

IPSWICH

TOWN



CHARACTER

STATEMENT



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Ipswich, Massachusetts

September 2004

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1. INTRODUCTION

What is the Ipswich Town Character Statement (TCS)?

The Ipswich TCS describes the distinctive qualities and characteristics of Ipswich from the perspective of the residents. It is a non-regulatory guidance document that identifies and discusses the many common and unique features of Ipswich. Design guidelines and recommendations for various land uses found throughout Ipswich are presented and discussed within the TCS.

What is its purpose?

The goal of the TCS is to preserve the distinct historic character of Ipswich as well as protect the diverse community and environmental resources that define the town. The TCS is intended as a resource for developers, community members, and town officials. The recommendations and guidelines are aimed at encouraging responsible development by promoting both aesthetic and functional ideas for design.

How was it prepared?

The Town Character Statement was developed by the Ipswich Department of Planning and Development, through the collective efforts of a graduate student team from Tufts University, two British planners, and planning staff. Following a well-attended public presentation, over eighty volunteers conducted a photographic survey to capture the distinctive characteristics of Ipswich from the perspective of community residents. The survey results and notes were analyzed and incorporated into a draft report issued to the Ipswich TCS Steering Group. The information gathered during public meetings and the photographic survey is the basis for the guidelines and recommendations found within the TCS.

How will it be used?

The Ipswich TCS should be taken into consideration on all future planning and development activities, to ensure that future development fits local surroundings and adds to the distinctive local character. Special permit granting authorities are encouraged to use the guidelines described in the TCS to help determine whether or not a proposal meets the criterion “compatibility with neighborhood character.” Thus, the more responsive a proposal is to the guidelines outlined in this report, the greater its chances of receiving favorable consideration from the Town’s permit granting authorities.

TCS readers will better understand the community values of Ipswich residents, helping to facilitate the incorporation of those values into the design and development process.

The TCS is a tool to help guide future development in Ipswich, not prevent it!

2. HISTORY

The town of Ipswich was founded on land that was originally inhabited by Native American tribes, who called the area “Agawam.” Agawam was colonized in 1633, when a group led by John Winthrop Jr. established the settlement and named it Ipswich in honor of the merchants of Ipswich, England, financial supporters of the Bay Colony. The banks of the Ipswich River provided an ideal location for establishing a new community. The settlers enjoyed the advantages of fresh water, waterpower, excellent fishing, and transportation.

The small settlement quickly prospered and by 1646 Ipswich had nearly 800 inhabitants. The early residents of Ipswich were farmers, fishermen, shipbuilders, and traders. By the mid-1700s bridges criss-crossed the Ipswich River, wharfs and storehouses aligned the shore of the navigable water, and a salt works, tannery and ship building yard were in operation. Fishing was the most profitable industry on the river. Ships from the West Indies unloaded molasses at the wharf. The barrels were rolled directly into a thriving distillery, the town’s second largest commercial operation.

Lace and stocking making developed as a home industry. The first stocking machine, which had been smuggled from England, arrived in Ipswich in 1822. For several years, small and intermittently successful textile industries came and went. In 1868, Amos A. Lawrence established the Ipswich Hosiery Mills in the old stone mill on the Ipswich River. By the turn of the century, the enterprise had become the largest stocking mill in the country.

The industrial revolution brought greater and more diverse population to Ipswich as a result of its water-powered mill industries such as tanning, shoemaking and machine knitting. Immigrants from England, Ireland, Canada, Poland and Greece found their way to Ipswich to work in the mills. Many of their descendants remain here today and consequently, Ipswich has a diverse cultural heritage.

For most of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Ipswich remained a sparsely populated country town. Today, Ipswich is well known for its early 17th century homes; fifty-eight houses in town were built prior to 1725 – the largest number still standing and occupied of any community in the country.



The Old Mill



The historic Meetinghouse Green dates back to the Town’s founding in 1630. (photo circa 1941)



Early downtown Ipswich

3. LANDSCAPES AND SETTING OF IPSWICH

The town of Ipswich is located in Essex County in northeastern Massachusetts, about 30 miles northeast of Boston. Hamilton borders Ipswich to the south, Rowley to the north, Essex to the east, and Topsfield and Boxford to the west. Ipswich is a traditional New England town with a highly developed “town center” surrounded by rural landscape and residential neighborhoods.



The Town’s landscape ranges from forest, to marsh, to beach.

Ipswich is approximately 33 square miles of rolling topography, forests, fields, farmland marshes, dunes, and beaches. The rural setting provides for exceptional river and ocean views and extensive open space. Ipswich is home to popular destinations such as Willowdale State Forest, the Parker River Wildlife Refuge, and the Sandy Point State Reservation. Crane Beach has been noted as “one of the most beautifully scenic beaches in all New England.” The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) has officially recognized Ipswich’s scenic and environmental significance to the state. The many preserved and protected lands in Ipswich provide open space and critical habitat, as well as providing residents and tourists with numerous recreational opportunities.

Agricultural land, which accounts for 10% of the town’s land area, is no longer a major economic resource. However, farm and agricultural lands add to the community’s character, provide open-space and recreational opportunities, and make natural habitat available for local wildlife.



Agricultural uses are prevalent in Ipswich.

Water is an integral component of the landscape, setting, and history of Ipswich. The Atlantic Ocean defines the town's eastern border and contributes significantly to Ipswich's character and maritime history. Approximately one-third of the town's land mass is protected salt marsh and estuaries, which limits development and helps to preserve open space and scenic views. The Ipswich River flows 35 miles from the west to the town center, where a dam marks the change to a tidal estuary that continues to the Atlantic.

Ipswich has enjoyed and benefited from its proximity to the ocean and river. It continues to be one of the top shellfish producers in the state. Although the hosiery mills, leather tanneries, and big shipyards are now gone, the river remains central to the character of Ipswich.



The Ipswich River runs through Town and is used for recreation, and commerce; it also contributes to the public drinking water supply.

3.1 Ipswich Character Areas/Land Use

The TCS organizes Ipswich into four general Character Areas (see Map 1). The mostly commercial “*Town Center Area*” and the “*Inner Residential Area*” are densely built and contain the Town’s early settlement area. Both the “*Outer Residential*” and “*Eastern Coastal*” Areas describe the remainder of the town, covering large geographic areas with many land uses but similar development patterns. While the geographical areas of the Outer Residential and the Eastern Coastal Areas are quite large, there are enough similar characteristics within these areas to allow for common generalization in many of the guidelines. Unique characteristics are also recognized and noted.

The Town Center Area: Consists of four sub-areas: Central Business District; North Green/South Main Street Area; Mill Area; and Hammatt Street/Brown Square Area.

The Inner Residential Area: A “high-density” residential area surrounding the Downtown Area. Consists of four sub-areas: High/East/County Street; Newmarch Street; Brown’s Mill; and Estes Street.

The Outer Residential Area: Encompasses nearly two-thirds of the land area of Ipswich, including the main corridors of High Street, Linebrook and Pineswamp Road, Topsfield Road, and Essex and County Roads.

The Eastern Coastal Area: Encompasses the eastern third of the town (including Jeffrey’s Neck and Argilla Roads); dominated by saltwater marshes and estuaries.



View of Market Street – the heart of the Town Center Area.



The closely built Inner Residential Area contains many of the Town’s historic houses.



Outer Residential housing is often set back and buffered from the road.



Much of the Eastern Coastal Area is marshland.

The TCS also describes three aspects of the town's land uses, which contribute significantly to the character of the town: the *Corridors* leading into and out of town, the extensive areas of *Open Space*, and its *Residential Design*.

