Stewards of the Heritage Area • Enhancing Quality of Life through Community Planning and Resource Conservation

Stewardship is fundamental to the mission of the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area. Community planning and stewardship of special resources have a long history in New England and within the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area.

This chapter outlines how partners within Freedom’s Way will work together to achieve stewardship goals – local, state, federal, nonprofit and governmental. Building on an existing, strong foundation, partners will collaborate on a common vision rooted in a landscape approach to stewardship of natural, historic, and cultural resources bound together in a common ecosystem.

Over the years, economic forces have driven dramatic change in land use within the heritage area that has transformed community character while causing important ecological consequences. Perhaps most dramatic were the clearing of land for agriculture in the early and mid-nineteenth century and then farmland abandonment that resulted in the widespread growth of forests throughout the region.

In contrast, today’s challenges stem primarily from metropolitan expansion and suburbanization that have led to increased awareness of the need for active community planning at the local and regional levels and to the development of planning processes and growth management techniques.

Local governments, both towns and cities, are the principal organizing unit for community planning and land use decisions. Since early
settlement, communities have been making decisions about the use of land, balancing ideas about the rights of individual land owners and the interests of the community at large. Local governance and decision making have always remained at the center of land use and community development, whether the communities are urban, suburban, or rural, and vary according to community capabilities.

The tradition of land stewardship within Freedom’s Way has strong roots in New England culture going back to the idea of the commons and the shared use of land for the common good. This tradition blossomed later with the emergence of The Trustees of Reservations (1891), Massachusetts Audubon (1901, among the earliest Audubon societies), and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (1896). Land stewardship has continued to grow through both private initiatives and state sponsored-programs. Today, a strong land stewardship ethic permeates public life in both Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Historic preservation is also a long tradition in both states. In 1910, William Sumner Appleton founded the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, known today as Historic New England. He led the organization for nearly four decades, in the process influencing the course of the entire nation’s drive to preserve historic places. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) was established by the legislature in 1963 to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archeological assets of the Commonwealth, predating by three years the national system established in the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. (New Hampshire’s Division of Historic Resources, like most State Historic Preservation Offices, followed in the years immediately after 1966.)

In Freedom’s Way, the following list provides indicators of the long-term, dedicated pursuit of stewardship in the region’s 45 cities and towns:

- 24.72 percent permanently protected conservation lands (easements, public ownership, and conservation trust ownership) – 158,531 acres – thought to be among the highest levels of permanent protection in the nation;
- 23 local land trusts (20 MA, 3 NH); 9 local, state, and regional land trusts have adopted the Standards & Practices set by the national Land Trust Alliance, with 6 achieving LTA accreditation;
- 3 National Wildlife Refuges (Assabet, Great Meadows, Oxbow, all in MA);
- 1 National Historical Park (Minute Man, in MA);
- 21 state parks, state forests, and other state-level public recreation areas (17 in MA, 4 in NH);
- 13 regional trails, with about 121 miles of existing improved regional trails and rail-trails; there are many more local trails and planned or proposed trails than indicated by these numbers;
- 17 National Historic Landmarks (all MA);
- 337 listings in the National Register of Historic Places (320 MA, 17 NH);
• 61 historic districts (as listed in the National Register; 56 MA, 6 NH);
• 39 local governments with historical or heritage commissions;
• 21 locally designated historic districts;
• 6 Certified Local Governments (3 recognized by the MA Historical Commission, 3 by the NH Department of Historic Resources);
• 16,225 surveyed historic sites and areas (15,584 MA, 371 NH); and
• 155 farms serving the general public, plus 28 farmers’ markets.

4.1 CONTEXT FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING AND LANDSCAPE STEWARDSHIP

This chapter covers community planning and specific areas of stewardship initiatives within Freedom’s Way – land conservation, historic preservation, and agriculture. In practice, land conservation has tended to emphasize natural resources; it often involves outdoor recreation because it provides public access to protected lands. Historic preservation has tended to emphasize built resources. Agriculture has tended to exist separately from land preservation, outdoor recreation, and historic preservation.

Yet, all of these are critical to the place-based identity that Freedom’s Way promotes as one of the strategic priorities explained in Chapter 1. Freedom’s Way emphasizes their similarities and connections and encourages partners in each sector to coordinate their perspectives and actions.

This section of this chapter provides important background for the recommended programs and actions that follow in further sections addressing community planning, land conservation, historic preservation, community enhancement, and agriculture.
4.1.1 Foundation for Planning and Stewardship

The introduction to the enabling legislation for the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area (Public Law 111-11, Section 8006 – see Appendix A) outlines its purposes as fostering close working relationships among government, the private sector, and local communities; assisting these entities in preserving the “special historic identity” of the heritage area; and managing, preserving, and protecting “cultural, historic, and natural resources...for the educational and inspirational benefit of future generations” (a.1-3). Community planning and stewardship are essential to the tasks associated with these purposes.

Enabling Legislation for Planning

With respect to the duties of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association, the legislation states that the Association should assist local government and regional planning organizations in carrying out programs and projects that recognize and protect important resource values (d.1.B.i). The Association is also expected to encourage economic development that is consistent with the purposes of the heritage area (d.1.H).

The legislation requires the heritage area’s management plan to take existing state and local plans into consideration in its development and implementation. This includes recognizing and supporting local planning documents that affect land use, community character, and landscape resources. The management plan is also required to include economic development strategies to conserve, manage, and develop the heritage area (e.2.F) and support economic revitalization efforts (e.2.H.iii). This plan meets these requirements through its support of local initiatives in community planning and enhancement (Chapter 4) and cultural heritage tourism, which stimulates local economic development (Chapter 5).

Enabling Legislation for Stewardship

The legislation requires that the heritage area management plan include an inventory of natural, historic, and recreational resources related to heritage area themes that should be conserved, restored, managed, developed, or maintained (e.2.G). In addition, the plan must recommend
policies and strategies that include the development of intergovernmental
and interagency agreements to protect natural, historic, and cultural
resources; apply appropriate land and water management techniques; and
support economic revitalization efforts (e.2.H).

Historic preservation is specifically emphasized in the legislation,
authorizing the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association to assist partners
(“units of local government, regional planning organizations, and
nonprofit organizations”) in protecting and restoring historic buildings
“consistent with themes of the Heritage Area” (d.1.B.v). It further states
that the management plan is expected to provide a framework for
coordination of partners’ plans so that they “present a unified historic
preservation and interpretation plan” (e.2.C).

Freedom’s Way Mission, Vision, and Goals
The heritage area’s mission and vision as articulated in Chapter 1
emphasize preserving places and creating strong communities. Community
planning is a means through which this work must be addressed, through
preservation, conservation, and educational initiatives to protect and
promote the heritage area’s shared resources and to encourage residents
and visitors to explore the heritage area’s landscape, history, and culture.

The heritage area’s vision sees Freedom’s Way as a convener and catalyst
to help people collaborate in creating strong communities, inspired by the
region’s historical and intellectual traditions.

Goal 2, Landscape and Sense of Place, adopted by the Freedom’s Way
Heritage Association’s board of directors, states:

Engage and collaborate with organizations, interests and
individuals to create a shared regional vision as a living
link across landscapes, history and time.

Goal 3 states:

Promote sustainable communities throughout the heritage
area that celebrate its character, memories, traditions, and
sense of place.
Both goals recognize the interplay of natural and cultural resources in shaping the character of landscapes and communities in Freedom's Way.

The role of community planning and stewardship of important resources is central in meeting these goals. The threats to the character of existing communities and landscapes often stem from inappropriate development and are managed through local community planning and stewardship.

4.1.2 The Freedom’s Way Landscape

The Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is varied and complex, rich in many possibilities for exploration. Woodlands, meadows, wetlands, and waterways are recognized as community assets important to local quality of life.

The extensive woodlands of central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, a consequence of the widespread abandonment of farmland within the region beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, are a principal character-defining feature of the landscape.

Geologically, the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is a landscape shaped by glaciers. As they retreated, the ice sheet left moraines and eskers, landforms of low and varied relief. Soils range in their composition as a result, but they are mostly mixed stones and sands of varying size. Many low-lying areas were once lake bottoms or river courses of silt and drain poorly if at all. There are numerous swamps and kettle holes.

The resulting landscape is one of low hills and uneven topography with intimate outdoor spaces and occasional vistas. The landscape is part of two broad ecological regions, the Gulf of Maine Coastal Plain in the eastern and central portions of the heritage area and the more rugged highlands of the Worcester/Monadnock Plateau to the northwest. Each has distinct variations in its plant communities and ecologies.

Freedom’s Way is drained primarily by three rivers and their tributaries, each ultimately flowing northeast toward the Merrimack River near the border of New Hampshire and Massachusetts.

The largest river in the Freedom’s Way area is the Nashua, once a glacial lake, which flows northeast through the heart of the heritage area and includes its largest area of floodplain and good agricultural soils. Smaller tributaries to the west drain the more elevated highlands.

To the east of the Nashua River is the smaller but significant Concord River and its southern tributaries, the Sudbury and Assabet Rivers, which converge in the town of Concord.

In northern Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire, the northeast-flowing Souhegan River and its tributaries course through Ashburnham and Ashby (MA) and New Ipswich, Milford, and Amherst (NH) toward the Merrimack. Smaller portions of the heritage area are drained by the Shawsheen and Mystic Rivers in the east and Millers River in the west.

The Nashua, Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet Rivers are known for their wetlands and wildlife, each having large areas preserved as National Wildlife Refuges. Twenty-nine free-flowing miles of the Sudbury, Assabet and Concord Rivers have been nationally recognized by Congress as Wild
and Scenic Rivers due to their “outstandingly remarkable resource values,” including scenery, history, literature, recreation and ecology.

In December of 2014, Congress passed the Nashua River Wild and Scenic River Study Act, a precursor to federal designation. Affected sections of the Nashua River are in Massachusetts, including two of its tributaries serving the northwestern parts of Freedom’s Way, the Squannacook and the Nissitissit. Towns through which these rivers pass are Lancaster, Harvard, Shirley, Ayer, Groton, Dunstable, Pepperell, and Townsend. A National Park Service reconnaissance report completed in June of 2014 “confirms that the Nashua River and its tributaries have all the ingredients for a successful Wild and Scenic River Study: highly significant natural, cultural and recreational resources; capable and committed local partners; and local communities with a demonstrated track record of support for conservation of the River,” according to an official.

Freedom’s Way includes both rural and urban landscapes, but the continued growth of metropolitan Boston is changing the mix. Within the ten-mile radius from its southeastern point near Boston to the region within the I-95 boundary, the heritage area is urban and suburban and densely populated, primarily late nineteenth and early twentieth century in character. The region’s still-evident Colonial heritage is represented in topography, early road alignments, historic buildings, and place names.

Between I-95 and the region bounded by I-495, another fifteen miles out, is the suburban portion of the heritage area. Fully developed but retaining much of its natural landscape character, this area has been a desirable place to live within the Boston metropolitan area for many decades.
Freedom's Way National Heritage Area
Management Plan

Existing Regional Trails and Rail-Trails


- Project Study Area
- Town Boundaries

Trails
1. Alewife Brook
2. Assabet River Rail Trail
3. Bedford Narrow Gauge Rail Trail
4. Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
5. Granite Town Rail Trail
6. Mason Railroad Trail
7. Mass Central Rail Trail
8. Minute Man Bikeway
9. Nashua Canal Trail
10. Nashua Heritage Rail Trail
11. Nashua River Rail Trail
12. North Central Pathway
13. Northern Strand Community Trail
14. Reformatory Branch Trail

Map prepared for the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association, Inc.
Map prepared by Heritage Strategies, LLC and Washington College Center for Environment and Society

HERITAGEstrategies

Edit: HERE, Diloimage, Mapcookie, © OpenStreetMap contributors and the GIS user community
4: Stewardship
Beyond I-495 is an ever-widening belt of mixed rural and suburban landscape with woodlands, fields, large landholdings, scattered suburban subdivisions, and many single-family homes. Commuter rail links this area to the inner suburbs and downtown Boston, with commercial centers at many railroad stops. The rural/suburban belt continues to move further north and west into the countryside. Gradually, the extensive woodlands that begin in the suburbs and increase further westward with less and less interruption become dominant and establish the rural character of central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire.

