

## Appendix B: Planning Glossary

### A

**Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC):** ACEC designations highlight areas where special management attention is needed to protect, and prevent irreparable damage to important historical, cultural, and scenic values, fish, or wildlife resources or other natural systems or processes; or to protect human life and safety from natural hazards.

**Affordable Housing:** The generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual income on housing. Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care.

**Agricultural Zoning:** Agricultural zoning, including forestry zoning, restricts land uses to farming and livestock, other kinds of open-space activities and limited home building. It is sometimes used in tandem with urban growth restrictions.

**Aquifer:** A water-bearing geologic formation, sometimes confined between clay layers and sometimes on the surface. The source of ground water for drinking supplies and irrigation.

### B

**BioMap2:** BioMap2 combines hundreds of individual pieces of geospatial data about the state's species, ecosystems, and landscapes. These elements of biodiversity fall into one of two complementary categories, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. Core Habitat identifies key areas to ensure the long-term persistence of species of conservation concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth.

**Brownfields:** Sites that are underutilized or not in active use, on land that is either contaminated or perceived as contaminated.

**Built Environment:** The urban environment consisting of buildings, roads, fixtures, parks, and all other improvements that form the physical character of a city.

### C

**Clean Energy and Climate Plan:** The Clean Energy and Climate Plan details how the State of Massachusetts will achieve its targets under its Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA) of 2008. The law commits the state to reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 25% below 1990 levels by 2020, and 80% by 2050.

**Community Development Plan:** A plan prepared by many Massachusetts communities in 2004 with state funding that addressed housing, environmental resources, transportation, and economic development.

**Community Types:** MetroFuture identified four basic community types across Massachusetts. While each city and town is unique, communities within each type share important characteristics that will influence their development over the coming decades. The criteria used to define Community Types include land use and housing patterns, recent growth trends, and projected development patterns. The four types are: Inner Core, Developing Suburbs, Maturing Suburbs, and Regional Urban Centers.



**Cluster Development:** A pattern of development in which industrial and commercial facilities and homes are grouped together on parcels of land in order to leave parts of the land undeveloped. Cluster development is often used in areas that require large lot sizes, and typically involves density transfer. Zoning ordinances permit cluster development by allowing smaller lot sizes when part of the land is left as open space.

**Comprehensive Plan:** Regional, state, or local documents that describe community visions for future growth. Comprehensive plans describe general plans and policies for how communities will grow and the tools that are used to guide land use decisions, and give general, long-range recommendations for community growth. Typical elements include, land use, housing, transportation, environment, economic development, and community facilities.

**Community Preservation Act:** The Community Preservation Act (CPA) CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund to raise money through a surcharge of up to 3% of the real estate tax levy on real property for open space protection, historic preservation and the provision of affordable housing. The act also creates a significant state matching fund, which serves as an incentive to communities to pass the CPA

**Commuter Rail:** Commuter rail refers to passenger trains operated on main line railroad track to provide employment transportation.

**Conservation Areas:** Environmentally sensitive and valuable lands protected from any activity that would significantly alter their ecological integrity, balance, or character, except in cases of overriding public interest.

## D

**Decentralized Wastewater Treatment Systems:** A decentralized wastewater treatment system is an onsite or cluster wastewater system that is used to treat and dispose of relatively small volumes of wastewater, generally originating from individual or groups of dwellings and businesses that are located relatively close together. Onsite and cluster systems are commonly used in combination.

**Distributed Growth Scenario:** The scenario developed during the 495 Compact planning process that used the entire set of locally identified priority areas to estimate future population, employment, and land use projections.

**Density:** The average number of people, families, or housing units on one unit of land. Density is also expressed as dwelling units per acre.

## E

**Economic Opportunity Area (EOA):** An area or several areas within a designated Massachusetts Economic Target Area of particular need and priority for economic development.

**Ecosystem:** The species and natural communities of a specific location interacting with one another and with the physical environment.

**Environmental Justice:** Is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the

development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits.

**Endangered Species:** Species that are in danger of extinction. It also is a category that denotes protection under federal law (Endangered Species Act).

## F

**Flood Plain:** The land adjacent to a water body stream, river, lake or ocean that experiences occasional flooding.

**Freight Rail:** Trains used to ship cargo through rail systems. US Department of Transportation (USODT) forecasts an 88% rise in rail freight demand by 2035.

