

## Economic Development Existing Conditions

Economic Development relates to the Wrentham's Vision in several ways. The small businesses and commercial districts of Wrentham contribute to its identity and character, the job opportunities influence the community composition and quality of life of residents, and a healthy economy and housing market helps provide for the Town's strong schools. Most directly, thoughtful economic development strategies targeting Downtown can help achieve the Vision for a "Downtown with more 'Mom and Pop' shops, small businesses, homes, and places to gather". In addition, ensuring "fiscal responsibility" will require analysis and attention to the tax rates, assessment value, and mix of land uses.

The following chapter presents findings related to economic development from data analysis and community engagement. The data analysis focuses on the Wrentham workforce, including both the residents of Wrentham and the people who work in Wrentham; jobs and businesses in Wrentham; commercial and industrial districts; and the municipal budget. The analysis is based on the most recent data available, which varies based on the data source. As explained in the Housing Chapter, the most recent source of Census data is the US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Average from 2014-2018. Data related to the municipal budget is more recent from fiscal years 2020 or 2021.

The quantitative data analysis must be understood within the context of the community's feedback, which provides insight into the lived experience of Wrentham residents and businesses. The community feedback was gathered through a town-wide survey, focus groups, and discussion with the Wrentham Economic Development Commission, as explained in the Introduction.

## Quick Facts

- COVID-19 pandemic
  - 10% unemployed in Wrentham in September 2020, 20% renters
- Workforce
  - 60% have Bachelor's degree or higher
  - Residents work in a variety of sectors, mostly in Boston and in other locations northeast of Wrentham
- Businesses & Employees
  - Most jobs are in Retail (median annual wage of \$21,000) and Education (median annual wage of \$48,000)
  - Job growth over past decade has been almost all in Retail
  - About 1 in 3 jobs in Wrentham are at Clothing and clothing accessories stores
  - 50% of businesses employ 4 or fewer employees
  - Commercial districts and industrial quarries
  - 80% of taxes from residential property, 20% from commercial/industrial

## Key Themes

The key themes of the data analysis and community engagement are summarized below.

- **The pandemic has had devastating impacts. Wrentham's businesses and jobs are concentrated in the retail sector, which has been one of the hardest hit industries both in terms of jobs and sales.** As of September 2020, 10% of Wrentham residents were unemployed. In addition to the immediate impacts, the future of brick-and-mortar retail is uncertain as more people started buying more goods online during the pandemic in order to maintain physical distance.
- **There are more jobs than workers in Wrentham, yet there's a mismatch between the workforce and jobs.** Almost all residents commute out of Town and work in higher-paying jobs in Boston or other destinations northwest of Wrentham. Half of residents spend more than an hour commuting each day, and 20% of residents spend more than two hours commuting each day. People who are employed in Wrentham come from locations south and southwest of Wrentham and mostly work in lower-paying retail jobs.
- **There are five main commercial districts: Downtown, Route 1, Wampum Corner, Premium Outlets, and western portion of Route 140, each with distinct characteristics that serve different clientele. However, businesses and jobs are concentrated at the Outlets.** Forty percent of Wrentham's jobs and 25% of its businesses are located at the Outlets. Regardless, about half of businesses in Wrentham are small businesses employing four or fewer employees.
- **Recent rezoning in Downtown Wrentham and along Route 1 provide unique opportunities for new commercial development. However, there are also unique challenges in both areas.** For example, the recent rezoning along Route 1 provides opportunity for new office and retail development, as well as protection and enhancement of natural and recreational resources in the area. However, there is strong competition in the retail sector in nearby locations in Foxborough, Plainville, and Franklin, where many residents leave Wrentham to go grocery shopping, as well as to buy other goods such as clothes and home supplies. In addition, uncertainty in the development process and Wrentham's reputation as being unfriendly to business has muted growth.
- **Wrentham has the highest assessed value, the lowest residential tax rate, and the second to lowest commercial, industrial, and personal property tax rates out of all neighboring towns. However, the Outlets account for almost 10% of Wrentham's assessed property value.** The second largest taxpayer accounts for only 1% of the property tax base, therefore the Outlets have an enormous role in the fiscal health of Wrentham.

### *COVID-19 Pandemic*

Although the COVID-19 pandemic's precise impacts are uncertain and still unfolding, it has clearly had devastating effects on the economy. Throughout the course of the pandemic starting in March 2020, non-essential businesses have faced closures, limited hours of operation, and restrictions on occupancy. Those sectors requiring the most in-person interaction (fitness centers, restaurants, etc.) have seen the most restrictions. At the beginning of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, 21 percent of wage earners in Massachusetts filed for unemployment. Over the next few months, people started to return to work, but 9.4% of the Massachusetts labor force still filed for unemployment in September 2020.<sup>1</sup>

In Wrentham, as of September 2020, approximately 10% of the workforce was unemployed, and the impacts have not been distributed evenly across the population. Of the 505 unemployment claims in Wrentham, 20% were from renters, yet renters make up only 15% of the households in Wrentham. Therefore, renters in Wrentham were disproportionately harmed by the job losses during the pandemic. In addition, certain industries have been harder hit than others: approximately 25 percent of people who work in sales were laid off in the spring of 2020.<sup>2</sup> With Wrentham's concentration of businesses and jobs at the Premium Outlets, it can be assumed that the pandemic has hit the local economy hard. Moreover, small businesses of all varieties have struggled through months of unprecedented challenge.

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<sup>1</sup> MAPC, 2020. *The COVID-19 Layoff Housing Hap, October Update: The Crisis Continues*.

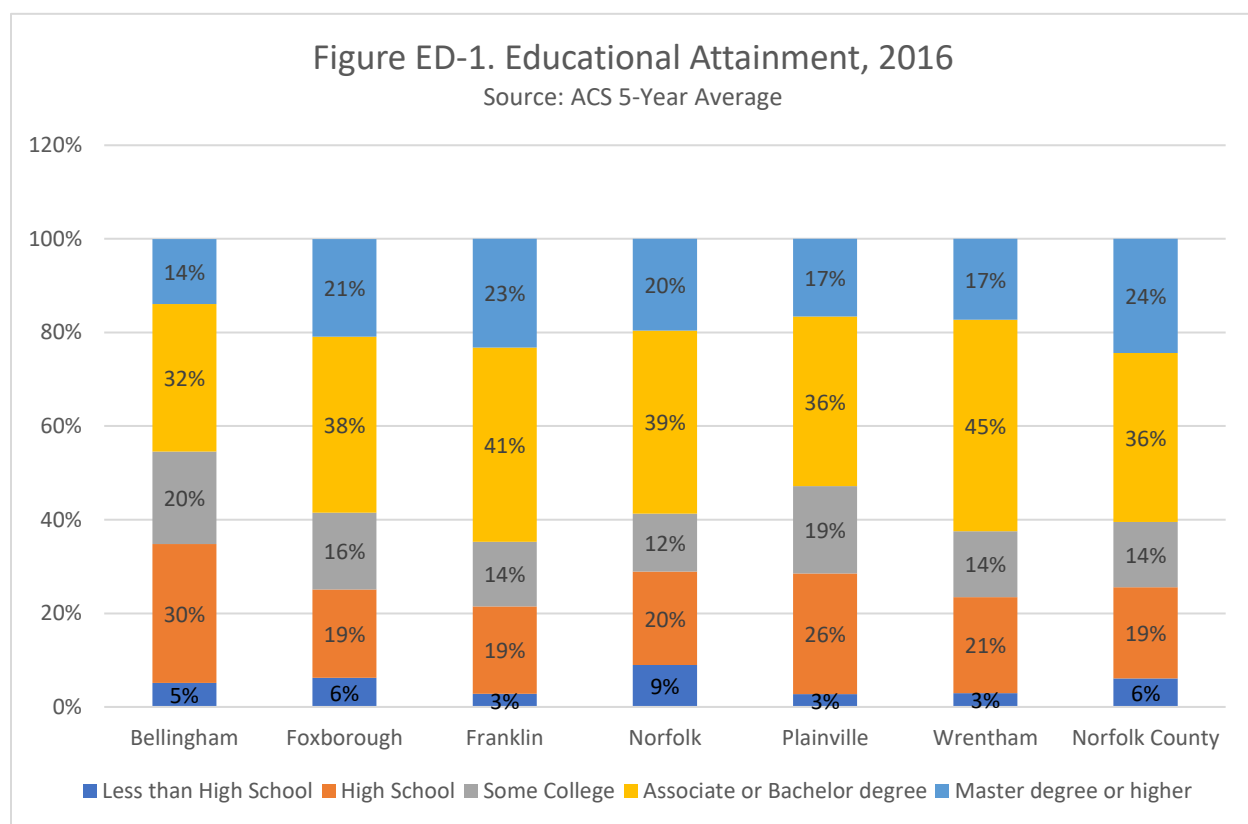
<sup>2</sup> MAPC, 2020.

