

Stoneham Historic Preservation Plan

2024



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The activity that is the subject of this community-wide historic preservation plan has been financed in part with Federal funds from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, through the Massachusetts Historical Commission, Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin, Chairman. However, the contents and opinions do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department of the Interior, or the Massachusetts Historical Commission, nor does the mention of trade names or commercial products constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Department of the Interior, or the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

This program receives Federal financial assistance for identification and protection of historic properties. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, as amended, the U.S. Department of the Interior prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability or age in its federally assisted programs. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility as described above, or if you desire further information, please write to: Office for Equal Opportunity, National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW, Washington, DC 20240.

Acknowledgements

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View of the Stoneham Fire Station from the Town Common.

Executive Summary

Stoneham has a rich history that is reflected in its built environment. The buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes are physical reminders of the town's past and help create a sense of place for residents. Understanding the past is also integral to the town's future.

Recognizing this, the Town of Stoneham decided to develop a historic preservation plan. This plan takes stock of Stoneham's history and historic resources with an eye towards informing Town decision-making to ensure that these tangible reminders of the town's past are preserved for future generations. The first chapter provides an overview of Stoneham's history and preservation activity as well as the policy context for historic preservation in Massachusetts. The second chapter provides a summary of the known historic resources in the town and a review of the Town's existing policies, regulations, and planning efforts related to historic preservation; it also discusses the opportunities and issues affecting Stoneham's historic resources. The third chapter presents recommendations for the Town to implement to strengthen its historic preservation program. The final chapter consists of an Action Plan that organizes the recommendations into short-, medium-, and long-term priorities and identifies responsible parties for implementing the recommendations.

The plan recommends that the Town immediately pursue three recommendations: develop a comprehensive historic resource survey plan, revise the zoning bylaw to provide more flexibility for historic buildings, and develop site plan review guidelines that include considerations for historic preservation. All three recommendations were identified as a high priority by respondents to a community survey, members of the Stoneham Historical Commission, and various community stakeholders. By undertaking these three efforts in the next year, the Town will be able to ensure that Stoneham's future growth and development is informed by a historical perspective.

This plan should serve as a guide for the Town and preservation stakeholders in Stoneham for the next 10 years. At that time, or sooner depending on local conditions, the plan should be updated to reflect recent accomplishments and new priorities.



Clockwise from top left: Round's Hardware; Stoneham library interior; Stoneham Savings Bank; 26 Wright Street; Old Burying Ground; 34 Pleasant Street

1878 Map of Stoneham by Bailey and Hazen.^{P1}



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Introduction to Historic Preservation Planning

Preservation Planning Overview

Historic preservation planning involves the proactive identification, evaluation, and protection of historic resources. The modern framework for this effort in the United States was largely established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, which positioned the federal government as the key administrator of historic preservation. This act laid the groundwork for a national program that now includes a network of regulations, funding opportunities, and professional organizations supporting preservationists nationwide.

Preserving historic sites is vital for maintaining the cultural heritage and identity of communities. By protecting these sites, we offer future generations access to diverse narratives and tangible links to the past, fostering a sense of belonging and continuity. Preservation also has substantial educational value, providing insights into historical events, architectural styles, and cultural practices that reflect our collective heritage.

From an economic perspective, historic preservation can drive local development. It attracts tourists, supports local businesses, and increases property values, contributing to the economic health of communities. Environmentally, preservation is a sustainable practice that conserves resources, reduces waste, and encourages the adaptive reuse of existing structures.

Preservation efforts enhance community cohesion by fostering a shared sense of identity and belonging. Historic landmarks become focal points for social interactions, community events, and cultural celebrations, which strengthen social ties among residents. These efforts also promote inclusivity by recognizing and protecting sites significant to all segments of the community, ensuring that various histories and cultures are honored and respected.

Education and awareness about a community's history promote mutual understanding and respect among its members. Engaging residents in preservation activities empowers them, instilling a sense of ownership and responsibility toward their community. This active

participation not only enhances community pride but also contributes to a stable, cohesive social fabric, reflecting the diverse voices that shape our communities.

Federal Historic Preservation Program

In the United States, the federal government has led the development of preservation policy, standards, and regulations since the passage of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) in 1966. The NHPA charges the federal government with the administration of the national preservation program in partnership with states, Native American tribes, and local governments. The National Park Service (NPS) within the Department of the Interior is the main federal agency that oversees this work. This section highlights a few aspects of the national preservation program as led by the federal government.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. The National Register, established by the NHPA, is managed by the NPS. The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in each state also plays a role coordinating the National Register; in Massachusetts, the authorized SHPO is the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). Listing a historic resource in the National Register is a rigorous process requiring review by the MHC and the NPS.

Listing in the National Register is largely an honorary recognition that acknowledges the importance of a historic resource without imposing obligations or restrictions on the owner. Listing on its own does not protect a property from demolition. However, listing provides benefits, including eligibility for federal and state rehabilitation tax incentives; protection from federal actions under the Section 106 review process; and eligibility for federal historic preservation grant funds. It also raises public awareness and fosters community support.

When MHC and NPS staff review a National Register nomination, they follow the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.³ To qualify, a property must be associated with an important historic context

and must retain integrity of the features that convey its historic significance. Key aspects of the criteria include:

- Types of historic resources: buildings, sites, districts, structures, and objects.
- Categories of historic context: history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.
- There are seven types of integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Resources with historic integrity will have at least several, if not most, of these types.
- Types of significance: association with significant historical events (Criterion A); association with significant people (Criterion B); architecture, design, and construction (Criterion C); and information potential (Criterion D).
- Areas of significance used to identify significant themes in American history, such as architecture, commerce, education, ethnic heritage, literature, and religion.
- Special consideration must be given to certain categories of resources when listing them, such as cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been removed from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings, commemorative properties, and properties that have achieved significance in the past 50 years. However, there are considerations for when these types may be significant.

The evaluation for listing in the National Register is rigorous, adhering to strict standards. The NPS provides detailed guidelines to support reviewers and nominations. The MHC is also available to assist with the nomination process.

It is a common misconception that listing in the National Register means that a historic resource is nationally significant. In fact, historic resources may be significant at the local, state, or national level. Similarly, a property listed in the National Register is not necessarily more historically significant than an unlisted one. The listing process is

time-intensive and typically requires professional consultants. To list a resource, it must first be identified as historic, which underscores the importance of conducting thorough historic resource surveys.

The National Historic Landmarks Program is a part of the National Register. National Historic Landmarks (NHL) are properties that are nationally significant and represent an outstanding aspect of American history and culture. NHL designation is the highest level of recognition in the National Historic Preservation Program, and all NHLs are listed in the National Register. Examples in Massachusetts include the Woburn Public Library and Count Rumford Birthplace in Woburn, Isaac Royall House and Slave Quarters in Medford, Emily Dickinson Home in Amherst, Faneuil Hall in Boston, and Mount Auburn Cemetery in Watertown.



Central Square Historic District sign.



266 Main Street.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

Another way that the National Park Service guides historic preservation activities in the United States is through the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The Standards provide guidance on making changes to a variety of historic resources, including buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts. The Standards include four treatment standards: Preservation, Rehabilitation, Restoration, and Reconstruction¹ (Figure 1).

In addition to the Standards, the National Park Service has developed guidelines that provide design and technical recommendations to apply the Standards to a specific project. There is a separate set of Guidelines for each treatment standard, in addition to guidelines on flood adaptation,

sustainability, and the treatment of cultural landscapes. The Standards and Guidelines are applied to all Federal undertakings and many state and local governments have adopted them as well.

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation


The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) is an independent federal agency that promotes the preservation, enhancement, and sustainable use of the nation's diverse historic resources, and advises the President and Congress on national historic preservation policy. One of the ACHP's main roles is overseeing the Section 106 review process. They also coordinate with federal agencies to improve their stewardship of historic properties and advise Congress and the White House on preservation policy.

The ACHP has five preservation initiatives: youth outreach, inclusiveness, climate change and sustainability, traditional trades training, and housing. In 2023, the ACHP adopted a policy statement on climate change and historic preservation that outlines 15 policy principles, including the importance of flexibility when considering energy efficiency retrofits of historic buildings and the need to consider impacts to historic properties as a part of disaster preparedness and response. The same year, the ACHP adopted a policy statement on housing and historic preservation with 13 policy principles, including revising zoning codes to encourage housing production while preserving historic contexts and allowing adaptive reuse of historic buildings for housing. These policies, along with others from the ACHP, demonstrate how national organizations are shaping the future of preservation policy.

Key Regulations: Section 106 of the NHPA and NEPA

There are two Federal laws that play an important role protecting historic resources in the United States, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation describes NHPA and NEPA as "laws that require federal agencies to 'stop, look, and listen' before making decisions that impact historic properties and the human environment."² Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of

Figure 1: Spectrum of Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties^{P2-P5}

Preservation	Rehabilitation	Restoration	Reconstruction
			
The lowest level of intervention with work focusing the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction	Making necessary repairs, alterations, and/or additions to ensure the usability of a resource while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values	Removing and/or reconstructing specific features to accurately depict a historic resource at a particular period of time	Constructing a resource from scratch to replicate its appearance at a specific period of time

projects they undertake, including direct federal projects as well as any funding, permits, licenses, or other approvals. Similarly, NEPA requires federal agencies to assess whether a major federal action has the potential to significantly affect the human environment, including historic resources, prior to making decisions.

Part of the review process includes consulting with interested parties, which may include local governments. This provides a chance for local preservation advocates to advocate for considering historic resources important to them as part of these processes. Consultation is typically initiated by the federal agency and coordinated by the State Historic Preservation Office, which in Massachusetts is the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

It is important to note that both Section 106 of the NHPA and NEPA do not prevent changes to historic resources, they simply outline a process that requires effects on historic resources to be considered. Since the federal agency is required to survey possible historic resources that may be impacted by the project, these reviews can lead to the identification of new historic resources, which supplement

an existing historic resource inventory. If a historic resource is substantially altered or demolished due to the federal action, then detailed documentation may be required.

Certified Local Government Program

The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program recognizes local governments throughout the United States that operate at a high level of professionalism. It is administered by the NPS, which supports CLG coordinators in each state. To become certified, municipalities must show that they have an active Historical Commission, follow Open Meeting law, and enforce a preservation bylaw or ordinance (a local historic district bylaw or ordinance). This certification allows qualified municipalities greater access to preservation resources at the state level, more input in the National Register review process, and access to different Federal grant programs. As of March 2024, there are 30 CLGs in Massachusetts. Stoneham is not a CLG.

National Heritage Areas

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) are places where natural, cultural,

and historic resources tell nationally important stories that celebrate our nation's diverse heritage. The goal of the program is to support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, and educational projects. Individual NHAs are designated by Congress through individual federal laws and the program is administered by the NPS; however, each NHA is managed by its own nonprofit organization. Through annual Congressional appropriations, NPS passes funds to NHA entities, which are supported by local fundraising activities. There are currently 62 heritage areas throughout the country, with five in Massachusetts: Essex National Heritage Area, Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area.

The Freedom's Way National Heritage Area was created in 2009 and recognizes 45 communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire bound by their participation in the first battles of the American Revolution. Stoneham was one of the communities that sent minutemen to Lexington and Concord, but the town was omitted from the original heritage area designation. The Town of Stoneham had conversations with members of their Congressional Delegation in 2016 and 2017 about joining Freedom's Way along with Winchester, but nothing has come of those conversations.

Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Program

Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Office

The National Park Service administers preservation programs through a designated State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) in each state. In Massachusetts, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) is the designated SHPO. The professional staff at MHC oversees preservation and archaeology programs through the Preservation Planning, Grants, and Technical Services divisions. Additionally, a 17-member Commission, appointed from various organizations across the Commonwealth, reviews state and federal preservation programs, including National Register nominations and grant programs.



322 Main Street.

MHC also maintains the State Register of Historic Places which includes properties listed in or eligible for the National Register, properties in local historic districts, properties with preservation restrictions, and other locally landmarked properties. Unlike the National Register, a property cannot be nominated to the State Register; it is a cumulative listing of significant properties in the state. There is a review process for projects involving state permits, licensing, or funding that affects properties listed in the State Register. Additionally, the MHC includes the State Archaeologist, who is responsible for reviewing all projects for their impact on archaeological assets.

Inventory of Historic and Archeological Assets of the Commonwealth

MHC maintains an inventory of all known cultural resources, which is compiled from various sources. The inventory of historic properties

is meant to be a record of all historically significant buildings, sites, districts, and objects. Properties included in the inventory are not protected from change; they have only been identified as historically significant. Once a historic property has been inventoried, however, stakeholders can decide to protect it from change through various means, such as designation or easements.

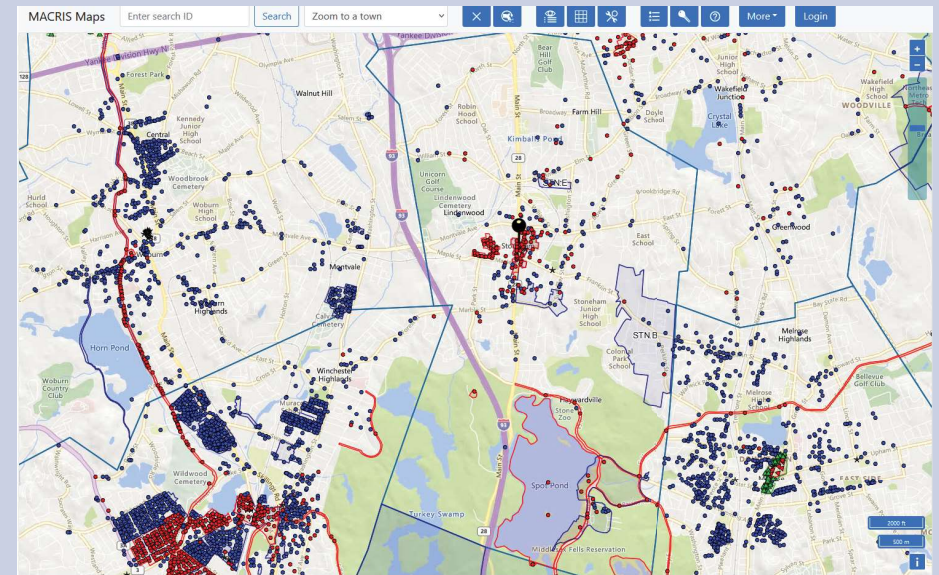
This inventory is available through the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). MACRIS allows users to search a database for information on historic properties and areas in the Commonwealth. There is also an option to view the data spatially using an interactive map. While it contains a lot of information, MACRIS does not include information on all historic properties and areas in Massachusetts, nor does it reflect all the information on file on historic properties and areas at the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

Local Historic Districts

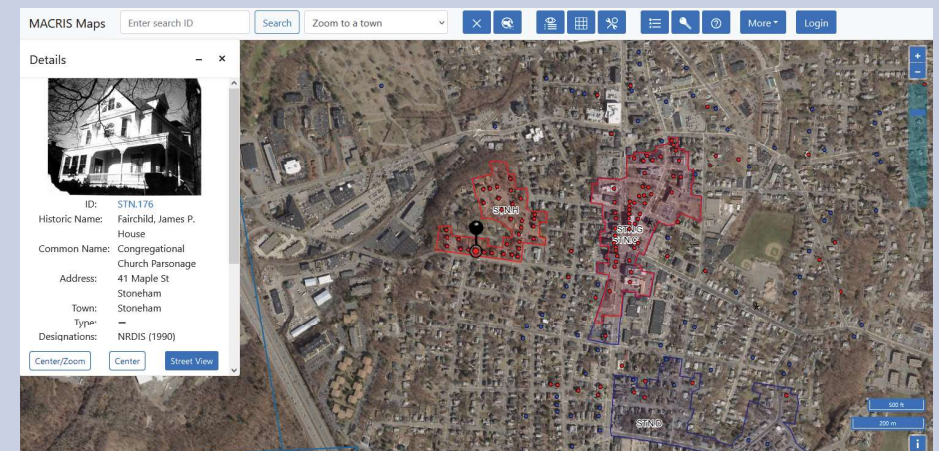
Establishing a Local Historic District through a municipal bylaw or ordinance, as outlined in Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) Chapter 40C, is a powerful method to protect historic buildings and areas. These districts can effectively preserve groups of historic buildings and maintain the historical character of certain parts of a municipality. However, it is crucial to implement these protections in a way that balances historical preservation with community growth and housing accessibility, especially affordable housing. To establish a district, the municipal legislative body must:

- Identify the historic assets to be protected,
- Establish protections for these assets,
- Create a local historic district commission, and
- Define procedures for managing the district. Categories of historic context: history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.

Local Historic District Commissions review changes to exterior



MACRIS Maps shows known historic resources, including individual properties represented as points and districts represented as polygons.



Users can access records on individual properties through MACRIS Maps.

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architectural features visible from a public way. They do not review interior alterations or changes that are not visible from a public way. Additionally, communities can adopt exemptions as outlined in MGL 40C.

Currently, Stoneham does not have any designated Local Historic Districts. If established, these districts could play a key role in maintaining the town's architectural and historical charm. However, it is important that they are designed to accommodate community development, support green infrastructure, and promote affordable housing initiatives.

Preservation Restrictions

Preservation restrictions are one of the most robust forms of protection for historic buildings, serving as legal measures to safeguard and maintain their historical, architectural, or cultural integrity. These binding restrictions are attached to the property itself, rather than the owner, ensuring protection in perpetuity. They dictate the types of alterations, renovations, or demolitions that can be carried out, typically focusing on the exterior of the building. However, if there are significant interior features, the restriction may extend to those areas as well. A designated third party reviews any changes to the property areas under the restriction, preserving its key characteristics and historical importance. Additionally, by restricting property development, these measures can reduce the property's market value, which may result in a property tax reduction for the owner.

In Stoneham, preservation restrictions protect two properties and are held by MHC. The Fire Station received its restriction in 2007, following a project funded by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, ensuring its protection forever. The second restriction, for the Warren Sweetser House, was established in 2008 by Richard Johnson, who had previously relocated and saved the property from demolition in 1999.



The Stoneham Fire Station is protected from insensitive alterations by a preservation restriction.



The Warren Sweetser House at 90 Franklin Street is protected from insensitive alterations by a preservation restriction.

Cultural Respect Easements

Cultural Respect Easements (CREs) are a legal approach to land conservation that recognizes the connection between Indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands. CREs allow Native American tribes to access private lands for cultural, spiritual, and traditional practices, such as ceremonies and gathering medicinal plants. These easements ensure that Indigenous communities can maintain their cultural ties to the land without affecting the property rights of landowners. By promoting mutual respect and understanding between landowners and Indigenous peoples, CREs serve as a tool for preserving cultural heritage and supporting environmental stewardship. In Massachusetts the Native Land Conservancy holds different CREs with various entities.

Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Plan

The MHC maintains a statewide historic preservation plan that guides preservation activities throughout the state. The MHC is in the process of updating the plan, which will cover the years 2023-2031. The draft plan currently includes a vision statement, five goals, and 30 objectives.

The vision statement reads, “Historic preservation efforts in Massachusetts will include the Commonwealth’s full range of historic, cultural, and archaeological resources from all the groups and peoples who have lived here. Historic preservation will be integrated into local and state planning processes, supporting sustainable and resilient development in all of the Commonwealth’s communities. Local, regional, and state agencies will have the funding and technical resources they need to carry out their desired historic preservation activities.”³

The draft goals include build capacity for historic preservation work within communities and the state; document and protect the Commonwealth’s historic and archaeological resources; support housing and economic development efforts with historic preservation; position historic preservation as an important piece of a sustainable, resilient Commonwealth; and raise the level of public awareness about historic preservation and educate the public about historic preservation’s benefits and tools.⁴

Massachusetts Archives and the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB)

The Massachusetts Archives is the state’s repository for historical documents and records, crucially preserving the commonwealth’s rich heritage. It houses an extensive collection of materials, including vital records, maps, photographs, and government documents, providing valuable resources for researchers, historians, and the general public.

The State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) works in tandem with the Archives, offering guidance and support for the preservation and accessibility of historical records. SHRAB’s efforts

ensure that Massachusetts' historical records are maintained, protected, and made available for future generations, fostering a deeper understanding of the state's history and cultural heritage.

The Roving Archivist Program administered by SHRAB is designed to improve the preservation and accessibility of historical records in Massachusetts. This program sends professional archivists to different organizations and institutions to provide assistance, guidance, and training in archival practices. The Roving Archivist Program aims to ensure that historical documents and collections are well-maintained, organized, and accessible to the public, supporting the preservation of the state's historical heritage. This service is provided at no cost, thanks to grant funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC).

Historic Preservation in Stoneham

Stoneham Historical Commission

The Stoneham Historical Commission was established to preserve and protect the town's historical and archaeological assets. Governed by Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40, Section 8D, the Commission, established in 1977, comprises seven members appointed by the Selectmen to three-year terms. Its primary objectives include identifying, evaluating, and protecting Stoneham's historical resources.

The Commission supports community education by installing historical markers, participating in Town Day, collaborating with schools to integrate local history into curriculums, organizing public events like the Halloween Open Day at the Old Burying Ground, and increasing its social media presence to engage a wider audience. It also collaborates with the Stoneham Historical Society and Museum, including on presentations by historical experts, to further enrich community understanding of Stoneham's past.

The Commission's recent preservation activities include tackling ADA access at Lindenwood Cemetery and the Old Burying Ground, conducting a feasibility study for the Fire Station's preservation, and supporting the preservation of Richard Gibney's mural. The

Commission supports the Historic Tax Credit Growth and Opportunity Act of 2021 for rehabilitation project incentives and conducts Section 106 Reviews to assess the impact on historic properties. It has challenged modifications to buildings by telecommunication carriers, ensured compliance with MassDOT leases, addressed the demolition of historic structures, and preserved significant elements like the Old Central School chimney.

The Commission's recent restoration efforts include securing funding for the repair of the Old Burying Ground's southeast corner wall and gravestone conservation, with resources via an operating budget and a capital improvement request for fiscal year 2023. These comprehensive efforts underscore the Commission's dedication to preserving Stoneham's history and heritage.

Historic House Marker Program

The Historic House Marker Program is run by the Stoneham Historic Commission and is a cornerstone of Stoneham's preservation efforts, designed to recognize and honor houses or buildings that represent the town's historical and architectural heritage. There are currently 47 installed markers that highlight buildings ranging in date from c. 1749 to 1939. The program is designed to be a form of recognition, not regulation, celebrating the historical significance of buildings without imposing any mandatory restrictions.

The program is open to structures ideally over 50 years old, with a preference for those over 75 years old. Structures that may not fully meet the age or architectural integrity criteria but possess historical value or significance are also considered. Flexibility is applied in evaluating architectural integrity. The program encourages property owners to preserve the character of their historic buildings, with modifications and additions that align with the original style.

The nomination and selection process for the Historic House Marker Program begins with invitations to property owners to apply for consideration. The application is free, though a fee is charged for creating the historic marker upon approval. The Historical Commission reviews each application to determine if the structure meets the eligibility criteria.



Typical marker issued by the Stoneham Historical Commission.



Plaque at Whip Hill Park.

The program has contributed to raising awareness of Stoneham's architectural heritage, highlighting the significance of the structures it supports. However, its focus on extant buildings may neglect properties important to diverse histories, such as those related to Black, LGBTQ+ identities, or factory workers' stories, that have been demolished or altered beyond recognition. These histories are valuable not for architectural reasons but for their connections to these identities and stories.

Funding and Financing Opportunities

Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Incentives

The National Park Service also administers the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives program, which encourages private sector investment in the rehabilitation and re-use of historic buildings. The program provides a 20% income tax credit for the substantial rehabilitation of buildings that are either individually listed in the National Register or contribute to a National Register-listed historic district. All work must follow the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, and only income-producing properties are eligible to use the tax credit, which means that homeowners are not eligible.

