

Town of Norton



Priority Development & Protection Areas October 2008

SOUTH COAST RAIL PROJECT
Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District

PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS PRIORITY PROTECTION AREAS

INTRODUCTION

Southeastern Massachusetts is growing rapidly. As a region, we are developing nearly 8 acres each and every day, or about 4½ square miles a year. This is equivalent to fully developing an area approximately the size of the Town of Somerset every 21 months.

Development is inevitable. Our region is a desirable place to live and work, and a certain amount of new growth is healthy. But in the past we have not always planned well for development and the result has not always been an asset for our communities and region. Good development should be planned for sites matched to their intended uses. Sites for more intensive development need good access, compatible abutting land uses, available public water and sewer service, and minimal environmental constraints. These areas need to be located, mapped and appropriately zoned. Likewise, we need to plan to protect our most environmentally sensitive natural areas. These are the areas that contribute to our water supply, contain threatened or endangered species or are special due to their scenic or historic features. These areas also need to be located, mapped and appropriately protected. We must steer development toward the appropriate (priority development) areas and away from the critical (priority protection) areas in order to achieve the vision that we have for our communities.

In conjunction with the South Coast Rail project and the Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force, SRPEDD will be working with municipal officials and citizens in southeastern Massachusetts' communities to identify **Priority Development Areas (PDAs)** and **Priority Protection Areas (PPAs)** in each of the region's twenty-seven (27) cities and towns.

WHAT ARE PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS (PDAs)?

These are areas within a city or town that are capable of handling more development due to several factors, including good transportation access, available infrastructure (primarily water and sewer), an absence of environmental constraints, and local support. PDAs can range in size from a single lot to many acres. Examples of potential PDAs locations already designated under state programs such as Chapter 43D (expedited permitting), Chapter 40R (smart growth zones) and Economic Opportunity Areas. Included in SRPEDD's suggested PDA designations will be the local recommendations for how these sites should be appropriately developed.



WHAT ARE PRIORITY PROTECTION AREAS (PPAs)?

These are areas within a city or town that deserve special protection due to the presence of significant environmental factors and natural features, such as endangered species habitats, areas critical to water supply, scenic vistas, or areas of historic significance. Like PDAs, the protection areas can vary greatly in size. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs), aquifer recharge areas, or designated priority habitats are examples of locations that could be designated as PPAs.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PDA/PPA DESIGNATIONS?

This work is useful to all communities in making land use and zoning decisions. It may be helpful when considering potential mitigation for the commuter rail project, and may be utilized if a regional system of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is created. The PDA/PPA information that is developed will also be integrated into the corridor plan for the South Coast Rail project.

HOW DOES THE PROCESS WORK?

SRPEDD assembled known data, local zoning bylaws, master plans and open space plans and worked with local planners, conservation agents, economic development officials, elected officials, interest groups, local organizations and citizens to review this information and refine it with local knowledge. This process took several months to complete in each community. State officials will be consulted for their input and final recommendations will be brought before local officials and the Southeastern Massachusetts Commuter Rail Task Force.

HAS THIS BEEN DONE BEFORE?

Similar efforts undertaken by SRPEDD in 1997 and The Coalition for Buzzards Bay have completed pieces of this process, and that work will be incorporated into this effort. The following pages reveal the work that members of the Town of Norton identified as Priority Protection and Priority Development Areas in the Fall of 2008.

