

AMESBURY RECONNAISSANCE REPORT

ESSEX COUNTY LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

MASSACHUSETTS HERITAGE LANDSCAPE INVENTORY PROGRAM



Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Essex National Heritage Commission

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INTRODUCTION

Essex County is known for its unusually rich and varied landscapes, which are represented in each of its 34 municipalities. Heritage landscapes are places that are created by human interaction with the natural environment. They are dynamic and evolving; they reflect the history of a community and provide a sense of place; they show the natural ecology that influenced land use patterns; and they often have scenic qualities. This wealth of landscapes is central to each community's character; yet heritage landscapes are vulnerable and ever changing. For this reason it is important to take the first steps towards their preservation by identifying those landscapes that are particularly valued by the community – a favorite local farm, a distinctive neighborhood or mill village, a unique natural feature, an inland river corridor or the rocky coast. To this end, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the Essex National Heritage Commission (ENHC) have collaborated to bring the Heritage Landscape Inventory program (HLI) to communities in Essex County. The primary goal of the program is to help communities identify a wide range of landscape resources, particularly those that are significant and unprotected. The focus is on landscapes that have not been identified in previous survey efforts in a given community. Another important goal of the program is to provide communities with strategies for preserving heritage landscapes.

The methodology for the Heritage Landscape Inventory program was developed in a Pilot Project conducted in southeast Massachusetts. It is outlined in the DCR publication *Reading the Land* which has provided guidance for the program in Essex County. In short, each participating community appoints a Local Project Coordinator (LPC) to assist the DCR-ENHC consulting team. The LPC organizes a heritage landscape identification meeting at which interested residents and town officials offer community input by identifying potential heritage landscapes. This meeting is followed by a fieldwork session including the consulting team and the LPC, usually accompanied by other community members. This group visits the priority landscapes identified in the meeting and gathers information about the community. The final product is the Reconnaissance Report, prepared for each participating community. It outlines the history of the community; identifies the resources and documentation that provide background information; provides a short description of the priority heritage landscapes visited; discusses planning issues identified by the community; and concludes with a brief discussion of survey and planning recommendations. A list of all of the heritage landscapes identified by the community is included in the Appendix.

AMESBURY HISTORY

Amesbury's distinctive landscape features — its hills, lakes, swamps and river corridors — were instrumental in shaping the history of the community from the earliest Native American use of the land to the present day.

During the Contact period (1500-1620) members of the Pawtucket group (also called Pentucket) were active along the Merrimack River, where Native American sites are believed to exist near the mouth of the Powow River (sometimes spelled Powwow) and Presby's Creek. Amesbury was included in the Merrimack Plantation authorized in 1638 and English settlers arrived shortly after that. The town was incorporated in 1668. It originally included Merrimac, which became a separate community in 1876. Boundaries shifted as late as 1886 when Amesbury annexed parts of Salisbury.

During the Colonial period (1675-1775) Amesbury remained mostly agricultural, with dispersed farmsteads producing primarily grains and practicing animal husbandry. There was a village center at Amesbury Ferry/Salisbury Point and later another settlement along the west bank of the Powow River. With plentiful waterpower, a variety of small-scale industries started to develop in the early 18th century including: ironworks, sawmills, gristmills, fulling mills, stave factories, tanneries, hat manufacturing, shipyards and maritime commerce. While most Colonial residents were Congregationalists, Quakers settled in Amesbury in the early 18th century.

During the Federal period (1775-1830) transportation routes improved with construction of several bridges including the Essex Merrimack Bridge in 1790. Water travel continued along the Merrimack while maritime industries, including fishing, shipping and shipbuilding, remained important until the War of 1812, after which maritime trade shifted to deeper coastal ports that could accommodate the larger oceangoing vessels of the period. Textile mills were built along the falls of the Powow River beginning in 1812 and assumed an increasingly important role in Amesbury's economy during the 19th century, moving the commercial and civic center of the community inland along the Powow River. Carriage making, nail manufacturing and hat making were other industries active in Amesbury in the 19th century. Amesbury also had a strong civic pride, the Amesbury Improvement Association established in 1893 is one of the oldest in the state and remains active in town affairs today.

By 1913 the textile mills had closed and the carriage industry had shifted to car manufacture which was active until the depression of the 1930s. Farming continued into the 20th century, with emphasis on dairy products and hay in the pre-World War II period. Manufacturing became more diverse by mid-20th century with residential development in the town center and in outlying areas.

Construction of Routes I-95 and I-495 in the 1960s and 70s brought widespread residential growth to Amesbury, dramatically changing the character of the community. The town's current population is just under 16,500 and like most Essex County communities it faces intense pressure for development. Since 1996, Amesbury has had a unique municipal structure; it is a town with a city form of government.

RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTATION

This section of the Reconnaissance Report identifies planning documents and tools that provide information relevant to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program.

Inventory of Historic Assets

The Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets is a statewide list that identifies significant historic resources throughout the Commonwealth. In order to be included in the inventory, a property must be documented on an MHC inventory form, which is then entered into the MHC database. This searchable database, known as MACRIS, is now available online at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc>.

According to the MHC, Amesbury's inventory includes 598 survey forms documenting properties that date from 1650 to 1980. The inventory was begun in the 1970s and underwent a major update in the late 1980s, which included Salisbury Point, the Highlands, the Ferry District, the Training Field, Elm Street and Lion's Mouth Road. The most recent update of the inventory was completed in 1997. The current inventory includes roughly one-half of the town's historic buildings. Archaeological sites, landscapes and other non-traditional historic resources are under-represented.



State and National Registers of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official federal list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that have been determined significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. All of the National Register properties in Amesbury are also listed in the State Register. Amesbury has one National Register district, the Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Village Historic District, established in 1985. The Amesbury Friends Meeting

House and the Rocky Hill Meeting House are individually listed in the National Register; the Rocky Hill Meeting House is also a Massachusetts Historic Landmark. Amesbury has two National Historic Landmarks, which are also listed in the National Register, Lowell's Boat Shop and the John Greenleaf Whittier House. All National Register listings are automatically listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

Four Amesbury properties are also protected through preservation restrictions in accordance with MGL Chapter 183, Sections 31-33. They are: Lowell's Boat Shop, Millyard Hollow Frame Dam, Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station #3 and the Old U.S. Post Office. Preservation restrictions run with the deed and are one of the strongest preservation strategies available. All properties that have preservation restrictions filed under the state statute are automatically listed in the State Register.

