

# **NEWBURYPORT RECONNAISSANCE REPORT**

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## **ESSEX COUNTY LANDSCAPE INVENTORY**

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



**Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation**

**Essex National Heritage Commission**

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## INTRODUCTION

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Essex County is known for its unusually rich and varied landscapes, which are represented in each of its 34 municipalities. Heritage landscapes are places that are created by human interaction with the natural environment. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the history of the community and provide a sense of place; they show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. This 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, an inland river corridor or the rocky coast. To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC) have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program (HLI) to communities in Essex County. 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. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land* which has provided guidance for the program in Essex County. In short, each participating community appoints a Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the DCR-ENHC consulting team. The LPC organizes a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and city officials offer community input by identifying potential heritage landscapes. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, usually 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 the Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community. It outlines the history of the community; identifies the resources and documentation that provide background information; provides a short description of the priority heritage landscapes visited; discusses planning issues identified by the community; and concludes with a brief discussion of survey and planning recommendations. A list of all of the heritage landscapes identified by the community is included in the Appendix.

## NEWBURYPORT HISTORY

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Newburyport's distinctive landscape features — rivers, hills, meadows and tidal flats — were instrumental in shaping the history of the community from the earliest Native American use of the land to the present day.

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The Merrimack River was an important Native American transportation route and fishing ground. During the Contact period (1500-1620) the Newburyport area was inhabited by members of the Pawtucket group (also called Penacook) who were found in coastal areas from Massachusetts Bay north to York, Maine. In the 1630s English settlers established the town of Newbury on the Parker River, with an agricultural economy based on the rich meadows and marshes of the Merrimack estuary. Soon, however, entrepreneurs were drawn to the Merrimack River to build a waterside settlement that became a fishing and trading center. By the 1640s, the first of several ferries connected this waterside section of Newbury on the south side of the Merrimack to Salisbury on the north, an important link on the main route from Boston to Portsmouth and Maine. Captain Paul White built the first wharf in 1655. By 1660, shipbuilding was an established industry and, by the end of the century, the town enjoyed a brisk trade with the West Indies and Europe. As wharves and shipyards proliferated, the town set aside “Wayes to the Water” to ensure public access forever.

In 1764, the port section of the community broke off from Newbury to become Newburyport. The town continued to grow in the years leading up to the American Revolution with trade, shipbuilding and related industries providing the economic base. Privateering during the Revolution and renewed maritime trade after it fueled the city’s economy, sparking unprecedented building activity, including many of the large Federal style houses still found along High Street and elsewhere throughout the city. In 1811, a catastrophic fire leveled the downtown. That event, together with trade embargoes leading up to the War of 1812, the silting of the harbor, and the diversion of New Hampshire goods to Boston by the Middlesex Canal, resulted in the city’s economic decline. Ironically, the 1811 fire led to stringent fire safety codes, which have helped to preserve the downtown.

Improved transportation systems played a significant role in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ferry boats crossed the Merrimack until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the first Essex Merrimack Bridge (to Amesbury) and the Newburyport Bridge (to Salisbury) replaced ferries across the Merrimack. The Newburyport Turnpike, Newburyport’s answer to the Middlesex Canal, was laid out in 1804, connecting State Street directly with Boston. The Eastern Railroad arrived in Newburyport in 1840. In 1851, the town became a city and annexed the fishing community of Joppa downriver and the shipbuilding area of Belleville upriver. Pride in this status led to the construction of new civic buildings, monuments and parks. At the same time, new steam-powered mills provided a financial boost to the city. Many of the large brick mill buildings that exist today were built in this period. While the West Indies trade and shipbuilding declined, the city remained the commercial center for the surrounding towns.

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Newburyport had gone into another decline that lasted past mid-century. In the 1950s, construction of Route 95 provided faster access to and from Newburyport, while rail service declined. In the 1960s, the city launched an urban renewal project, which, after portions of the waterfront and downtown were leveled, was turned by popular protest into a restoration project in the 1970s, restoring the decaying downtown and waterfront to a lively commercial center again. Today, Newburyport is a community of 17,500 that

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places high value on its natural and historic resources and is concerned about the impact of growth on community character.

## **RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION**

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This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program.

### **Inventory of Historic 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 on line at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>.

According to the MHC Inventory, a total of 2,725 historic resources have been identified in Newburyport that date from 1649 to 1990. Many of these were included because they fall into National Register districts but were never individually surveyed. Newburyport's extensive inventory, one of the largest in the state, was begun in the 1970s, with updates in the 1980s and 1990s.

### **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. Newburyport has one National Historic Landmark, the Caleb Cushing House. The city also has two National Register districts, the Market Square Historic District established in 1971 with 37 properties and the Newburyport Historic District established in 1984 with 2,576 properties. This large district contains the second largest collection of Federal period buildings in Massachusetts. There are 12 properties individually listed in the National Register. There are also properties associated with two thematic National Register nominations: First Period Buildings of Eastern Massachusetts and Lighthouses of Massachusetts. All National Register properties are also listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

Five Newburyport buildings are also protected through preservation restrictions in accordance with MGL Chapter 183, Sections 31-33. They include: the E.P. Dodge Building, the Eaton Drug Building, Fowle's News, Newburyport City Hall and Old South Church. A preservation restriction runs with the deed and is one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties that have preservation restrictions filed under the state statute are automatically listed in the State Register.

