

II

Regional Setting, Population, and Land Use Trends and Influences

Halifax is located in Eastern Massachusetts, bordered by Bridgewater and East Bridgewater on the west, Middleboro on the south, Plympton on the east and southeast, Pembroke on the Northeast and Hanson on the north. It covers 12,317 acres (19.25 square miles) and had a year 2000 population of 7,500. It is about 12.5 miles southeast of Brockton and 24 miles south of Boston and to some degree is a suburb of each. It is 14 miles southeast of Rte. 24, eight miles west of Route 3. The distance from major highways is partially offset by the restored MBTA service to Boston. The town is part of the Silver Lake school system. See Locus Map.

Four numbered state highways traverse Halifax. Rte. 106 (Plymouth Street) runs east to west through the middle of town. Route 105 (Thompson Street) runs north south in the southwestern portion of town. Route 58 (Monponsett Street) and Route 36 (Holmes Street) run north and south in the eastern part of town. These are two-lane roadways, which carry relatively low traffic volumes and serve as minor arterials. The junction of Rtes. 106 and 58 is the town's commercial center. Rtes. 24 and 3 are accessible via Rte. 106. The MBTA commuter rail station is in the northeastern corner of the town near the Pembroke line.

Halifax (incorporated in 1734) has a rich and active past. It was once considered a spot for rest and relaxation for city persons on the weekends. People would take the train from the city and stay in local homes, pondside cottages, or the Hotel Monponsett but most of the summer housing is now year round. Halifax has never been a major industrial center. Ice-cutting, charcoal making, cranberry growing, and farming were long its major economic activities and cranberries remain significant. Halifax is still largely rural. The only major store in the town is the new Wal Mart at the intersection of Routes 106 and 58.

A. Incomes

In the last ten years Halifax has become more affluent in comparison to the state and the Brockton Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSA) though it is surpassed by adjacent communities' median family, median household, and per capita incomes. The median family income of \$65,461 was lower than that in Plympton (\$75,000), Pembroke (\$74,985), Bridgewater (\$73,953), Hanson (\$68,560), and East Bridgewater (\$67,307).

In contrast, Halifax's 1999 median household and family incomes of \$57,015 and \$65,461 respectively, were well above both the Brockton PMSA figures of \$52,058 and \$60,980, and the state figures of \$50,502 and \$61,664. Where the town previously lagged behind the state and PMSA in all but median family income (where it barely exceeded the state), it now exceeds the PMSA in all categories by \$1000s of dollars, and exceeds the state by large margins in all but per capita income.

Table II-1
Comparative Income Trends

	Median Household		Median Family		Per Capita	
	1989	1999	1989	1999	1989	1999
Halifax	\$37,197	\$57,015	\$42,955	\$65,461	\$15,233	\$23,738
Brockton PMSA	\$37,403	\$52,058	\$43,845	\$60,890	\$16,442	\$21,654
Massachusetts	\$36,952	\$50,502	\$44,367	\$61,664	\$17,224	\$25,902

Source: US Census

These levels reflect the town's historic rural character and are presumably rising as rail service and more expensive new housing attract higher income families.

Despite moderate overall incomes Halifax has little poverty. Only 248 people or 3.3% of the population was found to be below the poverty level in 1999, fewer than in the state (9.3%), or PMSA (7.7%). All of the OCPC communities except Brockton at 14% have smaller percentages in poverty than the state. The only nearby town with a lower percentage at the poverty level was Plympton at 2.8%.

B. Age Patterns

Halifax has slightly greater proportions (1990) both under 18 and over 65 than the state or region. As of 1990 26.2% were under than eighteen compared to 25.67% regionally and 22.49% state wide; and 13.2% were over 65 compared to 11.3% regionally and 11.4% state wide. The 1990 median age of 33.76 years barely exceeded the region and state figures of 33.5 years and 33.6 years respectively.

