

## TOWN OF SALISBURY- 2012/2013 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

**THE TOWN:** It is the responsibility of everyone connected with this municipality to recognize that the main function of our local government is to serve the best interests of all people of Salisbury at all times. In 1638, only eighteen years after the Pilgrims landed, the Massachusetts General Court chartered a new "plantation", covering a 10-mile strip of territory north of the Merrimack River. The territory of the plantation stretched west into the wilderness and north as far as Hampton, now part of New Hampshire. There appears to have been a diversity of opinion among the settlers as to the name of the town. On September 4, 1639, the town was incorporated as Colchester. At a session of the General Court, held October 7, 1640, the name was changed to Salisbury.

Today, the Town of Salisbury is a community of over 7,434 year-round residents. It is the northeastern most municipality in Massachusetts, bordered on the south by the Merrimack River and on the east by the Atlantic Ocean. Prior to 1989, a three-person Board of Selectmen governed the Town. In May 1989, a Town Charter was approved at the ballot box. The Charter made sweeping changes in town government. It expanded the Board of Selectmen from three to five members. Many offices, which had been elected, became appointed. Currently, the only offices appearing on the annual town election ballot are: Selectmen, Moderator, and Triton Regional School Committee members. The Charter instituted a strong town manager form of government. The Town Manager is the chief administrative officer of the Town, directly responsible to the Board of Selectmen for the administration of all town affairs for which the Town Manager is given responsibility under the Charter including appointing and removing all department heads and employees and developing and administering a personnel system. The Selectmen are elected to three-year terms. They are the chief policy-making body of the Town, responsible for the issuance of policy directives and guidelines to be followed by all Town agencies serving under them.

**LOCATION:** Northeastern Massachusetts bordered by Seabrook, NH on the north and Amesbury, MA on the west. The Merrimack River separates Salisbury from Newburyport and Newbury to the south, and the Atlantic Ocean creates an eastern border.

### TOWN FACTS:

2010 Population...8,827(US Census)  
2010 Per capita income....\$30,055 (US Census)  
Unemployment Rate: 2008 4.9%, 2009 8.5%, 2010 11%, 2011 7.4 % (Mass.gov)  
2010 Median family income \$66,304 (US Census)  
2012 Average tax bill \$3,439 (Assessor)  
2012 Population 7434 (Town Census)  
FY13 General Budget \$19,546,950  
FY13 Water Budget \$2,304,334  
FY13 Sewer Budget \$2,198,346

**STRATEGY:** Over the years, Salisbury has maintained its traditional town character while accommodating substantial growth and new activities. It continues to be a livable community in a desirable, rewarding location. Still, Salisbury must grapple with a number of long-standing problems and newly arisen concerns in order to fulfill the promise which townspeople recognize. For example, as Salisbury's attractiveness grows and regional connections strengthen, increased development is generating significant pressures that are difficult to contend with. Water supply is tightly constrained and future usage may outstrip supply unless new sources are developed; septic issues remain troubling in parts of Town that are not sewered. Town financial resources are severely limited with many deferred priorities. Commercial development has lagged behind

residential growth and the Beach Commercial District suffers from negative perceptions. The roadway network is often highly congested at peak hours on summer weekends.

