



www.cmrpc.org
1 Mercantile Street, Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608



Town of Boylston Master Plan 2022

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2022 Town of Boylston Master Plan

A comprehensive Master Plan prepared with technical assistance from the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and funding from the Town of Boylston, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), and the CMRPC District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program.

CMRPC Project Team

Trish Settles, AICP, CMRPC Deputy Director- Regional Collaboration & Community Planning

Dominique DuTremble, CMRPC Program Manager- Comprehensive Planning, Project Lead

Emily Glaubitz, CMRPC Principal Planner, Project Co-lead

Matt Franz, GISP, CMRPC GIS Project Manager, Mapping

Gloria Agossou, CMRPC Assistant Planner, Layout, Design, & Photography

Contributors: Ron Barron, Sam Carter, Ian McElwee, Catie Morris, Sarah O' Brien, Rob Raymond, Kerrie Salwa, Ryan Saul, Will Talbot, Gabe Trevor, Nina Weisblatt, and Jane Wyrick.

Acknowledgements

Master Plan Steering Committee

- Richard Baker, Chair
- Matt Mecum, Vice Chair
- Mark Anttila, Secretary
- Van Baker
- Nancy Filgate
- Bill Filsinger
- Dennis Goguen
- Lori-Anne Hart
- Chris Miczek
- Claudine Underwood
- Jeff Walsh
- Meagan Grill
- Nell Lazour
- Arielle Strzelewicz
- James Spencer
- Dave Cole
- Jessica Rubinow

Boards & Committees

- Board of Selectmen
- Planning Board
- Housing Production Plan Subcommittee
- Open Space and Recreation Committee
- Parks & Recreation Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Council On Aging
- Historical Commission

Staff

- April Steward,
Town Administrator
- Paul Dell'Aquila,
Town Planner
- Alison Kennedy,
Administrative Assistant

Departments

- Boylston Departments
- Assessor's Office
- Boylston Public Library
- Building Department
- Cemetery Commission
- Council On Aging
- Facilities Maintenance
- Fire Department
- Highway Department
- Light Department
- Park and Recreation Commission
- Police Department
- Treasurer / Collector

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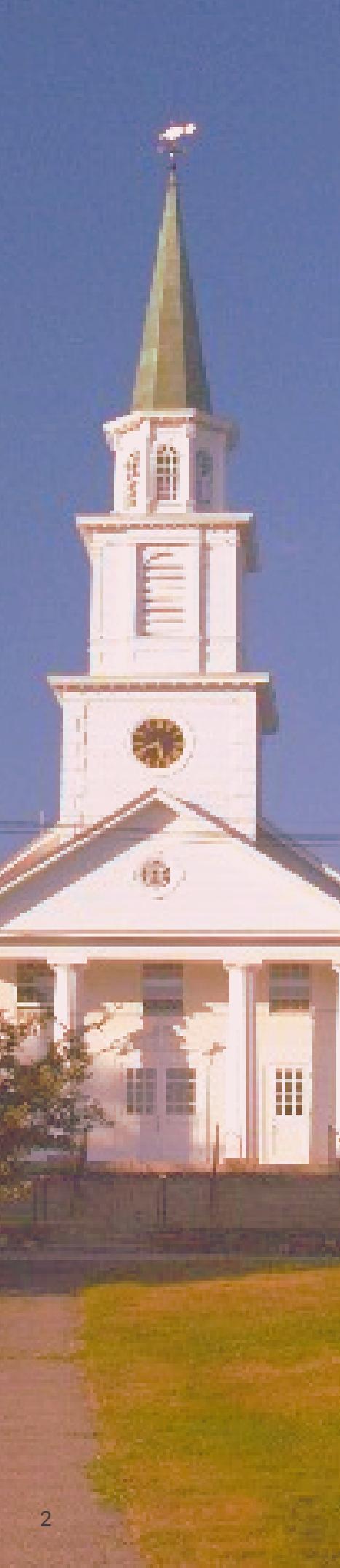
**Town of Boylston
Massachusetts**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Boylston Master Plan 2022



**Prepared with support from the
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission**



Overview

Boylston is defined by its New England character. Natural beauty abounds. The peaceful waters of the Wachusett Reservoir host a treasure trove of flora and fauna. The Town Common is dominated by a traditional New England steeple and centuries-old homes. The land is crisscrossed by numerous streams, fields of wildflowers, and stately trees.

Boylston has sent its young men and women to fight for their country. A score have given their lives for America. Our town was home of the greatest temperance orator of the 19th century, John B. Gough. Our historic Town Hall, Library, and Common have endured for generations to remind us of our heritage in the present day. Although Boylston has evolved, we recognize and celebrate this history.

Boylston is no longer a farming community. The village of Sawyers Mill is gone, and the mills that jumpstarted our economy are too. Yet, by and large, our town retains its rural character. It is still a special and splendid place that stands out across the region and the state. The retention of this character is not accidental. It is the result of careful planning to balance preservation, development, and many other factors over many years.

The purpose of this master plan is to ensure that Boylston meets the needs of its current and future residents. The Master Plan is a long-range strategic plan designed by and for the community. It is a roadmap to help inform municipal policies, investments, and decision-making for the next 10-20 years. The goals and strategies detailed in this plan were designed to advance a common vision for the Town, as defined by those who call it home.

This plan's goals are realistic and achievable; however, their achievement requires collective effort. It will require the dedication and cooperation of many people. This plan will not implement itself. We look forward to working together to make our common vision a reality.

Community Engagement

The 2022 Boylston Master Plan is a product of the thoughts, opinions, experiences, and dreams of residents of the Town of Boylston. The plan was developed through an inclusive participatory planning process that spanned two years. The Master Plan is built upon community input and provides a roadmap to achieve our common vision for Boylston's future.



Outreach Tools

A continual community engagement campaign incorporated social and traditional media outreach, community surveys, listening sessions, interviews, tabling, public forums, and monthly meetings of the Boylston Master Plan Steering Committee. The input provided by residents was foundational to the plan and informed its vision statement, goals, objectives, and strategies.



Envisioning our Community

Over the course of two years, the Boylston Master Plan Steering Committee collected input on residents' preferences, desires, and needs. Using this input, the Committee crafted a Vision Statement that reflects the Town's core values and goals, and provides insight into the Town's character. This Vision Statement served as the foundation for the 2022 Boylston Master Plan. The goals and recommendations contained within the Plan were designed to advance this common vision for our community.



Vision Statement

The residents of Boylston envision our town as a place where...



The natural landscapes, open spaces, and rich history of our community are proactively preserved and protected.



The children of our community are provided high-quality educational opportunities.



There is strategic economic development managed by type, location, and scope which harmonizes with our community's heritage.



Diversity of housing types is available for people of all ages, backgrounds, and income levels.



Government is open, cooperative, and responsive to the ideas and concerns of residents.



Social and recreational opportunities are available to residents of all ages.

Timeline

The following timeline identifies major developments and milestones in the 2022 Boylston Master Plan Update process.





Community Vision Statement, Goals, & Objectives Developed



Housing Production Plan Completed & Approved by DHCD



Visions and Goals Survey Open



Chapter Development



Chapters Approved & Released for Public Input



Plan Approved by Master Plan Steering Committee



Plan Adopted by Planning Board



Plan Published Online

Population & Housing

Boylston is a growing, affluent community with an aging population.

Boylston is a rural/suburban residential bedroom community. Its residential areas are primarily large-lot subdivisions and established neighborhoods. Although single-family, owner-occupied homes dominate the housing stock, there are also a growing number of multi-family developments and rental units.

Despite the development of several housing projects in the last decade, Boylston's housing stock has not kept pace with its population growth. There is a severe housing shortage locally, regionally, and statewide. Boylston is also well-below the State's 10% affordable housing goal and threshold for safe harbor from M.G.L. Chapter 40B Comprehensive Permits. The changing age composition of Boylston is causing greater demand for housing suitable for aging households as well as for smaller homes for households with fewer members. Yet, housing for seniors, middle-income workers, and single people as well as small households remains limited.

The Town should focus on managing growth sustainably, inclusively, and equitably and should enhance efforts to care for its senior citizens, including seniors with disabilities.

Constraints to housing development in the Town include soils, watershed protection areas, limited land availability, and restrictive zoning. Boylston residents have historically been hesitant in supporting multi-family and affordable housing due to concerns that new development will negatively impact the Town's image, services, schools, property tax rates, and open spaces.

There are several strategies the Town can use to expand its housing stock without compromising its rural character. New development can be managed sensitively and can follow Smart Growth guidelines, ensuring the Town maintains its natural beauty and small-town charm. Zoning and policy changes can be pursued to allow new housing that meets the community's needs but maintains Boylston's small town character. Increasing capacity and resources will also support housing production. Creating an Affordable Housing Trust, adopting the Community Preservation Act, and articulating the differences between various types of affordable housing will advance these goals.



Population & Housing Goals

The Population and Housing goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Build municipal capacity and advocacy efforts to support affordable housing production.

Goal 2

Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging issues in housing.

Goal 3

Ensure new housing development design and location prioritizes preservation of open space, utilizes Smart Growth principles, and preserves town character.

Goal 4

Encourage greater diversity, inclusivity, and distribution of housing types to meet the needs of families and individuals of all income levels, abilities, and ages, particularly seniors and young families.

Goal 5

Strive to meet the affordable housing thresholds established by M.G.L. Chapter 40B.

Open Space, Recreation, & Natural Resources

Boylston has plentiful natural and recreational spaces.

Boylston's recreational spaces provide active and passive recreation opportunities while complementing the town's natural beauty and ecosystems. Notable open spaces in town include parks, playgrounds, athletic fields and facilities, conservation and wildlife preservation areas, water bodies, and gardens. These spaces are enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Boylston's land-based natural spaces are primarily secondary-growth forests. Soil quality in the Town allows for but also limits farming and development. Boylston's water-based natural resources include the Wachusett Reservoir, which provides water to metropolitan Boston, as well as ponds, brooks, aquifers, and wetlands. Many plants and animals, including endangered species, thrive in Boylston and contribute to its biodiversity.

Boylston's primary environmental challenges are erosion, pollution, stormwater management, invasive species, and impacts from climate change. Non-point source pollution, or contaminated water runoff, threatens the Town's water bodies. Low Impact Development techniques, which capture water on site, filter it through vegetation, and let it soak into the ground, will help mitigate non-point source pollution and preserve water quality in the Town. There are also opportunities to connect additional open space parcels with DCR-owned land at the Wachusett Reservoir through the creation of a connected trail system.

The community faces capacity challenges in terms of funding and staffing. There are unmet needs in town relating to the accessibility of recreational facilities. The Town should consider regulatory tools and partnering with private landowners and conservation organizations to help preserve its natural and recreational spaces.



Open Space & Recreation Goals

The Open Space and Recreation goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Be proactive about continuing to enhance and preserve Boylston's town character and feel as a small New England town.

Goal 2

Preserve and protect Boylston's open spaces, including water bodies, woodlands, farms, and parks.

Goal 3

Maintain, add, and enhance recreational facilities and programs as needed.

Goal 4

Regulate and guide development to be consistent with town character and to protect open space and natural resources.

Natural Resources Goals

The Natural Resources goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Protect natural resource areas from environmental degradation, disturbances, and over-development.

Goal 2

Improve public awareness of Boylston's natural resources.

Goal 3

Improve natural resource management strategies to make Boylston more resilient.

Historical & Cultural Resources

Boylston has a long and rich history that residents wish to preserve.



Boylston is rich in historic and cultural resources that provide residents and visitors with a connection to its past. The hilly landscape has been historically characterized by forests, farms, orchards, places of worship, small businesses, manufacturing, and residences. Many aspects of the past remain, while others were erased over time or through major changes in land use. Historic sites in Boylston span from the 17th century onward. These valuable resources include historic buildings, structures, areas, monuments, and burial grounds.

The Town contains two properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places and one designated as a National Historic Landmark. The Town's local historic district, Boylston Center Historic District, hosts 21 historic properties.

Boylston residents take immense pride in the Town's historic, architectural, aesthetic, and cultural heritage. Culturally and historically significant locations include the historic Town Hall, the Sawyer Memorial Library, the John B. Gough House, and the Town Common.

Boylston is home to several organizations that work to preserve history and promote culture in the community. Residents of Boylston generally support preserving historical resources and expanding cultural services in the community, but some residents express concern regarding allocating too much of the Town's budget towards these efforts.

Boylston faces several challenges in preserving its historic and cultural resources, including limited funding and staffing to support such efforts. Future steps the Town should consider taking include establishing regulations to enhance historic preservation, designating one or more additional Local Historic Districts, and becoming eligible for Massachusetts Community Preservation Act funding.

Historical & Cultural Resources Goals

The Cultural & Historic Resources goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.

Goal 2

Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.

Goal 3

Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of town to enhance the community's rich heritage.

Goal 4

Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.

Economic Development

Once a center of agriculture and manufacturing, Boylston continues to develop as a service-oriented community.



Boylston's property tax base is primarily residential, with commercial and light industrial uses constituting 12%. This distribution is typical in the region, and the Town has been successful at attracting new businesses, given its infrastructure and environmental constraints. Boylston's proximity to Worcester, and the presence of an I-290 Interchange nearby, make it a prime location for warehousing and distribution. Such uses cluster along the Town's transportation corridors. Recent developments along Route 140 include FedEx, Rand-Whitney, and CREST Technologies. The corridor is also home to consumer-facing businesses, including several restaurants, banks, and retail/service establishments.

The Town has a high annual median income, a low unemployment rate, and a high percentage of workers with bachelor's degrees. A majority of Boylston's workers are employed by private companies, but the public, non-profit, and self-employed sectors are also well-represented in the Town's workforce. The Town has a single-payer tax rate and six commercially-oriented zoning districts. Boylston allows farming in all zoning districts to preserve its agricultural heritage. The Town's residents would like to see managed expansion of small-scale retail in town while preserving the community's charm.

Boylston has limited staff and volunteer capacity for economic development. There are several strategies that Boylston can use to encourage and support economic development, including streamlining permitting, developing a public wastewater system, prioritizing mixed-use, low-impact developments, updating zoning, promoting home occupations, and leveraging natural resources. In support of these actions, the Town should work to foster enhanced communication between town departments as well as between Town's government and the business community.

Economic Development Goals

The Economic Development goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Expand capacity to support and facilitate business development.

Goal 2

Take a proactive and responsive approach to economic development that supports existing businesses and encourages new ones.

Goal 3

Pursue an economic development strategy that evaluates the cumulative impacts of individual projects.

Goal 4

Ensure business development that maintains Boylston's small-town character.

Goal 5

Improve the visual aesthetics of businesses along Route 140 to better reflect the small-town and natural/agricultural character that residents desire.

Goal 6

Grow and diversify the tax base to promote a fiscally-sound future.

Economic Development Goals

The Economic Development goals of this Master Plan are (cont.):

Goal 7

Improve local utilization of Boylston's natural spaces.

Goal 8

Encourage small, consumer-oriented, and boutique businesses for Boylston residents and visitors to enjoy.

Goal 9

Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to support businesses.

Transportation

Boylston is a short commute away from Worcester, Boston, and Providence. It is well-positioned for companies requiring access to Interstates 290 and 495.

Transportation is among both Boylston's greatest assets and its greatest challenges. The Town is ideally located for workers commuting to Worcester, Boston, and Providence, as well as companies requiring easy access to major northeast transportation corridors. Such access has been a catalyst for economic development beyond what is typically expected for a community with limited water and sewer infrastructure as well as major environmental constraints. However, it has also created congestion, traffic, and safety issues.

Boylston contains two regionally significant roadways: Route 140 and Route 70. Route 140 connects with Interstate-290 (I-290) just across the town's border with Shrewsbury. The town also benefits from easy access to Interstate-495 via Route 62, Route 70, or Linden Street. The most traffic is experienced along I-290, Route 70, and Route 140. There is currently no public transportation in Boylston except for a van service for elderly residents and residents with disabilities; however, WRTA bus stops and MBTA commuter rail stops can be accessed in nearby communities.

Opportunities exist to support varied modes of transportation in town, including walking, biking, and car travel. Although bicyclists currently frequent a route around the Wachusett Reservoir, there is limited bicycle infrastructure in Boylston.

There is great potential for bicycle infrastructure, such as dedicated lanes and racks, throughout Boylston. Many residents would like more extensive and better-maintained sidewalk and bicycle networks. Multi-modal transportation can help residents, especially those with disabilities or who cannot afford a car, access local businesses and services. It can also enhance the safety of residents, including youth.

Strategies to strengthen Boylston's transportation network and enhance multi-modal transportation in town include adopting a Complete Streets policy, repairing and upgrading ramps, and exploring potential ride-sharing, public transport, and electric vehicle infrastructure.



Transportation Goals

The Transportation goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Maintain and improve the condition of Boylston's existing transportation network.

Goal 2

Increase the safety of Boylston's roads for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Goal 3

Mitigate negative impacts resulting from the transportation system.

Goal 4

Provide transportation alternatives to car travel.

Goal 5

Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow more pedestrians and bicycle access to businesses.

Goal 6

Take a proactive approach to emerging transportation technologies, trends, and issues.

Goal 7

Better connect the Town's roads, streets, and sidewalks to be consistent with the Town's small-town and environmental character.

Town Services & Facilities

Boylston residents value the quality town services and facilities that keep the community running smoothly.

Boylston has an Open Town Meeting form of government with an elected three-member Board of Selectmen as its executive branch and an appointed Town Administrator. There are many town boards and committees, plus several non-profit organizations, that work closely with the Town. Because Boylston has limited development and limited tax revenue, municipal services must be carefully evaluated each year for fiscal impact. Most residents want municipal services and facilities to run smoothly under a fiscally sustainable budget. Boylston strives to achieve these competing needs by carefully staffing town departments, especially through part-time and multi-role workers, workers shared with other towns, and volunteers.

Important public services provided by the town include Town Hall offices, the Public Library, the Council on Aging, public schools, public safety departments, and public works. The Town also runs a website, boylston-ma.gov.

The Boylston Municipal Light Department provides electricity to residents. Much of the Town has access to public water. The town does not have a public wastewater system. Trash and recycling collection, internet, cable, and gas are all provided by private companies.

Challenges and opportunities Boylston faces include renovating infrastructure, streamlining and digitizing permitting, re-establishing a Capital Planning Committee, potentially establishing public wastewater infrastructure, and potentially being designated as a Green Community.

Boylston's schools are confronted with issues of capacity and space availability. A school facility plan that addresses requirements and changes is needed. The Town requires a new public safety complex to meet the needs of the Police and Fire Departments. A Master Plan for the Hillside Property would also be beneficial.



Town Services & Facilities Goals

The Town Services & Facilities goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Maintain high-quality municipal facilities, services, and staffing consistent with the needs of the Town's population across different demographics.

Goal 2

Maintain fiscal sustainability.

Goal 3

Provide recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life in Boylston.

Goal 4

Improve the sustainability and resilience of Town operations.

Goal 5

Deliver infrastructure that meets existing and future Town needs.

Land Use

Boylston aims to manage growth while preserving its rural, historic, small-town charm.

Boylston is a residential community on the border of an urban core. The Town has a history of village centers and agriculture. The village of Sawyers Mill, along with much of the Town's manufacturing areas and agricultural lands, were demolished to support the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir. Today, Boylston is dominated by non-developed land uses, which significantly contribute to the community's character. Boylston residents commute to urban centers like Worcester and Boston and find respite in Boylston's bucolic family-friendly lifestyle. Residents want to preserve this beautiful rural character while ensuring the Town provides necessary goods, services, and jobs.

Boylston has useful corridors and villages which were formed by historic development patterns. The primary transportation route of Main Street conveys local traffic flow and serves the primary area of commerce while connecting the Town's various areas and the historic Town Common. The Town's residential areas follow a pattern of large-lot, low-density development, while its commercial development is concentrated along transportation corridors.

The Town's land use challenges include parking, the absence of wastewater infrastructure, population growth and an aging population, and climate change and sustainability. Boylston also faces emergent regional and national issues such as warehousing, distribution, and lodging.

Like many other communities with large-lot zoning, development in Boylston has spread outward from the town center with low-density housing that requires extra miles of roadways and is automobile-dependent. Such a trend is unsustainable as it requires higher costs to maintain roads and the amount of land available for development is limited. Boylston should reevaluate its large-lot, low-density zoning approach. The Town can prioritize higher densities in targeted locations in order to help mitigate the potential impacts of expected growth.

The Town will also be well-served by exploring infill, redevelopment, and reuse opportunities along Route 70 and Route 140. Survey results indicated support for targeted sewer infrastructure along major commercial corridors. Mobility can also be improved by expanding additional clusters of commercial properties in other areas of town, such as a node near the intersection of Route 70 and Route 140, so residents are not required to drive to Worcester or other locations to obtain necessary goods and services. By concentrating new development around existing and potential infrastructure, service provision costs will be limited and natural resources will be preserved.

Land Use Goals

The Land Use goals of this Master Plan are:

Goal 1

Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging land use issues.

Goal 2

Encourage development that is in harmony with the community's small-town character and heritage.

Goal 3

Concentrate new development around existing infrastructure to preserve natural resources and limit service provision costs.

Goal 4

Preserve and protect the Town's natural landscapes and resources, open spaces, and history in a manner that is fiscally sound.

Goal 5

Utilize the Town's large land holdings for their highest and best purpose consistent with the Town's vision.



Photo credit: CMRPC

Introduction

In 2020, the Town of Boylston launched a collaborative effort to bring the Town's existing Master Plan up-to-date. A committee of town residents converged in fall of 2020 to form the Boylston Master Plan Steering Committee. Charged with updating the 2000 Comprehensive Boylston Master Plan, the Committee embarked on a community-driven planning process facilitated by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). From October 2020 through to November 2022, the Committee, other Boylston residents, and CMRPC worked to create a new, long-term strategic comprehensive plan for the Town. The 2022 Boylston Master Plan provides concrete goals and strategies to help inform policies and investments for the next 10-20 years. Its recommendations are in service of a common vision based on residents' stated preferences, needs, and hopes for the future of their town.

Included in the Master Plan are nine core elements, which are prescribed by Massachusetts Law:

1. Goals and Policies Statement
2. Housing
3. Land Use
4. Economic Development
5. Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources
6. Cultural (and Historical) Resources
7. Circulation (i.e., Transportation)
8. Services and Facilities
9. Implementation Program

These core topics are cross-cutting. The respective chapters examine issues traditionally associated with each topic, as well as how the topics and subtopics impact each other. The end of each chapter contains a summary of the thematic goals and recommendations. An Implementation Matrix is also included in this plan.

The 2022 Boylston Master Plan is a comprehensive action plan designed to help the Town bring the plan recommendations to fruition. The Implementation Matrix is located at the end of the Master Plan. It identifies priorities, timetables, and resources the Town can refer to and use when achieving all the projects outlined in the plan.

What is a Master Plan?

A Master Plan is a document that describes the collective intentions of a community's residents. It shares how residents would like their town to be viewed, how they would like it to operate, what infrastructure they would like to see in it in the future, and how they would like their community to develop its economy and society. This plan can be used to guide Boylston's town leadership and voters at Boylston Town Meetings when they make decisions regarding spending, infrastructure projects, and zoning bylaws.

Master plans are not monolithic. They include goals and recommendations from different topical areas with varying timelines and requirements for implementation. These goals and action items are interconnected and can often be implemented concurrently. Importantly, Master Plans do not create, mandate, or implement anything. They are roadmaps based on conditions, preferences, and information known at the time of plan publication. Conditions, preferences, and what we know about issues Boylston faces will evolve over the lifespan of this Master Plan.

Why does Boylston need a Master Plan?

Massachusetts General Law 41, Section 81D requires planning boards to prepare Master Plans for communities they serve. These Master Plans need to be regularly updated to include recent changes and developments in the communities which they are about. As Boylston has changed and developed in a variety of ways since the Town's 2000 Comprehensive Master Plan was formed and published, it is vital to update the vision, goals, and action items from the 2000 plan and draft new ones so that the vision provided in this Plan is fit for these times.

Moreover, community master planning processes offer distinct benefits, including:

- Encouraging a dialogue about a community's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.
- Engaging a wide variety of stakeholders in developing a common vision, aspirational goals, and objectives.
- Ensuring that development is orderly, intentional, and predictable.
- Guiding an efficient capital spending program.
- Supporting a better bond rating by demonstrating prudent fiscal policies.
- The opportunity for "bonus" points on certain State grant programs.
- Identifying short- and long-term actions and who is responsible for implementation.
- Serving as a reference for boards to make clear, fair, and consistent decisions.
- Helping the town prepare for growth within the geographic region and in-line with demographic trends and changes.

Community Profile

Boylston is directly northeast of the City of Worcester. Despite its proximity to an epicenter of regional employment, Boylston remains a small, residential community with New England charm and abundant open space. The Wachusett Reservoir covers much of northwest Boylston. This limits development but contributes to plentiful natural spaces and wildlife. Likewise, Boylston’s public places preserve a rich history and cultural character. The Town is home to the John B. Gough Estate and Hillside Manor, where Gough (one of the greatest orators in early American history) resided in the mid-to-late 1800s. The New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill is peerless in the region and draws visitors from across New England. Boylston’s well-preserved Town Hall, Town Common, and Sawyer Memorial Library, as well as other well-preserved historic assets, further characterize the Town.

Originally home to the Nipmuc people, Boylston was first settled by Europeans in the 1600’s. It was incorporated as the North Precinct of Shrewsbury in 1742 and was incorporated as Boylston in 1786. The Wachusett Reservoir’s construction between 1895 and 1905 led to the flooding and destruction of the Town’s manufacturing center at Sawyer’s Mills and a decline in the Town’s population by more than 50%. After World War Two, Boylston saw an increase in population as upwardly-mobile families moved in.

The community subsequently evolved. In 2022, Boylston is a residential bedroom community in which many residents commute outside of town for work.

Key Facts

The Town’s population is 4,849 (2020). By 2040, it is projected to grow by ~3.7 % to 5,026 or 5,028 residents; however, there is evidence that the Town is growing at an even faster rate.



Boylston’s high-quality schools are a major factor in attracting new residents to Town.



Boylston’s median family income is \$117,310, and its median household income is \$97,591.



Boylston's population is aging; the percentage of the Town’s population over 65 years old is expected to increase from 17.3% in 2019 to 25.6% in 2040.



The median single-family home sales price in Boylston in 2021 was \$503,000. Most residences in town are single-family homes.



The median gross rent in Boylston is \$947 (2015-2019 ACS).



The Town has an affordable housing rate of 1.7%, well below the 10% mandate from the State.



The largest industries in Boylston are: education, healthcare, and social assistance; professional, administrative, and waste management; manufacturing; and arts, entertainment, accommodation, and food services.



The largest employers in town are Frito-Lay Inc., Landscaping Etc. Inc., and Mt Pleasant Country Club.



Many Boylston residents commute to work within Massachusetts but outside of town. The average commute for Boylston residents is 28.7 minutes.



The Town has almost 4,000 acres of conservation and recreation land.



History of Community Planning

Boylston has a long history of community planning. The earliest official plans for Boylston on file with the Town or Regional Planning Commission date to the 1970s.

Prior Planning Efforts

1979: Inventory of Historic Places and Natural Resources

This survey was conducted by the Boylston Historical Commission to record the important historic and natural resources in the Town as priority places for preservation and future use. It includes a map, history of ownership, and description of each resource.

1983: Boylston Reconnaissance Report - MHC Reconnaissance Survey

This Massachusetts Historical Commission report was part of a statewide series that explored the

historical development of municipalities in Massachusetts. The report describes Boylston's infrastructural, economic, and social history as well as its topography and political boundaries. It also includes an inventory of historical properties and describes threats to historical resources.

2000: Boylston Comprehensive Master Plan

This important plan was the first comprehensive master plan in Boylston's history. It highlighted the limits to commercial development in town due to the lack of a public wastewater system and opportunities in increasing collaboration between and capacity within the Town's government and the Town's business community. It also highlighted the importance of diversifying the Town's housing stock and design within commercial and industrial districts in addition to the expansion of these districts.

2005: Community Development Plan

This plan, although less wide-ranging than a master plan, covered a variety of topical areas: housing, economic development, open spaces, and transportation. Main themes in this plan included reviewing zoning bylaws in order to promote business development (echoing themes of the 2000 Master Plan), streamlining permitting, and improving environmental performance and village design standards.

2005: Open Space and Recreation Plan

This plan was the first of its kind in Boylston, and it was crafted by McGregor & Associates, P.C. and a committee of six Boylston residents as a roadmap for preserving and expanding open spaces in the Town. The main recommendations of this plan included protecting water resources in town, altering zoning bylaws to preserve the Town's character, education and outreach, and expanding trails and open space in town and/or owned by the Town; these recommendations were central to the Plan's Five-Year Action Plan.

2005: Affordable Housing and Planned Production Plan

This plan comprised a housing needs assessment and strategies for improving housing in town. Challenges to increasing affordable and rental housing options were identified, including the lack of public sewerage and restrictive zoning. Opportunities identified for increasing affordable and rental housing included building housing specifically for special needs populations, inclusionary zoning, building these types of housing on town-owned land, and other policy changes.

2005: Establishment of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund

A vote at the 2005 Boylston Town Meeting created this fund in order to build and maintain affordable housing in town for the benefit of residents with low to moderate incomes. This fund is run by a Board of Trustees that includes the entire Board of Selectmen as well as two members they appoint. The Board is also charged with implementing Housing Production Plan action items.

2007: Wachusett Reservoir Watershed Plan Update

This plan provided actionable strategies for protecting the Town's watersheds, especially through public outreach and educational efforts.

2007: Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) Inventory and Assessment of Boylston Water Assets and Infrastructure

This inventory and assessment was conducted by WPI to help the Boylston Water District meet federal GASB (Government Accounting Standards Board) 34 financial reporting requirements.

2010: Route 140 Corridor Study

This study explored strategies to increase economic development along Route 140. Recommendations from the study include changing the zoning along the corridor, modifying zoning bylaws related to building and parking, reviewing how the Town's water supply and infrastructure might need to be improved to help develop this corridor, and creating capacity-building initiatives to help businesses.

2012: Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan

This CMRPC-led collaborative plan between 13 central Worcester County communities identified priority parcels and transportation elements to preserve and/or develop. In Boylston, 12 Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs) were recorded, including two areas on Town-owned land.

2014: Berlin-Boylston Public Schools Regionalization Feasibility Study

This study from CMRPC and school committees in Berlin and Boylston explored the possibility of creating a consolidated PreK-12 regional school district serving the two towns, a strategy that for other places in Massachusetts has reduced costs and funneled new savings to improving teaching and learning outcomes. The study found that expected declining student enrollment and projected cost savings warranted consolidation.

2014: MS4 Stormwater Self-Assessment

This self-assessment of stormwater management practices was produced to see if the Town met MS4 Stormwater Permit Requirements. Recommendations of actions needed to comply with these requirements included capacity building, outreach, mapping and data collection, and bylaw updating relating to stormwater management.

2015: Strategic Wastewater Planning Process for Route 140

This plan examined the feasibility of constructing a municipal wastewater district to serve Route 140 and surrounding areas.

A major finding from the planning process was that Boylston residents did widely desire municipal sewer connections.

2016: Senior Residential Development Bylaw

This bylaw created a new floating overlay district designed for the growing senior population of Boylston. New construction in this district, which still considers the community's character, is characterized by more flexibility in design standards and helping senior citizens of the Town access services and have more options regarding where to live.

2018: Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans

These plans, crafted by the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO), inventoried bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, respectively, in the CMRPC region. The bicycle plan found that although there is little to no bicycle infrastructure currently in Boylston, there is much potential for bicycle facilities in the Town, especially if Complete Streets policies are adopted and outreach and education efforts, especially to students, can expand. The pedestrian plan found that in addition to Complete Streets and other outreach and education efforts, outreach to expand and maintain trails in the Town would be beneficial.

2018: West Boylston – Boylston – Shrewsbury Route 140 Corridor Profile

This corridor profile was completed by the CMMPO for the three communities along the corridor and was informed by the analysis of transportation data.

Suggested improvements included changes to roadways such as a modern roundabout, a new approach to a development, and changes to signage.

2020: Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

This plan builds on the Town's 2005 OSRP to explore changes to Open Space and Recreation in Boylston over the past decade-and-a-half. It is in effect until 2027. The plan was informed by a community survey and a stakeholder engagement group and updated the inventory of Boylston's open spaces and natural resources. Its action plan includes goals that aim to maintain the Town's character while protecting and enhancing open, natural, and recreational spaces.

2020: Regional Asset Management Report

Prepared by the CMMPO, this report details road infrastructure assets in the region. It identifies road conditions, repair strategies, and the funding needed for improvements. The report included two prioritized assets in Boylston, which were a pavement segment in "fair" condition and a culvert that represented a "moderate barrier."

2020: Regional Transportation Plan (Mobility2040) Update

This long-range transportation plan describes multi-modal transportation needs in the CMMPO region, resources for addressing those needs, and projects planned within the next 25 years. A Blackstone River Greenway to Mass-Central Rail Trail project identified in the Plan would help create healthy alternative transportation options in Boylston and surrounding communities.

2022 Master Plan Chapters

The following sections of this plan represent its core elements. As previously noted, the plan includes a deep dive into each of topics that Massachusetts General Law requires included in a Master Plan. Each topic has its own chapter. The chapters each include the following:

- Brief overview of the topic and the goals for the chapter
- Summary of relevant community input
- History of prior planning efforts
- Existing Conditions
- Issues and Opportunities
- Summary of Goals and Recommendations



Population and Housing

Introduction

This chapter is a reformatted version of the 2021 Boylston Housing Production Plan, which was developed by a sub-committee of the Master Plan Steering Committee. The Boylston Housing Production Plan Sub-Committee was a group of six volunteers tasked with the responsibility of guiding the creation of Boylston’s Housing Production Plan. The Sub-Committee met remotely on an approximately bi-monthly basis between October 2020 and June 2021. Meetings were open to the public and held in accordance with Open Meeting Law. Video recordings of all meetings were posted on the official Town of Boylston Vimeo webpage and local cable channel. CMRPC staff worked collaboratively with the Housing Production Plan Sub-Committee to understand local housing conditions and needs, seek input from the community using multiple platforms, and develop strategies to assist the town in meeting the housing needs of current and future residents.

The Boylston Housing Production Plan (HPP) was developed to provide the town with a strong tool for implementing alternative and affordable housing options to meet Chapter 40B regulations. The Plan synthesizes baseline demographic and housing research, community outreach, zoning, and regulatory review. It contains an implementation strategy that is included in the Master Plan Implementation Matrix (see Chapter 9).

Community Engagement

To gather public input on the affordability and availability of types of housing in Boylston, the Committee released a Residential Housing Needs Survey. The 17-question survey was available online, and hardcopies were available for pick-up and drop-off at the Boylston Public Library, Council on Aging, and Town Hall. The community survey ran from December 10, 2020, through January 15, 2021. Promotional postcards encouraged residents to complete the survey. These postcards were mailed out and hand-delivered by Sub-committee volunteers to every household and post office box in town. In total, 447 surveys were completed by town residents, representing more than 12% of the population over the age of 18. Of those respondents, 29% were under the age of 45, 41% were between the ages of 45 and 64, and 30% were 65 years or older. The complete survey, survey results, and the promotional postcard can be viewed in Appendix B.

A remote public workshop was held via Zoom on April 8, 2021, from 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. Nearly 40 community members participated in the virtual event and engaged in discussions on the future of housing in Boylston. Attendees were introduced to the Housing Production Plan with a presentation by CMRPC. Additional time was allotted for questions and answers, to discuss the results of the community survey, and for a breakout group activity on the potential design

and placement of alternative housing options. Prior to the workshop, a brief survey was sent to those who had pre-registered. The survey asked residents to select the types of housing they would be comfortable seeing built in the five designated “study areas” of Boylston shown on an interactive map. The results of this survey were used to prompt breakout groups discussions at the workshop. The valuable input gathered at this event was crucial to understanding who in Boylston needs housing and the types and locations of housing that are in demand.

Summary of Housing Goals

Goal 1: Build municipal capacity and advocacy efforts to support affordable housing production.

Goal 2: Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging issues in housing.

Goal 3: Ensure new housing development design and location prioritizes preservation of open space, utilizes Smart Growth principles, and preserves town character.

Goal 4: Encourage greater diversity, inclusivity, and distribution of housing types to meet the needs of families and individuals of all income levels, abilities, and ages, particularly seniors and young families.

Goal 5: Strive to meet the affordable housing thresholds established by M.G.L. Chapter 40B.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Housing Production Plan, 2021

This chapter is taken from Boylston’s 2021 Housing Production Plan. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B requires cities and towns in the Commonwealth to work towards ensuring that a minimum of 10% of their total housing stock qualifies as affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The State encourages municipalities to prepare a Housing Production Plan (HPP) to assist in achieving the 10 percent goal as well as take a proactive step in developing affordable housing. A Housing Production Plan is a plan authorized by M.G.L. Chapter 40B and administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). The HPP will be relevant for five years.

Commissions and Active Groups

Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees

The Town voted to establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund at the 2005 Boylston Annual Town Meeting. The purpose of the trust fund is to provide for the creation and preservation of affordable housing the Boylston for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households. Funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund may be used to support the acquisition, development, or preservation of affordable housing units. The trust fund is administered by a Board of Trustees, including all members of the Board of Selectmen, with the two remaining members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Board of Trustees can also become the entity in Boylston that oversees affordable housing issues and is tasked with implementing recommendations from the Housing Production Plan.

Existing Conditions

Demographic Characteristics

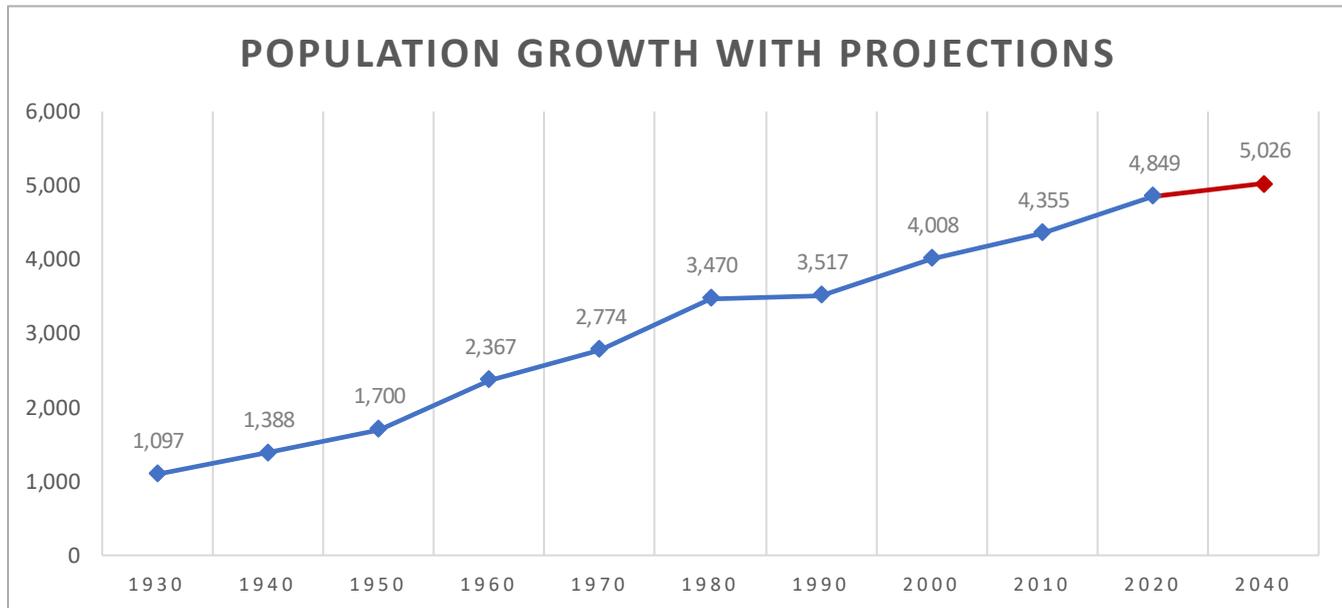
Historic and Projected Population Growth

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, Boylston’s population totals 4,849 residents and the town has a population density of 250 inhabitants per square mile. Historically an agricultural community, the town has experienced several periods of rapid population growth, including the years following the end of the Second World War. Between 1940 and 1960, the

town’s population grew by 41%. During this time, Boylston’s population grew from 1,388 residents to 2,367 residents. Since 2000, Boylston has grown by 17%, which is a greater percentage increase than all its surrounding neighbors, other than Berlin which grew by 28% in this 20-year period. The population of Worcester County grew by 10% between 2000 and 2020.

Boylston was initially anticipated to gradually increase its population by approximately four percent by 2040. This anticipated growth was lower than that of the town’s surrounding communities, each of which are expected to increase in overall population by at least an estimated 10% by 2040.¹ As of this year, Boylston’s population is already nearing the expected 2040 estimate of four percent growth, with a current population of 4,924. Future population change patterns will be determined by housing development patterns, local and regional economic conditions, and evolving living preferences of current and future generations.

Figure PH1. Boylston Population Growth with Projections, 1930-2040



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1930-2010; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019; CMRPC Population Estimates

As the COVID-19 pandemic and economic shutdown forced countless employees across the nation to work remotely from their homes in 2020 and 2021, it is possible that people may continue working remotely and elect to relocate outside of employment centers such as the Boston region to attractive and more affordable suburban communities in Central Massachusetts, such as Boylston. Even as conditions gradually return to a state of pre-COVID-19 normality, remote work is likely to increase in popularity and feasibility, with workers embracing more freedom and flexibility without needing to make lengthy commutes every day. Major companies have announced that employees working from home may continue to do so permanently. Boylston could experience a high demand in housing in the coming years due to these factors. The town’s quality of life, clean air, excellent school system, and other attractive small-town features make it a prime location for families to gravitate towards. While it is challenging to anticipate how the pandemic will furthermore affect the economy and housing market in the long-term, there will undoubtedly be profound impacts.

¹ CMRPC Population Projections

Median Age

It is important to examine age distribution in a community as different age groups may have various requirements and preferences for housing. Additionally, age is a protected class under State Law. U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-year Estimates show that approximately 25% of the Boylston population are under the age of 20; 11% between the age of 20 and 34; 13% from 35 to 44 years of age; 33% from 45 to 64 years; 15% from 65 to 84 years; and three percent over the age of 85 years (Table PH1). Since 2000, Boylston has seen the greatest increase occur in the 85 years and over age category (+69%). Age brackets that have decreased since 2000 include the Under 5 years (-19%), 20-34 years (-14%), and 35-44 years (-28%). The decrease in residents under the age of five and those between the ages of 20 and 44 has significant implications on school enrollment, as these groups represent future students of the public school system *and* parents of school-age children. According to elementary school enrollment data from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as of 2019, Boylston has 0.17 elementary students per household, matching the Massachusetts average of 0.17 students per household.

Table PH1. Boylston Population by Age, 2000-2019

	2000		2010		2019		2030 (Projection)		2040 (Projection)	
	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent	Total	Percent
Total population	4,008	100%	4,355	100%	4,623	100%	4,792	100%	5,028	100%
Under 5 years	238	5.9%	221	5.1%	200	4.3%	226	4.7%	223	4.4%
5 to 19 years	787	19.6%	875	20.1%	958	20.7%	855	17.8%	891	17.7%
20 to 34 years	600	15.0%	512	11.8%	528	11.4%	622	13.0%	703	14.0%
35 to 44 years	779	19.4%	618	14.2%	610	13.2%	588	12.3%	566	11.3%
45 to 64 years	1,113	27.8%	1,534	35.2%	1,528	33.1%	1,300	27.1%	1,361	27.1%
65 to 84 years	452	11.3%	519	11.9%	672	14.5%	1,092	22.8%	1,104	22.0%
85 years and over	39	1.0%	76	1.7%	127	2.8%	109	2.3%	180	3.6%
Median age	39.8	(X)	41.6	(X)	45.2	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)	(X)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

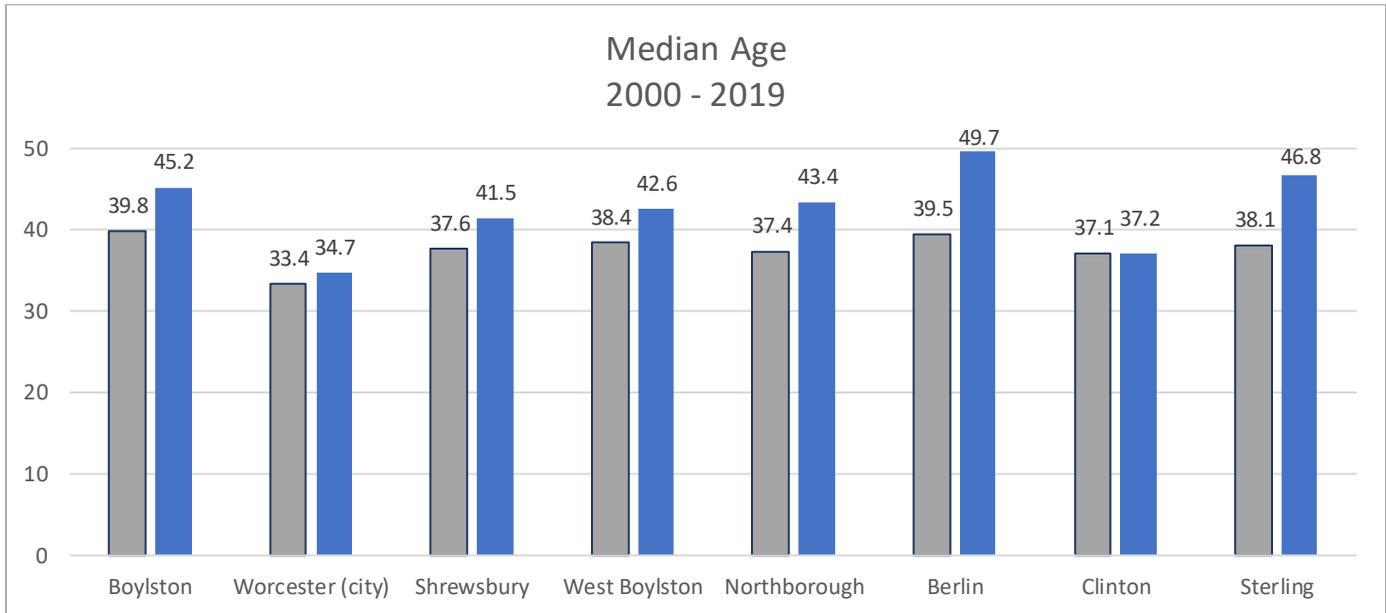
While residents ages 20-44 made up approximately 34% of Boylston’s population in 2000, this age bracket now constitutes approximately 25% of the population. This group typically consists of first-time homebuyers, implying barriers to homeownership could be one cause for the decrease in the 20-44 age bracket. This can also suggest an insufficient supply of housing options in Boylston such as rental units, starter homes, condominiums, apartments, or accessory dwelling units.

Boylston’s median age (45.2 years) has increased by nearly six years since 2000, an increase behind only Berlin and Sterling out of the surrounding communities (Figure PH2). The town’s median age remains well above the county (40.2 years) and state’s (39.5 years) median age, indicating an older population.² Currently, less than 20% of the population is over the age of 65 and, by 2040, this is anticipated to grow closer to 25% of the town’s population, a noteworthy trend but slightly less pronounced than other communities in the region.

² U.S. Census Bureau Estimates 2015-2019

It is anticipated that the changing age composition of Boylston will result in a greater demand for housing better suited for aging households as well as households with fewer members. The steadily increasing median age and proportion of the aged 65+ population in Boylston is reflective of national trends, as the Baby Boomer generation approaches and surpasses retirement age. The number of householders living alone in Boylston has been on the incline in recent decades, and the average household size has not increased. It is a necessity for Boylston to carefully plan for and create viable housing options for these community members.

Figure PH2. Median Age, 2000-2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000; American Community Survey 2015-2019

Household Composition

The U.S. Census Bureau states that a *household* consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit, including the related family members and all the unrelated people. A *family household* includes the family householder and all other people in the living quarters who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.³ Table PH2 shows that Boylston’s household composition has increased by 13% in the last two decades. Out of the surrounding communities, this growth rate is second only to Berlin, which has experienced a household increase of 26%, a rate that can be attributed to rapid multi-family housing construction in recent years (see Figure PH3). West Boylston and Clinton were the only two communities surrounding Boylston that decreased in number of households since 2000. The number of family units grew at a faster pace in Boylston (10%) compared to the county (five percent) and state (five percent). Overall, family units have increased at a slower pace than household units in Boylston, Worcester County, and Massachusetts.

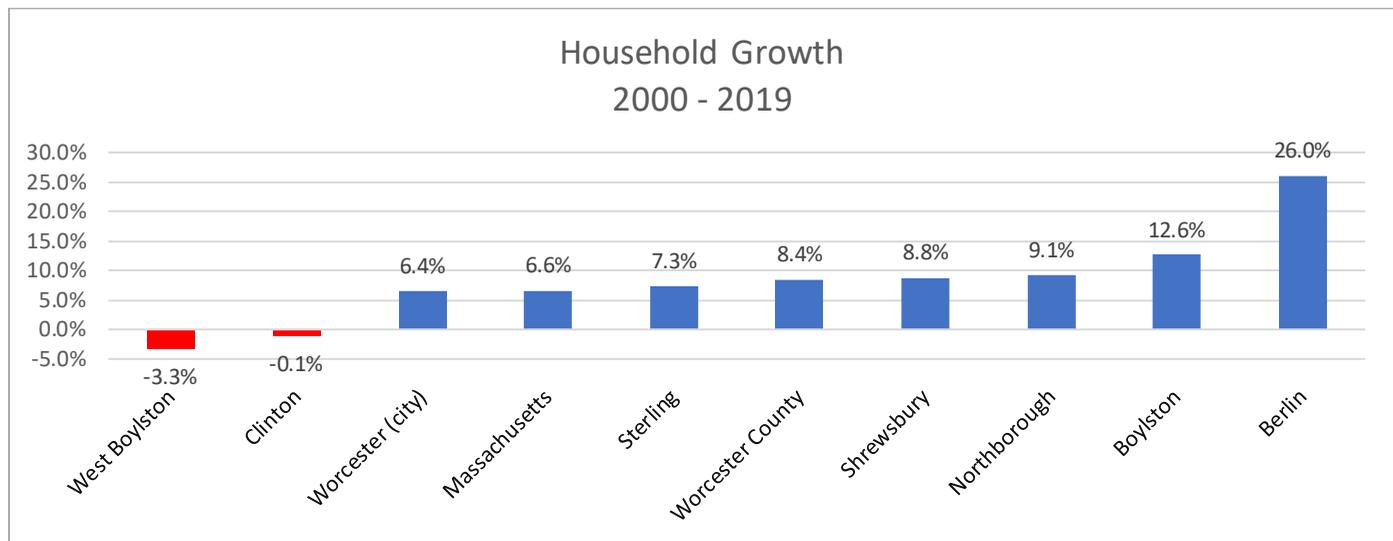
³ Same-sex couple households are included in the ‘family households’ category if there is at least one additional person related to the householder by birth or adoption.

Table PH2. Households and Families, 2000-2019

	2000 Census		2010 Census		2019 ACS Estimate		Percent Change 2000-2019	
	Households	Families	Households	Families	Households	Families	Households	Families
Boylston	1,573	1,141	1,698	1,162	1,799	1,273	13%	10%
Worcester County	283,927	192,423	303,080	202,602	309,951	202,645	8%	5%
Massachusetts	2,443,580	1,576,696	2,547,075	1,603,591	2,617,497	1,659,300	7%	5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000, 2010; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

Figure PH3. Household Growth, Boylston, and Surrounding Communities, 2000-2019



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

In 2019, 1,273 households in Boylston were classified as family households (Table PH3). Family households represent 71% of all households, while the remaining 29% consist of members who are not related to one another. Family households with their own children under the age of 18 make up 29% of all households in Boylston, which is higher than the state’s rate of 26%. An estimated 24% of all households in town are single-person households, and 10% of all households are elderly single-person households. These rates are lower than the Massachusetts 2019 averages of 29% and 12%, respectively.

For many communities in the region and state, the number of people living in a household has been declining as more people choose to live alone, delay having children, or have fewer or no children. Despite this trend, in Boylston, the average household size has remained at 2.56 since 2000. The number of family households with their own children under the age of 18 living in Boylston has only slightly decreased from 553 in 2000 to 524 in 2019. Single-parent households comprised six percent of all households. (Table PH3). Single-parent households may have more difficulty affording a safe and spacious home because of the reliance on one income to support the family. Proportionally, Boylston has fewer single-parent households than the state, which was at eight percent in 2019. Families with children are a protected class under federal law, and Massachusetts has made it unlawful to discriminate based on marital status.

Table PH3. Boylston Households by Household Type, 2019

	Number	Percent of Households
Total Households	1,799	100%
Family Households	1,273	71%
Family Households with own children under 18 years	524	29%
Male householder, no spouse present with own children under 18 years	19	1%
Female householder, no spouse present with own children under 18 years	97	5%
Non-family Households	526	29%
Householder living alone	429	24%
Elderly single-person households	183	10%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Race and Ethnicity

The population of Boylston is primarily White, at 96.1% of the town’s total population (Table PH4). Since 2000, the White alone population gained the greatest number of residents, increasing from 3,876 in 2000 to 4,443 residents in 2019. Black/African American and American Indian/Alaska Native residents of Boylston decreased in population, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Island residents remained at 0.0%. Populations that saw an increase since 2000 include Asian and Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The major ancestries of Boylston include Irish, Italian, English, French, German, Polish, Scottish, French Canadian, and Swedish. Figures PH4 and PH5 compare racial distributions in Boylston and Massachusetts.

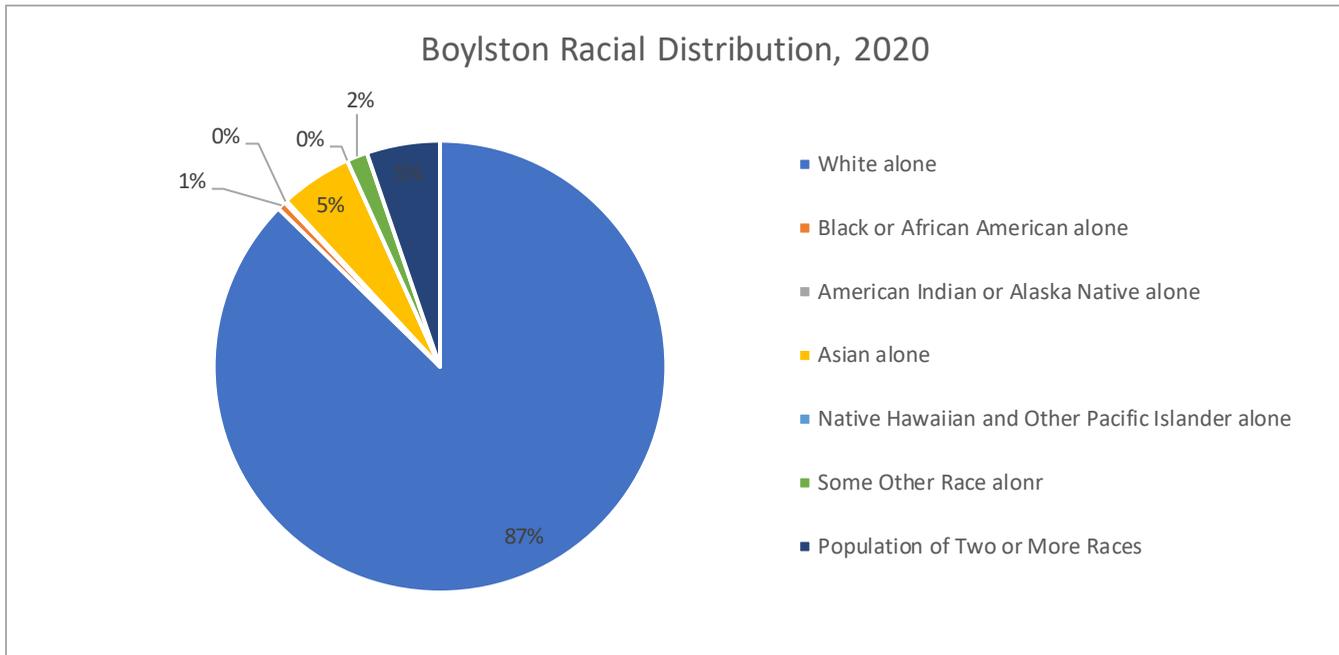
Additionally, an estimated 10% of the population over the age of five speaks a language other than English at home. In comparison, 20% of Worcester County’s population speaks a language other than English at home.

Table PH4. Boylston Population by Race/Ethnicity, 2000-2019

	2000		2010		2019	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total Population	4,008	100%	4,355	100%	4,623	100%
White alone	3,876	96.70%	4,061	93.20%	4,443	96.10%
Black or African American alone	27	0.50%	30	1.00%	9	0.20%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	9	0.10%	9	0.20%	0	0.00%
Asian alone	55	0.90%	159	3.70%	122	2.60%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Some other race alone	10	0.10%	29	0.20%	6	0.10%
Two or more races	31	0.30%	67	1.50%	43	0.90%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	26	0.60%	68	1.60%	191	4.10%

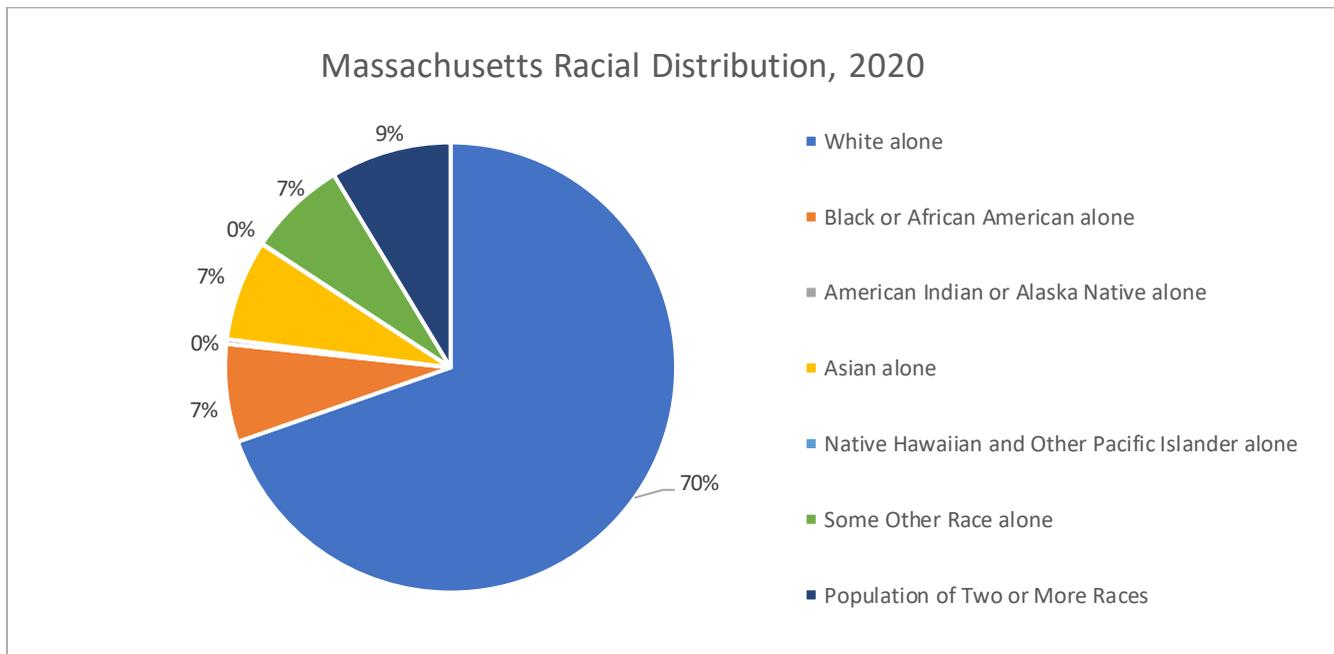
Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2000, 2010; 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Figure PH4. Racial Distribution of Boylston, 2019



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Estimates

Figure PH5. Racial Distribution of Massachusetts, 2019



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey Estimates

Disability & Special Needs

Disability is a protected class under Federal Law. A disability is defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a long-lasting physical, mental, or emotional condition. This condition can make it difficult for a person to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering. This condition can also impede a person from being able to go outside the home alone or to work at a job. Many residents with one or more disabilities face housing challenges due to a lack of housing that is affordable and physically accessible. Table 5 shows that an estimated 5.7% of Boylston’s population (159 residents) ages 18 to 64, also known as “working-age residents,” reported having one or more disabilities. An estimated 32% (256 people) of residents ages 65 and over in town reported having one or more disabilities. Ambulatory difficulties are currently the most common disability faced by the elderly population in Boylston, followed by difficulties with hearing. With projections of an increasing elderly population in Boylston, the demand for affordable and barrier-free/accessible housing may be on the rise. The range of disabilities present in the town’s population requires different types of accessible housing to serve the needs of persons with disabilities. Some communities in Massachusetts have put more effort and resources into integrating accessible housing and housing with supportive services in their planning for market-rate and affordable housing development.

Table PH5. Population by Estimated Disability Status

	Boylston		Worcester County		Massachusetts	
	Estimate	Percent of total population with a disability	Estimate	Percent of total population with a disability	Estimate	Percent of total population with a disability
Total civilian non-institutionalized population	4,623	(X)	813,041	(X)	6,777,468	(X)
<i>With a disability</i>	454	9.80%	98,164	12.10%	784,593	11.60%
Population 18 to 64 years	2,806	(X)	516,708	(X)	4,338,119	(X)
<i>With a disability</i>	159	5.7%	51,754	10.0%	383,233	8.8%
With a hearing difficulty	37	1.3%	9,047	1.8%	65,595	1.5%
With a vision difficulty	38	1.4%	7,560	1.5%	60,336	1.4%
With a cognitive difficulty	57	2.0%	26,793	5.2%	188,779	4.4%
With an ambulatory difficulty	39	1.4%	21,532	4.2%	161,323	3.7%
With a self-care difficulty	20	0.7%	9,186	1.8%	65,245	1.5%
With an independent living difficulty	33	1.2%	20,939	4.1%	142,648	3.3%
Population 65 years and over	799	(X)	121,318	(X)	1,070,970	(X)
<i>With a disability</i>	256	32.0%	38,514	31.7%	340,368	31.8%
With a hearing difficulty	120	15.0%	16,605	13.7%	144,455	13.5%
With a vision difficulty	9	1.1%	6,228	5.1%	55,114	5.1%
With a cognitive difficulty	60	7.5%	9,994	8.2%	82,664	7.7%
With an ambulatory difficulty	143	17.9%	23,783	19.6%	206,939	19.3%
With a self-care difficulty	39	4.9%	9,421	7.8%	80,740	7.5%
With an independent living difficulty	80	10.0%	15,829	13.0%	144,816	13.5%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Populations with special needs are residents who require specialized housing and/or support services. Included in this category, in no particular order, are:

- People with physical disabilities
- Elderly and frail elderly
- Veterans
- Survivors of domestic violence
- Youth aging out of foster care and at-risk youth
- People with psychiatric and cognitive disabilities
- People with substance abuse issues
- Ex-offenders
- People living with HIV or AIDS
- People who are homeless

The needs of these sub-populations overlap in many cases, as well as the institutions that serve them. Special needs populations are more likely than the general population to encounter difficulties securing and retaining adequate and affordable housing, due to lower incomes and other obstacles, and often require enhanced support services. While members of these populations often move through temporary housing placements, they often seek permanent and stable housing options. Unfortunately, due to the small size of Boylston, municipal-level data is not available on these specialized populations.

Numerous organizations provide support services and group homes in Worcester County. There are likely individuals with developmental disabilities who live independently in town with support from the Department of Developmental Services (DDS).

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment is one of the greatest factors determining employment and wealth, particularly now that a high school education is the minimum requirement to obtain a job in most industries. The most recent American Community Survey estimates that 97% of Boylston residents hold a high school degree or higher, whereas the state and county have educational attainment rates closer to 91% (Table PH6). The number of Boylston residents with a bachelor's degree or greater (58%) is higher than both Worcester County (22%) and Massachusetts (44%). Of the working-age population totaling 3,756 Boylston residents in 2019, 66% were participating in the labor force, a rate on par with the county but slightly lower than the state. Based on high educational attainment rates in the town, many Boylston residents are well-positioned to hold high-paying, professional jobs.⁴

⁴According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), a professional job is one that requires a specific level of college education, typically a bachelor's degree or higher, for someone to perform its duties and responsibilities. Examples include doctors, teachers, accountants, lawyers, scientists, and authors. Non-professional jobs classified by the EEOC include craftspeople, plumbers, electricians, installers, and food service workers or, in general, positions that primarily entail manual labor duties and trade skills learned through an apprenticeship or training program.

Table PH6. Labor Force and Education Levels

	Population 16 and Over		Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years and Over				
	Total	In Labor Force	Population 25 Years and Over	Less than High School	High School Graduate or Higher	Some College	Bachelor's Degree or Higher
Massachusetts	5,648,105	67.3%	4,781,683	9.3%	90.8%	15.4%	43.7%
Worcester County	671,415	66.2%	568,517	9.3%	90.7%	17.5%	22.0%
Boylston	3,756	66.2%	3,227	2.6%	97.4%	16.2%	57.5%

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income

The income of households is directly related to the amount of money that individuals and families can allocate for housing. Housing that is affordable for lower-income households is significant for creating household stability and economic self-sufficiency. To build and retain a strong and talented workforce to improve the region and state’s economic competitiveness, housing that is affordable to working-class and middle-class households needs to be readily available.

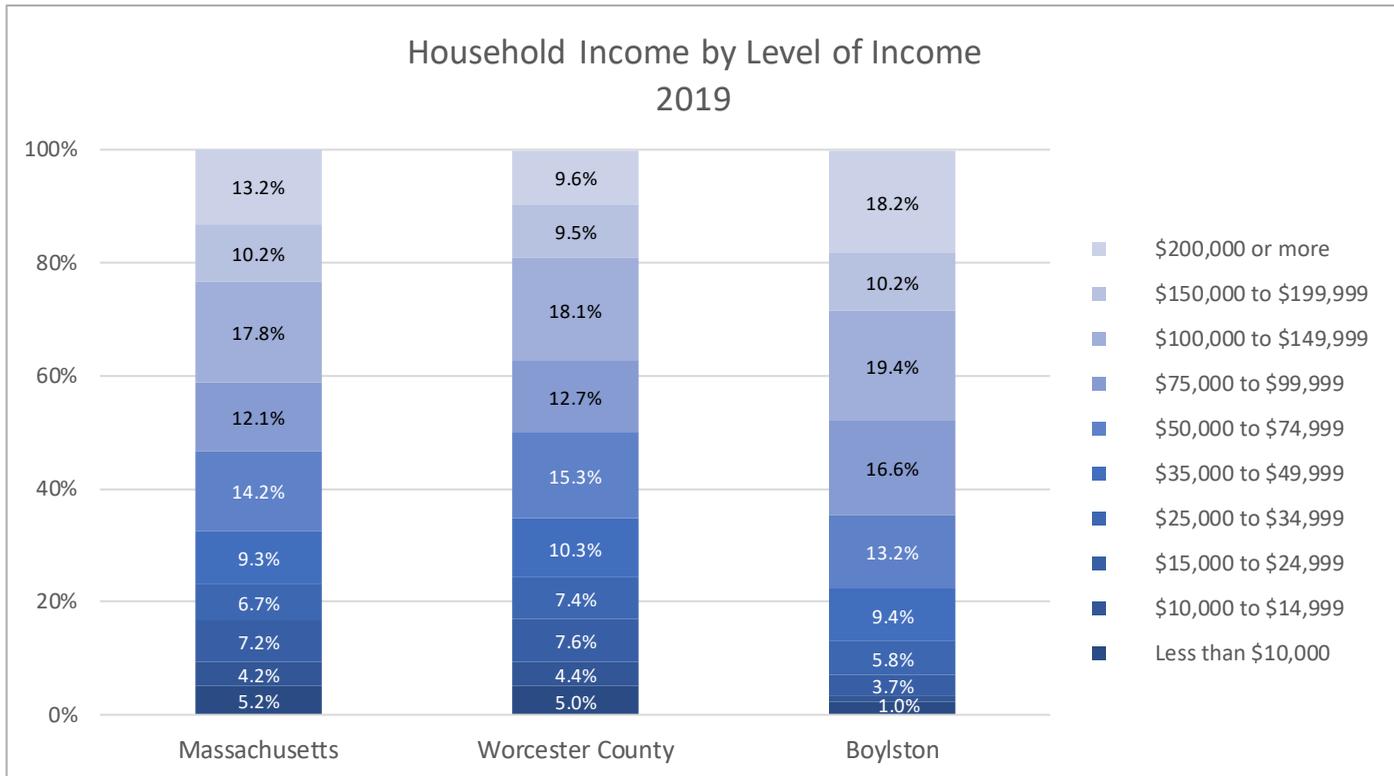
Table PH7. Median Household and Family Income, 2019

	Median Household Income	Median Family Income
Boylston	\$97,591	\$117,310
Worcester County	\$74,679	\$96,393
Massachusetts	\$81,215	\$103,126

Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Household and family income in Boylston were both significantly higher than Worcester County and Massachusetts in 2019, based on ACS estimates (Table PH7). Since 2000, Boylston’s median household income has increased by over 30% from \$67,703 to the 2019 estimate of \$97,591. In comparison, both Worcester County and the state of Massachusetts also experienced increases in median household income and median family income between 2000 and 2019. In terms of household income distribution among residents, Figure PH6 shows that there is a higher percentage of households earning more than \$100,000 per year versus the state and county.