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Community Summary

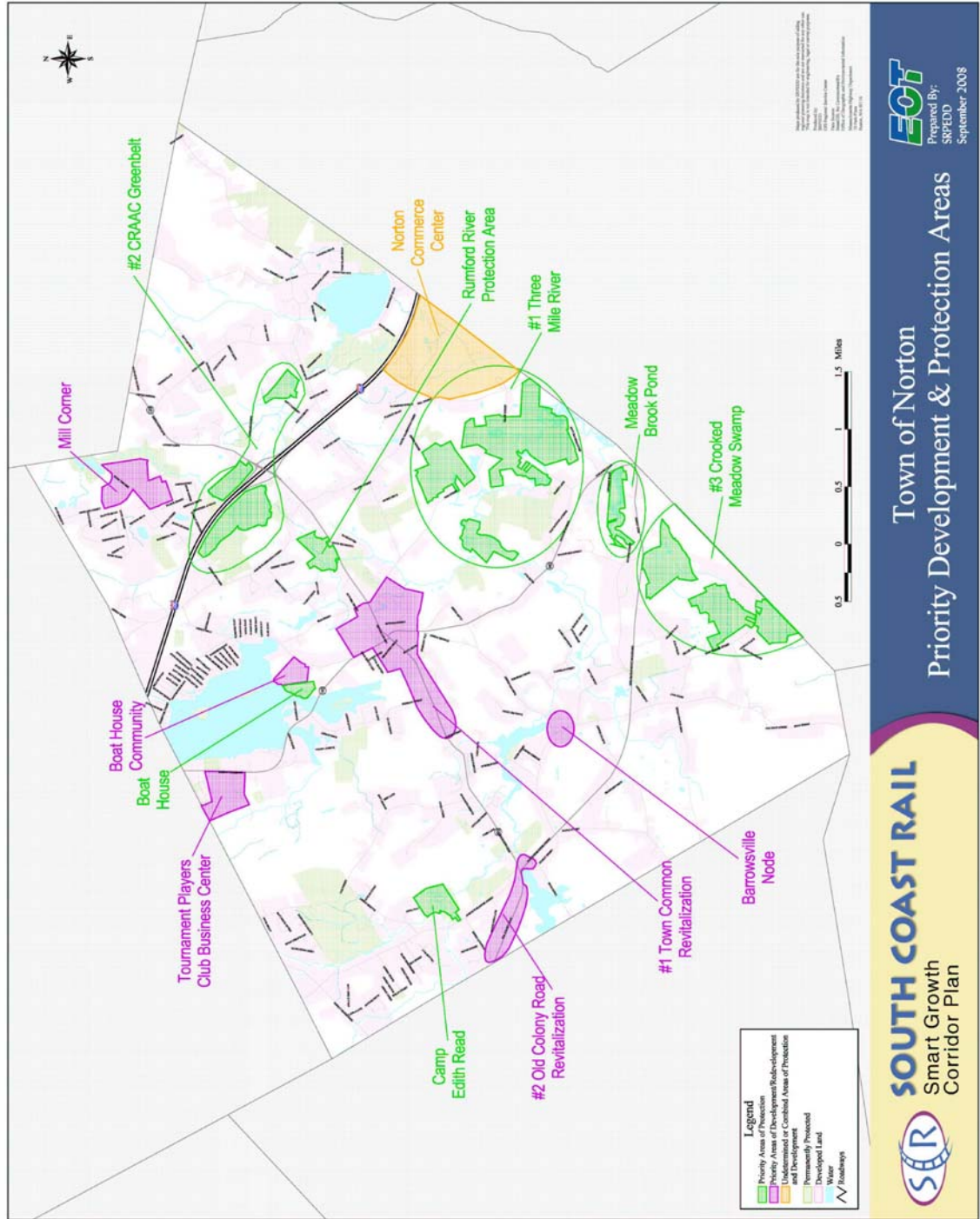
The Town of Norton is located in southeastern Massachusetts. The town has a rich history starting with the first colonial settlement in 1669 by William Wetherell. His house is located on the old native trail called Bay Road. Earlier industrial activity included bog iron, gristmills, and lumbering. The keel of the “Constitution” is thought to have been cut from the oak trees found within the Norton Great Woods. By the nineteenth century, textile mills, bleacheries, wool-combing, basket-making, jewelry manufacturing, and copper penny manufacturing were all taking place within the community. The town once hosted five railroad stations: East Norton, Chartley, Barrowsville, Crane Street, and Meadowbrook. In 1912, the Wheaton Female Seminary, became Wheaton College and still considered a well-respected school. Norton was a hub of activity.

Like the surrounding communities, Norton’s land use has been influenced by the construction of Route 495. The highway has provided easy access to neighboring communities, increased employment opportunities with shorter and more direct commutes, and increased the amount of traffic traveling through the center of town. The population has grown, and the community has tried to cope with the through zoning regulation. Currently the town has a rural character with suburban convenience.



I. The Town of Norton Priority Protection and Development Map

PDA and PPA are illustrated on this map. Please refer to the map for locations discussed in Section II.



II. Priority Development/Redevelopment

The following six (6) locations were identified by the town as having a high priority and the most potential for development or redevelopment.

1. Town Common Revitalization

The Town Common Revitalization area is centrally located at the crossroads of Routes 140 and 123, both of which lead to Route 495. The Town Common area consists of Wheaton College, Campus book store, United States Post Office, Norton Town Hall, Norton Police and Fire Stations, Norton



Public Library, CVS, Dunkin Donuts, Woodlawn Meadows Elderly Housing complex, Walgreens and extends to the Hess Gas station on West Main St. Portions of the area are within the Norton Center Historic District. The town envisions a quaint village common with a mix of commercial and residential uses that is in keeping with historic New England style design. Appropriate commercial redevelopment, mixed-use residential and infill opportunities exist in the Town Common.

