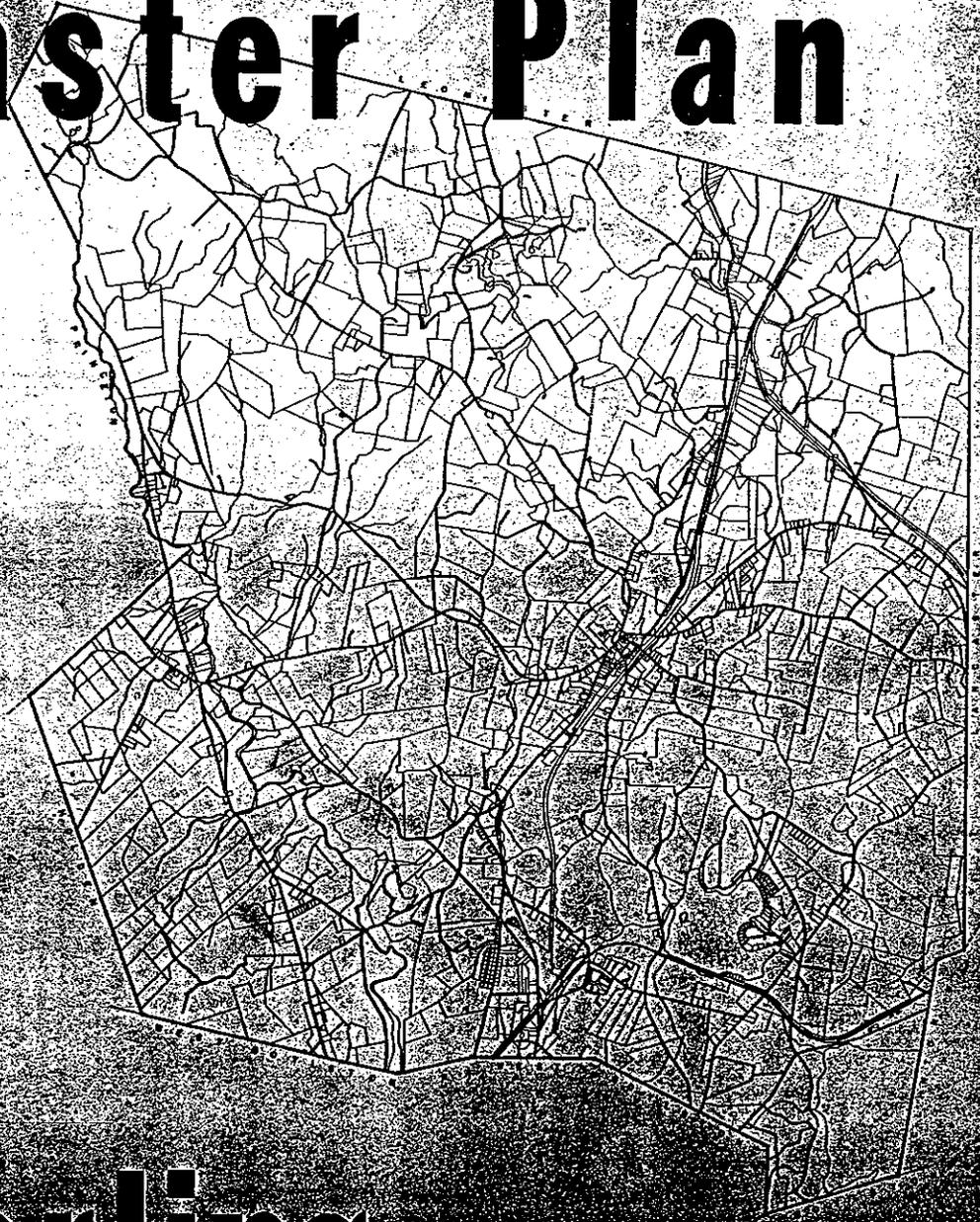


Master Plan



sterling,
massachusetts



Plan 129

ROBERT A. GORDON, CITY PLANNER

Letter of Transmittal

June 10, 1962

Sterling Planning Board
Town Hall
Sterling, Massachusetts

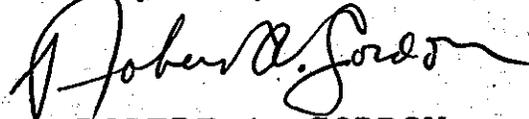
Gentlemen:

The past two years have been pleasant ones for me because of the close association between the Board and myself in pursuit of the ultimate objectives of the Master Plan herewith transmitted. It has been my earnest endeavor to provide the Board, and through the Board, the Town of Sterling with a Master Plan that will serve as a guide for municipal improvement for a reasonable period of time.