Figure PH6. Household Income by Level of Income, 2019



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Housing Supply Characteristics

Housing Types and Tenure

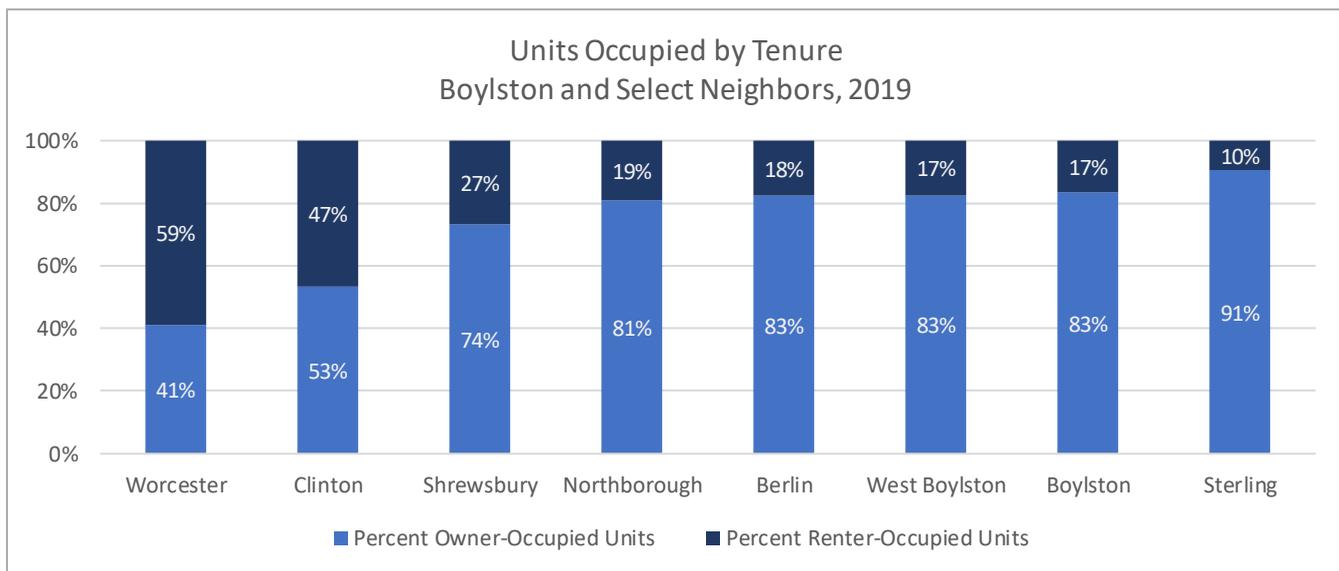
The 2000 U.S. Census showed that there were 1,573 occupied housing units in Boylston. Between 2000 and 2019, the number of housing units in the town grew at a rate of 12%, increasing the housing supply by an estimated 226 units (Table PH8). Worcester County’s total housing units grew by eight percent during this same period and Massachusetts’ total units increased by nearly seven percent. Occupancy of Boylston housing units increased slightly from 98% occupied in 2000 to 99% occupied in 2019. Owner-occupancy in Boylston has only increased by a fraction of a percentage since 2000, remaining at approximately 83% over the last two decades. This rate is still significantly higher than the county or state, which have greater availability of rental housing and rates of owner-occupied units not exceeding two-thirds of the overall housing supply. In addition to having a lower rate of rental housing than the county or state, Boylston has a lower rate than all its neighboring communities other than Sterling, with 17% of units occupied by renters as of 2019 (Figure PH7).

Table PH8. Households by Tenure, 2000-2019

	2000						2019					
	Boylston		Worcester County		Massachusetts		Boylston		Worcester County		Massachusetts	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total occupied housing units	1,573	100	283,927	100	2,443,580	100	1,799	100	309,951	100	2,617,497	100
Owner-occupied	1,317	83.7	182,104	64.1	1,508,052	61.7	1,499	83.3	201,806	65.1	1,632,765	62.3
Renter-occupied	256	16.3	101,823	35.9	935,528	38.3	300	16.7	108,145	34.9	984,732	37.7
Average household size of owner-occupied unit	2.67	(X)	2.76	(X)	2.72	(X)	2.67	(X)	2.75	(X)	2.69	(X)
Average household size of renter-occupied unit	1.9	(X)	2.19	(X)	2.17	(X)	2.03	(X)	2.22	(X)	2.25	(X)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000; American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

Figure PH7. Units Occupied by Tenure, Boylston, and Select Neighbors, 2019



Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019

Vacancy status is used as a basic indicator of the strength or weakness of a housing market and its stability. It shows demand for housing, identifies housing turnover, and suggests the quality of housing for certain areas. There are five reasons a house can be classified as vacant by the United States Census Bureau, including: the house is 1) for seasonal, recreational, or occasional use; 2) for rent; 3) for sale; 4) rented or sold, but not occupied; or 5) all other vacant units. Rental vacancy rates have steadily been declining across the U.S., in urban, suburban, and rural areas.

In Boylston, vacant housing units decreased from 33 units to 24 units between 2000 and 2018 (Table PH9). Both the homeowner vacancy rate and the rental vacancy rate were most recently estimated to be at 0.0%. Vacancy on some level is necessary for a sustainable market and economy, and a vacancy rate between four percent and six percent is typically considered healthy in that supply is close enough to demand to keep prices relatively stable. A vacancy rate this low suggests that demand is greatly outpacing supply and generally results in rising costs of housing. This presents

a challenge when trying to establish greater affordability in the town. However, increased production of rental units and multi-family units can help offset the impacts of these low vacancy rates.

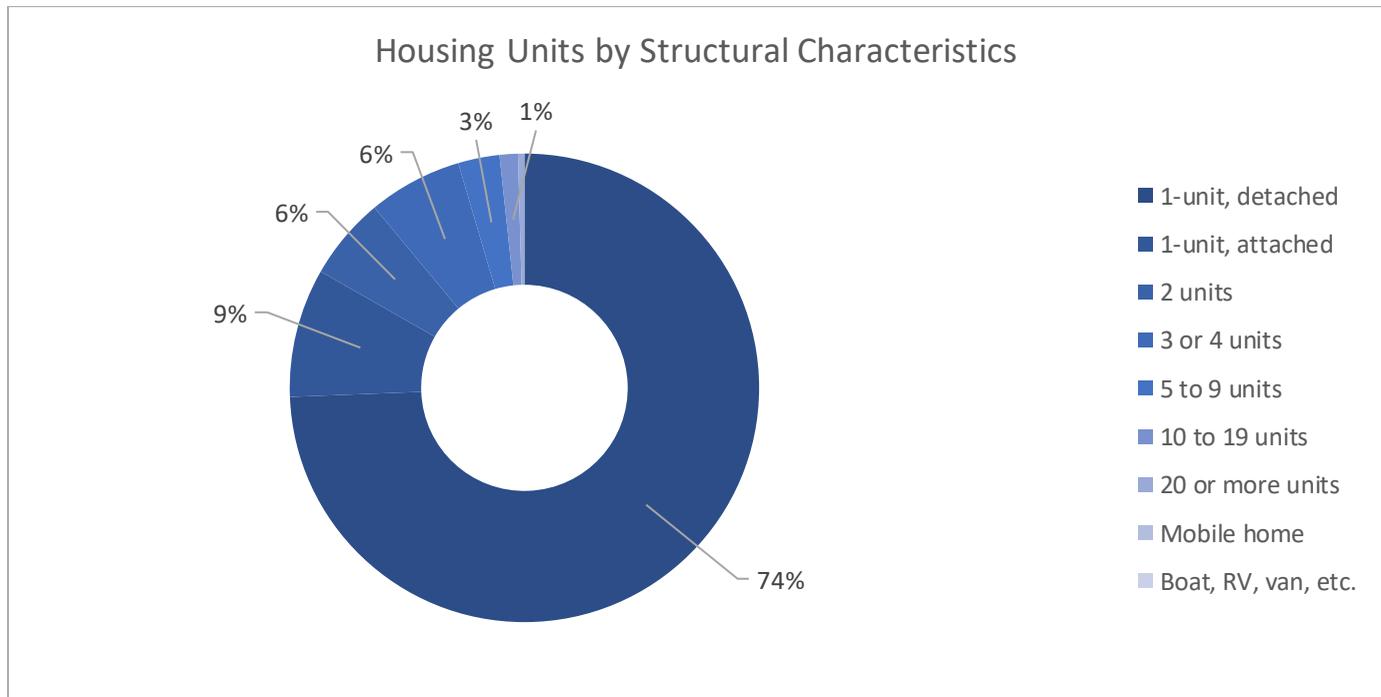
The ACS estimates that 74% of homes in Boylston are single-family detached homes, which far exceeds the ratios within Worcester County and the State, both of which remain under 60% of total homes (Figure PH8). In terms of infrastructure needs and land use, this type of housing is the least efficient in terms of supplying homes to current and future residents. Boylston has a very low proportion of housing types denser than two units. *It should be noted that the ACS Estimates are useful for comparison purposes, but the numbers may over-report or under-report the types of residential uses in town.* Boylston Assessor’s Office has local data that can provide a more accurate description of the types of uses in town. However, this dataset is not used to track tenure, so the American Community Survey is used to estimate the number of rental units by structural type.

Table PH9: Boylston Vacancy Rates, 2000-2019

	2000	2019
Total housing units	1,606	1,823
Occupied housing units	1,573	1,799
Vacant housing units	33	24
For rent	16	0
For sale only	0	0
Rented or sold, not occupied	3	0
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	4	0
Other vacant	10	24
Homeowner vacancy rate	1.00%	0.00%
Rental vacancy rate	1.00%	0.00%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010; American Community Survey Estimates 2015-2019

Figure PH8. Boylston Housing Units by Structural Type, 2019



Source: 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Analyzing the town’s housing stock by number of bedrooms is useful in determining if there are housing deficiencies such as the availability of one-to-two-bedroom homes for smaller households or three-bedroom units for larger families. As shown in Table PH10, the town could use more zero-bedroom, one-bedroom, and four-bedroom rental housing. By the most recent ACS estimates, there are zero rental housing options that have no bedroom, such as studio apartments, or four or more bedrooms, which could be single-family houses for rent. Studio apartments are often the cheapest options for individuals living alone. The town is also lacking in housing for owner occupancy with one bedroom, which often comes in the form of condominiums and apartments for sale. Overall, most housing options, both ownership and rental units, have between two and three bedrooms. It is important for communities to offer a variety of bedroom options within their housing stock to accommodate individuals and families of all sizes and budgets.

Table PH10. Boylston Housing by Number of Bedrooms, 2019

	Owner-occupied	Renter-occupied
Total occupied housing units	1,499	300
No bedroom	15	0
1 bedroom	49	59
2 or 3 bedrooms	952	241
4 or more bedrooms	483	0

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

Age of Housing Stock

Most (51%) of Boylston’s housing stock was built between 1960 and 2000 (Table PH11). Since Boylston was historically an agricultural community, its boom of housing development occurred later than some other Massachusetts communities. Only 15% of the town’s homes were built before 1940, indicating a relatively new housing stock compared to the state, county, and surrounding communities. Local Historic Districts, such as Boylston Center Historic District, can help preserve important historic homes that add to Boylston’s charming small-town New England character. Since 2010, the Town has not added as many new homes to its housing stock compared to previous decades in Boylston’s history. Homes built in the past two decades only make up five percent of the town’s existing housing stock.

Older homes can have implications for numerous structural, accessibility, safety, and energy issues. Examples of potential challenges include: a high demand for maintenance and repairs, home design that is inaccessible for people with disabilities and mobility impairments, inefficient heating/cooling/insulation systems, outdated materials that present health risks such as lead paint, asbestos, and lead pipes.

Table PH11. Boylston Homes by Age

Age of Home	Number of Homes	Percentage of Homes
Total Homes	1,823	100%
Built 1939 or earlier	275	15%
Built 1940 to 1959	331	18%
Built 1960 to 1979	475	26%
Built 1980 to 1999	457	25%
Built 2000 to 2009	201	11%
Built 2010 or later	84	5%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

Development and Building Activity

Like other commodities, the value of a home is greatly influenced by supply and demand. While there are many factors in play in determining home value, high demand intersecting with constrained supply will inevitably result in higher prices. Table PH12 shows the number of building permits for new housing units issued annually between 2006 and 2020. The table shows that, from a peak of 27 units in 2006, followed by a dip in production between 2007 and 2010, housing production in Boylston has leveled out to approximately 20 or so new units per year. Most building permits issued in this time have been for single-family homes, with only a couple years in which multi-family structure permits were issued. This low rate of production is likely one contributing factor to the price inflation observed in Boylston over the past few years.

Table PH12. Boylston Housing Unit Building Permits, 2006-2020

Year	Total Building Permits	Single-Family Structures	2-Family Structures	3+ Unit Multi-Family Structures
2006	27	21	6	0
2007	9	9	0	0
2008	8	8	0	0
2009	1	1	0	0
2010	1	1	0	0
2011	13	11	2	0
2012	14	14	0	0
2013	17	17	0	0
2014	24	24	0	0
2015	20	20	0	0
2016	21	21	0	0
2017	20	20	0	0
2018	20	20	0	0
2019	20	20	0	0
2020	21	21	0	0

Source: Department of Housing and Urban Development, SOCDs Building Permits Database, 2020

Housing Market Trends

Impact of COVID-19

The crisis created by the COVID-19 pandemic has had profound impacts on communities throughout the Commonwealth, and the road to recovery will not be easy for those who have suffered great losses. The crisis has had various effects on the housing market and will continue to have lasting impacts in the coming years. The termination of federal financial assistance is expected to disproportionately affect renters, especially low-income households. The U.S. Department of Labor found that households earning an income of less than \$40,000 per year were more likely to suffer economic damage from the pandemic than other households. The Biden administration extended the moratorium on evictions to June 30, 2021, but there is little known about how much in arrears low-income households have become. It may take many months or possibly even years to sort out the accumulating debt some households will face when the

moratorium is lifted. At the same time, demand for housing in lower-density communities where social distancing is easier is expected to continue to rise. Remote work options will make suburban and village units more attractive to professional households. This is likely to further bolster demand and keep price inflation stable in the long run absent the creation of new units. Because of this confluence of factors, renting households with incomes of less than \$40,000 will likely be especially vulnerable to eviction and homelessness. Towns across the Commonwealth will need to continue to provide more relief, including creating additional subsidized housing units, to help support these vulnerable households.

Single-Family Homes

In 2021, the median sales price for a single-family home in Boylston was \$503,000, the highest it had been since the 2006 median sales price of \$570,000 (Table PH13). Following the 2008 Recession, housing prices dropped off significantly. However, in Boylston and across the region they have been gradually on the rise to prices at or exceeding those prior to the Recession. Figure PH8 shows the single-family home median sale price compared to the total sales volume for Boylston from 2006 to 2021. Generally, increases in sales prices have simultaneously occurred with increases in the number of sales. The number of sales per year has remained consistent, with a slight drop in sales numbers in 2021 compared to the previous three years.

In Boylston, over a quarter of owner-occupied homes are valued over \$500,000 (Table PH14). Only 11% of owner-occupied homes in Boylston are valued under \$200,000. Most of the housing stock (61%) is valued between \$200,000 and \$500,000.

Table PH13. Median Single Family Home Value for Boylston and Surrounding Communities

Median Single-Family Home Value by Year						
Year	Boylston	Worcester	Shrewsbury	Northborough	West Boylston	Berlin
2006	\$570,000	\$240,000	\$404,375	\$420,000	\$260,000	\$495,000
2007	\$410,000	\$227,100	\$400,000	\$392,500	\$266,000	\$425,000
2008	\$318,000	\$194,000	\$368,500	\$340,000	\$235,000	\$365,000
2009	\$313,430	\$175,000	\$321,975	\$356,000	\$223,550	\$445,000
2010	\$295,000	\$172,000	\$380,000	\$353,000	\$232,000	\$344,000
2011	\$323,750	\$155,000	\$338,800	\$365,000	\$225,000	\$397,500
2012	\$367,500	\$160,200	\$329,000	\$340,000	\$213,500	\$408,500
2013	\$412,600	\$179,900	\$370,000	\$357,500	\$235,250	\$370,000
2014	\$375,000	\$182,250	\$400,500	\$380,000	\$242,500	\$370,000
2015	\$352,500	\$190,000	\$401,000	\$387,000	\$258,750	\$325,000
2016	\$395,000	\$205,000	\$394,000	\$416,900	\$257,500	\$400,000
2017	\$399,650	\$224,976	\$400,000	\$447,500	\$268,997	\$429,900
2018	\$449,000	\$238,000	\$417,750	\$450,000	\$306,950	\$424,000
2019	\$472,500	\$255,000	\$444,000	\$445,000	\$310,000	\$385,000
2020	\$455,000	\$285,000	\$476,500	\$482,500	\$360,000	\$459,900
2021	\$503,000	\$335,750	\$522,000	\$565,000	\$398,000	\$565,000

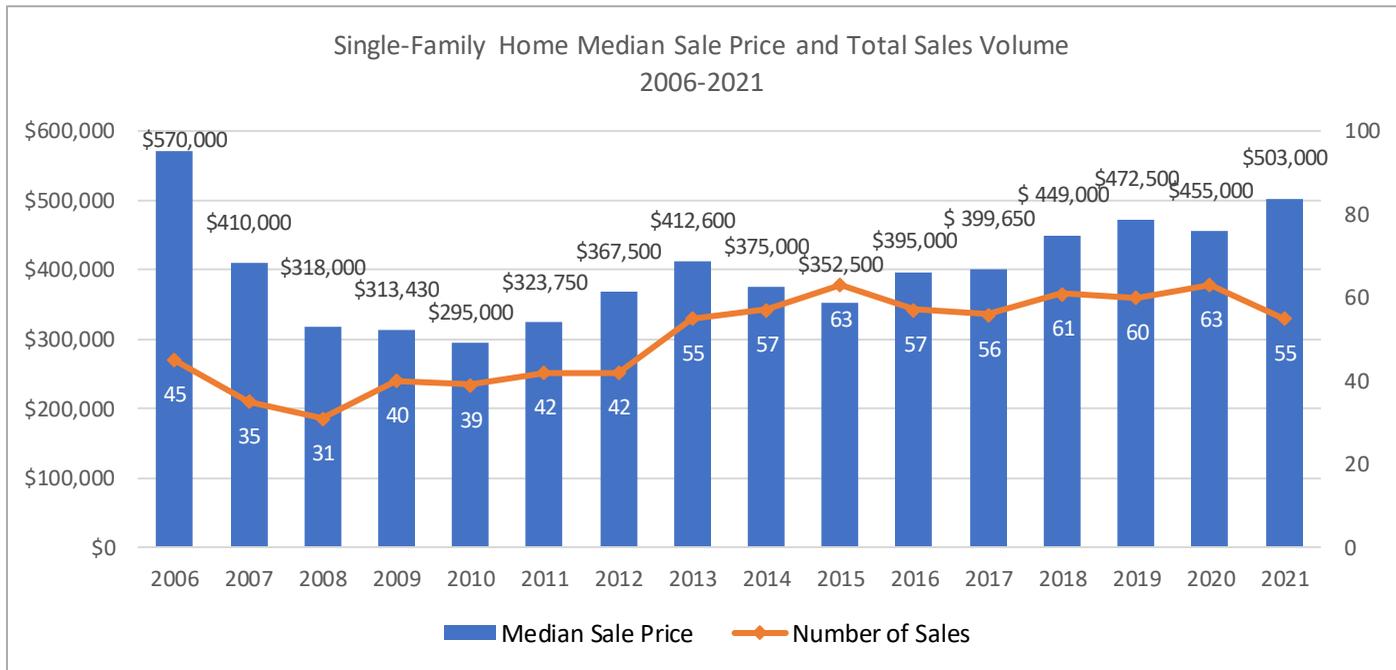
Source: The Warren Group, 2006-2021

Table PH14. Home Value of Owner-Occupied Units in Boylston, 2019

Value	Estimate
Owner-occupied units	1,499
Less than \$50,000	0
\$50,000 to \$99,999	33
\$100,000 to \$149,999	28
\$150,000 to \$199,999	110
\$200,000 to \$299,999	296
\$300,000 to \$499,999	619
\$500,000 to \$999,999	403
\$1,000,000 or more	10
Median (dollars)	385,900

*Source: American Community Survey
5-Year Estimates 2015-2019*

Figure PH9. Boylston Single-Family Home Median Sale Price and Total Sales by Year



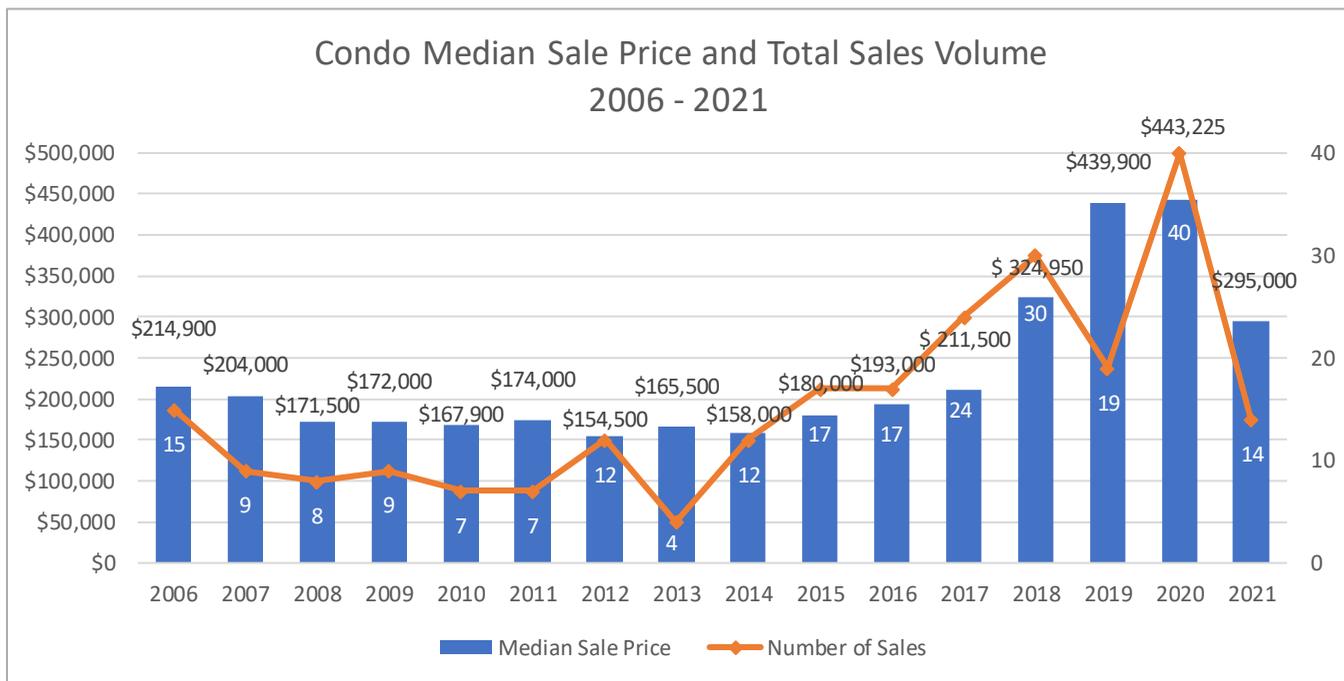
Source: The Warren Group, 2006-2021

Condominiums

Condominiums are often regarded as a type of middle ground between apartments and single-family home ownership and can help indicate demand from households in transition. A transitional household in this context is a household that is moving between rental housing and single-family housing. This could be exemplified by a young family purchasing a starter home or a senior long-time resident seeking to downsize, for example. A high level of activity in the condominium market suggests that Boylston is attracting demand from a wider range of households than just traditional single-family households. Figure PH9 shows that both the volume of transactions in condominiums and the median price they command have been rising through the study period. Price inflation among condominium units has accelerated over time to the point where the median price of a condominium is close to that of a single-family home. This indicates very strong demand compared to unit supply.

Condominium sales in Boylston have showed signs of increasingly robust market activity during the 2006 to 2021 period. Between 2014 and 2020, sales prices increased more than 180% for this market and the number of sales in 2020 was more than three times what it was in 2014, which can likely be attributed to the construction and sale of new condominiums. In 2021, prices for condos dipped back down slightly and the number of sales dropped considerably compared to the previous year.

Figure PH9. Boylston Condominium Median Sale Price and Total Sales by Year



Source: The Warren Group, 2006-2021

Rental Housing

As of 2019, Boylston has an estimated 276 units of occupied rental housing, or around 15% of the total occupied housing stock (Table PH15). The 2015-2019 American Community Survey estimated the median gross rent for Boylston at \$947, which is lower than the state and the county. The most recent local data on asking rents collected from Zillow, Trulia, and Craigslist in 2021 shows a very limited range of rental options. A one-bedroom apartment was listed on these sites for \$1,850 per month while a two-bedroom home was listed for \$2,400 per month. Rental units for any other number of bedrooms were not listed. This minimal availability is indicative of the extremely low vacancy rate. Handicapped accessible units were not listed.

Low vacancy rates paired with high asking rents pose challenges for low-income families that participate in the Section 8 Program. Once individuals and families make it off the years-long waiting list for this program, eligible households are issued a Section 8/HCVF Voucher and given only 120 days to locate their own rental housing. If no rental housing options within their price range come on the market, then the families lose the voucher opportunity.

Initial costs of renting an apartment (first and last month’s rent, security deposit, and sometimes broker fees) can be costly and preclude some lower-income households from affording to rent a home that meets their needs. While home sales prices are on the rise, so too have rents risen in the region. Reasons for this increase may be attributed to the financial uncertainty of owning a home, an expensive housing market that excludes first-time homebuyers from entering the homeownership market and forcing them to rent for longer periods of time, significant individual debt (such as emerging college-graduates) preventing entrance into the homeownership market.

Table PH15. Boylston Monthly Rent, 2019

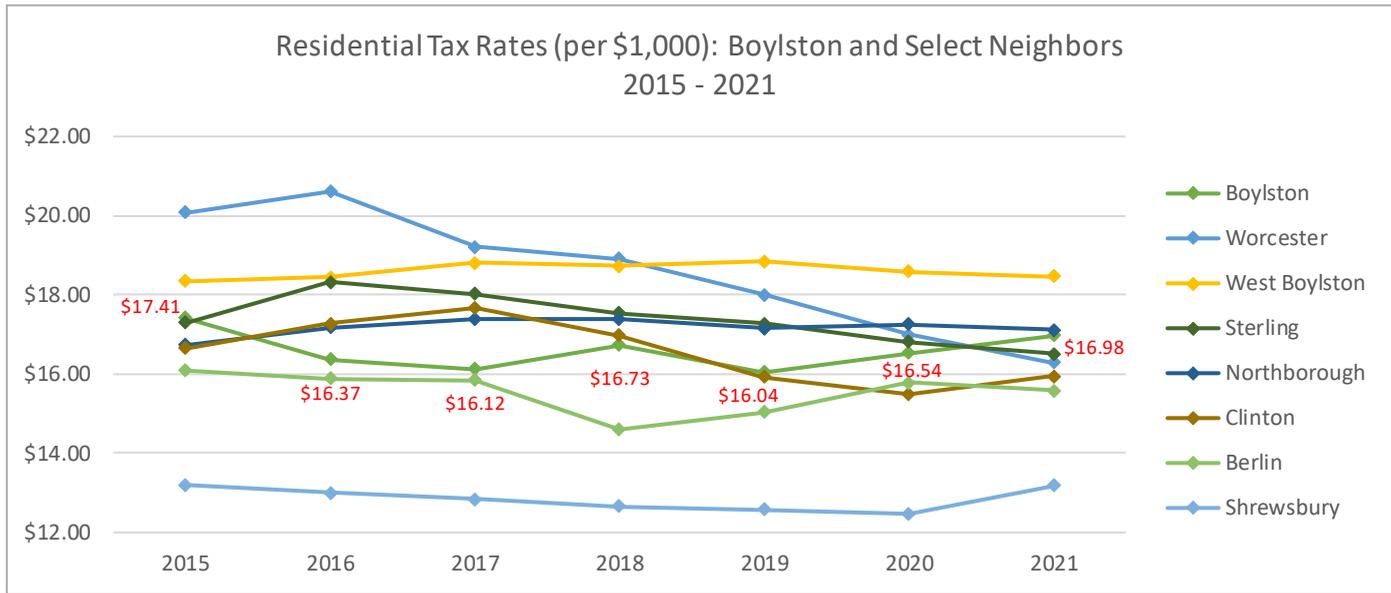
Gross Rent	Estimate	Percent
Occupied units paying rent	276	100%
Less than \$500	17	6%
\$500 to \$999	144	52%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	71	26%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	18	7%
\$2,000 to \$2,499	19	7%
\$2,500 to \$2,999	7	2%
\$3,000 or more	0	0%
Median Gross Rent (\$)	947	(X)

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2015-2019

Residential Property Taxes

Boylston’s residential tax rates have historically been lower than many of its neighbors including West Boylston, Worcester, and Sterling (Figure PH10). However, with recent increases since 2019, the town is now on the higher end of tax rates compared to its neighbors. Property taxes are an important factor that shape local housing markets as they influence the costs of buying, renting, or investing in homes. Many Boylston residents who completed the community housing survey wrote about the challenge of paying increasing taxes but wanting to remain in their homes. High property taxes may exclude many renters who aspire to purchase a home but are unable to afford the high tax bills along with a mortgage, utilities, and other associated costs.

Figure PH10. Residential Tax Rates of Boylston and Surrounding Communities, 2015-2021



Source: Town Websites

Affordability

Housing is generally considered “affordable” in the United States if the household is paying less than 30% of its annual income towards housing. Households paying between 30% and 50% of their income on housing are considered moderately cost-burdened, while households paying at least 50% of their income solely to cover housing costs are considered severely cost-burdened. These thresholds for housing affordability are used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to calculate Area Median Income (AMI) and promote income-restricted housing.

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40B calls for all cities and towns in the Commonwealth to ensure at least 10% of their total housing stock qualifies as affordable to households earning at or below 80% of the AMI. The AMI and the income limits are calculated by HUD and updated annually for each metropolitan statistical area (MSA), which set the income qualifications that householders living in deed-restricted affordable housing must meet. Table PH16 shows the 2022 Area Median Income and income limits for qualifying low-income households in the Worcester MSA, which Boylston belongs to along with other southern Worcester County communities. As of 2022, the AMI for the Worcester MSA is \$114,400. A single householder living in affordable housing in Boylston cannot earn more than \$61,900 and a family of four must earn under \$88,400 to qualify.

Table PH16. Area Median Income Limits for the Worcester Metropolitan Statistical Area

Area Median Income	FY 2022 Area Median Income Limit Category	Persons in Household				
		1	2	3	4	5
\$114,400	Low (80%) Income	\$61,900	\$70,750	\$79,600	\$88,400	\$95,500
	Very Low (50%) Income	\$38,700	\$44,200	\$49,750	\$55,250	\$59,700
	Extremely Low (30%) Income	\$23,250	\$26,550	\$29,850	\$33,150	\$35,850

Income Restricted Housing (Subsidized Housing)

There are currently 30 units in Boylston that are restricted for occupancy by lower-income households. Boylston does not have its own housing authority that manages public income-restricted housing for households earning less than 80% of the AMI. The town’s private income-restricted housing is owned and operated by both for-profit and non-profit owners who receive subsidies in exchange for renting to low- and moderate-income individuals and families.

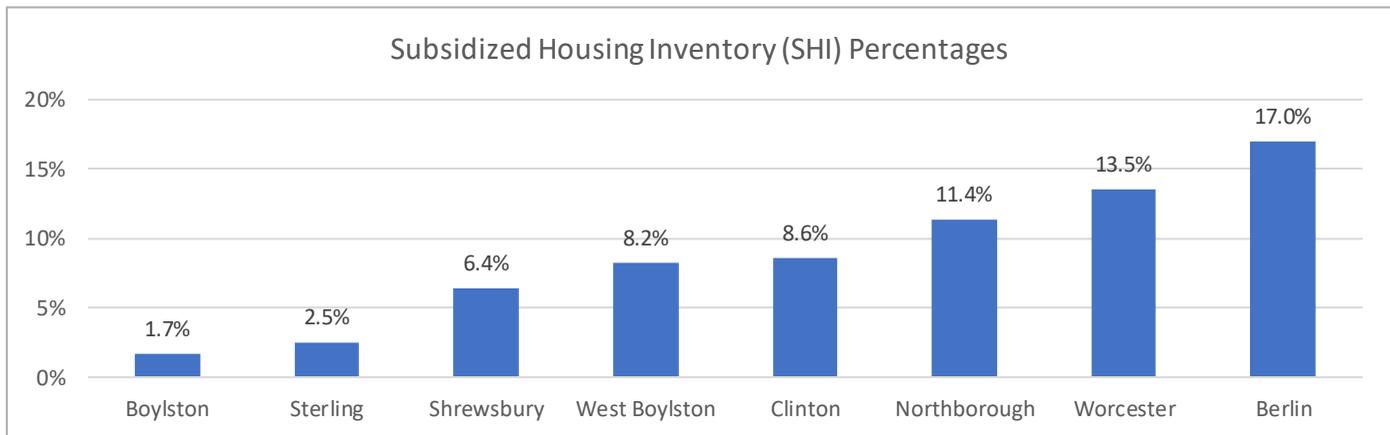
At only 1.7%, Boylston falls far below the State-mandated 10% affordable housing requirement and has the least amount of affordable housing compared to its neighbors. Figure PH11 shows where Boylston and its surrounding communities currently stand in terms of their Subsidized Housing Inventories (SHI). Out of all communities in the Commonwealth, Boylston falls in the bottom 75% for subsidized housing provision. The neighbors of Boylston that have met the 10% mandate are Northborough, Worcester, and Berlin.

Table PH17. DHCD Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) for Boylston

Name	Address	Type (Rental/Ownership)	SHI Units	Affordability Expires	Built w/ Comp. Permit	Subsidizing Agency
Sun Bank Village	Heritage Ln	Rental	24	2021	No	RHS
DDS Group Homes	Confidential	Rental	4	N/A	No	DDS
Mill Road Circle	Mill Road Circle	Ownership	2	Perpetuity	Yes	DHCD
Total Boylston SHI Units						30
Census 2010 Year-Round Housing Units						1,765
Percent Subsidized						1.70%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, 2021

Figure PH11. Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) Percentages as of December 21, 2021



Source: Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development

Housing Cost Burden

In the United States, housing can be considered “affordable” if the household pays no more than 30% of its annual income on housing. Households who pay more than 30% of their income towards housing are considered ‘cost-burdened’ and may have difficulties affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation, and medical care, as well as saving for their future. This definition typically operates under the following assumptions: 1) Housing costs for renters typically include gross rent plus utilities; 2) a calculation of total housing costs for owner-occupied households includes a mortgage payment- consisting of principal, interest, taxes, and insurance. Households paying between 30% and 50% of their income on housing are considered moderately cost-burdened, while households paying greater than 50% of their income are considered severely cost-burdened.

This definition of housing affordability is used by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to calculate Area Median Income (AMI) and promote income-restricted housing. The AMI is the median family income for the Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Boylston belongs to the Worcester, MA-CT MSA which includes communities in southern Worcester County. HUD calculates the AMI annually based on the U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey’s (ACS) estimated median family income for the MSA. As of 2021, the AMI for the Worcester MSA is \$98,800.

Affordable housing in Massachusetts generally refers to housing that is reserved for households with incomes at or below 80% of the area median income. DHCD maintains a Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) that lists all subsidized housing developments in a community. This inventory includes units reserved for households with incomes at or below 80% of the median under long-term, legally binding agreements and are subject to affirmative marketing requirements. In 2021, 80% of the area median income for the Worcester MSA was \$79,050 for a family of four. Municipalities and/or developers are responsible for updating their inventory directly with DHCD. When new subsidized units are occupied or permitted within a municipality, the municipality (or the developer) must make a written request for units to be added to the municipality’s inventory.

This task is accomplished through the *SHI: Requesting New Units Form*, available on the Massachusetts Subsidized Housing Inventory website, which must be submitted to DHCD.

The rate of foreclosure in Boylston has been fairly low since approximately 2013, following the Recession and Housing Crisis. Foreclosures are a useful indicator of the health of a housing market. Unusual spikes in foreclosure rates can indicate instability in the market. Table PH18 shows both petitions to foreclose and foreclosure sales for all home types, while Table PH19 is for single-family homes. Comparing the two tables shows that most of the properties petitioning to foreclose have been single-family homes, which constitute most of the town’s housing stock.

Petitions to foreclose indicate foreclosure action has been initiated by the mortgage holder. Such action does not necessarily lead to a resident losing their home, however. Rather, it suggests some hardship or instability that affected the homeowners’ ability to keep up their payments. The number of foreclosure sales tells us the volume of mortgages that have completed the foreclosure process and the mortgage holder is attempting to recoup their losses. Comparing these two numbers gives a sense of how much instability there is in the Boylston market. As Tables PH18 and PH19 show, after 2012 few of the foreclosure petitions have made it to the sale stage, indicating that homeowners in most cases were able to come to some sort of arrangement. This indicates a comparatively healthy base of homeowners in Boylston.

Table PH18. Boylston Foreclosures for all Home Types, 2006-2021

	Petitions to Foreclose	Foreclosure Sales
2006	6	8
2007	9	3
2008	15	5
2009	8	10
2010	11	8
2011	16	12
2012	8	7
2013	10	3
2014	5	3
2015	1	5
2016	6	4
2017	5	1
2018	7	2
2019	3	0
2020	0	2
2021	3	0
<i>Source: The Warren Group, 2006-2021</i>		

Table PH19. Boylston Foreclosures for Single-Family Homes, 2006-2018

	Petitions to Foreclose	Foreclosure Sales
2006	6	6
2007	8	3
2008	15	4
2009	8	10
2010	11	8
2011	13	12
2012	6	5
2013	9	2
2014	3	3
2015	0	4
2016	6	1
2017	3	1
2018	6	2
2019	2	0
2020	0	1
2021	1	0
<i>Source: The Warren Group, 2006-2021</i>		

Senior Housing

Seniors are a growing sector of the Boylston population and housing should reflect their needs. Most seniors require smaller, affordable, and accessible housing, which the town is currently lacking. There are very limited senior housing options in town, making it a challenge for those who have established roots here to remain in the community. Elderly residents require a range of options for levels of care, as some can age in place while others are more dependent and need assistance with daily tasks.

Compass Pointe is a recent housing development in town, constructed in 2018, that is primarily single-family homes but has a section of condominiums dedicated for age 55+ residents. These duplex homes are not income-restricted, only age-restricted, and units were sold at market rate. Lilymere Estates, a development located on Morgan Circle, is also a new over-55 adult community consisting of 30 single-story ranch condominium homes sold at market-rate prices.

The Boylston Council on Aging is a strong asset to the senior community, as they offer many resources, activities, and amenities to assist with the aging process. However, the office is housed within Town Hall and does not have its own building, which limits the COA's range of services. The Town is encouraged to take further actions to invest in ways to provide more suitable housing options and associated services for senior residents.

Issues and Opportunities

Population and Housing Issues

Subsidized Housing, Chapter 40B, and Comprehensive Permits

M.G.L. Chapter 40B establishes a consolidated local review and approval process (known as a *comprehensive permit*) that empowers the local zoning board of appeals to hold hearings and make binding decisions that encompass all local ordinances or bylaws and regulations. Communities that fall short of deed-restricting 10% of their housing stock as affordable to those earning 80% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) risk the vulnerability of developers being granted comprehensive permits to forego existing zoning restrictions. These permits are granted to developers if they reserve at least 25% (or 20% in some cases) of proposed units as affordable. To mitigate this risk, towns falling under the 10% requirement must add affordable housing units equaling 0.5% of the year-round housing stock each year, or 1.0% over two years, and have an approved Housing Production Plan, showing that the community is making strides to address its housing needs.

Boylston currently has 30 units listed on the State Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) but needs a total of 176 units to achieve the mandated 10% threshold. To achieve “safe harbor” from comprehensive permits, Boylston needs to add 9 eligible units per year to the SHI or 18 units over the course of two years.

Boylston completed a Housing Production Plan in 2021, which is valid for five years. With the HPP in place, to achieve “safe harbor” from developers being granted comprehensive permits, the Town must continue to add affordable units each year to the State’s Subsidized Housing Inventory. The Town can also achieve safe harbor by 1) demonstrating that low- or moderate-income housing exists on sites comprising at least 1.5% of the town’s total land area zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial use; or 2) proving the comprehensive permit before the ZBA would lead to the construction of low- or moderate-income housing on sites comprising more than 0.3 of one percent of the community’s total land area zoned for residential, commercial, or industrial use, or 10 acres alternatively, in one calendar year.

The 2021 Boylston Housing Production Plan offers a set of housing production goals and strategies that were informed by community planning efforts. The strategies have been recommended as methods to facilitate the creation of units to be included on the SHI as well as diversify the existing housing stock to meet the needs of the Boylston community.

Fair Housing and Housing Discrimination

Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968, also referred to as the Fair Housing Act, was enacted with the primary purpose of prohibiting discrimination in transactions involving the rental, sale, or financing of a home based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status, and mental or physical handicap. Massachusetts law included the following protected classes for tenants and homebuyers: marital status, children, sexual orientation, age, gender identity and expression, military or veteran status, ancestry, genetic information, retaliation, and receipt of public assistance or rental subsidies.

Under Federal law, state and local governments that receive federal housing funds are required not only to refrain from discriminatory practices, but they must also take initiative in promoting open and inclusive housing patterns, also known as “affirmatively furthering fair housing” or “AFFH”. As defined by HUD, this practice includes the following:

- Analyzing and eliminating discrimination in the jurisdiction.
- Promoting fair housing choice for all persons.
- Providing opportunities for inclusive patterns of housing occupancy regardless of race, color, religion, sex, familiar status, disability, and national origin.
- Promoting housing that is structurally accessible to, and usable by all persons, particularly persons with disabilities.
- Fostering compliance with the nondiscrimination provision of the Fair Housing Act.

In 2021, the White House issued a Memorandum to the Secretary of HUD, which declared that the affirmatively furthering fair housing provision in the Fair Housing Act, "...is not only a mandate to refrain from discrimination but a mandate to take actions that undo historic patterns of segregation and other types of discrimination and that afford access to long-denied opportunities."⁵ A number of Executive Orders implicating HUD's responsibility for implementing the mandate of AFFH were issued by the White House in 2021, including Executive Order 13895, "Advancing Racial Equity for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government" and Executive Order 13988, "Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation."

Under Federal and State law, municipalities must also ensure that municipal policies and programs do not have a disparate impact on members of a protected class. Disparate impact is a significant legal theory in which liability based upon a finding of discrimination may be incurred even when the discrimination was not purposeful or intentional. The municipality should consider if the policy or practice at hand is necessary to achieve substantial, legitimate, non-discriminatory interests and if there is a less discriminatory alternative that would meet the same interest.

Constraints to Housing Development

More information on constraints to housing development can be found in the 2021 Housing Production Plan.

Environmental Constraints

Future development in Boylston may be constrained by till-based soils and swamp deposits. In terms of soil, areas most ideal for dense multi-family housing are between Main Street and Sewall Street, extending east of Sewall Street and south to the town line. Other sand and gravel locations can be found near Tahanto Regional Middle/High School and running north toward the town of Clinton, including Sawyers Bluff and the area around Pine Grove Cemetery and Tahanto Point, just west of the Wachusett Reservoir. Currently, multi-family housing is only zoned for special permit in the Mixed Use Industrial zone just outside this concentration of sand and gravel deposits.

Historically, large-scale development in the northeast section of Boylston has been rare due mainly to the physical restraints of the land such as rock outcroppings, high water tables, slopes, and poor soils, coupled with the lack of municipal water or sewers. However, changes in Title 5 allowing mounded septic systems and increased percolation rates, along with increased demand for land which has raised raw lot prices, have contributed to making it economically feasible to develop land in this area of town.

Residential development is one of the greatest threats to forests and woodlands. Forest fragmentation results in small, scattered tracts of forest land which harms important plant and animal species relying on the forest-interior habitats. Suburban areas that are subdivided into single-family homes on large lots are a primary cause of forest fragmentation. Deforestation can also lead to soil erosion. The Conservation Commission is responsible for addressing erosion control issues as they arise, and the local Stormwater Control Bylaw is in place to control the adverse effects of erosion and sedimentation associated with development (among other purposes). Chronic sedimentation or deforestation issues are not currently considered significant problems in Boylston.

Floodplains, Wetlands, and Water Resources

Flood hazard areas can be found in several locations throughout Boylston, particularly near its streams and wetlands such as the Wachusett Reservoir, Sewall Pond, Spruce Pond, Pout Pond, Newton Pond, Rocky Pond, Mile Hill Road conservation area, and land at the southern end of Cross Street. Boylston's floodplains pose challenges for development as a permit is needed before construction can begin within any Special Flood Hazard Area. Three percent of Boylston's total land area (300 acres) fall within the 100-year floodplain.

⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) Website

Wetlands are dispersed throughout the town and some notable areas include near the Wachusett Reservoir, Mile Hill Road conservation area, the Heritage District, Sewall Pond, Spruce Pond, School Street, and Cross Street. The Town's local wetlands ordinance requires a permit for any development activities within 100 feet of a wetland or 200 feet of a perennial stream. Watershed Preservation Restrictions under the Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) apply to certain areas in town. More than two-thirds of the town is subject to the Watershed Protection Act (WsPA), which regulates land disturbance and land use around the primary water supplies serving Greater Boston – the Quabbin Reservoir, the Wachusett Reservoir, and the Ware River – and their tributaries. The state's ownership of so much land in Boylston, coupled with WsPA restrictions to preserve water quality, contributes to the limited amount of development that can occur within the town.

Vegetation, Fisheries, and Wildlife

Four areas of estimated habitat for rare wildlife have been designated by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife: the area around Sewall Pond, the area just south of Route 140 (Spruce Pond, Flagg Pond, and the pond and wetland area south of Elmwood Place), Stiles Hill extending down to Barnard Hill, and Rocky Pond (including the nearby wetlands and portions of East Woods).

Hazardous Waste, Pollution, and Stormwater

There are no Brownfield sites reported in Boylston. Brownfield sites are not required to "self-identify" or register with the Department of Environmental Protection, therefore there may be sites in town that would qualify as a Brownfield property⁶.

There are fourteen underground storage tanks located within town boundaries, which are important to monitor due to their potential adverse environmental effects should there be a leak, spill, or other issue. A solid waste facility exists in Boylston on Mile Hill Road, just north of its intersection with Green Street. The landfill has been closed and capped. Additionally, an inactive dump site is located on Route 140 and an illegal disposal site that has been closed is located on Route 70. DEP indicates that 40 sites in Boylston have reported releases of hazardous waste that are in various stages of remediation, most of which took place at gas and service stations and have been properly cleaned up.

The Town of Boylston has a Stormwater Control Bylaw in place to establish minimum requirements and procedures to control the adverse effects of increased post-development stormwater runoff, non-point pollution associated with new development and redevelopment, and erosion and sedimentation associated with construction. Those who meet the applicability of the bylaw must obtain a Stormwater Control Permit before beginning construction.

Regulatory Constraints

Zoning authority in Massachusetts is devolved to local governments by M.G.L. Chapter 40A. Boylston is divided into fifteen different Zoning districts, including three density levels of residential-only districts, three density levels of business districts, one heritage district, and one industrial district. Additionally, there are specialty business districts including mixed use industrial, neighborhood business, and Route 140 business. The Planning Board primarily acts as the special permit granting authority (SPGA) for different types of uses, along with the ZBA in some cases. The ZBA also holds the power to grant variances. Table 20 below describes the existing base zones and overlay districts along with their abbreviations as used in the zoning code.

Regulatory constraints are zoning bylaws, policies, and regulations which may be impeding the development of affordable housing. Regulations and ordinances set by local and state authorities in Massachusetts are often exclusionary and are designed to favor single-family homes. The various regulatory constraints to Boylston's affordable housing market are described in this section.

⁶ MassDEP Find Brownfield Sites websites: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/find-brownfields-sites>

Multi-family Dwellings

Allowing for the easy development of multi-family dwellings in some location in a community is considered a key strategy for increasing affordable housing options. Many seniors and renters in Boylston have voiced concerns over the lack of smaller, affordable units in town to downsize into due to rising property valuations. While multi-family dwellings are allowed in Boylston, they are only allowed under specific and relatively restrictive conditions. Boylston's zoning defines multi-family dwellings as a building containing more than two dwelling units. Multi-family dwellings are not allowed by right in any district, nor are they allowed by special permit in any other base zone. Only within the Mixed Use Industrial District and with a Special Permit are multi-family dwellings allowed to be constructed. Two-family dwellings are allowed by-right in each district that single-family units are allowed. An amendment to the zoning bylaw to change the definition of multi-family units to four or more dwelling units, plus allowing three-family dwelling units by-right in one or more districts, could improve housing diversity in town.

Limited Community Infrastructure

Boylston has no public sewer and currently has no plans to provide sewer in the future. The entire town is served by private septic systems, many of which are in failing condition. The Town of Boylston's water supply consists of five gravel packed groundwater wells, all of which are 90 feet deep and draw water from deposits of gravel and sand. Four of the wells are in proximity of Route 140 and Route 70. Additionally, there are five pumping stations, three storage tanks, and two booster stations that service the customers of the Boylston Water District. The remainder of the town, particularly the area north of the Town Center, is served by private wells. Various individual housing projects are hooked up to the public water supply and/or common septic systems.

The lack of adequate sewer and water infrastructure poses severe challenges to future developers interested in creating single-family housing (cluster/open space residential development) or multi-family housing. There may be various options in utilizing alternative waste treatment technologies, but those will have to be addressed on a site-specific basis.

Public transportation options in Boylston are extremely limited. The region is not connected by rail or bus service, although the Town of Boylston is a member of the Worcester Regional Transit Authority and is within the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Paratransit buffer. The closest fixed route bus service is in the neighboring town of West Boylston. The nearest commuter rail stations are in the neighboring communities of Worcester, Grafton, or Westborough on the Framingham/Worcester line. Travel in Boylston is primarily by car, and the town also has a limited sidewalk network.

The town is lacking in many retail stores and services that residents must travel outside of town to access. There are little to no grocery stores, restaurants or cafes, clothing stores, doctor's offices/health clinics, pharmacies, veterinary offices, pre-schools/daycare centers, etc. Residents without easy access to a car to travel outside Boylston face the challenge of meeting basic daily needs, an important factor to consider before creating additional housing. Particularly for senior populations, Boylston does not currently have adequate supportive services to meet the needs of vulnerable elderly residents.

Limited Subsidies and Staff Capacity

State and Federal financial resources to subsidize affordable housing production are very limited and competitive across Massachusetts. As housing prices continue to rise, deeper subsidies are required to fill the gaps between what housing costs to develop and what residents can realistically afford. Record-high housing sale prices and buyers willing to pay tens of thousands of dollars over asking prices are part of a highly competitive housing market. The need for deed-restricted affordable housing has only become more crucial as subsidies become less available.

Boylston has not voted to approve the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to establish a Community Preservation Fund. Under CPA, at least 10% of the funding raised through a local property surcharge paired with additional funding through the statewide CPA Trust Fund, must be dedicated to local housing efforts to preserve and produce affordable housing. The other two categories for funding allocation are open space preservation and recreation as well as historic

preservation. This resource could be immensely beneficial in supporting these activities in town, allowing Boylston to have a reliable source of funding for all items related to affordable housing.

The Town of Boylston lacks adequate staffing capacity to prioritize affordable housing efforts. The Town recently hired a Town Planner in 2020 but the position is shared with another community, therefore their hours are limited, and capacity is stretched. There is a volunteer Affordable Housing Committee that was established, but it is not currently active. Having limited Town resources to fund a part-time, full-time, or shared position to adequately address affordable housing initiatives is a barrier to Boylston achieving the goals of this HPP.

Land Availability

Although there are large tracts of undeveloped land in Boylston, much of the land has major restrictions on it that restrict feasible development for housing. About 4,200 acres of open space in town is under some form of regulatory protection to keep it from being developed. As previously described, approximately one-third of the town is owned by the Commonwealth and managed by the DCR, due to the presence of the Wachusett Reservoir. Development is restricted in this area, and anything being developed nearby proves challenging due to potential negative impacts on the water quality of the reservoir, such as stormwater runoff or erosion. However, the Town owns several sites that have some potential for the creation of new housing. The Town's greatest opportunity for building new affordable housing is through the land that it owns.

Community Perceptions

Proposed new housing development in rural and suburban towns such as Boylston can easily raise concerns and apprehensions by residents. Wariness about the impact that new units will have on local services, capacity of schools, property values, quality of life, and more are common, and impressions of what "affordable housing" looks like often hold negative connotations. Misunderstandings about affordable housing and the people living in these units result in their stigmatization, and development proposals are consistently faced with local opposition.

Throughout the public outreach process, Boylston residents have expressed a mix of reactions to discussions regarding new housing development. In general, residents were extremely hesitant to the proposal of new housing units in town, particularly developments with any amount of density. The activity during the April 8th public workshop had residents identify areas of town where new housing would be tolerated and the preferred types of housing for each study area. While many participants spoke highly of the idea of cottage housing communities in Boylston, anything with greater density than 4 units was not favored. While multi-family housing is the fastest way to increase Boylston's subsidized housing stock, this type of development will prove to be challenging and will almost certainly receive pushback from community members.

Utilizing this Plan, it is important to continue community outreach and education about the importance of affordable housing in the community. Informing local leaders and residents on these issues will help dispel negative stereotypes and garner political support. Providing up-to-date, accurate information on this topic will be a key strategy for gathering support. Community concerns should be addressed with sensitivity.

Population and Housing Opportunities and Strategies

Zoning Provisions that Address Affordable Housing and Smart Growth

Boylston's Zoning Bylaws include several provisions that promote some affordable housing, smart growth development, and overall greater diversity of housing choices.

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU)

The Accessory Apartment bylaw allows accessory dwelling units (ADUs) to be built under specific conditions in all existing residential districts. An accessory apartment is defined by Boylston's Zoning Bylaws as a self-contained housing unit incorporated within a detached, accessory structure to a single-family dwelling that is clearly subordinate to the

single-family dwelling and has received a special permit. Currently, these units are only allowed through a Special Permit of the Planning Board based on certain requirements. The purpose of this bylaw is as follows:

- Provide older homeowners with a means of obtaining rental income, companionship, security, and services, thereby enabling them to stay more comfortably in homes and neighborhoods they might otherwise be forced to leave.
- Add moderately priced rental units to the housing stock to meet the needs of smaller households.
- Develop housing units in single-family neighborhoods that are appropriate for households at a variety of stages in their life cycle.
- Protect stability, property values, and the residential character of a neighborhood.

Accessory apartments cannot exceed 1,000 square feet or contain more than two bedrooms. The accessory structure must be located on the same lot, no further than 75 feet from the principal structure. There must be at least one off-street parking space to serve the accessory apartment, along with access to the driveway serving the single-family dwelling.

While this is generally a strong bylaw that allows for diverse housing options, particularly for Boylston's special needs populations such as seniors, the Town might consider allowing accessory apartments to be constructed by-right (provided they meet all necessary criteria) in one or more districts in town.

Inclusionary Zoning

The Town's Zoning Bylaws include a section on Inclusionary Zoning. Through inclusionary zoning, the number of affordable units in town can increase when developments of any kind consisting of eight (8) or more units are required to set aside units for income-qualified individuals. The purpose of this bylaw is as follows:

- Encourage the supply of rental and ownership housing in the Town of Boylston that is available to and affordable to low- and moderate-income households.
- Exceed the 10% affordable housing trend established by the Commonwealth in M.G.L. Chapter 40B, Section 20.
- Encourage a greater diversity and distribution of housing to meet the needs of families and individuals of all income levels.

Section 16.04 of the Town's zoning bylaws previously incorrectly stated: *All developments including a residential component which are subject to this Section shall be required to set aside a minimum of fifteen percent (10%) of the total number of dwelling units, and a minimum of fifteen percent (10%) of the total number of bedrooms, provided as affordable housing.* However, at the Boylston Annual Town Meeting on June 7, 2021, the Town voted to approve Article 38, an amendment to Section 16 to require ten percent (10%) affordable units be set aside for developments with more than eight housing units.

Growth Management Bylaw

Section 12 of Boylston's Zoning Bylaws details the town's Growth Management provision. This bylaw limits residential development in order "to provide sufficient time for the town to expand its infrastructure, accommodate growth, including fire protection, water, sewer, schools, transportation, roads, recreation, and/or police protection". Its purpose is to ensure that growth happens in a more orderly and planned manner, preserving the community character, and ensuring that the town's resources are adequately prepared to take on additional units. The provision limits the rate of new development in the community to 20 permits per year.

Enacted in 2000, the bylaw provides for periodic review and was set to expire in 2005 unless extended via vote of the Town Meeting before the set date. Bylaws such as this are not permitted by M.G.L. Chapter 40A, except for a limited time and only for legitimate planning purposes and concerns. The Town should remove this bylaw if it is no longer being enforced.

Dimensional Requirements

Section 9 of Boylston’s Zoning Bylaws explains Boylston’s dimensional requirements and provides a schedule showing the required minimum lot size, minimum lot frontage, minimum setback, lot width, and lot depth for each zoning district. In terms of layout, this section is not well-placed within the bylaws as it comes several sections after the General Use Provisions, which is likely to lead to unnecessary confusion.

While the Rural Residential and Residential districts have minimum lot sizes of 40,000 square feet and 30,000 square feet, respectively, the General Residential district drops the minimum lot size to 15,000 square feet. It is unclear why the minimum lot frontage for single-family development is reduced, and not for two-family developments as well. Similarly, the Heritage district requires a minimum lot frontage of 125 feet for single-family homes while increasing the minimum to 150 feet for two-family homes. There is no standard stating that two-family homes need an additional 25 or 50 feet of frontage to be habitable. This standard can make it more challenging for developers to create two-family homes, which is the easiest way to create more units without changing Boylston’s small-town character.

This bylaw does not contain any specific requirements regarding multi-family units. It is assumed that since multi-family housing is only allowed in the MUI district, then the requirements of this zone apply to all multi-family developments. The standards would thus be a minimum lot size of 40,000 square feet, minimum lot frontage of 150 feet, and minimum setbacks of 50 feet. These requirements would not be considered good practices for a mixed-use district, but rather are more appropriate for an office park or planned unit development district. Reducing the minimums for lot size, frontage, and setbacks for the MUI district could have many beneficial impacts and attract developers willing to work with the Town to create a mixed-use environment that is cohesive, walkable, and fits the character of Boylston.

Table PH20. Boylston Dimensional Requirements

	Minimum Lot Size (sq. ft.)	Minimum Lot Frontage (ft.)	Minimum Setback (ft.)			Lot Width (ft.)	Lot Depth (ft.)
			Front	Side	Rear		
Rural Residential <i>1-Family/ 2-Family</i>	40,000	200	25	20	20	200	200
Residential <i>1-Family/ 2-Family</i>	30,000	150	25	20	20	150	200
General Residential <i>1-Family Detached</i>	15,000	100	25	20	20	100	150
General Residential <i>2-Family</i>	15,000	150	25	20	20	125	150
Heritage <i>1-Family</i>	25,000	125	25	20	20	125	200
Heritage <i>2-Family</i>	30,000	150	25	20	20	125	200
Village Business <i>1-Family</i>	15,000	100	20	20	25	100	100
Village Business <i>2-Family</i>	20,000	125	20	20	25	125	100
Neighborhood Business	30,000	125	25	20	20	125	150
Route 140 Business	40,000	125	25	25	25	125	150
Mixed Use Industrial	40,000	150	50	50	50	150	200

Source: Boylston Zoning Bylaws

Parking Provisions

Section 10.02 of the Town Zoning Bylaws dictates off-street parking and loading regulations. The section provides limited guidance on what constitutes “adequate” off-street parking for residential purposes. Only parking for upper-story dwellings in a commercial building are regulated specifically by this section. For this use, one space per one-bedroom and two spaces for units with two or more bedrooms is required, which is excessive. It is highly likely that this regulation is a deterrent for developing these types of residences. Section 10.02 also states that any other uses not specified within the bylaw requiring off-street parking are to be determined by the Planning Board. This places a considerable amount of decision-making authority on the Planning Board without providing adequate guidance. To mitigate any confusion, it is recommended that Section 10.02 be updated, or a provision be added that the Planning Board create a set of parking regulations to be made available for public review.

Capacity Building Strategies

The Town of Boylston is a relatively small community and, unlike many cities such as neighboring Worcester, lacks substantial annual State or Federal funding available to support local housing initiatives. Boylston has some local structure in place to coordinate housing efforts. These components include:

- **Town Planner:** The Town Planner serves as a visionary and subject matter expert in potential land use concepts, ideas, and plans, providing professional, management, and technical work assisting a wide range of Town Boards/Committees/Departments with all aspects of land use planning including zoning, site plan, growth management, and subdivision control law matters as delineated by state statute, local by-laws, local subdivision rules, and regulations.
- **Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Board of Trustees:** The purpose of the trust is to provide for the creation and preservation of affordable housing in Boylston for the benefit of low- and moderate- income households and for the funding of community housing, as defined in and in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44B. The Trust Fund is administered by a Board of Trustees, which includes all members of the Board of Selectmen, with the remaining members appointed by the Board of Selectmen.
- **Affordable Housing Committee:** The Affordable Housing Committee is appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Committee aids the Board of Selectmen in its efforts to provide a range of housing options for residents of all ages, incomes, and abilities.
- **Housing Production Plan:** A Chapter 40B Housing Production Plan is the municipality’s guiding document to help the town better understand local housing needs and demand, development constraints and opportunities, and strategies for providing additional affordable housing options to meet the town’s 10% goal. This plan is authorized by M.G.L. Chapter 40B and administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

The following capacity-building strategies will position Boylston to implement the Housing Production Plan components through necessary resources and effective coordination of housing activities in town.

Boylston Affordable Housing Committee

The Affordable Housing Committee (AHC) has been established by the Board of Selectmen; however, it remains inactive. There are five vacant seats on the Committee. The AHC is intended to be the Town entity tasked with many of the implementation items of this Housing Production Plan. As the guiding force for providing a full range of housing options for Boylston households of all incomes, ages, and abilities, the AHC will work to identify specific housing needs and lead initiatives for creating affordable housing.

Once members have been nominated and confirmed by the Board of Selectmen, the AHC should meet on a regular basis. It is recommended that the Committee take on the following tasks:

- Work cohesively with, and provide input to, the Town's Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Town Administrator, Town Planner, and other boards or committees that tackle housing issues
- Participate in discussions and negotiations with developers proposing affordable units
- Advocate for funding that supports affordable housing initiatives
- Make information on affordable housing readily available to current and prospective town residents
- Solicit input and feedback from residents on affordable housing initiatives
- Pursue affordable housing opportunities for specific populations including, but not limited to, seniors living on fixed incomes, those with disabilities, Town employees, etc.

Ongoing community outreach and education on housing issues and activities

Boylston town staff, boards, committees, and volunteers should build off the momentum of the Housing Production Plan and the Master Plan, continuing the valuable work to educate the community about the need and benefits of affordable housing, plus keeping residents informed of new housing initiatives. Lack of community support is oftentimes one of the greatest obstacles to creating affordable housing. Local approval, including Town Meetings, is required for many of these housing strategies, hence support from the community is essential to pass new initiatives. It is important to educate the community on the significance of affordable housing using a holistic approach, emphasizing how it impacts all aspects of the town. Community education focused on changing the historically negative perception of *who* qualifies for and lives in affordable units should be pursued by town leaders to remove barriers to creating affordable housing.

Outreach and education efforts can include, but are not limited to, hosting community meetings or special forums on specific housing initiatives, offering town officials the opportunity to present various proposals and solicit feedback from the public, providing the public with information on existing housing-related programs and services, enhanced use of the town's public access television and Vimeo page, expanding the Town website to include a housing section, and making general information on housing easily accessible to the public. Housing developers interested in including affordable units in future developments should be included in the town's outreach efforts as well. Hosting roundtable discussions or meetings between developers and town officials would be a proactive way to find an appropriate fit for the town's housing needs.

Affordable Housing Coordinator

If the Town of Boylston intends to assume a more proactive role in promoting affordable housing and effectively implementing the goals of this HPP, a dedicated Affordable Housing Coordinator should be hired to coordinate these activities. The Town Planner is part-time in Boylston and based on current job responsibilities, has limited capacity to assume additional duties. It is recommended that the Town pursue hiring a part-time, full-time, or shared Affordable Housing Coordinator to take a leading role in tackling housing initiatives. Options may include issuing a Request for Proposals for a Housing Coordinator position, hiring a part-time consultant, hiring an additional Assistant to the Town Planner, or collaborating with a nearby community to employ a shared Housing Coordinator or consultant.

Many communities in Massachusetts are accessing CPA funding to support these positions, which could be a source of funding for a part-time or full-time affordable housing staff person or consultant. Depending on Boylston's needs, the Housing Coordinator could provide services such as:

- Public education and outreach
- Grant Writing
- Maintaining the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)
- Outreach to establish relationships with developers, lenders, funders, service providers, etc. to promote community housing efforts
- Overall coordination of the strategies outlined in this Plan and providing necessary professional support as needed

Professional support can help ensure that affordable units produced are counted as part of the Subsidized Housing Inventory, applied through the Local Initiative Program (LIP) administered by the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). LIP is the vehicle for counting affordable units as part of a Town's SHI that are being developed through some local action. Some of the important tasks for ensuring that the affordable units, or Local Action Units (LAU's), meet the Chapter 40B/LIP requirements can be time-consuming and require technical knowledge and experience. While affordability restrictions for units produced through LIP are monitored by DHCD, the municipality and DHCD are expected to work cohesively to create affordable housing and fulfill the obligations of the affordability restrictions.

Should the Town decide to pursue a dedicated Affordable housing Coordinator, the Town Administrator is recommended to write a Scope of Services for the position and issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit interest from qualifying professionals or organizations to undertake these services. Outreach to CMRPC or neighboring communities to explore the possibility of a shared coordinator is highly suggested. Additionally, an option is to hire a part-time staff person who has affordable housing knowledge and experience.

Funding and technical assistance opportunities to implement the Housing Production Plan

Implementation of the strategies of the Housing Production Plan will require funding and technical assistance to create more affordable housing and pursue associated initiatives. There are a variety of avenues of funding and support the Town can follow to achieve its housing production goals. Organizations such as [Massachusetts Housing Partnership \(MHP\)](#), [Citizens' Housing and Planning Association \(CHAPA\)](#), [MassHousing](#), [Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance \(CMHA\)](#), and the [Department of Housing and Community Development \(DHCD\)](#) offer resources and services including, but not limited to: rental assistance, homelessness prevention, emergency shelter placement, home repair and maintenance for seniors, public education and advocacy, data and research, financing programs, homebuyer resources, trainings and events, model bylaws, funding opportunities, and much more. Planning assistance grants are made available each year through the [Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs \(EOEEA\)](#), offering municipalities in the Commonwealth technical help to improve their land use practices. The EOEEA planning assistance grants are part of an effort to encourage municipalities to implement land use regulations that are consistent with the Baker-Polito Administration's land conservation and development objectives, which includes the provision of sufficient and diverse housing.

The District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) is funded annually by the Legislature and the Governor through a state appropriation. CMRPC is one of the 13 regional planning agencies that administer the program, and Towns are encouraged to apply for technical assistance funding to complete projects related to planning for housing, growth, Community Compact Cabinet activities, or support of regional efficiency. DLTA projects run through the calendar year (January through December).

Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund and Board of Trustees

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund is an excellent opportunity for Boylston to have readily accessible funds available to respond efficiently to housing opportunities as needed. Oftentimes, State subsidy sources require local contribution by means of either local funds, municipally owned property donations, or private donations. Having a dedicated housing fund makes it useful for communities to be able to receive donations and avoid paying taxes.

The state enacted the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund Act on June 7, 2005, which simplified the process of establishing housing funds that are dedicated to subsidizing affordable housing. At the 2005 Boylston Annual Town Meeting, the Town voted to accept the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 44, Section 55C to establish a Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund with the purpose of providing for the creation and preservation of affordable housing in the Town for the benefit of low- and moderate-income households. The Trust Fund is administered by a Board of Trustees, which includes five (5) trustees, including all members of the Board of Selectmen, with the two remaining members to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen. As of 2021, all members of the Board of Trustees have been appointed.

The law enables communities to collect funds for housing, segregate them out of the general budget into an affordable housing trust fund, and subsequently use these funds without returning to Town Meeting for approval. Additionally, trusts can own and manage real-estate, though most trusts choose to dispose of property through a sale or long-term lease to a developer to clearly differentiate any affordable housing development from a public construction project to comply with Chapter 30B.

Funds from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund may be used to support the acquisition, development, or preservation of affordable housing units. Possible types of assistance through the affordable housing trust fund include:

- Deferred payment loans
- Low or no interest amortizing loans
- Down payment and closing cost assistance for first-time homebuyers
- Credit enhancements and mortgage insurance guarantees
- Matching funds for municipalities that sponsor affordable housing projects
- Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers

The Board of Trustees should explore ways to capitalize the fund. Some communities that have passed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) choose to annually commit a percentage of CPA funds to their local housing trust, without targeting the funding to any specific initiative. Towns with inclusionary zoning bylaws that allow cash-in-lieu of affordable units have also chosen to commit these funds to their housing trusts. Some communities have received funding from developers through negotiations on proposed developments. In addition to these methods, other opportunities to capitalize the housing trusts could include potential inclusionary zoning fees, donated funding or property, special fundraisers, or grants.

Along with managing the trust fund, the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees can also become the entity in Boylston that oversees affordable housing issues, utilizing this HPP as a guiding document and implementing the strategies. Now that the Board of Trustees is established, the Trust should determine its meeting schedule, designate officers, and review procedures. The Housing Trust may also decide to prepare housing guidelines regarding specific terms and conditions for allocating trust funds, including a summary of eligible activities, funding requirements, selection criteria, etc.

Town leaders should ensure that the Board remains involved in community housing activities and makes every effort to address housing issues as they arise. More information on affordable housing trust funds can be accessed at the [Massachusetts Affordable Housing Trust Fund Guidelines](#).

