

Town of Milford, Massachusetts Comprehensive Plan Executive Summary

English

May 14, 2025



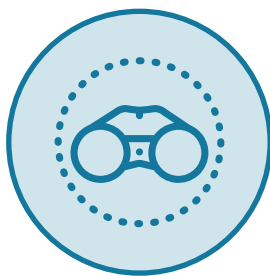
Overview

This dynamic, long-range planning document expresses Milford’s vision for the future and provides strategic direction for decision-making and investment. It outlines clear steps to turn that vision into reality, addressing current challenges while guiding long-term growth. Required under Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 41, Section 81D, all municipalities must prepare and periodically update a Comprehensive Plan to guide their physical development. Milford last updated its Plan in 2003, and with the community having changed significantly in the past 20 years, the time was right for a comprehensive update. These plans are typically revisited every 10 years to reflect evolving needs and opportunities.

development. It presents a Vision Statement, overarching themes, and actionable goals covering land use and zoning, housing, open space and recreation, natural and cultural resources, public services, and transportation.

Guided by the Milford Comprehensive Plan Ad Hoc Committee in partnership with the Planning Board, the planning process spanned monthly meetings throughout 2024 and early 2025. We hope this Plan reflects the voices of Milford residents and inspires shared ownership in implementing its vision for the future.

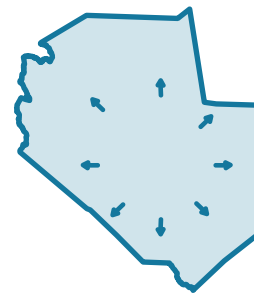
The Comprehensive Plan is geographically comprehensive, considering all areas within Milford’s municipal boundaries. While some areas receive more focused recommendations, the entire Town is included in the analysis. The Comprehensive Plan was developed through community input and data analysis, including trends in population, demographics, and



**Collective
Vision**



**A blueprint for the
long-term physical
development of Milford**



**Geographically
comprehensive and
considers all areas
of the town**

Process

The Town of Milford's Comprehensive Plan process began in February 2024 and concluded in spring 2025. Throughout this period, residents and stakeholders were engaged at key points through a wide range of outreach activities. The plan was shaped by community feedback, with particular attention given to themes heard from a diverse cross-section of residents.

The process began with a guided tour of Milford for the planning team and Ad Hoc Committee members to gain firsthand knowledge of the Town's geography and character. This was followed by extensive research and analysis across the Plan's topic areas to assess current conditions.

Public engagement launched with a Visioning Workshop at Town Hall in May 2024, where over 65 residents shared input on Milford's challenges and aspirations. This workshop was complemented by a community-wide survey that ran from March to August 2024, drawing 600 responses. The top challenges

identified included traffic congestion, downtown revitalization, municipal finances, and housing affordability.

Recognizing the need for more inclusive engagement, the planning team expanded outreach efforts over the summer and fall of 2024 to connect with underrepresented groups. This included a Community Organization Day with local service providers, business outreach in Downtown Milford, multilingual engagement events, and targeted sessions with the ESL program, Senior Center, Library, Youth Council, and Tri-County Regional Chamber. A tri-lingual community meeting held at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in November 2024 successfully engaged over 65 participants in Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and English.

A second community survey gathered feedback on the draft Vision Statement and Goals, with 25 residents providing detailed input. Collectively, the feedback from meetings, surveys, and direct outreach informed the core themes, priorities, and strategies of the Comprehensive Plan.



Figure 1: Spring Community Meeting



Figure 2: Fall Community Meeting



Vision Statement

Milford of the 21st Century honors its **historic roots** while embracing a **dynamic and inclusive future**. The town supports a vibrant and welcoming resident and business community that builds connections between **residents of all backgrounds** and strengthens **community identity** and **cohesion**. The town's strategic location and robust transportation network position it as a hub for new industries and businesses, driving managed and **sustainable economic growth** and **innovation**. The town continues to **improve transportation infrastructure** to **manage traffic**, reduce congestion, and improve travel conditions in support of a **vibrant local economy**.

Milford continues to attract a **diverse population** by fostering a **welcoming** environment for families of **all backgrounds** and providing a range of **housing options** for different life stages. The town's commitment to inclusivity is reflected in supportive **community services** and **housing policies** that help meet the needs of all residents. **Local shopping, entertainment, and services** also attract residents and visitors to Milford. In particular, the **Downtown** is a central feature of the community offering a **pedestrian-friendly** environment which brings the community together with a variety of **local shops, restaurants, parks, cultural venues, and events**.



