

Vision of Tomorrow

WRENTHAM MASTER PLAN


2030

Final Document

Phases I and II
December 2022



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(Letter from Town leadership
to be included)

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Executive Summary

Vision of Tomorrow: Wrentham's 2030 Master Plan is a guide for the Town's policies, programs, and investments for the next 10 years, translating the values and hopes of people who live, work, and play in Wrentham into specific actions.

This Master Plan represents the results of a community-based process to develop the Vision of Tomorrow for Wrentham. The Wrentham Master Plan includes a Vision Statement, and goals and strategies for: Economic Development; Land Use; Open Space and Recreation; Housing; Transportation; Community Facilities and Services; Historical and Cultural Resources; and Energy and Sustainability.

Vision of Tomorrow was created by Town volunteers on the Master Plan Committee and Town of Wrentham staff with the support of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). It is based on more than two years of community engagement, including four virtual public forums, two Town-wide surveys, several presentations to the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and Economic Development Commission, and focus groups.

Rigorous research and analysis not only identified key trends, but also uncovered new insights into some of the challenges and opportunities for residents and businesses. This research and analysis was used to inform the Master Plan and was referenced throughout the community engagement process. The full findings of the analysis are presented in the existing conditions assessments in the appendices.

Several main themes were identified during the Master Plan process, including the community's deeply-held commitment to: responsibly steward and protect Wrentham's beautiful land and natural resources; to continue to offer a great place to raise a family; and to support investment in the Town Center.

The Vision Statement captures these themes and the community's aspirations for the future, there by providing a north star for the rest of the Master Plan.



Source: Diane Glass



Source: Warren Cook

The goals, summarized on the following pages, address the key issues in each of the topics of the Master Plan ranging from diversifying the tax base, to improving walkability, and providing housing options to help Wrentham's aging seniors stay in the community.

The strategies identify actionable steps to advance each of the goals, providing guidance to members of the Board of Selectmen and Planning Board, Town staff, and other community leaders. The strategies include zoning amendments, events, collaborations with businesses and neighboring municipalities, strategic planning, improved communications, technical assistance, priorities for staff workplans, and more.

Economic Development Goals

- 1. Pursue strategic and innovative strategies for new economic opportunities*
- 2. Improve coordination and communication between businesses and the Town*
- 3. Make Wrentham more business-friendly and attract context-appropriate development*
- 4. Invest in the Town Center to support a walkable, attractive Town Center*

Land Use Goals

- 1. Leverage public and private infrastructure improvements and other community investments to strengthen existing centers of growth*
- 2. Advance preservation of unprotected open space and protection of semi-rural landscapes*
- 3. Promote walkable neighborhoods in existing village centers, without changing the historic and semi-rural nature of areas*
- 4. Continue targeted planning and zoning efforts to shape future growth and ensure development aligns with community objectives and infrastructure capacity.*
- 5. Work with Wrentham residents and the State to develop a vision to unlock the future potential and opportunity of the Wrentham Developmental Center*

Open Space and Recreation Goals

- 1. Protect watersheds, groundwater, and maintain and improve water infrastructure and quality consistent with the Wrentham Water Master Plan*
- 2. Expand walking, biking, and rolling connections and access to open space and recreation*
- 3. Advance preservation of unprotected open space and protection of semi-rural landscapes*
- 4. Protect sensitive habitats and contiguous wildlife corridors*
- 5. Invest in and improve existing resources, recreation facilities, and programs strengthening amenity, accessibility, and inclusiveness*

Housing Goals

- 1. Guide development towards the Town Center and areas with existing infrastructure*
- 2. Protect open space and discourage development of forests and fields*
- 3. Encourage a greater variety of housing options*
- 4. Thoughtfully promote deed-restricted Affordable Housing*

Transportation Goals

- 1. Support walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure, especially walking infrastructure within, and connecting to the Town Center as well as other key destinations*
- 2. Assess parking needs and implement parking management strategies in Wrentham's Town Center*
- 3. Increase roadway safety for all road users, especially the most vulnerable including people walking and biking, children, seniors, and people with disabilities*
- 4. Increase viable alternatives to single-occupancy, private vehicles and increase use of GATRA's transit options in Wrentham*
- 5. Plan for future transportation technologies including electric and autonomous vehicles, as well as electric bikes, and scooters*

Community Facilities and Services Goals

- 1. Provide high quality facilities, services, and programs that serve the needs of Wrentham's residents and responds to the Town's changing population*
- 2. Develop a sustainable, equitable, and comprehensive approach for short and long term capital improvements and maintenance planning*
- 3. Support proactive and timely assessment and response to funding needs for infrastructure and public facility improvements and staffing to pursue external funding sources, including state and federal grants*
- 4. Strengthen effective communication and collaboration within Town government and improve transparency of Town processes with the public*

Historical and Cultural Resources Goals

- 1. Preserve and add to the historic character of Wrentham*
- 2. Continue hosting community events, especially those co-located with historic or cultural resources, to foster a sense of belonging and understanding of local history*
- 3. Expand tools to better protect existing historic and cultural resources as development occurs*
- 4. Increase local capacity to manage and enhance historic and cultural resources*
- 5. Broaden and deepen Wrentham's documented history to include representation of all people that were a part of the land and the Town history*



Source: Diane Glass



Source: Diane Glass

Energy and Sustainability Goals

1. Explore opportunities for new economically feasible clean energy generation which minimizes potential impacts to natural resources, open space, and abutters
2. Support residents and businesses in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs by promoting programs and incentives
3. Prepare Town infrastructure for local impacts of climate change (flooding, drinking water supply, water quality and stormwater management, and widespread loss of electricity)
4. Reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs
5. Develop a community-wide Climate Action Plan to set goals, determine performance benchmarks and metrics, and actions to advance progress
6. Consider long term sustainability and resilience of programs, projects, and approvals
7. Promote water management and conservation in public and private facilities and properties

The Master Plan process itself has brought light to new issues and fostered dialogue between community members, staff, and elected officials. But, the work to implement the Goals and Strategies has just begun. Everyone in Town has a role to play in ensuring the success of the Master Plan, from referencing the shared Vision Statement as choices about the Town's future arise, to investing the time to advance Strategies, and defining details of implementation actions and pursuing external funding. *Vision of Tomorrow*, here we come!



Introduction

What is Vision of Tomorrow: Wrentham Master Plan 2030?

A master plan is a method of translating community values into specific actions to be completed over a period of ten years. The master plan process offers the opportunity to reflect on current conditions and aspirations for the future, and ultimately results in a policy guide that provides a framework for the priorities, programs, and physical development of a municipality.

As a Master Plan, Vision of Tomorrow is a translation of the values and hopes of people who live, work, and play in Wrentham into specific actions. Not everyone in Wrentham has the same goals—the process of developing Vision of Tomorrow included sharing and considering different opinions, analyzing United States Census and other data, and finding a workable consensus about current conditions and where the community wants to be in the future. Based on an understanding of the current situation and the community’s vision for the future, the Master Plan sets Goals and Strategies to guide the Town’s policy, programs, and investment decisions.

A master plan provides the framework for regulation and is meant to be implemented by tools such as zoning bylaws, budget plans, and capital improvement programs. According to Massachusetts’ State statute (Massachusetts General Law Chapter 41, Section 81D), each Master Plan should be “designed to provide a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality.” For example, the Master Plan should be used by the Planning Board in the evaluation of development projects brought before the Board and proactively amend zoning to be consistent with the vision of the Master Plan.

Vision of Tomorrow was a two phase process to develop a comprehensive Master Plan for Wrentham. It was developed by the Town of Wrentham and Town volunteers on the Master Plan Committee with the support of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). This first phase included developing a vision for the future of Wrentham, as well as Goals and Strategies for the Housing and Economic Development topics of the Master Plan. The second phase included developing goals and strategies for Land Use, Open Space and Recreation, Transportation, Community Facilities and Services, Historic and Cultural Resources, and Energy and Sustainability. The Master Plan Implementation section of this document identifies entities responsible for implementing priority strategies, along with potential funding sources, and the recommended time frame for completion.



Source: Diane Glass

How does it affect me? How can I use it?

How you can use and benefit from Vision of Tomorrow, no matter who you are is identified in the table below.

	Master Plan Process	Adopted Master Plan
If you are a resident...	<p>The process provides an opportunity for all residents and stakeholders to shape the future of the Town. The process also influences the direction and priorities of Town decision-making over the next 10 years.</p>	Vision of Tomorrow clearly identifies goals and strategies for specific decision-making entities, including the Planning Board. In this way, Vision of Tomorrow is used to help keep decision-makers accountable. For the next ten years, investments, policies, and other decisions should advance the vision of the Master Plan.
If you are a Town business owner...		Vision of Tomorrow outlines the Economic Development Goals and Strategies of the Town. This helps to provide an idea of what kind of businesses the community would like to see, and what to expect in terms of the support and programs that may be available to promote economic growth.
If you are a Town developer...		Vision of Tomorrow outlines the Housing and Economic Development Goals of the Town. This can help provide insight and reduce uncertainty about the general type of development that the community and decision-makers might support.
If you are a Town elected or volunteer...		Vision of Tomorrow reflects a public process to determine a shared vision for the future and how to get there. It is designed to guide decisions, including investments, policies and regulations, permitting, and priorities.
If you are on Town staff...		Vision of Tomorrow reflects a public process to determine a shared vision for the future and how to get there. It is designed to guide the work plan for the next ten years.

Master Plan Process

Public input is a critical component of the Master Plan process. During the course of preparing Vision of Tomorrow, residents, business owners, elected and appointed representatives, and others have been invited to weigh in.

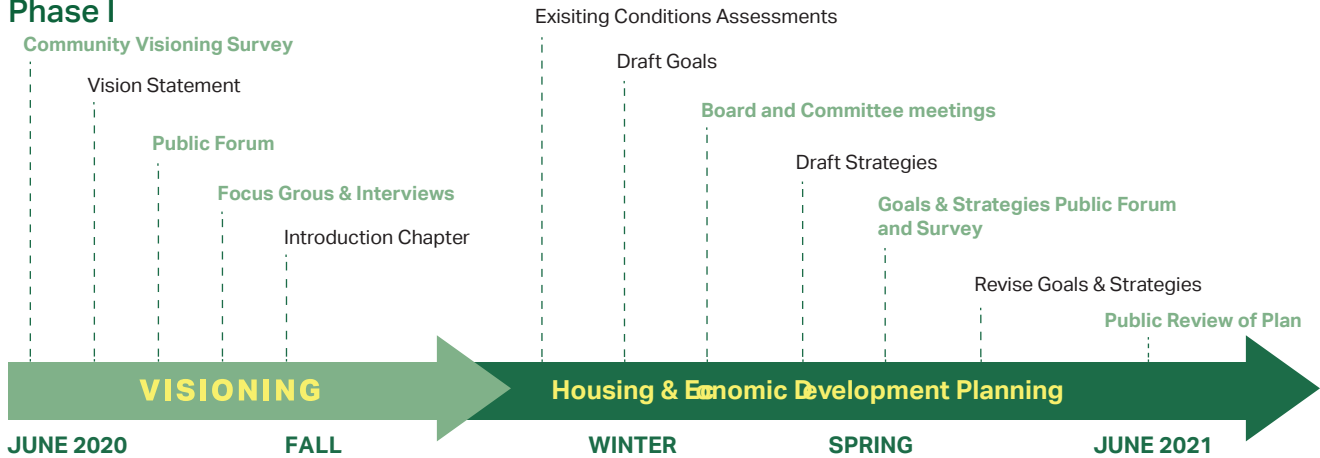
This input, along with demographic, housing, economic, and spatial analysis, was synthesized by the Master Plan Steering Committee with the help of MAPC and was used to prepare the Plan.

The public engagement process included the following key resources and events:

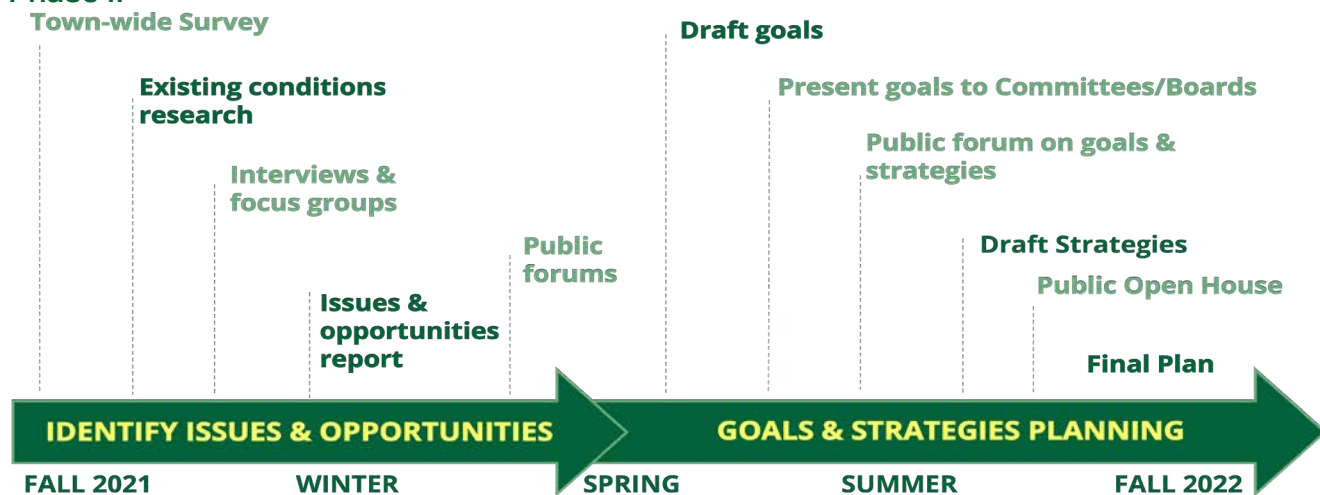
- **Project webpage:** The webpage provides background information on the Master Plan process, updates on recent and upcoming meetings or milestones, contact information for the Town, MAPC, and the Steering Committee, and the ability to sign up for email updates.
- **Master Plan Steering Committee meetings:** The Steering Committee met 18 times between June 2020 and October 2022 to prepare for and strategize robust public engagement, review existing conditions assessments, draft goals and strategies, and review draft materials. These meetings were posted and open to the public.
- **Presentations to Town Committees:** The Town Planner joined the meetings of the: Planning Board; Conservation Commission; Community Preservation Committee; Board of Health; School Committee; Board of Selectmen; Economic Development Commission; and Recreation Committee. The purpose was to introduce the Master Plan process and invite committee members to become involved. Additional presentations to the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and Economic Development Committee provided updates on key milestones and opportunities for feedback on goals and strategies.
- **Three town-wide surveys:** At the start of the Master Plan process (August 11 to October 1, 2020) an online and paper survey were made available to residents and stakeholders in Wrentham. Over 1,300 people participated in the survey. The Community Visioning Survey, including a summary of the survey findings, is presented on the following pages. A second survey, focused on the draft goals and potential strategies, was available from April 8 to April 26, 2021, and over 550 participants responded.
- **Five virtual public forums:** A virtual public forum was held on September 28, 2020 to present survey findings, review data analysis, collect feedback on the draft Vision Statement, and discuss any unidentified issues and opportunities facing the community. Forty-seven people attended. A second public forum, with 53 participants, was held on April 8, 2021 to present the draft goals, and potential strategies for discussion and feedback. Public forums were held to review Master Plan Phase II topic goals with the community on March 22, 2022 and March 29, 2022. A final public forum was hosted on September 19, 2022 to release the draft Master Plan for public review and comment.
- **Focus groups:** In order to learn from specific populations that are often underrepresented in planning processes, focus groups were held (in January 2020 and January 2022) with seniors, affordable housing residents, residents of color, and business owners. The focus groups were aimed at better understanding the challenges and opportunities related to housing and economic development in Wrentham, as well as how COVID-19 impacted them.

Planning Timeline

Phase I



Phase II



What is the Metropolitan Area Planning Council?

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is under contract with the Town of Wrentham to undertake the Master Plan process. MAPC is the Regional Planning Agency for the 101 cities and towns that make up Greater Boston. The agency's charge is to use planning to improve Metro Boston's livability, its prosperity, safety, health, equity, and distinctive character. To that end, MAPC assists its municipalities with planning projects and acts as a regional think-tank, offering data, analysis, advocacy, and regional collaboration.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Vision of Tomorrow was prepared during the unparalleled time of a global pandemic. According to public health guidelines, all meetings and public forums were held on-line.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic's precise impacts are uncertain and still unfolding, they have clearly had devastating effects on the economy and society at large. Although the most up-to-date information was used wherever possible, much of the data in the existing conditions assessment does not fully reflect the recent and dramatic shifts in people's lives, in the economy as caused by the pandemic, and related public health measures. Recently released data and the short- and long-term impacts were considered in the Master Plan process, wherever possible.

Progress Since the 2004 Master Plan

The Town's most recent Master Plan was completed in 2004. In September 2005, the Planning Board brought 22 articles to a Special Town Meeting warrant to implement recommendations from the 2004 Master Plan. Due mostly to logistical and technical difficulties, the vote on these articles was indefinitely postponed. Over the next several years, the Town struggled to address or implement the recommendations holistically. However, the Town of Wrentham has achieved several significant accomplishments, some of which are summarized below.

Housing

➤ Prepared the 2005 Housing Production Plan

Housing Production Plans (HPP) help municipalities better understand local housing need and demand, development constraints and opportunities, and the vision for future Affordable Housing and sometimes market-rate housing. Affordable Housing refers to housing that is restricted to residents of certain income limits. Following up and supplementing the 2004 Master Plan, the Town prepared an HPP for: defining specific Affordable Housing production goals; analyzing the capacity of municipal infrastructure and services to accommodate increased Affordable Housing production; and identifying specific geographic areas for future Affordable Housing growth. Consistent with the 2004 Master Plan, the HPP recommends zoning reform strategies to require a certain percentage of all new developments as Affordable Housing (also known as Inclusionary zoning), to channel new development into existing village centers and limit sprawl, and to reform other restrictive zoning requirements. In addition, the Town recommends reconvening the Wrentham Affordable Housing Partnership to provide leadership on Affordable Housing, as well as providing economic incentive programs for Affordable Housing development. Some of the recommendations have been implemented, including creating a new zoning district for the Village Center. Other recommendations, such as inclusionary zoning and reconvening the Wrentham Affordable Housing Partnership, have not advanced.

➤ Promoted Affordable Housing development

At the time of adoption of the 2004 Master Plan, there were 147 affordable units in Wrentham, accounting for approximately 5% of the total housing units. As of 2020, there are now 485 units, due in part to new Affordable Housing at Ledgeview, Eagle Brook, and other developments. In addition to better serving the needs of residents, the development of Affordable Housing has brought Wrentham into compliance with the Commonwealth's Chapter 40B requirements. These requirements establish a target for each municipality to ensure that 10% of each community's housing units are Affordable Housing units.

➤ Rezoned the Town Center to allow a mix of uses and improve walkability

Based on community visioning processes in 2002 and 2012, the Town hired MAPC to lead a planning process and draft a new Village Center Zoning District in 2017. The new Zoning District for the Town Center was adopted at Town Meeting, changing the zoning bylaw to extend the historic Town Center into the former Crosby Valve/Tyco site.

➤ Adopted the Community Preservation Act

In 2016, voters adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), adding a 1% surcharge on commercial and residential tax bills. The surcharge fees are collected in a community preservation fund administered for use on open space conservation, recreation, historical

preservation, and Affordable Housing (also known as “community housing”). Towns that adopt the CPA are also eligible for annual matching grants from the Massachusetts Community Preservation Trust Fund. More than 50% of municipalities in Massachusetts have passed CPA. Wrentham’s CPA funds have been used to create a playground at the Rice Complex, study stormwater runoff into Mirror Lake, restore paintings of the Wrentham resident Joseph Goss Cowell, and other projects.

Economic Development

➤ Rezoned Route 1 to encourage commercial development and protect natural resources

In 2018, the Town commissioned a study, funded by a grant from the Mass Gaming Commission, of the Route 1 corridor to examine how this high-traffic route could be better leveraged to offer local jobs and to contribute real estate taxes. Based on the study, the Town rezoned the area, streamlining the various existing zoning districts to focus on two areas within the corridor. The stretch south of Thurston Street has been rezoned to attract office, entertainment, and retail development. The stretch north of Thurston Street is rezoned to protect water supply and recreational resources at the Foxborough State Forest, while also encouraging limited office development.

➤ Adopted Tax Incentive Financing (TIF)

In 2015, Wrentham adopted Tax Incentive Financing (TIF), a public financing method that subsidizes redevelopment by incentivizing companies to invest in capital expansion and new employee growth. The TIF agreement provides a sliding scale tax break on the increase of valuation due to new investment. Specifically, TIF helps provide an incentive for Capstan Atlantic, a manufacturer of powdered metal parts, to remain in Wrentham. It also promotes Wrentham’s competitiveness in the commercial market. For example, one reason that Tyco Valve left Wrentham’s Town Center to move to Mansfield may be that TIF was only offered by the Town of Mansfield at the time.

Other Key Policy Actions and Planning Initiatives

➤ Rezoned the Wrentham Developmental Center (2005)

In 2004, the Town became concerned that the State would sell the 700-acre Wrentham Developmental Center to a developer. In 2005, Town Meeting voted to change the zoning from residential to a new district, called Conservation, Recreation, Schools, and Parks (CRSP), in order to better control future use. Eighty acres of this parcel were previously purchased by the Town in 1990 and in 2008 became the Rice Complex, an expansive recreation and athletic complex.

➤ Studied Town Center Transportation Safety (2009)

Upon the request of the Town, members from the Central Transportation Planning Staff and MAPC studied the traffic and safety concerns in the Town Center and around the Wrentham Common. The report, Community Transportation Technical Assistance Program: Wrentham Common Traffic Safety (2009), includes short- and long-term recommendations: for the intersections of Route 1A and Common Street; Routes 1A and 140; Route 140 and Common Street; and Taunton Street, Common Street, and David Brown Way. The recommended interventions include relocating pedestrian crosswalks to be perpendicular to streets, constructing curb extensions, and providing a mid-block crossing on David Brown Way from one part of the Common to the other.

➤ **Adopted the Town Charter (2014)**

The Town adopted the first Town Charter, which provided significant improvements to municipal responsibilities, authorities, and organization.

➤ **Studied transportation safety on Route 1A (South Street) (2017)**

The Central Transportation Planning Staff directed by the Boston region Metropolitan Planning Organization studied Route 1A, as one of a series of studies of 25 corridors in the region. The Route 1A Corridor Study (2017) found a high crash rate along the corridor, especially around the Town Common and near the Wrentham Premium Outlets. Recommendations included short-term improvements such as converting on-street angle parking to parallel parking near the Common and replacing the Yield sign at Common Street and Route 140 to a Stop sign, as well as long-term improvements such as redesigning and adding sidewalks from Randall Rd to Creek St.

➤ **Prepared a Hazard Mitigation Plan (2018)**

The 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan identified flooding as the greatest hazard threatening Wrentham and that climate change may exacerbate the threat. The highest priority mitigation measures are to: complete a feasibility study for renovating or moving the Department of Public Works; adopt a stormwater bylaw; implement the Open Space and Recreation Plan; and require new Low Impact Development strategies and stronger wetland protections.

➤ **Hosted a Community Resilience Building Workshop (2018)**

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program helps each community in the Commonwealth identify its climate resiliency vulnerabilities and strengths in terms of natural resources, infrastructure, and society. Wrentham's workshop identified inland flooding as the greatest climate hazard, consistent with the Hazard Mitigation Plan. Wrentham's strengths include: a cooperative public safety staff; 2,700 acres of open space that retains, slows, and allows for the infiltration of flood water; and community services to serve residents in need. The top recommendations to strengthen the resilience of natural resources are to re-evaluate the stormwater bylaws, create an Open Space and Recreation plan, and restore the lake systems. The recommendations for infrastructure are to establish an emergency shelter, relocate the Department of Public Works building outside of the floodplain, and improve communications equipment and strategies. Recommendations to strengthen social resiliency include creating a cohesive Local Emergency Planning Committee, creating a plan to protect Housing Authority residents, increasing the size of the Senior Center, expanding the food pantry, and creating a back-up supply of potable water.

➤ **Prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan (2021)**

The Open Space and Recreation Plan guides stewardship of Wrentham's natural resources and recreational opportunities. According to the plan, there are 4,671 acres of protected open space, recreation land, and private property with limited protection in Wrentham. The goals for the next 7 years are to protect watersheds to maintain water quality; preserve Wrentham's semi-rural appearance; create support for open space protection; protect sensitive habitat and wildlife corridors, improvement of existing recreation facilities; and develop new facilities and programs to serve all demographic groups.

➤ **Prepared a Green Infrastructure Master Plan (2022)**

The purpose of the Green Infrastructure Plan is to identify opportunities to address stormwater-driven flooding hazards, increase infiltration, and improve water quality through the use of nature-based, green infrastructure practices.



Wrentham's Vision

The Vision Statement provides a north star for the future of Wrentham. It is a statement of identity and aspirations developed through a public process, and it provides a framework for the *Vision of Tomorrow: Wrentham's 2030 Master Plan*. The Goals and Strategies of the Master Plan, which will guide the Town's policy, programs, and investment decisions for the next 10 years, are aimed at making this vision a reality.

Vision Statement

Wrentham is a charming town, proud of its Town Center and open spaces and is a great place to raise a family. Through a public process, Wrentham has set a vision for the future.

By 2030, the Town aspires to:

- ▶ ***Continue to cultivate a community-oriented and welcoming culture for all, regardless of race, religion, gender, age, ability, or income***
- ▶ ***Protect more farmland and open space for cultural heritage, scenic beauty, habitat, and water quality***
- ▶ ***Become more walkable and bikeable with sidewalks and trails***
- ▶ ***Strengthen the Town Center with more small businesses, dining options, homes, and places to gather***
- ▶ ***Maintain the semi-rural landscape by promoting sustainable land use patterns and shifting away from sprawl development***
- ▶ ***Encourage diversity with a mix of housing options affordable to young adults, families, households with lower-incomes, and seniors***
- ▶ ***Ensure fiscal responsibility while maintaining high-quality infrastructure and services***
- ▶ ***Support a healthy economy with a mix of businesses, good job opportunities, and a diverse tax base***
- ▶ ***Continue to be a great place to raise a family with strong schools and more community events***

To effectively pursue and strike a balance between these goals, Wrentham must continue to strive for transparent and effective governance and strong civic engagement and volunteerism.

Economic Development

The small businesses and commercial districts of Wrentham contribute to its identity and character, job opportunities influence the quality of life of residents, and healthy economy, and housing market that helps provide for the Town's strong schools. Thoughtful economic development strategies can help achieve the vision for a vibrant Town Center, as well as a fiscally-responsible Town government.

Quick Facts

► Workforce

- 60% have a 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 in Wrentham are in Retail and Education. About half of the people who are working in retail in Wrentham are 30 years or older
- 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
- 80% of taxes come from residential property, 20% from commercial/industrial/retail

► COVID-19 pandemic

- During the pandemic 10% of residents were unemployed (September 2020), 1 in 5 of those who were unemployed were renters



Key Themes

The Economic Development Goals and Strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement, as presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provides new insight into the economic health of residents and businesses, as well as the fiscal health of the Town. It too provides a valuable resource for the community when implementing the Master Plan, and meeting new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **The pandemic and its impacts highlighted that Wrentham's businesses and jobs were concentrated in the retail sector, which was one of the hardest hit industries both in terms of jobs and sales.** In September 2020, 10% of Wrentham residents were unemployed. In addition to the immediate impacts that were felt during the pandemic, the long term future of brick-and-mortar retail is uncertain as more people continue to buy more goods online. In-person offerings must continue to attract patrons through the quality and desirability of the experience. Diversifying the types of businesses and services would benefit future economic resilience.
- ▶ **There are more jobs than workers in Wrentham, yet there's a mismatch between the local workforce versus the types of local jobs.** Almost all residents commute out of Town and work in higher-paying jobs such as in Boston or other destinations northeast of Wrentham. Half of residents spend more than an hour commuting each day, and an additional 20% of residents spend more than two hours commuting each day. In contrast, people who are employed in Wrentham come from locations south and southwest of Wrentham and mostly work in lower-paying retail jobs.
- ▶ **There are 5 main commercial districts: Town Center, Route 1, Wampum Corner, Wrentham Premium Outlets, and the western portion of Route 140, each with distinct characteristics that serve different clientele. However, businesses and jobs are primarily concentrated at the Wrentham Premium Outlets.** Forty percent of Wrentham's jobs and 25% of its businesses are located at the Wrentham Premium Outlets. Regardless, about half of businesses in Wrentham are small businesses employing four or fewer employees.
- ▶ **Recent rezoning in Wrentham's Town Center 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 municipalities such as Foxborough, Plainville, and Franklin, where many residents leave Wrentham to go shopping for groceries, clothes, and home supplies. In addition, uncertainty in the development process and Wrentham's historical reputation as being unfriendly to business has muted growth.
- ▶ **Wrentham has the lowest residential tax rate and the second to lowest commercial and industrial tax rates out of all neighboring towns. The Wrentham Premium Outlets account for almost 10% of Wrentham's property tax revenue.** The next largest taxpayer accounts for less than 1% of the property tax base, demonstrating that the Wrentham Premium Outlets have an enormous role in the fiscal health of Wrentham.

Goals and Strategies

Economic Development Goal #1:

Pursue strategic and innovative strategies for new economic opportunities in Wrentham, including leveraging Wrentham’s major attractions such as the Wrentham Premium Outlets, Rice Complex, and natural, agricultural, and historical resources.

Background

Wrentham’s unique assets and proud semi-rural heritage provide opportunity for new economic growth, which is particularly important given the pandemic’s devastating economic 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. Thoughtful strategies are needed to support a strong recovery.

Strategies:

- 1. Work with Foxborough and Plainville to market the area as a multi-day destination with unique attractions to implement the Foxborough, Wrentham, & Plainville Regional Destination Marketing Plan.** The first recommended actions are to: create a visitor-friendly website for the region, conduct community outreach to build content for the website, and develop funding sources to support tourism marketing efforts.
 - **Background:** According to the US Travel Association, visitors to Wrentham spent over \$248 million in 2018.¹ The “Regional Destination Marketing Plan” aims to convert these one-day visitors to multi-day visitors that enjoy the major attractions of the local area, including the Wrentham Premium Outlets, Plainridge Park Casino, and Gillette Stadium and Patriot Place. The Marketing Plan focuses on the following five target audiences: Domestic Leisure Visitor Market, International Leisure Visitor Market, Group Tour Market, Meetings & Events, Local Community with five phases of coordinated communication strategies.
- 2. Encourage visitors already in Wrentham to better support Town businesses.** Work with the Rice Complex and the Wrentham Premium Outlets on marketing local restaurants, shops, and historic sites to visitors with on-site kiosks, brochures, or other means, and installing attractive signage, branding, and wayfinding at major attractions identifying Wrentham and directing visitors to Wrentham’s Town Center and historic sites.
- 3. Create opportunities for Town businesses at the Rice Complex, Wrentham Premium Outlets, and Sweatt Beach.** On-site farmers markets, food trucks, craft markets, or other temporary, pop-up uses could create low-barrier opportunities for entrepreneurs as well as new markets for established enterprises.
- 4. Pursue a walking/biking trail on the existing railroad bed connecting Town Center and Wrentham Premium Outlets, with respect and sensitivity to adjacent landowners.** The rail trail could be part of the larger Metacomet Greenway project, helping to encourage healthy activities, access to green space, and a potential decrease in traffic congestion as more people safely ride their bikes to destinations.

¹ Foxborough, Wrentham, & Plainville Regional Destination Marketing Plan. August 13, 2020. <<https://www.wrentham.ma.us/files/Wrentham%20Website%20Files/Economic%20Development%20Commission/Regional%20Destinaton%20Marketing%20Plan%202020%20FINAL.pdf>>

5. **Work with Town farmers to strengthen agrotourism, such as apple picking events, farmers markets, farm tours, informational website and social media, and branding and marketing.**
6. **Promote the water-related recreational activities including boating, fishing, and swimming at Sweatt Beach and Lake Pearl.**
7. **Provide walking tours and educational events for residents and visitors on Wrentham’s history in partnership with the Wrentham schools, the Historical Commission, the Wrentham Cultural Council, and the Economic Development Commission.** Innovative options, such as providing QR codes at historical markers with further information about Wrentham’s history, could help encourage greater engagement.
8. **Expand business opportunities by pursuing Wrentham as a wedding destination.**
 - Background: Wrentham’s Town Center has a unique opportunity to serve as a wedding destination with the Town Common, Sweatt Park, and Proctor Mansion all within walking distance of three churches. In addition, Lake Pearl, which hosts weddings and other events, is nearby. Greater coordination, planning, and promotion could create new business opportunities and vibrancy in the Town Center while thoughtfully mitigating impacts on local neighborhoods.

**Economic Development Goal #2:
Provide support for and improve coordination and communication between Wrentham’s businesses and the Town.**

Background

Although most jobs are at the Wrentham Premium Outlets, about half of all businesses in Wrentham are small businesses that employ fewer than 5 employees. Residents want to support their local businesses, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. Greater communication between the Town and the business community could help strengthen the local business community.

Strategies:

1. **Build the local support for businesses and business associations by continuing to invite local businesses, including farmers, to participate and support ongoing communication and collaboration.**
2. **Lead on a coordinated marketing and branding campaign for Wrentham and its businesses and promote the Wrentham brand at local events and in wayfinding improvements.**
 - Background: When asked “How can the Town help support economic recovery?” on a Master Plan survey conducted in April 2021, more than half of the 20 respondents chose “Marketing and branding.”
3. **Support economic recovery through technical assistance.** Assistance can include help applying for federal and State grants and loans, enhancing opportunities to expand take-out and delivery options, building online and social media presence, and other increasingly important strategies for post-COVID commercial success.

Economic Development Goal #3: Make Wrentham more business-friendly and attract context-appropriate development that diversifies employment options and the tax base and adds value to the community.

Background

There are few high-paying jobs in Town, resulting in the vast majority of Wrentham residents, who are largely well-educated and higher-income, having long commutes to work: 51% of residents spend more than an hour commuting each day and 21% spend more than 2 hours commuting each day. In addition, the lack of diverse, bigger businesses means a substantial portion of the Town budget is dependent on the success of the Wrentham Premium Outlets.

Strategies:

1. **Leverage recent Route 1 rezoning and build off of the Regional Destination Marketing Plan by initiating a proactive business recruitment strategy.** The strategy should focus on higher-paying jobs, such as the life sciences and bio-pharmaceutical industries. Tasks include initiating discussion with property owners, creating a preliminary market analysis, researching the businesses that employ the most Wrentham residents, and reaching out to potential employers and commercial uses to locate along the Route 1 corridor in Wrentham.
2. **Complete a comprehensive zoning audit and recodification to clarify and update allowable commercial, office, and industrial uses to reduce the uncertainty and delay of the development process.**
3. **Review and update zoning and other regulations to support targeted uses, including artisan and other small businesses; home businesses, remote work options, and shared office spaces; and dance, music, and cultural centers.**
4. **Review Town fee structure and consolidate fees to simplify the fee structure and increase predictability.**
5. **Review and update Town bylaws regulating liquor licensing, including temporary and outdoor, to better support small businesses and outdoor dining options, where appropriate.**
6. **Review and update Town bylaws regulating noise to allow outdoor music in the Town Center, when appropriate.**
7. **Partner with other communities and participate in the Greater Boston Region Workforce Planning Blueprint process to support a workforce pipeline.**
8. **Pursue a strategic planning process to diversify tax base.**

Economic Development Goal #4: Invest in the Town Center to support a walkable, attractive Town Center.

Background

The Town Center is the heart of the community, and new investments and improvements could make it shine with safer crosswalks, coordinated marketing, and development of vacant sites. To dovetail this Master Plan, the Town has received a State grant to develop a Local Rapid Recovery Plan to support a strong recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic in the Town Center. Many dedicated residents of Wrentham have already invested time and resources to coordinate landscaping, holiday decorations, and community events in the Town Center.

Strategies:

Small Businesses

1. **Continue development of and implement the Local Rapid Recovery Plan.**
2. **Encourage more local dining establishments by reaching out to pop-up dining establishments to locate permanently in Wrentham and to popular restaurants in the area to open a second location.**

Management, programming, and maintenance

3. **Assess potential for and pursue, if appropriate, a Town Center business association, business support and advocacy, or Business Improvement District to serve as a district management entity and help fund improvements such as trash and recycling cans, wayfinding, and/or landscaping in the Town Center.**
4. **Continue to cultivate the Town Center as a community gathering place by hosting safe and healthy community and arts and culture events in the Town Common and Sweatt Park.**
 - ▶ **Background:** One example of this type of support is the Wrentham Volunteer Alliance that was formed in November 2020 from several different organizations and clubs to work collaboratively and efficiently for the betterment of the Town. The Alliance is working on a schedule of events for 2021-2022 to bring culture and arts to the Town Center and Sweatt Park, in partnership with the Wrentham Business Collaborative and others.
5. **Plan for ways to encourage use of and better integrate Sweatt Park into the Town Center.**
6. **Seek strategies for providing and maintaining trash and recycling cans in Town Center through public/private partnerships.**

Pedestrian and transportation improvements

7. **Initiate an inclusive planning process and seek federal and State funding to implement the short-and long-term recommendations for improved pedestrian safety and reduced traffic impacts from the 2017 Route 1A Corridor Study.**

8. **Improve pedestrian safety between businesses on South Street and the Town Common to encourage its use.**
9. **In partnership with the Wrentham Disability Commission, install sidewalks in Town Center compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to improve safety and convenience for all Wrentham residents and visitors, particularly seniors.**
10. **Install sidewalks to provide a 3-mile walking circuit from the Town Common, past the High School, and around Lake Archer.** Developing the rail trail per Economic Development Goal #1, Strategy #4 will also provide a walking trail connected to Town Center.

Vacant and underutilized sites

11. **Identify the barriers to private-sector investment in and development of the vacant Tyco site through discussion with property owners and other stakeholders.** Examine frontage and access, infrastructure, tax incentives, zoning updates, and other strategies to encourage development that supports the goals of this Master Plan, including greater housing options, a walkable and attractive Town Center, and space for small businesses. *(See Housing Goal #1)*
12. **Analyze the costs and benefits of wastewater treatment options for new development in the Town Center and pursue the most beneficial option.** Options include municipal sewer, utilizing the High School's package treatment plan, and requiring a new package treatment plant. Identify federal and State funding opportunities for supporting new infrastructure. *(See Housing Goal #1)*
13. **Reach out to the property owner of the vacant Tyco site to pursue temporary uses of the site, including community events, small markets, outdoor eating, etc.**
14. **Landscape and pave the Town's gravel parking lot on the corner of Dedham and Franklin Streets.**



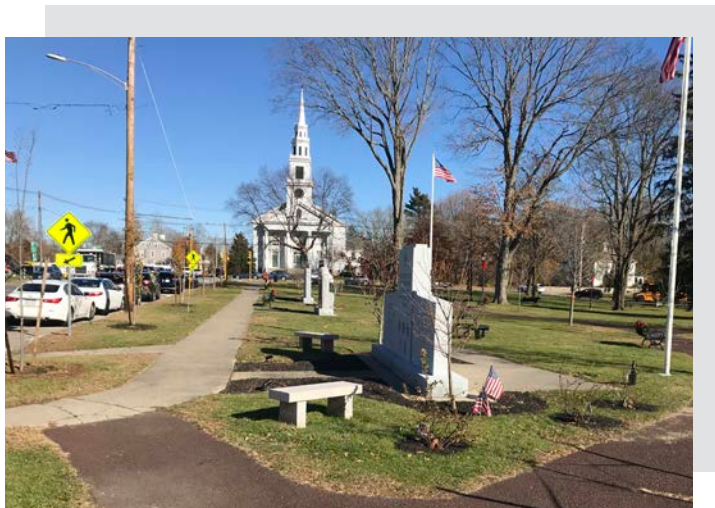
Source: Diane Glass

Land Use

Historical and current land use patterns, policies, and regulations help shape how and where new growth and development can occur in Wrentham. Land use encompasses a community’s development character – from the amount, type, and intensity of commercial and residential uses to the placement of land uses to ensure environmental resources are preserved and sites are designed with residents and visitors in mind. Effective land use goals, policies, and strategies can help Wrentham achieve its vision: to preserve farmland and open space; become more walkable and bikeable; and strengthen the Town Center and other village centers with more small businesses, dining options, homes, and places to gather.

Quick Facts

- ▶ 43% (approximately 6,168 acres) of Wrentham’s land area is comprised of residential land uses.
- ▶ A large share (22%) of Wrentham’s land is in public use, largely due to the Wrentham Developmental Center being sited in Town.
- ▶ 12% (approximately 1,800 acres) of land is used for commercial or industrial uses.
- ▶ Of the approximately 2,400 new homes built between 1980 and 2021, only 302 (12.5%) were multifamily units.



Source: MAPC

Key Themes

The Land Use Goals and Strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement, as presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provides new insight into the patterns of land use and regulation of land uses in the Town and provides a valuable resource for the community when implementing the Master Plan and meeting new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **The Town has successfully advanced recent rezoning efforts (e.g., Town Center, Route 1).** Continuing to update and refine the Town’s zoning can help achieve the community’s vision to create walkable, compact centers where new neighborhood businesses and job opportunities could thrive alongside different housing types.
 - Special planning efforts targeted at key areas, such as the Wrentham Developmental Center, Sheldonville, Wampum Corner, and the Wrentham Premium Outlets, will ensure the zoning bylaw reflects how communities want growth and development to occur.
- ▶ **The Town’s residential zoning districts require larger lot sizes due to the unavailability of public sewer.** While larger lot sizes are appropriate until public sewer is available, adding more flexibility to residential uses and dimensional standards could expand housing choices in Wrentham. (See Housing Goal 3)
- ▶ **Lots created prior to the enactment of the current large minimum lot standards have resulted in many legal non-conforming parcels.** This is especially prevalent near the lakes and village centers of Town Center, Wampum Corner, and Sheldonville. When considering future zoning bylaw amendments, the Town should consider how to update minimum lot size requirements in certain areas to maintain the neighborhood character.
- ▶ **The Open Space Preservation Development bylaw allows for smaller lot sizes when subdivisions include permanently protected open space. However, requirements such as the eight-acre minimum development size and 500-ft setback for dwellings might be limiting the applicability.** The bylaw also has a liberal definition for what qualifies as open space, which can work against the goals for active open space preservation. A review of the OSPD bylaw should be beneficial to help guide future growth of undeveloped parcels in the Town.
- ▶ **Wrentham is considered a “MBTA Community” and subject to recent Housing Choice zoning reforms that promote multi-family zoning near transit, or if no stations exist in a community, in locations consistent with sustainable development principles – like Wrentham’s Town Center or other existing village centers.** Wrentham will need to undertake a planning process to comply with this new legislation.
- ▶ **Town Center’s updated Village Zone district promotes walkable, compact development that is consistent with the historic architectural style.** Pursuing a formal historic designation for Town Center (see the Cultural Resources topic) and strengthening the coordination between the Planning Board and the Historical Commission regarding Town Center development review can help maintain the area’s historical integrity.

Future Land Use

Wrentham has an opportunity to be strategic in directing new population and job growth, while preserving other parts of town that are more semi-rural or agricultural. The Future Land Use map can help guide future amendments to the zoning bylaws, the leading tool for implementing long-term land use goals and can also be helpful in planning for public infrastructure. The Future Land Use map was created based on the public comments received during the Master Plan process. Feedback was received from Wrentham residents across many parts of the Town. Wrentham's focus for managing growth and change in development patterns over the next 10-15 years is illustrated on the Future Land Use map (on the next page).



Historic & Cultural Asset Clusters

Clusters of buildings and structures that have been evaluated for historical significance. Preservation of these resources should be considered as new development occurs in these centers. Where possible, new development should complement surrounding historic architecture and the area's cultural heritage.

Historical Village Centers

Small village centers that were developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s as Wrentham grew, with concentrated residential and neighborhood commercial uses clustered.

With limited access to public water and sewer, lower density residential uses like attached and detached single-family homes, triplexes, or quadplexes are more appropriately scaled for infill residential development. Small commercial uses like pharmacies, general stores, cafes, or offices can provide local amenities accessible by walking or biking.

Priority Growth Areas

Areas having compact, walkable development patterns that could benefit from infill development or redevelopment. New medium- and higher-density residential uses and mixed-use developments are suitable for these locations, where local businesses would benefit from increased foot traffic. Public infrastructure like roads, sidewalks, etc. exist in these areas. Public sewer could be extended here to support more compact residential and commercial uses. Concentrating uses would also support expanded transportation options.

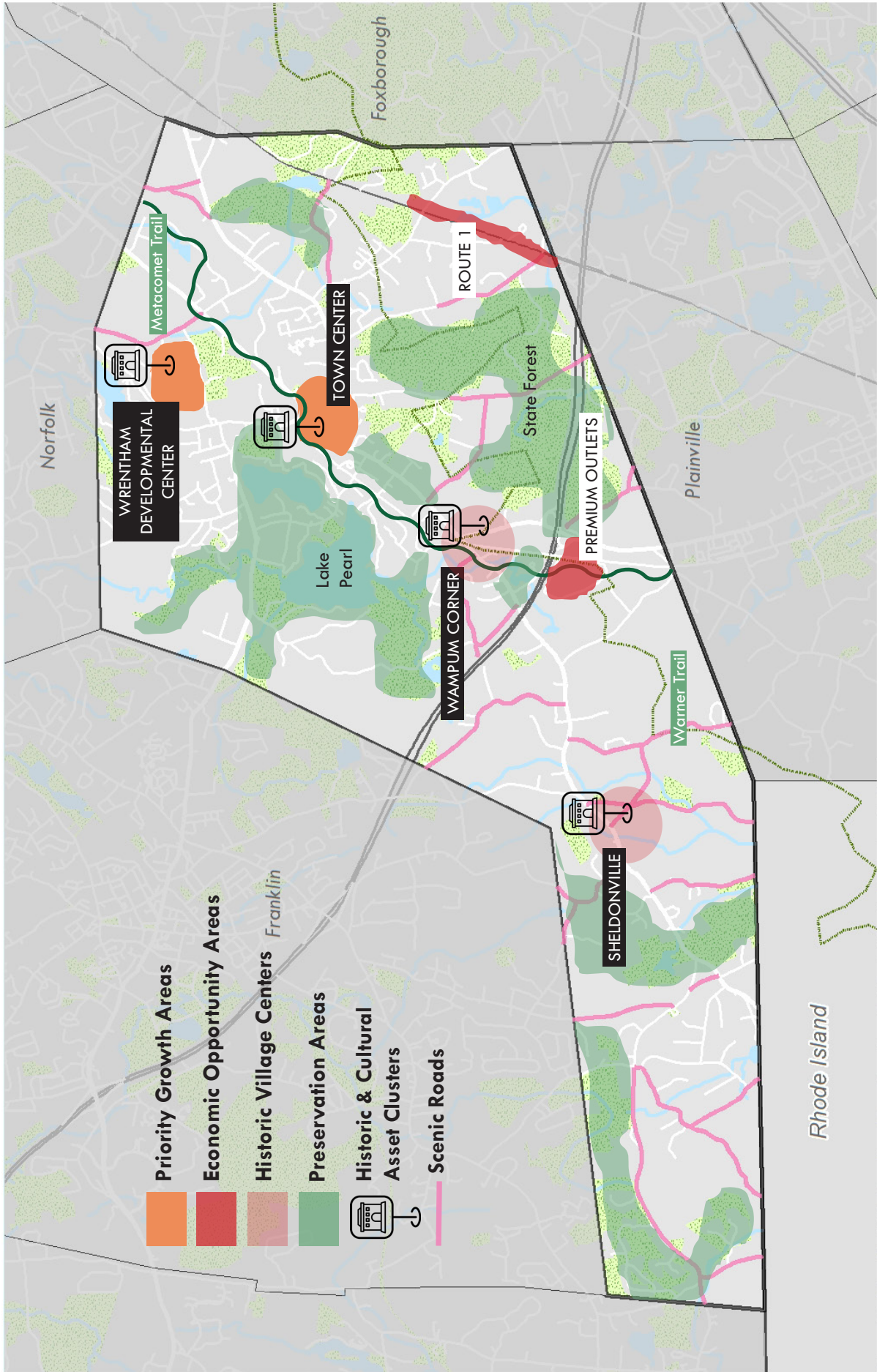
Preservation Areas

Conservation areas include permanently-protected public and private open spaces, farmlands, semi-rural landscapes, and environmentally-sensitive areas. Preserving these areas is intended to protect the environmental integrity of Wrentham, including water supply and ecological resources.

Economic Opportunity Areas

Existing commercial centers having access to transportation networks and infrastructure to support local job growth. Appropriately-sized commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development could expand local economic opportunities and shopping/dining amenities for Wrentham residents and visitors.

Wrentham Future Land Use Conceptual Map



Goals and Strategies

Land Use Goal #1:

Leverage public and private infrastructure improvements and other community investments to strengthen existing centers of growth (e.g., Town Center, Wampum Corner, Route 1 corridor, Route 1A commercial/industrial area, Wrentham Premium Outlets area, Wrentham Developmental Center, Sheldonville, and West Wrentham).

Background

Infrastructure investments will be required in order to support a denser mix of walkable uses in targeted areas of the town. The infrastructure investments will likely be incremental and may include both public and private investments. Defining specific infrastructure needs for specific areas to achieve community-based land use and development goals would facilitate the coordination of public and private investments coordinated as part of larger infrastructure investments.

Strategies:

1. Explore installation of public sewer in Wrentham's Town Center, along Route 1, and near the Wrentham Premium Outlets to support redevelopment and mixed-uses.
2. Pursue grants and other creative funding sources for focused public realm improvements that strengthen walking and biking infrastructure, reduce traffic congestion, improve streetscape, and improve neighborhood identity.
3. Coordinate with transportation partners to align multimodal improvements to the transportation network near existing population and employment centers (where land use efforts are focused) to reduce traffic congestion. (See also Transportation Goal 3)

Land Use Goal #2:

Advance preservation of unprotected open space and protection of semi-rural landscapes (including remaining active farms, corridors of wildlife habitat, and large areas of forestland).

Background

Conservation of land and preservation of open space is an important priority that has been expressed by residents through the Master Plan community survey and documented in Wrentham's recently completed Open Space and Recreation Plan. The most important and beneficial types of preservation are noted to include the handful of remaining active farms, and large contiguous areas of habitat.

Strategies:

1. Update the Wrentham Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) Bylaw to be more appealing and easier to apply to increase the share of protected and publicly accessible open space and to reduce environmental and infrastructure impacts.

2. **Protect scenic vistas and other semi-rural resources through targeted conservation easements and management agreements, and enacting incentives for protecting farms, significant trees, viewsheds, or other semi-rural and natural resources.** Particular focus should be placed on existing Chapter 61 lands and designated Scenic Roads.
3. **Increase public awareness of tax incentives available to private landowners who preserve open space.**
4. **Incentivize development in existing centers of growth to preserve semi-rural, agricultural, and lower density areas that are complemented by defined areas that are more compact and walkable.**

Land Use Goal #3:

Promote walkable neighborhoods in existing village centers, without changing the historic and semi-rural nature of areas.

Background

Improving walkability in the Town Center and village centers through improvements to land use patterns and infrastructure is important to many residents in Wrentham. These improvements should be balanced with the preservation of the more historic and semi-rural areas of the town where walkability may also be improved, but may include off-street trails and connected greenways.

Strategies:

1. **Review Wrentham's Zoning Bylaw to identify regulatory impediments to compact, walkable development, particularly in existing centers of growth.**
 - Integrate this review with a full Zoning Bylaw recodification process to explore and improve zoning language related to uses, definitions, and districts to be more clear and concise.
 - Create a Zoning Bylaw recodification working group through the Planning Board. All recommended zoning amendments would require review and approval by the Planning Board prior to Town Meeting approval.
2. **Identify ways to expand housing options in Wrentham's Town Center and other existing centers that are more likely to be walkable and have opportunities for infill development.** (See also Housing Goal #1)
3. **Identify the impacts and explore potential responses under Section 3A of the Zoning Act (regarding MBTA Communities) to create a zoning district that offers more housing options.**
4. **Begin a community planning process, such as a Complete Street Prioritization Plan, to assess and prioritize where multimodal infrastructure, like sidewalks and bike paths, could be installed to support pedestrian-oriented development.** (See also Economic Development Goal #4 and Transportation Goal #3)

Land Use Goal #4:

Continue targeted planning and zoning efforts to shape future growth and ensure development aligns with community objectives and infrastructure capacity.

Background

By proactively establishing a community-based vision with goals for specific areas, the Town can more confidently respond to future development proposals and communicate the intentions of the community to shape future growth. The type of development that may occur should be aligned with infrastructure planning and capacity. Additional study and investment in infrastructure capacity should be considered in partnership with development proposals through an analysis of potential impacts and required improvements.

Strategies:

1. **Pursue unique and specific neighborhood area planning efforts to provide a resident-centered district plan that can add a more tailored vision, goals, and district strategies for individual areas**, including the Wrentham Developmental Center, Wrentham Premium Outlets, Wampum Corner, and Sheldonville to refine allowable residential and commercial uses and shape how development occurs to enhance historical development patterns, expand economic opportunity, and promote walkability. These district planning processes would occur for each district individually over a number of years.
2. **Review commercial and industrial zoning regulations to promote economic development, particularly in Wrentham's Town Center, along Route 1, and other employment centers.** (See also Economic Development Goal 3)
3. **Consider public infrastructure capacity (transportation networks, water/sewer, schools, etc.) when conducting targeted planning and zoning efforts.** Research alternatives to embed performance standards and impact studies into regulations and development processes. The purpose is to ensure appropriate mitigation and investments as new development is approved.



Western view of the central part of Wrentham Source: Media Amazon.com

Land Use Goal #5:

Work with Wrentham residents and the State to create a vision to unlock the future potential and opportunity of the Wrentham Developmental Center.

Background

The Wrentham Developmental Center, formerly Wrentham State School, is a historic state-run medical campus with about 700 acres in the Town of Wrentham. The school opened in 1910. The campus was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. Significant portions of the campus have now been adapted to other uses. The remaining area presents a unique opportunity to the Town of Wrentham. A publicly accessible and community-based process to explore the future potential of the property would benefit all stakeholders involved in the property.

Strategies:

1. **Conduct a visioning process with community members, local business owners, youth, and other stakeholders to determine potential redevelopment opportunities.** Consider how arts and culture components could be incorporated into future redevelopment options to create a cultural destination for the Town. (See also Economic Development Goal 1.3)
2. **Assess the Wrentham Developmental Center's potential for meeting the housing needs and requirements, such as the Town's need for more deed-restricted Affordable Housing or potentially contributing to compliance with MBTA Communities requirements as redevelopment opportunities are considered.** (See also Housing Goal 4)
3. **Work with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and other state partners to create a historic preservation plan to guide maintenance and enhancement efforts of the designated historic sites on the campus.**
4. **Continue to seek engagement with state school representatives including seeking involvement of state school residents with Wrentham community and civic groups (for example Disability Commission, Council on Aging, etc.).**



Source: Wikipedia.org, Creative Commons, user: Magicpiano

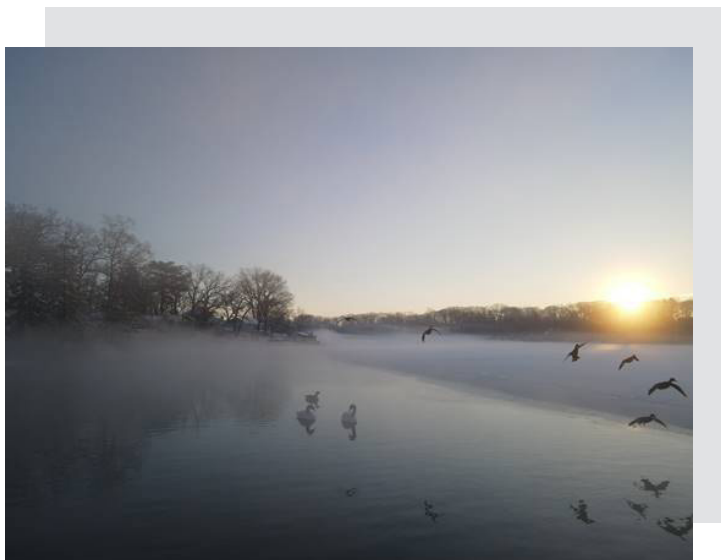
Open Space and Recreation

Preservation of Wrentham’s open spaces has been and continues to be of the highest priority for Wrentham’s residents. The farms and forests are critical to the identity of the Town and are a major attraction for people who live and move to Wrentham. However, farmlands have been quickly lost to development for the past several decades. Residents are now leading proactive strategies to protect the remaining critical areas of open space in Town to protect the remaining active farms, corridors of wildlife habitat, and large areas of forestland.

The Town of Wrentham adopted an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) in 2021. It was prepared by the Wrentham Open Space Committee with assistance from PGC Associates, LLC. The OSRP provides a detailed account of the Town’s cultural and geological history and a comprehensive description of all Town open space and recreational amenities along with goals, strategies, and a seven-year action plan to achieve them. The OSRP provides the foundation for open space and recreation in the Master Plan.

Quick Facts

- ▶ 3,200 acres or about 23% of the land in Wrentham are permanently protected open space
- ▶ In addition, there are 1,740 acres of open space with limited protection receiving tax benefits while remaining undeveloped
- ▶ Wrentham has the headwaters of four different watersheds: the Blackstone; Charles; Taunton; and Ten Mile Rivers



Source: Tom Sousa

Key Themes

The Open Space and Recreation Goals and Strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement, as presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provides new insight into the resources that are part of the Town's natural and recreational amenities. It provides a valuable resource for the community when implementing the Master Plan and meeting new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- **Big Apple Farm and Cook's Valley Farm are unprotected and vulnerable to development.** Proactive land conservation is required in order to find solutions that meet the landowners' needs while also protecting this valuable open space.
- **Open space protection is a high priority to the community, yet there are opportunities to strengthen open space protection.** For example, improving the Town's readiness to exercise its right-of-first-refusal to acquire Chapter 61 properties could help protect the more than 1,500 acres that only have limited protection currently.
- **Open Space Committee is actively working on a few strategies to protect land, including a ranking system of priority parcels. The ranking is based on natural resources, outreach to property owners on the financial benefits of open space conservation, and building relationships with professional land trusts.**
- **Population growth has been directly correlated with the loss of open space in Wrentham. However, changes in development patterns to encourage a smaller footprint on the land per home. This will be done through small multifamily homes, accessory dwelling units, and more development Town Center can allow for growth while still protecting open space.**
- **Wetlands have enormous value with respect to water quality, because they absorb pollutants, retain water to replenish aquifers, and manage storm and flood waters.** However, development frequently isolates or fragments wetlands. This occurs even if the wetlands are untouched.
- **Regulations intended to protect water quality including the Watershed Protection Districts, require relatively large areas of land per home which impacts the walkability of neighborhoods.**
- **The Rice Complex is a new, well-maintained recreational facility that serves Wrentham residents and provides a regional attraction for traveling sports teams and tournaments.**



Source: Tri Valley Irrigation

Goals and Strategies

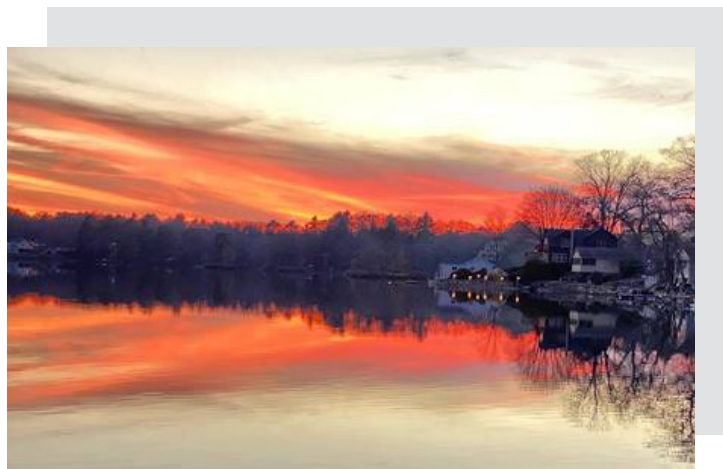
Open Space and Recreation Goal #1: Protect watersheds, groundwater, and maintain and improve water infrastructure and quality consistent with Wrentham's Water Master Plan.

Background

The Town of Wrentham has documented the importance of water infrastructure and water quality through recently completed studies such as: the Water Master Plan; Open Space and Recreation Plan; and Green Infrastructure Plan. The Master Plan elevates the recommendations of these complementary planning processes and echoes those recommendations through this goal and its strategies.

Strategies:

1. **Commit to and develop a funding or financing plan to complete the estimated Water System Capital Improvement Program (CIP).**
2. **Identify priority properties within the Zone II/Aquifer Protection Areas for additional protection or potential acquisition by the Town.**
3. **Plan for investment to address two wells identified in the Water Master Plan (Well 3 constructed in 1960 and Well 4 constructed in 1975) to improve well condition and operating capacity.**
4. **Explore options for water redundancy for West Wrentham including new interconnection, new groundwater source, new high service area (elevated storage tank).**
5. **Promote green infrastructure and low impact development through new public and private investments in the Town.**
6. **Continue to work with watershed management for each of the four watersheds (Blackstone, Charles, Taunton, and Ten Mile Rivers) with headwaters in Wrentham.**



Source: Tom Sousa

Open Space and Recreation Goal #2: Expand walking, biking, and rolling connections, and access to open space and recreation (for example, the Metacomet Greenway, connections to Rice Fields complex, and Town Center).

Background

Wrentham residents are excited to have safe and convenient places to walk, bike, and exercise with a particular interest in connecting to open space and recreation destinations throughout the Town. These connections would support community health, reduce local emissions, and improve quality of life for the residents. Connections for walking, biking, and rolling should be carefully considered with traffic patterns and roadway infrastructure to promote safe travel for all users. A walking trail at Rice Fields has been designed and engineered, and the planning for the Metacomet Greenway continues.

Strategies:

1. **Advance current feasibility studies and define critical next steps to implement the Metacomet Greenway which may include property acquisitions, seeking grants or other funding, procuring design and engineering services, etc.**
2. **Use existing resources, such as the proposed LandLine Greenway Network to identify locations of missing connections, identify needed improvements, and prioritize infrastructure investments.**
3. **Promote and encourage resident use of resources with guides such as The Guide to Conservation Areas and Open Spaces in the Town of Wrentham, which is currently available through the Conservation Commission. The availability and promotion of the guide should be expanded.**



Source: The Big Apple Farm

Open Space and Recreation Goal #3:

Advance preservation of unprotected open space and protection of semi-rural landscapes (including remaining active farms, corridors of wildlife habitat, and large areas of forestland).

Background

The preservation and conservation of remaining open space in Wrentham are important to the community. Important resources remain unprotected. These goals and strategies provide approaches to target the most important, yet unprotected, resources in the Town.

Strategies:

1. **Work with farmers and property owners to establish preservation alternatives and support for protecting farms including promotion of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program.**
2. **Explore ways to economically support local farms. Encourage community support for local farms such as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs (for example, the CSA at White Barn Farm.) Facilitate roundtable discussions to share best practices.** Work with local farmers to strengthen agrotourism, such as apple picking events, farmers markets, farm tours, informational website and social media, and branding and marketing. (This is a cross-topic strategy shared with Economic Development.)
3. **Update the Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) bylaw to encourage open space protection in new subdivision developments with a focus on protecting land having valuable resources.** Explore allowing OSPD by right rather than by special permit. (This is a cross-topic strategy shared with Housing.)
4. **Research and pursue a zoning amendments to discourage or prohibit the clear cutting of trees. (This is a cross-topic strategy shared with Housing.)**

Open Space and Recreation Goal #4:

Protect sensitive habitats and contiguous wildlife corridors.

Background

The Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan provides greater detail about the habitats and wildlife corridors of Wrentham. The protection of these contiguous areas is important to wildlife in the Town. These areas, in particular, provide ecological and environmental benefits. When natural areas become fragmented by buildings, roads, lawns, and other uses, it can decrease the ecological health of the environment, reduce the quality of the wildlife habitat, and disrupt wildlife migration and circulation patterns. Larger protected areas that are connected provide high-quality habitats and wildlife corridors. This goal and set of strategies elevate the additional information provided in the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Strategies:

1. Use the Wildlife Corridors that have been identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (2020) to guide Town open space acquisitions. Also, use them to inform development open space requirements to add contiguous open space connections to these corridors.
2. Assist landowners in preserving portions of their properties and provide guidance to them for managing the land.
3. Prepare management plans for protected parcels and Town-owned properties to address invasive species and uses permitted under the management plan.

Open Space and Recreation Goal #5: Invest in and improve existing resources, recreation facilities, and programs while strengthening amenity, accessibility, and inclusiveness.

Background

Wrentham residents are well-served by current recreation resources, facilities, and programs and proud of investments that have been made in the Town. Continued efforts should remain to maintain and strengthen the resources and facilities that already exist. A focus should be placed on strengthening the amenities available at each existing location and improving the accessibility and inclusiveness of equipment and features, including universally-accessible play equipment.

Strategies:

1. Develop or identify new revenue sources to support the maintenance and improvement of existing resources and amenities.
2. Improve existing children's playgrounds to expand existing amenities and expand availability of universally-accessible features and play equipment.
3. Prepare a work plan and sequence of investments for the improvements defined by the OSRP for Sweatt Park, the Rice Recreation Complex, Sweatt Recreation Complex, Sweatt Beach Facilities, and Town Common.
4. Per Wrentham's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) recommend preparing management and maintenance plans for all of Town-owned conservation and recreation properties.
5. Per the OSRP, recommend exploring the potential to collaborate with other towns and/or nonprofits to integrate recreation and conservation opportunities
6. Per the OSRP, recommend increasing awareness about recreation and conservation lands to residents and visitors, particularly seniors.



Housing

Everyone needs a home. Housing is foundational to the community, and having good housing options for residents of all stages in life--from young professionals to busy families to seniors looking to downsize--helps promote stability in the lives of residents and the community at large. In addition, housing strategies can help direct growth to existing neighborhood centers and reduce the pressure to develop farmland and open space.

Quick Facts

▶ Households

- 4,162 households, 35% have children
- 2.75 people per household
- \$113,000 median income
- \$137,768 median income of homeowners
- \$40,260 median income of renters

▶ Housing stock

- 4,240 housing units
- 86% are single-family, 14% multifamily
- 83% owner-occupied, 17% renter-occupied
- \$490,000 median cost of buying a single-family home, with large year-to-year variations
- \$2,200 monthly median cost of renting a home
- 485 units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory

▶ Municipal tools

- Wrentham Housing Authority
- Community Preservation Act
- Housing Choice Community designation
- Recent zoning updates: Village Center District and Accessory Dwelling unit bylaw

Key Themes

Like the Economic Development Goals and Strategies, the Housing Goals and Strategies are based on insights gleaned from the existing conditions assessment. Some of the findings, such as the need for greater housing options for seniors looking to downsize are well-known, whereas others, like the number of residents struggling with housing costs, has come as a surprise to some. This assessment provides a valuable resource for the community when implementing the Master Plan and meeting new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **The cost of buying a home in Wrentham is increasingly out of reach for the middle class, including Wrentham teachers and Town staff. People who live here have long commutes to their distant, high-paying jobs.** The median income of a Wrentham resident is \$113,000 allowing them to relatively easily afford housing in town. However, most jobs in Wrentham are in retail, which is one of the lowest-paying industries, and the cost of buying a home is even out of reach for our teachers and Town staff. For example, someone making the average Wrentham teacher salary would likely not be able to afford the average single-family home in town.
- ▶ **Almost 1 in 5 Wrentham households rent their home and they are struggling with the costs.** Most residents who rent are already cost-burdened by housing, meaning they spend more than 30% of their incomes on housing, and the cost of rent has almost doubled in the past few years. Most of the jobs in Wrentham don't pay enough for employees to be able to rent in Town. In addition, the disparity between the incomes of homeowners and renters in Wrentham is substantially greater than in other towns.
- ▶ **While Wrentham's median income is relatively high, Wrentham's middle class is shrinking. There is a large portion of low-income residents—almost 30% of households living in Wrentham qualify for Affordable Housing.** Wrentham's middle class has been shrinking for the past 10 years. Currently, Wrentham has the smallest percentage of middle-income residents (defined here as making \$75,000-\$150,000) out of all neighboring towns.
- ▶ **There is a shortage of smaller homes to meet the changing demographics and residents are frustrated with the high cost of new housing.** Households have been and are projected to get smaller—the population is aging and more seniors live alone or with a partner, couples are getting married or partnered later in life, and families are having fewer children. This results in greater demand for housing as more homes will be needed to shelter the same number of people, as well as a growing demand for homes with fewer bedrooms. Yet, many of the smaller homes built a few decades ago in Wrentham's neighborhoods would not be allowed under current zoning. Today, more land is required for a single family home, decreasing density, and the number of homes that can be built overall. In these areas, current zoning requires new houses to be built on at least 30,000 square feet or 3/4 of an acre of land, and dozens of previously developed lots are less than 22,000 square feet or 1/2 acre of land.
- ▶ **Recent Town Center rezoning provides opportunity for new housing, but no new development has been proposed.** In 2018, Wrentham adopted the Village Center District at Town Meeting to encourage a more attractive and walkable Town Center. When the zoning was adopted, it was estimated that it could create the potential for approximately 230 new housing units.

Goals and Strategies

Housing Goal #1:

Guide development towards the Town Center and areas with existing infrastructure.

Background

In 2018, Wrentham residents adopted a new zoning bylaw for the Town Center aimed at promoting a more attractive and walkable Town Center. The new zoning encourages the development of the vacant Crosby Valve/Tyco site to expand the historic Town Center with new housing, shops, restaurants, and more. Throughout the Master Plan process, community members have supported new growth in the Town Center. However, due to a variety of circumstances, no new development has been proposed. Identifying and addressing the barriers will help strengthen the Town Center.

Strategies:

1. **Identify the circumstances that need to be addressed to prompt private-sector investment in and development of the vacant Tyco site through discussion with property owners and other stakeholders.** Examine frontage and access, infrastructure, tax incentives, zoning updates, and other issues and strategies to encourage development that supports the goals of this Master Plan. Master Plan goals include expanding greater housing options, strengthening a walkable and attractive Town Center, and expanding space for small businesses. *(See Economic Development Goal #4)*
2. **Analyze the costs and benefits of wastewater treatment options for new development in the Town Center and pursue the most beneficial option.** Identify federal and State funding opportunities for supporting new infrastructure. *(See Economic Development Goal #4)*
3. **Initiate an inclusive public planning process to update zoning for small, multifamily housing in Town Center.**

➤ **Background:** Throughout the Master Plan process, the Town Center has been identified as a high priority for new housing. Townhouses and small multifamily dwellings are one part of the vision for development of the vacant Tyco site, as outlined by the Town Center zoning. However, there are inconsistencies and omissions in the Wrentham zoning bylaw that regulates small multifamily homes. For example, there are no standards for homes one above the other—the only standards regulating multifamily homes are for rowhouses, which are not defined. Clarifying the zoning standards for small multifamily housing will help provide guidance to developers and certainty that the development meets the community’s vision.

In addition, to help address the housing crisis, the State has recently passed legislation encouraging municipalities to allow multifamily housing in targeted areas (Massachusetts General Law Section 3A of Chapter 40A). Specifically, the new law requires municipalities to amend their multifamily zoning to allow 15 units per acre by right in walkable areas with traditional neighborhood design or near transit options, in order to remain eligible for important funding opportunities, including MassWorks and Housing Choice capital grants.

One potential strategy for Wrentham to clarify its multifamily zoning standards and to meet the State’s requirements is to amend the Town Center zoning as a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay (per Chapter 40R). This approach would have the added benefit of allowing the Town to gain reimbursements from the Commonwealth to cover the costs of educating any school-age children who move into new housing in the zoning district (per Chapter 40s). To provide guidance to developers and to meet the State’s new requirements, the Town Center zoning will require amendments.

4. **Proactively communicate with the Commonwealth to monitor changes and research potential uses of the Wrentham Developmental Center (WDC).**

- Background: The WDC is over 600 acres of land, buildings, and supporting infrastructure owned and operated by the Commonwealth. Given its large size and existing infrastructure, the area could provide future opportunities for the Town. By staying engaged with the Commonwealth, Wrentham can learn about and be prepared to shape potential opportunities here. This strategy also relates to the Economic Development Goals. For more background on the history of the WDC, refer to more detail provided in “Progress Since the 2004 Master Plan” in the Introduction section of this Master Plan.

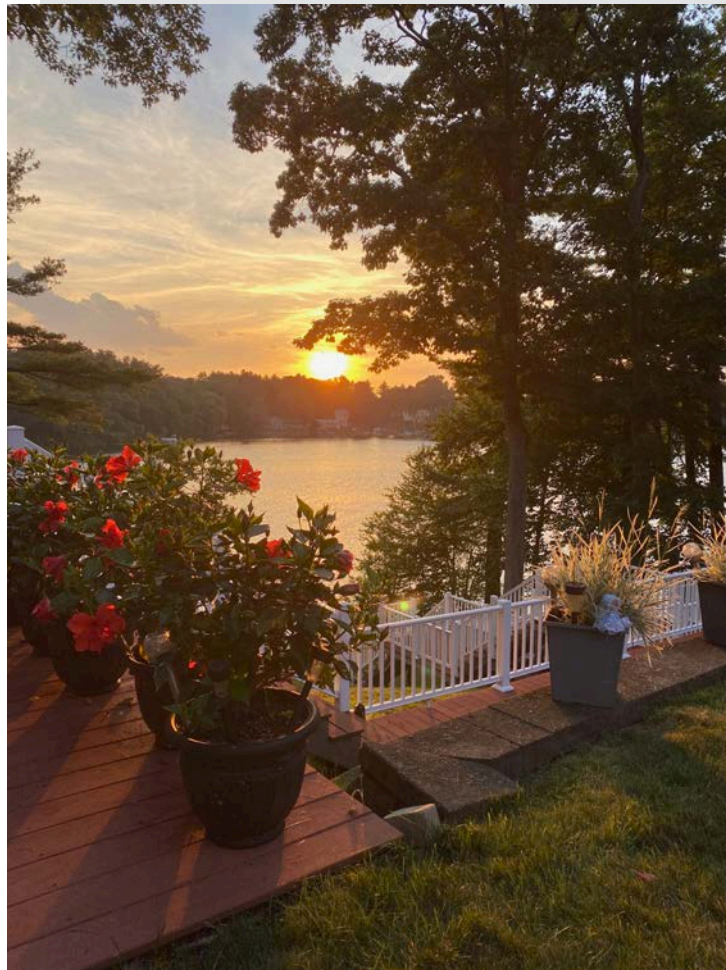


Photo Credit: Diane Glass

Housing Goal #2:

Protect open space, with a focus on protecting land with valuable natural resources and discourage development of forests and fields.

