Section 3

Community Setting

3 - COMMUNITY SETTING

A. Regional Context

Physical Location

The Town of Arlington is located in eastern Massachusetts and lies at the edge of the Boston Basin (a broad, flat, flood plain). Located about six miles northwest of Boston, Arlington's population of approximately 42,389 (2000 U.S. Census) occupies five and one half square miles or 3,517.5 acres. Arlington is part of Middlesex County and the Boston metropolitan area; its neighboring communities are Lexington, Winchester, Medford, Somerville, Cambridge and Belmont. The commercial corridors of Massachusetts Avenue and Broadway bisect the Town and connect it to Cambridge and Somerville on the east and Lexington on the west.

Map 1 — Arlington and Surrounding Communities

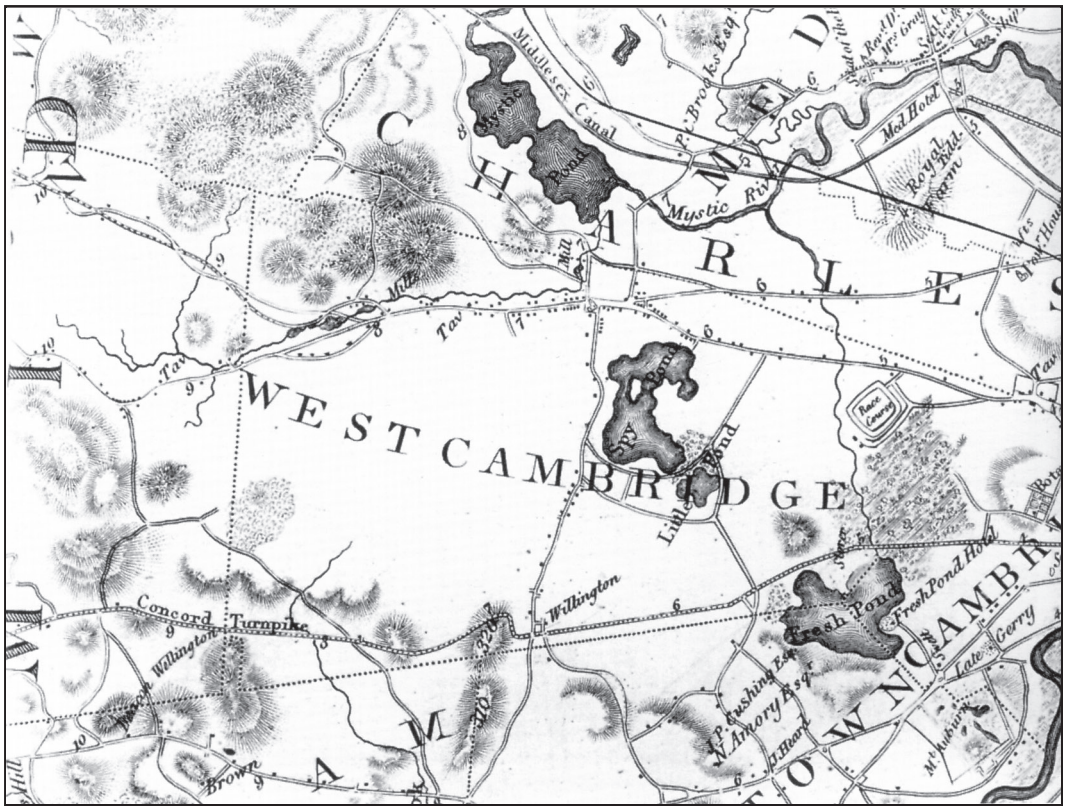
Arlington, like Lexington, Winchester and Belmont, is a Town governed by a five-member Board of Selectmen, an elected Town Meeting of 252 members, and an appointed Town Manager. Like Cambridge, Somerville, Medford and parts of Belmont, Arlington is densely developed with a high level of population per square mile (see Population Characteristics, Section 3C, for statistics on regional population density).

Arlington residents' mean income is not as high as neighboring towns (Lexington, Winchester, Belmont) but is higher than neighboring cities (Cambridge, Somerville, Medford). Almost half of Arlington residents (over the age of 25) have an associate, bachelor, graduate or professional degree. Town residents work in both blue collar and professional occupations. As in Arlington's surrounding communities, the Town has a large segment of aging people and a growing segment of middle-aged couples with children.

Community Development

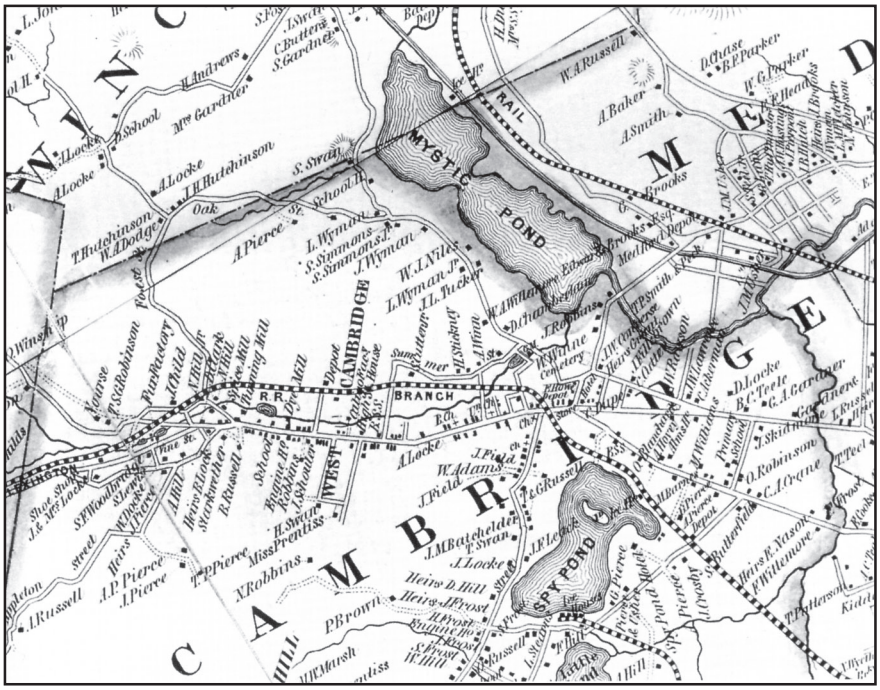
Many factors have shaped Arlington's natural and recreational open space as the Town developed from a small farming community in the colonial period to the densely developed suburban community it is today. The biggest influence on Arlington's development has been the growth of metropolitan Boston. The Town's close proximity to Boston and Cambridge, and to many colleges and universities in the region, makes it an ideal residential community for people affiliated with academia, financial institutions, high-tech and bio-tech industries, and other employment sectors.

