P 0103

MetroPlan

Summary of the Regional Plan for the Boston Metropolitan Area

MAPC
Metropolitan Area
Planning Council
60 Temple Place
Boston, MA 02111

Credits and Acknowledgments

This report was prepared by the staff of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council under the supervision of the Executive Director. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council under the supervision of the Executive Director. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is the officially designated regional planning agency for 101 cities and towns in the Boston metropolitan area. The Council provides technical assistance to its member communities in the areas of land use, transportation, economic development, water resources, housing, and environmental quality.

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From: Pillsbury, Martin [SMTP:MPillsbury@MAPC.ORG]
To: 'Hoganson, Mary'
Cc:
Subject: RE: Metro Plan 2000 and Summary
Sent: 5/1/01 4:30 PM **Importance:** Normal

MetroPlan was originally published in 1990, and republished with several amendments in 1994. The summary document was published this year. I was not aware that the dates were not clear. I will add the dates to both of the publications. 2001

Thanks,
Martin Pillsbury
Manager of Regional Planning Services
Metropolitan Area Planning Council

-----Original Message-----
From: Hoganson, Mary [SMTP:HogansonM@ttnus.com]
Sent: Tuesday, May 01, 2001 3:19 PM
To: 'mpillsbury@mapc.org'
Subject: FW: Metro Plan 2000 and Summary

-----Original Message-----
From: Hoganson, Mary
To: 'mpilsbury@mapc.org'
Sent: 4/30/01 3:45 PM
Subject: Metro Plan 2000 and Summary

I received the copies of the Metro Plan 2000 and the Metro Plan Summary that you sent me. Thank you very much. I was not able to find the date that the documents were published. Please provide me with dates, so I may use them as references.

Thank you,

Mary Hoganson
Tetra Tech NUS

About MetroPlan: The Regional Development Plan For Metropolitan Boston

This booklet presents a summary of *MetroPlan*, MAPC's regional development plan. *MetroPlan* was developed with input from citizens, communities, and agencies. It was formally adopted by the Council in May 1990 and is periodically revised to reflect changing conditions and new developments.

To receive additional copies of this summary document, or copies of the full *MetroPlan* document, please call or write Martin Pillsbury at MAPC at: Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111 Phone: 617-451-2770, mpillsbury@mapc.org

About MAPC: Regional Planning for the Boston Metropolitan Area

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council is the designated Regional Planning Agency for 101 cities and towns in the greater Boston Metropolitan Area. The Council prepares plans and provides technical assistance to the communities in the areas of transportation, land use, economic development, water resources, environmental management, and housing. The Council has a Data Center which provides demographic and economic data and forecasts of future trends. MAPC is also a member of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which oversees the implementation of transportation plans, programs, and projects in coordination with state agencies and communities.

MAPC works with its member communities through eight subregional organizations, shown in the map below. Each subregion has local representatives appointed by the chief elected officials of the member cities and towns. Subregions meet monthly to discuss issues of common concern and conduct studies and planning projects to address these issues.

Introductio

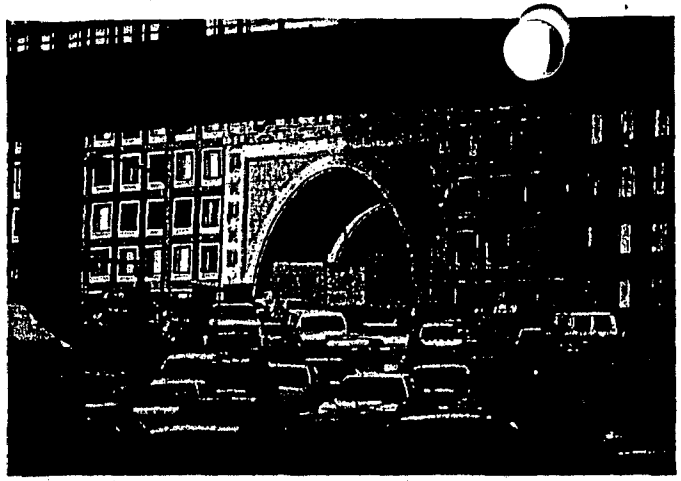
The Boston metropolitan region is a special place. The region has a rich history, a diverse and educated population, a strong economy, a tradition of local democracy, and outstanding natural resources, all of which contribute to the high quality of life we cherish. However, the 21st century brings with it some serious challenges. How can we maintain and strengthen our economy in a rapidly changing world? How can we provide the necessary public services and infrastructure at a price we can afford? How can we link our communities with an efficient transportation system? How can we assure decent housing and livable communities for all of our citizens? How can we preserve our rich natural heritage and our unique New England landscape? How can we protect and restore the health of our outstanding rivers, lakes, wetlands, coastal resources and the quality of the air we breathe?

Massachusetts and the Boston region have long been innovators and leaders in addressing many of these issues in the past, but the job is far from complete. As the pace of change increases in this new century, many of these challenges will become more difficult to manage without a concerted effort to focus our collective public and private sector actions. We must use our resources—financial, natural, and human—more efficiently in order to sustain and improve the qualities of the region which we value. MetroPlan addresses this need by describing some of the key issues facing the region and putting forth a set of recommendations to address these issues comprehensively.

The plan provides an overall framework for development which is designed to reap the benefits of growth at a lower cost and with fewer environmental impacts. The core vision of MetroPlan is that compact development within city and town centers is preferable to low density "sprawl" development throughout the region. By concentrating development in centers which have greater densities, mixed uses and public infrastructure, we can reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, loss of open space, water pollution, energy use, and infrastructure costs. Over the long term this is a more sustainable pattern of development which will significantly contribute to our quality of life.

