

# **BOXBOROUGH RECONNAISSANCE REPORT**

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## **FREEDOM'S WAY LANDSCAPE INVENTORY**

### **MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM**



**Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation**

**Freedom's Way Heritage Association**

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### **Cover Photographs**

John Wetherbee II Farm, Hill Road  
Depot Road Looking South  
West View Farm, Stow Road

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Freedom's Way Heritage Association includes 37 Massachusetts communities that are linked by historic events that helped to shape America's democratic form of governance and the intellectual traditions that underpin American freedom, democracy, conservation and social justice. Freedom's Way communities extend from Arlington on the east to Winchendon on the west. They represent a wide range of cities and towns, each shaped by the relationship between nature and culture.

Heritage landscapes are special places created by human interaction with the natural environment that help define the character of a community and reflect its past. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the history of a community and provide a sense of place; they show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. The wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character, yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first steps towards their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature or an important river corridor. To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Freedom's Way Heritage Association (FWHA) have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program (HLI) to communities in the Freedom's Way area. The primary goal of the program is to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected. The focus is on landscapes that have not been identified in previous survey efforts in a given community. Another important goal of the program is to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a pilot project conducted in southeast Massachusetts and refined in Essex County. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land* which has provided guidance for the program since its inception. In summary, each participating community appoints a Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the DCR-FWHA consulting team. The LPC organizes a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and town officials offer community input by identifying heritage landscapes. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, often accompanied by other community members. This group visits the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathers information about the community. The final product is this Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community. It outlines the history of the community; describes the priority heritage landscapes; discusses planning issues identified by the town; identifies planning tools available in the community; and concludes with preservation recommendations. A list of all of the heritage landscapes identified by the community is included in the Appendix.

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## **BOXBOROUGH HISTORY**

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Located at the edge of the central highlands at the headwaters of the Merrimack River and Concord River, Boxborough's lack of rivers and ponds suggests that it was not a major site of permanent native occupation prior to European settlement; however there are some documented sites dating to the Late Archaic Period (6,000-3,000 B.P.). In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it may have been used as a resource area by the Indians of the Praying Town of Nashoba. Native trails leading to the interior may have followed the western corridor around Wolf Swamp; other trails are likely along the Beaver Brook esker near Muddy Pond and in the northeast part of town.

Boxborough remained a near-frontier area with little European settlement until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, by which time colonial farms were scattered throughout the future town, especially along Liberty Square and Burroughs Roads. A religious society was formed and a new parish established in 1775, and in 1783 Boxborough was incorporated as a district of about eleven square miles, made up of parts of Stow, Harvard and Littleton. By 1800 a small center village had grown up around the meetinghouse at the top of Hill Road, but at its incorporation as a town in 1835, Boxborough was still an agricultural community of dispersed farms raising grain and livestock.

With the exception of small local industries including gristmills, sawmills and cooperages as well as some minor boot- and shoemaking, comb-making and a lime quarry and kiln, Boxborough's economy remained almost entirely agricultural through the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1806 the Union Turnpike was extended west from Concord, passing through Boxborough a short distance south of the center (today's Massachusetts Avenue/Route 111), easing the local farmers' access to regional markets. Growing of hops was a specialty on many Boxborough farms in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the town had the reputation as the largest hop-growing town of its size in New England. In 1845 the Fitchburg Railroad came through the northeast corner of town with a flag stop at the Littleton border, further speeding the shipment of farm products such as butter and cheese, and setting the stage for agricultural specialization. Dairying became increasingly important in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with farmers shipping milk to regional markets in Worcester, Lowell and Boston. After the Civil War many Boxborough farms also included large orchards of apples, pears and peaches, and some farmers were doing a brisk business in grapes and berries. By 1900, poultry raising was another important specialty, lasting into the 1940s.

While orcharding, poultry farming and some dairying continued into the 1970s, farming of all types declined throughout Boxborough after World War II. Commuting to jobs outside of Boxborough increased, spurred by regional highway construction including Route I-495 which came through the west part of town in the mid-1960s. Old farms were divided to make new house lots, and residential growth skyrocketed through the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dramatically changing the character of the community. The current population of Boxborough is about 5,400, up from 3,100 in 1980, and like many communities in the area, it faces intense pressure for development.

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## **PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

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Boxborough's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by approximately 12 residents, some representing town boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on February 9, 2006. During the meeting residents compiled a lengthy list of the town's heritage landscapes, which is included in the Appendix. Once the comprehensive list was created, attendees were asked to articulate the value of each landscape and the issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members identified a group of priority landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved. These landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and types of resources from a collection of individual sites such as the cow passes to entire roads and the many picturesque resources lining the road. The descriptions and recommendations included here are an initial step in identifying resources valued by the community and suggesting action strategies.

These landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and types of resources from individual properties to entire neighborhoods. Several include areas that have multiple layers. For example a neighborhood that is considered a heritage landscape may also include specific features that are individually recognized as heritage landscapes. Such layering shows the complexity and interdependence that are characteristic of most heritage landscapes. The descriptions and recommendations included here are an initial step in identifying resources valued by the community and suggesting action strategies.

### **Cow Passes**

There are several cow passes known to Boxborough residents; they are tunnels made of fieldstone under rural roads. Farmers who owned land on both sides of a road would construct these underpasses in order to move the cows and sheep from pasture to pasture. Most have been filled to some degree so that the overall height is only about three feet; however the passages clearly show the route and methods of construction. One of these cow passes, located under Wetherbee Lane which leads to the Silas Wetherbee Farm (604 Hill Road), is a tunnel with stone lined walls topped with large granite slabs. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the Wetherbees constructed this pass, now partially filled, for cattle. Another fine example runs under Picnic Street (opposite Avebury Circle) near a double stone wall that runs from Picnic Street west up over a hill towards the Old Town Center. This cow pass is similar in construction with granite walls and large granite slabs forming the top of the tunnel. An asphalt road surface covers the top of the pass. Another is reported to have been located on Middle Road leading from a barn that no longer exists to a pasture across the road.

These landscape features clearly represent a unique resource type that contributes to the farming history of Boxborough. They are vulnerable because they are little

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known and no longer used except by small wildlife. Cow passes that have been lost ran under a stretch of the railroad between Depot and Sargent Roads; they were filled by the railroad in the 1960s.

### ***Recommendations***

The cattle pass under Wetherbee Lane has been recorded in the pending National Register nomination for the Old Town Center. In addition the Picnic Street tunnel was documented in 2003. The Middle Road one was not. Documentation and advocacy work for preservation of these cattle passes has been and is the work of the Boxborough Historical Commission.

- Document other cattle or sheep passes when identified. Attempt to locate the one under Middle Road which may have been filled. When documenting it may be wise to measure and draw at least one of these tunnels.
- Work with the local Highway Department and Road Commissioners to develop sensitive treatment of road surface over these passes. Part of the process will be providing information about their importance and their apparent structural integrity.

