

HISTORIC AND SCENIC RESOURCES ELEMENT

5.7.1 INTRODUCTION

"Foster's historic man-made environment dates primarily from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century (1750-1850). Within this time frame, many houses and farms date to the years between 1760 and 1820. By 1830 the town and its population was in decline. The opening up of rich farm lands in the West; the lure of whaling and other marine industries; the development of water- and steam powered manufacturing elsewhere in Rhode Island and in eastern Connecticut; and the rise of railroads in the late 1830s contributed to a long period of decline in farm towns like Foster.

Consequently, the last half of the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s were years of little growth and development in Foster. Except for a handful of Civil War era churches, a few early twentieth century houses and some small businesses spurred by the brief existence of the Providence and Danielson electric trolley (from 1902 to c.1920) and by state and federal road improvement programs in the 1920s and 1930s, little building activity occurred until after 1950. It was only with the post war suburbanization, highway improvements and the use of the automobile to commute, that Foster once again began to develop. It was only in the mid-1970s that the population of the town surpassed its 1820s peak."

- Foster, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1, RIHPC, 1982.

The Town as a Cultural Landscape

Change, then, did not occur until recently. This, alone, accounts for the richness and importance of Foster's historic resources. It is not hard to view the entire town as an important and unique cultural landscape which retains the image and feel of an earlier time of rural tranquility and quietness. Although prosaic, this description is meaningful in that it is these qualities which townspeople value more than others.

The public opinion survey (Foster Community Survey) undertaken by Mount Vernon Associates for the 1991 Comprehensive Plan and reissued for the 2003 Update demonstrates that in defining "rural," the residents of Foster responded by listing the following characteristics:

<u>Characteristic</u>	<u>Mentioned by Survey in:</u>	
	<u>1990</u>	<u>2003</u>
Strict zoning/minimum acres	36.1%	29%
Open/wooded space	29.8	27
Minimal development	19.1	
Farming/living off the land	18.8	
Wild animals and livestock	17.1	40
Dirt/country roads	16.6	24

Quiet/peaceful	14.0	20
Sparse population	12.3	20
Little Commercial Development	0.0	20
Community/Political Involvement	20.0	0

Others mentioned cleanliness, beauty, few town services, few restrictions, friendliness, neighborliness, low taxes, historical resources, and volunteer town departments.

This Plan Element presents a summary description of the issues and concerns Foster faces in the quest for retaining the principal assets of its rural character. Following this discussion is the approach for meeting these needs.

5.7.2 INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission (RIHPC) began the survey of Foster's historic resources in 1969 as part of alternative alignments studies for the proposed I-84 highway project through western Rhode Island. This corridor study included only the area through which the highway was planned to pass. Supplemental survey work was undertaken in 1973 and significantly expanded in 1976.

The Foster survey is part of the RIHPC's on-going effort to prepare inventories of historic resources for each town on a statewide basis. A survey report entitled, *Foster, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1*, which has been extensively paraphrased in the Introduction 5.7.1, was published by the RIHPC in 1982. This report describes the historical development of the Town and lists recommendations for the preservation of these resources. It is available through the local libraries and the Planning Department.

The project was initiated to identify resources for inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places and worthy of preservation efforts.

The State and National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the Federal Government's list of structures, sites, areas and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology and culture. The National Register is the official inventory of the Nation's cultural and historical resources which are worthy of preservation. Most properties entered into the Register are nominated for inclusion by state historical preservation agencies like the RIHPC. All properties must be reviewed and approved by the US Department of the Interior prior to their entry in the Register.

Placement in the National Register affords a limited form of protection from potentially damaging federally funded projects and programs through a review process and establishes eligibility for certain tax credit benefits for certified rehabilitations. It also establishes eligibility for Federal and State grants-in-aid for rehabilitation and restoration

work.

Listing in the National Register automatically includes listing in the State Register of Historic Places, the State of Rhode Island's list of significant historical resources. The same degree of protection is afforded State Register listed resources threatened with the expenditure of State and local government funds (under the State Historic Preservation Act) as with the National Register program and federally funded projects.