Woven into this pattern are communities established where water power made manufacturing economically feasible. These towns or small cities are densely developed, with urban commercial and industrial cores along rivers and neighborhoods of wood framed residences around them. Most have struggled economically with the loss of their manufacturing base over recent decades. Larger towns have their own local suburbs extending into the rural countryside.

Colonial village centers and the old roads connecting them are evident everywhere, heavily developed but still extant in the urban southeast, pastoral and fully developed in the suburbs, and forested and still functioning in the rural north and west. Changes in land use are clearly visible in remnant features such as stone walls, field patterns, roads, and farm lanes as well as in patterns of successional plant communities that give evidence of previous use. Changes in transportation, as in manufacturing, also triggered landscape changes, as some places grew from railroad connections in the nineteenth century. Other changes stemmed from improved roads in the twentieth century, such as U.S. Route 2 that links many of the heritage area’s communities from east to west.

4.1.3 Inventory of Natural, Historic, and Recreational Resources

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association has assembled an extensive inventory of historic, cultural, and natural resources in a geographic information system (GIS) database. Collected primarily from state agencies and regional planning councils, this GIS database has been used to create the heritage area-wide and town-level maps illustrating this management plan.

A discussion of the Association’s existing GIS database is included in Appendix F of this plan. Because Freedom’s Way is served by two states and multiple regional planning agencies that divide up the heritage area, GIS information relevant to the heritage area is located with several different organizations. By gathering this information into a single database, the Association and partners have the ability to access and study the heritage area landscape as a unified area.

As explained further in Appendix F, GIS inventory layers included in the database include:
• Areas of critical environmental concern
• Community facilities
• Flood zones
• Habitats of rare species and wildlife
• Historic resources
• Land use
• Landforms and topography
• Named places
• Open space and park lands (federal, state, local)
• Prime forest lands
• Protected water bodies
• Regional trails
• Rivers and water bodies
• Towns
• Transmission lines
• Transportation (highways, roads, rail)
• Vernal pools
• Wetland types

A view to the west from Prospect Hill in Harvard, MA, reveals the variety of forest cover in the region through the many different greens of early spring.

(Photo by Patrice Todisco.)
Inventory information may be viewed or displayed in map or spreadsheet formats and at a heritage area-wide level or local level in considerable detail, including satellite background as an option. Owing to the scale of the heritage area (996 square miles), the detail in the maps produced from the inventory to illustrate this plan is necessarily limited by the need to compress the maps into 8.5” x 11” space. (For this reason, final maps produced include one for each of the forty-five towns combining selected data.) Many of these maps were produced at high resolution in portable document format (pdf), so that when viewed on a computer screen, users may zoom in to see more detail. Access to the GIS layers themselves, of course, provides even greater resolution and the ability to query the database. The Freedom’s Way database is not set up with an interface for users without GIS software to interact with the database. However, sources of much of the data, MACRIS and MassGIS and New Hampshire’s GRANIT databases, do offer this capability.

**Natural Resource Inventory**

Demonstrating the natural resource inventory are maps that illustrate this plan concerning ecological provinces and watersheds, rivers and water bodies, and conserved lands. A key natural resource map is “conserved lands” (page 5 or page 138), which identifies conserved and protected lands by ownership. Various federal and state agencies as well as nonprofit, municipal, and private owners control conserved lands. Among these lands are many of the most environmentally significant habitats and landscapes. They are particularly important to Freedom’s Way because they are publicly accessible and may be included in the heritage area’s interpretive presentation.

**Historic Resource Inventory**

With respect to historic resources, in Massachusetts separate data layers identify National Register historic sites, National Register historic districts, surveyed historic sites, and others. Information was mapped by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and is now available statewide in the state MassGIS database. More than 15,584 individual surveyed historic properties are included in the Massachusetts portion of the historic resource inventory. Survey forms for most of these properties may be viewed on the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s MACRIS website. The most interesting aspect of this inventory is the extensive surveying that has been completed in Massachusetts.

For the Freedom’s Way communities in New Hampshire, survey data is not yet available in GIS format at a statewide level. Some local GIS survey data, however, is available through the Nashua Regional Planning Commission. Owing to the variation in the way the data was collected and recorded by the two states, the data is displayed differently in each state (to signal to users that much of the data displayed is not uniform; see map, page 111). To illustrate this plan and the more uniform data applying to both states, a second map simply showing National Register structures and districts and National Historic Landmarks was also produced (page 16).

**Recreational Resource Inventory**

An original inventory of regional trails was completed for this project, involving a search of state and national databases and state websites describing trails and state priorities, displayed on a map provided for this

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**National Historic Landmarks in the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area**

1. Buckman Tavern, Lexington
2. Converse Memorial Library, Malden
3. Ralph Waldo Emerson House, Concord
4. First Church of Christ, Lancaster, Lancaster
5. Fruitlands, Harvard
6. Gropius House, Lincoln
7. Hancock-Clarke House, Lexington
8. Lexington Green, Lexington
9. Old Manse, Concord
10. Orchard House, Concord
11. Isaac Royall House, Medford
12. Count Rumford Birthplace, Woburn
13. Peter Tufts House, Medford
14. Walden Pond, Concord
15. The Wayside, “Home of Authors,” Concord
16. Winn Memorial Library, Woburn
17. Wright’s Tavern, Concord

(All are in Massachusetts.)
plan to illustrate the inventory (page 106). Maps also displaying available inventory data include one showing local and state parks, state forests, and National Wildlife Refuges (page 107). The rivers mapped mentioned earlier in this section provide much recreation, as well. Bicycling is an activity carried out on rail-trails and back roads throughout the region; some regional trails are rail-trails. New Hampshire designates local scenic roads and Massachusetts has the Battle Road Scenic Byway, attractive for both bicycling and driving for pleasure, long one of the nation’s favorite recreational pastimes.

**The Future of the FWNHA GIS Database**

Within its two-state region, the heritage area includes portions of three counties, six tourism regions, six economic development regions, and six regional planning agencies (see Appendix H). None of these programs shares boundaries. For this reason, once the database is in need of updating several years hence – or if new inventory layers customized to the heritage area need to be created from existing data – the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will evaluate whether it should continue to maintain its GIS database for its own use, for partners, and the general public to support further study and research. This will depend on the evolution of technologies for sharing and displaying data across agencies, boundaries, and platforms, and the uses found for the database in supporting the communications and curatorial roles described in Chapter 3. Long-term operation of the GIS database might best be accomplished by partnering with an academic institution or regional planning council with GIS capability and experience.
ACTION: Evaluate the need and benefits of maintaining, updating, and expanding a heritage area GIS inventory database for the use of the Association, partners, and potentially the general public.

*Timeframe and Responsibility: Mid-term action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and partners.*

4.2 APPROACH TO COMMUNITY PLANNING AND STEWARDSHIP

A National Heritage Area, almost by definition, is expected to have a high level of stewardship. As documented in the opening pages of this chapter, the communities within Freedom’s Way have benefited from decades of leadership, planning, and action to protect natural and historic resources and create healthy communities. Indeed, with Walden Pond lying near the
center of the region, it could be said that this is where it all began, since Henry David Thoreau is sometimes said to be the first environmentalist.

With such a foundation, any reader might ask, what can a heritage area possibly add? What results on the ground does the heritage area seek that we do not already have?

Eternal vigilance is the price of preservation and conservation. Buildings and landscapes may be “saved” in one generation, only to fall to the forces of time and nature in the next. Both private and public-trust property owners struggle to maintain land and buildings and raise adequate incomes to support them. Change and development are inevitable – although they need not evolve in such a way that a community must lose existing layers of natural and historic character. Public access to recreation land is a continual challenge – both providing it and managing it, all in the face of ever-growing demand for outdoor recreation.

These are challenges that will never be completely conquered, only managed. If the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area expects to prosper from a place-based identity worthy of promotion over decades to come, part of its work is to make certain that that identity survives and continues to be enhanced for future generations to appreciate.

Henry Ford is reputed to have said, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always gotten.” Freedom’s Way is not meant to replace existing systems – what we have always had – but rather to add strategically to the efforts of others, to create something new. Freedom’s Way envisions a next level of achievement in the never-ending tasks demanded in successful community planning and stewardship.

To meet these challenges, Freedom’s Way adds insight, visibility, standards, and resources. It brings a holistic and regional perspective to resource stewardship and a reliance on teamwork among all partners in the region.

The following approach generally applies to community planning, land conservation, historic preservation, community enhancement, and agricultural preservation. Further details on these approaches are given in sections that follow, addressing each topic specifically.

In every case, Freedom’s Way is not the leader, but the convener and enabler that encourages local, regional, and state action to reach ever-higher levels of achievement.

### 4.2.1 Promoting the Stewardship Message

Among the most important roles that Freedom’s Way can play in regional conservation and preservation is communicating the stewardship message to residents throughout the heritage area.

For the necessary public support to achieve stewardship, the public must first appreciate the heritage area’s resources. Chapters 2 and 3 describe an intensive approach to helping residents and visitors see not only the resources, but the stories behind those resources. The truly new idea that a heritage area brings to the task of stewardship is interpreting (explaining)
the entire region, linking individual sites, communities, resources, and stories into a much larger, more readily perceived whole.

Bringing greater visibility to the region’s needs and actions – including but not limited to stewardship – is also an important task of the heritage area, principally described in Chapter 3. A critical result is the recruitment and cultivation of many more supporters to help address community needs, including donors, volunteers, leaders, trainers, researchers, and more. Freedom’s Way must inspire many to give more and act more, in many ways, and bring much-needed recognition to all contributors.

Communication and interpretation supporting the value of stewardship and promoting place-based identity can be provided through interesting information about various landscapes and places, including their stories, their character, and the people who work on their behalf. Residents should be shown how to read their landscapes by identifying plant communities and historic features and understanding what they tell us about the landscape’s story. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways through heritage area programming.

Communications as described in Chapter 3 should include regular pieces on stewardship in various media formats. Communication on stewardship should be provided with information and updates on stewardship initiatives that are being undertaken within the heritage area.

Interpretation should highlight the individual characteristics and significance of local landscapes and how local landscapes connect to the regional context. Freedom’s Way can use its educational and interpretive programming, discussed in Chapter 2, to advance support for stewardship at the local and regional levels. The Freedom’s Way heritage area-wide interpretive presentation should feature interpretation of local landscapes.

In preparing interpretive plans for towns and villages, local partners should be encouraged to include natural and cultural landscapes that can tell local stories. Local conservation lands should feature interpreted trail networks. Community historic and natural sites should use local stories to illustrate the interpretive themes presented in Chapter 2, informing and educating residents about the historical development of the landscape and its significance to local communities.
Educational initiatives are important ways of connecting all learners, young and old alike, to the landscape and building awareness about stewardship issues. Existing school programming offered by stewardship partners is an important foundation on which to build, as further discussed in Chapter 2. On-site programming takes students out into the landscape for experiential learning through hikes, canoe excursions, and other activities that combine academic learning with sensory experiences. In-school programming combines classroom instruction with outdoor experiences in the local community, connecting learning with the real places students know. If these students remain in their communities as young adults and then become community leaders, their in-depth knowledge of local places and resources would be a boon to the volunteer organizations and leadership bodies working to make stewardship a part of community-building.

Life-long learning opportunities for adults can also support stewardship initiatives. This is especially true if such learning opportunities can be combined with offers of volunteer opportunities that benefit the resource involved, the community and organization seeking its stewardship, and the individual seeking to contribute. Participants learn about the local characteristics of their communities and the programs that can be brought to bear on accomplishing stewardship, and meet others interested in the same issues. From interested learners, therefore, it is possible to build committed stewards.

**ACTION:** Use heritage area communications and interpretive and educational programming to raise awareness about landscapes and historic sites and build support for stewardship initiatives.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Ongoing action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and educational and interpretive partners.