Planning Documents

In June 2004 Amesbury completed a comprehensive Master Plan prepared by VHB/Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. It establishes a vision for the future of the community that includes preserving "the classic New England Village character and heritage that currently exists in Amesbury, while accommodating growth in a manner that is well controlled and appropriate to meet the needs of the community." The plan includes recommendations for: land use and growth management, natural resources, historic and cultural resources, housing, economic development, public facilities and infrastructure, and transportation.

Amesbury's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was last updated in 2002. It identifies scenic landscapes and unique resources such as hills and rural roads; cultural and historic areas such as historic farms, rivers and village centers; and areas of critical environmental concern such as wetlands and waterbodies. The OSRP also includes an inventory of lands that are of conservation and recreation interest. Many of the heritage landscapes identified in this Reconnaissance Report are also included in the OSRP inventory.

In 1999 planning consultant Alfred J. Lima prepared a Preservation Plan for Amesbury that highlighted the town's historic resources and made recommendations for preservation actions. It includes eight goals, all of which are consistent with the recommendations contained in this Reconnaissance Report. They are:

- Conduct survey and planning related to historic preservation.
- Prepare district and individual nominations to the National Register.
- Preserve historic resources of the downtown as part of a larger revitalization effort.
- Preserve the historic and architectural integrity of Amesbury's neighborhoods.
- Preserve Amesbury's historic landscapes.
- Amend town regulations to support historic preservation goals.

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- Increase public appreciation of the value of historic preservation.
 - Develop the organizational capacity to achieve historic preservation goals.

The Preservation Plan also provides a list of preservation tools for implementing the plan and a five-year action plan with an itemized list of tasks, many of which have been implemented.

Planning Bylaws and Other Tools

Amesbury has a six-month demolition delay bylaw that can be imposed on any building that is 50+ years old after the Historical Commission determines that it is historically or architecturally significant. Amesbury has also enacted a scenic roads bylaw under Massachusetts General Laws Ch. 40-15C that includes nine designated scenic roads.

In 2002 Amesbury passed an amendment to the zoning ordinance allowing Neighborhood Conservation District zoning. The goal of this ordinance is to support preservation of historic and architectural integrity in the town's neighborhoods. This section provides a procedure to waive certain underlying zoning requirements in order to preserve historic and natural features on a site and requires restrictions on those features. There also are provisions for a density bonus, which is balanced by the preservation of a certain amount of open space. Each conservation district must be designated by a procedure that is described in the ordinance. To date there is one such district, the Brown Hill Neighborhood Conservation District.

PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

Amesbury's Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by approximately a dozen residents, some representing town boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on June 3, 2004. During the meeting residents compiled a lengthy list of the town's heritage landscapes, which is included in the Appendix. Once the comprehensive list was created, attendees were asked to articulate the value of each landscape and the issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members identified a group of priority heritage landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork. Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved.

This section describes the priority landscapes that are the focus of the reconnaissance work in Amesbury. In most instances intensive survey work will be needed to fully document the physical characteristics and the historical development of the landscape. These heritage landscapes, which are listed alphabetically, represent a range of scales and types of resources.

Cider Hill Farm

Cider Hill Farm, located on Fern Avenue in the northern part of town, is a family-owned farm with diversified crops and activities designed to appeal to a wide range of interests and market opportunities. It grows berries, orchard crops (including 50 varieties of apples), vegetables, nursery plants, flowers, and produces honey. There is a farm store located in a restored dairy barn that sells fresh produce as well as canned fruits and jams, and cider donuts. The Cook family has recently added greenhouses to expand their growing season for specialty crops such as beefsteak tomatoes. Cider Hill Farm has established a membership program to inform customers of seasonal events. It also attends several farmers markets, is part of a community supported agriculture program and runs an international exchange program to bring students from other countries to work on the farm during the summer months. The farm includes several houses, barns and outbuildings and some new greenhouses, all set in the rolling landscape surrounded by tilled fields. Cider Hill Farm functions as an anchor for the agricultural area that lies along South Hampton Road in the northern part of Amesbury and is also linked to the nearby Powow River Conservation District.

Hills

Amesbury has a rolling, hilly landscape whose unique features include six drumlins (glacially formed hills): Beech, Lone Tree, Mundy, Powow, Ring and Whittier Hills. These hills function as visual landmarks and provide orientation and identity within the community. There are also three smaller unnamed hills just south of Friend Street. Until recently most of the taller hills have remained forested but development is now either occurring or proposed on some of them. Powow Hill, at 331' above sea level, is the tallest hill in Amesbury and also the most threatened. It was an important site to the Native Americans; was used in the 20th century as a ski area and is now forested. Like several of the other hills it is partially owned by the town. However, wireless communication towers have already been built on it and residential development is proposed for the privately owned portion of the hill.



Kimball Road

Amesbury has two distinctive glacial eskers (long narrow glacially deposited ridges of gravel). One is located parallel to the Merrimack River in the Point Shore Neighborhood. The other is located in the northwestern corner of Amesbury. This second esker forms the route for a stretch of Kimball Road, which extends northwest from Haverhill Street. Kimball Road is important to the community in part for its unique geological background, but also as a scenic route with rural agricultural character along its southern part and dramatic views of Lake Attitash and Tuxbury Pond along its northern section.

Lower Millyard and Carriage Hill Area

The Lower Millyard and adjacent Carriage Hill, located downtown between the Powow and Back Rivers, were the historic site of Amesbury's carriage industry until a fire in 1888 destroyed most of the factories. The area includes late 19th and early 20th century industrial buildings, with some housing in the Carriage Hill area. The Lower Millyard has been underutilized but is in transition from industrial to mixed use. Its historical significance has been recognized but not fully documented. The town wishes to preserve the historic fabric of the neighborhood, while accommodating compatible new uses. Several recent studies have documented issues and opportunities in this area. Decisions made over the next few years will have a major impact on its long-term future.