Corridors: The main roads leading into and out of town, which include High Street, Linebrook, Pineswamp, Topsfield, Essex, Jeffrey's Neck, Argilla, and County Roads.

Open Space: Includes extensive salt marshes, beaches, river scenery, forest and agricultural lands integral to the scenic views, recreational opportunities, and wildlife habitat throughout Ipswich.

Residential Design: New construction and renovation should be in keeping with the existing design and character of the neighborhood.



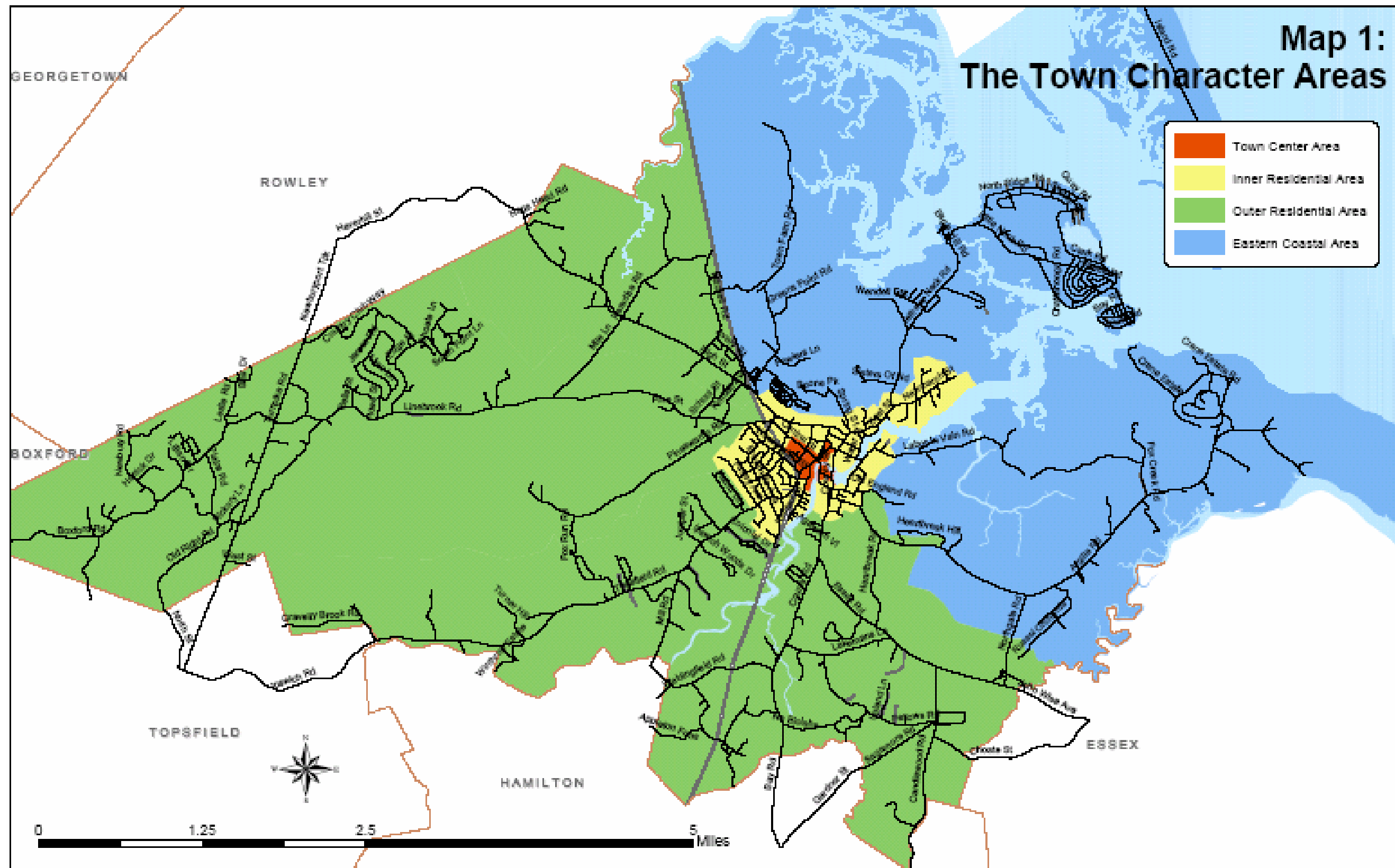
*The **Corridors** through Town often include long stretches of road and vegetation.*



***Open Space** is abundant in Ipswich and is of high value to the community.*



***Residential Design:** The recent addition to this house maintains its 18th century architectural integrity and is consistent with the neighborhood character.*



4. THE TOWN CENTER AREA

The Town Center Area, as shown in Map 2, is primarily comprised of commercial establishments, many of which date back to the 19th century. Each of the four sub-areas within the town center area has distinct characteristics that set it apart from the others. The four sub-areas are described below.

Central Business District

As one enters the town center from its main corridor streets, it is Market Street and Central Street that are first encountered and perceived as the central business district. The high density and commercial nature of the buildings easily distinguishes the area. The sense of enclosure of the downtown's built environment is enhanced by glimpse views to the surrounding streets, open spaces, and the river.

The buildings along Market Street are generally square, relatively small and simple, ranging from one to three stories high, with flat roofs. Storefronts are close to the road, with primary entrances opening to sidewalks that provide access for shoppers. Transparent storefront display windows are generally in scale to the storefront, and of a style appropriate to that of the building. Some shops, however, have wide fenestration and unsympathetic color treatments or rendering.

Many of the multi-floor buildings are mixed-use with businesses at street level and residences on the floors above. Second floor office space is also common. Street-level windows take up the majority of the building façades, but upper-floor windows are much smaller and provide privacy to residents of the upper floors. The most common building exteriors are brick or clapboard.

Central Street buildings for the most part are more massive than their Market Street counterparts, with multiple storefronts in a single building. The feeling is generally less pedestrian-friendly due to greater automobile traffic flow than Market Street. Buildings are generally three-story mixed use structures, and more likely made of brick. Storefronts are less intimate and advertising is less subdued. Building style is in character with the Central Business District scheme.



Small, eclectic, and often flat-roofed buildings characterize Market Street.



Buildings along Central Street are larger and more formal than on Market Street.

North Green/South Main Street Area

The central feature of the North Green Area is historic Meetinghouse Green, which sits atop a hill immediately north of the Central Business District. The site of the town's first meetinghouse, the Green is the present setting for the *First Church in Ipswich*.

Besides providing pastoral open space and a stunning overlook of the downtown, the Green also memorializes, through historical markers and monuments, significant Ipswich residents and events. Surrounding the Green are residences, several commercial establishments, the town library, apartment buildings, and two other churches.

Immediately south and east of the North Green is South Main Street, which crosses then parallels the Ipswich River until it meets up with the South Village Green. Most of the buildings that back up to the river are multi-story commercial buildings, with retail or service establishments on the first floor and offices or residential units on the upper floors. The South Main Street area also includes the former Town Hall/District Court Building and the Town Police Station.

Mill Area

The presence of huge, red brick buildings with multiple evenly spaced windows make the Mill Area, situated between Estes Street and the Ipswich River, easily recognizable. The area is home to one of the largest industries in Ipswich, EBSCO Publishing. It is also an area of great historic significance, as the original location of the Ipswich Mills industrial complex and surrounding mill housing. The area's significance was recognized in 1998 by its designation as the Ipswich Mills National Historic District.



Serving as the civic center of Ipswich since 1630, the North Green area contains open space, historic structures, churches, and the Town library.