In making recommendations, I have attempted to suggest only those things that the town needs in anticipation of future growth. Many of the projects that should be started now will be well beyond possibility in ten years time so prompt action in acquiring land and adopting regulations is necessary if the ultimate economy is to be achieved. Completion of a Master Plan is only the beginning. From this point forward, the Board and town must take appropriate action to see that the recommendations are properly reviewed and updated each year, in other words, that the Planning Program becomes a continuous one.

Sterling is a pleasant town with a rural character that can be preserved and enhanced by constant vigilance of its citizens in preserving that character. It is my earnest hope that this Plan will help them do so.

Respectfully submitted,



ROBERT A. GORDON
City Planner

72 New Bond Street
Worcester 6, Massachusetts

MASTER PLAN

TOWN OF STERLING, MASSACHUSETTS

Prepared by:

Robert A. Gordon
72 New Bond Street
Worcester, Massachusetts

For the:

Town of Sterling, Massachusetts under contract with the
Department of Commerce of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

and:

The Federal Urban Planning Assistance Program Section 701
Title VII Housing Act of 1954

June 1962

TOWN OF STERLING, MASSACHUSETTS

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INTRODUCTION

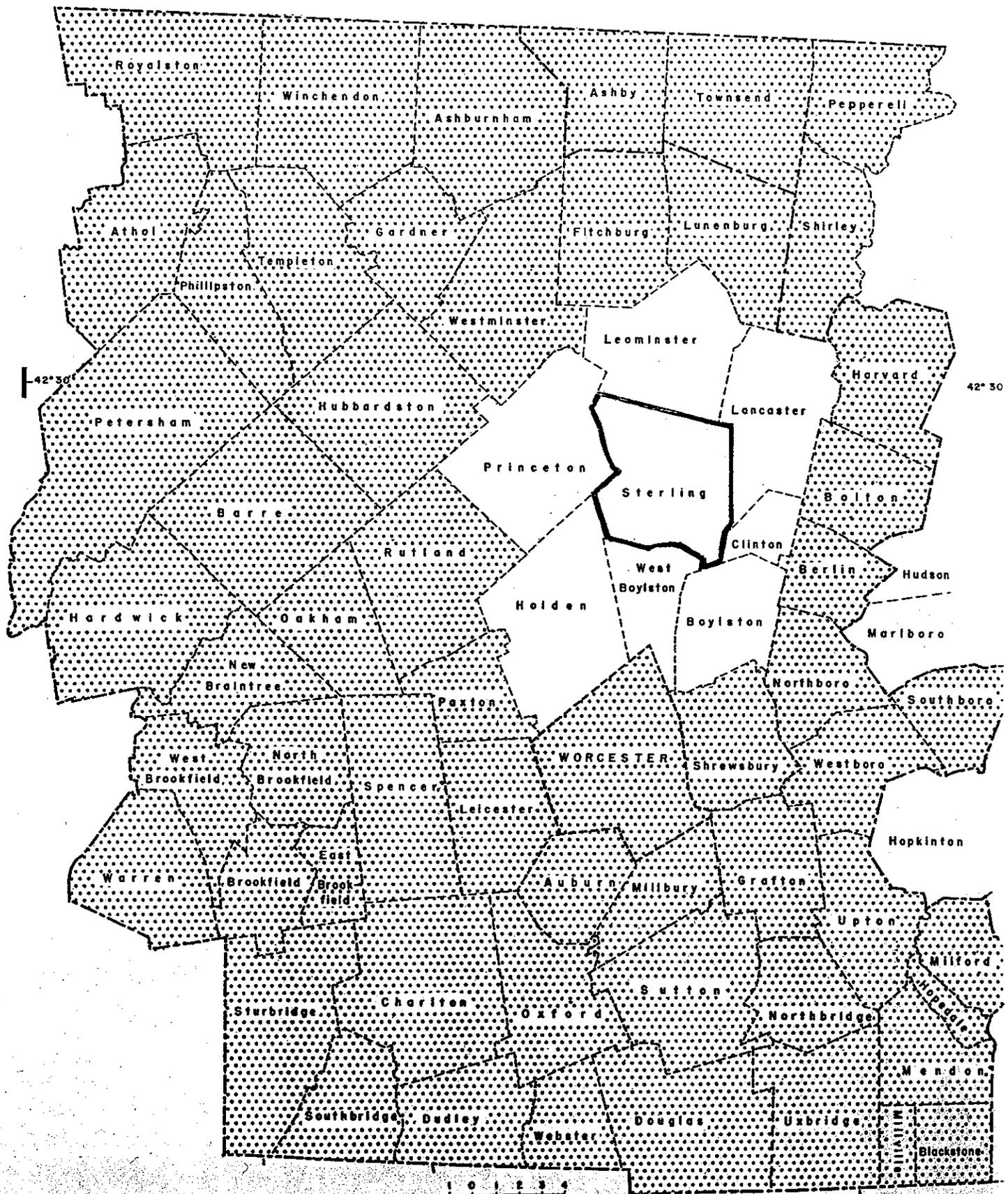
Sterling Massachusetts is a rural-residential community located in the north central section of Worcester County, (see Plate I). It lies between two urban complexes, Worcester to the south and Leominster-Fitchburg to the north. Both of these industrialized centers exert pressure on the town of Sterling. The pressure has come in the form of expansion of residential land uses. New construction in the town has averaged 20 - 30 new residential buildings per year since 1945. The effect is a gradual reduction of open space - sometimes the loss of its valuable orchards - and an increase in the need for town services.