Because Milford has adopted a strategy of inclusion, the town supports **housing opportunities** suitable for meeting a wide range of needs. A **diverse resident population** is drawn together fostering a sense of **shared community pride** and **identity**. All households, from long-time residents to newcomers, share in a sense of community through enriching events, programs, and services. **Civic engagement** and **community pride** are enhanced through a **strong emphasis on education** and Milford Schools. The town prioritizes **public safety** and **welfare** for all residents by enforcing regulations related to **high quality** and **healthy** housing opportunities.

Milford encourages the continued transformation of **high-tech industries, healthcare, and small businesses** to support **sustainable redevelopment** and **economic investments**. The town continues to prioritize its unique position at the headwaters of the **Charles River** with a focus on **preserving natural resources** and **protecting water sources**. The core of the community has been transformed through a system of **interconnected natural, park-like** settings that remain the pride, not only of residents, but, of the **business community** that helped to build and maintain them. Pride in the community is strengthened through **accessible parks, responsive social services, excellent municipal management, and well-maintained infrastructure**. Milford has managed its growth and evolution in a manner that has allowed it to remain a community where residents share a sense of **shared values** and **common purpose**.

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Future Land Use Vision Map

The Comprehensive Plan describes the Vision Statement, Themes, Goals, Strategies, and Actions primarily with text. It is also helpful to see the how the recommendations may apply differently across the town. While it is not possible to map every aspect of the Comprehensive Plan, the Future Land Use Vision Map provides a high-level depiction of how different parts of the town are approached differently through the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

