

Town of Milford, Massachusetts Comprehensive Plan

May 14, 2025



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Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

The Town of Milford contracted with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to develop the Comprehensive Plan. MAPC is the regional planning agency for the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston.

Funding Sources

Annual Town Meeting approved Town funds to support this planning process. In addition, the Town received state grant funds through MAPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) and Planning for MetroCommon2050 Technical Assistance (PMTA).

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SEITZ SPECIFIC CHIROPRACTIC

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BAKERY

OPEN

MARANHÃO CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Service Times:
Wednesday: 8:00 p.m.
Ladies' Service
Thursday: 8:00 p.m.
Prayer Service
Saturday: 7:30 p.m.
Sunday: 10:00 a.m.
Sunday Bible School
Sunday: 7:30 p.m.

IGREJA CRISTÃ MARANHATA

Horário dos cultos:
Quarta: 8:00 p.m.
Culto de Senhoras
Quinta: 8:00 p.m.
Culto de Oração
Sábado: 7:30 p.m.
Domingo: 10:00 a.m.
Escola Bíblica Dominical
Domingo: 7:30 a

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Introduction

Welcome to the Town of Milford's Comprehensive Plan! The Comprehensive Plan provides a holistic assessment of where Milford is in 2024/2025, reflects on its past, and sets a vision for the future. The Comprehensive Plan process involved listening to a diverse array of community members to better understand current challenges and future aspirations for the Town. The process also involved analyzing current data about the Town and compiling goals, strategies, and actions that will address challenges in the near term and build toward a strengthened long-term vision for the Town.

The Milford Comprehensive Plan has used current and relevant trends, information, and data about the community, such as population, demographics, and development patterns, to inform the community's vision and goals for the future. In addition to a Vision Statement and overarching themes of the plan, more specific goals are articulated. Each goal is detailed with strategies and actions to guide the Town policies, investments, and decision-making regarding land use and zoning, housing, open space and recreation, natural, cultural, and historic resources, public facilities and services, and transportation.

The Comprehensive Plan was guided by a Milford Comprehensive Plan Ad Hoc Committee comprised of a dedicated group of Town leadership. The group met monthly in 2024 and the first half of 2025 in joint meetings with the Planning Board to discuss the topics of the Comprehensive Plan and the development of this document. For everyone involved, it is our hope that you will see yourself in this document and can help show support and build momentum for implementing actions defined by Milford's Comprehensive Plan.

Plan Purpose

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

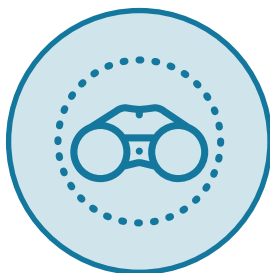
A Comprehensive Plan is a dynamic long-range planning document that expresses a community's vision for the future and provides strategic direction for decision-making and investment, and outlines the steps needed to make that vision a reality.

Why create a Comprehensive Plan?

Massachusetts General Law (MGL), Chapter 41, section 81D requires all cities and towns in the Commonwealth to create and update a Comprehensive Plan to provide a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. The Town of Milford last updated its Comprehensive Plan in 2003. Milford continues to grow and evolve and is therefore a different place than it was 20 years ago. Comprehensive Plans are typically updated about every 10 years to reflect the changes that have occurred within the community. The time was right for Milford to undertake this process.

What areas of Milford are included?

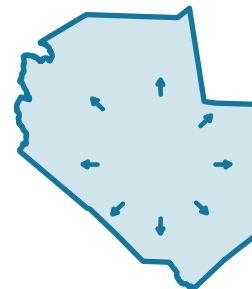
The Milford Comprehensive Plan is geographically comprehensive and includes all areas within the Town's municipal boundaries. Some areas of the Town receive more focus among the recommendations than others, but all parts of the Town have been considered in this plan. A base map for the Town of Milford is shown below with the primary features and municipal assets highlighted. In Chapter 4, a future land use vision map depicts the general focus of the types of recommendations that apply to each area of the Town.



**Collective
Vision**



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



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

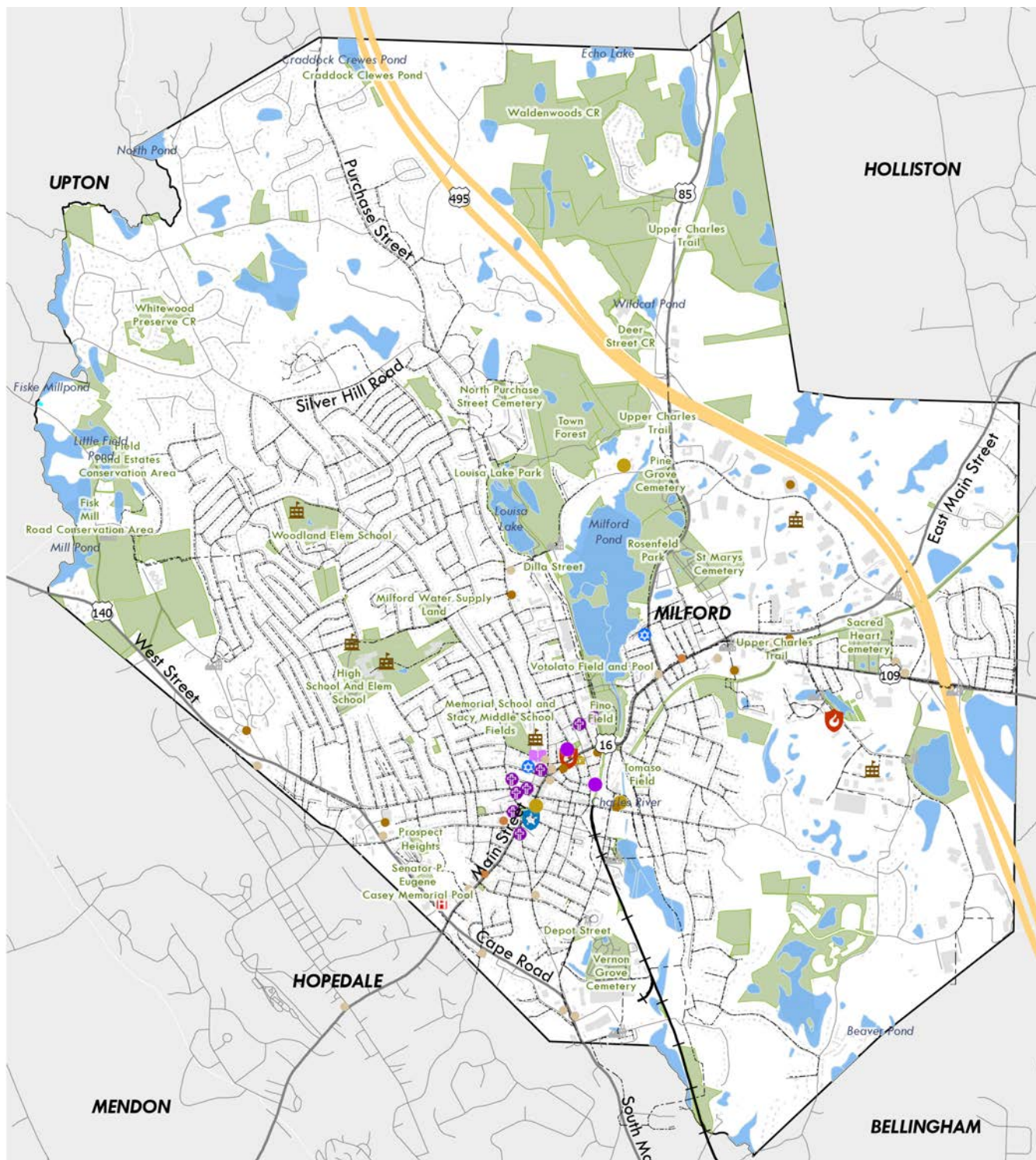
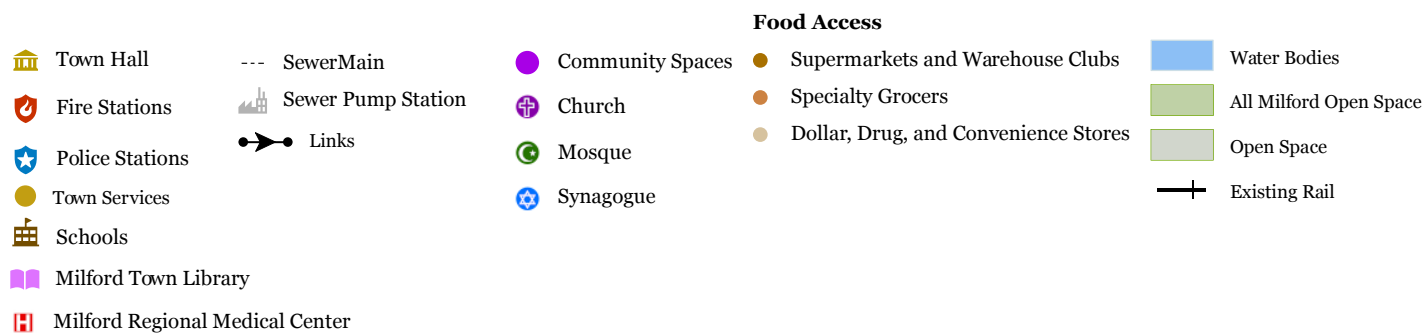


Figure 1: Base Map for the Milford Comprehensive Plan



What Topics Are Included?

The comprehensive plan process organized input, analysis, and community discussion across a holistic set of planning topics. The topics include Land Use, Downtown, Economic Development, Housing, Transportation, Cultural and Historical Resources, Natural Environment and Open Space, and Community Services and Facilities. A summary of each topic is provided below. The color coding and icons for each topic are used throughout this report to highlight and organize content related to each topic.



Land Use

Land use is the pattern of land preservation, development, and activity in the Town including how and where development and redevelopment can occur in the future. The Town's Zoning Bylaw defines the regulations for future development.



Economic Development

Economic Development refers to commerce, business, and commercial activity in Milford. The topic includes consideration for appropriate investment in property, the characteristics of the business and retail markets in the Town, health of small businesses, and the characteristics of jobs and the employment base of the Town.



Downtown

Milford's downtown has been a historic center of economic and community activity. Milford's downtown was a topic of focus in the process of analysis and discussion during Comprehensive Plan process and is a focus of the recommendations.



Housing

Milford's housing characteristics, demographic trends, and the broader context for the housing market in Eastern Massachusetts are all considered in the housing topic alongside an understanding of challenges and needs identified by the community.



Transportation

Milford's transportation system includes all infrastructure to get around the Town including any form of travel. This includes the vehicular street network and parking, bus system through the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority, sidewalks, and bicycle infrastructure such as the Upper Charles Trail.



Natural Environment & Open Space

Milford's rich natural environment includes preserved natural habitats, protected open spaces, and water bodies such as Milford Pond, Louisa Lake, and Echo Lake. Open spaces also include Town assets for active and passive recreation such as Fino Field and the Town Park.



Cultural and Historical Resources

Milford's cultural and historical resources include both physical assets and places, such as historically significant structures, and temporal events and activities. All of these features of the Town contribute to a shared sense of belonging, identity, and community.



Community Services and Facilities

Milford's community services and facilities refer to the physical infrastructure and the human capital that provide many of the critical services to support activities of residents, businesses, visitors, and commerce in the Town. This includes the Town's water, sewer, and stormwater systems, emergency services, and municipal buildings, properties, parks, and other assets.

Community Engagement

The Comprehensive Plan process began in February of 2024 and continued through spring of 2025. Residents and community members were engaged through a variety of approaches at meaningful points throughout the planning process. A special thank you is extended to all residents who took the time to attend a meeting, speak with us during an event, respond to a survey, or send us an email. The content of this plan has been built upon the feedback received from the community with a particular focus on the major themes that were being heard from a diverse cross-section of the community.

The process of learning about Milford began with the Comprehensive Planning team and Ad Hoc Committee members joining in a tour of all corners of the Town on a Senior Center shuttle bus. This tour provided a first-hand perspective for the planning team to better understand the Town. This tour was combined with in-depth research and analysis in each of the topic areas of the Comprehensive Plan which examined both spatial and tabular data to build a strong understanding of the current conditions of the Town.

The first community meeting, a Visioning Workshop, was hosted at Milford Town Hall on May 13, 2024. The meeting was attended by more than 65 residents who received background information about this process and then engaged in facilitated small group discussion to identify challenges in Milford today, opportunities for tomorrow, and a shared vision for the future. The feedback gathered at this meeting was combined with a community-

wide online survey which was open from March through August of 2024. A brief report was given at Town Meeting to share the initiation of this planning process and to promote the online survey. The survey received 600 responses that included input identifying challenges, opportunities, and a shared vision for the Town. The top four challenges facing Milford were identified as “reducing traffic congestion” (23% of responses), “improving the downtown” (19%), “municipal budget and taxes” (11%), and the “affordability of housing” (10%).

While the first community meeting and community survey successfully engaged over 665 residents, the audiences engaged did not reflect the diversity of the Town, particularly residents of color and residents who speak a language other than English. The planning team shifted summer and fall outreach efforts to try to connect with a more diverse cross section of the community. On June 25, 2024, the planning team convened a community organization day to discuss the Comprehensive Plan with service providers that connect with a diverse cross section of the Town. Organizations included the Tri-County Regional Chamber, Chris’ Corner, Milford WIC Program, Milford Town Library, Daily Bread Food Pantry, and others. In October 2024, the members of the planning team visited small businesses in Downtown to learn about their perspectives face-to-face including discussion in both Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese.



Figure 2: Spring Community Meeting



Figure 3: Fall Community Meeting

Also in October 2024, the planning team was present in a variety of times and places to engage directly with residents about the Comprehensive Plan including attending an Adult English as a Second Language (ESL) program at the High School with the parallel planning process focused on Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP 2.0). The team also hosted two sessions at the Milford Town Library, two sessions at the Milford Senior Center, a focus group meeting with the Youth Council at the Milford Youth Center, and a small business meeting hosted at the Tri-County Regional Chamber in Downtown Milford. Fall engagement was brought to a conclusion on November 18, 2024, at St. Mary of the Assumption Church with a tri-lingual session hosted for Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, and English-speaking participants. The audience was predominantly Spanish-speaking and was facilitated with the assistance of interpreters. The community meeting attracted over 65 participants engaged in discussion about how Milford could be

made better for all residents. A special thank you to Revered Peter Joyce and the St. Mary's community for hosting this important event.

In addition to the robust sequence of fall community engagement, a second community survey was also made available online to invite direct feedback on the draft Vision Statement and draft Goals for each of the Comprehensive Plan topics. About 25 community members took the time to provide detailed and meaningful feedback on the draft content of the Comprehensive Plan. All feedback, whether gathered in a large meeting, a focus group conversation, a one-on-one conversation, or through an online survey, was reviewed and compiled to identify the shared patterns, themes, and priorities that emerge from a variety of perspectives of Milford residents. The insights gathered through this outreach and engagement form the foundation for the content of this Comprehensive Plan.

Context

Previous Plans and Summaries

The following list of primary plan documents form a foundation of past planning that the Town has performed that informs this Comprehensive Plan. The list is not a full accounting of all documents that were made available to and reviewed by the planning team, but represent the previous plans most closely related to this Comprehensive Plan process.

Milford Upper Charles Trail Development Final Report (2023)

The Milford Upper Charles Trail Committee prepared this report summarizing the development of the Milford section of the proposed Upper Charles Trail and a subsidiary project to develop a connecting path from Route 85 at Walden Way to the Bike Trail. Phase 1 of the trail opened in 2007, Phase 2 of the trail opened in 2011, and Phase 3 of the trail opened in 2014.



Requests and long-term Capital Plan are presented in this report for consideration and information.

Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings Report (2018)

The Town completed a Community Resilience Building (CRB) Workshop with a total of thirteen participants. The Workshop's central objectives were to define top local natural and climate changes related hazards of concern; identify existing and future strengths and vulnerabilities; develop prioritized actions for the community; and identify immediate opportunities to collaboratively advance actions to increase resilience. The top adaptation action priorities that were identified include maintaining roadway access and power at the Milford Regional Medical Center and Milford High School; improving the existing Emergency Preparedness Plan to include evacuation routes, listings of available preparedness resources, potential partnerships, and other information; creating a formal emergency preparedness shelter plan; and conducting a flood vulnerability and design study for the Church to Water Street area.



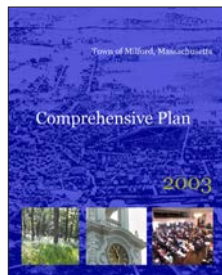
Milford Long Term Capital Planning Subcommittee Report (2019)

The Finance Committee's Long Term Capital Planning (LTCP) Subcommittee was established by the Finance Committee in Fiscal Year 2011. The LTCP Subcommittee began work in the spring of 2021 on a five-year plan. Each year the Town's Department heads meet with the LTCP to review the capital needs and to make short-term and long-term capital requests. The LTCP Subcommittee presents its recommendations to the full Finance Committee for review. The current fiscal year Funding



Milford Comprehensive Plan (2003)

The previous Milford comprehensive planning process occurred in 2003. Many individuals, Town committees, boards and departments contributed to the effort. The primary themes identified in the plan are focusing future planning on redevelopment and infill opportunities; being proactive in protecting water resources and open spaces; maintaining housing affordability for Milford residents; protecting the limited land remaining for industrial business development from other uses; remedy traffic congestion in downtown and key intersections; and appreciation for the public services, facilities, and strong sense of community in Town.



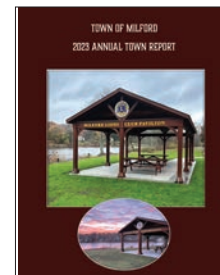
Town of Milford Open Space and Recreation Plan (2002)

The Town's previous open space plan was completed in 2002 and identifies conservation and recreational development of the Charles and Mill River corridors as the central theme of the plan. These corridors, composed of both river valleys and bordering uplands, have the potential for fulfilling multiple goals of the community in terms of water supply protection, recreational opportunity, and preservation of diverse intact ecosystems. The future completion of the Upper Charles Trail is highlighted and has since been implemented.



Current Town Efforts and Initiatives

In 2024, the Town invested in major improvements to Fino Field and its pool facilities and improvements at Town Park including two tennis courts, four pickleball courts, 2 basketball courts with futsal and street hockey options.



In 2021, the Town of Milford purchased the Milford Water Company giving the Town control over a previously private asset.

In 2018 the Town made a major shift to professionalize municipal services by establishing a centralized Human Resources department that supports all Town departments. A major renovation to the unique asset of the Youth Center at the old Armory building was completed in 2016. The Town Library was renovated in 2007 and 2008 and has expanded its English as a Second Language (ESL) programming.

Accomplishments Since 2003

The Town's previous Comprehensive Plan was completed in 2003. In the twenty years since the previous plan the Town has accomplished most of the recommended action steps of that plan. The previous Comprehensive Plan was organized by topic, below is a listing of accomplishments by topic.



Land Use

The Town created an Office Residential (OR) zone to allow mixed-use development in areas that do not attract retail business. The Town oversaw the transition of existing uses in the old industrial core to business park uses there.



Economic Development

The Town continued use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) to attract industrial businesses, including working with the hospital to develop a strategic plan for future expansions with the creation of an Institutional Zone.



Downtown

The Town reduced the CA zoning district downtown to reflect the current land use pattern of the Downtown commercial district. The Town conducted a feasibility study for additional parking facilities Downtown.



Housing

The Town has continued to encourage new affordable housing under Chapter 40B to have its affordability secured in perpetuity. It continued to facilitate the creation of additional senior housing and to allow for accessory dwelling units and encourage smaller homes. The Town has also increased participation in the Homeowner Rehabilitation Program and encouraged investment in existing homes.



Transportation

The Town conducted traffic studies at intersections, inventoried and mapped the existing pedestrian and bicycle network. The Town continued work on the Upper Charles Trail. It considered the potential expansion of the MBTA's Commuter rail service from Franklin to Milford and decided not to proceed with advocacy. The Town evaluated the downtown corridor and Dilla Street corridor and repaired the Mellen Street Bridge and explored an extension of Veteran's Memorial Drive to Depot Street.



Natural Environment and Open Space

The Town refined Water Resource regulation boundaries, minimized pollutant loads discharged into Louisa Lake and other water bodies, continued developing a stormwater management plan, developed a 35-foot no disturbance buffer for wetlands, and increased public access to Town-owned open space including Town Forest.



Cultural and Historical Resources

The Town updated the existing Milford Historic Resources database by adding new local State Historic Places as they were registered.



Community Services and Facilities

The Town updated the schools master plan, pursued Town Library grants for renovation and expansion, upgraded Police and Fire equipment, continued to improve the condition of roadways and sidewalks, and continued to upgrade the sewer system to minimize infiltration and overflow. The Town also constructed a new Senior Center and invested in the Youth Center.



A historical map of Milford, Vermont, showing streets like Summer Street, Cross Street, and Main Street. Various buildings and businesses are labeled, including Underwood Boot Shop, Underwood, Barber, A. Parkhurst, H. Hunt, J. Mason, Geo. Pierce, H. Hunt, J. Phipps, Mrs. Perry, L. Eames, Nelson & Erskin, Collins, Car. House, Lumber Yard, Machine Shop, Steam Mill, Boot Shop, J.P. Daniels, A. Cook, and A. Daniels. A river flows through the town, and a railroad line is visible.

02

Milford's Past

Understanding the themes of the past is integral to building the future of any community. Exploring Milford's historical patterns provides valuable insights that can shape its current priorities and future ambitions. It also fosters a deeper connection between the residents and their shared history, ensuring that Milford's heritage is preserved for future generations. Important themes that resonate throughout Milford's history include the town as an important center of industry, commerce, and culture, and home for immigrant communities gaining a foothold in the country.

Milford has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to preserving its historical heritage throughout the years. The establishment of the Milford Historical Commission in 1971 was a pivotal moment, underscoring the town's dedication to its past. This Commission has been instrumental in spearheading efforts to document, preserve, and celebrate Milford's historical assets. Milford is home to six individual historic properties and two historic districts that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Recognizing Milford's important historical themes as a foundation for planning and integrating historical preservation into Milford's community planning is crucial for maintaining a balance between honoring the past and accommodating growth and change. Milford has numerous opportunities to enrich its community by promoting cultural diversity, preserving its historical heritage, and expanding its arts and culture assets. By capitalizing on these opportunities, the town can foster a more inclusive and vibrant community environment.

Key Historical Events

1600

1700

1800

1662: Quashaamit and fellow Ponkapoag indigenous people deeded land to settlers in what is known today as Mendon and Milford

1667: Milford is included as part of Quinshepaug Plantation

1691: Milford is included as part of Mendon North Purchase

1780: Milford incorporated as a town distinct from Mendon



1815: Rosalinda Nelson and Roxanna Rawson found the Female Charitable and Benevolent Society

1819: First town meetinghouse built in Milford, representing a break between church and state

1822: William Godfrey establishes a stagecoach route between Mendon and Boston with a stop in Milford

1848: Framingham and Milford Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad connects Milford to the major urban centers of the Northeast



1854: Milford's current Town Hall is built based on designs by architect Thomas Silloway



1900

2000



1860: Milford pink granite was discovered, starting a long and successful quarrying industry in town



1884: Memorial Hall built as a memorial to Civil War Veterans

1886: Hopedale's petition to become a separate town from Milford is granted

1891: First electric streetcar line in Milford opens

1902: Booker T. Washington addresses the Quinshipaug Woman's Club

1912: Renowned sculptor Daniel Chester French makes statue of General William F. Draper that still stands in Draper Park today



1915: Henry "Boots" Mussulli, a jazz saxophonist who became known as the "Music Man of Milford" is born

1925: Ku Klux Klan members light a cross on fire on Bear Hill, which was put out by the Fire Department

1927: Sympathizers of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti rally in their support at Milford Town Hall

1962: Final adjustment to Milford's geopolitical boundaries

1969: The segment of I-495 that runs through Milford opens to traffic.

1990: Joseph E. Murray, a pioneer in organ transplantation who grew up in Milford, receives the Nobel Prize in Medicine

Growth and Development

Milford's Beginnings

The land that became the Town of Milford was first deeded to settlers by the Ponkapoag indigenous people in 1662, with the understanding that they would retain the right to use the land indefinitely. For the next century, the area was home to small agricultural settlements with limited civic infrastructure, including a church, schoolhouse, and burying ground.

Milford was incorporated as a distinct town in 1780, in part to reflect its growing population. Around this time, Milford's economy expanded to include artisans, such as carpenters and blacksmiths, as well as small-scale industry, such as the boot and shoe manufacturing that took place in Braggville. Reflecting this economic expansion, the population of Milford had increased to 1,360 people by 1839.

As the economy and population of Milford grew, so did other aspects of society. In 1815, Rosalinda Nelson and Roxanna Rawson founded the Female Charitable and Benevolent Society, which was affiliated with the First Congregational Church in Milford; it may be one of the first women's societies in the United States. In 1822, William Godfrey brought a stagecoach route to town, which was the first means of public transportation. The stages operated between Mendon, Milford, and Boston, and had a connection with a line to Hartford.



Figure 4: Plan of Milford made by Newell Nelson, dated 1831

Population Growth and the Rise of Industry

Milford saw the greatest growth in industry and population between 1830 and 1870. Between those four decades, the population increased from 1,360 to 9,000 people. Part of this population growth was fueled by the arrival of migrants from Ireland, who found work in the expanding boot and shoe industry as well as the emerging granite quarrying industry.

The construction of the Framingham and Milford Branch of the Boston & Albany Railroad in 1848 helped to connect Milford's people and

industries to the major urban centers of the Northeast. Quarrying became an important part of Milford's economy and identity. Milford granite has been used in the Boston Public Library, the Lincoln Memorial, Baltimore Union Station, and other notable buildings.

By the 1920s, there were 16 quarries operating in the town. The quarries attracted migrants from Italy who worked as skilled stonecutters, which contributed to the population boom at the turn of the century. By 1905, Italian migrants made up 33% of Milford's population. This caused friction with the Irish and Irish American residents, who had amassed political, social, and economic capital by the end of the 20th century.

As the population increased and the town became wealthier, Milford saw a building boom. By the 1870s, the central village had become a distinct commercial district with multistory commercial brick building blocks and diverse establishments such as breweries, bakeries, and banks. The dominant architectural styles used in residential construction during this period were Greek Revival or Italianate, though Second Empire and Gothic Revival houses were also popular. This building boom led to an expansion of the building trades as well as cutting of the town's woodlands to supply lumber. The historic development patterns of this era remain today and set the foundation for contemporary downtown Milford and the surrounding walkable neighborhoods.



Figure 5: First Congregational Church

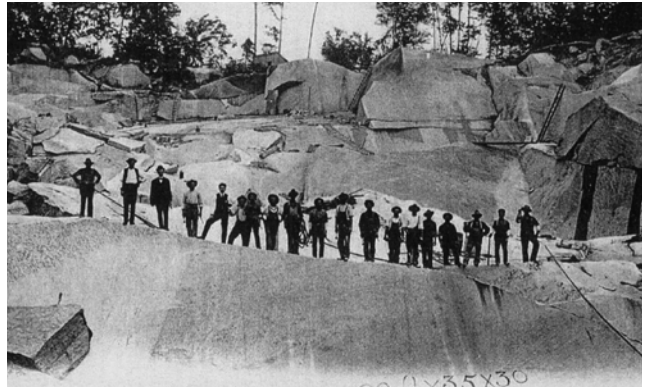


Figure 6: Largest piece of granite from Milford, MA

Economic and Demographic Shifts

Milford was a prosperous commercial center in the 1910s and 1920s and served as both an employment and a retail center for surrounding towns. The Great Depression led to the closure of several industrial businesses in Milford, including the Milford Iron Foundry, various shoe factories, and the quarries. The population continued to grow, albeit slowly, between 1915 and 1940, ultimately housing 15,388 residents. By the 1940s, Italian and Italian American residents comprised 51% of the population, eclipsing residents with Irish heritage.

Development slowed during this period, though residential development remained steady as new houses were constructed in the north and northwest areas of town. Due to the rise of personal automobile use, development became more disperse and less walkable. One example of this is the commercial strip development along Route 140; another is the housing development on Silver Hill. The street railways ceased to function in the 1920s, drawing Milford's history as a public transportation hub to a close. The completion of I-495 in the late 1950s solidified the transition to an auto-centric era in the Town.

Starting in the 1980s, there was a notable increase in Brazilian migrants moving to Massachusetts, many of whom have settled in the MetroWest region, including Milford. This demographic shift has brought cultural diversity and new perspectives to the area, as have previous waves of immigration from places

like Ireland and Italy. The Brazilian community, alongside other immigrant groups, contribute to Milford's evolving identity, enriching the town's cultural fabric and highlighting the importance of inclusion and representation in the community's ongoing development.



Figure 7: Quarry workers, Milford MA



Figure 8: Bank Block circa 1890s

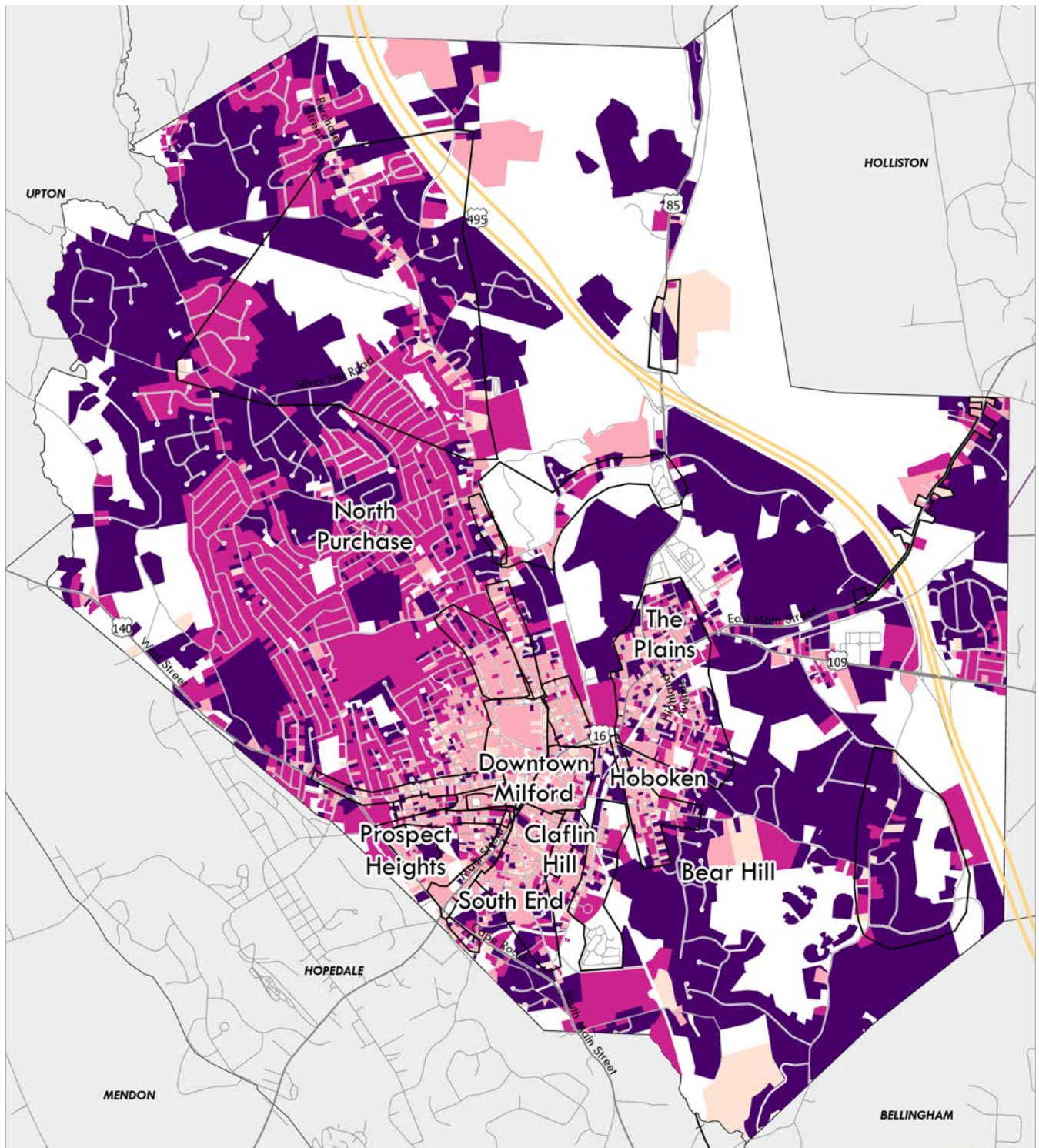
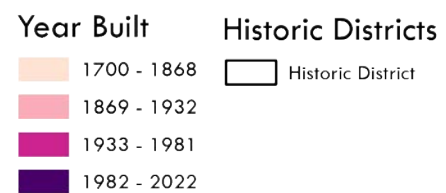


Figure 9: Historic Development Patterns by Past Year Built



Historical Context and Themes

Immigration

Like many other colonial New England settlements, Milford's early population was likely comprised of people with English Protestant heritage. Since the early 19th century, however, immigration has come to define the history and culture of the town. The first wave of immigration in the first half of the 19th century was largely from Ireland; the second wave in the second half of the 19th century was largely from Italy. While these two nationalities have been the most dominant, migrants from other countries, such as Poland, Armenia, Sweden, and Portugal, made a home for themselves in Milford in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as well.

Today, 23% of Milford residents were born in a foreign country. Recent migrants are more likely to be from South American countries such as Brazil and Ecuador than from Europe. They are part of a proud tradition of immigration and cultural exchange that has existed in Milford for close to 200 years.

Industry

Since the late 18th century, Milford has been a hub of industrial activity. Mills, workshops, and factories made boots, shoes, carriages, textiles, and furniture. Place names such as Braggville and Draper Park reflect the history of the men who founded successful businesses. Buildings constructed with pink granite quarried in Milford are reminders of a once-thriving industry.



Figure 10: Downtown Milford



Figure 11: Main St. storefronts 1950s

While it has declined since its peak, manufacturing is still a prominent industry in Milford today, employing approximately 15% of all people who work in Milford. Combined with related industries such as trade, transportation, and utilities, and construction, they employ approximately 42% of all workers. As in the past, these jobs remain an important economic gateway for immigrants by providing steady jobs to people who speak English as a second language or who don't have a college degree.

Commerce and Culture

For much of the 19th and 20th centuries, Milford served as a hub of commerce and culture for the area. Trains, electric streetcars, and buses connected people to get to Milford from nearby towns like Framingham, Holliston, Bellingham, Franklin, Upton, Medway, Uxbridge, and Grafton as well as the major cities of Boston, Providence, and New York City. Milford's downtown started to take shape by the late 19th century with the construction of the Gillon Block in 1888 and the Thom Block in 1891, both four-story masonry commercial buildings. Since this time Milford and its downtown have been a regional center serving surrounding communities.

During this period, the government complemented private investment by funding the construction of various civic buildings, including schools, fire stations, Memorial Hall, the Post Office, and the Armory. Milford also became a center for arts and culture, with music halls, theaters, and cinemas hosting concerts, vaudeville shows, movies, and more. Milford

eventually garnered a reputation for cultivating musical talent, especially jazz musicians like Boots Mussulli. Renowned jazz musicians like Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Lionel Hampton, and Dizzy Gillespie came to Milford to play at the Crystal Room in the Sons of Italy Hall on Sumner Street.

Today, Milford is home to several cultural institutions, including museums, libraries, cultural centers, and performance venues. Organizations like Claflin Hill Symphony Orchestra and venues like the Milford Performing Arts Center support community engagement and continue the proud tradition of artistic expression in Milford. Milford also supports diverse businesses, both downtown and near major vehicular connections like I-495 and Route 140.