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## **Planning Documents**

Newburyport's Open Space and Recreation Plan (2005) is nearing completion. The previous plan (1999) includes a section on scenic resources and unique environments. It highlights the hilltops, meadows, scenic roads, the downtown area and the waterfront as important assets of the community. The plan contains an inventory of parks and other city-owned land and includes descriptions and recommendations for the major parks and open spaces. Newburyport completed its Master Plan in 2001 and a Strategic Land Use Plan in 2004.

## **Planning Ordinances and Other Tools**

Newburyport passed the Community Preservation Act in 2002, with a 2% surcharge, which provides funding for historic preservation, open space protection and affordable housing. The city also adopted a Demolition Delay Ordinance in 2002, and recently amended it, to provide for a 12-month delay in the demolition of buildings deemed significant and preferably preserved by the Historical Commission. Newburyport has a Scenic Roads Ordinance developed in accordance with MGL Chapter 40-15C, the Scenic Roads Act. It stipulates that the Planning Board must hold a hearing for the removal of trees and stone walls within the right-of-ways on designated scenic roads. The city currently has no local historic districts.

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## **PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES**

Newburyport's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by approximately a dozen residents, some representing city boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on June 1, 2004. During the meeting residents compiled a lengthy list of the city'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 to identify issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members selected a group of priority heritage 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.

This section describes the priority landscapes chosen as the focus of the reconnaissance work in Newburyport. In most instances intensive survey work will be needed to fully document the physical characteristics and the historical development of the landscape. These heritage landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and types of resources.

### **Brown Square**

Brown Square, a .6 acre park located on Pleasant Street adjacent to City Hall, is an important civic space that functions as a common. It is also one of Newburyport's oldest public open spaces, given to the community in 1801 by Moses Brown. Its existence prompted the location of the new City Hall in 1851, and it has been a site for civic ceremonial functions ever since. Early postcards

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show it as an unadorned space with grass, elm trees, paths and perimeter fence. A focal point today is the statue of William Lloyd Garrison, which was presented to the community in 1893 and was recently restored. Residents value the simple character of the park and expressed concern that there was pressure to add new features to the space that might detract from its historic character. Incompatible elements, including a large residential development and a nearby parking garage, were also mentioned as concerns. Brown Square is located in the Newburyport Historic District, a National Register district.

### **Common Pasture**

Common Pasture is a roughly 1,000-acre area that lies in three communities, Newbury, Newburyport and West Newbury. It was established as common land in the Colonial period and much of it has remained largely rural for centuries. It runs roughly from Hale Street in Newburyport south to Scotland Road in Newbury, west to Turkey Hill Road in West Newbury and east to the Little River and is bisected by Route 95. The Common Pasture has been used for pasture, duck hunting, bird watching, harvesting of salt marsh hay, and as the subject of paintings. Today portions are in wetland; other portions are in mixed-use agriculture; and some areas have been converted to industrial use. The history of the area has not been well documented. Nearly all of Newburyport's remaining farms are located in the Common Pasture. A key reason for wishing to preserve the area is the historic importance of these working landscapes.

In 2004 the Common Pasture was listed as one of the "Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources of Massachusetts" by Preservation Mass, a statewide preservation advocacy group. The citation said in part,

*"As is the case for many existing open spaces, development is a constant threat. With its extremely large expanse, the pasture is especially challenged since it is controlled by three different sets of municipal zoning regulations representing each community through which it spreads. Residents have expressed concern for the pasture's future at town meetings and encouraged town officials to work with appropriate agencies to secure formal protections for the entire Common Pasture area. The imminent threat is evidenced in that permitting processes are already underway for proposed development on a wooded section near the south end of the pasture. The land represents a feeling of "home" to the community and preserves our working heritage."*

### **Curzon Mill Area**

The Curzon Mill area is a small rural enclave of roughly 25 acres at the junction of the Artichoke and Merrimack Rivers in the western part of Newburyport. It is located at the west end of Curzon Mill Road, which bisects the area and connects with Emery Lane in West Newbury via a pedestrian bridge. Historic resources in the Curzon Mill area include a historic gristmill (rebuilt in 1750 and now used as a residence) and three 19<sup>th</sup> century houses. The area is also associated with Pulitzer Prize-winning author John Phillips Marquand. The landscape is

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generally wooded and is largely surrounded by Maudslay State Park and the Artichoke and Merrimack Rivers. The Curzon Mill area is highly valued for its natural resources, which include dramatic 12' tides, outstanding wildlife and stunning river views. A six-acre parcel in the area is currently under consideration for purchase by the city using CPA funds. The historic importance of the area is not widely recognized.