## Workforce

There are 6,235 residents eligible for the workforce, as defined as aged 25-64 years. Between 2014-2018, the five-year average unemployment rate in Wrentham was 5.0%, the same as Norfolk County's.<sup>3</sup>

### *Educational attainment*

There is wide variation in the educational attainment of residents.<sup>4</sup> About 60% of Wrentham residents have a Bachelor degree or higher; however, 23 percent of Wrentham residents have a high school degree or less, and 17 percent of residents have a Master degree or higher. In other words, there are more residents with a high school degree or less than there are residents with a Master degree. Figure ED-1 compares the educational attainment of Wrentham's population to neighboring towns and the County at large. Franklin, which has a similar median income to Wrentham, has more residents with Masters degrees or higher.



<sup>3</sup> ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018

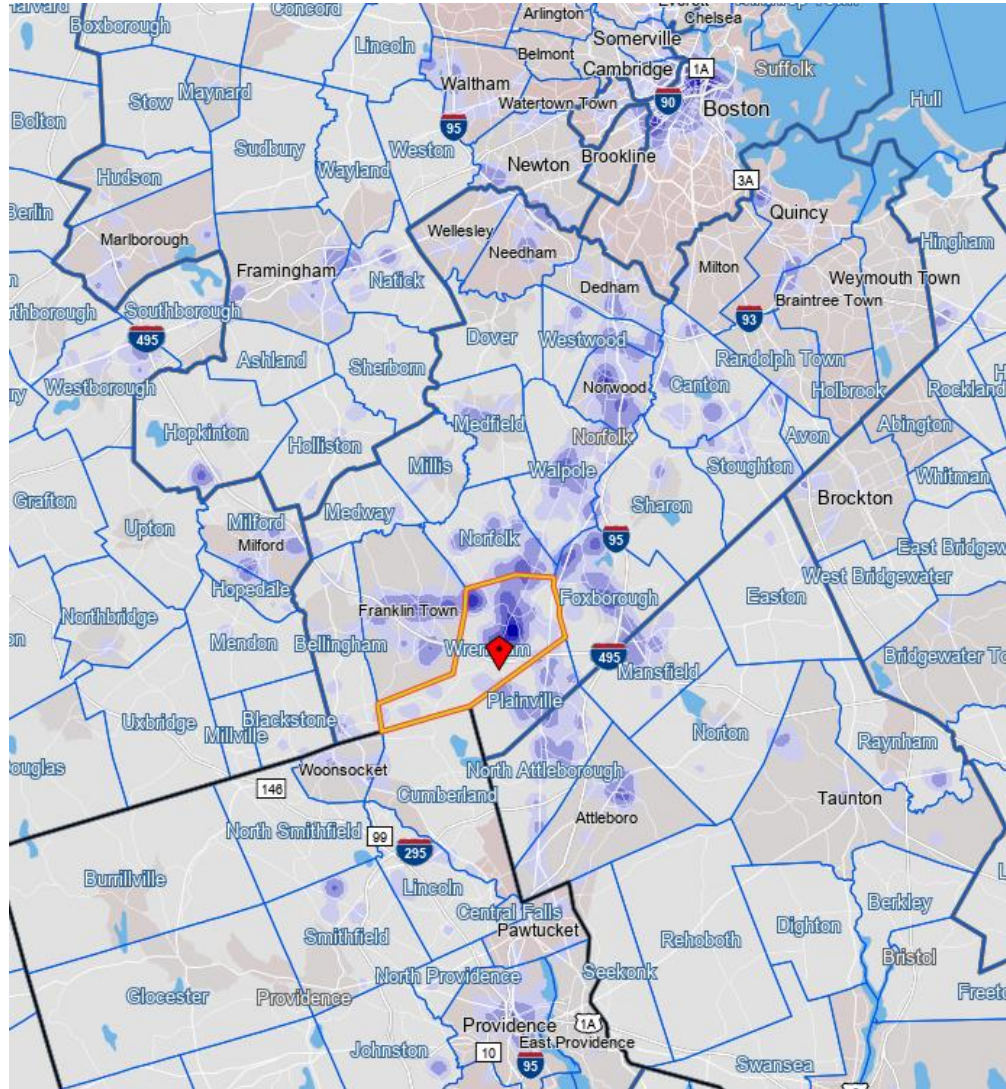
<sup>4</sup> Residents 25 years and over

### *Location of Jobs and Commute of Wrentham Residents*

Most residents work northeast of Wrentham in Boston, as well as in Walpole and Norwood. Figure ED-2 illustrates the location of resident's jobs with the darker purple color representing higher concentrations of jobs at which Wrentham residents work.

*Figure ED-2: Where Wrentham Residents Work, 2018*

Source: US Census



Fifty-two percent of Wrentham residents spend more than an hour commuting each day, including 21 percent of residents spend more than two hours commuting each day. Figure ED-3 illustrates the one-way commute time for Wrentham residents. The commute times are similar to those of residents in Bellingham, Foxborough, and Franklin. More residents in Norfolk have long commutes, and more residents in Plainville have short commutes. The data is too limited to identify changes in the length of commutes over time, however, there has been an increase in the number of and overall percentage of commuters who commute by transit, as shown in Figure ED-4. While most residents drive to work, 10 percent, or one in 10 residents, commute by transit. Wrentham is located between two commuter rail lines. The closest stations on the Franklin Line are in Norfolk and Franklin, providing approximately an hour-long train ride to South Station, Boston during the morning commute. The closest station on the Providence/Stoughton line are in Sharon and Mansfield, providing approximately a 40-minute train ride to South Station, Boston or a 40-minute train ride to Providence.