03

Milford's Present

Over the past two decades since the previous Comprehensive Plan, Milford has undergone significant changes. The town has welcomed new residents through immigration and experienced steady population growth, bringing diversity and rich cultural experiences to the community. At the same time, rising housing costs, increased flooding and extreme weather events, and the lasting effects of a global pandemic have presented new challenges for both residents and businesses.

This chapter provides a snapshot of Milford today, highlighting the people, organizations, public spaces, businesses, and institutions that shape the town's identity

Milford Demographics

Population

According to the 2020 Census, Milford’s population has grown by 8.5% since the last comprehensive plan was developed in 2003. As of the most recent estimate, the town’s population stands at approximately 30,304 residents, a slight decline from the 30,379 recorded in 2020. Looking ahead, projections indicate that Milford’s population will reach around 31,000 by 2050, reflecting a modest increase of approximately 500 residents compared to the 2020 Census count.

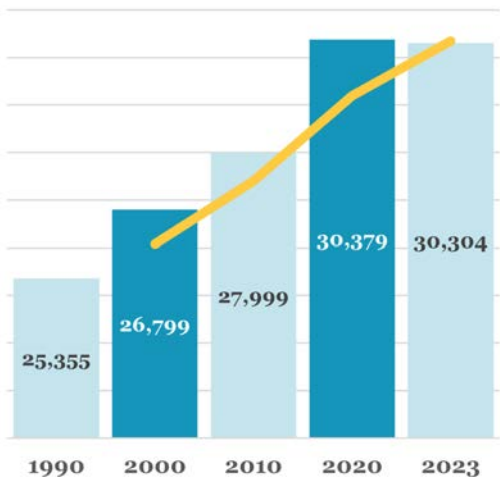


Figure 12: Population and Growth in Milford

Age

The median age in Milford has risen to 39.8 years, up from 36.6 years in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan. The town’s largest age groups are residents between the ages of 20 and 24 and those over 65, with each group representing roughly a quarter of the population. Together, they account for nearly half of all residents. While the overall population has aged, growth across all age cohorts has surpassed the projections made in 2003, continuing through 2025.

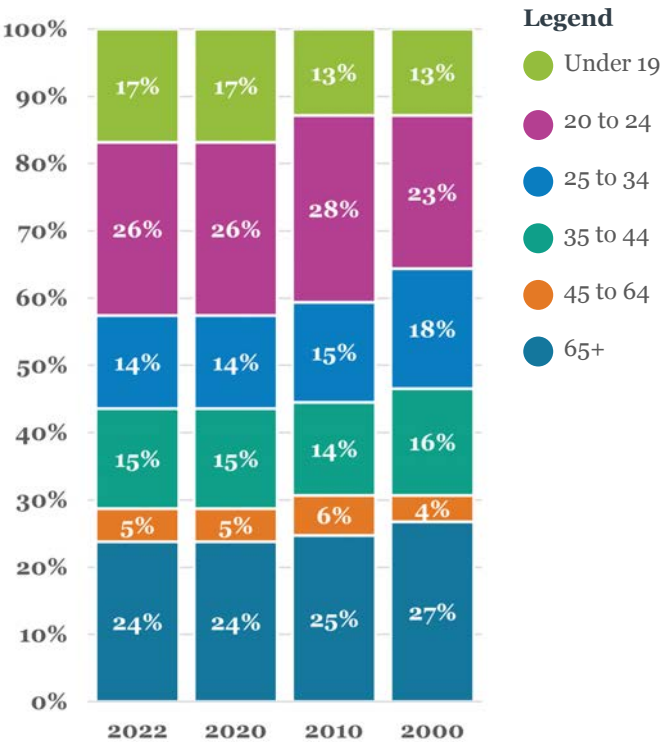


Figure 13: Age Distribution

Race and Ethnicity

Milford’s racial composition has shifted slightly since 2003, with notable changes over the past five years. The town has experienced an increase in Latino residents and individuals identifying as Two or More Races, while the population of non-Hispanic White residents has declined.

Figure 12 illustrates the racial composition of Milford. White, non-Hispanic residents remain the largest demographic group, comprising 70% of the town’s total population (21,184). However, this marks a significant decline from 2003, when over 90% of residents identified as White, reflecting a 20% decrease over two decades.

The Hispanic or Latino population makes up 12% of Milford’s residents, with the largest Hispanic origins being South American,

Ecuadorian, Puerto Rican, Central American, Salvadoran, and Dominican. Approximately 7% of the population identifies as two or more races. While specific racial combinations are not available for this category, this demographic shift underscores Milford’s growing diversity.

Additionally, 4% of residents identify as Black or African American, and 5% fall under the “Some Other Race”. The Asian population represents just over 3%, with the largest subgroups being Asian Indian and Pakistani. Each of these racial groups self-identifies as non-Hispanic and collectively represents 88% of Milford’s population.

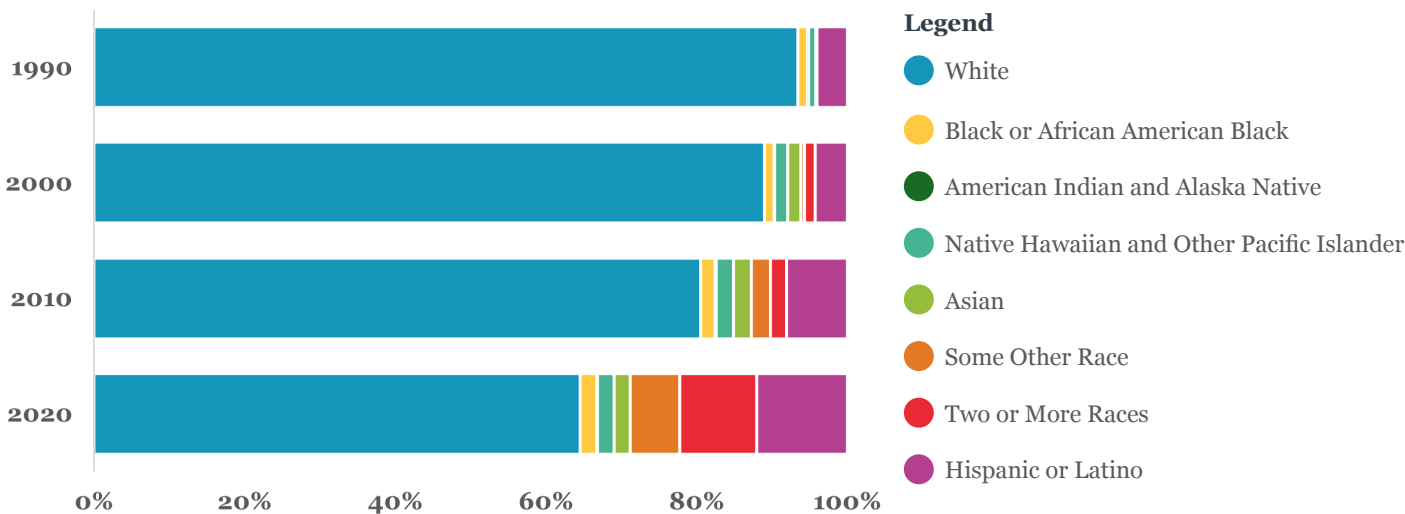


Figure 14: Race and Ethnicity Distribution

26%

of residents are
foreign born

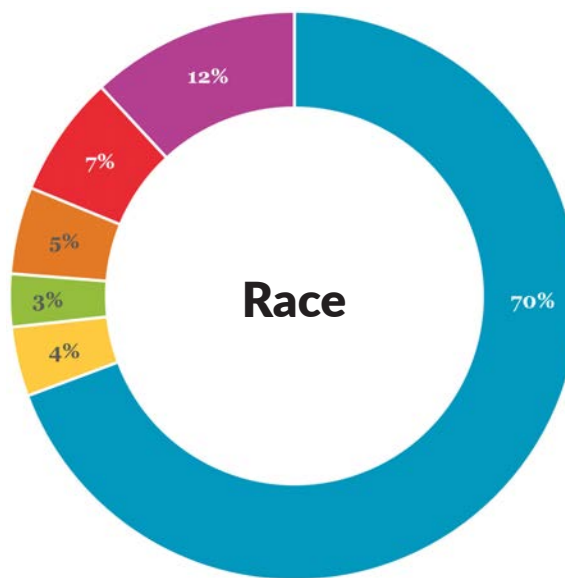


Diversity

Diversity is at the center of Milford's identity, with immigration playing a pivotal role in shaping the town's rich history. From the early influx of Irish and Italian immigrants to more recent waves from Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti and other countries, Milford has consistently been a landing place for people from all corners of the globe.

Today, approximately 26% of Milford's population is foreign-born. The downtown area and surrounding neighborhoods feature a vibrant mix of businesses and specialty shops that serve the town's Portuguese and Brazilian communities, offering goods and services that reflect their cultural heritage. Milford's diversity is also evident in the languages spoken at home.

According to the U.S. Census 2022 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimates, more than one-third of residents (35%) speak a language other than English at home. Among them, approximately 10% speak Spanish, 22% speak an Indo-European language, and 3% speak a language outside of these categories.



Legend

- White
- Some Other Race
- Black or African American Black
- Two or More Races
- Asian
- Hispanic or Latino

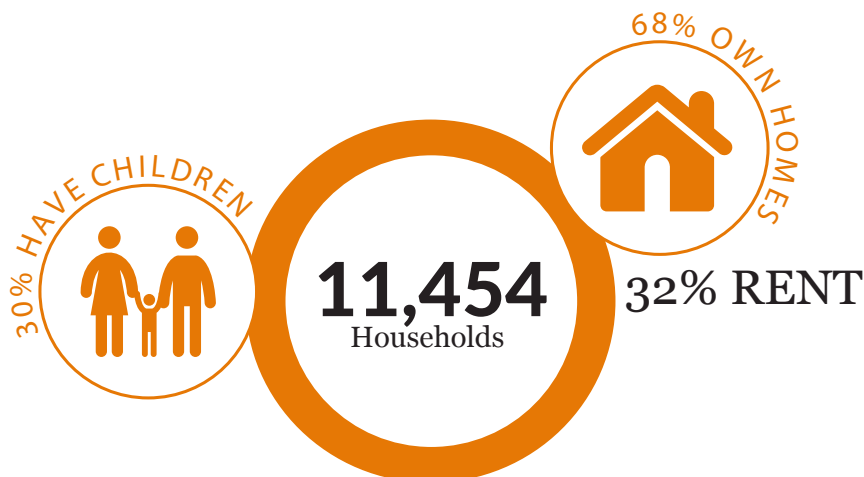
Figure 15: Race and Ethnicity Composition
Source: ACS 5-year estimates, 2022

35%

of residents speak a
language other than
English



Note: At the time of data collection and analysis, the most recent U.S. Census data was the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate ending in year 2022. The 5-Year estimates include data aggregated from 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018.



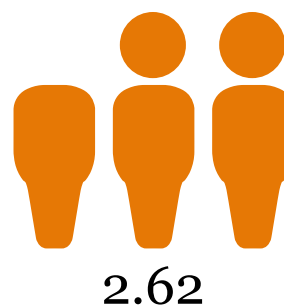
Households

According to the U.S. Census 2022 ACS 5-Year Estimates, Milford has 11,454 households. The town has experienced moderate growth over the past two decades, with a 7% increase in households since 2000. Family households are the most common household type, accounting for approximately 70% of all households, while non-family households make up 29%.

The average household size in Milford is 2.62 persons. Of the 11,454 households, 3,127 households have children under the age of 18 years old and approximately one third of households have one or more 65 years of age or over as a resident. Most households occupied housing units that are owner-occupied with 70.5%. The remaining households are renter occupied with 29.5%.



Median Household Size



Note: At the time of data collection and analysis, the most recent U.S. Census data was the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate ending in year 2022. The 5-Year estimates include data aggregated from 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018.

Environmental Justice Populations

An Environmental Justice (EJ) community is an area where residents face higher risks of exposure to pollution in the air, water, and soil. These communities often experience additional burdens, including socioeconomic and health challenges such as higher poverty rates, language barriers, and increased instances of asthma and other health conditions. They also tend to receive lower levels of investment in infrastructure and public services, leading to disparities in access to resources and opportunities.

In Massachusetts, a neighborhood is classified as an Environmental Justice (EJ) Community if it meets one or more of the following criteria:

- The median household income is 65% or less of the statewide median.
- 40% or more of the population identifies as a racial or ethnic minority.
- 25% or more of households report speaking English less than “very well”.
- 25% or more of the population identifies as a racial or ethnic minority, and the municipality’s median household income does not exceed 150% of the statewide median.

In Milford, 16 census block groups are classified as Environmental Justice Communities, accounting for 76% of the town’s population (23,109 residents).

- 13 block groups meet the criteria for either 40% minority population or a combination of 25% minority population and low median household income.
- 2 block groups meet the criteria for both a 40% minority population and low median household income.
- 1 block group meets the most extensive criteria, with 40% minority population, 25% low median household income, and a significant percentage of residents experiencing English isolation.

These designations highlight the need for targeted investments and policies to address environmental disparities, improve infrastructure, and expand economic and social opportunities for Milford’s most vulnerable communities.

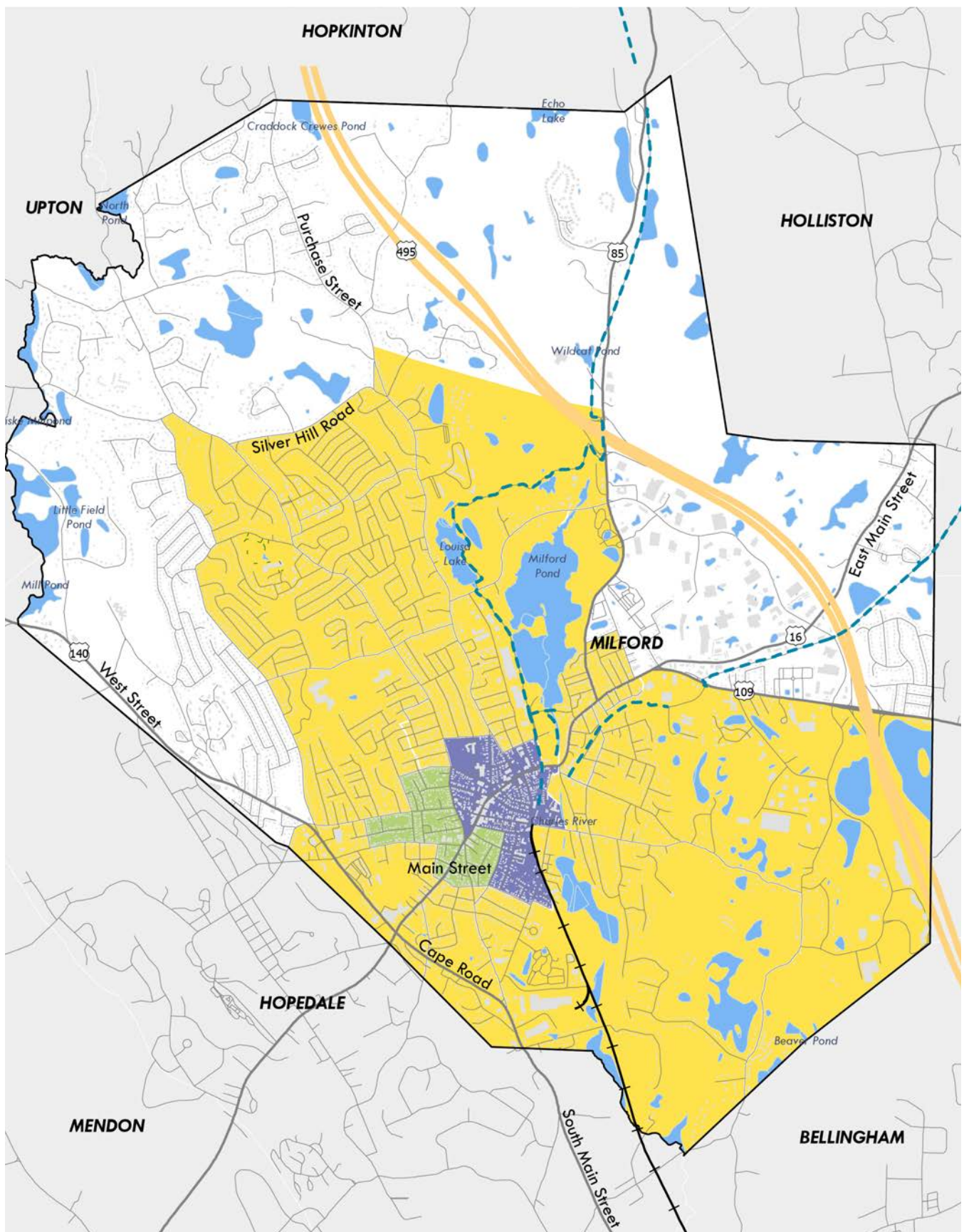


Figure 16: Milford Environmental Justice (EJ) areas

- EJ criteria: Minority population
- EJ criteria: Minority population and Income
- EJ criteria: Minority population, Income and English isolation

Context for Topics of the Comprehensive Plan

The following summaries provide a brief context for some of the most critical data organized by the topics of the Comprehensive Plan.



Milford’s natural resources, transportation corridors, and the downtown core played a pivotal role in shaping early land use development patterns, which continue to influence the town’s land use composition today. Milford is primarily zoned for residential - single-family homes, with pockets of commercial and industrial areas concentrated along major roadway corridors. Development along I-495 and major state routes is largely auto-oriented, while the historic downtown core and surrounding neighborhoods are a more compact development pattern that is more pedestrian-friendly.

Existing Land Use	Acreage	% of town
Residential	5,170.4	93.2%
Mixed Use	20.9	0.4%
Commercial	60.1	1.1%
Industrial	79.4	1.4%
Vacant, Public, & Open Space	215.5	3.9%

Figure 17: Milford Existing Land Use

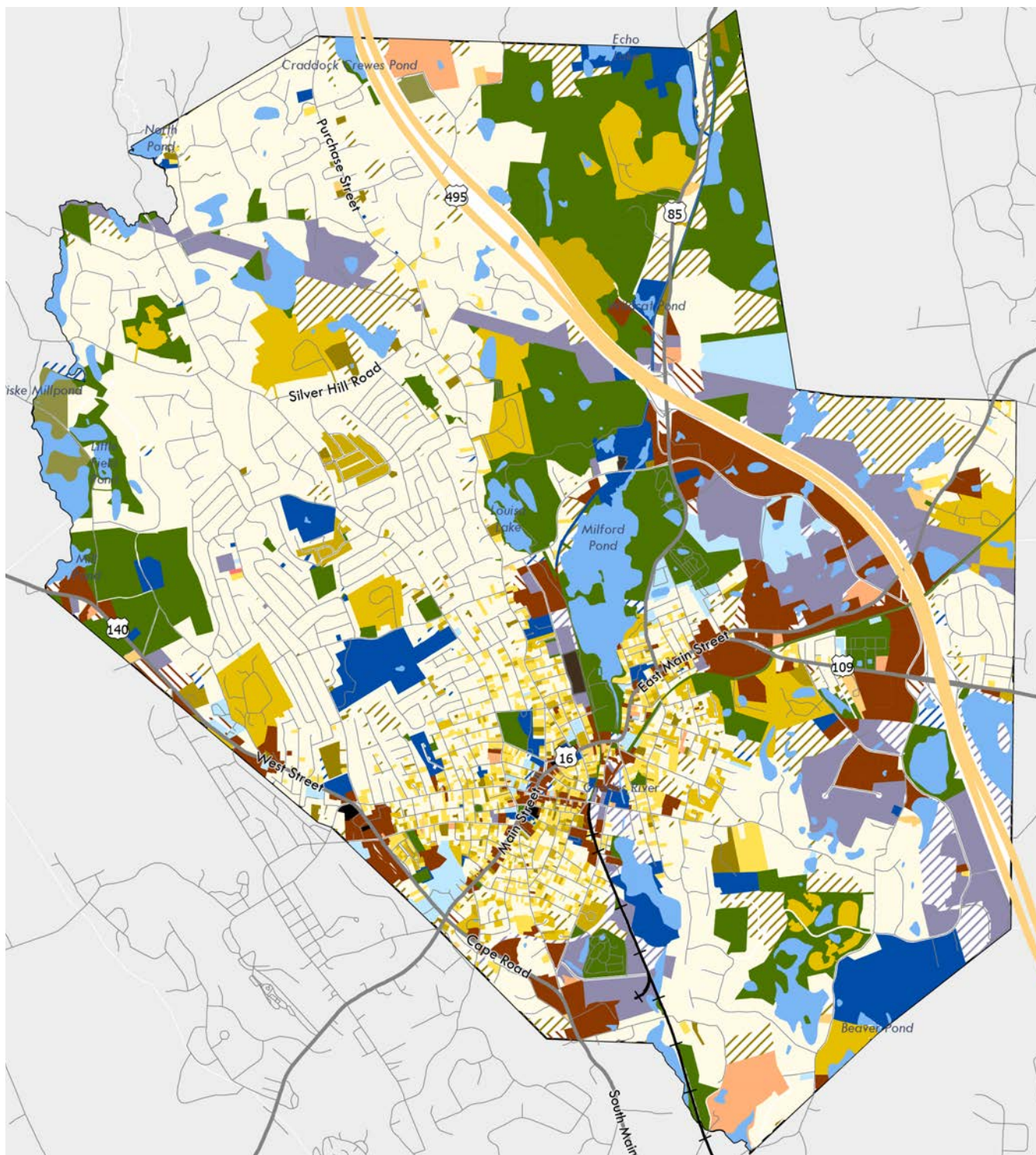


Figure 18: Milford Existing Land Use

Residential

- Single Family Residence
- Two or Three Family Residences
- Condominium
- Apartments with Four or more units
- Group Quarters
- Residential Other
- Residential Vacant

Mixed Use

- Mixed Use
- Mixed Use - Commercial
- Mixed Use - Industrial
- Mixed Use - Open Space
- Mixed Use - Public

Commercial

- Commercial
- Commercial Vacant

Industrial

- Industrial
- Industrial Vacant

Public or Exempt

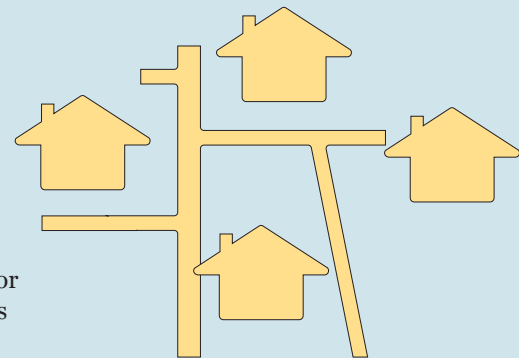
- Federal State or Municipal
- Institutional or Exempt; Tax Exempt Other
- Municipal Vacant
- Institutional or Exempt Vacant
- Unknown
- Open Space

Zoning Districts and Overlays

Zoning is a set of rules and regulations about what you can build and where. What can be built depends on the “zone” of the property. Zoning allows similar uses to be in the same area and keep away uses that are not compatible like heavy industrial sites next to residential. The town’s zoning includes five (5) residential, four (4) commercial, and three (3) industrial districts. An overlay is applied over a zoning area that adds additional or stricter standards and criteria for those parcels. Milford has two (2) overlay districts, a Flood Plain District and a Water Resource Protection Overlay.

93%

of Milford’s
land is zoned for
residential uses



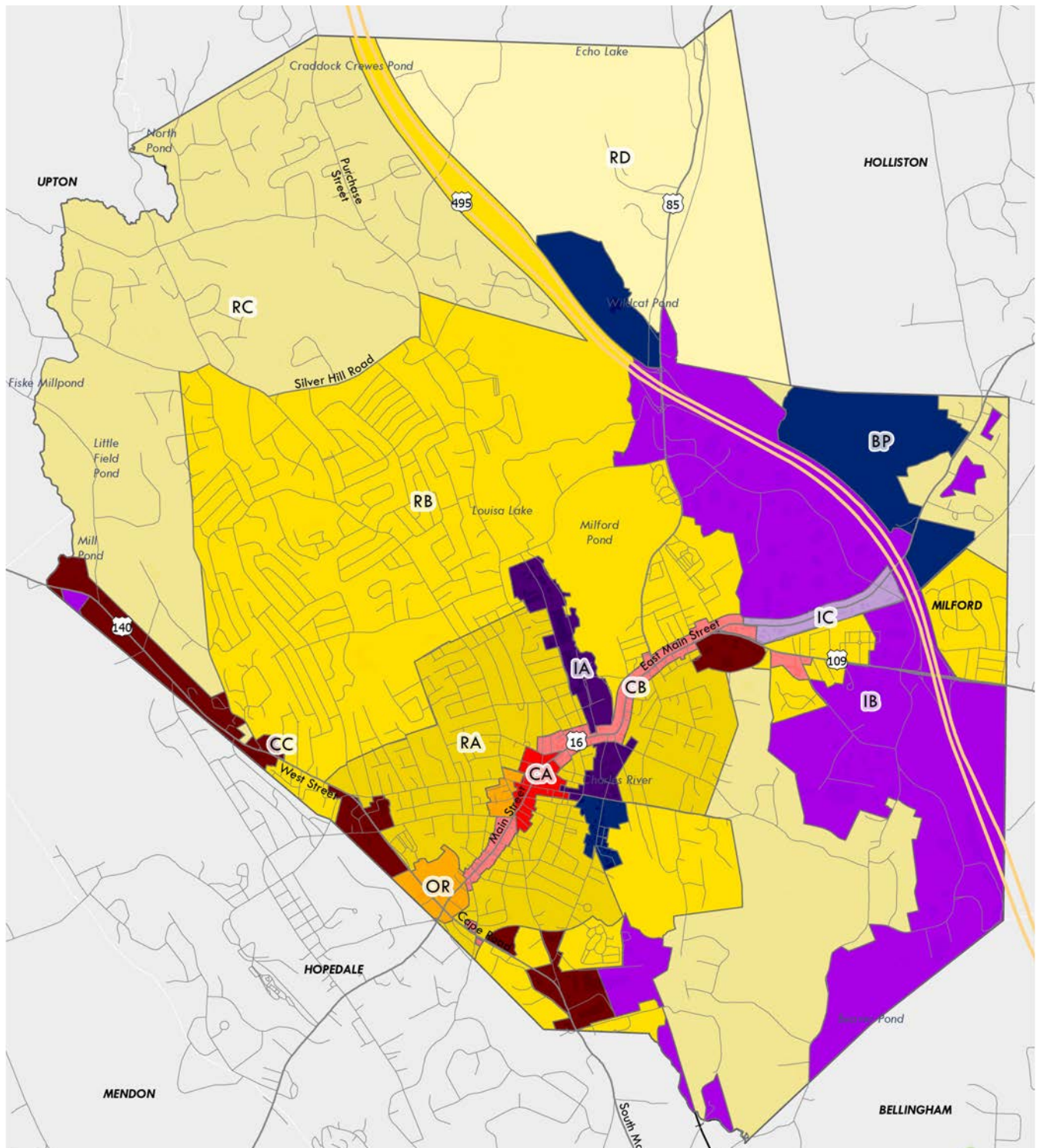


Figure 19: Milford Zoning

Residential

- General Residential (RA)
- Single Family Residential (RB)
- Rural Residential C (RC)
- Rural Residential D (RD)
- Office Residential

Commercial

- Business Park (BP)
- Central Commercial A (CA)
- Highway Commercial C (CC)
- Neighborhood Commercial B (CB)

Industrial

- Central Industrial A
- Highway Industrial B
- High and Neighborhood Industrial C



Downtown

Milford's historic downtown serves as a hub for small and minority-owned businesses and is home to several key anchor institutions. Home to approximately 150 businesses, downtown Milford features a diverse mix of retail, dining, professional and personal services, and institutional uses. The downtown also offers a walkable environment with access to public institutions like the library, post office, and museum; easy access to open space and recreation along the Charles River Bike Trail; and a vibrant local business scene.

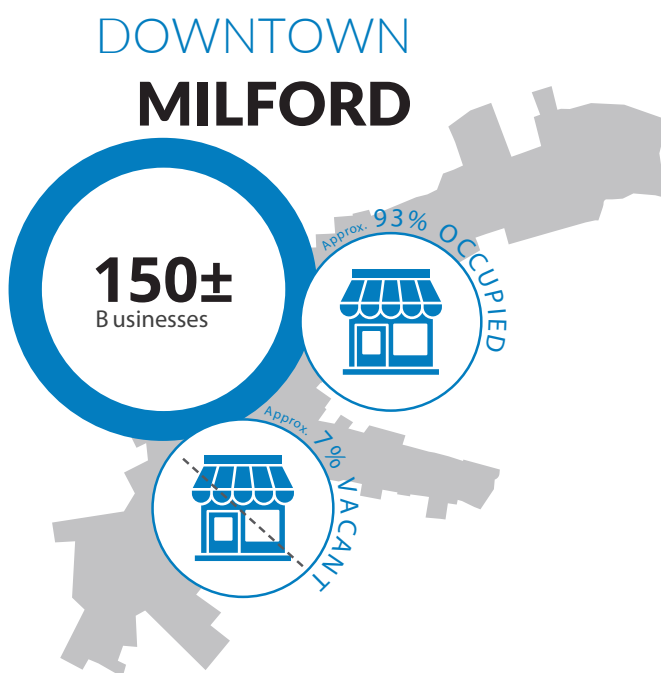


Figure 20: Downtown Milford Business Mix

Business Type	Definition	Number of Businesses
Retail	Clothing, electronics, home goods, music, convenience stores	27
Professional Services	Law, accounting, architecture, notary, immigration services, insurance, banks	26
Personal Care Services	Salon, barber, laundry, tattoo, dance	24
Food	Restaurant, grocery	22
Public and Institutional	Religious institution, town hall, library, fire station, police station, USPS, museum	18
Business Services	Electronic repair, plumbing, roof, carpentry, contractor supply, janitorial, orchestra	11
Vacant	Vacant commercial property	11
Medical Services	Dentistry, physical therapy	8
Automotive Services	Auto repair, gas	3
Total		150

Metropolitan Area Planning Council, April 2024



Figure 21: Milford Town Hall



Figure 22: Downtown Milford, Main St. & Winter St.



Figure 23: Downtown Milford, Main St. & Jefferson St.



Figure 24: Downtown Milford, Main St. & Pine St.



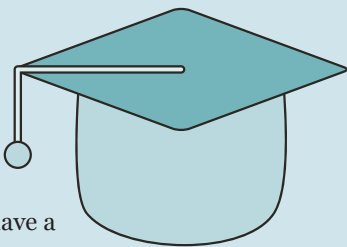
Economic Development

Milford has a strong economic base and is home to a diverse array of commercial, industrial, and retail businesses. Milford's labor force consists of 15,580 workers, with 15,029 employed and 551 unemployed, or a 3.5% unemployment rate (MA Department of Economic Research, 2024) which is consistent with the state average.

In terms of educational attainment, compared to state averages, Milford has a higher proportion of residents that have only a high school diploma or less. Milford also has a lower proportion of residents who have a master's degree or higher (US Census ACS, 5-Year Estimates, 2022). Median household income in Milford is \$92,842, but racial disparities persist, as Black and Hispanic/Latino households earn roughly 75% of white households' median income, with even larger gaps in per capita income.

50%

of residents have a Bachelor's degree or higher



Milford serves as an urban center for the communities surrounding it, with a strong economic base and employment opportunities. Commuter patterns show that out of 17,573 employed in Milford, most employees, 15,347, are commuting in from other towns, while many Milford residents commute out of Milford for work (US Census OnTheMap Application 2021). Of the people who live in Milford but work somewhere else, Boston, Framingham, and Worcester are the most popular commuting destinations.

Note: At the time of data collection and analysis, the most recent U.S. Census data was the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate ending in year 2022. The 5-Year estimates include data aggregated from 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018.

Figure 25: Largest Businesses by Number of Employees

	Company	Employment
1	Waters Corp	1,520
2	Milton CAT	1,135
3	Milford Regional Medical Center	1,000
4	Southworth-Milton Inc	905
5	Consigli Construction Co Inc	600
6	Visiting Nurse Association	250
7	Nitto Avecia Medicines	200
8	Department of Corrections	180
9	Genesis Healthcare Milford Ctr	175
10	Countryside Health Care-Milford	170
	Total Jobs	6,135

There are 1,148 businesses in Milford across several sectors, grouped by North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes. The largest employment sectors in Milford include education and health services, construction, trade and transportation, and manufacturing. Major employers such as Waters Corp, Milton CAT, Milford Regional Medical Center, and Consigli Construction provide thousands of jobs.



Housing

Milford needs more diverse and affordable housing options to meet community needs. Milford's location within the Boston and Worcester metro areas and attractive local amenities makes it a desirable place to live. The Town's modest growth and demographic shifts are contributing to a need for additional and more diverse housing types.

To purchase a single-family home in Milford without being cost burdened would require an annual household income of approximately \$162,000, plus additional funds for a 20% down payment. A proactive approach to addressing housing needs has been lacking. For example, the town does not have an updated Housing Production Plan nor comprehensive housing policies. Many of the housing objectives from the previous comprehensive plan, adopted over 20 years ago, to expand housing opportunities and revitalize existing stock, remain unmet.

The majority of Milford is zoned for single-family residential use only. Milford currently lacks an inclusionary zoning bylaw, and multifamily housing development is heavily restricted, except for projects built under Chapter 40B. As a result, only 5.89% of the housing stock is on the state's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), well below the 10% goal mandated by Massachusetts. Unfortunately, as observed by the town, the location of 40B projects may not be consistent with local planning or zoning.

Of the 10,665 homes in Milford, about two thirds are single-family and the other one third contain at least two units. Most of Milford's housing stock is over 60 years old and requires ongoing maintenance to remain safe and habitable. The town has seen a decline in rental housing, with fewer options available than in 2000, contributing to overcrowding and cost burdens for many residents. Milford's housing stock is largely family-oriented, with most homes offering two or more bedrooms. However, most of the town's housing stock with two or more bedrooms is limited to single family homes, often priced beyond reach for many families who need them.