South Main Street as it crosses the Ipswich River; the former Town Hall/District Court building is to the left in the distance.



EBSCO Publishing is located in the historic Mill Area.

Hammatt Street/Brown Square Area

Located on the western edge of the central business district, this area is a mixture of retail and service establishments, housing, and industrial use. Due in part to some longstanding soil contamination issues, Hammatt Street has lagged behind the rest of the downtown in both private and public investment. This has begun to change, however, with the recent reuse of a long-abandoned building into a mixed retail/residence use, and the installation of new sidewalks and curbs in the spring of 2002. Underutilized properties remain, but their redevelopment is likely when the contamination problems are eventually resolved.

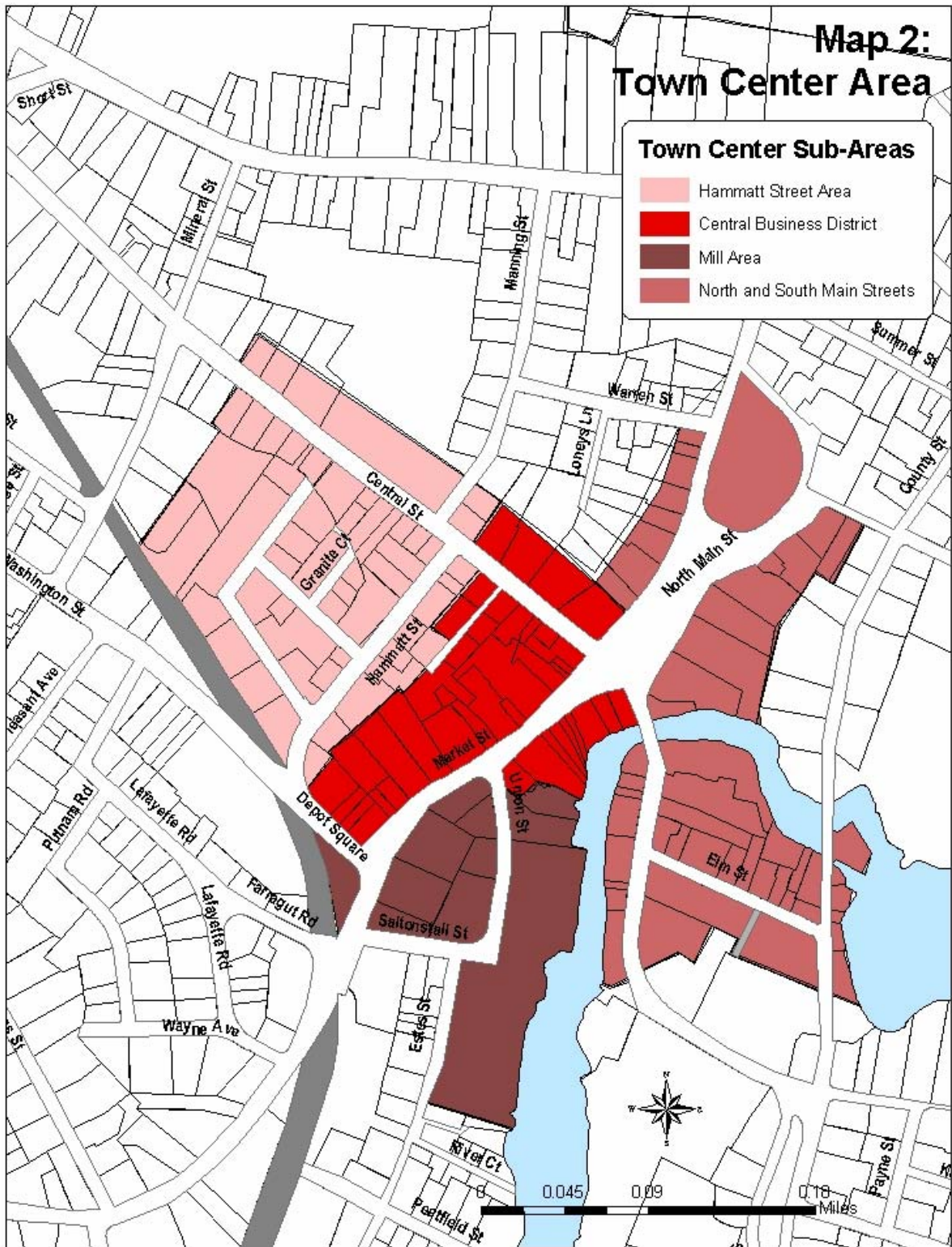
The Brown Square neighborhood has historically been more industrial in character than Hammatt Street, but is in transition to primarily heavy commercial and residential uses. The recent rezoning of a portion of this area from Industrial to Business will only hasten this change.



Recent renovation along Hammatt Street represents reinvestment in the area.



Former shellfish building on Soffron Lane has been proposed for adaptive reuse as artist space and residential dwellings.



4.1 Issues and Guidelines

Central Business District*

Issue: The Central Business District is a functional business district primarily serving local residents, but its businesses attract visitors to Ipswich as well.

Guideline: *Businesses should continue their primary function of addressing local residents' needs and resist the temptation to become curio and gift shops. Equally, business owners should strive to maintain the existing intimate relationship to Ipswich and the Central Business District, and avoid impersonal corporate culture and presentation.*

Issue: See-through glimpses to the surrounding streets and open spaces are characteristic of the central business district.

Guideline: *These glimpse views should be maintained as they provide a sense of openness within the high-density business district. These views also act as a subtle invitation for shoppers to explore the areas of Ipswich beyond the business district by advertising the open space and the river.*

Issue: The new riverwalk, scheduled to start construction in the Spring of 2004, will not only allow pedestrians easy access to the river and some of the residential neighborhoods beyond, but will also act as a unifying link between the Central Business District and other areas of Ipswich.

Guideline: *Business owners should capitalize on this opportunity to promote greater pedestrian activity in downtown Ipswich.*

Issue: Businesses are distinguished through the creative interpretation of historic building style, color, ornamentation, modest signage, and transparent window displays.



Businesses along Market Street share the above view of the Ipswich River. The Riverwalk will enhance access to the river.



Through creative design, businesses in the Town Center can maintain pedestrian-friendly storefronts as well as promote the historic character of Ipswich.

* Additional guidelines for building design in the Central Business District can be found in *Ipswich Façade Improvement Program Design Guidelines*, prepared by Cecil and Rizvi Inc., July 1996. The report is available in the Planning & Development Office at Town Hall and at the Ipswich Public Library.

Guideline: *The cohesiveness of this area is expressed through shop owners' variations of the basic building style theme. Although the buildings may be very similar in style, it is the creative expression of individual proprietors that gives the area its sense of vigor. Indirect lighting that calls attention to the business is preferred rather than internally lit signs that call attention to the lighting itself. Businesses should continue to advertise through the creative and tasteful use of color, building material, and modest signage in character with surrounding businesses.*

Issue: Utility poles and overhead power distribution and phone wires detract from the overall appearance of the central business district.

Guideline: *The Town should take steps to minimize the visual impact of utility poles and wires. The optimal solution is to relocate the services underground, but it is recognized that such approach would be extremely costly and potentially infeasible. Less drastic measures could include reducing the number of wires overhead, and relocating poles behind buildings wherever possible.*

North Green/South Main Street Area

Issue: Vehicular encroachment, soil erosion, haphazard parking, and an unfriendly road layout diminish the historic character of Meetinghouse Green.

