



NORFOLK

Master Plan 2035

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

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Acknowledgements

Steering Committee

Joe Burke, Resident
Eric Diamond, Planning Board
Dan Feyock, Resident
Erin Hunt, Resident
Kevin Kalkut, Select Board
Richard McCarthy, Town Planner
Melissa Meo, Planning Board
Chris Montfort, Planning Board
Chad Peck, Planning Board
Jen Pittore, Resident
Gary Sullivan, Planning Board
John Weddleton, Planning Board

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

Josh Fiala, Principal in Charge, Urban Design, Zoning
Andrea Harris-Long, Project Manager, Land Use, Housing
Gloria Huangpu, Community Engagement Specialist
Gurdeep Kaur, Economic Development
Travis Pollack, Transportation
Adi Nochur, Transportation
Abbey Judd, Arts & Culture
Lindsay Randall, Historic Preservation
Courtney Lewis, Open Space, Sustainability
Alexa DeRosa, Data Services
Brian Luther, Community Facilities/Services
Sarai Zelada, Public Health
Casey Williams, Plan Designer



WELCOME TO **NORFOLK**

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Introduction

A New Master Plan for Norfolk: Looking Ahead to 2035

The Town of Norfolk, as a small town connected by commuter rail to Boston and a short drive from Providence, has been experiencing moderate growth over the last few decades. New residents are attracted to Norfolk for the small-town, bucolic feel, family-oriented groups and activities like the Lions Club and others, beautiful parks and recreation spaces like Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and Pond Street Athletic Complex, and proximity to job opportunities and other amenities in nearby cities. Norfolk is expected to continue to experience moderate growth – projected to add more than 600 new households by 2050 according to recent growth projections. While the population is likely to increase, jobs in Norfolk are projected to decline, as was seen from 2010 to 2020. These growth trends alone call for continued coordinated and strategic action from Town leadership.

Recognizing this need, the Town, through its Planning Board, initiated this Master Plan process in fall 2022 to look more closely at recent trends impacting Norfolk – both today and likely into the future.

More importantly, the Master Plan enabled community dialogue into how local, regional, and global trends are impacting Norfolk community members. Over the course of 18 months, the Town engaged a variety of community members and groups to hear what residents feel the most pressing challenges, opportunities, and issues for Norfolk are. The project team met early on with Town officials to learn of work that is already underway that can be strengthened by the plan.

The Master Plan is a culmination of all of this research, community feedback, and discussions with Town leadership. It sets out a vision for Norfolk through 2035 and goals, strategies, and actions to make progress towards achieving the vision. The Master Plan builds on past planning efforts like the 2007 Master Plan and specialized plans and studies undertaken since that time.

What is a Master Plan?

Master Plans, or sometimes referred to as comprehensive plans, take stock of existing conditions in a municipality, reflect on past successes and challenges, and set a shared path for future improvements. Master Plans cover a wide range of topics across the Town's entire geography. Topics include economic development, land use, housing, open space, recreation and sustainability, transportation, historical and cultural resources, community facilities and services, and community health. In Massachusetts, a Master Plan is required by Massachusetts General Laws (MGL), Chapter 41, section 81D for any Town that has established a Planning Board, and that Board shall make a Master Plan, and from time to time extend or perfect that plan.

Setting the Stage for the Master Plan Update

The Town last created a Master Plan in 2007. Since that time, much has changed locally, regionally, and globally that impacts Norfolk. Norfolk's population has steadily increased, growing from 8,820 households in 2010 to 9,230 households in 2020¹. Through 2050, Norfolk will likely add at least 600 new households but potentially more as Massachusetts as a whole works to remedy a statewide housing shortage that has resulted in unaffordable and unattainable housing in many communities. Norfolk is subject to a new state law² that requires every community within the MBTA service area to have at least one residential zoning district that allows multi-family housing by-right (multi-family includes three-family units, quadplexes, and apartment buildings of varying sizes). Because Norfolk has a commuter rail station, the Town is required to enact new zoning by the end of 2024. (see the Housing element for more information)



Beyond planning for anticipated population and household growth, Norfolk, like many suburban communities that have historically served as bedroom communities to neighboring larger cities with job centers, is facing fiscal challenges. Norfolk's local tax base is predominantly residential, which has compounded already

high housing costs and was a constant point of friction voiced by Norfolk residents throughout this planning process. Norfolk's commercial activity is centered around the Route 115/1A interchange, with smaller centers in Town Center and River's Edge. Unlike household growth, Norfolk's employment has been slowly declining and will continue unless the Town prioritizes economic development over the next ten years. Focused attention to growing the local economy will not only benefit the local tax base – which needs to grow to support high quality municipal services and facilities – but also will have ripple effects on related outcomes such as transportation and community health. (see the Economic Development, Transportation, and Community Health elements for more information)



In 2023, Massachusetts Correctional Institutions (MCI) closed the Cedar Junction facility, which sits on the Norfolk/Walpole town line. The closure of this facility leaves behind a significant vacant state-owned property with expansive grounds, of which some has already been transferred to the Town of Norfolk. Engagement from this planning process could help the Town decide how to use the sensitive environmental areas. The prison's wastewater system could help address some of the infrastructure limitations noted in this plan that have historically prevented commercial and residential growth in Town Center.

¹ US Decennial Census, 2010, 2020.

² MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3A.

Globally, climate change and its impacts have increased rapidly since the 2007 Master Plan. Norfolk is not alone in bearing the impacts from increased severe weather events and other natural hazards. Norfolk is situated among several different water features and natural areas that are subject to more flooding as rainfall totals rise and more severe storms occur more frequently and rapidly. Norfolk has undertaken hazard mitigation planning and participated in municipal vulnerability assessments and action planning to better prepare and adapt when climate change impacts are felt. The Master Plan offers more strategies for how to help Norfolk increase resiliency and adaptation as the climate continues to change over the next ten years. (see the Open Space, Recreation, and Sustainability element for more information)



In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic occurred, forcing those working in professional/office-based sector jobs to work remotely from their homes; students and families to adjust to remote schooling; and with many amenities and indoor recreation opportunities shutdown, Norfolk residents relied on outdoor spaces to meet active, passive, and mental health needs. While Covid-19 seems to have impacted Norfolk businesses less dramatically than other communities across Greater Boston, transportation patterns were impacted more. With fewer commuters between 2020 and 2023, the commuter rail stop was less utilized. However, in 2024, commuter trips do seem to be rebounding. Norfolk residents realized more acutely during the pandemic how important local parks and trails are to their health and well-being. Luckily, another change since the 2007 Master Plan is the advancement of the Metacomet Greenway, a proposed 17-mile rail trail that extends from Walpole to North Attleboro. A portion of the trail runs through Norfolk, near the Route 115/1A intersection and, once built, this will offer more recreation opportunities and connectivity to neighboring communities by bicycle rather than just

cars. The Metacomet Greenway and conversations with Town staff and residents highlight a big opportunity – articulated more in this plan – for Norfolk to expand its multimodal transportation network throughout Town to offer more ways for people to get around. This is especially important for youth and seniors who may have limited access to personal vehicles. (see the Transportation element for more information)



Lastly, technological advances since 2007 pressure the Town to modernize services and communication strategies quickly. Global cybersecurity risks threaten local governments like Norfolk. Municipal IT infrastructure needs to be protected and expanded to protect municipal resources and offer better online-based services for residents. Communication methods globally have evolved with social media being a main driver of information sharing and gathering. Residents expect transparency and communication from Town government and do not have the time to attend board/committee meetings or evening forums. The Master Plan strategizes how Norfolk can employ new communication techniques to keep residents engaged and informed. (see the Community Facilities and Services element for more information)



All these evolving and changing local conditions call for a strategic plan that sets the Town up to react to pressing challenges and needs, while also setting themselves up to proactively plan for what's to come over the next decade and be resilient and adaptable to unforeseen circumstances. Without a plan grounded in reality and the needs and desires of community members, Norfolk will be left to react in a piecemeal approach and is likely to miss opportunities to employ resources efficiently and effectively. Without a strong plan for how to move forward and manage growth and change, the Town also misses opportunities to leverage outside resources like state and federal grants and other revenue sources.

Town Accomplishments since 2007

While the previous section highlights some of the biggest external trends and events that have impacted Norfolk, it is important to also reflect on where the Town was in 2007 when the last Master Plan was created and what local steps have been taken to advance the vision, goals, and strategies at that time.

Reflecting on where municipal action was successful since the 2007 plan is useful in crafting the action plans created under this new master plan. See the Action Plan chapter for recommended implementation steps to achieve the 2035 vision.

Accomplishments

The 2007 plan recognized that Norfolk was a growing Town and necessary steps needed to be taken to meet the growing demands to maintain the quality-of-life residents expected. The 2007 plan looked back at the population shifts from 1992 to 2007 and prioritized preparation towards continued population growth with a focus on capital improvements and built facilities, calling for expansions of staff, services, and facilities of the police station, fire station, recreational amenities, schools, and water wells.

Since 2007, the Town has met many of these goals.

In 2012, the Town opened the Freeman-Kennedy School, a brand new 96,410-square-foot facility serving 585 students in grades 3rd through 6th. The school includes 28 general classrooms; a gymnasium; a cafeteria; a library; and spaces especially designed for special education, music, art, and outdoor academics. The school grounds have become a community asset. Norfolk events like Baseball Opening Day and Halloween Haunted Car Crawl are hosted there and draw neighbors to congregate.

In 2019, the Town opened its new police station and regional public safety communications center at 14 Sharon Avenue, which also serves the neighboring towns of Wrentham, Plainville, and Franklin. This regional 911 center is an exemplary model for shared emergency services.

In 2020, the Town completed its purchase of 43 acres from the Department of Corrections for the expansion of the adjacent Pond Street Complex.

The additional land will provide walking and biking trails, kayaking, fishing, and bird watching among other outdoor activities, with 20 acres set aside for wetlands and pertinent buffer zones. This additional recreational area will add to the existing 21-acre Pond Street complex located at 33 Pond Street, which consists of soccer and baseball fields, basketball and tennis courts, a pavilion and playground, skatepark, sand volleyball court, and a walking trail.

And most recently, in May 2023, the Town broke ground on the new fire station facility at 117 Main Street.

The previous plan put into place infrastructural pieces that are vital to delivering town services. The 2024 Master Plan is also geared to manage growth and change by strengthening and fortifying the infrastructure that connects these pieces. The capital improvements of this plan look towards the life blood- the arteries- the sidewalks, the wastewater system, the digital network- that are vital to support a small town facing growth pressures.

Continuity towards new ideas

This master plan is consistent with the intent of previous planning efforts like the 2007 Master Plan since much of the content and concerns remain relevant. While progress has been made, there is work remaining for the Town.

A lot has changed in the past 17 years. As we face more complex challenges, the town needs to employ innovative strategies to address them. This plan includes more specific strategies that focus on operational and programmatic improvements to accompany the major capital investments made over the last two decades. A new chapter on Community Health supports Norfolk's commitment to advancing regional and local public health goals – through efforts like the Metacomet Public Health Alliance.

The 2024 Master Plan takes a holistic, layered approach with cross-cutting strategies and goals that bring together sometimes-siloed categories, building from best practices and principles in planning. For instance, it connects sustainability and economic development through strategies that build on the Town's strengths to meet challenges of climate change and economic resilience. It brings community health, transportation, open space, and recreation together by supporting an active multi-modal transportation system that increases safety and accessibility and supports healthy lifestyles for all residents. This plan also integrates an equity lens into the desire for an active and vibrant town center and town life by considering larger challenges such as social isolation, an aging population, and the housing crisis, to ensure an inclusive town for all community members.

The new plan builds from learnings from the events of the past decades to recommend strategies in preparation for shifts in demographics, labor trends, climate, and housing.



Top Left: Freeman Kennedy School, photo by Robert Benson for Flansburgh Architects

Top Right: Norfolk Police Station and Regional Dispatch Center, photo by Mark Stockwell of the Sun Chronicle

Bottom: Rendering of new Norfolk Fire Department, courtesy of Dore + Whittier Architects

How to use the plan

Master Plans are hierarchical documents that are assembled to help Town leadership – both municipal departments and Norfolk boards and committees – make decisions and prioritize actions and allocations of resources. The diagram on the next page shows the organization of the Master Plan content.

Following the snapshot of Norfolk today, which provides a high-level overview of the Town's existing conditions, the plan outlines the overarching **Vision Statement** that is supported by the **goals and strategies** of interrelated topics culminating in **action plans** for achieving the most pressing big ideas that have come from the planning process.

While not all goals and strategies can be acted upon or implemented immediately, the action plans are strategically put together to allow for some immediate implementation to begin. Town leadership should ideally reference the Master Plan frequently and reflect on how actions taken at Town Meeting and other major decision points are consistent with what has been laid out here.



Aerial photo of Town Center. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Plan Structure



How can different stakeholders use the plan?



Snapshot of Norfolk Today

Norfolk is a small town with a historic center connected by rail to Boston. Historically more agricultural like many of its neighbors, Norfolk experienced growth pressures in the 20th century due to its proximity to Boston and Providence. Norfolk is located in the Greater Boston region and is a member of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) – the regional planning agency for 101 cities and towns. Norfolk is a member of the South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) – a subregion organization comprised of ten communities southwest of Boston.



Population by Race

Norfolk is a predominantly white community. In addition, the majority of Norfolk's non-white population is residing in the prisons, further underscoring that Norfolk is not a very diverse community.



Household Tenure

Approximately 96% of households in Norfolk own their home. Norfolk has a small amount of rental options, a problem for younger residents, seniors looking to downsize, or others who may wish to reside in Norfolk but cannot afford to purchase a single family home.



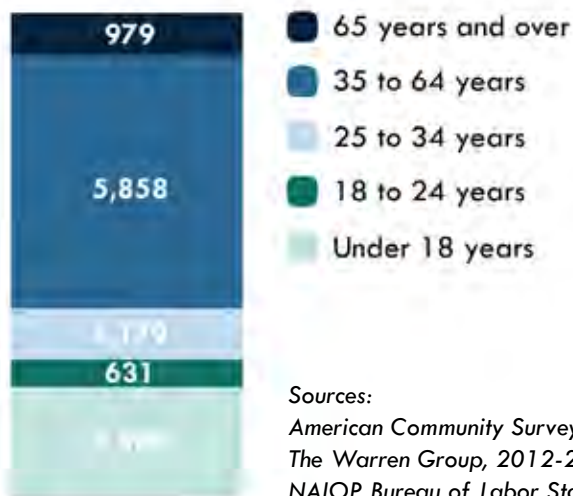
Cost Burden

A household is considered cost-burdened when more than 30% of income is spent on housing costs like rent, mortgage payments, or utility costs.

Population Age & Household Composition

Norfolk has an older population that is projected to get older in the coming decades. About 40% of households include a person age 65 years or older.

By 2050, Norfolk is projected to have nearly 1,000 households headed by residents over the age of 65, almost double the number today.



Sources:

American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2016-2020, 2017-2021

The Warren Group, 2012-2021

NAIOP Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021



324 businesses

3,006 jobs



87% of workers drive to work alone



10% of workers take the commuter rail

Economy

While the population is likely to increase, jobs in Norfolk are projected to decline, as was seen from 2010 to 2020.

Many Norfolk businesses are home occupations, businesses that operate out of the home.

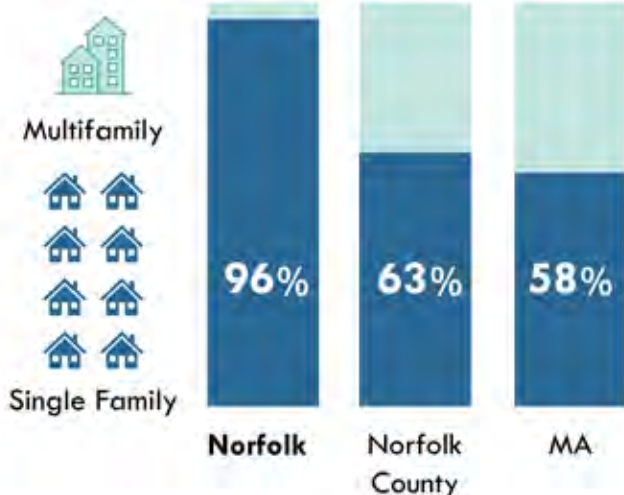
The construction and healthcare and social assistance industries have the highest share of workers in Norfolk.

Housing Stock & Cost of Housing

About 96% of Norfolk's housing stock is made up of single family homes, leaving few choices for other types of housing.

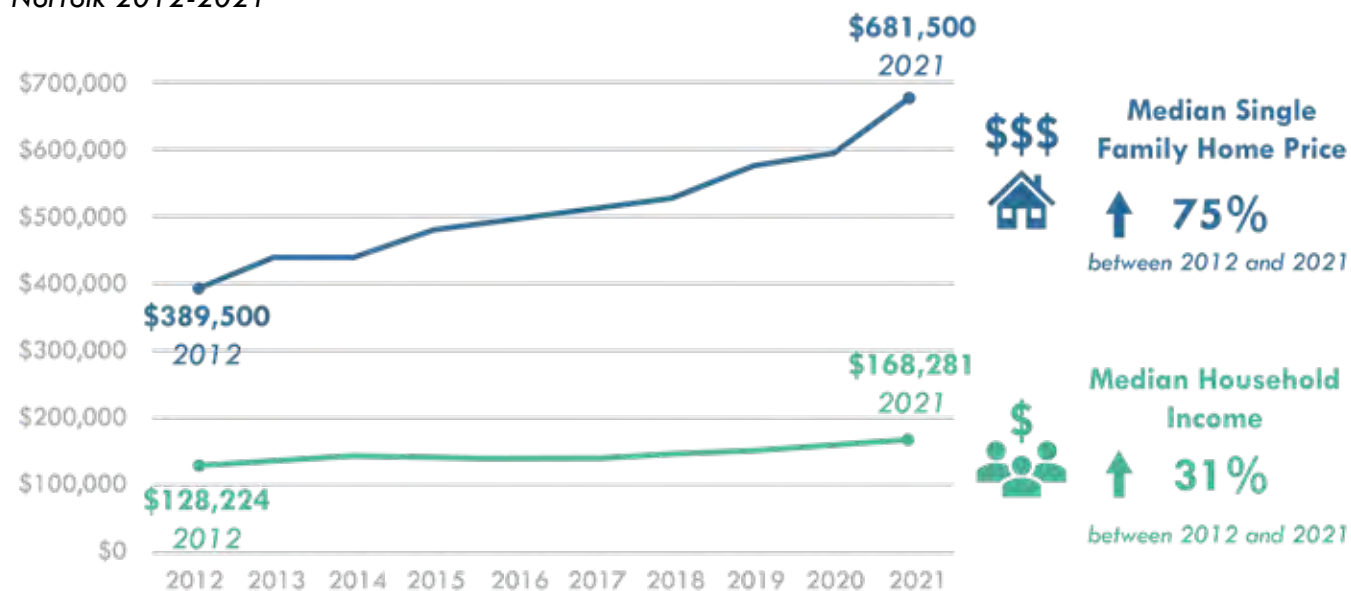
Between 2012 and 2021, housing costs increased far more than the median household income.

Norfolk's limited housing stock diversity coupled with high sales prices for single family residential and limited rental options means that Norfolk is a highly exclusive community.



Single Family Home Costs & Median Household Income

Norfolk 2012-2021



Planning Process

HIGHLIGHTING ISSUES

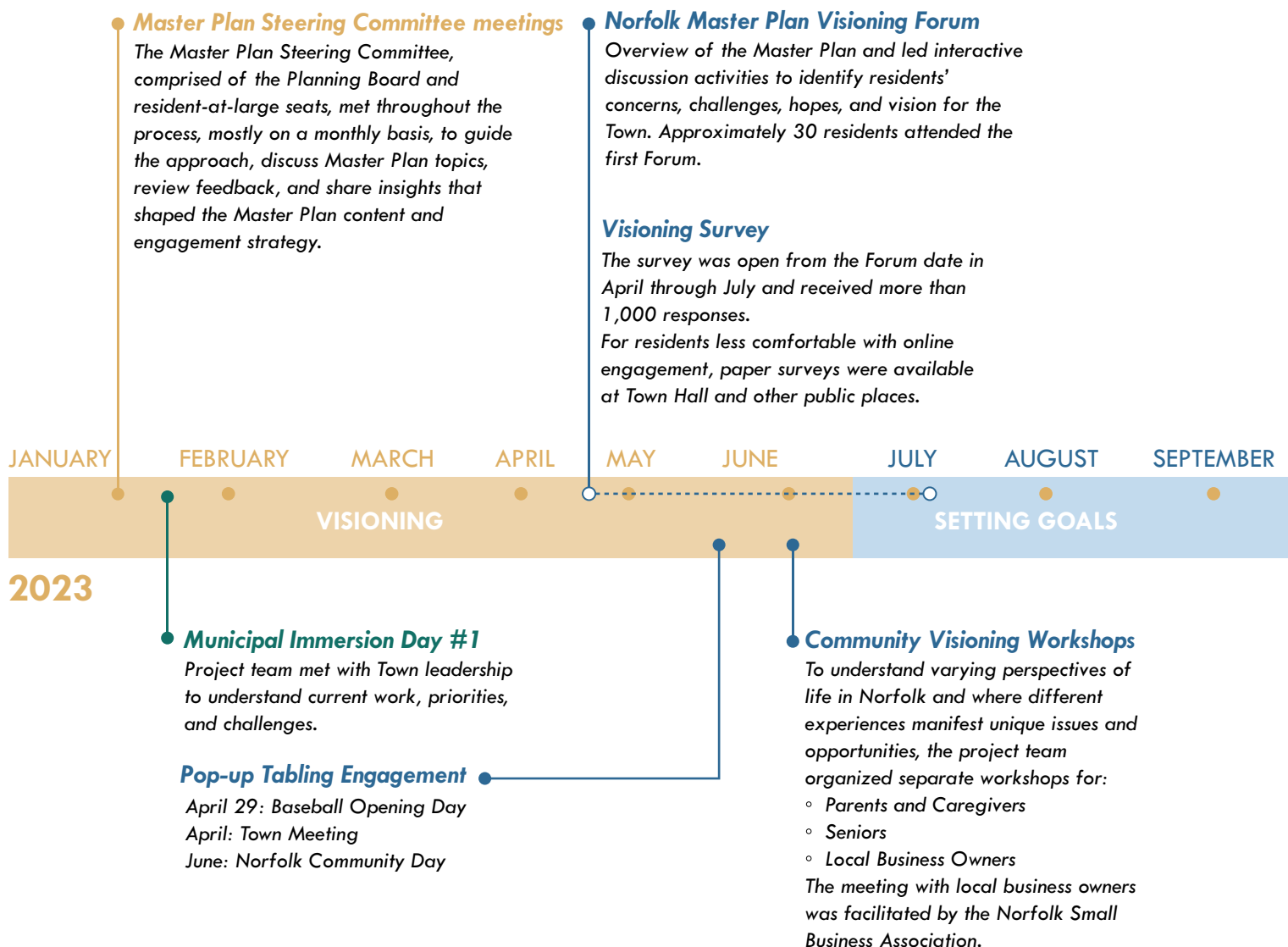


- To develop a vision and get a sense for residents' concerns, challenges, and hopes for Norfolk, the project team arranged, facilitated, and attended a range of events.
- Over 1,100 individuals were engaged in some form (forum, pop-up events, survey, focus groups, etc.). Input informed the draft vision statement and goals.
- As the public was sharing their ideas, the project team reviewed past planning efforts and existing conditions data to round out analysis.

IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS



- Conversations during Phase I engagement uncovered policy and programmatic ideas that can start to address issues.



PROVIDING A ROADMAP



- The Master Plan Steering Committee (MSPC) reviewed ideas from the public alongside best or emerging practices to respond to issues and findings from existing conditions to refine draft goals.
- Fall engagement gathered feedback on the draft goals and vision. An online platform allowed individuals to give feedback on all draft goals and rank statements for prioritization in the vision. The project team also attended Town board meetings and community meetings.
- From this, the project team identified themes in public comments that help prioritize implementation.
- A second Municipal immersion day aligned goals and strategies with municipal work underway or planned.
- Action plans were developed to demonstrate clear next steps upon plan completion.

Town Boards & Committees

MAPC provided an update on the Master Plan process and draft vision and goals to Town boards and committees. The project team promoted the different ways to provide feedback.

Engagement Roadshow

The project team continued the “Engagement Roadshow” model, meeting with various community organizations to gather input on goals and strategies for the plan.

Norfolk Lions Dinner Meeting

Over 50 community leaders were in attendance.

Norfolk Small Business Association

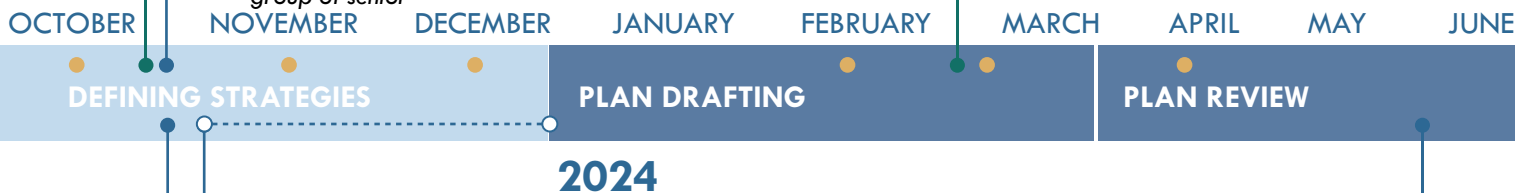
10-15 local business owners shared ideas about draft goals and strategies.

Council on Aging

The project team presented the draft plan goals to small group of senior

Municipal Immersion Day #2

The project team returned to Town Hall for a second day to review draft goals and strategies with town leadership. This helped refine the final draft plan.



Online Engagement Platform

The project team used an online engagement platform to share the draft vision and goals with the public. Individuals were able to “like” or “dislike” goals and add comments, questions, or other ideas.

Townwide Mailer

The Town sent postcards to every resident to publicize the master planning process and share ways for residents to give feedback on the draft vision and goals.

Public Forum & Plan Presentation

Steering Committee members attended the May 15 Town Meeting and June 5 Farmers Market to promote the draft plan and ways to comment ahead of finalization at the end of June.

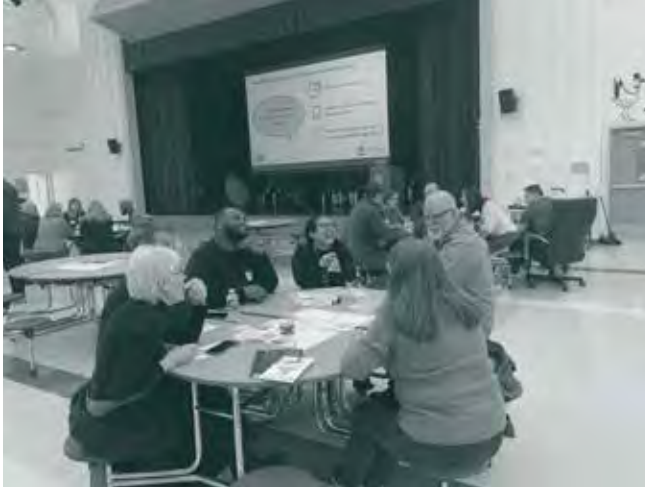


Norfolk
Grange



Norfolk Vision 2035

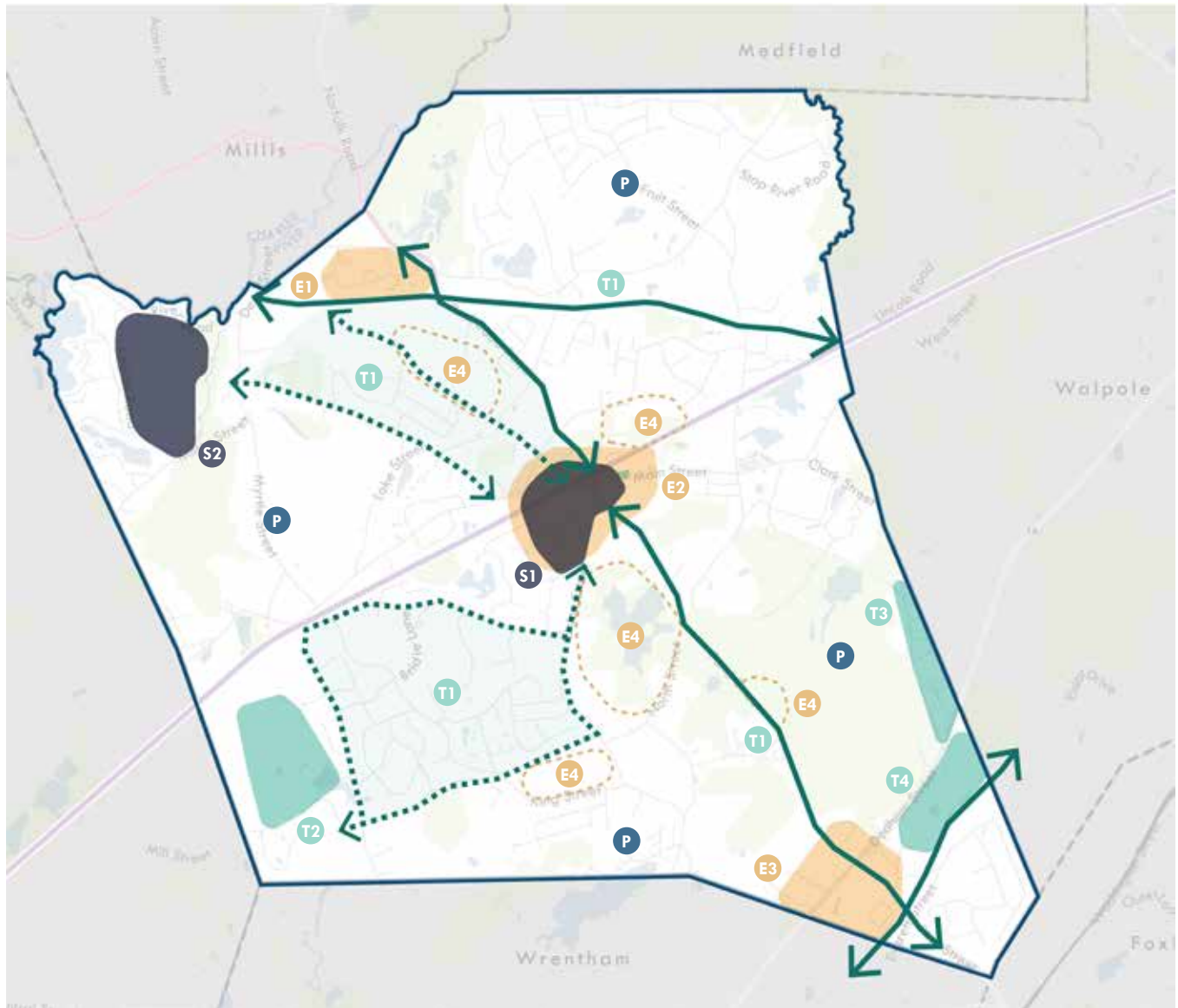
A vision serves as the north star for the future of Norfolk. It encompasses the unique identity of the Town while also aspiring to be better in certain areas. The vision has been refined over the course of this planning process and is grounded in community needs and desires. The plan's goals and strategies work together to make this vision a reality.



Norfolk residents aspire to...

- **A Town Center that is the center of Town life.**
- **A Town that preserves its semi-rural and village character and communal aspects of small-town life.**
- **A Town that defines and attracts the types of services and amenities desired by residents.**
- **Place the Town in a better position for the next generation.**
- **Clearly define what is desired in each area of the Town and to be patient working toward those outcomes.**
- **Plan for the long term with Town investments in sustainable services and infrastructure and the legacy of investments for the next generation.**
- **Plan and create a connected network of open space and Town facilities.**
- **Plan and create a secondary Town-wide walking and biking network.**
- **Create opportunities for housing options for all life stages to attract and keep residents.**
- **Support a community where all members contribute to safety and community health.**
- **Improve connections to and use of the train station as a central community feature.**

Mapping the Vision



-  **Strengthen**
-  **Transform**
-  **Enhance Neighborhood Centers**
-  **Enhance Parks & Public Spaces**
-  **Preserve**

Mapping the Vision

Applying a **STEP Framework** to Norfolk helps community members understand how the vision can be accomplished over time. Highlighting places that can be strengthened, transformed, enhanced, and preserved – each with varying levels of anticipated local action – brings the plan to life and hopefully energizes plan implementation.



Strengthen

Strengthening areas are long-held community assets that should be leveraged for maximum community benefit.

- S1** Town Center
- S2** Old Airport



Transform

Transformation areas have the greatest opportunity for future development and change.

- T1** Multimodal Network, including Metacomet Greenway
- T2** Buckley & Mann site
- T3** MCI Cedar Junction site
- T4** Southwood Hospital site



Enhance

Areas to **enhance** are largely performing well but with minimal intervention could reach maximum potential.

- E1** River's Edge
- E2** Outer Ring of Town Center
- E3** Route 1A/115
- E4** Public Facilities & Spaces
 - *Freeman Kennedy School*
 - *Council on Aging*
 - *Library*
 - *Pond Street Recreation Complex*
 - *King Philip Middle School*
 - *Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary*



Preserve

Preservation areas require the least amount of municipal investment and intervention. These places should be maintained but are unlikely to see much change.

- P** Preservation areas include:
 - Natural Resources
 - Agricultural areas
 - Outlying residential areas

Strengthen



Strengthening areas are long-held community assets that should be leveraged for maximum community benefit.

- S1** Town Center
- S2** Old Airport

Strengthen

Town Center

Historically, Town Center has always been the epicenter for Norfolk residents. Located on the commuter rail, there is quick access to Boston and other communities along the line. As Norfolk and surrounding communities developed, Town Center suffered from disinvestment and diffused growth across all parts of Norfolk. Over the last twenty years, the Town has been actively reinvesting in Town Center to attract more small businesses and people. New B-1 zoning was adopted to attract additional mixed-use development. New private development has included mixed-use buildings with small businesses on the ground floor and residential above. The new Town Hall and streetscape improvements are key public investments. Community organizations like the Lions Club partner with the Town to host a variety of events on Town Hill – from farmers’ markets and food trucks to holiday gatherings. Town Center has many positive attributes, but deliberate efforts to encourage more private investment and redevelopment will help strengthen this asset.



Aerial photo of Town Center. Photo by Andy Bankinowski

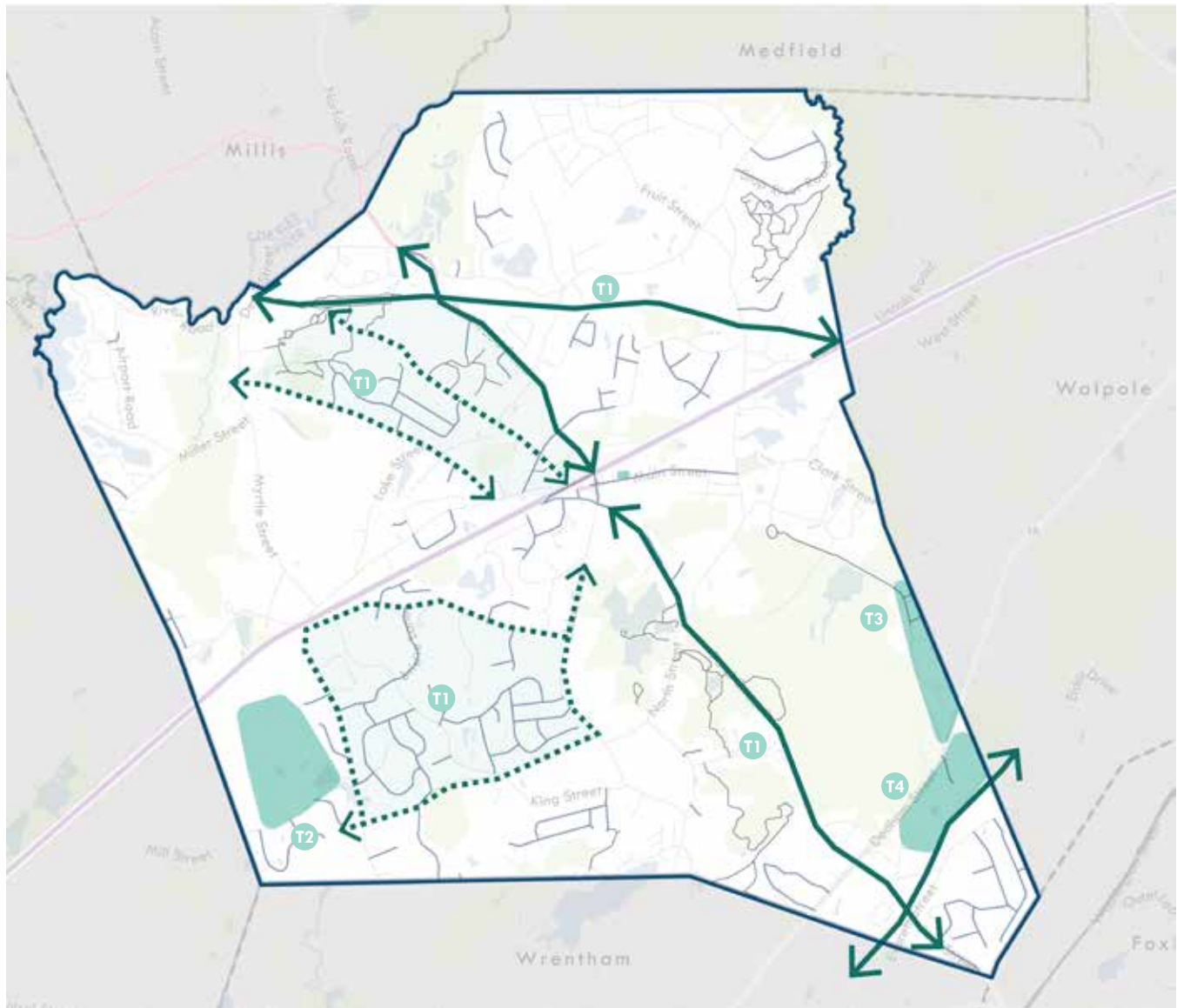
Old Airport

The abandoned Norfolk Airport, formerly the Henan-Menon Memorial Airport, sits vacant and the owners have donated some of the land to a private land trust. The area is open for Norfolk residents for walking and biking. The area provides recreation opportunities in an otherwise more remote part of Norfolk. The Town’s Conservation Commission, Recreation Department, and Planning Board should work to strengthen the site and make it more widely accessible. Research into the historical commercial uses in the area could uncover opportunities to expand small businesses to serve Norfolk neighborhoods in this part of Town.



Photo of the former Henan-Menaon Memorial Airport land. Photo by Davidafranklin - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=107353045>

Transform



Transformation areas have the greatest opportunity for future development and change.

-  **Transform Development**
 -  **Transform Multimodal Network**
 -  **Multimodal network**
 -  **Multimodal corridor**
 -  **Existing Sidewalk Network**
 -  **Existing Walking Trails**
-  **T1** Multimodal Network, including Metacomet Greenway
 -  **T2** Buckley & Mann site
 -  **T3** MCI Cedar Junction site
 -  **T4** Southwood Hospital site

Transform

Multimodal Network, including Metacomet Greenway

Norfolk is surrounded by many different regional trail networks, but few traverse through Norfolk today. At the southeastern corner of town, the Metacomet Greenway trail is proposed to run just south of, but parallel to, Route 1A. Norfolk has a Complete Streets prioritization plan that can help facilitate more multimodal connections, something residents have asked for through this planning process. This plan should be expanded to envision transforming vacant or underutilized utility and rail rights-of-ways into shared paths. Such a network could transform how residents of all ages get around and recreate in Norfolk. The Town should explore partnerships with regional trail organizations and neighboring communities to achieve this transformation.

Buckley & Mann site

The [Buckley & Mann](#) site is a former mill and factory on Lawrence Street, opened in the 1800s. It produced both shoddy (wool) and paper. Environmental testing confirmed hazardous materials onsite, which is concerning due to its proximity near open space and natural areas. The Conservation Commission could partner with the Planning Board to prioritize the cleanup of this area to improve environmental conditions. Redevelopment of the site can also help Norfolk grow its commercial tax base and offer different housing options. The Town should actively engage with property owners and developers to find an economically viable redevelopment plan that would support remediation through a process that involves the community, similar to the approach at the Southwood Hospital property.