**ACTION:** Encourage life-long learning opportunities that engage the general public in the care of natural and historic properties.

4.2.2 Promoting Teamwork among Stewardship Partners

Many partners within Freedom’s Way are active in implementing stewardship initiatives at the local and regional levels. The heritage area embraces these initiatives, serves as a trusted partner, and provides a forum for partners’ collaboration.

In particular, the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area provides an organizational forum through which regional stewardship partners can work together. The heritage area is a specific landscape area whose combination of urban, suburban, and rural landscapes provides an opportunity to plan and integrate a variety of strategies customized to the conditions within each community but coordinated regionally. The use of watersheds within the heritage area has been of practical importance for planning land conservation strategies, in particular.

Regional stewardship partners within Freedom’s Way include federal and state agencies, regional planning agencies, and nonprofit organizations working at the state and regional levels (multi-state or sub-state). Each entity has its own area of interest and responsibility as well as particular capabilities. A number of governmental and nonprofit partners actively manage large areas of conservation land and historic sites significant to the heritage area, including The Trustees of Reservations and Mass Audubon as well as the states with their state parks.

Because land conservation and historic preservation are specialties each with their own systems of governmental programs and support, more specific descriptions of local stewardship partners are described as appropriate in pertinent sections below.

As a regional forum for networking, Freedom’s Way can convene local, regional, and statewide stewardship partners to assess conditions, review achievements, determine regional strategies, set goals and priorities, and plan actions.

Comprising periodic work sessions, regular on-line communications, and training workshops as appropriate, such peer-to-peer networking will help both regional and local partners stay apprised of the actions and interests of other organizations within the heritage area and its watersheds. They will also be better positioned to learn from and gather support from other partners, and to coordinate their stewardship activities for increased regional impact.

Structures for promoting this teamwork include a heritage area-wide advisory committee of regional, statewide, and appropriate federal partners, described in Chapter 6 and a key mechanism for monitoring overall progress in implementing this plan. Regional networks where partners interested in a variety of issues within portions of the heritage area can support one another are also described in Chapter 6.

Special stewardship networks focusing more specifically on topics of community planning, land conservation, historic preservation, community enhancement, and agriculture – in the entire heritage area or in portions – also will be appropriate. For example, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association should help statewide preservation partners continue
conducting educational workshops for historic preservation volunteers participating on local historical commissions, historic district commissions, planning boards, and other local governing bodies.

4.2.3 Aligning Heritage Area Programs to Support Partners

Freedom's Way will support the activities of local, regional, statewide, and federal partners by aligning its programs to provide assistance where possible.

A logical step in the development of a heritage-area approach to stewardship is needs assessment at the local level. Investigation during the development of this management plan, however, suggests that the greatest need for assessment of local conditions and priorities as an
The implementation step is in historic preservation. Land conservation activity is widespread and encouraged by statewide alliances, state government programs, state and regional nonprofits, and standards set by the national nonprofit Land Trust Alliance. Discussion of needs assessment, therefore, is reserved for the historic preservation section below.

The Association has a number of tools at its disposal to support stewardship directly. For one, the Association may be able to provide direct funding or other forms of support depending upon the availability of resources.

The Association can also align other heritage area programming to support regional and local stewardship initiatives whenever appropriate. For example, heritage area support for place-based in-school science and environmental programming could be targeted to communities where stewardship initiatives are being undertaken.

As a National Heritage Area, the Association, together with its federal partners among the National Park Service and regional National Wildlife Refuges, may be of assistance in identifying federal programs that could be used to further stewardship initiatives.

**ACTION:** Adapt heritage area programming to align with actions and initiatives of stewardship partners where appropriate.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Ongoing action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and regional stewardship partners.

**ACTION:** Create a matching grant program to support stewardship in communities.

4.2.4 Encouraging Holistic Local Planning for Stewardship

Heritage areas are unique in their emphasis on engaging the public in experiencing regional stories that underlie sites, communities, and broader landscapes. **In addition, a heritage area such as Freedom’s Way brings a uniquely holistic perspective to the planning and action needed for successful stewardship across an entire region – it regards both natural and historic resources in a “both/and” kind of way rather than “either/or.”**

Specialists have evolved a term for this approach, the “cultural landscape.” Freedom’s Way itself is a broad and continuously evolving cultural landscape where both natural and historic resources are valued as character-defining features and as physical manifestations of our past. Moreover, individual landscapes within Freedom’s Way are also cultural landscapes, shaped by a combination of natural and human forces over time. The Harvard Forest has been a leader in explaining the interplay of natural and cultural forces in the landscape with studies of the dynamics at play (Harvard Forest’s work is described more completely later in this chapter).

By employing a unified approach to both land conservation and historic preservation (including farm landscapes), Freedom’s Way partners can recognize and work together to preserve key natural and historic features.

Over the years, regional land conservation partners have worked together to further conservation initiatives, especially to address fragmentation of conserved lands. Watershed protection and the establishment of greenways connecting conservation lands have been important subjects of regional focus. Linkages, corridors, and greenways that combine publicly and privately owned parcels begin to create the critical mass of networked landscape necessary for healthy and sustainable ecosystems. Creating such...
linkages and larger areas of protection has been a regional priority and requires sustained, coordinated action by many regional partners working at the state level. Whether they know it or not, their activities support protection of the entire cultural landscape.

Meanwhile, historic preservation has taken an increasingly holistic approach to buildings and related historic resources in their landscape context. The recognition of entire communities as local historic districts and National Register historic districts is part of this broader perspective. Archeologists have contributed to this understanding, as the landscape often provides important clues to American Indians’ use of the land and therefore the location of significant archeological sites that should be protected and studied.

### The Study of Cultural Landscapes

Officially, a cultural landscape is a geographic area including both natural and cultural resources associated with a historic event or activity, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. The National Park Service defines four general types of cultural landscapes, not mutually exclusive: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes (NPS 2014, Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes).

The National Park Service leads the recognition and study of cultural landscapes in the United States and has developed methodologies and guidelines for their identification, assessment, and treatment. These methodologies and guidelines can help partners understand the cultural landscape within Freedom’s Way as it has changed over time. They provide a set of best practices that can help partners recognize and preserve aspects and elements of the landscape significant to a community’s character. In employing this approach, land conservation or historic preservation specialists may discover additional justifications for the protections they seek.

In general, identification and analysis of a cultural landscape’s characteristics and features include:

- Spatial organization and land patterns;
- Views and vistas;
- Topography;
- Natural systems and features;
- Water features;
- Vegetation;
- Circulation;
- Buildings and structures;
- Small-scale features; and
- Other special considerations.

Landscape features are assessed as they relate to the property as a whole. Characteristics and features that contribute to the landscape’s character include:

- Spatial organization and land patterns;
- Views and vistas;
- Topography;
- Natural systems and features;
- Water features;
- Vegetation;
- Circulation;
- Buildings and structures;
- Small-scale features; and
- Other special considerations.
and significance are identified, protected, and preserved whenever possible. New design features are designed in a manner that is compatible with existing features (NPS 1998 & 2009).

Local stewardship partners should understand cultural landscapes within their communities. Their preservation and conservation or open-space plans should embrace cultural landscape methodologies and regard both natural and historic resources as elements within a larger landscape context. Specific landscape areas should be considered potential historic resources where appropriate.

**Cultural Landscapes and the Heritage Landscape Program**

The Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is already well on its way in employing the cultural landscape approach, thanks to its participation since 2006 in the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program operated by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Of the heritage area’s thirty-seven Massachusetts communities, twenty-two have had heritage landscape study reports completed (see Table 4-1).

For both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and statewide partners should prepare a heritage area-wide landscape context report, broadening and further developing the 2006 Historical Context for the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program prepared for Freedom’s Way through MassDCR. The new landscape context report should focus more strongly on Freedom’s Way as a cultural landscape and could help to set priorities for assisting community-level studies.

From this context-setting step, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and New Hampshire statewide partners should provide guidance and support for the preparation of heritage landscape studies in the eight New Hampshire communities using cultural landscape methodologies.

In Massachusetts, those communities that have not already participated should be encouraged to enter the program; existing heritage landscape studies should be updated and further developed on an ongoing basis.

For communities reluctant to undertake such studies for their own sake, but which are attracted to the idea of discovering and presenting their stories, cultural landscape studies could be combined with work on the community-level interpretive planning described in Chapter 2. Thus, participants would not only investigate resources in their own right (and the potential for protecting them), but also review ways to present their stories in association with significant resources. These could include everything from
outdoor interpretive signs and new trails or village walking tours to temporary exhibits in the town hall.

Heritage landscape studies can also provide the basis for further, more detailed preservation and open-space plans, or community comprehensive planning, as appropriate.

Within all heritage area communities, new and updated heritage landscape plans should assess each community’s entire cultural landscape, bringing together conservation and historic preservation interests and considerations. State grants and heritage area grants can support this work.

Ideally, new and updated reports would include town-wide cultural landscape summaries based upon the broadened heritage area-wide context report noted above and providing additional local detail. They would identify the broad landscape character areas that make up a community as well as more specific heritage landscapes that are identifiable resources for protection. They would outline a preservation approach, treatment recommendations, priorities, and long-term action program. Thus, the Heritage Landscape Program can be an ongoing planning tool for each community and serve as a guide for local and regional landscape conservation initiatives.

Including Cultural Values in Land Conservation Projects

An important role for Freedom’s Way in the conservation realm is encouraging inclusion of historical and cultural values in the land conservation process. Many conservation organizations use a point rating system in the evaluation of lands for acquisition or protection. Evaluations tend to include such factors as ecological value, location, degree of threat, and cost. Historical and cultural values are considered less often because they are not perceived as part of mission of land conservation.

ACTION: Use a cultural landscape approach and methodology in the identification, evaluation, assessment, and treatment of communities, landscapes, and sites.


ACTION: Encourage further use of the Heritage Landscape Inventory Program and broaden its approach in melding local preservation and conservation interests and initiatives.


ACTION: In setting priorities for aligning heritage area programs to cultural landscape protection, include a focus on linking corridors and greenways and communications about the need for a networked landscape to sustain healthy ecosystems.

organizations and because funding required for historic buildings is seen as reducing needed funds for land conservation.

With a strong focus on history and cultural landscapes, Freedom’s Way can help local and regional conservation partners understand the cultural history of their properties and how that history should influence their planning and decision making.

Historical, cultural, and archeological values should be considered when properties are being evaluated for protection. Existing condition assessments for conservation lands should include the identification of historic building and landscape features. Treatment plans should include the preservation of historic and archeological features.

Land management should also take note of the successional pathway experienced by a parcel in its transition from “natural” to cultural to “natural” condition. Different pathways result in different types of landscapes leading to different potentials for management and use. Best practices for forest and land management should include historical and cultural considerations.

4.3 PLANNING WITHIN FREEDOM’S WAY

The most significant threat to community character within Freedom’s Way is the continuing expansion of development associated with the Boston metropolitan region into central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Concern about suburban growth and the loss of sense of place was a principal motivation for establishing Freedom’s Way two decades ago. Studies by regional nonprofit organizations have documented this development, supplementing the work of regional planning organizations.

Towns and cities are the key vehicles through which to accomplish the planning, conservation, preservation, and community enhancement intended to result from the federal legislation that created the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area. All actions taken through the heritage area to support communities, however, are likely to involve collaboration with regional and state-level partners, as described previously.

**ACTION:** Take a leadership role in the consideration of historical and cultural values in conservation and land management decision making.

*Timeframe and Responsibility: Ongoing action of local and regional preservation partners and the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.*

### 4.3.1 Local Government Planning

In Massachusetts and New Hampshire, land use decisions are made on a parcel by parcel basis within a planning and regulatory framework established at the municipal and state levels. Local towns and cities are the primary venue for most land use decisions and are the front line for community planning and growth management. State law establishes the planning and zoning authority of towns and also its limits, providing protections for individual property and other rights. A variety of state nonprofit organizations provide information and support.

The distinctive planning environment in Massachusetts and New Hampshire emphasizes local involvement and control. Its strengths stem from communities’ in-depth knowledge of their resources and landscape, residents’ strong interest in the quality of their community, and the extraordinary degree of volunteerism in local community organizations and programs.