Guideline: *The Town should protect the green by establishing a barrier, such as vertical granite curbing, along its edge; eliminate the street that bisects the green; repair existing sidewalks and add sidewalks to make more of the Green area safely accessible by foot; reduce the excessively wide pavement areas of North Main Street to slow traffic and promote pedestrian safety; add amenities such as benches and historic lighting to encourage both the appearance and use of the Green; and, expand existing interpretative signage to educate visitors on the historic significance of the area. In August of 2003, the Town applied for funding for the North Green Improvement Project, which meets many of these guidelines.*



The above photos show the aesthetic improvements of removing overhead utility lines from Market Street.



Meetinghouse Green is characterized by a number of historic properties; these and the open space should be protected from excessive vehicular use.

Issue: The North Green and South Main Street areas are somewhat segregated from the Central Business District, the former by terrain and the latter by the Ipswich River. The new riverwalk will provide a much-needed pedestrian link from the North Green/South Main Street Area to the Mill Area and Central Business District.

Guideline: *The Town should connect the area to the proposed riverwalk through appropriate directional signage, and ensure that sidewalks are adequate to sustain foot traffic.*

Issue: As Ipswich grows, needs for government and civic services will likely expand. Renovations to existing historic buildings or new site development may be necessary to accommodate these additional needs.

Guideline: *As with all new building and renovation in Ipswich, designs should enhance and respect the historic building styles. Great attention should be given to enhancing the vibrancy, character, and relationship to surroundings. River and open space views should be preserved to the greatest extent possible. Genuine craftsmanship and durability of building materials is preferred to prefabrication, style mimicry, and low-quality products. Maintaining or expanding government and civic offices in this area is appropriate and is encouraged.*

Mill Area

Issue: The proposed riverwalk will cross the river over a new footbridge, and continue along the river's edge at the rear of EBSCO Publishing's parking lot.

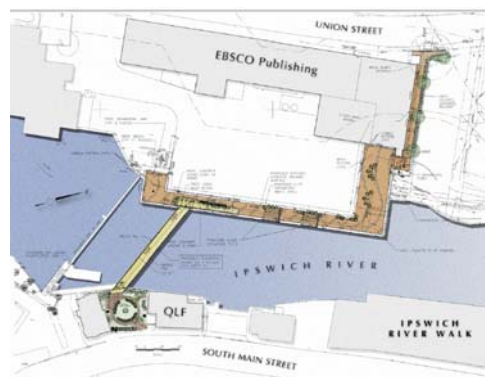
Guideline: *Care should be taken with the riverwalk in the mill area to draw attention to the river views and away from the EBSCO parking lot. Consider the use of indigenous vegetative buffers to obstruct the views of the parking lot.*



North Main Street, looking toward Route 1A/133 intersection and the Central Business District.



Exterior renovations to the former Town Hall/District Courthouse building respect the area's historic character.



Schematic of proposed Riverwalk, currently under construction and slated for completion in spring of 2005.

Issue: As EBSCO Publishing grows, so will the need for additional building and parking capacity.

Guideline: *Adaptive reuse of existing mill buildings, in a manner that is sensitive to the historic character of the area, is preferred over new development. New parking facilities should be developed so as to minimize impact on residential properties and the river ecosystem.*

Hammatt Street and Brown Square Area

Issue: This area contains both vacant and underutilized properties that will likely be redeveloped, whether through new construction or adaptive reuse.

Guideline: *Redevelopments, renovations and expansions should use building elements that fit with and enhance the town center character. Design and development challenges for this area should be met with creative expression of traditional local styles to increase civic amenity (particularly along Hammatt Street) and enhance local pride. Development in this area should convey a special feeling of permanence and durability. Multi-use building practice is encouraged to provide both housing and needed commercial products and services.*



New or expanding industry, like the EBSCO building above, should utilize existing infrastructure for expansion wherever possible.



17 Hammatt Street is an example of mixed use redevelopment that fits.

5. THE INNER RESIDENTIAL AREA

Surrounding the commercial center of town are several residential neighborhoods (see Map 3). The Inner Residential areas offer a transition between the urban downtown area and the rural outer residential areas. As one approaches the town center, buildings are at a higher density and there is a greater sense of enclosure than the housing further from town. The buildings further from the downtown area are generally set a greater distance back from the road. The Ipswich River exerts its presence mostly to the east and south of the downtown.

High/East/County Street Area

Many of the houses in this area were developed during Ipswich's early settlement period. The historical significance of the residences in this area is evidenced by its designation as a national historic district. The greatest concentration of pre-1725 homes is located along High Street, which, unlike most of the town's early roads, is a wide thoroughfare. Gone are the elm trees that once graced its path, but the street retains its elegance.

The Ipswich River is a dominant feature in the East Street neighborhood. Situated on its northern side is the Town Wharf, a particular attraction for local and visiting boaters. A number of properties have been developed along or close to the waterfront. These properties are very individualistic and innovative using characteristics of their location to inspire their design and form. There are still a few non-residential developments along the waterside, which represent the historical importance of the maritime economy. The emphasis is now on recreational rather than commercial fishing, although there is still an active commercial shell fishing industry in town.

Newmarch Street Area

At the eastern edge of the inner residential area lies the Newmarch Street neighborhood. Primarily developed in the 20th century, this area is less dense than the rest of the inner residential areas, but not dramatically so. Woodlands dominate this area. Curbless roads add to the informal and rural feeling. The housing is nestled in the woodlands, with few private boundaries between the houses.



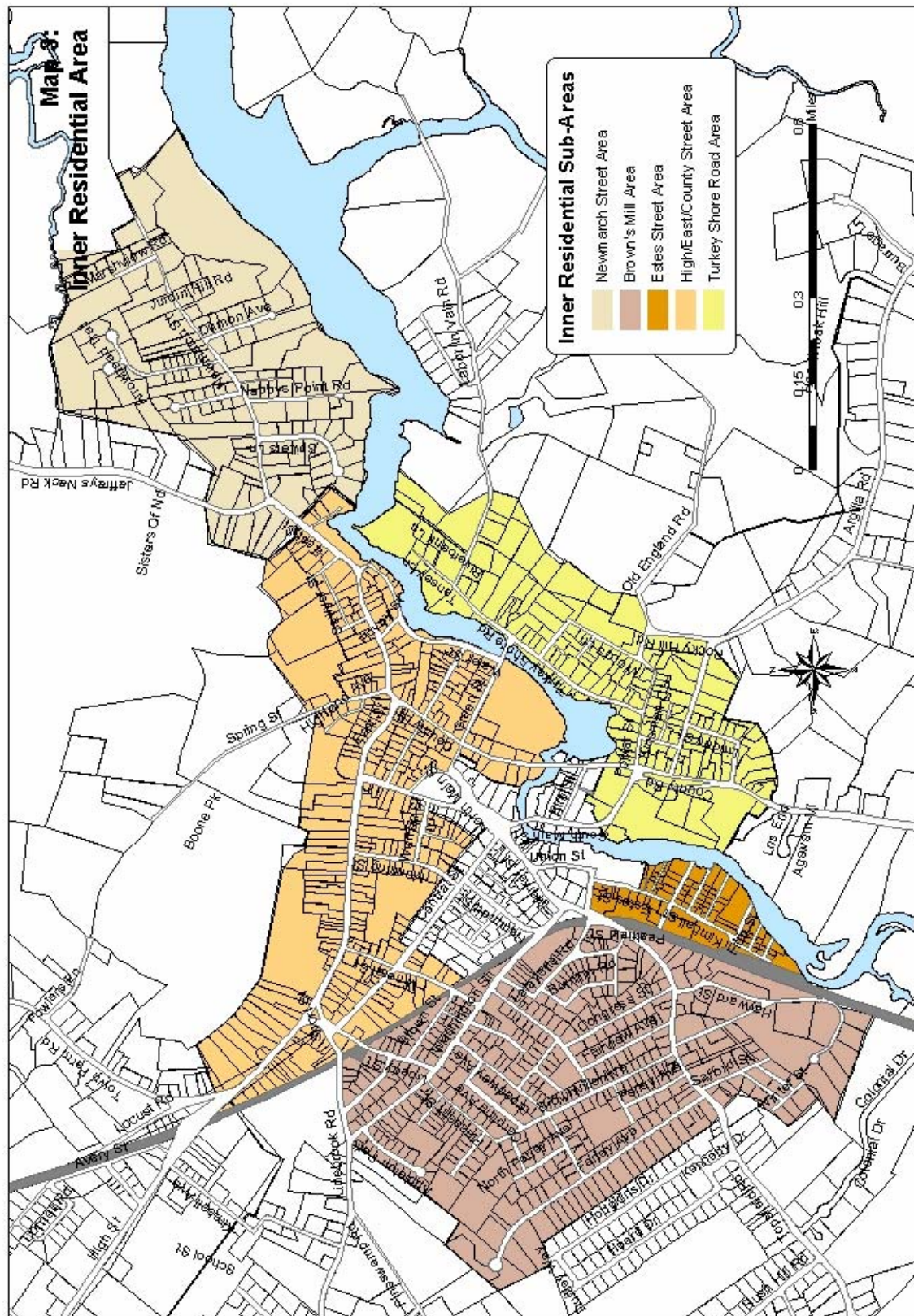
Like much of the Inner Residential Area, High Street contains a number of historic properties.