Figure ED-3. One-Way Commute Time for Wrentham Residents, 2016

Source: ACS 5-Year Survey

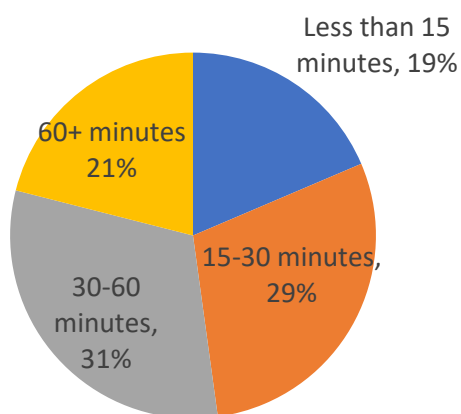
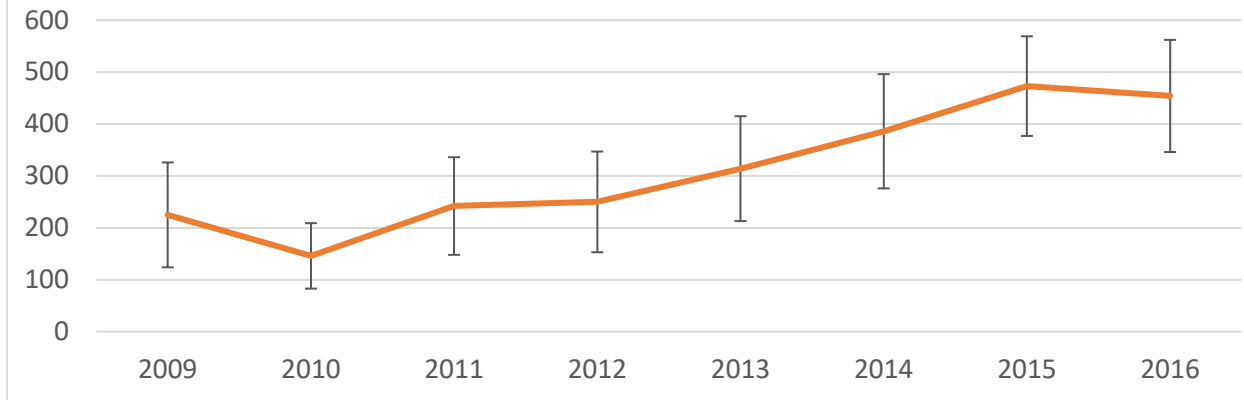


Figure ED-4. Growth in Number of Residents who Commute by  
Transit

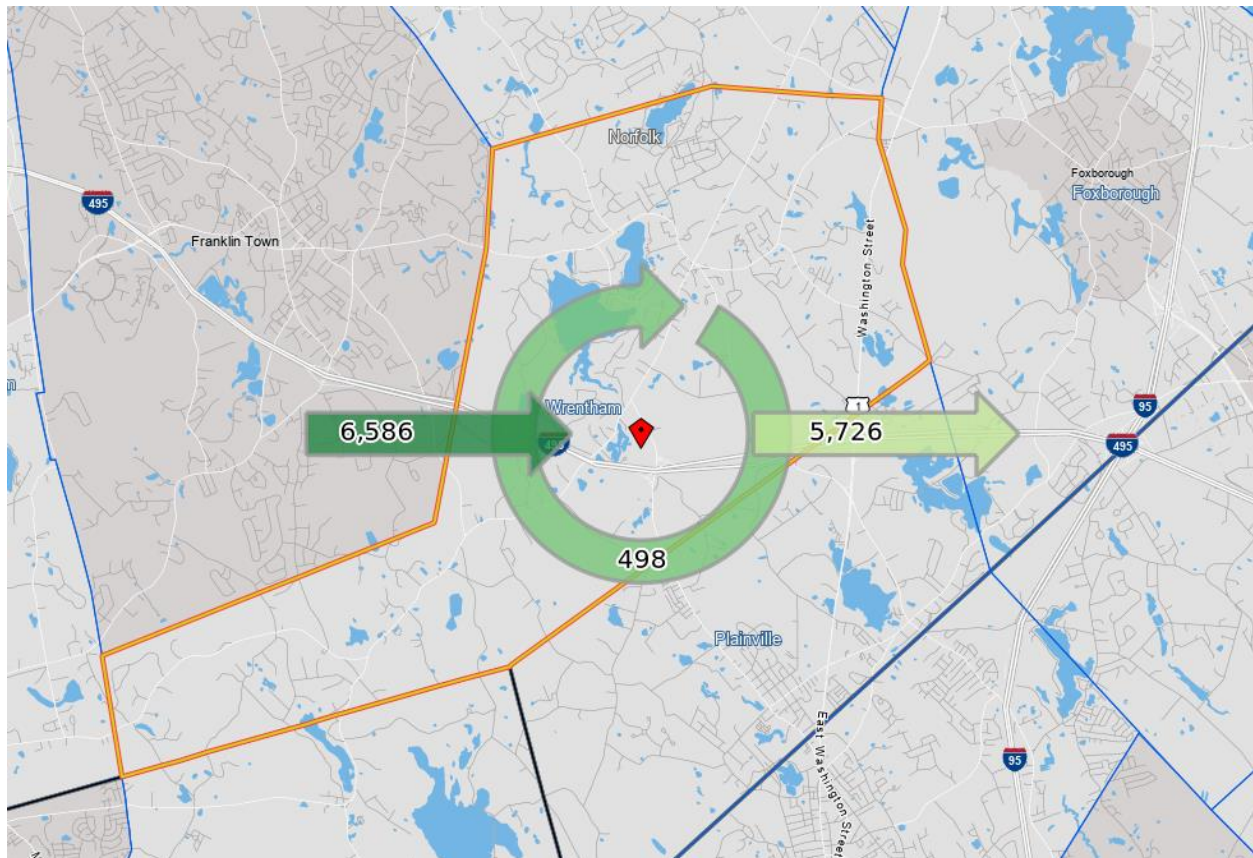
Source: ACS 5-Year Average



This pattern of residents commuting to the large city within a metropolitan area is not new or uncommon. However, Wrentham is not a traditional “bedroom” community in which most people leave town during the day. In fact, there are more jobs in Wrentham than workers—in 2016, there were 7,382 jobs and 6,235 residents in the labor force.<sup>5</sup> Figure ED-5 illustrates the daily flow of people in and out of Wrentham—a large number of people come to Wrentham to work (6,586 workers), a large number of residents leave to work (5,726 residents), and a relatively small number of residents stay and work in town (498 residents).<sup>6</sup>

*Figure ED-5: Inflow and Outflow of Workers, 2018*

Source: US Census



<sup>5</sup> Source: ACS 5-Year Survey 2014-2018, U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2016).

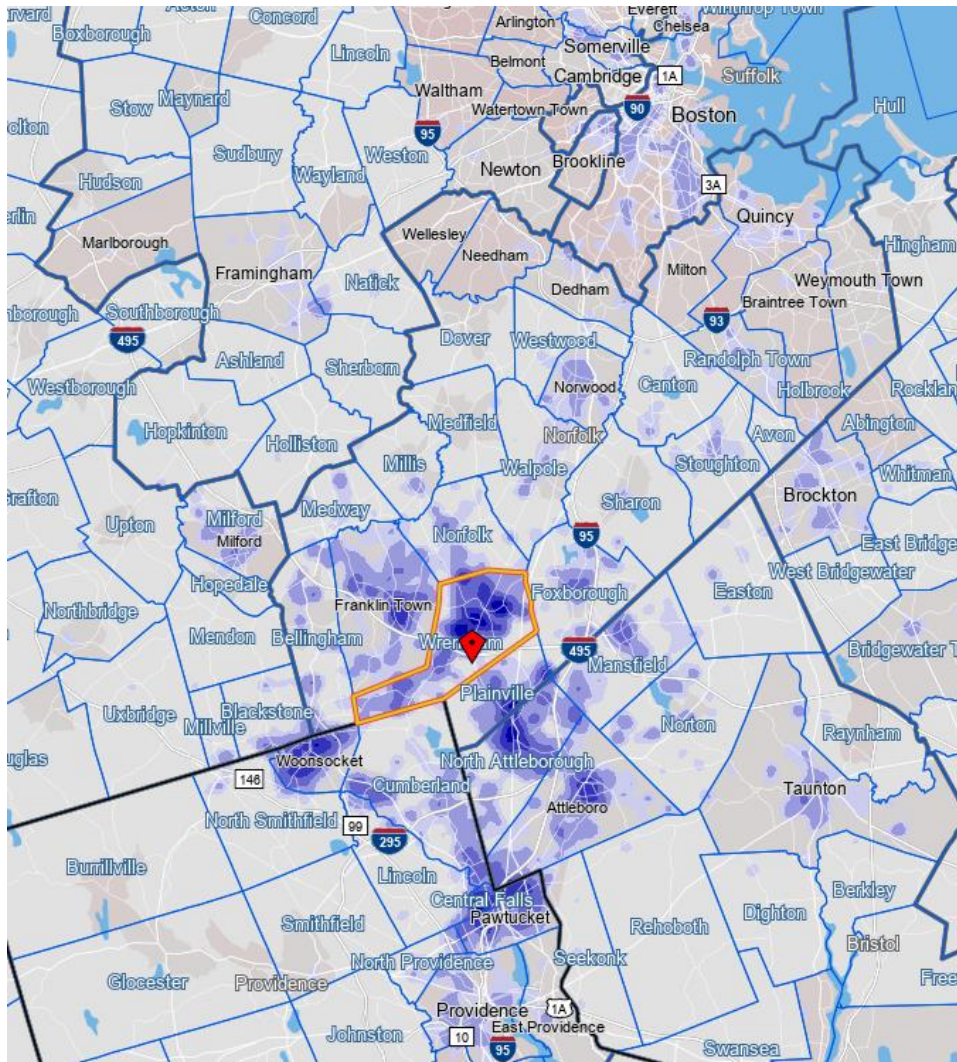
<sup>6</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2018).

