

TOWN OF STURBRIDGE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN STURBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS



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Executive Summary

The Town of Sturbridge initiated a public planning process in 2022 to develop a Historic Preservation Plan that will guide its historic preservation decision-making. The project was funded in part by the Town of Sturbridge Community Preservation Act and in part through a Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant, with federal funds from the National Park Service, US Department of the Interior. The project's purpose was to prepare an action-oriented document that will improve the preservation of historic and cultural resources in Sturbridge based on a community vision. This Historic Preservation Plan was prepared in 2022–2023 by The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL), with input from the Sturbridge Planning Department, Historical Commission, and other relevant Town boards, commissions, and organizations. This is the first preservation plan completed for the Town of Sturbridge and is anticipated to guide historic preservation planning for the next five to ten years, after which time the plan should be reviewed and updated as needed. The recommendations outlined in this plan are informed and guided by the principles of historic preservation that have been developed by practitioners in the field over the last 50-plus years. As a practical discipline, historic preservation can protect the historic character of a town while accommodating growth and change.

Sturbridge, in central Massachusetts near the Connecticut border (Figure 1-1), was settled circa 1725 by a group of proprietors from Medfield, and Sturbridge Center began to develop by 1733. Development was slow through the end of the eighteenth century, but the construction of the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike through the center of town in 1810 spurred a rapid shift from a dispersed agricultural settlement into a defined town with a concentration of residential buildings around the Common and small mills along the Quinebaug River.

Auger manufacturing had begun southwest of Cedar Street in the late eighteenth century and influenced the development of the village of Snellville. Textile manufacturing began about 1827 to the west in what became the village of Fiskdale. A third population node centered at the Common included civic and commercial buildings such as the meetinghouse, town hall, schools, and stores. Snellville and Fiskdale expanded through the end of the nineteenth century and continued production of cotton and augers through the early twentieth century. However, the overall complexion of Sturbridge changed by the mid-twentieth century due to an increase in tourist traffic and tourist-driven businesses. The development of the open-air, living history museum Old Sturbridge Village created a strong tourist economy that supports hotels, restaurants, and antique shops. Sturbridge remains largely oriented toward leisure, hospitality, and service

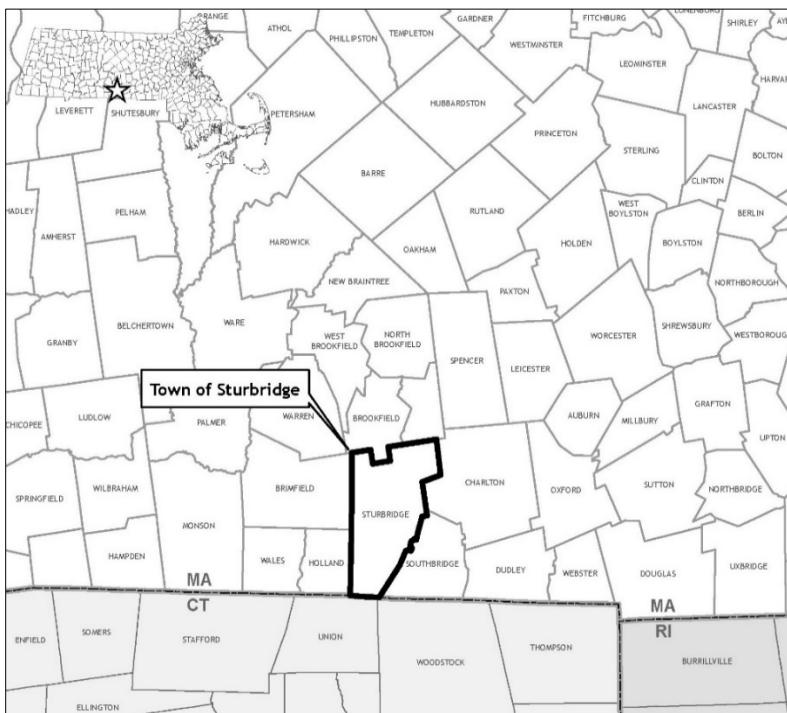


Figure 1-1. Map showing Sturbridge's location in Massachusetts.

industries, and US Route 20, which runs through the center of town, is a heavily traveled commercial corridor.

This plan builds on recent preservation planning efforts conducted in Sturbridge to create a framework for implementing tools that can help preserve significant and at-risk historic resources, including buildings, sites and landscapes, and documents. The plan is organized into six sections:

- **Section 1** describes the project vision and purpose, provides an overview of historic preservation in general, explains the methodology used to develop the plan (including the public engagement process), and identifies relevant stakeholders in Sturbridge.
- **Section 2** consists of a brief history of Sturbridge, including examples of resources associated with various periods of the town's development; brief descriptions of historic geographic areas identified in the town; and summaries of properties owned by the Town and/or listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register).
- **Section 3** summarizes prior preservation planning efforts conducted in Sturbridge, including overviews of past historic resource surveys and existing municipal policies and programs related to preservation.
- **Section 4** discusses the results of the public outreach component of this historic preservation plan and identifies particular issues and challenges to address.
- **Section 5** discusses the goals and outcomes of this plan, including a targeted list of priorities for future preservation efforts and policies to support these activities.
- **Section 6** presents a five-year action plan that outlines specific activities and time frames for completion. Initial top-priority projects recommended for Sturbridge are:
 1. Update of preservation-related information on the Town website as a first step in public outreach and education
 2. Development of a comprehensive plan for expanding historic survey
 3. Completion of an archaeological sensitivity survey
 4. Identification or acquisition of appropriate storage for archival materials
 5. Increased public engagement activity to encourage appreciation for Sturbridge's history and historic resources and build support for preservation initiatives

At the end of this document are a complete bibliography of sources consulted in the research for this plan and appendices containing the Town of Sturbridge Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan Community Survey and results from the community questionnaire.

Section 1 – Introduction: Vision and Process

1.1 Vision Statement

Sturbridge has long been proud of its history and its historic building stock. The town's history is evident in the village core and civic center around the Town Common; the former industrial nodes at Snellville and Fiskdale; the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century architecture throughout the town; and the twentieth-century shops, hotels, and motels along historic thoroughfares lined with stone walls. Expansive former agricultural fields provide scenic and recreational space, former railroad routes serve as walking trails, and modern businesses occupy historic buildings. Sturbridge's rural, historic character draws tourists from around the country and attracts people who want to live and work in the community. This 2023 Historic Preservation Plan provides the town with a road map for protecting its important historic and cultural areas as it continues to develop in the twenty-first century. Through implementation of the goals in this plan, Sturbridge can maintain its unique identity within the region and ensure that the stories of its past are a part of its future.

1.2 What is Historic Preservation?

The protection of historic buildings, districts, landscapes, sites, and other cultural resources preserves a community's unique historical character and enhances quality of life for its residents, businesses, and visitors. The character of individual communities is preserved through tax incentives, grants, technical assistance, research, planning, design review, education, and advocacy. Historic preservation strengthens local economies; stabilizes property values; fosters civic beauty and community pride; and encourages appreciation of local, state, and national history. Historic preservation planning benefits the whole community by serving a public purpose that advances the education and welfare of citizens while providing environmental stability and economic and cultural benefits.

The Greenest Building is Already Built: The preservation of existing buildings promotes the adaptive reuse of existing infrastructure and reduces the carbon footprint associated with extracting and transporting new construction materials. Reusing historic buildings also lessens the volume of demolished materials in landfills, which comprises 25%–40% of nationwide total waste. The preservation of older buildings also reduces the negative effects of sprawling growth and promotes energy conservation. Contrary to general misperceptions, the substantial “built to last” construction and design elements of older buildings can be energy efficient, due to wall and roof materials, building orientation, and window size and location. Preservation planning seeks to achieve a balance between property improvements that will achieve desired energy efficiency and local and state preservation design guidelines.

Preserving a Sense of Place: The presence of visual, aesthetic landmarks in a community gives people an emotional anchor and a sense of connection to what is around them and to the people who came before them. In Sturbridge, places such as Snellville, Fiskdale, and the Town Common can teach people about those who lived here hundreds and thousands of years ago and what was important to them in their use of the land and way of life.

Historic preservation consists of three main components: identification, evaluation, and protection. *Identification* consists of the comprehensive survey and documentation of local historic resources and areas to inform preservation planning and funding priorities. Resources are identified through historic maps, driving or walking surveys, and historical research. *Evaluation* of each resource involves a determination of its historic integrity (i.e., how intact it is to its primary historic period) and its associations with important

larger historical patterns in the town, state, or nation. *Protection* can take several forms, including historic designation, preservation or conservation restrictions, and other protections determined by local bylaws.

Historic preservation is implemented at the federal, state, and local levels, as discussed in the following sections.

Federal Historic Preservation

Historic preservation in the United States is governed by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended), which was signed into law on October 15, 1966. The NHPA was enacted in response to urban renewal and federally funded infrastructure projects such as highways that resulted in the rapid destruction of historic neighborhoods and other places significant in American history. It was intended to provide a robust historic preservation program that would protect historic resources for future generations to enjoy. The NHPA requires each state to maintain a State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and select a qualified State Historic Preservation Officer.

At the federal level, most historic preservation activity takes place under the oversight of the National Park Service (NPS), which administers, among other things, the National Register (discussed below) and Certified Local Government programs. The Certified Local Government program facilitates state and local government cooperation with federal partners to promote nationwide preservation initiatives. To participate in the program, municipalities must be certified by the NPS and meet several requirements including having Local Historic Districts (discussed below). Becoming a Certified Local Government can provide opportunities for grants and technical assistance from the federal government. The NPS also administers the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and its associated programs: the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and Historic American Landscape Survey (HALS). These are archival documentation programs maintained by the Library of Congress. The documentation provides a permanent record in written narrative, drawings, and photographs of the historic properties selected for inclusion under a variety of circumstances. The NPS also provides funding to states for historic survey and other preservation programming.

State Historic Preservation

At the state level, historic preservation initiatives are overseen by the SHPO, which in Massachusetts is the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). The Massachusetts state legislature established the MHC in 1963 (MGL Ch. 9 Sections 26–27D) to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The MHC provides preservation planning guidance to municipalities throughout the Commonwealth, works with local historical commissions and Certified Local Governments, approves National Register documentation for submittal to the NPS, oversees the State Register of Historic Places (State Register), reviews and comments on federally funded or licensed projects under Section 106 of the NHPA, and reviews federal and state tax credit applications. The MHC also administers various funding and economic incentives for preservation and serves as the state repository for documentation of recorded historic and archaeological sites in the Commonwealth.

Local Historic Preservation

At the municipal level, historic preservation planning is typically overseen by a local historical commission, which can advocate for a community's historic resources and support community initiatives such as historic resource surveys, National Register nominations, and Local Historic Districts. Since reforming in 2015, the Sturbridge Historical Commission (SHC) has played a proactive role in identifying and protecting historic and cultural resources to preserve the town's distinctive historic character (see Section 3).

Preservation Tools

Many tools are available to municipalities for the protection and management of historic resources. Tools that Sturbridge may find useful are described below, and specific applications of these tools are discussed in Section 6.

Survey and Inventory

Historic inventories are the foundation of municipal historical preservation efforts and are a valuable planning tool. They can be used to support the establishment of Local Historic Districts, the implementation of demolition delay bylaws, and the preparation of planning documents such as master plans. The information about historic and archaeological resources gathered as part of an inventory can also be used to prepare walking tours or classroom programs and to help raise public awareness and support for historic preservation.

The MHC oversees the Massachusetts state historic inventory and has developed templates for inventory forms to document a variety of resource types, including buildings, bridges, cemeteries, parks and landscapes, and areas or districts encompassing multiple related resources. The inventory forms record the location, appearance, condition, and history of resources to facilitate an evaluation of their significance to the town, state, and country. The forms also contain location maps and photographs. Documented resources are entered into the MHC's online Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (MACRIS), which consists of a searchable database and web map that allow the public to find information about resources in their community and throughout the Commonwealth. In the 1980s, the MHC also prepared a *Reconnaissance Survey Town Report* for each municipality in the Commonwealth outlining each town's historical development and identifying potential historic resources; Sturbridge's report was completed in 1984 (MHC 1984a).

National Register

Authorized by the NHPA, the National Register is the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation. It is part of a larger national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America's historic and archaeological resources. Listing in the National Register can trigger special protections or reviews based on town bylaws or state laws.

The NPS has established four criteria for listing significant cultural properties in the National Register (36 CFR 60). The criteria are broadly defined to include the wide range of properties that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. The quality of significance may be present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The criteria (known by the letters A–D) allow for the listing of properties

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important to prehistory or history.

Funding and Economic Incentives

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the MHC administers two funding programs for preservation efforts: the Survey and Planning Grant program, which provides NPS funds to communities for historic survey; and the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF), a 50% reimbursable matching grant program that supports the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites owned by a municipality or non-profit organization and listed in the State Register (MHC 2022).

In Massachusetts, the MHC also administers the federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credit programs, which provide economic incentives through private investment in the revitalization and reuse of historic buildings. The separate federal and state programs are available to property owners of eligible historic properties who complete a substantial and certified rehabilitation of a property according to preservation guidelines set by the NPS and the MHC, respectively. Historic properties must be income-producing and listed in the National Register as individual properties or contributing resources in a listed historic district. The incentive for both programs is a tax credit on the owner's income tax equal to 20% of qualified rehabilitation costs. The state program has an annual cap, and projects are selected for award using criteria that ensure funds are distributed with the most public benefit. Property owners have used the programs widely in Massachusetts and throughout the country to renovate and reuse a variety of historic buildings. The tax credit programs leverage substantial private investment for every federal and state award and can serve as catalysts for wider community revitalization.

Preservation Restrictions

A preservation restriction is a type of voluntary easement that protects historic and archaeological properties from changes that may be inappropriate by requiring current and future owners to seek review and approval from the oversight entity before any alteration of a specified portion of a building, structure, or site. A restriction can apply to any part of a historic property's exterior, interior, and/or setting. It is a legal agreement between a property owner and another party, usually a nonprofit organization or government body, and runs with the land so it is carried forward from current to future owners. A preservation restriction on a National Register-listed property may qualify as a charitable tax deduction for the owner.

Communities often find that preservation restrictions can be highly effective at preserving historic properties and may work with an owner to implement such a restriction. Local historical commissions can hold preservation restrictions on non-Town-owned properties, while nonprofit historical organizations can hold preservation restrictions on Town-owned properties as well. Examples of nonprofit historical organizations that hold preservation restrictions are The Trustees (formerly The Trustees of Reservations, or TTOR) and Historic New England.

Municipal Bylaws and Regulations

Municipal bylaws and regulations are considered two of the strongest historic preservation tools, as they can offer incentives and prohibitions to guide potential change. Opportunities for flexibility exist because communities can combine strict adherence to the regulations with advisory review and voluntary participation. Local bylaws and regulations form a framework for local governance that develops over time and provide support for creating and sustaining a sense of place and community appeal for residents and visitors. They function as a dynamic network of incentives, restrictions, and guidance to shape the appearance of a community. Local bylaws commonly cover land use, natural resource protection, and the design of buildings and structures; generally reflect and enforce national and state laws and mandatory requirements; and institute local options. They convey a community's character, priorities, and even aspirations. Through the Home Rule principle, Massachusetts communities enact local bylaws through a

legislative body, which in Sturbridge is the Annual Town Meeting. The following types of local bylaws and regulations can support historic preservation goals.

Community Preservation Act

In Massachusetts, communities can choose to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA), enacted by the Commonwealth in 2000. The CPA allows the state and communities to jointly fund local projects in three areas: open space and outdoor recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing. Adoption of the CPA by ballot referendum allows a community to raise monies for a local Community Preservation Fund through a surcharge of up to 3% on real property taxes. The guaranteed annual state matching funds come through a state-wide Community Preservation Trust Fund distributed to communities that adopt the CPA. As the Community Preservation Coalition, a state non-profit established to achieve passage of the CPA at the state level, asserts, “Property taxes traditionally fund the day-to-day operating needs of safety, health, schools, roads, maintenance, and more. But until CPA was enacted, there was no steady funding source for preserving and improving a community’s character and quality of life” (<http://www.communitypreservation.org/content/cpa-overview>).

In communities that have adopted the bylaw, CPA funds have provided a key financial resource for professional townwide historic property surveys when the MHC’s traditional matching Survey and Planning Grants program has limited funds available. CPA funds are locally administered and can thus provide a community with flexibility in the timing and scope of historic preservation projects. CPA historic preservation funds can be used for rehabilitation projects on public and private property. Projects completed using CPA funds can also include easements and deed restrictions to protect the affected properties in perpetuity. To date, 194 Massachusetts communities, including Sturbridge, have adopted the CPA.

Demolition Delay

Demolition delay is a widely used and effective tool to help protect a community’s historically and architecturally significant resources on an individual basis. If a resource is threatened by demolition and is found by a local historical commission to be “preferably preserved,” a demolition delay can be triggered by the age of the resource (e.g., construction of a building before a specified date or a rolling number of years) or by its listing in the state historic inventory, State Register, or National Register.

When a proponent applies to a municipality’s Building Department for a demolition permit for a building subject to a Demolition Delay bylaw, the local historical commission will determine if the building is historically significant, often using information from a recent historic inventory form. If the building is determined to be significant, the local historical commission will hold a public hearing to determine if the building should be preferably preserved, in which case a demolition delay will be placed on the building so that preservation alternatives can be explored. The terms of the bylaw specify the length of the delay; Sturbridge has a one-year demolition delay. A local historical commission can lift a delay before its expiration if desired, and a demolition permit can be issued when the delay is lifted or expires.

Local Historic Districts

A Local Historic District designation, established under MGL Chapter 40C, refers to an area within which any proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way are reviewed by a locally appointed Historic District Commission (HDC). Local Historic District designations have been used in Massachusetts since 1955 (the first was Nantucket) and provide the strongest protection for the preservation of historic properties. The MHC’s 2021 *Establishing Local Historic Districts* manual helps communities create a Local Historic District. A municipality appoints a District Study Committee to complete a survey

of the area, determine boundaries, and prepare a preliminary report for Town and MHC review. A final report is submitted to the local governing body for approval of the Local Historic District bylaw by two-thirds majority vote. A local HDC is established, which can be incorporated into the local historical commission or exist as a separate entity. Anyone proposing an exterior alteration to a building or structure in the Local Historic District that would be visible from a public way would need to apply to the HDC for a Certificate of Appropriateness. Each community establishes its own review criteria within the broad context of preservation best practices. A building's air conditioning units, storm doors and windows, paint color, and routine maintenance work are often exempt from review by a Historic District Commission. Examples of towns near or similar to Sturbridge with Local Historic Districts include Charlton, Uxbridge, Northbridge, Granby, and Royalston.

Under MGL Chapter 40C, communities can designate single-property Local Historic Districts for which any proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public way are reviewed by a locally appointed HDC. As single buildings have little regulatory protection aside from demolition delay review, placing historically and architecturally significant individual properties in a Local Historic District can provide protection from inappropriate changes. Brookline and Somerville, Massachusetts, are two communities that have used single-property Local Historic Districts effectively.

Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Neighborhood Conservation (or Architectural Preservation) Districts are an effective method for maintaining the overall historic character of an area. They involve more flexible review standards than Local Historic Districts and focus on the scale of major new construction, demolition, and other measures to protect streetscapes and development patterns. Minor changes to individual buildings such as window, door, or siding replacements that would be considered in a Local Historic District can be reviewed in an advisory capacity. A Neighborhood Conservation District can be overseen by a historical commission, HDC, Planning Board, or special Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. Neighborhood Conservation Districts exist in North Andover, Cambridge, Lexington, Lincoln, and Wellesley, Massachusetts.

Affirmative Maintenance Bylaws

An Affirmative Maintenance bylaw, sometimes referred to as a Demolition by Neglect bylaw, requires that buildings within a community be kept structurally sound. Long-term deferred maintenance often results in severe deterioration that can make a property susceptible to demolition to avoid the cost of rehabilitation and/or condemnation by the Building Commissioner. In some instances, Affirmative Maintenance bylaws empower a historical commission or HDC to take actions if a historical property is threatened with demolition due to neglect. Such a bylaw can apply town-wide or in specific areas such as Local Historic Districts. In other cases, a town's building department oversees so-called nuisance bylaws related to deferred maintenance. Massachusetts communities with Affirmative Maintenance bylaws include Nantucket, Newton, and Worcester.

Zoning

Zoning regulations are a series of laws and bylaws established to govern how land and buildings may be used. These regulations represent a town's official policy toward development and redevelopment and vary by state and locality. In Massachusetts, all zoning laws must comply with MGL Chapter 40A, enacted in the 1950s, which states that no bylaw may regulate or restrict materials or construction methods or place unreasonable regulations or prohibitions on commercial agriculture. Chapter 40A also prohibits the regulation or restriction of the interior of single-family houses and exempts a pre-existing building from

complying with zoning bylaws enacted after the building was constructed. An overlay district is a type of zoning regulation that applies only to a certain area within a town. Overlay districts can be used to preserve open space, use and dimensional requirements in line with surrounding buildings, or parking locations.

Flexible Dimension Zoning

Flexible dimension zoning preserves historic resources, streetscapes, and landscapes by recognizing significant features to be preserved and providing flexibility in dimensional requirements such as road layout, minimum lot size, lot coverage, frontage, building location, and number and location of required parking spaces. Such zoning can be implemented as a free-standing bylaw within the zoning code or as part of the dimensional requirements section of the zoning code. Examples of flexible dimension zoning used effectively in other communities are allowing historic streetscape setbacks instead of current setback regulations for new construction; allowing alternative dimensional and parking requirements when a historic building is preserved and reused; and modifying dimensional standards for new building lots, subdivisions, and “rear lot” development to preserve an existing building on a large parcel. Andover, Concord, Lexington, Marlborough, Rochester, Salem, and Weston are among the Massachusetts communities that have adopted flexible dimension zoning.

Downzoning and Upzoning

Downzoning and upzoning are planning techniques to adjust existing zoning district requirements to achieve certain objectives. Downzoning encourages cluster development in rural areas and saves open space by decreasing intensity of use. It can also be used to limit intensive industrial or commercial uses in commercial corridors. Brewster, Dartmouth, Dennis, and Plymouth use downzoning. Upzoning allows more intensive uses and can be used to allow new or mixed uses and to continue historic development patterns. Amherst, Ipswich, and Pittsfield use upzoning.

Village Center Zoning

Village center zoning creates a special zoning bylaw or overlay district to support the needs of small-scale mixed-use commercial areas, such as those in Sturbridge. It allows use and dimensional requirements reflective of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial development in terms of building size, scale, and lot location. Communities that use this tool include Acton, Bourne, Carver, Norfolk, and Weymouth.

Agricultural Preservation Bylaws

Direct zoning regulation of exclusively agricultural use areas is not allowed under MGL Chapter 40A; however, protection is possible using zoning amendments and the Right-to-Farm bylaw. Zoning amendments can be adopted for new or revised zoning districts to accommodate farming practices, such as encouraging new development on least favorable soils or supporting the economic viability of farming by allowing accessory uses. The Right-to-Farm bylaw is a general bylaw intended to protect normal farming practices and land use as a continuation of a town’s historical development pattern.

Open Space Protection

The protection of open space is often associated with the protection of historic resources directly (e.g., agricultural pastures and fields) or indirectly (e.g., the setting of buildings). Conservation restrictions can be used to protect scenic vistas, farmland, or natural areas. Land under a conservation restriction remains in private ownership, but the rights to develop it are donated or sold to a private or public entity. Nonprofit

land trusts can also protect open space by acquiring land or holding conservation restrictions donated by landowners.

1.3 Purpose of a Historic Preservation Plan

Many daily actions and decisions of Sturbridge's elected officials, departments, boards, commissions, and property owners involve historic preservation concerns. Such issues require immediate action and long-range planning, whether in the protection of individual buildings or open space; land-use plans for older neighborhoods; street and sidewalk improvements in historic districts; redevelopment projects in industrial and commercial sectors; or planning and maintenance of Town-owned and State-owned historic buildings, sites, and parks. Activities and coordination among Town boards and the public are conducted within the framework of Town regulations and on an ad hoc basis.

This Historic Preservation Plan

- serves as a planning document for Town boards and commissions and Sturbridge residents for cultural and historic preservation and planning projects;
- provides a clear mission statement for the SHC; and
- provides guidance for public and private stakeholders seeking to recognize, preserve, and protect the town's significant historic resources and archaeological sites.

Each component of the Historic Preservation Plan fulfills an objective to provide effective guidance to protect the town's heritage through steps to

- assess the current status of Sturbridge's historic and cultural resources;
- identify pertinent issues, opportunities, and priorities for preservation;
- identify and encourage collaboration and integration of historic preservation with other town planning activities and entities;
- recognize the diverse minority, ethnic, social, and cultural groups with a role in the history of Sturbridge and Massachusetts; and
- develop an Action Plan with near-term and long-term recommendations.

In implementing this Historic Preservation Plan, the Town of Sturbridge will expand policies and opportunities to protect and preserve buildings, structures, sites, and districts that reflect elements of local, state, or national cultural, social, economic, political, archaeological, and architectural history for public benefit.

1.4 Methodology

PAL's methodology for preparing this Historic Preservation Plan consisted of fieldwork, research, and public engagement.

Fieldwork

The fieldwork consisted of a drive-over survey of Sturbridge, focusing particularly on areas that were not recently documented. High-resolution photographs were taken to illustrate the variety of extant historic resources in the town.

Research

The research consisted of reviewing previous documentation, town planning reports, and historical publications, including newspapers and popular publications. The Bibliography at the end of this plan includes all the sources consulted.

Public Engagement

An effective Historic Preservation Plan relies on input and support from community members. The public engagement used to prepare this plan included outreach to residents, organizations, and local groups via a questionnaire and direct email contact and the convening of two public forums.

Questionnaire

PAL, with input from the SHC, the Sturbridge Planning Department, and the MHC, developed a questionnaire that was distributed in hard copy and as a web-based form from mid-October until the end of November 2022. The questionnaire was designed to inform members of the community about the Historic Preservation Plan and its goals and to solicit information about historic resources and preservation efforts in Sturbridge. Hard copies of the questionnaire were placed at town buildings, including the Joshua Hyde Public Library, Town Hall, and the Senior Center. The web-based questionnaire was made available via the Town's website and Facebook page and through a QR code posted at town buildings on a flyer publicizing the first public forum. A total of 79 questionnaires were returned: 70 via the web-based form, and 9 in hard copy. A copy of the 20-question survey is included as Appendix A, and the collated survey responses are included as Appendix B.

Email

PAL reached out directly to local officials, members of Town boards and commissions, and local and/or non-profit organizations in Sturbridge to obtain information about how they see their role with respect to historic preservation and about their interactions with other boards and organizations in the town. The following individuals, Town departments, organizations, and groups provided input for this plan (see Section 1.5 for descriptions of each entity): the Town Administrator, Department of Public Works, Facilities Department, Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator, Sturbridge Tourist Association, Chabunagungamaug Nipmuck Indian Council, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge Historical Society, Opacum Land Trust, The Trustees, the Last Green Valley, Joshua Hyde Public Library, Publick House, and members of the Sturbridge Lake Advisory Committee.

PAL staff also interviewed

- Becky Plimpton, Director, Joshua Hyde Public Library
- Tony Crane, Tree Warden, Town of Sturbridge
- Sandy Gibson-Quigley, Sturbridge Historical Society
- Ken White, Nipmuck Council
- Howie Fife, Opacum Land Trust
- Robin Grimm, Town Administrator, Town of Sturbridge
- Leigh Darrin, Cedar Lake Association
- Heather Blakeley, Director, Sturbridge Department of Public Works
- Robyn Chrabascz, Manager, Sturbridge Facilities Department

- Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator
- Michael Glick and Michael Harrington, Publick House
- Penny Dumas, Community Preservation Committee (CPC)

Public Forum No. 1

The Historic Preservation Plan and preliminary questionnaire results were discussed at a public forum held at Town Hall on November 14, 2022. The forum was attended by SHC and CPC members and approximately 12 members of the public and was broadcast by Sturbridge Community TV. Jean Bubon, Town of Sturbridge Planner, introduced PAL staff and the project. PAL staff used a PowerPoint presentation to describe the Historic Preservation Plan project's scope and goals, types of documentation and research identified in the town, the public questionnaire and sample results, and the next steps in the project. During the discussion, PAL staff presented the following four questions, which were developed from the public survey and received additional responses from those in attendance. (See Section 4 for a full discussion of this input.)

- What historic resources in Sturbridge are your favorites?
- Are there any areas or resources that you feel are particularly threatened?
- Are there any areas or resources that you think should be listed in the National Register?
- Are there any areas or properties that you think should be designated Local Historic Districts?

Public Forum No. 2

A second public forum was held at Town Hall on May 10, 2023, to solicit input on the recommendations included in this Historic Preservation Plan. The forum was attended by SHC members and approximately eight members of the public and was broadcast by Sturbridge Community TV. Jean Bubon, Town of Sturbridge Planner, introduced PAL staff, who briefly reviewed the Historic Preservation Plan project and summarized the near-term and long-term goals and recommended activities.

A brief discussion followed the presentation. Residents in attendance expressed agreement with PAL's overall conclusion that education and outreach about the value of Sturbridge's historic resources should be the highest priorities. One resident thanked SHC member Walter Hersee for his regular Facebook posts on Sturbridge history, which generate interest and connect the town's historic buildings to people and events. Another voiced concerns about the economic pragmatism of historic preservation initiatives such as the adoption of an Affirmative Maintenance bylaw. Several people suggested including local Scout groups and schools in public engagement activities to bring awareness of the town's history to younger generations beyond what they learn from Old Sturbridge Village. See Sections 5 and 6 for more details on the identified goals and recommendations.

1.5 Preservation Partners and Stakeholders

The activities of numerous Town boards and departments support historic preservation. The following local and state-wide non-profit and governmental organizations also have a stake in historic preservation in Sturbridge or could assist the Town with its preservation activities.

Town Departments

Since April 3, 1739, Sturbridge town business has primarily been handled through an Annual Town Meeting run by the Town Moderator, who is elected by Sturbridge voters every three years at the Town Meeting. The Town of Sturbridge is governed by a five-member Board of Selectmen elected by the voters. The Board members hold three-year terms that are staggered so that at least one member's term expires each year. The Board appoints a Town Administrator, who supports the Board and handles the town's day-to-day operations as its chief administrative officer.

Seven Town departments and offices are involved in municipal policy and/or activities regarding historic preservation issues:

- The Planning Department provides support to the Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Design Review Committee, Housing Trust, Open Space Committee, and Historical Commission and works to ensure implementation of Master Plan and Commercial Tourist District Revitalization Study goals.
- The Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator acts as a liaison between the business community and local officials and works to attract business to Sturbridge.
- The Recreation Department oversees and maintains town recreational areas such as parks, sports fields, and courts (including Turner's Field and the Cedar Lake Recreation Area); maintains a seasonal open-air skating rink on the Town Common; and oversees use of the Town Common for a variety of public and private events and activities.
- The Building Department performs building inspections, enforces building code, grants demolition permits, and assists the SHC in the administration of the Demolition Delay bylaw.
- The Department of Public Works is responsible for engineering, highways, water and sewerage systems, and maintenance of Town-owned properties, including cemeteries, scenic roads, and recreation areas, in conjunction with the Recreation Department.
- The Facilities Department provides facilities management, maintenance, and custodial support for Town-owned buildings, including those listed in the National Register, in conjunction with the Department of Public Works. The current Facilities Manager is a Qualified Historic Architect and Historic Preservationist, which is not a requirement of the job but provides an additional layer of preservation expertise to the management of Town-owned properties.
- The Joshua Hyde Public Library has a local history collection that includes copies of Town records and documents and items from private collections.

Boards, Commissions, and Committees

Eleven boards, commissions, and committees oversee and manage aspects of the Town's interests that include historical properties:

- The Planning Board is a seven-member board appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Planning Board reviews and approves subdivision plans, oversees scenic road and public shade tree bylaws, works with

applicants to protect shade trees and stone walls, and oversees the implementation of Master Plan goals and other plans and documents used to guide and manage the growth of Sturbridge.

- The Finance Committee is a nine-member board appointed by the Town Moderator. The Finance Committee gives recommendations on all department budgets, transfer requests, warrant articles, zoning articles, and bylaw articles to ensure the best mix of services for taxes collected.
- The Sturbridge Historical Commission (SHC) is a five-member board appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The SHC works with the Sturbridge Community Preservation Committee, the Board of Selectmen, the Joshua Hyde Public Library, the Town Clerk's office, the Department of Public Works, and other Town departments and boards to oversee and steward historic resources in the town, including Town- and privately owned buildings. It maintains an inventory of historic properties and sites that has been updated as a result of recent efforts; sponsors nominations to the National Register; reviews applications for demolition and explores all possible alternatives for historic buildings that it determines significant; monitors Town-owned historic properties; and educates the public about the town's heritage.
- The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is a nine-member board with three members appointed by the Town Administrator and one member each appointed by the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Recreation Committee, Open Space Committee, and Housing Partnership Committee. All members are subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The CPC is charged with studying the town's needs, possibilities, and resources regarding community preservation in four areas—Open Space, Recreation, Community Housing, and Historic Preservation—and with allocating funds raised through the Community Preservation Act. Historic preservation-specific goals include preserving and maintaining Sturbridge's historic landmarks, historic documents, and photographs and objects and increasing public awareness and use of historic buildings and properties.
- The Conservation Commission is a five-member board appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Conservation Commission administers the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Rivers Protection Act, and Town bylaws related to wetlands and is involved with building demolition around lakes in town. It also controls several Town-owned Open Space parcels. The Sturbridge Lake Advisory Committee is a volunteer subcommittee of the Conservation Commission that assists with the monitoring and management of Sturbridge's lakes.
- The Open Space Committee is a five-member board appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Open Space Committee completes and promotes land-protection goals outlined in the Master Plan, Open Space & Recreation Plan, and Recreational Trails Master Plan and reviews undeveloped parcels to determine their value for open space preservation, habitat preservation, water supply protection, and recreational opportunities.
- The Design Review Committee is a five-member board appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Design Review Committee promotes safe, functional, and attractive development of business areas; preserves and enhances the town's New England character in commercial areas and along thoroughfares; protects and preserves unique and cultural features in town; and protects commercial and residential property values by enhancing the town's appearance.

- The Zoning Board of Appeals is a seven-member board serving three-year terms. Five members are elected by the voters, and two members are appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Zoning Board of Appeals hears and decides appeals filed by people who have been denied permits for use of land or buildings due to zoning guidelines. The board can allow special permits provided that the use is not detrimental or hazardous and is consistent with other Town planning documents.
- The Recreation Commission is a five-member board elected by the voters to three-year terms. The Recreation Committee oversees recreational facilities and activities, including the recreational fields and town beach, for use by residents.
- The Trails Committee is a nine-member committee appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Trails Committee oversees trail maintenance, construction, and planning on public lands within the community.
- The Sturbridge Tourist Association is a five-member committee appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen. The Tourist Association serves as the fiduciary for a portion of the hotel/motel tax revenue collected by the Town to support community events that encourage tourism and fund the position of the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator.