Map 2 — Arlington (then West Cambridge) in 1830
(Source: Neckar and Zellie 1980, 12)



The character of Arlington's once rural community began to change in 1846 when the Lexington and West Cambridge Railroad opened to Arlington, allowing more residents to work outside of Town (Neckar and Zellie 1980). The continued growth of transportation options accelerated this change of life for Arlington residents and the change of character for the Town's landscape. As Boston grew, the pressure for the development of residential building lots within commuting distance grew as well. Over time, Arlington became less "country-like" and more "suburb-like" in character.

Map 3 — Arlington (then West Cambridge) in 1853
(Source: Neckar and Zellie 1990, 13)



Arlington Land Uses

Residential Land Use

The majority of Arlington's land use is residential—approximately 77 percent of the land available for development or 54 percent of total land use. Arlington is a safe and convenient place to live for people who may work in nearby cities but still wish to live in a town with a more suburban character. The majority of Arlington homes are situated on small lots ranging in size from 3,500 to 9,000 square feet. The Town's small residential lots and relatively small amount of open space (approximately 460 acres, or about 13 percent of the Town's land) are two of the important factors driving Arlington's need to preserve, protect and nurture its limited open space.

Transportation and Commercial Land Uses

Many major roads (Massachusetts Avenue and Routes 2, 2A, 3A, 16 and 60) pass through Arlington, linking residents with neighboring towns, Boston, Cambridge, and nearby highways (Interstates 93 and 95). During peak commuter hours these roads are highly congested. Public bus transportation also traverses Arlington, carrying commuters to regional destinations. Many of the roadways that pass

through Arlington border the Town's water bodies (for instance, Route 2 borders Spy Pond on the south, Route 16 borders Alewife Brook, and Mystic Valley Parkway borders the Mystic Lakes and Mystic River), thereby putting constraints on the use of open space abutting them. While these roadways provide many scenic views for the traveling public, their presence contributes to pollution of these waters.

Arlington does not have any major shopping malls or superstores to draw in large numbers of people from surrounding towns. The Town's three commercial centers (East Arlington, Arlington Center and Arlington Heights) feature small specialty stores frequented by residents and nonresidents. Traffic around these shopping areas and businesses (the majority of which are located along Massachusetts Avenue) is usually manageable, although residents frequently comment on the need for additional parking. Traffic around Arlington's more popular recreational resources presents additional seasonal problems.

Public Open Space Land Uses

Arlington has a number of relatively small open spaces that add to the region's character and beauty. Both residents and nonresidents enjoy Arlington's open space destinations and are invited to register for Arlington's recreational activities and programs. A few of Arlington's more popular open space destinations are described here (see Section 5 for a complete inventory and additional information).

• **Arlington Reservoir** is frequented by many visitors, particularly in the summer, because of its sandy beach and supervised swimming, with lifeguards. A path of about one mile in length around the Reservoir is used regularly by walkers, joggers, bird watchers and others who seek a quiet place to enjoy the outdoors close to home.

• **Great Meadows** (located in Lexington, but owned by Arlington) is a 183-acre area with a significant amount of wetlands and wet meadows. Arlington and neighboring town residents often visit Great Meadows to observe the diverse flora and fauna, to cross-country ski, or to use the trails for walking and bird watching.

• **Historic sites** in Arlington attract out-of-town tourists and local people alike. Several notable sites are the Jason Russell House and Smith Museum, the Samuel Wilson ("Uncle Sam") monument, the Old Schwamb Mill, the Whittemore-Robbins House, and the Cyrus Dallin Museum in the Jefferson Cutter House. (Refer to Section 4F for a more complete list of Arlington's major historic attractions.)

• **Menotomy Rocks Park** includes Hill's Pond and a playground, as well as wooded areas boasting many plant and wildlife species. Visitors use the 35-acre park for ice skating, picnicking, walking, jogging, ball playing, birding and relaxing. The park is also known for its spectacular glacial ledges.

• **Robbins Farm** contains 11 acres of recreation area. In the summer, visitors use the playground area, ball field, basketball court and open grassy space; in the winter, visitors use the area for sledding and cross-country skiing. The site atop a steep slope provides a panoramic view of Boston's skyline and is a wonderful spot for viewing the nighttime starry sky and the Fourth of July fireworks in Boston.

• **Spy Pond** and adjacent **Spy Pond Park** are frequent destinations for families with young children, sunbathers, boaters, birders and anglers. The 100-acre pond provides tranquil respite for people of all ages; Spy Pond Park borders the pond and the Minuteman Bikeway, and contains 3.7 acres of grassy recreation area, including a tot lot.

Open Space Resources Shared with Other Towns

Arlington shares a few important and unique resources with neighboring towns, and is actively engaged in regional planning efforts to preserve, protect and enhance those areas.

• **Minuteman Bikeway** — This rail/trail conversion dedicated in 1992 is an 11-mile paved bike trail that runs from Bedford in the west through Lexington and Arlington, terminating at Cambridge's Alewife T (MBTA) Station. Built over an abandoned railroad corridor, the bikeway abuts a mix of commercial and industrial land uses and connects them to many residential neighborhoods and open spaces (see Appendix F).

The future may include more opportunities for increased sharing of the Minuteman Bikeway, as federal Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA21) funds are helping with plans that would link the Minuteman Bikeway to other Cambridge and Charles River bikeways. Plans may also include an extension from Bedford toward Billerica. Neighboring communities of Watertown, Somerville and Belmont are also working to create bikeways that would link to the Minuteman Bikeway and other communities to the West.