Background

Wrentham has a lovely, semi-rural landscape and a strong agricultural heritage. As Wrentham works to better meet the need for housing choices, it can guide development in different ways. Some land use patterns require a lot of land per home or can negatively impact these resources, while others have a smaller footprint on the land and can actually include protection of natural resources. All new developments should be located and designed with deference to natural and cultural resources. Wrentham residents very strongly support protection of open space.

Strategies

1. **Update the Open Space Preservation Development bylaw to encourage open space protection in new subdivision developments, with a focus on protecting land with valuable natural resources.**

- ▶ Background: The Open Space Preservation bylaw offers the potential for an effective way to protect open space. The bylaw allows developers to cluster the housing in a subdivision if they permanently protect a certain percentage of the open space. This approach helps encourage housing options, protects open space, and supports more sustainable land use patterns. See page A-58 for more information.

However, during the Master Plan process, community members expressed distrust about the use of the bylaw. In particular, there is concern that the bylaw does not help to protect valuable open space. Amendments to the bylaw can target these concerns by requiring assessment and consideration of the natural, cultural, and scenic resources of the proposed open space to be conserved. In addition, amendments can ensure protected open space meets the needs of the community in other ways. For example, amendments can ensure that unbuildable land does not count towards the open space requirements. Instead, developers are incentivized to make the protected open space publicly accessible with walking trails, and/or that protection of land critical to water supply is prioritized. In this way, Open Space Preservation Developments can more effectively serve the community.

2. **Proactively implement the recent Open Space and Recreation Plan to strategically conserve open space, especially working farms, and areas with high visibility.**

- ▶ Background: Wrentham's 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan establishes a set of goals and strategies for land conservation and recreation improvements. Aggressive implementation of the plan, including establishing preservation alternatives for farmers, protecting land in perpetuity, and enforcing the Scenic Roads Bylaw is one of the most direct ways to protect Wrentham's semi-rural character.

3. **Research and pursue a zoning amendment to discourage or prohibit clear cutting of trees.**

- ▶ Background: Tree protection bylaws are increasingly popular in the metro Boston area. Bylaw amendments can require the identification and protection of significant trees as part of the subdivision process, as well as limit land disturbance and clear cutting of native species. Tyngsborough, Dennis, and Harwich provide zoning examples.

Housing Goal #3:

Encourage a greater variety of housing options in order to better serve residents and the people who work in Wrentham, and to allow greater access to the educational, cultural, and community opportunities in Wrentham.

Background

It's hard for young adults, first-time homebuyers, one parent families, seniors looking to downsize, and other smaller households to find a home in Wrentham. There are several reasons why the private market is not better meeting the demand for smaller homes, some of which the Town can influence and others it cannot. There is opportunity for Wrentham's zoning, which regulates land use and development, to make it easier for developers to build a range of housing options, including homes of more modest size and cost.

Every change to Wrentham's zoning must be approved at Town Meeting, under State law. Proposed zoning amendments should include an inclusive public process, including clear communication between the Town staff, elected representatives, and the public. The process should include a data-informed assessment of the zoning options and potential benefits and negative impacts, including impacts on natural resources. It should also include proactive outreach to people often underrepresented in planning processes, such as renters, low-income residents, and people of color.

Strategies:

1. **Establish a Wrentham Housing Committee.**

- Background: Wrentham has an active volunteer community with residents serving on committees and dedicating significant time to the future of the Town; however, there is no group dedicated to Wrentham's housing issues and opportunities. A volunteer Housing Committee could help support community engagement, implement the Strategies of this Master Plan, and pursue additional opportunities to achieve the Goals of this Master Plan as they arise.

2. **Initiate an inclusive planning process to update Article 13 in the Wrentham Zoning bylaw to allow well-designed "Cottage Clusters" that are not age-restricted.**

- Background: A cottage cluster is a group of smaller, single-family homes oriented towards a shared green space. Cottage clusters are thoughtfully designed to encourage a community feel, often with parking located in the rear of homes. Wrentham currently allows cottage cluster housing for seniors by Special Permit. Preference for Town residents, veterans, and employees (teachers, police, and fire) can also be included as a consideration. The Community at Pond Meadow is similar to a cottage cluster given the small grouping of modestly sized homes around green space. Examples of other cottage clusters exist in towns like Concord, Dennis, and Norfolk. Survey results from the Master Plan process show strong support for well-designed cottage clusters.



3. Initiate an inclusive planning process to consider potential amendments to the Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) bylaw to allow greater use of these housing types.

- Background: An ADU (also known as a granny flat, or in-law unit) is a smaller home on the same lot as a primary, single-family home. They provide a simple and low-impact method of increasing housing options for seniors looking to downsize, young adults, and other smaller households, with little impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Wrentham recently amended its zoning bylaw to allow accessory dwelling units by Special Permit.

Currently, though, Wrentham only allows accessory dwelling units that are attached to the primary home and occupied by a family member of the resident of the primary home. Specifically, the requirement that the resident be a family member of the resident of the primary home creates difficult enforcement issues. Other municipalities in the metro Boston area are considering amendments, and several towns including Littleton and Milford, allow non-family members to reside in an ADU. The Wrentham bylaw has already been met with interest from several homeowners to build new accessory dwellings.

Amendments to the existing bylaw, including allowing ADUs by right, to allow non-family members to reside in an ADU, or to allow detached ADUs, could make it easier to build accessory dwellings and allow these housing options to serve more of the community. Concerns about short-term rentals such as Airbnb rentals or owner-occupancy could be directly addressed within the bylaw, as is common in many other towns and cities. Initial survey results from the Master Plan process show interest in learning more about potential amendments, with the most support for allowing detached ADUs.

4. Research and pursue potential zoning amendments or other initiatives to limit tear downs.

- Background: Based on community engagement, residents are concerned about the loss of Wrentham's smaller homes, as they are being torn down and replaced with large houses. Research into best practices and discussion with other municipalities may provide potential strategies to address this issue. Careful consideration must be given to allow for tear downs and renovations that are necessary for safety and maintenance.

5. Clarify the existing definitions and update the zoning standards for two-family homes.

- Background: Establishing clear standards for well-designed two-family homes will help meet the need for more housing options, especially options of more modest size and cost. For example, two-family homes allow for intergenerational families to live near each other with younger family members living next to or above the senior relatives, as well as options for senior residents to collect income from an additional unit. However, there are currently no standards in the Wrentham Zoning bylaw for two-family homes where one home is above the other. This allows for confusion, inefficiency, and the potential for new development that does not meet the community's vision.

6. **Adopt design guidelines to ensure high-quality development consistent with neighborhood context, and to reduce uncertainty and time costs in the residential development review process.**
 - ▶ Background: Design guidelines provide guidance on and illustrations of preferred architectural and site design features of a building, including materials, rooflines, orientation towards the street, and more. As guidelines, they are not required to be standards, but help reduce inefficiency in the permit review process by clearly communicating aesthetic preferences to all developers rather than through each individual review process. Several other municipalities in the region have design guidelines that could serve as examples.

7. **Research and pursue potential strategies for encouraging net zero residential buildings to lower energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, including density bonuses or other means.**
 - ▶ Background: A net zero home or community of homes reduces energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions, by producing enough renewable energy to meet its own annual energy consumption. There are several strategies for encouraging net zero buildings, including adopting the net zero stretch energy code locally. Some strategies can both help to encourage net zero buildings and achieve the goal of more housing options, such as providing developers a density bonus for building homes that are net zero. For more information, see [MAPC's Municipal Net Zero Playbook](#).

8. **A large portion of current Wrentham residents are eligible for deed-restricted Affordable Housing based on their income. Wrentham should encourage market-rate housing options that are within the means of these residents.**
 - ▶ Background: While Wrentham's median income is relatively high, there is a large portion of low-income residents—almost 30% of households in Wrentham qualify for Affordable Housing. Eligibility for Affordable Housing is based on household income and size. For example, a family of two earning \$77,000 or a family of four earning \$96,250 is considered eligible for Affordable Housing in Wrentham. In contrast, approximately 300 housing units or 7% of Wrentham's housing stock is Affordable Housing exclusive for low- to moderate-income households. Given the concern among many residents about building more deed-restricted Affordable Housing in Wrentham, the Town can aim to encourage more modest, market-rate housing within the means of these lower-income households. Several of the strategies above will help address the need, and new strategies may arise over the course of the Master Plan implementation.

Housing Goal #4:

Thoughtfully promote deed-restricted Affordable Housing in order to stay above the Commonwealth's regulated threshold of 10% to retain local control over development.

Background

Affordable Housing is for the exclusive use of households below a certain income level. "Deed-restricted" refers to the legal requirement restricting the home only to households that qualify based on their income. "Low income" is defined by the federal government. In Wrentham, a family of four earning \$96,000 or a family of two earning \$77,000 is considered "low income."

Affordable Housing can come in all shapes and sizes, and the homes can be rented or owned by the residents. The Affordable Housing in Wrentham includes 38 single-family homes in Eagle Brook Village, 25 apartments in Eagle Brook Village, 55 apartments at The Point, almost 150 homes owned and managed by the Housing Authority, and a couple of other smaller developments.

To help meet the local and regional need for Affordable Housing, the Commonwealth encourages cities and towns to maintain at least 10% of the total housing stock on the Commonwealth's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). The SHI includes deed-restricted Affordable Housing exclusively for lower income households to rent or own, as well as market-rate rental housing units built in mixed-income developments. In Wrentham, the SHI includes approximately 300 deed-restricted Affordable Homes listed above, as well as an additional approximately 350 market-rate apartments in Eagle Brook and The Point. Based on this, Wrentham meets the State's 10% SHI threshold. The release of the 2020 Census data, however, may change where the Town stands in relationship to the 10% threshold.

If Wrentham does not continue to build Affordable Housing at the same pace as market-rate housing and it falls below the 10% threshold, developers will be legally allowed to build Affordable Housing and mixed-income projects that do not fully comply with local zoning (MA General Law Chapter 40B). In other words, if Wrentham does not maintain a certain amount of Affordable Housing, developers can build projects that may be inconsistent with local planning efforts.

However, Wrentham has a choice. If the Town adjusts its regulations and works with developers to steadily build Affordable Housing, then it can stay above the 10% threshold. In doing so, Wrentham would continue to have regulatory control and review over the design, shape, size, and location of the Affordable Housing to be more aligned with the community vision. In addition, the Town can proactively serve its current and future lower income residents, including workers, seniors, and families, who are burdened by high housing costs.

Strategies

- 1. Prepare a Housing Production Plan to analyze and plan for appropriate Affordable Housing.**
 - Background: Wrentham's last Housing Production Plan was adopted immediately after the previous Master Plan process in 2005. Housing Production Plans provide focused recommendations to meet the Town's housing needs. The planning process would also provide opportunity for more community engagement, and education about the housing issues and opportunities in Wrentham.

2. **Provide clear information and data about the existing Affordable Housing in Wrentham including cost, the need for Affordable Housing based on income limits, and the Town's potential options for meeting the need.**

➤ Background: Residents of Affordable Housing come from all walks of life—as one resident of Affordable Housing in Wrentham explained: “I manage a bank in Wrentham, everyone knows who I am.” Unfortunately, during the Master Plan process, a handful of responses to the Town-wide survey revealed a prejudice against families and households with low-incomes. Greater education and public discourse could help dispel misinformation and stereotypes, while raising awareness for the widespread need for more Affordable Housing. For example, during an interview as part of the planning process, a resident of Affordable Housing explained: “Before moving to Affordable Housing myself, I didn’t even know it existed.” A first step in improving communication is to clearly post the total number of Affordable Housing units in Wrentham, the income eligibility, and the cost of each unit.

3. **Inventory and track market rate and Affordable Housing development along with existing stock. Maintain at least 10% of housing units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.**

➤ Background: Monitoring development allows the Town to plan ahead and stay above the 10% threshold. In addition to new units, tracking the deed-restrictions of existing Affordable Housing units will help ensure that existing stock is preserved.

4. **Launch an inclusive planning process to develop effective inclusionary zoning. Require or encourage a portion of housing units in certain new developments to be reserved as Affordable Housing for low-income households.**

➤ Background: More than 100 cities and towns in the Commonwealth have inclusionary zoning, including Bellingham, Medway, Norfolk, and Mansfield. Inclusionary zoning bylaws can be designed to best serve the local community’s needs. For example, Bellingham requires that 10% of homes in developments of at least 8 homes be Affordable, where as Norfolk requires that 10% of homes in developments of at least 10 homes be Affordable. For more information, see the [Massachusetts Smart Growth Toolkit](#).

5. **Retain regulatory control of housing developments by working with private, public, or non-profit developers to build Affordable Housing consistent with Wrentham’s zoning.**

➤ Background: Rather than falling below the 10% threshold and reacting to Affordable Housing proposals that are not necessarily consistent with Wrentham’s zoning, the Town can work with willing developers to stay above the 10% threshold and build Affordable Housing consistent with the local regulations. To encourage this proactive, local approach, the Commonwealth provides technical assistance through the Local Initiative Program (LIP). The assistance is provided to communities and developers who are working together to create Affordable Housing opportunities. Wrentham can utilize the LIP to partner with mixed-income or Affordable Housing developers and receive technical assistance.

6. Review and pursue the potential for an Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

- Background: Dozens of municipalities across the Commonwealth have adopted Housing Trust Funds to create a designated source of funds for Affordable Housing. In most communities with Affordable Housing trusts, Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds are the primary source of funds, therefore there are no new fees or taxes.

Wrentham adopted the CPA levying a local tax for the exclusive uses of historic preservation, open space conservation, recreation, and Affordable Housing (also known as “community housing”). Under State law, at least 10% of CPA fund revenues must be used for Affordable Housing projects. To date, the use of Wrentham’s CPA funds for housing has been limited to installing a basketball hoop. The Town has the option to direct these revenues to a Trust Fund for strategic use on providing more housing options. For example, Norfolk has used its CPA funds to purchase property, provide short-term rental assistance, and purchase units to provide as Affordable Housing.

7. Support coordination between the Wrentham Housing Authority, the Planning Board, and the Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

- Background: Communication and collaboration will help foster greater understanding of the goals and challenges of Wrentham’s Boards, Committees, and staff. As well as promote more efficient use of limited resources to best meet Wrentham’s housing needs.

8. Review and pursue the potential for a Community Land Trust.

- Background: A Community Land Trust (CLT) is a private, non-profit corporation created to provide lasting affordability by retaining permanent ownership of the CLT land. CLT homeowners purchase only the building, not the land itself, reducing the barrier to entry for low- and moderate-income homebuyers.



Photo Credit: Warren Cook



Transportation

Safe, reliable, equitable, and enjoyable mobility options influence the quality of life for Wrentham residents, workers, and visitors. Mobility options enable access to essential services and resources, places of recreation, jobs, and social opportunities. A transportation system that is flexible, sustainable, and safe helps provide a strong foundation for economic growth, public health, and overall well-being. A sustainable system reduces greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Streets that accommodate all ages, abilities, and travel modes (driving, walking, rolling, cycling, public transit) and thoughtful transportation strategies can contribute to creating the Vision for a vibrant Town Center, as well as a sustainable Town.

Quick Facts

► Mobility

- On an average workday, approximately 6,500 people come into Wrentham for work, while about 5,700 leave.
- The average household in Wrentham drives about 80 miles per day.

► Infrastructure

- Wrentham has 96 miles of streets and roadways within its town limits, which includes 26 miles of State-maintained facilities.
- Approximately 25% of Wrentham's streets have sidewalks on one side and 2% have sidewalks on both sides of the street. There are no bicycle lanes or bike paths in Wrentham. The infrastructure does not currently support safe biking to Wrentham's schools.
- Many of the Town's roads are in a need of repair due to a prolonged lack of funding. An estimated \$15 million in funding is needed to repair the Town's existing roadways.

► Safety

- In Wrentham, the number of total traffic crashes remained fairly consistent from 2017 to 2019, averaging just over 350 crashes per year, or nearly one crash per day.

► COVID-19 Pandemic

- The pandemic has led to a 19% reduction in traffic on state-owned roads in the Town in 2020, but for some months pedestrian activity doubled in Town over the past two years as more people spent time at home.
- Bicycle activity initially more than doubled in 2020, but then fell below pre-pandemic levels in 2021. This is likely due to the lack of bicycle infrastructure in the Town. (Based on bicycle count data from MassDOT's Mobility Dashboard)

Key Themes

The Transportation Goals and Strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement, as presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provides new insight into the transportation context of the town, as well as connections to both near and far destinations. The information included here is intended to serve as a resource for Town staff, committee members, and the general public to implement the Master Plan and respond to new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **The car-centric nature of Wrentham limits the ability for residents to use other means of transportation, such as walking, rolling, biking, and public transit.** This is especially problematic for populations who cannot or do not drive for a variety of reasons, such as age, disability, and income.
- ▶ **Safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking infrastructure is lacking throughout Town, but is highly desired by residents.** Intersection crossings, mid-block crossings, pedestrian signals and sidewalks need improvements, and more sidewalks are needed both within the Town Center and key connections into Town.
- ▶ **Opportunities for a greater range of mobility options exist in Wrentham, but additional program support is needed.** The Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) Complete Streets program to support all roadway users, regardless of age, ability, or travel mode, can enable the Town to seek technical assistance and funding to improve local roadways, and to provide safer and greater transportation choices for residents and visitors. Resources such as funding, outreach, and community champions would help move critical projects forward and help spread the word about existing services.
- ▶ **Town Center parking is available, but better management of existing spaces would allow for more efficient usage.** There are multiple public parking lots that could be better utilized for long-term parking, and on-street spaces could be used for short-term trips.
- ▶ **Although nearly 70% of the Town's street network are Town-controlled, there are crucial streets in Wrentham's Town Center that are State-owned.** Improvements to safety, mobility, and technology on these streets will require collaboration with the MassDOT.



Source: MAPC

Goals and Strategies

Transportation Goal #1:

Support walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure, especially walking infrastructure within, and connecting to the Town Center as well as other key destinations.

Background

Many Wrentham residents have a desire to walk, bike, and roll around Town as part of recreational and social activities, and in some cases to accomplish local errands and trips. The Town's infrastructure should support safe and convenient travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other users. While a comprehensive network is the long-term goal, key destinations and well-populated routes should be prioritized in the near-term.

Strategies:

1. **Implement recommendations from the 2022 MAPC Town Center Walk Audit.**
2. **Incorporate Complete Streets elements into all roadway projects and explore opportunities for additional improvements through MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program.**
3. **Work with MassDOT on State roads, especially those that cross through Town Center to identify projects that can be done to improve pedestrian safety.**
4. **Increase safe, convenient connections to current and future multi-use trails, such as the Warner Trail and the Metacomet Greenway.**
 - Increase signage in high-traffic areas, such as the Town Center, to promote awareness of trail options.
 - Make it easier for people to get to the Town Center by connecting the trails there and other key destinations.
5. **Develop and regularly update a priority list of neighborhoods or street segments where new sidewalks are needed as well as where maintenance is required.**
 - Connect new sidewalks to existing sidewalks/crosswalks and connect to key destinations.
 - Develop a plan for snow clearance, including prioritization of key pedestrian routes, and regular maintenance of shrubbery/bushes/trees to ensure sidewalk is passable.
6. **Ensure future development prioritizes walking, biking, rolling and accessibility around Town.**
 - Explore ways to integrate sidewalks more consistently with development projects as an approval requirement through Planning Board review and public hearing processes.
7. **Work with MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program to implement improvements for students, parents, and staff to walk, bike, and roll to school.**
 - Create a safer connection from the high school to recreation areas, such as the Rice Complex.
8. **Include more trees and shrubs along streets and sidewalks to calm traffic, absorb emissions, and decrease summer heat.**

Transportation Goal #2:

Assess parking needs and implement parking management strategies in Wrentham's Town Center.

Background

The supply of parking should closely align with demand and managed to increase the availability of the most convenient spaces. Studies have shown that the oversupply of parking in Town Center areas has negative consequences. Parking takes space that could be other uses, amenities, or destinations. Parking supply should be carefully integrated with the Town Center environment to minimize negative impacts on the sense of place and walkability.

Strategies:

1. **Conduct a parking study in Wrentham's Town Center to determine current use of parking spaces and options for improved parking management.**
 - Implement two-hour parking in front of businesses to encourage turn-over and avoid all-day parking.
 - Work with MassDOT to assess whether realigning angled parking in front of businesses to parallel parking or other options such as rear-angled parking to increase safety for pedestrians and drivers.
 - Identify key parking spots and make them readily accessible as handicapped parking spaces in the Town Center.
2. **Consider reducing or eliminating required parking minimums in the Zoning bylaw for future development. Move to a data-driven decision about parking capacity in the Town Center and other locations.**



Source: Wikipedia.org

Transportation Goal #3:

Increase roadway safety for all road users, especially the most vulnerable including people walking and biking, children, seniors, and people with disabilities.

Background

The Town of Wrentham recently adopted a Complete Streets policy. A Complete Streets approach designs streets for everyone to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. The Town's Master Plan is aligned with this policy and the strategies defined under this goal will help to advance implementation of Complete Streets in Wrentham.

Strategies:

1. **Prioritize recommendations from the 2022 MAPC Town Center Walk Audit, a study that recommended specific improvements to pedestrian safety.**
2. **Upgrade signal and lighting technology, especially at intersections for people to cross the street and alert cars to pedestrians in the street. Coordinate operations of traffic signals on state roadways with MassDOT.**
 - Increase lighting on streets/sidewalks/crosswalks.
 - Provide more time for pedestrians to cross the street at signalized intersections.
 - Incorporate pedestrian countdowns and automatic WALK cycles into signal upgrades.
3. **Identify and implement quick-build projects at high-crash locations and/or locations with significant pedestrian activity.**
4. **Combine Complete Streets roadway redesign projects with repaving/maintenance efforts to decrease overall costs and accomplish changes faster.**
5. **Create a Transportation Safety Action Plan with measurable steps to reduce crashes, fatalities, and serious injuries on Town streets to be eligible for federal grants for Safe Streets funding.**
6. **Implement more visible/prominent crosswalks at major intersections, places of interest such as conservation areas, and areas with high pedestrian crashes, and areas with high traffic volumes.**
 - Prioritize all high traffic streets for pedestrian improvements.
 - Enhance crosswalks near angled parking in Town Center to increase safety for pedestrians.
7. **Reduce speeding through traffic calming measures, road diets (reducing travel lanes or lane widths), and improved signage.** Consider speed limits townwide and periodically assess the appropriate speed limit for a particular street given its current conditions, usage, and traffic patterns.

Transportation Goal #4:

Increase viable alternatives to single-occupancy, private vehicles and increase use of GATRA's transit options in and around Wrentham

Background

Driving is the most common way to get around in Wrentham. Alternatives to driving are sometimes not as widely known, or may not be considered because they seem complicated or inconvenient. However, for some types of trips and certain destinations, transit options may offer advantages over driving a private vehicle. The viability of transit under these circumstances should be improved for Wrentham residents.

Strategies:

1. **Increase awareness of transit options among Town residents, especially those who do not have access to a vehicle or do not drive, including seniors, people with disabilities, children, and people with low income.**
 - ▶ Increase signage around Town letting residents know about transit options.
 - ▶ Share transit information at Town events, meetings, schools, places of worship, and town programming.
 - ▶ Include information about transit options on the Town website, social media, etc.
 - ▶ Collect annual data from GATRA on trips to/from Wrentham and adjust awareness and other strategies as needed.
2. **Evaluate the potential to include a car-sharing program as an option at multi-unit developments.**
3. **Encourage the Wrentham Council on Aging and the Disability Commission to evaluate with GATRA unmet transit needs and determine what new transit options may be necessary.**
4. **Consider adding shuttle service for the Council on Aging to assist seniors in their day-to-day transportation needs and the Disability Commission to assist people with disabilities.**
5. **Improve walking and biking connections to areas with high utilization of GATRA transit service and areas where increased transit service is desired.**
6. **Increase availability of bicycle racks at popular destinations (for example, at Sweatt Park or near the hardware store in the Town Center).**

Transportation Goal #5: Plan for future transportation technologies including electric and autonomous vehicles, as well as electric bikes and scooters.

Background

The fleet of public and private vehicles on the roadways will continue to evolve. The next ten years may be an important time for technological advancements in transportation. The Town should monitor these developments and modify transportation and roadway infrastructure and policies to keep pace with technology-driven changes.

Strategies:

1. As part of Wrentham's Green Communities Plan efforts, develop a municipal fleet transition plan to move to electric vehicles (EVs), alternative fuel vehicles, or other green technologies (including electric bicycles) for most or all municipal vehicles (shared strategy with Energy and Sustainability).
2. For all new development projects incorporate electric charging and/or electric-vehicle-ready options in parking plans (shared strategy with Energy and Sustainability).
3. Increase options for electric vehicle charging in public spaces (shared strategy with Energy and Sustainability).
4. Increase education and outreach for residents about the benefits and opportunities for electric vehicles, including e-bikes and e-scooters. Inform residents about rebates available through the State's MOR-EV program.
5. Apply for and utilize available program funding opportunities that include the Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP), and National Grid's Fleet Advisory Services and Make Ready programs.
6. Begin planning for autonomous vehicles by holding public workshops with constituents as well as monitoring federal and state developments.



Source: MAPC



Community Facilities and Services

The Town of Wrentham owns and operates a range of public facilities that serve the public good, and make it possible for municipal employees and volunteers to provide services to residents, both directly and indirectly. Wrentham's ability to provide satisfactory facilities and services depends on effective capital planning, a commitment to implementation and the pursuit of funding, and the amount of revenue available for government operations. This topic includes information about the structure of Town government and provides an overview of the different types of facilities and services provided by the Town of Wrentham.

Quick Facts

- ▶ 34 building facilities, totaling 274,831 square feet are owned and operated by the Town.
- ▶ A Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is reviewed and updated annually by the Town to guide improvements to Town-owned buildings, equipment, and infrastructure.
- ▶ The Pavement Management Program (PMP) was recently updated to assess the Town's road conditions.
- ▶ A Water System Master Plan (WSMP) was recently completed to assess the condition and plan improvements to the public water system.

Key Themes

The Community Facilities and Services goals and strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement, as presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provides new insight into the facilities and services provided by the Town, as well as the fiscal health of the Town and provides a valuable resource for the community when implementing the plan and meeting new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **Ageing infrastructure and the need for modernization of key municipal facilities in the next 10-15 years present challenges that will need to be balanced against the Town's limited funding for capital improvements.**
- ▶ **Many of the Town's roads are in need of repair due to a prolonged lack of funding.** It is estimated that more than \$15 million in funding is needed to repair the Town's existing roadways.
- ▶ **The Department of Public Works, the Building Department, and the Facilities Department are responsible for tasks in maintaining the Town's infrastructure, buildings, and equipment, but could use facility upgrades and additional staffing resources.**
- ▶ **The Town Hall's existing size does not accommodate current space demands for operations and lacks adequate office space for Town departments as well as community meeting space.**

Goals and Strategies

Community Facilities and Services Goal #1: Provide high quality facilities, services, and programs that serve the needs of Wrentham's residents and businesses and responds to the Town's changing population.

Background

The type of Town services most needed by residents and the way those services are provided change over time. It is important for the Town's facilities, services, and programs to evolve with these changing needs and to efficiently respond to the needs of the community.

Strategies:

1. **Plan for new facilities and staff to serve a growing population, including adjusting staffing models, through long-range strategic plans and capital improvement planning (e.g. grant writing, DPW snow removal and ongoing street repair).**
2. **Coordinate performance measures across public safety agencies (e.g., fire and police) to better plan for additional facilities, units, and staffing and to provide better oversight and service to all parts of Wrentham as the Town continues to develop and grow.**
3. **Design new public facilities and renovate existing facilities with features and characteristics that support state-of-the-art technologies, energy efficiency, sustainability, green infrastructure/low impact development, livability, and equity.**
4. **Centralize IT infrastructure for the use of technology Town-wide and address service delivery and management issues across multiple processes and departments.**
 - Use capital funds for major IT investments, including implementation labor.
 - Develop technology standards and implement a professional help desk. Consider adding staff to the IT Department to develop and implement this and other policy changes.
 - Consider pursuing regional IT partnerships with surrounding communities to expand the use of shared resources. Opportunities exist in Geographic Information Services (GIS), emergency management services and technical infrastructure development.
5. **Explore sustainable and cost effective amendments to Town waste management. For example, evaluating the potential for a Town composting program.**



Source: Town of Wrentham

Community Facilities and Services Goal #2: Develop a sustainable, equitable, and comprehensive approach for short and long-term capital improvements and maintenance planning.

Background

In 2019, the Town of Wrentham appointed a new director of facilities and capital planning. The importance of the activities under facilities and capital planning is highlighted through this Master Plan goal and set of strategies.

Strategies:

- 1. Continue the formalized Town-wide Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) process for projected investments over the upcoming five-years and is updated annually.** The following recommendations should be considered when evaluating enhancements or improvements to the Town's process for CIP project identification and prioritization:
 - Develop a formal scoring process for evaluating of priority projects that align with the goals of the Master Plan.
 - Create a formal process for cross-departmental efforts to identify and promote projects for the CIP.
 - Prioritize projects that are promoted by multiple Town departments or that have financial support/partnerships with regional partners.
 - Prioritize projects that need to correct existing public facility and service deficiencies or replace key facilities that are currently in use and are at risk of failing
 - Vet prioritized projects through a community outreach process.
- 2. Continue to maintain the unified Town-wide asset management system to annually track and assess the conditions of all public buildings, facilities, parks and open spaces, assets, and infrastructure.**
- 3. Promote co-location of public facilities with respective Town offices, when feasible, to enhance efficient use of land, reduce capital and operating costs, maximize efficiencies in service provision, and reduce travel demand.**
 - Evaluate space needs, departmental roles, and interagency relationships to determine opportunities to maximize collaboration and improve efficiency (for example, the Planning Department and DPW may benefit from a shared location).
- 4. Prioritize funding for repair and maintenance of Wrentham's streets in a manner that aligns with future growth priorities, land use, and community anchors.**
 - Ensure repair and maintenance of Wrentham's roads follows the Town's 2021 Pavement Management Program (PMP).
- 5. Implement the recommended Improvements outlined in the Town's 2021 Water Master Plan.**

Community Facilities and Services Goal #3: Support proactive and timely assessment and response to funding needs for infrastructure and public facility improvements and staffing to pursue external funding sources, including State and federal grants.

Background

Underpinning nearly all of the goals and strategies of the Master Plan is the need for funding to support the recommendations. This critical goal highlights the need to pursue external funding sources to support the recommendations and provides strategies for enhancing this pursuit.

Strategies:

1. **Provide adequate funding for infrastructure and public facility improvements on an annual basis.**
2. **Explore new and long-term funding tools to enable increased investments in capital improvement projects and services.**
3. **Provide staffing support to Town departments to pursue grant opportunities that could provide training, planning and technical support, or funds for physical improvements to roads and facilities.**
 - Hire a grant writer to pursue and coordinate various federal, state, and private grants to support community goals.
4. **Encourage public-private partnerships to finance infrastructure and public facilities which fulfill mutual interests of the public and private sectors.**
5. **Clarify inventory and define the funding sources that are regularly available to support projects and programs in Wrentham.** Clarify the sources, the types of projects and applicants that may qualify, the project submission process, and awarding criteria for each source. Sources should include Community Preservation Act funds, Sweatt Fund, Town Capital Improvement Funds, and other sources.



Source: VisitingNewEngland.com

Community Facilities and Services Goal #4: Strengthen effective communication and collaboration within Town government and Improve transparency of Town processes with the public.

Background

Many elected, appointed, and volunteer boards and committees are responsible for important duties in the Town with the support of Town staff. As with any organization made of many related parts, effective communication and collaboration are critical to an efficient and well-functioning system. This communication and collaboration should be made as systemic as possible, the following strategies are intended to help.

Strategies:

1. **Promote the recommendations of the Master Plan by hosting annual events or through other outreach to ensure the Town’s existing and new residents are aware of the visions, goals, strategies, and action items outlined in the Master Plan.**
2. **Ensure Wrentham.gov is the central digital hub of information, events, and community organization engagement.** The Town recently launched the redesigned Town website to be more user-friendly and easier for residents to navigate. Drive all resident and constituents to the website and continue to maintain and update it with useful and relevant information.
3. **Improve public information sharing and establish communication channels for resident feedback about community facilities and services.**
 - ▶ Explore the feasibility of creating a 311 request and work management system (e.g., SeeClickFix) to allow residents to report non-emergency issues and submit service requests to the Town.
 - ▶ Use social media and other digital platforms to disseminate information and engage residents, community organizations, and traditionally underrepresented groups in the capital improvement planning process
4. **Continue to strengthen communication and coordination between Town departments, boards, and committees on planning initiatives and changes in the community.**
 - ▶ Define a set of principles that all Town departments use for engaging residents and stakeholders (e.g. business owners, property owners).
 - ▶ Coordinate projects that go before multiple boards to host joint meetings that comply with the rules of Open Meeting Law.

Historical and Cultural Resources

Identifying and recognizing local historical and cultural resources cultivates a sense of place for the residents of Wrentham. It also creates opportunities to connect people with places, experiences, and stories that are important to them and their communities. Honoring the Town's history and culture is intrinsically connected to other goals of community planning including economic development, housing, and land use patterns. Economic development goals such as supporting tourism and finding new opportunities for small businesses can be complemented by promoting Wrentham's history in coordination with neighboring communities and the region as a whole. Housing goals may be achieved by leveraging historic structures in rehabilitation projects. Land use goals aimed at preserving semi-rural and open space lands also serve to protect Wrentham's semi-rural heritage.

Quick Facts

► Historic Resources

- 367 listings within the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS)
- 5 National Register of Historic Places listings
- 90 Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places listings
- Nearly 100 sites recognized through the Town Historical Plaque Program

► Cultural Activities and Places

- Old Fiske Library Museum
- Wrentham Day
- Wrentham Arts on the Town Common
- Music on the Town Common

► Municipal Tools/Administrative Capacity in place

- Historical Commission
- Demolition Delay
- Wrentham Cultural Council
- Community Preservation Act



Old Fiske Library Source: wickedlocal.com

Key Themes

The Historical and Cultural Resources Goals and Strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement. Additional details of the research and data are presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provided new insight into the Town resources and provided a valuable resource for the community when implementing the Master Plan and meeting new challenges and opportunities. The Key Themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **Preservation efforts, largely led by the Town’s Historical Commission, Wrentham Cultural Council, and Community Preservation Committee, focus on actively seeking out and preserving artifacts of Wrentham’s history.** The Town recently awarded Community Preservation Act funds to hire an archivist to support these efforts.
- ▶ **Several properties are eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places or the State Registry; however, there are not currently efforts to undertake the designation process.** The Town has also not conducted a historical and architectural survey in recent years. However, because of the limited staff and volunteer availability, undertaking the tasks needed for the designation process has been virtually prohibitive.
- ▶ **Town Common serves as an active community gathering space, with several different events happening throughout the year. The Master Plan survey findings show that residents associate the Town Common with some of their fondest memories.** Volunteers are active in maintaining the landscaping, gazebo, and seasonal décor. The Town Common and surrounding Town Center buildings are eligible for but have not been designated as a historic district. Pursuing a historic designation for Town Common and the surrounding district could create additional funding opportunities for future improvements and programming.
- ▶ **The Housing topic of the Master Plan identified a shortage of smaller homes and inconsistencies between the current Zoning bylaws and historic development patterns. Some of the older neighborhoods in Wrentham, including those along the lakes as well as along East Street, Taunton Street, and Thurston Street, would be not be allowed under current zoning.** By not allowing development in the same character as some of the treasured historic neighborhoods, over time, new development could erode the Town’s character. The Housing and Land Use topics for more discussion about existing and allowable lot sizes.
- ▶ **Like many communities across New England and the nation, additional work is needed in Wrentham to ethically document, interpret, and share the history and culture of Wrentham’s residents and visitors of color, including Indigenous peoples.** Stories like that of Cesar Chelorr, an enslaved person born in Wrentham who is said to be the first documented plane-maker in North America. This is one example of a story that could be more widely shared and further researched.
- ▶ **Wrentham residents’ enthusiasm for preserving its history and culture is exhibited through activities (like Wrentham Day, Arts on the Common, poetry readings) organized by the Historical Commission, Wrentham Cultural Council, the Community Preservation Committee, and other community organizations.**

Goals and Strategies

Historical and Cultural Goal #1:

Preserve and add to the documented historic character of Wrentham.

Background

Identifying and recognizing historic and cultural resources in the Town will help preserve significant contributors to Wrentham's character and help to document the historic narrative of the Town for the benefit of future generations.

Strategies:

1. Establish a Town historic registry for Wrentham structures deemed historically or culturally significant to the Town.
2. Partner with preservation groups like the Massachusetts Historical Commission to conduct an updated historical and archaeological survey in Wrentham. The survey should build on past inventories and address gaps in resources, specifically related to Indigenous history or other underrepresented groups.
3. Pursue National Register of Historic Places designation for Town-owned resources. Consider prioritizing designation efforts based on relevance to historic narratives of the Town.
4. Share information with relevant property owners about the benefits of designating resources to the National Register of Historic Places or a Town registry (if established).
5. Encourage private land conservation in support of semi-rural heritage and economic activities including agriculture, horticulture, and aquaculture.
6. Support resident and municipal efforts to maintain historic and cultural resources through strategic maintenance planning, improved access and signage and recognition of volunteer efforts, including periodic clean-ups.
7. Assess known historic sites for vulnerability against climate change, natural disasters, and other risks.

Historical and Cultural Goal #2:

Continue hosting community events, especially those co-located with historic or cultural resources, to foster a sense of belonging and understanding of local history.

Background

Events are a critical component of the historic and cultural activities of the Town to build community, practice inclusion, and grow personal connections to the shared narratives of Wrentham.

Strategies:

1. **Work with the State to co-locate cultural events at the Wrentham Developmental Center.**
2. **Highlight historic and cultural resources during annual community events, and especially at the upcoming Wrentham 350th anniversary celebration.**
3. **Leverage Wrentham’s active volunteer network to help organize and promote diverse cultural activities and public art installations.** Coordinate activities among Town committees and other community groups to help publicize events.
4. **Partner with local farms to host events that celebrate Wrentham’s agricultural history.**
5. **Work with local residents, and others, who have personal history with local buildings and factual details, to gather and document relevant information.**
6. **Explore the inclusion of plaques along Metacomet greenway to discuss the history of the Town.**

Historical and Cultural Goal #3:

Expand tools to better protect existing historic and cultural resources as development occurs.

Background

A variety of approaches to preservation are needed to increase the likelihood of historical and cultural resource protection. The set of strategies under this goal expand the Town tools that would support these activities.

Strategies:

1. **Explore locations where a Local Historic District bylaw could be used to apply protections to resources designated nationally or locally.** Work with residents to designate historic districts for historical asset clusters such as the Town Center, around the Town Common, Wrentham Developmental Center, Sheldonville, or Wampum Corner. The Town may consider district-specific design guidelines for local historic districts to align new development with the historical patterns of the district. The Town would determine the requirements and guidelines associated with each district.
2. **Offer incentives to encourage preservation of historically or culturally significant structures. For example, new zoning incentives such as expedited approval for new uses or expedited review.**
3. **Consider adding new amendments to the Town’s General bylaws to advance preservation. This could include adopting an affirmative maintenance bylaw, adaptive reuse zoning, scenic vista overlay district, or agricultural preservation bylaw.** Amendments to Wrentham’s demolition delay bylaw, such as extending the delay from 12 months to 18 months for structures listed on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. This could help protect existing resources. More information on regulatory tools to facilitate preservation planning can be found in “Preservation through Bylaws and Ordinances” published by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

4. Amend the Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) zoning requirements of the Town's Zoning Bylaw to require the consideration of existing historical and cultural resources when an applicant is siting lots and designating common open space.
5. Digitize records of properties with Town historical markers to inform future survey activities and streamline the demolition delay review process.

Historical and Cultural Goal #4: Increase Town capacity to manage and enhance historic and cultural resources.

Background

In addition to expanded tools, increased capacity is also required to support historical and cultural activities in Wrentham. The following set of strategies would build local capacity in a number of important ways.

Strategies:

1. Hold joint meetings of the Historical Commission, Wrentham Cultural Council, and Community Preservation Committee to coordinate historical and cultural preservation efforts. For example, joint meetings could benefit collaboration on the Old Fiske Library Museum, facilitate shared learning opportunities, and explore jointly creating a historic preservation plan for Wrentham.
2. Expand municipal staffing capacity for the Historical Commission to ensure knowledge transfer as committee members retire and expand outreach for member renewal.
3. Attend training sessions and peer learning exchanges hosted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission to expand understanding of resource evaluations, designation procedures, and other preservation topics.
4. Continue using Community Preservation Act funds for historical preservation and identify other funding sources (like grants administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission) to support maintenance, preservation, and/or acquisition of historical sites, and to establish inventory.
5. Explore the formation of Town historical groups that are neighborhood-based to help identify and support local preservation activities and priorities. Determine if interest exists to form such a neighborhood group of volunteers to support preservation activities in collaboration with the Historical Commission, or others.
6. Continue to seek external grants to provide additional funding assistance to preservation activities.

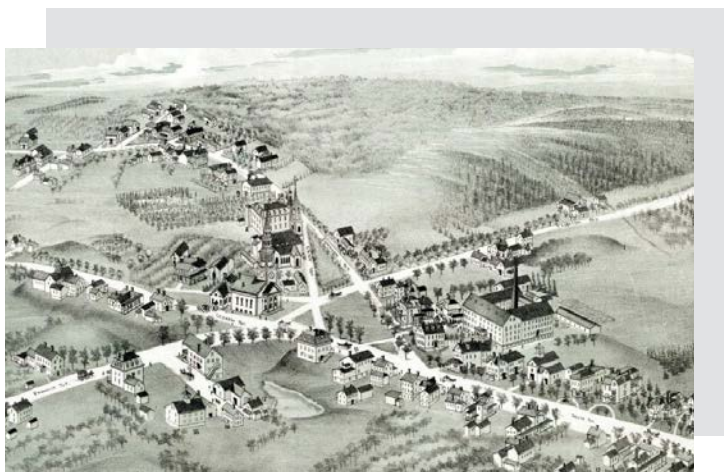
Historical and Cultural Goal #5: Broaden and deepen Wrentham's documented history to include representation of all peoples that were part of the history of the land and the Town.

Background

The collective stories of shared history are diverse and complicated. Even well-known historical events or stories involve multiple perspectives and interpretations. These stories benefit all members of a community to broaden and deepen the documented history of a place and the interpretation of events.

Strategies:

1. **Work with community partners (such as Wrentham Cultural Council, Historical Commission, Mashpee Wamponoag Tribe, etc.) to collect oral histories to better understand local history.**
2. **Expand the representation of people and stories that have not yet been fully told in Wrentham, in part through exploring artifact preservation work.** For example, consider prioritizing artifacts tied to Indigenous people or other groups that have not been the focus of past efforts and work with the Old Fiske Library Museum to curate exhibits focused on this history. Another example of a history to highlight is that the Proctor Mansion was on the on underground railroad.
3. **Inventory and pursue formal designation of resources connected to historic narratives that are less well known to expand and deepen an understanding of Wrentham's history.** For example, work with the owner of Helen Keller's former home to formally designate it on the National Register of Historic Places or designate Oak Point and its connection to the history of Indigenous people.
4. **Promote arts, culture, and historic preservation funding opportunities to cultural organizations and networks.**
5. **Use the Metacomet greenway as an additional opportunity to tell these less known stories – include history and interpretive elements in the design of this trail.**



Source: Knowol.com



Energy and Sustainability

Energy is an increasingly-critical topic for municipalities across Massachusetts both in terms of reducing energy costs and reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to slow climate change. Total energy costs represent a portion of annual Town spending and offer a corresponding prospect for savings.

In addition, increasing energy efficiency and shifting energy sources away from fossil fuels like gas and oil helps reduce GHG emissions. Massachusetts has a goal of reducing GHG emissions to net-zero (defined in the glossary of terms in the appendix) by 2050, and many municipalities have adopted the same goal. Municipalities have an important role in effectively reducing emissions directly through control over municipal energy usage, and indirectly through land use planning, policies and programs, and capital projects for residents and businesses energy use. Incorporating energy efficiency and renewable energy into municipal planning has several benefits, including to:

1. Help save money and reduce energy costs
2. Stabilize energy prices
3. Reduce air pollution
4. Reduce GHG emissions
5. Increase energy resilience and energy independence

Planning for long-term resiliency to prepare the infrastructure and services of the Town to the impacts of climate change is also a central responsibility of municipal government. The local impacts of global climate change have already begun to affect the water supply during drought conditions, the frequency of storm and inland flooding events, and the loss of electricity after major storms. Specifically, bacteria and nutrient pollution in stormwater have led to excessive algal growth and public health concerns in recent years, including closures of the public beach area located on Lake Pearl.

Quick Facts

- ▶ The Town of Wrentham spent \$680,000 on energy costs in 2020 and has a plan to cut energy use by 20% in 5 years.
- ▶ Delaney Elementary School has the highest energy use among municipal buildings.
- ▶ Municipal electricity use accounts for about 3% of all electricity use and 3% of natural gas use within Wrentham, highlighting the importance of private improvements as well.
- ▶ Wrentham residents and businesses have received more than \$4,000,000 in MassSaves electric incentives for energy efficiency upgrades between 2013-2019.
- ▶ There are 335 renewable energy sources in Wrentham, most of which are solar panels on residential property.
- ▶ Inland flooding is one of the greatest climate-related hazards that Wrentham faces with undersized and aging Stormwater infrastructure.

Key Themes

The Energy and Sustainability Goals and Strategies are based on research, data analysis, best practices, and community engagement, as presented in the existing conditions appendices. This assessment provided new insight into the patterns of energy use for residents and businesses. The assessment showed that sustainability efforts of the Town are important for the community. By implementing the Master Plan goals and strategies, the Town will be better prepared to meet new challenges and opportunities. The key themes of the assessment are summarized below.

- ▶ **Wrentham has adopted new policies to encourage energy efficiency and renewable energy generation that now make the Town eligible for Green Community designation. The designation grants Wrentham access to State grants for projects that improve municipal energy efficiency and renewable energy use.**
- ▶ **Municipal leadership in reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to mitigate the worst of climate change impacts is critical.** However, emissions from municipal buildings and Town-owned vehicles account for only a fraction of the total emissions in Wrentham. Reducing Town-wide emissions requires making it easier for residents and businesses to improve energy efficiency, shift to electric power, and install renewable energy generation.
- ▶ **The transportation sector is the largest source of emissions in the United States, in Massachusetts, and likely in Wrentham.** Driving is the primary source of GHG emissions in Massachusetts, the known impacts are even greater than coal-fired power plants. Promoting more walkable neighborhoods with land use patterns that allow people to walk, bike, or take transit to work, and school is one of the most effective strategies in reducing energy use and emissions.
- ▶ **The Town has started to address climate-related inland flooding through a new Green Infrastructure Master Plan** to improve stormwater management and to protect the quality of drinking water by promoting infiltration of stormwater to recharge the aquifer and by treating stormwater pollutants before they make their way into groundwater.



Source: msmabbey.org

Goals and Strategies

Energy and Sustainability Goal #1:

Explore opportunities for new economically-feasible clean energy generation which minimizes potential impacts to natural resources, open space, and abutters.

Background

Expanding clean energy generation and developing a more local and distributed approach to energy generation will improve the sustainability and reliability of energy resources.

Strategies:

1. **Explore locations for potential solar, wind, geothermal or other clean energy installations on previously developed municipal properties (building roofs, parking lot canopies, and former Town landfill).**
2. **Review clean energy project regulations, approval, and permitting processes to identify and reduce potential barriers to investments and to protect forested lots from clear-cutting trees for clean energy investments.**
3. **Promote resources, funding sources, and options available to Town residents, businesses, and property owners to invest in clean energy upgrades.**

Energy and Sustainability Goal #2:

Support residents, property owners, and businesses in reducing their greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs by promoting programs and incentives.

Background

Promoting existing programs available for residents, property owners, and businesses to increase energy efficiency and to reduce carbon footprints is good for the individual properties and for the long-term sustainability of the Town. Many of these existing programs offer funding and resources for improved the sustainability.

Strategies:

1. **Share information with residents about Mass Save, energy assessments, energy upgrade rebates, and other resources supported by the utility provider.** Promote and encourage use of the Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) program and financing.
2. **Support use of private electric vehicles by expanding public charging stations, adopting charging station guidance or requirements for new development, support an electric vehicle (EV) car sharing program, and expand local education and awareness of EVs and local support for them.**

3. Partner with schools and educational programs to engage students (at the Tri-county vocational school or other schools) to help with circulating information to Town businesses about grants, funding sources, or assisting with energy audits.
4. Model effective energy policies at the municipal level including, but not limited to a municipal green product purchasing policy, municipal energy reduction plan, municipal vehicle replacement policy, an anti-idling policy, energy audits of facilities, and implementation of Energy Conservation Measures (ECMs).

Energy and Sustainability Goal #3: Prepare Town infrastructure for local impacts of climate change (flooding, drinking water supply, water quality and stormwater management, and loss of electricity)

Background

The profile of climate risks continues to evolve and risk assessments should continue for critical municipal facilities that may be susceptible to flooding, extreme heat, drought, and power outages.

Strategies:

1. Work with property owners and developers to implement tree planting and regreening investments for properties where pavement and rooftops contribute to the heat island effect (for example, the Wrentham Premium Outlets).
2. Focus on addressing risks of power outages, identified as the community's greatest concern, through redundancy and backup systems.
3. Integrate sustainability and resilience practices into operation and investments in municipal facilities including exploring the Delaney School for use as an emergency shelter (Senior Center is currently an emergency shelter), relocation of the Department of Public Works complex and related facilities outside of the floodplain.
4. Explore the technical and financial feasibility for resilient energy systems in critical facilities. This could include installing islanding capabilities at municipally owned solar energy systems and installation of battery storage systems.
5. Protect the quality of drinking water supply by implementing recommendations from the Green Infrastructure Master Plan. For example, promote infiltration of stormwater to recharge the aquifer and improve filtration of stormwater pollutants.



Source: Patch.com

Energy and Sustainability Goal #4: Reduce municipal greenhouse gas emissions and energy costs.

Background

The Town should model investments and improvements that will improve sustainability of Town facilities and provide an example for private property owners.

Strategies:

1. **Explore participation in a Green Municipal Aggregation program to add 5% additional renewable energy into the utility energy sourcing contract.**
2. **Continue investments, improvements, and renovations to reduce energy usage at municipally owned buildings by implementing the Energy Reduction Plan.**
3. **Reduce energy use from municipally-owned vehicles including investing in alternative fuel and electric vehicles as new or replacement vehicles are needed and track vehicle usage patterns.**
4. **Continue to install and purchase renewable energy for municipal use, such as through direct ownership or power purchase agreements from nearby solar and wind sources.**
5. **Work in partnership with utilities to retrofit streetlights to LEDs. Town streetlights have already been converted.**

Energy and Sustainability Goal #5: Develop a community-wide Climate Action Plan to set goals, determine performance benchmarks and metrics, and actions to advance progress.

Background

Continue the activity and momentum of the Town's recent achievements in becoming designated as a Green Community. Explore opportunities for advancing climate resilience and green infrastructure such as the recently awarded municipal climate resilience grant from the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program.

Strategies:

1. **Establish an Energy Committee for the Town to guide and coordinate community-wide energy and sustainability efforts.**
2. **Establish a GHG emissions baseline for the community and streamline municipal energy data collection. Conduct a feasibility analysis of possible net-zero commitments. Support a long-term GHG emissions reduction plan.**
3. **Explore and set targets for GHG emissions reductions and net-zero goals, including interim targets for every decade and near-term targets for reduction, building on the 5-year energy reduction plan.**

Energy and Sustainability Goal #6: Consider long-term sustainability and resilience of future programs and projects.

Background

The long-term sustainability of public and private investments must be considered as part of project planning and approvals processes. The long term impacts of these investments should be properly assessed and mitigated through project requirements.

Strategies:

1. **Create and implement an updated stormwater bylaw resultant from the Green Infrastructure Master Plan.**
2. **Update Wrentham development regulations to enhance sustainability of projects that are approved including a no-disturbance buffer for wetlands, expanding the Water Resource Protection District, updating the Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) bylaw, allow by-right installation and operation of net-zero enabling technologies.**
3. **Adopt sustainability and resilience requirements/design guidelines for new construction to complement the energy efficiency required of Wrentham’s recently adopted MA “Stretch Code” including references to existing sustainability guideline systems such as the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) rating system.**

Energy and Sustainability Goal #7: Promote water management and conservation in public and private facilities and properties.

Background

The Town’s water resources and supplies are a major priority for Wrentham residents. In addition to other water protection goals of the Master Plan, water conservation remains as a long-term sustainability measure.

Strategies:

1. **Promote the use of rain barrels, rain gardens, and other means to collect and reuse or filter and infiltrate stormwater to help maintain water sources and supply.**



Source: Tim Sousa

Vision of Tomorrow

WRENTHAM MASTER PLAN



Implementation

Vision of Tomorrow: Wrentham's 2030 Master Plan is a guide for the Town's policies, programs, and investments for the next 10 years, translating the values and hopes of people who live, work, and play in Wrentham into specific actions.

Implementation of the Master Plan depends on the continued stewardship and attention of Town Boards, Committees, and residents. The Master Plan is a guide and provides a road map for policies, programs and investments for the next 10 years, but more details will be needed to translate the goals and strategies into action. This section presents an **Implementation Action Plan** to help begin the momentum of Master Plan implementation. The Implementation Action Plan provides an approach to implementation, with several goals and strategies suggested as initial priorities. In reality, there is no wrong way to approach implementation, provided that meaningful activities are underway to accomplish the goals of the Master Plan. Implementation is critically important to leverage the investment that has been made in the Master Plan process to plan for the future of Wrentham.

There are a few practical ways that implementation of the Master Plan can be advanced. The first approach is to build an awareness and understanding of the Master Plan content among the Town's Boards, Committees, and Commissions with a particular focus on the community's vision and the goals of the topics of most relevance. This could be achieved through circulating the final Master Plan, suggesting adding incorporating the Master Plan into an upcoming meeting agenda, and requiring new members to review the document. In building this awareness of the content, it is hoped that decisions made by the Town's Boards, Committee, and Commissions would be consistent with the content of the Master Plan and advance the town toward this shared vision.

The second approach is to ask Town staff, particularly relevant department heads, to review the Master Plan and to incorporate the community's vision and goals into future work planning, review of proposed projects, exploration of future investments, and other activities.

The third approach is through the establishment of a Master Plan Implementation Committee. The establishment of the Committee is described in more detail on the following pages. The Implementation Committee would provide the Town with a leadership team to guide, track, and encourage Master Plan implementation. It is anticipated that the Master Plan covers too many goals and strategies to accomplish concurrently so the Master Plan Implementation Committee would help to prioritize actions.

The initial actions identified in this section are intended as a starting point for the Committee. In each topic a goal has been elevated as the top priority by the Master Plan Committee. For each of these goals a set of suggested initial actions are outlined. These initial actions are intended to help get the implementation started. The Master Plan Implementation Committee can develop similar sets of actions for other goals or priorities they feel should be subsequently addressed. The Implementation Committee can devise a method for tracking progress so that it can be easily understood, shared, and used as motivation to continue the implementation efforts. The Master Plan Implementation Committee will be responsible for discernment of addition actions to advance Master Plan goals and strategies and translating the actions into a score card that can track progress.

Implementation Action Plan

The Implementation Action Plan provides important details to begin implementation of the Master Plan. It includes the following important sections:

- **Master Plan Implementation Committee**
- **Community Implementation Preferences**
- **Priority Goals, Strategies and Initial Actions**

The Implementation Action Plan does not provide a comprehensive guide to implementation activities. The purpose of the Action Plan is to provide a framework for getting started with helpful guidance, a framework for prioritization of activities, and examples of how a few actions may unfold from a few high priority Master Plan goals and strategies. The most important aspect of implementation is to get started and the reality is many important implementation activities are already underway. The Master Plan was developed over a two-year time period, during that same time the Town has completed actions that should correctly be observed as Master Plan implementation. For example, the Town adopted a Complete Streets Policy during the time of the Master Plan, pursued and completed designation as a Green Community, and developed recommendations to integrate low impact development practices into Town bylaws and regulations. All of these activities are building toward the Master Plan Vision articulated for Wrentham, and consistent with the Master Plan goals and strategies. These activities give the Town a head start on actions resulting from this planning process and establish a strong record of Master Plan Implementation. The following implementation approaches are intended to support and continue this momentum.

Master Plan Implementation Committee

One of the most effective approaches to Master Plan implementation has been to establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee. This Committee's purpose is to be the primary steward for Master Plan Implementation. They are not charged with doing all of the implementation activity, or being the only responsible entity, but would be the group that is focused on initiating, tracking, and promoting progress on implementation of the Master Plan. The Committee would work in partnership with other Boards, Committees, Town staff and volunteers, who may be best positioned to advance a particular Master Plan goal or strategy.

Successful examples of Master Plan Implementation Committees can be found throughout the Greater Boston region. A common feature of these committees is that they are typically authorized at Town Meeting with members appointed by the Board of Selectmen and the Planning Board. Alternatively, they can be established as a committee of the Planning Board. They typically meet with the Planning Board and or the Select Board twice annually to review implementation of the Master Plan, report

progress, and request assistance. The Committee can also report to Town Meeting annually on Master Plan Implementation progress including implementation actions accomplished within the past year, anticipated actions to be accomplished in the next two years, and resources, including Town Meeting appropriations, or other actions necessary to complete those steps. Some communities provide the Master Plan Implementation Committee with a modest budget from the annual operating budget to fund follow-up studies or assistance.

The Master Plan Implementation Committee is typically between five and nine members to be appointed jointly by the Planning Board and Selectmen with terms that are renewed annually. At least one member should be a member of the Planning Board and a second member should be a member of the Board of Selectmen. The other members may represent other relevant Boards and Committees or include residents with relevant expertise in planning, architecture, economic development, landscape architecture, engineering, real estate, or other relevant fields.

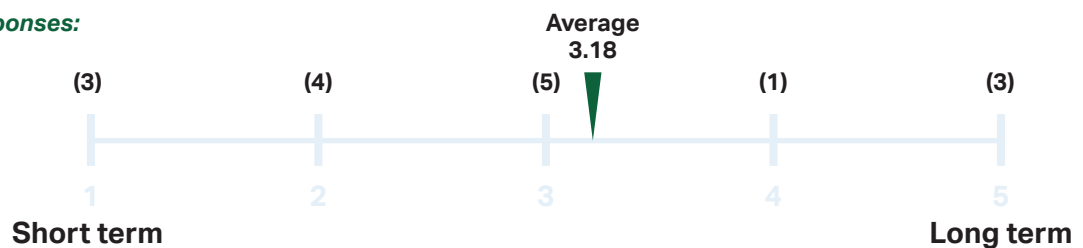
The Master Plan Implementation Committee typically exists for ten years at which time the process would shift to a focus on updating the Master Plan. At the end of the ten years, the Master Plan Implementation Committee should report to the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and Town Meeting, any recommendations as to the most effective approach to updating the Master Plan and potential improvements in the process that would assist future implementation efforts.

Community Implementation Preferences

As part of the Final Public Forum and public comment period, members of the Wrentham community were asked about their preferences for Master Plan implementation.

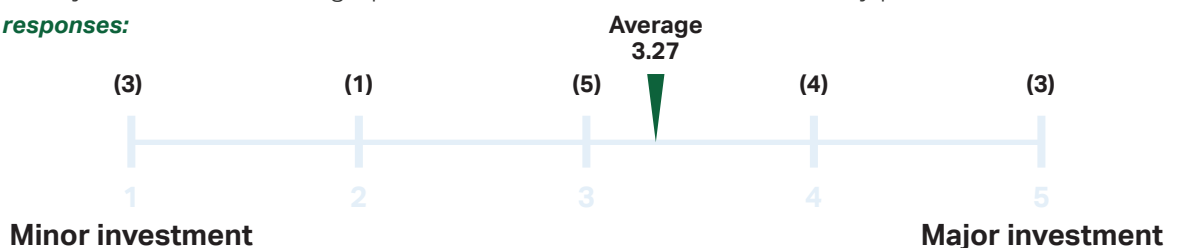
- Timing** - In the context of master plan implementation short-term would typically translate to activities that can occur in 1 to 3 years after plan completion. Mid-term activities would require between 4 and 6 years after plan completion. Long-term activities would include those that may require between 7 to 10 years, or more to implement. The community responses show a preference for mid-term implementation activities and a slight preference toward short term implementation activities. The graph shows the results of the community preferences.

Timing responses:



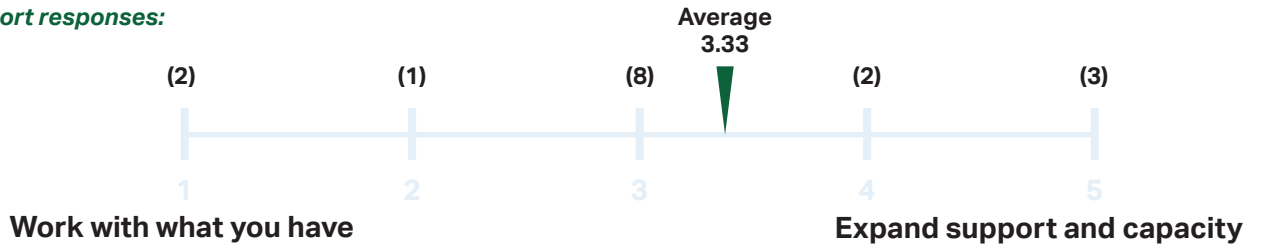
- Investment** - Implementation activities will require variety in the level of investment that occurs. Some actions may require minor investment and may only require time or staff hours, other efforts may require a major investment of town or external funds. The community preferences show a preference for a balanced approach to the level of investment with a slight preference in the direction of major investment. The graph shows the results of the community preferences.

Investment responses:



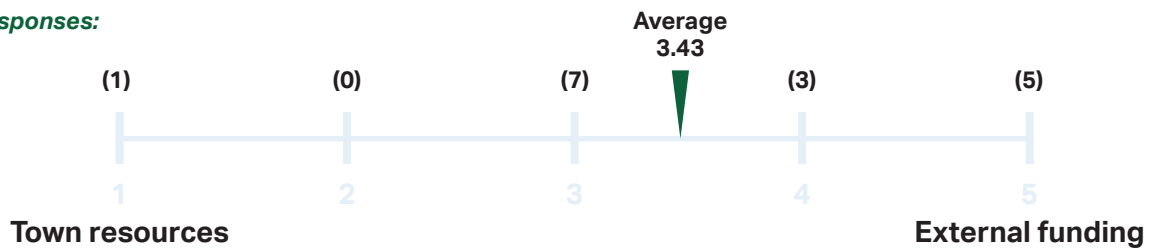
► **Support** - In addition to level of investment and funding, Master Plan implementation will generally require support. Implementation activities could use existing resources and would be dependent on current capacity or could seek to expand support and capacity for related activities. The community responses show a preference for a middle path that would supplement current resources with some strategic expansion of support and capacity. The graph shows the results of the community preferences.

Support responses:



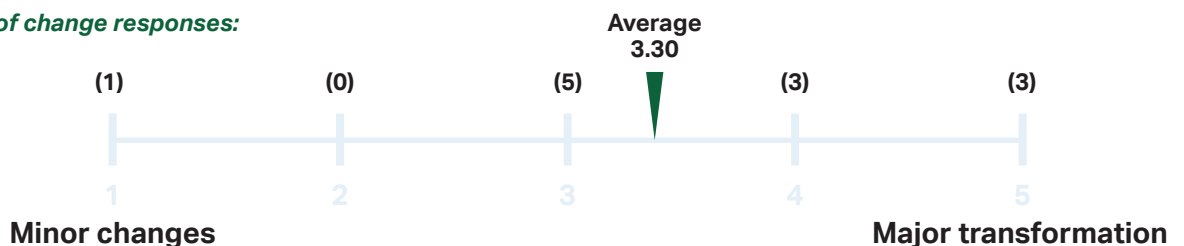
► **Funding Support** - Some implementation activities will be dependent on funding support. The funding sources can vary and may range from town resources including the annual town budget, or may include external funding sources including state funding programs, grants, or federal funds. The community responses show a preference for a balanced approach using a mix of town and external resources with a slight preference for external funding. The graph shows the results of the community preferences.

Funding responses:



► **Magnitude of change** - The impact of implementation activities will vary. Some activities will result in minor changes that help guide the town toward its vision. Other activities will result in a major transformation that will noticeably shift the town toward its vision. Both types of activities are likely to be needed and both are valid and effective approaches. The community responses show a preference for a balanced approach using a mix of minor changes and major transformations with a slight preference toward major transformation. The graph shows the results of the community preferences.

Magnitude of change responses:



Priority Goals, Strategies and Initial Actions

The Master Plan includes eight topics which combine to define 39 Master Plan goals. 193 strategies are distributed among the 39 Master Plan goals to provide further guidance toward implementation of the goals. The Master Plan Steering Committee identified goals for each topic as the top priority for that topic. The Wrentham community further prioritized these goals resulting in the list of priority goals shown below. These priority goals are outlined with examples of initial actions below with a brief discussion for each. The types of approaches and actions described should be used as a model for the other Master Plan goals and strategies that are not highlighted below.

- **Economic Development Goal:** Pursue strategic and innovative strategies for new economic opportunities in Wrentham, including leveraging Wrentham’s major attractions such as the Wrentham Premium Outlets, Rice Complex, and natural, agricultural, and historical resources.

- **Strategies:**

1. Work with Foxborough and Plainville to market the area as a multi-day destination with unique attractions to implement the Foxborough, Wrentham, & Plainville Regional Destination Marketing Plan.
2. Encourage visitors already in Wrentham to better support Town businesses.
3. Create opportunities for Town businesses at the Rice Complex, Wrentham Premium Outlets, and Sweatt Beach.
4. Pursue a walking/biking trail on the existing railroad bed connecting Town Center and Wrentham Premium Outlets, with respect and sensitivity to adjacent landowners.
5. Work with Town farmers to strengthen agrotourism, such as apple picking events, farmers markets, farm tours, informational website and social media, and branding and marketing.
6. Promote the water-related recreational activities including boating, fishing, and swimming at Sweatt Beach and Lake Pearl.
7. Provide walking tours and educational events for residents and visitors on Wrentham’s history in partnership with the Wrentham schools, the Historical Commission, the Wrentham Cultural Council, and the Economic Development Commission.
8. Expand business opportunities by pursuing Wrentham as a wedding destination.

- **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Convene a working group to advance the Foxborough, Wrentham and Plainville Regional Destination Marketing Plan. Potential participants in the working group could include Town staff, Economic Development Commission, representatives from Wrentham Premium Outlets, Patriot Place, and Plainridge Park Casino, and others.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development, Economic Development Commission

Potential Funding: MA Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant Program

Action 2: Identify cost-effective ways to promote Town businesses and attractions at the Rice Complex and Wrentham Premium Outlets working with managers of those properties to be included in advertising space at low or no cost to Town business owners.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development, Economic Development Commission

Potential Funding: Staff or Commission time

Action 3: Develop a self-guided historic walking tour brochure with the Historical Commission and the Wrentham Cultural Council. Make the brochure available at Town destinations including the Wrentham Premium Outlets, Town Hall, Public Library, and others.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Cultural Council, Historical Commission,

Potential Funding: Community Preservation Act funds, Cultural Council Grant

► **Land Use Goal: Leverage public and private infrastructure improvements and other community investments to strengthen existing centers of growth (e.g., Town Center, Wampum Corner, Route 1 corridor, Route 1A commercial/industrial area, Wrentham Premium Outlets area, Wrentham Developmental Center, Sheldonville, and West Wrentham).**

• **Strategies:**

1. Explore installation of public sewer in Wrentham's Town Center, along Route 1, and near the Wrentham Premium Outlets to support redevelopment and mixed-uses.
2. Pursue grants and other creative funding sources for focused public realm improvements that strengthen walking and biking infrastructure, reduce traffic congestion, improve streetscape, and improve neighborhood identity.
3. Coordinate with transportation partners to align multimodal improvements to the transportation network near existing population and employment centers (where land use efforts are focused). (See also Transportation Goal 3)

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Pursue a MassWorks Grant to identify potential options for shared wastewater treatment in Town Center to support additional investment and redevelopment of vacant properties.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development, Town Center property owners, Economic Development Commission

Potential Funding: MassWorks Grant

Action 2: Undertake a planning study to determine the most appropriate zoning changes needed to comply with Massachusetts Section 3A "MBTA Communities" requirements to strengthen existing centers of growth. Explore the benefits of combining this study with a zoning recodification effort to support detailed area planning and zoning changes in each of the centers of growth.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: MA Community Planning Grant

Action 3: Pursue Complete Streets funding for implementation of priority projects identified in an approved prioritization plan with a particular focus on infrastructure investments in the existing centers of growth.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Department of Public Works

Potential Funding: MA Complete Streets Funding Program

Action 4: Support the continued development, design, and eventual construction of the Metacomet Greenway in the Town of Wrentham. Continue to partner with adjacent communities and the Metacomet Greenway group of citizen volunteers.

Timeframe: Long-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: Staff time

► **Open Space and Recreation Goal: Protect watersheds, groundwater, and maintain and improve water infrastructure and quality consistent with Wrentham's Water Master Plan.**

• **Strategies:**

1. Commit to and develop a funding or financing plan to accomplish the estimated Water System Capital Improvement Program (CIP).
2. Identify priority properties within the Zone II/Aquifer Protection Areas for additional protection or potential acquisition by the Town.
3. Plan for investment to address two wells identified in the Water Master Plan (Well 3 constructed in 1960 and Well 4 constructed in 1975) to improve well condition and operating capacity.
4. Explore options for water redundancy for West Wrentham including new interconnection, new groundwater source, new high service area (elevated storage tank).
5. Promote green infrastructure and low impact development through new public and private investments in the Town.
6. Continue to work with watershed management for each of the four watersheds (Blackstone, Charles, Taunton, and Ten Mile Rivers) with headwaters in Wrentham.

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Work with the Town Administrator, Finance Department, Water Division, and Department of Public Works to develop options for funding or financing the Water Systems Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Work with the Select Board to present the options to Town Meeting for authorization.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Finance Department, Water Division, Department of Public Works

Potential Funding: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

Action 2: Pursue a MassWorks grant to hire a consultant to investigate and define well improvements for Well 3 and Well 4 and options for improved water redundancy.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Water Division and Department of Public Works

Potential Funding: MassWorks Grant

Action 3: Elevate the Green Infrastructure Master Plan with all Town Committees, Boards, and Departments.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: Staff time

Action 4: Identify a Committee, Board, or Staff person to be the liaison for the watershed management associations including Charles River Watershed Association, Blackstone River Watershed Council, Taunton River Watershed Alliance, and Ten Mile River Watershed Council.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Town Administrator's office

Potential Funding: Staff time

► **Housing Goal: Guide development towards the Town Center and areas with existing infrastructure.**

• **Strategies:**

1. Identify the circumstances that need to be addressed to prompt private-sector investment in and development of the vacant Tyco site through discussion with property owners and other stakeholders.
2. Analyze the costs and benefits of wastewater treatment options for new development in the Town Center and pursue the most beneficial option.
3. Initiate an inclusive public planning process to update zoning for small, multifamily housing in the Town Center.
4. Proactively communicate with the Commonwealth to monitor changes and research potential uses of the Wrentham Developmental Center (WDC).

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Undertake a planning study to determine the most appropriate zoning changes needed to comply with Massachusetts Section 3A "MBTA Communities" requirements to strengthen existing centers of growth. Explore the benefits of combining this study with a zoning recodification effort to support detailed area planning and zoning changes in each of the centers of growth.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: MA Community Planning Grant

Action 2: Pursue a MassWorks Grant to identify potential options for shared wastewater treatment in Town Center to support additional investment and redevelopment of vacant properties.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development, Town Center property owners, Economic Development Commission

Potential Funding: MassWorks Grant

Action 3: Continue to monitor future plans for the Wrentham Developmental Center and contact representatives of the Division of Capital Asset Management (DCAMM), Department of Developmental Services, and state legislators if changes in future use are under consideration. Learn from past examples of Developmental Services closures such as the Templeton Developmental Center complex.

Timeframe: Long-term

Potential Partners: Select Board, Planning Board, Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: Staff time

► **Transportation Goal: Support walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure, especially walking infrastructure within, and connecting to the Town Center as well as other key destinations.**

• **Strategies:**

1. Implement recommendations from the 2022 MAPC Town Center Walk Audit.
2. Incorporate Complete Streets elements into all roadway projects and explore opportunities for additional improvements through MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program.
3. Work with MassDOT on State roads, especially those that cross through Town Center to identify projects that can be done to improve pedestrian safety.
4. Increase safe, convenient connections to current and future multi-use trails such as the Warner Trail and the Metacomet Greenway.
5. Develop and regularly update a priority list of neighborhoods or street segments where new sidewalks are needed as well as where maintenance is required.
6. Ensure future development prioritizes walking, biking, rolling and accessibility around Town.
7. Work with MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program to implement improvements for students, parents, and staff to walk, bike, and roll to school.
8. Include more trees along streets and sidewalks to calm traffic, absorb emissions, and decrease summer heat.

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to identify and prioritize municipal projects that include improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian network.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: DPW, Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: MA Complete Streets Funding Program

Action 2: Pursue Complete Streets funding for implementation of priority projects identified in an approved prioritization plan with a particular focus on infrastructure investments in the existing centers of growth.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Department of Public Works

Potential Funding: MA Complete Streets Funding Program

Action 3: Support the continued development, design, and eventual construction of the Metacomet Greenway in the Town of Wrentham. Continue to partner with adjacent communities and the Metacomet Greenway group of citizen volunteers.

Timeframe: Long-term

Potential Partners: Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: Staff time

Action 4: Conduct Feasibility Study for an assessment of the “Town Center Walking Loop” around Lake Archer that includes Creek Street/South Street/Franklin Street to create a continuous separated pedestrian facility.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: DPW, Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: MA Downtown Initiative

► **Community Facilities and Services Goal: Provide high quality facilities, services, and programs that serve the needs of Wrentham’s residents and businesses and responds to the Town’s changing population.**

• **Strategies:**

1. Plan for new facilities and staff to serve a growing population, including adjusting staffing models, through long range strategic plans and capital improvement planning (e.g. grant writing, DPW snow removal and ongoing street repair).
2. Coordinate performance measures across public safety agencies (e.g., fire and police) to better plan for additional facilities, units, and staffing and to provide better oversight and service to all parts of Wrentham as the Town continues to develop and grow.
3. Design new public facilities and renovate existing facilities with features and characteristics that support state-of-the-art technologies, energy efficiency, sustainability, green infrastructure/low impact development, livability, and equity.
4. Centralize IT infrastructure for the use of technology Town-wide and address service delivery and management issues across multiple processes and departments.
5. Explore sustainable and cost effective amendments to Town waste management. For example, evaluating the potential for a Town composting program.