Its challenge is in providing local decision makers with the resources they need to be effective. Communities vary in the quality and extent of their planning and in the state-authorized planning programs they choose to implement. There can be limited incentive for communities to work together, and they can be protective of their own ways or even in conflict with their neighbors.

Of the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area’s forty-five local governments, seven are cities. One is in New Hampshire, Nashua; the others are in Massachusetts – Fitchburg, Gardner, Leominster, Malden, Medford, and Woburn. All have a mayor-council form of government except for Woburn, whose elected representatives are called aldermen. City services are operated by various departments (e.g., public works, parks, police), which generally include planning agencies.

The remaining thirty-eight towns operate generally with annual town meetings and three administrative bodies, each elected independently and each with roles in community planning and its implementation. The Board of Selectmen is responsible for overall town administration. The Planning Board reviews proposed subdivision and land development projects and also usually oversees preparation of the local comprehensive plan. The Zoning Board of Appeals reviews proposed changes to, or relief from, zoning regulations requested by property owners. Each entity has its own
distinct area of authority, none reporting to another, and contested decisions of each are appealed directly to the state court system.

The town meeting is the most important source of governing authority, the living embodiment of New England’s tradition of direct, participatory democracy. Practically all matters of general administration and governance are put to a vote in town meeting, which takes place yearly (sometimes more often). Perhaps most important are approval of the town budget and any proposed changes to the town code, both of which directly affect planning. Gaining approval of measures at town meeting requires extensive cultivation and support of local residents. In New Hampshire, a process of ballot voting a month after a non-voting town meeting is used to make final decisions on some issues.

In Massachusetts, towns with populations over 6,000 may use a form of representative town meeting in which a number of delegates are elected to represent the residents of various districts within the town because the population is too large for direct participation. In Freedom’s Way, only Arlington and Lexington use this form.

Cities and many towns are administered by a town manager. Staff sizes for towns working under the town manager vary based upon the size of the community. Most include at least administrative support, police, and public works staff responsible for road maintenance and public infrastructure. For planning, many have small staffs and rely heavily upon volunteers.

Cities and towns tend to have an array of appointed commissions and committees to deal with aspects of local governance, many of which are related to planning. State law authorizes administration over such topics of public interest as affordable housing, water supply, or wetlands. Many state programs are important vehicles for community planning, in some cases providing incentives for public planning and enhancements. A corresponding strength of local planning is that locally appointed commissions and committees provide active centers of support for implementing initiatives at the local level. For example, in both states, Conservation Commissions oversee publicly owned lands, natural
resources, and wetlands; and historic preservation commissions (known by various names) address heritage and historic districts. In Massachusetts, Agricultural Commissions support agricultural planning and activities and Community Preservation Act committees fund public enhancement projects.

Local comprehensive plans are prepared by each community to establish a vision and guide policy. Subdivision and land development ordinances and zoning ordinances are two primary sets of local planning regulations, both authorized and limited by state law. Local ordinances are tools for the implementation of policies outlined in the local comprehensive plan. Additional ordinances may be created to take advantage of other planning mechanisms as inferred through the discussion of commissions and committees above.

Some communities have been highly effective in creating and maintaining local plans while others have struggled with this task due to budgetary restrictions (MRPC 2011: 4).

**Strategic Heritage Area Support for Community Planning**

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area is dedicated to yielding tangible results on the ground in terms of strengthening community character, preserving resources, and promoting a place-based identity. Community planning is a key field of activity for achieving such results. While many of the actions that will be taken over the years affecting community character will be taken by others, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association can have an impact by strategically tailoring its programming to encourage and support actions meeting heritage area goals. **Programs in interpretation, education, communications, and stewardship described in this management plan can support good community planning and strengthen community character.**

Perhaps most important is the preparation of thorough, far-reaching local comprehensive plans, open space plans, preservation plans, and agricultural development plans that are closely coordinated with regional plans. Then, putting in place bylaws and regulatory processes that effectively implement those plans is essential. Plans should address land use that protects community character; preserves natural, historical and cultural resources; and encourages appropriate land and water management techniques.

Encouraging communities to take advantage of state programs such as the Community Preservation Act in Massachusetts is important to the long term goals of the heritage area. Freedom’s Way should encourage and assist partners in local communities in identifying and undertaking projects under the local Community Preservation Act processes that implement heritage area goals. The program permits communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund that supports projects in open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation. Local funding is derived from a surcharge on local property taxes. A yearly distribution from the statewide CPA Trust Fund, derived from a surcharge places on all real estate transactions at the state’s Registries of Deeds, supplements local funding by anywhere from roughly 37 percent to 79 percent (judging by figures provided for heritage area communities).
The fifteen Massachusetts communities in Freedom’s Way (see Table 4–1, page 144) that have established a Community Preservation Fund so far have seen an average of around $10 million each in local and state funding for their projects, inclusive of all towns, from 2002 to 2015 (incomplete year), ranging from a low of $1,556,195 (Littleton) to a high of $36,589,754 (Lexington). The remaining Massachusetts communities should be encouraged as appropriate to establish Community Preservation Funds of their own (a ballot action).

While regional planning agencies should take the lead in assisting communities with these efforts, Freedom’s Way partners should be engaged and provide support and assistance to both the regional planning organizations and local partners. Effective incentives should be developed to encourage communities to undertake good planning and implement projects consistent with heritage area goals.

**ACTION:** Adapt heritage area programming to align with local planning initiatives and processes where appropriate.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Ongoing action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and partners.

**ACTION:** Support and provide assistance to local partners in community planning.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Ongoing action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and partners.

### 4.3.2 Regional Planning

Freedom’s Way partners should actively participate in the development and implementation of regional visions and regional plans as a foundation for enhancing community character and preserving sense of place at the local level. An ongoing activity under constant evaluation, reassessment, and refinement, regional planning is led by state-designated regional
planning agencies with the involvement of local governments, nonprofit organizations, and citizens.

Regional planning agencies, therefore, are key regional partners in Freedom’s Way. Their assistance is the only source of professional planning services available to some communities. The regional agencies also serve as arms of the state to help coordinate planning and growth management between communities on a regional basis. Their assistance helps communities to overcome local insularity that often results from the traditional home rule-based land use control existing in both states (MRPC 2011:4).

Regional planning agencies are not as well funded as they could be, however, and are limited in the services they can provide to communities. Most rely upon fee-for-service projects requested by communities for a portion of the funding needed to support their staffs. They are therefore limited in the amount of visioning and support they can provide and are not always able to provide the level of incentives needed to encourage communities to undertake good planning.

**Regional Planning Agencies**

Both Massachusetts and New Hampshire divide their states into regions, each of which has a designated regional planning agency or commission whose role is to help coordinate and support planning at the local level. Transportation planning is a large part of their mandate, but they also provide technical assistance for other aspects of planning to communities.

Of the five regional planning agencies serving communities within The Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area, three regional planning agencies serve all but four of the forty-five Freedom’s Way communities.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) serves seventeen communities in the southeast portion of Freedom’s Way. The largest of the regional planning agencies serving Massachusetts, MAPC covers 101 local governments, including urban Boston and adjacent communities. MAPC has prepared a regional plan titled *MetroFuture, Making a Greater Boston Region* (MAPC 2008) that provides a vision for its communities. Recently, MAPC completed a follow-up *Strategic Plan, 2015-2020* focusing on near-term goals and objectives (MAPC 2014).

MAPC organizes its local governments into eight sub-regions for planning and local collaboration. Thirteen Freedom’s Way communities within MAPC make up the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination and are described as Maturing and Developing Suburbs. Three communities (Arlington, Medford, and Malden) are within MAPC’s urban Inner Core. One community (Woburn) is within MAPC’s Northern Suburban Planning Council and is identified as a Regional Urban Center.

Other regional planning agencies have worked on similar plans. The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), serving sixteen communities in the central and western portion of Freedom’s Way, prepared the *Montachusett Regional Strategic Framework Plan* to take a regional view of planning for housing, economic development and open space in the Montachusett Region (MRPC 2011). The Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC), serving six of the heritage area’s New Hampshire communities, is currently in the process of preparing a

**Other Regional Visioning**

New England is world-renowned for the quality of its educational and nonprofit institutions, a characteristic related to the region’s historic cultural perspectives on education and community betterment. As one might expect, these perspectives have played out in community planning as well as other interests. Academic and nonprofit institutions within the region have often collaborated in producing vision documents on land use and planning. Several recent efforts have stimulated public dialogue and influenced state and regional planning agencies. Several of the organizations involved in this visioning are partners within Freedom’s Way.

Mass Audubon, based in Lincoln, has produced a vision document titled *Losing Ground, Planning for Resilience*. It analyzes the effects of urban sprawl in the expansion of the Boston metropolitan region and specifically focuses upon the loss of open space. The most recent edition of this publication addresses trends between 2005 and 2013 (Mass Audubon 2014).

A second document, *Changes to the Land, Four Scenarios for the Future of the Massachusetts Landscape*, focuses upon the role of forests in the Massachusetts landscape (Harvard Forest 2014). Through the exploration of four alternative futures, the document advocates for the conservation and active management of forests as community assets and as sources of economic and environmental prosperity. Through the decisions of many local land owners as well as through wise public policies, forests can become more productive and more central to the region’s quality of life over the next fifty years.
A third document, *Wildlands and Woodlands*, addresses the long term conservation and management of New England’s forests, which include most of the conservation lands within Freedom’s Way. (In addition to the document cited, which relates to forests throughout New England, a second volume has been prepared specifically for the forests of Massachusetts.) It was produced by the Harvard Forest of Harvard University in Petersham, MA, which has been a leader in studying historic land use in Massachusetts and New England since 1907. In collaboration with other New England partners, Harvard Forest promotes the region’s return to forest as a great natural asset and advocates for community planning and forest management “best practices” that will further strengthen and enhance this asset.

*Wildlands and Woodlands* proposes a fifty-year initiative of land conservation and stewardship in which much of the region’s woodlands would be voluntarily protected from development and managed for forest products, water supply, wildlife habitat, recreation, aesthetics, and other objectives, and additional wildlands would be established as large landscape preserves subject to minimal human impact. The vision integrates economic prosperity, natural resource conservation, and energy and resource efficiency. It encourages a significant expansion of current approaches to conservation and the engagement of partners across the region to reconnect parceled landscapes, conserve large areas of intact forest, expand conservation finance strategies, and promote resource-efficient land use (Harvard Forest 2010).

A *Wildlands and Woodlands* partnership has been established and is coordinated by the nonprofit conservation organization Highstead in Redding, CT, in association with the Harvard Forest. Partners do not necessarily endorse all aspects of the Wildlands and Woodlands vision, but they work together toward conservation success. Leading conservation partners within Freedom’s Way are part of the initiative, including Mass Audubon, the Nashua River Watershed Association, the Massachusetts
Department of Conservation and Recreation, The Trustees of Reservations, the Trust for Public Land, and the New England Forestry Foundation.

A fourth document, *A New England Food Vision*, is a collaboration of a number of academic advocates in the fields of food systems, land use, and environmental policy. It illustrates a future in which food nourishes a social, economic, and environmental landscape that supports a high quality of life and is described further in the last section in this chapter on agriculture.

All quite recent, these four vision documents demonstrate the high quality of current thought about creative and productive management of the region’s future related to community character and land use. All four contribute to public dialogue about local and regional planning, and all align with the mission, vision, and goals of the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area. They are also well known by local planning and landscape interests and are influencing regional planning in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Partners within Freedom’s Way should participate in the public dialogue spurred by vision documents such as these. The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association should embrace this discussion, use its communication skills to engage local partners, and work with planning and nonprofit partners to move viable ideas toward implementation. Freedom’s Way could be a laboratory for visions such as these. The Association should seek out the coalitions behind these visions and encourage them to become partners within the heritage area.