Halifax is all in one Census Tract so block group data must be used to examine the distribution of population groups among neighborhoods. (See Block Group Map). This shows that Halifax's age groups are fairly evenly distributed among its block groups except that Block group 4 contains a high population of people over the age of 65 and relatively few people under 18. This presumably reflects the low cost public housing for the elderly and Richmond Park mobile home park in that area.

Table II-2

Population Characteristics of Halifax by Block Group

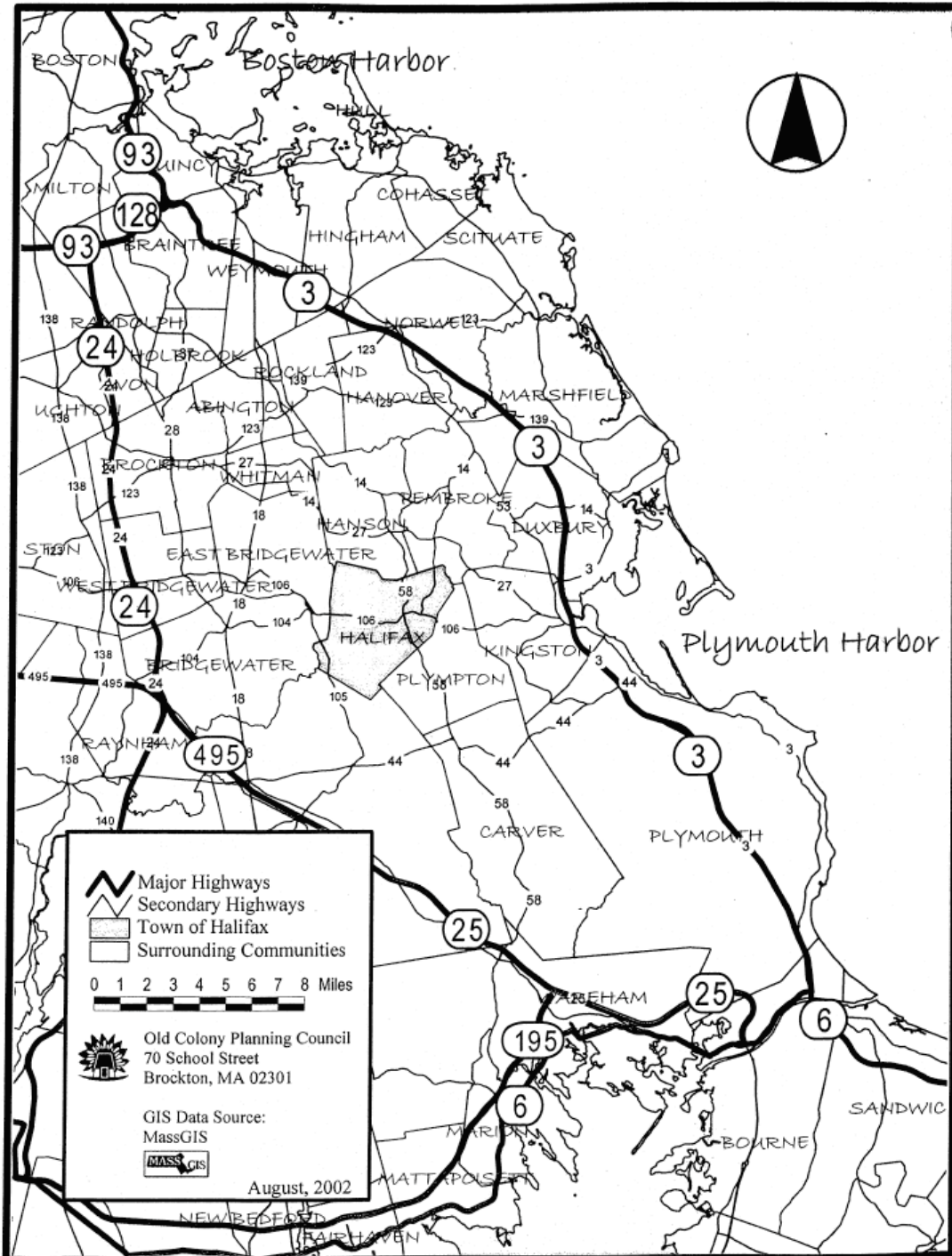
	Total	Under 18	% Under 18	Over 65	% Over 65
Halifax	6526	1711	26.2	859	13.2
BG1	1052	323	30.7	78	7.4
BG2	757	208	27.5	64	8.5
BG3	2212	647	29.2	84	3.8
BG4	1418	227	16.0	567	40.0
BG5	1087	308	28.3	66	6.1

