

Town of Swansea



Priority Development & Protection Areas November 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. For example this is equivalent to fully developing an area 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 on sites that are matched to their intended uses. Sites for more intensive development need good access, compatible abutting land uses, public water and sewer service nearby, and minimal environmental constraints. These areas need to be located, mapped and appropriately zoned.

Likewise, we need to plan to protect our most important 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 the cities and towns of the region to identify those areas that are the best ones for development and the best ones to be protected. These will be the **Priority Development Areas (PDAs)** and **Priority Protection Areas (PPAs)** and we will be working with municipal officials and citizens to locate and designate these areas.

WHAT ARE PRIORITY DEVELOPMENT AREAS?

These are areas within a city or town that are capable of handling more development due to several factors, including good 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. Areas designated under state programs such as Chapter 43D (expedited permitting), Chapter 40R (smart growth zones) or Economic Opportunity Areas can be examples of PDAs. Included in these designations will be the local recommendations for how these sites should be developed.

WHAT ARE PRIORITY PROTECTION AREAS?

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 can be examples of PPAs.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PDA/PPA DESIGNATIONS?

This work is useful to all communities in making land use and zoning decisions. But it may also be helpful when considering potential mitigation for the commuter rail project and may be utilized if a regional system of transfer of development rights is utilized. 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 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 of 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 Swansea identified as Priority Protection and Priority Development Areas in the summer and fall of 2008.

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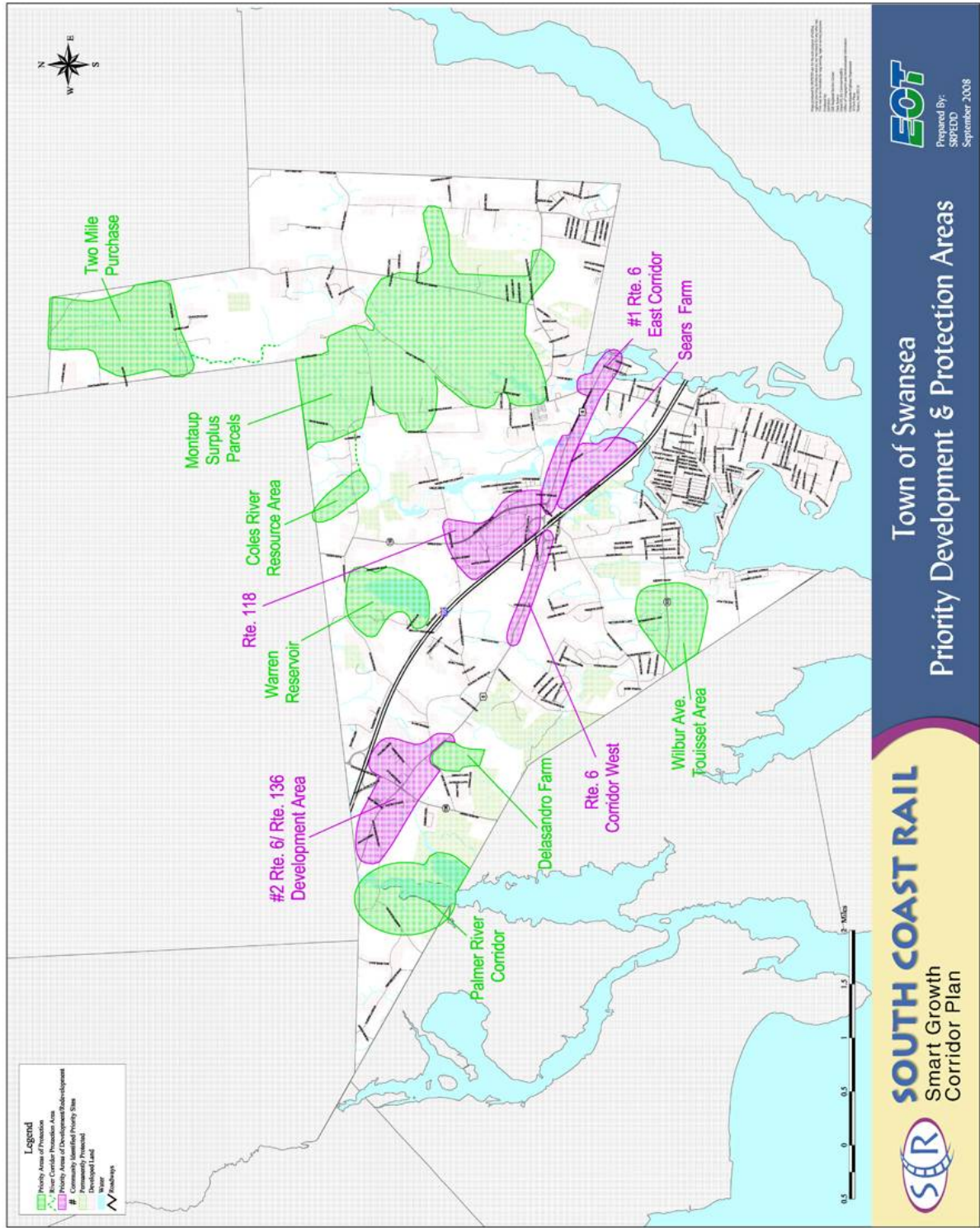
Community Summary