As a result of past and on-going survey activities, the following resources and districts in Foster have been listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places:

- *Foster Center Historic District*, Foster Center, Howard Hill and South Killingly Roads
- *Captain George Dorrance House*, Jenks Road
- *Solomon Drown House*, "Mount Hygeia," Mount Hygeia Road
- *Mount Vernon Tavern*, Plainfield Pike
- *Hopkins Mills Historic District*, Old Danielson Pike
- *Clayville Historic District*, bounded by Cole Avenue and Victory Highway in Foster, and Cole Avenue, Field Hill Road, Pleasant Lane and Victory Highway in Scituate
- *Moosup Valley Historic District*, Barb's Hill, Cucumber Hill, Harrington, Johnson, Moosup Valley, Plain Woods and Potter Roads
- *Breezy Hill (archeological) Site*, (RI-957), Danielson Pike

Review of preliminary materials by the State Review Board suggests the following properties may be eligible for listing in the National Register:

- *Deacon Daniel Hopkins House*, Balcom Road and Old Central Pike
- *Burgess Farm*, Nelson Aldrich Birthplace, Burgess Road
- *North Foster Baptist Church*, East Killingly Road
- *Phillips-Wright House*, Foster Center Road
- *Paine Farm*, Paine Road
- *Whidden-Fuller Farm*, Plainfield Pike

The following districts have been recently identified for further study and consideration for nomination to the State and National Registers:

East Killingly Road Historic District, a cluster of historic house near the North Baptist Church and the site of the Providence & Danielson electric car line.

- North Foster Baptist Church (1848-1955)
- Jenks Hopkins House (c1799)
- William G. Stone House (1832)
- Site of Providence & Danielson line
- plus 2 non-contributing 20th-century houses.

Howard Hill Historic District, a linear district of related late 18th-century family farms and an early intact shop.

- John T. Randall House Wheelwright Shop/ The Ray Howard Place (c1800) and Waterworks
- J.T. Randall House (c1810)
- Martin Howard Farm (c1783)
- W. Hill Farm (c1770 et seq)
- Judge Daniel Howard House (c1805 and 1856 et seq)

Winsor Road Historic District, a cluster of farms, acreage and family cemeteries, depicting agricultural life from the early 18th-century to the mid-19th century, including one of the oldest houses in Foster.

- Ira Winsor Farm (c1780, c1850, c1890, c1980)
- Winsor Cemetery, RI Historical Cemetery Foster #17 (early 19th-century)
- Winsor House (c1720 and c1740)
- William Colwell-Aseph Saunders Farm (c1765, c1840) plus barn, tinsmith house, wash house and privy Family Cemetery, RI Historical Cemetery Foster #18 (19th-century)
- Wade-Farrow Gristmill Site (before 1799) on NW side of Ponagansett River

In addition, several individual properties and areas have been recommended by the Foster Preservation Society for study and consideration for State and National Register listing:

Hartford Pike - RI Route 101

- *Jame G. Cook's Store and Post Office (c1855 and c1920)*; this property has two sections - the east section appears to be a rebuilding of Theodore Foster's law office and post office of 1815; the west section was a 1-1/2-story Victorian house, built by James G. Cook, storekeeper.

The property is directly east of *Mount Hygeia Schoolhouse (c1840)*, which is used for storage and fenced.

Mount Hygeia Road

- *Joshua Jones House (c1789 and c1845)*, an interesting complex with important 1950s with gardens and landscaping on 102 acres, in close proximity to the Solomon Drown House.

Theodore Foster Drive

Two properties along this dead end road have an uncertain future due to the use of the area for a Nike Missile Site in the late 1950s. Waste products have polluted ground water in this area.

- *Daniel Colwell Farm, "Cherry Farm" (c1772)*, the house is vacant; however the orchards (now apple) are productive. The question of the water supply needs to be addressed.
- *John Colwell House (1759)*; In 1956, a significant part of the farm on which this house is located was developed into Nike Missile Base. A beautiful view down Oak Hill (now heavily forested) exists.

Discussion has also been held on the possibility of thematic nominations for Foster. Two thematic topics appear to be worthy of further consideration:

The Churches of Foster Thematic Group, or the development of religious freedom in western section of Rhode Island from the early 18th-century to the middle of the 20th-century. An excellent book on this subject, *The Churches of Foster*, was published in 1978. Margery Matthews is the co-author. Four churches in Foster have already been listed in the National Register in the Foster Center Historic District, Hopkins Mills Historic District, Clayville Historic District and the Moosup Valley Historic District.

Agricultural Practices in Western Rhode Island as exemplified in Foster Farms, built from c1765 to c1840. The following farms could be included in this thematic nomination. This list is not inclusive however.