While there is ample room for growth in Sterling (54.7% of the land is open space subject to development) much of the vacant land will require extensive municipal service if it is to be developed as an asset to the town in the future. These areas will require increased access for example. Much of the land is wet and stony and will require new and better drainage facilities. There is ample water reserve but an extension of town water mains will insure adequate fire protection for expanding residential areas.

Certain characteristics of the town are conducive to further residential expansion. Its proximity to the regional employment centers of Leominster-Fitchburg, Clinton and Worcester is one of these characteristics. The high hills offering pleasant vistas to homeowners in new sub-divisions is another. Accessibility to employment centers is generally good if not always rapid. The town of Sterling has public and private recreation facilities along the shores of the several ponds within its borders. Large enclaves of public open space insure a rural character for parts of Sterling for some time to come. However, the need is apparent for a plan to guide growth and development in the future, and to recommend locations for public buildings and services, playgrounds and streets etc to serve the community. The Planning Board of the Town of Sterling herein attempts to estimate this need for the next two decades.

72°

STERLING'S POSITION IN WORCESTER COUNTY



0 1 2 3 4
MILES

72°

PLATE I

CARTOGRAPHY: ROBERT A. GORDON

HISTORY

Sterling was first known by the Indian name of Chocksett. After its separation from Lancaster in 1720, it became incorporated under its present name in 1781. The original settlement was formed around the Unitarian Church, which was later replaced by the present Greek type structure now housing an Antique shop. Sterling is predominantly a farming community, and farming is still a major source of income for its residents. For many years the rich soil on the slopes of Sterling's hills have nurtured its apple orchards.

Lack of water resources forestalled industrial growth in Sterling. Textile and paper-making factories located elsewhere - where water for power and processing was more readily available. Still, early industries located on the Stillwater River, where its slim resources were used to saw wood and grind grain. Over the years, many small industries have located in Sterling. The manufacture of clocks, hats, shirts, pottery, cider and other home type industries are some of these. Sterling has had its inventors too. In 1863 Ebenezer Buttrick invented the standard paper pattern used in dressmaking, and another native, Silas Stewart, invented a machine for manufacture of sewing machine needles. During most of Sterling's history, the town has had some sort of Woodworking enterprise. Sawmills, chair manufacture and, even until today, the manufacture of boxes used to pack apples from its many orchards.

In the past, the many thriving enterprises in Sterling were scattered over the town, their buildings and grounds even today landmarks in the history of Sterling.