7,011

single family
housing units



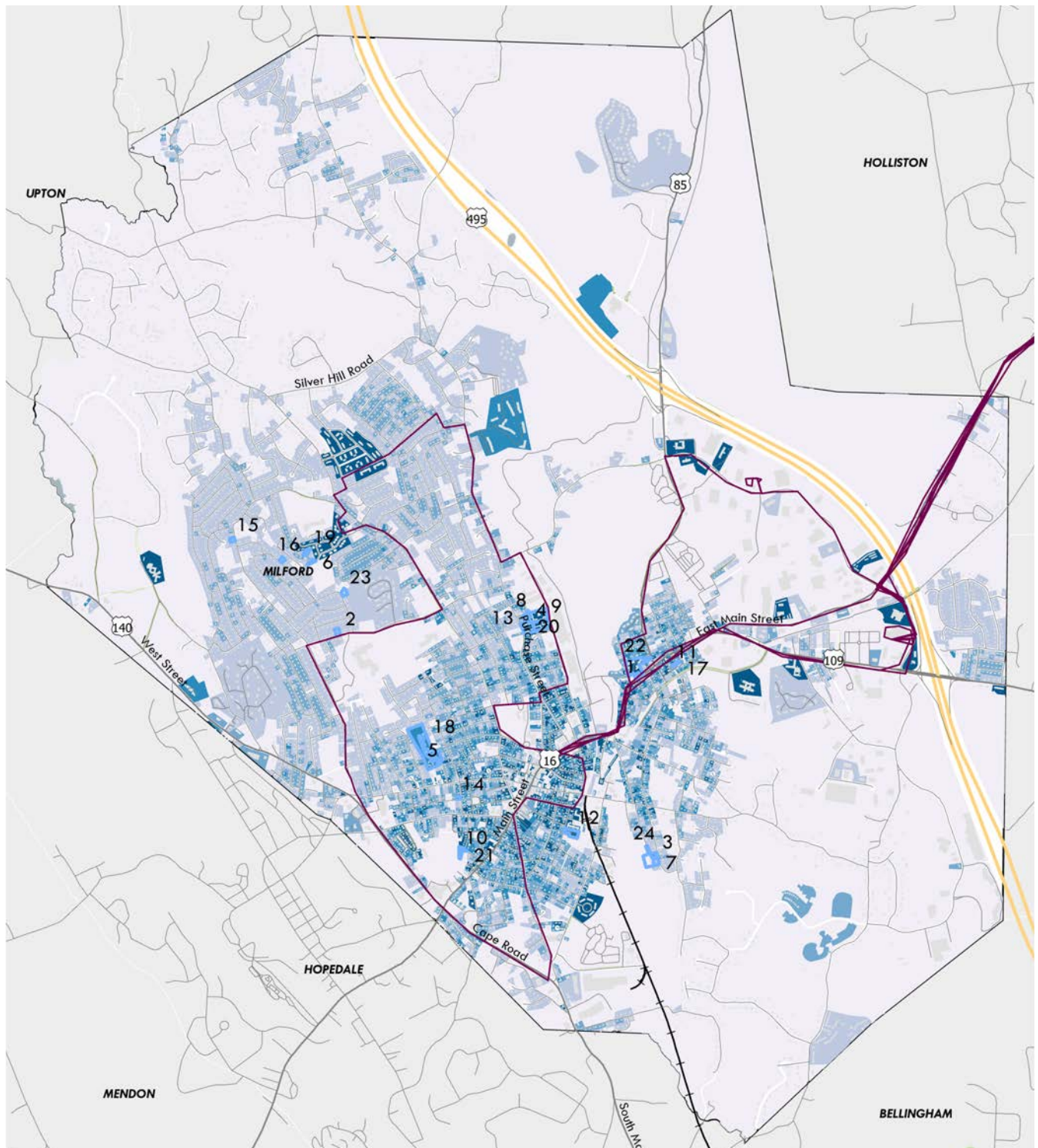
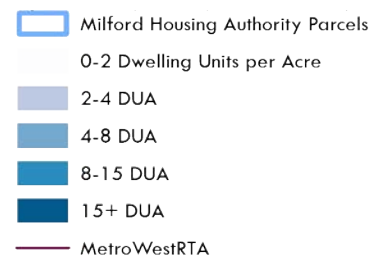


Figure 26: Milford Housing Density





Transportation

Milford is highly car-dependent, with 93% of households owning at least one vehicle. However, 804 households lack access to a vehicle. Commuting patterns show that 72% of residents drive alone to work, while only 2.7% walk, bike, or use public transit. Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in Milford is limited with about half of Milford's streets including sidewalks, and much of the sidewalk network that exists is in poor condition or has gaps in connections. Downtown Milford is relatively walkable, with well-maintained sidewalks and crosswalks, but beyond the downtown core, pedestrian access declines significantly. Two segments of the popular multi-use Upper Charles Trail end in downtown Milford, with one segment extending north to Hopkinton and the other segment extending east to Holliston. However, the northbound and eastbound segments do not connect, and aside from the trail and limited bike lanes on Route 16, Milford lacks dedicated bicycle infrastructure. Public transportation options are limited in Milford, with only two MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) bus routes and no commuter rail access.

Milford joined MassDOT's Complete Streets program in June 2020, adopting a Complete Streets policy to improve safe and accessible travel for all modes, including walking, biking, transit, and vehicles. In August 2020, the town developed a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and was awarded \$399,000 in state funding in 2021 for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

These upgrades included new sidewalks, curb ramps, pavement markings, signage, bicycle racks, and a rectangular rapid flashing beacon to enhance roadway safety.

Parking in downtown Milford was identified as a concern in the 2003 Comprehensive Plan and remains an issue. While some residents believe there is a shortage of parking, it is more likely a parking management challenge. A 2015 Town memo inventoried 380 public parking spaces downtown (135 on-street, 245 off-street), as well as an additional 374 off-street private parking spaces, for a total of 754 spaces. Over 25% of downtown Milford is occupied by surface parking, limiting opportunities for redevelopment and transit-oriented development.

From 2022 to 2024 the Town recorded one fatal pedestrian crash and 11 pedestrian injury crashes, as well as four bicyclist injury crashes and 146 vehicular injury crashes. In addition to these crashes causing fatalities or injuries, there were also over 1,000 crashes resulting in property damage from 2022 to 2024. While traffic crashes occur all over Milford, data from MassDOT indicate that specific locations may require targeted roadway safety interventions. The intersection of Congress Street and West Street/Exchange Street, the segment of Main Street between Park Terrace and Water Street, and the segment of Main Street between Pond Street and South Bow Street/Park Street in downtown Milford.

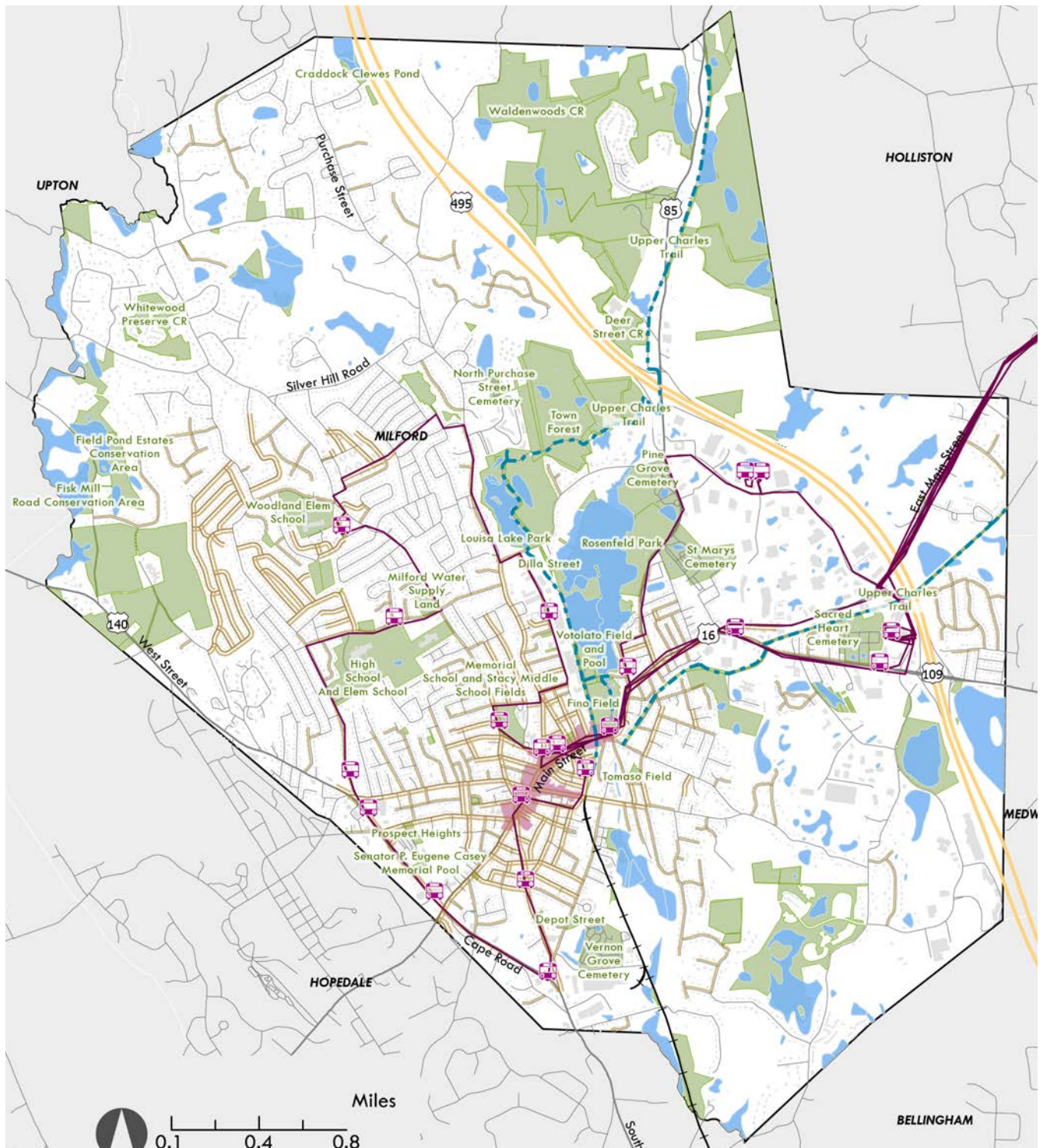










Figure 27: Milford Roadway, Transit, and Sidewalk Networks

- | | |
|---|---|
|  Downtown Outline |  MetroWest RTA Route 6 |
|  Upper Charles Trail |  MetroWest RTA Route 14 |
|  Sidewalks on One Side |  MetroWest RTA Bus Stops |
|  Sidewalks on Both Sides |  MetroWest RTA |



Cultural and Historical Resources

Milford's cultural and historical resources are essential to understanding its shared identity and shaping its future sense of community. Milford has a longstanding commitment to preserving its historical heritage. Many known historic resources are located within the town, including properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and properties recorded on the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is the primary way to recognize historically significant buildings, structures, sites, and objects. Milford has six individual historic properties, and two historic districts listed in the NRHP. Town Hall was the first property in Milford to be listed, receiving its designation in 1977, while the Prospect Heights Historic District became the town's first historic district on the register in 1990.

According to MACRIS, Milford has 597 documented historic resources and 26 historic areas. These include individual properties and districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), as well as historic resources identified through local survey efforts. 96% of inventoried historic resources are identified as being significant, at least in part, due to their architecture. Only 11 of the 597 inventoried historic resources are considered significant for their connection to ethnic history.

Figure 28: National Register of Historic Places Listings in Milford

Property	Type	Designation Year
Town Hall	Individual Building	1977
Gillion Block	Individual Building	1982
Thom Block	Individual Building	1983
Memorial Hall	Individual Building	1985
Azariah Newton House	Individual Building	1999
Ted's Diner	Individual Building	1999
Prospect Heights Historic District	District	1990
Hopedale Village Historic District	District	2002

Cultural assets play a vital role in shaping and enriching a community's unique identity. These assets include both tangible elements such as museums, libraries, historic sites, and landmarks and intangible elements, like festivals, parades, and special events. Additionally, creative businesses, such as artist studios, contribute to a vibrant cultural landscape, fostering artistic expression and community engagement.

Milford is home to several cultural institutions that foster community engagement, artistic expression, and historical preservation. The Milford Cultural Council supports local artists and cultural initiatives through grants, while the Milford Public Library hosts author talks, art exhibitions, and workshops for residents.

The Milford Performing Arts Center provides a space for theater, music, and dance performances, and Memorial Hall serves as a venue for cultural events. The Milford Historical Commission and Museum preserves the town's heritage through exhibits and programs.

Milford offers a variety of parks and public spaces that serve as venues for arts and cultural activities, providing opportunities for residents and visitors to engage in community events. Key locations include Upper Town Hall, the Library, the Senior Center, Milford Performing Arts Center, Draper Memorial Park, Calzone Park, Milford Town Park, Fino Field, and Plains Park. These spaces support cultural events, performances, and gatherings. Milford's annual events and festivals celebrate the town's arts, culture, and heritage while bringing the community together. Celebrate Milford and the 4th of July Parade and Fireworks are key events, featuring live music, food vendors, artisan booths, and family-friendly entertainment.

597

documented
historic resources

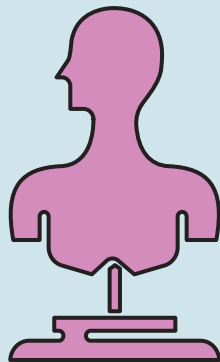


Figure 29: Memorial Hall



Figure 30: Prospect Heights Marker



Natural Environment and Open Space

Milford has a variety of regional and community open space assets that enhance quality of life and play a crucial role in sustainability and resilience to climate change. Water resources are a crucial part of Milford's environmental landscape, with the town spanning two watersheds: the Charles River watershed, which covers most of Milford, and the Blackstone River watershed, which touches the town's western edge. Key water bodies include Charles River, Echo Lake, Louisa Lake, and Milford Pond.

Milford currently obtains its water supply from five different sources. The Dilla Street facilities purify water from the Charles River, Echo Lake Reservoir, Dilla Street wells, and Clark's Island wells. In 2022, the town took a major step toward improved water resource management by acquiring the Milford Water Company, which will enable greater local control in water supply management.

Milford also supports significant biodiversity, with nine endangered, threatened, or special concern species identified in the town. Key habitats are concentrated around lakes, streams, wetlands, and forests, particularly in the northeastern portion of town. Stormwater runoff is particularly an increasing concern for the town. The most recent update for the Town's Stormwater Management Plan was in 2021.



Figure 31: Louisa Lake

Preserving open space for both active and passive recreation is vital to maintaining a high quality of life in Milford. While residents take pride in the town's athletic heritage and existing recreational facilities, ongoing investment and renewal are essential. Equally important is ensuring accessible recreational opportunities for all residents, regardless of age or ability, while safeguarding the town's remaining natural resources. Currently, about 43% of Milford residents live within a 10-minute walk of publicly accessible parks.

43%

of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a park or open space



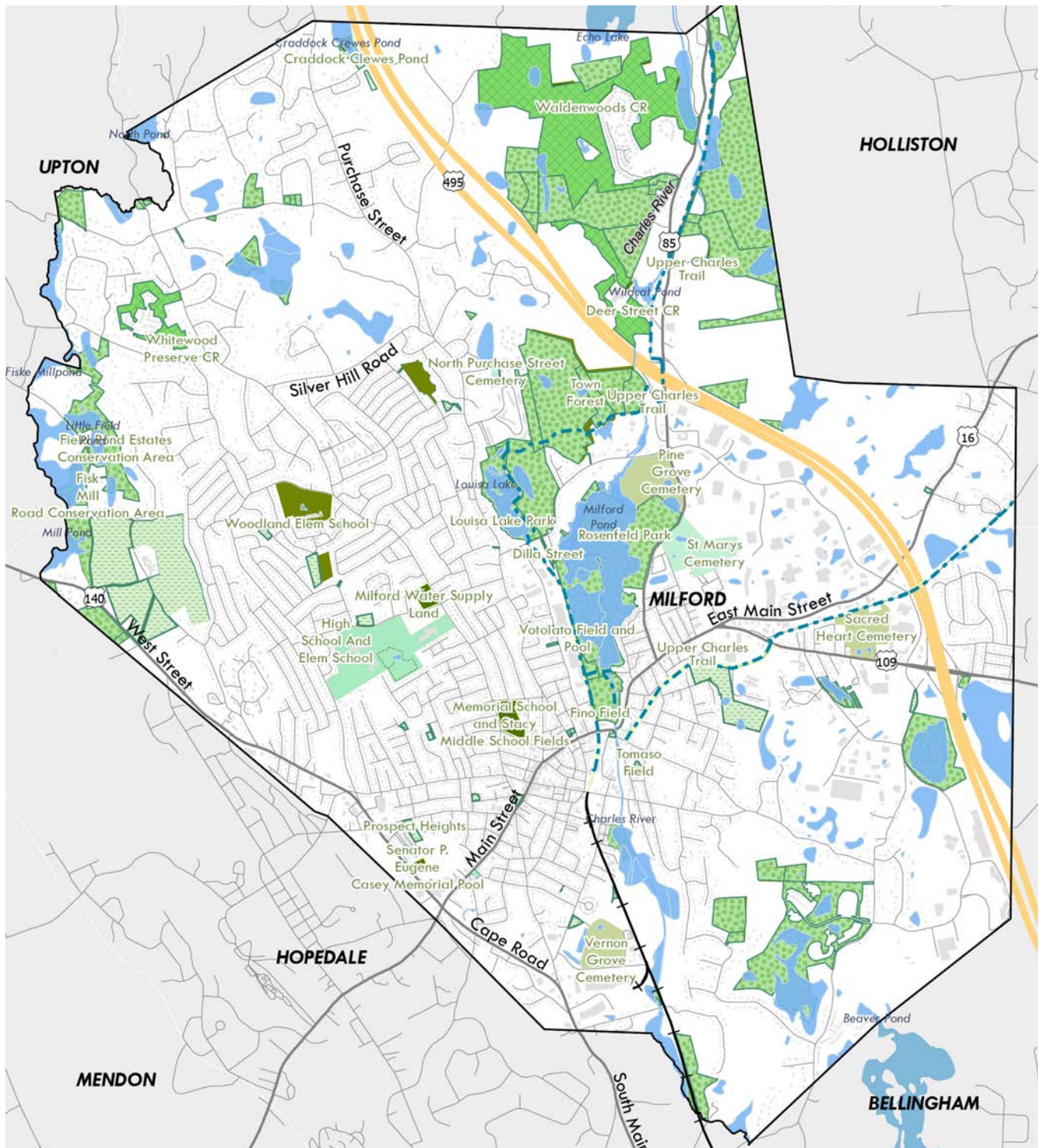


Figure 32: Milford Open Space

- Conservation Restriction
- ConCom Jurisdiction
- Undeveloped Town Land
- Upper Charles Trail



Community Services and Facilities

Milford's community facilities support municipal programs, staff, and services that are provided to town residents. The Town of Milford has approximately 1,000 employees, who report to 26 department heads, as well as 28 elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees, and 9 additional elected officials.

Milford's Town organizational structure is fairly typical for a smaller Massachusetts Town, with legislative authority vested in a representative Town Meeting, and executive authority vested in a Select Board. The Town Meeting body consists of 8 precincts with 30 members each, as well as at-large memberships for the 26 Department heads and Board Chairs. However, the town's governance structure is highly decentralized, which can lead to inefficiencies in decision-making. A more professionalized approach to management could improve operational effectiveness as the town grows and would continue an evolution the town has underway with the formation of a Human Resources department since the completion of the previous Comprehensive Plan.

Primary municipal facilities include the Town Hall, Town Library, Memorial Hall, Police Station, two Fire Stations, Youth Center, Senior Center, Cemeteries, and school facilities.

Milford is served by the six schools of Milford Public Schools, which cover from Pre-K to 12th grade, and include Shining Star Early Childhood Center; Brookside, Memorial, and Woodland Elementary Schools; Stacy Middle School, and Milford High School. The schools are housed in five buildings. Town infrastructure includes Town water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure systems and the local roadway network and infrastructure.

Milford's tax revenue is largely generated from property taxes, with a split tax rate of \$14.45 for residential and \$26.45 for commercial/industrial properties, making it higher than some neighboring towns.



Figure 33: Milford Town Library



Figure 34: Milford Fire Headquarters



Figure 35: Milford Police Headquarters



Figure 36: Milford Senior Center



Figure 37: Milford Youth Center



Figure 38: Milford High School



Figure 39: Fino Field Municipal Pool

Transportation

to better
spread awareness
of programs
existing in
Milton Hills

Milton
in all services provided to the
community.

Milton needs to address
lack of public transportation
options & language
access



04

Milford's Future

What if we could do better? This is a basic question which is at the heart of thinking about Milford's future together. The residents who engaged throughout the Comprehensive Plan process answered this question in a variety of ways. Milford residents share a strong sense of pride and a common understanding of Milford's greatest assets. Planning for a better future does not diminish the positive aspects of where the town is today. The shared Vision Statement and common themes articulated in this chapter point to the aspirations of the Milford community. This chapter defines ambitions for a better future. The following chapters define concrete actions to purposely move toward a Milford that is constantly improving and getting better for all residents.

Context for Themes and Vision

Strong Foundation

Sometimes, planning for a better future can make it sound like things are not going well today. As has been documented in the preceding chapters on Milford's Past and Milford's Present there is a strong foundation to build on for the future of Milford. When asked "what are Milford's greatest assets," residents highlight the town's natural amenities, such as Town Park and Louisa Lake, walking trails and connections, such as the Charles River Rail Trail, the businesses that provide goods and services, and strong connections in the community.

It is important to realize that Milford has many current assets that will remain strengths into the future and that these assets require support and care. All recommendations of this plan build on the strong foundation and legacy established by past generations and advanced by present town leaders, staff, and devoted residents. Nearly every recommendation could be framed as a continuation of a previous effort, but the town cannot rest on past successes and must continue to adapt to a changing world.

Dynamic Community

When asked "how would you describe Milford today," community members most frequently responded that Milford was changing and transitioning. Most describe that change as a continuing evolution from a small town to a mid-sized town. Not only has the town continued to grow, but its population is growing more diverse and building on the town's legacy as an immigrant community.

The town is emerging as a regional center and a hub of activity with convenient access to Boston, Worcester, and Rhode Island. The changes resulting from growth are placing stress on town facilities, such as the schools and roadway network. These changes are supported by a historically rich town with a strong community and sense of pride, well maintained community facilities, and a fiscally responsible approach to town governance.

The community is recognizing the need to adapt amidst these changes. Through this process, community members were asked "how would you like to be able to describe Milford in the future?" The most frequent responses highlighted that residents would like the town to be more inclusive and welcoming to diversity, particularly as diversity continues to increase in the town. Additionally, residents would like the housing to be safer and more affordable for all people, as housing affordability and overcrowding are identified as challenges. Residents would like more sidewalks and well-maintained roads, as congestion is highlighted as a top priority. Residents would like Downtown Milford to be a destination with additional restaurants, especially as other places compete for attention and dollars.

Achieving a Vision for the Future

When asked “what things does Milford need in order to achieve a future where these challenges are addressed,” community members highlighted the residents and their energy and potential contributions as an underused asset of the town. Community members suggested an increased need for communication and civic engagement, more opportunities for community involvement, and more accessible public meetings as the most frequently mentioned actions to achieve the vision articulated for the future. Community members were asked “how close is Milford to your ideal vision for the town?” The most popular answer wasn’t that Milford was far away from its vision, or that it was very close to its vision, but in the middle ground that it could be better and work toward achieving the vision.

The vision for the future of the town is consistent with this sentiment and balances aspiration with the recognition of a solid foundation. When asked “what kind of changes will get Milford to achieve the vision?” The most frequent response was not minor small changes, or major transformative changes, but again the middle ground of steady incremental changes.

In order for steady incremental changes to build toward a cohesive vision for the town, it is critically important to both articulate that vision and to build an awareness of that vision into decision making processes. The vision statement, themes, and recommendations in this document provide a variety of steady incremental changes that can help move Milford toward a better version of the town.

Community Priorities and Engagement Themes

Throughout the comprehensive plan engagement process a recurring set of themes was noted as shared and resonant across a diverse cross section of the community. The top five themes that recurred through these conversations are summarized below and are incorporated into the vision statement.

Community and Cultural Integration

The theme of improving community cohesion with a focus on embracing Milford's growing diversity was a recurring feature of community feedback. This discussion included the community and cultural integration of newer immigrant populations, such as Brazilian, Ecuadorian, Guatemalan, Haitian, and Egyptian residents. Community members expressed a desire for more inclusive activities, more diverse representation in town governance, better communication, and multilingual town services.

Economic Development and Downtown Revitalization

Support of economic development generally, and investment in the downtown specifically were a recurring theme throughout community conversations. Many residents desire additional amenities and attractions downtown and expressed a need for more retail, restaurants, and family-friendly spaces specifically. Residents expressed an interest in making downtown a cultural hub for the town and surrounding municipalities with community, arts, and cultural events adding vitality to the district. The town as a center of employment and the importance of the commercial tax base were also frequent themes.

"A diverse community with a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and open space land uses"

"To leave it better than we received it."

"A town that people want to raise their families in."

"Improved schools, lower crime, revitalized downtown"

Transportation and Traffic Safety

Traffic congestion, safety, and the lack of reliable public transportation were recurring themes and concerns highlighted frequently in community conversations. Specifically, safety concerns regarding unsafe street crossings, heavy traffic in certain areas (including downtown), the need for more sidewalks throughout the town, and the need for additional enforcement of traffic laws were discussed. There is concern that the current roadway infrastructure cannot support the town's growth and that changes to traffic management are needed. A general desire to reduce car dependency has been expressed, but how specifically to advance that remains unclear for community members.

"Inclusive and friendly to all pocket of cultures that live here."

"I would like to see Milford take care of the traffic congestion."

"A good open space infrastructure."

"An affordable town, with good schools and services"

"Safe community for all residents, Less congested roads"

"A place where you can grow old, things to do for all ages and all types of families"

"A multicultural, housing accessible community with a thriving downtown and beautiful trails/parks"

"More housing, sensibly developed."

"Less traffic, good school system, more locally owned stores especially clothing stores"

Affordable Housing and Housing Conditions

Housing affordability and housing quality were frequently mentioned by community members as critical issues. We heard from residents throughout the process who are struggling to find rental or ownership options in the town, with some residents being forced to look outside of the town for options. Residents also highlighted concerns about an aging housing stock, poorly maintained housing, and concerns about overcrowding and unsafe or unsanitary housing conditions.

Public Services and Community Resources

The importance of the availability and quality of public services, particularly for underserved groups, was also frequently discussed by community members. The Senior Center and Youth Center are both frequently highlighted as great community resources, especially for aging adults, and families, respectively. There is a growing need for resources such as afterschool programs, adult English as second language classes, and better healthcare services, including hospitals and clinics. The community also highlights concerns about homelessness, food insecurity, and poverty and support for the residents and families most at risk in Milford.



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**.

”



Future Land Use Vision Map

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.

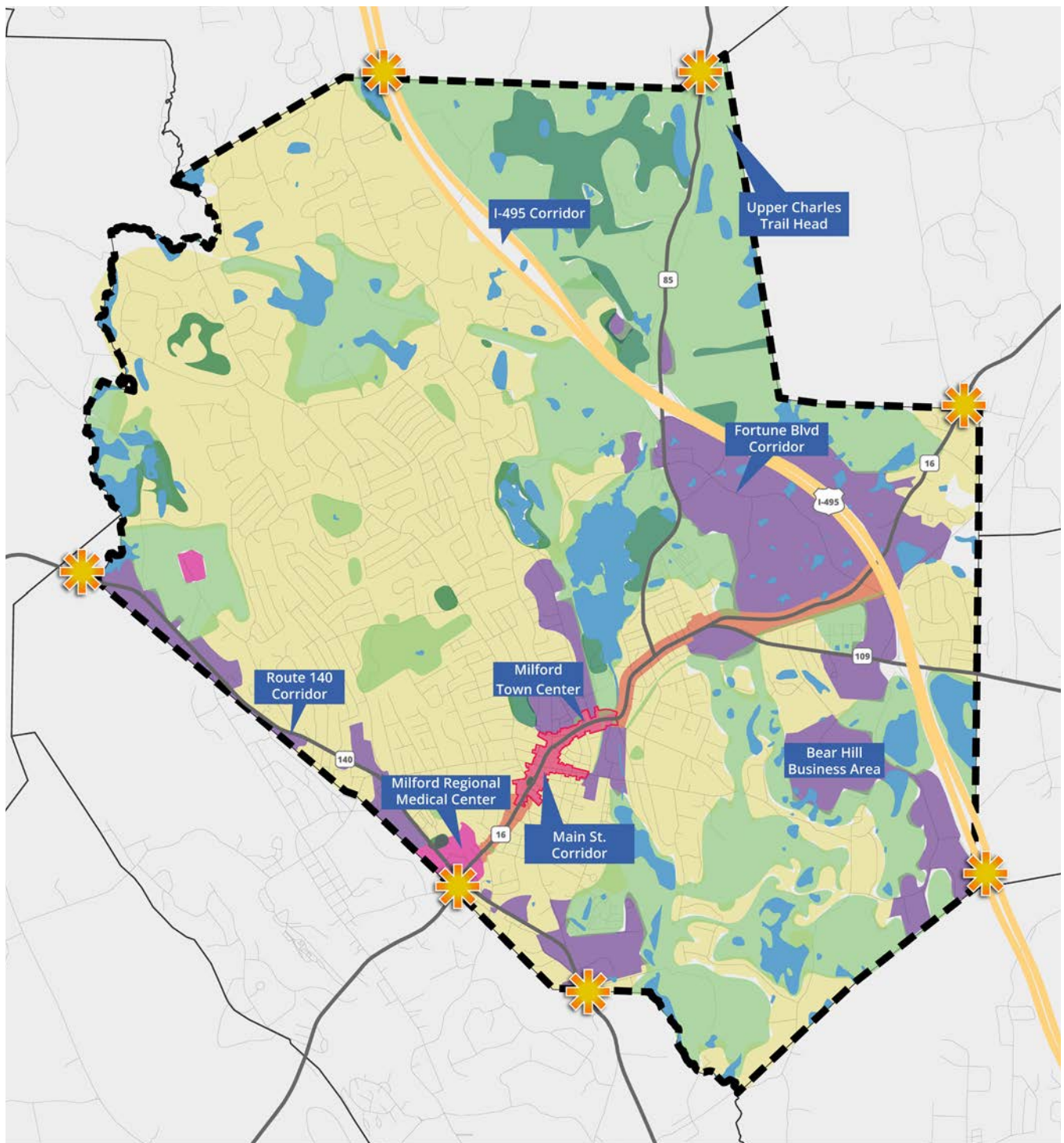


Figure 40: Future Land Use Vision Map









- | | |
|---|--|
| Neighborhood Preservation | Health & Wellness Areas |
| Transformative / Opportunity Areas | Open Space |
| Downtown Enhancement | Gateways |
| Connectivity and Walkability Corridor Enhancement | |

Introduction to Theme Chapters

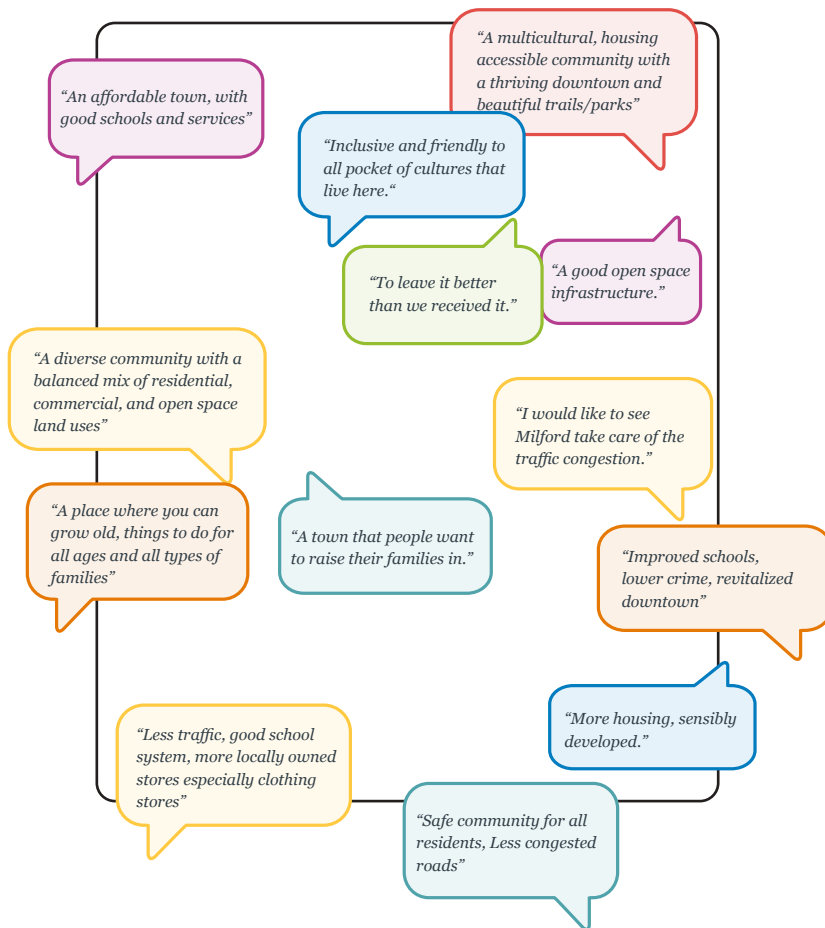
The content of the Comprehensive Plan was developed sequentially moving from the general to the specific. First, the data shared in the previous chapter was gathered and analyzed. Second, the community engaged in articulating the general challenges and opportunities in Milford. Third, a draft Vision Statement and draft Comprehensive Plan goals were drafted and then reviewed and refined with the community. Fourth, more detailed and specific strategies and actions were developed for each goal to provide concrete recommendations for addressing town challenges and advancing opportunities. Finally, with this multi-layered information defined, a series of Comprehensive Plan themes were defined to organize the recommendations of this plan.

The Comprehensive Plan themes are summarized below and form the organization for the following chapters of the plan document. There are nine plan themes and nine corresponding plan chapters. Each theme has five or six nested goals, and each nested goal is from at least two different Comprehensive Plan topics.

Plan Topic Areas

Land Use	
Economic Development	
Downtown	
Housing	
Transportation	
Natural Environment & Open Space	
Cultural and Historical Resources	
Community Services and Facilities	

Community Feedback



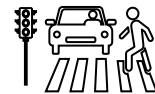
Community Driven Themes



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

Summary of Plan Themes



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



Strengthen 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.



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.



Strengthen 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.



05



Build Community and Bridge Cultures

Building community and bridging cultures was a common theme heard among community members throughout the comprehensive plan process. The history of Milford is closely connected to the immigrant populations who have chosen to settle in the town. That historical pattern continues today, and the demographic data shows that the town's current wave of immigration is serving to racially and ethnically diversify the town. The challenges of bringing together a diverse and multilingual community are aggravated by a post-pandemic social context that has resulted in less civic participation, a lingering sense of isolation, and a prioritization of connection through technology.

In this challenging context, a variety of approaches will be required to bring both new and long-standing residents together in a community of trust ready to invest in a shared vision. Specifically, the Town can help do this by activating downtown Milford, 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. By building community and bridging cultures, many other aspects of the comprehensive plan may be easier to accomplish and more residents can feel they share in the promise of a high quality of life in Milford.



Summary of Theme

The town has a strong community enriched by longtime families as well as newcomers, people born in the United States and people born abroad, and people who speak a myriad of languages. Milford has long served as a gateway for immigrants and others seeking to improve their lives and support their families.

The narrative history of the town includes immigrant stories of families from Ireland, Italy, and Portugal that have now lived in Milford for generations. More recent immigrant stories include families from Brazil, Ecuador, Haiti, Guatemala, Egypt and other countries setting roots in Milford.

Since the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the largest racial and ethnic group, people who identify as white, has shrunk from 90% to 70%. This is a clear indication of a more diverse population in the town. U.S. Census data shows that about 26% of the population of Milford is foreign born.

Along with this multicultural context, Milford is also multilingual. About 65% of Milford residents speak only English at home. More than 35% of Milford residents speak a language other than English at home including predominantly Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese, as well as French, Haitian, and Cajun.

To support all residents, Milford must find ways to build community among its diverse population by bridging and bringing together multiple cultures. In the near term, the town can do this by focusing on the public spaces, places,

and events that bring people together with a specific focus on activating the downtown for this purpose.

The small businesses of downtown are a strong reflection of the Town's diversity and multicultural character. Nearly 150 businesses are located in Downtown Milford and serve a diverse cross-section of Milford residents. This existing strength supports emphasizing downtown as the center of a multi-cultural community in Milford. The town can engage with business owners and partner with them to connect with residents through events downtown.

Additionally, celebrating cultural diversity can be accomplished directly through arts, cultural, and special events in the town. Milford hosts events and festivals throughout the year that bring the community together and showcase town culture and heritage. Key events such as Celebrate Milford and the 4th of July Parade and Fireworks draw large crowds and feature various activities, including live music, food vendors, local artisan booths, and family-friendly entertainment.

Both the calendar of events and the events themselves should be considered through a multicultural lens to both showcase the diversity of the community and to attract larger audiences by being more inclusive. In the long term, diversifying the housing stock and highlighting historic resources can also serve to expand the sense of welcome, build community, and strengthen livability of the town for a variety of cultural origins.