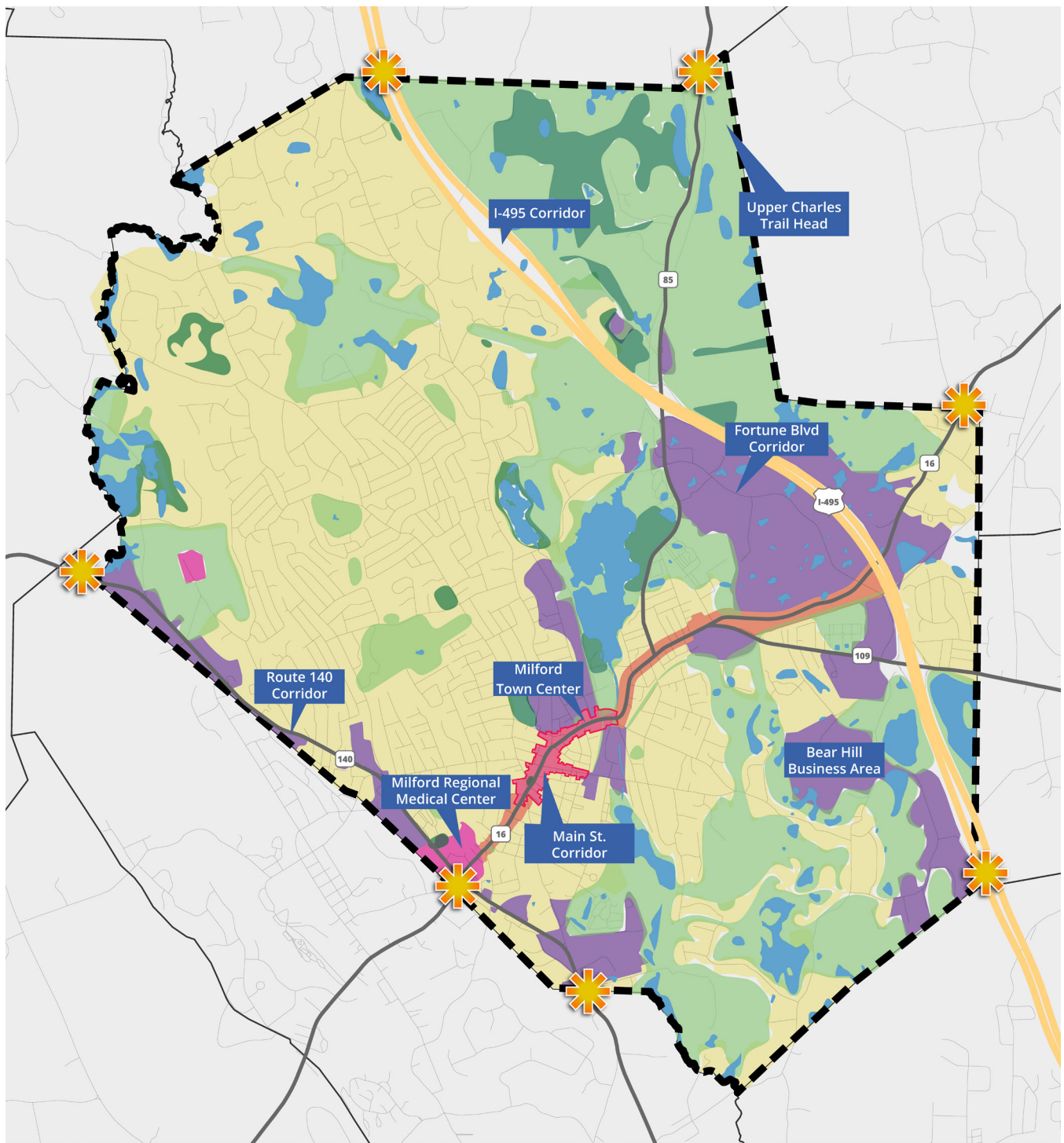


Figure 3: Future Land Use Vision Map



Comprehensive Plan Themes and Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan has defined 9 overarching themes that include 52 goals. The goals are further defined by 170 strategies and 323 actions. This comprehensive approach provides the town with specific actions to advance a wide variety of topics that may become a priority over the next 10 years.

This large number of actions can also become a barrier to implementation. An Implementation Action Plan distills the comprehensive goals, strategies, and actions to a smaller set of high priority items that would directly advance the town toward its shared vision and create momentum for the implementation of a larger number of goals, strategies, and actions. Nonetheless, it is important to note that it is unlikely that the Town will be able to implement all the recommendations of this plan over the next 10 years. It is important for the Town to make progress and build momentum for getting the most important actions done. As implementation of this plan will be a dynamic and ongoing process, it is important to have a steward of the process. The most effective model for this stewardship is the creation of a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee. Many parties will be involved in the implementation, but no single staff member, department, board, commission, or committee could take responsibility for advancing all comprehensive plan actions. This is where much of the risk of inaction originates. It is important to establish a Committee that is responsible for advancing and tracking implementation of the plan. The Implementation Action Plan highlights 20 goals with 20 strategies, and 20 actions.

Community Driven Themes



Build Community and Bridge Cultures



Strengthen Downtown as the Center of Community



Improve Transportation Safety and Reduce Congestion



Maintain the Livability and Charm of Neighborhoods



Continue to Improve Effective Governance



Advance Climate Resilience and Sustainability



Strengthen the Health and Well-Being of the Community



Continue to Support a Thriving Local Economy



Strengthen Communication and Engagement



Theme: Build community and bridge cultures

To support all residents and bring new and old residents alike to a shared and common identity, community of trust, and investment together, these goals and strategies provide a variety of approaches to build community and bridge cultural differences. The Town can do this by activating downtown, engaging with local small business owners, diversifying the housing stock to better align with more diverse housing needs, highlighting historic resources reflecting diverse narratives, and celebrating cultural diversity.



Goal: Preserve and celebrate cultural diversity.

Strategy: Sustain and expand community and cultural events that appeal to a variety of Milford residents.

- **Action:** Inventory existing community events and organizers to improve communication and coordination of cultural events including the Milford Cultural Council, the Milford Public Library, Milford Senior Center, and other community-based organizations.



Goal: Add capacity for business engagement and new business development.

Strategy: Define the type of business support that would be most helpful in partnership with Spanish and Brazilian small businesses, particularly in the Downtown, to support the goals of a strong business environment, cultural cohesion, and downtown placemaking

- **Action:** Hire a Business Liaison who speaks Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese to engage with and support businesses. Specific duties may entail building property owner relationships, business recruitment to help fill vacancies, improving the look and feel of the Downtown, connecting existing or potential new business tenants with property owners, connecting technical assistance and funding opportunities with small business owners, such as Small Business Administration loan support, in languages spoken by business owners, and acquiring economic development funding opportunities for the Town.



Theme: Strengthen downtown as the center of community

The Downtown district poses a place-based opportunity for Milford to achieve its vision of inclusion, economic investment, and celebrating a rich cultural history. There is opportunity for Downtown to be the center of efforts that bridge Milford's many cultural groups and to purposefully center activity and investment to emphasize the downtown as the center of community. This can be done through strategic rezoning, public art and creative placemaking, public programming, and other methods of promoting district and social cohesion.



Goal: Activate downtown as a district of community and culture with support for local small businesses, public art, and events.