Merrimack River

The Merrimack River forms the southern boundary of Amesbury and is intimately linked with the history of the community. Native Americans used the river as a transportation corridor. European settlers established the Point Shore and Ferry District neighborhoods along the banks of the river and developed maritime related industries. These early neighborhoods and remnants of the industrial use, including Lowell's Boat Shop and the Merrimack Hat Factory, still lie along the river in the eastern part of Amesbury. There are also two bridge crossings in the eastern part of town, the Whittier Memorial Bridge, which carries Route I-95 over the river, and the Essex-Merrimac Chain Bridge, which carries local traffic across the river. On the Amesbury/Salisbury line is Deer Island, a 4.5-acre island, accessed by Chain Bridge (most of the island is in Amesbury, the eastern tip lies in Salisbury). Most of Deer Island is town-owned conservation land but there is also a vacant 19th century house and barn complex located there, which is currently in poor condition and has been on the market for some time. Site-related constraints make use of the property difficult. In the western part of Amesbury, most of the river frontage remains in low density use.

Pleasant Valley Road

Pleasant Valley Road is a winding two-lane roadway about two miles long that still follows its historic alignment along the Merrimack River, extending from the town of Merrimac east to Martin Road in Amesbury. It is one of the most rural routes in Amesbury and one of nine designated scenic roads in the community.

Much of the river edge along Pleasant Valley Road is largely invisible due to private ownership and overgrown vegetation, with only periodic views of the river edge. Access also is limited with many of the once informal connections to the river disappearing. Much of the former farmland along the road is now proposed for development, including a major office park.

Point Shore Neighborhood

One of Amesbury's key goals is to preserve the rural character of the waterfront and maintain physical and visual access to the river. The Point Shore neighborhood (also known as Salisbury Point) is located along the Merrimack River south of Macy Street (Route 110) and east of the Powow River. Main Street is the major road corridor through this neighborhood. Most of the residences are located on the north side of the street facing the Merrimack, while the south or river side of Main Street is occupied by a mix of commercial and residential uses including boatyards and fishing docks. Lowell's Boat Shop at 459 Main Street is a National Historic Landmark with a long history of continuous boat building. The Congregational Church and Alliance Park are other important features of the neighborhood. Point Shore, with its predominantly 18th and 19th century houses, retains the character of a pre-industrial village. It has been a relatively stable neighborhood until recently. Road treatment (i.e. width, appearance, speed, crosswalks, lighting) is key to neighborhood character. Traffic has increased, major additions have been made to some buildings and views of the Merrimack are increasingly obstructed. The neighborhood is highly valued by the community because of its link with the town's early shipbuilding industry, the scenic and historic quality of the neighborhood, and the prominent location along the Merrimack River. The Ferry District, which lies directly to the west of Point Shore, has many of the same characteristics and faces many of the same challenges.

Powow River

The Powow River has its headwaters in New Hampshire and then flows through Tuxbury Pond in the northwest corner of Amesbury, emerging as a narrow winding stream that meanders through the northern part of Amesbury passing near the water treatment plant and then through Woodsom Farm. The river re-enters New Hampshire briefly and then flows southeast to widen into Lake Gardner, a long, narrow 80-acre impoundment located just north of Amesbury Center. As it flows through the center of town, the Powow descends through a series of dams created in the 19th century to generate waterpower for Amesbury industries. It then joins with the Back River to form a wide slow moving river that flows south into the Merrimack.

Powow River Conservation District

The Powow River Conservation District is a 134-acre town-managed natural area that includes Battis Farm, Camp Kent Environmental Center, a portion of Powow Hill and Lake Gardner. Battis Farm, located on South Hampton Road north of the town center, is now used for passive recreation and community gardens. It

also includes fields, forest, wetland areas and a parking lot that is shared with the Camp Kent Environmental Center, a former Girl Scout Camp that is now a town-owned nature study area. The town-owned portion of Powow Hill includes Batchelder Park at the summit, which was once open but is now wooded. Lake Gardner, located immediately west of Powow Hill, is an impoundment of the Powow River that is dammed at the southern end to create a narrow lake. The popular town beach is located adjacent to the newly restored dam. One concern expressed by community members was that wireless communication towers were marring the appearance of the once pristine hill and that residential development was likely to occur on privately owned sections of the hill.

Woodsom Farm

Woodsom Farm is a 379-acre farm on Lion's Mouth Road that was acquired by the town in 1989. It consists of rolling hills, fields, woods and marshes of outstanding natural beauty. The farmhouse and cow barn are still privately owned, although public acquisition has been proposed. The site was farmed as early as 1790 and was once the largest dairy farm in Essex County. The rehabilitation plan completed in 2000 focuses on the concept of a Woodsom Farm Center that would include mixed uses celebrating Amesbury history and farm life, while also preserving the natural resources of the area and providing for active recreation and community meeting space. The current challenge is gaining consensus on an appropriate balance of uses and finding funding sources to implement the recommendations. Woodsom Farm, which is centrally located within the community and highly visible, is also the cornerstone of a proposed Lion's Mouth Historic District that would preserve the agricultural character of an important part of town.

PLANNING

Preservation Strategies

Amesbury's rich and varied natural features, particularly the Merrimack and Powow Rivers, played a critical role in the settlement and historical development of the community and remain among the town's most important assets.

Amesbury is also fortunate to have a rich collection of historic resources. The 2004 Master Plan, 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan and 1999 Preservation Plan, all provide a clear vision for the future of the community. The town has already taken important steps to preserve its most significant buildings and natural areas by establishing land use regulations that support the goals articulated in these planning documents. Amesbury is now looking beyond these resources to the other natural and cultural assets that define the overall fabric of the community. Like most Essex County municipalities, Amesbury is under intense pressure for development. Special places such as farms, scenic roads, vistas and historic neighborhoods that were once taken for granted are now more vulnerable than ever to change.

Planning Issues

In addition to the priority landscapes listed in the previous section, residents identified general issues related to heritage landscapes and community character. Each of the critical planning issues affects at least one of the priority landscapes. These issues are listed in alphabetical order. Community members also expressed interest in learning about preservation tools and strategies that have been effective in other Massachusetts communities and in identifying sources for preservation funding.