Locus

Block Group Map Fig II-2

LOCUS

Fig. II-1



C. Growth Rates and Projections

According to the US Census, Halifax had a population of 6,526 in 1990 and an estimated population of 6,884 in 1996. This shows a 4.87% increase from 1990-96. The first table shows Halifax's growth rates from 1960 to 1990 and the estimated population in 1996. The town experienced rapid growth from 1960 to 1990 and slower growth through 1996.

Table II-3
Halifax Population Trends 1960-2000.)

	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Population	1,599	3,537	5,513	6,526	7500
Change	N/A	+121.20%	+55.87%	+18.37%	+14.9%

The OCPC region growth rates per decade for 1960-70, 70-80, and 80-90 were 31.24%, 20.22%, and 7.19%.

The following table shows growth projections by the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC), and the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER) for the town of Halifax from 2000-2020 issued prior to the 2000 Census results.

Table II-4
Population Projections for Halifax/OCPC Region

	Halifax /Region	Halifax/ Region	Halifax/ Region
	2000	2010	2020
MISER	7,318/322,384	8,174/345,897	NA
% Change	12.1%/8.6%	11.7%/7.3%	N/A
OCPC	7,950/327,282	8,680/343,959	9,410/360,627
% Change	21.82%/10.25%	9.18%/5.10%	8.41%/4.85%

Source: OCPC Community Information and Data Book, 1999, and Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research (MISER)

MISER predicted that Halifax would grow by 12.1% from 1990 to 2000 and by 11.7% from 2000 to 2010 while the OCPC region would grow by 8.6% from 1990-2000, and by 7.3% from 2000-2010.

The OCPC projected that the town would grow more rapidly, increasing by 21.82% from 1990 to 2000, by 9.18% from 2000-2010, and by 8.41% increase from 2010 to 2020. The actual growth was between these, reaching 7500 in 2000 for an increase of 14.9%. The most recent OCPC projections expect more growth with a 2020 town population of 10,100 and a regional population of 385,305.

The variations of the predictions by the Old Colony Planning Council and MISER are attributable to the different methods used. The Council extended recent development trends, consistent with available land and local regulations, while MISER does more demographic analysis considering birth rates and mortality rates, along with forecast deaths, and net migration. The large amount of new housing recently approved or under reviewed suggests that growth is now increasing and may continue into the near future.

Both MISER and the OCPC predict Halifax’s long-run growth rate to well exceed that for the region. These projections are highly probable due to the large amount of vacant land in Halifax and the emergence of the commuter rail in town. As discussed under the Build Out Analysis, the potential is lessened to the extent that much vacant land is protected under the Wetlands Protection Act or has more severe septic limitations than on such restricted land in other communities. However, the septic constraints may be lessened by the greater flexibility in the use of alternative and innovative systems and privately owned small treatment plants allowed under the revised Title V, the State Sanitary Code. It is worth noting that the most recent OCPC 2020 projection of 10,100 persons is well within the Build Out Analysis’ potential population of 15,819 (without sewers) and within the 15,516 to 19,230 ranges predicted by consultant Charles Downe in the 1964 Master Plan.

D. Ethnicity

The town’s small minority population is growing. Between 1980 and 1990 Halifax’s total minority population (defined as non-whites and white Hispanics) declined from 105 to 100. This reflected a drop in the self-defined Black and Native American groups and an increase in the Asian/Pacific Islander groups, which more than doubled. However by 2000 the combination of non-whites and all Hispanics was 164, though the lack of an explicit racial break down of Hispanics may have allowed a slight double counting of non-white Hispanics. Observation of trends throughout the region and of the opportunities created by the restoration of commuter rail service suggest that the minority population will continue to increase. The table below shows the 1980-1990 changes.