Town Common Revitalization Area Summary of Characteristics

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipally owned property</i> <p>Historical Significance</p>	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Medium/High yield aquifer</i> • <i>100 /500 year floodplain</i> • <i>Wetlands</i>
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fernandes Park</i> 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i> • <i>Sand and Gravel</i> • <i>Floodplain Alluvium</i>
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business Village</i> • <i>Residential</i> • <i>Municipal Water/ Sewer available</i> 	<p>Possible Use/Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commercial/Manufacturing</i> • <i>Mixed-use</i>
<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>West Main Street</i> 	<p>21E Site/Brownfield Potential</p>

2.) **Old Colony Road Revitalization Area**



This area, referred to as the Chartley Village Business corridor, is located at the intersection of North and South Worcester Streets and Route 123 (Old Colony Road) and extends west along Rte 123 to the Attleboro line. The town envisions a mix of industrial and commercial redevelopment and new infill development including opportunities

for mixed residential. In 1995, the town designated this area as an Economic Opportunity Area (EOA), which allows Norton to offer local and state development incentives. The town should also consider this area or specific sites within it for the 43D expedited permitting program to market, stimulate and encourage redevelopment.

**Old Colony Road Revitalization Area
Summary of Characteristics**

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipally owned property <p>Historical Significance</p>	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium/High yield aquifer • 100 /500 year floodplain • Wetlands • Wading River, Chartley Pond
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chartley Pond Conservation Area 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Till or Bedrock • Sand and Gravel • Floodplain Alluvium
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Village • Residential • Municipal Water/ Sewer available 	<p>Possible Use/Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial/Manufacturing • Mixed-use • Mixed residential
<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • West Main Street 	<p>21E Site/Brownfield Potential</p>

3.) **Barrowsville Node**

Located along Dean Street at the southern-end of Barrowsville Pond, this area once contained the Barrowsville Railroad Station and provides direct access to a CSX freight line allowing for a potential Transit Oriented Development (TOD). Barrowsville is one of eight (8) village center nodes and has opportunities for commercial redevelopment and mixed-use residential and in-fill development. Any redevelopment should be for low impact uses designed to maintain the historic character of this portion of Norton.

**Barrowsville Node
Summary of Characteristics**

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipally owned property <p>Historical Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrowsville 	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium/High yield aquifer • 100 /500 year floodplain • Wetlands • Wading River
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barrowsville Pond 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Till or Bedrock • Sand and Gravel • Floodplain Alluvium
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Village • Residential • Municipal Water/ Sewer available 	<p>Possible Use/Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial/Manufacturing • Mixed-use • TOD
<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean Street, South Worcester St. 	<p>21E Site/Brownfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential

4.) **Tournament Players Club (TPC) Business Center**

The Tournament Players Club Business Center is located in the Great Woods at the Norton/Mansfield town lines. The site, adjacent to the TPC golf course consists of approximately 100 acres with frontage along Route 140. Proposed plans are to development a 1.0-million square-foot office park including a hotel that will compliment the golf course. In addition, any planned development would be contingent on the construction of a southbound ramp at Route 140 and Route 495. The town should consider designating this area under the 43D expedited permitting program.

5.) **Boat House Community**

The Boat House property is owned by Wheaton College and is located on the south side of Norton Reservoir. This property is accessible from Reservoir Street. Wheaton College has previously hosted a substantial boating program at this

location. Future plans are unknown but the Town of Norton identified this location for potential mixed-use development. A combination of residential, commercial and recreational uses could be realized at this location.

6.) *Mill Corner*

The Mill Corner area was identified by the Town of Norton for potential mixed-use, low impact development. This small scenic area in the northeast section of town located on the former main road to Easton. This is an extension of Newcomb Street and known locally as Red Mill Road. Red Mill Road was the site of early 19th century industrial complex with grist, saw and cotton batting mills. This site is owned by the Daggett-Crandall-Newcomb Nursing Home and largely surrounded by land owned by the Land Preservation Society. New development or redevelopment in this area will need to use low impact development techniques to take into consideration the natural resources that surround this area including the Canoe River Aquifer and watershed protection areas.



III. Priority Protection Areas

The following six (6) areas have been identified as the highest priority areas for protection of unique natural resources.