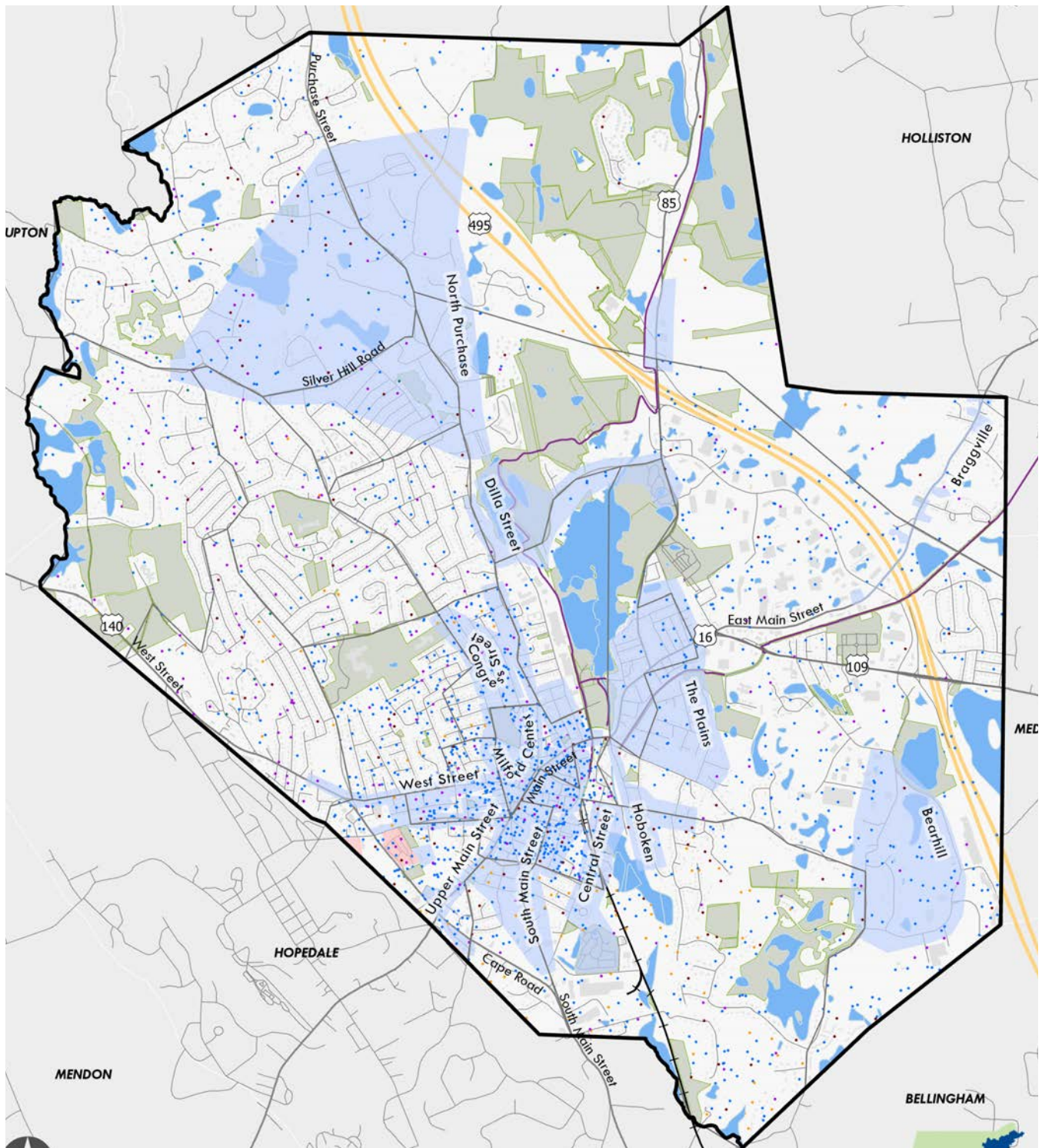


Figure 41: Community and Culture Map

1 Dot = 4 People

- | | |
|--|--|
| ● European | ● Oceanian |
| ● Asian | ● Latin America |
| ● African | ● North American |

Historic Districts

- | |
|--|
| District Identified in Local Inventory |
| National Register Historic Districts |

Challenges Facing Building Community Downtown

Downtown Milford provides a great setting with historical architectural structures and vibrant storefronts with a low vacancy rate, but it has unfulfilled potential to be a destination and a center of community life. Currently, a cohesive identity for the downtown is lacking, both as a business district and as a social gathering place. As a result, some residents do not have a reason to consistently visit downtown, and others may not feel welcome there. Barriers to access, such as language access, can further prevent members of the Milford community from fully participating. Technical barriers, such as Milford's sign bylaws have the potential to significantly limit outdoor public art and cultural expressions, particularly in the downtown area. Together, these factors can contribute to inequities and undercut downtown's potential as a center of the community. Seeking a cultural district designation for the downtown area can help to formally recognize Milford's cultural richness, attracting investment and patrons. Developing new programs and events at existing venues can provide more opportunities for artistic expression and cultural engagement. Encouraging public art installations and community art projects can beautify spaces and create a sense of place that will further center the community in Downtown.

Challenges Facing Business Owners

It is predominantly local small businesses that keep the ground floor storefronts downtown active and vital. However, local small businesses are already struggling to compete against national franchises and big box retailers. They have little capacity to support additional efforts to build community without significant support from the town. Currently, there is no position in town government whose role is to serve as a liaison to the business community. Many business owners, especially those with small businesses and those with businesses downtown, find it difficult to work with the town and would like the town to offer more services to businesses. Milford needs to provide a more supportive business environment to help bridge cultures, retain existing businesses, and to cultivate and attract new businesses. This will all help to build the capacity to build community in downtown Milford.

Bridging Cultures by Diversifying the Housing Stock

One third of homes in Milford are in a multifamily building, but the zoning bylaw does not currently allow new multifamily housing to be developed. As a result, there are limited options for people who do not want, or are unable to, reside in a single-family home. Multifamily housing tends to be more affordable to both renters and owners, so restricting it creates a cost burden for residents. Having a low variety of types of housing also makes it difficult for new residents to get settled and for longtime residents to stay in Milford as their lives and housing needs change. Limited availability

of smaller and affordable rental units may be contributing to the housing overcrowding challenges that have been identified by the community.

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

There is a division between longstanding immigrant communities and newer immigrant communities in Milford that is reflected in the ways that the Town preserves and celebrates cultural diversity. For example, the historic sites recognized in the state's inventory of known historic resources largely leave out the stories of immigrants, women, and people of color. Similarly, foundational histories of Milford have significant gaps, notably overlooking the narratives of Indigenous people, enslaved and free Black communities, as well as women's contributions.

There are historic buildings, places, and traditions in Milford that represent the histories of different cultures and nationalities, but people don't know about them. The Town does not actively support property owners, businesses, and cultural organizations to preserve and celebrate these historic resources. This is a missed opportunity to build community and a sense of place.

Milford's historic resources provide a sense of place and help residents feel connected to the town. Identifying and protecting places of importance to all residents ensures that Milford's historical narrative is comprehensive and inclusive. Integrating historical

considerations into broader community planning, including land use, economic development, and sustainability planning, will help balance the protection of the past with accommodating future growth and development. This approach will ensure that Milford's diverse cultural and historical heritage is celebrated and preserved for future generations.

Milford has many arts and culture assets that can be leveraged to enrich the community and celebrate cultural diversity. Venues like the Town Park bandstand and Town Hall, organizations like the Milford Cultural Council and the Claflin Hill Symphony, and events like the 4th of July parade provide a foundation for expanding current cultural activities to represent and welcome all residents. Projects like the "Fitness for All" mural by Carol Abram at Town Park and the hand-crafted game boards in Louisa Lake Park also show Milford's commitment to integrating arts and culture into public spaces. Partnering with local artists, schools, and cultural organizations to offer workshops, classes, and exhibitions can foster local talent and enhance the town's cultural vibrancy.

Supporting Community Feedback

Downtown

Participants engaging in the Comprehensive Plan want Downtown to be a space where people can gather and take pride in the historic buildings, active businesses, and safe environment. When asked to rate challenges in Milford, survey respondents identified “improving the downtown” as the second highest priority. Downtown was also identified as the highest opportunity for investment and growth in the town.

Respondents noted that there used to be more events downtown and lamented the lack of restaurants and shops. Both residents and business owners are dissatisfied with the quality of buildings downtown, saying that they are not well-maintained and look run-down.

Engaging With Business Owners

In a focus group, small business owners expressed frustration that the Town does not provide enough support for them, especially businesses that are owned by and that serve Latino residents. Community-based organizations also shared a desire for greater support, such as tax incentives and Town employees who speak Spanish. Survey respondents agreed by identifying small business support as the second highest challenge related to land use.

Diversifying The Housing Stock

The top housing issue that survey respondents identified was overcrowding, which is caused by a complex web of factors, including a lack of affordable housing. Community based organizations expressed a desire to have more housing and more types of housing in Milford, including multifamily buildings, housing on upper stories above retail, and senior housing.

Highlighting Historic Resources

Survey respondents identified encouraging historic preservation as the top priority related to history, arts, and culture and the 4th out of 9 priorities related to land use. When asked what legacy they hope to leave for future generations of Milford residents, strengthening historic preservation and community pride emerged as a key theme. The small business owner focus group also noted the long history of immigration in Milford as a point of pride.

Celebrating Cultural Diversity

Community-based organizations noted an interest in having more community events and gathering spaces in Milford, such as craft fairs, community gardens, festivals, public art, and community theatre. They hope that these events and spaces would provide opportunities for long-time residents and newcomers to talk to and learn from each other. Survey respondents also hoped to leave a legacy of a strong, inclusive community.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for building community and bridging cultures that is detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can take to help strengthen an inclusive multicultural community.



Goal: Preserve and celebrate cultural diversity.

Strategy: Expand the diversity of resources protected and uplifted to include cultural histories that reflect Milford's evolving community, ensuring all stories are recognized as part of the town's shared heritage.

- **Action:** Develop an inventory of significant sites and stories tied to Milford's immigrant communities, past and present, highlighting their ongoing contributions to the town's cultural fabric, capturing the stories and spaces that reflect their experiences and contributions.
- **Action:** Install interpretive signage and public art in key locations to honor these stories, demonstrating how the town's heritage continues to grow and evolve.

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

- **Action:** Promote the use of public performing spaces (e.g., bandstand, Town Hall) for a variety of cultural programs throughout the year.

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

Strategy: Expand Town resources to support arts and culture businesses.

- **Action:** Review the Milford Cultural Council's grant making criteria to see how they align with this comprehensive plan's goals and recommendations.
- **Action:** Host networking events for artists and cultural businesses throughout the region.
- **Action:** Explore regional coordination and collaboration of arts and culture events with neighboring communities and their local cultural councils.
- **Action:** Invite partnerships and collaboration between more established musicians, artists and performers in the community with new and emerging voices to both celebrate cultural diversity and to engage and expand new audiences.



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 entity.
- **Action:** Explore the management structure that is most responsive to the shared goals and able to advance establishing the entity. For example, a focus on multilingual and multicultural business support, or staff who coordinate programming, maintenance, and events in the district.

Strategy: Develop events that reflect the cultures represented by Milford residents.

- **Action:** Partner with community organizations, businesses, religious institutions, and youth groups to host events like sidewalk festivals, live music outdoors on Main Street on the weekends, etc., to bring people together downtown.
- **Action:** Partner with English as a Second Language classes at the Library and High School to bring new Spanish-speaking and Brazilian Portuguese-speaking residents Downtown to introduce them to the district and to encourage them to participate in the economy and civic life in Milford.

Strategy: Incorporate public art and cultural amenities into the downtown.

- **Action:** Prioritize public art investments, programs, and grants in downtown locations. Prioritize the celebration and inclusion of multiple cultures in the content of public art.
- **Action:** Install welcome banners downtown in Spanish, Brazilian Portuguese, Italian, and English, and other languages spoken in the Town.
- **Action:** Establish a Task Force to identify significant cultural events throughout the calendar year that could be celebrated downtown through events and decorations.

Strategy: Develop programming for youth downtown.

- **Action:** Partner with youth groups, schools, the Youth Center, and the Library to develop after school activities for youth in or near downtown and integrate downtown into youth outings or other events.



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:** Establish a budget for a business liaison, based on examples from comparable Towns.
- **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.

Strategy: Seek to provide distinct support to the business districts outside of the downtown.

- **Action:** Where desired, support the long-term exploration of district management organizations to support maintenance and investment in districts (for example, a Business Improvement District, or Main Street Organization, etc.)
- **Action:** Convene annual meetings of business owners within each business district to discuss future needs and support. Supplement these convenings with one-on-one meetings with business owners, which are easier for business owners to accommodate.



Goal: Support diversifying the housing stock.

Strategy: Remove municipal barriers to housing diversity.

- **Action:** Explore allowing a range of small-scale housing types (for example, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, and 4-8 unit multifamily) in the denser and compact neighborhoods adjacent to downtown.

- **Action:** Establish a 40R district for mixed-use development or multifamily housing that is associated with financial benefits to the town. Consider small portions of districts of concentrated development that are currently zoned as commercial or industrial where vacancies may be increasingly an issue.
- **Action:** Establish a 40Y “Starter Home Overlay” district to support the development of smaller single-family homes.

- **Action:** Allow for smaller lot sizes in residential districts, particularly as the portions of residential districts that are located within easy walking distance of downtown.
- **Action:** Streamline permitting processes in targeted areas where more housing is desired. This could be piloted in Downtown in conjunction with a new mixed-use overlay district.
- **Action:** Adopt the standards that have been developed for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) that align with the state regulations.

- **Action:** Allow for more residential and senior living near the senior center through zoning changes that allow for multifamily.

Strategy: Work with town residents more closely to understand their housing needs

- **Action:** Regularly engage in community conversations around housing with residents and other stakeholders.
- **Action:** Explore creating additional resident advisory committees around housing.



Goal: Leverage historic resources and expand historic narratives to facilitate community belonging.

Strategy: Support adaptive reuse opportunities of public and private properties that provide economically viable options to preserve structures.

- **Action:** Nominate downtown to the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district so property owners can be eligible for federal and state historic tax credits. Expand the historic narratives associated with downtown through the process of research, documentation, and preparation of the application.
- **Action:** Explore the feasibility of using MassDevelopment's Underutilized Properties Program to redevelop key buildings downtown.

- **Action:** Explore the feasibility of using the Mass Cultural Council's Cultural Facilities Fund to redevelop key buildings downtown.

Strategy: Support places that function as community anchors.

- **Action:** Facilitate conversations with residents to identify community anchors—such as gathering places, businesses, homes, and places of worship—that reflect both historic and contemporary cultural significance across a diverse array of town cultures.

- **Action:** Document the stories and significance of these spaces through oral histories and other forms of data collection that can be used as sources of historical knowledge.
- **Action:** Establish a legacy business program for long standing independent enterprises that make a strong contribution to community character.

Strategy: Establish a historic house marker program.

- **Action:** Create a list of historic buildings identified in MACRIS with key information that would be included on the sign.
- **Action:** Develop a standard sign design and establish a relationship with a sign vendor.
- **Action:** Create a process for property owners to apply for a historic house marker and publicize the program.

Strategy: Maintain industrial land uses and industrial jobs that connect to Milford's manufacturing legacy.

- **Action:** Ensure that zoning adequately supports current and future industrial uses.
- **Action:** Include manufacturing businesses in a legacy business program.

- **Action:** Promote Milford's proud history of manufacturing.

SEITZ SPECIFIC

CHIROPRACTIC

171

BAKERY

OPEN

MARANHÃO CRISTÃO CHURCH

Service Times:

Wednesday: 8:00 p.m.
Ladies' Service
Thursday: 8:00 p.m.
Prayer Service
Saturday: 7:30 p.m.
Sunday: 10:00 a.m.
Sunday Bible School
Sunday: 7:30 p.m.

171

SEITZ
Specific Chiropractic

IGREJA CRISTÃ MARANHÃO

Horário dos cultos:

Quarta: 8:00 p.m.
Culto de Senhoras
Quinta: 8:00 p.m.
Culto de Oração
Sábado: 7:30 p.m.
Domingo: 10:00 a.m.
Escola Bíblica Dominical
Domingo: 7:30a

06



Strengthen Downtown as the Center Of Community

Historically, downtown Milford was the center of community life and the center of commerce for the town and surrounding communities. The primacy of downtown as a center of commerce and jobs has shifted with that focus now centered on I-495. However, downtown districts remain attractive and relevant but need focused attention to re-emerge as a center of the 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 arts and cultural activity and investment to emphasize the downtown as the center of community life.

In addition, The Downtown is the most sustainable and beneficial location to encourage future growth and investment. The town can encourage this type of investment and strengthen the downtown as a center of community through strategic rezoning, investments in public art and creative placemaking, public programming, and other methods of promoting district and social cohesion. Downtown and the immediate surrounding neighborhoods provides more rental housing in a compact and walkable environment than other neighborhoods in Milford. Future real estate investment opportunities can create more diverse housing that will support the vitality of the Downtown, increase foot traffic to small businesses, and diversify the town's housing stock.



Summary of Theme

Milford offers a unique and historic downtown district that anchors Milford's status as a regional center. Milford's downtown has historically served as a center of commerce for Milford residents as well as residents and workers of neighboring communities. Main Street and its intersecting streets downtown have a wide variety of storefronts, community services, and amenities such as restaurants, the Town Library, Senior Center, and religious institutions.

These important destinations serve resident needs in a walkable and geographically proximate district that attracts a diverse cross-section of the Milford community. Downtown is easily accessible by car, bicycle, and walking from adjacent neighborhoods.

The storefronts downtown showcase the diverse cultural makeup of Milford, with small business owners who represent Brazilian, Ecuadorian, American, Portuguese, and other nationalities. These businesses offer culturally relevant goods and services to Milford residents and workers.

The new immigrant-owned businesses are economic assets for Milford in terms of filling vacant storefronts and paying into Milford's commercial tax base. About 150 storefront businesses are in downtown. The largest categories of businesses include retail (27 businesses in clothing, electronics, home goods, convenience stores), professional services (26 businesses in law, accounting, insurance, banks), personal services (24 businesses in salons, barbers, laundry, tattoo parlors, dance), and food (22 businesses in restaurants, grocery).

Downtown Milford today is an underutilized asset of the Town. It is more often mentioned in a negative context associated with traffic, or not being what it was in a previous era. However, it holds the most potential to dramatically enhance Milford's quality of life and sense of community pride.

By placing more emphasis on its downtown, Milford could differentiate itself from surrounding communities. A large portion of the residential neighborhoods that surround downtown, can reach downtown within a 10-minute walk (see the map on the following page). Encouraging these residents to walk to downtown to run an errand, pick up a needed item, attend an event, or attend church, may develop a pattern that can have a dramatic impact on transforming the heart of the town.

The downtown would feel more vibrant. Small businesses would experience more foot traffic and an increase in sales. The perception of traffic and parking challenges would improve. The audience to support additional events would be present and engaged. These types of positive outcomes are self-sustaining and reinforce a positive feedback loop that will result in additional benefits to the downtown, residents, and the town.

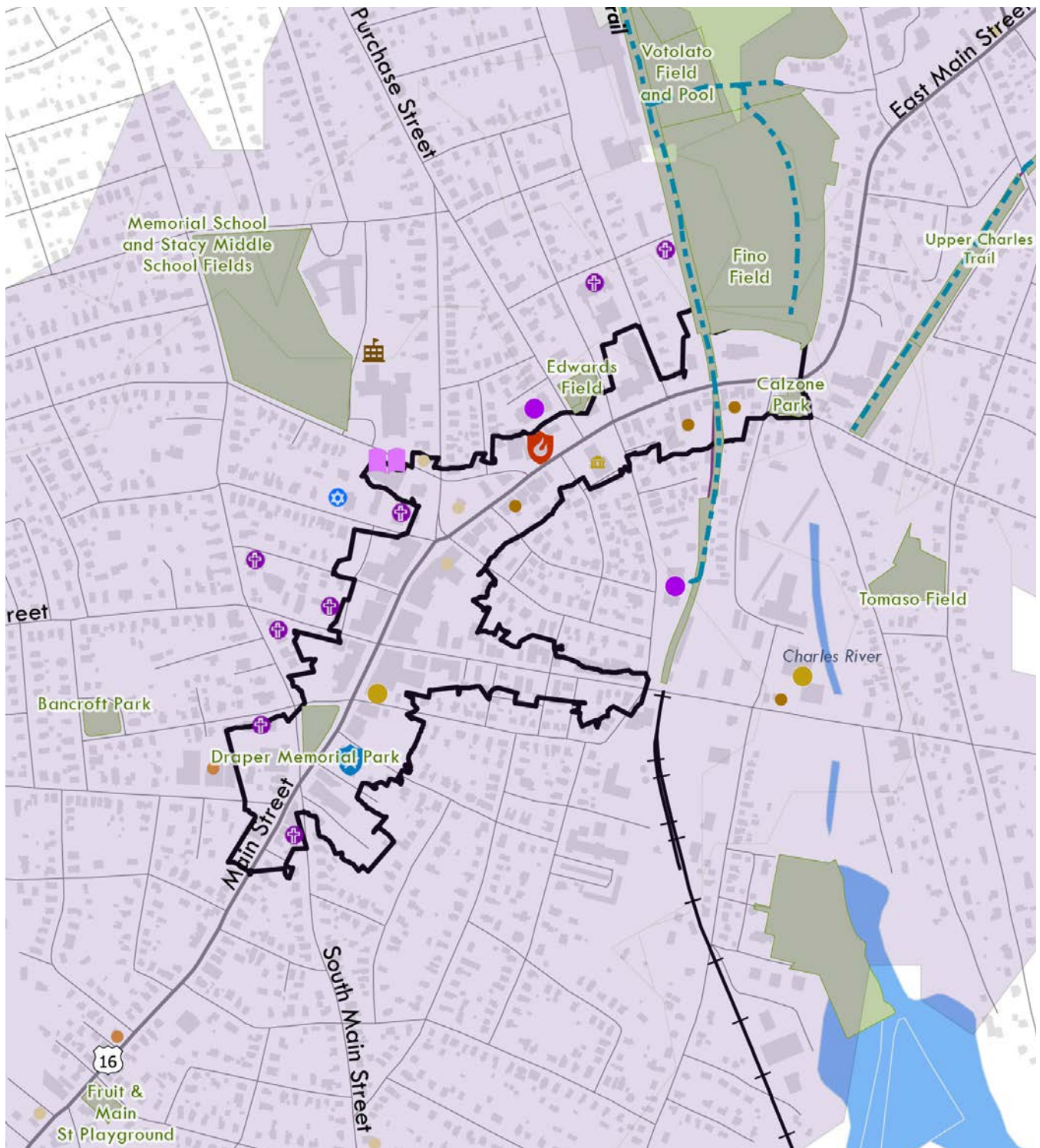
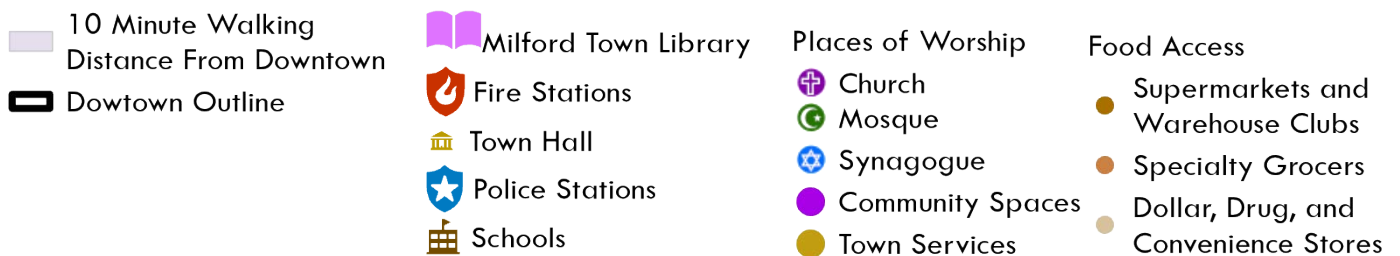


Figure 42: Downtown Milford with 10-minute Walkshed



Challenges Facing Downtown

While downtown offers many amenities, it isn't a destination where people want to stay and spend time. This detracts from a feeling of liveliness and vitality that the Town and the community are seeking. The sentiment may be caused by a variety of factors, such as that there are not enough family-oriented businesses, sit-down restaurants, and cultural attractions in downtown; cultural divisions result in exclusive patronage of some storefront businesses; there are few late-night establishments; or that traffic, parking, and congestion contribute to a more stressful downtown experience.

Older community members have voiced that downtown used to be a popular center of social life, where people met up with friends and spent time after work or school or on the weekends. Community members of all ages want to see downtown to return to that state of popularity with opportunities for social convening and entertainment.

Land use considerations also pose challenges to downtown vitality. Downtown commercial properties developed in the second half of the 20th century are auto-oriented and do not fully utilize the important downtown properties in the same way as historical structures. For example, at 89 Main Street is the Granite Building built in 1891. It is a historical 4-story granite structure that occupies nearly the entire footprint of the property. On the same block are two single story commercial structures including a bank and a convenience store. Both properties have about an equal amount of surface parking lot area and building area. The zoning downtown does not

allow mixed-use development consistent with the scale of the historical structure, making a transformative investment nearly impossible. Additionally, upper floor spaces above ground-floor retail are underutilized, and auto-oriented businesses along Main Street detract from walkability and safety in the district.

Without attention to rezoning and redevelopment on Main Street, Milford's downtown cannot encourage investments in the liveliness and cohesiveness that the community desires. Creating opportunities for future investments that are positive and potentially transformative is a needed, long-term strategy to continue to build downtown into a center of community.

Downtown Milford also experiences challenges with traffic safety, parking, and congestion. Downtown would benefit from traffic calming measures that prioritize pedestrian safety. While there are a variety of parking options downtown, residents and visitors have trouble finding parking; parking wayfinding and parking management improvements may help Milford achieve a welcoming and accessible downtown district for those who arrive by car. Downtown should also be reimagined and promoted as a district you can walk to from many Milford neighborhoods.

Opportunities for Continual Improvement

The downtown district poses a place-based opportunity for Milford to incrementally build toward the vision of inclusion, economic investment, and celebration of a rich cultural history. There is opportunity for downtown to be the center of efforts that bridge Milford's many cultural groups and to once again be at the center of the community. A single strategy or action will not unlock this potential, but through coordinated and complementary efforts progress can be made.

These coordinated efforts should include a thoughtful and community-based rezoning process to increase redevelopment opportunities, public and private investments in public art and creative placemaking, renewed devotion to enriching and community-building events and programming, and other methods of promoting district and social cohesion. Simple changes such as adding public trash cans on Main Street can help to beautify the environment and relieve businesses from conducting cleanup efforts themselves. Capacity to implement downtown revitalization and programming work could be increased through creation of a district management entity downtown, such as a Business Improvement District, Main Street Organization, or entity with paid personnel who focus on downtown.

Over the long-term, mixed-use redevelopment can help to transform a downtown. A private investment in mixed-use redevelopment can become a catalyst that encourages residents and regional visitors to spend more time downtown, increasing the sense of community and vitality in the district. Additionally, downtown is the right location to expand housing capacity in the town. It is a historically compact and walkable district where many daily trips can be accomplished without a car. It is also the right location to continue to diversify the housing stock in Milford with new construction, rentals, and a variety of small multifamily housing types.

Expanding housing opportunity in downtown supports other Comprehensive Plan themes including "continue to support a thriving local economy," "maintain the livability and charm of neighborhoods," and "strengthen the health and well-being of the community." Milford has found that if new zoning were to allow residential use in the existing upper floor spaces above ground-floor retail Downtown, housing would be difficult to the point of impossibility to construct due to accessibility concerns. This means that along with rezoning to allow mixed use and residential space in the Downtown district, redevelopment is necessary to meet Milford's goals. Milford can use mixed-use redevelopment as an opportunity to attract the family-oriented storefronts the community desires and create a welcoming environment for people of all ages and backgrounds.

Supporting Community Feedback

Community members highlight Downtown as an opportunity for place-based improvements. There is community desire for additional downtown shops and services that make downtown more of a lively destination. Community members have also voiced wanting Downtown to be a space where newer immigrant communities and older immigrant communities can come together, whether through events or multicultural and multilingual opportunities. There is concern about how businesses Downtown are only patronized by people who speak the language of the business owner, meaning that without intentional interventions to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps, Downtown may continue to showcase divisions rather than unity of Milford's residents, workers, and visitors.

The Downtown Revitalization Committee, a volunteer group, has been focused on improvements to facades and storefronts in Downtown. Community members throughout the Comprehensive Plan process voiced interest in revitalization and greater consistency of storefronts Downtown and hope that businesses can adhere to Milford's sign bylaw. There is an opportunity for greater alignment of storefront design while also celebrating the many cultures that make up Milford's population.

Small business owners in downtown expressed frustration that the Town does not provide enough support for them, especially businesses that are owned by and that serve Latino residents. Community-based organizations also shared a desire for greater support, such as more multilingual Town employees to help with direct business support. Survey respondents agreed by identifying small business support as the second highest challenge related to land use.

Community members have expressed interest in having more community events and gathering spaces in Milford, such as craft fairs, community gardens, festivals, and public art. The Town's assets of Memorial Hall, the Town Library, and Town Hall could all be leveraged in coordination with local businesses to bring more people downtown for events. Community members hope that these events and spaces would provide opportunities for long-time residents and newcomers to talk to and learn from each other. Survey respondents also hoped to leave a legacy of a strong, inclusive community. Existing downtown parks and open spaces, such as Draper Memorial Park could be used to host additional community events downtown.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for downtown detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can undertake to help strengthen the downtown as the center of the community.



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:** Analyze properties downtown where land value exceeds building value to determine locations best suited for mixed-use redevelopment.
- **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.
- **Action:** Based on redevelopment opportunities and a community process, prepare and adopt mixed-use zoning amendments for Downtown.

Strategy: In addition to encouraging full redevelopment, support better utilization of upper floor spaces, specifically in larger historical structures that should be preserved.

- **Action:** Explore zoning and building regulation modifications that enable a productive change of use and support investment in upper floors.

Strategy: Encourage activating commercial storefront vacancies Downtown.

- **Action:** Apply for the Massachusetts Municipal Vacant Storefront District program and engage commercial property owners to fill vacant storefronts. The Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program may help enliven vacant storefronts, and additional funding would be needed to help existing small businesses that cannot afford extensive renovations to participate in storefront revitalization programs. Storefront revitalization offers a dual opportunity for cultural placemaking and building a thriving Main Street.

- **Action:** Create a commercial storefront vacancy registration program to help track and fill vacant storefronts.
- **Action:** Support the development of a vacant storefront art program.

Strategy: Attract family- and experience-oriented businesses to Downtown.

- **Action:** Reach out to entrepreneurs of sit-down family restaurants, coffee shops, and events spaces to attract businesses where community members can spend time Downtown.



Goal: Enhance Milford's downtown and commercial areas by exploring additional zoning options that allow and support a mix of uses and increased residential density by-right.

Strategy: In addition to encouraging mixed-use redevelopment, explore zoning revisions to encourage investment in more dense and more diverse housing typologies around the downtown.

- **Action:** Initiate a community-based rezoning process for residential neighborhoods around the downtown (RA district) with the purpose of identifying zoning modifications that would encourage new housing opportunities. For example, currently residential uses defined in the Zoning Bylaw do not include townhomes, triplex or triple decker, fourplex, or other small multifamily.
- **Action:** Explore zoning changes that would encourage complementary investment near downtown to permit some mixed-uses including residential, retail, office, and entertainment in portions of the CA, OR, CB, and IA zoning districts

Strategy: Improve connectivity and walkability with each investment.

- **Action:** Integrate urban design, building design, and streetscape design standards into the zoning to prioritize walkability, active streetscapes, and transit-oriented development to enhance connectivity and accessibility.
- **Action:** Prohibit future uses that detract from a quality pedestrian-oriented downtown environment such as additional gas stations, drive throughs, auto-repair shops, or auto-dealerships.

Strategy: Incentivize development investments through zoning changes.

- **Action:** Explore tools and programs, such as density bonuses and streamlined permitting, to encourage investment in mixed-use and higher-density residential projects.

- **Action:** Explore the ability to use Town-owned property to support and attract downtown investment. For example, can

Town parking be used to support parking needs for downtown events.



Goal: Conduct area-specific placemaking strategies in Milford's Downtown to enhance cohesion and a welcoming environment.

Strategy: Incorporate and install public amenities into the downtown to encourage socialization.

- **Action:** Install benches throughout downtown, prioritizing age-friendly benches, for people to sit and rest or spend time.
- **Action:** Install trash and recycling receptacles throughout the downtown and prioritize locations near businesses that serve food and public gathering spaces.
- **Action:** Maintain streetlights and replace lights to provide safe and consistent lighting for the downtown sidewalks.

Strategy: Identify and activate underused spaces between buildings, next to parking, or in other areas to add to the vitality of the downtown and create new opportunities for outdoor seating.

- **Action:** Partner with property owners and businesses adjacent to underused spaces to introduce modest improvements such as outdoor seating, temporary lighting, outdoor plantings, or other amenities.

- **Action:** Partner with property owners of restaurants that may desire additional space for outdoor seating and dining. Work with property owners to establish permission and permits needed to temporarily use adjacent spaces for seasonal outdoor dining.

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 entity.
- **Action:** Explore the management structure that is most responsive to the shared goals and advance establishing the entity. For example, a focus on multilingual and multicultural business support, or staff who coordinate programming, maintenance, and events in the district.



Goal: Create mixed-use residential opportunities in the downtown and potentially other commercial districts that may benefit from new investment.

Strategy: Encourage new residential opportunities by creating a variety of mixed-use development opportunities along commercial corridors with downtown creating the largest and most permissive opportunity.

- **Action:** Explore allowing multi-family opportunities in other non-residential districts in conversation with district property owners and businesses to allow new opportunities for housing production and investment. Define the conditions under which such housing investment could be beneficial to the district and town.
- **Action:** Through each new mixed-use and multi-family housing investment reduce the

car dependence through public and private investments in multi-modal infrastructure.

- **Action:** Increase the allowed building height for mixed-use developments

Strategy: Encourage owners of vacant properties in mixed-use areas to either redevelop or sell their properties to bring new opportunities to contribute to the district vitality.

- **Action:** Identify districts with persistent vacancies and create an inventory.
- **Action:** Explore a vacancy fee in mixed use areas, potentially piloting implementation in downtown.



Goal: Assess parking needs and implement parking management strategies in and around Milford's downtown.

Strategy: Determine the utilization of public and private parking downtown, both on-street and off-street, to better understand local parking patterns and needs.

- **Action:** Conduct a downtown parking study to assess current parking utilization and to evaluate future management strategies.
- **Action:** Designate specific areas or spaces for off-street commercial vehicle parking for downtown and neighborhoods around downtown.

Strategy: Increase awareness of Downtown on-street and off-street parking options for Milford residents and visitors.

- **Action:** Create a downtown parking map that can be posted on the Town's website and handed out at local businesses, Town Hall, and other institutions. Create versions in the languages most spoken by Milford residents.
- **Action:** Add wayfinding signage downtown to inform residents and visitors about the presence of off-street parking lots and other destinations.

Strategy: Work with downtown businesses on shared parking agreements to create additional parking options across properties in downtown to open flexibility and ease of access for patrons seeking to park downtown.

- **Action:** Update downtown parking resources as needed to reflect the creation of additional parking options.

- **Action:** Conduct outreach to business owners and property owners regarding opportunities for Downtown parking optimization.

- **Action:** Share a model shared parking agreement with business and property owners and promote this best practice.



Goal: Increase roadway safety for all, especially for vulnerable road users (seniors, children, people with disabilities, people walking/biking/rolling) with an emphasis on downtown.

Strategy: Implement pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures, upgrade signal and lighting technology, and provide better signage and enforcement to control speeding and improve roadway safety on the Main Street corridor from Beach Street to Water Street.

- **Action:** Identify and implement quick build projects – including more visible/prominent crosswalks – at high crash locations and/or locations with significant pedestrian and youth activity including on Spruce Street near the Library and Stacy School, Upper Charles Trail crossing, and Pearl Street near the Youth Center.
- **Action:** Install radar speed signs that display the speed limit and speed of travel of passing vehicles.