### *People who work in Wrentham*

The people who work in Wrentham mostly come from the south, including Plainville and Attleboro, as well as Woonsocket and Central Falls in Rhode Island. The residential locations of people who work in Wrentham is shown in Figure ED-6 with areas of darker purple showing higher concentrations of residential locations.

*Figure ED-6: Where People who Work in Wrentham Live, 2018*

*Source: US Census*



### *Workforce and Jobs Mismatch*

One potential reason for the mismatch between the residents of Wrentham and the people who work in Wrentham is that the jobs in Wrentham do not match the education and skills of residents. Wrentham residents hold a variety of jobs in Health Care and Social Assistance; Retail Trade; Educational Services; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Manufacturing; and other industry sectors. In comparison, the types of jobs in Wrentham are concentrated in only two sectors: Retail Trade and Educational Services.<sup>7</sup> Figure ED-7 compares the types of jobs held by residents and the types of jobs held by people who work in Wrentham.

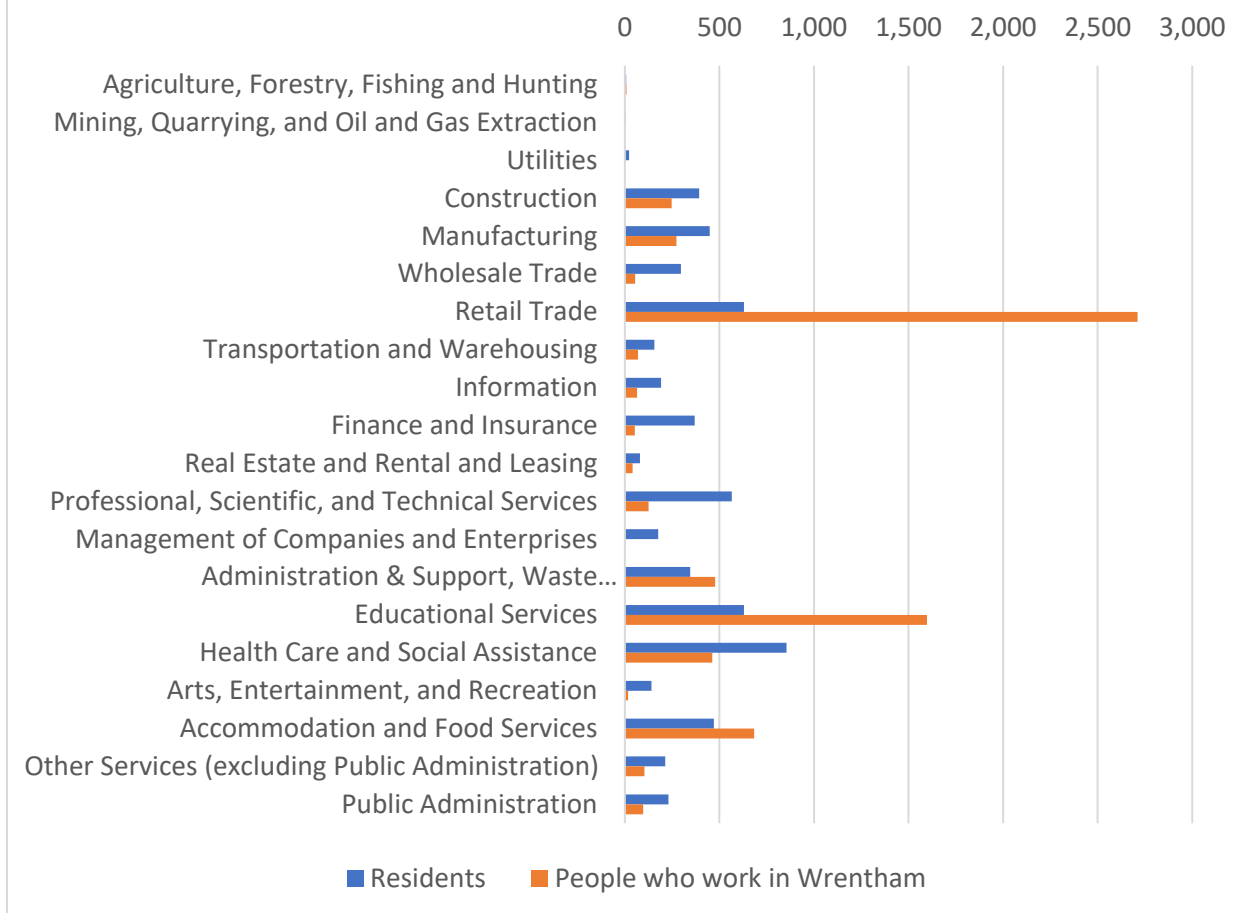
Another potential reason for the mismatch is that the housing in Wrentham does not meet the needs of workers in Wrentham. The Housing chapter discusses the lack of affordable and smaller housing options in Wrentham.

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<sup>7</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2018).

Figure ED-7. Jobs of residents vs. Jobs of people who work in Wrentham, 2018

Source: US Census



## Business and Employees

### *Jobs by Industry*

Table ED-1 shows the number of jobs and businesses by industry in Wrentham, as well as the average weekly wages and average annual wages of each job. As illustrated in Figure ED-7 above, jobs in Wrentham are concentrated in Retail Trade and Educational Services, which are also among the lowest paid jobs. The annual wage of someone working retail in Wrentham is \$21,360 and \$48,384 for someone in Educational Services.<sup>8</sup> In comparison, the median income of someone who lives in Wrentham is \$113,017.<sup>9</sup> As discussed in the Housing chapter, most people who work in Wrentham cannot afford to live here.

Table ED-1: Jobs and Wages in Wrentham by Industry, 2018

| Industry                                     | Jobs         | Businesses | Average Weekly Wage | Average Annual Wage |
|--|--------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Construction                                 | 268          | 62         | \$1,156             | \$55,488            |
| Wholesale Trade                              | 48           | 23         | \$1,591             | \$76,368            |
| Retail Trade                                 | 2,613        | 172        | \$445               | \$21,360            |
| Transportation and Warehousing               | 78           | 10         | \$1,189             | \$57,072            |
| Information                                  | 55           | 8          | \$1,663             | \$79,824            |
| Finance and Insurance                        | 65           | 16         | \$1,848             | \$88,704            |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing           | 36           | 10         | \$1,172             | \$56,256            |
| Professional and Technical Services          | 136          | 50         | \$1,561             | \$74,928            |
| Administrative and Waste Services            | 471          | 31         | \$876               | \$42,048            |
| Educational Services                         | 1,328        | 10         | \$1,008             | \$48,384            |
| Health Care and Social Assistance            | 473          | 50         | \$757               | \$36,336            |
| Accommodation and Food Services              | 772          | 24         | \$466               | \$22,368            |
| Other Services, Except Public Administration | 109          | 30         | \$701               | \$33,648            |
| Public Administration                        | 135          | 9          | \$1,385             | \$66,480            |
| <b>Total, All Industries</b>                 | <b>6,914</b> | <b>516</b> | <b>\$749</b>        | <b>35,952</b>       |

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)

<sup>8</sup> Some workers may hold more than one job, so the annual wage may not correlate to the annual income of each worker.