Massachusetts offers up to a 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic buildings that mirrors the federal program. Similarly to the federal tax credit, the state tax credit is only available to income-producing properties and is capped at 20%. This tax credit can be used in addition to the federal tax credit. However, the state tax credit program has an annual cap, which makes funding more competitive. Historic preservation tax incentives are often combined with other tax incentives such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits or New Market credits available to properties in economic target zones.

State Grant Programs

The MHC offers two annual grant programs: the Survey and Planning Grant Program and the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund. The grants depend on federal funding but are generally offered yearly.

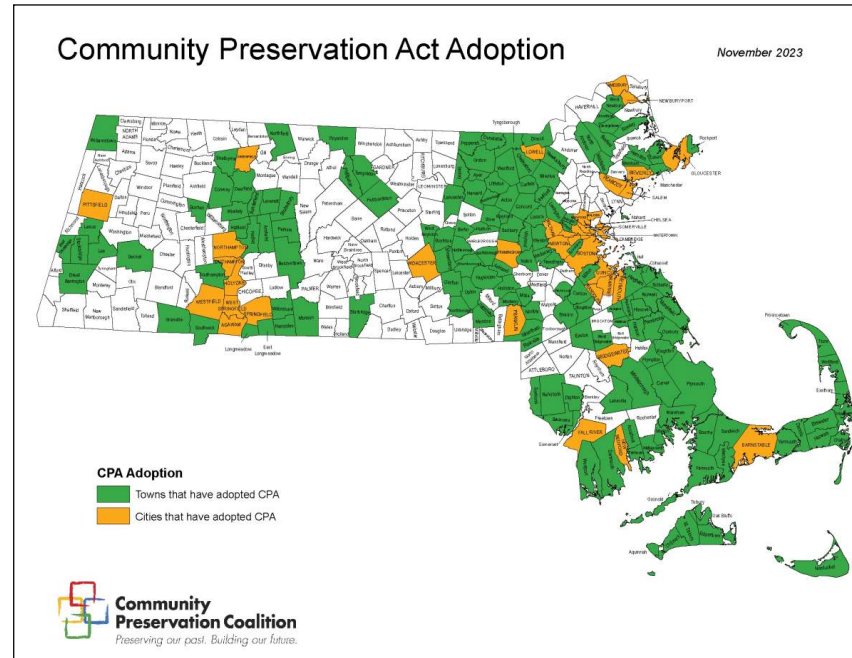
The NPS funds the Survey and Planning Grant Program and is a reimbursable, 50/50 matching grant program to support historic preservation planning activities in communities throughout the state. Applicants can be local historical commissions, local historic district commissions, planning offices, and other eligible public and non-profit historic preservation organizations. Projects such as historic resources survey and inventory, National Register of Historic Places nominations, and other projects that advance MHC's goals of identification, evaluation, and protection of historic resources are all eligible for the grants. In recent years, many communities have been using these grants in a phased manner to update their older inventory forms and complete a comprehensive survey of their historic resources.

The Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund is a state-funded grant program open to municipalities and non-profits for planning and rehabilitation work on historic structures. To be eligible for funding, the building must be listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Funding can be used for pre-development, development, or acquisition costs. A preservation restriction must be placed on buildings that receive funding through this grant.

Community Preservation Act

One of the most critical sources of funding for historic preservation work in Massachusetts is the state Community Preservation Act (CPA). Enacted in 2000, CPA allows communities to impose up to a 3% surcharge on property taxes to fund historic preservation, open space and recreation, and affordable housing projects. As of March 2024, 196 communities throughout Massachusetts have voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act.

In addition to the revenue raised through the property tax surcharge, communities that have adopted CPA receive a funding distribution from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Revenue (DOR). The amount of funding that each community receives depends on the amount of revenue collected that year and the number of communities participating in the program. All CPA communities are guaranteed a disbursement



from the Community Preservation Trust Fund as an incentive for participating in the CPA program. Other neighboring towns that have a CPA include Arlington, Medford, Malden, Peabody, and Salem.⁵

Each year, communities must allocate 10% of the total available funding to each of the three categories – historic preservation, open space and recreation, and affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be allocated based on individual communities' preferences. Regarding historic preservation, CPA funding can be spent on the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration of historic resources. Projects must adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.⁶

Historic Context

Delving into a community's historical development provides valuable insights that can shape its current and future preservation and growth strategies. This section draws on existing secondary source materials to provide a preliminary historic context for Stoneham. This historic context is not a full recounting of Stoneham's history; rather, it is the first step in developing a framework for understanding the types of historic resources that exist in the town. The Town may want to consider developing additional historic contexts to provide guidance for future preservation planning efforts (see Recommendations).

There are three main sources that were used to compile this historic context. The first two are the Stoneham Town Reconnaissance Survey (1981) and "The Historic & Archaeological Resources of the Boston Area" (1982), which were prepared by the Massachusetts Historical Commission as part of a statewide effort to trace the chronological development of Massachusetts communities from pre-European contact to the early modern period. The third is "Stoneham, Massachusetts: A Shoe Town" (1981), which was commissioned by the Stoneham Historical Commission. These three documents have served as the foundation of Stoneham's preservation planning efforts and, today, offer a starting point for understanding how the community has identified and prioritized its historical assets.

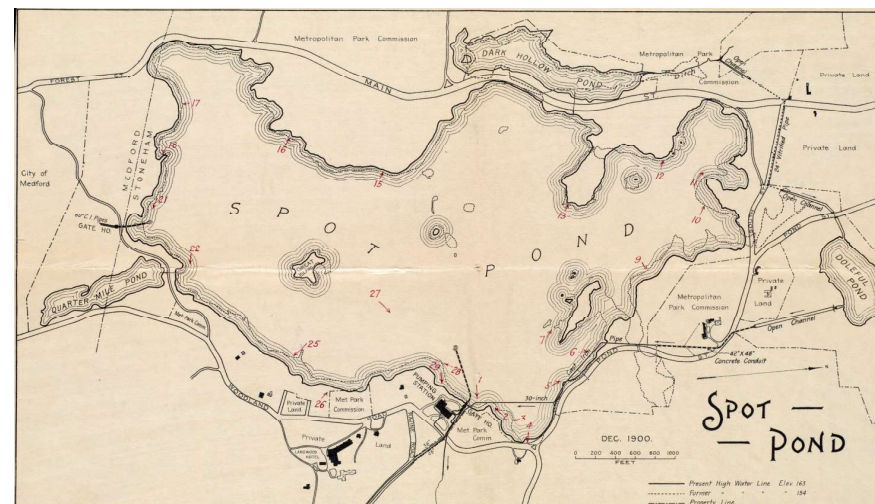
While foundational, these reports have significant gaps. Events of the 1960s and 1970s that were a recent memory of the 1980s are now over 50 years old and have become historic over time. Perspectives about who is included in historical narratives have also shifted to be more inclusive of underrepresented communities, including enslaved and free Black communities, indigenous groups, women, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Building on previous work, this historic context aims to ground Stoneham's future preservation efforts in a fuller accounting of the town's history. It also incorporates both chronological and thematic perspectives to begin the work of identifying discrete historic contexts for additional study. By elevating the stories of all community members, both past and present, the plan aspires to foster a more inclusive understanding of Stoneham's heritage so that it is better situated to steward it.

Geographical Context

Nestled within a landscape defined by its plateau, the Middlesex Fells, and Spot Pond, Stoneham's natural features have determined its settlement patterns, land use, and economy. This relationship between land and community is central to Stoneham's rich history and diverse heritage. Understanding how Stoneham's geographical landscape has played a central role throughout the town's history can ensure that conservation efforts respect Stoneham's heritage while preparing it for a resilient future, maintaining a balance between economic growth, community development, and environmental stewardship within its unique geographical context.

The town's varied topography, including hills and swamps, has influenced its landmarks and borders, reflecting a tapestry of stories and names that evolve with the community. The mineral springs near Spring Street, named "Kibby" by the Indigenous peoples who used them in the late seventeenth century, were an important site for the local community for centuries. This name inspired "Old Kibby Beverages," a soft drink made in the early twentieth century by Rufus Chapman, using spring water, cane sugar, extracts, and carbonic



Distribution Department, Spot Pond, annotated map of Spot Pond, showing location of photo numbers and direction of photos, Stoneham, Mass., Dec. 1900.⁶



Birch Trees at Spot Pond. ⁹⁷

gas⁷ Other natural and geographical features were named for local activities, like Cobble Hill, which had many shoemaking shops nearby.⁸ Adding to the area's historical complexity, the early years of settlement witnessed the construction of stone walls around agricultural fields, a laborious task undertaken by various people, including enslaved individuals. These stone walls reflect not only how rocky the landscape was but served as range lines and marked boundaries of individual properties and town borders.⁹

The geography also directed the town's physical evolution. Notably, the siting of the Medford Andover Turnpike was dependent on the town's geographical features; the Turnpike's construction, in turn, drew Stoneham's town center westward, transforming its commercial and social core. This shift propelled Stoneham towards modernization, enhancing its connectivity with the region.¹⁰

Stoneham's economy has been deeply influenced by its natural landscape. The area's rich soil and springs supported agriculture by indigenous peoples for thousands of years. The town also has a history of quarrying and mining, notably for "Stoneham Marble" (a type of limestone) and possibly small amounts of silver near Silver Mine Hill. These activities are reflected in local property records and even street names like South Marble Street.¹¹ Additionally, the springs fueled businesses like Rufus B. Chapman's "Old Kibby Beverages," which used spring water for its drinks and marketed them as medicinal in 1937.¹² These and other activities evidence how Stoneham's natural features have informed its economy and identity.

Community Formation by Historical Era

Stoneham's community formation and social dynamics demonstrate the town's adaptability and evolution amid changing societal norms and conflicts. From its early days with enslaved and free Black communities to the influence of abolitionist movements, religious institutions, and the labor movement, Stoneham has navigated complex social landscapes. The contributions of women, immigrants, and diverse identities have enriched the town's history, highlighting the importance of acknowledging and preserving these varied narratives. As Stoneham continues to grow, its past serves as a reminder of the resilience and complexity of its community dynamics.

Precolonial Era (Pre-1658)

Oral and archaeological evidence suggests that indigenous people have lived in the area that is now Stoneham for over 10,000 years. The area's natural resources, including its fertile land and abundant water, supported the development of complex societies long before European contact. The Pawtucket tribe, whose territory encompassed present-day Stoneham, engaged in sophisticated fishing, farming, and trading systems that sustained their community and fostered a rich cultural heritage. Their land stewardship set the foundation for the region's ecological diversity.¹³

Before the arrival of colonists, indigenous tribes such as the Pawtucket faced devastating losses due to diseases brought by early explorers and settlers to the Americas. These epidemics decimated populations, severely weakening these tribes' social structures and capacity to resist the encroachment of European settlers, leading to reduced numbers and disrupted societies by the time British colonists began establishing settlements in New England.

However, the arrival of Europeans and the subsequent colonization of the area did not result in the total eradication of indigenous peoples in the region or in Stoneham. Evidence suggests that indigenous people continued to live in the area, albeit in reduced numbers and under changed circumstances.¹⁴ Some indigenous individuals are buried in the Old Burying Ground in Stoneham.¹⁵

Today, descendants of those original inhabitants still hold ties to the community, and the land, with its historical and cultural significance, continues to be a living part of the indigenous community's identity.¹⁶ Their presence highlights the need to acknowledge and respect the relationship between Native peoples and their ancestral territories, ensuring that the legacy and rights of these communities are recognized moving forward.

Early Development (1658 – 1725)

In the early days of the mid-17th century, Stoneham was part of Charlestown and was known as Charlestown End. Early settlers favored the northeastern section of the settlement due to its proximity to the South Reading meeting house in what is now Wakefield, which provided both convenience and a sense of security against Native attacks, which were themselves a response to the dire consequences of starvation, land appropriation, and colonial pressures on Native populations.¹⁷ Key streets such as Marble Street and Summer Street were laid out in 1638, which made transportation easier.¹⁸

The foundation of Stoneham's early economy was the exploitation of natural resources. One of the earliest and most impactful activities was the quarrying of "Stoneham marble" near what is today South Marble Street. This marble was crucial for producing lime, a key ingredient in mortar for building foundations and walls. A timber



Plan of Stoneham surveyed by Luther Richardson, dated November 1794.¹⁸

industry also developed in Stoneham during this time, driven by the trade in cedar posts, shingles, and clapboards that had become essential to the local economy. The growth of formal quarry and timber industries marked the beginning of Stoneham's development, both economically and physically, particularly in the industrial area near Spot Pond Brook.¹⁹

The construction of homes during this period increasingly utilized locally available materials such as stone and wood, highlighting a symbiotic relationship between resource availability and economic growth.²⁰ Architecturally, Stoneham's colonial heritage is visible in its surviving early timber frame buildings. These structures, characterized by heavy, hand-cut timber frames covered with wooden clapboards or shingles, often featured two and half-story designs with central chimneys. Two notable examples are 63 Perkins Street and 218 Green Street. These buildings, with their original sash windows and modest architectural details, serve as tangible links to Stoneham's early history, reflecting the interplay between architecture, local resources, and the evolving social and economic conditions of the period.²¹

Notable Historic Resources

Millard-Souther-Green House, 218 Green Street (c.1700)



Constructed by Thomas Millard of Reading, this house is a rare example of early 18th century architecture in Stoneham. It was sold to the Souther family in 1725 and later to the Green family, both of whom have been identified as enslavers. The house was a notable landmark in early Stoneham and served as the location where the church was organized after the separation of what is now Stoneham from Charlestown in 1725. The property was individually listed in the National Register in 1984.

Jonathan Green House, 63 Perkins Street (c. 1720)



The house at 63 Perkins Street, built around 1720, features a five-bay, center-entry layout with a granite foundation and clapboard sheathing. Meanwhile, the house at 218 Green Street, constructed around 1700, has an asymmetrical four-bay facade with an added rear lean-to. Captain Jonathan Green (1719-1795), a delegate to the Concord convention of 1786 and to Boston in 1788 to ratify the constitution, was known for his active involvement in public affairs in Stoneham. He grew up in and later inhabited the house of his father, also named Jonathan. Additionally, records indicate that like his cousin Daniel Green, he was an enslaver, with documentation showing the purchase of an enslaved person in 1738. This history ties the significance of the house to the lives of those who were enslaved, highlighting their experiences as an important part of Stoneham's past.²² The property was individually listed in the National Register in 1984.

Elisha Knight House, 170 Franklin Street. (c.1750)



Prominent among Stoneham's mid-18th-century architecture is the Elisha Knight House at 170 Franklin Street, built around 1750. This well-preserved house maintains features an asymmetrical five-bay facade, a slightly off-center entry, and a pitched roof now covered with asphalt. The house rests on a raised granite foundation and is sheathed in clapboards with simple corner boards, a boxed cornice, and slightly projecting window architraves. Despite mid-19th-century 2/2 sash windows, the house retains the smaller 18th-century window size. It also includes a one-story ell extending from the center rear and a two-story ell projecting from the northeast rear corner.³⁰ The property was individually listed in the National Register in 1984.

Formation of the Town (1725 – 1800)

Stoneham's journey from a modest settlement to an established town began in 1725 when the General Court granted the Act of Incorporation, which formally created the Town. At that time, the population neared 250 people. One of the first significant actions taken by the new Town was the construction of a meeting house situated near the intersection of Summer and Pleasant Streets in 1726. This simple structure served the community's practical needs and marked the beginning of Stoneham's civic and social infrastructure.²⁴ In conjunction with the meeting house, the Town also established the Old Burying Ground in 1726 on land sold by James Hay. The first documented headstone was Timothy Wright in 1728. The cemetery expanded in 1758 with additional land, once again acquired from James Hay.²⁵

Throughout the 18th century, Stoneham remained sparsely populated and the American Revolution, despite its broader significance, had limited impact on the town's growth or structure. As a result, the town remained largely unchanged aside from a select few developments: the construction of saw and grist mills near Lindenwood Street, the establishment of a new schoolhouse in 1793, and the development of a few roads.²⁶ Most settlers remained dispersed throughout the northeast and southeast sections of town and primarily worked in farming or shoemaking.²⁷

Those residents who worked in shoemaking were less likely to work in a big factory than they were to work in small workshops dedicated to shoe production, known as "ten-footers." This domestic craftsmanship played a pivotal role in Stoneham's development, setting the stage for its emergence as a prominent center for the shoe manufacturing industry. An example of this is the Peter Doucette Shoe Shop, a ten-footer relocated from Pine Street to the Stoneham Historical Society in 1967.²⁸

The architecture during this time reflected the English roots and agricultural lives of the buildings' inhabitants. Many residences maintained traditional central chimney and center-hall plans, while some homes began to feature rear chimney and center-hall designs. The introduction of gambrel roofs around 1740 marked a notable shift in architectural preferences, a style that remained popular for about two decades.²⁹

Notable Historic Resources



45 Green Street

Locke-Baldwin-Kinsley House (c. 1744)

This house is one of Stoneham's few well-preserved 18th century houses and the only one with an ell known to have been used as a shop in the 19th century. It was first owned by the Locke family whose property holdings extended to Bow Street and beyond. It was purchased in 1867 by Micah B. Baldwin, a saddler and harnessmaker, who used the ell as a harness shop. It was later the home of Mrs. Helen Kinsley in the 20th century. The property was individually listed in the National Register in 1984.



81 Summer Street

Lynde Homestead (c. 1730)

The Lynde Homestead is one of the earliest extant buildings in Stoneham. The ownership of the property can be traced back to Joseph Lynde in the 17th century. From 1757-1797 the house was owned by an Englishman named Toler who was said to have been a Captain in the English Army.

Industrialization and Community Growth (1800–1850)

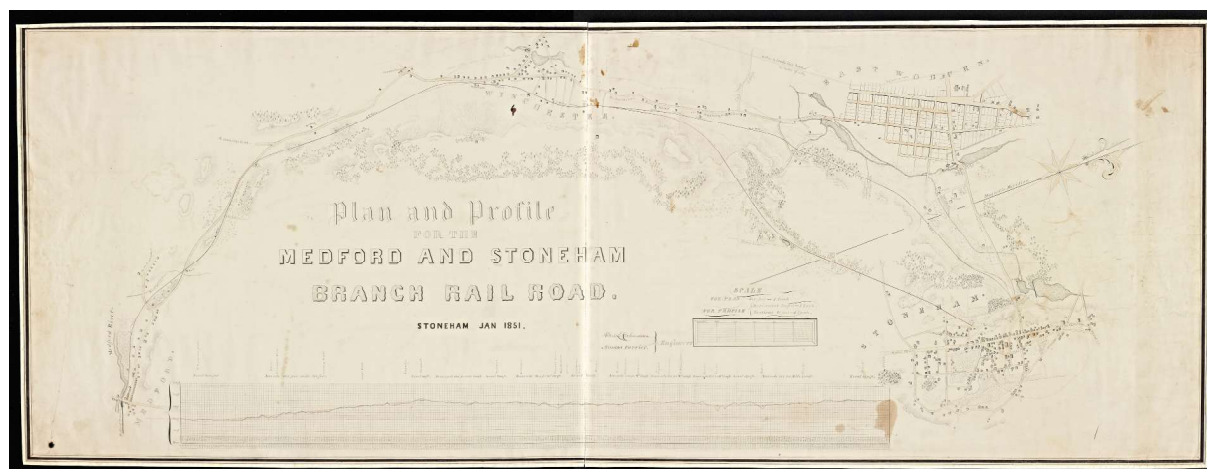
Transportation advancements played a crucial role in reshaping Stoneham during the first half of the 19th century. The Medford Andover Turnpike, now known as Main Street (Route 28), opened in 1806 and quickly enhanced trade routes, attracted businesses, and reshaped the town's economic landscape. A stage line between Reading and Boston that ran through Stoneham opened in 1833, driven by Padilla Beard.³¹

Shortly after, the Boston and Maine Railroad opened in the eastern part of Stoneham (now Melrose) in 1846, connecting the town to a broader regional economy.³² In both cases, the ease of transport facilitated the movement of raw materials and finished goods, spurring the growth of industries, particularly shoe manufacturing, which soon became a cornerstone of the town's economy. This increased accessibility encouraged a transition from agricultural land to urban development, with farmland being replaced by residential and commercial properties.³³

The enhanced connectivity allowed by transportation advancements fostered the influx of people and economic activity, which led to the rapid urbanization of Stoneham. By 1837, the shoemaking industry had grown from small-scale cottage operations to a dominant economic force, marking Stoneham as a leading shoe producer.

The industry's growth attracted a wave of workers, necessitating the development of new housing and residential neighborhoods; from 1840 to 1850 alone, Stoneham's population doubled. This rapid growth reflected the transformative impact of the shoemaking industry on Stoneham's social and economic landscape.³⁴

Civic and social infrastructure also developed during this period to support Stoneham residents as the town grew from a small, agricultural community to a densely populated, industrial center. A new meeting house was constructed in 1803 at the intersection of Washington and Spring Streets.³⁵ Following the opening of the Turnpike, activity shifted west towards the junction of Main, Franklin, and Central Streets – what is now known as Central Square. This triangular space quickly became the heart of social, commercial, and community activities, serving as a bustling venue for gatherings, transactions, and events. In a strategic move to centralize key town amenities, the combined Town House and school building, originally built in 1826, was relocated to the corner of Pleasant and Central Streets in 1833, further cementing the area's importance as the town center.³⁶ In 1836, Stoneham was divided into six school districts, each with its own school, and acquired its first fire engine. The construction of the First Congregational Church in 1840 and the Town Hall building between Common and Tidd Streets in 1846 were also crucial in supporting the town's expanding population and economic activities.³⁷



1851 Map of the Medford and Stoneham Branch Rail Road.³⁹

As industry flourished, residential development followed, particularly near the northern end of the Turnpike, where land was subdivided to accommodate the growing population.³⁸ New construction, predominantly in Federal and Greek Revival styles, reflected not only economic prosperity but also the ideals of freedom and progress that motivated engagement in the abolitionist movement. Greek Revival architecture became prominent in Stoneham as stylistic elements were disseminated through pattern books, making the style widely accessible.³⁹ The variety in Stoneham's architecture, from rural vernacular

Notable Historic Resources

Newhall House, 269 Green Street



This building is one of the best preserved examples of a traditional Greek Revival cottage in Stoneham. It was constructed circa 1840 and is notable for the extended front roof slope that forms a full porch. When Mary Newhall lived there, the house served as a safe haven for self-emancipating individuals seeking freedom from slavery.⁴⁶

Stoneham Meeting House, 52 Central Street



The Stoneham Meeting House at 52 Central Street stands out with its four-bay facade and centrally placed, asymmetrical door. This building, originally constructed as Stoneham's first Town Hall in 1826, now serves as a residence. In March 1833, it was relocated across Gould Meadow to be nearer to the Medford Andover Turnpike. It was a venue for anti-slavery meetings until such gatherings were prohibited by the town.⁴⁷

J.A. Wilson House, 105 Pond Street



The Federal style, although less prevalent today due to modifications and demolitions, brought distinct characteristics to Stoneham. Typically characterized by a gable roof with short returns, these houses were one to two stories tall with a five-bay facade and a central entrance framed by slender fluted pilasters. The exterior millwork was simple yet elegant. A notable example is the house at 105 Pond Street, which features a three-bay facade, a central entrance with pilastered framing, and cornice lintels above the windows.⁴⁸

to Gothic Revival cottages, illustrated the town's complex identity as it evolved from an agrarian society to a bustling economy, shaped by the values and conflicts of its inhabitants.⁴⁰

Evolving Beliefs, Shifting Landscape: Tracing Changes in the Physical Environment

The progression from the death's head to the willow and urn reflects changing religious beliefs and societal attitudes towards death, shifting from a focus on sin and judgment to a more sentimental and hopeful view of the afterlife and can be seen in the physical landscape of Stoneham's Old Burying Ground.



