

## **CHAPTER VII HISTORIC RESOURCES**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

A plan for Litchfield's future would not be complete without a look into the past. This chapter was prepared recognizing that historic resources provide a critical influence on the Town's character and quality of life. In terms of planning, historic structures and cultural and historic sites should be considered an integral part of the community's environmental resources. Like other attributes in the community, cultural and historic resources are nonrenewable. Preservation opportunities missed today may never be available again.

The goal of this chapter is to promote awareness of Litchfield's extensive cultural history, including ways to preserve sensitive cultural and historical resources in order to foster continued understanding and enjoyment by future generations. Preserving areas and institutions within Litchfield that have cultural value to the Town also provides for the continuation of unique aspects of local character. Low-density settlement patterns, agriculture, stick built buildings, stone walls, ancient history sites, forests, streams and sweeping views of these features are considered valuable community assets by residents. As such, it is appropriate to promote the protection of significant historical resources and identify ways that future development can be designed to fit-in and enhance this historical pattern of development best described as rural in nature.

Litchfield's river environment attracted prehistoric populations for thousands of years. The area has been actively studied by archaeologists and is considered one of the most important archaeological locations in New Hampshire. 17<sup>th</sup> through 19<sup>th</sup> century settlers similarly found the floodplains flanking the Merrimack River well suited for agriculture and trade. European settlers left their mark through farmhouses and agricultural buildings. Historic resources that remain along Rt. 3A help define the town's rural character. Often taken for granted by those accustomed to the appearance of the 3A corridor, the farmhouses, farm buildings, town center and open space along the road present a strong image to tourists and residents of neighboring communities - some of whom live in areas that have lost their traditional appearance in recent years in the face of rapid development. The preservation of manmade resources and cultural heritage is fundamental to the retention of a sense of place, identity and continuity in Litchfield. It is the responsibility of the community to plan a program of historic and cultural protection based on local needs and desires. This chapter provides: 1) background on important historic and archaeological sites in Litchfield; 2) a discussion of preservation techniques and tools; and 3) a series of recommendations for future planning and development..

### **B. HISTORIC RESOURCES**

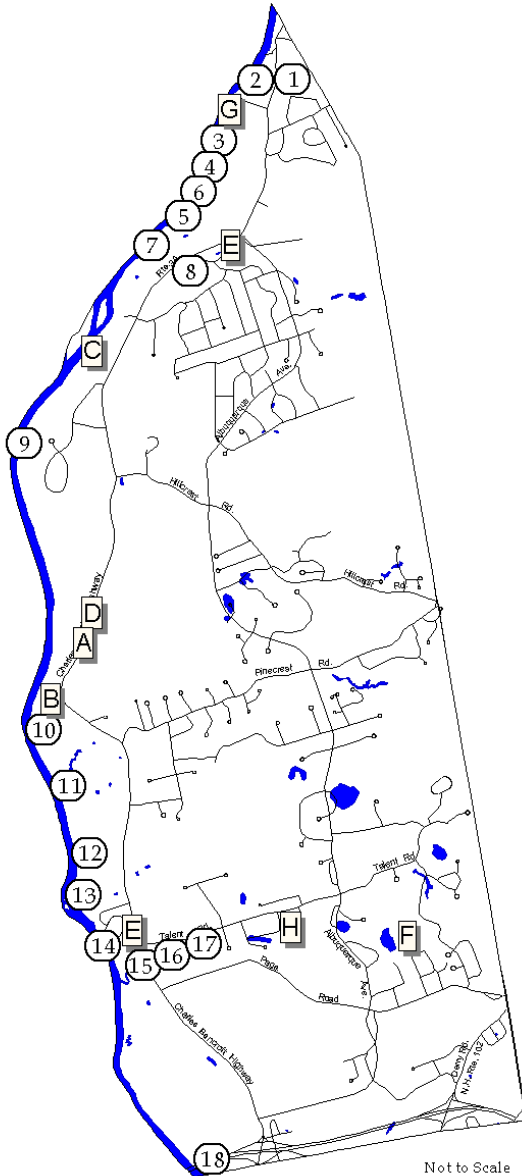
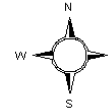
#### **1. Significant Archaeological Resources**

Litchfield is the home of some of the best archaeological sites in the state and has held the attention of amateur and professional antiquarians and archaeologists for over 100 years. Indigenous cultures were supported by the riverfront environment, which provided readily exploitable resources, including fish, migratory birds and diverse flora and fauna. Following two small excavations in Litchfield in the 1970s by the New Hampshire Archaeological Society, archaeological investigations in the early 1980s located more than 30 Indian sites, many intact, yielding artifacts ranging from 9,000 to approximately 300 years old. Artifacts included pottery, and bow and arrow hunting tools associated with the Penacook Indians. The largest number of artifacts, including hearths, hunting and fishing tools, food processing tools and pottery are about 4,000 years old, dating to what is known as the Archaic Period.