1. Three-Mile River Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) are places in Massachusetts that receive special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness and regional significance of their natural and cultural resources. These areas are identified and



nominated at the community level and reviewed and designated by the states' Secretary of Environmental Affairs. An ACEC designation creates a framework for local and regional stewardship of critical resources and ecosystems. The boundaries of the Three Mile River ACEC include 14,275-acres in the communities of

Dighton, Norton, and Taunton. (For more information on the Three Mile River ACEC visit: <http://www.ibiblio.org/virtualcell/acec/>)

Portions of the Three-Mile River corridor in Norton contain the unique natural community habitat known as the Small River Floodplain Forest. A floodplain is the area of flat land that is covered by water when a river reaches maximum height. The floodplain forest usually has a dominant tree canopy and rich herbaceous layer, but is relatively void of shrub species due to the force and extent of regular flooding. The floodplain is naturally a very dynamic zone because of the constantly changing course, height, and velocity of the water. There are only four high-quality examples of floodplain forest on small rivers across the state, the best example of which is the silver maple floodplain on the Three Mile River in Taunton, located adjacent to the Parker Memorial Golf Course, just south of the Norton/Taunton town line. This floodplain forest is Ranked S-2 in the Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Due to the fact that the floodplain forest tends to be long and narrow, where the floodplain is broad they can extend well inland, therefore protection efforts need to extend well into the upper reaches of the actual floodplain forest location.

The Three-Mile River is rich in historic resources since the river made it a perfect location for colonial settlements. Providing water for agriculture, shipbuilding, and later, the generation of waterpower to produce goods for a growing region.

Overall, it is the quality of the water in the river, due in part to the largely undeveloped river corridor and surrounding lands, which enables the Three-Mile River Watershed to provide such a large quantity of outstanding habitat. The undeveloped forests that contribute to the watershed health is what the Town of Norton is most interested in protecting.

***Three-Mile River Area of Critical Environmental Concern
Summary of Characteristics***

<p><i>Protected Parcels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Woodward Forest, LA Foster Wildlife Refuge</i> <p><i>Historical Significance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Prehistoric site</i> • <i>Historic</i> • <i>Lockety Neck</i> 	<p><i>Water Resource</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Extensive Wetlands</i> • <i>Taunton River Watershed</i> • <i>Medium/High Yield Aquifer</i> • <i>100-500 year Floodplain</i> • <i>Surface Water Resource</i> • <i>Three-Mile River, Dora Brook, Lily Pond</i>
<p><i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Globally Rare Species (TNC)</i> • <i>Priority & Estimated Habitat</i> • <i>Living Waters</i> • <i>Natural Community of Significance</i> • <i>Vernal Pools</i> 	<p><i>Soils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sand and Gravel</i> • <i>Floodplain Alluvium</i> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i>
<p><i>Zoning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Industrial</i> • <i>Business</i> • <i>Municipal water/No Sewer</i> 	<p><i>Development Area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Low density development</i> <p><i>Scenic and Recreational Resource</i></p>

- 2.) ***CRAAC Greenbelt***
 The Canoe River flows 16 miles from its headwater near Lake Massapoag in Sharon to Winnecunet Pond in Norton. The Canoe River Aquifer has been designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) and a federal Sole Source Aquifer. The boundaries of the



Canoe River Aquifer ACEC include 17,200 acres in the communities of Sharon, Foxborough, Mansfield, Easton and Norton. The Canoe River’s watershed recharges the aquifer, which supplies the primary drinking water source for four communities.

This area contains an Alluvial Red Maple Swamp identified by the Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program as a significant natural community. This red maple swamp is young, large, and free of invasive of exotic species, and is part of a larger wetland complex with intact hydrology. Red Maple Swamps are acidic-forested wetlands dominated by red maple. Located within the red maple swamps are small-scattered examples of the unique natural community known as the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp.

The extensive wetlands and woods abutting the river are essential in maintaining water quality and quantity. This is prime habitat for endangered species, including a federally listed freshwater mussel, and species of special concern identified by the Natural Heritage Endangered Species Program. The community hopes to acquire parcels within 500 feet of the riparian area to create a wildlife and passive recreation corridor that will permanently protect the overall health of the river ecosystem and simultaneously protect the water supply. (For more information on the CRAAC Greenbelt visit:

<http://home.comcast.net/~nrtma/html/committee.html>)

***CRAAC Greenbelt
Summary of Characteristics***

<p><i>Protected Parcels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipally owned parcels</i> • <i>Land Preservation Society of Norton protected parcels</i> • <i>Towns of Mansfield and Easton protected parcels</i> <p><i>Historical Significance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Yes</i> 	<p><i>Water Resource</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Canoe River</i> • <i>Medium/High yield aquifer</i> • <i>100/500 year floodplain</i> • <i>Wetlands</i> • <i>Sole Source Aquifer - Canoe River ACEC</i>
<p><i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Priority Habitat</i> • <i>Estimated Habitat</i> 	<p><i>Soils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i> • <i>Sand and Gravel</i> • <i>Floodplain Alluvium</i>
<p><i>Zoning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Residential</i> <p><i>Some areas have Town Water/No Sewer</i></p>	<p><i>21E Site/Brownfield</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p><i>Chapter 61 properties-yes</i></p>