Death's Head: The earliest gravestone motif, dating back to the 17th century, features a skull, often with crossed bones or wings. It reflects the Puritan focus on mortality, sin, and the afterlife's uncertainty.⁴¹



Cherub: Evolving in the 18th century, the cherub motif, with its angelic face and wings, signifies a shift towards a more optimistic view of death. It aligns with the rise of religious movements emphasizing salvation and the soul's journey to heaven.⁴²



Willow and Urn: During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, this motif gained popularity, symbolizing the emergence of intellectual-focused religions over those emphasizing emotions. The willow symbolizes mourning and sorrow, while the urn represents the soul's containment and the body's eventual return to dust.⁴³

As beliefs evolved in Stoneham, so too did its architectural landscape, reflecting a progression from practicality in the Colonial Period to balanced symmetry in the Georgian Style, and culminating in a reflection of ideas of freedom with the Greek Revival Style, all of which shaped the town's physical and cultural landscape.

Colonial Period: Early architecture in this period was functional and straightforward, reflecting the Puritan emphasis on practicality and humility. Buildings were simple, with little ornamentation, mirroring the community's focus on survival and religious devotion.⁴⁴



"Jonathan Green House, 63 Perkins Street." Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). Inventory Number: STN.9.

Georgian Style: As beliefs shifted towards a more balanced view of life and the afterlife, the Georgian style emerged, characterized by symmetry and classical proportions. This style reflected a growing interest in order and harmony, aligning with the societal move towards a more structured and optimistic outlook.⁴⁵



"Locke - Baldwin - Kinsley House, 45 Green Street." Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). Inventory Number: STN.79

Greek Revival Style: This style became popular in the early 19th century as ideas of freedom and democracy gained prominence, inspired by the ancient Greek emphasis on these values. The architecture of this period featured columns, pediments, and a sense of grandeur, symbolizing the community's aspirations for order, beauty, and civic virtue.



"Warren Sweetser House, 90 Franklin Street." Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). Inventory Number: STN.29.

The Height of Industry and Social Change (1850–1900)

During the second half of the 19th century, Stoneham's growth continued at a steady pace. Once again, transportation improvements played a key role in spurring development. In 1859, a 25-passenger horse car line replaced the traditional coach service, marking a step forward in public transit.⁴⁹ However, the horse car line could not meet the demands of the burgeoning leather and shoe industry, leading to a strong push for railway connectivity. In 1861, the first section of track that would allow the Boston and Maine railroad to run through the central part of Stoneham was laid to Farm Hill between Main and Central Streets. The tracks were continued to Franklin Street in 1863, facilitating easier access and transportation for both goods and workers.⁵⁰ By 1900, Stoneham had finally achieved full service by an electric streetcar.⁵¹ The establishment of the railroad and later, the streetcar, spurred the development of major commercial blocks around Central Square, solidifying its status as Stoneham's commercial core.⁵²

As the shoemaking industry gained momentum, due partly to the Civil War, Stoneham experienced a notable expansion of its built environment. The establishment of large factories, such as the John Hill Shoe factory constructed in 1858 and the William Tidd and Company tannery on Pine Street, became symbolic of the town's newfound industrial identity. This growth attracted workers from neighboring towns, who commuted to Stoneham's Central Square via horse-drawn barges that operated daily from Woburn and Wakefield. The associated infrastructure, like roads and schools, fostered a sense of community among the diverse workforce.⁵³

Stoneham's industrial landscape was diversified with ventures beyond the shoe industry. Among its diverse ventures was Haywardville, a notable establishment owned by Nathaniel Hayward and located near Spot Pond. Originally a rubber factory, Haywardville gained historical significance when Hayward secured the first patent for the vulcanization of rubber, marking a pivotal innovation in industrial processes. The town also boasted other significant enterprises in this location, such as William Nicklefield's snuff mill and Thomas Rand's chocolate and spice mill. Rand's mill, known for its production, was eventually sold to Thomas Hurd, who shifted its focus to producing

satinets, a type of fabric.⁵⁴

The demographic landscape of Stoneham underwent a significant transformation with the influx of immigrants who came to work in the town's factories. They came from Canada, Ireland, and other New England states like New Hampshire and Maine. These new residents primarily settled along Summer Street, Tremont Street, and Elm Street.⁵⁵ This influx of immigrants enriched Stoneham's cultural diversity and bolstered its labor force.

The social landscape of Stoneham was marked by a stark divide between the working class and the factory owners. Factory workers lived in modest conditions, with some wives contributing to the household income by shoe binding at home. Despite the challenges of limited education and resources, factory workers and their families lived in a mostly a close-knit community, with workers attending social gatherings like picnics and dances together.⁵⁶



Undated map of Stoneham, likely 1880 or 1889.⁵¹⁰

In contrast, factory owners enjoyed a more affluent lifestyle, residing in large homes and ensuring their children received formal education. This economic disparity did not, however, lead to significant segregation or tension, as the community interacted civilly and without conflict. While they maintained overall positive class relations, the factory workers still joined the Great Shoemakers Strike of 1860 that swept the region, as the social tensions of previous decades endured.⁵⁷

As industrialization advanced, more women entered the workforce, challenging traditional gender roles and fighting for better labor conditions and wages. Their activism wasn't confined to labor issues, however; they also became fervent supporters of the suffrage movement, campaigning for voting rights and showcasing the interconnectedness of social causes in Stoneham's history. Both upper-class women, such as Paulina Gerry and Mary W. Stevens, and working-class women, like shoe stitcher Martha Wallbridge, were committed suffrage advocates.⁵⁸ In 1870, the Daughters of St. Crispin, a national women's trade union, held its National Convention in Stoneham where they held their first vote for equal wages.⁵⁹

Stoneham also became a notable hub of the Spiritualist movement, which centered on the belief in the immortality of the soul and the possibility of communicating with the dead. The 1871 Spiritualist Yearbook highlights Edward T. Whittier, editor of the *Stoneham Independent*, as the leader of the Stoneham Spiritualist Lyceum, and Ida Herson as its caretaker. By the 1880 census, Stoneham was also home to such notable people as Lucida Gamage, recognized as a "clairvoyant physician," and C. Fannie Allyn, who was already known in town for her suffrage activism and was a trance "lecturer."⁶¹ This evolution from social and labor activism to spiritual exploration underscores the diverse and dynamic nature of Stoneham's historical landscape, reflecting the town's commitment to progressive ideas and the varied paths its residents took in their quest for knowledge and change.

As Stoneham grew in population, it also developed additional civic and social infrastructure. A public water system and electric streetlights were installed, new roads were created and old roads were straightened, and a new almshouse was built on Elm Street in 1852.⁶² The establishment of the Stoneham Five Cents Savings

WHEREAS, in every field of human effort the value and power of organization is fully recognized; therefore be it

RESOLVED by this National Grand Lodge of Daughters of St. Crispin, that we demand for our labor the same rate of compensation for equal skill displayed, or the same hours of toil, as is paid other laborers in the same branches of business; and we regard a denial of this right by anyone as a usurpation and a fraud.

RESOLVED, That we condemn and promptly veto one sister's making a percentage on another sister's labor.

RESOLVED, That we assure our fellow citizens that we only desire to so elevate and improve our condition as to better fit us for the discharge of those high social and moral duties which devolve upon every true woman.

At the St. Crispin National Convention in Stoneham in 1870, thirty delegates from thirteen locals across six states unanimously adopted this resolution.⁶⁰

Bank in 1855 also played a crucial role in bolstering the town's financial stability.⁶³ The development of large public spaces like Central Square, along with the presence of Congregational and Universalist churches and the Town Hall, further shaped the town's landscape and community life.⁶⁴ The establishment of the Stoneham Town Improvement Association in 1897 marked a commitment to enhancing the town's appeal and addressing emerging issues such as road design and tree care, managing speeding automobiles and attracting new businesses to Stoneham.

During this period, there were both public and private initiatives to expand access to nature and outdoor recreation. In 1892, Fanny Foster Tudor donated land in Stoneham to the Trustees of Public Reservations create "a natural park for the public benefit." This land was named Virginia Woods in memory of her daughter, marking the first time in history that property was donated to a land trust.⁶⁵ In 1893, the Town of Stoneham voted to donate about 725 acres to the Metropolitan Parks Commission for what would become the

Middlesex Fells Reservation.⁶⁶ One consequence of the development of these new recreation areas was the decline of the Wyoming neighborhood, which had been a popular destination for wealthy Boston residents. Some of the large, impressive granite homes that they had built along the shoreline were later incorporated into the Middlesex Fells Reservation and the Stoneham Zoo, but the majority were demolished.⁶⁷

During this period, Stoneham's architectural landscape evolved to reflect the town's growth and changing social dynamics. Houses during this period often feature a blend of architectural styles, with affluent members of the community favoring ornate styles like Queen Anne, Italianate, and Second Empire, while more modest, functional homes like one-and-a-half to two-story, gable-end, frame houses were constructed for the working class. Notably, Stoneham's

residential landscape, shaped by its shoe-making industry, differed from typical factory towns with large multi-family and tenement buildings. Despite their simplicity, the homes of working-class residents played a crucial role in forming close-knit communities among the workers, fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie. Clusters of these historic homes can still be seen in the Summer and Pond Street neighborhoods, as well as on Tremont Street.⁶⁸

Stoneham's architectural landscape is uniquely enriched by the presence of four Octagon-style houses, a rare and exceptional style from the 1850s and 1860s, with only about 2,000 examples surviving in the United States today. These two-story structures typically feature low-pitched hipped roofs, wide eave overhangs, and often include eave brackets. Some are adorned with Greek Revival or Italianate decorative details, while others maintain a

Notable Historic Resources

Jacob Kidder House, 13 Cedar Avenue



This Italianate house, built c. 1870, is 2 ½ stories and displays a gable-end façade with sidehall plan, which was popular in the mid-19th century.⁷¹

Capt. James Gould House, 77 Summer Street



The Capt. James Gould octagon house stands across from working-class residences, showcasing the mixed socioeconomic makeup of the area.⁷⁰

Emerson Street Shoeworker Houses



Workers cottages on Street, not inventoried in the MACRIS database, but significant to Stoneham's history.

simpler aesthetic. Notable examples in Stoneham include the house at 72 Pine Street, built by Enoch Fuller, a friend of P.T. Barnum of circus fame, as well as those at 2 Spring Street, 77 Summer Street, and 35 Lincoln Street. These distinctive homes contribute significantly to the town's unique architectural character.⁶⁹

Early 20th Century Transitions (1900–1950)

The decline of the shoe industry at the turn of the century marked a significant transition for the town. As the shoe industry's production declined, former factory buildings were repurposed or simply razed.⁷² Amid these developments, Stoneham's industrial sector continued to diversify, with a focus on automobile manufacturing. The opening of Lucius J. Phelps's automobile factory on Pine Street in 1902 marked a significant moment in the transition away from a primarily shoemaking economy. By 1905, the Shawmut Motor Company had taken over the Phelps factory, focusing on manufacturing vehicles known for their endurance.⁷³ The Company achieved fame in 1909 when one of their cars won a transcontinental race from New York City to Seattle.⁷⁴

The rise of the automobile dramatically influenced Stoneham's urban development in addition to its economy. The construction of Interstate 93 and Interstate 95/Route 28 from the 1930s to the 1950s reinforced the automobile-centric nature of the region. This in turn led to increased traffic congestion, environmental concerns, and urban sprawl, which served to further entrench Stoneham's reliance on personal vehicles.⁷⁵ The termination of streetcar service in 1946, followed by the end of passenger rail service in 1958, left residents almost entirely dependent on personal vehicles. The establishment of auto-oriented infrastructure like gas stations and garages along Main Street highlighted a growing reliance on cars.⁷⁶

During this period, Stoneham's population continued to grow, reaching 10,841 people by 1935.⁷⁷ Residents increasingly sought employment beyond the traditional shoe industry, and newcomers were drawn to Stoneham's appealing lifestyle rather than job prospects. Perhaps to maintain its appeal, the town used the Tenement House Act in 1912 to effectively ban multifamily housing that contained three or more units. This shift marked a departure from Stoneham's previous efforts

Ford
THE UNIVERSAL CAR
Franklin Street Garage
K. Melkonian & Sons, Proprietors
The Only Ford Agent in Stoneham

Runabout	\$345	Sedan	\$645
Touring Car	360	Town Car	595
Coupelet	505	Chassis	325

F. O. B. DETROIT
FULL LINE OF AUTO TIRES AND SUPPLIES
RENTING STORING REPAIRING WASHING

TELEPHONE 1561 41 FRANKLIN STREET
JANUARY 6 1917 Independent

1917 advertisement for Ford automobiles sold at the Franklin Street Garage.⁸¹¹

to accommodate workers with modest housing options.⁷⁸

Later, in 1925, Stoneham adopted a zoning plan that set standards for building construction and land use, designating Central Square and a portion of Main Street as the retail business core, with amendments later allowing for additional commercial development. These initiatives marked a shift from rapid growth and urbanization to more constrained development.

Construction projects during this time further enhanced the town's infrastructure and public amenities. In 1901, a new high school was



The construction of the Stoneham Public Library was funded by a grant from Andrew Carnegie.

erected on the former site of the William Street Cemetery, followed by the construction of the Stoneham Public Library in 1903 with a \$15,000 grant from Andrew Carnegie. The library was so popular that it doubled in size during an expansion campaign in 1929-1931, funded by a \$100,000 bequest from Annie Hamilton Brown.⁷⁹ Federal funding through the New Deal supported the construction of a new Town Hall and the North Elementary School in 1939, a dedicated post office building in 1941, and the “Shoemakers of Stoneham” Terra Cotta relief by William Zorach in 1942, among other projects.⁸⁰ These projects not only enhanced the town’s infrastructure and cultural heritage but also reflected the New Deal’s broader goal of rebuilding America’s spirit and infrastructure during tough times. In addition to the physical expansion of its civic infrastructure, Stoneham marked its 200th anniversary in 1925 with a grand celebration. A highlight of the festivities was a pageant featuring over 700 actors who reenacted key moments from the



The “Shoemakers of Stoneham” is a terra cotta relief by William Zorach that is displayed in the Stoneham post office.

town’s history, including Governor Winthrop’s naming of Spot Pond and the departure of soldiers for the Civil War. To commemorate the occasion, special souvenirs were created for the community.⁸¹

Following the devastation of World War I, the world faced another tragic chapter with the Armenian Genocide. In the aftermath of this atrocity, many Armenians sought refuge in the United States, including Stoneham. The Bagdikian family is an example of this migration. They settled at 59 Elm Street from 1922 and became part of the local Armenian community. Ben-Hur Haig Bagdikian, a member of this family, graduated from Clark University in Worcester and had a notable career in journalism, including his pivotal role in the publication of the Pentagon Papers by the Washington Post in 1971.⁸²

Improved transportation also played a key role in advancing social causes, notably women’s suffrage. Building on the town’s established

tradition of active female engagement in social causes, improved transportation enabled women from all levels of Stoneham society to further their participation in the movement for voting rights. They could more easily attend marches and meetings in the Greater Boston area and facilitate the bringing of lecturers to the town. This integration of transportation advancements with social causes illustrates the interconnected nature of Stoneham's historical development, where progress in one area often bolstered progress in another.⁸³

Social dynamics during this period were also evolving. The relationship between Annie Hamilton Brown and Theresa Hitchler, known as a Boston Marriage, emerged as an example of the diversity of identities that contributed to Stoneham's development. Despite the limited acceptance of same-sex partnerships at the time, Annie's wealth as a member of the prominent Tidd family provided them with a measure of security and influence. Theresa, who lived at 31 Maple Street, and Annie left a joint legacy that includes Annie's significant bequest to the Stoneham Public Library and Theresa's role in its construction. Their

All who are to join the suffrage parade will leave by the Fells-way car this Saturday noon' at 12.30 o'clock. All friends, men and women, are invited to join the greatest suffrage demonstration ever seen in Massachusetts. March for victory Saturday, Oct. 16, at 2 p. m. This means YOU.

Stoneham Independent. Saturday, October 16th, 1915⁸⁴



Headstone in Lindenwood Cemetery for Annie Hamilton Brown and Theresa Hitchler.

shared headstone in Lindenwood Cemetery highlights the presence and contributions of queer individuals in Stoneham's history. This aspect of their story emphasizes the importance of recognizing and preserving diverse contributions within the town's collective memory.⁸⁵

Stoneham's connection with the Olympics began in 1932 at the Winter Games where Stoneham High School graduate Edwin "Ted" Frasier represented the United States as a goalie for the hockey team. Following his Olympic experience, Frasier remained in Stoneham, where he became involved in local community service, serving on the Stoneham Parks Commission and working as a practice goalie for visiting teams, including the Boston Bruins.⁸⁶ Stoneham was later home to another Olympian, Josephine Warren Madden, who ran in the track and field relay in the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin, Germany. Madden briefly resided in Stoneham in 1946 before returning and eventually settling permanently in 1973. Both Frasier and Madden's athletic achievements not only contributed to the town's rich Olympic history but also reflected the spirit of athleticism

Notable Historic Resources

28 High Street, Walter Keene Residence (c. 1900)



This house is an example of the transitional Queen Anne/Colonial Revival style. Its Queen Anne features include the combination shingle/clapboard surface and a corner tower with a one-story porch. Its Colonial Revival features include a rectangular plan, hipped roof, entry porch with balustrade, and a modified Palladian window. The property was individually listed in the National Register in 1984.

59 Elm Street



"I grew up in the house on 59 Elm Street. That porch was a place for which I have fond memories. The corner of the porch around from the front door was where I drew by pencil very exotic looking instruments and I was Captain Nemo in command of a submarine. The Shamlians visited us often and we had great feasts in our house—dolmas, pilaf, kusstuf, and always much fruit. My father always had a large garden and was a genius at making hybrids by grafting, and made a fruit tree by grafting a peach and plum tree. He had a cherry tree with the most gorgeous cherries ever eaten and I spent much time in its upper branches pigging out on sweet cherries"

- Ben H. Bagdikian⁹¹

39 High Street (1920)



This bungalow is a good example of the transition of a California-style single family dwelling on the East Coast. The second wave of building along High Street began in the 1920s with houses like this one. The builder took full advantage of this high site to evoke a suburban setting.

and determination ingrained in the community.⁸⁷

During this period, Stoneham's architectural landscape transitioned to embrace suburban designs, notably introducing styles such as Shingle and Craftsman. This shift in architectural styles marked a

pivotal change in the community's development pattern, moving from dense urban lots to more spacious suburban yards around the compact central area.⁸⁸ Shingle Style architecture features irregular, steeply pitched rooflines and asymmetrical façades clad in continuous wood shingles. An example can be seen at 29 Cedar

Avenue, a house that was built in the “Mount Discovery” subdivision, part of the John Hill estate subdivisions.⁸⁹ Craftsman architecture is characterized by one or one-and-a-half story houses featuring porches and a low-pitched gable roof with wide, unenclosed eave overhangs and exposed roof rafters. A notable example of this style is the house at 380 Green Street, which was most likely built using a “bungalow book,” a common practice of the time that provided designs and plans for constructing Craftsman-style homes.⁹⁰

Modern Developments and Contemporary Challenges (1950 – Present)

Since the mid-20th century, the Town of Stoneham has experienced significant population growth and housing development. The town’s population nearly doubled from 10,841 in 1935 to over 20,000 by 1965, driven by post-war economic prosperity and suburban expansion. This surge in population necessitated extensive residential development, particularly in the town’s outlying areas. To accommodate this growth, older homes were demolished, large farmlands were subdivided into residential lots, and wetlands were filled in to create buildable land.⁹³

Zoning regulations played a crucial role in managing this growth and reshaping Stoneham’s landscape. In the 1970s, the Town revised the zoning code to further limit multifamily housing development. These measures, including apartment construction moratoria, aimed to control the town’s expansion but also limited housing supply, making Stoneham more exclusive.⁹⁴ The Federal Housing Administration also influenced homebuilding during this time through the publication of housing and subdivision standards tied to its mortgage program.⁹⁵ As a result, new development tended to be characterized by detached, single-family houses on large lots in popular styles such as Cape Cods and Ranches. These houses were often constructed in batches as part of a subdivision complete with curvilinear streets and cul-de-sac.⁹⁶

Zoning changes also transformed mixed-use areas into predominantly commercial corridors, particularly along Main Street north of Elm Street. This shift not only reflected the changing dynamics of the town but also aligned with broader regional trends toward commercial

expansion.⁹⁷ It also reinforced preferences for single-family houses over apartment buildings. One example of this trend is the H.P. Smith Monument Company office and shop. The building, which still stands today, is located at 238 Main Street outside of the traditional downtown area of Stoneham Square and was designed by the firm of noted architect Royal Barry Wills in 1963. It is a classic, two-story extended/angled Cape Cod house with white washed brick and even a chimney, evoking the comforts of home for grieving family members.⁹⁸

The combined effects of population growth, housing development, zoning changes, and transportation shifts profoundly influenced Stoneham’s commercial landscape. The construction of the Farm Hill and Redstone Shopping Centers in the 1950s and 1960s created retail vacancies in historic Central Square. As a result, many downtown structures, like those at 366-368 Main Street, were replaced with modern buildings, leaving few mid-19th century edifices intact. This wave of change was not without its critics, and over time, local attitudes shifted towards preservation. By 1978, structures like the



H.P. Smith Memorials Building.

BACKGROUND

Dow Block and Chase Block, once considered expendable, were recognized as valuable historical assets, highlighting a growing appreciation for the town's architectural heritage.⁹⁹

Building on the town's earlier Olympic contributions, Stoneham continued to nurture athletic talent, producing several notable Olympians in the latter half of the 20th century. Donald Whiston and Francis P. "Frank" O'Grady both played on the U.S. hockey teams, the former in 1952 and the latter in 1956.¹⁰⁰ Men were not the only Stoneham residents to dominate on the ice. Nancy Rouillard-Ludington Graham, a pairs figure skater, won a bronze medal in the 1960 Winter Olympics and Nancy Kerrigan won a bronze medal at the 1992 Winter Olympics and a silver medal at the 1994 games.¹⁰¹

As the landscape and community of Stoneham evolved, residents recognized the importance of acknowledging its origins. In 1975, to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the town's founding, a series of events took place from March to October. The festivities included a banquet and ball, and each month featured a different commemorative event.¹⁰² Stoneham's vibrant community life is also illustrated by the establishment of the Appian Club in 1982 by Italian immigrants and their descendants. The club, which expanded to include a women's section in 2004, remains a testament to the

significant contributions of diverse cultural groups to the town's social fabric.¹⁰³



Farm Hill Plaza



Mr. Zip or "Zippy" at the Stoneham Post Office

Concurrent with these developments, the adoption of the ZIP code system in the 1960s played a subtle yet influential role in Stoneham's evolution. The national campaign to promote ZIP codes, featuring Mr. Zip as a mascot, aimed to modernize communication and improve mail delivery efficiency. This initiative not only streamlined postal services but also helped define community boundaries more clearly, influencing the town's development patterns.

Source: Nancy Pope, "50 ZIPpy years" Smithsonian National Postal Museum. Accessed March 11, 2024. <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/50-zippy-years>

Historic Themes

Themes are useful for identifying the most compelling aspects of a community's history. They are particularly useful as a framework for survey efforts and for preparing multiple property documentation forms in support of National Register listing. The themes highlighted here are based on the prominence of that topic in Stoneham's history, conversations with the Stoneham Historical Commission, and community engagement. Additional themes that could be further developed include women's rights, labor history, and 20th century growth and development.