Strategy: Establish a downtown district management entity (Business Improvement District, Cultural District, Main Street Organization, or other type of nonprofit).

- **Action:** Convene business owners, property owners, and stakeholders of downtown to determine the shared goals, interests, and objectives that could be supported by a downtown district management.



Goal: Encourage mixed-use redevelopment opportunities consistent with the historical scale of downtown and better utilization of upper floor spaces to strengthen downtown as a cultural and business destination.

Strategy: Explore new mixed-use zoning opportunities for downtown that would allow redevelopment consistent with historical structures (up to 4-stories, nearly full lot coverage, minimal setbacks, and reduced parking requirements). Integrate historic preservation protections for historical downtown structures.

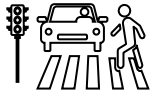
- **Action:** Initiate a community-based rezoning process for downtown (portions of CB and CA districts) with the purpose of identifying zoning modifications that would encourage mixed-use redevelopment opportunities to capture land value of under-utilized properties Downtown.



Goal: Manage downtown traffic safety and provide parking wayfinding downtown.

Strategy: Relieve street parking pressures Downtown.

- **Action:** Develop a parking management plan to increase the utilization of the parking supply that is available in the downtown.



Theme: Improve transportation safety and reduce congestion

Improving transportation safety and reducing congestion in Milford will require a multi-faceted approach. Improvements to roadway networks in Milford must be accompanied by enhanced multimodal transportation infrastructure and service, as well as changes in land use patterns to reduce car dependence and to enable more compact development. Downtown Milford is an important activity area where many of these improvements can be targeted in the near term, but a town-wide approach is also necessary to ensure long-term sustainability and efficacy.



Goal: Explore opportunities to address congestion by changing roadway configurations and improving traffic signalization.

Strategy: Modernize traffic signals and address congestion bottlenecks on local roadways to improve traffic flow.

- **Action:** Pursue funding through MassDOT's Local Bottleneck Reduction program for improvements to local roadways.



Goal: Expand and improve walking, biking, and rolling connections and infrastructure throughout the Town to provide non-motor vehicle transportation options and reduce congestion.

Strategy: Develop a Town-wide multimodal transportation plan.

- **Action:** Update the Town's existing Complete Streets Prioritization Plan to provide a comprehensive vision and listing of projects to advance a town-wide multimodal transportation network.



Theme: Maintain the livability and charm of neighborhoods

As demand for housing increases, and as Milford continues to develop economically, maintaining livability requires a balance between strategic growth, housing diversity, infrastructure improvements, and enhanced public spaces. These goals and strategies advance directing development to appropriate areas while ensuring that neighborhoods remain attractive, functional, and inclusive for all residents.



Goal: Increase the share of Affordable Housing through zoning and housing policies.

Strategy: Build local capacity to support Affordable Housing Development.

- **Action:** Build support for local adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA), a local property tax surcharge of not more than 3%, and leverage funds to support the Affordable Housing Trust.



Goal: Enhance multimodal access to open space and recreation assets and strategically expand the network of multimodal connections to the Upper Charles Trail.

Strategy: Develop a pilot approach to incrementally increasing safe multimodal routes from underserved neighborhoods to specific open space destinations and refine based on usage patterns and feedback.

- **Action:** Identify the roadways with the most potential to connect residents and least potential barriers to roadway reconfiguration. Consider low cost on-street or off-street reconfigurations to provide safe, two-way, pedestrian and bicycle travel.



Theme: Continue to improve effective governance

The requirements of what constitutes effective governance are shifting as Milford continues to evolve. As the town continues to grow and diversify, more demands will be placed on its governance structure. Expectations for the quality and breadth of town services continue to increase, as do the costs of providing them. Additionally, the need for major capital investments will place pressure on the town's fiscally conservative approach. The goals and strategies under this theme provide the framework for continuing to provide Milford residents with a high level of service and effective governance.



Goal: Improve and update capital improvement process and practices.

Strategy: Establish and share clear project priorities for ranking capital improvements, include metrics which evaluate equity-centered impacts. For example, asking who benefits from the improvement? And who may be harmed by the improvement?

- **Action:** Define a decision framework based on project priorities and score and rank capital improvements based on the framework.



Goal: Continue to evaluate department structures and organization for efficient delivery of services.

Strategy: Identify and explore continued centralization of shared resources and functions that may be duplicated across multiple departments.

- **Action:** Many departments are dependent on volunteers, explore whether a centralized volunteer coordination system would be effective for multiple departments. For example, sharing a system between the Library, Senior Center, and Youth Center.



