

Regional Planning Agencies in Action



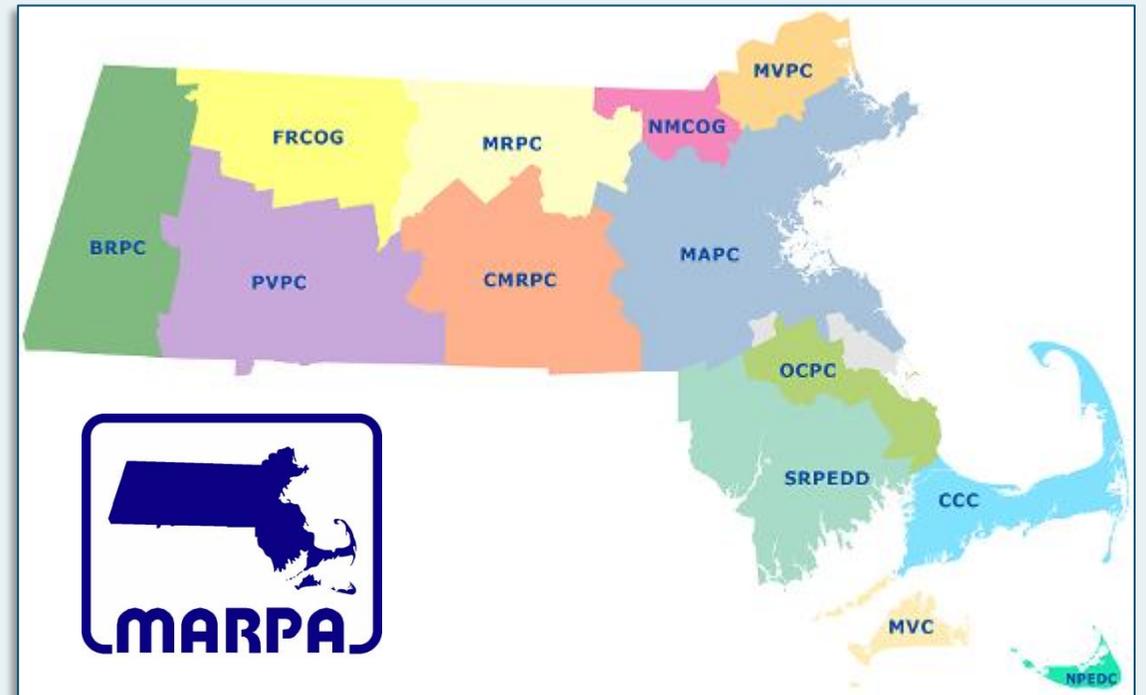
Presented by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies

The Work of Regional Planning Agencies

Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) were created by Massachusetts General Law in 1974.

Purpose: comprehensively study, plan, and recommend how a region can protect and enhance its environment, economy and quality of life through the study of land use, natural resources, climate resilience, economic development, transportation.

Climate Resilience is now a cross-cutting theme that informs our work in all other areas. We balance efforts to reduce future greenhouse gas emissions with responding to the current impacts of climate change.



Local Action Units Resource Guide

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)



- **About:** MAPC created a resource guide for municipalities to tackle challenges around Local Action Unit (LAU) program implementation.
 - Rent increases in LAUs are outpacing tenant income growth and heightening displacement risk.
 - Municipalities across the MAPC region identified a need for resources around procedures, onboarding materials, and best practices to support local administration.
- **Regional impact:** As multi-municipality project involving 14 communities, this project brought together partners to consider strengthening tenant protections around rent increases in affordable housing and boosts the need for adding capacity at municipal scale (such as shared housing services offices).

The screenshot shows the MAPC website's page for the 'Local Action Units (LAUs) Resource Guide for Municipalities'. The page has a dark blue header with navigation links: JOBS, METROCOMMON 2050, CALENDAR, PRESS ROOM, BLOG, SEARCH, LEARN, OUR WORK, GET INVOLVED, ABOUT MAPC. The main content area has a large heading 'Local Action Units (LAUs)' and a sub-heading 'A Resource Guide for Municipalities'. Below this is a photo of a brick building. The page also includes a 'RESOURCE GUIDE FOR LOCAL ACTION UNITS (LAUS)' section and a call to action for a webinar: 'Join MAPC for the LAUs Resource Release Webinar! Monday, November 17, 2025 | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m., via Zoom'. At the bottom, there are four buttons: 'Local Action Units (LAUs) 101', 'Local Action Unit (LAU) Application Process', 'Resources for Municipalities', and 'Challenges and Recommendations'.