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Prepare a Succession Plan to help address staff retirements and turnover that would challenge the ability to maintain service levels. Utilize the expertise and experience of current staff to prepare guidance for future town employees and potentially plans to assist through mentorship programs or consulting.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Town Administrator’s office, Town staff

Potential Funding: Staff time

Action 2: Inventory and Geo-Code all public works assets of the town to expand town asset inventories so that all assets in the database are geocoded and condition rated. Use the expanded town asset inventory to inform capital planning and emergency repair.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: DPW, Facilities and Capital Planning

Potential Funding: Staff time

Action 3: Conduct a Town-wide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and develop an ADA Transition Plan including pedestrian infrastructure within the public right of way, Sweatt Park, and Wrentham Center to provide an improved and accessible pedestrian environment. As part of this process, identify a Town ADA Coordinator.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: DPW, Facilities and Capital Planning

Potential Funding: Staff time

➤ **Historical and Cultural Resources Goal: Preserve and add to the historic character of Wrentham.**

• **Strategies:**

1. Establish a Town historic registry for Wrentham structures deemed historically or culturally significant in the Town.
2. Partner with preservation groups like the Massachusetts Historical Commission to conduct an updated historical and archaeological survey in Wrentham. The survey should build on past inventories and addresses gaps in resources related to Indigenous history or other underrepresented groups.
3. Pursue National Register of Historic Places designation for Town-owned resources. Consider prioritizing designation efforts based on relevance to historic narratives of the Town.
4. Share information with relevant property owners about the benefits of designating resources to the National Register of Historic Places or a Town registry (if established).
5. Encourage private land conservation in support of semi-rural heritage and economic activities including agriculture, horticulture, and aquaculture.
6. Support resident and municipal efforts to maintain historic and cultural resources through strategic maintenance planning, improved access and signage and recognition of volunteer efforts, including periodic clean-ups.
7. Assess known historic sites for vulnerability against climate change, natural disasters, and other risks.

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Build on the current inventories and resources of the Wrentham Historical Commission to establish a Town historic registry for all structures, buildings, and sites deemed historically or culturally significant in the Town. In the inventory include notations about condition, ownership, and potential risks

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Wrentham Historical Commission

Potential Funding: Staff time, Community Preservation Act funds

Action 2: Educate property owners about the benefits of designating resources to the National Register of Historic Places beginning with those properties participating in the Plaque Program. To participate in the program buildings must be at least 100 years old, an event of historical interest occurred at that location, and it was the residence of an individual of historical significance.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Wrentham Historical Commission

Potential Funding: Staff time, Community Preservation Act funds

► **Energy and Sustainability Goal: Explore opportunities for new economically-feasible clean energy generation which minimizes potential impacts to natural resources, open space, and abutters.**

• **Strategies:**

1. Explore locations for potential solar, wind, geothermal or other clean energy installations on previously developed municipal properties (building roofs, parking lot canopies, former Town landfill).
2. Review clean energy project regulations, approval, and permitting processes to identify and reduce potential barriers to investments and to protect forested lots from clear-cutting trees for clean energy investments.
3. Promote resources, funding sources, and options available to Town residents, businesses, and property owners to invest in clean energy upgrades.

• **Potential Implementation Actions:**

Action 1: Review current approval and permitting procedures for solar energy installations in Section 390-4.8 "Solar photovoltaic installations" of the Zoning Bylaw in regard to both streamlined permitting and protection against clear-cutting lots for ground-mounted solar installations.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Building Commissioner, Planning & Community Development

Potential Funding: Staff time

Action 2: Consider new opportunities for clean energy installations, particularly rooftop solar photovoltaic installations on municipal rooftops, as a second phase to energy efficiency upgrades contemplated as part of the Town's Green Community designation.

Timeframe: Mid-term

Potential Partners: Facilities and Capital Planning, Wrentham Public Schools

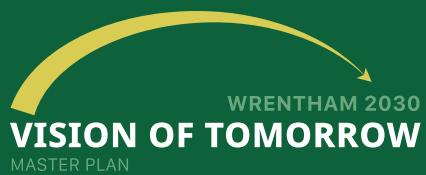
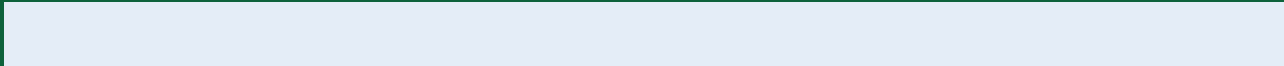
Potential Funding: MA Green Communities grants

Action 3: Consolidate energy efficiency resources on the newly updated Wrentham.gov town website under the "Residents" "Groups and Services" information. A tab such as "Clean Energy Resources" could increase awareness of programs such as MassSaves, PACE, and other resources that may become available.

Timeframe: Near-term

Potential Partners: Town Administrator's office

Potential Funding: Staff time



Vision of Tomorrow

WRENTHAM MASTER PLAN

2030

Appendices
December 2022



Snapshot of Wrentham

Regional Context

Wrentham is located on the border of Massachusetts and Rhode Island. It is approximately 30 miles southwest of Boston and 30 miles north of Providence, Rhode Island. It is in Norfolk County and bordered by the towns of: Norfolk; Foxborough; Plainville; Cumberland, Rhode Island; Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Bellingham, and Franklin.

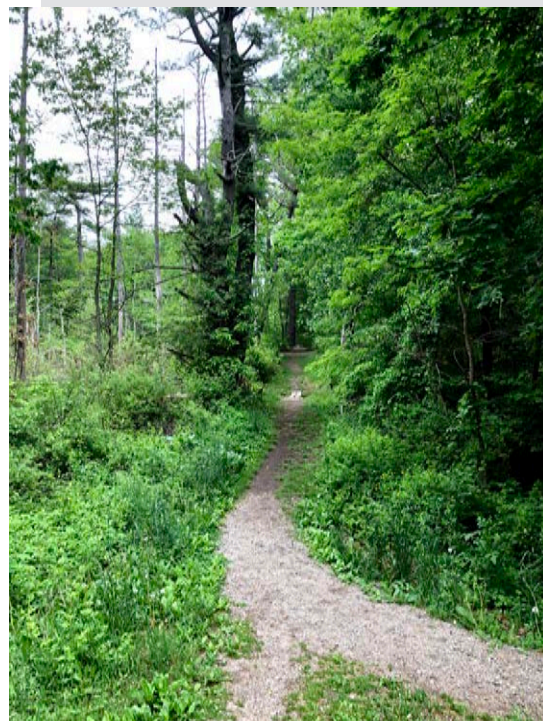
As part of the Boston metropolitan area, Wrentham is one of the 101 cities and towns represented by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC). MAPC works with communities through eight sub-regional organizations whose members are appointed by chief elected officials and planning boards. Wrentham is a member of the subregion called the Southwest Area Planning Committee (SWAP), along with Bellingham, Dover, Franklin, Hopkinton, Milford, Millis, Medway, Norfolk, and Sherborn.

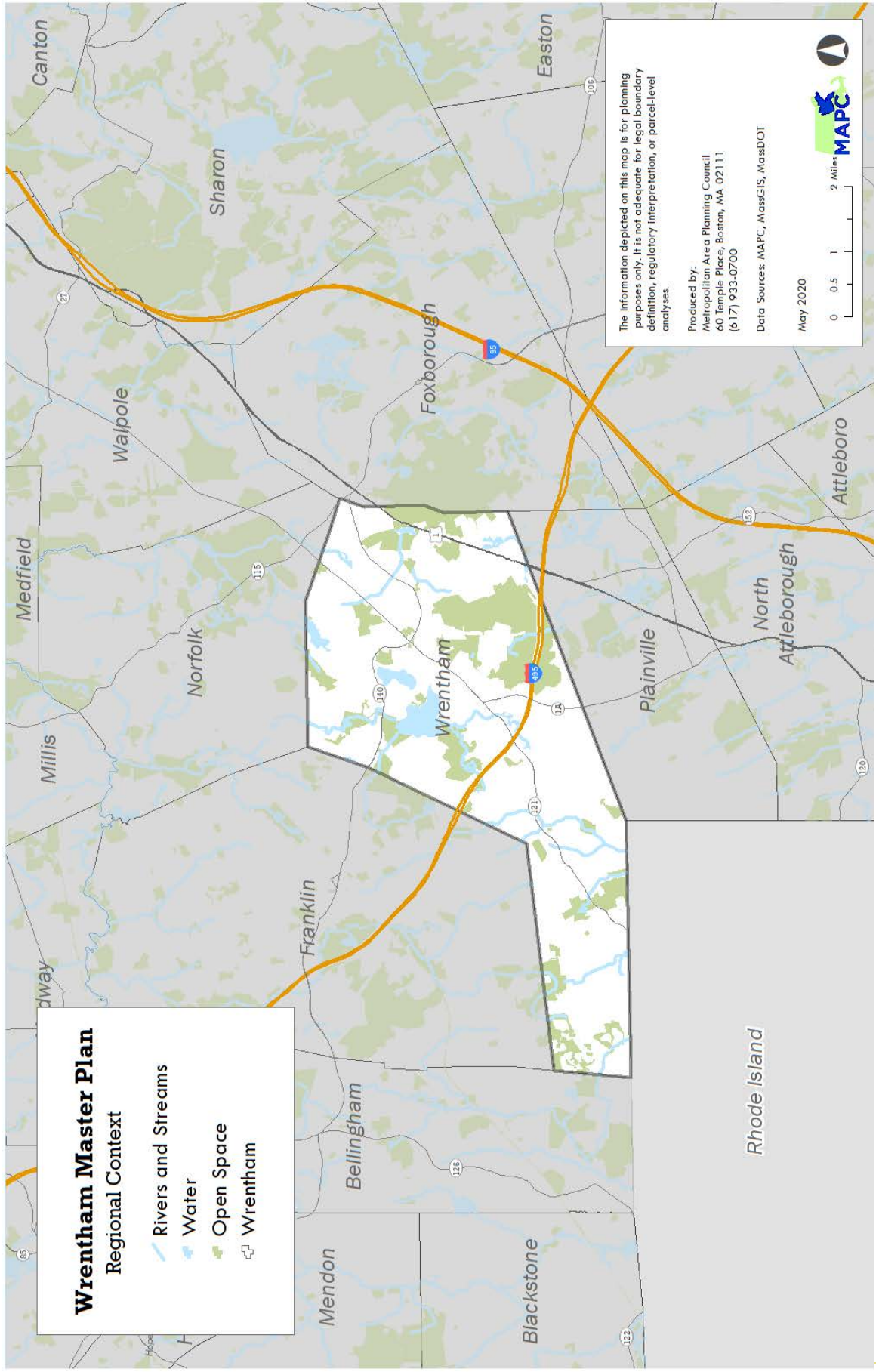
Two major highways provide easy automobile and truck access to Wrentham. Interstate 495 connects to Cape Cod and Interstate 90. It runs east-west through Wrentham, and Interstate 95 connecting to Boston and Providence, lies just east of Wrentham. The Wrentham Premium Outlets, located within the Town, as well as Gillette Stadium (home to the New England Patriots football team) located just northeast of Wrentham in Foxborough, draw people from across the region.

In terms of natural resources, Wrentham includes the headwaters for four major rivers: the Charles River; the Blackstone River; the Ten Mile River; and the Taunton River. All these water sources are part of the drinking water systems of adjacent and further downstream municipalities. Wrentham's own drinking water sources come almost entirely from within the Town boundaries. The regional context for Wrentham is illustrated in the map on the next page.



Photo Credit: Warren Cook





History

Earliest History

Native Americans have lived in what is now known as Wrentham for over 8,000 years. In more recent times, the settlement was known as Wollomonopoag, meaning “place of shells”, referring to the resources of Lake Pearl and Lake Archer. The land was used for hunting, fishing, farming and village areas by the Wampanoag Indians. Oak Point near Creek Street was the site of the King Philip Oak, where the Native American leader, Metacomet, later known as King Philip, is said to have held council.

The first English settlers arrived to the area in the 1600’s. Although early contact between the English settlers and Native Americans were friendly, increasing encroachment on Native land increased hostilities which erupted in the King Philip’s War from 1675-1678. The war was devastating for both sides and marks the last armed resistance by the Native Americans in this area. Following the war, settlers rapidly rebuilt their holdings, expanding farther into the area and displacing the Native Americans. By the late 1600’s, a few dozen European settlers had portioned the lands and started to farm in the area.

The Town of Wrentham has its beginnings as an early outgrowth of Plymouth Colony, and quickly established its own identity and independence. It is named for Wrentham, England in County Suffolk on the North Sea and the birthplace of John Thurston, and other early settlers. Originally, Wrentham extended from Dedham to the Rhode Island border. The area was connected to both Boston and Providence by the Post Road, the predecessor of Route 1. Its lands were originally part of Dedham, and became an incorporated town on October 17, 1673, after inhabitants petitioned the Dedham Selectmen who agreed to form the new town.

As settlement progressed, the Town Center and neighborhood areas became established. First for security, and then for business and convenience, each part of Town began establishing unique identities. The Town Center grew up around the Town Common with church and civic buildings along with mercantile buildings forming the core of the Town’s identity. Containing the early crossroads and what became the Post Road between Boston and Providence, Wrentham rapidly became a fixture on the colonial scene.

Other neighborhoods, more clearly seen today in Wampum Corner and Sheldonville, emerged as local farming centers and had smaller-scale commercial and civic components to serve their immediate needs. Over time, the central portions of these neighborhoods came to have more residences built along their main roads, cementing the community.

From its founding, Wrentham spawned nearly all of the towns which now surround it, and the boundaries of Wrentham began to shrink as these towns formed from the incorporated area. Franklin and Foxborough were established in 1778 and Norfolk in 1870. The transformation was complete in 1905 when the Slacksville village of Wrentham became Plainville.

Ultimately, the early focal points for the Town of Wrentham became the Town Center, the lakes area of Lake Pearl and Lake Archer, Wampum Corner, Sheldonville, and the Post Road. The areas that nestled around these focal points were predominantly farmland or open space.

Recent Growth

From the first European settlements until the mid-twentieth century, Wrentham continued to be a lightly-populated agricultural area. Suburbanization began following the Second World War. In the 1960's, Interstate 495 was constructed and has been a major driver of change. By facilitating access to employment centers, it stimulated a shift from agricultural land use to residential and commercial growth.

Beginning in the early 20th century, new development added important features to Wrentham's landscape. In 1910, when the population of Wrentham was only 1,700 people, the Wrentham State School, now known as the Wrentham Developmental Center, opened. The campus, just north of the Town Center, eventually grew to be over 700 acres, although by the 1980's, the patient population was significantly downsized.

Shortly after the turn of the 20th century, Winter Brothers Tap and Die began operating on Kendrick Street in the Town Center. After the Second World War, the company was sold to the Crosby Valve and Gauge Company. The commercial and industrial use of this property, which included a rail line and rail operations on Depot Street, grew with additional businesses employing 700 people in buildings that covered almost 50 acres. It was the Town's largest employer and its biggest single tax revenue source until 1998. Crosby Valve was eventually sold to Tyco Flow, which in 2010, moved to Mansfield. Upon the sale, all of the buildings were leveled and removed. As of 2022, the property remains vacant.

In 1997, the Wrentham Premium Outlets opened at the southwest corner of Interstate 495 and State Route 1A. With retail space spreading over 600,000 square feet and operating with approximately 170 stores, it was the largest retail outlet mall in New England. Its total footprint with parking covers over 15 acres. Its retail space makes it the largest single source of tax revenue for Wrentham.

It was also during the late 1990's and early 2000's that two large residential neighborhoods in Wrentham were completed. Wrentham Village in the west end of town was the first of the two completed with approximately 95 homes. Wamponaug Estates nestled on the east side of Route 1A between Lake Pearl and Wampum Corner built out to nearly 100 homes. The two projects provide insight into the impacts of different land use patterns and approaches to housing development. Wrentham Village's 95 homes consumed 300-acres of farmland using conventional 2-acre lots. Using the Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) Bylaw, Wamponaug Estate's nearly 100 homes were built on approximately 60 sand-covered acres of a former quarry and protected 56 acres of woodlands that serves to buffer to Lake Pearl and existing nearby homes from the development

From 1970 to 2003, the Town conserved significant areas of land, adding to the conserved area of Trout Pond, a 42-acre parcel between Route 1A (South Street), Beach Street, and Taunton Street that was gifted to the Town in 1908. In 1970, the Town purchased 65 acres in the west end of Town that is known as Joe's Rock. In 1985 the Town purchased 115 acres of an operating hayfield and meadow on the opposite side of West Street from Joe's Rock, now known as Birchwold Farm. In 1990, it added five more acres to this area. In the early 2000s, the Town purchased 212 acres of woodland and wetlands that had been private property southwest of Lake Pearl. The land is now known as the Wollomonopoag Conservation Area, making a full historical circle back to the earliest origins of Wrentham.

Government Structure

Wrentham is governed by an Open Town Meeting and is led by a Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator. The Board of Selectmen are the Chief Elected Officials and Executive Officers of Wrentham. The Board consists of five members who are elected for 3-year terms. According to Massachusetts General Laws, all municipal authority not delegated to other elected boards or retained by Open Town Meeting is vested with the Board of Selectmen. The Board appoints a Town Administrator for managing the day-to-day business of the Town within its policy direction and employs a Town Counsel for handling the Town's legal affairs.

Open Town Meeting represents Wrentham's legislative branch. The Town Charter requires Town Meetings in June and November. In use for over 300 years, Open Town Meeting gives Massachusetts taxpayers a chance to voice their opinions and directly effect change in their communities. All voters are eligible to debate and vote on budgets, bylaws and all matters brought before Open Town Meetings, and approve bonding.

There are over 24 Town departments that manage the day-to-day operations of Wrentham.

Climate Change

With catastrophic wildfires in California, violent hurricanes in the southeast, and historical flooding across the Midwest, the impacts of climate change are being felt across the country. Massachusetts and Wrentham are not immune. As stated in the Community Resilience Building Summary of Findings, "Wrentham is currently challenged with localized flooding in roads, low drinking water supply during times of drought, water quality and stormwater management challenges, and widespread loss of electricity during severe storms."¹ In Wrentham, climate change is expected to contribute to increasingly threatening inland flooding, heat waves, severe storms, drought, and harmful algae blooms in Wrentham. Without a dramatic decrease in global emissions, on the order of cutting emissions in half in the next 10 years, scientists expect more catastrophic impacts, including widespread drought, severe storms, and the concomitant economic disruptions and migrations.²

Coronavirus Pandemic

The pandemic has touched every person, every family, and all corners of our Town and country. Lives have been lost, children have stayed home from school, and family members went months without seeing each other in person. The economic disruptions have been devastating to some while having little effect on others.

For example, in Wrentham, as of September 2020, approximately 10% of the workforce was unemployed; however, 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% of people who work in sales were laid off in the spring of 2020.³ With Wrentham's concentration of businesses and jobs at the Wrentham Premium Outlets, it can be assumed that the pandemic has hit the Town's economy in particular. Moreover, small businesses of all varieties have struggled through months of unprecedented challenge.

¹ Wrentham Community Resilience Building Summary of Findings, 2018.

² International Panel on Climate Change, Summary for Policymakers, 2019. ⁴ UC Berkeley CoolClimate Network, [Average Annual Household Carbon Footprint](#) (2013)

³ MAPC, 2020. The COVID-19 Layoff Housing Hap, October Update: The Crisis Continues.

One bright spot during the pandemic was the availability of socially-distanced recreation. Joe’s Rock, Birchwold, Esker Trail, and Wollomonopoag Conservation Areas, and others, were widely used. The parking lots were typically full on weekends. The release of the Wrentham Guide to Open Spaces 2020, funded by the Sweatt Fund, just prior to the onset of the pandemic helped steer many people to the outdoors and highlighted Wrentham’s open spaces, providing safe entertainment.

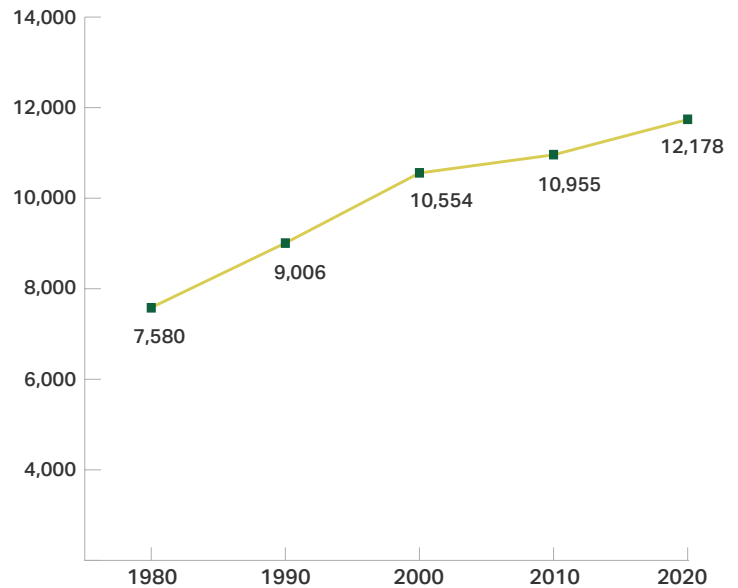
Population

In 2020, there are 12,178 residents in Wrentham. The projected population is 12,180 people in 2030 and 12,654 in 2040.¹

Between 1980 and 2000, the population increased by approximately 40%. In the past 20 years, the growth rate has slowed to 13%, and population growth is projected to continue to slow over the next 20 years. The data is illustrated in Figure 1.

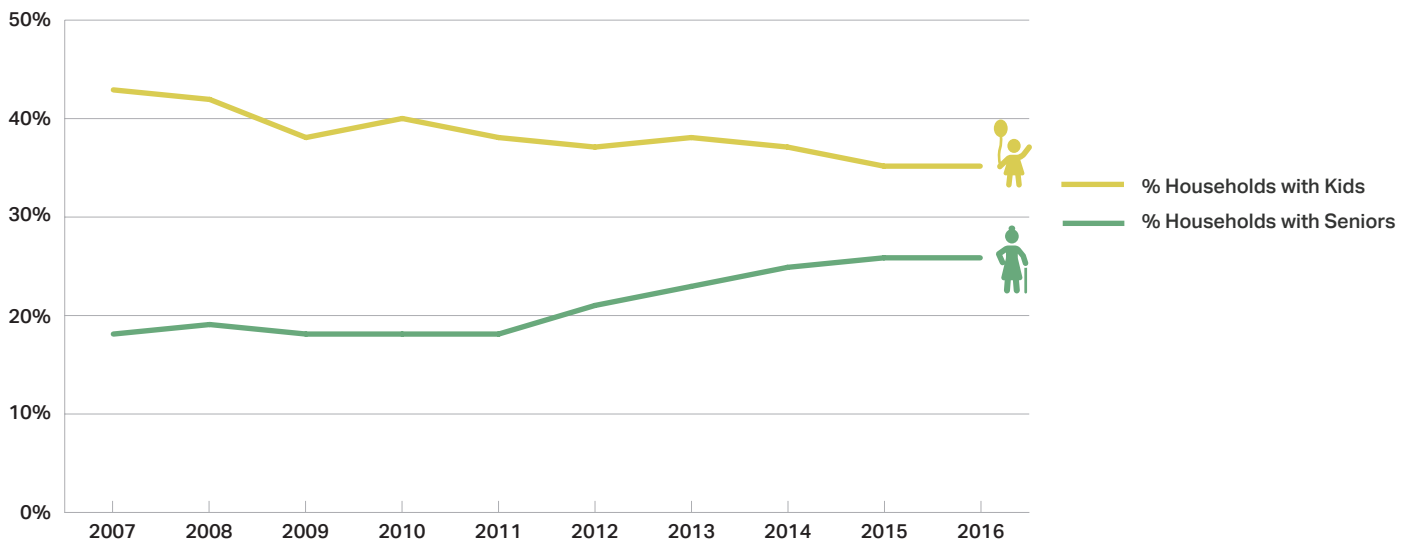
The population is getting older, and projections indicate this trend will continue. The number of households with seniors is increasing, and conversely, the number of households with children is decreasing. Similarly, the median age has increased from 40.9 to 43.2 in the eight years between 2007 and 2015. The number of seniors is expected to increase by approximately 1,000 people in the next 10 years, resulting in almost 30% of the Town’s population being over the age of 65 by 2030.² The data is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 1: Population from 1980-2019 Wrentham



Source: US Census Population Estimates; 2020 Decennial Census

Figure 2: Households with Senior vs. with Children 2007-2016



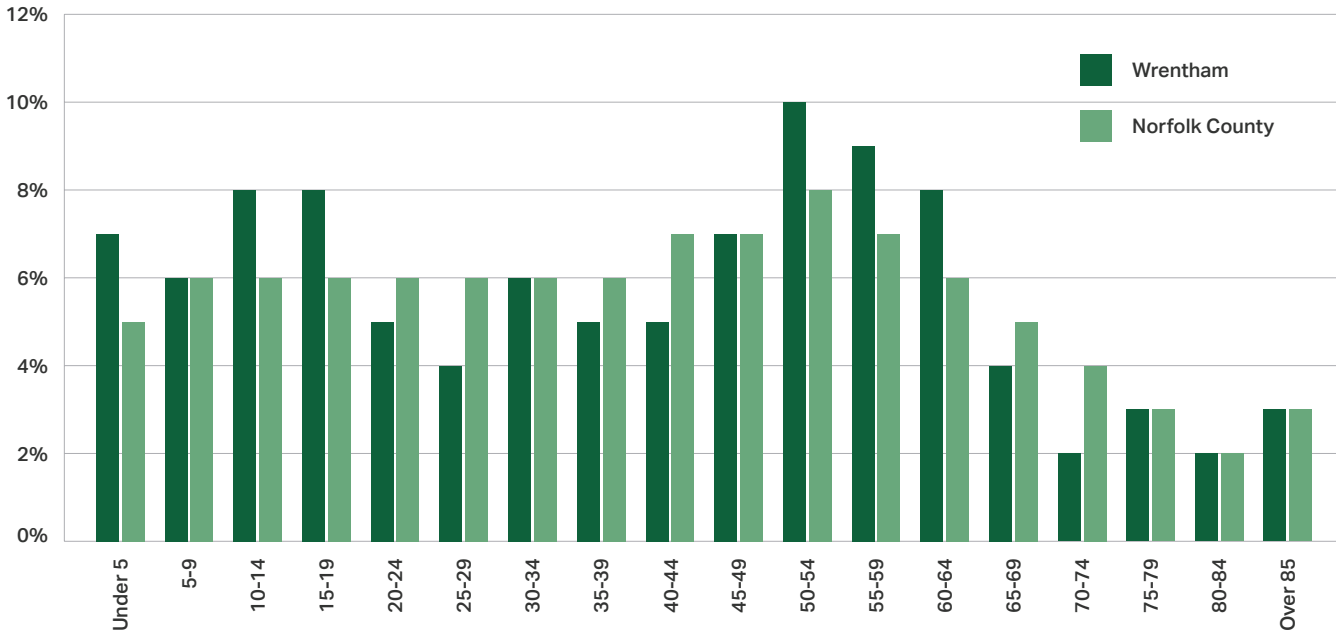
Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

1 MassDOT, 2018, MAPC 2011

2 ibid

A greater portion of Wrentham's population is under the age of 18 and between 50 and 65 years old than in the County as a whole. The population by age of Wrentham compared to that of Norfolk County, according to the most recent data is shown in Figure 3.

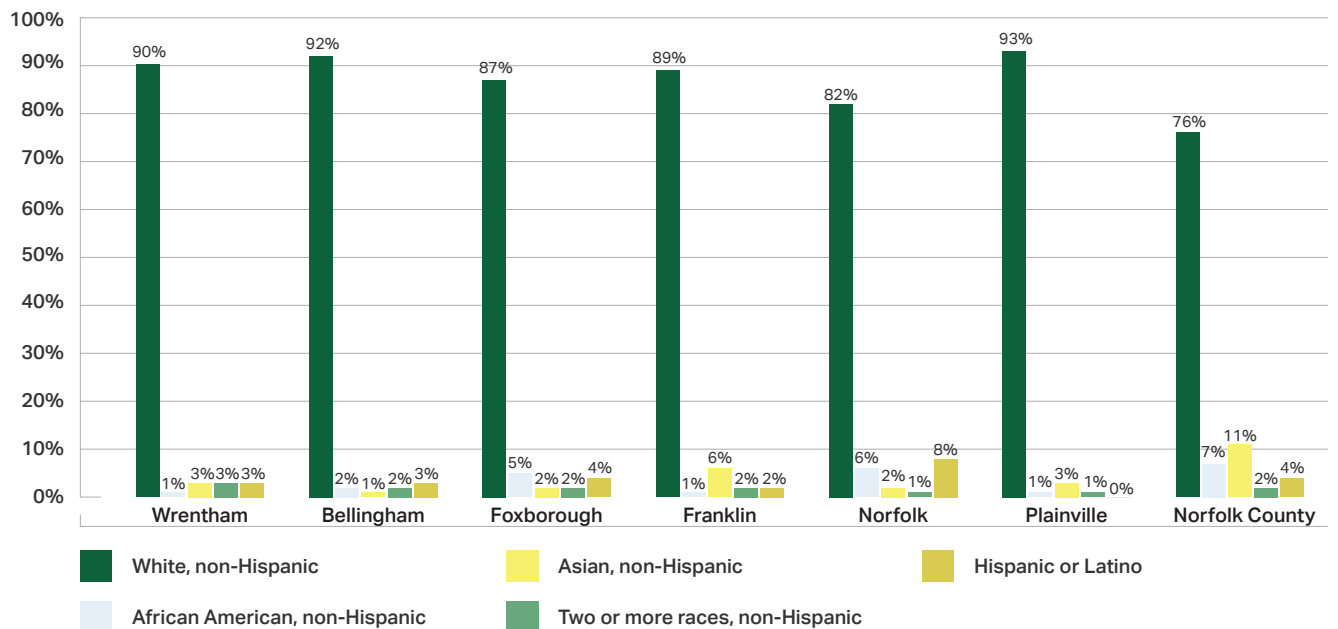
Figure 3: Population by Age in Wrentham and Norfolk County



Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

Similar to neighboring towns, Wrentham lacks racial diversity with 94% of the population identifying as white. In comparison, 76% of the population of Norfolk County is white, 11% is Asian American, and seven percent is African American. More than one in 20 households, or six percent of households, speak a language other than English at home. Most of these languages are Slavic, including Russian. In addition, six percent of Wrentham residents were born outside of the United States. The data is shown in Figure 4.

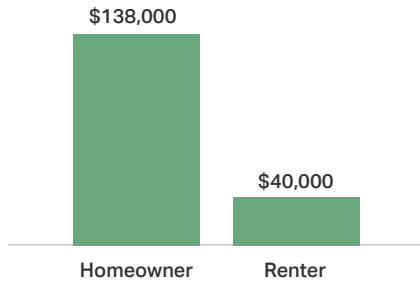
Figure 4: Population by Race



Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

The median income is \$113,000 compared to \$100,000 in the County. Alternatively, between 350 and 800 Wrentham residents live below the poverty line, defined as a family of four making less than \$24,000 annually. Income is correlated with age in Wrentham—older residents have lower incomes than middle-aged residents. There is not enough data to determine whether income is correlated with race. There is an overwhelming disparity between the incomes of Wrentham residents who own their homes and those who rent their homes. The data is shown in Figure 5,

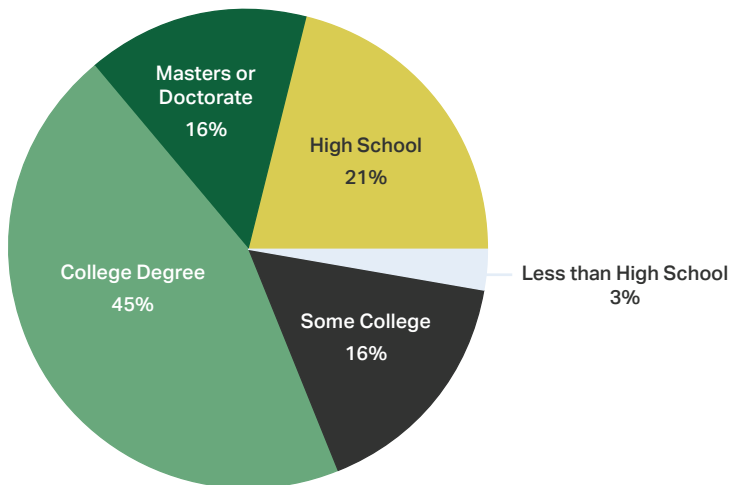
Figure 5: Household Income by Tenure



Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

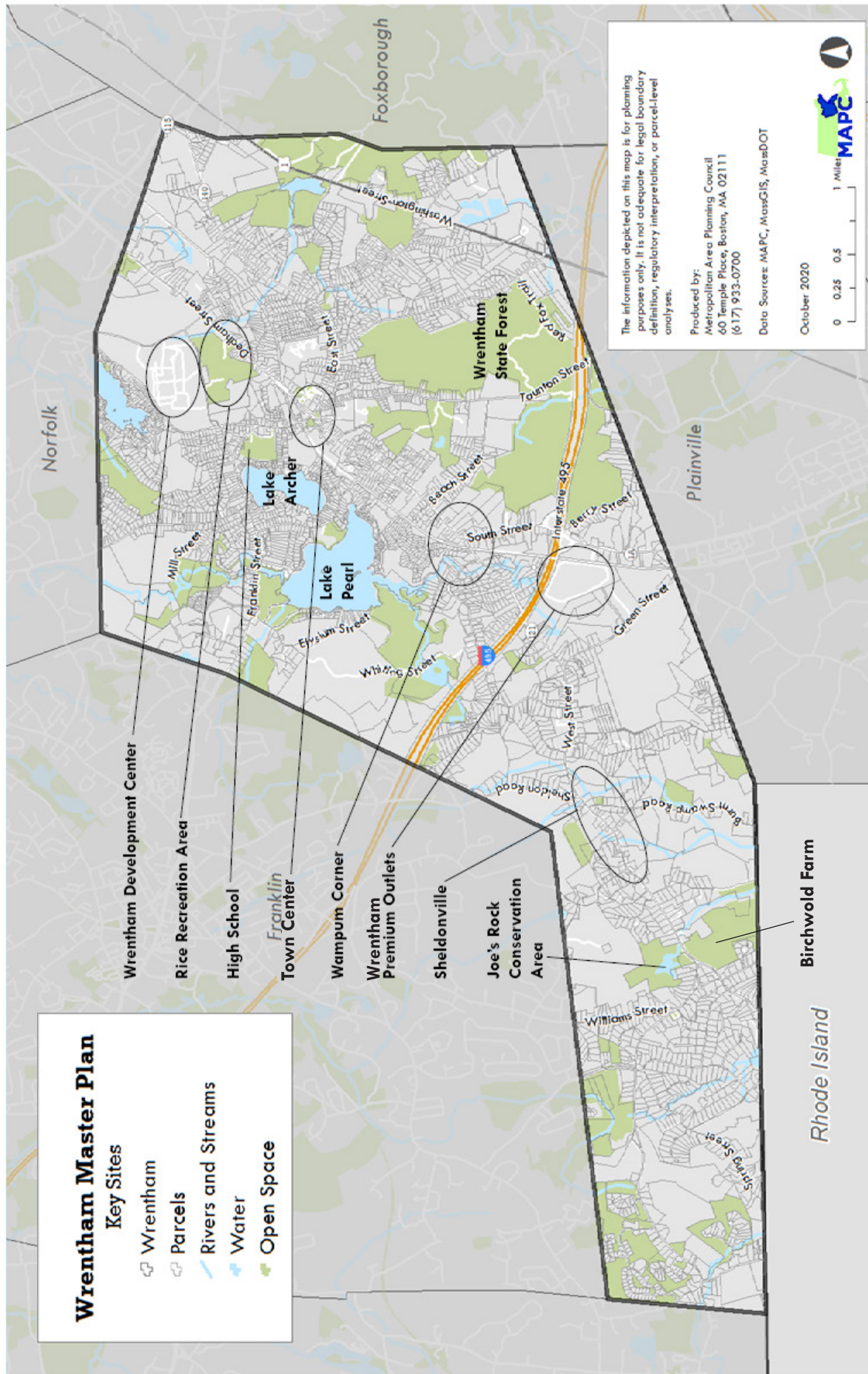
The educational attainment of residents varies widely. More than 60% of adults have at least a college degree, including 16% of the Town’s population that has a Masters or Doctorates. Similarly, sixty percent of the County’s population also has a college degree or higher. Whereas there is a substantial population in Wrentham who have earned advanced degrees, 1 in 4 residents have their high school degree or less, and have not attended any college classes. The educational attainment data is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6: Educational Attainment



Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

The key sites and places in the Town of Wrentham are shown on the map on the next page.



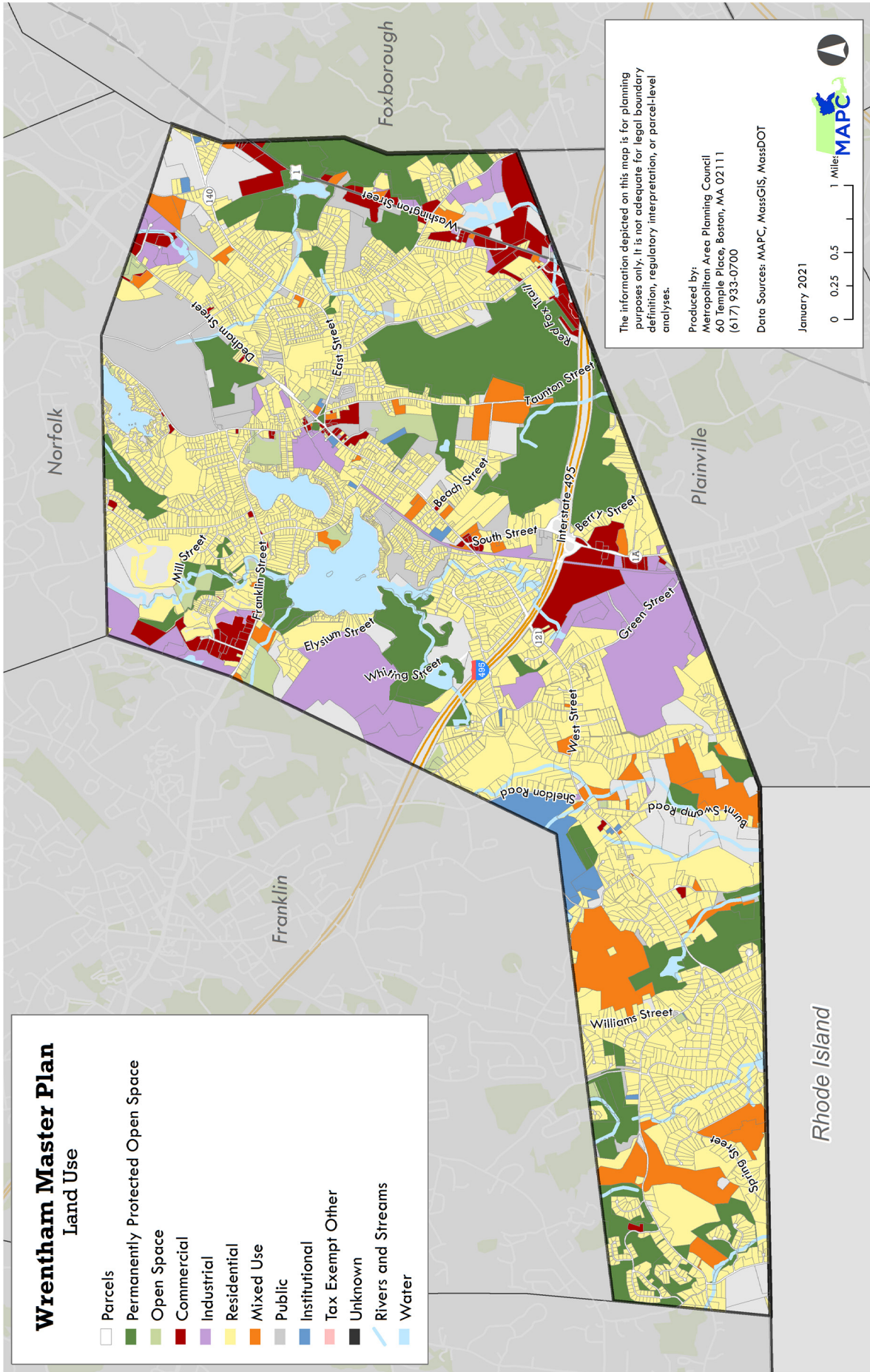
Place

The Town covers approximately 23 square miles of rolling forest, wetlands, and a few remaining farms. Lake Archer and Lake Pearl are defining water features of Wrentham, providing scenic views and a shared attraction for residential neighborhoods, and Lake Pearl offers public recreation at Sweatt Beach. Route 1A is the main spine of Town running from the northern border with Norfolk to the Town Center where it becomes South Street until it connects with Interstate 495. It is lined with older homes, businesses, and residential developments. Route 1 runs along the eastern side of Wrentham through wetlands and conservation land. It is spotted with auto-oriented commercial development and industry serving the motorists and trucks traveling between Boston, Providence, and Gillette Stadium. A new large development at the intersection with Interstate 495 provides new homes, restaurants, an assisted living facility, two hotels, and other retail businesses. The Interstate runs east-west and bisects the Town: the lakes, Town Center, and Route 1 to the north; and the Wrentham Premium Outlets, larger properties, and agricultural lands to the south.

Most of the land in Wrentham is currently used for residential purposes. There are two large industrial areas with active quarries west of Lake Pearl and south of the Wrentham Premium Outlets. Areas of conserved open space are distributed throughout Town, with the largest being the Wrentham State Forest in the eastern area of Town, as well as along Route 1. The land use in the Town of Wrentham according to the Town's Assessor's data is illustrated on the map on the next page.



Photo Credit: Mark Cuddy



Wrentham Master Plan
Land Use

- Parcels
- Permanently Protected Open Space
- Open Space
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Residential
- Mixed Use
- Public
- Institutional
- Tax Exempt Other
- Unknown
- Rivers and Streams
- Water

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

Produced by:
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111
(617) 933-0700

Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS, MassDOT

January 2021

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



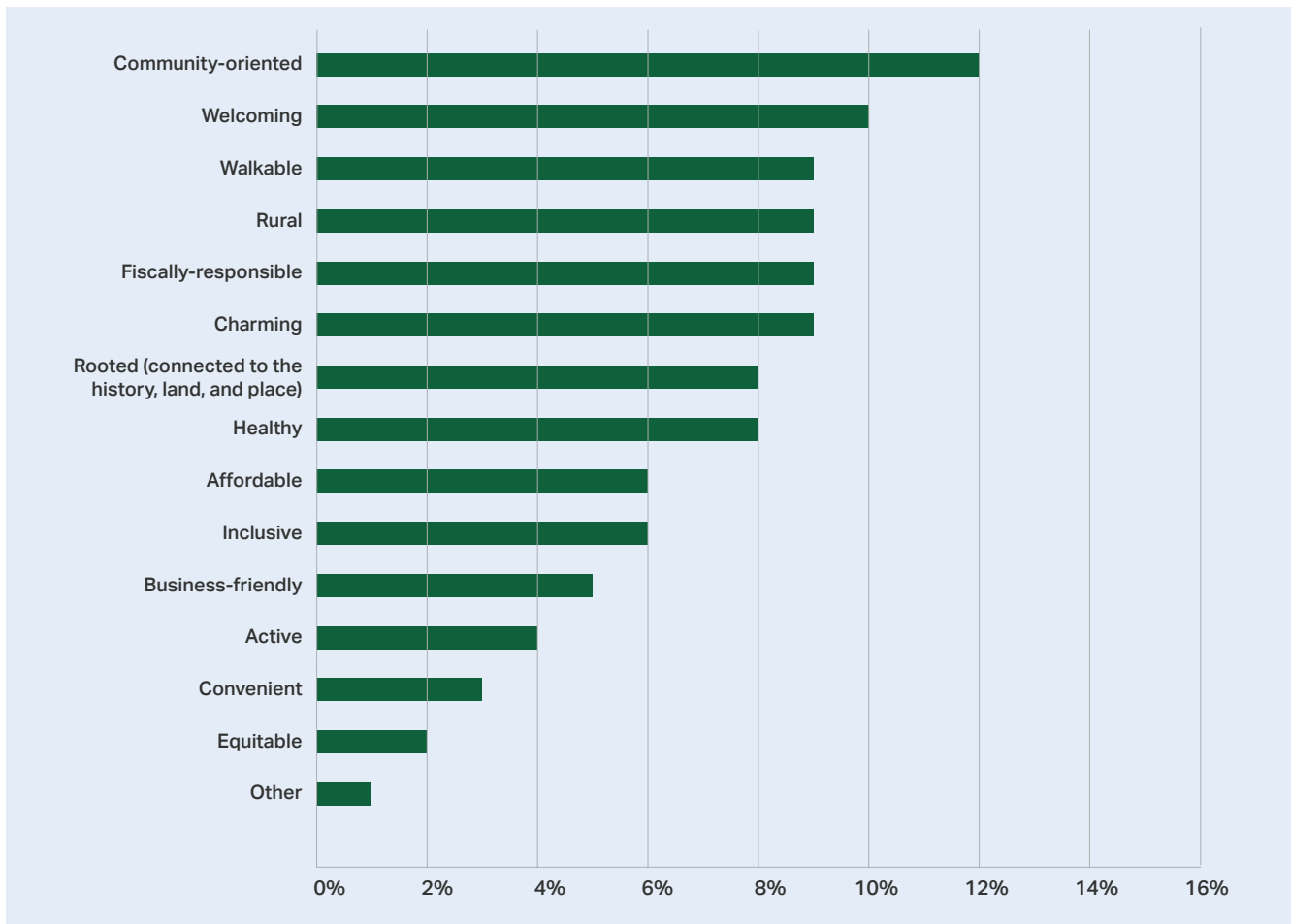
Community Visioning Survey Findings

At the beginning of the Master Plan process, a Community Visioning Survey was widely distributed throughout Town. A postcard with a link to the online survey was mailed to every household; a press release was sent to local media; paper versions of the survey were available at Town Hall; Town staff and Steering Committee members reached out to the schools, small businesses, senior center, youth groups, and civic organizations; and staff and Steering Committee members shared emails and social media posts. Over 1,300 people participated in the survey, including 1,000 of whom provided full survey responses.

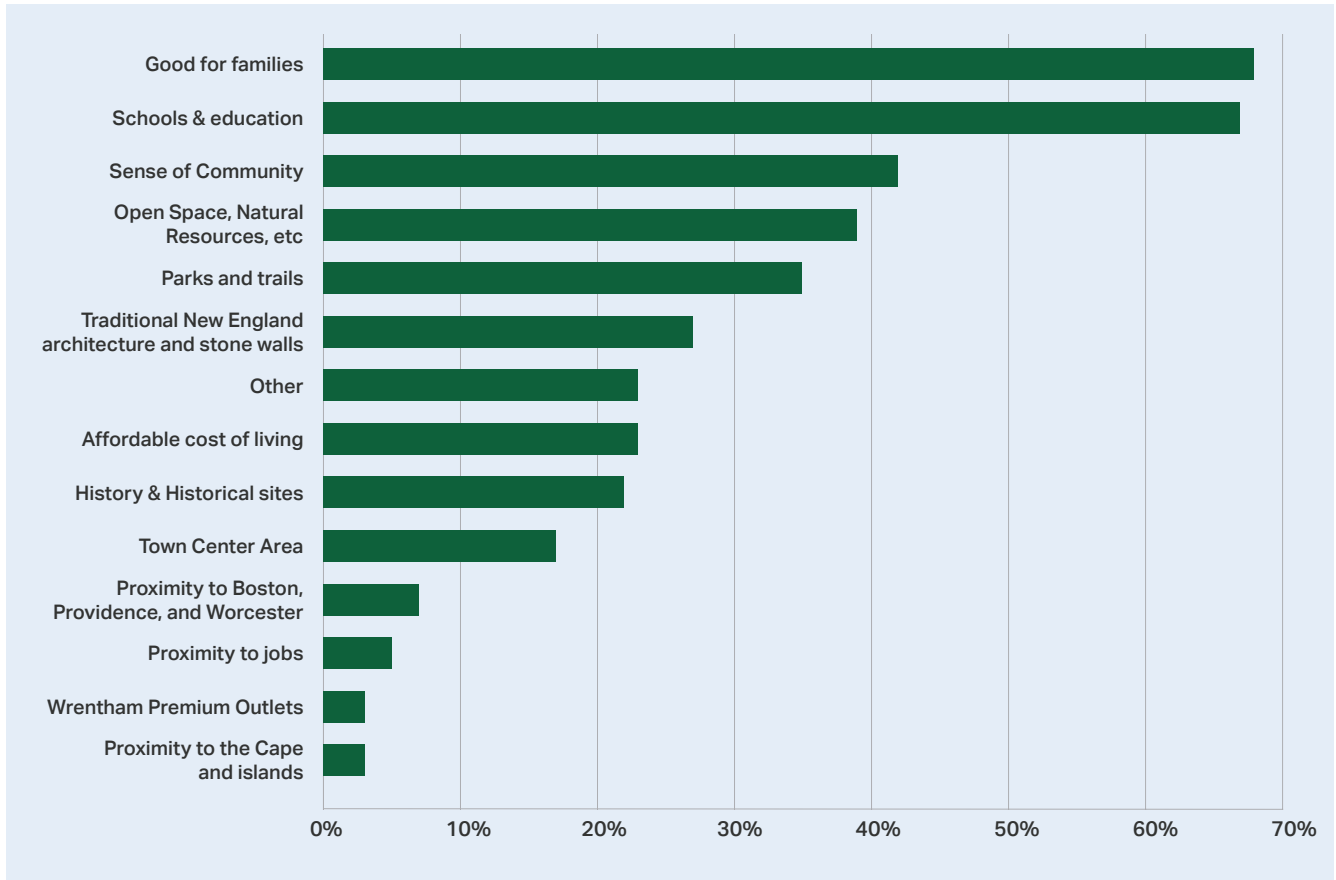
According to the survey results, Wrentham's greatest strengths are: being good for families; the schools and education; the sense of community; and the open space, natural resources, and farmland. The words that best describe respondents' aspirations for Wrentham are community-oriented; welcoming; and walkable. These strengths and aspirations were central throughout the Master Plan process, including in the development of the Vision, as well as in the development of the Goals and Strategies.

The responses to some of the key questions in the survey are illustrated in the figures on the following pages.

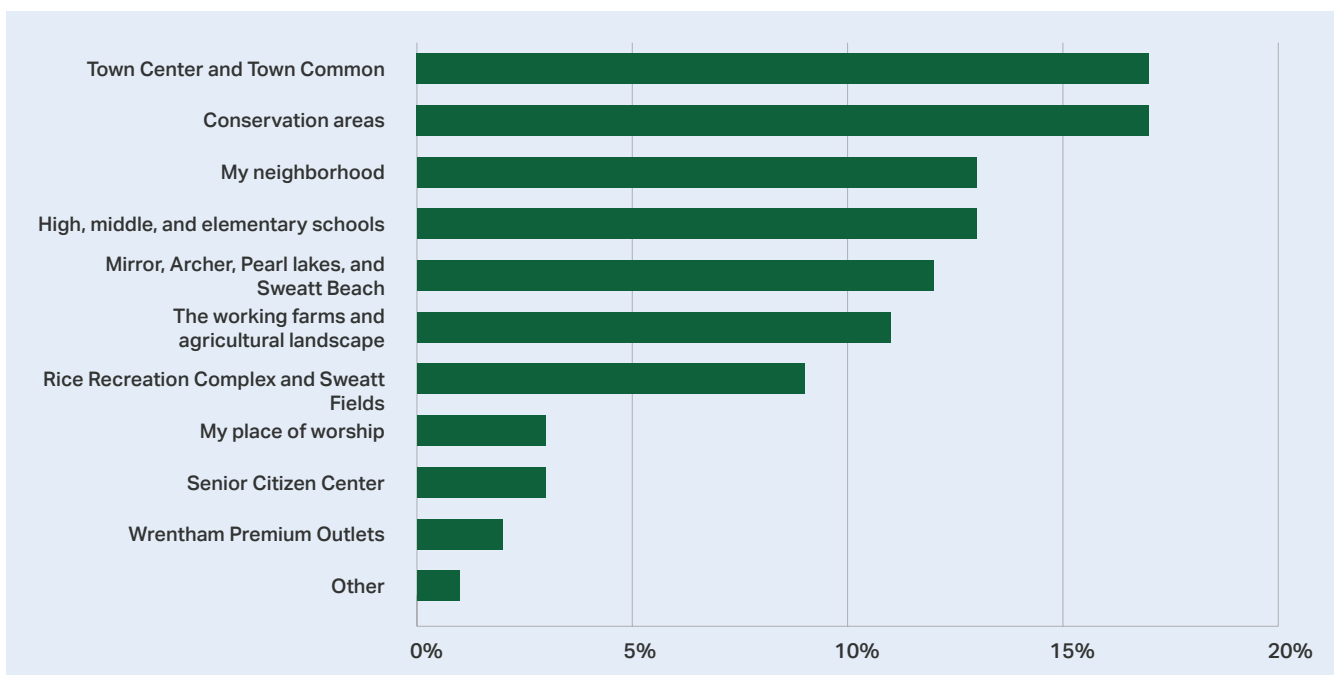
Which set of words best describe your aspirations for Wrentham?



What are Wrentham's greatest strengths?



Which places in Wrentham are most meaningful to you? Please choose up to 5.

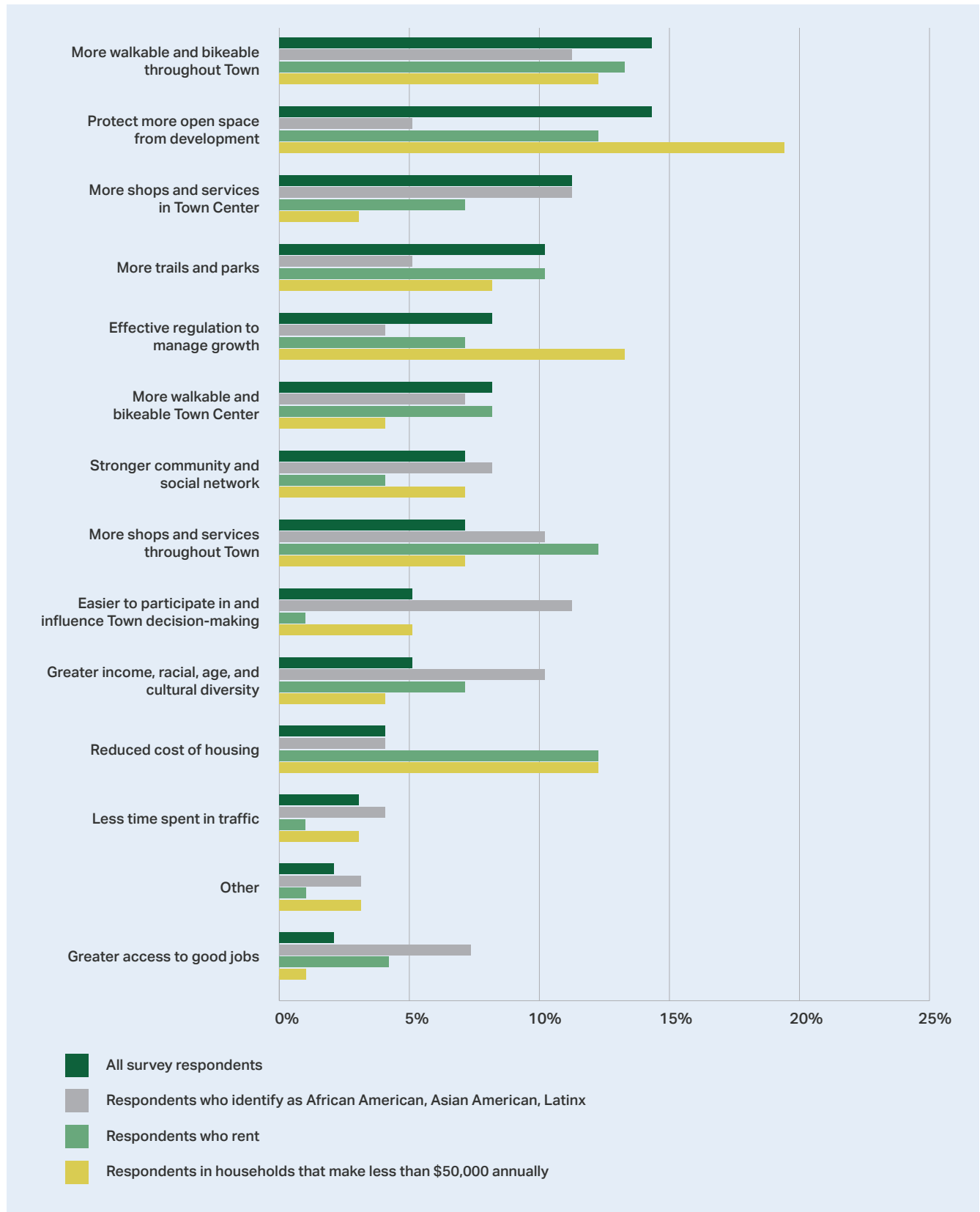


Given the demographics of the respondents compared to the demographics of the full Wrentham population, the survey under-represents renters, households with low-incomes, and may under-represent residents of color, although the data is too limited to determine. Due to this under-representation, the following survey responses are broken into these demographic subgroups for certain questions. Of note, the responses only reflect the perspectives of individuals, and should not be interpreted as representing the perspective of all individuals of each demographic. However, this focused analysis illustrates the commonalities and differences in lived experience in Wrentham across different survey respondents. For example, there are differences in which improvements would most improve quality of life for different stakeholders. One of the most highly-supported improvements for respondents of color is to make it easier to participate in and influence local decision-making. This improvement was not as important for lower-income respondents or renters, demonstrating a difference in the experience of residents based on race, not income. The responses by demographic subgroups on the following page are illustrated to show the differences in responses. Again, the number of responses for each demographic group is small and does not represent the views of a whole demographic group.



Source: Diane Glass

Which improvements would most increase your quality of life? Please choose up to 5.



Existing Conditions Assessment: Economic Development

The existing conditions assessment 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 topic of the Master Plan 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 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 Town-wide surveys, focus groups, and discussion with the Wrentham Economic Development Commission, as explained in the Introduction.

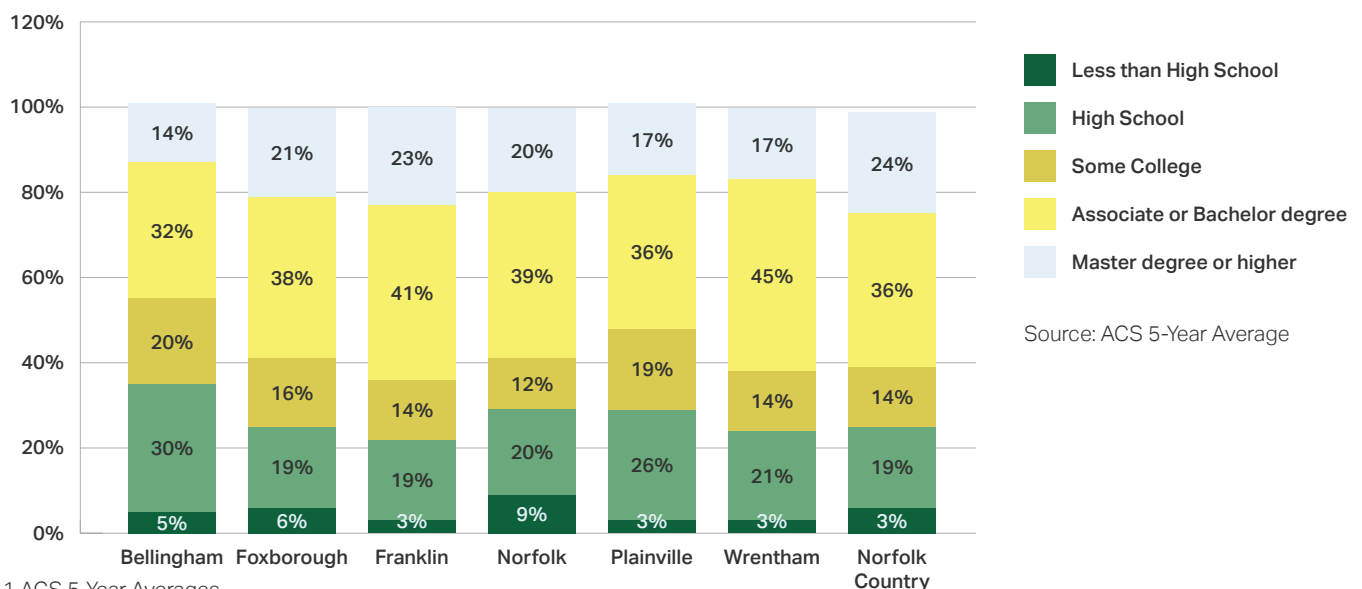
Workforce

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.¹

Educational attainment

The educational attainment of residents varies widely.² More than 60% of adults have at least a college degree, including 16% of the Town’s population that has a Masters or Doctorate. Sixty percent of the County’s population also has a college degree or higher. Although there is a substantial population in Wrentham who have earned advanced degrees, 1 in 4 residents have their high school degree or less and have not attended a college class. In other words, there are more residents with a high school degree or less than there are residents with a Masters degree. The educational attainment of Wrentham’s population is compared to neighboring towns and the County at large in Figure ED-1. Franklin, which has a similar median income to Wrentham, has more residents with Masters degrees or higher.

Figure ED-1: Educational Attainment, 2016

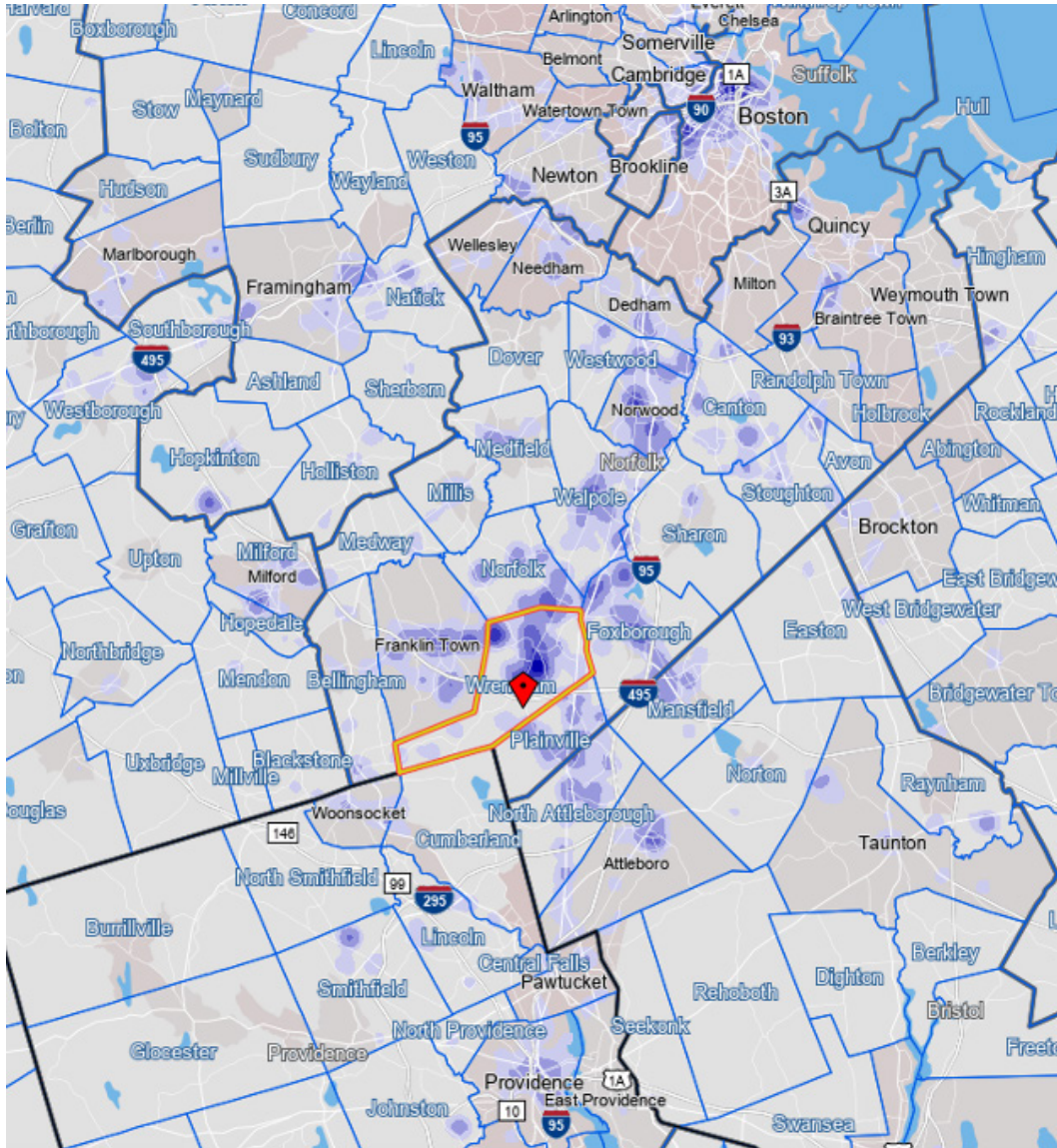


¹ ACS 5-Year Averages
² Residents 25 years and over

Location of Jobs and Commute of Wrentham Residents

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

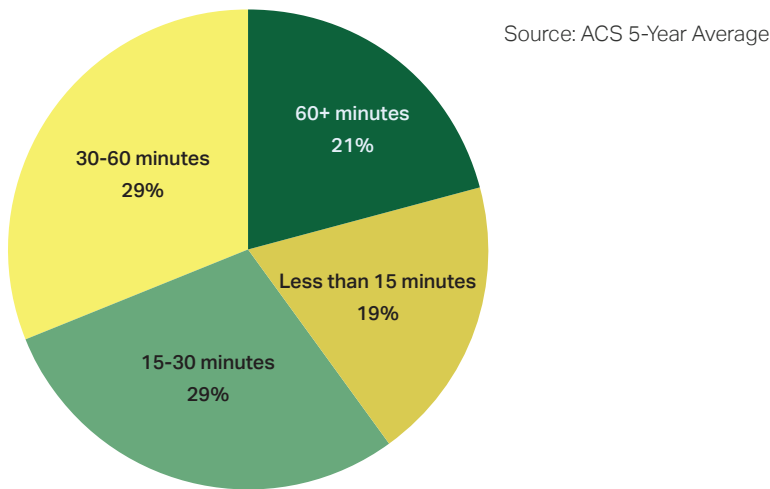
Figure ED-2: Where Wrentham Residents Work, 2018



Source: US Census

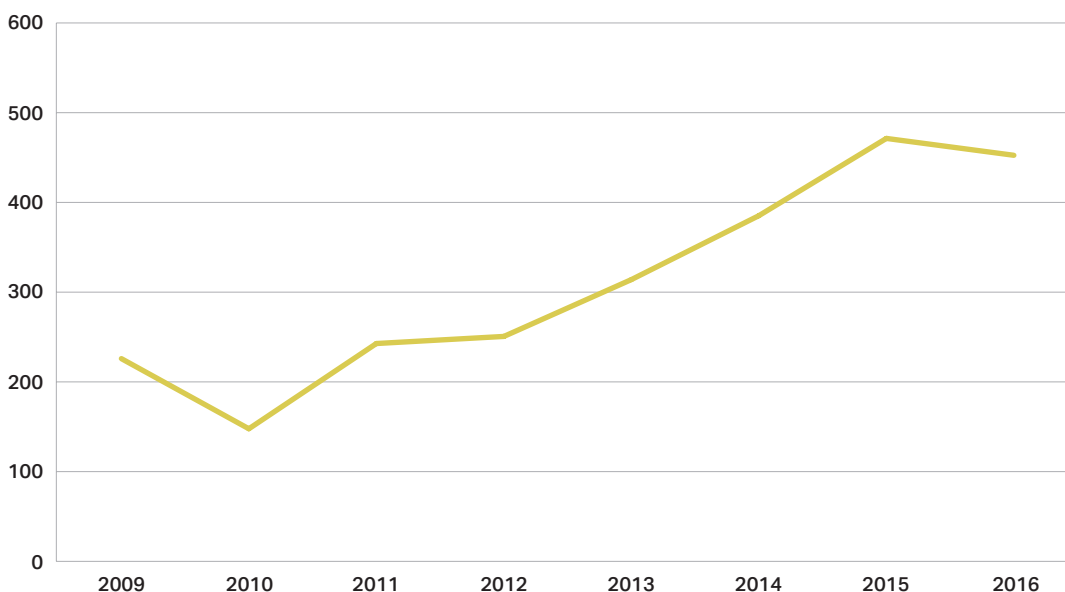
Fifty-two percent of Wrentham residents spend more than an hour commuting each day, and 21% of residents spend more than two hours commuting each day. The commute times are similar to those of residents in Bellingham, Foxborough, and Franklin. More residents in Norfolk have long commutes, and more residents in Plainville have short commutes. The one-way commute time for Wrentham residents is illustrated in Figure ED-3.

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



While most residents drive to work, 10%, 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. 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.

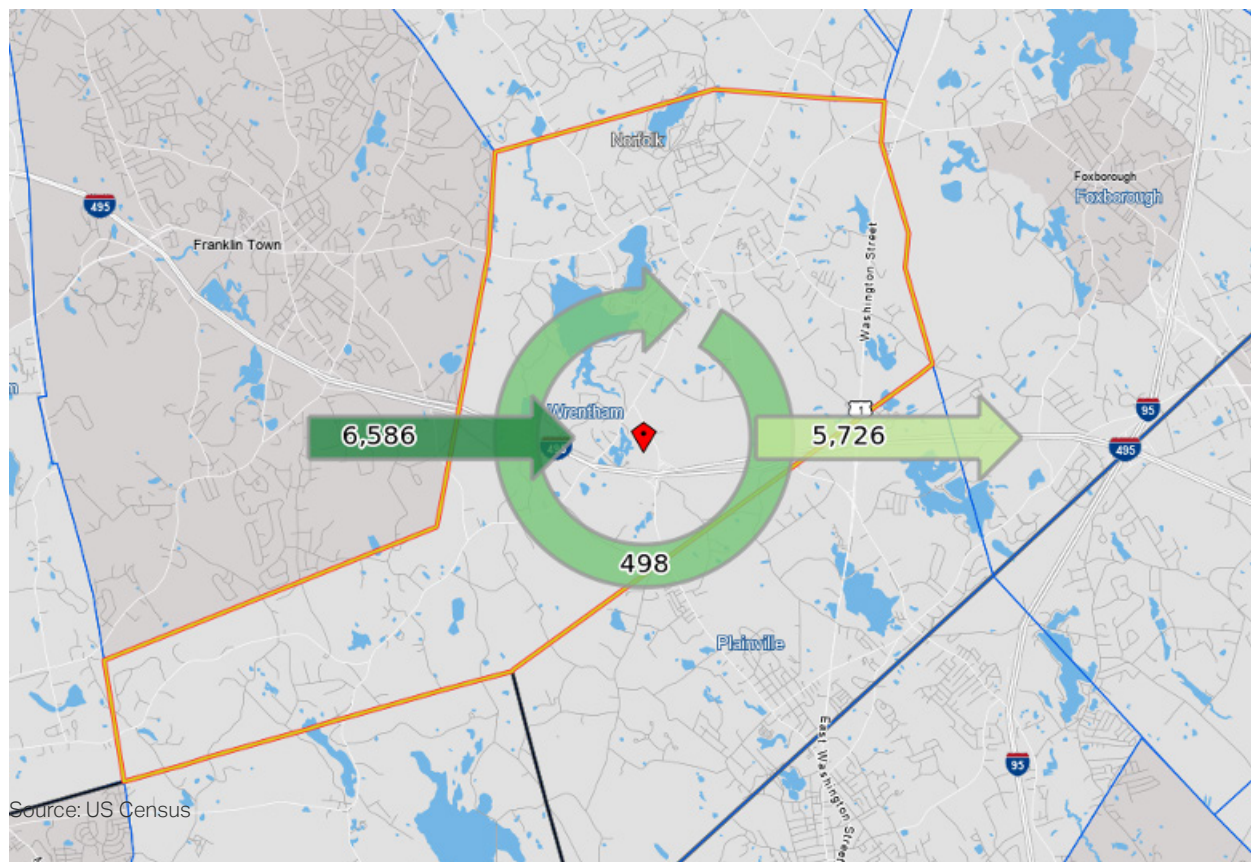
Figure ED-4: Growth in Number of Wrentham Residents who Commute by Transit



Source: ACS 5-Year Average

In general, this pattern of residents commuting to a 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 7,400 jobs and 6,200 residents in the labor force.¹ The daily flow of people in and out of Wrentham is shown in Figure ED-5—a large number of people come to Wrentham to work (6,586 workers according to this data source), a large number of residents leave Town to work (5,726 residents), and a relatively small number of residents stay and work in town (498 residents).¹⁰ Approximately 40% of the people who work in Wrentham work at the Wrentham Premium Outlets, accounting for a substantial portion of the daily inflow of workers.