**Strategic Heritage Area Support for Regional Planning**

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and regional partners can help frame regional planning issues and challenges for local communities in ways that relate to the heritage area’s strategic priority of promoting place-based identity. They can coordinate among regional planning
agencies and nonprofits serving different portions of the heritage area and can be instrumental in ensuring that cultural, historical, and natural resource values are accorded visibility in regional planning.

The Association’s ability to communicate with local and regional partners is an important asset in raising awareness about regional planning. Through its network, the Association can encourage local partners to become engaged in regional planning initiatives to strengthen local input, provide local partners with a regional perspective, and foster collaboration among communities toward common goals.

To this end, it is important that support for regional planning be provided from the state and federal levels. The regional planning agencies in Massachusetts and New Hampshire are dependent upon funding from their states. If visionary regional planning is to occur, the regional planning agencies must be adequately funded so they are able to undertake their important work. Regional planning is critical to strengthening the regional economy as well as enhancing quality of life.

The implementation of regional plans, however, occurs primarily at the local municipal level through good local planning and decision-making. Incentives are needed to encourage local governments to participate in implementing regional plans in accord with their communities’ interest. These can take the form of funding for local planning, technical assistance, and funding in implementing local plans consistent with the regional framework. Regional planning agencies play a critical role here as well, and funding to provide incentives for local implementation should be provided through these agencies.

As trusted sources of information and analysis for federal, state, and local officials and policymakers, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and other regional heritage area partners should work with the regional planning agencies in shaping state and federal policy.
Freedom’s Way partners can provide an important voice in advocating for funding at the state and federal levels for regional planning and implementation. As a National Heritage Area, Freedom’s Way can work with other national partners to help bring federal resources to regional planning initiatives. Successful implementation of regional plans also requires advocacy to revise laws, regulations, policies, distribution of resources, and other public decisions that will advance community interests.

**ACTION:** Collaborate with regional planning agencies, local governments, and nonprofit partners in pursuing a regional vision for community planning and growth management that promotes place-based identity, protects special resources, strengthens local economies, promotes sustainability, and enhances local quality of life. Work with these partners to synthesize regional visions within the framework of a cultural landscape approach.


**ACTION:** Support regional planning agencies as they undertake regional planning and provide local planning services, technical assistance, and incentives to local governments consistent with the heritage area’s mission.


**ACTION:** Advocate for state and federal policies and resources in support of regional and local planning.


### 4.4 Land Conservation in Freedom’s Way

Land conservation is a primary vehicle for preserving natural and cultural resources within Freedom’s Way. Both central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire enjoy strong, active, and highly visible programs for land conservation and management within the heritage area at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. Active regional nonprofit organizations provide leadership for much of this effort, but it is at the local level that the most comprehensive work is being accomplished.

Twenty communities within the Massachusetts portion of the heritage area are served by local land trusts that own and manage conserved lands within their boundaries. In New Hampshire, five local land trusts serve multiple towns. Regional and statewide organizations are also highly active in preserving local lands in both states.

Overall, almost 25 percent of the total land area (994 square miles) within Freedom’s Way is presently conserved through public-trust land ownership and conservation restrictions. This is thought to be among the highest levels of permanent protection in the nation, compared to such
highly protected locations as the Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area in Colorado (an area the size of Rhode Island), the Maryland portion of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and New Hampshire as a whole.

Much of the conserved land within the heritage area is forested, and wetlands are an important resource type within its glaciated landscape. Land conservation and the preservation of open space have received broad public support at the local level. Through its partners, the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area can be a positive force in supporting land conservation and the preservation of natural and cultural resources.

4.4.1 Context for Land Conservation

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire were predominantly agricultural. Throughout the Colonial era, towns were established with cooperative, interdependent local networks supporting a farm economy. In the early nineteenth century as a national and international market economy expanded, farming began to change, with increased production for sale in distant markets, a shift toward specialization in crop production, and regional competition.

By the mid-nineteenth century, New England’s poor glacial soils proved no match for the levels of agricultural production achieved in other regions. The development of a national railroad network accelerated regional competition, and New England’s agricultural decline increased. Widespread abandonment of farmland took place across New England in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Successful farm operations adapted to and specialized in orchards, dairy, beef, and other products. The amount of land returning to woodland began increasing, and today, much of the region is forested. Conservation of forested lands at the local level is widespread and well-supported.

Since the 1960s, state incentives have encouraged and helped fund conservation actions such as the purchase of land and conservation restrictions on land. Local land trusts have been established in towns, often by local citizens, to provide a vehicle for grassroots conservation initiatives. State and national regulations to preserve wetlands contribute to the amount of preserved lands and help establish networks and linkages with the goal of creating ecologically sustainable areas of conserved lands.

In addition to the extensive amount of locally conserved lands, large areas of wetland and forest are preserved by the state and federal governments as state parks, state forests, and national wildlife refuges (as much as 8 percent of land area within the Massachusetts portion of Freedom’s Way). State and regional organizations such as Mass Audubon and the Nashua River Watershed Association actively work on large-scale conservation initiatives, often in collaboration with state and federal agencies, as well as advocating for and facilitating land conservation and best practices management at the local level.

4.4.2 Recreational Use of Conserved Land

Recreational use of conservation lands helps promote conserved sites as community assets for the benefit of local residents and builds support for continued conservation initiatives.
The region’s conserved land provides extensive opportunities for public recreation, especially trail development. Scenic driving, bicycling forested back roads, and paddling on the region’s rivers are also popular activities and are promoted by the regional visitor bureaus. A number of communities within Freedom’s Way have created local trail networks on their publicly owned lands, and some have created rural walking trails along public roads. The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission and Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition have mapped trails on protected lands in towns throughout the Montachusett region, promote trail usage, and are working to establish regional trail connections.

The stories of the land, both natural and cultural, can be read in the land. Current educational, interpretive, and recreational programming helps tell the landscape’s story to residents and visitors. As described in Chapter 2, the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area can highlight, enhance, and broaden this effort.

4.4.3 Encouraging Conservation at the Local Level

Local governments in Massachusetts and New Hampshire have preserved thousands of acres of land through local initiatives over the past five decades. As shown on the map illustrating the inventory of conserved lands in the Freedom’s Way GIS database, Massachusetts communities have conserved more land than any other owner group within the heritage area. According to the inventory 7.34 percent of the total land area within Freedom’s Way is conserved by Massachusetts local governments. In Massachusetts, this compares to 6.68 percent by state agencies, 5.73 percent by trusts and private owners, and 1.49 percent by the federal government.

Land conservation at the local level has been encouraged by state policies and programs, including matching funds for the acquisition of land. In Massachusetts, the land conservation incentives that were introduced in 1960 gained great momentum in the 1970s. They continue today with programs such as the Community Preservation Act, discussed in the preceding section on community planning.
Funds and matching state funds support open space and recreation as well as historic preservation and affordable housing initiatives.

Communities are therefore key partners in land conservation. Most communities have created local land trusts or community conservation commissions, or both, to acquire and manage key properties. Regional conservation partners assist these local groups. The advantages of having local leadership at the forefront of conservation efforts are (1) the knowledge, commitment, and local support they bring to the task, preserving the landscapes they know and love, (2) the amount of conservation activity that can take place with many local actors in many local places, and (3) access to local funding through appropriations and private contributions.

Freedom’s Way partners will continue to encourage and support land conservation at the local level. Regional conservation partners will assist local organizations in conceiving, planning, organizing, and consummating land purchases and purchases of conservation restrictions. Technical assistance can be provided where needed. Depending upon the availability of resources, grants may be offered for planning, appraisals, legal fees, and other costs associated with land acquisition.

Freedom’s Way should include local partners in developing regional conservation strategies, often focusing strategies upon communities where conditions and activities are ripe. In addition to acquisition and protection, land management should be an ongoing part of the conservation initiative.

**ACTION:** Support land conservation initiatives of local governments and other local conservation partners across the heritage area.


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**Local Land Trusts Serving Freedom’s Way Communities in New Hampshire**

- Monadnock Conservancy
- Nichols-Smith Conservation Land Trust
- Nissitissit River Land Trust
- Monadnock Community Land Trust
- Souhegan Valley Land Trust
providing advice, technical assistance, and planning grants for land management at the local level.

4.5 HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN FREEDOM’S WAY

Freedom’s Way is uniquely positioned to provide much-needed regional support in historic preservation, a focus of the heritage area’s mission. While other regional organizations have programs supporting land conservation and community planning, no other regional organization is committed to the specialized field of historic preservation within the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area.

One key way this support will occur is by integrating historic preservation and other stewardship activities and retooling how historic preservation is practiced within the heritage area.

Massachusetts and New Hampshire have well-developed historic preservation programs administered by their State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs) and supported by statewide nonprofit organizations. Preservation Massachusetts and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance are statewide nonprofit organizations that provide information, guidance, and technical assistance to local communities. They also serve as advocates at the national, state, and local levels. They have a unique and important role in their ability to engage with and provide guidance for local historic preservation interests, but are also limited by funding and staff capacity.

Historic preservation initiatives are most effective when implemented at the local level. Freedom’s Way communities have a long and proud history of local preservation activity. During the management planning process, however, it became apparent from observations contributed by focus group participants that in recent years towns and cities have participated in the programs to varying degrees and that overall participation is uneven. The SHPOs and statewide nonprofits have limited budgets and capacity. Guidance, support, and technical assistance are an ongoing need as expressed by both statewide and local partners.

4.5.1 Preservation Planning Context

Communities within Freedom’s Way, and New England in general, convey a strong sense of historical identity. This is due in part to the central place that historic town and village centers play within the community landscape and in part to the preservation of iconic historic buildings, many dating from the Colonial era.

In general, historic buildings are highly valued and widely recognized by local residents and most communities have initiated some level of historic preservation inventory, awareness, and protection. The need for preservation awareness relates to resources from the region’s entire history, including but not limited Colonial-era resources. Community character and quality of life is closely linked to the treatment of historic building and landscape resources.

Information on local historic resource surveys is kept in local government files and compiled at the state level by the SHPOs, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources (DHR). MHC has an accessible online database called the
Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) that provides access to most of the surveyed historic resources within Massachusetts communities and to their survey forms. In New Hampshire, DHR is working on implementing a similar database.

MHC has recently mapped these surveyed resources in the MassGIS database and has been working to verify the locations of surveyed resources community by community. In both states, examination of local historic resource surveys reveals that gaps in comprehensive local surveys and the updating of older surveys are an ongoing need. Each state has a limited amount of funding and staffing available to assist communities with the survey of resources within their boundaries.

The Historic Inventory map from the Freedom’s Way GIS inventory database shows available information on surveyed resources in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, totaling 16,225 historic sites and areas (15,584 individual survey sites in Massachusetts and 371 in New Hampshire). Determining the status of historic resource surveys for all Freedom’s Way communities in both states and setting priorities for completing surveys remains to be done.

MHC and DHR are designated as State Historic Preservation Offices within the two states. The federal government administers a nationwide historic preservation program through the National Park Service in accordance with requirements of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended (ACHP 2008). The act established a process through which federal impacts on historic resources could be appropriately managed in collaboration with states. It also provided funding and programs through which each state can offer services and encourage historic preservation initiatives at the local level.

The Robbins House (ca. 1823) is a two-family home built for the son and daughter of slavery survivor and Revolutionary War veteran Caesar Robbins. This house was originally located on a small farm at the edge of Concord’s Great Field, in an area where a handful of self-emancipated Africans and their families established their homes. The last African American occupants left the house in the 1860s, and in the winter of 1870-71 the building was moved to Bedford Street. In 2011 the Drinking Gourd Project moved the house to land adjacent to the North Bridge parking lot, where it is prominently displayed for Concord visitors. It will serve as an interpretive center for Concord’s early African history. Support for the project has come from the Town of Concord’s Community Preservation Fund.

(Text courtesy The Drinking Gourd Project, Inc.)
These federal programs have become the framework for grassroots historic preservation initiatives nationwide. In addition, Massachusetts and New Hampshire have created complementary programs at the state level for local communities (see sidebars and Table 4-1). In combination, these state and federal programs are a highly effective means through which local communities can preserve and manage historic resources.