- *Burgess Farm, Nelson Aldrich Birthplace (c1820), Burgess Road*
- *Randall Farm (c1780), Foster Center Road*
- *Martin Howard Farm (c1783), Howard Hill Road*
- *W. Hill Farm (c1770), Howard Hill Road*
- *Judge Daniel Howard House (c1805 and 1856), Howard Hill Road*
- *Paine-Bennett Farm (c1815), Old Plainfield Pike*
- *Paine Farm (c1785 and c1835) and Foster Cemetery C#32, Paine Road*
- *Whidden-Fuller Farm (c1770 and c1840), Plainfield Pike*
- *Abijah Weaver Farm, Sweet Farm (1809), South Killingly Road*
- *Colwell-Saunders Farm (c1765 - c1840) and Foster Cemetery C#17 and Foster Cemetery C#18, Winsor Road*
- *Ashahel Crossman House (c1850), North Road*
- *Jeremiah Bennett Farm (c1770), South Killingly Road*

Early Rural Industry, Foster's mills, mill ruins and archeological sites. Many of Foster's excellent mill foundations, raceways and dams as well as extant small mill/shop buildings would be included in this nomination.

All of these resources have been mapped with widespread archeological sites identified in the Foster historical survey.

5.7.3 ISSUES AND CONCERNS - THREATS TO HISTORIC RESOURCES AND TOWN CHARACTER

Fire, natural disaster, demolition, unsympathetic rehabilitation, commercial and residential development, variances for historical buildings destroyed or collapsed, zoning and subdivision regulations pose threats to the preservation of Foster's heritage.

Foster has been lucky. There has been no large scale housing development which has radically altered the relationship of historic buildings and farms to the landscape. *Much of the town's historic built environment remains intact.* There have been, however, unsympathetic alterations to many of Foster's historic houses. Some historic farms have been let go - farmhouses abandoned, fields overgrown or reforested. Many historic buildings have been restored or rehabilitated. Many have been preserved. One of the most serious threats to retaining the historical identity of the town is more far-reaching than the simple loss of an isolated

structure or a building's unsympathetic alteration. Because the identity of the town is a function of the location of scattered historic farms in a rural landscape of forests, field and stream and small clustered historic buildings in hamlets. The largest threat is the introduction of competing and foreign development patterns, the most incongruous of which is suburban residential and commercial sprawl.

The character of scattered farms in the landscape is further enhanced by the small setback many of these buildings have from Foster's rural roads. Many farmhouses and barns are actually set straddling Foster's roads. Zoning setback requirements will not allow this pattern to be continued without a dimensional variance or deviation; hence new houses are built with greater setbacks on frontage lots. Many of these new houses have been built with a vegetated buffer between house and road, essentially screening new development and allowing the historic road scape to retain a strong visual identity.

Zoning

The one fundamental truth about zoning and subdivision regulations is that these ordinances prescribe the character of land use development from single family homes on frontage lots and in development projects, to strip commercial development on Route 6.

As was pointed out in the Land Use Profile (Technical Report #2), Foster has zoned for a uniform "5 acre" (4.59 acres/unit) pattern of residential development with the supposition that the rural character of the town can be preserved with this zoning. The land use study demonstrated that while the density of development may be appropriate from an environmental point of view, the "5 acre" lots being created and built on are actually suburbanizing the landscape, sprawling development along Foster's roads, with houses at uniform intervals much like the development patterns in standard subdivision development. Likewise, Foster's subdivision regulations dictate new development patterns for back lots that are *alien* to the historic and character-defining elements of the town.

Commercial Strip Development

Unfortunately zoning for commercial development along Route 6 and outside of the hamlet centers has spread commercial development out, primarily sprawling unsightly strip commercial development along the highway and, as previously pointed out, channeling neighborhood type commercial uses away from village and hamlet centers where they would historically be located. The odd thing about most of the Route 6 commercial development, which is characterized by abandoned flea markets, auto salvage and auction houses, truck stops, outdated motels, and small isolated strip centers, is that it is extremely unattractive, has no relationship to Foster as a community, provides some neighborhood-type convenience to Foster residents and provides little if any tax revenue. There are a few exceptions, but the overall feeling about Route 6 is that it is an eyesore and unfortunate. No one would like to see the auto auction houses, auto salvage, flea markets and this sort of land use appear in

the town's scenic and historic hamlets. Many would like to see these uses discontinued altogether. Others make use of the (hair dresser, liquor store, bar, restaurant and video store), but the fact that for the most part each of these uses is separate from the other and requires driving from one to the other along or across a two lane highway. None of this development has any connection with the historic and scenic assets or identity of the community.

