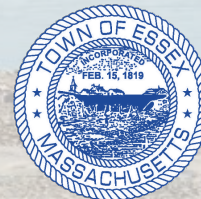


# Town of Essex Open Space & Recreation Plan 2026 Update

Open Space Committee Meeting #3  
December 4, 2025, 4pm



# Where we are in the process

## Task 1. Setting the foundation

Aug – Sept 2025

## Task 2. Environmental and Land Analysis

- Regional context
- Population characteristics
- Growth and Development Patterns
- Environmental Inventory
- Conservation & Recreation Land Inventory

Sept – Dec 2025

## Task 3. Community Engagement

- Online survey
- Event #1
- Event #2

Oct 2025 – April 2026

## Task 4. Needs Analysis

January – April 2026

## Task 5. Draft 10-Year Action Plan

April – May 2026

## Task 6. Writing a Plan

June 2026

# Where we are in the process

## Task 1. Setting the foundation

Aug – Sept 2025

## Task 2. Environmental and Land Analysis

- Regional context
- Population characteristics
- Growth and Development Patterns
- Environmental Inventory
- Conservation & Recreation Land Inventory

Sept – Dec 2025

## Task 3. Community Engagement

- Online survey
- Event #1
- Event #2



Oct 2025 – April 2026

## Task 4. Needs Analysis

January – April 2026

## Task 5. Draft 10-Year Action Plan

April – May 2026

## Task 6. Writing a Plan

June 2026

# Group agreements

---

- Listen for understanding, not disagreement
- Consider the opinions and experiences of others
- Bring a spirit of experimentation and creativity
- Take space, make space (take turns speaking, make room for others to speak)
- Speak for yourself and/or the group you represent, not for others

*Any modifications?*



# Agenda

---

- **Community engagement**
  - Clamfest: brief recap
  - Survey: preliminary results
  - Next steps for outreach
- **Open space inventory**
- **Other required Environmental and Land Analysis**
- **Next steps + OSC Meeting #4**

# Agenda

---

- **Community engagement**
  - Clamfest: brief recap
  - Survey: preliminary results
  - Next steps for outreach
- Open space inventory
- Other required Environmental and Land Analysis
- Next steps + OSC Meeting #4

Town of Essex  
2026 OSRP Update

# Clam Fest



# Town of Essex 2026 OSRP Update

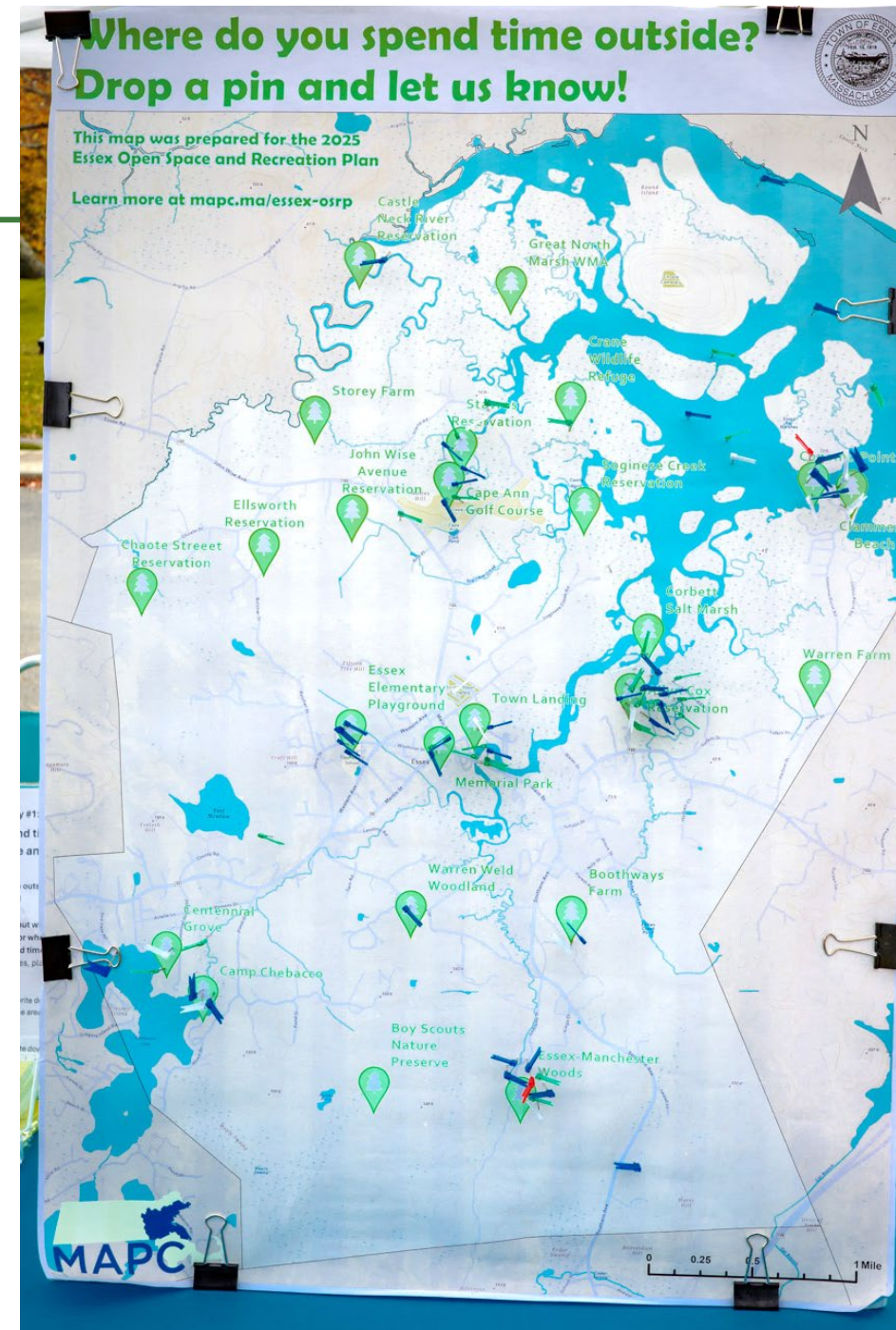


# Town of Essex 2026 OSRP Update



# Clam Fest

Site	Nb of Pins
Allyn Cox Reservation	13
Conomo Point / Clammer's Beach	9
Essex Manchester Woods	8
Essex River Basin (in the water)	7
Town Landing	6
Cape Ann Golf Course	6
Centennial Grove	4
Essex Elementary School Playground	4
Camp Chebacco	3
Memorial Park	3
Boothways Farm	2
Stavros Reservation	2
Warren Weld	1
Spring Street Cemetery	1
Crane Wildlife Refuge	1
Castle Neck River Reservation	1
Soginese Creek Reservation	1
Monoliths (?)	1
Somewhere near Turf Meadow	1
Right across from Cap Ann Golf Course	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>