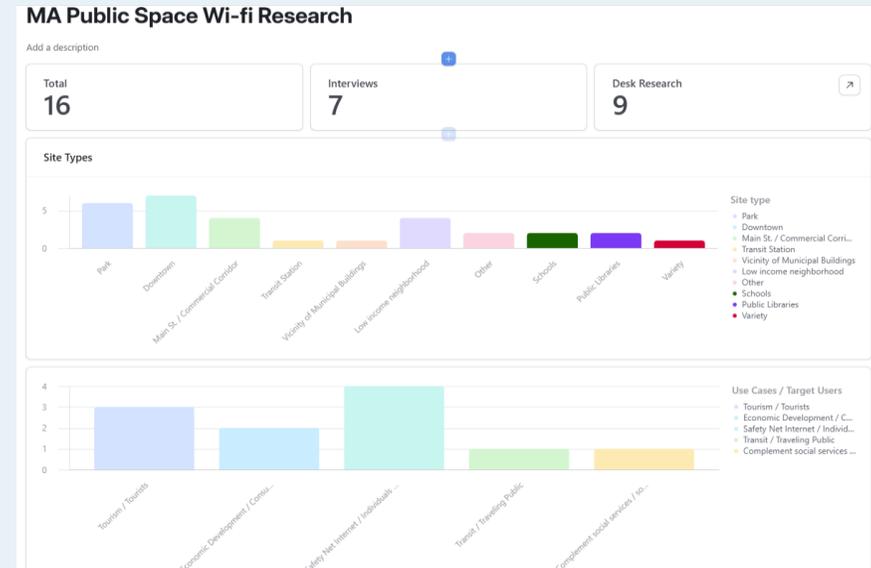
[Webpage Link](#)

Gloucester Public Wifi Feasibility Study

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)



- About:** MAPC worked with Gloucester on the development of the City's first digital equity plan through funding from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI)
 - A key short-term recommendation of Gloucester's Digital Equity Plan was to pilot a publicly accessible outdoor Wi-Fi network in downtown Gloucester.
 - Access to high-speed internet is a necessity for full participation in modern life, but many communities still experiences an acute "digital divide." Free internet in public spaces provides a safety net for those who rely on mobile data plans and/or lack at-home internet access.
- Regional Impact:** Through this project, MAPC and the City of Gloucester are developing a step-by-step guide for municipalities that want to install public wifi networks. The guide draws on lessons from cities and towns across Massachusetts and covers procurement, network management, serving priority populations, and choosing sites.



Project/Network Name	Municipality	Site type	Use Cases / Target Users	Technology/Equipment used	Network M...
Harvard Square Wi-fi	Cambridge	Main St. / Commercial Cor	Economic Development / ...	-	Business
South Hadley	South Hadley	Park	-	-	-
Downtown Pittsfield Public Wi-fi	Pittsfield	Downtown / Main St. / C...	-	Outdoor Access Points	Muni IT
Cambridge Public Internet	Cambridge	Park / Vicinity of Municipi	-	Cable/Fiber / Switches	Muni IT
Wicked Free Wi-fi	Boston	Low income neighborhood	Safety Net Internet / Indi	-	Muni IT
Kendall Square Free Wi-fi	Cambridge	Downtown / Main St. / C...	-	-	Instituti
Salem- The Point / El Punto Mesh Network	Salem	Low income neighborhood	Safety Net Internet / Indi	mesh network	Non-pr
Downtown Amherst Wi-fi	Amherst	Downtown	-	-	-
Worcester Public Wi-fi Locations	Worcester	Variety	-	-	-
Princeton - Kravath Field	Princeton	Park	-	-	-

Master Plan Update

Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NP&EDC)

NP&EDC

NANTUCKET PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION



The NP&EDC provided technical financial assistance to the Nantucket Planning Board for the Master Plan Update. The project is ongoing, and efforts in 2025 focused on public engagement.