Private/Non-Profit Organizations

The following organizations in the Sturbridge area and elsewhere in Massachusetts may be resources to help the Town with its preservation activities:

- The Cedar Lake Association is a membership/residential-based organization that protects Sturbridge's Cedar Lake and provides recreational activities on and around the lake.
- The Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuck Indian Council is one of the ancestral tribes of Nipmucks (or Nipmucs) in the Sturbridge area.
- Historic New England is a Boston-based regional heritage organization that is a leader in collecting, preserving, and using historic buildings, landscapes, and archives to present history.
- The Sturbridge chapter of the Lions Club International serves visually and hearing-impaired individuals, supports community needs, and constructed the bandstand on the Town Common.
- Old Sturbridge Village (OSV) is an outdoor living history museum that opened in 1946 and depicts a rural New England town from the 1830s. One of the primary drivers of tourism in Sturbridge, OSV has preserved buildings from across New England by relocating them to the museum and preserved buildings adjacent to the museum.
- The Opacum Land Trust is a regional land conservation organization of 13 towns (including Sturbridge) formed in 2000 to protect natural and cultural resources such as farmland, forest, wetlands, rivers, and watersheds in south-central Massachusetts.

- The Publick House is a historic inn facing the Sturbridge Common that has as its primary building a tavern built in 1772 by Colonel Ebenezer Crafts. Over its nearly 250-year history, the property has been used as a tavern, a boarding house, and now an inn.
- The Sturbridge chapter of Rotary International, a worldwide service organization of business and professional men and women united to provide humanitarian service, supports local youth programs, community food pantries, and town-wide cleanup projects, among others. The Sturbridge chapter acts as stewards of ongoing communication back to Stourbridge, England.
- The Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale consists of three congregations—the 1736 Congregational Church, 1747 Baptist Church of Fiskdale, and 1864 Unitarian Church—that meet in the 1910 Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale building near the north end of the Town Common.
- The Sturbridge Historical Society is a local organization established in 1991 to collect and preserve materials and information relating to the history, people, culture, and built environment of Sturbridge. The Society holds lectures about topics of interest to members and residents.
- The Trustees (formerly The Trustees of Reservations or TTOR) is a Massachusetts-based non-profit organization that stewards historic properties across the state. The Trustees are the owners/managers of Tantiusques Reservation on Leadmine Road in Sturbridge, a graphite mine used by the Nipmucs and European colonists that is now an interpretive site with hiking trails.
- The Last Green Valley is a non-profit stewardship organization associated with the Last Green Valley, formerly called the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers National Heritage Corridor, which was established in 1994. This National Heritage Corridor is a 35-town corridor of farmland and forest administered by the Last Green Valley non-profit group and the NPS to preserve and celebrate the region’s cultural, historical, and natural heritage.

Regional and State Agencies

The following agencies and elected officials in the Sturbridge area may be resources to help the Town with its preservation activities:

- The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission provides planning services and grant preparation and administration assistance; conducts studies on regional growth and development issues; and works with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, and local governments to implement regional transportation and planning projects.
- The Chamber of Central Mass South, established in 1945 to improve the region’s business climate, has its office in Sturbridge. The agency is “the leading advocate for local business, [the chamber] promotes the success of its members, and enhances regional prosperity through networking, education, and promotion” (Chamber of Central Mass South 2023).
- The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is a state agency that owns Wells State Park, a 1,400-acre public recreation area on Walker Pond Road in Sturbridge. The park provides outdoor recreation opportunities, including campsites and hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing trails.

- The Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife is a state agency that holds conservation restrictions on open space in Sturbridge.
- The Massachusetts Preservation Coalition is a network of local, state, private, and public historic preservation organizations in Massachusetts organized by Preservation Massachusetts (see below) to establish state-wide partnerships to promote historic preservation and support preservation initiatives in the state.
- Preservation Massachusetts is a state-wide advocacy group “that educates and empowers people to preserve and reuse historic resources that are important to them and their community” (Preservation Massachusetts 2023).
- The Regional Tourism Council, part of the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, is dedicated to promoting Massachusetts as a leisure-travel destination and promotes historical sites in the state, including OSV.
- Representative Todd M. Smola is the current State Representative for the 1st Hampden district, which includes Sturbridge.
- Senator Ryan C. Fattman is the current State Senator for the Worcester and Hampden district, which includes Sturbridge.
- Anne Gobi, formerly the senator for the Worcester and Hampden district, is the current Director of Rural Affairs for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Section 2 – Historical Context and Identification of Historic Areas and Properties

2.1 A Brief History of Sturbridge

Historic contexts provide an organizational framework that groups information about related historic properties based on a theme, geographic limits, and chronological periods. A historic context is related to the developmental history of an area, region, or theme (e.g., agriculture, transportation, and waterpower). Contexts can be developed for local, state, and national geographic scales. The historic context developed for cultural resources in Sturbridge extends from the Pre-Contact Period to the present day and spans nearly 12,500 years of human occupation in the Quinebaug River drainage and the incorporated town boundaries.

Pre-Contact Period (12,500–450 Years Before Present [BP]¹)

The earliest human occupation of southeastern New England occurred during the *PaleoIndian Period* (circa [ca.] 12,500–10,000 BP) when humans moved into the region after the retreat of the Laurentide ice sheet and the Wisconsin glacier. The *Early Archaic Period* (10,000–8000 BP) was characterized by a gradually warmer and drier climate that would have made seasonally available food resources more predictable and abundant, allowing pre-contact populations to exploit a wide range of territories (Ogden 1977) and to generalize in their subsistence base. The distribution of *Middle Archaic Period* (ca. 8000–5000 BP) sites in a variety of riverine and upland environmental settings indicates a fairly intricate settlement pattern with varying site size, function, and internal complexity. Large base camps, usually located near riverine wetlands, appear to have been used repeatedly over a number of generations (Doucette and Cross 1997; Jones 1999). A core area of Middle Archaic settlement has been identified in the Quaboag River drainage north of Sturbridge.

The *Late Archaic Period* (ca. 5000–3000 BP) was marked by a climatic shift to drier and slightly warmer conditions with a significant decrease in precipitation. Wetland and estuarine areas appear to have been used extensively based on site distribution. The period is grouped into three major cultural traditions (Laurentian, Small Stemmed, and Susquehanna), and the Small Stemmed and the Susquehanna traditions overlap with the Woodland Period. Several Late Archaic sites have been recorded in the middle/upper Quinebaug River drainage, including the Parker Farm Site (19-WR-343) in Sturbridge. The *Transitional Archaic Period* (ca. 3600–2500 BP) marked the interim between the Archaic and Woodland periods and included use of steatite (soapstone) vessels.

The *Woodland Period* (ca. 3000–450 BP) in southeastern New England is divided into the Early, Middle, and Late Woodland sub-periods, each with its own distinctive cultural aspects. Little information exists about the *Early Woodland Period* (ca. 3000–2000 BP) in the region, but the lack of identified sites may be the result of recovered artifacts being attributed to other periods. However, it was a time of widespread long-distance exchange of raw materials, finished products, and information (MHC 1984b). Ceramic technology, known as Vinette I, replaced the soapstone vessels used during the Transitional Archaic Period.

The *Middle Woodland Period* (ca. 2000–1000 BP) was characterized by the presence of large base camps in riverine and coastal settings and the establishment of regional trade networks. Middle Woodland artifact assemblages frequently contain a substantial percentage of non-local lithic materials. Increasing sedentism appears to have played a greater role in settlement and subsistence patterns. The frequency of storage pit

¹ Pre-Contact date ranges represent radiocarbon years before present (BP), with the present defined as AD 1950.

features at sites suggests processing and storage of bulky foods, a characteristic of more sedentary settlement patterns. Horticulture began to supplement the traditional hunting and gathering practices in the Northeast and led to changes in subsistence, population growth, organization of labor, and social stratification (Snow 1980). The degree of dependence on horticulture and its significance as a stimulus of social and economic change in the late pre-contact history of southern New England is a topic of archaeological research (e.g., Chilton 2010).

The *Late Woodland Period* (ca. 1000–450 BP) was marked by an increase in ceramic production through improvements in tempering and firing technology. Some populations may still have relied solely on hunting and gathering, while others turned to horticulture. Coastal areas and large semipermanent village settlements adjacent to arable lands, particularly along broad floodplains, were preferred (Bendremer 1993; Bendremer and Dewar 1993). Farming, however, did not preclude the continuance of seasonal rounds, and small task-specific camps were still common. Social complexity, the formation of political alliances, and the establishment of tribal territories developed. Larger groups sometimes lived in fortified villages, indicating the presence of complicated political alliances (Mulholland 1988).

Very few sites with Woodland components are recorded in Sturbridge, although some sites dating to the Middle and Late Woodland periods are recorded in the Quaboag drainage to the north. The area around Quaboag Pond and sections of the Quaboag River floodplain with soils favorable for horticulture may have been more attractive for settlement and subsistence activities than the more rugged and narrow ridges to the south. A Late Woodland component was identified at the Forest Lane Rockshelter Site (19-WR-688) in Sturbridge (Milne and Ritchie 2000).

Contact Period (450–300 BP/ca. 1500–1675)

The traditional cultural systems of Native Americans were rapidly transformed when Native Americans had first contact with European explorers and settlers. This contact slowly but completely disrupted Native American lifeways, including their social, economic, and political cultures. The lifeways of the Contact Period Native populations are believed to have resembled those of the Late Woodland Period, with large permanent base camps and villages (some fortified) and smaller satellite hunting and fishing camps. Large groups may have gathered at certain times of the year for resource exploitation and social and ceremonial functions.

Early ethnohistorical documents and modern ethnohistorical sources attest to the extensive trade network in place (Bragdon 1996; Brasser 1978; Snow 1980; Winthrop 1996 [1649]). Fur trade was an important economic factor for Europeans and Natives alike, and the Native Americans received clothing, food items, metal, and beads in return for furs. The writings of several early explorers and settlers, including John Winthrop, William Bradford, Thomas Morton, Samuel Champlain, and Samuel and John Smith, record interaction between Native peoples and Europeans. European trade goods circulated to Native populations, especially during the early seventeenth century. Although pre-contact trade routes may not have been used throughout the Late Woodland Period (McBride and Dewar 1987), they clearly served as conduits for distributing European goods, especially marine shell beads (wampum), by the early seventeenth century.

The present-day town of Sturbridge is within the ancestral homeland or territory of the Nipmuc Tribe, which encompassed parts of present-day central Massachusetts, northeastern Connecticut, and northwestern Rhode Island. The Nipmuc Tribal community comprises several bands, historically linked by kinship ties, trade routes, and other alliances (Reclaiming Heritage 2023). According to Stockwell (1879), the first recorded contact with the branch of Nipmuc occupying what is now southern Worcester County occurred in 1674, when English missionary John Eliot and the Massachusetts Indian Agent, Daniel Gookin, visited the area in an effort to assimilate the Nipmuc living there (Mrozowski et al. 2009:432–433).

During the first months of King Philip's War (1675–1676), in the fall of 1675, the Massachusetts Bay Colony attempted to retain the Nipmuc as allies. The efforts were unsuccessful, as the Wampanoag leader Metacom (called King Philip by English colonists) had secured their allegiance. Nipmuc groups residing at Manchaug and Chaubunagungamaug, under their sachem Black James, went to war with the English. King Philip's War decimated the Nipmuc Tribe, and most of the survivors sought refuge in western Massachusetts following the hostilities. Soon after, European settlers moved into the Nipmuc territory; some Nipmucs returned and eventually were settled into a 4-square-mile reserve in present-day Dudley and Webster (Hurd 1889). King Philip's War resulted in the military defeat and geographic dispersal of Native groups throughout southern New England. By the mid-seventeenth century, few Native peoples survived in the region, but their population continued to maintain distinct cultural traditions.

Plantation Period (ca. 1620–1675)

A large part of the land now within the bounds of Sturbridge was originally included in a large tract known as the Tantiusque Deed. This 10-mile-wide area was established in 1644 and surrounded the Winthrop Leadmine grant on Leadmine Hill. An acquisition of land from Native American occupants in 1655 was known as the Eliot Purchase and covered an area in the northern portion of Sturbridge. The first English occupants were workers at the Winthrop graphite mine that began operation in 1658. An early road network followed Native American trails corresponding to the routes of Wallace, Fisher Hill, and Whittemore roads to Main Street. A primary east–west route was Pynchon's Road, which connected Boston to Springfield after 1635 (MHC 1984a).

Extant resources associated with the Plantation Period include the Tantiusques Site on Leadmine Road (Figure 2-1), now owned by The Trustees; Wallace Road, running south from Main Street near the Southbridge line; and Whittemore Road, which runs approximately southeast from Hall Road near Route 131.



Figure 2-1. Tantiusques Graphite Mine, Leadmine Road, looking north (photo by author).

Colonial Period (1675–1775)

The first permanent European settlement in Sturbridge occurred ca. 1725 by residents of Medfield, after the initial exploration of the area in the late seventeenth century and graphite mining in the southwestern highlands (MHC 1984a:1–2). By 1730, 50 house lots of a minimum of 50 acres each were laid out. Six acres near the settlement's geographic center were donated to the Town by the heirs of Gurdon Saltonstall from the 2,000-acre farm of Sir Richard Saltonstall for the meetinghouse lot (MHC 1984a:3–4). The original Town Common (STU.921) encompassed the land to the west where the Joshua Hyde Library (STU.11), Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale (STU.10), and Sturbridge Town Hall (STU.4) are located, and the Old Sturbridge Burial Ground (STU.801) and Sturbridge Center School (STU.39) on the south side of Main Street.

Sturbridge was incorporated as a town in 1738. The first meetinghouse (not extant) was built in 1733 (MHC 1984a:4). When the land was set aside for the common (Figure 2-2), two roads were laid out running north and south from the meetinghouse (Levine 1971:3). By 1740, the uses of the lot were listed as “a meetinghouse place a burying place and a training field” (Hynes 1919:9, quoted in Levine 1971:3). In 1774, the men of Sturbridge used the common as a military camp to organize into companies before the outbreak of the American Revolution (1775–1783). A stone weapons magazine was constructed on the common and stocked with 5 half-barrels of powder, 500 flints, and 5 cwt (hundredweight) of lead (Clark 1838:17).



Figure 2-2. Sturbridge Town Common, looking east (photo by author).

Stagecoach travel in New England began in the early eighteenth century and quickly spurred the construction of taverns to accommodate travelers along the highways (Forbes and Eastman 1954:1). In 1772, Dr. Erasmus Babbitt sold a parcel of land on the south side of the Town Common to Colonel Ebenezer Crafts (1740–1810). Crafts, originally from Pomfret, Connecticut, graduated from Yale in 1759 and married his wife Mehitable in 1762. In 1768, the family settled in Woodstock, Connecticut, near Sturbridge. After acquiring the property in Sturbridge from Babbitt, Crafts reportedly built the Publick House (STU.36) there facing the common and ran a tavern out of it (Figure 2-3). In 1775, Crafts rallied a cavalry composed of men from Sturbridge and nearby Charlton, Dudley, and Oxford. Crafts was commissioned the captain of the cavalry and ordered to join up with the Continental Army in Cambridge. Crafts served in the army until Boston was evacuated by the British in March 1776, and he returned to Sturbridge (Find A Grave 2011; Crafts and Crafts 1893:132).



Figure 2-3. Publick House, looking southeast (photo by author).

Extant resources associated with the Colonial Period in Sturbridge include the Sturbridge Town Common, the Old Burial Ground (Figure 2-4), and the Publick House (see Figure 2-3).



Figure 2-4. Old Burial Ground, looking southeast (photo by author).

Federal Period (1775–1830)



Figure 2-5. Alpheus Wight House, 420 Main Street, looking northwest (photo by author).

The Snell auger manufactory originated about 1790, when Thomas Snell (1772–1832) moved from Bridgewater to Ware, Massachusetts, and began making augers. Thomas and his wife Susanna had 17 children; Melville (1804–1877) and Thomas Jr. (1798–1885) went into the family business. In 1811, the Sturbridge Manufacturing Company acquired a grist mill owned by Moses Fisk in an area known as Westville, a village southwest of Sturbridge Center, and built the first cotton mill in this part of Worcester County on the site of the grist mill. The mill began production with 128 spindles and was sold to the Westville Manufacturing Company in 1833 (Stone 1930:44).

About 1810, Simeon Burt (1788–1855), a stagecoach operator from Monson, Massachusetts, came to Sturbridge with Cyrus Merrick (1782–1872). About that same time, the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike (now Charlton Street) was built through the center of Sturbridge, facilitating the flow of people and manufactured goods through the town and spurring the development of a small residential cluster around the meetinghouse (Wood 1919: 26, 158–159).² The two men purchased the Crafts tavern, which they operated until about 1820, when they sold it to David K. Porter (1784–1868), who was also in the stagecoach business (Nutt 1919:1099). Porter retained the property until 1827, when he sold it to Cromwell Bullard (1803–1849). Bullard and his wife, Mary, purchased the property shortly after their marriage. In 1816, the southeast portion of Sturbridge became part of the city of Southbridge.

Extant resources associated with the Federal Period in Sturbridge include wood-frame residential buildings and agricultural outbuildings along main transportation routes, such as Alpheus Wight’s house and barn on Main Street and the Joseph Marsh House and barns on Brookfield Road; early industrial resources, like the Wight-Snell Tailrace; and historic circulation routes (Figure 2-7), including Charlton Street (formerly the

The area known as Snellville, northwest of the common, was settled in the late eighteenth century when Alpheus Wight (1770–1851) dug a canal from the Quinebaug River to provide waterpower east of the river; a remnant of the canal is extant as the Wight-Snell Tailrace (late 18th century, STU.918). Members of the Wight family constructed saw, grist, and fulling mills along the new waterway, and a small mill village (known as Wight Village) developed with worker housing, a company store, and a counting house (Holley 1973b; Burns 1988:22; Stone 1930:1958). Alpheus built a house (Figure 2-5) on the north side of Main Street (420 Main Street, ca. 1790, STU.89) and a barn (Figure 2-6) on the south side of Main Street (419 Main Street, ca. 1790, STU.122).



Figure 2-6. Alpheus Wight Barn, 419 Main Street, looking southeast (photo by author).

² A section of the turnpike in its original form remains extant on the Heins Farm Trail on Stallion Hill Road.

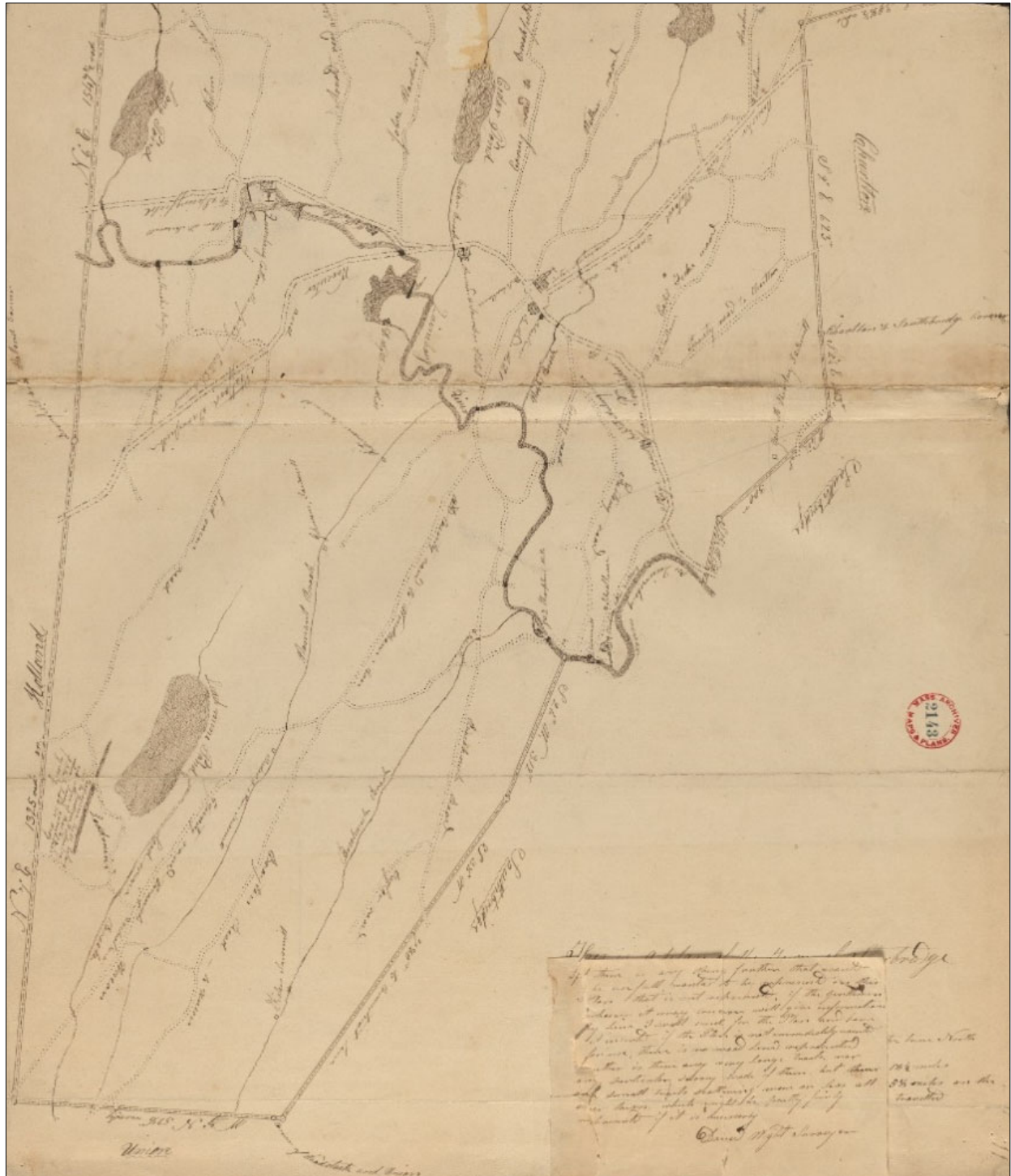


Figure 2-7. 1831 (Wight) map of Sturbridge, showing, among other things, the course of the Quinebaug River, the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike, and portions of present-day Routes 131 and 20.

Worcester-Stafford Turnpike). Residential buildings were constructed in a variety of popular styles and forms, including cape, Federal, and Georgian.

Early Industrial Period (1830–1870)

During the Early Industrial Period, Sturbridge Center became the political focus of the town. The routing of the turnpike through the center of Sturbridge was an important stimulus for the town's nineteenth-century growth because it was part of a major overland stage route from Boston to New York. Temporary shoe shops and stock pens were erected on the common in the nineteenth century (Davis 1858:114; Burns 1984:16–17; Briere 2016). By about 1835, the common had reached its approximate shape, with lots encircling it occupied by numerous houses and shops (Wood 1997:120–121; Levine 1971).

The industrial districts at Westville and Fiskdale continued to expand as large stone and brick mill buildings were constructed for textile manufacture (Figure 2-8). By 1837, six cotton mills employing 71 men and 117 women operated in Sturbridge. The textile industry peaked in the 1840s; by 1865, only one mill in Westville and two in Fiskdale remained (MHC 1984a). In 1838, 13 sawmills operated; by 1870, 8 of them continued to operate on tributary streams of the Quinebaug River (Morrison and Chamberland 1975).



Figure 2-8. Fiskdale Lower Mill, 559 Main Street, looking southwest (photo by author).

In 1852, Snell & Brothers purchased the Wight gristmill and moved it 200 feet to the east to make room to construct a large factory for the manufacture of augers. The town's extensive forests yielded up to 900,000 feet of boards and 4,100 cords of firewood annually. Other local industries included tanneries, blacksmith shops, and factories producing cabinets, chaises, carriages, firearms, and woodworking and shoemaking tools. Immigrants, primarily from Ireland, swelled the industrial communities, increasing the population from 1,688 in 1830 to 2,291 by 1860 (Atwood 2001; MA Vital Records 2023).

A mid-nineteenth-century map shows the routes of the Worcester-Stafford Turnpike, portions of present-day Routes 131 and 20, and the course of the Quinebaug River (Figure 2-9; Walling 1857). Outlying areas of the town remained in agricultural use. Local farms raised livestock (sheep and cattle) for dairy, meat, and wool production. Forested areas cleared to supply timber for local industries were eventually used for pasture and hay (MHC 1984a).

Extant resources associated with the Early Industrial Period in Sturbridge include the Fiskdale Lower Mill; wood residences in Fiskdale and Snellville to house workers and mill owners (Figure 2-10); scattered agricultural and industrial outbuildings (Figures 2-11 and 2-12); and numerous residential buildings. Buildings were often built in popular architectural styles of the day, including Greek Revival, late examples of the Federal style, and Italianate.

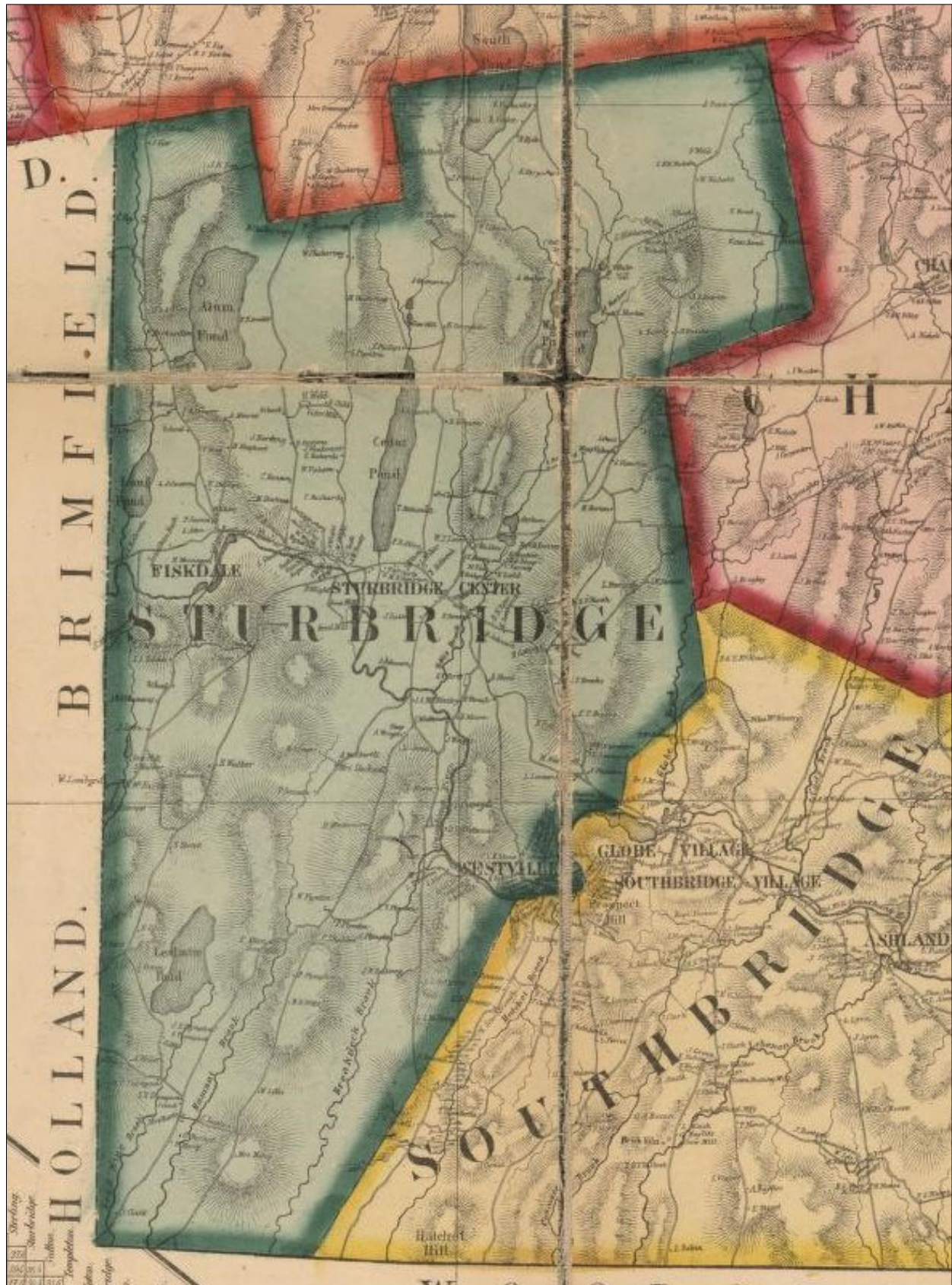


Figure 2-9. 1857 (Walling) map of Sturbridge, showing expanded development in Sturbridge Center and Fiskdale.



Figure 2-10. Simeon Drake House, 528 Main Street, looking northwest (photo by author).



Figure 2-11. Sturbridge Cotton Mills Office, 541 Main Street, looking southwest (photo by author).



Figure 2-12. Southbridge and Sturbridge Street Railway Substation, 331 Main Street, looking south (photo by author).

Late Industrial Period (1870–1915)

By 1915, the town's population was approximately 2,000, a slight decrease from its peak in the 1860s and likely due to changes in the town's industries. Transportation improvements included an electric railway between Southbridge, Sturbridge, and Palmer. The local trolley line was connected to the Boston and Albany and the New York, New Haven, and Hartford railroads and carried passengers and local industrial and agricultural products to larger markets in Worcester, Boston, and New York. Construction of the Grand Trunk Railroad (Figure 2-13) began in 1909 but was never completed. Work initially stopped after the president of the company, Charles Melville Hays, perished on the *Titanic* in 1912, and subsequent efforts to complete the railroad ended when the company's Rhode Island

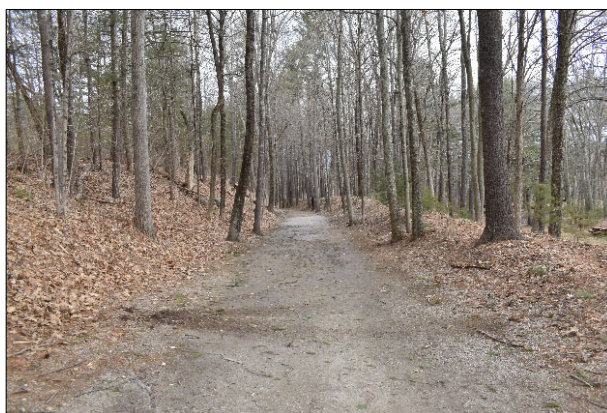


Figure 2-13. Grand Trunk Railroad alignment, now a walking path, looking northeast (photo by author).

charter was not renewed in 1926 (Sewell and Lee 2011).

Some small local sawmills and textile factories were abandoned or modified for other uses in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The Snell Manufacturing Company in Fiskdale continued to produce chisels, boring machines, and augers into the early twentieth century. Sturbridge farms were involved in dairying, orchards, and poultry raising. The amount of land in pasturage decreased, and some areas reverted to woodland (MHC 1984a). Recreational cottage development began at several ponds in the area as suburban growth from Southbridge expanded into the southeast part of Sturbridge.

Extant resources associated with the Late Industrial Period in Sturbridge include some early lake cottages, although many have been replaced or modernized; the Grand Trunk Railroad right-of-way, now a walking path; St. Anne Shrine in Fiskdale, which has attracted visitors to the town since the late 1880s; and residential buildings constructed for mill employees in Snellville and Fiskdale, among other areas of Sturbridge (Figure 2-14). In the Snellville area, these included several houses on Auger Street.



Figure 2-14. 1870 (Beers) map of Sturbridge, showing development in Sturbridge Center (right), Snellville (center, unlabeled), and Fiskdale (left).

Early to Mid-Twentieth Century (1915–1945)

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Sturbridge's industries began to change. While still largely agricultural, production shifted from livestock or grains to predominantly fruit orchards, such as the Haynes' orchard south of the Publick House, now the site of the Publick House's Country Lodge, formerly the Sturbridge Orchard Inn Motel (see *Modern Period* below) (Parsons 2017).

In 1926, the Fiskdale Mills, by then called the Fiskdale Finishing Company, declared bankruptcy. A June 1926 advertisement in the *Boston Globe* (Figure 2-15) indicated that the company's holdings at the time consisted of Mill 1, a two-, three-, and four-story daylight mill; Mill 2, a two- and five-story daylight mill;

waterpower rights; and 26 tenement buildings, consisting of an agent's house, a farm house, 3 single dwellings, and 21 two-, three-, and four-family dwellings and tenements (*Boston Globe* 1926a). A subdivision plan was filed that created separate parcels for the residential buildings (Worcester County Registry of Deeds 47/41). By August 1926, 13 of the residences (2 single-family homes and 11 two-, three-, and four-family residences) were sold (*Boston Globe* 1926b).

In 1927, Golding Brothers, a New York City firm that also owned the Southbridge Finishing Company, reopened the Fiskdale mills; equipped them with new machinery; and began producing bleached, dyed, printed, mercerized, and finished tickings, dress goods, and shirtings (Stone 1930:1957). In 1934, a nationwide textile workers strike forced the Fiskdale mills to shut down for three weeks. The strike was led by the United Textile Workers union, whose membership increased dramatically from 15,000 in 1933 to 250,000 in 1934. Workers demanded better working conditions, better wages, and union recognition (Findlay 2018). The strike lasted until a Board of Inquiry called by President Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested an arbitration plan that was agreed to by the union leaders and mill owners (*Boston Globe* 1934). In 1935, the Sturbridge and Southbridge Finishing Companies, which employed 700 people at the time, organized workers into three eight-hour shifts and anticipated creating 100 new jobs as a result (*Boston Globe* 1935). In November 1936, the Goldings awarded 800 workers a 10% raise (*Boston Globe* 1936). The Hurricane of 1938 damaged the roof of the Fiskdale Lower Mill and reduced the rear portion of the building from five stories to three (Holley 1973a).

By 1938, the Fiskdale Ball Field, 529 Main Street (STU.907, Figure 2-16), which may have been constructed by the Goldings as a perk for their employees, was in use (NETR 2018). In the early 1970s, a bar known as Turner's Club sponsored a baseball team that played at the Fiskdale Ball Field, which is now known as Turner's Field. The bar, on the south side of Main Street immediately north of the ball field until about 1973, is now the relocated Oxhead Tavern (Brimfield Congregational Church Conference Hall, 366 Main Street [STU.187, Figure 2-17]) (Briere 1995). The ball field remains in use and hosts games for several recreational league teams. The Oxhead Tavern closed during the COVID-19 pandemic and has not reopened.

**Trustee's Sale
in Bankruptcy**

Estate Fiskdale Finishing Co.
Bankrupt No. 33780

All the right, title and interest of the Trustees in
Bankruptcy in and to the

**REAL ESTATE
MACHINERY EQUIPMENT
FISKDALE FINISHING COMPANY**
TO BE SOLD ON PREMISES
Fiskdale, Mass.
(Five miles west of Southbridge)

THURSDAY, JUNE 24, 1926 AT 11 A. M.

REAL ESTATE—MILL No. 1, 2, 3 and 4—story brick daylight manufactur-
ing building in good condition. Approx. 31,000 sq. ft. of floor space.
MILL No. 2, 2 and 3—story brick daylight manufacturing building in good
condition. Approx. 55,000 sq. ft. floor space.
WATER POWER, No. 1 mill develops approx. 300 H. P. and No. 2 approx.
200 H. P. Valuable water rights.
26 TENEMENT BUILDINGS, comprising an agent's house, a farm house,
three single dwellings and twenty-one 2, 3 and 4-family dwellings and tene-
ments.
MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT includes looms, rolls, washers, dryers,
print machines, folding machines, sewing machines, motors, lathes, drill
presses, etc., desks, chairs, cabinets, adding machines, typewriters, safe, etc.
By order of Abner L. Braley, George V. Penneck and Warren S. Shepard,
Trustees.
Merrill S. June, Esq., 808 Slater Bldg., Worcester, Mass., Attorney for
Trustees.