# Survey Overview

---

**Purpose:** Gather input that we cannot get from other sources:

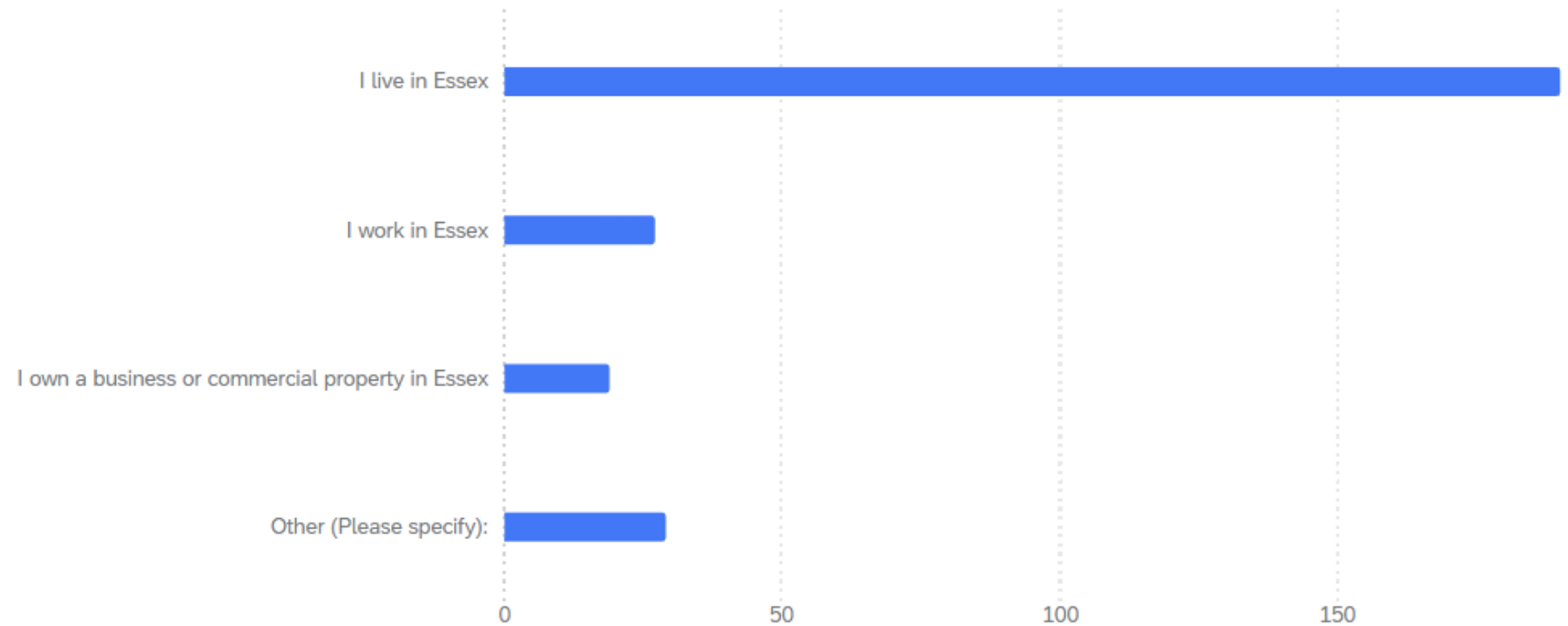
1. What are the community's goals & priorities?
2. How are existing open space resources used and perceived?
3. What are the main barriers, needs, and improvements needed for both conversation and recreation?

**Sample size:** As of 12/3/2025, we had **313** online responses, with **48** fully blank responses = **265** usable responses so far

# Representativeness of sample

Draft as of 12/3/2025

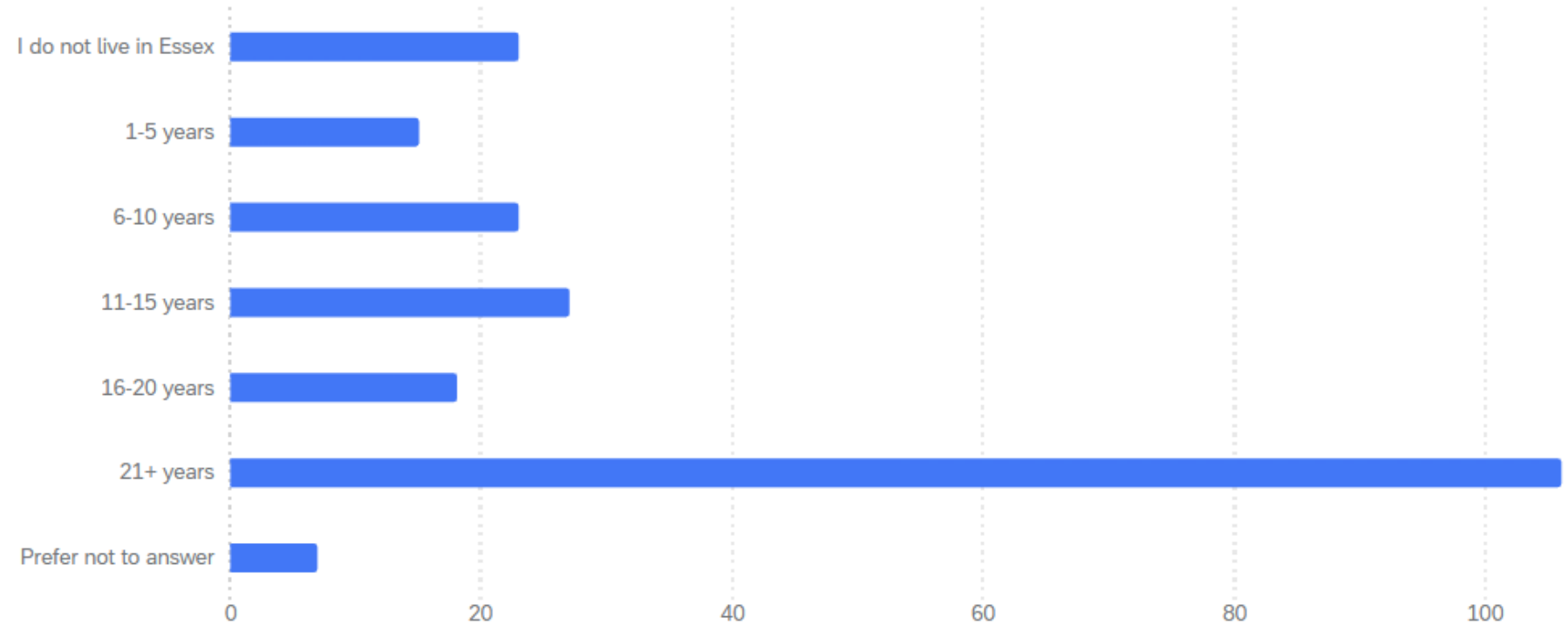
Q20: What is your connection to Essex? Select all that apply. 219 ⓘ



# Representativeness of sample

Draft as of 12/3/2025

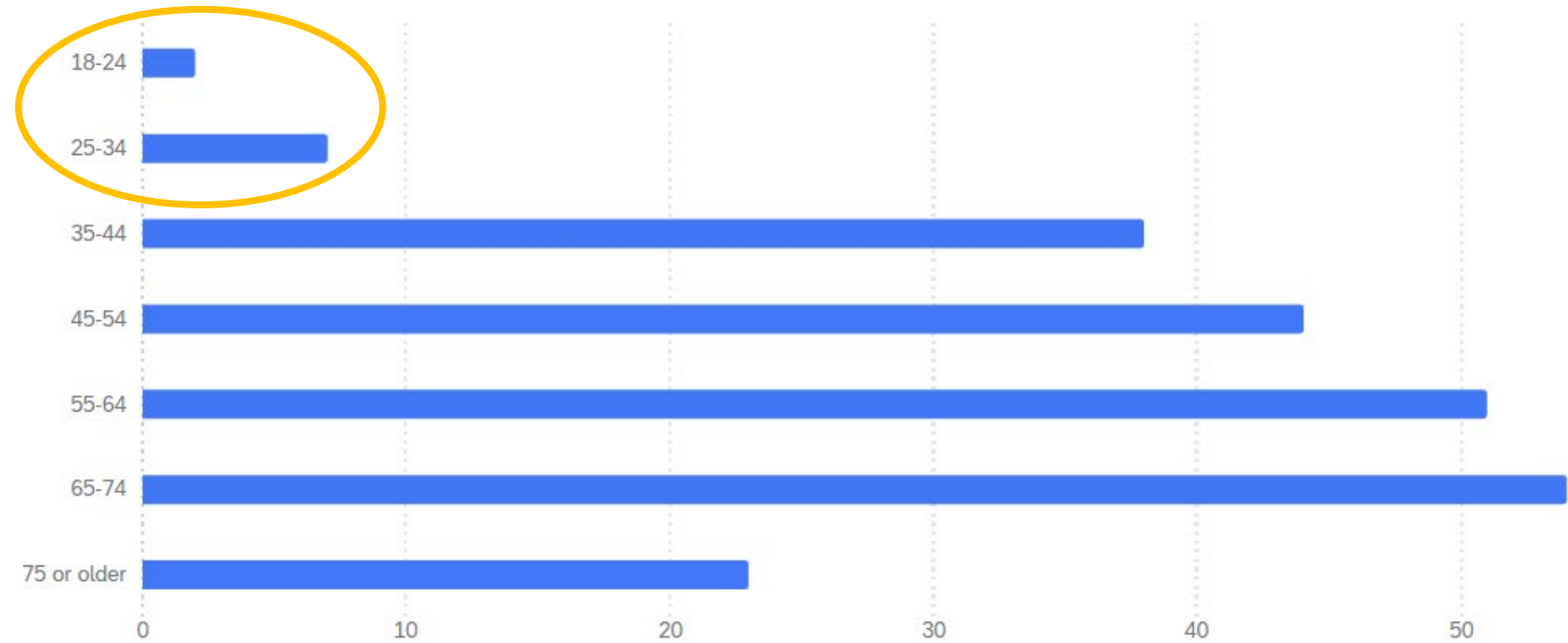
Q21: How long have you lived in Essex? 219 ⓘ