The Ipswich River runs along Water Street, bordering the East Street neighborhood.



Woodlands are interspersed throughout the Newmarch Street Area.



Estes Street Area

Originally constructed as housing for mill workers, this area is characterized by a mixture of single-family, two-family, and multi-family dwellings, primarily of wood construction, and built on small lots (many 5,000 square feet or less). Situated along the south side of the river, this area is narrow, densely built, closely knit, and strongly influenced by the presence of the Ipswich River.



Though quite dense, the Estes Street area maintains a close relationship with the Ipswich River, which is just beyond the tree line in this photo.

Turkey Shore Road Neighborhood

Like the High/East/County Street neighborhood, the Ipswich River is a dominant feature here, and many properties have been developed along the waterfront. Densely built, the neighborhood is almost exclusively residential and the age of its housing ranges from pre-1725 to present day. Houses are predominantly of wood construction on small lots.



Housing along Turkey Shore Road is densely built and faces the Ipswich River.

Brown's Mill Area

The residences in this area, also formerly mill housing, are similar in age and character to those found in the Estes Street Area. Here the housing retains a backdrop of trees but in a less woodland setting. There is a greater sense of street character, with a more formal alignment. The area south of Topsfield Road on the periphery of this area contains similar housing patterns, as well as a considerable amount of industrial development.

Recent developments on the town's edge do not always demonstrate the same traditional characteristics as the Inner Residential Area and tend to be less neighborly, less sensitive to scale and more exposed than the other housing in the area. Though close in proximity, housing adjacent to the Brown's Mill Area reflects a vastly different housing character and thus serves as a transition to the Outer Residential Area.



Typical row of housing in Brown's Mill neighborhood

5.1 Issues and Guidelines

Inner Residential Developments

Issue: Many of the homes in the High/East/County Street neighborhoods, as well as some in the Turkey Shore Road neighborhood, were built prior to the industrial era, and reflect the character of that period. The historic houses have a commonality based on related architectural styles, colors, materials and sizes.

Guideline: *Renovations and expansions, as well as redevelopment, should reflect the early American and Victorian styles, colors, materials and sizes of the other houses common to this era.*



An example of renovation in keeping with neighborhood character on High Street.

Issue: Many of the homes in the Brown's Mill and Estes Street neighborhoods were built as mill housing for the Brown's Mill and Ipswich Mill workers. While built mostly in the common vernacular, these houses are historically representative of Ipswich's industrial era.

Guideline: *Infill development within the Brown's Mill and Estes Street neighborhoods should be sized and situated in a manner that is consistent with the surrounding neighborhood.*



These newly constructed houses on Brown Street blend well with the older housing in the neighborhood.

Issue: As the Ipswich River flows through the town center it significantly influences the organization of the residential areas to the south and east of downtown. The Ipswich River has been a focal point in the historic development of Ipswich and continues to play an integral role in the development of residential, commercial, and recreational areas of Ipswich.

Guideline: *Redevelopment near and along the Ipswich River should strive to maintain the river as a focal point, and to make use of its scenic beauty.*

Guideline: *Explore opportunities to develop closer connections and awareness of the river as a link between residential and commercial centers.*

6. THE OUTER RESIDENTIAL AREA

The Outer Residential Area (see Map 4) encompasses a large geographical area, including several areas surrounding the main corridor roads, as described in Section 8: Corridors.

Outer High Street Area

The Outer High Street area contains a variety of residential homes, including many 17th century homes, and ranging from a 1640's homestead to recently built multi-family apartments. Both natural and characteristic buffers are found along the residential areas. Small markets and commercial plazas have no buffers and are obvious disruptions of the pastoral aesthetic of the High Street Area. Included in the Outer High Street Area is Mitchell Road, a light industrial area closely abutting the residences along Avery Street; this relatively low-density industrial development adds little to the character of the neighborhood.

Linebrook/Pineswamp Road Area

The Linebrook/Pineswamp area is a mixture of large and small residential developments. Many of the houses closer to town are more visible, whereas houses further from town have more stonewalls and natural buffers. The Willowdale State Forest is the predominant open space in this neighborhood. Route 1 runs perpendicular to Linebrook Road and contains a mixture of commercial, industrial, and residential activities. This area also includes two large subdivisions: the Pinefield neighborhood off Linebrook Road, constructed in the 1950s and 60s; and the Ipswich Country Club off Route 1, a high-end cluster development constructed around a golf course, built mostly in the 1990s.

Topsfield Road Area

Most of the residential development in this area is clustered in relatively dense neighborhoods near the Town Center. For the most part, the newer residences are located in neighborhoods off of the main corridor while older houses are located primarily along Essex, County, and inner Argilla Road. Housing here utilizes many different types of buffers, including rock walls, wooden fencing and natural landscaping, to accent the aesthetics of the established sections of Ipswich. The Topsfield Road area includes significant open space resources related to the Ipswich River, Great Estates and woodland areas.