Map VII-1. Archeological and Historical Sites

Map VII-4

Archeological & Historical Sites  
 Litchfield, NH



Site Type	ID Number	Site Name
archaeological	1	Indian Desert Site
archaeological	2	Three Flakes Site
archaeological	3	Litchfield Site
archaeological	4	Maticook East Bank
archaeological	5	Moore's Fall Site
archaeological	6	Two Feathers Site
archaeological	7	Colby Farm Site
archaeological	8	Hogancamp Site
archaeological	9	Rodonis Field Site
archaeological	10	Litchfield Island Site
archaeological	11	Nesenkeag Site
archaeological	12	Thebodeau Site
archaeological	13	Campbell Site
archaeological	14	Smolt Site
archaeological	15	Leary Spring Sites
archaeological	16	Ford Sand Bank
archaeological	17	Chase Brook
archaeological	18	Danford Archaeological District
historical	A	Town Ceter
historical	B	Thornton's Ferry
historical	C	Reed's Ferry
historical	D	Old Stage Rd
historical	E	Site of Old Grist Mills
historical	E	Site of Old Grist Mills
historical	F	Site of Old Brickyards
historical	G	Moore's Falls Locks Remains
historical	H	Poor House

Map Legend

- ① Archeological Site ID Number
- Ⓐ Historical Site ID Letter

Source: NRPC, April 2000

Map VII-1 illustrates Litchfield's archeological sites, which have been investigated, as well as other historic sites in the Town. Two sites in particular, the Thebodeau Site, north of Chase Brook, and the Danforth Archaeological District in south Litchfield are considered especially significant. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Circumferential Highway project<sup>1</sup> concluded that these sites are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places because they contain information important to the understanding of prehistory along the lower Merrimack Valley and possibly New England. Many of the sites are characterized as small, temporary sites where tool manufacture and hunting predominated. While the river was indeed important for prehistoric settlement in Litchfield, brooks or streams may have been even more attractive, but have not been studied in as great detail. For additional information on Litchfield archaeological resources, see the discussion below under *Protection of Archeological Resource Areas* and/or contact the NH Division of Historical Resources in Concord.

## **2. Significant Historic Structures**

The Litchfield Historical Society is a source of information on the history of the Town over the last 350 years. The group possesses written local histories, photographs, and members may also be able to provide oral histories. While there is not always physical remnants of earlier eras, the Society can provide understanding of key events and personalities in the community, historical context, as well as the vicinity or approximate location of potential historical sites. According to Historical Society officials, European influences started in the 1650's with early records showing that Litchfield was then a part of Dunstable, Massachusetts. Both sides of the Merrimack River were granted to William Brenton in a piece of land that became known as Benton Farm. Chief Passaconaway of the Penacook Indians lived in a Litchfield settlement at least part of the year around this era. The first European settlers were Frank and Robert Darrah. In 1728, sixteen proprietors divided up the Brenton Farm Land.

A visual survey of town bears out that the greatest concentration of significant historic resources is within the 3A corridor. The main public road connecting Litchfield with Manchester and Hudson was laid out in 1734 and its alignment has changed little, as evidenced by the proximity of buildings to the road. Running the length of town, this road is the spine along which homes and services were historically oriented. Litchfield differs from other towns in the region in its extreme linear development, contrasting with the typical New England town common or village concept.

Virtually all construction prior to the 1930s and 1940s took place in the 3A corridor. The structures along the road offer a panorama of styles, ranging from First Period and Georgian of the late 17th century to the Victorian modes of the late 19th century. Sturdiness and simplicity are the key features that characterize local architecture. With the exception of several brick houses, clapboard structures predominate. Humble Cape Cod structures mix with more substantial 2-1/2 story houses with five bay facades.



One of the oldest surviving structures in town is believed to be the Alves House. Although it has been greatly altered, its roofline still suggests its First Period origins. Research indicates it was built in 1766, but some timbers are believed to date back to a late 1600s house previously on the property. More substantial and more intact late 18th Century houses include the Jean House and Sordillo House, the latter known as "Century Farm." Many of the earliest houses display little ornament; decoration is usually reserved for the doorway. Fanlit doorways, such as that on the Sparks House, are typical of the Federal style and are relatively rare in Litchfield. Judging from the number of cornerblock doorway moldings, inspired by the Greek Revival style, there was considerable building activity in the 1830s and '40s, a period at which Litchfield's commercial trade was at its height, prior to

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<sup>1</sup> Army Corp of Engineers, *Nashua-Hudson Circumferential Highway Final Environmental Impact Statement*, Volume I, 1993.

the point when the negative impact of the railroad passing by Litchfield in favor of Merrimack was felt. Buildings constructed during this period and retaining features of the period include the Goffe House, Robinson House, Besse House and Chamberlain House.