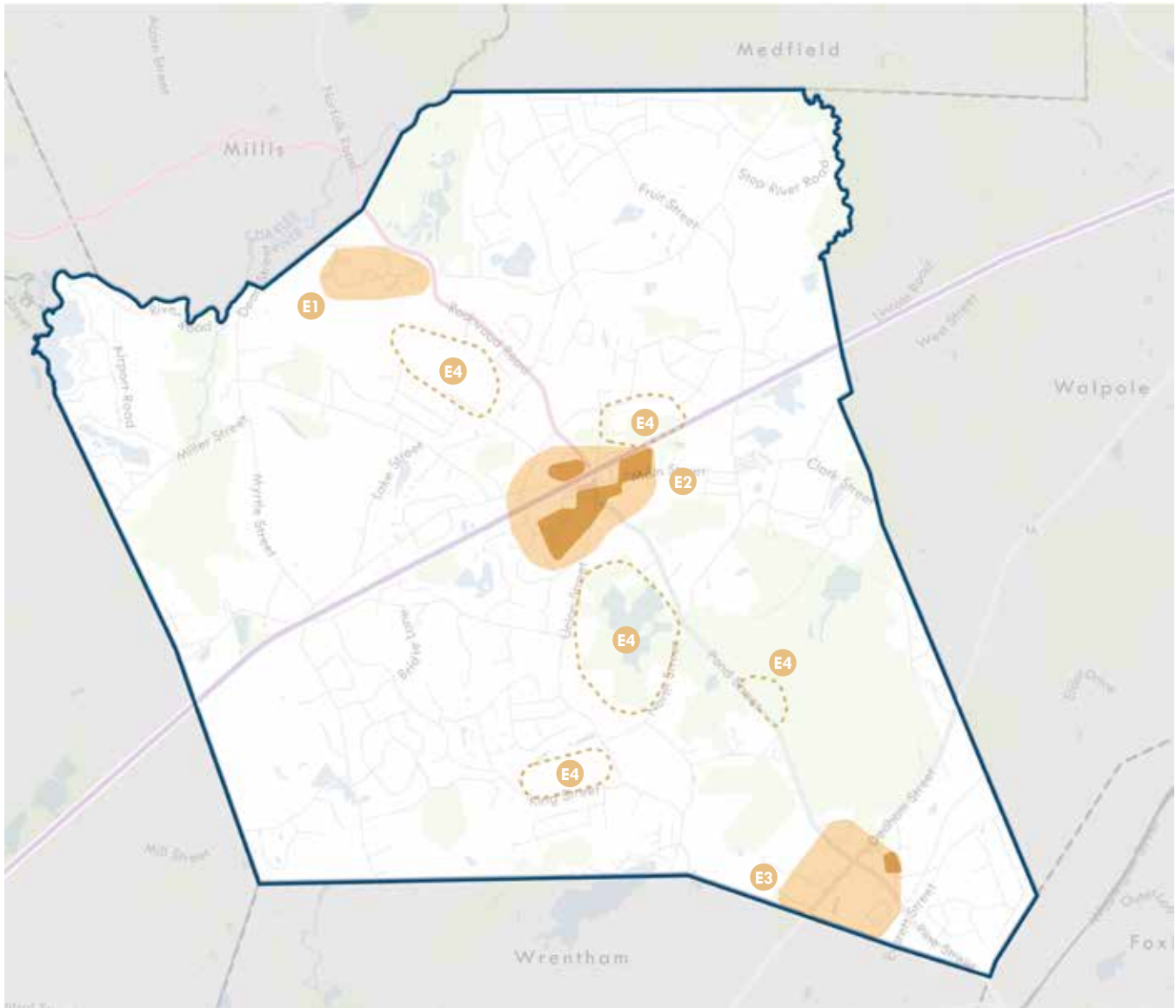
MCI Cedar Junction site

The MCI Cedar Junction site was a correctional institution that closed in 2023. The state has transferred some of the grounds to the Town of Norfolk, which will be incorporated into adjacent recreation land along Pond Street. The developed portions of the site offer an opportunity to meet development goals such as increasing commercial businesses, mixed-use development, and offering different housing choices. The site could be connected to Town Center through existing sidewalks and trails that traverse the recreation lands. The Town should partner with the state and Town of Walpole to proactively plan for the future of the property and engage in future land disposition processes that may occur.

Southwood Hospital site

The Southwood Hospital opened as a state cancer hospital in 1927, then known as Pondville Hospital. Eventually it was acquired by private hospital networks and ultimately closed in 2003. Due to the cancer treatments that occurred onsite, it is contaminated with hazardous materials. While the site has been on the market for many years, a new owner began working with the Town in earnest in 2021 to clean up and develop the site. Through a state grant, the Town hired MAPC to conduct public engagement to assess potential development scenarios and prepare recommendations for the developer to consider. As of 2024, the results of this work, including financial feasibility of the site, point to Southwood Hospital having the most potential as a new job center in Norfolk – with commercial and light industrial uses. Depending on the scale of the final development program, the project could help transform Norfolk's local job base and offer more employment opportunities for area residents.

Enhance



Areas to **enhance** are largely performing well but with minimal intervention could reach maximum potential.



Enhance Neighborhood Centers



Enhance Parks & Public Spaces



MBTA Communities District

E1

River's Edge

E2

Outer Ring of Town Center

E3

Route 1A/115

E4

Public Facilities & Spaces

- Freeman Kennedy School
- Council on Aging
- Library
- Pond Street Recreation Complex
- King Philip Middle School
- Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary

Enhance

River's Edge

Built in 2007, the Village at Rivers Edge offers townhomes for residents aged 55 or older alongside a community center and small mixed-use building with local businesses. When this area was developed, it created a new activity center on the edge of Norfolk. The commercial uses along Route 115 could be enhanced over time to offer more local amenities to area residents. Residents of Rivers Edge also noted that they would like to be connected to Town Center by sidewalk or multimodal path.

Outer Ring of Town Center

As public and private investments continue to be focused on Town Center, infill development and more dense middle housing types (like duplexes, townhouses, mixed-use residential buildings) could add to the vibrancy. Adding more residents to this area would provide more customer base for local businesses, support more walkability within Town Center, increase ridership for the commuter rail, and improve community cohesion in an area that is otherwise not very vibrant outside of special events on Town Hill. The MBTA Communities zoning supports this vision.

Route 1A/115

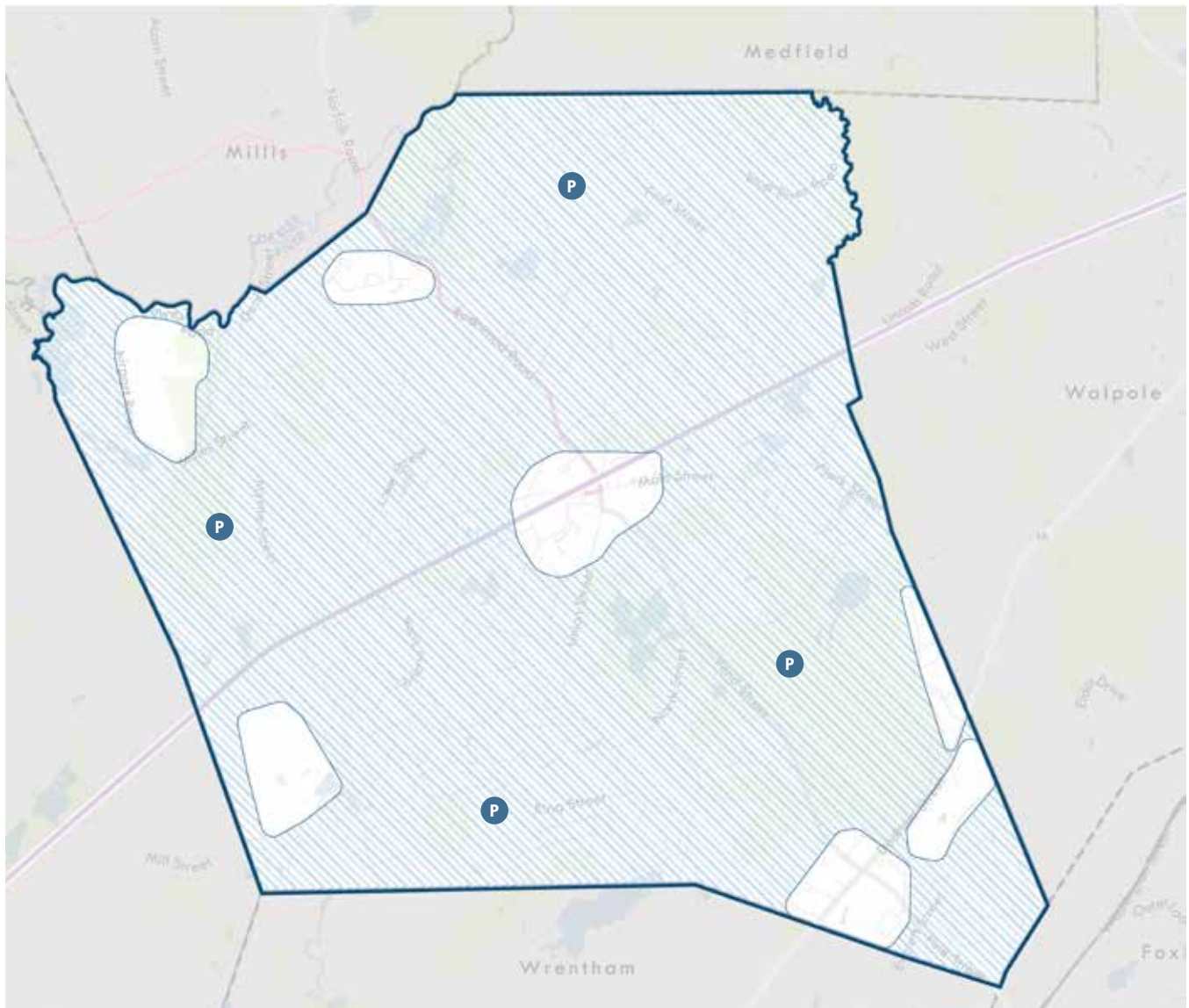
This area continues to be a commercial center for Norfolk, providing a variety of different small and medium sized businesses, sites for critical public facilities like the police and 9-1-1 regional dispatch center, and the Southwood Hospital site. The Town should review how recent developments have been occurring and potentially update commercial zoning to ensure that commercial uses can still flourish but other uses – like residential, parks and open space, and multimodal network connections.

Public Facilities & Spaces

(Freeman Kennedy, COA, Library, Pond Street Complex, King Philip, Stony Brook)

Norfolk has a history of investing in public facilities, and this should continue. Over the next ten years, focus should be on maintaining existing facilities and making upgrades for efficiency and sustainability. Many new public facilities have been built in the last twenty years, and the Town would benefit financially from investing in robust capital maintenance planning to extend the life of these facilities. Exploring where municipal uses can be co-located or where facilities could be multi-functional can also extend the life and utility of these expensive investments.

Preserve



Preservation areas require the least amount of new municipal investment and intervention. These places should be maintained but are unlikely to see much change.



Preserve



Existing and future centers
targeted for moderat growth
and future investment



Preservation areas include:

- Natural Resources
- Agricultural areas
- Outlying residential areas

Preserve

Throughout the master planning process, residents shared that Norfolk’s small-town feel and agricultural history are two of its most treasured qualities. Master plans must balance planning for future job and population growth alongside preservation goals.

The goals and strategies of this master plan aim to do this, by focusing new resident and job growth to centers like Town Center, Route 115/1A, Rivers Edge, Southwood Hospital, and Buckley & Mann. By focusing in centers, this will enable outlying areas that are interspersed amidst conservation areas, open space, and recreation lands to have modest improvements. In these outlying areas – where development takes the shape of single-family homes on larger lots – improvements may include accessory dwelling units, home-based businesses, community gardens, agricultural uses, and other less intense land uses that can still preserve the “small-town feel” and agricultural nature.

Balancing new growth and preservation is difficult, but this is one of the greatest benefits of maintaining a community master plan. Land use policies with preservation benefits such as open space preservation/cluster subdivisions, transfer of development rights, and conservation programs (e.g. Chapter 61) are discussed among the goals and strategies.



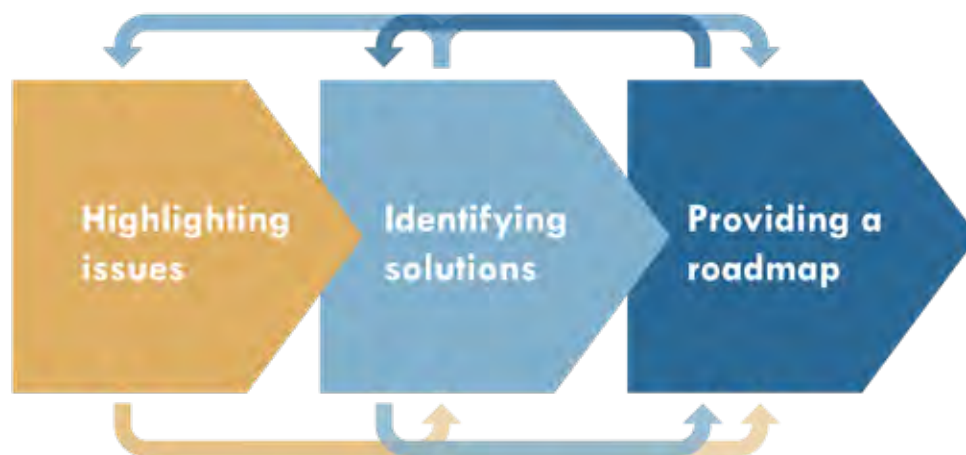
*Aerial view of working agricultural lands in Norfolk.
Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski*





Goals and Strategies

The following plan elements outline the goals and strategies by policy topic area. The approach to each element was methodical and comprehensive.



Highlighting issues:

The project team reviewed existing conditions, past planning reports and studies, and relevant data metrics to understand current issues. Community members were asked during engagement opportunities to identify issues, challenges, and opportunities to round out the existing conditions review.



Identifying solutions:

The project team reviewed best practices and case studies, recommendations from past plans and other policy documents, and heard ideas from Town staff and community members to inform goals and strategies for addressing Norfolk's challenges and capitalizing on Norfolk's unique opportunities and existing successes.



Providing a roadmap:

Feedback from community members and Town leadership prioritized the many goals and strategies to create action plans to kick off implementation of the new master plan. This is a critical step as resources (both staff capacity and financial resources) limit how many implementation projects can occur alongside day-to-day municipal activities to keep the Town running.



Physical
Therapy

Physical
Therapy
&
Wellness
Center

WYMAN



Economic Development

Norfolk has historically focused economic growth to Town Center and the Route 1A/115 crossroads. The Economic Development element builds on this policy direction, examining the Town’s economic status, employment base, and trends in retail and commercial uses to anticipate future market drivers and how those might impact Town Center, Route 1A/115, and other areas identified in the planning process. Recommendations include strategies for attracting and expanding emerging “green” industries that promote environmental sustainability, encouraging sustainable siting and construction of new facilities, and expanding access to Norfolk jobs through strategically locating job centers near transit hubs, like Town Center.

Quick Facts

324 total business establishments



There are **324 total business establishments** in the town. Over the past decade, 39 new businesses have opened up, 37 of which are within the Health Care and Social Assistance industry.



22 industrial properties

The **25 largest employers include schools, bus services, prisons, fire department, police department, and Town offices.** These include: Freeman Kennedy, Holmes Bus Service, King Philip, Commonwealth, Eagle Brook Saloon, Olive Day School, Horse N' Carriage, Jofran Sales, Acv Enviro, Bluesky Tower Partners



11 office properties

The town has **22 industrial properties**, all of which are fully occupied. They range in size between 3,000 square feet to 182,000 square feet.



20 retail properties

There are **11 office properties**, with a 1.1% average vacancy rate. The buildings range in size from 605 square feet to 211,000 square feet.

There are **20 retail properties** with an average vacancy rate of 0.1%, ranging in size from 2,126 square feet to 18,625 square feet.

\$168,281

Median Household Income



The majority of the town is **largely residential** and relies on residential property tax revenue.

The town of Norfolk has a **median household income of \$168,281**, which is about 1.5 times the amount in Norfolk County (\$112,089) and nearly double the amount in Massachusetts (\$89,026)

25% of the population under 18 years old



Approximately 1,519 workers come into the town of Norfolk for work, and 3,965 Norfolk residents who travel outside of the town for work. 182 people both reside and work in the town

40% of households include a person aged 60 years or older

The town is home to families with young children, with almost 25% of the entire population being under 18 years old.

40% of households have a person aged 60 years or older.

What are Norfolk residents saying about Economic Development?

"Encourage business development to reduce property tax burden!"

"We definitely need more restaurants, retail with character, markets. The future of this town depends on it. We need more tax income and we need to be able to keep up with the times. We can still maintain a small town feel and don't need large corporate retail at every corner, but we need restaurants that bring the community together and give a sense of completeness within our own town rather than always having to look elsewhere."

"Great place to raise a family with great schools and family events. However, with the proper lack of infrastructure, etc. our Town Center continues to lag behind many similar towns, vacant of any restaurants or businesses that would make us an even more vibrant community."

"I wish to see Norfolk continue to maintain its open space, rural/suburban charm, excellent school system, and close-knit feel, while also expanding upon and creating new opportunities for small businesses to open and thrive in town. It is disheartening to see so many empty storefronts, many of which have been vacant for years, while neighboring towns have flourishing small business communities. I believe that Town Center and 1A/115 offer the best opportunity to expand the town's business sector. I am dismayed that the vast majority of the money spent by my household on food, entertainment, recreation, etc. is done so in other towns simply because we lack these amenities here. In the future, I hope to see Norfolk as a sought-after community prized for its safety, school excellence, natural beauty and scenery, and sense of community between residents and local businesses."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] connectivity between residents, more community, more gathering spaces, diverse ethnically, environmentally friendly, well taken care of, accepting of all people"

"[My vision for Norfolk is] creating a town center people want to go do each day and night"

"Under developed Town Center"

"Significant potential, but lacking a centrifugal pull. We need town center to be strong, active and inviting. Then voter turnout increases, small business support increases."

"Quiet, pretty, lacking culture"

"Quiet, rural town. Good schools, nice people. Seriously lacking in commercial - grocery stores, restaurants, etc."

"Remains a great place to live and raise a family. Has room to grow and support all economic and diverse citizens. Need to attract a broader housing, business, restaurant & services approach as the town continues grow."

"A small town with a great community that lacks central physical community meeting spaces (grocery, restaurants, shops)"

"Would love to see more small businesses and restaurants in town which would only grow the sense of community we already have here."

"Would like to see more diversity in town residents"

"The town needs a heart. The center is barren and depressing. We need a community center where our community can gather, shop, and relax."

Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive in any way. This is intended to help connect the plan to verbatim comments provided by Norfolk residents.

Key Issues



There is very little commercial and industrial activity in the Town that could generate tax revenue and thus ease the burden on residential property taxes. The town is predominantly residential with a relatively small percentage of land area dedicated to commercial and industrial land uses.



The limited infrastructure, particularly the limited sewer system, inhibits business development in the Town Center. Businesses such as restaurants need more comprehensive wastewater infrastructure than septic tanks to support the high volumes of their operations. Without this infrastructure, businesses cannot operate in the Town Center.



The limited commercial uses and businesses in town means limited services and amenities available locally to residents and visitors. There is a lack of local amenities and services such as grocery stores, restaurants, medical offices, fitness centers, repair shops, and other general services to meet the needs of residents. This means residents spend their money outside the town, resulting in “leakage” of potential tax revenue. It also means that there are few gathering spaces where residents can come together for community building and socializing. These “third places” are vital for community health and wellbeing, as locations that facilitate social interaction outside of the people you live or work with and encourage “public relaxation.” They are places where one can encounter “regulars,” or frequenters of a space, as well as potential new connections.



A large share of business owners operate primarily out of their own homes, citing lack of affordable and desirable commercial space available for lease. There is a desire for small “mom and pop” shops and the town does not want “big box” or chain retailers but that is what currently exists (e.g. Walgreens, Dunkin Donuts).



The Town appears to have a deficit of socioeconomic and racial diversity that may limit economic and cultural creativity.



The community has expressed two distinct, but not necessarily opposing, desires. The community has voiced that it is important to them to preserve the small-town rural character of Norfolk, while others feel that this is more so an aspiration as the town lacks the attributes found in traditional New England small towns. There is a strong desire for amenities in the form of built and social infrastructure that could bring more opportunities for interaction, relationship-building, and creating an active community. It will be beneficial to facilitate incremental “right-sized” commercial growth that centers design and enhances the town character.



Small business owners have stressed that there is very little in terms of support from the Town but they would like to build that relationship.

The current allowed residential density may not supply the level of commercial activity needed to sustain local businesses.

Norfolk's Economic Development Toolbox includes:



- The Norfolk Small Business Association is an organization that meets regularly to help small businesses come together to identify and overcome challenges and create opportunities for growth. Their main event is Annual Discovery Day on Town Hill to help businesses gain exposure in the community.
- There are state and federal funding opportunities currently available to help the town pursue the projects needed to fulfill its vision.
- The Town of Norfolk developed a Townwide Economic Development Plan in 2018, the findings and recommendations of which remain relevant and can help progress the town further towards more economic activity.

Economic Development Goals & Strategies

Goal ED1: Prioritize smart, responsible, incremental development of Town Center and the Commuter Rail hub as a business district.

The Town of Norfolk is zoned primarily residential and relies on property taxes for much of its tax revenue to fund town services and operations. The community has expressed a desire for Norfolk to have an active town center with small shops and places to gather while maintaining a traditional New England small town character. The Town has been trying to balance these two goals through thoughtful and effective zoning and design standards that can curate the type of town center residents have been seeking for decades. Norfolk's businesses have little visible presence to the residents of the town and surrounding communities. The town does not currently have a traditional commercial center where businesses agglomerate together that people would travel to it in the expectation of being able to run all of their errands and acquire a variety of goods and services in an efficient and convenient trip. A strong town center identity would help businesses benefit from the economic advantages of density and proximity to other goods and services.

As the Town has aspired to develop its Town Center for decades, the strategies below put forth recommendations to take a more direct approach towards reaching this goal.

Strategy ED 1.1 Continue to explore wastewater solutions and stormwater planning beginning in Town Center to support a variety of business activities.

Norfolk's development is stunted by the limited wastewater infrastructure available in the town. While the residential parcels can use individual septic tanks to meet their current needs, the desires and aspirations of the community calls for intentional planning for larger capacity. In order to meaningfully foster commercial development, the town needs to develop reliable and comprehensive sewer infrastructure. The Town Center near the commuter rail station should be prioritized for sewer infrastructure investments. Funding is available from both state and federal resources to assist towns to develop wastewater systems. Preparing parcels to be ready for sewer connections will increase the value of those parcels and the town should work closely with the private property owners to ensure that some of the added value is captured in the form of development fees, district fees, commercial district tax, affordable commercial leasing covenant, or other form.

Strategy ED 1.2 Align development goals with zoning and infrastructure investments.

Investments in physical infrastructure need to be aligned with the town's development goals by updating zoning regulations, development potential capacities, and allowable uses. Even though the Town has recently updated zoning in the Town Center, an openness to future changes may be needed. Building height, density, parking requirements, affordable housing requirements, or other zoning characteristics may need further refinement to attract mixed-use development investment. The Town should work with private property owners and developers, to assess interest and identify sites of potential development. They should create development agreements that can benefit both public and private interests and encourage private development alongside public investments.

**Strategy
ED 1.2**

Infrastructure investment usually spurs redevelopment and planning ahead can help mitigate negative impacts of cost, prolonged construction, and nuisances. For instance, roadway and sidewalk improvements should be aligned with sewer improvements and digital network infrastructure installations (e.g. fiber optics cables) under a “dig once” policy. When private property owners initiate new developments or major redevelopments, they should be responsible for making comprehensive infrastructure improvements adjacent to their parcels. The Town can also assess appropriate fees to charge to pool together resources to make those infrastructure improvements synchronously on a larger scale (e.g. block-by-block). This is especially crucial to plan around land holdings of vacant parcels along Liberty Lane, owned by private development corporations.

**Strategy
ED 1.3**

Establish a commercial district and an organizing entity such as a neighborhood association, Tax Increment Financing District, or a Business Improvement District in Town Center.

The Town lacks a distinctly delineated “Town Center District”, that goes beyond the abilities of a zoning district. A Town Center district should encourage businesses to locate in town center through flexible and expedited regulatory measures, incentivize property owners to make façade and structural improvements (especially for ADA and age-friendly purposes), and allow more flexibility of uses than general commercial districts. A delineated district could have reduced parking requirements and take advantage of underutilized parking at the commuter rail station through the establishment of a “park-once” district, where visitors can leave their cars and access a variety of goods and services in one trip. The business district would benefit from a concerted place-making effort through distinct design guidelines, signage (wayfinding and sign program), and pedestrian improvements. An established district and entity would help cultivate the identity of a traditional New England town character.

In addition to physical and financial investments to directly encourage commercial growth, the Town needs to grow the long-term capacity of its commercial business community. As the town delineates its town center district, it can facilitate the establishment of an organized commercial community that brings together property owners and business owners in a formal way. This organization can take many forms, including a neighborhood association, a tax increment financing district, or a business improvement district. The primary purpose should be to create a cohesive place-based effort towards the improvement of Town Center. The organization should establish a regular medium for discussion amongst members, inform decision making in the development and continued improvement of Town Center, and foster a business support system. An organized commercial business community, delineated by physical boundaries, can strengthen business ties to the area and encourage collective collaboration towards enhancing Town Center. The organization can explore the use and application of incentives as well as disincentives such as fees for chronic vacancy, neglect, or underdevelopment of viable land. With a system of transparency, invested interest, and communication, the business community may be more empowered to drive desired change.

Economic Development Goals & Strategies

Strategy ED 1.3

The Small Business Association (SBA) appears to be best positioned to coordinate a Town Center Business District. Fees collected from businesses can be utilized for short-term goals of cultural enhancements such as the installation of artwork in public spaces or pop-up events, and can also work towards building larger infrastructure projects such as sidewalk and sewer improvements. An organized business community is also more robust and resilient and would help small businesses build capacity against existing and potential market pressures.

Strategy ED 1.4

Identify and pursue funding opportunities to finance initial “one-time” infrastructure improvements and establish continued regular funding structures for ongoing maintenance.

The Town, together with the business community, needs to pursue private, state, and federal grant opportunities available to fund infrastructure improvements. For example, the Community One Stop for Growth available through the Commonwealth’s Executive Office of Economic Development, is available for a wide range of project ideas, including wastewater infrastructure development and placemaking. Another mechanism to fund projects would be to establish fees of the commercial property owners and businesses in town that would be reinvested back into activities that support the business community either through short-term activities or long-term projects.



Aerial photo of Town Center. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Goal ED2: Support existing and attract new small, neighborhood-serving businesses.

The Town needs to balance long-term and larger-scale projects with short-term needs and opportunities. The small businesses located in town are facing challenges that the Town could address with small-scale interventions. Many businesses are relatively new and are finding their footing, while others are long-standing. Steps can be taken to support both new and seasoned businesses as they navigate zoning regulations and permitting processes. Supporting the existing business community and resolving these roadblocks is vital to further commercial development in the town.

The following strategies aim to address the present-day needs of existing businesses and position the town to better support new businesses.

Strategy ED 2.1 Continue to review zoning and related regulations to identify barriers to business growth and success.

Reviewing regulations for commercial and retail renovations or use regulations for different business types can identify and remove unnecessary barriers to modest improvements or new construction. The zoning bylaw should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to create both long-term and short-term impacts.

The Town could develop a regularly updated online map of vacant office, commercial, and industrial (e.g. Shire Business Park) sites for increased public awareness of available space. This could be an added layer to the interactive zoning map, showing allowable uses and the required process for permitting. For sites that are chronically vacant, meet with the property owners and businesses to identify challenges and how the town may be able to address them through zoning changes. Explore pilot zoning regulations to allow “flex spaces” that can be easily and cost-effectively reconfigured to suit the needs of different commercial tenants, especially those that may seek temporary occupancy. Ensure that zoning is supportive of the adaptive reuse of the existing building stock – both existing commercial and industrial buildings, and also those that could be repurposed into commercial, industrial, or mixed-use buildings. Meet with developers who specialize in small town development to continue to inform updates to zoning bylaws to attract commercial development and generate interest in redevelopment opportunities that fit the character of the existing community.

Strategy ED 2.2 Encourage home businesses as appropriate.

In the short-term, support existing businesses to expand and grow through modifying allowable uses as needed at their current locations. Many of Norfolk’s 324 businesses operate out of people’s homes. The Town should ensure that these home businesses, when harmonious in their zoning, are supported through the regulatory processes and nurtured through services and opportunities to allow for their eventual expansion to commercial spaces in town. The town’s largely single-family lots are proportioned generously to accommodate ancillary uses and mitigate any anticipated nuisances.

Economic Development Goals & Strategies

Strategy ED 2.2

For example, the town is currently working to update their sign bylaws. The town could explore an appropriate method and design guidelines for signage for home businesses. Changes to bylaws should be reviewed by those affected (e.g. the Small Business Association, current owners of home occupations) to resolve any issues prior to adoption.

Strategy ED 2.3

Establish a channel for regular routine communication between the business community and Town Hall.

Establish a business development liaison role through a partnership between Town Hall and the Small Business Association (SBA). Business owners and entrepreneurs have limited capacity and are available at irregular hours. Whereas the previous master plan suggested dedicated office hours, this may still be too rigid for businesses to attend. A more business-friendly practice that would be practical in this setting would be to have a dedicated point of contact (i.e. concierge) that helps business owners navigate regulatory processes as the need arises. This role should be flexible and malleable to fit the town's needs through the years and could be co-sponsored by the Small Business Association. This role can take on many forms including a paid internship, a part-time paid role for a new staff member, additional role and duties for an existing staff member with additional pay and resources dedicated for this objective, a shared full-time role with a neighboring community with shared interests, or a full-time in-house staff member. A dedicated position in any of these forms could help coordinate a smoother flow of information and exchange to understand the changing needs of the business community and provide them with services, such as marketing, that small businesses often don't have the capacity to develop on their own. This would serve to continue to improve the relationship between Town officials and businesses. The SBA has capacity and potential to take on a larger role to realizing the Town's goals. As they help businesses navigate regulatory processes, they could benefit from more formal relationships with Town Hall. The liaison should attend SBA meetings, visit with business at their locations, and have a firm understanding of permit requirements and processes to help businesses resolve problems.

Strategy ED 2.4

Explore ways to raise awareness and create networking opportunities for Norfolk businesses.

Having a strong town center identity would help promote the businesses that locate there. However, until those long-range goals can be realized, businesses currently struggle with visibility and awareness. Small businesses don't have the capacity for business development on their own and would benefit from services, such as marketing to increase their customer base. Local newspapers (i.e., Norfolk & Wrentham News "Local Town Pages") and the Norfolk Council on Aging publishes monthly newsletters (i.e., "News from the Branch", "Silver Set Gazette") that feature ad space from local businesses. The town could feature businesses on their website, install sponsored banners and other advertising at key locations in town, and spotlight businesses through social media. A business liaison should be given graphic skills training and tools for creating physical and digital marketing materials. To the extent possible, the town should encourage local procurement of goods and services for Town needs and inter-business sourcing. The Town

**Strategy
ED 2.4**

of Norfolk has businesses such as a limo service company, promotional products supplier, coffee machine supplier, and caterers. Bringing businesses together may help further business-to-business services as well as more collaborative awareness building. The Town can organize networking events such as annual business community brunches, golf outings, nature walks, and community service events, co-sponsored by the local business community, to which the Town can invite local and regional stakeholders.

**Strategy
ED 2.5****Continue to plan and host scheduled activities, like pop-ups.**

The Town holds events throughout the year where businesses receive visibility including Discovery Day, Baseball Opening Day, and the Farmer's Market on Town Hill. Some of these events could be reformatted and relocated to Town Center to activate that area of town. The Town should explore block-party style road closures or sidewalk activation to bring more residents to activate Town Center. Pop-up events could also take place indoors in either town-owned facilities or vacant commercial spaces for awareness and activation of those otherwise dormant areas and allow for continuity through unfavorable weather. To meet the demand for dining options, the Town could pilot an Art Walk and Food Truck night to promote local artists and explore the integration of food vendors into the town. It will be important to work closely with regulatory bodies to streamline the permitting process for more innovative and creative ideas and to obtain buy-in from businesses. The community has expressed a strong desire for increased social life in town through dining options, cultural events that bring community together, and for diversity in those events. Pop-up events can help community members visualize what the town could look and feel like without significant capital and resource commitments. It is important to note that even when the activity itself may not lead with a business-focused intent, adjacent activities, like arts and culture productions, directly and indirectly stimulate local economies. It may even be more effective to lead with an arts and culture focused activity that is augmented by synergistic economic goals.

Economic Development Goals & Strategies

Goal ED3: Encourage commercial growth to increase local services and amenities and reduce tax burden on individual property owners.

The Town has tools at its disposal which can work within the existing framework of economic activity in the town to stimulate economic growth. In addition to building relationships with small businesses, commercial property owners are a key piece of the puzzle. Educating and incentivizing them to upgrade and expand their existing buildings can help activate these spaces and bring in businesses who wish to locate to Norfolk but may be finding better commercial stock in neighboring communities.

Strategy ED 3.1 Develop an incubation hub to bring more local businesses into public visibility.

Many businesses shared the desire to grow and expand, but cited factors that limit their business potential including: the lack of available affordable and desirable commercial space in town, not needing nor wanting a traditional lease given the hybrid or online nature of their businesses, and their other work and familial obligations that curtail their businesses pursuits to be part-time side projects. Business owners were interested in the option to have flexible office and retail spaces where they could be in close proximity to other business owners, have meeting space, and coffee and lunch options. The Town could develop a co-working space to serve as an incubation hub where businesses can lease discounted office space with flexible lease commitments that meet their needs. This can serve as a stepping stone for businesses that may have outgrown their homes but are not quite ready to occupy their own commercial spaces. An incubation hub should provide a packaged delivery of services that includes common utilities, internet, printing equipment, furnishings, coffee bar, and other amenities to simplify lease terms and allow more flexibility in occupancy. The hub should look at uses beyond administrative office space and explore the facilitation of creating commercial kitchens for ghost kitchens and catering businesses, explore maker spaces for local artists and craftspeople to utilize and hold community classes, wellness and fitness studios for group classes, and other business ideas that focus on generating active foot traffic.

Inactive historic buildings, especially those near Town Center, could be potential locations for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse to provide commercial space, such as the George Thayer House/Dupee Restaurant at 15 Rockwood Road and The Cook Tavern at 237 Main Street. The SBA currently holds its monthly meetings at the Norfolk Grange Hall located at 28 Rockwood Road and should continue to activate this space with their other events as well. State and federal grants are available to support historical preservation efforts such as the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund.

**Strategy
ED 3.2**

Encourage commercial landlords to modify their leasing practices to support growing incoming small businesses.

As the Town reviews and updates their zoning regulations, it will also be important to engage commercial landlords to help them understand and motivate them to update their leasing practices. Small businesses today are seeking shorter lease terms, a higher quality of services including faster broadband internet speeds, and access to outdoor retail area. Small business owners expressed favorability towards smaller and local landlords, saying they were more invested in their commercial spaces and ready to assist the business owners address their regulatory challenges and physical upgrades required for their business. Landlords that are invested in the success of their tenants can be instrumental in not just the trajectories of an individual business, but can also help make the larger transitions towards shaping cohesive commercial districts the town hopes to achieve. Evaluating and renovating existing underutilized commercial building stock to fit post-Covid-19 business trends is an important short-term step to sustain existing business activity while long-term development processes are underway.

**Strategy
ED 3.3**

Support local farming and recreation economy.

The farming history of Norfolk is still an important presence in the town today. The Town can bolster the agricultural businesses by facilitating partnerships for procurement agreements between the local farms and the local schools to acquire their produce locally under a “Farm to Cafeteria” program. Some farms currently offer Community Supported Agriculture memberships that the Town can help promote and expand. It can also encourage agrotourism by promoting local events and culture and providing support services, such as transportation from the commuter rail station, in the coordination with seasonal events (e.g., pumpkin patches, outdoor biergartens, Oktoberfests, summer and holiday events, etc.). With the expansion of the Pond Street Recreation Complex, the Town can promote ecotourism and encourage visitors to patronize local businesses.

**Strategy
ED 3.4**

Continue to collaborate with property owners to redevelop former industrial properties (Southwood Hospital, Buckley and Mann) as appropriate to support Town goals.

The larger inactive parcels in town will benefit from site specific plans, developed in close collaboration with the current property owners and interested or future developers. The 88-acre Southwood hospital site located at 111 Dedham Street has received interest from developers over the past decade but no project has come to fruition. Remediated this contaminated site is the highest priority of the community. The Town should continue to work with property owners to support redevelopment that is economically viable and that would result in remediation. The property is a unique opportunity to expand the commercial tax base of the Town. The Buckley and Mann site is a former mill and designated superfund site and requires in-depth studies and remediation before it can be considered for any new uses.

Economic Development Goals & Strategies

Goal ED4: Facilitate and incentivize new “right-sized” commercial development that supports diversity of small landlords and small developers.

Feedback gathered from the Master Plan public forums and community-wide survey note that there is a strong desire for local goods and services such as restaurants, a small grocery store, coffee shops, and the like. There is also clear rejection of big box retailers to fill these needs. The Town has struggled to attract and facilitate an active Town Center over the past decades and as such, a more involved approach may be effective. The Town can work to cultivate its local resources into commercial businesses to better serve local residents. These types of businesses will capture the leakage that occurs when residents travel to neighboring towns to purchase their goods and services. In addition to the benefits of a diversified tax base, these types of businesses can be natural passive gathering places that foster a sense of belonging and community. In a town with relatively low density and an auto-centric design, social isolation, especially in the aging senior citizen population, is a real threat. The town can take steps to develop a more social and communal atmosphere through investments to foster and grow certain types of desirable businesses.

Strategy ED 4.1 Establish development standards and design guidelines that will shape development to align with a traditional New England small town character.

The Town needs to continue to update its zoning bylaws and develop design guidelines for its commercial districts to create the type of New England town culture they wish to cultivate. Currently, the town is already home to one big box retailer and a franchise, both with drive-thrus. Community members have expressed that while the convenience of these retailers is important to them, they do not want this type of design replicated. The Town has already developed design guidelines for Town Center and needs to work with future developers to implement the guidelines. Additionally, the Town should create design guidelines for other districts to help guide future investments toward a shared vision. The town can use regulatory tools to prevent “big box retailers” through strategies such as maximum lot size, FAR, maximum tenant space size, and designated architectural style.

Strategy ED 4.2 Incentivize property owners to invest in properties to attract new businesses.

In order to create a vibrant town with strong social ties between community members, the Town must take action steps beyond zoning updates. Garnering support from motivated commercial property owners is essential to realizing the Town’s vision. The Town needs to engage with its current base of commercial property owners to understand their interests and challenges. The Town can encourage commercial property owners to invest in and develop Town Center into a pedestrian-oriented place through capital improvements in walkability, bikeability, and connectivity through incentives such as reduced parking requirements for the installation of these upgrades. Encourage passive recreation spaces on private property as appropriate through amenities such as parklets. Current active small businesses are suppressed and driven out by the lack of movement from property

**Strategy
ED 4.2**

owners of large parcels in town center. Building capacity of local smaller property owners can help grow local wealth and guide the type of slow incremental development the town wishes to see. The Town should employ disincentives for vacant and undeveloped land in key commercial areas, such as along Liberty Lane in town center.

**Strategy
ED 4.3****Facilitate the creation of a locally owned co-op store model to support small businesses and farms.**

The community has expressed a need for more locally available food, produce, goods, and services but has whole-heartedly rejected big box retailers. The Town could more directly facilitate the creation of a grocery co-op where local farmers can sell produce year-round. An indoor winter farmer's market can serve as a starting point to develop into a more sustainable model. The Town should consult with existing co-ops and interested parties to help develop a local co-op grocer. The co-op model can be beneficial here to center local ownership in the creation of Town Center. The co-op model can also be applied to coffee shops and other community-serving uses.

See it in action: Assabet Co-Op Market, Maynard

The Assabet Co-op Market opened in May 2023 with over 2,200 member owners. The Co-op is a community-owned, full-service grocery store in Maynard that serves the entire Metro West region.

Additional information can be found here:

<https://assabetmarket.coop/>

**Strategy
ED 4.4****Explore establishing a Commercial Community Land Trust.**

The Town and residents of Norfolk are advantageously positioned as a high-income and generally wealthy community. However, the town lacks the physical commercial spaces for businesses to expand. As such, many end up moving out of town. Some business owners reside in Norfolk currently and while they would like to bring their businesses to town, there is physically no space for them to do so. In the absence of invested interest from developers and property owners, the Town can take a more direct approach. The community can work with local non-profits like the Grange to establish a commercial community land trust that will acquire the real estate needed for community-serving businesses such as a co-op grocery store and an incubation hub. This type of direct action, through collaboration with the Small Business Association and Norfolk Historical Society, and other local groups, may help the town move towards the vision it seeks for Town Center. Even if the land trust is not initially able to be located in Town Center, it can be established in an underutilized space elsewhere and serve to incubate small businesses as they grow, capturing that economic activity before it leaves the town and use it to attract commercial development.

Economic Development Goals & Strategies

Goal ED5: Foster equitable economic growth and long-term economic resiliency and sustainability by supporting a diversity of businesses.

In the long-term, the town should continue to prepare for growth and change. The past decade has been economically tumultuous, especially through the Covid-19 pandemic. The town could benefit from taking more creative approaches than it has previously to stimulate its local economy.

Below are strategies that can help the town create new economic opportunity for entrepreneurs and the essential workers needed to operate businesses the town wishes to see.

Strategy ED 5.1 Identify and explore support services for large anchor businesses.

The goal was also included in the 2018 Economic Development Plan. Evaluate the progress to identify challenges faced as well as successes realized. The Town can work with its neighboring communities to understand the needs of large anchor businesses in the area and identify support services that can be locally sourced. The Town, likely through a concerted effort with its neighboring towns, can develop and coordinate local procurement agreements between large anchor businesses (e.g. ForeKicks, Pondville Medical Center, and Gillette Stadium) to local existing businesses, including area farms. Procurement agreements and services could be coordinated in respect to transportation services, supplies, etc. The Town should work with neighboring communities on a concerted economic development strategy to capitalize on the benefits of the upcoming seven total 2026 FIFA World Cup matches to be held at Gillette Stadium in Foxborough.