The challenges Salisbury faces are sizeable, but not insurmountable. Some, like traffic congestion, are structural problems and can only be improved upon, not eliminated. Maintaining affordability requires attention so that the community is not impacted unduly. Some resources, like historic buildings and natural areas, need to be properly conserved, so their value does not erode, and ways found to make them more available to the community. Other aspects, like commercial development, which have lagged need to be encouraged and guided to the most opportune locations. The vision of preserving community character, limiting development impacts, promoting affordable housing, improving Town finances and facilities, improving commercial and transportation activities and maintaining environmental quality, are all widely supported. Many residents, business people, landowners, and town officials have met regularly and worked to define and analyze these issues and to craft solutions. For nearly six years, Salisbury has undertaken a variety of planning processes to define its aspirations and to chart a course that will permit its goals to be accomplished. In July of 2004, after months of meetings and hard work, the Town completed a Community Development Plan; the first comprehensive planning effort completed in Salisbury in over 20 years. During the process the Town designated several areas of town for targeted activities including but not limited to zoning changes, traffic studies and infrastructure. Since the completion of the plan, the Town has worked hard to achieve the goals and action items set through the process. Over the last eight years Salisbury achieved quite a few of the goals including rezoning the Beach Commercial District and Salisbury Square, developing an Inclusionary Housing Zoning Bylaw and a Flexible Residential Development Bylaw, creating a new Commercial IV District on Rabbit Road and extending sewer services to serve the new district and the existing industrial district, completing a Harbor Management Plan, an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment, an Affordable Housing Plan, and an Open Space Plan. In October 2008, we completed the 20 month process of developing a new Master Plan. Town Meeting 2008 set up a Master Plan Implementation Committee that meets quarterly to assure the town moves forward on the Master Plan Goals. In 2010, Salisbury town meeting approved a Wind Energy Facilities zoning by-law and a Solar Zoning by-law. The Solar Zoning by-law meets the first criteria of the program requirements for the DOER Green Communities program, creating as-of-right siting for renewable energy generating facilities. The Town currently has as-of-right siting of renewable/alternative energy R&D and/or manufacturing facilities in the Industrial Zoning District. Additionally, the permitting process for the Wind Energy Facilities Zoning by-law meets the "expedited Permitting" process requirement, the second of the Green Communities program.

Severe flooding and flood damage suffered in 2005, 2006 and 2007 and the realization that rising sea levels threaten our low-lying coastal town have stimulated action on flood hazard mitigation measures. During 2008 these included developing a Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan in concert with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) that will make the Town eligible for FEMA Flood Hazard Mitigation Grants and working with the State Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to develop the Salisbury Beach State Reservation Barrier Beach Management Plan. The Town successfully applied to FEMA for a Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant to reconstruct the railway embankment and tide gate at Town Creek that had washed out in 2005 and 2007 and flooded US Route 1 and nearby properties. The Town is also working with DCR and the Army Corps of Engineers on designing and constructing a flood wall to protect marsh-side properties at the north end of Salisbury Beach from chronic tidal flooding. In addition, since 2008 the Town has partnered with the neighboring towns of Newbury and Newburyport in the Merrimack River Beach Alliance to seek funding to renourish eroding barrier beaches and repair the

Merrimack River jetties. Badly eroded areas on Salisbury Beach and Plum Island in Newbury are being renourished in the fall of 2010 using a combination of Federal, State, and local funds.

The Salisbury Center Corridor Target area's boundaries were originally approved by the Selectmen on March 13, 2006. In the past, the target area has focused on an area from Rings Island on the town's southern boundary north to Heritage Mobile Home Park and Cushing Street east to Washington Street. This area is composed of a thickly settled central area surrounded by older subdivisions and mobile home parks with inadequate infrastructure. Each year since 2006 the CAC opens the topic of target area boundaries for discussion at their annual public hearings for the purpose of revising the target area if needed. At last year's public hearings for the CDBG grant it was the consensus among those attending that due to the increasing number of substandard housing units at the beach in the area south of the commercial beach center, that this area be included in the target area this year for the first time. Recently, Town officials have had to intervene in this area because of building and health code violations in several buildings in this location. The hope is that including the area in the CDBG housing rehabilitation program will help promote investment in some of the most derelict units in this area. The newly expanded target area which was approved at the CAC November 8, 2010 meeting and endorsed by the Selectmen on the same date, will still be called the Salisbury Center Corridor Target Area.

This Community Development Strategy combines the municipality's efforts at community-based planning, identifies and prioritizes goals, and identifies strategies for addressing those needs over the next three to five years by targeting specific areas including the Salisbury Center Corridor, the Beach Commercial District and the Rabbit Road District. The Town adopted the following goals through its planning activities and has begun to achieve them through its boards and committees as an integral part of the community development strategies for Salisbury. They are based upon the realization that all town officials need to work toward implementing the new Master Plan and that achieving our goals requires adherence to the principles of sustainable development.

**Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources:** Salisbury has a wonderful natural environment. We are blessed by miles of beautiful ocean beaches, extensive salt marshes and estuaries and the Merrimack River, as well as upland forests and farm land. These assets deserve increased attention.

#### **Goals**

- Enhance access to open space and to recreational facilities, including new play fields, parking areas, play equipment, and our developing rail trail network
- Protect against coastal beach erosion and flooding from coastal storms
- Secure water supply, improve aquifer health, limit wastewater impacts, restrict impervious surfaces
- Encourage cluster development under the Town's Cluster Bylaw (FRD) (Fall 2005)

#### **Housing and Quality of Life**

Salisbury residents value the variety of residential environments that exist in town. Suburban neighborhoods feel close to nature - near woodlands, marshes, wetlands, the remaining farms, or close to the river or beach. Many residents have voiced their concerns over the impact of further development on the quality of life in Salisbury. The Town must continue to address the issues of affordable housing, homelessness, and the needs of low/moderate income residents. There is a great desire to assist the local social service agencies to continue to bring services to these populations; especially the children and elderly.

#### **Goals:**

- Preserve rural town character, limit impacts of new housing, improve affordability, and accommodate housing diversity
- Achieve Chapter 40B housing goals to get control of Chapter 40B developments
- Use contributions to the Salisbury Affordable Housing Trust Fund under the Inclusionary Zoning By-law (adopted Fall 2005) to develop affordable housing
- Support neighborhoods and encourage more physically distinctive, socially cohesive neighborhoods
- Increase support of social services including low income residents, elderly and youth services

**Economic Development:** Salisbury relies predominantly on residential property taxes for its municipal revenue. Even through the Commercial/Industrial/Personal Property (CIP) contribution to the revenue stream has recently increased after being largely stable over the past decade; its proportion of the town's revenue has declined as residential numbers and property values have increased. A vibrant local economy is essential to maintaining and improving opportunities for Town residents and for the Town's fiscal health. The Town recognizes that it has not maximized its economic potential and recommends specific actions that it can take to encourage more beneficial commercial and light industrial development. The Town achieved an important goal during 2010 by completing the Rabbit Road Sewer project that brought necessary infrastructure to the industrial park and the new business zone, thus encouraging industrial and business development in the most opportune areas.

**Goals:**

- Revitalize the Beach Commercial District (mixed-use rezoning adopted Fall 2005)
- Revitalize Salisbury Center Corridor Target Area (mixed-use rezoning adopted Fall 2006)
- Encourage new, beneficial, industrial and commercial uses in defined business zones, such as the new Commercial IV business zone (adopted 2005) near I-95
- Attract new commercial/industrial uses to business zones near I-95 and I-495
- Offer Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) to eligible developers seeking to add quality commercial development along entrance corridors
- Continue to work with Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) on Regional Planning Efforts, including but not limited to "brownfields" opportunities, rail trail efforts, expansion of the existing sewer to existing Industrial park.
- Support development of employment, educational, and training for local businesses through meetings with Workforce Investment Board and collaboration with Chamber of Commerce
- Work to review the best option for the re-use of Salisbury Memorial/Spaulding School

**Transportation and Municipal Services**

Traffic congestion at the beach and in Salisbury Square during the summer months continues to be a major source of frustration for Town residents. Further, residents throughout the Town have expressed the need for additional sidewalks along main streets and in neighborhoods as well as the desire for a walkable Town center. The Town business community has also expressed their frustration over the procedures and inaccessibility for dealing with various Town boards and departments.

**Goals:**

- Minimize congestion and traffic impacts; improve pedestrian safety in Salisbury Center Corridor Target Area
- Make Salisbury's main roads and neighborhoods more pedestrian-friendly
- Improve drainage, water lines, sewer lines and road conditions on main roads and in neighborhoods
- Improve and streamline Town government services and permitting processes
- Continue to address 504 Transition Plan to make town properties accessible to all persons
- Continue development of rail trails to facilitate off road travel by bicycle and by walking.