### **Flagg Hill Area**

Located in the southeast corner of Boxborough near the Stow line, Flagg Hill Road is a hilly route with spectacular views from the top of Flagg Hill, on Windemere Lane. There once was a country club (now a private residence) and an old ski slope on Flagg Hill. At the bottom of the hill there is a large pond on the southeast side of Flagg Hill Road, which was dug in the early 1960s by the owners of the property at that time. The Flagg Hill Conservation Area is a 286-acre public open space of which 72 acres are in Boxborough and the balance is in Stow. Important privately-owned landscape features in the Flagg Hill area include a peach orchard, historic houses and barns. Of note is the old Silas Taylor property with its ca. 1830 house (built by subsequent owner John Fletcher) and a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century New England barn at 205 Flagg Hill Road.

Development of the large parcels along Flagg Hill Road would result in loss of historic structures due to their locations at the road edge across the frontage of properties. Views are somewhat hampered by voluntary growth of roadside vegetation.

### ***Recommendations***

Some of the land along Flagg Hill Road is municipally owned and managed by the Conservation Commission. The Historical Commission has documented historic structures along Flagg Hill Road. However, there has not been a comprehensive approach that incorporates the heritage landscape methodology. Documentation is the responsibility of the Historical Commission and physical work such as clearing of vegetation on town-owned property would be carried

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out by the Highway Department in coordination with the Conservation Commission. Thus to enhance this heritage landscape:

- Document the setting and overall historical development using an MHC Area Form.
- Clear views by selective roadside cutting of scrub vegetation.
- Discuss with Planning Board options of “flexible zoning” to preserve certain features on properties (such as views and vistas) while allowing property owners to develop land. This would require adoption of a zoning amendment at Town Meeting and must be carefully studied to determine positive effects for the town.

### **Hill Road Area**

Hill Road, a narrow rural road, leads past some of Boxborough’s most scenic agricultural landscapes on its way north from Massachusetts Avenue to the Littleton border. The picturesque farms with their farmhouses, barns and fields, set off by stone walls and post-and-rail fencing, tell of Boxborough’s agrarian past. A good example is the John Wetherbee II Farm (187 Hill Road) situated on the east side of Hill Road. The long stretch of fairly straight road approaching the farm from the south provides a fine view of this important scenic landscape.

Hill Road has two rounded right-angle turns as it approaches Middle Road where the Old Town Center is situated. The first meetinghouse was established at the top of the hill where Middle Road meets Hill Road. While the meetinghouse is no longer extant, the site is of particular significance for the tiny community that evolved around it. Important heritage landscapes include the North Burying Ground, a common in front of the cemetery and meetinghouse site, and the ca. 1796 Parsonage (462 Hill Road) property, where a large late 19<sup>th</sup> century New England barn sits at the edge of an open hay field fronted by a 300-foot long fieldstone wall and a split-rail fence along Hill Road. The North Burying Ground, also called the Hill Cemetery, was established in ca. 1776. Today it is an L-shaped parcel, with approximately 150 markers, that is partially surrounded by a field stone wall. Many markers are in fair condition, but some are displaced. The tombs that are situated on the back slope overlooking the Have-Not Pond Swamp are in poor repair. Adjacent to the cemetery at Old Town Center is a colonial herb garden laid out within the foundation walls of the old meetinghouse which burned in 1953. Only the foundation and the bell survive marking the focus of this original town center.

Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a triangular piece of land – part of the old common – was located in the middle of the broad intersection at Middle and Hill Roads. Now it is a sea of road pavement, and the only part of the common that remains, opposite the meetinghouse site, is a much smaller triangular piece on the southeast corner of the T-intersection. The vista from the top of the hill is stunning on a clear winter day when one can make out some of the taller buildings of Boston.

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Farther north, branching west off Hill Road, is Wetherbee Lane, a gravel road or driveway. This unpaved former farm lane crosses a cattle pass (possibly used once as a sheep passage) as it winds to the ca. 1770 Silas Wetherbee House and over 25 acres of open pastures, woods and former agricultural fields. North of this farm is the intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street where two early schools are situated. The second one-room schoolhouse on the hill was built in 1808 at the Picnic Street-Hill Road intersection. It was the second building for this district known as School #2 – Boxborough had been divided into four districts in 1784. The 1808 schoolhouse was moved farther north, converted to a residence (799 Hill Road) and replaced by the present Schoolhouse #2 (339 Picnic Street) in 1852. Not only is this schoolhouse intact, but there also is an old privy directly behind the school and a small grassed triangle across Picnic Street that was used as the school play yard. Schoolhouse #2 was preserved by Wallace Robinson who purchased the building in 1949. It is at the center of a yearly town tradition when the owners open the schoolhouse to hold an old fashioned school day for the children of Boxborough and other towns to attend. The triangle across the road was purchased by the town from Edward Brown for \$25 when the original school was built.

Near the Picnic Road intersection is the Ephraim Whitcomb III House, a large Federal style brick dwelling built in 1814. Whitcomb built this commodious house just north of the house of his father-in-law, Edward Brown. In 1851 this house and farm were purchased by Benjamin Stowe Hager, who put up the handsome New England barn. He and his descendants owned this farm for over a century until 1956.



### ***Recommendations***

Hill Road has been well documented by the Boxborough Historical Commission. A National Register nomination for the Old Town Center, extending along Hill Road from south of Middle Road to north of Picnic Street, has been submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and will be reviewed by the Commissioners at the September 2006 meeting. Furthermore Hill Road is one of the 12 roads that have some protection through the Scenic Roads Bylaw. Additional preservation of the area would require the implementation of protective districts, the establishment of agricultural restrictions and changes in zoning. These would be initiated by the Historical Commission with the assistance of the Planning Board.

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- Prepare a local historic district study report in anticipation of establishing a local historic district for the Old Town Center area. For more information refer to **Village and Rural Neighborhood Character** in the General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.
  - Establish agricultural commission and a right-to-farm bylaw. For more information refer to **Agricultural Preservation** in General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.
  - Consider zoning tools such as a scenic overlay district or a flexible zoning bylaw. The goal would be to preserve certain important characteristics that have been clearly defined. The overlay district would require a special permit for development within those view corridors. Flexible zoning would permit adjustments in dimensional requirements in order to preserve certain features (without affecting allowed density).
  - Work with conservation groups and property owners to acquire certain key parcels of farmland or to apply for agricultural preservation restrictions on selected farms.
  - Implement **Scenic Roads** recommendations detailed below in the General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.
  - Develop plan to restore a sense of place to the Old Town Center T-intersection by removing some of the pavement.

### **Liberty Square and Sargent Road Area**

This rural intersection in the northeast quadrant of Boxborough is marked by the modest 18<sup>th</sup> - and 19<sup>th</sup>-century dwellings and remnants of their surrounding agricultural landscape. The views at the intersection of Liberty Square and Sargent Roads are reminiscent of a bygone era with the red barn, a brick-end house and narrow winding road. Liberty Square Road meanders up the hill to Sargent Road with properties close to the road edge. The view east on Sargent Road is of a narrow road lined with a tree canopy and some stone walls.

At the T-intersection of Liberty Square and Sargent Roads is the ca. 1833 Simon Blanchard House (446 Liberty Square Road), a Federal/Greek Revival style side-gabled house with mature trees lining a dirt driveway and low stone walls on each side of the house-yard. Preserved on a separate lot are surviving elements of a farm, a 20<sup>th</sup>-century red barn, a large barn foundation at the road's edge and remnants of orchards and hayfields that once surrounded the property. Across the street from the barn foundation is the ca. 1760 Joseph Raymond House (459 Liberty Square Road), a Georgian-style Cape that faces south. This farmhouse was updated in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century with large 2/2 windows, projecting bays and dormers.