Slavery and Abolition

The enslavement of Black individuals played a profound role in Stoneham's early economic and social fabric. During the colonial era, white residents used forced labor to help clear the land and construct stone walls to render the land productive for agriculture.¹⁰⁴ Elder Daniel Green was perhaps the first white person in Stoneham to use enslaved labor. In his will, written in 1754, he bequeathed to his wife, Mary, "his Negro women and her children," indicating the presence and exploitation of enslaved individuals in the area's early history.¹⁰⁵

Stoneham's early years also reveal a complex social fabric, particularly regarding the treatment of Black individuals. In 1754, a Town Meeting resolution mandated specific seating arrangements for Black individuals in the meeting house, segregating them to certain areas. This decree, alongside the Massachusetts slave census of the same year, which recorded eight enslaved adults in Stoneham, sheds light on the experiences of the town's Black community. Among the enslaved were Cato, Simon, Daniel Kingstone, and Dinah, whose names appear in various records. Additionally, the town recorded seventeen births of individuals of African descent between 1730 and 1790, highlighting the presence and treatment of Black individuals in Stoneham's history.¹⁰⁶

Simultaneously, Stoneham had a free Black community. Records mention Simon Barjona, a skilled shoemaker, and Hannah, described as "mulatto and part Indian," who were married in the meeting house,



Old Burying Ground.

where their children were also baptized. These records illustrate the interconnectedness of free Black families in Stoneham, a connection that also extended to other communities of color in the region, including towns such as Reading, Medford, and Malden.¹⁰⁷

The issue of abolitionism became increasingly prominent during the first half of the 19th century. The Green family, long-standing members of the Stoneham community and descendants of enslavers, hosted the town's first abolitionist meeting at 8 Bow Street. Initially, abolitionist gatherings faced disruptions from opponents rather than outright prohibition. However, in 1837, the town officially barred anti-slavery discussions from the Town House, a move that underscored the deepening conflict over abolitionism. This period also highlighted the diversity of opinion within the community, with both long-established families and newer residents holding varied stances on abolitionism. The complexity of the issue was further underscored by a fatal fight during "an altercation concerning an abolition meeting," illustrating that the debate over slavery was not a simple division between old and new residents but a multifaceted

issue that affected the entire community.¹⁰⁸

Despite these tensions, the establishment of the Female Anti-Slavery Society in 1838 and a men's chapter in 1839 demonstrated a commitment to the abolitionist cause. Abijah Bryant, the deacon of the Congregational Church, along with his wife, provided shelter to self-emancipating individuals in their home at 307 Main Street, now demolished, actively participating in the resistance against slavery. Mary Newhall of 269 Green Street, a member of the Newhall family known for their support of abolitionism, also provided shelter and assistance to those escaping slavery.¹⁰⁹ These actions, among others, contributed to Stoneham's role in what is commonly referred to as the Underground Railroad, showcasing the town's active involvement in contributing to the broader movement for social justice and equality.

Military

Stoneham has a long and proud military history that dates to the pre-colonial era. During King Philip's War, Stoneham residents played a significant role in the colonial war efforts. Figures like Thomas Gery and John Gould are remembered for their service, commemorated by a plaque placed in 1917 by Hon. Levi S. Gould on the Pleasant Street wall of the Old Burying Ground. The town's commitment continued through the French and Indian War, with about 30 men enlisting from a small population of around 300. Among them were Timothy Wright, buried in the Old Burying Ground, and Titus Potamia, a free black man. Additionally, four Stoneham men joined Rogers' Rangers, a notable unit specialized in raiding and combat, further showcasing Stoneham's significant contributions.¹¹⁰

As the American colonies moved towards independence, Stoneham's involvement in the Revolutionary War is notable, with 98 men listed on the Muster Rolls. A local company of Minutemen was formed and trained in the winter and spring of 1775. Col. Samuel Sprague led these men to the Battles of Lexington and Concord, where some, like Edward Bucknam, were wounded. Col. Sprague also commanded Stoneham men at the Battle of Bunker Hill, including six patriots of color, both free and enslaved. Among these were Isaiah Barjonah, baptized in Stoneham and noted in records as "mulatto," and Cato,

enslaved by the Green family, who enlisted in May 1775 and served through significant events of the war.¹¹¹

This commitment was further demonstrated in the 19th century when Stoneham played a notable role in the Civil War, with many of its residents taking part in the conflict. On April 19, 1861, exactly 86 years after the Battle of Lexington and Concord, Captain John H. Dike led the Stoneham Light Infantry, Company L, into the war's first skirmish in Baltimore, linking the town's historical contributions to the nation's continued struggles for freedom and unity.¹¹² Among the notable residents was Dr. W. Symington Brown, who served as a surgeon for the 33rd and 55th regiments, the latter being one of Massachusetts' black regiments. Col. J. Parker Gould, who fought in the Battle of the Crater, was severely injured and later succumbed to his injuries, illustrating the personal sacrifices made by Stoneham's citizens.¹¹³

Women from Stoneham also made significant contributions. Hannah Arnold joined the Nursing Corps and worked in a makeshift hospital in Washington D.C. and the Finley U.S. General Hospital. After the war, she married John Bray and lived near the Old Burying Ground.¹¹⁴

The Civil War history of Stoneham includes not only residents who left to fight but also individuals who came to Stoneham after the war. Abraham Davis is one such example. Originally an enslaved person from Georgia, he self-emancipated and joined the Union Army. After the war, he settled in Stoneham and became part of the community.¹¹⁵ Davis is buried in Lindenwood Cemetery, which was established in 1861, is the final resting place of many Civil War veterans, including Col. Jacob Parker Gould.¹¹⁶

As the turn of the century approached, Stoneham's contribution to the Spanish-American War was marked by the deployment of its Light Infantry under Captain Warren E. Sweetser on May 6, 1898, the grandson of the Sweetser whose relocated Greek Revival house is now protected by a preservation restriction. The unit's experience, characterized by an arduous three-month trek through the Puerto Rican countryside, earned them the nickname "hikers," a testament to their resilience and determination.¹¹⁷ Tragically, this period also saw

the loss of Private James McColgan from Stoneham, who was killed on June 11, 1898, and is remembered as the “First American soldier killed on Cuban soil.”¹¹⁸

The enduring legacy of these soldiers and their moniker as “hikers” is immortalized in the Spanish-American War Memorial, commonly known as “The Hiker.” This statue, dedicated on October 27, 1928, and situated in front of the Police Station on Central Street, serves as a poignant reminder of Stoneham’s role and the bravery of its citizens during the Spanish-American War. In 1941, the Spanish War Hall, originally built in 1911 as a manufacturing facility for pharmaceutical papers and boxes, was purchased as the meeting hall for Spanish American War Veterans, who then deeded it to the Stoneham Historical Society & Museum in 1958, where it now serves as the museum, library, and meeting hall.¹¹⁹

As the world was engulfed in the first global conflict, Stoneham played a notable role in World War I as its men were integral to the “Yankee Division,” consisting of New Englanders who were among the first Americans to arrive in France and engage in combat.¹²⁰ Highlighting the town’s involvement, Company H of the sixth regiment of the Massachusetts National Guard, led by Captain-elect T. Arthur Ireland, marched down Stoneham’s Main Street from the armory to the Franklin Street Station. This procession of 67 men and three officers symbolized the town’s commitment and the personal sacrifices of its citizens in the global conflict.¹²¹

In World War II, Stoneham made significant contributions to the war effort, with residents serving in various capacities. Men from Stoneham fought bravely, with Staff Sergeant George J. Hall being a notable example. He was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic actions near Anzio, Italy, on May 23, 1944, where he single-handedly killed seven enemy soldiers and captured nine. Sadly, he later succumbed to his wounds in 1946. In his honor, the “triangle” at the junction of East and Spring Streets and the local VFW post bears his name, serving as a lasting tribute to his bravery.¹²²

The war effort was not limited to the battlefield. Women like Rosemary Hamill, a fourth-grade teacher, left their jobs to support the war effort. Hamill joined the Coast Guard and held the rank of

Specialist C.¹²³ Additionally, many families in Stoneham participated in the Victory Gardens movement, contributing to food production during a time of scarcity. In 1942, Stoneham residents organized the Home Front Trust, a community effort to support service members and their families during the war and assist soldiers transitioning back to civilian life. The trust hosted concerts, dances, bean suppers, and other events to raise funds for this cause, showcasing the town’s collective spirit and dedication to the war effort.¹²⁴

The Vietnam War also added a poignant chapter to the town’s history. Technical Sergeant Richard B. Fitzgibbon Jr., recognized as the first American to die in the conflict, was murdered by a fellow American service member on June 8, 1956. The recognition of Fitzgibbon’s death as part of the Vietnam War required the intervention of



The Spanish War Hall was originally built in 1911 as a small manufacturing facility to produce papers and boxes for storing and shipping pharmaceuticals. It was deeded from the United Spanish War Veterans to the Stoneham Historical Society and Museum in 1958.



Civil War monument in Lindenwood Cemetery.

Today, the town's Memorial Day Parade honors and celebrates the contributions of individuals and the Stoneham community at large. Recent parades have featured over 70 groups and last about 45 minutes, which underscores the importance and popularity of this event.

family members and government officials, including then U.S. Representative Ed Markey. Their efforts led to the Department of Defense changing the Vietnam War Memorial's qualification date to November 1, 1955, the day American troops first entered Vietnam.

Adding a layer of complexity to this story is the fact that Fitzgibbon's son, Richard B. Fitzgibbon III, also died in Vietnam. This makes them one of only three known father-and-son pairs to die serving in the Vietnam War. Their intertwined fates underscore the personal and familial sacrifices made during this tumultuous period in history. Beyond the Fitzgibbons, other men from Stoneham served and died in the war, contributing to the town's legacy of service and sacrifice in Vietnam.¹²⁵

History of Historic Preservation Planning in Stoneham

The present effort is guided by an understanding of Stoneham's historical context and aims to integrate individual initiatives into a cohesive preservation plan. The Town has not adopted a formal master plan and is currently embarking on its first historic preservation plan; local efforts have, instead, centered on a piecemeal approach, with planning efforts across the community considering historic preservation. This approach has allowed municipal staff and volunteers to create tailored responses that respond to the Town's needs. While Stoneham's cultural and historical identity is deeply ingrained in its streets, buildings, landscapes, and intangible aspects, it's worth noting that preservation planning has not yet emerged as a priority or consideration for the town. As Stoneham continues to evolve, embracing a balance between preserving its history and embracing future developments could significantly enhance its unique character and ensure its history remains an integral part of its identity.

Historic Preservation Initiatives

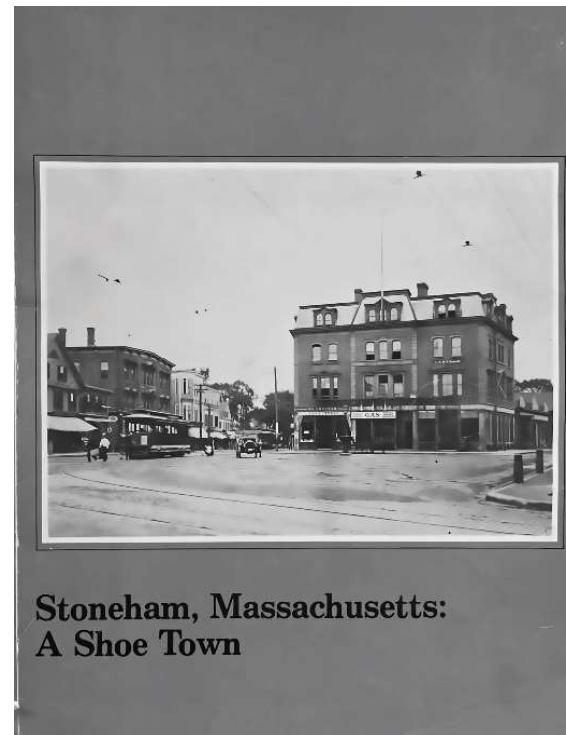
The foundation for preservation planning in Stoneham has been significantly shaped by the townwide survey conducted by Carole Zellie and Martha Coons, followed by the Reconnaissance Survey Town Report, and further augmented by the Historic and Archaeological Resources of the Boston Area report. These efforts, alongside the National Register of Historic Places designations, have collectively established a strong base for understanding and preserving Stoneham's heritage. Yet, the landscape of historic preservation has seen considerable changes over the past 40-plus years. Buildings that were considered new at the time of these surveys and reports are now regarded as historic, and there is an increasing emphasis on representing a wider spectrum of historical stories.

Zellie and Coons' Survey and Publication

The 1979 Inventory housed at the Stoneham Historical Society and

the 1981 publication by Carole Zellie and Martha Coons are related efforts in documenting Stoneham's history. Carole Zellie likely had a significant role in the 1979 inventory, which helped establish a comprehensive understanding of the town's heritage. This inventory cataloged more properties than the 273 listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission database, including 72 on the State Register of Historic Places. However, it missed forms for properties already on the State Register.

The 1981 publication, "Stoneham, Massachusetts: a Shoe Town," by Zellie and Coons expanded on this work, providing detailed insights into Stoneham's architectural and historical landscape.



Cover of the 1981 *Stoneham, Massachusetts: a Shoe Town* by Carole Zellie and Martha Coons

Reconnaissance Survey Town Report for Stoneham (1981)

The Reconnaissance Survey Town Report for Stoneham compiled for the Massachusetts Historical Commission played a crucial role in initiating preservation efforts by identifying the town's historical development and areas of significance. It highlighted the need to further preserve the town's well-preserved Victorian neighborhoods, period churches, and the industrial district with 19th-century shoe factories. The survey's findings underscored the importance of maintaining the town's historic residential fabric and town center, which remained remarkably intact despite development pressures. This comprehensive overview provided a foundation for targeted preservation initiatives to safeguard Stoneham's rich historical heritage.

The Historic and Archaeological Resources of the Boston Area (1982)

The Historic and Archaeological Resources of the Boston Area report further emphasized the importance of preservation efforts in Stoneham. It highlighted the town's role in the rubber shoe manufacturing industry and the ice trade, showcasing its significance in local manufacturing during the Early Industrial period. The report also noted the impact of the street railway network expansion and highway construction on the town's development. These findings underscored the need to preserve sites related to Stoneham's industrial history, such as the former shoe factories and ice trade locations. The report's insights helped guide preservation efforts toward protecting these historically significant sites in Stoneham.

National Register of Historic Places

The designation of historic properties in Stoneham primarily occurred in two significant years, 1984 and 1990, with a noticeable shift in the type of designations over time.

In 1984, Stoneham initiated a significant effort in historic preservation, with 51 properties designated for their historical significance. Of these, 48 were recognized as individual listings (NRIND), highlighting their unique historical importance. The remaining three properties



First Congregational Church on Main Street.

were designated under the National Register Determination of Eligibility (NRDOE), indicating at the time their potential eligibility for individual listing. This marked the beginning of Stoneham's commitment to preserving its diverse historical assets, focusing on both individual buildings and broader historical contexts. Stoneham's Multiple Resource Areas (MRAs) were also part of this effort, with the first MRA listing, the Stoneham Multiple Resource Area (STN.I), established in 1984. Stoneham's effort was notable because it was one of only thirty-five Massachusetts communities to pursue MRA listings. This distinction underscores Stoneham's proactive commitment to historic preservation, as the MRA process streamlined the National Register listing by using a shared historic context, reducing repetitive documentation and effort.

However, by 1990, the approach shifted dramatically towards recognizing historic districts, with 90 properties designated as part of National Register Districts (NRDIS). This change indicates a strategic move towards preserving larger historical contexts and areas within Stoneham, highlighting the importance of not only individual

buildings but also the collective historical landscape. During this period, Stoneham continued its use of the MRA framework, adding the Central Square Historic District (STN.G) and Nobility Hill Historic District (STN.H) to its listings. In 1992, the Spot Pond Archaeological District (STN.K) was also designated as part of this MRA approach. Nearby towns like Malden, Reading, Wakefield, and Winchester also adopted this method, further highlighting the regional commitment to streamlined preservation efforts. However, the National Park Service has since discontinued MRA listings, requiring future nominations to follow the individual or district processes, as demonstrated by the Sweetser House (90 Franklin Street, STN.29) in 2005. Initially eligible for the Stoneham MRA in 1984, the Sweetser House was not listed due to owner objections until years later.

Subsequent years saw fewer designations, with a continued focus on districts and multiple property submissions, reflecting an evolving approach to historic preservation that emphasizes broader historical narratives over isolated sites.



The Town of Stoneham received funding from the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund to complete a Preservation Master Plan for the Old Burying Ground.

1726 Old Burying Ground Preservation Master Plan (2012)

The 1726 Old Burying Ground Preservation Master Plan serves as a foundational document for the conservation and enhancement of a key historical site within Stoneham. Recognized on the National Register of Historic Places, this cemetery houses an estimated 348 headstones, spanning the period of 1728 to 1924, alongside an undetermined count of fragments, 3 tombs, and likely unmarked burials that reflect a fuller spectrum of Stoneham's historical community. The plan prioritizes a list of 11 projects, each aimed at addressing specific conservation needs to maintain the site's integrity and historical significance. It was prepared by Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC, Monument Conservation Collaborative, LLC, and CME Associates, Inc.

Stoneham also undertook a comprehensive site survey of the Old Burial Ground by employing a global positioning system (GPS) to accurately document the cemetery's physical features. This detailed mapping serves as a crucial tool for preservation experts, aiding in the planning of maintenance activities. Facilitated by a grant managed by the Stoneham Historical Commission, the survey's findings have been instrumental in guiding the ongoing care and preservation of this historic site.

Colonel Gould Gravestone Restoration (2013)

In 2013, the Stoneham Historical Commission undertook the restoration of Colonel J. Parker Gould's gravestone in Lindenwood Cemetery. This initiative was made possible through a grant from the Massachusetts Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission. Colonel Gould, a local historical figure, was laid to rest in Linden Avenue, Lot 178, Grave 8, and the restoration efforts aimed to preserve his memory and honor his contributions to the community.

Historical Marker Program

In 2021, the Stoneham Historical Commission completed the installation of three historical markers, each measuring 29" x 37", to honor important aspects of the town's history. The first marker,

highlighting the Stoneham Automobile Industry, was placed at the Clara Steele Playground behind Town Hall. The second marker, commemorating the Carnegie Library, was installed at the 1904 Public Library at Maple and Main Streets. Additionally, a marker honoring Col. J. Parker Gould, a Civil War hero, was positioned on the Tri-Community Greenway near Lindenwood Cemetery. The Commission previously oversaw historical signs for the Greenway on the shoe industry, the Stoneham branch line, and the trolley system, as well as several “on this site” signs. These installations are part of the Commission’s efforts to celebrate and preserve Stoneham’s heritage, with plans for additional markers in the future.

Integration of Historic Preservation in Town-Wide Planning

Stoneham’s integration of historic preservation into town-wide planning reflects a conscious effort to respect its past while moving forward sustainably in all aspects of growth. This approach is evident in the town’s consideration of historical character in zoning and land use planning, which supports the integration of new development and the town’s historical fabric. This approach both preserves physical assets and stewards the historical narratives and social dynamics that shaped Stoneham’s development.

Economic Development

The Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan of 2014 stands out as a notable effort to acknowledge the town’s heritage as a component to town development. While the primary focus of the plan was to reinvigorate Stoneham Center and its surroundings, it also incorporated strategies to preserve the town’s historical and cultural assets and emphasized their potential to stimulate economic growth and community vibrancy.

One of the plan’s key strategies in was the promotion of Stoneham’s historic and cultural offerings. It was recommended that the Stoneham Historical Society update the Stoneham Historic Walking Tour pamphlet and work together with the Chamber of Commerce



Businesses along Main Street.

to cross-promote historical sites with current cultural and retail offerings, creating a holistic experience that integrated the town’s historical identity with its contemporary aspirations. This approach was recommended not only to attract visitors and residents but also to enrich the town’s economic and social fabric.

Furthermore, the plan’s approach to zoning and land use planning encouraged the establishment of businesses aligned with the town’s historical character and development patterns to support an active retail environment. This focus on maintaining a strong sense of place through the preservation of historic assets and the enhancement of cultural offerings exemplified Stoneham’s dedication to safeguarding its heritage while fostering economic development and community vibrancy.

Transportation

The Complete Streets Downtown Study for Stoneham Town Center includes enhancing the town's character among its broader objectives. While the study primarily addresses safety, walkability, and economic development, its emphasis on creating a more attractive and vibrant environment in the town center indirectly supports the preservation of its historical assets.

The creation of a livable mixed-use environment with local walking destinations, retail, and housing aligns with the preservation of the town's historic character but also reflects a return to the area's roots. In the 1950s, Main Street was a vibrant area characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, which transitioned into a predominantly commercial corridor. Reintegrating a diverse mix of uses can recapture the essence of the town's historic identity and foster a more dynamic and sustainable community.

Open Space and Recreation

Stoneham's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) (2018) concentrates on the management and development of the town's open spaces, mainly for environmental and recreational purposes. The plan outlines strategies for conserving and utilizing these areas to benefit the community.

In setting criteria for protecting open space parcels, the plan emphasizes factors including ecological value, recreational potential, and community need. Although historical significance is not explicitly highlighted as a major criterion, the preservation of open spaces can indirectly contribute to maintaining the town's historical landscape.

The OSRP aims to foster collaboration among different town boards, committees, and recreational groups to implement its goals effectively. The OSRP Update Committee, consisting of members from diverse town entities, seeks to ensure coordinated efforts in realizing the plan's objectives. This collaborative approach is intended to facilitate the comprehensive implementation of the plan, aligning with broader town initiatives and indirectly supporting the preservation of Stoneham's historical and cultural landscapes.



Stoneham Town Common.

Including the Stoneham Historical Commission in these collaborations ensures historical perspectives are incorporated, enriching planning discussions with valuable insights into preserving Stoneham's unique heritage. The plan also mentions adopting the Community Preservation Act, which can be used to preserve historic sites as well as preserve open space and create affordable housing.

Housing

In 2020, Stoneham adopted a Housing Production Plan aimed at addressing the growing need for diverse housing options. This plan also incorporates elements of historic preservation as part of its overall strategy.

The plan advocates for the development of housing in areas that are already well-served by public amenities and transportation. It argues that this approach helps to reduce the reliance on personal vehicles and can be supported by the repurposing of existing historic

buildings to both meet modern housing needs and preserve their historical value.

A significant focus of the plan is the conversion of underutilized buildings into mixed-income housing. It states that this approach both helps to increase the diversity of housing options available in Stoneham and supports the preservation of the town's architectural heritage. The plan highlights the successful conversion of former schools and industrial buildings, such as the John Hill Shoe Factory, into residential units. It encourages the Town, in collaboration with the Stoneham Historical Commission, to continue identifying and assessing such properties for their potential to be repurposed as housing, taking into consideration their historical significance and any challenges that may arise during the conversion process.

Furthermore, the plan underscores the importance of garnering support for the Community Preservation Act (CPA). The CPA provides a funding mechanism that can be used for affordable housing initiatives as well as historic preservation projects. By building support for the CPA, the plan aims to secure a financial resource that can be leveraged to protect and enhance Stoneham's historic assets while also addressing housing needs.

Another key strategy outlined in the plan is the pursuit of historic preservation tax incentives. Recognizing the financial challenges associated with rehabilitating historic structures for housing, the plan identifies various grant and loan programs available at the federal and state levels. Programs such as the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentives Program and the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit are highlighted as potential sources of funding with the potential to make the conversion of historic buildings into mixed-income housing more feasible. Although Stoneham has not yet undertaken any projects utilizing the Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit and has only completed two federal HRTC projects in the early 2000s, the plan suggests that Stoneham could explore the development of local tax incentive programs to further support property owners interested in undertaking such rehabilitation projects.



