

“What Does Rural Character Mean to You?”

“Crossroads Forum”, May, 2005

- SCENIC CHARACTER. *We are now a suburb, not a farming community.*
- A balanced blend of natural areas and locally owned businesses. Natural areas should include parks, nature trails, and lakes/ponds. Businesses should be few in number to prevent traffic congestion, but carefully chosen to provide destinations of interest to the local population.
- Open space – trees- easy access to stores & shops – Parks/areas for playgrounds – large lots & no building between homes in the “old” town area
- *Rural character is not “zoning out of control”. It is not a Wal-Mart with nice landscaping in what was once a meadow. It also is not clearly defined. It ends up different everywhere. It is a balance between controlled development and maintaining the aesthetic of what existed in a place prior to any development.*
- Hopkinton in the 70’s. Farmland/open space
- “Mayberry-esque”. Everyone knows their neighbors. Farms. Horses being led up our street. Going out our back door and into the woods to cross-country ski or snowshoe. Being able to drive up to Hopkinton Center without any traffic congestion. Being able to walk our dog down Cross St. and in Hopkinton without cars speeding by. Lots of open space.
- *Rural Hopkinton: A fantasy vision of an earlier time when the town was small, quiet, and you could know all your neighbors. Having moved here from a rural community, I would say it was defined as: Significant farming – far from population centers/difficult to get to – Wal Mart – A general feeling of settling for what you got because there aren’t any other options. Clearly, this doesn’t describe Hopkinton!*
- “Country”. It doesn’t mean exurban, which is what we’re fast becoming, or, perhaps, have already become. We must try to keep as much land open as possible. We should encourage industrial development, not housing.
- Rural streetscapes – stonewalls – trees – low or no excess lighting – large setbacks for houses. Controlled: small traffic. Buildings in industrial areas, set way back and screened. Nice, walkable town center. Controlled growth.
- Hopkinton is already past being rural. Rural is farmland, mostly RR# for mail. Agrarian industry.
- Open land. Historic significance: avoid “generic” structures like Hopkinton Drug. Slower moving cars. Observe speed limits on back roads.
- *The term rural no longer applies to Hopkinton. The town is far more suburban than rural, with all the issues generally associated with rapidly-growing suburban*

communities: rising taxes, population growth, traffic, newcomers outnumber “townies”

- *A small town has a walkable downtown with shops and services that are providing and supporting the needs of the people who live in town. These shops need to have what the locals want so they both feel connected to the town and their neighbors. People know your name you and want to support local and small businesses over larger businesses.*
- *Open space – wildlife habitats, evidence of animals/birds – clean air/water – peace/quiet – evidence of agriculture/farms – trees/shrubs – water, ponds/lakes/brooks – quaint: preserved homes/buildings*
- *Green-lined thoroughfares. Clustered neighborhoods to enable community spirit. No traffic jams. Ability to bike to shopping w/o fear of death.*
- *Smallish industrial/commercial area not noticeable, blending in with the feel of the area. Small, single family houses with large yards. Small downtown area (not huge stores) just like it is now. No larger, no smaller. Large areas of undeveloped land. The most noise heard at night is nature, not traffic. Small total population.*
- *Preserving the geographic and “regional” cultural history of the town as it incorporates new people and their personal commitments into the whole.*
- *Winding roads – stone walls – historic preservation – maintain small town feel*
- *Hopkinton before 1980’s*
- *Quiet, spacious, friendly living. Low traffic flow. Controlled, thoughtful town growth. Large areas of unbuilt land.*
- *Wooded streets with stone walls. No large developments. Open space throughout the town. Fields used for agriculture, horticultural, and farm animals. No strip malls. Any retail space should be aesthetically similar to historic buildings.*
- *People know/care about neighbors/community. Pretty: lots of trees, nature, etc. “Quaint” downtown (e.g. not lots of chains, fun & interesting shops and restaurants, locally owned.)*
- *Sufficient open space in town for passive recreational activity such as hiking, kayaking, mountain biking. Well-planned downtown and avoidance of “honky-tonk” feel.*
- *Less population density than major SMSA’s. Priority on quality of life: willing to “pay” for quality. A place where “officials” are accessible, and take the time to get to know you.*
- *In addition to being surrounded by busier, more commercial communities, Hopkinton’s rural character provides a somewhat slower, domestic, or family*

oriented community with restricted commercialization and more than average open space including recreational opportunities.