The old town hall was built in 1851 from parts of an older Meeting House, which was built across the road from where the building now stands. A shift in the course of the Merrimack River during the early 1800s forced the dismantling of the original Meeting House. The adjacent Community Church was built in 1844. These two structures, together with the town Library, Cemetery and half a dozen surrounding residences constitute the only real town center in Litchfield. In the vicinity of this historical town

center area were also the locations of Thornton's Ferry, where people received passage across the River, and the colonial period muster grounds where regional troops assembled for the Crown Point campaign. According to an interview with a Historical Society official in spring 2000, the muster grounds are identified by State Officials as one of two colonial era muster grounds in New Hampshire that remain in an undeveloped condition.



By the Civil War, new building in Litchfield reached a standstill. Today few buildings date to the late 1800s, although the mix of architectural elements which characterize the town buildings today are important evidence of the town's evolving history and contribute significantly to its character. The significance of these changes over time should be recognized and respected, but any attempt to create an earlier appearance would be a misrepresentation of local history. Good examples of buildings representing a cross-section of styles dating to the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century include the Jefferson House, the Colby House and alterations to the Bergeron and Leary Houses.

Other than the town center, there are few significant concentrations of historic resources in Litchfield. Rather, individual historic structures and cellarholes indicating previous areas of habitation are scattered throughout town, particularly along the old River Road (now NH 3A) including some small concentrations of human activity by the sites of former dams, mills and brickyards. A listing of some of the town's more important historic structures and sites is illustrated in Map VII-1, above.

Scenic views of farmland, forests, wetland and the river valley go hand in hand with the town's built historic resources, and should be considered significant cultural resources in their own right. Open spaces as well as buildings should be considered landmarks worthy of preservation in Litchfield. In addition, a unique natural resource mentioned in Henry David Thoreau's journals were glacial sand dunes in the vicinity of Pinecrest Cemetery.

Transportation has played an important role in development of the community. One important physical reminder of the early industry in the community is the lock remains at Cromwell Falls on the Merrimack River. These locks enabled expanded canal based trade along the Merrimack River, to which Litchfield businesses supplied lumber, bricks, and other agricultural products. In addition, there are also physical remnants from the early 20<sup>th</sup> rail corridor that was used to provide trolley service between Manchester and Nashua from 1907 to 1931. This corridor is still intact in many places and could provide a resource for future recreational trail development.

### **3. Tools for Historic Preservation**

In order to insure that Litchfield retains historic assets in the future, the various vehicles for preservation available at the private, local and federal level are discussed below.

#### **4. Historic Resources Survey**

Preservation through documentation is a basic, essential and noncontroversial preservation strategy. There are several reasons for maintaining a historic resources survey for the community. In addition to providing a permanent written and photographic record of local architecture, and other man-made resources, a good inventory is the foundation for other preservation initiatives. It can be of service to a heritage commission or historic district commission and it can be used to support grant applications or prepare nominations for listing of historic structures in the National Register of Historic Places. Maintaining a survey also encourages and enables understanding and appreciation of historic structures and sites by citizens. Historic resource assessments are also necessary for accomplishing environmental reviews required in projects receiving federal funding, such as highway projects. As the beginning of a comprehensive historic preservation strategy, information gathered should act as a basis for future decision making, by identifying buildings suitable for and worthy of preservation or rehabilitation.

During summer 1988 local volunteers working with the NRPC initiated a survey of key historic resources along Rt. 3A.<sup>2</sup> A copy of the survey is on file at Town Hall. More than 75 structures were characterized at that point. This effort could be supplemented with recorded information on additional structures elsewhere in town, as well as cellar holes and sites of prehistoric and historic activity. In recent years, analysis of local historic resources was performed as part of the environmental review for the Circumferential Highway. These studies provide detailed insight into local history; thus, it is recommended that when research and studies are produced by residents, or by government entities, academics or non-profits, that the Planning Board obtain copies of the information for its files in order to develop detailed and comprehensive inventories and descriptions of local heritage. When development is proposed, the information could be consulted for site analysis.

In addition to detailed cultural and historical resource, inventories and historical documents maintained by the Historical Society, there are a number of publications that provide overviews of the history of Litchfield and its environments. In May 2000, the Litchfield Historical Society printed a history of Litchfield.<sup>3</sup> The NRPC also has in its library, bound descriptions of Litchfield history. In addition to providing references on noteworthy events and personalities, documents such as this provide background on the activities and lifestyles of earlier generations. This type of information can also help inform the community about land use potential and provide insight on the potential development of the community in the future.

#### **5. Heritage Commission**

RSA 674:44-a, adopted in 1992, enables the establishment of municipal heritage commissions as vehicles to address the proper recognition, use, and protection of local resources that are valued for their historic, cultural, aesthetic, or community significance within their natural, built, or cultural contexts. Establishing a heritage commission in the community could provide a public sector mechanism specifically focused on promoting the preservation of local historical and cultural resources.