• **Water Bodies** — Arlington shares several water bodies with neighboring communities. Alewife Brook on the eastern side of Town creates borders with Medford, Belmont, Cambridge, and Somerville. It flows into the Mystic River, which the passes through Medford and Somerville on its way to Boston Harbor. The Mystic Lakes border Arlington, Medford and Winchester. Alewife Brook, Mystic River, the Mystic Lakes, and adjacent green space are all owned and controlled by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). On the western edge of Town, the Arlington and Lexington border runs about midway through the Arlington Reservoir.

• **Parkways** — Multiple highways and roads (Routes 2, 2A, 3A, 16, and 60) pass through Arlington. Alewife Brook Parkway (Route 16) and the Mystic Valley Parkway offer particularly scenic and open space value. These two roadways are owned and controlled by the MDC and are shared with surrounding Cambridge, Somerville and Medford. Planned over one hundred years ago, these parkways were designed as carriageways that would provide scenic views to the traveling public. Although less well known than the greenways in Boston, they are a complement to Boston's Emerald Necklace. Besides serving as transportation corridors, these parkways provide a buffer area between land uses.

• **Additional Open Space Resources in Neighboring Towns** - The following open space resources are among those located in neighboring towns that are also enjoyed by Arlington residents:

- Beaver Brook Reservation, an MDC facility in Belmont and Waltham
- Habitat, a Massachusetts Audubon Society sanctuary in Belmont
- Rock Meadow in Belmont (a part of the former Metropolitan State Hospital Complex)
- Fresh Pond, Mt. Auburn Cemetery and the Charles River in Cambridge
- Alewife Reservation (MDC) in Cambridge, bordering Belmont and Arlington
- Great Meadows in Lexington (owned by Arlington)
- Whipple Hill, Willards Woods and other conservation lands in Lexington
- Middlesex Fells (MDC) in Winchester, Medford, Melrose and Stoneham

Regional Planning Efforts

Arlington is a member of a regional planning agency called the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). The Town participates actively in MAPC planning activities, such as the Inner Core Committee (residents of communities close to Boston who meet regularly to discuss common interests, such as open space) and MetroGreen (the land resources protection element of the MAPC's regional development plan).

Arlington consults the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) in its open space planning. The state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) produces the SCORP, which documents state recreation and conservation areas, their usage and their managing entities. It also documents problems in providing recreation access and protecting resources. The last SCORP (1988-1992 version) also had a second volume with an Action Plan.

The Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) is developing a land use plan for the Alewife Brook Parkway area. The plan, titled *Master Plan for the Parklands of the Alewife Brook and the Mystic River Parkways,* has had input from Arlington citizens. The MDC has not yet released this plan, but it will contain ideas for upgrading the Alewife Brook Parkway area to make it more accessible and usable by the general public.

Increasing development pressures in the Alewife region and more frequent flooding in East Arlington over the past five years have caused growing concerns and activism. The expanded citizens group called the Coalition for Alewife, consisting of residents in Arlington, Belmont, and Cambridge, meets regularly to monitor proposals and advocate to preserve and enhance the MDC-owned Alewife Reservation and surrounding areas.

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), now housed in Arlington's Central School building next to Town Hall, also has been re-organized in recent years. This group works to protect the Mystic River watershed area, including Alewife Brook, Mill Brook, and the Mystic River and Lakes. MyRWA's members represent Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge, Medford, Somerville, Lexington, Winchester and Woburn. Their report of the Open Space in the Upper and Lower Mystic River Watershed is expected to be available in fall, 2002.

B. History of the Community

Menotomy: Pre-Colonial Era

The Massachuset Tribe

When the first English colonists arrived in the Boston area, the only inhabitants of the region were members of the Massachuset tribe. The Massachuset occupied valleys of the Charles and Neponset rivers in eastern Massachusetts, including the present site of Arlington, which they called Menotomy (meaning "place of swiftly running water"). The name Massachuset means "at the range of hills," probably with reference to the ring of hills surrounding the Boston Basin created during the last ice age.

The Massachuset tribe spoke what linguists call the Algonquian N-dialect. The same dialect was spoken by the neighboring Narragansett, Nauset, Niantic and Wampanoag. Algonquian (or Algonquin) is the name used for the largest pre-colonial language group in North America. Some evidence of the migrations of ancestors of the Massachuset tribe lies in the fact that Algonquian dialects are spoken from Montana to Massachusetts by the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Gros Ventres, Blackfoot, Cree, Ojibwe, Ottawa, Potawatomi, and numerous tribes along the Atlantic coast from Hudson Bay to South Carolina.

In 1614, when Captain John Smith explored the coast of New England, there may have been as many as 3,000 Massachuset living in 20 villages around Boston Bay. They were divided into six sub-tribes named after their chiefs or sachems. Between 1614 and 1617, disaster struck in the form of three separate epidemics of European diseases. During the same period, the Abenaki tribe from the north attacked the Massachuset villages. In 1620 the Pilgrims found that most of the Massachuset villages in the region were empty and only recently abandoned. When the first Puritans settled at Boston in 1629, only 500 Massachuset were left in the immediate area, and smallpox killed many of these in 1633. No organized groups of the Massachuset are known to have survived after 1800.

The Massachuset are memorialized in Arlington today by "The Menotomy Indian Hunter," a sculpture by Cyrus Dallin located in the Robbins Memorial Garden next to the Town Hall.

The Squaw Sachem

The hereditary chief of the sub-tribe that occupied Menotomy was a woman whose full name is unknown. She is known by her title, Squaw Sachem, and she was married to Nanapeshemet (or the New Moon), one of the greatest sachems in New England, ruling over a larger area than any other. He resided in what is now the city of Lynn until the war with the Abenaki (aka Tarratines), which began in 1615. He then retreated to a hill on the borders of the Mystic River (in Medford), where he built a house and fortified himself. The Abenaki pursued him to his retreat and killed him in 1619. At his death, his widow became sachem because his sons were too young to rule. After about a decade, however, the two eldest sons were old enough that the English recognized them as chiefs in Charlestown and Saugus. They both died in 1633, so again there was no sachem. The settlers' deeds were executed with the Squaw Sachem. In some of those documents, her name is joined with that of her second husband, Web Cowet, a "great physician," whom she married before 1635.

The Squaw Sachem conducted raids against tribes that tried to encroach on her territory. These raids ceased after 1625, because her tribe had gotten too small for such aggressive action. To survive, she had to establish a friendly relationship with the English colonists. Following is the text of the agreement by which she sold Menotomy and adjacent land to the colonists.

