

WHAT IS A MASTER PLAN?

A Master Plan is a long-range plan that establishes a basis for informed decision-making by providing a guide for the physical form, growth, and development of a community. It is an opportunity for a town to map out its plans for the future – where, how, and at what pace it will develop physically, economically, and socially. A master plan assesses existing conditions and identifies trends so that decision-makers can better understand the impact of their decisions. It includes analysis, recommendations, and proposals for a town's economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, infrastructure, natural resources, and land use. It also defines strategies towards achieving the goals established in the master plan – the short, medium, and long-term actions. These implementation strategies provide guidance for town decision-making on all matters that will impact the physical development of a community, including budgeting, ordinances, capital improvements, and organizational structure.



The information in a master plan is based on public input, surveys, previous planning initiatives, a town's regional setting, and its existing development, physical characteristics, and social and economic conditions. The master planning process typically includes significant public involvement to obtain the public's visions, ideas, priorities, and preferences for the town's future.

WHY IS A MASTER PLAN IMPORTANT TO WARE?

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Ware was a booming commercial and cotton textile manufacturing town with a thriving agricultural economy. By the beginning of World War I, Ware's mills employed more than 2,500 people. At the same time, dairy farms surrounding Ware's center were producing large quantities of milk, cheese, butter, and eggs. These agricultural products contributed significantly to the Town's economy. In the 1920's and 1930's, Ware's economic niche in the region began to dissipate when the textile mills closed due to competition with mills in southern states, misjudgments by mill owners, and the Great Depression. At the same time, there was a decline in the farming sector in town due in part to the loss of farmland to the Quabbin Reservoir and in part to national changes in the agricultural economy.



Since then, Ware has evolved into a bedroom community and rural service center of about 9,800 residents where over half of the working population commutes elsewhere to work. Throughout the past few decades, various town planning efforts have attempted to redefine Ware's identity and niche in the region, with little success. These planning efforts have taken an independent approach to planning



Ware's development, focusing on specific types of development, such as affordable housing and single-family housing, or particular parts of town, such as the Route 32 corridor. Many of these planning efforts have also centered on Ware's natural resources and open space as the key asset that could set Ware apart from other towns in the region.

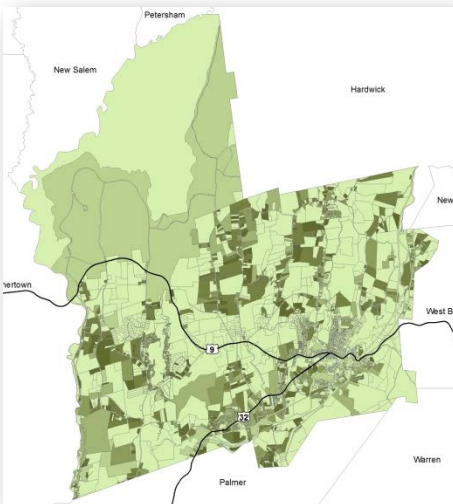
However, beyond its natural beauty and open space, Ware has a number of other special characteristics that could play important roles in the Town's future development:

- ◆ A central, accessible location within the State. The Town is situated between the two largest employment centers in the central and western parts of Massachusetts – Worcester and Springfield – and is within 30 miles of six interstate highways (90, 91, 84, 190, 290, and 395).
- ◆ A small town character and a close-knit community.
- ◆ A hospital, one that is part of a major regional healthcare system.
- ◆ A downtown with interesting buildings and architecture, including the underutilized mill yard complex.
- ◆ A diverse mix of local employers and businesses.
- ◆ A variety of land uses – most of Ware's land is rural; however, the downtown also has "urban" neighborhoods and suburban areas where most of Ware's residents live.



Developing a new Master Plan for the Town will allow Ware to identify all of its needs and assets, and give it a chance to reevaluate its place and role in the region. This new Master Plan takes a unified approach to planning Ware's development, focusing on the special characteristics of our town. The

Master Plan will allow Ware to coordinate the disparate planning efforts that have occurred over the past few decades, and create a comprehensive vision for the Town's future that looks holistically at all aspects of Ware. Creating a plan to guide the Town's physical growth will require the Town to consider everything that may impact development, such as housing, business, infrastructure, and transportation, and to contemplate how these issues are interrelated. This process will mean that Ware is not planning for just one aspect of the town or favoring a single form of development, but is instead determining how everything will develop in concert. This holistic effort will allow Ware to have a



firmer grasp on the spectrum of issues, challenges, and opportunities that the Town may face in the future.

