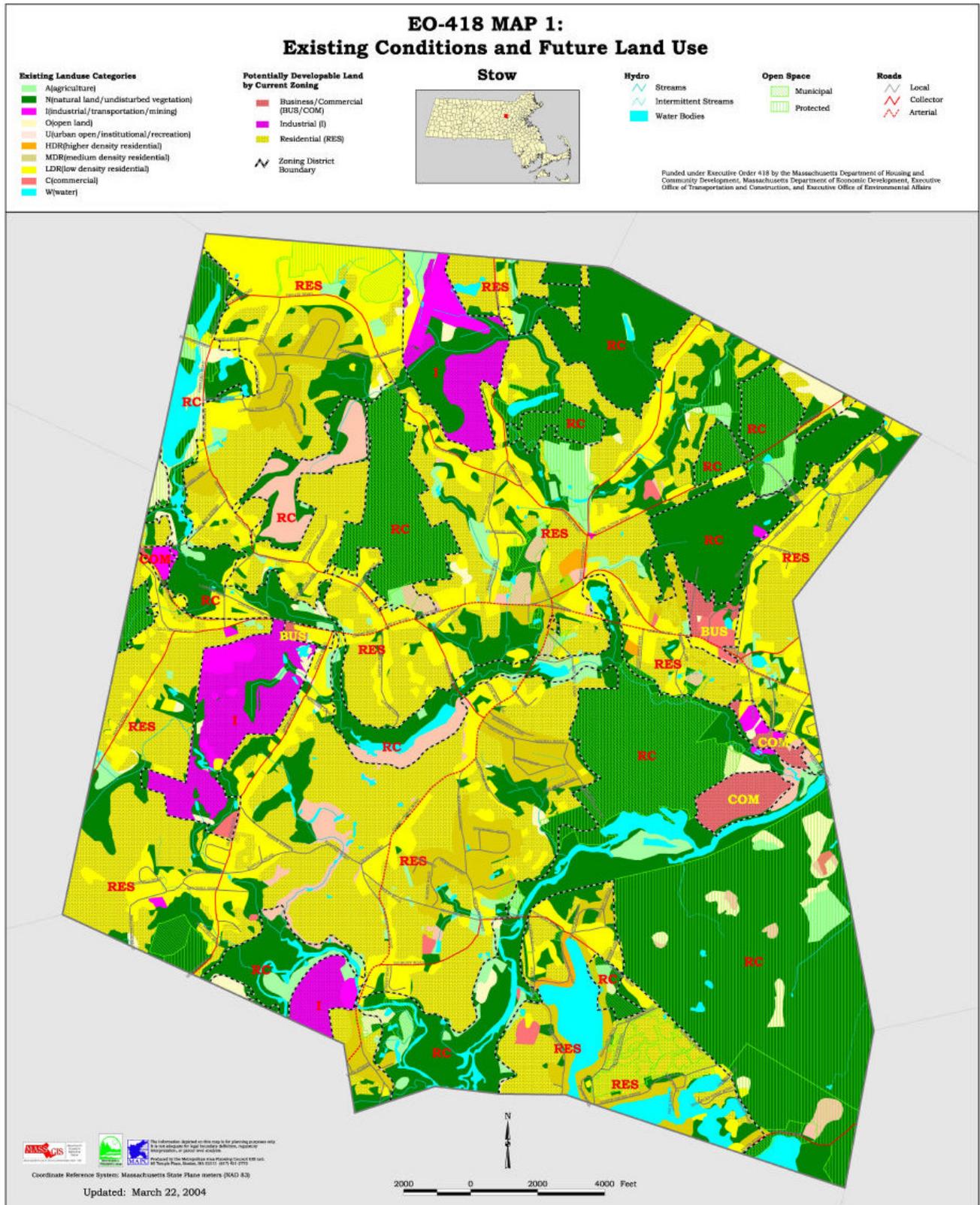
<sup>c</sup> Includes Meeting House sales.

n.a. not available

**Single Family New House Construction Building Permits in Stow**  
**(from www.citydata.com)**

| <u>Year</u> | <u># of Permits</u> | <u>Average Cost</u> |
|-------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1996        | 19                  | \$118,200           |
| 1997        | 30                  | \$130,000           |
| 1998        | 29                  | \$141,900           |
| 1999        | 23                  | \$113,600           |
| 2000        | 41                  | \$173,000           |
| 2001        | 28                  | \$161,700           |
| 2002        | 36                  | \$167,500           |
| 2003        | 16                  | \$238,700           |
| 2004        | 34                  | \$228,100           |
| 2005        | 29                  | \$270,800           |

## Stow Build Out Map – Our Future as Programmed by Existing Zoning



### ***Infrastructure - Transportation systems***

The principal transportation network which serves Stow has not changed significantly from that described in the 1997 Open Space Plan. Route 62, heading south into Hudson, previously had a low underpass. The underpass was removed and trucks now readily maneuver this route. The regional transportation accessibility has not changed.