There is no protection in the Town's regulations for historic buildings, districts or scenic areas. National Register listing only regulates federal and state agency activities or funding that may affect the integrity of such resources. Private property owners may do what they wish with historic resources in Foster, demolishing historic houses and structures which do not serve their interests or altering historic buildings by insensitive additions and rehabilitations. These activities have an adverse affect on the town, eroding the unique character, devaluing property, and destabilizing the tax base. *Many previous studies, throughout the Nation, have demonstrated that historic resources and scenic areas which are retained and enhanced produce a stabilizing effect upon local economies and tax revenue.* These resources attract reinvestment in a community and instill in residents a real sense of place which reinforces their desire to stay in the community and contribute to its well being. Historic resources have been used as economic development tools in many rural New England towns and villages. Models exist for this use in the Connecticut River Valley and Vermont where resources have been preserved, and a local economy developed, not as museums, but as they are - evolving in a managed and sensitive way, retaining opportunities for town residents, yet providing a future for tax base improvement.

There is protection for Foster's historic cemeteries within the Zoning Ordinance. It requires no construction to take place within 35 feet of a cemetery and no driveways within 15 feet of a cemetery among other restrictions.

5.7.4 PROTECTIVE TOOLS

Historic Buildings, Districts and Scenic Areas

Stewardship

A primary factor in promoting preservation of community resources, both natural and cultural is a sense of stewardship. This philosophy entails viewing property not as a commodity, but as a non-renewable resource which needs to be protected for future enjoyment. Historic buildings are particularly appropriate for stewardship roles in that they have existed for many years longer than their present owners and are physical records of the heritage of the town which is a possession of not any one individual but of the community and its residents.

Zoning and Subdivision Regulations

Zoning setback and height regulations have an influence upon the preservation of historic resources. Subdivision regulations which are insensitive to historic properties and contain requirements for the standardization of suburban development patterns have a profound influence on the preservation of the character of historic farms, including farmhouses, farm buildings and their settings. Both zoning and subdivision regulations can be modified to allow for greater flexibility - allowing for change that is in tune with the existing character of the area. Creative Land Development (CLD), variable lot requirements, and flexible zoning standards are tools that provide opportunities for new development which does not adversely affect the integrity of historical areas. In addition, site plan review is a technique by which review boards and agencies can evaluate specific locations of buildings, parking areas, circulation roads, landscaping and buffer areas to mitigate impacts.

Historic District Zoning

Historic district zoning may be one tool to explore which will provide a reasonable mechanism to allow new additions, alterations and construction in Foster's historic districts without jeopardizing the historical integrity and character of these districts. An historic district zone is an overlay zone which only addresses the exterior appearance of buildings and structures within a definite geographic boundaries. The use of the property is dictated by the underlying zoning for the area. With this zoning in place, a Town appointed commission of district residents is able to evaluate the compatibility and affect of exterior alterations to structures within the district. A certificate of appropriateness is required from the Commission before a building permit for construction may be issued by the Building Official. Recent Rhode Island enabling legislation for historic district zoning has removed a commission's ability to make arbitrary and unreasonable demands of property owners. A set of standards and design guidelines for compatible alterations must be adopted by each commission and followed closely in each review so that aesthetic taste is not a factor.

Special Area Management (SAM) Planning

Another tool which may be used in Foster to learn more about the town's historic hamlets, how they function and specific threats to their existence, is the development of individual management or conservation plans. Patterned after planning for the preservation of unique and critical natural resources, this tool is also known as Special Area Management (SAM) planning. The development of SAM plans for Foster Center, Clayville, Moosup Valley and Hopkins Mills should include a rigorous inventory of historic resources, land use and environmental features within each village. Existing and future threats to the resources within each village should be catalogued and analyzed. Management strategies for each village should be developed through the active participation of village residents. These strategies could then be adopted by the Town for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan and future implementation.

Town-Wide Preservation Plan

Because historic resources are important to defining the overall rural character of Foster, a specific guide plan for managing these resources is an important tool to use for their preservation.

The 1982 RIHPC report on the town, entitled *Foster, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1*, contained the town's first Historic Preservation Plan. Many of the problems and opportunities evaluated in this document remain, although a number of recommendations made 8 years ago have been implemented.