### **Downtown Area (including Market Square and the Central Waterfront)**

Newburyport's downtown is the historic, civic and economic core of the community, the “essence” of Newburyport. It is a dense urban seaport that includes commercial and residential buildings, a working waterfront and important civic spaces that have been enhanced with recent streetscape improvements. One focal point of the downtown is the commercial district centered on Market Square, which is characterized by two- and three-story Federal style brick buildings interspersed with civic structures such as the Firehouse Center (now a multi-use building) and the U.S. Custom House (now a museum). A working waterfront lies along the edge of the downtown, with boatyards, a fishing pier, yacht clubs and other water-related uses including the waterfront park and promenade. Adjacent residential areas include wooden and brick Federal-style buildings typically set on small lots, many with attractive gardens. The downtown is now a regional tourist attraction that includes a lively commercial district and many waterfront activities. Residents expressed concern about incremental change to the character of the historic district; diminishing access to the waterfront; the condition of public open spaces; need for increasing amounts of parking; and potential loss of water-related businesses as riverfront land becomes more valuable.

### **High Street Neighborhood**

The High Street neighborhood runs along High Street from the Atkinson Common east to the Newbury border. It is best known for the outstanding collection of large Federal period houses on spacious lots along most of the length of the street, also for Bartlet Mall and the old Essex County Superior Courthouse, designed by architect Charles Bullfinch. The courthouse is one of the oldest still in continuing use. Much of High Street lies in the Newburyport Historic District, which is listed in the National Register. Residents expressed strong concern about incremental changes to the High Street neighborhood, particularly rear and side lot subdivision, loss of trees, and proliferation of utility poles, wires and out-of-scale traffic management devices.

### **Joppa Flats**

Joppa Flats is a large expanse of regionally significant marshland that includes portions of Newbury and Newburyport. Historically it has been used for the harvest of saltmarsh hay (a use that continues today) and for hunting, fishing, clamming, bird watching, painting and recreational boating. It is one of the most ecologically rich and visually dramatic landscapes in Essex County and is highly valued by residents and tourists alike. Much of the area is owned by public agencies and non-profit organizations although there are some private holdings,

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especially on portions of the marsh that are slightly higher in elevation. One former clam shack, now a residence, serves as a reminder of a once thriving industry. Concerns expressed by residents included preserving public access; potential impacts of adjacent development on ecology and water quality; and pressures for development of lots that were previously considered unbuildable. Mass Audubon's new Joppa Flats Education Center and the headquarters of the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge are focal points of the area.



### **Merrimack River**

The Merrimack River forms the northern boundary of Newburyport. The Newburyport portion of the river begins at the Artichoke River, flows east past Maudslay State Park and the downtown and widens beyond Joppa Flats before reaching the Atlantic Ocean at Plum Island, which forms the eastern boundary of Newburyport. The river is integral to the historical and environmental character of the community. Native Americans used the river as a transportation corridor. English settlers built their early neighborhoods along the banks of the river and developed maritime-related industries. These residential and commercial neighborhoods and associated waterfront uses form the core of present day Newburyport.

Newburyport is fortunate that Maudslay State Park occupies a major section of river frontage in the northwestern part of the city, preserving remnants of the formal estate landscape, providing important open space, and offering habitat to many species of wildlife, including bald eagles. The rural Old Ferry Road area lies to the east of Maudslay. It is an important connecting link with Moseley Woods which is east of the John Greenleaf Whittier Memorial Bridge. The river's edge from Maudslay along Bartlett Cove to the bridge is largely undeveloped, although the portion next to the bridge contains the city's main waterworks.

Between the Chain Bridge and Route 1, the waterfront is largely small-scale residential with some water-related businesses and one park. In the section above Jefferson Street, several large, formerly open lots have seen rapid development recently, threatening bald eagle habitat. Between Jefferson and Oakland Streets are the sites of many of Belleville's historic shipyards, which are largely unknown today. The area still contains many houses related to the

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shipyards, most of which have not been inventoried. Little public access to the river is available between Moseley Woods and Cashman Park, which lies along the waterfront west of the Route 1 Bridge.

The downtown waterfront is densely developed with mixed uses, including boatyards and yacht clubs as well as public parks and promenades. Five historic "Ways to the Water" are located in this downtown riverfront. The Joppa/South End neighborhood southeast of downtown includes a small riverfront park, the one remaining former clam shack and a dense residential neighborhood. Joppa Flats continues to the east, with dramatic regional views over the tidal flats. Much but not all of the marshland is owned by public agencies and non-profit organizations. The northern end of Plum Island at the mouth of the Merrimack River is the easternmost section of Newburyport.

Primary issues associated with the Merrimack River include preserving traditional waterfront uses such as fishing and boatyards, assuring and enhancing continued public access, and preserving water quality. Residents also expressed hope about a plan to move parking lots off the downtown waterfront in favor of expanding park space. Residents noted the need for better understanding of the role the waterfront has played in Newburyport's history.