Strategy ED 5.2 Monitor regional workforce trends and support essential workers.

Although the Town of Norfolk is not an employer hub, it should pay attention to regional workforce development trends as they may affect the services and resources available to Town residents. For instance, labor shortages in the healthcare sector continue to impact the availability of hospital and medical services. Area schools could work more closely with the area's MassHire centers to develop internship and learning pathways. To support the local workforce, especially certain essential roles such as teachers, healthcare workers, emergency and on-call responders, and other service workers, the Town should update its housing goals and develop solutions to ensure available affordable housing for the workforce.

Strategy ED 5.3 Develop programs and support for entrepreneurs from historically disadvantaged backgrounds to help open businesses in Norfolk.

In order to stimulate the local economy and attract a diversity of businesses, the Town can pilot funding opportunities for small businesses that may want to locate to Norfolk. This may be especially effective in bringing in a diverse range of dining options in the form of food trucks or pop-up stands for community events. By increasing the range of businesses through direct support, it also helps them compete against the types of franchises the town wishes to prevent.

**Strategy
ED 5.4**

Develop a multi-lingual business guide for businesses interested in locating to Norfolk.

Town businesses, especially new ones, would benefit from a business guide. By making it available in more than one language, the Town could expand its reach. The community feedback highlighted that the Town can be perceived as exclusionary and cold, but would like to be seen as a welcoming place. Creating promotional materials in other languages can be one step towards that sense of inclusion.





Land Use

The Land Use element identifies the distribution of existing uses and specifies locations for new residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use growth and areas to be protected as open space. Goals and recommendations focus on addressing sustainable land use practices, how development patterns impact climate change, and desired development patterns for different land uses and locations in Norfolk.

Quick Facts



The Town of Norfolk is characterized by its semi-rural landscapes including woodlands, farmlands, and a variety of rivers and water bodies.



42% residential

About 42% of Norfolk's land area is currently residential, making residential the primary land use in the Town.

30,000 SF
residential minimum lot size

Norfolk is primarily zoned for single family residential development, with a minimum lot size requirement of at least 30,000 square feet.



Near the geographic center of the Town is the central business district (B-1 zoning) of the Town Center. The district includes a mix of commercial, residential, municipal, and institutional uses.

Norfolk's Commuter Rail station is in the Town Center.



3.8% commercial or light industrial

About 3.8% of the land in Norfolk is currently commercial or light industrial.



All of Norfolk's roadways are classified locally as "scenic" roadways, except for Route 115 and 1A.



1,083 acres
of Chapter 61 protected land

A total of 50 parcels are protected for land conservation under Chapter 61 for a total of 1,083 acres of protected land, in addition to Town-owned conservation and open space land.

What are Norfolk residents saying about land use?

"Keeping Norfolk's rural feel."

"It would be lovely and contribute to a healthy and connected community by having sidewalks and bike paths linking the whole town together."

"Expanding and preserving the natural beauty of the town by halting building and expanding nature preserves."

"Keep Norfolk the way it is."

"Primary challenge is town's desire for growth. Maybe we don't want growth. 40B is threat to fundamental fabric of town."

"If Norfolk can maintain its uniqueness for another 50-100 years it will have proven that you can grow and improve while not conceding your core identity."

"Ensuring toxic sites are safe for redevelopment."

"Need to define land use better - the intent I believe is to make good development but good land use. However, the way land use should be used as a means to protect and preserve."

"Smart development that doesn't consume woodland or farms."

"Moderate (verb) residential growth, preserve open and rural feel, encourage small business."

"Affordable semi-rural town with open spaces / places for recreation, support for diverse population - ethnic / racial / socioeconomic, sense of history, and a solid tax base."

"A similar feel for the town as it has today. Although it would be nice to have a more vibrant town center with restaurants etc."

"Responsible growth, expanded services."

"A town that maintains its suburban rural charm, but greatly expands municipal services and incentives to attract more business. Walkability is big too. I would love for someday to be able to walk to the center of town with my children on sidewalks and be able to hop around all the local shops that could exist there."



Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive in any way. This is intended to help connect the plan to verbatim comments provided by Norfolk residents.

Key Issues



Residents are concerned about the type, scale, and location of future growth and how public services will keep pace with it while others are concerned about the tax burden placed on homeowners.



Housing development proposed under Chapter 40B is likely to be among the largest and densest development to continue to occur, but is currently outside of the Town's control due to the Town's affordable housing percentage being less than 10% of the total housing stock. In 2022 and 2023 alone, eight 40B projects were completed or under construction with a combined total of 296 homes constructed or underway.



While desirable among residents, current growth patterns of predominantly lower density residential will present long term challenges for the maintenance of less efficient roadway, water, and infrastructure systems



New growth, including mixed-use and commercial development should be focused on the existing centers of economic activity, including Town Center and the Route 115/1A area, but limited wastewater infrastructure and lower market demand may continue to present barriers to investment



Increasing the density of activity in existing centers through redevelopment is an important aspect of strategic growth that also helps the Town to retain the semi-rural character of less developed areas of the town



It is important that the transportation network is enhanced for better options to get around without a car, particularly in the existing centers where future investment will continue to occur and connecting to open space amenities and town facilities throughout the town.

Norfolk's Land Use Toolbox to guide and direct future growth includes:



- **Norfolk Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals** are the two primary Town Boards responsible for the review and approval of future development proposals in the Town under the Norfolk Zoning Bylaw and Planning Board Rules and Regulations for the Subdivision of Land and Site Plan Approval. The Planning Board is also responsible for proactive planning such as this Town-wide Master Plan and recommending changes to the Town-wide Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Board is supported by the Town Planner and Planning Department.
- **Norfolk Zoning Bylaw** regulates the use and development of land in the Town. Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 40A gives towns authority to adopt ordinances and bylaws to regulate the use of land, buildings, and structures.
- **Scenic Roads Bylaw** maintains the natural, historic and scenic character of Norfolk's roads by requiring review of requests to cut down trees or remove portions of a stone wall on a designated Scenic Road.



Aerial photo of Norfolk. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

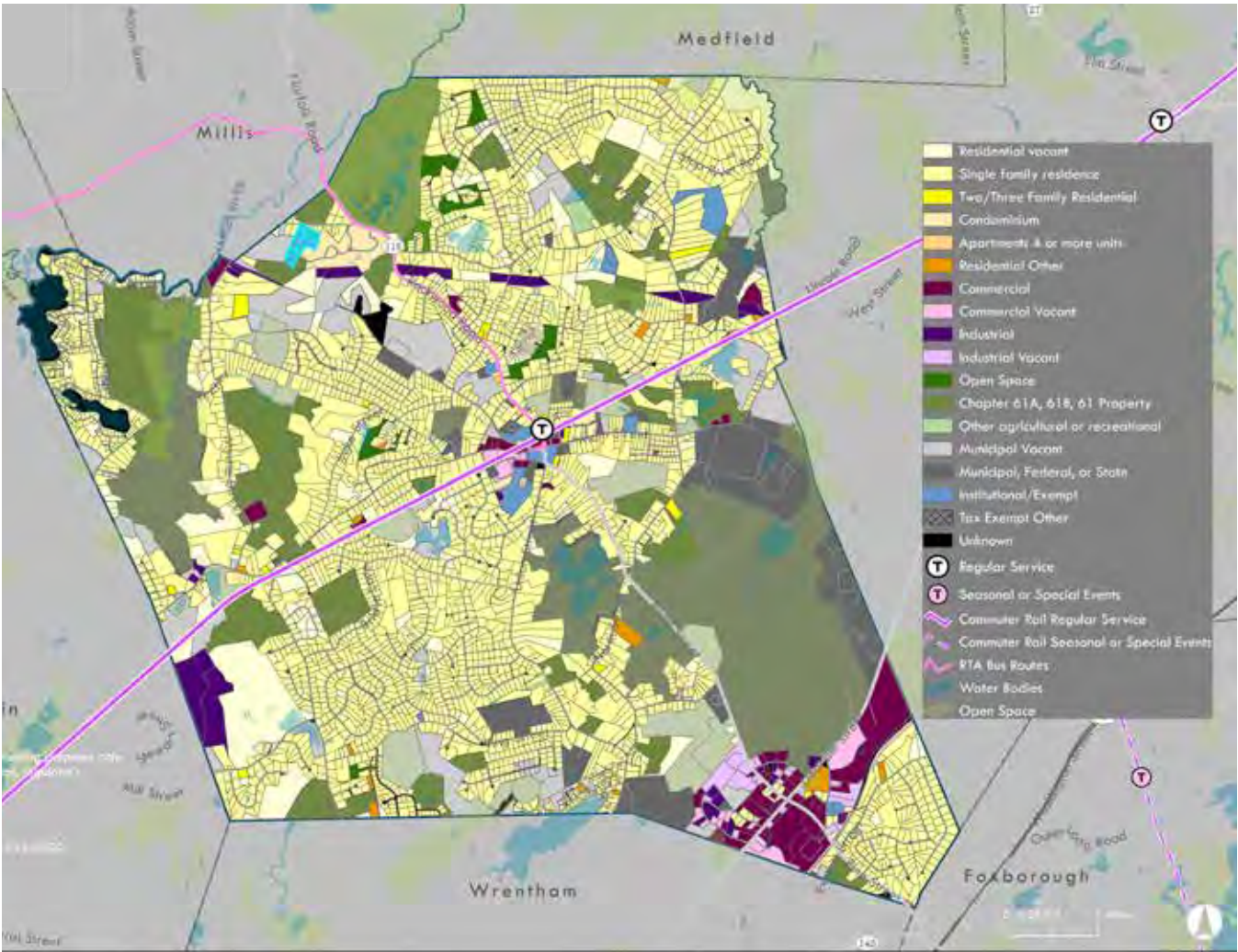
Land Use Goals & Strategies

Norfolk's land use patterns are well-defined and generally follow a traditional pattern with a transit-served and walkable mixed-use Town Center geographically near the Town's center. The Town Center is a destination for several uses and services in the Town. The center is surrounded by residential uses of higher density and that density decreases as distance from the Town Center increases. This general pattern results in land uses across the Town that are relatively predictable and uniform. The Town has evolved from being historically predominantly agricultural to predominantly residential today. Even though agricultural uses have decreased over time, residents view the Town character as rural and agricultural.

A few other nodes of non-residential or mixed-use activity occur throughout the Town outside of the Town Center. The largest of these nodes is at and around the intersection of Route 1A and Route 115. This area includes commercial, municipal, and residential uses. The former Southwood Hospital property, which represents a large redevelopment opportunity in the Town, is just to the north of this intersection. The other nodes include the River's Edge mixed use development on the northern side of Route 115 and the former mill site on Lawrence Street in the western portion of the Town known as the Buckley & Mann property.

Future growth and development will continue to occur in the Town. Through planning and regulation, the Town should continue to encourage future growth and development that strengthens sustainable development patterns and positively impacts the Town vision for a preserved semi-rural small-town character, enhanced Town Center, and diversified tax base. The implementation of these goals and strategies do have an interdependence on private property owners and private investment but provide recommendations the Town can undertake to advance its vision for future land use.

Norfolk Land Use Map



Land Use Goals & Strategies

Goal LU1: Continue to encourage community activity, development, and infrastructure investment in Town Center.

Norfolk Town Center has been a central feature of the community identity for decades. Improving Town Center was a priority identified in the 2007 Master Plan and was subject of a Town Center (B-1 District) Zoning Study in 2019 that resulted in Town Meeting approval of zoning amendments to encourage mixed-use development. Town Center has been the focus of past streetscape and infrastructure investments. While this focus has resulted in improvements from both public and private investments, the potential to dramatically improve the Town Center remains. Several prominent properties remain vacant and undeveloped and could contribute to the vitality of the Town Center. In addition to private property and mixed-use activity, Town Center is also the location of important Town facilities and services including Town Hall, Library, Fire Station, and commuter rail station. Town Hill, adjacent to the library, is also home to a rich calendar of community events including the Norfolk Farmer's Market, holiday events, and Norfolk Discovery Day. All this activity should continue to be supported in the Town Center. Future additional activity, development, infrastructure, and investment should be used to strengthen Town Center as a center of Town life.

Strategy LU 1.1 Develop wastewater solutions in Town Center to support future growth of higher density and intensity of uses including exploring a connection to the Norfolk MCI wastewater system or expansion of the Meetinghouse Road wastewater facility.

The lack of a municipal sewer and water system are primary considerations for redevelopment of the scale and density that is encouraged for the Town Center. An increased density of uses and the type of uses that are desired, such as additional restaurants, will likely require additional wastewater capacity than could be provided by a traditional on-site septic system. The Town has undertaken engineering studies to explore the feasibility of a variety of options to expand wastewater capacity in the Town Center. This exploration should continue to identify the most viable and cost-effective solution and to define an implementation approach.

Strategy LU 1.2 Continue to support property owners in making mixed-use investments.

The Town should continue to communicate with property owners and potential developers to gather feedback on the market context for mixed-use development in Town Center. While the Town recently updated the zoning to encourage mixed-use development, additional changes to the regulations may be required to increase the financial viability of development. Necessary refinements will likely be best identified through open communication and continued dialogue with those who would be making the investments.

**Strategy
LU 1.3**

Continue to partner with organizations like the Norfolk Community League and Norfolk Lions Clubs to hold events, such as the farmer's markets, Holiday on the Hill, holiday markets, and crafts fairs to activate Town Center; ensure year-round events with winter weather accommodations by partnering with indoor venues such as the Freeman-Kennedy School, Norfolk Public Library, and Town-owned facilities.

While there is a desire to improve the built environment of the Town Center, acting on that desire is not entirely within the control of the Town. Ensuring that Town Center is a central feature of Town life and community activities is more within the control of the Town. This type of activity already occurs. The annual calendar of Town Center events should be expanded to fill any monthly gaps they may currently exist. Discussions with vacant property owners could also be pursued to explore what temporary activities could potentially occur on vacant properties to expand the use and vitality of the Town Center.

**Strategy
LU 1.4**

Help create connections between Norfolk small businesses and vacant spaces in the Town Center.

Many of Norfolk's small businesses are home occupations. Some small business owners may reach a point where renting a space for the business is needed to grow and hire additional staff. These local small businesses may be an ideal match for smaller spaces that may be available in the Town Center. These local businesses could help to fill vacancies and contribute to the vitality of the Town Center. Small businesses that are public facing with consumer services or products would have a particularly strong alignment with Town Center.



New mixed-use building that added commercial space to Town Center following adoption of B-1 Zoning.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

Strategy LU 1.5 Implement pedestrian infrastructure improvements in Town Center with development and maintenance of sidewalks, trees, bicycle lanes, and all-weather amenities.

Many of Norfolk's small businesses are home occupations. Some small business owners may reach a point where renting a space for the business is needed to grow and hire additional staff. These local small businesses may be an ideal match for smaller spaces that may be available in the Town Center. These local businesses could help to fill vacancies and contribute to the vitality of the Town Center. Small businesses that are public facing with consumer services or products would have a particularly strong alignment with Town Center.

Strategy LU 1.6 Encourage shared parking in municipal and MBTA parking lots; create a park-once district at Town Center and discourage auto-oriented uses in Town Center; mitigate parking requirements for potential businesses.

The balance of the need for parking and impact of parking in a Town Center is critically important. While necessary to support businesses and residents, parking is also disruptive to the walkability and character of a district. The commuter rail parking lots provide a large supply of parking that is also located in the Town Center. This parking is controlled by the MBTA, but through partnership with them could be used to support Town Center activity. As the Town Center continues to add more activity with new buildings and uses, it is important for the parking supply that exists to be used more efficiently. Considering all parking in the Town Center as a shared resource is one way to achieve improved efficiency and to avoid the over-supply of parking in the future. Every parking space that is provided and not used is a lost opportunity for that land area to be something else that would attract people to the Town Center.



Aerial view of Town Center, showing parking behind newer commercial buildings and commuter rail station parking lot. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Goal LU2: Support stable growth and incremental improvement in the commercial districts located near Route 115/1A.

After Town Center, the second largest concentration of non-residential uses in Norfolk is the area near the intersection of Route 115 and Route 1A. This area was also among the most frequently mentioned areas by residents to continue to focus investments and improvements in the Town. The primary objectives were to continue to build up the commercial tax base in Town and to diversify land uses, this area should continue to be promoted as a location for additional non-residential uses and an increase in the density of uses over time. This general area would extend to include the former Southwood Hospital property that is located just to the northeast on Route 1A. The Town has been engaged in an active visioning and zoning study for this specific property.

Strategy LU 2.1 Conduct a district planning process to develop a district vision and goals that can be used to modify zoning in the commercial districts.

An effort like the Town Center B-1 District Zoning Study should be performed for the Route 115/1A area. This type of district planning effort would begin by defining a district vision and goals for the district. It would then compare the current zoning regulations to the vision and goals and identify recommendations for zoning changes to strengthen the consistency between the community's vision for the district and the regulation of future investments. It is likely that the outcome of this study will create greater flexibility in allowable uses and the types of investments that could occur to strengthen the future economic development potential of this important non-residential area of the Town. As was performed in Town Center, this study could assess the development potential of parcels in the district.

Norfolk Southwood Hospital Site Re-Use Analysis and Zoning Recommendations Study

This study has engaged the community and property owner in a discussion related to the re-use of the 87-acre former Southwood State Hospital site on Route 1A. The former hospital closed in 1997 and a successful redevelopment plan has not yet emerged. The study will result in zoning recommendations to enable economically viable future redevelopment that will support the primary community goal of remediating the site.

Strategy LU 2.2 Differentiate the future growth at Route 115/1A and Town Center.

As future growth occurs in both Route 115/1A and Town Center it will be very important for the Town to differentiate the vision and goals for each district. Town Center is more focused on a walkable mixed-use collection of restaurants and small businesses that will help to anchor it as a central feature of life in the Town. The Route 115/1A area is a more commercially focused area that is less consumer focused. It is an area for the Town to grow larger scale commercial, light industrial, or light manufacturing uses that can contribute to the Town's tax base. The differentiations between the two districts should be translated into clear differences in the allowed uses in the two districts. This will help the two districts to respond to the full range of Town-wide goals in a complementary manner while avoiding competing districts within the Town.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

Strategy LU 2.3 Foster housing density and housing diversity in this area through development incentives in height and density.

To preserve other undeveloped or primarily residential areas of the Town, the area around Route 115/1A could also be a strategic location to increase housing density and the diversity of housing types. If this goal is confirmed through defining a district vision and goals, zoning incentives could be used to encourage this type of housing development by allowing more height or density in exchange for rental homes, live/work homes, or other housing types that are not currently available in Norfolk.

Strategy LU 2.4 Work with developers to prioritize infrastructure improvements that align with incoming development projects; align infrastructure investments with zoning; update zoning approvals to include conditions for mitigation of impacts.

Like Town Center, specific infrastructure needs may become a barrier to future investment in the Route 115/1A area. When specific needs are identified to support investments that are consistent with the district vision and goals, the Town should explore how best to support removing infrastructure barriers. Wastewater infrastructure, and roadway, sidewalk, and bicycle infrastructure may better support future investment. Future funding for these investments could be considered as part of updated zoning requirements that explore impact fees to mitigate and improve specific impacts of future development. A fee study could be performed to explore the most effective requirements for development fees related to infrastructure improvements for new developments.

Goal LU3: Strengthen clusters of dense, walkable areas that can be connected by a multimodal network.

Outside of Town Center and Route 115/1A, a couple current or potential future clusters of denser walkable areas are important to note for future land use policy in Norfolk. River's Edge is located north of Town Center on Route 115 and is an existing cluster of homes for seniors and retail and commercial space. In the western portion of the Town, the former Buckley and Mann Mill property has the potential to be a future development with residential and modest retail and commercial space that may be similar to River's Edge. These smaller clusters of denser development provide the opportunity for neighborhood serving stores that should also be connected by the potential multimodal network discussed in the Transportation Chapter of the Master Plan.

Strategy LU 3.1 Refine zoning to allow increasing density and walkability of specific concentrated areas over time.

Like Town Center and Route 1A/115, a district visioning, goal setting, and zoning review process for the River's Edge area, and Buckley and Mann area should be considered to proactively plan for future evolution and investment in these areas. Zoning regulations should be made consistent with the district vision and goals that emerge from the community planning processes.

Strategy LU 3.2 Encourage active transportation through bicycle and pedestrian improvements, especially to create connections to open spaces for recreation including the Mass Audubon's Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, Norfolk Community Park at Rockwood Road, Fales Memorial Park, and Pond Street Athletic Complex.

As outlined in the Transportation chapter, the opportunity for a town-wide network of connections for bicyclists and pedestrians would be transformative. This network should make strategic connections to these clusters of dense, walkable areas, Town Center, Route 115/1A, and open space and recreation resources. While every home may not be directly connected to this network. By connecting these nodes, the network would be distributed across the Town. Expanding this multimodal network over time should include collaborating with the Norfolk Housing Authority to make age-friendly and ADA pedestrian infrastructure and upgrades in and around the developments. As the multimodal network continues to expand create a map and resource guide for Norfolk walking and hiking areas with parking lots, ADA accessibility information, and promote nearby recreation areas through online outreach and social media to increase active use of these amenities through walking and biking in the Town.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

Strategy LU 3.3

Explore collaboration with neighboring towns.

As the planning for the Metacomet Greenway has shown, there is strong potential for multimodal networks to connect to neighboring towns and nearby centers of activity. As Norfolk's town-wide multimodal network begins to take shape, continue conversations and collaboration with neighboring towns to see where the network could connect across municipal boundaries.

Strategy LU 3.4

Update development requirements to connect new developments and significant redevelopments to a wider network of pedestrian infrastructure including wider sidewalks, lighting infrastructure, benches, etc.

New development should contribute to the walkability and bikability of the Town. This is particularly important for those properties that are part of the one of the identified centers of activity, or properties that are located directly adjacent to an existing or planned multimodal trail. Requirements could include adding sidewalks or paths that will connect to the multimodal trail, adding amenities adjacent to the trail, completing a segment of the trail, or other contribution that is commensurate with the scale of the new development.

Goal LU4: Balance small-town feel with desire for more services and amenities by strategically locating new residential and commercial growth in existing communities.

As indicated in the Illustrative Vision, preservation is also a major component of the approach to future land uses in the Town. The pressure will remain for the Town to continue to grow and it should align its regulations and described in previous strategies to encourage that growth in specific locations (Town Center, Route 115/1A, River's Edge, Buckley and Mann). This approach is consistent with the community's desire to preserve the small-town and semi-rural feel of the Town.

Strategy LU 4.1 Refine zoning tools to preserve open space (cluster subdivision, transfer of development rights, conservation restrictions, etc.)

For underlying Residence Zones, an Open Space Preservation Development allows a 10% increase in the number of allowable building lots with other open space and development requirements by special permit. Increasing the incentive for this type of development may be warranted for exploration. The minimum open space requirement of 25% should also be increased. The open space preservation that would result, while still allowing housing growth would be consistent with the community vision. A desire to preserve the appearance of wooded lots from the street is expressed in the community feedback. Other preservation mechanisms, such as transfer of development rights (TDR) are worth consideration as well to preserve targeted conservation areas in the Town and allow concentrated development in specific locations.

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR)

Transfer of development rights is a zoning tool which establishes two related zoning districts, the Preservation District, and the Receiving District. The bylaw establishes the right to transfer development rights from the Preservation District to the Receiving District. This is typically a complicated bylaw, but in concept would help to preserve specific areas of the Town while encouraging concentrated development in other areas. The Commonwealth has prepared a model TDR Bylaw.

Strategy LU 4.2 Continue to work toward compliance with 40B requirements to control approvals.

The Commonwealth's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) determines a municipality's susceptibility to the development through Chapter 40B. Chapter 40B allows a proposed housing development meeting certain conditions to circumvent local zoning requirements. As of 2023, the Town's current SHI is 4.21%. 10% is required to allow control over the approval of a 40B proposed housing development. It is critically important for the Town to make progress on meeting this threshold as it is the only way to align future housing development more with the goals of the Town.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

**Strategy
LU 4.3** **Adopt design standards to facilitate desired development outcomes to build on the desirability of small-town characteristics.**

The Town has developed Norfolk Town Center Design Review Guidelines to supplement the Zoning Bylaw and provide additional guidance for future development. Design standards or guidelines could also be developed for the other districts that have been highlighted for additional visioning and zoning updates (Route 115/1A, Buckley and Mann, River's Edge). General design guidelines could also be created for lower density residential, including Open Space Preservation Development to focus on the characteristics that most contribute to the small-town and semi-rural character that the community would like to preserve.

**Strategy
LU 4.4** **Explore updates to scenic roads bylaws, right to farm, or other land conservation regulations.**

Every road in Norfolk is designated as a “scenic road” which gives trees, stone walls, and other features, more protection near roadways. While this protection is desired to preserve the semi-rural character of the community it may create challenges with tree maintenance and storm and wind hazards as noted in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community Resilience Building Workshop Report. Bylaw refinement specifying the type of allowed maintenance may be helpful. Other conservation regulations, such as a right to farm bylaw could be considered for Norfolk. A right to farm bylaw is a general bylaw that encourages the pursuit of agriculture, promotes agriculture-based economic opportunities, and protects farmlands within the community by allowing agricultural uses and related activities to function with minimal conflict with abutters and town agencies.

**Strategy
LU 4.5** **Explore ways to encourage participation in Chapter 61 and other resources for land conservation.**

Chapter 61, the Massachusetts Forestland Taxation Act, requires that municipalities reduce assessments of forest land when a landowner is enrolled and observes the requirements of the program. This enables landowners to realize the value of the current use of the land in exchange for a ten-year commitment to grow forest products while keeping the land undeveloped. Any property owner that owns ten acres of contiguous forest and it is devoted to the growth of forest products is eligible for enrollment and could be informed of this opportunity to conserve forest land in Norfolk. Norfolk has a total of 50 parcels protected under Chapter 61 for a total of 1,083 acres of protected land in the Town.

Goal LU5: Pursue long-term partnerships to support the Town and stewardship of State-owned lands and resources in Norfolk.

Several important publicly owned properties in Norfolk are not within the control of the Town. These State-owned lands and resources require the Town to coordinate with the appropriate agencies to plan for the long term and to plan for any changes to their policies, management, or status. Examples of these types of properties include the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail parking lots and the Massachusetts Correctional Institution (MCI) at Norfolk and MCI Cedar Junction. Each of these facilities include large properties in strategic locations of the Town.

Strategy LU 5.1 Build regular communication and partnership with the MBTA to plan for long-term.

In several surface parking lots located in the Town Center, the MBTA owns 630 total parking spaces. The parking is managed by Keolis Commuter Services. The parking lots are managed with daily parking rates and monthly parking passes. Overnight parking is not available. The parking lots are well-located in the Town Center near the Commuter Rail platform and near other Town Center businesses and destinations. Depending on commuter parking utilization rates, these parking areas may have capacity to support parking for other uses in the Town Center. This type of parking management requires coordination with the MBTA. Over the longer term, commuter parking lot properties could also be discussed in partnership with the MBTA for redevelopment, if the parking supply for commuters was retained, or parking patterns show persistent and sustained low utilization.

Strategy LU 5.2 Build regular communication and partnership with state prisons to plan for long-term.

The Massachusetts Department of Correction has been in the process of evaluating prison operations and acted on prison closures at MCI Cedar Junction and MCI Concord. Typically following the closure of a state facility, the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) will undertake a disposition process to enable a new use of the state property. The Town should be involved in conversations with DCAMM and the Governor's Office to understand the plan for land associated with MCI Cedar Junction. Most of this property is in the Town of Walpole, some is in the Town of Norfolk. It would also be important to understand the long-term objectives for MCI Norfolk which is fully within the Town. In past eras, the Town leadership has fostered a more open and communicative relationship with prison Superintendents. Wastewater and other infrastructure at the prison facilities could potentially be explored as a resource to share with adjacent areas of the Town.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

Strategy LU 5.3 Explore long-term infrastructure partnership or opportunities with MWRA, and other municipalities.

The Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) is an independent authority that provides wholesale water and sewer services to its customer communities. The MWRA service area reaches as near to Norfolk as neighboring Walpole for sewer and as near as Norwood for water. Long term extension of one or both services into portions of Norfolk could be worth exploring through a cost-benefit analysis. For specific properties nearer to current service, this could provide an infrastructure solution to support water or wastewater needs.

Strategy LU 5.4 Explore partnerships with local organizations and schools to encourage stewardship of open spaces and facilitate volunteer and internship opportunities.

Stewardship of Town-owned resources is a consistent need, particularly for open spaces and conservation lands. The Town should encourage local organizations, schools, and other residents to partner in this stewardship. For example, invite specific groups to join for a clean up day at a conservation property.

Strategy LU 5.5 Continue to identify and work to reduce municipal vulnerabilities.

The Town has participated in Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) planning and should continue to plan and implement in this area of need. The highest priority concerns that emerged from the Community Resilience Building Workshop in 2020 included addressing vulnerabilities by assessing the condition of existing stormwater infrastructure, establishing a town wide tree maintenance program, continuing to evaluate hazardous waste sites, and maintaining a high-quality regional communications center.



Aerial photo of roadway flooding. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Goal LU6: Continue to modernize zoning to ensure regulations promote Town goals and address modern challenges like fossil fuel reduction for long term climate resiliency and to mitigate economic impacts of climate change.

In addition to proactive zoning changes to specific districts, the Town's Zoning Bylaw will continue to require updates to remain current with best practices around sustainability and resiliency. The following strategies provide a few specific examples, but other best practices may emerge as the impacts of climate change continue to evolve.

Strategy LU 6.1 Update permit requirements to integrate energy efficiency upgrades into new developments and major redevelopments such as incorporation of solar panels, energy efficient windows, heat pumps, etc.

Norfolk adopted the Stretch Energy Code in 2018, but has not adopted the Specialized Energy Code. The potential impacts on homeowners and impacts to their ability to make home renovations or improvements have been considerations in not adopting the Specialized Energy Code. Exploring additional energy code requirements for larger projects in the Town would be beneficial to the long term sustainability of future large-scale development.

Strategy LU 6.2 Integrate green infrastructure best practices into development of stormwater and town sewer systems to address potential flooding, water efficiency, and other environmental challenges.

Green infrastructure best practices try to mimic natural processes to manage stormwater. Features such as plants, soil, and natural materials are used to remove pollutants and allow stormwater to absorb back into the ground and avoid being collected in the stormwater infrastructure system. Where a combined stormwater and wastewater system exists, heavy rains can cause an overflow of the system. Stormwater infrastructure is one of the priority awareness highlighted by the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) planning for the Town. A Stormwater Utility is a best practice which may need to be explored in the future. It involves a stormwater fee that is based on the impervious cover of a property. The fees collected are then used to maintain and improve the stormwater system.

Norfolk Green Infrastructure Planning

In 2023, Norfolk prepared a Green Infrastructure Report. In 2022, Norfolk completed an assessment of current regulations for Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Infrastructure with detailed best practice recommendations.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

Strategy LU 6.3 **Prioritize Town investments to be developed with exemplary energy efficiency, sustainability, and resilience.**

Continuing to invest in the energy efficiency and sustainability of Town facilities is good for operational efficiency. It is also good to lead by example and be able to point to public investments the Town has made to enhance efficiency, sustainability, and resilience while requiring the same from private development.

Strategy LU 6.4 **Explore Town programs to reduce food waste and composting system by allowing and supporting on-site composting as well as establishing partnership with local farms through appropriate waste management contractors.**

The Town's Solid Waste Division is responsible for monitoring, collecting and disposing of solid waste, hazardous waste, bulky waste, yard waste, and recyclables. Exploration of a food waste or composting program to raise awareness of the benefits of composting and the reduction of household waste. A compost bin program could offer discounted composters to Norfolk residents. For example, the Walpole Board of Health has compost bins available as part of a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection grant. Walpole residents may purchase bins for \$25.

See it in action: Composting in Walpole

The Walpole Board of Health has compost bins available as part of a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection grant. Walpole residents may purchase bins for \$25.

Strategy LU 6.5 **Explore Town programs to increase water conservation.**

Water conservation tips are listed on the Town's Water Division webpage. Similar to a compost bin program, water conservation awareness efforts could be paired with a cistern or rain barrel program. A cistern or rain barrel could be offered at a discount to Norfolk residents in order to capture rainwater from downspouts for use in landscape irrigation.

Goal LU7: Identify future strategies for land use, economic development, and sustainability through strengthened communication.

New strategies will emerge over the next 10-year period as trends and patterns in land use, economic development, and sustainability continue to evolve. Strengthening communication with residents, surrounding Towns, and property owners will help the Town to proactively assess changing circumstances and propose active strategies to address emerging issues.

Strategy LU 7.1 Expand use of the online interactive Geographic Information System (GIS) map of Norfolk. Explore interactive features residents could use to engage with the online spatial data available.

The Town of Norfolk online GIS map is available at <https://next.axisgis.com/NorfolkMA/>. Individual property cards are available through the map. Current data for permitting processes, zoning processes, or other Town planning processes could be added as features, so that a resident could review current activity of the Town spatially.

Strategy LU 7.2 Collaborate with surrounding municipalities on developing a subregional land use and economic development plan for guiding growth and future planning.

As community feedback indicated, the services and goods available in surrounding municipalities are an important part of fulfilling the needs of Norfolk residents in the future. Build on existing conversation and collaboration with neighboring municipalities in regular standing meetings such as MAPC's South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) Subregion. Municipal collaboration around land use and economic development would help to guide growth that is complementary across Town boundaries and may strengthen an understanding of surrounding real estate market conditions.

Strategy LU 7.3 Provide additional updates about Town trends to the community beyond Town meeting and outreach of the Annual Report.

One model of this additional outreach is a Town Administrator's newsletter that focuses on a few topics of interest of the day and invites feedback and dialogue from residents. During the Master Plan process, Norfolk's Newsletter was launched as a new way to share information and connect with the community. The Select Board also revived Norfolk Community Forum, a monthly program on NCTV, to help keep residents informed of important Town issues.

Land Use Goals & Strategies

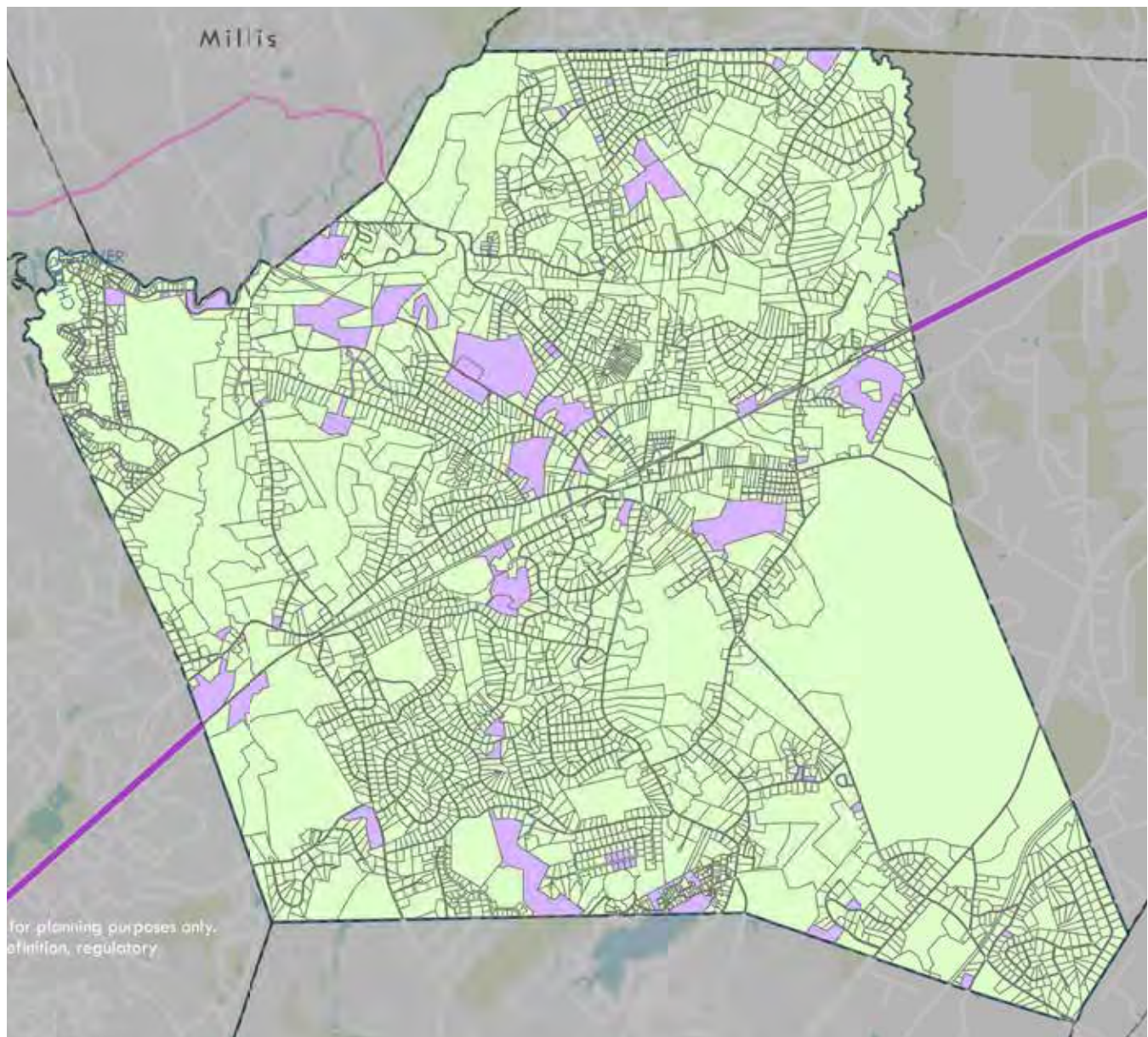
Strategy LU 7.4 Proactively recruit specific uses that are desired by the community for specific properties.

While proactive zoning updates for specific districts will help guide future land use to align with the community vision and goals, specific properties may become available to advance a specific objective of the Town. For example, a key property may become available for conservation or flood protection for which the Town may want to explore acquisition. In other circumstances a property in the Town Center may present an opportunity to match a particular small business with a vacant storefront, or to invite interest from developers for a desired type of redevelopment.

Strategy LU 7.5 Use Town-owned property to create opportunities for specific uses that are desired by the community.

While the Town is not fully in control of the development of private property, it does have more control over the properties which it owns. The Town-owned properties in and around Town Center may offer additional long-term opportunities to invite a specific community-desired use. For example, the Old Town Hall property is currently vacant on Main Street. It is a currently a liability and maintenance issue for the Town. If no additional Town use is deemed needed or appropriate for this location, it could be disposed of for private redevelopment. In that circumstance, the Town could reduce the cost of the property to attract a desired use and then make that use a condition of the disposition.

Town Owned Parcels



Town Owned Parcels



Norfolk
Grange

Norfolk Grange Hall #118
Historic Preservation Project

Donated by the Norfolk Grange
to the Norfolk Grange Hall #118
Historic Preservation Project
for the purpose of restoring
the building to its original
condition and making it
available for use as a
community center.



Housing

The Housing Element includes recommendations for policy and regulatory changes, including those aligned with the recent Housing Production Plan. It discusses opportunities to meet Norfolk’s current and future housing needs and ensures a balance of local housing opportunities exist for all residents.

Housing by the Numbers



Median Household Income

\$168,281

Norfolk has 2,967 households and an average household size of 3.1 persons per household. 40% of households have a person aged 60 years or older.

\$168,281 median household income, which is about 1.5 times the amount in Norfolk County (\$112,089) and nearly double the amount in Massachusetts (\$89,026).

3,587 total housing units



Single Family



Multi-unit

3,587 housing units, of which 95% are occupied. 96% of all housing is single-family. 4% is multi-unit. This is extremely low compared to Norfolk County (37%) and Massachusetts (42%). There are no multi-family buildings with over 10 units.

96% of homes are owner occupied

96% of homes are owner-occupied. Only 4% of units are rented, which is significantly lower than Norfolk County (32%) and Massachusetts (38%).

\$\$\$ \$563,800 median value



\$681,500 median cost

\$563,800 median value of owner-occupied homes. Median cost of single-family home is \$681,500¹.



25% of households are potentially cost-burdened by housing

25% of households spend more than 30% of their household income on housing costs, meaning they are potentially cost-burdened. Of these, about half earn less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) and are likely eligible for Affordable Housing.

151 units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (4.2% of all units)

151 units (4.2% of all units) on Subsidized Housing Inventory. Unique to Norfolk, the majority are ownership, rather than rental.

Sources:

American Community Survey, 5-year estimates 2017-2021

The Warren Group, 2021

Subsidized Housing Inventory 2023, EOHLC

What are Norfolk residents saying about housing?

Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive in any way. This is intended to help connect the plan to verbatim comments provided by Norfolk residents.

"Keep costs low so that people can stay in their house."

"Not accessible to people of lower incomes."

"Current homes for sale grandfathered into affordable housing instead of cutting down every tree in town to build new homes."

"Provide zoning options that enable a more diverse community to grow here."

"No more affordable housing or apartments - restaurants and small businesses for the town people to use within our own town."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] reasonable housing costs."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] diversity and acceptance."

"[My vision for Norfolk is a] small town with welcoming spirit to not just upper middle class, which means investment in businesses (particularly in the 115 areas and less rural areas of town) to offset spending to support the great school systems. Otherwise, the high tax rate and housing market will marginalize those."