" The 15th of the 2d mo.,1639.
Wee Web-Cowet and Squaw Sachem do sell vnto the Inhabitants of the Towne of Charlestowne, all the land within the line granted them bythe court, (excepting the farmes and the ground, on the west of the two great Ponds called Misticke ponds, from the south side of Mr. Nowell's lott, neere the vpper end of the Ponds, vnto the little runnet that cometh from Capt. Cook's mills, which the Squaw reserveth to their vse, for her life, for the Indians to to plant and hunt vpon, and the weare above the pons, they also reserve for the Indians to fish at whiles the Squaw liveth, and after the death of Squaw Sachem, she doth leave all her lands from Mr. Mayhue's house to neere Salem to the present Governor, Mr. John Winthrop, Sen'r, Mr. Increase Nowell, Mr. John Wilson, Mr. Edward Gibbons to dispose of, and all

Indians to depart, and for sattisfactio from Charlestowne, wee acknowledge to have received in full sattisfaction, twenty and one coates, ninten fathom of wampom, and three bushels of corne: In witness wherof we have here vnto sett o'r hands the day and yeare above named.
the marke of Squaw Sachem, the marke of Web Cowet."

There are records of several other sales of land by the Squaw Sachem and Web Cowet to the English settlers. In addition to the proceeds from such sales, they received help and goods from the settlers. In May 1640, Cambridge was ordered to give the Squaw Sachem a coat every winter for life. In 1641, Cambridge was enjoined to give her 35 bushels of corn and four coats (for two years). In 1643, the court granted her gunpowder and shot and ordered "her piece to be mended." The Squaw Sachem died circa 1667. She was buried in what is now Medford; the exact location is unknown.

Post-Colonial Era

When first settled by the English around 1635, Arlington was known as Menotomy and was part of Cambridge. Almost 200 years later in 1807, Arlington was incorporated as West Cambridge, and in 1850 a part of West Cambridge was annexed to Winchester and in 1856 another part of West Cambridge was annexed to create Belmont. Arlington adopted its present name in 1867 to honor civil war veterans buried at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Virginia.

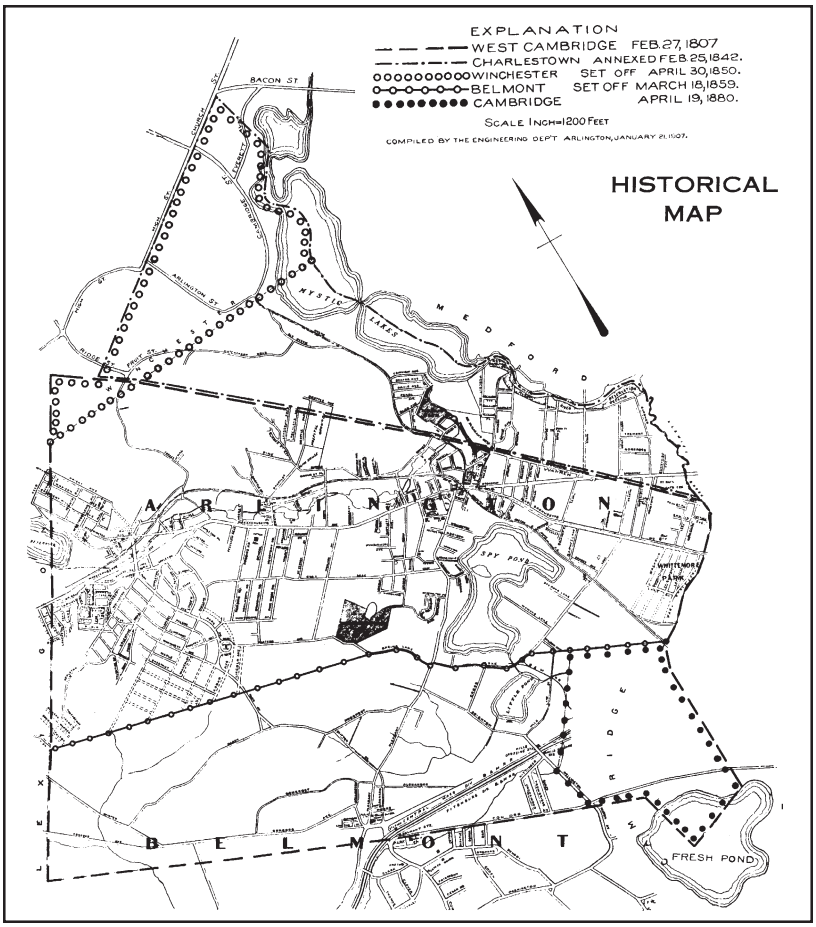
In Arlington's early colonial years, industry and agriculture thrived. Gristmills for corn and wheat, sawmills, ice harvesting, dairying and market gardening provided work for Town residents. Small family-owned mills along Mill Brook and its series of millponds also powered shoemaking, calico printing, woodturning, paint grinding and other industries. The industrial and agricultural nature of the community began to change with transportation improvements, notably the construction of a railroad in 1846 and later the development of electric streetcars (Neckar and Zellie 1980).

The historic Old Schwamb Mill reflects the changing character and economic foundation of the Town over time (Old Schwamb Mill 1993). The mill was established in 1650 at the Foot of the Rocks as a gristmill and saw mill, where water-powered millstones ground grains and spices and where logs were sawn into planks. In 1864 Charles Schwamb, a German immigrant woodworker, and a partner converted the mill into a woodworking shop for the manufacture of high-quality oval and circular picture frames and picture frame mouldings. The business thrived for 105 years, until the late 1960s, when cheap imports and other technologies reduced the demand for high-quality wooden frames. The mill was protected by a group of Arlington preservationists and established as a working museum in 1969.

By the late 1800s, the Town's character changed dramatically, as Arlington became part of the greater Boston metropolitan area, both economically and socially. Civic and state leaders became aware of the need to preserve the Town's open space, and in 1896 land was assembled to create the Town-owned Menotomy Rocks Park (Mattheisen 1996). As the twentieth century progressed, however, the development of businesses, new homes and road construction began depleting more and more of the Town's land (Neckar and Zellie 1980). The post-World War II building boom was significant in some lowland areas of Town that previously had been preserved in farmland and floodplains.