Zoning and Policy Strategies

The Town of Boylston is highly recommended to consider the following zoning and policy-related strategies to promote the production of additional affordable and direct new housing developments to the most appropriate locations. Currently, the Town's Zoning Bylaws constrain the development of affordable housing, which has contributed to the town's lack of diverse and affordable housing options. These strategies offer pathways for the town to actively create affordable housing without compromising the small-town character and valuable open space that are important aspects of Boylston.

Modification of the existing Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw to allow for more flexibility and offer greater opportunities for development

The Town of Boylston's Bylaws allow accessory apartments by special permit in eight of the town's zoning districts (RR, R, GR, VB, NB, C, H, MUI). Accessory apartments are described as "a self-contained housing unit incorporated within a detached, accessory structure to a single-family dwelling that is clearly subordinate to the single-family dwelling and has received a special permit pursuant to the criteria below". As previously noted in the Housing Challenges section, the bylaw is generally strong and meets some Smart Growth principles. However, the town should consider some modifications to allow this favorable type of housing to be constructed more easily. Applying for a special permit is

often a barrier for community members who would like to create an accessory apartment on their property. The Town is encouraged to consider permitting this use to be allowed by-right in one or more districts in town, provided they meet all necessary criteria. The Town should consider waiving the parking requirement, as ADU's being built for an elderly relative who no longer drives should be able to avoid this requirement without seeking a variance, particularly if options like the WRTA Paratransit service are available.

Workforce Housing Special Tax Assessment (WH-STA) Area in which developers can be offered a property tax incentive to build housing affordable to low-to middle-income residents

Created by legislative action in 2016 ([M.G.L. Ch. 40, sec. 60B](#)) a Workforce Housing Special Tax Assessment (WH-STA) area is a potentially powerful tool for encouraging the development of affordable housing in a community. Like Tax Increment Financing (TIF) or District Improvement Financing (DIF), wherein a developer is allowed a reduction in their property taxes for a set period in exchange for adding affordable units to their development, the WH-STA allows communities to establish a district. The law gives towns a certain amount of control over the placement of the district, the minimum level of affordability to qualify, along with any other tools the Town would need to negotiate with a potential developer. WH-STA can also be used in conjunction with other tools, such as affordable housing density bonuses, parking minimum reductions, or any other tool the community may see fit to implement.

For a town to implement a WH-STA area, they must first develop a WH-STA Plan. This plan outlines the geographic boundaries of the district and the characteristics that make it particularly suitable for affordable housing. Much like the TIF or DIF mechanism, a WH-STA needs to have a developer lined up to complete the plan. However, if there are no projects in suitable areas in the development pipeline, it is still recommended that the Town proceed with developing a draft plan as a first step. Such a process will allow the Town to identify potentially suitable areas, start discussions with existing property owners where appropriate, and raise awareness of the development potential of certain areas of town. Once a developer is identified and the project area is established, the Town may then complete the plan and present it to Town Meeting for adoption.

Adoption of a Cottage Housing Bylaw

A Cottage Housing Bylaw is like an open space bylaw in that it provides density bonuses in exchange for a common open space set-aside but focuses on houses on smaller lots with a pedestrian-oriented layout. In a cottage development, housing units (typically single-family) are clustered with smaller than typical frontages along shared spaces, walkways, or other amenities. Infrastructure and parking are relegated away from lot frontages and amenities, usually towards the back of the lot.

Cottage houses tend to be smaller in living-area and are thus less expensive to produce. At the same time, their clustered design allows for more efficient placement of water, wastewater, utilities, and other infrastructure, further reducing development costs. The focus on shared common space allows the developer to off-set some of the loss of private space by creating shared amenities in the common area such as outdoor seating and grilling areas. Similar to condominiums, buyers need to be comfortable with less private space in exchange for lower costs and a more communal atmosphere.

CMRPC or local housing organizations can provide the town with a model bylaw as well as provide technical assistance to the town to develop a bylaw that is appropriate for Boylston.

Cottage House Development



Photo Credit: Concord Riverwalk, zeroenergy.com

Participation in the Housing Choice Designation and Grant Program

The Housing Choice Initiative was put into action by the Baker-Polito Administration following an identification of inadequate housing production across the Commonwealth. The Administration has set a goal of 135,000 new housing units statewide by the year 2025. One crucial part of this multi-pronged effort to increase the state's housing supply is the Housing Choice Designation and Grant Program. A Housing Choice Designation rewards communities that are producing new housing and have adopted best practices to promote sustainable housing development. A community that achieves this designation receives both exclusive admission to Housing Choice Capital Grants and priority access to many other Commonwealth grant and capital funding programs (i.e., MassWorks, Complete Streets, LAND, and PARC grants).

Housing Choice Communities are designated in two ways: 1) At least a five percent increase or 500 increase in new units over the previous 5 years; or 2) At least a three percent increase or 300 unit increase in new units over the previous 5 years *and* demonstrate 7 of 14 best practices, two of which must be affordable. As of 2021, there are a total of 78 communities that have achieved designation. Boylston was most recently designated in 2020, following a 5% increase in housing units. The Town has received a grant of \$83,500 through the Housing Choice program to fund a traffic engineering study for the Route 140/Sewall Street intersection to improve traffic flow following an influx of housing development in that area.

It is recommended that the Town continue to reapply for designation when their current designation expires. Designation will ensure the Town has priority access to the Commonwealth's financial resources that will assist the municipality with future housing developments. Examples of potential projects include feasibility studies, pedestrian infrastructure enhancements, upgrades to water and sewer infrastructure, conversion of Town-owned property into affordable units, land acquisition, and much more. CMRPC staff are available to provide technical assistance with designation and grant applications.

For more information, visit the [Mass.gov Housing Choice Designation and Grants website](#).

Adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA)

Boylston's lack of local subsidy funds is a major constraint to pursuing greater housing affordability, diversity, and sustainability. Many towns that have made significant strides with respect to affordable housing have had Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding available to subsidize locally sponsored housing initiatives.

Cities and towns that adopt CPA obtain community preservation funds from two sources - a local property tax surcharge and a yearly distribution from the statewide CPA Trust Fund. Trust fund revenues are derived from a surcharge placed on all real estate transactions at the state's Registries of Deeds. The surcharge for most documents filed at the Registries is \$50, which is immediately deposited in the CPA Trust Fund held at the Department of Revenue (DOR), plus municipal lien certificates are subject to a \$25 surcharge. Depending upon how the real estate market is doing, the \$50/\$25 fees add up to approximately \$60 million per year. Each spring, every CPA community receives a distribution from the trust fund at a formula-based percentage of what they raised locally.

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) establishes the authority for municipalities in the Commonwealth to create a Community Preservation Fund derived from a surcharge of one percent to three percent of the property tax, to be matched by the state based on a funding commitment of approximately \$36 million annually. Once adopted, the Act requires that at least 10% of the funding raised through taxes be distributed to each of the three categories – open

ADOPTING CPA DOES NOT HAVE TO PLACE SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL BURDENS ON BOYLSTON HOMEOWNERS. FOR EXAMPLE, IF THE TOWN ADOPTED THE EXEMPTION OF THE FIRST \$100,000 OF PROPERTY VALUE AND THE 1.5% SURCHARGE ON THE MEDIAN SINGLE-FAMILY PROPERTY OF ABOUT \$350,000, WITH A TOWN TAX RATE OF \$16.98 PER \$1,000 THE ANNUAL COST WOULD BE \$89, THE EQUIVALENT OF \$7 PER MONTH.

space/recreation, historic preservation, and affordable housing – allowing flexibility in distributing the majority of the money to any of these uses as determined by the community. CPA also allows communities to target funds to those earning up to 100% of the area median income.

Communities in Central Massachusetts that have adopted CPA include the towns of Berlin, Grafton, Hopedale, Mendon, Northbridge, Northborough, Sturbridge, Shrewsbury, Upton, and West Boylston, among the 187 CPA communities across the Commonwealth (53% of the state’s municipalities).

There are many ways that the Town could utilize CPA funding to enhance affordable housing efforts in Boylston, including the following:

- Acquire land for the purpose of creating affordable housing.
- Adaptive re-use of existing buildings through the conversion of nonresidential properties into affordable housing.
- Purchase of existing market-rate homes and conversion to affordable homes to create permanent deed-restricted affordable rental housing.
- Buy-down the cost of homes to create affordable mortgage costs for first-time homebuyers with qualifying incomes.
- Support the development of affordable housing on publicly owned land.
- Support the construction of new housing on small, non-complying lots in existing neighborhoods.
- Support the costs of improvements necessary to develop accessory dwelling units, with the provision that the units be permanently deed-restricted to preserve affordability.
- Finance predevelopment activities (soft costs) to promote better project planning.
- Provide financial support to help cover down-payment and closing costs for first-time homebuyers
- Offer direct assistance in the form of rental vouchers that subsidize the difference between market rents and what a household can afford to pay.
- Fund a professional to support the implementation of local affordable housing plans.

To learn more about the Community Preservation Act and see examples of housing projects funded by CPA in other communities, visit the [Community Preservation Coalition official website](#).

Design guidelines or standards for new multi-family housing developments

Design guidelines and standards are mechanisms to ensure that new development complements a community’s character. In a community that primarily consists of low-density, single-family dwellings, residents often worry that dense, multi-family housing developments will alter the small-town feeling. To give residents more input on the design of new developments, design guidelines can be prepared and included in the Town Zoning Bylaws which inform the proposals of multi-family housing proposals. Taking into consideration the aesthetic character of the town, plus Smart Growth and sustainability principles, design guidelines encourage the existing housing stock to be used as a reference point for the character and architecture of new housing development.

Design guidelines are a document outlining various aspects of residential developments that are encouraged and discouraged. These aspects can include, but are not limited to, style and materials, bulk masking and scale, sidewalks and pathways, driveways and parking, landscaping, utility and waste storage areas, lighting, and drainage and stormwater. In Boylston’s case, design guidelines would be applied to any location where multi-family housing is permitted. Design guidelines are recommended suggestions while design standards are legal and mandatory requirements.

By utilizing design guidelines or standards, affordable housing development can be pursued in a manner that is consistent with, and complimentary to, what came before.

Buy-down program whereby the Town uses funds to buy-down market-rate homes, deed restrict them as affordable in perpetuity, and sell them to income-qualified, first-time homebuyers at below-market prices

The underlying goal of a buy-down program is to assist income-qualified households in purchasing an existing home in the community. Each community’s buy-down program will vary in structure. Utilizing Affordable Housing Trust Funds or Community Preservation Act funds (if passed), this program could assist the town in bridging the gap between what is available in the open market and what is affordable to a low- to moderate-income household by offering grants to homebuyers to help them “buy down” or reduce the purchase price of the home. The community can set what the qualifications of the homebuyer are, such as annual household income limits or amount of assets. The community will also choose the amount of the subsidy awarded per unit. By deed restricting the homes as affordable in perpetuity, this program would help increase to town’s units on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

Housing Development Strategies

The following Housing Development Strategies offer a guide for Boylston to produce new affordable housing at an increased pace. Boylston has limited Town resources for building its affordable housing stock, therefore it is important for the Town to reach out and partner with developers, both non-profit and for-profit, which will be able to access other sources of financing. The Town should explore the availability of state subsidy programs such as the “Friendly 40B” process through the Local Initiative Program (LIP) as a means of creating new affordable units.

Inventory of Town-owned land suitable for new housing development

To proactively create affordable housing and avoid unwanted comprehensive permits, the Town should take all the necessary steps to prepare for new housing development. By developing an inventory of Town-owned properties and assessing each parcel of land based on constraints and factors such as zoning restrictions, topography and soils, infrastructure, traffic patterns, existing residences and businesses, presence of wetlands or endangered species, wildlife corridors, historic resources, open space conservation restrictions, etc. the Town will position itself for successful future development. This inventory should be utilized when developers want to submit proposals to the town for residential developments, so the town can determine and prioritize the properties that are most appropriate.

Several Town-owned sites that could potentially be suitable for the development of housing were discussed by residents at the public workshop. The benefits and drawbacks of each site plus the types of housing that would be most appropriate in each area were the foundations of the discussions in each breakout group at the workshop. These are areas in which the filing of comprehensive applications would also be encouraged. The study area sites, which are general areas but contain Town-owned land within them, included:

- **Hillside:** The Hillside study area is bounded by the southern border of Route 140 and the western border of Route 70. It contains Hillside Park, Police Department, Town Hall, Gough House, Electric Light Department, open space, and Town-owned land.
- **Route 140 / Sewall Street:** This study area is bounded by the southern border of Route 140 and the western border of South Sewall Street. This area of town includes Town-owned land, Sewall Brook, Worcester Pistol & Rifle Club, residences, commercial businesses, a gas station, a bank, and is close to the I-290 interchange.
- **Central Street / Rocky Pond Road:** This area is bounded by Central Street, Rocky Pond Road, and the town border. It is directly south of Rocky Pond and southeast of the Haven Country Club. The area contains Town-owned land, single-family residences, and some wetlands.
- **Linden Street / Mile Hill Road / Green Street:** This area is in the northeast section of Boylston and is bounded by Green Street, Mile Hill Road, and Linden Street. Notable features of the study area include Wrack Meadow, Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary, single-family residences, and Town-owned land.
- **Main Street/Cross Street:** The Main St / Cross St study area boundaries include the east side of Route 70 (Main St) and the mid-point between Cross St and Linden St. It is northeast of Tower Hill Botanic Garden. The area includes residences, a section of French Brook, Pine Ridge Farm, open space, and Town-owned land.

A basic map outlining each of these study areas that could serve as sites for new affordable housing can be found in Appendix B. When creating an inventory of Town-owned land suitable for housing development, these areas of town should be considered. Additionally, while these areas may be appropriate for new housing development, there are certainly other properties in Boylston that could serve as good locations for new affordable housing. The Town will remain open to all opportunities as they arise to determine what is most appropriate for the community's needs.

Housing development in town in recent years has been concentrated in the Route 140 / Sewall Street area. A proposed "Friendly 40B" multi-family housing development will likely be developed on the corner of Route 140 and Sewall St, following a successful permitting process. Compass Pointe, a new development of single-family homes and two-family condominiums, is located off Sewall St and south of Route 140. A market-rate 55+ housing development consisting of single-family homes was recently completed and is located on Morgan Circle, off of Sewall Street. Additionally, two Habitat for Humanity homes were recently constructed on Mill Road Circle, which is also off Sewall Street.

Rapid housing growth in the area has occurred due to factors such as availability of land, prime soils, and town water connections. However, some town residents have expressed concern that development has been concentrated in this region and not in other areas of Boylston that are also suitable. Future housing development should allow for and encourage input from residents.

Higher inclusion of accessible units in proposed affordable housing developments

It is crucial to accommodate people with disabilities and seniors who have limited mobility or special needs, particularly those that are low-income. While there may be accessible units that are market rate, oftentimes people with disabilities or those with limited mobility cannot afford to live in them. It is crucial that this population is advocated for and that there is enough availability of affordable units that are also accessible. Boylston Town staff, boards, committees, and Council on Aging should advocate for additional accessible units that are deed restricted as affordable when developers submit proposals.

Partnerships with private developers to create affordable housing

As a means of creating new affordable housing units, the Town should explore the availability of state subsidy programs such as the "Friendly 40B" process through the Local Initiative Program (LIP). Actively seeking out developers that are willing to create affordable housing, establishing a working relationship with them, and ensuring the development process is clear and fluid are significant steps. Working cohesively with private developers to facilitate the construction of affordable housing for households earning below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) is preferable to being subject to Comprehensive Permitting from developers who will not necessarily seek out community input. Collaborating with developers can also help the Town better understand and mitigate challenges associated with developing affordable housing. It is suggested that the Town host round-table discussions in which one or more developers are invited to talk with representatives of the Town including the Town Administrator, Town Planner, Select Board, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Affordable Housing Committee, Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees, Resident Advisory Board, and any others wishing to be involved in the process.

Down-payment/closing cost assistance program whereby the Town provides grants to income-eligible, first-time homebuyers willing to purchase affordable units listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory

In Boylston and many other communities in the Commonwealth, housing is too expensive, and the market is not inclusive to first-time homebuyers. To break down barriers for this population to enter the housing market, a down-payment/closing cost assistance program could help diversify homeownership in Boylston. This program would help low- to moderate-income households become homebuyers by advancing the cash assistance needed to be able to complete the closing of the home's mortgage. Oftentimes, people have the means of paying a mortgage and associated homeowner costs, however they do not have enough to pay the initial home purchase costs.

Assistance could be offered in a variety of ways, including a grant, a no- or low-interest amortizing loan, or a deferred loan in which repayment is not required unless the property is refinanced or sold within a defined period of time (i.e. 10 years). Funds for this program could be designated from the Affordable Housing Trust Fund.

Programs may also place limits on the home purchases, for example by limiting the sales price, requiring the home to be a single-family unit, requiring the loan to meet certain requirements (such as a fixed-price loan), or requiring the home to be in a particular target area. Under Chapter 40B restrictions, the sale of a unit listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory to an eligible buyer at the maximum resale price must be completed typically within 90 days, or else the affordability restriction could be lost, and a non-income eligible buyer may purchase the unit. Since the Town intends to maintain existing units on the SHI and have the ownership units readily available to income-eligible buyers, the Town could restrict this program to first-time homebuyers that meet income-eligibility requirements and are willing to purchase a resale unit with affordability restrictions.

The Town should seek out models from communities that currently operate successful down-payment/closing cost assistance programs and create a program that works for Boylston.

Partnerships with local rental property owners, offering incentives in exchange for deed restricting certain units as affordable

Boylston has much housing that is considered affordable by HUD standards. However, these individual rental units managed by local property owners have not been registered to the Subsidized Housing Authority. The Town should consider a method by which incentives can be offered to local property owners in exchange for their cooperation in deed-restricting their rental units as affordable. As Boylston already has an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, the Town can leverage this resource to add more affordable housing units to the SHI. The Town can also partner with local non-profits specializing in affordable housing to initiate this type of program. If it is possible for the town to establish a partnership with local rental property owners without burdening existing residents, it is an endeavor worth exploring. Housing professionals at Mass Housing Partnership or DHCD are available to offer advice and insight.

Modification of the existing Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to mandate residential developments set aside a minimum of 15% of the total number of dwelling units as affordable housing for very-low, low-, or moderate- income residents

The Town of Boylston maintains an Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw that requires new, converted, or renovated units to include a proportion of housing units as affordable to people meeting very-low-, low-, or moderate-income standards. This bylaw is designed to help the town increase its affordable housing stock to meet the Chapter 40B 10% affordability threshold and encourage a greater diversity of housing options for families and individuals of all income levels. The provisions apply to all residential developments of eight (8) or more units, whether they are rental or ownership, including assisted living units in a life care facility.

The Town should modify the existing inclusionary zoning bylaw, increasing the mandated percentage of affordable units set aside from the current 10% up to 15%. Boylston's affordable housing rate is far behind other Massachusetts communities; it, therefore, needs to enhance all opportunities to create new affordable units.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

The Master Plan recommends the following action items based on the goals and objectives crafted with careful consideration of the public outreach results, analysis of current conditions, and progress achieved since the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and other planning initiatives. The action items accompanying the objectives will also be reflected in the Implementation Matrix (Chapter 8).

1. Goal: Build municipal capacity and advocacy efforts to support affordable housing production.
 - a. Objective: Conduct ongoing community outreach and education on housing issues and activities.
 - i. Action Item: Schedule an annual meeting/forum open to the public.
 - b. Objective: Coordinate municipal efforts to manage housing growth, initiatives, and funding opportunities
 - i. Action Item: Consider hiring a dedicated Affordable Housing Coordinator
 - ii. Action Item: Provide opportunities for community leaders to revive the Boylston Affordable Housing Committee to guide affordable housing initiatives in town
 - iii. Action Item: Maintain an active Board of Trustees for the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund
 - c. Objective: Actively seek out and apply for funding and technical assistance to implement the HPP Action Plan
 - i. Action Item: Promote adoption of Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a source of funding to support housing planning.
 - ii. Action Item: Maintain designation as a Housing Choice Community
2. Goal: Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging issues in housing.
 - a. Objective: Stay actively informed on market trends and new opportunities to support managed growth in housing
 - i. Action Item: Encourage community leaders to participate in informational meetings and forums hosted by organizations such as CMRPC, Mass Housing Partnership (MHP), Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), or Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC).
 - b. Objective: Collaborate on regional housing solutions with neighboring communities.
 - i. Action Item: Collaborate on regional housing forums, dialogues, and studies hosted by CMRPC and other regional organizations.
3. Goal: Ensure new housing development design and location prioritizes preservation of open space, utilizes Smart Growth principles, and preserves town character.
 - a. Objective: Expand housing options by prioritizing denser, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented housing development.
 - i. Action Item: Prepare design guidelines or standards for new multi-family housing developments to encourage developers to create new housing that is consistent with and compliments the community's character.
 - b. Objective: Reduce regulatory constraints in zoning bylaws, policies, and regulations that may be impeding the development of affordable housing.
 - i. Action Item: Modify the Town's inclusionary zoning bylaw to mandate residential developments set aside a minimum of 15% of total number of dwellings as affordable housing for very-low, low-, or moderate-income residents.
 - ii. Action Item: Consider modifying the existing Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw to allow for more flexibility and offer greater opportunities for development
 - c. Objective: Encourage the development of smaller lot residential zoning in appropriate locations.
 - i. Action Item: Reevaluate residential lot sizes to determine potential for reducing minimum area requirements
 - ii. Action Item: Pursue adoption of a cottage housing bylaw

4. Goal: Encourage greater diversity, inclusivity, and distribution of housing types to meet the needs of families and individuals of all income levels, abilities, and ages, particularly seniors and young families.
 - a. Objective: Allow for easier development of multi-family dwellings in additional locations.
 - i. Action Item: Explore adoption of a Workforce Housing Special Tax Assessment (WH-STA) Area in which developers can be offered a property tax incentive to build housing affordable to low- to middle-income residents
 - b. Objective: Build the supply of rental and ownership housing in the Town of Boylston that is available to and affordable to low- and moderate-income households.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to work with, solicit interest from, and partner with "friendly 40B" developers and other private developers interested in building affordable housing.
 - ii. Action Item: Develop an action plan to help seniors and families who are getting priced out of the local housing and rental market stay in the community. Explore additional methods to help those on fixed or lower incomes afford increasing property tax valuations (i.e., more volunteer opportunities in exchange for property tax waivers) and ways to create smaller, more cost-effective, and affordable houses.
5. Goal: Strive to meet the affordable housing thresholds established by M.G.L. Chapter 40B.
 - a. Objective: Pursue affordable housing production strategies laid out in the Housing Production Plan.
 - i. Action Item: Commit to producing at least the minimum number of affordable units per year sufficient to meet DHCD "Safe Harbor" requirements.
 - ii. Action Item: Advocate for a higher inclusion of accessible units in proposed affordable housing developments
 - iii. Action Item: Create an inventory of Town-owned land suitable for new housing development.
 - iv. Action Item: Host roundtable discussions in which developers are invited to speak with municipal boards, committees, staff, and residents about potential housing developments and associated challenges or concerns.
 - v. Action Item: Pursue appropriate zoning and policy changes to encourage greater affordable housing.
 - vi. Action Item: Explore the creation of a buy-down program whereby the Town uses funds to buy-down market rate homes, deed restrict them as affordable in perpetuity, and sell them to income-qualified, first-time homebuyers at below-market prices.
 - vii. Action Item: Create a down-payment/closing cost assistance program whereby the Town provides grants to income-eligible, first-time homebuyers willing to purchase affordable units listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory.
 - viii. Action Item: Investigate a partnership with local rental property owners, offering incentives in exchange for deed restricting certain units as affordable.



*Photo: Wachusett Reservoir
Photo Credit: CMRPC*

Open Space, Recreation, & Natural Resources

Introduction

Boylston's landscape is characterized by expansive open space, water bodies, wildlife, farms, scenic views, and recreational opportunities. Residents treasure the community's valuable natural areas and resources, citing the rural character, land conservation, and water and air quality as important attributes of life in Boylston.

Planning for natural resource management, open space, and recreation is critical to preserving resources while enhancing recreational opportunities and experiences for the whole community. This Master Plan offers policies and guidelines that can drive future actions which are consistent with the preservation of open space and the enhancement of recreational uses. This chapter incorporates and builds off the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan completed in 2020, and identifies, updates, and incorporates relevant information to the town's open space and recreation resources. This plan presents an approach to assessing the recreational needs of the community while balancing the preservation of valuable environmental assets.

Natural resource management refers to the management practices of natural resources such as land, water, soil, plants, and animals, with a particular focus on how management affects the quality of life for both current and future generations. This concept deals with managing the interactions between people and the natural landscape, recognizing that people's livelihoods rely on the health and productivity of the natural environment.

Open space is defined as public and privately-owned undeveloped lands which are important for a variety of reasons, including habitat for wildlife, water resource protection, passive recreation, agriculture, forestry, or scenic qualities. This encompasses areas that are often in a predominantly natural state or lands in states that have been altered to maximize resource-based uses such as farms, orchards, silviculture, trails, and other similar uses.

Passive recreation is considered non-consumptive uses of land such as wildlife observation, walking along wooded trails, biking along scenic roadways, and canoeing or kayaking on waterways.

Active recreation is considered land used for active recreational purposes, such as athletic fields and courts, swimming facilities, or golf courses. Recreation facilities provide opportunities for athletic and family-oriented activities which increase engagement and social cohesion throughout the community. Parcels used for active recreation typically do

not constitute open space since they are developed and covered in part with surfaces like tennis or basketball courts, parking areas, and paved pathways.

Community Engagement

In the first community survey, residents were asked to rank the top three items out of 17 options that are most important to their quality of life in Boylston. Open space was the most popular answer, with half of all respondents ranking it as their first, second, or third item. This survey also asked residents what Boylston's greatest strength is, and "location" ranked highest followed by "natural beauty," while "parks and recreation" was the 8th ranked choice. Residents who took this survey were generally satisfied with the status of Boylston's parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities according to responses to Question 32. Most (67%) respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with parks and open spaces, while 49% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with recreational facilities. A second survey on preliminary vision statement and goals was circulated to Boylston residents. In general, Boylston residents approved goals for open space, recreation, and natural resources. Edits were made to goals based on feedback from the survey where there was not overwhelming approval.

A few themes related to open space, recreation, and natural resources emerged from the visioning workshop in 2021. Many workshop participants described that they were drawn to Boylston due to its rural character and they continue to stay in town because of aspects including open space, wildlife, clean air and water, and abundance of parks and outdoor recreation opportunities. These aspects were consistently brought up by residents as a priority for their quality of life in Boylston.

Summary of Goals

Open Space and Recreation

Goal 1: Be proactive about continuing to enhance and preserve Boylston's town character and small, New England town feel.

Goal 2: Preserve and protect Boylston's open spaces, including water bodies, woodlands, farms, and parks.

Goal 3: Maintain, add, and enhance recreational facilities and programs as needed.

Goal 4: Regulate and guide development to be consistent with town character, and to protect open space and natural resources.

Natural Resources

Goal 1: Protect natural resource areas from environmental degradation, disturbances, and over-development.

Goal 2: Improve public awareness of Boylston's natural resources.

Goal 3: Improve natural resource management strategies to make Boylston more resilient.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2005

Boylston's first effort at local open space planning was its 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). McGregor & Associates, P.C. completed the project, and the process was guided by an appointed Open Space Planning Committee of six community members. The Plan states that it reflects Boylston's desire to protect, maintain, and diversify the open space available to its citizenry. The major components of the plan include recommendations for a non-zoning wetlands bylaw, some zoning bylaw changes, developing criteria for future open space acquisition opportunities, outreach and education on open space and natural resource protection, creating regional networks for trails and other open space assets, and watershed protection. The following eight goals were developed as part of the Five-Year Action Plan:

1. Be proactive about continuing to enhance and preserve Boylston's town character and small New England town feel and formulate/implement additional goals and objectives that are consistent with this goal.
2. Preserve and protect Boylston's remaining agricultural lands.

3. The Open Space and Recreation Committee in coordination with other town boards should inventory and rank parcels of land that are important to protect their wildlife and habitat resources.
4. Continue to work with other communities from a regional perspective on opportunities for increased open space connection, wildlife preservation, and other recreational opportunities.
5. Educate residents about the importance of natural resources and habitat protection areas and encourage their participation in such initiatives.
6. Maintain, add, and enhance recreational facilities and programs as needed.
7. Direct development to specific areas of Boylston that have been previously identified to maximize the protection of the Town's natural resources.
8. Implement the five-year action strategy as soon as possible.

Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2020

An update to the 2004 OSRP was completed in 2020 and is in effect until 2027. CMRPC was the consultant on this project and the process was guided by a five-member Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee. The 2005 plan was revisited, and the project team evaluated changes that have occurred in the town and region since its completion. Public engagement included a community survey and stakeholder focus group, the results of which can be found in the appendix of the OSRP.

The 2020 plan provides an updated inventory of Boylston's open spaces and environmental resources, presents the needs and challenges associated with open space and recreation opportunities, and lays out a seven-year action plan to guide the town's progress on goals and strategies which includes the following four goals:

1. Be proactive about continuing to enhance and preserve Boylston's town character and small, New England town feel.
2. Preserve and protect Boylston's open spaces, including waterbodies, woodlands, farms, and parks.
3. Maintain, add, and enhance recreational facilities and programs as needed.
4. Regulate and guide development to be consistent with town character, and to protect open space and natural resources.



Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan, 2012

The Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan was completed by CMRPC in 2012. The Central Thirteen was a collaborative effort between 13 communities in central Worcester County to classify local priority parcels for development and preservation. Priority Preservation Areas (PPAs), Priority Development Areas (PDAs), and Priority Transportation Improvements (PTIs) were identified in each town and mapped accordingly, in a manner consistent with existing policies, master plans, and guidelines, and the State's Sustainable Development Principles. In Boylston, 12 areas in the northeast portion of town were identified as local priorities for preservation, including Town-owned land off Linden Street and Mile Hill Road.

Commissions and Active Groups

Agricultural Commission

Established in 2016, the Agricultural Commission represents Boylston's farming community. The three-member board, serving staggered terms of three years each, is appointed by the Board of Selectmen each fiscal year. The commission serves as facilitators for encouraging the pursuit of agriculture in the town of Boylston and promotes agricultural-based economic opportunities in town.

Conservation Commission

The Boylston Conservation Commission receives authority from the Conservation Commission Act (M.G.L. Chapter 40 section 8C), the Wetlands Protection Act (M.G.L. Chapter 131 section 40), and the home rule provisions of the state constitution for non-zoning wetlands bylaws. The Conservation Commission is a seven-member board appointed by the Board of Selectmen and charged with ensuring the protection of the Town's natural resources and conservation areas. The commission is responsible for administering and enforcing the state Wetlands Protection Act. The commission typically meets on the third Monday of each month and requires applications to be submitted two weeks prior to the regularly scheduled meeting.

Parks and Recreation Commission

The mission of the Boylston Parks and Recreation Commission is to offer community residents programs, services, and facilities that will enrich their lives. A five-member board comprises the Park and Recreation Commission. The commission maintains an active website and social media pages to inform residents about facilities, activity guidelines, field use rules and regulations, calendar of events, program registration, news, announcements, and more. The commission office is in the basement of the Police Department building at 215 Main Street and is open Monday through Thursday. Meetings occur on the first Tuesday of each month in the Town Hall.

Open Space and Recreation Committee

The Boylston Open Space and Recreation Committee was established in 2019 to guide the process of updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). During the plan's development stages, the committee met monthly to plan for public engagement efforts and discuss elements of the OSRP. The plan was approved by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Division of Conservation Services (DCS) in December 2020, allowing the Town to participate in DCS grant rounds through December 2027. The Open Space and Recreation Commission is currently tasked with overseeing implementation of the OSRP Action Plan.

Council on Aging

Established in 1974, the Boylston Council on Aging has a mission of providing those 60 and older an opportunity to learn about and receive services that may improve their quality of life. The Council on Aging sponsors programs such as educational seminars, outreach work, referrals for services, social and recreational opportunities, meals, and transportation. Citizens are encouraged to participate in and utilize all programs and provide constructive feedback. The town also has an active Senior Citizen Society that meets monthly at the Town House and schedules educational and social programs. The Council on Aging Board meets monthly at the Boylston Town Hall and the office is open Monday through Thursday.

Existing Conditions

Natural resources, open space, and recreation facilities provide countless social and ecological benefits. They contribute to the quality of life and the character of the community, provide a center for community activities for all ages, enhance property values, attract businesses, and minimize excessive Town spending. Well-maintained and managed open space can protect water supplies, provide natural means of stormwater filtration, reduce flooding, improve air quality, and much more. While there are many barriers to protecting open space and natural resources, it is of utmost importance to prioritize the preservation of natural assets. Future development must be guided in a manner that preserves protected natural areas and connections between these areas.

Topography, Geology, and Soils

Surficial geology is a significant factor in both development and preservation. Different soils are more suitable for different purposes, be it residential construction, farmland, fruit orchards, open space, or a variety of other circumstances. Extensive differences in soil properties can occur even within short distances. Most of the land in Boylston is till, bedrock, or some combination of both, and there are many sand and gravel deposits, areas of fine grain

deposits, and flood plains. Boylston’s mix of forest communities, including white pine/oak forest and mixed oak forest, are frequently located on glacial till soils of drumlins and moraines.

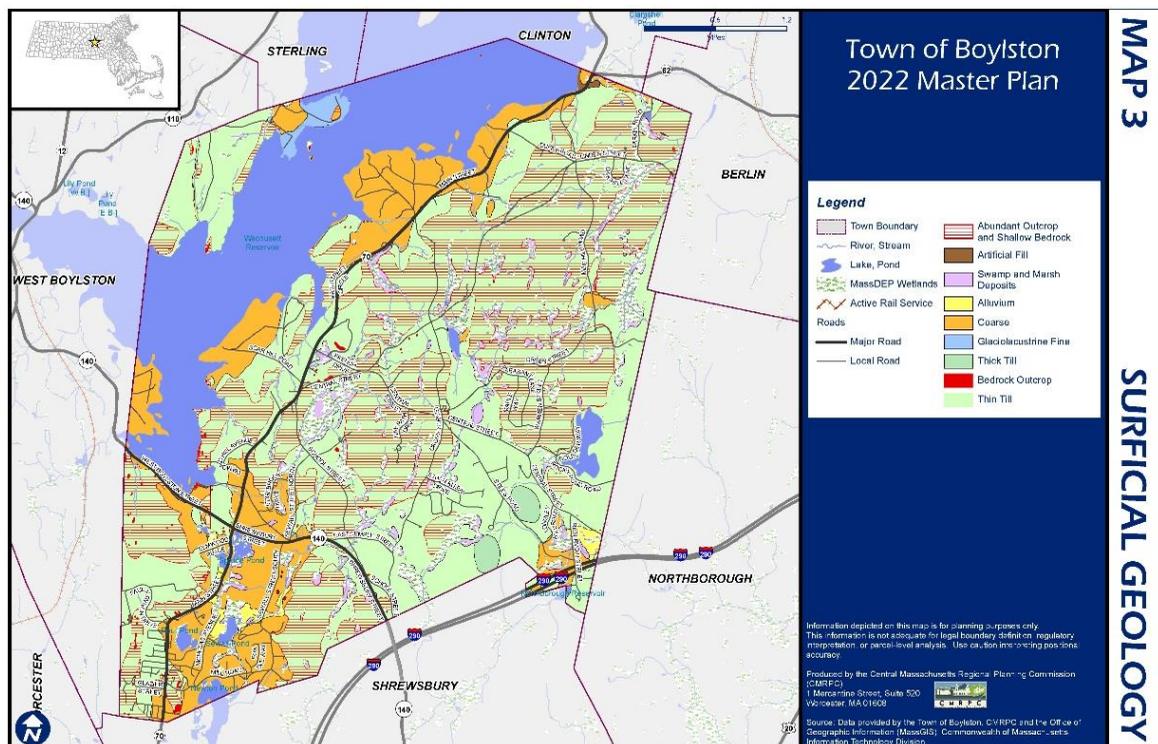
Map LU2 depicts the soil types that exist in Boylston. The soil properties and development limitations of the primary soil classes in Boylston, as listed in the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)¹, are as follows:

Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor: Very deep, nearly level to steep soils that are excessively drained and somewhat excessively drained. Located on outwash plains. Most areas are farmed or are used for urban development and a few areas are covered with trees. Limiting factors include slope, dryness, and low content of nutrients. Slope is a limitation in some areas. However, in most areas, there are essentially no limitations for dwellings and local roads and streets. The rapid permeability in the substratum of the soils causes a hazard of groundwater pollution in areas used for septic tank absorption fields.

Paxton-Woodbridge-Canton: Very deep, nearly level to steep soils that are well drained and moderately well drained. Located on uplands, these soils are found on upland hills and ridges dissected by many small drainageways. Most areas have more than three percent of the surface covered by stones. It is suitable for cultivated crops, hay, pasture, and is well suited to trees. Limitations for farming include slope, an erosion hazard, stones on the surface, and a seasonal high-water table. Limitations for community development include slope, the seasonal high-water table, a frost-action potential, and the firm substratum of the Paxton and Woodbridge soils.

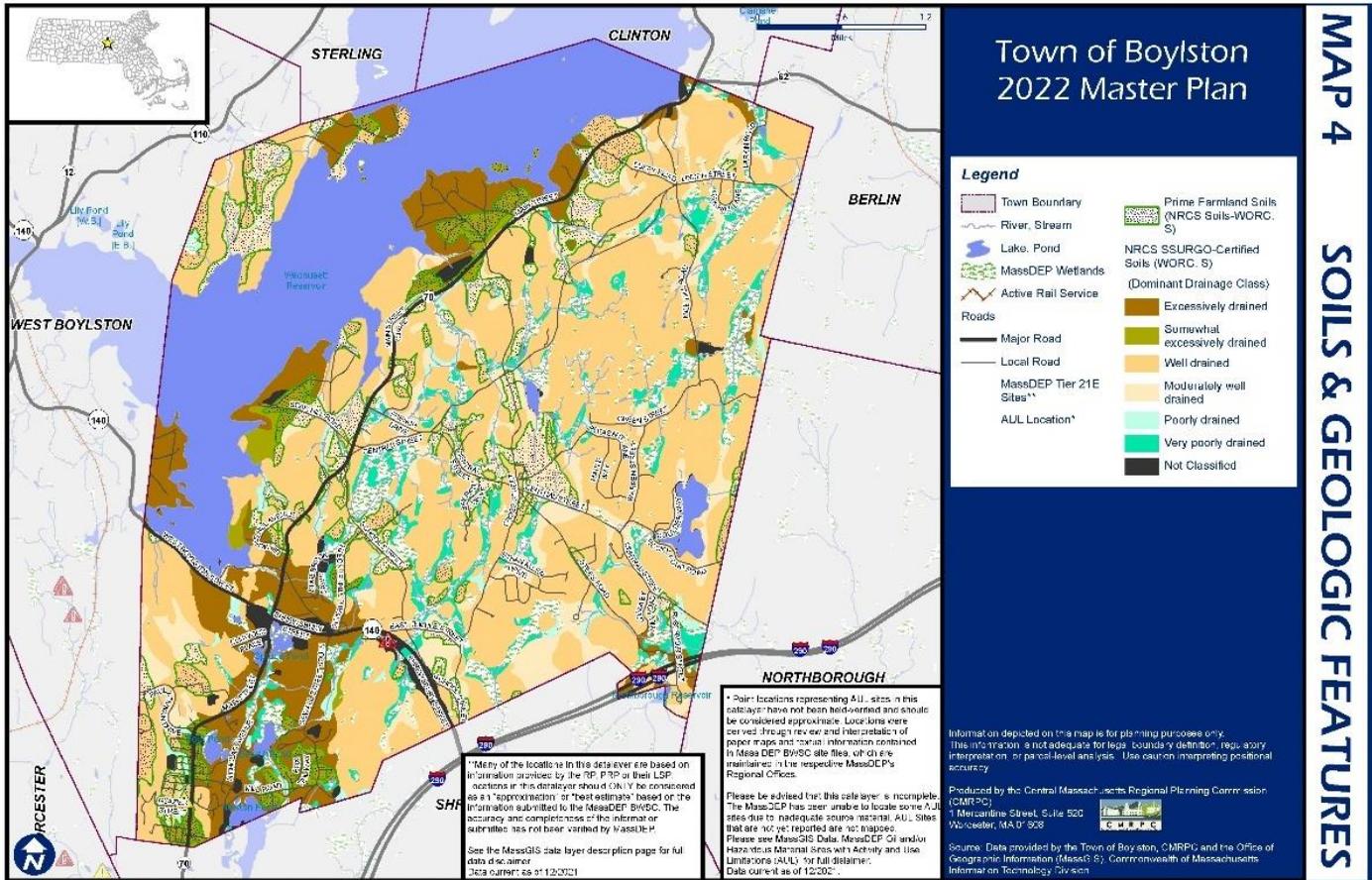
Chatfield-Hollis: Moderately deep and shallow, gently sloping to moderately steep soils that are well drained or somewhat excessively drained. Located on uplands, these soils are found on hills and ridges and with bedrock exposures located throughout. Most areas are found in woodland. The primary limitations for community development, along with farming, are the depth to bedrock and the areas of exposed bedrock.

Map OSNR1: Surficial Geology



¹ https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_MANUSCRIPTS/massachusetts/MA613/0/worcester.pdf

Map OSNR2: Soils and Geologic Features



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Water Resources

Water resources are a defining feature of Boylston, with 2,421 acres of surface water making up 19% of the town's total area, plus wetlands consisting of an additional 10% (1,312 acres) of the landscape. The water resources in town provide not only a water supply for millions of people in metropolitan Boston, but they also function as flood control, recreational opportunities (such as swimming, boating, and fishing), wildlife habitat areas, groundwater supply, pollution prevention, and storm damage control sources.

The dominant water feature of Boylston and the surrounding area is the 4,135-acre Wachusett Reservoir. Thirty-seven (37) miles of shoreline in Boylston, West Boylston, Clinton, and Sterling border the reservoir and it has an average depth of 48 feet. In 1908, the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) dammed the south branch of the Nashua River to create the reservoir as a clean, safe, drinking water supply for the Boston Metro area. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) manages the protection of this water resource to maintain water quality. Recreational activities are regulated and limited, and not all areas are open to the public. However, permitted activities include fishing, biking, running and walking, hunting, and snowshoeing.



Photo: Great Blue Heron at Rocky Pond

Notable ponds in Boylston include Rocky Pond, Pout Pond, Halls Pond, Flagg Pond, Sewall Pond, Spruce Pond, and Newton Pond/Mud Pond, which is partially located in Shrewsbury. Its shoreline dotted with cottages, Rocky Pond offers

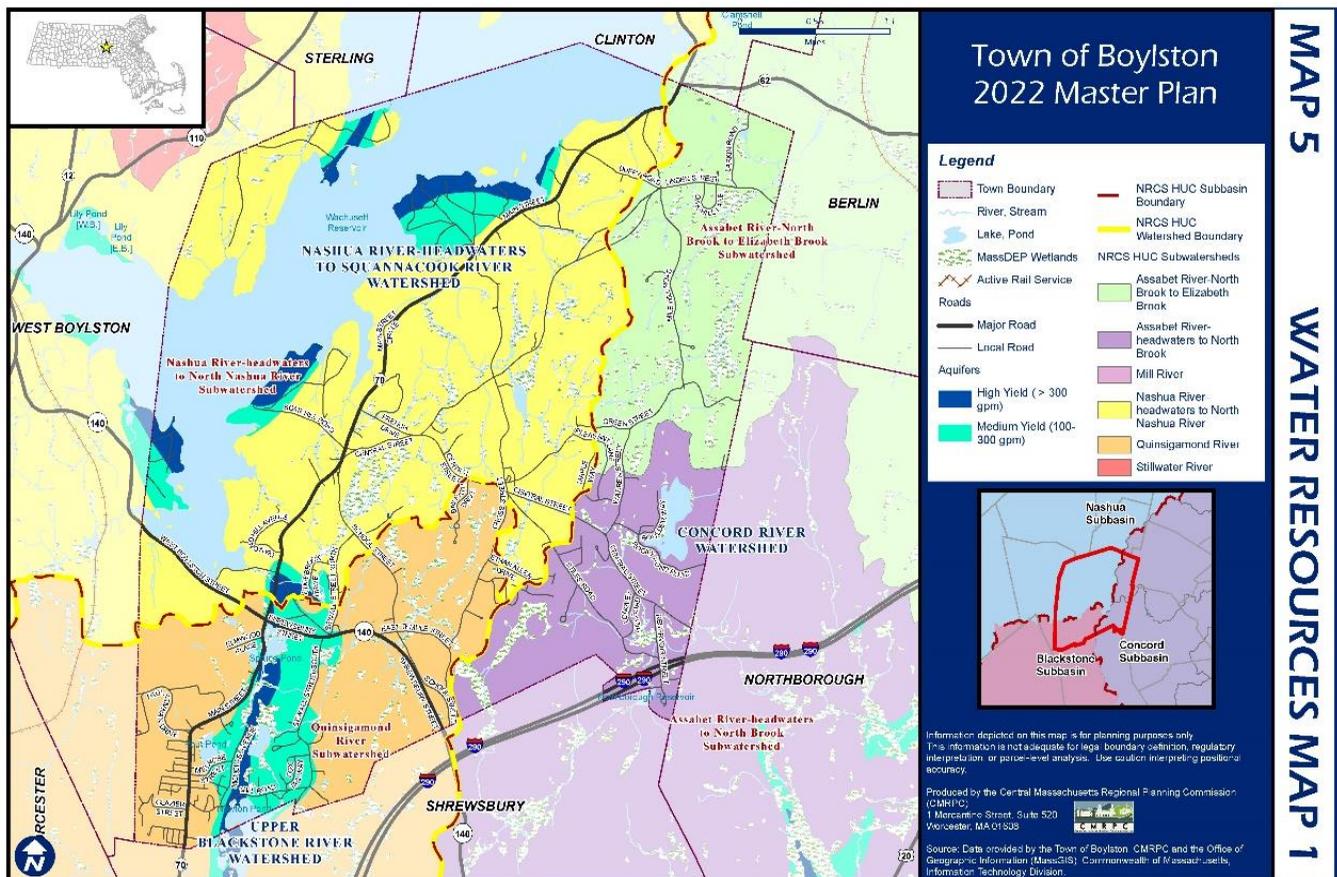
water for an abundance of wildlife and is used recreationally for swimming, boating, and fishing. Sewall Pond consists of eleven spring-fed acres and is home to a variety of wildlife, though it no longer offers a public beach. Camp Harrington (YMCA) and Gothing Beach historically provided recreation and beach facilities open to residents. However, the property was sold and partially developed. Town efforts are underway to protect the remaining 18 acres.

The major brooks in Boylston include:

- French Brook (sometimes referred to as Mill Brook), which flows through the easterly and north-central parts of the town into the Wachusett Reservoir
- Hastings Brook, which flows into the Wachusett Reservoir
- Wrack Meadow Brook, which flows into North Brook in Berlin, a tributary of the Assabet River
- Malagasco (Muddy) Brook, which flows into the Wachusett Reservoir
- Sewall Brook, which flows east of Cross Street, crosses Route 140, and south to Sewall Pond
- Cold Harbor Brook, which flows southeasterly into Northborough

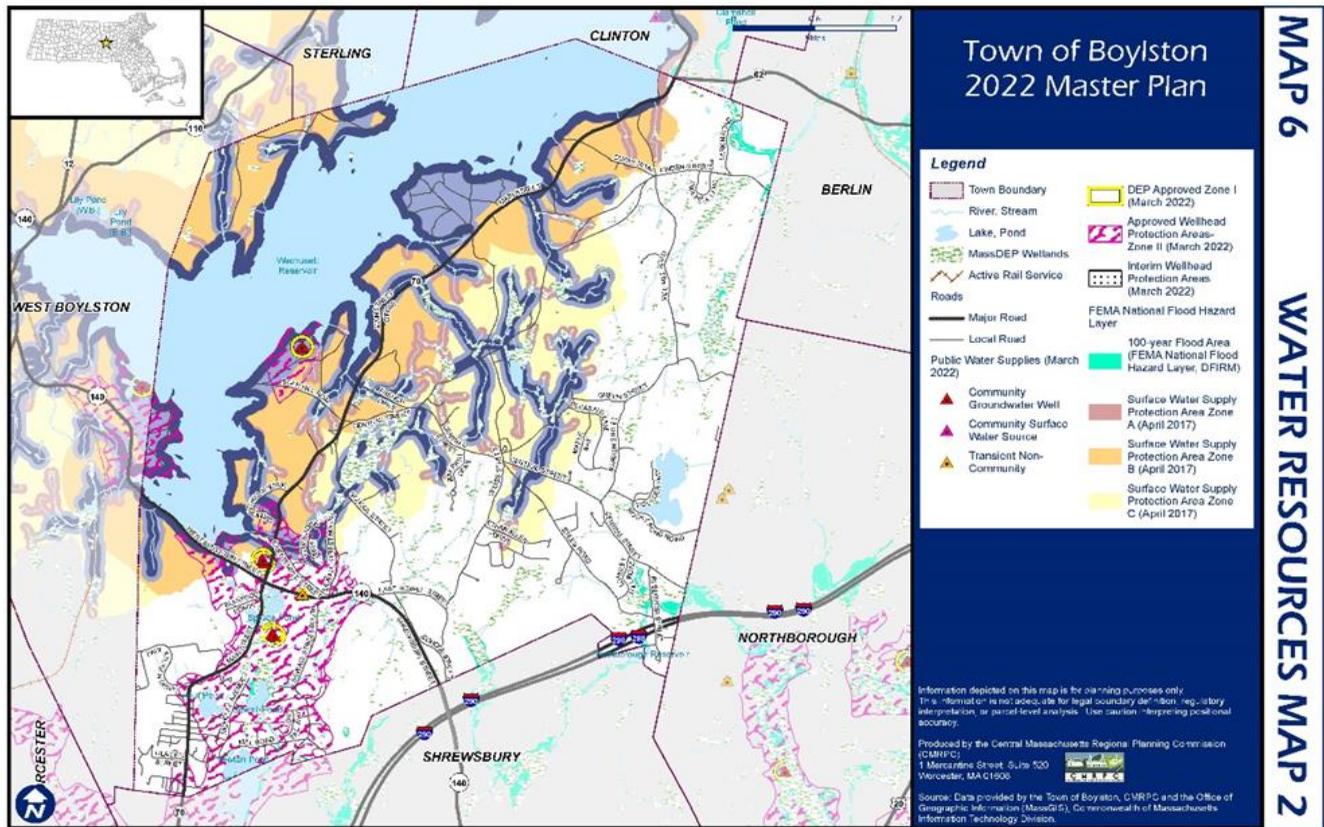
A unique characteristic of Boylston is that it is divided by three different watersheds. The largest watershed is the Nashua River Watershed, which drains into the Wachusett Reservoir. Tahanto Regional Middle/High School, East Woods, Boylston Town Center, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, and The Haven Country Club (formerly Mount Pleasant Country Club) are located within this watershed (north of Route 140). In the eastern portion of town is the Concord Watershed (also known as the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord, or SuAsCo, Watershed) that drains east. Rocky Pond, Wrack Meadow, and Straw Hollow are located within the Concord River Watershed. Finally, in the southwest corner of Boylston is the Blackstone River watershed, which drains to the south. Hillside Field and Gym, Spruce Pond, Boylston Elementary School, Sewall Pond, Newton Pond, and Morningdale Manor Playing Fields and Playground are located within this watershed.

Map OSRRN3: Water Resources Map 1



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Map OSRNR4: Water Resources Map 2



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Wetlands

Wetlands are critical to flood control and maintaining water quality. They offer necessary water storage, absorb stormwater runoff, and provide valuable wildlife habitat and scenic beauty.

Over 1,300 acres in Boylston are classified as wetlands. They are dispersed throughout the town and some notable areas include near the Wachusett Reservoir, Mile Hill Road conservation area, the Heritage District, Sewall Pond, Spruce Pond, School Street, and Cross Street. Table OSRNR1 shows the distribution of wetland types in Boylston.

To protect these essential areas, a permit is required by the State Wetlands Protection Act Regulations for any development activities within 100 feet of a wetland or 200 feet of a perennial stream. All projects within the 100-year floodplain also require a permit. Watershed Preservation Restrictions under the Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP) apply to certain areas in Boylston as well. The Boylston Conservation Commission administers the State's Wetland Protection Act regulations at the local level.

Table OSRNR1: Boylston Wetlands by Type

Wetland Type	Acres
Forested Wetland	1,125.36
Non-forested Wetland	194.92
Unconsolidated Shore	0.41
Total	1,320.69

Source: MassGIS, 2022

Aquifer Recharge Areas

Aquifers are glacial formations that can store and yield significant quantities of water to serve as a private or public water supply. Water saturates the soil during periods of precipitation that in turn migrates downward to the saturated zone. The water table is the boundary between the saturated zone and unsaturated zone and when more precipitation enters the aquifer than is taken out, the water table rises. Boylston has some very productive aquifers located near or along the Wachusett Reservoir and in the southwest corner of Town near Spruce, Sewall, Hall, and Newton Ponds. Morningdale Water District Wells 1 and 2 and Boylston Water District Wells 1 and 2 are in this area.

Aquifer recharge areas consist of the Quinsigamond valley extending from Route 140 south to Lake Quinsigamond in Worcester and beyond, with municipal wells in Boylston, Shrewsbury, and Worcester. The Nashua River valley, including the Wachusett Reservoir, consists of extensive deposits of water-bearing gravel.

Boylston has made several efforts to protect areas around private and public wells from contamination, including the adoption of a Wellhead Protection District in 1999. This district includes the Zone II areas, which are areas of an aquifer that contribute water to a well under pumping and recharge conditions.

Hazardous Material and Underground Storage Tank Sites

The Soils and Limitations Map shows sites of recorded spills, releases of oil, hazardous materials, and underground storage tanks. Awareness of these sites is important because they are potential sources of water supply contamination. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is responsible for keeping a database and enforcing the cleanup of sites that are contaminated with toxic or hazardous waste. DEP indicates that as of 2022, 41 sites in Boylston have reported releases of hazardous waste that are in various stages of remediation, the most recent report of which was reported on September 1, 2021. Many of them took place at gas and service stations and have been cleaned up, no longer posing a threat to the surrounding area. None of the active sites appear to pose an imminent threat to the environment as they are contained and there are plans to clean and monitor the sites.

Boylston has 14 underground storage tanks located within town boundaries². Underground storage tanks are important to inventory and monitor due to their potential adverse environmental effects should there be a leak, spill, or some other type of issue. Due to the sensitive nature of much of Boylston's natural environment, this list should continue to be updated and the sites monitored by the Town and DEP.

Floodplains

Important floodplains in Boylston are the Wachusett Reservoir, Sewall Pond, Spruce Pond, Pout Pond, Newton Pond, Rocky Pond, Mile Hill Road conservation area, and land at the southern end of Cross Street. There are 300 acres within the 100-year floodplain (three percent of the town's total land area). Boylston's floodplains pose environmental and regulatory challenges for development as a permit is needed before construction can begin within any Special Flood Hazard Area.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are small, shallow, seasonal wetlands that provide an important wildlife habitat, particularly for amphibians and invertebrates. Also known as ephemeral pools, autumnal pools, and temporary woodland ponds, they typically fill with water in the autumn or winter due to rising groundwater and rainfall. The pools remain through the spring and into summer then dry completely by the middle or end of summer each year, or every few years. Clusters of potential vernal pools indicate particularly good habitat for species that depend on vernal pools such as water scorpions, spotted turtles, wood ducks, water bugs, ribbon snakes, salamanders (several species), fairy shrimp, isopods, wood frogs, spadefoot toads, and fingernail clams.

² <https://ma-ust.windsorcloud.com/ust/facility/search/list?1>

According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Boylston has nine Certified Vernal Pools and many Potential Vernal Pools.³ Certified vernal pools are protected if they fall under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations (310 CMR 10.00), however certification only establishes that it functions as a vernal pool and does not determine that the pool is within a resource area protected by the Wetlands Protection Act. Certified vernal pools are also afforded protection under the state Water Quality Certification regulations (401 Program), the state Title 5 regulations, and the Forest Cutting Practices Act regulations.

Vegetation

Limited urban development has resulted in the types of vegetation that grow in Boylston today. Like much of New England, by the 19th century, much of the town was used for pastureland and current forestry consists of second-growth hardwood species. There are large undisturbed tracts of forestland throughout the community and several areas of significant environmental interest. Forests in Boylston are primarily central hardwoods with some transition hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple, plus red and white pine. Commonly found trees include red oak, hemlock, red maple, aspen, hickories, and gray birch. Common forest shrubs and herbs include lowbush blueberries, wintergreen, clubmosses, and witch hazel. The forest surrounding the Wachusett Reservoir includes stands of red pine, which is typical of reservoir plantings. The central hardwood forest habitat type is likely to be the most threatened because it is generally suitable for development.

Agriculture

Farmland is still prevalent in Boylston and is an important natural resource. Agricultural land attracts grassland birds such as eastern meadowlarks and bobolinks. These species can still be found in hayfields, meadows, and pastures. However, across the region, these populations are dwindling because of fields that are too small and too scattered. Fields are also used by many bird species for nesting, hunting, and feeding on seeds and insects. Other species such as voles, white-tailed deer, woodchucks, coyotes, eastern cottontail rabbits, eastern hognose snakes, and northern brown snakes also rely on agricultural areas. Further fragmentation of grasslands and croplands is of great concern.

Fisheries and Wildlife

Boylston's diverse habitats support a variety of wildlife and fish species. Nearly all the species commonly found in Boylston are permanent or occasional residents of local forests and wetlands, although there are migratory waterbirds at the reservoir. The local waterways and ponds are home to many types of fish and aquatic life found in the rivers, brooks, and ponds of the region. The Wachusett Reservoir hosts a range of fish and aquatic species, plus is ideal territory for certain birds. It attracts large numbers of migratory waterfowl including Red-throated Loons, Red-necked Grebe, scoters, and Long-tailed Ducks, which usually have a more coastal affinity. Fish species that can be found in the reservoir include Smallmouth bass, Lake trout, Largemouth bass, Atlantic salmon, Rainbow trout, Brown trout, White perch, and Yellow perch.

Forestry

Unfragmented tracts of forestland provide higher quality habitat than small, fragmented parcels of land. Fragmentation limits access to essential resources like food, water, and shelter for local wildlife. Wildlife corridors are one effective tool to help sustain wildlife populations, habitats, and overall biodiversity. These corridors can reduce vehicle-animal collisions along with other harmful impacts of habitat fragmentation. Smaller, undeveloped pieces of land and trail easements can help connect larger preserved areas. Conservation easements can be a cost-effective method of resource protection and preventing forest fragmentation. Additionally, linked trail systems not only provide environmentally friendly transportation and recreation opportunities for residents, but they also help with wildlife connectivity. Increased sidewalks, bike lanes, and paths can also reduce the amount of deadly vehicle-animal collisions, air pollution, and noise pollution from cars. Encouraging zoning and development types with minimal impact on open

³ <https://www.mass.gov/vernal-pools>

space will be an important step, as well. Synergy among neighboring communities, non-profit groups, landowners, State agencies, and regional partners will be essential to conservation and preservation.

Significant unfragmented areas in Boylston that are important sites for biodiversity include the land around Rocky Pond, East Woods, and Wrack Meadow, plus Cold Harbor Brook, French Brook, and North Brook. As these sites are located on the watershed divide, the Concord River Watershed Association has expressed concern for these areas. Threats include division by roadways; increased fragmentation by development; increased development on Rocky Pond; proximity to a golf course; and development in Wrack Meadow.

Rare Species: Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife lists ten occurrences of rare or endangered plants and animals in Boylston, including the date of the most recently recorded local observation. Table OSRNR2 shows the two rare or endangered plants observed in Boylston are adder's tongue fern (a threatened species) and broad waterleaf (an endangered species). Table OSRNR3 shows the most recent sightings of eight animal species, one of which is endangered (pied-billed grebe), two of which are threatened (bald eagle and marbled salamander), and five of which are of special concern (bridle shiner, common loon, Eastern whip-poor-will, orange sallow moth, and wood turtle).

These plants and animals are particularly vulnerable to habitat destruction, invasive species, climate change, and human disturbances such as development or logging. When planning for Boylston’s natural resources and community development, careful consideration must be given to these species.

Table OSRNR2: Endangered Species Observations in Boylston – Vegetation

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	MESA Status	Most Recent Observation
Vascular Plant	Ophioglossum pusillum	Adder's Tongue Fern	Threatened	2000
Vascular Plant	Hydrophyllum canadense	Broad Waterleaf	Endangered	1943

Source: NHESP, MassWildlife, 2022

Table OSRNR3: Endangered Species Observations in Boylston – Wildlife

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	MESA Status	Most Recent Observation
Bird	Haliaeetus leucocephalus	Bald Eagle	Threatened	2021
Fish	Notropis bifrenatus	Bridle Shiner	Special Concern	1951
Bird	Gavia immer	Common Loon	Special Concern	2018
Bird	Antrostomus vociferus	Eastern Whip-poor-will	Special Concern	2021
Amphibian	Ambystoma opacum	Marbled Salamander	Threatened	1999
Butterfly/Moth	Pyrrhia aurantiago	Orange Sallow Moth	Special Concern	2008
Bird	Podilymbus podiceps	Pied-billed Grebe	Endangered	1978
Reptile	Glyptemys insculpta	Wood Turtle	Special Concern	1983

NHESP, MassWildlife, 2022

Invasive Species

Invasive plant species are abundant in the natural environment in Boylston and throughout Massachusetts. Non-native species were introduced intentionally in some areas of the state for erosion control and food supply for wildlife. However, fruits and seeds were spread unintentionally by wildlife and human nature and slowly, natural habitats across the state are being degraded.

A major threat to local maple tree populations, including red, silver, and sugar maples, is the invasive Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB), which was first detected in Worcester in 2008. Currently, 110 square miles in Worcester County are regulated for the ALB, including the town of Boylston. Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, USDA APHIS, and the U.S. Forest Service are all working collaboratively to eradicate ALB from the state.⁴ Currently the only effective means to eliminate ALB is to remove infested trees and destroy them by chipping or burning. 35,000 trees were killed by the beetle or felled by foresters trying to contain the infestation, which transformed the landscape of neighborhoods in towns including Boylston. Tree replanting efforts should be pursued within the quarantine area if there are still significant gaps where trees used to be abundant.

Corridors

The Sudbury Valley Trustees have undertaken an ambitious project titled the Tri-Town Landscape Protection Project (TTLP), which aims to conserve one of the largest, unprotected, road-less areas in the Boston MetroWest region.⁵ The project area within the towns of Boylston, Berlin, and Northborough encompasses hundreds of acres of some of the most intact and important unprotected wildlife habitat in eastern Massachusetts. The eastern section of Boylston up to the Clinton border is included in the project area, including Wrack Meadow Woods, Wrack Meadow Brook perennial stream, and Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary. Additionally, the project area is a vital link in a forested wildlife corridor covering thousands of acres and used by deer, moose, coyote, fisher, turkey, black bear, turtles, and salamanders. One of the ultimate goals of the TTLP is to create a connected landscape of conservation land that will link into a wildlife corridor that reaches into the White Mountains National Forest.

Riparian corridors are 100-meter natural corridors along waterways providing avenues of movement for some wildlife species and fulfilling other ecological functions. These corridors filter sediment from runoff before it enters rivers and streams, control erosion by absorbing and slowing stormwater runoff, provide a storage area for flood waters, provide food and habitat for fish and other wildlife, and preserve open space and aesthetic surroundings. Habitat and species populations can be damaged if these corridors are disturbed or interrupted. Disturbances such as roads, parking lots, manicured lawns, or large commercial developments threaten the sustainability of these valuable wetland habitats. The preservation of riparian corridors should be prioritized by the community and enforced by the Conservation Commission.

Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscapes

Released in 2010, BioMap2⁶ includes over 4,000 records added to the NHESP database since BioMap's inception in 2001. It is a comprehensive mapping tool encompassing Massachusetts that identifies areas most in need of protection to ensure native biodiversity. The report and map thoroughly discuss biodiversity in Massachusetts and state that, when protected, biodiversity enhances water supply and watershed protection, as well as recreational opportunities and aesthetic benefits. The goal of the project was to produce a statewide map that could guide the protection of the state's vulnerable natural resources. Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscapes are identified in these maps and are defined as follows:

Core Habitat: Identifies key areas to ensure the long-term persistence of species of conservation concern, exemplary natural communities, and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. The specific subcomponents of *Core Habitat* include Species of Conservation Concern, Priority Natural Communities, Aquatic Core, Forest Core, Wetland Core, and Vernal Pool Core.

Critical Natural Landscape: Identifies larger landscape areas that are better able to support ecological processes, disturbances, and wide-ranging species. The specific subcomponents of *Critical Natural Landscape* include Foraging Habitat for Tern Species, Landscape Blocks, Upland Buffers of Wetland Core, Upland Buffers of Aquatic Core, and Upland Habitat to Support Coastal Adaptation.

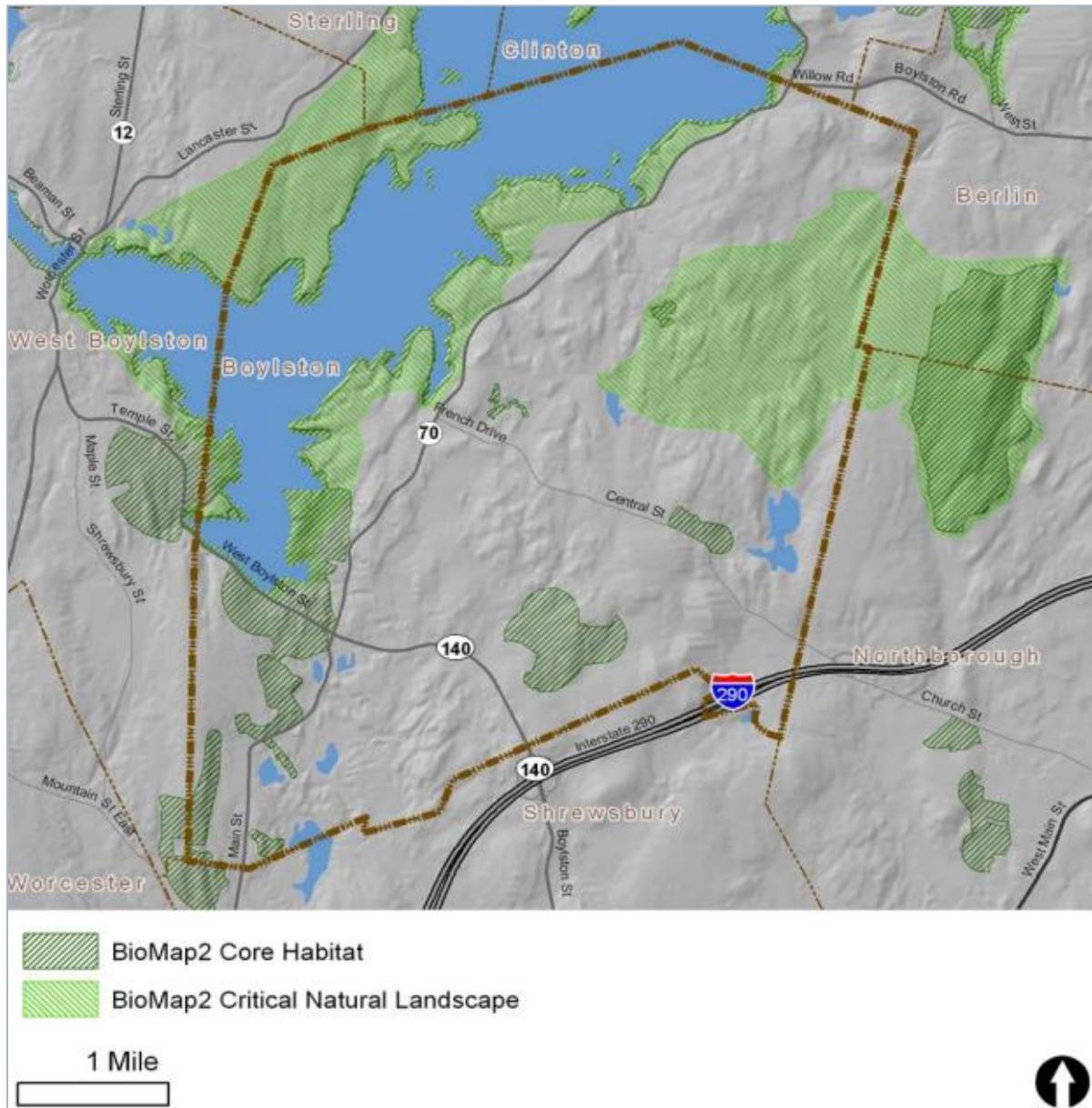
⁴ <https://www.mass.gov/guides/asian-longhorned-beetle-in-massachusetts#-history-of-alb-in-massachusetts->

⁵ <https://www.svtweb.org/land-protection/projects/tri-town-initiative>

⁶ <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/biomap2-conserving-the-biodiversity-of-massachusetts-in-a-changing-world>

Boylston has areas identified by BioMap2 as Core Habitats for conserving biodiversity. These core habitats include one wetland core, one aquatic core, and six species of conservation concern cores. Four Critical Natural Landscapes have been identified, including two landscape blocks, one wetland core buffer, and one aquatic core buffer. The areas identified as Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscapes in Boylston can be viewed in Map OSNR6. The full BioMap2 Report for Boylston can be read on the MassGIS website.⁷

Map OSNR6: BioMap2 Core Habitats and Critical Natural Landscapes in Boylston



Source: BioMap2, NHESP, 2022

⁷ http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap/pdf/town_core/Boylston.pdf

Open Space Destinations

Boylston is home to many open space destinations that offer active and passive recreation opportunities, natural beauty, and contribute to natural resource preservation.