<sup>9</sup> ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018

Jobs in Wrentham have been concentrated in retail and education since at least 2004 at the time of the last Master Plan. Table ED-2 shows the change in the number of jobs and Establishments in Wrentham by industry between 2005 and 2018. The table is color coded to identify those industries that have gained or lost a substantial percentage of jobs and/or Establishments. More than 25% of jobs in the Manufacturing, Wholesale Trade, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing industries have been lost since 2005. The number of jobs in Retail Trade, Information, Administrative and Waste Services, and Other Services have increased. However, the number of jobs in these industries, other than Retail Trade, is minimal. The growth in jobs in the past 13 years has almost all been in the Retail Trade—Wrentham gained approximately 1,000 jobs between 2005 and 2018, and 842 of those were in the Retail Trade. More than 75% of the jobs in Retail Trade in Wrentham are in clothing and clothing accessories stores, presumably at the Wrentham Premium Outlets.

Table ED-2. Change in Jobs and Establishments in Wrentham by Industry, 2005-2018

|                                     |                       | 2005         | 2018         | Change     | % Change   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Construction                        | Jobs                  | 271          | 268          | (3)        | -1%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 57           | 62           | 5          | 9%         |
| Manufacturing*                      | Jobs                  | 457          | 315          | (142)      | -31%       |
|                                     | Establishments        | 13           | 8            | (5)        | -38%       |
| Wholesale Trade                     | Jobs                  | 147          | 48           | (99)       | -67%       |
|                                     | Establishments        | 25           | 23           | (2)        | -8%        |
| Retail Trade                        | Jobs                  | 1,771        | 2,613        | 842        | 48%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 135          | 172          | 37         | 27%        |
| Transportation and Warehousing      | Jobs                  | 48           | 78           | 30         | 63%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 9            | 10           | 1          | 11%        |
| Information                         | Jobs                  | 33           | 55           | 22         | 67%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 6            | 8            | 2          | 33%        |
| Finance and Insurance               | Jobs                  | 70           | 65           | (5)        | -7%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 15           | 16           | 1          | 7%         |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing  | Jobs                  | 54           | 36           | (18)       | -33%       |
|                                     | Establishments        | 11           | 10           | (1)        | -9%        |
| Professional and Technical Services | Jobs                  | 136          | 136          | -          | 0%         |
|                                     | Establishments        | 39           | 50           | 11         | 28%        |
| Administrative and Waste Services   | Jobs                  | 156          | 471          | 315        | 202%       |
|                                     | Establishments        | 23           | 31           | 8          | 35%        |
| Educational Services                | Jobs                  | 1,331        | 1,328        | (3)        | 0%         |
|                                     | Establishments        | 7            | 10           | 3          | 43%        |
| Health Care and Social Assistance   | Jobs                  | 449          | 473          | 24         | 5%         |
|                                     | Establishments        | 22           | 50           | 28         | 127%       |
| Accommodation and Food Services     | Jobs                  | 742          | 772          | 30         | 4%         |
|                                     | Establishments        | 28           | 24           | (4)        | -14%       |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Admin    | Jobs                  | 86           | 109          | 23         | 27%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 31           | 30           | (1)        | -3%        |
| Public Administration               | Jobs                  | 122          | 135          | 13         | 11%        |
|                                     | Establishments        | 7            | 9            | 2          | 29%        |
| <b>Total, All Industries</b>        | <b>Jobs</b>           | <b>5,915</b> | <b>6,914</b> | <b>999</b> | <b>17%</b> |
|                                     | <b>Establishments</b> | <b>433</b>   | <b>516</b>   | <b>83</b>  | <b>19%</b> |

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)

Notes:

\* The number of jobs and Establishments in Manufacturing in Wrentham in 2018 is unavailable, therefore the jobs and Establishments in 2017 is shown here.

### *Size of Establishments*

The largest employers are listed in Table ED-3. Three are located at the Premium Outlets, three are related to schools, two are national chain restaurants, and two are industrial. This data should be understood within context, as it may include inaccuracies and has been generalized to preserve confidentiality. The vast majority of businesses in Wrentham are located at the Premium Outlets. As of 2016, there were approximately 519 businesses in the Premium Outlets.<sup>10</sup>

Table ED-3: Largest Employers, 2016

| <b>Company Name</b>            | <b>Address</b>              | <b>Type of Establishment</b>    | <b>Number of Employees</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Bloomingdale's                 | 1 Premium Outlet Blvd # 5   | Department Stores               | 100-249                    |
| Gap Outlet                     | 1 Premium Outlet Blvd # 360 | Factory Outlets                 | 100-249                    |
| Tlc Cleaning Co                | 50 Industrial Rd            | Janitor Service                 | 100-249                    |
| Capstan Atlantic               | 10 Cushing Dr               | Metal-Powder-Fabricators (Mfrs) | 100-249                    |
| Cracker Barrel Old Country Str | 1048 South St # 40          | Restaurants                     | 100-249                    |
| Ruby Tuesday                   | 1 Premium Outlet Blvd # 800 | Restaurants                     | 100-249                    |
| Delaney Vogel School           | 120 Taunton St              | Schools                         | 100-249                    |
| King Philip High School        | 201 Franklin St             | Schools                         | 100-249                    |
| Wrentham School Superintendent | 120 Taunton St              | Schools                         | 100-249                    |

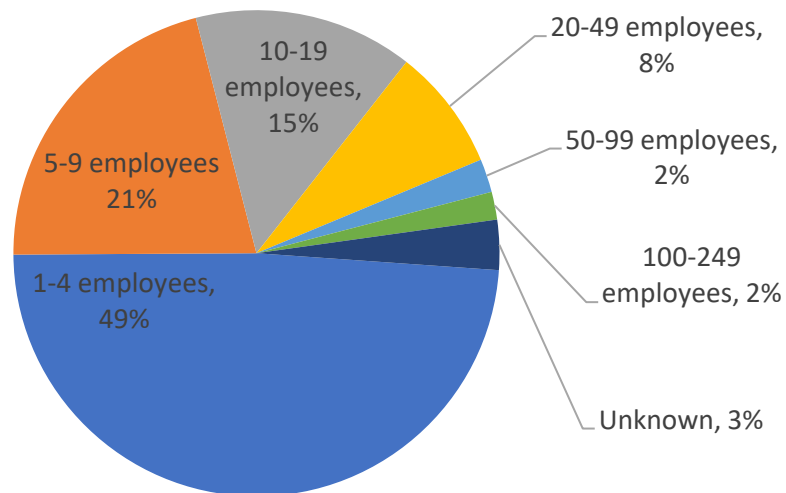
Source: InfoGroup 2016

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<sup>10</sup> InfoGroup 2016. This number may be an overestimate, as according to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, there were a total of 510 establishments in all industries in Wrentham in 2016. Both the data from InfoGroup nor the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development may have inaccuracies.

Regardless of the concentration of businesses at the Premium Outlets, most businesses in Wrentham are small businesses. Half of the businesses employ less than 5 employees, and 22 percent employ less than 10 employees, as shown in Figure ED-8. This proportion is similar to that of neighboring towns, except for Norfolk where a more businesses, 60 percent, employ fewer than five employees.<sup>11</sup>

Figure ED-8. Businesses by # of Employees, 2016  
Source: InfoGroup, 2016



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<sup>11</sup> InfoGroup 2016

Table ED-4 shows the number of businesses in Wrentham and surrounding towns by number of employees. Although Wrentham has a similar proportion of small businesses, it lacks larger businesses employing more than 250 workers. In comparison, Franklin has five businesses employing 500-999 people, and both Bellingham and Foxborough have at least one business that employs more than 1,000 people.