What Challenges

Distressed neighborhoods and concentrations of poverty



Growing traffic congestion and delays in travel

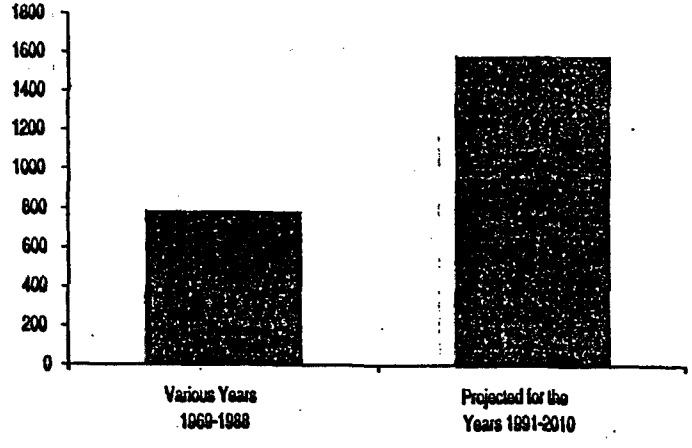
Does the Region Face?

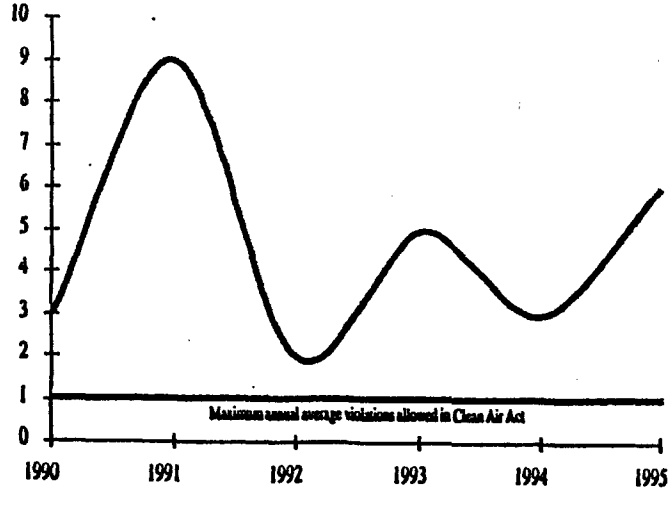
Air pollution, due mostly to automobile emissions

Loss of the region's priceless open space and wetlands

Why Do We Need to Plan?

WITHOUT THOUGHTFUL AND DELIBERATE ACTION TO STEER THE REGION IN A POSITIVE DIRECTION, RECENT TRENDS SUGGEST COSTLY PROBLEMS FOR THE FUTU





In the last several decades, much of the region's growth has shifted to low density sprawl outside of traditional town and city centers. This trend consumes more land—since 1951, the population grew by xx%, while loss of open space grew by xx%.

As development sprawls out over more land area, the use of the automobile increases. The total number of miles of automobile travel in the region has doubled since 1970, and continues to increase by2 percent each year.

As automobile travel increases, so does air pollution. The region already fails to meet the air quality standards of the Clean Air Act for ozone.

Sprawl also increases the cost of providing infrastructure and public services, such as roads, sewers, and water supply.

Housing costs are once again rising dramatically, outstripping increases in wages.

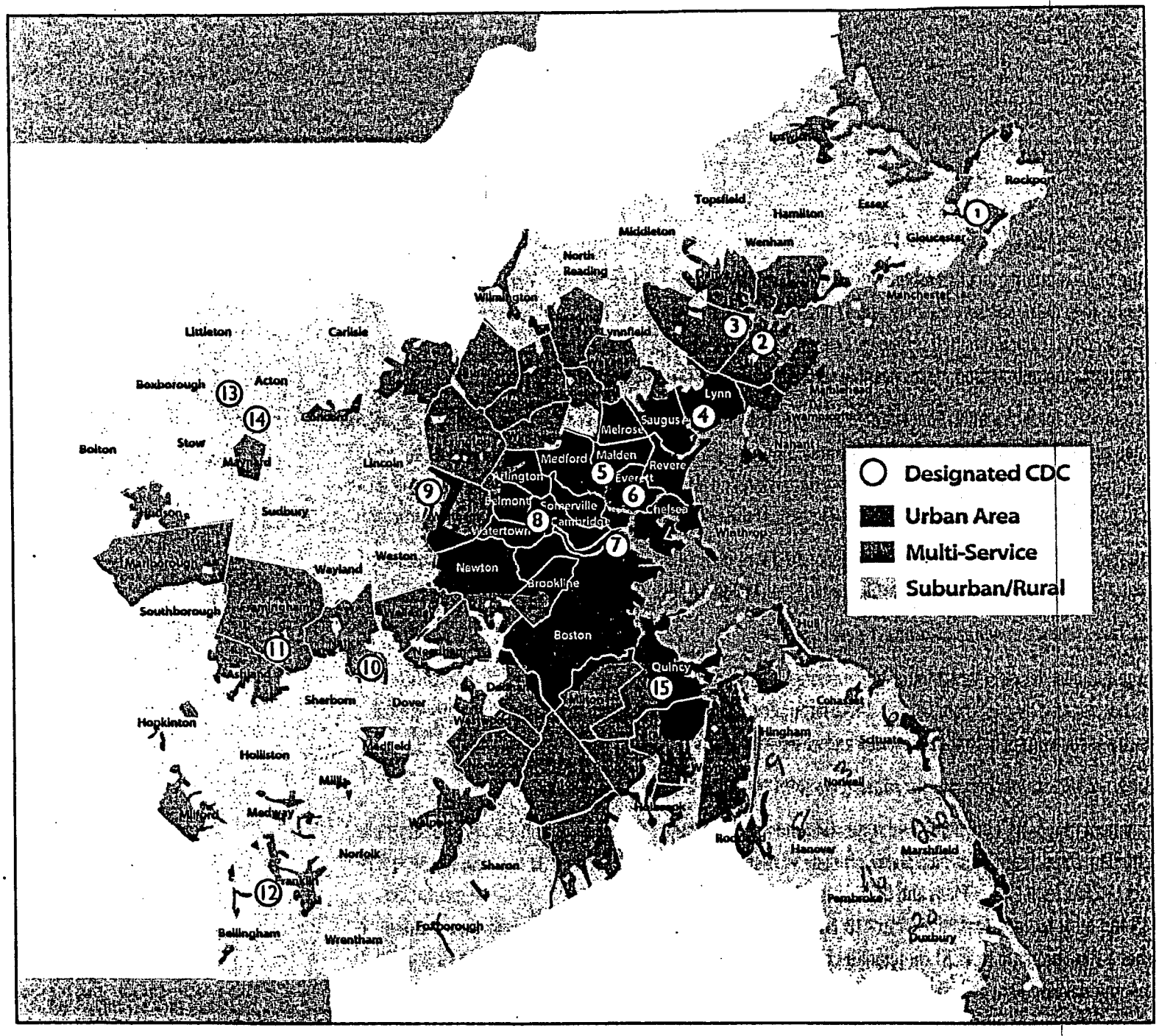
Forecasts of future growth indicate that the trend towards more sprawl development in outlying areas will continue and accelerate over the next 30 years. Unless state and local governments and the private sector work together to encourage a different development pattern, all of the problems with sprawl—traffic congestion, air and water pollution, and high housing and infrastructure costs will only be exacerbated.