Concerns relating to historic preservation outlined in the 1982 Report are still relevant today:

- Changing land use patterns can alter the character of Foster in all too short a time unless careful consideration is given now to how, where, and especially why development changes are to occur.
- The total landscape, natural and man-made, is important in the context of Foster's historical development, for its present ability to evoke the past and to mirror and preserve a segment of early nineteenth-century, agrarian, small town New England, the physical evidence of which is being lost at an accelerating rate throughout the region.

By including a Historic and Scenic Element in the 1991 Comprehensive Plan, it is possible to include the preservation of Foster's heritage as an integral component with managing growth and the future development of the town, managing the preservation of environmental features, open space and seeking opportunities for economic development. This holistic approach puts historic preservation into a context and focus.

5.7.5 CURRENT PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

The following preservation programs have been implemented:

- The Foster Preservation Society has undertaken a program to identify valued buildings, historic sites, and hamlets with markers and plaques which does stimulate local awareness of resources and interest. Some forty-two (42) historical plaques have been produced for Foster buildings as well as historic districts signs for Hopkins Mills, Clayville, Foster Center and Moosup Valley. These markers educate residents and visitors on the location of historic resources.

The Foster Preservation Society has also undertaken educational programs including school children tours and classroom programs. The Society has also held programs for church groups at local libraries. A collection of historical photographs, scrapbooks and genealogical material is housed at the Tyler Free Library in Moosup Valley for research purposes. The Society has also completed a study of area cemeteries and expects to complete a record of who is buried in them.

- The Town offices are housed in a new structure in Foster Center between the Aylsworth House and the Town House, reinforcing Foster Center as the seat of town government. Other recommendations regarding the design and location of facilities in Foster Center have been met, including site planning, and retention of the barn and shed at the Aylsworth House. The Eddy House, formerly housing the Town Clerk's office has been renovated as a meeting space.
- The Foster Preservation Society has worked with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission to expand the number properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. National Register listing since 1982 includes the Hopkins Mills Historic District, Clayville Historic District, and Moosup Valley Historic District. The listing of these districts has been a tremendous undertaking and extremely beneficial to the town.
- Celebrations and events such as Foster Old Home Days and the Farmers Clambake are annual traditions which the Town and the Grange sponsor. Every effort should be made to continue these in the future.

Other recommendations included in the 1982 RI Historic Preservation Report have not been implemented and should be seriously considered in the Comprehensive Plan. These recommendations include:

Under Planning for the Built Environment, (pg 47 et seq.) items 1, 2c, 2d, 3a, 3b, 3c, 4, 5, 6, 7a, 7b, 7d, 8, 9, 10a, 10b, 10c, and continued effort on 11. (see copy of Foster, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report P-F-1, 1982 in the Technical Appendix)

Under Planning for the Land, all items need to be addressed. All of the recommendations of the 1982 Foster Comprehensive Plan are more valid today than they were 20 years ago. These items include the need for:

- Unique natural habitat protection
- Natural scenery districts
- Regulation of gravel mining
- Protection of Foster's brooks, streams, and rivers as well as other important and sensitive environmental features
- Forestry management
- Open Space preservation
- Variable lot size requirements to change uniform suburban-type development

- Cluster-type development regulations
- Farmland and Farm preservation

5.7.6 SCENIC VALUE

The single most important attribute of Foster's cultural landscape is its scenic quality and integrity. The historic resources in each of the listed historic districts derive their significance not as individual buildings or structures, but as a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The cultural landscape is significant as the identity of Foster, and it provides a sense of place which is distinct to the residents of the community. Concerns regarding development continue to be emphasized by the people of the Community. Since 1991 accelerated development has significantly impacted designated scenic areas.

The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (RIDEM) recently published (1990) a statewide inventory of the State's most scenic areas, *The Rhode Island Landscape Inventory*. This inventory catalogues Rhode Island's most scenic cultural landscape images including rural farmsteads, small urban mill villages, the "colonial" New England town commons and the ubiquitous agricultural lands edged with stone walls. All of these features are present in Foster and are listed from the inventory in the following categories and are mapped together with the historic resources:

DISTINCTIVE (highest rating): These landscapes have the highest visual appeal of "imageability" and contain a great deal of variety in form, line, texture, and color in the land when evaluating the physiogeographic, historic and cultural features.