# Representativeness of sample

Draft as of 12/3/2025

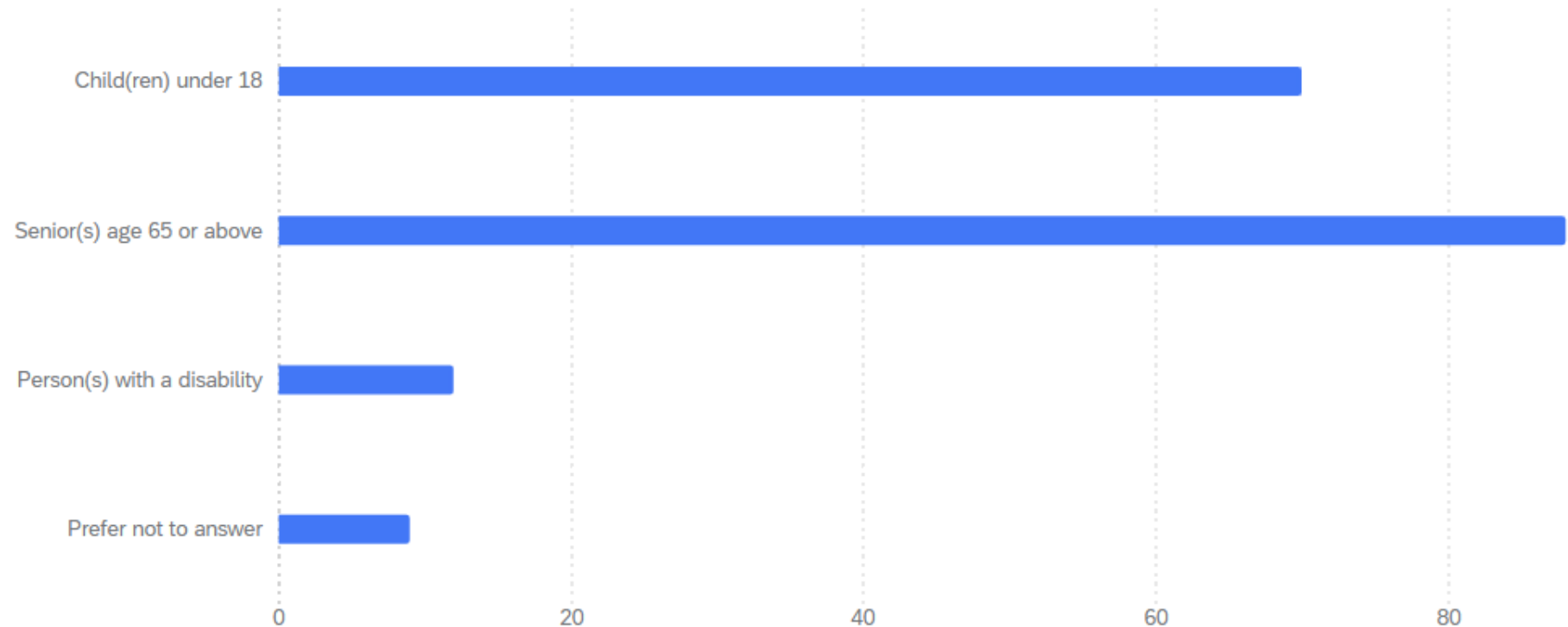
Q23: How old are you? 219 ⓘ



# Representativeness of sample

Draft as of 12/3/2025

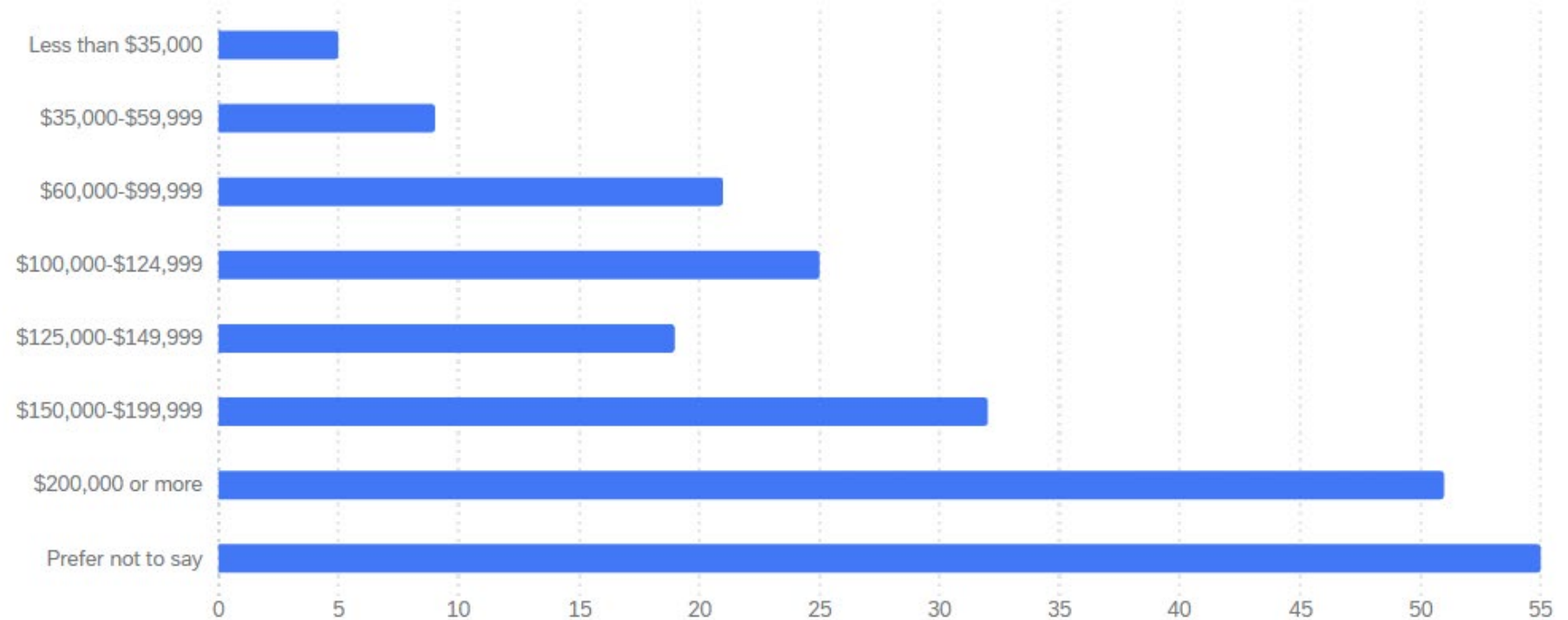
Q25: Do you or any members of your household match the following descriptions? Check all that apply. 159 ⓘ