What is Our Vision of a Livable Region?

A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY WHICH USES RESOURCES EFFICIENTLY

MetroPlan is based on a vision of a region which is sustainable over the long term—sustainable in our use of natural resources; sustainable in our economic development, and sustainable in a high quality of life for our citizens and our communities. To achieve this, MetroPlan identifies some of our region's critical issues and problems and charts a course to solve them.

Transportation	A sustainable, accessible and equitable transportation system which provides mobility with the least possible air pollution, and energy consumption.
Economic Development	A robust and diverse economy which offers opportunities to all our citizens and keeps us competitive in the global economy of the 21st century.
Water Resources	Clean water and healthy watersheds which provide us with quality drinking water, recreational opportunities, and abundant fisheries and wildlife.
Housing and Community Development	Decent and affordable housing in all of our communities which meets the needs of a diverse and changing population.
Open Space and Land Resources	A "regional commons" which provides accessible open space for recreation and preserves our New England landscape and our rich natural heritage.
Livable Communities	Vital communities which provide all of our citizens with a high quality of life, including education, local services, a healthy environment for families, the young, and the old.


Designated CDC
Urban Area
Multi-Service
Suburban/Rural
Rockport
Essex
Gloucester
Topsfield
Hamilton
Wenham
Middleton
North Reading
Wilmington
Lynnfield
Manchester
Littleton
Carlisle
Boxborough
Acton
Lynn
Saugus
Melrose
Bolton
Stow
Lincoln
Medford
Malden
Revere
Everett
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Belmont
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A Plan of Action for the Future

MetroPlan provides a framework to address some of the critical public policy issues facing the Boston metropolitan area, including transportation, economic development, housing, water resources, and land resources. These issues are addressed in the MetroPlan's "elements," and in a set of detailed action recommendations. Each of the elements includes an analysis of existing conditions, an identification of critical issues and problems, and a set of recommendations to address these issues. This chapter provides a summary of these analyses and recommendations, updated somewhat to reflect changing conditions. The issues are organized into the following sections:

- Sustainable and Equitable Mobility and Clean Air
- Opportunity, Prosperity and Economic Diversity
- Clean Water and Healthy Watersheds
- A Regional Commons
- Decent and Affordable Housing
- Livable Communities in a Livable Region

What's Special about the Region?

Adverse transportation system

Major airport and port facilities

Extensive but old public transportation system

Radial pattern of public transit

Aging and decentralized

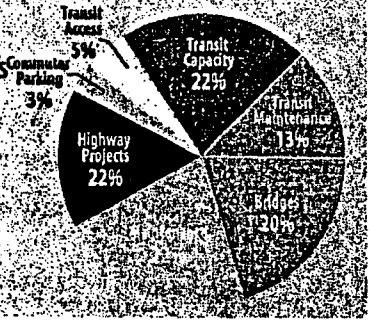
What Challenges Do We Face?

Mobility. We need to satisfy people's need for mobility without increasing the number and length of vehicle trips.

Achieving Clean Air standards. The Clean Air Act requires that we achieve air quality standards by 1999.

Maintaining economic competitiveness. The region's economy requires the ability to bring people to job sites and to move goods from ports to markets and from producers to consumers.

Adequate and equitable funding and financing. Transportation needs greatly exceed the region's financial ability. The region's needs, not including the Central Artery, are about $3.5 billion. Annual funding is about $175 million for roads and $300 million for transit.



Reducing the need for in automobile travel. Automobile travel in the Boston region is growing by a rate of about 2% annually. The challenge is to reduce auto travel by increasing the use of transit and alternative modes, including bicycling and walking, through land use changes such as concentrated development.

What is our Vision of a Livable Future?

Efficient mobility, with shorter commutes, less reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and improved options for auto-free commuting.

Focused development in concentrated mixed-use areas which promote continued economic vitality, preserve mobility, and allow for more transit and pedestrian access.

A safely maintained transportation system, with maximum use of the existing infrastructure.