Heritage Commissions have advisory and review authority, such as to:

- Survey and inventory cultural resources.
- Assist the Planning Board, as requested, in the development of sections of the master plan, which address cultural and historic resources.
- Advise, upon request, local agencies and other local boards in their review of requests on matters potentially affecting cultural and historic resources.
- Coordinate activities with service organizations and non-profit groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Nashua Regional Planning Commission, *Litchfield Historic Resources Survey*, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Town of Litchfield Historical Society, *A Brief History of Litchfield*, May 2000.

Heritage Commissions provide a local mechanism to facilitate a planning dialogue on local cultural and historic resources. The Planning Board consulted the Litchfield Historical Society in the course of developing this section; however, that group does not have the legal standing that a Heritage Commission would have. For example, a Heritage Commission could hold hearings necessary to carry out its duties. Heritage commissions may also receive gifts of money and property, in the name of the community, subject to the approval of the Board of Selectmen. The New Hampshire Land Conservation and Investment Program (LCIP) and the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) both provide a significant source of public funds for underwriting historic preservation and open space protection. To qualify for these funds, communities have to formally document the need for preservation and identify the most urgent and valuable preservation priorities. Finally, a heritage commission could also serve as a vehicle for holding historic preservation easements.



In the early 1990s, the community opposed development of a local historic district. At that point, there was not a consensus for adopting limits on property and building development within an area proposed to be set-up within a historic district centered around the old town hall. Although it is not recommended that Litchfield adopt a local historic district this point in time, a heritage commission could provide leadership researching the basis for establishing a historic district ordinance within the municipality in the future, should residents seek to explore this option again. Heritage commissions may also assume, if authorized by the local legislative body, the composition and duties of historic district commissions. In the NRPC region, Wilton is the community that most recently adopted a heritage commission.

## **6. State Register of Historic Places**

The State of New Hampshire Register of Historic Places program encourages the identification and protection of historical, architectural, archaeological and cultural resources. The program is provided for listing in order to encourage awareness of the historical significance of the listed structure, but does not mandate protection. Benefits of listing include public recognition, consideration and advocacy in the planning of local and state funded projects, qualification for state financial assistance for preservation projects (i.e. LCHIP) and special consideration or relief in the application of some access, building and safety code regulations. Listing takes place through application to the NH Division of Historic Resources.<sup>4</sup> Many buildings in Litchfield may be candidates for listing.

## **7. National Register of Historic Places**

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's resources worthy of preservation. Established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and administered by the National Park Service within the Department of the Interior, the National Register lists properties of local, state and/or national significance in the areas of American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering and culture. Resources may be nominated individually, in groups as districts, or as multiple resource areas, and must generally be older than 50 years.

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<sup>4</sup> NH Division of Historic Resources, *The NH State Register of Historic Places*, February 8, 2001. See: [www.state.nh.us/nhdhr](http://www.state.nh.us/nhdhr).

The primary benefit of National Register listing is the recognition it affords and the appreciation of local resources, which is stimulated through such recognition. The National Register also provides for review of the effects, which any federally funded, licensed or assisted project might have on a property that is listed on the Register or which is eligible for listing. Register standing also makes a property eligible for certain federal tax benefits (investment tax credits) for the rehabilitation of income-producing buildings and the charitable deduction of donations or easements.

Contrary to what many people often believe, National Register listing does not interfere with a property owner's right to alter, manage, dispose of or even demolish property they own unless federal funds are involved. Nor does National Register listing require that owners open their property to the public. A National Register district must have the approval of a majority of property owners in the district. For a single, privately owned property with one owner, the property will not be listed if the owner objects. National Register listing can be an important catalyst to change public perception and increase historic awareness, but cannot in itself prevent detrimental alterations or demolition. Yet, it remains an important first step toward historic awareness, respect and protection. Statewide there are nearly five hundred National Register listings, of which approximately fifty are districts. Included are 17 individual buildings or sites and four districts in the NRPC region.

No structures in Litchfield are listed on the National Register, although several archeological and historic character sites have been determined to be eligible. The Historic and Archeological Resources section of the Circumferential Highway EIS<sup>5</sup> studied the four communities directly impacted by the proposed project and concluded that 16 structures and three historic districts were eligible for the Register. In Litchfield this included: the McQuesten-Calawa House; the McQuesten-Leary House; the Chase-Parker House; the Leary Center House; the Bathalon-Hayes House and the Adams-Bergeron House. Typically, these resources are eligible for the Register because these resources embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.

Other local historic resources, which may be appropriate for Register listings, include the town center (town hall, library, church and private residences) as well as some private residences. These buildings would also be eligible for National Register listing on an individual basis, although in contrast to pursuing numerous individual listings, it is generally more cost/time effective and comprehensive to pursue a district nomination. In addition to promoting awareness of cultural resources, Register listing can also help the community weigh proposed actions more carefully, so that it does not inadvertently expend its long-term assets in realizing immediate objectives. Assistance in the preparation of National Register nominations is available from NRPC.