# Representativeness of sample

Draft as of 12/3/2025

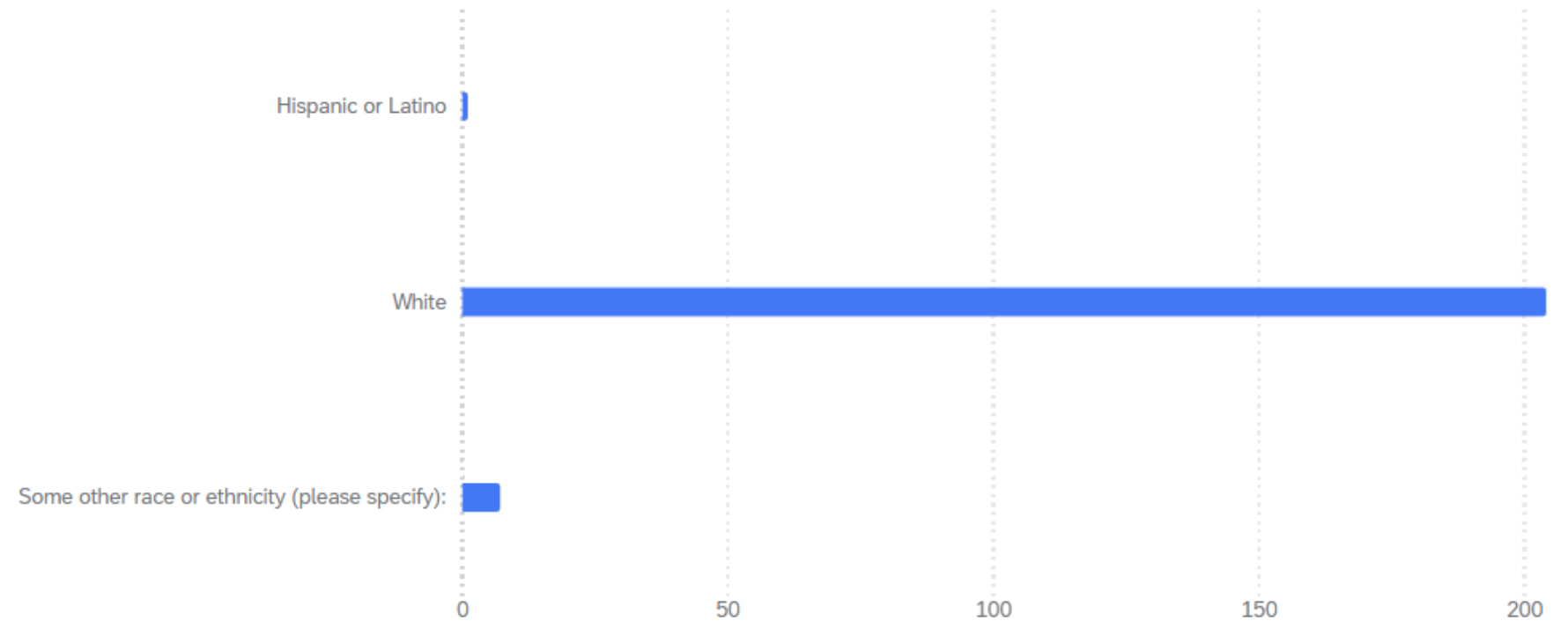
Q24: What is your household income, annually? 217 ⓘ



# Representativeness of sample

Draft as of 12/3/2025

Q22: Which category describes you? Select all that apply. 212 ⓘ



# Preliminary observations

---

**Q. How often do you visit or use the following open space and recreation areas?**

- Most visited places are Conomo Point, Allyn Cox, Essex River Town Landing, Memorial Park
- Least known / least visited are Warren Weld Woodland and Stavros Reservation & White's Hill

# Preliminary observations

---

**Q. How often do you partake in the following activities in Essex?**  
(walking/hiking, water-based, active recreational facilities)

- More than three quarters of respondents partake in frequent walking/hiking in Essex
- Two thirds indicated frequent water-based activities in Essex
- A smaller share of respondents use recreational facilities
  - Relatively fair share of respondents said they don't ***but they wish they could***

# Preliminary observations

---

**Q. What prevents you from visiting the open space and recreation areas listed in the previous questions? Check all that apply.**

- Top 7 barriers in order of importance:
  - Not enough time
  - Unaware of trails
  - Unaware of these areas
  - Unaware of these sites being publicly accessible
  - Poor condition of parks or facilities
  - The type of recreational programs/facilities I'm most interested in are not offered in Essex
  - Lack of parking

# Preliminary observations

---

**Q. How could open space and recreation areas be improved and/or made easier to use and access?**

- Improvements needed at Centennial Grove and Memorial Park
- General lack of recreational amenities (tennis, pickleball, soccer, playgrounds/amenities for kids)
- Better trail maintenance and trail markers
- Lack of biking options generally
- Parking access issues at Conomo, Town landings, others
- Some think focus on open space is misplaced – that Essex is missing essential services like grocery stores, pharmacy, businesses, etc.

# Preliminary observations

---

**Q. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements [Conservation goals]**

- **Strong agreement with:** “Existing open spaces in Essex are effectively protecting the most critical natural resources of the town.”
- **Even slightly stronger agreement with:** “Essex should do more to proactively preserve and conserve additional natural resources in the town.”

# Preliminary observations

---

**Q. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements [Recreational goals]**

- **Medium agreement with:** “Existing parks and recreational sites in Essex are meeting my and my household's recreation needs.”
- **Strong agreement with:** “Essex should do more to expand recreational amenities and programming to meet the needs of the community as a whole.”

# Preliminary observations

---

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Environmental Protection**

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Recreation Facilities and Programming**

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Access and Connectivity**

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Communication and Education**

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Long-term Maintenance & Acquisition**

# Preliminary observations

---

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Environmental Protection**

- Very strong support for all the statements in this section

# Preliminary observations

---

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Recreation Facilities and Programming**

- Strongest support for improving maintenance of existing parks and hosting more community events
- Lower, but still majority support for adding new recreational facilities or offering more recreation programs

# Preliminary observations

---

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Access and Connectivity**

- Strong support for connecting existing open spaces with trails and bike paths, and for providing public access to water bodies
- Less concern over signage and wayfinding

# Preliminary observations

---

Please rate the importance of the following:

 **Communication and Education**

- Strong support for all the statements in this section

# Preliminary observations

---

Please rate the importance of the following:



## Long-term Maintenance & Acquisition

- Very strong support for improving long-term maintenance of existing open space / rec areas
- Somewhat strong support for acquiring more land for conservation
- Lower support (less than majority) for acquiring more land for recreation

# Preliminary observations

---

## Any parcels in town that should be protected?

- A lot of general comments, such as “the land between Southern Ave and 128” or “the marsh and all wetlands”
- Some specific parcels suggestions -- we will need to investigate these
- Some said the amount of new land dedicated as open space should be limited given other Town needs.
  - *“No, Essex is adequately and beautifully protected as-is. Essex needs more housing, development, businesses, and tourism to become more economically stable and maintain or improve the quality of education and other services in the town.”*

# Survey: Next Steps

---

## Final push on outreach:

- MAPC is running a limited social media ad campaign targeting Essex residents under the age of 35
- Recent newsletters: MECT, Greenbelt, School District social media
- **Any other ideas to target younger residents?**