Clean air.

How Do We Get There from Here?

Link transportation and land use strategies to promote concentrated development. This is the essence of MetroPlan and the primary tool to achieve its goals.

Prioritize transportation investment based on the policies of MetroPlan. Proposed transportation projects should be reviewed for consistency with these policies before design begins. the Boston MPO should initiate projects to ensure that the region wide priorities are met.

Establish new transportation concepts, encouraging bicycling, walking, and transit, and incorporate new technologies which increase energy efficiency and reduce air water pollution.

Encourage movement of goods more efficiently and with less impact on people, including use of rail and shopping and management of shipping routes and hours.

Restructure fares, taxes, and other direct and indirect subsidies to encourage public transportation and other alternatives to single-occupancy automobile travel.

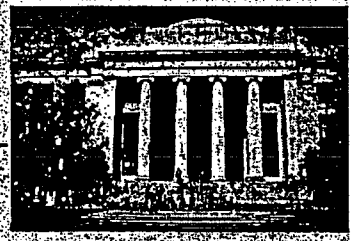
Encourage public/private partnerships to support transportation facilities and services.

What's Special about the Region?

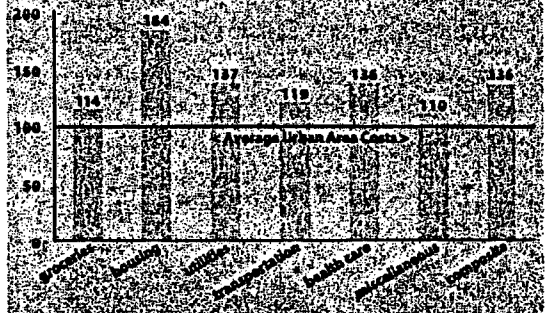
Variety of local economies. The region encompasses coastal communities, older industrial centers, rural towns, and modern urban developments, and includes over 2 million jobs.

Wealth and poverty. Within the region are areas of wealth as well as concentrations of poverty.

Concentrations of world-class institutions. Anchored in Boston and Cambridge, the region supports a unique concentration of universities, medical centers, and research institutions, plus dozens of technical and vocational education institutes, applied research centers, an extensive system of community colleges, and many well-regarded private universities. The region is also a world class center of medical teaching universities and hospitals, most of which have major grants and contracts for medical research.



Spin-off industries and research and development (R & D) laboratories. Originally clustered in Boston and Cambridge, spin-off industries and R & D laboratories now exist throughout the region. The educational and research infrastructure has expanded well beyond computers into new technologies, pharmaceuticals (biotech), new materials, and environmental remediation. Smaller "tech" firms are constantly being launched, and technological and scientific discoveries can be brought to market.



High income and high living costs. The region's per capita income and cost of living are both about 44% above the national average.[1] The cost of housing is especially out-of-line with the other areas of the country at 83% above the norm.

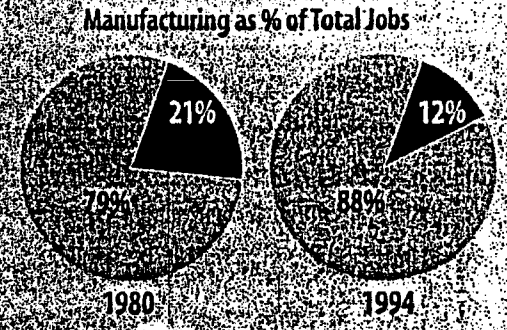
Concentration of financial firms. The region is also a major financial center, with Boston functioning as a national hub for mutual funds, pension management, and venture capital. The city is also a regional center for insurance and banking and business services such as management consulting, law, accounting, and taxation. This extensive network of organizations improves access to bank loans and facilitates the structuring of complex financial transactions to a degree which is not typical in areas of comparable size.

[1] According to the 1990 federal census, the region's per capita income is $19,577, compared with a national average of $14,420. The American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association's quarterly *Cost of Living Index* show that in the 3rd quarter of 1999 the cost of living for the Massachusetts portion of the Boston PMSA was 44% higher than the average of all the 307 urban areas surveyed.

What Challenges Do We Face?