- *Open space.*
- *Open space. Non-“suburban” atmosphere, with minimal homogeneous housing developments. Winding roads. No shopping centers. Diverse population and income levels.*
- *Beautiful country roads, Traditional N.E. downtown. Rich heritage in lands. Bodies of water.*
- *A great place to live with large and small tracts of trees, parks, and stone walls along with all the history to enrich our lives. The friendliness of town people makes Hopkinton great!*
- *When the economic base of the town is centered around agricultural, local business and extractive industries. A nostalgic sop to suburban towns that deny they are suburban.*
- *Maintain some open space and keep development style less urban, but do not sacrifice the opportunity for additional commercial growth – it is needed to build revenues. Rural character is provided by scenic roads, lakes, etc and development that does occur within certain guidelines should be done to try to maintain this “feel”.*
- *Landscape, country roads, lack of commercial development*
- *Not Hopkinton. Probably a town somewhere in Montana. “Rural” town would be a remote farming town with lots of farms and large tracts of undeveloped land.*
- *Cows, farms, barns, stonewalls, shade trees hanging over roads (Fruit St.), Joe Pratt.*
- *Land largely undisturbed by commercial or residential development. Abundant in undeveloped land/open space. Town dominated by Weston Nurseries.*
- *Downtown – I love the character of the town common with the true New England flavor (trees, less traffic). Large growth of developments is bothersome, however, due to the attorney general, zoning changes are stopped. Also, stopping a lot of the developments comes with a price. I would like more industrial/commercial development so our infrastructure will not be affected as much. The geographic location is wonderful. We are now a suburban active community...changing!!*
- *Lack of expansive industrial areas. One area location. Scenic streets – no cutting of trees near the roads. Centrally located commercial area downtown.*
- *Plenty of trees. Preserving of landmarks. Keeping up with rivers and lakes in terms of pollution. Keeping our back roads as they are unless they’re unsafe.*

- Winding country roads. Friendly neighbors. Rich natural resources.
- Home spacing. Congestion control. Open space access. Trees. Community connection.
- Tree lined roads. Low housing density. Relaxed pace.
- *Winding roads. Open space. Historic homes. Preservation of mature landscaping.*
- *Open space. Low density. No strip malls. Few traffic lights. Neighborhood safety.*
- *A small, tight, “downtown section”, with quick travel to small farm areas, or houses separated by lots of land. In town, there is a densely build old section, with close, similar houses. Outside of the center, there are narrow roads with stone walls, small farm animals, chickens, roosters, lambs, goats, some horses and laundry on the line!*
- Continued existence of winding, country roads; housing and commercial/industrial hidden from view when driving through town; limited traffic; trees.
- *I moved to town in 1978...a lot has changed since then! “Rural” means:*
 - *More green and blue than black (top)*
 - *Few traffic signals*
 - *Manageable traffic*
 - *Scenic roads, outlooks or panoramas (Saddle Hill!), hiking trails, fishing*
 - *Public access to open spaces*
 - *Few national chain stores*
 - *No big box stores!*
 - *No parking meters*
 - *Walkable, attractive downtown*

“Rural” means a slower pace of life, community, and an abundant measure of woods, water, and views.
- In place: Where one feels spacious; where there is some woodland to explore on or off trail; where one can have horses and a chicken coop; where water sports don't feel crowded. In people: Where we greet one another outdoors in respect and dignity. “A friendly place to live.”
- Trees, open space, country roads, larger house lots, stone walls.
- *Farmland, open space/woodlands, fresh air, clean bodies of water, limited population, some commercial/business – small shops, no large factories, friendliness, knowing your neighbors.*
- *Hopkinton is no longer a “rural” community. It is a suburban, residential community – suburban to the Boston suburbs of the 128 area, Framingham/Natick, etc. The term “exurb” may apply more accurately to Hopkinton. It will continue to grow under these influences with constraints due to limited services (water, sewer) and public transportation. We should try to direct*

growth with mixed residential (multi & single family) with light industrial development and “appropriate” commercial development – meaning commercial development to serve the Town, not the region. Residential growth should accommodate a mix of age and economic groups.