3.) ***Crooked Meadow Swamp***

Crooked Meadow Swamp protection area is located in the along southwestern boundary of Norton and the City of Taunton and is included in the Three Mile River ACEC designation. Historically this large cedar swamp was popular for local residents to harvest the cedar trees and meadow hay for their farming operations. This area is rich in wildlife and maintains a corridor between the Cedar Swamp southwestern area of town to the Three-Mile River in the southeastern portion of town.

***Crooked Meadow Swamp
Summary of Characteristics***

<i>Protected Parcels</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Municipally owned parcels</i> <i>Historical Significance</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Assuming yes-historic egg farm</i> 	<i>Water Resource</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Medium/High yield aquifer</i> • <i>100/500 year floodplain</i> • <i>Wetlands</i> • <i>Crooked Meadow Brook, Birch Brook, Goose Brook Branch</i>
<i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Priority Habitat</i> • <i>Estimated Habitat</i> 	<i>Soils</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i> • <i>Sand and Gravel</i> • <i>Floodplain Alluvium</i>
<i>Zoning</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Residential</i> <p><i>Some areas have Town Water/No Sewer</i></p>	<i>21E Site/Brownfield</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p><i>Chapter 61 properties</i></p>

4.) ***Meadow Brook Pond***

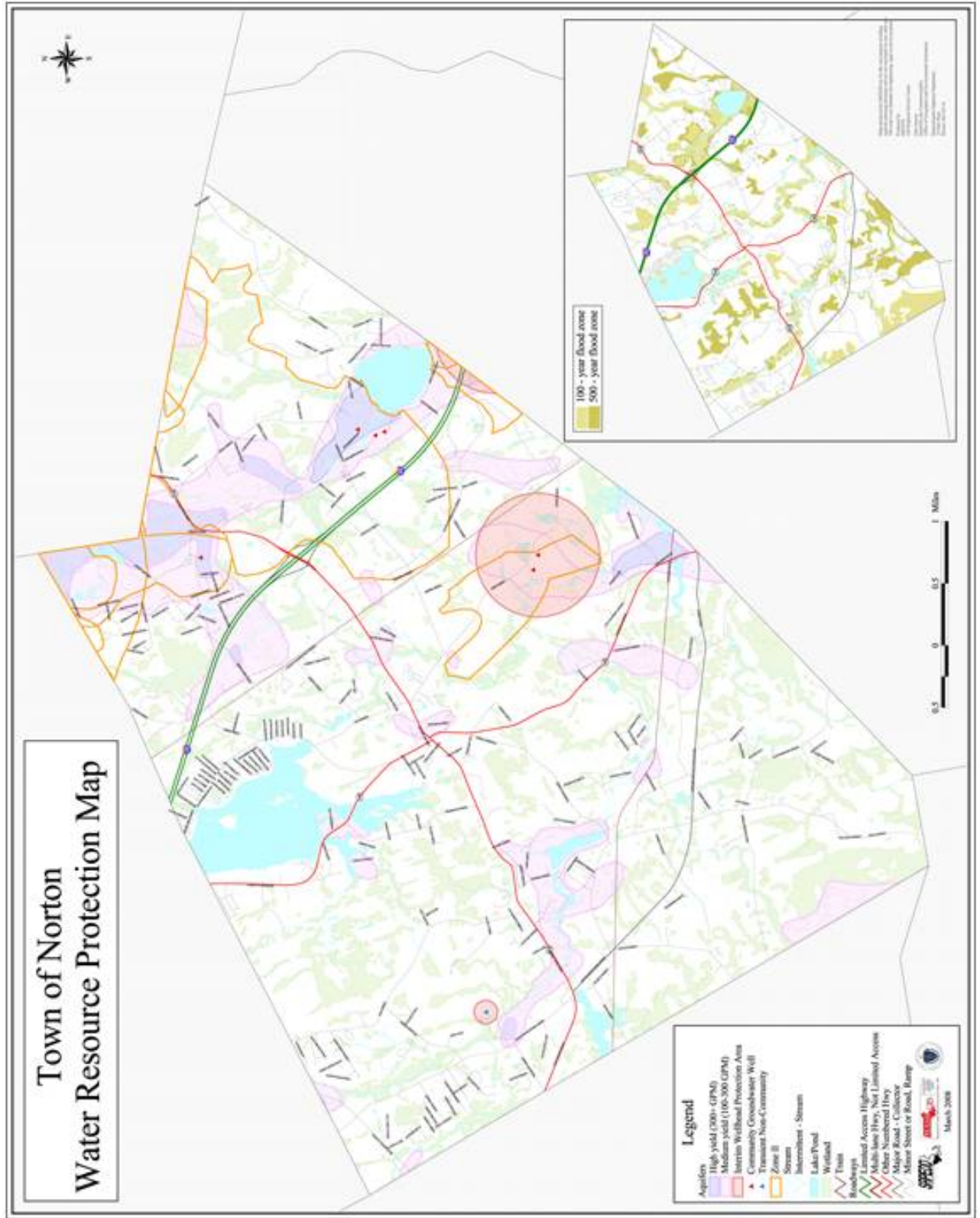
Meadow Brook Pond is located in the southern section of town. The area abuts the CSX rail line, which is easily accessible from Route 140. The pond is located along Crooked Meadow Brook, which then empties into the Three-Mile River before crossing into Taunton. This area historically housed one of Norton’s icehouses and is locally important for fishing. The Town of Norton is interested in preserving this pond and the forested upland that surrounds it for future generations.