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Subdivision of the farmland and construction along short cul-de-sacs alters the rural character; however, historic properties thus far have been preserved with a portion of their original landscape that evokes the farming history.



### *Recommendations*

The Historical Commission has documented the historic properties at this intersection. The roads have been designated scenic roads, and are afforded the protection of the Boxborough Scenic Roads Bylaw. Vulnerable aspects are outbuildings and remnants of the agricultural landscape. Local historic district designation would only provide opportunity to have input on new construction and demolition or rehabilitation of outbuildings and dwellings. A scenic overlay district designation may be one way in which to capture some elements of the agricultural landscape. For more information refer to **Village and Rural Neighborhood Character** and **Scenic Roads** in the General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.

### **Littlefield Road, Davidson and Depot Roads Area**

Another rural area of Boxborough's northeast corner is along Littlefield Road from Sargent Road to the south up to its intersection with Davidson and Depot Roads. The old Fitchburg Railroad (now an MBTA Commuter Rail line) passes near this intersection. A depot once stood on the northwest side of the tracks. The roads are characteristically narrow and lined with stonewalls, historic houses and a modest amount of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup>-century infill housing. Some large oaks similar to those that were in Boxborough's Inches Woods contribute to the picturesque landscape.

On the southwest side of Littlefield Road is the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Jacob Littlefield Farm, with ca. 1843 Italianate house, attached barn, a free-standing barn, stone walls and rural agricultural fields. At the juncture with Littleton Road, Littlefield Road becomes Depot Road; on the northeast side is the John Blanchard Farm (69 Depot Road) with its ca. 1844 Greek Revival farmhouse and detached barn. The latter structure was a former hops house with kiln. Beyond this farm is the railroad right-of-way and the site of the former depot. Just northwest of the railroad crossing at a 90-degree-angle turn of Depot Road and the terminus of

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Davidson Road are a number of historic properties, each situated close to the road with surrounding open and rural landscapes. Before reaching this intersection there is conservation land – a scenic rolling meadow with wetlands. A six-acre property at the right angle turn is the Simon Hartwell House (234 Depot Road) comprising a ca. 1851 Greek Revival dwelling with outbuildings and surrounding pasture land. One long time resident remembers playing baseball on the field at the intersection. Up on a hill overlooking this turn is the ca. 1798 Isaac Jennings House (8 Davidson Road) and up the hill of Davidson Road is the ca. 1778 Samuel Davis House (61 Davidson Road). The rural narrow road and the open land are vulnerable parts of this heritage landscape.

### ***Recommendations***

Most properties in this area have been documented by the Historical Commission. In addition each of the road segments is listed in the Scenic Roads Bylaw. Threats from development pressures and loss of the scenic qualities may be addressed by the Historical Commission and the Planning Board.

- Study the area for local historic district designation. Refer to **Village and Rural Neighborhood Character** in General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.
- Consider a requirement to present a cluster plan with a traditional subdivision plan for development of properties that exceed a certain size.

### **Massachusetts Avenue**

Massachusetts Avenue (Route 111) cuts a remarkably straight east-west route through Boxborough traversing hills and valleys and providing scenic views as one travels in either direction. Long views are noted near the Acton line where the road runs in a straight line. The tree canopy over the section between Middle Road at the New Town Center and Hill Road is referred to as the “Cathedral of Trees” for the arching canopy that the roadside trees form. This straight route dates back to the road’s origin as the Union Turnpike completed in 1808 connecting Concord with the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike in Leominster. This toll road passed through Acton, Boxborough, Harvard and Lancaster on its way west. By 1831 the toll was abandoned and this section of the Union Turnpike had become a public road in 1831. Over a century later in 1937 it was designated State Route 111, but continues to be known locally as Massachusetts Avenue. It remains a two-lane road with gravel shoulders for most of its length through Boxborough.

The road cannot be designated a scenic road because it is a numbered route. As a consequence the removal of trees and stone walls does not necessarily undergo the scrutiny of the Planning Board as is the case on roads that are regulated by the Scenic Roads Bylaw. As noted in the Boxborough Master Plan, however, the scenic quality of this road is critical to Boxborough’s character. At the western end of Massachusetts Avenue there have been some drainage issues at the point where the road passes over the Beaver Brook outlet from Wolf Swamp.

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### ***Recommendations***

State and local highway regulations and the removal of obstructions near electrical and telephone wires are challenges to the scenic character of roads such as Massachusetts Avenue. Communication among the local Highway Department, Mass Highway and telephone and electrical companies is critical and may be best facilitated by the Historical Commission and the Planning Board.

- Identify and document the key features along Massachusetts Avenue such as the tree canopies, stone walls and vistas using MHC methodology and an Area Form.
- Develop a policy for review of cutting and highway maintenance, including any proposed widening, that may affect the identified features.
- Seek assistance from tree programs administered by DCR. Review types of programs available for planting, protection and maintenance of public trees at <http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/forestry/urban/urbanGrants.htm>.

### **New Town Center**

Located at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, Middle Road and Stow Road this area eclipsed the Old Town Center at the other end of Middle Road and Hill Road in 1901 when the Town Hall was constructed here. Its roots as a focus of town activity, however, date to the time when the old toll road became a public highway in 1831. At its center is the 1832 Evangelical Congregational Church. The church faces Massachusetts Avenue and sits across Middle Road from the 1901 Victorian Eclectic Town Hall. Opposite the Church on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue are two brick Federal buildings constructed as dwellings that have been converted to professional offices. They are the Peter Wheeler House (25 Stow Road) and the Paul Haywood House (25R Stow Road), both dating to ca. 1832. The Paul Haywood House was moved to this location from across Massachusetts Avenue in the 1980s. On the northeast corner of Massachusetts Avenue is the Evangelical Congregational Parsonage built in 1858.

The zoning of the land opposite the church on the south side of Massachusetts Avenue has been changed to “the Town Center District,” a special zoning district that allows mixed uses – residential and business. This district which forms only part of the New Town Center identified as a priority heritage landscape, extends past the fire pond in a westerly and southerly direction. Design review guidelines administered by the Design Review Board also were adopted to help guide development in this area.

### ***Recommendations***

The Historical Commission has documented the Town Hall area on an Area Form as well as individual building forms. These forms identify important

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features and historical development patterns. In addition, the design review guidelines adopted to assist the Design Review Board in advising the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals about potential development clearly address the importance of the integrity of the historic resources. Continued vigilance among the interested parties can be facilitated by the Historical Commission.

- Provide the Design Review Board and the Planning Board with Town Hall Area inventory (MHC forms) as guides to measuring characteristics in the New Town Center proposals that should be responsive to historic resources and to maintaining the character of the area.
- Develop a walking brochure of the area to educate residents and demonstrate interest and the importance of this locale to future business owners.