## G

**GIS (Graphic Information Systems):** GIS technology is used to develop maps that depict resources or features such as soil types, population densities, land uses, transportation corridors, waterways, etc. GIS computer programs link features commonly seen on maps (such as roads, town boundaries, water bodies) with related information not usually presented on maps, such as type of road surface, population, type of agriculture, type of vegetation, or water quality information. A GIS is a unique information system in which individual observations can be spatially referenced to each other.

**Global Warming Solutions Act:** In August 2008, Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick signed into law the Global Warming Solutions Act (GWSA), making Massachusetts one of the first states in the nation to move forward with a comprehensive regulatory program to address Climate Change.

**GreenDOT Initiative:** In 2010 The Massachusetts Department of Transportation launched GreenDOT. GreenDOT has three goals: reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; promote the healthy transportation options of walking, bicycling, and public transit; and support for smart growth development.

**Greenfields:** Newly developed commercial real estate on what was previously undeveloped open space.

**Greenhouse Gas:** Some greenhouse gases, which contribute to the greenhouse effect, occur naturally in the atmosphere while others result from human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels. Greenhouse gases include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and ozone.

**Greenway:** A linear open space; a corridor composed of natural vegetation. Greenways can be used to create connected networks of open space that include traditional parks and natural areas.

**Groundwater:** All water below the surface of the land. It is water found in the pore spaces of bedrock or soil, and it reaches the land surface through springs or it can be pumped using wells.

**Growth District Initiative:** The Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development will partner with municipalities that have identified one or more areas within their communities as being appropriate locations for significant new growth, whether commercial, residential or mixed-use. Eligible areas must be located in places with existing infrastructure, access to transportation and not be located on environmentally sensitive land.

## H

**Habitat:** Living environment of a species, that provides whatever that species needs for its survival, such as nutrients, water and living space.

**Housing Diversity:** A variety of houses in type, size, tenure and location – can increase housing affordability, while accommodating a variety of housing needs.

**Housing Element:** A comprehensive assessment of current and projected housing needs for all economic segments of the community. It sets forth local housing policies and programs to implement those policies.

**Housing Production Plan:** A Housing Production Plan (HPP) is a community's proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing by: creating a strategy to enable it to meet its affordable housing needs in a manner consistent with the Chapter 40B statute and regulations; and producing housing units in accordance with the HPP:

**Housing Trust Funds:** Housing trust funds are a separate funding source established by a municipality to provide a revenue source that supports the creation and preservation of affordable housing cities and towns for the benefit of low and moderate income households

**Historic Area:** An area or building in which historic events occurred, or one which has special value due to architectural or cultural features relating to the heritage of the community. Elements in historic areas have significance that necessitates preservation or conservation.

## I

**Impaired Streams:** A stream is impaired when it does not meet established water quality goals. These goals are typically a measure of stream's health, flow and ability to support a type and diversity of aquatic life, such as fish and aquatic insects.

**Impervious Surface:** Any surface through which rainfall cannot pass or be effectively absorbed. (Roads, buildings, paved parking lots, sidewalks etc.)

**Incentive Zoning:** Provides for give and take compromise on zoning restrictions, allowing for more flexibility to provide environmental protection. Incentive zoning allows a developer to exceed zoning ordinance limitations if the developer agrees to fulfill conditions specified in the ordinance. The developer may be allowed to exceed height limits by a specified amount in exchange for providing open spaces or plazas adjacent to the building.

**Inclusionary zoning:** A system that requires a minimum percentage of lower and moderate income housing to be provided in new developments. Inclusionary programs are based on mandatory requirements or development incentives, such as density bonuses.

**Individual Residential Wells:** A well intended to produce potable water for human consumption at a single residence.

**Infill Development:** Infill projects use vacant or underutilized land in previously developed areas for buildings, parking, and other uses.

**Infrastructure:** Water and sewer lines, roads, urban transit lines, schools and other public facilities needed to support developed areas.

## L

**Land Trusts:** Nonprofit organizations interested in the protection of natural resources and historic areas. Activities include public education, purchase and coordination of conservation easements, and planning services.

**Land Use:** The manner in which a parcel of land is used or occupied.

**Level of Service (LOS):** A qualitative measure describing operational conditions within a traffic stream in terms of speed and travel time, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience, and safety. Level A denotes the best traffic conditions while Level F indicates gridlock. An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for a development proposal evaluates the impact the development will have on the LOS standards for police, fire, utilities, parks, schools and traffic in the affected area.

