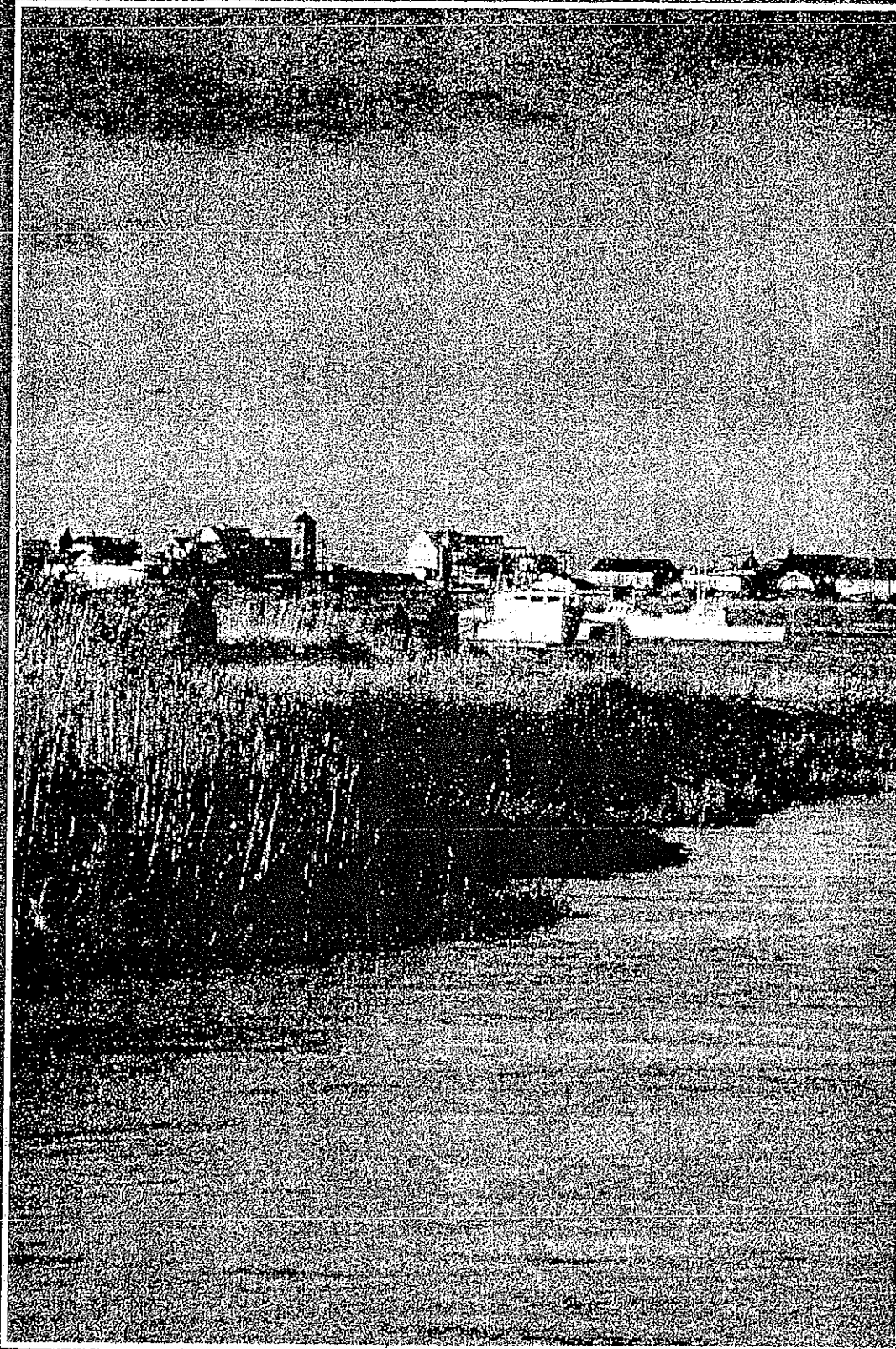


# *THE TOWNSCAPE PLAN*

*Key*



*A Comprehensive Plan  
for the Town of Marshfield, MA*

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The cover photograph was provided courtesy of Vin Horrigan. Mr. Horrigan is a resident of the town and one of the area's most accomplished professional landscape photographers.