Strategy: Pursue safety assessments at locations identified as crash clusters to identify challenges and recommended improvements.

- **Action:** Work with MassDOT to conduct a Roadway Safety Audit (RSA) at Main Street/Water Street/Park Terrace.

- **Action:** Work with WalkMassachusetts to conduct a downtown pedestrian safety audit along Route 16/Main Street between Pond Street and South Bow Street/Park Street.

Strategy: Work with MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program to implement improvements for students, parents, and staff to walk, bike, and roll to school and after school to the Youth Center and Library.

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



07



Improve Transportation Safety and Reduce Congestion

If one topic can bring the community together, it is agreement on the need to improve transportation conditions and reduce congestion. Unfortunately, there is no single near-term solution that will dramatically change the transportation conditions in Milford. The growth and development patterns of the past 50 years have prioritized travel by car. The land use and travel patterns that result make it difficult for trips that are required each day to be made without driving a car. These facts are the primary reason why traffic and congestion seem so prevalent and unavoidable. In the past, the town has considered and rejected major investments to reduce auto-dependence or to reduce congestion such as extending the commuter rail line or adding a downtown bypass road.

Improving transportation safety and reducing congestion in Milford will require near-term and long-term strategies and the results will be incremental. In the near-term improvements to existing roadway networks in Milford must be accompanied by enhanced multimodal transportation infrastructure and service, as well as a focus on roadway safety improvements for all. In the long-term changes in land use patterns to reduce car dependence and to enable more compact development and increased use of the bus transit in and around Milford would all help to reduce the number of vehicles on the roads. 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 encourage changes in travel behaviors throughout the town.



Summary of Theme

Improving the safety and reliability of Milford's transportation network is a top priority for Town officials and residents alike. The Town is well-served by numerous roadways, including Interstate 495 and an extensive network of state and local roads. While these roadways provide thousands of residents and commuters from Milford and surrounding towns with transportation access to and from important destinations, they also incur significant costs and challenges.

High levels of traffic congestion contribute to lost time and productivity and increased local air pollution. Car-centric development patterns contribute to suburban sprawl and increased greenhouse gas emissions, and high volumes of vehicles on the road contribute to high volumes of roadway crashes – some of which result in injuries and even fatalities. In addition, an overall lack of non-vehicular transportation options and infrastructure in Milford further perpetuates these challenges and precludes the safety and mobility of vulnerable populations – including seniors, children, people with disabilities –as well as people who do not drive or own cars.

Improving traffic safety and reducing congestion in Milford will require a multi-faceted approach. The Goals, Strategies, and Actions outlined in this chapter draw upon various Comprehensive Plan topics, naturally including Transportation while also drawing upon Land Use and Downtown. Changes 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, and combined with a town-wide approach to ensure long-term sustainability and efficacy.

While roadway safety and congestion issues are inherently transportation issues, it is worth noting that transportation elements are also included in other Themes throughout this Comprehensive Plan. Of note, transportation goals are also included in Chapter 6 (Strengthen downtown as the center of community), Chapter 8 (Maintain the livability and charm of neighborhoods), Chapter 9 (Continue to improve effective governance), Chapter 10 (Advance climate resilience and sustainability), and Chapter 11 (Strengthen the health and well-being of the community).

These cross-cutting themes highlight how addressing transportation safety and reducing congestion – and improving transportation infrastructure and service in general – yield a range of benefits for Milford residents and visitors that include but also extend beyond improved safety and circulation.

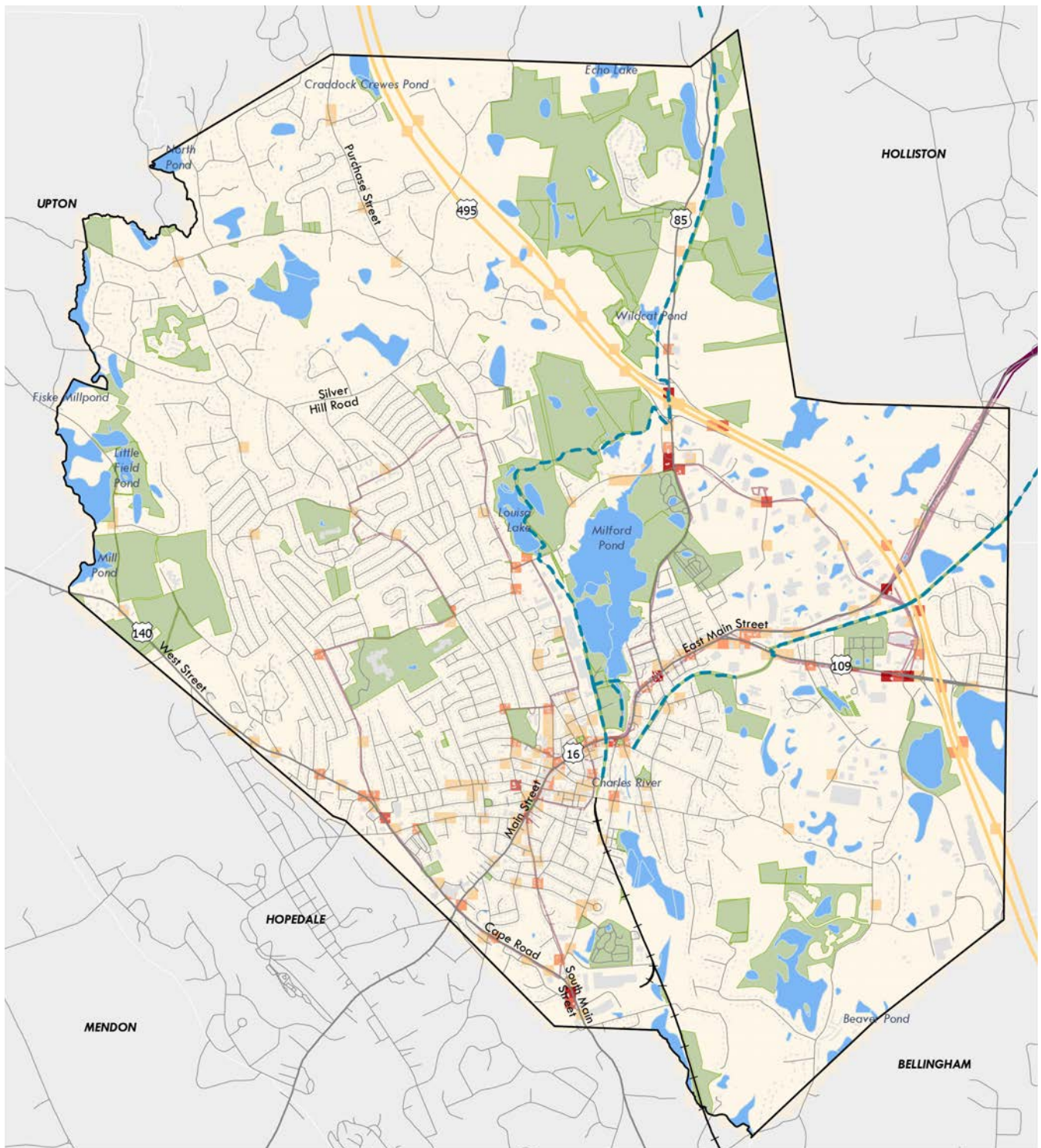
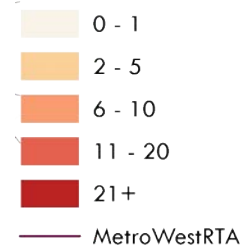


Figure 43: Collision Map

Collisions 2018-2022



Transportation Safety Challenges

As the Collision Severity and Injury map indicates, traffic crashes are an ongoing challenge in Milford. From 2022 to 2024 the Town recorded one fatal pedestrian crash and 11 pedestrian injury crashes, as well as four bicyclist injury crashes and 146 vehicular injury crashes. In addition to these crashes causing fatalities or injuries, there were also over 1,000 crashes resulting in property damage from 2022 to 2024.

While traffic crashes occur all over Milford, data from MassDOT indicate that specific locations present particular challenges. The intersection of Congress Street and West Street/Exchange Street was ranked 151 on the list of the top 200 crash clusters in the state from 2019 to 2021. The segment of Main Street between Park Terrace and Water Street was identified as another significant crash cluster, ranking in the top 5% in the region from 2019 to 2021. Finally, the segment of Main Street between Pond Street and South Bow Street/Park Street in downtown Milford contains two pedestrian crash clusters that were ranked in the top 5% in the region from 2012 to 2021.

Transportation Safety Opportunities

Improving transportation safety in Milford will require both location-specific and townwide strategies. As part of the former, the Town should pursue targeted roadway safety interventions at the crash cluster locations described above.

More specifically, the Town should work with MassDOT to conduct a Road Safety Audit (RSA) at the vehicular crash clusters, and with WalkMassachusetts (a statewide pedestrian advocacy organization) to conduct a pedestrian safety audit along Main Street in downtown Milford. Such audits bring together the perspectives of diverse residents and stakeholders to generate detailed, place-based, near- and long-term recommendations for safety improvements. The Town and other agencies like MassDOT can then implement these improvements for the benefit of drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users alike.

More broadly, Milford can take measures to calm traffic, reduce vehicular speeds, and enhance crosswalks, roadway signage, and signal and lighting technology in downtown and throughout the Town. “Quick build” projects can be implemented at low cost in the near-term using paint, plastic flex posts, and/or planter boxes. These projects can be targeted at locations with high volumes of crashes and/or significant pedestrian and bicyclist activity (such as the area in the vicinity of the Milford Senior Center, where many seniors park their vehicles before walking to the Center). Expanding and improving sidewalks and other walking, biking, and rolling infrastructure throughout the Town will further improve safety and access for vulnerable road users – including seniors, children, and people with disabilities – while also further calming traffic.

The Town's transportation safety efforts should be aligned and coordinated with other transportation initiatives wherever possible. These include the Town's Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, the forthcoming Boston Region Vision Zero Action Plan (led by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization) to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries throughout the region, and ongoing initiatives in Milford through MassDOT's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program. Brookside Elementary School, Memorial Elementary School, Stacy Middle School, and Woodland Elementary School are all SRTS Partners in Milford, and the Town should work with them to identify and improve safe walking, biking, and rolling routes for students, parents, teachers, and staff. All these programs can leverage funding for roadway projects that advance safety and multimodal transportation goals.

Traffic Congestion Challenges

Traffic congestion is another persistent challenge in Milford that increases greenhouse gas pollution and undermines public health and quality of life. Over 12,000 Milford residents commute to other municipalities for work and nearly 15,000 residents of other municipalities commute into Milford for work. These high levels of commuter inflows and outflows – with most commuters traveling via single occupancy vehicle – result in significant traffic volumes and congestion on Milford streets and roadways. In addition, sprawling land use patterns and an overall lack of multimodal transportation options in Milford make it difficult for residents to make local trips (for errands, medical

appointments, social visits, etc.) without a car, further contributing to the Town's congestion issues.

Traffic Congestion Opportunities

Addressing Milford's traffic congestion requires both local and regional solutions. The Town should improve traffic signalization and change roadway configurations at targeted locations identified as congestion bottlenecks, as well as throughout the Town more broadly. MassDOT's Local Bottleneck Reduction program provides an important source of funds to help improve traffic flow at choke points on local roadways. The Town can also use planned and proposed roadway projects – whether through its Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Safe Routes to School, or other transportation efforts – to improve traffic operations and multimodal transportation infrastructure, while also addressing safety.

While focusing on roadways can help mitigate some traffic issues, it is insufficient to address the broader driver of congestion in Milford, which is the overwhelming dependence on cars for both local and regional trips. Projects to expand roadway capacity (such as adding or widening a travel lane) often fail to address congestion in the long term, as short-term improvements in traffic flow often induce more people to drive and thus increase traffic. Long-term solutions to congestion therefore must focus on expanding and improving non-vehicular transportation options, as well as land

use and zoning changes that enable more mixed-use and compact development and make local trips possible without a car.

Decreasing dependence on single-occupancy vehicles will ultimately reduce the number of vehicles on Milford's roadways. This will reduce traffic congestion and vehicular crash risks, while also providing additional quality of life, safety, public health, and environmental benefits. These objectives can be accomplished through a number of measures, including increased use of the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority's (MWRTA) bus service in and around Milford, consideration of new local and regional transit connections (including shuttle connections to major employers and commuter rail stations), and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies to reduce vehicular trips at new and existing developments.

While public transit service and usage in Milford overall are limited, there is strong potential for increased public transit ridership, as 76% of Town residents live within a quarter mile of MWRTA Bus Routes 6 and 14 that provide connections to downtown Milford, other local destinations, and neighboring towns. The 2024 additions of evening and weekend service on these bus routes already indicate a growing demand for public transit, and the recent implementation of fare-free service on MWRTA bus routes through June 2025 also helps make the bus a more attractive transportation option. The Town of Milford should work with the MWRTA and other stakeholders to increase awareness of these services, to provide improved

bus infrastructure and amenities, and to explore opportunities for more frequent bus service in the future as local land use and development patterns change.

Expanding walking, biking, and rolling connections and infrastructure throughout the Town – including to bus stops, places of employment, schools, and other key destinations – is another important congestion reduction strategy. Making it safer and easier to get to, from, and around Milford without a car will help reduce local and regional traffic, and it is also something the Town can make great strides towards achieving without state or regional assistance. The Upper Charles Trail is an important regional asset in this effort, and the Town's Complete Streets efforts should continue to advance multimodal transportation goals. Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures at new and existing developments should include the provision of new and improved pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. More compact land use and development patterns in the future will also support improved walkability, bikability, and transit access in Milford, putting the Town on a pathway to long-term transportation sustainability

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the transportation safety and congestion context detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can undertake to help improve transportation safety and reduce congestion.



Goal: Increase roadway safety for all, especially for vulnerable road users (seniors, children, people with disabilities, people walking/biking/rolling) and at locations identified as vehicular and pedestrian crash clusters).

Strategy: Implement pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures, upgrade signal and lighting technology, and provide better signage and enforcement to control speeding and improve roadway safety Town-wide.

- **Action:** Identify and implement quick build projects – including more visible/prominent crosswalks – at high crash locations and/or locations with significant pedestrian activity.
- **Action:** Install radar speed signs that display the speed limit and speed of travel of passing vehicles.

Strategy: Pursue safety assessments at locations identified as crash clusters to identify challenges and recommended improvements.

- **Action:** Work with MassDOT to conduct a Road Safety Audit (RSA) at Congress Street/West Street/Exchange Street and Main Street/Water Street/Park Terrace.

- **Action:** Work with WalkMassachusetts to conduct a downtown pedestrian safety audit along Route 16/Main Street between Pond Street and South Bow Street/Park Street.

Strategy: Work with MassDOT’s Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program to implement improvements and safety education programs for students, parents, and staff to walk, bike, and roll to school.

- **Action:** Host a “Transportation Fair” or other public event to engage the school community in SRTS programs and ways to make biking, walking, and rolling to school safer and better options.

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



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

Strategy: Assess traffic signal cycles throughout town for opportunities to improve traffic flow.

- **Action:** Implement traffic signal timing changes that reduce queuing of vehicles.

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.

Strategy: Use planned and proposed roadway projects to improve traffic operations and multimodal transportation infrastructure.

- **Action:** Use the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to advance the Rehabilitation of Route 16 project to improve safety, operations, and mobility for all modes of travel.



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

Strategy: Implement traffic calming measures through Downtown.

- **Action:** Conduct a pedestrian safety audit along Main Street in downtown Milford to identify critical safety improvements.
- **Action:** Add crosswalks, curb extensions and pedestrian safety mechanisms on Main Street as identified.
- **Action:** Enhance Main Street streetscape with additional street trees and landscape plantings.

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.
- **Action:** Implement clear signage as “wayfinding” to motorists to locate off-street parking lots Downtown rather than “cruising” for on street spots
- **Action:** Identify and enforce parking of commercial vans off-street.
- **Action:** Consider limiting street parking to 1-3 hours and making lots unlimited to incentivize parking off street.



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.

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

- **Action:** Explore opportunities to connect the two segments of the Upper Charles Trail that converge near downtown Milford.
- **Action:** Engage with the working group considering the extension of the Upper Charles Trail to the south.

Strategy: Incorporate Complete Streets elements into all roadway projects.

- **Action:** Combine Complete Streets roadway redesign projects with repaving/maintenance efforts to decrease costs and accomplish changes faster.

- **Action:** Explore opportunities for additional improvements through MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program.

Strategy: Develop an asset management plan for streets and sidewalks to identify areas in poor condition and to prioritize repairs and new construction accordingly.

Strategy: Add bicycle parking downtown and along the Upper Charles Trail and consider requiring bicycle parking at public parks/buildings and as part of new development.

- **Action:** Pursue funding from the Boston Region MPO's Community Connections program to add bicycle parking.
- **Action:** Develop an ordinance adding bicycle parking requirements to the Town's zoning code.

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



Goal: Decrease congestion and dependence on single-occupancy vehicles through increased use of MWRTA's bus transit in and around Milford, other transit connections, and Transportation Demand Management (TDM).

Strategy: Increase awareness and utilization of MWRTA transit options amongst town residents, especially those who do not have access to a car or do not drive.

- **Action:** Work with the Milford Senior Center, Milford Public Schools, local businesses, and other institutions to disseminate information about MWRTA's bus service.
- **Action:** Work with MWRTA and MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program to pursue opportunities and funding to add more visible signage and amenities at bus stops, including benches and/or shelters at highly utilized locations, visible schedules and maps, lighting, safe routes to access bus stops, etc.

Strategy: Work with the MWRTA, the Milford Senior Center, neighboring cities and towns, and the business community to evaluate unmet transit needs and determine if new transit and shuttle options may be necessary.

- **Action:** Assess utilization of existing senior van program and determine potential for expansion and/or better coordination with existing MWRTA service.

- **Action:** Consider coordinating with neighboring towns on regional shuttle service and/or the creation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA) to improve non-automotive connections to major employers and commuter rail stations.

- **Action:** Explore shuttle funding options through the Boston Region MPO's Community Connections program.

Strategy: Explore opportunities for more frequent MWRTA service in Milford and consider transit priority elements as service potentially increases in the future.

- **Action:** Engage major employers in conversations around how to increase transit service and access to their facilities through public-private partnerships.

Strategy: Although previously analyzed and dismissed, monitor MBTA utilization of railroad track between Milford and Franklin and consider long-term potential for future commuter rail expansion.

- **Action:** Work with the Boston Region MPO to re-examine feasibility of long-term commuter rail expansion to Milford as development patterns shift and consider

how denser development and transit access reinforce each other.

Strategy: Explore strategies for Transportation Demand Management (TDM) at new and existing developments that reduce the provision of excess parking, promote

ridesharing/carsharing options, and improve walking and biking connections to MWRTA bus service and other transit options.

- **Action:** Encourage employers to offer incentives to employees who choose to take transit, bike, walk or carpool to work and charge for parking.



Goal: Encourage long term land use patterns that make local trips practical and safe without a car.

Strategy: Explore zoning bylaw modifications that will allow and encourage mixed-use redevelopment with co-located residential and commercial uses, bringing housing closer to some destinations for daily local trips.

- **Action:** Pilot mixed-use redevelopment zoning changes in Downtown by exploring the creation of an overlay district that requires mixed-use with non-residential on the ground floor while allowing greater height, more density, and requiring less parking.

Strategy: Explore zoning changes that will reduce development costs and biases that link homes with car ownerships.

- **Action:** Reduce zoning requirements for minimum off-street parking at residential developments which helps parking to be rightsized for the development
- **Action:** Encourage developers to unbundle parking costs from housing costs and to

separate rental of a parking space from rental of a housing unit.

Strategy: Consider predominantly residential locations that could benefit from a non-residential convenience store, personal service, or other type of destination and explore zoning changes that would allow such uses in these locations.

Strategy: Integrate multi-modal connections into neighborhoods to offer a safe and practical route to make a local trip without a car. This could include sidewalks, crosswalks, and trails that provide a continuous connection for pedestrians and/or bicyclists from a neighborhood to a nearby open space, or area of commerce.





08



Maintain the Livability and Charm of Neighborhoods

Livable neighborhoods are the foundation for a strong community. Neighborhoods foster close-knit networks of residents. When the conditions are present for residents to feel connected, they are more likely to support each other. In addition to centering downtown as a feature of community life, complementary investments in neighborhoods can help residents to feel connected. Neighborhoods that continue to evolve to center walkability, environmental sustainability, biodiversity and connections to green spaces, and preservation all help to connect people to one another and to the built environment.

Milford's residential neighborhoods, particularly the predominantly single-family neighborhoods, will not be the location of large-scale changes, as most of the residentially zoned land has been subdivided and built. Nonetheless, all places are dynamic, and changes will continue to happen. It is important to take a proactive approach to guiding positive change through incremental investments to maintain and improve livability and charm of the neighborhoods. As demand for housing increases, and as Milford continues to develop economically, maintaining livability and a strong quality of life requires a balance between growth in strategic locations, increasing housing diversity, multimodal infrastructure improvements, and enhancements to accessible open spaces. For example, accessory dwelling units will be allowed on a single-family home lot, bringing additional housing opportunities to integrate into neighborhoods in a positive manner. These new units could be combined with new trails and sidewalks that create new connections that make it easier to get around by bike or on foot.

Summary of Theme

Milford is a growing and evolving community that values its distinct neighborhood character, accessibility, and quality of life. The town's historic charm, diverse housing stock, and vibrant downtown are key attributes that residents seek to preserve while addressing the pressures of growth. 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. The Plan outlines directing development to appropriate areas while ensuring that neighborhoods remain attractive, functional, and inclusive for all residents.

Milford has distinctive neighborhoods that have each evolved with a sense of history, land use pattern, and culture. A few of the distinct neighborhoods include The Plains and Prospect Heights. The Plains is the area between Sacred Heart Church and the junctions of Route 16 and 109. The neighborhood received its name from the topographical characteristic of the land. The neighborhood is home to Plains Park, a popular park for recreation and sports, and Plains Mall which includes a supermarket. The neighborhood was historically home to largely Italian immigrants.

Prospect Heights is a neighborhood that was owned and built by the Draper Corporation, which at the height of its success, was the world's largest manufacturer of automatic looms. The neighborhood is located between upper Water Street, Route 140 to the Milford Hospital, and down to Prospect Heights. The community

has had a mix of immigrant residents from Portuguese, Irish, Italian, Greek, Armenian, and Polish origins. The neighborhood is home to Prospect Heights Park and a shopping plaza with a supermarket.

Both neighborhoods are examples of more centrally located and historical, compact, and walkable parts of the Town. Each of this type of neighborhood has open space, and convenience retail amenities that serve it and that can be walkable or bikeable from neighborhood homes. All neighborhoods in Milford do not share these benefits with others being more dispersed and car dependent.

Many of the more compact more historical neighborhoods are in zoning districts RA and RB. Some of the more dispersed neighborhoods are in RB with the remainder in both RC and RD zoning districts. The more dispersed in disconnected neighborhoods would benefit from incremental and strategic investments to connect residents to the growing multimodal network of the town.

The thematic map on the following page highlights some of the neighborhoods throughout Milford and maps the density of the residential context. Across the town the residential context is predominantly single family, but there are pockets of additional density.

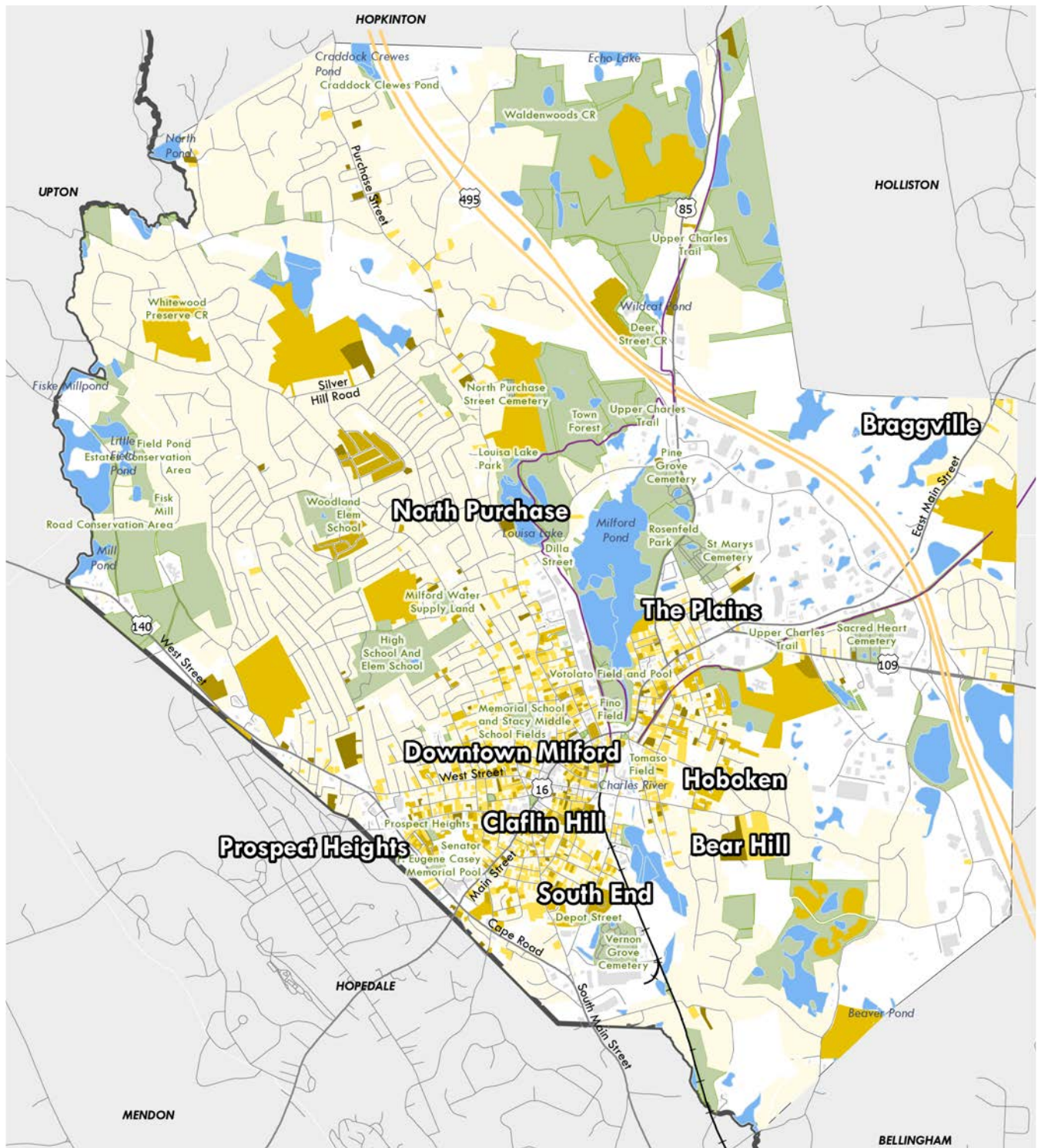


Figure 44: Milford's Neighborhoods

Residential

- Single Family Residence
- Two or Three Family Residences
- Condominium
- Apartments with Four or more units
- Group Quarters
- Residential Other
- Residential Vacant

Challenges

As Milford experiences economic and population growth, the town faces the challenge of directing development to appropriate areas while preserving the character and charm of its existing neighborhoods. The current development patterns have contributed to congestion by requiring most residents to drive, and reduced affordability by limiting housing options.

The Town continues to be subject to Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permit projects which allow a developer to avoid compliance with local zoning restrictions to typically build larger scale multifamily housing that incorporates affordability. These projects are often located in isolated areas that are not connected to resources, or in parts of the Town that were zoned for other uses. Balancing growth and neighborhood preservation is essential to ensuring that new developments complement rather than overwhelm the existing community fabric.

Housing affordability and diversity remain significant concerns, particularly for first-time homebuyers, low-income families, and seniors. The increasing cost of housing, coupled with restrictive zoning laws that limit multifamily housing, has resulted in a shortage of diverse housing options. Without zoning reforms and proactive housing policies, many residents may struggle to find housing that meets their needs, further exacerbating affordability challenges and limiting economic diversity within the town. Another challenge is the aging housing stock and the need for property maintenance.

Many of Milford's homes, particularly rental properties, were built before 1980 and require upgrades to remain safe and livable. Without adequate support and incentives for homeowners and landlords, deteriorating properties can negatively impact neighborhood aesthetics, safety and overall property values. Addressing these maintenance challenges is critical to preserving the town's residential character and ensuring that all housing remains viable for future generations.

While Milford offers a variety of recreational and green spaces, access to these amenities is not equally distributed across the town. Expanding accessibility, improving connectivity, and ensuring that parks support the diverse needs of residents are growing priorities for enhancing community well-being and supporting a high quality of life.

Transportation and road safety also pose significant challenges, particularly in downtown areas and high-crash locations. Traffic congestion, limited multimodal access, and pedestrian safety concerns hinder mobility and accessibility. Improving walkability, expanding biking infrastructure, and implementing traffic calming measures are necessary steps to create a safer, more efficient transportation network that accommodates all residents, including seniors, children, and people with disabilities. Each of these challenges is connected and complicated. Incremental changes will help to reduce the negative impacts on neighborhoods and livability in Milford.

Opportunities

Strategic growth and a more proactive approach to residential development can help Milford manage expansion and the need for additional housing while maintaining the character of its residential neighborhoods. Opportunities exist for Milford to be more proactive, such as achieving Housing Choice Designation with the Commonwealth.

Housing Choice Designation allows municipalities to take advantage of financial resources, such as the Housing Choice Grant Program, and preferential treatment for many state grant and capital funding programs. These programs include the State Revolving Fund for Water and Sewer Infrastructure, MassWorks, Complete Streets, MassDOT capital projects, and PARC and LAND grants. The types of policy requirements to qualify are best practices which would contribute to this and other Comprehensive Plan themes including multi-family zoning, inclusionary zoning, housing rehab funding, local actions that support housing, mixed-use zoning, accessory dwelling units, and climate resiliency planning, among others.

Expanding affordable housing is essential to ensuring that residents of all income levels can find suitable homes in Milford. Policies such as inclusionary zoning, affordable housing trusts, and down payment assistance programs can help increase the availability of affordable homes and would contribute to Housing Choice Designation. Additionally, partnering with financial institutions and leveraging state and federal grants will provide

the necessary resources to support affordable housing initiatives and expand access to homeownership for low- and moderate-income families. Supporting property maintenance and homeownership is crucial for preserving Milford's aging housing stock. Providing low or no-interest loans, tax abatements, and forgivable loans for property improvements can incentivize homeowners and landlords to maintain and upgrade their properties, preventing neighborhood deterioration. Targeted home repair programs for seniors and persons with disabilities will further ensure that housing remains safe, accessible, and livable for vulnerable residents.

Enhancing and connecting to open spaces will increase access to recreational opportunities and promote a healthier, more inclusive community. Updating Milford's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP), activating underutilized spaces, and investing in ADA-compliant park improvements will make recreational areas more accessible to all residents. Developing green corridors and improving signage will strengthen connections between parks, trails, and neighborhoods, encouraging outdoor activity and environmental sustainability. Expanding multimodal connections, including bike lanes, shared-use paths, and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, will make it easier for residents to access recreation areas. These improvements will contribute to a more walkable, bike-friendly, and accessible town for all.

Supporting Community Feedback

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, many residents discussed improvements desired to housing and in support of livable neighborhoods in Milford. Business owners, residents, and workers cited that there is not enough affordable housing available, making it difficult for employees to live in town. Residents mentioned directly that rent increases have forced them to leave Milford to find more affordable housing that is available in a surrounding town. Specific housing programs that were mentioned by residents included a down payment assistance program and additional affordable rental options in the town.

Related to affordability and housing supply, many residents expressed concerns about the safety and livability of overcrowded housing. Residents observed multiple families living in single apartments, with some properties having subdivided rooms without proper safety measures. Residents expressed concerns for the safety of the living conditions and the potential negative impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

Homelessness has also been highlighted as an increasing issue in the Town. Milford Schools have seen an increase in the number of students who self-report as homeless. Local efforts have been organized to offer support. For example, the Trinity Episcopal Church provides support for homeless residents and opened spaces for them when the Homeless Shelter on Bow Street by Town Hall closed.

While most transportation concerns focused on traffic and congestion challenges, there was an openness to expanding ways to get around town without a car. Some community members called for strategic transportation planning to reduce congestion and improve accessibility, including better sidewalks and transit options. Some community members supported more biking connections, improved enforcement of speed limits, improved crosswalks, and improvements to enhance pedestrian visibility at key intersections. In the context of the neighborhoods, often these types of transportation improvements were mentioned in connection with a nearby open space, amenity, or community destination.

The community also commented on the open space network. Residents agreed that parks should be welcoming to all people, and cultural programming should be expanded to be inclusive of all cultures in Milford. It was noted that different racial and ethnic groups may be treated differently if they gather as a group at a local open space. Residents also noted the need for improved signage and connections between parks, trails, and between the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown. Residents including youth expressed interest in more spaces for gathering and recreation, including skate parks, cultural spaces, and playgrounds.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for livable neighborhoods detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can undertake to help maintain and improve neighborhoods.



Goal: Manage and direct growth to appropriate areas of town while preserving the character of existing neighborhoods, expanding diverse housing options, and enhancing transportation and circulation.

Strategy: Explore a more neighborhood specific approach to zoning that respects the context of each neighborhood while adding new opportunities for housing.

- **Action:** Select a neighborhood to pilot a zoning exploration process that is community-based with a goal of producing zoning recommendations that could be considered for adoption.

Strategy: Encourage diverse housing development through a more proactive and permissive approach to housing that removes barriers to multifamily housing development.

- **Action:** Explore pathways to achieving Housing Choice Designation.

Strategy: Leverage funding and technical resources to expand housing options and enhance neighborhood transportation and circulation.

- **Action:** Pursue state and federal grants, partnerships, and technical assistance programs to advance key recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and support local implementation efforts.
- **Action:** Explore the neighborhood streets that could most effectively serve as multimodal collectors to provide a safe bicycle corridor to connect to the Upper Charles Trail or other assets. For example, Whitewood Road to Silver Hill Road to Purchase Street could provide a connection.
- **Action:** Explore off-street pathways or connections that could serve as multimodal collectors to provide a safe bicycle corridor to connect to the Upper Charles Trail or other assets. For example, the utility corridor that cuts east-west across the northern portion of the town's residential neighborhoods.



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

Strategy: Build more homes through the Milford Housing Authority. Currently the Milford Housing Authority manages 287 dwelling units across 33 buildings.

- **Action:** Work in collaboration with the town budget and Milford Housing Authority to increase the Milford Housing Authority Budget and/or advocate for additional funding from the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC). The Milford Housing Authority did not request additional funding through the most recent Capital Improvement Plan, but did request an increase in spending flexibility.
- **Action:** Increase Housing Authority staff in support of additional funding, if successful.

Strategy: Create an affordable, first-time home buyer program.

- **Action:** Develop a municipal downpayment assistance program to help first time homebuyers, potentially in partnership with surrounding municipalities. Promote opportunities for down payment assistance through MassHousing.

- **Action:** Partner with financial institutions to support mortgage counseling and financial readiness.

Strategy: Require affordable housing be built as part of multifamily developments.

- **Action:** Introduce an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw that requires a percent of all units be deed restricted as affordable within income limits expressed as part of the bylaw.

Strategy: Build local capacity to support Affordable Housing Development.

- **Action:** Establish an Affordable Housing Trust.
- **Action:** Participate in the SWAP Shared Housing Services office and conversations.
- **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: Provide additional support for property owners to maintain aging properties.

Strategy: Assist and encourage property maintenance, particularly for properties that are over 50 years old.

- **Action:** Establish a home repair program for seniors and persons with disabilities.
- **Action:** Define reasonable timelines and support technical assistance for households who need property improvements for safety.
- **Action:** Promote the Commonwealth's Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) designed to help people with disabilities (or who are over 60 years old) live independently at home.