Agricultural Land

Preservation of agricultural land is an important goal for Amesbury, particularly in areas that retain a high concentration of agricultural use such as along South Hampton Road, Lion's Mouth Road and Middle Road. Many of Amesbury's farms have already been subdivided or converted to other uses. Farms that remain are highly valued by the community, especially those that retain active agricultural use, have significant historic structures or are visible from public right of ways. The list of priority landscapes includes three farms, two have been acquired by the town and one remains in private ownership. Cider Hill Farm is currently a vibrant business with strong community support but family-based farming is a tenuous occupation and there are no permanent protections in place. At Woodsom Farm, which is town-owned, the challenges are different. Long-term protection of 379-acres of farmland has been assured but the exact nature of future stewardship remains to be resolved. It will undoubtedly include a combination of land leased to local farmers for hay or other agricultural purposes; active recreation such as sports fields; and natural areas along the Powow River. Proposed uses for the privately owned farm buildings is still pending. Battis Farm is also town-owned and managed.



Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

Amesbury has nine historic burial grounds established between 1654 and 1883, some of which are town-owned and some of which are private. Smaller burial grounds that are no longer active are typically less well documented and receive less care. The condition of older tombs and headstones is a particular concern.

Downtown Area

Amesbury's downtown is characterized by mills, commercial buildings, worker housing and civic structures, all of which contribute significantly to downtown character. The Market Square area has 75 resources listed in the Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Village National Register District. The related tax credits for rehabilitation of commercial buildings have been important to the revitalization effort that Amesbury has undergone over the past decade, which has included redevelopment of vacant mill space, façade improvements, and updated infrastructure and public amenities. Amesbury residents are particularly proud of these improvements, which add a new sense of vitality to the community. Some residents expressed interest in creating a downtown "civic campus" that would link the various municipal buildings. There is also strong concern about the future of the Lower Millyard, a former industrial area that is currently underutilized and is proposed for redevelopment.

Neighborhoods

Amesbury's neighborhoods are rich in historic resources and essential to community character. Amesbury has 23 neighborhood planning districts, about half of which are compact residential and commercial neighborhoods and half of which are larger geographic areas with more dispersed land uses. The Point Shore and Ferry District neighborhoods along the Merrimack River are two of Amesbury's oldest and best preserved neighborhoods. Their desirable location along the Merrimack River also makes them particularly vulnerable to change.

Scenic Roads

Amesbury has nine designated scenic roads but many of Amesbury's roads retain scenic qualities. These include narrow road width, meandering alignment, stone walls, mature trees, and scenic vistas of agricultural landscapes and historic homesteads. In some instances these qualities are being compromised either by changes to the road right-of-way itself through widening, straightening or increased curb cuts or by changes to adjacent features such as breaks in stone walls or loss of scenic vistas or trees. Detrimental impacts of traffic, particularly along Main Street, were also mentioned as a concern.

PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

Preservation planning is a three-step process: identification, evaluation and protection. Four useful documents to consult before beginning to implement preservation strategies are the Massachusetts Historical Commission's *Survey Manual* and *Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances*; the Department of Conservation and Recreation's *Reading the Land*; and the Essex National Heritage Commission's *Essex National Heritage Area Plan*. Each publication provides necessary information for the identification, evaluation and protection of the rich cultural heritage of Massachusetts communities. General recommendations are listed first, followed by more specific recommendations.

Each community will have to determine the best way to implement the recommendations discussed below. One approach that might help Amesbury begin the process is to form a Heritage Landscape Committee, as described in *Reading the Land*.

General Recommendations

Recommendations that apply to a broad range of resources are discussed below. The general recommendations are listed in the order in which they are most logically addressed when applying the three-step preservation planning process as described above. Thus the goal will be to (1) identify, (2) evaluate, (3) protect.

Inventory of Heritage Landscapes and Other Historic Assets

The vital first step in developing preservation strategies for heritage landscapes is to record information about the resources on MHC inventory forms. One cannot advocate for something unless one knows precisely what it is – the physical characteristics and the historical development. Approximately one-half of the historic structures in town have not yet been documented, and for the roughly 600 that have been inventoried, some of the information is incomplete. In addition, most archaeological sites and landscapes, which are particularly vulnerable to development, have not been inventoried. All resources that have been recorded in the past should be reviewed, particularly those documented in the 1980s because survey methodology has changed since that time. New procedures are more comprehensive and link properties in a more coherent way than in the past. Furthermore, many of the areas for which documentation is appropriate may be considered as heritage landscapes, particularly farms and residential neighborhoods. Thus, using the Massachusetts Historical Commission survey methodology, record Amesbury's heritage landscapes beginning with the priority landscapes listed in this report:

- Compile a list of resources that are under-represented or not sufficiently documented, beginning with heritage landscapes.

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- Document unprotected resources first, beginning with the most threatened resources.
 - Make sure to document secondary features on farms and residential properties, such as barns, stone walls and landscape elements.
 - Record a wide range of historic and pre-historic resources including archaeological sites, landscape features and industrial resources.

National Register Program

A critical step in the inventory process is the evaluation of each resource for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In all likelihood, documentation provided by further survey will yield information to support additional National Register listings. Therefore, develop a National Register listing plan taking into consideration a property's integrity and vulnerability. Properties that are in need of recognition and preservation should be given priority. Individual properties and the following areas have already been recommended in the Preservation Plan as potential National Register Districts:

- Felch houses on South Hampton Road
- Ferry District
- Highlands Area
- Lion's Mouth Road (including Woodsom Farm)
- Point Shore (Salisbury Point) (NR nomination is underway)
- Training Field Area

Agricultural Landscapes

Preservation of agricultural landscapes ideally means preservation of farming activities; otherwise it is simply the preservation of land as open space. It is important to know what the key features of an agricultural landscape are and which features the community values in order to make a case for preservation of these landscapes. Some preservation tools are available that can assist communities in preserving farming activities. Consider the following options.

- Use existing tools such as Site Plan Review and Cluster Bylaw to establish a buffer between farmland and new development.
- Establish an agricultural commission to address farm preservation in Amesbury.
- Adopt a right-to-farm bylaw, which allows farmers to carry on farming activities that may be considered a nuisance to neighbors.
- Pass the Community Preservation Act, which can be a key source of funds to purchase development rights on farms or to assist a farmer in the restoration of historic farm buildings.

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- Continue public-private partnerships to preserve farmland through purchase, conservation restrictions or agricultural preservation restrictions.