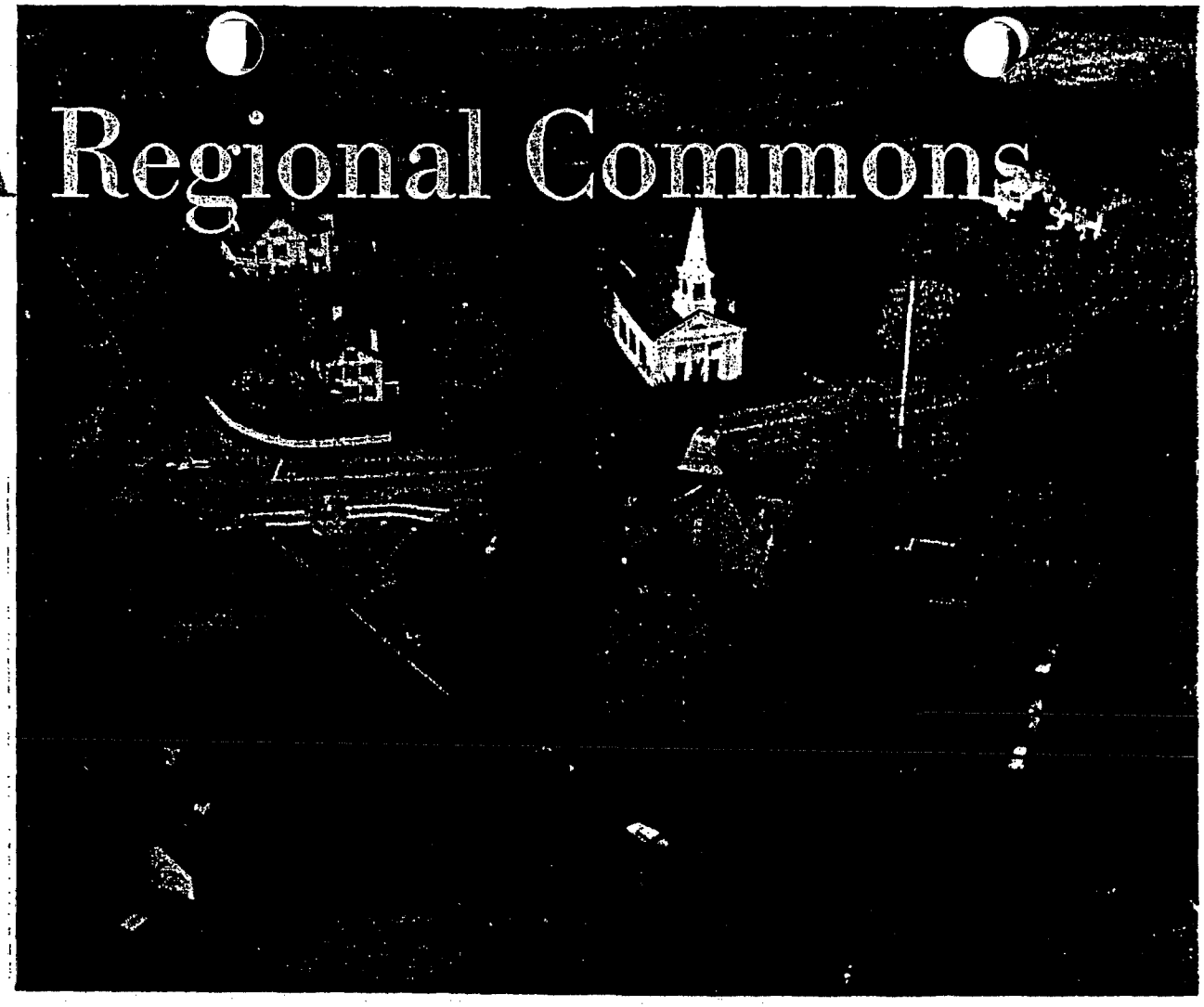
Low skills, low incomes. Low income people and those without professional or technical skills face extreme economic hardship in this region because of the high cost of living. (Poverty indicators underreport hardship in metropolitan Boston because they do not factor in our very high cost of living, particularly for energy and housing.) These people cannot wait for future income from new-tech industries.

Loss of manufacturing jobs. For the past three decades, the region has been losing traditional durable manufacturing jobs, including those in ship building, assembly, and production. These jobs provide middle-income wages without requiring advanced education and expand the regional economy by exporting goods and bringing income into the region from elsewhere.



Achieving Our Land Resources Goals:

A Regional Commons



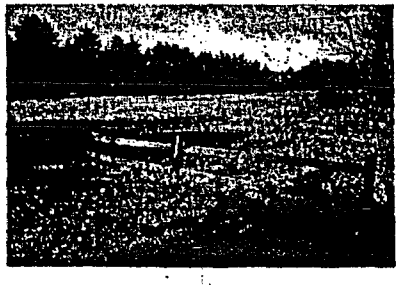
The goal of "MetroGreen," the land resources section of MetroPlan, is to create and preserve the "regional commons." The concept of the town common has a long history in Massachusetts. The dictionary defines a common as "a tract of land belonging to or used by a community as a whole; a piece of land subject to common use; a public open area in a municipality." The establishment of a town common or green in individual communities was one of the earliest steps a community took to preserve the lands it depended on.

But a common does not necessarily have to be in the center of a community; it is essentially all land which is vital to a region's prosperity. MetroGreen is all that land area which contributes to the environmental health of the metropolitan region. These are areas which supply the regional community with clean water, flood protection, recreation, wildlife habitats, natural beauty, and a sense of place. They contribute to the region's quality of life and attract newcomers and visitors. Yet as land is utilized, demands on the remaining land increase. The region's finite natural resources are continually threatened by wasteful development patterns that lead to sprawl. Both market forces and local revenue needs contribute to this trend. At the same time, competing demands for public and private funds limit preservation efforts.

In the face of these pressures, creating and preserving the regional commons presents a series of challenges in terms of awareness, public policy, planning, funding, and tools to accomplish our goals.

What is our Vision of a Livable Future?

The overarching vision is MetroGreen, the regional commons. We will know that we have been successful when citizens of all ages, income levels and physical abilities can find opportunities for recreation close to their homes. Many of the region's parks and conservation lands will be linked by trails and greenways, allowing residents the choice of walking or biking to reach their destinations. Wherever possible, parks will be accessible by public transportation. Every effort will be made to educate residents and visitors about the open space and recreational resources of the area.



It will be rare for the lands that are important to our communities' sense of place to be lost to inappropriate development because careful local planning will enable communities to access funds in a timely manner and adequate protections will be in place.

How do We Get There from Here?

Identify Lands In Need of Protection

- Encourage local master planning to weigh the economic benefits of resource protection to achieve a balance between preservation and development.
- Encourage the use of programs such as the Natural Heritage Program and Areas of Critical Environmental Concern to target areas for protection.
- Work with the MAPC subregions to identify critical resources for protection.
- Stress the need for land resource protection especially in concentrated development centers and densely populated areas.

Choose the Appropriate Method of Protection

- As funds for open space protection become more scarce and the role of government is challenged, it is important to select the most appropriate form of protection (easement, acquisition, regulation).