Table II-5
Halifax’s Population 1980-1990

Year	Total	White	Black	Amer. Ind.	Asian Pac.Isl.	Other	Hispanic
1990	6526	6441	33	9	23	20	21 (15 white)
1980	5513	5426	42	15	11	19	26 (18white)
OCPC							
% Chg	18.37%	18.71%	-21.43%	-40.00%	109.09%	5.26%	0.00%
Region							
%Chg.	7.19%	2.50%	120.62%	25.31%	171.43%	88.92%	168.40%

Source: State Data Center, Mass. Institute for Social and Economic Research

The town contains only one US Census and the available block group data shows no significant clustering of the various groups to create communities within a community

E. Educational Attainment

Halifax is below the Region’s proportions of population completing high school and college as of 1990. In 1990 82.6% of Halifax’s population, 25 years and older, had complete high school or higher compared to the OCPC percentages of 83.8%. The proportion of the population 25 and older who completed 4 or more years of college with a BA/BS or higher was 13.4% compared to 19.0% regionally. Brockton had the lowest educational attainment for a community 74.4% and 12.9% for high school and college completion respectively. Abington had the highest percent of high school graduates 89.4% and Easton had the highest percent of college graduates 27.7% (1990 US Census STF 3A). By 2000, attainment had increased and 91.2% of those over 25 had a high school education or more, while 21.2% had a bachelor’s degree or higher..

	% Completed High School Or Higher	% Completed 4 or More Years of College
Halifax	80.6%	13.4%
OCPC Region	83.8%	19.0%

F. Employment/Commuting Patterns

Most people who work away from home (2,839 of 3,250 {1900}, or 87.4%) work in other communities and most local jobs (705 or 1,116 in 1990, or 63.2%) are held by people from other communities, while only 411 residents work within the town. The figure of 1,116 jobs is the number of persons commuting to Halifax according to the trip table in the 1990 US Census Urban Transportation Planning Package. Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training (DET) data shows even fewer local jobs, 615 in 1989 and 683 in 1990. In either case, the limited number of residents working within the town reflects the few jobs in Halifax, the miss-match between local jobs and residents’ skills and the common pattern of people living in one community and commuting to jobs over the metropolitan area.

Those who commuted out of town in 1990 went to Brockton (271), Boston (225), Plymouth (207), Pembroke (185), Kingston (106), and Hanson (105). The remaining 2,151 commuters went to scattered destinations, primarily in Plymouth and Norfolk Counties. The restored commuter rail service has probably increased the proportion going to Boston and Cambridge.

G. Occupations

In 1990, 3,313 residents 16 years and older were employed. The greatest number, 585 or 17.1%, were in precision production/craft and repair. Other major occupation groups were administrative support, 497 (15.0%); sales, 444 (13.4%); service (except protective

and household), 388 (11.7%), executive, administrative and managerial, 381 (11.5%) and professional, 375 (11.3%). The least common occupations included private household, 0%; protective services, 2.5%; technicians and related support, 3.3%; and machine operators, assemblers and inspectors; transportation and material movers; and equipment cleaners and laborers; all with 4.5%. The majority of Halifax’s employed population works in professional, managerial, sales and service, or executive jobs.

By 2000 3,946 residents 16 and older were employed and the greatest number (by the 2000 Census categories), 1361 (34.5%), were in “Management, Professional and Related Occupations. “ Another 1,147 (29.1%) were in “Sales and Office “ occupations. Thus the town is increasingly white collar.

H. Local Employment

Halifax offers limited employment opportunities. The number published ranges from the 714 reported by the Mass. DET for 1996 to the 1,116 employment destinations reported in the 1990 US Census trip tables. These limited amounts can be attributed to the rural setting and distance to major highways, which does not attract large firms. The jobs by industry inventoried by the Mass. DET follow.