Property May Be Inspected Any Time Prior to Sale Upon
Application to the Auctioneers

Illustrated Descriptive Catalogue Upon Application to

SAMUEL T. FREEMAN & CO., Auctioneers
1808-10 CHESTNUT ST. PHILADELPHIA **80 FEDERAL ST. BOSTON**

Figure 2-15. *Boston Globe* advertisement for the sale of Fiskdale Finishing Company property (*Boston Globe* 1926a).



Figure 2-16. Fiskdale Ball Field, 529 Main Street, looking southwest (photo by author).



Figure 2-17. Oxhead Tavern, 366 Main Street, looking northwest (photo by author).

Extant resources associated with the Early to Mid-Twentieth Century Period in Sturbridge include the Fiskdale Ball Field, a former town fire station at the intersection of Route 20 and Holland Road, industrial buildings in the Snell Manufacturing Company complex, wood-frame residential buildings (Figure 2-18), often on side streets on lots further from historic thoroughfares, built in a variety of styles and forms, including Classical and Colonial revivals and Capes; and civic and ecclesiastic buildings such as the Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale.



Figure 2-18. Early 20th-century residence, 20 Charlton Street, looking south (photo by author).

Modern Period (1945–Present)

Quinebaug Village, a historical museum and reconstructed village now known as Old Sturbridge Village, opened in Sturbridge in 1946 (Figure 2-19). Established by brothers Joel Cheney Wells, Albert Bacheller Wells, and Channing McGregory Wells, industrialists who owned the American Optical Company in nearby Southbridge, Old Sturbridge Village was initially conceived as a museum to display their burgeoning antiques collections.³

Soon, however, the site became an open-air, living history museum, collecting historic buildings from throughout New England. It also became the focal point of commercial development based on tourism



Figure 2-19. Oliver Wight Tavern, Old Sturbridge Village (photo by author).

³ The American Optical Company was established in 1869 when three local spectacle, or eyeglass, shops were consolidated (Simmons 2000:9).

along the Route 20 highway corridor. In the mid-twentieth century, the Massachusetts Turnpike, Route 15, and Route 84 (known as the Wilbur Park Crossway in Connecticut) were constructed to handle increased automobile traffic and connect Holland and Sturbridge in Massachusetts to East Hartford, Connecticut, and points west and south. Small clusters of seasonal cottages were built on Alum, Cedar, Long, and Leadmine ponds, and suburban development expanded along the Route 131 corridor (MHC 1984a).

As a result of Old Sturbridge Village and the highway development, the hospitality industry in Sturbridge began to flourish. Soon after, the Brimfield Antique and Collectibles Show began in 1959, further increasing the draw to Sturbridge and the surrounding communities (Levin 1999). By the mid-twentieth

century, numerous hotels and restaurants were under construction along main transportation routes to accommodate the influx of tourists. Several small motor court-type motels were built near the Southbridge border on Route 131, including the present-day Hamilton Inn (Figure 2-20) and Scottish Inn (142 Main Street). Near the center of Sturbridge, the American Motor Lodge, the Country Motor Lodge at the Publick House, and the Lodges at Old Sturbridge Village provided lodging options closer to Old Sturbridge Village and the commercial core of town. The Lodges at Old Sturbridge Village was centered around the Wight house. The Lodges at Old Sturbridge Village closed in 2005 (Gushue 2005) and reopened in 2014. The American Motor Lodge, extant by 1966, was demolished ca. 2014 and is now the site of the Holiday Inn Express at 21 New Boston Road. The Country Motor Lodge, originally the Sturbridge Orchard Inn Motel (Figure 2-21), opened in 1964 on the east side of Haynes Street, adjacent to the Publick House, and remains in operation as part of the Publick House complex.

By the mid-twentieth century, the industrial complex of Snellville and Fiskdale was changing. The Snell Manufacturing Company went out of business in 1942–1943 and sold its buildings to other industrial concerns. By 1950, Fiskdale Realty, Inc. owned the upper and lower Fiskdale mill complexes, which were largely vacant, although tenants possibly occupied portions (AFMFIC 1950). In 1953, the Sturbridge



Figure 2-20. Hamilton Inn, 172 Main Street, looking southeast (photo by author).



Figure 2-21. Sturbridge Orchard Inn Motel, looking south (photo by author).

Yankee Workshop acquired the former Snell Manufacturing building on Route 20 for a showroom and the Lower Mill in Fiskdale to house its mail-order business selling early American furniture and accessories. In 1954, CPC Engineering and Arland Tool & Manufacturing Company purchased former Snell Manufacturing buildings for their businesses. By 1971, the canal that had provided waterpower to the Snell and Wight operations was infilled and paved over. By 1972, CPC Engineering owned the Fiskdale Upper Mill and had demolished the deteriorated four-story main mill building (Dufresne 1972). The southern one- and two-story portions of the building were used as a laundry and by CPC for steel fabrication (Dufresne 1972).

When the American Optical Company decided not to develop products from its fiber optic and laser technology research, Mosaic Fabrications (later Galileo Electro-Optics, Figure 2-22) was established in Fiskdale, and Laser, Inc. (later Coherent General) was founded in Sturbridge to take over. Mosaic Fabrications' Mid-Twentieth-Century Modern building was constructed on the site of the Mominee Farm, a former stagecoach stop (Briere 1995). G & F Tool, a plastics products manufacturer and SpecTran Corporation (now OFS), a fiber optics products manufacturer, have also become major employers in Sturbridge. The town was a center of development for fiber optic technologies into the late twentieth century. A consortium of firms, called the Center for



Figure 2-22. Galileo Electro-Optics building, 660 Main Street (photo by author).

Advanced Fiberoptic Applications (CAFA), was established in 1996 and joined with the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Bell Labs, and other organizations to work with NASA and the United States Department of Defense to develop new technologies; CAFA folded in 2012 (Levin 1999:10).

Residential neighborhoods built north and south of the Route 20 corridor increased the town's housing density and population. Between 1950 and 1980, the population of Sturbridge more than doubled, from 2,805 to 5,976 (US Census 1950–1980). Residential developments were largely constructed north of Route 20 in formerly undeveloped or agricultural areas; there is a small amount of residential development to the south of Route 20, generally along the north and south sides of Mashapaug Road and the east and west sides of Wallace and Shepard roads and side roads extending from them. Despite the increased development, Sturbridge continues to have large areas of undeveloped land, much of which is protected by conservation restrictions or is held by the Town, the Opacum Land Trust, or other organizations.



Figure 2-23. Route 20 in Fiskdale, looking west toward the Otis Block/Blackington Building (center left) (photo by author).

Today, the Route 20 area of Sturbridge remains a heavily trafficked, mixed-use corridor of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings (Figure 2-23). The commercial buildings are generally occupied by restaurants, boutiques, and antique stores that cater to tourists drawn to the area by Old Sturbridge Village to the east and the antiques market in Brimfield to the west. The area surrounding the Town Common remains a locus of civic life in Sturbridge, where residents attend to business in Town offices, visit the library, or attend church.

Extant resources associated with the Modern Period in Sturbridge include a wide variety of wood-frame residential buildings constructed in popular forms and styles, including Ranch, mid-century Cape, and Contemporary, many built along side streets or in planned subdivisions; chain and independent commercial buildings and restaurants such as Cumberland Farms, CVS, and fast-food restaurants; and numerous hotels and motels, predominantly along Routes 131 and 20. Sturbridge retains a high concentration of historical residences, particularly around the Town Common, and in the Snellville and Fiskdale development nodes.

2.2 Sturbridge Common

The Sturbridge Common was laid out by 1730 on 6 acres near the settlement's geographic center that were purchased from the 2,000-acre farm of Sir Richard Saltonstall for the meetinghouse (MHC 1984a:3–4). The original town common encompassed the land to the west where the Joshua Hyde Library, Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, and the Sturbridge Town Hall are located, as well as the Old Sturbridge Burial Ground and the Sturbridge Center School on the south side of Main Street.

At the time land was set aside by the Saltonstalls, two roads were laid out running north and south from the meetinghouse (Levine 1971:3). By 1740, the uses of the lot were listed as “a meetinghouse place a burying place and a training field” (Hynes 1919:9, quoted in Levine 1971:3). In 1774, the men of Sturbridge used the common as a military camp where they organized into companies before the outbreak of the American Revolution (1775–1783). A stone weapons magazine was constructed on the common and stocked with five half-barrels of powder, 500 flints, and 5 cwt (hundredweight) of lead (Clark 1838:17). The Worcester-Stafford Turnpike, today's Main Street, was built through the town center in 1810 as part of a major overland stage route from Boston to New York and stimulated the town's nineteenth-century growth (MHC 1984a:4). A small residential cluster, much of which remains intact within the Sturbridge Common Historic District (Figure 2-24), grew around the meetinghouse (no longer extant). By about 1835, the common had reached its approximate shape, with lots encircling it occupied by numerous houses and shops (Wood 1997:120–121; Levine 1971).



Figure 2-24. Sturbridge Common, looking northeast (photo by author).

By the mid-nineteenth century, development around the common slowed as town commerce shifted west to the industrial villages of Snellville and Fiskdale (Levine 1971:12). By 1870, the current rectangular layout of the common existed with diagonal paths through the northwest and northeast corners (Beers 1870). The layout may have been a reflection, conscious or otherwise, of the nineteenth-century ideation of the Puritan village, with substantial houses encircling open commons (Wood and Steinitz 1992:105).

In the twentieth century, a watering trough was removed from the south end of the common during a World War I scrap metal drive. The bandstand at the northwest corner of the common was built in 1995, and in 2012 the common became the site of a skating rink in the winter, which continues to the present. The Sturbridge Common was listed in the National Register on November 9, 1977, as part of the Sturbridge Common Historic District.

2.3 Snellville

The village of Snellville is in west-central Sturbridge, on the north side of the Quinebaug River and encompassing the north and south sides of Main Street/US Route 20. The area developed around the Wight and Snell manufacturing companies beginning in the early nineteenth century and today is a heavily traveled, mixed-use corridor with residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. Industrial buildings are on the south side of Main Street, adjacent to the Quinebaug River, which historically provided waterpower. Residential and commercial buildings on both sides of Main Street are generally Federal, Greek Revival, and Italianate in style. Worker's housing, primarily along Snell and Auger streets, is astylistic, i.e., without a specific style (Figure 2-25). Buildings in the area are generally in good to fair condition; many are clad with vinyl siding and have vinyl replacement windows.



Figure 2-25. Snell Auger worker's housing, 7 Auger Street, looking southwest (photo by author).

2.4 Fiskdale

The village of Fiskdale is in western Sturbridge, on the north side of the Quinebaug River and encompassing the north and south sides of Main Street/US Route 20. The area developed as a mill village around the Fiskdale Upper and Lower mills in the mid-to-late nineteenth century and today is a heavily traveled, mixed-use corridor with industrial, commercial, and residential buildings. Industrial buildings and the remaining mill dam (Figure 2-26) are on the south side of Main Street and east side of Holland Road, adjacent to the Quinebaug River. Commercial and residential buildings are on both sides of Main Street and extend north onto Church and High streets. They are generally Greek Revival or Italianate in style; most of the housing built for mill workers are astylistic. The village also includes St. Anne's Church, the Otis Block/Blackington Building, Turner's Field, and the American Legion Champeau-Vilandre Post 109.



Figure 2-26. Fiskdale Mill Dam, looking southeast (photo by author).

2.5 Old Sturbridge Village

Old Sturbridge Village (Figure 2-27), opened in 1946, is a 200+-acre open-air museum campus encompassing 40 historical residential and civic buildings. Several are from Sturbridge and nearby Charlton, and the others were moved to the site from locations elsewhere in New England. A tavern, tin shop, shoe shop, meetinghouses, and several residential buildings are staffed by costumed, third-person interpreters.

2.6 Lakes and Ponds

Sturbridge has several large, freshwater lakes and ponds around which small summer cottages (Figure 2-28) have been constructed since at least the early twentieth century. The most well-known of the lakes may be Cedar Lake (Figure 2-29), immediately north of Route 20 and adjacent to the Burgess Elementary School and the Sturbridge Host Hotel. On the southwest end of Cedar Lake is a recreational area with tennis and basketball courts, a playground, walking paths, and a small beach. Walker Pond, in the northeast part of Sturbridge, is within Wells State Park, which is managed by the Massachusetts DCR. The park encompasses a beach, hiking trails, and campsites.



Figure 2-27. Fitch and Fenno House on a Snowy Day (credit Old Sturbridge Village).



Figure 2-28. 128 Lake Road, built 1926 (Sturbridge Assessor).



Figure 2-29. Cedar Lake, looking south (photo by author).

2.7 Fiske Hill

Fiske Hill is in the eastern part of Sturbridge and is named for brothers Henry and Daniel Fiske, who settled there in 1731 (before the town's incorporation in 1738). It is the site of a ca. 1832 house once owned by a member of the Fiske family (Figure 2-30).

The area was well suited for agriculture with well-drained, fertile soil. By the late eighteenth century, the main thoroughfare through the area, Fiske Hill Road, was part of a stagecoach route and the area had a Baptist church, school, and inn. By the mid-twentieth century, the area shifted from agricultural use to an area of predominantly large houses (Walsh 2017a).



Figure 2-30. Daniel Fiske III/Channing M. Wells House, 77 Fiske Hill Road, looking northwest (Walsh 2017b).

2.8 Town-Owned Historic Properties

Sturbridge does not maintain a specific list of historic Town-owned properties, so PAL developed a working list based on conversations with the Town's Facilities Manager, previous historic surveys, and the Town Assessor's database. The Town owns 13 properties that are historic (50 years old or older), eight of which of which were built before 1900; four of these are listed in the National Register within the Sturbridge Town Common Historic District (NRDIS). The MHC holds a Preservation Restriction on the Sturbridge Center School.

The Town-owned historic properties are:

- Town Common, 278 Main Street, 1738, STU.921 (NRDIS), see Figure 2-24
- Sturbridge Center School/Center Office Building, 301 Main Street, 1855, STU.39 (NRDIS and Preservation Restriction), Figure 2-31
- Joshua Hyde Public Library, 306 Main Street, 1896, STU.11 (NRDIS), Figure 2-32
- Sturbridge Agricultural Hall/Town Hall, 308 Main Street, 1838, STU.4 (NRDIS), Figure 2-33
- Pump House, 378 Main Street, 1971, STU.79, Figure 2-34
- Snellville School No. 2/Sturbridge Senior Center, 480 Main Street, 1874, STU.113, Figure 2-35
- Fiskdale Baptist Church Vestry/Sturbridge Nursery School, 518 Main Street, 1920, STU.137, Figure 2-36
- Sturbridge Fire Station, 8 Brookfield Road, 1922, STU.161, Figure 2-37
- Cedar Pond Dam, 50 Burgess School Road, 1925, uninventoried
- North Cemetery, 44 Maple Street, 1790, STU.800
- Old Sturbridge Burial Ground, 293 Main Street, 1750, STU.801
- Sturbridge Soldiers Monument, 306 Main Street, 1871, STU.910
- Water Department, 375 Main Street, 1965–1988, uninventoried



Figure 2-31. Sturbridge Center School/Center Office Building, 301 Main Street, looking southwest (photo by author).



Figure 2-32. Joshua Hyde Public Library, 306 Main Street, looking south (photo by author).



Figure 2-33. Sturbridge Agricultural Hall/Town Hall, 308 Main Street, looking northeast (photo by author).



Figure 2-34. Sturbridge Pump House, 378 Main Street, looking northwest (photo by author).



Figure 2-35. Snellville School No. 2/Sturbridge Senior Center, 480 Main Street, looking northwest (photo by author).



Figure 2-36. Sturbridge Baptist Vestry/Sturbridge Nursery School, 518 Main Street, looking north (photo by author).



Figure 2-37. Sturbridge Fire Station, 8 Brookfield Road, looking northwest (photo by author).

Current uses of the Town-owned buildings include Town offices and departments such as the Library, Senior Center, and Planning Department. The Town Administrator has full jurisdiction over the rental and use of all Town-owned properties, except the school properties and those that are controlled by the Conservation Commission. As such, the Town is responsible for the maintenance and repair of Town buildings, which is overseen by the Facilities Manager, who works with the departments occupying the buildings to ensure that potential issues are addressed quickly and that the departments' needs are being met. Other Town-owned historical properties that have not been surveyed include municipal utilities such as the water department facilities, recycling center, and recreation areas.

There are three historic cemeteries in Sturbridge, two of which are Town-owned:⁴

- North Cemetery, 44 Maple Street, 1790, STU.800, Figure 2-38
- Old Burial Ground, 293 Main Street, 1740, STU.801, Figure 2-39



Figure 2-38. North Cemetery, looking northeast (photo by author).



Figure 2-39. Old Burial Ground, 293 Main Street, looking southwest (photo by author).

⁴ The third historic cemetery, St. Anne Cemetery established ca. 1879, is managed by the Catholic Diocese of Worcester. The North Cemetery and St. Anne Cemetery continue to take new burials.

There are several memorials and monuments in town, including three large-scale monuments near the Town Common that are overseen by the town's Veterans Agent with assistance from the Facilities Manager:

- Sturbridge Gold Star Mothers Monument, 301 Main Street, 2007, uninventoried, Figure 2-40
- Sturbridge Soldiers Monument, 306 Main Street, 1871, STU.910, Figure 2-41
- Sturbridge Honor Roll Monument, 308 Main Street, 1980, STU.923, Figure 2-42

Small-scale commemorative objects and plaques, including memorials to first responders and plaques associated with specific historic resources, are also scattered throughout the town.



Figure 2-40. Sturbridge Gold Star Mothers Monument, 301 Main Street, looking south (photo by author)



Figure 2-41. Sturbridge Soldiers Monument, 306 Main Street, looking north (photo by author).



Figure 2-42. Sturbridge Honor Roll Monument, 308 Main Street, looking northwest (photo by author).

The Town owns three park and recreation areas:

- Fiskdale Ball Field/Turner's Field, 529 Main Street, 1938, STU.907, see Figure 2-17
- Cedar Lake Recreation Area, 60 Cedar Street, ca. 1970, uninventoried, see Figure 2-28
- Town Barn Fields, 3 New Boston Road Extension, ca. 1990, uninventoried

The Fiskdale Ball Field, now called Turner's Field, was constructed by the owners of the Fiskdale Mills for their employees. The Cedar Lake Recreation Area and the Town Barn Fields were developed in the late twentieth century.

The Town is also a major owner of open space in Sturbridge, controlling nearly 2,397 acres as of 2018. The Open Space Committee works with the Conservation Commission and the non-profit Opacum Land Trust, which hold Conservation Restrictions on some properties. Other Conservation Restrictions are held by the Conservation Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife. The Town acquired several properties using CPA Open Space funds as administered by the CPC.

Town-owned open space properties include Shumway Farm, Heins Farm, the former Camp Robinson Crusoe property, and the Town Common. Properties designated Priority Heritage Landscapes were identified in the Sturbridge Reconnaissance Report prepared by the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program in 2007. A complete inventory of open space in Sturbridge, sorted by owner or managing agency, is included in the Town's updated Open Space and Recreation Plan (Sturbridge OSC 2018:88–98, 111), as are the Heritage Landscapes and Open Space maps included in this preservation plan as Figures 2-43 and 2-44, respectively.

Examples of Town-owned open space are:

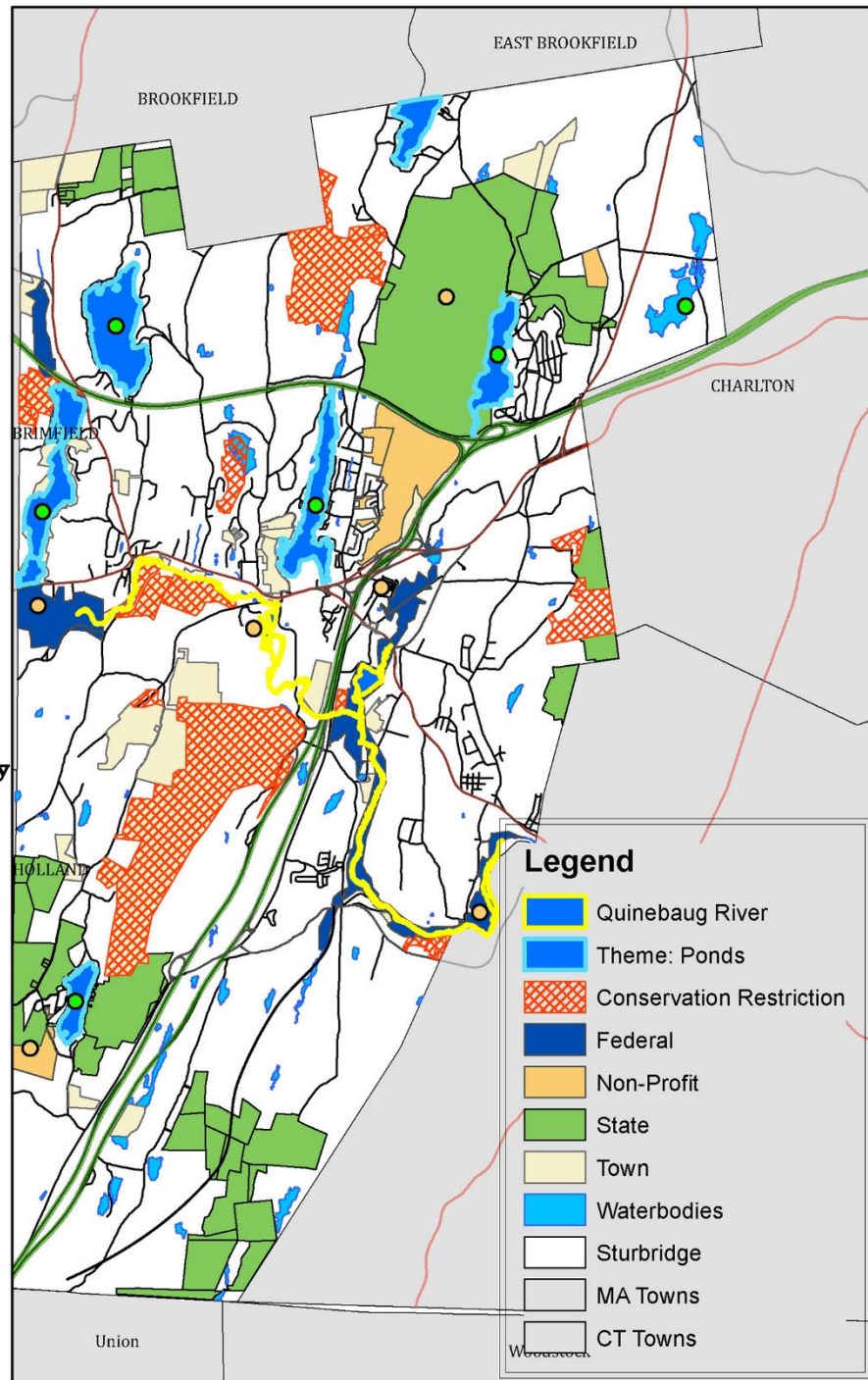
- Plimpton Community Forest, 277 New Boston Road and 7 Allen Road (296.26 acres), consists of the Plimpton family farm, which was active from the early nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The Opacum Land Trust holds a Conservation Restriction on the property. This Trust preserves agricultural and forestry land as important components of the town's character and provides connectivity to other private- or state-owned open space in Sturbridge, including Wells State Park, the Wolf Swamp Wildlife Management Area, the Hamilton Rod and Gun Club, and Opacum Woods.
- Riverlands, 51 and 55 Holland Road and 52 Stallion Hill Road (approximately 141 acres), is managed by the Conservation Commission with a Conservation Restriction held by the Opacum Land Trust. The property protects potential recreation land and critical habitats adjacent to Old Sturbridge Village and the Quinebaug River. Trails are under construction on the property.
- Long Pond Conservation Area, 45 and 55 Champeaux Road and 197 Brookfield Road (79.57 acres), contributes to access to Long Pond and helps protect the fragile natural resource area.
- Leadmine Mountain Conservation Land, 10 and 36 Shattuck Road, 127A Stallion Hill Road, and 197 Leadmine Road (994.43 acres), historically encompassed Camp Robinson Crusoe, a co-ed summer camp that operated from 1932 to 1970, and the Hamant Brook area. The Town purchased the land from Old Sturbridge Village in 2010 with CPA Open Space funds, and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife holds part of the Conservation Restriction on the land. A parking lot at 197 Leadmine Road provides access to the Leadmine Mountain Trails and Heins Farm Conservation Land Trails, which include historic cart paths and logging/skid roads.
- Heins Farm Conservation Land, 200 Leadmine Road (85 acres), encompasses portions of the historic Stafford Turnpike and hiking trails. The Town acquired the property with CPA Open Space funds, and the Conservation Commission has custody and control of it.

Town of Sturbridge: Heritage Landscape Inventory

Ponds: ●
Big Alum,
Cedar Lake,
Leadmine Pond,
Long Pond, Walker
Pond, South Pond.

○ Old Sturbridge
Village,
Town Historic District,
Tantiusques
Wells State Park,
Westville Recreation
Area, Opacum Woods,
Streeter Beach

Map based on the
Department of
Conservation
and Recreation
Heritage Landscape
Inventory Map of Priority
Landscapes, in
conjunction with
public input at
the Open Space and
Recreation
Public Forum,
and survey
responses.
Created May 17, 2018.

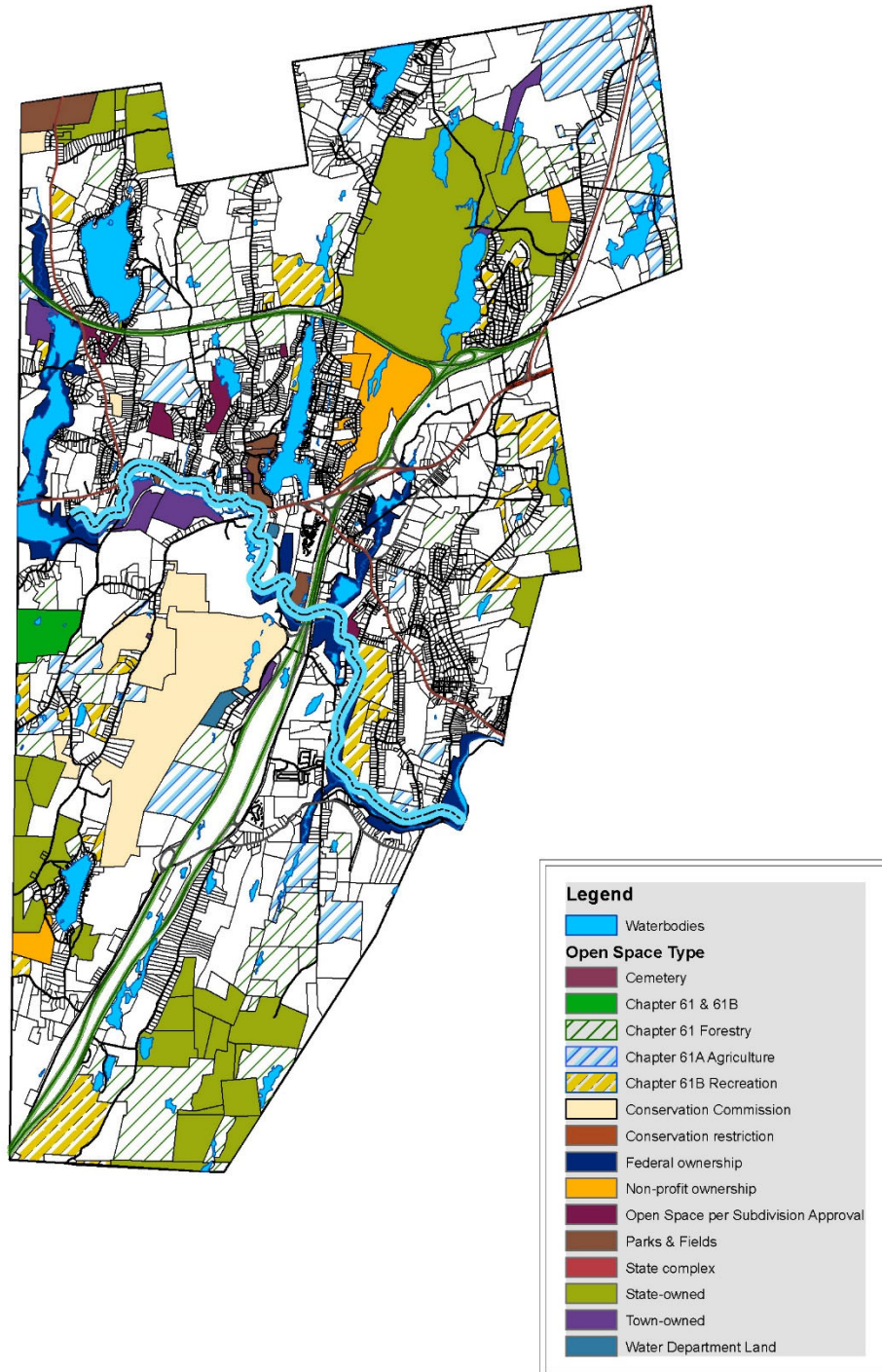


0 0.5 1 2
Miles



Figure 2-43. Sturbridge Heritage Landscapes Map (Sturbridge OSC 2018).

Town of Sturbridge Open Space Map



Date created: June 20, 2023. Data Sources: Town of Sturbridge



Figure 2-44. Town of Sturbridge Open Space Map (Sturbridge OSC 2023).

2.9 National Register-Eligible Properties

Historic property surveys in 2017 and 2018 (see Section 3) recommended a total of 25 areas or individual buildings in Sturbridge as eligible for listing in the National Register at the local level under Criteria A and C. The Sturbridge Historical Commission presented house plaques to the owners of eligible properties, along with copies of the inventory forms, in recognition of their National Register eligibility. As of 2023, none of the recommended properties have been listed. The recommendations are likely still valid, but earlier surveys should be revisited to ascertain if additional properties may be eligible for listing.

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) recommended the following 14 areas or individual buildings as eligible for listing in the National Register in 2017:

- The Haynes Corner Area (STU.I) is recommended eligible in the areas of Industry and Architecture as a representative collection of late eighteenth- to early twentieth-century residential and industrial buildings associated with the production of wagons in Sturbridge.
- The Joseph Marsh House (STU.229) is recommended eligible for its association with the history of agriculture in Sturbridge and as a well-preserved example of a Georgian-style farmhouse in Sturbridge.
- The Eliab and Fanny Marsh House (STU.232) is recommended eligible for its association with the agricultural history of Sturbridge and as a good example of a rural, Georgian-style farmhouse with Federal-style features.
- The Eli and Mary Marsh House (STU.241) is recommended eligible for its association with the agricultural history of Sturbridge and as a well-preserved example of a Georgian-style saltbox-form house that represents an increasingly rare building style and form.
- The Samuel and Mary Morse House (STU.246) is recommended eligible for its association with the agricultural history of Sturbridge and as a well-preserved example of a Georgian-style house with two barns.
- The Samuel and Lucy Hobbs House (STU.48) is recommended for its association with the agricultural history of Sturbridge, including the organization of an agricultural society, and as an extremely well-preserved example of a Georgian-style house with outbuildings in Sturbridge.
- The Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse (STU.113) is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Social History, and Architecture as a well-preserved Italianate-style schoolhouse that was built to serve the growing population of Snellville in the late nineteenth century.
- The Otis Block/Blackington Building, 572 Main Street (STU.151) is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the development of Fiskdale and its function as a central meeting hall and commercial building within the village and as a rare example of a Gothic Revival-style building in Sturbridge.
- The John Smith House (STU.59) is recommended eligible for its association with the development of the Fiske Hill area and as a good example of a Federal-style brick house with attached ells.

- The Abner Allen House (STU.292) is recommended eligible for its association with the mid-eighteenth-century development of the area that became the Fiskdale mill village and as a good example of a Georgian-style house in Sturbridge.
- The George J. and Delina D. Cloutier House (STU.294) is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Social History, and Architecture for its association with the residential and agricultural development of Sturbridge and for its collection of early twentieth-century agricultural outbuildings.
- The Jonas Bemis/Silverberg Family House (STU.298) is recommended eligible for its association with the residential and agricultural development of the Podunk Road area of Sturbridge and as a residential building exhibiting vernacular interpretations of popular styles.
- The Hamilton Woolen Co. House (STU.303) is recommended eligible for its association with the development of the Westville neighborhood of Sturbridge and as a late example of a Georgian-style house.
- The Fiskdale Mill Agents House (STU.306) is recommended eligible for its association with the development of Fiskdale as an industrial node in Sturbridge and as a well-preserved example of a Queen Anne-style house in Sturbridge.

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL), recommended the following 11 properties as eligible for listing in the National Register in 2018:

- The Josiah Fiske House, 530 Main Street (STU.140), is recommended eligible in the areas of Industry, Community Planning and Development, and Architecture for the association of Josiah Fiske with the development of the Fiskdale cotton mills and the subsequent development of the surrounding mill village and as a generally intact example of a rare temple-front Greek Revival-style house in Sturbridge.
- The James Johnson Double House, 533–535 Main Street (STU.189), is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the development of Fiskdale as a mill village in the early to mid-nineteenth century and as a generally intact example of a double house, which was a common building type in the village.
- The Sturbridge Cotton Mills Office, 541 Main Street (STU.191), is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the development of Fiskdale in the early to mid-nineteenth century and as an unusual example of a Greek Revival-style brick building constructed in the village.
- The Fiskdale Lower Mill (Mill No. 2), 559 Main Street (STU.193), is recommended eligible in the areas of Industry, Community Planning and Development, and Architecture for its association with the development of the cotton fabric industry in Sturbridge and the subsequent development of the surrounding mill village and as a generally intact example of a nineteenth-century mill building in Sturbridge.
- The Alpheus Wight House, 420 Main Street (STU.89), is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the early development of the village node later known as Snellville and as a good example of an eighteenth-century Federal-style building in Sturbridge.

- The Winthrop Wight House, 420 Main Street (STU.88), is recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the early development of the village node later known as Snellville and as a good example of an early nineteenth-century residential building in Sturbridge.
- The Daniel Wight House and Barn, 472 Main Street (STU.111 and STU.319), are recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for their association with the growth of the Snellville mill village in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and as relatively intact examples of a nineteenth-century Italianate-style house and barn in Sturbridge.
- The Martin L. Phillips House and Barn, 468 Main Street (STU.110 and STU.330), are recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the late nineteenth-century residential development of the Snellville area and as an intact example of a three-bay, side-hall plan, Queen Anne-style house in Sturbridge.
- The John and Lizzie Hooker House and Barn, 473 Main Street (STU.115 and STU.329), are recommended eligible in the area of Community Planning and Development for its association with the late nineteenth-century residential development of the Snellville area and as an intact example of a Queen Anne-style house in Sturbridge.
- The George E. Richards House and Barn, 407 Main Street (STU.124 and STU.332), are recommended eligible in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Architecture for its association with the residential development of the Snellville area in the late nineteenth century. Under Criterion C, the property is eligible in the area of Architecture as an intact example of a three-bay, side-hall plan, Italianate-style house.

In 2018, PAL also recommended a study of the mid-twentieth-century automobile tourist culture, which had a significant impact on Sturbridge, particularly along Routes 20 and 131, in conjunction with the establishment of OSV; to date, this study has not been undertaken.