The new building at 380 Main Street stands in contrast to the old building at 366 Main Street.



This former factory at 426 Main Street was converted into a mixed-use building with ground-story businesses and housing above.

Annotated List of Preservation Partners and Stakeholders in Stoneham

Stoneham Department of Planning and Community Development (Town)

The Department of Planning & Community Development provides technical support and information on land use and development to all town departments, committees, and boards as needed. They play a crucial role in ensuring that development decisions consider Stoneham's historical and cultural heritage, integrating preservation into broader community development strategies.



Stoneham Town Hall.

Stoneham Historical Society & Museum (Non-profit)

The Stoneham Historical Society plays a vital role in preserving the town's rich history. Through collaborations with the Stoneham Historical Commission, the society engages in public education and community outreach, highlighting the significance of Stoneham's heritage and the importance of its conservation. By organizing events, exhibits, and educational programs, the Historical Society ensures that the town's past remains accessible and relevant to current and future generations.

Stoneham Public Library (Town)

The Stoneham Public Library serves as a valuable resource for local history. Its collection of town reports, archives, and local newspapers, including the Stoneham Amateur, Stoneham Independent, Stoneham Ledger, and Stoneham News, provide researchers, historians, and residents with a deeper understanding of Stoneham's evolution, documenting its social, cultural, and economic development over the years.

Stoneham Council on Aging (Town)

The Stoneham Council on Aging provides essential services for the town's seniors, focusing on social, nutritional, and medical needs with an emphasis on kindness, respect, and dignity. The Senior Center, housed in a Greek Revival building dating back to 1852, serves as the main hub for these services. Originally the Town's almshouse, it has undergone renovations to maintain its historical significance while accommodating modern needs. This building has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places since 1984.

Stoneham Department of Public Works (Town)

The Stoneham Department of Public Works provides and maintains public services for the town's growth and residents' quality of life. The Cemetery Division, part of the DPW, manages the 31-acre Lindenwood Cemetery, ensuring its preservation. The DPW's responsibilities also include infrastructure maintenance, snow removal, and emergency response.

Stoneham Cultural Council (Town)

The Stoneham Cultural Council is part of the Mass Cultural Council network and receives state funding and local donations to support local arts, humanities, and sciences. Established in 1982, the council, appointed by the Select Board, plays a vital role in awarding grants to individuals and organizations that enrich the town's cultural scene. The Mass Cultural Council's mission is to promote excellence, education, diversity, and inclusion in these areas, contributing to community vitality and economic growth.

Department of Conservation and Recreation (State)

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) plays a crucial role in preserving the natural and historical landscapes of the Middlesex Fells Reservation, which includes parts of Stoneham. The DCR ensures that residents and visitors can enjoy the Fells' beauty and significance through managing and maintaining the area, educational programs, and preservation and conservation efforts.

Stoneham Chamber of Commerce (Non-profit)

The Stoneham Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1984, plays a key role in the town's economic development. It provides support and resources to local businesses and promotes collaboration between businesses and the community. With a vision focused on a thriving Stoneham, the Chamber works to connect businesses, government, community groups, and residents, driving innovation and improving quality of life.

Stoneham Community Development Corporation (Non-profit)

The Stoneham Community Development Corporation (Stoneham CDC) is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life in Stoneham by fostering a sense of community and connection. Through town events, equitable long-term planning, and community forums, the Stoneham CDC encourages residents to get involved and take pride in their town. Acting as an intermediary, the Stoneham CDC supports community projects from conception to completion, empowering residents to improve public spaces and make Stoneham a more desirable place to live.

Friends of the Fells (Non-profit)

The Friends of the Fells works to conserve and promote sustainable enjoyment of the Middlesex Fells Reservation. Their vision is for



The former Central School on Williams Street.

nature and people to thrive in harmony, supported by a diverse community. They focus on building community appreciation, protecting the Fells' ecology, providing learning opportunities, and supporting DCR's management of the area. They emphasize planning through diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Stoneham Garden Club (Non-profit)

The Stoneham Garden Club, founded in 1928, has a long history of community involvement and gardening enthusiasm. Initially meeting in members' homes, the club now convenes at Whip Hill, a 30-acre Conservation Center and Wildlife Refuge owned by the Town of Stoneham. Club activities include maintaining the Herb Garden and Perennial Border at Whip Hill, decorating the park for the annual "Christmas at Whip Hill" celebration, and hosting an Annual Plant Sale and Luncheon.



Issues and Opportunities Analysis

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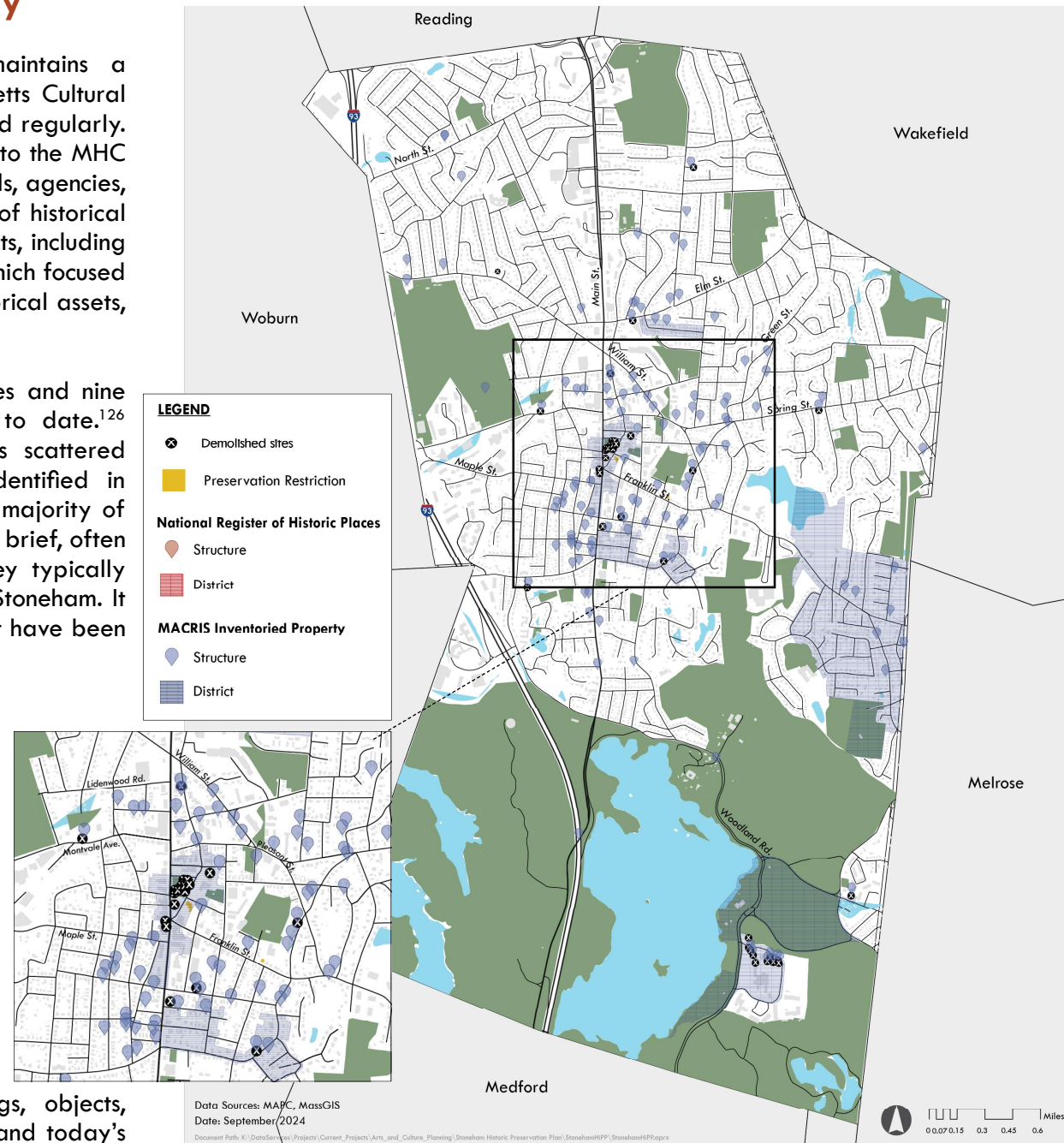
Local Public Awareness and Community Engagement

Stoneham Historic Properties Inventory

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains a database of historic properties called the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), which is updated regularly. This system compiles all historical inventories submitted to the MHC and serves as a valuable resource for various individuals, agencies, and organizations, helping them pinpoint the locations of historical assets. The data is also integrated into numerous projects, including the Massachusetts 2022 Climate Change Assessment, which focused on understanding the impact of climate change on historical assets, particularly those closely linked to the local economy.

According to MACRIS, 272 individual historic resources and nine historic areas have been documented in Stoneham to date.¹²⁶ Although there are individual properties and areas scattered throughout the town, most inventoried properties identified in MACRIS are clustered in the center of Stoneham. The majority of the forms are from the 1980s and early 1990s and are brief, often listing minimal information. If sources were listed, they typically mention only a single map, such as the 1889 map of Stoneham. It is important to note that MACRIS includes buildings that have been demolished.

These historic properties form the basis of the town's inventory, but they do not represent all historic resources in Stoneham. There are various factors that can lead to an incomplete inventory. One is the date of construction. For example, the 1979 survey likely disregarded buildings built after 1929 because they would have been built in the prior 50 years, making them largely ineligible for listing in the National Register. While there are 20 buildings in Stoneham built between 1930-1955 listed in the National Register, they were included as part of historic district nominations in 1990, there is scarce documentation of their historic significance, and four have already been demolished. There are likely many historic buildings, objects, structures, and sites in Stoneham built between 1929 and today's



50-year threshold of 1974 that could be considered historically significant.

The fact that 94% of known historic resources in Stoneham have “architecture” listed as a significance category shows a bias towards architecturally distinctive buildings. While many of the historic resources are tagged with multiple areas of significance, the heavy focus on architecture implies that less distinctive buildings could have been overlooked. For example, there are only two resources with significance for “ethnic heritage” and three for “social history,” categories that indicate a focus on people of color, immigrants, and other groups with less power and representation.

Notably, small-scale workers’ cottages outside the Central Square Historic District and in the northern part of town near Route 28/I-95 are underrepresented in the inventory. These cottages are crucial to understanding the town’s working-class history. The northern area, which saw more recent development, might now include structures that meet the 50-year age requirement for historic designation. However, these properties have not been thoroughly evaluated for their historical importance.

Notable Historic Resources

41 Lincoln Street



A Maria Hannaford Cady was known to hold suffrage meetings from her home at 41 Lincoln Street. This property has not been surveyed and therefore does not exist in the State’s official inventory.

48 Hancock Street, STN.191



Inventoried as 43 Hancock Street. Connection to Fannie Allyn (suffrage activist and Spiritualist) not mentioned in the inventory.

31 Maple Street, STN.239



Theresa Hitchler’s home, notable for its connection to LGBTQ history. Not mentioned in the inventory.

269 Green Street, STN.66



Significant for the self-emancipating individuals who passed through it. Not mentioned in the inventory.

Of the **272** inventoried historic resources in Stoneham:

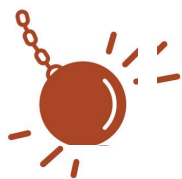
57% are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

These resources are discussed in further detail in the next section.



43% (118) are not listed in the National Register.

There is less information available about these resources because they were completed as part of a community-wide survey in April and May of 1979.



13% (35) are known to have been demolished.

18 of those resources were listed in the National Register. Additional resources may also have been demolished or altered beyond recognition.



7% of those that are listed in the National Register were designated in the past 30 years.

93% were designated between 1984-1994.



93% (253) are buildings. There are also 15 structures, 2 objects, and 2 burial grounds.

94% include “architecture” as one of the reasons why they’re significant.



40% were built in the Late Industrial period (1870-1915), followed by 30% in the Early Industrial period (1830-1870).¹²³



Stoneham Fire Station



Warren Sweetser House

2 properties have a preservation restriction, the Stoneham Fire Station and the Warren Sweetser House. Preservation restrictions are a legal tool that provides a degree of protection from change.



Of the 9 inventoried historic areas in Stoneham...

- 44% (4) are listed in the National Register.
- 33% (3) are located in the Middlesex Fells.
- 22% (2) are historic shoemakers neighborhoods.

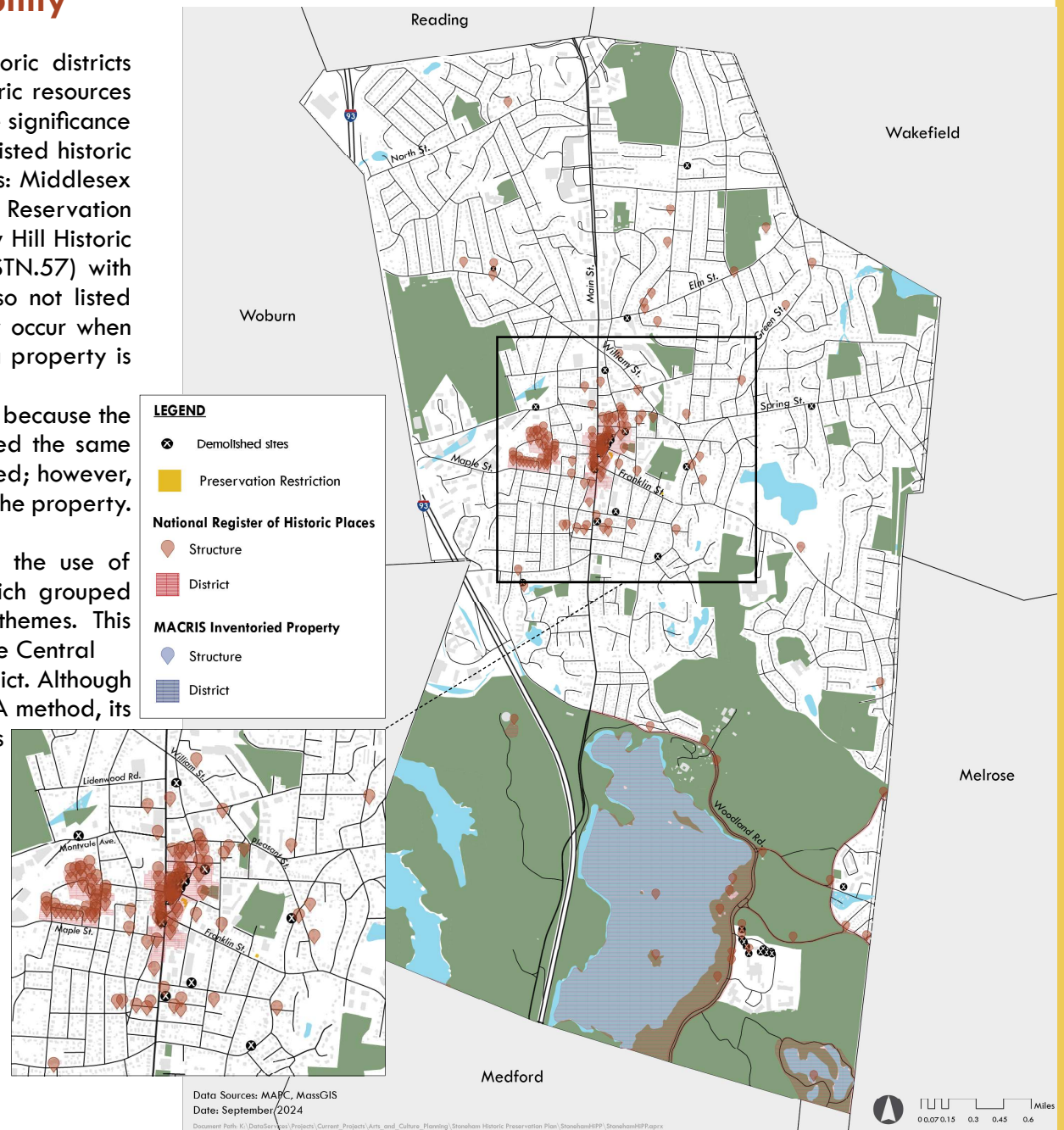
National Register Listings and Eligibility

Stoneham has 154 historic resources and four historic districts listed in the National Register. 50 of the listed historic resources are individually listed, which means that they achieve significance without being part of a historic district. 102 of the listed historic resources are part of one of the four historic districts: Middlesex Fells Reservoirs Historic District, Middlesex Fells Reservation Parkways, Central Square Historic District, or Nobility Hill Historic District. There are also two resources (STN.1 and STN.57) with a Determination of Eligibility (NRDOE) that are also not listed in the National Register. Determinations of Eligibility occur when the Secretary of the Interior issues an opinion that a property is eligible for listing in the

National Register, but the property is not listed, often because the owner objects. A property with a NRDOE is afforded the same protections as a property that has been formally listed; however, there may not be the same level of documentation on the property.

Stoneham's past preservation efforts also involved the use of the Multiple Resource Areas (MRA) framework, which grouped properties with shared historical or architectural themes. This approach facilitated the designation of areas like the Central Square Historic District and Nobility Hill Historic District. Although the National Park Service no longer employs the MRA method, its impact on Stoneham's preservation practices remains significant.

Two National Register-listed buildings, the Warren Sweetser House and the Stoneham Fire Station, have preservation restrictions. Since the Town of Stoneham does not have regulations in place that protect historic properties, only these two buildings out of the 137 National Register-listed buildings in Stoneham have significant protection from alteration or demolition.



There are 18 National Register-listed resources that are known to have been demolished. 15 of those resources were part of a historic district, 13 of which were in the Central Square Historic District. While the National Park Service does not require demolished resources to be removed from the National Register, demolished resources are no longer considered significant. A future town-wide survey should review the eligibility of individual resources and districts that have been affected by demolition, such as Tremont Street.

The vast majority of National Register listings in Stoneham date to the decade between 1984 and 1994. There has been no new National Register listing in Stoneham since the Warren Sweetser House at 90 Franklin Street was listed in 2005. If those nominations were completed today, both the MHC and the NPS would likely require a greater depth of research and a stronger argument for significance. For example, the nomination for 107 William Street consists of a simple inventory form, Form B, with only one paragraph on the building's architectural significance and one paragraph on its historical significance.



Demolished building in Stoneham.

Given Stoneham's substantial progress in conducting surveys and previous National Register work, the town is in a strong position to submit new National Register nominations. With a significant number of inventoried properties and opportunities to survey new areas, there is considerable potential for additional listings. However, the Town needs to decide where to direct its limited resources. Prioritizing National Register listing for Town-owned properties would make them eligible for the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund. Additionally, listing historic buildings that may interest developers using state and federal historic tax credits could be beneficial. Since the nomination process is lengthy and uncertain, having a property already listed could make rehabilitation more attractive to developers.

Municipal Bylaws, Regulations, and Management

The preservation and management of historical assets are important to honoring Stoneham's heritage and accommodating change. However, the town does not have traditional historic preservation bylaws such as a demolition delay bylaw or a Local Historic District. This context highlights the need for thoughtful integration of historic preservation goals within zoning bylaws to ensure that future development respects and reflects the town's historical character.

Zoning Bylaw Analysis

Zoning is a form of land use regulation that sets standards for future development. It is a powerful tool for shaping the built environment because it dictates how land can be used, including the size and shape of buildings, the actual use of a property, and requirements for parking and site design. As a result, it is important for a community's historic preservation goals to be embedded in the standards set in the zoning bylaw. There are two parts to this zoning bylaw analysis: direct mentions of historic preservation and/or the Historical Commission, and compatibility of development standards with historic contexts.

Historic Preservation in the Stoneham Zoning Bylaw

There are infrequent mentions of historic preservation in Stoneham's zoning bylaw. This may be due in part to the fact that there are no historic preservation regulations on the books that would require greater coordination with the zoning bylaw. It may also be because zoning bylaws tend to be revised incrementally as issues arise and town governments, such as Stoneham, require changes to the zoning bylaw to be approved at Town Meeting.

The strongest historic preservation provision in Stoneham's zoning bylaw is in Section 6.1 1.3.10 Wireless Service Facility Requirements and Restrictions. This provision states, "Any Personal Wireless Service Facilities located on or within an historic structure shall not alter the character-defining features or distinctive construction methods of the building. Any alteration made to an historic structure to accommodate a device shall be fully reversible." There are some shortcomings with this provision, however. First, "historic structure" is not defined in the zoning bylaw, which creates an opening for conflicting legal interpretations. Is a historic structure one that is listed in the National Register or one that is identified in MACRIS? Is a structure inclusive of non-buildings? Second, wireless service facilities are allowed by a special permit from the Planning Board, which is not required to consult with the Historical Commission when making its decision.

The inclusion of the Historical Commission in discretionary land use decisions also arises in Section 7.2 on site plan review. This section states that the Select Board "shall seek input and recommendations" from the Historical Commission on developing Site Plan Guidelines and that the Select Board shall adopt guidelines that "protect and preserve buildings, structures and areas of historical and/or aesthetic significance." These guidelines do not appear to exist. The Historical Commission is also named to the "Development Review team" for the administrative review of enlargements to buildings that received site plan approval in the past. The inclusion of the Historical Commission as part of a multidisciplinary development review team is positive; however, the purview of the team's review appears to be limited since the Select Board has sole jurisdiction to approve site plans. Furthermore, it is considered a best practice

for a land use board, such as the Planning Board, to approve site plans, not the Select Board.

The Historical Commission is also referenced in Section 6.7 on signage. This section includes a provision allowing historical markers approved by the Historical Commission in all zoning districts.

Development Standards in Historic Contexts

Like many cities and towns in Massachusetts, Stoneham's zoning bylaw divides the town into zoning districts, each with a unique set of development standards. This zoning analysis focuses on the zoning districts with the greatest concentration of known historic resources, as determined using MACRIS data. Those zoning districts include the Residence A, Residence B, and Central Business districts.

RESIDENCE A

The Residence A zoning district is the largest zoning district in Stoneham, occupying two-thirds of the town's land area. Its purpose is to "provide family suburban residential areas with related public and semi-public uses and accessory uses." As a result, the only uses that are permitted by-right are single-family houses and home occupations. Accessory dwellings on properties with an owner-occupied house are allowed by a special permit from the Planning Board. The dimensional standards for Residence A favor large lots with large setbacks, minimal building coverage, and a maximum height of 30', which is consistent with the desired suburban character.