Map 4 — Arlington in 1907 (Source: Neckar and Zellie 1990, 9)

This map shows how Arlington's boundaries have changed over the years.



Until 1972, when Arlington put a development moratorium on building permits, commercial and residential development boomed. In 1975, after overhauling many of its zoning bylaws, the Town adopted a modified set to better regulate development. The 1975 zoning bylaws did not save much open space, however, because the Town had little open space left to save at that time. The effect of this intense history of development remains visible in Arlington today.

C. Population Characteristics

Understanding Arlington's population characteristics is essential so the Town can maximize the appropriate use of its open space resources and plan for the future. The following discussion provides statistical demographics and then analyzes how Arlington's open space planning can respond to those demographics.

Unless otherwise noted, the 2000 U. S. Census provides the demographic statistics referenced in this subsection (see Appendix G). The 2000 Census documents 42,389 residents in Arlington. This represents a loss of 5 percent since 1990, when the population was 44,630. This new figure is somewhat less than was previously projected. The 2000 population statistics show that the majority of Arlington's population of 42,389 is between 20 and 64 years of age. In general, the age ranges of 5-14 and 35-54 have shown increases and the age ranges of 15-34 and 60-74 have declined. The median age is now 39.5, whereas in 1990 it was 37. Arlington is also more diverse now, showing increases in the number of African American, Asian and Hispanic residents. The Town's 19,011 households have declined slightly in size from 2.36 to 2.22 since 1990 (Hornor 2001).

As recorded in the 2000 Census, Arlington's 5.5 square miles (5.2 sq. mi. in land, .3 sq. mi. in water) is populated with 42,389 people, presenting a population density of about 8,152 persons per square mile—far more than 2,082 persons per square mile, which is the average population density of other MAPC member communities. With the exception of Lexington, the cities and towns abutting Arlington also have a relatively high population density average, indicating that abundant open space resources for Arlington residents are not available nearby.

More evidence of Arlington's densely settled residential character is the relatively small size of its average house lot (6,800 square feet). Small house lots mean that residents may not have ample yard space for recreation and may need to use Town-owned resources. The results of the January 1995 Open Space Survey and several Vision 2020 and Open Space Committee surveys conducted in 1999, 2000 and 2001 all indicated that residents desire more natural areas and community garden space (see Appendix B).

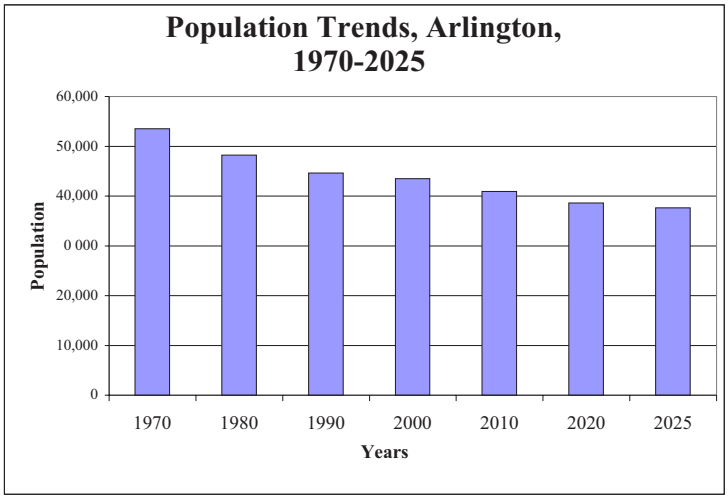
Population Statistics

Many sources offer population data and projections. This section uses information from the 2000 U.S. Census, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), and the University of Massachusetts-based Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER). The following population data and projections represent our best understanding of current population configurations and estimates.

Arlington's Current and Projected Population

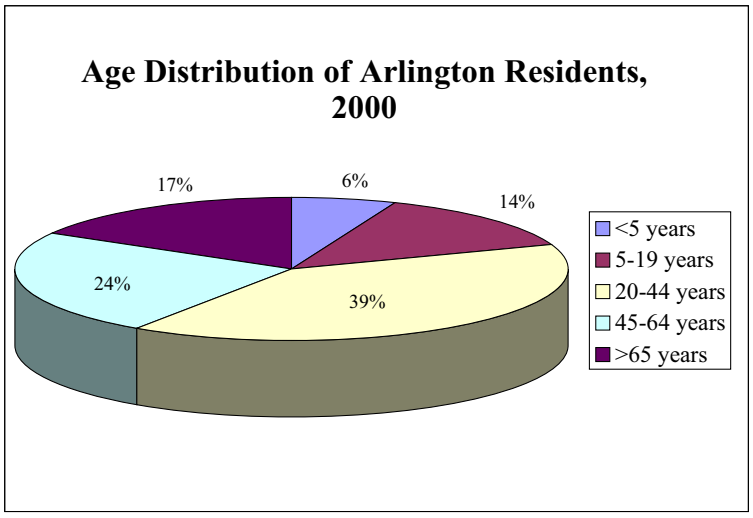
As mentioned, the 2000 U.S. Census reports that Arlington has a population of 42,389 persons. Figure 1 shows that Arlington's population has declined steadily from a peak of more than 53,000 in 1970. This loss of population is related to such national trends as declining birth rate, aging population, and smaller household size. According to MISER's population projections (1995), Arlington's population decline will continue through the year 2010. The MAPC's *A Demographic Profile of Arlington 1990 - 2005* (1995) predicts a similar population decline. Change in the size of Arlington's population is one of the factors causing changes in the age composition of its residents. Figure 2 indicates the 2000 age composition for Arlington residents.

Figure 1.



Source: MAPC. A Decade of Change, 1990-2000 (*http://www.mapc.org*).

Figure 2.