Section 3 – Preservation Planning in Sturbridge

3.1 History

Preservation planning began in Sturbridge in the mid-1960s, with activities guided by the 1963 establishment of the MHC and the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966.

Local Historical Commission

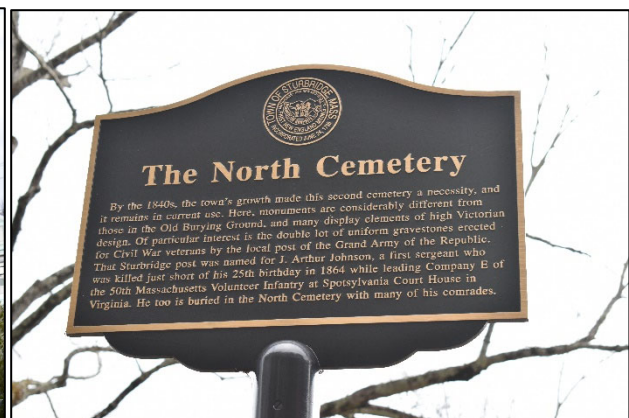
The Town first established the Sturbridge Historical Commission, in the late 1960s and adopted MGL Chapter 40, Section 8D at the March 9, 1970, Annual Town Meeting. The first survey of historic resources was conducted in Sturbridge in 1972–1974. The survey resulted in the preparation of National Register documentation for the Sturbridge Town Common (listed in 1977), the Oliver and Harmony Wight House (listed in 1982), and the Tantusques Reservation (listed in 1983). The SHC was largely dormant from the late 1970s to 2015, when it reactivated in response to the demolition of the Worcester South Agricultural Hall at 362 Main Street (STU.77, Figure 3-1).



Figure 3-1. *Worcester South Agricultural Society Exhibition Hall, 362 Main Street, ca. 2016, before demolition (Doherty 2016)*

Since 2015, the SHC has worked to increase public awareness of preservation by placing informational wayside signage at several locations in town (Figures 3-2 and 3-3) and by overseeing two historic resource surveys funded by the CPC and the MHC and conducted by professional consultants (see Section 2.2). As a result of these surveys, the SHC presented plaques to 30 properties that were evaluated by the consultants as potentially eligible for listing in the National Register in recognition of the owners' active or passive preservation efforts (Town of Sturbridge 2020:170; 2019:161).

In 2021, the SHC worked with the Town to update the Town Charter to involve the commission more fully in the demolition delay process to prevent historical



Figures 3-2 and 3-3. *Examples of interpretive signage installed by the SHC and the town (photos by author).*

buildings from demolition without first undergoing review for historic or archaeological significance (Town of Sturbridge 2021:174).

Master Plan

The Town's first Master Plan was prepared in 1965 by Lord-Wood Associates and was updated in 1971 by the same firm, in both cases likely in response to shifts in Sturbridge's economy from industry to tourism and to the construction of Interstates 84 and 90. Larson Associates, Inc. updated the Master Plan in 1988, in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of the founding of Sturbridge. Suggestions in the 1988 Master Plan related to historic preservation include instituting architectural design review in industrial areas and enacting specific zoning controls and encouraging development in the town's "historic district." This district stretches east from the Interstate 84 corridor to encompass the Town Common, Charlton Street, and both sides of Route 131 to Hall Road (Lord-Wood 1965, 1971; Larson Associates, Inc. 1988).

In 2011, Sturbridge engaged Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) and RKG Associates, Inc. to update its Master Plan. Historic preservation goals in the 2011 plan, which is the current plan in use, include

- Integrating natural, historic, and archaeological resource identification, documentation, and evaluation into local planning;
- Developing and strengthening local planning and protection for natural and historic resources ;
- Incorporating specific historic preservation objectives in community revitalization and economic development efforts; and
- Creating and enhancing cultural opportunities in Sturbridge.

The Master Plan specifies the following for Land Use and Community Design goals:

- Balancing residential, commercial, and industrial development to allow the town to grow while protecting its historic, environmental, and rural character;
- Improving the architectural quality and streetscape of Main Street; and
- Identifying design values that the town considers important in preserving the historic character of its corridors.

The Master Plan also specifies the Open Space and Recreation goal of preserving the small-town New England character of Sturbridge and increasing the amount of open space within the town via various means, with an emphasis on preserving parcels that support and protect water supplies and natural, cultural, and historic resources while providing access to recreational opportunities.

The historic preservation-oriented recommendations in the Master Plan include

- Adoption of an Architectural Preservation District bylaw;
- Continuation of historic resource survey;
- Undertaking of a community-wide archaeological inventory;
- Modification and extension of the Demolition Delay bylaw; and
- Collaboration with various groups to enhance public education about and engagement with the town's historic resources.

To date, Sturbridge has not adopted an Architectural Preservation District bylaw or undertaken an archaeological inventory. The Town has extended its Demolition Delay bylaw to one year, undertaken

additional historic survey, and begun to explore public education and outreach opportunities (VHB and RKG 2011:1:1–3; 5:20–21).

Other Relevant Planning Documents

In 2007, the Massachusetts DCR, with the John H. Chaffee Blackstone River Valley and Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridors, prepared a reconnaissance report for Sturbridge as part of the *Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program* (Figure 3-4). The report discusses specific landscapes and properties in Sturbridge that are historically significant, such as the Town Common, Old Sturbridge Village, and privately owned residences. It includes recommendations for town-wide and specific preservation activities such as an update of the National Register documentation for the Town Common and consideration of Local Historic Districts to further protect important properties. The report authors also advocate for more historic inventory and National Register documentation (MassDCR 2007). To date, the Town Common National Register nomination has not been updated, and a Local Historic District bylaw has not been enacted.

In 2009, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) prepared a report of its *Commercial/Tourist District Revitalization Study* for Sturbridge that discusses various aspects of the Route 20 corridor through Snellville and Fiskdale. The CMRPC recommendations related to historic preservation include coordinating planning efforts to develop history and eco-tourism opportunities around Fiskdale and implementing design standards for new and redeveloped buildings along Main Street (CMRPC 2009:58, 60).

In 2012, Kay-Linn Enterprises, LLC of Boulder, Colorado, prepared a *Recreation Trails Master Plan* for the Sturbridge Recreation Trails Master Plan Subcommittee. The preparation of this plan appears to have been triggered by the Town's acquisition of more than 800 acres of land around Leadmine Mountain from Old Sturbridge Village and of adjacent properties from private owners. The plan discusses extant town trails, such as those at Leadmine Mountain and Wells State Park, and opportunities for trail construction and use. Plan goals related to historic preservation include developing a diverse system of environmentally sustainable, forest-based trails that highlight the ecology, topography, vistas, rural character, and historic and cultural significance of Sturbridge's protected lands. Sturbridge has a growing system of trails through a variety of landscapes (Kay-Linn Enterprises 2012:1, 5–7, 18).

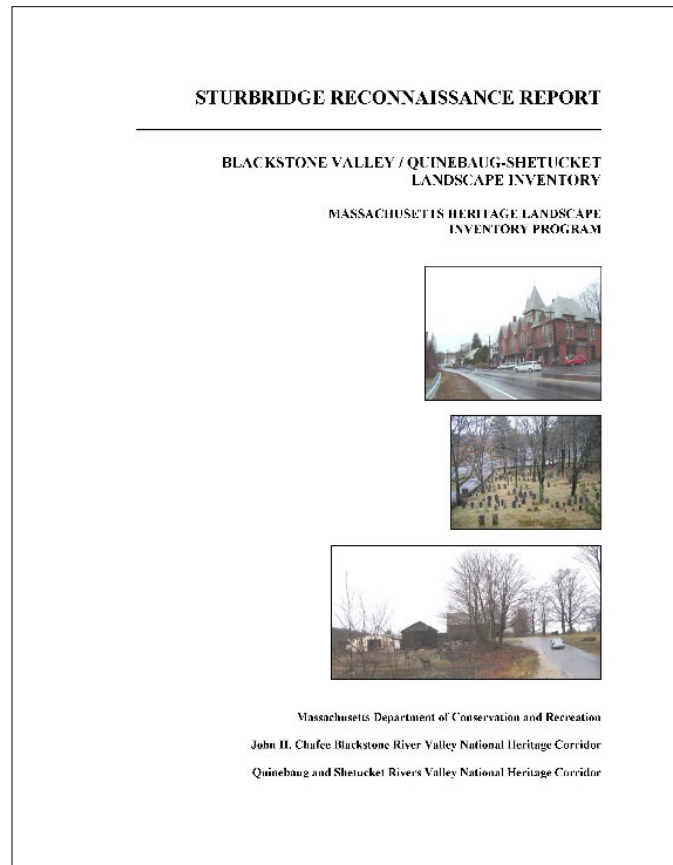


Figure 3-4. Sturbridge Reconnaissance Report.

In 2014, Pare Corporation prepared a *Commercial Tourist District Plan* to provide conceptual plans for improving Route 20, particularly in Snellville and Fiskdale, to be more pedestrian and bicycle friendly, encourage economic growth and stability in the corridor, and make the area more attractive. The plan suggests the development of a robust visitor center that would draw tourists and present them with recreational and historical options in town, including Old Sturbridge Village, Wells State Park, the Last Green Valley Heritage Corridor, and hiking trails and recreational sites (Pare Corporation 2014:1, 64). Currently, there is no town visitor center, but visitors can access information about sites to visit and things to do by obtaining brochures at Town offices and area hotels and by visiting the updated tourism website <https://experiencesturbridge.com>.

In 2018, the Open Space Committee updated the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* in response to the accomplishment of many goals in the 2011 Master Plan and the pending expiration date of the Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2019. Portions of the plan discuss environmental concerns and inventory the open space parcels owned by the Town and other agencies and public and private organizations such as The Trustees, the Massachusetts DCR, the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Recommendations in the plan that relate to historic preservation include acquiring open space that protects natural, cultural, and historic resources; preserving agricultural and forest lands; identifying methods to preserve streetscapes; and identifying the natural, built, and historic elements that contribute to the character of the town (Sturbridge Open Space Committee 2018:171–173). The Town has made progress on adopting these recommendations, including acquiring large tracts of open space and historic agricultural lands to preserve them in perpetuity.

In 2022, the Conway School and Hendra|Marquis|McSulla prepared a *Trail Sustainability Plan* for Sturbridge. The plan discusses existing trails, including the benefits of hiking and walking trails to the residents of the town; and use statistics, including an increase in trail use due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Identified goals include extending the trail system to connect various areas of town; expanding the trails that highlight the ecology, topography, vistas, rural character, and historical and cultural significance of Sturbridge's protected land; making the trails accessible to all; and making the trail design and build process efficient, transparent, and collaborative (Conway School et al. 2022:25, 69).

Existing Municipal Bylaws and Regulations

Sturbridge has several existing municipal bylaws in place that relate to historic preservation.

Community Preservation Act

Sturbridge voters adopted the Community Preservation Act at the Town Meeting in April 2001, with the maximum property tax surcharge of 3%. As of 2020, the Town had received \$4,166,662 from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts since the inception of the CPA program in Sturbridge (CPC 2020). At that time, the goals of the CPA were to identify and purchase land for open space and preserve Sturbridge's rural, agricultural character; create new trails; continue to preserve Sturbridge's historic documents, photographs, and artifacts; increase public awareness and use of historic resources; promote the development of affordable housing; and expand recreational areas for use by local residents (CPC 2006). Notable projects funded by the CPA include the construction of trails on the Leadmine Parcel, removal of derelict outbuildings from the Leadmine and Heins parcels, restoration of windows in the Joshua Hyde Public Library, restoration of three William Willard portraits at the library, and restoration of headstones in historic cemeteries (CPC 2016–2020).

Demolition Delay

When invoked, Sturbridge's demolition delay bylaw imposes a year-long delay for properties at least 100 years old that the SHC finds significant and preferably preserved. The delay can be waived at any point in the process by the SHC. The delay allows time to explore alternatives to demolition, or for mitigation if no alternatives can be found. If a demolition delay is enacted for a property, the Building Department cannot issue a demolition permit within the year without notification from the SHC. Perhaps the most significant loss under the demolition delay bylaw was the Worcester South Agricultural Hall, which was demolished in 2016 to make way for a CVS Pharmacy (see Figure 3-1). Notable successes include the preservation of the Chamberlain Barn on the campus of the Publick House. Initially slated for demolition, the barn was instead moved back on the lot to preserve it while allowing for the construction of a new building to expand the facility's lodging rooms (Figures 3-5 and 3-6).

Open Space Protection

Sturbridge adopted an Open Space Residential Development bylaw in 2009 with the intent of minimizing suburban sprawl by allowing more flexibility of lot size and setback in residential development and by permanently preserving at least half the land area in a subdivision as open space. In 2017, the bylaw was amended to allow a variety of housing types under a more streamlined permitting process (Sturbridge OSC 2018:159).

Public Shade Trees

In 1997, Sturbridge adopted a Public Shade Trees bylaw that is administered by the Town's Tree Warden. The bylaw prevents the removal of healthy street trees to preserve the town's rural character along its roads.

Scenic Roads

Sturbridge adopted a Scenic Roads bylaw in 2004 to help protect the rural or historic character of local roads by ensuring that work done to trees and stone walls in the public right-of-way preserves the road's scenic, historic, and aesthetic characteristics.



Figure 3-5. New lodging building on former site of the Chamberlain Barn at the Publick House (photo by author).



Figure 3-6. Chamberlain Barn (right) on its new foundation in the field behind the Publick House (photo by author).

The following roads or road segments are designated as scenic roads in Sturbridge (Figure 3-7):

- Allen Road from New Boston Road to the Brookfield town line
- Arnold Road from Main Street to the Brookfield town line
- Beaudry Road from Fiske Hill Road for 0.67 miles
- Cedar Street from Main Street to Gay Road
- Champeaux Road from Brookfield Road to the Brimfield town line
- Charlton Street from Main Street to Hall Road
- Cooper Road from Cedar Street to Arnold Road
- Douty Road from Holland Road to Leadmine Road
- Fairview Park Road from the northerly connection to Main Street to the southerly connection to Main Street
- Farquhar Road from Main Street to River Road
- Finlay Road from Holland Road to Leadmine Road
- Fiske Hill Road from Main Street (Route 131) to Route 20
- Gardner Avenue from Maple Street to the cul-de-sac, 0.24 miles
- Gifford Road from Route 20 to Fiske Hill Road
- Holland Road from Main Street to the Holland town line
- Leadmine Road from Stallion Hill Road to Route 15
- Leno Road from Leadmine Road to the Holland town line
- Maple Street from Main Street to the cul-de-sac, 0.51 miles
- Mashapaug Road from Route 15 to the Southbridge town line
- McGilpin Road from the northerly connection with Fiske Hill Road to the southerly connection with Fiske Hill Road
- New Boston Road from Route 20 to the East Brookfield town line
- Podunk Road from Route 49 to Putnam Road
- Shepard Road from Main Street to the Westville Dam access road
- South Road from Mashaupaug Road to the end, approximately 1 mile
- Stallion Hill Road from Route 20 to the intersection with Douty Road and Leadmine Road
- Wallace Road from Main Street to the Westville Dam access road
- Whittemore Road from Hall Road to Fiske Hill Road
- Willard Road from Whittemore Road to Main Street
- Woodlawn Drive from Wells Park Road for 0.56 miles
- Vinton Road from Leadmine Road to the Holland town line

Zoning Bylaws

The Planning Department uses Site Plan Review to ensure that new proposed buildings and structures and new proposed uses of existing ones are integrated into the existing terrain and surrounding landscape to protect, among other things, scenic views and natural or historical features of the site or buildings affected. Buildings and structures must be sited to minimize disruption of the surrounding topography, including maintaining historically significant public views and features.

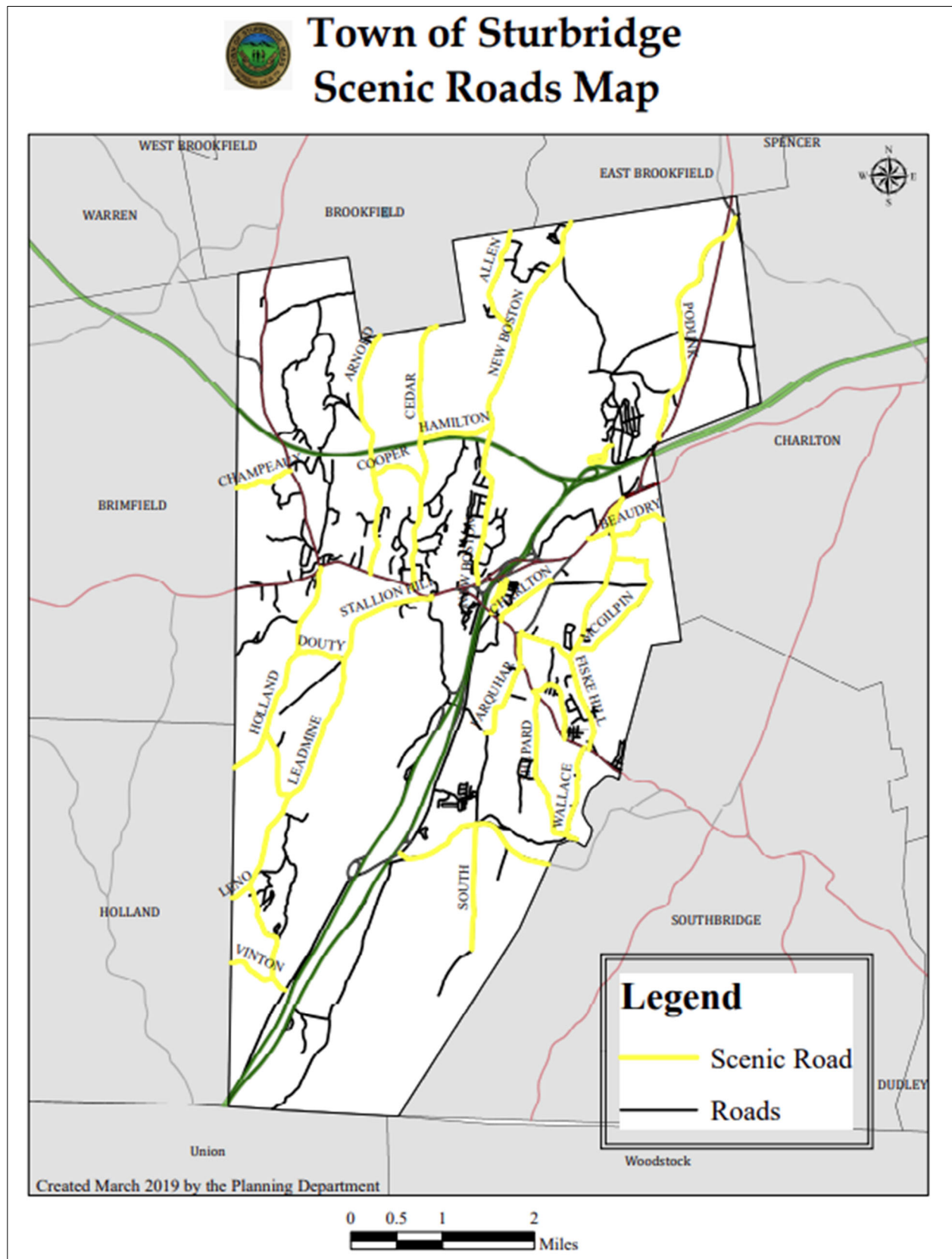


Figure 3-7. Scenic Roads map (Town of Sturbridge).

Sturbridge's Design Review bylaw, triggered by construction or renovation projects and signage within non-residential zoning districts, applies to the following zoning areas within the town (Figure 3-8) in an advisory capacity:

- Commercial District – where exceptions are allowed by special permit: Building heights greater than 35 feet or 3 stories, pursuant to a determination of the special permit granting authority that the design, siting, and scale of the proposed building are consistent with the location, scale, and characteristics of the uses of the site and are in harmony with the surrounding properties and land uses.
- Commercial Tourist District – which is intended to be an attractive neighborhood and commercial center that is pedestrian-friendly, caters to residents and tourists alike, and provides a variety of shopping opportunities, restaurants and inns, and establishments offering family entertainment during the day and night.
- Historic Commercial District – is an overlay district that allows for residential and limited service, retail, and cultural uses in and around the Sturbridge Common National Register Historic District and preserves and protects the district's distinctive historical characteristics by ensuring maintenance and improvement of the surrounding area. Design review is required for all adaptive reuse projects, additions to existing buildings, and infill development; this review shall take place before or current with the site plan review process and may include architectural review or sign review.

The Design Review guidelines specifically state that “the removal or alteration of any historic material, or architectural features, commonly identified as historically significant in the Town, should be avoided.” Additionally, stylistic features associated with historically significant buildings in Sturbridge should be taken into account, and new buildings should be designed to complement the scale, color, and materials of the historically significant buildings. Where appropriate, new buildings can use new materials and designs, as long as they complement the surrounding historic buildings. Specific guidance is given for fenestration patterns and materials, additions, and the replacement in kind of materials, among other topics (Design Review Committee 2011:9–10).

3.2 Past Surveys and Documentation of Historic Resources

Since the establishment of the SHC in the late 1960s, historical resources in the town have been documented on MHC inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, and HABS forms.

Inventory

A review of Sturbridge's historic property inventory in MACRIS indicates that a combined total of 383 areas and individual resources in Sturbridge have assigned inventory numbers (Figure 3-9). The inventory forms in MACRIS were produced as part of three separate survey efforts: the initial 1972–1974 survey undertaken by members of the SHC, a 2016–2017 survey by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC), and a 2018 survey by PAL. To date, surveys have largely focused on concentrations of older buildings in town and in major settlement and development nodes, such as Snellville and Fiskdale.

Town of Sturbridge Zoning Map

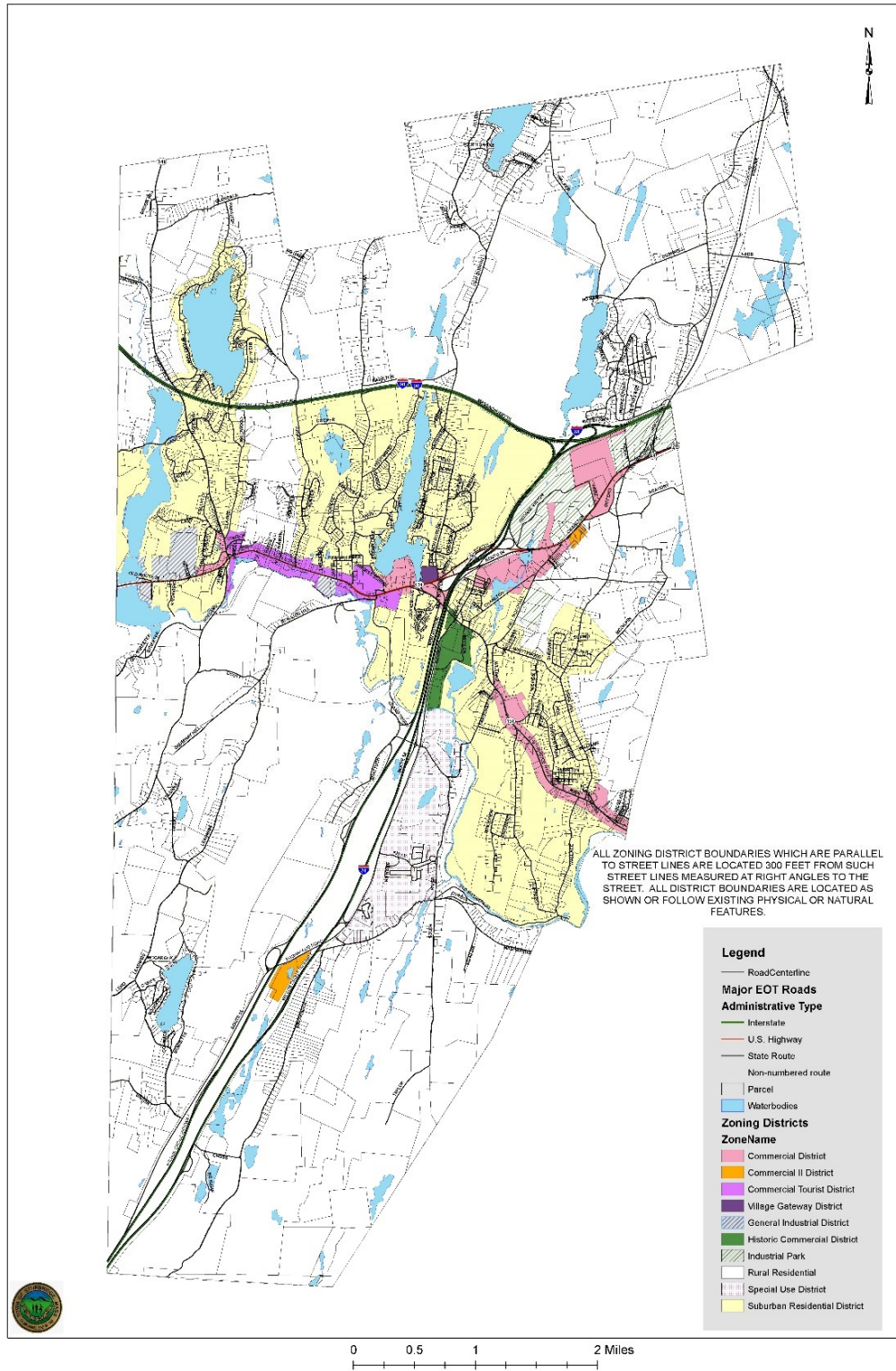


Figure 3-8. Sturbridge Zoning Map.

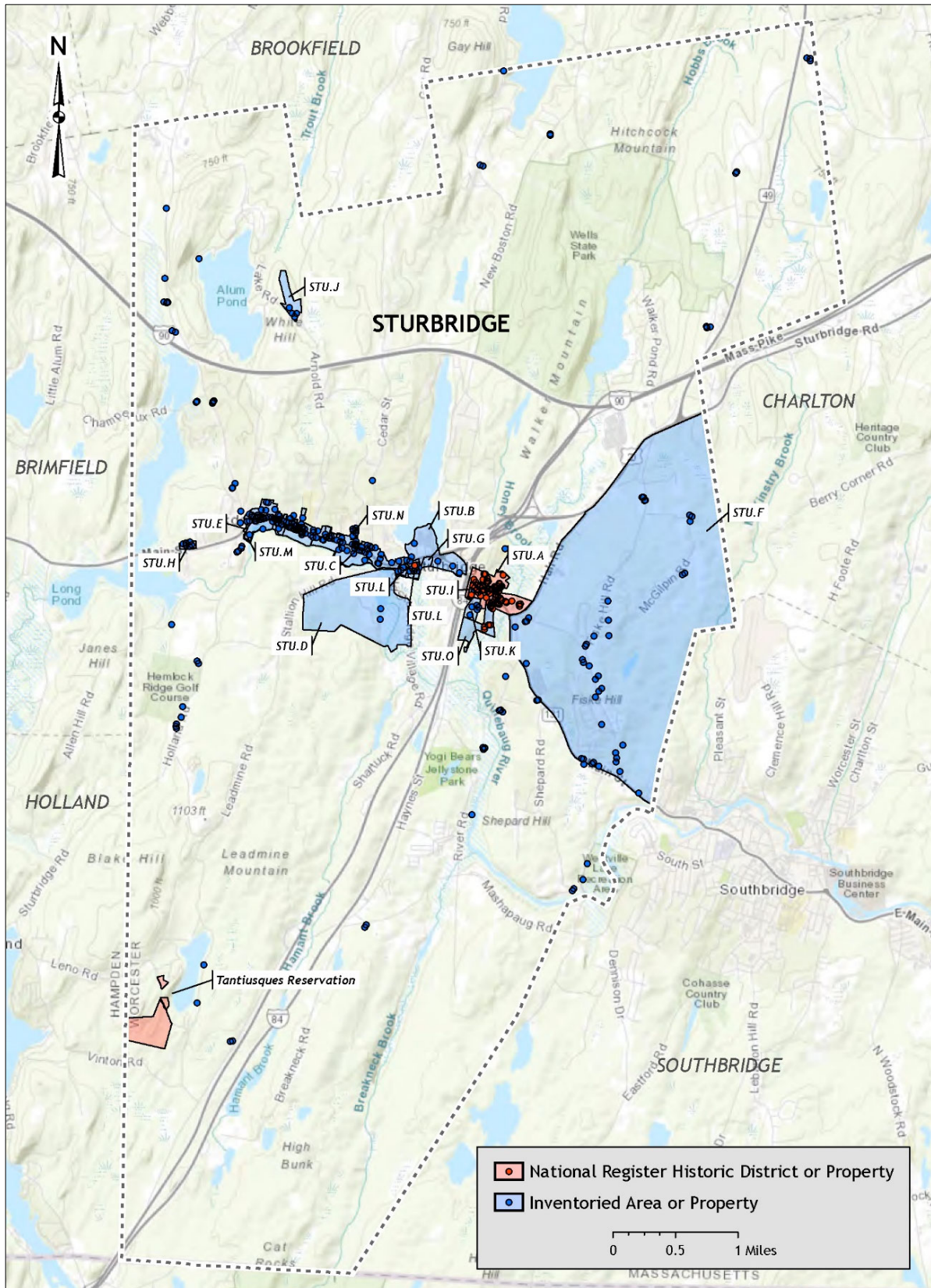


Figure 3-9. Map showing the locations of MACRIS-inventoried areas and individual resources in Sturbridge.

The inventory forms produced in the 1972–1974 survey generally met MHC standards at that time. However, they include only black and white or no photographs, little to no documentation, and do not meet current MHC standards (Figure 3-10). The two more recent survey efforts produced inventory forms that do meet current MHC standards (Figure 3-11). The PVPC prepared Area and Building forms for approximately 100 properties and National Register evaluations for one area and 13 individual properties, focusing on older buildings of historic interest outside the town center, including lake areas and farms. Further study recommendations from that survey effort included adopting Neighborhood Conservation Districts, securing preservation restrictions on particularly important buildings, and creating Local Historic Districts (PVPC 2017). The PAL survey resulted in Area and Building forms for approximately 95 properties and National Register evaluations for 11 individual properties. PAL also recommended a study of the mid-twentieth-century automobile tourist culture that, with the establishment of Old Sturbridge Village, had a significant impact on Sturbridge, particularly along Route 20 (Pineo et al. 2018).

Existing inventory documentation for Sturbridge consists of 15 area forms (Table 1 and Figure 3-12) encompassing 325 individual properties and 43 individual MHC forms, primarily for resources within existing inventoried areas. Inventoried buildings outside areas consist of scattered properties documented on Building (B) forms on Holland Road near the border of Brimfield and Holland border, River Road, Farquhar Road, and Hamilton Woolen Company worker's housing near the Southbridge border. Some cemeteries and open spaces are documented on MHC Burial Ground (E) forms and Parks and Landscape (H) forms. Five monuments, consisting of town boundary markers, a schoolhouse memorial, and memorials to Sturbridge residents who served in the military, are documented on MHC Monument/Object (C) forms.

Figure 3-10. Typical 1970s inventory form (STU.67) for a historic resource in Sturbridge.

Figure 3-11. Example of a 2018 inventory form for a historic resource (STU.27).

Table 1. MHC Area Forms.

MHC ID	Area Name	No. of Resources	Author	Form Year	Status of Form/Documentation
STU.A	Sturbridge Common Historic District	72	Agnes S. Wilkin, SHC	Ca. 1973	No context, but area is listed in the National Register
STU.B	Sturbridge Fairgrounds Area	28	Helen G. Holley, SHC	1973	Should be updated; much of the area has been demolished
STU.C	Snellville	60	Helen G. Holley, SHC	1973	Very little context
STU.D	Old Sturbridge Village	16	Wolfgang Lowy, SHC	1973	Very brief overview of the village and 7 of its buildings; includes a list of all 16 buildings and structures in the village at the time.
STU.E	Fiskdale	79	Helen G. Holley, SHC	1973	Map, some context, and aerial photographs
STU.F	Fiske Hill	42	Agnes S. Wilkin, SHC	1974	Minimal information about individual resources
STU.G	Bob's Trailer Park	unknown resources	Helen G. Holley, SHC	1973	Locus map only, no description or context
STU.H	Bay Path Motel	5	Bonnie Parsons, PVPC	2017	Description and context
STU.I	Haynes Corner	6	Bonnie Parsons, PVPC	2017	Description, context, and National Register evaluation
STU.J	Hyland Orchard and Rapsallion Brewery	5	Bonnie Parsons, PVPC	2017	Descriptions and context for fruit cultivation in Sturbridge
STU.K	Sturbridge Orchard Inn Motel	6	Bonnie Parsons, PVPC	2017	Description and context
STU.L	Wight-Motel Area	10	Bonnie Parsons, PVPC	2017	Description and individual building contexts
STU.M	Fiskdale Mill Area	23	PAL	2018	Description, context, and National Register evaluation
STU.N	Wight-Snell Manufacturing Area	31	PAL	2018	Description, context, and National Register evaluation
STU.O	Public House Area	10	PAL	2018	Description and context

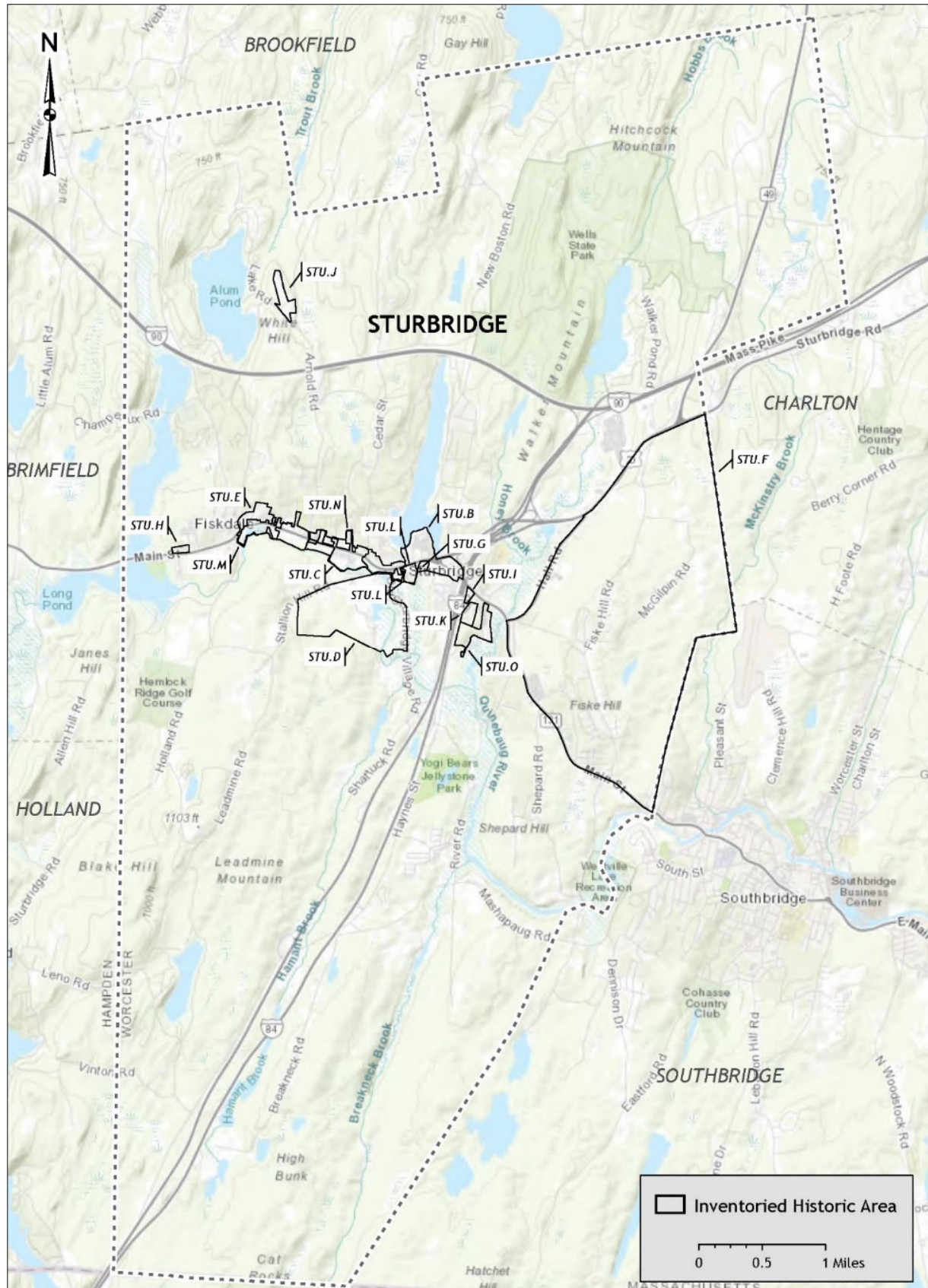


Figure 3-12. Inventoried Areas in MACRIS.