In the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area, local participation in federal and state historic preservation programming varies. A preliminary assessment of information gathered by MHC and other sources concerning preservation-related programs and bylaws adopted by communities indicates that communities could avail themselves of additional preservation tools. For example, in Massachusetts, only fifteen of the heritage area’s thirty-seven communities have established Community Preservation Funds; nineteen participated in a first round of heritage landscape inventories in 2006.

Historic preservation is most effective when undertaken at the grassroots level through initiatives within individual communities. Due to limited capacity, dependence upon volunteers, and turnover of personnel at the local level, an ongoing need exists for information, guidance, planning, support, and other forms of technical assistance for local communities. State agencies are limited by funding and staff resources. Regional planning agencies can provide support but do not generally take an active role in historic preservation programming.

### 4.5.2 Freedom’s Way as a Regional Preservation Partner

A critical gap in the preservation planning framework in Massachusetts and New Hampshire can be addressed by Freedom’s Way. In both Massachusetts and New Hampshire, the statewide preservation organizations and SHPOs are unable to serve adequately the large number of local governments statewide – 312 towns and 39 cities in Massachusetts, 221 towns and 13 cities in New Hampshire. Unlike land conservation where regional conservation organizations provide support and assistance to local conservation entities, there are no regional historic preservation organizations providing support and assistance to the local level. Freedom’s Way can help fill this role by collaborating with statewide partners, being a convener for regional collaboration among community partners, and providing resources for implementation.

This section describes actions to advance local historic preservation; the following section describes the best practices to be advanced. Together, these sections are designed to provide a “framework for coordination of [existing State, county, and local plans] to present a unified historic preservation and interpretation plan” that is required in the legislation establishing the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area” (e.2.B-C).

The philosophy of the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area is that historic preservation and interpretation must be approached holistically, in concert with well-rounded resource conservation and economic development based on heritage resources.

The required “historic preservation and interpretation plan” is to be integrated with a cultural landscape approach that allows coordination with other stewardship activities also discussed in this
chapter, addressing community and regional planning, land conservation, community enhancement, and agriculture, and in Chapter 5, concerning cultural heritage tourism. Moreover, Chapter 2’s interpretation plan and Chapter 3’s curatorship plan are important elements to combine with the following framework. Those chapters explain how the public is to be engaged in the discovery of historic resources and their associated stories, and enlisted in promoting the place-based identity to which the region’s historic resources are so critical.

Element 1: Collaborating with Statewide Historic Preservation Partners

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will develop ongoing relationships with the two statewide nonprofit historic preservation organizations, Preservation Massachusetts and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. The goal is realization of comprehensive, ongoing historic preservation implemented by local communities with regional guidance and support.

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will work with Preservation Massachusetts and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance to identify needs, develop strategies, and organize a regional historic preservation strategy, coordinating with the two State Historic Preservation Offices, the Massachusetts Historical Commission and New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. The regional program will make use of such statewide preservation tools as survey methodologies and databases and will encourage local communities to participate in programs managed by the statewide and SHPOs. Technical assistance and funding support will be sought through the SHPOs as appropriate.

Working with the two statewide nonprofits and the SHPOs, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will also maintain relationships with regional planning agencies active within the heritage area and will request their assistance in incorporating the regional preservation program into their planning activities.

Element 2: Assessment and Ongoing Feedback

As a first step, the Association will consult with SHPOs and the statewide nonprofits to learn about their experiences in working with heritage area communities and the kinds of issues that have arisen. In addition, working with these partners, the Association will undertake a heritage area-wide survey and assessment of stewardship activity at the local level, including but not necessarily limited to historic preservation. This assessment will help to ascertain the general level of stewardship capability within heritage area communities and to determine the kinds of support that are most needed. For historic preservation, such an assessment will refine the matrix of preservation tools presented in this plan (Table 4-1, page 144). It should review the extent to which historic resources have been surveyed, historic preservation planning has been undertaken, and existing preservation programs and tools are being used; and gather information about specific issues that communities face.

Over time, as the program grows and local relationships evolve, local partners could contribute to an ongoing understanding of the heritage

Historic Preservation Programs of the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources

- Archeology
- Architectural History
- Certified Local Government Program
- Funding Tips
- Historic Preservation Review and Compliance
- National Register of Historic Places
- New Hampshire Historical Marker Program
- New Hampshire First State House Project
- New Hampshire’s Five Year Preservation Plan
- New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places
- Preservation Easements
- Project Archeology
- SCRAP – State Conservation and Rescue Archeology Program
- Survey and Inventory
- Tools for Preserving Farms and Barns
- Storm Recovery and Disaster Planning Grants for Historic Properties
- Conservation License Plate Grant Program
- State Arts Council Grant Information
### Table 4-1 Community Stewardship Tools in Use in the Freedom’s Way National Heritage Area

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**SOURCE:** Compiled by Heritage Strategies, LLC, 2015
area’s needs by preparing a preservation self-evaluation, summarizing needs, capabilities, and local priorities with respect to historic preservation, or by responding to on-line surveys, or both. Participating communities could also develop and share yearly priorities and work plans. Ultimately, the program would build up and maintain a file with background information on each participating community.

A brief summary report of findings from the preservation assessment can be posted online by the Association for partners’ review. Based upon the assessment, the Association and statewide partners would refine overall priorities and strategies for the heritage area’s regional preservation program.

The Association could provide a brief, yearly state-of-preservation report to the Board, statewide partners, and local preservation partners. The process would allow an assessment of progress, adjustment of priorities, adaptation of programs, and introduction of new initiatives. Periodically, MHC and DHR could help to coordinate information and activities with each state’s five-year historic preservation plan (a requirement for the SHPOs to receive federal funding).

**ACTION:** Undertake a general heritage area-wide survey and assessment of stewardship activity and the needs of historic and other resources at the local level within the heritage area.

**Timeframe and Responsibility:** Short-term action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and statewide nonprofit partners with local preservation partners.

**ACTION:** Collaborate with statewide historic preservation partners and regional planning agencies in organizing, developing, and implementing a regional historic preservation strategy.

**Timeframe and Responsibility:** Short term and ongoing action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and nonprofit statewide historic preservation partners.

**Element 3: Creating a Historic Preservation Peer-to-Peer Network**

In undertaking and following up with the preservation assessment, the Association should build relationships with interested communities. Because of the number of communities and the complexity of issues, it will take some time to build substantial relationships; it is not expected that a connection will be developed with every community or evenly among the communities that participate. Targets for interaction would be local preservation organizations that express and demonstrate interest, including historical or heritage commissions, historic district commissions or historic architectural review boards, and planning boards.

A critical step will be to encourage peer-to-peer regional networking, creating an informal historic preservation group of historical commissions, historic district commissions, and other preservation organizations within the heritage area. The Association and statewide partners could provide an online forum in which network participants can
communicate with each other, sharing information and case studies. They can also work together to obtain training where participants from different communities can meet, share experiences and ideas, and provide support to each other. The network could be modeled after the existing Western Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition.

**Element 4: Building Relationships with Interested Communities**

The Association and its statewide partners will work with local partners in towns and cities to encourage grassroots historic preservation activities through education, consultation, guidance, online resources, technical assistance, and funding where possible. Best practices to be advanced are described in detail in the following section.

The assessment in Step 2 and networking in Step 3 are critical to documenting need and gaining insight from local participants most interested in building their knowledge and obtaining help.

**ACTION:** Encourage local networks of organizations engaged in multiple stewardship disciplines, built around the concept of protecting community character and the cultural landscape, through which these organizations can communicate with each other and share information and experiences.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Short-term action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association with local partners.

**ACTION:** Create one or more historic preservation networks providing a forum through which preservation organizations can communicate with each other and share information and experiences.


**Element 5: Aligning Heritage Area Programs to Support Local Historic Preservation**

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association will align its programs to address the identified needs of local preservation partners, including a matching grant program to support communities’ preservation planning and action. This regional program will be coordinated with state historic preservation grant programs but may also develop new initiatives for grant funding based upon need and priority. The early focus is expected to include surveys, preservation plans, cultural landscape initiatives, and community interpretive planning. The matching grant program in particular might be designed to encourage local partnerships among multiple community groups who should be engaged in historic preservation, including those interested in interpretation, land conservation, and trails.

 ACTION: Encourage local networks of organizations engaged in multiple stewardship disciplines, built around the concept of protecting community character and the cultural landscape, through which these organizations can communicate with each other and share information and experiences.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Short-term action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association with local partners.

**ACTION:** Create one or more historic preservation networks providing a forum through which preservation organizations can communicate with each other and share information and experiences.

Based on documented needs, over time it might be possible to collaborate with statewide nonprofits and SHPOs in developing and funding a circuit rider program for the heritage area to address historic preservation.

**ACTION: Develop an ongoing program of support and technical assistance to communities for historic preservation.**

*Timeframe and Responsibility: Mid-term and long term action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and nonprofit statewide partners.*

**Element 6: Supporting Local Preservation Action**

As discussed in Chapter 3, advocacy for stewardship policies and programs at the state and federal levels will be a responsibility of all regional partners. In terms of local preservation advocacy, Freedom’s Way partners and the Association should support historic preservation advocates at the local level to the extent possible. Independently, local and regional partners should consider and decide when their individual organizations are able to support and assist other partners on local preservation issues.

On behalf of Freedom’s Way as a whole, the Association’s Board of Directors should decide when it is appropriate to support and assist local preservation partners advocating on preservation issues. Freedom’s Way should establish a reputation as a strong, professional, and principled advocate for historic preservation within the region, working toward consensus among all interests on behalf of residents and resources. Involvement in advocacy can involve considerable opportunity costs – no matter what the level of its funding might be at any given point in the years ahead, the Association will not have the resources to do everything it needs to be doing, and must choose carefully.

**ACTION: When appropriate, assist local partners in advocating for historic preservation.**

*Timeframe and Responsibility: Ongoing action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and partners.*

**4.5.3 Best Practices for Local Preservation**

In addressing historic preservation needs within the heritage area, it is important that basic preservation tools be in place at the community level as a foundation for ongoing work. Freedom’s Way statewide partners and the Association will encourage and support local partners in developing, expanding, and improving preservation best practices.

Local historical commissions, historic district commissions, and planning commissions address land development and change on an ongoing basis. The program of technical assistance and support led by the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and its statewide partners as outlined in the preceding section may assist these local partners.

Among critical needs identified during management planning are (1) updating and maintaining historic preservation inventories; and (2) undertaking historic preservation plans. Best practices for
implementation of preservation plans are also important, including incorporation of historic preservation into community comprehensive plans and adoption of preservation tools and incentives (with participation in state and federal preservation programs).

**Historic Preservation Inventories**

A historic preservation inventory (or survey, considered interchangeable with “inventory” here) identifies significant historic resources that contribute to the character of a place and establishes a sound basis for decisions on providing additional investments, incentives, and protections in stewarding that place’s historic landscapes and structures.

Local preservation partners should work on expanding and updating their inventories. Many across the region are old and were not prepared in accordance with current professional standards. In many communities, fine early surveys were undertaken that focused only on concentrations of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century buildings or were conceived with other limits (primary buildings, not outbuildings; or architecturally distinctive structures, not vernacular ones). Surveys have not been undertaken across the entire area of every town, and they do not consistently identify significant resources from every era. Best practice is to insure that buildings fifty years or older are evaluated, which means that structures built in the 20th century all the way up to 1965 may now be included. Thus, even current surveys are never “complete” with the passage of time.

Moreover, many surveys predate the development of guidelines recommended by the National Park Service for describing cultural landscapes (discussed in an earlier section). In addition, new technologies have made it easier to assemble information across broad areas like Freedom’s Way, from GIS mapping to more recent developments in surveying using special software and handheld equipment. The newer technologies have the further benefit of providing great potential for making appropriate use of volunteers under professional guidance. Well-informed volunteers who participate in surveys can provide additional helping hands for further public outreach in support of incorporating historic preservation into local planning, policies, and investments.