Swansea is considered a suburban/rural community located in southwestern Bristol County, Massachusetts. It is approximately 4 miles from Fall River, 50 miles from Boston, and 12 miles from Providence. Bordering communities are Warren, Rhode Island on the west and southwest; Somerset on the east, and Dighton, Rehoboth and Seekonk on the north. Swansea has seen a significant population increase because of its close proximity to Providence over the past 30 years.



The Town of Swansea has a rich history beginning with it being founded on the premise of religious tolerance. Colonial settlement began in 1663. It was also the site of the first bloodshed in the King Philip’s War in 1675. Before the war, several native settlement sites and trails existed. After the war forges, ironworks, and fishing made up a considerable amount of the economy. The active economic centers were in the many of the small villages, which have still maintained their historic character.

Swansea Priority Protection & Development Areas



Town of Swansea Priority Development/Redevelopment and Protections Areas

II. Priority Development/Redevelopment

1. *Route 6 East Corridor*

The Route 6 East Corridor stretches from the Town of Somerset boundary line at the Venus DeMilo Restaurant to the Route 118 interchange. A number of priority development, redevelopment, and revitalization strategies have been identified through out the east end corridor such as economic development incentives, staff and organizational support, zoning revisions, improvement in plan design and standards for the Route 6 corridor, while supporting local agriculture and shellfishing. Some of the initiatives proposed are water and sewer infrastructure improvements, tax incentives, brownfield site assessment; streamlined permitting, design guidelines and village type development. Along Route 6, the plan encourages mixed use, business nodes, neighborhood-oriented convenience retail, and pedestrian centers. The lack of a municipal sewer system remains a constraint to the types of development the Town of Swansea envisions for this area.

The 2003 Swansea Comprehensive Plan and the 1997 Regional Land Use Priority Development Areas and Priority Protection Areas in Southeastern Massachusetts both envisioned Route 6 as an area of redevelopment.

Route 6 Corridor Area Constraints/Potential

<p><i>Protected Parcels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p><i>Historical Significance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Water Resource</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Lees River</i> • <i>Cole River</i>
<p><i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Soils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i>
<p><i>Zoning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business B</i> • <i>Rural Residential</i> • <i>Limited Commercial/Manufacturing</i> <p><i>21E Site/Brownfield</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Swan Finishing</i> <p><i>No Municipal Water/Septic</i></p>	<p><i>Development Area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Route 6</i> • <i>Commercial Development</i> <p><i>Possible Use/Reuse</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mixed Use</i> • <i>Village Residential Design</i> • <i>Mall & Town Center</i> • <i>Pedestrian Center</i>

2. Route 6/Route 136 Development Area

The Routes 6 and 136 Development Area is being considered for more mixed use in the future. Currently this area is the location of highway-oriented retail and services that service community and regional needs. Though the market trend is leaning toward commercial development, a number of new subdivisions and 40B housing developments have been proposed. As more housing fills in other areas, the town would like to realize a liveable, walkable community.

Route 6/Route 136 Development Areas

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p>Historical Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Palmer River</i>
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sand & Gravel</i> • <i>Floodplain Alluvium</i>
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business B</i> • <i>Rural Residential</i> • <i>Limited Commercial/Manufacturing</i> <p>21E Site/Brownfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Swan Finishing</i> <p>No Municipal Water/Septic</p>	<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Route 6</i> <p>Possible Use/Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mixed Use</i> • <i>Village Residential Design</i> • <i>Mall & Town Center</i> • <i>Pedestrian Center</i>

3. Route 6 West Corridor

The Route 6 West Corridor extends from the Route 195 Interchange west to Colletti Lane and includes the Maple Street and Bushee Road intersections. The Town of Swansea is considering encouraging a greater mix of uses than is allowed at the present time. At neighborhood intersections, new development and redevelopment could focus on smaller businesses that follow pedestrian-oriented design standards. Adopting design standards with shared parking, landscape, traffic calming measures, sign control, and parking in the rear could aid in promoting the types of uses the town is interested in acquiring throughout the corridor.