### **Old Ferry Road Area**

The Old Ferry Road area is the historic location of an important Merrimack River crossing that dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This once-active area is now a somewhat isolated enclave between Maudslay State Park and Route 95, abutting the Merrimack. Old Ferry Road was cut off from the rest of Ferry Road by the construction of Route 95. It is a narrow rural road that becomes a trail after passing Arrowhead Farm, one of the country's oldest family farms, and the former Pettingill property, a 25-acre parcel under an agricultural preservation restriction (APR). Adjacent to Old Ferry Road is Spring Lane, which includes Water Department land and an informal fishing area just west of the Whittier Memorial Bridge. The entire Old Ferry Road/Spring Lane area is largely wooded and is an important open space connector between Maudslay State Park on the west and the Moseley Woods on the east.

### **Plum Island**

Plum Island is a barrier beach lying at the mouth of the Merrimack River, east of downtown Newburyport. Only the northern tip of Plum Island is in Newburyport, the remainder is in Newbury, Rowley and Ipswich. The northern part of the island is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century cottage community, while the southern portion of the island is undeveloped and occupied by the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge and Sandy Point State Park. The northern portion of the island will soon have state-mandated water and sewer services, which will increase pressure for development on this fragile barrier beach. A zoning overlay district was established in 2001 to protect against over development. Residents expressed a desire to preserve island character in light of impending water and sewer service, including the scale and density of development and public access to the beach. MHC inventory forms have not been completed for Plum Island.

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## **Sawyer Hill Cemetery**

Sawyer Hill Cemetery, also known as the Quaker Cemetery, is a small privately owned cemetery on Curzon Mill Road adjacent to Maudslay State Park. It was established around the 1790s and is still active on a limited basis. The wooded site with several hundred headstones and burial monuments is located back from the road and is not easily visible or well known. It appears to receive rudimentary care but has not been documented on an MHC inventory form. Some of the headstones and monuments are in need of stone conservation.

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## **PLANNING**

### **Preservation Strategies**

Newburyport's dramatic coastal landscape and the Merrimack River played a critical role in the settlement and historical development of the community and remain among the city's most important assets. Newburyport is also fortunate to have an unusually large and rich collection of historic resources. The city has already taken some steps to preserve its most significant buildings and natural areas, although it has no local historic districts yet. Newburyport is now looking beyond these resources to the landscapes, streetscapes, rural roads, farms, neighborhoods and other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most Essex County municipalities, Newburyport is under intense pressure for development, especially in waterfront areas. Special places within the community that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

### **Planning Issues**

In addition to the priority landscapes listed in the previous section, residents identified general issues related to heritage landscapes and community character. Each of the critical planning issues affects at least one of the priority landscapes. The issues are arranged in alphabetical order. Some involve more than one community, while others address issues that are specific to Newburyport. Another major theme of the landscape identification meeting was the fact that many heritage landscapes areas are taken for granted. Their historical value is not well documented or widely recognized. 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.

### ***Agricultural Land***

Preservation of agricultural land is an important goal for Newburyport, particularly in areas that retain a high concentration of agricultural use such as along Hale Street, sections of Low Street and Old Ferry Road. Most of Newburyport's former farms have already been subdivided or converted to other uses. Farms that remain are highly valued by the community, especially those

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that continue the historic practice of haying, have significant historic structures or are visible from public right of ways.

### ***Burial Grounds and Cemeteries***

Newburyport residents identified one privately owned burial ground, Sawyer Hill, as a priority landscape but also expressed concern about other burial grounds and cemeteries, including those that are city-owned. Only two burial grounds have been documented on MHC inventory forms and all exhibit some preservation needs, particularly the older ones that are no longer actively used for burial. Issues include inadequate maintenance, vandalism, deteriorated monuments and hazardous trees.



### ***Downtown***

Newburyport's downtown includes an outstanding collection of Federal period architecture, with commercial areas at the core and water-related activities along the riverfront, surrounded by compact urban residential neighborhoods. The city underwent a major revitalization in the 1970s with considerable investment in urban infrastructure and a commitment to preserving the historic fabric of the city. Documentation of the major buildings in the 1970s and creation of a large Newburyport National Register Historic District in 1984 represented an important commitment to that goal, but the absence of local historic districts limits protection. In the intervening years, the commercial success of the revitalization plan has created new issues and challenges. The city faces constant pressure to increase residential density in downtown neighborhoods. The city is also trying to reconfigure some of the parking on the waterfront to make way for expanded parkland. Addressing parking issues will help to enhance public access to the riverfront.

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### *Neighborhoods*

Preserving neighborhood character was a major theme of the heritage landscape meeting. Newburyport's residential neighborhoods are rich in historic resources and essential to community vitality. Churches and schools serve as anchors in their neighborhoods. The Unitarian Church and Saint Paul's (High Street) have burial grounds. Newburyport High School, Kelley School and Brown School have urban landscape qualities. Eleven neighborhoods were identified as heritage landscapes, ranging from compact urban neighborhoods to larger rural areas. While almost all neighborhoods are facing changes that threaten community character, rural and waterfront neighborhoods were perceived as the most threatened. Some neighborhoods close to the downtown have been listed in the National Register, while other neighborhoods have not been documented on MHC inventory forms. All neighborhoods have little form of protection, although the Fruit Street neighborhood is working toward local historic district status.