Wachusett Reservoir

Now the second largest body of water in the state of Massachusetts, the Wachusett Reservoir was created by the construction of Clinton Dam, completed in 1908 on the South Branch of the Nashua River. The Wachusett Reservoir and the surrounding watershed, considered a scenic and unique resource for both their water value and recreational value, are managed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection (DWSP). Hiking, picnicking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and shore fishing are allowed at various points along the reservoir shoreline. There are miles of forested fire roads south of Route 110 in West Boylston and Boylston.

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill

The Worcester County Horticultural Society, the third oldest active horticultural society in the United States, operates New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill (formerly Tower Hill Botanic Garden) as its headquarters on a 171-acre site of formal gardens, woodland trails, meadows, and educational facilities in Boylston. Located at 11 French Drive, Tower Hill has been in operation since 1986 and welcomes over 150,000 visitors per year. The botanic garden features a four-season display of the finest plants for cultivation in New England. Carefully planned gardens and collections of ornamental, edible, and native plants, plus trails that enhance the natural features of this beautiful property and a robust program and event schedule make Tower Hill a top attraction in Boylston. With support from the Boylston Cultural Council, free general admission is offered to Boylston residents.



*Photo: New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill
Photo Credit: New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill*

Boylston Center Town Common

The Town Center in Boylston is a scenic resource with charming, traditional New England village characteristics including pristine churches, pedestrian-friendly streets, 18th and 19th century homes, and other historical structures. The Town Common has historically been the focal point of the town, a central place to hold celebrations and festivities. It is an open space that features scattered trees, walking paths, and a stunning gazebo.

Hillside Complex and Trails

A 300-acre town-owned property, Hillside is an important section of Boylston that hosts town offices, public safety, athletic fields and facilities, historic landmarks, and open space. A gymnasium is located inside the Town Hall. The natural areas of Hillside include forest and wildlife stands, white pine trees, ponds, brooks, and a vernal pool. The primary trails that visitors can use are the Gough House Trail, Gough House-Flagg House Link Trail, and Flagg Pond Trail. A map is available on the Town of Boylston website.



*Photo 5: Hillside Playground
Photo Credit: Boylston Parks and Recreation*



Photo: Aerial view of Hillside. Photo credit: CMRPC

Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary

Located in the northeast corner of the town on Linden Street is Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary. This is a 45-acre wildlife sanctuary of natural land that features an award-winning, energy-efficient Trailhead House comprised of sustainable building materials, composting toilets, and a rooftop garden. Summer Star is open to the public, free of charge, and encourages visitors to enjoy the beauty of nature while being respectful to all wildlife. A variety of programs and exhibits are offered at Summer Star, such as free outdoor tours, talks, and wildlife releases, plus visitors can learn about environmental sustainability at the Trailhead House. There are over 1.75 miles of marked trails on the property, but to protect the natural wildlife visitors are prohibited from the following: hunting or trapping, motorized vehicles, dog walking, skiing, bicycling, fires, waste disposal, and cutting or removing plants.

East Woods

The East Woods conservation property is a 237-acre parcel owned by the Town of Boylston. The property is open to the public for passive recreation. An out-and-back trail totaling over three miles runs through the property. Mount Monadnock and the New Hampshire hills can be seen from parts of the East Woods. It is crucial to preserve large, contiguous areas like East Woods as fragmentation due to development can be detrimental to biodiversity.

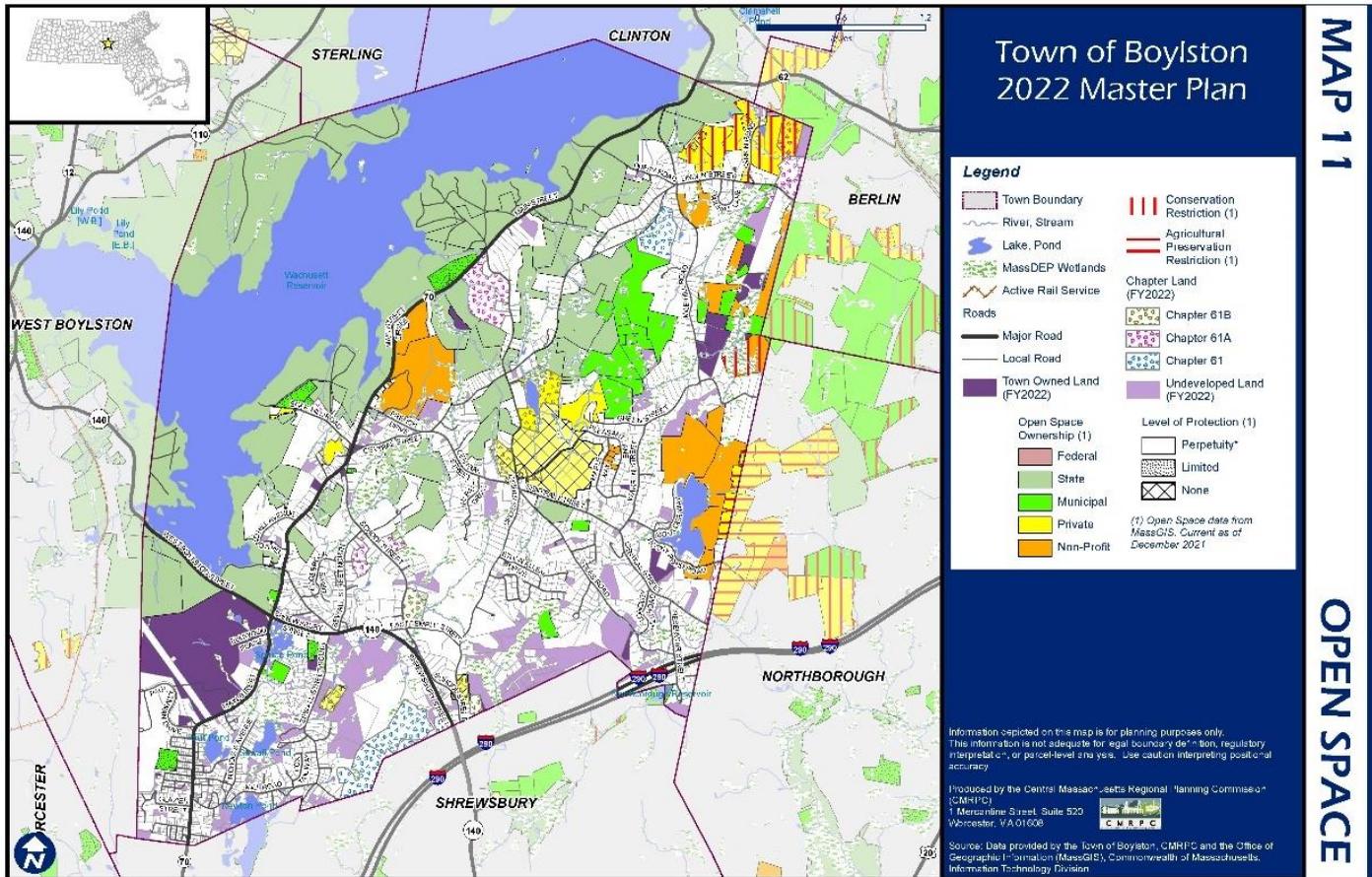
Wrack Meadow Conservation Area

Located in the northeast corner of Boylston near Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary, the Wrack Meadow conservation property is owned by the Sudbury Valley Trustees. The 51-acre open space parcel has 0.3 miles of public trails. Wrack Meadow is primarily upland and entirely wooded, with a combination of red and white oak, and hickories. The intact and extensively forested woodland acts as a buffer to nearby areas that support rare or endangered species.

Elmer's Seat

Elmer's Seat is a seven-acre parcel of open space located between Pleasant Lane and Maple Way. The area includes wetlands, native plants, a hilltop scenic vista of Wachusett Mountain, ledge outcrops, and a trail network. It is owned and managed by Greater Worcester Land Trust, which was gifted the property.

Map OSRNR7: Open Space



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Recreation Areas, Facilities, and Programming

The Boylston Parks and Recreation Department offers athletic and recreational programs for all ages and abilities. The town’s recreational services and facilities are an integral part of the community, enhancing the quality of life for participants in Town-sponsored activities. Parks and Recreation offers adult classes, sports, classes, activities, and special events. Examples of recent programs include ladies’ self-defense, pickleball, and CPR certification. The Town’s athletic facilities are managed by this department, requiring applications to reserve times of use at Manor Park, Hillside Gym and Fields, Center Court, Lions Youth Football Field, and the Elementary School Field.

Many recreational, social, and cultural programs are offered through the Council on Aging for community members over the age of 60. Fitness classes are sponsored regularly, such as Tai Chi, yoga, Zumba, and strength workouts. An art program is hosted weekly for participants to learn new skills such as watercolor painting. Educational programs related to health and wellness are also offered by the COA and held at the Boylston Public Library.

Table OSRNR4 details recreation facilities and locations in Boylston, presenting a summary of the types and geographic distribution of recreational opportunities in town. Some of the properties listed in this table are used for passive as well as active recreation purposes. Much of the open space in Boylston is available for passive recreation opportunities such as hiking, walking, wildlife observation, and similar activities. Additional areas for passive recreation include Fawcett Memorial Forest, Falby Memorial Forest, Town Common, Hillside, Wachusett Reservoir, Wrack Meadow, Old Boylston Cemetery, Pine Grove Cemetery, Tougas Farm, East Woods, Tower Hill, the Davidian Brothers Farm, as well as various other public ways.

Table OSRNR4. Boylston Recreation Facilities

Site Name	Owner	Location	Facilities
Boylston Elementary School Field & Playground	Town of Boylston	Sewall Street	Playground; softball field
Fields at Tahanto Regional Middle/High School	Town of Boylston	Main Street	Three multi-sport athletic fields; baseball field; softball field; track and field facilities
Center Court and Playground	Town of Boylston	School Street	Basketball/pickleball court; swings; seasonal ice skating rink
Town Hall Gymnasium	Town of Boylston	Main Street	Basketball court
Hillside Playground/Complex	Town of Boylston	Main Street	Playground; soccer field; nature trails; picnic pavilion
Morningdale Manor Playing Fields and Playground	Town of Boylston	Orient and Greenwood Streets	Three baseball fields; playground equipment; basketball court (in disrepair); tennis courts (in disrepair)
Lions Youth Football Field	Town of Boylston	Elmwood Place (Routes 70/140 intersection)	Football field
Scar Hill Road Ball Field	Town of Boylston	Scar Hill Road	Soccer field
Cyprian Keyes Golf Course	Cyprian Keyes Golf Club (public)	E Temple Street	9-hole par three golf course; 18-hole championship golf course
The Haven Golf Course	The Haven Country Club (private)	Cross Street	18-hole championship golf course

Source: Town of Boylston, 2022

Inventory of Open Space

State Owned Land

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns a considerable amount of land within Boylston’s boundaries—approximately 2,346 acres. This is primarily the Wachusett Reservoir and watershed. The Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Division of Water Supply Protection manages this land which is protected in perpetuity and permits limited public access and activities.

Town Owned Land

The Town of Boylston owns just under 410 acres of land that is of conservation and recreation interest. Town owned open space is under various management agencies and serves a range of purposes including water supply, conservation, recreation, cemetery, and athletic fields. The parcels owned by the Town vary in level of protection and public access.

Table OSRNR5: Parcels of Conservation and Recreation Interest Under Public Ownership

Property	Acres
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	
Wachusett Reservoir	2,346.38
Town of Boylston	
Miscellaneous	25.01
Manor Playground	12.7
Morningdale Water District	8.05
Town Pickleball & Basketball Courts and Playground	1.27
East Woods	236.97
Northborough Reservoir	2.96
Tahanto Regional High School Athletic Fields	25.89
Mile Hill Conservation Area	43.19
Wrack Meadow Conservation Area	19.65
Boylston Water Supply Land	3.02
Pine Grove Cemetery	19.9
Boylston Elementary School Playground	11.04

Source: MassGIS, 2022

Land Trusts

Land trusts own a total of 377 acres of open space in Boylston. New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) owns 199 acres of open space in Boylston, Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) owns over 152 acres, and Greater Worcester Land Trust (GWLT) owns 25 acres. The most recent land acquisition in Boylston by a land trust was the purchase of 18 acres on the former Camp Harrington property from Pine Street Realty LLC for \$150,000 by GWLT in 2021. GWLT is collaborating with the Town on a long-term plan for the property to build a recreation area.

Table 6: Open Space Under Land Trust Ownership

Property	Acres
Greater Worcester Land Trust	
Elmer's Seat	7.18
Camp Harrington	18.00
Sudbury Valley Trustees	
Mile Hill Woods	30.14
Mile Hill Conservation Area	33.62
Wrack Meadow Conservation Area	88.54
New England Forestry Foundation	
Falby Forest	133.22
Minacapelli Forest	14.61
Fawcett Memorial Forest	6.07
Sydow Forest	45.46

Source: MassGIS, 2022

Conservation Restrictions

A conservation restriction (CR) is a legal document, which extinguishes development rights and ensures a particular property will remain as open space. It is a permanent deed restriction, recorded with the Registry of Deeds, and binding on all future owners of a parcel. It identifies the important ecological features of the property and the public benefit which results from preserving the natural condition of the land. Conservation restrictions may be granted by public or private landowners to qualified organizations. The property owner retains ownership of the land and may sell or bequeath the preserved land with all restrictions in place. Any title search of a property will reveal the existence of a CR and all future owners will be bound by it.

A landowner can determine which part(s) of their property would be restricted in the future by the easement. Landowners can withhold some land from the easement while protecting the remainder of the property. Tax benefits can also be derived from a CR, including reduction of federal income taxes (if the CR is donated), reduction of estate or inheritance taxes, and possible deduction in real estate taxes.

Currently, there are four parcels in Boylston that contain preservation restrictions, totaling 217 acres of permanently protected land.

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program is a voluntary program that offers a non-development alternative to farmland owners for their agricultural lands who are faced with a decision regarding the future use and disposition of their farms. The primary objective of the APR program is to protect productive farmland with the deed restrictions and revitalize the local agricultural industry by making land more affordable to farmers and their operations more financially secure. The program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the “fair market value” and the “agricultural value” of their farms in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which prevents any use of the property that will negatively impact its future agricultural viability. Municipalities that have passed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) can use funds to purchase Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, document agricultural resources, repair barns, and acquire farmland.

There are currently two APRs in place in Boylston, totaling 45 acres of protected agricultural land.

Private Property Conservation Programs

Various levels of protection can be offered to private open lands. The Chapter 61 Tax Program gives preferential tax treatment to landowners who maintain their property as open space for timber production, agriculture, or recreation. This program acknowledges that rising property values and taxes can make owning land expensive, therefore offers an opportunity to reduce property taxes in exchange for providing significant public benefits such as clean water, wildlife habitat, rural character, wood products, food, and outdoor recreation.⁸

There are three different Chapter 61 programs, each of which aims to keep land undeveloped:

- **Chapter 61 – Forestry:** This applies to land growing forest products, including wood, timber, Christmas trees, and other products produced by forest vegetation.
- **Chapter 61A – Agriculture:** This is for land growing agricultural or horticultural products, including fruits, vegetables, ornamental shrubs, timber, animals, and maple syrup.
- **Chapter 61B – Open Space and Recreation:** This is for land in open space and/or recreation. It does not require land to be managed or have a 10-year forest management plan, therefore is best suited for landowners who take a passive approach to their land.

⁸ <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/25/chapter-61-programs.pdf>

There are several temporarily protected land parcels in Boylston that are in either the Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B preservation programs. Landowners have the option to withdraw from the program for a change to residential, industrial, or commercial use, but will need to pay a withdrawal penalty tax if changing use. When land is removed from these programs, the Town has 120 days to exercise its right of first refusal to purchase the property.

Boylston is one of 29 Massachusetts communities that are compensated by the DCR Watershed Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program for the protection of state-owned land that is used for water supply purposes. The DCR Watershed Management program also relies on other conservation lands that are on private property. A [Watershed Protection Restriction \(WPR\)](#) is a legal agreement between the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and a private landowner where the landowner sells or donates the development rights of their property to DCR for water supply protection purposes while keeping ownership of their land. If the landowner sells their property, the WPR remains in effect permanently and carries forward. There are six WPR's in Boylston, totaling 143 acres of protected watershed land.

Table OSRNR7: Open Space in Boylston Under Private Ownership

Property	Acres
Conservation Restrictions	
Coldwell CR	9.4
Bernfeld CR	53.92
Wrack Meadow Conservation Area	42.21
Golas CR	111
Agricultural Preservation Restrictions	
Davidian Kerop APR	9.91
Tougas Family Farm APR	35
Watershed Protection Restriction	
Kim WPR	31.79
Mount Pleasant WPR	55.12
White WPR	38.02
Hamilton WPR	2.26
Woodbury WPR	2.67
Prince WPR	12.72
Other	
Tower Hill Botanic Garden	140.11
The Haven Country Club	203.14
Boylston Sportsmen's Club	11.76
Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary	45.0
Worcester Pistol and Rifle Club	12.75

Issues and Opportunities

Environmental Challenges

Erosion, Sedimentation, and Forestry

Erosion in Boylston has not been identified as a notable issue. It can lead to increased pollution and sedimentation in water bodies, causing a decline in species populations and posing a threat to human health. The Wachusett Reservoir is an important regional resource and if significant erosion were to occur along the shoreline, it could potentially be very hazardous to the environment. For this reason, all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) are banned, and bicycles are only allowed on designated routes at the Wachusett Reservoir. Deforestation, either due to natural hazards or clear-cutting, can also lead to soil erosion. The Conservation Commission is responsible for addressing erosion control issues as they arise, and the local Stormwater Control Bylaw is in place to control the adverse effects of erosion and sedimentation associated

with development (among other purposes). Chronic sedimentation or deforestation issues are not currently considered significant problems in Boylston but should be monitored.

Non-Point Source Pollution and Stormwater Management

Non-point source (NPS) pollution is runoff that has been altered and contaminated by outside sources such as salt and sand from roadways, failing septic systems, underground storage tanks, landfills, gas stations, agricultural runoff, fertilizer from lawns, and erosion. These pollutants may enter water bodies from runoff caused by snowfall and rainfall thereby harming water quality. Additionally, Route 12 bisects the Wachusett Reservoir and Route 140 is located along the southern edge of the reservoir, creating a vulnerability due to the potential fuel spill in the event of an accident. The challenge is to reduce the negative impact of pollutants to a minimum or eliminate their impact completely. Part of that process is to have an appropriate monitoring and management system in place to identify when pollution levels are of concern and identify what measures should be taken to remediate the problem.

The Town remains in compliance with the federal and state stormwater requirements. The Town filed its Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP) and submits to EPA and MassDEP each year its Annual Report of the Massachusetts Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit. The Boylston Town Administrator oversees the Stormwater Management Program and compliance with the Small MS4 General Permit, along with the SWMP Team consisting of two Conservation Commission members, the Highway Department Superintendent, and the Board of Health Agent.

The Town of Boylston has a Stormwater Control Bylaw in place to establish minimum requirements and procedures to control the adverse effects of increased post-development stormwater runoff, non-point pollution associated with new development and redevelopment, and erosion and sedimentation associated with construction. Those who meet the applicability of the bylaw must obtain a Stormwater Control Permit before beginning construction.

Low Impact Development (LID) refers to systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration, or use of stormwater in order to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat. LID is an approach to land development (or re-development) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features, minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treats stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. LID techniques capture water on site, filter it through vegetation, and let it soak into the ground. Examples of LID techniques include permeable paving, rain gardens, green rooftop systems, vegetated buffers, rain barrels and cisterns, and site design that minimizes disturbance. It will be important for the Town to identify how much NPS is harming its natural resources and formulate a plan for what to implement as a protection measure.

Invasive Species

Many invasive species are already so prominent in Northeast forests that eradication would be nearly impossible. However, managing and limiting the spread of existing invasive species, plus early detection of new invasive species is a more realistic focus. Invasive species can threaten native species populations and their habitats, scenic resources, and water resources. As previously described, the ALB invasion resulted in the removal of thousands of trees in Boylston, completely changing the landscape of some parts of the town. When planting new trees, residents should understand that diversity of trees and plants, as opposed to monoculture, can help prevent the spread of pests. Residents can also help stop the spread of future invasive species such as the ALB by reporting detections to the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

Land Acquisition

There are opportunities for the Town of Boylston to connect additional open space parcels with DCR-owned land around the Wachusett Reservoir. Creation of a connected trail network would provide residents with additional access to open space, even if the acquisition of an entire parcel is not possible. Open space acquisition often happens as the result of a piecemeal, ad hoc decision-making process, but the Town can proactively seek preservation opportunities for the most valued parcels. For this to occur, a priority list of specific parcels of land that the town is interested in protecting and conserving needs to be made. However, there is currently no internal mechanism in place to guide the decision-making process. There are no specific criteria defined to assist the Town in determining whether a parcel should be purchased. The Town may at times be presented with the opportunity to exercise its right of first refusal and offer to purchase land when a property that is temporarily protected under the Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B program is removed from the program by the landowners.

The most significant factors to consider in Boylston's landscape include the protection of regional or local drinking water sources, natural resources and scenic views, creation of regional and local networks or corridors of open spaces and trails (and identifying the barriers to do so), and maintaining the rural character of the Town. These factors have been repeatedly stressed in the goals and objectives and during public participation forums held as part of the OSRP processes. Given the nature of the three watersheds and potential non-point pollution sources, open space acquisitions affecting water quality and within local watersheds should be considered for a high level of priority. An additional high priority should be the creation or extension of regional open space and trail networks that connect with those in other watershed towns. Other specific criteria used to evaluate sites for purchase may include agricultural features, location of parcel in relation to other protected land, proximity to historic and cultural resources, cost of the parcel, or potential environmental problems with the site.



Photo 7: Wachusett Reservoir

Photo Credit: CMRPC

Wildlife corridors are one effective tool to help sustain wildlife populations, habitats, and overall biodiversity. These corridors can reduce vehicle-animal collisions along with other harmful impacts of habitat fragmentation. Smaller, undeveloped pieces of land and trail easements can help connect larger preserved areas. Conservation easements can be a cost-effective method of resource protection and preventing forest fragmentation. Additionally, linked trail systems not only provide environmentally friendly transportation and recreation opportunities for residents, but they also help with wildlife connectivity. Increased sidewalks, bike lanes, and paths can also reduce the amount of deadly vehicle-animal collisions, air pollution, and noise pollution from cars. Encouraging zoning and development types with minimal impact on open space will be an important step, as well.

Camp Harrington Property

Camp Harrington was a highly valued recreational and swimming spot for Boylston residents for decades. The YMCA youth summer camp program operated on the property for years until the property was purchased by Pine Street Realty LLC and partially developed for housing, leaving a portion remaining for recreation. The OSRP survey asked residents if they would be in favor of the Town acquiring the former YMCA Camp Harrington property for open space or recreation purposes and 82% of respondents selected that they would approve of this action. Citing the desire to keep the remaining land undeveloped for future recreation in Boylston, the Town collaborated with Greater Worcester Land Trust (GWLT) to acquire the property. To give the Town additional time to apply for state funding for its acquisition and receive approval at Town Meeting, GWLT purchased the 18-acre property with the intention of temporarily maintaining the site. The Town applied for and received a grant of \$100,000 from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental

Affairs in 2021 to acquire the former YMCA Camp Harrington. The purchase was approved by Town Meeting voters and the Town closed on the purchase on May 25, 2022.

Recreation and Community Challenges

Accessibility and Equity

Residents of all age groups and abilities deserve safe, accessible places to participate in recreational activities. The public outreach process helped to identify gaps in recreation and open space provision, plus which populations are in need of greater investment from the town.

A self-assessment of the Town's compliance with ADA guidelines for recreational facilities as part of the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan demonstrated that the Town falls short in many categories. The current location of the Parks and Recreation Commission office is difficult for patrons to find and is not fully accessible. The women's restroom at Hillside Gym can only be accessed by stairs. Hillside Field has handicapped parking spaces. However, there is no handicapped-accessible trail from the parking lot to the field and playground. Center Court and Playground also lack designated accessible parking spaces, line striping, or compliant signage, albeit there are plans in place for improvements to be made to this outdoor facility. Amenities such as ramps, elevators, accessible toilets, or access routes are not common in Town-owned properties. While some facilities have the occasional accessible swing or picnic table, overall, the Town recreational facilities need many updates to accommodate residents and visitors of all abilities.



Photo 8: Gymnasium at Town Hall

Photo Credit: CMRPC

Recreational activities, whether passive or active, should regularly be assessed regarding the extent to which they are available for residents of all ages and abilities. While playgrounds may be highly popular for families with young children, those without children living at home might prefer the option of joining a softball or pickleball league. Teenagers and young adults are an important group to ensure adequate recreational opportunities are offered, as those who participate in recreational activities may experience reduced obesity, reduced depression and stress, increased stewardship, and volunteerism, as well as decreased risk of engaging in risky behaviors such as smoking and drug use.

Access to physical activity is also particularly important to another vulnerable group – seniors. While the town has two golf courses, trails and open space, and an active Council on Aging, there are several improvements that the town could undertake to provide for its older residents. A dedicated senior center is highly needed as a resource for seniors, with expanded activities to be offered there such as Tai chi, yoga, Zumba, ballroom dancing, or other ways to socialize and exercise. Some of the town's trails could also be made wheelchair accessible to make them usable for all senior residents and those with disabilities. Town-sponsored activities that promote social interaction such as community gardens, special events, community service projects, book clubs, or community theater productions could also highly benefit this population.

Amenities, Maintenance, and Funding

It can be a challenge for communities to adequately maintain existing open space and recreation resources and ensure that they can be safely accessed by the public. Public outreach during the Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan processes has resulted in a call for more bike lanes, sidewalks, and trails by residents. Improving road safety for cyclists continues to be a challenge for a community like Boylston, which is defined by winding roads designed to prioritize motorized vehicles. According to public outreach, many residents believe that the quantity of playing fields and courts is adequate. However, these existing facilities require some much-needed maintenance and updates. Several facilities are no longer safe or usable for recreation. Comments have been received about the status of the Town's basketball and tennis courts along with suggestions that lights be installed at Hillside fields to accommodate more

practice times. Improvements, including accessibility updates, have been called for at the Hillside Gym, Hillside snack shack, Hillside Playground, Manor Playground, Town Common, and Center Court and Playground.

The three playgrounds in town face accessibility issues that may be leading to their underutilization. Manor Playground, Hillside Playground, and Center Playground lack stroller accessibility. Comments have suggested that the hidden location of Manor playground makes it less desirable to visit. Hillside playground also lacks railings on its stairs and has no tree shade, which leads to the heating of its surface materials, making it unusable in the summer months. The Center Playground's play area for younger children could also be moved or fenced in due to its proximity to the road.

The trail systems in town should be analyzed to identify key linkage points that could be acquired by trail easements, fee acquisition, or other land protection tools. While the Mass Central Rail Trail does not run directly through Boylston, connecting the trail system to the MCRT could have many recreational and economic benefits for the town. Having accessible trails that are on level terrain, paved, or use other wheelchair-friendly materials such as packed crushed stone are additionally important for inclusivity. While the town has plentiful trails and conservation lands, improvements such as trail markers and maps could enhance the experience of those visiting these properties. Trails need regular maintenance such as clearing fallen trees and overgrowth, removing dangerous roots and loose rocks, or cleaning up litter. The Town can work cohesively with entities like the DCR and Sudbury Valley Trustees to improve open space amenities.

Boylston is stretched thin in terms of funding and staffing that can be dedicated to environmental conservation efforts, limiting its scope of local services. However, there are several ways that the Town can acquire funding and technical assistance for open space and recreation initiatives. With a State-approved OSRP in place until 2027, the Town remains eligible to apply for grants from the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) and Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) programs. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) has not been passed in Boylston, which is a tool that could help the community preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities through the creation of a local Community Preservation Fund.

Management Challenges

Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Implementation

The guiding document of the Town's open space and recreation resource management is the 2020 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). A seven-year action plan at the end of the OSRP details the plan's goals and objectives, which summarize Boylston's long-range aspirations for the protection of natural resources and the management of recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. It is important to ensure that elements of this plan will be implemented to the greatest extent possible. Many of the OSRP goals and objectives are incorporated into this Master Plan. An entity must be designated to oversee the implementation of the recommendations. While the individual items listed in the action plan are the responsibility of a combination of boards, committees, and other appropriate stakeholders, it will be essential for a designated committee to follow up and ensure action items are carried out.

Staff and Volunteer Capacity

The lack of staffing, such as a full-time Conservation Agent, results in the need to build a strong volunteer base. Volunteer opportunities such as positions on committees, educational outreach, and clean-up days are important for the Town to make available to achieve its desired outcomes related to open space and recreation. Existing volunteer groups such as the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts can be recruited to help with service projects related to the maintenance, upgrade, and clean-up of recreation facilities.

Development Pressures

Residential, commercial, and industrial development in Boylston has historically been rather limited, particularly due to the State's control over one-third of the town and the two-thirds of the town that are subject to the Watershed Protection Act. While residents enjoy their small town, pressures to promote economic vitality through commercial and residential development persist. Some residents favor zoning that provides for increases in density in existing developed

areas in exchange for open space in less developed or environmentally sensitive areas. Residents have also expressed support for the creation of a Wetlands Bylaw with a 50 ft. buffer. It is of the utmost importance to preserve large, contiguous areas of open space such as East Woods and Wrack Meadow. Striking a balance between future land protection and development is a high priority for the town.

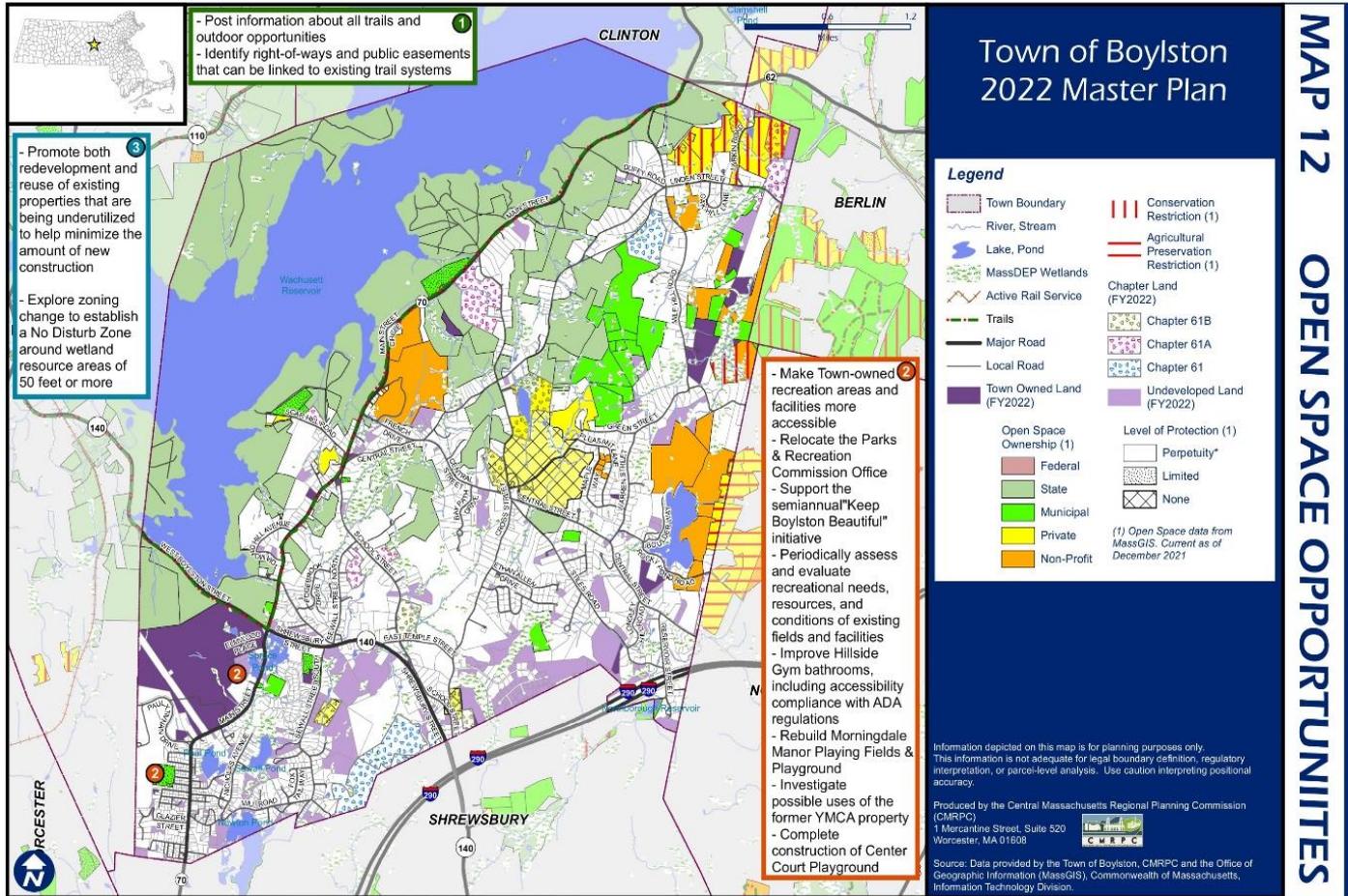
Role of Land Trusts, Forestry Managers, and Preservation Organizations

There are many other stakeholders that are committed to the principles of land conservation, natural resource preservation, and provision of recreational opportunities for all. Land trusts are non-profit organizations that are directly involved in land transactions and management, which can take many forms. The roles of land trusts can include purchasing or accepting donations of land or of conservation easements, managing land owned by others, advising landowners on how to preserve their land, negotiating conservation transactions, working cooperatively with government agencies by acquiring or managing land, researching open space needs and priorities, or assisting in the development of open space and recreation plans. They may also work with other non-profit organizations and sometimes with developers. Land trusts are advantageous since they operate as private organizations, therefore can act more swiftly than government agencies on negotiations with landowners.

A Tree Warden holds the responsibility of caring for all shade trees on public lands in a town or city, including parks, public streets, schools, and Town-owned forests. Tree Wardens must evaluate and provide preventative tree maintenance programs, hazardous tree removal, utility arboricultural operations, and oversee the work of outside contractors by timely inspections. Duties of a Tree Warden can include pruning trees, removing dead or dying trees, planting new trees, conducting inventories and assessments, reviewing site plans, inspecting contracted tree work, and more.

Preservation organizations are incredible assets to communities like Boylston. Nature centers, wildlife sanctuaries, historical societies, trail groups, and food co-ops are some examples of community-driven organizations that enhance livability for people and wildlife in an area. There are often opportunities for these groups to work cooperatively with the public sector on a common goal, as well as encouraging multiple towns to unite on a certain project. In Boylston, the Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary is an example of a private preservation organization that protects and cares for land in town, hosts events and programs on nature and wildlife, and offers a space for locals to reflect and enjoy the beauty of the outdoors.

Map 8: Open Space Opportunities



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Current and Future Demand

Throughout the public outreach processes of both the Master Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan, there emerged clear themes in the demands from residents. Residents are generally satisfied with Boylston’s open space and recreational resources and would like to see investments made in improving the existing athletic fields, parks, and recreation opportunities on conservation land. Suggestions from the public included installing lights at Hillside, renovating the basketball and tennis courts at Morningdale Manor Park, expanding playgrounds to accommodate very young children, improving the condition of the Hillside gymnasium, and enhancing general trail maintenance. Enhancing accessibility to recreational areas, such as handicapped accessible parking or other ADA-compliant improvements to facilities, has been called for and an ADA Access Self-Evaluation Report as part of the OSRP demonstrated the town is lacking in many of these categories. Additionally, residents expressed a desire for expanding connections for walking and biking, such as sidewalks, trail connections, off-road paths, or on-road bike lanes. Community members suggested a trail connecting Boylston to Berlin for active recreation, more sidewalks to Boylston Elementary School, sidewalks on Sewall Street to connect neighborhoods and Route 140, bicycle lanes on roads, and a marked hiking trail around the Wachusett Reservoir.

Tools and Resources

There are many resources available to municipalities to assist with achieving the goals of this Master Plan. Funding, planning, regulatory, and technical assistance resources exist to aid in Boylston’s preservation, conservation, and recreational provision objectives. The following resources should be considered by municipal officials and stakeholders:

Community Preservation Act

Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a reliable funding source that could enhance conservation and recreation initiatives in Boylston. CPA allows communities to establish a local Community Preservation Fund dedicated to open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation. Under CPA, 32,566 acres of open space have been preserved and over 3,000 outdoor recreation projects have been initiated in Massachusetts. Examples of CPA-funded projects include removing invasive plants and planting native species to restore habitats in open space parcels; purchasing land for open space preservation; rehabilitation and creating playing fields; building pickleball-specific courts; construction of accessible trails; purchasing conservation restrictions for agricultural land; and much more. A more comprehensive summary of CPA can be found in the Cultural and Historic Resources chapter.

Scenic Roads Bylaw

A Scenic Road Bylaw is a tool that communities can use to preserve the scenic, historic, and aesthetic characteristics of the public right-of-way. Under this bylaw, certain roads are designated as scenic roads and subsequently, any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work done on the road cannot include the cutting or removal of trees or destruction of stone walls without consent from the Planning Board. Enforcement of this bylaw would help Boylston maintain its small-town character and prevent unnecessary destruction of trees or stone walls in certain areas of town.

Local Wetlands Bylaw

Municipalities have the option to impose stronger protective measures over activities in or near wetland resource areas. The Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act (M.G.L. Ch. 131 §40) is limited to protecting only eight wetland values and covers vegetated wetlands, flood-prone areas, and other listed resources if they border bodies of water. A local wetlands bylaw can expand the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission, add wetland values warranting local protection, tighten permit and hearing procedures, establish filing and consultant fees, confer authority on the Commission to adopt its own regulations, and clarify the power to disapprove work in or affecting wetlands and floodplains. Boylston would be able to establish buffer zones or no alteration zones within an established distance of resource areas to mitigate disturbances from development.

State Land and Recreation Funding Programs

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Conservation and Recreation offer various grants and loans for land and recreational projects. Boylston can consider applying for certain programs or partnering with local organizations on their applications.

- **Drinking Water Supply Protection Program:** The DWSP grant program provides financial assistance to public water systems and municipal water departments for the purchase of land or interests in land for the following purposes: 1) protection of existing DEP-approved public drinking water supplies; 2) protection of planned future public drinking water supplies; or 3) groundwater recharge. It is a reimbursement program.
- **Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Program:** The LAND Grant Program helps cities and towns acquire land for conservation and passive recreation purposes. The grants reimburse cities and towns for the acquisition of land in fee or for a conservation restriction.
- **Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program:** The PARC Program was established to assist cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. These grants can be used by municipalities to acquire parkland, build a new park, or renovate an existing park.
- **Conservation Partnership Grant Program:** The Conservation Partnership Grant Program can help not-for-profit groups (IRS 501(c)(3) organizations) acquire interests in land for conservation or recreation purposes. Potential projects fall into one of two categories: 1) Acquisition of the fee interest in land or a conservation restriction or 2) Due diligence for land or a conservation restriction that was donated to you.
- **Landscape Partnership Grant Program:** This program seeks to protect large blocks of conservation land. Local, state, and federal government agencies and non-profit groups can use this grant to work together to protect

- at least 500 acres of land. Towns with fewer than 6,000 residents can also receive a grant to build a park or playground.
- [Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program](#): The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development, and renovation of parks, trails, and conservation areas.
- [MassTrails Grants](#): MassTrails provides matching grants to communities, public entities, and non-profit organizations to plan, design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails, trail systems, and trails experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors. Applications are accepted annually for a variety of well-planned trail projects benefiting communities across the state.

Private Grant Programs

- [The Conservation Fund](#): The Conservation Fund is a national non-profit organization that funds efforts related to environmental preservation and economic development. There are 11 programs operated under this organization, including a Conservation Loans program that funds projects with a permanent conservation outcome.

Climate Change and Resiliency Planning

As global temperatures rise, there will be increasingly severe impacts at the local level. Communities like Boylston can anticipate more extreme temperatures, increased rainfall and flooding in winter and spring, decreased rain in summer and fall, drought, and destructive storms. The changing climate will have impacts on public health, infrastructure and utilities, agriculture, forests, and water bodies. There are many available tools that can help Boylston prepare for an uncertain future.

The [Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness \(MVP\) grant program](#) provides support for cities and towns in Massachusetts to begin the process of planning for climate change resiliency and implementing priority projects.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency's [Hazard Mitigation Assistance Grant Program](#) provides funds to assist state agencies, local governments, federally recognized tribes, and certain non-profit organizations to implement long-term, all-hazards related mitigation measures after a major disaster declaration.

FEMA's [Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities \(BRIC\)](#) supports states, local communities, tribes, and territories undertaking hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks they face from disasters and natural hazards, through a nationally competitive program that enables large infrastructure projects.

The [Agricultural Climate Resiliency & Efficiencies \(ACRE\) program](#) is a competitive, reimbursement grant program that funds materials and labor for the implementation of practices that address the agricultural sector's vulnerability to climate change, improves economic resiliency, and advances the general goals identified in the Massachusetts Local Action Food Plan.

Additionally, land use regulations such as floodplain and wetlands restrictions, tree protection, water conservation, or design standards and zoning are powerful tools that communities utilize to address the growing impacts of rainstorms, sea level rise, heat, and drought. There are many additional programs at the national, state, and regional levels that Boylston can pursue.

Building Local Capacity

Limited staffing and funding from the town results in the need for creative management strategies for initiatives relating to natural resources, open space, and recreation. Boylston should continue to foster partnerships with local organizations that prioritize land conservation and recreation opportunities. Land trusts such as Greater Worcester Land Trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees, and New England Forestry Foundation are very resourceful, and strengthening these relationships will help the town achieve the goals of this Master Plan. Just within Boylston, there are several groups committed to preserving land in town and educating the public, such as Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary and Tower Hill Botanic Gardens. Building the volunteer base will also be essential for the town to successfully achieve its

strategies. Outreach to private landowners in town to inform them of opportunities to preserve their properties as open space or farms is another priority, especially as development pressures increase. Synergy among neighboring communities, non-profit groups, landowners, State agencies, and regional partners will be essential to conservation and preservation.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

Open Space and Recreation

1. Goal: Be proactive about continuing to enhance and preserve Boylston's town character and feel as a small New England town.
 - a. Objective: Promote and build awareness of Boylston's open space and small-town charm as a way of inspiring community pride.
 - i. Action Item: Post information about all trails and outdoor opportunities on the Town website.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore business and economic development opportunities related to Boylston's natural resources.
 - iii. Action Item: Partner with Tower Hill Botanical Garden and Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary on strategies to protect and preserve open space.
 - b. Objective: Promote coordination among the various Town boards, committees, and commissions responsible for open space and recreational facilities.
 - i. Action Item: Create a permanent standing Open Space Advisory Committee.
 - ii. Action Item: Track progress on the goals of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and report annually to Town boards and committees.
 - iii. Action Item: Ensure all municipal staff commissions, committees, and boards understand their role in the implementation of the goals in this Master Plan and the OSRP.
 - c. Objective: Actively involve local businesses, organizations, and schools in beautifying Boylston through cleanup days and streetscape improvements.
 - i. Action Item: Support the semi-annual "Keep Boylston Beautiful" initiative
2. Goal: Preserve and protect Boylston's open spaces, including water bodies, woodlands, farms, and parks.
 - a. Objective: Develop criteria for open space acquisition.
 - i. Action Item: Identify and create a priority list for land acquisition and preservation consisting of properties most important to protect for their wildlife and habitat resources.
 - b. Objective: Protect and provide access to priority parcels through the purchase of land, acceptance of donated land, or implementation of conservation restrictions.
 - i. Action Item: Inform landowners about land preservation and conservation opportunities (I.e. Conservation Restriction Review Program).
 - ii. Action Item: Acquire and conserve land at the former Camp Harrington.
 - c. Objective: Permanently protect appropriate and desired Town-owned property from future development.
 - i. Action Item: Work to protect open space at Hillside.
 - ii. Action Item: Assess the need for and utility of a municipal land trust.
 - iii. Action Item: Identify town-owned property that could be preserved in service income-generating active or passive recreation (e.g., a small camp or community hall/arts center/park suitable for rentals).
 - d. Objective: Further educate property owners of the Chapter 61 Program to conserve lands and encourage them to participate.
 - i. Action Item: Post educational materials about the Chapter 61 Program on the Town website and promote these materials on social media platforms.
 - e. Objective: Create a funding strategy for open space acquisition and management.

- i. Action Item: Research and apply for available State and Federal funding tools as a way to acquire new open space.
 - ii. Action Item: Update and revise the Open Space and Recreation Plan to reflect the town's changing needs and remain qualified for State program funding for the acquisition and protection of open space and recreational facilities.
 - f. Objective: Continue to collaborate with other communities from a regional perspective on opportunities for increased open space connection and wildlife preservation.
 - i. Action Item: Work with regional land trusts, neighboring towns, and other agencies to prioritize remaining desirable properties for watershed protection, habitat preservation, and trail networks.
 - 3. Goal: Maintain, add, and enhance recreational facilities and programs as needed.
 - a. Objective: Determine the needs for additional recreational facilities.
 - i. Action Item: Create an organizational chart and communication plan to clarify ownership of recreational lands, costs of use, and responsibility for maintenance.
 - ii. Action Item: Periodically assess and evaluate recreational needs, resources, and conditions of existing fields and facilities.
 - iii. Action Item: On the Town website, add the addresses and access information for recreational areas and facilities so they can be easily located.
 - b. Objective: Develop a plan for improving and updating existing indoor and outdoor facilities.
 - i. Action Item: Relocate the Parks & Recreation Commission Office to a more accessible location for community members.
 - ii. Action Item: Complete construction of Center Court Playground.
 - iii. Action Item: Rebuild Morningdale Manor Playing Fields.
 - iv. Rebuild the Morndingdale Manor Playground. Assess siting alternatives to make the playground less isolated and include a path accessible by strollers.
 - v. Action Item: Improve Hillside Gym bathrooms, including accessibility compliance with ADA regulations.
 - vi. Action Item: Improve the accessibility and safety of Hillside Playground by installing a stroller and ADA-friendly path from the parking lot to the playground / field and add railings on the stairs. Add tree shade to prevent surface materials from getting too hot so the playground is usable during summer months.
 - vii. Action Item: Improve safety and access at Center Playground by installing a stroller path and fencing in or moving the toddlers play equipment further from the road.
 - c. Objective: Establish sustainable funding sources, partnerships, and volunteer networks to make ongoing improvements.
 - i. Action Item: Explore adoption of the Community Preservation Act for financing historic preservation, open space, and recreation projects.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore prospective funding sources including State/Federal grants, partnerships with non-profit organizations, and other opportunities as they arise.
 - iii. Action Item: Recruit volunteer groups to help with the maintenance, upgrade, and clean-up of facilities (such as the Boy Scouts, etc.). Create and regularly update a list of maintenance and improvement projects that could be undertaken by volunteer groups.
 - d. Objective: Enhance access to existing facilities and promote such areas in specific neighborhoods.
 - i. Action Item: In accordance with the ADA Access Self-Evaluation in the OSRP, take steps to make Town-owned recreation areas and facilities more accessible to all patrons.
 - e. Objective: Explore the possibility of linking existing natural resources, open space, and recreation facilities with a contiguous network of greenways and foot trail corridors.
 - i. Action Item: Identify rights-of-way and public easements that can be linked to existing trail systems.
 - ii. Action Item: Seek funding and technical assistance through the DCR's Greenways & Trails Program.

- f. Objective: Provide cultural and recreation opportunities and support for seniors.
 - i. Action item: Regularly review Council on Aging (COA) services such as van operations and programming to ensure service levels are line with changing demographics.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore opportunities to coordinate with nearby towns that also have COA services or senior centers.
 - iii. Action Item: Create a senior taskforce and host an annual meeting.
- 4. Goal: Regulate and guide development to be consistent with town character, and to protect open space and natural resources.
 - a. Objective: Boards and commissions should meet on a regular basis to discuss preservation activities and development proposals.
 - i. Action Item: Host a task force meeting annually with all boards and commissions to review status of OSRP action items.
 - b. Objective: Ensure that development regulations create development that has the least impact on the environment.
 - i. Action Item: Consider bylaws to promote dark night skies and a healthy level of noise.
 - c. Objective: Work with developers to maximize the preservation of open space areas and protection of environmentally sensitive areas.
 - i. Action Item: Investigate creating incentives for developers to create recreation areas, open land, and wildlife corridors.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore zoning changes such as Open Space Residential Design, Cluster Development, and other bylaws to require conservation of open space with new subdivisions.
 - d. Objective: Promote both redevelopment and reuse of existing properties that are being underutilized to help minimize the amount of new construction.
 - i. Action Item: Create an inventory of potential properties for future development.

Natural Resources

- 1. Goal: Protect natural resource areas from environmental degradation, disturbances, and over-development.
 - a. Objective: Utilize zoning, regulatory, and legislative resources to enhance natural resource conservation efforts.
 - i. Action Item: Pursue adoption of conservation-related bylaws and policies, particularly zoning incentives for preserving open space and natural resources.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore establishing a No Disturb Zone around wetland resource areas to a defined distance.
 - b. Objective: Collaborate with local, regional, and state conservation organizations on natural resource management.
 - i. Action Item: Foster partnerships with local land trusts and non-profit organizations to identify and acquire important unprotected natural resource areas for permanent protection.
 - ii. Action Item: Pursue increased dialogue and collaboration with Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation in support of town access to DCR property.
 - c. Objective: Address the quality of all Boylston water resources.
 - i. Action item: Provide adequate protection for all Boylston ponds.
 - ii. Action Item: Develop a written Lake Phosphorous Control Plan and fully implement all control measures.
 - iii. Action Item: Reduce the threshold by which a project would be reviewed locally and obtain a stormwater management permit.
 - iv. Action Item: Identify changes to roadway width, parking, and other requirements in zoning and subdivision bylaws that reduce impervious cover.
 - v. Action Item: Develop a rain barrel program.
 - vi. Action Item: Develop a stormwater utility or enterprise fund and incentivize private sites to take their own actions through a credit system.
 - vii.

- viii. Action Item: Implement an organic waste and leaf litter collection program. Gather and remove all landscaping wastes and leaf litter from impervious roadways and parking lots at least once per week Sept 1 to Dec 1 of each year.
- 2. Goal: Improve public awareness of Boylston's natural resources.
 - a. Objective: Inform the public about the importance of natural resource protection.
 - i. Action Item: Utilize town resources such as newsletters, utility bill inserts, and digital platforms such as the town website and social media to educate the public about the benefits of natural resource protection and available programs such as Chapter 61.
 - b. Objective: Expand opportunities for community service and involvement in natural resource conservation.
 - i. Action Item: Develop a landscape and maintenance plan for town property.
 - c. Objective: Increase accessibility to the town's forests, water bodies, and open spaces.
 - i. Action Item: Communicate the community benefits of trail easements to landowners.
- 3. Goal: Improve natural resource management strategies to make Boylston more resilient.
 - a. Objective: Encourage development and management practices that minimize destructive impacts on valuable natural resources.
 - i. Action Item: Incorporate guidance for the implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in appropriate by-laws and regulations.
 - b. Objective: Implement goals, objectives, and action items listed in the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
 - i. Action Item: Establish and maintain an active Open Space Advisory Committee tasked with overseeing implementation of the OSRP.
 - c. Objective: Evaluate and anticipate the impact of climate change on natural resources and water bodies and pursue appropriate mitigation policies and plans.
 - i. Action Item: Pursue certification as a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) community to develop an action-oriented resiliency plan and qualify for grant funding.



Photo: Boylston Town Common
Photo credit: CMRPC

Cultural & Historical Resources

Introduction

Boylston is rich in historic and cultural resources that provide residents and visitors with a connection to the town's past. The hilly landscape has been historically characterized by forests, farms, orchards, places of worship, small businesses, manufacturing, residences, and more. Many aspects of the past remain today, while others were erased over time or through major changes in land use: such as the eminent domain takings of 2,761 acres of land for the Wachusett Dam and Reservoir System completed in 1905. Residents take immense pride in the historic, architectural, and aesthetic heritage of Boylston.

Cultural resources refer to how people relate to their environment and surroundings through their culture, and can include cultural uses of the natural environment, the built environment, and social institutions. The places, buildings, objects, documents, traditions, and stories of our cultural heritage help shape the community's sense of place, giving Boylston residents a sense of "home."

Historic resources include the districts, sites, buildings, structures, or objects that are significant in the history, architecture, engineering, archaeology, or culture of the community, state, or country. Historic preservation generally refers to safeguarding the existence and appearance of historic elements in the community, placing value not only on the physical structures but the occupants and uses over time as well. The historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes help residents understand the community's origin and how it became what it is today.

Proactive planning for historic and cultural resources allows the community to reflect on its evolution as a town and envision its direction for the future. It is essential to inventory and document a community's historic and cultural assets to provide a framework for preservation. This chapter aims to identify what is valued and irreplaceable in the town, who the key stakeholders and partners are, and what steps can be taken to preserve and enhance Boylston's heritage for future generations.

Community Engagement

Input was sought from residents regarding their perspectives on the importance and preservation of Boylston's historic resources. The Community Vision survey provided a set of statements about historic assets and asked survey respondents to identify whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements. Overall, residents expressed favorability regarding historic resource preservation, while some noted concern about municipal financial resources that would be dedicated to these efforts. The results of question 10 on the Community Vision Survey can be seen in Table CH1.

A second survey was released to Boylston residents after the Master Plan Steering Committee and CMRPC developed a vision statement and preliminary goals for each of the master plan elements. The survey sought feedback from residents on how relevant the goals were to Boylston’s future. The four historic and cultural resources goals were primarily considered “Very Relevant” or “Somewhat Relevant” by respondents. At monthly Committee meetings the results of the survey were discussed, and changes were made accordingly to goals that did not receive overwhelming positive feedback. The results of question 7 on the Vision and Goals Survey are summarized in Table CH2.

Table CH1. Community Vision Survey Results

Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about Boylston’s historic assets?				
	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total Responses
Historic resources are an essential part of Boylston’s character	70%	26%	4%	394
New development should be prohibited if it means losing a historic building	64%	25%	11%	393
Historic resources deserve financial support from the town’s government	54%	33%	13%	394
Historic resources should be paid for by property owners alone, without additional help from the town’s government	18%	40%	42%	389
Local regulations should protect certain historic resources and regions (e.g., Local Historic District)	73%	24%	3%	389
The Hillside/Gough House site is an important Town asset that should be carefully redeveloped to maximize its economic potential	55%	29%	16%	391

Table 2: Preliminary Vision and Goals Survey Results

Rate each statement by the extent you think each goal is relevant to Boylston's future.				
	Very Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Not At All Relevant	Total Responses
Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.	69%	27%	4%	181
Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.	50%	40%	11%	181
Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of Town to enhance the community’s rich heritage.	52%	37%	11%	180
Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.	41%	44%	14%	180

Summary of Goals

The following goals were established to reflect the above noted public preferences.

Goal 1: Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.

Goal 2: Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.

Goal 3: Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of Town to enhance the community’s rich heritage.

Goal 4: Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Boylston Reconnaissance Report (1983)

As part of Massachusetts Historical Commission's Statewide Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports, this survey was conducted to document the historical development of municipalities in the Commonwealth. The report begins with an historic overview, a description of topography, and political boundaries. Seven periods of the town's history are described, each section summarizing the transportation routes, settlement patterns, population, economic base, architecture, and observations for the period.

Inventory of Historic Places and Natural Resources (1979)

A summary of historic assets of the town was developed to identify, evaluate, and preserve our historic resources and areas of significance including buildings and natural resources for present and future use. The Boylston Historical Commission conducted the initial survey of historical assets of the town of Boylston in 1979 and strives to maintain it continuously to identify, evaluate, and preserve our historic resources and areas of significance including historic buildings and natural resources for present and future use. Each asset has a site survey completed which includes a historical description, location on a map, chain of title, and description of the historical significance to the town. This inventory is the primary means for recording information on our historic resources, their significance, including the people and activities associated with each over time.

Commissions and Active Groups

Governmental Commissions

Historical Commission: The Historical Commission is the official municipal government agent responsible for the community-wide historic preservation planning. It is a three-to seven-member board of residents that are appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission works to promote, preserve, and develop the town's historical assets for current and future use. Additionally, at the request of the Town of Boylston, the Commission oversees the operations of the town's Historic Town Hall. The Historical Commission operates in accordance with the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 8D, with a mission to:

- Identify historic assets as well as archeological sites.
- Encourage the protection and preservation of town artifacts that comprise the rich tapestry of Boylston's past.
- Encourage historic activities and historic events, including but not limited to tours, interactive programs, presentations, and educational activities.
- Educate the community on historic preservation through working collaboratively with other Town boards, Historical organizations, and the community, at large.
- Advertise, prepare, print, and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets deemed necessary for the purpose of protecting and preserving historic places.

Historic District Commission: The Boylston Center Historic District became an official local historic district in 1979. With its inception, a Historic District Commission was created to oversee administration and alteration of any structures or buildings within the district, in accordance with Boylston's Local Historic District Rules and Regulations that are consistent with M.G.L. Chapter 40C. The Commission is tasked with reviewing proposals and issuing certificates of appropriateness, of non-applicability, or of hardship to homeowners seeking alternation of an exterior architectural feature within the boundaries of a Historic District. The Historic District Commission is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and consists of seven regular members, each of whom serve a term of three years.

Cemetery Commission: The Cemetery Commission consists of three elected members who each serve a three-year term; with one seat on the board elected annually. The Old Burial Ground and the Pine Grove Cemetery are Town-operated under the jurisdiction of the Highway Department and the supervision of the Cemetery Commission. The Pine

Grove Cemetery provides burial space for residents or former residents of the Town of Boylston. The Highway Department performs route maintenance and upkeep of both cemeteries. All recreational vehicles are banned, and other activities deemed inappropriate, such as exercising unleashed animals and parking except on Cemetery business are not allowed. The complete Rules and Regulations of the Pine Grove Cemetery can be located on the Town of Boylston website.

Boylston Cultural Council: The Boylston Cultural Council is part of the Massachusetts Local Cultural Council (LCC) Program, which funds and manages a network of LCCs across the state. The Mass Cultural Council receives funding from the Massachusetts Legislature and the National Endowment for the Arts and distributes those public funds through two channels, one of which is distributions to LCCs which then re-grant funds to individuals and organizations in their own communities. Each council awards money based on community cultural needs, which are assessed and established by council members appointed by the Board of Selectmen. Applicants apply directly to local councils. The Boylston Cultural Council seeks to support both local Boylston artisans and cultural events to enrich the Boylston community. The Council aims to appeal to a wide audience of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. The FY2022 allocation for Boylston was \$5,300.

Public Library Trustees: The Library Trustees is a six-member board tasked with establishing a mission and vision, determining policies that govern the library, and overseeing the management as well as the physical space. The Trustees manage building maintenance and renovation projects, monitor budgets, and assist with strategic and long-range planning. The library is currently in the process of developing a Strategic Plan for 2023-2028. The 2017-2022 goals established for the library state that the Boylston Public Library will:

- Be a community hub for the Town of Boylston, enriching lives by providing a means of social and cultural interaction.
- Provide a flexible and adaptable physical space that is accessible to all residents and adequately supports collections and services.
- Enhance existing collections and services.
- Improve marketing, outreach, and communications with patrons, media, and stakeholders.
- Provide the highest level of customer service to all residents.
- Develop new offerings to patrons as community needs change.
- Adapt services as new technology becomes available.

Private Groups

Boylston Historical Society and Museum, Inc.: The Boylston Historical Society is a tax-exempt, non-profit organization founded in 1971 managed by its Board of Directors and Officers elected from its membership. Their mission is to preserve the history of the town and its people by assembling collections of archival records and artifacts, ensuring their continuous care, providing public access to them, and using them in cultural and educational purposes. The Society is headquartered in the Historic Town Hall located near the Town Common in Boylston Center. It hosts a small museum and library that are rich in historic artifacts and history on Boylston and Central Massachusetts. With a dedication to increasing the knowledge and appreciation of the people and events which created present-day Boylston, the Society's motto is "Preserve the Past for the Future." Over 16,000 artifactual and archival items are part of the Society's many collections. Its George and Sybil Fuller Memorial Research Library holds over 2,400 volumes, including an extensive Boylston Records section and numerous reference books on American history. These materials are available to researchers and townspeople. The Historical Society is committed to collecting and preserving the historical heritage of our town through its museum, library, public programming, and publications. Visitors can also acquire copies of local history books and other publications.

Boylston Cemetery Research Consortium: Organized in 2008, the Boylston Cemetery Research Consortium is a research consortium of the Boylston Historical Commission, the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, the Boylston Cemetery Commission, and the Boylston Cemetery Office who strive to map, photograph, and link the graves within the town of Boylston to preserve the historical heritage of the town and its people.

The consortium and its volunteers search original town documents, burial records, and cemetery stones in the Old Burial Ground and the Pine Grove Cemetery, with the ongoing research published online on the Findagrave.com free

web site. The consortium's primary goals are to research and preserve town history as presented in our cemeteries, linking these town citizens to their roots and descendants, as possible. Specific concentration is given to accurate documentation and historical relevance. Besides sharing the data online with educators, researchers, historians and genealogists, the data is used for basic historical research and publications of the Boylston Historical Society & Museum, as well as providing a location reference for out-of-town visitors to locate ancestors.

Boylston Public Library Foundation: The Mission of the Boylston Public Library Foundation, Inc. is to raise funds to support the current activities and long-term goals of the library as a community hub, including the enhancement of the physical space and the adoption of new technologies. The Boylston Public Library Foundation, Inc. (BPLF) believes that every resident of our diverse Boylston community deserves free and easy access to the vast world of reliable information, ideas, and connections available in the public domain. As a community center and resource able to accommodate meetings, social gatherings and other group activities, the BPL will help every community member to realize their full potential, and thereby contribute to the common good. Funding from past Annual Appeals has made possible many of the wonderful improvements and new services implemented at the library. The Board of Directors meets regularly to consider the financial needs of the library and the support available from the Foundation as well as to work on upcoming library projects with the Library Trustees.

Friends of the Boylston Public Library: The Friends of the Boylston Public Library is a non-profit organization consisting of volunteers dedicated to helping promote, support, and provide for fuller utilization of all material and cultural library resources. The organization sponsors various library programs and museum/park passes, holds community events, and raises awareness on the importance of libraries. Memberships are offered and these funds help the library host events and provide museum passes each year. The three goals of the organization are: 1) engage users at the library, 2) encourage gifts and Friends' financial support for the benefit of the library, and 3) serve as the library's link to the community through advocacy, marketing, programming, and access. The Friends of the Boylston Public Library meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.

Hillside Restoration Project, Inc.: As a joint venture between the Boylston Historical Society and Boylston's municipal leaders, the Hillside Restoration Project launched in 1998. This project is now a small non-profit organization managed by an independent Board of Directors. The primary goal of the organization includes the complete restoration and adaptive reuse of the John B. Gough Estate, a National Historic Landmark site which includes the Gough House, barn, carriage house, and 12 acres of landscape features. The mission of the Hillside Restoration Project is to restore, preserve, and adaptively reuse the Hillside Estate, home of the internationally renowned temperance orator and social reformer, John B. Gough, to serve the greater community. The project's leaders have recently taken proactive steps to engage residents, including hosting a month-long event in August 2021 called *Discover Hillside!* in which a series of activities and programming were held to provide residents with a sense of the possibilities for the site.

Existing Conditions

History and Overview

Pre-Colonial Period (Before 1675): Nipmuc tribes were the original inhabitants of the land that is now Boylston. Regional patterns suggest permanent settlements were not common in the area, but the land was used for seasonal fishing, gathering, and hunting, as well as agriculture. The native population dwindled in the area upon the arrival of English settlers who established praying towns (settlements intended to convert Native Americans to Christianity) in nearby locations.

Colonial Period (1675-1775): The Sawyer family is the most notable of the first settlers in present-day Boylston. Thomas Sawyer Jr. is often believed to be the town's first landowner, acquiring land in 1705 in the territory that would later become Boylston. Thomas Sawyer Jr.'s second son, Joseph Sawyer, built a dwelling, barn, cornmill and sawmill near the Nashua River in Lancaster, later to become part of Boylston. His son Aaron succeeded him, building a nearby home, barns, a neatsfoot oil mill, a saw and grist mill, and other out-buildings. This area became known as Sawyer's Mills and eventually became a small manufacturing village.

The first attempts to incorporate Boylston occurred in 1738, then again in 1741, however those endeavors were unsuccessful. The town was incorporated as the North Precinct of Shrewsbury on December 17, 1742. In 1743, a meeting house was constructed in the geographic center of the precinct and the Reverend Ebenezer Morse, ordained in October of 1743, served as the church's first minister. Other municipal structures were built as well, including a schoolhouse, burying ground, noon-house, pound, parsonage, and tavern. The economic base was primarily agricultural with strength in cattle and grains, as well as orchard products such as hickory, apple, and stone fruit.

Federal Period (1775-1830): On March 1, 1786, the Town of Boylston was incorporated, named after a Boston-based family. A social library was established in 1792. The Second Meeting House, with a bell tower and clock, was constructed in 1793 on the site of the present-day Sawyer Memorial Library. Boylston's primary economic activity continued to be agriculture through the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Orchard growing, a land use well-suited to the town's hills, experienced a surge in development and by 1806 there were 30 cider mills in Boylston. Early 19th century tax lists note over 100 farmers in Boylston, along with a variety of craftsmen. A brickyard was established in 1807 at Route 70 and Cross Street. Several taverns operated during this period along with a corner store which operated throughout the 19th century. In 1808 West Boylston separated, reducing the town's population, and resulting in the loss of its best waterpower sites and four operating mills.

Early Industrial Period (1830-1870): The Town Hall was built in 1830 with proceeds from a grant by Ward Nicholas Boylston. This fund was also used to build the school building in the town center. A post office opened in 1845. A dance pavilion and picnic resort of the Nashua River above Sawyer's Mills was built in 1850 by Thomas Cunningham.

The industrial center of the town continued to be Sawyer's Mills. Straw Hollow developed as a major commercial complex for dairy production and orchard growing, plus palm leaf hat and straw braid production during the first half of the period. Agriculture continued to be the major employer during the Early Industrial Period. Between 1845 and 1865, 400,000 – 600,000 board feet of lumber were cut from Boylston's forests annually by three sawmills, plus nearly 4,000 cords of firewood per year. A cotton mill at Sawyer's Mills was erected in 1855, a large manufacturing enterprise employing 50 people to produce cotton yarn and gingham cloth. 1865 saw the construction of a third meeting house as the second was deemed too large and "cheerless". Most residential development occurred during the early portion of this period.

Late Industrial Period (1870-1915): The major event of this period was the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir that began in 1895 and was completed in 1905, with flooding of the Nashua River Valley and establishment of surrounding watershed pine plantations. For the reservoir to be constructed, 302 people were displaced and 46 dwellings were either moved or destroyed. The once thriving textile mill complex, and village of Sawyer's Mills was erased as the buildings and homes were torn down to make room for the reservoir. This constituted a sizeable loss in taxable property, a virtual elimination of the town's manufacturing industry, plus resulted in a population decline of over 50% over the next five years. The reservoir also flooded the tracks of the only railroad through the town, the Southern Division tracks of the Boston and Main Railroad, erected in 1875.

Agriculture continued to grow with the demands of the Worcester and Boston markets, with dairy providing the largest income to Boylston farmers. A large creamery and stock farm were established at Straw Hollow during the 1870's and continued into the early 20th century.

Boylston experienced a surge in population between 1895 and 1900 due to the arrival of immigrant workers on the Wachusett Reservoir, living in temporary housing developments, however the population dropped immediately after the completion of the reservoir. With population relocation due to the reservoir's construction, further development in the center of town occurred, including construction of Sawyer Memorial Library in 1904. With the opening of the electric streetcar line in 1898 along the length of Main Street from Worcester to Clinton, the village of Morningdale began to develop as a cottage streetcar suburb of Worcester.

Early Modern & Modern Period (1915-present): The streetcar line was abandoned by the 1920's as local roads were improved to accommodate automobiles. The population rose significantly with suburban development, which was particularly concentrated in Morningdale. Worcester County Tuberculosis Hospital was constructed on the border with

West Boylston. The Early Modern Period saw Boylston’s economy remain largely agricultural, providing the means of livelihood to most of the town’s occupants.

The town remained an agricultural community until the mid-1950’s. Boylston gradually evolved into a bedroom community for workers commuting to nearby employment hubs like Worcester and Boston. The Town prides itself as quiet, peaceful town for residents and retains much of its rural atmosphere.

Historical and Cultural Resources Inventory

A comprehensive inventory of the town’s historic resources resides in the Historical Commission section of the Fuller Research Library at the Historic Town Hall. A version of this inventory is available online using the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), a research website managed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. A copy of Boylston’s historic resource inventory, listing the historic structures, monuments, statues, objects, burial grounds, and historical buildings, is included in the Appendix and notable historic resources are included in Tables CH3 and CH4, and Map CH1.