## **8. Local Historic District(s)**

The term "historic district" can refer either to an historic district established by town meeting vote, or as previously discussed, to a National Register Historic District. Both are useful preservation tools but differ in the way in which they are established and the protection they afford. An historic area may be both a locally designated historic district and a National Register District. Within the NRPC region, Amherst, Hollis, Mont Vernon and Nashua have enacted local historic district ordinances. The most comprehensive preservation tool available to local governments under New Hampshire state law is the creation and administration of a local historic district (RSA 674:45). The purpose of an historic district is to protect and preserve areas of outstanding architectural and historic value from inappropriate alterations and additions that might detract from an otherwise distinctive character. Historic districts should not attempt to "freeze" time but should preserve what is significant to a district while accommodating change and new construction, in accordance with regulations based on a local consensus.

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<sup>5</sup> Army Corp of Engineers, *Nashua-Hudson Circumferential Highway Final Environmental Impact Statement*, Volume I, 1993.

After preparing an appropriate ordinance, an historic district-commission is given authority to consider the appropriateness of any proposed construction, exterior changes or demolition of any structure within the district. Each individual ordinance must outline precisely permitted and prohibited actions and regulated activities. Expectedly, ordinances take on varying degrees of strictness, depending on local desires. It is important to note that historic district commissions control noncontributing structures as well as new construction within a district. Alterations and additions within a district are individually reviewed in respect to their mass, scale and detailing in relation to surrounding structures.

Historic districting can be an effective technique for protecting the character of an area by emphasizing exterior appearance and setting. Yet, unlike site plan review, historic districts allow officials to exercise authority over construction and alteration of single family dwellings. However, buildings alone need not comprise a district. Effective district preservation should involve streetscapes, landscapes, contributing views and viewsheds, as well as buildings. It should be noted that historic districting is not an appropriate method for protecting all historical resources in an area, especially where properties are widely scattered. In those instances, particularly in non-residential zones, site plan regulations can provide guidance of how to promote site development that does not detract from existing community character. Therefore, it is a recommendation of this plan that the Site Plan Review Regulations be updated to provide more guidance in the development of non-residential sites along the 3A corridor, as well as in other parts of the community, in order to promote high quality development that fits in with the existing environment. Finally, it is worth noting that historic districting may not be the most effective means of protecting a significant land area, but districting can be effectively combined with other techniques.

The Land Use chapter discusses the potential for a Town-center zoning district, although it does not present potential locations. In the 1980s one potential location for this type of district was identified in the vicinity of 3A, Pinecrest Road, Hillcrest Road and Albuquerque Avenue. Should this area be zoned for this purpose in the future, it is desirable to promote new development that is in harmony with the character and historical resources around the Old Meeting House on Route 3A. While existing wetlands probably limit the opportunities to provide direct access to this area off 3A, one option may be for the area around the Old Meeting House on Route 3A to be established as a gateway to an expanded village type area beyond it to the east. In that case, a district could provide a way to help control development and the appearance of development around the gateway -- which could in turn aid and promote additional economic and community development since it has been shown that people seek attractive environments to do business and conduct commercial activities.

Within Litchfield, there are residents who may be interested in putting their homes within a historic district. A problem is that there was not a strong enough consensus to approve the creation of a local district in the early 90's. The primary place to establish this type of district would be along Rt. 3A. Since there was opposition to establishing a more encompassing district in the 1990s, an alternative would be to promote establishing a more limited district around the Old Meeting House/town center area from Griffin Memorial School north to Cutler Memorial Library. A larger district, encompassing both sides of Rt. 3A from Page Road to Hillcrest Road, would go further in protecting a greater number of Litchfield's historic structures, but should be reserved for the future.

## **9. *Historic Building Rehabilitation Federal Tax Credits***

The rehabilitation of older buildings, frequently less expensive than new construction, is a cost-effective solution benefiting the tax base while filling older structures with new life. The Economic Recovery Act of 1981, as amended, provides attractive incentives in the form of federal investment tax credits for the substantial rehabilitation of income-producing older buildings. The act was passed to support preservation by eliminating certain tax incentives that encouraged the demolition of historic structures. In order to receive the credits, owners are required to furnish detailed rehabilitation plans for



review and certification by the National Park Service. Municipal structures are not eligible for these credits. Currently the tax incentives take two forms:

<u>Credit</u>	<u>Building Use</u>	<u>Eligible Properties</u>
10%	Commercial/Industrial	40 years and older
20%	Commercial/Industrial Income Residential	50 years and older

To be eligible for the larger federal tax credit, a building must be a certified historic structure, either listed individually on the National Register, or contributing to a National Register or certified local district. Certified rehabilitation work must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, a list of standards developed to ensure that significant features of a building will not be compromised. In order to qualify for any of the tax credits, rehabilitation expenditures must exceed \$5,000, or the adjusted basis of the property (cost of the building excluding the value of the land less depreciation, whichever is greater). The investment tax credits provide some incentive to rehabilitate older buildings instead of undertaking new construction. Unfortunately, because these credits do not cover privately-owned, non-income-producing residences, which constitute the majority of Litchfield's resources, their use in town is somewhat limited. Larger structures with income-producing potential could benefit from the use of the credits, which would also ensure the sympathetic rehabilitation of the buildings.