The three categories that compromise 79.9% or 547 of Halifax’s 714 jobs in 1996 are Government, Services and Trade. Trade and Govt. (including schools) are proportionally

Table II-6

Halifax/Regional Employment 1996

	Halifax	Halifax	OCPC Region
	#	%	%
Government	199	27.9	14.8
Agriculture	33	4.6	.9
Mining	0	0.0	.02
Construction	19	2.7	3.8
Manufacturing	C		11.4
Transportation,			
Comm. & Utilities	55	7.7	6.0
Trade	261	36.5	34.1
Finance, Insurance			
Real Estate	35	4.9	2.9
Services	109	15.3	26.1
Total	714	100.0	100.0

Source: 1996 Mass. DET, “Employment and Wages”, 1996

C= confidential data; suppressed when there are fewer than three firms reporting but included in the total.

larger than in the region while services are slightly smaller. Agriculture, estimated at 4.6% or about 33 people, presumably reflects year round cranberry growing employment and is far more significant in the town than in the region as a whole. The new Wal Mart store at the junction of Rtes. 106 and 58, has since added many more jobs in trade while the Jordon Hospital Wellness Center adds some jobs in professional services.

I. Residential/Non-Residential Tax Base

Halifax had a total residential/non-residential tax base of \$390,787,900 in FY 2000. The residential and open space portion of this was \$339,756,200 or 86.94% of the total tax base. The non-residential (commercial, industrial and personal property) tax base was \$51,031,700 or 13.6% of the total. This is the second highest dependency on housing among contiguous communities, exceeded only by Hanson at 89.91% and well above the regional figure of 78.02%. It is comparable to the surrounding communities, which ranged from 83.7% in Pembroke, to 85.9% in East Bridgewater; and to 86.2% in Plympton (Mass Dept. of Revenue Division of Local Services).

These statistics show the lack of commercial and industrial uses in these communities. At the other extreme housing accounts for only 50.1% of the tax base in the town of Avon and for 61.2% in West Bridgewater as of FY2000. These are both communities with extensive industrial or heavy commercial areas near Rte. 24.

J. Housing

Halifax is mainly a town of homeowners and has a rapidly growing housing stock. There were 2,362 occupied housing units in 1990 and 2,758 in 2000, a 16.8% increase. Of the 1990 stock, 2,121 (86.47%) were owner occupied in 1990 and 241 were renter occupied. This far exceeds the region's owner-occupancy figure of 62.5% and is greater than all but Bridgewater's 95.5% and Plympton's 89.9%. In 2000 there were 2519 (91%) owner-occupied units and 239 renter occupied units (9%) for a slight loss in rental units. Many of these rental units may be condominium units, which are rented out but could return to owner-occupancy.

In 1990 there were 1,850 conventional single-family detached houses, 448 mobile homes and 155 units in multi-family structures. The combined family detached units were 93.7% of the total stock compared to 68.6% of the region's stock. By 2000 there were 2,023 detached houses and 429 mobile homes (for 86.3% of the stock) and a reported 389 units in multi-unit structures. The last includes an undefined 218 units of "1-unit, attached" housing and an inexplicable 9 units in buildings with "20 or more units" and may reflect changed definitions.

The town's housing covers a wide range of prices as occurs in many communities with a diverse housing and an increasing number of large more expensive ones. As of 1998 the median sales prices of single-family detached and condominium units were \$146,100 and

\$100,250 respectively, or just below the regional figures of \$151,420 and \$108,300. (The difference is probably even less than this suggests because the regional figure is an average of community medians rather than a true regional median and therefore is higher than one giving full weight to Brockton's larger low-cost supply). Halifax's prices have also been slightly below most surrounding communities as shown below.