Table ED-4. Businesses by Number of Employees, 2016

| # of Employees          | Number of Businesses |            |            |             |            |            |
|-------------------------|----------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
|                         | Wrentham             | Bellingham | Foxboro    | Franklin    | Norfolk    | Plainville |
| <b>1-4</b>              | 264                  | 323        | 450        | 587         | 200        | 236        |
| <b>5-9</b>              | 114                  | 136        | 200        | 261         | 60         | 105        |
| <b>10-19</b>            | 79                   | 65         | 100        | 131         | 23         | 38         |
| <b>20-49</b>            | 44                   | 52         | 65         | 111         | 16         | 37         |
| <b>50-99</b>            | 12                   | 10         | 23         | 40          | 5          | 7          |
| <b>100-249</b>          | 10                   | 9          | 19         | 26          | 5          | 7          |
| <b>250-499</b>          | 0                    | 1          | 1          | 5           | 1          | 0          |
| <b>500-999</b>          | 0                    | 0          | 1          | 2           | 0          | 0          |
| <b>1000-4999</b>        | 0                    | 0          | 2          | 0           | 0          | 0          |
| <b>5000-9999</b>        | 0                    | 1          | 0          | 0           | 0          | 0          |
| <b>Unknown</b>          | 18                   | 34         | 34         | 47          | 10         | 20         |
| <b>Total businesses</b> | <b>541</b>           | <b>631</b> | <b>895</b> | <b>1210</b> | <b>320</b> | <b>450</b> |

Source: InfoGroup, 2016

## Commercial/Industrial Districts

Figure ED-8 shows the land use of each parcel in Wrentham, according to the Wrentham Tax Assessor. The dark red color indicates commercial land use. As shown in the figure, the commercial land uses are clustered at the following five main commercial districts, and potentially at a sixth along Route 1A in the north of town: Downtown, Wampum Corner, Premium Outlets, Route 1, and Route 140. Each district has a different character and provides different goods, services, and consumer experiences.

### *Downtown*

Wrentham's Downtown has many of the characteristics of the quintessential, small New England town center. The Town Common provides a common focal point, and Sweatt Park provides additional recreational green space. A handful of local restaurants, retail and convenience stores, places of worship, historical landmarks, and civic uses (Town Hall and District Court) provide a balanced mix of destinations and services. The description of the Downtown in the 2004 Plan is accurate today: "It is the social heart of the town, a crossroads meeting of important regional roads (both State highways), and the formal face with its white steepled church fronting the Common."

The traditional design of the Downtown with small lots, relatively narrow streets, on-street parking, and buildings oriented to the sidewalk allows visitors to park and walk to multiple destinations without moving their car. Improvements to serve pedestrians, including fewer curb cuts, safer crosswalks, and potential other street design, as well as bicycle infrastructure, could help make it even more welcoming

to pedestrians. The recent Village Center District rezoning, as explained in the Introduction chapter, aims to further support an attractive, walkable downtown consistent with Wrentham's small town character. The zoning extends the historic center by allowing new housing and mixed-use development, as well as redevelopment of the large vacant (former Crosby Valve/Tyco/FRM) site next to Sweatt Park. However, there are challenges to new investment. The Downtown lacks Town sewer, and one of the lots comprising the vacant site lacks frontage and access.

### *Wampum Corner*

Less than two miles south of the Downtown on South Street is Wampum Corner at the junction of West Street and South Street. Wampum Corner was one of the first sites of settlement and has remained a small commercial center with a collection of local restaurants and retail and convenience stores.

### *Wrentham Premium Outlets*

Built in 1997, the Premium Outlets on the southern side of Interstate 495, typifies the auto-oriented malls built in the mid-1990's. Most people know Wrentham because of the Outlets, coming from across the Boston region to go shopping. Anchored by the Nike Factory Store, Saks Off 5<sup>th</sup>, Levi's Outlet Store and others, the Outlets provides a substantial portion of the municipal tax base, as well as a large portion of the jobs in town.

### *Route 1*

Route 1 is a four-lane State route that extends along the eastern side of Wrentham. Providing a connection between Boston and Providence, as well as access to Gillette Stadium (the home of the New England Patriots football team) just north of the Wrentham boundary in Foxborough and the Plainridge Park Casino just south of Wrentham in Plainville, it carries travelers from around the region. As such, commercial uses along Route 1 are auto-oriented: buildings are setback from the road with expansive parking lots on large lots. The uses are varied and cater to more regional needs (e.g. an animal hospital and go-kart track) and those who are driving through (e.g. a motel and truck stop). Light industrial uses, including an RV and camper storage lot, also dot the corridor. Destinations are spread out, requiring a car to visit. Just south of the Wrentham border on Route 1 in Plainville is a strip shopping mall with a Stop & Shop, Target, TJ Maxx, and other large chains, and just north is a similar strip shopping mall with a Trader Joe's and Bass Pro Shops. However, within Wrentham, most non-residential uses are owned by small businesses rather than national chains.

Route 1 was recently rezoned, as is explained in the Introduction, to improve the aesthetics of the corridor and more fully leverage the visibility on a high-traffic route. The rezoning is intended to attract office, entertainment, and retail development along the southern portion of Route 1. Along the portion north of Thurston Street, the rezoning is intended to protect water supply and recreational resources at the Foxborough State Forest, while also encouraging limited office development. A 2018 study of the corridor also recommends transportation and landscaping improvements to accommodate increased traffic, improve stormwater management, and create a more cohesive and attractive corridor.

### *Route 140*

Route 140, also known as Franklin Street, runs east/west through town and becomes East Street at the central intersection with South Street in the Downtown. Near the western border, there is a

concentration of commercial and industrial uses, adjacent to the new Eagle Brook residential development. The uses are mostly industry-oriented services, including truck services and janitorial services, serving a select clientele from across the region. Although the area is walkable from the Eagle Brook neighborhood, the non-residential uses do not provide everyday needs for the nearby residents. Just west of the Wrentham border on Route 140 in Franklin is more retail, including a strip shopping mall with a Big Lots and Shaw's grocery store.