Burial Grounds and Cemeteries

Amesbury has nine historic burial grounds and cemeteries, most under private ownership. The documentation and preservation needs vary for each site. The DCR publication *Preservation Guidelines for Municipally Owned Historic Burial Grounds and Cemeteries* provides guidance on developing preservation plans for burial grounds, including identification and evaluation of the resources as well as preservation strategies. Using this guide Amesbury should:

- Review survey forms for all burial grounds and cemeteries that have been in use for more than 50 years. Update or prepare new forms as needed.
- List eligible burial grounds and cemeteries in the National Register of Historic Places.
- Develop a preservation and management plan for each town-owned burial ground taking into consideration repair of stone markers, stone walls and fencing related to cemeteries, repair of iron work, removal of invasive growth, ongoing maintenance of plant material.
- Work with private/institutional owners of older burial grounds to inform them of preservation and management planning and to assure that basic preservation needs are met.

Neighborhood Character

Nearly all preservation strategies address neighborhood character in some manner. As described above, thorough documentation on MHC inventory forms is an important first step in the preservation planning process, followed by National Register listing where appropriate. Three preservation tools that are particularly applicable to Amesbury's historic neighborhoods are demolition delay, local historic district designation (MGL Chapter 40C) and neighborhood conservation district designation. A demolition delay ordinance provides a time period in which the city can consider alternatives to demolition. Both types of districts recognize special areas within a community where the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places are preserved and protected. Each type of district is a local initiative, adopted by a 2/3 vote of the City Council, and administered by a district commission, appointed by the Mayor. The strongest form of protection for the preservation of historic resources is local historic district designation, while neighborhood conservation districts are less restrictive but still embrace neighborhood character.

- Be sure to widely publicize all demolition requests so that residents are aware of potential demolitions.

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- Determine whether historic neighborhoods such as Ferry District, Point Shore or Highland Street would be appropriate local historic or neighborhood conservation districts. Areas with a high level of historical significance and integrity should be considered as potential local historic districts, while neighborhood conservation districts would be more appropriate for residential neighborhoods that may have less integrity and where more flexibility is needed.
 - Adopt a Local Historic District Ordinance to preserve neighborhood character by regulating design of historic features. Complete study of Point Shore district and designate it and other historically significant neighborhoods as local historic districts to preserve individual properties as well as neighborhood character. In a local historic district, any proposed changes to exterior architectural features visible from a public right-of-way are reviewed by the locally appointed historic district commission.
 - Alternatively, pass a Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD) Ordinance. Neighborhood conservation districts are special areas that are preserved by regulating scale, massing and materials of additions and new construction. Such districts may be the most appropriate way to preserve the land use pattern of an area where there are changes in materials but the overall size, scale and orientation of structures within the heritage landscape are retained.

Scenic Roads

Scenic roads are an integral part of the historic fabric of the community. They are highly valued by Amesbury residents and visitors alike. Yet roads must also accommodate modern transportation needs and decisions regarding roadways are often made with travel requirements as the only consideration. The Scenic Roads Act (MGL Chapter 40-15C) under which Amesbury adopted its Scenic Roads Ordinance addresses the removal of trees and stone walls that are within the public right-of-way. Yet, in addition to roadway issues, much of what we value about scenic roads — the stone walls, views across open fields — is not within the public right-of-way. This is an important distinction and requires more than one approach.

- Complete an inventory with descriptions and photo documentation of each rural road in Amesbury. Use this as the basis for designation of additional scenic roads, particularly those in rural/agricultural areas and adjacent to waterbodies.
- Amend the Scenic Roads Bylaw by adding design criteria to be considered when approving removal of trees and stone walls. Add other design criteria such as a provision allowing only one driveway cut per property on scenic roads. Coordinate procedures between Highway Department and Planning Board.

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- Establish an overlay to reinforce preservation of important views by establishing a no-disturb buffer on private property bordering on scenic roads or adopting flexible zoning standards to protect certain views. Such bylaws could be written to apply to the numbered routes also, which are not protected under the Scenic Roads Bylaw.
 - Develop policies and implementation standards for road maintenance and reconstruction, including bridge reconstructions, which address the scenic and historic characteristics while also addressing safety. This is an important public process in which the public may have to accept responsibility for certain costs to implement standards that are not acceptable to projects funded by Mass. Highway Department. Such standards should have a section addressing the way in which the local Highway Department maintains roads, for example requiring a public hearing if any additional pavement is to be added to a town road during reconstruction or repair. Policies can be adopted by local boards having jurisdiction over roads or can be adopted through a bylaw. In developing policies consider factors such as road width, clearing of shoulders, walking paths and posted speeds. A delicate balance is required.

Funding of Preservation Projects

Funding for preservation projects is an important aspect of implementing preservation strategies. In recent years, the ENHC has maintained a small grants program for Essex County communities. In addition, both the MHC and the DCR have had funding programs to assist communities in preservation related issues including:

- Survey and Planning Grants, administered by the MHC, support survey, National Register and preservation planning work.
- The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) administered by the MHC, funds restoration and rehabilitation projects.
- The Historic Landscape Preservation Grant Program (HLPGP) administered by DCR funds planning, rehabilitation, education and stewardship projects focused on historic landscapes, including cemeteries.

Funding for state programs varies from year to year. When planning Amesbury's heritage landscape inventory program, contact relevant agencies to determine whether funding is available.

Towns that have adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA) find it to be an excellent funding source for many heritage landscape projects; however Amesbury first would have to adopt the Act. While tricky to pass in lean economic times, the number and types of projects that are benefiting across the Commonwealth is worthy of consideration. The CPA establishes a mechanism

by which towns can develop a fund dedicated to historic preservation, open space and affordable housing. Funds are collected through a .5% to 3% surcharge on each annual real estate tax bill. The Commonwealth has established a dedicated fund which is used to match the municipality's collections under the CPA.

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act, by a majority vote on a ballot question, fosters partnerships among historic preservationists, conservationists and affordable housing advocates. At least 10% of the funds must be used to preserve historic resources; at least 10% must be used to protect open space; and at least 10% must be used to advance affordable housing. The remaining 70% must be used for one of these three uses as well as recreational needs and can be distributed in varying proportions depending upon the projects that the town believes are appropriate and beneficial to the municipality. Information about the CPA can be found at www.communitypreservation.org.

Specific Recommendations

Cider Hill Farm

Cider Hill Farm is the cornerstone of the agricultural district in the northeastern part of Amesbury and a highly valued community asset. It is currently an active family-owned farm but there are no permanent protections in place to assure that the land remains in active agricultural use.

- Work with landowners and local land trusts such as Essex County Greenbelt Association to explore whether protection mechanisms such as agricultural preservation restrictions might be appropriate.