Table II-7
Housing Data

Town	Halifax	Hanson	E. Bdgwtr.	Pembroke	Plympton	Region
% Owner - (1990) Occupied	86.47	83.38	79.54	85.04	89.92	65.48
# Single Family	1850	2720	2987	4509	786	72681
# Mobile Homes	448	19	80	39	4	2798
# Multi-Unit	155	246	633	333	22	34603
Total HU	2453	2985	3700	4881	812	110082
Median Price						
1994-1998						
Single Family	\$130,000	\$130,105	\$134,135	\$149,900	\$159,940	\$135,135
Condominium	\$90,530	\$113,500	\$97,250	\$109,900	\$159,940	\$94,079
# Units Permitted						
1995-1998	169	138	245	286	33	4234
% Increase						
Over 1990	6.9%	4.6%	6.6%	5.9%	4.1%	3.8%
Total Increase						
1980-1990	30%	15%	18%	19%	18%	29%
Total Units 2000	2841	3178	4427	5897	872	118,300
Total Units 1990	2453	2985	3700	4881	794	109,546
% Increase	15.8%	6.5	19.6%	20.8%	9.8%	8.0%

Sources: US Census, 1990,2000. Housing Characteristics: Banker and Tradesman, 1/99

The Town's housing stock has been growing more rapidly than that in the Region. From 1980 to 1990 Halifax's stock grew by 30%, slightly ahead of the regions 29% and much faster than adjacent communities, which ranged from 15% to 19%. Data on new units permitted from 1995 to 1998 was similar. Halifax's 6.9% increase far exceeded the region's 3.8% increase and those of adjacent communities, which ranged from 4.1% to 6.6%. Most recently, from 1990 to 2000, the town went from 2,453 units 2841units for a 15.8% increase. This exceeded half of the neighboring towns and was nearly twice the regional rate. See Table II-7 above.

K. Land Use

Halifax contains 12,317 acres (19.25 sq. miles). Table II-8 below compares its 1991 land uses with those in nearby communities and in the region. It indicates that Halifax is one of the region's least developed communities and therefore has among the most choices open to it as it plans its future. These choices are constrained to the extent that much of the undeveloped land is in severe wetlands or cranberry bogs (which are regulated as wetlands) with very limited development potential, but they are significant none-the-less.

As of 1991, 16.0% of the town was developed, far less than the region's 26.4%. It was more developed than Plympton (13.1%), but less than Bridgewater (22.5%), Hanson (25.6%), East Bridgewater (25.9%), or Pembroke (29.8%). These figures are the total of land in recreation, residential, commercial or industrial use. They exclude land in mining since these sand and gravel operations often can be developed after closure. They also exclude land in the Urban Open Space category, which often includes the developed portion of large institutions along with their grounds. Thus these figures understate development to the extent that a town has major public institutions such as the MCI land in Bridgewater.

While it had less developed land Halifax had far more land in crops and woody perennials (including cranberry bogs and orchards), (22%) than the region (7.5%) or the adjacent towns. The comparable figures were Pembroke, 4.9%; Hanson, 8.3%, E. Bridgewater, 9.5%; Plympton, 14.2%; and Bridgewater, 15.0% including Correctional Institution land. The town had less forest than the region, 45.2% vs. 52.2%, but more wetlands, 5.7% vs. 2.7%.

Since the 1991 aerial survey, land in commercial use has grown considerably with development of the Wal Mart store and other businesses along Rte. 106.

Further discussion of patterns, trends and potentials within the town reflecting the studies more recent land use inventory follows in the Land Use Element.

Build Out Analysis Summary

The 1994 Halifax Build Out Analysis found 6,489 acres of undeveloped land and land in agricultural or extensive recreational use. After allowing for mapped flood plain, Wetlands, and septicily-limited soils, and applying present zoning and subdivision requirements, the Agricultural-Residential (AR), and Conservancy © zoned parcels, including 287 existing lots, had the potential for 1,622 new single family houses. After excluding the existing lots, which lacked the 10-acre minimum required for multi-family development, this land had the potential for 1,469 multi-family units.

Land Use 2000

Fig. II-3

The Commercial-Business (CB)-zoned land had the potential for 1,470,000 square feet of commercial-business space in the place of 120 house lots. The Industrially zoned land had the potential for 5,723,200 sq. ft. of industrial or distribution space.