Paine Farm	110 acres	well-sited rural historic farm and apple orchard
Tucker Hollow Road	264 acres	pristine piece of land with interesting topography
Walker Road farms,	712 acres	well-sited, historic interesting topography
Howard Hill Road	459 acres	well-sited, historic farms, interesting topography
Isthmus Road Westconnaug Reservoir	603 acres	rural road with scenic vistas to reservoir
Clayville	540 acres	distinctive historic town, high visual quality
Barden Reservoir	758 acres	beautiful wooded area

		w/ponds and spillways
Moosup Valley	561 acres (+)	open and wooded historic rural setting, interesting land form
Quanduck Brook	137 acres	scenic brook in woodland setting
Vaughn Hollow (mostly in Coventry)	154 acres	Rice City Pond area is well sited and well contained

NOTEWORTHY (high rating): These landscapes and features are of lesser, but nevertheless important, visual quality than the distinctive landscapes with characteristics which combine to create an area of scenic value.

Crossman Farm (Boswell/North Rds)	287 acres	historic farm with well sited buildings
North Road	86 acres	nice sequence of woodland and open space farmland
Winsor Road woodland	276 acres	nice sequence of and open farmland
North Road/Foster Center Road	564 acres	noteworthy farms, interesting rural road

In addition the Foster Conservation Commission and members of the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) have noted areas of high scenic value and interest which they have determined reinforce the identity of the town. These areas include areas which may not have been experienced by DEM staff traveling the roads of the town, but interior areas which are known by local townspeople and property owners.

The following is a partial list of areas noted:

- Hemlock Swamp
- Boiling Springs (North Road, Shippee Schoolhouse Pond)
- Gabro Outcrop on Johnson Road
- Wilson Property on Maple Rock Road
- Ravine between Snagwood and Paine Road
- Angell Sweet Farm along Moosup River
- Earthen Dam off Tucker Hollow Road
- Dug Well and Root Cellar on Wilson Property
- Land near Cranston Fish and Game Pond
- Stone Walls at Ross Orchard
- Barn on B. Campbell Property
- Stone Monuments on Power line R-O-W off Pierce Road

- Moosup River and adjacent Wetlands
- Dorrance Mills/Potter Mills - Plainwoods Road
- Rocky Glen behind Fernley House on Mount Hygeia Road
- Hopkins Mills Pond
- Headlands of the Moosup River
- Downey Property
- Head of Paine Brook
- Watershed of the Ponagansett River
- Plat 17, Lot 94 - Dr. Cardi Property
- Witch Hill School
- Rams Tail Fishing Area
- Hemlock Brook, King Road
- Shaw Property on Ponagansett Road
- Morgan Property on Danielson Pike - Historic Spring and the largest Red Oak in Rhode Island
- Borders Property on North Road
- Central Pike Trail

The Conservation Commission survey points out that despite the diversity of the above list of specific locations, there is a common thread that the feeling of the respondents is that the town as a whole must be considered as having an aesthetic and historic character that should be preserved. Planning and zoning for limited development throughout the town, and the preservation of open space in many areas of town are concepts that are found on nearly every returned questionnaire.

The RIDEM report accurately assesses that: "the scenic or aesthetic value of the traditional landscape lies in its unique scenic resources. People tend to appreciate landscapes which define where they live and make their 'home' or their part of the country special and identifiable from other areas." This sense of place becomes focused when new development is not sensitive to the character and integrity of local conditions, both environmental and built. *It is a basic reason for negative feelings about new development in town.*

The report goes on to acknowledge that: "Because much of what we see as new development today is the same all over the United States and often makes no clear distinctions between rural and urban, people resent the loss of identity to the landscape where they live" and their sense of place. This observation is particularly true for Foster. There has been very little intrusive change in the landscape to date. However, this condition may not continue into the future. We have found that Foster's residents are acutely aware of new development along the town's roads. Suburbanization has already been noted by town residents as a future which is not acceptable. The 1991 Foster Community Survey points out that 26% of Foster residents would leave town to live elsewhere if Foster became more suburbanized. *This is the single largest reason for residents to move from town.* Similarly, Over 30% of the respondents to the 2003 Community Survey answered in a similar fashion. The report warns that: "Citizens and officials must understand that the disappearance of open

space and scenic areas to development is not a process beyond their control."

5.7.7 APPROACH

Managing historic and scenic resources protection is a significant and integral component of this Plan. A primary vehicle for town guidance and regulation of change to the cultural landscape of Foster is the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay District which includes areas of primary historic and scenic value for protection. In addition to this district, the Town will consider future historic district zoning for protection of village character as well as significant individual resources. Educational and cultural heritage activities already underway are encouraged and supported. Economic development activities will be guided by linkages to the town's historic resources and scenic qualities.