Route 6 West Corridor

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p>Historical Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i>
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i>
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business</i> <p>21E Site/Brownfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None known</i> <p>No Municipal Water/Septic</p>	<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commercial</i> • <i>Retail</i> <p>Possible Use/Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mixed Use</i> • <i>Village Residential Design</i> • <i>Pedestrian Center</i>

4. Route 118

The Route 118 area includes the Swansea Mall and other smaller commercial activities. This area is presently working as a mixed-use mall given the two newly developed apartments located on the periphery. The development of Oakwood Apartments, a multifamily, higher density residential use around the perimeter of this area, begins to create the feel of a village residential design on a larger scale. The Town of Swansea is interested in creating more connections between commercial and residential uses. Improvement of pedestrian connections and adopting Route 6 design standards regarding parking, signage, and landscaping are just a few means to realize this potential.

Route 118

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p>Historical Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Water Resource Protection District</i>
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i>
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business</i> <p>21E Site/Brownfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cumberland Farms</i> <p>No Municipal Water/Septic</p>	<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commercial</i> • <i>Retail</i> • <i>Apartment Complex</i> <p>Possible Use/Reuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Mixed Use</i> • <i>Village Residential Design</i> • <i>Mall & Town Center</i> • <i>Pedestrian Center</i>

5. Sears Farm



The Sears Farm, located off Route 6, is currently being considered as a new development site for general business, office and research. The Town of Swansea owns this property.

Potentially this site could become a center for office space, high-tech industry or research and development, and housing. A development plan is needed with infrastructure investment and incentives. There is potential for a

conservation easement on the Cole’s River. The lack of water and sewer services continues to act as a constraint for development in this area.

Sears Farm

<p><i>Protected Parcels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> <p><i>Historical Significance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Water Resource</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cole River</i> • <i>100 & 500 Year Floodplain</i>
<p><i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Soils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sand and Gravel</i>
<p><i>Zoning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Limited Commercial</i> • <i>Manufacturing</i> <p><i>No Municipal Water/Septic</i></p>	<p><i>Development Area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Farmland</i> <p><i>21E Site/Brownfield</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Town Dump</i>

III. *Priority Areas of Protection*

1. *Mountaup Power Company Surplus Parcels*

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program considers the section that runs north to south along Hailes Hill Road and east to west from Sharps Lot Road to Hortonville Road a Priority Habitat of Rare Species. The Town of Swansea has identified this area as high priority protection area in its 2002 Comprehensive Plan.

Lewin Brook runs along the Sharps Lot Road/ Hailes Hill Road/Hortonville Road area through the Mountaup Power Company’s surplus parcels. Lewin Brook drains into the Lees River. The Department of Fish and Game under the Massachusetts Trout Stocked Waters Program stocks the Lees and Cole River with trout.

Lewin Brook Watershed Area

<p><i>Protected Parcels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Girl Scouts of America – Dillon Lane</i> • <i>Town owned property – Paquett Farm</i> • <i>Village Park</i> <p><i>Historical Significance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Water Resource</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cole River</i> • <i>100 & 500 Year Floodplain</i> • <i>Groundwater resource protection area</i> • <i>Extensive wetlands</i> • <i>Cold water stream</i>
<p><i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Priority Habitat</i> 	<p><i>Soils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i>
<p><i>Zoning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rural Residential</i> <p><i>No Municipal Water/Septic</i></p>	<p><i>Development Area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Farmland</i> • <i>Low density development along the roadways</i> <p><i>21E Site/Brownfield</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Swansea Print Works remediation complete</i>

2. *Two Mile Purchase*

The Two Mile Purchase is located in north Swansea. The Town of Swansea dedicated this area as a high priority protection area in the 2002 Comprehensive Plan, “A Blueprint for the Future”. Lewin Brook and the Cole River run through this section crossing from Dighton to the Mount Hope Bay. It has extensive wetlands and is a considered groundwater resource area. This area is relatively undeveloped and inaccessible, although three farms located here are still in

operation. Proposed zoning for this area includes Estate B, which would require a 3-acre lot size for residential use and as an aquifer overlay protection district.