Large sections of the town with primarily mid-to-late twentieth-century construction, predominantly in the residential areas north of US Route 20, and along the north and east ends of Routes 20 and 131 have not been surveyed. An additional area that has not been sufficiently documented is Old Sturbridge Village, which is more than 50 years old and should be comprehensively surveyed (see Section 5). Cross-referencing the MACRIS data with the Sturbridge Assessor's database also shows that historic buildings scattered throughout the town (including two mid-eighteenth-century houses at 21 and 56 South Road) are not in the inventory. Additional survey may identify other extant historic buildings and present a more comprehensive view of Sturbridge's history.

National Register

Sturbridge has three National Register-listed resources: the Sturbridge Common Historic District, the Oliver and Harmony Wight House, and the Tantiusques Reservation (Table 2 and Figure 3-13). The National Register documentation for each property met the standards for documentation at the time but could be updated to encompass additional properties and areas or periods of significance and to expand the discussion of residents in the areas, particularly women and people of color.

Table 2. Properties Listed in the National Register.

MHC ID	Property Name	Location	Period of Significance	Date Listed
STU.A	Sturbridge Common Historic District	Around Town Common	1738–ca.1940	11/9/1977
STU.74	Oliver [and Harmony] Wight House	369–371 Main Street	1789	6/1/1982
STU.909	Tantiusques Reservation	Leadmine Road	1643	10/6/1983

Historic American Buildings Survey

HABS documentation from 1934 to 1938 exists for two properties in Sturbridge (Table 3 and Figures 3-14 and 3-15).

Table 3. Historic American Building Survey Documentation.

HABS ID	Property Name	Location	Date and Types of Documentation
MA 2-38	General Salem Towne House	Moved from Old County Road, Charlton, to Old Sturbridge Village	1934: 8 photos, 17 measured drawings, and 1 data page
MA 2-17	Oliver [and Harmony] Wight House	369–371 Main Street	1936–1938: 5 photos, 16 measured drawings, 1 data page, and 2 supplemental pages

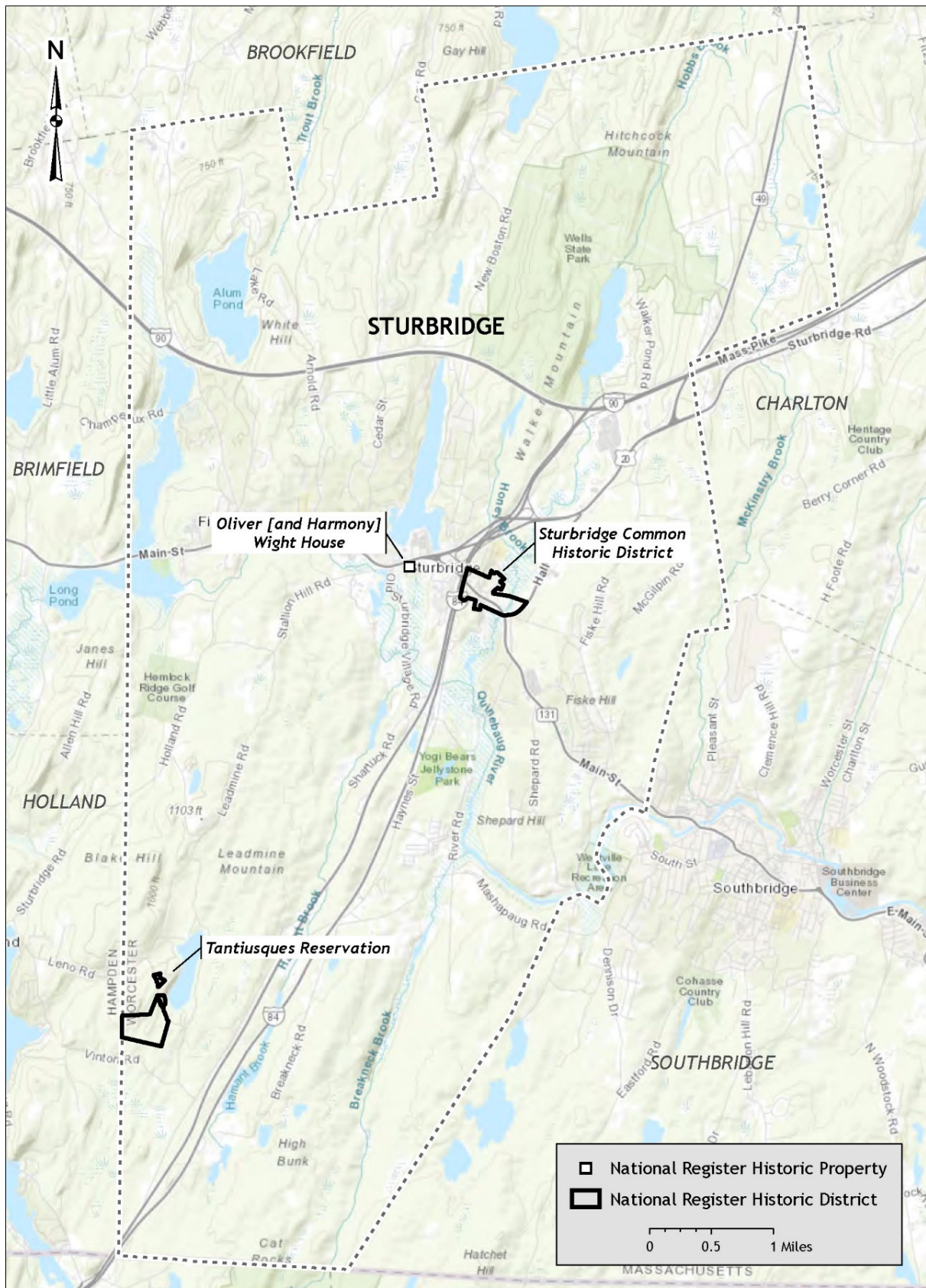


Figure 3-13. Properties listed in the National Register.



Figure 3-14. Oliver Wight House in 1936–1938 (Historic American Building Survey).

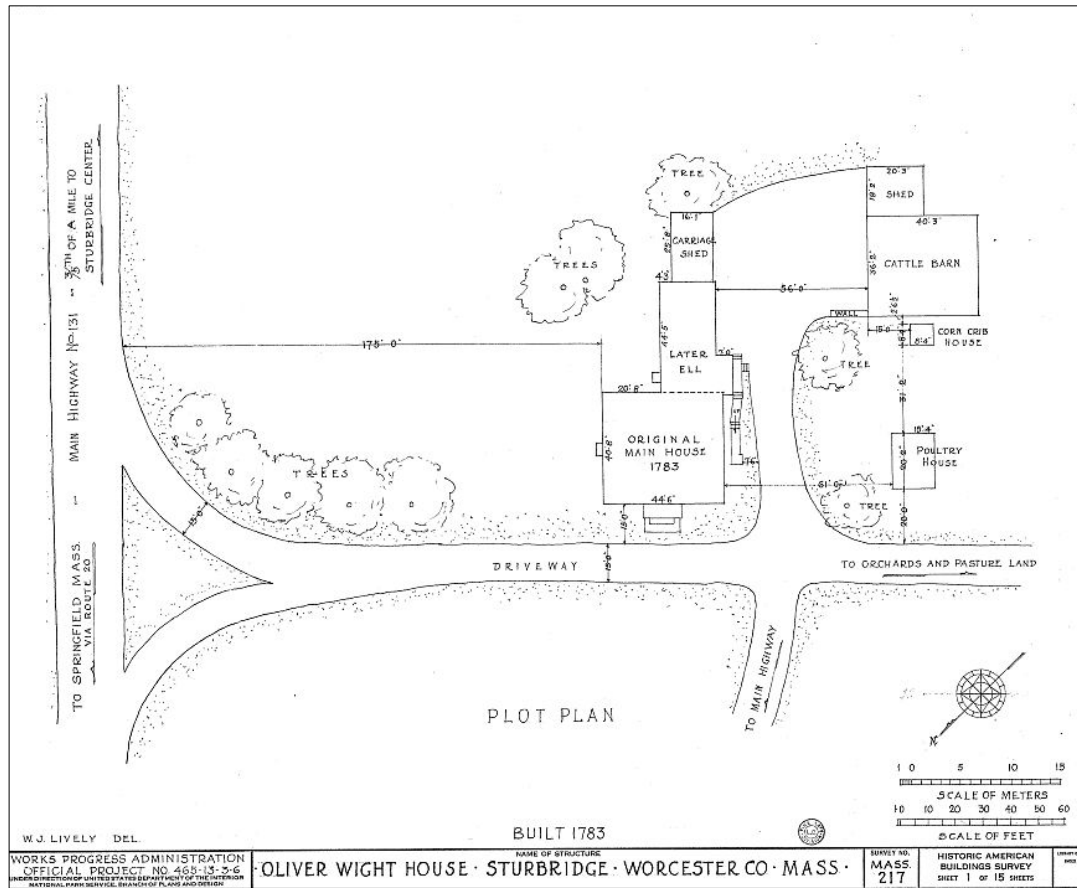


Figure 3-15. Oliver Wight House site plan, 1936–1938 (Historic American Building Survey).

Preservation Restrictions

The Town-owned Sturbridge Center School at 301 Main Street is currently the only property in Sturbridge under a preservation restriction. This preservation restriction is held by the MHC, which must approve any major changes to the building before work is completed.

3.3 Existing Education and Outreach Programs

The community survey questionnaire and the results (discussed in Section 4 and included as Appendices A and B) indicate that while the SHC and other organizations have worked to ensure that historical survey documentation and historical documents are available to the public on the Town website and Library websites, more education and outreach is needed. Existing educational materials and outreach programs include several interpretive panels associated with historic resources around the Town Common, occasional walking tours, and events held on the Town Common.

The Town Planner recently created an ArcGIS StoryMap (available at <http://arcg.is/1yWyb0>) with information about selected historic properties in town. This type of mapping could be expanded to provide easy-to-access information about all inventoried properties in Sturbridge to the general public and to those residents responsible for planning- and preservation-related decisions.

Section 4 – Outreach and Analysis

4.1 Public Engagement

This section presents a general synthesis of the results of the public engagement component of this Historic Preservation Plan. As discussed in Section 1.4, 79 people responded to the Sturbridge Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan Community Survey: 70 using the online questionnaire and 9 using hard copy questionnaires distributed throughout the town (see Appendices A and B).

The results of the survey indicate that among the respondents, residents of Sturbridge support balanced growth in the town that maintains a mix of open space preservation, recreational opportunities, and residential development. Areas of particular concern are around the town's lakes, areas where previous existing houses have replaced with larger ones, and large tracts of undeveloped land at the town's periphery. Historic landscapes were identified as a significant threatened resource, suggesting that the Town has done a good job preserving historic buildings but needs to devote more attention to historic landscapes.

Residents also support the creation of pocket parks, access points to the Quinebaug River, and streetscape improvements, including the planting of shade trees in the Commercial Tourist District along Route 20 to make the area more attractive and serve as a model for the rest of the town (Sturbridge OSC 2018:159–160). In general, more public outreach and education is needed with respect to historic preservation. Misconceptions about the role of various preservation programs, including the National Register, and that of Old Sturbridge Village are prevalent. A perception that historic preservation applies only to buildings may result in the loss of historic landscapes and important historical town documents.

The respondents live throughout Sturbridge (Figure 4-1), with three areas having the highest responses: the Cedar Street Area between Route 20 and Brookfield (9); Fiske Hill Road – Upper Area (9); and Route 131 from the Southbridge town line to the Town Common Area (8). At least three responses came from the Big Alum Pond, Cedar Lake, Leadmine Lake, and Walker Pond areas. Sixty-four respondents own their own, non-historic, home or condominium (Figures 4-2 and 4-3), and most have lived in Sturbridge for at least 10 years (Figure 4-4); only 15 of the 79 respondents have lived in the town less than 10 years.

Survey respondents believe that the following areas of town have strong histories or historic character (Figure 4-5):

- Town Common Area (38)
- Old Sturbridge Village (12)
- Fiskdale (11)
- Publick House (9)

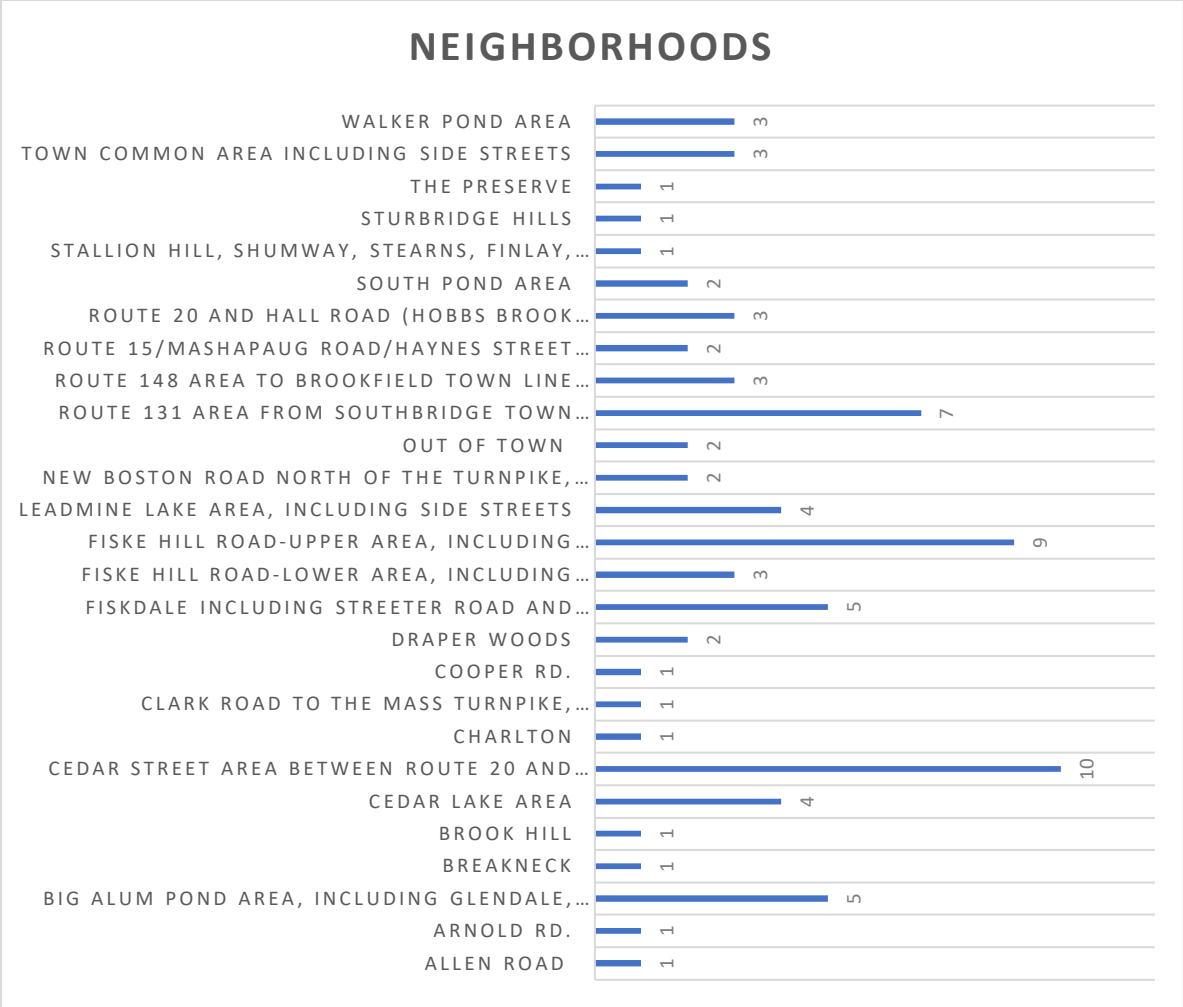


Figure 4-1. Question 1: Neighborhoods where respondents live.

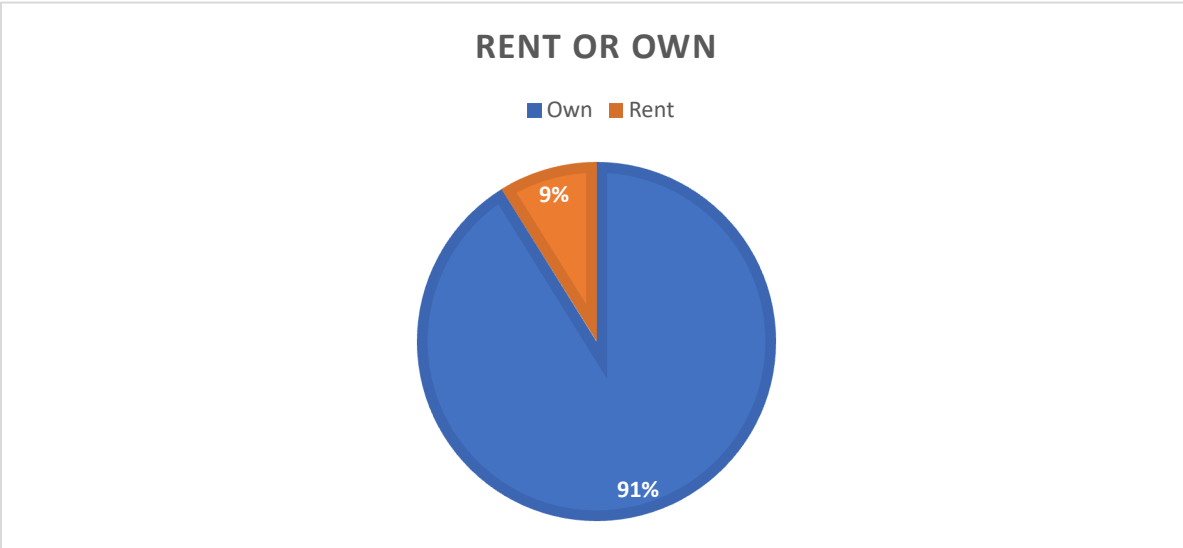


Figure 4-2. Question 2: Percentages of respondents who own their own property versus renting.

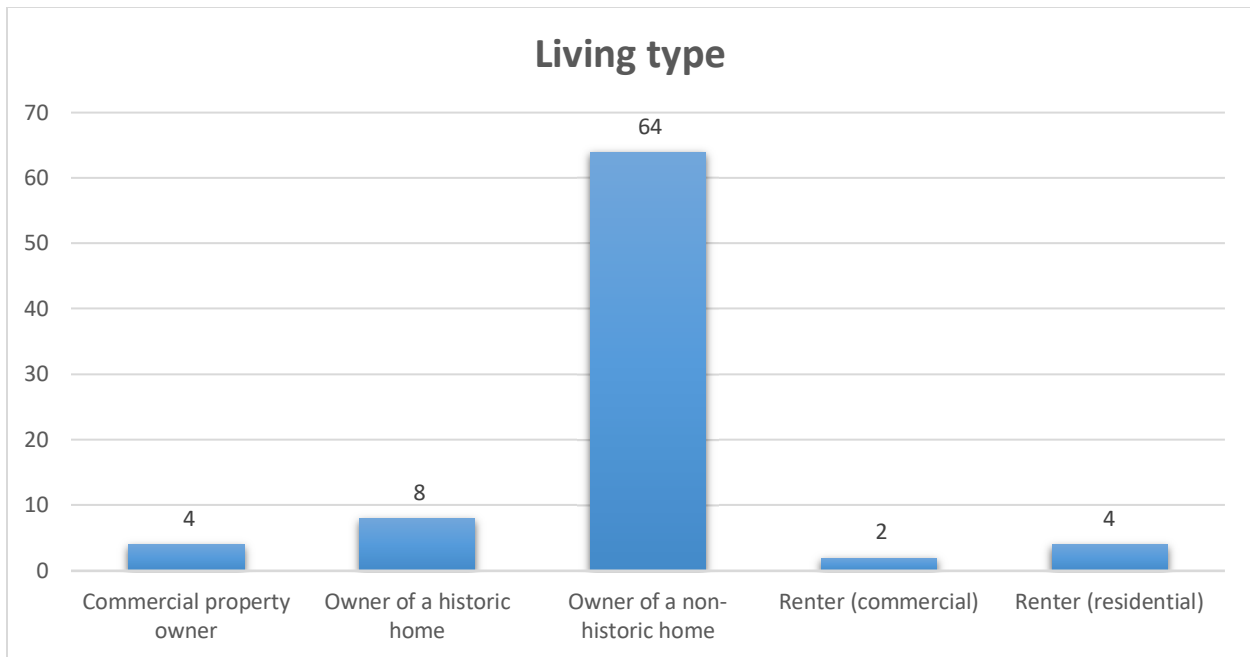


Figure 4-3. Question 3: Types of properties owned and rented by respondents.

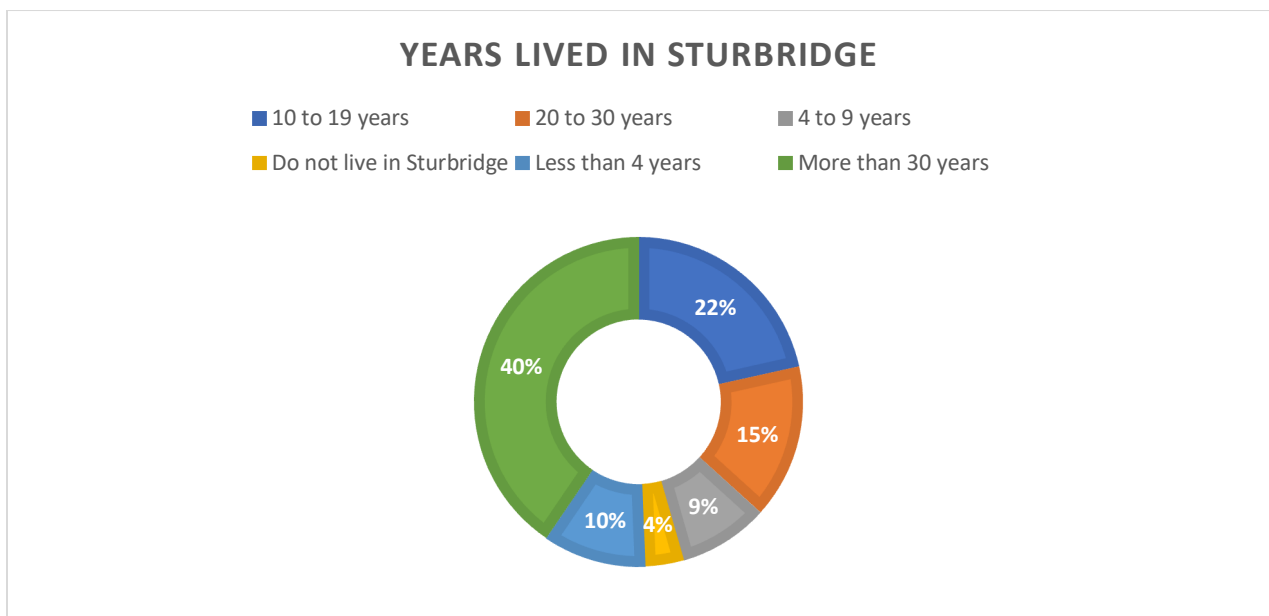


Figure 4-4. Question 4: Number of years respondents have lived in Sturbridge.

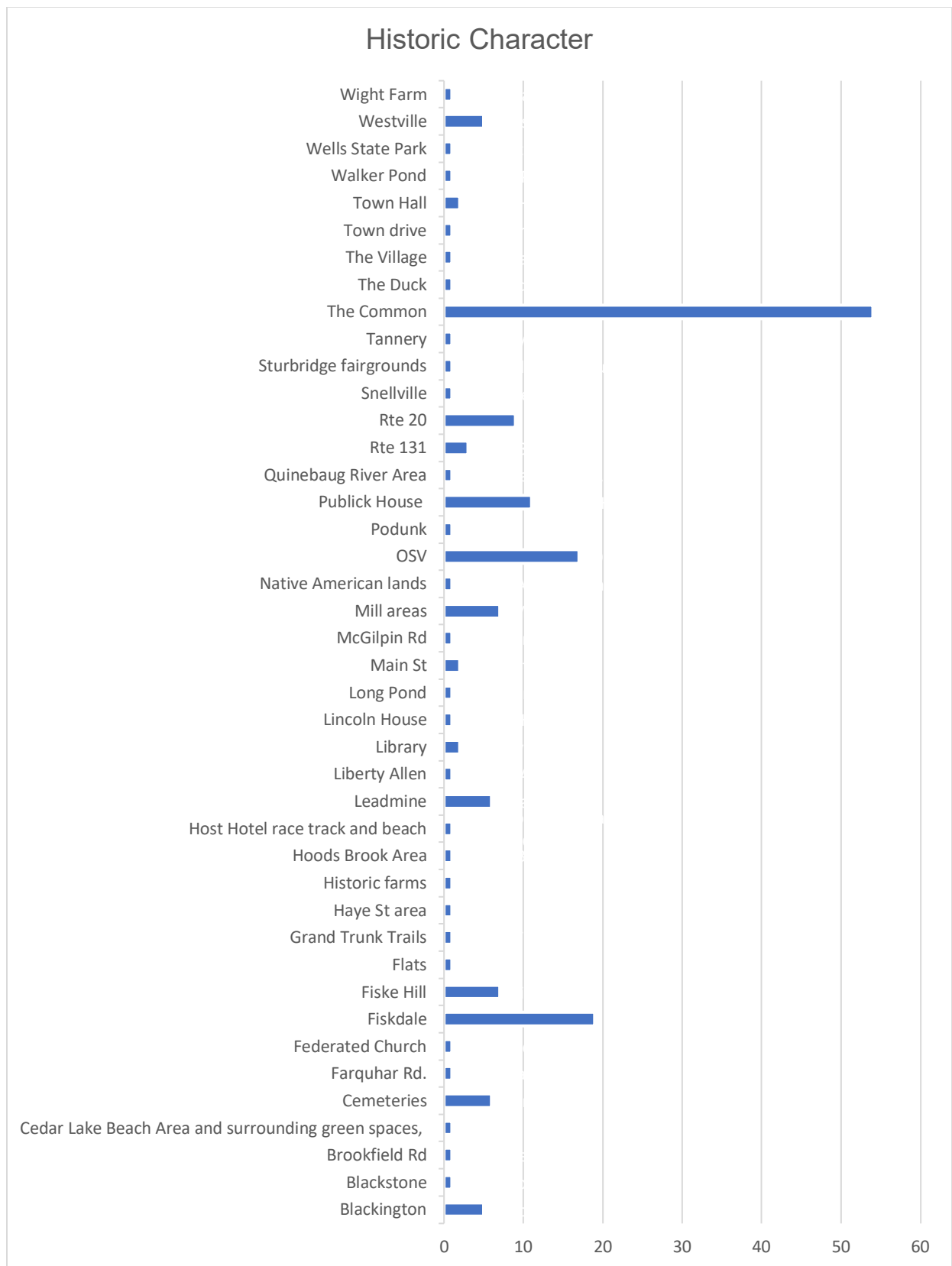


Figure 4-5. Question 7: Areas of town that respondents feel have the most historic character.

Most respondents feel that the town's character comes from its historic common, mill buildings in Snellville and Fiskdale, and historic homes scattered throughout the town. Some respondents feel that Old Sturbridge Village also contributes to the historic character, while others cautioned against conflating Old Sturbridge Village with the history of Sturbridge itself (Figure 4-6). Other resources identified as part of the town's character include stone walls, especially those along scenic roads; community and agricultural landscapes, including cemeteries and open spaces; religious properties; and indigenous cultural sites.

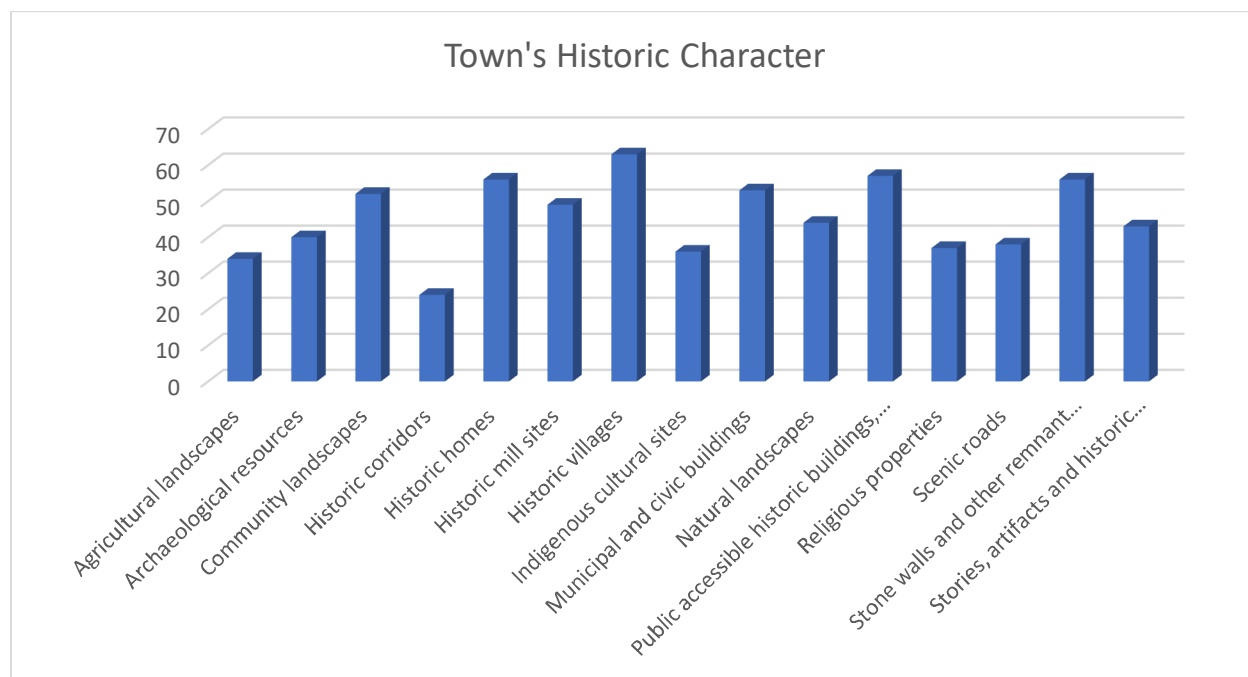


Figure 4-6. Question 9b: Resources that respondents feel contribute to the historic feel of Sturbridge.

The questionnaire responses suggest that community members may not be aware of what the SHC can and cannot do regarding historic preservation or of the purpose of each type of historical documentation. The background research tasks and the questionnaire responses indicate that residents are aware of many of the town's historic development nodes, including the Snellville and Fiskdale mill villages and the Town Common area, and are concerned about the longevity of resources in Fiskdale, particularly the Otis Block/Blackington Building and mill buildings. Other resources identified as being threatened include historic landscapes (specifically Douty Farm and other agricultural areas), the Oxhead Tavern, stone walls, historic homes, and the Chamberlain Block (Figure 4-7).

Buildings that may be lost through demolition, because of residential and commercial development pressures or lack of maintenance, are a source of concern for respondents. Losses may also be a result of a lack of prioritizing historic preservation (Figure 4-8). Public outreach and education will be a necessary component of any historic preservation work in the town, as several responses to the questionnaire indicate that the respondent would not want to live in a historic home because they erroneously believe they would be told what color they could paint their house or what types of alterations they could make.

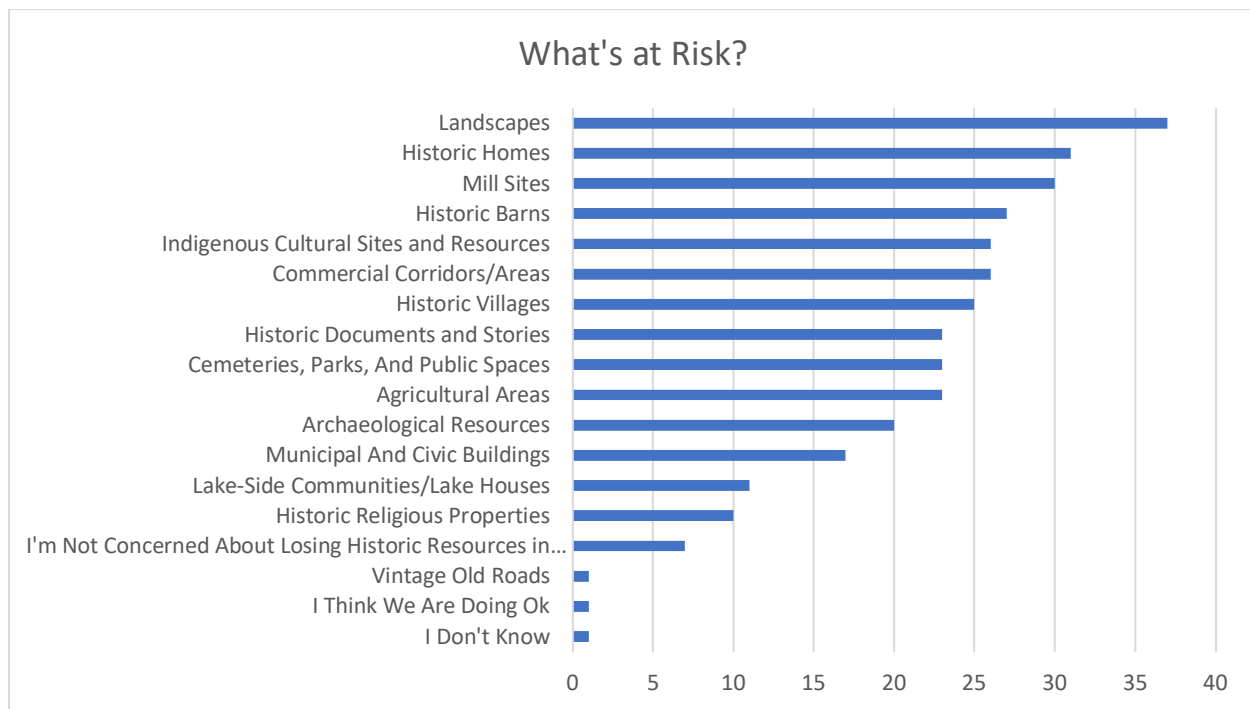


Figure 4-7. Question 16: Historic resources respondents feel are at risk for being lost.