Figure ED-5: Inflow and Outflow of Workers, 2016

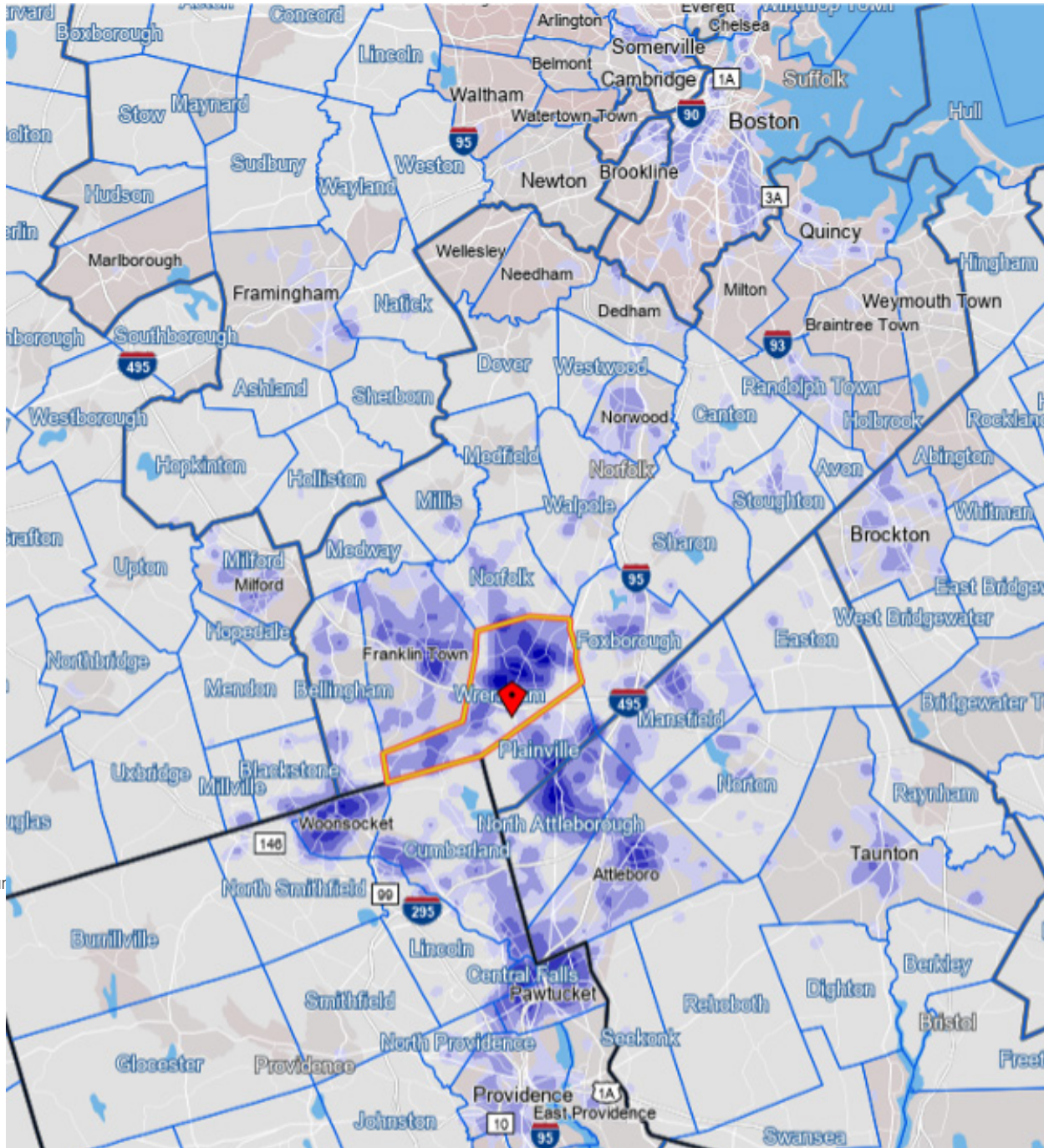


1 Source: ACS 5-Year Average, U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2016).
 10 U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2018).

People who work in Wrentham

The people who work in Wrentham mostly come from locations south of Town, 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

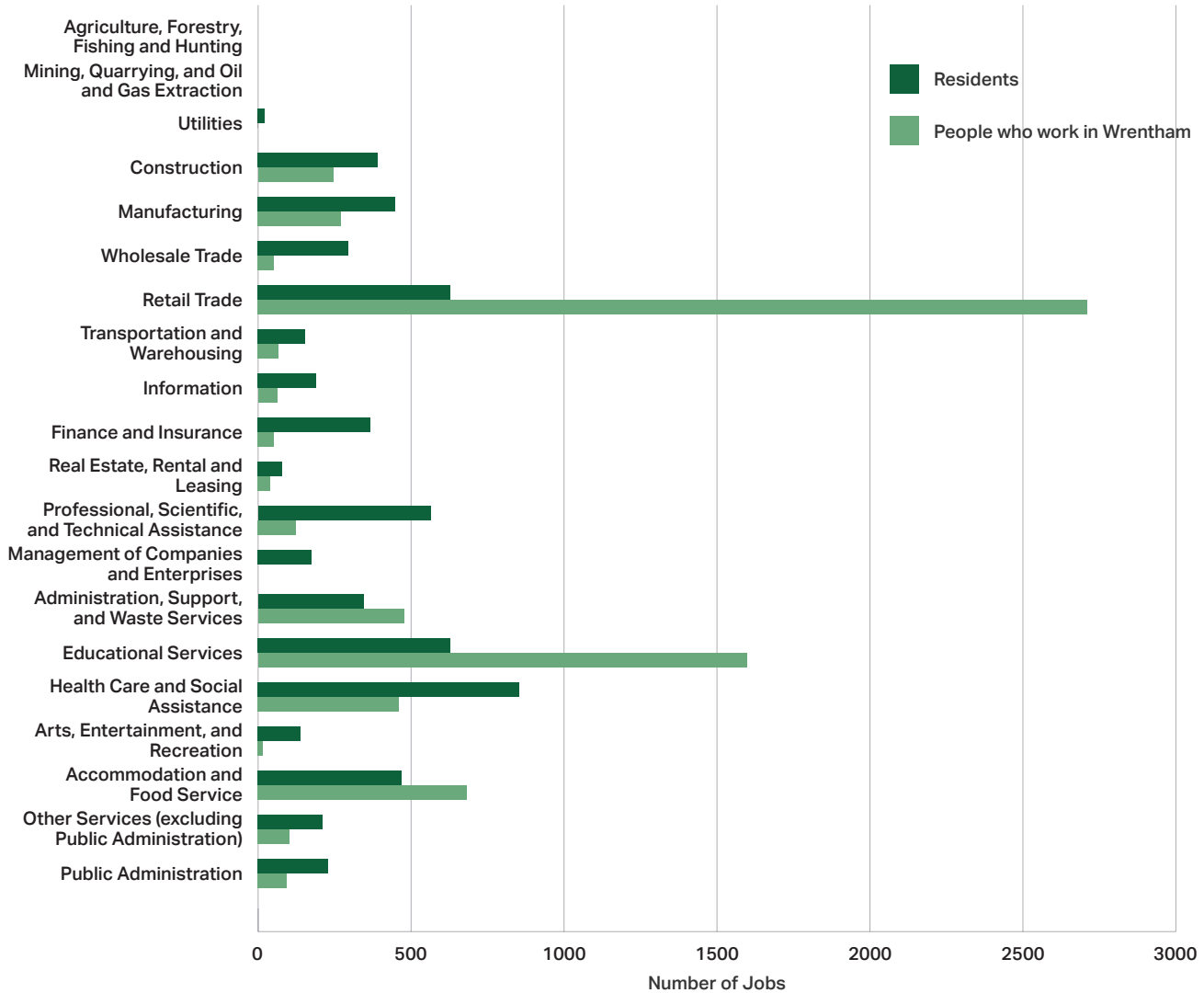


Source:

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.¹ The types of jobs held by residents and the types of jobs held by people who work in Wrentham is compared in Figure ED-7.

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



Source: US Census

Another potential reason for the mismatch is that the housing in Wrentham does not meet the needs of workers in Wrentham. The Housing topic of the Master Plan presents additional analysis of the housing supply and demand in Wrentham.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2018).

Business and Employees

Jobs by Industry

As previously discussed, jobs in Wrentham are concentrated in Retail Trade and Educational Services, which are also among the lowest paying jobs. The annual wage of someone working retail in Wrentham is \$21,360 and \$48,384 for someone in Educational Services.¹ In comparison, the median income of someone who lives in Wrentham is \$113,017. Many of the retail employees are 29 years old or younger; however, about half (approximately 1,300) are 30 years or older.² Therefore, the impression that the vast majority of people who work at the Wrentham Premium Outlets are high schoolers is inaccurate. The number of jobs and businesses by industry in Wrentham, as well as the average weekly wages and average annual wages of each job is shown in Table ED-1.

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, 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
Total, All Industries	6,914	516	\$749	\$35,952

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

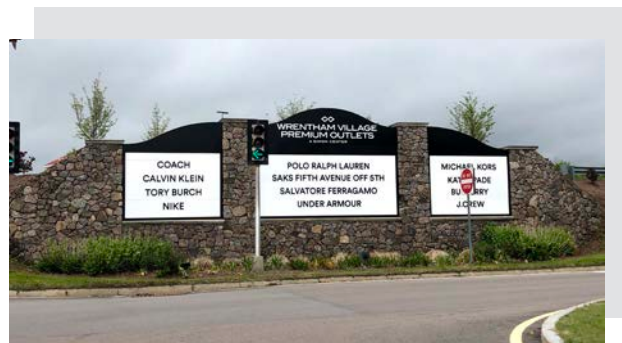
¹ Some workers may hold more than one job, so the annual wage may not correlate to the annual income of each worker.

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

Jobs in Wrentham have been concentrated in retail and education since at least 2004 at the time of the last Master Plan. The change in the number of jobs and establishments in Wrentham by industry between 2005 and 2018 is shown in Table ED-2. 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.

Uncertainty in the Retail Sector

With the increase in online shopping over the past few years, and the rapid acceleration of this trend due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the future of brick-and-mortar retail is uncertain.¹ Some retailers are shifting location from shopping malls to “Lifestyle Centers”, which combine the traditional retail functions of a shopping mall with dining, entertainment, and other leisure amenities. Lifestyle Centers are also distinct from shopping malls as they often include mixed-use and residential development rather than entirely commercial uses; upscale national-chain specialty stores (e.g. Pottery Barn, Crate & Barrel, etc.) serve as anchors, rather than department stores (e.g. Macy’s, Sears, etc.); have smaller footprints of 320,000 square feet on average nationally rather than 800,000 square feet; and they are often mostly outdoors along walkways or internal streets rather than enclosed within a building.



¹ Jordyn Holman, Lauren Coleman-Lochner, “Stores that defined American Mall eye a freestanding future”, Boston Globe, March 22, 2021 <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2021/03/22/business/stores-that-defined-American-malls-eye-freestanding-future/?s_campaign=8315>

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, except Public Administration	Jobs	86	109	23	27%
	Establishments	31	30	(1)	-3%
Public Administration	Jobs	122	135	13	11%
	Establishments	7	9	2	29%
Total, All Industries	Jobs	5,915	6,914	999	17%
	Establishments	433	516	83	19%

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 are shown here.

** Red = negative %, green = positive %

Size of Establishments

The largest employers are listed in Table ED-3. Five are located at the Wrentham Premium Outlets, three are related to schools, 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 Wrentham Premium Outlets. As of 2016, there were approximately 519 businesses in the Wrentham Premium Outlets.¹

Capstan Atlantic, located at the northern end of Route 1A, expanded its facilities in Wrentham in 2016 after entering a tax increment financing (TIF) agreement with the Town. A TIF is a tool used by municipal governments to stimulate economic development in a targeted geographical area. TIFs are used to finance redevelopment projects, or other investments, based on the anticipated increase in tax revenue from the new development. In the case of Capstan in Wrentham, Capstan was exempted from property tax increases for a period of 10 years. This subsidizes their multi-million dollar investment in expanding their facility and increasing the number of jobs.

Table ED-3: Largest Employers, 2016

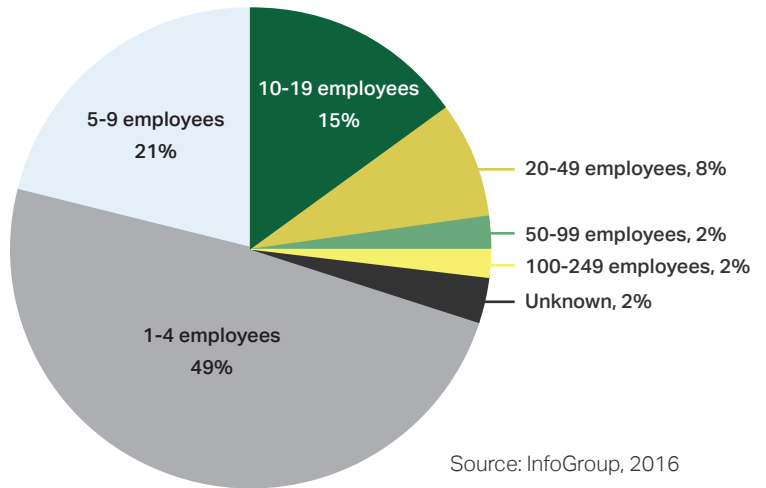
Company Name	Address	Type of Establishment	Number of Employees
Bloomingdale's	1 Premium Outlet Blvd # 5	Department Stores	100-249
Gap Outlet	1 Premium Outlet Blvd # 360	Factory Outlets	100-249
TLC Cleaning Co	50 Industrial Rd	Janitor Service	100-249
Capstan Atlantic	10 Cushing Dr	Metal-Powder-Fabricators (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 Office of School Superintendent	120 Taunton St	Schools	100-249

Source: InfoGroup 2016

¹ 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 or the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development may have inaccuracies.

Regardless of the concentration of businesses at the Wrentham Premium Outlets, most businesses in Wrentham are small businesses. Half of the businesses employ fewer than 5 employees, and 22% employ less than 10 employees, as shown in Figure ED-8. This proportion is similar to that of neighboring towns, except for Norfolk where more businesses, 60%, employ fewer than five employees.¹

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



The number of businesses in Wrentham and surrounding towns by number of employees is shown in Table ED-4. 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	Foxborough	Franklin	Norfolk	Plainville
1-4	264	323	450	587	200	236
5-9	114	136	200	261	60	105
10-19	79	65	100	131	23	38
20-49	44	52	65	111	16	37
50-99	12	10	23	40	5	7
100-249	10	9	19	26	5	7
250-499	0	1	1	5	1	0
500-999	0	0	1	2	0	0
1,000-4999	0	0	2	0	0	0
5,000-9999	0	1	0	0	0	0
Unknown	18	34	34	47	10	20
Total businesses	541	631	895	1210	320	450

Source: InfoGroup, 2016

¹ InfoGroup, 2016

Commercial/Industrial Districts

The map on the next page 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: Town Center, Wampum Corner, Wrentham Premium Outlets, Route 1, and Route 140. Each district has a different character and provides different goods, services, and consumer experiences.

Town Center

Wrentham's Town Center has many 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 Town Center in the 2004 Master 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 steeple church fronting the Town Common."

The traditional design of the Town Center 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 having to move their car. Improvements to serve pedestrians, including fewer curb cuts and safer crosswalks, could help make it even more walkable. The recent Village Center District rezoning, as explained in the Introduction section, aims to further support an attractive, walkable Town Center consistent with Wrentham's small town character. However, there are challenges to new investment. The Town Center lacks Town sewer, and one of the lots comprising the vacant site lacks frontage and access.

Capstan Atlantic, one of Wrentham's largest employers is located at the northern end of Route 1A a few miles from Town Center.

Wampum Corner

Less than two miles south of the Town Center 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 Wrentham 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 Wrentham Premium Outlets, coming from across the Boston region to go shopping. Anchored by the Nike Factory Store, Saks Off 5th, Levi's Outlet Store and others, the Wrentham Premium Outlets provide 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. It provides a connection between Boston and Providence, as well as access to Gillette Stadium (the home of the New England Patriots football team and New England Revolution soccer 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 that are setback from the road with expansive parking lots on large lots. The uses are varied and cater to more regional demand (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. Near the western border of Town 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 typically 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. Further consumer research could help to explain why residents shop elsewhere—one reason may be that one-stop shops such as Target are more convenient for everyday goods than the Wrentham Premium Outlets. Increasing the amount of spending by residents in the Town may provide an opportunity for new businesses or better financial support for existing businesses in Wrentham and help to diversify the Town's tax base.

Industrial Areas and 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 Town Center; 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 Wrentham 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 Town Center offers produce at their roadside farm stand. Agriculture is critical to Wrentham's heritage and offers potential for town branding and tourism.



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 and industrial property tax rates.

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

Municipality	Residential	Commercial	Industrial
Bellingham	14.41	20.58	20.58
Foxborough	14.74	18.73	18.73
Franklin	14.65	14.65	14.65
Norfolk	17.99	17.99	17.99
Plainville	14.70	17.75	17.75
Wrentham	14.07	17.42	17.42

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%, lower than any other neighboring towns. Norfolk's average tax bill as a percentage of income is the highest at 17.78%.¹

The total assessed value in Wrentham is approximately \$2.5 billion. As shown in Table ED-6, 80% of Wrentham's assessed value is comprised of residential property and 20% of commercial, industrial, and personal property, similar to the percentages in Foxborough and Franklin.² Bellingham and Plainville have a higher portion of commercial, industrial, and personal property value and Norfolk has a lower.

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.

¹ MA Department of Revenue, 2020 <<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/municipal-finance-trend-dashboard>>

² 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.

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

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

Source: MA Department of Revenue

Notes:

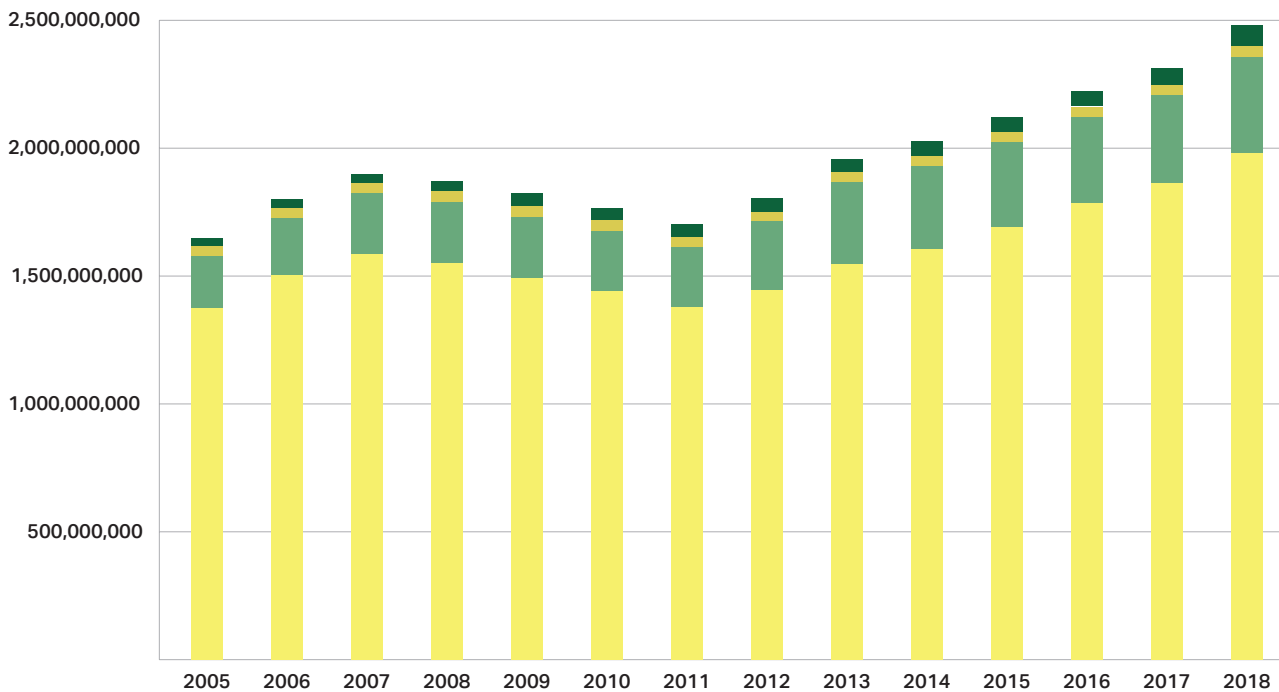
* Personal property generally includes tangible items that are not firmly attached to land or buildings and are not considered to be part of the real estate, for example, merchandise, furniture, machinery, tools, animals, and equipment.

** "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% in fiscal year 2005 to just under 80 percent in 2021. The assessed value by class in Wrentham from fiscal year 2005-2021 is shown in Figure ED-9.

Figure ED-9. Assessed Value by Class in Wrentham Fiscal Year 2005-2021



Source: MA Department of Revenue



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

Table ED-7: Largest taxpayers, FY 2020

Name	Nature of business	Total assessed value	Amount of tax	% of Wrentham’s total property tax value
Premium Outlet Partner LP	Retail	\$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 that was conducted in Fall 2020, focus groups that were conducted in January 2021, and meetings 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"> • Good for families with strong schools • Open space, natural resources, and farmland, suggesting potential to promote Wrentham’s natural resources for tourism • According to the Town-wide survey, Town Center and the Town Common is the most “meaningful place” to Wrentham residents • Walkable Town Center with local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance from higher-paying jobs resulting in long commutes • 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. • Lack of diversity in restaurant options • Increase in on-line shopping, especially during COVID • Lack of communication between Town Center businesses and the Town • Lack of coordination between Town Center businesses and Wrentham businesses generally • Love for Wrentham’s “small-town feel” fuels opposition to new development • Developers are hesitant to build along Route 1 in Wrentham given the uncertainty of community opposition • Burdensome fees and taxes • Reputation as being unfriendly to business • Long and uncertain development and permitting process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrentham Premium Outlets are not considered one of the “most important strengths” of Wrentham, suggesting potential to better serve local residents • Two of the “most important improvements” to residents is to support “more shops and services in Town Center” and “more trails and parks” • 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 in Town Center and along Route 1 rather than near the Wrentham Premium Outlets, Sheldonville, Wampum Corner, or the Wrentham Developmental Center • Residents would like to support more locally-owned businesses • Town Common is potential gathering space but can feel run-down • Desire for more community events

Existing Conditions Assessment:

Land Use

The Land Use topic focuses on Wrentham’s historical and existing land use patterns. The topic also highlights current policies and regulations that help shape how and where new growth and development may occur in the Town. Land use encompasses a community’s development character – from the amount, type, and intensity of commercial and residential uses to the placement of land uses to ensure environmental resources are preserved and sites are designed with residents and visitors in mind. Effective land use goals, policies, and strategies may help Wrentham achieve its vision: preserving farmland and open space; becoming more walkable and bikeable; and strengthening the Town Center and other village centers with more small businesses (dining options, homes, and places to gather). The complete Vision Statement is written at the beginning of the Master Plan. Land use regulations may also help preserve and enhance the historical development patterns that exist in the Wrentham’s village centers (additional discussion in the Historical and Cultural Resources topic).

Land use decisions and regulations have lasting impacts on the physical form of communities and the composition of the population (including the racial diversity of places). In Massachusetts, like other parts of the Country, cities and towns passed restrictive zoning rules, such as large required lot sizes and not allowing multifamily housing which narrowed the range and affordability of housing options. This lack of diverse housing options, combined with racial disparities in homeownership and wealth creation (due to inequitable financing and lending practices e.g., redlining in the mid-20th century) have contributed to low proportions of racial diversity in many suburban communities. This has contributed to a segregated Greater Boston region, with the suburbs surrounding Boston, including Wrentham, being predominantly white.¹

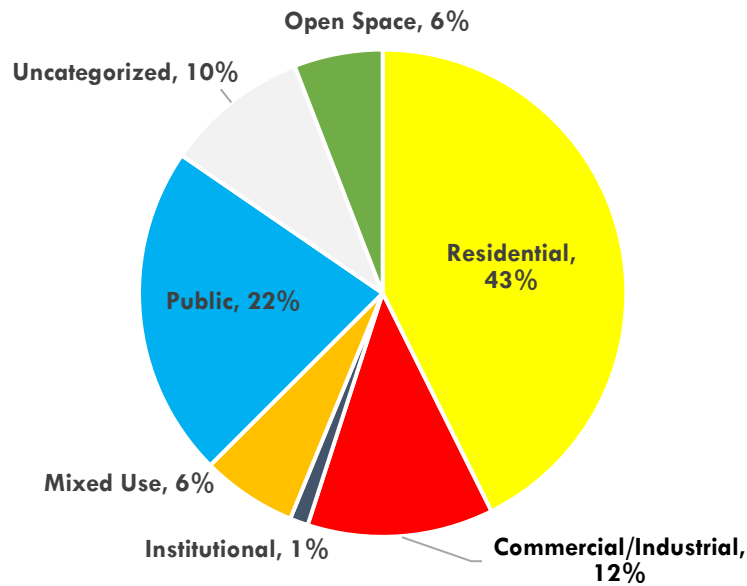
Wrentham’s land use decisions have impacts beyond the Town’s borders in the Greater Boston region. Wrentham is part of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) region and its Southwest Advisory Planning (SWAP) Committee subregion. Collaborating with adjacent cities and towns on land use decisions have been helping to more effectively plan infrastructure, transportation, housing, and economic development. This collaboration includes working with MAPC to play a role in advancing MetroCommon 2050, the Greater Boston regional plan, through smart growth land use decisions and shared regional resources to achieve local goals that benefit the residents and visitors of Wrentham.

Existing Land Uses

Over its development history as a town, Wrentham has predominantly been an agricultural community dotted with village centers, including the Town Center (where Town Common is located), Sheldonville, and Wampum Corner. Residential development has happened over time, primarily along the major roadways as cul-de-sacs or loops off main roads. In the 1980s and 1990s, a development boom resulted in large areas of undeveloped land being subdivided to accommodate the large minimum lot sizes required by the three residential zoning districts (30,000 square feet, one acre, and two acres). The Wrentham Premium Outlets opened in 1997, creating a significant new employment node near Interstate 495. The location of existing land uses is shown in Map 1. The distribution of existing land uses today is shown in Figure LU1.

¹ <https://www.bostonmagazine.com/news/2020/12/08/boston-segregation/>

Figure LU1 – Share of Existing Land Uses



Source: MassGIS

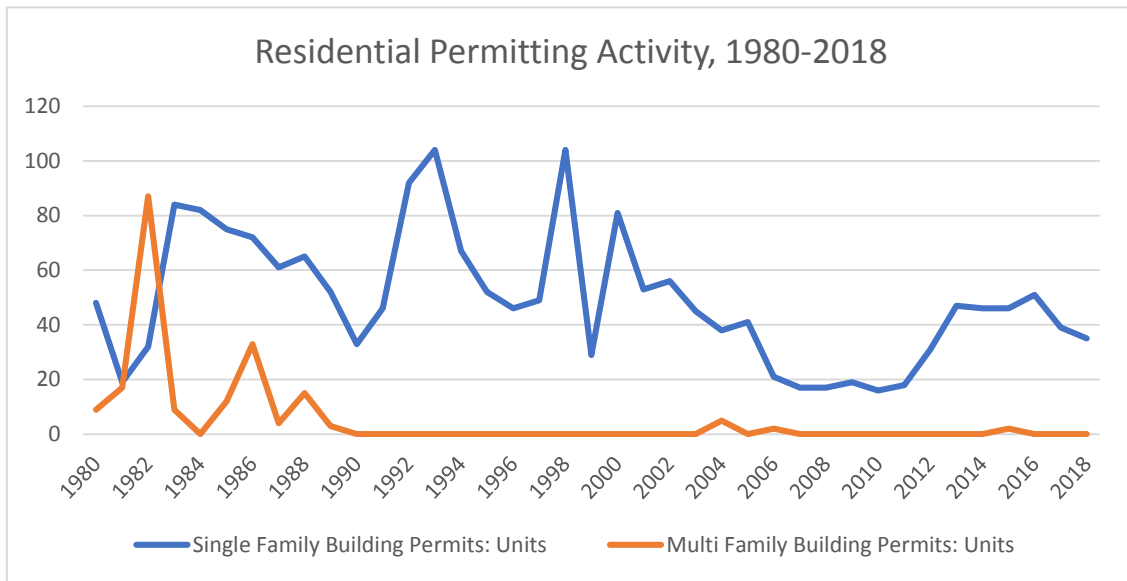
Growth and Development

Beginning in the 1970s, Wrentham transitioned to a suburban, more populous town. That was, in part, due to the construction of Interstate 495 in the 1960s. The highway made Wrentham more accessible to employment centers around the region, and both residential and commercial growth occurred in the town. While many suburbs surrounding Boston became bedroom communities for surrounding employment centers, Wrentham is unique in that there are more jobs than households in the town. However, only 530 Wrentham residents live and work in Wrentham, while nearly 6,000 residents leave Wrentham for work.¹ This data reinforces that there is a mismatch between the local workforce and local jobs (see the Economic Development element from Master Plan Phase I). Those working jobs located in Wrentham, especially the jobs in lower-paying retail and service industries, may not be able to afford housing in Wrentham due to the limited supply of housing options (see also the Housing element from Master Plan Phase I).

The residential permitting activity from 1980-2018 is shown in Figure 2. Nearly 2,000 new single-family homes were built during this time. A significantly smaller number of multi-family units – only 198 homes – were constructed. New permitting activity for multi-family development, which included everything from 2-unit duplexes to larger-scale apartment complexes, was consistently low at less than 10 per year from 1990 to about 2018. The next section on Wrentham’s zoning regulations helps articulate why residential development has been limited to single-family homes.

¹ On the Map, US Census Bureau. See the Transportation Element for additional information on work commutes.

Figure LU2 – Residential Permitting Activity (by unit), 1980-2018



Source: US Census Bureau, Building Permit Survey. Note: In 2018, the Town only reported permitting data for 8 out of 12 months.

Commercial Growth and Development

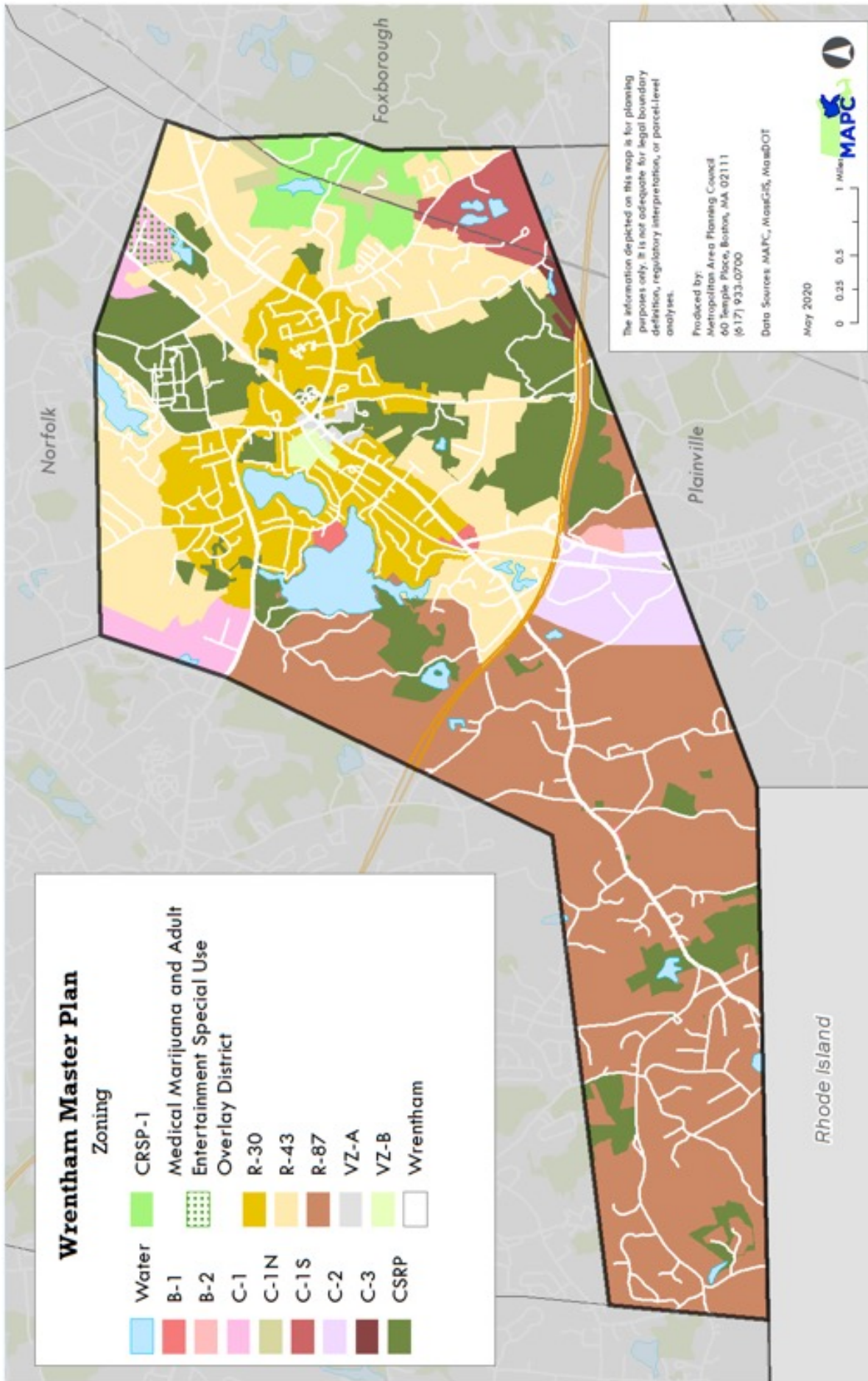
Wrentham has five main commercial districts: Town Center; Route 1; Wampum Corner; Wrentham Premium Outlets; and the western portion of Route 140. There have been very few new commercial developments in recent years. Updates to the zoning bylaw, like the new Route 1 zoning district, aim to attract new economic development opportunities to the Town. (The Economic Development topic of the Master Plan provides additional information).

Wrentham Zoning

Zoning regulations guide how and where growth occurs in a community. Wrentham’s Zoning bylaw was first adopted in 1960. The Town had established three major residential zoning districts that required minimum lot sizes of 30,000 square feet, one acre, and two acres, respectively. Requiring larger lot sizes was the initially intended strategy to protect open space and allow space for on-site well and septic systems. Growth in the 1980s and 1990s resulted in the subdivision of large areas of undeveloped land to accommodate these larger lot sizes. Map 2 shows the Town’s zoning map.

Residential Zoning

As previously mentioned, the Town has three residential districts that all require large lot sizes, largely due to the lack of public sewer. All new development in Wrentham requires on-site septic systems, which are regulated by the Title 5 Septic System program, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection. Title 5 has minimum square footage requirements for different land uses, based on the anticipated wastewater use. The R-30 district, which surrounds Town Center, Lake Pearl, and Lake Archer, requires a minimum of 30,000 square feet. Wrentham’s R-87 district requires two-acre minimum lot sizes and is primarily the area



northeast of I-495 and west of Lake Pearl. The R-43 district, which requires one-acre lot sizes, is mostly in the area northeast of I-495. The surrounding R-30 district created a gradual decrease in density as growth extends out from Town Center. The R-43 and R-87 zoning districts require larger lot sizes to help preserve the semi-rural character of outlying areas.

Prior to the advent of the current zoning and septic system regulations, lots in Wrentham were historically smaller. Maps 3 and 4 show the lots that are less than 30,000 square feet alongside inventoried cultural resources to demonstrate historical development patterns (The Historical and Cultural Resources topic includes additional information about historical significance). These lots would be considered legal non-conforming lots today.

Wrentham's residential zoning currently limits the development of different types of housing (other than detached single-family homes). The Housing topic outlines potential zoning amendments to allow more diverse housing types (such as cottage clusters, accessory dwelling units, and two-family homes) in residentially zoned areas.

Open Space Preservation Development

The Town enacted the Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) bylaw in the 1990s. The purpose of OSPD subdivisions is to allow more flexibility in the subdivision design process – flexibility is awarded when common open space is identified and preserved for public use. Wrentham's OSPD bylaw allows for smaller lot sizes – down to 22,000 square feet – if at least 30% of the subdivision is preserved as open space. Smaller lot sizes can then be designed because developers may install private wastewater treatment facilities, rather than individual septic systems. OSPD subdivisions must be at least eight acres in size, and dwellings on newly-created lots in OSPDs must be 500 feet from public rights-of-way. The eight-acre minimum qualifying size for OSPDs and the 500 foot requirement could be seen as limiting factors. Additionally, the Town has seen where some OSPD subdivisions result in large numbers of units and limited active open space opportunities. As noted in the Housing topic, refinements to the bylaw could ensure that unbuildable land does not count towards the open space requirements. Developers are incentivized to make the protected open space publicly accessible with walking trails, and/or that protection of land critical to water supply is prioritized. In this way, OSPDs may more effectively serve the community. Reviewing the OSPD bylaw could also help decrease the number of Approval Not Required (ANR) subdivision applications.³

Commercial and Industrial Districts

The Town's commercial zoning districts consist of: retail business districts (B-1 and B-2) and commercial-industrial districts (C-1, C-2, and C-3). The Town adopted new Zoning bylaws for the Route 1 corridor, which is discussed in more detail under "Special Planning Areas" below. These commercial and industrial districts allow a variety of non-residential uses, nearly all requiring a Special Permit from the Planning Board. More intense industrial uses, like research labs, light manufacturing, warehouses, or industrial office parks, are only allowed in the C-1, C-2, or C-3 districts. The C-1, C-2, and C-3 industrial zoning is largely south of Thurston Street. The area south of I-495, including the Wrentham Premium Outlets, is zoned C-2 (industrial) with a smaller portion of B-2 (retail). Generally, the areas zoned for commercial and industrial uses are located along Wrentham's major transportation arteries, including Routes 1, 140, and 1A. The Green Street, Industrial Drive, and Cushing Drive areas are zoned commercial and industrial.

³ An "Approval Not Required" project is a type of subdivision that does not require a formal review process by the Planning Board. Generally, all lots shown on an ANR plan must have frontage on an existing public way, except in the case of land transfers between properties. For more information, see: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/07/rn/anrhandbook.pdf>

Natural resource protection areas

Wrentham is wholly located in an aquifer protection zone and in the headwaters of four different watersheds. The Town is also at risk of flooding events, according to the 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan. As such, it is critically important that development is done in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner. The Town has adopted an Aquifer Protection District and Floodplain District to regulate development near water resources. The Town also has a Watershed Protection Overlay, which is administered with the Conservation Commission. (The Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources topic of the Master Plan has more information.)

During Phase I of the Master Plan, concern over clear cutting of trees as development occurs arose. The Town could consider adding tree protection bylaws, in addition to these water protection provisions, to the zoning code to help identify and protect significant trees.

Special Planning Areas

The Town has targeted specific areas for zoning reform projects. Work in Wrentham's Town Center and along Route 1 has recently been completed to better align future development with the community's vision. Zoning amendments to address emerging planning issues, like expanded housing options, and changing retail and service uses, have also been adopted in recent years.

Wrentham's Town Center

In 2018, the Town worked with MAPC to update the zoning in Wrentham's Town Center to allow for walkable, mixed-use development that would provide additional governmental, spiritual, service, residential, and social services for the community. A significant portion of the Village Zone area includes the former Crosby Valve/Tyco site – approximately 50 acres adjacent to the historical Town Center building frontage on South Street. This land is currently vacant and presents an opportunity for redevelopment to continue the street grid to expand the historical Town Center.

This new zoning district contains two sub-districts – Village Zone, VZ-A and VZ-B. VZ-A includes the historical Town Center and is generally 2.5 to 3-story buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Pedestrian-scale retail frontages line South Street, with sidewalks connecting the businesses, homes, Town Hall, and places of worship. The zoning is intended to preserve the existing buildings and uses. In VZ-A, new single-family detached homes are prohibited, while other housing types are technically allowed, but additional requirements may make housing development actually challenging to achieve. Shopping centers or complexes are also prohibited. VZ-B encompasses the former Crosby Valve/Tyco site. Mixed-use development, rather than solely residential or solely commercial, is encouraged for this area.

A future land use diagram for VZ-B shows the three subareas to help guide redevelopment – the Mixed-Use Extension of South Street, the Compact Residential/Mixed-Use area, and the Compact Residential Buffer. (See more in the Future Land Use section). Dimensional standards allow for smaller lot sizes and setbacks and increased lot coverage. The existing lot size patterns in Wrentham's village centers are shown in Figure LU3 and LU4 on the following page. A minimum residential density of 5 units per acre is also included. Design standards address building orientation, materials and appearance, landscaping and sidewalk amenities, pedestrian connectivity, bike parking, and sustainable design measures. Historical structures are intended to be preserved and renovated; however, no coordination with the Historical Commission is noted.

Figure LU3 – Lot Sizes near Town Center

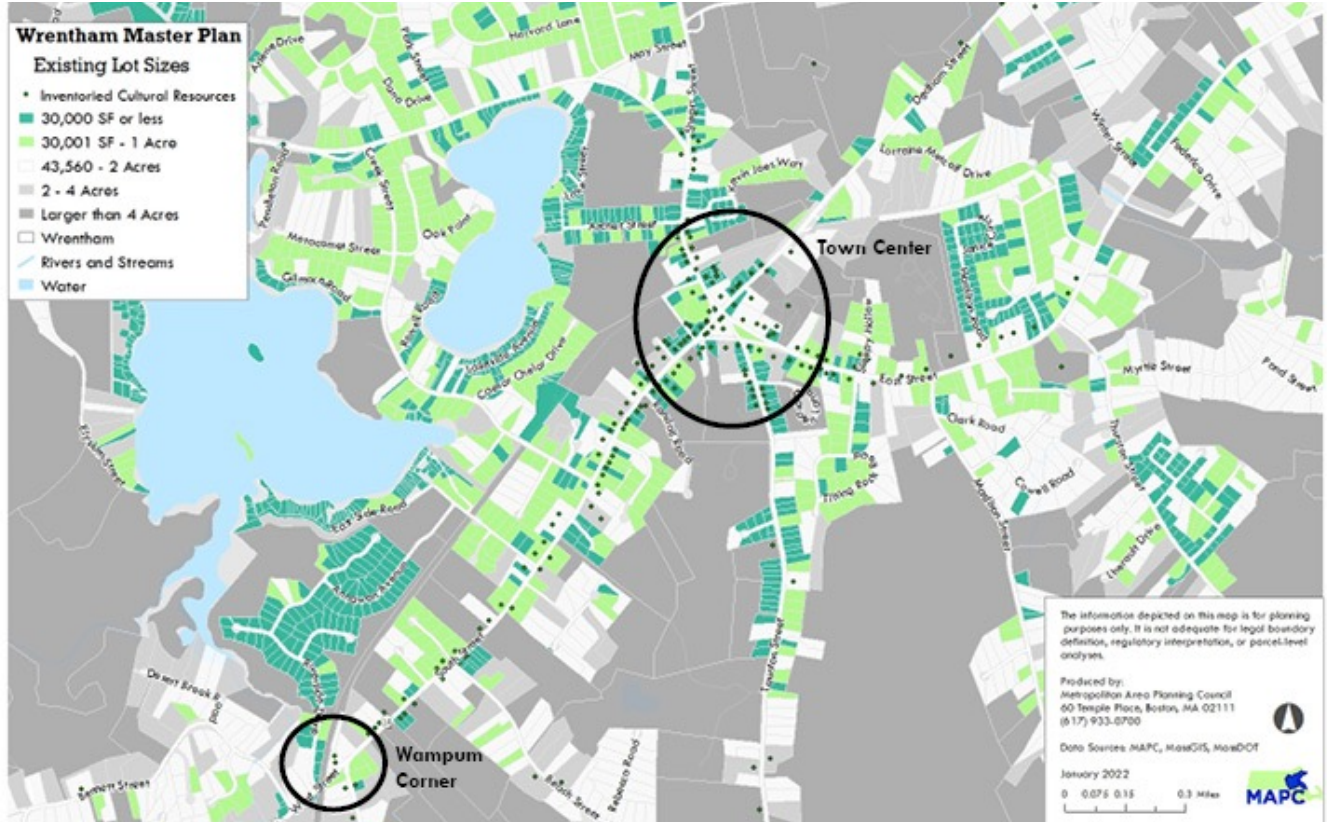


Figure LU4 – Lot Sizes near Sheldonville and Wampum Corner



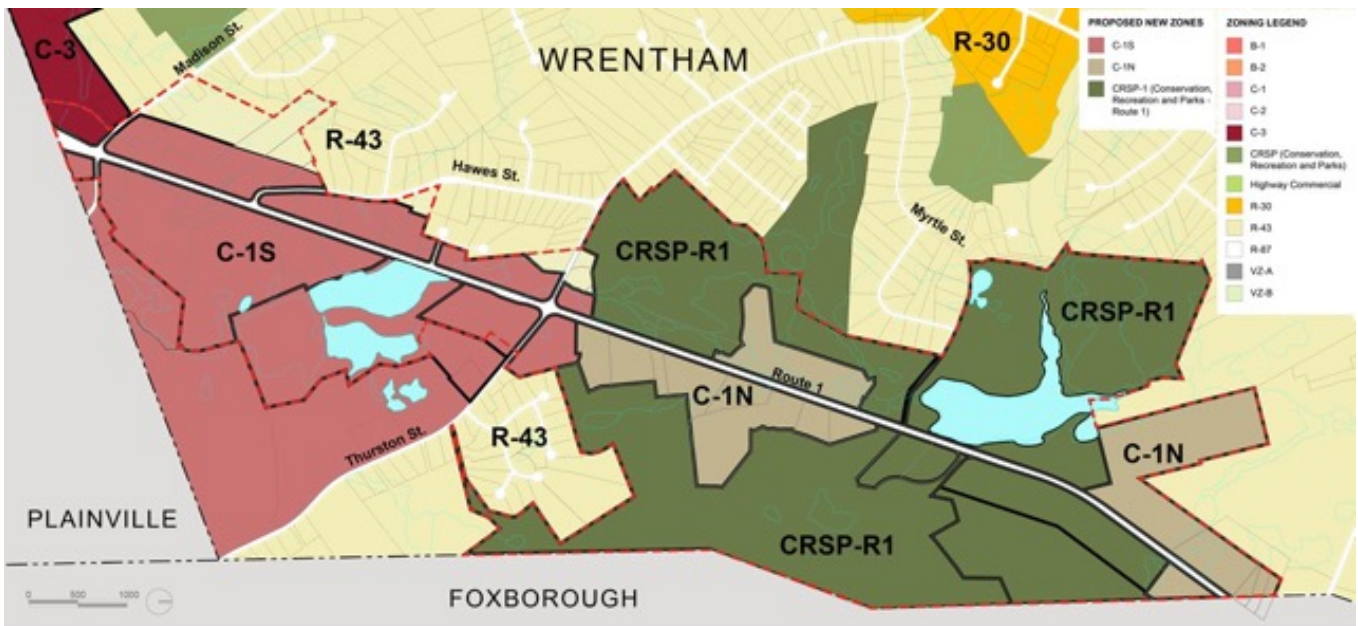
Commercial Route 1

The Town undertook a land use and transportation study of the Route 1 corridor in 2018. The study included recommendations for transportation improvements including adding dedicated turn lanes, landscaped center medians, outside curbing, phased signalization, and separated bicycle accommodations parallel to Route 1. The study also recommended improvements to access management (driveways, curb cuts, access roads) and transit service opportunities. Zoning changes were identified as an opportunity to accommodate desired development, expand commercial opportunities to increase the Town's tax base, and develop a cohesive land use plan for the corridor.

The Route 1 corridor is unique because there are significant natural resources – wetlands, ponds, forests, and open space – that should be protected. The corridor also has room for aesthetic improvement and the potential of becoming an employment center. During the corridor planning process, Wrentham residents voiced a strong desire for more commercial uses, like offices, retail, hotels, and entertainment.

In 2019, the Town adopted the Route 1 Zoning District to implement these recommendations. The new zoning district divides a portion of Route 1 into three sub-districts. C-1N, the Route 1 North Zoning District, encourages uses that are compatible with the adjacent natural resources. C-1S, the Route 1 South Zoning District, allows a mix of office, entertainment, hospitality, retail, and commercial services. The CRSP-R1, the Conservation, Recreation, School, and Park district allows public and institutional uses. Dimensional standards for the C-1N and C-1S districts are more flexible, allowing up to five- and six-story buildings, respectively. Design standards are included in the new zoning district that promote a traditional New England village style for commercial uses.

Figure LU5 – Route 1 Zoning District



This architectural requirement may be a barrier to new development and could be difficult to interpret. If refinements to the district are considered, removing these architectural requirements could be reconsidered. Front yard setbacks are large – 50 feet – resulting in the continued auto-oriented focus along the corridor. Vehicular access requirements work to manage access along the corridor. Map 5 shows Route 1.

Recent zoning amendments

In recent years, the Town has adopted the following amendments, in addition to the Town Center Village and Route 1 zoning efforts, to the Zoning bylaw:

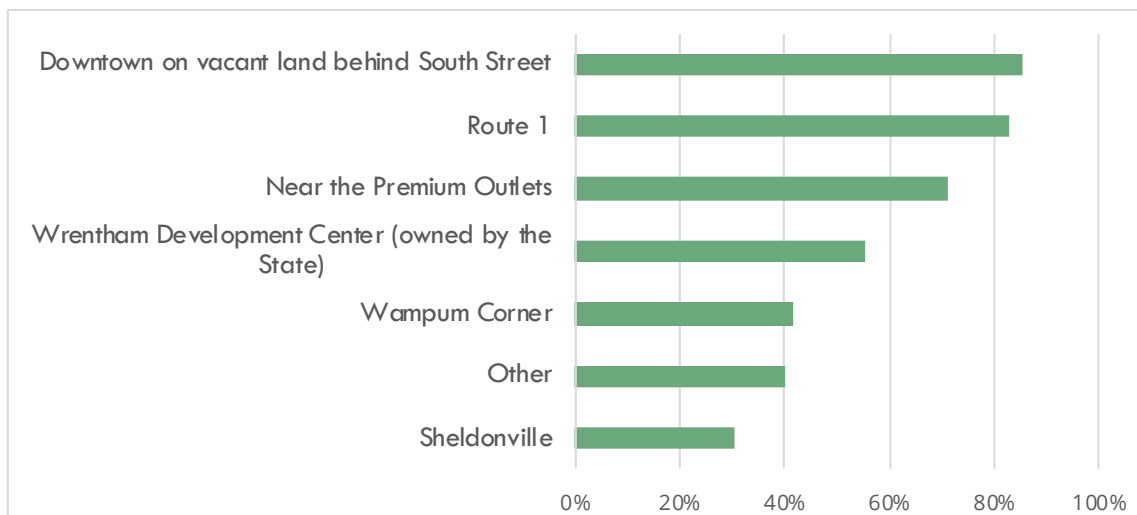
- Allowed accessory dwelling units in residential and Village Zone districts by Special Permit
- Clarified the definition and use allowances for brew pubs, breweries, microbreweries, and nano-breweries
- Revised the requirements for senior living communities to include more flexibility in community design, offer incentives for public amenities, and clarify definitions
- Made minor amendments for non-criminal and sign penalties
- Changed miscellaneous definitions and dimensional regulations

Future Land Use

A Future Land Use map can help manage growth and change in development patterns for the Town. The Future Land Use map can also be a useful tool for public infrastructure and service planning. For example, transportation improvements like sidewalk installations or safety improvements can be prioritized to areas where more people are likely to live, work, and visit. Water and sewer improvements can be targeted at areas to support future growth.

The Future Land Use map may not be consistent with the current zoning and may show opportunities for the zoning to be refined in the future (through special planning projects like neighborhood plans, corridor plans, or other targeted efforts). A Master Plan survey question asked respondents where new growth should be directed (see Figure LU6 below). Over 80% said that new growth should occur in the Town Center on the vacant land behind South Street. Over 80% also saw Route 1 as an opportunity for attracting new growth. Around 70% of respondents want to see

Figure LU6 – Phase I Survey Finding – Where Should Future Growth Occur in Wrentham?



more growth occur near the Wrentham Premium Outlets, and around 50% of respondents would like to see growth at the Wrentham Developmental Center, which is owned by the State. During a second Master Plan Town-wide survey, responses showed that 80% of respondents still generally agree with focusing growth in these areas. The survey findings are consistent with the recent planning efforts by the Town, including the Village District zoning efforts for Town Center and Route 1 Corridor Study for example.

Planning for Growth in Village Centers

Wrentham, like many places across New England, first adopted zoning that emphasized separation of land uses. However, historical development patterns naturally included gathering spots where residential and commercial uses co-existed. In Wrentham, the village centers of Town Center, Wampum Corner, and Sheldonville are most evident examples of this pattern. With the opening of the Wrentham Premium Outlets in 1997, a new commercial center emerged and now serves as an opportunity to accommodate future growth. Concentrating future growth in existing village centers and discouraging subdividing Wrentham's agriculture and semi-rural properties may help preserve the community's semi-rural landscapes. This targeted future growth increase the opportunity to add density and walkability to previously developed areas.

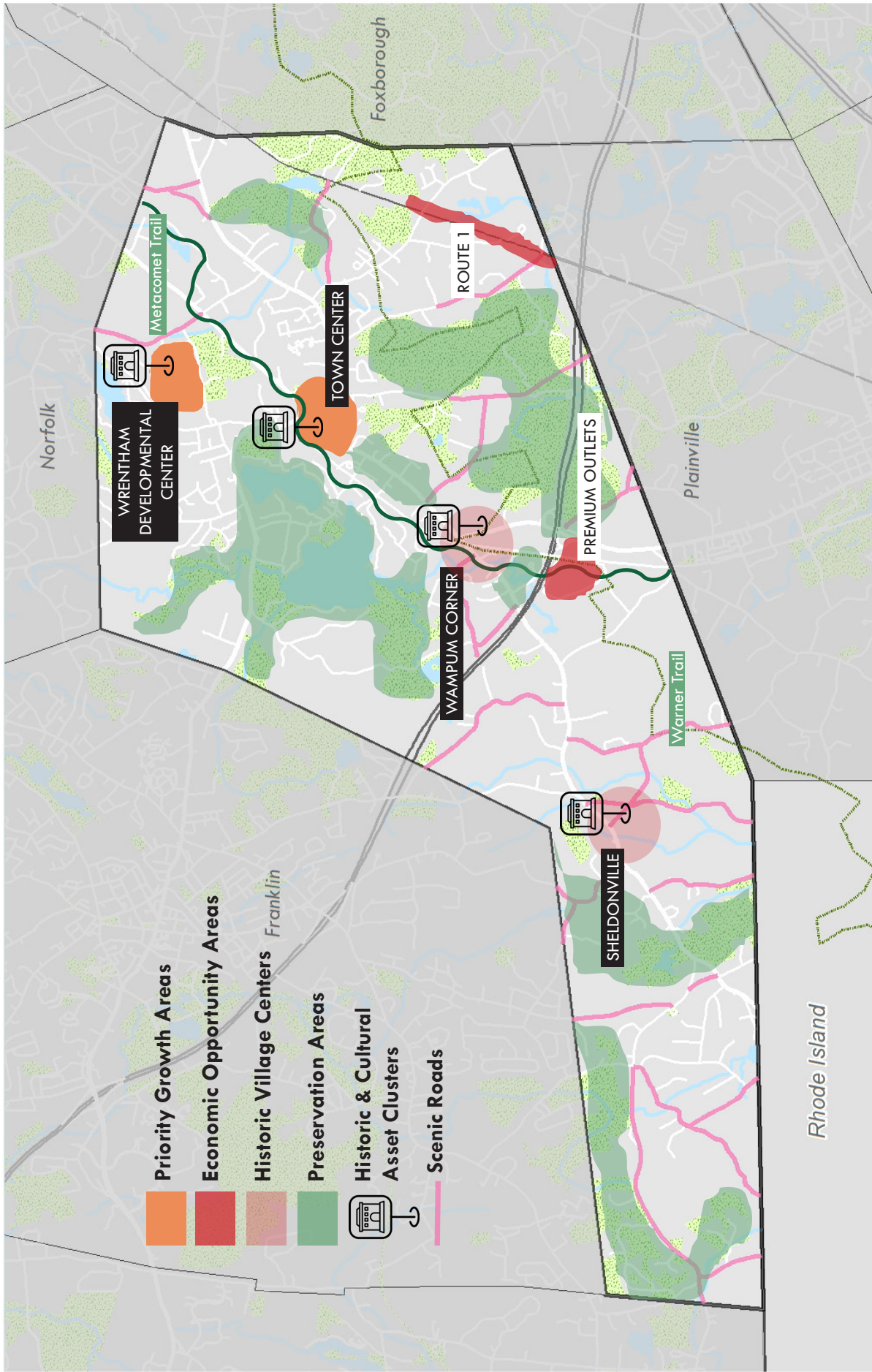
Leveraging the Town's recent work to update and refine zoning in key areas may further achieve goals to create more compact, walkable areas and expand transportation options. Strategically promoting growth and development in village centers could also complement targeted open space planning and result in more acres being permanently protected in Wrentham. The Future Land Use Conceptual Map on the following page highlights the three existing village centers – Town Center, Wampum Corner, and Sheldonville. The Wrentham Developmental Center is also identified as a village center, as there is an opportunity for additional planning and growth in that area. The Town's two primary commercial centers, Wrentham Premium Outlets and the Route 1 corridor, are also shown. These six areas represent opportunities for additional planning and future land use analysis to help guide new developments. The centers are discussed in more detail below.

Wrentham's Town Center

Wrentham's Town Center and the Town Common have been a gathering place for Wrentham residents since colonial settlement in the 1600s. This area became thickly settled, with small businesses and residences interspersed around civic uses. In the late-20th century, due to Wrentham's 1960 Zoning bylaw and modern-day requirements for septic systems, compact, denser developments in the Town Center were no longer permissible. Growth was pushed out into the outlying areas of Wrentham, resulting in the loss of semi-rural and agricultural lands. Public infrastructure like roads, water service from community wells, schools, and parks, had to be expanded to serve the growing population to accommodate for the sprawling development patterns (which decreases efficiency in service.) In 2013, the Town was unsuccessful in pursuing the installation of smart wastewater treatment facilities to support public sewer in both the Town Center and near the Wrentham Premium Outlets.

Figure LU7 – Wrentham Future Land Use Conceptual Map

Wrentham Future Land Use Conceptual Map



Wrentham Future Land Use Conceptual Map

Land Use Descriptions

The Future Land Use map graphically shows Wrentham's plan for managing growth and change in development patterns over the next 10-15 years. Wrentham has an opportunity to be strategic in directing new population and job growth, while preserving other parts of town that are more rural, agricultural, or natural. The Future Land Use map can help guide future amendments to the zoning bylaw, the leading tool for implementing long-term land use goals, but it can also be helpful in planning for public infrastructure and service expansions. Drawing from public comments received during the Vision of Tomorrow: Wrentham Master Plan 2030 process, the future land use conceptual map was created. Feedback from Wrentham residents across many parts of town shaped where and how growth should occur.



Historic & Cultural Asset Clusters

Clusters of buildings and structures that have been evaluated for historical significance. Preservation of these resources should be considered as new development occurs in these centers. Where possible, new development should complement surrounding historic architecture and the area's cultural heritage.

Priority Growth Areas

Areas having compact, walkable development patterns that could benefit from infill development or redevelopment. New medium- and higher-density residential uses and mixed-use developments are suitable for these locations, where local businesses would benefit from increased foot traffic. Public infrastructure like roads, sidewalks, etc. exist in these areas. Public sewer could be extended here to support more compact residential and commercial uses. Concentrating uses would also support expanded transportation options.

Economic Opportunity Areas

Existing commercial centers having access to transportation networks and infrastructure to support local job growth. Appropriately-sized commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development could expand local economic opportunities and shopping/dining amenities for Wrentham residents and visitors.

Preservation Areas

Conservation areas include permanently-protected public and private open spaces, farmlands, semi-rural landscapes, and environmentally-sensitive areas. Preserving these areas is intended to protect the environmental integrity of Wrentham, including water supply and ecological resources.

Historical Village Centers

Small village centers that were developed in the late 1800s and early 1900s as Wrentham grew, with concentrated residential and neighborhood commercial uses clustered.

With limited access to public water and sewer, lower density residential uses like attached and detached single-family homes, triplexes, or quadplexes are more appropriately scaled for infill residential development. Small commercial uses like pharmacies, general stores, cafes, or offices can provide local amenities accessible by walking or biking.

In 2018, as part of the Village Zone district, the Town prepared a diagram (Figure LU8, a Village Zone Future Land Use diagram) to help guide the process of development in the Village Zones with subdistricts VZ-A and VZ-B. In doing so, the Town could be better able to meet these Goals:

- Preserve and strengthen the Town Center
- Provide flexibility for new development, while concentrating additional commercial and a mix of uses near the existing Town Center
- Provide new housing options that are often more affordable, like townhouses or smaller multifamily homes
- Transition to less dense residential uses further from Town Center
- Discourage retail uses in the Compact Residential buffer area
- Uses are generally anticipated to be developed as follows:
- Compact Residential Buffer – 100% residential
- Compact Residential/Mixed Use Area – up to 70% residential
- Create a mixed-use extension of South Street – at least 40% commercial, in similar character to the existing historic design

While the Village Zone district was adopted very recently, there are opportunities to refine the regulations and uses to ensure new development aligns with community desires. The Wrentham Master Plan Phase II survey found that 79% of respondents want to see pedestrian-friendly retail, restaurant, and office space in Town Center. 68% of respondents want to see mixed-use development. Less than 15% want to see auto-oriented developments like those in other parts of town. Many communities have found that incorporated form-based codes may be an effective way to promote pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use developments in targeted areas, like Wrentham's Town Center.

Wrentham Developmental Center

The campus surrounding the Wrentham Developmental Center is designated as a National Historic District. The campus contains a significant amount of open space among the buildings, many of which are architecturally interesting brick structures that are vacant or underused. In the periphery of the campus, community events such as the Crackerbarrel Fair, Dog Show, and sporting events like high school cross country meets, soccer games, cricket, and baseball games attract numerous visitors. The area is served by its own wastewater treatment facility, and over the years, as the State has collapsed and expanded uses for the various facilities, new businesses and organizations have opened in the area. Because of the center's proximity to Town Center and availability of wastewater infrastructure, this area could be a key opportunity for redevelopment in the future. The Master Plan Phase II survey found that residents continue to see this area as an opportunity for growth. Some respondents have innovative ideas for the area – for example, one respondent said, "Every time I walk there, I envision the building[s] being utilized for artists, housing, [and students]."

The Town did rezone a portion of this area from residential to Conservation, Recreation, Schools, and Parks (CSRP) to guide future land uses. In 2008, about 80 acres of the CSRP area was turned into the Rice Complex, an expansive recreation and athletic complex. Given the size of the area and the number of historic resources, the Town could benefit from a visioning and subarea planning effort, undertaken ideally in partnership with the State and other stakeholders, to continue to refine the future of this key area. Being a designated historical site, funding opportunities may be available to help cover long-range planning efforts. Historic preservation tax credits or other programs may incentivize private investors and help offset redevelopment costs.

Sheldonville and Wampum Corner

Wampum Corner and Sheldonville are two historic village centers in Wrentham that have long consisted of residences and neighborhood services. Wampum Corner is centered on the junction of Route 1A and Route 121, while Sheldonville is situated further southwest on Route 121. While the limitations of on-site septic prevent development patterns like those originally seen in the area, these village centers do provide opportunities to create semi-rural community cohesion. The clusters of historical resources in both of these centers also provides an opportunity to tie subarea planning to historical preservation planning (see the Cultural Resources element for more information).

Following the 2004 Wrentham Master plan adoption, a subarea planning effort was focused on Wampum Corner. The planning initiative considered options for the reuse of the former Marra property (675 South Street); evaluation of housing and infrastructure along the corridor; and a conceptual subarea plan for the corridor that built on the 2004 Master Plan and 2005 Housing Production Plan. Consultants were hired to look specifically at zoning options for the corridor, potential housing and mixed-use development opportunities, open space and pedestrian improvements, and infrastructure limitations and potential improvements, especially for traffic mitigation. This project was viewed as an opportunity to plan for increased business capacity, including expanded neighborhood commercial uses like a grocery store, pharmacy, or small office space. In the end, the Wampum Corner subarea plan resulted in minimal changes to the zoning bylaw related to low- to moderate-density housing. Since it has been over ten years since this effort was undertaken, the Town could revisit this planning effort and conduct a new planning process to hear from residents and identify zoning amendments and other public improvements.

Economic Development Growth

Beyond the existing village centers, where ideally both housing and economic development opportunities can develop, Wrentham has key areas for existing and new businesses to grow and expand. Concentrating employment opportunities in key locations can create nodes of activity, where businesses can support one another, and the Town can efficiently provide infrastructure and transportation services. Wrentham worked with the 495/MetroWest Corridor Partnership, along with five regional planning agencies, a regional economic development organization, and a non-profit environmental organization in 2012 to identify Priority Development Areas and Priority Preservation Areas (read full report here). These areas are important economic assets for Wrentham and provide opportunities for improvement in zoning and permitting processes. These areas are also opportunities to evaluate and focus infrastructure improvements to support existing and new economic activities. The priority areas in Wrentham are highlighted on the following page in Figure LU10. Notable centers include the Wrentham Premium Outlets area, Route 1 corridor, Town Center, and Wrentham Developmental Center.

Ensuring the Zoning Bylaws Reflect the Community Vision

As noted in the “Zoning” section, the Town has made amendments to the Zoning Bylaw over the years to address emerging planning issues and market changes, such as construction technologies, design trends, and community preferences. In addition to focused planning efforts in

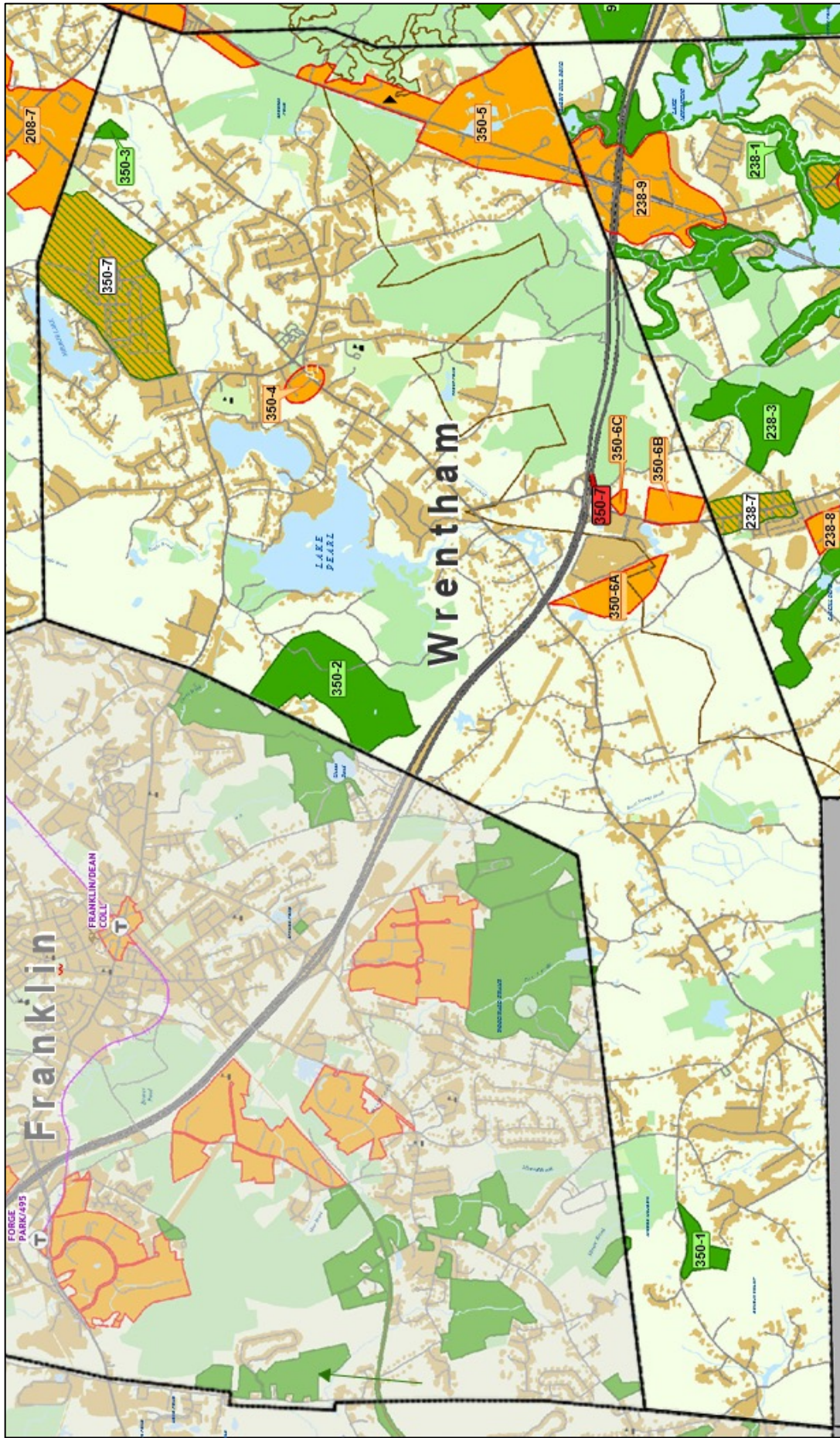
Figure LU9 – Table of Priority Area Locations

ID	Name	Priority Type
350-1	Cooks Parcel	Preservation
350-2	Lorusso Quarry	Preservation
350-3	Cushing Industrial Park Plaza	Preservation
350-4	Wrentham’s Town Center	Development
350-5	Route 1 Corridor	Development
350-6A	Simeone Property	Development
350-6B	South Street Neighborhood Trust	Development
350-6C	Wrentham Crossing	Development
350-7	Wrentham Developmental Center	Preservation/Development
350-7	SLIP Ramp	Significant Transportation Investment Corridor

Source: 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan, 2012

key areas suitable for new growth, revisiting design guidelines and dimensional standards may help achieve community-wide goals. Findings from both the Master Plan Phase I and Phase II surveys and interviews and focus groups with Town residents and business owners note that having a more walkable and bike-friendly Wrentham is desired. The existing zoning bylaw includes large setbacks and buffers that may conflict with these community goals. Having limited guidelines for site design, like building orientation and parking location, may also work against goals to create walkable, connected communities. Reviewing the lot size requirements for different uses, especially in key areas that have traditionally been more compact and walkable, may help achieve community

Figure LU10 – Priority Development and Preservation Base Map



Source: 495/MetroWest Development Compact Plan, 2012

goals for walkability and expanded housing options. For example, attached single-family homes are required to have twice the minimum lot size as detached single-family homes. Triple-family homes are required to have three times the minimum lot size. These regulations may be prohibitive to expanded housing options and contribute to sprawling housing development patterns that are more auto oriented.

Semi-rural Preservation Techniques

Outside of Wrentham's village centers, semi-rural areas, including a few working farms, and permanently protected open space dominate the landscape (see the Open Space element for more information). As development pressures ensue, the semi-rural areas in the outlying areas of Wrentham are at risk of being subdivided and converted into estates on large lots. Other communities across New England and nationwide have employed semi-rural preservation techniques, like Transfer of Development Rights programs and conservation easements, to help protect semi-rural and natural resources from sprawling residential development. Using these techniques may also help implement the goals of Wrentham's Open Space and Recreation Plan and the Green Communities program. Discouraging sprawling development is also fiscally responsible, as the Town may more efficiently provide public services and infrastructure to areas with more compact developments. The Town could also refine the existing Open Space Preservation Development bylaw to make it more appealing to property owners or potential developers.

Changes in State Law: MBTA Communities

In 2021, the State added a new section (3A) to M.G.L. c. 40A (the Zoning Act) as part of an economic development bill to promote more housing choices near transit. The new section requires that MBTA communities have at least one zoning district of reasonable size that permits multi-family housing by-right. Other zoning criteria in the statute include a minimum gross density of 15 units per acre; located no more than ½ mile from a commuter rail station, subway station, ferry terminal, or bus station, as applicable; housing must not have age restrictions; and housing must be suitable for families with children. Wrentham is designated an MBTA community under the new bill. Section 3A notes that failure to comply with new requirements will make communities ineligible for funds from the Housing Choice Initiative program, Local Capital Projects Fund, and MassWorks infrastructure program.

The Massachusetts Department of Community Development (DHCD) is working with MBTA and MassDOT to prepare guidelines for how the new section of state law will be implemented. Draft guidelines were released in December 2021 and are available for review through March 31, 2022. Final guidelines were issued in summer 2022.

Under the draft guidelines, MBTA communities have been organized into four different types, based on transit service. Wrentham is categorized as an "MBTA Adjacent" community, due to the lack of transit stations in or near Wrentham (less than ½ mile). MBTA Adjacent communities are required to have a zoning district that allows multi-family by-right in an area that is at least 50 acres in size and contiguous. Since MBTA Adjacent communities are not within ½-mile radius of transit stations, the draft guidelines advise that the multi-family zoning district should be located "in an area with reasonable access to a transit station based on existing street patterns, pedestrian connections, and bicycle lanes, or in an area that is otherwise consistent with the Commonwealth's sustainable development principles – for example, near an existing Town Center or village center, near an RTA bus stop or line, or in a location with existing under-utilized facilities that may be redeveloped into new multi-family housing." The zoning district's multi-family unit capacity must be equal to or greater than 10% of the town's total housing stock. In Wrentham, ten percent of the housing

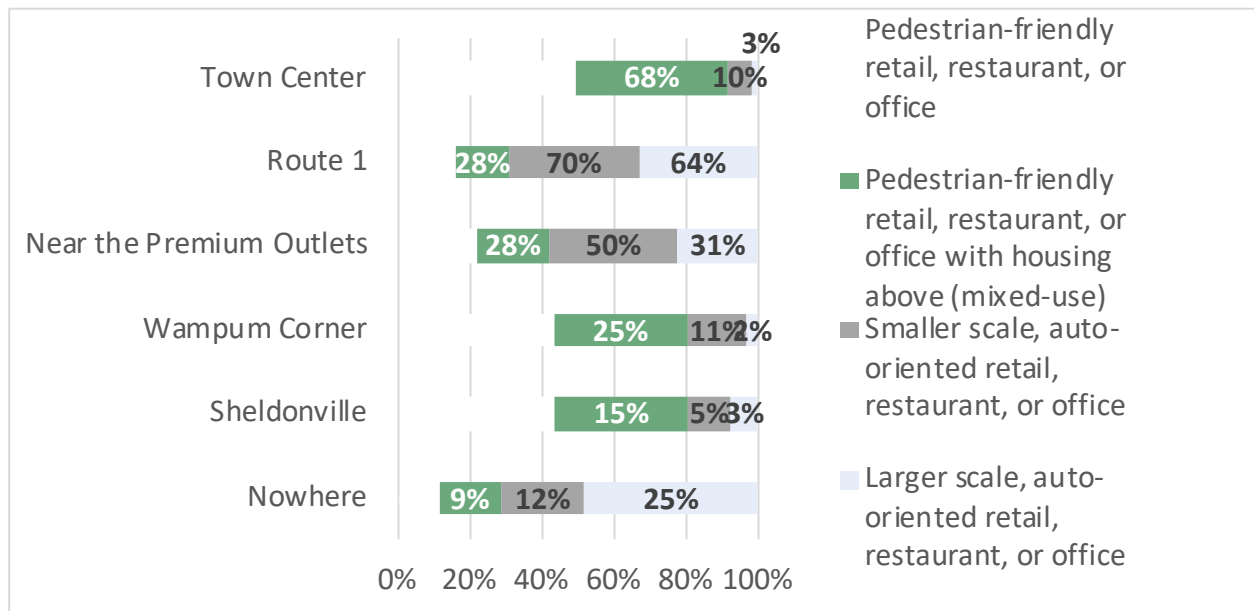
stock is 462 (4,620 total housing units exist in Wrentham, according to DHCD and based on 2020 Decennial Census data). Guidelines include how to demonstrate unit capacity. It is important to note that Section 3A and draft guidelines do not require communities to build multi-family units. The intent is to ensure local regulations permit multi-family development near transit, should an application be made.

The MTBA Communities guidance recognizes that many communities do not currently have a multi-family district of reasonable size that meets the requirements of Section 3A. The draft guidance outlines a process for interim compliance. Communities may create an action plan and timeline for work associated with the creation of a conforming multi-family district. For MBTA adjacent communities, the action plan should be submitted by December 31, 2022, and approved by DHCD by July 1, 2023. The action plan must be implemented and result in adoption of a zoning amendment by December 31, 2024. More information is available online: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/multi-family-zoning-requirement-for-mbta-communities#review-the-draft-guidelines->.

Community Engagement

The Land Use existing conditions report was informed by interviews with Town staff and officials, conversations during focus groups, and feedback received at community forums. Surveys conducted as part of Master Plan Phase I, in addition to the Master Plan Phase II survey informed the analysis.