The primary goal for this element is as follows:

The cultural heritage of Foster, embodied in historic resources and scenic areas is the basic building block of the quality of life, town character, and is awarded high value by the community. It is also important for its economic development potential.

The following are specific policies for action:

- On-going preservation programs of the Foster Preservation Society will be encouraged:
 - Marking historic resources
 - Educational programs in schools, libraries
 - Genealogical research programs at Tyler Free Library and the cemetery recording project.
- Preservation of Town-owned historic buildings will continue.
- Celebrations such as Foster Old Home Days and the Farmers Clambake will be encouraged.

And:

- All historic resources listed in or eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places and all scenic areas of distinctive and noteworthy quality will be given a degree of protection from the adverse affects of new development.
- The Town will use Foster's significant visual assets as marketing tools for economic development and tax base stabilization realizing the marketability of Foster's scenic assets also entails a commitment

to their preservation and conservation. Assign tourism and commercial recreation (both passive and active) as potential economic development activities for the Economic Development Commission to explore. Emphasize coordination of historical and economic need in the implementation of the Economic Development Commission.

- The Town will consider assistance from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and coordinate with neighboring towns for a regional approach to asset protection and promotion.
- The impact of all new development on town character, scenic and historic resources needs to be assessed continuously. Historic and scenic preservation will be incorporated into overall planning and development activities, particularly economic development activities and the approval of new development projects in or near historic resources, both inside and outside existing National Register listed or eligible districts or scenic areas enumerated in the Rhode Island Landscape Inventory and in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Town agencies, boards and commissions will recognize the contribution of historic resources to the landscape and the character of the town. New planned development and subdivision development will be evaluated for impacts to historic resources and the impact of development upon scenic features. Consideration will be given to historic resources and their environmental and scenic settings. Consideration will be given to scenic areas and their integrity.
- The Town will consider developing a rating system as a component of a performance standard for new developments in historically and visually significant areas. Visual absorption capability measures the potential of the land to visually absorb new development and change. It is an indication of the degree of difficulty by which the land can absorb change or new development without losing its visual integrity. Scenic areas where new development could easily obstruct views (vistas, narrow views, panoramas) may be considered to have a low potential to visually absorb change or new development. This rating system will be incorporated in the proposed site plan review process for the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay Zoning District.
- The Town will include historic farms and scenic areas in the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District which will allow residential compound, cluster-type subdivision development, and planned development (all known as Creative Land Development) for future back lot development and set standards for building placement on all lots including those created by road frontage land divisions.

In such proposals, the Town may require historic farmhouses and farm buildings to be set aside on large parcels, if appropriate, set apart and adjacent to planned open space to retain the historical setting. In addition, the Town will explore allowing residential units to be located within existing historic farm outbuildings such as stables,

barns, etc., provided that these units are counted in the overall density requirement. In this case, the opportunity for some affordable housing units might be created either as secondary units within the principal farmhouse or as small units within a barn or other outbuilding. This type of use has been encouraged in rural conservation districts in England, where the visual and historic character of farms and farmyards have been retained along with the visual character of the surrounding farmland. In fact much of the farmland has been retained in agricultural use adding to the scenic quality of these areas. Moosup Valley should be included in this overlay zoning district.

- Promote planned development approaches to land development in the designated Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay zoning District. Planned development entails designing not only the layout of roads and lots, in this case in a residential compound or cluster-type arrangement, but also designing an overall architectural design which is consistent with the character of wood-clad Foster vernacular farm types.

An example of an overall design might be, within a large (in terms of acreage) project, the clustering of homes into several distinct farm complexes, each one appearing to be a single set of related buildings on its own acreage.