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***PART ONE: TOWNWIDE POLICIES AND STRATEGIES***

# *TOWNSCAPE POLICIES & STRATEGIES*

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There is clearly a need for an updated Comprehensive Plan in Marshfield. Our community is nearing the end of its basic building and development period. Soon, the majority of the unprotected open land will house more families and businesses. As we approach this next phase in our growth as a community, now is the time to anticipate what we want our town to look and feel like in twenty years. What will be Marshfield's *townscape* in the year 2020?

The discussion that follows presents a summary of the work performed in the course of preparing the Comprehensive Plan. These critical issues lay the foundation for the vi-

sion statement and subsequent goals, policies and recommendations that follow. Finally, the most essential actions we must take as a Town are woven into an integrated strategy that is Marshfield's core work program for the life of the Plan. Together, these various pieces answer three central questions:

*What type of community can we be in the future?*

*Can the Plan lay out a path to take us toward our preferred future?*

*What work must be done to reach that future?*



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## *Summary of Critical Issues*

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### *The Landscape*

Marshfield's character is based on two fundamental landscape features: the coast and the forested, formerly agricultural inland. The former is largely built out; the latter is where the majority of change will occur in the next two decades:

The feature in Marshfield's landscape most sensitive to change from future development will be the few remaining fields and woodlands. As farming is no longer highly economically viable, housing will be the use that will bring owners the greatest financial return. While some owners may hold fields open due to a commitment to farming and the preservation of the landscape, many will not.

The rural roadscape is of great importance, but of somewhat less sensitivity than the open fields. The high level of dense vegetation and the tendency of builders to place homes away from the road mean that the vegetated road edge will likely remain in most areas. Thus, the visual experience along most inland roads will also be maintained despite the presence of more houses.

Of greater threat to the roadscape than more homes will be road modifications performed to improve safety and/or increase road capacity. Such changes must be handled with great care so as to not lose the rural, tree-lined qualities of many of the Town's roads.



*The few remaining fields and woodlands are where the majority of change in Marshfield's landscape will occur.*

The coast has largely been developed, but there is the potential in some areas for infill construction which might obscure views of the ocean and coastal marshes or create a sense of inappropriately high densities.

The historic built landscape of the old villages is largely intact. The same is true for most of the outlying historic structures - homes, barns, civic buildings and churches. Marshfield has done well in preserving these structures. Generally speaking, lot size limitations, zoning requirements and an apparent high level of respect for local history all are working together to protect the Town's historic landscape. Despite previous good efforts, continued attention must be paid to this issue in the future.

### *Managing Land Uses*

The Town's land use pattern will remain stable into the future. This is due to a combination of factors. First, there is no desire on the part of residents to see dramatic change. Second, the majority of remaining vacant land lies within areas that are both zoned for housing and are most suitable for housing versus other uses. Third, the limited number of east-west routes and north-south routes shapes the

town's land use pattern to a dramatic degree and this road system will not change.

The one exception to this condition is the Enterprise Drive area. There is ample vacant land and a variety of potential uses. Change will occur here.

The rate of residential growth is steady but not overwhelming. Buildout will be reached within a few decades.

Route 139 traffic congestion is the major factor that will control land use policy along the Route 139 corridor. Residents feel strongly that further congestion must be avoided. This objective will strongly influence the choice of land uses in the Enterprise Drive area.

Residents are very concerned with improving the aesthetics of current commercial areas. This includes the Downtown, the Route 139 corridor and Brant Rock. While there has not been dramatic change in the other villages there are concerns that the Town manage development carefully in these areas as well as to protect and enhance their character.