The Phase II Community Survey conducted in November-December 2021, survey respondents were asked to choose up to 5 responses with the results below, answering: Where do you want to see different development types?



Existing Conditions Assessment: Open Space and Recreation

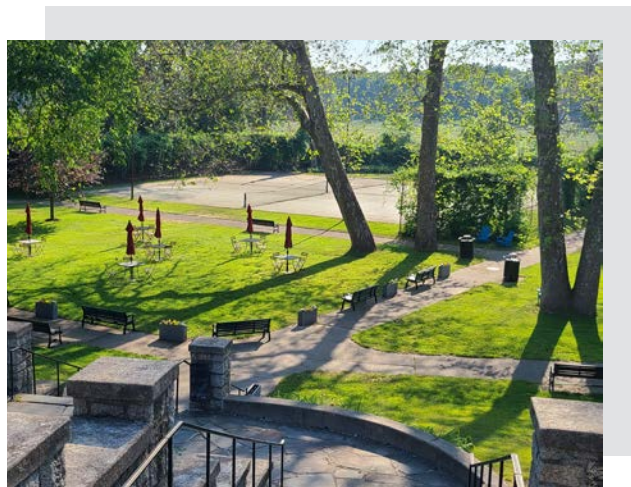
The existing conditions and characteristics of natural, open space and recreational resources in Wrentham are documented in more detail in the Town's recently completed and adopted Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The Wrentham OSRP was completed in 2021 by the Wrentham Open Space Committee with the assistance from PGC Associates, LLC. The OSRP includes detailed goals, strategies, and a seven-year action plan to achieve them. The Master Plan is coordinated and consistent with the OSRP and enhances its recommendations.

Natural resources

Soils, geology, and topography

Geology, soils and topography are significant factors in determining both natural and manmade land uses. They influence the flora and fauna that are attracted to Wrentham, and they help determine the types and extent of development that are feasible within specific areas of Town. Soils are a significant controlling factor in the location of residential housing since there is currently no municipal sewer system and new housing is dependent on soils that can support septic systems, although innovative alternative septic system technologies have increased locational options to some degree.

The western portion of Wrentham, west of Cherry Street in Sheldonville, consists principally of glacial till. Till is a poorly sorted mixture of sand, silt, clay, pebbles and boulders. This poor sorting results in an inferior ability to absorb surface waters and transmit groundwater; it is the reason many wetlands, poorly drained with few well-defined stream channels, cover Sheldonville. The majority of Wrentham, east of Cherry Street in Sheldonville, consists of glacial outwash consisting of well-sorted sands and gravels that are generally very capable of absorbing surface waters. In these areas, wetlands tend to be less extensive and drainage patterns are better defined. Wetlands and other surface water bodies are the function of elevation and the water table.



Source: Diane Glass

Topography in Wrentham includes a number of low hills on the southern boundary of the Town, otherwise the land is flat. The highest elevation in Wrentham is 490 feet above sea level (per the National Geodetic Vertical Datum (NGVD), at Joe's Rock on Bucks Hill. The lowest elevation in Wrentham is 180 feet at the dam on Mirror Lake in the northern section of Wrentham.

Water resources

Watersheds

Wrentham is divided by four different watersheds: the Blackstone River, Charles River, Taunton River, and Ten Mile River watersheds, as shown in the following figure. Most of Sheldonville is in the Blackstone watershed, though the northernmost part is in the Charles. The central section of Wrentham is in the Charles, but a small area in the south is in the Ten Mile River watershed. Eastern Wrentham is mostly in the Taunton River watershed, but the northeast corner is in the Charles. The headwaters of tributaries to each of these major rivers, Blackstone River, Charles River, Taunton River, and Ten Mile River, are in Wrentham. Downstream communities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island depend on one or more of these four watersheds for their drinking water supplies.

Surface waters

The three largest bodies of water in Wrentham are Lake Pearl (218 acres), Lake Archer (79 acres), and Mirror Lake (55 acres). All three of these lakes are in the Charles River watershed. Lake Pearl is highly developed around its eastern half. The western half has some development, but the majority is either undeveloped due to wetlands, sparsely developed due to slope factors, or part of the Town's recreational area. Mirror Lake and Lake Archer are nearly surrounded with a higher density single-family homes. Most of these homes were formerly seasonal cottages that have since been converted to year-round use. This combined with the lack of filtration of stormwater into the lakes has created some water quality issues as noted in the Environmental Challenges below. Crocker Pond, an important drinking water resource for Attleboro, is surrounded mostly by conservation land. However, its eastern boundary is adjacent to privately owned business-zoned land along Route 1. A junkyard across the highway contributes its runoff to Crocker Pond.

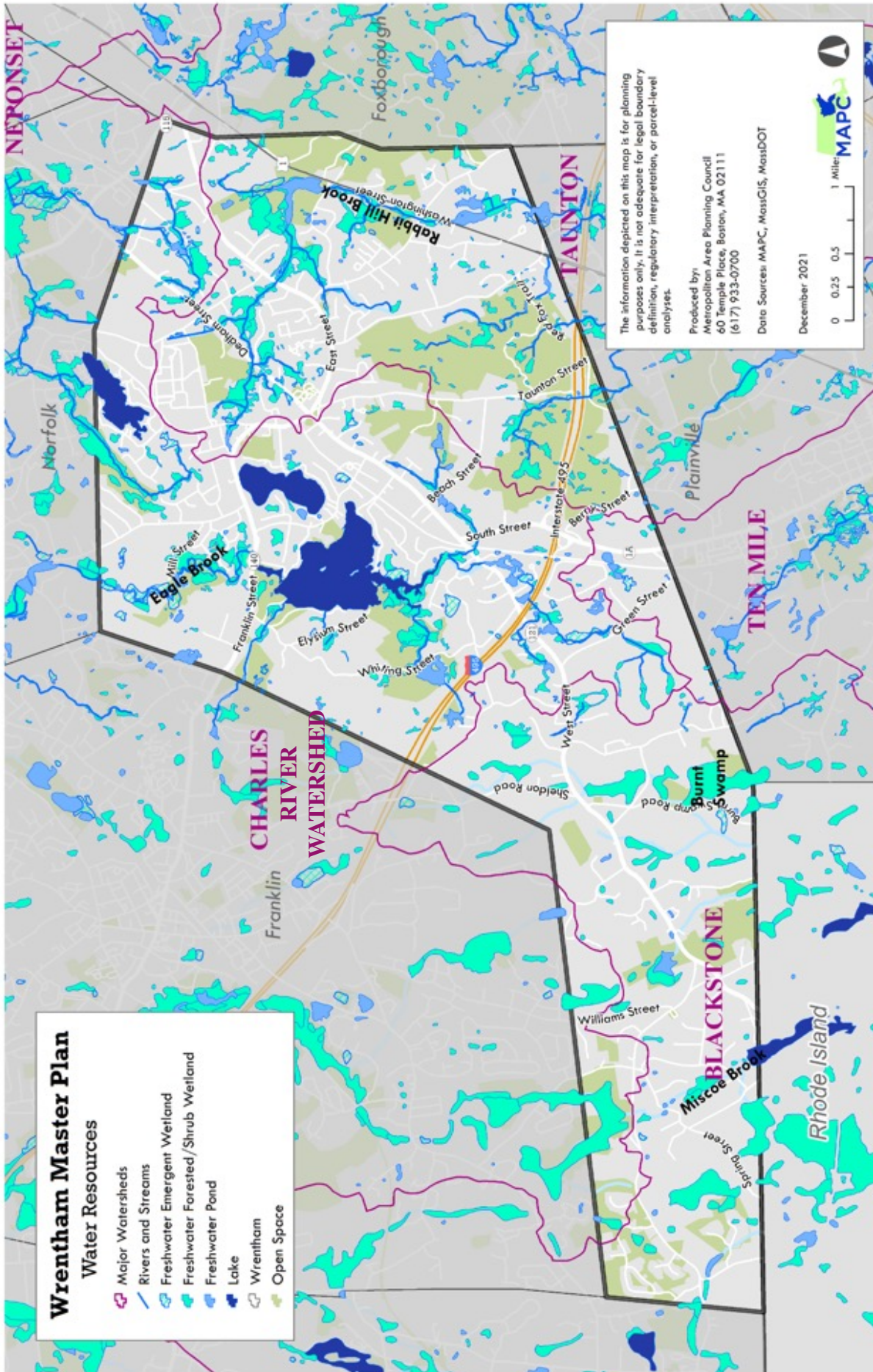
There are several other small ponds throughout the Town. As mentioned, since Wrentham is at the head of three of its four watersheds, many of these streams and ponds are susceptible to drought and either dry up or are severely depleted during summer dry periods.

Wrentham has a Watershed Protection overlay zoning district to protect land within the watersheds of the Charles and Blackstone Rivers, as well as the Taunton River Sub-Basin. The Watershed Protection District requires lots to have at least 30,000 square feet or $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre (and 22,500 square feet or $\frac{1}{2}$ acre in the R-30 zoning district where lot sizes are $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre) outside of a 100-foot buffer zone around lakes, ponds, and wetlands. This ensures that there is space for development with sufficient distance from water bodies.

Wetlands

Extensive wetlands exist throughout the Town with major wetland areas near Burnt Swamp, north and south of Lake Pearl, and Rabbit Hill Brook which flows southward from Crocker Pond. All the tributaries of the streams in Wrentham have wetlands associated with them. The majority are red maple and shrub/scrub wetlands.

Wetlands have enormous value with respect to water quality, because they absorb pollution and retain water to replenish aquifers and manage storm and flood waters. The Wetlands Protection



Act affords some open space protection adjacent to wetlands. In the early 1990s, the Wrentham Conservation Commission instituted a Town wetlands bylaw in order to further protect Wrentham's natural resources. The Commission further enhanced this bylaw with the April 2000 implementation of a 50-foot "No-Build" buffer zone around wetlands.

However, development frequently isolates or fragments wetlands even if the wetlands are untouched. This fragmentation severely limits the wildlife habitat value, yields little recreational value for people, and, because contaminated runoff from manmade surfaces runs into the wetlands, diminishes the wetlands' ability to remove pollutants and increases storm surges in streams.

Flood Hazard Areas

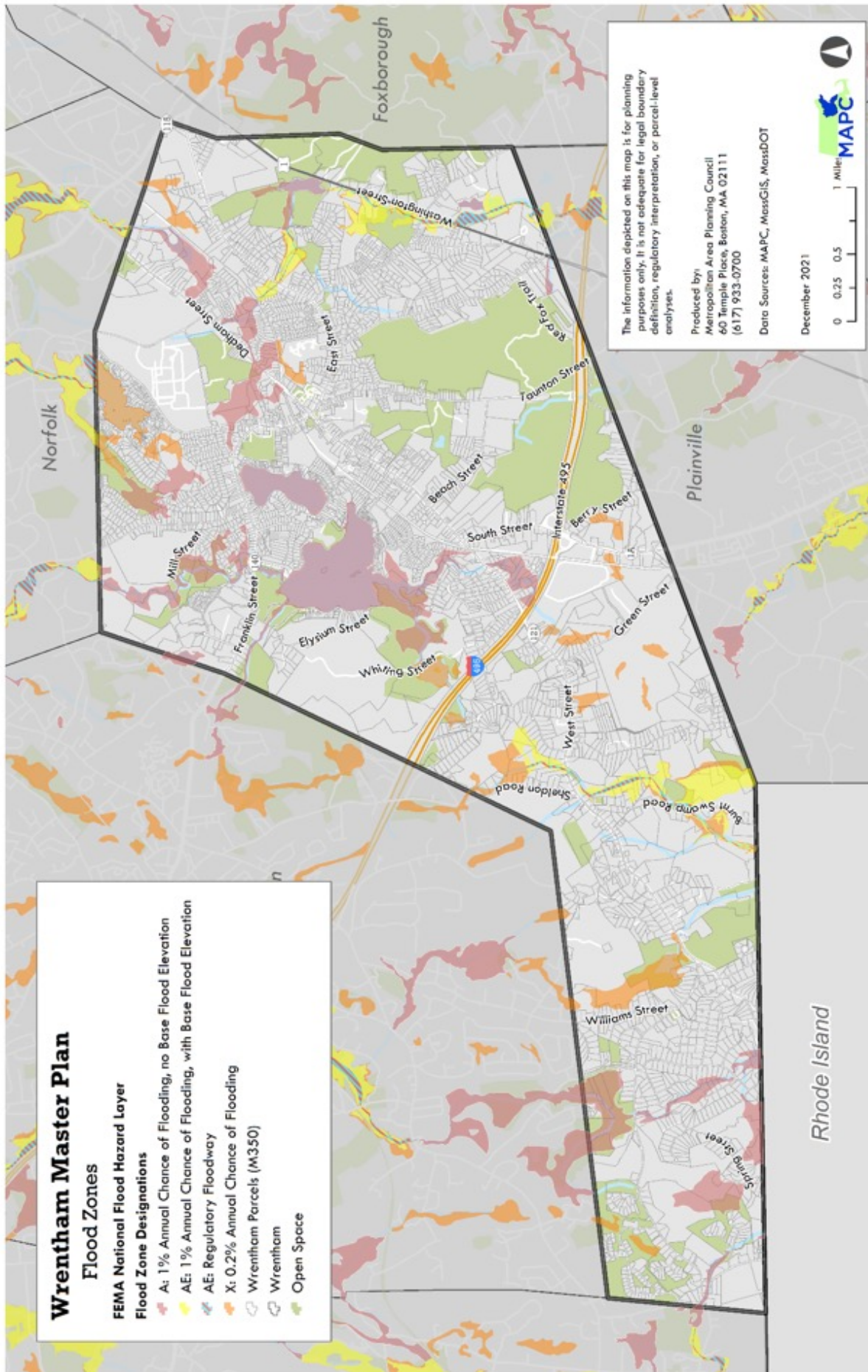
Because Wrentham is at or near the top of its four watersheds, most streams in Town are small and have limited flood zones. Areas subject to flooding are limited to low, flat areas with poor drainage adjacent to wetlands. The areas with poor drainage are on roadways where stormwater infrastructure is outdated, such as near the Town Center, or inadequate, such as on Green Street.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has published Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) delineating 100 year and 500-year floodplains. The maps were most recently updated July 17, 2012. The primary areas subject to flooding are in the northern section of Town along Eagle Brook, Stony Brook and Uncas Brook; the northeast section along Stony Brook; a corridor just east of Lake Archer along Safe Meadow Brook across Routes 1A and 140 to Crocker Pond; the eastern part of Town south of Crocker Pond along Route 1 to Rabbit Hill Pond; an area south of Lake Pearl to I-495; and in Sheldonville from just north of Route 121 along Burnt Swamp Brook to Burnt Swamp near the border with Plainville and Cumberland.

In addition to the FEMA flood zones, there are other areas of flooding due to impervious surfaces or changes to the hydrology. Erosion, sedimentation, and chronic flooding are intimately tied together. The general process is that land is stripped of its forest cover and ground cover for development; a large storm event then picks up the soil and deposits it into local streams and ponds. Wrentham has adopted both zoning and general bylaws to regulate earth removal practices to help minimize erosion by regulating land clearing and establishing regulations that minimize erosion. See the Energy and Sustainability topic of the Master Plan for more information on inland flooding.

Groundwater and Aquifer Protection

Wrentham is entirely dependent on groundwater for its drinking water supply. Three wells, #2, #3 and #5, are in the Charles River watershed, while wells #4 and #6 are in the Taunton River watershed, as shown in the "Drinking Water Protections" map. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) uses hydro-geologic modeling to delineate wellhead protection areas to protect the recharge area around public water supply groundwater sources. The DEP Approved Zone II, as shown on the map, covers most of Wrentham including the Town Center, Route 1A, Franklin Street, and East Street. The DEP Approved Zone I is intended to protect the immediate area around a public water supply well or wellfield. Zone III is land area beyond the area of Zone II from which surface water and groundwater drain into Zone II. Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations require municipal controls, which in the case of Wrentham is the Wrentham Aquifer Protection Overlay District, to regulate uses in Zones I, II, and III. The Aquifer Protection District Overlay limits activities such as the amount of a building lot that may be rendered impervious, and prohibits other uses outright, such as landfills and unprotected storage of hazardous materials. Development within the APD which exceeds 15% impervious lot coverage may be allowed only by Planning Board special permit.



Water Quality

Water pollution is caused by both discreet (point) sources, such as an industrial outfall, as well as from broad areas of less concentrated pollution (non-point), such as from sewage waste, fertilizers on lawns, and automotive pollutants from roads and parking areas

Given that most homes have septic systems, there is concern that residential subdivisions will impact the drinking water supplies. Septic systems encroaching upon the zones of contribution to municipal wells are a threat as they can discharge nitrogen and other undesirable chemicals into the groundwater. Other wastewater management options that are available to support potential redevelopment considerations include municipal sewer, shared/ cluster wastewater systems, or on-site wastewater treatment plant systems.

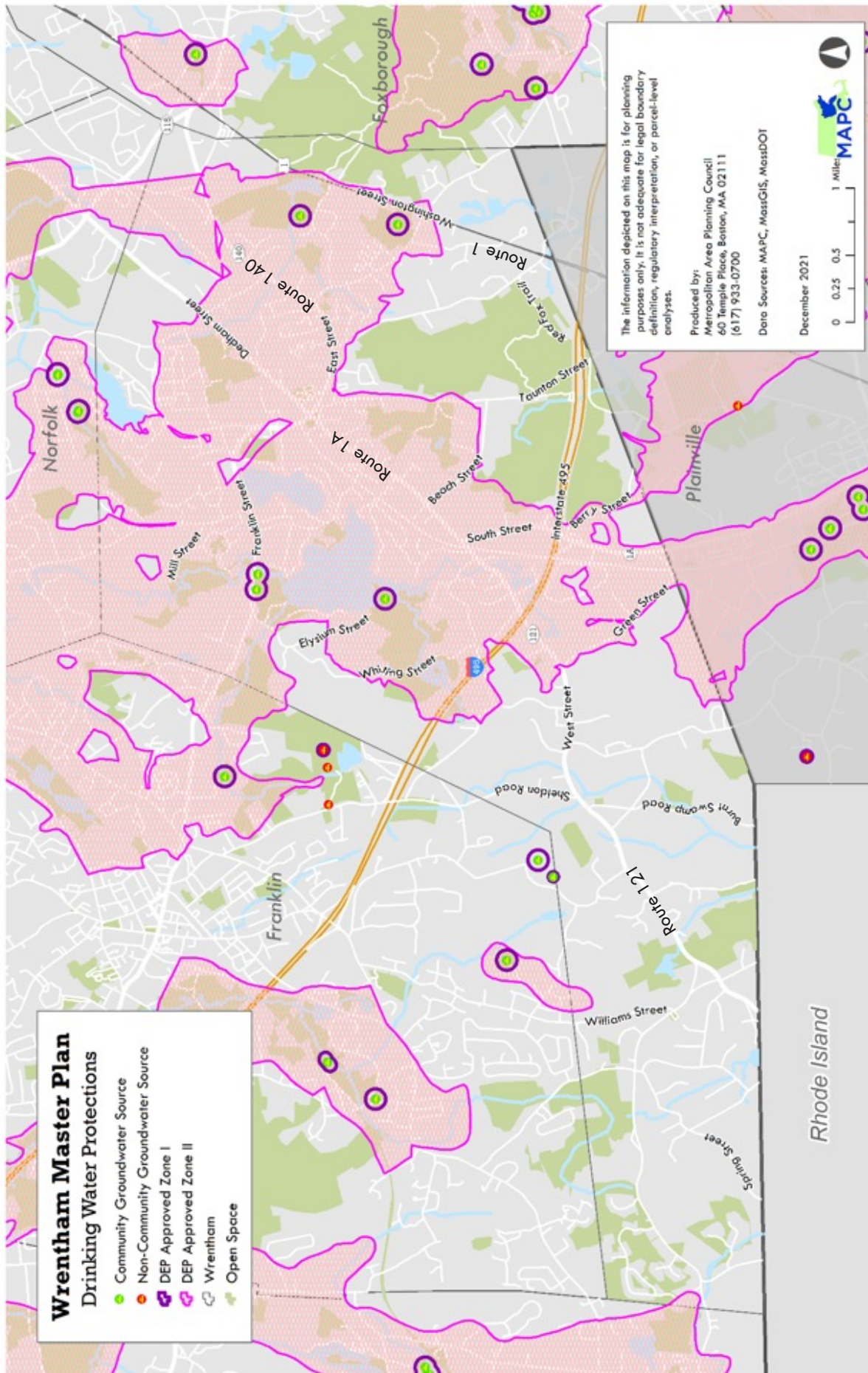
Contamination from runoff can be mitigated through the application of Low-Impact Development (LID) principles and stormwater filtration systems. The Town complies with the Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and is in the process of complying with EPA's updated Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) requirements that went into effect in 2018 to reduce the impact of stormwater on surface and groundwater. These measures will become increasingly important as climate change increases the frequency and intensity of storms. The surface water connection to groundwater highlights the need to maintain or improve water quality in Wrentham's major lakes.

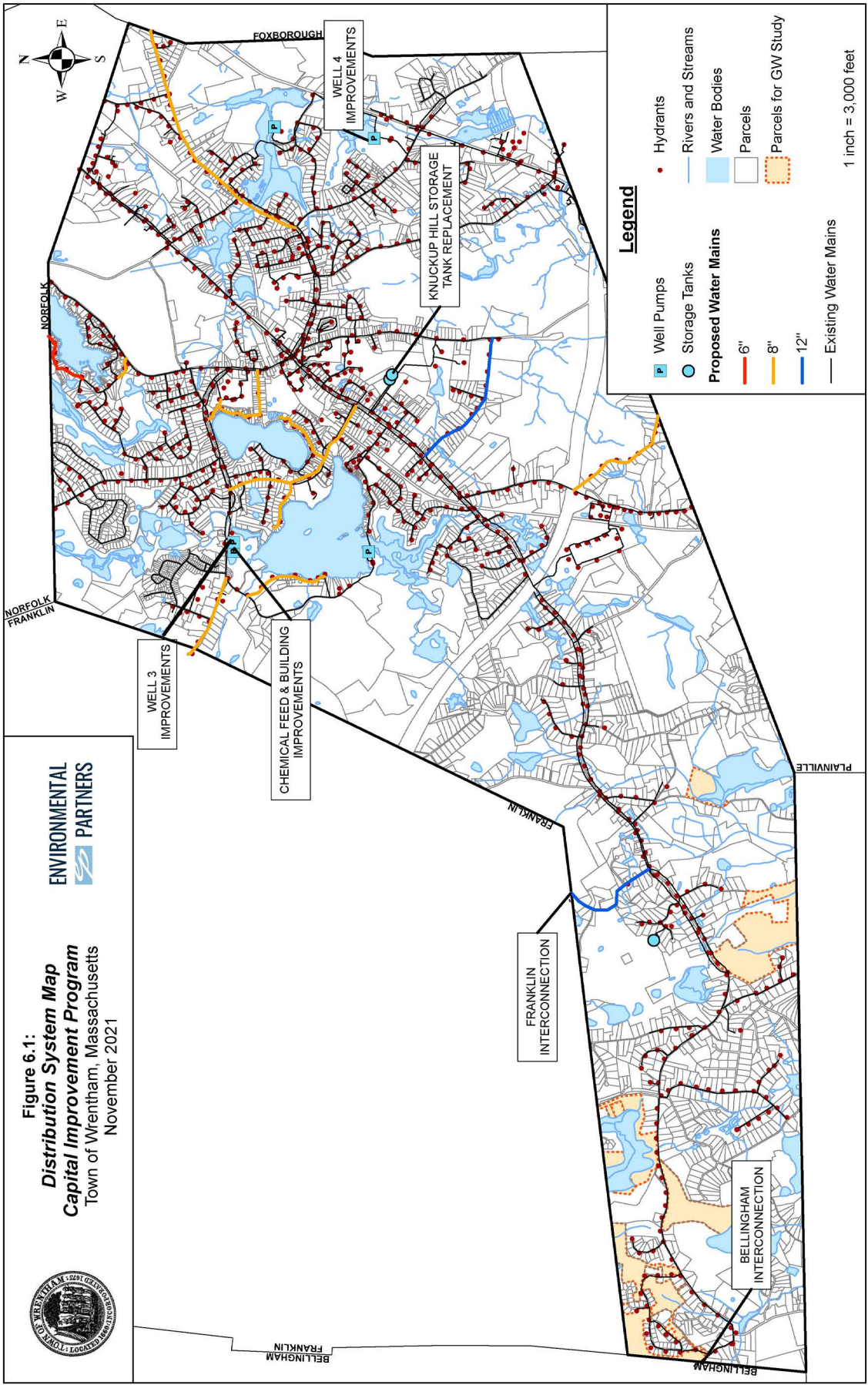
Vegetation

The predominant vegetation in Wrentham is forest land consisting largely of a mix of hardwood and white pines, although forests have declined in recent decades due to increased development in Wrentham and surrounding Towns. According to the University of Massachusetts Resource Mapping Project (see Table 1), the total area of forest declined from 9,095 acres in 1971 to 7,677 in 1999, a loss of 1,418 acres. A 2005 analysis by the Sanborn company used a different methodology and estimated a total of 8,015 acres that year. It is unclear if the difference is due to the different methodology or whether formerly cleared area reverted to forest between 1999 and 2005.

Old fields, typified by a myriad of grasses, goldenrod, and milkweed, are diminishing in number, since natural succession has reclaimed many to a shrub/sapling habitat. Public shade trees represent another important component of vegetation, providing significant benefits including providing cooling during hot summer months, extending the life of street pavement by shading it from the effects of the sun, absorbing stormwater runoff and adding an aesthetic element to the streetscape. See the Energy and Sustainability topic of the Master Plan for more information on extreme heat and cooling strategies. Consequently, Wrentham protects public shade trees by strongly enforcing the Scenic Roads Act and Scenic Roads Bylaw on its 21 designated roads, as well as the Public Shade Tree Act.

The Wrentham Zoning Bylaw also has requirements in the parking regulations for landscaping to: reduce the visual impacts of large areas of pavement; improve the overall areas for shade and heat reduction; and enhance the overall aesthetic appeal of parking areas.





Environmental Partners prepared this map for the Wrentham Water Master Plan.

Fisheries and Wildlife

Wetlands and large areas of open space provide habitat for upland game and non-game animals. Deer, raccoon, fox, coyote, opossum, and many types of small rodents occupy upland habitats throughout Wrentham. Turkey, woodcock, many reptile species, and several other types of animals also occupy these upland habitats. Fishers, a large relative of the mink, also exist in Wrentham. In wetland habitats muskrat, mink, shellfish, mallards, wood ducks, various herons and other birds are present.

Native fish species are most likely non-existent. Despite a formerly aggressive stocking program, the high drought potential shared by all bodies of Town water and recent declines in water quality have either eliminated or made scarce any native fishes. All species of trout and salmon are stocked by the State. Some warm water fishes have become established, notably largemouth bass and sunfish. Lake Archer formerly enjoyed a population of smallmouth bass; unfortunately, these have mostly been supplanted by more aggressive species.

Rare Species

There are nine rare and endangered species in Wrentham as identified by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (MDFW), including reptiles, fish, amphibians, plants, and a bird.¹ The Common Names for the nine species include Blanding's Turtle, Bridle Shiner (fish), Eastern Box Turtle, Eastern Pondmussel, Long-leaved Bluet (plant), Marbled Salamander, Peregrine Falcon, Philadelphia Panicgrass (plant), and Toothcup (plant).

Migration Corridors

Wildlife corridors provide migratory routes for animals that enhance their habitat and encourage biodiversity. Corridors in Wrentham are primarily located along the streams. This is due, in part, to the Wetlands Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act which have served to limit development near these resources. Roadways and development along them tend to fragment habitat areas, thus, limiting migration and reducing habitat. Of particular note, the I-495 corridor splits Wrentham roughly in half. Nevertheless, there are important wildlife corridors within Wrentham that connect with abutting Towns.

¹ For more information, see the 2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan <<https://wrentham.ma.us/files/Wrentham%20Website%20Files/Open%20Space%20Committee/Wrentham%20OSRP%20Final%20Report%203-27-2021%20.pdf>>



PREPARED BY:
PGC Associates
INCORPORATED

DATA SOURCE: OFFICE OF GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION (MAGGIE), COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS, MASSGIS

PGC Associates prepared this map for the Wrentham Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Open Space Resources

Conservation lands are typically undeveloped parcels that are entirely undisturbed or are used by the public for low-impact passive recreation such as hiking, biking, fishing, and wildlife viewing. Depending on the type of land, conservation parcels provide: natural habitats for plants and wildlife; help to replenish and protect aquifers; reduce and absorb stormwater runoff; or protect natural or cultural resources like farmland. Open space can be owned by government agencies, non-profits, or private entities and can be protected in perpetuity or for a certain number of years. The protected and recreational open space in Wrentham are shown on the next map.

Public Open Space

Approximately 3,400 acres of land in Wrentham are currently dedicated to public or semi-public open space in State Forests and municipal lands.

State and Federal Open Space

Wrentham is fortunate to have access to three Massachusetts state forests: F. Gilbert Hills State Forest, Wrentham State Forest, and Franklin State Forest. Over one third of the public open space in Wrentham is part of the State Forest system. They are open to the public for hiking, biking, and cross-country skiing, and are maintained by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Wrentham State Forest and F. Gilbert Hills State Forest (which is largely located in Foxborough) also offer access to Warner Trail, a hiking trail maintained by the Appalachian Mountain Club that can be hiked north to Sharon, MA or south to Diamond Hill, RI. The Commonwealth also owns the Wrentham Developmental Center, much of which is fairgrounds and open space. Other governmental open space includes land along Miscoe Brook in West Wrentham owned by the United States Army Corps of Engineers for its Charles River Watershed Natural Valley Storage Area.

Table O-1: State and Federal Protected Open Space

Name	Acres
Wrentham State Forest	1,024
F. Gilbert Hills State Forest	256
Franklin State Forest	82
Charles River Natural Valley Storage Area	23

Municipal Open Space

There are 910 acres of municipal open space, including land owned by the Town and the Wrentham Conservation Commission. The largest areas of open space and those that have parking areas are listed in the table below.

Table O-2: Municipal Open Space

Name	Address	Acres	Jurisdiction	Facilities
Wollomonopoag Conservation Area	230 Elysium Street	200	Conservation Commission	Parking, kiosk, trail
Birchwold Farm Conservation Area	1499 West Street	124	Conservation Commission	Parking, kiosk, trails, picnic tables
The Preserve at Oak Hill Conservation Area	60 Luke Street 2490 Oak Hill Ave 2490 West Street	100		
Homer Croker Pond Conservation Area	200 Washington Street	93	Conservation Commission	Parking, kiosk, trails, picnic tables
Toils End Farm	40 Maple Hill Road 239 Forest Grove Ave 2 Farrington Ave	78		
Joe's Rock Conservation Area	1498-1508 West Street	71	Conservation Commission	Parking, kiosk, trails, picnic tables
Knuckup Hill	120 Taunton Street	58	Recreation Commission	Trails
Wampanoag Estates Conservation Area	Conservation Area	56		
Whipple Estates Conservation Area	1 Hales Pond Lane	53		
Burnt Swamp Conservation Area	203 Burnt Swamp Road	38		
Eagle Brook: Craig Meadow and Oxbow Meadow	708 Franklin Street R and 130 Mill Street	25	Conservation Commission	Parking, trails

Water Department Open Space

The Wrentham Water Department also owns 250 acres of land for water quality protection, along Franklin, Thurston, Taunton, South, and Elysium Streets.

Private Open Space and Tools for Protection Agricultural Land

The laws of the Commonwealth set forth two important programs designed to protect agricultural and horticultural lands.

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program is a voluntary program in which the Commonwealth agrees to pay the owner of agricultural land the difference between the land's fair market value and its agricultural value in exchange for a permanent deed restriction that prohibits any use of the property that could harm its agricultural viability. As of this date, no land in Wrentham is enrolled in the APR Program.

While the APR program provides permanent protection to agricultural land, Chapter 61A provides temporary protection but is used more often. The Chapter 61A program empowers municipalities with a right-of-first refusal to purchase properties enrolled in the program when a sale or change of use is proposed by the landowner. In exchange, landowners enjoy reduced property taxes. There are 850 acres of Chapter 61A land in Wrentham.

Forested Land

There are programs to encourage the protection of forested land, similar to the Chapter 61A program for agricultural land. Chapter 61 subjects a participating landowner to a ten-year active forest-management commitment in exchange for a reduction in property taxes. Nearly 200 acres of land in Wrentham are enrolled in the Commonwealth's Chapter 61 program, most of which is in the eastern portion of Town where bedrock exposure complicates agriculture or development.

The Commonwealth's Chapter 61B program provides similar benefits to those offered under Chapters 61 and 61A but is applicable to wildlife or recreation lands with a minimum size of five acres. The Chapter 61B program requires annual resubmittal of an application but does not require a ten-year forest management plan. Over 400 acres of Chapter 61B lands are in Wrentham. Most of that land is forested, with the exception of Franklin Country Club. Some of the Chapter 61B, such as the Wrentham Anglers Club, Franklin Rod & Gun Club, and Wrentham Sportsman's Association, may be accessed by membership to the organizations.

Conservation Restrictions

Conservation restrictions offer an additional tool for agricultural or forestland open space protection. Property rights can be understood as a bundle of rights. With a conservation restriction, the right to develop land has been transferred (by sale or donation) to a land conservation organization, such as a land trust or a public agency. However, the land remains in private ownership and can be used for agriculture or passive recreation, and the conservation restriction can be written to permit construction of homes for family members. There are many forms of conservation restrictions, some permanent and some with defined time limits. Public access may be permitted but is not required. There are 164 acres of land in Wrentham protected with a conservation restriction, most of which is part of an Open Space Development such as Eaglebrook Village or Wolloff Estates.

Open Space Preservation Development

Wrentham's Open Space Preservation Development (OSPD) Bylaw was enacted in 1993 to provide flexibility for developers in exchange for the permanent protection of open space. Over 300 acres of open space have been protected under the OSPD to date, most of which is protected through conservation restrictions. Additionally, the development patterns that the bylaw has produced have saved the Town substantial sums of money in infrastructure maintenance, while protecting

significant open space without direct cost. However, as noted in the Housing and Land Use and Zoning topics of the Master Plan, there are concerns about the effectiveness of the OSPD Bylaw. Several OSPD subdivisions have protected land along the perimeter of the subdivision, rather than the land with the greatest natural resources or a more substantial area of usable open space for passive recreation.

Table O-3: Unprotected Open Space

Site Name	Location	Acres	Description
Wrentham Development Center	Emerald Street	700	Farmland
The Big Apple	Arnold Street – Otis Street	192	Farmland
Hagopian (formerly known as Red Bird Farm)	Taunton and Beach Streets	70+	Forest
Snow Property	East Street and Vine Streets	70	Forest
Cooks Valley Farm	West Street	38	Farmland and Forest
Stahl Property	Everett Street	30	Forest

Unprotected Open Space

There are several significant areas of open space in Wrentham that remain unprotected, including The Big Apple, Cooks Valley Farm, and Wrentham Development Center. Some of the key privately-owned tracts of unprotected open space noted in the OSRP are listed below.

The Open Space Committee is actively working to protect more open space. The most recent land purchase for open space protection was at the Wrentham Development Center for the Rice Field Complex, which includes sports fields and buildings, as well as undeveloped open space. Prior to that, the Town worked with the Wrentham Water District to purchase Wollomonopoag, south of the lakes, for protection of the Town’s water supply. In addition, the Town has acquired open space from the Planning Board’s approval of Open Space Residential Developments, such as Oak Hill and Whipple Estates.

One of the biggest challenges to protecting open space in Wrentham is the limited time the Town has to exercise its right-of-first-refusal when a property in Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B is for sale. Therefore, to better prepare for these opportunities for land protection, the Open Space Committee has developed criteria to rank parcels based on their natural resource value. This will help the Town prioritize parcels for more efficient and responsive action if they go up for sale. In addition, the Open Space Committee applied for and received a Sweatt Fund grant of approximately \$3,000 to do outreach to landowners with Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B land to inform them of the financial benefits of keeping their land undeveloped.

In addition, the Community Preservation Committee, which administers the Community Preservation Act funds, has reached out to Wildlands Trust to learn more and pursue potential opportunities to partner with the land trust on open space protection. Wildlands Trust is a non-profit organization dedicated to conserving land and preserving the natural heritage of Southeastern Massachusetts. Wildlands conserves land in a few different ways. It has an acquisition program through which it purchases and protects properties for watershed and farmland protection, and it also partners with municipalities on using the municipality’s Community Preservation Act funding for open space protection. Working with a land trust offers great opportunity for being more responsive when Chapter 61 parcels are for sale, as well as being proactive in protecting key resources, including farmland.

Recreation Resources

Most of Wrentham’s Recreation Commission properties are located at two facilities: the William A Rice Recreation Area and the Sweatt Athletic Complex, both of which are well-maintained. The Rice facility, includes over eighty acres of playing fields and courts that serve Wrentham residents, as well

Table O-4: Recreation Facilities

Name	Address	Acres	Jurisdiction	Facilities
Sweatt Athletic Complex	120 Taunton Street	58	Recreation Commission	Baseball/softball fields, batting cages, picnic shelter, concessions stand and rest rooms, tot lot, parking, trails
William A. Rice Athletic Complex	54 Emerald Street	80	Recreation Commission	Baseball/softball fields, basketball courts, multi-use fields, beach volleyball courts, batting cages, administrative/ restroom facility, parking.
Sweatt Beach and Boat Landing	715 Franklin Street	77	Department of Public Works	Beach, dock, picnic area, volleyball, bathhouse, kayak and paddleboard rentals
Sweatt Memorial Park	3 Franklin Park	1	Recreation Commission	Tennis courts, lighting, picnic area, paths, benches
Town Common	5 Common Street	2		Benches, paths, gazebo, monuments

as provide a regional attraction for traveling sports teams and tournaments. The Sweatt Complex is a sixty-acre site on the south side of the Town Center shared with a few school buildings and the Fiske Library that also offers connectivity with the Trout Pond and Knuckup Hill open spaces parcels. In addition, Sweatt Beach, managed by the Recreation Commission offers lake access for swimming and boating. Finally, the Town Common and Sweatt Memorial Park provide important gathering places for the community right in the heart of the Town Center.

The Rice Complex, Sweatt Complex, and Sweatt Beach are heavily used and well-maintained. However, the Recreation Director has noted the need for funding to continue maintenance of the recreation facilities and to fund staff positions that support these valuable assets to the community. In addition, he noted that the Rice Complex is only about 70% complete, with a walking path, turf fields, and potential additional facilities still underway.

Residents greatly value the Town Common but would like to see improvements and more programming at the park. And, although the volunteer Landscaping Committee has invested time and resources in beautifying Sweatt Park, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to provide safe outdoor space for socializing and picnics, it remains underutilized. Improved pedestrian access to the Town Common and visibility of Sweatt Park may attract more users.

Trails

There are walking trails throughout the public open space areas. In addition, the Warner Trail, a regional hiking trail, passes through Wrentham as it runs from Sharon to Cumberland, Rhode Island. It runs through Gilbert Hills State Forest then Wrentham State Forest and along the abandoned Old Colony rail bed near the Wrentham Premium Outlets. There is also an active effort led by volunteers to develop the full length of the old rail bed into a 17-mile rail trail extending from Walpole to North Attleboro. The Metacomet Greenway, as it is called, would provide recreation opportunities, as well as safe and pleasant walking and biking connections between destinations in Town. See the Transportation topic of the Master Plan for more information about the Metacomet Greenway.

Community engagement

As part of the OSRP planning process, residents had the opportunity to participate in a survey focused on open space and recreation. The majority of responders ranked Wrentham's recreation facilities as good or excellent. The survey respondents were also asked to rank a list of recreation items, indicating those considered to be a priority. The top five recreation items identified as priorities by survey responders are:

- Children's playgrounds
- Bike trails
- Conservation areas
- Hiking trails
- Town Common

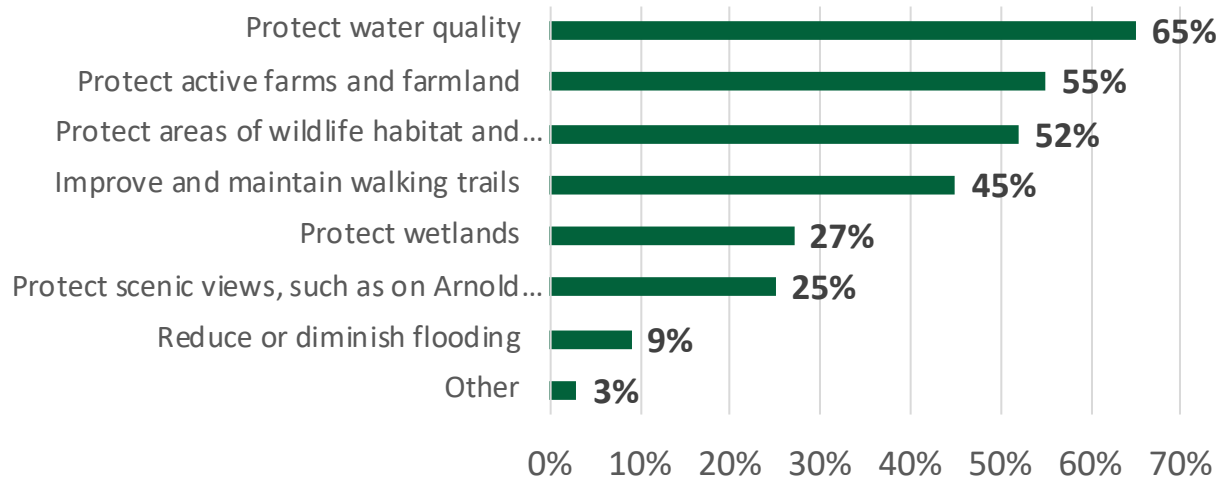
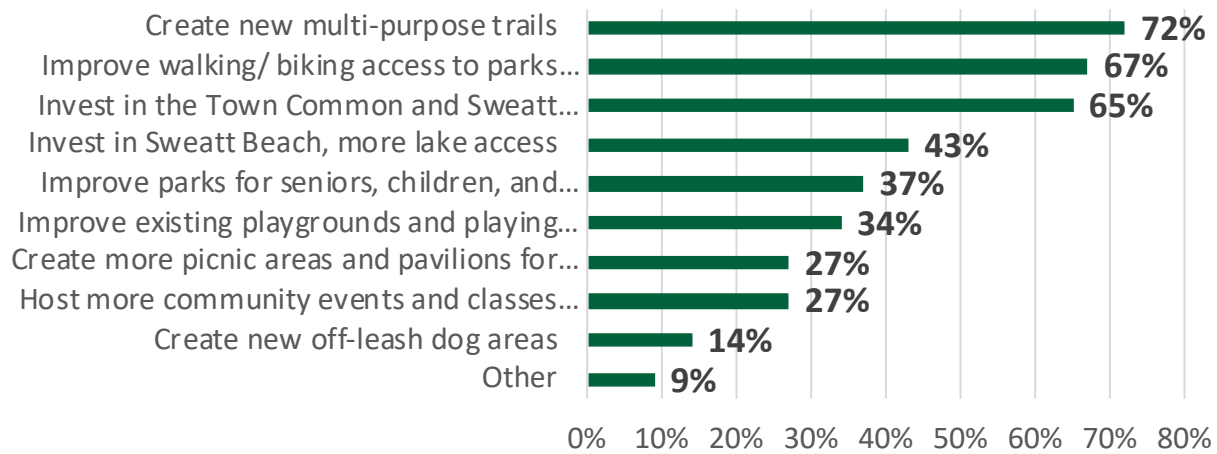
In addition, residents had the opportunity to participate in a public forum on October 29, 2019. At the forum, residents expressed interest in biking, between neighborhoods and Town Center, as well as between Rice Athletic Complex and Town Center. See the Transportation topic of the Master Plan for more community support for bike access throughout Town, and strategies to address this need. In addition, residents expressed the need for programs for older residents without children, especially at the Rice Athletic Complex. The Recreation Commission and Director of Recreation were asked about needs from their perspective as the primary provider of recreation services in Wrentham, as part of the OSRP planning process. Among the general needs they identified are the following: improve handicapped accessibility, create walking paths at recreation sites, work with Open Space Committee to create hiking and bike trails, install landscaping and hardscaping materials for recreation sites, find new revenue sources for maintenance and continued growth of recreation facilities, develop programs and activities to increase involvement of community residents, and create and manage interactive events for residents of all ages. Another concern

noted during the OSRP planning process was management of recreation facilities. For example, Sweatt Park is under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen rather than the Recreation Commission. Similarly, the Town Common is not under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Commission, yet the Commission hosts 12 Concerts on the Common, as well as “Wrentham Day” and the Wrentham “Wroad Wrace” each September.

The Phase II Community Survey conducted in November-December 2021, included several questions focused on open space, recreation, and natural resources.

Survey respondents were asked to choose up to 5 responses with the results below, answering: Over the next 10 years, what are the most important goals for recreation?

Similarly, respondents were asked to choose up to 3 responses with results below, answering: Over the next 10 years, what are the most important goals for open space?



Existing Conditions Assessment:

Housing

The following section presents the demographics of households, the housing stock, and housing costs in Wrentham, followed by a discussion of housing needs, opportunities, and constraints, as well as potential municipal tools to advance housing locally. All of this information should be understood within the context of feedback from the community.

Given that the findings for the 2020 Census have not yet been released, the most recent source of data available is the US Census American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Averages. The ACS is an ongoing survey that provides data every year. Unlike the Census, the ACS surveys only a sample of the population. The 5-year estimates are “period” estimates that represent data collected over a period of time, thus increasing the statistical reliability of the annual surveys. Most of the data is from the most recent ACS 5-year average from 2012 to 2018, summarized below as the year 2016. Therefore, more recent developments, such as Ledgeview/The Point, and the residents who live in them are not included in most of the summary statistics.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching impacts on our society, including tragic loss of life, stressed mental health, compromised public education, and a struggling economy. Given this, it is reasonable to assume that the pandemic will have some kind of influence on the housing market. There is a great amount of speculation about what impacts will unfold in 2021 and in future years. However, it is too early to make accurate projections for Wrentham. Based on historical trends and economic theory, housing demand remains high in strong jobs markets. Although there has been an increase in remote work, the job and housing market in the Boston metropolitan area remains strong with continued investment and development. Therefore, it is assumed that Wrentham’s recent housing trends will continue.



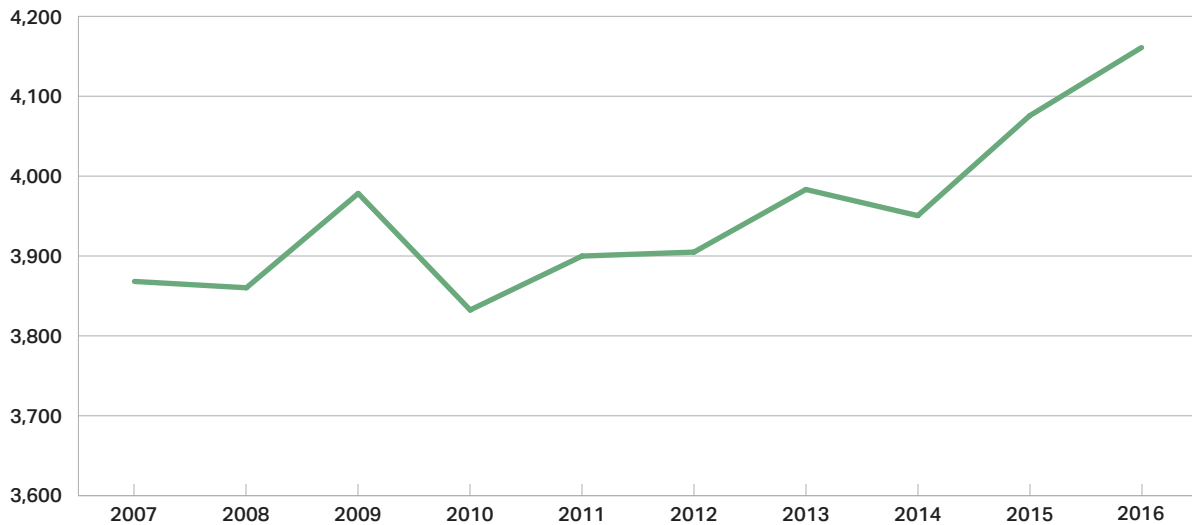
Source: Diane Glass

Households

Number of households

While analyzing the Wrentham population is important for gaining a better understanding of the overall conditions in Town, analyzing households is helpful when considering the housing conditions, including the demand for and preferences for different types of housing. There are 4,162 households in Wrentham.¹ Households may be families of related individuals, or non-families with unrelated individuals living in the same housing unit. The number of households has grown by 8% over 10 years, adding 295 households. Data is illustrated in Figure H-1.

Figure H-1. # of Households, 2007-2016



Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

MAPC prepared population projections through 2030 for the Metro Boston region under two scenarios: Status Quo, based on the continuation of existing rates of births, deaths, migration, and housing occupancy; and a Stronger Region that assumes higher population growth, greater housing demand, and a larger workforce. The total number of households in Wrentham has already exceeded the projections for the Stronger Region scenario, which had estimated 3,950 households in Wrentham in 2020 and 4,142 in 2030.²

As of the most recent data, there are an average of 2.75 people per housing unit in Wrentham, thus household size has already gotten smaller. The household size is similar to that of neighboring towns which range from 2.54 in Plainville to 2.99 in Norfolk. The average household size for owner-occupied homes is close to three people per home, compared to a little less than two people per home in renter-occupied homes. The average household size is also larger for owner-occupied homes than renter-occupied in neighboring towns, also.³

1 ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018

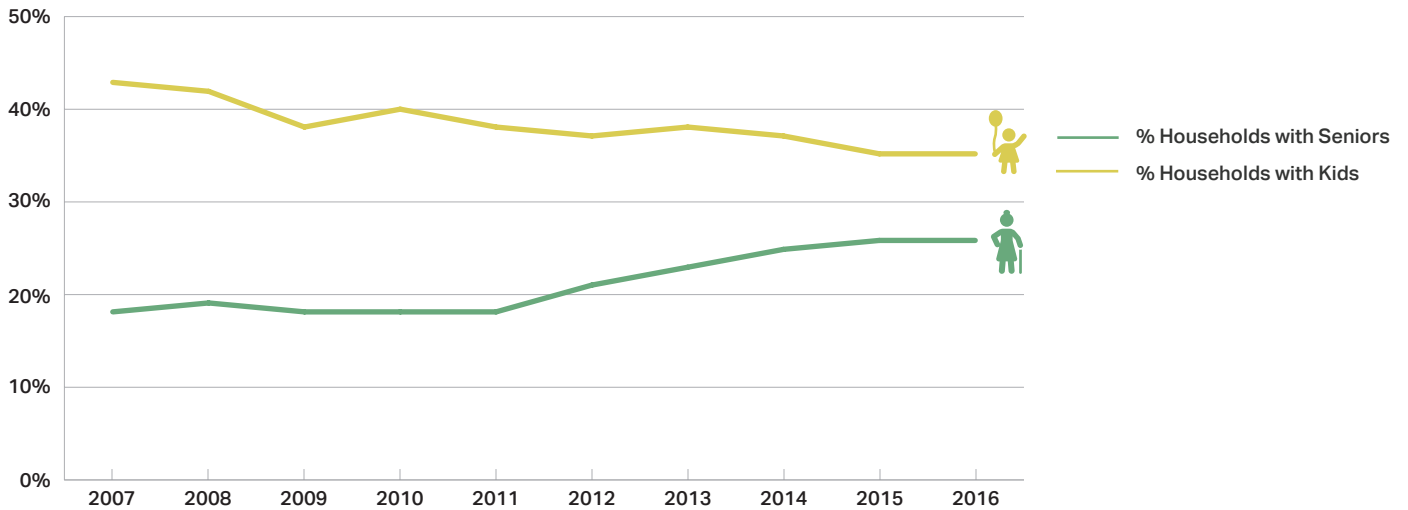
2 MAPC MetroFuture Projections, 2016

3 ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018

Households with children and seniors

1,439 households in Wrentham, 35% of the total, have children. This is similar to neighboring towns which range from 31% in Foxborough to 41% in Norfolk. However, the proportion of households with children has been decreasing in Wrentham, consistent with the population getting older in age. Fewer households, 1,065 in total or 26%, are occupied by people over the age of 65. Of these households, 444 are occupied by seniors living alone. The percentage of households with a senior has increased from 18% on average between 2005-2009 to 26% on average from 2014-2018.¹ Data is shown in Figure H-2.

Figure H-2. % Households with Children or Seniors



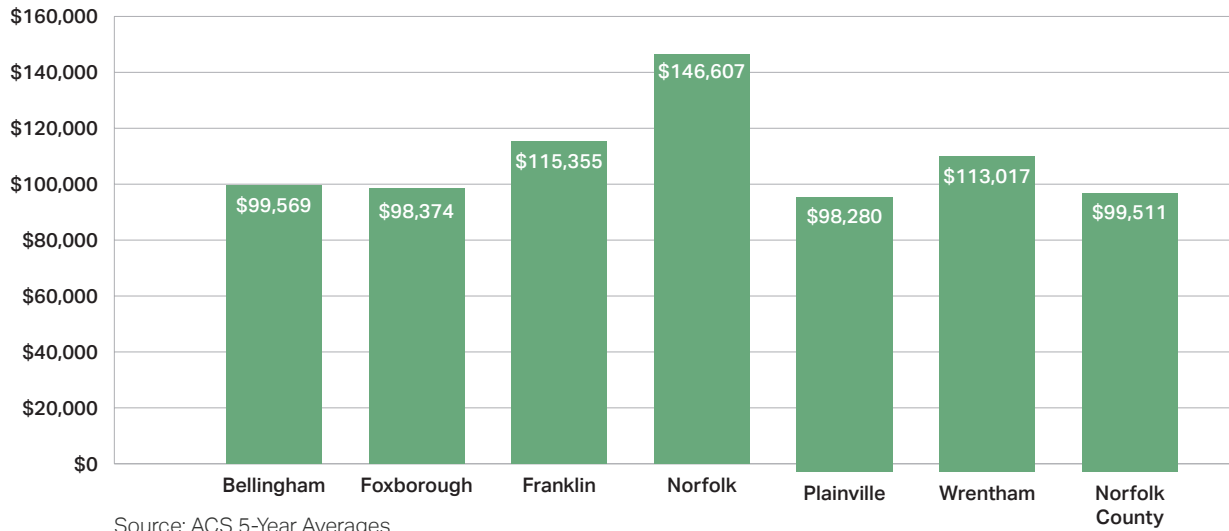
Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

¹ ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018

Household income

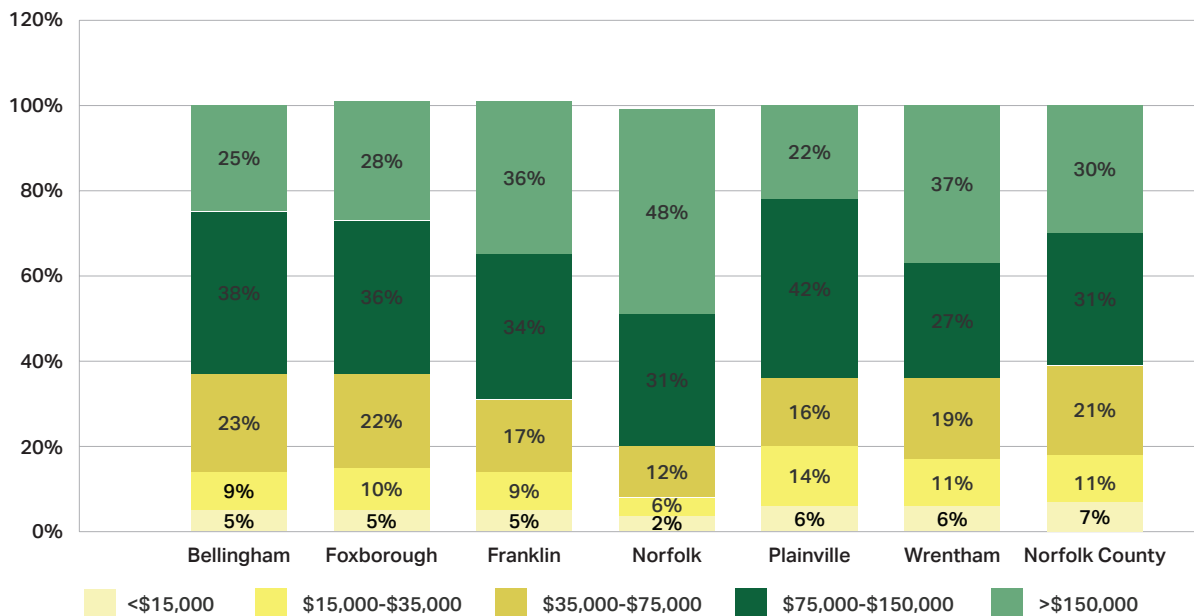
Wrentham’s median household income is \$113,017, higher than Bellingham, Foxborough, and Plainville, while lower than Franklin and Norfolk. The median household income has increased by \$19,000 or 21% over the previous 10 years, similar to the increase in Norfolk County generally. Data is shown in Figure H-3.

Figure H-3. Median Household Income, 2016



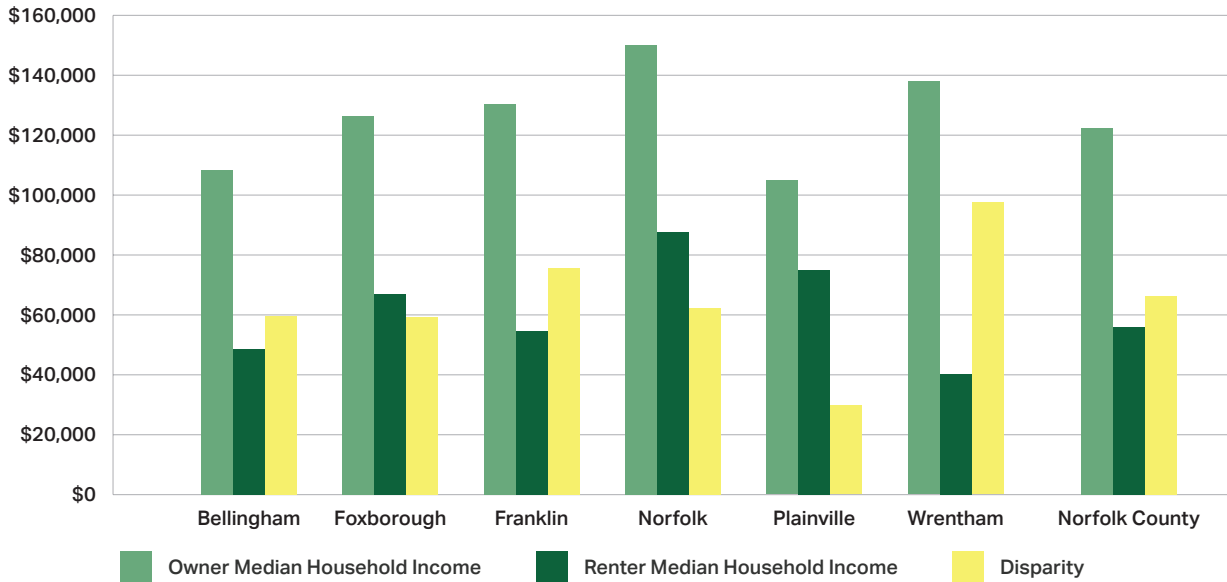
Notably, Wrentham has the smallest percentage of middle-income households: only 27% of households earn between \$75,000 to \$150,000, compared to 42% in Plainville and 31% in Norfolk. A comparison of the range of incomes between towns, demonstrating the relatively small portion of middle-income households in Wrentham is shown in Figure H-4.

Figure H-4. Household Income Inequality, 2016



The income disparity between renters and homeowners is even more dramatic. On average, homeowners in Wrentham make \$137,768 while renters make \$40,260, a difference of \$97,508 annually. The disparity between homeowner and renter incomes in Wrentham is substantially greater than in other towns, as shown in Figure H-5.¹

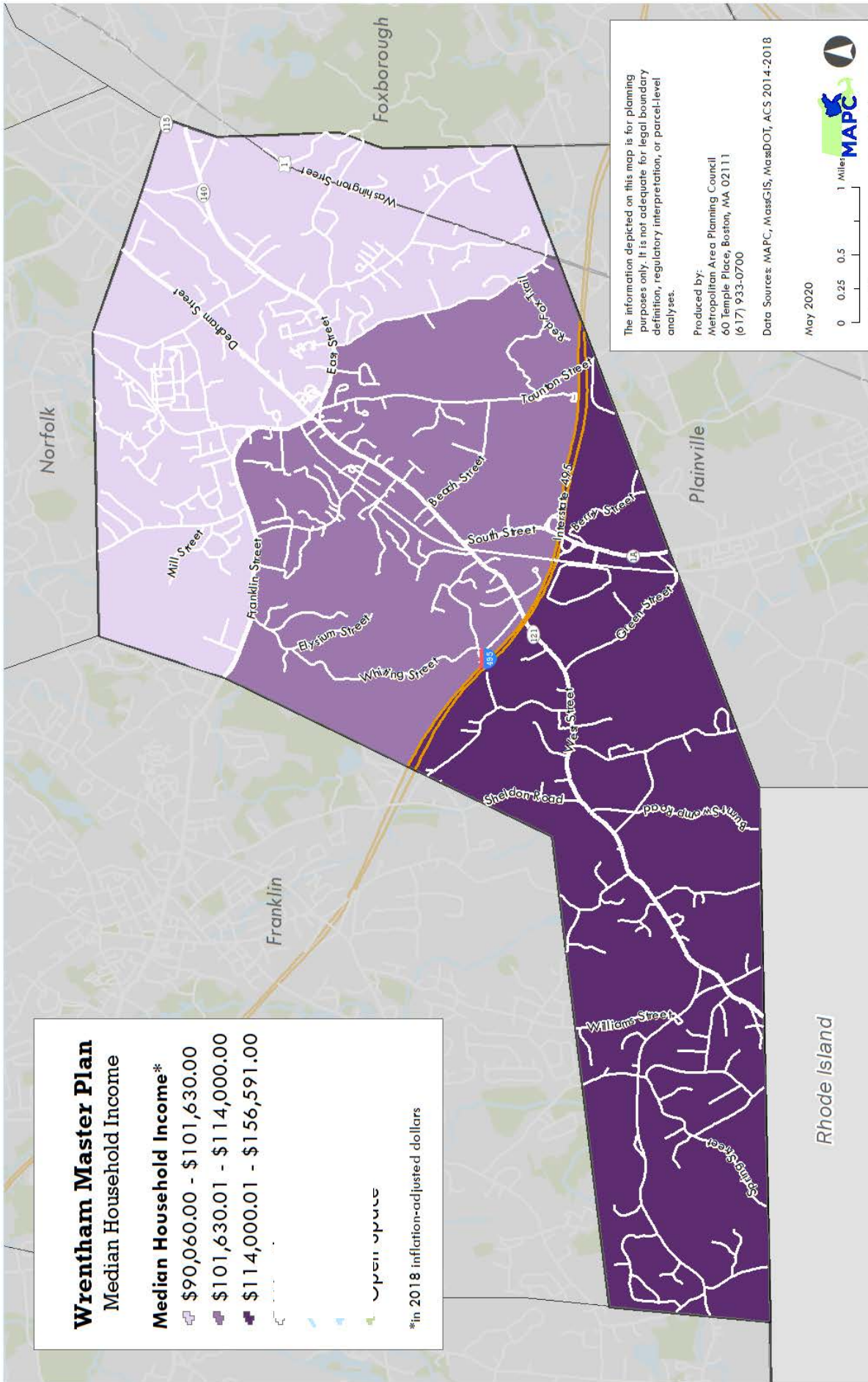
Figure H-5. Disparity between Homeowner and Renter Median Household Income, 2016



Source: ACS 5-Year Averages

There are also difference in household income across different neighborhoods in Wrentham. Median household income is lower in the northern portions of town and higher in the southern portions, as shown on the Median Household Income map.

¹ ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018



Wrentham Master Plan
 Median Household Income

Median Household Income*

- ☐ \$90,060.00 - \$101,630.00
- ☐ \$101,630.01 - \$114,000.00
- ☐ \$114,000.01 - \$156,591.00

☐ Open Space

*in 2018 inflation-adjusted dollars

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

Produced by:
 Metropolitan Area Planning Council
 60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111
 (617) 933-0700

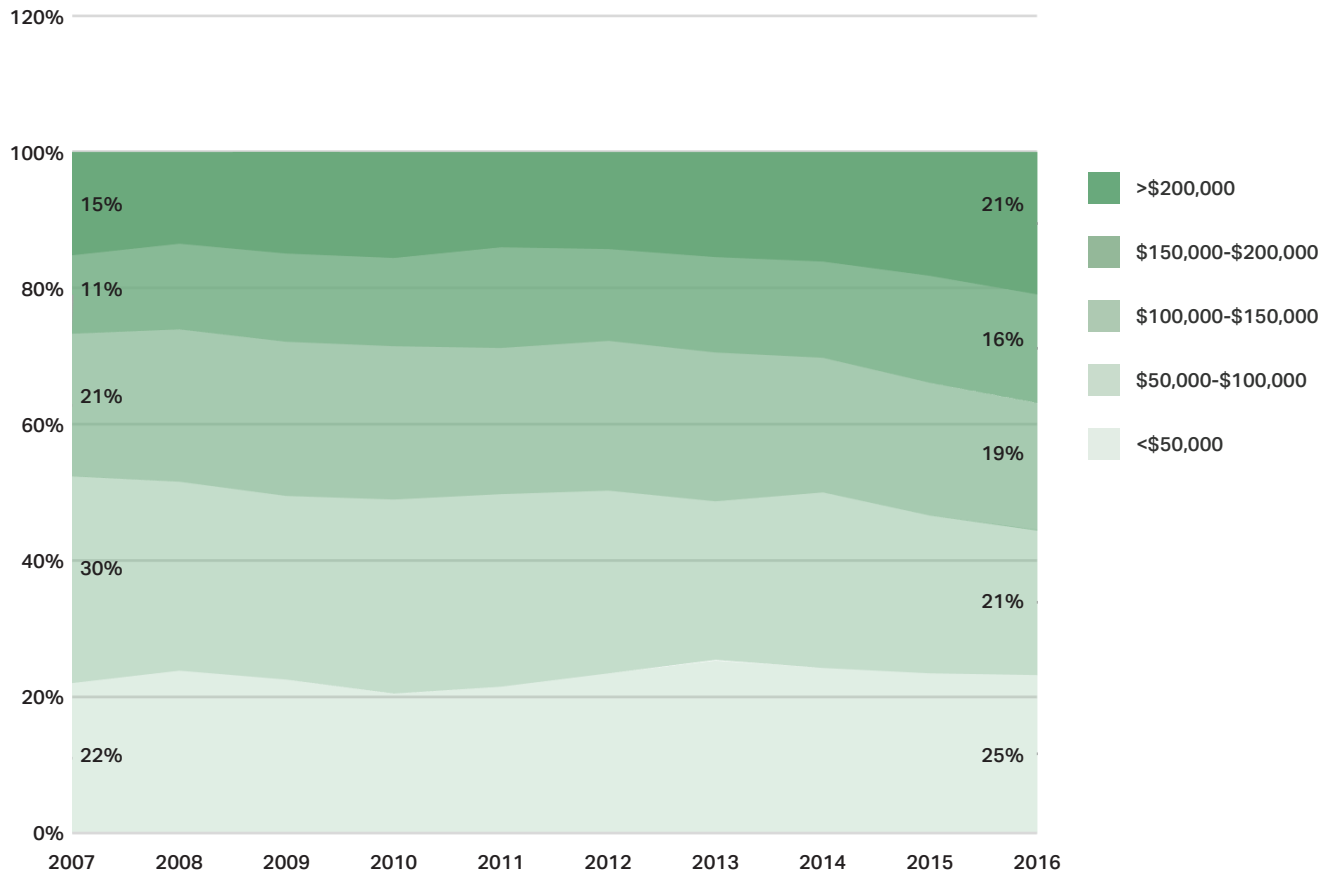
Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS, MassDOT, ACS 2014-2018

May 2020

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

The percentage of households making more than \$150,000 over the 10 years between 2007 and 2016 has increased from 26% to 37%. During the same time, the percentage of households making between \$50,000 - \$150,000 decreased from 51% of the total number of households to 40%, and the number of households making less than \$50,000 stayed roughly the same. The data does not track individual households over time, so we cannot definitively determine the cause of this trend. It may have been caused by an increase in earnings by what used to be middle-income households, or it may have been caused by an influx of new, higher-income households and outflux of middle-income households. Nonetheless, Wrentham's middle class has been shrinking in the past 10 years.¹ The change in household income over time is shown in Figure H-6.

Figure H-6. Household income, 2007-2016



Source ACS 5-Year Averages

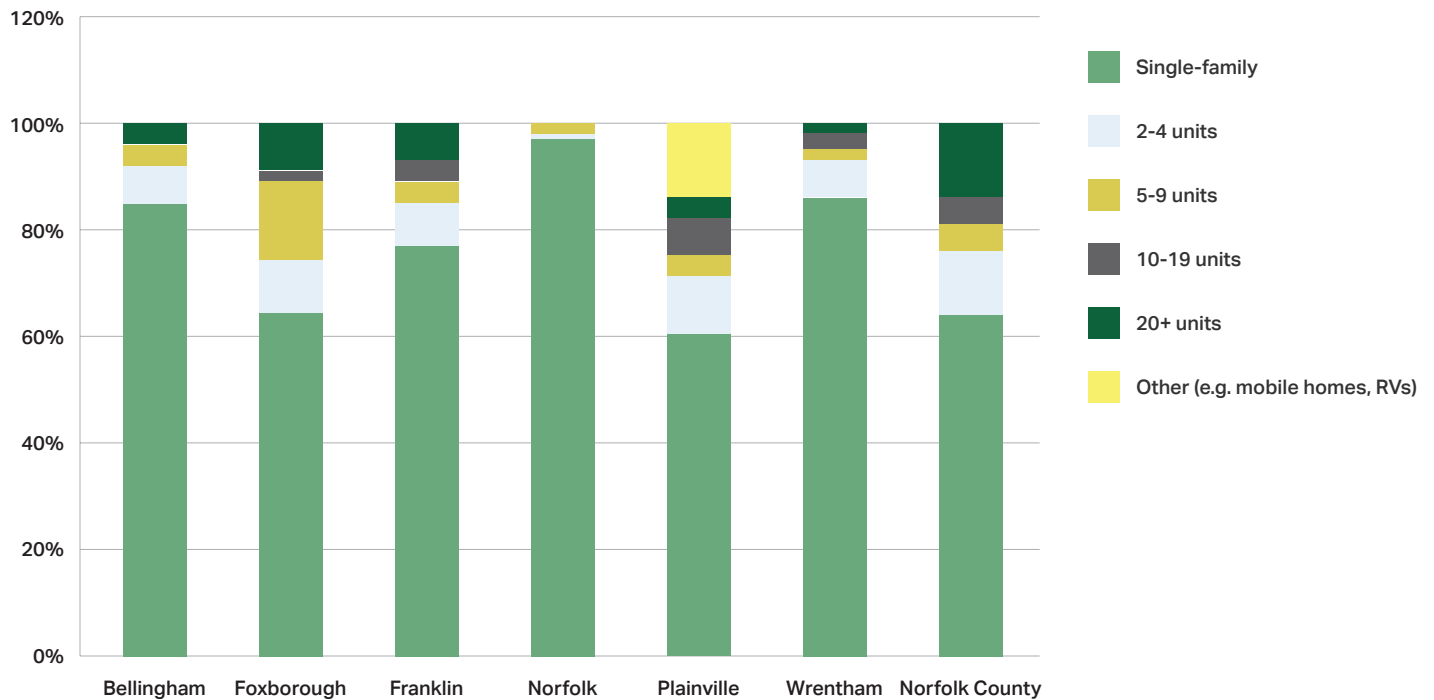
1 ACS 5-Year Averages

Housing stock

Housing types, size, and age

There are 4,240 housing units in Wrentham, most of which are single-family homes—86% are single-family including 79% detached and 8% attached single-family (also known as townhomes). Only Norfolk has a higher percentage of single-family homes. The housing stock of Franklin, which has a similar median household income to Wrentham, is 77% single-family and has a far greater proportion of multifamily housing structures with 20 or greater units. Recent developments in Wrentham, including Ledgeview/The Point may change these proportions. Similar to other municipalities, housing in Wrentham was mostly built between 1980 and 1999—34% of the housing is from this era. The data is shown in Figure H-7.

Figure H-7. Housing Types



Source ACS 5-Year Averages

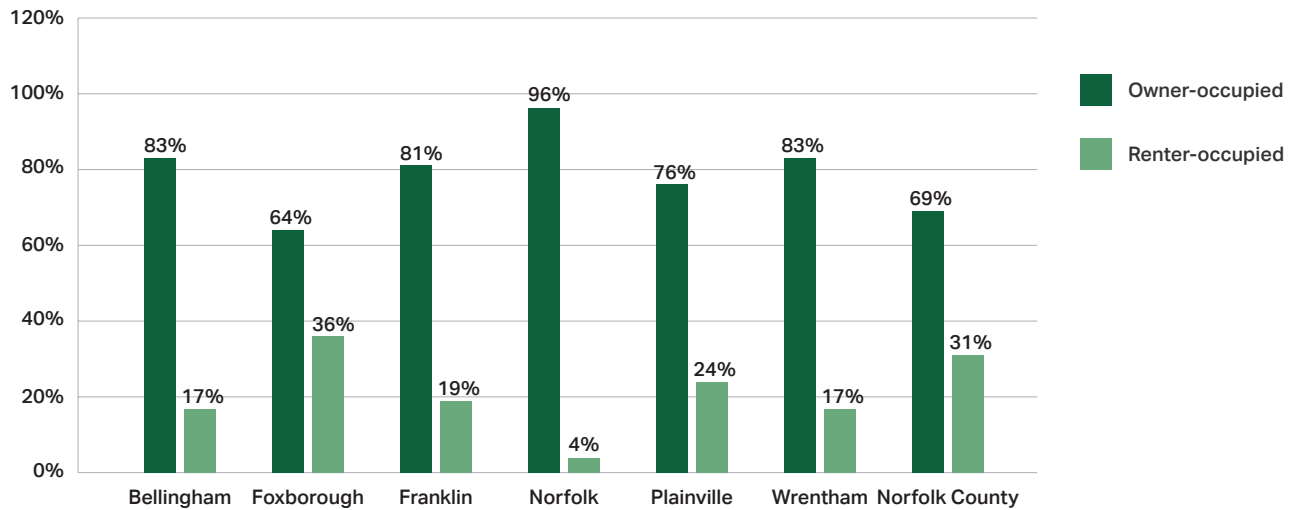
Between 50% and 90% of the housing has three bedrooms or greater, similar to Bellingham and Franklin. There are few housing options with fewer bedrooms, therefore the margin of error in the data is large. Between 4% and 8% of homes are one-bedroom and between 18% and 24% are two-bedroom.¹

Wrentham has a very low vacancy rate. Of the 4,240 housing units in Wrentham, 98% are occupied. This suggests a relatively low supply and high demand of housing. A low vacancy rate can result in an increase in prices and limit the ability of residents to find a home that best meets their needs.