### *Scenic Roads*

Newburyport's rural roads were mentioned as scenic and historic assets that contribute much to the character of the community. Several residents cited the need for a tree ordinance to protect significant older trees, particularly along roadsides, while others commented that the urban trees appeared stressed and needed better care. Newburyport has a Scenic Roads Ordinance, which establishes a process through which the city can govern the protection of both trees and stone walls on its rights of way. The Planning Board must review and approve activities that would affect trees and stone walls. However, the law does not provide for jurisdiction over trees and stone walls on state-numbered routes like parts of High Street. Members of the Newbury Tree Committee are working to create a tree ordinance which is expected to be enacted soon.

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## **PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Preservation planning is a three-step process: identification, evaluation and protection. Four useful documents to consult before beginning to implement preservation strategies are the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Survey Manual* and *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances*; the Department of Conservation and Recreation's *Reading the Land*; and the Essex National Heritage Commission's *Essex National Heritage Area Plan*. Each publication provides necessary information for the identification, evaluation and protection of the rich cultural heritage of Massachusetts communities. The recommendations that follow are in two parts. General recommendations are listed first, followed by more specific recommendations.

Each community will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations discussed below. One approach that might help Newburyport begin the process is to form a Heritage Landscape Committee, as described in *Reading the Land*.

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## **General Recommendations**

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. The general 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 and (3) protect.

### ***Inventory of Heritage Landscapes and Other Historic Assets***

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 historical development. Although Newburyport has done extensive survey of its historic resources, most of it was done nearly 30 years ago and focused almost entirely on buildings in the Newburyport National Register District. Most of the city's historic landscapes have not been documented at all. All resources that have been recorded in the past should be reviewed, particularly those documented in the 1970s because survey methodology has changed since that time. New procedures are more comprehensive and link properties in a more coherent way than in the past. Thus, using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology, record Newburyport's heritage:

- Document heritage landscapes and other resources identified by the community that are not already represented in the MHC inventory, with emphasis on priority landscapes and threatened neighborhoods such as Plum Island, Common Pasture, the Curzon Mill area and the Old Ferry Road area.
- Organize the survey by property type and include a wide range of property types. Document unprotected resources first and prioritize by need/threat.
- Make sure to document secondary features on residential properties, such as barns, wagon sheds, silos, garages, stone walls.

### ***National Register Program***

As additional survey work is completed, evaluate properties for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Develop a National Register listing plan taking into consideration a property's significance, integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition in order to advance preservation strategies should be given priority. It is likely that Curzon Mill, Old Ferry Road and parts of Plum Island will be eligible for the National Register.

### ***Agricultural Landscapes***

Preservation of agricultural landscapes ideally means preservation of farming activities; otherwise, it is simply the preservation of land as open space. It is important to know what the key features of an agricultural landscape are and

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which features the community values in order to make a case for preservation of these landscapes. Some preservation tools are available that can assist communities in preserving farming activities. Consider the following options.

- Establish an agricultural commission to address farm preservation in Newburyport.
- 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.
- Use Community Preservation funds to purchase development rights on farms or to assist a farmer in the restoration of historic farm buildings.
- Continue public-private partnerships to preserve farmland through purchase, agricultural preservation restrictions or conservation restrictions.

### ***Burial Grounds and Cemeteries***

Newburyport has a range of historic burial areas and cemeteries, under both public and private ownership. The documentation and preservation needs vary for each site. The DCR publication *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries* provides guidance on developing preservation plans for burial grounds, including identification and evaluation of the resources as well as preservation strategies. Using this guide Newburyport should:

- Prepare MHC inventory forms for all burial grounds and cemeteries that are 50 years or older. Update existing MHC inventory forms as needed.
- List eligible burial grounds and cemeteries in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Develop a preservation and management plan for each city-owned burial ground taking into consideration repair of stone markers, stone walls and fencing related to cemeteries, repair of iron work, removal of invasive growth, and on-going maintenance of plant material.
- Work with private/institutional owners of older burial grounds to inform them of preservation and management planning and to assure that basic preservation needs are met.

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### *Neighborhood Character*

Nearly all preservation strategies address neighborhood character in some manner. Thorough documentation on MHC inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Two preservation tools that are particularly applicable to Newburyport's historic neighborhoods are local historic districts (MGL Chapter 40C) and neighborhood conservation districts. Both types of districts recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. Each type of district is a local initiative, adopted by a 2/3 vote of the City Council, and administered by a district commission, appointed by the Mayor. Local historic districts offer the strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources, while neighborhood conservation districts are less restrictive but still embrace neighborhood character.