#### *Nearby Commercial Districts*

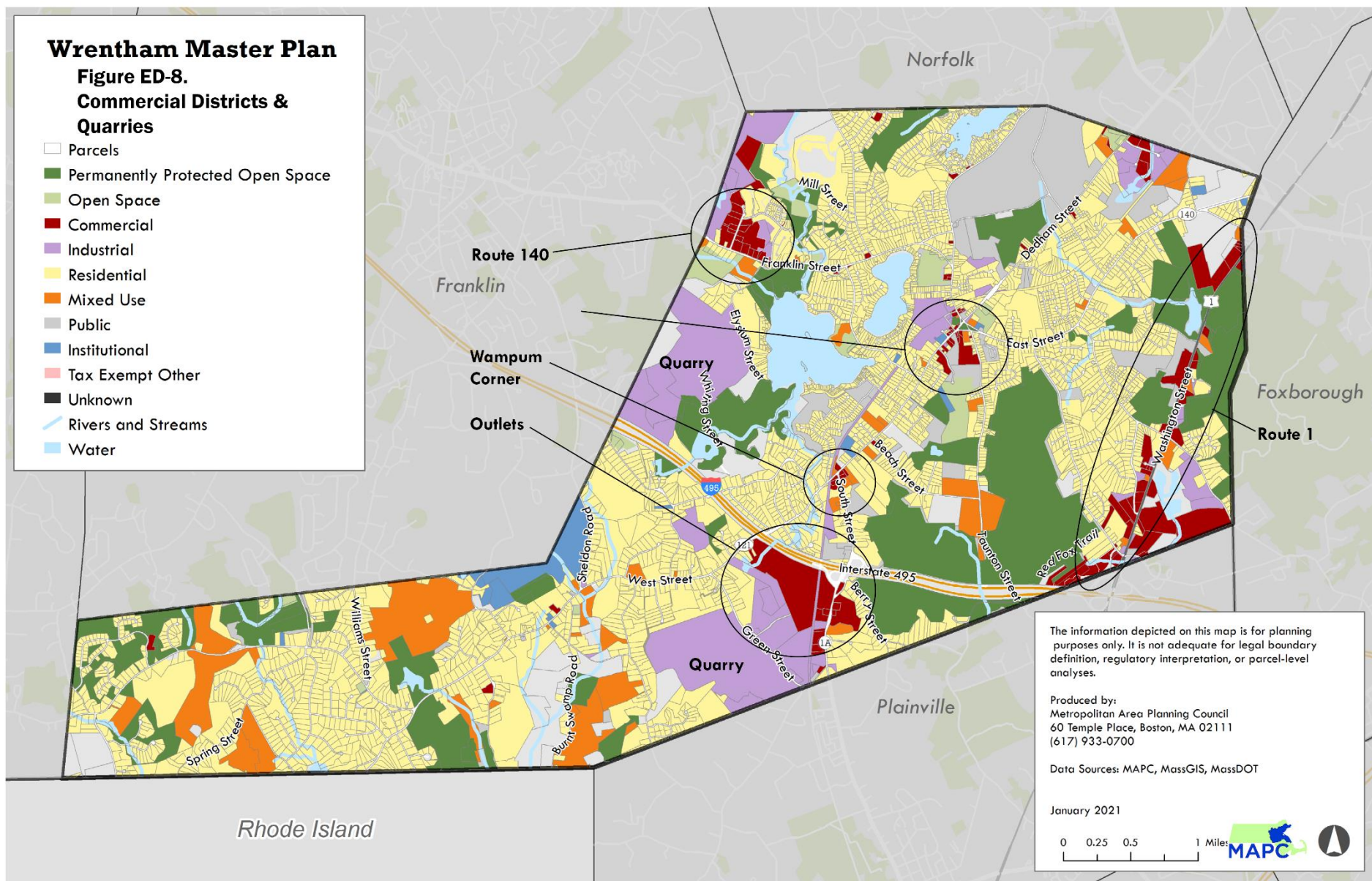
As noted above, there are commercial districts with national chain retailers just outside of Wrentham to the north in Foxborough, south in Plainville, and west in Franklin. Focus groups with Wrentham residents indicated that residents leave town to do their grocery shopping at Shaw's, Big Y, Trader Joe's, or Stop and Shop, as Wrentham does not have a grocery store. Residents also buy other goods, such as clothes, at stores outside of Wrentham such as TJ Maxx and Target, rather than at the Premium Outlets. Further consumer research could help elucidate why residents shop elsewhere—one reason may be that one-stop shops such as Target are more convenient for everyday goods than the Premium Outlets.

#### *Industrial Areas & Quarries*

Industrial uses are shown in light purple in Figure ED-8. A few of the industrial areas are vacant, such as the former Crosby Valve/Tyco/FRM site on the west side of the Downtown, the area in the north west corner of Town, as well as most of the area on the east side of Route 1. However, there are two large and active quarries in Wrentham: one just south of the Premium Outlets and the other southwest of Lake Pearl.

#### *Farms and Farm stands*

Wrentham also has a handful of farms that not only offer fresh produce but serve as a destination for recreation and tourism. The Big Apple Farm offers apple picking and a robust farm shop; Cook's Valley Farm offers fresh produce at their farm stand; and White Barn Farm on Route 1A just south of the Downtown offers produce at their roadside farm stand. Agriculture is critical to Wrentham's heritage and offers potential for town branding and tourism.



Document Path: K:\DataServices\Projects\Current\_Projects\Master\_Plans\Wrentham\ProjectFiles\WrenthamMasterPlan\_Commercial.mxd

## Municipal Budget

### *Tax rates*

The tax rates in Wrentham and neighboring towns are given in Table ED-5. Wrentham has the lowest residential tax rate, and the second to lowest commercial, industrial, and personal property tax rate.

Table ED-5. Tax Rates by Class, Fiscal Year 2021

| <b>Municipality</b> | <b>Residential</b> | <b>Open Space</b> | <b>Commercial</b> | <b>Industrial</b> | <b>Personal Property</b> |
|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Bellingham          | 14.41              | 0.00              | 20.58             | 20.58             | 20.47                    |
| Foxborough          | 14.74              | 0.00              | 18.73             | 18.73             | 18.73                    |
| Franklin            | 14.65              | 0.00              | 14.65             | 14.65             | 14.65                    |
| Norfolk             | 17.99              | 17.99             | 17.99             | 17.99             | 17.99                    |
| Plainville          | 14.70              | 0.00              | 17.75             | 17.75             | 17.75                    |
| Wrentham            | 14.07              | 0.00              | 17.42             | 17.42             | 17.39                    |

Source: MA Department of Revenue

The average single family tax bill is \$6,743. Although this is higher than the average bill in Bellingham, Franklin, or Plainville, the median income in Wrentham is higher than in those towns. When accounting for the median income, Wrentham's average tax bill as a percentage of income is 12.26 percent, lower than any other neighboring towns. Norfolk's average tax bill as a percentage of income is the highest at 17.78 percent.<sup>12</sup>

The total assessed value in Wrentham is approximately \$2.5 billion. As shown in Table ED-6, 80 percent of Wrentham's assessed value is comprised of residential property and 20 percent of commercial, industrial, and personal property, similar to the percentages in Foxborough and Franklin.<sup>13</sup> Bellingham and Plainville have a higher portion of commercial, industrial, and personal property value and Norfolk has a lower. Given the analysis above of business locations and the concentration at the Premium Outlets, it can be assumed that the majority of Wrentham's commercial tax base is also concentrated at the Premium Outlets.

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<sup>12</sup> MA Department of Revenue, 2020 <<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/municipal-finance-trend-dashboard>>

<sup>13</sup> Personal property generally includes tangible items that are not firmly attached to land or buildings and are not considered to be part of the real estate, for example, merchandise, furniture, machinery, tools, animals and equipment.

When accounting for the population of each Town, Wrentham has the highest assessed value per capita at \$211,156. In other words, Wrentham has the largest tax base, considering its population. However, Wrentham also has the lowest population density out of the neighboring towns. Therefore, infrastructure and services are spread out over a larger area of land, which may increase costs.

Table ED-6. Assessed Values by Class, Fiscal Year 2021

| Municipality | Assessed Value, in billions |            |            |                       |               | RO**<br>% of<br>Total | CIP***<br>% of<br>Total | Land<br>Value per<br>Capita | Population<br>Density<br>(per square<br>mile) |
|--------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|-----------------------|---------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|              | Residential                 | Commercial | Industrial | Personal<br>Property* | Total         |                       |                         |                             |   |
| Bellingham   | \$2.03                      | \$0.29     | \$0.27     | \$0.29                | <b>\$2.88</b> | 71%                   | 29%                     | \$169,321                   | 558   |
| Foxborough   | \$2.70                      | \$0.56     | \$0.07     | \$0.12                | <b>\$3.45</b> | 78%                   | 22%                     | \$195,782                   | 844   |
| Franklin     | \$4.68                      | \$0.39     | \$0.52     | \$0.19                | <b>\$5.77</b> | 81%                   | 19%                     | \$169,393                   | 1,261   |
| Norfolk      | \$1.83                      | \$0.08     | \$0.02     | \$0.05                | <b>\$1.98</b> | 93%                   | 7%                      | \$168,478                   | 773   |
| Plainville   | \$1.15                      | \$0.30     | \$0.07     | \$0.09                | <b>\$1.61</b> | 71%                   | 29%                     | \$176,884                   | 788   |
| Wrentham     | \$1.98                      | \$0.37     | \$0.05     | \$0.08                | <b>\$2.48</b> | 80%                   | 20%                     | \$211,156                   | 512   |