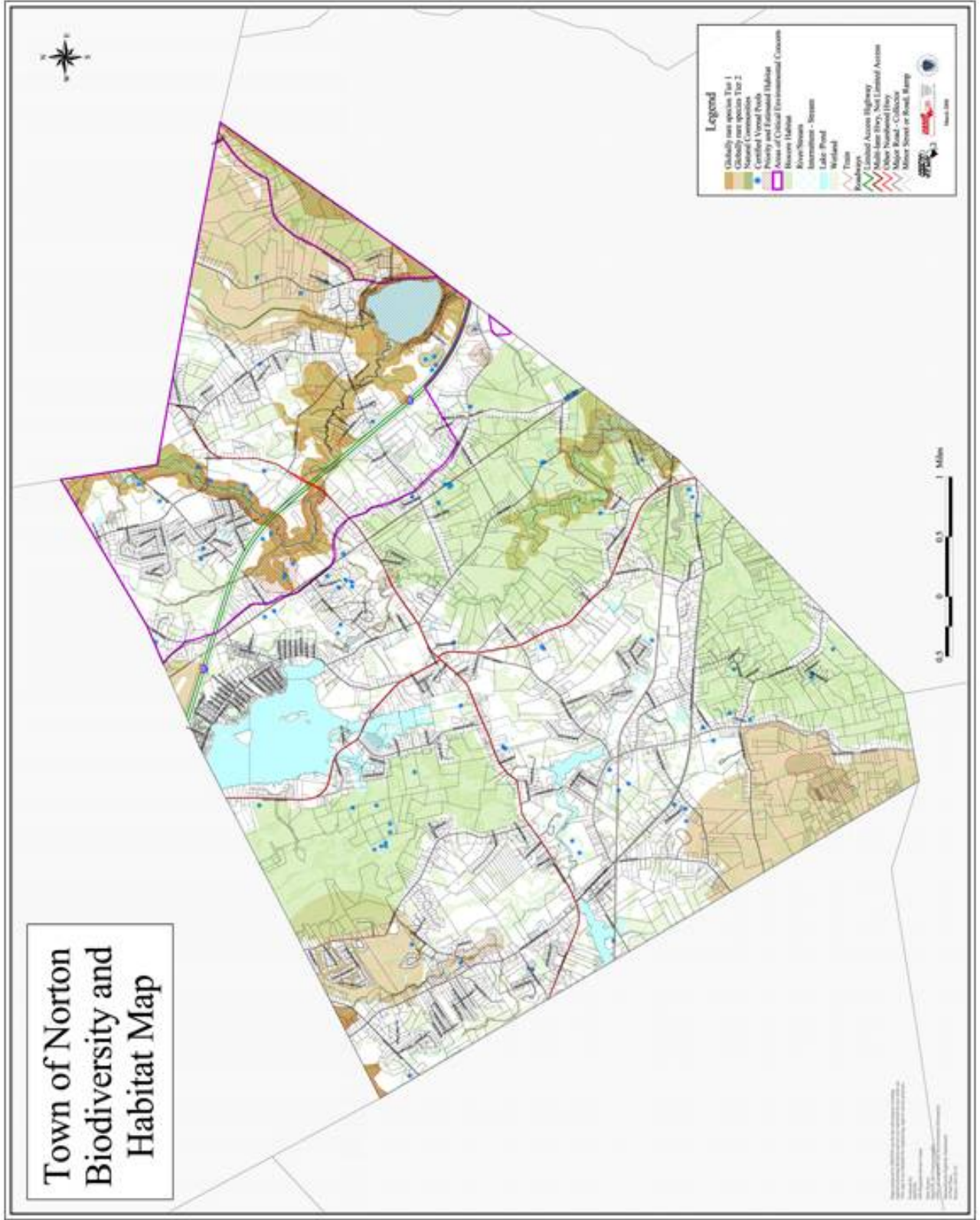
5.) ***Camp Edith Read***

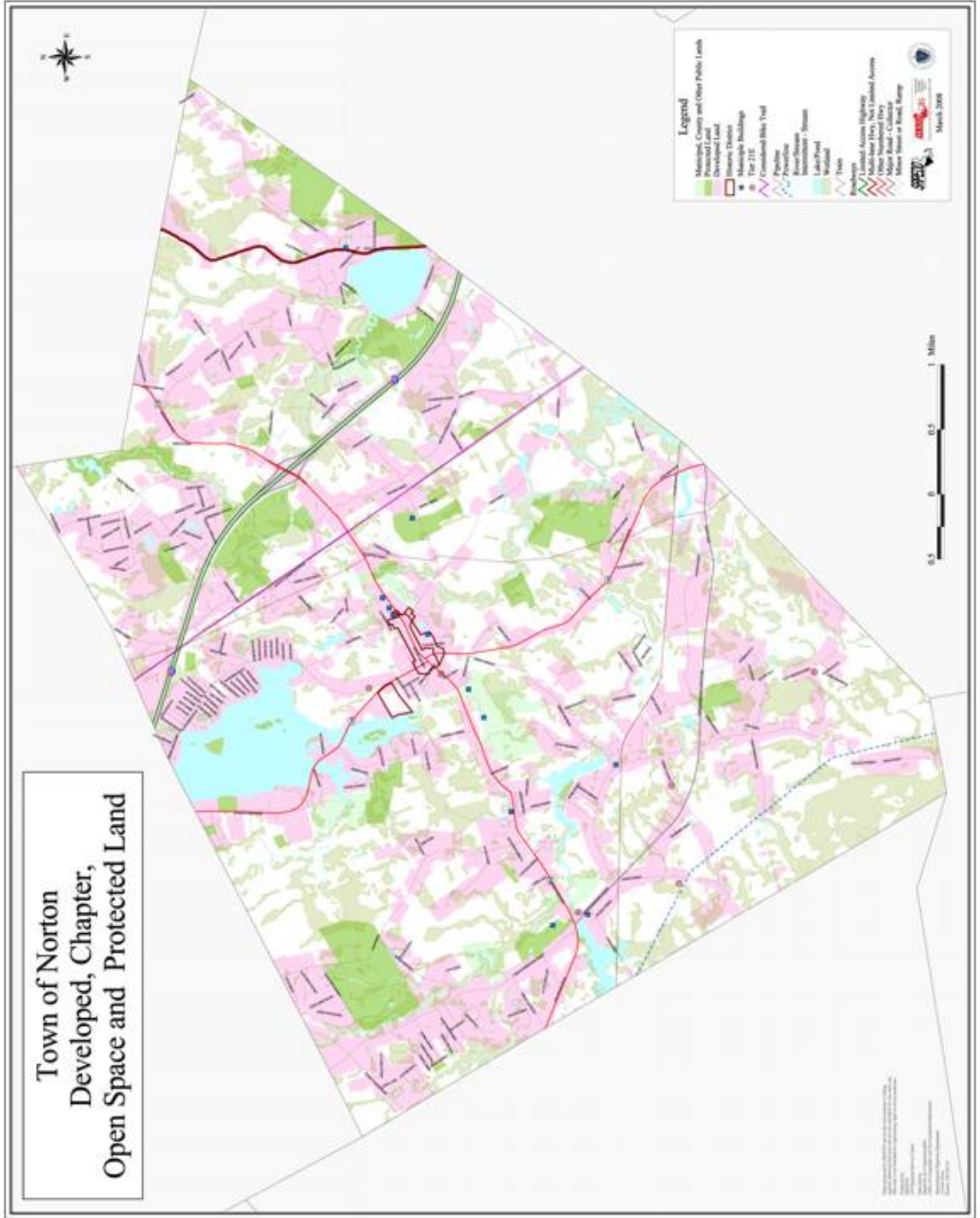
Camp Edith Read, a 44-acre site along Wading River, offers girls the chance to explore nature in a safe, fun environment. The site includes a lodge, playing field, adventure trail, shelters for rainy day activities, and an in-ground swimming pool. Campers will participate in Girl Scout Badge and Try-it Themed programs, while also enjoying arts and crafts, singing, games and outdoor cooking. The Town of Norton is supportive of the Girl Scout program and facility and would like to see it remain a part of the community.

