

LINCOLN'S ROADSIDES

Lincoln, Massachusetts



Prepared by

Lincoln Garden Club Roadsides Committee

October 15, 2009

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<http://www.lincolnroadsides.org/report>

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Acknowledgements

The goal of the Lincoln Garden Club Roadsides Project is to raise awareness of the need to protect and maintain the rural and historic character of Lincoln's roadsides. This report is intended to provide guidance to both private property owners and Town officials and staff as part of the broader effort to maintain the rural character of Lincoln.

This report as well as the accompanying website and brochure were the product of several years of research among Garden Club members, many residents, town staff and officials in Lincoln. The Garden thanks everyone for their contribution to the effort.

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Copies of the report are available in the Clerk's office at Town Hall and in the Lincoln Library. The Roadsides brochure was mailed to all Lincoln residents and is in Town Hall.

Find the full report as well as resident-focused guidelines and resources available for download on the Lincoln Roadsides website at www.lincolnroadsides.org.

www.lincolngardenclub.org

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B. Invasive Identification and Removal: Lincoln Conservation Commission April 2008

C. Stone Wall Maintenance : *Lincoln's Stone Walls*, Lincoln Garden Club May 2009

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Available as downloads on the Town Website: <http://www.lincolntown.org/bylaw.htm>

- 1. Lincoln Fence Bylaw: Lincoln Zoning Bylaw Section 18.5
- 2. Lincoln Scenic Road Bylaw: Lincoln General Laws Article XVII
- 3. Lincoln Reconnaissance Report, June 2006 (Landscape Inventory)
<http://www.lincolntown.org/depts/planning.htm>
- 4. Open Space and Recreation Plan, Lincoln, Ma. March 2008
<http://www.lincolntown.org/depts/conservation.htm>
- 5. Lincoln Comprehensive Long Range Plan Aug. 2009 Draft (CLRP Draft)
<http://www.lincolntown.org/index.htm>

Available through Town Clerk and Planning Board

- 6. Lincoln Roadside Study 1980
- 7. Tree Planting Guidelines from 1980 Report
- 8. Roadway Design Guidelines 1997 Report
- 9. Lincoln Dark Sky Guidelines: Lincoln Planning Board

Available on line

- 10. Massachusetts Public Shade Tree Act General Laws Chapter 87
<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/gl-87-toc.htm>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Goal

The goal of the Lincoln Garden Club Roadsides Project is to raise awareness of the need to protect and maintain the rural and historic character of Lincoln's roadsides. This report is intended to provide guidance to both private property owners and Town officials and staff as part of the broader effort to maintain the rural character of Lincoln.

With the alignment of many of Lincoln's roadways dating back to colonial times, the experience of moving through the Town for both residents and visitors continues to be one of fields, forests, stone walls and historic buildings that are an important part of our rural heritage. However, the impacts of increased traffic volumes, new development, and limited maintenance budgets have challenged Lincoln's ability to retain and improve the quality of its roadsides. Current planning studies by various Town boards and committees are focused on these challenges. This broader awareness creates an opportunity for the Town, its nonprofit partners, and property owners to work together to enhance the public face of our Town. For example, together we can:

- Clean up, reveal, repair and maintain historic stone walls
- Reduce invasives on public rights-of-way and private edges of the road, and replace with native plants
- Open up and maintain views of historic fields and historic properties
- Improve gateway intersections and road edges of key civic properties
- Guide tree pruning by utilities to preserve the shape and longevity of roadside trees
- Improve the appearance and placement of guard rails, lighting, signs
- Improve public safety with better visibility for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists

Background

Lincoln is fortunate to have much of its early road system intact and protected by the Minute Man National Historical Park and by Lincoln's Scenic Roads Bylaw. An excerpt from the 1980 Lincoln Roadside Study summarizes the linkage between our historic roads and the Town's rural character:

The roads of Lincoln are typical of country towns of mid-New England... Lincoln has retained significant portions of its agrarian, nineteenth century land uses and fine architecture built over the last centuries. This has resulted in a pattern of visually dominant zones where open fields defined by rock walls and tree allees combined with the clustered notable architecture of the Town Center have established a memorable

image... although much development has occurred in Lincoln, the suburbanization is not significantly evident.¹

The Town's basic roadway system dates back to the Colonial era and retains much of the original alignment characteristics. What has changed is the intensity of use of the roadway corridors, both for traffic and for the utility infrastructure systems that serve Town residents. The impact of these two forces, coupled with a much more wooded landscape, means that the roadway scene of today faces challenges in retaining its historic character and beauty.

Guidelines for Maintaining the Rural Character of Lincoln's Roadsides

The Public Right-of-way and the Bordering Landscape

The public right-of-way (ROW) is owned by the Town except for Routes 2 and Route 2A which are owned by the Commonwealth. The ROW includes the pavement and a strip of land adjacent to the pavement edge. Stone walls often define the ROW edge beyond the pavement. Where there are no stone walls the ROW varies in width, but in general is approximately 10-15 feet of shoulder area on each side of the pavement.

The Town is responsible for general maintenance and tree removal within the public right-of-way. Property owner actions within the ROW adjacent to their properties are generally restricted to cleaning up trash, removing invasive plant species, and planting groundcovers. Other property owner actions in the ROW such as planting of trees require Town approval.