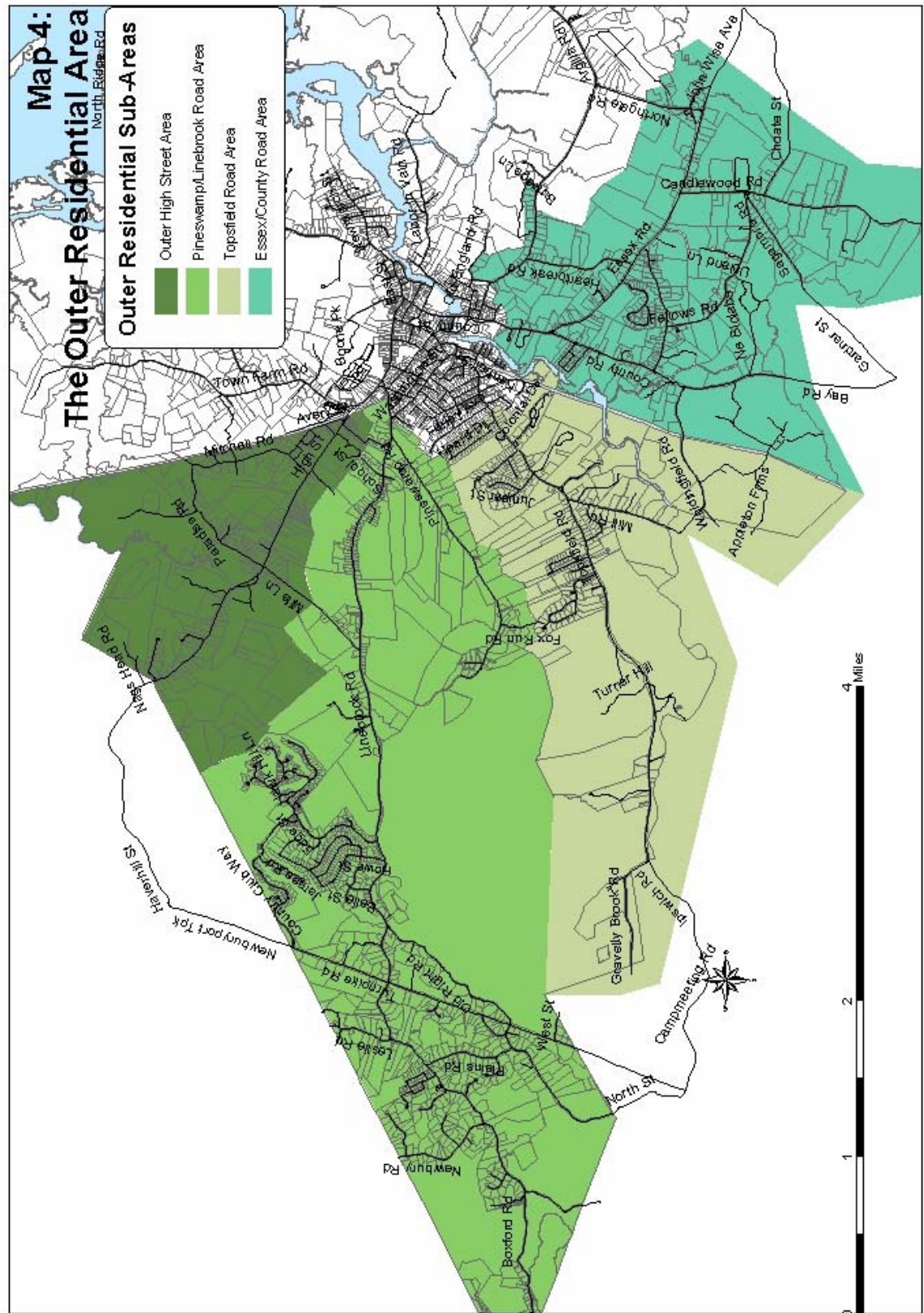
Many roads in the Outer Residential Area are accented with stonewalls and trees acting as buffers.



Houses closer to town are more visible and closer together.



Houses on side streets off Topsfield Road are more densely settled.



Essex/County Road Area

Farmlands, the Ipswich River, a golf course, and an apple orchard comprise a majority of the open space in the Essex/County Road Area. The stonewall buffers and fences maintain a large presence throughout the area. Occasionally small roadside commercial plazas interrupt the flow of the pastoral landscapes.



Essex Road is predominately agriculture and open space, with residences interspersed along the corridor.

6.1 Issues and Guidelines

Outer Residential Housing

Issue: Housing in the outer residential areas varies in style, materials, type and color. Increasingly, however, new residential construction creates homogenous, large-scale, and expensive houses set on large lots that do not preserve open space and which contribute to sprawl. In addition, many of these developments are accessed by unnecessarily wide roads, which are also out of character with historic development in much of Ipswich.

Guideline: *Future development should consider local needs and design characteristics so that new is integrated with the old.*

Guideline: *Ipswich takes pride in diversity while preserving character. New developments should promote diversity in styles while retaining the woodland and river qualities that make Ipswich special.*

Guideline: *Woodland and tree settings enhance the quality of the neighborhoods by creating a sense of enclosure and reducing the urbanizing effects of traffic and development. Developers are encouraged to use natural buffers made of native vegetation and stonewalls to preserve this character and to promote the spatial characteristics of Ipswich.*

Guideline: *Cluster subdivisions and other concentrated development options should be used to preserve open space and create affordable housing. The Town's Protective Zoning Bylaw provides developers with a density bonus if they build in this manner in the Rural Residence Districts.*

Guideline: *Town subdivision regulations should encourage narrower road widths in keeping with the Town's historic character.*



Wide roads create large and unappealing impervious surfaces that are inconsistent with the traditional character of Ipswich.



Natural buffers throughout the Outer Residential Area contribute to area's pastoral appeal.



Emery Lane, a new subdivision road in Ipswich with relatively narrow width.

Non-Residential Areas

Issue: Non-residential areas are located throughout Ipswich. At times there are abrupt commercial, industrial and business sections interspersed between residential areas, which disrupts the flow of the corridors.

Guideline: A balance needs to be achieved that promotes economic development while preserving the Town's pastoral quality. Non-residential developments should be thoughtfully designed to help maintain this balance. Possible approaches include placing parking lots behind non-residential buildings, constructing natural buffers and maintaining buffers that are similar to those already established in the area.

Guideline: Avoid linear strip development of commercial activities. Instead, develop the commercialized establishments back from the road with a retained woodland setting.

Guideline: Minimizing blacktopped areas is recommended to reduce surface water run-off. Constructing green islands in the parking lot or adding landscape with an emphasis on native vegetation will help not only to reduce run-off but also enhance the aesthetic beauty of the non-residential area.

Guideline: To maintain the rural charm of Ipswich and promote economic development, property owners should consider local and small market businesses, such as farm retail outlets, when developing in non-residential areas.

Guideline: Improve and enhance the signage and interpretation of the corridor routes so that they do not interrupt the views. Solutions include constructing parking/ information bays, adopting corridor route names, and demarcating the downtown area.



The 1640 Hart House blends well with residences in the Outer Residential Area.



The Marini Farm stand, shown above, along with other rural businesses, are desirable uses in the Outer Residential Area.

7. THE EASTERN COASTAL AREA

The land area located between and surrounding Town Farm Road and Argilla Road (excluding the developed residential areas near the town center) roughly describes the eastern coastal area (see Map 5). An extensive network of coastal wetlands, marshes, beaches, and sand dunes dominates this area. The landscape is primarily open and exposed with wide views; much of it is inaccessible.

The tidal estuaries are especially popular for recreational use, primarily for boaters and anglers who use the network of creeks and tidal marshes. Both the maritime tradition and the fishing industry have great historical and cultural significance. The shellfishing industry is an important cultural and economic resource that is greatly influenced by the environmental quality of the coastal land area as well as the impact of development.

Small footbridges, boardwalks, boatyards, and mooring jetties are characteristic of development found within and around the coastal region. Although the area is relatively secluded in the off-season, the summer (tourist) season attracts many visitors, especially to Castle Hill and Crane Beach.

Residential development along the coast is limited to the bluffs and islands with road and bridge access. Waterside communities have developed above the marshes where buildings are possible. The Great Neck and Little Neck areas are high-density communities. Many of these historically summer homes are being converted to year round residences, although Little Neck is predominantly a summer colony. In addition, there are a few lower density “waterside communities” found along Argilla Road, Jeffrey’s Neck Road, and Town Farm Road.

Closer inland, visitors will find that the area also contains one of the three Great Estates properties (specially-zoned uses allowing non-residential development) as well as some farms and agricultural land. The family farms are especially important town resources that provide important open space, wildlife habitat and recreational trails.