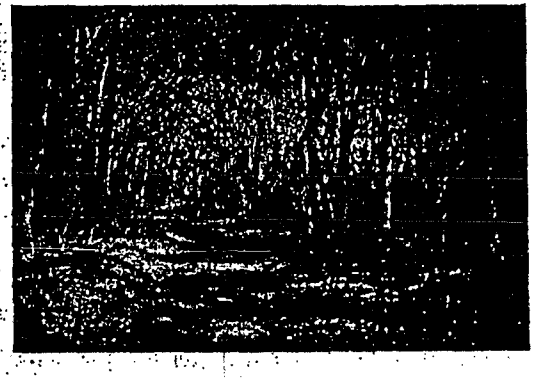
Finance Creatively

- Scarce funding also necessitates special efforts to use both traditional and creative funding and financing approaches and to bundle many different sources.

Form Partnerships

Office park built

- Coordinate regional efforts with local master plans, open space plans, and zoning.
- Encourage private sector involvement in open space protection.
- Establish cooperative agreements between state and local government and private non-profit organizations. Non-profits have the ability to move quickly to acquire land and have more flexibility in financing than government does.



Make the Most of What We Have

- Improve access to major areas of regional open space to increase opportunities for those in the more congested urban areas and to prevent overuse of land.
- Improve the maintenance of existing parks.
- Support efforts to restrict the sale or conversion of protected open space.
- Retain federal and state "surplus" lands for long-term public benefits.

What's Special about the Region?

A diverse network of water resources. The region is blessed with hundreds of miles of rivers, dozens of lakes, and over 300 miles of coastline. These waters support diverse fish and shellfish resources which have both recreational and commercial value to the region.

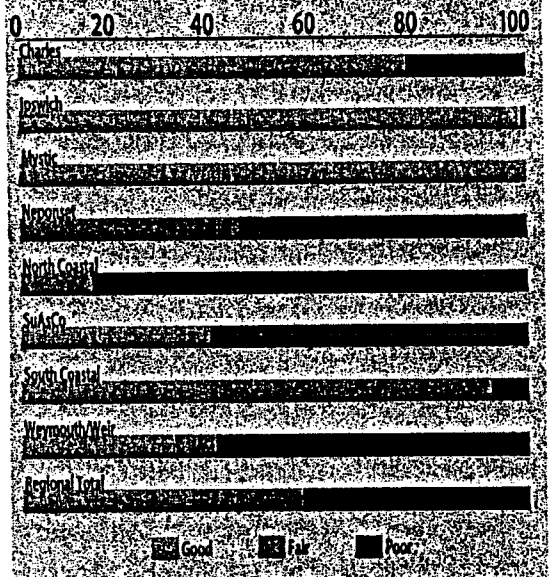
Accessible recreational waters. The region offers many opportunities for both fresh and salt water recreation. The MDC park system, the Boston Harbor Islands, and numerous state and local parks provide public access for swimming, fishing, and boating.

A high quality, reliable water supply system. The region is fortunate to have one of the highest quality metropolitan water systems in the nation. The Quabbin and Wachusett reservoirs provides up to 300 million gallons per day to two million people.

A tradition of local management of water resources. The "first line of defense" for water resources protection is formed by local conservation commissions, boards of health, and other local government boards. Many important state regulations, such as wetlands protection and Title 5, are administered in each community by local boards.

Innovative watershed-based state programs. Massachusetts is unique in its approach to water resources management. The Water Management Act, Interbasin Transfer Act, Rivers Protection Act, and the Watershed Initiative are forward-looking management tools which lay the foundation for comprehensive management of our water resources.

What Challenges Do We Face?



Degraded water quality. Only one-third of the region's rivers meet their water quality standards under the Clean Water Act. The region's lakes and coastal waters do not fare any better. Over two-thirds of the lakes are rated as "poor" or "severe," while 80 percent of the coastal waters fail their water quality standards.

Threatened water supplies. Many cities and towns face the threat of water supply contamination. Since 1980, 20 communities have lost wells to groundwater contamination. Surface water is also at risk. Many reservoir systems receive polluted runoff from highways, and some face potential contamination from commercial or industrial sites.

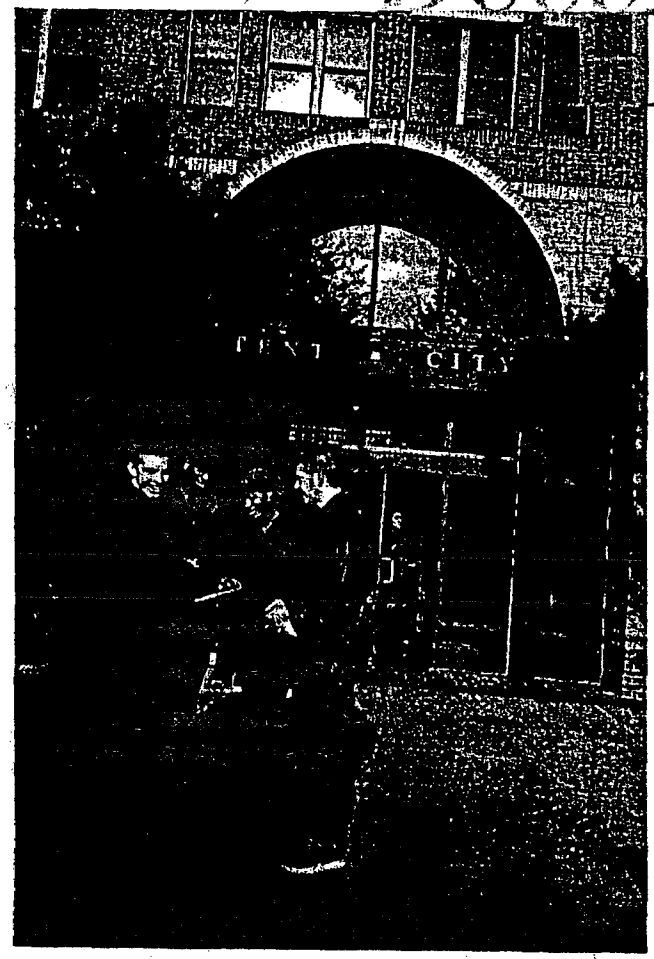
Non-point source pollution. Many water quality problems are due to "non-point source" pollution, pollution caused by diffused sources such as contaminated runoff from developed areas. This is exacerbated by sprawl, with widespread development in many watersheds.