**SOURCES:** The following reports were referenced in preparing this document.

*1996 Economic Development Action Plan, Northern Essex Economic Target Area, Salisbury Zoning Bylaws, DHCD Community Profile, Salisbury 504 Transition Plan 2006, Affordable Housing Plan 2006, Community Development Plan 2004, Board of Selectmen and Town Manager's FY10 Priority List, Minutes from Town Meetings and local Board and Committee Meetings, Salisbury Open Space and Recreation Plan 2007, Master Plan 2008, Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan 2008, Salisbury Beach State Reservation Barrier Beach Management Plan 2008*

## Priorities List and Action Plan

\*List is in order of highest priority per category

Item	Priority	Time frame	Status
<b>Open Space and Cultural Resources</b>			
Open Space and Recreation Plan: Priorities	HIGH	SHORT	Finished 2010
Historic Properties	HIGH	SHORT	Continue to work with the Historical Commission to protect the town's historical resources
Harbor Management Plan: Priorities	HIGH	MED	Ongoing
Begin Beach Revitalization Plan	HIGH	LONG	Ongoing
Develop additional play fields and play grounds	HIGH	LONG	Upgrade to Lions Park playground needed
Continue developing the Salisbury Rail Trail and bike routes as part of Coastal Trails Network	HIGH	LONG	Completion of Ghost Trail 4/28/12 Trail Maintenance Day Nov 19, 2012 25% design of Old Eastern Marsh Trail Phase 2 - Mudnock Road to Seabrook Road Design of trail – off Ghost Trail
Expand Waterfront Recreational opportunities	MED	MED	Continue efforts including reviewing policies on recreational fishing and clamming
Explore benefits of the Community Preservation Act for Salisbury	MED	MED	
Revisit the Beach Access Study	LOW	MED	
Encourage conservation of natural resources in new developments through alternate technology, including tying into the Town's existing sewer system, improving water resources	LOW	MED	ONGOING
Expand or replace the Town Library	HIGH	MED	Grant received, Vote for town funding May 2013 Town Meeting

Item	Priority	Time frame	Status
Obtain additional conservation easements on natural lands	LOW	LONG	Town to continue promoting Flexible Residential Development which encourages conservation easements. Secured Rail Trail easement connecting Ghost Trail to Rabbit Rd.
Improve access to lands and waterways	LOW	LONG	Develop new harbor access at Friedenfels Rd
Create Salisbury Beach Management Plan	HIGH	LONG	Completed. Worked with DCR
Create Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan	HIGH	SHORT	Completed. Worked with MVPC
<b>Housing and Quality of Life</b>			
Revise zoning for appropriate densities, better siting, and affordable housing	HIGH	SHORT	Planning and Zoning Review Committees continuing work
Continue Housing Rehabilitation Program to assist low income residents fix code violations	HIGH	SHORT	4 Units funded through 2008 CDBG Grant, 17 Units Funded Through 2009 CDBG Grant, 4 Units Funded Through 2010 CDBG Grant , 6 Units Funded Through 2011 CDBG Grant , 4 Units Funded Through 2012 CDBG Grant continue to help emergency cases using North Shore Home Consortium funds and Program Income. Long waiting list shows there is still a great need. Continue to work.
Work towards meeting the needs of Salisbury's growing senior population	HIGH	MED	Expansion of Senior Center to offer activities and services to meet the needs of more seniors
Work with Housing Authority and Assisted Living to help them to provide affordable housing to our seniors	HIGH	MED	Housing Authority still has other ongoing maintenance issues. Working on other issues. Meeting to discuss long term plan for rehabilitation. Continue to meet with Assisted Living to discuss needs.
Work towards meeting the needs of Salisbury's existing low/moderate income population	HIGH	MED	ONGOING- Town continues to implement inclusionary zoning bylaw, actively search for developers that meet our housing needs
Increase support of social services to Salisbury residents	HIGH	SHORT	Assist Boys & Girls Club, Pettengill House, & other social service agencies and determine which Salisbury needs are not being provided for. Determine best approach towards providing for those needs.
Work closely and efficiently with developers on 40 B proposals in order to expand housing opportunities	MED	LONG	ONGOING
Work on improving blighted properties	MED	SHORT	BOH implemented new inspection program; Town received funding for 29 Elm St. REI for Spaulding School. Plains School ready to bid. Looking at police, fire and DPW.