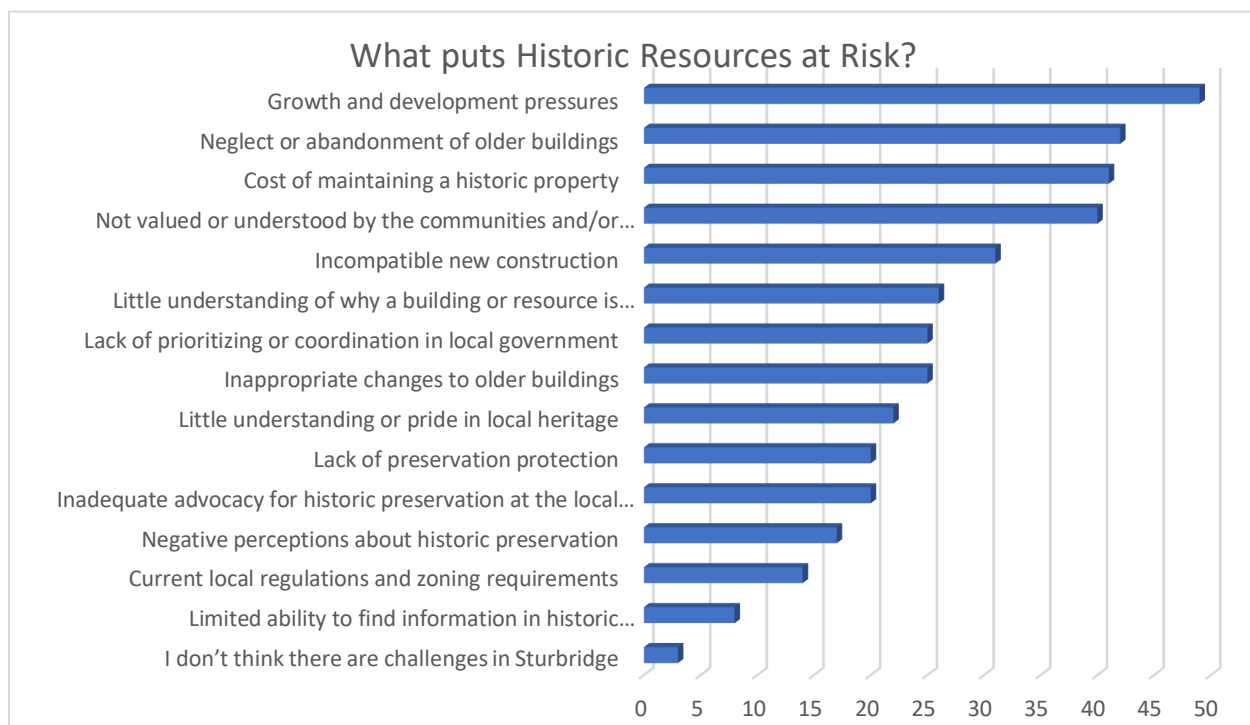


Figure 4-8. Question 17: Causes identified by respondents as potentially responsible for the loss of historic resources.

Community members expressed a desire for more architectural survey in town, as well as a comprehensive town-wide archaeological sensitivity survey (Figure 4-9). Additionally, some requested more visible information about historic preservation and properties, including plaques on houses, walking and driving tours, interpretive signage, and information in the Town annual reports to clarify that Sturbridge is not just Old Sturbridge Village.

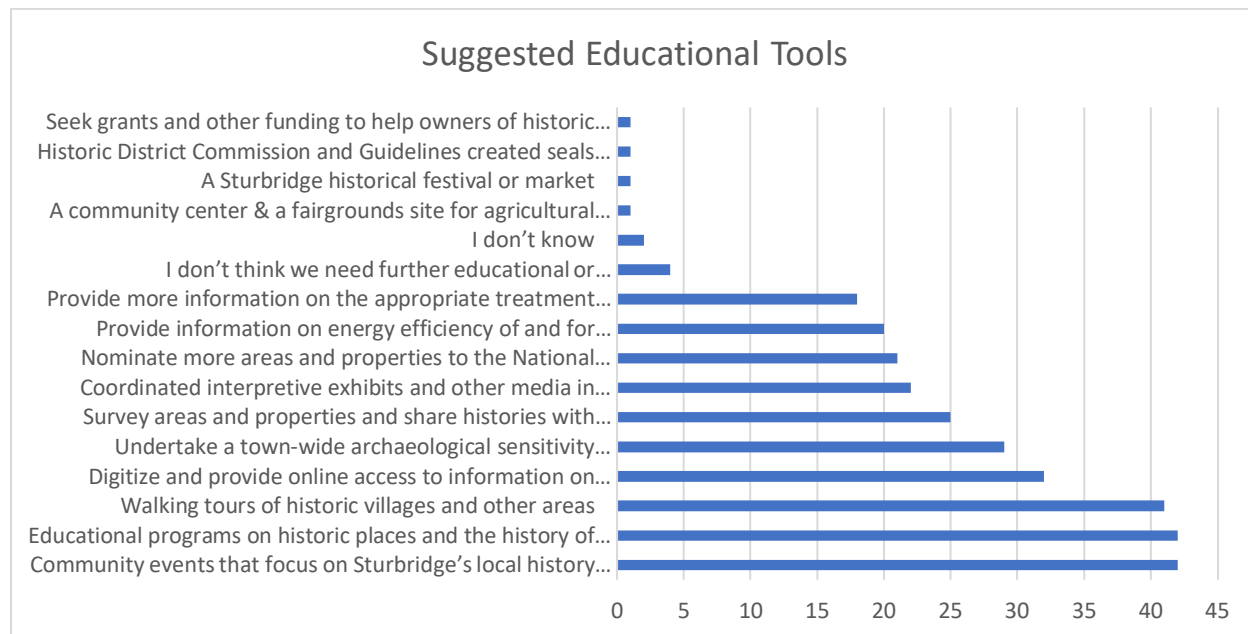


Figure 4-9. Question 18: Commemorative and educational tools respondents would like to see used more.

Favorite resources in the town that were identified at the public forum and in questionnaires include the Otis Block/Blackington Building, the mills of Snellville and Fiskdale, the Town Common area, agricultural landscapes, cemeteries, and Old Sturbridge Village (Figure 4-10). Support for the creation of Local Historic Districts is mixed, with concerns about the negative financial effect it might have on residents' ability to stay in their homes. Resources identified as potential candidates for Local Historic Districts are the Otis Block/Blackington Building, Fiskdale Area, St. Anne Shrine, Cedar Street Barn, and Town Common area; of these, only the Town Common area is listed in the National Register. Resources that respondents would like to see listed in the National Register include Old Sturbridge Village, the Otis Block/Blackington Building, town cemeteries, the Publick House, the Allen Road area with its intact agricultural stone walls, St. Anne Shrine, the Fiskdale mills area, Snellville, and Fiske Hill.

When asked what words come to mind when they think about Sturbridge's historic character, the responses were generally positive, reflecting Sturbridge's image as a quaint, historic New England town. Other responses reflected frustration with the historic preservation process or Sturbridge's image (Figure 4-11).

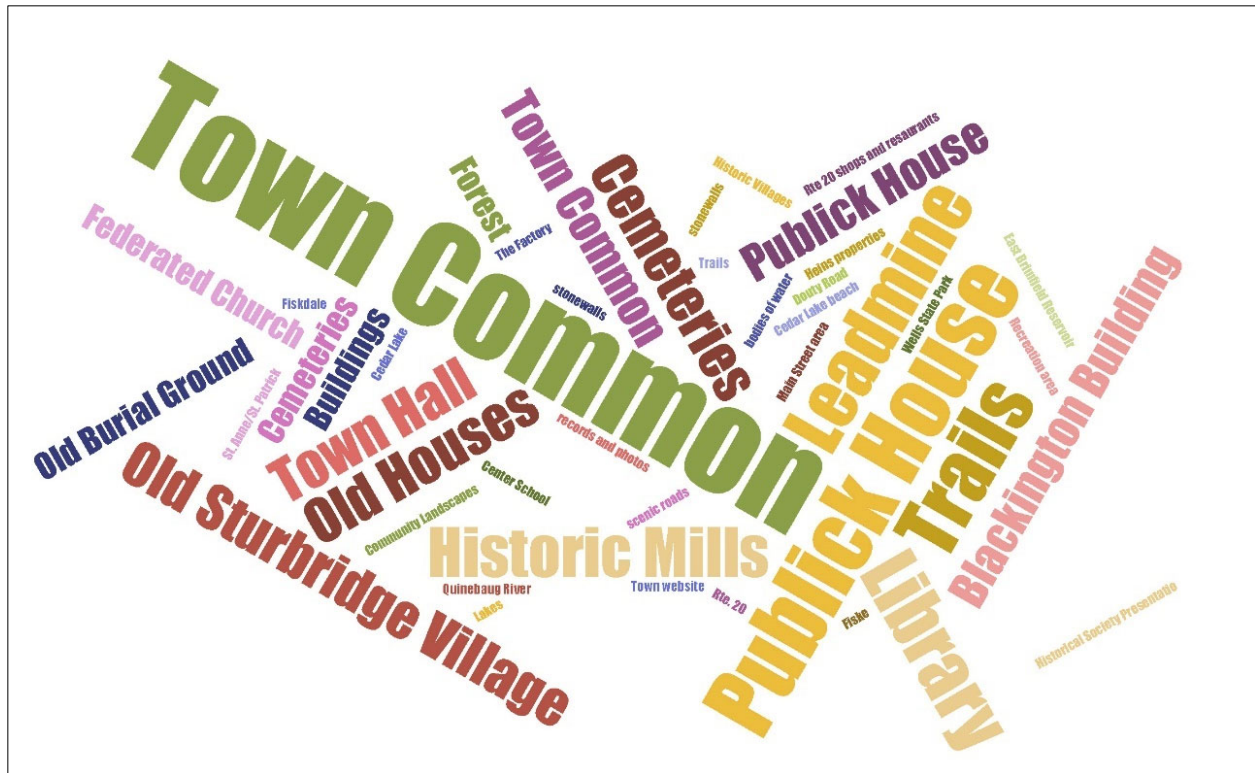


Figure 4-10. Question 10: Respondents' favorite historic resources or places in Sturbridge.



Figure 4-11. Question 11: Words respondents associate with historic preservation in Sturbridge.

Respondents generally feel that preservation in Sturbridge reflects the importance of the town’s history and landscape to its character but are concerned about the effectiveness of historic preservation oversight, possibly due to a lack of familiarity with the roles played by the SHC, the Town Planner, other municipal boards and departments, and outside organizations. Potential ways to address these concerns are discussed in Sections 5 and 6.

4.2 Historic Preservation Issues and Challenges

Key issues currently at the forefront of preservation planning in Sturbridge have been expressed in public forums and responses to questionnaires and by Town boards, commissions, and staff. While much progress has been made, the Town is experiencing challenges to the development of planning measures that would allow citizens to protect and continue to enjoy the historic resources that comprise its rich heritage. This section briefly discusses recent and potential losses in the built environment, followed by ongoing and anticipated challenges that affect historic preservation in Sturbridge that have been identified through conversations with residents and stakeholders, background research, and fieldwork.

Recent and Potential Losses

In the past ten years, several buildings associated with Sturbridge’s agricultural past have been demolished, including the Worcester South Agricultural Society Exhibition Hall at 362 Main Street (STU.77, Figure 4-12), which was demolished in 2016 to make way for construction of a CVS Pharmacy (Figure 4-13). The loss of the Exhibition Hall prompted the reinvigoration of the SHC as noted previously. Other recent losses include the C. G. Allen Farmhouse and Outbuilding at 14 Douty Road (Figure 4-14, demolished in 2017), an outbuilding associated with the Plimpton property at 100 Holland Road (demolished in 2018), and a barn on the Leadmine property (demolished in 2020). The Plimpton and Leadmine properties are owned by the Town, which undertook the demolitions to remove hazards from the properties.⁵



Figures 4-12 and 4-13. Worcester South Agricultural Society Exhibition Hall, 362 Main Street, ca. 2016 (left, Doherty 2016), and CVS Pharmacy building constructed at same address (right, photo by author).

⁵ Robyn Chrabascz, Town of Sturbridge Facilities Manager, personal communication with author, December 2022.



Figure 4-14. C.G. Allen House, 14 Douty Road, before demolition (Walsh 2017c).

Potential losses include kit and vernacular homes around Sturbridge’s freshwater lakes that could be replaced with new, modern residential buildings. However, it is difficult to know how many historic buildings are extant or have been lost, because there has been little comprehensive historic survey around the lakes.

Buildings historically associated with manufacturing in Snellville and Fiskdale, including mills and worker’s housing, are also at risk for demolition, particularly in Fiskdale, due to increasing residential and commercial development pressures.

Ongoing and Anticipated Issues and Challenges

The SHC and Planning Department have done much to support historic preservation in Sturbridge, including initiating two rounds of historical survey in 2016–2018 and undertaking the preparation of this Historic Preservation Plan. However, the following significant challenges remain:

- **Identification of Near-Term and Long-Term Historic Preservation Goals:** The Town Planner maintains a list of short- and long-term goals identified through the town’s Master Plan process, which was last undertaken in 2011. The Sturbridge Master Plan Implementation list includes two historic preservation-specific goals that have not yet been completed: to initiate and support bylaws to encourage preservation of historic assets and to consider the preparation of a community-wide archaeological inventory.
- **Volunteer Shortage:** Sturbridge needs volunteers interested in serving on the boards and commissions that have purview over elements of historic preservation in the town. For example, the SHC had two open seats for several months, although one was filled in December 2022, and the Open Space Committee currently has an open seat. A lack of volunteers can make it difficult to assemble a quorum, which prevents the completion of commission business.
- **Communication and Coordination between Departments and Commissions:** The 2021 Annual Town Meeting updated the Town Charter to involve the SHC more fully in the demolition delay process to prevent the demolition of historical buildings before they have been reviewed for historic or archaeological significance (Town of Sturbridge 2021:174). However, no avenue currently exists for design review by the SHC of buildings that are not listed in the National Register. There is work to do, including more architectural survey, to ensure that the Building Department is aware of all buildings that may be covered by the demolition delay bylaw.

- **Town-Wide Inventory of Historic Properties and Archaeological Sites:** Review of the Sturbridge historic property inventory shows that past town-wide survey has focused on the town's main settlement and development nodes and on resources from the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries. Geographic and temporal gaps in the inventory exist where areas beyond main transportation routes and resources dating from the mid-twentieth century to the present have not been surveyed. In addition, Sturbridge has not had a town-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey and, thus, does not have an archaeological sensitivity map to inform planning efforts.
- **Reuse and Redevelopment of Historic Properties:** The Town has acquired former agricultural tracts and other large, open spaces as conservation lands to ensure continued stewardship. Less attention has been paid to other historic properties that may be available for reuse or redevelopment. Historic mill and commercial buildings, particularly in the Fiskdale area, need careful planning to ensure their continued use and preservation.
- **Potential Impacts from New Projects to Historic Resources:** As surrounding towns such as Charlton expand, increased development pressure in Sturbridge can have a negative impact on the Town's historic resources and landscapes. Town departments need to consider the potential impacts to these resources as part of the permitting process.
- **Storage of Historical Town Records and Historical Objects:** Town records are stored in several places, including the Joshua Hyde Library, the Public Safety Complex, the Town Clerk's Office, and the Center Office Building. In addition to the records storage scattered in several places, none of the storage spaces are climate controlled, causing concerns about the long-term preservation of these documents. A secondary issue is the lack of space for artifacts and records associated with Sturbridge's history that are currently in private collections. Neither the Town nor the Sturbridge Historical Society has appropriate storage space to accept donations of significant resources associated with Sturbridge's history, presenting the risk that those items could be lost to the town.
- **Lack of Local Historic Districts:** Sturbridge does not currently have any Local Historic Districts. Establishment of a Local Historic District requires approval at the Annual Town Meeting. The existence of a Local Historic District is one of the qualifications for becoming a Certified Local Government. The Town could consider creating a Local Historic District and pursuing a Certified Local Government application to augment local historic preservation efforts.
- **Historic Properties and Cemeteries Management:** The Facilities Manager oversees the management of Town-owned historic buildings, but multiple boards oversee the management of other properties such as cemeteries and monuments, which can pose coordination challenges.
- **Generating Awareness of and Enthusiasm for Historic Resources among Town Citizens:** The SHC has a solid track record of public education and raising awareness about the Town's history and historic resources, which it has undertaken with the help of local historians. Additional opportunities exist to educate residents about historic preservation, including drawing a clear distinction between Old Sturbridge Village and the SHC and building support for preservation initiatives such as National Register listing or creating Local Historic Districts.

Section 5 – Goals and Policies

5.1 What Are the Resources We Want to Protect?

The public engagement component for preparing this Historic Preservation Plan, discussed in Section 4.1, resulted in baseline information on the historic resources that residents want to protect. The responses to Question 8 of the public survey (“What does historic preservation mean to you?”) indicate that most Sturbridge residents take pride in the town’s history and architecture and value preservation as a way to keep history alive, educate others, and find new purposes for old buildings. Survey respondents identified multiple types of historic resources throughout Sturbridge as being at risk and in need of protection, including landscapes such as farms and agricultural fields, parks, and cemeteries; archaeological resources; indigenous cultural sites and resources; historical documents and oral histories; and many different types of historic buildings. The survey answers reflect an overall concern about the effects of future development on historic properties. Only a few respondents expressed negative attitudes toward preservation based on concerns about the potential for higher property taxes or a lack of interest in preserving anything other than the Publick House and Town Common. PAL concurs with the overall sentiment that Sturbridge needs to preserve a variety of resources, with emphasis on cultural landscapes, archaeological resources, historical documents and stories, and Town- and privately owned historical buildings.

Areas and resources identified by survey respondents for listing in the National Register or for establishing Local Historic Districts generally coalesce around major settlement nodes in town, such as Fiskdale, Snellville, Fiske Hill, and the Town Common. Other significant resources noted are the Levi Lincoln Jr. House at the entrance to Old Sturbridge Village, St. Anne Shrine, the Cedar Street barn, and the Allen Road stone wall system. As a result of its historic property surveys in 2017 and 2018, PAL recommended some of the same resources for National Register listing and identified others as potentially eligible for listing (see Section 2.9). PAL notes that historic stone walls like those along Allen Road exist throughout the town, particularly along the scenic roads noted in Section 3.1. The 30 roads or road segments currently designated as Scenic Roads under Sturbridge’s 2004 bylaw should be surveyed, along with any associated stone walls, and evaluated from a historic preservation perspective. As noted in Section 4.2, PAL recommends that areas outside the main settlement and development nodes be comprehensively surveyed to identify other resources potentially in need of preservation.

Survey respondents did not identify many resources built after ca. 1950; Old Sturbridge Village was the most recent resource specifically named. Many communities often overlook their recent past, and survey efforts are generally limited to older resources because the NPS does not consider resources less than 50 years old eligible for listing in the National Register unless they have exceptional significance. However, a lack of awareness increases the risk of potentially significant buildings being removed or replaced, and an understanding of recent history is critical for placing these resources in context and evaluating their significance. PAL’s drive-over surveys identified potentially significant mid-twentieth-century buildings and sites, e.g., the former Galileo Electro-Optics Company building on Route 20 (see Figure 2-22) and motels along Routes 20 and 131 (see Figures 2-20 and 2-21), especially near the town’s border with Southbridge and Charlton. A thorough inventory and documentation effort would enable more informed planning policies and programs related to these resources.

In addition, PAL suggests that oral histories, particularly those related to events in the second half of the twentieth century and the first decades of the twenty-first century, and photograph and artifact collections should be considered for preservation. Background research has indicated that much of the town’s historical documentation emphasizes its earlier history and does not extend to the twentieth century. Newspapers, including *The Southbridge Press* (1891–1934); *The Southbridge Evening News* (1934–1970) and its section on Sturbridge called *The Sturbridge Scene*; the *Country Courier*; the *Worcester Telegram/Telegram &*

Gazette (1888–present); and the *Southbridge News* (1923–present) provided robust coverage of life in Sturbridge for many years. However, only the *Southbridge News* and *Worcester Telegram/Telegram & Gazette* remain in operation, primarily online, and Sturbridge has not had comprehensive coverage by a newspaper of record for the past 25 years. Oral histories may be the best sources of information on the recent past, and the SHC may want to consider publishing a comprehensive local history that brings the narrative to the present.

5.2 How Can We Achieve Protection?

The first step in any effective historic preservation effort is to ensure that an up-to-date and comprehensive inventory of historic resources exists. The historic properties inventory for Sturbridge, available to the public through the MHC’s online MACRIS database, is an essential tool for Town officials and staff, and the general public, to use in preservation planning, decision-making, advocacy, and education. It is much easier to generate support for preserving a building or a site when people are aware of its history and significance.

As discussed in Section 3.2, Sturbridge has added to its historic properties inventory within the past 10 years and currently has survey documentation for almost 400 properties. However, the inventory lacks information about several areas within the town, such as lakeside cottage developments, and resources built after about 1970. Survey efforts should focus on 1) documenting areas and individual properties that have not been surveyed and 2) updating forms produced in 1972–1974 to provide adequate architectural descriptions, historic significance statements, and current photographs that meet MHC standards. Resources threatened by redevelopment or neglect should be prioritized. Survey updates and new surveys complement each other and can be done simultaneously. Sturbridge would also benefit from a town-wide archaeological survey to identify areas of significance and high archaeological sensitivity (i.e., areas with the potential for containing significant archaeological sites and resources). This information would help the Town formulate a protection plan for belowground resources. Funding for such surveys may come from the MHC’s Survey and Planning Grant program and/or from the Sturbridge CPC.

The Sturbridge historic properties inventory will inform implementation of the preservation tools described in Section 1.2 to protect those resources identified as important. Tools that are particularly suited to the preservation of Sturbridge’s distinct community character are federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits, preservation restrictions, and municipal bylaws and regulations. The adoption of new bylaws and regulations requires approval at the Annual Town Meeting, and significant outreach and education efforts will be needed to build support. Preservation restrictions and federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits do not require approval at Town Meeting and can be used by willing property owners at any time without Town approval. See Section 1.2 for details about each of the recommended preservation tools.

Federal and State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits

Several buildings in Sturbridge, particularly in the Snellville and Fiskdale areas, may be eligible for rehabilitation using federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits. One such building is the Otis Block/Blackington Building in Fiskdale, which is potentially eligible for listing in the National Register as part of a Fiskdale National Register district. The SHC can educate property owners about the benefits of tax credits and assist those interested in pursuing this preservation incentive.

Preservation Restrictions

The Town-owned Sturbridge Center School at 301 Main Street is currently the only property in Sturbridge under a preservation restriction. Other properties that might be good candidates for Preservation Restrictions include buildings that retain most or all of their historic fabric and have a high degree of historical integrity or are significant in Sturbridge history but for which establishing a Local Historic District is not an option. Preservation Restrictions on non-Town-owned properties can be held by the SHC.

Local Historic and Neighborhood Conservation Districts

Local Historic Districts can provide residents with a review process to protect areas of particular importance to Sturbridge and its history against incompatible change and/or development. Studies done by PlaceEconomics and others show that property values tend to rise within Local Historic Districts, which means they can also function as an economic driver while preserving historic fabric (PlaceEconomics2020). Local Historic Districts can be created for single buildings and/or groups of buildings. For example, a Local Historic District for the Town Common area could protect the village character from incompatible infill, while single-building Local Historic Districts could be used to protect the former Oxhead Tavern and the Otis Block/Blackington Building.

The adoption of a Local Historic District bylaw and subsequent establishment of Local Historic Districts would require educational outreach to the community and careful selection of district boundaries. Resident concerns about regulatory overreach could be addressed by creating flexible design review criteria with public input. Neighborhood Conservation Districts can also be considered as a more flexible alternative to Local Historic Districts if public and political support for Local Historic District designation is lacking. Neighborhood Conservation Districts could be used to protect historic resources in the Town Common area, Snellville, Fiskdale, and other areas with a concentration of historic buildings, while still allowing for some change.

Affirmative Maintenance Bylaw

Individual buildings threatened by full or partial vacancy and/or deferred maintenance could benefit from an Affirmative Maintenance, or Demolition by Neglect, bylaw, particularly when adaptive reuse incentives such as tax credits are not available or other municipal bylaws do not apply. An Affirmative Maintenance bylaw can be tailored to a specific area within the town where owner neglect is a concern or adopted town-wide to discourage deferred maintenance.

Zoning Amendments

Zoning amendments can help regulate development along Routes 20 and 131 or in areas with a concentration of historical buildings that may be subject to subdivision of larger lots and infill construction. PAL suggests the following zoning amendments be added to the Sturbridge Zoning Bylaw:

- Flexible Dimension Zoning to help preserve the character-defining features of historic resources, streetscapes, and landscapes in areas like Fiskdale and Snellville, where the arrangement of buildings along the street edge and in relation to each other is a key component;
- Downzoning and Upzoning to encourage subdivision development to be clustered in rural areas, thus preserving open space and existing building density, or to maintain industrial development in historically appropriate areas like Fiskdale and Snellville; and

- Village Center Zoning to maintain the character of smaller mixed-use areas, such as the area around the Town Common and Publick House that encompasses Town buildings, private residences, and commercial areas.

Archaeological Preservation Bylaw

An archaeological preservation bylaw can help protect important archaeological sites and other archaeologically sensitive areas in Sturbridge. Such a bylaw empowers the Town to require the survey and documentation of archaeologically significant features and resources before any land disturbance, including from projects that propose excavation, grading, or filling in archaeologically sensitive areas. A town-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey would develop an archaeological sensitivity map to implement such a bylaw. The MHC can provide a sample of an effective municipal archaeological review bylaw.

Section 6 – Five-Year Action Plan

The recommendations for preservation activities presented in Table 4 and described in this section are divided into four categories (Inventory/Survey, National Register, Education/Outreach, and Bylaws and Regulations) and identified as near-term, long-term, or ongoing priorities.

- **Near-term projects**, indicated in green, are considered imperative and should be undertaken within the next 1–3 years. The five highest-priority projects are indicated with green boxes.
- **Long-term projects**, indicated in purple, are considered important but not imperative and should be undertaken within the next 3–5 years.
- **Ongoing projects**, indicated in blue, do not have a finite ending (e.g., historical commissioner education).

Table 4. Recommended Preservation Activities and Priorities.

Priority	Activity	Category
Near-term	Historic Survey Plan	Inventory/Survey
	Archaeological Survey	Inventory/Survey
	Landscape Survey	Inventory/Survey
	Website Update	Education/Outreach
	Archival Storage	Education/Outreach
	Public Engagement	Education/Outreach
	Affirmative Maintenance	Bylaws and Regulations
Long-term	Interpretive Signage/Brochures	Education/Outreach
	Walking Tours	Education/Outreach
	New Documentation	National Register
	Existing Documentation Updates	National Register
	Protection of Archaeological Resources	Bylaws and Regulations
	Local Historic Districts	Bylaws and Regulations
Ongoing	Commissioner Education	Education/Outreach
	History Events	Education/Outreach
	Community Preservation	Education/Outreach
	Oral Histories	Education/Outreach

Priorities are also based on the amount of effort anticipated for a project or the importance indicated by survey respondents. Some near-term projects can be undertaken without large expense or the involvement of a consultant or other professional, while others may require outside assistance. Long-term projects may require substantial funding, education and outreach campaigns, and/or specialized consultants. Descriptions of each recommendation in Table 4 are provided below, with green boxes around the five top-priority recommendations.

In general, Sturbridge should prioritize **Inventory/Survey** and **Education/Outreach** projects because they will serve as a basis for other projects and/or establish crucial baseline data or community buy-in for subsequent preservation decisions. For example, historic surveys are essential to identify properties that may be eligible for listing in the National Register and/or good candidates for Local Historic Districts. Additionally, survey can be used to identify themes or topics for walking tours or education programs. If the SHC intends to undertake National Register documentation or establish Local Historic Districts, community outreach and education to ensure that residents understand what is being proposed and the potential effect on their property is critical to the success of those activities. For National Register districts, at least half the property owners in a district must be in support of the nomination. Local Historic Districts are voted on at Town Meeting and require significant public support. All recommended actions should begin with research and historic survey that can be used to plan and present clearly articulated and justifiable proposals to the public. The SHC should leverage the existing surveys and support future survey to inform its overall preservation goals, while at the same time engaging with the broader community to strengthen support for its work. The Town's current Facilities Manager, who is a Qualified Historic Architect and Historic Preservationist, can also provide valuable expertise and advice to the SHC.

Inventory/Survey

The Town's historic properties inventory should be expanded to include properties farther from main transportation routes and those built since the mid-twentieth century. Old Sturbridge Village should be a priority for full documentation, as well as buildings that may be subject to the Town's demolition delay bylaw and have not been previously surveyed or have insufficient documentation. Historic survey should be done by a qualified historical consultant. Buildings can be documented individually on MHC B forms or as groups on MHC Area forms. Survey results can help the SHC decide whether to pursue Local Historic Districts or Neighborhood Conservation Districts for particular areas or resources and can identify additional properties that may be eligible for listing in the National Register. Funding for surveys can come from the MHC's Survey and Planning Grant program, CPA funding, or other municipal sources.

Historic Survey Plan [Near-term]

Survey plans discuss the history and development of a municipality, or area within a municipality, and provide specific recommendations for documentation and future survey. The SHC can develop its own comprehensive survey plan based on existing recommendations, including those discussed in this Historic Preservation Plan, or hire a qualified historical consultant to prepare a formal survey plan. Previously identified areas that should be prioritized for survey include Routes 20 and 131 near the town's borders with Charlton and Southbridge, residential areas north of Route 20 and west of Interstate 84, and residential areas around Sturbridge's numerous lakes and ponds. Survey should also focus on thematic areas or resource types, such as properties and landscapes associated with cultural groups like the Nipmuc tribe or the Irish and French-Canadian immigrants who came to work in the town's mills. Although survey can be done without a comprehensive survey plan in place, a survey plan will help organize survey projects efficiently and provide a map for phased implementation of survey as resources become available. Towns with recent consultant-prepared survey plans include [Medford](#) and [Arlington](#).

Funding for survey plans or historic surveys, if undertaken by a consultant, can come from the MHC's Survey and Planning Grant program, which provides a 50/50 matching grant; CPA funding; or other municipal sources. Keep in mind that it is most cost-effective to develop large survey projects rather than document a handful of properties at a time. Minimum MHC-funded survey projects cost \$25,000, although most recent ones have cost \$30,000 or more. A typical \$30,000 survey can document about 100 resources, depending on the complexity of the resources and the number of individual and area forms produced.

Archaeological Survey [Near-term]

A town-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey should be done that includes the preparation of an archaeological sensitivity map, which indicates the probability of encountering an archaeological site within a given area. The survey should be done by a professional archaeologist, and the MHC should be consulted for assistance. Archaeological resources documented on state site forms are available only to registered archaeologists and not the public. An archaeological survey would necessarily cover the entire town, and this project can be undertaken separately from building surveys. The results of the survey can help the SHC decide whether to pursue the establishment of an Archaeological Preservation bylaw. Funding for archaeological survey can come from the MHC's Survey and Planning Grant program, CPA funding, or other municipal sources.

Landscape Survey [Near-term]

A historic landscape survey should be done to identify and document historic landscapes, particularly historic vernacular landscapes, ethnographic landscapes, and those that are potentially threatened. The survey should include Sturbridge's 30 designated scenic roads or road segments and their associated stone walls. A landscape survey should ideally be done by a qualified historical consultant, such as a landscape historian or architectural historian with experience identifying historic and cultural landscapes. The Massachusetts DCR publication *Terra Firma: Volume I* (<https://www.mass.gov/doc/terra-firma-putting-historic-landscape-preservation-on-solid-ground/download>) has useful information on identifying and documenting historic landscapes. The results of a landscape survey can help the SHC decide whether to pursue Local Historic Districts or Neighborhood Conservation Districts for particular areas or resources. Funding for landscape surveys can come from the MHC's Survey and Planning Grant program, CPA funding, or other municipal sources.

Education/Outreach

Ensuring that residents and Town staff and officials fully understand the SHC's mission and activities is vital to cultivating support for preservation initiatives such as the establishment of Local Historic Districts and National Register districts. As a result, the SHC must prioritize public engagement, including updating the SHC section of the Town website. Additionally, the preservation and protection of Town historical records in climate-controlled storage is necessary to ensure their longevity and access by future residents and researchers.

Website Update [Near-term]

The Town should update the SHC section of its website to provide more information about the commission and a better understanding of its role. Information could include highlights of preservation successes and losses and an explanation of the demolition delay bylaw. These updates can help build support for preservation initiatives in the town. A link to the MACRIS database should also be included on the Town website to facilitate access to forms that are not hosted on the Town's website. Examples of websites that include this information are those for the [Medford Historical Commission](#), [Salem Historical Commission](#), [Amherst Historical Commission](#), and [Lexington Historical Commission](#). A website update could be part of a larger Town-wide project or a targeted effort by the SHC or other local volunteers.

Archival Storage [Near-term]

The Town should work with the Town's head librarian and other departments to identify or create appropriate centrally located, climate-controlled storage for Town records that are currently scattered

among several sites and held in non-climate-controlled spaces. Storage should accommodate not only the documents and objects already owned by the Town but also provide space for future growth. The Town collections could be housed in an underutilized building, such as the old fire station at the corner of Route 20 and Brookfield Road, or in a designated space within a building such as the Center Office Building. Centralized storage and digitization would improve public access to Town documents. Archival storage projects are often funded with CPA funds.

The Sturbridge Historical Society should likewise be encouraged to find a permanent, climate-controlled space to house its collections and future donations from residents. The Massachusetts State Record Management Unit of the State Archives can provide technical assistance and training in areas including disaster planning and organizing and storing records. The Massachusetts State Historic Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) also oversees a grant-funded Roving Archivist Program that connects stewards of historical records with trained professional archivists to advise grantees on archival storage, organization, preservation, disaster planning, and other topics.

Public Engagement [Near-term]

The SHC should increase public engagement with the community about historic resources and the economic and environmental benefits of historic preservation. Encouraging appreciation for Sturbridge's history and historic resources beyond Old Sturbridge Village will help the SHC to build support for town-wide preservation initiatives. Examples of potential SHC public engagement activities, most of which can be implemented at minimal cost to the Town, are:

- Submit regular posts to the Sturbridge Facebook page and/or local online newspapers about past survey work, National Register nominations, collections at the Historical Society or Library, and other topics.
- Coordinate with the Sturbridge Historical Society and/or Library to host a photo scanning day where residents can preserve valuable photos and other family records. Such events can be fun opportunities to share stories and record history together while adding to the town's digital local history collections.
- Encourage, support, and recognize good stewardship of historic properties in town through preservation project awards. For example, present a framed certificate to property owners at a project site or at a Select Board meeting to honor exemplary work.
- Work with local children's groups, schools, and organizations such as the Girl and Boy Scouts to share information and develop educational programs on local history.
- Develop at least one handout to place at public locations throughout town. The handout could be a general guide to historic sites in Sturbridge or a map for a walking tour of a specific area such as the Town Common, Snellville, Fiskdale, or Fiske Hill. Funding from the CPC, the Mass Cultural Council, or the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism could be used to hire a professional to design and print the handout.