Lower Millyard

The Lower Millyard is an underutilized industrial area that is targeted for redevelopment. Many of the older buildings and structures found here are in poor condition and in some cases their historic attributes are not readily apparent. Along with the adjacent Carriage Hill neighborhood, this area represents both an opportunity and a challenge.

- Prepare MHC inventory forms for significant buildings, structures, sites and features that have not already been documented. Nominate some or all to NR if determined eligible.
- Review the zoning bylaw to determine whether there are incentives to preserve historic structures. Often the opposite is the case – such regulations generally are more easily followed if one gets rid of the historic structure. Consider flexible zoning bylaw to address important natural features and historic properties.
- Develop design review guidelines for the area.

-
- Collaborate with a graduate preservation or real estate program to develop reuse plan(s) for mill buildings in this area.

Point Shore Neighborhood and Ferry District

These two neighborhoods along the Merrimack River were among the earliest parts of Amesbury to be settled. They retain a strong 19th century village character and are highly valued by the community. Both neighborhoods have been determined eligible for listing in the National Register. The Amesbury Historical Commission has begun to study the Point Shore neighborhood for local historic district designation.

- Complete the nomination process for listing both neighborhoods to the National Register.
- Adopt a local historic district ordinance and designate two districts, Point Shore Historic District and the Ferry Historic District.

CONCLUSION

The Amesbury Reconnaissance Report is a critical tool in starting to identify the rich and diverse heritage landscapes in Amesbury and in beginning to think about preservation strategies. However, it is only the first step in the planning process. Landscapes identified in this report, especially the priority landscapes, will typically need further documentation on MHC inventory forms. The documentation in turn can be used in publicity efforts to build consensus and gather public support for their preservation. Implementation of recommendations will require a concerted effort of and partnerships with municipal boards and agencies, local non-profits, and state agencies and commissions.

Distribution of this Reconnaissance Report to the municipal land use boards and commissions will assist in making this one of the planning documents that guides Amesbury in preserving important features of the community's character. The tasks that are recommended will require cooperation and coordination among boards and commissions, particularly Amesbury's Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Conservation Commission. It also is advisable to present this information to the City Council and to the Mayor, the applicants to the Heritage Landscape Inventory program on behalf of the town. Finally distribution of the report to the Historical Society, neighborhood associations, and any other preservation minded organizations will broaden the audience and assist in gathering interest and support for Amesbury's heritage landscapes.

APPENDIX: HERITAGE LANDSCAPES IDENTIFIED BY COMMUNITY

This list was prepared as a summary of the Heritage Landscape Identification meeting held in Amesbury on June 3 and follow-up fieldwork on July 7, 2004. This is a working list and can be updated by the community. **There may be other heritage landscapes that were not identified at the HLI meeting noted above.** The chart has two columns, the name and location of the resource are in the first, notes about the resource are in the second. Landscapes are grouped by land use category. Abbreviations used are listed below.

- APR = Agricultural Preservation Restriction ATC = Amesbury Treasures Coalition
- CR = Conservation Restriction LHD = Local Historic District
- NR = National Register PR = Preservation Restriction
- * = Priority Landscape TTOR = The Trustees of Reservations

All LHD listings refer to the Amesbury and Salisbury Mills Village Historic District.

Agriculture	
<i>Battis Farm</i> South Hampton Road	Town-owned open space and community gardens. Next to Camp Kent Environmental Center. Included in Powow River Conservation District.
<i>Cider Hill Farm</i> * 45 Fern Avenue	Active farm with farmhouse, barns, greenhouses, planted fields, nursery. Also has farm stand/retail store (vegetables, fruit) and recreation (corn maze).
<i>Middle Earth Farm</i> 67 Fern Avenue	Organic farm with community supported agriculture program. Not very visible because it has limited road frontage.
<i>Pender Farm</i> 18 Buttonwood Road	Near Merrimack River. Was dairy farm until recently, includes fields, tidal marsh. 105 acres protected by APR.
<i>Starlite Farm</i> 84 S. Hampton Road	Opposite Battis Farm, horse farm with post and rail paddocks and pasture land, huge barn with silo.
<i>Sunset Hill Farm</i> 212 Lion’s Mouth Road	14 acre tree farm in Chap. 61A (agriculture).
<i>Woodsom Farm</i> * Lion’s Mouth Road	379-acre farm acquired by town as open space. Some of the farm buildings are not town-owned. Currently used for active and passive recreation. Some parts are hayed. Area also includes wetlands associated with Powow River. Master plan recently completed.
Burial Grounds and Cemeteries	
<i>Amesbury Union-Bartlett Cemetery</i> Main Street	Established 1663. Two adjacent cemeteries. Amesbury-Union is town-owned, 18.2 acres. Bartlett Cemetery is town-owned 1.35 acres. Both are located behind the Macy-Colby House.
<i>Corner Cemetery</i> Elm Street	Established 1793. Town-owned, next to the old Fire Station, 39,900 sq. ft.

<i>Golgotha Burial Ground</i> Main Street	Established 1654. Owned by Amesbury Improvement Association. First burial ground in Amesbury.
<i>Mount Prospect Cemetery</i> Elm Street	Established 1811. Private, 31.6 acres.
<i>Old Indian Burial Ground</i>	Located at eastern edge of town between Congress and Monroe Streets.
<i>Salisbury Plains Burying Ground</i> Monroe Street	Established 1718. Private, one acre.
<i>Salisbury Point Cemetery</i> Clark's Road	Established 1788. Private, 9.5 acres. Also known as Webster's-Salisbury Point Cemetery.
<i>St. Joseph's Cemetery</i> Haverhill Road	Roman Catholic, 64.3 acres.
<i>Tuxbury Burial Ground</i> Kimball Road	Established 1837.
Commercial	
<i>Downtown</i> Main Street area	Includes: municipal block, Market Square, Bartlett Park and Josiah Bartlett Statue, Gazebo Park, Public Library, section of Powow River, and Amesbury murals. Churches are also an integral part of downtown, including Baptist Church, Congregational Church, Methodist Church, St. James, and St. Joseph's. Town is interested in creating more campus-like setting for municipal buildings.
<i>Kimball Pickle Factory</i> Merrimac Street	Across street from Merrimack Hat Factory, still in business.
<i>Smith's Chain Bridge Filling Station #3</i> 520 Main Street	PR. Former gas station located on Main Street in visible location. Was used as Amesbury visitor center.
Industrial	
<i>Carriage Hill Area *</i> Oakland & Morrill St.	Former mill buildings with declining industrial use are being studied for potential redevelopment.
<i>Cedar Street Area</i>	Cluster of five mill buildings along Back River being redeveloped for mixed-use live/work space for artists, craftspeople and entrepreneurs. There will also be an affordable housing component. Area will include adjacent parkland.
<i>Lower Mill Yard *</i> Between Back and Powow Rivers	Changing industrial area. Formerly carriage factories, early car manufacturing. Currently DPW and junkyards. Target of future renewal efforts, including new transportation center.
<i>Merrimack Hat</i>	Large mill building on dramatic site overlooking the Merrimack River being converted