Because the Residence A district covers such a large swath of Stoneham, it does not adequately account for the variations in development patterns and historic contexts that exist within its boundaries. This leads to two issues: historic buildings that do not conform to the zoning and new development that does not match the historic context. The first issue is only a concern if a property owner chooses to make changes to the property, such as building an addition, converting it to a different use, or adding an accessory dwelling unit. In that case, the property owner would need to seek

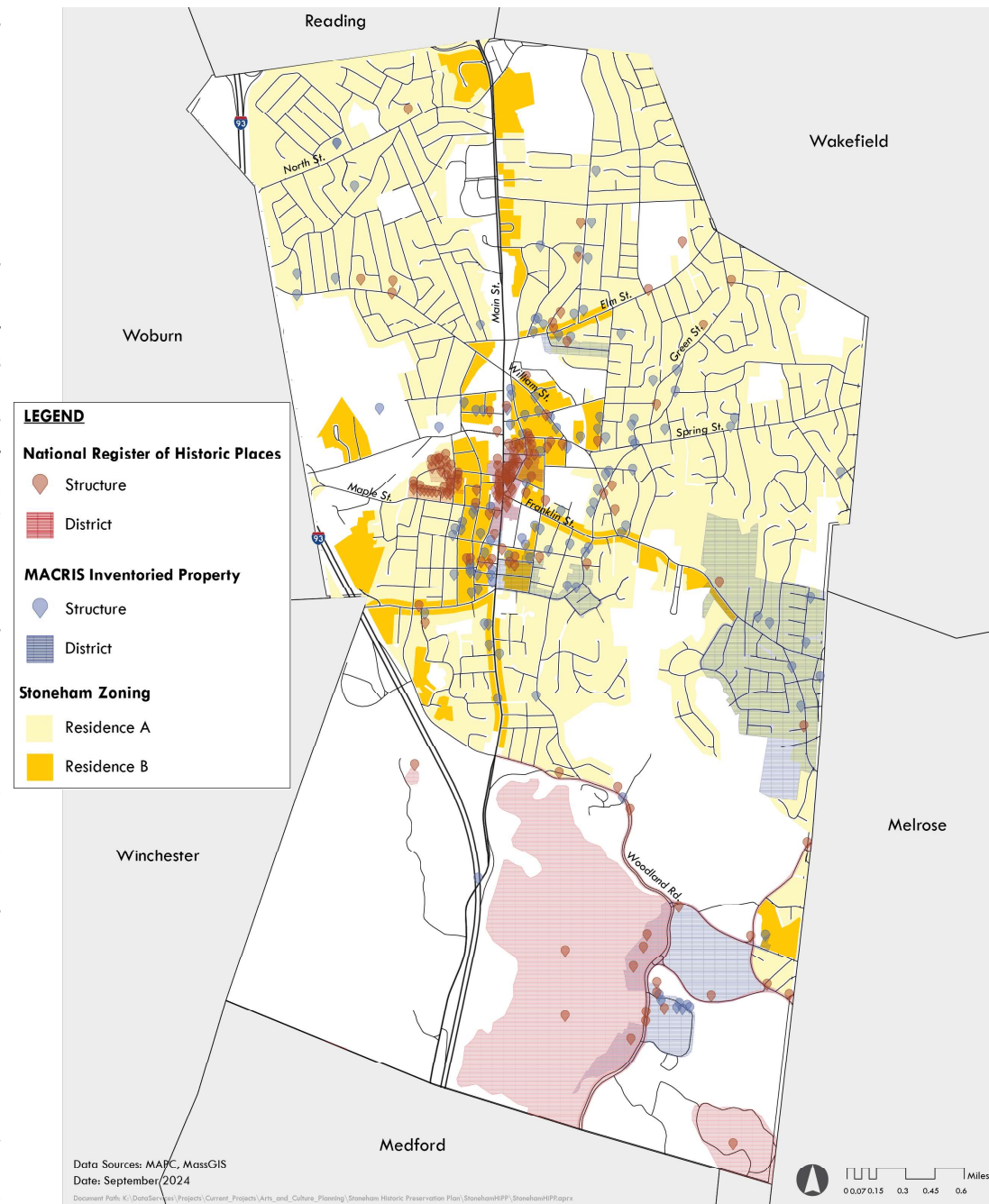
a variance from the Board of Appeals, which adds time, cost, and uncertainty to a redevelopment project since variances are not typically supposed to be granted.

The biggest roadblock for historic structures in Residence A is the minimum lot size requirement. According to an analysis of MACRIS data, there are 284 properties in the Residence A zoning district with a nonconforming lot size that are either part of an identified historic area or include a historic resource. 18 of those 284 properties are listed in the National Register. Most of the properties on Tremont Street and about half of Nobility Hill, Summer-Pond, and Green Lane-Columbus do not meet the minimum lot size requirement. Not only does this mean that the redevelopment of those properties would require a zoning variance, but also that there's a mismatch between the desired land use and the existing land use. Two other possible roadblocks are the large front yard setback requirement and the low height requirement. The former would primarily be an issue for small cottages like the ones on Tremont Street; the latter would primarily be an issue for the tall Queen Anne houses like the ones on Maple Street.

The Residence A district includes historic areas with very different contexts, such as the Tremont Street Shoemakers Neighborhood and Nobility Hill. For example, Tremont Street is characterized by modest cottages of one or two stories with minimal front yard setbacks. In contrast, Maple Street is characterized by large, three-story buildings set back from the street with open lawns. In instances where the zoning effectively allows more development potential on the lot than what's there currently, teardowns are incentivized (see 12 Tremont Street). It would be challenging for one set of zoning standards to match all contexts given how different the development patterns are. The zoning seems better suited to the context of Nobility Hill than it does to the context of Tremont Street.

RESIDENCE B DISTRICT

The Residence B zoning district is a relatively small area in Stoneham, occupying one-fifth of the land area in the town. It is primarily concentrated around Stoneham Square and radiates out from the



Square along major roads. The purpose of this zoning district is to “provide residential areas of medium intensity with a variety of housing types and recreational not-for-profit uses.” Unlike Residence A, Residence B allows two-family houses by-right in addition to single-family houses and home occupations. Some types of group housing are allowed by Planning Board special permit, as are owner-occupied accessory dwellings and conversion of an existing building to a not-for-profit recreational use. Multifamily housing is allowed only after receiving a special permit from the Planning Board and site plan approval from the Select Board. The dimensional standards for Residence B are generally less restrictive than those for Residence A, such as the minimum lot size, minimum lot width, maximum lot coverage, and front setback requirements. The maximum height is still 30.’

The minimum lot size in Residence B is 7,000 square feet, which is more in keeping with the current parcel sizes than Residence A. However, an analysis of MACRIS data shows that there are still 28 properties in the Residence B zoning district with a nonconforming lot size that are either part of an identified historic area or include a historic resource. The majority of those 28 properties are listed in the National Register and are considered to be individually significant, rather than contributing to a district. There are also historic buildings in Residence B that do not appear to meet the minimum front setback or maximum lot coverage requirements, such as 18 Maple Street and the Michael Foley Cottage at 14 Emerson Street. All these nonconformities would make improvements to these properties challenging without a zoning variance.

Like Residence A, there are many parcels in Residence B where the zoning would allow a much larger building on lots that are currently occupied by modest historic buildings, such as 67 Summer Street and 81 Summer Street. The redevelopment of the A.H. Tredick House at 22 Wright Street provides a telling example of this mismatch. According to the 1979 inventory form, the house was constructed circa 1850 and was “a well preserved [sic] example of a small Greek Revival house with side-hall plan, like those of many shoemakers who lived in the central portions of Stoneham in the early to late nineteenth century.”¹²⁸ The house was demolished in May 2022 and replaced with three condos that each sold for approximately \$1 million.



12 Tremont Street (STN.67) as seen in the 1979 inventory form (top) and a 2024 photo (bottom).

Similarly to Residence A, there is a mismatch between different types of historic buildings within the zoning district. For example, the Italianate house at 30 Chestnut Street is much larger than the small colonial house at 81 Summer Street, which are both different from the Greek Revival/Italianate house at 18 Maple Street that uses up most of the lot area. Ideally, the zoning would be tailored more closely to existing conditions so that future development matches the historic context of these neighborhoods.

CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

The Central Business zoning district encompasses Stoneham Square in the center of the town, roughly defined as Main Street, from Marble Street in the south to Lindenwood Road in the north. Its purpose is to “preserve and improve the character and qualities of Stoneham Square.” There are no uses allowed by-right in the Central Business district beyond the handful of uses that are permitted in all districts.¹²⁹ A variety of retail uses, including personal services, banks, and restaurants are allowed by Select Board site plan approval; select commercial uses, including entertainment, hotels, and mixed-use buildings, are allowed by Planning Board special permit and Select Board site plan approval.

The dimensional standards for the Central Business district are very flexible; in fact, the only limitation is a height limit of 45'. This means that buildings can be built to the edges of the lot, without setbacks or open space, and that lots of any size are considered developable. This both helps and hurts the historic buildings in the district. Since the zoning requirements are flexible, there are less buildings that would be considered nonconforming and therefore require a zoning variance for any changes. On the other hand, the zoning is not sufficient to guide historically sensitive new development. For example, the height limit makes it possible for four-story buildings to be constructed, which is about a story taller than most of the historic buildings in the district, especially those on the outskirts. In addition, the ability to build to the lot lines is out of character with the historic buildings south of Maple Street, which typically have large front yard setbacks and small side and rear setbacks as well.



22 Wright Street (STN.153) as seen in 1979 and 2023 using Google Maps streetview.

ADDITIONAL OBSERVATIONS

While there are not that many surviving known historic resources in the Commercial 1 zoning district, it's worth noting that the E. Porter Dodge House at 44 Pleasant Street and the cottages on the east side of Oriental Court are purpose-built residential buildings, but the zoning district doesn't allow residential uses. While the residential uses may legally continue because they predate the zoning, the current zoning incentivizes redevelopment for non-residential uses that would likely require demolition of the existing buildings.

Most of the historic resources in the Recreation and Open Space district are in the Middlesex Fells; the Stoneham Senior Center is an exception. The historic resources identified in the Medical/Office/Residential district were associated with the New England Sanitarium/Memorial Hospital and have all been demolished.



The Chase Brothers Block was built in 1874 and contributes to the Central Square Historic District.

Town-Owned Historic Resources

The Town of Stoneham owns eight historic resources that are identified in MACRIS. These properties are part of the town's rich heritage and are maintained for public benefit and historical preservation. In addition, there are nine historic resources identified as contributing to the Central Square Historic District listed in the National Register that were demolished to facilitate the creation of the town common.



Senior Center
136 Elm Street

- Constructed 1852
- Individually listed in the National Register (STN.63)



Stoneham Fire Station
25 Central Street

- Constructed 1916
- Individually listed in the National Register (STN.36)



Lindenwood Cemetery
529 Montvale Avenue

- Established 1861
- Inventoried property, not designated (STN.801)



Stoneham Public Library
445 Main Street

- Constructed 1904
- Individually listed in the National Register and contributing to the Central Square Historic District listed in the National Register (STN.28)



Old Burying Ground

119 Pleasant Street

- Established 1726
- Individually listed in the National Register (STN.800)



Stoneham Spanish-American War Monument - "The Hiker"

43 Central Street

- Constructed 1928
- Contributing to the Central Square Historic District listed in the National Register (STN.906)



Stoneham Town Hall

35 Central Street

- Constructed 1939
- Contributing to the Central Square Historic District listed in the National Register (STN.197)



Stoneham Police Station

47 Central Street

- Constructed 1950
- Contributing to the Central Square Historic District listed in the National Register (STN.198)

Local Public Awareness and Community Engagement

Since the role of historic preservation is to preserve the places and stories that matter to people, community outreach and engagement were key components of this process. The project team engaged in various types of outreach at different points throughout the process to increase the diversity of people and perspectives that were included. The three key touchpoints early in the process were stakeholder interviews, an in-person community meeting, and an online community survey. A second online community survey was distributed in the summer to solicit feedback on draft recommendations. Throughout the project, the project team maintained a website with current information about the project and used an email newsletter to share updates and opportunities to participate.

Stakeholder Engagement

To better understand how people in Stoneham perceive historic preservation goals and efforts, a series of one-on-one interviews was conducted with 22 key stakeholders between the months of April and June 2024. Stakeholders were identified by the project team, including MAPC, the Stoneham Historical Commission, and the Town Planner, based on their level of involvement with local historic preservation activities. Interviewees include Town staff, residents who serve on Town boards and committees, local business owners, development professionals, and staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Each interview was conducted by MAPC. Comments made by interviewees were kept confidential to ensure that they were comfortable sharing honestly.

Five main themes emerged from the stakeholder interviews:

1. Stoneham's history is a valuable, but underappreciated community asset.

There is support for preserving historic structures and increasing awareness of the town's history; however, history is not seen as

a priority. Specific buildings, such as the Carnegie wing of the library and the Council on Aging building, and specific areas, such as downtown, were recognized as important and worthy of preservation. Select comments include:

- While residents take pride in the downtown district, historic theater, and old shops, they do not visit them frequently enough to ensure their sustainability.
- The widespread support for the bank mural demonstrates the community's value for preserving local history.
- The idea of what's considered historic and worth preserving tends to be narrow in scope.
- Town-owned historic buildings receive varying levels of appreciation, with some like the Council on Aging building and firehouse deemed significant, while others like the library are less valued.
- There's a desire to revive the practice of teaching local history in elementary schools, which was more prevalent in the past.
- Making local history more personal, visual, and accessible through maps and photos is considered important for community engagement.
- Adaptive reuse of historic buildings is preferred over demolition as a preservation strategy.
- Stoneham's rich history serves as an attractive feature for potential new residents.

2. Fiscal constraints make addressing deferred maintenance of Town-owned properties a challenge.

Due to budget constraints, the Town has not been in a financial position to keep up with the necessary maintenance of Town-owned historic properties. Without a proactive approach, the Town has been unable to plan for routine improvements, such as roof replacements, as well as infrastructure modernization, such as sustainability efforts. Select comments include:

- Facilities management tends to be reactive rather than proactive, primarily due to financial constraints.
- Deferred maintenance of Town-owned properties stems from

challenging financial conditions in the early 2000s.

- Preserving historic features and buildings is not prioritized in public spending decisions.
- Key priorities include roof replacements, HVAC updates, sustainability retrofits, and general modernization.
- There are opportunities to creatively leverage funding.
- There is a lack of widespread awareness among Town staff about the preservation restriction on the fire station property.

3. History is not adequately considered in planning and development review.

The Town does not have a culture of engaging in long-range planning, so decisions about permitting new development are largely made on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Board and the Board of Appeals. The Historical Commission does not have a formal role in this process, nor does it have tools to support preservation instead of demolition. Select comments include:

- Decisions about new development are divided between the Planning Board and the Board of Appeals, which hold significant power but have differing approaches.
- The Historical Commission lacks a formal role in advising on development review applications, including demolition permits.
- Without dedicated Town staff support, the Historical Commission lacks a strong advocate in departmental decision-making processes.
- The zoning bylaw does not offer flexibility or incentives for preserving historic buildings or constructing new buildings that align with the historic context.

4. Development pressure is prompting reflection on community identity and values.

A hot real estate market has increased the value of properties in Stoneham, leading to a tension between preserving historic buildings and accommodating new development. There is also interest in harnessing the market to revitalize downtown. Select comments include:

- Stoneham's limited public transit and other factors have shielded it from significant change, preserving an insular and homogenous culture.
- The loss of specific places and buildings, such as Weiss Farm, the Dairy Dome, and Hago Harrington's, has evoked sadness, disappointment, and anger among residents.
- Town leadership has become more thoughtful and progressive but remains cautious about upsetting older, longtime residents and lacks foresight and ambition.
- While residents express discontent with change, they are resistant to property regulations.
- There's a desire for downtown revitalization through new businesses and development, but property owners show little interest in collaborating to reduce vacancies.

5. The Stoneham Historical Commission is an important but overlooked partner.

The Commission is often sidelined due to interpersonal dynamics within town government and confusion about their role. The Commission is seen more as a roadblock than a constructive partner, resulting in a preference for working directly with trusted individual advisors or avoiding the Commission's input entirely. Select comments include:

- Developers tend to consult informally with individual members of the Commission with whom they have a good working relationship, rather than formally seek advice from the entire Commission.
- There is a perception that the Commission has a "you can't do that" attitude and complicates matters based on comments at public meetings and conversations with property owners.
- The Historical Commission is often treated as an afterthought rather than a constructive partner.
- The work needs to be shared among more partners, not just the Historical Commission.

Spring Community-Wide Engagement

Following the stakeholder interviews, the project team held a community meeting and distributed a survey to better understand the perspective of the broader Stoneham community. The community meeting was held at Town Hall on May 22, 2024 and the survey was available between May 22-July 7, 2024. Despite robust promotion, only five members of the public attended the community meeting. This low turnout may reflect a lack of interest in historic preservation in Stoneham and a general disengagement from civic life. The survey generated slightly higher participation, with 56 responses. The questions posed by the survey are the same as the questions posed by the engagement activities at the community meeting, so the responses are analyzed here together.

What Makes You Proud of Stoneham?

The goal of this question was to understand how people describe their relationship to Stoneham and what fosters their connection to the town. The majority of the open-ended responses to this question (57%) highlighted the importance of a small-town community feeling. Respondents highlighted the “small town friendliness,” “feeling of community,” and “tight knit community.” Respondents were also proud of the town’s history, downtown, civic life and town services, good schools, green spaces, and walkability.

What Places in Stoneham Are Important to You?

Responses to this question revealed the places, historic and not historic, that are valued in the community. The public library (57%) and Town Common (33%), two important public resources, were mentioned most frequently in the open-ended responses to this question. Other landmarks like the Greater Boston Stage Company theater, Stoneham Square, and Town Hall were also identified frequently. Middlesex Fells, including Stone Zoo and Spot Pond, are also very important to respondents. Various churches and cemeteries, along with civic buildings like the senior center, fire station, and schools, and a variety of local businesses and restaurants were also mentioned.

Preservation Statements

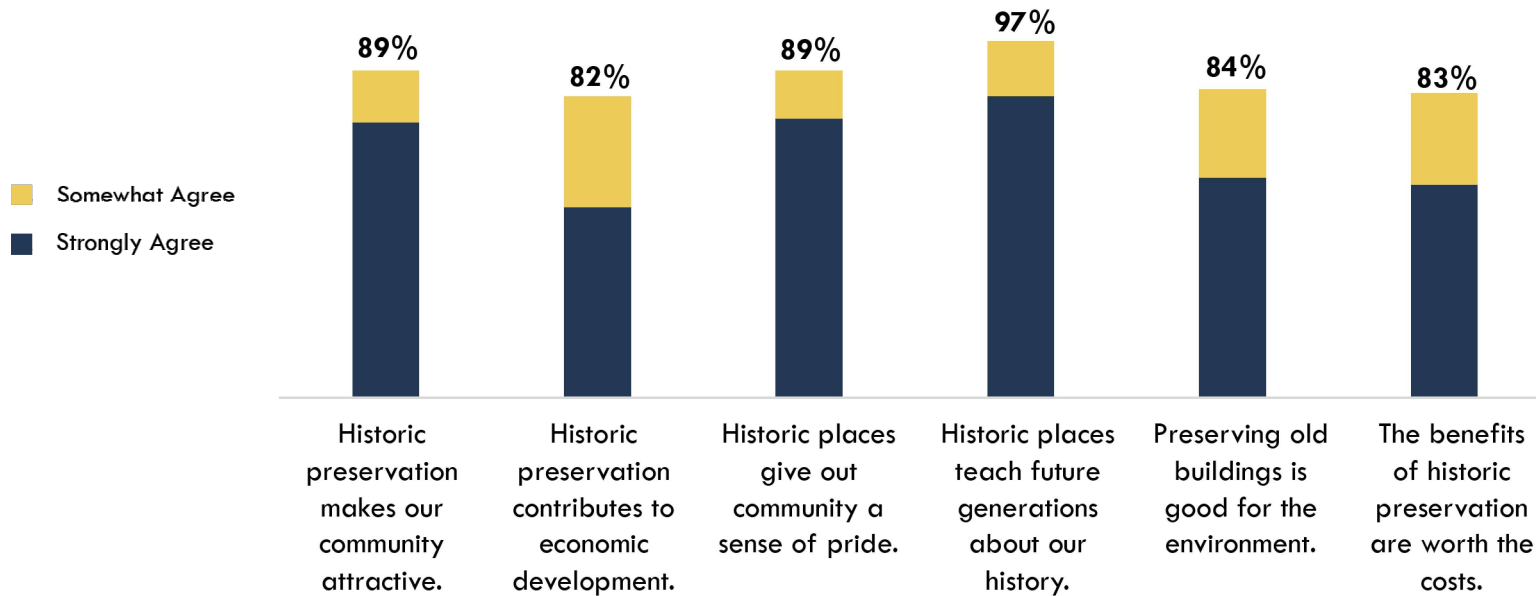
Respondents were asked how much they agreed with six statements about historic preservation. The goal of these questions was to understand community perceptions of the value of historic preservation. The statements are:

- Historic preservation makes our community attractive.
- Historic preservation contributes to economic development.
- Historic places give our community a sense of pride.
- Historic places teach future generations about our history.
- Preserving old buildings is good for the environment.
- The benefits of historic preservation are worth the costs.

A majority of respondents (over 50%) “strongly agree” with all of the above statements and 83% of respondents either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that the benefits of preservation outweigh the costs. The statement about historic places teaching future generations about our history received overwhelming support, with 97% of respondents selecting either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree.” The connection between community attractiveness and sense of pride also scored high, with 89% of respondents selecting either “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” for both statements. Respondents were less certain about preservation’s contribution to economic development and environmental sustainability, but still agreed that they were connected.

What Histories Do You Think Are Missing, Incomplete, or Underrepresented in Stoneham Today?

This open-ended question generated a range of responses that touched on perceived gaps in Stoneham’s historical narrative. Many respondents cited the need to tell the full story by expanding the narrative to groups of people that have often been overlooked, including enslaved people, indigenous communities, people of color, and women. There was particular interest in the history of slavery and abolition in Stoneham. Respondents also noted an interest in the early history of Stoneham, including its founding and development, as well as the “shoe town” years, including stories of immigration.

Percentage of respondents who agree to survey statements on historic preservation and places.

What Are the Greatest Threats to Preserving Stoneham's History?

Respondents were fairly evenly split between three threats to preserving the town's history: "lack of money and resources," "people not knowing or caring," and "development pressure." Respondents were less likely to perceive climate change as a threat. Additional, open-ended responses include town politics, misinformation, and the lack of the Historical Commission's influence. The Town can build momentum and community buy-in by focusing on actions that target these perceived threats."

What Do You Hope That This Plan Will Accomplish?

This open-ended question asked respondents to reflect on the goals that they have for the historic preservation plan. About a third of respondents hope that the plan will increase awareness and appreciation of local history; a third of respondents also hope that the plan will contribute to preserving the town's historic character. Respondents also mentioned goals such as generating community pride, providing actionable next steps, and balancing preserving history with allowing change.

Summer Community-Wide Engagement

The feedback from the stakeholder engagement and spring community-wide engagement provides a foundation for understanding the perspectives of different people with ties to Stoneham including, but not limited to, those who are already involved in preserving the town's history. Building off this feedback, the project team developed a list of draft recommendations that the Town could pursue to enhance its historic preservation efforts. A second community-wide survey was distributed online from August 1-August 18, 2024. Members of the Stoneham Historical Commission held "office hours" at the library and tabled at the farmers market to increase visibility of the project and survey. This second survey generated significantly higher participation than prior community engagement activities, with 124 responses received.

The survey contained three types of questions that were repeated for each of the six categories of recommendations. The first question asked respondents to rank each draft recommendation based on whether they considered it to be a high, medium, or low priority; respondents were not limited in the number of high priority rankings they could assign. The second question asked respondents to identify their top recommendation in that category. The third question allowed an open-ended response for additional suggestions.

Education and Outreach Recommendations

Respondents identified educational programs and public events as both a high priority and the most important recommendation in this category. Interestingly, there was less support for interpretive signage and public art in the rankings question, but respondents ranked it as the second most important recommendation overall. While an active website and online resources and coalition building and partnerships were ranked similarly, the latter recommendation was seen as the least important overall.

In open-ended responses, several respondents shared a desire to see more youth-focused education, including in schools, as well as public-focused awareness strategies. Some respondents also noted the value of signage and other cues in the built environment.

"I feel like it is difficult to get people who don't already have an interest to events. There needs to be incentives...which could be had through partnerships. Tag something on to a beer garden, food truck event, etc. People will come for the food and drink (incentive) and then learn something as well. Perhaps a walking tour or scavenger hunt that earns you a ticket for a drink or some dollars off some food."

"A one-time event will not draw enough attendance on its own, and I don't see many people going online to learn about Stoneham's history as interesting as it may be. I think focusing on getting to as many community touch points over the following weeks/months/years is the key. For that you need [to] have information in a place that people are likely to see/read it. I would couple this with an awareness campaign to queue [sic] people as to what the signage is for."