### **Steele Farm**

The Levi Wetherbee Farm (484 Middle Road), better known locally by its 20<sup>th</sup> century name, Steele Farm, was purchased by the town in 1994. This heritage landscape comprises 34 acres of meadowland; the Levi Wetherbee House, a mid-18<sup>th</sup>-century farmhouse that was raised in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century; the ca. 1904 Richardson Icehouse (moved to this site in the 1990s); the 1940-41 Steele Barn; a farm pond; and a system of stone walls. The buildings and small gravel parking lot are located on the south side of Middle Road. Important aspects of the property include walking trails, vistas across the meadows and the land's connection to Beaver Brook Meadow, conservation land that also is owned by the town. Steele Farm extends almost to Massachusetts Avenue.

Steele Farm's significance lies in its role in over 200 years of Boxborough's agricultural development. It is a well preserved agricultural and architectural resource that clearly was recognized by the town in its purchase. The link with one of Boxborough's founding families, the Wetherbees, connects this property to the Silas Wetherbee Farm on Hill Road (Levi Wetherbee was the son of Silas Wetherbee), to much of the land making up the Old Town Center including the site of the first meetinghouse which was donated by Silas Wetherbee and to a number of other local Wetherbee-owned farms in this area of Boxborough.

The town's purchase of this property saved it from potential development; however there are no permanent preservation or conservation restrictions on the property. For the short term the property is protected in that those who voted to purchase it are unlikely to vote to develop it; however over time sentiments can change with shifts in municipal needs.

### ***Recommendations***

The Historical Commission has documented this property fully and has submitted an application for listing in the National Register of Historic Places on behalf of the town. This listing in the National Register, expected by the end of 2006, will be the first step to securing long-term protection for the property. The Historical

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Commission, Conservation Commission and Planning Board collectively can pursue the permanent protection of the farm.

- Develop a management plan with preservation of the integrity of Steele Farm at its core.
- Develop a program by which the land can be used for farming activities such as haying and pastureland for livestock.
- Apply permanent restrictions – preservation and conservation using M.G.L. Chapter 184, Sections 31-33.



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## CRITICAL CONCERNS

In addition to the priority landscapes listed in the previous section, residents also identified critical concerns related to heritage landscapes and community character. These are town-wide issues that are linked to a range or category of heritage landscapes, not to a particular place. They are listed in alphabetical order. Community members also expressed interest in learning about preservation tools and strategies that have been effective in other Massachusetts communities and in identifying sources for preservation funding.

### Farms

The rural character of Boxborough is linked to the farms, those at the gateways to the community and those along the many rural scenic roads. Preservation of the farms, including evidence of farming activities, is critical to preserving the rural character. About 500 acres are listed as Chapter 61A land, meaning that property owners are taxed at a lower rate due to their agricultural use. Another 50 to 100 acres of farm land are protected by agricultural preservation restrictions or conservation restrictions. This accounts for privately-owned agricultural land only. The town also owns agricultural land such as the Steele Farm (364 acres). For more information on farm preservation refer to **Agricultural Landscape** in the General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.

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### **Hilltop Vistas**

Boxborough's topography is accentuated by the distant vistas that are seen from the tops of the hills. From the Old Town Center there are a number of views. Easterly down Middle Road the tallest buildings of Boston can be seen on a clear day particularly in the winter; northwesterly from the North Burying Ground Mt. Monadnock can be seen; and in a southwesterly direction the lower Hill Road farms come into view from this same vantage point. Boxborough residents place high value on these views but they are ephemeral and often depend on periodic pruning and clearing of vegetation on private land. Views should be mapped and to the extent possible the local Highway Department can promote selective clearing to keep roadside views open. A list of these vistas should be provided to the Planning Board for use in review of development plans that may impact the views.

### **Native American Archaeological Sites**

Boxborough residents expressed keen interest in Native American sites which may be unrecognized leading to their destruction. A crucial step in the preservation of Native American archaeological sites is to have a professional archaeologist conduct a communitywide archaeological reconnaissance survey of potential prehistoric and historic sites.

### **Scenic Roads**

Twelve roads have been included in Boxborough's Scenic Roads Bylaw: Burrroughs, Davidson, Depot, Hill, Liberty Square and Littlefield (both between Depot and Sargent), Middle (between Hill and Depot), Old Harvard, Pine Hill, Sargent, and Stow Roads and Picnic Street. Removal of trees and stone walls in the right-of-way on these roads requires a public hearing before the Planning Board. The stone walls along these roads as well as those that form property boundaries and are viewed from the roads are important features of Boxborough's rural landscape. Often the stone walls and some of the scenic trees are on private property so that preservation of them is not covered by the Scenic Roads Bylaw. Refer to **Scenic Roads** in General Preservation Planning Recommendations section of this report.



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Some residents expressed concerns about invasive plants such as bittersweet and poison ivy that are growing along the sides of Boxborough's scenic roads. Invasive plants that are left to grow wild tend to harm other natural plant material. This problem is particularly evident with roadside trees that are being choked. Control of roadside invasive plants is a challenging management issue and may best be addressed by making property owners aware so that they may remove any invasive plants growing at the edges of their properties.

## **EXISTING RESOURCE DOCUMENTATION AND PLANNING TOOLS**

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Boxborough already has important planning tools in place to document current conditions within the town; identify issues of concern to town residents; and develop strategies for action. This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies some of the existing planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program.

### **Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets**

The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets is a statewide list that identifies significant historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. In order to be included in the inventory, a property must be documented on an MHC inventory form, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as MACRIS, is now available online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>.

According to the MHC, Boxborough's inventory documents over 150 historic resources ranging from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to 1970. Most of the work was completed in 2003 when the town undertook a town-wide survey funded by Town Meeting in 2001. Only a few properties had been documented previously. The 2003 inventory focused on three areas in particular: the Old Town Center, the Hill Road Agricultural Area and the Town Hall Area. Other areas were surveyed as well.

Boxborough has 12 documented ancient Native American sites dating back to the Late Archaic Period (6,000-3,000 B.P.) and three documented historic archaeological sites. Because of the known information about this region as well as the apparent Native American activity in Boxborough, it is assumed that there is significantly more archaeology potential in the town.

### **State and National Registers of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. The Town of Boxborough's National Register (NR) program is in its infant stage. Applications for the town's first listings were submitted to the MHC and are awaiting review, which is scheduled for September 2006. They include a district along Hill Road to be called the Old Town Common Historic District and an

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individual nomination for the Levi Wetherbee Farm (Steele Farm). Once these properties are listed in the National Register they will automatically be listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

### **Planning Documents and Tools**

In 2002 Boxborough completed the *Boxborough Master Plan* as well as an update of the *Boxborough Open Space and Recreation Plan*. One of the key land use goals of the Master Plan captures the intent of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program: *Preserve the elements of Boxborough that contribute to the town's rural residential character with strong agricultural and historical roots*. Many parts of the Master Plan and the Open Space Plan bolster this goal.