- Community Survey
- Kitchen Conversations
- Six Word Story
- Vision Kick-Off Event, *with Charles Marohn of Strong Towns*
- Public Workshops, Presentations, and Public Hearings
- Multiple Tabling Events
- Engagement with Nantucket Middle School Civics Class



Revitalization of D.W. Field Park

Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)



OLD COLONY
PLANNING COUNCIL

700 ACRE PARK

200,000+ RESIDENTS WITH ACCESS TO NATURE
Brockton, Avon & surrounding areas

7 PONDS

1 GOLF COURSE

6 MILES OF MULTI-USE TRAILS



Nine partners and over **\$1.5 million** in philanthropic, state, and federal funding for planning, design, and construction



Over **1,200** residents participated in the planning process



30 abutting acres purchased and conserved



BAT bus stop **added** to improve access

 Initiative leader: Southeastern MA Land Trust	 D.W. Field Park managed by Brockton Department of Parks and Recreation	 Host town of northern section of D.W. Field Park and champions of park expansion efforts	 Environmental, recreation, and transportation planning and outreach	 Nonprofit volunteer friends group for D.W. Field Park
 Engineering and planning for stormwater management	 Environmental education, climate change science, habitat surveying	 Sustainable landscape planning and design graduate school	 D.W. Field Park-adjacent art museum in Brockton	

Legend

- - - D.W. Field Parkway North Loop - 3.7 mi (one-way traffic)
- - - D.W. Field Parkway South - 1.2 mi (two-way traffic)
- - - Waldo Lake Footpaths - 1.5 mi
- - - Thirty Acre Pond Footpaths - 1.1 mi
- Main Parking Lot
- Additional Parking
- 🗿 Observation Tower
- ☀️ Picnic Area

Plymouth County Food System Action Planning

Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)

Old Colony Planning Council, in partnership with Plymouth County and the Marion Institute, is leading a regional effort to strengthen the local food system.



OLD COLONY
PLANNING COUNCIL



WHY IT MATTERS

Support local farms & food producers

Help towns & organizations work better together

Prepare for future challenges through smart, local solutions

PROJECT AREA



DLTA Housing Initiatives

PLANNING FOCUSED PROJECTS - DLTA

- **Seasonal Communities** – provided guidance to eligible communities
- **Accessory Dwelling Units** – wrote and/or reviewed bylaws for communities throughout region
- **Housing Action Plan/Product Plan Implementation** – developed plans in towns of Monterey, Sheffield, and West Stockbridge
- **Zoning/Subdivision Regulations** – worked on significant revisions/recodification in towns of Cheshire, Peru, Washington, West Stockbridge, Williamstown

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT FOCUSED PROJECTS – DLTA-GAP

- **CDBG Grants/Housing Rehab** – provided outreach and grant writing assistance in towns of Becket, Clarksburg, Florida, Hinsdale, Mount Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, Otis, Sheffield, and West Stockbridge