1 ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018

The majority of the housing is owner-occupied, although 17%, almost one in five homes, are renter-occupied. In other words, 83% of households own their homes and 17% rent their homes. This is a similar proportion to Bellingham and Franklin. In comparison, 4% of housing units are renter-occupied in Norfolk and 36% in Foxborough. This proportion of renters is not new--approximately 15% of the households in Wrentham have been renter-occupied for the past 10 years.¹ The data is shown in Figure H-8.

Figure H-8. % Homes owned & rented



Source: ACS 5-Year Average

¹ ACS 5-Year Averages, 2005-2009 through 2014-2018

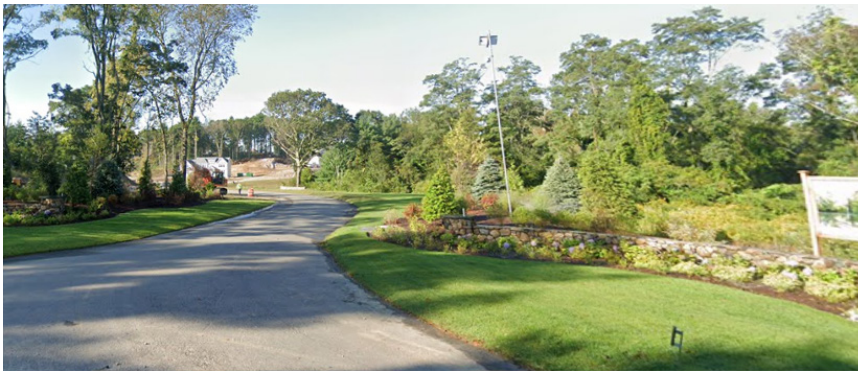
Recent residential development

In addition to the housing described above, there have been a few major residential developments in recent years, as summarized below. These developments add variety to the housing stock, offering both single-family and multifamily units at both market-rate costs and deed-restricted Affordable levels for rent and ownership.

- ▶ **Ledgeview/The Point:** 238 luxury apartment bedrooms for residents aged 55 years and older, as well as assisted living, Marriott Hotels, and commercial uses located at the intersection of I-495 and Route 1.



- ▶ **Park Street:** 92 lots on 112 acres, Open Space Residential Preservation subdivision



- ▶ **Eagle Brook Commons:** 100-unit rental development

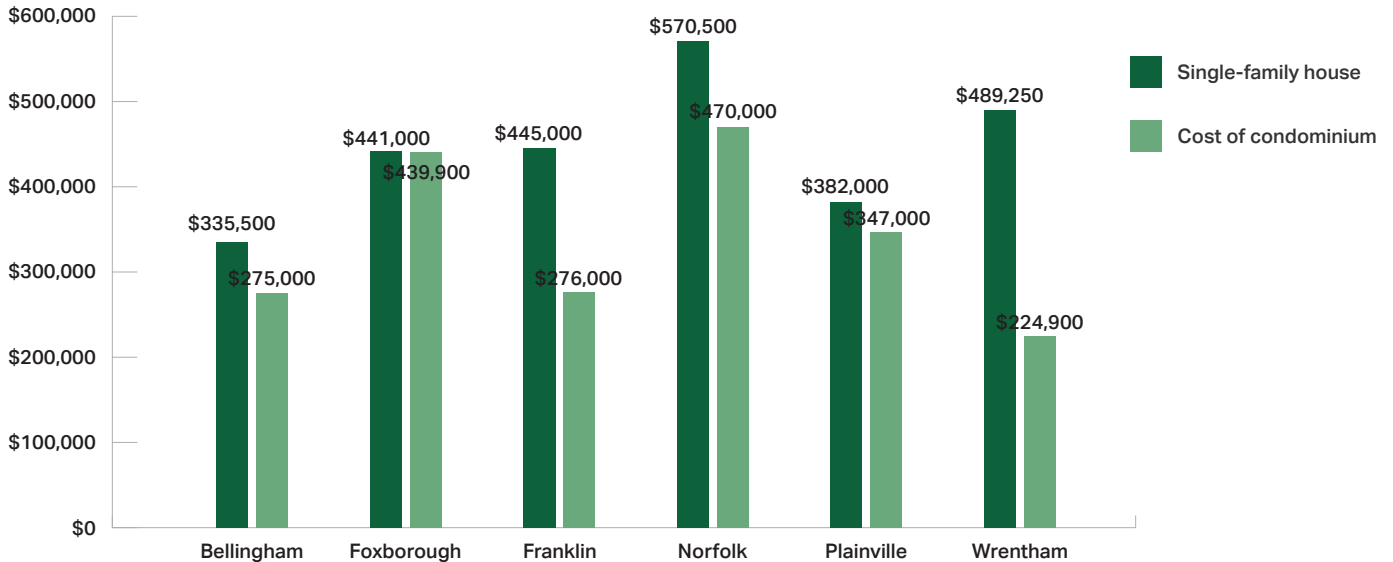


Housing costs

Median cost of a home

The median cost of a single-family house in Wrentham is \$489,250, similar to the cost in Foxborough and Franklin. The median cost of a condominium is substantially less at \$224,900. The difference between the cost of a single-family house and a condominium is greater in Wrentham than in any of the adjacent towns. The median cost of a single-family home and a condominium in Wrentham and neighboring towns is shown in Figure H-9.¹

Figure H-9. Cost of single-family house vs. condo, 2019



Source: Warren Group

There are several ways to measure the cost of rent. According to the apartments currently on the market, the median rent in Wrentham is \$2,207.² In contrast, the median contracted rent, which includes the cost of leases that have not been updated in years, is lower. The most recent data on contracted rent is from 2016 with a median of \$1,042, similar to Bellingham's and lower than the rent in most neighboring towns.³

1 Warren Group, 2018. Median cost is based on annual home sales.

2 Based on listings on Craigslist in the 4th quarter of 2020, including one 1-bedroom, four 2-bedroom, and one 3-bedroom apartments.

3 ACS 5-Year Averages, 2014-2018. Does not include utilities or fuel cost. Data on contracted rents from 2019 is not yet available. The most recent data on contracted rent is an average of the five years between 2014-2018, identified here as the median rent in 2016.

Change in costs over time

Over the past two decades, the median price of a single-family home (including condominiums and single-family houses) in Wrentham has increased by an average annual change of 1%. In real dollars, the median cost of buying a home increased from \$304,000 in 2000 to \$489,250 in 2019. However, the value of the dollar has also changed over that time due to inflation. When accounting for inflation, the cost of a home in Wrentham has increased little. In 2019 dollars, the cost of a single-family home was \$465,408 in 2000 and now is \$489,250.

In comparison, the median cost of renting has increased much more than the increase in buying a single-family house or a condominium. The median cost of renting an apartment, buying a single-family house, and buying a condominium from 2015-2019 in Wrentham in 2019 dollars is shown in Table H-1.¹ Rent has increased annually by 18% on average, while the cost of buying home has increased between 2-5%.

Table H-1. Change in cost of a Home in Wrentham, 2015-2019 in 2019 Dollars

	Median rent	Median cost of single-family house	Median cost of condominium
2015	\$1,478	\$446,727	\$191,611
2016	\$1,414	\$474,475	\$239,004
2017	\$1,789	\$450,518	\$207,891
2018	\$1,478	\$468,784	\$244,583
2019	\$2,490	\$489,250	\$224,900
Average Annual % Change	18%	2%	5%

Source: Warren Group, Craigslist, US Bureau of Labor Statistics
Notes: Median rent based on 4th quarter listings on Craigslist

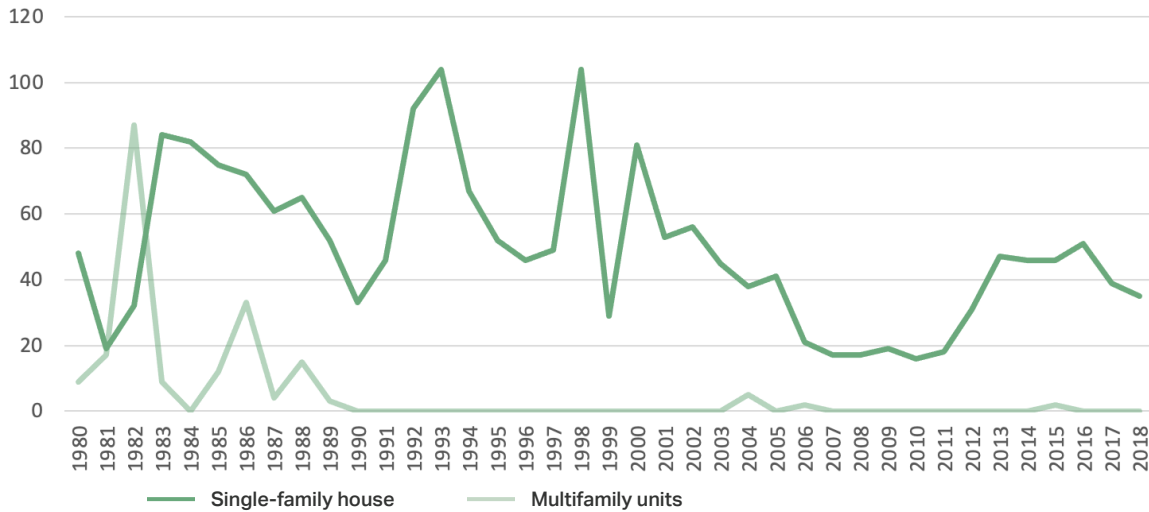
Residential development

Another important aspect of the housing market is the production of new housing units. Regionally, production of housing units has not kept pace with demand for housing units. This combination of decreasing supply and increasing demand has contributed to rising housing costs and continues to have a direct negative impact on housing affordability. In Wrentham, the rate of residential development has also been slowing. The number of building permits for single-family and multifamily units from 1980-2019 is shown in Figure H-10. In particular, almost no multifamily units were built during the 18 years between 1990 and 2018.²

¹ ACS 5-Year Averages 2005-2009 through 2014-2018; Warren Group; US Bureau of Labor Statistics. Data on cost of buying a single-family house or condominium in 2020 is not yet available.

² Census Building Permit Survey, 1980-2018

Figure H-10. Building permits, single-family & multifamily units, 1980-2018



Source: Census Building Permit Survey

Wrentham has added approximately 730 new housing units since 2000 and 371 since 2010.¹ In comparison to adjacent towns, the pace of residential development in recent years between 2007-2016 has been similar to that in Franklin; Norfolk, Bellingham, and Plainville have seen a higher rate of residential development. Foxborough has seen a relatively lower rate, although more recent building permit data indicates that there was a very large amount of new housing units permitted in Foxborough in 2017.²

Affordable Housing

When most people talk about housing affordability, they simply mean housing that works within their budget. However, “Affordable Housing”—distinguished in this Master Plan with capitalized letters—refers to a more specific type of housing. Affordable Housing refers to housing that is deed restricted to cost no more than 30% of income for households meeting specific income thresholds. In other words, the cost of the housing is relative to the residents’ income is preserved, regardless of whether market-rate housing costs increase or decrease over the years. These restrictions ensure that income-eligible households can stay in their communities without having to make difficult financial decisions, such as skipping meals or doctor’s appointments, to have enough money to pay for their homes.

Typically, “Affordable Housing” is reserved for households at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI), but it can be reserved for those with lower incomes or higher incomes. The AMI is a measure set by the federal government based on income and household size. In the Boston area, including Wrentham, the 2020 AMI is \$119,000.³ This means that a family of two earning \$77,000 or a family of four earning \$96,250 are eligible for Affordable Housing in Wrentham.

One tool to measure and help produce Affordable Housing is “Chapter 40B” or the Massachusetts’ Comprehensive Permit law, enacted in 1969. Chapter 40B is a state statute that encourages cities and towns to maintain a supply of Affordable Housing. Under Chapter 40B, at least 10% of every

1 ACS 5-Year Average 2014-2018; US Census, 2000, 2010
 2 Census Building Permit Survey
 3 MA Department of Housing and Community Development

municipality’s housing stock must be listed on the Massachusetts Subsidized Housing Inventory. The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) includes housing that is deed restricted to be affordable to eligible low- and moderate-income residents without paying more than 30% of their annual household income, as well as market-rate units in mixed-income rental housing developments where 20-25% of units are Affordable Housing. This means the Subsidized Housing Inventory is typically an overestimation of each municipality’s Affordable Housing supply.

In communities where less than 10% of housing units are included on the Subsidized Housing Inventory, developers may petition the local Zoning Boards of Appeals (ZBA) for a comprehensive permit for housing developments that do not fully comply with local zoning, provided at least 20-25% of homes in the development are Affordable Housing. Under Chapter 40B, the ZBA has limited grounds for refusal in this case. Communities that are above 10% on the SHI may claim “safe harbor” and thereby deny a developer a comprehensive permit.

A municipality’s Subsidized Housing Inventory fluctuates with new development of both Affordable and market rate housing. As more market rate housing is built, or if Affordable units are lost, more Affordable units must be produced to reach, maintain, or exceed the 10% threshold.

Out of 3,821 housing units, 485 or 12.69% are counted in the Subsidized Housing Inventory, narrowly exceeding the 10% goal.^{1,2} However, it is also important to highlight that all new units developed between 2010 and 2020 will be added to the year-round housing unit total as of the 2020 decennial census and may change the percentage of housing units counted on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

Municipal tax rate

Another component of housing affordability is the annual cost of municipal property taxes. The proposed residential tax rate for the 2021 Fiscal Year is \$14.07 per \$1,000 of assessed value, a decrease from 2020 and the lowest rate since 2012.³ Based on a median home value of \$434,900 on average between 2014-2018, the average single family home tax bill for 2021 would be approximately \$6,500. The property tax rates of neighboring towns are shown in Table H-2. Wrentham’s tax rate is lower than that of all neighboring towns.

Table H-2: Residential tax rates, FY 2021

Municipality	Tax rate per \$1,000 assessed value
Bellingham	14.41
Foxborough	14.74
Franklin	14.65
Norfolk	17.99
Plainville	14.70
Wrentham	14.07

Source: MA Department of Revenue

1 For the purposes of the formal SHI, the number of total housing units in Wrentham is based on 2010 Census, and the number of affordable units is based on DHCD’s most recent update in September 2017.

2 DHCD, Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), 2017

3 Wrentham’s annual tax rate is unavailable before 2012.

Housing needs

Comparing Wrentham's households to its housing can help elucidate how people's housing needs are being met and where there might be gaps in affordability and housing types and locations.

Affordability

The cost of housing is relative to the household and can be analyzed in a number of ways. One way to assess affordability is cost-burden. A household is considered cost-burdened if more than 30% of household income is spent on housing. Approximately 27% of households are cost-burdened, a reduction from 32% in 2007.¹ The actual number of cost-burdened households has also decreased from 1,216 in 2007 to 1,119 households in 2016. However, all of that benefit has been gained by homeowners. During the same time period, the number of cost-burdened renters has increased from 237 to 364 households resulting in more than half of renters being cost-burdened in 2017.



About 2 out of 10 homeowners are cost-burdened (spend more than 30% of income on housing)



About 6 out of 10 renters are cost-burdened

Another way is to consider the gap between median household income and median home price. Wrentham's median income is relatively high, thus the average Wrentham household that currently lives in Wrentham could still likely afford to move into the average Wrentham home. More specifically, a household earning Wrentham's median income of \$113,017² would be able to afford a house costing approximately \$540,000, assuming good credit, reasonable level of debt, and a down payment of 20% of the cost of the average Wrentham home.³ Therefore, the average Wrentham family could afford the average home in Wrentham. Similarly, the median household would be able to easily afford the median monthly rental rate for a two-bedroom.

Of course, this calculation is a generalization, and does not give a complete picture of need. For example, it also does not take into account the people who would like to live in Wrentham but have not moved to Town because of the relatively high cost of housing. For example, the median income in Plainville in 2016 was \$98,280. Using the same assumptions, the average Plainville household would not be able to afford the average home in Wrentham. Thus, the housing costs are likely excluding households with lower and middle incomes.

¹ ACS, 5-Year Survey 2005-2009 through 2014-2018

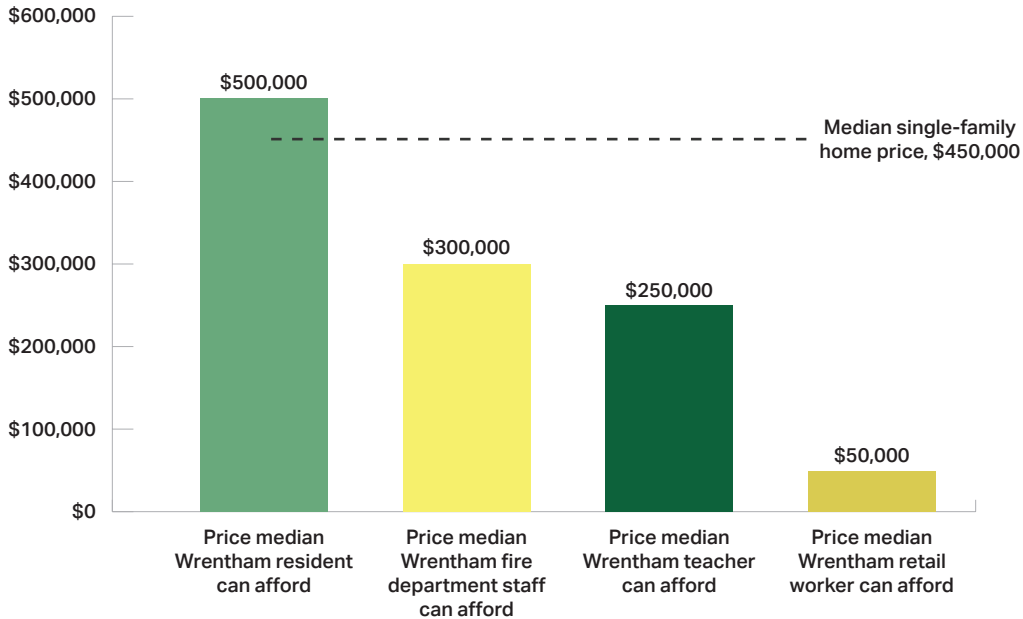
² Due to data availability, the affordability gap calculation is based on 2016 median income and housing costs.

³ This calculation was performed using the Zillow Affordability Calculator with the following assumptions: \$500 monthly debts, \$87,945 down payment, 4% interest rate, 30-year mortgage, 1.4% property tax, \$1,000 annual home insurance.

Importantly, it also does not account for the people who work in Wrentham, who maintain its economy, but cannot afford to live here. As discussed in further detail in the Economic Development topic of the Master Plan, most people who work in Wrentham work in retail, education, or accommodation and food services. These three sectors account for 68% of the employees in Wrentham. The median income of someone who works in retail makes \$21,000 in their job in Wrentham. Similarly, an employee working in education makes \$26,000 and an employee working in accommodation and food services makes \$19,000. Unless these workers have 2nd or 3rd jobs or live with other earners in their household, these workers likely cannot afford the median home price. Based on the assumptions used above, the average employee in Wrentham would be able to afford a \$50,000 single-family home.

Similarly, the people who contribute to the civic society of Wrentham also cannot afford to live here. The chart below illustrates this mismatch in Wrentham. Based on standard housing financing assumptions, the average teacher who teaches in Wrentham schools cannot afford to buy a house here, as a single earner. Similarly, the average staff of the Wrentham fire department cannot afford to buy a house here without additional income from another earner in the household or another job. This mismatch makes it harder to attract high-quality teachers and Town employees, weakens community bonds, and contributes to traffic and congestion because residents spend time on the roads commuting out of town and workers spend time on the roads commuting in. If there was a greater match between the cost of housing and the wages for jobs in Wrentham, the people who work here could also live here. The median single-family home price in Wrentham compared to what the median resident, the Wrentham fire department staff, Wrentham teacher, and Wrentham retail employee could afford is shown in Figure H-11.¹

Figure H-11. Mismatch between Wrentham Town Employee Salaries and Cost of Housing

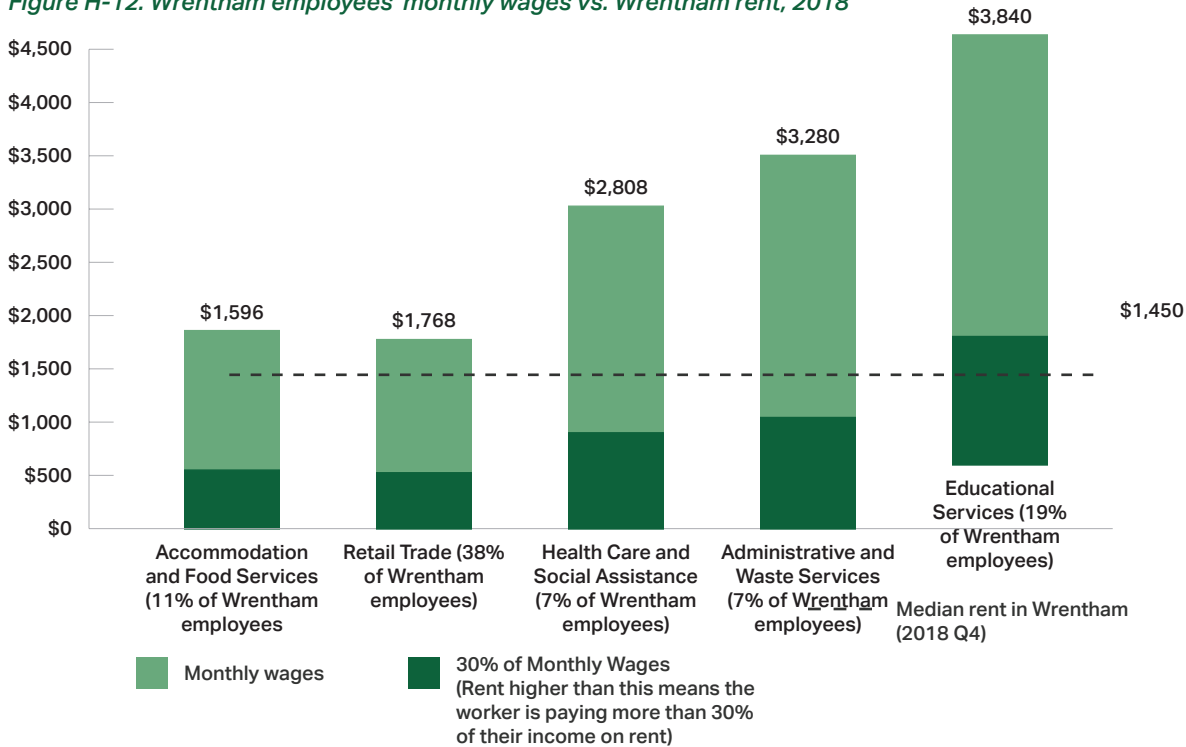


Source: ACS, EOLWD 2018, Town of Wrentham, Zillow Affordability Calculator

¹ ACS, 5-Year Survey 2005-2009 through 2014-2018; EOLWD 2018; Town of Wrentham, 2020; Zillow Affordability Calculator

Renting a home is often within greater reach than homeownership because costs can be lower and there is no need for a down payment. However, the cost of an apartment in Wrentham is still out of reach for many people who work in town. The median rent in Wrentham in 2018, as well as the average monthly wages of workers in the five biggest sectors in Wrentham—82% of employees in Wrentham work in these five sectors is shown in Figure H-12.¹ The average employee who worked in any of these five sectors and rented a home in Wrentham was cost-burdened, meaning they paid more than 30% of their income on housing. Specifically, a resident working in Accommodation and Food Services would have spent approximately 80% of their monthly income on housing.

Figure H-12. Wrentham employees' monthly wages vs. Wrentham rent, 2018



Yet another assessment of affordability is the match between the supply of Affordable Housing and the number of households that qualify for it. Although the median income is relatively high, there is a large portion of low-income residents. In 2015, almost 30% of households in Wrentham made less than 80% of the Area Median Income, qualifying them for Affordable Housing; far fewer than 30% of the housing units in Wrentham are Affordable Housing units.^{2,3}

1 Based on listings on Craigslist in the 4th quarter of 2016, including three 1-bedroom and four 2-bedroom apartments.
 2 2015 HUD Section 8 Income Limits; 2013-2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy; ACS 2013-2017 5-Year Average, <<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html>>
 3 The discrepancy of 10 Affordable Housing units between this data from the 2013-2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy and the 2017 Subsidized Housing Inventory may be due to a loss of Affordable Housing units or inaccuracy in the data.



For every 1 Affordable Housing unit, there are 2.4 eligible households in Wrentham.



Table 3 provides more detail on this gap in Affordable Housing, including the federal income limits based on AMI that determine whether a household is eligible for Affordable Housing, and those income limits translated into dollars in the Boston metropolitan area. The range of incomes allows for different household size—as explained above, the income limit for a family of four is higher than the income limit of a family of two. The number and percentage of households in Wrentham that qualify for Affordable Housing based on each income limit and the household size is listed in Table H-3.

Table H-3: Wrentham households eligible for Affordable Housing, 2015

	# of Wrentham Renters	# of Wrentham Homeowners	Total # of Wrentham Households	% of Households (out of 4,076 in 2015)
Extremely low income, <30% Area Median Income	245	215	460	11%
Very low income, 30-50% Area Median Income	140	245	385	9%
Low Income, 50-80% Area Median Income	70	280	350	9%
TOTAL	455	740	1,195	29%

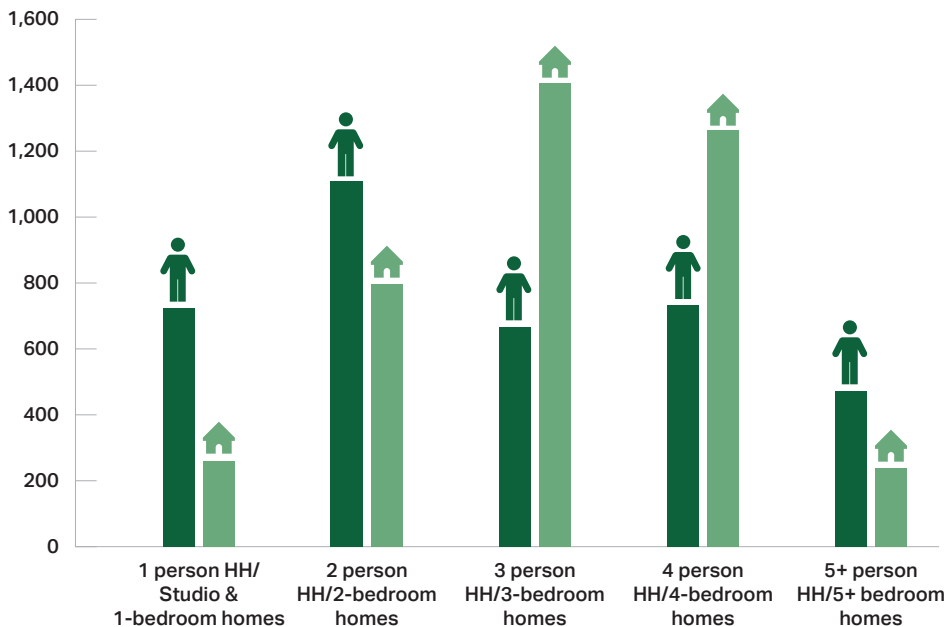
Source: 2013-2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy; ACS 2013-2017 5-Year Average, <<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html>>

Variety of options

Not only does the price matter, but households also have different preferences for types of housing. In Wrentham, there is a mismatch between the number of people in an average household and the number of bedrooms in an average home, as illustrated in Figure H-14. While there are 1,830 one- or two-person households, there are only between 790 and 1,330 housing units with 2-bedrooms or less. This is consistent with the shrinking size of households and the slow housing production in the past decade, which has limited the amount of new housing stock that can respond to the shifting demographic needs.

In other words, smaller households such as young adults looking to move back to Wrentham, families wanting to buy their first home, one-parent households, and seniors looking to downsize all must compete for limited housing choices or possibly occupy housing they cannot afford (since price rises with square feet) and maybe even cannot maintain (since larger homes require more maintenance). The focus group with seniors conducted as part of the community engagement affirmed that some residents are remaining in homes larger than they would prefer because of lack of options.

Figure H-14. Housing size mismatch, 2010



Source: US Census, ACS 5-Year Estimate

Housing Opportunities and Constraints

The analysis of housing needs points to a demand for new housing opportunities, including lower-cost and smaller housing options or “Missing Middle” housing, as well as Affordable Housing units. Residential development is influenced by various factors, including historical development patterns, existing land use regulations, public investment, community support or opposition, market demand, natural resources protection areas, municipal infrastructure, and the availability of developable land. This section provides an overview of factors that provide opportunities and constraints impacting residential development in Wrentham, including physical and regulatory obstacles.

Municipal Tools

Wrentham has several existing assets to advance housing goals.

Wrentham’s Housing Authority operates two developments. Bennett Gardens includes 66 one-bedroom units for seniors and people with disabilities, and Emerald Lane includes 15 units of family housing with four 4 bedroom units, five 3 bedroom units, and six 2 bedroom units.

In 2016, the Town of Wrentham voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act, and a Community Preservation Committee was established to administer the funds. The Community Preservation Act, or CPA, was enacted by the Massachusetts legislature in 2000 to give communities a vehicle to fund open space preservation, Affordable Housing, historical preservation and recreation. Wrentham’s CPA funds have been approved for use in nine different projects, including the preparation of the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan, creation of a playground at the Rice Complex, and restoration of the paintings of a Wrentham resident and renowned artist. Two of the nine projects have been administered by the Wrentham Housing Authority, both of which were the installation of new basketball hoops. The CPA provides opportunity for further investment in Wrentham’s Affordable Housing stock (also known as “community housing”), which it has not yet provided.

Most recently, in 2019, Wrentham earned the Housing Choice Community designation for producing new housing and adopting best practices to promote sustainable housing development. The designation allows Wrentham to apply to exclusive Housing Choice Capital Grants, and bolsters its applications to other state funding programs, such as MassWorks and MassDOT capital projects.

In addition, there are several municipal tools that Wrentham could consider cultivating, depending on its goals.

Section 55C of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 44 enables the creation of a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund. A housing trust allows municipalities to collect funds for Affordable Housing and separate those funds from the general municipal budget. These funds can then be used for Affordable Housing production and preservation programs. Dozens of communities across the state currently have Affordable Housing trusts. CPC funds are the most common source of funding; other common sources include inclusionary zoning payments, other developer fees, a municipality’s general fund, tax title sales, donations, and payments from special bylaws. Wrentham does not have a housing trust.

In addition, Wrentham’s most recent Housing Production Plan (HPP) was adopted in 2005. The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development approves HPPs for a five-year period, meaning that Wrentham’s HPP expired more than a decade ago. An updated Housing Production Plan would assist the Town in directing and leveraging its resources to meet the housing needs of Wrentham. They are useful supplements to Master Plans, providing a more detailed assessment of housing need, limitations, locations for potential housing development, goals, and strategies.

Zoning and Permitting

What is zoning?

Zoning is one of the most important tools a municipality has to help achieve the community's vision for the future. Modifications to the zoning and permitting requirements could improve the mix of housing available in Wrentham, in terms of affordability, housing diversity, and the development process.

Local zoning bylaws often define the allowable use of development, such as residential, commercial, or industrial, as well as characteristics such as the appropriate height, lots size, placement and massing of structures, and parking requirements. Importantly, while zoning regulates the use and design of development, zoning cannot mandate certain development to occur. For example, a community may desire a specific type of use to occur on a property, and it may be zoned to allow or even encourage such a use, but such investments in changes on a property are ultimately decided by private owners, institutions, or the entities that own or control the property. Unless the Town owns or controls a property and is willing to make an investment, it cannot mandate change through zoning.

The map on the next page shows the zoning districts in Wrentham, along with the land designated by the Town Assessor as both vacant and developable. Residential uses are allowed in R-30, R-43, R-87, VZ-A (Village District Zoning Subarea A), and VZ-B (Village District Zoning Subarea B). Based on the Assessor's data, there are significant areas for new development within all of these districts except for VZ-B.

Housing Diversity and Cost

The 2005 Housing Production Plan identified zoning as one of the key constraints to development: "Wrentham's zoning only permits single family homes by right...No zoning district in Wrentham currently permits more than 3 dwellings within a given building. Further, Wrentham zoning does not encourage smaller housing types which could be renter occupied. Addressing these permitting constraints is probably the most important task to facilitating greater production of affordable housing."¹

Recent re-zoning efforts have created more opportunity for residential development. In 2018, Wrentham adopted the Village Center District at Town Meeting to encourage a more attractive and walkable Town Center. Its intent is to continue the Town Center street grid to expand Wrentham's historical Town Center by providing additional retail and housing, as well as mixed use development opportunities. The District is divided into two sub-areas: the traditional village (Subdistrict A) and the vacant Tyco site (Subdistrict B). The Village Center District allows for mixed-use of residential and commercial/service establishments to complement existing businesses, enhances walkability of the Town Center, and helps ensure quality design. In terms of residential uses, a "double attached dwelling" (e.g. a two-unit rowhouse) and a "multiple attached dwelling" (e.g. a three-unit rowhouse) is permitted by special permit in some areas of the District, and mixed-use development (e.g. a shop on the first floor and multifamily housing above, or a shop adjacent to a multifamily building on the same lot) is permitted by special permit throughout the District. The lot requirements and dimensional standards are also relaxed, allowing for more compact, walkable development. There is potential for substantial new residential development in the Village Center. When the zoning was being considered for adoption, it was estimated that it could create the potential for approximately 230 new housing units.

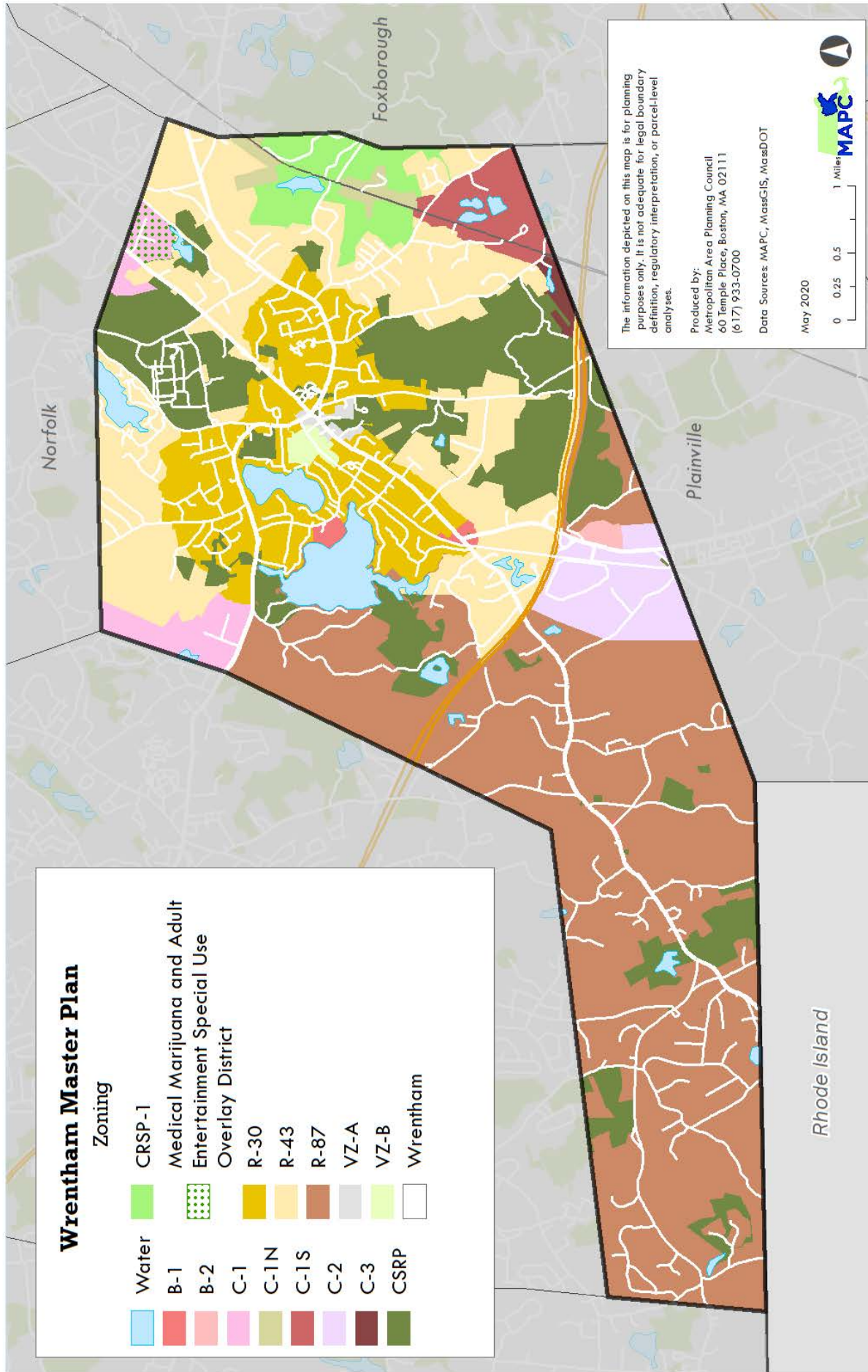
¹ Wrentham Housing Production Plan, 2005

In addition, a zoning amendment adopted in 2019 allows for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) or “granny flats”. According to Wrentham’s zoning, an ADU is a self-contained housing unit incorporated within a single-family home and must be occupied by a relative. Through this amendment, Wrentham helped increase the potential for smaller housing options, particularly for intergenerational households. Based on conversations with Town staff, since adoption of the amendment, there has been great interest in developing ADUs.

Nonetheless, as of 2020, single-family housing is still the only housing allowed by right in Wrentham. A special permit is required for a two-unit row house, a three-unit row house, and the conversion of a single family home to a two-unit row house. Special permits allow for Town Boards to hold more discretion over development approvals, and in doing so, they also introduce costs, uncertainty, and inefficiency in the development process.

Similarly, although the ADU bylaw created smaller housing options for family members of Wrentham homeowners, Wrentham’s zoning continues to create the conditions that promote larger housing types. One of the main factors in the cost of housing is the cost of land. In a desirable place like Wrentham, the cost of land is very high. To cover the cost of land, developers build larger, more expensive homes. Zoning regulations that require a certain amount of land for each new home add to the cost of building new housing. Developers then pass that cost on to the homebuyer.

For example, outside of the Town Center, each new home must be built on a lot of at least 30,000 square feet, more than a half-acre. Under current conditions, many of the homes in Wrentham’s neighborhoods that were built a few decades ago, such as along Archer Street or along Hamilton Road off of East Street, would no longer be permitted. The lot sizes in these areas are approximately 15,000 square feet or one-third of an acre, not meeting the 30,000 square feet minimum lot size requirement. Much of Wrentham falls within the R-87 zoning district, which requires 87,000 square feet or two acres per home. These requirements for single-family homes on large lots, in effect, encourage developers to build larger or more expensive homes in order to cover the cost of the land. There are trade-offs to maintaining zoning that promotes single-family homes on lots of a certain size, and the increase in housing costs is one of the impacts to consider.



Open Space Protection

Zoning can also help provide housing options while protecting natural resources and open space. Towns often require large lots with the intent of preserving semi-rural character and open space, both of which are of highest priority to the Wrentham community. However, in many cases there are more effective ways to protect open space that do not add to the cost of housing—specifically, conserving land in perpetuity is the only sure-fire way to protect open space and should be a high priority for the Town over the next 10 years.

Wrentham’s Open Space Preservation bylaw aims to do just this by providing developers an option to cluster the housing in a subdivision if they permanently protect some of the open space. The bylaw has helped to protect over 400 acres, including in the Pond Meadow, Wampanoag Estates, and Badus Brook developments. Wrentham’s 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan includes a recommendation to “encourage developers to use Open Space Preservation Bylaw” by amending the bylaw to allow Open Space Preservation development by right, as well as by promoting the benefits of open space preservation development.

Affordability

Wrentham’s zoning does require Affordability in senior living communities: at least 5% of homeownership units and 25% of rental units in a senior living community must be Affordable. As of January 2021, one such project is currently being proposed. In addition, there are density bonus incentives for further Affordable Housing, meaning that developers may build a greater number of bedrooms if they provide more Affordable units.

Municipal Infrastructure

Although there are several private wastewater treatment facilities in the Town, Wrentham does not have a municipal sewer system. The lack of municipal infrastructure creates a significant obstacle to developing more housing, including in the Town Center. Institutions and larger campuses have met their needs independently: several municipal buildings in the Town Center area, including the new Public Safety building, share a small wastewater treatment facility with the Wrentham Elementary School; King Philip Regional High School maintains a large facility for its uses; the Wrentham Developmental Center has its own, older treatment facility; and the Wrentham Premium Outlets built a substantial treatment facility for its needs. Other private systems have also been installed at various sites. Unused septic and treatment facility capacity of oversized systems might be made available for use by local buildings constrained by the limitations their sites place on expansion of areas or uses. This could be helpful in areas where greater densities are sought such as in Town Center, or where soils cannot accept the anticipated burdens. Recent improvements and innovations in package treatment plants have greatly reduced the cost and area needed for new facilities, making them competitive with traditional septic systems in some instances. Private parties may also seek to create district treatment facilities to serve a local demand, helping to achieve desired levels of development.

Wrentham draws its water supply from a series of wells on the north and south sides of Lake Pearl. Those wells all draw from the Charles River Watershed. Other community wells are located near Crocker Pond and north of Thurston Street, with a transient well located to the eastern side of Route 1. Private wells exist off Beech Street, and on the Franklin line in Sheldonville. Most of Wrentham is served by municipal wells, but some private wells have been drilled, particularly in the Sheldonville area. The water division of the Department of Public Works maintains and operates the 79 miles of water mains. Like most communities in eastern Massachusetts, Wrentham is confined by annual withdrawal limits to its wells set by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Unlike water and sewer service, the provision of education and public safety services are not dependent on environmental factors, but rather on factors such as the municipal budget and the limitations imposed by Proposition 2 ½.¹ Wrentham has two elementary schools for the Town and participates in the King Philip Regional school system with Norfolk and Plainville. The King Philip High School is located in Wrentham, while the King Philip Middle School is located in Norfolk. Since 2005, school enrollment in the High School has increased by 5% and decreased by 10% in the Middle School.

Physical and natural constraints

The 2005 Housing Production Plan identified wetlands protections and requirements for wastewater treatment as another key constraint to development. If development continues to spread, new housing will be pushed to sites with poor soils and higher groundwater levels, requiring more expensive engineering solutions to treat wastewater.² However, zoning amendments, infrastructure investments, and other strategies can help support “smart growth,” in which development is more compact and efficient and directed towards locations more suitable for development, such as areas that have already been developed. Recent rezoning efforts in Town Center and along Route 1 help to direct growth to these strategic locations.

¹ Proposition 2 1/2 places constraints on the amount of property taxes a city or town can levy and on how much the levy can be increased from year to year.

² DEP regs 310 CMR 15.000 et seq., commonly referred to as “Title V”

Community engagement

Based on the town-wide survey conducted in Fall 2020 and focus groups conducted in January 2021, the following strengths, challenges, and opportunities related to housing were identified.

Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong school system and lower taxes than closer to Boston • Proximity to Boston and Providence • Mixed-income housing at Eagle Brook is really helpful at preventing stigma against Affordable Housing residents • Eagle Brook provides an attractive for families and low-income households • Pond Meadow provides an attractive option for seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New housing is often large and expensive, i.e. “McMansions” • Lack of ownership options for smaller homes appropriate for seniors wanting to downsize and new households, suggesting demand for “Missing Middle” housing • Affordable Housing units are older and small • Lack of awareness and information about Affordable Housing units • Difficult for new residents to learn about local governance, as well as community activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for housing development on vacant Tyco Valve site in Town Center

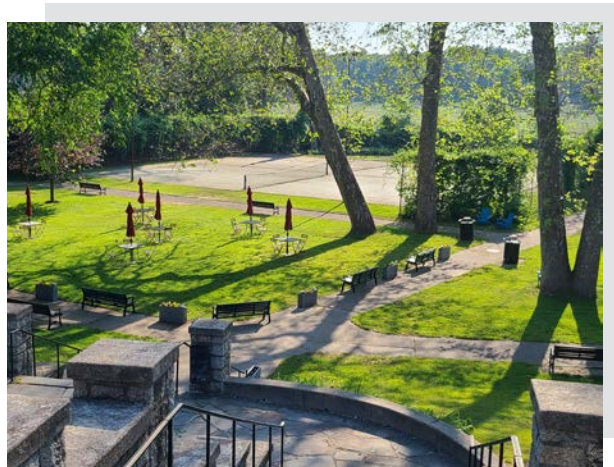
Existing Conditions Assessment: Transportation

Wrentham’s car-centric transportation network reflects mostly late 20th century and 21st century suburban and lower-density development, with regional automobile access via Route 1 and I-495 but a lack of sidewalks within the Town itself. (See the Historical and Cultural Resources topic to learn more about Wrentham’s transportation history.) While Wrentham is not served by rail, it does have regional on-demand (microtransit) bus service provided by the Greater Attleboro and Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA). As such, residents and workers travel by car for the majority of their work and daily needs trips.

A successful transportation network plans for the efficient, enjoyable, and safe movement of people and goods and provides multiple travel mode options for people to get where they want to go. Transportation affects land use and development as well as the environment, including air quality, noise, water quality, and climate change. Similarly, land use and housing development patterns affect transportation patterns. For example, when housing is near to jobs, then commutes are shorter. Furthermore, when houses are nearer to destinations, such as schools, parks, or shops, people can walk or bike to get where they are going, thus reducing traffic congestion.

The existing transportation network also affects the health and safety of all users, particularly those without access to an automobile who use transit, walking, and cycling to connect to their daily needs. As such, an equitable, well-designed and functional transportation network can have positive impacts on economic development and the quality of life for the entire community.

The majority of the data on commuting, automobile use and transit used for this Master Plan are from surveys and measurements conducted prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, which changed how many people travel to work, school, and other daily needs in 2020. Where possible, information on how the pandemic may alter travel patterns long-term is included in this topic.



Source: Diane Glass

Commuting Characteristics

Vehicle Ownership

Wrentham residents own an average of 2.4 vehicles per household (2014 Massachusetts Vehicle Census), and the average household drives about 80 miles per day. These figures are higher than Statewide averages and reflect the land use patterns and lack of non-driving mobility options available within the Town. The relative low-density residential neighborhoods, separation of housing from jobs and businesses, and lack of public transit coverage and opportunities to walk and bike to destinations safely can help explain the low rate of households with zero vehicles (3.5%), and the tendency for most households to rely on one or more vehicles. Nonetheless, the Town has approximately 150 households without an automobile who are impeded by the lack of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections.

Commutes

As noted in the Economic Development topic from Phase I of Wrentham's Master Plan (2020), a majority of residents drive to work and most of those who work outside the home spent more than an hour commuting each day, based upon data collected prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. About 45% of Wrentham residents live within a 30-minute commute from their job, which is similar to other communities in the Greater Boston region (46%) but less than the average Statewide (53%). Also noteworthy is that a larger percent of Wrentham residents have commute times of over an hour (21%) as compared to the region and Massachusetts as a whole (15% and 13% respectively). Between six and nine percent of Wrentham residents who work outside of the home take transit (2015-2019 ACS). These travel mode percentages for Wrentham have remained relatively stable over the last 10 years.

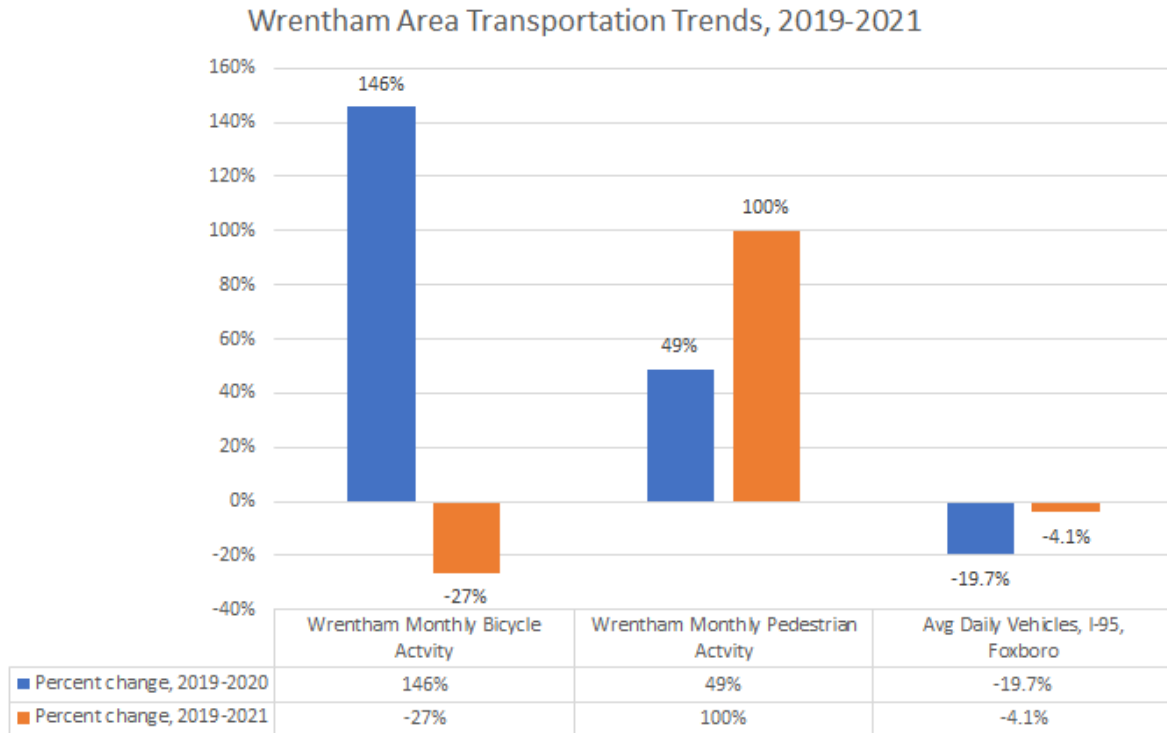
Transportation Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Travel patterns, particularly work-related trips, have changed for many during the pandemic. Most office workers in 2020 and into 2021 have been working from home remotely, and most schools and universities held remote learning as well in 2020. These changes have led to significant adaptations in auto, walking, biking, and transit trips in Greater Boston. For Wrentham, the pandemic has led to 19% reduction in traffic on State-owned roads in the town in 2020, but for some months pedestrian activity in Town more than doubled over the past two years as more people spent time at home. Bicycle activity initially more than doubled in 2020, but then fell below pre-pandemic levels in 2021, likely due to the lack of bicycle infrastructure in the Town. This presents a significant opportunity to improve active transportation facilities to ensure these trips are safe and convenient. Finally, both parking activity at the nearby Norfolk commuter rail station and overall commuter rail ridership have decreased substantially, but traffic on I-95 is nearly back to 2019 levels. These data suggest that some residents in the area who previously rode transit are now driving to their destinations. Wrentham area transportation trends are illustrated in Figure T-1.

The longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on travel are unknown; however, recent data and surveys suggest that while some workers may choose to work remotely full time, many who can work from home will return to their work sites two to three days per week.¹ Those working in food services, education, and health care (many of whom have continued to work on site during the pandemic)

1 MAPC 2021 survey of 1,200 residents and workers in the Neponset Valley region (including Wrentham); see chapter 2 of Neponset Valley Route 1/1A Corridor Mobility Study (December 2021) completed by MAPC.

Figure T-1: Wrentham Area Transportation Trends, 2019-2021



will continue to commute to their jobs, but with changes in their work patterns. For example, retail and restaurants will evolve with workers interfacing less with customers and instead fulfilling and delivering online orders, creating shifts in traffic generation and parking needs.

Employment Concentrations/Connections

As noted in the Economic Development topic from Phase I of the Master Plan, most residents work northeast of Wrentham in locations such as Boston, Walpole, and Norwood. The top job categories for Wrentham residents include health care, retail, education, plus professional, scientific, and technical. For jobs in Wrentham, retail, education, and accommodation/food service are the top three, with concentrations at the Premium Outlet, Town Center, and the Wrentham State School. This creates a workforce and jobs mismatch (as noted in the Economic Development topic) that requires longer commutes for both Wrentham residents as well as those commuting into Town, mainly from the south.

There are only 530 employed Wrentham residents that also work in the town. In contrast, nearly 6,000 residents leave Wrentham for work. As noted in the “Commutes” section earlier in this report, only 6-9% of residents who work outside the home take transit, meaning the vast majority of residents leaving the town to work are driving. There are also nearly 7,000 people who live outside of Wrentham but commute into the town to work. This significant inflow and outflow of people to and from Wrentham leads to an increase in traffic on the town’s main connector roads, especially at prime commute times.

Existing Networks

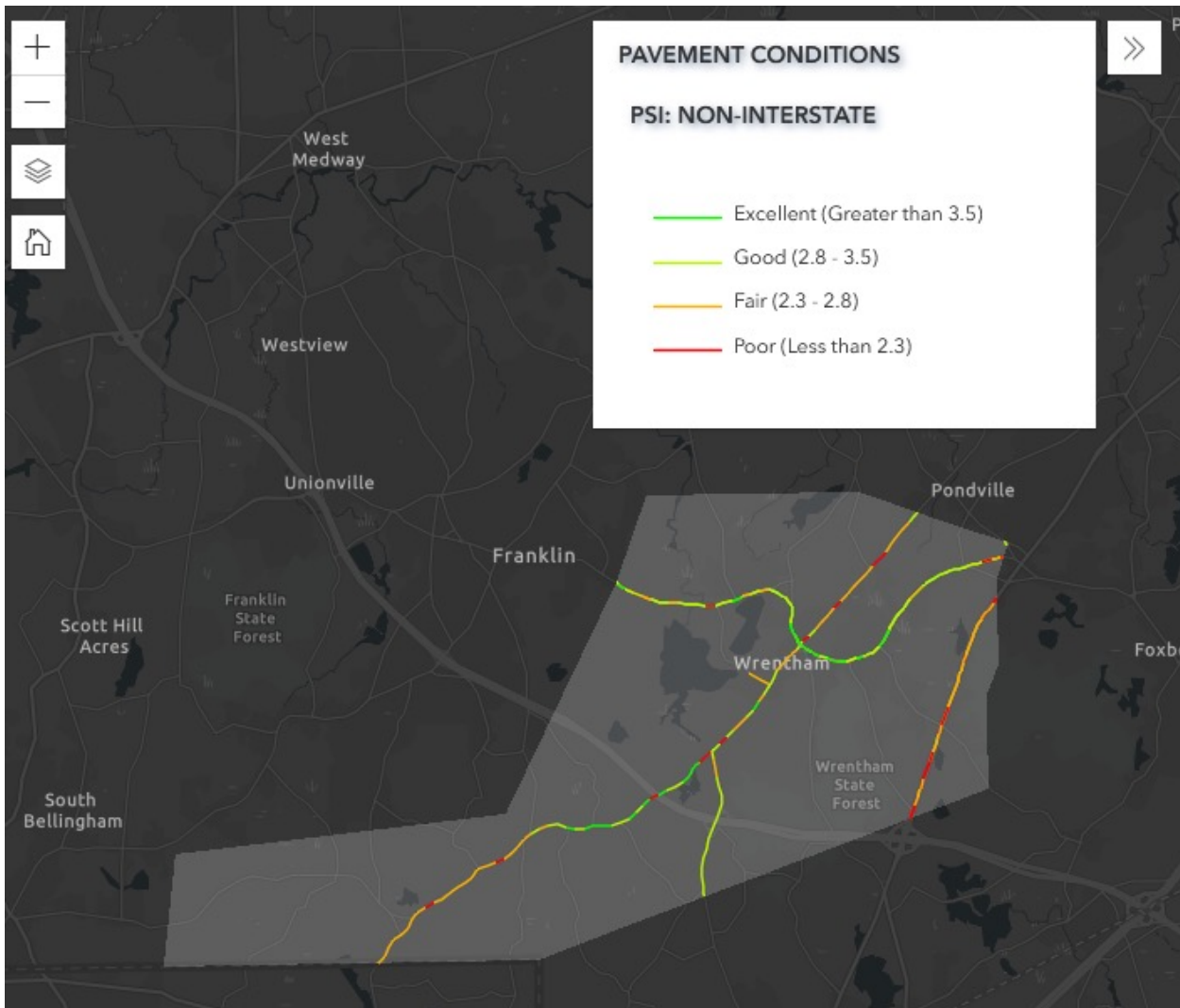
Roads and Streets

Roadways and streets provide critical connectivity in Wrentham, particularly along east-west routes that connect with the Providence Turnpike (Route 1), Route 1A, and Route 121, which are the main north-south roadways. The main east-west corridor is Route 140 (Franklin Street/East Street). I-495 plays a prominent role for Town traffic, particularly around the interchanges with Route 1A and Route 1. Town-maintained streets also provide important connections within Wrentham, particularly to schools, employment, and neighborhood centers. As noted in the Community Facilities and Services topic, many of the town's roads need significant maintenance and repair due to a prolonged lack of funding. It is estimated that more than \$15 million in funding is needed to repair the Town's existing roadways.

Functional Classification of Roadways

Wrentham has 96 miles of streets and roadways within its town limits, which includes 26 miles of State-maintained facilities. Nearly 70 percent of the street network is town-controlled, with a vast

Figure T-2: Wrentham Pavement Conditions



Source: MassDOT pavement condition rankings as defined at <https://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/DataViewers/MunicipalDashboard/mainView.html?town=Wrentham&dash=Investment>

2 <https://gis.massdot.state.ma.us/DataViewers/MunicipalDashboard/>

majority of those classified as local streets.² The Wrentham map on the following page shows the functional classification of roadways.

Pavement Management

Approximately half of Wrentham’s non-interstate road miles are rated “excellent” or “good” by MassDOT. A vast majority of the interstate lane miles are also rated “excellent” or “good”. Areas that have “fair” or “poor” ratings include nearly all of Route 1, as well as sections of Route 1A and Route 121.

Figure T-4: Average Daily Vehicular Traffic Counts in Wrentham, Select Locations

Location	2004	2016	2020
West Street (Rt 121), south of I-495	7,200	10,100	7,100
Dedham St (Rt 1A), north of Rt. 140	N/A	8,400	7,000*
Washington St (Rt. 1) near Hawes St	25,000	33,639**	27,700*
Creek St, west of Rt 1A	5,500	5,100	5,300
I-495, north of Rt. 1	74,600	92,200	67,200
Rt 1A ramp to Northbound I-495	4,600	3,600*	3,600*

*MassDOT estimate. **2019 count.
Data taken from MassDOT and previous Wrentham planning studies

Traffic Volumes

A review of MassDOT data shows that some streets in Wrentham have seen increasing vehicular traffic since the last Master Plan was completed in 2004. Key corridors that saw traffic increases include West Street, Washington Street/Route 1, and I-495. As noted earlier, the COVID-19 pandemic reduced overall vehicle traffic in 2020, with Wrentham overall experiencing a 19% decrease in traffic in 2020. Preliminary data in greater Boston suggest that 2021 traffic volumes are approaching 2019 levels, although morning and afternoon peak period traffic has not necessarily returned to pre-pandemic levels (Boston Indicators).

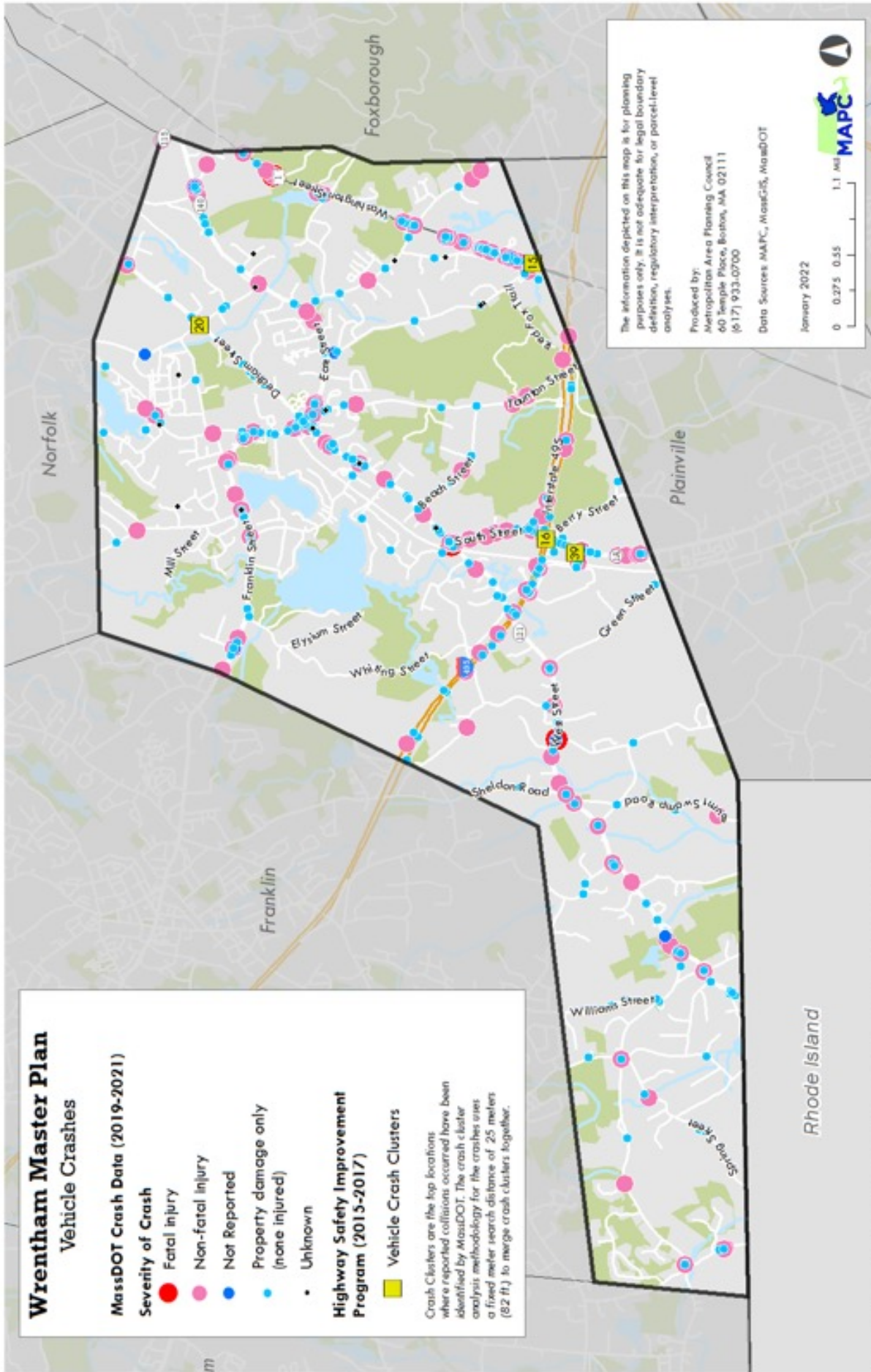
Figure T-5: Wrentham and Norfolk Vehicle Crash Comparison

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Vehicle Crashes in Wrentham	358	348	361	196
Vehicle Crashes in Norfolk County	15,014	14,139	14,086	9,500

Source: MassDOT Crash Data Portal

Traffic Safety

In Wrentham the number of total traffic crashes remained fairly consistent, averaging just over 350 crashes per year from 2017 to 2019. In contrast, the total crashes in Norfolk County have been steadily decreasing over the same time. The Town saw a nearly 60% decrease in crashes in 2020 while Norfolk County saw a 67% decrease, likely due to decreased travel as a result of the pandemic.



There were four fatal crashes in the town from 2017-2020 (MassDOT Crash Data Portal).

The top 5% of crash clusters in the Town from 2016-2018 were located at the intersections of Route 1A/Winter St/North St, Route 1A/Interstate 495, and Route 1A/Premium Outlet Blvd.

The majority of crashes over the last three years resulted in either a non-fatal injury or property damage in Wrentham. From 2015-2017, there were four locations in Wrentham that were included in MassDOT's top locations where reported collisions occurred. These locations include Route 1A/Winter St/North St, Route 1A/Interstate 495, Route 1A/Premium Outlet Blvd and Route 1/Madison St. Future traffic calming and safety improvements should be prioritized at these locations, as they are consistently high crash locations.

Traffic Operations and Prior Studies

Recommendations from Wrentham's previous Master Plan in 2004 included consideration of better transit access, better roadway safety to reduce crashes and congestion, better pedestrian (sidewalk) and bicycle infrastructure, better roadway standards, improved transit, and studies for improvements along Route 1 and Route 1A (including the Route 1A/I-495 interchange) and for circulation and parking improvements for Wampum Corner and Town Center. Studies have been completed for Routes 1 and 1A and Town Center (described below), and the town now has better transit service through GATRA. However, the Town still lacks pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and has areas of congestion and crash clusters.

The 2017 Route 1A study, which was conducted by the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) for the Boston Region Metropolitan Organization (MPO), included recommendations for traffic control (including signals and signage) at various intersections, including at I-495 and the Wrentham Premium Outlets. The study also recommended adding 5-foot shoulders on both sides of Route 1A for bicycle lanes, a continuous sidewalk, and a parallel multi-use path along the utility corridor. The 2018 Route 1 study recommendations included better access management through consolidated driveways and better left-turn lane access. The study also recommended a multi-use path for rolling/walking/cycling parallel to Route 1

Town Center Circulation

Wrentham's Town Center presents the greatest transportation challenge in Town with the intersection of critical streets (Route 1A, Route 140), as well as the presence of key commercial establishments (stores, restaurants, etc.) and recreational nodes (Town Common, Sweatt Park). Issues in the area include morning and afternoon traffic congestion and safety problems with conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. 2017 counts showed that vehicular traffic on Route 1A in the Town Center averaged 13,000 to 16,000 vehicles per day; however, recent counts by MassDOT both prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic (2016-2020) suggest lower daily traffic volumes of 11,500 to 14,000 vehicles on Route 1A and 9,500 vehicles on Route 140 in the Town Center. Improving Town Center circulation could support Town businesses by increasing access to the Town Center, and making it safer for people to walk, bike, and use mobility devices throughout the area.

A CTPS study of Wrentham Common in 2009 recommended changes to the Town Center traffic flow, including the option of closing David Brown Way in the middle of the Common, realigning other streets, improving sidewalks and crosswalks, changing angled parking to parallel parking, and adding a small rotary at Common Street and Route 1A. The 2017 Route 1A study recommended

similar changes in the area, including revising the parking to parallel and installing a traffic signal at Common Street. None of these recommendations have been implemented, and the area continues to have traffic and pedestrian safety challenges.

In 2021, Wrentham completed a COVID-19 Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP), which included recommendations that brought together transportation and economic development. The three transportation-related recommendations were to develop a Complete Streets policy (recommendation #4), to conduct a pedestrian safety audit in the Town Center (recommendation #5), and to develop a Town Center walking loop feasibility study (recommendation #7). MAPC worked with Town staff and stakeholders from November – December 2021 to advance recommendations 4 and 5; the results of these activities are discussed briefly elsewhere in this topic and comprehensively in a memo that MAPC provided to Town staff and stakeholders.

A significant challenge the Town faces with implementing safety improvements to the Town Center is that both major roads running through this area (Routes 1A and 140) are State-owned. The Town currently has a project initiated in the Boston MPO Transportation Improvement Program process to receive federal funding to make changes more feasible.

Town Center Parking

Wrentham is a vehicle-oriented town with limited transit service and pedestrian or bike infrastructure. However, there is an abundance of parking at destinations of interest, including employment, commercial, and recreational centers. Not having proper management of parking, combined with the lack of non-driving alternatives, can lead to resident or visitor frustration, and can cause a perceived loss of business. However, oversupplying parking can lead to higher development costs and underutilized space can encourage driving over alternative modes of transportation, which creates more wear and tear on roadways, increases congestion, creates conflicts with walkers, cyclists and other roadway users, and releases more greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.

Significant on-street and off-street public parking is provided in Wrentham Center. Almost all the public parking is free and unrestricted, and some businesses provide their own off-street lots as well. The on-street parking spaces are mostly parallel to the curb, except for a cluster of angled spaces on the west side of Route 1A (South Street). A 2017 study of the Route 1A corridor in Wrentham conducted by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization recommended that these angled spaces be converted to parallel parking. Drivers backing out of the angled spaces are often unable to see oncoming southbound traffic on Route 1A, and several of these spaces are located immediately adjacent to crosswalks, creating visibility challenges and safety hazards for pedestrians as well.

Off-street public parking in Wrentham Center is provided at Town Hall, as well as in a municipal parking lot with gravel surfacing on the northwest corner of the Route 1A/Route 140 intersection. The parking provided in this lot is abundant but mostly underutilized, likely due to a combination of the poor quality of the lot, the need to cross the heavily trafficked and poorly signaled Route 140 on foot to access Town establishments from the lot, and a desire for drivers to park as close as possible to the establishments they patronize. The Town of Wrentham plans to pave and landscape the lot to make it a more attractive option for people driving to the Center.

On-street public parking spaces in Wrentham Center are clearly defined with pavement markings, but just south of the Center on Route 1A, no such markings exist along the wide roadway shoulders there. In the absence of any signage indicating whether parking is allowed, some drivers park along these roadway shoulders, with their parked vehicles sometimes intruding on the grassy verges that separate the pedestrian sidewalks from the roadway. In one instance, the former verge outside a small office building has been paved over to accommodate vehicular parking – even though the building has abundant off-street parking in the back and the existing roadway shoulder provides plenty of space to accommodate informally parked vehicles. A parking study in Wrentham Center would provide insight into how to better manage the overall on- and off-street parking supply, to define some areas where parking may be restricted, and to reconfigure some parking/roadway spaces to better accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

Electrification and Charging Infrastructure

Electric vehicles such as cars, bikes, and scooters are becoming increasingly popular in Massachusetts. Electrification of private vehicles as well as public transit and municipal fleets are important strategies to meet Greenhouse Gas Emissions goals as well as for combating climate change and improving air quality.

In Wrentham, there are two locations that have public electric DC fast charging stations available, including Wrentham Premium Outlets (4 ports), and a fuel station at 580 Washington Street (4 ports). However, there are no publicly accessible Level 2 charging stations in Wrentham. There are more charging stations in surrounding towns, however the locations and total number of charging stations are limited.

Wrentham has opportunities to increase public charging resources in town. Programs are available for individuals, businesses, and non-profits for vehicles and charging infrastructure through the Massachusetts Offers Rebates for Electric Vehicles (MOR-EV) program, Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP), and National Grid. See the goals and strategies section for more information.

Autonomous Vehicles

Autonomous vehicles – also sometimes referred to as driver-less vehicles or self-driving vehicles – are vehicles that rely on onboard technologies such as radar, Lidar (light detection and ranging), and GPS (global positioning systems) to sense and interpret its environment and navigate itself without human intervention. Autonomous vehicles are intended to safely operate on public roadways and interact with existing infrastructure and other roadway users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles operated by humans.

The deployment of autonomous vehicles holds the potential to positively transform the transportation network. Autonomous vehicles will affect not only transportation systems, but also the economy, safety, workforce, environment, land use, and energy use. The positive transformational impacts include strengthening public transportation, reducing crashes and fatalities for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions. Autonomous vehicles also have the capability to lessen the need for parking facilities and increase mobility for those who cannot drive. However, without appropriate legislation and policies in place, the eventual widespread deployment of autonomous vehicles could increase safety risks for drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists in addition to increased traffic congestion, vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and greenhouse gas emissions.

An important step to prepare for the future of autonomous vehicles is for the Town of Wrentham to start discussing and planning for the onset of autonomous technologies. The Town of Wrentham can start planning by holding public workshops with constituents as well as monitoring Federal and State developments and make sure their interests are voiced.

Freight

Wrentham does not have businesses that generate a significant amount of freight traffic. However, both observations by MAPC and comments at Wrentham transportation focus groups noted that a considerable amount of truck traffic from the local quarry and businesses along Franklin Street/Route 140 travel through the Town Center area on a regular basis, creating conflicts with pedestrians and school and neighborhood travel.

There is no mention of Wrentham or this section of I-495 in 2018 Massachusetts Freight Plan, and no critical freight corridors are identified in the 2019 Boston Region MPO Freight Planning Action Plan Update. MAPC's 2021 analysis of e-commerce in Greater Boston noted that the South West Advisory Planning (SWAP) Committee subregion (which includes Wrentham) has experienced growth in the number of Amazon facilities. The continued growth of online retail will likely result in the continued expansion of the number of e-commerce warehouse facilities in Greater Boston.

Current Transportation Improvement Projects

The Town, in partnership with adjacent municipalities and State agencies including MassDOT, has planned for recent transportation improvements. As noted in the Community Facilities and Services topic, a significant portion of the town's roads are in a serious state of disrepair due to a prolonged lack of funding. It is estimated that more than \$15 million in funding is needed to repair the Town's existing roadways. Through State Aid, which ranges from approximately \$250,000 to \$450,000 each year, the Town can fund a handful of roadway improvement projects. It is estimated that an annual investment of 3 million dollars is needed to maintain the town's roads in their present state.¹

- **Boston Region MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** – The TIP is the five-year rolling capital plan for the 97 cities and towns in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) planning area. The TIP documents all transportation projects that will receive federal funding in the region over the next five years
 - Construction of Route I-495/Route 1A ramps (TIP page 11)
- **MassDOT Shared Streets and Spaces Grants** – Established in June 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program assists municipalities in meeting their individual needs for more and safer outdoor recreation, commerce, community activities, and mobility.
 - October 2020 - Wrentham was awarded \$53,797.20 to support outdoor dining and commerce within Wrentham Center, calm traffic, and improve connections to and between key Town parks.
- **Wrentham Capital Improvement Plan** – A CIP provides a blueprint for planning a community's capital expenditures. It coordinates community planning, financial capacity, and physical development.

¹ Town of Wrentham, 2019 Annual Report

- FY21 – DPW, Sidewalks Roadways, \$300,000
- FY22 – Recreation-Rice Complex, Parking Lot Seal Stripe, \$100,000
- FY22 – Recreation-Rice Complex, Walking Path, \$100,000
- FY22 – DPW, Sidewalks Roadways, \$300,000

Public Transit

Around 97% of Wrentham households have at least one vehicle, and a vast majority of residents drive to work. Nonetheless, there are transit services in Wrentham that provide vital links for those who cannot drive, including older adults, persons with disabilities, and teenagers who do not yet drive. Moreover, good transit services can allow a household to forego having a vehicle for each worker or adult and can provide a more sustainable option for getting around for daily needs.