## Closing the survey:

- MAPC will close the survey EOD on Friday December 19
- OS Committee will send us paper copies for manual entry

## Analysis & results:

- MAPC will conduct analysis and share results at OSC Meeting #4
- **This will inform the OSRP Needs Analysis**

# Agenda

---

- **Community engagement**
  - Clamfest: brief recap
  - Survey: preliminary results
  - Next steps for outreach
- **Open space inventory**
- **Other required Environmental and Land Analysis**
- **Next steps + OSC Meeting #4**

# State OSRP requirements

---

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. Community Setting
4. Environmental Inventory and Analysis
5. **Conservation and Recreation Lands Inventory**
6. Analysis of Needs
7. Ten-Year Action Plan
8. Public Comments / Letters of Support
9. References

# Open Space Inventory

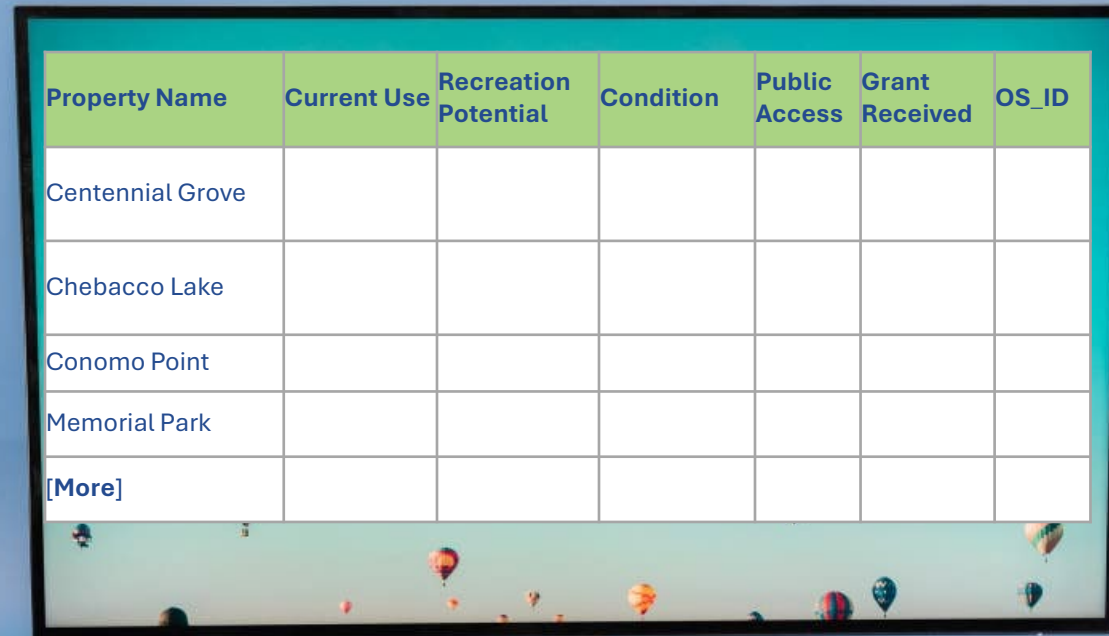
**Table 1:**  
Town-owned  
conservation  
and recreation  
properties

**Table 2:**  
Public parcels  
providing  
conservation/  
recreation  
amenities, but  
not held by Con  
Comm (other  
town, state,  
federal, nonprofit)

**Table 3:**  
Permanently  
protected  
private parcels  
  
(e.g. CR, APR,  
WPR, Chap 61,  
61A or 61B, or  
other major  
estates)

**Map:** Parcel-level map of all sites identified in Tables 1-3

# Open Space Inventory – Draft



Property Name	Current Use	Recreation Potential	Condition	Public Access	Grant Received	OS_ID
Centennial Grove						
Chebacco Lake						
Conomo Point						
Memorial Park						
[More]						

# OS Inventory Next Steps

---

- **Open Space Committee**

- Looking for 1-2 Committee members to do a high-level check / review of Tables 1 & 2, focusing on the following columns:
  - Current Use
  - Recreation Potential
  - Condition
  - Public Access
- No need to review accuracy of parcel identification!
- Share feedback two weeks before OSC Meeting #4

- **Town Staff + MAPC**

- Continue sorting through technical parcel identification
- Finalize the GIS shapefile

# Agenda

---

- **Community engagement**
  - Clamfest: brief recap
  - Survey: preliminary results
  - Next steps for outreach
- **Open space inventory**
- **Other required Environmental and Land Analysis**
- **Next steps + OSC Meeting #4**

# State OSRP requirements

---

1. Executive Summary
2. Introduction
3. **Community Setting**
4. Environmental Inventory & Analysis
5. Conservation & Recreation Land Inventory
6. Analysis of Needs
7. Ten-Year Action Plan
8. Public Comments / Letters of Support
9. References