- Determine where local historic districts would be appropriate and where neighborhood conservation districts would be appropriate. It is likely that some or all of the downtown and High Street areas included in the Newburyport Historic District (already listed in the National Register) should be considered as a potential local historic district while neighborhood conservation districts would be more appropriate for residential neighborhoods that may have less architectural integrity and where more flexibility is needed.
- Pass a local historic district (LHD) ordinance and designate historically significant neighborhoods as local historic districts to preserve individual property as well as neighborhood character. In a local historic district, any proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public right-of-way are reviewed by a locally appointed historic district commission.
- Alternatively, pass a neighborhood conservation district (NCD) ordinance. Neighborhood conservation districts are special areas that are preserved by regulating scale, massing and materials of additions and new construction. Such districts may be the most appropriate way to preserve the land use pattern of an area where there are changes in materials but the overall size, scale and orientation of structures within the heritage landscape are retained.

### *Scenic Roads*

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Newburyport residents and visitors alike. Yet roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. The Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40-15C) under which Newburyport's Scenic Roads Ordinance was adopted only addresses 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 —

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is not within the public right-of-way. This is an important distinction and requires more than one approach.

- Develop a list with descriptions and photo documentation of each rural road in Newburyport. Use this as the basis for designation of additional scenic roads, particularly those in rural/agricultural areas and adjacent to rivers.
- Amend the Scenic Roads Ordinance 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 Public Works Department, Planning Office and Planning Board.
- Establish an overlay to reinforce preservation of important views by establishing a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopting flexible zoning standards to protect certain views. Such bylaws could be written to apply to the numbered routes also, which are not protected under the Scenic Roads Ordinance.
- Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstruction, which address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the community may have to accept responsibility for some costs to implement standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by Mass. 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 city road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads, or can be adopted 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.



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### ***Funding of Preservation Projects***

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. In recent years, the ENHC has maintained a small grants program for Essex County communities. In addition, both the MHC and the 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 for Newburyport's heritage landscapes, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is an excellent source of funding for many heritage landscape projects. Newburyport adopted the CPA in 2002 with a 2% surcharge on each real estate bill and some exemptions. Many of the recommendations in this report could be funded with CPA money, including survey and National Register projects, preservation and conservation restrictions and agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs), which may be applicable to some of the more vulnerable landscapes. The Community Preservation Committee is charged with developing a plan, considering projects and recommending expenditure of the CPA funds to the City Council. The plan helps to guide the community in selecting the most appropriate projects for CPA funding.

### **Specific Recommendations**

#### ***Brown Square***

- Document history and existing conditions of Brown Square on an MHC inventory form.
- Prepare a management plan that addresses the square itself and surrounding streetscape. Use Bartlet Mall plan as a model and include guidelines for evaluation of proposed monuments.

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### *Common Pasture*

The Common Pasture is a regional resource located in three communities. Preservation efforts will require cooperation among these communities as well as broad public support and the involvement of non-profit organizations. Important steps in this direction have already occurred with the establishment of a Common Pasture Coalition and inclusion of Common Pasture on Preservation Mass's "Most Endangered" list for 2004. Natural resources associated with the Common Pasture have been documented by the Open Space Committee but less is known about the cultural resources of the area. Newburyport's application to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program emphasized that historic inventory information would be very helpful in supporting the efforts of the coalition.

- Complete an MHC area form for the Common Pasture with descriptions and photo documentation.
- Working with the towns of Newbury and West Newbury, develop a regional plan for the Common Pasture.
- Review recommendations for agricultural preservation under general recommendations and implement those that are applicable.
- Explore options for funding to acquire property and development rights. Pursue transfer of development rights program associated with the strategic land use plan.

### *Plum Island*

Increased development of Plum Island, resulting in some loss of the character of this unique heritage landscape is inevitable. It is essential that Newbury and Newburyport work together to preserve the context of the summer cottage community by enforcing the terms of the overlay district adopted in 2001, including all environmental, health and zoning regulations and by reviewing the effectiveness of the overlay district. If the goals are not achieved, every effort should be made to tighten the regulations so that over-development does not occur. Heritage landscape documentation will provide yet another layer of information of the significance of the area and will be one more reason to protect the neighborhood.

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## CONCLUSION

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The Newburyport Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the rich and diverse heritage landscapes in Newburyport and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. However, it is only the first step in the planning process. 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 to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort of and partnerships with municipal boards and agencies, local non-profits, neighboring communities 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 Newburyport in preserving important features of the community's character. The tasks that are recommended will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly Newburyport's Historical Commission, Office of Planning and Development, and Open Space Committee. It also is advisable to present this information to the City Council and the Mayor, applicants to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program on behalf of the city. Finally distribution of the report to neighborhood associations and other preservation minded organizations will broaden the audience and assist in gathering interest and support for Newburyport's heritage landscapes.

**APPENDIX: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY**

This list was prepared as a summary of the Heritage Landscape Identification meeting held in Newburyport on June 1 and follow-up fieldwork on June 3, 2004. This is a working list and can be updated by the community. **There may be other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the name and location of the resource are in the first, notes about the resource are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Abbreviations used are listed below.