Item	Priority	Time frame	Status
<b>Economic Development</b>			
Zoning Bylaw Review	HIGH	MED	Ongoing-
Encourage McKenna property Redevelopment.	HIGH	MED	Working with MVPC on Brownfields Assessment
Create Master Plan	HIGH	SHORT	Master Plan process completed in Fall '08
Develop boardwalk at Beach Center	HIGH	MED	Feasibility Study Completed. Funding secured for Design Obtain funding for construction
Use zoning and enforcement to improve appearance of Town gateways and business properties	MED	MED	Under review- Zoning Review Committee
<b>Transportation and Municipal Services</b>			
Plan for expansion of water supply	HIGH	SHORT/ MED	New well, new water tower complete
Renovation/Replacement of Fire/Police/DPW	HIGH	LONG	RFQ out for Build out Planning
Complete renovation of Town Hall; centralize Town departments	HIGH	SHORT	Town Meeting funded-Phase one complete. Phase 2 complete in November 2007. Phase 3: \$75,000 was completed Fall '09.
Work to bring sewer lines to our existing industrial park and new business zone	HIGH	SHORT	Project completed (final coat of pavement on roads spring 2010)
Develop more and better sidewalks, rail trails and bike lanes. Enhance current plan for year-round repair and replacement of streets and sidewalks	HIGH	MED	ONGOING/Committee created –determined that priorities in most traveled areas and areas around parks, Memorial School and town square. Plan complete.
ADA Removal Barriers work on Town Owned Building; continue to work 504 Transition Plan	HIGH	MED	Continue to improve- see 504 plan for specific improvements
Hire engineers to review infrastructure on S. End of the Beach including but not limited to sidewalks, drainage, sewer lines, water lines	HIGH	MED	DPW reviewing
Address Neighborhood Infrastructure and Safety issues- Mudnock Road, Maple St, Gardner St Spring St., Lion's Way, Lincoln Ave., Howard George Court, Adams St., Garfield St., Hayes St., Taft St., and Washington St..	HIGH	MED	Gardner St. Phase II construction due to begin by spring 2013. Spring St. and Lion's Way construction complete Fall 2011. Gardner St. phase I complete Fall 2012. Lincoln Ave neighborhood has completed designs.
Plan for expansion of wastewater capacity	HIGH	LONG	Purchased land for expansion May '05
Fund capital improvements project in CIP	HIGH	LONG	ONGOING
Initiate Town facilities review and long range capital planning	MED	LONG	Updated Capital Improvement Draft Plan Complete

Item	Priority	Time frame	Status
Develop reuse and accessibility plan for old schools (Memorial, Plains, Little Red School House)	MED	LONG	Memorial School – Currently occupied by Boys and Girls Club and Greater Lawrence Technical Collaborative High School. REI for Spaulding School under review. Seek bids to sell Plains School.
Study integrating police, fire and emergency services long-term	LOW	LONG	Town Manager and Police/Fire Chiefs working on a plan. RFR out to bid.
Follow up Rte 110/Rte1A corridor study for intersection/safety improvement, and congestion relief; get assistance from state legislators	LOW	LONG	New lane added at School Street (Rte 110) to prepare for additional traffic from closing of Hines Bridge for repairs.
Get increased/improved service from MVRTA	MED	LONG	Bus 54 running. Continue to work with MVRTA and underserved population to expand bus line

**PRIORITY**      LOW/MEDIUM/HIGH

**TIMEFRAME** SHORT - 1 YEAR/MEDIUM- 2-3 YEARS/LONG- 4-5 YEARS