6.) ***Boat House***

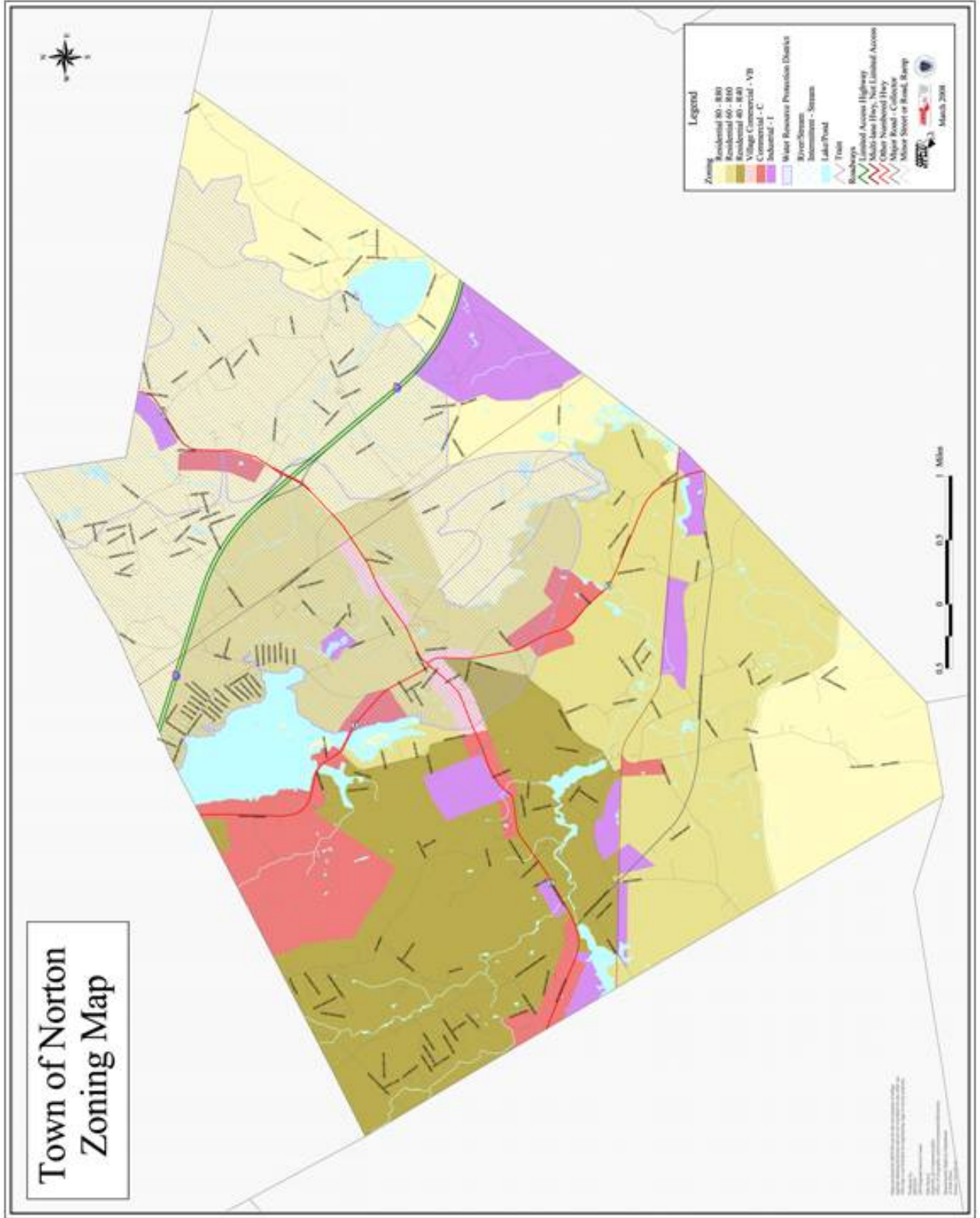
The Boat House property is owned by a private landowner and has been for listed for sale for a number of years. This site is located on the Norton Reservoir, which is a man-made pond of approximately 520 acres. The Reservoir is relatively shallow is owned by the Conservation Commission, Despite its name the Norton Reservoir is not a drinking water source. Currently there are only small unofficial launch areas on tight local streets. This property would provide an easily accessible boat ramp area for the pond and possibly some picnic and camping areas.







Norton Priority Protection & Development Areas



Norton Priority Protection & Development Areas