## M

**Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40.B:** The Comprehensive Permit Act is a Massachusetts law which allows developers of affordable housing to override certain aspects of municipal zoning bylaws and other requirements. The Act consists of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B, Sections 20 through 23, along with associated regulations. Chapter 40B was enacted to address the shortage of affordable housing statewide by reducing barriers created by local municipal building permit approval processes, local zoning, and other restrictions. Its goal is to encourage the production of affordable housing in all communities throughout the Commonwealth.

**MassGIS:** The Commonwealth's Office of Geographic and Environmental Information, within the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). Through MassGIS, the Commonwealth has created a comprehensive, statewide database of spatial information for environmental planning and management.

**Master Plan:** A statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long term physical development of the municipality.

**Mixed Use Development:** Development that is created in response to patterns of separate uses that are typical in suburban areas necessitating reliance on cars. Mixed use developments include residential, commercial, and business accommodations in one area.

**Mode/Modal Split:** A term that describes how many people use alternative forms of transportation. Frequently used to describe the percentage of people using private automobiles as opposed to the percentage using public transportation.

## O

**Open Space:** Used to describe undeveloped land or land that is used for recreation. Farmland as well as all natural habitats (forests, fields, wetlands etc.) is lumped in this category.

**Open Space Residential Design (OSRD):** A form of residential subdivision that maximizes resource protection and conservation of natural areas through the use of design strategies that result in permanent open space preservation.

**Overlay Districts:** Zoning districts in which additional regulatory standards are superimposed on existing zoning. Overlay districts provide a method of placing special restrictions in addition to those required by basic zoning ordinances.

## P

**Photovoltaic (PV):** Literally, "light" (photo) and "electricity" (voltaic). The class of equipment used to generate electricity directly from sunlight.

**Plan:** A statement of policies, including text and diagrams, setting forth objectives, principles, standards, and plan proposals for the future physical development of the city or county.

**Planning:** The process of setting development goals and policy, gathering and evaluating information, and developing alternatives for future actions based on the evaluation of the information.

**Prime Agricultural Soils:** Soils considered highly suitable for agricultural activity. Prime farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed for the agricultural productivity to sustainably produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.

**Priority Development Sites:** Under [Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 43D](#), all permit reviews and final decisions shall be completed within 180 days of a determination that an application is complete. Parcels that are zoned for commercial or industrial development and are capable of the development or redevelopment of a building of at least 50,000 square feet gross floor area are eligible.

**Priority Habitat:** Priority habitat is a habitat type with unique or significant value to one or more species. An area classified and mapped as priority habitat must have one or more of the following attributes: comparatively high fish or wildlife density; comparatively high fish or wildlife species diversity; fish spawning habitat; important wildlife habitat; important fish or wildlife seasonal range; important fish or wildlife movement corridor; rearing and foraging habitat; Important marine mammal haul-out; ç; limited availability; high vulnerability to habitat alteration; unique or dependent species; or shellfish bed.

## R

**Registry of Motor Vehicles Data:** 16 million Registry of Motor Vehicles inspection records, 2005 - 2007 that were processed, geocoded, and analyzed to determine aggregate-level household vehicle travel distances. The current vehicle fleet mileage figures were obtained from the odometer readings

**Recharge:** Water that infiltrates into the ground, usually from above, that replenishes groundwater reserves, provides soil moisture, and affords evapotranspiration.

**Regional Planning Agency:** Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) are public organizations that encompass groupings of cities and towns and serve these municipalities by dealing with issues and

needs that cross governmental and other boundaries through planning, policymaking and technical assistance.

**Regional Transit Authority:** A public operator of one or more of the following: bus, subway, commuter rail and ferry systems.

**Rehabilitation:** In communities with a large stock of older housing or other structures that could lend themselves more easily to conversion into residential units, rehabilitation can be a very affordable and environmentally-friendly way to provide more housing, commercial areas, and offices.

**Runoff:** The water that flows off the surface of the land, ultimately into our streams and water bodies, without being absorbed into the soil.

## S

**Smart Growth:** Well-planned development that protects open space and farmland, revitalizes communities, keeps housing affordable and provides more transportation choices.