## **10. Historic Markers**

Originated by the NH Legislature in 1955, the aim of the Historical Marker Program is the erection of appropriate markers designating events, people and places of historical significance to the State of New Hampshire. Communities that would like to be considered for a marker submit a request for consideration by the State Highway Department and Division of Historical Resources. There is generally no cost involved for a marker on a State-maintained road, although there is a charge for markers on private roads. Statewide there are approximately 150 historical markers; although few have been erected in NRPC communities, and none in Litchfield.

The Historical Society has at times advocated for placement of physical markers within the community to promote awareness of historical resources. Currently, there are local historic markers at the Cutler Library and at the former site of Aquila Underwood's home, the location of Litchfield's first town meeting. There are also road markers in storage, which were once ordered placed along the Charles Bancroft Highway as a condition of the use of the funds from the will of this resident. The Historical Society advocates the replacement of these monuments to prominent positions within the corridor. In addition, when the opportunities arise in site plan or subdivision review, or in undertaking public projects, such as highway or recreation improvements, there may be opportunities to include markers to increase public awareness of significant persons, places or events.

## **11. Easements**

Preservation easements are a proven tool for protecting significant historic properties. An easement is a property right that can be bought or sold through a legal agreement between a property owner and an organization eligible to hold easements. In New Hampshire, RSA, 447:45-47 covers conservation, preservation and agricultural conservation restrictions commonly known as easements. Just as a conservation easement can be used to protect open space, scenic areas, waterways, wildlife sanctuaries, etc. from incompatible use and development, an architectural easement protects the exterior appearance of a building. Easements provide property owners with two important benefits. First, the character of a property is protected in perpetuity. In addition, the donation of an easement may make the

owner eligible for certain tax advantages. If the property is listed in the National Register, in return for giving an easement, an owner is eligible under the Tax Treatment and Extension Act of 1980 to make a deduction from their taxes. Donation of an easement may also reduce estate and local property taxes.

Easements are also beneficial to a community because the costs of acquiring easements may be significantly lower than buying properties outright to protect valuable resources, particularly when easements can be acquired by donation. Significant resources can remain in private hands but are protected from inappropriate alteration, as the organization holding the easement is given the right to review any proposed changes to the structure or property. If properly administered, easements are a superior method of conserving and protecting land, water and historic resources -- perhaps better and longer than zoning or locally designated historic districts. During subdivision and site plan review, it is recommended that the Planning Board explore with development proponents the potential use of easements to assure the proper use of resources, preserve significant resources and promote development that does not adversely affect the quality of natural and man-made resources, particularly the aesthetic and visual character of the community.

## **12. Scenic Byway and Road Designation**

The New Hampshire Scenic and Cultural Byways Program established in 1992 under RSA 238:19: *"...provide(s) opportunities for the residents and visitors to travel a system of byways which feature the scenic and cultural qualities of the State within the existing highway system, promote retention of rural and urban scenic byways, support the cultural, recreational, and historic attributes along these byways and expose the unique elements of the State's beauty, culture and history."*

Route 3A may classify as a state designated byway, which fit requirements set by the NH Scenic and Cultural Byways Council. Currently, one benefit of achieving designation as a State scenic or cultural byway is the ability to qualify for a special fund of federal Transportation Enhancement Act (hereafter TEA-21) funding that could be used for improvements for scenic overlooks or interpretive centers -- examples of projects that could promote the history of the corridor and enhance future community and economic development.

At the local level Scenic Road Designations, RSA 231:157, provide a process by which local roads can be classified as scenic by a Town vote. Since Charles Bancroft Highway is a Class II State Road, the route could not qualify for this designation; however, roads that join the Highway, such as Pinecrest, Hillcrest, Talent, Page Roads, and Albuquerque Avenue could be designated scenic roads. The advantage of placing this designation on the thoroughfares is that repair, maintenance and reconstruction of designated roads can not involve the cutting or removal of trees 15 inches or more, or the tearing down of stone walls in the public right of way, without the permission of the Planning Board or board responsible for the local scenic roads program, thereby presenting another way to promote the retention of natural and historical character of the road corridors.

## **13. Protection of Archaeological Resource Areas**

The preservation of areas of high potential for prehistoric and historic archaeological sites poses unique problems. In comparison to historic structures, archaeological resources are more difficult to identify and protect. Litchfield benefits from having many areas that have already been identified and studied. For example, extensive research and documentation exists from the environmental review performed during permitting for the Nashua-Hudson Circumferential Highway in 1993, as well as at earlier points in time. However, it is also important to note that comprehensive evaluations of the entire community have not been performed and there appear to be instances where resources were not identified prior to damage or disruption.

Each archeological site is unique and fragile. Once a site is disturbed, information is lost. While there is often an urgent need to keep the location of important archaeological resources confidential, the same confidentiality precludes public awareness. A problem is that increased appreciation may also represent a very real threat to archaeological resources -- however, the Planning Board promotes awareness of archeological resources with an assumption that such awareness is critical to achieving resource preservation and protection.