"Single-family to two-family conversions or accessory dwelling units, etc. to increase density."

"[Opportunity along] Route 115. Fight for developers who will build apartment units, which will have the greatest impact to qualify for 40B instead of mega mansions and du/triplexes that don't help."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] a strong community that supports all of its members without driving people out due to affordability."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] inevitably higher population/denser development, increased business development (inc. restaurants, small grocery, housing near public transport) but without sacrificing the quality of school, too much of the green space, or the well-maintained infrastructure, or completely altering the small-ish town character."



Key Issues



As sale prices and other housing costs have increased tremendously, it has made it challenging for households with fixed or lower incomes to afford to stay in Norfolk.

Only households with generous incomes are able to move to Norfolk, given the majority of the Town's housing stock is comprised of large single-family detached homes. Seniors are particularly concerned about the ability to remain in Norfolk as they age, given the few affordable downsizing and rental options that exist.



Very few rental options exist in Norfolk, making it challenging for recent high school or college graduates to stay or return to Norfolk and seniors looking to downsize. Because of the limited stock, there are often no vacancies, creating a tight and competitive market for the low supply.



Norfolk has been successful in expanding affordable homeownership options, but there is still a need for more affordable rental housing as costs continue to increase and older residents transition to fixed incomes. Norfolk has work to do to reach the 10% goal for units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.



There are very few small (studio or 1-bedroom) housing options (only 4%), which is a mismatch with household size – where nearly half of households have 1- to 2-people.



Public sentiment is mixed when it comes to expanding housing choices in Norfolk.

Some residents like that Norfolk is exclusive, while others welcome more housing choices because they see value in socioeconomic and racial diversity.



It is important that Norfolk grows responsibly and incrementally due to natural development constraints and limited transportation network. Norfolk has already begun customizing zoning to better shape how different parts of town can grow (for example, the B-1 zoning). It is critical that denser new housing is located in strategic locations, near existing infrastructure and amenities, where future transportation improvements (such as improved commuter rail, new sidewalks or bike paths, or local on-demand transit options) can serve new households.

Norfolk's Housing Toolbox



Norfolk Affordable Housing Trust, which was established in 2006. Notably, the Trust administers the Scattered Site Housing Program, which has created 18 affordable homes over the last seven years.

Adoption of the **Community Preservation Act** in 2001; over \$11 million in revenue has been collected (this includes local surcharge and state distribution).

Adopted **housing-supportive zoning tools** including inclusionary zoning to require deed-restricted affordable housing in new developments; regulations to allow accessory dwelling units; and mixed-use zoning around Town Center (B-1 District).

Housing Goals & Strategies

Norfolk has been proactive in understanding housing needs and challenges and employing a variety of strategies. The level of success in implementation has varied, and the following Goals and Strategies offer an opportunity refine current efforts and try new initiatives to address housing issues. Many of these goals and strategies reinforce or build on policies from the 2022 [Norfolk Housing Production Plan](#).

Goal H1: Increase the share of Affordable Housing in Norfolk to better serve all members of the Norfolk community past, present, and future.

The Norfolk Affordable Housing Trust (AHT) was created in 2006; they, along with the Town's Affordable Housing Director, are responsible for strategizing how to increase the share of Affordable Housing.

Strategy H1.1 The Planning Board and Affordable Housing Trust should work together to update the inclusionary zoning policy and ensure it can be applied to the new MBTA Communities/Section 3A zoning that allows multifamily housing by-right.

Norfolk adopted an inclusionary zoning bylaw in 1997, and it has been amended overtime. Currently, the policy requires between 10 and 20 percent affordable units in developments with six or more units. As new multifamily zoning is created, the Town should undertake an economic feasibility assessment of the current policy and update it to maximize affordability under current market conditions.

Strategy H1.2 Leverage town-owned and tax title lands to develop Affordable Housing (in collaboration with the Norfolk Affordable Housing Trust).

The Town should continue to work with the AHT to maintain a current list of town-owned and tax title properties that could have development potential for new affordable housing. Offering low or no-cost land can incentivize experienced developers to create context-sensitive affordable housing developments. At one point, the AHT did pursue purchasing the old Norfolk Town Hall, which is about 9.5 acres in size. This was unsuccessful, but this represents an opportunity for the AHT and the Town to coordinate redeveloping the site to meet housing and other municipal goals.

Strategy H1.3 Continue the Affordable Housing Trust's scattered site housing program for first-time homebuyers to convert existing market-rate homes into Affordable homes. Consider adjusting the formula for when purchases can be made to better account for current market conditions.

Over the last seven years, 18 Affordable homes have been created under this housing program. Rising home sales prices have made it difficult for the AHT to continue acquiring homes due to a cap on how much they can spend on new acquisitions. This is an important program for providing affordable homeownership options and the AHT should work closely with Town staff to develop an inventory of private properties that have potential for conversion to affordable housing.

Strategy H1.4

Continue to leverage Community Preservation Act funding on an annual basis to further housing goals.

Norfolk was one of the early adopters of the Community Preservation Act, enacting in 2001. This program raises funds for municipal housing, open space/recreation, and historic preservation efforts by adding a small surcharge on local property taxes that is matched with funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund. Initially, Norfolk levied the full 3% surcharge, but in 2012, Town Meeting voted to decrease the surcharge to 1%. Norfolk includes exemptions for low and moderate income homeowners and the first \$100,000 of property values for residential properties. Since its adoption, Norfolk has earned \$11.4 million dollars, of which \$7.1 has come from the local surcharge and \$4.2 million has been matched from the state trust fund. CPA funds have been the primary source of funding for the AHT's efforts to create new affordable housing units.

Housing Projects Funded by Norfolk's Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Norfolk dedicates more than 10% of their CPA funding towards housing projects and works closely with the Norfolk Affordable Housing Trust to program funds for housing.

Some projects include:

- Land acquisition for Affordable housing
- Establishing a scattered site Affordable housing program
- Establishing a short-term rental assistance program
- Establishing a down payment assistance program
- Creating a new housing production plan

Strategy H1.5

Continue to find innovative ways to fund the Affordable Housing Director position. Establish a contingency funding plan, should the market change and this position can no longer be supported by private developers.

The Affordable Housing Director works with the AHT to maintain and expand the Affordable housing stock and provides affordable housing resources to Norfolk residents. Currently, the director also serves as the lottery agent for 40B developments in town, so revenue from private developers covers employee costs rather than municipal funds. As 40B developments slow or if existing developments decide to hire their own lottery agents, the Town should be prepared to fund the Affordable Housing Director from municipal revenue.



Boyde's Crossing Affordable Housing, photo courtesy of Delphic Associates



Lakeland Farms 40B Development (rendering), photo courtesy of Delphic Associates

Housing Goals & Strategies

Strategy H1.6 Create a regular, predictable funding source for the Affordable Housing Trust and a five-year action plan to enhance the trust’s effectiveness.

The AHT is primarily funded by the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and funds generated through the inclusionary zoning bylaw. Additional funding sources that could be explored include federal grants, state grants, private donations, cell tower payments, and other municipal funds. Currently, the State Legislature is considering whether to adopt legislation that would enable local option real estate transfer fees¹. If this state law is passed, the Town of Norfolk could leverage this new tool to increase funds for affordable housing. MAPC offers technical assistance to AHTs to create five-year action plans for raising and spending funds to expand Affordable housing.

Strategy H1.7 Continue to develop and maintain relationships with local and regional Affordable housing developers to pursue collaborative initiatives for housing production.

The Norfolk Housing Authority manages 84 affordable homes – 64 are reserved for seniors and people with disabilities, while 20 are family-sized and have no restrictions beyond income eligibility. Between this entity and developers of “friendly” 40B developments, Norfolk has a base of relationships to expand Affordable housing.

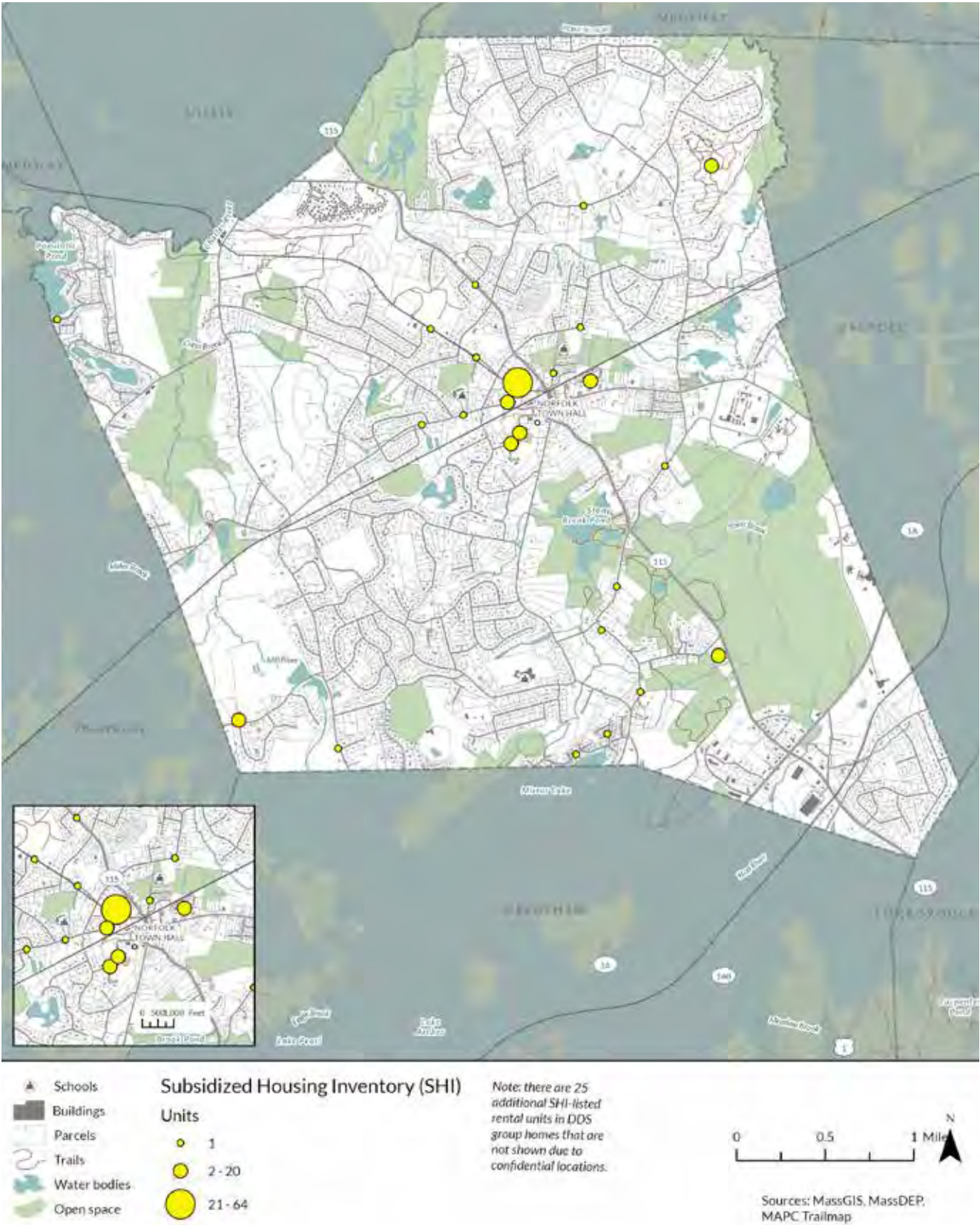
Strategy H1.8 Continue to participate in the SWAP TRIC Shared Housing Services Office, and when appropriate, offer to provide shared services.

Norfolk is a small town with limited resources, so partnering with neighboring communities, regional and state agencies, and local non-profits that provide community services is critical. Norfolk already joins housing conversations through the South West Advisory Planning Committee (SWAP) and Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC) Regional Housing Shared Services Office. While not all of the services covered by the office are needed by Norfolk at this time, project-specific consultation needs and program development (e.g., rental assistance programs, down payment assistance programs, buy-down programs, etc.) may be helpful. Services can also include helping connect residents with service providers. This partnership can continue to expand local Affordable housing capacity.

¹ An Act granting a local option for a real estate transfer fee to fund affordable housing - Filed by Representative Connolly (HD.2857) and Senator Comerford (SD.1982).

Map of Subsidized Housing

Norfolk Housing Production Plan 2022, courtesy of JM Goldson for the Town of Norfolk



Housing Goals & Strategies

Goal H2: Expand the types of housing options that can be built in Norfolk in the context of existing infrastructure and housing need.

In the mid-twentieth century, suburban communities like Norfolk wrote zoning bylaws that severely restricted the types of housing that could be built. The majority of Norfolk is zoned primarily for single-family housing (R1, R2, and R3 districts), which has resulted in much of the former farmland and green space not covered under conservation easements to be carved into “estate” lot developments. With single-family homes being the only form of housing that could be built by-right, and as a result, housing production dramatically slowed and housing types became less diverse. With the lack of supply, housing costs have increased dramatically and the diversity of housing supply decreased. Communities across Massachusetts are trying to retune local zoning laws to better meet changing housing needs and preferences. In more recent years, Norfolk has employed a growth management strategy to retune local zoning laws to better meet changing housing needs and preferences and sustain a more diverse local economy. Norfolk has directed growth to Town Center – where the B-1 zoning permits mixed-use and more residential housing types – and in the southern part of Town near Pondville, Route 115/1A crossroads – where the C-4 mixed-use district and C-6 district allow planned multi-lot residential developments with smaller lot sizes. Most housing types beyond single-family detached still either require Special Permit or are outright prohibited.

The following strategies aim to gradually expand the types of housing that are available in Norfolk to enable current residents to have flexibility to downsize or move but stay in Town, while also hopefully being more welcoming to new residents who may have different housing needs than what exists in Norfolk today.

Strategy H2.1 **In preparation for future conversations about zoning amendments, development processes, or housing projects, the Planning Board and Norfolk Affordable Housing Trust should host community conversations about housing needs and the connections to other community goals like conservation, economic development, climate resiliency, etc.**

Feedback gathered throughout the planning process highlighted a divide within the community when it comes to housing issues. Residents who are likely to have their housing needs met are less likely to support housing work, while those who are less housing secure (like seniors living on fixed-incomes or younger residents hoping to buy their first home) want to see increased housing choices in Norfolk. The Town should partner with community groups to engage in more dialogue around housing access and what it means for the community as a whole.

It is critical to customize zoning regulations to allow for some housing growth in less dense areas and direct new production of “middle” and larger housing types to areas that are equipped with infrastructure, services, and complementary commercial uses (like Town Center, River’s Edge, and Route 115/1A). The following strategies will help Norfolk responsibly respond to the housing affordability and supply challenges, while also being mindful of the small-town feel and existing development patterns. Modernizing zoning will also support incremental expansion of rental options, something that is significantly in short supply in Norfolk.

See it in action: Community Conversations in Beverly, MA



Source: The Cabot, <https://thecabot.org/community/community-conversations/>

In the North Shore, a local theater (the Cabot) hosts a talk series called “[Community Conversations](#)” with screenings, speakers, and sometimes musical performances, covering a variety of timely, social topics. Community Conversations was started in May 2021, and has covered topics such as housing, homelessness among women’s veterans, isolation and mental health, and racism and workplace equity. In January 2024, a [talk was focused on Affordable Housing](#) and leaders from the community, including municipal staff from Beverly, joined.

Strategy H2.2

Continue to improve zoning regulations to remove barriers to housing production and retrofitting or repurposing existing buildings.

Reviewing regulations for residential conversions or use regulations for different housing types can remove unnecessary barriers to modest residential improvements or new construction. As household size and needs change, ensuring zoning is supportive of the adaptive reuse of the existing building stock – both existing large single-family homes but also non-residential buildings that could be repurposed into residential or mixed-use buildings – will also be an opportunity to create new affordable housing and smaller market-rate rental and ownership options.

Strategy H2.3

In proximity to Town Center, outlying B-1 area, Route 115/1A, River’s Edge, and other existing activity centers, streamline permitting and allow for more by-right housing developments to allow construction to move forward more quickly. Consider updating site plan review processes to inform site design while also allowing for more by-right approvals, particularly for middle housing types.

Particularly, Norfolk could benefit from allowing more “middle” housing types by right, such as conversion of single-family homes to two-family homes and accessory dwelling units.

Housing Goals & Strategies

Strategy H2.4 Review the existing Open Space Preservation subdivision regulations and add incentives to encourage this development type, particularly in the more rural parts of Norfolk, to conserve what green space and natural areas still remain.

Norfolk has adopted open space preservation subdivision regulations to encourage clustered subdivisions where homes are located closer together to preserve open space and natural features. However, open space subdivisions are allowed by Special Permit. To encourage these conservation-oriented subdivisions rather than conventional subdivisions that consume more land under current zoning (due to large minimum lot sizes), the Town should incentivize open space subdivisions by making them allowed by right, allowing more middle housing types, and offering more flexibility with dimensional regulations or density bonuses, particularly when Affordable homes are included.

Strategy H2.5 Explore use of the state's new 40Y Starter Home District program to expand options for first-time homebuyers and those looking to downsize but stay in Norfolk.

Already in Practice: Norfolk's Targeted Zoning Efforts

The **B-1 rezoning effort for Town Center**, approved in 2021, encourages more mixed-use and residential development near the train station. This zoning effort complements municipal investments in wastewater treatment plants to ensure new growth is adequately served. Focusing new housing growth in Town Center will also support existing and future businesses and locate more people near Town Hill where community events are a townwide draw.

New **multifamily zoning** adopted under a new state law (Section 3A MBTA Communities) further supports Norfolk's goals to strategically locate housing-supportive zoning near existing centers. Norfolk has inclusionary zoning, which will help ensure developments of a certain size will include Affordable Housing, helping the Town reach the 10% goal under the Subsidized Housing Inventory.

What is "middle" housing?

Middle housing refers to housing that provides diverse, often smaller, housing options along the spectrum of affordability and scale. Middle housing includes duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, townhomes, courtyard cottages, or cluster homes. In many communities, including Norfolk, there is very little supply of this kind of housing. To find out more about this and other smaller housing types, see MAPC's [Living Little](#) report.



Goal H3: Target housing production to strategic existing activity centers like Town Center, the immediate outlying B-1 area, River’s Edge, and Route 115/1A.

Consistently, Norfolk residents shared feedback throughout the master planning process about housing and new development. Many are concerned that new development will eliminate green space, increase traffic congestion, and overpopulate schools. Towns must accept a certain level of population and economic growth to maintain bottom lines. Master Plans can help manage growth and ensure it keeps pace with infrastructure and services. Norfolk has already been doing this by strategically zoning Town Center and working to expand water and sewer infrastructure to accommodate more growth near the commuter rail station, rather than in outlying areas where there is minimal transportation infrastructure beyond local roads and public infrastructure. The Master Plan reinforces the Town’s efforts for “strategic growth” by targeting new housing growth to Town Center, the immediate outlying B-1 area, and Route 115/1A areas.

Strategy H3.1 Continue pursuing infrastructure investments in Town Center to prepare for future development of vacant parcels.

Future growth in Norfolk is limited by environmental constraints, infrastructure capacity, and regulatory barriers. Norfolk has a long history of flooding due to the various wetlands and other water features. Stormwater infrastructure is limited, but new development and redevelopment can support this. Norfolk has never invested in a comprehensive municipal sewer system and town wells provide limited water capacity. The Town should continue to research non-traditional technologies for waste management systems, particularly for multi-unit and affordable housing developments. The Town is also positioned well to take advantage of site improvements that can help overall environmental conditions.

Strategy H3.2 Work with the owners of the Stop & Shop parcel to develop this site as mixed-use.

This site, if developed, could serve as a catalyst for other private investments in Town Center. The proximity to the commuter rail station and other amenities makes it well-suited for a mixed-use development that includes both market-rate and affordable housing, in addition to first-floor commercial uses.

Strategy H3.3 Market development opportunities to local and regional housing developers to pursue collaborative initiatives for housing production alongside other uses to foster more vibrant and appealing centers.

Community members emphasized the desire for well-designed, high-quality development in Town Center. The Town should work with developers who have demonstrated community-aligned projects to co-create a vision for redevelopment of key parcels in Town Center, the 115/1A area, and River’s Edge.

Housing Goals & Strategies

Goal H4: Improve housing stability (meaning residents feel confident they can stay put) and affordability for existing and future residents.

Feedback gathered from the Master Plan spring public forums and community-wide survey note that housing affordability and high property taxes have made it challenging for current residents to remain stable in their current housing. Norfolk does offer a tax abatement work program and income-based tax abatement options for senior residents, but additional programs to help seniors and households with lower or fixed incomes to deal with rising land values and property tax assessments should be pursued. Additionally, programs that can help lower-income residents retrofit homes to accommodate changing mobility needs may also be needed. About 5% of Norfolk's population has a disability, and as residents age, this will likely increase.

Strategy H4.1 **Continue establishing and funding programs that offer services for seniors who wish to age in place, such as small grants for accessibility improvements, critical repairs, and/or weatherization/energy efficiency.**

Already in Practice: Norfolk's Retire-In-Place Assistance (RIPA) Program

The Norfolk Affordable Housing Trust just started this new program to provide limited financial assistance to income-eligible seniors or people with disabilities to help repair or rehabilitate existing owner-occupied housing. Eligible households must earn less than 50% of the Area Median Income. Grants are limited to \$5,000 per applicant.

Strategy H4.2 **The Housing Authority and Affordable Housing Trust should work with the Council on Aging's outreach coordinator to increase awareness of resources available to support local seniors. Partner with the Council on Aging to offer training to help seniors retain housing stability.**

Today, several different Town departments work to connect residents with resources, but feedback received from Master Plan public forums indicates that the information is not shared broadly with the community. Particularly, older residents during the River's Edge workshop in June 2023 noted that they do not have consistent lines of communication from the Town and would like to be better informed of services, programs, and events.

**Strategy
H4.3**

Expand the opportunity for accessory dwelling units to offer options for seniors to age in place and have intergenerational living.

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) allow property owners flexibility to add an additional, smaller unit – either within their principal dwelling unit (e.g., basement apartment), in a garage or accessory building, or separate but in the rear of property. ADUs can help offset rising housing costs if used as a rental unit. They can also help seniors downsize but remain in town – through supporting intergenerational living or renting out the principal home to a caretaker or family. ADUs have minimal impacts on neighbors, especially in communities like Norfolk where lots are larger and offer more natural buffers. An ADU bylaw can restrict the use of the homes as short-term rentals; this would ensure ADUs expand rental housing options and remain open to those who want to make Norfolk their home.

**Strategy
H4.4**

Continue to expand the property tax work program that allows seniors with lower incomes to work for the town and receive up to \$1,500 in property tax credits. Consider increasing to \$2,000 and expanding the overall program budget to allow for greater participation.

In 2023, 19 people applied to the program, which is a small percentage of eligible seniors. This program can be paired with LIHEAP to help manage housing costs. In addition to finding ways to expand the program, the Town should advertise with local organizations to expand overall reach and awareness.





Transportation

The Transportation element analyzes the Town's current and proposed transportation system, focusing on major streets, public transportation, pedestrian circulation, bicycle infrastructure, parking, and integration of Complete Streets. Recommendations focus on improving the safety of all modes of transport and enhancing sustainable transportation modes, including pedestrian and bicycle routes and facilities, park-and-ride lots, public transit, and micro-mobility.

What are Norfolk residents saying about transportation?

"Providing charging stations in the town center/ MBTA lots could incentivize switch to EVs."

"The roads and sidewalks. We need more sidewalks."

"Enhancing town's infrastructure, including roads and sidewalks, as we expand the number of residents."

"I don't see any challenges for my family, but I could see that it might be hard for seniors as there is no local grocery store."

"People that live in Norfolk have cars - we do not need busses."

"We need more stop lights as there are many dangerous intersections."

"Connections to Needham, Milford, Wrentham."

"Speed enforcing, cars are traveling too fast."



"[Attracted to live in Norfolk because of] Commuter rail access to Boston, proximity to major amenities but small-town feel."

"There are no real transportation issues in this town, it's too small."

"More sidewalks! Streets like Cleveland are so dangerous. I always feel like I'm going to be run over when out for a run. My kids won't ride their bike because it's dangerous."

"Traffic lights on dangerous roads and streets."

"Better traffic/pedestrian flow at railroad."



Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist in the Town. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive of every sentiment. This is intended to help connect the plan to direct quotes provided by Norfolk residents.

Transportation Quick Facts



69%



8%



21%



Over
90%
of households own at least one vehicle

+19%
vehicle miles traveled



Less than
1/3
of Town streets
have sidewalks



Norfolk's transportation network consists of **85 miles of streets**.

Approximately **69% of Norfolk residents drive to work, with 8% taking transit and 21% working from home**. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, almost 80% of residents drove, 10% used transit, and 8% worked from home.

Over 90% of Norfolk households have at least one vehicle; however, there are between 50 to 100 zero vehicle households.

Despite the increase in residents working from home, **Norfolk has seen a 19% increase in vehicle miles traveled**, likely due to more people driving locally for daily needs and rebounding numbers of residents driving to work. The Town has also experienced a moderate increase in vehicular crashes.

Fewer than a third (33%) of the Town's streets have sidewalks, and many are unlinked and do not always connect to Town schools, parks, or other destinations.



Norfolk has an MBTA Commuter Rail Station in the Town Center on the Franklin Line. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic it was one of the busiest on the line, averaging over 8000 boardings on an average weekday in 2018. The MBTA estimates that as of October 2022 commuter rail ridership systemwide was about 76% of pre-pandemic levels.



GATRA offers two general transit service routes in Norfolk – the Medway Shuttle and Go United, an on-demand microtransit service to any place in Norfolk, Franklin, Wrentham, and Foxborough.

Norfolk's Transportation Toolbox to expand transportation choices includes:



- Norfolk adopted a Complete Streets policy and prioritization plan in 2019.
- The Norfolk Senior Center/Council on Aging (COA) recently acquired a van (on loan from GATRA) to offer its own on demand ride service for senior residents and residents with disabilities.
- Chapter 90 funding is authorized through Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 90, Section 34 providing funding to municipalities for the implementation of capital improvements on local public ways.



Aerial photo of power infrastructure in Norfolk. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Key Issues



The lack of pedestrian and bicycle connections means most trips, even short trips, must be made by automobile – resulting in increasing traffic, pollution, and creating difficulty for those who cannot drive or afford a personal vehicle (including children and teens, people with lower incomes, seniors). The requirement that most trips occur by driving also has a public health impact by reducing the opportunity for including active travel and healthy lifestyle into daily life.



There has been an **increase in the number of crashes** over the last few years; but few fatalities, and few pedestrian and bicycle crashes.



Despite the participation of some Town schools in MassDOT's Safe Routes to Schools program, **many students cannot safely walk or bike to school**, and many have difficulty with participating in after-school activities if they do not have friends or family who can drive them.



With fewer people commuting to Boston, there may be an opportunity to **re-consider land dedicated to commuter rail parking** within downtown Norfolk.



GATRA Go United on-demand transit can connect people to destinations in Norfolk and surrounding towns, but many residents may not be aware of the service, and feedback from residents indicates that services may not be meeting community needs.



According to the Town, **nearly half of its asphalt roadways are in poor condition**, and MassDOT notes that more than half of MassDOT managed streets in Norfolk are in Fair or Poor condition.



The Town continues to investigate off-street regional trails such as the Metacomet Greenway that would connect from Walpole through Norfolk to Wrentham along the old Metacomet railway right-of-way.

Transportation Goals & Strategies

Norfolk has been making the most of available resources in responding to transportation needs and challenges. The Town has had success in implementation. For example, it has installed sidewalks in locations where it is most possible and cost effective due to street right-of-way configurations. The following Goals and Strategies offer an opportunity to refine current efforts and try new initiatives to address current and future transportation issues. Many of these goals and strategies build on or reframe recommended projects from the 2019 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.

Goal T1: Expand walking, biking, and rolling connections to Town Center, schools, recreation spaces, and other key destinations.

The Norfolk community voiced broad and frequent support for strengthening the ability to get around town without a car. This is a long-term effort that will require incremental progress, but the result of these efforts is a potential generational transformation of the mobility and health options for the residents of Norfolk.

Strategy T1.1 Develop a Town-wide multi-modal access plan and prioritize missing links.

The Town has developed a list of recommended transportation improvement projects through the 2019 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. This plan is focused on improvements to the existing street network to benefit all types of travel. Future planning for walking and biking would benefit from a broader approach to strengthening connections. This approach would identify a plan for a comprehensive network of existing on-street and potential off-street connections. The off-street connections may use old rail-rights-of-way or utility corridors where a paved path for walking and biking could occur. This Town-wide multi-modal access plan would then prioritize the most impactful missing links.

Strategy T1.2 Increase safe and convenient connections to current and future multi-use trails and paths.

In locations where future multi-use trails and paths may occur, the Town should explore opportunities for safe and convenient connections to them. These connections may occur through existing Town properties, existing Town sidewalks, or by partnering with abutting private property owners where the property has the potential for a public easement and connection that would not be disruptive to the use of the property.

Strategy T1.3 Incorporate Complete Streets elements into all roadway projects and explore opportunities for additional improvements through MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program.

The Complete Streets Prioritization Plan completed in 2019 noted the lack of a connected pedestrian and bicycle network in the community. Over three-fourths (27 of 35) of the recommended projects in the Complete Street Plan addressed pedestrian deficiencies. All new roadway investments should also include improvements for other types of travel to support the incremental improvement of a Town-wide multi-modal network.

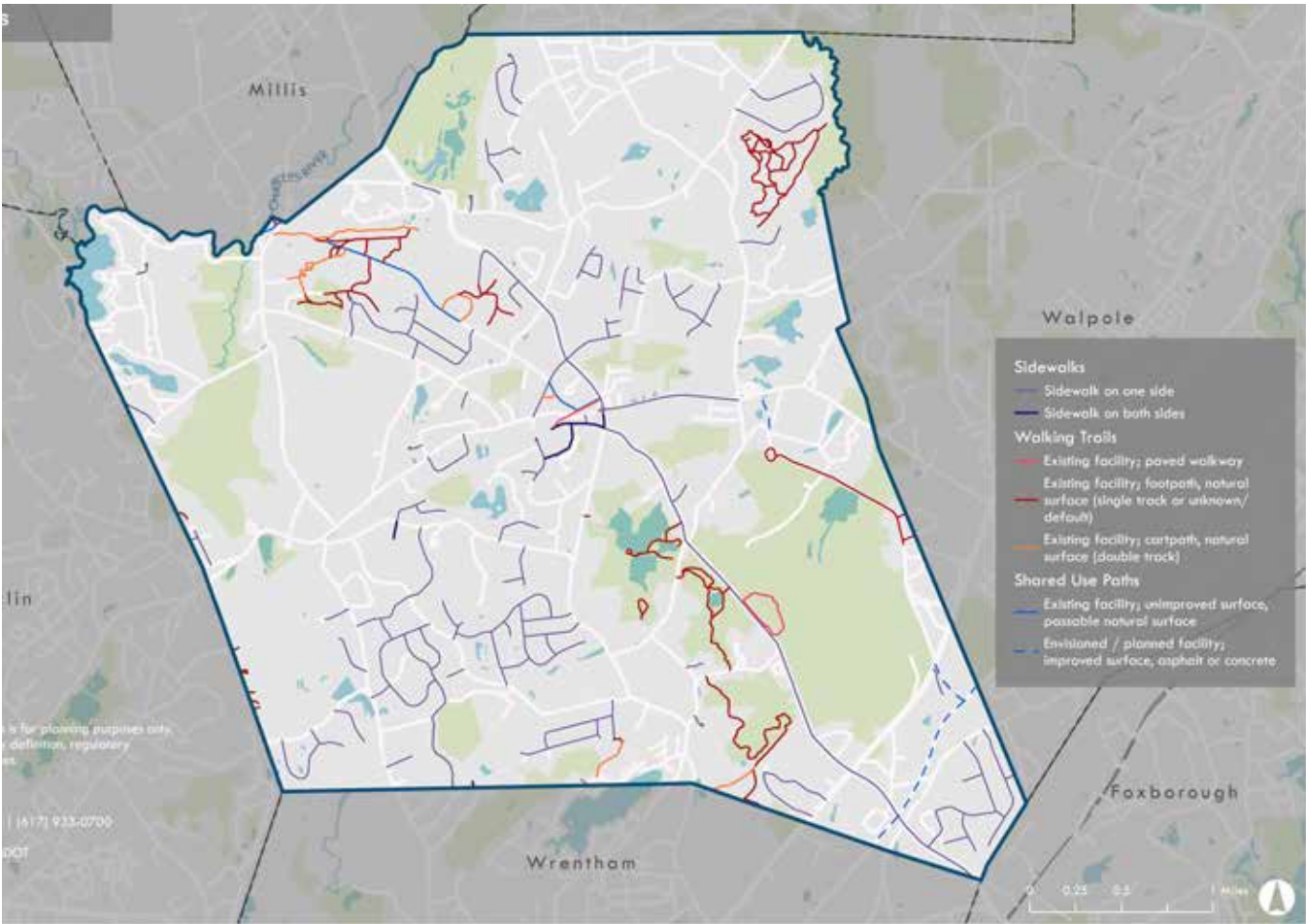
Strategy T1.4 Enforce current bicycle parking requirements in the Town Center and require bicycle racks at public parks and other publicly accessible sites and buildings.

As a network of connected paths expands and safe and convenient bicycling in Town becomes more routine and normalized, places to park bicycles will become more important than they are today. The capacity for safe, secure, and convenient places to park a bicycle should be increased at the destinations that are likely to be the most frequent destinations. These destinations are likely to include Town Center (near Town Hill, the Library, and Town Hall), parks and open space resources, and schools.

Strategy T1.5 Ensure future development prioritizes walking, biking, rolling and ADA access and infrastructure in and around town.

Every investment in the Town, whether focused on a public right-of-way, a private property, or another asset, has an opportunity to strengthen walking and biking in Town. A plan for safe and convenient travel without a car should be integrated into development plans, particularly for large properties, or subdivisions. Connections to nearby (current or future) components of the town-wide multi-modal network should be integrated into the site planning.

Pedestrian Facilities Map



Transportation Goals & Strategies

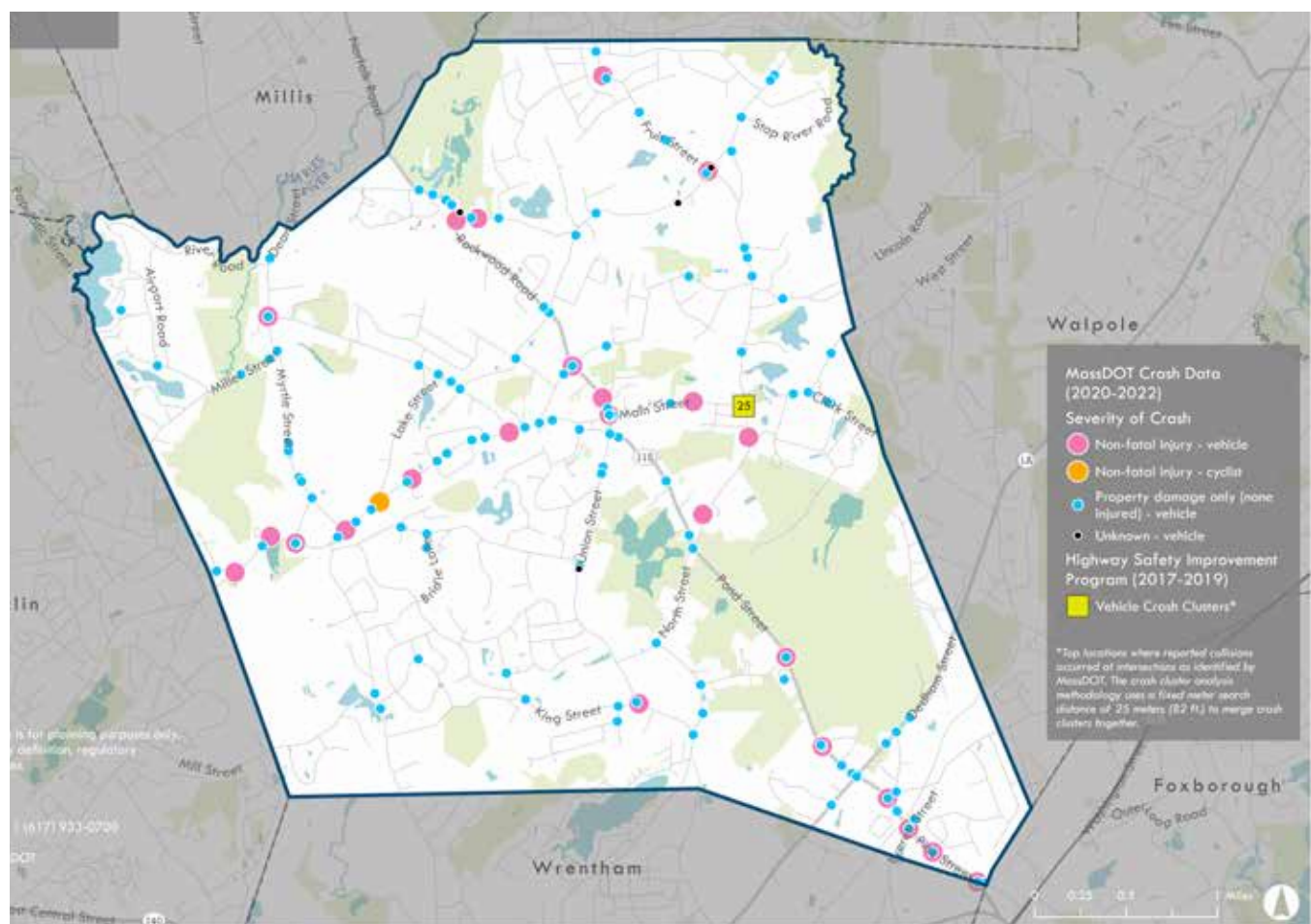
Goal T2: Increase street safety for all - especially for more vulnerable residents (seniors, children, and people with disabilities).

This goal is more directly aligned with the Town's list of recommended transportation improvement projects through the 2019 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. The improvements focus on the existing street network with improvements that will increase street safety, reduce crashes, and reduce or eliminate traffic fatalities on local roads. If streets are made safe for the most vulnerable residents, street safety will be improved for all residents.

Strategy T2.1 **Implement traffic calming measures, upgrade signal and lighting technology, and provide better signage and enforcement to control speeding Town-wide – including considering speed limits town-wide and installation of radar speed signs that display the speed limit and speed of travel of passing vehicles.**

The severity of vehicular crashes and probability of severe injury is directly related to speed of travel. Reducing speed of travel is primarily dependent of roadway design and enforcement.

Mapping Crashes



Transportation Goals & Strategies

Strategy T2.2 **Identify and implement quick build projects – including more visible/prominent crosswalks – at high crash locations and/or locations with significant pedestrian activity.**

Quick build projects prioritize responsiveness, experimentation, and implementation to expedite relatively modest investments that will improve safety in critical locations. These solutions should be prioritized based on annual review of vehicular crash data, particularly focusing on locations of crashes that involved pedestrians or bicycles.

Strategy T2.3 **Work with MassDOT’s Safe Routes to School program to implement improvements for students, parents, and staff to walk, bike, and roll to school.**

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a free, federally funded program administered by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). The program works to increase safe walking, biking, and rolling among public elementary, middle, and high school students. It uses a collaborative, community-focused approach that bridges the gap between health and transportation by increasing safety for students walking and biking, helping students stay active and build independence, boosting attendance and reducing tardiness, and decreasing traffic congestion and improving air quality.