The potential 1,622 new single-family houses could hold up to 4,379 new residents at the 2.7 persons per household found by the 1990 US Census. Combining this with the town's 1996 Census population estimate of 6,844 (approximating the population at the time of the analysis) gives a theoretical potential population of 11,223. This is a 3,723 increase over the 2000 Census count of 7,500.

Table II-8

Comparative Land Uses – 1991

Uses	Halifax Acres	Halifax %	Hanson %	E.Bdgwtr. %	Pembroke %	Brdgwtr. %	Plympton %	Region %
Forest	5014	45.2	50.8	50.8	48.7	47.2	60.4	52.2
Wetlands	630	5.7	6.8	4.0	4.1	2.8	3.2	2.7
Water	781	7.0	4.7	1.5	7.9	3.1	2.4	4.0
Crops & Pasture	1823	16.4	2.7	9.0	1.3	14.7	6.4	5.0
Woody *								
Perennial	672	6.0	5.6	0.5	3.6	0.3	7.8	2.5
Urban **								
Open	144	1.3	1.2	2.1	1.8	2.4	1.0	2.0
Open **								
Land	316	2.8	1.7	3.2	1.3	4.3	3.1	3.0
Mining	5	.5	3.0	1.9	.7	1.1	2.5	.8
Residential	1542	13.9	23.4	22.8	26.1	20.4	12.6	21.8
Recreational	180	1.6	.7	.9	1.6	.7	.2	1.5
Commercial	41	.4	.7	.9	1.6	.7	.2	1.5
Industrial	9	.1	.8	.9	.4	.7	.2	1.5
Total	11,203	100.0						

*Includes intensive agricultural uses such as cranberry bogs, orchards and nurseries

** Includes vacant land, public open spaces and the sites of institutions with significant open areas

*** Non-forested vacant land including abandoned farm fields and power lines

Source: Mass GIS LU21 Data Files based on the MacConnell program's 1991 aerial photographs

These totals reflect adjustment for extensive wetlands and floodplain areas which are excluded from development under a 1997 zoning bylaw amendment and hence are limited much more severely than they would be under only the Wetlands Protection Act, the Wetlands Protection bylaw, Title 5, Flood Plain regulations, and the Rivers Bill.

In contrast, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Year 2000 Build Out Analysis used a more limited inventory of wetlands, found 2,380 potential new dwelling units,

assumed a 2.5 persons/unit, added these to the estimated 1998 population, and came up with a build out population of 13,114. See Figures III-1 and III-2 in Chapter III.

For comparison, the Council's 1988 Build out Analysis for the town of East Bridgewater found that that community with 11,133 acres of land (8% beyond Halifax's 10,324 acres) and slightly smaller basic lot requirements (35,000 sq. ft. vs. 40,000 sq. ft.) had the potential for up to 23,625 residents.

Because of the different sources of Wetlands Information, the available land identified in this study is less than that suggested by the map of Zoning and Absolute Development Constraints used by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs for its recent Build Out Analysis. In Halifax at least, that effort appears to have used the typically more general and limited wetlands pattern from sources such as USGS Topographic sheets rather than the very detailed, more irregular, and more extensive patterns from the 1993/1997 Massachusetts Wetlands Inventory. The Inventory includes approximately 930 acres more of Wetlands outside of the flood plain than that calculated from the USGS maps. When applied to this effort, it led to a reduction of 650 new single-family houses, and of about 356,000 square feet of industrial space. See figures II-1 and III-2.

This study's estimate of a potential 5,723,200 sq. ft. of floor space on vacant industrially-zoned land could accommodate 9,538 jobs in manufacturing, or by special permit it could allow 4,770 jobs in distribution or 8,805 jobs in retail. The 1,470,000 sq. ft. possible through full use of the Commercial and Business zoned land could add 2,262 retail jobs, or by special permit it could allow up to 1,225 jobs in distribution or 2,450 jobs in manufacturing. Such growth is unlikely as is discussed in Chapter IX Economic Development, below.

Land Use, 2000

Fig. II-3

Census Block Groups

Fig II-2