Source: U.S. Census

Projections for 2010 — Age of Arlington Residents

MAPC projections for Arlington indicate the following change in age demographics from 2000 to 2010 (percentages have been rounded):

Infant, Toddler, Young Children (ages under 5 years) – 6 to 5 percent of the total population

Child to Young Adult (Ages 5-19 years) – 14 to 16 percent of the total population

Adult Segment (Ages 20-44 years) – 39 to 29 percent of the total population

Middle-age to Late Adult (Ages 45-64 years) – 24 to 31 percent of the total population

Elderly (Ages 65 and up) – 17 to 19 percent of the total population

As 2000 population statistics show, the majority of Arlington's population is between 20-64 years of age. The median age is now 39.5, whereas in 1990 it was 37. According to MAPC predictions, in the year 2010 the majority of Arlington's population will still be composed of adults ages 20-64. The major shift in this age group (from 1990 to 2010) will be the increase in adults ages 45-64 and the decrease in adults ages 20-44.

Employment Characteristics

Arlington's residents are employed predominantly in white-collar managerial, professional or technical jobs (MAPC 1995). More than a third of the Town's residents work in sales or some other kind of service industry. The number of people working in jobs requiring manual labor declined 22 percent between 1970 and 1990, and currently, they account for less than 15 percent of the population's employment. Although Arlington has lost most of its industrial and manufacturing employers, the Town has a growing service sector, including retail, medical and information technology, and restaurants and food-related services. Although the majority of Arlington residents work outside of the Town, a growing number of residents have home offices in Arlington.

Perhaps because of Arlington's proximity to many Boston and Cambridge-area universities and colleges, the Town is also home to people associated with higher education, such as teachers, professors, and graduate students. Also, due to Arlington's close location to Boston, Cambridge, and Routes 2, 93, and 128, the Town is an ideal place for entrepreneurs and technology-based small businesses, many of which start as "kitchen-table" enterprises and provide employment on a part-time or small-scale basis.

Income Characteristics

Data from the 2000 U.S. Census, broken down to the community level, will not be available until mid- to late-2002. Alternatively we present here a comparison of 1990 data and available 2000 data for Middlesex County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The figures show increases of income for families and households from 1990 to 2000, and similar increases can be anticipated for the Town of Arlington. In its report to Town Meeting in April 2002, the Town's Affordable Housing Task Force has estimated the median household income at $70,000.

	1990			2000	
	Arlington	Middlesex County	Mass.	Middlesex County	Mass.
Median family income (persons living in a household who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption)	$52,749	$52,112	$44,367	NA	$61,560
Median nonfamily household income (persons living in household who are not related by birth, marriage, or adoption)	$29,128	$26,517	$31,198	NA	NA
Median household income (average of both family and nonfamily households)	$43,309	$43,847	$36,952	$53,268	$49,708

Nearly 23 percent of households with income receive social security (MAPC 1995). Despite the Town's increased median income, approximately 5 percent of households with income receive public assistance and almost 5 percent of Arlington individuals live below the poverty level.

People with Disabilities

Approximately 2,000 Arlington residents (or approximately 4.5 percent of the total population) have some sort of mobility and/or self-care limitations, and more than half of this group is over age 65. See Appendix H for additional information about the Arlington Commission on Disability and the Town's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Population Impacts on Open Space Needs

The following discussion is based on Arlington's population demographics and is not a final open space needs analysis. Refer to Sections 6, 7, 8 and 9 for thorough analysis and detail on the Town's open space goals, needs, objectives and actions.

Senior Citizens' Needs

Arlington residents over the age of 65 comprise about 17 percent of the population in 2000. This percentage is expected to increase slightly over the next 15 years and Arlington will need to continue planning for the open space needs of senior citizens and increasing their access to open space. Some senior residents in Arlington live on limited or fixed incomes; thus, while many Town residents can travel out of Town for their recreational needs and enjoy sports requiring expensive equipment or large amounts of open space, many senior citizen residents need open space and recreation resources that are easily accessible by walking or public transportation.

Also, although there are a number of indoor facilities and programs for senior citizens, they need more programmed outdoor activities, especially as seniors remain stronger and healthier longer than in the past. Areas for passive recreation, such as walking, picnicking and bird watching, and events for the elderly, such as sightseeing tours, are popular with the over 65 group (Chadwick, Martin, Bailey, Inc. 1995) and should be made more easily accessible and available to them. Installing benches and establishing rest areas at recreational areas, commercial pedestrian spaces and local neighborhood parks may help to make some open spaces more accessible to the elderly.

Adults' Needs

Arlington residents between the ages of 20 and 44 comprised 39 percent of Arlington's population in 2000, and those between the ages of 45 and 64 account for just under 24 percent, totaling about 63 percent of the population. Although the 20-44 age group is projected to decline in numbers by 2010, the 45-64 group will increase and the total will be about 60 percent. These residents need active recreational facilities and resources for ball sports and biking, and passive recreation resources to enjoy activities such as picnicking and watching wildlife (Chadwick, Martin, Bailey 1995).

Toddlers', Children's and Teens' Needs

Toddlers, children and teens (ages 0-19) make up almost 20 percent of Arlington's population according to the 2000 U.S. Census, and that number is expected to remain steady. Arlington does not have adequate park and recreation space for the number of young people in Town, and these spaces are not evenly distributed throughout the neighborhoods. The household demographic trend points to a continued need for parks and play areas for very young children, including ample access to Spy Pond and other water ways for walking and observing wildlife. The Town is experiencing increased demands for playing fields for soccer, baseball, lacrosse and football by both boys' and girls' teams at Arlington High School and Arlington Catholic High School, as well as growing demands by league sports, especially soccer and baseball, for youngsters of all ages.

People with Disabilities' Needs

Almost 4 percent of Arlington's population has some kind of mobility or self-care limitation (U.S. Census 1990) and the Town will continue to increase the amount of open spaces accessible to people with disabilities, particularly parks, playgrounds, and passive recreation areas (see Appendix H).

Under the national Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Town has an obligation to plan for people with disabilities to participate in all aspects of Town government. Arlington makes it a point to ensure their inclusion in Town open space activities. For instance, people with disabilities are explicitly invited (in the Town's seasonal recreation pamphlet) to participate in Arlington Recreation Department activities and programs. Furthermore, the Park and Recreation Commission assures accessibility for people with disabilities in all of its renovation and expansion plans. And, as part of new capital investments, Town policy is to upgrade its open space facilities to national accessibility standards for people with disabilities.

Cross-age Group Needs

Arlington needs to increase and better maintain team playing fields for the recreational enjoyment of Arlington residents of all ages. The Park and Recreation Commission regularly assesses the needs for improving the Town's recreational facilities and has developed a 10-year capital planning process for scheduling park and playground renovations.