Streamflow concerns. Low streamflows in the summer are a concern for several rivers, particularly the Ipswich and the Charles. Low flows stress fish populations and threaten ecosystem health, and they can exacerbate water quality problems. Careful planning is required to balance water supply withdrawals with the need for adequate in-stream flows.

Boston Harbor/Massachusetts Bay. Coastal waters suffer from pollution and the closure of productive shellfish beds due to both point sources such as sewage treatment plants and non-point source pollutants such as stormwater and failing septic systems.

Comprehensive watershed management. State water resources programs do not address

Decent & Affordable Housing



Housing is a key component of the region's resource base, its image, and its overall well-being. A range of housing opportunities is essential to economic development, helping to attract and retain a diverse and talented workforce. Density of housing and its proximity to jobs affects mobility and transportation choices. Housing improvement is essential for neighborhood revitalization. Housing investment—both as a bricks and mortar issue and as a people issue—is key to stable communities and to a healthy society.

The metro Boston housing market has gone through substantial turmoil in recent years, with a major boom escalating housing costs far beyond incomes in the mid-1980s: a subsequent downturn with foreclosures, dislocation, and disinvestment in some areas; and another major escalation, this one not as steep but much longer in duration and with similar impacts.

The baby boomers, whose demands fueled the earlier boom in rentals and starter homes, are now putting pressure on the trade-up market. Most of today's new development is large, single-family housing on the periphery of the region. The region's older housing, along with most of its rental and subsidized housing, is in the core and the older, more urban communities. They too are seeing steep price rises, and in some cases, gentrification.

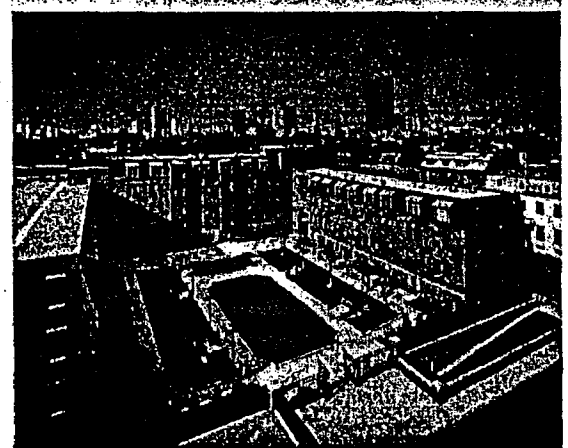
Thus, today's housing growth pattern contributes to sprawl, consuming scarce land. Many suburban communities, concerned about tax revenues and school and other service costs, support this trend by zoning for high-end housing and commercial development over high density family housing. Housing affordability remains a major problem. Both state and federal housing funds have dried up in recent years, and although the housing issue has recently reappeared on the public policy agenda, funding remains low. The challenge ahead is to ensure that policy-makers recognize the integral relationship among housing, metropolitan resilience, economic vitality and support effective housing programs.

Open and accessible suburban communities, where at least 10% of the housing stock is permanently affordable.

Strong, fully funded public programs that create and preserve permanently affordable housing throughout the region.

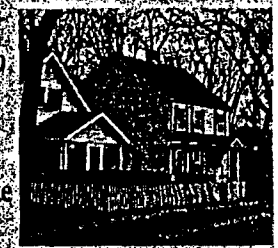
How Do We Get There from Here?

Educate people through broader alliances and better information. To put housing back on the



public policy agenda, MAPC should work with others to develop and disseminate better information, including data that links housing and regional stability, economic development, neighborhood revitalization, and urban problem-solving; and data which better prepares us to meet future housing needs.

Promote housing policies, programs, and funding dedicated to creating and preserving permanently affordable housing. We need to work with policy makers and program designers to ensure that limited public resources are used to create and preserve housing that will not revert to market rates, but will continue to serve the needs of low and moderate income people over time.



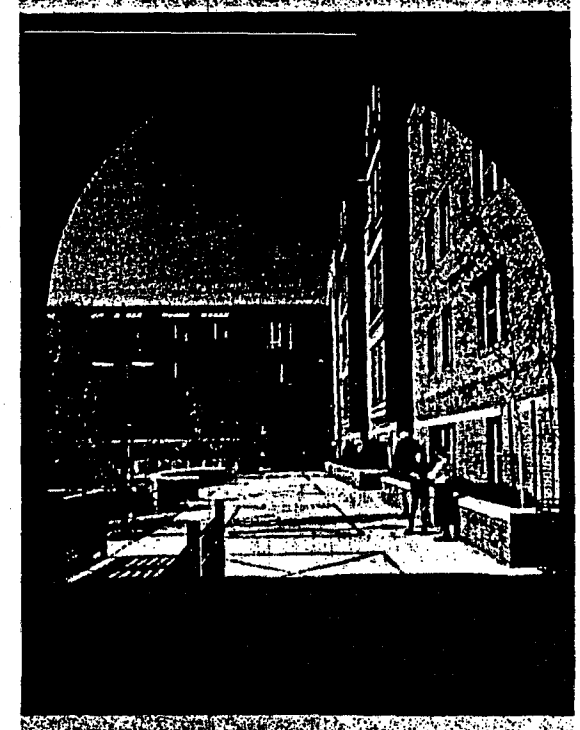
Develop more effective incentives and tools to stimulate a diverse housing supply. We need a package of incentives to encourage diverse housing and good planning, and we need adequate enforcement tools.