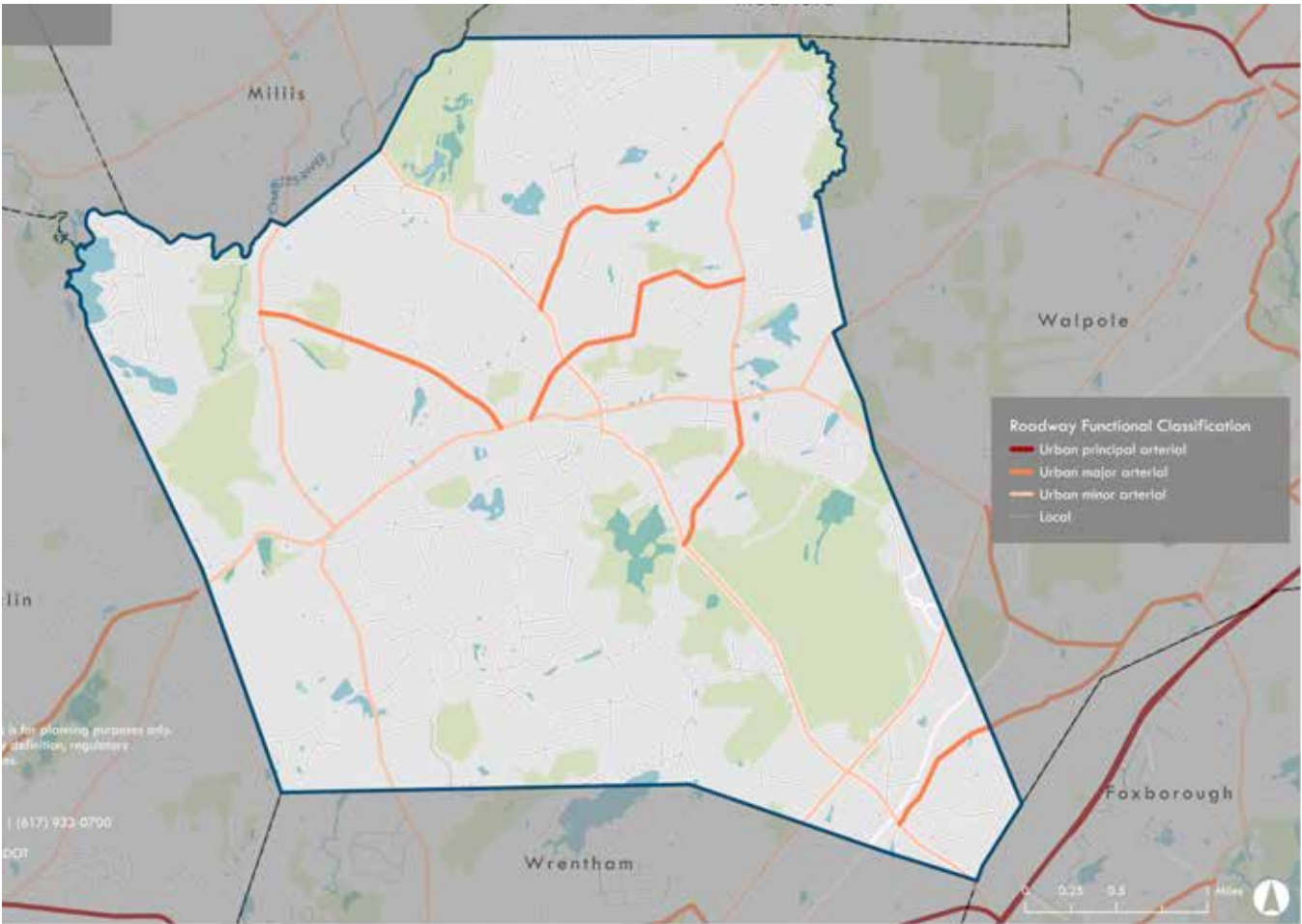
Strategy T2.4 **Use the results of the forthcoming regional Vision Zero action plan to prioritize and fund roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian safety improvements.**

The regional Vision Zero action plan is federally funded and managed at a regional level but will result in recommendations that will be useful to Norfolk. The Plan will include analysis of crash data to identify trends and high-risk corridors, engagement with communities disproportionately impacted by roadway safety issues, and the formulation of evidence-based, data-driven policy and project recommendations. The final Vision Zero Action Plan, with an anticipated completion date of June 2025, will provide a framework that will unlock additional safety and program implementation funds for municipalities.

Regional Vision Zero Action Plan

- The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is creating a Vision Zero Action Plan for 97 cities and towns in the Boston Region. The work is funded by a Safe Streets and Roads for all planning grant from the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT).
- The Plan will adopt the Safe System approach that deems deaths and serious injuries unacceptable, focuses on safety for people, acknowledges that humans make mistakes, and builds redundancies to prevent severe crashes.

Road Classification Map



Transportation Goals & Strategies

Goal T3: Prioritize funding for street and sidewalk maintenance.

There are many demands on the Town's annual budget. The annual budget for all street repairs and construction (including sidewalks, crosswalks, and ramps) is approximately \$500,000. Most of this annual budget comes from the Town's Chapter 90 funding allocation from the Commonwealth. The Norfolk Department of Public Works (DPW) has stated in the Fiscal Year 2023 Capital Improvement Plan that the Town needs to significantly increase its commitment to road repair to bring its streets and roads to an acceptable level of condition. The Town's current roadway repair backlog is over \$17 million (not including drainage or sidewalks), in addition to \$33 million needed to bring the Town's existing sidewalks, curb ramps, and crossings to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act.

Strategy T3.1 Develop a transportation network “master plan” that includes an asset management plan for streets and sidewalks to identify areas in poor condition and to prioritize repairs accordingly.

The Town maintains a pavement management program that identifies the condition index of each street. This could be expanded to include sidewalk and off-street path conditions as well. Based on this condition index and a prioritization based on metrics such as impact, traffic volume, and equity define a multi-year investment plan to systemically improve street and sidewalk conditions. Use the specific list of improvements to advocate for additional share of the annual budget.

Strategy T3.2 Develop a town policy to construct sidewalks, pathways, or other street improvements in areas with highest crashes and in routes used by most vulnerable users (e.g. walking routes to schools).

Based on MassDOT Crash Data, the Town has one vehicle crash cluster. A top location where reported collisions occurred at intersections as identified by MassDOT. This Crash Cluster is at the Intersection of Main Street, Seekonk Street, and Needham Street. Other street segments with higher crash frequency are Pine Street between Route 1A and the town line and Main Street west of Town Center. The Town should incorporate a procedure to continue to monitor crash data, identify locations of concern, and explore safety modifications in these locations. Data should continue to be reviewed after improvements to determine if crash frequency and severity has been reduced.

Strategy T3.3 Combine Complete Streets roadway redesign projects with repaving/ maintenance efforts to decrease overall costs and accomplish changes faster.

Consider every repaving and street maintenance investment as an opportunity to advance Complete Streets efforts in the Town. For example, if restriping a segment of roadway is needed. Consider modifications to the striping that would enhance safety for pedestrians or bicyclists such as narrowing travel lanes, adding a bicycle lane (if paved width allows), or adding shared lane markings that indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles.

**Strategy
T3.4**

Use data sources such as MAPC’s Local Access Score to prioritize locations for investment.

Engage with available data sources to support prioritization discussion and decision-making. The Local Access Score was developed to answer the question – if this were a good place to walk or bike, would many people find it a useful route? It provides a robust, quantitative estimate of current or potential roadway utility for walkers and bikers. An active transportation network utility score is provided for each segment of roadway. It indicates how useful that street segment is for connecting residents with schools, shops, restaurants, parks, and transit stations.

**Strategy
T3.5**

Develop a modified participatory budgeting process to allocate street/sidewalk funds.

Invite the broader community to provide feedback on the prioritization of street and sidewalk investments to assist in the allocation of limited funds. Determine how this feedback will be incorporated into the decision-making process and be transparent about other factors that will be used to prioritize investments.

Transportation Goals & Strategies

Goal T4: Decrease dependence on single-occupancy vehicles and increase transit connections, particularly for seniors and residents who cannot drive.

Most Norfolk residents drive for daily needs. Approximately 69% of Norfolk residents drive to work most days. Norfolk drivers average driving 27 miles per day. According to US Census data, over 90% of Norfolk households have at least one vehicle. About 50% of Norfolk households have two vehicles. Giving more residents safe and convenient options for travel benefits drivers and non-drivers alike. Less dependence on vehicles results in less congestion on roadways. Viable alternatives must also be available for residents who cannot drive. It is estimated that between 50 to 100 households in Norfolk do not own a vehicle.

Strategy T4.1 Increase awareness of transit options amongst town residents, especially those who do not have access to a car or do not drive, including seniors, people with disabilities, children, and people who have low incomes.

The MBTA Commuter Rail stop at Town Center is a well-known feature of the Town, but it may not provide the type of transit that some residents need for daily travel. Greater Attleboro and Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) offers on demand services for Norfolk residents aged 60 and over and to persons with a disability. This service is curb-to-curb with access offered within Foxborough, Franklin, Norfolk, and Wrentham. The Norfolk Senior Center/Council on Aging is well positioned to increase awareness of this service and other options available.

Strategy T4.2 Encourage the Norfolk Council on Aging to evaluate with GATRA unmet transit needs and determine what new transit and shuttle options may be necessary.

The needs of the community do shift, and unmet needs should be collected from residents and analyzed for patterns and gaps in the transit services that are currently provided. The Norfolk Council on Aging does provide some of its own on demand services to supplement GATRA. Communicating gaps to GATRA, advocating for services that align with the needs of residents, or exploring new models of transportation assistance should also occur when misalignments are observed. For example, most medical appointments are to facilities outside of Norfolk and create dispatching and scheduling challenges for the COA and GATRA.

Strategy T4.3 Improve walking and biking connections to areas with higher utilization of GATRA transit service and areas where seniors and school-aged children would want to access, such as parks, restaurants, and retail.

In 2021, the Town was awarded a state grant to create a senior walking district with new benches at the Senior Center and Town Hill including crosswalk and safety improvements. The model provided by this type of effort could be expanded to provide similar improvements in other parts of the Town.

**Strategy
T4.4**

Explore strategies for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) at new and existing developments that reduce the provision of excess parking, promote ridesharing/carsharing options, and promote walking and biking connections to transit.

Currently, there are no known employer-sponsored shuttles operating in Norfolk. The Town is also not an official member of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) that coordinates carpooling, vanpools, or operates shuttles. However, the Neponset Valley TMA includes Norfolk in the list of towns it serves. In December 2021, MAPC produced a Neponset Valley Route 1/1A Corridor Mobility Study for the TMA. Norfolk was included in the study area and the study recommended new and expanded microtransit services in the area. As employment clusters continue to add activity and concentrations of employees these types of services should be considered as part of the growth.

**Strategy
T4.5**

Work with MBTA staff to explore opportunities for expanded commuter rail service and relocating the current commuter rail station as part of future “regional rail” models.

The utility of the Town’s commuter rail services would be enhanced by more frequent service that could better accommodate trips outside of the traditional workday commuting patterns. This type of enhancement is even more necessary with changes to commuter and travel patterns that persist post-pandemic. The disruption caused to Town Center with the closing of Rockwood Road is also a challenge for traffic and congestion. This disruption would increase with future potential increases in service. If momentum builds toward a “regional rail” model for commuter rail, the Town should advocate for these investments to benefit the Franklin Line.

**Strategy
T4.6**

Strategy T4.6: Continue to monitor traffic and congestion patterns and explore solutions when issues are identified.

In addition to monitoring crash locations, traffic and congestion patterns should continue to be monitored Town-wide. Aside from the congestion associated with the commuter rail train, no other current persistent traffic or congestion patterns were identified in this process.

Transportation Goals & Strategies

Goal T5: Revise Town Zoning and Parking ordinances to encourage more activity and density of use in existing activity centers.

The best long-term strategy to manage traffic, congestion, and transportation infrastructure while encouraging sustainable forms of travel is to increase focus on the development patterns of the Town. Additional growth in the Town should be focused more on the redevelopment and increased density of properties in existing centers of activity. A research study for the Bureau of Transportation Statistics found that 28% of all trips in the United States by all modes of transportation were less than 1 mile. By adding more activities, housing, and safe sidewalks in existing centers, more of these short trips are likely to be completed without a car. To encourage this future, the Town must continue to revise its zoning and parking requirements.

Strategy T5.1 Track parking use data and consider reducing or eliminating parking minimums from future development and move to a data-driven decision about parking needs.

Track parking utilization for a variety of days and times for recent development projects in Norfolk that would provide data for future development. The actual utilization rates of parking could be used to inform parking requirements in the zoning bylaw. MAPC has collected this type of data for nearly 200 multifamily housing development projects throughout the region through its [Perfect Fit Parking Initiative](#).

Strategy T5.2 Assess parking utilization in large parking lots, including MBTA commuter rail station lots, and commuter rail usage patterns to optimize use of land, better understand opportunities for transit-oriented land uses and redevelopment, and to explore options for improved management.

Coordinate with the MBTA to determine if new commuter rail station parking data will be gathered and made available. If not, explore the collection of parking utilization data at a variety of assumed peak demand conditions. In its simplest form, data collection involves counting cars in each of the commuter rail parking lots at specific times on specific days and comparing this count to the total inventory of commuter rail parking spaces. Use this data to explore options for efficient management or use of the properties with the MBTA. Coordinate and work with MBTA staff to conduct passenger counts and intercept surveys at the Norfolk MBTA commuter rail station to better understand current commuter rail usage patterns.

Strategy T5.3 Explore high volume event parking techniques to optimize events with high demand circulation and parking.

The parking supply of a district does not need to accommodate the peak demand. This is particularly true if the increased parking supply reduces the walkability of the district. The techniques already employed at town events such as Norfolk Community Day could be employed to optimize nearby temporary parking resources while allowing large crowds to participate.

**Strategy
T5.4**

Analyze trip generation impacts of new development and implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips.

Gathering post occupancy trip generation, traffic impact, and user surveys could help to inform future requirements, mitigate potential impacts, and encourage alternatives to driving. This type of data gathering, and analysis could be required of property owners for larger scale developments that may produce traffic impacts.



Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Transportation Goals & Strategies

Goal T6: Continue to make updates to Norfolk’s infrastructure to meet current and future transportation technology demands (EVs, AVs, E-Bikes, “sharing” options, etc.).

Transportation technology will continue to evolve. The Town’s public infrastructure and development requirements should continue to evolve to support future technology. Investments should be cost-effective and leverage incentive programs, or outside funding sources.

Strategy T6.1: For all new development projects, incorporate electric charging and/or electric vehicle ready options in parking plans.

For larger new development or redevelopment projects, particularly commercial or light industrial, incorporate requirements for a minimum requirement of parking spaces that are provided with electric vehicle charging. Provide guidance on the location of electric vehicle charging equipped parking spots.

Strategy T6.2: Increase options for electric vehicle charging in public spaces.

MassDOT Vehicle Census data shows that about 4% of registered vehicles in Norfolk are hybrid or electric vehicles. At popular Town facilities such as the Town Library, Town Hall, or Pond Street Athletic Complex, explore locations where the location of current electrical utilities and electrical capacity would support electric vehicle charging. Identify external funding sources that may be used to install charging stations in these locations.



(Left) “EV charging station” by OregonDOT, licensed under CC BY 2.0.

(Right) “EV Charging Stations” by Open Grid Scheduler / Grid Engine, CC0 1.0.

Strategy T6.3 Increase education and outreach for residents about the benefits and opportunities for electric vehicles and micro-mobility devices, including e-bikes and e-scooters.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, all forms of electric vehicles (EVs) can help improve fuel economy, lower fuel costs, and reduce emissions. According to J.D. Power the average American spends between \$150 to \$200 on gas every month. If the Town begins to make progress on a connected network of walking and biking paths, then options such as an e-bike become an even more budget-friendly alternative for local mobility.

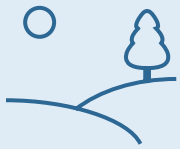
Strategy T6.4 Monitor traffic impacts of navigation apps and respond to address potential issues with cut-through traffic or other impacts.

Future technology changes may also impact the routes drivers take. Navigation apps have not produced negative impacts observed in Norfolk, but traffic patterns should continue to be monitored. Peak commute times or congestion from events, such as those hosted in Foxborough at Gillette Stadium, can create circumstances where navigation apps begin to push large amounts of traffic to streets that don't typically see high traffic volumes. If becomes observed as a regular occurrence in specific locations, then solutions may need to be explored.

Strategy T6.5 Monitor autonomous vehicle adoption and respond to future local impacts if they emerge.

Widespread autonomous vehicle adoption is likely to remain delayed with technical and other challenges. However, when adoption does begin its impacts on transportation patterns and transportation infrastructure could be dramatic. For example, in the nearer term robotaxis may be the closest to market adoption and could potentially improve on-demand mobility services. In the longer term widespread adoption could change the need for parking at destinations and increase the importance of curb-side drop-off space.





Open Space, Recreation, & Sustainability

The Open Space, Recreation, and Sustainability Element provides a plan for protecting and enhancing the Town's natural and recreational spaces. Strategies outline how Norfolk can continue to provide quality open spaces and recreation facilities and programming. Strategies also identify ways to make Norfolk more sustainable into the future.

What are Norfolk residents saying about Open Space, Recreation, and Sustainability?

Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive in any way. This is intended to help connect the plan to verbatim comments provided by Norfolk residents.

"Additional inclusive recreational programs for children with special needs"

"Dog accessible walking areas"

"Passive recreation. Sidewalks. We have plenty of playgrounds and ball fields, but not many areas for hiking with a dog."

"Better community gardens"

"Need for indoor recreation facilities"

"Improvement to existing rec areas- lights, bathroom facilities, turf field, etc to keep our programs competitive with other towns"

"[Norfolk has] great parks, plenty of playgrounds, etc."

"We are the ONLY town in the area without Pickleball courts. The recreation department has refused to line one or two tennis courts in the meantime. This is the fastest growing sport in America and we have a large population of people who play"

"Leverage state opportunities for conservation while also increasing trails and sidewalks. We know that when people are out of their cars they patronize small businesses more often. We don't need to be a pass through town."

"Would love to see a splash pad or swimming pool for residents. Would love to see improved signage and trail maps/markers for town land/parks that aren't well-known but are "hidden gems."

"Need for recreation for all ages, including seniors (pickleball)"

"[My vision for Norfolk is] a beautiful town with green spaces abound! Let's show surrounding towns like Walpole what responsible development looks like. We need to preserve the natural beauty and historic places of this town."

Quick Facts



28% public and private open space

Public and private open space in Norfolk makes up approximately 28% of the town's total area.

1,768.4
acres

permanently protected

Approximately 1,768.4 acres or 17.9% of Norfolk's open space is permanently protected.



3 rivers
2 brooks

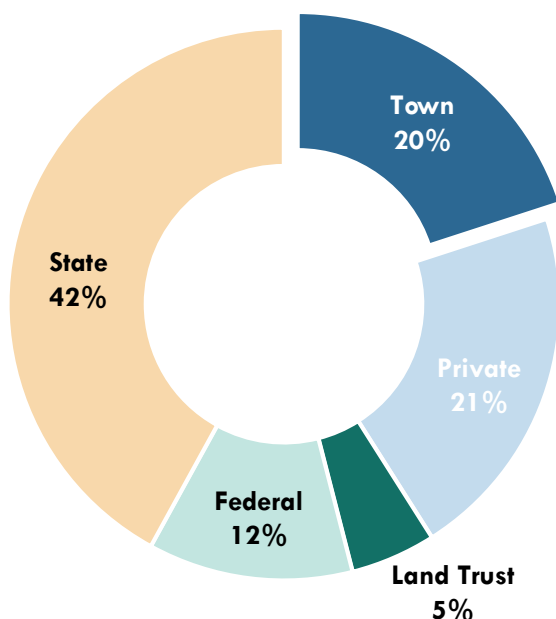
Water resources are a significant aspect of Norfolk's landscape, the Charles River, Stop River, Mill River, Stony Brook, and Cress Brook traverse the town.



Proposed Metacomet Greenway offers Norfolk an opportunity to be part of a larger regional trail network.

Community Preservation Act funding has secured and expanded open space and recreation amenities.

Norfolk is home to Mass Audubon's Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and Bristol Blake State Reservation



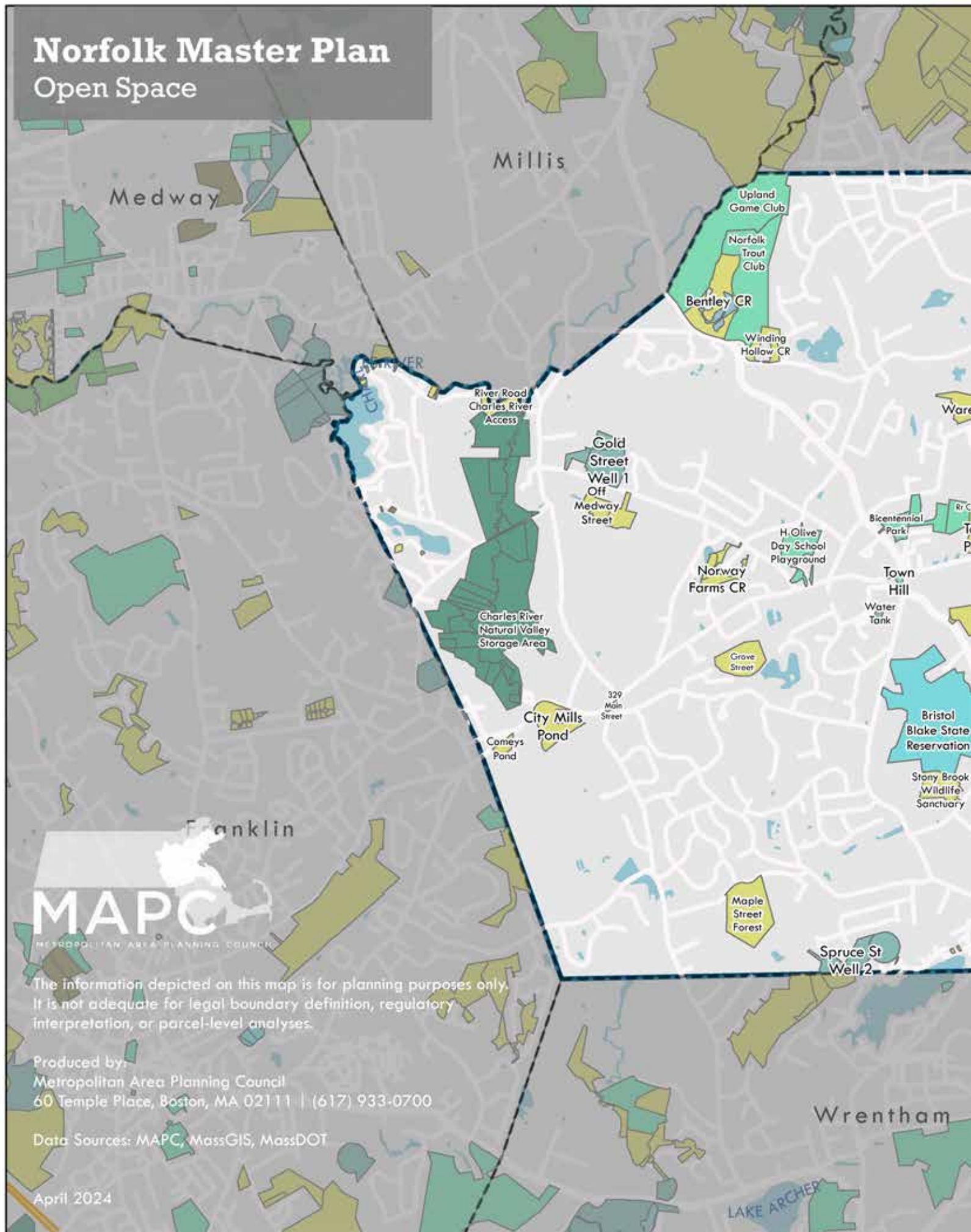
Norfolk Open Space Land Ownership



Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary
Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Norfolk Master Plan

Open Space



MAPC

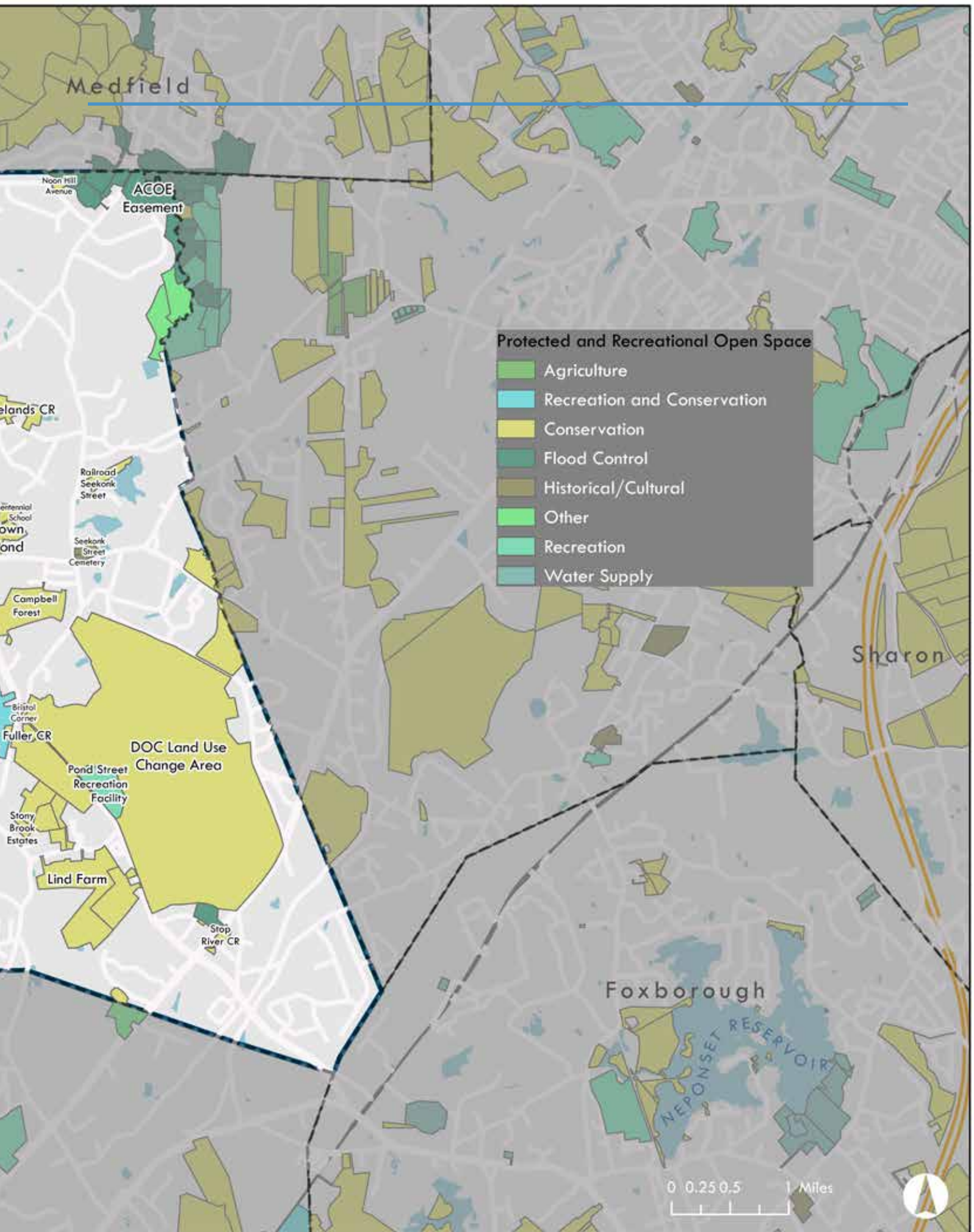
METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL

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

April 2024



Key Issues



Residents are overall very happy with the recreation offerings in Norfolk, but there are **opportunities to diversify the facilities** to better serve all segments of the population. Improvements to **make recreational facilities and programs more accessible and inclusive** should be a priority over the next ten years. Improvements for people with physical disabilities are needed in key places, like Town Hill and Pond Street Recreation Complex. Having a diverse offering of programs for residents of all ranges continues to be a challenge. More modest improvements – like permanent restroom facilities or lights for evening events – were top of mind when talking to residents through the planning process.



Water supply and water quality are two of the most critical challenges for Norfolk. Norfolk's unique positioning within the Charles River Watershed and amidst important aquifers requires more attention towards **low impact development principles** to ensure the built environment does not negatively impact water resources. Furthermore, **redevelopment of existing sites** can improve water quality through upgrades to stormwater drainage systems and inclusion of green infrastructure.



The increased likelihood of future drought and strong storms adds to the vulnerability of the town's **reliance on rainwater to recharge the aquifer**. Acquisition of new open space and conservation lands – including new conservation easements on privately owned lands – can promote overall resiliency and protect the most vulnerable areas.



Norfolk should **continue to provide recreational and social activities, with a focus on making these activities accessible by walking or biking**. This is particularly important for young people who may not have access to a car and older residents who want to find ways to stay active as they age.



Invasive plants and insects have damaged and, in some cases, replaced, native species. Attention to planting requirements for both private and public developments can help restore the natural ecosystem and reintroduce native species.



Norfolk has a variety of open space and conservation lands, under public and private ownership. The Town should continue to find ways to **increase public access to existing protected open space**. The Community Preservation Act can support acquisition of lands that can increase public access.



Integrating open space and recreation with historic and cultural expression can enrich the overall recreation offerings for Norfolk residents, including attracting new users who may be more interested in arts and culture alongside nature.

Norfolk's Open Space, Recreation, and Sustainability Toolbox includes:



- The Norfolk Conservation Commission protects the Town's natural resources and oversees local wetlands regulations. The Commission also pursues acquisition of open space.
- The Recreation Department manages Norfolk's recreation facilities and offers a wide range of recreation programming, often partnering with other Town departments and boards, as well as community partners. The Recreation Commission guides the Department's work.
- The Stormwater Division of Public Works, which implements the Stormwater Management Bylaw, adopted in 2007 and amended in 2021. The Town is actively finding ways to integrate low impact development principles and green infrastructure to better manage stormwater runoff and protect water resources.
- Norfolk has adopted a Scenic Roads Bylaw to advance tree protection.
- Norfolk has adopted the Community Preservation Act, which expands funding available for open space and recreation improvements and new land acquisitions.



Aerial photo of natural landscape in Norfolk. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Open Space Goals & Strategies

Norfolk has an active Recreation Department that provides a wide range of activities and programming for Norfolk residents. Residents are happy overall with the Recreation offerings but see opportunities for more open space conservation, continuing to diversify recreation opportunities, environmental stewardship, and overall environmental sustainability. Several different players impact Norfolk's natural environment and recreation – from the Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Community Preservation Committee to the Recreation Commission and Recreation Department. The following Goals and Strategies offer an opportunity refine current efforts and try new initiatives to continue to improve open space, recreation, and sustainability. Many of these goals and strategies reinforce or build on policies from the 2017 Norfolk [Open Space and Recreation Plan](#).

Goal OS1: Continue to improve and expand park and open space access for all.

Norfolk's Recreation Department, Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee, and other partners work to ensure Norfolk residents have adequate parks, recreation facilities, and open space. Residents noted that recreation amenities should continue to evolve to best serve residents of all ages and abilities and continue to make existing facilities more accessible to people with disabilities.

Strategy OS 1.1 Strive for universal access and inclusivity and seek opportunities to go beyond minimum ADA requirements and the Massachusetts Accessibility Code (521 CMR) to create equal access for all community members.

Some facilities, like Campbell Forest, have some ADA accessible trails and facilities, but other prominent recreation spaces lack adequate ADA access. For example, Town Hill is not designed for universal access. The Town should continue to inventory and prioritize ADA improvements for existing parks and open spaces to ensure residents of all ages and abilities can enjoy them.

Strategy OS 1.2 Continue to evaluate the need for different park and recreational facilities based on geographic distribution, age distribution, and current and future population on a regular basis.

Parks and recreation facilities are typically divided into two main categories based on activities and amenities offered. Active recreation facilities encourage physical activity such as sports, hiking, and biking. Passive recreation facilities are designed for more relaxed activities like picnicking, bird watching, and being surrounded by natural settings. Both types serve different segments of the population, and while Norfolk does have both of these types of amenities, public feedback noted that more passive recreation could better serve older residents and people with physical disabilities. Norfolk should continue to assess how its recreation facilities serve different segments of the population and unique user needs, looking to guidance from the National Recreation and Park Association for emerging best practices.

Strategy OS 1.3 **Invest in sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, streetscapes, trails, and wayfinding that improve safety and provide better walking and biking connectivity between parks, recreational assets, and open space.**

Norfolk residents expressed a strong desire to be able to walk or bike to parks and recreation fields. As multimodal improvements continue to be made, Norfolk should prioritize segments that connect more neighborhoods to these facilities. Safety improvements are especially important for older residents and young people.

Strategy OS 1.4 **Upgrade and expand local and regional trail corridors, to provide interconnectivity between parks and open space and increase access along the Charles River and other water bodies.**

Norfolk is surrounded by many different regional trail networks, but few traverse through Norfolk today. At the southeastern corner of town, the Metacomet Greenway trail is proposed to run just south of, but parallel to, Route 1A. The Town should explore partnerships with regional trail organizations and neighboring communities to achieve this transformation.

Leveraging Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds

Norfolk has employed CPA funding towards open space and projects, working closely with the Norfolk Recreation Commission and Conservation Commission to recommend projects. Some projects include:

- Land acquisition for open space around Highland Lake, Gumps Farm
- Town Hill improvements, including walk ways and signage
- Recreation field improvements
- Funding for creating an Open Space and Recreation Plan
- Weed control program to restore Mirror Lake

Open Space Goals & Strategies

Goal OS2: Continue to provide high quality parks, open spaces, recreation facilities, amenities, and programs that serve all residents.

Norfolk's open space system encompasses over 2,000 acres of public and privately owned land, including parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, school grounds and recreational facilities, community gardens, conservation land, cemeteries, and memorials. Norfolk's Recreation Department is actively evolving its programming offerings on these sites to best serve Norfolk residents. Town projects have worked to restore Town-owned lakes and ponds. The following strategies position the Town to continue to invest in parks and programming, while also evaluating how current and future amenities can best meeting the evolving needs of Norfolk residents, today and into the future.



Photo of nature trail, courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

**Strategy
OS 2.1**

Invest in multi-purpose parks and public spaces that can support flexible uses.

The Pond Street Recreation Complex and Norfolk Community Park at Rockwood Road are Norfolk's two major Town-run parks. Pond Street encompasses just over 20 acres. Facilities include six playing fields, volleyball, tennis and basketball courts, a skate park, a tot lot, a sheltered picnic area, portable restrooms, and a $\frac{3}{4}$ mile walking trail. The Rockwood Park is 17 acres and includes a tot lot playground, walking trails, a community garden, and portable restrooms. Both of these parks are great examples of multi-purpose facilities that offer a range of activities. Public feedback supports continuing to invest in these spaces, through improvements like permanent restrooms, accessibility improvements, lights for evening activities, etc. Norfolk should continue to evaluate properties as they become available to create a new multi-purpose park, particularly in parts of town that are less likely to be able to walk or bike to Pond Street or Rockwood Park.

**Strategy
OS 2.2**

Continue to assess and plan for the different recreation needs to support robust youth, adult, and senior programming across multiple categories – active recreation, nature-based, and arts and culture.

Feedback gathered from residents noted that the Recreation Department provides a variety of youth programming through its sports-related offerings. There is more opportunity for growing programming for adults and older residents. Norfolk should partner with the Stony Brook Nature Center and Wildlife Sanctuary to offer nature-based programming. State-owned and managed facilities often have greater access to resources and can help offset costs for shared programming. The Cultural Council could work with the Recreation Department to integrate arts and culture into parks and open space.



Pond Street Complex



Rockwood Park

Open Space Goals & Strategies

Goal OS3: Protect and enhance Norfolk's natural resources and environmental systems.

In addition to the active and passive recreation sites, Norfolk's open space system includes several conservation areas that are managed by the Conservation Commission. These areas are usually undeveloped tracts of land that are managed with an emphasis on their aesthetic and natural resource values. Although some of these sites may provide opportunities for passive recreation, their primary purpose and use is environmental protection. These sites are shown in the below table. Strategies identify opportunities to partner with private and non-profit landowners to advance conservation goals and protect Norfolk's environmental quality.

| Site | Location | Acres |
|--|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Lind Farm Conservation Area | Marshall Street | 64 |
| Pondville Conservation Land | 78 Pond Street | 26 |
| Campbell Forest | 49 North Street / Alice Avenue | 42 |
| Kenneth Wood Conservation Land (Town Pond) | Main Street | 7 |
| Bird Farm Conservation Land | off Main Street | 25 |
| Grove Street Conservation Land | Between Grove Street and MBTA tracks | 22 |
| Maple Street Conservation Land | off Maple Street | 36 |
| Tails End Farm (Open Space) | off Maple Street | 38 |
| Old Mill Meadow Conservation Land | off Old Mill Road Extension | 5 |
| River Road Fishing & Boat Launch | River Road | 7 |
| TOTAL | | 272 |

Strategy OS 3.1 Enhance partnerships with neighboring municipalities, the Charles River Watershed Association and other nonprofits and external agencies to protect and improve Norfolk's surface and groundwater resources.

Norfolk already partners with the Charles River Watershed Association to do annual river cleanups, as one example. Several other non-profit organizations exist to protect and enhance the environmental quality of regional resources that traverse through Norfolk. Norfolk's Conservation Agent and the Conservation Commission should continue to build these relationships.

**Strategy
OS 3.2**

Protect Norfolk’s unique ecosystems and increase the diversity of habitats for critical species by partnering with allied agencies and private landowners.

Historically, Norfolk emerged as an agricultural community because of the town’s open rolling landscape, rich soils, and proximity to water resources. Approximately 45% of Norfolk’s land area is considered “prime farmland” according to the US Department of Agriculture. Even more of Norfolk’s land area is considered prime forest land (97%), meaning that land has soil capable of growing wood at a rate of 85 cubic feet or more per acre.

The [Massachusetts Chapter 61 programs](#) incentivize landowners of working forests, agricultural lands, and conservation lands to keep these areas undeveloped through reduced property taxes. These lands provide valuable public benefits and cost less for the Town to serve. The Conservation Commission is charged with keeping track of where Chapter 61 lands exist in Norfolk today and developing relationships with property owners to ensure that when Chapter 61 lands lose or rescind the designation, the Town has an opportunity to purchase and protect the lands in perpetuity. All Chapter 61 programs give the Town a first refusal option (sometimes referred to as the right of first refusal) that is triggered if the land use is converted to a non-chapter 61 use (e.g., residential, commercial, or industrial) while enrolled in the program or within one year of withdrawal from the program. Some exceptions apply. Towns have a short window to exercise the right of first refusal, so developing relationships with owners can ensure the Town has adequate time to prepare and respond to changes in property designation, since purchases require Town Meeting approval.



Working Farm, photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Open Space Goals & Strategies

**Strategy
OS 3.3** **Work with local and regional partners to expand outdoor recreation and nature-based programs, particularly for youth, in parks and recreation areas throughout the town.**

Public feedback highlighted that Norfolk residents highly value two of the conservation areas that are maintained by non-Town entities – the Stony Brook Nature Center and Wildlife Sanctuary and the old Airport property, where private landowners have allowed Town residents to use private trails. State-, Federal-, or Non-profit-owned open space account for over 600 acres of Norfolk’s total open space. Stony Brook, in particular, offers a variety of nature-based programs. Partnerships with these different owners and organizations is necessary to expand access and programming.

**Strategy
OS 3.4** **Integrate public art into the design of parks and public spaces to help community members interpret Norfolk’s natural resources and features and foster an appreciation for the natural environment.**

The Cultural Council should partner with the Conservation Agent to reach out to local organizations, regional schools (K-12, community colleges, and universities) to find ways to integrate art into the natural landscape. For example, students from a local trade school with a welding program could create sculptures that could be displayed temporarily on a conservation site. This would provide a local cultural attraction and offer students an opportunity to use their skills in a creative practice.

Goal OS4: Highlight and protect Norfolk’s unique historic, social, and cultural resources.

As noted in the Historical and Cultural Resources Element, Norfolk has a variety of historical landscapes that contribute to the overall “small-town” look and feel and reinforce its history as an agricultural community. Strategies seek to connect historic preservation and conservation goals.

Strategy OS 4.1 Fund and expand Norfolk’s historic preservation efforts to protect, restore, and promote the cultural and historic resources of the town’s parks system.

Community Preservation Act funds can be leveraged to advance both open space and historic preservation goals. The Conservation Commission and Historical Commission should meet periodically to strategize historic landscapes that should be preserved. Looking at the findings from the 2006 Historic Survey and commissioning an update to this report could expand documentation of these unique cultural assets.

Strategy OS 4.2 Develop a thorough inventory of all historic park structures and prioritize them for preservation and restoration.

The Recreation Department and Conservation Commission should partner with the Historical Commission to understand what historic structures exist on parks, open space, and conservation lands. The groups could coordinate and develop a plan to protect and enhance structures for future generations.

Strategy OS 4.3 Collaborate with organizations and agencies to activate parks and support art, cultural, and social community events.

The Cultural Council has awarded grants for arts and cultural programming to a variety of local community groups and organizations. In future grant award cycles, the Cultural Council could pilot setting aside some funds for programming that takes place in parks or open space areas.

Strategy OS 4.4 Continue including infrastructure improvements and physical enhancements that support historic preservation and arts and cultural events and programming in parks in the town’s Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Norfolk’s Community Preservation Act can help fund these improvements.

The Recreation Department maintains a list of ongoing projects and is constantly considering priorities for years to come. Working with the Cultural Council to identify opportunities for arts and culture integration into these projects can provide dual benefits. The Town has done this in past projects. For example, new signage was erected on Town Hill to highlight local history. This was funded through Norfolk’s Community Preservation Act funds.

Open Space Goals & Strategies

Goal OS5: Ensure adequate resources, staff, and funding are available for maintaining Norfolk’s parks, open space, and recreation facilities.

The Recreation Department often evaluates its facilities and programs to ensure current residents’ needs are being met. Strategies under this goal focus on continuing to collect data, evaluate offerings and facilities, and identify unique ways to fund improvements and expand administrative capacity.

Strategy OS 5.1 Prioritize the evaluation and pursuit of alternative revenue options such as corporate support and development of parks partners, to expand programming, enhance services, and support capital improvements.

The Town currently relies on municipal funds, Community Preservation Act funding, and grants to fund the majority of park improvements. Registration and attendance fees for sports leagues and other recreation programming helps fund Recreation Department staff. The Town should pursue partnerships to diversify funding sources. In many communities, local healthcare systems will often support parks and open space since physical activity leads to improved health outcomes.

Strategy OS 5.2 Collect and review data on replacing or renovating amenities and facilities and ensure that ongoing costs are appropriately budgeted.

The Recreation Department has one of the most extensive contact lists, due to its diverse offerings of programs and participants. The Department should continue to use this communication channel to collect data on facility usage to inform replacement or renovation projects.