- Maintaining the general characteristic, the face of the town. Little industrial/commercial development, but enough to give the town a tax revenue and growth...I love all the lakes and landscapes; trees and all.
- My idea of “rural character” is stonewalls; tree lined road, and a neighbor to say “hi” to. Also, our historic homes and structures to remain intact to remember where we came from.
- *Varied home styles with “traditional architecture”; rural roads (i.e. 2 lane only), winding, tree lined; encouragement of agricultural/farm use; no chain stores or fast food; protection of open water (lakes, streams); open space (either public or private); open views; protection of remaining farmland.*
- *Open space, undeveloped, natural.*
- It means historical houses, small narrow roads, trees, 61 A land – lakes free of pollution, no condos.
- Lots of undeveloped open space and no little strip mall type of commercial development. It also means narrow, winding roads.
- No traffic, limited shopping, and horse and buggies at he grocery store.
- *Green space; appropriate commercial/industrial development; appropriate signage*
- *Woodlands and open space, either privately held or held in common (public)*
- Farms, stonewalls, winding roads; small-town character; town green; town meeting form of government; fields and lakes; invisible industry. What Hopkinton was in 1977.
- Open space; quaint “downtown”; Familiar faces at the grocery store – “Everybody knows your name.”; good schools, good teachers who know the students and parents.
- The “green tunnel”; back roads; wildlife in its element.
- *Living more than 30 minutes from Boston and having some streets in the town that have many trees.*
- *Open space, parks/nature/trees, safety, lack of strip malls or store chains, low population density, narrow country roads.*
- *Farms/barns – manure piles; cultivated fields; forests and woodlands; natural growth of trees and grasses (as opposed to landscaped)*

- Quiet, slow growth; no big stores or chains; community involvement (i.e. church bake sales). It also has come to mean a real conflict in Hopkinton. You can't have rural character and all bells and whistles that all want.
- Low density; significant agricultural/and/or undesignated open space; limited development.
- Something that Hopkinton that used to have but no longer, for better or worse, has.
- *Country feel – you know you're outside the "big" city; movement is a bit slower; old-fashioned feel; locally owned businesses; breathing clean air. ("Country feel" preferable term to "rural")*
- *Undeveloped commercially; restricted low density residential; wooded; clean water; passive recreation areas*
- Woods; narrow roads; lack of light pollution (it's dark at night); wild animals; horses; stonewalls; farming
- Country estates; farm land (with a horse or two or maybe a cow); fields; open space; large acre homes (1.5 & 3); stonewalls
- *Quaint, charming, old colonial homes. Not too much commercial presence. No ugly signage. No chain-store restaurants. Not a lot of trucks driving through.*
- *Limited new housing developments. Save current open space and add more. Limit amount and type of new commercial growth. At same time, would like to see some user-friendly businesses downtown.*
- Farms, tree-lined streets (Pond St.), open space, small country stores
- Smaller town feel; independently owned retail downtown; friendly atmosphere; community activity; preserved open space
- *Lots of open space, farmland, fields, meadows, spaced out housing – a few developments, winding roads, small downtown with enough stores to support necessary services; friendly residents with a feel of community; family events; lots of dogs, horses, sheep, etc.; a sense of being away from city life; historic buildings; mostly small businesses owned and run by residents.*
- *Minimal traffic; scenic roadways; woods, ponds, meadows, wildlife; small businesses with easy access in town; Town center should participate in the rural character, not become the "zone" for the undesirable characteristics of suburban life, i.e. don't cluster densest housing, greatest traffic, etc.*
- Watersheds; forest and fields' country lanes; small downtown; wildlife
- Woodlands; scenic areas preserved; open space for passive recreation; hiking/biking trails; no big boxes; room for farms/horses; larger lots, lower density

- Open farmland, natural trails, farms and a village feeling. No franchise stores. A peaceful and involved community.