Preservation strategies adopted by Boxborough include a Scenic Roads Bylaw with 12 designated roads and the Demolition Delay Bylaw. The latter applies to a pre-determined list of 37 properties that are subject to review if there is an application for demolition. There also are Design Review Board Guidelines that are governed by the Zoning Bylaw for the Town Center District. This zoning district allows mixed uses in a prescribed area at the intersection of Middle Road and Massachusetts Avenue. The Guidelines clearly address the scenic and historic character of the Town Center and will assist the Design Review Board in advising the Planning Board on development proposals in the Town Center Zoning District. The rules and regulations of Site Plan Approval also have been amended to allow consideration by the Planning Board of natural features such as scenic vistas and tree canopies when reviewing site plans.

### **GENERAL PRESERVATION PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Recommendations pertaining to priority heritage landscapes can be found beginning on page 3. This section of the Reconnaissance Report offers more general recommendations relevant to preserving the character of the community that would be applicable to a wide range of community resources.

Boxborough's residents place high value on the community's strong sense of place, which is created by its varied natural features and land-use patterns that made use of the fertile land. The town has already taken measures to document and evaluate its most significant buildings and natural areas. It is now looking beyond traditional resources to consider landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, urban neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most municipalities, Boxborough is facing multiple pressures for change that threaten land-based uses and natural resources, especially its remaining farming areas. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

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

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- Department of Conservation and Recreation, *Reading the Land*
  - Freedom's Way Heritage Association, *Feasibility Study*
  - Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Survey Manual*
  - Massachusetts Historical Commission, *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances*

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. These recommendations are listed in the order in which they are most logically addressed when applying the three-step preservation planning process as described above. Thus the goal will be to (1) identify, (2) evaluate, (3) protect.

### **Inventory of Heritage Landscapes**

The goals and methodology of Boxborough's 2003 Inventory project were similar to those of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program and in some cases have addressed the resources in a similar fashion. Many resources will appear on both lists. The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources on MHC inventory forms. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development. The resources discussed in this Reconnaissance Report that have not been documented should be included in the next inventory project. Thus, using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology:

- Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not sufficiently documented, beginning with heritage landscapes and those resources not documented in the 2002-03 survey.
- Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.
- Make sure to document secondary features on rural and residential properties, such as outbuildings, stone walls and landscape elements.
- Conduct a community-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey to identify patterns of ancient Native American and historic occupation and to identify known and probable locations of archaeological resources associated with these patterns. Known and potential ancient Native American and historic archaeological sites should be documented in the field for evidence of their cultural association and/or integrity. All survey work should be completed by a professional archaeologist who meets the professional qualifications (950 CMR 70.01) outlined in the State Archaeologist Permit Regulations (950 CMR 70.00). The Inventory of Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth contains sensitive information about archaeological sites. The inventory is confidential; it is not a public record (G.L. c. 9, ss. 26A (1)). Care should be taken to keep archaeological site information in a secure

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location with restricted access. Refer to the MHC article "Community-Wide Archaeological Surveys" which appeared in the Preservation Advocate, Fall 2005 which can be found at the following MHC link:<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcpdf/pafall05.pdf>

### **National Register Program**

Survey work will require an evaluation as to whether resources meet the qualifications for National Register listing. Using information generated in the survey work and the accompanying National Register evaluations, Boxborough should expand its National Register program to augment the two National Register nominations pending review and approval.

- Develop a National Register listing plan, taking into consideration a property's integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority.
- Consider potential National Register district nominations for the New Town Center, the Liberty Square-Sargent Road Area and for areas of Hill Road that are not included in the pending NR nomination.

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

Nearly all preservation strategies address village and neighborhood character in some manner. As described above, thorough documentation on MHC inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Three traditional preservation strategies are: a demolition delay bylaw; a local historic district bylaw (in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C) and designation; and a neighborhood architectural conservation district bylaw and designation. Boxborough has already adopted a demolition delay bylaw.

- **Demolition delay bylaws** provide a time period in which the town can explore alternatives to demolition. The Boxborough Historical Commission should consider extending the delay period from six months to one year and working to expand the list of resources, beyond the 37 properties for which the bylaw is currently applicable, such as all buildings that are at least 75 years old.
- **Local historic districts**, adopted through a local initiative, recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected by the designation. These districts are the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources. They are adopted by a 2/3 vote of the Town Meeting and administered by a district commission appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The MHC staff can assist the Boxborough Historical Commission in developing the necessary study report to determine appropriate local historic district designation. Areas that may be preserved through local historic districting

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include the Old Town Center and the Littlefield-Depot-Davidson Roads neighborhood.

- **Neighborhood architectural conservation districts** also are local initiatives that recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. They are less restrictive than local historic districts but still embrace neighborhood character. Neighborhood architectural conservation district designation is appropriate for residential neighborhoods that may have less integrity and where more flexibility is needed.

### **Agricultural Landscapes**

Preservation of agricultural landscapes means preservation of farming activities, particularly in Boxborough where farms are integral to the community's character as well as its economy. It is important to know what the features of these agricultural landscapes are and which features the community treasures in order to make a case for preservation of these farms. Some preservation tools are available that can assist communities in preserving the actual farming activities.

- Document additional farms using MHC Area Forms as was done for the Levi Wetherbee (Steele) Farm in 2001. Some farms have already been documented on B-Forms, but these focus on the main house. A more comprehensive approach is needed to document the full range of features that characterize many of Boxborough's farms.
- Establish an agricultural commission to advocate for farming.
- Adopt a right-to-farm bylaw which allows farmers to carry on farming activities that may be considered a nuisance to neighbors.
- Adopt a cluster bylaw that requires a buffer between development and farmland.
- Develop partnerships to raise funds to purchase development rights on farms or to assist farmers in the restoration of historic farm buildings for which the owner would be required to donate a preservation restriction (PR).
- Continue public-private partnerships to preserve farm land through purchase or conservation restrictions (CRs) or agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs).

### **Burial Grounds and Cemeteries**

Boxborough's cemeteries are critical aspects of the town character; particularly the North Burying Ground on Hill Road, which has been documented as part of the 2003 survey project and 2004 National Register nomination application. The South Cemetery also was documented in the 2003 project. The documentation and preservation methodologies for town-owned cemeteries are described in the

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DCR publication *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries*. Using this guide Boxborough should:

- Survey remaining burial grounds and cemeteries that have been in use for more than 50 years, using MHC methodology.
- List eligible burial grounds and cemeteries in the National Register of Historic Places. The North Burying Ground is included in the pending Old Town Center NR nomination. The survey form for the South Cemetery has evaluated that property for the NR and recommends NR listing.
- Develop a preservation and management plan for each burial ground or cemetery taking into consideration repair of stone markers, stone walls and stone fencing related to cemeteries, repair of iron work, removal of invasive growth, and on-going maintenance of plant material.

### **Scenic Roads**

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Boxborough residents and visitors alike and were listed as a critical issue. Roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. Boxborough already has adopted the Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40-15C) and designated 12 roads for which there must be review and approval for the removal of trees and stone walls that are within the right-of-way. Yet, in addition to roadway issues, much of what we value about scenic roads – the stone walls, views across open fields – is not within the public right-of-way. The preservation and protection of scenic roads therefore requires more than one approach.

- Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each of the roads in Boxborough including the character defining features that should be retained.
- Amend the Scenic Roads Bylaw by adding design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls. Add other design criteria such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. Coordinate procedures between Highway Department and Planning Board.
- Consider a scenic overlay district which may provide a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopt flexible zoning standards to protect certain views. Such bylaws also could be written to apply to the numbered routes, which are not protected under the Scenic Roads Bylaw.
- Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstructions, and management of the cow passes under the roads. Policies should address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public

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process in which the community may have to accept responsibility for certain costs to implement standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by the Massachusetts Highway Department. Such standards should have a section addressing the way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads, for example requiring a public hearing if any additional pavement is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can be adopted at Town Meeting through a bylaw. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths and posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

### **Funding of Preservation Projects**

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

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

Funding for state programs varies from year to year. When planning Boxborough's heritage landscape inventory program, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

Towns that have adopted the **Community Preservation Act (CPA)** find it to be an excellent funding source for many heritage landscape projects. Although Boxborough's Town Meeting has rejected the Act in the past, and while it is tricky to pass in lean economic times, the number and types of projects that are currently benefiting from the CPA across the Commonwealth is worthy of reconsideration. Boxborough projects eligible for CPA funding would include MHC inventory, National Register nominations, cemetery preservation, open space acquisition and preservation and restoration of public buildings. In addition, a preservation restriction program could be established using CPA funds. The CPA (M.G.L. Chapter 44B) establishes a mechanism by which cities and towns can develop a fund dedicated to historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Local funds are collected through a .5% to 3% surcharge on each annual real estate tax bill. At the state level, the Commonwealth has established a dedicated fund which is used to match the municipality's collections under the CPA. The amount of the surcharge is determined as a ballot question proposed at a town election.

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Adoption of the Community Preservation Act, by a majority vote on a ballot question, fosters **partnerships** among historic preservationists, conservationists and affordable housing advocates. At least 10% of the funds must be used to preserve historic resources; at least 10% must be used to protect open space; and at least 10% must be used to advance affordable housing. The remaining 70% must be used for one of these three uses as well as recreational needs and can be distributed in varying proportions depending upon the projects that the town believes are appropriate and beneficial to the municipality. Additional information about the CPA can be found at [www.communitypreservation.org](http://www.communitypreservation.org).

## CONCLUSION

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The Boxborough Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the rich and diverse heritage landscapes in Boxborough and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. Boxborough will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations discussed above. One approach that might help Boxborough begin the process is to form a Heritage Landscape Committee, as described in *Reading the Land*.

Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will typically need further documentation on MHC inventory forms. The documentation in turn can be used in publicity efforts to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort of and partnerships among municipal boards and agencies, local non-profit organizations, and state agencies and commissions.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to the municipal land use boards and commissions will assist in making this one of the planning documents that guides Boxborough in preserving important features of the community's character. The recommended tasks will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly Boxborough's Historical Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and the Boxborough Conservation Trust. It also is advisable to present this information to the Board of Selectmen, which was the applicant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program on behalf of the town. Finally distribution of the report to the Historical Society, neighborhood associations, and any other preservation minded organizations will broaden the audience and assist in gathering interest and support for Boxborough's heritage landscapes.

**APPENDIX: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY**

This list was generated by local participants at the Heritage Landscape Identification meeting held in Boxborough on February 9, 2006 and the follow-up fieldwork on April 4, 2006. **There are undoubtedly other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the names and locations of resources are in the first; notes about resources are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Abbreviations used are listed below.

APR = Agricultural Preservation Restriction      CR = Conservation Restriction  
 LHD = Local Historic District                      NR = National Register  
 PR = Preservation Restriction                      \* = Priority Landscape  
 SVT = Sudbury Valley Trustees                    + = Part of a Priority Landscape

<b>Agriculture</b>	
<b><i>Burroughs Farm</i></b> 370 Burroughs Road	APR on 47 acres. Historically known as the Taylor-Burroughs Farm. Ca. 1735 farmhouse with adjacent farm land. Old tavern. House (yellow clapboard) on separate lot, set back from road. Last owner raised Guernseys and Jerseys here and sold milk from herd. Property has been divided but some is still farmed. Burroughs Road was part of the old turnpike. Also known as the Sheehan Farm.
<b><i>Eldridge Road Orchard</i></b>	Orchard on Harvard border at Old Harvard Road, near Delaney Flood Prevention Project.
<b><i>Hill Road Farms +</i></b>	Documented in MHC Area Form B (Boxborough Old Town Center Area) and C (Hill Road Agricultural Area). Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Liberty Square Road Farm Remnants +</i></b> 446 Liberty Square Road	Barn remnants on Smart Property, near intersection of Liberty Square and Sargent Roads. The property of the ca. 1833 Simon Blanchard Federal style house once surrounded by orchards and hayfields. Now just a single building lot.
<b><i>Littlefield Farm +</i></b> 394 Littlefield Road	Jacob Littlefield’s mid 19 <sup>th</sup> -century farm with ca. 1843 Italianate house, attached barn, detached barn, stone walls and rural agricultural fields. In Davidson/Depot Roads neighborhood. Part of Littlefield Road – Davidson and Depot Roads Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Morse Farm</i></b> 926 Hill Rd.	House and two barns on small lot with 40-50 acres of pasture land behind in common ownership. Cows graze here.
<b><i>Robinson Homestead Farm +</i></b> 828 Hill Rd.	NR pending as part of Old Town Center District. Now eight acres. Robinsons came from Littleton. Includes the Reuben Mead Draper House, a ca. 1851 Greek Revival dwelling with an attached barn, detached barn and sheds, orchards and pastures behind.
<b><i>Steele Farm *</i></b> 484 Middle Road	The Levi Wetherbee Farm – NR pending. Town owned since it was purchased in 1994. 34 acres that are part of 100 acres of municipally owned land and adjacent to Beaver Brook Meadow which is conservation land. Vista is important. House and barn. No restrictions presently. Mid 18 <sup>th</sup> - to early 19 <sup>th</sup> -century Colonial/Federal farm house, 1940-41 Steele barn, ca. 1904 Richardson icehouse. The land extends southwesterly almost to Massachusetts Avenue.

