

## NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Residents, visitors, business owners, and employers repeatedly cite "small town character" as one of Franklin's most appealing attributes. We are fortunate to have a distinct downtown, thriving neighborhoods, a rich history, a wealth of educational opportunities, and a diverse natural environment of forests, farms, rivers, brooks, and ponds. However, it would be a tragic mistake to take any of these assets for granted, because they can easily be lost forever to inexorable suburban sprawl. This chapter establishes three goals to identify and protect our most important community resources; improve educational opportunities; and strengthen efforts to protect our environment.

### Goals and Objectives

**GOAL 1 - Resource Protection:** Preserve and protect community resources representative of the Town's natural or cultural history and community attributes imparting a New England town character to Franklin, including scenic vistas, streetscapes, historic structures, and the architectural integrity of certain town areas.

**Goal 1, Objective 1 - Preservation Strategies:** Inventory community resources for preservation or protection in order to retain the Town's natural or cultural history or its New England town character; identify their locations, as well as threats and opportunities related to their preservation.

Franklin could better preserve and enhance the historical character of the Town if it adopted strategies to ensure that development and redevelopment occurs in a style consistent with the character of surrounding structures. The fire-destroyed site at the corner of W. Central St. and West St., is an example of an historic building lost forever. Redevelopment of this site consistent with its neighborhood could help to establish a positive impression of Downtown Franklin for traffic approaching from the west. See Natural & Cultural Resources Map 1, for a reference to all registered historic properties in Franklin.



**Goal 1, Objective 2 - Preservation Districts:** Amend the Zoning By-law to authorize the designation of overlay preservation districts, including historic districts, to protect recognized community attributes and to preserve architectural integrity within a designated district.

When residents are asked to "picture" their town, they often envision the Town

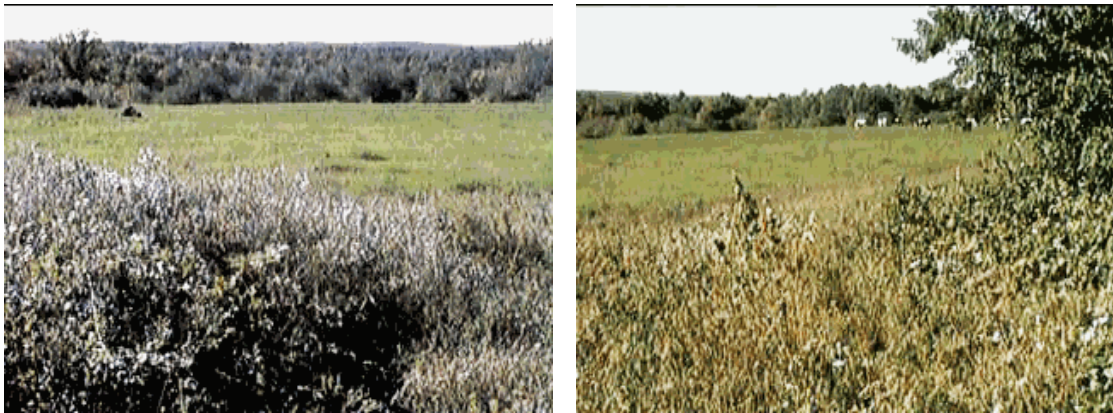
Common with historic homes along its perimeter. This Master Plan proposes that these images of Franklin be preserved and that the Town adopt a By-Law shaping the responsibilities of property owners in areas designated as preservation districts. The area of the Town Common extending to Dean College and back to Hillside Road would be a good candidate for initial evaluation (see Figure 5).

**Goal 1, Objective 3 - Streetscapes & Scenic Views: Identify scenic vistas and streetscapes contributing to Franklin residents' sense of place; identify threats and opportunities related to their preservation and propose measures to effect preservation, including acquisition of easements and adoption of a scenic roads bylaw.**

A streetscape is an area, one side of a street or both, where the architecture, placement of buildings and landscaping help to integrate the area into a visual whole; an example of this is the streetscape along Cottage Street in Franklin. Figure 6 illustrates 2 examples. Figure 7 shows a scenic vista off Upper Union Street looking west. Both sets of photographs illustrate ways a sense of place is established. These streetscapes and vistas are examples of what should be preserved to retain for our residents a sense of continuity with the images which shape their view of Franklin. They are an important set of reference points for generations to come.



**Figure 6: Streetscapes - Downtown And Residential**



**Figure 7: Scenic Vistas**

**GOAL 2 - Educational Opportunities: Provide quality lifetime learning opportunities for all community members by promoting community access to the Town's many educational resources.**

**Goal 2, Objective 1 - Lifetime Learning: Create an Educational Opportunities Commission to (a) study lifetime learning needs and interests of Franklin community members, (b) identify opportunities for broadening access to education resources and (c) propose access agreements between the Town, its public school system, Tri-County Regional, Dean College, and corporations with facilities in Franklin.**

In a 1996 workshop conducted by the United Chamber of Commerce, participants indicated that they held local schools in high esteem, although the perception is that Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical School is underutilized.

**GOAL 3 - Environmental Review Process: Develop stricter environmental resource protection standards and assign them a "threshold" status within the development review process.**

**Goal 3, Objective 1 - Threshold Requirement: Require that all environmental reporting requirements and reviews be completed before accepting and scheduling development proposals for processing.**

**Goal 3, Objective 2 - External Reviews: Encourage greater use of consultant review fees to provide for the assessment of environmental issues.**

**Goal 3, Objective 3 - Wetlands By-Laws: Enact a wetlands by-law to be more restrictive and protective than the state's wetlands and rivers protection statutes.**

**Goal 3, Objective 4 - Zone III: Reconsider appropriate environmental restrictions and protections within Zone III aquifer recharge areas.**

The town government is expected to protect Franklin's environmental resources against threats of compromise and degradation. The development process can be conducted with appropriate mitigation practices. The Town's various board and committees involved in the development process need to have the tools to carry out their responsibilities. This Master Plan views the environmental reporting required as part of the development plan application process as important data which should be available to the public before boards and committees take final action. Where public hearings are required, the Town should assure that required data is available to and presented at such hearings.