Table CH3: Major Historical Properties in Boylston by Time Period

Historic Period	Structure/Landscape	Location	Year
Pre-Colonial Period (Before 1675)	Bay Path Road	Bay Path Rd	1630
Colonial Period (1675-1775)	Samuel Bennett House	Linden St	C 1725
	Phineas Howe - Capt. John Howe House	Cross St	C 1727
	Daniel Hastings House	Central St	C 1728
	Elisha Maynard House	Tower Hill Rd	1735
	Lt. Timothy Whitney - Peter Babcock House	Central St	1742
	Strawberry Hill Farm	School St	C 1743
	Boylston Old Burial Ground*	Main St	1745
	Dea. Jonathan Bond House	Main St	1757
	Taylor Tavern*	Main St	C 1760
	David Taylor - Aaron White Tavern Ell*	Main St	C 1770
Federal Period (1775-1830)	Calvin Glazier House*	School St	C 1770
	Elijah Ball House	Mile Hill Rd	1778
	Rev. Eleazor Fairbanks House*	School St	1779
	Jotham Bush – Caleb Kendall House	Main St	1780
	Rocky Pond Farm	Rocky Pond Rd	1784
	Dea. Cyprian Keyes House - Barlin Acres	East Temple St	C 1790
	Caleb Kendall House	Diamond Hill Ave	1794
	William Ball – Ira Longley House	Linden St	1795
	Boylston Second Noon House	School St	1799
	Rev. Ward Cotton House*	Cottonwood Pl	C 1800
	Montraville Flagg - Lt. John Hastings House	Elmwood Pl	C 1800
	Dea. Jonathon Bond, Jr. House	Main St	C 1800
	Abbott Tavern*	Church St	C 1805
	H. Winchester House*	Central St	1805
	Amasa Keyes House	School St	1809
	Stephen Brigham House	Main St	C 1812
	James Hastings House	Central St	1815
	Parker Lowe House and Blacksmith Shop	Linden St	1815
	Silas Hastings Tavern*	Main St	1818
	Ezra Collier - Abishai Crossman, Jr. House	Central St	C 1819
Capt. Jason Abbot – George Boyden House	Central St	1825	

Cultural & Historical Resources

	Historic Town Hall*	Central St	1830
Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)	John Bartholomew Gough House & 12-acre Preservation Site**	Main St	1848
	Phineas Stratton House*	Main St	C 1849
	Simon Partridge House	Sewall St	1850
	Capt. John T. Andrews House*	Scar Hill Rd	C 1859
	Charles I. Longley House	Central St	1865
	Henry White House	Central St	C 1869
	Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)	Bigelow Parsonage*	9 Scar Hill Rd
Dr. Andrew Bigelow Gold Mine		Linden St	1875
Clifford T. Eldridge House		Main St	1875
Sawyer Memorial Library*		Main St	1904
Wachusett Reservoir		Wachusett Reservoir	1905
Early Modern and Modern Periods (1915-present)	Caren Lund House	Belair St	1917
	Ernest A. Leyon House	Stockton St	1917
	Claus Oscar Johnson House	Belair St	C 1919
	Eva M. Bunker House	Main St	1921
	Boylston Men's Club Hall	Main St	1923
	Albert C. Johnson House	Melrose St	1924
	Boylston Telephone Exchange*	Scar Hill Rd	1925
	Morningdale School	Main St	1926
	Calliope Theatre	Main St	1926
	Boylston First Congregational Church*	Church St	1927
	Bond Corner Store*	Central St	1811 (rebuilt 1929)
	Walter M. Gasek House	Nicholas Ave	1935
	First Congregational Church Parsonage*	Church St	1950
	Boylston Powder House Marker*	Main St	1972
*Located within the Boylston Center Historical District			
**National Landmark			

Source: MACRIS, 2022

Table CH4: Major Historic Resources in Boylston by Resource Type

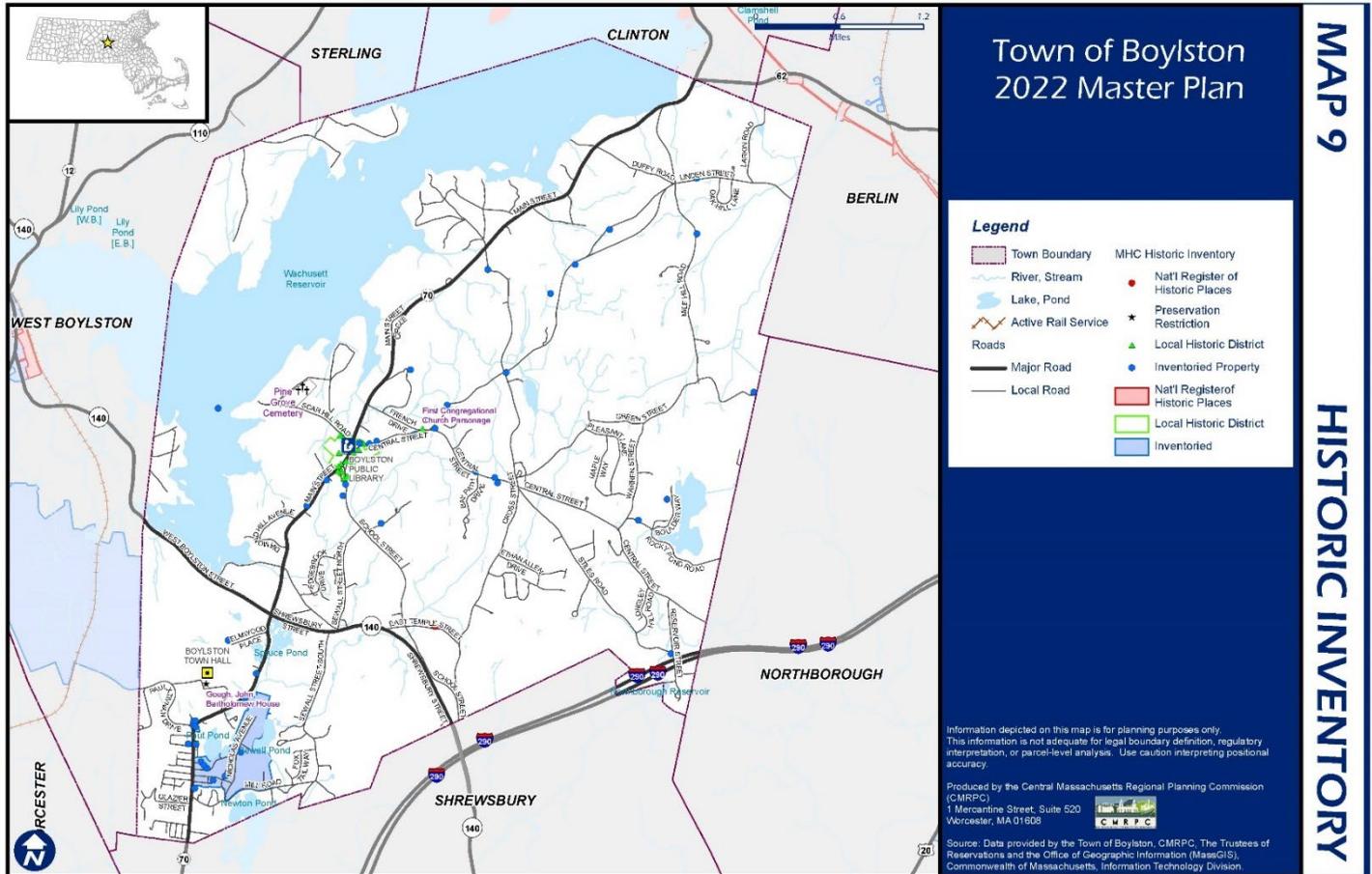
Type of Historic Resource	Name of Historic Resource	
Historic Structures	Bay Path Road	Rocky Pond Ledges
	Dr. Andrew Bigelow Gold Mine	Wachusett Reservoir
Historic Areas	Boylston Historic District	Windsor Park and City Gardens
Monuments, Statues, Objects	Boylston Powder House Marker	First Meeting House Marker
	Second Meeting House Marker	Consolidated School Marker
	Consolidated School Marker	Center School Marker
	Memorial Tablet	Red Knights Firefighters Memorial
	Soldiers War Memorial	Civil War Memorial
Burial Grounds	Boylston Old Burial Ground	Pine Grove Cemetery
Historic Buildings	Historic Town Hall and Museum (Central St)	148, 149, 178, 181, 183, 219, 264, 307, 565, 599, 620, 644, 651, 661, and 701 Main St
	Boylston First Congregational Church (Church St)	21 Melrose St
	First Congregational Church Parsonage (Church St)	211 Mile Hill Rd
	Morningdale School (Main St)	72 Nicholas Ave
	Sawyer Memorial Library (Main St)	40 Poe Ave
	1 Central St	64 Reservoir Rd
	11 and 15 Belair St	25 Rocky Pond Rd

Cultural & Historical Resources

Cottonwood Pl	1, 5, 9 and 10-12 Scar Hill Rd
30 Cross St	5, 15, 16, 22, 30, 111, School St
18 Diamond Hill Ave	298 Sewall St
284 East Temple St	32 Stockton St
Elmwood Pl	30 Tower Hill Rd
439 Green St	39, 142, 330, and 426 Linden St

Source: MACRIS, 2022

Map CH1: Inventory of Historic Resources



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Historic Classifications

Massachusetts State Register of Historic Places

Established in 1982 by M.G.L. Ch. 9, ss. 26-27C, the State Register of Historic Places is a comprehensive listing of the buildings, structures, objects, and sites that have received local, state, or national designations based on their historical or archaeological significance. Over 67,000 properties in more than 340 cities and towns in Massachusetts are included in the State Register. The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) publishes the State Register of Historic Places once per year. This important historic preservation planning reference tool serves to alert property owners, planners, and project proponents as to which historic properties and sites should be considered for preservation undertakings. Additional information on properties listed in the State Register is available through MHC.

Filing an Inventory Form with MHC does not constitute listing in the State Register of Historic Places. Listings are arranged by municipality and within each city or town, properties are arranged alphabetically by their historic name. Many listings include multiple designations, and the boundaries of each designation can sometimes differ. Address listings of individual properties located within historic districts are not included. Publications are available at the State House Bookstore, Room 116, State House, Boston, MA 02133.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation's historic places worthy of preservation. It is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archaeological resources in this country. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture.

A property listed on the National Register of Historic Places does not place any restrictions on the way an owner handles their property, given there is no state or federal involvement in a project and no pertinent local or regional regulations. It is a federal designation and provides national recognition that the area, noting significance to the history of the community, state, or nation. National Register Districts are often confused with Local Historic Districts; however, they are far less effective preservation tactics. Designation as a National Register District has benefits such as qualifying property owners for state and federal preservation grants or making certain tax incentives available for preservation, however it does not protect buildings and structures within the district from demolition or substantial alteration.

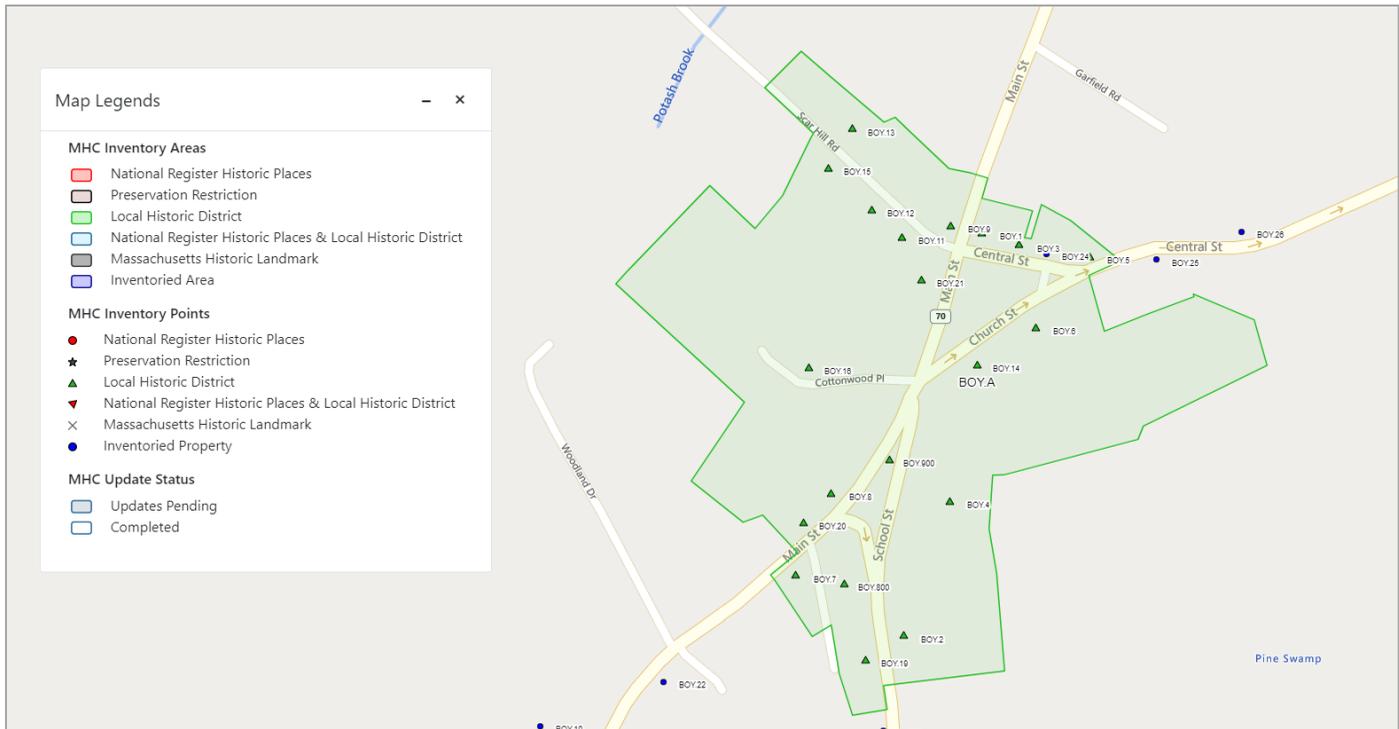
There are no National Register Districts located in Boylston. However, there are two National Register Individual Properties: the Deacon Cyprian Keyes House – Barlin Acres (1790) and the John B. Gough House (1848). The Deacon Cyprian Keyes House was designated in 1982, although much of Barlin Acres was demolished to make way for the construction of the Cyprian Keyes Club House. The John B. Gough House was designated in 1974 when it became a National Historic Landmark.

Local Historic Districts

A Local Historic District is a district designated by a local ordinance, which falls under the jurisdiction of a local historic preservation review commission. This designation protects the significant properties and the historic character of the district, encouraging sensitive development through a design review process. A Historic Commission approves major changes planned for properties within the district boundaries and issues Certificates of Appropriateness to allow proposed changes to take place. As stated in M.G. Chapter 40C, Local Historic Districts serve three major purposes: 1) to preserved and protect the distinctive characteristics of buildings and places significant in the history of the Commonwealth and its cities and towns, 2) to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places, and 3) to encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district.

Boylston has one local historic district – Boylston Center Historic District. There are 21 historic properties listed within the boundaries of this district (see Map CH2 and Table CH5). The town's Local Historic District was designated in 1979. Owners of the properties in this district seeking alterations to exterior architectural features of buildings must file an application with the Boylston Historic District Commission, who consider the appropriateness of proposed changes. The Bylaws of Boylston Historic District include the powers and duties of the Historic Commission as well as guidelines and exceptions to review authority.

Map CH2: Boylston Center Historic District Boundaries



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Table 5: Properties within the Boylston Center Historic District (MACRIS)

Property Name	Street	Year
Historic Town Hall	Central St	1830
Bond Corner Store	1 Central St	1929
Winchester, H. House	15 Central St	R 1805
Boylston First Congregational Church	Church St	1927
First Congregational Church Parsonage	Church St	1950
Abbott Tavern	4 Church St	C 1805
Cotton, Rev. Ward House	Cottonwood Pl	C 1800
Sawyer Memorial Library	Main St	1904
Boylston Old Burial Ground	Main St	1745
Boylston Powder House Marker	Main St	1972
Stratton, Phineas House	644 Main St	C 1849
Taylor Tavern	651 Main St	C 1760
Taylor, David - White, Aaron Tavern Ell	661 Main St	C 1770
Hastings, Silas Tavern	701 Main St	1818
	1 Scar Hill Rd	C 1925
Boylston Telephone Exchange	5 Scar Hill Rd	R 1925
Bigelow Parsonage	9 Scar Hill Rd	1873
Andrews, Capt. John T. House	10-12 Scar Hill Rd	C 1859
Fairbanks, Rev. Eleazor House	5 School St	1779
Chinnery, Dr. Thaddeus - Bigelow, Rev. Andrew House	15 School St	1793
Glazier, Calvin House	16 School St	C 1770

Source: MACRIS, 2022

National Historic Landmarks Program

A National Historic Landmark is a building, district, object, site, or structure that is officially recognized by the United States government for its outstanding historical significance. Each Landmark demonstrates exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archaeology, technology, and culture. Out of over 90,000 places listed on the National Register of Historic Places, only about 2,600 are recognized as National Historic Landmarks. The Program relies on the guidance of National Park Service staff throughout the nomination process and works with citizens to assist existing Landmarks. The United States Secretary of the Interior designated these historic places because they are:

- Sites where events of national historical significance occurred.
- Places associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in U.S. history.
- Icons of ideals that shaped the nation.
- Outstanding examples of design or construction.
- Places characterizing a way of life.
- Archaeological sites able to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures or shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the U.S.

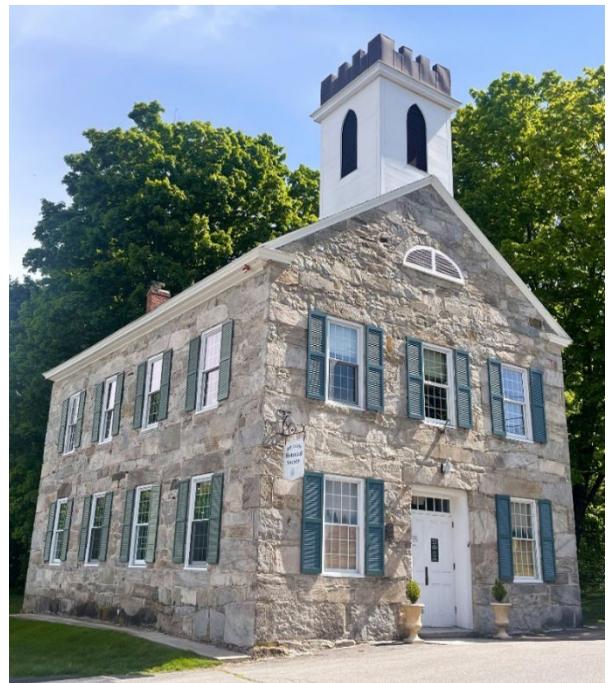
There is one National Historic Landmark located in Boylston- the John B. Gough House. The historic estate set on the hilltop at 221 Main Street was constructed by social reformer and temperance orator John Bartholomew Gough in 1848. The house was occupied by Gough for 38 years, while he built a career as a nationally renowned orator, delivering at least 9,600 lectures to more than 9 million people in his lifetime. The John B. Gough House was designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1974, and in 2011 the Hillside Restoration Project and the Town applied to the Secretary of the Interior to expand the National Landmark status to include the remaining barn on the property.

Cultural and Historic Destinations

Historic Town Hall

An impressive stone edifice in the town's historic center, the Historic Town Hall was constructed in 1830 as Boylston's first Town Hall and now is one of the oldest town halls in Massachusetts that continues to serve the public. Proceeds from a grant by Ward Nicholas Boylston made construction of this municipal building possible, however Ward Boylston died before the ashlar granite building was constructed. In 1840, the Town voted to purchase a 1,000-pound bell, which was brought by ox-driven cart from East Medway and placed in a small belfry on top of the building. A foundational aspect of the community, over the years the Historic Town Hall has been used for municipal offices, school classes, religious services, a library, police department, plus hosting local theater groups.

The building remains actively available for public use, hosting civic and private organizations that include the Boylston Historical Commission, local chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club, Hillside Restoration Group, and Boylston Historical Society and Museum. The Fuller Research Library is located downstairs. A large hall with original stage, serving as a meeting place for townspeople and museum of rotating exhibits, is on the second floor. The bell in the bell tower is rung on special holidays. The Historical Commission is tasked with overseeing the operations and management of the Historic Town Hall.



*Photo: Historic Town Hall
Photo Credit: CMRPC*

Sawyer Memorial Library

Boylston's public library is a significant cultural and historical resource to residents. The Boylston Social Library was founded in 1792 as a private organization, however in 1880 its librarian, George L. Wright, persuaded the members to donate their collection to the town and start a public library. Prior to having its own building, the library was in the current Historic Town Hall, then the Town Hall. In 1904, the Sawyer Memorial Library was constructed out of field stone on the site where the second meeting house of Boylston's Congregational Church stood between 1793 and 1835, followed by the second Centre School House, built in 1841. Spanning 4,000 square feet, the Craftsman-style library was designed by architects Fuller & Delano of Worcester, using funding provided by Miss Salome E. White of Brooklyn, NY in memory of her mother, Mrs. Harriet Sawyer White of Sawyer's Mills.

Now more commonly known as the Boylston Public Library, the library is the social, cultural, and educational hub for locals. The library offers many innovative programs, book and media collections, and technology to its patrons. Its mission is to foster a lifelong love of learning through the provision of cultural, educational, and recreational resources. A three-phase renovation of the existing library was decided by the Library Trustees in 2009, following failure of a March 2008 town vote to construct a new library at Hillside. This renovation included ADA compliant features, a remodel of the Children's Room, upgrades to infrastructure, parking lot expansion, roof replacement, chimney removal, and more.

Boylston Common

Early European settlements in New England typically had a meeting house and the common became the place specifically reserved for these places of worship and public affairs. When settlements grew in population and people constructed homes and businesses adjacent to the common, it became the center of town. The Boylston Common provides a glimpse into the early days of the town, with over twenty historical structures surrounding the beautifully landscaped open space.

The first Boylston Common was located on the northern side of the Old Burial Ground, approximately one-tenth of a mile south of the present common. This common saw the development of Boylston's First Meeting House, Old Burial Ground, Hearse House, first schoolhouse, Taylor Tavern and Store, and First Noon House. Upon construction of the Second Meeting House in 1793, the site of present-day Sawyer Memorial Library, the area known now as Boylston Common was deemed the "New Common." This area featured the second Noon House, Third and Fourth Meeting Houses, Town Hall, Center (Corner) Store, and residences. In the early 1900's, Boylston Common was the bustling center of the town, hosting two general stores, a millinery shop, post office, public library, Town Hall, and the meeting house.

Today, the Boylston Town Common serves as the center of festivities and celebrations in town, a public space that unites the town. The gazebo, which underwent reconstruction in 2020, is a lovely feature of the landscape that is a point of pride for residents.

Hillside and John B. Gough House

John Bartholomew Gough was a well-known social reformer and temperance orator who captivated audiences with exuberant emotional appeals, speaking against the consumption of alcoholic beverages and emphasizing alcohol's negative effects of people's health, personalities, and family lives. In 1843 he married his second wife, Mary Elizabeth Whitcomb, and built the two-story farmhouse in Italianate style in 1848.

The house has a roughly square plan with three bays on each side, with a flat roof and square belvedere on top. A wide porch spans the front of the building and additions have been added to the rear of the house. Gough's working farm was named Hillside and a scenic roadway lined with elm trees interspersed with syringa bushes led to the house. Hillside was visited by many, including a former U.S. president, clergymen, artists, politicians, and temperance leaders. Gough lived in his Boylston residence for the



Photo: John B. Gough Estate at Hillside
Photo Credit: CMRPC

major portion of his oratorical career, from 1848 until his death in 1886.

After Gough's death, the house was purchased by William J. Hogg, owner of the Crompton Carpet Company in Worcester, and served as the campus of the Shepherd Knapp School for much of the 20th century. The John B. Gough Farm was purchased in 1930 by George F. Fuller, the president of the Wyman-Gordon Co. Noted for its historical significance, the house was declared a National Historic Landmark and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

Hillside Farm is municipally owned and consists of the John B. Gough House, a horse barn, carriage house, and 12.56 acres of landscape features under a preservation restriction. The farm also features the foundation of a former springhouse, a structure uncommon in New England, built into the sloping hillside. The fieldstone foundation includes three chambers divided by cross wall supports and was historically used for keeping spring water clean as well as refrigeration for food that would otherwise spoil.

Hillside Farm sits within the larger Hillside Park, a 293.6 acres Town-owned site that hosts municipal offices, public safety, recreation fields and facilities, and open space. Much local momentum has been dedicated to preservation and restoration efforts of Hillside Farm. The Hillside Restoration Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to the full restoration and adaptive reuse of the estate, envisioning Hillside as a self-sustaining, multi-use facility that integrates culture, history, nature, and recreation. A master plan has been recommended for Hillside to establish a shared vision for future use of this importance resource.



Old Burial Ground. Photo Credit: CMRPC

Old Burial Ground

Located at the intersection of Main and School Streets in the town's historic center, the Old Burial Ground dates to 1742, following the town's incorporation as the North Precinct of Shrewsbury. Many of Boylston's prominent historical figures are buried here, including Captain Robert Andrews, Commander of the town's Minutemen in 1775; Dr. Samuel Brigham, Paymaster on the staff of General George Washington; Henry Keyes, the town's only veteran of the French and Indian War; Reverend Ebenezer Morse, the first minister of the North Parish and a prominent Tory during the American Revolutionary War; and the graves of many men who served in the French and Indian War, Revolutionary War, and War of 1812. By the 1830's, the two-acre Burial Ground was approaching its limits, leading to the establishment of Pine Grove Cemetery off Scar Hill Road in 1837. Subsequently, only occasional burials took place in the Old Burial Ground.

The Boylston Old Burial Ground is included in the boundaries of the Boylston Center Historic District, aiding its preservation for years to come. In 2010, a full photographic survey was completed with grave photographs and transcriptions available online. Only two gravestones were unidentifiable in this survey.

Issues and Opportunities

Preservation and maintenance of historic properties and cultural destinations proves to be an ongoing challenge for residents, but a battle that has countless merits. Small communities like Boylston often struggle to allocate adequate resources to protect their historic resources. Particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, when many businesses and families are struggling to get back on their feet, the allocation of town funding and staff time towards preservation efforts may be a controversial topic. There are many tools that Boylston can utilize to provide supplemental assistance

in ensuring historic and cultural resources are preserved. The Town's leaders and residents should thoughtfully consider the various opportunities to address preservation challenges.

Community Planning Tools

Demolition Delay Bylaw

Demolition delay ordinances or bylaws are tools for communities to protect historic buildings and structures. Enacted by a majority vote at Town Meeting, a demolition delay ordinance or bylaw provides a review procedure requiring a delay in the demolition of historically significant buildings. This process provides a period in which Towns can consider alternatives to demolition of historic buildings and structures. During this process of establishing a demolition delay bylaw, the Local Historical Commission collaborates with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to develop a bylaw that would appropriately fit the Town's needs. The town's Historical Commission should also work with other local groups to coordinate public education outreach and widely publicize the advantages of a demolition delay bylaw to the community. Typically, demolition delay bylaws apply to structures that were built over 50 years ago. The most common delay of demolition is six months, although many communities have discovered that a 1-year delay is more effective. This is a tool that can help temporarily protect structures with historic value but not completely impede development options. Boylston should explore the adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw that will extend time for concerned parties to consider alternatives to demolition.

Local Historic District

Local Historic Districts, as defined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C, are some of the most effective ways to prevent inappropriate alterations to historically significant buildings. If a property owner wishes to make changes to exterior architectural features visible to public view, then the locally appointed Historic District Commission must review the proposed changes. A public hearing is held by the locally appointed Historic District Commission to determine whether the changes are suitable. To assist property owners within Local Historic Districts, many Historic District Commissions opt to prepare Historic District Design Guidelines.

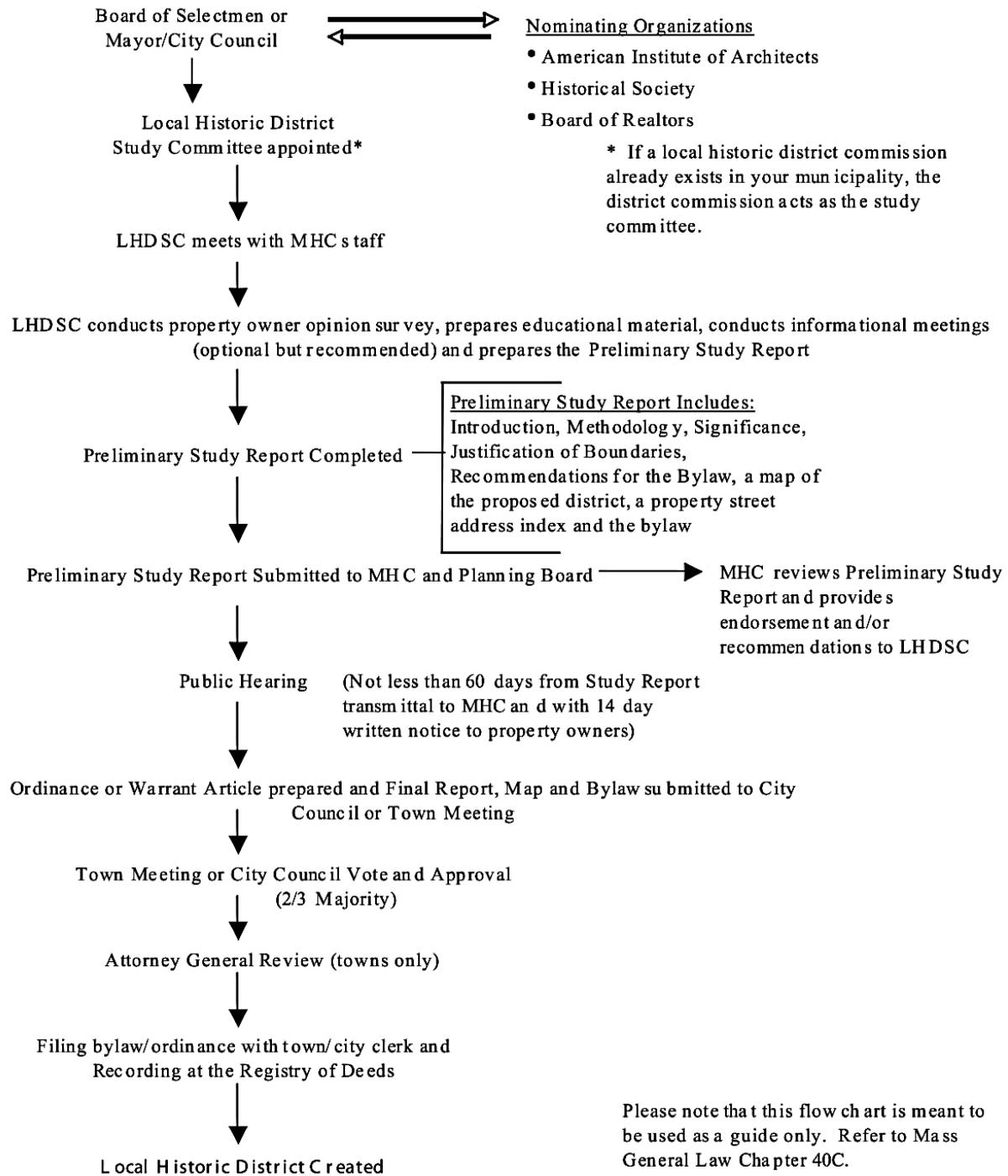
Boylston currently has one local historic district, as previously described in this chapter, called the Boylston Center Historic District. A Historic District Commission exists to review proposed changes to exterior architectural features of buildings within the district boundaries. Seven community members appointed by the Select Board serve on the Historic District Commission. The Historic District Bylaws are easily available for the public to read and can be located on the Town of Boylston website.

The town is encouraged to pursue additional local historic districts. Sizes of districts can vary greatly, and communities are even permitted to establish single building districts, though it is generally more desirable to protect the character of a larger surrounding area. The existing Historic District Commission would be responsible for leading the process, which begins with research and a preliminary report on the historical and architectural significance of the buildings, structures, or sites to be included in the proposed district. Subsequently, a public hearing is required to be held prior to the vote at Town Meeting, giving residents the opportunity to ask questions or voice concerns. Following the public hearing, a final report with the district map and proposed bylaw must be submitted for consideration to Town Meeting. Staff at the Massachusetts Historical Commission is available to tour the proposed district, review the historic district process, answer questions, and provide materials to aid the process at any point. The steps are detailed in Figure CH1.

It is important to note that when a Local Historic District is created, there are many proposed changes that are exempt from review, including review of interior and a variety of external features (i.e., HVAC units, storm doors, storm windows, paint color, and temporary structures). The decision on which features are exempt from review depends on how the local bylaw or ordinance is written and voted on at Town Meeting.

Figure CH1: Steps to Establishing a Local Historic District

Establishing a Local Historic District Flow Chart



Source: Massachusetts Historical Commission, 2022

Preservation Restriction

Defined in Massachusetts General Laws Chapter, 184 Section 31, a Preservation Restriction (PR) is a voluntary legal agreement that protects a significant historic, archaeological, or cultural resource from changes that may be inappropriate. It assures that an historic or culturally significant property's intrinsic values will be preserved by present and future owners by restricting the demolition or alteration of its significant historic features. A PR must be filed at the Registry of Deeds and runs with the property. While PRs typically focus on exterior architectural features, they may also address any significant interior spaces. Preservation Restrictions offer protection of a historic property or site for a term of years or in perpetuity.

At the core of a PR is the Grantor's Covenants, where the owner of the property agrees to maintain the building exterior in good repair consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, which are federal standards that define appropriate treatment of historic properties. A Preservation Restriction may be held by any governmental body or charitable corporation or trust capable of acquiring interests in land and whose purposes include historic preservation. Local Historical Commissions are empowered to hold preservation restrictions under the state's Historic District Act; however, they cannot hold a PR on a town-owned property. Those who want to use a working model to establish a Preservation Restriction can utilize the Massachusetts Historical Commission long form template, available in its Guidebook on Preservation Restrictions.

Community Preservation Act

Codified as Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44B, the Community Preservation Act (CPA) is available to communities that want to protect their open space and historic sites, create affordable housing options, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA funds are generated through two sources: a voter-approved surcharge of up to three percent on annual real estate taxes, and an annual disbursement from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund administered by the Department of Revenue, which distributes funds each year to communities that have adopted CPA. At least 10% of the annual revenues must be used for each of the three core areas: 1) open space, 2) historic resources, and 3) affordable housing. The remaining 70% can be used for any combination of the above uses as well as recreational uses.

Scenic Roads Bylaw

A Scenic Roads Bylaw is a preservation planning tool that helps communities preserve the scenic, historic, and aesthetic characteristics of the public right-of-way. This regulatory tool can help Boylston maintain its small-town character. Roads that are designated as "scenic roads" by the town and approved at Town Meeting require additional review and protection regarding actions like tree removal, stone wall removal, or other significant alterations within the public right-of-way. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40, Section 15C states that if a city or town passes a bylaw in accordance with the Scenic Roads Act, the cutting or removal of trees, or the altering or removal of stone walls within a road right-of-way, requires prior written consent of the planning board, select board, or city council.

Roads could be designated as a scenic road based on the following criteria:

- Overall scenic beauty and view from the roadside
- Contributions of trees to scenic beauty
- Contributions of stone walls to scenic beauty or prevalence of historic stone walls along the right-of-way
- Age and historic significance of road, trees, or stone walls



Photo: Stone wall along a Scenic Road.

Photo Credit: CMRPC

A bylaw will establish the process and criteria for designating roads as scenic roads, the types of work on trees or stone walls that will require hearings, the process for conducting hearings, the criteria for approving proposed work, and how the bylaw will be enforced. The town may develop a bylaw that is appropriate for Boylston's needs.

Other means of managing change along historic roads include a Scenic Vista Protection Bylaw, Scenic Overlay District, or Corridor Overlay Protection Bylaw.

Historic Resources Survey

In Massachusetts, historic resources of a community are documented on inventory forms developed by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC). There are eight different forms, depending on the kind of historic resource (areas, buildings, objects, archaeological sites, burial grounds, structures, streetscapes, or parks and landscapes). While these forms were formerly prepared by community volunteers, today they are prepared by consultants such as professional architectural historians. Survey work today considers all a community's historic resources, not limited to buildings, but resources developed by all the peoples who have lived in the area. Survey forms can provide information for planning projects beyond just historic preservation as many community planning initiatives, development projects, and even roadwork projects deal with historic resources.

Communities are encouraged to update their historic resources surveys. Surveys do not need to be updated all at one time. For many communities, hiring a consultant to prepare a survey plan can be helpful and there is funding available through the MHC Survey and Planning Grant Program (a 50/50 reimbursable matching grant) for this endeavor. Communities should contact MHC prior to completing and submitting new or updated inventory forms.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

1. Goal: Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.
 - a. Objective: Continue to evaluate, prioritize, and fund maintenance and preservation of historic assets using timely and proactive measures.
 - i. Action Item: Continue routine maintenance activities and funding for Town-owned historic properties.
 - ii. Action Item: Create a plan and fund restoration of the Old Burial Ground
 - iii. Action Item: Create a plan and fund restoration of the slate roof on Sawyer Memorial Library
 - iv. Action Item: Create a Master Plan for the Hillside property.
 - b. Objective: Encourage fluid communication and collaboration among local preservation groups.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to integrate and encourage participation of private and public preservation organizations
2. Goal: Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.
 - a. Objective: Educate property owners on the benefits of Preservation Restrictions
 - i. Action Item: Develop literature outlining the parameters of Preservation Restrictions and the environmental benefits of conserving resources with preservation of existing structures; then utilize the town website and social media platforms to share the information.
3. Goal: Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of Town to enhance the community's rich heritage.
 - a. Objective: Ensure protection of historically significant structures
 - i. Action Item: Explore adoption of a Demolition Delay Ordinance or Bylaw to protect historic and architecturally significant buildings from demolition.
 - ii. Action Item: Educate the public about the benefits of Local Historic Districts and continue to identify any historic buildings or areas that could be designated.
 - iii. Action Item: Educate Town leaders on the significance of historic preservation and ways to address preservation issues.

4. Goal: Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.
 - a. Objective: Enhance public access to historic resources and information.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to maintain and update a publicly accessible, comprehensive inventory of the town's historic resources including the historic artifacts, properties, structures, districts, burial grounds, and any other notable features of Boylston's history.
 - ii. Action Item: Continue to maintain the digitized historical records relevant to Boylston and continue providing online access to them.
 - iii. Action Item: Continue to encourage community research to fill in gaps of Boylston's history, such as identifying unknown people in photographs.
 - b. Objective: Expand community outreach initiatives related to the town's cultural and historical resources.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to sponsor activities such as guided community tours, self-guided walking tours, history days, farmer's markets, concerts, community theater, etc. to attract visitors and build appreciation for local history and culture.
 - ii. Action Item: Incorporate a "How to Get Involved" section into the Boylston Town website that details volunteer opportunities and contact information.
 - c. Objective: Promote the community's local identity and foster a sense of place.
 - i. Action Item: Utilize new wayfinding signage, enhanced gateway features, and other beautification or place-making projects.
 - ii. Action Item: Boost the Town's presence on social media networks to communicate local news, events, and updates to residents.



Photo: FedEx Facility
Photo credit: CMRPC

Economic Development

Introduction

Economic development is a term that conjures up different meanings for different people. To some, it means expanding non-residential tax bases, or growing jobs. For others, it implies helping small businesses thrive, and supporting new businesses as they get up and running. Others still see economic development as a means of increasing community vitality, amenities, income, or quality of life. In this master plan, we define economic development as *the creation of wealth from which community benefits are realized*. The following chapter explores Boylston through this lens. Accounting for existing conditions, issues, opportunities, and best practices, it identifies actionable strategies the Town can use to generate wealth and community benefit. The strategies are designed to advance specific economic goals:

1. Expand capacity to support and facilitate business development.
2. Take a proactive and responsive approach to economic development that supports existing businesses and encourages new ones.
3. Pursue an economic development strategy that evaluates the cumulative impacts of individual projects.
4. Ensure business development that maintains Boylston's small-town character.
5. Improve the visual aesthetics of businesses along Route 140 to better reflect the small-town character that residents desire.
6. Grow and diversify the tax base to promote a fiscally sound future.
7. Improve local utilization of Boylston's natural spaces.
8. Encourage small, consumer-oriented, and boutique local businesses for Boylston residents and visitors.
9. Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow and promote more pedestrian and bicycle access to businesses where possible.

These goals were established through a robust community engagement process. This process included two community surveys, a visioning workshop, and monthly steering committee meetings open to the public. Results relevant to economic development are included in the Community Input subsection located later in this chapter. Key findings that informed the goals include:

- Survey respondents strongly support the town establishing well-defined commercial and industrial areas in town and enacting the necessary controls to achieve aesthetic compatibility to preserve town character.
- Residents want more commercial amenities to meet their daily needs. Most respondents feel the town should encourage the appropriate growth of small business, convenience stores, and retail services.

- Small retail shops are in demand. Most survey respondents articulated a desire for more small retail shops (e.g., boutiques, art galleries, restaurants).
- Route 140 is the preferred location for growth. Most survey respondents feel new development should mostly occur along the Route 140 corridor.
- Most respondents indicated that Hillside/ the Gough House is an important Town asset that should be carefully redeveloped to maximize its economic potential.
- Promotion of local businesses is a favored economic development strategy. Most survey respondents feel the town should emphasize the promotion and awareness of local businesses that may appeal to both residents and visitors.
- There is fairly strong support for targeted sewer infrastructure. Just 36% of respondents opposed development of sewer anywhere in town.

The following chapter details an economic development strategy built upon these preferences, needs, and goals. It defines commercial areas in which to focus economic activity; seeks preservation of Boylston's small-town charm; and emphasizes small business creation and retention in areas deemed preferable by its residents. To provide a context for these strategies, we will review the town's economic history and prior planning efforts, summarize existing economic conditions, and detail issues and opportunities.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Economic development is a long-standing focus in Boylston. Strategic economic development planning efforts helped the town transition from an agricultural community to what it is today. A review of these prior planning efforts provides a structural view of the town's issues, opportunities, and preferred strategies.

Boylston Comprehensive Plan (2000)

The Town of Boylston completed its first comprehensive master plan in 2000. The plan identified several economic strategies, some of which have been implemented. Among these are the establishment of a Commercial Zone on the properties opposite CREST Technologies and Atlas News and limiting uses allowed in that zone to neighborhood convenience shopping. Relatedly, the plan called for concept planning for the Route 140 Corridor to better support for commercial development, as well as expansion of the Industrial Zone. A community-driven planning process for the corridor has not been implemented to date. The plan also suggests establishing a floating Village Retail Zone district. This has been implemented. Opportunities for increasing public and private economic development capacity were also identified. Suggestions included designating a staff person such as the Town Administrator to work with existing and new businesses and encouraging formation of a business organization. These suggestions are revisited and explored later in this chapter.

Community Development Plan (2005)

In 2005 the Town completed a Community Development Plan that focused on housing, economic development, open space protection, and transportation. Implementation of the Plan's economic development recommendations has been mixed. The plan called for reaffirming priority development locations identified in the Comprehensive Plan and reviewing the zoning bylaw for impediments or barriers to potential commercial or industrial development within those areas. This has been done but requires periodic review and additional zoning updates. The plan also suggested encouraging village style design at the intersection of Routes 140 and 70 through design standards and the types of uses allowed. The plan identified a need to streamline the permitting process and modernize environmental performance standards.

Route 140 Corridor Study (2010)

In 2010, the Town commissioned a corridor study for Route 140 / Shrewsbury Street. The study sought to advance the Town's economic goals for the corridor. It looked at land use, infrastructure and utilities, and local capacity. Recommendations from the study include the following zoning changes:

- Establish a Neighborhood Business District in the vicinity of the Route 140-Route 70 intersection.
- Change the Industrial District to the Flexible Business Development District.
- Establish a Shrewsbury Street Business District on the south side of Route 140.
- Establish a Mixed-Use Industrial District on the north side of Route 140.
- Adjust the use regulations and dimensional controls for all districts along Route 140.
- Bring off-street parking requirements in line with industry standards and create flexibility for the Planning Board to reduce or waive parking requirements.
- Eliminate the Limited Industrial District.
- Update Zoning Bylaw definitions and procedures for site plan review.

The plan also called for verifying the capacity of the existing water supply and distribution system to support additional development on Route 140 and determine improvements that may be required.

Additional recommendations focused on capacity building. The plan called for establishing a Route 140 Corridor Advisory Committee that includes property owners and business owners to act as a sounding board for implementation and to advance ideas concerning the corridor's development; maintaining the Applicant Advisory Committee (AAC) as an information and technical assistance resource to business property owners and developers; and retaining an economic development consultant to assist the Town on an as-needed basis.

Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan (2021)

The Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan focused on Route 140. The plan explores challenges and barriers to economic growth with a focus on tactical, strategic project recommendations. Projects identified in the plan focused on capacity building and placemaking through aesthetic improvements and programming. Identified projects include establishment of an Economic Development Committee; sidewalk, bike path, and access management on the western segment of Route 140; collaborating with property owners on aesthetic improvements and programming in the western segment of Route 140; review of zoning and development of design guidelines; creation of a facade or storefront improvement program; and review of permitting processes and procedures to identify opportunities to streamline permitting and enhance capacity.

Economic History

Overview¹

The Town of Boylston originally existed as a part of Shrewsbury until 1786. The natural topography and soil type in Boylston proved difficult for colonial agricultural expansion, limiting development to the western half of town. Early colonial settlers chose dairying and orcharding as primary agricultural crops due to the rocky and hilly terrain. Railroad connection in Boylston was not seen until the 1890's, slowing transportation and accessibility. The town's agricultural land supply was drastically changed by the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir in 1905, which led to flooding of the best agricultural lands and the conversion of manufacturing lands to watershed reservations. Suburban development in the Morningdale neighborhood began in the early 20th century due to Worcester's influence in the town's southwest region. Commercial and light industrial development in Boylston has concentrated along the Route 140 corridor. Although Boylston is currently on the periphery of the current regional industrial development core, the I-290 connection stimulates suburban development.

Present day Boylston is a bedroom community that retains its rural, small-town, and natural character. Boylston residents cherish the town's abundant natural resources. Nearly a third of the town is owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and managed by its Division of Conservation and Recreation (in the early 1900s, approximately 4,000 acres of Boylston was taken for the creation of the Wachusett Reservoir). More than two-thirds of the town is subject to the Watershed Protection Act, leaving limited developable land.² Commercial and light industrial development

¹ This subsection is informed by and summarizes relevant sections of the Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Boylston (1983).

² Route 140 Corridor Study (2010).

clusters in several areas, especially Route 140. Proximity to an Interstate 290 (I-290) interchange and the City of Worcester make the area a desirable location for development, despite its lack of wastewater infrastructure. The corridor hosts several industrial and light industrial uses, including warehousing and distribution, especially in its eastern segment near I-290. Small businesses are common throughout the corridor, with consumer establishments such as restaurants and retail more prominent in its western segment. The Route 70/Morningdale neighborhood also hosts some limited, non-residential development.

Consistent with state and local growth forecasts, demand for commercial, light industrial, and housing development is expected to increase. What this growth looks like, where it is located, and the goals it serves must be defined by the community.

Economic History³

Colonial Period (1675-1775)

Boylston began primarily as an agricultural settlement, with strengths in cattle grazing and grains, orchard trading, and clay resources. The town relied on mills located on French and Sewall Brook, which have since flooded. Sawyer's Mills, operating from the mid-18th Century until the creation of the Wachusett Reservoir, included a saw and grist mill, clothier's mill, fulling mill, and neat's-foot oil mill. Commercially, Boylston residents operated four taverns.

Federal Period (1775-1830)

Boylston remained heavily involved in agriculture in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, following regional trends. Orchard growth thrived due to the topographical nature of Boylston, expanding to 30 cider mills by 1806. The separation of West Boylston and Boylston in 1808 caused a loss of Boylston's previous waterpower site, two sawmills, and grist mill, and a fulling mill. A brickyard located north of Green Hill was established in 1807, increasing brickmaking as a profession. Tax lists from the early 19th century count a few housewrights, tanners, clothiers, blacksmiths, and over 100 farmers. Sawyer Mill remained as a waterpower source after the separation of West Boylston.

Early Industrial Period (1830-1870)

As agricultural practices continued to employ most Boylston residents, more advanced manufacturing establishments and progressive industries arose, including a boot and shoe making storefront, palm leaf hat and straw braid production, and comb making. As smaller manufacturing operations dwindled by mid-century, wood products, the cotton mill, and dairy production picked up speed.

Late Industrial Period (1870-1915)

The Late Industrial Period brought the demolition of Sawyer's Mills village for the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir. Virtually eliminating manufacturing and most taxable properties caused a population decline of more than 50% over five years. Agriculture continued to grow during this period due to demand from Worcester and Boston. Dairying remained a profitable industry. Mining briefly gained popularity in hopes of gold.

Early Modern Period and Present Day (1915-Today)

The Boylston economy closely mirrored the late industrial period in the early modern period, with no apparent commercial or industrial growth. Orchards, dairy and stock farms, and market gardens remained top industries.

In the 21st century, Boylston is a predominantly rural and residential community. Located on Interstate 290 halfway between Worcester and Interstate 495, it is a central point for southern New England transportation and distribution. Much of the Wachusett Reservoir is located within town boundaries (about a third of the town is owned by the Commonwealth and managed by the Division of Conservation and Recreation), as are the popular Tower Hill Botanical Garden and recently established Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary. The town is a 10-minute drive from Worcester, 30 minutes from Framingham, 50 minutes from Boston, and an hour from Providence. Boylston's Route 140/ Shrewsbury Street in Boylston is uniquely suited to commercial development. It contains a large area of undeveloped land

³ Economic history summarized from Boylston MHC Reconnaissance Survey Report, 1983.

conveniently located for use as distribution centers, light industry, and offices. A few smaller parcels on Route 140 are suitable for retail establishments. Additional development opportunities exist at Hillside, a nearly 300-acre property acquired by the town in 1997. Morningdale, a residential neighborhood with some allowed commercial uses, presents another potential area for commercial growth over the long-term. Overall, more neighborhood scale, mixed-use infill and redevelopment are desired and consistent with the Town’s character.

Summary of Community Input

In spring and fall of 2021, the Master Plan project team conducted town-wide surveys to gauge the community’s preferences across assorted topics. The initial survey focused on priorities and needs. The second survey gauged reception of a vision statement and goals developed in response to the results of the initial survey and analysis of existing conditions. Findings relevant to economic development are presented below.

In the initial survey, residents weighed in on the continued relevance of goals from the prior master plan; the type of land uses and businesses they would like to see; preferences for new development; the role of tourism in Boylston’s future economy; and support for infrastructure investments (e.g., water and sewer) needed for development. As shown in Table ED1, residents largely viewed the goals from the previous master plan as relevant. The survey results indicate especially strong support for “establishing well-defined commercial and industrial areas in town and enact the necessary controls to achieve aesthetic compatibility to preserve town character,” and “expanding the tax base through controlled commercial development.”

Table ED1. Community Vision Survey, Relevance of Goals

"Rate each statement by whether you feel it is still relevant to Boylston’s future."	Very Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Not at all Relevant
Expand tax base through controlled commercial development	62%	32%	6%
Establish well-defined commercial and industrial areas in town and enact the necessary controls to achieve aesthetic compatibility to preserve town character	74%	22%	4%
Increase employment opportunities	30%	49%	21%
Encourage the appropriate growth of small business, convenience stores, and retail services to meet daily needs of residents as the town matures	51%	35%	13%

More specific preferences around commercial development include support for more small businesses. As shown in Figure ED1, a significant percentage of respondents favored more small retail shops, restaurants, clean energy production, agricultural businesses, and customer services. Respondents strongly preferred that new development concentrate along Route 140. A full 70% of respondents indicated that Route 140 is the best place for new commercial development, with 63% in favor of focusing business expansion on existing buildings. Another 57% would like to encourage new mixed-use development in the corridor. While less popular than Route 140, a significant percent of respondents indicated that Morningdale is suitable for expanded commercial and mixed-use development. Residents also indicated that the Hillside/Gough House site “is an important Town asset that should be carefully redeveloped to maximize its economic potential.” More than half of respondents agreed with this statement, and another 29% felt neutral about the topic. Also noteworthy is fairly strong support for targeted sewer infrastructure. As shown in Figure ED2, just 36% of survey respondents opposed development of sewer anywhere in town. Again, the preferred location for these improvements is along major commercial corridors- Route 70 and/or Route 140.

Figure ED1. Community Vision Survey: Beneficial Business Types

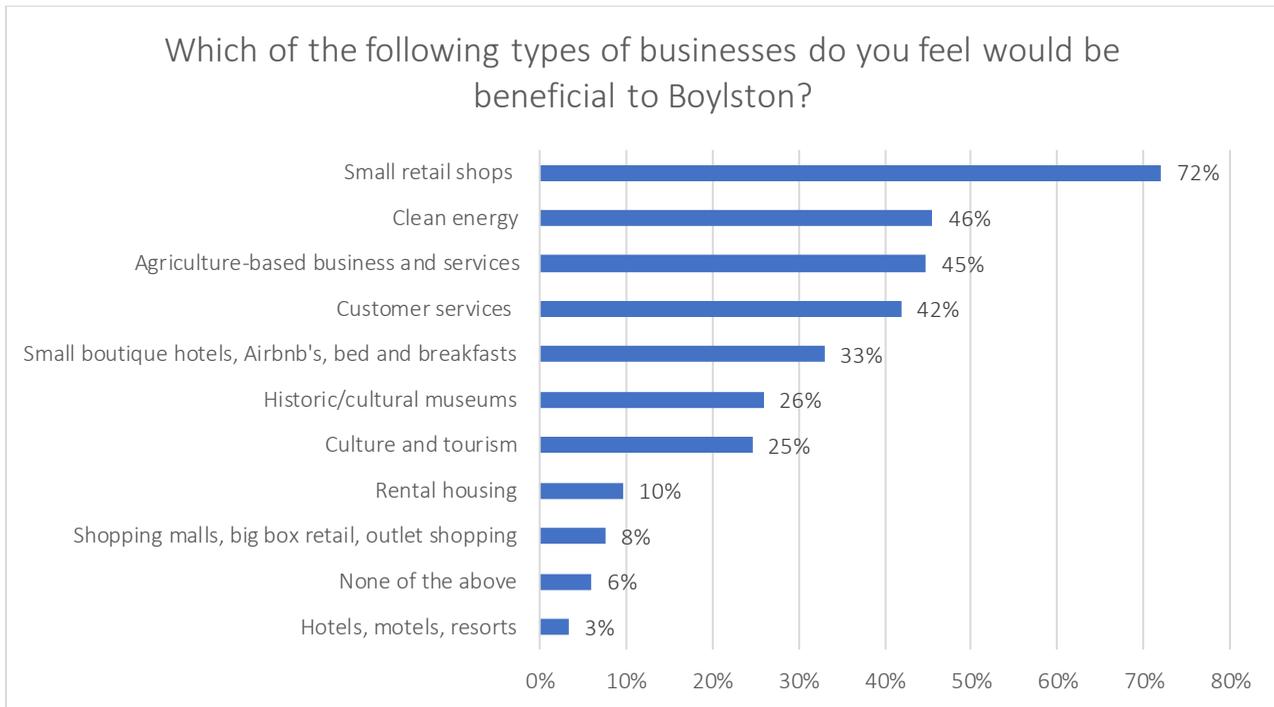
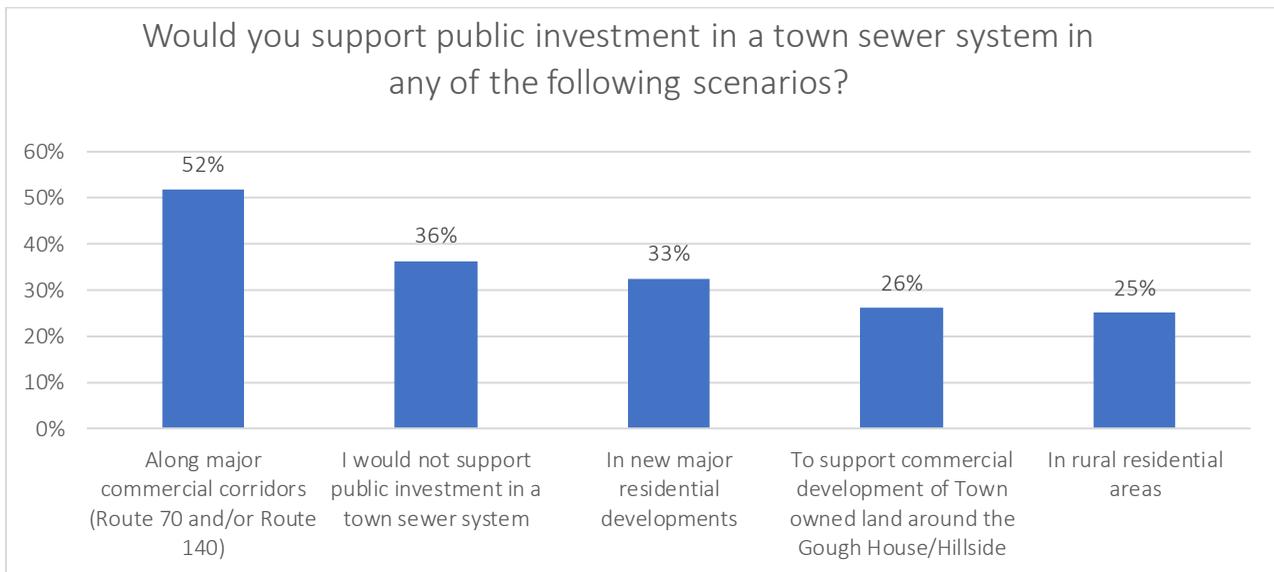


Figure ED2. Community Vision Survey: Support for Public Investment in Sewer System



In the subsequent survey, respondents were asked to identify the relevance of draft goals to Boylston’s future. Respondents found that most of the draft economic development goals were very relevant or somewhat relevant to Boylston’s future. As shown in Table ED2, the goals perceived as most relevant were “Ensure business development that maintains Boylston’s small-town character,” and “Grow and diversify the tax base to promote a fiscally-sound future.”

Table ED2. Vision and Goals Survey, Relevance of Goals

"Rate each statement by the extent you think each goal is relevant to Boylston's future"	Very Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Not at all Relevant
Expand capacity to support and facilitate business development.	49%	38%	14%
Take a proactive and responsive approach to economic development that supports existing businesses and encourages new ones.	63%	31%	7%
Pursue an economic development strategy that evaluates the cumulative impacts of individual projects.	65%	31%	5%
Ensure business development that maintains Boylston's small-town character.	71%	25%	4%
Improve the visual aesthetics of businesses along Route 140 to better reflect the small-town and green/natural character that residents desire.	63%	27%	9%
Grow and diversify the tax base to promote a fiscally-sound future.	70%	24%	5%
Improve the marketing of Boylston's natural spaces.	37%	45%	18%
Encourage small, consumer-oriented, and boutique businesses for Boylston residents and visitors to enjoy.	54%	36%	9%
Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow and promote more pedestrian and bicycle access to businesses.	61%	27%	12%

While it is difficult to establish absolute consensus on such topics, the community preferences and priorities identified in the survey provide clear direction for economic development strategies. The following summary of existing economic conditions quantifies and provides more detail on the needs identified above.

Existing Conditions

An analysis of existing conditions provides a baseline from which to measure future growth. It helps identify issues and opportunities, and contextualize needs identified through community outreach. The following analysis helped inform the economic development strategies identified later in this chapter.

Income

As shown in Table ED3, the Boylston median household income (MHI) is \$97,591, which is significantly higher than Worcester County's MHI of \$78,345 and Massachusetts' MHI of \$85,843. The median income for nonfamily households is \$53,125, while the MHI for family households is \$117,310. More specifically, married-couple families have an MHI of \$136,389. Boylston's Median Household Income has increased by 11% since 2010, similar to trends in West Boylston, Clinton, and Berlin yet lower than Shrewsbury, Northborough, and Sterling. Figure ED3 highlights the degree to which Boylston's median family income is higher than Massachusetts' median family income of \$103,126 but similar to Worcester County's median family income of \$116,660. Figure ED4 details percent of households by income bracket in Boylston and Worcester County. As shown below, Boylston has a much greater percentage of households earning between \$75,000 and \$99,000, as well as those earning over \$200,000, than Worcester County as a whole.

Table ED3. Median Household Incomes Comparison

Geography	2010	2019	% Change 2010-2019
Clinton	\$49,705	\$53,972	9%
West Boylston	\$79,906	\$88,906	11%
Boylston	\$88,214	\$97,591	11%
Berlin	\$92,917	\$99,297	7%
Shrewsbury	\$85,697	\$104,766	22%
Sterling	\$102,115	\$121,458	19%
Northborough	\$102,969	\$128,613	25%
Worcester County	\$61,212	\$78,345	28%
Massachusetts	\$62,072	\$81,215	31%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2010; American Community Survey 2015-2019

Figure ED3. Boylston Median Household Income

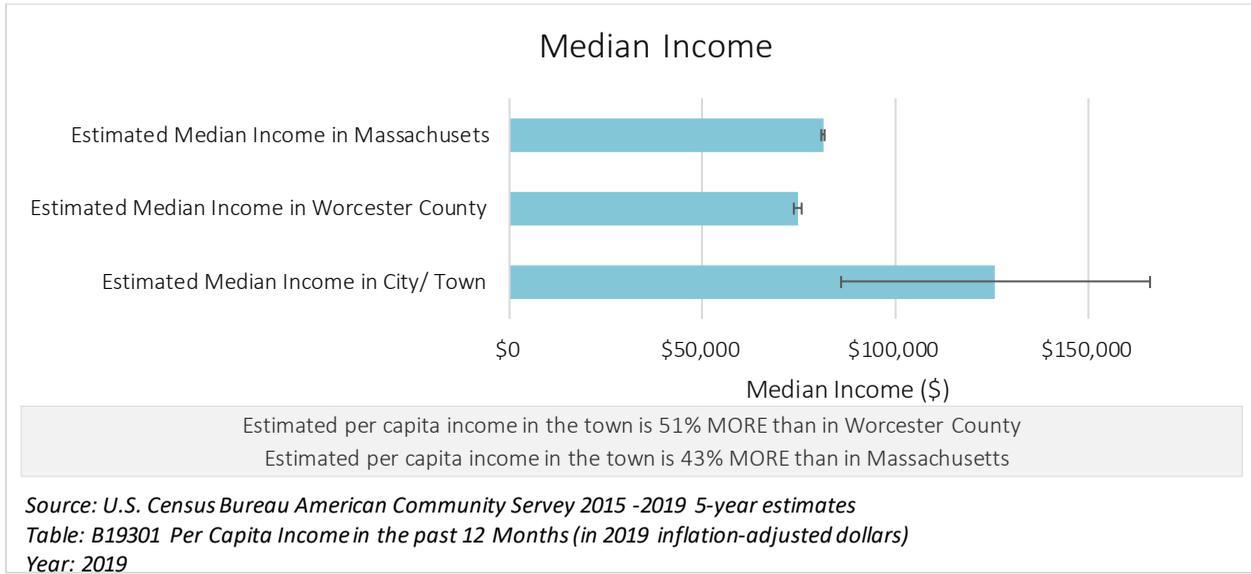
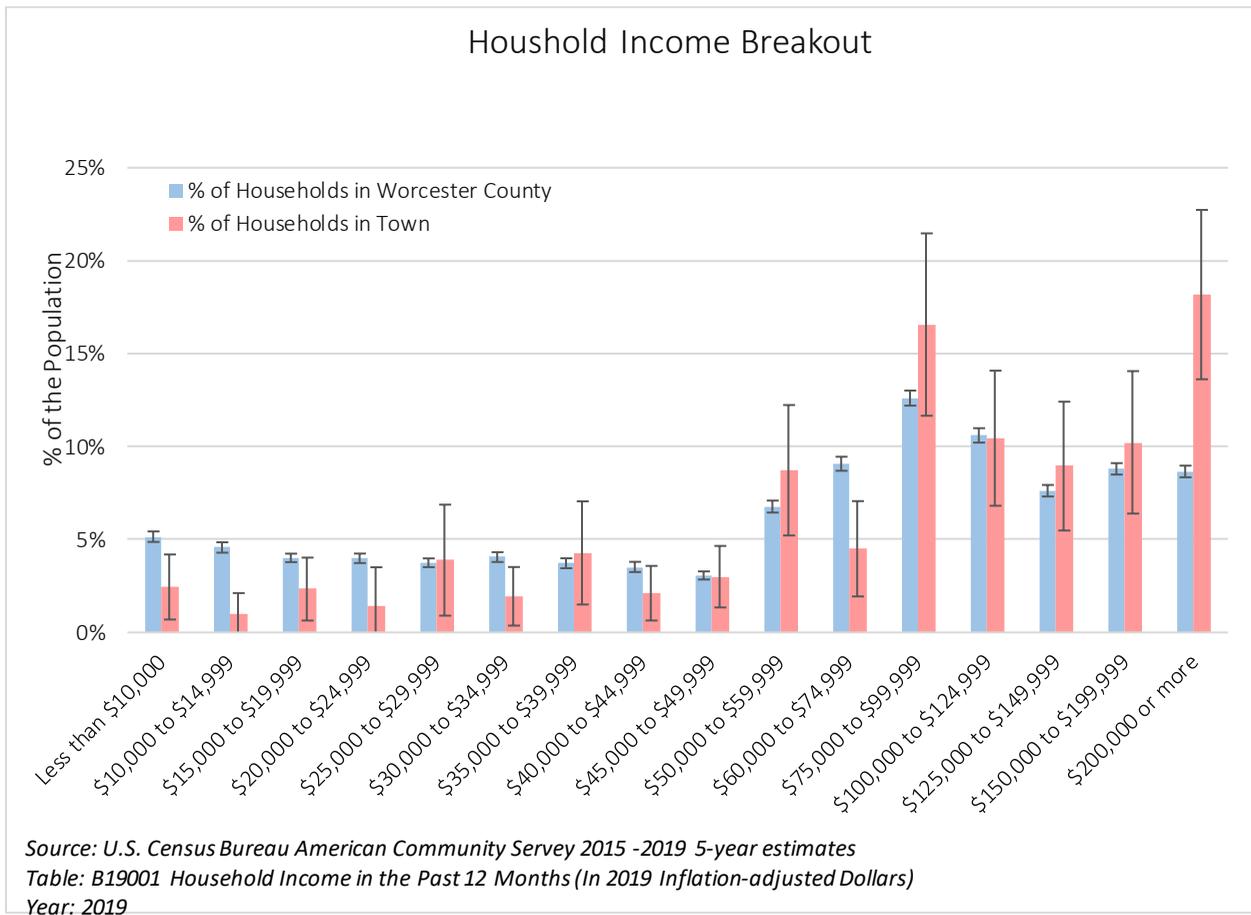


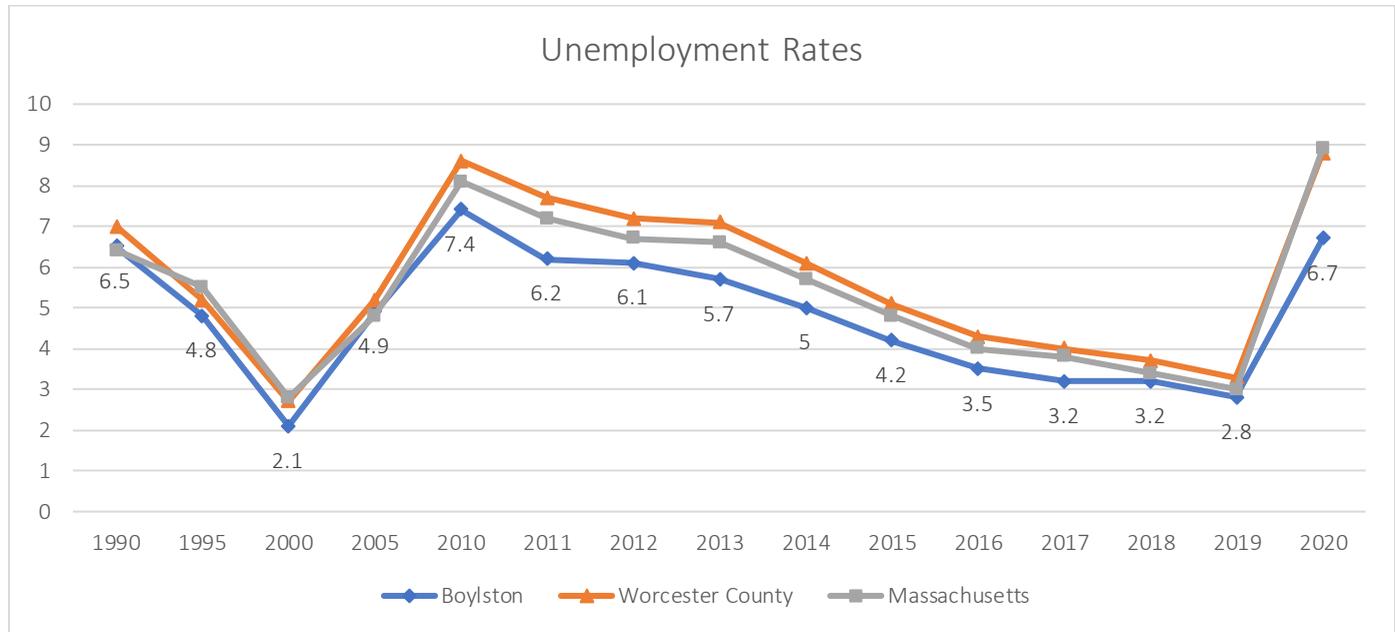
Figure ED4. Boylston Household Income Breakout



Employment

As of December 2021, Boylston’s labor force includes 2,781 residents.⁴ According to the Massachusetts Labor Force and Unemployment Data Reports, Boylston’s December 2021 unemployment rate was 3.2%, which is comparable to the Massachusetts rate of 3.5%. Boylston’s labor force has increased by approximately 200 residents since 2010. This nine percent growth rate is higher than that of Massachusetts (four percent). The unemployment rate in Boylston has fluctuated since 1990, closely following county and state trends. It is important to note the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused the 2.8% rate of unemployment in 2019 to rise to 6.7% in 2020. The current rate of 3.2% shows significant improvement since early 2020.

Figure ED5. Boylston Unemployment Rates



Source: Massachusetts Labor Force and Unemployment Data Reports, December 2021

Table ED4 presents the percentage of Boylston workers by occupation. Understanding the employed labor force’s division by occupation type is also helpful when planning for future job growth. Occupation data provides an added layer of insight into the makeup of the employment base and the kinds of employers that provide local wage and salary jobs. Most Boylston workers are employed by private companies in management, business, science, and arts occupations. Figure ED6 presents these findings in more detail. Educational attainment overlaps with job choice, workforce skillset, and the wages people are likely to earn. Statewide, Bachelor’s degrees have become a minimum credential to enter the workforce. Trending toward higher levels of educational attainment is particularly evident in Boylston because residents with at least a Bachelor’s degree make up 58% of Boylston’s population between 25 and 64, compared to 37% of Massachusetts’ 25-64 population.