As noted in the Housing topic from Phase I of the Master Plan, 86% of housing units in Wrentham are single-family. The Town has a small but noteworthy amount of multi-unit housing which includes housing for seniors, people with disabilities, people who have low-incomes, and families. Out of 3,821 housing units in Wrentham, 485 or 12.69% are counted in the Subsidized Housing Inventory. These multi-unit housing developments, as well as housing occupied by residents less likely to own or drive a vehicle should be a priority for the town to ensure access to transit opportunities, including GATRA's on-demand microtransit service and senior center shuttles, as discussed below.

During Wrentham transportation focus groups conducted in December 2021, there were multiple mentions of gaps in current transportation services. A focus group specific to the aging and disability experience noted the lack of information available to residents about existing services and how to access them. Another focus group specific to public school administration noted that there are numerous families without access to cars, so when services are provided outside of normal school hours, it is very challenging (or impossible) for those families to access those services.

Bus, Paratransit, and Senior Transportation

Wrentham is served by the Greater Attleboro Transportation Regional Authority (GATRA). GATRA provides the GATRA Go United on-demand microtransit shuttle that services all of Wrentham, plus Franklin, Norfolk, and Foxborough. Residents can travel to and from any destination, with door-to-door service within the four towns in the service area. The service operates Monday-Friday 7 AM to 6 PM and Saturday 9 AM to 6 PM. Between the dates of December 15, 2020 and January 10, 2022, 2,264 Go United trips originated in Wrentham and 2,470 Go United trips ended in Wrentham.

With this service, residents can connect with the MBTA commuter rail in Norfolk and Franklin, as well as other GATRA services such as the Medway T Shuttle (connecting Medway and Norfolk) and the GATRA Go Connect (serving Mansfield, Foxborough and Norton). GATRA also provides dial-a-ride service to other destinations for residents who are seniors (60 and over) or persons with a disability who cannot access other public transportation. Wrentham does not operate its own senior or paratransit service.

The GATRA Go United service replaced GATRA's fixed-route Tri-Town Connector service, which ran from July 2014 to March 2020 before being suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Tri-Town Connector included stops in Wrentham at the Council on Aging, the Liberty Pines housing

development, and the commuter parking lot downtown at the intersection of Route 1A/Route 140. While the Tri-Town Connector also provided connections to the MBTA commuter rail in Norfolk, the route suffered from low ridership from the beginning and was seen by GATRA as having too many stakeholders and objectives to serve any of them well. The new GATRA Go United service was thus seen as an opportunity to better meet the needs of the communities of Wrentham, Franklin, Norfolk, and Foxborough in a more flexible fashion.

Commuter Rail

The nearest commuter rail services are in Norfolk and Franklin on the MBTA Franklin Line and Mansfield on the MBTA Providence/Stoughton Line. All three stations are between five and seven miles from Wrentham Town Center but have park and ride facilities. As of October 2021, the Franklin line provides weekday hourly service in the mornings and afternoon, with trains every two hours in the middle of the day, with less frequent service on the weekends. A trip between Norfolk and South Station in Boston is around 55 minutes. Mansfield station has hourly service on weekdays and trains approximately every two to three hours on weekends, providing a 45-minute travel time to South Station.

TMA and Employee Shuttles

Currently there are no known employee sponsored shuttle, vanpool, or carpool operations in Wrentham. The Neponset Valley Transportation Management Association (TMA) is a partnership that operates employment shuttles, and vanpool/carpool services for members. However, neither the Town nor any Wrentham businesses are members of the TMA.

Walking and Cycling

Wrentham has limited dedicated pedestrian and bicycle facilities, but there are some walking/hiking trails in Town forests and parks, including the Trout Pond Conservation Area and Wrentham State Forest. Pedestrian, bicycle and other "rolling" infrastructure provides a safer and more pleasant way for residents to connect with destinations in town, particularly schools, parks, nature preserves, and neighborhood shops and restaurants.

Improving walkability and bikeability throughout Wrentham was the top priority for respondents to the Town's Phase I Master Plan survey in 2020, with 14 percent of respondents listing it as the most important improvement to be made in the Town. Another 8 percent of Phase I respondents listed improving walkability and bikeability in the Town Center as the most important improvement. This emphasis on walkability and bikeability was reinforced in the Town's Phase II Master Plan survey in 2022, with 49 percent of Phase II respondents indicating that making it safer to walk to/within the Town Center is the one of the most important transportation improvements in Wrentham (second only to 59 percent of respondents highlighting improving safety at high-collision intersections as one of the most important transportation improvements). Making it safer/easier to walk/bike to school (selected by 45 percent of respondents) and making it safer/easier to walk throughout town (selected by 38 percent of respondents) also rated highly as important transportation improvements.

Creating a walking loop from Town Center and around the lakes was one of the recommendations in the Economic Development topic from Phase I of the Master Plan. Furthermore, conducting a pedestrian safety audit in Wrentham's Town Center and conducting a feasibility study for a Town Center walking loop that would connect businesses, schools and recreation facilities were

recommended in Wrentham’s 2021 Local Rapid Recovery Plan (LRRP) for COVID-19. In December 2021, MAPC worked with Town staff and other stakeholders to lay the groundwork for the pedestrian safety audit, which was then conducted by MAPC staff in April 2022. Audit participants built a shared understanding of the elements that comprise a walkable community, observed pedestrian safety conditions in Wrentham Center through an on-site walk, and recommended improvements to the built environment that improve pedestrian safety, accessibility, and comfort for all. A memo summarizing the walk audit process and recommendations will be provided to Town staff and stakeholders.

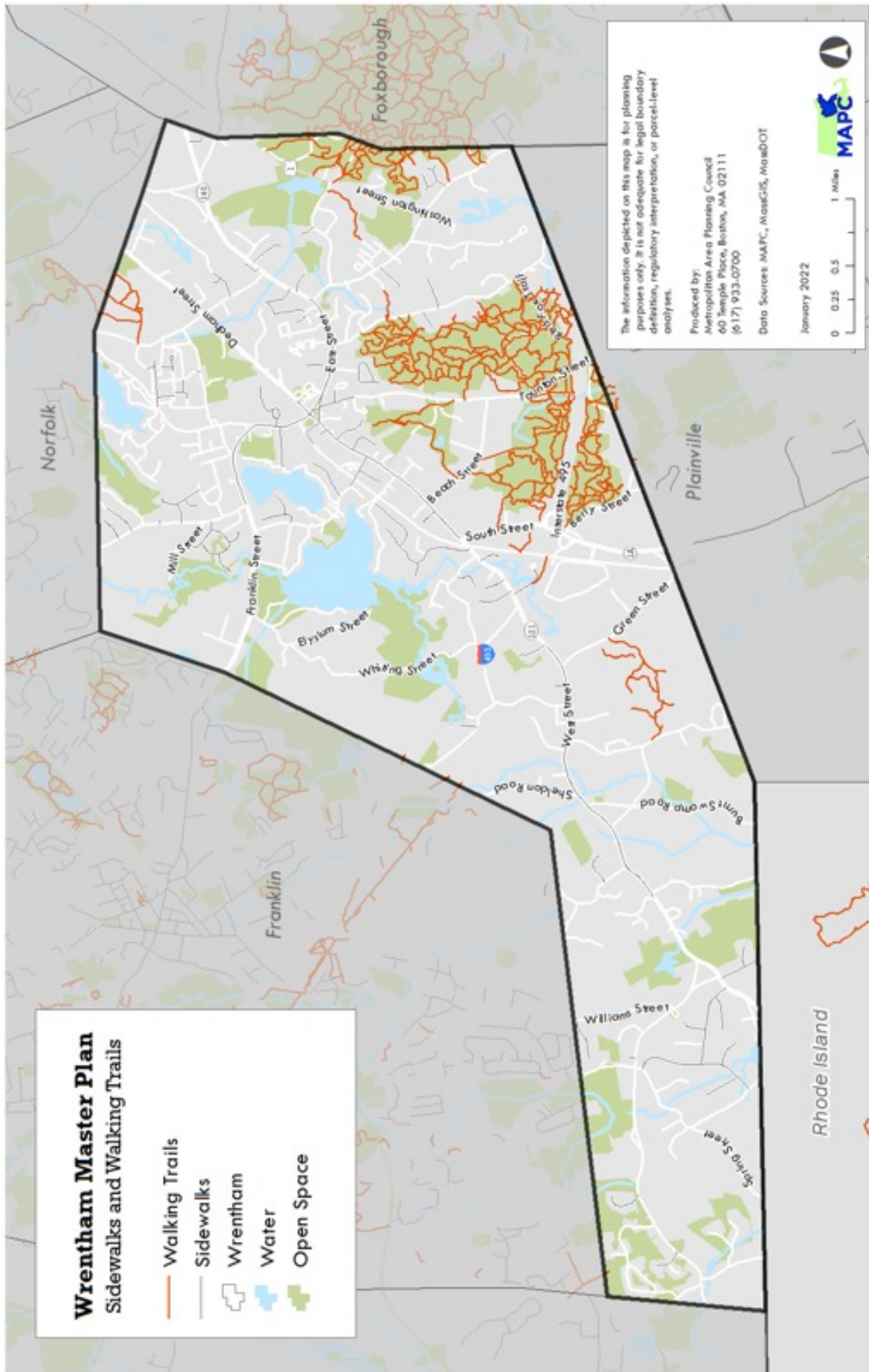
Pedestrian infrastructure improvements in Wrentham Center will advance the goals of the Village Center Overlay District passed by Town Meeting in 2018, which sought to create a more walkable and vibrant Town Center. Pedestrian and bicycle issues in Wrentham Center and throughout Wrentham more broadly have been studied extensively in the past, with the Central Transportation Planning Staff of the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization conducting a corridor study of Route 1A in Wrentham in 2017 and a Wrentham Common traffic safety report in 2009. Both documents recommended bicycle and pedestrian improvements to be implemented at various locations in the Town to enhance safety and accessibility. The April 2022 pedestrian safety audit presented another opportunity to mobilize the Wrentham community to support these and other changes.

Figure T-8: Route of Proposed Metacomet Greenway through Wrentham



Source: www.metacometgreenway.org

MassDOT’s Complete Streets program (described later in this topic) also provides a vehicle for the Town to advance multimodal transportation projects that support increased walking and biking, as well as transit. In December 2021, MAPC worked with Town staff and the Board of Selectmen to lay the groundwork for passing a Town Complete Streets policy, as recommended in the 2021 LRRP. At the end of 2021, the Town executed a letter of intent to pass a Complete Streets policy within one year. The Town then passed and secured MassDOT approval for a Complete Streets policy in March 2022, which will enable the Town to seek technical assistance funding and eventually infrastructure funding for Complete Streets projects.



LandLine Greenway Network

The LandLine Regional Greenway Network is being developed by MAPC in partnership with each of the region's 101 communities. The greenway corridors identified as part of this regional network are planned to be prioritized for active transportation use and are separate from vehicular traffic to the greatest extent feasible, or traffic calmed to allow for sharing the road.

LandLine and local advocates envision a regional trail from Norwood to Plainville using the unused rail bed that once served Wrentham; this is sometimes known as the proposed Metacomet Greenway extending from Wrentham to North Attleboro. This trail would then connect with other trails in Walpole, Norfolk, Foxborough, and Plainville. LandLine would also connect foot paths in Wrentham State Forest with other trails to create a regional footpath to Foxborough and beyond. The Metacomet Greenway corridor is also noted in the Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources topic of this Master Plan.

Sidewalks and Bicycle Facilities

Around only 25% of Wrentham's streets have sidewalks on at least one side and only 2% have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Most of the existing sidewalk network is centered around the Town Center and Route 1A south of the Town Center. Key crosstown streets (including large portions of Taunton Street, Route 140 and Sharon Street) lack sidewalks, as do many streets connecting with local destinations such as Sweatt Beach, the Wrentham Senior Center, and the Wrentham Premium Outlets.

As noted above, there are foot trails in recreation areas such as Wrentham State Forest. There are no bicycle facilities in Wrentham, including none connecting to schools. Figure T-9 shows the existing sidewalk and trail network in Wrentham.

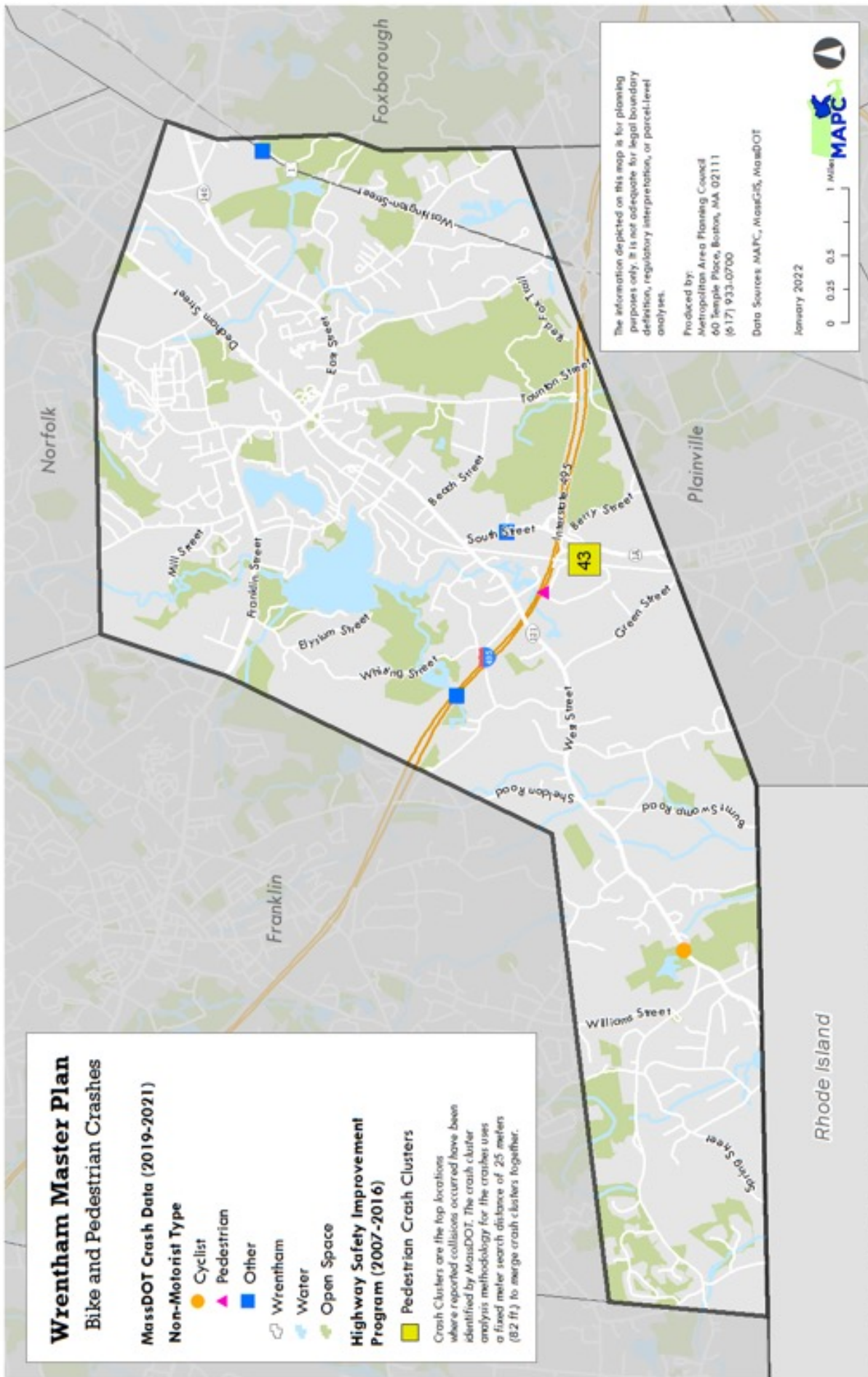
Complete Streets Program

Complete Streets are those that provide safe and accessible options for all travel modes (walking, biking, transit, and motorized vehicles) and for people of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets can improve safety, health, and neighborhood livability by reducing the severity and number of crashes and by promoting walking, running, and cycling. The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program was created to reward municipalities that demonstrate a commitment to embedding Complete Streets in policy and practice. Communities that have a Complete Streets policy and prioritization plan are eligible for technical assistance and funding for projects through MassDOT's Complete Streets program.

Developing a Complete Streets policy was recommended in Wrentham's 2021 Local Rapid Recovery Plan for COVID-19. In December 2021, MAPC worked with Town staff and the Board of Selectmen to lay the groundwork for passing a Town Complete Streets policy. At the end of 2021, the Town executed a letter of intent to pass a Complete Streets policy within one year. The Board of Selectmen subsequently passed a Complete Streets policy in March 2022, which was then approved by MassDOT later that month. This will enable the Town to pursue technical assistance funding for a prioritization plan and eventually infrastructure funding for Town Complete Streets projects.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Crash Data

The most vulnerable users on Wrentham's streets are those that walk, bike, and roll for recreation or transportation. As was previously noted, Wrentham has limited sidewalk coverage and no bicycle facilities, leaving those that do not drive more susceptible to injury. In the last three years, Wrentham



has seen very few bike crashes, likely due to low bike usage in the town. However, this data only reflects crashes that have been reported to MassDOT, and therefore may not include all crashes and injuries in the Town. In the same time period, pedestrian crashes were low overall, but data showed a pedestrian crash cluster near the Wrentham Premium Outlets. This area experiences both a high volume of vehicle traffic and significant pedestrian activity, increasing the possibilities for crashes.

Safe Routes to School

The Massachusetts Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program, a program under MassDOT, works to increase safe biking and walking among elementary and middle school students throughout the State. The program exists in approximately 65 percent of Massachusetts schools. SRTS utilizes the six E's to implement its program- Education, Encouragement, Engagement, Evaluation, Engineering, and Equity. The program can provide technical assistance with important school planning measures like arrival/dismissal plans, walk and bike audits, and developing safe walking and biking routes for students.

In Wrentham, 2 schools were partnered with SRTS in 2021. The schools partnering with SRTS include the Delaney School and the Roderick Elementary School, which are both located half a mile from Wrentham Center. SRTS programs at the Delaney and Roderick schools could improve arrival and dismissal traffic, as well as increase student physical activity before and after school.

In 2021, Wrentham submitted a project application to the Safe Routes to School Program for improvements at the intersection of Route 1A and Randall Road. This location is a critical pedestrian access point for children walking to and from the Roderick and Delaney Schools, yet the crosswalk at this location is deficient and in need of significant safety upgrades.

Existing Conditions Assessment: Community Facilities and Services

The following section presents the current status of community facilities and services in Wrentham. The Town of Wrentham owns and operates a variety of public facilities that serve the public good and make it possible for municipal employees and volunteers to provide services to residents both directly and indirectly. Wrentham's ability to provide adequate facilities and services depends on effective capital planning, a commitment to implementation, and the amount of revenue available for Town government operations. This topic of the Master Plan includes information about the structure of Town administration and provides an overview of the different types of facilities and services provided by the Town of Wrentham.

Municipal Mission Statement

The Town of Wrentham is a municipal government that seeks to promote and support a high quality of life for its citizens. Through the development and contribution of all employees to the maximum of their potential, the Town will provide quality services that result in the highest achievable levels of customer satisfaction and recognition for excellence. Service delivery will be cost effective, based on the needs of the community and the requirements of Town ordinances, and state and federal laws. Our goal is to be the best Town government for our size in Massachusetts and to be recognized throughout the Eastern United States for providing quality service to citizens and visitors.



Source: Diane Glass

Town Government

Pursuant to the Town's General Bylaws, last revised in November 2019, Wrentham is governed by an open town meeting form of government and led by an elected five-member Board of Selectmen. In an Open Town Meeting form of government, all registered voter residents in attendance vote on the budget and other Articles in the Warrant. The warrant lists the meeting's time, place, and agenda. A Town Meeting's action is not valid unless the subject was listed on the Warrant.

The Board of Selectmen is the governing body as well as the Awarding and Licensing Authority of the Town. It is their responsibility for calling all Annual and Special Town Meetings and putting together the Town Meeting Warrants. The primary purpose of the Annual Town Meeting is to appropriate money to fund Town expenses for the fiscal year. The Moderator presides over these meetings at which Articles are presented to voters. Articles are items listed on the warrant.

Appropriations for each town function or department may be in separate articles or one article on the warrant may propose appropriations for all necessary town expenses. The Moderator announces and explains the articles contained in the meeting warrant, conducts the discussion of each article, and announces the results of each vote. The Finance Committee contributes to the decision-making process by analyzing the impacts of Articles and offering their recommendations for or against as they deem appropriate.

Town Departments

The Town of Wrentham's government is comprised of more than 24 departments, each vital to the efficient operation of town business and the provision of public services. The Town Administrator is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and serves as the chief administrative officer of the Town. The Town Administrator is responsible for coordinating day-to-day operations of the community, including supervision of all town departments under the jurisdiction of the Board of Selectmen, and appointing most department heads. A list of Town departments, boards, and commissions which carry out governmental activities, classified by function, is below:

General Government

- Assessing Department
- Board of Selectmen
- Economic Development Commission
- Facilities Management
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Planning and Community Development
- Town Administrator
- Town Clerk
- Town Moderator
- Treasurer/Collector

Public Safety

- Building Department
- Board of Health
- Constables
- Emergency Management
- Fire Department
- Police Department
- Zoning Board of Appeals

Public Works

- Animal Control Officer / Animal Inspector
- Department of Public Works
- Recycling

Human and Health Services

- Council on Aging
- Commission on Disability
- Public Health Nurses
- Veteran's Agent
- Wrentham Housing Authority

Culture and Recreation

- Fiske Public Library
- Historical Commission
- Recreation Commission

Education

- Wrentham Public Schools
 - Delaney School
 - Roderick Elementary School

Capital Improvement Planning

The Town maintains a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to guide improvements to the Town's buildings, equipment, and infrastructure, which is developed and updated annually by the Town Manager and Town Department heads and submitted to the Finance Committee for feedback. The CIP is a working document as items are added, removed, or moved out depending on needs and finances. While individual department heads are charged with submitting capital requests for their departmental needs, the Town's Director of Facilities & Capital Planning, develops the capital plan for all Town owned buildings.

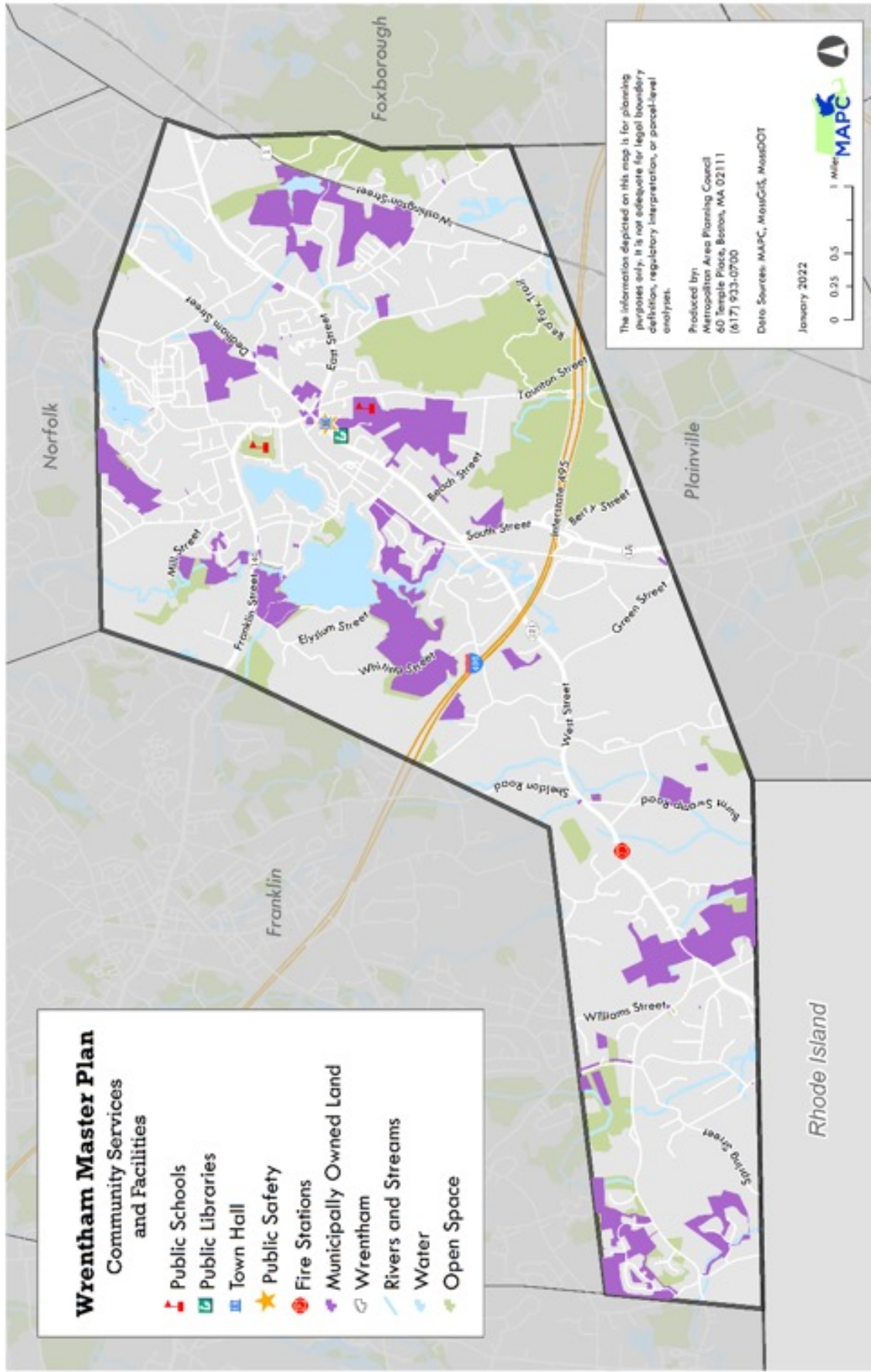
The FY2022 CIP provides a detailed list of projects that have been completed or are currently being worked on, and information on funding sources for capital improvement projects. In addition to public infrastructure and general municipal facilities, the Town also makes capital investments in other types of community facilities projects including parks and open space, recreational facilities, and community and human services facilities.

In 2020, a Facility Condition Assessment was prepared for the Town of Wrentham by Dude Solutions in partnership with ALPHA Facilities Solutions, LLC. The report assessed the physical condition of 34 town owned facilities, totaling 274,831 square feet, and identified and documented current site needs. The report also assessed the remaining service life of major building systems including envelope; architectural finishes; roofs; electrical; plumbing; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC).

Data collected for the Facility Condition Assessment was also input into Capital Forecast – a cloud-based capital planning tool used to forecast facility maintenance needs and estimate current and future funding requirements for facility sustainment. The software's implementation has raised the Town's awareness of the condition of their buildings and brought more needed improvements to light. Although the comprehensive assessment serves as a guide for long term capital planning, the Town uses Dude Solutions – an online work order request system – to order and track both regular and preventative maintenance throughout the Town's facilities.

Town Facilities and Infrastructure

A public facility is any town-owned asset that has been developed for a public purpose and provides community services, such as school facilities and also includes non-building facilities such as parks, playgrounds, and cemeteries.



Wrentham Master Plan
Community Services and Facilities

- Public Schools
- Public Libraries
- Town Hall
- Public Safety
- Fire Stations
- Municipally Owned Land
- Wrentham
- Rivers and Streams
- Water
- Open Space

The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analysis.

Produced by:
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111
(617) 933-0700

Data Sources: MAPC, MassGIS, MassDOT

January 2022

0 0.25 0.5 1 Mile

Municipal Buildings

The Town of Wrentham currently owns and manages 9 public buildings as well as some accessory structures throughout the town. The major structures include the following:

- **Wrentham Town Hall:** The Wrentham Town Hall, which houses several municipal departments, is located in the Town Center at 79 South Street. The two-story, 10,984 sq. ft. facility was originally constructed in 1950 and underwent substantial renovations and additions in the early 2000s. These improvements helped to alleviate the space needs of some departments. However, Town Hall's existing size does not accommodate current space demands for operations and lacks adequate office space for town departments as well as community meeting space. The 2020 Facilities Assessment describes the building as well maintained and in good condition.
- **Building Inspector Office:** The Building Inspector Office building is located near the DPW Facility at 350 Taunton Street. The one story, 1,500 sq. ft. structure was built in 1935 and houses administrative offices for the town's Building Inspector.
- **Wrentham DPW Facility:** The Wrentham Public Works Facility is located at 360 Taunton Street. The two-story, 9,638 sq. ft. main building, which houses the Town's Department of Public Works, was constructed in 1977. The public works site also includes the DPW garage, a leased multi-use trailer, a storage building, a salt shed, and the town's brush dump. The DPW building and grounds are the largest and oldest of the Town's facilities, which have yet to be renovated.
- **Animal Control Garage:** The Animal Control Garage is located near the DPW Facility on Taunton Street. The one-story, 600 square-foot building was built in 1935 and provides storage for animal control. This facility is generally in poor condition and many of the major building systems are deteriorated and have exceeded their recommended useful life.
- **Cemetery Garage Building:** The Cemetery Garage Building is located on the site of the Wrentham Center Cemetery, a 15-acre cemetery, that is also owned and operated by the Town. The one-story, 600 square-foot building was built in 1942 and provides storage for both cemetery maintenance and ancillary DPW operations. This facility is generally in poor condition and many of the major building systems are deteriorated and have exceeded their recommended useful life.
- **Wrentham Public Safety Building:** The Wrentham Public Safety Building, located at 89 South Street, serves as the headquarters for both the Wrentham Police Department and Wrentham Fire Department. The two story, 38,329 sq. ft. building was built in 2002 and features a large, shared meeting space.
- **Sheldonville Fire Station (Station #2):** Constructed in 1978, the Sheldonville Fire Station (Station #2), is a 1,978 sq. ft. building located at 1143 West Street. The facility is generally in good condition and a majority of the major and minor building systems are within their expected service life. The station has two vehicle bays and accommodates approximately 4 personnel at a time. The 2019 Town Meeting approved \$150,000 in funding for basic repairs and maintenance to the Sheldonville Fire Station. These improvements will make the facility ready for personnel to occupy the station on a more regular basis.

- **Fiske Public Library:** The Fiske Public Library is located, across from Roderick Elementary School at 110 Randall Road and shares a parking lot with the Sweatt Athletic Complex. Built in 1997, this 13,840 sq. ft. building houses the Town’s 90,654 holdings.
- **Wrentham Senior Center:** The Wrentham Senior Center located at 400 Taunton Street serves as the headquarters for the Council on Aging. This 3,778 sq. ft. facility was constructed in 1997 and features a food prep area for the center’s Meals on Wheels program. The building is generally in good condition.
- **Old Fiske Library Museum & Gallery:** The Old Fiske Library Museum & Gallery is located at 55 East Street. This 3,997sq. ft., 1890’s structure once served as the town library. Today the building houses the Wrentham Historical Commission and the Wrentham Arts and Cultural Commission and serves as a meeting space for community events.
- **Wampum House:** The Wampum House is a historical cape style farmhouse located at 677 South Street in Wampum Corner. Because of its age and nearly unaltered condition, the Wampum House is one of Wrentham’s earliest and most significant structures (see the Historical and Cultural Resources topic for more information). The main building was built in 1694 and a one-story addition was later added to the rear of the home. The two story, 2,215 sq. ft. facility is generally in good condition and a majority of the building systems are within their expected service life. The Wampum House is owned by the Town and maintained by the Facilities Department. The facility is also rented out to the community for private events.

Other Public Facilities

Recreational Facilities

The Town of Wrentham has a number of facilities that offer passive and active recreational opportunities as listed in Table CF1. Facilities actively managed by the Recreation Commission are generally located at two facilities: the William A Rice Recreation Area, and the Sweatt Athletic Complex. The Rice facility, located on Emerald Street across from the Developmental Center, includes over eighty acres of playing fields and courts, as well as a large parking area and the recreation commission offices. The Sweatt complex is a sixty-acre site, shared with a few school buildings, and offers additional playing fields, courts, and park spaces. It also offers connectivity with the Trout Pond and Knuckup Hill open spaces parcels. The Recreation Commission also manages the Sweatt Beach portion of the Water Department’s property at Lake Pearl.

Table CF1: Recreation Commission Facilities

Managed by Recreation Commission			
Name	Location	Description/Amenities	Acreage
William A. Rice Complex	54 Emerald Street	1 Baseball/2 softball fields, 3 basketball courts, 2 volleyball courts, multi-use fields, batting cages	80.49
Sweatt Athletic Complex	120 Taunton Street	1 Baseball/ 2 softball fields, 2 Little League fields, tee ball, picnic shelter, tot lot, batting cages, trails	58.34*

Source: Town of Wrentham Board of Assessors and Recreation Commission

*Includes school site #Includes Water Department land

Table CF1: Recreation Commission Facilities (continued)

Sweatt Beach and Boat Landing	715 Franklin Street	Beach, dock, picnic area, volleyball, bathhouse, kayaking and paddleboard rentals	76.55**
Managed by Department of Public Works			
Name	Location	Description/Amenities	Acreage
Sweatt Memorial Park	3 Franklin Street	Tennis courts, benches, picnic area, path, lighting	0.96
Town Common	5 Common Street/ 20 East Street	Benches, paths, gazebo, monuments	2.34

Source: Town of Wrentham Board of Assessors and Recreation Commission

*Includes school site

**Includes Water Department land

Two additional facilities managed by the Department of Public Works also offer recreation opportunities in the Town Center. Sweatt Memorial Park offers tennis courts and park spaces in a Town Center setting. It is adjacent to Wrentham Town Common, which is a favorite recreation site for residents. Please refer to the Open Space and Recreation topic of this Master Plan and the Town’s 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan for more detailed information on Wrentham’s parks, open space, and recreation facilities.

Town Cemeteries

Wrentham has two town-owned cemeteries. They include the historical Wrentham Center Cemetery and the Sheldonville Cemetery. Established in 1673, the Wrentham Center Cemetery located along East Street and Dedham Street is one of the oldest cemeteries in Wrentham. The 15-acre site has more than four hundred gravestones that bear the names of individuals and families who were prominent in the Town’s economic history. The Sheldonville Cemetery is a smaller cemetery located on Burnt Swamp Road that dates back to 1813. Both of these facilities are maintained by the Cemetery Division of the Department of Public Works.

Table CF2: Town Cemeteries

Name	Location	Acreage
Wrentham Center Cemetery	65 East Street	15.00
Sheldonville Cemetery (Burnt Swamp)	43 Burnt Swamp Road	1.96

Source: Town of Wrentham Board of Assessors and Recreation Commission

Infrastructure

Roadways and Sidewalks

Wrentham has approximately 96 miles of streets and roadways within its town limits, which includes 26 miles of state-maintained facilities. As mentioned in the Transportation and Connectivity topic of this Master Plan, approximately 25% of Wrentham’s streets have sidewalks on at least one side and only 2% have sidewalks on both sides of the street. Most of the town’s existing sidewalk network is centered around Town Center and Route 1A south of Town Center.

The Department of Public Works is responsible for maintaining all town owned public roadways and sidewalks. In 2021 the DPW worked with Environmental Partners Group, Inc. to develop a Pavement Management Plan (PMP) for the town’s roadway system. This long-term planning document has been used to identify and prioritize Wrentham’s roadway infrastructure needs. The PMP highlights the most effective use of funding by examining multiple means of pavement preservation and reconstruction.

Many of the town’s roads are in a serious state of disrepair due to a prolonged lack of funding. It is estimated that more than \$15 million in funding is needed to repair the Town’s existing roadways. Through State Aid, which ranges from approximately \$250,000 to \$450,000 each year, the Town can fund a handful of roadway improvement projects. It is estimated that an annual investment of 3 million dollars is needed to maintain the town’s roads in their present state.¹

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts’ Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a federally mandated, prioritized listing of highway, bridge, intermodal, and transit investments implemented with funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Local communities and Metropolitan Planning Organizations partner to develop local priorities to be included in the TIP. Currently, Wrentham has one project listed in the TIP:

Route I-495/Route-1A Ramps Reconstruction Project

The purpose of the Route I-495/Route-1A Ramps Reconstruction project is to improve traffic safety and operation of Route 1A (in the area of Route I-495), including I-495 Southbound (SB) off/on ramps. Work for this project will include the construction of a new slip ramp (from Route-1A NB to Route-I-495 SB) and milling and repaving of the existing pavement. Pedestrian and bicycle accommodations consisting of 10-foot-wide paved, shared-use-paths will be provided along both sides of Route 1A in accordance with applicable design guides.²

For more detailed information on Wrentham’s recent transportation improvements Please refer to the Transportation and Connectivity topic of this Master Plan.

Water

Wrentham’s water system consists of approximately 95 miles of water mains, five groundwater supply wells, three treatment facilities and three storage tanks. In addition, the Town maintains six emergency interconnections with neighboring water distribution systems including two with the Town of Norfolk, one with the Town of Foxborough, and one with the Town of Franklin. The other two connections are with the Wrentham Development Center (WDC), which operates the Wrentham State School. The system is managed by the Water Division of the Department of Public Works.

Table CF3: Water Facilities

Name	Location
Franklin Street Well No. 2	Located to the north of Lake Pearl
Franklin Street Well No. 3	
Thurston Street Well No. 4	Located in the eastern part of Wrentham near Route 1
Lake Pearl Well No. 5	Located adjacent to Lake Pearl
Crocker Pond Well No. 6	Located adjacent to Crocker Pond

Source: Town of Wrentham Annual Water Quality Report 2020

1 Town of Wrentham, 2019 Annual Report

2 MassDOT Highway Design Public Hearings, <https://www.mass.gov/event/wrentham-route-i-495route-1a-ramps-reconstruction-2022-01-26t183000-0500-2022-01-26t193000-0500>

The Water Division recently oversaw the completion of a 5-million-dollar water main replacement project on Madison Street. The purpose of this project was to increase fire flows and provide redundancy throughout the water distribution system. The project called for the replacement of two existing 12-inch dead end watermains with a new 16-inch loop along the entire length of Madison Street from East Street (Rt. 106) to Washington Street (Rt. 1) for a total length of 8,940 feet. In addition, new stormwater features such as bioswales and regrading were implemented at various locations along Madison Street to promote improved drainage under the Massachusetts Stormwater Standards.¹ This project will greatly aid in the economic development of Route 1.

A Water System Master Plan (WSMP) was recently prepared for the Town of Wrentham by Environmental Partners Group, LLC. The WSMP will help ensure that the Town can provide high-quality drinking water to all customers and serve as a roadmap to guide improvements to Wrentham's water system in the coming years. The WSMP includes an assessment of the Town's existing water storage facilities and projected storage needs. Overall, the plan found that the Town has the ability to meet present and future demands with all of its water supply sources and treatment facilities operational. However, the WSMP recommends that the Town pursue additional groundwater supplies in west Wrentham, improve resiliency at existing facilities, and maintain updated emergency response plans. Section 6 of the WSMP presents a Capital Improvements Program (CIP) with cost estimates for recommended improvements that should be implemented over the next 20 years to properly maintain and improve Wrentham's public water system.

Sewer

Wrentham has no municipal sewer system. Waste disposal is primarily through on-site wastewater treatment systems, i.e., septic systems. Some older properties which have not been updated still have cesspools, which are upgraded to comply with Title 5 as properties change hands (See the Land Use topic for more information about Title 5 Septic System regulations). The Wrentham Developmental Center and two open space subdivisions, Oak Hill and Toils End, have their own small "package" treatment plants for the use of the homes within the subdivision.

Town Services

While public facilities provide physical space for local government services, service delivery also depends on people: municipal staff and volunteers. Community services include municipal services and utilities such as public safety (police, fire, and EMS), public health, recreation, public water, sewer, and partner organization and contracted services such as solid waste and recycling or street maintenance.

Town Facilities Management

Public Works

The Wrentham Department of Public Works (DPW) is headquartered at 360 Taunton Street. The DPW is responsible for managing and maintaining the Town's public works infrastructure and provides support to multiple other Town departments. The Public Works Department is staffed by 21 full-time employees and is organized into five divisions: Administration, Highway, Water, Cemetery, and Fleet Maintenance. Each division is supervised by a division manager, with overall direction from the Department of Public Works Director.

¹ Madison St. Water Main Replacement, GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc, <https://www.gza.com/projects/Madison-st-water-main-replacement>

The Highway Division is responsible for maintaining all public roadways and sidewalks, the stormwater drainage system, snow plowing and sanding operations, road signage, and traffic markings. The division also oversees grounds maintenance for all public buildings, Town-owned cemeteries, the Town Commons and public shade trees. The Highway Division actively saves the town money by keeping most requests for service in house. Work such as failing catch basins, arborist work, small drainage repair problems, removing beaver obstructions, roadside mowing, annual cross walk painting, patching potholes and trenches as well as most other kinds of road repairs are all done with the divisional staff. Inland flooding is one of the highest priority local impacts of climate change in Wrentham, therefore stormwater drainage and roadway landscaping is increasingly important.

The Water Division is responsible for providing high quality drinking water to homes and businesses. The Division operates and maintains the town's Municipal Public Drinking water system, as described above. The Water Division is further charged with emergency repairs to water main breaks, installing and reading water meters, testing meters, and other components of the water distribution system. The Cemetery Division oversees the preservation, maintenance, operation and perpetual care of town owned cemeteries. This Division manages all burials, cremations, headstone installations, and sales of lots for the Wrentham Center Cemetery.

In addition to core DPW administrative functions, the DPW also provides fleet maintenance services for most town vehicles and oversees the vendor contract for curbside solid waste disposal and recycling services. The Town utilizes automated curbside trash and recycling collection. Through a contractor, trash is collected weekly, and recyclable items are collected bi-weekly. Residents are provided with a blue 96-gallon wheeled cart for recycling and a black 35-gallon wheeled cart for trash. The DPW also operates the Town's Yard Waste Drop-off site. Wrentham residents that pay the annual trash fee and purchase a \$20 sticker can use the center. Waste accepted at the DPW Brush/Compost Site includes leaves, grass/lawn clippings, branches, shrubs, and Christmas trees.

Although the DPW works continuously to maintain the Town's infrastructure, their own facilities are significantly degraded and require substantial investment in order to serve the needs of the Department and the Town as a whole. A facility condition assessment conducted by Alpha Facilities Solutions in 2020 concluded that several of the DPW Facility's major building systems have exceeded their useful life, do not meet current building codes, and their condition negatively impacts both the Department's operational efficiency and employee safety.

Facilities Department

The Facilities Department is responsible for the maintenance and repair of all town owned buildings including projects such as those related to building envelopes, building systems, flooring, and fixed building assets that are not department specific. The department is led by the Director of Facilities & Capital Planning and staffed by one full-time Maintenance Technician, two part time janitors, and one part time administrative assistant. In addition to regular custodial duties, response to work order requests, and planned maintenance activities, the Facilities Department is also charged with developing the annual Capital Improvement Plan.

Public Safety

Police Department

The Wrentham Police Department (WPD) is committed to working in partnership with the citizens of Wrentham to provide the highest level of public safety and services to the community. The members of the Department are empowered to enforce the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the By-Laws of the Town of Wrentham. The Department is led by the Chief of Police, who – with the support of the Deputy Chief of Police – oversees the divisions comprising the Police Department. The WPD has a total of 23 FTE employees, including five sergeants, fourteen patrolmen, an administrative assistant, and Cruiser, the Community Resource Dog. The Police Department operates out of the Public Safety Building at 89 South Street, which also houses the Fire Department.

Fire Department

The Wrentham Fire Department provides a range of emergency services, including fire prevention and suppression, emergency medical services, and code enforcement. As of fiscal year 2020 (FY20), the Fire Department is staffed by a Chief of Department, Deputy Chief, Administrative Captain, Fire Prevention & Training Captain; four Shift Captains that serve as Shift Commanders, 20 firefighters and an administrative assistant. In FY20 the Fire Department applied for and received a \$1,003,828 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). This additional funding will enable the Department to hire six additional firefighters and staff two ambulance crews per shift.

Wrentham has two fire stations that house a variety of apparatus. The Fire Department Headquarters are located in the Public Safety Building at 89 South Street. The 2019 Town Meeting approved \$150,000 in funding for basic repairs and maintenance to the Sheldonville Fire Station (Station 2) located at 1143 West Street. These improvements will make the facility ready for personnel to occupy the station on a more regular basis. The department currently maintains three class “A” pumpers, a heavy-duty ladder truck, a 2,500-gal tanker/pumper, two ambulances, two brush trucks, and three support vehicles. The condition of the Department’s fleet has been improved significantly with the addition of a new Class “A” pumper and a new Ambulance. The Fire Department is actively exploring replacement strategies either through capital or grant alternatives as costly repairs and the age of the Department’s vehicle fleet remain a challenge.

Emergency Management

The Wrentham Emergency Management Agency (WEMA) is the town agency responsible for coordinating Town, State, regional, Federal, volunteer, and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Town of Wrentham. The Emergency Management Director (EMD) provides the lead command and control for all-hazards that require the coordination of more than one agency for emergency events. WEMA develops plans for effective response to all-hazards, disasters or threats; trains emergency personnel and volunteers to protect the public; provides information to residents; and assists individuals, families, and businesses to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from all-hazards emergencies.

The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is located at the Wrentham Public Safety building. The EOC is under the command and authority of the Emergency Management Director. The center provides a place for representatives of the Local Emergency Management Team to assemble and coordinate the support of any type of emergency in the Town. The EOC is equipped with computers, communication, and monitoring equipment, which enables officials of the various departments and outside agencies to communicate and bring needed resources to the emergency. If additional resources from outside the community are required, Emergency Management will coordinate requests through the center.

Building Department

The Building Department provides building, electrical, plumbing, and gas inspectional services and administers the State Building Code and enforces the town’s Zoning Bylaw. Building Department is headed by the Building Commissioner/Zoning Enforcement Officer and staffed by a Local Building and Mechanical Inspector, a Wiring Inspector, an Assistant Wiring Inspector, a Plumbing and Gas Inspector, Assistant Plumbing and Gas Inspector and an Administrative Assistant. The Building Department offices are located near the DPW Facility at 350 Taunton Street.

Planning and Community Development

Located in Town Hall, the Planning and Community Development Department (PCDD) provides guidance, coordination, and advisory planning services to the Town of Wrentham. This Department is involved in many key town-wide initiatives including but not limited to land use, zoning, transportation, economic development, affordable housing, open space, and land preservation. The PCDD is led by the Director of Planning & Economic Development and staffed by a full time Land Use Specialist, a part time Administrative Assistant, and a part time Conservation Agent.

The PCDD staff provides administrative support to the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, and Conservation Commission to administer the Town’s Zoning Bylaw. Working with various Town departments, boards, committees and community organizations, the Department also helps develop policies, program initiatives, and recommended zoning provisions to guide the future development of the community in alignment with the Town’s Master Plan.

Public Education

Wrentham Public Schools

Wrentham operates a PK-6 public school system which is comprised of two schools located on one campus at 120 Taunton Street. The mission of Wrentham Public Schools (WPS), in partnership with families and the community, is to establish a safe, supportive, and structured environment in which students can achieve individual success. The district is governed by the Wrentham School Committee, a board of five elected members, and managed by the Superintendent.

According to the most recent data available from the Massachusetts Department of Education, 921 students were enrolled in Wrentham Public Schools for the 2021-2022 school year. Of these, approximately 59% were students in pre-kindergarten through grade 3 and 41% in grades 4 to 6. The Delaney School, which includes the Vogel Building and Janneli Annex, houses students in preschool through grade 3. The Roderick Elementary School is for students in grades 4 through 6. Table CF4 summarizes Wrentham’s public-school buildings and their associated recreational facilities.

Table CF4: Wrentham Public Schools

School	Year Built	Address	Grades	Enrollment	Recreation Facilities
Delaney School	1956	120 Taunton Street	PK-3	541	Sweatt Athletic Complex: 1 Baseball/ 2 softball fields, 2 Little League fields, tee ball, picnic shelter, tot lot, batting cages, trails
George L. Vogel Building	1935				
Janneli Annex	2003				
Charles E Roderick Elementary School	1968	120 Taunton Street	4-6	380	

King Philip Regional Schools

After 6th grade, students attend King Philip Regional District schools, which bring together approximately 1,874 students from Wrentham, Norfolk, and Plainville. Of these, approximately 38% are students enrolled at the regional middle school (grades 7-8) and 62% are enrolled at the regional high school (grades 9-12). The King Philip High School is located in Wrentham, while the King Philip Middle School is located in Norfolk.

Culture and Recreation

Fiske Public Library

The Fiske Public Library was constructed in 1997 and is located at 110 Randall Road between Roderick Elementary School and the Sweatt Athletic Complex. The Library serves as a cultural hub for the community and offers a variety of programming for children, teens, and adults. In addition to the area occupied by the circulation desk the facility features nine public computer workstations, a Children's Reading Room, a Homework Center, two study rooms, and three community meeting rooms. The Fiske Library has over 6,600 registered patrons and 90,654 holdings. Wrentham is part of the SAILS Library Network of 72 public and academic libraries in 40 communities throughout Southeastern Massachusetts, offering residents access to books, movies, music, magazines, and reference material. Additionally, the Library provides a number of museum passes that can be checked out.

Old Fiske Library Museum

The Old Fiske Library was built in 1894 and has since been renamed the Old Fiske Museum. The museum was renovated in 2010 and now houses the Wrentham Historical Commission and the Wrentham Arts and Cultural Commission. The Old Fiske Museum is open to the public the first Sunday of each month and hosts a variety of exhibits, local artifacts, art, and open houses throughout the year.

Wrentham Recreation Department

The Wrentham Recreation Department along with the Recreation Commission provides a wide variety of recreational programming for residents and maintains the Town parks, open space, and recreational facilities. The Recreation Department is staffed by a Recreation Director, an Assistant Recreation Director and an Administrative Assistant and operates from an office at the William Rice Recreation Complex located at 54 Emerald Street. The Recreation Department is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for the public to enjoy Wrentham's open space areas while collaborating with other organizations to promote community pride. Please refer to the Open Space and Recreation topic of this Master Plan for additional information about the Recreation Department.

Health and Human Services

Veterans Services

Veterans Services in Wrentham is carried out by the town's Veterans Agent. The Veterans Agent is responsible for aiding veterans and their dependents in all State and Federal claims related to service-connected and non-service-connected compensation, pensions, and services. Additionally, this office assists with veteran health benefits and prescription drugs, business and education programs, and burial benefits. In particular, the Agent helps to arrange benefits for needy Veterans and families pursuant to Mass. General Laws Chapter 115. Wrentham's Veterans' Agent is shared with the towns of North Attleboro and Plainville.

Wrentham Housing Authority

The Wrentham Housing Authority (DHA) provides housing assistance to residents through State and Federal programs such as the Alternative Housing Voucher Program (AHVP). These programs are income based and the eligibility guidelines are set by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The WHA housing stock consists of 66 one-bedroom apartments dedicated to senior/disabled individuals on Garden Lane as well as a mix of two-, three-, and four-bedroom apartments for families on New Emerald Lane. The Wrentham Housing Authority is staffed by an Executive Director, a Program Coordinator, and a Resident Services Coordinator.

In fiscal year 2020, the WHA received \$106,629 in capital improvement funds from DHCD as well as a \$675,000 grant to convert four units at Garden Lane into ADA units. The Community Preservation Committee also awarded the WHA \$54,200 for Bulkhead and Storm Door Replacements at New Emerald Lane. These projects are all anticipated to be completed in 2021.

Council on Aging

The Wrentham Council on Aging (COA) is responsible for providing direct services to residents 60 and over and also identifying other available community resources to assist this population. The Council on Aging Board consists of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Wrentham Senior Center located at 400 Taunton Street serves as the headquarters for COA. The Senior Center is staffed by the Director, an Outreach Coordinator, an Administrative Assistant Director, and two Drivers.

The Senior Center provides support services and a variety of recreational, social, educational, and health programs to Wrentham's older residents. Programs and activities offered through the Center and COA include exercise classes; walking groups; line dancing; knitting and crocheting; and yoga. The COA also provides transportation services, a meals-on-wheels service, and one-on-one assistance for a variety of needs such as applying for health insurance, disability, and other benefits.

Disability Commission

The Disability Commission provides guidance to public and private agencies, individuals, organizations, and institutions to ensure that people with disabilities have equal access to Town facilities, services, and programs. The Commission consists of nine Commissioners, all volunteers. The members are appointed by the Town Administrator with approval from the Selectmen. Mass. General Laws Chapter 40: Section 8J mandates that the majority of Commissioners have a disability or have a family member with a disability.

Board of Health and Public Nurses

Wrentham's Health Department is mandated through Federal, State, and Town laws to protect and promote the health and safety of the community. The Health Department and Board of Health (BOH) are responsible for enforcing the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) regulations and Town rules in the areas of wastewater disposal, solid waste, noise, odor, and hazardous waste. Additionally, it administers and enforces the Department of Public Health community sanitation program and Food and Drug Administration food protection program.

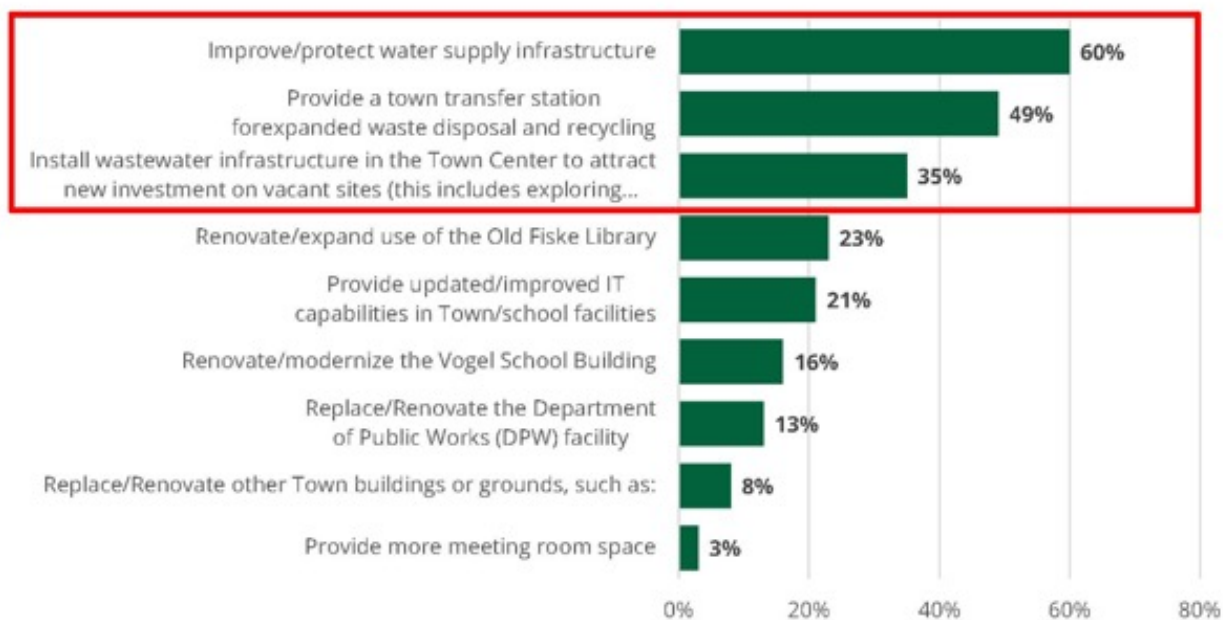
In addition to the BOH, Wrentham has two Public Health Nurses that provide direct services and programs to residents free of charge. services and programs provided to residents include immunization and blood pressure clinics, school programs, and home visits.

Community Engagement

The Community Facilities and Services existing conditions report was informed by interviews with Town staff and officials and feedback received from the community survey. Additional feedback from the public forums and steering committee was incorporated into this element as goals and strategies were discussed.

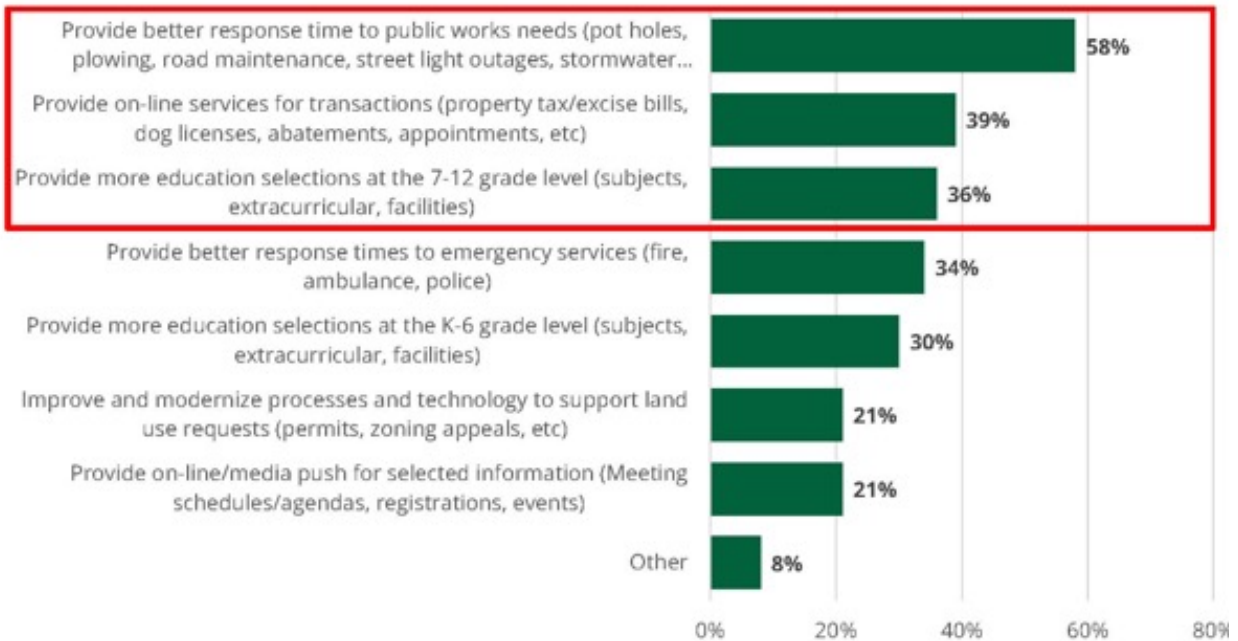
The Phase II survey conducted in November-December 2021 asked survey participants to rate the importance of a number of priorities related to community facilities and services. According to the survey, respondents' top priorities for Town facilities are improving and protecting Wrentham's water supply infrastructure, providing a transfer station for expanded waste disposal and recycling, and installing wastewater infrastructure in the Town Center to attract new investment.

What should be the top priorities for Town facilities? Choose up to 3.



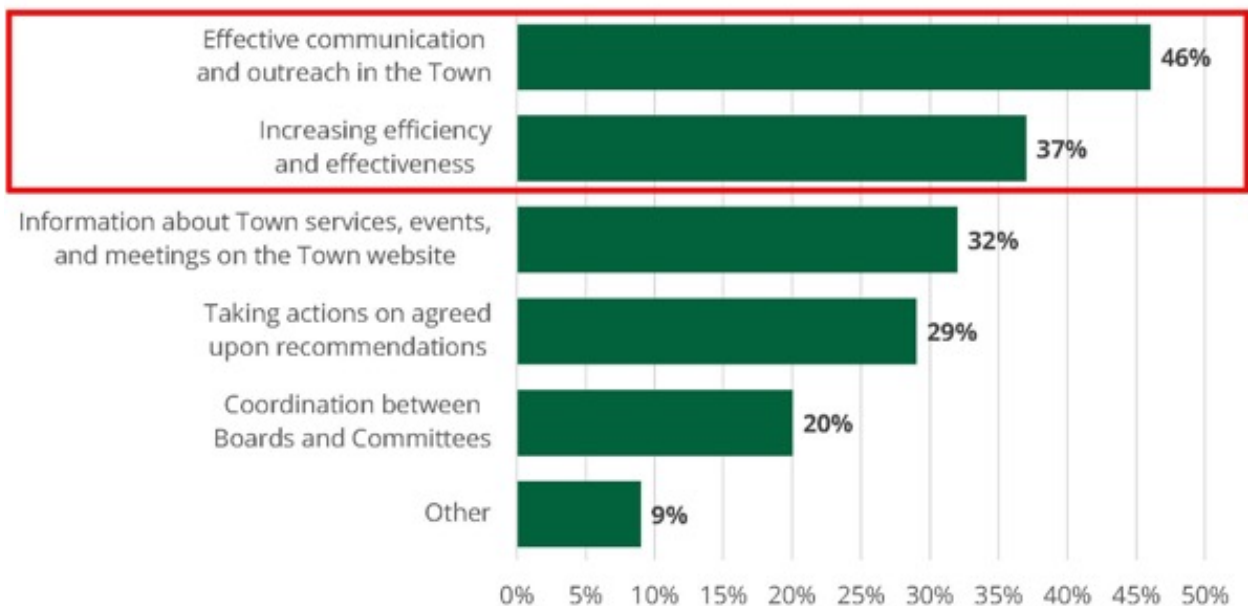
In terms of Town Services, respondents would like the Town to provide better response times to public works needs (e.g., potholes, plowing, road maintenance, etc.). Residents would also like an easy and convenient method to do online transactions for things like paying their property tax/excise bills, applying for dog licenses, and scheduling appointments with municipal staff.

What should be the top priorities for Town services? Choose up to 3.



We also asked survey participants what the most important challenges were in terms of governance and services. Effective communication and outreach in the Town (46%) and increasing efficiency and effectiveness (37%) were both identified as significant challenges.

What are the most important challenges in terms of governance and services? Choose up to 2.



Existing Conditions Assessment: Historical and Cultural Resources

Understanding Wrentham over Time

The place now known as Wrentham is located within the homeland of the Wampanoag people. The Wampanoag people have lived in this area for millennia, along with the Nipmuc, Massachusetts, and Narragansett peoples, using the land for hunting and fishing grounds. This crossroads for the Indigenous peoples of southeastern New England became a settlement for English colonists in the 1600s. Wrentham was colonized initially as part of the Dedham community. In 1673, Wrentham incorporated as a town and since that time, has grown from an agricultural community to a bustling Town Center connected to other parts of New England by rail first and eventually Routes 1 and 1A and Interstates 495 and 95. These transportation improvements would eventually attract both industrial manufacturing opportunities and tourists drawn to the beautiful lakes and natural resources in the valley's foothills.

Figure HC-1. Indigenous homelands and settlements at the time of Wrentham colonization.
Source: <https://native-land.ca/maps/territories/Wampanoag/>



Today, Wrentham continues to value the Town's unique heritage, largely through the Town's Historical Commission. The Commission is charged with preserving, maintaining, displaying, collecting, and sharing Town history. Wrentham's Cultural Council awards state-funded grants for cultural programming in the Town and works with the Historical Commission to host events and curate exhibits at the Old Fiske Library/Museum. More on the Town's preservation efforts is included later in this report.



Wampum Corner Railroad Station, 1890s. Source: "Wampum Corner Station," SAILS Digital History Collections, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://sailsinc.omeka.net/items/show/1809>.



Seasonal tourism at Lake Pearl in the 1940s. Source: Sun Chronicle

History of Wrentham

First Peoples

The Wampanoag people used the land now known as Wrentham for hunting, fishing, farming, and village areas. Oak Point, near Creek Street, was the site of the King Philip Oak, where Metacomet, the Native American sachem, or leader, of the Wampanoag people is said to have held council. Metacomet became sachem in 1662, and for many years, he oversaw trading between the English colonists and Native peoples.

Colonization of Native Lands

English settlers first came to the area as an early outgrowth of the Plymouth Colony. Present-day Wrentham was originally part of the Dedham colony. In 1635, the General Court of Massachusetts annexed Native lands from Watertown to Rhode Island as the Dedham community. In 1673, Wrentham incorporated as a town, apart from the Dedham colony.¹

King Philip's War

Like many parts of New England, as the colonial inhabitants of Wrentham and the surrounding areas encroached on the Wampanoag territory, conflicts arose. While treaties were entered into by all groups, agreements were not often honored. In 1675, three Wampanoags were hanged in Plymouth Colony – this violence spurred a bloody war. The Wampanoag peoples, along with Native tribes across New England, attacked colonial villages from Maine to Rhode Island over a period of six months. Colonial militia retaliated, and the conflict became known as King Philip's War (King Philip was Metacomet's English name). In Wrentham, nearly all the existing buildings at the time were burnt to the ground. Eventually, the colonial militia overwhelmed the Native peoples, resulting in several public executions and enslavement of others. The Wampanoags lost much of their territory, and the residents of Wrentham rebuilt and expanded the town settlement. While some Wampanoags remained in the Wrentham area, many were killed or sold into the West Indies slave trade.

¹ A History of Dedham, Massachusetts by Frank Smith, 1936.
<https://archive.org/details/historyofdedhamm00smit/page/n111/mode/2up?ref=ol&view=theater>

Agricultural Roots

Entering the 1700s, the Wrentham settlement saw a rise in farming and population. Early activities centered on farmsteads, land clearing, timbering, pasturage, and farming occupancies. These small farms were quite independent, providing most of their daily needs from their farming and household industries. Over time, some farms were able to grow and expand, specializing in crops which were more successful and able to bring higher prices at market. However, the gradual improvement of local roads into a reliable regional system and the introduction of the railroad supported a transition from farming to more town-centered occupations.

A Growing Town Center

As colonial settlement progressed and the population of the area increased, Town Center and neighborhood areas became established. The Town Center grew up around the Common, with church and civic buildings grouped around it, along with mercantile buildings, forming a focal point for town gathering. The Original Congregational Church of Wrentham, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, formed in 1692. Containing the early crossroads and what became the Post Road between Boston and Providence (now known as Route 1), Wrentham rapidly became a fixture on the colonial scene.

Other neighborhoods, more clearly seen today in Sheldonville, emerged as local farming centers with smaller scale commercial and civic components to serve these immediate needs. Over time, the central portions of these neighborhoods came to have more residences built along the main roads, cementing the community. Outside of Wampum Corner, these neighborhoods never developed sufficient density or economic value to drive the creation of outlying business centers. As farming uses declined, the residential aspects have become dominant in most of these areas, with newer homes occupying many of the farms, while other fields have regrown into forests.

Industrialization

Growing industrialization in the late 1800s accelerated changes to Wrentham, as transportation made it easier to bring goods to and from market, increased personal mobility with better roads and the introduction of railroads, and the gradual decline of the farming homestead. The railroad also spurred limited development of industry, making the chief regional markets in Boston and Providence more accessible. Industry really took off once the steam engine was perfected and brought into general use, due to the lack of usable waterpower in Wrentham. Like many New England towns, a small industrial district emerged close to Town Center and the Wampum Corner railroad station, eventually specializing in metal casting and machining. Without ready access to high quality raw materials, fuels, or local markets, industrial development was dependent on a skilled workforce drawn from nearby farms. While important, industrial production never developed into the dominant characteristic of the town or spawned a diversified complex of related industrial production. Wrentham's industry remained loosely tied to regional manufacturing, a position that continues into the present.



Sheldonville Boat Works working housing at 1098 West Street. During the 1800s, it was common for factories in the area to provide worker housing. Many of these multi-family homes have been documented in MACRIS. Source: MACRIS



Wrentham Premium Outlets

Wrentham, the Tourist Destination

The introduction of the railroad, generally paralleling today’s Route 1A, helped to cement the position of the Town Center and assisted the rise of commercial businesses. The rustic summers and adjacency of the lakes attracted city dwellers looking for weekend respite from urban life. Early lake activities were characterized by religious organizations and social uplift, but over time the recreational and relaxation aspects became more prominent. Wrentham was soon a renowned minor resort area, with much comment on its beautiful and quintessential New England village character, at a time when other regional villages were being rapidly altered by the forces of the industrial revolution. The appeal of the lakes led to residential settlement in the form of seasonal camps and cabins in the area. These have been slowly converted and winterized to be year-round dwellings.

Suburbanization and Present-Day Wrentham

Over the course of the twentieth century, new roadways would make Wrentham more accessible to new residents. First, Route 1 opened Wrentham up as a tourist stop as travelers went from Maine to Florida. Once interstates 95 and 495 were built, suburbanization was right around the corner. People could now live in Wrentham and easily commute to nearby employment centers. Slowly, more farms were lost as subdivisions were built. Today, Wrentham is still a small community nestled between farms and open space. Town Center, Sheldonville, and Wampum Corner are still vibrant small village centers where residents go for neighborhood services. The Wrentham Premium Outlets near the I-495 junction provide shopping opportunities and serve as a regional attraction. Route 1A remains a busy route between Boston and Providence.

Repurposing the Wrentham Rail Line

Phase I of the Wrentham Master Plan includes an economic development strategy to pursue a walking/biking trail along the existing railroad bed connecting Town Center and the Wrentham Premium Outlets. The rail trail could be part of the larger Metacomet Greenway project. Historical markers could be installed along the rail trail to highlight Wrentham’s history at the turn of the twentieth century, when rail first came to Wrentham.

Historical and Cultural Assets

Historical and cultural assets can be buildings or structures in the built environment (including engineering structures like dams or bridges, agricultural buildings, fences, etc.), but these assets can also be in the form of community events and cultural organizations. Both tangible and intangible cultural assets together form a cultural framework of a place. In communities across New England and the United States, archaeological resources, like early remnants or earthworks, also contribute to the cultural identity of a community. Native American artifacts and cultural landscapes, as well as unmarked burial grounds – particularly those connected with Native American and African American communities – are often disturbed through development and are particularly deserving of recognition, preservation, and protection.

Historically Designated Resources

Traditionally, preservation of historical and cultural resources has focused on the tangible resources like buildings, structures, and objects. There are three primary ways to designate and preserve resources:

- **National Register of Historic Places** is the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation. This national program coordinates and supports public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect America’s historic and archaeological resources. Properties are eligible for the National Register if the property is significant – meaning it is associated with events, activities, or developments that were important in the past; associated with the lives of people who were important in the past; represent significant architectural, landscape, or engineering achievements; or has the potential to yield information about our past through archaeological investigation. National Register listings also must generally be at least 50 years old and look similar to the way they did in the past. Resources may be evaluated and deemed “eligible” for listing but not undergo the formal designation process.
- **Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places** was established in 1982 as a comprehensive listing of buildings, structures, objects, and sites that have received Town, State, or National designations. The State Register is administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. The State maintains the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), a comprehensive database of inventoried resources and designation statuses.
- **Local designation**, which can take the form of regulatory protections and designations or community recognition, like Wrentham’s Plaque Program. Wrentham does not have a codified local designation program (such as a historic district bylaw or other designation) beyond recognition through the Plaque Program.

Benefits to National Register Historic Designation

- Federal Tax Credits when resources are preserved and/or revitalized
- Federal income, estate, and gift tax deductions for charitable contributions in the form of conservation easements
- Federal Historic Preservation Grants (administered by State Historic Preservation Offices)
- State Historic Grant and Tax Programs

Find out more here: https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NR_Brochure_Poster_web508.pdf

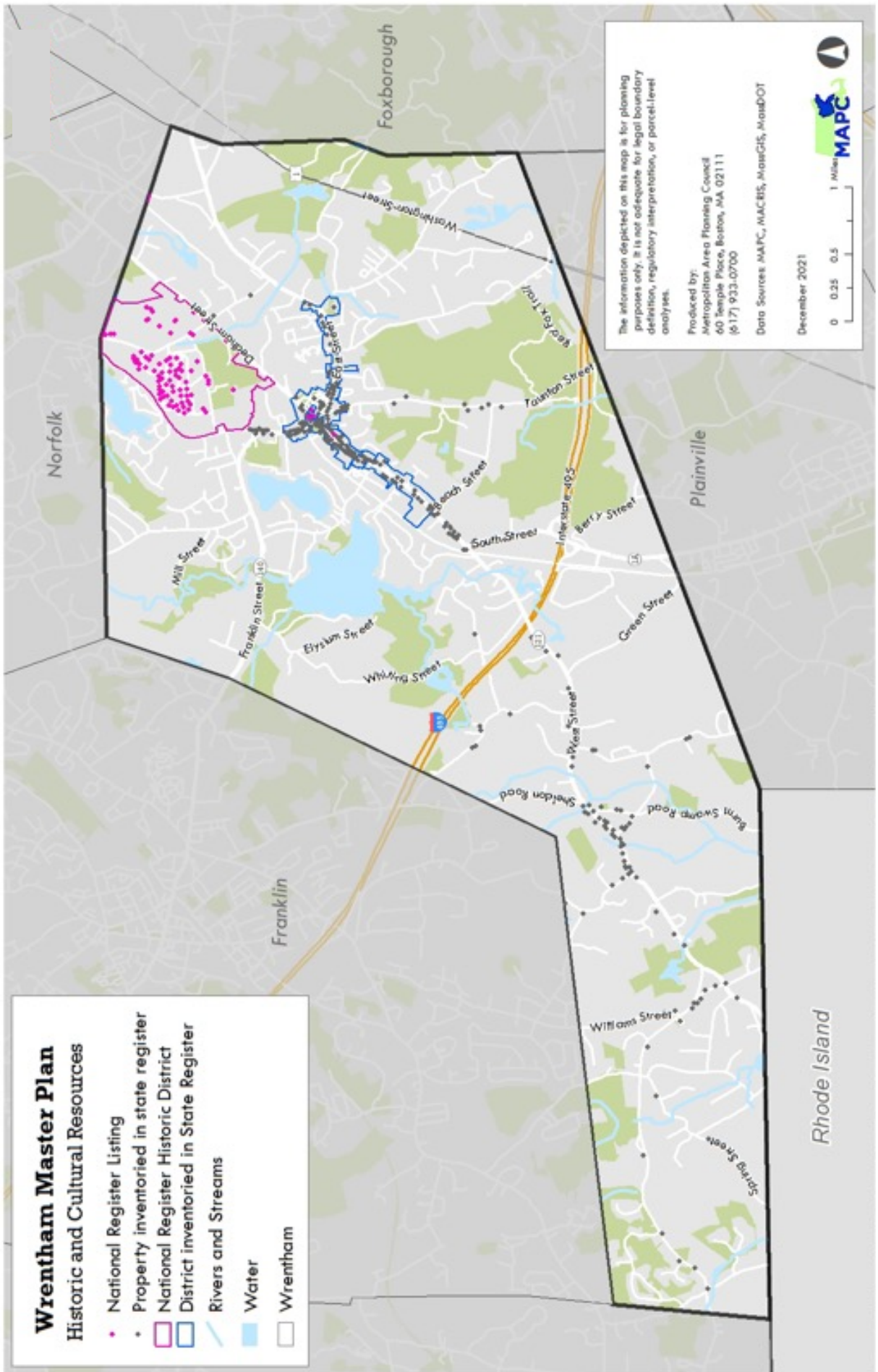


Table HC-7. Wrentham Historic Designations

Type of Designation	Number of Resources
Total Historical Resources inventoried in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS)	367
National Register of Historic Places	
Historic Districts	3
Individual Listings	2
State Register of Historic Places	
Districts (inventoried)	7
Districts (listed)	3
Buildings (inventoried)	323
Buildings (listed)	68
Burial Grounds (inventoried)	5
Burial Grounds (listed)	1
Markers (monuments and plaques)	10
Structures, including misc. outbuildings and engineering infrastructure (inventoried)	22
Structures, including misc. outbuildings and engineering infrastructure (listed)	18

National Register of Historic Places

- Wrentham State School
- Massachusetts State Hospital and State Schools
- Original Congregational Church of Wrentham, 1 East Street
- Roebuck Tavern, 21 Dedham Street
- Plimpton-Winter House, 127 South Street

Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places

- Wrentham State School
- Massachusetts State Hospital and State Schools
- Original Congregational Church of Wrentham
- 68 individual buildings
- Wrentham State School cemetery



The Franklin St. Bridge over abandoned railroad, shown here from 1889, is an example of a historical engineering structure. Source: MACRIS



The Original Congregational Church of Wrentham is a historical church in Wrentham, with its first congregation formed in 1692. The present church is a Greek Revival structure built in 1834. The church has a four-stage tower (rebuilt after the New England Hurricane of 1938) and a tetrastyle Doric portico. The building underwent a modernizing renovation in 1878, at which time many of the windows were modified to have rounded tops; many of these changes were reversed during renovations in the 1950s. The church building was listed in the NRHP in 2014. (Sources: MACRIS (photo); https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Original_Congregational_Church_of_Wrentham)

Arts, Cultural, and Historical Resources Not Formally Designated

Many historic designation programs focus on tangible resources with rigid criteria that can sometimes prevent unique cultural assets from being designated or recognized. It is important for communities and their plans to still acknowledge and celebrate cultural resources and nodes in the community such as dance studios, language schools, or civic clubs. These places contribute to and help shape the cultural framework of a community. The table below, informed by Phase II community survey findings, notes some of these arts, culture, and historical resources to try to provide a more complete picture of Wrentham’s history and culture. Some of the resources below could be formally recognized through the Town’s local recognition processes.