**Smart Growth District:** Smart Growth District are overlay zoning districts established under Chapter 40R of the Massachusetts General Laws to promote housing production and, more generally, smart growth development. Chapters 40R and 40S both provide financial incentives to communities to adopt these new zoning districts.

**Solar Power (or Energy):** Use of sunlight, or solar energy, to heat and light buildings, generate electricity (using solar photovoltaic systems - PV cells/panels), heat hot water, and for a variety of commercial and industrial uses.

**Special Districts:** Geographic areas in which fees or taxes are collected to fund investments or services benefiting properties within the district.

**State Tax Incentives:** Massachusetts offers tax incentives to individuals and business that install renewable energy systems at their homes or offices. This section provides a summary of these incentives and who to contact for more information.

**Stream Corridor:** The area (containing wetlands, flood plains, woodlands, unique habitats, and steep slopes) which lies between relatively level uplands and stream banks and through which water, draining from the uplands, flows and is naturally cleansed and stored. Base flow for streams comes from ground water as springs and seeps.

**Subdivision:** A subdivision occurs as the result of dividing land into lots for sale or development.

**Subdivision Rules and Regulations:** Procedures, requirements, and provisions governing the subdivision of land that is specified in formal Rules and Regulations promulgated by a city or town under the authority vested in the Planning Board by section 81-Q of Chapter 41 of the General Laws of Massachusetts.

**Subsidized Housing Inventory:** The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is used to measure a community's stock of low-or moderate-income housing for the purposes of M.G.L. Chapter 40B, the Comprehensive Permit Law. While housing developed under Chapter 40B is eligible for inclusion on the inventory, many other types of housing also qualify to count toward a community's affordable housing stock.

## T

**Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ):** A unit commonly used in transportation planning models to define where trips begin and end. TAZs include information on population, employment and households, and can vary in size so that they can contain similar amounts of people making trips.

**Trip Generation:** The first step in the conventional four-step transportation forecasting process (followed by trip distribution, mode choice, and route assignment), widely used for forecasting travel demands. It predicts the number of trips originating in or destined for a particular traffic analysis zone.

**Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** The development of housing, commercial space, services, and job opportunities in close proximity to public transportation. Reduces dependency on cars and time spent in traffic, which protects the environment and can ease traffic congestion, as well as increasing opportunity by linking residents to jobs and services.

**Transit Nodes:** Stops along a public transportation route where people board and disembark, often where one or more routes intersect with each other. These sites can provide ideal locations for mixed-use development as well as transit-oriented development.

**Transportation demand management strategies (TDM):** TDM is a general term for strategies that result in more efficient use of transportation resources, including incentives to reduce driving, use alternative options, and improve transit.

**Transportation Reform Act Modernizing the Transportation Systems of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:** In June 2009, Governor Patrick signed Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2009, “An Act Modernizing the Transportation Systems of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, (as amended by Chapter 26 of the Acts of 2009) creating a streamlined Massachusetts Department of Transportation, which includes the Registry of Motor Vehicles, the Highway Division and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA).

## U

**USGS (United States Geological Survey):** A federal agency which provides mapping of topography, aquifer levels, and areas where aquifers are recharged.

## W

**Wastewater:** Water that has been adversely affected in quality by human influence. It comprises liquid waste discharged by domestic residences, commercial properties, industry, and/or agriculture and can encompass a wide range of potential contaminants and concentrations. In the most common usage, it refers to the municipal wastewater that contains a broad spectrum of contaminants resulting from the mixing of wastewaters from different sources.

**Watershed:** The geographic area which drains into a specific body of water. A watershed may contain several sub-watersheds.

**Wetlands:** Area having specific hydric soil and water table characteristics supporting or capable of supporting wetlands vegetation.

**Workforce Housing:** Workforce housing is generally understood to mean any form of housing, including ownership of single or multi-family homes, or occupation of rental units, that constitutes affordable housing for individuals and heads of household who are gainfully employed, and not typically understood to be the target of affordable housing programs.

**Z**

**Zoning:** Classification of land in a community into different areas and districts. Zoning is a legislative process that regulates building dimensions, density, design, placement and use within each district.

*The glossary above is a modified version of the glossary from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) Smart Growth/Smart Energy Toolkit: [http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart\\_growth\\_toolkit/pages/glossary.html](http://www.mass.gov/envir/smart_growth_toolkit/pages/glossary.html)*