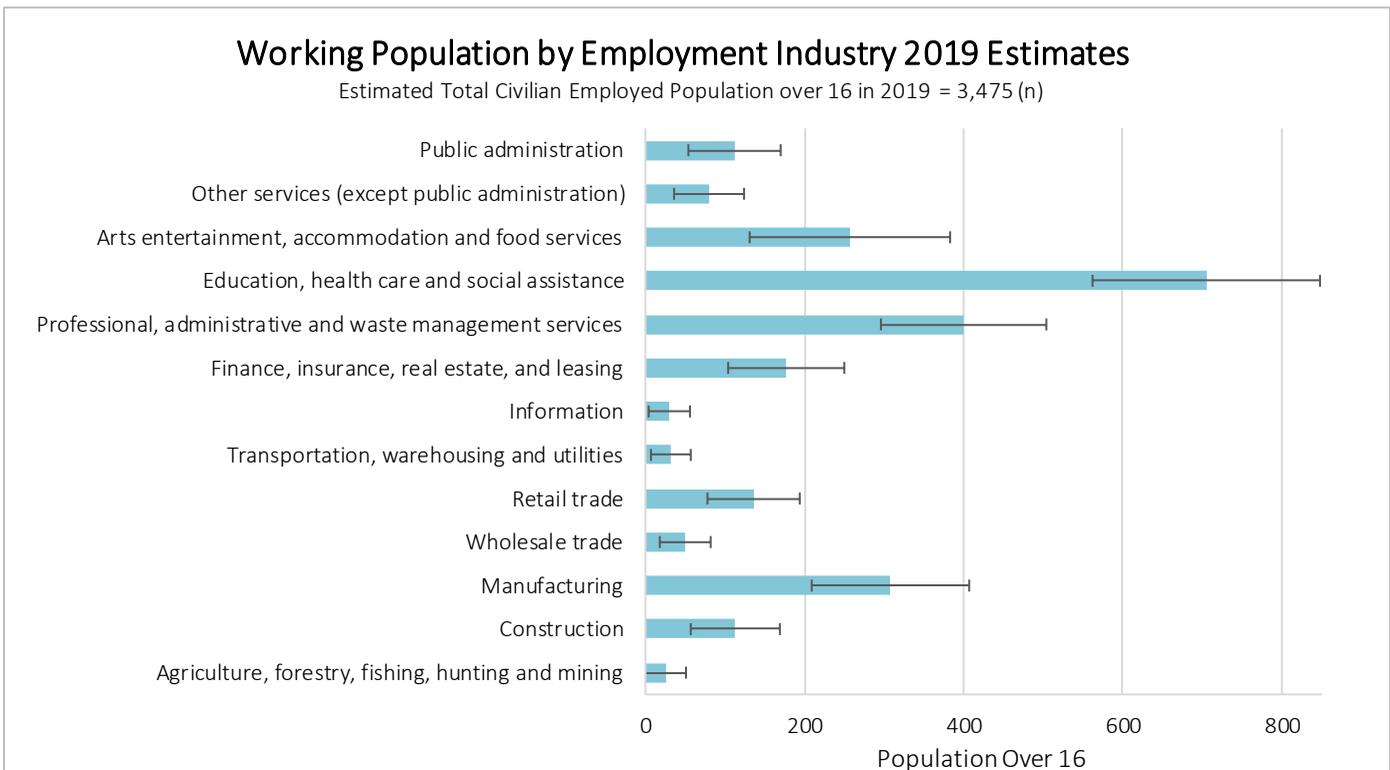
⁴ Labor force is defined as residents 16 years and older who are employed or looking for work.

Table ED4: Occupation by Class of Worker

	Total Estimate	Private company employees	Self-Employed, Own Inc Business	Private nonprofit	Government Employees	Self-Employed Own Not Inc. Business & Unpaid Family Workers
Civilian employed population 16 years and over	2,425	66.3%	2.2%	8.7%	13.5%	9.4%
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	1,313	63.7%	2.1%	9.15	14.5%	10.7%
Sales and office occupations	435	77.0%	0%	6.2%	7.4%	9.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	435	61.5%	7.4%	0%	5.4%	25.7%
Service Occupations	408	63.5%	0%	13.5%	21.1%	2%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	148	71.1%	13.2%	7.4%	8.3%	0%

Source: American Community Survey 2015-2019

Figure ED6: Working Population by Industry



Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2015 -2019 5-year estimates

Table: 2019 DP03 Selected Economic Characteristics

Year: 2019

The average travel time to work in Boylston is 28.7 minutes, comparable to Worcester County’s average travel time of 30.5 minutes and Massachusetts’ time of 31 minutes. As shown in Table ED5, 81% of Boylston workers commute by car, truck, or van. Out of those commuters, 78% drove alone while five percent carpooled. Less than one percent of Boylston workers used public transportation to commute, while three percent walked, three percent used a taxi or taxi equivalent, and zero percent used a bicycle. Approximately 10% of workers worked from home in 2019.

Table ED5: How Boylston Residents Get to Work

Commute Characteristic	Count/ %
Workers Age 16+ Commute Base	2,179
Workers 16+ Took Public Transportation (%)	1%
Workers 16+ Took a Bus or Trolley Bus (%)	0%
Workers 16+ Took the Railroad (%)	-
Workers 16+ Bicycled (%)	0%
Workers 16+ Walked (%)	3%
Commute to Work: <5 minutes (%)	2%
Commute to Work: 5-9 minutes (%)	6%
Commute to Work: 10-14 minutes (%)	15%
Commute to Work: 15-19 minutes (%)	18%
Commute to Work: 20-24 minutes (%)	19%
Commute to Work: 25-29 minutes (%)	6%
Commute to Work: 30-34 minutes (%)	11%
Commute to Work: 35-39 minutes (%)	3%
Commute to Work: 40-44 minutes (%)	1%
Commute to Work: 45-59 minutes (%)	7%
Commute to Work: 60-89 minutes (%)	7%
Commute to Work: 90 minutes or more (%)	5%

Source: 2015-2019 ACS Commuting Flows

Finally, occupation data provided further insight into the makeup of the employment base and the kinds of employers that provide local wage and salary jobs. Table ED6 lists Boylston’s largest employers.

Table ED6. Boylston Largest Employers

Company Name	Number of Employees	Industry
Frito-Lay Inc	100-249	Other Food Manufacturing
Landscaping Etc Inc	100-249	Other Specialty Trade Contractors
Mt Pleasant Country Club	100-249	Travel Arrangement and Reservation Services
Berlin-Boylston School Dist	50-99	Elementary and Secondary Schools
Boylston Elementary School	50-99	Elementary and Secondary Schools
Cyprian Keyes Golf Club	50-99	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
Haven Country Club-Golf	50-99	Other Amusement and Recreation Industries
Tahanto Regional High School	50-99	Elementary and Secondary Schools
Tower Hill Botanic Garden	50-99	Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions
Boylston Fire Dept	20-49	Justice, Public Order, and Safety Activities
Boylston Town Admin	20-49	Executive, Legislative, and Other General Govt. Support
CREST Technologies, Inc.	25-60	management of technology deployments, trade show logistics, and corporate events in education and enterprise markets
Entravision Communications	20-49	Radio and Television Broadcasting
Honematic Machine Corp	20-49	N/A
Loomis Armored US	20-49	Investigation and Security Services
Red River Hospital	20-49	Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Hospitals
Summer Wildlife	20-49	Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions
Drain-A-Way Inc	10-19	Remediation and Other Waste Management Services
Dunkin'	10-19	Restaurants and Other Eating Places
Fountain Services Inc	10-19	Wholesale Electronic Markets and Agents and Brokers
Frontline Network Systems Inc	10-19	N/A

Economic Development

G & L Plumbing & Heating Inc	10-19	Remediation and Other Waste Management Services
Haven Country Club Maintenance	10-19	Civic and Social Organizations
PJ Keating Co	10-19	Highway, Street, and Bridge Construction
R P Masiello Inc	10-19	Residential Building Construction

Tax Rates

There are many factors that inform how attractive a municipality is to developers and business owners. Tax rates are one such factor. Boylston operates on a single-payer property tax rate (i.e., there is one tax rate regardless of the type of property). This is advantageous to business owners and developers; in a split rate system, commercial and industrial property owners often pay a much higher tax rate than residential property owners, which can discourage commercial and industrial development. Table ED7 presents tax rates by class for Boylston and surrounding communities. As shown below, the tax rate for commercial and industrial property in Boylston is consistent with other nearby single-payer systems, and much less than in nearby communities with split rates.

Table ED7: FY22 Tax Rates for Comparison

Municipality	Residential Tax Rate	Open Space Tax Rate	Commercial Tax Rate	Industrial Tax Rate	Personal Property Tax Rate
Berlin	15.63	15.63	27.18	27.18	27.02
Boylston	15.84	0.00	15.84	15.84	15.84
Clinton	14.91	0.00	25.06	25.06	25.06
Northborough	16.49	0.00	16.49	16.49	16.49
Shrewsbury	14.11	0.00	14.11	14.11	14.11
Sterling	15.25	0.00	15.25	15.25	15.25
West Boylston	17.68	0.00	17.68	17.68	17.68

Source: Division of Local Services, Department of Revenue, Data Analytics and Resources Bureau. Community Comparison Report. 2022.

An analysis of tax levy by property class reveals the extent to which non-residential properties contribute to the tax base. In Boylston, the Industrial tax levy is particularly limited, despite a significant number of industrial properties. In part, this may reflect the Town's use of tax incentives to attract new development. Table ED8 presents tax levy by property class and the percentage of the tax base each type contributes on a comparative basis. As shown below, Boylston's property tax base is nearly 86% residential. This percentage is on the higher side when compared to nearby towns.

Table ED8: Tax Base by Class

Municipality	Residential Levy	Open Space Levy	Commercial Levy	Industrial Levy	Personal Prop Levy	Total Tax Levy	R/O % of Total Levy	CIP as % of Total Levy
Berlin	8,649,688	31,846	3,334,472	341,074	549,892	12,906,972	67.26	32.74
Boylston	13,100,146	0	1,525,240	286,821	384,577	15,296,784	85.64	14.36
Clinton	21,925,580	0	1,989,633	2,581,178	3,359,417	29,855,808	73.44	26.56
Northborough	40,849,663	0	5,918,202	7,133,269	1,828,082	55,729,216	73.30	26.70
Shrewsbury	86,899,506	0	7,612,572	2,583,782	1,451,350	98,547,211	88.18	11.82
Sterling	17,947,198	0	777,902	956,239	763,074	20,444,413	87.79	12.21
West Boylston	16,551,310	0	1,218,683	942,148	1,361,195	20,073,335	82.45	17.55

Source: Division of Local Services, Department of Revenue, Data Analytics and Resources Bureau. Community Comparison Report. 2022.

Commercial Zoning

The Town of Boylston contains six zoning districts that focus on commercial uses. Each of these districts is located along or adjacent to Route 140 or Route 70.

Neighborhood Business (NB) District: The NB District consists of 22 acres located on the northern portion of Route 140 from its intersection with Route 70/ Main Street until Sewall Street. The purpose of the Neighborhood Business District is to accommodate smaller-scale businesses and residential premises in mixed-use buildings. Landmarks include the 1921 Diner, Post Office, and Greenleaf Plaza.

Flexible Business Development (FBD) District: The FBD District consists of 263 acres on the southern side of Route 140. The district's frontage is interrupted by the Route 140 Business District. The district also fronts on Sewall Street. The purpose of the FBD District is to accommodate a mix of commercial and light industrial uses, in some cases by special permit. Landmarks include Webster First Federal Credit Union, and the Shell station.

Route 140 Business (RB) District: The Route 140 Business District is located along the south side of Route 140 in the south-central area of Boylston. The district permits commercial uses at a larger scale than allowed by the NB District, as well as light industrial uses, in some cases by special permit. Landmarks include Premiere Self Storage, Fuller RV, Boylston Garage, LEI, and Honematic Machine Corporation.

Village Business (VB) District: The VB District consists of a 49-acre strip of frontage on the southern segment of Route 70. The purpose of the VB District is to provide small-scale retail and personal service uses for the convenience of those residing in the neighboring area. Landmarks include Elevation Fitness and Bob's Barbershop.

Highway Business (HB) District: The Highway Business District consists of a 9-acre strip of frontage on Route 70. The purpose of the HB district is to provide for uses of a commercial nature that require adequate highway exposure and access. Such uses are likely to generate a significant amount of vehicular traffic in conjunction with their operation, and therefore would be inappropriately located along the majority of the Town's streets. Landmarks include F & S Motors and access points to the Hillside complex.

Commercial (C) District: The Commercial District consists of an 11-acre strip of frontage along Route 70, north of its intersection with Route 140. The purpose of the C District is to provide for the retail and personal service requirements of the residents of the Town by establishing this District in areas where access is acceptable, and where adequate off-street parking can be provided.

Industrial Zoning

Boylston has several areas that host or are suitable for Industrial and Light Industrial uses.

IP District: The IP District consists of 542 acres on Route 70, south of its intersection with Route 140. The purpose of the IP District is to provide facilities and space for executive offices, research and development, and light manufacturing and assembly of product components. It is a secondary purpose of this District to provide facilities and space for training of persons engaged in management, sales, or manufacturing industries. Along Route 70, landmarks include Frito Lay, Hillside Complex (including the Town Hall and Police Station), and other municipal buildings. The South Bay of Wachusett Reservoir is located adjacent to the district in the north; more than half of the district's frontage on Route 140 and Route 70 is in a Wellhead Protection Area.

Mixed Use Industrial (MUI): The Town's MUI District consisting of 43 acres located along the northerly portion of Route 140, due east of the Neighborhood Business District. The district accommodates a limited mix of industrial uses and office uses and is partially overlaid by the Residential Office overlay (which allows small-scale professional offices in residential districts where, due to location on high volume roadways, existing dwellings are adversely affected and poorly suited for residential use). Landmarks include Brookside Apartments, Fountain Services, and Philips Precision.

The Flexible Business District and Residential Business Districts also provide for light industrial uses.

Commercial and Retail Business

Because residents indicated a strong desire for addition small, consumer-oriented businesses, a close examination of the Town’s retail sector is warranted.

One way to assess retail sector health is measuring the supply versus demand of retail goods. Figures exist for how much money consumers typically spend on assorted items. If local stores are not selling an equivalent amount of such items, residents are likely purchasing those items from businesses outside of town. Such economic “leakage” out of the local economy is sometimes the result of goods not being available at stores within the Town. High amounts of leakage can indicate that new businesses providing such goods within the trade area could be viable.

Many of the highest leakage rates in Boylston are in industry groups that may not be desirable (or appropriate targets given the challenges faced by certain types of brick-and-mortar stores in the era of e-commerce and expanding delivery services). Examples include Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers, Automobile Dealers, Gasoline Stations, Department Stores, and Electronics & Appliance Stores. However, retail types consistent with priorities of residents (and potentially appropriate for today’s online marketplace) have moderate to high leakage factors, including:

- Grocery Stores
- Restaurants and Other Eating Places
- Building Materials, Garden Equipment, and Supply Stores
- Health and Personal Care Stores
- General Merchandise Stores

Such enterprises may be appropriate targets of business recruitment strategies. Table ED9 shows the overall supply, demand, and leakage in Boylston, along with breakouts for retail trade and food and drink. Figure ED7 depicts the leakage factor by subgroup in more detail.

Table ED9: Boylston Annual Retail Supply, Demand, and Leakage

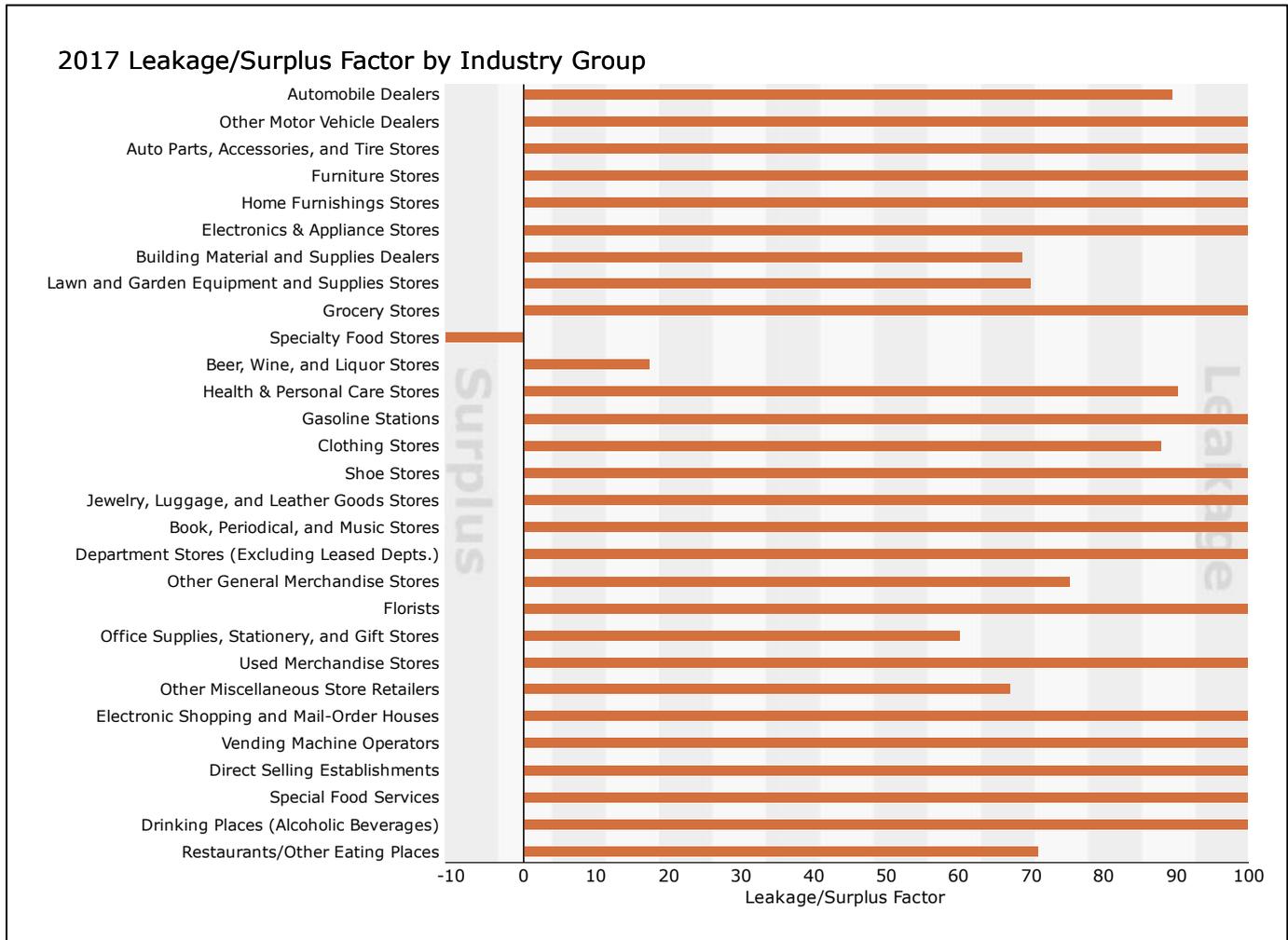
Industry Summary	Retail Potential	Retail Sales	Retail Gap	Leakage Factor
Total Retail Trade and Food & Drink	104,194,968	8,154,808	96,040,160	85.5
Total Retail Trade	93,737,836	6,545,996	87,191,840	86.9
Total Food & Drink	10,457,132	1,608,812	8,848,320	73.3
Industry Group	Retail Potential	Retail Sales	Retail Gap	Leakage Factor
Motor Vehicle & Parts Dealers	19,117,230	875,953	18,241,277	91.2
Automobile Dealers	15,976,203	875,953	15,100,250	89.6
Other Motor Vehicle Dealers	1,644,959	0	1,644,959	100.0
Auto Parts, Accessories & Tire Stores	1,496,068	0	1,496,068	100.0
Furniture & Home Furnishings Stores	2,767,664	0	2,767,664	100.0
Furniture Stores	1,451,699	0	1,451,699	100.0
Home Furnishings Stores	1,315,965	0	1,315,965	100.0
Electronics & Appliance Stores	3,978,317	0	3,978,317	100.0
Bldg. Materials, Garden Equip. & Supply Stores	6,526,316	1,198,102	5,328,214	69.0
Bldg. Material & Supplies Dealers	6,004,393	1,105,977	4,898,416	68.9
Lawn & Garden Equip & Supply Stores	521,923	92,125	429,798	70.0
Food & Beverage Stores	17,848,289	2,212,512	15,635,777	77.9
Grocery Stores	15,208,394	0	15,208,394	100.0
Specialty Food Stores	666,296	827,647	-161,351	-10.8
Beer, Wine & Liquor Stores	1,973,599	1,384,865	588,734	17.5
Health & Personal Care Stores	6,049,763	304,887	5,744,876	90.4
Gasoline Stations	8,059,376	0	8,059,376	100.0
Clothing & Clothing Accessories Stores	6,843,709	306,477	6,537,232	91.4
Clothing Stores	4,815,862	306,477	4,509,385	88.0

Economic Development

Shoe Stores	822,984	0	822,984	100.0
Jewelry, Luggage & Leather Goods Stores	1,204,863	0	1,204,863	100.0
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Book & Music Stores	3,615,424	511,508	3,103,916	75.2
Sporting Goods/Hobby/Musical Instr Stores	3,181,805	511,508	2,670,297	72.3
Book, Periodical & Music Stores	433,619	0	433,619	100.0
General Merchandise Stores	11,427,072	462,012	10,965,060	92.2
Department Stores Excluding Leased Depts.	8,152,909	0	8,152,909	100.0
Other General Merchandise Stores	3,274,163	462,012	2,812,151	75.3
Miscellaneous Store Retailers	3,733,217	674,545	3,058,672	69.4
Florists	337,820	0	337,820	100.0
Office Supplies, Stationery & Gift Stores	1,242,689	307,736	934,953	60.3
Used Merchandise Stores	289,321	0	289,321	100.0
Other Miscellaneous Store Retailers	1,863,387	366,809	1,496,578	67.1
Non-store Retailers	3,771,459	0	3,771,459	100.0
Electronic Shopping & Mail-Order Houses	3,226,433	0	3,226,433	100.0
Vending Machine Operators	47,312	0	47,312	100.0
Direct Selling Establishments	497,714	0	497,714	100.0
Food Services & Drinking Places	10,457,132	1,608,812	8,848,320	73.3
Special Food Services	392,781	0	392,781	100.0
Drinking Places – Alcoholic Beverages	570,035	0	570,035	100.0
Restaurants/Other Eating Places	9,494,316	1,608,812	7,885,504	71.0

Source: Esri and Data Axle. Esri 2021 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace.

Figure ED7: Boylston Retail Leakage Factor by Industry



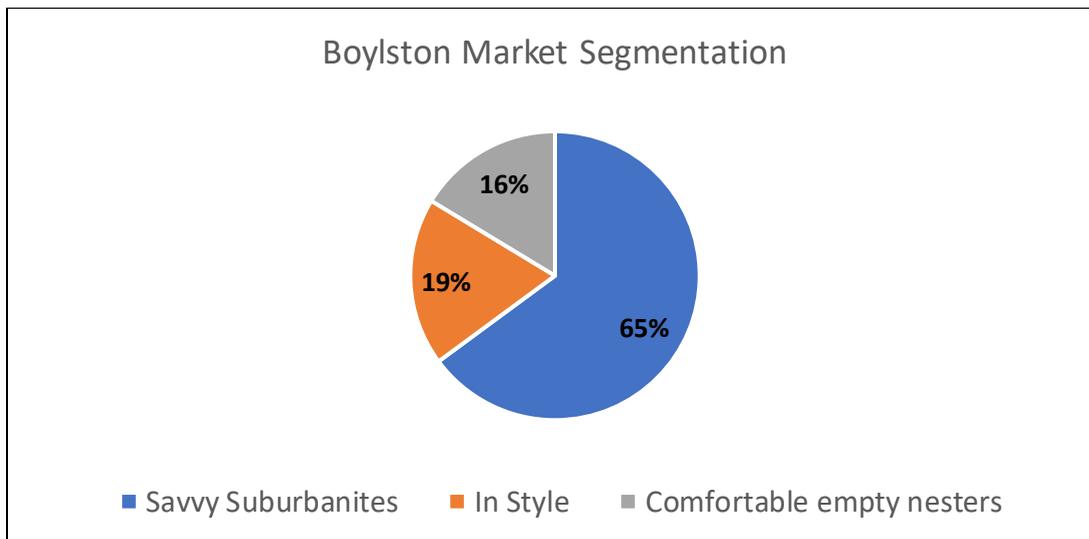
Source: Esri and Data Axle. Esri 2021 Updated Demographics. Esri 2017 Retail MarketPlace.

Consumer Profiles and Market Segmentation

In conjunction with retail leakage analysis, an examination of consumer profiles and market segmentation can provide insight into the types of businesses that have the potential to do well in an area. The following analysis looks at the consumer personas of Boylston residents across dominant demographic and socioeconomic groups. It is a summation of the local consumer base that can be used to frame marketing materials and inform discussions with site selectors. It can also be used by local businesses to target their advertising and understand their potential client base.

Market segmentation is calculated by dividing residential neighborhoods into distinct groups based on their socioeconomic and demographic composition. Neighborhoods with the most similar characteristics are grouped together, and neighborhoods showing divergent characteristics are separated. ESRI Business Analytics and its Tapestry Segmentation divide America's consumers into 67 distinct groupings. There are three dominant consumer profiles in Boylston, as shown in Figure ED8.

Figure ED8. Boylston Market Segmentation



Source: ESRI Business Analyst. Tapestry Segmentation Report. 2022.

Each of the above noted consumer groups have distinct purchasing preferences and habits. Details on these preferences and habits are follows:

Savvy Suburbanites: Comprising 66% of Boylston residents, *Savvy Suburbanites* are well educated, well read, and well capitalized. Families include empty nesters and empty nester wannabes, who still have adult children at home. Located in older neighborhoods outside the urban core, their suburban lifestyle includes home remodeling and gardening plus the active pursuit of sports and exercise. They enjoy good food and wine, plus the amenities of the city's cultural events.

- Well-connected consumers that appreciate technology and make liberal use of it for everything from shopping and banking to staying current and communicating.
- Informed shoppers that do their research prior to purchasing and focus on quality.

In Style: Comprising 19% of Boylston residents, *In Style* consumers embrace an urbane lifestyle that includes support of the arts, travel, and extensive reading. They are connected and make full use of the advantages of mobile devices. Professional couples or single households without children, they have the time to focus on their homes and their interests. The population is slightly older and already planning for their retirement.

- The median household income of \$73,000 reveals an affluent market with income supplemented by investments and a substantial net worth.
- Connected and knowledgeable, they carry smartphones and use many of the features.

- Attentive to price, they use coupons, especially mobile coupons.

Comfortable empty nesters: Comprising 17 percent of Boylston residents, *Comfortable Empty Nesters* are a large, growing segment of older residents, with nearly half of all householders aged 55 or older; many still live in the suburbs where they grew up. Most are professionals working in government, health care, or manufacturing. These Baby Boomers are earning a comfortable living and benefiting from years of prudent investing and saving. Their net worth is well above average. Many are enjoying the transition from child rearing to retirement. They value their health and financial well-being.

- Most households' income from wages or salaries, but a third also draw income from investments and retirement.
- Comfortable Empty Nesters residents physically and financially active.
- Prefer eating at home instead of dining out.
- Home maintenance is a priority among these homeowners

As Boylston works to attract new businesses and help existing businesses thrive, the combined results of the Retail Leakage Analysis and Market Segmentation Report can help the Town identify viable new business categories and help existing businesses approach marketing in a targeted way.

Agricultural Business

Boylston's early economic history centered on farming. Construction of the Wachusett Reservoir in the early 1900s required that much of this early farmland be sacrificed. Farming then became economically unfeasible around the 1940s, leading to the closure of many operations. By the early 1960s most of Boylston's farms were gone. Today, the town contains limited working landscapes. Much of the land that was farmed in the past has returned to woods. Boylston is a Right to Farm community, which means that agricultural uses are allowed in all districts. The Town also has an Agricultural Commission that encourages the pursuit of and promotes agricultural-based economic opportunities in the Town.

Infrastructure

Boylston has no public wastewater system. The entire Town is served by private septic systems, some of which are in failing condition. The Town is served by five public drinking water wells. The Morningdale area, the Town Center, and several streets north of Route 140 are served by public water. The remainder of the Town, particularly the area north of the Town Center, is served by private wells. Thus, economic development needs to be focused along the Route 140 corridor from Shrewsbury to Route 70 and along the Village Business District on Route 70 in the southwestern portion of the Town.

Access and Location

Boylston's Route 140 / Shrewsbury Street Corridor is well connected to major regional transportation infrastructure. This is in addition to being located approximately 15-20 minutes to Worcester, one hour to Boston, and one hour to Providence, RI. These advantages can be seen by businesses locating distribution facilities in Boylston, such as FedEx's ground transportation facility. On a more localized level, Route 140's direct and indirect access to major transportation routes like I-290, I-190, and Route 146 make it a well-traveled thoroughfare for Boylston residents and residents of nearby towns. This presents an opportunity for drivers passing through to visit businesses in the area.

Capacity

The Town of Boylston has been working to enhance its municipal services and community development capacity. In 2020, the Town hired its first-ever Town Planner, a half-time staff position it shares with a nearby community. Accordingly, the Town is undertaking many first-time or first in a longtime planning initiatives. In 2021 and 2022, the Town undertook several topical planning initiatives, including a Rapid Recovery Plan for the Route 140 Business District and a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness plan. In 2022, the Town established an Economic Development Committee. Despite these positive developments, the Town is understaffed and has limited implementation capacity, especially around economic development. Boylston does not have a dedicated economic development staffer, Business Association, or regular and proactive communications with the business community.

Priority Development Areas

As part of a regional planning process entitled the Central 13 Prioritization Project in 2012, Boylston identified local priority development, preservation, and infrastructure improvement areas. Sites relevant to this chapter are as follows:

- **315 Main Street (43D Priority Development Area):** Home to Frito Lay, this site has room for further development. As of 2021, a proposal for a 94,000 square foot warehouse/storage building, driveways, parking areas, and stormwater management facilities was undergoing development review.
- **141 Shrewsbury (43D Priority Development Area):** This site is now home to Phillips Precision, Inc. is a manufacturing laboratory. A full-service machine shop specializing in short-run production and complex prototypes.
- **Flexible Business Development Zone:** The FBD District consists of 263 acres on the southern side of Route 140, beginning due east of Spruce Pond and running east to the Shrewsbury Line. For approximately _ miles, the district's Route frontage is interrupted by the Route 140 Business District. The Zone also fronts on Sewall Street. The purpose of the FBD District is to accommodate a mix of commercial and light industrial uses, in some cases by special permit. Landmarks include Webster First Federal Credit Union, and the Shell station.
- **Realignment of 140 and East Temple Street:** This project is fully engineered but construction was not put out to bid.
- **Sewer connections to Priority Development Areas:** The Central 13 study identified a need to providing sewer connections to Boylston's PDAs. As of 2022, there are no plans for a public wastewater system.

Hillside

Another local development priority is Hillside Complex. The 12.56-acre parcel is held under preservation easement and situated within the larger Hillside Park, a 293.6-acre, municipally owned property once part of the Gough estate. The property, which consists of a nineteenth-century mansion, horse barn, and carriage house, was the home of internationally renowned temperance activist John B. Gough. This property contains two modern structures that serve as the Boylston Police Department and town administrative offices; electrical power lines owned by New England Power Company; municipal soccer fields; parking lots; and a forested area. The Gough House is partially renovated, while the horse barn and carriage house are in an advanced state of deterioration. The property is in the southwest quadrant of the Route 140 and Route 70 intersection. Analysis of the general land use patterns for the 2000 Master Plan led to the conclusion that there are only two areas in Town suitable for substantial future commercial development. Hillside is one of those areas.

Issues and Opportunities

The following section explores Boylston's economic issues and opportunities. It offers actionable strategies for mitigating challenges and leveraging resources for economic growth. The topics and recommendations were identified through a holistic process that included analysis of primary and secondary data, stakeholder interviews, benchmarking, and best practices.

Capacity

Over the past decade, economic development has been redefined as a core government function, like assessing, planning, and municipal management. The recent addition of a part-time Town Planner in Boylston was a positive and necessary step for strategic land use and economic development planning; however, catching up on decades of economic development best practices, and proactively addressing current and emergent issues, requires more than a single part-time planner.

Limited implementation capacity presents a challenge in Boylston. The strategies in this plan will not implement themselves. Without enhanced capacity, it is likely that only a limited subset of the actions presented herein will be realized. The town should work to increase its economic development capacity through volunteer, public/private hybrid, and staff positions. Such resources are necessary to implement the economic development initiatives in this chapter, many of which were identified in prior plans and remain unaddressed due to a lack of capacity.

Staffing

The Town's community development and planning functions are disadvantaged by low staffing levels. A full-time Town Planner may be warranted at the time of writing and will almost certainly be warranted within the lifespan of the Master Plan. Economic Development responsibilities currently falling on Town Planner would ideally be the domain of a designated, part-time economic development coordinator. Opportunities may exist to pilot a shared, two-town economic development coordinator position through the Community Compact Efficiency and Regionalization Program.

Boards and Committees

The recent establishment of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) is a significant development in terms of economic development capacity. EDC impact and outcomes may be strengthened through a strategic planning process that establishes a vision, roles, and implementation plan for the EDC including how recommendations of the Master Plan can be tackled. The plan should encourage collaboration with the Planning Board through joint strategic planning workshops, joint deliverables, and a structured approach to future collaboration and interaction. The EDC, in collaboration with a potential Boylston Business Organization, is the ideal implementor of applied economic development initiatives focused on small business growth and small business success. Examples of EDC projects include:

- **Raising awareness:** Identifying new and existing outreach methods to promote local businesses (e.g., at the beginning of each Board of Selectmen or Planning Board meeting, provide 3-5 minutes for a business-owner to highlight their business); promoting new and existing businesses through social media, press releases, ribbon cuttings, coordinating with local newspapers, etc.
- **Buy local and joint marketing endeavors:** Partner with neighboring communities to create a local shopping and dining guide to stimulate visitation to target areas and increase economic activity for local businesses. Establish programs that incentive visitors to patronize multiple businesses in a trip (e.g., a business passport with associated raffle drawings, gift cards to local businesses as giveaways, or creating a rewards program for shoppers).
- **Business recruitment:** Create Business Attraction Brochure or marketing materials geared towards developers or retail/restaurant businesses. This could help recruit additional businesses to Route 140.
- **Opportunity and lead tracking:** Establishment of an accurate, accessible, and easy-to maintain database of prime development parcels including assessor's data, known environmental and other constraints, ownership and land use history, and broker contacts; tracking inquiries from prospective business owners and developers to help match interested parties with opportunities, navigate local hurdles, and track outcomes; manage a Vacancy Registry process to facilitate constructive dialogue between commercial property owners with vacant properties and the Town.
- **Networking:** Participate in Chamber of Commerce meetings and events to ensure awareness of regional economic and development trends and build alliances with neighboring towns.

Communication between town departments

Clear and consistent communication between town departments and boards is essential to economic development outcomes. All staff involved in the permitting process need to have a mutual understanding of the basic processes, concerns, and timelines of the other review boards. Additionally, it is essential that some Boards and staff not directly involved in the permitting keep apprised of potential projects, interest, and proposals. For example, the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen have a role in private sector relationship management, and in navigating hurdles. Their vision and leadership can be instrumental in setting the tone for how helpful, accountable, and diligent staff are in helping potential opportunities reach fruition. Boylston should identify strategies to enhance communication between town departments and their involvement in the development process, including leadership positions such as the Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator. This may entail enhancement of interdepartmental review initiatives, establishment of ex officio positions on committees, formalization of lead tracking and status reports, or other mechanisms.

Business Community

Not all economic development resources come from municipal government. The local and regional business community represents an underutilized resource that can be coordinated, mobilized, and leveraged in support of economic development. Private sector engagement serves dual purposes:

- It will certainly enhance the relationship between the Town and local business owners, which is a vital element in business retention, expansion, and whether the business community views the town as business friendly. For example, close working relationships between business owners and municipal government improve the likelihood that a business struggling with local regulations or issues will consult with local government and search for mutually agreeable solutions, rather than relocating to another town with no notice.
- The local business community is also a resource that can assist in the implementation of economic development initiatives. Business organizations often supplement staff capacity, providing skills and perspectives not always available among municipal staff due to the technical and public-focused nature of government work. Business organizations often tackle applied economic development tasks such as coordinating events, spearheading buy local campaigns, creating joint marketing materials, and nurturing business to business purchasing.

In support of this objective there are several strategies the town can undertake.

- **Convene and mobilize the business community:** The EDC can serve as a convener for local businesses. As a first step, the EDC can host frequent meetings with the local business community to discuss challenges and desired resources. The EDC can create a business outreach strategy that formalizes outreach pipelines between the Town and businesses (e.g., a regular EDC event that invites business owners to participate, regular communications such as a newsletter, or guest speakers from businesses at EDC meetings). Through this process the Town may help foster the development of a local business or merchants association. Alternatively, it may appoint business owners to a Business Roundtable that meets regularly and includes municipal leadership. Business Roundtables are a best practice that improves the relationship between municipal government and the local business community. In one successful local case, the Town Manager sits on the Business Roundtable, and has provided every business member with her personal phone number. While such decisions are obviously at the discretion of municipal personnel, the case demonstrates the importance of public-private relationships, and perceptions about those relationships, in economic development.
- **Joint development efforts:** The Town can also explore subregional and multi-town opportunities for collaborative marketing and development. Boylston should leverage its local Chamber of Commerce, Regional Economic Development Organizations (495 MetroWest Partnership and the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce), and industry-specific groups (for example, Central Mass Grown) to tap into collaborative marketing and development efforts, including grant applications, and stay apprised of efforts by other towns and organizations to do the same. Collaborating with regional entities and other towns will help the town leverage economies of scale and tap into external resources.
- **Resources:** The Town can also utilize the Worcester Resource Business Alliance as a resource to help support existing businesses or businesses looking to open or graduate to a storefront.

Permitting

Permitting is a challenge for many municipalities. Permitting regulations and processes play a significant role in what and how much is developed in a town, and whether a town is considered business friendly by the development community. While there is a natural friction between developers and those charged with enforcing regulations, a thoughtfully developed permitting process can encourage appropriate and desired development and help a town overcome a reputation of being difficult to do business in. Permitting processes and procedures are also one of the lowest cost economic development strategies, as well as one of the only factors directly within a town's control. Structural economic issues, such as the decline in American manufacturing, are bigger than any one town can tackle, but streamlining, tidying up, and clarifying local processes and procedures is well within a municipality's capabilities.

Prior Boylston planning efforts identified a need to streamline permitting processes. There are several steps the town can implement to streamline the permitting process, make it more predictable, and expedite development.

Replace Special Permit requirements with Site Plan Review

In the Master Plan community engagement process, residents identified business types and amenities of which they would like to see more in town, including small retail shops (e.g., boutiques, art galleries, and restaurants) and other small businesses (e.g., bed and breakfasts, certified public accountants, and contractors). To attract these business

types, the town should work to make the permitting process for these uses as clear and predictable as possible. This begins with identifying uses for which Special Permit requirements can be replaced with Site Plan Review.

For developers, Site Plan Review processes are more attractive than Special Permit processes. Site Plan Review simply establishes performance criteria for developments, ensuring that the project fits with the community. By contrast, “In the special permit process, the full range of discretion is available to the special permit granting authority. Neither the Zoning Enabling Act nor the town zoning by-law gives . . . an absolute right to the special permit . . . The board is not compelled to grant the permit. It has discretionary power in acting thereon.”⁵

Planning Boards often prefer Special Permits for the discretionary power it provides. It is for this same reason that it is disliked by developers; it offers no assurances that their project, even if well-planned, thoughtfully designed, and appropriate in all ways, will be approved. Towns that are serious about economic development are strongly advised to review their Special Permit requirements for opportunities to replace them with carefully developed Site Plan Review criteria wherever reasonable—especially for desired uses.

More online permitting

Given the Town’s limited staff capacity, the more automated the permitting process, the better. All permitting that can be done online should be transitioned to an online permitting platform.

Consistency between permitting applications

As of 2022, the Town is working to modernize and standardize its permitting applications. This is an important project on several fronts. Clear application materials encourage more complete applications and proposals. In turn, this minimizes surprises for applicants and permitting staff, reducing demand on both. Detailed and clear applications can also assist on the back end. By ensuring that applications include all relevant information (e.g., where information is recorded), follow-up, follow-through, and enforcement capabilities are enhanced.

Permit tracking software

Beyond software that enables online permit applications, permitting software that tracks permit status, required staff or applicant actions, and enforcement needs will help ensure that necessary actions do not fall through the cracks.

Combined permitting

Many municipalities have realized benefits through the introduction of Zoning Combined Permitting. This strategy enables developers to apply for multiple types of permits through a single application and public hearing process. It has been shown to significantly reduce permitting timeframes, reduce costs for developers, and reduce the demand on review committees. The Town should solicit combined permitting models from other communities and assess various options for implementing this measure.

Miscellaneous Permitting Changes

Various other permitting changes are identified in the Land Use section. Several specific opportunities exist to encourage small business and other types of economic activity.

- **Tiered Site Plan Review:** As noted in the Land Use chapter of this plan, the current Zoning Bylaw includes one process for Site Plan review, and this process does not change based on the scope or scale of the development. The Town should consider a tiered approach that differentiates between low-scale, low-intensity uses and more complex uses.
- **Permitting and regulations for events and food trucks:** As noted earlier in this chapter, Boylston residents desire more restaurants and dining options; however, the Town’s lack of public sewer renders the creation of new dining establishments challenging (and expensive). An alternative measure to expand dining options is to court food trucks. The Town can encourage food truck operation by developing and providing potential food truck owners with a comprehensive toolkit that outlines all permitting requirements to the streamline application process.
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⁵ https://massctc.org/docs/core-docs/Site%20Plan%20Review%20Module2%20_1_.pdf

- **Permit Outdoor Dining:** The Town can support new and existing businesses by making outdoor dining easy to establish. The Town can offer a single application that condenses all required permitting and licensing documentation to meet outdoor dining needs. Several key elements of the single application may include a checklist of each necessary requirement, a list of any separate permits that may need to be obtained, any additional design guidelines, instructions concerning alcohol sales and services, and a list of key dates/timeline for the review and approval process. The single application should also be differentiated by seating type, location, and/or space ownership. The single application and clearly laid out checklist will decrease overall confusion and optimize the time it takes to gather all necessary materials, thus helping to streamline the permitting process. Appointing a liaison at Boylston Town Hall would also create an iterative feedback loop to report on permitting challenges and to provide applicants with necessary permitting and application information.
- **Temporary Use Permits:** To activate vacant space, adopt a pop-up retail ordinance that allows and streamlines temporary uses. In the existing commercial corridors, one prominent vacancy (or several less prominent ones) could diminish the area's vitality.

Business Liaison

The Town currently lacks a designated point person to shepherd developers or prospective business owners through the pre-development and permitting process. Assigning this responsibility to a designated staffer will prevent economic development opportunities from falling through the cracks, make for a smoother development process, and strengthen the town's image as being supportive of business and development.

Permitting Guidebook

Once the Town has implemented measures to enhance and streamline its permitting process, a logical next step is the development of a Permitting Guidebook. Such products are useful tools for helping prospective business owners and developers anticipate and navigate the permitting process.

Open for Business Page

Boylston had a dedicated website aimed at businesses and developers (townofboylston.com), but it is not operational. The Town should reactivate this webpage, which links from the Town's website. It is advantageous to have an easily accessible (i.e., electronic) repository for marketing materials, information for site selectors, details about the permitting process, and tax incentive policies.

Allow for a mix of new land uses that are appropriate to both the needs of the community and the scale of surrounding neighborhoods

As Boylston evolves, so too must its land uses. As development goals manifest, and new patterns and issues emerge, the Town must allow new land uses that are appropriate to contemporary needs. Several areas may be suitable for significant use changes in the lifespan of this plan. As a first step, the Town should conduct a comprehensive zoning diagnostic to ensure zoning is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan. In terms of economic development, there are several opportunities to make the zoning more development friendly and consistent with the economic development priorities highlighted by residents throughout the master planning process.

Commercial and Village Business Districts

There are two zoning districts in Boylston that no longer serve their intended purposes: the Commercial (C) and Village Business (VB) districts. Both zoning districts are along Route 70. They became obsolete when the town established a Route 140 Business District. When the Route 140 zoning was modified it left a sliver of C zoning, but those commercially zoned parcels are mostly used for residential purposes. The district has just one active business. The previous Master Plan recommended elimination of the C district. This suggestion is still valid. Similarly, the VB district is almost 100% developed as residential. The Town should review the C and VB districts for utility and rezone remaining C and VB parcels to residential as appropriate.

Route 140 Zoning

Route 140 in Boylston is comprised of several distinct segments, as is reflected in its zoning (NB, FBD, MUI, RB, and RR). The NB District contains a cluster of consumer-facing businesses such as restaurants, a post office, retailers, and housing developments. This area is suitable for mixed-use development, which is allowed in the district to a varying extent depending on use. The Town should review the allowed uses for the NB District as the area continues to evolve. As of 2022, residential uses such as second-floor dwelling units above commercial properties, and accessory apartments, require a Special Permit. Allowing such developments By-Right, or subject to Site Plan Review, would better encourage their creation.

Morningdale

Morningdale is a predominantly residential neighborhood located on and around Route 70/ Main Street. The area is zoned General Residential and Village Business. In addition to single-family housing, it also hosts some small businesses such as a dental office, massage parlor, stylist, fitness center, antique store, barber shop, and daycare center. Once the western segment of Route 140 is further built-out with small businesses and mixed-use developments, Morningdale may serve as a target area for light mixed-use and neighborhood-scale commercial amenities. Beyond zoning for such uses, the Town should facilitate connectivity between Morningdale neighborhood and nearby areas of Boylston, which will encourage business patronage. Given the high residential population in this area, a specific plan may be needed to guide the new development.

Hillside

As noted in the Existing Conditions analysis, the Hillside property is a preservation priority and economic development opportunity. Boylston's commercial corridor is just two miles up Main Street from the subject property, and the site includes an interesting mix of historic and open space possibilities. To tap into the economic potential of this site, the Town first needs to undertake a site-specific, community-driven master planning process that also details the infrastructure and needs of each building for adaptive reuse. As articulated in the Town Services and Facilities chapter of this plan, the Town should investigate opportunities to redefine the site as an events or performance venue and identify what is needed to advance such an effort. Potential adaptive reuses include the ground-floor front rooms of the Gough House as a nonprofit learning and retreat center, the horse barn as an event space, and the carriage house as additional municipal space.

As noted by the Hillside Restoration Partnerships Project Position Statement (HRPPPS), preserving the buildings could facilitate economic development in Boylston, increase cultural and recreational opportunities in town, and provide a teaching resource for local schools and the broader public about the history of reform movements in America.

Currently, allowed uses at the property reflect Industrial Park (IP) zoning with wellhead protection overlay provisions applying to a portion of the property. By-right uses include office, medical office, wholesale/warehouse, commercial recreation, R&D, corporate HQ, light manufacturing, renewable energy, and public uses. Special permit uses include corporate conference center, hotel/motel, and utilities. Hillside may also be subject to development limitations due to its appropriation through eminent domain. The Town acquired the property with the intention of augmenting municipal open space and increasing opportunities for public use. New structures built on the property would require the Town to preserve as open space an equal amount of land elsewhere and would require legislative approval.

Several interesting complimentary uses have been suggested for the property. As noted in the HRPPS, food incubators are becoming increasingly popular meaning of sparking economic development, supporting local agriculture, and increasing community programming. With the Gough House as an event/meeting facility, the horse barn and/or carriage house could be used for related and supportive secondary uses, such as a catering kitchen run by local food entrepreneurs. Gough House events could feasibly have an exclusive relationship with the local catering services, adding further synchronicity to the site. An on-site garden could provide fresh ingredients for the tenants and learning opportunities for the community, while maintaining the historic farm use and feel of the property. Artist live/work space, affordable, and senior housing are also among potential adaptive reuses.

Encourage desirable economic development and growth patterns

Throughout the Master Plan process, Boylston residents consistently articulated that Boylston's small-town character should be maintained. While a vast majority of residents felt the town should encourage the appropriate growth of small business, more than 95% of respondents felt the town should establish well-defined commercial and industrial areas in town and develop controls to achieve aesthetic compatibility to preserve town character. Zoning and incentives are the primary tools the town can use to encourage desirable development types and patterns.

Incorporate Smart Growth design principles into commercial areas

As defined by the US EPA, "*Smart growth covers a range of development and conservation strategies that help protect our health and natural environment and make our communities more attractive, economically stronger, and more socially diverse.*" It is a planning framework that seeks to limit sprawl and protect natural resources by concentrating development in compact areas. It includes ten core principles, including: taking advantage of compact building design; creating walkable neighborhoods; fostering distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place; and preserving open space, farmland, natural beauty, and critical environmental areas. Boylston should use zoning and related mechanisms to incorporate Smart Growth principles into its existing and planned development. Opportunities are as listed below.

- **Low-impact Development (LID):** Green infrastructure (GI)/Low impact development (LID) refers to systems and practices that use or mimic natural processes that result in the infiltration, evapotranspiration, or use of stormwater to protect water quality and associated aquatic habitat. LID/GI practices aim to preserve, restore and create green space using soils, vegetation, and rainwater harvest techniques. LID is an approach to land development (or re-development) that works with nature to manage stormwater as close to its source as possible. LID employs principles such as preserving and recreating natural landscape features, minimizing effective imperviousness to create functional and appealing site drainage that treat stormwater as a resource rather than a waste product. By implementing LID practices, water can be managed in a way that reduces the impact of built areas and promotes the natural movement of water within an ecosystem or watershed.⁶
- **Transfer of Development Rights:** Transfer of Development Rights is a zoning technique that conserves land by redirecting development that would otherwise occur on the land (the sending area) to a receiving area suitable for denser development. The technique operates so that owners in the sending area can be compensated for their redirected development rights.⁷
- **Cluster Development:** Residential cluster development is a form of land development in which principal buildings and structures are grouped together on a site, thus saving the remaining land area for common open space, conservation, agriculture, recreation, and public and semipublic uses.⁸
- **Traditional Neighborhood Design:** A Traditional Neighborhood Development, or TND, also known as a village-style development, includes a variety of housing types, a mixture of land uses, an active center, a walkable design and often a transit option within a compact neighborhood scale area. TNDs can be developed either as infill in an existing developed area or as a new large-scale project. To qualify as a TND, a project should include a range of housing types, a network of well-connected streets and blocks and a variety of public spaces, and should have amenities such as stores, schools, and places of worship within walking distance of residences.⁹
- **Mixed-use development:** Mixed-use development is characterized as pedestrian-friendly development that blends two or more residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and/or industrial uses. Mixed use is one of the ten principles of Smart Growth, a planning strategy that seeks to foster community design and development that serves the economy, community, public health, and the environment. While mixed use has become a popular buzz word, the term can be confusing. It is not just limited to a multi-story development that incorporates commercial use on the first floor with residential uses on upper floors. The Urban Land Institute's Mixed-Use Development Handbook characterizes mixed-use development as one that 1) provides three or more significant revenue-producing uses (such as retail/entertainment, office, residential, hotel, and/or

⁶ Summarized from <https://www.epa.gov/nps/urban-runoff-low-impact-development>

⁷ Summarized from <https://conservationtools.org/guides/12-transfer-of-development-rights>

⁸ Summarized from <https://planning-org-uploaded-media.s3.amazonaws.com/document/Zoning-Practice-2007-08.pdf>

⁹ Summarized from <https://www.nlc.org/resource/traditional-neighborhood-development/>

civic/cultural/recreation), 2) fosters integration, density, and compatibility of land uses, and 3) creates a walkable community with uninterrupted pedestrian connections.¹⁰

- **Pedestrian-centered design:** Much of the commercial development patterns in place reflect design elements that date to the mid-twentieth century and reflect the era's focus on the personal automobile and vehicle-centered design. More contemporary design trends focus on re-establishing traditional village centers and walkable, pedestrian-oriented streetscapes built for foot traffic over vehicle parking needs. The Town should review frontage setbacks for business properties to facilitate a vibrant, walkable town center or commercial area; creating a continuous edge of commercial amenities, with parking located to the rear or side, has been shown to encourage pedestrian activity and business patronage.
- **Host Agreements:** Use host agreements and windfall tax revenue from large industrial developments to fund smart growth improvements such as sidewalks, trail connections and improvements, the purchase of land for preservation and conservation, and other desirable amenities.

Explore creative ways to encourage desirable small businesses in target areas

The Town has done an excellent job using tax incentives to court large industrial and light industrial enterprises. Amazon and Fed Ex distribution centers are prime examples; however, respondents to the Master Plan surveys indicated a strong desire to see additional small, neighborhood scale business amenities: restaurants, personal services, retail, and agricultural enterprises.

The Town should explore whether these smaller but desired business types are also worth incentivizing, and how to go about doing so. There may be viable methods of providing tax incentives to prospective or existing small businesses. Opportunities to explore include establishment of a tax abatement district for new businesses in target areas; identification of priority business types, issuance of RFPs, and establishment of tax breaks for startups for a prescribed period; and tax rebates based on private investments in aesthetic improvements.

As noted in the Existing Conditions analysis, there are several business types that have limited local supply and significant unmet demand. The Town can utilize the Retail Leakage Analysis and Market Segmentation Report included in this Plan to narrow in on the types of businesses that could do well in Town and make the case for their viability based on the demographic and socioeconomic consumer profile information.

Home Occupations

Home occupations or home-based businesses (HBBs) are often overlooked as an aspect of the local economy. Yet, the number of people working and running their businesses from home is on the rise. Enabled by technology, this trend has provided new opportunities for stay-at-home parents and those with mobility and health issues, improving access to the formal economy. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, this became the norm in 2020 for a large section of the US workforce. It has given way to significant migration based on new variables. It has also yielded new expectations about where work will take place. Boylston needs to consider how to responsibly accommodate home-based businesses and remote workers. The following strategies will assist the Town in doing so.

Strengthen Relationships with and Among Home-based Business Owners

As municipalities convene business owners and conduct outreach, business owners without a brick-and-mortar building designated for commercial activities are often overlooked. The Town of Boylston should purposely cultivate its relationship with and work to support new and existing home-based occupations. This includes engaging such business owners (and potentially their employees) in public-private activities like those for conventional business models. Convening public-private dialogues and networking will help support this sector of Boylston's economy. Other targeted activities that the town can undertake include:

- **Create an inventory of home-based businesses to help establish connectivity, business-to-business purchasing opportunities, and resident awareness:** Home-based businesses are often disconnected and are as unaware of each other as residents are of the businesses. Facilitating awareness, among the businesses as well as by other residents, will support economic viability of home occupations.

¹⁰ Summarized from <https://www.completecommunitiesde.org/planning/landuse/mixed-use-development/>

- **Promote vacant commercial spaces to home-based businesses that may be in search of additional workspace:** Home occupations often serve as incubators for large, mature businesses down the road. Amazon, Disney, and many other large corporations started out as home occupations. As home occupations succeed, they often scale up, requiring additional space. Home-based businesses should be a target of efforts to fill vacant commercial and industrial space.
- **Right-sized office space with resources:** As interest in developing office space emerges, encourage developers to focus on or include small office spaces with business resources (e.g., co-working spaces) to provide commercial space for existing home occupations.

Ensure zoning supports home occupations

Historically, zoning and permitting for home-based businesses has sought to prevent commercial or industrial uses or scale that are out of synch with residential areas. Often, municipalities require a Special Permit for home-based businesses, and include a mix of requirements based on “customary uses” versus other uses regulated by performance standards. By contrast, planning and development best practices are moving towards a “contemporary framework [that] aspires to regulate HBBs strictly based on the measurable impacts they may have on neighbors.”¹¹ Some aspects of the Boylston Zoning Bylaws are consistent with this regulatory framework.

Where home occupations are permitted in Boylston, they are simply required to meet the following criteria: (1) *There is no open display of materials visible from the street,* (2) *There is adequate off-street parking and* (3) *The use is not detrimental by way of noise or other nuisance to the neighborhood.* The bylaw meets some best practices in that it is not vague, it is not too strict, and it is enforceable. It does not restrict non-resident employees and does not differentiate between customary and non-customary home uses. On the other hand, the Zoning Bylaw only permits home occupations in three of the town’s fifteen zoning districts- Rural Residential, Residential, and General Residential (and by Special Permit only in the latter). The Town should reassess its restrictions on home occupations in the other districts. Many of these districts permit residential uses; however, even those that do not include non-conforming residential uses should be subject to the same home occupation regulations. As Boylston considers expanding this use to other Districts, the Town should also keep in mind best practices in zoning for home occupations:

- **Avoid differentiating between permitted versus nonpermitted types of home occupations:** The traditional method of classifying businesses as customary versus noncustomary, and restricting accordingly, requires constant revision as the nature of work and technologies evolve. By evaluating criteria other than use, the bylaws will remain up to date longer.
- **Tie all performance standards to measurable health, safety, and welfare impacts.** As noted by the Center for Growth and Opportunity, “Prevailing vagueness and lack of enforceability leaves the legality of many HBBs up to the whims of enforcement officers while the excessive strictness needlessly criminalizes many harmless HBB activities, forcing HBB operators to either cease operations or go underground.” Tying performance standards to concrete metrics for health and safety offers a middle ground by protecting the public welfare, and enabling objective enforcement, but not being so restrictive as to discourage operating openly.
- **Create a permit-free “no impact” category of home occupation.** By creating a special category for home occupations that are designated “no impact” the Town could enable certain types of HBBs to operate without having to acquire a special permit or license. The CGO suggests “The HBB would still need to follow the customary municipal health-and-safety codes, noise standards, etc., but adding this category to the Town’s zoning laws will promote long-term economic growth for the Town as well as improve the work-life balance of local business owners.”¹²
- **Offer flexible review and permitting for home occupations that do have an impact, but one that can be mitigated.** Many HBBs that initially start small but grow larger over time tend to run into conflicts with the standard “no impact” rules. It is thus recommended that an agreement between Boylston neighbors, town planning bodies and HBB entrepreneurs should be put in place to govern these HBB impacts. A permit should

¹¹ Zoning for Opportunity: A Survey of Home-Based Business Regulations. Center for Growth and Opportunity.

¹² Zoning for Opportunity: A Survey of Home-Based Business Regulations. Center for Growth and Opportunity.

also be given by the Town that would permit impactful HBBs to operate on a foreseeable and public basis, which will increase overall transparency.

Placemaking on Route 140

As detailed in the Town's 2000 Master Plan, "The Route 140 Corridor between the Town line adjacent to the I-290 interchange northwest to its intersection with Route 70 is one of only two areas in Town suitable for substantial future commercial development"¹³ More than 20 years later, this mostly remains true. The Corridor is Boylston's primary business area, with uses ranging from mom-and-pop restaurants to massive distribution facilities to pockets of multi-family housing. Despite such developments, the corridor is not fully built out. Vacant and underutilized parcels present additional development opportunities. However, as the town pursues additional development in this area, it should work to improve the visual aesthetics of Route 140 to better reflect the small-town and natural/agricultural character that residents desire. Several strategies to encourage development of Route 140 as an appealing commercial node are identified in the Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan (2022).

Define the Gateways

The Route 140 / Shrewsbury Street Corridor acts as a gateway of entry or exit for many those traveling to or through Boylston. There are opportunities for aesthetic improvements, including storefronts and facades, and landscaping. Aesthetic improvements in both the public and private realms along the Route 140 / Shrewsbury Street Corridor can create a "gateway" into Boylston that better matches the small-town and natural character that residents value.

Lower-cost aesthetic improvements

To encourage patronage of Route 140 (west), the Town should enhance and define the area's gateways. Hanging banners and baskets from gooseneck streetlights, self-watering planters, painted road art, replacement of dirt patches with paving stones, and other low-cost aesthetic improvements will make the area more inviting to visitors. High-visibility areas such as the entryway to the 1921 Diner and nearby businesses represent top priority areas

Creation of passive recreation spots between select buildings

In the western segment of Route 140, some plazas suffer from too many access points and undirected traffic flow through connected parking lots and between buildings. In addition to limiting curb cuts, parking lot traffic can be guided through repurposing spaces between buildings as passive recreation space. Such spaces can be passively programmed through installation of low-cost fixtures such as string lights, picnic tables, and murals.

Redefine and encourage recreational use of knoll next to Greenleaf Place

The grassy area next to Greenleaf Place can be repurposed as a pocket park for active or passive recreation. While the green space currently lacks appeal, half wall buffers and planters would provide a sense of protection from traffic, define the space, and maintain the visual line of sight for passing vehicles. Basic landscaping, installation of picnic tables and bike racks would encourage use.

Wayfinding and Signage

Route 140 would be enhanced through uniform signage and wayfinding that clearly conveys information to visitors and encourages exploration. The western segment of the target area lacks wayfinding and public signage. Existing private signage is inconsistent and unappealing. Adoption and distribution of attractive, branded signage would help further define the target area.

Landscaping

Islands between parking lots and travel lanes and other high visibility areas should be improved through general landscaping. DIY self-watering planters serve as attractive, movable, low-cost options for defining spaces, buffering unflattering views, and encouraging passive recreation. Longer-term, potential improvements can include the installation of brick paver stones instead of concrete sidewalks, decorative trash receptacles, benches, pedestrian information/location signs, decorative street and traffic signs, uniform property information, address signs,

¹³ Boylston Comprehensive Plan (2000)

Design Guidelines

Boylston lacks design guidelines outside of those required by Site Plan Review. Design Guidelines are a tool communities use to articulate aesthetic preferences for architecture, landscaping, materials, and other design elements. Such guidelines complement zoning to guide developers and new business owners as they plan out new construction or major exterior renovations. Design Guidelines are a long-term mechanism for guiding development; over the course of years, they can significantly shape the overall feel of an area. The Town should match community vision for new development and provide a menu of options for encouraged designs. Such a menu allows for a flexible response from projects of varying sizes, densities, and uses.

Façade Improvement Program

A façade improvement program may be used to address components of the façade (including awnings and signs), a storefront system, accessibility, the entire façade, or façades visible from a public way, and/or components of the site (including signage, planters, restriping for outdoor dining or retail display, or adding more permanent landscaping). However, within a target area such as a downtown, corridor, or other commercial area, some buildings may have more extensive needs.

Programming

Create a cultural and events strategy and implement the same. The events/cultural activation strategy should be guided by a dedicated staff member supported by an events committee.

This project will require collaboration and coordination, particularly regarding partners and sponsors, marketing efforts (including an online events calendar and regional efforts), and business partnerships to ensure that both goals are met; activation and improved image of the Route 140 corridor and increased revenues for businesses (and new business locations).

Establish and inspire events to draw patrons and visitors to the western segment of the target area and its businesses. Encourage and enable a variety of events so that use is an ongoing activity such that community members anticipate and seek out the area for new, reoccurring, and self-guided programming.

Agricultural Businesses

As highlighted in the master plan surveys, agricultural economic development has strong support from Boylston residents. Agricultural uses are also consistent with the small-town and natural character important to residents. The economics of small-scale farming remains a challenge, and there are few active in Boylston. The Town should work to preserve the remaining working landscapes as possible. The Town can help existing farms succeed by ensuring that zoning and regulations clearly and readily support agrotourism and expanded on-farm activities such as dining, entertainment, events, liquor sales, and other uses.

Sewer

Currently, the Route 140 / Shrewsbury Street Corridor does not have a sewer system. The lack of a sewer system poses several different challenges, including limiting economic development to major developers with the budgets and site specifics to independently address wastewater disposal, or developments that do not require much infrastructure (such as warehousing and distribution centers). In the Vision Survey, 52% of respondents indicated they would support public investment in a town sewer system along major commercial corridor (Route 140 and/or Route 70). The Town should continue to assess the need for public wastewater infrastructure.

Traffic and connectivity

Boylston's industrial and commercial base benefits from the Town's proximity to the Interstate 290 Interchange. Access from Route 140 provides easy connection to the turnpike, which benefits business and commuters alike. Yet, safety and congestion on Route 140 are a major concern for the community, as highlighted in the Master Plan survey. Given Route 140's importance as a main transportation artery in Town and as a commercial corridor, a comprehensive visioning and long-range planning process should be considered for the corridor. Over the years, Boylston has undertaken numerous Route 140 traffic studies. The need for a vision and corridor plan is identified in several prior plans but remains unaddressed. This project is an essential precursory step to addressing congestion, safety, and connectivity on the

Corridor. As part of that initiative the town should collect updated traffic counts and other data to inform how traffic and capacity issues are best addressed.

Concurrent to, and as a part of the Route 140 corridor plan, the Town should work to facilitate multi-modal transportation in the area. As detailed in the Transportation chapter of this plan, Community input and analysis of existing conditions indicate that Boylston can improve and expand pedestrian infrastructure. In the Community Master Plan Survey, 67% of survey respondents indicated that they would like to see improved sidewalks and crosswalks, while 71% of survey responses said that sidewalk conditions need to be improved. Similarly, the Town of Boylston can improve and expand its bicycle infrastructure. Although 36% of survey respondents stated that they wanted to see dedicated bicycle lanes, there were no surveyed Boylston locations that most survey respondents felt safe biking in Town.

Pedestrian and bicycle activity have a proven impact on economic development. The number of “feet on the street” informs the success of proximate local businesses. Enhanced pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure encourage people to get out and explore their communities. It can also help define an area as a destination. Such infrastructure includes adequate sidewalks, bike lanes, shared-use paths, bicycle racks, and strategically located “landing spots” that encourage walkers and bikers to stop at businesses. It is important to include Sidewalks and bicycle lanes in any Route 140 construction. The Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan (2021) focused on Boylston’s Route 140 corridor and detailed several relevant measures and projects.

Funding for sidewalk and bicycle infrastructure is accessible through the MassDOT Complete Streets Program. As detailed in the Transportation & Circulation chapter, the program provides technical grant assistance and project funding for communities to make local roadway improvements. To access Complete Streets funding, Boylston would first need to adopt a Complete Streets policy (Tier 1). Then, the town would need to complete a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (Tier 2). The completion of this plan gives the town access to project construction funding (Tier 3).

Natural Resources

The Master Plan survey highlighted the extent to which Boylston residents cherish their outdoor and natural spaces. These assets can be leveraged to support economic development and way of life. By focusing on the Town’s unique natural and outdoor resources, the Town can attract desirable forms of visitorship while enhancing the amenities valued by residents. Boylston’s unique economic natural assets include the following.

Wachusett Reservoir

Boylston is one of four Massachusetts towns that border the Commonwealth’s second largest in land body of water, the Wachusett Reservoir. The Wachusett Reservoir presents an abundance of recreational opportunities, including hiking, fishing, trail-running, cross-country skiing, and other activities. This tremendous natural asset is a boon to the community. Boylston residents and visitors alike pass through the corridor on their way to enjoy the many recreational opportunities available at the Reservoir. Improved direct or indirect connections between major thoroughfares and the access points to roads and trails near the Reservoir would enhance access.

Summerstar Wildlife Sanctuary

The Sanctuary consists of 45 acres of natural land. Summerstar is open to the public free of charge. The sanctuary organizes a variety of events and projects to promote public awareness of science, nature, wildlife, and the environment, and aids in animal rescue and release in collaboration with Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine. Throughout the year, the sanctuary also hosts various courses, lectures, conferences, and artistic and cultural events.

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill (NEBGTH)

NEBGTH is a nonprofit organization located in Boylston. It consists of 171 acres operated by the Worcester County Horticultural Society, one of the oldest of its kind in the country. It is open to the public for garden viewing, trail walking, activities, private events, classes, weddings, exhibitions, and more. The property is a popular state and regional destination, attracting thousands of visitors to Boylston every year.

Tri-Town Landscape Protection Project

An ongoing project by the Sudbury Valley Trustees is poised to create new opportunities related to ecotourism. The Trustees have been purchasing farmland and other properties in Boylston and the adjacent towns of Berlin and Northborough. According to the Trustees, their Tri-Town Landscape Protection Project seeks to protect some of the most intact and important unprotected wildlife habitat in eastern Massachusetts.” The project seeks to protect 500 acres of land around Mount Pisgah and the Wachusett Reservoir. “The land, comprised of quality habitat, working farms, and recreational trails, connecting valuable natural landscapes with the potential to link this area up to the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire through a network of conservation land.” While this linkage is forthcoming, the project has protected several Boylston properties as passive recreation resources.

Other Passive Recreation Sites

Aside from well-known outdoor destinations, Boylston has several passive recreation areas that contribute to its natural character and image. These smaller but still impressive sites can be promoted jointly with the Town’s more prominent natural resources.

- **Brissette Property:** These 47 acres of backland are open to the public for passive recreation.
- **Boylston Tax Title Parcels:** These 95 acres were deeded to the Boylston Conservation Commission for conservation and passive recreation purposes. Located off Mile Hill Road, they are bordered by Wrack Meadow Woods Reservation, the Eager and Brissette properties, and the Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Sawyer Bluff to Wachusett Reservoir Trail parking:** The trail consists of 1.75-mile loop. This route is popular for hiking, walking and other nature tours.
- **Elmers Seat Pleasant Hill:** Elmer’s Seat features spectacular views of Mount Wachusett and the surrounding countryside. There is also a wetland, glacial boulders, and a vernal pool on the seven-acre property.
- **South Bay, Wachusett Reservoir:** The South Bay area of the Wachusett Reservoir is a wonderful place to hike, fish and for bird watching. The Bay is stocked with trout. West Temple Street is gated and is a nice walk along with the trails that follow the shoreline.