The major land use choices facing the Town will be shaping Enterprise Drive, reinforcing the Downtown and carefully controlling the aesthetics of future development and redevelopment, particularly commercial and industrial development.

### *Circulation*

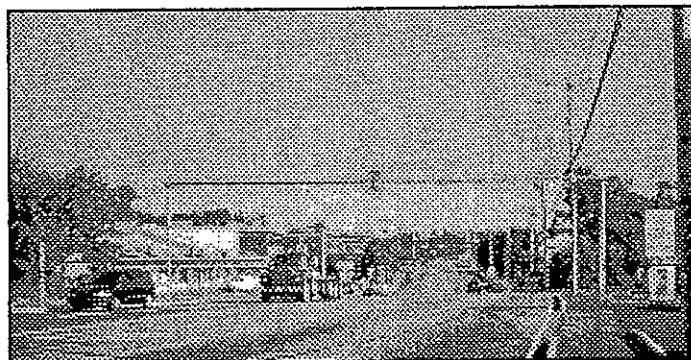
While there are many local and area-specific circulation problems in Marshfield, it is clear that the predominant concerns for a comprehensive plan are those relating to town-wide issues which have a direct impact on all residents and visitors.

A major focus of these concerns is Route 139. As previously noted, this route is subject to

significant traffic congestion, mainly as a result of the absence of alternative east-west routes, and the concentration of present and future commercial and industrial development. Similarly, there is concern about increasing demand on the limited north-south routes, and the impact of the planned Greenbush commuter rail service.

The absence of alternate east-west routes places pressure and capacity demands on Route 139. The congestion on Route 139 is exacerbated by seasonal variations, with high summer peaks, particularly at weekends.

There are design and operational problems on Route 139, in particular difficulties associated with turning traffic and multiple curb cuts, and the variations in the roadway cross-section/number of travel lanes.



*Since it is the gateway to Marshfield, a major focus of the Comprehensive Plan is the circulation, economic development and aesthetics of Route 139.*

Pressure on Route 3A as the only continuous north-south route will increase, particularly in light of the planned Greenbush commuter rail service to Scituate. Although Route 3A appears to have adequate capacity to meet these needs, problems are associated with traffic turning to and from side streets.

The potential impact of build out in the Enterprise Drive area, both in terms of traffic generation and the need to provide for adequate access, is serious. As strengthening/expansion of development in this area is generally supported, it is essential to limit traffic generation to acceptable levels, and manage access accordingly.

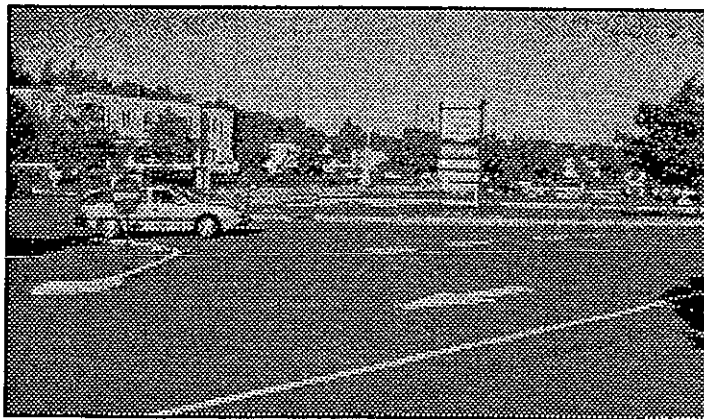
Implications of re-zoning for non-industrial uses along Route 139 in the Enterprise Drive

area, specifically the impact to traffic congestion and access management must be carefully considered.

There is the potential for serious negative impacts to the rural character of many roadways if capacity, operational or safety improvements are called for and full highway design standards applied. This also applies to intersections, in particular those with triangular, grass islands.

Poor vehicular circulation and a poor pedestrian network in the Downtown/Webster Square area continues to be a problem.