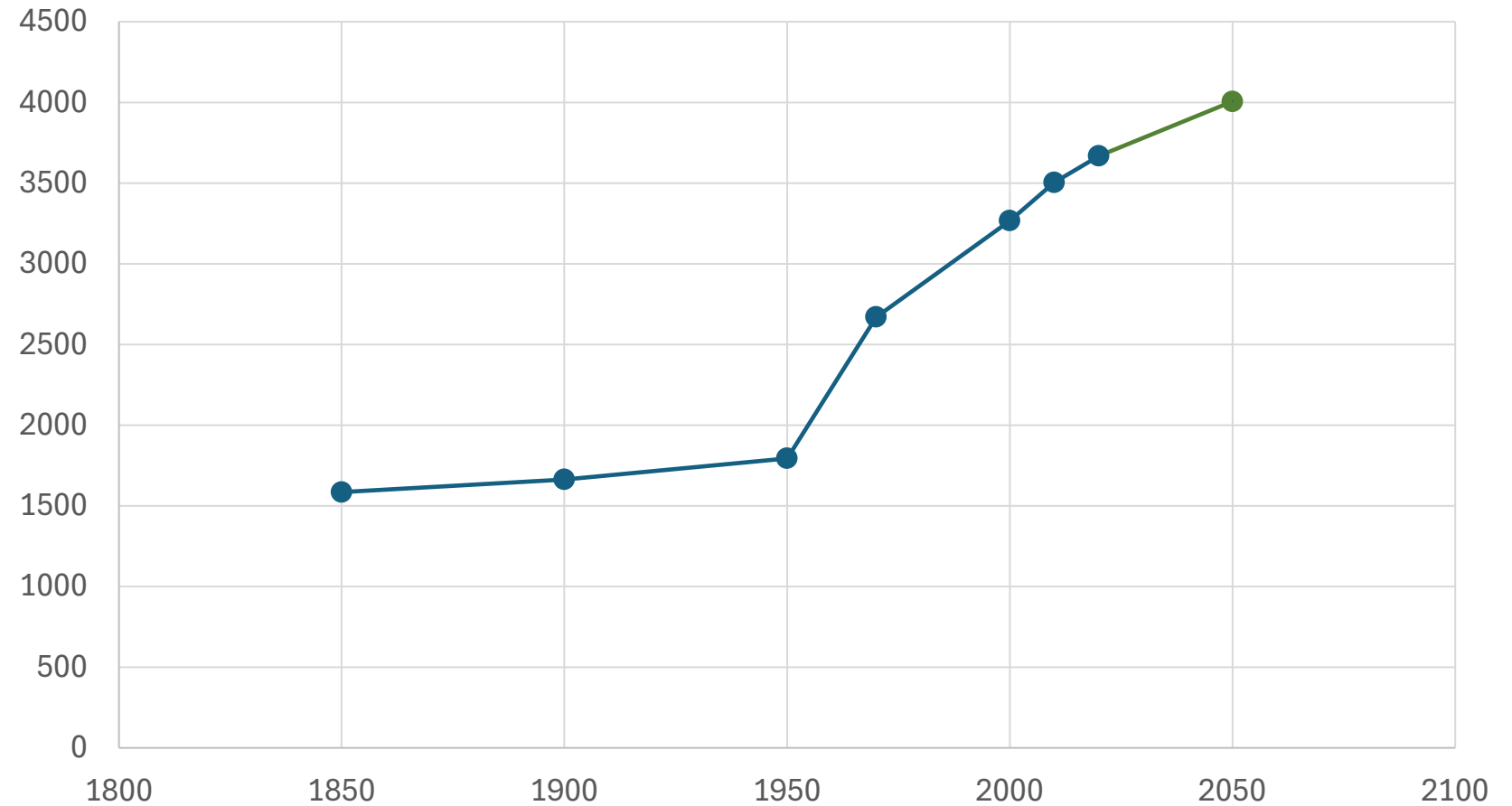
# Regional Context

---

- Coastal community on Greater Boston's North Shore in Essex County. Part of the Cape Ann communities (Manchester, Ipswich, Gloucester, Rockport).
- Coastal marshlands and forested areas are shared with neighbors.
- Regional open space nonprofits: The Trustees, Essex County Greenbelt Association.
- Neighboring communities have active open space committees, some have OSRPs

# Population Characteristics

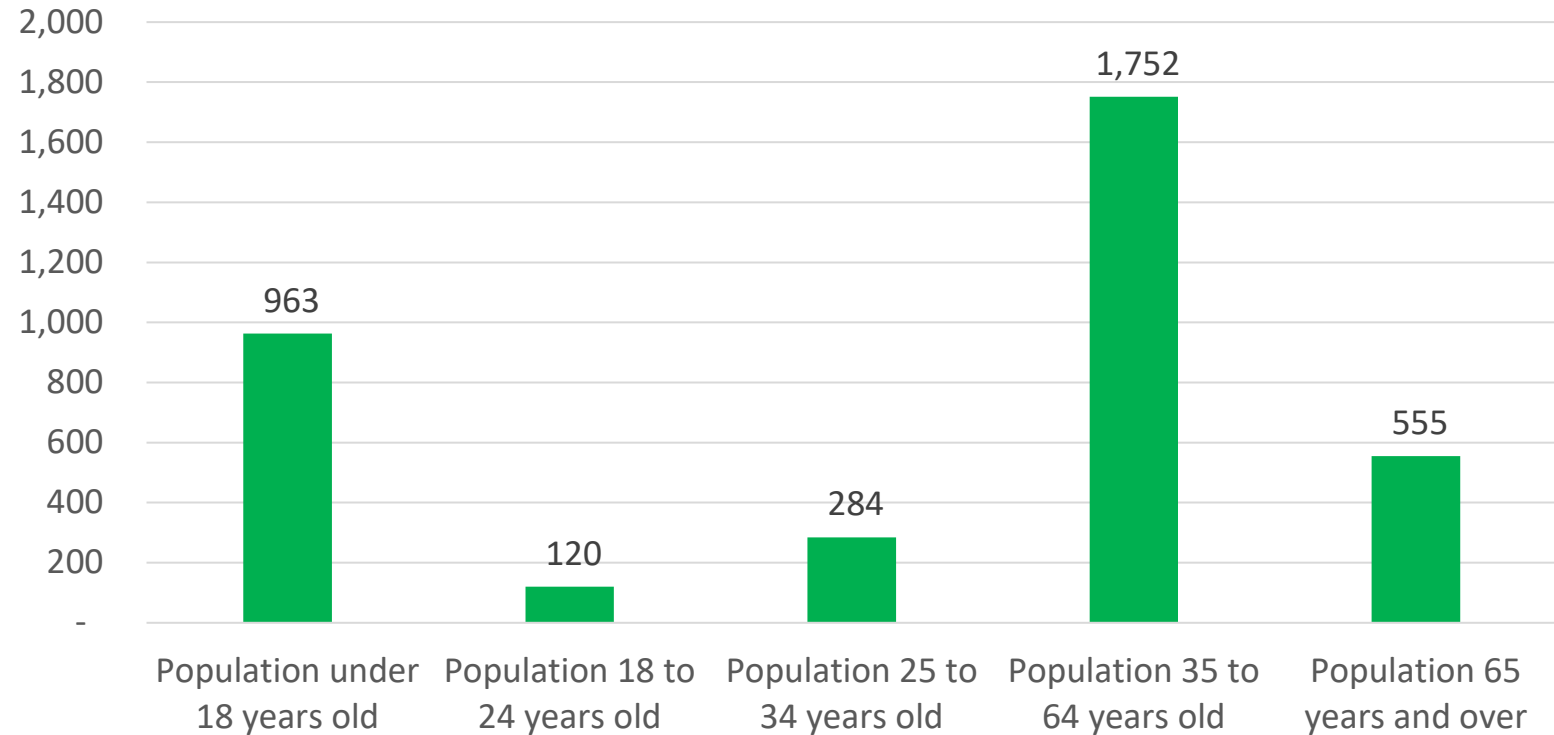
## Essex Population Over Time with Projections



Source: US Census Decennial Census, 1850 – 2020. MAPC population Projections

# Population Characteristics

## Essex MA Population by Age



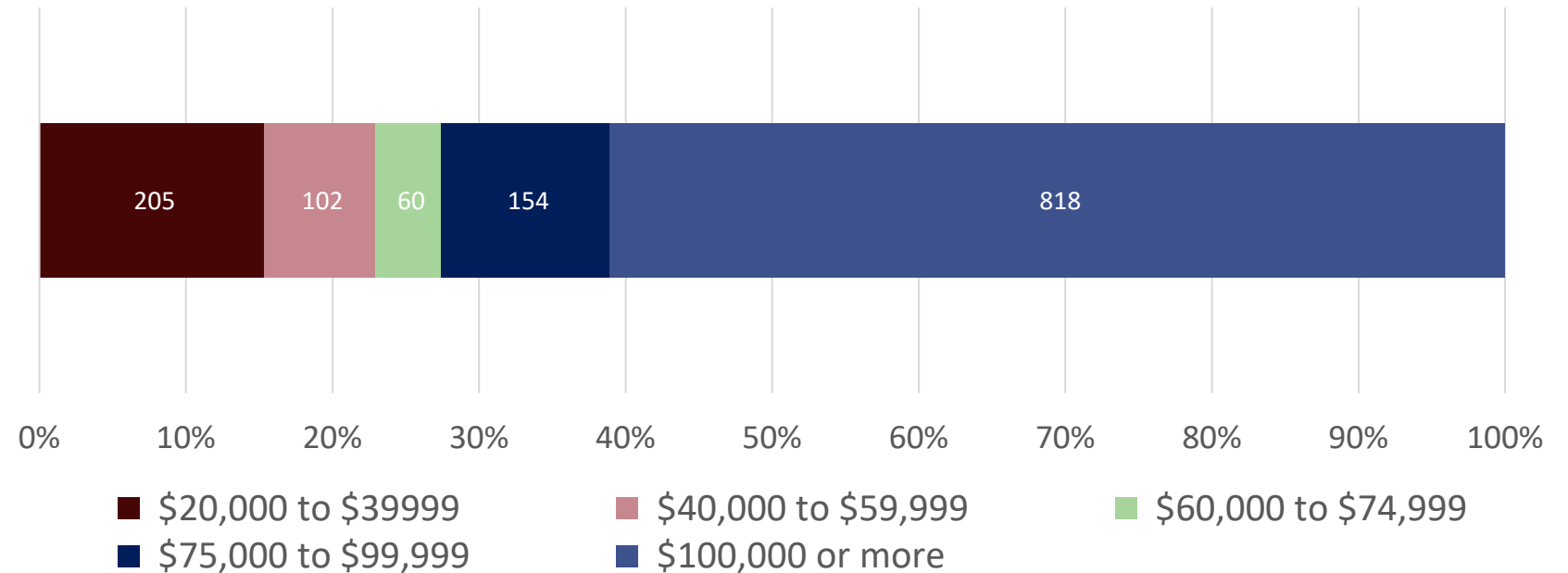
- Many families in Essex. 38% of households have children under 18.
- 27% of households have a senior 65 years of age or older.
- Few young professionals.