Strategy: Create financial incentives for removing dangerous elements from aging properties.

- **Action:** Explore making available low or no interest loans through the municipality or in partnership with local financial institutions.
- **Action:** Explore expanding municipal property tax relief programs within expanded criteria or conditions. Promote relief programs that exist such as the Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Abatement administered by the Senior Center.



Goal: Expand accessibility to parks and open spaces throughout the Town.

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:** Conduct a comprehensive ADA assessment of open space in Milford.
- **Action:** Activate municipally owned open space to bring diverse cultural resources.

Strategy: Engage neighborhood communities to understand desired park amenities and recreational assets that are desired in specific locations.

- **Action:** Assess current parks and recreational assets to identify gaps or underutilized spaces that could be enhanced based on community input.
- **Action:** Conduct community surveys and host focus groups to gather input from residents about desired amenities, types of parks, and recreational opportunities.


Strategy: Enhance access to information, particularly information about access to and use of municipal assets.

- **Action:** Clarify the operating principles and hours for publicly and privately owned open space (e.g., school parks).

Strategy: Update the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

- **Action:** Identify a committee of staff and residents to guide the project.

- **Action:** Identify and apply for funding opportunities (e.g., MAPC's Technical Assistance Program, Community One Stop for Growth Grant, or Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) grants).



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:** Based on the 10-minute walksheds for parks with public access, identify the neighborhoods most in need of multimodal access. The northern neighborhoods and southern neighborhoods are most in need.
- **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.
- **Action:** Once low-cost reconfigurations are implemented, promote the changes to area residents to encourage active use and gather user feedback through surveys.

Strategy: Expand walking and biking connections to the existing multimodal network.

- **Action:** Identify and encourage strategic feeders to the Upper Charles Trail.
- **Action:** Develop a multimodal network map that shows the existing trails, bike lanes, and sidewalks.
- **Action:** Survey residents to identify the most desired connections and gaps in the existing multimodal network.
- **Action:** Create consistent, easy to read signs that guide pedestrians, cyclists, and transit riders to open spaces, recreational facilities, downtown, and other destinations with the distance to each destination.



Goal: Increase roadway safety for all, especially for vulnerable road users (seniors, children, people with disabilities, people walking/biking/rolling) and at locations identified as vehicular and pedestrian crash clusters.

Strategy: Implement pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures, upgrade signal and lighting technology, and provide better signage and enforcement to control speeding and improve roadway safety Town-wide.

- **Action:** Identify and implement quick build projects – including more visible/prominent crosswalks – at high crash locations and/or locations with significant pedestrian activity.
- **Action:** Install radar speed signs that display the speed limit and speed of travel of passing vehicles.

Strategy: Work with MassDOT's Safe Routes to School program to implement improvements for students, parents, and staff to walk, bike, and roll to school.

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



09



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. Milford's population has grown by 8.5% since the last comprehensive plan was developed in 2003. Over the same period the town has shifted from about 90% non-Hispanic White population to about 70% non-Hispanic White. The largest growth in racial demographics has occurred in Latino and Two- or more race populations. The town's current population is approximately 30,304 residents. In addition to having more people, and a greater diversity of needs, what residents expect from town services continues to expand. A baseline of quality infrastructure with well-maintained roads, water and sewer systems, high quality schools, and excellence in public safety remains, but additional expectations around other amenities and services continue to grow.

Expectations for the quality and breadth of town services continue to increase, as do the costs of providing them. Municipalities are not immune to inflation and have been impacted by additional external costs of goods and services and additional internal costs of personnel and benefits. Property tax revenues have not kept pace with these inflationary adjustments. Additionally, the need for major capital investments will place pressure on the town's fiscally conservative approach. The Town continues to prioritize its spending, carefully manage debt, and focus on essential infrastructure and investments. 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, even within this difficult context



Summary of Theme

The governance of Milford requires a close partnership between residents and municipal employees. Milford's organizational structure is typical for a Massachusetts Town of its size. Its legislative authority is vested in a representative Town Meeting and executive authority is vested in a Select Board. The Town Meeting body consists of 8 precincts with 30 members per precinct and at-large membership for department heads and board chairs. A portion of Town Meeting positions are not currently filled. Annual Town Meeting takes place in the spring and typically addresses operating expenses and other policy items. A Special Town Meeting occurs in the fall and typically addresses capital budget items. The Town Administrator manages the daily operation of the Select Board's office, is the administrative supervisor of department heads appointed by the Select Board and performs a variety of other duties.

The town employees are an immense resource for the town delivering services on behalf of residents. Milford is served by approximately 1,600 employees, who report to 26 department heads, as well as 28 elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees, and 9 elected officials. While the Comprehensive Plan does not provide a detailed assessment of each of these departments, it does set a broader vision to which departments should be responsive. The town has long strived for a fiscally conservative approach to governance. For example, to date, the town has never passed a Proposition 2 ½ override to raise revenue. Municipal costs continue to rise along with the costs of most

other services and town will need to be strategic in providing the revenue needed to sustain effective municipal services.

The services delivered by the town are supported by town facilities and infrastructure. The major facilities of the town include Town Hall, Town Library, Memorial Hall, the Police Station two Fire Stations, the Senior Center, the Youth Center, cemeteries, town-owned land and open spaces, and town-owned roads, sewer, and water infrastructure. Milford is served by six town-owned public schools including Shining Star Early Childhood Center, Brookside, Memorial and Woodland Elementary Schools, Stacy Middle School, and Milford High School. The town has continued to invest in municipal facilities since the last Comprehensive Plan and the community takes great pride in the town's open spaces, schools, Senior Center and Youth Center. The need for continued investments has been identified by the town and recognized by the community and include exploring a major investment in the town's high school through either renovation of the existing building or a new building and exploring expanding space for town offices that are in the lower levels of Town Hall. The map on the following page shows the locations of town facilities.

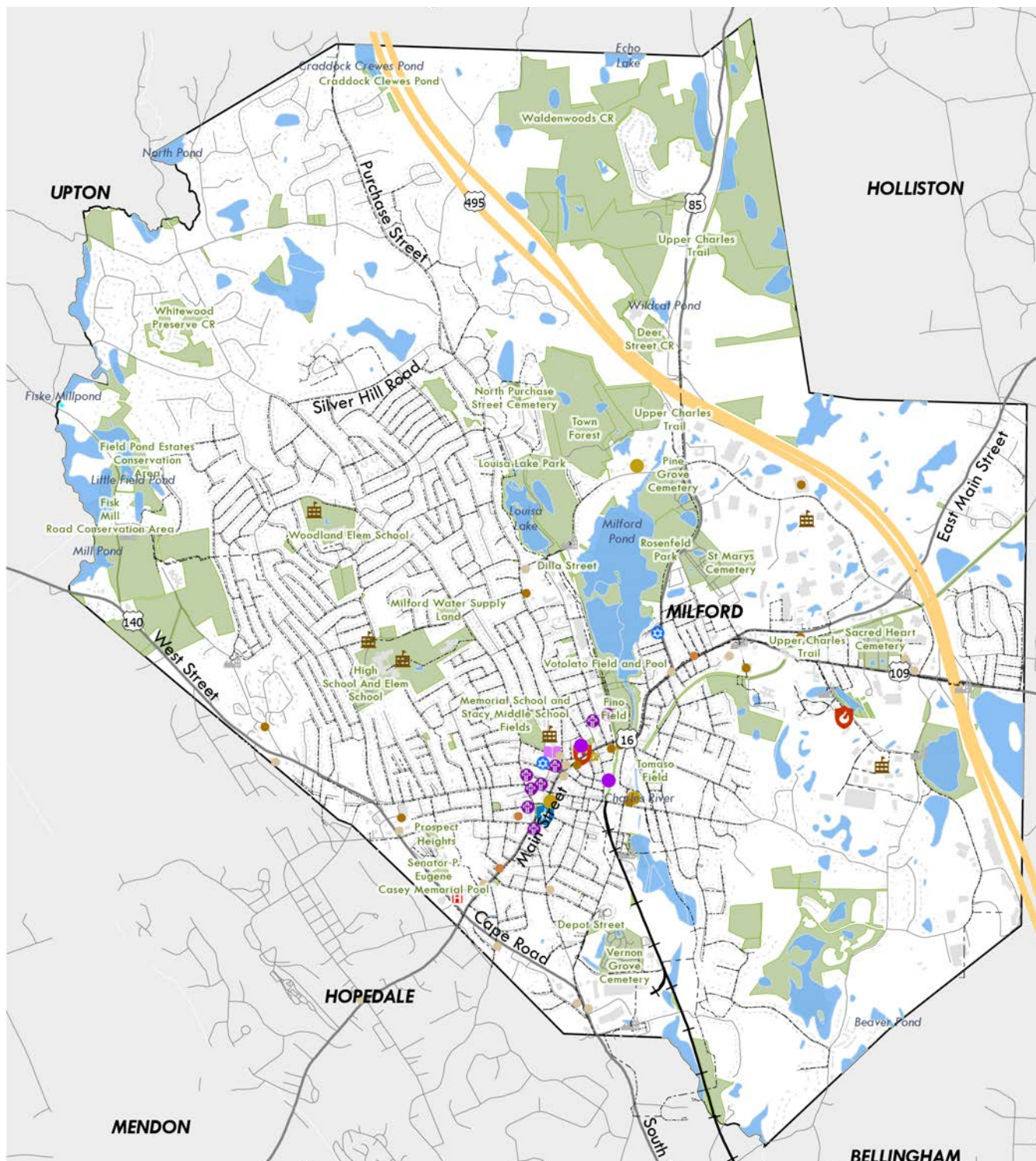
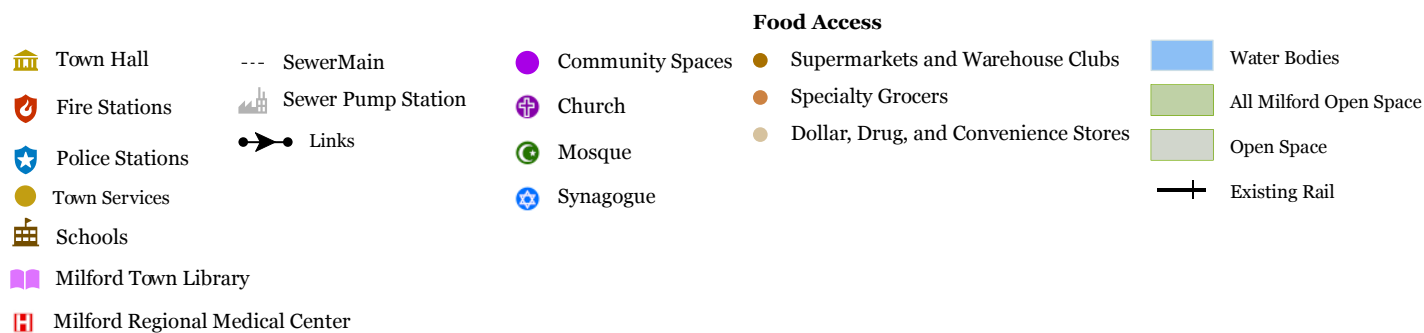


Figure 45: Milford Public Facilities



Challenges

The requirements of what constitutes effective governance are shifting as Milford continues to evolve. As the Town continues to grow, more demands will be placed on its governance structure. This may require additional investment in professional staff to support Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees, and to add capacity in Town Departments. As the demographics of residents continue to evolve, services will need to accommodate residents' needs. The Town has begun to shift a modest number of resources to support non-English speaking residents. For example, the Town Library provides English language learner programs. However, through this process community members highlighted that it is difficult to engage with most departments of the Town if English is not your first language. In general, increased staffing levels are likely needed to keep pace with the demand for services. As new staff are added, it would be beneficial to seek hires that are multilingual. While many of Milford's departments have adopted creative approaches to address service level needs without increasing staff, this approach is likely not sustainable over the long term.

Milford's tax revenue is largely generated from property taxes, with a split tax rate of \$14.45 for residential and \$26.45 for commercial/industrial properties, making it higher than some neighboring towns. According to the Massachusetts Financial Management Resource Bureau, the average proportions of municipal revenue are 58% property taxes, 19% state aid, 14% other available resources, and 9% local

receipts. By comparison, in 2024, Milford's revenue was 49% property taxes, 32% state aid, 13% other available resources, and 6% local receipts. This comparison indicates a potential risk in receiving a larger proportion of the budget in the form of state aid. It also indicates the potential for redevelopment of properties to increase the revenue from property taxes, and that some options for town revenue remain unused. For example, other available resources include Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, which has not been adopted in Milford or local option excise taxes. The increasing costs to provide town services, and the need for major capital investments may require the exploration of additional revenue sources.

Additionally, increasing rates of poverty and homelessness have also been shared anecdotally and are evident in the data. Addressing needs of temporary housing, affordable housing, and food insecurity place pressure on municipal capacity and budgets. A network of community-based organizations and service providers address the needs of residents and more direct partnerships with municipal departments would benefit the coordination of services and the delivery of services to residents in need.

As highlighted in other chapters, several infrastructure-related investments will require continued capital planning and management. A program of strategically expanding sidewalk and trail amenities throughout the town is a long term need that should be broken into incremental investments and prioritized. The town's sewer and stormwater infrastructure

are aging and require continued investment to re-lining broken pipes and repairing sewer manholes. Inflow and infiltration remain a serious concern for the town's sewer system. The town will need to continue to investigate emerging contaminants to maintain a safe and healthy water supply and to remain in compliance with new regulations at the state or federal level. Decades ago, the town established an Enterprise Fund for sewer user fees which provides the budget for operations and functions of the town's Sewer Department.

Opportunities

Milford should continue the professionalization and efficiency of town services. The town created a centralized Human Resources department in 2018. Prior to that, each department had their own policies and procedures for staff and hiring. Bringing consistent policies to all town departments is a big step toward the consistent and efficient delivery of services. A similar centralization of functions through a Department of Public Works (DPW) could benefit delivery of town services. Currently, the functions are separated and compartmentalized with a water department and commissioners, sewer department and commissioners, parks department, and highway department. Each department is responsible for services, maintenance, and budgeting. By centralizing these functions, they could become more consistent and coordinated and result in service improvements after the transition. Another municipal staffing opportunity is succession planning. Succession planning across several

departments presents an opportunity for bridging transition with continuity through proactive planning and an opportunity for renewal among municipal staff.

Considering additional opportunities for revenue to support necessary operational expenses is another area of opportunity. The town currently uses enterprise funds to support water and sewer services. An enterprise fund could also be used to support stormwater utilities. A community adopts an enterprise fund by a vote of town meeting. It establishes a separate accounting and financial reporting mechanism for a municipal service for which a fee is charged in exchange for goods or services. Of note, expenditures to support stormwater infrastructure and management are currently taken from the highway budget. This has a direct impact on the ability to invest in the street network and sidewalks. Stormwater regulations and requirements will only continue to increase. Currently, stormwater duties and expertise are shared between the Town Engineer and the Highway Surveyor. Additionally, the Town Engineer is Conservation Agent providing support to the Conservation Commission. While efficient, these types of arrangements limit staff capacity.

Supporting Community Feedback

While the community takes great pride and enjoyment in the facilities and amenities provided by the Town, it does appear the greater priority is keeping the municipal budget and tax rates steady. When asked to rank challenges, community survey respondents prioritized “maintaining municipal budgets and tax rates” with 11% of the responses compared to “improving town facilities, services, and amenities” with 8% of the responses. In that context, maintaining a consistent level of service and improving on effective governance may be difficult. Regarding community facilities and services, the top four priorities defined in the community survey point to making best use of the resources already available. The top four priorities include 1) continue to invest in infrastructure to meet future needs, 2) continue to invest in schools to meet future needs, 3) maintenance of current buildings and property, and 4) efficient use of current buildings and property.

However, the community feedback is difficult to balance. While many note the importance of retaining affordable property taxes, many also note the need for the town to invest in infrastructure. One of the most frequent items mentioned in responses to the question, what does Milford need to achieve the future you envision, was funding. Additional funding capacity will be important to addressing community desires for investments in infrastructure and services of the town. Other chapter themes highlight the community desires for investments in infrastructure including frequent community discussion of investment in the roadway network, sidewalks, open spaces, and multimodal connections. The

availability and quality of public services has been a key theme of community feedback as well. This is particularly true for underserved groups. The need for multilingual town services was highlighted frequently throughout the Comprehensive Plan process. Even for well-used and well-regarded community resources, such as the Senior Center. The list of desired investments from the community is not short. Participants in this process highlighted the need for improvements to parking, accessibility, and additional programming.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for effective governance detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can undertake to help strengthen effective governance.



Goal: Support the commercial tax base by preserving and supporting industrial opportunities, addressing office park vacancies, and rebalancing zoning of non-residential areas.

Strategy: Conduct business attraction to fill commercial vacancies.

- **Action:** Partner with economic development entities like the Massachusetts Office of Business Development and 495 MetroWest Partnership to fill large-scale vacancies, focusing on the Fortune Boulevard corridor and nearby office parks.

Strategy: Maintain support for Milford's industrial sector.

- **Action:** Continue supporting the needs of Milford's industrial businesses.
- **Action:** Collaborate with industrial businesses to identify workforce development opportunities for non-English speaking workers in Milford.
- **Action:** Consider allowing new low impact industrial uses in commercially zoned districts that are currently challenged by high vacancy rates.

Strategy: Collaborate with Milford Regional Medical Center on a long-term land use plan for the hospital and surrounding uses in Milford.

- **Action:** Assess long-term needs of Milford Regional Medical Center and expand medical

zoning in under-utilized adjacent properties to allow for expansion of the hospital and affiliated and supportive businesses.

- **Action:** Connect the hospital's long-term land use strategy to Milford's workforce development strategy.
- **Action:** Conduct recurring meetings with UMass Memorial Health, affiliate of Milford Regional Medical Center, to assess the hospital's expansion plans and determine development opportunities in Milford.

Strategy: Explore other sources of municipal revenue to reduce dependence on property taxes, for example, the meals tax, marijuana tax, and Community Preservation Act. The Town already maximizes the local room occupancy excise tax at 6% additional.

- **Action:** Explore the potential revenue generated from introducing a meals tax and the potential negative impacts.
- **Action:** Explore the potential revenue generated from local adoption of the Community Preservation Act and work with the community to explore its benefits and the costs to individual households. Goal: Improve and update capital improvement process and practices.



Goal: Improve and update capital improvement process and practices.

Strategy: Improve data and analytical inputs for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

- **Action:** Expand the data and analytical context of capital projects and how each project fits within the larger context of municipal systems. For example, include an updated Pavement Conditions Index (PCI) for the townwide roadway network, develop a sidewalk conditions inventory, and others. Update relevant data every two to three years.
- **Action:** Integrate data from recently completed capital projects to refine budget assumptions.

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.

- **Action:** Provide a brief explanation of selected capital investments relative to the decision framework.

Strategy: Enhance transparency of the current capital improvement process.

- **Action:** Post the most recent 5-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) on the town website and provide updates annually.
- **Action:** Provide more community engagement opportunities to keep the public informed about the process, projects, and project outcomes.
- **Action:** Provide a public dashboard of current capital improvement projects with timelines, budgets, intended outcomes, and the priorities to which the project is responsive.



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.
- **Action:** Multiple departments and town needs have been identified that may benefit from the hiring of an interdepartmental grant writer. While likely not enough activity to support a single department, a shared grant writer could result in more external funding for multiple departments.
- **Action:** Explore benefits of centralizing the IT budget and empowering IT staff

to manage resources across all town departments.

Strategy: Explore department and staff reorganizations where past structures or space needs may not align as well with current or future needs.

- **Action:** Explore consolidation and creation of a Department of Public Works.
- **Action:** Explore hiring additional staff expertise that may be warranted including a Stormwater Engineer. It is a position that could be considered in combination with a Conservation Agent.
- **Action:** Explore opportunities to provide additional office space to departments located on the lower levels of Town Hall.



Goal: Continue to update Milford's Zoning Bylaw to support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan to future investments contribute to the shared community vision.

Strategy: Conduct a comprehensive zoning review with input from residents, businesses, and community stakeholders update and refine zoning categories and regulations that directly implement the plan's vision and goals, including recommendations for sustainable land use, mixed-use development, housing diversity, and economic growth.

- **Action:** Conduct a comprehensive assessment and analysis of the current zoning bylaw to identify gaps and misalignments between current land use patterns and the Comprehensive Plan goals.
- **Action:** Identify community benefits that should be a part of future development investments.

- **Action:** Explore new zoning districts that unlock new development potential to support sustainable growth that can fortify the property tax base.

Strategy: Enhance the public’s understanding of zoning and development processes.

- **Action:** Establish a Citizens Academy to increase transparency and civic engagement. The program would empower residents by offering a detailed view of local government operations, zoning regulations, and the

functions of key boards and commissions through engaging discussion and hands-on activities.

Strategy: Update zoning for clarity and transparency.

- **Action:** Update the zoning bylaws for clarity and usability, prioritize user-friendly language, graphics, and tables to make the bylaw more accessible and easier to navigate for residents, developers, and decision-makers.



Goal: Strengthen the Town’s ability to effectively manage its historic and cultural resources.

Strategy: Expand and diversify the funding available to support local historic preservation activities.

- **Action:** Explore the potential revenue generated from local adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) and work with the community to explore its benefits and the costs to individual households.

Strategy: Expand municipal capacity and expertise to support historic preservation efforts.

- **Action:** Translate cultural documents, event information, and promotional materials into Portuguese and Spanish.
- **Action:** Provide interpretation services for cultural events and other gatherings.

- **Action:** Install multilingual signage in public spaces, such as Memorial Hall.

Strategy: Expand communication that highlights history and historical resources

- **Action:** Add self-guided QR code tours in multiple languages.
- **Action:** Share an awareness of the history of the community through a newsletter highlighting “this day in Milford history” to share an inclusive snapshot of significant stories of the town’s past.

Strategy: Expand access to history and historical resources.

- **Action:** Lead a student-led civics project connected to Milford’s history.
- **Action:** Broaden exhibits at Memorial Hall Museum.



Goal: Plan for infrastructure to meet current and future transportation technology needs and demands in Milford.

Strategy: Continue to approve and support alternative fuel infrastructure including electric vehicle charging or other future technologies.

- **Action:** Require electric vehicle charging and/or electric vehicle ready charging options in new developments and evaluate occupancy and use patterns.

Strategy: Increase options for public electric vehicle charging.

- **Action:** Integrate the installation of electric vehicle charging into investments in municipal facilities and properties. Specifically focus on locations that would enable transition to an electric municipal fleet.

Strategy: Act quickly to enable local regulations or guidance on new transportation technologies and trends.

- **Action:** Monitor autonomous vehicle adoption and respond to future local impacts as they emerge.
- **Action:** Monitor state legislative activity to enable local speed enforcement cameras.



10



Advance Climate Resilience and Sustainability

Milford has a unique composition of open space assets and natural resources near its geographic center including Louisa Lake, Milford Pond, Fino Field, Rosenfeld Park, and the Town Forest among others. Milford's natural environment and open spaces play a critical role in advancing climate resilience and sustainability in the Town. 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. The context of these resources in Milford is not without challenges.

Unfortunately, the context for climate resilience and sustainability is shifting and requires a more proactive approach to planning for climate-related disruptions. The disruptions will likely include prolonged periods of drought, more intense heat during summer months and elevated risk of brush fires, and intense precipitation events associated with inland flooding. 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.

Summary of Theme

Milford's natural environment and open space network play a critical role in supporting a healthy and resilient population and sustainable natural habitats. The map on the following page shows the clustering of core natural habitats predominantly in the northwest corner of the town. As the network of natural resources move south and east the assets become more formal as open space and recreation assets of the town. Many of these resources are well located to serve the populations of the town most in need. The light shaded tone in the background over much of the central and southern portions of the town show the extents of the Environmental Justice (EJ) population areas for the town. Chapter 3 provides the specific definition of EJ populations, but in summary, the EJ populations are marginalized in some way and often share disproportionately in the burdens of environmental hazards and lack of access to resources.

The map shows a strong network of natural areas and open spaces that will need to be leveraged for advancing climate resilience and sustainability. However, climate change presents growing challenges, including increased stormwater runoff and extreme weather events. The location of the existing network highlights the need to proactively plan for climate resilience and sustainability. Much of the water protection and wellhead protection areas are located adjacent to previously developed commercial and industrial zoned land with I-495 traversing portions of them as well. This adjacency also highlights the critical importance of stormwater management and the need for the town to support continued improvements to stormwater infrastructure.

Potential future hazard areas mapped for brush fire and flooding risk are also co-located with the natural and open space resources of the town and overlap with the EJ population areas as well. To address these climate resilience and sustainability risks and 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. Strategies include revising parking ordinances to promote transit-oriented development, integrating nature-based flood mitigation efforts, and leveraging local and regional partnerships to fund and implement resilience projects. Through these actions, Milford can adapt to the impacts of climate change while improving environmental quality and quality of life for all residents.

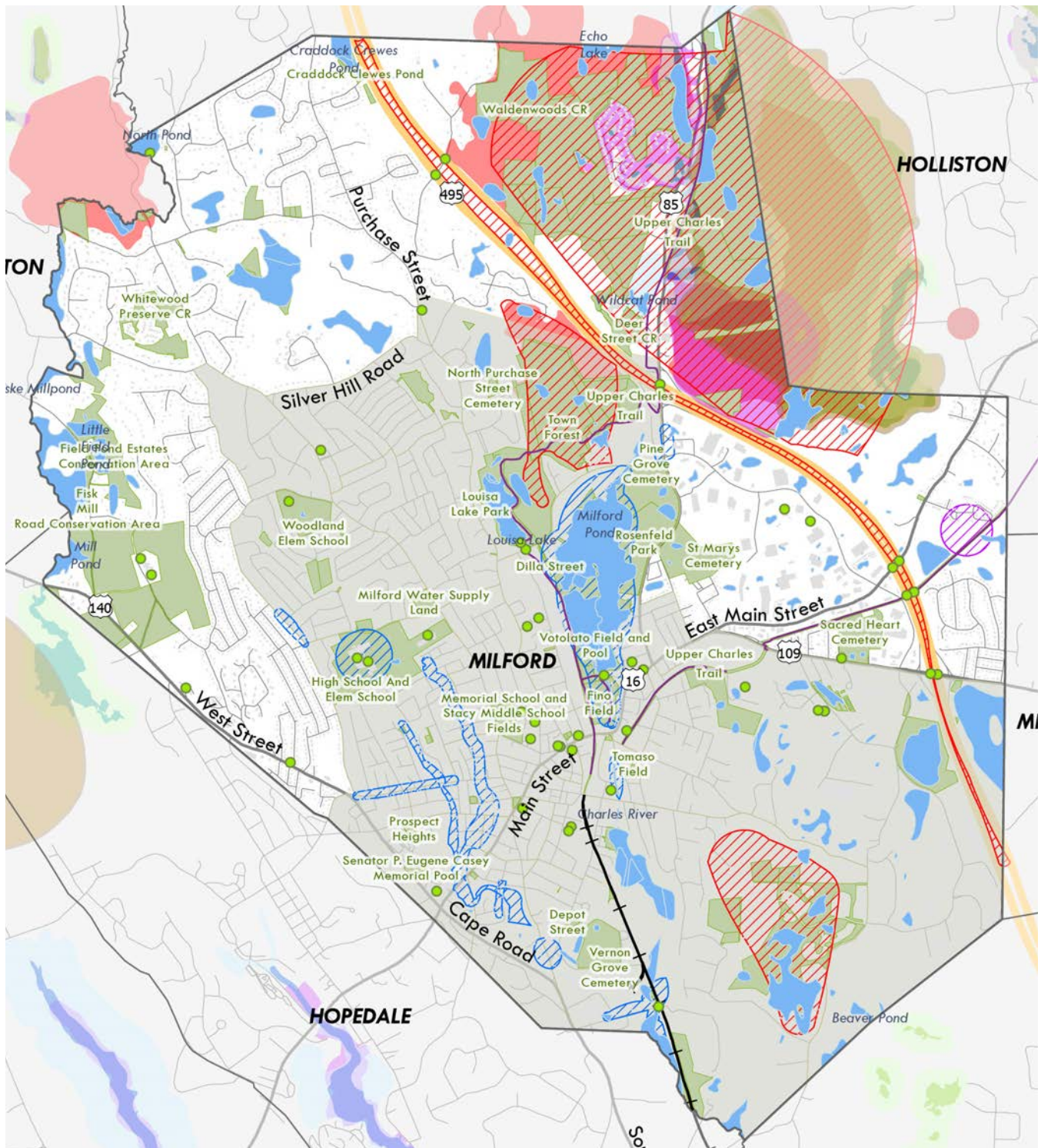
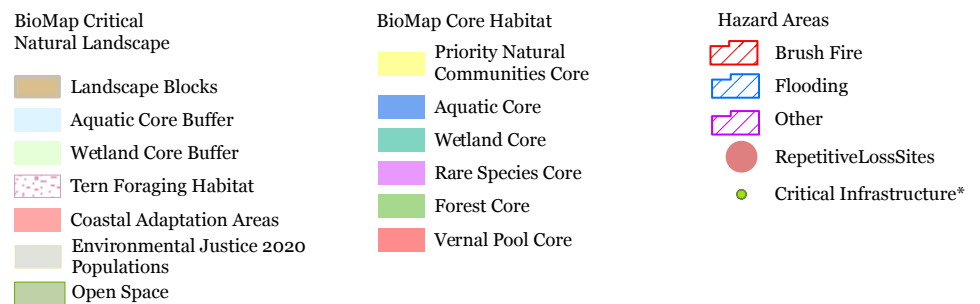


Figure 46: Climate Priority Natural Communities



Challenges

Open space preservation plays a pivotal role in Milford's climate resiliency, as these serve as flood buffers, biodiversity corridors, and community recreation spaces. However, disconnected green spaces reduce their ecological and recreational value. By strengthening connections between parks, wetlands, and other natural areas, Milford can create more resilient open space network that enhances stormwater infiltration, mitigates heat islands, and improves overall climate adaptation. It is important to preserve critical open space through permanent protection as well as ensuring equitable access to quality open space for all residents. Water resource management continues to be a critical issue, as Milford tries to protect its watersheds, groundwater, and overall water quality. Stormwater runoff, flooding, and pollution from impervious surfaces pose risks to both natural habitats and public health. To address these concerns, the Town needs to prioritize green infrastructure investments, such as bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable pavements, while also working to update zoning bylaws to incorporate low-impact development principles.

One of the most prevalent and intractable concerns in Milford is the impact of dispersed development patterns on Milford's environment and transportation systems. An era of auto-oriented growth has contributed to congestion, increased emissions, and limited walkability, making it essential to begin to shift to long term land use strategies that promote mixed-use developments and growth that supports multimodal travel. Existing zoning and parking

policies reinforce car dependency, rather than evolving to support more sustainable transportation alternatives such as walking, biking and public transit.

This model of growth led to the increase of impervious surfaces throughout the town, making stormwater management a critical issue. On top of that, more frequent heavy rainfall events will lead to excessive runoff, flooding, and pollution of local water bodies. Stormwater runoff collects many types of substances including oils, fertilizers, chemicals, waste, and sand and grit, containing hazards that may discharge directly into the local water bodies or infiltrate into the ground and the groundwater supply. Water drawn from the groundwater supply is treated by the Milford Water Department for safe drinking. Unlike wastewater, stormwater usually gets minimal treatment before it is discharged. To address this issue, the town's aging stormwater infrastructure is in need of major upgrades, but funding constraints and a lack of dedicated public works management complicate efforts. The Town is considering introducing a Stormwater Utility Fee, collected from property owners to support dedicated fund to pay specifically for the work of operating, maintaining and improving stormwater infrastructure. The Town is also looking to fill the engineer position overseeing the town's effort to improve stormwater management.

Opportunities

Despite these challenges, Milford has numerous opportunities to enhance climate resilience and sustainability. As highlighted in Chapter 1, Milford completed a Community Resilience Building Workshop in 2018 and has a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness 2.0 process underway concurrently with the Comprehensive Plan process. The top resilience and adaptation priorities identified in the Community Building Workshop include maintaining roadway access and power at the Milford Regional Medical Center and Milford High School; improving the existing Emergency Preparedness Plan to include evacuation routes, listings of available preparedness resources, potential partnerships, and other information; creating a formal emergency preparedness shelter plan; and conducting a flood vulnerability and design study for the Church to Water Street area.

The town can continue to strategically preserve and connect open spaces, particularly in flood-prone areas, to create a network of green infrastructure that provides recreational benefits while also managing stormwater and improving biodiversity. Additionally, expanding Low Impact Development (LID) practices, such as bioswales, permeable pavements, and rain gardens, can improve water quality and reduce urban flooding. Milford can also leverage zoning reforms to encourage sustainable growth, including revising parking requirements and supporting compact and walkable development, which will reduce car dependency and emissions. Further, the town has an opportunity to expand urban forestry efforts, increasing tree canopy

coverage to mitigate urban heat island effects and enhance air quality, particularly in heat-stressed neighborhoods. Finally, strengthening partnerships with regional organizations such as the Charles River Watershed Association and securing state and federal grants can provide essential funding and technical support for climate adaptation projects.

Many of the other goals, strategies and actions of the Comprehensive Plan would positively contribute to building the resilience of the community and the sustainability of the town governance, including the themes of Chapter 5: Build community and bridge cultures; Chapter 7: Improve transportation safety and reduce congestion; Chapter 8: Maintain the livability and charm of neighborhoods; Chapter 9: Continue to improve effective governance; Chapter 11: Strengthen the health and well-being of the community; Chapter 12: Continue to support a thriving local economy; and Chapter 13: Strengthen communication and engagement. Effectively, the theme of advancing resilience and sustainability is woven throughout the content of the Comprehensive Plan.

Supporting Community Feedback

In this process, Milford residents have noted current limitations with accessing and connecting to existing open spaces. Residents noted the need for more open space or better utilization of existing open spaces closer to the town center and called for an updated Open Space and Recreational Plan (OSRP) to provide a more detailed assessment of community open space and recreation needs. Residents expressed a desire for better connections between existing open spaces, including additional bike trails, and connections to assets and destinations such as Louisa Lake and downtown areas.

Milford residents also noted concerns with the quality and maintenance of natural resources and open space assets. Community members voiced concern about effectively managing stormwater runoff to help protect the town's natural water resources. Concerns were raised about the maintenance of existing parks and natural resources, such as the Upper Charles Trail and Upper Charles headwaters, which is contributing to the deterioration of trees and water quality concerns. Concerns were also expressed around the lack of tree planting in town, which could help mitigate heat islands and improve air quality. Additionally, it was noted by residents that park gates are often locked in the winter, limiting access to open space year-round.

As shared across many of the themes, the community frequently discussed car dependency, traffic, and congestion. Traffic congestion and the lack of alternative transportation options were frequently highlighted. Traffic congestion was frequently mentioned with specific areas of the roadway

network with most common references to Main Street and Dilla Street. Beyond the limited bus routes that serve the town, the town lacks a more comprehensive public transit network, making it difficult for residents without cars to move efficiently. Beyond transit, getting around by biking or walking is a concern as well. Bike and pedestrian safety concerns were raised by community members, particularly regarding the lack of safe and secure bike parking at destinations and fully connected and safe pedestrian pathways.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for climate resilience detailed in this chapter. Each goal and

the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can undertake to help advance resilience and sustainability.



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

Strategy: Promote green infrastructure and low impact development through public and private investment.

- **Action:** Partner and collaborate with regional partners such as neighboring communities, watershed associations, and state agencies to implement larger scale resilience projects and share resources.
- **Action:** Provide incentives to encourage private landowners to install green roofs, bioswales, rain gardens and tree planting.

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.

- **Action:** Update the town's Zoning Bylaw and its associated regulations to incorporate the most current environmental standards. For example, adopt the Stretch Energy Code.