Low-income Family Needs

Although Arlington is primarily a middle-income Town, around 5 percent of households receive public assistance, and almost 5 percent of Arlington residents live below the poverty level (MAPC 1995). The poverty level for low and moderate income households is considered 80 percent of median income, or about $35,000 for an individual and $50,000 for a family of four (Affordable Housing Task Force 2001). Thus, despite the increase in average household salary, the Town still needs to address the percentage of its population that cannot afford to spend time and money to access recreation.

The Arlington Boys and Girls Club, Fidelity House, Boy and Girl Scouts, and various church groups, sports leagues and clubs offer their recreation programs to all residents, regardless of income level. Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) funds sometimes help subsidize scholarships to these programs. Many private groups also offer assistance (through scholarships and other methods) to people in need. Arlington will continue to support these recreation programs and consider the open space needs of its low-income families when planning open space.

Summary of Needs

User needs for and concerns about access to open space and recreational facilities for all ages seem to have increased in recent years. Demands on parks, playgrounds and playing fields for youth and adult activities are recognized throughout the Town. Volunteer neighborhood groups have organized tot lots and playground renovations in several areas, including Mt. Gilboa/Reservoir, Robbins Farm Park, Menotomy Rocks Park and Spy Pond Park. The proliferation of Friends groups to support parks such as Menotomy Rocks, Robbins Farm and Spy Pond also illustrates the need and desire of citizens to be directly involved in their neighborhood open space resources.

Arlington is also more actively committed to providing additional affordable housing, elderly housing and assisted living facilities for low-income and elderly residents, so their needs for open space and recreational facilities need to be addressed as well. In addition, new condominium and rental apartments near Arlington Center are attracting younger working people who appreciate the convenience of Arlington, as well as its suburban character, restaurants, and recreational opportunities, especially the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway. The resulting increased use of these resources mean that even more attention to maintenance of these facilities will be needed in the future.

D. Growth and Development Patterns

Land Use Patterns and Trends

Arlington has evolved from a farming community during colonial times to a Town where roughly 88 percent of the land available for development is currently developed for a combination of residential and commercial uses. Because Arlington is almost completely developed, it is unlikely that significant change in the land use patterns will occur.

The majority of Arlington's land use today is residential. Arlington has a base of single-family homes, but sizable portions of Arlington's population live in two-and-three family homes, condominiums and apartment buildings. House lots in Arlington are generally quite small (3,500 to 9,000 square feet) and do not usually provide sufficient recreational space. Residents, therefore, rely on the Town's open space, which is also quite limited because of Arlington's population density.

Arlington's Land Use

Arlington contains 3,517.5 acres within its borders. Arlington's land use, divided by category and acreage, is shown in Table 1. The land use categories in this table do not necessarily correspond with Arlington's zoning categories.

Table 1 — Arlington's Land Use

Land Use	Acres	Percent of Total Land Use (rounded)
Residential and Schools	1,898	54%
Streets and Bikeway	730	21%
Open Space	460	13%
Water Bodies	286	8%
Commercial	127	<4%
Industrial	16	<1%

Source: Town of Arlington Office of Planning and Community Development 2002.

Arlington Zoning and Open Space

Arlington Town Meeting in 2001 voted to approve the creation of an open space district, thus increasing the number of zoning districts to 19. Nearly 50 Town-owned parcels, including parks, playgrounds and playing fields throughout the Town, were transferred into this new open space zoning district, adding an extra level of protection from development to those designated sites. Eight of Arlington's other zones are residential, six are business, and the others are zones for special uses, such as hospital, industry and transportation.

Arlington also has a land use regulation known as Environmental Design Review (EDR), which improves the visual quality of the environment. EDR is required for certain classes of special permits.* Most major development projects have to undergo EDR by Arlington's Redevelopment Board. EDRs have strict review standards. As part of the EDR, the board reviews the development plan for such elements as landscaping and relation of the site plan to the surrounding neighborhood. While these visual elements *do not add* great amounts of open space to Arlington, they do affect the visual quality of the Town (including its green character); they also provide buffer zones between adjacent land uses.

Projects that undergo EDR are typically located along major thoroughfares. These projects have an important effect on Arlington's open space system. For example, when conducting an EDR on a proposed development, the Arlington Redevelopment Board considers the site's proximity to major or significant open space. If the proposed site abutted the Minuteman Bikeway, for instance, the proposed project would be reviewed in terms of its relationship to the bikeway. The board might then recommend that the proposed project offer access to and from the bikeway. Similarly, projects near major water bodies or special features, such as entryways into the Town, would also undergo careful EDR. An EDR enhances Arlington's character and assures that major development parcels will maximize visual potential and consider their relation to the surrounding environment. (See Appendix I.)

Infrastructure

Because Arlington is highly developed, its existing infrastructure will not affect future development patterns or future redevelopment plans. Furthermore, infrastructure has not significantly determined the development of open space in the past; rather pressure for suburban development and growth have affected the Town's open space.

* Special permits are regulated under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40A, "The Zoning Act." The other special permit granting authority in Arlington is the Zoning Board of Appeals. Arlington grants special permits for uses that are desirable but that need special consideration and attention to limit any possible adverse impact.

Transportation Systems

Arlington has a variety of systems suitable for various methods of transport:

• The Town's well-developed road system consists of 95 miles of public streets, 24 miles of private streets, and 6 miles of state highways and parkways.

• The Minuteman Bikeway carries bicycle and pedestrian commuter and recreation traffic. This rail/trail conversion project runs through Arlington's central valley (Mill Brook Valley), which also provides the most level and direct route through Town.

• The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) provides bus service that connects to the Alewife T Station, to parts of Cambridge (including Harvard Square), and to other communities, including Somerville, Lexington and Bedford.

• The Council on Aging provides a jitney (van) service called "Dial-A-Ride." This service provides individualized routes and time of service to suit peoples' transportation needs. This service is for people with disabilities, the elderly and lower-income people.

Water Supply Systems

Arlington receives its drinking water from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA). Very few wells remain in Arlington, so they do not play a significant role in long-term planning.