Source: American Community Survey, 2022 5-year Estimates

OSRP Meeting #3 – Dec 4, 2025

# Population Characteristics

## Essex Household Income



- Most of the population (59%) make \$100k or more in household income.
- Overall median household income is \$133,553

# Population Characteristics

---

## Additional Notes:

- There are no environmental justice populations in Essex. Nearest EJ population is in Hamilton.
- 12% of Essex residents have a form of disability.
- Limited public transit access to open space.
- Community is racially homogeneous.

# Growth & Development Patterns

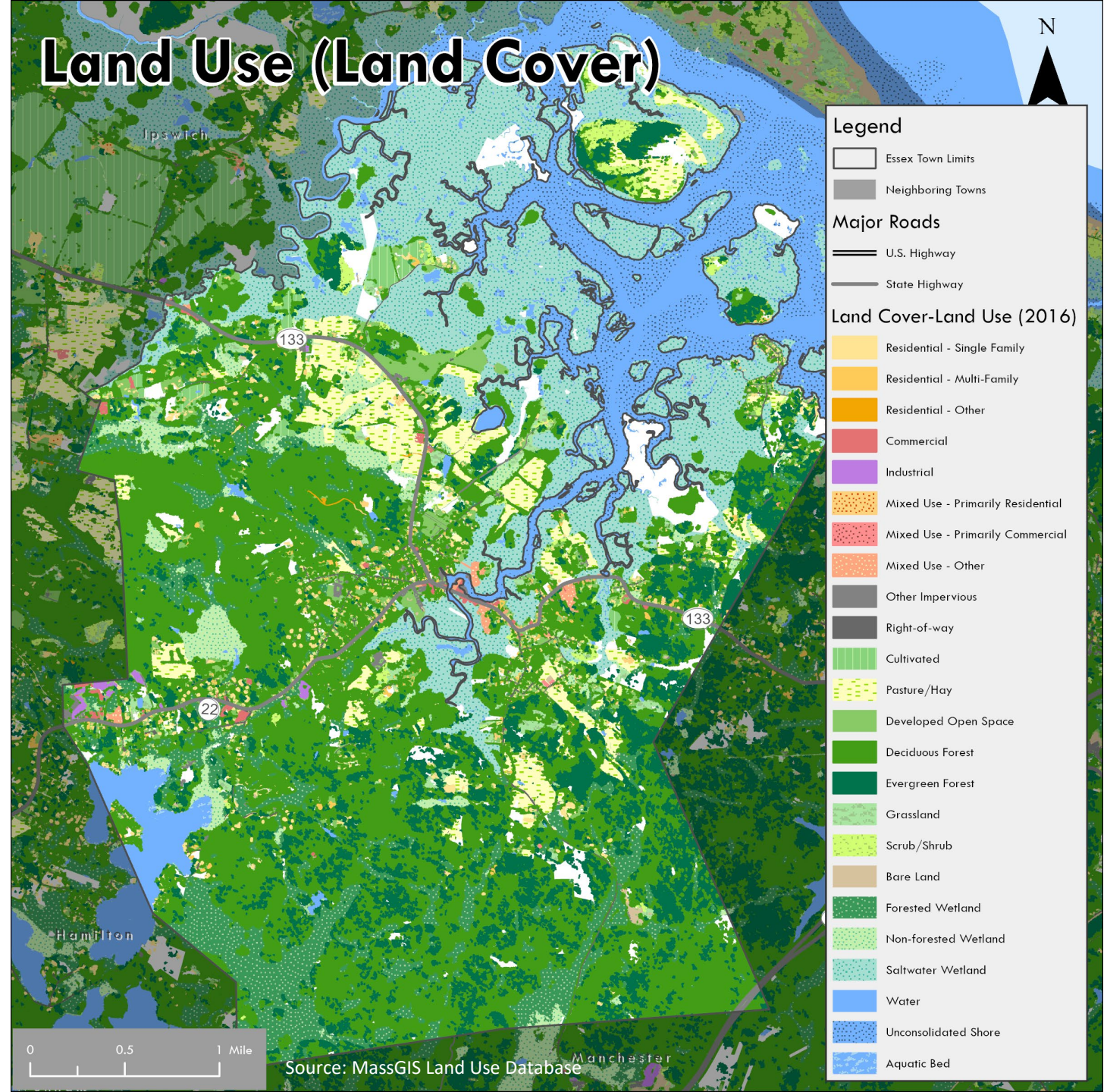
---

- Slow development growth over time. Post-war population boom, typical of many American communities.
- Numerous development constraints limit development and help preserve open space.
  - Limited water/sewer capacity.
  - Steep grade changes across Essex.
  - Hard bedrock, too hard to build a septic system.
  - Soft soils that limit building and density.
- Few homes have been built in recent years.