The Historic and Archeological Resources section of the Circumferential Highway EIS studied the four communities impacted by the proposed project. It concludes that 2 archeological districts, 13 previously recorded prehistoric sites, and 25 locations of prehistoric resource potential existed in the study area. As noted earlier, Litchfield has numerous prehistoric sites of significance. It was noted that with large tracts of agriculture in Litchfield, many archeologically sensitive areas are preserved from the effects of development, which are irreversible. While the EIS does not list the location of these resources, these are often situated on the first terrace above the Merrimack River, on the margin of the second tier above the River, on interior stream or water feature margins, and also possibly in upland locations.

Outside of the prehistoric archeological resources, the EIS notes that in the study area, 39 site or sensitive area was identified. These resources were significant because the sites relate to:

- Early Exploration and Settlement of Interior NH circa 1632-1770;
- The French and Indian or Revolutionary War;
- Small to Mid-scale Lumbering and Mill Working circa 1620-present;
- Brick-making for Local and Regional Markets circa 1650-1920;
- Mixed Agriculture and the Family Farm 1630-present; and
- River and Canal Navigation 1790-1890.

Development is the greatest threat to archaeological resources. Federal laws that protect archaeological resources include environmental impact assessments, such as are required highway projects or other federal developments which require review of impacts to cultural resources. In addition, there are mining laws which allow review of projects for impacts, and there is the possibility of review within the dredge and fill process. At the local level, Site Analysis, Section 403.00 of the Subdivision Regulations, provides for the identification of man-made resources in location proposed to receive development.

One problem is that the Planning Board may not have the skills or resources to identify the historical characteristics of sites, interpret information to assess its significance, or the skills to identify alternatives available to promote and achieve historical resource preservation. One option available to the Board is to obtain copies of research documents in the possession of the State Archeologist and place them on file in the municipality, thereby providing a current listing of existing information and assessment. Providing local public access to these documents will expand the information available to parties performing this type of investigation as part of subdivision and site plan applications.

The Performance Standards in Section 403.00 of the Zoning Ordinance provide the Planning Board with the discretion to require environmental assessment to determine compliance with these standards. Similarly, site analysis provisions of the subdivision regulations provide for identification of man made and historical resources. A problem is that land use permit applications appear to seldom reference the master plan. Typically the level of historical resource analysis provided by development proponents is poor quality or apparently cursory. It is a recommendation that the Planning Board require applicants for land use permits to perform more comprehensive and qualified historical and cultural resource analysis prior to plan acceptance. In addition, the Board could more frequently require specialized study by applicants that will provide detailed analysis on the extent of historical resources on a site and potential preservation actions. Based on current knowledge, areas in the community to special

attention to include: the Merrimack River corridor, the Route 3A corridor, and the corridors of the tributaries that flow into the River. In these cases, the Town would hire, at the expense of a developer, a professional archaeologist as a consultant to evaluate a property for archaeological potential and/or survey the area for unknown archaeological sites. It seems clear that it is within the powers of planning boards in New Hampshire to require special studies. In order to publicize the intent of the Planning Board to emphasize these types of study, a statement could be adopted in local land use regulations confirming what studies are mandatory, providing the grounds for granting waivers, and a reservation of the right to reverse a decision and require additional analysis, when it could enhance the evaluation of an application.

Once there is an understanding of the historical resources on a site, the Planning Board and the development proponent should explore preservation opportunities. Public acquisition of land, public land donations, or easement donations are potential options. The donation of a land development rights, such as historical preservation restrictions, or their purchase by private parties is another major way of effectively preserve archaeological resources. In some cases in New Hampshire, during the development process, cooperative developers have provided time to perform digs or record archaeological data, which would otherwise be destroyed. The State Division of Historical Resources has limited ability to review private projects for impact on archaeological resources. However, local officials should consult the Historical Resources Division if a proposal will impact a known archaeological resource, or if a project is in a location with a high probability of archaeological potential, such as in areas with proximity to flowing waters or 3A.

#### **14. *Innovative Land Use Controls***

The use of an "open space development" ordinance allows for development to be located away from sensitive areas, agricultural lands or historic areas. In the State of New Hampshire RSA 674:21 gives communities authority to adopt a variety of innovative land use controls which may support the preservation of community character and consequently historic resources. The concept of the transfer of development rights is another strategy that may be used to help a community retain its historic character.