Finally, the practice of undertaking topical “context studies” at the state level means that in many cases additional background research is now available to provide an improved basis for evaluating individual buildings and districts for inclusion in surveys and such follow-up steps as listing them in the National Register of Historic Places.

An inventory should be conducted in accordance with survey methodologies and research provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources. The resulting information should be included in the GIS databases of the statewide organizations, regional planning agencies, and Freedom’s Way.
In conducting the heritage area-wide preservation assessment discussed above, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and its statewide partners should develop a sense of inventory needs and priorities among participating communities. This step would help to outline a long-term program for completing historic preservation inventories community by community (and phased within communities if resources are limited) and determine how a phased inventory program across the heritage area might be performed and funded over time. State survey grant programs and the heritage area matching grant program are possible sources of funding.

Interested local partners must lead in organizing and conducting historic resource inventories, with heritage area and statewide encouragement and support. They should consider joint surveys with neighboring communities to develop common themes and evaluate shared resource types, toward the goal of multiple-community cooperation in managing resources and promoting cultural heritage tourism.

Finally, just as with the heritage landscape study process described earlier in this chapter, for communities reluctant to undertake inventories for their own sake, but which are attracted to the idea of discovering and presenting their stories, preservation inventories could be combined with work on the community-level interpretive planning described in Chapter 2. Thus, participants would not only investigate resources in their own right (and the potential for protecting them), but also review ways to present their stories in association with significant resources. These could include everything from outdoor interpretive signs and new trails or village walking tours to temporary exhibits in the town hall.

**ACTION:** Work to expand historic preservation inventories in heritage area communities.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Ongoing action of local preservation partners with support from statewide partners and the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.

With care, older buildings can continue to serve their original purposes even as community needs grow and change. This fine building constructed in 1902 for the Ashby Free Public Library in Ashby, MA, has a respectful large addition on the rear. The matching color of the new brick façade complements the original, yet it is clearly modern. Ashby’s local historic district helped to create the successful community dialogue that led to a functional, sensitive expansion, including greater accessibility and a community meeting room. For a town with a population of just 3,114 in 2013, it is a remarkable achievement.

(Photograph by A. Elizabeth Watson, AICP, Heritage Strategies, LLC.)
In the best of all possible worlds, a community particularly interested in exploring its resources and possibilities across the board might choose to undertake all three possibilities for assessment – landscape study, preservation inventory, and community interpretive plan.

**Local Historic Preservation Planning**

Historic preservation plans identify local preservation issues, identify opportunities for developing and enhancing preservation tools and programs, and demonstrate how historic preservation will be incorporated into community planning processes and procedures. Although many planners may wish for an updated heritage landscape study or preservation survey before proceeding to preservation planning, a more strategic approach is to document such inventory needs and plan for addressing them over time, once the plan is complete and as funds become available.

Because the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association is committed to a cultural landscape approach, and in the spirit of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act, it is appropriate to consider adapting standard historic preservation planning methodology into a more holistic approach to stewardship planning as a whole. The following, as a part of the elements highlighted for the Congressionally required “historic preservation and interpretation plan,” focuses on historic preservation planning. An action below, however, notes the possibility of encouraging more integrated planning for natural and cultural resources, and community character as a whole.

The heritage area should encourage local preservation partners to prepare and update historic preservation plans, taking advantage of existing state grant programs for preservation planning. Best practice is to prepare a historic preservation plan as an element of a local comprehensive plan.
Among other benefits to this approach, local comprehensive plans are updated periodically in accordance with state requirements, thus keeping preservation planning up to date.

Preservation planning allows for a process of community education and participation. Ultimately, it lays the foundation for decisions about whether and how communities will choose to participate in state and federal historic preservation programs managed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources and other state agencies and make use of other preservation and growth management tools available under their respective state laws. Many communities may already participate in some or even all of these programs; a preservation plan allows a comprehensive review of the possibilities, best practices, and strategies for improving local action over time, in phases.

Among possibilities to be reviewed for adoption during preservation planning are tools generally found in various forms of enabling legislation passed in one or both states:

- The Certified Local Government Program (a federal program available in both states through the SHPOs; it provides grant funding to local partners whose historic preservation policies and practices meet certain standards);

- Community Preservation Act (available in Massachusetts, providing funding for historic preservation, and described on pages 126-27);

- Cultural District Program (MA; under consideration in NH) – providing a range of benefits in planning, marketing, planning, and funding).

Old mills make excellent candidates for adaptive use as offices or multi-family housing. Tax credits may be available for sensitive rehabilitation and major maintenance of commercial buildings such as this beautiful building housing Nypro, a plastics manufacturer, in Clinton, MA.
• Heritage Landscapes Inventory Program (MA – described in an earlier section in this chapter);

• Designation of local historic districts or landmarks (which then allows regulation of demolition and changes to locally valued historic resources);

• Local designation of scenic roads;

• Encouragement of investment in rehabilitation of historic structures, which can benefit from federal tax credits and, in Massachusetts, state-level tax credits; and

• Incorporation of historic preservation review processes during subdivision and development.

As a part of a program of technical assistance and support, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association should encourage statewide preservation

ACTION: Work to expand historic preservation or stewardship planning in heritage area communities.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Ongoing action of local preservation partners with support from statewide partners and the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.

ACTION: Encourage communities to participate in state and federal historic preservation programs managed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources and other state agencies, and make use of the wide variety of preservation tools available under state law.

Timeframe and Responsibility: Ongoing action of local preservation partners with support from statewide partners and the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.
partners as they provide guidance, assistance, and support in the preparation of preservation plans; and also provide encouragement as communities implement improvements in the use of preservation tools. This includes advising communities in assessing their needs and priorities and identifying and sharing best practices, methodologies, and models for good preservation plans and other programs. In the heritage area’s matching grant program, priority could be awarded to proposals that aim for incorporating historic preservation plans into comprehensive plans and other community policies affecting historic resources.

4.6 ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CENTERS

In addition to providing support for planning, land conservation, and historic preservation in heritage area towns and cities, over the long term Freedom’s Way can encourage communities to enhance their commercial centers. This would not only improve quality of life for residents, but also enlarge communities’ appeal for the cultural heritage travelers to be drawn to Freedom’s Way, as explained in the next chapter on cultural heritage tourism. The heritage area’s communities offer both the multiple experiences – from trailheads to museums – and the services that visitors expect and need as they move from place to place throughout the heritage area.

Possibilities for two such community enhancement programs are outlined here. They may work separately or in combination. On an ongoing basis, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association and partners should assess needs and priorities to evaluate how programs such as these might benefit communities and the heritage area and which might be the most effective use of heritage area resources. It is expected that needs, priorities, and

The Community Preservation Fund of the Town of Acton supported preservation of the Women’s Club building (ca. 1829), first constructed as a church, but converted to a two-unit residence in 1839. The Women’s Club (founded 1915) converted it to its headquarters in 1924. The club’s website states, “It is believed that during the time of the ‘Underground Railway’ the clubhouse was one of many old homes in Acton which had secret rooms and tunnels and served as ‘stations’ helping the slaves on their way to freedom.”
Preliminary Idea: A “Mill Town” Revitalization Initiative

While a “mill town” is not precisely definable (even Colonial villages had mills), the downtown revitalization process described here is more applicable to communities with more commercial development and larger populations that grew as the Industrial Revolution spread in the nineteenth century. Historic mill towns could be defined and promoted by Freedom’s Way as visitor destinations or part of thematic itineraries.

Planning under this concept should use Main Street strategies along with preservation and adaptive reuse tools. It should include business development strategies focusing upon downtowns as regional gathering places with restaurants, cultural attractions, services, events, interpretation, public art, and walkable downtowns linked with residential areas and trail networks. Communities should seek to join the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Cultural District Initiative, in which communities meeting program criteria may be promoted and receive matching state grants. (Currently, only Concord is so designated.)

The National Trust for Historic Preservation developed the National Main Street Center nearly forty years ago as a strategy to revitalize traditional downtowns. Since then, more than 1,600 historic communities have adopted its Main Street Four-Point Approach®:

- **Organization:** Developing and sustaining an effective downtown management organization.
- **Design:** Improving the appearance of downtown buildings and streetscapes through historic preservation.
- **Promotion:** Marketing the district’s unique assets to bring people downtown.
- **Economic Restructuring:** Improving the downtown’s economic base by assisting and recruiting businesses and finding new uses for underused space.

The Main Street model is a volunteer-driven economic development effort to manage a downtown, and always includes local business leadership. Communities gain experience and capacity year after year in learning to
work with partners and raise money, understand the local economy, promote the business district, and enhance and restore historic buildings. This is a program that can last indefinitely in a supportive community.

Many states operate programs that support Main Street initiatives at the local level, although Massachusetts and New Hampshire do not. Nonetheless, many communities in both states manage successful Main Street programs.

The National Main Street Center offers eight guiding principles:

- **Comprehensive**: Successful long-term downtown revitalization is complicated and cannot be accomplished through any single project.

- **Incremental**: Small projects and simple activities lead to a more sophisticated understanding of the revitalization process and help to develop local skills to undertake increasingly complex projects.

- **Self-help**: Nobody else will save Main Street. Local leaders must be determined to make their commercial area successful. Success depends upon the involvement and commitment of the local community.

- **Public-private partnership**: The public and private sectors have a vital interest in the economic health and physical viability of the downtown. Each has a role to play and must understand the other’s strengths and limitations to forge an effective partnership.

- **Identifying existing assets**: Commercial districts need to capitalize on assets that make them unique and different. Every district has unique attributes, such as distinctive architecture or a pedestrian feel. They create a local sense of belonging – what Freedom’s Way calls place-based identity – and differentiate each district and each community.

- **Quality**: Every aspect of the program must emphasize quality. This applies equally to each element, from storefront design to promotional campaigns to educational programs to organizational performance.

- **Change**: Main Street can make skeptics become believers. Changes in attitudes and the ways that things are done are necessary to improve the district’s economic conditions. Public support for change builds as the Main Street program grows in its work.

- **Implementation**: Actions create confidence in the program and increase local involvement. Frequent and visible changes remind the community and downtown’s stakeholders that revitalization is under way, beginning with small steps and building on those successes.

While a heritage area-wide program supporting downtown revitalization is conjectural at this time, the matching grant program to be established by Freedom’s Way could be targeted at any time by interested communities seeking to raise funds to support such an initiative.
Preliminary Idea: A Village Center Initiative

A Village Center Initiative would feature preparation of master plans for the management, treatment, and enhancement of historic village centers. The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association would collaborate with regional planning agencies and other state and regional planning partners to establish guidelines and criteria for village center plans. Depending upon local interest and need, plans for historic villages could range from simple exercises addressing limited short term goals to comprehensive planning initiatives addressing long term issues.

The plans would emphasize a ‘walkable village’ concept that encourages public use and incorporates public amenities, interpretation, public art, wayfinding, services, and other enhancements in village centers. Plans would identify needed public improvements. Implementation might include production of village maps, publications, website information, and web applications as appropriate using heritage area graphic formats and identity. Historic village centers could be promoted by Freedom’s Way as visitor destinations or part of thematic itineraries.

Village Center Initiatives would be led by local partners in accordance with a process outlined by the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association in association with its partners. If professional assistance is needed, funding might be sought from the heritage area, regional planning agency, state agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other sources depending upon the specific needs and goals of the village.

A Village Center Initiative might be structured in accordance with the following steps:

- Local partners in a historic village express interest in preparing a master plan for their village by organizing local participants into a village planning group and outlining their goals and objectives for the process. A public meeting should be held to obtain input and support from local residents and public officials.
- Develop a scope of work for the planning process. Establish a budget and obtain commitments of funding sources.
• Outline a public participation process in association with the scope of work.

• Obtain professional planning services to manage the planning process either through a regional planning agency, nonprofit partner, or private consultant.

• Undertake an existing conditions assessment. Identify boundaries for the master plan. Review historic resource inventory information and determine whether surveys need updating. Identify historic landscape features and characteristics in accordance with cultural landscape planning methodologies. Identify issues and needs. If development pressure is an issue within the village, assess properties for their capacity to accommodate new development without impacting historic character.