Survey and Inventory Recommendations

Respondents overwhelmingly identified applying for state funding as both a high priority and the most important recommendation in this category. Inventorying Town-owned historic properties was also identified as a high priority by most respondents while conducting a comprehensive survey plan was ranked as the second most important recommendation. Integrating historic resource data was seen as less of a priority.

In open-ended responses, respondents expressed overall support for the recommendations, but cited concerns about the cost to taxpayers.

"While we might support these goals, we hesitate about support that winds up increasing our property tax bills."

"Ultimately I believe state funding will be needed. But all of the above needs to be achieved. Then produce a brochure and signage tying all together."

Town-Owned Property Recommendations

Respondents selected three key recommendations in this category: developing long-term maintenance plans for restored city buildings, parks, and cemeteries; developing a preservation checklist for Town boards and commissions to consider when reviewing projects related to historic properties; and implementing a policy that

historic Town-owned properties are preserved according to the national preservation standard. Training Town staff and boards on preservation best practices and preparing an annual report to the Select Board on the state of historic preservation in Stoneham were seen as less of a priority.

In open-ended responses, respondents expressed concern about the deferred maintenance of historic, Town-owned properties and how that affects residents' quality of life and feeling of pride in the town.

"Find ways to open town-owned properties for public use and events. This would increase individual citizen's [sic] awareness of the town's historic assets and why it's important to preserve them."

"As a patron, I can see how delayed maintenance has affected the Library."

Land Use Regulation Recommendations

Respondents ranked advisory development reviews as higher priorities than regulatory bylaws, such as establishing a local historic district. However, establishing a demolition delay bylaw and revising the zoning bylaw to provide more flexibility for historic buildings tied for the second most important recommendation. Developing site plan review guidelines that include considerations for historic preservation was ranked as the most important recommendation in this category and was identified as a high priority by over half of respondents.

In open-ended responses, respondents noted the importance of balancing preservation goals with allowing the town to change, with some going so far as to prioritize property owners' rights over historic preservation. Some saw advisory processes as one way to accomplish this.

"When working under a construction permit, there are a number of boxes that need to be checked at various stages of the project - electrical, fire dept, health & safety, rough and final plumbing, etc. Why would[n't] a review by the historic commission be one of the boxes needing a check? If the property is not historic, then it would be a quick review. If the property is historic then the SHC should be consulted and adding an SHC signoff to the permit would ensure that gets done."

"Demolition delay and Zoning Bylaw should balance preservation with development needs."

"Any structure that impedes a residential or commercial [sic] landowner from making full use of their properties must be avoided at all costs."

National Register of Historic Places Recommendations

Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of seeking National Register listing for all eligible Town-owned historic properties to enable access to historic preservation grant funds and ensure their protection, with 71% ranking it a high priority and 51% choosing it as their most important recommendation. The other two recommendations, supporting private property owners to list their properties in the National Register and pursuing opportunities to list properties that reflect underrepresented histories each received support as well.

In open-ended responses, respondents indicated an interest in supporting National Register listings, but did not offer specific recommendations.

"Listing town-owned properties may provide access to funding needed to do the things the SHC wants to do in Stoneham. And in going through the process, the SHC could become subject matter experts. Citizens who wish to list private properties would then have a trusted advisor to go to for advice and assistance."

"Are there additional town-based incentives that could be offered to building owners to seek this? Tax breaks, utility fee breaks, etc."

Funding Support Recommendations

Respondents were overwhelmingly supportive of seeking grant funding to support Town-led preservation efforts, with 81% ranking it a high priority and 48% choosing it as their most important recommendation. Respondents were also supportive of adopting the Community Preservation Act, with 58% ranking it a high priority and 25% choosing it as their most important recommendation. Supporting private property owners who want to use federal and state historic rehabilitation tax credits to enable and creating local property tax incentives to support owners of historic homes with maintenance and rehabilitation ranked similarly in terms of level of priority, but tax incentives received three times as many votes for most important recommendation.

In open-ended responses, some respondents indicated an opposition to recommendations that could increase taxes, while others were supportive of tax-based incentives for historic preservation.

"If I knew more about the Community Preservation Act I might change my answer. The title sounds promising."

"I do not believe private property owners should get extra tax credits or incentives. This only means that property owners of non-historic properties end up paying more to subsidize them."

"To help preserve historical properties grant monies will be necessary, but tax incentives will also be necessary. It needs to be a comprehensive package."

Engagement Analysis

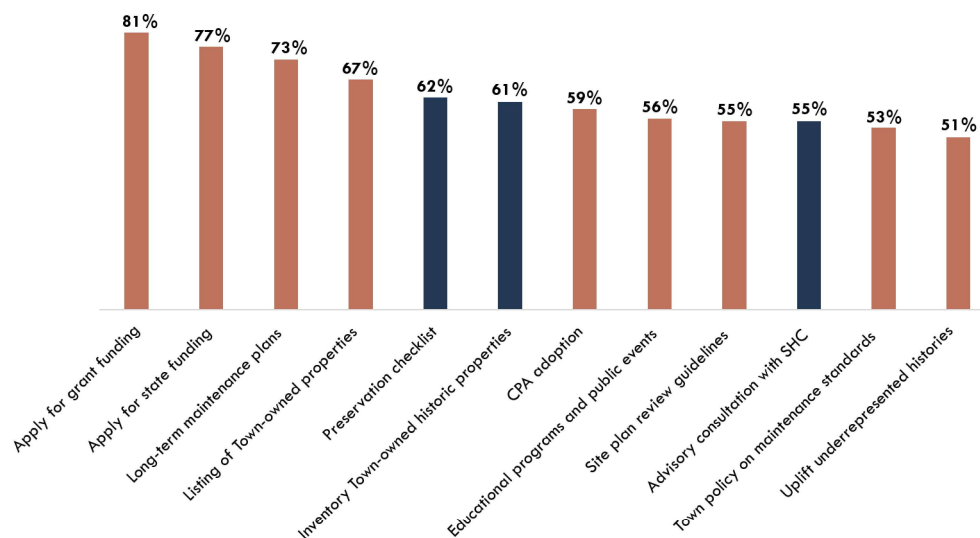
There is a clear appreciation for the feeling of small-town community in Stoneham, which is perceived as threatened by development pressure and generational change. This feeling is indirectly tied to historic places, such as the Town's public library, the Greater Boston Stage Company theater, and the Middlesex Fells. However, the importance of preserving old and historic buildings stems less from aesthetic considerations and more from a desire to cultivate community pride and a sense of belonging.

There is a sense that preservation is a nicety, not an essential component of the town's fabric. This may be due, in part, to a perception that preservation is about saving beautiful, old buildings or that preservationists are difficult to work with and oppose change. These perceptions are not unique to Stoneham, but they do highlight the importance of education and outreach to counter stereotypes and engage diverse constituencies. In addition, there is a strong interest in elevating underrepresented histories to tell the full story of Stoneham's history.

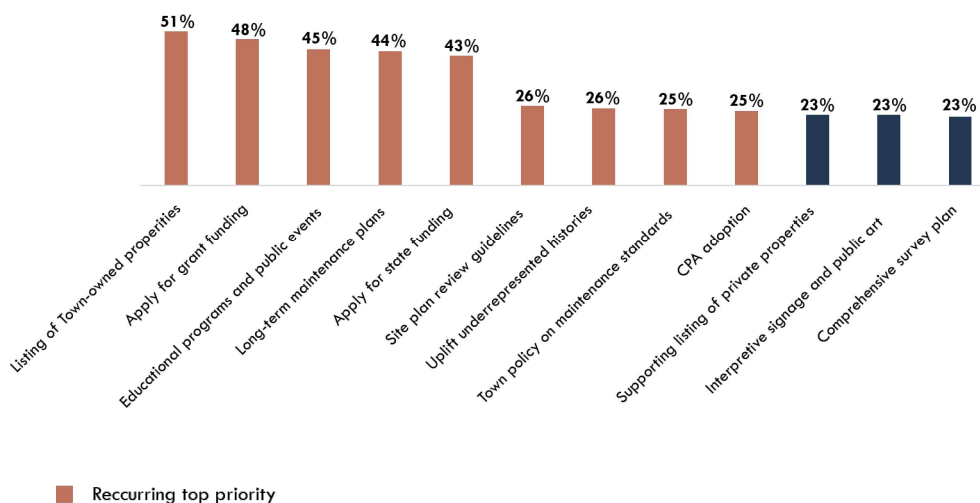
The stated importance of publicly owned buildings and properties shows the role that both the Town of Stoneham and the state government, through the Department of Conservation and Recreation, can play in preserving history and historic resources in Stoneham. There is support for the thoughtful stewardship of historic places such as the library, Town Hall, cemeteries, Whip Hill, fire station, and senior center as well as the Middlesex Fells. Part of the value of these places comes from the sense of belonging and feelings of pride that they provide.

While there is less of an appetite for regulating private property, there is some interest in strengthening existing regulations and development review processes to incorporate considerations for historic resources. Similarly, there is support for careful use of Town coffers to support private preservation efforts, such as homeowner tax incentives, and there seems to be a renewed interest in adopting the Community Preservation Act. Overall, there is strong support for applying for grant funding to implement preservation priorities.

Percent of Survey Respondents Selecting "High Priority"



Percent of Survey Respondents Selecting "Most Important Recommendations"



The below graphic elaborates on the engagement analysis by identifying specific strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and constraints relative to local historic preservation goals in Stoneham. Combined with the engagement analysis, the SWOT analysis helps define a path forward by understanding the conditions in which work will take place. Based on these analyses, the following section details the recommended actions that the Town should take.

SWOT Analysis

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Town-Controlled	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volunteer knowledge and dedication• Diversity of historic resources• Number of existing historic resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Limited capacity• Municipal fiscal constraints• Mismatch between historic context and development allowed by zoning• Inactive inventory and listing process• Out of date historic resource inventory
Out of Town Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding available to support goals• Expertise available to support work• Existing research on Stoneham’s history	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Development pressure• Limited grant funding



Recommendations

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented in this section reflect the findings of the planning process outlined in the previous sections of this plan. They are organized into six categories, each with an identified objective, a statement of purpose, a connection to other Town plans and policies, and a set of targeted actions. Each category also has an “attic” with ideas for future actions.

Education and Outreach Recommendations

Objective:

Build broad awareness about historic resources in Stoneham to create a culture of preservation and a sense of belonging among community members.

Why It's Important:

If people don't know about Stoneham's history and why it's important, they will be less likely to care about and support historic preservation efforts. This was reflected in the spring community survey where “people not knowing or caring” tied for the greatest issue identified by respondents. Collaborating with local partners, organizing public events, and providing educational opportunities are vital to preserving and celebrating Stoneham's heritage.

Connection to Town Plans and Policies:

○ Housing Production Plan

Strategy 6: Create and distribute educational materials on housing. Strategy 6 of the Housing Production Plan, focused on creating and distributing educational materials on housing, is supported by the Stoneham Historic Preservation Plan's recommendations for organizing public events and educational programs that build awareness and a culture of preservation.



This marker in Cambridge highlights women's history and includes a QR code that links to a webpage.

○ Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan

Strategy 5.C: Promote Stoneham's historic and cultural assets to draw more visitors (and residents) to the area. Strategy 5.C of the Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan, which aims to promote Stoneham's historic and cultural assets to draw more visitors and residents to the area, is supported by the Historic Preservation Plan's recommendations to organize educational programs, public events, and interpretive signage that enhance awareness and appreciation of Stoneham's historic resources, fostering a culture of preservation and community engagement.

Recommended Actions



#1

Organize educational programs and public events that celebrate Stoneham's historic resources and build a culture of preservation.

The Stoneham Historical Commission (SHC) already runs several programs and events, including an Annual Heritage Award, historic preservation month activities in May, and open days at the Old Burying Ground. The Town can build on this foundation by evaluating the success of existing programs, including the number of participants and how well participants represent the Stoneham community, and broadening the reach of these programs by partnering with respected community groups, such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Historical Society and Museum. Specific actions could include:

- Collaborate with DCR and MHC to promote Archaeology Month in October with public archaeology activities.
- Expand the Annual Heritage Award program to a standing event outside of a Select Board meeting in a more celebratory atmosphere.
- Collaborate with the library to provide access to the Stoneham Room through researcher trainings, talks, and other types of public events.
- Participate in National History Day activities in the schools.
- Coordinate an informal network of historic property owners to share resources and offer advisory consultations.
- Organize an annual historic house tour of private houses to foster pride and build community.
- Join with neighboring towns to organize a one-day training for historic homeowners.

#2

Install interpretive signage and public art throughout Stoneham that tell stories about historic people and places.

The SHC already runs a Historic House Marker Program that supports the installation of simple plaques that display information such as the date of construction, the name of the original owner, and the original owner's occupation. This program could be expanded to include options for freestanding markers with narrative descriptions of a site's history and significance, such as those offered by the Cambridge Historical Commission. The Town could promote such a program by installing plaques or markers on all Town-owned historic properties. In addition to standard signage, the Town could create an outdoor exhibit program with self-guided interpretive waysides or use public art to interpret the Town's history. These creative approaches could be focused on specific areas, such as the Nobility Hill Historic District, or specific resource types, such as the history of shoemaking.

#3

Deepen partnerships with community groups and organizations to expand the Town's reach and build a coalition that advocates for cultural and historic preservation issues.

The Town will exponentially increase the success of its preservation efforts by partnering with diverse community groups and organizations in Stoneham. This includes the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Boston Stage Company, local businesses, the Boys and Girls Club, the Historical Society and Museum, the Stoneham Community Development Corporation, and faith-based organizations. In addition to educating these community groups about important preservation issues, the Town should find opportunities to use preservation to meet identified community needs and priorities. The Town also has an opportunity to strengthen its relationship with the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), specifically



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RECOMMENDATIONS

the Office of Cultural Resources. Another constituent group the Town could improve relationships with are property owners of known historic resources, including buildings listed in the National Register and sites identified in the cultural resource inventory. For example, the Town could host a conversation with historic property owners about their needs and challenges to start to build trust and a relationship with these stewards of Stoneham's history.

#4

Work with the town's U.S. Congressional Delegation to add Stoneham to the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

Despite playing an important role in the American Revolution, Stoneham was not included in the Federal legislation that established the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area. Being part of Freedom's Way would support sustainable economic development and contribute to community pride by promoting the education and stewardship of the Town's Revolutionary Era historic sites. Since a Federal law would need to be passed to add Stoneham to Freedom's Way, the Town would need to work with its delegation in Congress. To support this effort, the Town could assemble a coalition of partners, including the Historical Society and Museum and the Stoneham Chamber of Commerce. The Town may also want to consider partnering with the Town of Winchester, which is interested in joining Freedom's Way as well.



Additional Recommendations:

- Collaborate with the Stoneham Public Schools to integrate local history and architecture into the curriculum and extracurricular programs, for example through the required civic action project.
- Maintain an active website with robust online resources related to historic preservation, including information on best practices, national preservation standards, and funding opportunities.
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce, Greater Boston Stage Company, and other cultural nonprofits to apply for designation of Stoneham Square as a cultural district with the Mass Cultural Council once applications open in FY26.



Whip Hill estate and park.

Survey and Inventory Recommendations

Objective:

Develop a full inventory of historic places in Stoneham that can be used to inform decision-making in diverse situations.

Why It's Important:

Having a complete record of historic places in Stoneham is the foundation of good preservation planning. Historic resource inventories tell us what there is to protect and preserve for future generations. It also provides detailed information that can be used for educational and outreach efforts.

Connection to Town Plans and Policies:

○ Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Stoneham Historic Preservation Plan supports the goals of an Open Space and Recreation Plan by developing a comprehensive survey and inventory of historic places to guide future preservation efforts, which can inform decision-making for the protection and enhancement of recreational and conservation areas, ensuring these spaces are preserved and maintained for community use and enjoyment.

○ Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan

Strategy 5.C: Promote Stoneham's historic and cultural assets to draw more visitors (and residents) to the area. By thoroughly documenting Stoneham's historic and cultural assets through a comprehensive inventory, the Historic Preservation Plan directly supports Strategy 5.C. of the Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan, enhancing efforts to attract more visitors and residents to the area.

Recommended Actions

#1

Develop a comprehensive survey plan to guide future survey efforts.



Survey plans provide a framework for updating the Town's historic resource inventory by identifying key historic contexts and recommending how to structure future survey efforts. It is typical for a community to first complete a survey plan and then implement that plan over several years by surveying individual neighborhoods or types of historic resources. Marblehead and Medford are two examples of nearby communities that have taken this approach. Stoneham could apply for MHC's annual Survey and Planning Grant program, a 50/50 reimbursable matching grant program, to help cover costs of both the survey plan and future survey phases. The Town should plan to set aside adequate funding to cover its share for each year of the survey effort.

A future town-wide survey should consider the following:

- Develop historic contexts for locally relevant themes – such as slavery and abolition, military history, women's history, and indigenous history – and historic resources – such as octagon houses and shoemakers' cottages.
- Conduct more research into the social history connected to both inventoried and uninventoried properties, including 41 Lincoln Street (home of suffrage activist Mrs. Maria Hanaford Cady), 48 Hancock Street (connection to suffrage activist and Spiritualist C. Fannie Allyn), 32 Maple Street (home of Theresa Hitchler), and 269 Green Street (Underground Railroad site).
- Focus on property types that are more threatened by demolition, such as shoemakers' cottages. Identify historic resources built after 1930.



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RECOMMENDATIONS

- Revise all inventory forms that predate the most recent iteration of MHC's survey and inventory forms.
- Review the eligibility of individual resources and districts that have been affected by demolition.
- Include properties identified in community outreach for this plan: 16 Summer Street, 40 Gould Street, and 291 Main Street.
- Include properties with a DOE that are not listed in the National Register (i.e., the Martin-Maxwell Estate at 58 Elm Street, STN. 57).
- Work with DCR to survey property they own, including in the Middlesex Fells.

#2

Complete inventory forms for Town-owned historic properties.

Most of the Town-owned properties that could be historically significant have been surveyed and included in the historic resource inventory. However, there are several properties that should be researched to determine if they are historically significant, including Whip Hill, the Old Central School (35 William Street), the Public Works Building (16 Pine Street), the Unicorn Golf Course, and the Stoneham Housing Authority Properties that are over 50 years old. In addition, the inventory form for Lindenwood Cemetery dates to 1979 and should be re-done. The Town should work with MHC to complete official survey and inventory forms for each property. This will ensure that the inventory accurately reflects the historic resources owned by the Town.

#3

Conduct a town-wide archaeological survey in conjunction with DCR.

A significant amount of Stoneham's land area and its historic resources are located in the Middlesex Fells on property owned by DCR. This includes above-ground resources, such as buildings and structures, as well as below-ground archaeological resources. The Town could work with DCR's Office of Cultural Resources to conduct a town-wide reconnaissance survey of archaeological resources that would help both the Town and the Commonwealth make informed decisions about future development and permitting. DCR would be able to provide subject-matter expertise and may also be able to provide funding to hire a consultant to conduct the survey.



Additional Recommendations:

- Collaborate with the Stoneham Public Schools to integrate local history and architecture into the curriculum and extracurricular programs, for example through the required civic action project.

Town-Owned Property Recommendations

Objective:

Enhance the preservation and maintenance of Town-owned historic properties through training, planning, and policy development.

Why It's Important:

The Town can set an example in the way it takes care of the historic properties it owns, like the fire station, senior center, and library. Doing so will ensure that these valuable resources are preserved and maintained for future generations and contribute to community pride.

Connection to Town Plans and Policies:

○ Open Space and Recreation Plan

Goal 4: Assign Conservation Commission or other committees to work with Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) on expanded use of Spot Pond, Stone Zoo, and Middlesex Fells Reservation

Goal 5: Acquire additional areas for recreational facilities or conservation area, including preserving Weiss Farm through purchase or trade

Goal 7: Develop a plan for the continuation and expansion of the breadth and frequency of events at the Common, as well as other locations such as Whip Hill Park.

The Stoneham historic preservation plan supports the Open Space and Recreation Plan goals by advocating for the preservation of town-owned properties through national preservation standards (Goal 4), developing long-term maintenance plans to enhance recreational and conservation areas like Weiss Farm (Goal 5), and fostering a culture of preservation that supports the expansion of events at key sites like the Common and Whip Hill Park (Goal 7).

Recommended Actions

#1

Implement a policy that Town owned historic properties are preserved according to the national preservation standard.



The Select Board could adopt a formal policy that states that all physical historic resources owned by the Town should be maintained and preserved according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The four Standards and their accompanying guidelines provide guidance on how to make decisions about caring for a range of historic resources, including buildings, sites, structures, objects, and districts. Projects that receive federal and state funding, including the MPPF and federal tax credits, also must follow the Standards. By adopting a formal policy, the Town will set the foundation for creating a culture of preservation in its capital improvement and asset management programs.

#2

Develop long-term maintenance plans for Town-owned historic properties.



Keeping up with the regular maintenance of historic properties is important to ensure their preservation. Activities such as mowing grass near foundations, removing leaf litter from roofs, and regularly cleaning gutters are critical to preventing larger, more expensive repairs in the future. Maintenance also helps to stretch dollars that are spent on repairs. The Town could develop a best practices guide for the maintenance of its Town-owned historic properties that Town staff could use not just for buildings, but also for parks, cemeteries, and monuments.



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#3

Provide training to Town staff on preservation best practices.

In coordination with recommendations 1 and 2 in this section, the Town could conduct an introductory training on preservation best practices for Town staff that regularly interact with historic resources. This could include staff in the Department of Public Works, the Fire Department, the Recreation Department, the School Department, Procurement, and the Library. The NPS offers web-based training features that anyone can access and the MHC offers regular virtual workshops on topics important to municipal staff. While policies and practices are a good foundation, they need stewards to implement them. Empowering Town staff entrusted with caring for the Town's historic resources will help foster a culture of preservation.

**Additional Recommendations:**

- Develop a Town policy requiring departments to solicit comments from the SHC on any project affecting Town-owned historic resources, including the development of the capital improvement plan.
- Establish a policy on the keeping and preservation of Town records with the help of the State Historical Records Advisory Board's Roving Archivist Program.

Land Use Regulation Recommendations**Objective:**

Preserve Stoneham's historic character through effective land use regulations, sensitive planning, and proactive development strategies.

Why It's Important:

Preserving the historic character of the town necessitates careful planning and strategic actions. Preservation doesn't have to stop change, but it can guide growth and development in a way that honors the town's history and identity. The Town can revise existing land use regulations to better consider historic properties; it can also establish new land use regulations with an explicit focus on historic preservation. Any change to a Town bylaw will require a public process and approval at Town Meeting.

Connection to Town Plans and Policies:○ **Housing Production Plan**

Strategy 17: Revise the ADU Bylaw. The Stoneham historic preservation plan supports Housing Production Plan strategies by advocating for zoning bylaw revisions that provide flexibility for preserving historic buildings, ensuring that proposed changes, such as streamlining the permitting process for ADUs (Strategy 17), align with maintaining the town's historic character.

○ **Stoneham Town Center Complete Streets**

Strategy: Goal 2: Achieve a vision for the downtown that articulates a walkable Town Center environment with mixed uses and open space. The Historic Preservation Plan's recommendation to revise the zoning bylaw to provide more flexibility for historic buildings supports Goal 2 of the Stoneham Town Center Complete Streets Strategy by ensuring that preservation efforts are integrated with the development of mixed-use spaces, enhancing the walkability and historic character of the Town Center.

○ Open Space and Recreation Plan

Goal 11: Coordinate with other Plans and Boards. The Stoneham historic preservation plan supports Open Space and Recreation Plan Goal #11 by advocating for the integration of historic preservation considerations into land use regulations and site plan guidelines, ensuring that coordination with other plans and boards aligns with preserving the town's historic character.



44 Pleasant Street.

Recommended Actions

#1

Develop site plan review guidelines that include considerations for historic preservation.