Improve taxation policies. Taxation policies often have unintended results: changes in the federal tax code in 1986 eliminated most incentives for new multi-family housing, and state tax laws encourage new commercial growth and less housing. Integrated with other tools, we need taxation policies that promote a mix of housing types in each community.

Seek adequate and innovative funding for cost-effective programs. With most types of public funding and financing very low, we need to cooperate more than ever to support the range of needs in the region. We need to be especially creative in developing innovative and cost-effective solutions and involving new partners.

Prioritize housing investment to support a mix of housing opportunities throughout the region. This includes reinvestment to maintain and upgrade housing stock in older, urban areas; preserve existing affordable housing, such as "expiring use" properties where restrictions may end and owners may raise rents or convert to condominiums; attract middle income families to urban areas; and increase opportunities for low and moderate income households in suburban and rural areas. It also includes lending that supports stable neighborhoods and a stable housing stock.

Link job growth and housing. Seek a balance between jobs and housing to reduce commuting, traffic congestion, energy use, and pollution.



What's Special about the Region?

The tradition of the "New England town" as the center of community life.

Strong, autonomous local government.

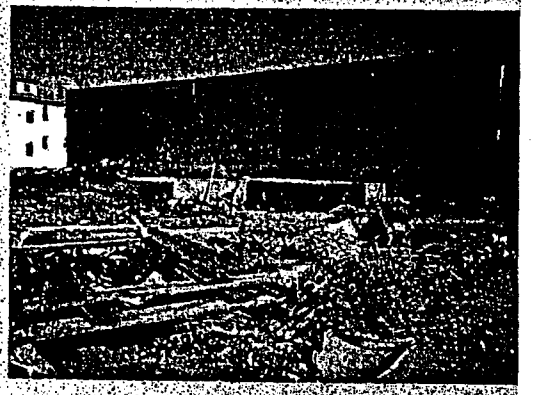
Weak regional government.

A tradition of tolerance and an appreciation of diversity.

A richness of cultural, historic, civic, social, and religious institutions.

What Challenges Do We Face?

Urban disinvestment. Some urban areas face problems of abandonment, foreclosure, and blight. Government alone cannot reverse these trends.



Strained public budgets. State and federal support for urban redevelopment, job training and development, housing, and other "urban agenda" purposes has declined in recent years.

"Fiscal zoning." Existing tax policy encourages communities to act in isolation and to promote development based on its revenue-generating potential.

Unsustainable Development. As development expands in many of the region's communities, not enough attention is being given to the negative impacts on a healthy environment (including clean water and air) and on recreational and open space resources that improve the quality of life.

Economic Disadvantage. As jobs and housing have spread to the suburbs, pockets of poverty have been left behind, while minorities and new immigrants have had unequal access to new opportunities, even in the midst of an economic boom. High costs of living in the region make it difficult for families to attain economic self-sufficiency.

Poor educational outcomes. Many of the schools in the region are underperforming, creating a potential drag on the economy and contributing to the economic disadvantage of some residents. Employment training programs are often underfunded and higher education is often too expensive to be accessed by these residents. Education is often the draw that lures young and more affluent families from city to suburb.

Loss of community. Lack of affordable housing in the same communities where people work as well as other amenities/services requiring travel across long distances contributes to this loss of community. At the same time, newcomers heighten the need for more inclusive civic participation processes and greater appreciation of diverse heritage, arts and culture.

Crime. Between 1995 and 1998, total crime decreased in the region as a whole. About 20% of suburban communities saw an increase in violent or property crime.

What is our Vision of a Livable Future?

A cooperative region, in which city and suburb recognize each other's importance and needs, engage in holistic planning and work together across communities to achieve a shared set of goals.

A viable central city, with jobs, affordable housing, open space, and a quality of life that will at-

A CALL TO ACTION:

Working Together to Achieve Our Goa for a Livable Region

Achieving the ambitious goals of MetroPlan will take the cooperation of state agencies, city and town governments, and citizens from throughout the region. Everyone has a role to play in the effort to shape the future of the region and move in a positive direction into the next century.

What MAPC Does

As the regional planning agency for metropolitan Boston, MAPC plays a key advisory role to state and local governments. MAPC uses this role to focus its efforts to implement MetroPlan in several ways, including:

- MAPC works cooperatively with cities and towns to establish Concentrated Development Centers (CDCs) which encourage development in appropriate areas.
- MAPC works with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) office to implement a Generic Environmental Impact Review process which streamlines review of development projects in CDCs.
- MAPC reviews development proposals under the MEPA to encourage consistency with the goals of MetroPlan.
- MAPC works with the state transportation agencies to develop the Regional Transportation Plan and to program expenditures annually on state and federally funded transportation projects.
- MAPC works with state and federal agencies to ensure that policies and programs are consistent with MetroPlan. This process implements Executive Order 385, "Planning for Growth," which requires that state agencies consider the consistency of their actions with local and regional plans.
- MAPC works with communities to review local land use plans and regulations to ensure their consistency with MetroPlan.
- MAPC provides technical assistance and develops education and outreach tools to increase involvement of communities and citizens.
- MAPC will work with the legislature to adopt or amend legislation.