<b><i>Stow Road Farmland</i></b>	Corn fields on left and right and at end of Tamarack Lane – airport property.
<b><i>Wetherbee, John II House</i></b> 187 Hill Road	One of the most striking farms. Retains 15 acres of pasture land set off by post and rail fencing, a ca. 1770 farmhouse, ca. 1920s gambrel roof barn, other outbuildings.
<b><i>Wetherbee, Silas Farm +</i></b> 604 Hill Rd	NR pending as part of Old Town Center HD. Also known as Walnut Farm, part of farm of first settler John Wetherbee. At end of Wetherbee Lane off Hill Road. Ca. 1770 Colonial-style house, shop and cow pass. Late 20 <sup>th</sup> century demolition of attached chicken and apple barn. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Wetherbee, Simon Farm</i></b> Hill Rd.	House and farm. Part is protected with conservation restrictions. Abuts Have Not Pond and Conservation Land.
<b><i>Winston Folley Farm</i></b> 69 Depot Road	The old John Blanchard Farm with a ca. 1844 Federal/Greek Revival house and barn on former Hop Barn foundation. Farm of George Krusen for last 40+ years. A deed of 1718 from Mr. Squire to John Blanchard indicates a house on the property in that transaction, thus perhaps the first house in the area.
<b>Archaeological</b>	
<b><i>Cisco Property</i></b>	Potential archaeological sites. Some archaeological investigation has taken place.
<b><i>Inches Mill Site</i></b> Liberty Square Road	Tied to Inches Woods and Thoreau's visit there. The sawmill was in operation from 1806 to 1865.
<b><i>Joseph Sawyer Grist Mill Site</i></b>	On Cisco Property at end of pond.
<b><i>Sudbury Valley Trustees Property</i></b>	There may be remnant archaeological resources in northeast part of town on SVT land associated with Nashoba Praying Village. This has not yet been confirmed by professional archaeological survey.
<b>Burial Grounds and Cemeteries</b>	
<b><i>Hazard Lane</i></b>	Undocumented domestic burial sites of free blacks. Some free blacks may have been buried in South Cemetery as well.
<b><i>North Burying Ground +</i></b> Hill Rd. at Middle Rd.	NR pending as part of Old Town Center HD. Also known as Hill Cemetery and as Old North Cemetery. At Old Town Common. Established in ca. 1776 is an L-shaped parcel partially surrounded by a field stone wall with approximately 150 slate markers. In poor condition. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Smallpox Cemetery</i></b> Burroughs Rd.	Undocumented burial sites. Exact location is unclear.

<b><i>South Cemetery</i></b> Burroughs Rd.	Ca. 1784 to present, stone wall along Burroughs Road with three gates, slate stones, granite obelisks, one tomb (1901), former Hearse House, and possibly graves of free African Americans.
<b>Civic</b>	
<b><i>New Town Center *</i></b> Middle Road	Town Hall, Congregational Church, Parsonage, brick houses. Land opposite the Congregational Church on south side of Massachusetts Avenue is zoned "Town Center District" which is special zoning allowing mixed uses, residential, and business. It includes the fire pond and land southwest of the pond also. Densities vary.
<b><i>Old Town Center +</i></b> Hill and Middle	NR district pending. Burial ground, old pastures, orchards and gardens, common, colonial herb garden, southern part of Hill Road Agricultural area, views to Boston, historic houses, Meetinghouse bell salvaged when meetinghouse burned in 1953. An Eagle Scout took on the project of displaying the bell on the burial ground/herb garden parcel. Behind the burial ground is Have-Not Pond and a 24-acre conservation area. The T-shaped intersection at Middle and Hill Roads is very wide as there was a grass triangle in the intersection which was removed. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Richardson Store</i></b> 871 Massachusetts Ave.	One of a few commercial activities in Boxborough is this ca. 1950 store built on this main route through town which became State Route 111 in 1937.
<b>Industrial</b>	
<b><i>Lime Quarry</i></b>	On Singer property. Exposed from same vein as quarry in Bolton dating to the 1700s.
<b><i>Lemuel Sawyer's Mill</i></b> West Whitcomb Rd.	Sawmill on Beaver Brook with a 15 foot drop.
<b><i>Whitcomb House</i></b> Cunningham Rd.	Site of first dam, saw and grist mill in Boxborough
<b>Institutional</b>	
<b><i>Sally Draper House +</i></b> 799 Hill Road	NR pending as part of Old Town Center HD. Ca. 1807 former schoolhouse prior to Schoolhouse #2. Converted to a residence in ca. 1852 for Sally Draper and moved down to its present location close to the road. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Schoolhouse #2 +</i></b> 339 Picnic St	NR pending as part of Old Town Center HD. Ca. 1852 one-room schoolhouse with Italianate elaboration. North of Old Town Common. Wallace Robinson purchased in 1949 to preserve. Has become a town tradition when yearly the owners open the schoolhouse to hold an old fashioned school day for the children of Boxborough and other towns to attend. The triangle in front of the school at Picnic Street and Hill Road was purchased by the town for \$25 when first school was built. Part of Hill Road Area Heritage Landscape.

<b>Miscellaneous</b>	
<b><i>Chamber / Seat</i></b>	Built into the side of the hill on Goodwin land.
<b>Natural</b>	
<b><i>Boxborough Esker</i></b>	Also known as Ridge Hill, it is a 2 ½ mile esker (geological feature) with a rise of over 45 feet at its crest. It is located in Beaver Valley Preserve in the northwest part of Boxborough west of Rt. 495.
<b><i>Cathedral of Trees + Massachusetts Ave.</i></b>	Mature oak trees arch over the stretch of Massachusetts Avenue between Middle and Hill Roads.
<b><i>Heron Rookery Route 2</i></b>	On the south side of Route 2 between Rt. 495 and Central Street. Most of it is in Littleton.
<b><i>Large Oak Trees + Littlefield &amp; Depot Rd.</i></b>	Mature oak trees along road corridor that arch over the road. Part of Littlefield Road – Davidson and Depot Roads Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b>Open Space /Parks</b>	
<b><i>Beaver Valley Preserve</i></b>	82 acres owned by Nature Conservancy. Boxborough Esker is located here.
<b><i>Cisco Land Beaver Brook Rd</i></b>	Two parcels: 154 acres, 87 acres. Also included in Archaeological Type due to some potential sites on these two large parcels.
<b><i>Colonial Herb Garden +</i></b>	At Old Town Common in foundation of Harvard’s old town hall. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Flagg Hill *</i></b>	Good views from the top. Large pond at the bottom. 286 acres in Boxborough and Stow as Flagg Hill Conservation Area. Other parts that are privately owned. Higher points on top of Windemere Lane. Old ski slope and country club that now is a private residence. Peach orchard. Part of Flagg Hill Area Priority Heritage Landscape
<b><i>Flerra Meadows Stow Road</i></b>	Part is conservation land on the east side of Stow Road.
<b><i>Harvard Sportsman Club</i></b>	56 acres.
<b><i>Heath Hen Meadows</i></b>	Located in the Flagg Hill area, the meadows are along Heath Hen Brook which also meanders into Stow.
<b><i>Inches Woods</i></b>	Thoreau’s documented visits – see <a href="http://www.multimgmt.com/BHSociety/Thoreauvisits.htm">http://www.multimgmt.com/BHSociety/Thoreauvisits.htm</a> . There were first growth woods here which are described in Thoreau’s journal. Associated with Inches Mill Site.