The bordering landscape lies outside the public right-of-way and is a larger area that has significant impact on the roadside image. A zone of as much as 20 to 30 feet in width containing plantings, stone walls, fences and other structures can be an important part of one's view of the roadside. These bordering landscapes are the responsibility of property owners.

General Guidelines for Roadsides Improvements

Clean up: Roadside clean up can start with trash removal and focus on removing invasive plants that block views or interfere with stone walls.

Plantings: Property owners and the Town share a responsibility for the roadway plantings: the Town plants and maintains trees, shrubs, and ground covers within the public right-of-way while private property owners can plant in the bordering landscape, outside the public right-of-way. In addition, property owners can plant ground covers, grasses and perennials in the right-of-way with the understanding that such plantings are subject to the effects of plowing and mowing by the Town. Planting guidelines and a planting list are included in the report and appendices.

¹ Lincoln Roadside Study, Prepared for the Lincoln Roadside Committee, 1980. Page 1

Stone walls: Stone walls are significant elements of Lincoln's roadsides. More detailed information on the history and maintenance of stone walls is included in Appendix C. Care should be taken in removing invasives and scrub trees from stone walls, and traditional techniques should be used to maintain, repair and construct stone walls. Stone walls along Scenic Roads are protected and monitored by the Planning Board.

Other Guidelines: The report offers guidelines for other elements of the roadside that can impact the rural character: fencing, lighting, guardrails, storm water management, signs/traffic control hardware, and utility poles and lines.

Guidelines for Specific Roadside Types

The 1980 Lincoln Roadside Study used the two visual images of Lincoln, wooded and agrarian, as the basis for categorizing the Town's roads into five different types. Those categories were modified and updated for this report, with recommendations for each roadside type included in chapter IIIC of this report. The descriptions of the five roadside types that characterize Lincoln today are taken from the 1980 report (in italics), except for the Lincoln Station description.

Natural: *This type reflects those stretches of the roads bordered by woods. The growth, for the most part, consists of mixed trees and shrubs with few large specimen quality trees.*

Agricultural: *Throughout much of the Town extensive fields have been preserved either for continued farm use or as part of the conservation efforts of individuals and the Town. These fields provide outstanding visual contrast to the wooded areas. The roads separating these fields are often lined with mature trees whose rhythmic placement gives the road a canopied allée character. The basic landforms associated with farming tend to be level thus allowing for impressive vistas. Rock walls along these fields tend to be better built, higher and well maintained compared with those of the natural areas.*

Historic: *Complementary to the agricultural lands are those associated with or dominated by notable architecture. The mutually supportive interaction of the land and these houses and farm buildings has enriched the visual scene and provides a series of articulated lawns edged with well built walls and mature specimen trees.*

Suburban: *In determining this type two factors were considered: newness (i.e. roads not found on maps of the last century) and the scale, lawn treatment and architecture associated with these newer houses. These suburban sections have a different visual order, which is non-typical of the rest of the Town. This difference is primarily a product of the character of the houses and tended lawns which often "bleed" into the road. It is also the lack of mature trees and the absence of walls and other fixtures of past use of the land.*

Commercial/Lincoln Station: The Lincoln Station commercial area includes the shops and commercial properties bordering Lincoln Road at the railroad tracks. The north side of Lincoln Road from Lincoln Woods to the railroad tracks is characterized by well kept stone walls, a roadside path, and mature trees and plantings that buffer the parking from the road. On the south side, the roadside is more fragmented, with entries to several parking lots and side streets but with no continuous pedestrian path or unifying feature like a stone wall.

Gateways and Important Intersections

At some entrance points to Lincoln visitors and residents are welcomed with attractive views that highlight Lincoln's rural character. The goal of the recommendations in this report is to enhance the entry experience by improving vistas and other landscape elements at key gateways. Eight major gateways are identified.

Proposed Action Plans

Public/Private Cooperation: Working together, the Town, its institutional partners, and property owners can accomplish much to restore, improve and maintain our rural roadsides. Offered here are suggested actions plans for the Town and institutions, and for private property owners and neighborhoods. The Garden Club offers to continue to work on education and, as appropriate, on specific projects.

Proposed Public & Institutional Action Plans: The recommendations included in this report can be linked to and reinforce the work of several Town efforts related to roadway design guidelines. The 1997 report on roadway improvements by consultants Vanesse Hangen Brusline Inc. outlined design standards which have been supplemented by further work by the Ad Hoc Roadway and Traffic Committee (AHRTC) for the 2009-2010 roadway repaving project. Efforts by the current Long Range Planning Committee include a proposal to develop a design standards manual which can be used for both buildings as well as site/landscape improvements. Recommendations in this Roadsides report relative to plantings, stone wall maintenance, and other design features of the roadway corridor could be included in the Town's design standards by reference. Specific project opportunities which could be incorporated into the Town's agenda are listed in the report, such as linking the upcoming road improvements to roadside restoration projects such as Lincoln Station; gateway improvements; and demonstration projects with Lincoln institutions and neighborhoods.

Proposed Private Property Owner and Neighborhood Action Plan: Property owners interested in improving Lincoln's roadsides can focus both on the roadside edge as well as the bordering landscape. In particular, private property owners can focus on the plantings, walls, and other landscape features within the bordering landscape zone with attention given as to how these features relate to their roadside type.