As highlighted above, Boylston has a tremendous number of unique outdoor assets that can help support local businesses. In ecotourism and natural resources-based economic development strategies, the primary challenge is leveraging such assets into consumer spending. The Town should work to increase local and regional utilization of Boylston’s natural spaces with the goal of using those resources to generate spillover economic activity in local businesses. Mixed marketing (i.e., promoting natural resources alongside businesses that might appeal to visitors), self-guided Instagram tours that combine several types of natural and business sites and offering discounts to people coming from nature-based destinations can help keep people in town after visiting an outdoor destination. Any trail flyers or informational kiosks could also include a suggested donation for maintenance and improvements, along with easy payment options facilitated by a QR code visitors can scan to make their preferred form of type of electronic payment donation.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

The Master Plan recommends the following action items based on the goals and objectives crafted with careful consideration of the public outreach results, analysis of current conditions, and progress achieved since the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and other planning initiatives. The action items accompanying the objectives will also be reflected in the Implementation Matrix (Chapter 8).

1. Goal: Expand capacity to support and facilitate business development.
 - a. Objective: Establish a committee of local business owners that is tasked with providing guidance, support, and advocacy for the town’s economic development initiatives.
 - i. Action Item: Develop an action plan for the newly established economic development committee that encourages collaboration with the Planning Board through joint strategic planning workshops, joint deliverables, and a structured approach to future collaboration and interaction.

- b. Objective: Ensure the local permitting process is a straightforward and fluid process.
 - i. Action Item: Update and unify all physical permits.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore opportunities to combine permitting to expedite workflow, reduce the time needed to process and consider applications, reduce the number of required hearings, and decrease the impact in materials and cost to the developer and the town of making and considering multiple applications.
 - iii. Action Item: Implement better permit tracking and clarity in zoning enforcement.
 - iv. Action Item: Research and assess the utility of various permit tracking software for enhancing issuance and enforcement of permits.
 - v. Action Item: Ensure that permit application forms are appropriately thorough.
 - vi. Action item: Identify strategies to enhance communication between town departments involved in the development process.
 - vii. Action Item: Create a Permitting Guidebook to clarify the permitting process for developers and prospective business-owners.
 - viii. Action Item: Designate a single point of contact to shepherd developers and prospective business owners through the permitting process.
 - c. Objective: Coordinate and mobilize the local business community to enhance the relationship between the Town and business-owners.
 - i. Action Item: Convene frequent meetings with the local business community to discuss challenges and desired resources.
 - ii. Action Item: Foster development of a local business or merchants association; alternatively, appoint business owners to Business Roundtable that meets regularly and includes municipal leadership.
 - iii. Action Item: Create a business outreach strategy that formalizes outreach pipelines between the Economic Development Committee and businesses (e.g., a regular EDC event that invites business owners to participate, regular communications such as a newsletter, or guest speakers from businesses at EDC meetings).
 - iv. Action Item: Explore subregional and multi-town opportunities for collaborative marketing and economic development.
 - d. Objective: Enhance municipal resources to strengthen economic development in town.
 - i. Action Item: Formalize allowable uses for windfall tax revenue and work with the Finance committee to define prudent use and establish a mechanism for resident input.
 - ii. Action Item: Pilot a part-time Economic Development Coordinator position using grant funds.
 - iii. Action Item: Complete an Economic Development Strategic Plan to guide the efforts of the future EDC and municipal staff.
 - iv. Action Item: Collaborate with regional entities and other local towns to leverage economies of scale and tap into external resources.
2. Goal: Take a proactive and responsive approach to economic development that supports existing businesses and encourages new ones.
- a. Objective: Support new and existing home-based occupations.
 - i. Action Item: Ensure that local zoning bylaws enable home-based occupations of appropriate type and scale.
 - ii. Action Item: Ensure that zoning is supportive of work-from-home and home offices.
 - iii. Action Item: Create an inventory of home-based businesses to help establish connectivity and network.
 - iv. Action Item: Promote vacant commercial spaces to home-based occupations that may be in search of a new workspace.
 - v. Action Item: Encourage development of new small office space with business resources (e.g., co-working spaces) to provide commercial space for existing home occupations.

- b. Objective: Improve the ease of doing business in Boylston
 - i. Action Item: Implement standing Round Table Review/ Pre-Development Conference, providing potential developers and business-owners informal opportunities to meet with all permitting staff at any point in the development process.
 - ii. Action Item: Create a Vacancy Registry process to facilitate constructive dialogue between commercial property owners with vacant properties and town staff.
- 3. Goal: Pursue an economic development strategy that evaluates the cumulative impacts of individual projects.
 - a. Objective: Monitor issues surrounding the implementation of 5G.
 - b. Objective: Assess the impact of warehouses and distribution facilities from a regional perspective.
- 4. Goal: Ensure business development that maintains Boylston's small-town character.
 - a. Objective: Allow for a mix of new land uses that are appropriate to both the needs of the community and the scale of surrounding neighborhoods.
 - i. Action Item: Conduct a comprehensive zoning diagnostic to ensure zoning is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and other strategic plans.
 - ii. Action Item: Review zoning for ways to make it more development friendly and consistent with the economic development priorities highlighted by residents throughout the master planning process. Revise to encourage desirable development types and patterns.
 - iii. Action Item: Employ Smart Growth design principles in commercial areas
 - iv. Action Item: Review the Commercial (C) and Village Business (VB) Districts for utility; as appropriate, rezone remaining C and VB parcels to residential.
 - v. Action Item: Review Site Plan Review Criteria to ensure it is sufficiently robust to protect the town from undesirable development; identify uses for which Special Permit can be replaced with Site Plan Review.
 - vi. Action Item: Review frontage setbacks for business properties to facilitate a vibrant, walkable town center or commercial area.
- 5. Goal: Improve the visual aesthetics of businesses along Route 140 to better reflect the small-town and natural/agricultural character that residents desire.
 - a. Objective: Define the Route 140 corridor as a distinct and unified location.
 - i. Action Item: Implement the pedestrian and placemaking recommendations identified in the Town of Boylston Local Rapid Recovery Plan.
 - b. Objective: Facilitate connectivity between Morningdale neighborhood and nearby areas of Boylston.
 - i. Action Item: Develop and install new wayfinding signage that showcase the Route 140 corridor's businesses, landmarks, parking, and other features.
 - ii. Action Item: Partner with local organizations to undertake placemaking upgrades such as benches, sidewalks, bike paths, signage, planters, or lighting.
 - iii. Action Item: Conduct a traffic/parking study for Route 140.
 - iv. Action Item: Create and fund a façade improvement program for Route 140.
- 6. Goal: Grow and diversify the tax base to promote a fiscally-sound future.
 - a. Objective: Promote existing Boylston businesses.
 - i. Action Item: Create awareness among municipal staff and other town leaders about the economic goals established in this Master Plan to ensure a common vision and coordinated approach.
 - ii. Action Item: Leverage new and existing communication and outreach methods to promote local businesses (e.g., at the beginning of each Board of Selectmen or Planning Board meeting, provide 3-5 minutes for a business-owner to highlight their business).
 - iii. Action Item: Partner with neighboring communities to create a local shopping and dining guide to stimulate visitation to target areas and increase economic activity for local businesses.

- iv. Action Item: Establish programs that incentive visitors to patronize multiple businesses in a trip (e.g., a business passport with associated raffle drawings, gift cards to local businesses as giveaways, or creating a rewards program for shoppers).
 - b. Objective: Attract and retain small, consumer-oriented, and local businesses for Boylston residents and visitors to enjoy.
 - i. Action Item: Encourage outdoor dining by supporting the necessary permitting and working with businesses to create outdoor dining options.
 - ii. Action Item: Create Business Attraction Brochure or marketing materials geared toward either developers or retail/restaurant businesses. This could help recruit additional businesses to Route 140.
 - c. Objective: Attract new commercial and industrial development to help stabilize residential tax burden.
 - i. Action Item: Utilize tax incentives to incentive commercial and light industrial business development.
 - ii. Action Item: Review zoning bylaws to ensure that desirable non-residential uses are clearly defined and not unnecessarily restrictive.
- 7. Goal: Improve local utilization of Boylston's natural spaces.
 - a. Objective: Explore strategies that leverage Boylston's natural resources into additional economic activity.
 - i. Action Item: Enhance access to the Reservoir by improving direct and indirect connections between major thoroughfares and the access points to roads and trails near the Reservoir.
 - ii. Action Item: Support the Tri-Town Landscape Protection Project's efforts to create a network of connected natural landscapes (habitats, working landscapes, and recreation areas) and link this network to the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire.
 - iii. Action Item: Promote smaller passive recreation areas alongside the Town's prominent outdoor assets to brand Boylston as an outdoor destination.
 - iv. Action Item: Promote natural resources alongside traditional businesses to appeal to visitors from multiple angles and create multiple reasons to visit town.
 - v. Action Item: Consider working with the school department or Boy Scouts to have youth create a self-guided Instagram tour that combine several types of natural and business sites. Offer discounts to people who complete the tour and meet its eligibility (posting) requirements.
 - vi. Action Item: At trail heads, parks, and other outdoor facilities, post materials that include a suggested donation for maintenance and improvements, along with easy payment options facilitated by a QR code visitors can scan to make their preferred form of type of electronic payment donation.
- 8. Goal: Encourage small, consumer-oriented, and boutique businesses for Boylston residents and visitors to enjoy.
 - i. Action Item: Provide and facilitate access to incentives and opportunities for small-scale businesses and other desirable enterprises
 - ii. Action Item: Engage the Commonwealth and State Representatives about direct support to small businesses.
 - iii. Action Item: Review zoning and permitting requirements for food trucks.
 - iv. Action Item: Encourage food truck operations by providing potential food truck owners with a comprehensive toolkit that outlines all permitting requirements to streamline application process.
 - v. Action Item: Provide a single application that condenses all required permitting and licensing documentation to meet outdoor dining needs. Include a checklist of each necessary requirement, a list of any separate permits that may need to be obtained, any additional design guidelines, instructions concerning alcohol sales and services, and a list of key dates and

timeline for the review and approval process. The single application should also be differentiated by seating type, location, and/or space ownership.

- vi. Action Item: Adopt a pop-up retail ordinance that allows and streamlines temporary uses to fill vacant spaces.
9. Goal: Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to support businesses.
- a. Objective: Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow and promote more pedestrian and bicycle access to businesses.
 - i. Action Item: Implement a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan.
 - ii. Action Item: Connect the Town's neighborhoods with its business districts.
 - iii. Action Item: Create bicycle infrastructure (bike lanes on key streets and bike racks in strategic locations) to encourage cycling.
 - iv. Action Item: Identify strategies to manage the traffic through the community on Routes 140 and 70.
 - v. Action Item: Explore state and national infrastructure funding to resolve traffic flow and road conditions.



Photo: Town Hall
Photo Credit: CMRPC

Town Services & Facilities

Introduction

The effectiveness of services and facilities is crucial to a municipality's function. These elements are the most visible representation of any local government and arguably the most important aspect. The quality, extent, and cost of the physical facilities through which town services are provided are essential aspects of how a community operates. The following chapter details a strategy for town services and facilities built upon preferences, needs, and goals established by a robust community engagement process. It assesses town facilities and services conditions and provides a path for improvements deemed important by residents. Five goals were crafted by the project team using input from two community surveys, a visioning workshop, stakeholder interviews, and monthly public meetings:

- **Goal 1:** Maintain high-quality municipal facilities, services, and staffing consistent with town population, demographics, and the needs thereof.
- **Goal 2:** Maintain fiscal sustainability.
- **Goal 3:** Provide recreation and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life in Boylston.
- **Goal 4:** Improve the sustainability and resilience of Town Operations.
- **Goal 5:** Deliver Infrastructure that meets existing and future Town needs.

Key findings that informed the above goals include:

- Residents highly value municipal facilities and services. More than 76% of survey respondents indicated that municipal facilities, services, and staffing are very relevant to Boylston's future.
- Boylston residents particularly value their quality of education and schools. When asked to identify which amenities will be the most important to future quality of life in Boylston, 52% of survey respondents rated schools as number one in importance. Another 60% of respondents said the quality of the schools factored into their decision to live in town.
- There is moderate demand for water connections. When asked to identify more significant interest in connecting to public water 50% of residents said that they were significantly interested in an expanded water system. Other residents found it not applicable or did not feel as strongly due to their own private systems.

The following chapter details a Town Services and Facilities strategy built upon these preferences, needs, and goals. To contextualize these strategies, this chapter reviews the history of Boylston's public facilities and planning efforts, summarizes existing conditions, and describes issues and opportunities.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

In recent years, there have not been extensive formal planning efforts around Boylston's town services and facilities. To date, there are no Building Reuse Plans or Capital Plans available. The Town has completed an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation for Town-owned recreation facilities as part of the Open Space and Recreation Plan; however, not all Town buildings were evaluated for this plan and there is no ADA Transition Plan in place. Toward the end of the Master Planning process, the town kicked off an effort to create a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) plan; preliminary findings are incorporated as available; the final report will help inform a future update of the Master Plan. The primary formal planning document that addresses Boylston town services and facilities is the 2000 Comprehensive Plan. Several local water and wastewater infrastructure studies also exist.

Boylston Comprehensive Plan (2000)

The Boylston Comprehensive Plan provided a significant assessment of the adequacy and future needs of Boylston's government to provide public services to its citizens. Goals developed as a result of three public workshops in the visioning process of this plan include:

- Professionalize Town administration: Town Government needs to match the growing needs of the town which demand more day-to-day administrative attention and coordination of activities.
- Optimize fiscal procedures: Broaden the tax base and proactively seek funding sources. Control the balance between school and non-school expenses through communication and cooperative actions.
- Establish a detailed capital improvement planning process.
- Install sewage stream: Build a sewer system in necessary areas to correct adverse environmental conditions and to protect water supply resources.
- Build new municipal facilities to handle administrative and public safety services.
- Actively pursue educational improvements and funding sources to maintain and improve educational opportunities for our young people to compete in the 21st century.

Planning for Water and Wastewater

The Town of Boylston has undertaken or been the subject of several water and wastewater studies. Information from these plans is detailed in the water subsection of this chapter. In summary:

- In 2007, Worcester Polytechnical Institute (WPI) inventoried and assessed water assets and infrastructure in Boylston. The goal of this project was to assist the Boylston Water District in satisfying their requirements for GASB 34. The results are being used to help the town comply with these requirements.
- In 2007, the Wachusett Reservoir Watershed Plan was updated. This update included a watershed protection plan and public action plan.
- In 2015, the Town of Boylston undertook a strategic wastewater planning process for Route 140 to help determine the feasibility of creating a municipal sewer district. This study determined there does not appear to be a widespread desire by Boylston residents to connect to a municipal wastewater system.

MS4 Stormwater Self-Assessment

In 2014, the Town of Boylston completed a self-assessment of its stormwater management practices as a component of meeting MS4 Stormwater Permit Requirements. The assessment highlighted necessary actions for compliance, including:

- Establishing a Stormwater Committee.
- Complete outfall mapping and inventory in the Urbanized area.
- Screening outfalls for dry weather flow and identifying and correcting illicit discharges.
- Developing and adopting stormwater bylaws that meet the permit requirements for prohibition of illicit discharged, construction site runoff control, and post-construction storm water management.
- Identifying local group/organizations with interest in stormwater with which to partner.
- Continue efforts to engage the public in stormwater issues and watershed topics.

Berlin-Boylston Public Schools Regionalization Feasibility Study (2014)

In 2014, a feasibility study to determine the financial, administrative, and academic implications of forming a PreK-12 regional school district was developed by CMRPC and the Berlin Memorial, Boylston Elementary, and Berlin-Boylston Regional School Committees. Citing the regional consolidation of school districts across the Commonwealth as a method for reducing overhead costs and funneling savings into improving educational outcomes, this study was initiated to determine whether this may be an appropriate model for Berlin and Boylston. The study recommended that the Berlin and Boylston schools regionalize, describing how a projected decline in school enrollment decreases the demand for separate school facilities. A single PreK-12 district system would reduce unnecessary overhead and result in improved student performances.

History and Overview

Present day Boylston retains much of its small-town character. More than one-third of the town is owned by the State and managed by its Division of Conservation and Recreation, while two-thirds of the town is designated as Watershed Protection Area. Accordingly, Boylston has limited development and limited tax revenue. Its municipal services and facilities reflect these constraints. Over the years, Boylston has made the effort to modernize its municipal services and buildings to meet the needs of its population; however, most of the municipal staff are part-time employees, or serve multiple roles. Volunteers play a large part in municipal government, staffing boards, committees, and interest groups. With limited financial resources, infrastructure and amenities are also limited. In the coming decades, Boylston town services and facilities must continue to evolve to meet the needs of the town's growing population. Residents have a clear vision for how they would like the town to change, as reflected in the community surveys undertaken as a part of this master plan.

Municipal infrastructure was slow to develop in Boylston, given the community's agricultural history. By 1733, three schoolhouses had formed in different areas of town.¹ School areas were first known as squadrons or districts and covered an approximately two-mile area. A formal district system was voted and passed by the Townspeople of Boylston in 1850, consisting of six school districts. District I was the Centre School, District II was the North Centre School (located

¹ Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey Town Report: Boylston (1983)

in Sawyer’s Mills village), District III was the North East School (also known as Six Nations School), District IV was the South East School, District V was the South School, and District VI was the West School. By 1894 there were only four active schools in operation, and the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir subsequently led to the closing of three schools: the West School, the North East School, and the Sawyer’s Mills School. A new consolidated and centralized school opened in 1904. The Berlin Boylston Regional School District was formed in 1959, and regional classes in grades 7 to 12 began in 1962 after the completion of Tahanto Regional Middle/High School.

The town’s first post office was established in the Sawyer’s Mills area in 1825, while a second post office opened in the center of town in 1850. In 1890, the Lancaster Mills Company built a new village store, housing the Boylston-Sawyer’s Mills Post Office until it closed in 1903 with the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir. In 1960, Boylston Centre Post Office was officially changed to Boylston Post Office and remained in the town center until 1977 when it transferred to the Morningdale branch.

Boylston’s first Town Hall, a historic building still utilized to this day, opened in 1831. Municipal offices were relocated to the new municipal building in 1974. The Town Hall was home to Boylston’s first public library for the last two decades of the nineteenth century, until the Sawyer Memorial Library was erected in 1904 and the collections were moved there. The original town facilities laid the foundation for the infrastructure and development that is present today.

Summary of Community Input

In the fall of 2021, the project team conducted a town-wide survey to gauge the community’s reception of the vision statement and goals developed by the Master Plan Steering Committee and CMRPC. Findings relevant to town services and facilities are presented in Table TSF1. Survey respondents were asked for their opinions on how relevant the initial goals are to Boylston’s future. Most of the goals were considered very relevant or somewhat relevant to Boylston’s future according to respondents. The most well-received goals were “Maintain fiscal sustainability” and “Ensure that facilities are well-maintained and functioning optimally.” The goal “Provide recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life in Boylston” was not perceived to be very relevant to the Town’s future.

Table TSF1: Question from Vision and Goals Survey

How relevant are the following goals to Boylston’s future?	Very Relevant	Somewhat Relevant	Not Relevant
Maintain high-quality municipal facilities, services, and staffing consistent with town population, demographics, and the needs thereof.	76%	22%	2%
Ensure that facilities are well-maintained and functioning optimally.	80%	19%	1%
Maintain long-term funding mechanisms to provide for future public facility needs.	72%	27%	2%
Maintain fiscal sustainability.	86%	13%	1%
Provide recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life in Boylston.	55%	32%	12%
Improve the sustainability and resilience of Town operations.	66%	32%	3%
Deliver infrastructure that meets existing and future Town needs.	72%	25%	3%

In the first survey of the Boylston Master Plan, titled the Community Vision Survey, respondents were asked to rank the top three items based on what *currently* contributes most to their quality of life. Town services was one of the most highly ranked choices, as 44% of respondents considered it either their first, second, or third choice that contributes significantly to their quality of life in Boylston. The only options ranked higher were open space and quality of education/schools. Comparatively, town facilities received a lower ranked selection, with only 15% of respondents ranking it in the top three contributions to quality of life. In a subsequent question, residents were asked what items

they anticipate being most important to their quality of life *in the future*. Town services received the second highest number of selections for first, second, or third choice, while Town facilities fell lower on residents’ priorities.

The Community Vision Survey additionally asked the community about the level of satisfaction and use frequency for Boylston town services and facilities (Table TSF3). The most popular services are parks and open spaces, the library, and recreational facilities. Senior services were the lowest ranked option for frequency of use.

Table TSF2: Question from Community Vision Survey

In terms of the future, which of the following items do you expect will be the most important to your quality of life in Boylston? Select your top 3 choices that you hope will contribute significantly to your quality of life in Boylston in the future.	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice
Town services (Highway, Water, Fire, Police)	45%	29%	26%
Housing affordability (rental or purchase)	49%	36%	15
Recreational resources (parks, pools, playgrounds, fields)	25%	44.4%	31%
Open space (farms, scenic views, forests, water bodies)	51%	26%	23%
Job opportunities	14%	57%	29%
Access to public transportation	19%	44%	38%
Walkability in Town Center	7%	47%	47%
Shopping options within town	25%	38%	37%
Community events (for example Memorial Day Parade)	0%	34%	66%
Youth programs (baseball, soccer, basketball, summer programs, etc.)	9%	49%	43%
Town facilities (Town Hall, Library, Town House)	12%	37%	51%
Historic Town Center	22%	48%	30%
Other historic and cultural resources	0%	50%	50%
Senior Services	29%	31%	40%
Quality of education/schools	52%	25%	30%
Availability of high-speed internet	28%	35%	38%
Emergency service response time	22%	28%	49%

Table TSF3: Question from Community Vision Survey

How satisfied are you with these town services and facilities?	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Satisfied	I do not use this service/facility
Boylston Elementary School	32%	23%	4%	41%
Tahanto Regional Middle/High School	28%	21%	5%	45%
Library	34%	37%	3%	27%
Recreational facilities	8%	41%	14%	36%
Parks and open spaces	17%	50%	16%	17%
Town Hall (Municipal Complex)	10%	59%	7%	25%
Historic Town Hall	7%	33%	2%	58%
Town website	8%	62%	12%	19%
Town events	9%	51%	12%	28%
Online bill pay	9%	37%	7%	47%

Town House	5%	33%	5%	56%
Senior Services	4%	11%	7%	78%
Police and emergency services	42%	44%	3%	11%
Highway department	42%	47%	7%	5%

The Community Vision Survey asked residents about their satisfaction with Town water facilities. Most survey respondents reported their satisfaction levels as excellent or good. Private well users were asked if they would consider connecting to Town water if it became available in their neighborhood. Of those who this would apply to, 36% responded yes, 23% responded no, and 41% respondents answered that they would need more information before deciding. In a similar question, private septic users were asked if they would ever consider connecting to Town sewer if it became available. Of those applicable to this question, 56% indicated that if public wastewater disposal became available in their neighborhood, they would you consider connecting, while 18% stated they would not, and 26% were unsure.

When prompted about unmet municipal services and facility needs, the most prominent suggestions by survey participants included trash and recycling collection, water services, a senior center, and improvement to recreational facilities. When asked if the quality of the Boylston Public Schools impacted their choice to move to Boylston, 60% of survey respondents indicated that it did play a role.

Each of these findings helped inform the development of goals and objectives. The project team synthesized these results with input from other stakeholders to identify existing conditions, issues, and opportunities, and formulate strategies in service of the shared vision and common preferences/needs.

Existing Conditions

The following section details the existing conditions of Boylston’s town services and facilities. It presents a point-in-time snapshot of governance, staffing, services, facilities, utilities, and infrastructure.

Governance and Administration

The two basic powers of the Town of Boylston are the powers to adopt laws and appropriate money. An elected three-member Board of Selectmen serves as the Town’s executive branch, which is responsible for making and implementing Town policies and procedures, appointing members to several unelected boards and commissions, and executing certain contracts, in addition to various other tasks. The Town is governed by the Open Town Meeting form of government and the annual Town Meeting each spring serves as Boylston’s legislative branch. The most important feature of this form of government is the people’s voice. All registered voters of the town are allowed to bring up, nominate and vote on all issues presented at the Town Meeting. As of 2022, there are 2,247 registered voters with residency, a majority of which are over the age of 55. A professional Town Administrator is appointed by the Board of Selectmen to manage Town Departments and advise on other matters.

Town Processes and Procedures

Municipalities across the Commonwealth have embraced the internet to help expedite and improve access to core government services. Bill payment, permitting, assessments, and other services are increasingly funneled through municipal websites and their processing platforms. The Boylston town website (boylston-ma.gov) is a hub for information related to municipal government and town information. The town website provides community news, information and records related to public meetings, plans and project information, assessing data, and other services and information.

An online permitting system is available on the town website for public use. It allows anyone to apply online for a permit, check the status of a permit, and review permits on properties. It includes residential building permits, commercial

building applications, minor repairs, sheet metal, electrical, plumbing, gas, and open-air burning permits. Board of Health applications (septic, well, food service, etc.) cannot yet be submitted online; however, links to downloadable applications are posted on the Board of Health. Submittals related to Conservation, Planning, and Zoning must also be submitted in hard copy.

Online bill pay is available for real estate tax, personal property tax, motor vehicle excise tax, and electric bills.

Boards, Committees, Commissions, and Nonprofit Partners

Boylston operates in no small part due to its municipal Boards and Committees. All such entities are volunteer based. Table TSF4 names Boylston’s Boards and Committees and summarizes the missions of each.

Table TSF4: Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Name	Core Purpose(s)
ADA Committee	The ADA Committee works with town officers and departments to identify community needs under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
Affordable Housing Committee	The Affordable Housing Committee assists the Board of Selectmen in its efforts to provide a full range of housing choices for households of all incomes, ages, and abilities.
Board Assessors Office	The Assessing Department is responsible for administering all the Massachusetts General Laws relating to valuation and taxation in a fair and equitable manner throughout the community , as well as delivering service to the community in the most fiscally responsible manner.
Board of Health	The Board of Health is responsible for disease prevention and control, and health and environmental protection and promoting a healthy community. It serves as the local arm of the Mass. Department of Public Health and the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection. To fulfill their duties, they develop, implement and enforce health policies, oversee inspections to maintain minimum standards for sanitation in housing and food service, and assure that the basic health needs of their community are being met.
Board of Registrars of Voters	Duties include maintaining accurate lists of registered voters in Boylston; preparation and publishing of Boylston resident lists; voter registration; processing voter registration changes; hearing complaints of illegal or incorrect registration; accepting and certifying nomination papers and petitions; processing of vote-by-mail applications; maintenance and testing of voting equipment; certifying elections; and conducting election recounts.
Board of Selectmen	The Board of Selectmen oversees the executive functions of the Town. Duties include calling town elections and approving the town meeting warrant; reviewing the municipal annual budget; making appointments to several municipal boards and committees; licensing of alcohol establishments, restaurants, car dealers, transient vendors and entertainment and amusement devices; sale of town owned land and acceptance of gifts of lands; and review and approve all payables of the Town of Boylston.
Cable Advisory Committee	The purpose of the Cable Television Advisory Committee is to provide advice and assistance to the Select Board in monitoring compliance with the Cable Television License Agreement and other aspects of cable television service including the local access channels.
Cemetery Commission	The Town of Boylston operates Pine Grove Cemetery under the jurisdiction of the Highway Department and the supervision of the Cemetery Commission. The cemetery provides burial space for residents or former residents of the Town of Boylston. The Cemetery Commission is made up of 3 members, elected for a 3-year term. One seat on the board is elected each year. Routine maintenance and upkeep are performed by the Highway Department.
Conservation Commission	The Conservation Commission is devoted to preserving and protecting Boylston’s natural environment. It administers and enforces the Wetlands Protection Act and River Protection Acts (MGL Chapter 131 Section 40) and has an important role in open space planning pursuant to its authority under the Conservation Commission Act MGL Chapter 40 Section 8c.

Town Services & Facilities

Council on Aging	The Council on Aging was established in 1974 with the mission of providing those 60 and older an opportunity to learn about and receive services which may improve their quality of life. Educational seminars, outreach work, including referrals for services, social and recreational opportunities, along with meals and transportation are examples of programs sponsored.
Earth Removal Board	The Earth Removal Board meets on an as-needed basis and does not hold regularly scheduled meetings. The Board Members are appointed and represent various Town Boards.
Finance Committee	The finance committee serves as the town's official fiscal watchdog. Its primary responsibility is to advise and make recommendations to town meeting on the budget and other areas with financial implications.
Historic District Commission	The Historic District Commission is charged with reviewing additions and/or modifications to properties located within Boylston's Local Historic Districts. The HDC holds public hearings on these projects to determine the appropriateness of such alterations.
Historical Commission	The Historical Commission appointed by the Selectmen is a three-to-seven-member board that works to promote, preserve, and develop the town's historical assets for present and future use. In addition, the Commission oversees the operations of Historic Town Hall.
Open Space and Recreation Committee	The Open Space and Recreation Committee maintains and carries out the town's state approved Open Space and Recreation Plan to ensure that Boylston maintains and improves the variety, quality, and accessibility of open space and recreational facilities for the well-being of all residents.
Park and Recreation Commission	The Mission of the Boylston Parks & Recreation Commission is to offer the residents of our community programs, services and facilities that will enrich their lives.
Planning Board	The Planning Board is charged with specific duties and responsibilities to include long range planning (Master Plan); review of subdivision plans; holding public hearings and forwarding recommendations on proposed zoning changes; and reviewing major developments.
Storm Water Committee	The Stormwater Committee acts as an advisory body to the DPW. The Committee reviews and makes recommendations on stormwater ordinances and related regulations and perform other tasks relevant to assisting the DPW with the implementation of best practices for stormwater management.
Zoning Board of Appeals	The ZBA holds public hearings to consider petitions for a variance or special permit and public hearings on appeals brought to the Board by anyone aggrieved by a decision of the Zoning Enforcement Officer or the Building Inspector.
Senior Tax Rebate Committee	The Senior Tax Rebate Committee are appointed by the selectman. They are setup to help lower taxes for seniors through a service (---) to town

Non-Profit and Community Partners

Boylston is home to numerous non-profit and community-based organizations. These entities work closely with the town government and other organizations to coordinate and supplement local and regional efforts. The following notable organizations are especially relevant to town services and facilities.

Hillside Restoration Project

The Hillside Restoration Project, Inc. (HRP) is a non-profit organization whose mission includes the restoration, preservation, and adaptive reuse of the John B. Gough Estate in Boylston, one of seven National Historic Landmarks in Central Massachusetts. The project is one of the most significant and comprehensive historic preservation efforts in the region and has been recognized by local, state, and national preservation organizations. One of the goals of the organization focuses on mutually beneficial collaborations and partnerships with educational, cultural, and civic groups in the preservation of this important historical landmark.

Boylston Public Library Foundation and Friends of the Boylston Public Library

The Friends of the Boylston Public Library and the Boylston Public Library Foundation are non-profit organizations founded in 2014 to provide support to the public library. In 2020, the Foundation and Friends of the Library worked together to fundraise for the financial needs of the library.

WBAC Boylston Access Channel

The WBAC Boylston Access Channel provides the town of Boylston and the Tahanto Regional Middle/High School with public and educational television stations.

Municipal Facilities

Boylston is home to a variety of municipal facilities. Major public facilities are presented in Map TSF1.

Historic Town Hall (7 Central Street)

The original (Historic) Boylston Town Hall (built in 1830) is located at 7 Central Street. It no longer serves as the seat of local government but is used by the public and civic groups such as the Boylston Historical Commission and Hillside Restoration Group.

Town Hall (221 Main Street)

The contemporary Town Hall is located at 221 Main Street. Built in 1974, the building is in good condition. The facility is not ADA accessible; however, there are plans to update the building. As the Town Hall is approaching 50 years of age, there are various updates and renovations that need to occur to maintain the building. Replacement of aging heat pumps in each office has been called for as a priority. It is of high significance to the town to conduct upgrades to meet ADA standards and accommodate all members of the community.

Town Hall is at full capacity, which is a limiting factor if the Town pursues hiring additional employees. As noted in Table TSF5, 15 staff members work in the building as of 2022. Many of these positions are part-time or intermunicipal shared positions, such as that of Town Planner (shared with Upton) and Building Inspector (shared with Sterling).

Table TSF5: Town Hall Employees

Name	Full-time (FT) or Part-time (PT)	Hours per week
Facilities Technician	FT	40
Selectmen's Administrative Assist	FT	35
Town Administrator	FT	40
Assistant Assessor	FT	26
Human Resources	PT	12
Board of Health Inspector	FT	21; shared with Town of Southborough
Conservation Commission / Board of Health Administrative Assistant	FT	34
Assistant Treasurer/Collector	FT	26
Treasurer/ Tax Collector	FT	32
COA Coordinator/ Outreach Worker	FT	24
COA Assistant/ Van Scheduler	PT	Varies
Town Accountant	PT	Varies
Town Clerk	FT	26
Assistant Town Clerk	PT	15
Town Planner	PT	20; shared with Town of Upton
Building Inspector	PT	20; shared with Town of Sterling

Plumbing Inspector/Gas Inspectors	PT	Monthly stipend
Wiring Inspector	PT	Monthly stipend
Building Department Administrative Assistant	FT	28
COA Van Driver	PT	2-3

Source: Town of Boylston

Boylston Public Library

Boylston’s first library open to the public was established in 1880, with the collections originally housed in the Old Town Hall until the Sawyer Memorial Library opened in 1904. The library has seven full-time staff positions, including the Director, Assistant Director, Children’s Librarian, Senior Library Assistant, Library Page, and Housekeeper. The public library has experienced various changes since opening over 100 years ago. In 1976, the basement was converted into a Children’s Room, and in 1994 a handicapped-accessible wooden ramp was added to the front entrance. With increased use over the years, an expansion was first called for in the 1980s to accommodate a meeting room and additional shelving space.

Efforts to expand the library or construct a new library at Hillside were unsuccessful over the years, until a decision was made by the Library Trustees in 2009 to undergo a three-phase renovation of the existing library. Phase I was completed in 2013. Improvements included a new septic system to replace the cesspool, plus a new ADA compliant ramp, deck, and front door with a push button automatic opener. Phase II was completed in 2017. It included installation of an ADA compliant lift, new bathrooms, substantial upgrades to the library’s infrastructure, and an expansion of the parking lot. Phase III, which included a roof replacement, chimney removal, repairing gables and eaves, and installation of new insulation, is ongoing since 2021. As a result of these upgrades, the building is now in good condition.

The library closed during the initial outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic but began a program of contactless, curbside pickup for books.

Council on Aging

The Council on Aging (COA) serves Boylston residents over the age of 60. It is run by two full-time staff: a COA Director, and the COA Assistant/Scheduler. The COA also employs a Van Scheduler and five van drivers. The Town does not have a dedicated Senior Center, but the COA provides event space, meals, work out options, zoom classes, and socialization at various sites. The Town House, from where most of the COA programs operate, is in good condition, with proper air control, heating, electricity, plumbing, and Wi-Fi. It benefits from excellent parking options that provides easy access to the building entrance. The facility is ADA accessible, and it contains accessible bathrooms. Current COA programs include:

- Elder Services of Worcester Area (ESWA) provides the Senior Lunch Program on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 12:00pm at the Town House. ESWA also runs the Meals on Wheels program to homebound seniors in town. Meals are available Monday - Friday.
- The COA van is available for Boylston seniors 60 years and older or those under 60 with a disability. The van is available Monday - Thursday from 8am to 2pm. There is a suggested donation of \$3.00 for rides.
- Fitness classes are offered through the COA at the Boylston Town House (599 Main St). Classes include Tai Chi, Yoga, Flex and Tone, Zumba Gold and Strength, Stretch and Stamina.
- The COA Coordinator provides in-home or over the phone education and support to Boylston seniors and/or caregivers. This includes referrals to resources for in-home support, caregiver assistance, or financial entitlements.
- Educational programs are offered by the COA and often held at the Boylston Public Library. Examples of past programs include Fraud and Scams, Real ID, and topics on health and wellness.
- The COA provides durable medical equipment for loan; equipment may include walkers, wheelchairs, canes, shower chairs, etc.

Such programming is intended to keep seniors engaged and connected as healthy, educated, and active members of the community. As Boylston's senior population grows, the Town needs to continue building partnerships with local organizations and consider Boylston's aging population when creating new spaces in town. There is potential for an outreach worker to designate their time to reaching our underserved seniors for additional support. Future opportunities include more fitness rooms, a media room, classroom, and at least three private office spaces for the Director, Assistant, and Van Scheduler and Outreach Worker.

Public Schools

Boylston is part of the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District. The district includes three schools: Boylston Elementary School (grades K-5), Berlin Memorial School (grades K-5), and Tahanto Regional Middle/High School (grades 6-12). The Boylston Elementary School building was constructed in 1955 and was most recently fully renovated in 1999. The Berlin Memorial School was rebuilt in 1951. The Tahanto Regional Middle/ High School opened in 2013. Berlin Memorial School is specific to the Town of Berlin (with possible exception of School Choice students) and is therefore outside the scope of this Master Plan.

Boylston Elementary School is in good condition. The facility is fully accessible. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment at Boylston Elementary School has been consistently climbing. In the 2020-2021 school year enrollment was projected to be 224; while actual enrollment was 278, an all-time high. The average class size at Boylston Elementary is currently at 18 students; classes are capped by the district at 20 students. A public survey to Boylston Elementary School parents indicated that most feel it is important for to keep class sizes small.

The Tahanto Regional Middle/ High school, located on Main Street in Boylston, was built in 1962. A 2007 feasibility study conducted by the Berlin-Boylston Regional School District recommended construction of a new school versus renovation of the existing one as a cost-effective pursuit. The new two-story, 126,11 sq. ft. facility designed to serve 560 students from grades 6 through 12 broke ground in May 2011 and opened its doors in January 2013. Taxpayers in both towns covered the towns' \$22 million share of the total \$32.2 million cost. The new building is fully accessible and features interactive technology such as smart boards and creating more common spaces. Total enrollment at Tahanto Regional Middle/ High School was 531 students as of October 2020. This number dipped slightly from 2019 enrollment figures.

Police Department

The Boylston Police Station is a historical structure. Currently on staff are twelve full-time officers, one Executive Assistant, and five full-time dispatchers. The building is in fair condition but is inadequate in size and function to meet contemporary policing needs. Improvements and additions are required. The building lacks holding cells, secure booking rooms, panic alarms, a fire suppression system, or sally port. There is minimal storage for records. The male locker room overflows into the female locker room due to lack of space. The department maintains seven patrol vehicles. As of February 2022, one of the vehicles is out of service and awaiting replacement. In 2022, the department



*Photo: Tahanto Regional Middle/High School
Photo Credit: CMRPC*

applied for and received a state grant for \$3,000,000 to fund mandated 911 dispatcher training. The department also received an Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant that year for crime prevention programs, and a state 911 Support Grant to support the expansion of 911 centers and dispatching training. In 2021, the Police Dispatch received 15,536 calls. The Department shares dispatch with several nearby communities, based at the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) building located near Wachusett Reservoir.

Fire Department

Built in 1940, the Boylston Fire Station is in fair to poor condition. The 7,474 sq. ft. building is not ADA accessible. The Chief's Office is located in a separate section of the building. Constructed in 1912, the 600 sq. ft. Chief's space is ADA accessible and in good condition. The Fire Department also has access to a few storage areas located proximate to its Fire Department building: namely, cold storage in a nearby barn, a lean-to shelter, and a Council on Aging van storing EMS/ ALS equipment. Offsite storage areas are located at 1 Elmwood Place and 215 Main Street. The department is staffed through a mix of full-time and paid call positions. The department maintains a small fleet of vehicles. Staffing and a vehicle inventory are summarized in Tables TSF6 and TSF7.

Approximately 60% of the town is protected by a municipal water fire suppression system such as fire hydrants. There are currently three dry hydrants, two of which are located at Rocky Pond and another at Oak Hill Circle. There are currently four 12,000-gallon cisterns used to catch excess storm water. They are located at Rachel Road, Ryan Lande, Redwood Circle, and Longley Hill Road.

The dispatch entities that receive calls relevant to the Fire Department are the Boylston Public Safety Access Point and the Boylston Police Department. Collectively, the Town responded to 493 EMS calls in 2021. This is significantly lower than the 676 calls received the previous year, there were eight fires that occurred in structures, zero fires in vehicles, and 34 calls for mutual aid among all emergency responders. In addition, there were twelve co-alarms and seventy-five fire alarms recorded that both Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the fire station responded to. In 2021 the Fire Department also responded to 43 motor vehicle accidents.



Photo: Boylston Police Department
Photo Credit: CMRPC



Photo: Boylston Fire Department
Photo Credit: CMRPC

Table TSF6. Fire Department Staffing

Staff	Full-time (FT) Part-time (PT) or Paid Call (PC)
Chief/EMT	1 FT
Captain/EMT	1 FT
Lieutenant/ EMT	1 FT
FF/EMT	2 FT
Deputy Chief/EMT	1 PC
Lieutenant/EMT	3 PC
Lieutenant	3 PC
FF/EMT	13 PC
FF	8 PC
EMT	15 PC

Table TSF7. Fire Department Vehicle Inventory

Vehicle	Use
1984 Military surplus 2 ½ ton Forestry Tanker	Forestry 2
1989 Ford commercial cab E-One Engine	Engine 1
1989 Mack commercial cab E-One Tanker	Tanker 1
1986 Freightliner commercial cab Engine	Engine 2
2004 GMC T7500 commercial cab Heavy Rescue	Rescue 1
2005 GMC 2500 HD Forestry Pick up	Forestry 1
2009 GMC 4500 Road Rescue Ambulance	Ambulance 1
2017 Ram 5500 Horton Ambulance	Ambulance 2
2015 Custom cab E-One Cyclone 100' Quint	Ladder 1
2016 Chevrolet Traverse Chiefs Command Vehicle	Car 1

Emergency Management

The Town of Boylston is a part of the South Wachusett Regional Emergency planning committee. In 2020, the committee prepared a Hazardous Materials Emergency Plan. To meet the emergency planning requirements, the CEO of each community will ensure that their communities will development and maintain individual HAZMAT plans. The primary point of contact for the Town of Boylston is the Boylston Dispatch Center. The current emergency management system is 30-50 years old. Other Emergency Management efforts include a cooperative project between the Council on Aging and the Fire Department to complete home visits. The initiative will commence in spring of 2022. The call/response times of emergency services is better than the state regulations. There are four emergency rooms in a ten-minute radius.

Municipal Light Department Building

The Boylston Municipal Light Department (BMLD) office and garage were built in 1970. Few updates have been made in the decades since, and the building needs replacement. The main entrance and public areas of the office are not ADA accessible. There are no public bathroom facilities in the office. The garage and stock area are antiquated and, increasingly, inadequately sized. In the garage, the cement floor is deteriorating and needs repairs. There are no separate meeting rooms and no break room for workers, nor locker rooms or showers. There is a clear need to update staff facilities seeing as there is only a small men’s bathroom downstairs off the garage area in the electrical room. Staff include the General Manager, Office Manager, Accounts Receivable staffer, Foreman, 1st Class Lineman, and an Apprentice Lineman.

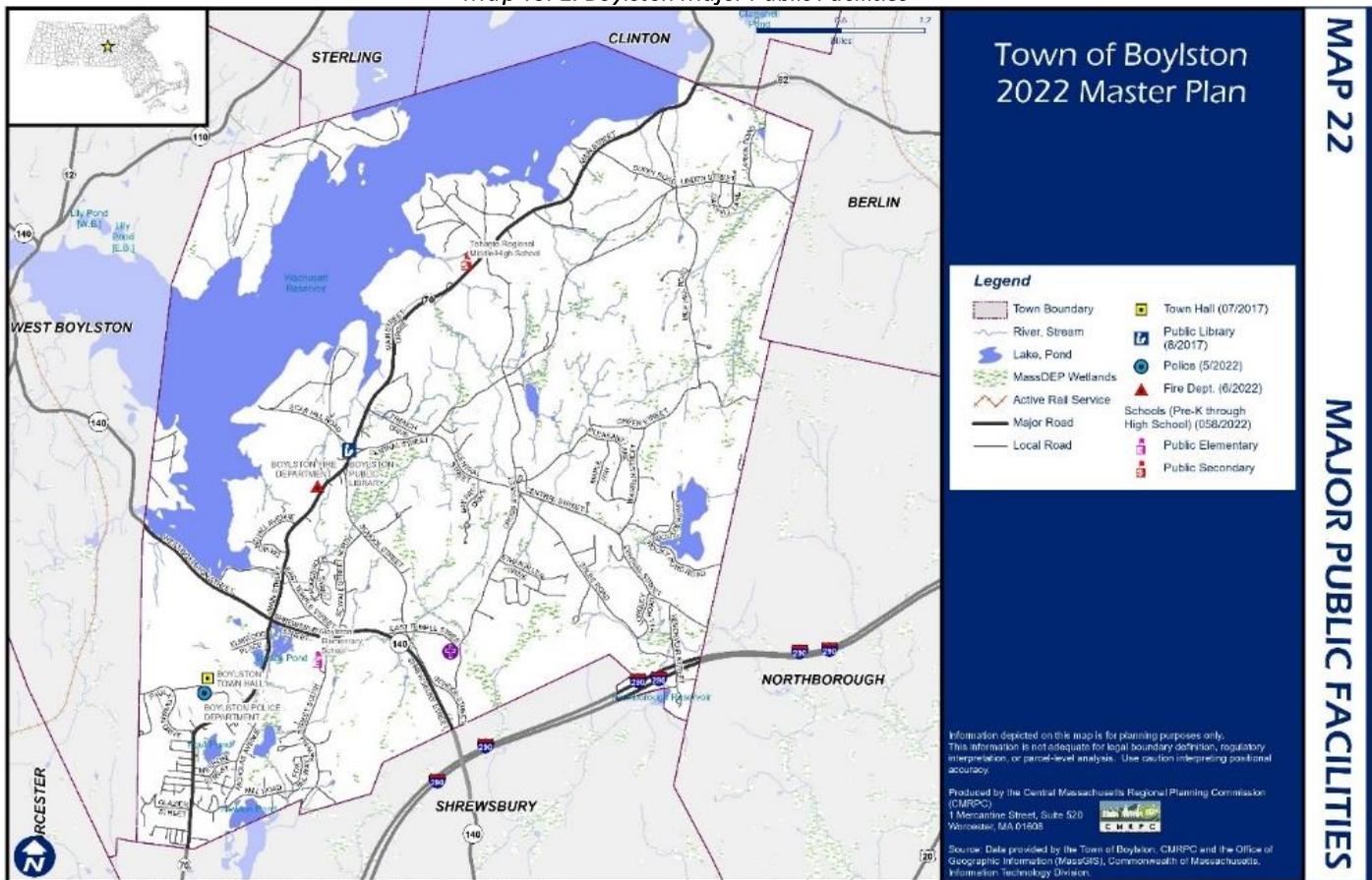
Highway Department

Built in 2016, the current Highway Department main building is in good condition and is ADA accessible. The Highway Department also has a salt shed and a smaller sand shed for residents. The current size of each building was built with the current capacity at the time. There are seven fulltime employees that work year-round. These are the Superintendent, Foreman, Mechanic, two Equipment Operators, a Laborer, and an Administrative Assistant. The Town hires two to three staff for summer seasonal help that are full-time.



Photo: Boylston Municipal Light Department Photo Credit: CMRPC

Map TSF1: Boylston Major Public Facilities



Source: CMRPC, 2022

MAP 22

MAJOR PUBLIC FACILITIES

Utilities and Infrastructure

Electrical Supply

Boylston Municipal Light Department (BMLD) is the electricity provider for Boylston residents. It makes bulk power purchases through the Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company (MMWEC), of which Boylston is a member. MMWEC manages Boylston's power portfolio by purchasing low-cost electricity. The BLMD, through MMWEC, has made it a priority to lower carbon emitting generation in its energy portfolio. In 2020, its portfolio was 51% carbon-free and 9.8% renewable. Its electricity resources include nuclear, wind, water (hydropower), gas, oil, solar and, as soon as possible, offshore wind. According to a Department of Public Utilities report, the 2,470 BLMD customers purchased 32,785,005 kilowatt hours (KWH) in 2020. BMLD 2020 operating expenses totaled \$4,069,097, with an average cost for power of 0.1181 cents per KWH.

Water Supply

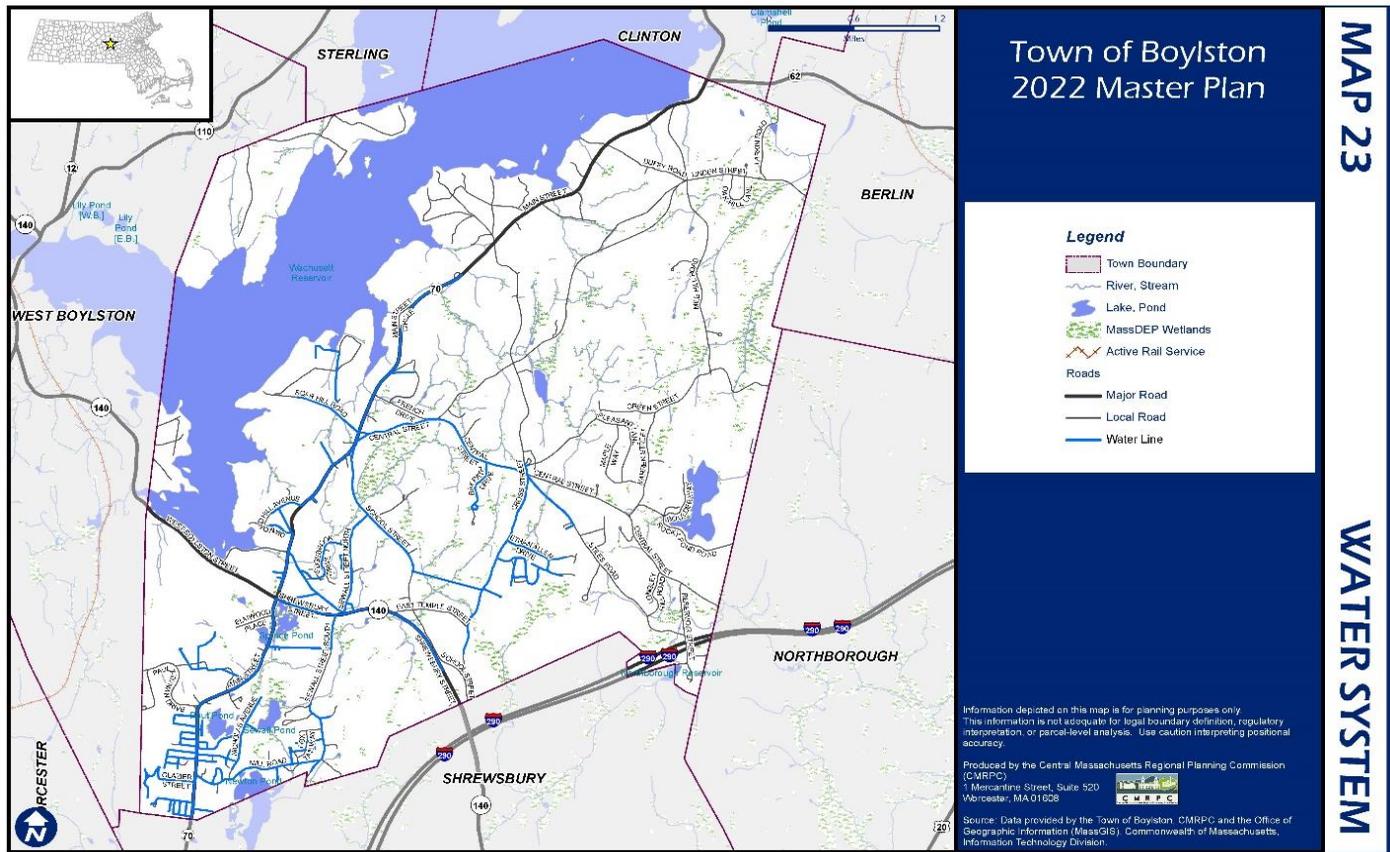
Boylston is served by five public drinking water wells. A consolidated Water District was recently established from two smaller water districts (Morningdale and Boylston). The Boylston Water District is not part of the town's government. It is a separate entity, and the Water District's income is based on water rates charged to its customers. This income covers all operating, maintenance, improvement costs, bond repayments and long-term loans that may be necessary to manage the district. To ensure the district covers its expenses, it is important that it can set its own rate to effectively plan for short and long-term needs. The Morningdale area, Town Center, and several streets north of Route 140 are served by public water. There are a total of 180 hydrants in the town of Boylston. The cost of each hydrant is roughly \$1,258 per year.

The Town's water supply consists of five gravel packed groundwater wells, all of which are 90 feet deep and draw water from deposits of gravel and sand. Four of the wells are proximate to Route 140 and Route 70, while an additional well is located off Scar Hill Road. Additionally, there are five pumping stations, three storage tanks, and two booster stations serving customers of the Boylston Water District. The remainder of the town, particularly the area north of the Town Center, is served by private wells. Various individual housing projects are connected to the public water supply. The Boylston Water District voted in 2011 to enact mandatory water use restrictions effective May 1st through September 30th each calendar year. Water supply protection measures established by the Boylston Water District include coordinating local project review. A Wellhead Protection District Bylaw has been established to ensure quality drinking water is provided to Boylston residents by means of limited land use controls within direct recharge areas of the Boylston and Morningdale Water District Wells. Some of the wells are vulnerable due to their proximity to the road. Maps TSF2 depicts the Boylston Water System.

Boylston hosts a large portion of the Wachusett Reservoir. More than two-thirds of the town is subject to the Watershed Protection Act (WsPA), which regulates land disturbance and land use around the primary water supplies serving Greater Boston – the Quabbin Reservoir, the Wachusett Reservoir, the Ware River, and their tributaries.

In 2007, the Town of Boylston underwent an assessment to see if they met compliance with GASB 34 standards. The Government Accounting Standard Board (GASB) issued guidelines to assist local governments in the process of quantifying their assets to obtain better bond ratings. The assessment found that complying with GASB 34 standards will be beneficial for Boylston in the long run. At the time, the town of Boylston operated on systems that were not advanced enough for them to adopt the GASB 34 guidelines. It is important for Boylston first to inventory all assets of the water distribution system and assess their worth or current value. Complying with GASB 34 is difficult because most records are kept in paper form. As a first step toward compliance, the paper records need to be organized and computerized to make them easily accessible. This will support efficient management of the water distribution system.

Map TSF2: Boylston Water System



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Wastewater

The Town of Boylston does not have a public wastewater collection disposal system. The Town is served by private and common septic systems, many of which are in failing condition. In 2010, a wastewater study was conducted for Route 140. The study recommended that the town hire an engineering firm to identify wastewater disposal options for the corridor. This could potentially include extending sewer service from the city of Worcester or constructing and operating a shared treatment facility with the town of Shrewsbury. The concept of providing sewer service on Route 140 has been discussed in one form or another for more than 30 years. Currently, the nearest wastewater plants are the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District and the Westborough Wastewater Treatment Plant. To move forward Boylston needs to construct its own wastewater facility or join the neighboring district. Due to the topographical conditions of the town, the construction of a new wastewater facility in Boylston would be extremely difficult from both a cost and permitting standpoint.

Stormwater

Given the town’s proximity to the Wachusett Reservoir, and large amount of land subject to the Watershed Protection Act, proper stormwater management practices are not only necessary, but required. In 1996, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) issued the Stormwater Policy that established Stormwater Management Standards aimed at encouraging recharge and preventing stormwater discharges from causing or contributing to the pollution of the surface waters and groundwaters of the Commonwealth. These standards have been in place, and been updated, over the past three decades.

The Stormwater Management Standards address water quality (pollutants) and water quantity (flooding, low base flow and recharge) by establishing standards that require the implementation of a wide variety of stormwater management strategies. These strategies include environmentally sensitive site design and low-impact development (LID) techniques

to minimize impervious surface and land disturbance, source control and pollution prevention, structural BMPs, construction period erosion and sedimentation control, and the long-term operation and maintenance of stormwater management systems.

Boylston is part of the Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition (CMRSWC). The coalition works to address stormwater management from a local and regional perspective. The town also has a dedicated Stormwater Committee. The Committee has implemented several best practices, including:

- Maintained a low-cost multi-media public education effort covering many stormwater topics for residents and businesses in Boylston by using a combination of DCR resources, free materials (from EPA and MassDEP), and custom-made materials.
- Completed outfall mapping and inventory in the Urbanized Area.
- Screened all outfalls for dry weather flow.
- Identified and corrected one illicit discharge from a residential property.
- Developed and adopted two stormwater bylaws (Illicit Discharge By-law and Stormwater Control Bylaw) that meet the permit requirements for prohibition of illicit discharges, construction site runoff control, and post-construction stormwater management
- Tree Planting Plan to replant trees that were impacted by the Asian Longhorned Beetle infestation.

In addition to these measures, there are public works and development-focused strategies the Town can implement or continue implementing. These strategies are identified in the Issues and Opportunities section of this plan.

Roadways, Culverts, and Dams

In 2020, Mile Hill Road and Warren Street were paved in 2020 along with a section of Central Street in the center of town. All storm drains were replaced underneath these roads. One of the culverts in Boylston is located at Route 70. There are six dams in Boylston, which are located at Rocky Pond, Camp Harrington Pond, and Mill Road Circle.

Solid Waste Disposal and Recycling

One solid waste facility (a landfill) exists in Boylston on Mile Hill Road, just north of its intersection with Green Street. The landfill was closed and capped several years ago. At this time, there are no known environmental problems with the facility, however, it should continue to be monitored and managed. Boylston is a part of the Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycling Center. Residents pay per car and can bring recycling to this location. The regional recycling center holds household hazardous waste collection events a few times a year for residents as well. Town pickup was discontinued over 20 years ago and now residents must hire their own garbage pickup.

Internet and Cable

The town of Boylston has been consistently serviced by Spectrum. The Town goes out to bid every 10 years and Spectrum has continued to be the constant provider. The town has a cable access station and Town cable committee. Charter services the entire town. The Town of Boylston wrote to Verizon in 2015 inquiring about potential deployment of FiOS, but Verizon declined expansion.

Natural Gas

The natural gas infrastructure in Boylston is privately owned through Eversource. There are gas lines located in the Hillside area. Another area includes Morningdale.

Underground Storage Tanks

Boylston has twelve underground storage tanks located within town boundaries. Underground storage tanks are important to inventory and monitor due to their potential adverse environmental effects should there be a leak, spill, or some other type of problem. Due to the sensitive nature of much of Boylston’s environment, this list should continue to be updated and the sites monitored by the Town and DEP. Table TSF8 details the location of underground storage tanks in Boylston.

Table TSF8. Underground Storage Tank Locations

Address	Association
170 Shrewsbury Street	New England Telephone
328 Shrewsbury Street	Mobile Oil O6ELN
50 Shrewsbury Street	Atlas News
240 Shrewsbury Street	Caprera Construction Company
2 Green Street	Mt. Pleasant Country Club
200 Shrewsbury Street	New Boylston Trust
270 Shrewsbury Street	Dipilato’s Service
74 Main Street	Wagner Brothers, Inc.
Route 140	Robert F. Desmarais Construction
Sewall Street	Town of Boylston
67 Main Street	Wagner Motor Sales
Main Street	New England Telephone

Source: Mass DEP, 2022

Recreation and Miscellaneous Facilities

The community survey highlighted that residents highly prioritize open space and recreation. There are five municipally owned parks, complexes, and fields throughout Boylston. These parks are used to host different youth and school leagues. Table 9 details each of the facilities and their uses.

Table 9. Recreation Department Facilities

Name	Use
Boylston Elementary School Field	The home of the Boylston Youth Softball. The playground is open to all (afterschool and on weekends)
Center of Town	In the center of Town, residents can enjoy 2 tennis courts, a basketball court, and swings. In the winter they can enjoy ice skating
Field at RT 70/140	At the intersection of 70 & 140 is the home practice field for the Boylston-West Boylston Pop-Warner Football and Cheerleading
Hillside Complex	The hillside complex offers 200+ acres home to municipal offices, the police department, fields, a covered pavilion picnic area, and a playground. An indoor gym is open to adults and children for a variety of uses. It’s also home to the Boylston Youth Soccer
Manor Park	Manor Park has 3 baseball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and playground equipment with swings. It’s home to the Boylston youth baseball program

Cemeteries

In 1741, when the Town of Boylston was first incorporated, one of the first initiatives was to acquire land from Lieutenant Eleazar Taylor for a meeting house and a Burial Ground. This burial ground is home to some of Boylston's most prominent historical figures. According to the Boylston History archives, by 1830 the Burial Ground became too crowded, so Pine Grove Cemetery was established by 1837. The Cemetery is maintained by the Highway Department. The department's main duties related to the cemetery include selling cemetery lots, record keeping, and scheduling burials. In 2020, the northeast corner of the cemetery was cleaned up, loamed, and reseeded.

Hillside Farm

Hillside Farm is an historic property owned by the Town of Boylston. Boylston acquired the property from Digital Equipment in 1997 through eminent domain with the intention of augmenting municipal open space and increasing opportunities for public use. The 293-acre property includes a nineteenth century mansion (the Gough House) and a horse barn/carriage house. The site is also home to the Boylston Police Department, town administrative offices, and a historic town house that serves as an event space for local nonprofits and community members. There are also municipal soccer fields; parking lots; and a forested area. Within the Hillside property, 12.56 acres are designed as a local Priority Development Area in the Central Thirteen Prioritization Project completed by CMRPC. In 2001, The town of Boylston entered into a historic preservation agreement with the Massachusetts Historical Commission² to protect 12 acres of town owned property.

The Gough House at Hillside is partially renovated. As of 2021, renovations include the ground level of its front rooms. The barn /carriage house need repairs. According to the feasibility study done by Hillside Restoration Project, the building's rafters are splitting, and the barn portion requires framing and permanent reinforcement. In the carriage house portion of the building, the exterior wall shows signs of rot. The chimney joints are eroded. A leak in the roof has rotted a hole through the attic floor, and the attic wall plate exhibits an outward bow. At the time of the assessment the barn was vacant, and the carriage house was in use. The Town of Boylston maintains the grounds.

Issues and Opportunities

The issues and opportunities presented herein were identified through outreach to municipal staff, the community survey, and various town reports. The identified issues and opportunities directly inform the recommendations for this chapter.

Town Processes and Procedures

Increasingly, communities are recognizing the value of streamlining permitting processes and procedures. Historically, small-town permitting might take the form of several visits to a Town Hall, several applications to and informal conversations with different departments, and multiple sets of designs, documents, and review processes. Navigating such processes can be confusing, difficult, slow, and costly for applicants and permitting staff alike. Ambiguity in process is a known deterrent to development and generates less predictable development outcomes. It is a leading cause of lawsuits against municipalities.

² Town of Boylston Hillside Farm Development Proposal: https://www.boylston-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf4171/f/events/hillside_farm_development_proposal.pdf

For all these reasons, municipalities are encouraged to develop clear, streamlined permitting processes, supported by technology. Boylston's transition to online permitting is an excellent step in streamlining its permitting process. The Town should work to incorporate additional types of applications into the scope of online services. Doing so will reduce the demand on the town's limited permitting staff. There are also several key steps the town can take to improve its development outcomes and support its permitting staff.

- Permit applications require modernization, including a place to record the book and page of where a subdivision is recorded so that it can be easily located.
- Permit tracking software is of vital importance in a town like Boylston. With limited staff and significant demand pressure, technology can help staff manage permitting processes and zoning enforcement by providing a central repository that is searchable and that aids them in their project management. For example, when the Planning Board approves a subdivision, project information can be logged into tracking software, including a record of the subdivision plan and the decision. As with more general project management software, the staff can set notifications to help them meet various timelines and complete required next steps.

In addition to these essential steps, many communities find it helpful to appoint a dedicated staffer whose duties include shepherding developers through the permitting process. Consolidation of multiple permits and public hearings through Zoning Combined Permitting can also smooth, improve the outcomes of, and expedite development processes. The topics are addressed in more detail in the economic development section of this plan.

Capital Planning

Previously, the Town of Boylston had a Capital Planning Committee that assisted in the preparation of a Capital Improvement Plan. The Committee made recommendations on capital expenditure requests from Town boards and departments. As of 2022, no such Committee or process exists. The lack of a Capital Planning Committee or Capital Improvement Plan puts the town at a disadvantage in terms of planning for capital investments.

The Town should reestablish a Capital Planning Committee and undertake the development and routine update of a Capital Plan with recommendations that serve as an integral part of the Finance Committee's budget report to Town Meeting. Recommendations for this Committee are as follows:

- Work with Town Administrator, Town Accountant, and Finance Committee to create and maintain a Capital Plan. This will be achieved by regular meetings and discussions with Town Departments, Boards, and Committees that will put forward requests for Capital Funding as part of an Annual or Special Town Meeting. While this Committee will have no oversight of the annual operating budget, they need to be aware and receive regular updates of the operating budgets to ensure that capital needs are considered in an appropriate order and timing.
- In the immediate term, perform a comprehensive assessment of all owned town facilities and property (including school properties). Work collaboratively with other town boards and committees to provide a plan for construction, remodeling, consolidation, or sale.
- In the absence of a formal building committee for a specific project, this Committee can serve as point of initial approval for all project expenses, change orders, and invoices. Projects falling under the oversight of this Committee can specifically be decided as part of or immediately following any Town Meeting appropriation by a vote of the Board of Selectmen based on a recommendation from the Town Administrator.
- If the Board of Selectmen decide to have a separate Building Committee for any specific project, then a member of this Committee shall be appointed.

Town Hall (221 Main Street)

Having undergone periodic renovations since its construction in 1974, Town Hall is mostly well-maintained. However, opportunities for enhanced services and necessary maintenance exist.

- **Heating Pumps:** As of 2022, the heat pumps at Town Hall are not functioning properly. The pumps are aging out and need to be replaced prior to failure.
- **Permitting Processes:** Stakeholder interviews revealed that Boylston's permitting processes are difficult to understand, and the town would benefit from a more streamlined process. Recommendations from enhancing the permitting process are detailed above and in the Economic Development and Land Use sections of this plan.
- **Hybrid Meeting Room:** Creating a Hybrid meeting room would encourage flexibility for online and in-person meeting. This could encourage more public participation from residents.
- **ADA Accessibility:** The main entrance at Town Hall is not ADA accessible.
- **Aging Facility:** Town Hall is an older building. It requires regular and ongoing updating and renovation.

With the growing population, the Town Hall and other departments – police, fire, highway, library, etc.) is facing pressure to expand capacity.

Library

There are many areas of opportunity for the Boylston Public Library, a treasured public facility in town. In terms of facilities and physical infrastructure, the building is extremely limited in terms of space and storage. The lack of space limits the number and scale of activities that the library can host, as well as its ability to maintain archives. Additionally, the Library has no community room. The lack of community space impacts how the library can host meetings and put on programs and events. It also lacks a proper computer lab.

Another area of opportunity is staff retention. In 2019, the Library Board of Trustees undertook an extensive wage analysis of Massachusetts library workers. The analysis was prompted by significant staff turnover in over several years. The wage analysis suggested that the wages paid by Boylston Public Library are not competitive.

Council on Aging

The Town's senior population is increasing in terms of number of residents and percentage of the town's population. With this age sector's population growth comes an increased need for accessible facilities and services. The lack of a dedicated Senior Center limits the Town's ability to offer cultural and recreational opportunities to its senior residents. Additional space to accommodate enhanced media such as an area for television, as well as music systems for programming and hosting events, would be valuable. A dedicated Senior Center would require on-site parking for the COA van, as well as drivers to support COA events.

Schools

Capacity and space are issues faced by all the schools in Boylston. The local birthrate and enrollment rates have increased rapidly. There is a concern that the town does not have enough resources to meet its educational needs. As of 2022, classroom space is limited and the number of students per class is nearing maximum capacity. There are three spaces that could serve as additional classrooms if needed (the Maker Space for STEM, the Technology Room, and a classroom currently used for storage). Based on projections for 2023-2024 school year, the Principal at the Elementary School has asked for an additional teacher. This teacher will require a classroom, further reducing classroom options. A school facility plan that addresses potential changes in class sizes, a need for more classroom spaces, and adequacy of common spaced is needed. The Regional School Committee might be able to assist the Town and facilitate access to

resources that are otherwise unavailable. This connection also means there is room to explore other shared services in the future.

Public Works

Public works in Boylston includes the Boylston Municipal Light District, the water system, and the stormwater drainage system. The project team identified several issues and opportunities related to these topics.

Boylston Municipal Light Department

- BMLD will be looking to replace some of its vehicles in the next five years, including the bucket truck and a 1-ton dump truck.
- BMLD is actively working with MMWEC to purchase power from offshore wind and other renewable generation, including a large scale solar and battery project to meet our 2050 carbon-free goals.
- There is a desire for more community space for the staff. An idea proposed was a staff gym/fitness center.
- BLMD has worked with the highway department to ensure that they are mitigating issues from potential tree damage. MassDOT also has a contract to remove dead trees within certain buffers from electric wires.

Roads, Culverts, and Dams

- **Paving and roadbed maintenance:** Despite operating on a tight budget, the Highway Department strategy for road maintenance has been effective. Boylston roadways are generally in good condition. However, Central Street needs paving, a costly future project.
- **Flooding:** The Town's drainage may not be appropriately sized given the frequency of 100-year floods. An area south of the Regional Middle/High school frequently floods. Residents increasingly expressing concerns about home flooding. The Town should formally assess and pursue funding for mitigation
- **Beaver activity:** The Styles Road culverts are not big enough and beaver activity has increased in this location. Flooding of this road would be dangerous for resident access in and out. The flooding south of the Middle/ High School could be due to Beaver activity. There is a Beaver plan in place for new development around FedEx facility. Beavers could be relocated from the Styles Road and south of the Middle/School to mitigate these issues and help wetlands and hydration in the Town's forests.
- **Dead trees:** Dead trees have the potential to take out power lines and block roads during storms. On Diamond Hill Avenue, the oak trees are affected by gypsy moths. This could affect BMLD. The Highway Department has a limited annual budget (\$10-\$15,000) for tree removal. Continued attention to pest control and tree removal is required.
- **Dams:** There are six dams in Boylston. The Wachusett Dam was recently improved through tree removal, bringing it from high hazard to good condition status; however, it has the potential to flood Routes 70 and 62 if it overflowed on the Clinton line (no public infrastructure would be affected).