Public transportation is still provided only by the South Acton train station, part of the MBTA's Fitchburg to Boston line. There are still not many designated pedestrian, bicycle or horseback ways, although in progress is the establishment of a bicycle/walking trail, the Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT), along the old Boston & Maine railroad right of way, running from Hudson, northerly from the Lake Boon area, parallel to the Assabet River and toward Maynard. The ARRT is partially complete except for Stow where a few private landowners have raised concerns; several alternative proposals are being examined that would provide for continuation of the trail. (ARRT Feasibility Study, 1997).

### ***Infrastructure - Water supply systems***

The water supply system in Stow has not changed significantly from that described in the 1997 Open Space Plan. It is still primarily based on individual on-site systems except for a number of privately owned "public" systems which either serve small developments, recreation areas or businesses and the town-owned system described in the 1980 Plan. The "public" systems include those of Harvard Acres, Juniper Hills, Plantation Apartments, Meetinghouse at Stow, Pilot Grove Apartments and the Town Common water system, which serves the town buildings, one home and a church. Additional multiple-user water supply systems are proposed for the Villages at Stow 40B and the Arbor Glen "active adult neighborhood" development off Hudson Road. The groundwater pollution problems noted in Section 4.7.7. of the 1997 Open Space Plan have mainly been resolved. Currently under consideration is a small-scale public or private water supply system to serve the "Lower Village" area, in order to alleviate regulatory constraints on businesses in this area. .

Protection of groundwater resources is a high priority according to Stow residents. It received a high priority ranking in the town-wide survey for the Master Plan in addition to being identified by participants in the Master Plan public forums. In the late 1980s Town Meeting approved a Water Resource Protection overlay zoning district in order to protect the groundwater resources of Stow. The overlay zones are based on an evaluation of the groundwater potential throughout the Town. The protected areas are those with the highest potential and generally coincide with the major aquifers in Stow. The Water Resource Protection district is shown in Map 4.

### ***Infrastructure – Wastewater Disposal systems***

Sewage disposal systems in Stow, still mostly individual on-site septic systems, have not significantly changed from that described in the 1997 Open Space Plan. New systems are all required to meet the local Board of Health regulations which are more stringent than the State's Title 5. Several new high density residential developments have constructed or plan to construct on-site private sewage treatment facilities including Meetinghouse at Stow on Rt. 117, the Villages at Stow 40B on Rt. 117, the Arbor Glen Active Adult Neighborhood (AAN) development on Hudson Road, and the Ridgewood AAN on Boxboro Road.

### ***Long-term Development Patterns***

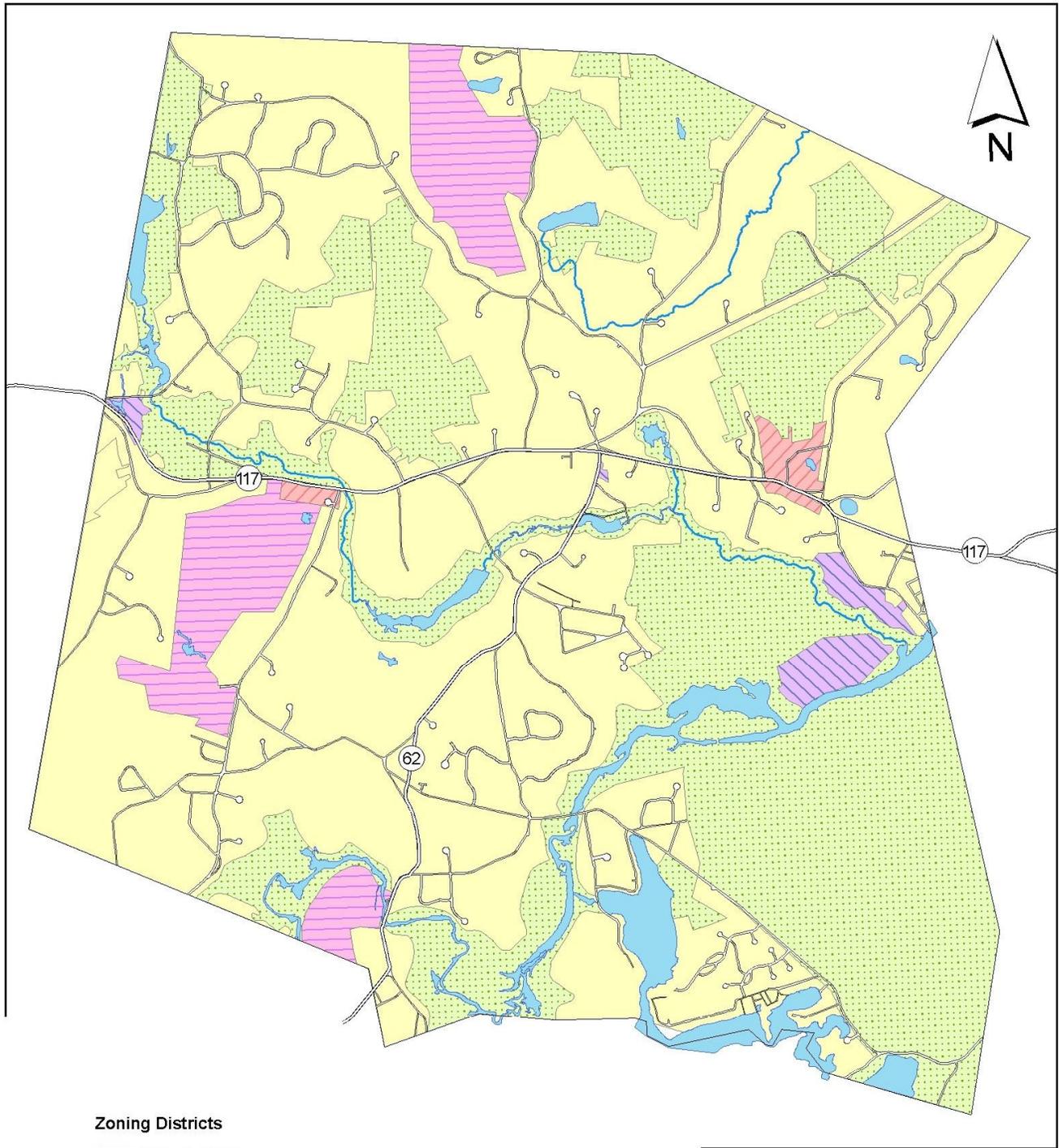
Stow has always prided itself on maintaining its rural character. Various town surveys over the years have consistently shown that the rural nature of the Town is crucial to the citizens. The most recent survey taken by the Master Plan Committee in 2003 reconfirms this desire. The perception of rural character is strongly dependent on the large amount of existing open land along the main roads of