Sewer Service

The MWRA disposes of Arlington's sewage. Arlington's sewer system consists of approximately 117 miles of pipe. There are five combined sewer outfalls (CSOs) on Alewife Brook between Massachusetts Avenue and the Mystic River (from the Somerville and Cambridge sides). The MWRA is currently proposing significant improvements to these outfalls to reduce wet weather discharges to Alewife Brook. While the Municipal Sewer System serves the entire Town, a small number of septic systems remain in Arlington.

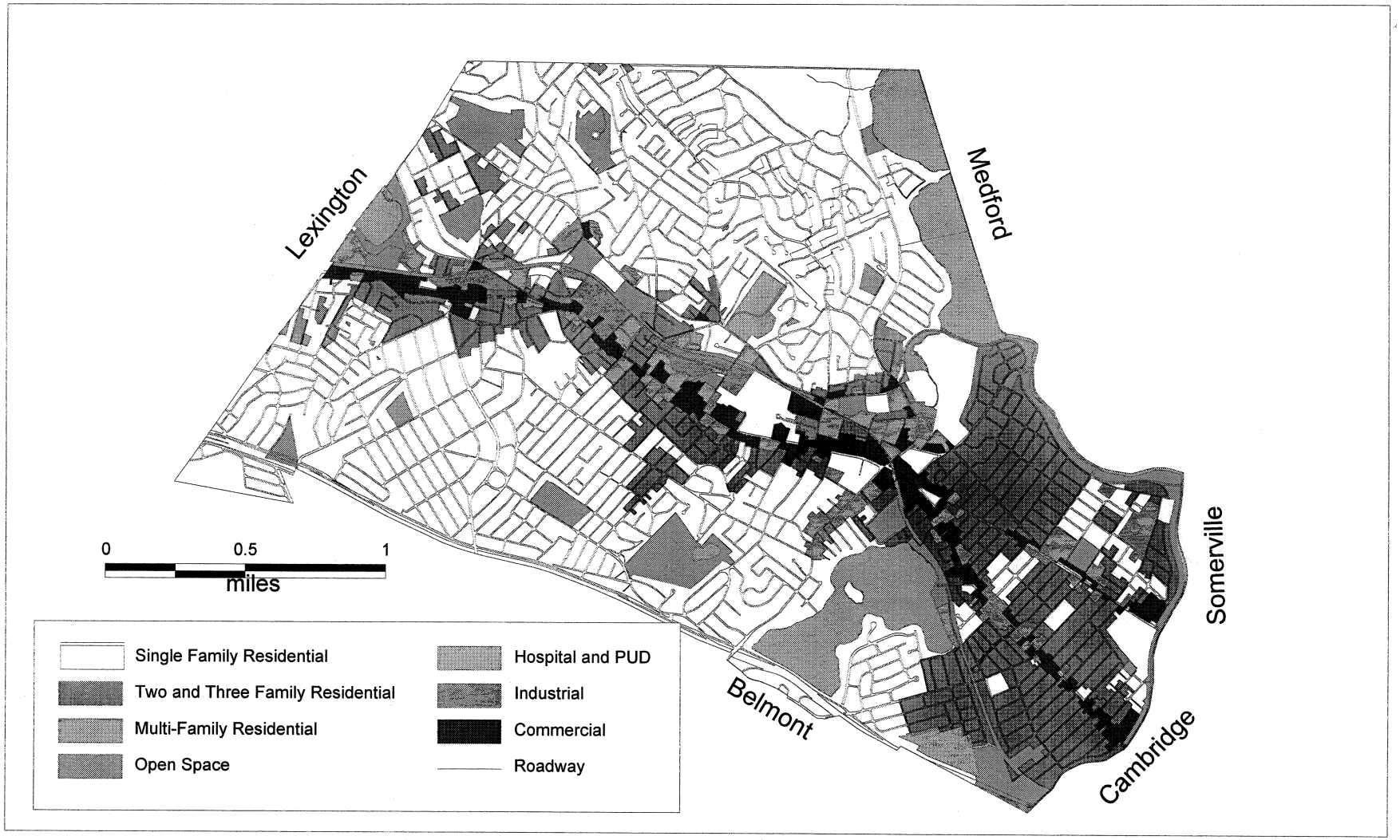
Long-term Development Patterns

As mentioned, the long-term development patterns of Arlington are already in place since the Town is almost fully developed. Land use regulatory policy now centers more around the redevelopment of existing sites, and regulation by special permit for new uses rather than around new subdivision control.

Control of land subdivision rests with the Board of Selectmen, acting as the Town's Board of Survey. This arrangement is unusual in Massachusetts (usually the Town planning board is in control of subdivision) and is due to historical factors in the Town's early-twentieth-century development. Arlington's Department of Planning and Community Development provides planning research and advice to Town officials and boards.

Map 5 is based on Arlington's zoning map; it shows the Town's 19 zoning districts consolidated into seven categories: single-family, two- and three-family, multi-family (apartments and condominiums), open space, commercial, industrial, and hospital and planned unit development (PUD).

Map 5 — Arlington's Generalized Zoning



Town of Arlington, Open Space Plan 2001-2006

Map 5
Generalized Zoning

Long-term Changes to Land Use Patterns

The existing pattern of Arlington's land use may evolve naturally over time with changes in local or regional circumstances, but major changes are not anticipated.

A significant circumstance that could change Arlington's land use patterns would be economic pressure for even more intense development that would cause the rezoning of land. Arlington has only a few vacant properties with development potential. Usually, though, these properties also have development constraints. For instance, the undeveloped land that is part of Lahey/Health South (formerly Symmes Hospital land) has limited development potential because it is partially located on steep slopes and is currently zoned for hospital use. Another large parcel of undeveloped Arlington land, the Mugar site, located in East Arlington, although largely wetlands and floodplains, has been the subject of numerous development proposals, although the Town Meeting has voted several times to protect the property as open space.

Arlington is now focused more on preservation of existing protected lands and on acquisition of small parcels of open space where possible. Open space acquisition will likely occur on a piecemeal basis when properties in which the Town has interest come up for sale on the open market.

Build-out Analysis

Because Arlington is almost fully developed, this plan does not contain a build-out analysis, which would show what could happen if the Town developed all its land to maximum potential under zoning. This type of analysis is more revealing for rural or more suburban communities than for an older, more developed suburb.