Valued Arts, Culture, and Historic Resources Not Formally Designated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Fiske Library/Museum and associated cultural programs, including museum days and holiday openings for Memorial Day, Wrentham Day, and Holiday Open House. Other programming has included a socially distanced poetry open mic nights on the library lawn and holiday markets. The Old Fiske Library/Museum also has curated displays of artifacts from the Wrentham Historical Commission.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working landscapes like Big Apple Farm, Mount Saint Mary’s Abbey, and the Wrentham Developmental Center farmland. These places remind residents and visitors of Wrentham’s agricultural history.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrentham State Forest includes cultural resources like cow commons, stone walls, colonial roads, rock carvings, and a former mill site.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local sporting events, often school-sponsored, at the Town’s various park and recreation facilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joe’s Rock is a southwest facing cliff that rises above a former cranberry bog. The lookout provides sweeping views of the Wrentham area.

Valued Arts, Culture, and Historic Resources Not Formally Designated (continued)

- Longstanding Town events and activities that bring the community together, including the Crackerbarrel Fair, Wrentham Arts on the Common, and Wrentham Day.
- Lake Pearl and Sweatt Beach provide community gathering spots near the Town's water resources.
- The Fiske Public Library hosts events and digital history exhibits. Current exhibits include the Helen Keller exhibit, based on Keller's time spent in Wrentham; the Joseph MacDougald Railroad Connection; and two high school yearbook collections (for Wrentham High School and King Philip High School).
- **Town anniversary celebrations – the town is currently planning for the 350th Anniversary in 2023.**
- **Water trough in Town Common¹ – this artifact dates back to the late 1800s and is said to have been the first monument erected in the Town Common. Residents and visitors would stop and let horses and dogs get drinks. The trough no longer works, but the Wrentham Garden Club maintains landscaping around the artifact.**
- **Daniel Cook Store and Hall is right next to Sweatt Park and is a good example of 1800s Victorian architecture. The ornate woodwork on the building façade is a landmark to both drivers along Route 1A and pedestrians visiting Town Center.**
- **The Sheldonville Schoolhouse, built in 1869, is now known as Little Red Schoolhouse.²**
- **Wrentham Premium Outlets serves as a community gathering spot for residents and visitors, especially young adults in the area.**



*The old Daniel Cook store and hall has been repurposed into a variety of commercial uses over the years. Most recently, a consignment shop.
Source: Google.*

Wrentham's Plaque Program

Wrentham enacted a Plaque Program to promote awareness and pride in Wrentham and its past. The program seeks to educate residents and visitors about houses, buildings, and locations of historical interest or importance. The Sweatt Fund, a Town benefactor who sponsors arts and cultural programming in Wrentham, pays for the plaques and once installed, the plaques are owned

1 https://www.thesunchronicle.com/news/local_news/wrentham-history-takes-a-beating/article_2a77e9ce-8de4-5d6c-9273-679d7772c0b6.html

2 <https://www.norfolkwrenthamnews.com/2021/01/29/344331/wrentham-s-little-red-schoolhouse-a-long-history-of-educating-children>

by the Town. There are almost 100 different homes and sites that have been awarded plaques, with the oldest resource recognized being the Wrentham Center Cemetery, dating back to 1673. The oldest plaqued home is dated 1680.

Future Preservation Opportunities

During the surveying and inventorying of historical and cultural resources, preservation professionals will often deem properties “eligible” for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), if they find that the resource appears to meet the designation criteria. Because Wrentham has not actively pursued designating or listing resources on the NRHP, there are key properties or areas that are eligible and could be listed on national or state registries in the future¹:

- **Town Common** qualifies for designation as a NRHP historic district. The area is dominated by the Common, the archetypal church and the historic Old Fiske Library. Its commercial structures are most prominent in the two-story wood framed commercial blocks dating from the early twentieth century. Just off the Common are the Town Hall and District Court buildings, both from the mid-20th century. Imposing Victorian residences are also sited near the Common, some of which have been converted to professional offices and other uses. Significant residences are found on the main roads to all sides of the Common, some dating back to early colonial settlement. There is a significant series which extends south towards Wampum Corner, creating a fine ensemble. Town volunteers, like the Landscaping Committee, improve the overall appearance of the Town Common with seasonal landscaping and décor.
- **Wampum Corner** was home to the Town’s railroad station in 1892 and has served as a commercial hub for the town since the mid-1700s. Today, the area is characterized by a series of modest commercial buildings dating from early to twentieth mid-century, many of which are oriented to food, automotive, and other personal services. This area, together with residences set back from the main intersections, form a significant portion of the neighborhood. One special residence, the Wampum House, was built in

Origins of Wampum Corner and the Wampum House

While Wrentham celebrates Wampum Corner and the Wampum House as historic Town landmarks, the origins of the name “Wampum” are murky. The Wampum House resource inventory form claims the settlement is “named after Wrentham’s last Indian.” This claim highlights a common but harmful misconception: that no Indigenous peoples in the Northeast survived colonization and its impacts, including displacement, epidemics, and conflicts like King Philip’s War. Another story found on an inventory form for the Wampum House claims that the structure was the only surviving house after King Philip’s War because the Native peoples were afraid to burn the house down as its inhabitants had smallpox (source: Wrentham Historical Society). Understanding and sharing the history of Wampum Corner, from both the Indigenous and colonist perspectives, can work to better appreciate the Indigenous history of Wrentham and tell a more complete history.

¹ See the 2004 Wrentham Master Plan for additional background on preservation gaps.

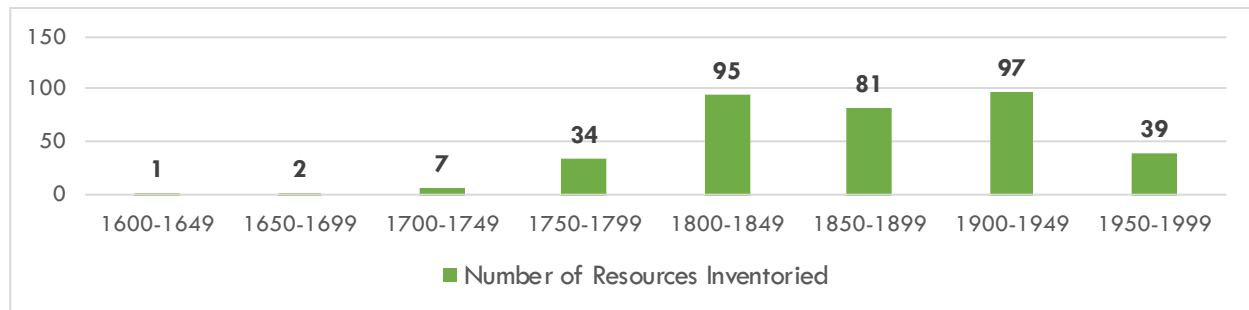
1700 and is currently maintained by the Historical Commission. The house is a full cape with its gable end to the street and a one-story addition to the rear. Because of its age and nearly unaltered condition, this house is one of Wrentham's important early houses, according to the MACRIS inventory form, and eligible for the NRHP.

- **Individual historical homes and outbuildings** – Several of the older residences in Wrentham exhibit various eras of construction, style, and use. The post-federalist, religious and intellectual ferment of the Great Awakening, and pre-Civil War era periods are particularly well-represented. These older residences could qualify for NRHP or state designation. Many of the owners of these properties take pride in the history of buildings, affixing plaques and dated signboards indicating early builders and property owners. The structures are also treated with care, as repair and restoration efforts are high quality and often historically accurate.
- **Civic and institutional buildings** - Older civic buildings, particularly the churches and civic/institutional buildings like the **Old Fiske Library/Museum** and **Mount Saint Mary's Abbey**, are well qualified for historic status.

Gaps in Inventorying Historical and Cultural Resources

Several properties have met the 50-year threshold for NRHP designation since the last resource evaluation was conducted, meaning there may be additional properties eligible for the NRHP or state registry. The number of resources identified from different periods of Wrentham's history (beginning with colonial times) is shown in Figure HC-2. The few resources from pre-1600 shows a gap in Indigenous history of the area. The low number of resources inventoried after 1950, despite this period being a significant period of growth for the Town, demonstrates a need to do a new historical and cultural resource survey.

Figure HC-2. Number of Inventoried Resources in Wrentham by Time Period



Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory (MACRIS), November 2021

Telling the Complete Story of Wrentham

The Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory database (MACRIS) categorizes inventoried resources by area of significance. Analyzing Wrentham's resources in this context can help identify gaps in Town research and preservation efforts. Wrentham has no documented resources related specifically to women's history. The only Wrentham resource tied to "Ethnic Heritage" (a MACRIS area of significance) is the grinding stone used by Indigenous people, located at the site of the Old Fiske Library/Museum. Reviewing resources through the lens of "significance" shows that research and documentation efforts have been dominated by White male history. Town preservation efforts that seek out the stories of non-White residents and communities, as well as women and LGBTQ communities, can enrich the telling and understanding of Wrentham's history.

Threats to historical and cultural resources

Lack of Town regulatory protections as development occurs - Without an active preservation movement and Town regulatory protections in place, historical and cultural resources are more likely to be lost as development occurs. The 2004 Wrentham Master Plan mentioned that new development patterns that include cul-de-sacs, Approval Not Required (ANR) sites¹, and insensitive site design (including for infill) erode the older settlement patterns. While Wrentham does have a demolition delay bylaw that grants Historical Commission oversight on demolition requests for buildings on the National Register of Historic Places or otherwise deemed “significant”, the review process is subjective due to the lack of formally designated properties within the Town. The bylaw only can prevent demolition, which means resources are left vulnerable to significant alterations that may diminish historical or architectural quality and preclude them from future formal designation. With so few historical homes and properties designated, very few are protected from demolition. The Town also lacks design guidelines for new construction or infill development, leaving room for historical landscapes and districts to be altered dramatically.

Natural Hazards and climate-related threats – The Town completed a Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2018, which identified Wrentham’s hazard risk. Wrentham is at risk of experiencing flooding, which can be detrimental to existing historical and cultural resources. As climate change is likely to increase the severity and frequency of flooding events and other hazards like thunderstorms, nor’easters, and blizzard or snow events, it will be important for the Town to consider how best to protect and mitigate damage. See the Energy and Sustainability topic for more information about flooding risks in Wrentham.

Gaps in research – the gaps in Wrentham’s existing historical inventory mentioned in the previous section represent a significant threat to resources that have yet to be research and identified. If research and archiving efforts do not shift to other topic areas, such as women’s history, LGBTQ history, or the stories of Black, Indigenous, or other peoples of color, resources may inadvertently be lost.

Opportunities for Future Work

The Town has committed to preserving and celebrating its rich history and culture. The Historical Commission, Wrentham Cultural Council, and other municipal and civic organizations work together to document and share Wrentham’s history with residents and visitors. To inform future work, the following opportunities have been observed.

Leverage Historical and Cultural Asset Clusters

Wrentham’s historical development patterns have resulted in natural clusters of historical and cultural resources (see Map 2). Wampum Corner, Town Common, and the State School have already been identified in MACRIS as potential historic districts. Sheldonville could also qualify as a historic district, due to the area’s cohesion as a residential settlement. Sheldonville homes embody a building spurt beginning in the 1830s and continuing through the Victorian era. Colonial revivals mix with late Victorian mansards, carpenter Gothic, and hints of the federalist styles. Homes show great levels of detail and ornament, with varied and articulated masses, some from initial composition,

¹ An “Approval Not Required” project is a type of subdivision that does not require a formal review process by the Planning Board. Generally, all lots shown on an ANR plan must have frontage on an existing public way, except in the case of land transfers between properties. For more information, see: <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/07/rn/anrhandbook.pdf>

while others bear the mark of long-term accretions of farmhouses and barnyards. Most of the buildings address the roads, some being quite close. In the center of Sheldonville, buildings are sited much nearer to their neighbors than in outlying areas. Stone fences and hedges are distinguishing features. Targeting preservation efforts to these clusters of resources could be effective in preserving the overall integrity of areas and generating economic development opportunities, like historical walking tours (see Economic Development Strategy 7 from Phase I of the Master Plan).

Further economic development goals

During Phase I of the Master Plan, the first Economic Development goal states, “Pursue strategic and innovative strategies for new economic opportunities in Wrentham, including leveraging Wrentham’s major attractions such as the Wrentham Premium Outlets, Rice Complex, and natural, agricultural, and historical resources.” Several of the economic development strategies to achieve this goal present opportunities to leverage historical and cultural resources. Marketing historical sites with signage, branding, and wayfinding, particularly along existing and future walking and bike routes to regional destinations, can educate about Wrentham’s history (See Economic Development Strategies 1, 2, 4, and 7.) Art installations that interpret stories and themes from different periods in Wrentham’s history could also be an effective way to highlight the Town’s history and culture.

Economic Development Strategy 3 calls for the Town to create opportunities for Town businesses, through on-site farmers markets, food trucks, craft markets, or other temporary pop-up events. Locating temporary events near historical resources can add a cultural component to special events and publicize the historic significance of Town sites. Wrentham’s historic farms and semi-rural landscapes also provide an opportunity for unique pop-up events and markets.

Economic Development Strategy 8 acknowledges an opportunity for Wrentham’s Town Center to become a wedding destination. Formally designating potential wedding venue sites on the National or State Registers can help promote the venues and expand funding options for renovation or revitalization efforts (see the Funding Opportunities section below for more information). The Town can also consider what other kinds of special events, such as cultural fairs or maker exhibits, could be hosted at historic sites. Consideration for the events that occurred at historic sites, particularly those that harmed communities of color, should also be taken into account when determining whether to host events.

Housing opportunities consistent with historical patterns

As noted in the Housing topic of the Master Plan inconsistencies between the current zoning bylaw and historical development patterns have been observed. Some of the older neighborhoods in Wrentham would be not be allowed under current zoning. By not allowing development in the same character as some of the treasured historical neighborhoods, over time, new development could erode the Town’s character. (see also Housing Goal 3) Affording minimum lot size flexibility in key areas of the Town where there was historically denser settlement patterns could also complement transportation goals to create more compact, walkable neighborhoods in areas like Wrentham’s Town Center, Wampum Corner, or Sheldonville.

Many communities have leveraged vacant historical commercial, civic, or institutional buildings to create new mixed-use developments that include different housing types and neighborhood services. The Wrentham Development Center and Crosby Valve/Tyco sites both represent redevelopment opportunities where historical and cultural resources can be integrated and serve as an amenity. (see also Housing Goal 1)

Existing Preservation Efforts and Tools

Wrentham Historical Commission

The Wrentham Historical Commission is a volunteer-based commission that was established in 1967. The Commission is responsible for preserving, maintaining, displaying, collecting, and sharing artifacts and stories of the Town's history. The Commission maintains the Wampum House, a cape-style farmhouse at 677 South Street in Wampum Corner that dates from around 1740. The Commission also executes the Town's demolition bylaw and historic plaque program. The Commission meets monthly at the Old Fiske Library/Museum.

Demolition Bylaw

The demolition bylaw, Article 7.60, Section 2 in Wrentham's General Bylaws, was enacted in 2002. The bylaw requires any home proposed to be demolished that is fifty years or older and/or listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places must be reviewed by the Historical Commission for approval.

Historic Plaque Program

Paid for by Sweatt Funds and administered by the Historical Commission, this program recognizes homes or buildings that are at least 100 years old. The plaques note whether an event of historical interest occurred at the location or if a place was the residence of an individual of historical significance. The purpose of the program is to promote awareness and pride in Wrentham. Almost 100 different homes and sites have been awarded plaques, with the oldest landmark being the Wrentham Center Cemetery, which dates back to 1673. The oldest plaqued home is dated 1680. More information on the program and how to apply for plaques is available [here](#).

Old Fiske Library Museum

The Old Fiske Library was built in 1894 and has since been renamed the Old Fiske Museum. The museum was renovated in 2010 and hosts a variety of exhibits and open houses throughout the year. The Historical Commission's gallery features historical artifacts from Wrentham's rich history.

Archival Efforts

The Wrentham Historical Commission maintains a vast collection of artifacts related to Wrentham's history. Current and former residents donate artifacts to the Commission, who then archive, curate, and display artifacts at the Old Fiske Library Museum. In 2018, the Commission hired the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) to complete a Preservation Needs Assessment. The assessment evaluating the buildings and environments as they relate to the preservation needs of materials; examined current policies, storage, and handling procedures; and assessed the general conditions of materials. According to the Needs Assessment, the Wrentham Historical Commission possesses:

- 1,000 bound volumes
- 1,500 issues of newspapers
- 10,000 documents and manuscripts
- 250 maps
- 65 posters
- 25 audiovisual materials, including film, CDs, and magnetic tape
- Artwork including 25 pieces on paper, 25 paintings, and 12 textiles
- Photograph collection comprised of 10,000 prints, 1,000 negatives, and 1,500 slides
- Approximately 2,000 artifacts

The Needs Assessment, through a questionnaire of Commission members, identified that priority collections and items include the Cowell paintings and Wrentham Whig Party Banner. Many pieces of the collection still need to be processed, archived, and prioritized. The Preservation Needs Assessment outlines recommendations for archiving and maintaining the collection, with an emphasis on activities that provide the broadest benefit to all collections, rather than a small number of items. Read the complete report here. The Commission, along with the Community



Source: Town of Wrentham

Preservation Committee, refers to the Needs Assessment recommendations when determining projects to fund through Wrentham’s Community Preservation Act funding.

Wrentham Cultural Council

The Wrentham Cultural Council, comprised of volunteers, is a Town branch of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. It is responsible for reviewing and awarding grants for cultural programming in the Town. The Wrentham Cultural Council works with the Wrentham Historical Commission to host events and curate exhibits at the Old Fiske Library/Museum. The Council also sponsors the annual Arts on the Common festival each spring. The Council’s vision statement is, “Enhance the vitality of the Wrentham community by engaging residents in the arts, humanities, and interpretative sciences.” This vision is carried out through the collective support of Wrentham’s arts and culture community, which includes supporting local dance schools and musicians, summer music programs for area youth, and events like poetry readings and documentary screenings.

Community Preservation Committee

Wrentham became a Community Preservation Act (CPA) community in 2016. The Act allows Wrentham to create a Town Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, recreation, and affordable housing. The Community Preservation Committee was formed to administer the program. Funds earned and granted through the CPA are an important tool for historic preservation and rehabilitation of important historic landscapes and buildings. Since 2016, the Town has funded 13 projects, of which one has fallen into the category of historic preservation – the restoration and preservation of the framed paintings by Joseph Goss Cowell a Wrentham resident and renowned artist, sculptor and designer. At the November 2021 Town Meeting, the Town approved \$35,000 to fund a part-time archivist position and the purchase of supplies to catalog and preserve the Historical Commission’s significant artifacts. The Committee also adopted a Community Preservation Plan in 2021 that includes three historic preservation goals focused on historical artifact acquisition and preservation.

Funding opportunities

A variety of funding opportunities, in the form of grants and direct funds, are available to municipalities and non-profit organizations focused on historic preservation and supporting arts and culture.

- **Community Preservation Act (CPA)** – The funds gathered under this program can be used for historic preservation; however, there are some restrictions. The funds may be appropriated for a building, structure, vessel, real property, document, or artifact that is either on the National Register of Historic Places or has been determined by the Wrentham Historical Commission to be significant in the history, archaeology, architecture, or culture of Wrentham. Appropriated funds may only be used for acquiring, preserving, rehabilitating, or restoring those eligible resources. Properties acquired for historic preservation using CPA funds require a permanent historic preservation restriction to be placed on them, approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and filed with the Registry of Deeds.
- **Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credits** – A 20% tax credit is available for the rehabilitation of historic, income-producing buildings that are determined by the Secretary of the Interior, through the National Park Service, to be “certified historic structures.” A certified historic structure is a building that is listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places or located in a registered historic district and certified by the National Park Service as contributing to the historic significance of that district. Rehabilitation work must comply with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Owner-occupied residential structures are not eligible for this tax credit.
- **Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits** – Massachusetts administers this program, which is set to expire in 2027. Under the program, a certified rehabilitation project on an income-producing property is eligible to receive up to 20% of the cost of certified rehabilitation expenditures in state tax credits. The Massachusetts Historical Commission certifies the projects and allocates available credits. Selection criteria ensures the funds are distributed to projects that provide the most public benefit. Criteria include affordable housing, preservation, potential for loss, statement of need, geographic distribution, feasibility, public support, state of utility, and economic impact.
- **Grant opportunities**
 - **State Cultural Council funds** – Wrentham is awarded \$5,000 that can be split into mini-grants to support cultural projects in the Town. This grant program is administered by the Wrentham Cultural Council.
 - **Sweatt Memorial Trust** – The Sweatt Memorial Fund is a trust that was left to the Town in the early 20th century. Using the Trust funds, the Town awards grants to projects that benefit the Town, but may not be covered by the Town budget. The Sweatt Memorial Fund Advisory Committee oversees the funding process. In the past, Wrentham’s Landscaping Committee, Wrentham Cultural Council, and Historical Commission have received funds to support projects, from electricity for outdoor events at Sweatt Park and the installation of a Persian Gulf War Memorial to display cases for the Old Fiske Library Museum.

- **Additional Grant Opportunities**
 - National Trust for Historic Preservation funds
 - Economic Development Association Tourism Grants
 - National Endowment for the Arts - Grants for Arts Projects, Challenge America, Our Town
 - Mass Humanities Grants
 - Cultural Facilities Fund, a partnership between Mass Cultural Council and MassDevelopment
 - MassDevelopment Commonwealth Places
 - Historic New England Community Preservation Grants
 - Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Program
 - National Park Service Historic Preservation Fund grants
- **Alternative Funding Mechanisms**
 - **Preservation Loan Funds** – In Arlington, Massachusetts, a nonprofit organization – Arlington Preservation Fund, Inc. – has been formed for the purpose of providing low-interest loans to owners of historically-significant properties in Arlington. Initiated through a Community Development Block Grant, the fund is administered by a nine-member board appointed by the Arlington Select Board. Eligible properties are located within the Town’s local historic districts, listed on the NRHP, documented through Historical Commission inventories, or otherwise deemed significant by the Board. Preservation restrictions are applied to the areas of work funded by the loans for twice the term of the loan unless the property is in a Wrentham local historic district.
 - **Use Allowances for Historic Preservation** – Zoning use regulations can provide financial incentives for historic preservation. By moderately increasing allowable income-producing activities within the historically-significant properties. The Zoning bylaw can help create supportive conditions for historic preservation. Examples of incentives include the allowance of an additional by-right housing unit within structures certified as historically significant or the allowance of a set of home-based occupations that would not disrupt or alter the historical character of the building or surrounding neighborhood.

Community Engagement

Findings from the Town-wide survey conducted during Phase I of the Master Plan indicate the importance of historical and cultural resources to Town residents. Nearly a quarter of respondents said history and historical sites are Wrentham's greatest strengths. Overall, residents desire more community events. This desire is particularly noted among residents of color who saw more opportunities for stronger community and social networks in the Town, and more diversity overall. Preserving and enhancing cultural resources and activities can strengthen the community and make it more welcoming. Respondents also noted that the Town Common serves as a potential gathering space, with opportunities for more investment to continue making improvements to the park.

Interviews with members of the Historical Commission, Wrentham Cultural Council, and Community Preservation Committee were conducted to inform the existing conditions analysis. The Phase II Town-wide survey findings most relevant to cultural resources are reflected as well.

Feedback from the public forums, focus groups, and steering committee will be incorporated into this element as goals and strategies are discussed.

Existing Conditions Assessment: Energy and Sustainability

This section presents Wrentham's municipal energy profile, residential and commercial energy profile, and a climate preparedness and resiliency summary for Wrentham, followed by a discussion of community's feedback, in the topic of energy and sustainability.

Municipal Energy Profile

Municipalities have direct control over energy use in their municipal facilities including, buildings, open space and recreational facilities, traffic lights, water and wastewater systems, and vehicle fleets. While municipal energy use only makes up a small portion of the total energy use within a community, municipal leadership on energy efficiency and renewable energy can be critical to elevating the issue and incentivizing change through leading by example. Energy efficiency efforts may help save the Town money by reducing costs from energy usage and taking advantage of utility incentives. Similarly, purchasing renewable energy could help stabilize energy prices and may reduce costs for the Town, which can be a significant portion of the municipal budget.

Green Community and Clean Energy

Wrentham has been primarily working to cut costs by improving energy efficiency and encouraging renewable energy sources. The Town is currently in the process of becoming designated as a Green Community by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER). The Green Communities Designation allows the Town to be eligible for State grant funding to implement energy conservation measures across Town-owned properties, buildings, and vehicles. For example, municipalities have used Green Community grants to purchase new heating equipment for schools and/or to install electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. In order to become a Green Community, a municipality must:

1. Develop a 5-year energy reduction plan to reduce municipal energy use by 20%,
2. Approve zoning for renewable energy generation,
3. Create expedited permitting for as-of-right energy facilities,
4. Begin a fuel-efficient vehicle purchasing policy,
5. Adopt the Massachusetts' Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) Stretch Code (780 CM 115.AA) which minimizes the full costs of an asset over its life cycle and increase energy efficiency in new construction.

As of November 2021, Wrentham meets each of these criteria, with the final step having been taken at the November 15, 2021 Town Meeting, where the Stretch Code was unanimously adopted. The Town is in the process of completing an application for Green Community Designation.

Resources exist for Wrentham to plan for the use of Green Community grants to further emissions reductions, including the Municipal Net Zero Playbook. The Playbook offers guidance to help municipalities improve energy efficiency and shift to renewable energy sources to advance towards net zero, including through transportation, buildings, zoning and permitting, and increasing the renewable energy supply.

Municipal Energy Use

The Town's energy use over the past several years by facility type, including building, open space, street and traffic lights, transportation, and water/sewer is shown in Table E-1.¹ Operations in the buildings consume the most energy. It is difficult to determine an overall trend of energy use. From year to year, energy use has fluctuated due to changes in the weather and use and record keeping has been kept for only six years.

Table E-1. Municipal Energy Use

Municipal Energy Use (MMBtu) by Facility Type, 2015-2020						
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Buildings	20,900	18,587	19,752	19,481	20,323	18,581
Open Space	30	26	28	22	23	25
Street/Traffic Lights	34	34	33	36	38	36
Transportation	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported	6,548	6,607
Water/Sewer	2,707	2,864	2,542	2,782	2,434	2,824
Total	NA	NA	NA	NA	29,365	28,073

Source: Mass Energy Insight, ERP Guidance Table 3b - Municipal Energy Consumption

The energy consumption of municipal buildings (excluding the King Philip Regional High School) is listed in Table E-2. Delaney Elementary School consumes substantially more than any other building. The table also shows the size and energy efficiency of each building, and the Delaney Elementary School is not only the biggest building, but also one of the most inefficient.

Table E-2. Highest Energy Consuming Municipal Buildings

Highest Energy Consuming Municipal Buildings			
	Energy use in 2020 (MMBtu)	Area (Square feet)	Energy use per area (MMBtu/square foot)
Delaney Elementary School	7,935	58,500	0.14
Charles E Roderick Intermediate School	3,460	55,662	0.06
Public Safety Building	2,845	38,329	0.07
DPW Garage	1,201	9,638	0.12
Town Hall	1,113	10,984	0.10
Fiske Public Library	871	13,840	0.06
Senior Center	499	3,778	0.13
Sheldonville Fire Station	234	1,978	0.12
Old Fiske Library	184	3,997	0.05
Cemetery Building	103	600	0.17
Building Inspector	87	1,500	0.06
Church Clock Ext	48	-	-
Total	18,581		

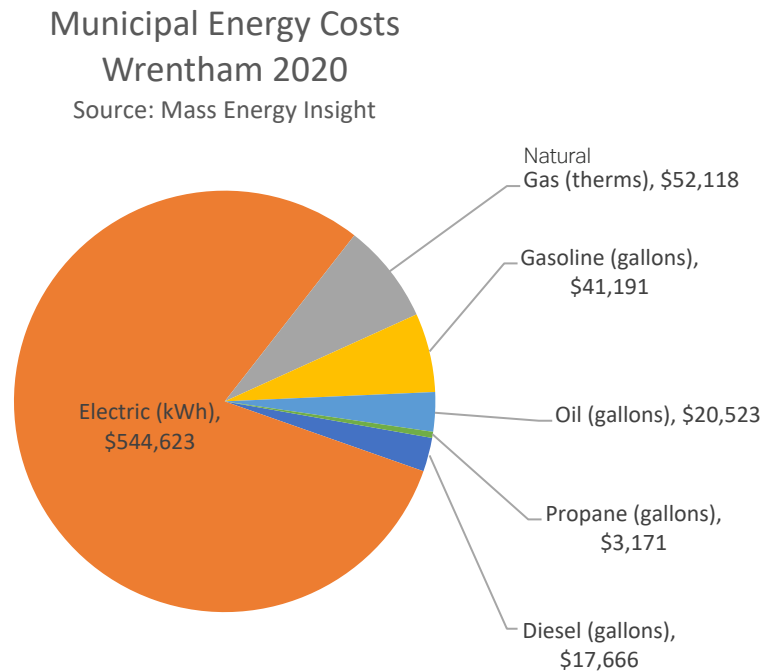
Source: Mass Energy Insight, ERP Guidance Table 3b - Municipal Energy Consumption; Alpha Facility Solutions "Town of Wrentham Facility Condition Assessment," January 22, 2020

¹ This data does not include the King Philip Regional High School.

Municipal Energy Costs

The chart below illustrates Wrentham’s municipal energy costs in 2020 with a total of \$680,000. The majority of municipal energy costs are for electricity, likely for lighting and cooling. Shifting use from fossil fuels, such as gas and oil, to electricity is an effective strategy towards reducing emissions. Particularly as more renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind, are integrated into energy production through the electric grid.

Figure E-1. Municipal Energy Costs



Residential and Commercial Energy Profile

Compared to municipal energy use, the energy used in residential, commercial, and industrial sectors comprises a larger portion of Wrentham’s energy usage and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. For example, municipal electricity use accounts for about 3% of all electricity use and 3% of natural gas use within Wrentham, and an even smaller percent of transportation energy use.

Energy Use

The following table shows the electric and natural gas usage from the residential sector compared to the commercial and industrial.¹ In Wrentham, electricity is primarily used for lighting and cooling, and natural gas for building heat and hot water. The commercial and industrial sectors use slightly more energy than the residential sector, accounting for about 57% of the total electricity use and 61% of the total natural gas use.

The annual electric and natural gas usage between 2013 and 2019 has fluctuated from year to year but remained relatively constant. However, over the course of each year, there are typically energy peaks during the summer months such as July and August, as well as winter months such as January and December due to the seasonal energy needs for cooling and heating, respectively.

¹ The commercial and industrial sector data also includes municipal energy use due to aggregation of data from MassSave. MassSave is a collaborative, all-encompassing energy efficiency program run by energy providers and utilities in Massachusetts.

Table E-3. Residential, Commercial and Industrial Energy Use and Savings

Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Energy Use and Savings		
Sector	Annual Electric Usage (MWh)*	Annual Gas Usage (Therms)*
Residential	40,469	1,460,573
Commercial & Industrial**	52,113	2,266,346
Total	92,581	3,726,919

Source: MassSave <https://www.masssavedata.com/Public/GeographicSavings?view=U>

*MWh Mega-Watt hour. One MW is equivalent to 1,000 kilowatts (kW) or 1,000,000 watts (W). One MWh would be equivalent to the electricity required to power 10,000 100-watt light bulbs for one hour.

A therm is equivalent to 100,000 BTUs or British Thermal Units. One therm is approximately the energy equivalent of burning 100 cubic feet of natural gas.

** This also includes municipal energy use due to aggregation of data from Mass Save.

Energy Costs and Energy Efficiency

Wrentham’s adoption of the Stretch Code at the Spring 2021 Town Meeting should help increase energy efficiency and lower residents’ energy costs. In addition, Wrentham’s residents have already been proactive in taking action to address energy use in their own homes, as illustrated below by the rate of participation in the MassSave program. MassSave is a statewide collaborative of Massachusetts’ natural gas and electric utilities, and energy efficiency service providers that offer services and rebates to State residents to help them make energy efficiency upgrades. The figure below illustrate the increasing number of incentives granted to Wrentham residents and businesses between 2013 and 2019. The correlated increase in electric savings in both the residential and commercial/industrial sectors is also illustrated. Wrentham residents and businesses have received more than \$4,000,000 in MassSaves electric incentives for energy efficiency upgrades between 2013-2019.

Figure E-2. Use of Electric Incentives in Wrentham

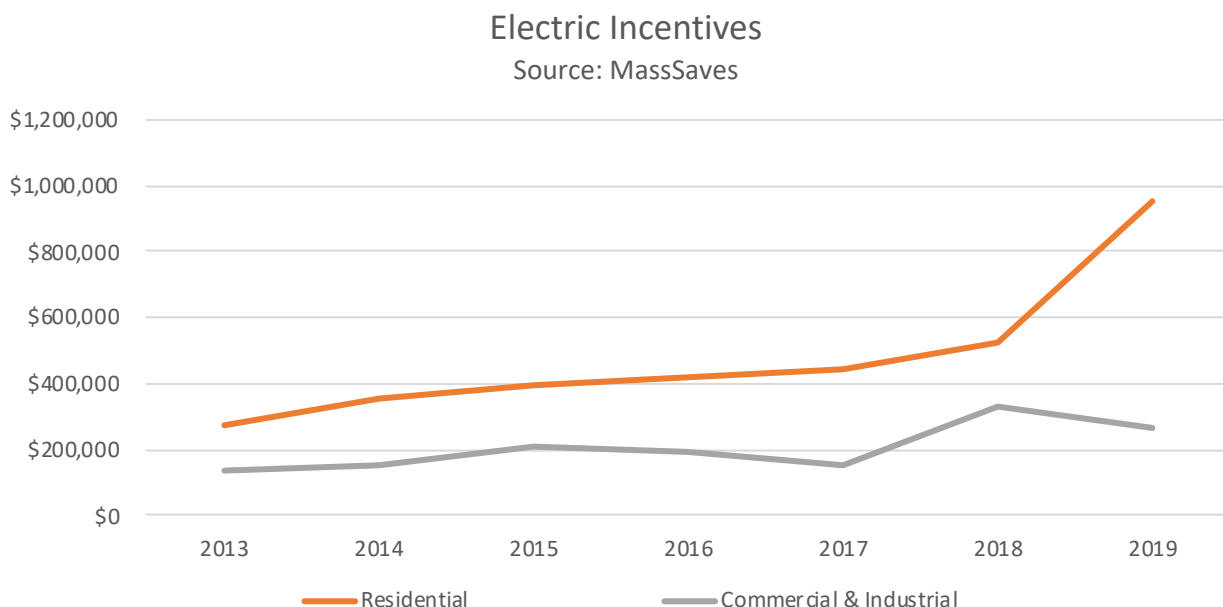
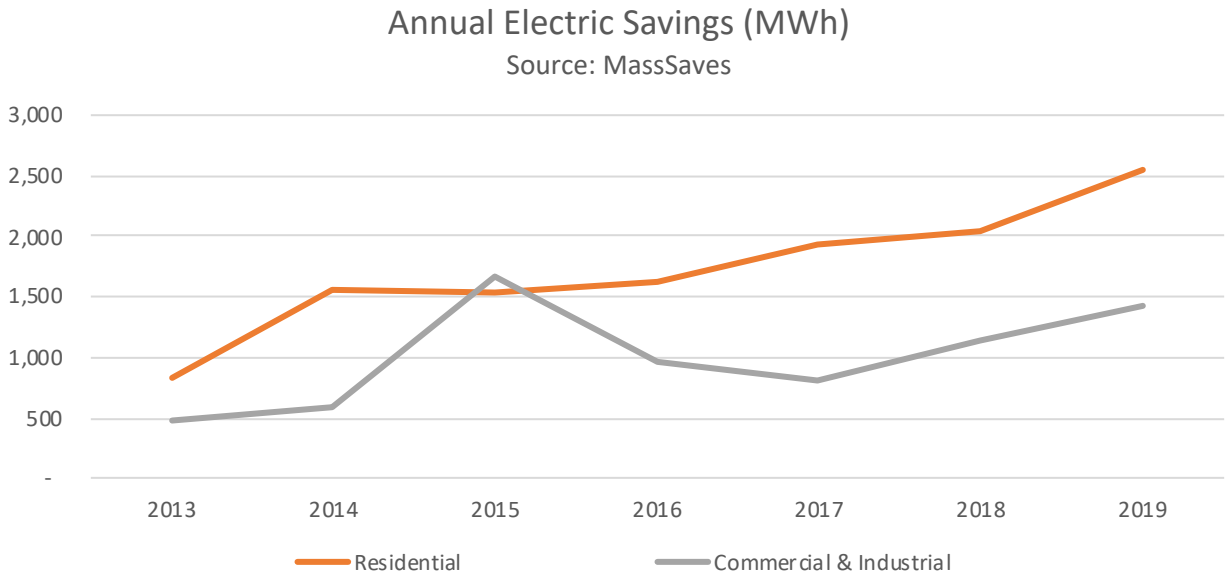


Figure E-3. Annual Electric Savings



Wrentham also participates in the PACE (Property Assessed Clean Energy) Financing made available through the municipality to homeowners to reduce energy and water consumption. The PACE program allows homeowners to payback the upfront costs of renewable energy, energy efficiency, and water efficiency improvements through assessments added to their property tax bill.

Renewable Energy Generation

Wrentham residents and businesses have also been proactive investing in renewable energy sources. There are more than 335 qualified renewable energy generation units in Wrentham, most of which are solar panels at residential properties with a capacity of 8 – 14 kilowatts at a cost of \$4 per watt.¹ There are also several larger installations at Mount Saint Mary’s Abbey, the Wrentham Development Center, and other commercial, municipal, and institutional properties. In total, the renewable energy generation capacity in Wrentham is currently approximately 17,000 kW, a minuscule amount compared to the town-wide energy use.

Green Municipal Aggregation

In addition to taking steps to increase energy efficiency and otherwise reduce energy use, cities and towns are increasingly turning to municipal aggregation (also called community choice aggregation) to help residents and businesses within the community save money on electricity costs. In a municipal aggregation, a city or town contracts with an electricity supplier on behalf of residents and businesses who have not already selected a competitive supplier as an alternative to the basic service provided by the electric utility. This is separate from the municipal-specific contracts.

Typically, most aggregations in Massachusetts have pursued cost savings and price stability as primary goals, but MAPC has developed a strategy to help communities achieve these goals while also helping to build new renewable energy.² Communities participating in the Green Municipal Aggregation program typically add 5% or more additional renewable energy into their contracts (above and beyond current State requirements), helping to drive increased renewable generation capacity in New England. Fourteen cities and towns in the Boston metro area are implementing Green Municipal Aggregation with MAPC, including Millis. Wrentham could pursue the same.

1 <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/lists-of-qualified-generation-units>

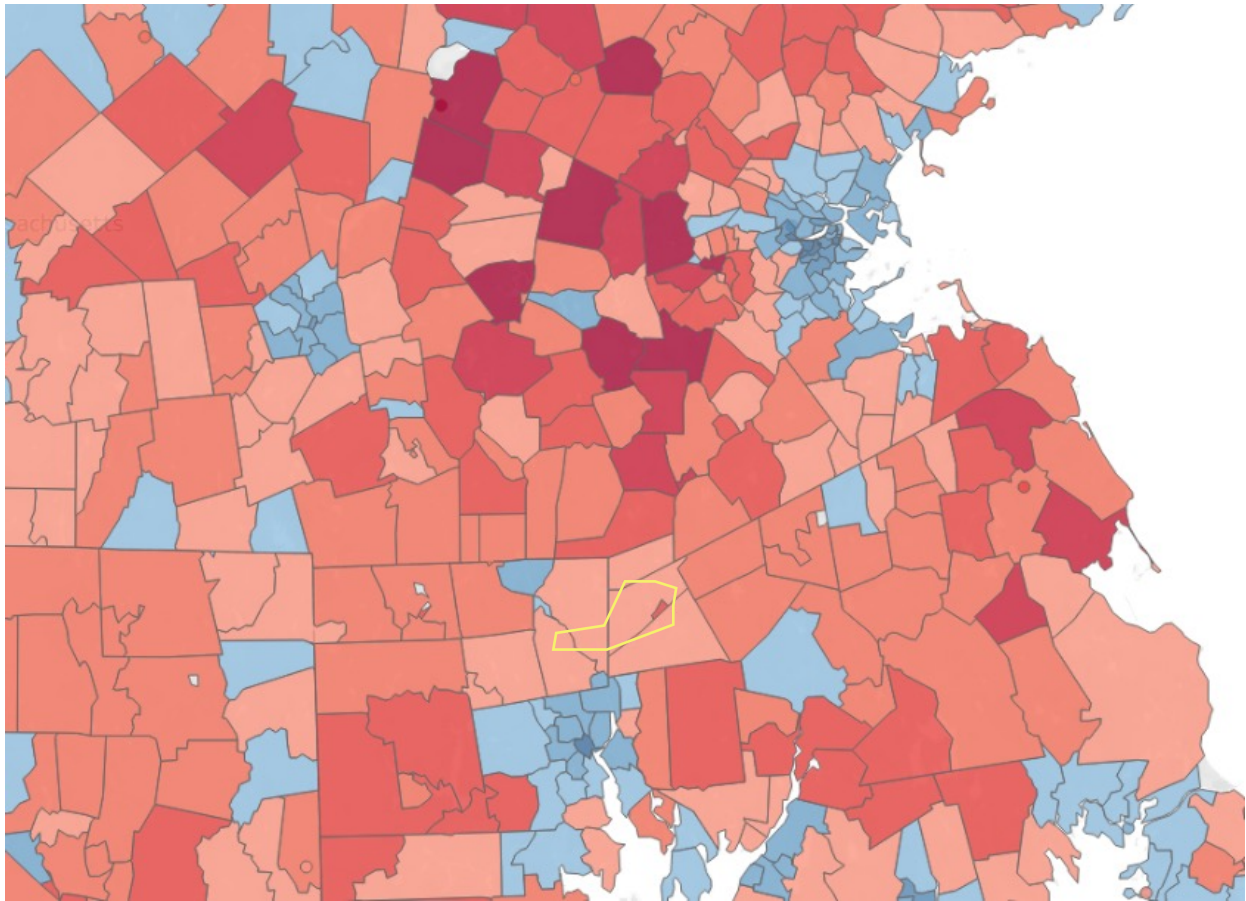
2 For more information: <https://www.mapc.org/our-work/expertise/clean-energy/green-municipal-aggregation/>

Transportation Energy and Emissions

Unfortunately, Massachusetts municipal-level data on transportation energy use is unavailable, even though the transportation sector is the largest source of emissions in the United States, in Massachusetts, and likely in Wrentham. Cars and personal trucks currently are the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), more than coal-fired power plants. Transportation emissions are a product of the total miles driven (often referred to as vehicle-miles traveled, or VMT) and the fuel efficiency of those vehicles. Transitioning to electric or other “zero emission” vehicles is critical to reducing emissions. In addition, reducing the need to drive, and making it safer and more convenient to take transit, to walk, and to bike is necessary for effectively reducing transportation sector energy use. The land use patterns of Massachusetts towns and cities have created a dependence on cars and trucks to get to work, home, and most places people need to go. The estimated carbon emissions per household by zip code are shown in Figure E-4.

As is illustrated, households in more urban zip codes have less carbon emissions (shown as blue) largely due to less use of cars and personal trucks. The households in more rural zip codes have more carbon emissions (shown in pink). The estimated carbon emissions from different sectors of an average household in Wrentham is shown in Figure E-5 on the following page.¹

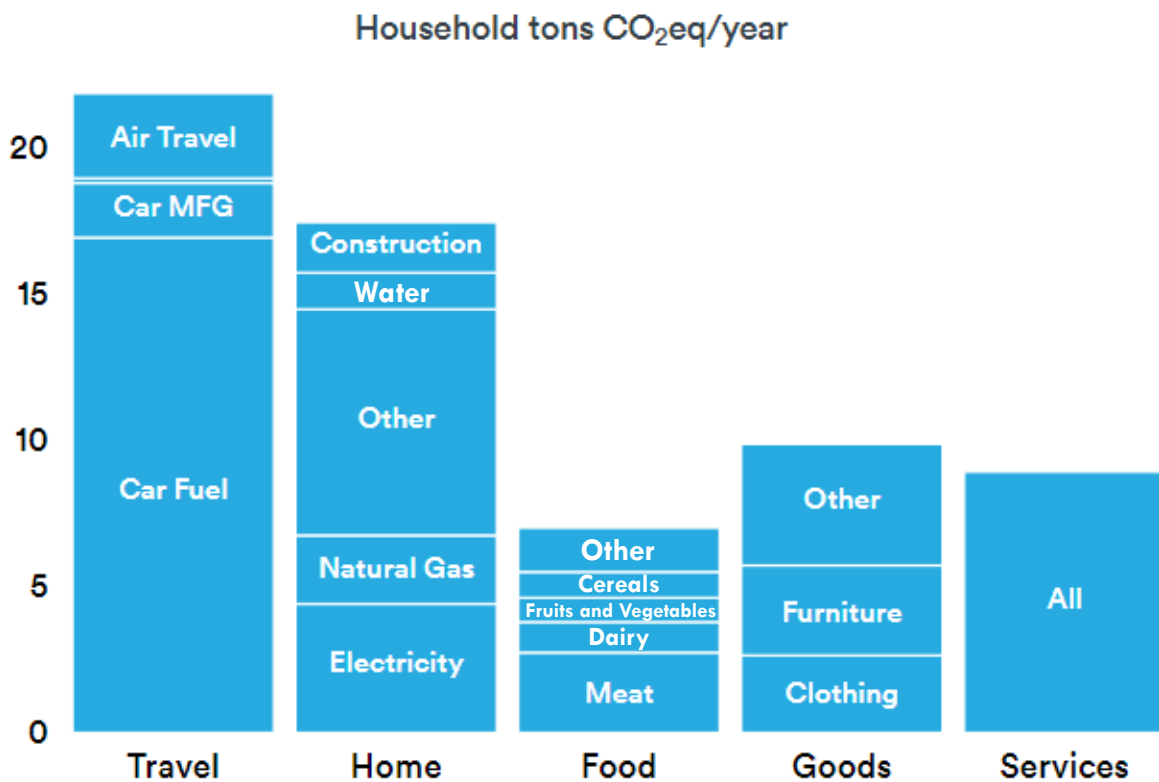
Figure E-4 Estimated carbon emission per household by zip code²



¹ Source: UC Berkeley CoolClimate Network, Average Annual Household Carbon Footprint (2013).

² Source: UC Berkeley CoolClimate Network, Average Annual Household Carbon Footprint (2013).

Figure E-5. Estimated carbon emissions from average household in Wrentham¹



Climate Preparedness and Resiliency

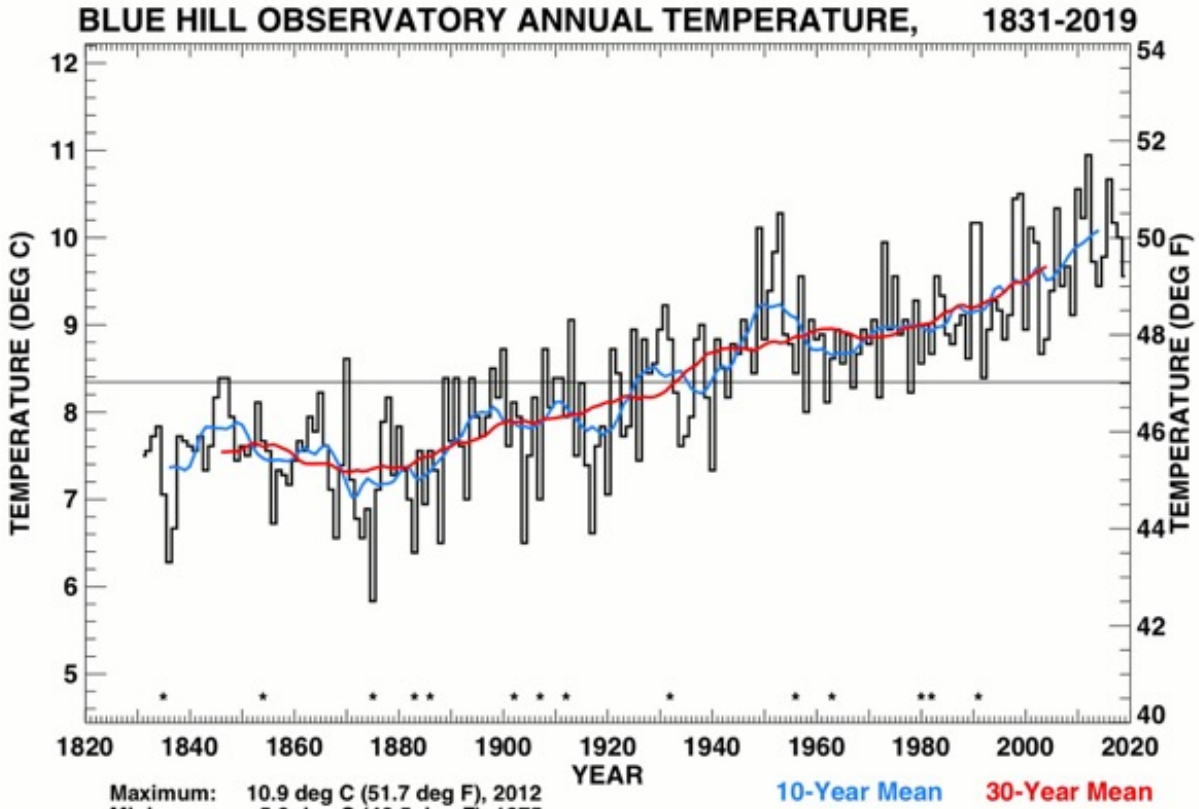
Recent years have seen notable weather extremes in Wrentham. Globally, the past five years have been the hottest in recorded history. These types of weather events are projected to happen more frequently as our climate warms. Projected changes include an increase in average temperatures and extreme heat days. Changing precipitation patterns include both increased flooding from large rain events and a greater likelihood of drought. Changing climatic conditions will have wide ranging impacts on infrastructure, public health, natural resources, and the economy. Wrentham is already taking proactive steps to address potential climate threats; the Master Plan process is an additional opportunity to assure that Wrentham is well-prepared to address the challenges posed by changing conditions. This section summarizes climate projections, highlights existing conditions, and identifies climate impacts to consider when planning for the future.

Climate Observations and Projections - Temperature and Extreme Heat

Records from the Blue Hill Observatory in Milton, MA show that average temperatures (30-year mean) have risen approximately 3 degrees (F) in the almost 200 years since record keeping began in 1831, as shown in the Figure E-6 on the next page.

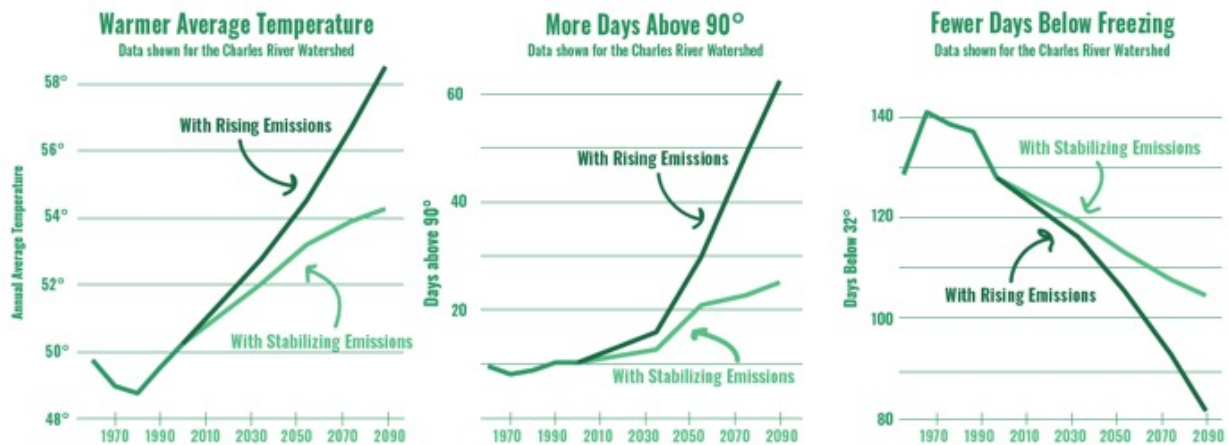
¹ Source: UC Berkeley CoolClimate Network, Average Annual Household Carbon Footprint (2013).

Figure E-6. Observed Increase in Temperature



The Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center (NECASC) provides localized climate projections for Massachusetts. Projections for average temperature, days above 90 degrees, and days below freezing for the Wrentham area are shown in Figure E-7.

Figure E-7. Projected Temperature Changes for the North Coastal Watershed¹



¹ Northeast Climate Adaptation Science Center (NECASC)

The projected increase in extreme heat and heat waves is the source of one of the key health concerns related to climate change. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures can cause heat-related illnesses, such as heat cramps, heat exhaustion, heat stroke, and death. Heat can also exacerbate pre-existing conditions, including respiratory illnesses, cardiovascular disease, and mental illnesses. The poor air quality and high humidity that often accompany heat waves can also aggravate asthma and other pre-existing cardiovascular conditions.

Due to what is termed the “heat island effect,” areas with less shade and more dark surfaces (pavement and roofs) will experience even hotter temperatures. These surfaces absorb heat during the day and release it in the evening, keeping nighttime temperatures warmer as well. In contrast, trees can play an important role in mitigating heat. Shaded surfaces can be 25-40 degrees cooler than peak temperatures of unshaded surfaces. Although most of Wrentham has a robust tree cover that helps cool the air, the Wrentham Premium Outlets and its parking areas are a “Hot Spot,” defined as being in the hottest 5% of the MAPC region.

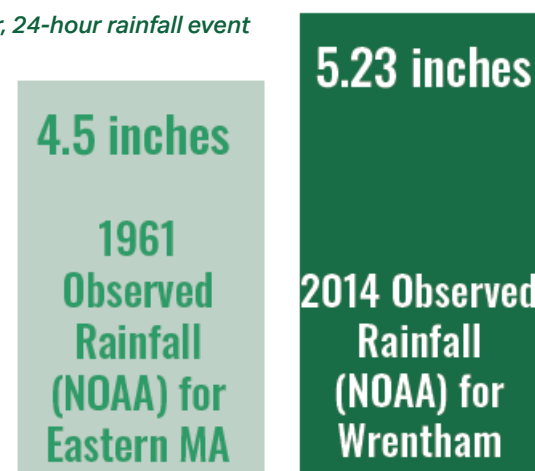
The Wrentham Zoning Bylaw also has requirements in the parking regulations for landscaping to reduce the visual impacts of large areas of pavement, improve the overall environment of parking areas by providing areas for shade and heat reduction, and enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal of parking areas.

Precipitation Patterns, Flooding, & Drought

Annual precipitation in Massachusetts has increased by approximately 10% in the fifty-year period from 1960 to 2010.¹ Moreover, there has been a significant increase in the frequency and intensity of large rain events. The Northeast US has experienced a 55% increase in the amount of annual precipitation that falls in the top 1% of storm events over the past 60 years.² The following figure shows the increase in the size of the 10-year, 24-hour storm, a figure used to size stormwater infrastructure, for Wrentham over the past 60 years.

The trends of increasing annual rainfall and large rainfall events are projected to continue as the climate warms. Despite overall increasing precipitation, more frequent and significant summer droughts are also a projected consequence of climate change. This is due to projections that precipitation will increase in winter and spring and decrease slightly in the summer and fall, and a result of earlier snow melt and higher temperatures that will reduce soil moisture.

Figure E-8: Increase in the 10-year, 24-hour rainfall event



Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

¹ Massachusetts Climate Adaptation Report, 2011; <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/11/29/Full%20report.pdf>

² Fourth National Climate Assessment, 2018

Impacts on Society

Just as some locations in Wrentham will be more vulnerable to climate impacts than others, it is also true that climate change will not affect all residents of Wrentham equally. People who may be more susceptible to negative health effects can include older adults, young children, pregnant women, people with disabilities, and people with pre-existing health conditions, as they are more likely to be physically vulnerable to the health impacts of extreme heat and poor air quality. Individuals with physical mobility constraints may need additional assistance with emergency response. Older adults are often at elevated risk due to a high prevalence of pre-existing and chronic conditions. People who live in substandard housing and in housing without air conditioning have increased vulnerability to heat-related illnesses. Black and Latino residents in Massachusetts are hospitalized for asthma at considerably higher rates than the population as whole, reflecting the reality that longstanding societal inequities can lead to differential health outcomes based on race and ethnicity.

Low-income residents are often more susceptible to financial shocks, which can occur after extreme weather, and which can impact financial security and the ability to secure safe shelter and meet medical needs. Social isolation can also influence vulnerability, as it limits access to critical information, municipal resources, and social support systems. In the absence of strong social support networks and translation services, people living alone and those with limited English language proficiency may experience social isolation. People of color and undocumented immigrants may also experience social isolation where there are historically strained or tenuous relationships with government officials and first responders.

Certain occupations may also experience more severe impacts. People who work outdoors, or in unregulated temperatures, are at increased risk for heat-related illnesses. Residents reliant on the local fishing, shell fishing, and lobstering economy may be impacted as changes in water temperature and acidity affect the local ocean economy.

Strategies that direct resources to populations most likely to be affected, include improving public health, housing conditions, and community cohesion will support resilience in the face of climate impacts. Social connectedness helps populations prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impact from climate change. Research has shown that communities with stronger ties and networks have reacted faster to meet needs and begin recovery efforts after the occurrence of natural disasters. Additionally, there is a growing body of evidence that social cohesion is a protective health factor as those with stronger connections typically experience healthier outcomes.

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan

Wrentham received a grant in 2018 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to participate in the Commonwealth's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program. The program provides supports for municipalities to plan and implement key climate resilience actions using a community-based, multi-disciplinary, participatory planning effort through the Community Resilience Building (CRB) platform. The process was guided by a core team that also serves as its Natural Hazard Mitigation steering committee, providing synergy and alignment with both processes, including staff of 11 municipal departments, two businesses, health providers, religious leaders, and Food Pantry.

Hazards

Recent climate-related events illustrate the potential hazards to the town. For example, in 2016, Massachusetts experienced one of the worst droughts since the 1960s, and Wrentham's water supply was threatened. In March 2018, the Town had widespread electricity loss during Winter Storm Riley, which is an ongoing risk because of the location of the substations. Based on these experiences and others, the MVP Plan identifies the following top hazards in Wrentham:

1. Inland flooding
2. Heat Waves
3. Severe Storms (ice storms, tornadoes, Nor'easters, blizzards)
4. Drought

MVP Recommendations

Based on these hazards and an assessment of the Town's strengths and challenges in terms of infrastructure, society and community, and environmental and natural resources, the MVP plan identifies the following priority actions:

Infrastructure

1. Establish a shelter that can serve the community for multiple days, is ADA compliant, can include showers and cooking facilities, and provide back-up power generation. Consider the Delaney School as an option.
2. Relocate the Department of Public Works complex including the building, salt shed, and other facilities outside of the floodplain.
3. Improve and upgrade communication equipment and strategies for public safety and municipal staff, particularly during emergencies. Ensure there are back-up strategies that will function in the event of loss of electricity and internet, such as redundancy towers.

Society

1. Create a more cohesive Local Emergency Planning Committee and work to create a better more cohesive Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.
2. Create a plan to protect residents during emergencies and extreme weather events for Bennett Gardens and other Housing Authority facilities.
3. Increase the size of the Senior Center.
4. Expand Food Pantry operations to include all residents and increase hours during time of emergencies and extreme weather events.
5. Create back up potable water options during emergencies and extreme weather events.

Environment

1. Re-evaluate existing stormwater bylaws. Ensure bylaws address water quality issues and green infrastructure opportunities for stormwater management.
2. Create a new Open Space and Recreation Plan that prioritizes connected open space and acquiring land that prioritizes resiliency and climate/natural hazard mitigation.
3. Restore the lake systems in town for water quality, recreation opportunity, and flood mitigation.

Strengthening Resiliency

The Town has started to advance the recommendations of the MVP Plan. In 2021, the Town received more than \$100,000 from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs in an MVP Action Grant to update the Town land use bylaws and regulations. The goal of this project is to improve the Town's resiliency to flooding while also protecting surface and groundwater sources from stormwater pollution, which will improve the resiliency of both the Town's water supplies and important recreational resources such as Lake Pearl and Lake Archer. The Town intends to integrate climate resiliency considerations into its land use policies and regulations and to develop a town-wide Green Infrastructure Master Plan which will increase the use of Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Infrastructure (GI) in the community.¹

In addition, the Town is working with the Charles River Watershed Association on a Charles River Watershed modeling project along with 16 other communities.² The Charles River Flood Model forecasts expected flooding under different climate conditions and allows us to test flood mitigation strategies of various nature-based solutions.

Hazard Mitigation Plan

In conjunction with the MVP Plan, the Town also completed a Hazard Mitigation Plan in 2018, as required to be eligible to receive FEMA funding for hazard mitigation grants. The Wrentham Hazard Mitigation Plan assesses the potential impacts to the Town from flooding, high winds, winter storms, brush fire, geologic hazards, extreme temperatures, and drought. Flooding, driven by hurricanes, nor'easters, and other storms, clearly presents the greatest hazard to the Town.

Based on these hazards, the following mitigation measures are identified as high priority:

Extreme heat

- Evaluate cooling and warming center locations and opportunities for back-up electricity generation
- Become designated as a Tree City USA

Flooding

- Complete a feasibility study to upgrade, renovate, or move New DPW. Needs assessment first then site assessment.
- Create and implement a stormwater bylaw.
- Eagle Dam restoration or removal.
- Implement the updated Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- Revise development regulations, including to develop a no-disturbance buffer for wetlands, expand the Water Resource Protection District, and update the Open Space Preservation Development bylaw

Multiple Hazards

- Upgrade GIS and mapping technology

¹ <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/38c0d67ba7f1471696f385aa0a9c1b88/>

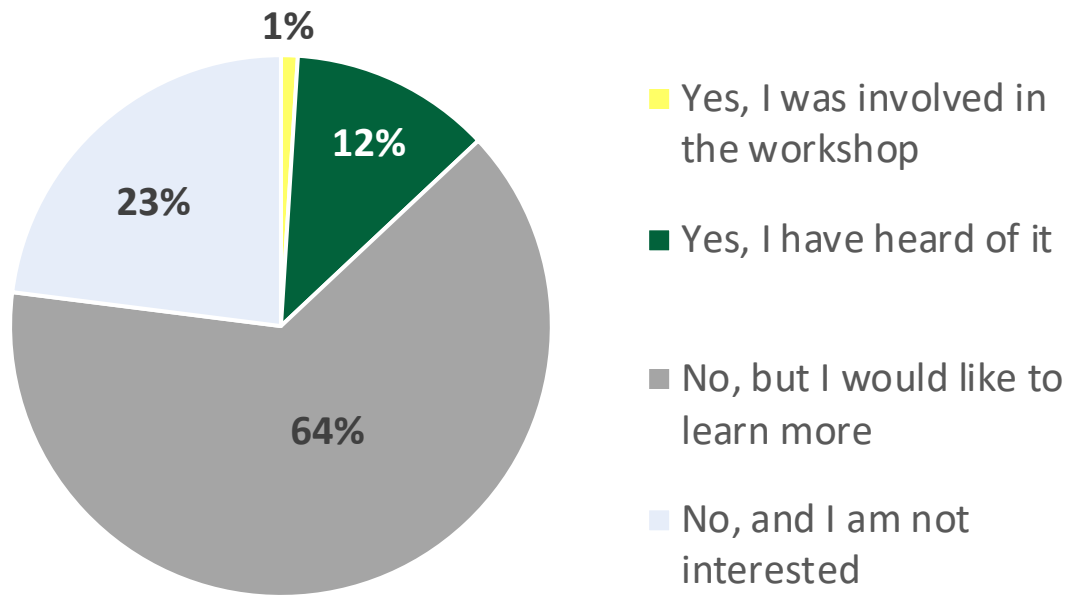
² <https://www.crwa.org/watershed-model.html>

Community engagement

The Phase II Community Survey conducted in November-December 2021, included several questions focused on energy and sustainability.

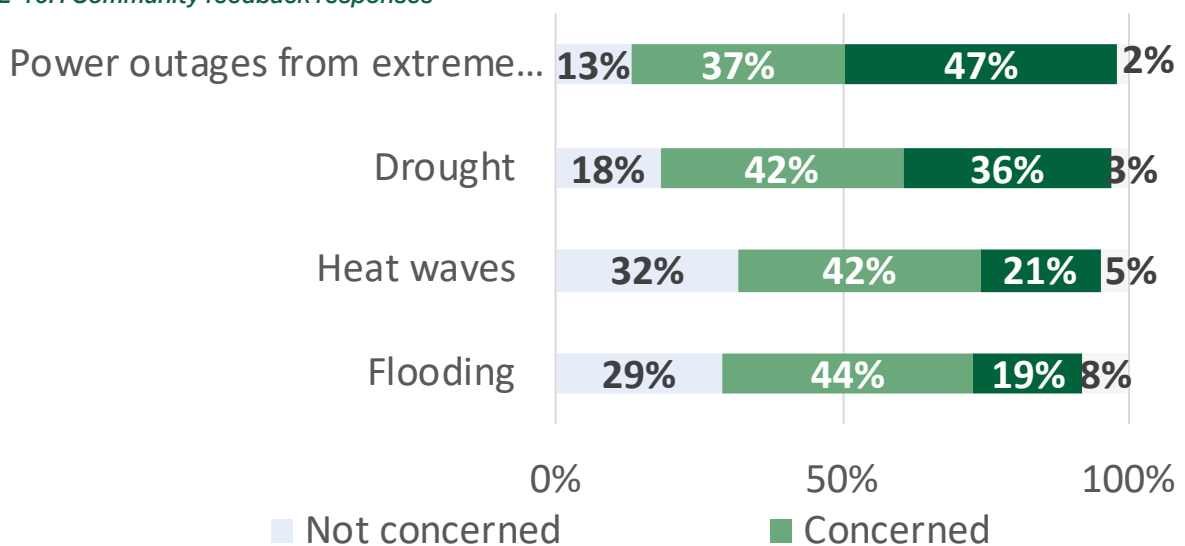
Survey respondents were asked: What is your familiarity with Wrentham’s 2018 Community Resilience Building workshop and plan?

Figure E-9. : Community feedback responses

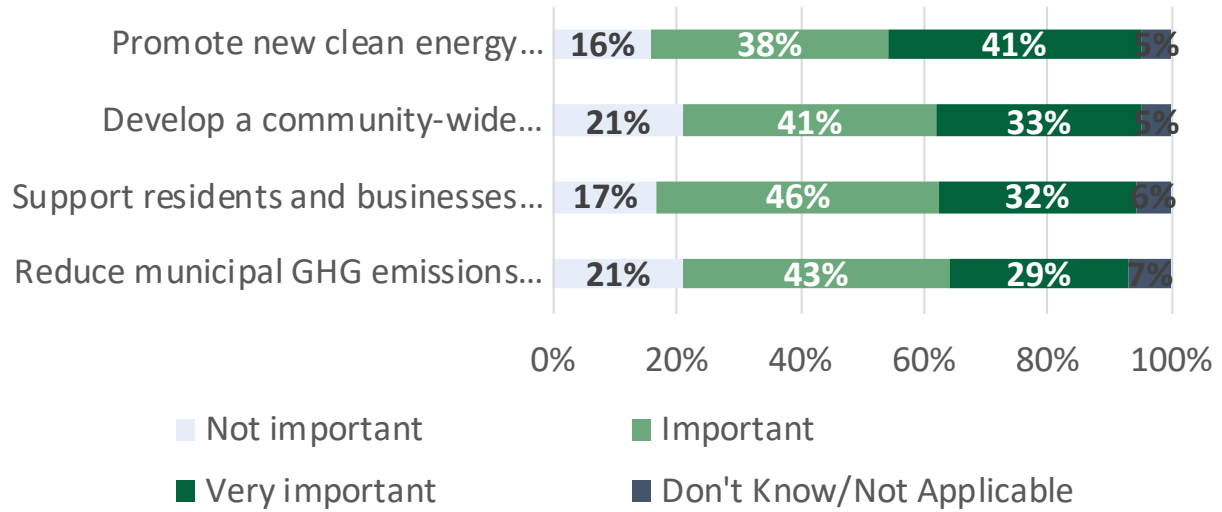


Survey respondents were asked: Rank your concern about the following local climate impacts.

Figure E-10. : Community feedback responses



Survey respondents were asked: How important are the following energy and sustainability goals?



Glossary

➤ **Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU):** A secondary dwelling unit on the same lot as the primary dwelling unit, commonly referred to as “in-law unit” or “granny flat”. See Housing Goal #3 Strategy #3.

➤ **Affordable Housing:** Low and moderate income housing for individuals and families, also known as “community housing”.

More specifically, Affordable Housing is deed restricted to cost no more than 30% of income for households meeting specific income thresholds. Typically, “Affordable Housing” is for “low-income” households, those at or below 80% of the area median income (AMI), but it can be reserved for those with lower or higher incomes. (See definitions for “low income,” “very low income,” and “extremely low income.”)

➤ **Area Median Income (AMI):** A measure of income set by the federal government and used by housing programs to determine eligibility for deed-restricted Affordable Housing based on income and household size. The AMI for the geographic area that includes Wrentham is \$119,000 (US Department of Housing & Urban Development).

➤ **By right:** Allowed according to zoning regulations; does not require any discretionary action by the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals. See “Special Permit”

➤ **Chapter 40B:** Under the Massachusetts’ Comprehensive Permit law, enacted in 1969, in municipalities where less than 10% of the year-round housing is Affordable Housing, developers of low- and moderate-income housing can pursue expedited local review under the comprehensive permit process and request a limited waiver of local zoning. If their application is denied or approved with conditions that render it uneconomic, developers can appeal to the state to overturn the local decision if it is found unreasonable. (Chapter 774 of the Acts of 1969; M.G.L.c.40B§20-23)

➤ **Community Housing:** See Affordable Housing

➤ **Cost Burden:** Paying more than 30% of income on housing. Paying more than 50% of income on housing is called severe cost burden. In Lynn, 25% of households are cost burdened and 21% are severely cost burdened (ACS, 2013-17).

➤ **Deed Restriction or Deed Rider:** A legal mechanism that limits how a home can be used, who can live there, housing costs, and how the home can be transferred. This is the mechanism to ensure Affordable Housing is reserved for specific income groups at a price they can afford over a specified time period.

Green infrastructure: Integration of natural systems and elements to provide a specific service, often water infiltration, filtration, or storage. May include engineered elements in addition to natural elements. May also provide co-benefits such as shade, cooling, wild-life habitat, recreation etc.

Greenhouse gas emissions: Gases in the atmosphere that absorb and re-emit heat, and thereby keep the planet’s atmosphere warmer than it otherwise would be. Those most commonly accounted for are carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄), and nitrous oxide (N₂O).

➤ **Household:** The people living together in the same house. A household can be a family, roommates, or a person living alone

- ▶ **Inclusionary Zoning:** A local zoning policy that requires or encourages developers of residential developments over a certain scale to include Affordable Housing or to make payments to the locality for development of such housing elsewhere. The policy typically offers incentives such as increased density, reduced parking requirements, or expedited permitting to offset the financial impacts of providing Affordable Housing.
- ▶ **Income-Eligible Household:** A household that meets the income requirements of a housing program; these are typically low-income households defined as having incomes at or below 80% of AMI. In Wrentham, that's \$86,650 for a 3-person household (US Department of Housing & Urban Development).
- ▶ **Low-Income Household:** Generally speaking, a household with income below 80% of AMI, including very low-income and extremely-low-income households). More specifically—in the context of other income thresholds, such as very-low income and extremely-low income—low-income refers to households with income between 50% and 80% of AMI.
- ▶ **Market-Rate Housing:** Housing that sells or leases at the “going rate” on the free market.
- ▶ **Mixed-Income Housing Development:** Development that includes housing affordable to households with different incomes, typically including market-rate housing and deed-restricted Affordable Housing for lower-income households.
- ▶ **Multifamily Housing:** Buildings with more than one unit, such as apartment buildings, condominiums, townhouses, or duplexes. There is a wide range of multifamily housing that differs in scale and design.

Net-zero municipality: A municipality which produces zero net carbon pollution and/or gets as much electricity from renewable sources as it uses, achieved through a combination of energy efficiency improvements, local clean energy production, and purchasing renewable energy.

Renewable energy: Energy that is collected from resources which are naturally replenished on a human timescale, such as sunlight, wind, rain, tides, waves, and geothermal heat

- ▶ **Single-Family Housing:** A structure maintained and used as a single dwelling unit. Single-family housing is owned by a single owner, has no shared property or common walls, has private access to the street from the structure, and has only one set of utilities
- ▶ **Special permit:** A discretionary action subject to review and approval by the zoning regulatory body (either the Wrentham Planning Board or Wrentham Zoning Board of Appeals depending on the use) that allows for a use, dimension, or development type outside of those allowed by-right according to the Zoning Bylaw. See “By right”
- ▶ **Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI):** In Massachusetts, the SHI is maintained by the MA Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD) and used to measure each municipality’s supply of Affordable Housing for the purposes of Chapter 40B. The SHI includes all housing developed under Chapter 40B, including both Affordable Housing and market-rate units in rental developments, and other deed-restricted Affordable Housing, such as public housing, project-based vouchers, federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) projects, and many others.
- ▶ **Zoning bylaw:** A municipal law that outlines permitted uses and dimensional restrictions for various sections of land.