Theme: Advance climate resilience and sustainability

Milford's natural environment and open space play a critical role in advancing climate resilience and sustainability. The town's existing open space network, water resources, and regulatory framework provide a strong foundation for integrating resilience measures into future planning and development. To continue to address climate-related challenges, Milford needs to pursue a multi-faceted approach, focusing on strengthening water resource protection, enhancing green infrastructure, expanding equitable access to open spaces, and aligning zoning regulations with sustainability goals.



Goal: Continue to protect watersheds, groundwater, and improve water quality.

Strategy: Incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) principles into land use regulations, encouraging developers to integrate green infrastructure such as green roofs, bioswales, and permeable pavements.

- **Action:** Update the town's subdivision regulations to require stormwater best management practices, reduce impervious surface coverage, and protect natural features and open space.



Goal: Continue to improve environmental sustainability and resiliency for Town facilities, services and residents.

Strategy: Pursue becoming qualified for financial and technical support for reduced municipal energy use, sustainability improvements, and climate-related investments.

- **Action:** Become a Designated Green Community to cut municipal energy costs, access grants for clean and resilient energy projects, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote energy-efficient building construction, foster renewable energy and clean energy, and become a clean energy leader.



Theme: Strengthening the health and well-being of the community

Support for safe and equitable access to town resources and opportunities is important to proactively strengthen the collective health and well-being of the community. Goals and strategies include engaging residents to address income disparities, addressing housing displacement and unhoused populations, improving safe walking and biking, and promoting equitable access to cultural assets, open spaces, and municipal facilities



Goal: Continue to address overcrowding while preventing displacement.

Strategy: Increase near-term prevention of overcrowding.

- **Action:** Provide residents with tenants' rights information based on legal rights of renters in Massachusetts with contact information for tenant advocacy organizations, such as City Life/Vida Urbana.



Goal: Promote equitable access to cultural assets.

Strategy: Expand communication that highlights community pride, culture, history, and historical resources.

- **Action:** Newsletter highlighting important town information, news of the day, "today in Milford history." Make newsletter available in English, Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese.



Goal: Maintain and improve existing resources, recreational facilities, and programs strengthening amenity, accessibility and inclusiveness.

Strategy: Foster parks that are both physically and culturally inclusive, ensuring they are accessible, welcoming, and reflective of the diverse needs and identities of the community.

- **Action:** Ensure inclusive and equitable enforcement of park rules so that all community members feel welcome and able to use park spaces.



Theme: Continue to support a thriving local economy

A strong local economy maintains Milford's status as a regional urban center for jobs and amenities for residents of Milford and the surrounding towns. The town can remain agile to support local investment through close attention to zoning regulations, opportunities for reinvestment, workforce development, and support for a diverse supply of local housing production.



Goal: Create more opportunities for multifamily housing to attract new investments and support the local workforce.

Strategy: Encourage multifamily development by defining locations where it is an allowed zoning use, either by-right with site plan review or by special permit.

- **Action:** Explore adding multifamily development by right with site plan review in existing residential zones adjacent to the downtown, for example the current General Residential (RA) zoning district.



Goal: Continue to plan for long term financial resiliency and sustainability.

Strategy: Continue to diversify revenue sources for the town.

- **Action:** Consider the establishment of a stormwater enterprise fund to sustainably fund improvements and support compliance with federal and state regulations.



Theme: Strengthening communication and engagement

Underpinning nearly all other themes and their associated goals and strategies is transparent communication and engagement. This closely relates to continuing to improve effective governance and includes goals and strategies that focus on resident outreach, the accessibility of town resources, supporting effective town boards and committees, continuing to improve the inclusive and equitable access to town services, and continuing to engage in regular long-range planning to guide future change.



Goal: Improve resident outreach and accessibility of town resources, especially regarding town policies and decision-making processes.

Strategy: Improve inclusivity and accessibility of town meetings and information through language access.

- **Action:** Provide language accessibility for meetings including easy and convenient ways for residents to request in-meeting interpretation in advance.



Goal: Support effective boards and committees.

Strategy: Improve ease and convenience for residents engaging with boards, commissions and committees, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups, to increase their involvement in decision making and town processes.

- **Action:** Create a consistent resident feedback invitation that can be integrated into a variety of processes and meetings. Define a consistent format and information to be included in each resident feedback invitation, such as the topic, what type of feedback is most useful at that moment, how the feedback will be used, and if additional opportunities for feedback will occur, and what the timeline is for the specific issue or item that is inviting feedback.