• Present findings and initial recommendations to local partners and the public for discussion.

• Based upon the input received, prepare draft recommendations for the treatment of historic features and for enhancement of the village. Outline preservation and adaptive reuse strategies tailored to the characteristics of the village. Create a ‘walkable village’ plan identifying walking routes, destinations, and suggested infrastructure improvements. Outline an interpretive program that presents the village story to residents and visitors using authentic places. Identify desired village enhancements. If development pressure is an issue within the village, prepare guidelines for appropriate new development in locations where it can be accommodated. Describe implementation steps and work products. Identify the roles of various local partners in implementing the village plan.

• Review the draft village master plan with local partners and residents.

• Prepare the final village master plan and begin phased implementation.

While a heritage area-wide program is conjectural at this time, the matching grant program to be established by Freedom’s Way could be targeted at any time by interested communities seeking to raise funds to support a village master plan.
programs will evolve over time, perhaps community by community, and new ideas for special programs will be developed. As with programs described in the preceding sections of this chapter, community enhancement programs should be designed to take advantage of state programs and the support of state and regional partners. For the heritage area, they should especially reinforce the interpretive programming described in Chapter 2.

The two ideas outlined on pages 154–57 focus on historic villages and industrial towns, two distinct types of community centers within Freedom’s Way with differing needs and potential. They are offered as preliminary analysis demonstrating the combination of best practices already seen in some communities, adapted to help meet economic development purposes expressed in the Freedom’s Way legislation (d.1.H; e.2.F; e.2.H.iii):

- **Villages:** Chapter 2 of this plan suggests that historic villages within Freedom’s Way consider preparing interpretive presentations using the heritage area’s Partnership Media and Exhibit Program and that the interpretation of historic villages could be a thematic presentation across the heritage area. Building on this suggestion, a broader initiative for historic villages could explore the planning issues and needs of participating villages and possibilities for their enhancement.

- **Downtowns:** Downtown areas can be featured as service centers for residents and visitors, with restaurants, shops, services, and attractions. Frequently featuring historic mills, these are urban growth centers, already focal points for infrastructure improvements and development initiatives in regional planning.

For both types of communities, Freedom’s Way can encourage and support planning initiatives. It can also promote them as visitor service destinations as part of the Freedom’s Way experience and its heritage area-wide interpretive presentation. Finally, it can encourage physical or
interpretive linkages through encouraging communities to explore scenic byway connections, planning for regional wayfinding signage, or creating smart-phone applications that help visitors and residents find their way around the entire region to enjoy these places.

Communities that recognize themselves in these descriptions and the potential benefits of such approaches are encouraged to begin working toward such programs for themselves, enlisting the heritage area and partners as allies in their experimentation. The heritage area’s matching grant program is one potential source of funding, with or without a formal community enhancement program. Ultimately, such “demonstration communities” could help to develop an approach replicable across the heritage area.

In the early days of implementing the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in Massachusetts and Rhode Island (http://www.nps.gov/blac/planyourvisit/valley-sites.htm), a focus on the small towns along the river with programs like those described here proved highly popular. Today, the investment made there well over two decades ago has proven its value many times over.

**ACTION:** Develop and implement special programs for communities that address local interests and unmet needs while implementing the strategic heritage area-wide objective to promote place-based identity.

**Timeframe and Responsibility:** Mid-term and long-term action of the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association with local governments, local business organizations, regional planning agencies, and state, regional, and nonprofit partners.
4.7 STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURAL TRADITIONS

Agriculture has played a central role in New England’s history over the centuries and has been a defining element of the Freedom’s Way landscape. Today, agriculture in Freedom’s Way features a rich mix of dairy farms, orchards, market gardens, livestock farms, and other specialty endeavors. Farm stands, community supported agriculture, community gardens, and farm attractions are valued by both local residents and visitors. Many communities have preserved farmland as part of their approach to land conservation.

As with community planning, land conservation, and historic preservation Freedom’s Way can catalyze support for regional agriculture. It can help to develop a regional vision for agriculture within the cultural landscape approach by bringing stakeholders together, spreading the word, and supporting phased action at the local level.

4.7.1 Agricultural Context

The story of the Freedom’s Way landscape is largely the story of the changing agricultural traditions of heritage area communities. Native people within the region foraged for local foods for thousands of years before European contact and farmed on the productive soils along rivers and in areas left by the glaciers. Native agricultural sites attracted the first Puritan settlers in the Freedom’s Way region because they were ready for cultivation.

During the Colonial era, settlers developed an ecologically sustainable system of mixed husbandry focused on local subsistence and exchange with neighbors. Production was closely tied to the characteristics and capabilities of the land, and only a small surplus was sent to regional markets.

The view from Linden Row Farm, Hollis, NH.
(Photo by Patrice Todisco.)
In the early nineteenth century, an agricultural boom took place as farmers shifted to commercial production. Large areas of land were cleared, reaching a peak after mid-century. Well over half the landscape of southern New England was farmland. Extensive low-intensity land use (mostly in pasture) maximized production in butter, cheese, beef, and wool for the rapidly growing urban areas that were developing industrially. The extensive clearing was not ecologically sustainable, and by the late 1800s abandoned pasture land began returning to successional growth all across the region.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, agriculture intensified, but on reduced areas of land. Farmers transitioned to the specialties of milk, poultry, produce, and fruit, increasing overall production for the urban market but only in selective food products. After 1910, food production in New England began to decline with the rise of oil-driven agriculture and long-distance transportation, which undermined the regional specialties.

The amount of land devoted to farming in New England has continued to decline from about 17 percent in the early twentieth century to the present figure of about 5 percent today. High land costs and competition from large-scale agriculture elsewhere has reduced overall food production in New England. Today the region produces about half of the dairy products, less than half of the vegetables, and only a small fraction of other foods consumed by New Englanders.

Farming persists in New England and Freedom’s Way, with strong public support as well as the active support of government, land trusts, and farm organizations. Local agricultural operations are promoted as visitor attractions across the landscape. Interest in local foods and the popularity of regional community supported agriculture (CSA), market gardens, and orchards have been a mainstay for agriculture in local communities and...
indicate the potential for sustained agricultural production for the future (Kelly et al. 2014: 4-7; and Foster et al. 2004: 62-90).

4.7.2 A Vision and Plan for the Region’s Agriculture

Agriculture in Massachusetts and New England is the current subject of visionary thinking and planning by the academic community, agricultural organizations, and regional planning entities, similar to other visioning described earlier in this chapter.

During the summer of 2014, collaborators from several of New England’s leading universities and other organizations prepared a vision for the future of agriculture in New England, building upon the region’s history and the nature of its land. The resulting report, A New England Food Vision (2014 Kelly et al.), analyzes food needs and capabilities in New England and proposes how sustainable agriculture can be developed to strengthen the social and environmental landscape and enhance the quality of economic life over the next fifty years.

A New England Food Vision is the culmination of several years of work by collaborators under the initiative Food Solutions New England, a network effort to engage in dialogue, learning, and decision-making about agriculture and a regional food system. It proposes changes in food production, distribution, and consumption reaching from the most rural areas to the densest cities – across the entire food system – with changes in land use consistent with historic patterns and the capacity of the land.

The collaboration envisions an increase in agriculture throughout New England over the next fifty years, from 5 percent to 15 percent of land area, focusing on increased production of foods that grow well here. The New England envisioned would grow most of its vegetables, half of its fruit, some of its grains, and all of its dairy, beef, and other animal products – about half of the region’s food needs.

The vision projects a healthy, attractive, and bountiful landscape balancing forests, fields, suburbs, and cities and enhancing environmental quality.
envisions a region in which 70 percent of the land remains forested, with adequate room remaining for clustered “smart growth” and green development. It would be implemented through the independent decisions of property owners, consumers, and communities working together toward a common vision in the best New England tradition.

In tandem with this work, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), a regional planning agency for Boston and its suburbs and a regional partner within Freedom’s Way, is coordinating preparation of a Massachusetts Food System Plan. With funding from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, MAPC is contracted along with a team of project partners on a statewide food system plan with specific goals and an action plan to make the vision a reality.

In preparing the plan, the project team is working with food system experts, including producers, business owners, food system stakeholders, and consumers to conduct a comprehensive assessment to identify the current strengths of the Commonwealth’s food system and opportunities for improvement. The project looks at all components of the food system, as well as overarching areas, such as employment opportunities, public health improvements, and climate resiliency.

The plan is being developed in both a statewide and a New England regional context. With a focus on strengthening the food system within Massachusetts, the plan will complement food system planning efforts underway in neighboring states and New England as a whole. The plan is to be completed in September 2015 (MAPC 2014).

Freedom’s Way partners have the opportunity to participate in the development of the statewide Massachusetts Food System Plan described above. Along with other heritage area partners, such as other regional planning councils and agricultural communities, the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association should stay apprised of policies and recommended actions as they are developed and consider how the heritage area could serve as a model in regional and local implementation.

Possibilities for long-term implementation include engaging communities and strengthening agriculture, building upon existing assets. The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association should consider establishing a network to engage with farmers and farm organizations and become informed regarding their interests and initiatives. The heritage area should promote and support regional farms in collaboration with state agencies and regional visitor bureaus. The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, through its MassGrown program, and the New Hampshire Department of Agriculture are key statewide partners.
Freedom’s Way partners could prepare a regional assessment within the context of the forthcoming statewide plan in order to develop priorities, strategies, and a practical, phased action plan that can be implemented by partners and communities in a coordinated manner over time. Communities’ ordinary planning could include an agricultural assessment as part of the planning undertaken by communities, assessing existing farming and the capacity of the land to support additional farming over the long term, with technical support from universities and state agencies.

The Freedom’s Way Heritage Association can align its programs to support communities in the conservation of agricultural lands as part of local land conservation programs. Communities whose agriculture could become significant to their economies could be encouraged to undertake local agricultural development planning, which is like economic development planning, but focused on agriculture. (Ordinary economic development usually is not so focused, tending to assume agriculture is healthy or that it is too specialized or too small a part of the overall economic picture to deserve attention.) Such a specialized plan would help

**ACTION:** Participate in the development of a regional vision and plan for agriculture in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and New England.


**ACTION:** Work toward implementation of the vision and plan for food systems and agriculture within Freedom’s Way communities.

*Timeframe and Responsibility:* Long-term action of regional planning councils, local governments, and agricultural partners with support from the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.
local communities identify ways to strengthen their existing farms and introduce new farming initiatives within their locales in accordance with the regional vision and local plan.

### 4.7.3 Support for Regional Farms

Freedom’s Way is home to a variety of agricultural operations, especially along its southern area in the towns of Stow, Bolton, Lancaster, and Sterling and in the Nashua River Valley. Many are publicly accessible and are promoted as regional attractions by the regional visitor bureaus. About forty farms, farm stands, and orchards serving as regional visitor attractions are identified in Chapter 2 of this plan on interpretation. These farms are important economic assets and are valued by their communities.

Freedom’s Way recognizes the importance of regional agriculture and over the years has conducted workshops and created programming to support it. Freedom’s Way should continue this work and enlist partners in a coordinated program of consultation and promotion.

Farms and farm stands should be promoted as cultural heritage tourism attractions in heritage area marketing materials. Farming, farm issues, and local foods can be featured regularly in heritage area communications.

Today’s farms should be part of the Freedom’s Way experience and be incorporated into the heritage area-wide interpretive presentation. The story of New England agriculture is integral to the story of the Freedom’s Way landscape. Existing farms should be recruited to help tell that story. Local farms can also be included in community interpretive presentations, as well as in educational programming.

Interpretation of the agricultural story should culminate in the role of agriculture today and the vision for the future. It should highlight and encourage the public interest in community supported agriculture and local foods. Visitor service areas should promote restaurants that feature local foods and recipes.

**ACTION:** Support farming and public interest in local foods. Promote farms, farm stands, and orchards as agricultural attractions for visitors. Incorporate farms into heritage area programming and the heritage area-wide interpretive presentation.

**Timeframe and Responsibility:** Ongoing action of local and regional partners and the Freedom’s Way Heritage Association.