Strategy: Continue and monitor implementation of the Milford Stormwater Management Plan (2021) and Milford Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Plan (IDDE) (2021).

- **Action:** Create a list of priority action items (long-term, mid-term, and short-term) and track implementation.
- **Action:** Periodically review and update the IDDE plan to address emerging pollutants and infrastructure challenges.



Goal: Expand open space features and resources as part of resilience improvements, stormwater management, and expanded green infrastructure.

Strategy: Strengthen connections between open spaces to maximize their value as recreational assets, natural habitat corridors, and integral components of resilience infrastructure.

- **Action:** Identify potential green corridors that connect parks, wetlands, and other natural areas across the town and highlight gaps to strengthen continuity to enhance biodiversity, reduce urban heat islands, and improve stormwater infiltration.

- **Action:** Develop multi-functional open spaces that provide recreational benefits while serving as natural stormwater management systems.

Strategy: Expand the tree canopy to enhance resilience, improve air quality, and create more inviting community spaces.

- **Action:** Launch initiatives to increase urban tree cover in public spaces, emphasizing areas prone to heat stress, the heat island effect, or flooding.

- **Action:** Create a tree-planting program that includes funding, volunteer opportunities, and public education on the benefits of urban trees.

Strategy: Integrate resilience into open space planning.

- **Action:** Prioritize open space projects that are multifunctional and that can provide flood mitigation, stormwater management, and climate adaptation benefits, aligning with local sustainability goals.



Goal: Develop preservation priorities for unprotected open space.

Strategy: Develop a framework to prioritize open space protection in the town.

- **Action:** Consider themes identified in the Comprehensive Plan as part of the framework for prioritization. For example, expanding access to open space within a 10-minute walk for all residents, expanding protection of water resources, and connecting natural habitats and wildlife corridors.

Strategy: Examine and update existing open space data to enable informed decision making and strategic planning.

- **Action:** Update Town's open space map and data to provide a clearer understanding of open space ownership and conservation status.

Strategy: Update and maintain a list of priority properties under private ownership to assist in protect for conservation, natural resource protection, and open space.

- **Action:** For priority properties discuss conservation options with property owners (Conservation Restriction, Chapter 61 tax benefits, Agricultural Preservation Restriction, etc.).

Strategy: Update and maintain a list of priority properties under town ownership that would benefit from additional protection.

- **Action:** Discuss adding protection with the steward of the property, considering adding restrictions, changing stewardship, or increasing zoning protections for the property.

Strategy: Identify and prioritize acquisition of undeveloped parcels in flood-prone areas or near watersheds for conversion to open space or nature-based flood buffers.

- **Action:** Work with land trust, state grants, and private landowners to identify and pursue opportunities.



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.
- **Action:** Develop a municipal energy reduction plan for municipal and school facilities.
- **Action:** Apply for grants for energy efficiency investments in municipal facilities that are made available to municipalities with the Green Community Designation.

Strategy: Explore adoption of local regulations to increase energy efficiency and sustainability of new construction.

- **Action:** Explore adoption of the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code. Milford is 1 of 50 cities and towns that remain with the base energy code. All other cities and towns have adopted either the Stretch Energy Code or Specialized Energy Code.
- **Action:** Explore additional zoning requirements for specific districts to enhance the sustainability and/or climate resilience of new construction. For example, requiring the installation of electric vehicle charging.

Strategy: Explore municipal energy improvements and savings through investments in efficient lighting, heating and cooling equipment upgrades, and commissioning.

- **Action:** Partner with utility energy efficiency programs, such as Mass Save, to make smart energy efficiency investments to municipal facilities.

Strategy: Explore town programs that can assist residents with increasing sustainability.

- **Action:** Consider programs to reduce food waste and to encourage composting.

- **Action:** Promote water conservation tips and consider programs such as providing discounted cisterns or rain barrels for reuse of rainwater.



Goal: Strengthen open space preservation and recreation priorities through private and public investments.

Strategy: Continue to gather feedback from the community to align recreational facilities and amenities with community needs.

- **Action:** As part of a new Open Space and Recreation Plan, conduct community surveys and a recreational needs assessment to identify needed investments.

Strategy: Increase zoning requirements for adding open space features, recreational amenities, increased sustainability, and multi-modal connections and infrastructure to future development.

- **Action:** Analyze and determine the balance between increased entitlements (allowed uses, increased building height, reduced parking requirements) and more predictable approvals (site plan review) with additional requirements for amenities consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

Strategy: Strengthen the town's zoning to encourage investment in previously developed areas, while preserving the undeveloped areas that remain.

- **Action:** Update zoning to strategically increase protected open space. For example,

improve the current Planned Residential Development in the zoning to accommodate Town's updated goal to expand open space.

- **Action:** Define locations in town where multifamily housing is allowed and proactively plan for the increase in density in appropriate locations.

- **Action:** Continue to work toward compliance with Chapter 40B to create more control over the location of larger scale development.

Strategy: Increase multimodal connectivity and access to open space.

- **Action:** Improve non-car connectivity by developing on-street bike facilities and multi-use trails that link to key recreational areas and neighborhoods.
- **Action:** Consider the functionality and amenity of all town-owned properties and where access to open space may be lacking add modest amenities to expand access to convenient recreation for more residents.



Goal: Revise town zoning and parking ordinances to encourage more sustainable development patterns, while also reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips and congestion.

Strategy: Consider reducing or eliminating minimum parking requirements for future developments and move to data-driven decisions about parking needs.

- **Action:** Assess parking utilization at multifamily housing sites in town to better understand parking needs and update parking requirements accordingly.
- **Action:** Consider reducing commercial parking requirements to facilitate more mixed-use development and reduce driving.

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

- **Action:** Explore partnerships with car share services to provide convenient alternatives to car ownership.

Strategy: Enhance streetscape design.

- **Action:** Implement streetscape improvements along Main Street, including planters, decorative pedestrian-scale lighting, banners, and other enhancements that contribute to a welcoming and visually cohesive downtown environment. Coordinate these efforts with traffic calming and other transportation improvements.



11



Strengthening the Health and Well-Being of the Community

A healthy and thriving community is one where people feel secure, connected, and empowered to lead fulfilling lives. This goes far beyond the collection of buildings, streets, and public spaces that make up the built environment to include economic stability, housing affordability, accessible transportation, cultural vibrancy, environmental resilience, and equitable access to parks and open spaces. All factors external to an individual that influence health and well-being are collectively referred to as the Social Determinants of Health (SDoH). Planning decisions defined in this Comprehensive Plan will influence social, environmental, and behavioral patterns within the town and will impact long-term health outcomes. Of course, SDoH are not the only determinants of health and well-being. Healthcare and genetics also account for a large proportion of long-term health outcomes. This chapter lays out a thoughtful and proactive approach to strengthening Milford's health and well-being by addressing these interconnected priorities.

To frame these interconnected priorities another way, a healthy individual must have the proper context for optimal health, mental health, and well-being. A healthy individual must be surrounded by a healthy community that enables income security, housing, safety, education, and food security, among others. A healthy community must exist in the broader context of a healthy environment with clean water, clean air, healthy soil, biodiversity, and climate stability, among others. Finally, all these levels of health must exist in the broader context of a healthy society with community cohesion, shared access to resources, laws and governance, and sustainable systems, among others. The Comprehensive Plan focuses recommendations primarily at the levels of community and environment.



Summary of Theme

The Vision Statement and many themes of the Comprehensive Plan point to the importance of supporting a healthy and thriving community in Milford. A healthy and thriving community is one where people feel secure, connected, and empowered to lead fulfilling lives. While Milford is well regarded for providing the setting for fulfilling lives for many of its residents, it is an ambition that is not met equally across the diverse population of the town. To meet this ambition goes far beyond the collection of buildings, streets, and public spaces that make up the built environment of the town to include economic stability, housing affordability, accessible transportation, cultural vibrancy, environmental resilience, and equitable access to parks and open spaces.

Several of these factors have been elevated by challenges throughout the Comprehensive Plan process. Inclusive and affordable housing and displacement and unhoused populations have been highlighted. These challenges directly impact the health and well-being of individuals who are experiencing housing instability and directly impact the health and well-being of the collective community through instability and uncertainty. Housing instability erodes the ability to meet other requirements for health including food security.

Opportunities have been highlighted to address these housing-related challenges and to address other concerns impacting health and well-being are addressed in this chapter as well. Housing instability can be addressed directly by supporting housing production and supporting and broadening economic

opportunity. Additionally, health and well-being can be supported in the town by improving the convenience and safety of active transportation, expanding access to parks and open spaces, and drawing the community together through culture.

These opportunities can enhance the context Milford provides for the optimal health, mental health, and well-being of its residents. A healthy individual must be surrounded by a healthy community that enables income security, housing, safety, education, and food security, among others. A healthy community must exist in the broader context of a healthy environment with clean water, clean air, healthy soil, biodiversity, and climate stability, among others. Finally, all these levels of health must exist in the broader context of a healthy society with community cohesion, shared access to resources, laws and governance, and sustainable systems, among others.

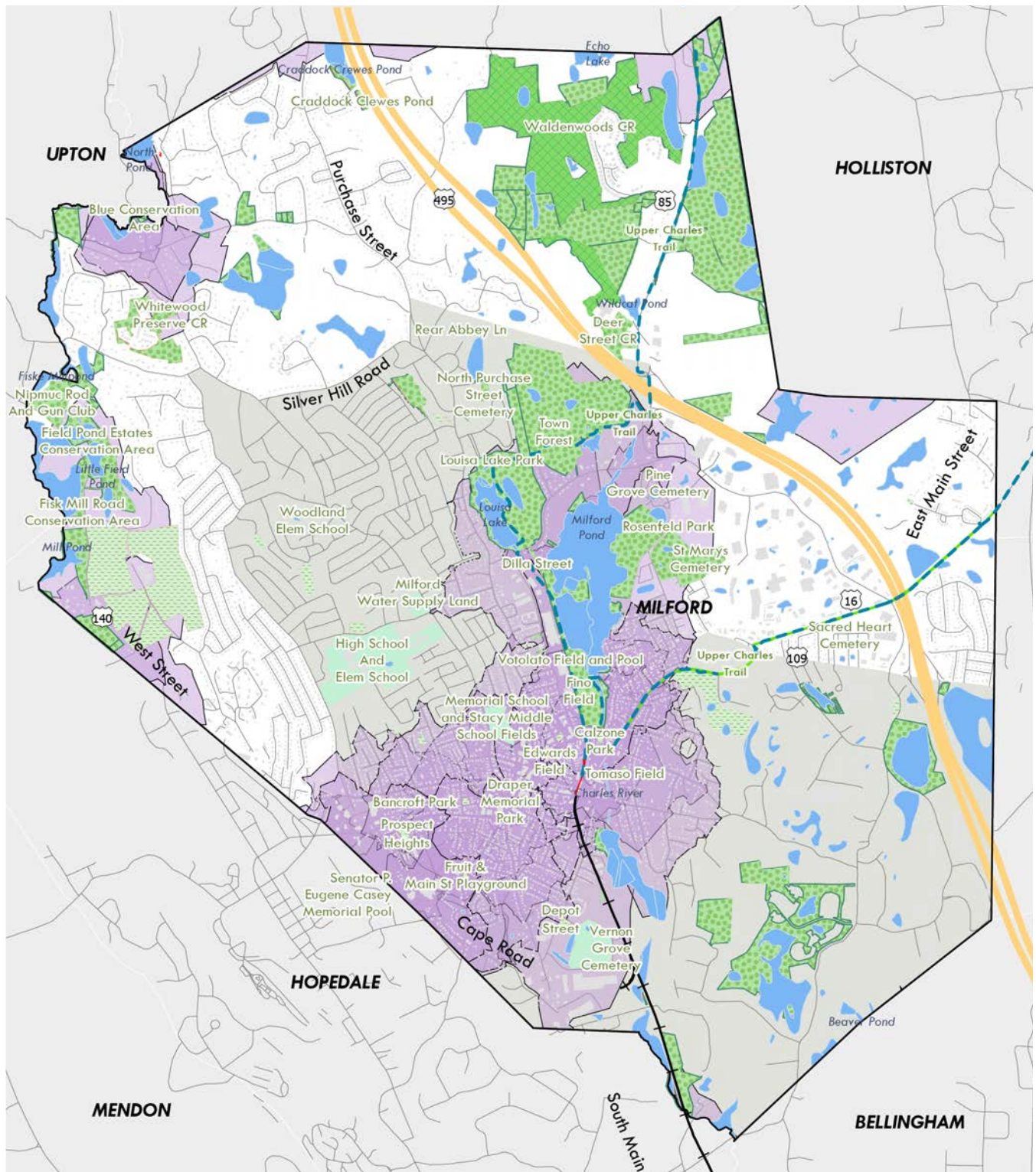


Figure 47: Health and Well Being Parks Map

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Conservation Restriction |  10 Min Walksheds for Parks with Public Access |
|  ConCom Jurisdiction |  Environmental Justice 2020 Populations |
|  Undeveloped Town Land |  Upper Charles Trail |

Challenges

Inclusive and Affordable Housing

The town's housing market has outpaced income growth, leading to an increase in cost-burdened households, those spending more than 30% of their income on housing. Milford's zoning regulations, which overwhelmingly favor single-family residential development, restrict the availability of rental and multi-unit housing options. Currently, no apartment buildings can be constructed by-right or via special permit, except for retirement living facilities, requiring most multifamily development to proceed through the M.G.L. Chapter 40B process. While the town's median household income is \$92,842, income disparities persist, with Black and Hispanic/Latino households earning approximately 75% of white households' median income. Additionally, 9% of Milford's population lives below the poverty line.

Homeownership is becoming increasingly unattainable. A household must earn at least \$162,000 annually to afford a median-priced single-family home without experiencing financial strain, a threshold that exceeds the financial capacity of many residents. Limited housing production, coupled with escalating costs, has contributed to overcrowding, with approximately 150 homes classified as overcrowded and 50 identified as severely overcrowded.

Displacement and Unhoused Populations

The pressures of rising property values, increasing rents, and higher household expenses have led to displacement risks for many residents, particularly low-income households, seniors, and historically marginalized populations. To ensure that all residents have access to stable, safe housing the town must take a proactive approach to mitigating displacement by expanding housing affordability measures and increasing access to support services for vulnerable residents. This includes addressing the needs of unhoused populations through a comprehensive strategy that integrates emergency shelter, transitional housing programs, and essential wraparound services to promote long-term stability.

Opportunities

Economic Opportunity

Milford benefits from a strong local economy, with businesses spanning the healthcare, construction, manufacturing, and trade, transportation, and utilities sectors. Key economic anchors such as the Milford Regional Medical Center and major industrial employers, including Milton CAT and Waters Corporation, provide thousands of jobs and contribute significantly to the town's commercial tax base.

Despite these strengths, economic disparities persist. The town faces high office and retail vacancies, increasing industrial rental rates, racial and ethnic income inequities, and rising housing costs. To foster a more resilient and inclusive economy, the town must take a proactive and equitable approach to economic development, ensuring that opportunities for stable employment, entrepreneurship, and workforce advancement are available to all.

Milford's real estate market reflects shifting economic demands. Office vacancy rates have reached a decade-high of 5.7% post-pandemic, while industrial spaces are fully occupied, resulting in rising rents. The retail sector maintains a 7.5% vacancy rate, consistent with past trends but with limited leasing activity. A strategic approach to commercial development is necessary to balance market demands and promote long-term economic stability.

Connected, Safe, and Accessible Transportation

Since the adoption of the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, Milford has made significant strides in enhancing its transportation network. The completion of a 6.6-mile segment of the Upper Charles Trail in 2014 has provided critical multi-use connectivity, while the town's participation in MassDOT's Complete Streets program has led to targeted investments in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. In 2021, Milford secured \$399,000 in state funding to improve sidewalks, curb ramps, and wayfinding signage.

Despite these advancements, Milford remains a car-dependent community, with 72.2% of residents commuting alone by vehicle. While 93% of households own at least one car, 804 households lack private vehicle access, underscoring the importance of expanded public transportation options. Recent service enhancements to MetroWest Regional Transit Authority (MWRTA) Routes 6 and 14 have extended weekday evening hours, but service gaps persist, including the absence of weekend transit options and infrequent weekday routes. Increased traffic congestion, declining air quality, and rising traffic-related injuries highlight the urgent need for multimodal transportation solutions. Between 2022 and 2024, the town recorded one fatal pedestrian crash, 11 pedestrian injuries, four bicyclist injuries, and 146 vehicular injury crashes. Transitioning from a car-centric transportation model to a more integrated system of walking, biking, and transit will improve safety, reduce environmental impact, and enhance overall community well-being.

Equitable and Resilient Parks and Open Spaces

Parks and open spaces serve as critical social and environmental infrastructure, supporting public health, ecological sustainability, and community cohesion. Milford's 1,302 acres of open space constitute 15% of the town's land area, offering diverse recreational opportunities. Recent investments, including improvements to Town Park and the municipal pool at Fino Field, demonstrate a commitment to enhancing public spaces. However, stormwater management, open space preservation, and equitable park access require continued attention. Stormwater runoff poses significant environmental risks, with pollutants potentially contaminating groundwater supplies. Currently, only 16.4% of Milford's open space is permanently protected, leaving other parcels vulnerable to development.

Park accessibility varies significantly across neighborhoods. While 43% of residents live within a 10-minute walk of a public park, downtown Milford (Census Tract 7443) has limited open space despite its high population density and environmental justice designation. Addressing these disparities through targeted investments in park amenities, programming, and connectivity will enhance community health and resilience.

Identity and Cultural Cohesion

Milford's cultural and historical assets are integral to its identity, economic vitality, and sense of community. The town's rich history, dating back to its incorporation in 1780, reflects the contributions of Indigenous peoples, industrial workers, and diverse immigrant communities. However, challenges persist in preserving and promoting these cultural assets. Many historical narratives remain incomplete, with early documentation often excluding key contributions from underrepresented groups. Additionally, the absence of strong preservation policies, such as a demolition delay bylaw or a historic preservation plan, places historically significant structures at risk. Additionally, Milford has not adopted the Community Preservation Act, which could provide funding for historic conservation efforts. Equitable access to cultural spaces and programming remains a priority. Language barriers, restrictive sign bylaws, and a lack of inclusive representation in public art and events inhibit broad community engagement. Addressing these challenges will strengthen the town's collective cultural identity and ensure that all residents can participate in and benefit from the town's rich heritage.

Supporting Community Feedback

Housing affordability remains a pressing issue for many Milford residents. A diverse cross-section of community members discussed challenges they have faced with housing in the town. Some participants in the process shared that they were previously Milford residents and had to move to a nearby town to find affordable housing. These participants remain in Milford to use town services, such as the Senior Center and Library.

When surveyed, residents who participated in this process identified reducing housing overcrowding as the most important housing issue in Milford. Community engagement has confirmed that overcrowding is a major housing concern in Milford, reflecting a need for expanded and diversified housing options. This concern was primarily raised by concerned residents, but not by the individuals impacted by and experiencing overcrowded housing. Community feedback was received for challenges that may be exacerbated by difficult housing conditions including domestic violence and abuse toward women specifically.

Residents surveyed as part of this process identified two most important issues for open space and recreation that are relevant to this theme. The most important issue was to increase Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility of parks and the second most important issue was identified as the need for more recreational programs. Both point to increasing the accessibility and inclusive of open spaces, programs, and amenities.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for health and well-being detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the town can undertake to help strengthen community health.



Goal: Proactively engage residents to address income disparities.

Strategy: Support English language learning for new adult residents, which enables job mobility and civic participation.

- **Action:** Partner with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) organizations to provide free or reduced cost ESOL classes in or near downtown. A potential partner is the Brazilian Workers Center. Such classes are being offered by the Town Library and at the Milford High School in the evenings.
- **Action:** Follow the language access recommendations of the MAPC Language Access Guide, such as hiring multilingual Town staff and compensating them to act as liaisons to Milford's diverse linguistic communities. (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/language-access-guide/>)

Strategy: Create a Workforce Development Strategy for the Town to address race-based income disparities.

- **Action:** Collaborate with and encourage employers that hire workers without a 4-year college degree, or who speak English as a second language, or who do not speak English to determine the workforce skills that are most needed.
- **Action:** Engage MassHire Central Region Workforce Board, the MassHire Framingham Career Center, and local community-based organizations that serve populations with demonstrated lower incomes to partner with the town on a Milford Workforce Development Strategy.

Strategy: Encourage local hiring and connections between Milford based employers and Milford residents.

- **Action:** Develop local job boards and encourage local preferences for hiring and referrals for successful local hires.



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 Life/Vida Urbana.
- **Action:** Provide landlords with legal obligations for the housing they provide based on Massachusetts state law and State Sanitary Code Regulations.

Strategy: Work with residents and property owners to address properties identified as overcrowded.

- **Action:** Continue to increase code enforcement to address State Sanitary Code violations.
- **Action:** Provide landlords with risks and responsibilities faced for renting an illegal unit, such as a damage claim for tenant relocation, moving/storage expenses, reimbursement of rent and deposits, and violations of the Consumers Protection Act.

Strategy: Develop larger, affordable homes so large families do not cause overcrowding.

- **Action:** Modify zoning in neighborhoods most impacted by overcrowding to allow new housing types and to create incentives to encourage more affordable 2+ bedroom homes to be built.

Strategy: Develop or make available additional units to house people most at risk and those displaced by overcrowding.

- **Action:** Increase Milford Housing Authority capacity to build larger units.
- **Action:** Development RFPs on town-owned land targeting to house those who would otherwise be displaced by code enforcement.
- **Action:** Partner with housing advocates, community based-organizations, temporary shelters, or others who may be able to assist in finding temporary housing and supportive services for impacted populations.



Goal: Explore programs and support for unhoused populations.

Strategy: Proactively understand the homeless need.

- **Action:** Complete annual Point-in-Time (PIT) counts with the county Continuum of Care.
- **Action:** Work in partnership with the Milford Public Schools to better track the data gathered to understand the number of homeless students and what their needs are.

Strategy: Strengthen the network of homeless service providers.

- **Action:** Greater partnership with the Worcester City and County Continuum of Care, ensuring resources are coming to Milford to match the need.

- **Action:** Direct support and a greater partnership with local nonprofits and churches who provide homeless services.

Strategy: Provide more direct services to unhoused persons and persons at risk of homelessness.

- **Action:** Establish and fund a municipal department and position to work with homeless and at-risk persons and households.
- **Action:** Ensure there are tenant protections in place to aid persons at risk of losing their housing.
- **Action:** Establish programs designed to prevent homelessness and provide basic hygiene and sanitation services.



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.

Strategy: Increase safe and convenient connections to current and future multi-use trails.

- **Action:** Explore opportunities to connect the two segments of the Upper Charles Trail that converge near downtown Milford.
- **Action:** Engage with the working group considering the extension of the Upper Charles Trail to the south.

Strategy: Incorporate Complete Streets elements into all roadway projects.

- **Action:** Combine Complete Streets roadway redesign projects with repaving/maintenance efforts to decrease costs and accomplish changes faster.

- **Action:** Explore opportunities for additional improvements through MassDOT's Shared Streets and Spaces program.

Strategy: Develop an asset management plan for streets and sidewalks to identify areas in poor condition and to prioritize repairs and new construction accordingly.

Strategy: Add bicycle parking downtown and along the Upper Charles Trail and consider requiring bicycle parking at public parks/buildings and as part of new development.

- **Action:** Pursue funding from the Boston Region MPO's Community Connections program to add bicycle parking.
- **Action:** Develop an ordinance adding bicycle parking requirements to the Town's zoning code.

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



Goal: Promote equitable access to cultural assets.

Strategy: Improve language accessibility for town information, programs, services, cultural events, and cultural assets

- **Action:** Translate cultural documents, event information, and promotional materials into Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese.
- **Action:** Provide interpretation services for cultural events and other gatherings.
- **Action:** Install multilingual signage in public spaces, like Town Hall and Memorial Hall.

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

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

- **Action:** Provide QR codes for information or self-guided tours that can easily be updated and that link to multiple languages.

Strategy: Expand access and contributions to history and historical resources.

- **Action:** Lead a student-led civics project connected to Milford’s history.
- **Action:** Broaden exhibits at Memorial Hall Museum.
- **Action:** Invite contributions from community members that represent historical and cultural narratives that may be missing or that are underrepresented.



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:** Conduct a comprehensive ADA assessment of open space in Milford.
- **Action:** Activate municipally owned open space through diverse cultural resources.
- **Action:** Ensure inclusive and equitable enforcement of park rules so that all community members feel welcome and able to use park spaces.

Strategy: Engage the community to understand desired park amenities/recreational assets.

- **Action:** Update Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

- **Action:** Assess current parks and recreational assets to identify gaps or underutilized spaces that could be enhanced based on community input.

- **Action:** Conduct community surveys and host focus groups to gather input from residents about desired amenities, types of parks and recreational opportunities.

Strategy: Enhance access to open space information and availability.

- **Action:** Clarify the operating principles and hours for publicly and privately owned open space (e.g., school parks).

Strategy: Incorporate open space and green infrastructure priorities into municipal capital improvement plans to ensure alignment of funding and development timelines.

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BIENVENIDO



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SUNDAY

06:00 am / 10:00 pm

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12



Continue To Support A Thriving Local Economy

Milford has historically been a center of industry and commerce. It has served as a regional center for jobs, services, and amenities. This history as a regional center has been maintained over the years though the location and context for that activity has shifted. Historically, the downtown and surrounding areas were the center of this activity. However, for the half century since the completion of I-495 that activity has shifted to align with this important highway corridor. The Town's largest industrial and commercial zoned districts are aligned with the central and southern portions of I-495 as it runs through the Town. Additional commercial and industrial zoned districts are oriented to other major roadway corridors throughout the town, including Route 140, Route 16 (Main Street in Downtown), and Summer Street.

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 is home to 1,148 businesses across several industry sectors. The largest employment sectors in Milford include education and health services, construction, trade and transportation, and manufacturing. The labor force in Milford includes about 15,580 workers. Most of these Milford residents commute to employers in nearby cities and towns. Illustrating Milford's continued importance as a regional center, 15,347 employees commute into Milford and reside in other nearby cities and towns. The town can continue to support a thriving local economy through close attention to zoning regulations, opportunities for reinvestment, workforce development, and support for a diverse supply of local housing production.

Summary of Theme

Context of Milford's Local Economy

Milford has historically been a center of industry and commerce. It has served as a regional center for jobs, services, and amenities. This history as a regional center has been maintained over the years though the location and context for that activity has shifted. Historically, the downtown and surrounding areas were the center of this activity. However, for the half century since the completion of I-495 that activity has shifted to align with this important highway corridor. The Town's largest industrial and commercial zoned districts are aligned with the central and southern portions of I-495 as it runs through the Town. Additional commercial and industrial zoned districts are oriented to other major roadway corridors throughout the town, including Route 140, Route 16 (Main Street in Downtown), and Summer Street. Milford's location with two exits along Interstate 495 makes it an easily accessible center for both consumer-facing and industrial economic activity.

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 is home to 1,148 businesses across several industry sectors. The largest employment sectors in Milford include education and health services, construction, trade and transportation, and manufacturing. The Milford Regional Medical Center acts as an institutional anchor in Milford's economy, including through its recent affiliation with UMass Memorial Health.

The town's 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 labor force in Milford includes about 15,580 workers. Most of these Milford residents commute to employers in nearby cities and towns. Illustrating Milford's continued importance as a regional center, This strength is also demonstrated through continued business activity such as the opening of a new Trader Joe's location on Fortune Boulevard. 15,347 employees commute into Milford and reside in other nearby cities and towns. The town can continue to support a thriving local economy through close attention to zoning regulations, opportunities for reinvestment, workforce development, and support for a diverse supply of local housing production.

The map on the following page illustrates the number of employees per current zoning district. The Downtown is a center of employment activity with the many small businesses located throughout the Main Street corridor. The largest employees are in the zoning districts near I-495. Route 140 is also highlighted as an employment center. The neighborhoods north of Main Street are also highlighted, likely due to the number of employees of the Milford public schools located in the neighborhoods.

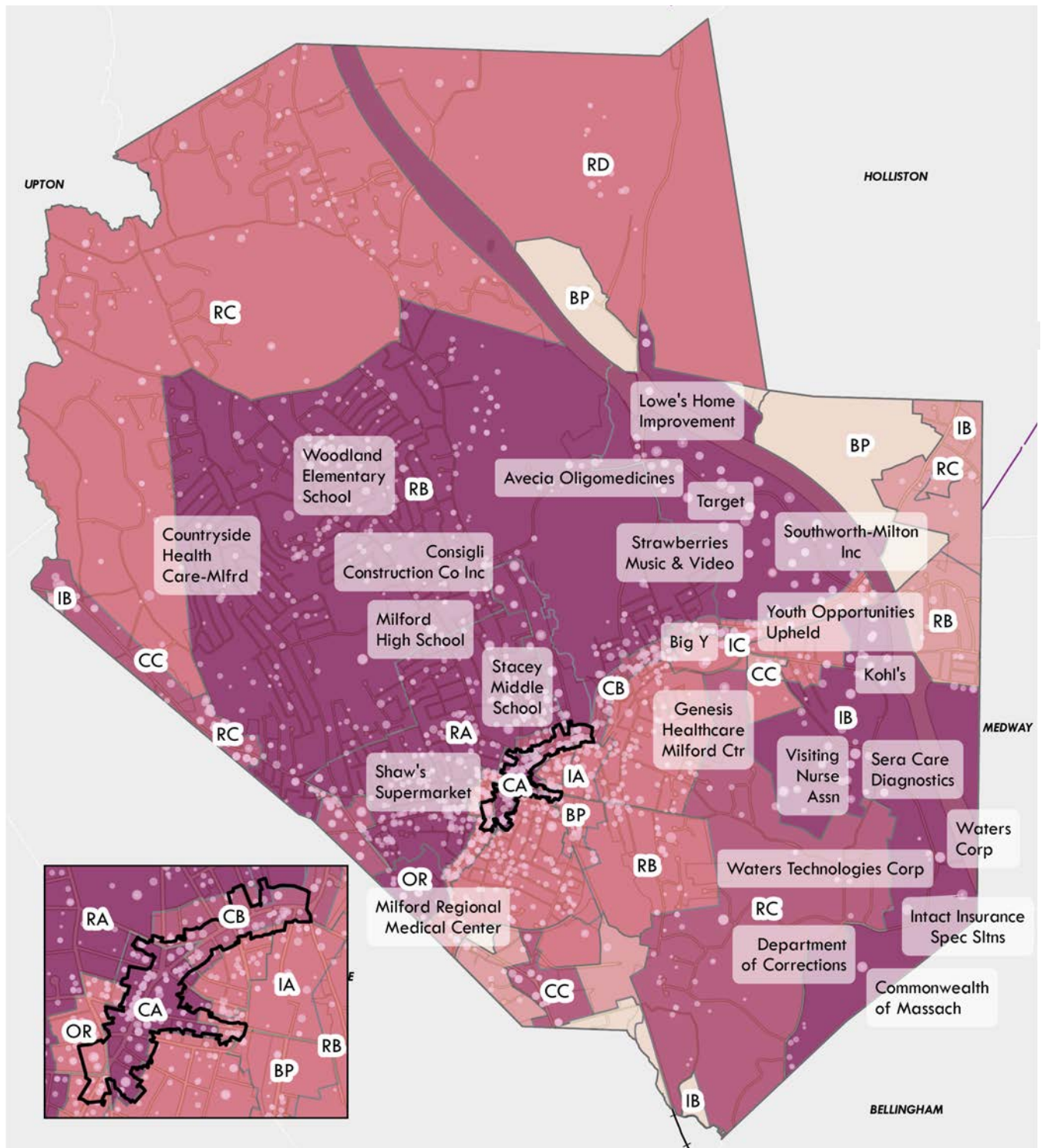


Figure 48: Employees by Zoning District in Milford

Challenges

Milford is not immune to the economic challenges that are facing the Greater Boston region and must contend with a few unique challenges as well. Shared economic challenges facing the Greater Boston region include housing affordability and a constrained housing supply; the continuing impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic including changes to commute patterns, occupancy of commercial office space, and changes to consumer preferences and spending patterns; the continued expansion of online commerce and retail spending; continually growing disparities in income inequality; and the impact of inflation, higher interest rates, and economic uncertainty negatively impacting long term business investments and new construction.

In addition, Milford faces unique challenges such as a high commercial tax rate compared to adjacent towns. This makes Milford a less desirable location for business investment, and businesses that would otherwise invest in Milford may be attracted elsewhere. In addition, there is a relatively high rate of office vacancy in Milford, and exploring opportunities for rezoning is needed to allow flexibility of uses to allow for the productive use of vacant spaces or redevelopment of underutilized properties. Additionally, the lack of mixed-use zoning in the town further constrains opportunities to better utilize land and unlock economic potential in Milford. Finally, demographic shifts in the town will continue to change Milford's workforce and needs required to support the workforce. For example, an increasingly diverse and foreign-born population would benefit from

collaboration with educational institutions, workforce development agencies, and English as a Second Language programs. The changing composition of business owners may necessitate new modes of supporting small local businesses in subjects such as business expansion or access to capital.

Constrained housing along with demographic changes require the town and economic anchors to flexibly respond to the needs of community members in the town. The related challenges of housing affordability, overcrowding, food insecurity, and homelessness point to the need for a coordinated approach to providing supportive services. A close coordination between town departments and community-based organizations is important for community members facing multiple challenges with few resources.

Opportunities

Zoning reform can be used as a tool for economic improvement to meet community needs and enhance the tax base. To support the economic wellbeing of residents, Milford can create more opportunities for multifamily housing to meet demand. This will require zoning reform that allows multifamily housing and a collaborative approach to 40B developments and other multi-family housing developers. Milford can also revise the zoning bylaw in targeted commercial and industrial areas to expand or specify the uses that best utilize the land, such as encouraging industrial rather than office use where commercial vacancies are high

and industrial vacancies are low. Milford can assess locations ready for redevelopment and investment where land value currently exceeds building value and where historic structures, or community amenities will not be displaced. This may include areas that will or can in the future support new multifamily housing.

One way Milford can economically support residents and respond to changing demographics in the Town is through workforce development efforts. Milford can collaborate with local partners to provide English language support to adult residents and can support employers that offer jobs to people without 4-year college degrees (28% of residents have a high school diploma and no further education) or who don't speak English as a first language (35% of residents speak languages other than English) (Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2022). As Milford's population continues to diversify and racial income disparities remain, this type of intentional workforce development can support the economic wellbeing of Milford residents and the Town.

Due to Milford's fiscally conservative approach, it is important to invest in a thriving local economy. Milford's commercial tax base is one of the foundations of the town's annual revenues. Investments to support businesses may include several approaches. As the town has done in the past, invest in keeping the zoning bylaw up to date with the needs of businesses and future investments. Continue to invest in roadway, water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure to enable efficient business

operation. Invest in attracting businesses to fill vacancies and promoting the town for complementary private investments.

Another interesting aspect of Milford is that the town nearly meets the criteria for becoming a "Gateway City," except for population threshold. A Gateway City is defined as a municipality with a population between 35,000 and 250,000, a median household income below the state average and a rate of educational attainment (bachelor's degree or above) below the state average. Currently, Milford's Population is 30,304 residents. Qualifying as a Gateway City would open new state funding opportunities.

Note: At the time of data collection and analysis, the most recent U.S. Census data was the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-Year Estimate ending in year 2022. The 5-Year estimates include data aggregated from 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, and 2018.

Supporting Community Feedback

Business owners and economic development stakeholders provided feedback on the strengths and challenges of Milford's economy. These stakeholders reported that the town is helpful and responsive to outreach from new businesses wanting to locate in Milford, and that Tax Increment Financing (TIF) has been well utilized by larger businesses to support their expansion or retention in town. On the other hand, businesses owners and stakeholders have voiced concern over the high commercial tax rate compared to nearby towns.