Marshlands, foliage and beaches dominate the Eastern Coastal Area.



Boat yards, like Ipswich Outboard Motor & Boat above, are an important means of commerce.



Agricultural areas are common in the Eastern Coastal Area

[illegible]

7.1 Issues and Guidelines

Issue: The open landscape is one of the most vulnerable characteristics of the eastern coastal area. The visual intrusion of new and modified development has the potential to alter both the views and the traditional design characteristics of the community.



Guideline: *Development should occur in a manner that maintains views, including those seen from drumlin hilltops throughout town. (See concentrated development guidelines on page 23). Architectural and landscape design should be based on local character.*

Issue: Ipswich is home to a diversity of flora and fauna, and protecting the town's natural resources is of great importance.



Guideline: *Protect the town's coastal wetlands/marshes, beach and dunes, the Ipswich River, forested land, and other sensitive and significant natural resources.*

Development that preserves views and landscape is critical to protecting the integrity and resources of the Eastern Coastal Area.

Issue: The coastal marshes and tidal estuaries are especially sensitive to increasing pollution generated by development. Shellfish and juvenile fish habitat can be adversely affected by non-point source pollution.



Guideline: *Future development should be required to limit and mitigate the pollution of estuarine habitats, so as to protect wildlife habitat and the commercial and recreational shellfishing resources from water pollution, especially storm water runoff that may impair environmental quality and restrict harvesting.*

Marshland in Ipswich is prevalent and requires protection.

Issue: The tourism industry continues to grow and gain importance as an economic support base for the town. The protection, preservation, and promotion of open space and scenic landscapes, which are key draws for tourism, are of great importance to the residents of Ipswich.

Guideline: *Development should maintain and expand public access for open space recreation (walking trails, recreational boating, athletic fields, etc.). Special attention must be paid to achieving a balance between natural habitat, development, tourism, and recreational uses.*

Issue: Increased traffic, especially in the summer, will continue to affect the rural character of the eastern coastal area.

Guideline: *Establishing buffered, discrete, and natural parking areas at scenic viewpoints, and developing a bicycle path along main travel routes (Argilla, Jeffrey's Neck, and Town Farm Road), would enhance the area's recreational appeal, without substantially increasing automobile traffic.*



Strawberry Hill was protected through the Town's Open Space Bond Program, and is open to the public for passive recreation.



The parking area at Hamlin Reservation on Argilla Road is well-buffered from the road.

8. CORRIDORS

The character of Ipswich is shaped significantly by its corridor roads, which include High Street, Linebrook, Topsfield, Essex, Jeffrey's Neck, Argilla, and County Roads (see Map 6). These main corridor roads leading into and out of the town share several characteristics. They all have a strong picturesque setting with woodlands and panoramic views of open space. A majority of the residential dwellings are set discreetly within wooded areas along the roads. Some residential houses are buffered from the road by older woodlands and others by native and non-native vegetation. Other houses achieve separation from the roadway through the use of stonewalls and fences. Occasionally residential developments are set back from the corridors but have incurred heavy loss of wooded areas, leaving the development uncharacteristically open and exposed.

Physical features observed along the corridors include stonewalls, historical houses, farm buildings and natural environments. These views can be both long and short. The long views offer panoramic views of Ipswich and the short ones present close-up views of distinctive Ipswich elements.

Although largely residential in character, the corridors contain significant pockets of commercial development. These shops and offices inject an abrupt change in the corridors' character, sometimes adversely. The small roadside farm markets, however, add to the provincial nature of the corridors.



Like the Outer Residential Area, the Corridors contain a variety of natural and pastoral buffers.



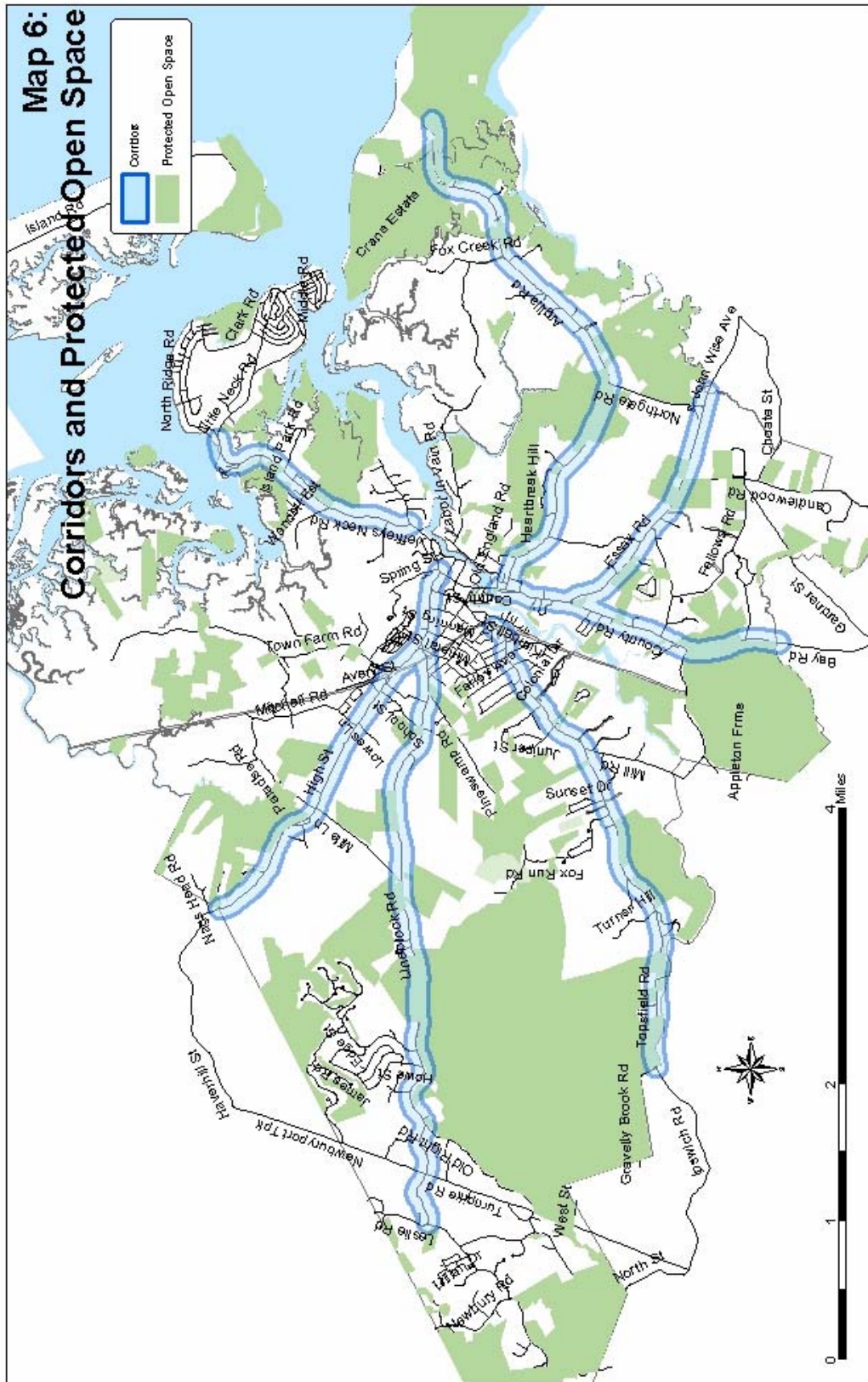
Wide views and pastoral settings characterize the corridors leading into Town. Note the residences are buffered from the main road.