<b><i>Patch Hill</i></b>	16.7 acres, third highest point. Old carriage trail with double stone wall. Patch Hill named for Nathan Patch of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. Also known as Goat Hill it is a glacial drumlin.
<b><i>Picnic Trust Land</i></b>	This land is off Picnic Street near Steele Farm and is town-owned.
<b><i>Robinson Conservation Land</i></b> 989 Hill Rd.	Wallace A. Robinson Conservation Land. This is on the opposite side of Hill Road and northeast of the Robinson Farm. Part of the Patch Hill Conservation Area as the first purchase of 64.58 acres in 1976. In 18 <sup>th</sup> century a limestone quarry and kiln as well as part of the old carriage road to Groton was here.
<b><i>Ben Schrieber Land</i></b> 80-90 Central St	60 acres under CR.
<b>Residential</b>	
<b><i>Benjamin or Simon Draper House+</i></b> 827 Hill Road	NR pending as part of Old Town Center District. Part of the building known traditionally as the 18 <sup>th</sup> -century Boaz Brown or Zebediah Wheeler House, the main house is a Draper house, c. 1825. An American Chestnut tree is on the property. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Littlefield Road Area *</i></b> Littlefield Road	Historic houses along Littlefield, Davidson and Depot Roads, Littlefield Farm.
<b><i>Old Town Center +</i></b>	Cluster of historic houses, also along Hill from Middle Road north passing Picnic Street with Schoolhouse #2 also. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape and listed under Civic/Center also.
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b><i>Cart Paths</i></b>	Part of historic agricultural circulation system, now part of Carriage Trail that follows old carriage road to Groton.
<b><i>Cow Passes *</i></b>	These cattle passages are slowly collapsing. Two have been documented in Historic Resource Survey. They are found under Wetherbee Lane, Littlefield Road, Middle Road, and on Hagers land. A sheep pass has been documented under Picnic Street. Also part of the agricultural landscape. Cow pass on Wetherbee Lane has been partially filled in. It is described in full in the NR nomination for Old Town Center. Farm at end of Wetherbee Lane belonged to Silas Wetherbee, then Caleb Wetherbee. There was a cattle crossing under the railroad between Depot and Sargent Roads. Railroad filled it in between 1958 and 1965. It is likely that there is a cattle pass on Sargent Road where granite tops are visible.
<b><i>Davidson &amp; Depot Roads +</i></b>	Just west of Davidson and Depot Roads, intersection is Littlefield Road. Location of former depot. Railroad stone arched bridge. Historic dwellings in neighborhood such as the 1844 John Blanchard House (69 Depot Road), ca. 1798 Isaac Jennings House (8 Davidson Road) and the ca. 1778 Samuel Davis House (61 Davidson Road).

<b><i>Flagg Hill Road +</i></b>	Scenic with vistas. Silas Taylor Farm with ca. 1830 Greek Revival farmhouse and detached 19 <sup>th</sup> -century barn on northwest side with stonewalls. 205 Flagg Hill Road – large barn next to Greek Revival
<b><i>Gateway Landscapes</i></b>	Most roadway entrances to Boxborough are lined with farms that convey the character of the community.
<b><i>Granite Markers</i></b>	Codman Hill Road 1829 mile marker and large boundary oak, 1907 Beaver Brook Road marker and Littlefield Road marker.
<b><i>Hill Road +</i></b>	Important route with many types of heritage landscapes along the route particularly agricultural, burial, civic, and residential. Part of Hill Road Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Liberty Square Road *</i></b>	At Sargent Road the Joseph Raymond House, a ca. 1760 wood frame Cape with a vista and the 1789 Simon Blanchard House opposite Sargent Road on Liberty Square Road with barn and large foundation. Behind barn an old foundation.
<b><i>Littlefield Road +</i></b>	Large oak trees thought to be as large as those that once were in Inches Woods, Jacob Littlefield Farm, intersection of Davidson and Depot Roads. Stone wall was the original boundary between Littleton and Stow (pre-Boxborough). There is Rolling Meadows which is conservation land. SVT owns two acres at Littlefield, Littleton and Depot Roads.
<b><i>Massachusetts Avenue * Rt. 111</i></b>	Character of road as a former toll road with fine tree canopy in one section between Middle and Hill Roads referred to as “Cathedral of Trees” and other sections near the Acton line that are straight and with fine vistas. This road was designated a public route in 1831 and became State Route 111 over a century later in 1937. There have been some drainage issues on the hill on Mass. Ave about where the road passes over Beaver Brook outlet into Wolf Swamp.
<b><i>Memorial Day Parade Route</i></b>	Connecting trail and theme: Old Walnut Farm at end of Wetherbee Lane to the North Burying Ground to the Herb Garden in the foundation of Harvard’s old town hall, down Middle Road past the Levi Wetherbee Farm to Town Hall, Congregational Church and down to South Cemetery.
<b><i>Middle Road Views</i></b>	Views of Boston on top of hill at Middle Road where tree canopy has grown to the point of obstructing the vista and changing the view. Also looking north, northwest from this hill could see Mount Monadnock; however trees around the North Cemetery obstruct that view.
<b><i>Old Carriage Road</i></b>	Double stone wall marks the route of an old carriage road and indicates historic agricultural use.
<b><i>Old Turnpike</i></b>	Remnants of old turnpike route beginning in Harvard and crossing into Boxborough through the woods. Now a trail.
<b><i>Stone Arched Railroad Bridge</i></b>	Carries the Boston & Maine Railroad over area between Depot and Sargent Roads.
<b><i>Stone Bridge Codman Hill Rd.</i></b>	The stone arched bridge once carried Codman Hill Road over Elizabeth Brook. In the 1950s the road was straightened and shifted away from the bridge which is no longer in use.

<b><i>Views from Route 495</i></b>	Wooded and natural areas on each side of Rt. 495 articulate character of Boxborough with particular attempt to maintain these natural settings along the highway. When Rt. 495 built a 495 Council was established to preserve character along side of highway. Boxborough was successful particularly north of Route 111. Need to watch zoning in this area to preserve those vistas for travelers on Rt. 495.
<b>Waterbodies</b>	
<b><i>Beaver Brook</i></b>	Flows from Boxborough to Littleton down the western edge of Boxborough under Route 495 to Wolf Swamp.
<b><i>Elderidge Pond</i></b>	Two-acre pond as part of Elizabeth Brook.
<b><i>Flagg Hill Pond +</i></b>	12-acre pond of which most is town owned. Part of Flagg Hill Area Priority Heritage Landscape.
<b><i>Fort Pond Brook &amp; Pond</i></b>	Two-acre pond within Fort Pond Brook on Acton-Boxborough line.
<b><i>Guggins Brook</i></b>	Meandering brook from the middle of Boxborough to Acton where it joins with Inches Brook and Fort Pond Brook.
<b><i>Half Moon Meadow Brook</i></b>	Tributary of Fort Pond Brook. Flows through Indian Meadow which was partially filled in the 1800s by the B & M railroad.
<b><i>Muddy Pond</i></b>	One-acre pond near esker in Beaver Brook Preserve west of Rt. 495.
<b><i>Wolf Swamp</i> Old Harvard Rd</b>	229 acres – protected town owned. Natural infill around the edges near the roads obstructing views of the swamp. Same issue between 80 and 90 Central Street.

# BOXBOROUGH OPENSOURCE & HISTORIC RESOURCES

## High Priority Heritage Landscapes

1. Cow Passes
  - a. Hill Road - Wetherbee Lane
  - b. Picnic Street
2. Flag Hill Area
3. Hill Road Area
4. Liberty Square, Sargent Road Area
5. Littlefield Road, Davidson & Depot Roads
6. Massachusetts Avenue - Cathedral of Trees
7. New Town Center
8. Steele Farm

Note: Default Legend, all categories may not appear on the map.

Legend:

- DCR
- DCRS/DFG
- Other State
- County
- Municipal
- Federal
- Land Trust
- Non-Profit
- Conservation Restriction
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction
- CR/APR Combination
- Other Legal Interest
- State Historic Resources
- Interstate
- State
- Local Road

Scale: 0, 0.25, 0.5 Miles