Businesses across Milford also share many common interests with residents and want to see beautification, parking improvements, and other investments downtown. Business owners who operate downtown, especially those who speak languages other than English, expressed safety as their top concern. They have experienced a series of robberies or theft to their businesses and personal vehicles, motorcycles speeding on the sidewalks and endangering pedestrians, and a slower police response time than expected.

Small business owners could use technical assistance help, such as a presentation or educational materials in the language they speak on Small Business Administration (SBA) funding opportunities. Community members want to see a more culturally united business environment. Also refer to the community context and recommendations of Chapter 6: Strengthen Downtown as a Center of Community for more about Downtown.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for Milford's economy detailed in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the Town can undertake to help support a thriving local economy.



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.
- **Action:** Create overlay zones for multifamily buildings in other zoning districts that may present redevelopment opportunities. An overlay zone can be used to add a new opportunity, while the underlying zoning remains in place.
- **Action:** Where multifamily may be allowed, increase the allowed density and/or building height and reduce parking minimums for multifamily developments.

Strategy: Encourage friendly 40B developments.

- **Action:** Publish a guide for 40B developer interactions with the town including highlighting locations where 40B development is encouraged (residential neighborhoods near downtown), and locations where it is discouraged (industrial and commercial zoned districts).
- **Action:** Identify transformative redevelopment properties and actively market development opportunities to prospective developers, for example, 211 Central Street.
- **Action:** Proactively engage multifamily housing developers and maintain those relationships to gather feedback on transformative redevelopment opportunities and barriers to multifamily investment.



Goal: Assess redevelopment opportunity throughout town and downtown to meet community needs and enhance the tax base.

Strategy: Pursue mixed-use redevelopment opportunities to capture the land value of under-utilized properties around Town

- **Action:** Analyze properties in downtown Milford to determine where land value

exceeds building value to determine which properties are potentially underutilized and that could benefit from a mixed-use redevelopment.

- **Action:** Explore zoning modifications in the Central Commercial zoning district that would create mixed-use redevelopment opportunities for underutilized properties.

Strategy: Assist in filling commercial and industrial vacancies.

- **Action:** Identify existing spaces with commercial and industrial vacancies and discuss challenges in finding new tenants with property owners.

- **Action:** If challenges are identified with the district zoning or other town policies, explore modifying the regulations to create new opportunities for tenants.



Goal: Update the zoning bylaw to allow and encourage industrial and commercial mixed-use in appropriate areas of town.

Strategy: Revise zoning in key commercial and industrial areas.

- **Action:** Update zoning designations in office, business, and industrial districts near I-495 and Route 140 corridors (e.g., Fortune Boulevard and South Main Street) to increase development capacity, promote economic growth, and enable non-residential mixed-use (commercial and industrial) opportunities.
- **Action:** Differentiate subdistricts for the Highway Industrial B (IB) zoning district. Allow different uses in the subdistricts reinforcing distinctions which have occurred. Consider allowing multifamily residential uses in the portions of the district which are currently retail focused, for example Milford Plaza.

Strategy: Promote strategic growth and innovation clusters.

- **Action:** Market and expand opportunities for medical-focused, health-tech businesses,

and related industries near the Milford Regional Medical Center to strengthen the local economy and create jobs.

Strategy: Expand uses to accommodate future needs.

- **Action:** Update and refine zoning and use regulations to promote compatible combinations of light industrial and commercial, for example flex spaces, artisanal manufacturing, or other innovative workspaces.

Strategy: Strengthen development and design standards.

- **Action:** Establish clear design and performance standards to ensure new developments create the transformations that are desired. For example, introducing residential into predominantly retail properties to densify the development and create a more compact and walkable place by reducing large surface parking areas and diversifying uses and housing types.



Goal: Proactively engage residents to address income disparities.

Strategy: Support English language learning for new adult residents, which enables job mobility and civic participation.

- **Action:** Partner with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) organizations to provide free or reduced cost ESOL classes in or near downtown. A potential partner is the Brazilian Workers Center. Such classes are being offered by the Town Library and at the Milford High School in the evenings.
- **Action:** Follow the language access recommendations of the MAPC Language Access Guide, such as hiring multilingual Town staff and compensating them to act as liaisons to Milford's diverse linguistic communities. (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/language-access-guide/>)

Strategy: Create a Workforce Development Strategy for the Town to address race-based income disparities.

- **Action:** Collaborate with and encourage employers that hire workers without a 4-year college degree, or who speak English as a second language, or who do not speak English to determine the workforce skills that are most needed.
- **Action:** Engage MassHire Central Region Workforce Board, the MassHire Framingham Career Center, and local community-based organizations that serve populations with demonstrated lower incomes to partner with the town on a Milford Workforce Development Strategy.

Strategy: Encourage local hiring and connections between Milford based employers and Milford residents.

- **Action:** Develop local job boards and encourage local preferences for hiring and referrals for successful local hires.



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.

- **Action:** Consider expansions to local excise taxes to further diversify revenue.
- **Action:** Consider adopting the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to provide additional funding for open spaces, affordable housing, and historic preservation.

Strategy: Foster sustainable growth for private sector enterprises in the town.

- **Action:** Continue to be responsive to the needs of commercial and industrial businesses to support a strong tax base, with a particular focus on zoning changes that would enable future investments.

Strategy: Explore public private partnerships for infrastructure or other investments.

- **Action:** Explore partnerships that could invest in long term sewer infrastructure improvements that would benefit town infrastructure and private properties.

- **Action:** Explore partnerships for development improving nearby transportation connections for walking and biking.

Strategy: Explore services or other areas that could benefit from multi-municipal collaboration.

- **Action:** Expand the use of collective purchasing to reduce administrative burdens of procurement and save on a wide range of equipment and services.



Goal: Integrate arts and culture into public spaces and recognize as an economic driver.

Strategy: Recognize the arts and cultural sector as an economic driver that supports jobs, generates revenue, and invites tourism.

- **Action:** Support a calendar of annual events that will draw the community together and attract visitors from outside of Milford.
- **Action:** Strengthen the connections between events and small businesses by hosting arts and culture events downtown and coordinating business hours.
- **Action:** Support establishing a cluster of arts industries including web publishing, streaming, broadcasting, publishing, motion picture, video, and video game industries in Milford.

Strategy: Establish an ongoing process to assess and address how local zoning and building regulations affect cultural spaces, ensuring they support and enhance the community's diverse cultural expressions.

- **Action:** Build on the recent amendment to the sign bylaw that allows murals by reviewing how that and other bylaws can be updated to explicitly permit more creative public art elements like sculptures, unique signage, facades, and displays. This will foster a vibrant downtown that reflects artistic and cultural diversity.
- **Action:** Conduct an internal review of existing zoning and building regulations to identify any unintended biases against diverse cultural expressions in downtown aesthetics and signage.

- **Action:** Develop a simple cultural space zoning checklist to guide planners and developers in considering the impact of regulations on cultural spaces.

Strategy: Establish Cultural Respect Easements (CREs) on municipal owned land to formally recognize and protect Indigenous rights to land and resources, aligning with 1662 historical deed that ensured perpetual access to hunting, fishing, and cultural practices.

- **Action:** Collaborate with Indigenous organizations such as the Native Land Conservancy or Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Collective to implement CREs.
- **Action:** Provide training for local law enforcement on the legal and historical basis of Indigenous rights to land access, emphasizing respectful engagement.



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13



Strengthening Communication and Engagement

As the town faces complex challenges, such as population growth, economic disparities, climate change, and housing affordability, it must also invest in the tools, partnerships, and practices that allow residents to be full participants in shaping their community. A recurring theme throughout the Comprehensive Plan process was the need to strengthen communication and engagement between town leadership and residents, town boards, commissions, and committees, and town services and community-based organizations. While a seemingly simple request, strengthening communication and engagement requires consistent effort and thoughtful approaches. Once a focus on improving communication and engagement becomes routine, it will help to create a cultural shift that will strengthen the Milford community and enable town leadership to make decisions with confidence.

Strengthening communication and engagement is essential to building public trust, ensuring equitable access to town resources and services, building partnerships with local organizations, and creating a culture of inclusion, collaboration, and transparency in governance. To achieve these results, the town should foster transparency by sharing information openly. The town should encourage and create opportunities to receive community feedback and be responsive to the feedback. Through many of the recommendations in Chapter 5: Build communities and bridge cultures, and others, the town should cultivate an inclusive environment for residents from all backgrounds. Communication and engagement opportunities should be created so that a diverse array of residents feel comfortable providing feedback, and that feedback can be provided in a way that is convenient.



Summary of Theme

Strengthening communication and engagement is important for the town to effectively face complex challenges. This theme includes strategies to invest in the tools, partnerships, and practices that will enable residents to be full participants in shaping their community. The town should seek to improve resident outreach and the accessibility of town resources, especially regarding town policies and creating new opportunities to add transparency and receive feedback on town decision-making processes. A recurring theme throughout the Comprehensive Plan process was the need to strengthen communication and engagement between town leadership and residents, town staff across a range of departments, town boards, commissions, and committees, and town services and community-based organizations.

Additional strategies hope to expand support for effective boards, committees, and community-based organizations. While a seemingly simple request, strengthening communication and engagement requires consistent effort and thoughtful approaches. Once improvements in communication and engagement become routine, it will help to create a cultural shift that will strengthen the Milford community and enable town leadership to make decisions with confidence.

Strengthening communication and engagement is essential to building public trust, ensuring equitable access to town resources and services, building partnerships with local organizations, and creating a culture of inclusion, collaboration, and transparency in governance. The town should continue to improve inclusivity and

equitable access to services. To achieve these results, the town should foster transparency by sharing information openly. The town should encourage and create opportunities to receive community feedback and be responsive to the feedback.

The town should cultivate an inclusive environment for residents from all backgrounds and strengthen an understanding and documentation of historic resources and themes. The map on the following page juxtaposes the town's historic districts with its current immigrant communities by country of origin highlighting the renewal and cultural vibrancy of the town. Communication and engagement opportunities should be created so that a diverse array of residents feel comfortable providing feedback. All these efforts will help to engage the full community in sustaining long-range planning to guide future change.

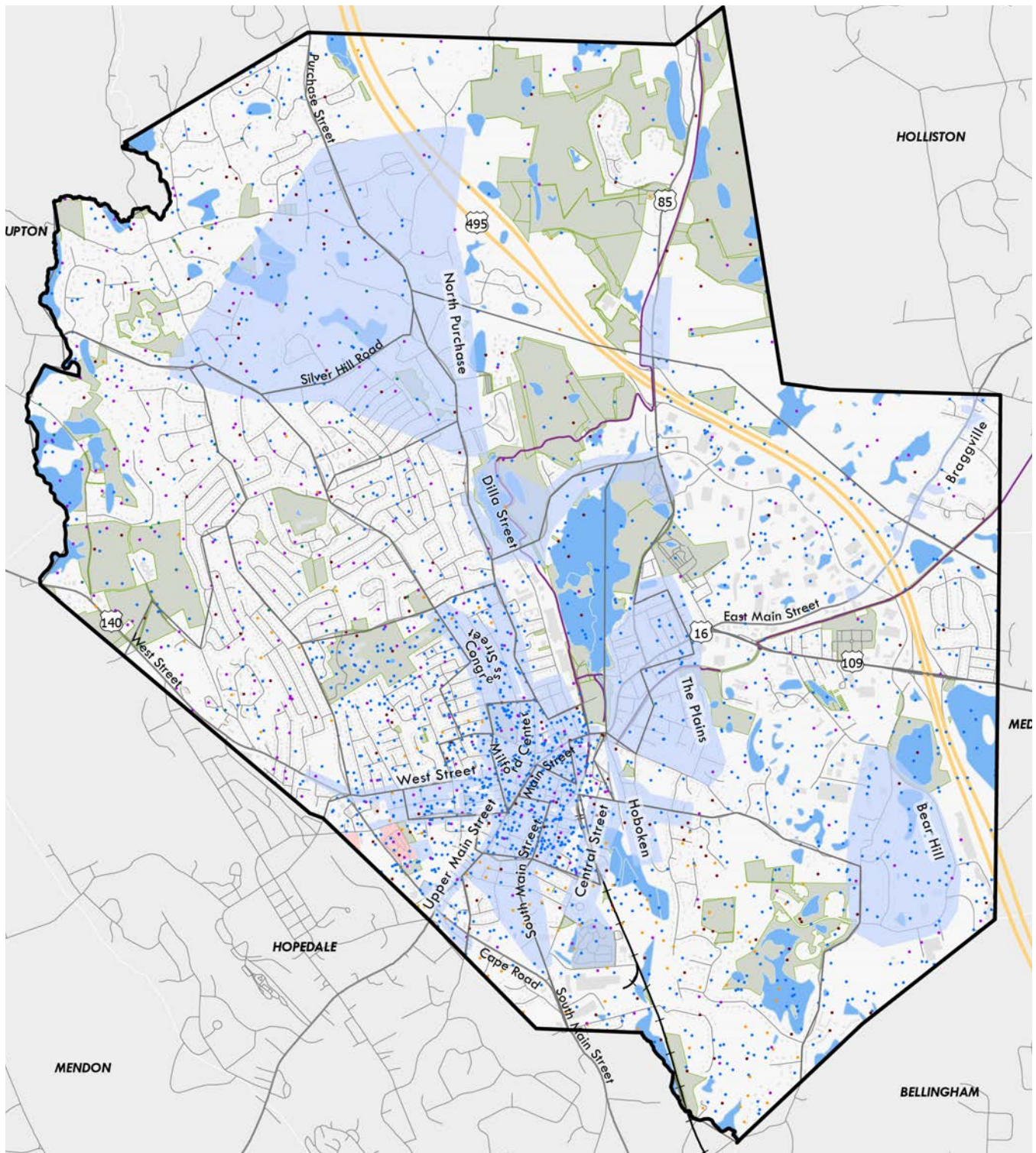


Figure 49: Immigrant Communities by Origin in Milford

1 Dot = 4 People

- European
- Asian
- African
- Oceanian
- Latin America
- North American

Historic Districts

- District Identified in Local Inventory
- National Register Historic Districts

Challenges

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

Residents across Milford have expressed concerns about barriers to accessing municipal services and the need for more meaningful representation in the Town's decision-making processes. These sentiments are echoed by Town staff and officials, who acknowledge the growing urgency to improve language accessibility, enhance outreach, and invest in culturally inclusive events and initiatives that reflect the town's diversity. Residents also voiced concerns that public meetings are overly procedural or lack meaningful opportunities for input. A renewed focus on two-way communication, through town hall meetings, surveys, advisory groups, and participatory planning, can help shift this perception and increase engagement.

To strengthen local democracy and build a more inclusive civic culture, Milford needs to expand its outreach strategies to reach all segments of the community, especially those who have been historically underrepresented or underserved. This includes investing in multilingual communication, culturally responsive materials, and more proactive, community centered engagement efforts.

Increasing equitable access to civic and democratic processes means ensuring that every resident regardless of language, background, ability, or income, has the tools, support, and opportunities to participate in local government. It requires building systems that empower

residents to share their perspectives, stay informed, and help shape decisions that directly affect their lives and neighborhoods.

Continue to improve inclusivity and equitable access to services

Residents interact with local government every day, from paying utility bills to checking out library books, or accessing housing services. The town should strive to make all resident-facing services as simple, efficient and user-friendly as possible. While recent updates to the Town of Milford's website represent progress, much more can be done to ensure that all resident-facing services are accessible. This includes optimizing digital tools for users with limited English proficiency, disabilities, or limited access to technology, as well as offering printed and in-person alternatives where needed.

The Town should also work to expand access to services and supports for Environmental Justice populations, unhoused residents, and recent immigrants. Improving transparency and open access to municipal data will empower residents and community partners to advocate for resources and help identify and address service gaps.

Opportunities

Support effective boards, committees, and community-based organizations

Effective governance relies on well-supported boards, commissions, and community-based organizations. The Town should invest in

training and capacity-building for boards and staff to promote equitable engagement practices. Community-based organizations play an essential role in connecting residents to resources and amplifying underrepresented voices. The town should leverage partnerships with trusted organizations like the Youth Center, Senior Center, Library, and Housing Authority. These institutions already serve as vital community connectors and can help broaden the reach and impact of Town engagement efforts.

Strengthen understanding and documentation of historic resources/themes

Milford's identity is deeply shaped by its layered cultural and immigration history. The Town is home to long-standing Irish, Italian, and Portuguese communities, as well as growing populations from Brazil, Ecuador, and other Latin American countries. Roughly 26% of Milford residents today are foreign-born. These communities contribute to the town's economic vitality and cultural richness particularly in the downtown. However, much of Milford's historical documentation overlooks key narratives, such as those of Indigenous people, enslaved individuals, women, and immigrant populations.

The Town should prioritize expanding its historic inventory to reflect the full breadth of its heritage, protecting vulnerable historic assets, and integrating cultural history into planning

and placemaking efforts. A more inclusive historical narrative can strengthen the town's identity and residents' sense of belonging

Sustaining long-range planning to guide future change

The Town of Milford is grappling with financial and infrastructure challenges that threaten its ability to maintain current service levels. The town has historically followed a fiscally conservative approach, avoiding Proposition 2½ overrides. However, the combined effects of inflation, reduced state education funding, and aging infrastructure make this approach increasingly unsustainable. Temporary grants have helped fill gaps, but they are not a long-term solution. Critical needs include overcrowded municipal buildings, a deteriorating high school, outdated traffic signals, and aging water and sewer systems. Growing demands for parking, sidewalk and road improvements, multilingual services and staffing are further straining resources. Many departments have worked creatively to stretch limited capacity, but without additional investment and strategic planning, service delivery will suffer.

To effectively meet these challenges, the Town of Milford must continue to engage in regular long-range planning and capital improvement planning. These tools are critical for guiding future growth, prioritizing investments, and ensuring that services and infrastructure can meet the needs of all residents, now and in the years to come.

Supporting Community Feedback

Through this Comprehensive Plan process Milford residents were asked, what things does Milford need to achieve the shared vision for the town's future? The most frequent responses from residents were to increase communication and civic engagement, to create more opportunities for community involvement, and to facilitate more accessible public meetings. These responses formed the foundation for this theme and resonated in community discussions.

Interestingly, while the goals and strategies of this theme each have inherent benefits, as framed by the community feedback, they are also in service of the larger vision and other themes articulated in the Comprehensive Plan. By taking actions to strengthen communication, community involvement, and civic engagement, implementation of all goals, strategies, and actions becomes easier. The adage, "many hands make light work" applies here. It is important to invite the entire community to participate in helping Milford to evolve toward the shared vision that has been articulated.

Goals, Strategies, and Actions

The following goals, strategies, and actions are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement and respond to the context for communication and engagement in this chapter. Each goal and the associated strategies and actions provide specific, tangible, and actionable steps the town can take to help strengthen engagement.



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.
- **Action:** Provide meeting agendas or other critical information in English, Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese.

Strategy: Provide information sessions about Town Meeting and the processes to become a Town Meeting member to expand the interest in and to support diverse representation in Town Meeting.

- **Action:** Expand language access at Town Meeting through translation of important materials and by making interpretation available.

Strategy: Highlight important decisions or policy changes with a specifically designed community notice that draws attention to these important items. Provide notice in

advance of meetings where the decision will be made, invite advance feedback, and provide the results of the decision.

- **Action:** Create a framework for the types of decisions or policy changes that would receive this additional treatment to increase public understanding and engagement.
- **Action:** Provide an annual revenue analysis and projection to ensure residents are familiar with the upcoming fiscal projections compared with annual town budgets.



Goal: Continue to improve inclusivity and equitable access to town services.

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

- **Action:** Translation of the information on the town website is currently available through a Google Translate button at the bottom right of the webpage. Improve accessibility by making this function more prominent or offering a more visible button for translation into Spanish and Portuguese (Brazil).
- **Action:** Translate in person signage in town facilities, particularly in Town Hall, into Spanish and Brazilian Portuguese. Provide instructions in multiple languages for how non-English speaking residents should engage with services in the building.
- **Action:** Have available, either through the presence of multi-lingual staff members, or through familiarity with language translation apps, assistance from municipal staff for non-English speaking residents.

Strategy: Strategically distribute information about town services through Milford Public Schools, Library, Senior Center, and Youth Center.

- **Action:** Create a resident resource and service guide that will increase awareness of what is available. Provide the resource guide in English, Spanish, and Brazilian Portuguese.

Strategy: Improve town service delivery through diverse and equitable hiring.

- **Action:** Create a framework for tracking representation in town governance and compare demographics of municipal employees with demographics of the town. Where possible, seek to increase representation of constituent groups currently underrepresented.
- **Action:** Strengthen the connection between Milford Public Schools and municipal government. Create a civic education, mentorship, or internship pathway that brings Milford high school students into town governance.
- **Action:** Define career pathways from Milford Public Schools to municipal employment to both increase connections to town services and to expand the hiring pool for municipal positions.



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:** Develop simple guides and flow charts for decision making and town policies and processes. Make these resources available to residents to inform them of the important moments for feedback and involvement.
 - **Action:** Continually experiment with new techniques for community engagement and new channels of communication.
 - **Action:** Work to standardize agendas, procedures, and meetings across boards, commissions, and committees, as much as is feasible.
 - **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.
- Strategy:** Improve collaboration and communication between boards, commissions, and committees and department staff that support them.
- **Action:** Define and document the hierarchy and lines of communication for all boards, commissions, and committees. Group Boards/Commissions/Committees by function and structure them with direct oversight from other Boards/Commissions/Committees, with oversight connecting back to the Select Board.
 - **Action:** Recommend as a best practice that each board/commission/committee draft an annual report that outlines the previous fiscal year's efforts and evaluates and establishes clear goals and steps to achieve the goals. Use a shared template for this report.
 - **Action:** Recommend as a best practice that each board/commission/committee have an annual reorganization of officers.
 - **Action:** Establish and model a code of conduct, beginning with the Select Board and expanding to all boards and committees. Current members would establish the code of conduct and once established, incoming members would sign-on to the code of conduct.



Goal: Continue to engage in regular long-range planning to guide future change.

Strategy: Consider preparing a series of more detailed district-level community-based visioning and zoning plans to better align zoning requirements with district goals.

- **Action:** Pilot a district-level community-based visioning and zoning plan in the Downtown to explore mixed-use zoning modifications to encourage transformative investments.

Strategy: Consider preparing town-wide plans that complement the comprehensive plan and that would provide additional detail in high priority topics.

- **Action:** Prepare a Housing Production Plan to proactively plan for multifamily housing and that could help the town to achieve “safe harbor” from 40B development.
- **Action:** Prepare an Open Space and Recreation Plan to add further detail to community open space needs and detail increasing the functionality and accessibility of Milford’s open spaces.
- **Action:** Complete the current MVP2.0 process and integrate recommendations into town processes.



Goal: Strengthen understanding and documentation of historic resources and themes.

Strategy: Develop a comprehensive survey plan to guide future historic resource survey efforts. Preservation planning begins with a survey of any historically significant buildings, structures, objects, areas, burial grounds, landscape features, or sites. A new plan would document what has already been surveyed, expand inclusiveness of histories documented, and add new or missing resources.

- **Action:** Apply for a Survey and Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to pay for a consultant to undertake the plan.

Strategy: Prepare a historic context and narrative on the history of immigration in Milford.

- **Action:** Apply for a Survey and Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to pay for a consultant to undertake the study.
- **Action:** Support the organization of a call for local immigration stories to be a part of a broad and diverse cataloging of this historic context.

Strategy: Prepare a historic context and narrative on the history of jazz in Milford.

- **Action:** Apply for a Survey and Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to pay for a consultant to undertake the study.
- **Action:** Identify local experts that could help guide the development of the historic context of jazz in Milford and empower them as an advisory group.





14

Implementation Action Plan

The Town of Milford's Comprehensive Plan provides a holistic assessment of where Milford is in 2024/2025, reflects on its past, and sets a vision for the future. The plan defines a comprehensive set of goals that are detailed with strategies and actions to guide the Town policies, investments, and decision-making regarding land use and zoning, housing, open space and recreation, natural, cultural, and historic resources, public facilities and services, and transportation. The 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. This chapter 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.

This Implementation Action Plan highlights 20 goals with 20 strategies, and 20 actions.

Implementation

A Comprehensive Plan is only effective if there is a shared commitment to implementation. Implementation will rely on leadership and collaboration among Town staff, Boards, Commissions, and Committees, community-based organizations, and Milford residents. While every action outlined in this plan cannot be undertaken at the same time, it is important to begin momentum on implementation efforts. It is also important to make progress across the 9 themes of the Comprehensive Plan. The Implementation Action Plan outlined in the following pages highlights the goals, strategies, and actions that are most important in each theme to get the momentum started. These items are either focused on capacity building or catalyzing an important change. It is hoped that accomplishments among these initial items will build momentum for completion of other items defined in the plan.

The 9 themes across the Milford Comprehensive Plan include:

- Building 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
- Strengthening the health and well-being of the community
- Continue to support a thriving local economy
- Strengthening communication and engagement

Progress in each of the themes is important to build toward the shared community vision expressed in Chapter 4 of the Comprehensive Plan. The focus of the implementation action plan is over the next 1 to 5 years. As work is accomplished, additional actions from the Comprehensive Plan should be undertaken and should be made easier by the progress already made. It is important to view the Comprehensive Plan as a dynamic and ongoing process. The plan documents the community vision, goals, strategies, and actions in 2024/25 but as progress is made, the specific actions may shift, or new strategies may emerge. It is important to track progress against this plan, but to not place it as an obstacle to new approaches.

Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee

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.

Other towns have successfully used the model of a Comprehensive Plan Implementation Committee. Some are formed as a subcommittee of the Planning Board, an Ad Hoc Committee with representation from multiple boards, or formed by vote at Town Meeting authorizing the Select Board and Planning Board to appoint the Committee. Regardless, of the type of formation and authorization it is important to include diverse perspectives across several boards and committees and to include resident participation. Committees are often required to report to the Planning Board and Select Board at least twice annually and to Town Meeting at least annually. The reporting includes implementation actions accomplished within the past year, anticipated steps to be accomplished within the next year or two years, and resources, including Town Meeting appropriations or

other actions, necessary to complete those steps. Other Implementation Committees have a set term for members typically about three years. The committee typically continues for about ten years and such term may be extended by vote of Town Meeting if that was how the committee originated. One feature that is very helpful for the success of the committee is to provide them a town budget line item to fund follow up work and studies.

Implementation Action Plan

The Comprehensive Plan Implementation Action Plan that follows is organized by the 9 themes. One page for each theme. It highlights priority actions that will advance the strategies, goals, and vision articulated in the Milford Comprehensive Plan. Initial priorities have been selected based on the feedback received during the Comprehensive Plan process and comments and prioritization feedback received during the comment period for the draft plan document.

All the actions are not possible with the existing resources of the Town. Several highlighted actions provide recommendations to help expand the resources and capacity of the Town to support implementation. Other highlighted actions may require decisions to be made about how to prioritize the resources that are available.

In addition to listing the actions, the Action Plan pages list responsibility, both groups that have been identified to lead and support an action. The Action Plan pages also define the timeframe that would be most helpful for the

action to be completed within, or for progress to be underway, so that other actions may follow. The Action Plan pages also identify potential resources that would help support undertaking the action.

Four categories of timeframe are used to define and prioritize the actions of the master plan. In some cases, the actions are a continuation of an effort that may be underway or require continuous attention and action. The timeframe for these actions is described as “continuous and ongoing.” The three other timeframe categories are expressed in years from the completion of the Comprehensive Plan and include near-term (1 to 3 years from the conclusion of the Comprehensive Plan), mid-term (4 to 6 years from the conclusion of the

Comprehensive Plan), and long-term (7 to 9 years from the conclusion of the Comprehensive Plan). The timeframes are intended to describe when the action should be initiated. An action may take longer to be completed than the described timeframe. The action plans are purposefully focused on near-term actions.

For some actions, there are potential resources that could be used to support the recommendation. The resources may include potential funding sources, particularly external funding sources that may be available to the Town for a particular activity. The resources also include additional reference or guidance documents that are provided through links to websites.

Lastly, the full list of responsible parties suggested in the Implementation Action Plan are repeated below in alphabetical order:

- Building & Inspections Department
- Conservation Commission
- Downtown Revitalization Committee
- Economic Development Commission
- Fair Housing Committee
- Finance Committee
- Fire Department
- Health Department
- Highway Department
- HR Department
- IT Department
- Library
- Milford Cultural Council
- Milford Public Schools
- Parks Commission
- Parks Department
- Planning Board
- Planning & Engineering Department
- Police Department
- Select Board
- Senior Center
- Town Administrator
- Town Accountant
- Tri-County Regional Chamber
- Youth Center

Priority recommendations for each theme



Build community and bridge cultures



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.

Commentary	An inventory of existing community events and organizers would increase visibility and opportunities for collaboration. Integrate the inventory with the online Milford Town Calendar.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Milford Cultural Council
Support	Library
Timeframe	Continuous and ongoing
Potential Resources	Mass Cultural Council Grant funding

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Build community and bridge cultures



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.

Commentary	This could be integrated with an Economic Development staff position.
Type	Capacity building
Responsibility (Lead)	Town Administrator
Support	HR Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthen downtown as the center of community



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.

Commentary	Building support with downtown business owners is critical to establishing a successful management entity. A formal entity will provide a partner that is missing from downtown.
Type	Capacity building
Responsibility (Lead)	Downtown Revitalization Committee
Support	Economic Development Commission, Tri-County Regional Chamber
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget, Chamber support, examples of other successful downtown management entities such as Hudson Downtown Business Improvement District (BID), Downtown Framingham Inc. non-profit, Beverly Main Streets (main street district) and Beverly Arts District (BAD)

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthen downtown as the center of community



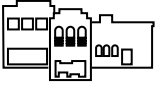
Goal: Encourage mixed-use redevelopment opportunities consistent with the historical scale of downtown and better utilization of upper floor spaces to strengthen downtown as a cultural and business destination.

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.

Commentary	The rezoning should be focused on encouraging mixed-use redevelopment investment in underutilized or auto-centric properties in downtown. To develop the zoning concepts a community planning process should be used to document a shared district vision and build support.
Type	Regulatory change
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning Board
Support	Planning & Engineering Department, Downtown Revitalization Committee
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	MAPC Technical Assistance, One-Stop Grant, EEA Planning Grant

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthen downtown as the center of community



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.

Commentary	A parking management plan should comprehensively organize downtown parking resources to improve efficiency and utilization and include public and private parking resources, on-street and off-street resources, and exploration of parking fees and enforcement to create turnover in the highest demand locations, encourage long term parking in appropriate locations, and increase the best use of parking that is available. Downtown should evolve into a district where patrons park once and walk to multiple destinations.
Type	Regulatory change
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning & Engineering Department
Support	Highway Department, Planning Board, Downtown Revitalization Committee
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget, MAPC Technical Assistance

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Improve transportation safety and reduce congestion



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.

Commentary	Application can be joint with the regional transit authority and will be ranked higher if on a fixed transit route. The solution does not need to be submitted as part of the application.
Type	Capacity building
Responsibility (Lead)	Highway Department
Support	Planning & Engineering Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Improve transportation safety and reduce congestion



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.

Commentary	Developing a comprehensive Town-wide multimodal transportation plan that prioritizes expanding the multimodal network and filling gaps in the existing system should inform updating the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan. Multimodal connections to downtown, primary open spaces, and existing multimodal trails, such as the Upper Charles Trail, should be prioritized.
Type	Planning
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning & Engineering Department
Support	Highway Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget (if assisted by external consultant), staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Maintain the livability and charm of neighborhoods



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.

Commentary	The Community Preservation Act is a state law passed in 2000 that allows Massachusetts communities to conduct a referendum to add a small surcharge to local property taxes unlocking matching funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund. Funds may be used to support recreation, protect open space, support local affordable housing, and preserve historic buildings and resources.
Type	Capacity building
Responsibility (Lead)	Select Board
Support	Fair Housing Committee, Parks Department, Parks Commission, Conservation Commission, or other allied advocates
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Community Preservation Coalition CPA adoption resources (online)

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Maintain the livability and charm of neighborhoods



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.

Commentary	Test temporary configurations to increase bike and pedestrian safety.
Type	Planning
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning & Engineering Department
Support	Highway Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget (if assisted by external consultant), staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Continue to improve 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.

Commentary	Expand on existing systems and develop efficient ways to share this information with the community. Report out approved projects, intended impacts, and metrics for measuring outcomes on completion.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Finance Committee
Support	Town Accountant
Timeframe	Continuous and ongoing
Potential Resources	Staff time, examples from other municipalities such as Brewster's Citizens Guide to Municipal Finance and use of "capital stories" in capital improvement plan including use of online tools such as opengov.com

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Continue to improve effective governance



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.

Commentary	A variety of software platforms exist for this purpose. A single platform should be shared to serve multiple needs across the town. If one platform is in use today it should be tested for use by others and then developed to expand and coordinate resident involvement.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Town Administrator and IT Department
Support	HR Department, Library, Senior Center, Youth Center, and others
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Staff time, town budget to support platform

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Advance climate resilience and sustainability



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.

Commentary	The regulations could be updated to increase sustainable development and encourage compact lots. This effort could be combined with complementary zoning modifications to Open Space Residential Development and Planned Residential developments.
Type	Regulatory change
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning Board
Support	Planning & Engineering Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget, staff time, MAPC Technical Assistance, Mass Audubon LID & Climate-Smart, Nature-Based Solutions Bylaw Review Tool

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Advance climate resilience and sustainability



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.

Commentary	The MA Green Community Designation and Grant Program provides a road map along with financial and technical support.
Type	Capacity building
Responsibility (Lead)	Select Board
Support	Milford Public Schools, Library, other municipal facility stewards
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthening the health and well-being of the community



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.

Commentary	Circulate in neighborhoods reporting overcrowding.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Health Department
Support	Building & Inspections Department, Fire Department, Police Department
Timeframe	Continuous and ongoing
Potential Resources	Staff time



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.

Commentary	A common and central touchpoint to bring the community together and share important information.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Town Administrator
Support	All department (news contributions)
Timeframe	Continuous and ongoing
Potential Resources	Staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthening the health and well-being of the community



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.

Commentary	Provide clear rules and expectations for the use of parks, but ensure they are enforced uniformly across a diverse population.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Parks Department
Support	Police Department
Timeframe	Continuous and ongoing
Potential Resources	Staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Continue to support a thriving local economy



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.

Commentary	Increasing and diversifying the housing supply will support a thriving local economy. Finding locations to allow multifamily development by right would be a major shift for the town's zoning regulations. New multifamily should require a percentage of affordable housing units be included (typically above 10%) to encourage progress on the town's affordable housing requirements.
Type	Regulatory change
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning Board
Support	Planning & Engineering Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Continue to support a thriving local economy



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.

Commentary	Explore the needed amount of surcharge and variations in rates between residential, commercial, and industrial property owners and approaches (flat fee, residential equivalent unit, tiered fee based on impervious surface), and possible exemptions. Present options to residents for consideration.
Type	Capacity building
Responsibility (Lead)	Planning & Engineering Department
Support	Highway Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget, staff time, Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthening communication and engagement



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.

Commentary	Creating an on-call relationship with translation and interpretation services would support responsiveness to requests. The two primary language needs identified through this process are Spanish and Portuguese (Brazilian).
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Town Administrator
Support	All departments engaging with the public
Timeframe	Continuous and ongoing
Potential Resources	Town budget

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.



Strengthening communication and engagement



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.

Commentary	This should likely be both an online and paper form that is available at meetings. The creation of the form should be supported with an intake process to record, compile, and direct feedback to the appropriate town departments, staff, boards, and committees. The form should be provided in multiple languages.
Type	Communication and coordination
Responsibility (Lead)	Town Administrator
Support	IT Department
Timeframe	Near-term (1 to 3 years)
Potential Resources	Town budget, staff time

Note: The implementation recommendations are intended to provide a reasonable starting point. If an alternative approach is found to be more advantageous or expedient then it should be pursued.