The Town should develop comprehensive site plan guidelines that incorporate best practices in historic preservation. These guidelines would provide a framework for decision-making about development that is subject to site plan review. Doing so would ensure that historic preservation is considered in permitting decisions without going a step further and establishing local historic districts. The Town's zoning bylaw authorizes the Select Board to consult with the Historical Commission to develop these guidelines, but that has not yet been done.

#2

Revise the zoning bylaw to provide more flexibility for historic buildings in keeping with neighborhood character.

Some of the Town's zoning regulations effectively encourage the demolition of historic buildings because they allow more development than what is currently built. Per the Municipal Bylaws, Regulations, and Management section earlier in this plan, the Town should consider revising the dimensional standards and allowed uses in the Residence A, Residence B, and Central Business Districts. In addition, the Town should consider adding a historic resource special permit that would allow any development that involves the preservation of a historic resource to waive requirements for dimensional standards and minimum parking requirements by special permit. This would give property owners a more certain path forward than having to seek zoning variances, which are typically not supposed to be granted.



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#3

Study the feasibility of establishing a demolition delay bylaw.

Approximately half of the municipalities in Greater Boston have a demolition delay bylaw. The purpose of these bylaws is to encourage the preservation of historic buildings by delaying the issuance of a demolition permit by a set amount of time. If the Town wanted to pursue developing a demolition delay bylaw, it would want to determine which buildings would be subject to the bylaw, the length of time for the delay, and whether the SHC would administer the bylaw, among other considerations. The Eastern Massachusetts Historical Commission Coalition held a webinar on demolition delay bylaw best practices in 2024, which may be helpful as the Town considers this option. The MHC could also provide a sample bylaw for reference.

#4

Implement a policy requiring Town departments and boards to ask the Stoneham Historical Commission for advisory comments on projects affecting historic resources.

While the SHC does not currently have the authority to regulate land use, the Town could decide that other regulatory boards and commissions should seek the SHC's advisory opinion on relevant projects. For example, the Planning Board and Board of Appeals could send the SHC applications for special permits and variances for projects that involve a historic resource. This would enable the SHC to provide comments in a structured, formal way without requiring more work on the part of the applicant.

#5

Study the feasibility of establishing a local historic district.

Approximately half of the municipalities in Greater Boston have at least one local historic district, which regulates changes to historic buildings. If the Town wanted to establish a local historic district, it would need to consider what properties would be included in the district in addition to determining what Town body would administer the district, what types of activities would be regulated, and what the criteria for review would be among other considerations. The bylaw that creates the local historic district would have to follow Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C. One place to start would be to simply create a local historic district that includes all properties that are already listed in the National Register. This would include the Nobility Hill Historic District and the Central Square Historic District, in addition to individual properties throughout the town. The Town could also decide to wait to establish a local historic district until the town-wide cultural resource survey is complete.



Demolition of building in Stoneham.



Additional Recommendations:

- **Study the feasibility of establishing an archaeological preservation bylaw.** An archaeological preservation bylaw can help protect important archaeological sites and other archaeologically sensitive areas in the town. The bylaw empowers the town to require the survey and documentation of archaeologically significant features and resources prior to land disturbance, including projects that propose excavation, grading, or filling in archaeologically sensitive areas. A town-wide archaeological reconnaissance survey would develop an archaeological sensitivity map to implement such a bylaw. The MHC can provide a sample of an effective municipal archaeological review bylaw.

National Register of Historic Places Recommendations

Objective:

Recognize diverse historic and cultural resources in Stoneham by listing important places in the National Register of Historic Places.

Why It's Important:

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. Listing shows the historic importance of a property and makes property owners eligible for funding like tax credits, grants, and loans. While there are 50 properties and four historic districts in Stoneham that are

listed in the National Register, they do not fully represent the town's diverse history.

Connection to Town Plans and Policies:

- **Open Space and Recreation Plan**

Goal 7: Develop a plan for the continuation and expansion of the breadth and frequency of events at the Common, as well as other locations such as Whip Hill Park. The Open Space and Recreation Plan's goal to expand events at locations like Whip Hill Park is supported by the Stoneham Historic Preservation Plan's recommendation to seek National Register listing for eligible town-owned properties, including Whip Hill, which would enhance their historical significance and access to preservation funding.

- **Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan**

Strategy 5.C: Promote Stoneham's historic and cultural assets to draw more visitors (and residents) to the area. Strategy 5.C. of the Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan is supported by the Historic Preservation Plan's recommendations to expand National Register listings, which can elevate Stoneham's historic and cultural assets, drawing more visitors and residents to the area.

Recommended Actions

#1

Seek National Register listing for all eligible Town-owned historic properties.



There are several Town-owned historic properties that may be eligible for the National Register but have not been listed, including Whip Hill, the Old Central School, and Lindenwood Cemetery. Listing these properties would elevate their historic significance in the community and would also enable the Town to apply for grants that would support their preservation. There also may be properties listed in the National Register that would benefit from a revised and updated nomination form. This need could be identified in future survey efforts.

#2

Identify and pursue opportunities to list properties that reflect underrepresented histories.



Stoneham has a rich history not fully represented in the types of places listed in the National Register. This includes the history of slavery and abolition, the contribution of women, and the role of immigration in supporting industrial expansion. Researching and designating properties that reflect underrepresented histories will ensure a comprehensive representation of the town's diverse cultural heritage. This work could be led by the Town or in partnership with a nonprofit organization, such as the Historical Society and Museum. Grants are available from the NPS to support preparing both new and revised National Register nominations.

#3

Encourage and assist private property owners to list their properties in the National Register.

The Town could provide information and resources to private property owners who are interested in listing their properties in the National Register. Homeowners may be interested in designation for the honorary distinction; developers may be interested to gain access to federal and state historic tax credits; and nonprofits may be interested to gain access to grant funding. The Town could include information about the National Register listing process, including benefits, on the Town website; host information sessions; and send mailers to owners of historic properties notifying them of the opportunity to list their property.



Whip Hill estate and park.



= Top Survey Response

Survey and Inventory Recommendations

Objective:

Secure and maximize funding to support the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic properties in Stoneham.

Why It's Important:

Money is essential to preserve historic places, whether it's used to physically repair a structure or to prepare a planning document. The Town can leverage various financial tools, like tax programs, and funding resources, like grants, to support both public and private preservation efforts.

Connection to Town Plans and Policies:

○ Housing Production Plan

Strategy 4: Re-use buildings for mixed-income housing;
Strategy 7: Build support for the Community Preservation Act
Strategy 13: Pursue historic preservation tax incentives.

The Stoneham historic preservation plan supports Housing Production Plan strategies by advocating for the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to fund historic preservation and affordable housing (Strategy 7), promoting the adaptive reuse of underutilized historic buildings for mixed-income housing (Strategy 4), and leveraging historic preservation tax incentives to facilitate these projects (Strategy 13).

○ Stoneham Town Center Complete Streets Strategy

Goal 2: Achieve a vision for the downtown that articulates a walkable Town Center environment with mixed uses and open space. The Historic Preservation Plan's emphasis on supporting adaptive reuse opportunities for underutilized historic buildings aligns with Goal 2 of the Stoneham Town Center Complete Streets Strategy by facilitating the transformation of these properties into vibrant mixed-use spaces, thereby contributing to a walkable and dynamic Town Center environment.

○ Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan

Strategy 5.C: Promote Stoneham's historic and cultural assets to draw more visitors (and residents) to the area. The Stoneham Town Center Strategic Action Plan Strategy 5.C is supported by the Historic Preservation Plan's funding recommendations because securing resources like the Community Preservation Act and various grants will provide the necessary financial backing to preserve and adapt historic properties, making them more attractive and accessible to visitors and residents, thereby enhancing Stoneham's historic and cultural appeal.



Dow Building in Central Square.

Recommended Actions

#1

Advocate for the adoption of the Community Preservation Act.



The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a common tool that municipalities in Massachusetts use to generate local funding for historic preservation projects. A wide range of projects can be funded by the CPA, including acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation, and restoration. For example, Malden recently used CPA funds to acquire and move a historic building to City-owned land to prevent its demolition and the Town of Arlington recently used CPA funds to repair the building envelope of their town hall. CPA funding also supports affordable housing, open space, and recreation, but at least 10% of the total available funding must be dedicated to historic preservation. Stoneham would be able to decide how to use the funding to best support community goals. The Community Preservation Coalition is a resource for information about the CPA and how to form local coalitions to support adoption of the act.

#2

Apply for grant funding from regional, state, and national programs.



There are numerous grants that the Town or partner organizations can apply for to support various preservation activities. Two important sources of funding are the Survey and Planning Grant Program and the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund administered by the MHC. Grants are available from other state and regional organizations such as the State Historical Records Advisory Board, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund, and Preservation Massachusetts. In addition, grant funding is available from the federal government and national organizations such as the National Park Service and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. More information about grant resources is included in the Appendix.



Stoneham Town Common.

#3

Support adaptive reuse opportunities of public and private properties.

The Town could work with property owners to identify adaptive reuse opportunities for underutilized historic buildings that support community goals. One example of such an opportunity would be to convert a vacant school building into affordable housing. Depending on who owns the property and what use it would be converted into, there may be federal and state funding available to make the project financially viable. For example, federal and state historic tax credits are often combined with the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) for low-income rental housing. The Town could also consider selling or leasing buildings for a nominal fee to support similar projects on Town-owned properties.



= Top Survey Response

#4

Create local property tax incentives to encourage private redevelopment and preservation of historic properties.

The Town could develop property tax incentives as a form of financial assistance to owners of historic properties. One way to do this would be to delay the increase in the total tax that a property owner owes after they substantially rehabilitate a historic property through the calculation of the property's assessed value; this approach is seen in Bedford's residential property tax incentive. Another way to do this would be to apply a deduction to the total tax that a property owner owes based on the cost of maintenance or rehabilitation; this approach is seen in Warren, RI. In addition to the type of tax incentive, the Town would want to decide what types of property owners can benefit (e.g., homeowners, small businesses, developers), what properties would qualify, what work would qualify, and for how long the benefit would be applied, among other considerations.



One of four octagon houses in Stoneham.



Prioritized Action Plan

The 20 recommendations detailed in the prior section are all integral to preserving Stoneham's historic built environment. However, they cannot all be undertaken at once. This section prioritizes these recommended actions by identifying who, when, and how they will be implemented. Note that the recommendation to apply for grant funding from regional, state, and national programs is integrated throughout.



Who will be involved in implementing recommendations?



How will the work be funded?

Top Three Recommendations for Immediate Implementation

Develop a comprehensive survey plan to guide future survey efforts.

This recommendation is a priority because having a complete inventory of historic resources is an important foundation for the Town. To implement this recommendation, the Town should apply for MHC's annual Survey and Planning Grant program. The details for the 2025 Fiscal Year are not currently available, but the Town will likely need to submit a letter of intent this fall, followed by a full application early next year. The Town, led by the Historical Commission, should work with MHC to develop an appropriate scope and budget for the project. The Town could also consult with communities like Billerica and Ipswich that recently received funding for survey plans. Since the Survey and Planning Grant program requires a 50% match, the Town will need to plan to contribute half of the cost of the project.

Revise the zoning bylaw to provide more flexibility for historic buildings in keeping with neighborhood character.


The Town is currently working with a consultant to recodify the zoning bylaw. This provides an opportunity to revise specific provisions of the bylaw to better align with the look and feel of Stoneham's historic neighborhoods, as noted earlier in the Recommendations section. Doing so will incentivize the reuse of historic buildings, help prevent teardowns, and ensure that new buildings complement the historic context. If this additional work is out of the scope of the current contract, the Town could apply for the Community One Stop for Growth or Planning Assistance Grants from the state to fund additional consultant analysis. MAPC may also be able to provide funding through the Technical Assistance Program for their staff to do the work.


Develop site plan review guidelines that include considerations for historic preservation.

In conjunction with the zoning bylaw recodification, the Town should develop site plan review guidelines to provide a framework for decision-making about development that is subject to site plan review. Since the Select Board reviews and approves site plans, they should lead the development of guidelines with support from the Town Administrator, the Director of Planning & Community Development, the Town Clerk, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Appeals. This could be an internal project undertaken by Town staff and volunteer board members; however, the Town may want to apply for Community One Stop for Growth or Planning Assistance Grants from the state to hire a consultant. MAPC may also be able to provide funding through the Technical Assistance Program for their staff to do the work.


Ongoing and Short-term Recommendations (1-3 years)

Organize educational programs and public events that celebrate Stoneham's historic resources and build a culture of preservation.

 Stoneham Historical Commission to lead in partnership with Select Board, Town Administrator, Library, Stoneham Public Schools, community groups and organizations, historic property owners, DCR, MHC, and neighboring communities


 This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and the budget of partner organizations, including the Stoneham Cultural Council. External funding may be available for specific events and activities.


Deepen partnerships with community groups and organizations to expand the Town's reach and build a coalition that advocates for cultural and historic preservation issues.

 Stoneham Historical Commission to lead in partnership with Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Boston Stage Company, Zoo New England, local businesses, the Boys and Girls Club, the Historical Society and Museum, the Stoneham Community Development Corporation, faith-based organizations, DCR Office of Cultural Resources, historic property owners


 This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.


Complete inventory forms for Town-owned historic properties.

 Town Administrator to lead with support from the Department of Public Works, the Conservation Commission, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission

 This could be an internal project undertaken by members of the Stoneham Historical Commission with volunteers from the Historical Society and Museum. The Town could also pursue funding from state grant programs or MAPC to hire a consultant to conduct the research and prepare the forms.


Seek National Register listing for all eligible Town-owned historic properties.

 Town Administrator to lead with support from Director of Planning & Community Development, Director of Public Works, Conservation Commission, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission

 The Town would likely need to hire a consultant to prepare the nominations, though Town staff and volunteer board members could support the work. Funding may be available from state, federal, or nonprofit grant programs to pay for the consultant's services.

Medium-term Recommendations (2-5 years)

Develop long-term maintenance plans for Town-owned historic properties.

 Town Administrator to lead with support from the Department of Public Works, Facilities Director, Council on Aging, Library, School Department, Fire Department, Police Department, Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, Conservation Commission, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission

 This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.

Identify and pursue opportunities to list properties that reflect underrepresented histories in the National Register.



Stoneham Historical Commission to lead in partnership with the library, the Historical Society and Museum, the Human Rights Commission, and historic property owners



Grants are available from the NPS to support preparing both new and revised National Register nominations through the Underrepresented Communities, History of Equal Rights (HER), and African American Civil Rights grant programs.

Implement a policy that Town owned historic properties are preserved according to the national preservation standard.



Town Administrator to lead with support from the Department of Public Works, Facilities Director, Council on Aging, Library, School Department, Fire Department, Police Department, Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission



This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.

Encourage and assist private property owners to list their properties in the National Register.



Stoneham Historical Commission to lead in partnership with the library, the Historical Society and Museum, and historic property owners



This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.

Implement a policy requiring Town departments and boards to ask the Stoneham Historical Commission for advisory comments on projects affecting historic resources.



Town Administrator to lead with support from Director of Planning & Community Development, Town Clerk, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Appeals



This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.

Provide training to Town staff on preservation best practices.



Town Administrator to lead with support from department directors and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission



This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.

Conduct a town-wide archaeological survey in conjunction with DCR.



Town Administrator to lead with support from Director of Planning & Community Development and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission



DCR may be able to contribute funding for a survey that includes property it owns. The Town could also apply to MHC's Survey and Planning Grant Program.


Support adaptive reuse opportunities of public and private properties.




Director of Planning & Community Development to lead with support from Town Administrator, Director of Public Works, Stoneham Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, Capital Improvement Advisory Committee, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission

 This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and volunteer time.


Install interpretive signage and public art throughout Stoneham that tell stories about historic people and places.


 Director of Planning & Community Development to lead with support from Town Administrator, Human Rights Commission, Stoneham Cultural Council, Recreation Department, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission

 This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and the budget of partner organizations, including the Stoneham Cultural Council. External funding may be available for specific events and activities.


Long-term Recommendations (5-10 years)


Study the feasibility of establishing a demolition delay bylaw.

 Director of Planning & Community Development to lead with support from Select Board, Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Appeals


 This could be an internal project undertaken by Town staff and volunteer board members. The Town could also pursue funding from state grant programs or MAPC to hire a consultant to prepare a bylaw.

Study the feasibility of establishing local historic districts.

 Director of Planning & Community Development to lead with support from Select Board, Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Board of Appeals


 This could be an internal project undertaken by Town staff and volunteer board members. The Town could also pursue funding from state grant programs or MAPC to hire a consultant to prepare a bylaw.


Advocate for the adoption of the Community Preservation Act.

 Select Board and Town Administrator to lead with support from Director of Planning & Community Development, Recreation Department, and members of the Stoneham Historical Commission, Stoneham Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, and Open Space and Recreation Committee as well as the Stoneham Community Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce

 This would mostly be supported by the Town budget and the budget of partner organizations. External funding and support may be available from the Community Preservation Coalition.

Work with the town's U.S. Congressional Delegation to add Stoneham to the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

 Select Board and Town Administrator to lead with support from the Historical Society and Museum and the Stoneham Chamber of Commerce as well as the offices of U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, U.S. Senator Edward Markey, U.S. Representative Katherine Clark, Massachusetts Senator Jason Lewis, and Massachusetts Representative Michael Day.

 This would be an internal project undertaken by Town staff and volunteer board members.

Endnotes

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Photos

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Appendix

Historic Preservation Funding Opportunities

Program/Grant Name	Type of Granting Entity	Granting Entity	Funded Work
Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program	Federal Government	National Park Service (NPS)	Building rehabilitation in rural communities
African American Civil Rights (History)	Federal Government	National Park Service (NPS)	Survey, planning, and documentation of historic sites/events, creation of interpretive and educational materials around significant sites (including oral histories)
Underrepresented Communities Grants	Federal Government	National Park Service (NPS)	Surveys and inventories of historic properties associated with communities underrepresented in the National Register, as well as the development of nominations to the National Register for specific sites
History of Equal Rights Grant Program (HER)	Federal Government	National Park Service (NPS)	Pre-preservation and preservation projects for historic sites with significance related to equal rights
Cultural and Community Resilience program	Federal Government	National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)	Identifying and capturing cultural and historical resources; collecting oral histories from individuals impacted by extreme weather events; documenting traditional knowledge, memories of elders, practices, or technologies; engaging in collaborative planning efforts to prepare communities for rapid response collecting; and applying insights from cultural heritage identification and documentation projects to inform local and regional community resilience strategies - focus on EJ communities
Public Humanities Projects (Humanities Discussions)	Federal Government	National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)	Projects that bring the ideas and insights of the humanities to life for general audiences through in-person, hybrid, or virtual programming; projects must engage humanities scholarship to analyze significant themes in disciplines such as history, literature, ethics, and art history

Award Amount	Match Required?	Grant Cycle	Link
\$200,000 to \$750,000	No	Application open Fall 2024; three year grant period	https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/paul-bruhn-historic-revitalization-grants-program.htm
\$15,000 to \$75,000	No, but preferred	Application open June 2024, due September 2024; three year grant period	https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/african-american-civil-rights.htm
\$15,000 to \$75,000	No, but preferred	Application open May 2024, due August 29, 2024; three year grant period	https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/underrepresented-community-grants.htm
\$15,000 to \$50,000 for pre-preservation work	No, but preferred	Application open May 2024, due August 2024	https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/history-of-equal-rights.htm
up to \$150,000	No	May 2024 application deadline; two year grant period	https://www.neh.gov/program/cultural-and-community-resilience
up to \$400,000	No	Application open May 2024; optional draft due July 2024; final deadline August 2024; one to four year grant period	https://www.neh.gov/grants/public/public-humanities-projects

Appendix

Historic Preservation Funding Opportunities

Program/Grant Name	Type of Granting Entity	Granting Entity	Funded Work
Technical Assistance Program	MAPC	MAPC	Projects that advance MetroCommon 2050
National Trust Preservation Funds	Private Foundation	National Trust for Historic Preservation	Preservation planning, education, and outreach
African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund	Private Foundation	National Trust for Historic Preservation	Advance ongoing preservation activities for historic places such as sites, museums, and landscapes representing African American cultural heritage. The fund supports work in four primary areas: Capital Projects, Organizational Capacity Building, Project Planning, and Programming and Interpretation
Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation	Private Foundation	National Trust for Historic Preservation	Planning activities and education efforts focused on preservation
Historic Properties Redevelopment Programs	Private Foundation	1772 Foundation	Feasibility studies or other funding support for historic properties redevelopment programs (i.e. revolving funds)
Historic Preservation Matching Grants	Private Foundation	1772 Foundation	Exterior painting, finishes and surface restoration, fire detection/lightning protection/security systems, repairs to/restoration of porches, roofs and windows, repairs to foundations and sills, and chimney and masonry repointing
Expand Massachusetts Stories: Open Track	Private Foundation	Mass Humanities	Projects that collect, interpret and/or share narratives about the Commonwealth, with an emphasis on the voices and experiences that have gone unrecognized, or have been excluded from public conversation

Award Amount	Match Required?	Grant Cycle	Link
Varies	No	January 2024, but technically rolling	https://www.mapc.org/about-mapc/funding-opportunities/
\$2,500 to \$5,000	Yes, 50%	Three deadlines per year in February, June, and October	https://savingplaces.org/preservation-funds
\$50,000 to \$150,000	No, but preferred	Application open December 2023; application deadline February 2024	https://savingplaces.org/action-fund-guidelines
\$2,500 to \$15,000	Yes, 50%	Application due March 2024	https://savingplaces.org/favrot-fund
Maximum is \$250,000; typical range is \$50,000-\$75,000	No	Letters of inquiry will be accepted until October 11, 2024; invited applications will be due on December 6, 2024	https://www.1772foundation.org/hprp2025
Up to \$10,000	Yes	Letters of inquiry will be accepted until November 1, 2024; invited applications will be due on February 21, 2025	https://www.1772foundation.org/massachusetts
Up to \$20,000	No	Application due May 31, 2024	https://masshumanities.org/active-grants/expand-massachusetts-stories-open-track/

Appendix

Historic Preservation Funding Opportunities

Program/Grant Name	Type of Granting Entity	Granting Entity	Funded Work
Survey & Planning Grant Program	State Government	Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)	Completion of cultural resource inventories; nomination of significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places; completion of community-wide preservation plans; other types of studies, reports, publications and projects that relate to the identification and protection of significant historic properties and sites.
Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)	State Government	Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC)	Pre-development, development, and acquisition projects related to properties listed in the State Register
Planning Assistance Grants	State Government	Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)	Implement land use regulations that are consistent with the Administration's land conservation and development objectives including reduction of land, energy, and natural resource consumption, provision of sufficient and diverse housing, and mitigation of/preparation for climate change. Funds help communities retain appropriate technical expertise and undertake the public process associated with creating plans and adopting land use regulations.
Community One Stop for Growth	State Government	Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development	Grants to support activities and initial steps by community-based actors to attract and guide private investment in a community or to support implementation of construction activities to leverage private, commercial, industrial, residential investment projects, and other improvements that further the community vision.

Award Amount	Match Required?	Grant Cycle	Link
Minimum award of \$7,500, average award is \$10,000-\$20,000	Yes, 50%	February 2024 application deadline; 9-12 months to complete project	https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/mhc/grants/survey-and-planning.htm
Average award is \$50,000	Yes, 50%	March 2024 application deadline; 9-12 months to complete project	https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/mhc/grants/mppf.htm
Up to \$50,000 per community	Yes, 25%	July 3, 2024 application deadline	https://www.mass.gov/service-details/planning-assistance-grants
Varies	No, but preferred	Expressions of interest due February 9, 2024, full application due June 5, 2024	https://www.mass.gov/guides/community-one-stop-for-growth