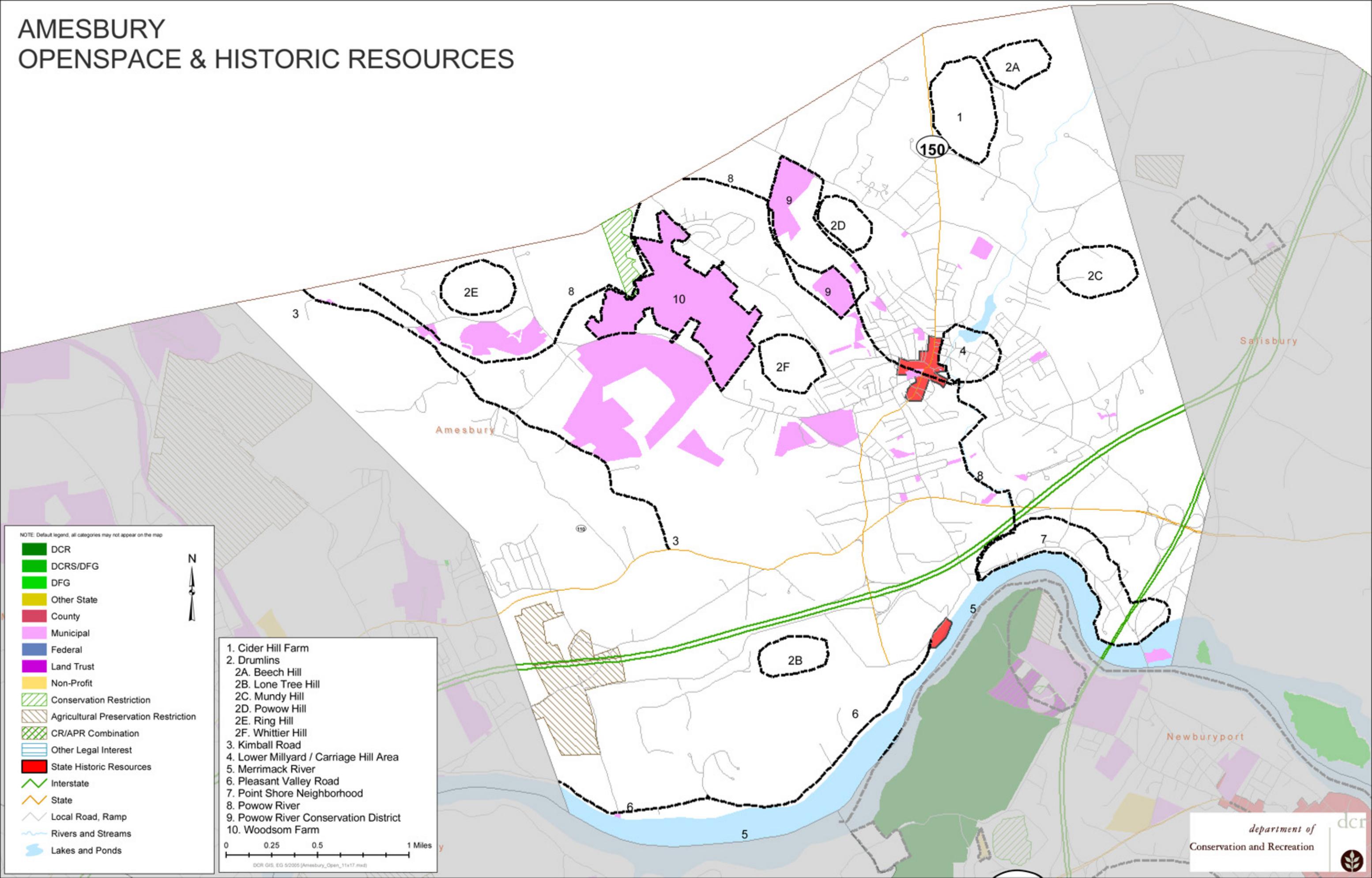
Factory Merrimac Street	to condominiums with marina and slip space. DOE-1987 with 24 resources.
Upper Mill Yard High Street area	Part of downtown area. Brick mill buildings being converted to multi-use development with 49 units of housing. Town owns adjacent parkland, which incorporates industrial features and walkways along the riverfront.
Institution	
Bartlett Museum 270 Main Street	ATC. Italianate former schoolhouse used as carriage and hat museum. Salisbury Point Historical Society is located here.
Quaker Meetinghouse 120 Friend Street	NR IND. 1851, active Friends meetinghouse, also used as daycare center.
Rocky Hill Meetinghouse Old Portsmouth Road	NR, MHL, ATC. Owned by Historic New England (formerly SPNEA).
Maritime	
Lowell's Boat Shop 459 Main Street	NR, NHL, PR, ATC. Located in Point Shore neighborhood, still operates as boat shop. Managed by Newburyport Maritime Society.
Military	
Old Powderhouse Powderhouse Hill	Town-owned stone tower, maintained by Amesbury Improvement Association.
Natural Feature	
Back River	Located in northeastern part of community, underutilized and inaccessible. Includes Clark's Pond and Little Clark's Pond.
Bailey's Pond	On Beacon Street near Merrimack River. Pine woods, old gravel pit, 180-unit development proposed nearby.
Eskers	Amesbury has several distinctive glacially-formed eskers, including a section of Kimball Road and part of the Point Shore neighborhood.
Great Swamp	Town-owned, connects to and runs through Woodsom Farm.
Hills	Lone Tree Hill - Partially developed. Mundy Hill - Partially developed. Powow Hill - Highest point in Essex County. Top of hill reputed to be Native American site. Former Atlantic Ski Area. Cell towers and development under construction at top of hill. Important for panoramic views to and from hill. Whittier Hill - Glacially-formed drumlin west of Lake Gardner.