Goal OS6: Leverage existing and new open space and conservation areas to advance resiliency goals.

Norfolk is uniquely positioned amidst several different sensitive environmental areas that can both help the Town be more resilient as climate change causes more natural hazards, but it also presents a unique opportunity to make the most of existing open space and conservation areas. Strategic acquisition of new open space conservation areas and easements can advance resiliency goals. In particular, Norfolk's positioning within the Charles River Watershed presents the most opportunity and need for proactive environmental resource management. The Charles River Watershed has faced significant pollution problems in the past. Thankfully, environmental organizations like the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWR) have made great strides in improving water quality through advocacy, education, and cleanup efforts. The following strategies aim to continue to improve environmental quality to protect the Charles River Watershed and other natural and water resources.

Already in Practice: Norfolk's Watershed Protection District & Wellhead Protection District

In 1992, Norfolk adopted a Watershed Protection District to protect water sources, including water bodies, wetlands, recharge areas, and groundwater supply. The overlay district provides an additional level of oversight for new development that occurs near water resources. Complementary, Norfolk has an Aquifer and Water Supply and Interim Wellhead Protection District that protects, preserves, and maintains the aquifers and recharge areas from temporary and permanent contamination. Norfolk shares major aquifers with Franklin, Medway, Millis, and Wrentham.



Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski

Open Space Goals & Strategies

Strategy OS 6.1 Use parks as productive landscapes that perform green stormwater infrastructure and flood mitigation roles to enhance resiliency, recreational use, and beauty.

Norfolk has an active Stormwater Division, part of the Town Public Works Department. The Division is charged with managing the Town's storm drain system and working with the Planning Board to ensure development and resulting stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces like streets, parking lots, and rooftops is properly managed. Norfolk's parks offer a unique opportunity to help manage stormwater. Installation of green infrastructure and other flood mitigation techniques should be coordinated between Public Works and the Recreation Department to provide dual community benefits.

Already in Practice: Low Impact Development and Green Infrastructure

The Town has actively been seeking ways to incorporate low impact development principles and green infrastructure into new developments and redevelopment projects. In 2022, the Town undertook an assessment of current regulations as part of the Town's overall Stormwater Manager Plan. The assessment included recommendations for improving overall site design, project design layout standards, and maintenance and operations. Findings from this study can be incorporated into public capital projects like park improvements and other public projects.

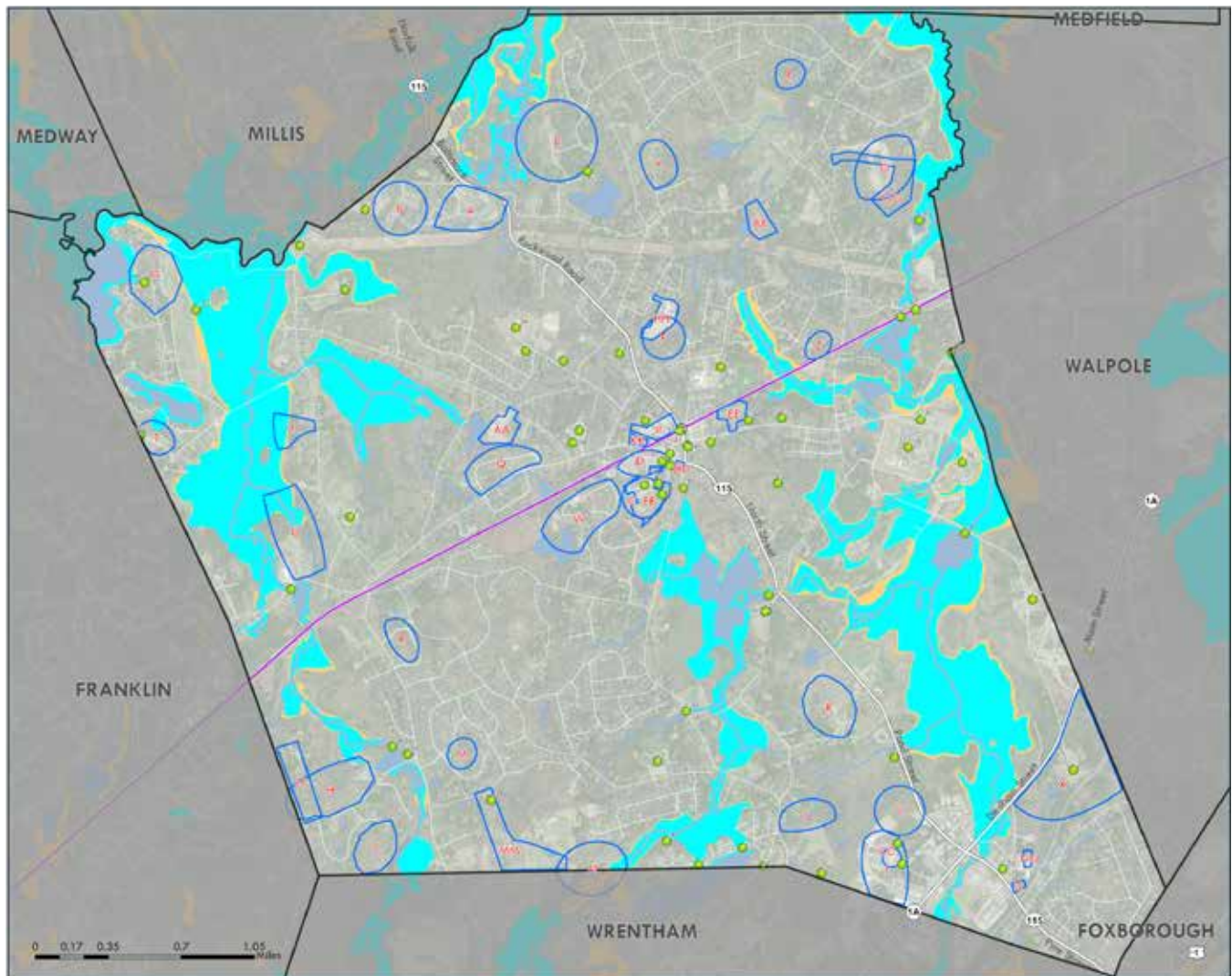
Strategy OS 6.2 Require the consistent use of native plant species and plants for healthy pollinator communities in parks and open spaces and at public facilities.

When properties are developed or redeveloped, Norfolk's Conservation Agent and Conservation Commission actively advise property owners on landscaping and buffer requirements to ensure native plant species are installed. This advisement should be carried forward to the Recreation and Public Works Departments when landscaping is installed on Town-owned and managed parcels. The Town could consider adopting landscaping standards to ensure consistency across all capital projects.

Strategy OS 6.3 Identify flood-prone areas where additions to open space or conservation lands would help in advancing flood resilience.

Norfolk recently worked with MAPC to complete a Hazard Mitigation Plan that assessed a number of hazardous risks, including flooding. The plan identified a number of locally identified areas of flooding in Norfolk (e.g., City Mills Pond Dam, River Road, Seekonk Street, Walpole Town Line bridge/culvert, and Priscilla Avenue). This information, coupled with flood zone maps, can help the Conservation Commission prioritize open space and conservation land acquisitions (including conservation easements created in partnership with non-profits or private landowners).

Flood Zones Map



- Critical Infrastructure®
- Development Areas
- Water Bodies
- Commuter Rail

FEMA Flood Zones, 2017

(Annual Chance)

- Zone A: 1%
- Zone AE: 1%
- Zone AH: 1%
- Zone AO: 1%
- Zone VE: 1% with Velocity Hazard
- 0.2% Annual Chance





Historical and Cultural Resources

The Historic and Cultural Resources Element includes recommendations for continuing to identify and preserve historical and cultural assets. It discusses opportunities for expanding cultural enrichment activities, public art, and placemaking opportunities to create a vibrant Town Center. Strategies are also centered in helping Norfolk understand its complete history and connections with Tribes and Indigenous partners.

What are residents saying about historical and cultural resources in Norfolk?

"Lack of sustainable town center businesses to promote social activities. Examples are Wrentham Center, Medfield Center and Wellesley Center."

"[Need more] live theater, music and a bookstore"

"Don't know, not familiar with this area"

"More ability to visit history – e.g., make Tramp House a museum with docents"

"This should be a non-starter other than the Historic Commission"

"This is a small town of farmland... this is N/A topic. There are lots of events for its size."

"We need to move forward and stop focusing on prioritizing the history of the town. Maybe the library, senior center, and grange could offer more culturally focused programs?"

"Some historical landmarks, like the Warelands, are not accessible via sidewalk."

"Historical and current cultural identity is needed for Norfolk. I'm sick of being called a bedroom community - we can be more than that and design and intent can help."

"History of conservation land, e.g. who built the stone walls and why"

"[One of the reasons I moved to Norfolk was] Jane and Paul's farm. I loved that Norfolk has an active farm in town and it is so important to me that we support them. We should ask the farmers what they think. It's so hard to find land to lease and keep it from development."

"I so appreciate all of the community events we have and hope those are maintained. They're our favorite part of living here, along with Stonybrook."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] a vibrant town with a cultural downtown of restaurants, bars and shops."

"[My vision for Norfolk is] Improved diversity (race, culture, socioeconomic status, etc.)."

"Need more public events. Cultural associations."

"Focus on traditions and community celebrations. I would love for Norfolk to develop town center a bit with more businesses that encourage people to spend time in town center and walk around. A walkable downtown like Franklin or Medfield that attracts people."

Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive in any way. This is intended to help connect the plan to verbatim comments provided by Norfolk residents.

Quick Facts



The Historical Commission partners with the Town Library to curate and manage a **local history room at the library**.

343 historic & cultural sites

343 historic and cultural sites inventoried with the Massachusetts Historical Commission

76 National Register Sites

76 National Register sites, including the Norfolk Grange Hall, Stephen Turner House, Warelands, and Pondville Cemetery.

3
National Register Districts

3 National Register Districts

- Wrentham State School (shared with Town of Wrentham)
- Rockwood Road
- Sullivan's Corner



3 properties with preservation restrictions

- Norfolk Grange Hall - 28 Rockwood Road
- Henry Kirk White Pond House – 48 Everett Street
- Solomon Blake - Edward Ward - Bristol House – 97 North Street



Hometown of Albert “Allie” Moulton, who is the only known African American to play in Major League Baseball before Jackie Robinson.

\$7,200

in Norfolk Cultural Council Grants

In 2022, Norfolk Cultural Council distributed \$7,200 in grants to 17 individuals, groups, and nonprofit organizations that provided programming centering around the arts, humanities, history, and interpretive sciences for children, adults, and intergenerational groups.

In 2021, Norfolk's Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector reported 93 jobs, based on average monthly employment and 7 industry establishments.

\$812,063

allocated Culture and Recreation budget

The Town of Norfolk Fiscal 2022 General Budget allocated \$812,063 toward Culture and Recreation, in the 2023 General Budget request was for \$891,176 which is a 9.7% increase. Most of the Cultural and Recreation budget line item is dedicated to the library and recreation, with less than \$1,000 for annual expenditures for the Historical Commission and Memorial Day.

Key Issues



From public feedback received, there are opportunities to deepen the community's understanding of what historical and cultural resource management is and how it can complement other community goals like a vibrant town center, community cohesion, preservation of Norfolk's small town feel, and open space preservation.



Norfolk has not undertaken any comprehensive historic or cultural planning efforts since 2006. These types of projects can help prioritize and manage work related to historical assets. Conducting updated historical resource surveys can help uncover lesser known histories, particularly of historically marginalized groups like women, people of color, Indigenous histories, people with disabilities, and working class people. It is essential to recognize that historical preservation and historical memory should not solely focus on the stories of the dominant culture, but also encompass the diverse histories of all communities. This can be achieved through research, interpretation, and education programs that highlight the contributions and experiences of all members of a community.



The Town has not invested much in historical assets in recent years. Related work is led mostly by volunteers. Norfolk does not have any municipal staff dedicated to preservation planning or arts and culture. Engagement from the planning process indicated that there is little support to use municipal resources in this area, which could be due to the lack of understanding how these investments can help advance other goals. Norfolk should explore what sources exist, like state or federal grants, technical assistance grants, Foundation programs, to support this work until there is more community support for local investment.



While Norfolk has adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA) – a key local tool for investing in historic preservation – the Community Preservation Committee noted that there are challenges in effectively utilizing CPA funds in the historic category. This could be in part due to the absence of municipal staff capacity.



Norfolk residents love the many unique community events that occur, like Community Day, Food Trucks on the Town Hill, Halloween Haunted Car Crawl, etc. This type of cultural programming is supported by a broad network of community groups and volunteers. Broader cultural programming is provided by organizations outside of Norfolk, in neighboring cities and towns throughout the region. There is an opportunity to strengthen these collaborations to provide more consistent and diverse activities for Norfolk residents.



Current land use and zoning regulations offer limited opportunities for economic development or commercial growth, resulting in few areas that could provide space for new creative sector businesses. Furthermore, lack of vibrant and compact commercial centers means that there are fewer spots for entertainment or public realm places for people to gather formally or informally.

- The B-1 zoning did allow for a new mixed-use building to be built next to Town Hall, which now houses a dance studio. More creative businesses like this could be possible if Norfolk continues to modernize regulations to better align with community goals.

Norfolk's Historical and Cultural Toolbox

to preserve and promote history and culture includes:



- The Norfolk Historical Commission, composed of seven appointed members. They are charged with collecting and preserving historical records, including documents, photos, and various materials that relate to Norfolk's history.
- Adoption of a Demolition Delay bylaw, administered by the Historical Commission.
- The Norfolk Cultural Council (NCC) is part of a network of local cultural councils funded by The Massachusetts Cultural Council to support public programs that advance arts, humanities, and interpretive science. The Council awards grants to help support local cultural events. The NCC prioritizes grant recipients who use local Norfolk venues or work with Norfolk organizations.
- Adoption of the Community Preservation Act in 2001; over \$11 million in revenue has been collected (this includes local surcharge and state distribution). These funds can support historic preservation efforts. A member of the Historic Commission sits on the Community Preservation Committee to strengthen the partnership between the two similarly-focused groups.
- Active partnership with Town Library, including co-curation of a local history room.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Norfolk has a network of active volunteers who serve on Town boards like the Historical Commission and Cultural Council – these two groups work to understand historic and cultural needs and challenges and employ a variety of strategies. These groups may be limited due to the volunteer nature and lack of municipal staff capacity dedicated to staffing the boards and helping them carry out plans and programming. Norfolk’s active community groups like the Lions Club and others also augment the limited municipal capacity by organizing community events that bring people together. The following Goals and Strategies offer an opportunity to refine current efforts and try new initiatives to better preserve and promote historic and cultural heritage.



Aerial Photo of community event at Town Center. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Goal HC1: Strengthen understanding and documentation of historic resources and narratives.

The Historical Commission's dedication has positioned the town to build upon past achievements and projects effectively. Public engagement highlighted that there is room for more education and awareness about Norfolk's historic legacy, how cultural events and programming can benefit community members of all ages, and where there might be gaps in documented history. The following strategies aim to better document, promote, and preserve Norfolk's history for current and future generations.

Strategy HC 1.1 Develop and implement a comprehensive historic preservation plan for Norfolk.

Historic preservation plays a crucial role in safeguarding and celebrating the distinct character and heritage of a place. It not only preserves the tangible aspects, such as buildings and landmarks, but also the intangible elements, including stories, traditions, and cultural identities. By protecting and promoting historical sites, communities can maintain a sense of identity, strengthen local pride, and foster a greater understanding of their past. Conducting historic preservation plans provide a process for engaging the public on what matters most to them about Norfolk's history and culture, what resources may be at risk of being lost, and what strategies could be employed to further goals. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) provides grants to fund historic preservation plans.

Strategy HC 1.2 Expand and update documentation of sites related to underrecognized communities, and then make active efforts to share this valuable information with the whole community (example: Uplifting the story of Albert "Allie" Moulton at the Little League Opening Day Parade and Celebration).

In 2006, the Norfolk Historical Commission hired Kathleen Broomer to conduct a survey of historical sites throughout the town. The goal was to update the records with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) by identifying and documenting important buildings and landmarks, highlighting their historical significance. The report recommended the creation of four National Register Districts, including the Town Center District, and found 13 individual sites to be eligible for National Register nominations.

To encompass all of Norfolk's history from different historical perspectives, Norfolk should continue to work with diverse groups and individuals, both locally and regionally. For example, the Historical Commission could update their webpage to discuss Albert "Allie" Moulton, notable African American baseball player. Local history could also be expanded to better discuss the role of slavery in the development of Norfolk, citing primary source documents such as the 1754 Wrentham slave census.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Strategy HC 1.3 Expand access to history and historical resources and continue to find new ways to highlight history and historical resources in Town communications.

In 2006, the Norfolk Historical Commission hired Kathleen Broomer to conduct a survey of historical sites throughout the town. The goal was to update the records with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) by identifying and documenting important buildings and landmarks, highlighting their historical significance. The report recommended the creation of four National Register Districts, including the Town Center District, and found 13 individual sites to be eligible for National Register nominations.

To encompass all of Norfolk's history from different historical perspectives, Norfolk should continue to work with diverse groups and individuals, both locally and regionally. For example, the Historical Commission could update their webpage to discuss Albert "Allie" Moulton, notable African American baseball player. Local history could also be expanded to better discuss the role of slavery in the development of Norfolk, citing primary source documents such as the 1754 Wrentham slave census.

Already in Practice

Town Center Walking Tour


The Norfolk Historical Commission partnered with the Norfolk Public Library, Board of Library Trustees, and the Norfolk Community Preservation Committee to prepare a self-guided walking tour with accompanying informational pamphlet to showcase the historic structures around Town Center.

Norfolk Stories

Over the last 15 years, the Historical Commission has undertaken an oral history project where memories and perspectives of long-time residents and community members with strong connections to Norfolk provide valuable insights into Norfolk's history. The oral histories are translated into print volumes that are for sale at the Town Clerk's office. Proceeds from the book sales help fund the Commission's work.


Local History Room at the Town Library

The Historical Commission partners with the Library to curate a local history room of Norfolk artifacts and stories. The Library is currently pursuing funding to start to digitize documents so they will be more accessible and available for future generations.




Town Hill

Town Hill was the site of the first Meeting House (1796) pictured on the Town Seal (see pamphlet cover). After the Town incorporated in 1870, the Meeting House on the site was donated and refurbished as a Town Hall. The Hall burned to the ground in 1922. After being situated in an interim location for many years, a permanent Town Hall was built in 1998. The octagonal gazebo or "Bandstand" was built in 1992.




The Ware Crypt

In 1790, Ebenezer Ware donated to the town the land on which the Library stands. Originally, dating back as early as 1730, the burial chamber was used exclusively by the Ware family. Later the crypt was used by the town during the winter months. Do not be fooled by its location: the contour of the hill has changed drastically throughout the years!




Library Schoolhouse

North School, now the oldest part of the Norfolk Public Library, was built in 1845. A one-room schoolhouse at Cleveland and First Streets, it was moved to Town Hill in 1899 where it was used as a Truck House and volunteer Fire Department. By 1926 the small building opened as an elementary school again until 1939 when it held a Manual Training class for boys. In 1951, this "Old Fire-House School" was renovated and became the public Library. Additions were constructed in 1961-62 and 1984-85 which expanded the Library around the Old North School and in 2005 it became the Meeting Room, now called "The Schoolroom." Its interior was restored in 2009.




PANEL shows all sites on walking tour faces Main Street on Town Hill




The Tramp House

Built in 1886 at a cost of \$406.51, many wandering "tramps" or vagrants spent the night in this building and farmers seeking labor would come by in the mornings to hire them. The Tramp House was also used as a nighty look-up and men would be expected to move on in the morning. Many tramps and vagrants followed the rails looking for work.




The Old Parsonage

The Old Parsonage, ca. early 1800s, 5 Union Street: The house was built on part of the land originally set aside by Robert Ware the Elder in 1730, passed down to his sons and eventually sold to Josiah Ware. In 1810, the home was purchased by Rev. John Cleveland and in 1838 it was sold to Salmon Mann, a parishioner in the Cleveland Society, for \$200. He later willed the house to his daughter, Dorothy, and Mann occupied it until 1922. In 1964 it was sold to the Federated Church as a parsonage and is used as such today.



Federated Church

Built in 1832, the Federated Church was originally called the Second Meeting House. The Cleveland Religious Society, known as "The Society," left the First Meeting House located on what would come to be called Town Hill, due to a church political split. The Society began its life under the pastorate of Moses Thayer. In 1908, the Federated Church was formed when eventually the Baptists, the North Parish Association and the Cleveland Religious Society were joined.





Blake-Campbell House and Blacksmith Shop

The oldest part of the house, built ca. 1850, shows an east wing which may have been added in the early 20th century. The blacksmith shop to the west of the house dates from 1870s to 1900. Levi N. Blake was a blacksmith by trade, a member of Norfolk Farmer's Club and later a town officer. George L. Campbell, also a skilled blacksmith and wheelwright, occupied the house and shop through at least 1955.



Ware/Dupee/Thayer Gross House

13 Rockwood Road. The house, built by farmer Cyrus Ware in ca. 1850, appears on an 1858 map as a store. Sarah Dupee purchased the house in 1866 and through the years ran a restaurant, operated a dry goods and grocery store and sold real estate within this Rockwood Road Historic District. In 1893, the house was sold to railroad flagman George Thayer. For a time, 13 Rockwood Rd. served as a post office. From the 1970s it was the home of Frank and Carol Gross. Frank was Norfolk's Town Moderator for over 30 years.



Norfolk Grange

This building was constructed by the Baptists in 1863. In 1921 it was sold to the Norfolk Grange whose membership continues to this day. After the Town Hall burned to the ground in 1922, the Grange served as a meeting and voting place and held school graduation, school plays and dances. The library was housed here from 1922-1956. Norfolk's Roman Catholic congregation held services here from 1947 to 1952. The Norfolk Grange was recognized by the National Register of Historic Places in 1989 and is an active Grange (#1335) today.



Salmon Mann House

"The Salmon Mann House" (ca. 1800) at #16 Rockwood Rd., is not to be confused with #5 Union St. which Salmon Mann purchased sometime between 1838 and 1853. Salmon Mann lived at the house you are looking at with his first wife, Mary Ferriss. In 1808, he acquired one-half of his father's 79-acre homestead. According to railroad deeds, Salmon Mann sold 3 acres of his land to the Norfolk County Railroad for railroad construction. This house is considered to be the finest example of early 19th century capes in Norfolk.



A Walking Tour of Historical Sites in Norfolk Town Center

Welcome

Every day thousands of people pass through Norfolk Center. Some use the commuter rail, visit the Library, Town Hall, shops, banks, churches, cafes, and more. This brochure is an invitation to pause for a while and consider the places and spaces and lucky details our Town's history. For many years, there has been local and national historic buildings are preserved in these Walking Tour stops, you can get an idea of how the Town was and how it evolved, over the course of 200 years. For more information, visit the Norfolk Historical Commission website and click on "Walking Tour". More detailed information on each site may be accessed for further study. You may also encourage to visit the Schoolroom at our Public Library. Enjoy your walk! This brochure is from NLCorp.

Norfolk Historical Commission
Norfolk Public Library
Board of Library Trustees
Made possible through a grant from the
Norfolk Preservation Committee

WELCOME TO NORFOLK
SETTLED 1678 INC. 1870

All photos, courtesy of Betty Lehan
Brochure compiled by Betty Whitney

Informational pamphlet for the Town Center Walking Tour to showcase the historic structures around Town Center.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Goal HC2: Identify and pursue funding opportunities and increase resources for Historical Preservation and other related activities (such as heritage tourism, etc.)

The Historical Commission's dedication has positioned the town to build upon past achievements and projects effectively. Public engagement highlighted that there is room for more education and awareness about Norfolk's historic legacy, how cultural events and programming can benefit community members of all ages, and where there might be gaps in documented history. The following strategies aim to better document, promote, and preserve Norfolk's history for current and future generations.

Strategy HC 2.1 Actively identify and prioritize historical preservation projects in Norfolk for funding through the Community Preservation Act.

Funds raised under the Community Preservation Act can support open space and recreation, housing, and historic preservation projects. While Norfolk regularly undertakes Open Space and Recreation and Housing planning efforts (housing production plans), the Town has never completed a historic preservation plan to help identify and prioritize projects. Without a guiding document like this or a strategic plan from the Historical Commission, the projects that may be getting funded are not the highest priority from a townwide perspective. Finding ways to engage the public in this process can help ensure that preservation projects align with local priorities.

Strategy HC 2.2 Increase the funding for the Historical Commission's preservation projects and activities.

A variety of federal, state, and foundation grant programs exist to fund preservation and cultural projects. Designation on the National Register of Historic Places (districts or individual sites) unlock grant opportunities from the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, and Massachusetts Historical Commission. The Historical Commission should work with the state to understand the different funding sources available to support their work and consider how Town staff can expand administrative capacity for applying and administering grant projects.

Historic Preservation Projects Funded by Norfolk's Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Over the years, Norfolk has used CPA funds for a variety of preservation projects. Some examples include:

- The 2006 Townwide Historic and Architectural Survey
- National Register of Historic Places Nominations
- Restoration of the Misty Meadow Farm Mural at the Library
- Build and install a display case for historic items at Town Hall
- Building restoration and rehabilitation (interior and exterior) at various sites, including the Grange, Tramp House, Pondville Cemetery Crypt, and Federated Church
- Ground penetrating radar to identify unmarked graves



Grange Hall, photo courtesy of MACRIS



"Misty Meadows Farm" by Emily Jacques, restored with CPA funds, photo courtesy of [Community Preservation Coalition](#)

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Goal HC3: Preserve and promote Norfolk's rich historical heritage.

Given the rich and long history of Norfolk, from the days of King Philip to colonial times as part of the Dedham colony, there is an opportunity to capitalize on heritage tourism and continue to learn and expand the understanding of Norfolk's history, from different perspectives. Strategies aim to protect and enhance historic and cultural assets, while leaving space for them to evolve within the modern context.

Strategy HC 3.1 Assess and update the Demolition Delay bylaw to determine if it effectively preserves historical sites or if it inadvertently only creates higher development expenses.

Norfolk has adopted a demolition delay bylaw, which authorizes a review process by the Historical Commission when a demolition is proposed for buildings that are on the National Register of Historic Places or deemed eligible for listing. The review also extends to any building or structure that is found by the Commission to be historically or architecturally significant. Public feedback highlighted that the bylaw may not be very effective, as some historical assets have been lost. It is important that the Historical Commission and Town Planner are equipped to work with property owners to find creative solutions for adaptive reuse to avoid further loss of historical assets. The current 6-month review period may need to be revisited and extended to offer more time for coordination on consensus solutions. The Town should find ways to ensure the Historical Commission is adequately staffed to administer the bylaw and work with developers to achieve positive results that save historic buildings.

See it in action: Improving the Demolition Delay Tool in Salem and Medford

In 2024, the Eastern Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition hosted a webinar, "[From Bylaw to Action: Understanding Demolition Delay Implementation](#)." Salem, MA and Medford, MA shared how they reviewed and refined their bylaws to encourage more rehabilitation and less loss of structures. Notable bylaw changes in Salem included extending the delay period and having different periods depending on building age (any building between 50-99 years is subject to a 12-month delay; buildings older than 100 years are subject to an 18-month delay). Both communities integrate the demolition delay into the development review process and have close partnerships with planners to help design and find solutions.



Lower Mills Village, Massachusetts, spanning both sides of the Neponset River between Milton (on the right) and City of Boston (Dorchester) (on the left). These buildings were once part of the Walter Baker Chocolate Factory. Photo credit: Marc N. Belanger, Wikimedia

**Strategy
HC 3.2**

Introduce a Demolition by Neglect Bylaw that emphasizes collaboration and support. This bylaw should aim to assist property owners of historically significant buildings by offering guidance and resources. The goal should be to aid owners in maintaining these buildings, thereby preserving important historical structures in a supportive and effective manner, while avoiding punitive actions.

Demolition by neglect is a term used to describe a situation in which a property owner intentionally allows a historic property to suffer severe deterioration, potentially beyond the point of repair. Property owners may use this kind of long-term neglect to circumvent historic preservation regulations.⁷ Enacting a Demolition by Neglect bylaw allows the Historical Commission to intervene when it appears that a historic property is being left to decay. The bylaw allows the Commission and Building Inspector to work with the property owner to ideally make improvements or find willing partners or a new purchaser of the property. For an example bylaw, see Marblehead, MA.

**Strategy
HC 3.3**

Assess known historic sites for vulnerability against climate change, natural disasters, and other risks.

Norfolk is vulnerable to climate change impacts, including an increased frequency of extreme weather events, and historic buildings and sites located in flood-prone areas face risks of damage or destruction. Adapting historic structures to be resilient to these threats is an ongoing challenge.

**Strategy
HC 3.4**

Investigate the possibility of establishing Local Historic District(s) to protect historical sites, enhance community development, and maintain the community's character, while still accommodating growth and development, particularly housing.

Norfolk has three National Register districts and the 2006 Town Wide Historic Properties Survey recommended nominating Town Center and three others as new National Register Districts. National Register designation does not offer any protections against demolition or significant renovation that might degrade historic significance. Local bylaws provide these protections. In Massachusetts, towns can designate Local Historic Districts to preserve unique cultural and historic attributes. Find out more about how to designate Local Historic Districts through this guide prepared by the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

**Strategy
HC 3.5**

Develop a notification system that informs the historical commission about significant events impacting heritage sites, such as the sale of important historical properties.

To foster collaboration between the Historical Commission and permitting departments like Building, Planning, Board of Health, etc., Town staff should work together to establish communication channels that notify the historical commission about impacts to historic sites or structures of a certain age. This extends to ownership changes, as Historical Commissions should develop relationships with owners of historic properties.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

**Strategy
HC 3.6** **Acknowledge the historical significance of agricultural lands in the town and support residents who wish to implement conservation restrictions on their property. Encourage those interested in donating or selling their land to engage with Tribes and Indigenous-led groups like the Native Land Conservancy or the Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective.**

As Norfolk seeks to retain its connection to agriculture and historical farms, the Historical Commission can partner with the Conservation Commission and conservation groups to secure conservation restrictions on large parcels of existing farmland or green space. Recognizing that Norfolk and the surrounding communities were initially settled by the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, the Historical Commission can take leadership in connecting property owners with Tribes and Indigenous-led groups like the Native Land Conservancy to help facilitate a return of lands to Indigenous communities.

See it in action: Native Land Conservancy in Centerville, MA

A 1.4-acre parcel of forest in Centerville, MA was gifted to the Native Land Conservancy by a Sandwich, MA resident. The Native Land Conservancy, the first Native American-led nonprofit land trust east of the Mississippi River, applied a conservation easement to the property to ensure it will be protected in perpetuity. [Read more in this article.](#)

Goal HC4: Promote more alignment between preservation efforts and town-led projects, including integrating conservation and climate-related efforts in the preservation of natural historical landscapes as mitigation for flooding and other hazardous impacts.

Historic preservation contributes to the sustainability of a place in multiple ways. Economically, it can attract tourism, create heritage-based businesses, and enhance property values. Environmentally, preserving historic structures reduces the need for new construction and promotes sustainable practices, thus minimizing the environmental impact. Socially, historical preservation fosters a sense of community, provides educational opportunities, and offers shared spaces that promote cultural exchange and civic engagement.

Historic preservation can complement many of the priorities voiced by residents during engagement for this plan – such as making Town Center for vibrant, growing Norfolk’s commercial base with small businesses, preparing for flooding and other natural hazards, and offering more ways to get around and socialize with neighbors. The following strategies help connect preservation with these other goals.

Strategy HC 4.1 Incorporate members of the Norfolk Historical Commission into Town-wide projects to ensure comprehensive representation and insights from a historical perspective which can lead to better integration between preservation and development and economic growth initiatives.

The Historical Commission can add a unique perspective to a variety of different municipal projects and efforts. For example, consulting with the Historical Commission and historic preservation experts when planning and zoning efforts are undertaken can ensure that preservation and development initiatives are aligned. As zoning regulations have supported development patterns inconsistent with historic growth, there is an opportunity to realign zoning and historic built form through these types of partnerships. Specific examples of where zoning conflicts with preservation goals include:

- Restrictions on modifications or renovations to historic buildings may live their adaptive reuse or hinder necessary repairs. Striking a balance between preservation and modern needs can be complex.
- Strict parking requirements can deter adaptive reuse projects or make it difficult to preserve historical structures while accommodating contemporary needs.
- Setback regulations can limit the ability to expand or modify historic structures, particularly if the existing building is located close to the property lines.

Historically, and this is the case in Norfolk, modern Euclidean or use-based zoning influenced local markets and often led to the closing of small businesses. For example, currently Norfolk lacks a grocery store, but historically there had been numerous general stores in the Deanville, City Mills, and Pondville areas that served as the trading centers for the surrounding agricultural districts. Amending regulations to encourage small grocery stores and other small businesses would be consistent with the community’s historical traditions and heritage.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Strategy HC 4.2 **Incorporate both precontact, historical, and undeveloped landscapes as climate-resilient measures to effectively counteract the impacts of climate change, including flooding. Use native plantings, when possible.**

Norfolk's agrarian roots and rural legacy provides an opportunity to leverage historic landscapes that have not been developed - and are cherished by residents for their contributions to the small-town feel - for climate resiliency. This can be accomplished by returning to precontact landscapes (including marshes, dam removal – potentially work with other towns/region as it will have an impact on their flooding, etc.).

Strategy HC 4.3 **Collaborate with Tribes and indigenous-led groups like the Native Land Conservancy to put in place Cultural Respect Easements on conservation areas within Norfolk.**

The Mashpee Wampanoag people used the land now known as Norfolk for hunting, fishing, farming, and village areas. As Norfolk works to preserve remaining natural resources and key conservation areas, returning land that was colonized from the first Indigenous inhabitants can help repair the harm of colonization. The Historical Commission and Conservation Commission should establish partnerships with Tribes and indigenous-led groups to enact conservation and cultural respect easements.

Cultural Respect Easements

A Cultural Respect Easement is a legal agreement that guarantees Indigenous people cultural access to land in perpetuity. Cultural Respect Easements provide Indigenous people with safe areas to practice their traditional and spiritual lifeways, such as ceremonies, seasonal celebrations, camping, and more. [Find out more](#) about this tool for cultural preservation and how it is applied in other parts of Massachusetts.

Goal HC5: Sustain and expand community and cultural events (e.g. Norfolk Community Day, Events on Town Hill, etc.).

Norfolk's cultural resources are embedded throughout daily life and activities, supported and created by a broad range of stakeholders and participants. Like many towns in Massachusetts, Norfolk's cultural events and programming take place in local schools, the library, the senior center and the Town Hill. Investment in these public resources enables the Town to support a diversity of programming and social connections. Norfolk's cultural life is nurtured by the leadership of Norfolk Cultural Council, as well as other local groups, such as the Norfolk Lion's Club, which provide funding and support community events. Cultural events and activities are integral to community life, and by extension areas of open space recreation planning, public health, economic development and public services.

Strategy HC 5.1 Inventory existing community events and organizers to improve communication and coordination of cultural events including the Norfolk Cultural Council, the Norfolk Public Library, Norfolk Senior Center, Recreation Department, and other community-based organizations.

The Norfolk Cultural Council hosts events like the Juried Art Exhibitions and Concerns on Town Hill. The Cultural Council partners with the Senior Center, Norfolk Library, Recreation Department, Lions Club, and other community organizations to host a variety of programming throughout the year for residents of all ages. Regional organizations also help round out the cultural events available to Norfolk residents. Examples include the Un-Common Theater Company, LiveARTS, Neponset Choral Society, and Massachusetts Audubon. Norfolk is well-positioned to better inventory and promote these events through the Town website and Town communications to help raise awareness and participation in local and regional cultural events.

Strategy HC 5.2 Facilitate coordination among historic preservation and cultural organizations to identify shared priorities.

With the Historical Commission and Cultural Council both aiming to preserve and celebrate cultural assets in the community, these two boards should be closely coordinating. Norfolk also has multiple community clubs to support broader social and cultural activities that improve quality of life in the town, including some unique cultural organizations that support literary arts and an active public access television program. The Town Historical Commission and Cultural Council should continue to partner with community clubs and groups who provide cultural value to living in Norfolk. Strong performing arts programs exist for youth in the King Philip School System, and there is evidence that members of the broader community support and value these activities.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Strategy HC 5.3 Revisit signage bylaws, other regulations, and Town approval processes to remove barriers to public art installations and creative placemaking.

The Norfolk Planning Board has been working with the Norfolk Small Business Association to update the Town's signage bylaw. The definition of a sign can potentially limit the installation or approval of public art such as murals. As revisions to the signage bylaw are contemplated, the Planning Board and Select Board should find ways to ensure public art can be installed to contribute to community culture and placemaking, particularly in Town Center and other activity centers.

A review of other regulations found that a few others may be impeding public art and creative placemaking – both of these creative expressions can add vibrancy and culture to Town Center and other gathering places. The Planning Board, along with other relevant boards and committees and Town departments, should review:

- Chapter 228 Peace and Good Order regulations, including how obstructions in public places, streets, and sidewalks are regulated (228-1) and when games are allowed on streets and sidewalks (228-2).
- Zoning Bylaw Article 6 addresses vibration and noise, which may have implications on how the ordinance is enforced and upheld in relationship to events and music-related businesses.

Goal HC6: Expand Town resources to support arts and culture businesses.

Norfolk is home to local artists across creative disciplines and arts-based small businesses and entrepreneurs alike. Performers based in Norfolk range from theater groups like the Inspiration Performing Troupe, local musicians like the Hipshot Band, and the Tommy James Magic Shows. While based in Norfolk, each of these performers are known to perform regionally throughout New England. Norfolk's creative businesses provide opportunities for cultural programming and artistic expression in a variety of forms.

Strategy HC 6.1 Utilize grants from the Norfolk Cultural Council to highlight local businesses and entrepreneurs with temporary art activations and performances locally.

Norfolk's community events are often hosted in partnership with community organizations. The Lions Club and Norfolk Community League are responsible for a number of these events, and there is an opportunity for the Cultural Council to help connect local businesses and artists to hosts of these events to support art activations and showcase local talent.

Strategy HC 6.2 Invite members of the creative economy to serve on the Norfolk Cultural Council to help direct resources for events that highlight local artists, entrepreneurs, and creative businesses.

Norfolk has a number of arts-based local businesses – like Exhale School of Dance, Ivy Music Academy, Norfolk Piano, Patchwork Community Craft, Retrograde Guitars, and Tiki Tattoo. To better connect the local creative economy to municipal-sponsored cultural events, the Town should engage these business owners and invite them to serve on or engage with the Norfolk Cultural Council.

Strategy HC 6.3 Host networking events for artists and cultural businesses throughout the region.

The Cultural Council, as a convening body for the Town, could partner with local organizations to host social events to bring artists and cultural businesses from Norfolk and surrounding communities together. The networking events can also raise awareness of Cultural Council grants and other resources to support artists and cultural businesses.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals & Strategies

Goal HC7: Coordinate more opportunities to highlight the regional arts and cultural resources.

Norfolk is home to local artists across creative disciplines and arts-based small businesses and entrepreneurs alike. Performers based in Norfolk range from theater groups like the Inspiration Performing Troupe, local musicians like the Hipshot Band, and the Tommy James Magic Shows. While based in Norfolk, each of these performers are known to perform regionally throughout New England. Norfolk's creative businesses provide opportunities for cultural programming and artistic expression in a variety of forms.

Strategy HC 7.1 Build and strengthen networks across regional arts and cultural resources in partnership with other local Cultural Councils, cultural event organizers, and public facilities to access regional resources.

Norfolk and its residents are served by regional resources and facilities that exist in neighboring towns. The Norfolk Cultural Council should continue to foster relationships with neighboring providers and organizations to continue to offer quality cultural enrichment for residents of all ages. Some examples of these regional institutions are included below:

- The Franklin Cultural Council is a frequent collaborator with the Norfolk Cultural Council and co-produces programming that serves both communities. Franklin has venues that host local and touring artists, like LiveARTS, an organization based in Franklin that produces concert series and concerts at the Circle of Friends Coffee House. Both of these have received grants from the Norfolk Cultural Council.
- In Medfield, the Bellforge Arts Center is a multi-arts and outdoor recreation center only 15 minutes away from Norfolk, located at the former Medfield State Hospital site. The Norfolk Cultural Council has partnered with Medfield to support the Medfield Porchfest in the past as well.
- In Medway, some musical resources exist including Encore Music Academy and Recording Studios and Medway Piano Studios. These offer opportunities for new partnerships in the future.

Strategy HC 7.2 Explore opportunities to establish public/private partnership to expand arts education in the public schools with in-school curricula, staffing, and enrichment activities, such as field trips tours through the library, senior center, and schools to events in Franklin and Medfield.

The Cultural Council should explore ways to partner with the school districts that serve Norfolk but also explore other school districts with different arts programming and education opportunities. Engaging young Norfolk residents in arts and culture at an early age can strengthen Norfolk's cultural heritage for generations to come.

Goal HC8: Integrate arts and culture opportunities into public space development and planning.

Public spaces and facilities offer opportunities for engagement and awareness of arts and culture. As Norfolk evolves how to use existing public facilities and plans for new ones, considering different ways for arts and culture to be infused can encourage multi-use buildings. In Norfolk already, the Town Library and Senior Center/Council on Aging are critical community anchors for cultural life in town, providing services for all generations. The Library's Community Room hosts many creative activities like storytelling, music classes, watercolor meetups, book clubs, a fiber art group, and art exhibits from local groups and artists. The following strategies can help sustain and grow even more opportunities for arts and culture enrichment.