- CR = Conservation Restriction                      NR = National Register  
 LHD = Local Historic District                      PR = Preservation Restriction  
 NHL = National Historic Landmark              \* = Priority Landscape

<b>Burial Grounds and Cemeteries</b>	
<i><b>Belleville Cemetery</b></i> Story Avenue	13-acre 19 <sup>th</sup> century cemetery, privately owned.
<i><b>Oak Hill Cemetery</b></i> State Street	NR District. 34.4 acres, 1842 rural cemetery, privately owned.
<i><b>Old Hill/Highland Burial Ground</b></i> Greenleaf/Pond Sts.	5.3-acre city-owned burial ground adjacent to Bartlet Mall is in two sections, one called Old Hill and the other called Highland.
<i><b>Saint Mary's Cemetery</b></i> Storey Avenue	23.7-acre Catholic cemetery.
<i><b>Sawyer Hill Cemetery</b></i> * Curzon Mill Road	Small Quaker cemetery near Maudslay State Park. Established circa 1790s, still active on limited basis. Todd Woodworth and Judge Richard Welch are trustees.
<b>Civic / Downtown</b>	
<i><b>Downtown</b></i> * Route 1, Washington/ Harris, Fair Streets	NR District. The essence of Newburyport, dense urban seaport with gardens and trees. Threatened by incremental change. Downtown alleys are important. Urban outbuildings, carriage houses etc are being lost. Sub-areas include Market Square and the waterfront.
<b>Maritime</b>	
<i><b>Central Waterfront</b></i> *	NR District. A portion of the central waterfront is owned by the Redevelopment Authority, another portion is owned by the Waterfront Trust. Historic aspect of waterfront is not fully appreciated. Area includes: Firehouse Center, boardwalk, museum, embayment, public access, remaining working fishing. "Wayes to the water" ensure permanent access to the waterfront, only five remain. Resources include American Yacht Club on Water Street, the oldest yacht club in the United States and a Coast Guard station.

<b><i>Joppa Flats *</i></b> Joppa to Plum Island	Part of regionally significant salt marsh known as the Great Marsh. Partially protected. Historically important for Native American use, fishing, clamming, duck hunting, salt hay, etc. Hunting shacks on Woodbridge Island. Valuable wildlife habitat. Flats at eastern point owned by Historic New England (formerly SPNEA) as part of Spencer-Pierce-Little Farm. Clam flats threatened by development, pollution, natural forces.
<b><i>Lighthouses and Range Lights</i></b>	NR. Lighthouses in Newburyport include: Plum Island light, Coast Guard station, life saving station. There are also two range lights, one is one Coast Guard property, one is privately owned.
<b>Natural Features</b>	
<b><i>Artichoke River</i></b>	Forms boundary with West Newbury, runs through Curzon Mill area, 12' tides, important bird habitat (herons, eagles), watershed area, largely protected.
<b><i>Little River</i></b>	Common Pasture area, drains into Parker River.
<b><i>Merrimack River *</i></b>	Regional river serving many purposes and impacting many communities. Newburyport portion is intensively used for boat building, fishing, yacht clubs, boat storage, recreation, navigation and tourism.
<b>Open Space</b>	
<b><i>Atkinson Common</i></b> Moseley Ave and High Street	NR District. Established 1873. 21 acres, city-owned, managed by trust. Old common at west end of city. Passive recreation, tennis courts, gazebo, stone tower, Civil War memorial.
<b><i>Bartlet Mall</i></b> High Street	NR District. 7.3 acres, city-owned. Passive park with frog pond, Essex Superior Courthouse, nearby horse watering trough and old gaol. Master plan completed, improvements made through DCR/EOEA grants, including replanting of elms. Well-loved and well-protected, needs funding to implement the remainder of the plan.
<b><i>Brown Square *</i></b> Green and Pleasant	NR District. .6-acre square is focal point of civic area that also includes City Hall. Given to city in 1801. Statue of William Lloyd Garrison. Landscape used to be more formal. Proliferation of monuments is a concern.
<b><i>Cashman Park</i></b> Merrimac Street	NR district. 12.4 acres, city-owned. Former shipbuilding and distillery area along the Merrimack. Recreation facilities and view of river.
<b><i>City Forest</i></b> Hale Street	Southwest part of city near I-95. Scenic wooded open space with pedestrian loop trail. Unusual early history. Plans to extend trail system.
<b><i>Common Pasture *</i></b> Scotland Road, Turkey Hill Road	Historic pasture both sides of Hale Street, multiple owners. Includes old farms, hay land, some dairy and specialty agriculture, wet meadows. Primary agricultural area in Newburyport.
<b><i>Joppa Park</i></b> Water Street	Along Merrimack River. Narrow linear park along seawall with great views of river, passive recreation.