CDBG Housing Rehabilitation - before



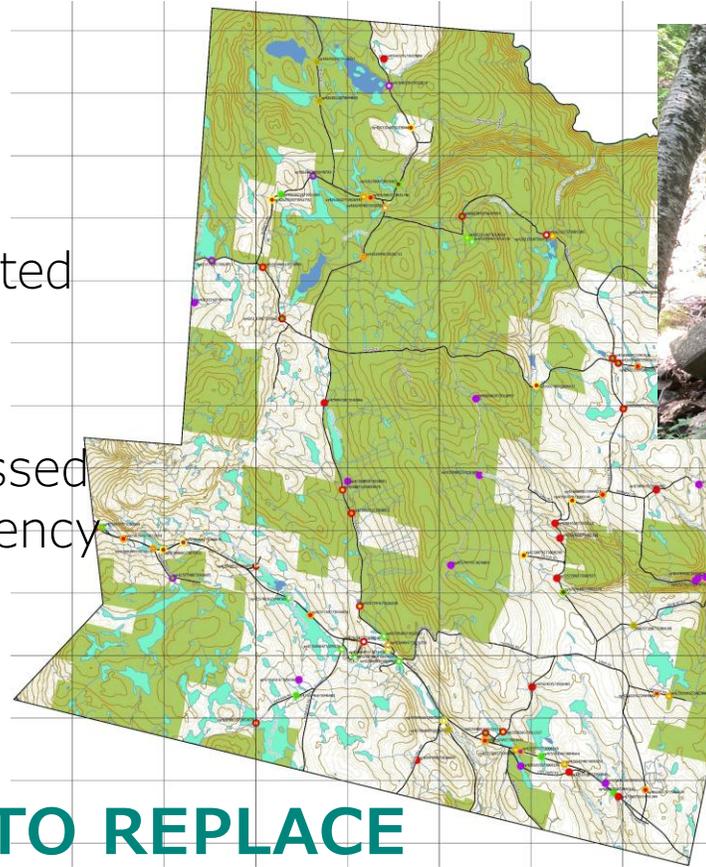
CDBG Housing Rehabilitation - after

Savoy Road-Stream Crossing Prioritization

TOWN OF SAVOY

- 645 Residents
- 60% of town permanently protected open space
- 70 Town-Managed Road Miles
- 70 Culverts and 12 Bridges assessed
 - 65% identified structural deficiency concerns
 - 15% Poor condition
 - 20% Fair/Good condition

**CONSTRUCTION COST TO REPLACE
ONE CULVERT: \$1.6 MILLION**



Eastham Climate Action Plan

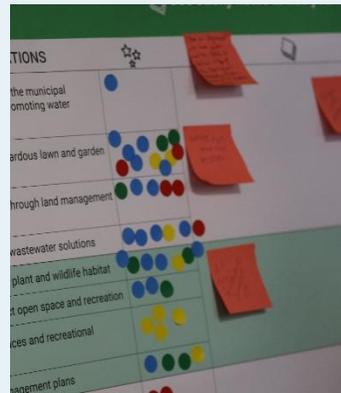
Cape Cod Commission (CCC)



CAPE COD
COMMISSION

In close partnership with municipal staff and residents, the Cape Cod Commission developed the Town of Eastham's Climate Action Plan to address local vulnerabilities and priorities.

Leveraging a robust community-centered process, Commission staff helped draft a plan that outlines practical, cost-effective actions aligned with local, regional, state, and national climate frameworks, prioritizes equity, and supports long-term implementation.



Incentivizing Year-round Housing on Cape Cod

Cape Cod Commission (CCC)



CAPE COD
COMMISSION

Cape Cod Commission collaborated with Outwith Studios to develop regional strategies for year-round housing incentive programs on Cape Cod. This initiative aligns with a key recommendation of the Regional Housing Strategy to provide financial incentives for converting and preserving year-round housing.

PROJECT GOALS



Understand the Year-round Housing Program Landscape



Understand the Scale of Subsidy Needed



Understand Non-financial Barriers and Solutions to Adoption



Provide Program Design Guidance for Implementation

The study primarily explored two different programs



Deed Restriction Programs

For Cape Cod, the report recommends a pilot program offering 16 percent of a home's value, capped at \$125,000, targeting residents earning up to 150% of the area median income.



Annual Subsidy Programs

The report recommends that recurring rental subsidy programs be established as pilot programs with maximum rents also targeting households earning up to 150% AMI.

Assisting Municipalities in Greater Lowell

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOCG) - Spotlight on Dunstable



**NORTHERN
MIDDLESEX
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**

SERVING THE REGION SINCE 1963

NMCOG is helping Dunstable advance key local priorities such as the Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Route 113 Visioning and Land Use Study, and zoning updates from concept to implementation.

Leveraging an implementation focused approach, NMCOG secured and pursued significant state and federal funding on the Town's behalf, including a \$475,000 Housing Works grant, a \$64,000 MassTrails grant, and energy and digital equity funding.

These projects were made possible with District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA).



All images by NMCOG.
Graphic design by Kelly Lynema.

Assisting Municipalities in Greater Lowell

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) - Spotlight on Westford



**NORTHERN
MIDDLESEX
COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS**

SERVING THE REGION SINCE 1963

NMCOG worked with Westford on environmental and sustainability programs, while also assisting with local housing production and transportation goals.

NMCOG assisted with Westford's Strategic Plan, delivered key zoning amendments, advanced MBTA Communities compliance -resulting in multiple developments moving forward, and led climate and stormwater initiatives, positioning Westford for continued grant eligibility, infrastructure investment, and long-term resilience.

These projects were made possible in part by District Local Technical Assistance.