Strategy HC 8.1 Coordinate activations of public facilities (I.e. Town Hill, Norfolk Library, Kennedy School) for arts and cultural activities that support connection and quality of life and highlight historic narratives.

The Town Library houses the Misty Meadow Farm Mural, an example of public art that provides both cultural enrichment and historic appreciation. Finding other ways to incorporate public art and active art installations can help connect Norfolk residents. The Cultural Council could fund organizations specialized in public art installations or support local artists.

Strategy HC 8.2 Identify public parks and recreational facilities where public art can be included within the design and construction.

Norfolk's Recreation Department provides a variety of well-loved programming and facilities. The Cultural Council should work with the Recreation Department to find ways to achieve both recreation goals but also incorporate public art to reach a broader range of community members. Public feedback noted that more passive recreation, which is appropriate to couple with public art, is needed.





Community Facilities & Services

This element inventories public facilities, infrastructure, and services including the Town's water system, sewer system, stormwater drainage, emergency services (e.g., fire and police), municipal offices, schools, and other community facilities. The element intersects with the Transportation element to assess public roads and multimodal facilities. Recommendations focus on how to coordinate land use and transportation decisions with capital improvement planning and will help Norfolk prioritize future capital investments.

What are residents saying about community facilities and services?

"Lots of opportunities to use town owned buildings/ parking lots (schools !) to install solar panels. Would also drastically lower town cost for expensive Eversource power. Other local communities have successfully taken this approach."

"Would like more transparency and insight into the allocation of the budget. With our increasingly high tax bills, it's not easy to understand where money is being allocated, when and for how long. As the school's get older and funding keeps getting cut, I'd like to understand where the money is going."

"Developing a vision and strategy for Senior Services that is on a par with other local towns."

"Better fiscal controls-taxes are increasing much too fast. Control expenditures, particularly in police and fire departments. Also, let's try to increase industrial development to aid in keeping residential taxes down."

"Continually raising the bar for quality of the education we provide our kids."

"Additional inclusive recreational programs for children with special needs. Greater accessibility for people with mobility impairments."

"I wish the town offered more services, no streetlights, no trash pick-up, no sidewalks, it's hard to understand why the taxes are so high when basic things are not included."

"A town that maintains its suburban rural charm, but greatly expands municipal services and incentives to attract more business. Walkability is big too. I would love for someday to be able to walk to the center of town with my children on sidewalks and be able to hop around all the local shops that could exist there."

"Good schools, open space/recreation, sense of community, making a difference, improving diversity initiatives and school systems."

"I wish we could worry less about adding services etc. and focus on maintaining what we have."

"My vision is that the town will continue to invest in essential infrastructure such as the recent approval of the new Fire Station, but also provide zoning options that enable a more diverse community to grow here, which would include attractive options for young families and individuals to move into town, while still providing enhancing common resources such as the Library and Senior Center."



Throughout the Master Plan process, Norfolk community members were asked to share their opinions about what issues and opportunities exist in the Town. Quotes that were representative of themes heard throughout the process have been highlighted here. This is not a scientific representation, nor intended to be inclusive of every sentiment. This is intended to help connect the plan to direct quotes provided by Norfolk residents.

Quick Facts



9 public buildings



82 vehicles

Norfolk maintains **9 public buildings** that total 292,013 square feet. Norfolk owns and maintains **82 vehicles** with an average age of 10.7 years.

FY23
\$18M

\$89M
over the next 5 years

To maintain and improve its current properties, facilities, and assets, the **Norfolk Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)** listed over **\$18 Million** in project requests for FY23 and over **\$89 Million** in requests over the next 5 years.



AA+
bond credit rating

The Town of Norfolk maintains a **AA+ bond credit rating**, which is the second highest rating given by credit rating agency Standard and Poor's and allows the Town to borrow for capital projects at competitive rates.



22 Boards & Committees

38 Elected Officials

Norfolk relies on resident volunteers to serve on **22 Boards and Committees** which advise or make decisions on Town governance. The Town has **38 elected officials** that hold positions as Moderator, Select Board, Town Clerk, Board of Assessors, Board of Health, Constables, Housing Authority, Library Trustees, Planning Board, Recreation Commission, King Philip Regional School Committee, and Norfolk School Committee.

90

miles of public roadways



Within the **15 square miles of the Town**, there are over **90 miles of public roadways** (Town and state-owned).



2 enterprise funds

Norfolk maintains **two enterprise funds for Water and Sewer services** where separate accounting and financial reporting is established for a municipal service in which a fee is charged in exchange for the service.

Key Issues



Over the last ten Town Meetings, Norfolk average attendance is just over two percent (2.16%) of registered voters. This average is below most communities in the region with a similar population and characteristics.



The Town of Norfolk has not completed an external facilities assessment recently to inform and prioritize its capital improvement investments.



Norfolk's Fleet includes 21 assets, or 25% of the total fleet, that are over 15 years old. Initial steps have been taken to enable Norfolk to invest in electric vehicles, however, the current fleet relies on conventional combustion engines and Town facilities cannot currently support a transition to electric.



In addition to continuing efforts to improve energy efficiency in school and municipal buildings, Norfolk needs to leverage opportunities from its facilities to produce clean energy.



Civic engagement is imperative to the public decision-making process and Norfolk does not have a consistent, resident friendly, and equitable communication strategy or process. As the primary communication resource, the Norfolk website can be difficult to navigate, and the catalog of meeting minutes and financial documents are inconsistently updated. Informational pages can be outdated, and town resources are only available in English.

Norfolk's Community Facilities and Services Toolbox

to improve facilities and services includes:



Town of Norfolk Capital Improvement Program (CIP) – the Town projects capital budgeting out 5 years using the ClearGov platform. The most recent capital budget book is FY24-FY28 Capital Budget Book.

Link: https://cms5.revize.com/revize/norfolk/Document_Center/Departments/Finance/Town%20Budgets/2024/View%20Capital%20Budget%20FY24.pdf



Aerial photo of Norfolk Town Hall. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Community Facilities and Services Goals & Strategies

The Town of Norfolk continually maintains and invests in the community facilities, personnel, and equipment that make town services possible. The challenge for the future is to set priorities and determine how competing projects will be paid for with limited sources of funds while retaining a focus on fiscal responsibility and the tax burden placed primarily on residential homeowners.

Norfolk's community services and facilities have undergone many changes in its 153-year history at the behest of its residents. In its current form the Town of Norfolk provides a range of services for residents that include Police, Fire, Ambulance, Public Works, Land Use, Recreation, and many others. Residents of Norfolk are able to determine the financial and other key policies of its local government by participating in the Norfolk Town Meeting. The Town requires investment, effective management, and planning to support Norfolk's current and future demands in support of the maintenance of public facilities and the development of private facilities.



Goal CFS1: Continue to refine and professionalize the Town's Capital Improvement and budget process.

Since FY23, Norfolk has produced a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which provides a thorough overview of the major capital projects planned over the next 5 years. The capital budget is where the Town lays out its priorities for large scale projects for the next 5 years, and where the largest town deficiencies are remedied. Utilizing the ClearGov Capital Budgeting software, the CIP has become a thorough and resident friendly document.

Strategy CFS 1.1 Establish clear goals and objectives for each town department and reference them in budgetary discussions.

The capital budget is where the Town lays out its priorities for large scale projects for the next 5 years, and where the largest town deficiencies are remedied. For example, the CIP includes multiple transportation related requests. These items if approved by the Select Board and voters will have a significant impact on Transportation in the community, and it is imperative that the CIP is utilized effectively to inform voters on the need for these capital projects and show the outcomes of their investment.

Strategy CFS 1.2 Build and enhance systems that collect operational metrics on each department and link information directly to the Town Budget to better inform budgetary decisions.

The current municipal budget is not resident friendly as it would be very difficult to understand the cause of budget increases or the status of ongoing department level projects without knowing where else to access that information. While great strides have been made in presenting this information using the ClearGov Transparency Center portal, the budget does not provide context on service or facility outcomes.

Strategy CFS 1.3 Invest in educating the community on municipal services, decisions, and finance by creating accessible educational programs, like a Citizen's (Civics) Academy, and creating a community outreach position and/or function to oversee resident engagement.

Hosting an annual Town budget and capital improvement community meeting in the lead up to Town Meeting could be very helpful in supporting a well-informed population. This type of session could be used to inform and educate residents so that Town Meeting might function more efficiently and effectively.

Community Facilities and Services Goals & Strategies

Goal CFS2: Identify opportunities to generate clean energy and prioritize investments that reduce the Town's carbon footprint and operational energy costs

The Town's Energy Committee is charged with assisting the Town of Norfolk in investigating, recommending, and advocating viable methods for achieving energy conservation and energy cost reduction through energy conservation, energy efficiency, and renewable energy generation. The Town is a designated Green Community and eligible for grants from the Commonwealth's Green Communities Division. The Town has a successful track record of renewable energy generation with the installation of two phases of solar arrays on the former Town landfill. A total of 1.6-megawatt solar array has been installed on a total of 5 acres.

Strategy CFS 2.1 Conduct a municipal energy audit of all facilities that includes the primary source of energy, demand, variance, evaluates the overall costs of fuel and system maintenance versus the costs of cleaner alternatives.

The energy conservation and energy efficiency of Town facilities is directly related to the cost of operation of the facilities. Energy audits of Town facilities would help to evaluate if more cost effective and sustainable alternatives for operation are available.

Strategy CFS 2.2 Identify, evaluate, and prioritize clean energy generation opportunities on public assets to begin electrifying municipal services.

The Town has a successful track record of renewable energy generation with the installation of two phases of solar arrays on the former Town landfill. A total of 1.6-megawatt solar array has been installed on a total of 5 acres. This installation occurred in 2012. Other Town properties and facilities should be evaluated to determine if additional clean energy generation opportunities exist. In addition to reducing the long-term operational costs of municipal services and facilities, clean energy generation can be combined with battery storage to provide a resilient power solution for emergency facilities. This type of investment can improve the resilience of the Town.

Strategy CFS 2.3 Continue the effort to expand infrastructure that assists Norfolk municipal departments adopt clean energy methods by approving relevant capital requests.

Provide Town departments with the support to continue to evolve operations in a manner that is more sustainable and cost-effective over the long term. Some of the relevant capital requests will be a part of annual budget requests. Other outside funding sources may be available as well. In 2020, Norfolk was designated a Green Community by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (MA DOER). At the time of designation, Norfolk was awarded a grant of \$144,600 for five energy projects to improve energy efficiency in town buildings.

**Strategy
CFS 2.4**

Upgrade Norfolk DPW, Police, and School facility electric services to enable high powered electric equipment charging and phase out gas powered equipment.

Planning for the long-term replacement of internal combustion engine vehicles requires investment in charging infrastructure as well as the conversion of the municipal fleet.

**Strategy
CFS 2.5**

Phase-in an electric municipal fleet.

Planning for the long-term replacement of internal combustion engine vehicles in the municipal fleet is one way to save money on fuel consumption while also providing a more sustainable delivery of services. Programs such as the Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) and the MAPC Green Mobility Purchasing Program are available.



Aerial photo of solar array in Norfolk. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Community Facilities and Services Goals & Strategies

Goal CFS3: Emphasize resilience and sustainability of Town services and infrastructure by investing in areas that protect business continuity.

Business continuity refers to the level of readiness to maintain critical functions after an emergency or disruption. The four pillars of business continuity are assessment, preparedness, responses, and recovery. Through programs such as the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program the Town has begun the process of assessment and preparedness with an emphasis on resilience and sustainability in the event of an emergency.

Strategy CFS 3.1 **Continue to implement actions identified in the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program to reduce vulnerabilities and pursue state funding for building community climate resilience. For example, preventative tree maintenance, evaluation of dam conditions, and emergency shelter provisions.**

In 2020, the Town prepared a Summary of Findings from the MVP Community Resilience Program. The highest priority actions identified include a condition assessment of existing stormwater systems, establishing a tree maintenance program, evaluating and remediating contaminated sites, maintaining the existing regional communications center, and maintaining the rural character and open space of the Town.

Strategy CFS 3.2 **Strengthen digital infrastructure to protect against increasingly common cyber-attacks and data breaches.**

The demands on the Norfolk Information Technology (IT) department will continue to rise. Investment in cybersecurity and regular external cyber assessments are vital to ensure Norfolk's assets and resident are protected. In addition to maintaining existing assets (using the 5 year refresh plan), Norfolk needs to invest in its IT department to implement operationally focused IT goals that enhance operational efficiencies.

Strategy CFS 3.3 **Target municipal investments towards Town Center and Route 115/1A to attract private investment and commercial growth.**

Town Center and Route 115/1A are the two centers of economic activity in the Town. These centers and the immediate surrounding vicinity should be the focus of continued municipal investments in infrastructure to support existing non-residential activity and to attract additional private investment and commercial growth.

Goal CFS4: Strengthen and expand the Town’s Enterprise Fund offerings to better provide Town services to residents and businesses.

Increasingly, municipalities are establishing enterprise funds for their business-type services, including water, sewer, stormwater, trash, ambulance, etc. A community adopts an enterprise fund by a vote of town meeting. It establishes a separate accounting and financial reporting mechanism for a municipal service for which a fee is charge in exchange for goods and services. An enterprise fund is considered the best practice to promote and maintain long-term financial sustainability for water, sewer, and stormwater activities. Norfolk currently maintains an enterprise fund for water. Many municipalities in the Commonwealth have multiple enterprise funds.

Strategy CFS 4.1 Continue to expand water service in Town to eventually include every residence in Norfolk.

Norfolk’s water is supplied from five wells that draw from the Charles River Watershed (two Gold Street wells, two Spruce Road wells, and one Holbrook Street well. The water is delivered to homes through 75 miles of water main and stored in two 1.0-million-gallon storage tanks. Through the municipal water system water is treated and tested, and leaks are minimized. Expanding water service brings the same level of quality and efficiency to additional residents. All water supplied locally, whether private or public, is drawing from the same Charles River Watershed. It is important for all water drawn to be managed and monitored as efficiently as possible.

Strategy CFS 4.2 Continue to explore wastewater solutions for Town Center and the funding mechanisms that may be needed to support investments.

A small wastewater treatment plant is available for a portion of the properties in the Town Center. These properties are in the area of Meetinghouse Road where the treatment facility is located. The Town now owns this treatment facility, but it does not have enough capacity to serve the entire Town Center. The Town has been evaluating expanding wastewater solutions for the Town Center for the past few years. In 2024, the Town received a nearly \$1 million federal grant to expand the wastewater capacity in Town Center. This expansion will help to overcome a major infrastructure barrier to additional mixed-use development in the Town Center.

Community Facilities and Services Goals & Strategies

Strategy CFS 4.3 **Continue to invest in water quality and water treatment to anticipate future regulations (for example, PFAS regulations required significant investments for impacted municipalities).**

In 2020, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) published its public drinking water standard for a group of six Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS). According to the Clean Water Fund, the standard is one of the nation's most stringent limits on PFAS in drinking water. Municipalities were then required to test public drinking water supplies in accordance with this new standard. For those municipalities found to not comply the cost of drinking water cleanup is considerable. State and federal funds are available, but local towns have also had to contribute to the cost of water treatment. Norfolk is fully in compliance with current regulations with no issues. However, just as new PFAS regulations emerged in 2020, other water supply risks could emerge in the future.

Strategy CFS 4.4 **Invest in the stormwater system to keep pace with increased rainfall intensity and duration. For example, complete a condition assessment of all culverts, enact an Operation and Maintenance program, and evaluate the possibility of creating a stormwater utility.**

The Town's stormwater infrastructure was identified as a highest priority in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) process. Regulations and requirements continue to increase for municipalities, such as the requirements of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permits. Similar to Norfolk's water enterprise fund. A stormwater utility or stormwater enterprise fund can be established to designate a fund dedicated only to stormwater work. As of 2023, 23 Massachusetts municipalities have established Stormwater utilities. Since impervious surfaces (roofs, driveways, and roadways) are what produce stormwater runoff that must be managed, stormwater utility rates are most commonly based on the amount of impervious surface on a property.

Goal CFS5: Make Town facilities and the policy and processes that drive decisions more accessible.

Since Fiscal Year 2023, Norfolk has produced a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) which provides a transparent and accessible overview of the major capital projects planned over the next 5 years. Separating major capital projects from the annual operating budget is a well-accepted best practice for municipal government and helps provide residents with a clearer understanding of the properties, facilities, and equipment that Norfolk maintains, the purpose of these assets, and how they are to be maintained in the near future. Utilizing the ClearGov Capital Budgeting software, the CIP has become a thorough and resident friendly document.

Strategy CFS 5.1 Conduct an external facilities assessment to inform the capital improvement planning process.

A third-party facility and roadways analysis would provide an unbiased and objective assessment of Norfolk's assets. It would ensure that Norfolk residents, administration, and elected officials have accurate data and expert insights to make more informed capital improvement decisions. This analysis could help identify cost-savings opportunities and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the capital improvement process.

Strategy CFS 5.2 Formalize a transparent decision-making framework to evaluate and prioritize capital improvement spending.

The CIP outlines the process for each request, and notes that it is the responsibility of each department head to prioritize its department's requests. The prioritization of requests may not be as defined and is not frequently subject to broader community input. Narratives could also expand to discuss the cause of budget increases, the status of ongoing department level projects, and the status of previous priorities and projects which have been completed. A comparison of budgeted and actual costs for capital improvements would be useful data to incorporate into future decision-making and prioritization.

Strategy CFS 5.3 Improve accessibility of Community Facilities and public areas by continuing to implement steps in prior self-evaluations.

In 2021 the Town of Norfolk completed an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan for Town-wide facilities and Sidewalks and Curb Ramps. The two plans suggest prioritized proposed improvements, potential project funding, and a potential schedule of improvements. The proposed approach to facilities is to seek competitive grants and the use of local funds appropriated on an annual basis. The proposed approach to sidewalks is to incrementally improve accessibility over a 10-year period with an annual line item in the Town budget.

Community Facilities and Services Goals & Strategies

Strategy CFS 5.4 **Occasionally undertake a comprehensive review of the Town Charter and/or organization of Legislative Special Acts.**

Under Massachusetts General Law Chapter 43B, towns can form a charter commission to adopt a new charter, revise an existing charter, or amend selected charter provisions. “Charter” refers to a written instrument that defines the government structure under which the town operates. It may create local offices, distribute powers, duties, and responsibilities, and establish and define certain procedures to be followed by town government. The intent of the review is to identify outdated language or practices and to identify areas for refinement to produce more effective governance. The Town of Norfolk, like many other municipalities in Massachusetts, has formed their local government using Legislative Special Acts. For Legislative Special Acts, any change that the town would like to make would also need to be approved locally and submitted to the State Legislature for approval.



Aerial photo of Town Hill. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Goal CFS6: Prepare for challenges in the municipal labor market and rising costs of services.

The labor market in general remains tight with low unemployment. The workforce is aging generally, and that aging is pronounced in public sector employment. The talent pipeline for public sector employees is less strong than the talent pipeline for private sector employees. All these dynamics contribute to a challenging future for the municipal labor market. Employment opportunities for specialty positions with requirements for expertise or training are particularly difficult to fill and vacant positions can persist for months. The current municipal labor market, particularly in specialized municipal functions including building, mechanical, finance, public health, and public safety will create challenges for maintaining local services without a proper succession and recruitment plan. Proactively planning for a strong municipal workforce is required in the context of the current labor market.

Strategy CFS 6.1 Conduct a formal succession planning study to evaluate Norfolk’s current practices and continually improve town policies to improve organizational sustainability, document processes and procedures, and strengthen onboarding.

A third-party facility and roadways analysis would provide an unbiased and objective assessment of Norfolk’s assets. It would ensure that Norfolk residents, administration, and elected officials have accurate data and expert insights to make more informed capital improvement decisions. This analysis could help identify cost-savings opportunities and improve the overall efficiency and effectiveness of the capital improvement process.

Strategy CFS 6.2 Develop relationships with higher education staff and offer professional paid internship programs to attract local students.

This strategy may be most effective in partnership with other municipalities or partner organizations such as the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA). A part of the municipal labor market concerns is the reduced strength of the talent pipeline. Programs directed toward college students and young professionals could increase the number of potential candidates that are interested and qualified to fill open positions in the municipal labor market.

Strategy CFS 6.3 Foster collaboration and partnerships with neighboring municipalities at each department level to promote knowledge and service sharing.

Collaboration with neighboring municipalities can aid in the coordination of issues that cross town boundaries. This collaboration can also be a platform for sharing best practices. Shared Service Arrangements offer a way to formalize this collaboration and to share resources and staff. This is particularly useful in areas of expertise where a smaller municipality may not be able to support an additional full time staff member. For example, Shared Service Offices are frequently used in the region to provide additional housing or public health expertise that is shared between multiple municipalities.

Community Facilities and Services Goals & Strategies

Goal CFS7: Encourage more frequent collaboration across Norfolk boards and committees for increased efficiency and effectiveness.

Governance of the Town is organized through 21 elected, appointed, and volunteer boards, commissions, and committees. Generally, these governing bodies can be organized around five categories - Town Management, Health and Human Services, Land Use and Zoning, Community, and Education.

Strategy CFS 7.1 Each board and committee should establish clear goals and reevaluate annually.

The practice of defining annual goals is practiced by some boards and committees. For example, the Select Board defines goals and combines them with Town Administrator goals. Other boards and committees should follow this practice to provide a more proactive approach to the leadership the boards and committees are providing. Ideally, board and committee goals would be consistent with the Master Plan and shared with other relevant boards and committees.

Strategy CFS 7.2 Board and committees should encourage joint meetings where multiple approvals or perspectives are required. For example, encourage shared pre-development review meetings.

Joint meetings are an effective approach to efficient coordination when an issue, topic, or project require the review or input of multiple boards or committees. In general, it is a good practice for joint meetings between relevant boards and committees to occur to build common understanding. Joint meetings also help individual boards and committees to understand their relationship in the town and how multiple boards and committees are advancing the goals of the town collectively.

Strategy CFS 7.3 Make space within limited meeting times and busy agendas for implementing town priorities.

Board and committee meetings agendas often become filled with regular business. Keeping pace with the prescribed timelines of required projects and reviews is one of the primary concerns of the boards and committees. If the board and committee has proactively established annual goals, it would be a best practice to place time on agendas to also discuss and advance one of the goals that have been prioritized. Multiple goals can be advanced over the course of a year. This practice allows boards and committees to be responsive to the items that are brought before them while proactively addressing items of their own choosing.

**Strategy
CFS 7.4**

Become more proactive in recruiting new voices in Town Government and maintaining commitment and continuity for town volunteer positions.

All boards, committees, and commissions consist of Norfolk citizens who contribute their time for the benefit of the Town. The Town already posts board and committee vacancies on the Town website with instructions and materials for how to apply. Providing this information in a more visible and proactive manner may help to attract additional candidates to fill vacant volunteer positions. The promotion of these volunteer opportunities should also be used as an opportunity to target populations that may be underrepresented in volunteer leadership positions of the Town. For example, younger residents, residents who are renters, or residents who earn less than the median income.





Community Health

The Community Health element takes an interdisciplinary lens across each element of the Master Plan, ensuring that community livability and well-being is incorporated as a metric for municipal programs, services, and spending. Goals and strategies promote positive health outcomes for current and future Norfolk residents.

What are residents saying about community health?

"We know that sidewalks increase local business viability and also has great health outcomes. I visited my parents in their rural town in Western Mass for a few days and my step count increased to 8,000 steps a day, but when I am home I am around 1,000 a day mostly because I don't feel safe walking with a stroller on Seekonk to the center of town, to Kennedy, or to Rockwood playground. The dream would be that we could walk or ride bikes to school or the playground."

"As a mother who has had to go to the ER twice in the last two weeks with her kids... it does give me a lot of pause that we are 30-40 minutes away from our closest ER (Milford and Needham). It is so important that we support Norwood in their efforts to reopen their hospital ASAP."

"Medical facilities are out of town and there is no bus for people who no longer drive."

"Metacomet Greenway bike path!"

"Greater accessibility for people with mobility impairments."

"Older adults who need transport to appointments that are between Norfolk and Boston."

"More sidewalks! Streets like Cleveland are so dangerous. I always feel like I'm going to be run over when out for a run. My kids won't ride their bike because it's dangerous."

"Need for more community services for people with disabilities."

"A need for designated gathering/playing areas for our youth."

"The sidewalk should extend all the way to the Senior center. There should be a bike rack at Senior center."

"Currents parks seems underutilized."

"More buildings for indoor recreation. This would help with camps and activities."

"For a small town it is very unwalkable and unsafe that leads to more difficulty using these spaces."

"Need free training for CPR/First Aid certification."

"Mental health for youth and teens."

"Investing in the health of residents through programs and amenities (fresh food options)."

"I hope we can have a town center where families can shop and eat and be able to run into neighbors. I hope it's a place where the community can come together and spend money in their own town without having to travel to other town for amenities like restaurants and food stores."

"Hopefully to continue to create that close-knit family feel, where people know each other and say hello when walking. People get together for a common goal, etc."

"Expanded recreational opportunities and bike/foot infrastructure."

"[My vision for Norfolk is..] connectivity between residents, more community, more gathering spaces, diverse ethnically, environmentally friendly, well taken care of, accepting of all people."

"The town absolutely needs a grocery store - even a smaller option like brothers market- to increase opportunities for community building, convenience for residents, and to put money back into the town that can ease property taxes and support pre-k-6 schooling."

Quick Facts



28% 60 years or older

28% of Norfolk residents are 60 years or older. Older residents of Norfolk fare better on most healthy aging indicators than older residents across the Commonwealth. (*MA Healthy Aging Collaborative*)



25% under 18 years old

The town is home to families with young children, with almost 25% of the entire population being under 18 years old.



Norfolk residents experience healthier outcomes than residents of other municipalities in the Commonwealth.



1 medical clinic
0 hospitals

There is one medical facility in Norfolk: the Tufts Medical Center clinic. The closest hospitals are the UMass Memorial Health Hospital in Marlborough and the Milford Regional Medical Center in Milford.

Defining Public Health Terms

- **Community Health:** non-clinical approaches for improving health, preventing disease, and reducing health disparities through addressing social, behavioral, environmental, economic, and medical determinants of health in a geographically defined population. *American Health Association (AHA)*
- **Foundations of Health:** commonly referred to as Social Determinants of Health, these are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, play, and age. These conditions include quality and accessible housing, quality education, quality healthcare, recreational space, community infrastructure, employment, access to technology, the environment, and the wider set of forces and systems that shape the conditions of daily life such as poverty, racism, policy and governance, social norm and many more.
- **Health Disparities:** preventable differences in the burden of disease, injury, violence, or opportunities to achieve optimal health that are experienced by socially disadvantaged populations. *Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*
- **Health Equity:** a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. Achieving health equity requires focused and ongoing efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices, remove obstacles to health, and eliminate preventable health disparities. It involves acknowledging and addressing racism as a threat to public health and the history and ongoing use of unethical practices in public health that lead to inequitable health outcomes. *(CDC)*
- **Racism:** a system designed and constructed to benefit white people and justify the dehumanization of Black, Indigenous, and people of color that is maintained through institutional structures and policies, cultural norms and values, and individual behaviors. Racism shapes social and economic factors that put some people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk for negative mental health outcomes and health-related behaviors, as well as chronic and toxic stress or inflammation. Racism prevents millions of people from attaining their highest level of health, and consequently, affects the health of our nation. *(Race Forward, CDC)*

Norfolk's Community Health Toolbox includes:



Norfolk Board of Health serves the residents of the Town, their work is heavily focused on addressing regulatory health issues, which are primarily environmental health issues such as residential septic tank systems. The Board oversees the Town's Medical Reserve Corps and its Community Emergency Response Team, which are made up of volunteers prepared to assist in local public health emergencies.

The Metacomet Public Health Alliance (the Alliance) was established in Spring 2019 as a collaboration between the towns of Franklin, Norfolk, and Wrentham to improve the health and well-being of residents by providing them with public health services and programs.

- The Alliance offers a **Nursing Services Program** to provide comprehensive nursing services to residents of Norfolk and member communities, especially residents who face challenges due to location, mobility, and income. Nursing services include wellness programming, flu clinics, disease screenings, and disease investigations. Additionally, the nursing program aims to create partnerships to prevent disease, reduce the effects of chronic diseases, lower premature death rates, and improve the quality of life in Norfolk and member communities.
- **Inspectional Services** are available to Norfolk through the Alliance. A Regional Health Agent provides technical services including state sanitary code inspections such as food establishment inspections, camp inspections, swimming pool inspections, and housing/nuisance inspections. The Alliance also provides Norfolk access to a Regional Environmental Health Agent and offers Emergency Preparedness support to provide individual and family preparedness resources.

The **Tufts Medical Center Specialty Center** in Norfolk is a clinic that offers medical care by doctors who specialize in endocrinology, breast and plastic surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, urogynecology, and rheumatology.

The **Norfolk Council on Aging** (the Council) serves as a resource for older residents, their families, and caretakers by providing programs and services that enhance their quality of life, promote healthy aging, and foster independence. Programs offered by the Council include activities that promote physical activity, social interaction, and even grocery shopping.

The Town adopted a **complete streets policies and plan**, but the lack of new sidewalk and bicycle connections since the 2007 Master Plan suggests challenges in implementing recommendations.

Key Issues



There is one medical facility in Norfolk: the Tufts Medical Center clinic. The closest hospitals are the UMass Memorial Health Hospital in Marlborough and the Milford Regional Medical Center in Milford.



Health metrics indicate that Norfolk residents generally experience healthier outcomes than residents across the Commonwealth. However, the data also shows that rates of cancer, COPD, high cholesterol, and obesity are more prevalent in Norfolk than they are across the state.



Health data reveals that Norfolk residents partake in risky health behaviors at a slightly higher rate than residents across the Commonwealth. Residents engage in more binge drinking and smoking and less physical activity than residents across the Commonwealth.



Norfolk residents participate in preventive screenings and services at a similar rate or better than residents across the Commonwealth. Norfolk slightly lags behind the Commonwealth in terms of preventive services for breast cancer and diseases.



Norfolk lacks the social infrastructure that encourages interaction and leads to social cohesion. A more connected community with strong social support networks offers individuals social capital or shared group resources and learning.



Many households rely on septic tank systems to treat wastewater, and the town does not have any stormwater surge system.



There is a general lack of awareness and understanding of community health and its intersection with broader town decisions



Limited health data is available at the local level. Health data is necessary to understand the key health issues that Norfolk residents face and identify opportunities to improve community health. However, there are limitations to health data. Current data is not always available. The most recent Community Health Assessment including Norfolk, the 2019 MetroWest Region Community Health Assessment, did not include any responses from Norfolk residents.



In areas with small populations like Norfolk, data may be limited due to restrictions on privacy. This makes it difficult to identify where health disparities may exist, and which populations are disproportionately burdened by poor health, harmful exposures, or social barriers to health.



The lack of pedestrian and bicycle connections means the vast majority of trips, even short trips, must be made by automobile – resulting in increasing traffic, pollution, automobile crashes. Many students cannot safely walk or bike to school, and many have difficulty with participating in after-school activities if they do not have friends or family who can drive them.

Community Health Goals & Strategies

Community health considers the factors outside of medical approaches that improve health, prevent disease, and reduce health disparities by addressing the broader foundations of health, including social, economic, and environmental conditions. Improving conditions to promote healthy living and reduce risks to well-being at the community level is essential because it provides the greatest benefits to the health of a community and elevates health equity among all residents. The Town has an aging population, low density, and a lack of passive community gathering spaces. These factors can worsen sedentary and isolated lifestyles, which negatively impact individual health. The strategies recommended here take a holistic perspective with the understanding that multiple factors may contribute to health outcomes, these outcomes may be symptoms of the root problem, and steps can be taken to address their root causes. The goals and strategies here are aimed to address challenges to healthy lifestyles and habits and enhance the quality of life, with a focus on physical and mental health, for Norfolk community members.

The Social Determinants of Health (SDoH) are external factors that influence the health and well-being of individuals including social, environmental, and behavioral factors. These factors can combine to affect 60% of an individual's long-term health outcomes, more than the influence of genetics and healthcare combined. Individual physical and mental health is dependent on multiple levels of context. Healthy people need a healthy community. A healthy community needs a healthy environment. A healthy environment needs a healthy society. In order to optimize health, mental health, and well-being, conditions at each of these levels need to be transformed to support health where people are born, grow, live, work, and age. The goals below will benefit from a collaborative approach between multiple stakeholders including Town representatives, Board of Health, and the school district to name a few. It may require entities expanding or shifting their traditional roles to help advance the larger vision for the Town.

Community Health Goals & Strategies

Goal CH1: Improve infrastructure to increase safety, walkability, and connectedness and expand opportunities for active and passive recreation.

Transportation and how people move through their communities on a daily basis plays an important factor in both individual health and communal health. In order to encourage physical activity and create a healthier community, the town can improve connectivity and options for active transportation within the town and to area destinations. The Town of Norfolk has limited infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, persons using mobility aids, and non-motorized vehicular traffic in general.

The most direct impacts of safer road design are reductions in vehicle accidents and related injuries and deaths. Currently, there are 9,490 active vehicles registered in the Town of Norfolk, with a household average of 30 miles driven daily. 94.47% are passenger vehicles. Lack of physical activity have significant long-term impacts on a person's health that can result in obesity, Type II diabetes, coronary heart disease, and certain cancers.

By creating neighborhoods that invite and encourage people to walk or bike to their destinations, instead of relying on their vehicles, it helps create healthier habits and integrate physical activity into their existing daily routines. Evidence suggests that good infrastructure (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) and public transportation access leads to increased walking and biking for transportation purposes, and therefore plays an important role in increasing population-level physical activity. A robust body of literature links physical activity to a wide range of health benefits. In addition to the benefits of physical activity, reducing vehicle traffic also reduces emissions that pollute the air, which are related to asthma rates. All of these factors- vehicular accidents, physical inactivity, and polluted environments- contribute to increased mortality rates. By creating more pedestrian-oriented design, it also contributes to the social health of public spaces through opportunities for spontaneous interactions, more active neighborhoods, and greater opportunities for community relationship building.

As the Town looks at its infrastructure investments for the future, the strategies below put forth recommendations to center community health and wellbeing in that endeavor.

Strategy CH 1.1 Ensure regional Vision Zero plan and other transportation plans prioritize improvements that support health by eliminating traffic fatalities and injuries and promoting accessible design.

Community feedback has highlighted concerns about safety, speed of car traffic, and lack of precautionary safety measures that should be addressed to allow for equitable access to the town as a whole. By adopting a Vision Zero plan, or incorporating elements of Vision Zero into transportation planning and traffic management interventions, the town can help make the streets safer for all users. This should be paired with an awareness campaign for community knowledge building for the effort.

Strategy
CH 1.2

Invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that connects residents to destinations that support health such as grocery stores, commercial districts, recreation destinations, transit, and schools.

While there are open space areas for recreation and enjoyment, access to these areas typically requires driving a car and parking. By investing in infrastructure that encourages non-vehicular modes of transportation, residents can have more options to travel to their destinations. This encourages active transportation such as walking and biking. Furthermore, it increases mobility for kids who may not drive, given that 25% of the town's population are under 18 years old. By giving alternatives to driving, children are able to be more mobile without depending on a vehicle and a driver. It also means that they build healthy habits at a younger age. By giving people alternative means of safe transportation, it helps reduce dependence on automobiles and increase active transportation. This has benefits for both individual physical health as well as the community's social atmosphere.



Aerial photo of playing fields in Norfolk. Photo courtesy of Andy Bakinowski.

Community Health Goals & Strategies

Goal CH2: Expand the Board of Health’s capacity to assess community health vulnerabilities, trends, and challenges to better support the community’s health needs through partnerships and regional collaboration.

One of the challenges in the development of a comprehensive community health analysis was the lack of readily available data specific to the population of Norfolk. The Town should work with its neighboring municipalities, through the Metacomet Public Health Alliance, to develop a regular method of awareness raising, outreach, and data collection around health needs and challenges that residents and workers face. By coming together to develop standardized materials such as flyers and surveys that are administered across multiple communities at regular intervals, each town will be able to reap the benefits of greater capacity, a further reach, and a larger pool of data for analysis. Through more intentional collaboration, there can also be greater consensus about practices and policies, informed both by the unique needs of each partner municipality and supported more widely across town boundaries.

The following strategies are aimed to address the information and data gaps and expand capacity for community health planning initiatives.

Strategy CH 2.1 Continue regional collaboration with the Metacomet Public Health Alliance to deliver public health services through shared municipal initiatives.

The Metacomet Public Health Alliance is an important convening entity that can help the partnering towns identify challenges and develop solutions. Through collaboration, each partnering town can expand their capacity for knowledge building, information sharing, and plan implementation. The Town should utilize this vehicle for collaboration on its community health initiatives. By combining efforts with neighboring towns, they can compound their impact.

Strategy CH 2.2 Create avenues to assess the community’s health and wellness needs on a regular basis.

The Town should expand the Metacomet Public Health Alliance to better facilitate health and wellness services in the town. Working through the Metacomet Health Alliance, the Town needs to increase the collection and use of local health data currently available from community and publicly available sources as a foundation for building additional information. This can begin as an **area-wide health survey** that is distributed across the partner towns. The Town should work with a community health specialist to develop the survey tool, conduct outreach efforts for participation, and later analyze the data. This should occur on a regular annual basis, with certain data points remaining the same to compare across years and geographies, with the understanding that the survey questionnaire should be reviewed and modified each year to address changing trends. The survey should be available in digital and paper formats with multiple points of access.

**Strategy
CH 2.3****Develop and implement a communications strategy to inform residents, businesses, and municipal staff about existing health services.**

Another role of the collaborative partnership formed through the Metacomet Health Alliance should be to expand awareness, information sharing, and communal knowledge building. A comprehensive strategy that reaches beyond the town is especially important due to the lack of amenities and services available in the town. As most residents must travel to neighboring communities for their health needs and their errands, working together with other municipalities is essential for expanding awareness. Residents may obtain their information from flyers they see in local grocery stores, dry cleaners, and other businesses and areas they visit outside the town. An effective strategy requires area-wide collaboration, ideally through uniform branding. Establishing cross-community partnership around community health increases visibility and recognition, which are both necessary for trust and confidence building around a topic as sensitive and private as health and wellness. Uniform, streamlined, and regular methods of communication are especially vital for sharing information in the event of health emergencies, as witnessed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Community Health Goals & Strategies

Goal CH3: Support improvements that address the physical, mental, and social health and well-being of residents, with a special focus on the unique needs of youth and seniors.

The majority of the Town's population is comprised of either youth under 18 years of age (comprising 25% of the population), or elderly residents over the age of 60 (comprising 28% of the population). The Town is made up of low density, single family residential development that is largely auto-dependent. This development pattern can exacerbate isolation, is not conducive to physical activity, and can have detrimental effects on the physical wellbeing of residents, the social vibrancy of the community, and individuals' mental health. The Town could take steps to focus on these two target populations by gearing resources and services to address the unique challenges they face. Over the past few years after the immediate physical threat of Covid-19 declined, there has been increased widespread focus on mental health in communities across the country. As the Town seeks to better serve its residents, it is essential that both physical and mental health initiatives are prioritized in its efforts.

Strategy CH 3.1 Support programs that provide social and emotional support to younger and older residents.

The Town should work with healthcare providers and community-based health organizations to expand targeted support in their offerings to both the youth and senior populations. The Town should collaborate with these partners to develop programming that is locally accessible to these groups both in-person and virtually online. The Town's support to these services can take various forms including raising awareness about access to mental health providers, supporting the development of support group services through facilitating use of publicly-owned facilities, and contracting with community-based organizations that serve as concierges to connect community members with the services they seek.

Strategy CH 3.2 Strengthen relationships between the local school districts and Norfolk Council on Aging to improve access to activities and programs, share knowledge of resources and services available, and expand intergenerational opportunities.

The Town can help bring together these two target populations through programming and opportunities for collaboration. Intergenerational learning and activities have proven mutual benefits for both age groups to help reduce loneliness and social isolation, build friendships and social connections, and enhance learning and skill sharing across age groups. One model includes co-locating childcare and eldercare together.

See it in action: Intergenerational Care

Mass Audubon Habitat Intergenerational Program (HIP)

The Habitat Intergenerational Program (HIP) is a volunteer community service and learning program that started in 1997 at Habitat Education Center in Belmont. HIP connects people of all ages, dispels myths about how the young and old should act, and promotes the joy of learning together. It enables persons of many generations to participate in environmental service projects and become stewards of their environment.

Find out more: <https://www.massaudubon.org/places-to-explore/wildlife-sanctuaries/habitat/programs-activities/hip-at-habitat>

Strategy CH 3.3 **Establish a Youth Council to elevate youth issues and empower youth to be involved in decisions that affect their community.**

Many communities have established youth councils to help amplify the voices of youth in their communities. Young people are often overlooked and underrepresented in traditional electoral processes, especially with voting age restrictions. While it may be assumed that parents represent their children's interests, it inherently excludes a large percentage of the population. By establishing a formal youth council, the Town can engage the younger population in civic leadership, help their needs be raised and heard, and activate and engage the younger population in town decisions and future development.

Community Health Goals & Strategies

Goal CH4: Increase opportunities for social engagement and community connectedness.