Stow. Thus preservation of these highly visible undeveloped parcels is necessary to maintaining the character of the Town.

The traditional development pattern in Town has encompassed 2 primary types of development: residential and business/light industry. During the 1980s, land values soared and some tracts of agricultural and forest land were sold for development. With the recession of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the drop in land values, growth slowed to its pre-boom pace. In the mid-1990s, however, housing growth increased and is likely to continue for the coming decade. Recently approved development projects include the 96 unit Villages at Stow 40B being developed by Habitech, and the 66-unit "Arbor Glen" Active Adult Neighborhood development by Pulte Homes. Both of these developments are near the intersection of Hudson Rd. and Rt. 117. In addition, Landwest Development (Habitech) has begun construction of 33 homes at Derby Woods off Harvard Road. Additional large developments are likely to continue to be submitted to the town and will accelerate the pace of new home construction. Particularly vulnerable is the land in the southwest corner of town where there are a large number of undeveloped parcels and little protected land. This area is identified for special attention in the Action section of this plan. Also vulnerable are all of the town's privately owned golf courses, which remain undeveloped due to the positive economic climate for golf, but are otherwise highly developable.

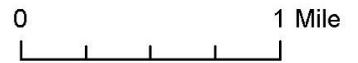
The 2000 Build Out Study completed by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) for Stow identified the potential for the construction of more than 1300 additional homes *under current zoning*, which would increase the population from 5902 at the time of the study to 9582. See Required Map 1-Zoning. Not taken into consideration are increases in population resulting from "density bonuses" in 40Bs or AAN developments, which could put this total higher. The study estimated that new development permitted by current zoning would add 699 new schoolchildren to the town, generate a demand for 515,915 additional gallons of water/day, add 30 miles of new roads, and generate an additional 1888 tons of solid waste/year. The study also identified the potential for an additional 3.1 million square feet of commercial/industrial development on land currently zoned for this use. A map of what Stow would look like if built out – produced as part of this study – is contained in the previous section.

### Stow - Zoning



**Zoning Districts**

-  BUS - Business
-  COM - Commercial
-  I - Industrial
-  RES - Residential
-  RC - Recreation / Conservation
-  Water Bodies



Zoning data developed by Town of Stow, MA.

Map produced March 2008.

This study provided helpful insight for the community and depicts a completely suburbanized landscape that will require significant investment in capital projects (such as new schools) to meet the demand generated by this development. While it is difficult to imagine a future Stow in which the only “open” land is that which is currently under permanent protection, that is the future reality that is depicted in the build out analysis. In addition to the impacts on the school population, such development would fragment habitat, threaten surface and ground water quality, reduce recreational opportunities, add substantially to traffic issues on major arteries, and fundamentally change the character and quality of life of Stow. The town is currently in the process of revising and updating its master plan. In addition current efforts are underway to consider modifications to zoning bylaws that would shift the pattern of development using tools like transfer of development rights and village-oriented development. In addition, one of the recommendations of this Open Space and Recreation Plan is that the town actively work to reduce the total buildout that is possible using a variety of tools including zoning, land acquisition, and other land protection techniques such as conservation restrictions, protecting one additional acre of land for every acre that is developed.



New Flagg Hill Entrance and Open Space Parcel off Trefry Lane.

Protected through collaborative effort by Stow's Planning Board and Conservation Commission