There are deficiencies in pedestrian and bicycle facilities, including missing linkages, absence of crosswalks and discontinuities in sidewalks.



*Poor vehicular and pedestrian circulation continue to be a problem in the Webster Square area.*

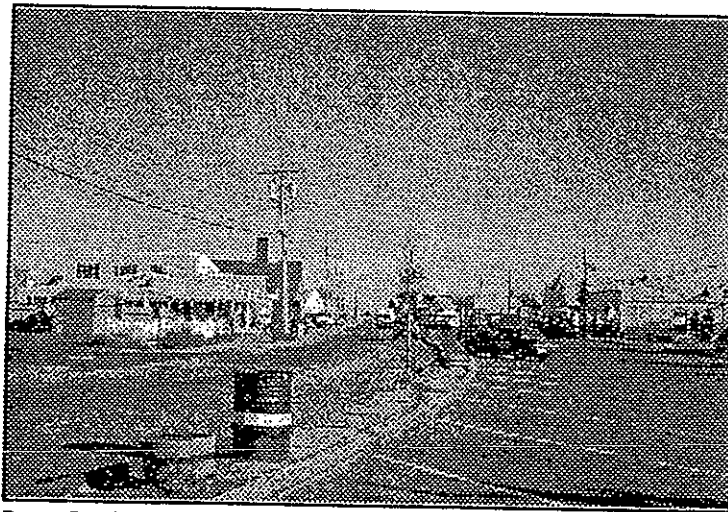
## *The Economy*

Marshfield's employment opportunities and the tax base appear sufficient to meet the needs of the community. However, modest continued growth is expected and desired.

Most residents would like to see the Downtown more attractive and more appealing as a place to gather and linger. To date, Town Meeting voters have been unwilling to fund sewer extension to allow a wider variety of uses (e.g., restaurants) or to ensure that groundwater and the South River are protected. The result will be an increasingly difficult operating environment. The Downtown Revitalization Plan is a strong concept which the Town will be gradually pursuing in the years ahead.

The smaller village centers are stable and no major regulatory actions or investments are needed. Interest in attracting year round businesses has been expressed and the zoning and buildings are present to make this possible in most areas. Opportunities to encourage more business development in Brant Rock should be explored.

The future land use policy and a circulation plan for the Enterprise Drive area must be defined. This includes the properties abutting Route 139 and those lying within the interior portions of the industrial zone.



*Brant Rock will continue to become more economically healthy.*

## *Services and Facilities*

Major investments are currently planned and underway for water and storm drain improvements. The 50 year old age of this system is a liability and must be addressed.

The need for sewer extension to the Downtown is under debate and appears necessary, but Town Meeting voters have, to date, been unwilling to fund the extension.

Seawalls will continue to decay unless the Town develops consistent policy and management goals. Shoreline protection structures are costing the Town significant amounts of money in continuing maintenance. Higher levels of attention must be paid to this issue in the future.

Inter-town ground water protection efforts are non-existent, but are nonetheless important. Marshfield needs to develop specific mechanisms aimed at protection of the Town's recharge areas in conjunction with the towns of Pembroke and Duxbury.

The landfill will be closed by the end of 1998. The cost of the closure will be paid for by the Town. A new transfer station or other method of solid waste disposal must be identified.

There will be an increased need for elderly services. The fire, library and building departments are all seeing increasing demands from the aging population. This trend will continue and must be anticipated.

## *Housing*

Marshfield housing stock is and will continue to be primarily single family homes. There is no desire on the part of residents to dramatically change this quality of the Town.

There are also some residents who would like to see a greater variety of housing options available in Marshfield. Apartments built in the 1960's set a negative standard for multi-family housing in the community that may be difficult to overcome.

There is some interest within the community of seeing new developments set aside land as open space.