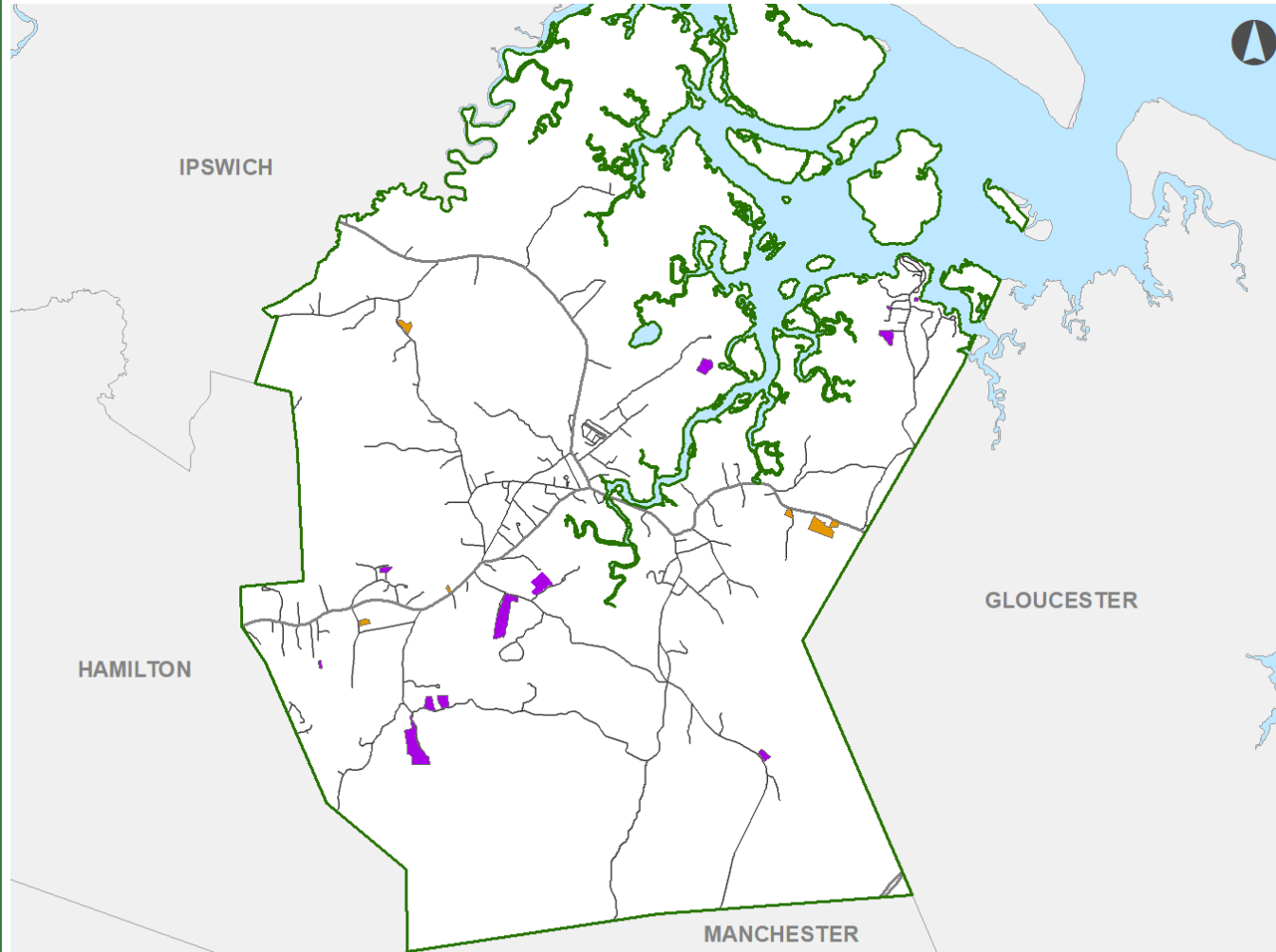
# Growth & Development Patterns

Municipality	Population Density / sq mi
Gosnold	5
Westminster	236
Essex	264
Sturbridge	267
Ipswich	433
Manchester	585
Rockport	1,000
Gloucester	1,143
Boston	13,545

# Town of Essex 2026 OSRP Update



# Town of Essex 2026 OSRP Update



## Essex New Residential Development 2020 - 2024

### Legend

- Essex Boundary
- Parcels
- Major Roads
- Neighboring Towns

### Development Activity

#### Number of Units

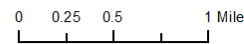
- 1 This data is new construction only. It does not include homes that were rehabbed or rebuilt.
- 2

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

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

Data Sources: MAPC, EOHLC, MassGIS, MassDOT

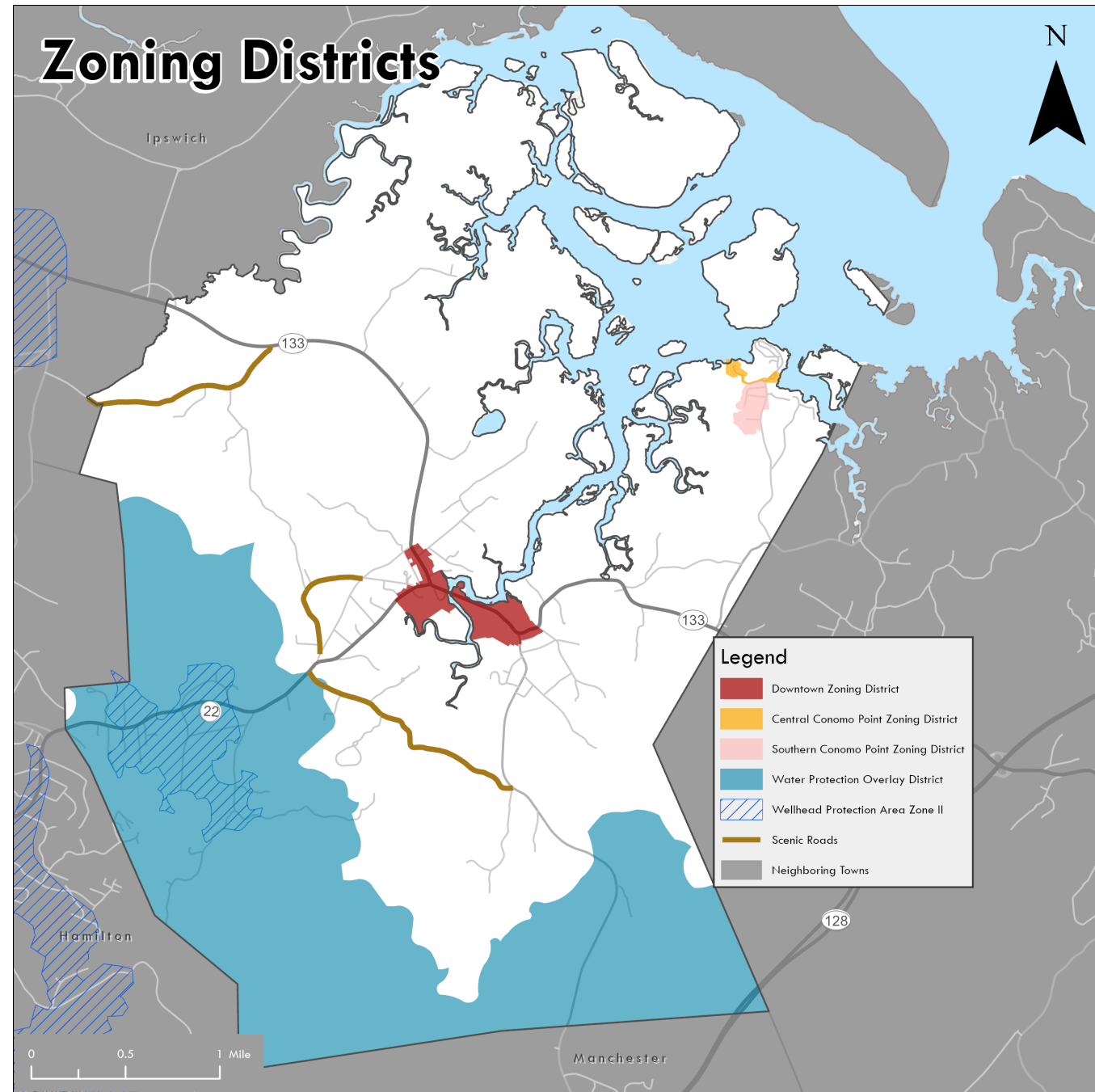
December 2024



Source: Town of Essex



Town of Essex  
2026 OSRP Update



# Agenda

---

- **Community engagement**
  - Clamfest: brief recap
  - Survey: preliminary results
  - Next steps for outreach
- **Open space inventory**
- **Other required Environmental and Land Analysis**
- **Next steps + OSC Meeting #4**

# Next steps

## MAPC / Town of Essex



Finish open space  
inventory and  
environmental  
analysis



Final push on  
advertising the  
survey; analyze  
results



Prepare for OSC  
Meeting #4  
(early February?)

## Open Space Committee

- Last push on outreach with a focus on younger residents – **now until Dec 19**
- Email or mail us the paper copies of the survey – **due Jan 4**
- Subcommittee assigned to Open Space Inventory review – **due Jan 16**

# Next steps

Meeting #	Topics covered *
#1 - Sept 2025	Kick-off
#2 – Oct 2025	CE Phase 1 + Draft OS inventory
#3 – Dec 2025	CE Phase 1 + Draft OS inventory and environmental analysis
#4 – Jan/Feb 2026	Wrap up OS inventory and environmental analysis Analysis of Needs based on survey results
#5 – March 2026	Brainstorm 10-year action plan + CE Phase 2
#6 – April 2026	Finalize the 10-year action plan + CE Phase 2
#7 – May 2026	Final Draft Plan + CE Phase 3

\*Subject to change as the project evolves.

# Thank you!

Valerie Massard, Town of Essex - [vmassard@essexma.org](mailto:vmassard@essexma.org)

Evelyne St-Louis, MAPC - [est-louis@mapc.org](mailto:est-louis@mapc.org)

John Cruz, MAPC - [jcruz@mapc.org](mailto:jcruz@mapc.org)