Strategic Framework

Thriving Together, Honoring Tradition, Growing Towards a Sustainable Future

Vision

Westford strives to be a welcoming and inclusive community that honors its history and traditions. We are driven towards innovation and progress, balancing growth with preservation and a commitment to creating a sustainable future.

Mission

We are a team of dedicated professionals that take pride in fostering a vibrant community by delivering excellent public service.

Values

Professionalism | Dedication | Collaboration
Accountability | Service-Oriented

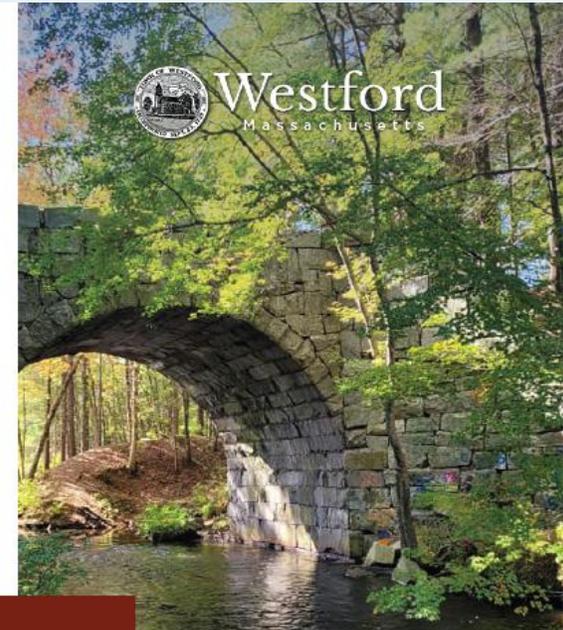


Image from Town of Westford

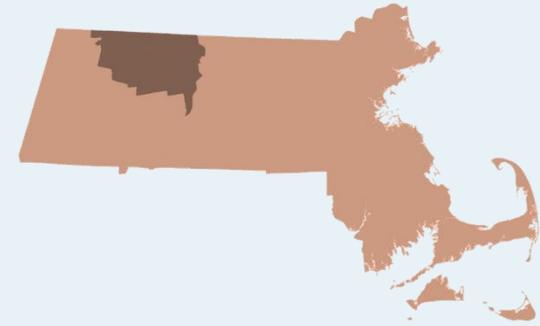
Strategic Outcome Areas



Commitment to Environmental Sustainability & Climate Action - Environmental sustainability goals as envisioned in the Westford Climate Roadmap will guide investments in clean energy and zero waste initiatives. The Town's efforts to address climate change will consider the need to balance fiscal, operational, and environmental objectives.



**Franklin Regional
Council of Governments**



Providing Critical Assistance to our Rural Communities

Of Franklin County's 26 municipalities...

- 18 have a population of less than 2,000 people
- 11 have a total property tax revenue of less than \$5 million
- 5 have professional planner/community development staff

DLTA funding provides small communities with critical access to professional expertise to address essential needs and advance innovative projects.

DLTA Activities

Guiding the zoning bylaw amendment process

Convening municipal officials on programs and policies

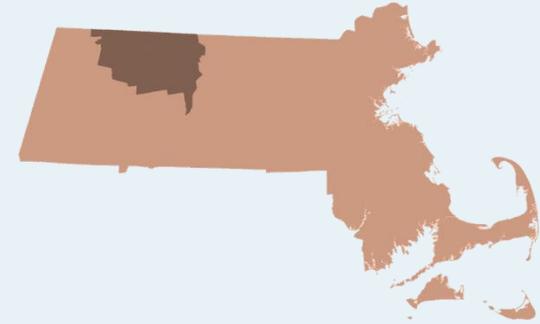
Assisting with Local Plans and Studies

Providing match to innovative projects, like the Rural Downtown Coordinator

Exploring the potential to share municipal services



Franklin Regional
Council of Governments



Providing Critical Assistance to our Rural Communities

2026 DLTA Activities include...

Assessing municipal regulations and conditions to foster housing production and implement best practices

Exploring the feasibility of regionalizing Emergency Medical Services

Assisting with adoption of model bylaws to address ADUs, floodplain regulation, clean energy projects

Helping dispose of underutilized municipal property for the purpose of redevelopment