## *Open Space and Recreation*

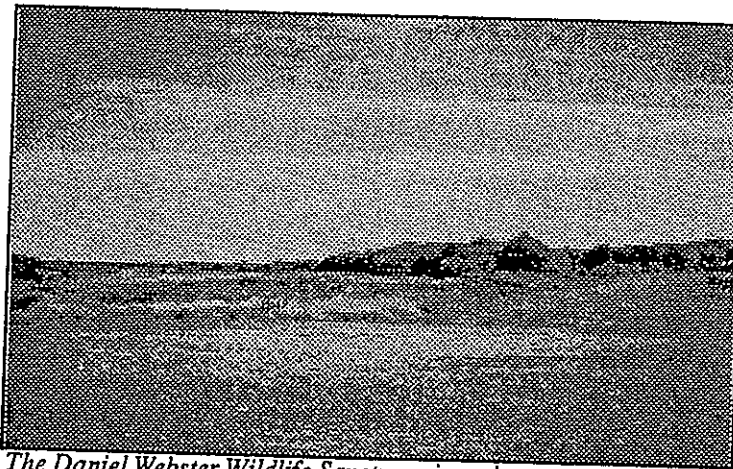
Funding must be sought to continue with open space acquisition efforts. The Town's Conservation Fund needs more cash available.

The Town has done poorly in providing neighborhood parks and open space in association with new subdivisions. A more assertive approach, backed up by a commitment to purchase designated open space, should become the norm.

There is concern that access to the coast will be privatized. The Town needs a clear policy and set of decision making criteria to ensure that all historic access routes to the beaches remain open to the public.

Open space protection will be one of the fundamental tools that the Town can use to protect its rural character in the coming decades. A continued emphasis on this challenge must be placed throughout Town government. The benefits will accrue not only to the Town's character, but also to groundwater protection, surface water quality improvements, recreational needs and ecosystem protection.

Open space and recreation needs vary in different parts of Town (e.g., some areas favor preservation while other areas would like more recreation.)



*The Daniel Webster Wildlife Sanctuary is an important part of Marshfield's open space preservation efforts.*

## *Cultural Resources*

Marshfield has rich historic resources and an active Historical Commission.

Funds will be needed to expand and continue the National Register of Historic Places inventorying effort.

Supporters of historic preservation are also supportive of Design Review standards for multifamily and commercial properties.

History should continue to be given serious support both in the above efforts as well as in public projects such as the Railroad Park and in funding targeted efforts to identify and protect archeological resources.

Overall, Marshfield is a well managed residential town with a moderate business base and an exceptional natural setting. Moderate growth will continue with the result being an end to most residential development within 20 to 30 years. How do the solutions to these many specific challenges fit together to make a cohesive picture for the future? What will Marshfield be like for coming generations?



*The historic Winslow House.*



## *A Vision Statement for Marshfield*

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Marshfield currently lacks an overarching purpose to drive and shape its community development and planning work. The Town does well managing specific problems that arise or considering the issues of a particular area such as the Downtown. It has done less well in planning for how the various villages and aspects of the landscape fit together to form a whole community. The following statement is intended to lay out a direction for what it is that we want our town to be. With this statement, we try to answer the question, *What will be Marshfield's townscape?*

*Marshfield is and will continue to be a residential community, that is, our primary purpose as a community within the broader context of our region, is to provide a wonderful place for people to grow up, to go to school, to raise families, to recreate and to retire. While*

*we have many businesses and we will continue to encourage their health, those businesses will be primarily oriented toward meeting the needs of the residents of Marshfield, rather than the needs of the broader region. We are not and shall not become a regional shopping, office or manufacturing destination. We are a community of homes.*

*There are several qualities that distinguish us from other residential communities. These qualities must be protected if we are to maintain and enhance our community character. Those qualities are the coast, our historic structures, our rural roads, our villages and our open lands. If any of these qualities are compromised, essential ingredients of Marshfield's character will be lost. Each must be given attention and stewardship.*