Lake Attitash (Kimball Pond)	Early 20 th century recreation area on Amesbury/Merrimack line with narrow roads and summer cottages, many now year-around houses. As area becomes more developed, problems with water quality increase.
Lake Gardner	Important recreation area. Lake Gardner Dam recently rebuilt with modern structure and granite block facing. Includes five-acre town beach adjacent to dam.
Merrimack River *	Scenic shoreline, "town's greatest treasure." Amesbury Wharf was highest point on the river navigable by ship. Many water-related uses and historic settlement areas along river.
Patten's Pond	Kettle hole pond located near center of town, wildlife sanctuary. Owned by Amesbury Improvement Association.
Powow River *	Wild in New Hampshire, changes as it travels through Amesbury, from meandering rural river to falls historically used to power industrial uses. Riverwalk located along downtown section. Mouth of Powow is known archaeological site. Portion of river near Lake Gardner runs through Powow River Conservation District.
Presby's Creek	Freshwater tidal marshes at Pender Farm.
Tuxbury Pond off Newton Road	Wide part of Powow River where one can put in and paddle for hours up into NH. Brand new dam.
Open Space	
Alliance Park Main Street	.97-acre park owned by Amesbury Improvement Association. In Point Shore where the Powow and the Merrimack meet.
Amesbury Country Club	Private, 105.87 acres.
Bartlett's Reach Park Pleasant Valley Road	Privately owned and maintained park along Merrimack River for residents of Bartlett's Reach Condominium only. Located within and surrounded by wetlands.
Boy Scout Camp	Near Tuxbury Pond.
Camp Bauercrest Haverhill Road	Private camp with beach on Lake Attitash, important feature on the lake.
Powow River Conservation District * South Hampton Road	Town-owned area that includes Battis Farm (town-owned open space and community gardens); Camp Kent Environmental Center (former Girl Scout camp donated to town) and part of Powow Hill including Batchelder Park (top of Powow Hill, was open, now wooded, cell towers proposed).
Collins Street Park	Small park for multi-purpose recreation, 1.8 acres.
Deer Island	45-acre island in middle of Merrimack River, largely town-owned, passive recreation.

<i>Gillis Park</i> Elm Street	Town-owned .13-acre square in front of railroad station.
<i>Margaret Rice Park</i> South Martin Road	Former gravel pit, now a 31.9-acre unimproved park.
<i>Memorial Park</i>	Town-owned 1-acre park used for passive recreation.
<i>Riverwalk</i>	1.1-acre walkway along Powow River in downtown area near the Lower Mill Yard. Phase I to be constructed in Spring 2005. In Powow River Conservation District.
<i>Town Forest</i> Kimball Road	Town-owned 41-acre forest area with trails.
<i>Town Park</i> Friend Street	Also known as Amesbury Park, 23.4 acres used for multi-purpose recreation.
<i>Training Field Park</i>	Town-owned 1.5-acre park used for passive recreation. Was site of Colonial training field.
Residential / Building	
<i>Macy-Colby House</i> 253 Main Street	ATC. 1654, center chimney, 3-bay, one of the oldest houses in Amesbury.
<i>Mary Baker Eddy Hse</i> 277 Main Street	ATC. Squire Bagley House where Mary Baker Eddy was a visitor in 1868-1870.
<i>Whittier House</i> 86 Friend Street	NR, NHL, ATC. Circa 1829. Greek Revival/Italianate house that was John Greenleaf Whittier's home from 1886-1892. Listed on. Amesbury Treasures Coalition.
Residential / Neighborhood	
<i>Ferry District</i>	West of Powow River along the Merrimack. Glacial esker, former Native American trail. Boat club, now boat shop, building threatened. Has town landing. Vulnerable to change. Similar issues to Point Shore. Ferry crossing lines up with Ferry Road in Newburyport.
<i>Highland St. Area</i> Hillside Avenue	Residential neighborhood. Scenic road with large Queen Anne and Colonial Revival houses.
<i>Point Shore * Neighborhood</i>	Along Merrimack River from Alliance Park to Visitor Center. Resources include: Merrimack River edge, town landing, Alliance Park, Lowell's Boat Shop (NHL) and Congregational Church.

Structure	
<i>Monuments</i>	Captains Well - monument related to Whittier poem, Amesbury Middle School. Doughboy Statue - World War I Monument, Amesbury Middle School. Susannah Martin Stone - At end of North Martin Road. Veterans Memorial - Across from Amesbury Middle School in Justin Memorial Park.
Transportation	
<i>Chain Bridge</i>	Over Merrimack River, important gateway to Amesbury.
<i>Coastal Trails Network</i>	Three miles in Amesbury, part of 17 mile regional trail system.
<i>Kimball Road</i>	Scenic road near Lake Attitash that runs along an esker.
<i>Landing Strip</i> off Kimball Road	Northwest corner of town near Lake Attitash. Abuts property for which there is a large 40B proposal.
<i>Pleasant Valley Road</i> *	Scenic route along Merrimack River. Designated scenic road.
<i>Route 110</i>	Regional transportation corridor. Eastern part is now too developed to convey historic character.

AMESBURY OPENSOURCE & HISTORIC RESOURCES



NOTE: Default legend, all categories may not appear on the map

- DCR
- DCRS/DFG
- DFG
- Other State
- County
- Municipal
- Federal
- Land Trust
- Non-Profit
- Conservation Restriction
- Agricultural Preservation Restriction
- CR/APR Combination
- Other Legal Interest
- State Historic Resources
- Interstate
- State
- Local Road, Ramp
- Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Ponds

- 1. Cider Hill Farm
- 2. Drumlins
 - 2A. Beech Hill
 - 2B. Lone Tree Hill
 - 2C. Mundy Hill
 - 2D. Powow Hill
 - 2E. Ring Hill
 - 2F. Whittier Hill
- 3. Kimball Road
- 4. Lower Millyard / Carriage Hill Area
- 5. Merrimack River
- 6. Pleasant Valley Road
- 7. Point Shore Neighborhood
- 8. Powow River
- 9. Powow River Conservation District
- 10. Woodsom Farm

