



Data Sources: MAPC Analysis, MassGIS, MassDOT, US Census, Info USA, Walk Score

Mapping Town and Village Centers

The town and village center has been an essential feature of Massachusetts communities for centuries. Centrally-located colonial town halls served as a nucleus for stores, schools, worship, and civic spaces. Over time, these centers grew and densified while new villages sprouted in city neighborhoods. These centers are less economically significant today, but they can play a vital role in the MAPC region’s future. The characteristics that we associate with town and village centers — a mix of uses, walkable streets, higher densities — are also known to reduce driving and increase transit use, making them ideal locations for new growth. For many residents, the vibrancy and viability of their town or village center is a key concern.

The MAPC “Village Screen” ranking measures every Census Block based on key characteristics such as number of businesses, street connectivity, Walk Score, population density, employment, building density, and

distance to that municipality’s city or town hall. The highest-ranked census blocks in each city or town are identified on this map.

This screening tool can inform plans for new growth to revitalize sluggish downtowns, expand housing choices, reduce auto dependence, and improve the local economy. Communities can take advantage of these benefits by adopting zoning to encourage well-designed compact development that will help make village and town centers central again.