Like here on Linebrook Road, many corridors contain large stretches of natural landscaping with long views.



Farm stands, like Russell Orchards above, are an example of good commercial development along the corridors.



8.1 Issues and Guidelines

Issue: The roadways to and from the center of town display many historic, natural and rural characteristics unique to Ipswich.

Guideline: *Regard for both the long and short views should be taken when developing along the corridors.*

Guideline: *Existing buffers along the corridors should be maintained, and similar buffers should be established in new developments.*

Guideline: *To better integrate non-residential areas with the residential development, concentrate on improving design and appearance of commercial establishments.*

Guideline: *Identify important cultural resources along the corridor roads.*



Long and short views are important to preserve along the corridors. Appleton Farm, shown above, is identified as a significant cultural resource.



Residential development, interspersed with a farm on Essex Road, can be seen from North Ridge Road.

9. OPEN SPACE

According to a Scenic Landscape Inventory conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM) in 1981, Ipswich has some of the finest coastal scenery in the Commonwealth. Although the statewide average was only 9% “Distinctive” or “Noteworthy”, most of Ipswich (excluding the developed town center) was classified as such. Open space within Ipswich, however is not limited to the Eastern Coastal Area. The Inventory also noted outstanding farmland and inland river scenery.

The salt marshes and beautiful beaches, which comprise approximately 30% of the town’s land area, dominate the eastern region of Ipswich and provide important recreational resources for residents and tourists alike. Crane Beach, a five-mile barrier beach owned and managed by the Trustees of Reservations, is perhaps the most well known area. Plum Island, which is partly in Ipswich, is also a significant resource protected by a State Reservation and a National Wildlife Refuge. All of the wetlands, flood plains, water resources, and adjoining land areas are protected by the Conservation Commission through the Ipswich Wetlands Protection Bylaw, which can be found online at: www.town.ipswich.ma.us/conservation/default.htm

Further inland, the Willowdale State Forest and numerous farms and agricultural lands are also important open space resources that provide natural wildlife habitat and recreational uses. About 1500 acres of mixed-forest habitat are protected in the Willowdale State Forest. Additional forestlands and extensive agricultural land is partially protected by private ownership and other state land preservation tools. Smaller pockets of open farmland are found between developments or woodland areas along the corridors. Woodland areas are usually found in the form of preserved land such as state forests. Open space is also found in the form of Great Estate properties, which are generally set within a formal boundary but maintain large wooded areas or open lands that add to the picturesque setting of the roadways.



The picturesque qualities of Ipswich are not limited to beaches and marsh; this captivating view is of the Town’s reservoir.



Beaches, dunes and marshland are important to Ipswich’s character.



Protected forest lands provide recreational spaces for residents and visitors to Ipswich.

Additional information regarding open space policies can be found on the town web site <http://www.town.ipswich.ma.us> including the *Open Space and Recreation Plan* and the *Criteria for Evaluating Proposed Open Space*.

9.1 Issues and Guidelines

Issue: Although substantial areas of land are already protected by various government, private, and non-profit organizations, many other areas of environmental and aesthetic significance remain vulnerable to development. It is essential to continue to preserve and protect open space, especially in the sensitive coastal environments.

Guideline: *The Town and the development community should use all available tools to preserve and protect open space. Visit <http://www.town.ipswich.ma.us> for more information about open space preservation.*



The Town's unprotected open space is vulnerable to development.



Balancing residential development with preservation of open space and its views is a priority to the Town of Ipswich.

Issue: Open space is highly valued by the residents of Ipswich and contributes significantly to the character, history and economic base of the town. It is an integral and defining characteristic of Ipswich, and demonstrates the importance of recreational opportunities and environmental conservation and preservation to the town.

Guideline: *Preserving important natural features, buffers, and scenic vistas will help maintain the town's distinctive rural character.*

Guideline: *Retain and support farmland as an integral part of open space.*



Farmland, which often lies within residentially settled areas, is important to preserve.

10. RESIDENTIAL DESIGN

When choosing a place to live, people often select a neighborhood first and a home second. The ingredients that shape a neighborhood into a unique and desirable place to reside include the design of the homes, historical attributes, natural features of the land and native vegetation, degree of privacy, landscaping, and views. These features bond to form the character of a neighborhood.

Ipswich is fortunate to have many neighborhoods with distinctive character. Before building in Ipswich, developers and homebuilders are encouraged to become familiar with the character of their neighborhood. Prospective builders should examine the neighborhood's existing setbacks, structural tendencies/design, buffers, degrees of privacy, views, landscaping, and the natural features of the land.

10.1 Issues and Guidelines

Issue: Coherency in proportionality of residential design is an important component of neighborhood character.

Guideline: *New development should take into consideration the structural design of the surrounding residences. New and old buildings complement each other when they are proportionate in square footage and height.*

Issue: The manner in which structures relate to each other and to the street shapes the character of a neighborhood.

Guideline: *Whenever possible, remodeling and new construction should conform to neighborhood setbacks. In some instances owners may require a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals to achieve these setbacks.*

Guideline: *New construction should utilize natural land features and landscaping should relate to the surrounding environment. When planting, residents should use native species.*



Residential buildings near Meetinghouse Green are stately and carry historic significance.



This recent addition complements the historically and architecturally significant Knowlton building on County Road.



The landscaping at this newly constructed group home on Essex Road is entirely comprised of native species

Issue: Maintaining views and privacy are major concerns of Ipswich residents.

Guideline: To protect and enhance visual and spatial privacy, housing designs should take into consideration window placement and separation from neighbors and streets. Builders should consider privacy in a holistic way by considering the front, sides, and back of the property. In doing so, new housing should follow the privacy character of the neighborhood by maintaining like buffers or using new native vegetative buffers.

Guideline: Buildings and landscaping should be placed so as not to obstruct the neighbors' or neighborhood's view. When this objective cannot be achieved, every effort should be made to minimize view obstruction.



This renovation on Great Neck minimized impact to neighbor's views of the Ipswich Bay, while maintaining a sense of privacy.

11. CONCLUSION

The Ipswich TCS has been produced with the goal of preserving the distinct historic character of Ipswich, protecting the many community and environmental resources that characterize the town, and encouraging responsible development. It is hoped that the recommendations contained in this document will help guide future development in a manner that is consistent with the Town's character.

The residents of Ipswich thank you for considering the valuable history and character of this unique New England town, and for taking the steps necessary to maintain its charm.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of the Town Character Statement was truly a collaborative effort, and there are many people to be acknowledged. First, thanks are given to Town Manager George Howe, who authorized Planning Director Glenn Gibbs to participate in an International Planners Exchange, during which he learned of England's Town Character initiative. Considerable thanks are owed to British Planners Trevor Cherrett and Jo Rose, who spent two weeks in Ipswich guiding a public participation process and writing the initial draft of the Statement. The eighty plus volunteers who conducted a photographic survey of the Town deserve thanks, as do those who later participated in the TCS Steering Committee; members of that Committee included Nan Hagen, Ann Pulver, Nat Pulsifer, and Bill Maguire.

The initial draft TCS was significantly reworked and expanded upon by a graduate student team from Tufts University's Urban and Environmental Policy Program. Those students were Valerie Monastra, Siddha Parker, and Douglas Crosby.

Summer intern Darlene Gallant and Open Space Assistant Beth O'Connor of the Planning & Development Department both made significant contributions to the refinement and completion of the TCS. Other departmental staff who provided assistance along the way include Joan Vontzalides, Kate Day, and summer interns Jeff Meyer, David Sharples and Andrea Bowman.

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