Feedback gathered from the Master Plan public forums and community-wide survey note that there is a strong desire for local goods and services such as restaurants, a small grocery store, coffee shops, and the like. There is also clear rejection of big box retailers to fill these needs. The Town has struggled to attract and facilitate an active Town Center over the past decades and as such, a more involved approach may be effective. The Town can work to cultivate its local resources into commercial businesses to better serve local residents. These types of businesses will capture the leakage that occurs when residents travel to neighboring towns to purchase their goods and services. In addition to the benefits of a diversified tax base, these types of businesses can be natural passive gathering places that foster a sense of belonging and community. In a town with relatively low density and an auto-centric design, social isolation, especially in the aging senior citizen population, is a real threat. There is a strong desire for a “third place” - an anchor of the community and usually a public setting that hosts frequent and informal gatherings of people. The Town can take steps to develop a more social and communal atmosphere through investments to foster and grow certain types of desirable businesses.

Strategy CH 4.1 Activate Town Center as a gathering space for events, programming, and a community anchor for community members of all ages.

Through development standards, design guidelines, and direct investments in infrastructural improvements, the Town can develop a pedestrian-oriented and age-friendly Town Center that not only provides amenities and services to residents, but one that is also a gathering space for community members. The people that spend the most amount of time in the town are children and the elderly. They likely do not commute for work and may be dependent upon someone else for transportation. Creating a place that they enjoy spending their time in both through private businesses and public realm enhancements is essential to activating Town Center.

Strategy CH 4.2 Leverage public facilities to support connection between residents by enhancing recreation services, such as adult classes and group exercises, and strengthening arts and cultural programming for all ages.

The Town could facilitate more activities for residents including fitness classes, group recreational activities (e.g. hikes), pick-up adult and senior sports leagues, and skills workshops. Town residents expressed a strong desire for these options to be available more locally. The Town can procure services from local business owners to further support the entrepreneurs in town and provide more visibility to their businesses. In-town activities and events will help bring people together and grow the sense of community. This can begin as ad-hoc annual sports and recreation days and tournaments to allow flexibility and greater participation based on peoples’ availability. This will also help gauge the demand to sustain a more regular schedule of activities.

**Strategy
CH 4.3**

Collaborate with local and regional organizations to support social and cultural gatherings, celebrations, and lifelong learning.

As the Town seeks to build local capacity for more entertainment opportunities, they can begin by facilitating special occasional events. They should partner with organizations in the area to develop arts and culture events and pop-ups to activate the town center. This can help build it as a cultural destination in the short-term, while long-term interventions are under development. Local access to entertainment, arts, and cultural programming is an important building block for social and mental wellbeing. It is also important for people to be able to experience what an active Town Center looks and feels like to help realize the vision for more permanent improvements.

Community Health Goals & Strategies

Goal CH5: Sustain and expand access to local food.

The Town is predominantly residential with a small commercial base. As such, it lacks a full-service grocery store like what surrounding communities enjoy. The community feedback has been largely in support of bringing in a small grocery store option, one that is not a typical big box chain store that may induce traffic. As the Town works on economic development efforts to create more long-term local options, there are steps the town can take to expand access in the near-term. The Town has a robust farming culture and is in close proximity to agricultural lands. Prioritizing access to local food presents an opportunity to address multiple goals. It can reduce the carbon footprint associated with transportation of produce to its destination customers, it can capture revenue leaked to other towns when community members shop elsewhere, and it can provide healthy food options for residents. The strategies below present interventions that can facilitate greater access to food locally.

Strategy CH 5.1 Increase food access by improving transportation to grocery stores.

The Council on Aging provides transportation services to local senior citizens for their errands, including grocery shopping. The closest large-scale grocery store appears to be Big Y in Franklin, approximately 5 miles away and between 10 - 15 minutes by car. The town can improve transportation options to Big Y that increase access to the grocery store for all residents, not just the older population. This can be a shuttle service available to all residents or a rotational carpool facilitated by a local organization.

Strategy CH 5.2 Continue to support and expand local food production and distribution through community gardens and farmers' markets.

The Town should further support the historic farming culture through regulatory relief such as the adoption of Right to Farm legislation and helping farming hobbyists participate in produce exchanges or sales. They can coordinate harvest exchanges for residents, either passively through a community refrigerator and pantry or actively through seasonal weekly events. This would be marketed to residents who have small scale farming projects on their residential properties. The Town can also hold farming workshops, facilitate a tool share program, and work with local schools and organizations to engage interested residents in farming as a hobby towards the development of a community garden space.

Some of the area farming businesses currently offer Community Serving Agriculture (CSA) options where residents can sign up to receive locally grown produce on a seasonal basis. This is a valuable model in the community and has potential for growth. The Town should help raise awareness among residents about these programs and encourage their use through active marketing and providing gifts cards or vouchers. The Town currently holds an outdoor farmers' markets on Wednesday evenings on Town Hill. This also directly activates town center with more activity. The farmer's market should also be expanded indoors, as possible, in the colder seasons by facilitating use of town-owned facilities (e.g., the Grange). The Town should establish a more permanent central location for longer-term use to develop a more consistent local grocery option that can eventually grow into a co-op.

**Strategy
CH 5.3**

Facilitate local food procurement at restaurants, schools, and municipal facilities.

The Town can help raise awareness and connect local farming businesses to nearby restaurants to facilitate business-to-business sales and services. The Town can also work with the state in order to facilitate procurement arrangements between the area schools and facilities to local farms. Helping local farms to increase their revenue can strengthen their business, and help preserve the farming community and lands.

Goal CH6: Identify and remediate sources of pollution that degrade water quality in town.

A rising concern for residents is resource conservation and water quality. The Town should work to understand the current conditions of natural resources, pollution status, and create a plan to address the problems. By inventorying and creating an ongoing plan for monitoring conditions, the town can better position itself to understand how different factors affect the natural environment. The Town can support environmental organizations that may already be working on these efforts to help elevate their work through collaborative funding applications, access, and implementing regulatory measures for prevention.

**Strategy
CH 6.1**

Identify locations where stormwater systems are not adequate for increases in rainfall intensity and duration. Increase stormwater capacity and enhance practices of nearby landowners to decrease contaminants in stormwater runoff.

Climate change is producing drastic weather events that current infrastructure is not adequately prepared to handle. The Town needs to conduct an audit of its stormwater infrastructure and take appropriate measures to enhance it to accommodate heightened levels of stormwater runoff. Stormwater best practices also need to be incorporated, especially in terms of pollution and runoff. The Town should develop its stormwater and wastewater systems together.

**Strategy
CH 6.2**

Continue to work with owners of contaminated sites to support possible remediation and redevelopment options.

Work with the owners of contaminated sites to develop plans and pursue funding opportunities to remediate contaminated sites. This is an obstacle for future development and a detriment to the Town's potential.





Implementation: Achieving the Vision

A master plan is only effective if there is a shared community commitment to implementation of the outlined goals and strategies. Implementation relies on shared stewardship and attention by Town staff, Norfolk Boards and Committees, and the residents who ultimately make many of the decisions at annual Town Meetings. Throughout the course of the planning process, it became clear that Norfolk is constrained by both municipal capacity and financial resources. Implementation of master plans does not happen overnight, and strategic steps should be taken to make strides over the next decade. Over the course of 18 months, as the project team gathered feedback on issues, challenges, and opportunities, priorities also became apparent. Norfolk residents are most interested in seeing progress in the following areas:

- Strengthening Town Center
- Expanding mobility and recreation opportunities
- Growing the local economy to lessen the burden on residential taxes and support local businesses
- Improving resiliency and adaptation in the face of climate change

This section outlines four strategic action plans that set forth a path for Town officials to make progress in these focus areas over the next 3-5 years. As work is accomplished, the action plans should be revisited on a regular basis to stay the course on achieving the long-term vision.

Norfolk Town Leadership: Bringing the Community Together to Implement

While Norfolk's municipal capacity has expanded over time to include professionally staffed departments and a strong Town Administrator, the Town still depends on the dedication of volunteer residents to serve on the various boards and committees charged with making decisions and recommendations to other bodies. To properly chart out implementation and hold implementors responsible for advancing the shared vision of this plan, it is important to understand these different stakeholders and decision-makers in Town government.

Norfolk has the following municipal departments. The size of the departments varies, and some staff may be shared across departments.

| Town Department | Role |
|---|--|
| Town Administrator | Appointed by the Select Board. Responsible for daily management of Town government. |
| Animal Control | Helps residents with issues related to public safety, laws, wildlife concerns, disease issues, and other scenarios. Handles nuisance and dangerous animals and looks out for the safety of animals within Norfolk. Approx. 2,100 dogs and a variety of wildlife. |
| Assessors | Oversees yearly revaluation of all real and personal property in Norfolk. Maintains property tax records and parcel ownership data. Oversees tax exemption programs, collection of excise taxes, and preparation of abutters lists. Approx. 4,200 parcels in Norfolk. |
| Building | Administers and enforces the following state codes: building, electrical, plumbing, and mechanical. Works with the Town Planner to administer and enforce the Norfolk Zoning Bylaw. |
| Facilities | Combined Facilities Department oversees municipal buildings and Norfolk schools. Responsibilities include capital improvements and planning, custodial care and cleaning, landscaping and pedestrian snow removal for school properties, maintenance and repairs of all municipally-owned buildings, procurement, and school building rentals. |
| Finance | Develops and oversees the Town's annual operating and capital budgets. Coordinates all financial services and activities across Town departments. |
| Human Resources | Develops and administers policies and procedures related to recruitment, retention, training, and staff development. |
| Information and Technology | Provides technical support for Town departments and coordinates townwide systems for applications, email, GIS, website, and telecommunications. |
| Land Use | Collectively includes Town staff who support the Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals to effectively plan for short-term and long-term changes in land use and the built environment. |
| Library | Provides resources and services to promote lifelong learning, recreational interests, cultural exchanges, and a sense of community for Norfolk residents of all ages. |
| Public Safety (Police and Fire) | Responds to 9-1-1 calls related to fire, rescue, criminal behavior, and other aspects of community safety. Both departments provide prevention and health care training and youth programming. |
| Public Works | Maintains and preserves the Town's infrastructure. Provides a range of services including snow and ice removal, stormwater drainage, water supply and distribution, wastewater collection and pumping, vehicle fleet maintenance, road maintenance and improvement, maintenance of Town properties, and transfer station operations. |
| Recreation | Provides recreational programming, community events, and maintenance of recreation properties (fields, playgrounds, community garden) |
| Senior Center / Council on Aging | Provides space and programming for Norfolk's residents aged 60 years and older. |
| Town Clerk | Manages and preserves official Town records and assists the public in accessing public documents and information. Supports boards and committees. Administers municipal elections. |
| Treasurer / Collector | Responsible for the collection of real estate and personal property taxes, water payments, and motor vehicle excise taxes. |
| Veterans Services | Local arm of the Department of Veterans' Services. Provides information about resources and benefits available for Veterans to Norfolk residents. |

Town Boards & Committees

The following Boards and Committees have been created to oversee and guide various functions of Town government. Boards and committees rely on the volunteerism of Norfolk residents. Depending on municipal projects, special committees – like the Fire Station Building Committee – form to guide municipal decision-making. These temporary committees have not been included in the following table. Often times, boards and committees play a vital role in advancing goals and strategies of master plans. While municipal staff are bogged down in the day-to-day activities, small towns like Norfolk rely on volunteers to help expand municipal capacity to undertake special projects.

| Town Department | Role |
|--|--|
| Advisory Committee | Consists of nine members appointed by the Town Moderator (for Town Meeting). Submits the municipal budget to Town Meeting. Presents recommendations on all Town Meeting warrant articles and prepares motions. |
| Affordable Housing Trust | Established in 2006, the Trust currently has eight members. Its goal is to preserve and expand affordable and community housing, including working towards the 10% goal required under Chapter 40B. The Trust administers housing programs, connects residents with housing resources, and works to implement the Norfolk Housing Production Plan. |
| Board of Assessors | Three-member body who works with the Norfolk Assessor to conduct the yearly revaluation. The board oversees exemption programs, the appeals process, and other tax-related programs. |
| Board of Health | Three-member body that operates as part of a regional cohort – the Metacomet Public Health Alliance – to provide nursing and public health services, inspectional services, and environmental health services to Norfolk residents. Volunteers provide additional support to public safety partners to advance community health and safety. |
| Community Preservation Committee | Thirteen-member body comprised of precinct appointments and representatives from Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Housing Authority, Planning Board, and Recreation Commission. Oversees Norfolk's Community Preservation Act implementation and recommends projects for funding to Town Meeting. |
| Conservation Commission | Local regulatory seven-member body with jurisdiction over natural resource areas protected under MGL 131 and the Norfolk Wetland Regulations. Responsible for active conservation land management and development review, when resource areas are impacted. |
| Council on Aging | Oversees the Senior Center and programming for Norfolk residents aged 60 years and older. |
| Cultural Council | Local arm of the Massachusetts Cultural Council. Supports public programs that promote arts, humanities, and interpretive science by awarding grants to community organizations and events. |
| Design Review Board | Administers design guidelines included in the B-1 zoning for Town Center. |
| Energy Committee | Supports the Town in investigating, recommending, and advocating viable methods for achieving energy conservation and energy cost reduction. Identifies, designs, and implements community projects and programs that foster energy conservation and energy efficiency and renewable energy generation. |
| Historical Commission | Aims to increase the knowledge and appreciation of Norfolk's history by collecting, preserving, and sharing stories. Consists of seven appointed members. |
| Housing Authority | Established in 1975, the Housing Authority manages 84 units of state public housing. |
| King Philip Regional School Committee | Elected 9-member body who oversees activities and operations for the King Philip Middle-High School. Members represent Norfolk, Plainville, and Wrentham (three representatives per community). |
| Library Trustees | Three elected community members plus the Library Director comprise the Trustees. Oversee the governance of the Library and work with the Director to define policy and services and develop the Library budget for Town Meeting approval. |
| Planning Board | Elected 5-member body who develops and administers the Norfolk Zoning Bylaw, Subdivision Regulations, Site Plan Approval, and Scenic Roads Act. Responsible for developing and implementing for long-range planning efforts like the Norfolk Master Plan, with other stakeholders. |
| Public School Committee | Elected 5-member body who oversees activities and operations for Norfolk Public Schools. |
| Recreation Commission | Appointed 7-member body who guides decision-making regarding programs, services, and facilities for the Norfolk Recreation Department. |
| Select Board | Elected 3-member body who serves at the Town's Chief Elected Officials. Charged with general supervision of all town government matters. Appoints members to various boards and committees, appoints the Town Administrator and Town Counsel, and grants a variety of licenses, permits, and waivers. |
| Zoning Board of Appeals | The following Boards and Committees have been created to oversee and guide various functions of Town government. Boards and committees rely on the volunteerism of Norfolk residents. Depending on municipal projects, special committees – like the Fire Station Building Committee – form to guide municipal decision-making. These temporary committees have not been included in the following table. Often times, boards and committees play a vital role in advancing goals and strategies of master plans. While municipal staff are bogged down in the day-to-day activities, small towns like Norfolk rely on volunteers to help expand municipal capacity to undertake special projects. |

Approaches to Implementation

Towns approach plan implementation differently. Some communities look to the Planning Board to serve as primary implementors and expect that they annual review and report back on progress made. This can be challenging when Planning Boards are tasked with discretionary review processes that consume meeting time. It also can be challenging when the Planning Board does not have representation from other boards and committees or regular communication with Town departments beyond those related to development review.

Because of some of these considerations, in Massachusetts, it is common for towns to establish Master Plan implementation committees comprised of representatives from Town departments, Town Boards and Committees, and interested residents. The project team recommends that Norfolk establish a Master Plan Implementation Committee to guide, track, and encourage Master Plan implementation. Beyond the action plans that help to prioritize implementation projects, an Implementation Committee can also help further prioritize activities and help the Town capitalize on timely or unexpected opportunities, such as a specific grant that becomes available that could help fund an implementation activity, that arise.

An implementation committee could be comprised in a variety of ways. To ensure a cross-cutting group of implementors with immediate ties to boards and committees who are related to goals and strategies in the plan, the committee could include representatives from Planning Board, Advisory Committee, Affordable Housing Trust, Board of Health, Community Preservation Committee, Conservation Committee, Council on Aging, Energy Committee, Historical Commission, Cultural Council, Recreation Commission, and Select Board. Additionally, having at-large seats for interested residents could offer more diverse perspectives and expand ways for community members to be involved in Town government. The committee could determine how frequent they want to meet – at least every two months seems ideal, if not more during busy times (e.g., prioritizing next steps upon plan adoption, budget season when funding may need to be requested, etc.). The Town Administrator could also arrange for different departments to regularly interact with the implementation committee and provide progress updates on implementation activities.

Communicating the Plan: Accountability & Transparency

Upon completion and adoption of the master plan, the Planning Board should work with the Town Planner to make the plan available on the Town's website. Using existing communication channels managed by the Town, an announcement that the plan is complete and available can be distributed via email for increased awareness. Members of the Planning Board or broader Master Plan Steering Committee could do a "road show" and present on the plan and relevant goals and strategies to the various Town boards and committees. The Town Planner and Town Administrator could coordinate to present the Master Plan to all Town departments to ensure goals and strategies can be worked into departmental work plans.

Other ways to keep the Master Plan top-of-mind outside of the implementation committee is to incorporate references of the plan into staff recommendations for board/committee meetings and Town Meeting warrants. This can ensure that Town decision-making is aligned with the overall vision and goals.

As implementation gets underway, the Town should consider how it can share accomplishments and progress towards achieving goals and strategies so the plan can remain a "living" document. This will help ensure residents see the Town advancing the vision, goals, and strategies. Public feedback through this process highlighted that despite much work being done since the 2007 Master Plan, residents did not necessarily know about all that has been accomplished. Better publicizing Town investments and forward movement on issues identified in this planning process can position the Town to have more effective implementation and more to celebrate in 5-10 years when the next master plan is created.

Resources for Implementation

The strategies included in this plan vary in what is needed to see accomplishment. In some cases, staff capacity is the primary resource, while other strategies will require financial resources, staff capacity, political will, and other things. This section focused on financial resources to highlight how the Town can leverage local funds and take advantage of regional, state, and federal grant opportunities. A few examples of commonly used resources are included below. See more details on specific resources in the Action Plans.

- **Municipal funds** can be awarded at Town Meeting for special projects as requested by Boards, Committees, and Town Departments.
- **Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds** collected by Norfolk can be awarded for open space, recreation, historic preservation, and housing projects.
- **Technical Assistance grants** from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council can help expand staff capacity and make progress on strategy implementation. State agencies like Mass Housing Partnership, MassHousing, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), and others also offer grants to hire technical assistance.
- The [Massachusetts Community One-Stop for Growth program](#) is a single application portal that allows towns to apply for a variety of different state grant programs that support different local projects. Grants can support activities related to community activation and placemaking, planning and zoning, site preparation for development, and infrastructure and construction activities that catalyze growth.
- The Town Administrator and Select Board should review **staff capacity** and ensure that boards/committees and municipal departments are equipped to carry out their work. Where needed, staff assignments could be revisited or new positions could be created to better support plan implementation to advance the community vision.

Action Plans

The following implementation tables were created to serve as mini action plans for achieving progress in four focus areas that emerged as themes from community feedback. The tables include time periods for accomplishing the work (short-term, mid-term, long-term), resources needed (potential funding sources, including grants, where applicable), potential partners (Town departments, boards/committees, community partners, private sector partners, etc.), and potential challenges (political will, environmental constraints, etc.).

The Action Plans should be reviewed in more detail once an implementation committee is assembled. Priorities may need to shift, based on municipal work underway or changing local conditions.

How to use the Action Plans

| | Considerations |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Town Department or Board/Committee responsible for shepherding the work |
| Timeframe | Near-term or short-term is 1-3 years Mid-term is 4-6 years Long-term is 7-10 years |
| Budget | \$ - can likely be accomplished with existing town resources and staff or a modest amount of resource reallocation \$\$ - may require a more significant reallocation of Town funds and will likely be subject to Town Meeting approval; \$\$\$ - requires significant external funding and Town borrowing potentially |
| Location | Corresponds with established geographic centers like Town Center, Route 115/1A, River's Edge, etc. Some likely have townwide impacts. |
| Risk | Indicates how dependent the success of the strategy is on external factors like political support, community support, or outside agencies and partnerships. The higher risk strategies require more political, community, or external support. |
| Partners | Internal - other Town departments and Boards/Committees External - businesses, non-profits, community-based organizations, other government agencies, etc. |
| Resources | Existing resources that could be used to support the strategy like Town staff or earmarked programmatic funds or external capacity-building and grant programs that may be new or underutilized. |

Action Plan for: Strengthening Town Center

Goal LU1: Continue to encourage community activity, development, and infrastructure investment in Town Center.

Strategy LU 1.1: Develop wastewater solutions in Town Center to support future growth of higher density and intensity of uses, including exploring a connection to the Norfolk MCI wastewater system or expansion of the Meetinghouse Road wastewater facility. (Related strategies: H 3.1, ED 1.1, and CFS 4.2)

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | High (requires Town Meeting vote) |
| Partners | State Department of Environmental Protection, State Department of Correctional Institutions (if possible, to tap into existing wastewater system) |
| Resources | MassWorks and HousingWorks Infrastructure Programs |

Strategy LU 1.2: Continue to support property owners in making mixed-use investments.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | High (dependent on willingness of private property owners) |
| Partners | Private property owners, local developers, Small Business Association |
| Resources | Municipal staff time; Community One-Stop for Growth grants can help with specific site readiness work and marketing strategies |

Strategy LU 1.3: Continue to partner with organizations like the Norfolk Community League and Norfolk Lions Club to hold events such as the farmer's markets, Holiday on the Hill, holiday markets, and craft fairs to activate Town Center; ensure year-round events with winter weather accommodations by partnering with indoor venues such as the Freeman-Kennedy School, Norfolk Public Library, and Town-owned facilities.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Cultural Council, Town Administrator |
| Timeframe | Ongoing |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center + other publicly accessible sites |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Lions Club, Community League, School Districts, Historical Commission, Council on Aging, Public Library |
| Resources | Mass Cultural Council grants |

Strategy LU 1.4: Help create connections between Norfolk small businesses and vacant spaces in the Town Center.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Assistant Town Administrator |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Property Owners, Small Business Association |
| Resources | Municipal staff time; MA Downtown Initiative Grant Program |

Strategy LU 1.5: Implement pedestrian infrastructure improvements in Town Center with all development and maintenance of sidewalks, trees, bicycle lanes, and all-weather amenities.

Action Plans | Strengthening Town Center

| | |
|---|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-Term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Land Use Department, Recreation Department |
| Resources | MassDOT Shared Streets Program, Complete Streets Funding Program, MassWorks Infrastructure Program, Safe Routes to School, Transportation Improvement Program |
| Strategy LU 1.6: Encourage shared parking in municipal and MBTA parking lots; create a park-once district at Town Center, and discourage auto-oriented uses in Town Center; mitigate parking requirements for potential businesses. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Medium |
| Partners | Department of Public Works, MBTA |
| Resources | Municipal staff time; MAPC Technical Assistance Grant |
| Goal H2: Expand the types of housing options that can be built in Norfolk in the context of existing infrastructure and housing need. | |
| Strategy H 2.3: In proximity to Town Center, outlying B-1 area, Route 115/1A, River's Edge, and other existing activity centers, streamline permitting and allow for more by-right housing developments to allow construction to move forward more quickly. Consider updating site plan review processes to inform site design while also allowing for more by-right approvals, particularly for middle housing types. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | High (zoning changes subject to Town Meeting approval) |
| Partners | Affordable Housing Trust, Housing Authority, Building Inspector, Zoning Board of Appeals |
| Resources | Municipal staff time; MAPC Technical Assistance Grant |
| Goal H3: Target housing production to strategic existing activity centers like Town Center, the immediate outlying B-1 area, River's Edge, and Route 115/1A. | |
| Strategy H 3.2: Work with the owners of the Stop & Shop parcel to develop the site as mixed-use. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Parcel-specific |
| Risk | High (requires property owner action) |
| Partners | Property owner |
| Resources | Municipal staff time |
| Goal HC3: Preserve and promote Norfolk's rich historical heritage. | |
| Strategy HC 3.4: Investigate the possibility of establishing Local Historic District(s) to protect historical sites, enhance community development, and maintain the community's character, while still accommodating growth and development, particularly housing. | |
| Lead | Historical Commission |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Low |

Action Plans | Strengthening Town Center

| | |
|---|---|
| Partners | Land Use Department, Planning Board, Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), Cultural Council |
| Resources | MHC Preservation Planning Grant, MAPC Technical Assistance Grant |
| Goal HC5: Sustain and expand community and cultural events (e.g., Norfolk Community Day, Events on Town Hill, etc.). | |
| Strategy HC 5.3: Revisit signage bylaws, other regulations, and Town approval processes to remove barriers to public art installations and creative placemaking. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Medium (bylaw revisions require Town Meeting vote) |
| Partners | Small Business Association, Cultural Council |
| Resources | Municipal staff time; MAPC Technical Assistance Grant |
| Goal HC6: Expand Town resources to support arts and culture businesses. | |
| Strategy HC 6.1: Utilize grants from the Norfolk Cultural Council to highlight local businesses and entrepreneurs with temporary art activations and performances locally. | |
| Lead | Cultural Council |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$-\$-\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Medium |
| Partners | Business owners/Small Business Association, local artists and performers, Land Use Department and Building Inspector for permitting |
| Resources | Existing grant funding from MA Cultural Council |
| Goal CFS3: Expand resilience and sustainability of Town services and infrastructure by investing in areas that protect business continuity. | |
| Strategy CFS 3.3: Target municipal investments towards Town Center and Route 115/1A to attract private investment and commercial growth. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Medium |
| Partners | Department of Public Works, Recreation Department |
| Resources | MassWorks Infrastructure Program, MA Downtown Initiative |
| Goal CH4: Increase opportunities for social engagement and community connectedness. | |
| Strategy CH 4.1: Activate Town Center as a gathering space for events, programming, and a community anchor for community members of all ages. | |
| Lead | Cultural Council |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$-\$-\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Recreation Department, Lions Club, Community League, and other community organizations; Public Library; School Districts |
| Resources | Staff time (likely new staff to support volunteers); Cultural Council Grants |

Action Plan for: Expanding Mobility and Recreation Opportunities

Goal LU3: Strengthen clusters of dense, walkable areas that can be connected by a multimodal network.

Strategy LU 3.1: Refine zoning to allow increasing density and walkability of specific concentrated areas over time.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Medium (bylaw revisions require Town Meeting vote) |
| Partners | Department of Public Works |
| Resources | MassWorks Infrastructure Program, One-Stop Community Planning Grant |

Strategy LU 3.2: Encourage active transportation through bicycle and pedestrian improvements, especially to create connections to open spaces for recreation, including the Mass Audubon's Stony Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, Norfolk Community Park at Rockwood Road, Fales Memorial Park, and Pond Street Athletic Complex.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works, Recreation Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Conservation Commission, Planning Board |
| Resources | |

Strategy LU 3.3: Explore collaboration with neighboring towns.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Planning Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Town Administrator |
| Resources | Metropolitan Area Planning Council South West Advisory Planning Committee |

Strategy LU 3.4: Update development requirements to connect new developments and significant redevelopments to a wider network of pedestrian infrastructure including wider sidewalks, lighting infrastructure, benches, etc.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Medium (bylaw revisions require Town Meeting vote) |
| Partners | Department of Public Works, Zoning Board of Appeals |
| Resources | MassWorks Infrastructure Program, One-Stop Community Planning Grant |

Goal T1: Expand walking, biking, and rolling connections to Town Center, schools, recreation spaces, and other key destinations.

Strategy T 1.1: Develop a townwide multimodal access plan and prioritize missing links. (Related: Strategy T3.1: Develop a transportation network "master plan" that includes an asset management plan for streets and sidewalks to identify areas in poor condition and to prioritize repairs accordingly.)

| | |
|-------------|----------------------------|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
|-------------|----------------------------|

Action Plans | Expanding Mobility & Recreation Opportunities

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Planning Department |
| Resources | MA Complete Streets Grant Program |

Strategy T 1.2: Increase safe and convenient connections to current and future multi-use trails and paths.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Conservation Commission, Planning Department |
| Resources | MA Complete Streets Grant Program |

Strategy T 1.3: Incorporate Complete Streets elements into all roadway projects and explore opportunities for additional improvements through MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program.

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | |
| Resources | MA Complete Streets Grant Program |

Strategy T 1.5: Ensure future development prioritizes walking, biking, rolling, and ADA access and infrastructure in and around town.

| | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Lead | Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Planning Department |
| Resources | |

Goal T3: Prioritize funding for street and sidewalk maintenance.

Strategy T 3.1: Develop a transportation network "master plan" that includes an asset management plan for streets and sidewalks to identify areas in poor condition and to prioritize repairs accordingly.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Finance Department, Planning Department |
| Resources | |

Strategy T 3.3: Combine Complete Streets roadway redesign projects with repaving/maintenance efforts to decrease overall costs and accomplish changes faster.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Finance Department, Planning Department |
| Resources | MA Complete Streets Grant Program |

Action Plans | Expanding Mobility & Recreation Opportunities

Strategy T 3.4: Use data sources such as MAPC's Local Access Score to prioritize locations for investment.

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Planning Department |
| Resources | MAPC Local Access Score, Walk Score |

Strategy T 3.5: Develop a modified participatory budgeting process to allocate street/sidewalk funds.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Finance Department, Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Town Administrator |
| Resources | Other municipal examples – Lexington, MA |

Goal OS1: Continue to improve and expand park and open space access for all.

Strategy OS 1.3: Invest in sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, streetscapes, trails, and wayfinding that improve safety and provide better walking and biking connectivity between parks, recreational assets, and open space.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Conservation Commission, Recreation Department |
| Resources | MA Complete Streets Grant Program |

Strategy OS 1.4: Upgrade and expand local and regional trail corridors, to provide interconnectivity between parks and open space and increase access along the Charles River and other water bodies.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Conservation Commission, Recreation Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term to Long-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Department of Public Works |
| Resources | Metacomet Greenway and other partners |

Strategy OS 3.4: Integrate public art into the design of parks and public spaces to help community members interpret Norfolk's natural resources and features and foster an appreciation for the natural environment.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Norfolk Cultural Council |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Recreation Department, Conservation Commission |
| Resources | Mass Cultural Council |

Goal OS4: Highlight and protect Norfolk's unique historic, social, and cultural resources.

Strategy OS 4.1: Fund and expand Norfolk's historic preservation efforts to protect, restore, and promote the cultural and historic resources of the town's park system.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Norfolk Historical Commission, Recreation Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term |

Action Plans | Expanding Mobility & Recreation Opportunities

| | |
|---|--|
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Historic sites and assets, open spaces |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Conservation Commission |
| Resources | Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund |
| Goal CH1: Improve infrastructure to increase safety, walkability, and connectedness and expand opportunities for active and passive recreation. | |
| Strategy CH 1.2: Invest in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that connects residents to destinations that support health such as grocery stores, commercial districts, recreation destinations, transit, and schools. | |
| Lead | Department of Public Works, Schools |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Planning Department |
| Resources | MA Safe Routes to School Program |

Action Plan for: Growing the Local Economy

Goal ED1: Prioritize smart, responsible, incremental development of Town Center and the Commuter Rail hub as a business district.

Strategy ED 1.2: Align development goals with zoning and infrastructure investments.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Medium (relies on small business participation/interest) |
| Partners | Department of Public Works |
| Resources | MassWorks Infrastructure Program, One-Stop Community Planning Grant |

Strategy ED 1.3: Establish a commercial district and an organizing entity such as a neighborhood association, tax increment financing district, or business improvement district in Town Center.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board, Assistant Town Administrator |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Medium (relies on small business participation/interest) |
| Partners | Small Business Association |
| Resources | Municipal staff time, MAPC Technical Assistance Grant, MA Business Improvement Districts Technical Assistance |

Strategy ED 1.4: Identify and pursue funding opportunities to finance initial “one-time” infrastructure improvements and establish continued regular funding structures for ongoing maintenance.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term to long-term |
| Budget | \$\$-\$\$\$\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | Medium to High (may require Town Meeting support) |
| Partners | Planning Board, Land Use Department |
| Resources | Community One-Stop for Growth grant programs |

Goal ED2: Support existing and attract new small, neighborhood-serving businesses.

Strategy ED 2.2: Encourage home businesses, as appropriate.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Small Business Association |
| Resources | Community Compact Best Practices Grant; MA EEA Planning Grants |

Goal ED3: Encourage commercial growth to increase local services and amenities and reduce tax burden on individual property owners.

Strategy ED 3.1: Develop an incubation hub to bring more local businesses into public visibility.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Assistant Town Administrator (serving as Economic Development Liaison) |
| Timeframe | Long-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Town Center |
| Risk | High |
| Partners | Small Business Association, Land Use Department/Planning Board |

Action Plans | Growing the Local Economy

| | |
|---|--|
| Resources | MAPC EDA Grants |
| Strategy ED 3.4: Continue to collaborate with property owners to redevelop former industrial properties (Southwood Hospital, Buckley & Mann) as appropriate to support Town goals. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term to Long-term |
| Budget | \$\$-\$\$\$\$ (depending on public incentives and subsidies) |
| Location | Parcel specific |
| Risk | High |
| Partners | Property owners, developers |
| Resources | MassWorks Infrastructure Program; MA EOHLC Housing Development Programs (for developments with Affordable Housing); Brownfields State and Federal Grants |
| Goal ED5: Foster equitable economic growth and long-term economic resiliency and sustainability by supporting a diversity of businesses. | |
| Strategy ED 5.1: Identify and explore support services for large anchor businesses. | |
| Lead | Land Use Department/Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Town Center, Route 115/1A, parcel-specific |
| Risk | High (dependent on private property owners) |
| Partners | Small Business Association, Chambers of Commerce, local business owners |
| Resources | Municipal staff time |

Action Plan for: Improving Resiliency and Adaptation

Goal LU5: Pursue long-term partnerships to support the Town and stewardship of State-owned lands and resources in Norfolk.

Strategy LU 5.5: Continue to identify and work to reduce municipal vulnerabilities.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Finance Department, Town Administrator, Public Safety (Police, Fire) |
| Resources | MVP Action Grant |

Goal LU6: Continue to modernize zoning to ensure regulations promote Town goals and address modern challenges like fossil fuel reduction for long-term climate resiliency and to mitigate economic impacts of climate change.

Strategy LU 6.1: Update permit requirements to integrate energy efficiency upgrades into new developments and major redevelopments such as incorporation of solar panels, energy efficient windows, heat pumps, etc.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | High (changes may require Town Meeting approval) |
| Partners | Planning Department, Building Department |
| Resources | |

Strategy LU 6.2: Integrate green infrastructure best practices into development of stormwater and town sewer systems to address potential flooding, water efficiency, and other environmental challenges.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Finance Department, Town Administrator |
| Resources | MVP Action Grant |

Strategy LU 6.3: Prioritize Town investments to be developed with exemplary energy efficiency, sustainability, and resilience.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Facilities Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term to Long-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Municipal facilities |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Finance Department, Town Administrator |
| Resources | |

Strategy LU 6.5: Explore Town programs to increase water conservation.

| | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |

Action Plans | Improving Resiliency & Adaptation

| | |
|---|---|
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Water Division, Conservation Commission |
| Resources | MA Drought Management Task Force, Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency |
| Goal T6: Continue to make updates to Norfolk's infrastructure to meet current and future transportation technology demands. | |
| Strategy T 6.1: For all new development projects, incorporate electric charging and/or electric vehicle ready options in parking plans. | |
| Lead | Planning Board, Planning Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Zoning Board of Appeals |
| Resources | Model zoning bylaws for Electric Vehicle (EV) Ready Code |
| Strategy T 6.2: Increase options for electric vehicle charging in public spaces. | |
| Lead | Facilities Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Municipal facilities |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Department of Public Works |
| Resources | Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) |
| Goal OS6: Leverage existing and new open space and conservation areas to advance resiliency goals. | |
| Strategy OS 6.1: Use parks as productive landscapes that perform green stormwater infrastructure and flood mitigation roles to enhance resiliency, recreational use, and beauty. | |
| Lead | Conservation Commission, Recreation Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Open space and conservation areas |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Department of Public Works |
| Resources | MVP Action Grant |
| Strategy OS 6.3: Identify flood-prone areas where additions to open space or conservation lands would help in advancing flood resilience. | |
| Lead | Conservation Commission, Planning Board |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Flood plain areas |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Planning Department, Department of Public Works |
| Resources | Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency Hazard Mitigation Grant Program |
| Goal HC3: Preserve and promote Norfolk's rich historical heritage. | |
| Strategy HC 3.3: Assess known historic sites for vulnerability against climate change, natural disasters, and other risks. | |
| Lead | Norfolk Historical Commission |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Historic sites and assets |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Conservation Commission |
| Resources | Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund |

Action Plans | Improving Resiliency & Adaptation

Goal HC4: Promote more alignment between preservation efforts and town-led projects, including integrating conservation and climate-related efforts in the preservation of natural historical landscapes as mitigation for flooding and other hazardous impacts.

Strategy HC 4.2: Incorporate both precontact, historical, and undeveloped landscapes as climate-resilient measures to effectively counteract the impacts of climate change, including flooding. Use native plantings, when possible.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Conservation Commission, Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Flood plain areas |
| Risk | Medium |
| Partners | Charles River Watershed Association |
| Resources | MVP Action Grant |

Goal CFS2: Identify opportunities to generate clean energy and prioritize investments that reduce the Town's carbon footprint and operational energy costs.

Strategy CFS 2.1: Conduct a municipal energy audit of all facilities that includes the primary source of energy, demand, variance, evaluates the overall costs of fuel and system maintenance versus the costs of cleaner alternatives.

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Lead | Facilities Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Municipal facilities |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Town Administrator |
| Resources | Green Communities Grants |

Strategy CFS 2.2: Identify, evaluate, and prioritize clean energy generation opportunities on public assets to begin electrifying municipal services.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works, Facilities Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Municipal facilities |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Town Administrator |
| Resources | Green Communities Grants |

Strategy CFS 2.3: Continue the effort to expand infrastructure that assists Norfolk municipal departments adopt clean energy methods by approving relevant capital requests.

| | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Lead | Finance Department |
| Timeframe | Near-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Municipal facilities |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Facilities Department |
| Resources | Green Communities Grants |

Strategy CFS 2.4: Upgrade Norfolk DPW, Police, and School facility electric services to enable high powered electric equipment charging and phase out gas powered equipment.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Facilities Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | Municipal facilities |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Department of Public Works, Police, Fire, and Schools |
| Resources | Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) |

Action Plans | Improving Resiliency & Adaptation

Strategy CFS 2.5: Phase in an electric municipal fleet.

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Town Administrator, Finance Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$ |
| Location | None |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Departments with vehicles |
| Resources | Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) |

Goal CFS3: Emphasize resilience and sustainability of Town services and infrastructure by investing in areas that protect business continuity.

Strategy CFS 3.1: Continue to implement actions identified in the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program to reduce vulnerabilities and pursue state funding for building community climate resilience. For example, preventative tree maintenance, evaluation of dam conditions, and emergency shelter provisions.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Short-term |
| Budget | \$-\$\$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Town Administrator, Public Safety (Police, Fire) |
| Resources | MVP Action Grant |

Goal CFS4: Strengthen and expand the Town's Enterprise Fund offerings to better provide Town services to residents and businesses.

Strategy CFS 4.3: Continue to invest in water quality and water treatment to anticipate future regulations (for example, PFAS regulations required significant investments for impacted municipalities).

| | |
|------------------|---|
| Lead | Department of Public Works |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | Low |
| Partners | Town Administrator, Finance Department |
| Resources | Drinking Water Supply Grants, Water Quality Management Planning Grant Program |

Strategy CFS 4.4: Invest in the stormwater system to keep pace with increased rainfall intensity and duration. For example, complete a condition assessment of all culverts, enact an Operation and Maintenance program, and evaluate the possibility of creating a stormwater utility.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Lead | Department of Public Works, Land Use Department |
| Timeframe | Mid-term |
| Budget | \$\$ |
| Location | Townwide |
| Risk | High (evaluating new tax) |
| Partners | Town Administrator, Finance Department |
| Resources | MVP Action Grant, MassDEP Nonpoint Source Competitive Grants, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loans |





Norfolk Master Plan

Additional Resources

For additional information about this master plan and other recent planning efforts in town, please refer to the additional resources provided below.

- **Project webpage:** mapc.ma/norfolk2035
- **Existing Conditions Summary:** <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/NMP-Topic-Briefing-Summary-9-20-23.pdf>
- **2022 Housing Production Plan:** https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2022-Norfolk_HPP_DHCD.pdf
- **2020 MVP Community Resilience Program – Resilience Building Report:** <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2020-FY19-MVP-Planning-Grant-Report-Norfolk.pdf>
- **2020 Town Center Zoning Study:** <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2020-Norfolk-Town-Center-Final-Report-01-27-20.pdf>
- **2019 Complete Streets Prioritization Plan:** <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2019-norfolk-complete-streets-pp-report-final.pdf>
- **2018 Economic Development Plan:** https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2018-Norfolk-TEDS-Final_10.12.pdf
- **2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan:** <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2017-norfolk-osrp-7-17-17.pdf>
- **2007 Master Plan:** <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/2007-Norfolk-master-plan.pdf>

NORFOLK

Master Plan 2035

DRAFT FOR REVIEW

May 2024