The SHC could also hold public meetings on local history or preservation-related topics; host preservation staff from the PVPC, Preservation Massachusetts, or other state organizations to speak about programs like the National Register, Local Historic Districts and Neighborhood Conservation Districts, and historic tax credits; and distribute existing MHC information on such topics via the Town website and/or printed handouts placed at public locations throughout town.

Walking Tours [Long-term]

Developing a historic site guide or walking tour handout as recommended above can be the starting point for an expanded program of guided and self-guided walking and driving tours of Sturbridge. The SHC

should work with the Sturbridge Historical Society and other local historical and heritage groups to create a variety of tour options. Small waysides or QR codes at tour stops could provide more information about each area or resource. The [Museum in the Streets](#) is one example of a popular way to develop tours. Audio tours accessed via cell phones are a type of driving tour that could be developed. The Town of Great Barrington has developed a series of tours covering a variety of topics, most of which have downloadable tour brochures and recorded videos or audio clips about particular sites. Funding for such projects could be through the MHC's Survey and Planning grant program or the CPC. The Town of Sturbridge could also partner with academic public history programs such as those at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and Boston campuses; students may be available to work with the Town to develop such tours.

Interpretive Signage/Brochures [Long-term]

The Town should install interpretive signage and waysides that meet [NPS standards](#). Such interpretive signage can be placed at locations of important buildings and events (Figure 6-1). Other signage can direct visitors to the Quinebaug River and Riverwalk, Cedar Lake, Long Pond, and other open spaces and scenic places. Colorful tourist brochures can promote the town's natural and historical resources. The SHC should coordinate closely with local tourism and economic development agencies, including the Sturbridge Tourist Association and the Regional Tourism Council, to leverage existing efforts and possibly tie into larger wayfinding projects in the area. Funding for interpretive signage or waysides could come from the CPC, the Mass Cultural Council, the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism, or other economic development entities.



Figure 6-1. An example of an NPS wayside at Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI (photo by author).

Commissioner Education [Ongoing]

SHC members, particularly new members, should participate in the biennial Massachusetts State Preservation Conference and webinars presented by the MHC and Preservation Mass staff to stay current on relevant issues and regulations. The State Preservation Conference is organized by Preservation Mass. Presentations from the 2021 conference are available to view on YouTube and the [Preservation Mass website](#). Preservation Mass webinars and Preservation Conversations cover topics such as historic tax credits, storytelling in preservation, talking about historic preservation, and preservation grant programs. These webinars are available on YouTube and the Preservation Mass website. MHC webinars are listed on the MHC website and cover topics such as administering Local Historic Districts; infill construction in Local Historic Districts; the National Register; and typical architectural styles, forms, and building technologies found in Massachusetts. Preservation Mass and MHC webinars are usually free to watch.

History Events [On-going]

Cooperate with organizations like Old Sturbridge Village and other area groups on marketing and events. Most existing public events can be opportunities for the SHC to host a walking tour or staff a table with information and activities on local history. Examples include the Summer Concert Series on the Common, Town-wide Yard Sale, Brimfield Flea Markets, and Sturbridge Farmer's Markets. The SHC should be present at as many events throughout the year as possible. Special events hosted by the SHC in conjunction with other organizations could include themed walking tours, special historic house or property tours, author talks and book signings, and reenactments of historical events. Joining forces with other groups can enable the SHC to have more impact on the community with minimal outlay of funds and effort.

Community Preservation [Ongoing]

The Town should continue to support CPC projects, including expanding public education about the CPA program and its benefits by updating the CPC website and holding informational sessions. The SHC should also work with the CPC and local economic development groups to fund private rehabilitation projects on historic commercial or residential buildings as in Cambridge, Somerville, and Springfield. In this way, the Town can provide property owners with financial incentives to make improvements to historic buildings and at the same time ensure SHC oversight of the work. In addition, properties that receive CPA funding should be designated as Local Historic Districts to protect the Town's investment. The SHC should also coordinate with the Sturbridge CPC and the Massachusetts Community Preservation Coalition to identify additional preservation projects that could be funded using CPA funds.

Oral Histories [Ongoing]

The Town should collect and transcribe oral histories from long-time Sturbridge residents. These histories can include their memories of growing up in Sturbridge and changes they have seen in the town. Residents who identify as part of cultural groups like the Nipmuc tribe or Irish and French-Canadian immigrants may have important information passed down through their families. Stories from younger residents could be about recent events, including their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics for oral histories could be identified through public questionnaires or be organized around public or school events. The Oral History Lab at the University of Massachusetts Amherst could help the town organize and undertake an oral history initiative. Interviews would ideally be overseen by a professional, but local high school students or other volunteers could be involved with formulating questions, conducting interviews, and helping to transcribe completed interviews. Funding for oral history projects can come from MassHumanities via their Mass Stories grants, the Mass Cultural Council via their Festivals & Projects grants, CPA funding, or other non-profit sources.

National Register

Although a National Register listing is primarily an honorary designation, it can bring attention to a community's historic properties, encourage preservation, provide limited protection from state and federal actions, and offer eligibility for certain monetary benefits. As discussed in Section 2, properties determined eligible or listed in the National Register are subject to Sturbridge's demolition delay bylaw; income-producing properties that are listed in the National Register can leverage state and federal tax credits; and properties owned by municipalities or non-profit organizations that are listed in the National Register can apply for state preservation grants from the MPPF. The SHC should support the preparation of National Register listings for the areas and properties previously identified by the PVPC or PAL as potentially eligible (listed in Section 2.9 and below) or identified in future historic survey projects, with priority given to any that may be eligible for rehabilitation using MPPF or Historic Tax Credit funding. In general, National Register projects are considered important but not imperative and, thus, should have lower priority than the near-term recommendations in this Historic Preservation Plan.

New Documentation [Long-term]

As discussed in Section 2.9, the following properties in Sturbridge have been recommended eligible for National Register listing:

- Haynes Corner Area (STU.I)
- Joseph Marsh House (STU.229)
- Eliab and Fanny Marsh House (STU.232)
- Eli and Mary Marsh House (STU.241)
- Samuel and Mary Morse House (STU.246)
- Samuel and Lucy Hobbs House (STU.48)
- Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse (STU.113)
- Otis Block/Blackington Building, 572 Main Street (STU.151)
- John Smith House (STU.59)
- Abner Allen House (STU.292)
- George J. and Delina D. Cloutier House (STU.294)
- Jonas Bemis/Silverberg Family House (STU.298)
- Hamilton Woolen Co. House (STU.303)
- Fiskdale Mill Agents House (STU.306)
- Josiah Fiske House, 530 Main Street (STU.140)
- James Johnson Double House, 533–535 Main Street (STU.189)
- Sturbridge Cotton Mills Office, 541 Main Street (STU.191)
- Fiskdale Lower Mill (Mill No. 2), 559 Main Street (STU.193)
- Alpheus Wight House, 420 Main Street (STU.89)
- Winthrop Wight House, 420 Main Street (STU.88)
- Daniel Wight House and Barn, 472 Main Street (STU.111 and STU.319)
- Martin L. Phillips House and Barn, 468 Main Street (STU.110 and STU.330)

- John and Lizzie Hooker House and Barn, 473 Main Street (STU.115 and STU.329)
- George E. Richards House and Barn, 407 Main Street (STU.124 and STU.332)

Future historic survey may identify additional properties eligible for National Register listing and will help to establish a comprehensive town-wide context for fully evaluating any property's level of significance.

Property owners and/or the SHC can initiate the process for a National Register listing at any point. Before a nomination is prepared, the MHC should be consulted to obtain concurrence for National Register eligibility. Typically, a recent MHC Inventory form with an attached National Register Criteria Statement is necessary for the MHC to provide an eligibility opinion. Once the MHC has concurred, a qualified historical consultant should be hired to prepare the National Register documentation to ensure that it meets MHC and NPS standards. The cost of a single-building National Register nomination varies widely based on the building's age and complexity, but a typical nomination for a house can range from \$5,000 to \$10,000. The entire process of listing a property can take two years or more, and the property owner or owners must agree to the listing.

The MHC's Survey and Planning Grant program can provide the funding for National Register documentation for a public/non-profit building like the Town-owned Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse, which could then benefit from an MPPF grant for maintenance and rehabilitation projects. The SHC should prioritize National Register listing for the schoolhouse after it has completed the Inventory/Survey projects recommended as near-term priorities in this Historic Preservation Plan.

Except the Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse, the properties already identified as eligible for National Register listing are all privately owned. The SHC should decide how best to support National Register projects for such properties. For example, does Sturbridge want to use CPA or other municipal funding sources to list private properties? If so, a good first step would be to reach out to property owners to gauge their interest in listing and then prioritize projects for funding based on development threats, potential economic development, community support, or areas of historic significance (particularly unique or under-represented stories, for example). If not, the SHC can simply provide interested property owners with general information on the process and potential benefits of National Register listing and encourage those who decide to use their own funds to pursue it. The SHC can also offer assistance with finding a consultant, for example, or facilitating research for the nomination.

Existing Documentation Updates [Long-term]

The existing National Register documentation for the Sturbridge Common, Wight House, and Tantiusques Reservation could be updated to current National Register standards and to ensure that all relevant areas and periods of significance are addressed. A qualified historical consultant should prepare National Register updates, and the funding sources described above for new National Register nominations also apply to updates. In general, National Register updates are a long-term priority because the existing documentation is sufficient for most purposes. An updated nomination for the Sturbridge Common Historic District might benefit the owners of income-producing or municipal properties within the district who want to pursue Historic Tax Credit or MPPF rehabilitation projects. Likewise, the owners of the Wight House might consider updating the National Register documentation if the property would qualify for Historic Tax Credit incentives (i.e., it is income-producing). The Trustees, which owns the Tantiusques Reservation, could work with the SHC to apply for an NPS Underrepresented Communities grant to update the property's National Register documentation to address all aspects of its history. The SHC should consider supporting projects to update existing National Register nominations only after addressing the projects recommended as near-term priorities in this Historic Preservation Plan.

Bylaws and Regulations

The adoption of new bylaws governing the protection of historic resources in Sturbridge should come *only* after significant public education efforts to ensure resident support at the annual Town Meeting. The MHC's *Preservation Through Bylaws and Ordinances*, available from the MHC's Local Government Programs Coordinator, provides examples of bylaws that protect local historic resources. Sturbridge could pursue an affirmative maintenance bylaw in the short term with targeted public outreach and cooperation from the Building Department. Longer term, the SHC should consider implementing local historic district and archaeological preservation bylaws based on the results of the historic and archaeology survey discussed above. Both initiatives would require more substantial public outreach campaigns to correct misconceptions evident in the responses to the community survey questionnaire discussed in Section 4.

Affirmative Maintenance [Near-term]

The Town should adopt an affirmative maintenance bylaw to protect historic properties from demolition by neglect. An affirmative maintenance bylaw generally empowers a local historical commission to use a clear set of standards to identify buildings that are threatened by demolition by neglect. Typically, these standards are linked to particular elements of a building and are associated with the town building safety codes. An affirmative maintenance bylaw can at a minimum require that property owners keep buildings stable and secure and can levy fines or place liens on properties if the Town is forced to make the repairs. The bylaw should include clear economic hardship provisions. The SHC should work closely with the Town Building Department and code enforcement officers to develop and implement a suitable affirmative maintenance bylaw. It should look at the bylaws in effect in other Massachusetts communities such as Worcester for sample language. The SHC will also need to provide residents with information on the effects of such bylaws and advocate for public support. In combination with Sturbridge's existing demolition delay bylaw, an affirmative maintenance bylaw can prevent preservation losses by giving the community time to develop feasible alternatives to demolition.

Local Historic Districts [Long-term]

The SHC should use the recommendations in this Historic Preservation Plan and the results of additional historic survey to determine the feasibility of implementing a Local Historic District or Neighborhood Conservation District in Sturbridge. Particularly important or vulnerable areas such as Fiskdale, St. Anne Shrine, and the Town Common should be prioritized for protection. Single-building Local Historic Districts might be the best approach to protecting isolated individual properties that retain most or all of their historic fabric and are significant in Sturbridge history but are surrounded by other buildings that do not need or lack support for protection. Examples include the former Oxhead Tavern, Otis Block/Blackington Building, Cedar Street Barn, and many of the buildings recommended above as eligible for listing in the National Register. Priority should also be given to properties with recent comprehensive survey documentation, which include most of those recommended in this plan. Survey documentation should provide sufficient information for talking to the general public about a property's significance, determining a district boundary, and administering district guidelines. The existing Town Common National Register Historic District may be the most logical area for the SHC to pursue Local Historic District designation, as it has a well-established historical significance, clearly defined boundary, and strong public support for protection. The SHC may feel, however, that other areas or individual properties are more in need of protection from inappropriate development.

If the SHC decides to explore Local Historic District status for a particular area and/or property, it should conduct initial public outreach to gauge support for such an initiative. Outreach would ideally consist of one-on-one conversations or small neighborhood meetings with the property owners in a potential district. The SHC must provide clear information about what Local Historic District status means, the process for

establishing one, how Sturbridge would develop and implement review guidelines, and most importantly why such protection is recommended. If property owners express support for Local Historic District status, the SHC can approach the Board of Selectmen to form a study committee to prepare a study report and guide the Local Historic District process. The SHC must be prepared to answer the board's questions and concerns and advocate for the initiative. Once the board agrees to establish and appoint a study committee, the committee members should then contact the MHC's Local Government Programs Coordinator for assistance and guidance throughout the process. The MHC's comprehensive guide *Establishing Local Historic Districts* includes sample text to use for drafting Local Historic District bylaws. The SHC should support the study committee's work and continue to engage in public education and outreach to ensure a positive outcome at the Annual Town Meeting.

If the SHC finds that support for Local Historic Districts or Neighborhood Conservation Districts is lacking among Sturbridge residents, it should consider using Preservation Restrictions to protect important or vulnerable properties. As explained in Section 1.2, willing property owners can implement Preservation Restrictions at any time without Town approval. The SHC can hold Preservation Restrictions on non-Town-owned properties, and National Register-listed properties with Preservation Restrictions may qualify as charitable tax deductions for owners.

Protection of Archaeological Resources [Long-term]

After the completion of an archaeological survey and preparation of an archaeological sensitivity map, as recommended above, the Town should adopt a bylaw to protect archaeological resources. An archaeological preservation bylaw allows a local government board, often the historical commission, to review and comment on projects that may impact archaeologically sensitive areas before any proposed construction begins on a property. Contact the MHC for guidance and sample language.

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Appendix A

Resident Survey

Town of Sturbridge

Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan

Community Survey

The Town of Sturbridge is developing a Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan to better recognize, protect, preserve and enhance our historic buildings, villages, landscapes, and other historic resources. The Sturbridge Master Plan of 2011 identifies the preservation of historic places, natural resources, and cultural assets in Sturbridge as the key to maintaining its character and traditions, and managing its growth. Two professional historic surveys were completed in 2017 and 2019 to help identify built historic resources. A Historic Preservation Plan will provide guidance for the next steps in the Town's efforts to preserve historic assets while promoting economic growth.

The Historical Commission and Planning Department will lead the project in collaboration with other Town Boards, Commissions, Committees, and Non-Profit Partners which is funded by the Sturbridge Community Preservation Fund and a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

An important element of this process is to collect input from as many residents and stakeholders as possible. Many residents say the reason they remain or choose to live in Sturbridge is because of its small, historic, New England town "feel". We would like to know what you think contributes to the small, historic, New England town "feel". What about Sturbridge is historic, what has changed since you initially lived here, are there ways to better protect its historic character, have missteps been made, and finally, what does historic preservation mean to you?

The following questions have been designed to gain a better understanding of how you feel and think about preservation of Sturbridge's historical assets. Please answer as best as you can and feel free to clarify your responses where you think it is appropriate. Comments are welcome as they will provide the Historical Commission and Planning Department valuable information towards this effort.

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your input is valuable to the project.

Completing the survey should take no longer than 10–15 minutes.

1. What area of Sturbridge do you live in? (Check one that best fits or add another)

- | | |
|---|---|
| a. <input type="checkbox"/> Arnold Road | i. <input type="checkbox"/> Fiskdale including Streeter Road and Holland Road to Douty |
| b. <input type="checkbox"/> Big Alum Pond Area, including Glendale, Paradise, Mt. Dan, Lake, Hemlock, and Roy streets | j. <input type="checkbox"/> Fiske Hill Road – Lower Area, including Summit, Old Farm, Apple Hill and Williams |
| c. <input type="checkbox"/> Breakneck | k. <input type="checkbox"/> Fiske Hill Road – Upper Area, including McGilpin, Hillside, Wallace, Ridgeview, Orchard, Shepard, River, and Shattuck |
| d. <input type="checkbox"/> Brook Hill | l. <input type="checkbox"/> Leadmine Lake Area, including side streets |
| e. <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Lake Area | m. <input type="checkbox"/> Long Pond Area |
| f. <input type="checkbox"/> Cedar Street Area between Route 20 and Brookfield, including side streets | |
| g. <input type="checkbox"/> Clark Road to the Mass Turnpike, including side streets | |
| h. <input type="checkbox"/> Draper Woods | |

- n. _____ New Boston Road north of the
Turnpike, including side streets
- o. _____ Route 15/Mashapaug Road/Haynes
Street Area
- p. _____ Route 20 from Brimfield Town Line
to Fiskdale
- q. _____ Route 20 and Hall Road (Hobbs
Brook Area)
- r. _____ Route 20 and New Boston Road
Area
- s. _____ Route 49 Area including Ladd,
Podunk, Bushnell, Putnam, etc.
- t. _____ Route 131 Area from Southbridge
Town Line to Town Common Area,
including side streets (Farquhar, Fairview
Park, Turner Lane, etc.)
- u. _____ Route 148 Area to Brookfield Town
Line including side streets
- v. _____ South Pond Area
- w. _____ Stallion Hill, Shumway, Stearns,
Finlay, Douty
- x. _____ Sturbridge Hills
- y. _____ Sturbridge Retirement Cooperative
- z. _____ Town Common Area including side
streets
- aa. _____ The Preserve
- bb. _____ The Sanctuary
- cc. _____ The Highlands
- dd. _____ Walker Pond Area
- ee. _____ Other: _____

2. Do you rent or own your home/property? (check one below)
- a. ☐ Own
 - b. ☐ Rent
3. Which of the following options best characterizes you? (check all that apply)
- a. ☐ Owner of a historic home
 - b. ☐ Owner of a non-historic home/condo
 - c. ☐ Commercial property owner
 - d. ☐ Renter (residential)
 - e. ☐ Renter (commercial)
 - f. ☐ Other: _____
4. How long have you lived in Sturbridge (check one below)?
- a. ☐ Less than 4 years
 - b. ☐ 4 to 9 years
 - c. ☐ 10 to 19 years
 - d. ☐ 20 to 30 years
 - e. ☐ More than 30 years
 - f. ☐ Do not live in Sturbridge
5. What is your age group?
- a. ☐ 18–24
 - b. ☐ 25–34
 - c. ☐ 35–44
 - d. ☐ 45–54
 - e. ☐ 55–64
 - f. ☐ 65 and over
6. Do you consider your neighborhood or area to be historic or to have a distinct historic character?
(Check one)
- a. ☐ Yes
 - b. ☐ No
 - c. ☐ I don't know
7. What areas of Sturbridge do you think have a strong history or historic character? (Name up to three, which need not be already recognized, such as listed in the National Register.)
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
8. Please explain what historic preservation is to you. _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

9. What makes up the Town's historic character or "New England feel," and what do you think of when you hear about historic preservation in Sturbridge? (Please explain below and check all that apply.)

- a. ☐ Historic villages (i.e. Fiskdale, Snellville, Town Common area, etc.)
 - b. ☐ Historic corridors (i.e. Route 20/Main Street, Worcester-Stafford Turnpike/Charlton Street, New Boston Road, Fiske Hill Road, Douty Road, etc.)
 - c. ☐ Historic homes (inventoried throughout the Town)
 - d. ☐ Municipal and civic buildings (i.e. Town Hall, Senior Center, Joshua Hyde Library, etc.)
 - e. ☐ Religious properties (i.e., Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, St. Anne & St. Patrick Parish Complex, etc.)
 - f. ☐ Publicly accessible historic buildings, museums, and sites (Old Sturbridge Village, Publick House, Blackington Building, Grand Trunk Railroad and Heins Farm trails, etc.)
 - g. ☐ Community landscapes (i.e. Sturbridge Town Common, Fiskdale ballfield/Turner's Field, historic cemeteries, etc.)
 - h. ☐ Agricultural landscapes (including farmsteads, outbuildings, orchards, and fields)
 - i. ☐ Natural landscapes (such as the Quinebaug River, Long and Big Alum ponds, Leadmine and Westville lakes, vernal pools, wetlands, and glacial features)
 - j. ☐ Indigenous cultural sites
 - k. ☐ Archaeological resources (including Tantiusques, Camp Robinson Crusoe, etc.)
 - l. ☐ Historic mill sites (Fiskdale Upper and Lower mills, Snell Manufacturing Company, etc.)
 - m. ☐ Stone walls and other remnant historic landscape features
 - n. ☐ Scenic roads (Fiske Hill Road, Holland Road, Podunk Road, Stallion Hill Road, etc.)
 - o. ☐ Stories, artifacts and historic documents about Sturbridge's history
 - p. ☐ Other: _____
10. Which historic resources or places in Sturbridge are your favorites? (List up to three)
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
11. What 3 words come to mind when you think of your own experience of Sturbridge's historic character? (Please limit to one-word answers)
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
12. Would you live in a historic building, village, or area if you could? (Check one)
- a. ☐ Yes
 - b. ☐ Yes, I already do
 - c. ☐ No
 - d. ☐ I don't know
 - a. ☐ Other: _____

13. If you answered yes, or yes you already do, to Question 12, why?

14. If you answered yes, or you already do, to Question 12, what improvements would you like to see in your historic village or area?

15. If you answered no, or I don't know, to Question 12, what changes, if any, would make a historic building, village, or area more attractive for you to want to live there?

16. What types of historic resources do you think are most at risk in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)

- a. ☐ Historic homes
- b. ☐ Historic barns
- c. ☐ Historic villages
- d. ☐ Commercial corridors/areas
- e. ☐ Municipal and civic buildings
- f. ☐ Historic religious properties
- g. ☐ Landscapes
- h. ☐ Cemeteries, parks, and public spaces
- i. ☐ Agricultural areas
- j. ☐ Mill sites
- k. ☐ Lake-side communities/lake houses
- l. ☐ Historic documents and stories
- m. ☐ Archaeological resources
- n. ☐ Indigenous cultural sites and resources
- o. ☐ Other: _____
- p. ☐ I'm not concerned about losing historic resources in Sturbridge

17. What do you think causes these historic resources to be at risk? (Check all that apply)

- a. ☐ Growth and development pressure
- b. ☐ Incompatible new construction
- c. ☐ Cost of maintaining a historic property
- d. ☐ Inappropriate changes to older buildings
- e. ☐ Neglect or abandonment of older buildings
- f. ☐ Current local regulations and zoning requirements
- g. ☐ Lack of prioritizing or coordination in local government
- h. ☐ Lack of preservation protections
- i. ☐ Not valued or understood by the community and/or developers
- j. ☐ Negative perceptions about historic preservation
- k. ☐ Inadequate advocacy for historic preservation at the local level
- l. ☐ Limited ability to find information on historic resources/best practices
- m. ☐ Little understanding of why a building or resource is historically significant

- n. ☐ Little understanding or pride in local heritage
 - o. ☐ Other: _____
 - p. ☐ I don't think there are challenges in Sturbridge
18. Which educational and commemorative tools and actions would you like to see used more in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)
- a. ☐ Survey areas and properties and share histories with residents and visitors. (This action shares history but provides no formal protection.)
 - b. ☐ Nominate more areas and properties to the National Register of Historic Places. (This action provides national recognition but no formal protection.)
 - c. ☐ Undertake a town-wide archaeological sensitivity assessment, which is a non-invasive survey conducted by a registered professional archaeologist that determines the likelihood of finding significant archaeological or historical resources (archaeological resources are locations or sites of ancient or historical occupation, subsistence, manufacturing, processing, recreation, agriculture, graves, or other cultural purposes).
 - d. ☐ Digitize and provide online access to information on historic properties and historic documents (note that Town Meeting records from 1738–1945 have been digitized and are available at the Joshua Hyde Public Library).
 - e. ☐ Educational programs on historic places and the history of Sturbridge.
 - f. ☐ Walking tours of historic villages and other areas.
 - g. ☐ Coordinated interpretive exhibits and other media in historic areas, along trails, and in natural landscapes.
 - h. ☐ Community events that focus on Sturbridge's local history and culture.
 - i. ☐ Provide more information on the appropriate treatment of historic buildings
 - j. ☐ Provide information on energy efficiency of and for historic buildings.
 - k. ☐ Other: _____
 - l. ☐ I don't know.
 - m. ☐ I don't think we need further educational or commemorative action on historic preservation in Sturbridge.
19. Which regulatory or financial tools and actions would you like to see amended or used more in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)
- a. ☐ Proactive plan for commercial areas that includes incorporation of historic properties into proposed new development.
 - b. ☐ Zoning bylaw and subdivision regulation language that encourages the preservation, rehabilitation, and (where appropriate) adaptive reuse of historic properties.
 - c. ☐ Designate more National Register districts (this action does not provide formal protection to historic resources, but can help make the case for establishing local historic districts).
 - d. ☐ Promote the Community Preservation Act, including holding educational/outreach programs to help people understand how it benefits the town.
20. Which regulatory or financial tools and actions that are not already in use would you like to see adopted or considered for adoption in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)
- a. ☐ Designate local historic districts. (This action provides formal protection to historic properties and can prevent demolition of historic resources.)
 - b. ☐ Encourage property owners to establish single-property historic districts. (This action provides a vehicle through which property owners can protect properties beyond the period of their ownership.)

- c. _____ Implement advisory design review measures for historic buildings outside of local historic districts. (This action provides an opportunity to advise on proposed changes to historic building fabric and sympathetic treatments but may not be mandatory.)
 - d. _____ Implement bylaws to prevent property owners from allowing buildings to degrade over time, leading to demolition (called an Affirmative Maintenance Bylaw, this action ensures property owners care for Sturbridge's historic buildings.)
 - e. _____. Implement bylaws to protect archaeological resources, such as locations or site of ancient or historical occupation, subsistence, manufacturing, processing, recreation, agriculture, graves, or other cultural purposes (This bylaw would permit a review of proposed projects that would disturb areas that might have a high archaeological sensitivity, or number of archaeological resources, based on the results of a town-wide archaeological sensitivity survey).
 - f. _____ Provide/implement local grants and/or low-interest loan program for private owners of historic properties. (Would require legal owner commitment for the property's continued preservation and protection.)
 - g. _____ Other: _____
 - h. _____ I don't know.
 - i. _____ I don't think we need further regulatory or financial action on historic preservation in Sturbridge.
21. Are there any areas or properties in Sturbridge you think should be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places? This action provides national recognition, but no formal protection. (Note that the Town Common and surrounding properties, the Oliver Wight House, and the Tantiusques Reservation are already listed in the National Register.)
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____ No, I do not think the Town should nominate any areas or properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
 - e. _____ I don't know.
22. Are there any specific areas you think should be designated as local historic districts? Local historic districts provide formal protection to historic resources and can prevent demolition of historic properties.
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____ No, I do not think the Town should facilitate the creation of any local historic districts.
 - e. _____ I don't know.
23. Historic Preservation in Sturbridge: Please rate your level of satisfaction on each of the items below. (Number 1-low rating through 4-high rating; 0-I don't know)
- a. _____ Preservation in Sturbridge reflects the importance of historic resources to the Town's identity and character
 - b. _____ Preservation in Sturbridge reflects the importance of the landscape to the Town's identity and character
 - c. _____ Familiarity with the Town's historic preservation oversight
 - d. _____ Overall effectiveness of the Town's historic preservation tools and efforts
 - e. _____ Overall ability to feel informed about local historic preservation issues
 - f. _____ Overall ability to feel informed about history topics and events

- g. _____ Overall ability to participate in Town historic preservation oversight processes
- h. _____ Usefulness of the Town's website in supporting my needs for engaging in historic preservation
- i. _____ Other: _____

24. Do you have any other thoughts or concerns about historic preservation in Sturbridge that you would like to share? Feel free to write as much as you'd like.

Appendix B
Collated Public Survey Answers

Note: For questions where respondents were asked to rank choices, the median for each choice has been entered.

Town of Sturbridge Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan Community Survey

The Town of Sturbridge is developing a Community-Wide Historic Preservation Plan to better recognize, protect, preserve and enhance our historic buildings, villages, landscapes, and other historic resources. The Sturbridge Master Plan of 2011 identifies the preservation of historic places, natural resources, and cultural assets in Sturbridge as the key to maintaining its character and traditions and managing its growth. Two professional historic surveys were completed in 2017 and 2019 to help identify built historic resources. A Historic Preservation Plan will provide guidance for the next steps in the Town's efforts to preserve historic assets while promoting economic growth.

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The following questions have been designed to gain a better understanding of how you feel and think about preservation of Sturbridge's historical assets. Please answer as best as you can and feel free to clarify your responses where you think it is appropriate. Comments are welcome as they will provide the Historical Commission and Planning Department valuable information towards this effort.

Thank you for participating in our survey! Your input is valuable to the project.

Completing the survey should take no longer than 10–15 minutes.

1. What area of Sturbridge do you live in? (Check one that best fits or add another)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. <u>1</u> Arnold Road b. <u>5</u> Big Alum Pond Area, including Glendale, Paradise, Mt. Dan, Lake, Hemlock, and Roy streets. c. <u>1</u> Breakneck d. <u>1</u> Brook Hill e. <u>4</u> Cedar Lake Area f. <u>10</u> Cedar Street Area between Route 20 and Brookfield, including side streets. g. <u>1</u> Clark Road to the Mass Turnpike, including side streets. h. <u>2</u> Draper Woods i. <u>5</u> Fiskdale including Streeter Road and Holland Road to Doudy j. <u>3</u> Fiske Hill Road – Lower Area, including Summit, Old Farm, Apple Hill and Williams k. <u>9</u> Fiske Hill Road – Upper Area, including McGilpin, Hillside, Wallace, Ridgeview, Orchard, Shepard, River, and Shattuck l. <u>4</u> Leadmine Lake Area, including side streets. m. <u> </u> Long Pond Area n. <u>2</u> New Boston Road north of the Turnpike, including side streets. o. <u>2</u> Route 15/Mashapaug Road/Haynes Street Area 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> p. <u> </u> Route 20 from Brimfield Town Line to Fiskdale q. <u>3</u> Route 20 and Hall Road (Hobbs Brook Area) r. <u> </u> Route 20 and New Boston Road Area s. <u> </u> Route 49 Area including Ladd, Podunk, Bushnell, Putnam, etc. t. <u>7</u> Route 131 Area from Southbridge Town Line to Town Common Area, including side streets (Farquhar, Fairview Park, Turner Lane, etc.) u. <u>3</u> Route 148 Area to Brookfield Town Line including side streets. v. <u>2</u> South Pond Area w. <u>1</u> Stallion Hill, Shumway, Stearns, Finlay, Doudy x. <u>1</u> Sturbridge Hills y. <u> </u> Sturbridge Retirement Cooperative z. <u>3</u> Town Common Area including side streets. aa. <u>1</u> The Preserve bb. <u> </u> The Sanctuary cc. <u> </u> The Highlands dd. <u>3</u> Walker Pond Area ee. <u>1</u> Other: Allen Rd. <u>1</u> Other: Charlton <u>1</u> Other: Cooper Rd. <u>2</u> Other: Out of Town
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2. Do you rent or own your home/property? (Check one below)
 - a. 72 Own
 - b. 7 Rent

3. Which of the following options best characterizes you? (Check all that apply)
 - a. 8 Owner of a historic home
 - b. 64 Owner of a non-historic home/condo
 - c. 4 Commercial property owners
 - d. 4 Renter (residential)
 - e. 2 Renter (commercial)
 - f. Other: _____

4. How long have you lived in Sturbridge (check one below)?
 - a. 8 Less than 4 years
 - b. 7 4 to 9 years
 - c. 17 10 to 19 years
 - d. 12 20 to 30 years
 - e. 32 More than 30 years
 - f. 3 Do not live in Sturbridge.

5. What is your age group?
- 18–24
 - 3 25–34
 - 12 35–44
 - 9 45–54
 - 21 55–64
 - 34 65 and over
6. Do you consider your neighborhood or area to be historic or to have a distinct historic character? (Check one)
- 28 Yes
 - 43 No
 - 7 I don't know.

7. What areas of Sturbridge do you think have a strong history or historic character? (Name up to three, which need not be already recognized, such as listed in the National Register.)

<u> 5 </u> Blackington	<u> 1 </u> McGilpin Rd
<u> 1 </u> Blackstone	<u> 7 </u> Mill areas
<u> 1 </u> Brookfield Rd	<u> 1 </u> Native American land
<u> 1 </u> Cedar Lake Beach Area	<u> 17 </u> OSV
and surrounding green spaces,	<u> 1 </u> Podunk
<u> 6 </u> Cemeteries	<u> 11 </u> Publick House
<u> 1 </u> Farquhar Rd.	<u> 1 </u> Quinnebaug River Area
<u> 1 </u> Federated Church	<u> 3 </u> Rte. 131
<u> 19 </u> Fiskdale	<u> 9 </u> Rte. 20
<u> 7 </u> Fiske Hill	<u> 1 </u> Snellville
<u> 1 </u> Flats	<u> 1 </u> Sturbridge fairgrounds
<u> 1 </u> Grand Trunk Trails	<u> 1 </u> Table 3
<u> 1 </u> Haye St area	<u> 1 </u> Tannery
<u> 1 </u> Historic farm	<u> 54 </u> The Common
<u> 1 </u> Hoods Brook Area	<u> 1 </u> The Duck
<u> 1 </u> Host Hotel racetrack and beach	<u> 1 </u> The Village
<u> 6 </u> Leadmine	<u> 1 </u> Town drive
<u> 1 </u> Liberty Allen	<u> 2 </u> Town Hall
<u> 2 </u> Library	<u> 1 </u> Walker Pond
<u> 1 </u> Lincoln House	<u> 1 </u> Wells State Park
<u> 1 </u> Long Pond	<u> 5 </u> Westville
<u> 2 </u> Main St	<u> 1 </u> Wight Farm

8. Please explain what historic preservation is to you.

- Preserving homes and locations in town that have significant historic value.
- Strong financial support to owners of historic properties, to preserve them.
- Retaining historical characteristics
- Preserving actual historic areas while we still allowing growth
- Understanding the actual history of the community -- in terms of geography, the built environment, and the people who have and who do live here, and including the "untold" stories of "everyday" people (inclusive); and working to promote the ongoing understanding of people and place through the conservation and preservation of the geography, built environment, documents, and artifacts that represent that total history, while promoting thoughtful development that respects that history, understanding that we do not live in a static environment.