#### **15. *Building Code Provisions***

In seeking to protect the public's health and safety, standards such as building codes may present unique complications to the use or rehabilitation of an historic building. As a result, some communities have elected to amend local building codes to exempt historic structures from certain code requirements, other than life safety provisions. This allows historic buildings to continue to be used safely while not imposing a modern set of standards that are impossible for an older building to meet without a significant loss of integrity. It should be noted that Chapter 32 of the Basic Building Code of Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA), used by many of the region's communities including Litchfield, specifically addresses the need for sympathetic treatment of historic structures. Under this section, buildings identified as historic buildings are not subject to the code when they are "*judged by the building official to be safe and in the public's interest of health, safety and welfare regarding any proposed construction, alteration, repair, enlargement, relocation and location within fire limits.*"

## **C. CONCLUSIONS**

There is an urgent need to preserve Litchfield historic resources due to pressures on these resources caused by growth and development. One advantage is that there is a variety of mechanisms available to promote preservation of natural, cultural and historic resources. Options available to the Planning Board include tools to require detailed assessment and evaluation of the histories of sites and techniques to direct development to the parts of sites, which are not as sensitive in terms of natural or cultural resources. The Planning Board and other municipal divisions can also take a proactive stance and form public-private partnerships to promote resource preservation. Finally, a program to understand and protect priority cultural and historical resources would benefit from the formation of Heritage Commission which could provide advisory opinions on a rich and complicated subject, and which would provide developers with a focused liaison which could help deliver a thorough and consistent historical resources review. When there are actions to preserve key features of sites, there should be attention to the details of stewardship, specifically the long-term management and monitoring of these resources.

## **D. RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Planning Board recommends the following initiatives:

- Encourage continued archaeological investigation in Litchfield, particularly along the brooks and associated floodplain that feed into the Merrimack River and which have not been studied in detail, as well as along 3A where much of the recent history evolved. One reason that investigation is an important first step is that without it there may be a lack of awareness regarding key resources and sites.
- Complete the preparation of a historic resources survey, including parts of town not reviewed during the review for the Circumferential Highway and Airport Connector Road environmental impact studies. Update information periodically to indicate changes to buildings, including remodeling, fire, demolition or changes to surroundings.
- Continue to locate, identify, and catalogue sites of historical significance and identify the highest priorities for preservation. Analyze resource types, the significance of sites, the imminence of threats to resources, and the opportunities for preservation. Analyzing resources now could place the community in a competitive position to receive grant funds when these are available.
- Advocate key cultural/historical priorities for the inclusion in the Regional Environmental Planning Program (REPP). At the regional level this program is coordinated by the NRPC. Listing the most significant local unprotected historic and cultural resources in the REPP plan will probably influence the ability to obtain funding for resource protection through the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Commission. Consider the acquisition of available, significant property for preservation purposes in limited but critical cases.
- Continue the protection and enhancement of the historic Litchfield center. The residential, agricultural and public service character should be retained. This area could potentially serve as a boundary or gateway for a town-center or village zoning district to the north and west, which could extend as far as the Liberty Way municipal complex.
- Obtain copies of documents and studies that identify and assess archeological and historical resources from the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) at the NH Division of Historic Resources. Obtaining this information and making it available to the public at the local level will facilitate the systematic sharing of information on cultural and historical resources. Since 1991 there has been study performed within Litchfield as part of the environmental impact

- review process for the Nashua-Hudson Circumferential Highway, and possibly other projects. Also obtain from the SHPO literature regarding the appropriate rehabilitation techniques to place on file in the town office which encourage and explain the benefits of the sensitive rehabilitation/renovation of older homes and buildings.
- Historical interest and pride should be promoted, as well as the continued collection, preservation and protection of early photographs. Ways to promote awareness are:
    - i. photographs and exhibits in public places;
    - ii. brochures describing local history;
    - iii. lectures on local history;
    - iv. tours of historic structures and sites;
    - v. local history courses in the school curriculum;
    - vi. oral history projects;
    - vii. support of the Litchfield Historical Society; and
    - viii. taking pictures of townspeople and structures for permanent reference.
  - The Town should encourage the protection, enhancement and rehabilitation of significant architectural and historic resources such as the Town Hall and the library. Any building changes, site improvement or other alteration (especially to town owned buildings) should respect the historical qualities of the structure. Similarly, if renovation is proposed for the fire station on 3A, efforts should occur to improve the façade appearance so the structure better blends in with the historic buildings adjacent to it.
  - Encourage National Register listing for eligible local structures, such as the town center and appropriate private residences.
  - Continue to locate, identify, catalogue, preserve and protect town records, documents, manuscripts and artifacts and provide a suitable and safe repository for them. Early handwritten records should be reproduced (transcribed or microfilmed but not photocopied) and copies kept in more than one location. Continue to make collected historical information (in a protected environment) accessible to town residents and future generations.
  - Encourage the use of innovative land use controls including conservation/open space development preserve open space and minimize the visual impact of new development on significant historic areas, open space and scenic views.
  - Promote the donation of easements by historic property owners to a designated authority such as the Conservation Commission, The Society for the Protection of New England Antiquities, or an established land trust such as the Society for the Preservation of New Hampshire Forests. Where appropriate, the Town should consider applying for assistance from the Trust for New Hampshire Lands acquisition and easement program.
  - Promote upgrading, preservation and protection of Town graveyards and private burying grounds.