Source: MA Department of Revenue

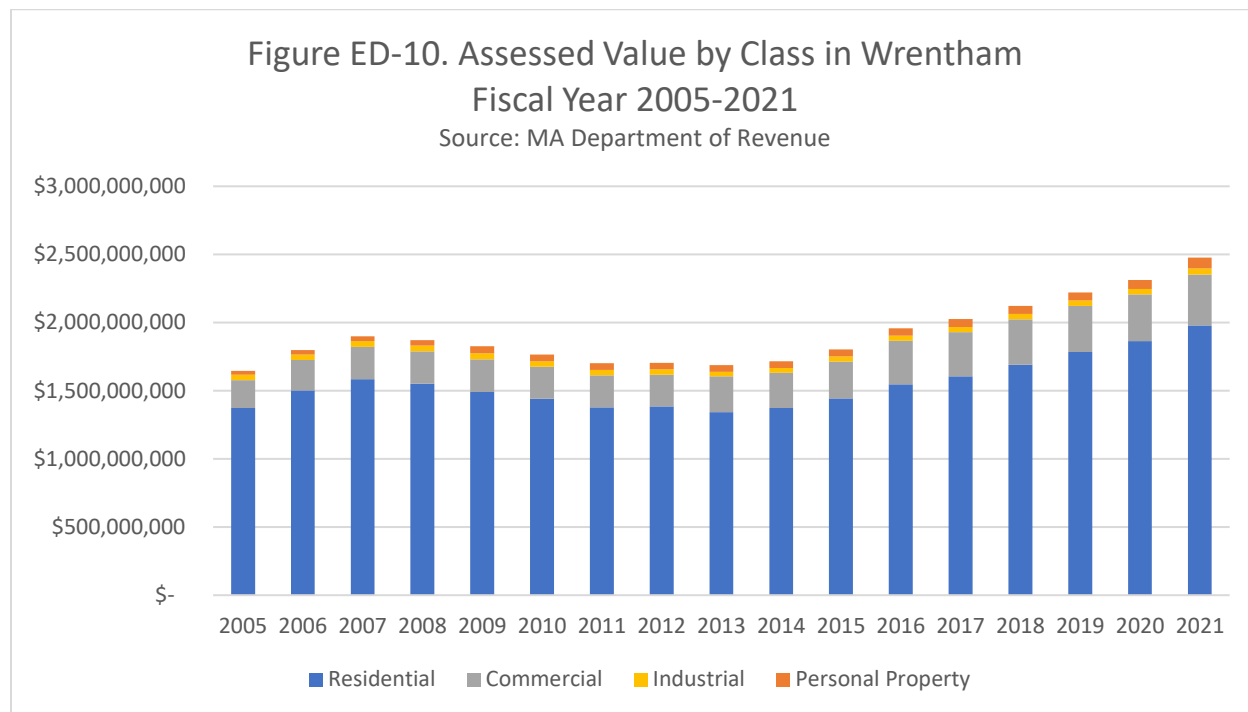
Notes:

\* Personal property generally includes tangible items that are not firmly attached to land or buildings and are not considered to be part of the real estate, for example, merchandise, furniture, machinery, tools, animals, and equipment.

\*\* "RO" indicates Residential and Open Space. The assessed value of Open Space property is marginal.

\*\*\* "CIP" indicates Commercial, Industrial, and Personal Property

Wrentham’s total assessed value has increased over time, and notably, the percentage from residential property has decreased from 83 percent in fiscal year 2005 to just under 80 percent in 2021. Figure ED-10 shows the assessed value by class in Wrentham from fiscal year 2005-2021.



However, the Outlets account for almost 10% of Wrentham's assessed property value. The second largest taxpayer accounts for only 1% of the property tax base, therefore the Outlets have an enormous role in the fiscal health of Wrentham. Table ED-7 below lists the largest taxpayers in fiscal year 2020, demonstrating the enormous role that the Outlets play in the fiscal health of Wrentham.

| <b>Table ED-7: Largest taxpayers, FY 2020</b> |                           |                             |                      |   |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|---|
| <b>Name</b>                                   | <b>Nature of business</b> | <b>Total assessed value</b> | <b>Amount of tax</b> | <b>% of Wrentham's total property tax value</b> |
| Premium Outlet Partner LP                     | Outlet mall               | \$224,000,000               | \$4,000,000          | 9.7%  |
| Massachusetts Electric                        | Utility                   | \$20,000,000                | \$350,000            | 0.9%  |
| DRI/Maple Ledgeview Wrentham                  | Retail                    | \$19,000,000                | \$250,000            | 0.8%  |
| The Shops at Wrentham, LLC                    | Retail                    | \$10,000,000                | \$200,000            | 0.4%  |
| Pond Home Community Inc                       | Assisted living           | \$9,000,000                 | \$150,000            | 0.4%  |
| Verizon new England Inc                       | Utility                   | \$8,000,000                 | \$150,000            | 0.3%  |
| Bay State Gas Company                         | Utility                   | \$8,000,000                 | \$150,000            | 0.3%  |
| Capstan Holdings I LLC                        | Manufacturing             | \$7,000,000                 | \$150,000            | 0.3%  |
| Maples Rehab & Nurs Ctr LLC                   | Nursing home              | \$7,000,000                 | \$150,000            | 0.3%  |
| Algonquin Gas Transmission                    | Utility                   | \$6,000,000                 | \$100,000            | 0.3%  |
| Source: Town of Wrentham Annual Report, 2020  |                           |                             |                      |   |

## Community feedback

Based on the town-wide survey conducted in Fall 2020, focus groups conducted in January 2021, and meeting with the Wrentham Economic Development Commission in February 2021, the following additional strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to economic development were identified.

| Strength  | Challenge  | Opportunity  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Good for families and strong schools and education, suggesting potential to attract new residents</li> <li>- Open space, natural resources, and farmland, suggesting potential to promote Wrentham's natural resources for tourism</li> <li>- According to the town-wide survey, Downtown and the Town Common is the most "meaningful place" to Wrentham residents</li> <li>- Walkable Downtown with local businesses</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Distance from higher-paying jobs resulting in long commutes</li> <li>- Residents leave Wrentham to grocery shop, buy clothes, and run other errands at markets and retail options that don't exist in Wrentham. However, demand to locate similar commercial options in Wrentham is low, because the shops and amenities are nearby in Plainville, Franklin, and Foxborough, just beyond the Wrentham border.</li> <li>- Lack of diversity in restaurant options</li> <li>- Increase in on-line shopping, especially during COVID</li> <li>- Lack of communication between Downtown businesses and the Town</li> <li>- Lack of coordination between Downtown businesses and Wrentham businesses generally</li> <li>- Love for Wrentham's "small-town feel" fuels opposition to new development</li> <li>- Impact of COVID-19 on small businesses</li> <li>- Developers are hesitant to build along Route 1 in Wrentham given the uncertainty of community opposition</li> <li>- Burdensome fees and taxes</li> <li>- Reputation as being unfriendly to business</li> <li>- Long and uncertain development and permitting process</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Premium Outlets are not considered one of the "most important strengths" of Wrentham, suggesting potential demand for expansion of goods and services offered at the Outlets</li> <li>- Two of the "most important improvements" to residents is to support "more shops and services Downtown" and "more trails and parks"</li> <li>- Given the choice of where to locate new growth if it were to occur, respondents to the town-wide survey preferred new growth to be located Downtown and along Route 1 rather than near the Premium Outlets, Sheldonville, Wampum Corner, or the Wrentham Development Center</li> <li>- Residents would like to support more locally-owned businesses</li> <li>- Town Common is potential gathering space but can feel run-down</li> <li>- Desire for more community events</li> </ul> |