- Historic preservation is protecting areas (or homes) of historical preservation, celebrating past events, and keeping the spirit of our history alive.
- Preserving historic architecture and features. Something as simple as dentil trim and stone walls, to historic structures.
- Make sure historic buildings and areas stay preserved.
- Has an important connection to the history of the community?
- The preservation of tangible assets that give a community character and retain the story of a structure, place or object.
- HP is keeping old and important properties and areas maintained for future generations to be able to visually comprehend our past heritage. HP is repair, maintenance, restoration, and rehabilitation. Rehab is important to ensure that these buildings can be upgraded for modern living and new use while maintaining a building's, site's, or district's character.
- Maintaining/preserve historical character and history.
- preserving things historic
- Preserving & resurrecting the areas & activities that Sturbridge (as well as Fiskdale, Snellville, etc.) were founded upon.
- A good concept but probably expensive. It'll probably involve a very expensive study to be done and no outcome. The other thing is more extensive regulations to be sure there is no development.
- Identifying, stabilizing, protecting from deterioration, and maintaining natural and manmade structures and landscapes and their features that survive from prior to a specific date and present evidence of an otherwise lost era, and hold intrinsic value for their distinctive character or provide opportunities for insight of a time past that may be either different from or similar to present day life.
- Maintaining the history and character of Sturbridge, minimizing commercial/ industrial buildings/ chain stores/ etc.
- Restoring old Sturbridge buildings & events
- OSV
- Maintaining and safeguarding historic buildings or outside areas, so that they are not lost forever.
- Preservation of landmarks important to the state and town's history
- Maintaining character
- Keeping the small town feel by supporting small businesses and community events.
- Integrity and style of buildings (authenticity)
- Keeping historic buildings and areas true to their original state and maintained to still look fresh and new.
- Restored homes from 50s and before. Commercial areas from 50s and before. Trails
- Maintaining the aesthetic that the town was built with, while providing modern updates as needed. Preserving monument and landmarks. Crating monuments to indicate historic features.
- Intentional preservation of physical attributes of a historic building and/or landscape. May include restrictions on modifications.
- Keeping older buildings historically preserved as much as possible.
- Keeping the historic character
- Our homes in overtaxed town
- having thing look the way they did back when they were built.
- Caring for and preserving historic buildings and the feel and look of the community.
- Keeping the caricature of the town - keeping old houses looking good - mark areas of historical importance
- The village Publick house and common are enough the town needs to move forward.
- Acknowledging historical areas and not destroying them
- to me, historic preservation is the attempt to retain and preserve certain structures in town with significant historic value to the town.
- "Respecting the history of an area, the age and use of properties - the story behind the area.

- Respecting historical homes, historical properties, historical public buildings, historical land uses, and historical architecture.
 - Upkeep of historic properties consisting of house, buildings and land.
 - Old style
 - Maintaining the existing character of the formal & extended Common area and open space throughout town.
 - To not only preserve the oldest buildings, but the overall small-town feeling (not being overcrowded and saving the green areas and natural atmosphere of a small town), and not allowing commercialization to intrude, overtake, and destroy what we love about our town.
 - Protecting things that were influential in the Town development.
 - It is keeping the integrity of antique buildings and respecting the style of historic property and buildings, using quality materials and paying attention to the architecture and layout of a property.
 - Reusing historic buildings for new purposes versus demolishing them (i.e., Mary Wells School apartments)
 - Honoring the people of the past, what they built, how they lived while still providing the infrastructure and space for people living today and their needs.
 - keeping the character of properties that the town has control over
 - Keeping alive history
 - Retaining the "character" of a building or area as to reflect a bygone era or a reflection of a certain period of time in the early stages or evolution of a town or space.
 - Preserving those structures will provide a historic perspective of the area.
 - Restoring old building
 - "Keeping older buildings, especially those with steeples, interesting architecture, rooftop-variety, and riverfront space. Preventing development that interferes with those assets and views of those assets.
 - Keeping the buildings looks the same, signs should not be lit or tacky and roads not widened.
 - Preserving an area for future generations to understand their place in society and history.
 - Educating residents and visitors of the historic significance of historic buildings, neighborhoods, cemeteries, farms
 - preserving property in town that is historical or at least recognizing it with an historical marker.
 - identifying areas that can be proven to have important people, relatives or events whether or not a building still exists on the site. The most prominent location related to each of these topics should be preserved.
 - Preserving the things that have survived over the years that show what the Town - structures, foundations, landscapes and scenic views - was like in the past.
 - Remembering something of importance, rather than just something that occurred.
 - Preserving beauty in nature, culture and architecture.
 - preserving as much as possible, the early homes and barns, etc. that made up the founding of our town.
 - Preserving original buildings and landscape such that it was years ago.
 - The preservation of historic homes, areas, and buildings such as senior center, Millyard, Blackington building, artifacts, landscape, and documents
 - Protection of historic properties and signage where appropriate. Protect those areas.
 - Rte. 20 was a quaint area of local shops, and I think we've lost that to an area of yuppie restaurants.
 - Protect our ancestral homelands.
 - To keep the integrity of the historic buildings in town.
 - Very important so future residents will know the past.
9. What makes up the Town's historic character or "New England feel," and what do you think of when you hear about historic preservation in Sturbridge? (Please explain below and check all that apply.)
- OSV is largest factor and around the commo.
 - Our very restrictive commercial zoning
 - The historical buildings and uncluttered landscape

- Maintaining the common area, encouraging historic home restoration, and assisting financially.
- Really the only section of Sturbridge I would call historical is the common. The town has a very NE feel but I'm concerned that people use historical preservation to block any changes. Sturbridge is not "quaint", we have 3 Dunkin Donuts, 3 Subways and 2 Burger Kings. We need to invest in smart development and broaden our commercial tax base. We are going backwards.
- The historic character of Sturbridge includes the various historic buildings -- municipal/public, religious, commercial and industrial, and private homes; historic landscapes -- open spaces/agricultural lands, Town Common, Main Street Fiskdale, and burial grounds. Historic preservation includes the inventorying of these resources, a plan for the conservation and preservation of these resources -- with a priority listing, and understanding that it is not possible nor reasonable to keep or "save" all resources, a plan to creating and maintaining a record of these resources, and methods for informing the public of these resources and the history of the community.
- I know that historic preservation is about protecting the look and character of older homes and areas. Other than the common area, with the beautiful gazebo, the church, library, town hall, and the Publick House, I don't feel like the rest of Sturbridge has 'character' or a New England feel.
- Our Town Common and parts of Main Street in Fiskdale, the Quinebaug River and our landscape of hills filled with forest.
- History of area
- Not much of a need for it. Only two areas are historic in nature: the common area and Blackington building.
- The variety of architectural styles, the traditional Town Common and Government Center and the mill housing in Fiskdale
- Rural character
- Sturbridge is very split - many think of HP as just OSV. But OSV in concept is not preservation - it's almost an amusement park with relocated buildings in a setup they never existed. Getting people to separate that from what the town's or a district's character is really difficult. Also getting designers and builders to understand that keeping just a shell is not true preservation either. Sturbridge's most intact area is around the common. But if you look closely, the commercial corridor is very intact New England town center character as well, despite the highway.
- Buildings and land with historical significance
- The local business, the common, the Public House and OSV
- What originally made the town: industry (mills), agriculture (fairgrounds & farms), and mines?
- Even a single element in a community can quicken residents and visitors generally to ascribe value to it that enables them, in their imaginations, to fill the gaps they sense in life today. That way they can believe, in a near heroic sense, a responsibility to preserve a mythologized, idealized past that leaves out what it was like to go to the dentist once upon a time. A "New England feel" is a made-up notion that gains popularity precisely because it's popular. Actual long ago New Englanders did all they could to shuck their ways in favor of what they saw as progress. They aimed to go forward and nowadays we all look to the past.
- OSV, Publick house, small locally owned shops/ restaurants, trails and conservation land, aesthetically pleasing main streets and downtown.
- OSV
- The character largely comes from the historic buildings, but the outside spaces such as OSV, the cemetery, Leadmine, etc. also contribute greatly. Having the area businesses decorate for holidays absolutely adds to the NE charm. Regarding preservation in Sturbridge, mostly I just say my prayers. Trying to bring things like a horse racing track into town can dramatically shake one's faith.
- The older buildings and frequent town events. I think historic preservation is not only about keeping the features of our older buildings but also keeping the nature of how the town functions.
- Keeping out chain stores and restaurants well supporting small businesses that are unique. Walkability is one thing our town lacks and would be a great contributor to encouraging commerce and tourism.
- "OSV! Quaint downtown with old but well-kept buildings. Avoiding trashy buildings

- with neon lights everyone and businesses packed tightly next to each other. Historic preservation is a perfect balance of buildings (built to appropriate scale), and natural landscapes preserved such as trees, rivers and smaller parking lots."
- Answer to previous question plus a focus on independent businesses and community
- OSV. Senior center, town common, old records located in library, town hall, cemeteries.
- The architecture and scenic routes.
- NOT RT 20, which is ugly and not very New England feely. Some of RT 131, and back roads mostly. Trees, barns, livestock. In Sturbridge, what may appear historic is not necessarily so. If a barn, for instance, has no actual historic value at all, then it is irresponsible to insist a business save it at a huge expense rather than remove it. Preservation must be done using facts and not be wasteful for aesthetics alone.
- OSV, Public house, Fall.
- Rural, small shops, not too much commercial development or traffic. Historic locations, buildings, open space, agricultural fields, etc.
- It's tax free.
- not allowing apartments to be put everywhere, limited chain businesses
- The look of the old homes and historic town common.
- Our common with the church in the middle of town - the old cemeteries, the various stone walls around the town - the old farms --- I think the town has let various old builders destroyed without checking for historical significance.
- village Publick House Common
- The Common and Publick House and the stories about what took place in this town. I think there's a whole group of people trying to recognize the importance of the history of Sturbridge.
- certainly, the type of architecture which may not be common today.
- Open space, beautiful vistas, friendly local shops and small non- chain restaurants
- We need more historical preservation to maintain our distinct New England character to secure our tourism industry and our identity to differentiate us from other towns. We are uniquely fortunate to have a backdrop of beautiful scenic views of our hilly terrain which must be preserved.
- Old character of house and buildings, trim on building, landscape, etc.
- Public house, cemetery
- The small neighborhoods, the trees and open space, the formal common area / town hall / library area
- Trees!!! We love our trees in New England, especially in the Fall!!!
- The Town Common Area
- I think of the design and materials used in the buildings and the style being historic and consistent with each other. The attention to details such as signage and colors that unify a town and give it a character appealing to residents and visitors alike.
- Only the Town Common area seems historic NE to me. Sturbridge has gone with modern retail with its Main Street (Rt 20) years ago which would be difficult to undo.
- I think the architecture of older buildings and well-groomed foliage are the main contributions to the feel of Sturbridge.
- stone walls, no lit signs, colonial style, brick buildings and sidewalk
- New England style architecture, town common, gazebo. Old Sturbridge Village. As a business manager balancing historic "preservation" and the needs of an ongoing business can often be challenging to manage because not everyone who comes to or through Sturbridge is here to expressly experience the past. As a town we need to look forward to remaining vital.
- Open space, historic homes and structures
- The Public House and common
- I think of the town common, places like the Blackington Building and Mill, Town Hall, library, Federated Church, and other (attractive) buildings that date back more than 100 years or so. As far as historic preservation, I think of efforts and funding and seeking grants for restoration, maintenance and protection of

those buildings/areas and areas immediately surrounding. This includes graveyards, especially the graveyard next to the Center Office Building and older farms/fields.

- careful infrastructure and development of business and residents
- Old colonials, common, wooded areas, farms
- The Common is the only area that has "New England feel" because Sturbridge has not emphasized other areas and has allowed historic buildings to be torn down or stripped of their historic assets.
- the buildings, preserving history.
- unfortunately, congested main roads and highways that cut the town into quadrants have all but cancelled the New England feel. The main artery (Rte. 20) is the only way around town. To me I have to say, the lack of a second level of roads both north/south and east/west has overloaded the Main Street and negated charm (with a few GREAT examples scattered around that try to pop). Here's another way of looking at it: where is "Snellville? does anyone know where "Fiskdale" begins and ends?
- Our 18th and 19th century buildings, neighborhoods, landscapes.
- "New England feel". Look at Routes 20 and 131!
- OSV and open spaces.
- Space, trees, byways vs highways, gatherings on the common, our form of town government i.e., town meetings where everyone gets a vote.
- Older homes/buildings
- Well maintained, town buildings, Well
- Quaint is what I think of on historic preservation.
- Sad

- q. 63 Historic villages (i.e., Fiskdale, Snellville, Town Common area, etc.)
- r. 24 Historic corridors (i.e., Route 20/Main Street, Worcester-Stafford Turnpike/Charlton Street, New Boston Road, Fiske Hill Road, Douty Road, etc.)
- s. 56 Historic homes (inventoried throughout the Town)
- t. 53 Municipal and civic buildings (i.e., Town Hall, Senior Center, Joshua Hyde Library, etc.)
- u. 37 Religious properties (i.e., Federated Church of Sturbridge and Fiskdale, St. Anne & St. Patrick Parish Complex, etc.)
- v. 57 Publicly accessible historic buildings, museums, and sites (Old Sturbridge Village, Publick House, Blackington Building, Grand Trunk Railroad and Heins Farm trails, etc.)
- w. 52 Community landscapes (i.e., Sturbridge Town Common, Fiskdale ballfield/Turner's Field, historic cemeteries, etc.)
- x. 34 Agricultural landscapes (including farmsteads, outbuildings, orchards, and fields)
- y. 44 Natural landscapes (such as the Quinebaug River, Long and Big Alum ponds, Leadmine and Westville lakes, vernal pools, wetlands, and glacial features)
- z. 36 Indigenous cultural sites
- aa. 40 Archaeological resources (including Tantiusques, Camp Robinson Crusoe, etc.)
- bb. 49 Historic mill sites (Fiskdale Upper and Lower mills, Snell Manufacturing Company, etc.)
- cc. 56 Stone walls and other remnant historic landscape features
- dd. 38 Scenic roads (Fiske Hill Road, Holland Road, Podunk Road, Stallion Hill Road, etc.)
- ee. 43 Stories, artifacts and historic documents about Sturbridge's history
- ff. Other: _____

10. Which historic resources or places in Sturbridge are your favorites? (List up to three)

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <u>3</u> Blackington Building | <u>1</u> Cedar Lake beach |
| <u>1</u> bodies of water | <u>6</u> Cemeteries |
| <u>1</u> Buildings | <u>1</u> Center School |
| <u>1</u> Cedar Lake | <u>1</u> Community Landscapes |

1 Douty Road
1 East Brimfield Reservoir
2 Federated Church
1 Fiskdale
1 Fiske
2 Forest
1 Heins properties
5 Historic Mills
1 Historic Villages
1 Historical Society Presentations
1 Lakes
7 Leadmine
7 Library
1 Main Street area
2 Old Burial Ground
4 Old Houses

33 Old Sturbridge Village
15 Publick House
1 Quinebaug River
1 records and photos
1 Recreation area
1 Rte. 20 shops and restaurants
1 Rte. 20
1 scenic roads
1 St. Anne/St. Patrick
1 stonewalls
1 The Factory
45 Town Common
1 Town Hall
1 Town website
9 Trails
1 Wells State Park

11. What 3 words come to mind when you think of your own experience of Sturbridge's historic character? (Please limit to one-word answers)

<u>2</u> Accessible	<u>1</u> Family	<u>1</u> Nice
<u>1</u> Aesthetic	<u>1</u> Few	<u>1</u> Not Much Really
<u>1</u> Agriculture	<u>1</u> Forgotten	<u>1</u> Old
<u>1</u> Annoyed	<u>1</u> Friendly	<u>1</u> Old Fashioned Stone Walls
<u>1</u> At-Risk	<u>1</u> Frustrating	<u>3</u> Old Sturbridge Village
<u>1</u> Attractive	<u>1</u> Green	<u>1</u> Overblown
<u>1</u> Authentic	<u>1</u> Groomed	<u>1</u> Overrated
<u>1</u> Awe	<u>1</u> Hands-On	<u>1</u> Overtaxed
<u>1</u> Awesome	<u>2</u> History	<u>2</u> Past
<u>5</u> Beautiful	<u>1</u> Historically Significant	<u>1</u> Peace
<u>3</u> Beauty	<u>1</u> Homes	<u>2</u> Peaceful
<u>1</u> Boring	<u>1</u> Homey	<u>2</u> Preservation
<u>1</u> Buildings	<u>1</u> Important Crossroads	<u>2</u> Pride
<u>2</u> Cemeteries	<u>1</u> Impressive	<u>2</u> Pristine
<u>1</u> Challenging	<u>1</u> Inaccurate	<u>1</u> Proud
<u>1</u> Character	<u>1</u> Inconsistent	<u>1</u> Publick House
<u>7</u> Charming	<u>1</u> Industry	<u>6</u> Quaint
<u>1</u> Classic	<u>1</u> Interesting	<u>1</u> Quiet
<u>1</u> Classic New England Center	<u>1</u> Inviting	<u>2</u> Quintessential
<u>1</u> Colonial	<u>1</u> Keep	<u>1</u> Relaxing
<u>1</u> Commercialized	<u>1</u> Lacking	<u>1</u> Remembered
<u>3</u> Common	<u>2</u> Landscape	<u>2</u> Rural
<u>2</u> Community	<u>1</u> Limited	<u>1</u> Scenic
<u>1</u> Complicated	<u>1</u> Link to The Past	<u>1</u> Setting
<u>1</u> Cozy	<u>1</u> Love	<u>1</u> Small Town Charm
<u>1</u> Culture	<u>2</u> Maintained	<u>1</u> Special
<u>2</u> Educational	<u>1</u> Misleading	<u>1</u> Sporadic
<u>1</u> Environment	<u>1</u> Missed Opportunities	<u>1</u> Spread-Out
<u>1</u> Exercise	<u>1</u> Natural	<u>1</u> Thin
	<u>1</u> New England	

1 Too Little Of
2 Town Common
1 Tradition
1 Tragic Loss
1 Trails

1 Treasured
1 Uncompetitive
3 Unique
1 Unknowledgeable
1 Unprotected

1 Valuable
1 Very Old
1 Walls
1 Well Preserved Old
1 Wonder

12. Would you live in a historic building, village, or area if you could? (Check one)

- e. 32 Yes
f. 10 Yes, I already do
g. 16 No
h. 17 I don't know.
a. 1 Other: Used to

13. If you answered yes, or yes you already do, to Question 12, why?

- Nostalgia
- Love the size and sound structure. Also, the surrounding properties are a distance away.
- The price of my house was excellent when I bought it.
- I consider most of Sturbridge is an historic area. I would live in an historic building if I could afford to maintain the historic character and integrity of the exterior while maintaining a modern, comfortable lifestyle.
- Unique and quality architectural features, such as gorgeous glass in the windows, amazing wood trim throughout the home, old doors with character, exterior architecture, a slate roof is icing on the cake.
- curation and preservation
- born and raised here.
- It helps old buildings (mills) stay intact but have new use!
- Scenic beauty
- Enjoy learning about the historical background.
- I like the proximity to other things at many of our historic neighborhoods.
- Personally, is my style. I don't like all the mcmanions packed into neighborhoods with no land.
- If I like a house, I will just live in it, regardless.
- The architecture is beautiful on some of these properties.
- I enjoy the feel and character of a historic home.
- the character and history the houses hold.
- The feel of being part of history.
- I love history and antiques.
- I love old houses.
- I love the character of historic buildings.
- I used to live in a home on the historic register and in a historic district and I took some pride in that.
- I believe in restoring early buildings.
- Because they are real, not plastic construction and have an interesting character. Also, the scale is more relatable to humans.
- I like the look and usually built better than today's houses.
- People enjoy classic style like my home has.
- I love old homes.
- I modeled my house after one in OSV.
- Homes with unique character and generally quiet neighborhoods
- Feeling connected to the history of an area is as important and feeds feeling connected to the modern community.

- There is so much charm and history in those, and it is wonderful to imagine and mimic the lives that lived there before you.
- I like to feel like I'm preserving a part of history and honoring the past.
- history and character
- love the Hobbs homestead.
- I like where I live.
- Question makes no sense.
- Always been drawn to it.
- I love old buildings (but not the drafts!)
- Simpler times
- Because I think there is more character in the bldgs. and spots

14. If you answered yes, or you already do, to Question 12, what improvements would you like to see in your historic village or area?

- Stronger financial support to property owners
- Benches. Information on history of area buildings, common posted on plaques or museum quality plaques.
- Alternate road parking during events at Common
- Signage noting historic aspects; maintenance of certain aspects -- building exteriors, landscapes, stone walls, etc.
- I think vinyl siding on a historic home is sacrilegious and anything that can be done to avoid that should be considered. Grants awarded to homeowners who will avoid using vinyl or to homeowners willing to replace vinyl siding with wood or some of the composite products that are so close to a wood look and feel, might be a good idea.
- sidewalks and limited traffic
- drainage. less traffic on the Common, i.e., one way on Morse St.
- Multi use commercial & residential in the mills, bring back the fairgrounds, maybe add some history to the annual report so people know that we aren't OSV!
- Traffic off 84 should be changed. Bridge repair
- Maintain and preserve.
- Would be great to be able to easily walk around Big Alum, but that ship has sailed. Otherwise, I don't really want the Big Alum area to change. I would have sold my home and moved from Sturbridge had the racetrack been approved. I don't want to live in Pottersville. I want to live in Bedford Falls.
- Accessibility
- Add more features to an historic area to add to its appeal, like the lights on the common.
- Funding assistance to homebuyers to make updates.
- Area is not historic. Property was subdivided and surrounded by new homes.
- less modernization
- More promotion of our historic area, maybe a driving tour past the homes.
- Marking historical houses so people know where they are.
- More care of some of the historic buildings in town.
- Less traffic, more walkability, more info
- More respect for the integrity of historic brand and the landscape.
- General upkeep
- Shopping village or outlets to bring more to town but off 84.
- I'd like to see wires buried so Main St. is more walkable, open and inviting.
- Don't let historic villages go the way of Rt 20 with too much in the way of modern retail and modern buildings.

- More restoration. There are many beautiful buildings and areas, but they run the risk of being run down and dilapidated without skilled restoration.
 - Some of the houses around the common need a little touch up
 - Nothing comes to mind.
 - None
 - more authenticity when updating the facades.
 - Keep as original as possible.
 - I think this is too late. We've made our area too commercial. We're too anxious to get rid of the old & history.
 - Go back in time.
15. If you answered no, or I don't know, to Question 12, what changes, if any, would make a historic building, village, or area more attractive for you to want to live there?
- Incorporate new and old to bring to 21st century.
 - Outside maintenance
 - Buy the Chamberlain Block, restore it. Build a town history museum, add shops.
 - An unlimited budget to be able to properly upkeep such a home.
 - I did not answer no.
 - Restored
 - none
 - none
 - none
 - Question is too vague. Would not want upkeep of historical properties.
 - Less restrictions on historic properties.
 - Exterior preservation of structures, specifically homes, is simultaneously worthwhile and a straitjacket. Appearing to live in the past and actually doing so is nearly a contradiction.
 - Community site or garden
 - What the surroundings are like
 - I wouldn't be able to afford the renovations to modern lifestyles.
 - I like privacy so not sure I would want to live on the Common, etc.
 - I didn't answer no.
 - Allowance for internal infrastructure modernization, if appropriate
 - more efficient
 - Less density for houses.
 - Too many rules
 - Idk
 - None
 - Nothing
 - Landscape
 - Not sure
 - as long as the building is town owner, non-lit signs.
 - Keep the historic character of the building and update.
 - Nothing ...I do not want to live in the past.
 - I would be concerned about limitations that would prevent me from living in a manner that was most acceptable to me.
 - Updated electrical and plumbing.
 - cohesiveness in the neighborhood

- Living near a "Great Pond" should get more respect as "historic" because they had been owned by the Crown and now the Commonwealth.
- I would not want to be required to request permission to alter my home aesthetics.
- Historic homes, buildings should be expected to preserve the upkeep of the beauty - too many are in need of repair.
- Well maintained. Accessible to all
- up to code

16. What types of historic resources do you think are most at risk in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)

- q. 31 Historic homes
- r. 27 Historic barns
- s. 25 Historic villages
- t. 26 Commercial corridors/areas
- u. 17 Municipal and civic buildings
- v. 10 Historic religious properties
- w. 37 Landscapes
- x. 23 Cemeteries, parks, and public spaces
- y. 23 Agricultural areas
- z. 30 Mill sites
- aa. 11 Lake-side communities/lake houses
- bb. 23 Historic documents and stories
- cc. 20 Archaeological resources
- dd. 26 Indigenous cultural sites and resources
- ee. 1 Other: I Don't Know
- 1 Other: I Think We Are Doing Ok
- 1 Other: Vintage Roads
- ff. 7 I'm not concerned about losing historic resources in Sturbridge.

17. What do you think causes these historic resources to be at risk? (Check all that apply)

- q. 49 Growth and development pressure
- r. 31 Incompatible new construction
- s. 41 Cost of maintaining a historic property
- t. 25 Inappropriate changes to older buildings
- u. 42 Neglect or abandonment of older buildings
- v. 14 Current local regulations and zoning requirements
- w. 20 Lack of prioritizing or coordination in local government
- x. 20 Lack of preservation protections
- y. 40 Not valued or understood by the community and/or developers.
- z. 17 Negative perceptions about historic preservation
- aa. 20 Inadequate advocacies for historic preservation at the local level
- bb. 8 Limited abilities to find information on historic resources/best practices.
- cc. 26 Little understanding of why a building or resource is historically significant.
- dd. 22 Little understanding or pride in local heritage
- ee. Other: _____
- ff. 3 I don't think there are challenges in Sturbridge.

18. Which educational and commemorative tools and actions would you like to see used more in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)

- n. 25 Survey areas and properties and share histories with residents and visitors. (This action shares history but provides no formal protection.)

- o. 21 Nominate more areas and properties to the National Register of Historic Places. (This action provides national recognition but no formal protection.)
- p. 29 Undertake a town-wide archaeological sensitivity assessment, which is a non-invasive survey conducted by a registered professional archaeologist that determines the likelihood of finding significant archaeological or historical resources (archaeological resources are locations or sites of ancient or historical occupation, subsistence, manufacturing, processing, recreation, agriculture, graves, or other cultural purposes).
- q. 32 Digitize and provide online access to information on historic properties and historic documents (note that Town Meeting records from 1738–1945 have been digitized and are available at the Joshua Hyde Public Library).
- r. 42 Educational programs on historic places and the history of Sturbridge.
- s. 41 Walking tours of historic villages and other areas.
- t. 22 Coordinated interpretive exhibits and other media in historic areas, along trails, and in natural landscapes.
- u. 42 Community events that focus on Sturbridge’s local history and culture.
- v. 18 Provide more information on the appropriate treatment of historic buildings.
- w. 20 Provide information on energy efficiency of and for historic buildings.
- x. 1 Other: A community center & a fairgrounds site for agricultural activities
1 Other: A Sturbridge historical festival or market
1 Other: Historic District Commission and Guidelines created seals or signage for historic areas and buildings.
1 Other: Seek grants and other funding to help owners of historic property afford to keep their property.
- y. 2 I don’t know.
- z. 4 I don’t think we need further educational or commemorative action on historic preservation in Sturbridge.

19. Which regulatory or financial tools and actions would you like to see amended or used more in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)

- a. 37 Proactive plans for commercial areas that includes incorporation of historic properties into proposed new development.
- b. 40 Zoning bylaw and subdivision regulation language that encourages the preservation, rehabilitation, and (where appropriate) adaptive reuse of historic properties.
- c. 27 Designate more National Register districts (this action does not provide formal protection to historic resources but can help make the case for establishing local historic districts).
- d. 38 Promote the Community Preservation Act, including holding educational/outreach programs to help people understand how it benefits the town.

20. Which regulatory or financial tools and actions that are not already in use would you like to see adopted or considered for adoption in Sturbridge? (Check all that apply)

- a. 32 Designate local historic districts. (This action provides formal protection to historic properties and can prevent demolition of historic resources.)
- b. 25 Encourage property owners to establish single-property historic districts. (This action provides a vehicle through which property owners can protect properties beyond the period of their ownership.)
- c. 23 Implement advisory design review measures for historic buildings outside of local historic districts. (This action provides an opportunity to advise on proposed changes to historic building fabric and sympathetic treatments but may not be mandatory.)
- d. 26 Implement bylaws to prevent property owners from allowing buildings to degrade over time, leading to demolition (called an Affirmative Maintenance Bylaw, this action ensures property owners care for Sturbridge’s historic buildings.)

- e. 25 Implement bylaws to protect archaeological resources, such as locations or site of ancient or historical occupation, subsistence, manufacturing, processing, recreation, agriculture, graves, or other cultural purposes (This bylaw would permit a review of proposed projects that would disturb areas that might have a high archaeological sensitivity, or number of archaeological resources, based on the results of a town-wide archaeological sensitivity survey).
- f. 34 Provide/implement local grants and/or low-interest loan program for private owners of historic properties. (Would require legal owner commitment for the property's continued preservation and protection.)
- g. 1 Other: National Main Street designation and funding
1 Other: Not a fan of telling people what to do with their property within reason.
1 Other: Pay taxes.
2 Other: Incentives
- h. 8 I don't know.
- i. 11 I don't think we need further regulatory or financial action on historic preservation in Sturbridge.

21. Are there any areas or properties in Sturbridge you think should be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places? This action provides national recognition, but no formal protection. (Note that the Town Common and surrounding properties, the Oliver Wight House, and the Tantiusques Reservation are already listed in the National Register.)

1 518 Main Street Nursery School
5 Blackington bldg.
2 Cemeteries
4 Fiskdale
1 Fiske hill
1 Hayloft Stepper barn
1 Lincoln house
4 Mills

1 north cemetery
1 Oliver Wright House
1 OSV
1 Publick House
1 Snellville
1 St. Anne Shrine
1 stone wall
1 Town Common

- f. 10 No, I do not think the Town should nominate any areas or properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
- g. 4 I don't know.

22. Are there any specific areas you think should be designated as local historic districts? Local historic districts provide formal protection to historic resources and can prevent demolition of historic properties.

1 Blackington Building
1 Cedar Street Barn
5 Fiskdale
1 Public House
1 St. Anne Shrine
7 The Common

- f. 12 No, I do not think the Town should facilitate the creation of any local historic districts.
- g. 8 I don't know.

23. Historic Preservation in Sturbridge: Please rate your level of satisfaction on each of the items below. (Number 1-low rating through 4-high rating; 0-I don't know)

- j. 3 Preservation in Sturbridge reflects the importance of historic resources to the Town's identity and character.
- k. 3 Preservation in Sturbridge reflects the importance of the landscape to the Town's identity and character.
- l. 1 Familiarity with the Town's historic preservation oversight
- m. 2 Overall effectiveness of the Town's historic preservation tools and efforts
- n. 2 Overall ability to feel informed about local historic preservation issues.
- o. 2 Overall ability to feel informed about history topics and events.
- p. 2 Overall ability to participate in Town historic preservation oversight processes.
- q. 1 Usefulness of the Town's website in supporting my needs for engaging in historic preservation
- r. 0 Other: _____

24. Do you have any other thoughts or concerns about historic preservation in Sturbridge that you would like to share? Feel free to write as much as you'd like.

- Proper, and readable signage would be good.
- Please don't allow "preservation" stop development.
- I feel proud that we have a Historic Commission that cares about important historic preservation projects in Sturbridge. I appreciate that Ms. Jean Bubon has shared guidance to the Historic Commission, as they search for grants to continue research and support of preservation. I am extremely grateful of Mr. Bob Briere's efforts towards preserving the Old Burial Ground and North Cemetery. The CPA is a valuable tool, which helped to preserve our Town Hall and restore our Center School. I appreciate that town residents have put their CPA funds to good use for so many important historic projects since its adoption in 2001.
- Historic Preservation in Sturbridge has already gone too far when CVS was held up for months when the result was known within days.
- CPA projects should get formal historic reviews too to make sure they are compliant.
- It is very important to maintain our character but within ability to grow the community.
- Too often it delays progress.
- We need to bridge the old and the new. For example, drive-throughs should be safely allowed regardless of area as should residential & commercial construction & use while preserving the integrity of the town's history. People need to understand that OSV came YEARS after Sturbridge and that is a museum not an homage to Sturbridge; they need to be better informed on what the common and fairgrounds and mills and mines were used for and how these things are our true history!
- It's a good concept but knowing Sturbridge it will add to taxes. The senior center should have been preserved and not expanded at a ridiculous cost. A new one should have been built.
- There is no Great Wall of China surrounding Sturbridge. Particularly Charlton's aggressive construction will call for more services and residences in Sturbridge. So will stepped up rail service in Worcester and environs. McDonalds, Burger King, the branded motels, Panera and others set today's tone, beginning 45 years ago. The historic preservation horse is out of the barn. Northborough to Brimfield is on its way to becoming another MetroWest. Twenty years ago, Sturbridge missed an opportunity to host high-tech and medical research facilities. The rail-trail work is welcome, but it's not the Presidential Range of New Hampshire nor the Berkshires. By tourist-based taxes paid over the years, Sturbridge is not a tourist community; that idea is a unicorn that is talked of, believed in and non-existent. Culturally, the Town lacks a critical mass, unlike the Cape and islands, Boston area and Western Mass. Central mass, figuratively and literally, is just in between.

- Please build a fairground for town ag events & community gatherings such a farmers' markets etc.
- What happened to the exhibition hall at the old Fairgrounds speaks volumes.
- We need to be stricter about what businesses come in and how they present their establishment. I.e. lights and sign designs
- I think we are doing fine.
- This was mentioned above, but I think guided tours are great! I have participated in annual historic walks in other towns and really enjoyed the presentation and facts provided. I've also participated in "spook walks" that identify rumored haunted properties and cemeteries.
- Be mindful of adding new and/or extra burdens on residents and businesses.
- Too many homes were let in by way of e-1 pumps they could have remained open land without the town having to buy it. trails displaced wildlife.
- "No central place for tourists to view info, history, events, etc. A designated building, special area at the library, emphasis in town hall, etc. could be a possibility. A self-guided walking tour of the Fiskdale area.
- Historic Preservation is absolutely necessary to maintain our quality of life and our economic well-being.
- Build a quant shopping village or outlets off 84.
- The amount of traffic is a concern. The state should be petitioned to have other towns adjacent to the Mass Pike have their own access to the Pike to cut down on traffic through Sturbridge. The traffic increase should be a shared burden.
- The character of the town can be only one part of a multi-part plan to have people visit Sturbridge. I'm sure the growing hospitality and wedding/function business does more to fill hotel rooms and restaurants bringing business into town than the perceived historic aesthetic of the town. OSV has played a large role in past and will continue to move forward but I'm not sure a focus on the historic aspect of the town will continue to be embraced by future generations.
- There is a need to balance historical preservation with the need for community growth and expanded economic opportunity for the Town.
- I think it is vitally important, and that funding to help assist keeping it is just as important as the sentiment to keep it.
- Would love a museum for the town's history and stories, OSV is not really specific to Sturbridge.
- Residents seem to think OSV is all that is required to be considered a town that values its history.
- I believe that when the town was chartered the rule was to habitat a specific number of lots (such as x amount of 7 acre lots for family homes, and x number of 100-acre plots for community use). these original layouts should recognize regardless of what is on them today. That's a form of community preservation (knowing the town's roots)
- What I see is a situation in which people are trying to create "history" that wasn't there. Some old buildings are just that...old buildings. That does not make them historical. We need fewer people telling others what they have to do/believe. Driving down Rtes. 131 and 20 makes one question whether this is a "historical town". Old Sturbridge Village (which never was real) does not make Sturbridge a "historic" town. Have people who have studied Sturbridge submit their input, i.e., Brian Burns and Douglas Quigley.
- It saddens me to see old buildings torn down to build CVS and Cumberland Farms on Rt. 20The ability to act residents actually interested in their town rather than themselves.