<b><i>March's Hill</i></b> High Street at Bromfield	NR District. Recreational area with basketball court and winter sledding. Water tower. Forested hill and kettle hole with planned adjacent rail trail. Changing land use on Parker Street side.
<b><i>Maudslay State Park</i></b> Curzon Mill Road	480-acre state park with 19 <sup>th</sup> century gardens and outbuildings, rolling meadows, pine forests and mountain laurel. Guided tours, trails for walking, hiking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing. Seasonal outdoor theater and performance center.
<b><i>Moseley Woods</i></b> Merrimac and Spofford Streets	18 acres, owned by city and Moseley Trust. Overlooking Merrimack River. Passive recreation, open space, picnic grounds, playground, walking trails. Large area with recent renovations. Was part of Moseley Estate. Adjacent Water Department land is vulnerable to change.
<b><i>Three Roads Triangle</i></b> High Street	Intersection with two small parks, very visible area opposite Atkinson Common. Gateway to community, with weeping beeches and war memorials. Renovation scheduled for 2005.
<b>Residential / Neighborhoods</b>	
<b><i>Belleville</i></b> Woodland to Three Roads	Primarily residential neighborhood near Atkinson Common includes Jefferson Court, a compact residential district along the Merrimack River. Historically it extended from Oakland to the Artichoke River.
<b><i>Curzon Mill Area</i></b> * Curzon Mill Road	Forested enclave adjacent to Maudslay State Park. Historic gristmill and houses, also associated with mid 20 <sup>th</sup> century author John Phillips Marquand. Multiple parcels, mostly held by two families.
<b><i>High Street</i></b> * <b><i>Neighborhood</i></b>	NR District. Outstanding collection of Federal period houses. Local historic district has been discussed. Incremental development and rear lot subdivision are issues.
<b><i>Joppa</i></b> Bromfield Street east	Compact residential neighborhood extending east of South End along Water Street and Plum Island Turnpike to airport. Includes Joppa Park, seawall, clam shack.
<b><i>North End</i></b> Route 1 to Woodland	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> early 20 <sup>th</sup> c. residential neighborhood with deeper setbacks than other areas. Includes Ocean Mills area, rehabbed cotton mills with worker housing on Ocean Street.
<b><i>Old Ferry Road</i></b> * Ferry Road and Spring Lane	Historic ferry landing between Maudslay State Park and Route 95. Includes Arrowhead Farm (flowers) and Pettingill Field (25 acres of prime land with views of river, under APR) as well as Water Department land. Two unprotected parcels on east side. Old Ferry Road is overgrown.
<b><i>Plum Island</i></b>	Northern tip is in Newburyport, sections also in Newbury, Rowley and Ipswich. Early 20 <sup>th</sup> century cottage community at northern end will soon have city water and sewer services, which will increase pressure for development on fragile barrier beach. Southern part of island is Parker River National Wildlife Refuge and Sandy Point State Park.
<b><i>South End</i></b> Federal Street to Marlborough Street	Dense, compact residential neighborhood with narrow streets and 18 <sup>th</sup> and 19 <sup>th</sup> century two to three-story houses.

<b>Tannery</b> Liberty Street	At southern end of downtown area, with rehabbed Tannery building and Georgian houses.
<b>Turkey Hill Road Area</b>	Residential area west of Route 95. Section south of Hale Street has very rural character. Potential rural historic district?
<b>Waterside West</b>	Portion of waterfront between Route 1 and the central waterfront. Includes Windward Yacht Club. City wants to shape proposed mixed-use development in this area to extend the downtown character and enhance public access to the waterfront.
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b>Bridges over Merrimack River</b>	Four bridges over the Merrimack include Whittier Memorial Bridge (Route I-95), the Chain Bridge (Spofford St), the Railroad Bridge and the Route 1 Bridge. They have dramatic views up and down the Merrimack River.
<b>Gateways to Community</b>	Several distinct arrival points into Newburyport are considered gateways to the community. The Route 1 exit to Three Roads (two small parks opposite Atkinson Common) is very visible and is considered the main entrance. Also entrances from the Route 1 bridge, High Street from Newbury, the Route 1 traffic circle (State Street) and the Chain Bridge.
<b>Lighthouses and Range Lights</b>	NR. Three lighthouses in Newburyport (Plum Island light, Coast Guard Station, life saving station), also two range lights (One Coast Guard property, one privately owned)
<b>Merrimack River Trail</b>	Designated wholly accessible linear walking trail that parallels the Merrimack River from the West Newbury border to Plum Island. Includes section along Old Ferry Road.
<b>Plum Island Airfield</b> Plum Island Turnpike	Historic airfield, still active. One of the oldest airfields in continuous use in the country. Site of earliest experimental flights in the northeast, 1910 (typical of dunes and fields used for this); then early air navigation markers 1920s; commercial airport 1930s. Early landscape unchanged probably NR eligible.
<b>Rail Corridor</b>	Spur east along Newbury/Newburyport line to Joppa, portion of four-mile loop. Being converted to rail trail.
<b>Route 1A</b>	A portion of High Street has been designated as an Essex National Heritage Area Scenic Byway. There are no restrictions inherent with the designation, but it provides access to federal funding to be used as determined by community.
<b>WPA bridges</b>	Including bridges over Route 1 and Plum Island Turnpike Bridge. Contribute to community character.