“Swansea’s ponds, rivers and wetlands are a treasure and account for much of the appeal of the area. Besides providing opportunities for hunting, swimming, boating, water skiing, skating and fishing, these resources are the primary habitat for a rich array of plants and animals.”

Swansea Master Plan, 2003

Two Mile Purchase

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hailes Farm <p>Historical Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cole River • 100 & 500 Year Floodplain • Groundwater resource protection area • Extensive wetlands
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BioCore Habitat 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Till or Bedrock • Sand & Gravel • The majority of soils in this area are considered Low Development Potential
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural Residential <p>No Municipal Water/Septic</p>	<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Farmland <p>21E Site/Brownfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None

3. Warren Reservoir

The Warren Reservoir, spanning 200 acres, is the largest open body of water in town. This pond provides public water to the Bristol County Water Authority in Warren, Rhode Island. The Town of Swansea has a municipal well located in this area.



Warren Reservoir Area

<p>Protected Parcels</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>An area close to Rte 195</i> <p>Historical Significance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Water Resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reservoir for Bristol County Water Authority</i> • <i>Municipal Wellhead Protection</i> • <i>Extensive wetlands</i>
<p>Natural Resource Protection Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p>Soils</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i> • <i>Sand & Gravel</i>
<p>Zoning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rural Residential</i> • <i>Protected Open Space</i> • <i>Zone II Protection Area</i> <p>No Municipal Water/Septic</p>	<p>Development Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reed Street</i> • <i>Reservoir Road</i> <p>21E Site/Brownfield</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i>

4. Palmer River Corridor

The Palmer River is a tributary and one of the primary sub-drainage areas in the Narragansett and Mount Hope Bays. The Palmer River converges with the Barrington River in the towns of Warren and Barrington, Rhode Island to form the Warren River, which is a tributary to upper Narragansett Bay. The Massachusetts portion of the Palmer River watershed falls primarily within the municipalities of Rehoboth and Swansea. The land use within this watershed is mostly forested, but also mixed areas of residential, agricultural, and recreational.



The Palmer River is also one of only two self-sustaining coastal shad fisheries in Massachusetts. A fish ladder was recently repaired at the Shad Factory Pond dam. Extensive protected areas owned by the Swansea Land Trust, Barrington Land Trust, and Town of Swansea are located in the Palmer River corridor plus two privately owned golf courses.

The Town of Swansea has begun the process of developing a desalinization facility on the lower Palmer River. Until now, the town has relied entirely on groundwater pumped from five well fields. When groundwater levels drop, the town finds it increasingly difficult to supply water to its residents especially during peak demands. It is estimated to cost \$3.50 to produce every 1,000 gallons

of clean water, but with a federal subsidy the cost drops to \$2.88 per 1,000 gallons. The water department along with the state will test the process for an entire year and begin servicing the community in 2010.

Palmer River Corridor

<p><i>Protected Parcels</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Water Resource</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reservoir for Bristol County Water Authority</i> • <i>Municipal Wellhead Protection</i> • <i>Extensive wetlands</i>
<p><i>Historical Significance</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	
<p><i>Natural Resource Protection Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i> 	<p><i>Soils</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Floodplain Alluvium</i> • <i>Till or Bedrock</i> • <i>Sand & Gravel</i>
<p><i>Zoning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rural Residential</i> • <i>Protected Open Space</i> • <i>Zone II Protection Area</i> 	<p><i>Development Area</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reed Street</i> • <i>Reservoir Road</i> <p><i>21E Site/Brownfield</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>None</i>
<p><i>No Municipal Water/Septic</i></p>	

5. ***Cole’s River Resource Area***

The Cole’s River flows from the northern tip of Swansea into the Mount Hope Bay. The protection of the Cole’s River is important as a resource area which includes a valuable floodplain, drinking water, and natural habitat. Below is an aerial view of the area.

Natural Communities

The Town of Dighton shares an Alluvial Red Maple Swamp community with the Town of Swansea. This example of an Alluvial Red Maple Swamp is in excellent condition, buffered from human development. This is a community of red maples that occurs in low areas along river and streams. Regular flooding enriches the soil with nutrients, resulting in an unusual set of associated flora. Threats to all wetlands include changes in water quality and quantity. Constant human and natural disturbances are particularly vulnerable to the establishment of exotic species.



Resource Areas:

The areas below have been identified through the priority process as Resource Areas that have been protected but have other resource values that the Town of Swansea would like to continue to preserve.

- ***Delassandro Farm***
- ***Wilbur Avenue/Touisset Area***