- Complete the scenic road loops which connect with the scenic routes of neighboring towns.
- Implement the recommendations contained in the 1982 **RI Historic Preservation Commission** Survey including the following:
 - Map archaeological sites as constraints to development and apply criteria for their consideration in any new development projects which would be located on them or in close proximity to them.
 - Maintain and continuously update a collection of restoration reference material in the town libraries or at the Planning Office for use of the community with the aid of the Foster Preservation Society.
 - Continue efforts to record information concerning Foster's historic resources, farms, mills, and cemeteries. Provide information to property owners who are interested from the Foster inventory and support the work of the Foster Preservation Society in this regard including their educational programs.
- And promote through the Farmland - Rural Conservation Overlay District and otherwise:
 - unique natural habitat protection.
 - Natural scenery districts.
 - Protection of Foster's brooks, streams, and rivers as well as other

- important and sensitive environmental features.
 - Forestry management.
 - Open Space preservation.
 - Variable lot size requirements.
 - Creative Land Development regulations.
 - Farmland and farm preservation
- Promote Foster's heritage as an economic development tool, including:
 - *Recreational opportunities, tours of scenic areas, area crafts and area bed and breakfast establishments.*
 - Consider location of offices for the Conservation Commission, the Economic Development Commission and the Foster Preservation Society in a surplus town-owned historic building in Foster Center anticipating that this working environment might sponsor collaboration between these groups.
 - Continue promoting walking trails; a linear park system with trail linkages for hiking, birding, horseback-riding etc.; camping centers; industries that make use of historical assets; alternative agriculture that uses local natural resources; greenhouse-nursery production; horse stables and trail systems; riding schools; fish hatcheries and freshwater aquaculture; tree farms; forestry products; saw mills; lumbering; wood crafts and carpentry, furniture making; antiques markets; country stores; orchards; fruit and berry production; vineyards and wineries; sugaring; chickens; eggs; sheep and wool production including spinning; small hydroelectric production; sugaring; bottling; arts and crafts; bed and breakfast establishments and small inns. Each of these individually is connected to the cultural and scenic heritage that is Foster. Together they will bring to Foster a diverse economic base for employment and property tax stabilization without inducing suburban development.
 - Designate scenic roads and enact protective ordinances for stone walls and R-O-W trees. Establish standards for town improvements such as pavement, width and drainage which will not adversely affect scenic road character.
 - The following roads, or portions thereof, should be designated as scenic roads:
 - Boswell Trail
 - Central Pike (Foster/Scituate Line to Balcom Road intersection)
 - Foster Center Road
 - Hemlock Road
 - Howard Hill Road
 - Isthmus Road
 - Jencks Road
 - Johnson Road
 - Kennedy Road

Moosup Valley Road
North Road
Old Danielson Pike
Old Plainfield Pike
Paine Road
Ponagansett Road
Theodore Foster Drive
Tucker Hollow Road
Winsor Road
Walker Road

- Establish scenic standards for new (subdivision or otherwise) roads such that future roads may become scenic roads.
 - Establish set back requirements and buffers as well as variable lot width standards for new development along scenic roads. Establish appropriate standards for the setbacks of historic buildings and resources within historic districts such that the historic setback can be maintained should the historic building be inadvertently damaged or destroyed and a replacement is planned. Under current zoning the building could not be replaced unless the standard 35 ft setback is met or a zoning variance granted. Likewise, new construction within historic districts could not be built at the historic setback line unless a dimensional variance is granted.
 - Control commercial development on Route 6 by zoning for nodal type development, rezoning existing undeveloped commercial areas to residential.
 - Develop Special Area Management (SAM) plans for the historic villages including Foster Center, Clayville, Moosup Valley and Hopkins Mills. Each plan will be tailored to each village and will provide for the preservation and enhancement of each village's unique identity and character.
 - Establish a study commission to assess the acceptability of historic district zoning for the four National Register listed historic village districts in Foster: Clayville, Hopkins Mills, Foster Center and Moosup Valley. The study commission would be appointed by the Town Council to provide advice on the appropriateness of boundaries for such zoning districts, standards and guidelines of review and the possibility of phasing in historic district zoning, perhaps designating one hamlet initially, to be followed by other areas should the zoning prove successful at achieving its purpose. This effort may be coordinated with Special Area Management (SAM) planning for hamlet protection.
 - Coordinate with the Town of Scituate on preservation activities within Clayville.
 - Review and update the Town's sign ordinance to include standards for cottage industry signs, commercial and industrial signs and signage within the historic hamlets.

- Work with the Foster Preservation Society to develop a design guidelines manual for renovations to historic properties and work with the Society to distribute the manual to local property owners.
- Design and distribute interpretive brochures of Foster's cultural landscape. Work with area real estate salespeople to educate them on Foster's heritage and its development goals and policies regarding preservation and conservation.
- Develop tourism management guidelines consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.
- Work with the Land Trust on the acquisition of historic and scenic easements to preserve resources.