For many of these issues, green infrastructure offers a possible solution. Green infrastructure utilizes plants/ soils and other permeable surfaces to filter and absorb storm water where it falls.³ The Town should investigate the feasibility of green infrastructure solutions and pursue related grant opportunities through MassDEP.

³ Green Infrastructure: <https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure>

Water

The Town of Boylston supplies quality water but faces issues with aging infrastructure. About half of the town uses municipal water and the other half utilizes private wells. Wells that are located near roadways, such as those on Route 70, are vulnerable to salt contamination from runoff. The Town is aware of this and would like to investigate road salt alternatives. Wells located near subdivisions are vulnerable to high nitrate levels, mitigation of which requires education and behavioral changes.

Additional issues and opportunities include:

- Some of the hydrants are older and their inconsistency have the potential to impact fire service issues. There are more hydrants needed for neighborhoods that are outside of the water district.
- There is an opportunity to maintain the dams and ensure they are being properly assessed.
- There has been an increased frequency in failed pipes that will only increase as the water table increases. Older pipes need repair and are higher priority for the town. The Town should consider a long-term program to replace the aging pipes.

Wastewater

In 2013, the Town of Boylston proposed establishment of micro sewer infrastructure. In 2014, the Boylston Business Marketing Committee approved an RFP for a sewer design. The proposed expansion of sewage space stemmed from a Route 140 corridor study that recommended a sewer assessment. The most prominent constraint to Route 140 development is the lack of public sewer service. Sewage is a hugely significant issue because without proper infrastructure, the amount of development that a site can support is limited. Nevertheless, there has been scattered development along Route 140. Three different parcels that contain warehouse facilities will each have their own wastewater disposal systems.

Stormwater

Boylston has limited infrastructure for removing sediment and other contaminants from stormwater. The Town predominantly relies on “country drainage” in the road’s shoulder, rather than subsurface stormwater systems like storm drains and catchbasins. The Town’s current stormwater regulations allow for low-impact development. The Town should encourage developers to invest in low-impact development features that filter stormwater. The Town also has an opportunity to demonstrate or pilot best practices for dealing with stormwater on Town-owned properties through techniques like rain gardens or responsible fertilizer application. There are also areas in need of better drainage infrastructure such as Mill Road.

Police Department

As per state mandate, the Police Department must meet certain accreditation standards. To meet these standards, the Town is planning to undertake improvements in the following areas: central records management, secure storage for larger items, updates to the evidence room, panic alarms in areas where inmates have access to, and plans for fire evacuation and suppression systems. These improvements are opportunities and issues that require further exploration.

Fire Department

In recent decades, Boylston has experienced an expansion in the number of commercial businesses and residential units alike. The Fire Department staffing levels have not kept pace. The Town needs to increase Fire Department staffing to meet the needs of the community. Currently, the Department has two full-time staff that provide coverage on weekdays from 7:00 am to 11:00 pm. Overnight and weekend coverage is provided by an on-call force. These workers have other

jobs and commitments, and it is increasingly difficult to find night and weekend coverage. The town should work to increase full-time staffing numbers to provide coverage seven days per week, and ultimately 24 hours per day.

Boylston requires a new public safety complex to meet current and future needs of the Police and Fire Departments. The Fire Department operates from a building that is in poor condition, does not meet any modern building code requirements, and has no ADA compatible access points. The department has outgrown the building and needs more space for apparatus, office, and living quarters. The current bunk room in the fire station is inadequate for its diverse workforce; it is one room with three bunk beds with no privacy. In addition, the bunk room is located on the second floor of the building directly over the apparatus bays, with no safe secondary means of egress in the event of a fire. Ideally, a public safety complex would include fire, police, public safety dispatch, and some community space for something such as a senior center.

Additionally, the dry hydrants and cisterns used for fire suppression are maintenance-intensive, and the ponds are not ideal sources for rural firefighting. Expansion of the water system would support public safety by improving the town's firefight capacity.

Recreation

Many of the issues and opportunities found in the recreation section are addressed in the Open Space and Recreation Chapter. However, there are a few issues that deal with the maintenance of the area.

- **Pest Problem:** The Asian longhorned beetle has impacted the trees in Boylston since a severe infestation in 2008. Mandatory tree checks are in place to ensure that the trees are protected from this invasive species. Meanwhile, gypsy moths are a continuous problem for oak trees in the town. The Tree Warden should continue monitoring pests and undertaking remedial activities.
- **Groundwater Issues:** Since the neighborhood of Morningdale is located within the Blackstone River Watershed, the area is vulnerable to rising groundwater. Currently, poor drainage at Morningdale Manor Playing Fields and Playground impacts conditions and use of its baseball field. An assessment of the Town's stormwater management practices is recommended.

Hillside

As previously noted, the deterioration of the Gough House, the horse barn, and the carriage house are extremely important issues that impact the safety and accessibility of Hillside's future use. The building infrastructure needs to meet contemporary public building standards. Future preservation must focus on sustainable restoration. As stated in the *Hillside Farm Project Positioning Statement*, it would be beneficial to create a master plan for the hillside area that identifies the infrastructure status of each of the buildings so that they are usable for recreation and municipal purposes.⁴ The Town should also investigate opportunities for the space to become an events or performance venue, and identify requirements needed to advance this use. The Hillside report outlined proposed uses and architectural zones that should be referenced as the Town considers building out the park. Recommendations include recreating the ground-floor front rooms and using them for a non-profit learning and retreat center; transforming the horse barn into an event space; or working with the town to reach a preservation agreement for the land.

Energy Efficiency and Cost Reduction Opportunities

Boylston is not yet designated as a Green Community. The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) Green Communities program is designed to help municipalities become more energy efficient, lower greenhouse gas emissions, cut municipal energy costs, and make the community a more sustainable place to live. Once designated,

⁴ Hillside Farm, Boylston, Project Positioning Statement. Architectural Heritage Foundation. 2021.

communities are eligible for grants to fund energy conservation measures. As of 2022, 280 cities and towns in Massachusetts have been designated as Green Communities and have received almost \$50.9 million for energy conservation projects to date. Closer to home, thirty three out of forty towns in the CMRPC region have become designated as a Green Community. Collectively, these communities have received nearly \$15.7 million in funding. Becoming a Green Community is an easily achievable yet impactful way for the Town to improve the sustainability and resiliency of Town operations.

To earn Green Community designation and become eligible to apply for energy conservation grants annually, a Town must complete the designation process. Towns in Central Massachusetts, such as Boylston, can contract with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission at no out-of-pocket costs to receive guidance and administrative assistance on the designation process and its full lifecycle.

Importantly, investor-owned electric utilities and municipalities served by municipal light plants are eligible to become Green Communities. Many of the towns CMRPC works with on Green Communities are served by a Municipal Light Plant. The Municipal Light Plants can contract with a Project Expediter approved by the state to complete their electrical and heating energy conservation projects if at least one property in Boylston is served by National Grid. If total project costs are under \$100,000, the MLP can use a Project Expediter to purchase materials and complete installation without the town or MLP going out to bid, per M.G.L. 25A, Section 14.

Municipal Vehicle Fleet

While designation as a Green Community can drastically lower municipal building energy use, utilizing Green Communities grants to make municipal vehicle fleets more energy efficient can also save energy and cut costs. When a Green Community adopts Criterion 4 of the designation process, the Fuel-Efficient Vehicle Policy (FEVP) states that communities will purchase fuel-efficient vehicles whenever such vehicles are available and practical, aiming to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by municipal vehicles. Off-road vehicles, motorcycles, heavy-duty vehicles, and police cruisers are exempt from the FEVP. The Green Communities program provides guidance on which vehicles to purchase, financial assistance to do so, and how much cost and energy savings the purchase will provide over time. Eligible fuel-efficient vehicle projects include are grants to purchase electric vehicles, electric vehicle charging stations, or Idle-Right fuel saving devices.

Besides the Green Communities program, there are numerous other grant and funding opportunities the town can use to increase the efficiency of its municipal vehicle fleet. The Congestion, Mitigation, and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program aims to fund projects that help local governments follow the requirements of the Clean Air Act. This often takes the form of grants to upgrade outdated municipal vehicles (CMAQ). The Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program (MassEVIP) also has incentive programs to assist in the process of purchasing electric vehicle charging station, such as the MassEVIP Public Access Charging Program, DC Fast Charging Incentives, and Workplace and Fleet Charging Incentives.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

The Master Plan recommends the following goals, objectives, and action items that have been crafted with careful consideration of the public outreach results, analysis of current conditions, and progress achieved since the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and other planning initiatives. The action items accompanying the objectives will also be reflected in the Implementation Matrix.

1. Goal: Maintain high-quality municipal facilities, services, and staffing consistent with the needs of the Town's population across different demographics.
 - a. Objective: Ensure that facilities are well-maintained and functioning optimally.
 - i. Action item: Complete an ADA/504 Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan

- ii. Action item: Renew Capital Improvement Plan and Capital Improvement Planning Committee.
- iii. Action Item: Complete a Master Plan for the Hillside area.
- iv. Action Item: Pursue Green Communities designation to access funding for energy efficiency projects at municipal and school buildings.
- b. Objective: Provide desirable new services and facilities.
 - i. Action item: Take steps to advance construction of a new Public Safety Building to house the Police and Fire Departments.
 - ii. Action item: Consider a new building for the Municipal Light Department or improved storage facility to house larger equipment that exceeds current space capacity.
 - iii. Action item: Identify new spaces to hold senior programming, with an eye to position seniors near other activities in town. Look towards collaborating with other facilities to maximize resources
 - iv. Action item: Continue to explore opportunities for shared (inter-municipal) services and staff, including police and fire services.
 - v. Action item: Ensure that online permitting is comprehensive and functioning optimally.
 - vi. Action item: Establish a remote or hybrid meeting space for public meetings.
 - vii. Action item: Research and explore opportunities to increase internet access and a competitive cable tv contract.
- 2. Goal: Maintain fiscal sustainability.
 - a. Objective: Maintain long-term funding mechanisms to provide for future public facility needs.
 - i. Action item: As a component of capital planning, develop a long-term maintenance program to provide resources for maintenance and repairs.
 - ii. Action Item: Expand the use of the Capital Improvement Program to incorporate Hazard Mitigation in the program planning
 - b. Objective: Continue professionalizing town government to match the town demands more day-to-day services and proactive strategies.
 - i. Action Item: Address structural understaffing so that town employees can meet the expectations of residents and have sustainable workloads.
 - ii. Action Item: Continue applying for grants to upgrade municipal technology.
 - iii. Action Item: Continue to bring town hall services online.
 - iv. Action Item: Create and maintain inventory of the technological items (computers, radios, work cell phones) that are in most need for replacement across town services.
 - v. Action Item: Expand online permitting to incorporate all municipal applications and permitting processes.
 - vi. Action Item: Explore permit tracking software to support staff procedural and enforcement duties.
 - vii. Action Item: Create a communications plan that establishes standards, strategies, and accountability for interdepartmental and town to resident communications.
 - viii. Action Item: Explore creation of a communications coordinator position or technological alternatives to a coordinator, such as communications software.
 - ix. Action Item: Identify creative and equitable ways to educate residents about issues, resources and opportunities for service on municipal boards, committees and commissions.

- x. Action Item: Consider establishing student liaison positions on committees.
 - xi. Action Item: Create a mechanism for residents to provide feedback on municipal services and issues (e.g., an email address/phone line, a box at town hall, or a periodic community meeting where residents can voice issues).
 - c. Objective: Continue optimizing fiscal procedures within the town, broaden the tax base and proactively seek funding sources.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to support and cultivate new business development.
 - ii. Action Item: Continue to engage with business types that provide local sales tax or hosting revenue.
 - iii. Action Item: Continue to pursue department enterprise revenue.
 - iv. Action Item: Explore more cost-effective health insurance benefits for employees and retirees.
 - v. Action Item: Continue to reduce the percentage of property taxes that go uncollected.
 - d. Objective: Control balance between school and non-school expenses through communication and cooperative actions.
 - i. Action Item: Regularly review the long-term planning guides in the school departments budget book and support the critical needs through capital planning.
- 3. Goal: Provide recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life in Boylston.
 - a. Objective: Provide robust cultural opportunities and supports for seniors.
 - i. Action Item: Regularly review COA services such as van operations and programming to ensure service levels are in line with changing demographics.
 - ii. Action Item: Expand program offerings for seniors as the aging population grows.
 - iii. Action Item: Pursue creation of a dedicated senior center.
 - b. Objective: Continue working to preserve land for fields and other recreational and open space use.
 - i. Action Item: Apply for LAND, PARC, and MassTrails grants to fund priority Open Space and Natural Resources projects included in this plan.
- 4. Goal: Improve the sustainability and resilience of Town operations.
 - a. Objective: Make Town operations more resilient to natural and other hazards.
 - i. Action Item: Implement the recommendations of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan and update the Plan on a 5-year cycle.
 - ii. Action item: Work to score in the Community Rating System (CRS) under the Nation Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to enable its residents to obtain lower flood insurance rates.
 - iii. Action item: Educate residents about the National Flood Insurance Program.
 - b. Objective: Work to improve the efficiency of municipal and school facilities.
 - i. Action Item: Pursue Green Communities designation to access grant funding for energy efficiency.
- 5. Goal: Deliver infrastructure that meets existing and future Town needs.
 - a. Objective: Ensure an adequate water supply for existing and future needs.
 - i. Action item: Increase capacity of the existing water supply and distribution system to support additional development on Route 140.
 - ii. Action Item: In Zone I, regularly, and when feasible, eliminate any non-water supply activities

- iii. Action Item: Continue informing residents on ways they can help protect drinking water sources, such as practicing good septic system maintenance, limiting the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and preventing cross-connection/ backflow.
 - iv. Action Item: Work with emergency response teams to ensure that they are aware of the stormwater drainage in the Boylston Water District's Zone II.
 - v. Action Item: Cooperate with emergency teams in response to spills or accidents within the Water District.
 - vi. Action Item: Partner with local businesses to ensure the proper storage, handling, and disposal of hazardous materials. Residents can help protect our drinking water.
- b. Objective: Maintain safe and adequate roadway infrastructure.
- i. Action item: Continue to conduct road repairs repaving as annual paving as funds allow.
 - ii. Action item: Explore alternative erosion control alternatives.
 - iii. Action Item: Explore new funding opportunities to support ongoing road maintenance needs.
 - iv. Action item: Maintain tree trimming program across the town to protect utility wires.
 - v. Action item: Maintain vegetative debris program, trimming brush and growth away from roads and clearing growth impact flow away from infrastructure.
 - vi. Action item: Continue properly cleaning and maintaining all stormwater structures and basins.
- c. Objective: Implement emergency preparedness, coordination, and response strategies.
- i. Action item: Continue to participate in National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) (or other) training offered by the State and/or FEMA that addresses flood hazard planning and management.
 - ii. Action item: Keep Evacuation Plan up to date.
 - iii. Action item: Maintain fire access roads in isolated areas.
 - iv. Action item: Continue regional training and drills for emergency response in case of disaster.
 - v. Action item: Maintain certification of officials in the Unified Incident Command program.
 - vi. Action item: Maintain shelter and emergency resources, ensuring accurate and up to date inventory is maintained and rotation of expiring resources replaced.
- d. Objective: Ensure adequate sewer capacity for existing and future needs.
- i. Action item: As demand, technology, and funding sources evolve, regularly assess feasibility of wastewater disposal options.
 - ii. Action Item: Continue to assess the need for sewerage system for the town in critical areas to correct adverse environmental conditions, protect water supply resources, and encourage economic development.
 - iii. Action Item: Explore opportunities for private sewer that could be shared by multiple businesses in the commercial areas.
- e. Objective: Expand stormwater management practices.
- i. Action Item: Hire a part or full-time Conservation / Stormwater Agent to meet the additional needs presented by mandated federal and state stormwater regulations.

- ii. Action Item: Continue informing residents about programs for residents on storm drain clearance and other best practices.
 - iii. Action Item: Develop a prioritized inventory of problem culverts for use in seeking external financial support.
- f. Objective: Ensure adequate electrical distribution capacity for existing and future needs.
 - i. Action Item: Continue efforts to lower carbon emitting generation in energy portfolio.
 - ii. Action Item: Continue to provide residential Home Energy Loss Prevention Services (HELPS) to its customers.
 - iii. Action Item: Explore opportunities for municipal solar on town-owned land.
 - iv. Action Item: Explore opportunities for resident solar including how to streamline and/or eliminate unnecessary constraints.
- g. Objective: Maintain quality school facilities and services consistent with the school systems changing needs.
 - i. Action Item: Continue to track, model, and monitor enrollment trends.
 - ii. Action Item: Plan for increased enrollment at BES and BMS, potentially peaking in 2027.
 - iii. Action Item: Create a school facilities and services plan that addresses potential changes in class sizes, need for more classroom spaces, adequacy of common spaces (e.g., cafeteria, nurses' office), and student scheduling.



Photo: Route 140/Route 70 intersection
Photo credit: CMRPC

Transportation

Introduction

Boylston is bordered by the Towns of West Boylston, Sterling, Clinton, Berlin, Northborough, and Shrewsbury. Additionally, the Town’s northern border abuts the beautiful Wachusett Reservoir. Due to its small-town character and lack of transit service, the primary mode of transportation in Boylston is the private automobile. Boylston is located within the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) planning region and is a member of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) for transportation planning purposes. The town has several significant regional roadways, namely, Massachusetts state Route 140 and Route 70. Route 140 connects with Interstate-290 (I-290) just across the Town’s border with Shrewsbury. This access to I-290, as well as access to Route 62 via Route 70 or Linden Street, provides the town’s access to entry points to Interstate 495 (I-495) just east of Boylston.

For the purpose of this Master Plan, *transportation and circulation* refer to the ways that people and goods move through the town of Boylston and the ease at which they can do so. This chapter will address vehicle traffic as well as public transportation, bicycle infrastructure, and pedestrian travel.

Boylston’s proximity to important roadways, along with the desire to balance growth with the preservation of its small-town character, makes it critical to comprehensively examine the Town’s transportation system. This chapter will seek to accomplish that to ensure that Boylston’s transportation system is a safe, accessible, and efficient network for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians alike.

Summary of Transportation Goals

Goal 1: Maintain and improve the condition of Boylston’s existing transportation network.

Goal 2: Increase the safety of Boylston’s roads for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Goal 3: Mitigate negative impacts resulting from the transportation system.

Goal 4: Provide transportation alternatives to car travel.

Goal 5: Improve the Town’s streetscape and sidewalks to allow more pedestrians and bicycle access to businesses.

Goal 6: Take a proactive approach to emerging transportation technologies, trends, and issues.

Goal 7: Better connect the Town’s roads, streets, and sidewalks to be consistent with the Town’s small-town and environmental character.

Community Engagement

Two town-wide surveys were conducted as part of the community outreach and engagement process for the Boylston Master Plan update. The Community Vision Survey, released in early 2021, asked Boylston residents a wide variety of questions about topics ranging from Land Use to Economic Development to Open Space and Recreation. The survey also asked residents thirteen multiple-choice and open-ended questions relating to Transportation. Questions included, but were not limited to, rating the relevancy of the 2000 Boylston Master Plan transportation goals, rating the overall road conditions, commonly used modes of transportation for residents, and identifying particularly difficult areas or intersections in the town.

The Vision and Goals Survey, released later in 2021, was designed to collect feedback from residents on the vision and goals written by the Master Plan Steering Committee as part of the Boylston Master Plan update. The survey asked residents how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the draft goals that were developed for each corresponding chapter. This survey asked residents to rate each of the Transportation and Circulation goals by the extent residents felt they were relevant to the Town's future.

The Town of Boylston Master Plan Steering Committee conducted monthly committee meetings to monitor and advance the progress of the Master Plan update. A significant product of these meetings included visioning sessions, in which the Master Plan Steering Committee developed the Master Plan Vision statement, with support from CMRPC and input from the community surveys. The Vision Statement is the statement designed to encapsulate the Town's vision of how the Master Plan will represent the Town's direction and progress in the years to come. Furthermore, the monthly committee meetings were integral to developing the goals that are laid out in this Master Plan. The committee members, again in collaboration with CMRPC, developed the corresponding action items and strategies, to provide actionable strategies to achieve the goals stated in this plan. The goals, action items, and strategies were developed principally through crucial reliance on community feedback gathered in the surveys.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Regional Transportation Plan

Mobility2040 is the current Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) for the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) region. This LRTP identifies the multi-modal transportation needs in the region, the resources required to address them, and the projects planned for the next 25 years. Federal planning provisions passed in August of 2005 require that CMMPO update its LRTP every four years, with the plan last being updated in 2020. Mobility2040 lists the "Multimodal Connection: Blackstone River Greenway to Mass-Central Rail Trail" as a potential major Bike/Ped infrastructure project in the plan. The project was determined to comprehensively meet the Mobility2040 goal to "increase transportation options and promote healthy modes," and meet all but one of the other six goals in some capacity. No other project-specific information related to Boylston was included in the LRTP.

WRTA Comprehensive Service Analysis

In 2020, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) was tasked by the Massachusetts State Legislature to update its 5-year Comprehensive Service Analysis (CSA). This analysis provided the WRTA with the opportunity to assess the entire transit network and identify goals for improving and expanding the network. The WRTA was established in 1974 pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 161B to finance, contract for, and develop the operation of transit service in the WRTA service area, in which Boylston is included. There are 25 fixed bus routes operated by the WRTA as of FY2019, including in West Boylston and Shrewsbury, which border Boylston. However, no routes currently operate in the Town of Boylston. There is no project-specific information or recommendations related to Boylston in the plan.

CMMPO Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a federally mandated program for all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). It serves as a prioritized list of all transportation investments within the MPO's regions for the next five years. The CMMPO is the MPO that carries out the TIP process for the Central Massachusetts region, of which Boylston is a part. Potential TIP projects are scored and selected by CMMPO staff and CMMPO Advisory Committee before being endorsed by the CMMPO. There are currently no Boylston-related projects listed on the CMMPO 2022-2026 TIP.

2018 West Boylston – Boylston – Shrewsbury Route 140 Corridor Profile

In 2018, the CMMPO conducted a corridor profile for Route 140 in the host communities of West Boylston, Boylston, and Shrewsbury. This plan combines the information produced by the transportation Management Systems maintained by CMRPC staff along Route 140, which includes traffic counting, congestion management process (CMP), freight planning, transportation safety planning program, pavement management system (PMS), and bridge management system (BMS). The Route 140 Corridor Profile includes the analysis and interpretation of performance-based data, identifies potential projects for further study, and suggests operational and physical improvements. The suggested improvements are considered by the host communities and the MassDOT Highway Division, and when local consensus is reached, proposed projects selected by the community can be eligible to be included in programming in the annual TIP document.

The Route 140 Corridor Profile identified several site-specific observations and existing deficiencies in Boylston at the Route 140/Route 70 intersection, the Route 140/School Street intersection, the new FedEx facility at 100 Pine Hill Drive, and at the construction of Pine Hill Drive between Route 140 and School Street. Some of the observations and deficiencies noted were the high number of crashes at the Route 140/Route 70 intersection and the difficulty of exiting onto Route 140 from School Street, especially when making left turns.

Site-specific suggestions improvement options were identified for five different sites in Boylston: Route 140/Route 70 intersection; Route 140 between Route 70 and Sewall Street; Route 140/Sewall Street; Route 140 between Sewall Street and Pine Hill Drive; and Route 140/School Street and Pine Hill Drive intersections. A variety of suggested improvements were made, such as further study on Route 140/Sewall Street to examine a potential modern roundabout and other improvement options, or removing and replacing all yellow diamond crossroads signs and replace with "Signal Ahead" signs on all four approaches at the Route 140/Route 70 intersection. Following the construction of Pine Hill Drive and the release of the Route 140 Corridor Profile, a new approach was constructed from the east (from Cross Street/School Street to the recently-constructed Route 140/Pine Hill Drive signalized intersection). This new approach allowed for eliminating the former connection from School Street to Route 140, which was identified to be problematic, and accommodation of the FedEx site.

2018 Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans

Two plans were created by the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) to assess the current state of bike and pedestrian infrastructure in the region. They outline best practices for pedestrian and bike facilities and serve as references for village planning and design for bicyclists. The 2018 CMMPO Regional Bicycle Plan identified zero miles of existing or programmed bicycle facilities but identified 18 miles of potential bicycle facilities. Four priority recommendations were made for Boylston: 1) Adopt the CMMPO Regional Bicycle Plan; 2) Create and adopt local Complete Streets policies and prioritization plans; 3) Work with MassDOT to determine how quickly arterial and collector streets with excess shoulder width can be converted into Complete Streets; and 4) Work with local, regional, and statewide advocacy groups to expand public education campaigns that promote the rules of the road, such as Safe Routes to School materials and practice. Additionally, there were ten on-road recommendations for Boylston, of which two were deemed to have "regional" priority, six "major" priority, and two "minor" priority.

In the 2018 CMMPO Regional Pedestrian Plan, five priority recommendations were made for Boylston. The five recommendations included the four recommendations made in the 2018 CMMPO Regional Bicycle Plan in addition to

the recommendation of working with MassDOT and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to ensure that Regional Multi-Use Trails and Pathways can meet subregional and regional travel needs via alternative modes.

2021 CMMPO Regional Bicycle Compatibility Index

As a supplement to the 2018 Regional Bicycle Plan, CMRPC staff developed the CMMPO Regional Bicycle Compatibility Index (BCI). This plan is designed to take a closer look into the region’s road infrastructure and its ability to support bicycle accommodations. The BCI, which has been formulated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), provides a comfort level analysis of roadways in terms of their compatibility to easily integrate bicycle infrastructure, while also determining the perceived safety of bicyclists. The BCI is intended to support stakeholder decision-making in prioritizing segments to build upon the region’s multi-modal network. The ranking system breaks down the BCI score into 6 grades: Class A (the best) to Class F (the worst), and is broken down as the following: Class A: up to a BCI score of 1.51; Class B: 1.52 to 2.31; Class C: 2.32 to 3.41; Class D: 3.42 to 4.41; Class E: 4.42 to 5.30; Class F: above a BCI score of 5.30. Of the twenty road segments evaluated in Boylston, two segments received an “A,” three segments received a “B,” two segments received a “D,” eight segments received an “E,” four segments received an “F,” and one segment received a combined grade of “B/C/D.” A more detailed breakdown of the grades, observed problems, proposed actions, and expected outcomes of the twenty road segments analyzed in Boylston, can be found below in Table 6 in the “Bicycle Infrastructure” subsection of the Issues, Opportunities, and Strategies section of this Master Plan.

2020 Regional Asset Management Report

This plan was created by the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) to assess conditions, funding needs, and recommend repair strategies for the region’s road system. Assets included in this report are pavement, sidewalks, curb ramps, culverts, bridges, and traffic signals. Pavement data was last collected for Boylston’s pavement in 2018, its sidewalks in 2020, and its ramps in 2020. The 2020 Regional Asset Management Report (AMR) listed the following prioritized pavement segment and culvert in Boylston: the pavement segment of Central Street (from French Drive to Cross Street) was deemed to be in “fair” condition, and the culvert on Cross Street over a tributary to French Brook was deemed to be a “moderate barrier.” Boylston had no sidewalks, curb ramp segments, or bridges listed, nor did the AMR identify any pavement segments in Boylston to be in “excellent,” “good,” “poor,” or “very poor” conditions.

Existing Conditions

Boylston Road Jurisdictions

Table T1 shows the jurisdiction of the town’s roads. The official state database of public and private roadways in the Commonwealth is the MassDOT Road Inventory File (RIF). The information in the RIF on roadway ownership in Massachusetts communities helps determine the amount of local aid municipalities receive.

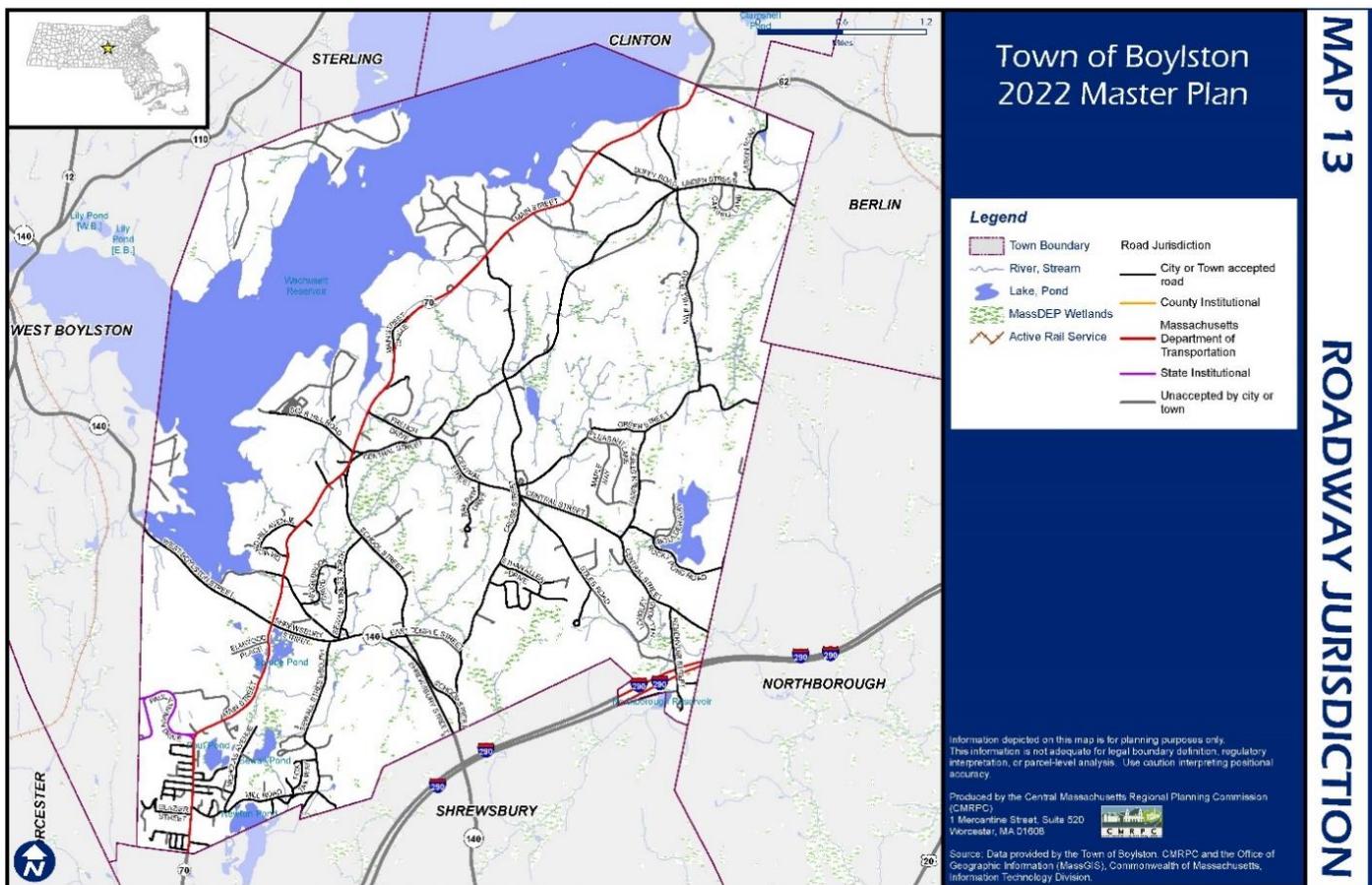
The most updated version of the RIF is the 2020 Massachusetts Road Inventory Year End Report released in July 2021. According to this current version, the Town of Boylston contains 51.72 total miles of roads. Ownership of road miles by the Town of Boylston amounts to approximately 40.01 miles. This is compared to approximately 7.81 of State-owned roads. Additionally, there are 2.81 miles that are classified as “Unaccepted,” which are roads open to public travel, but not formally accepted by a municipality. The “Unaccepted” classification can also include some private roadways.

Table T1: Road Jurisdiction Mileage in Boylston

Jurisdiction	Total Miles
0 – Unaccepted	2.81
1 – MassDOT	7.81
2 – Boylston Accepted	40.01
7 – State Institutional	1.09
9 – County Institutional	.001
Total	51.72

Source: MassDOT, MA Road Inventory Year End Report, 2021

Map T1: Boylston Roadway Jurisdiction



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Boylston Roadway Functional Classification

Roads are classified into different groups based on the service they provide. The Federal Highway Administration classifies roads into a hierarchy of four categories: 1) Principal Arterials, 2) Minor Arterials, 3) Collectors (Major, Minor), and 4) Local Roads. Roads higher in the hierarchy, such as Principal Arterials or Minor Arterials, are designed to provide greater mobility and typically have higher design speeds. In contrast, roads lower in the hierarchy, such as Local Roads, provide local access and typically have lower design speeds. Collectors provide a level of service designed for shorter distances and lower speeds, due to their function of “collecting” traffic from local roads and connecting them with arterials and other smaller towns and cities. According to the previously mentioned 2020 Massachusetts Road Inventory

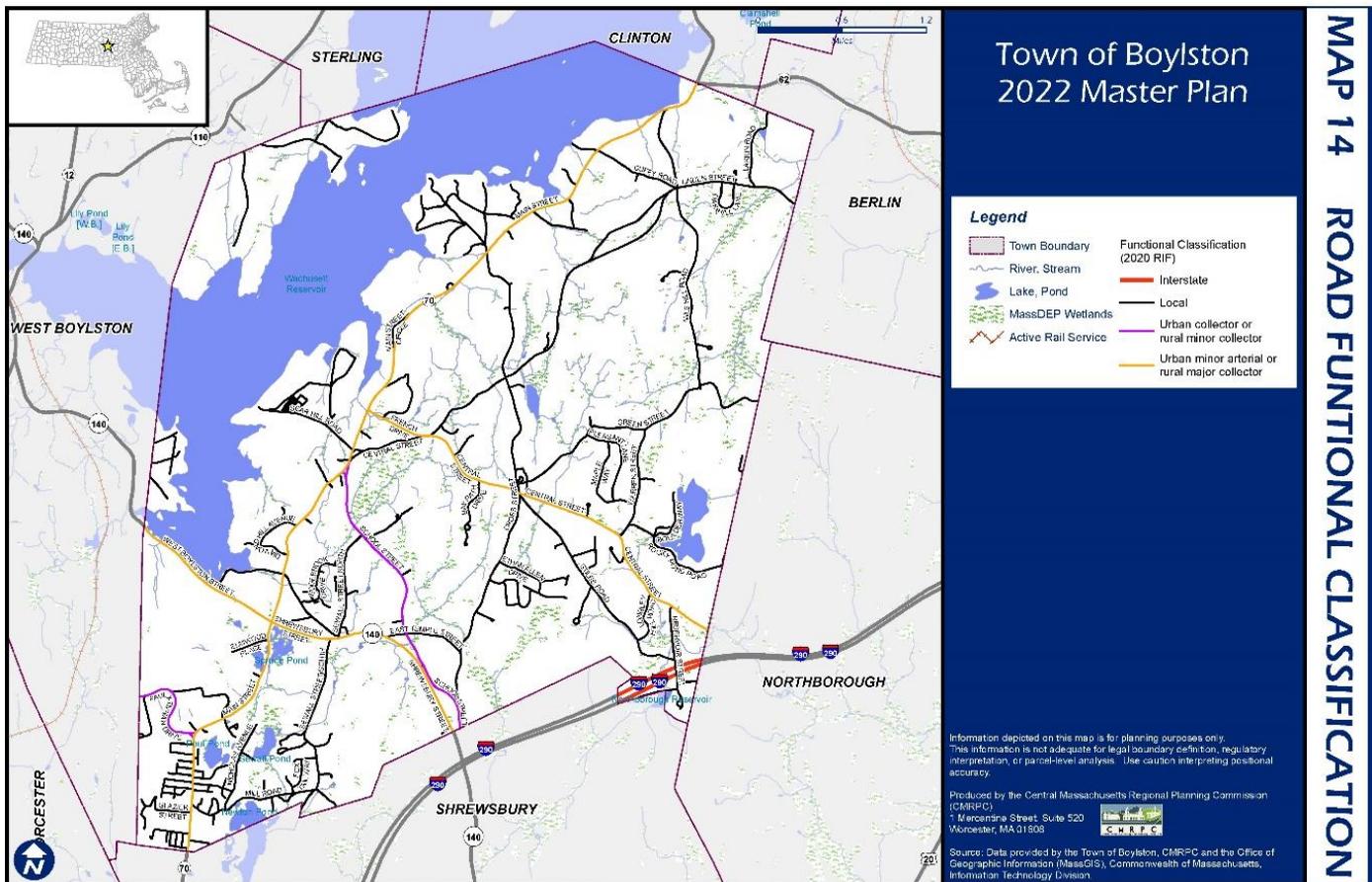
Year End Report, there are 0.65 total miles of roadway in Boylston classified as “Interstate”; 35.15 total miles classified as “Local”; 2.93 total miles classified as “Collector”; and 12.98 total miles classified as “Arterial”. The urban/rural breakdown of Boylston’s roadways’ functional classification can be found below in Table T2. A map of Boylston’s Road classifications can be seen below in Map T2.

Table T2: Boylston Roadway Functional Classification Mileage

Classification	Total Miles
Interstate - Urban	0.65
Interstate - Rural	0.00
Interstate - TOTAL	0.65
Local - Urban	33.08
Local - Rural	2.07
Local - TOTAL	35.15
Collector - Urban	2.93
Collector - Rural	0.00
Collector - TOTAL	2.93
Arterial - Urban	12.98
Arterial - Rural	0.00
Arterial - TOTAL	12.98
TOTAL	51.72

Source: MassDOT, Massachusetts Road Inventory Year End Report, July 2021

Map T2: Boylston Roadway Functional Classification

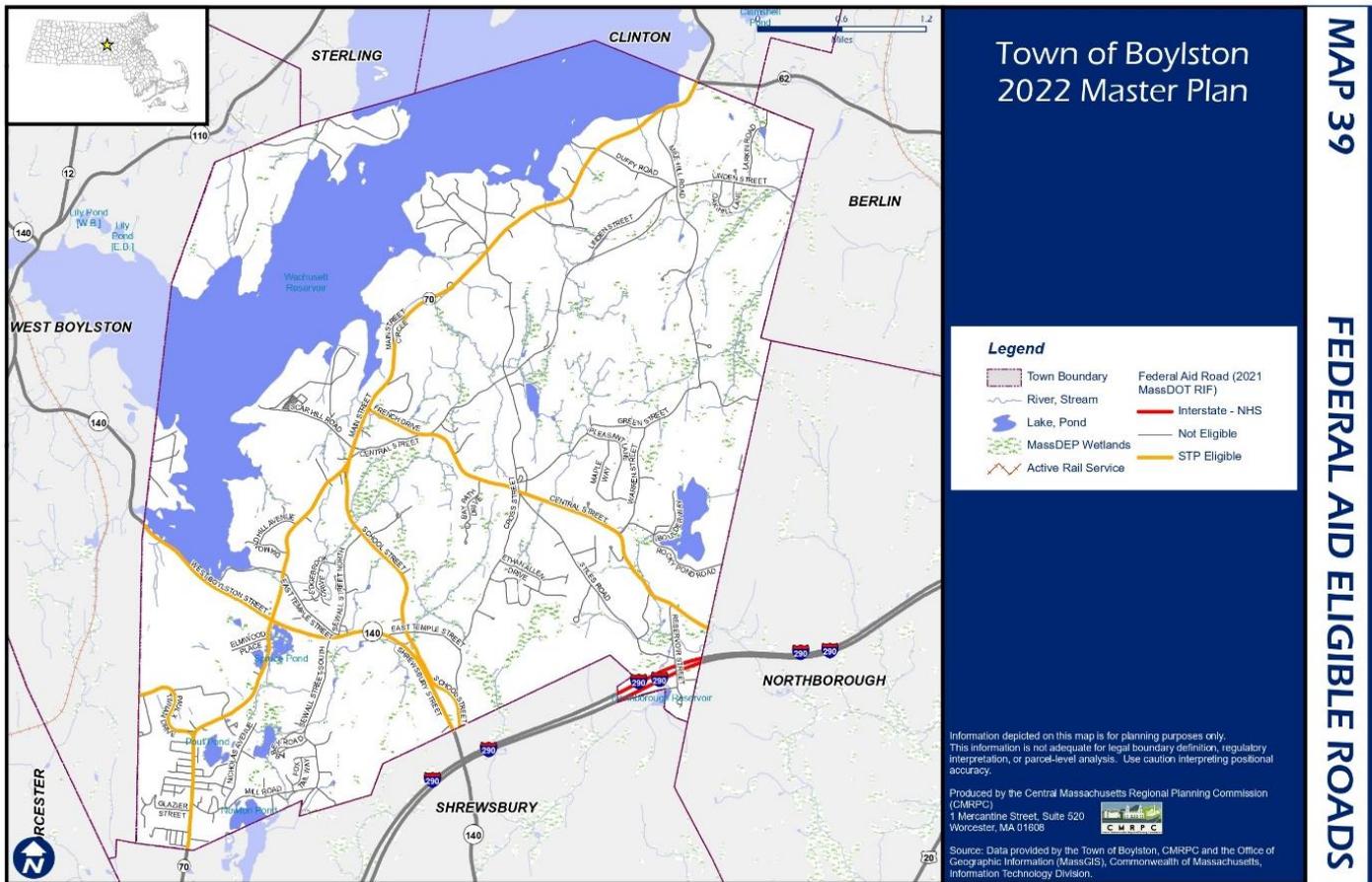


Source: CMRPC, 2022

Boylston Federal-aid Eligible Roadways

Federal-aid eligible roads are roadways that are qualified to receive financing from federal government sources. Such funds are allocated from the federal government to state governments. Through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), those funds are then distributed for roadway improvement projects. Along with urban or rural roadway classification, functional classification determines if a roadway can qualify for receipt of federal funds. All interstates, urban and rural arterials, urban collectors, and major rural collectors are eligible for these funds. Rural minor collectors and local roads are not eligible for these funds. Although Boylston does not have any rural minor collectors, 35.15 miles of its roads are functionally classified as “Local,” which means approximately 68% of Boylston’s roadways are not eligible for the aforementioned federal funds. Boylston’s federal-aid eligible roadways are shown in Map T3.

Map T3: Boylston Federal-aid Eligible Roadways



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Narrative of the Road Network

Interstate-290

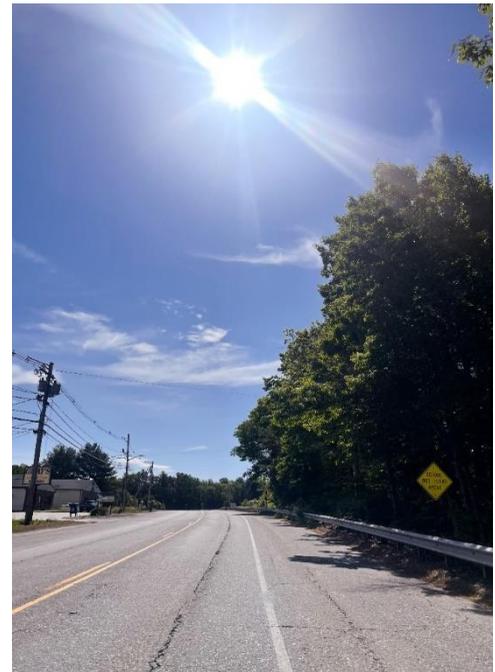
The only interstate highway in Boylston is I-290. There are no direct connections or entry/exit points to I-290 located within Boylston's borders. The closest entry/exit point is located just across Boylston's southern town line in Shrewsbury along Route 140. Travelers originating in the south end of Boylston going westbound or returning on I-290 typically use the Plantation Street onramp or offramp. Boylston travelers destined to/from I-495 south typically use the Church Street entry/exit in Northborough.

State Route 70 / Main Street

Massachusetts State Route 70 is a major route running from the Shrewsbury town line in the south to the Clinton town line in the north. Route 70 provides connections to Route 62 to its north, which provides access to entry and exit points of I-495 to Boylston's east in Berlin. The road's main intersection in Boylston is with Route 140, with other significant intersections with School Street, Cross Street, and French Drive.

State Route 140

Massachusetts State Route 140 is a major route running from the Shrewsbury town line to the south and to the West Boylston town line in the west. Besides the small section of I-290 located in town, Route 140 is Boylston's most heavily trafficked roadway. It also acts as a major commercial corridor in town, with many of Boylston's businesses located along Route 140 between the Shrewsbury town line and Route 70. The Wachusett Reservoir precludes commercial development on most of Route 140 between the West Boylston town line and Route 70. Route 140 provides key connections to I-290 just across the town line in Shrewsbury and provides access to State Route 12 in West Boylston to the west. The road's main intersection in Boylston is with Route 70, with other significant intersections with School Street, Cross Street, and Pine Hill Drive, on which the FedEx distribution facility is located. Route 140 experiences the heaviest traffic flows near its southern end, just before the I-290 entry points in Shrewsbury.



*Photo: State Route 140 in Boylston
Photo credit: CMRPC staff*

Network Conditions

On behalf of the CMMPO, CMRPC staff developed an Asset Management System (AMS) to assess conditions, funding needs, and recommended repair strategies. The goal of the AMS process is to keep roadways in the best possible conditions with the most efficient use of available funding. Assets that are monitored as part of this process are road pavement, sidewalks and ramps, traffic signals, culverts, and bridges. CMRPC staff assess these assets using data from field surveys, statewide programs, and other available data sets as needed. CMRPC's most recent road inspection was in 2018. This survey assessed Federal Aid Eligible roads, which are a subset of the roads in the Town.

Pavement

In CMRPC's recent road inspection in Boylston, pavement conditions could be given a rating of "very poor," "poor," "fair," "good," or "excellent." Approximately 2.12 miles of the roadway sections surveyed in Boylston for pavement conditions received a "fair" rating, which was the lowest rating any surveyed roadway in Boylston received. Approximately 11.95 miles of surveyed roadway received a "good" rating, while 2.78 miles received an "excellent" rating. These survey results align with results from the Community Vision Survey, where 93% of respondents rated road conditions as either "good" or "adequate."

Sidewalks and Ramps

CMRPC’s baseline assessment of sidewalk and ramp data is from 2015. Typically, this data is updated every 3-5 years. In Boylston, 0.11 miles of sidewalk received a “fair” rating, 2.43 miles received a “good” rating, and 1.05 miles received an “excellent” rating. There was no reported data for 0.02 miles of the Town’s sidewalks.

Ramp assessments classify ramps into two categories. A “historic” classification defines a ramp that is in good condition but does not have a detectable warning panel. A “non-compliant” ramp is a ramp that is in poor condition. Of the 42 ramps surveyed in Boylston, 19, or 45.24% were classified as “historic,” while 23, or 54.76% were deemed to be “non-compliant.”

Bridges

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) tracks the status of bridges in Massachusetts through the MassDOT Bridge Inspection Management System (BIMS). Biannual inspections inform the database that features information on MassDOT and municipality-owned bridges with spans greater than 20 feet. Currently, data is not available for MassDOT and municipality-owned bridges with spans between 10 and 20 feet, and culverts with spans of four to 10 feet. There are two bridges maintained by MassDOT in Boylston and 12 culverts. However, the NAACC database identified 61 culverts or possible culverts.

Table T3: Boylston Bridge Inspections

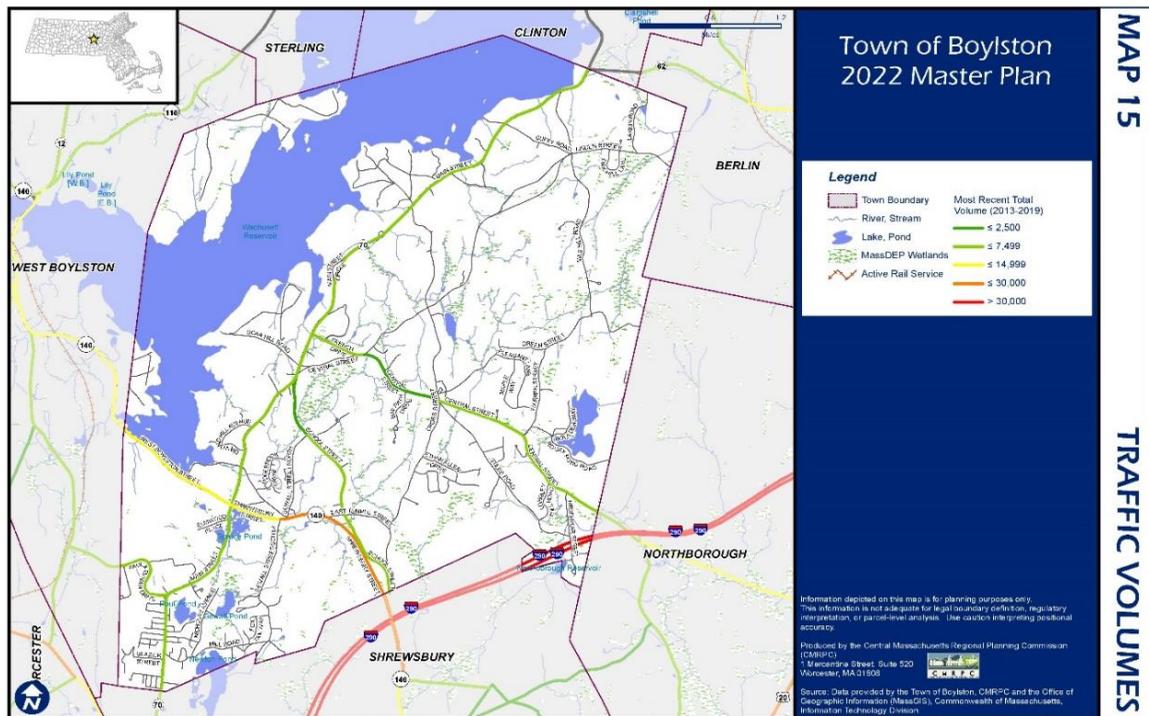
Bridge Location/Feature Intersected	Year Constructed	Inspection Date	Deck Condition	Superstructure Condition	Substructure Condition	Culvert Condition
I-290 EB	1968	6/30/2020	6	6	7	N
HWY Reservoir St.	1968	6/30/2020	6	7	5	N

Source: MassDOT, Bridge Inspection Management System, June 2020

Traffic Volume

Among Boylston’s main roadways, the traffic volumes generally range between 2,500-7,499 to 7,4999-14,999 vehicle trips per day. As indicated in the figure below, the entirety of the Route 70 section in town experiences between 2,500 and 7,499 vehicle trips per day. However, the other main roadway in Boylston, Route 140 experiences heavier traffic volume. The more northerly section of Route 140 from the intersection of Sewall Street South to the West Boylston town line, sees between 7,499 and 14,999 vehicle trips per day. The more southerly section, from the Sewall Street South intersection to the Shrewsbury town line, ranges between 14,999 and 30,000 vehicle trips per day, with volume increasing as it approaches I-290 entry points. The small section of I-290 in Boylston experiences the heaviest traffic volume in town with over 30,000 vehicle trips per day.

Map T3: Boylston Traffic Volumes



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Freight Rail and Trucking

Table T4 below represents the most recently collected data by CMRPC on heavy vehicle travel in Boylston.¹ Upon examining this data, only one location in town has a heavy vehicle percentage exceeding 10%: Route 140 at West Boylston TL. At this location, there was a 12.3% heavy vehicle measurement in September of 2020. All other locations with measured data have heavy vehicle percentages in the range of 5.13% to 8.75%. Concerning freight rail, there are no existing rail lines of any kind in the town of Boylston.

Table T4: Surveyed Heavy Vehicle Percentages in Various Boylston Locations

Date	Heavy Vehicle Percent Combined	Municipality	Street	Location
6/4/2019	5.13%	Boylston	Central St	E of Cross St
6/4/2019	8.27%	Boylston	School St	At Shrewsbury TL
10/19/2016	5.66%	Boylston	Main St (Rt70)	At Shrewsbury TL
10/19/2016	8.75%	Boylston	Main St (Rt70)	N of Shrewsbury St (Rt140)
10/19/2016	5.90%	Boylston	Main St (Rt70)	S of Willow Rd (Rt62)
10/19/2016	7.47%	Boylston	Main St (Rt70)	S of Shrewsbury-W Boylston St (Rt140)
9/3/2020	12.30%	Boylston	West Boylston St (Rt140)	At West Boylston TL
6/4/2019	6.16%	Boylston	School St	N of East Temple St
6/4/2019	5.99%	Boylston	Central St	At Northborough TL

Source: CMRPC, September 2020

¹ Heavy Vehicle is defined by the Federal Highway Administration as a vehicle with six or more tires touching the ground. The Heavy vehicle percentage is the percentage of total vehicles observed that meet this category or higher.

Road Network Funding

The Chapter 90 program was authorized through Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.) Chapter 90, Section 34. This program reimburses towns for “maintaining, repairing, improving, and constructing town and county ways and bridges...” and provides funding to municipalities for the implementation of capital improvements on local public ways. Annual funding through the program acts as a source of investment for improvements and further investments into local transportation networks. Each Massachusetts municipality receives an allocation of the total Chapter 90 funding and allows local communities to invest in their unique transportation needs and goals. The amount of Chapter 90 funding a municipality receives is determined by a formula developed by the Legislative Rural Caucus of the



Photo: Boylston streetscape
Photo Credit: CMRPC staff

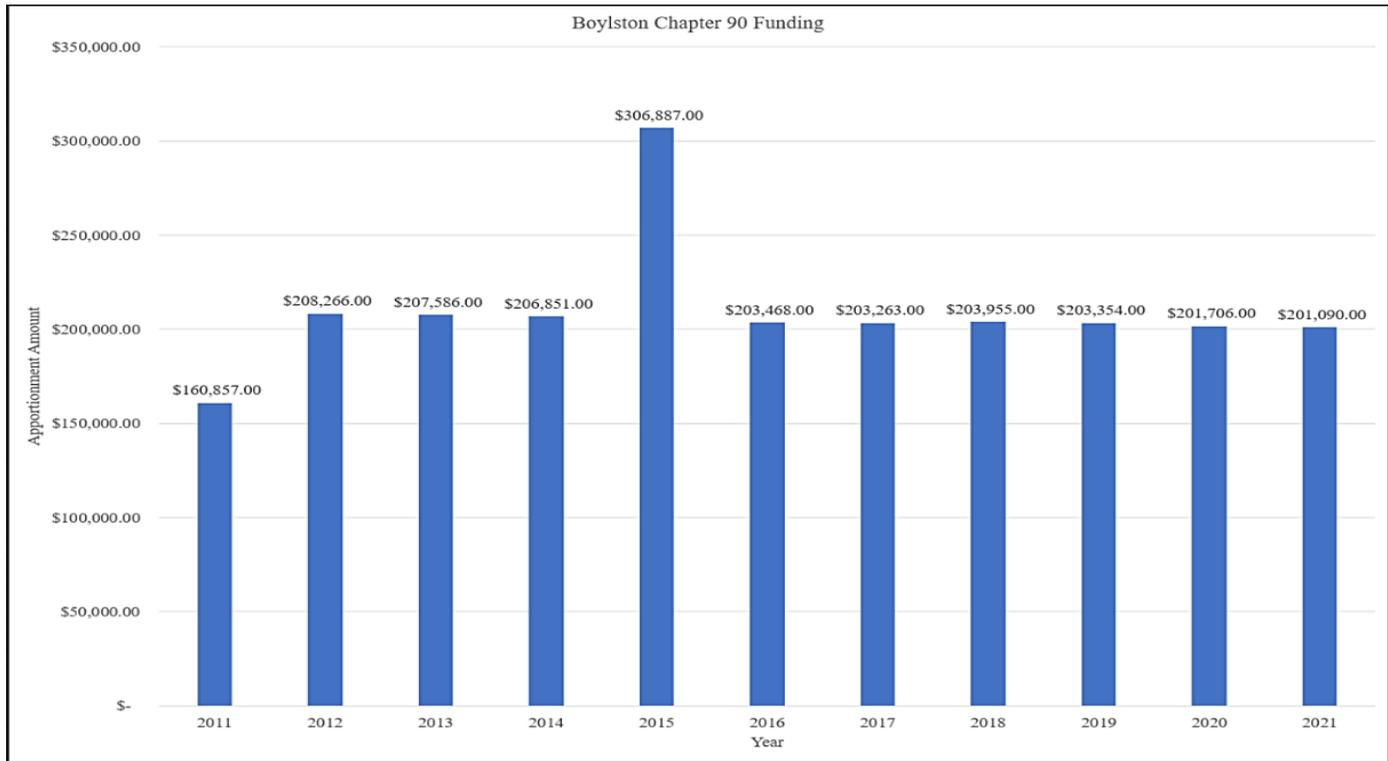
Transportation Committee. The formula uses three weighted categories: 1) Roadway mileage (58.33%), 2) Population (20.83%), and 3) Employment (20.83%). In the most recent round of funding based on this formula, Boylston received \$201,381 for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22). Table 5 compares Boylston’s FY22 Chapter 90 funding to the neighboring municipalities in the CMRPC region and the three weighted categories that determine funding allocations. Figure 1 indicates the Chapter 90 funding Boylston has received since 2011. In FY23 the town of Boylston’s road budget constitutes: \$203,000 for Chapter 90; \$260,000 for Road Paving/Repair; and \$215,000 for Snow and Ice.

Table T5: FY 23 Chapter 90 Funding – Boylston and Neighboring Towns in the CMRPC Region

Municipality	Miles 2020	Population 2010	Employment 2020	Amount
Berlin	42.31	2,866	686	\$193,278
Northborough	80.22	14,155	9,101	\$516,914
Shrewsbury	149.55	35,608	14,741	\$989,227
West Boylston	50.40	7,669	3,312	\$285,272
Boylston	40.06	4,355	1,442	\$203,748

Source: MassDOT, FY 23 Chapter 90 Apportionments, April 2022

Figure T1: 2011-2021 Chapter 90 Funding Boylston



Source: MassDOT, Chapter 90 Past Apportionments, March 2022

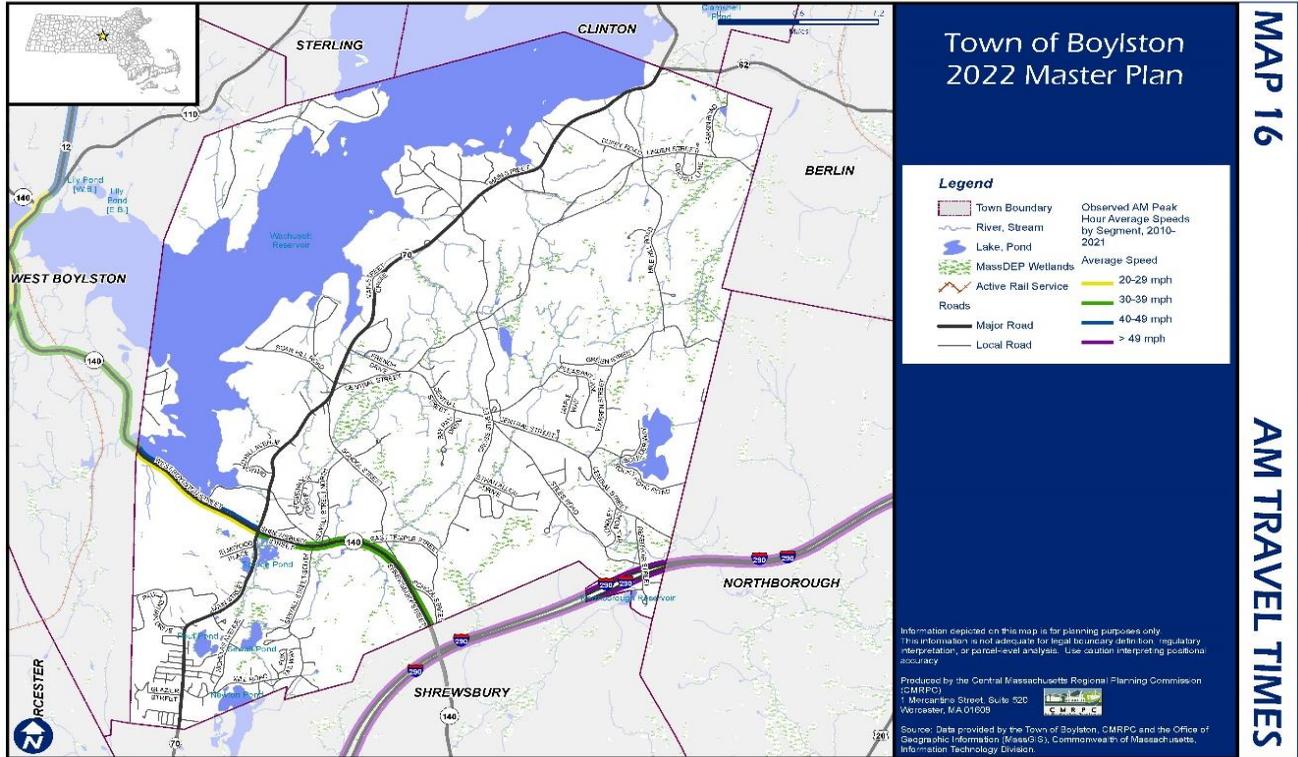
Journey to Work

Most workers living in Boylston commute to their place of employment by car, truck, or van. In 2019, prior to COVID-19 and the changes brought by it, 83.1% of Boylston’s working residents commuted to work by car and an estimated 10.0% of residents worked from home. The most recent data from the American Community Survey (ACS) suggests that as of 2020, 81.0% of workers commute by car while 12.9% work from home. There was minimal change among workers who commute via public transportation, walking, bicycling, taxicab, or other means. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in decreased commuting and increased remote work across the region and country, a trend that is likely to continue into the coming years.

According to 2020 ACS data, the largest percentage (27.1%) of commuters depart their home for work between 9:00am and 12:59pm. Within the morning hours, 15.5% of commuters reported leaving home for work between 7:00am and 7:29am, 12.1% left home between 7:30am-7:59am, and 11.7% left home between 8:00am and 8:29am. The average vehicular speeds observed during morning and afternoon peak hours along the Route 140 corridor are shown in Maps T4 and T5, respectively. For both morning and afternoon peak hours, vehicular speeds range from 20-49 miles per hour. The only exception is the southbound section of Route 140 from the West Boylston town line to the intersection with Route 70, which has observed morning peak hour average speeds of 20-29 miles per hour.

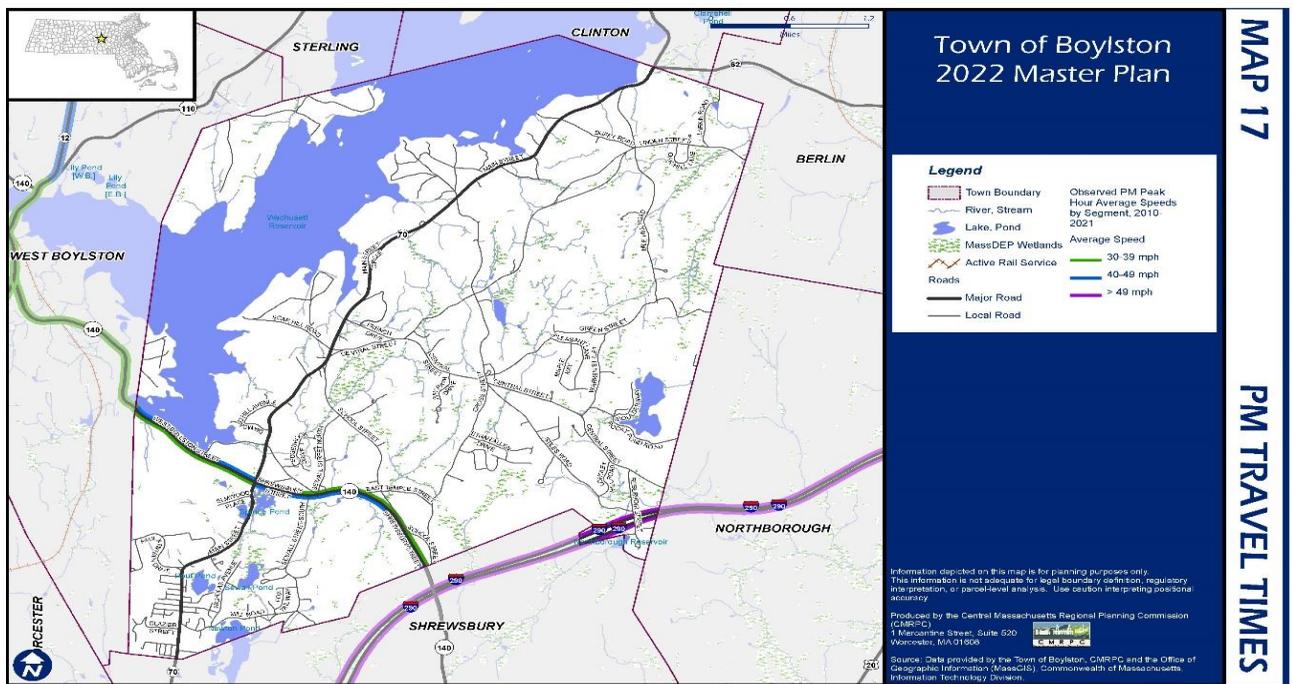
Upon examination of time spent commuting, 18.3% of commuters had a commute time of 20-24 minutes, 17.9% commuted for 15 to 19 minutes, 13.4% commuted for 10 to 14 minutes, and 12.5% commuted for over one hour. Just 1.7% of Boylston residents reported working in a different state, while 98.3% reported working in Massachusetts. Furthermore, 64.8% of Boylston’s residents said they work within Worcester County, with 33.5% reporting working in a different county.

Map T4: Morning Peak Hours Travel Speeds



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Map T5: Afternoon Peak Hours Travel Speeds



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Transportation Safety

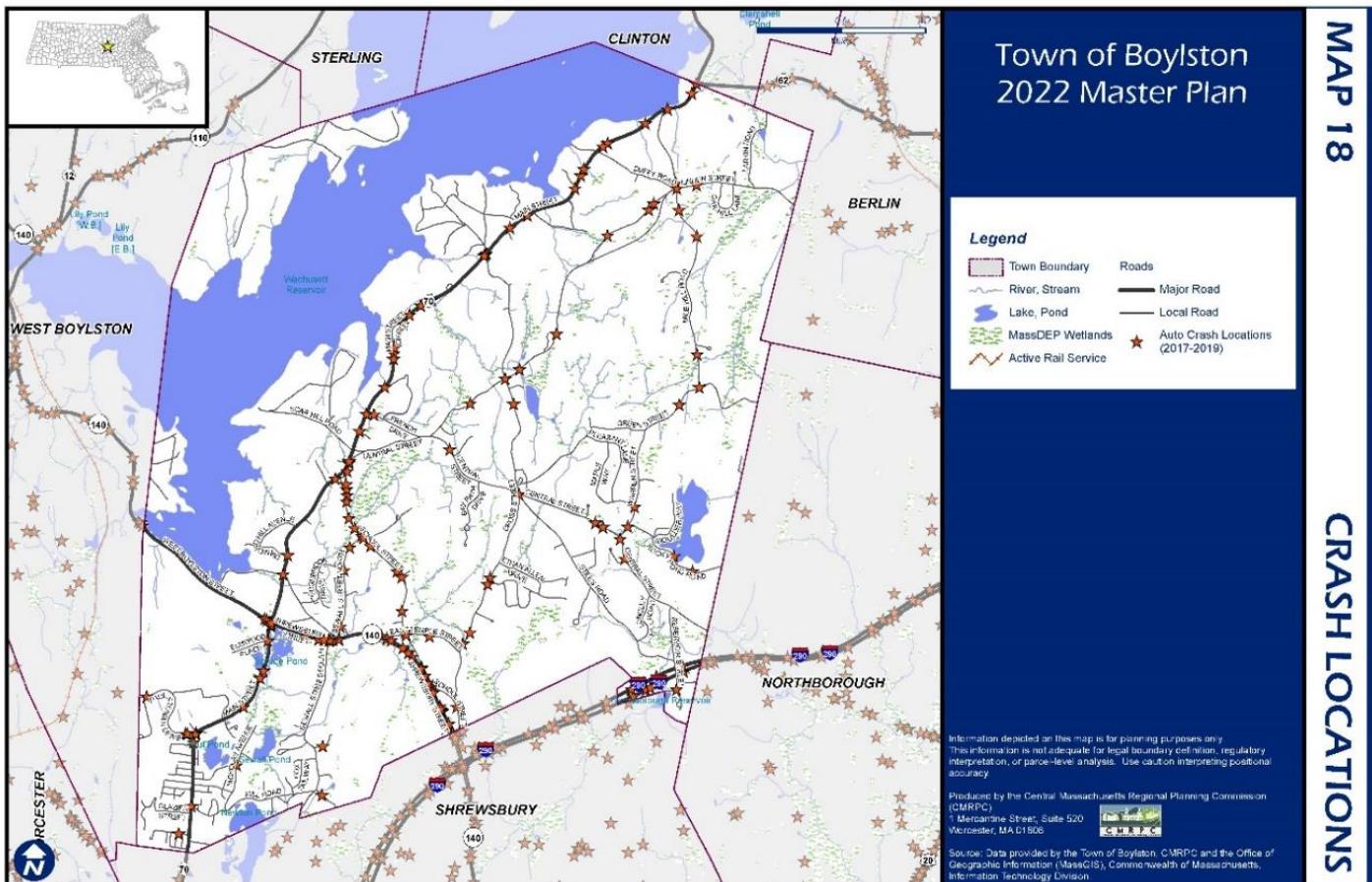
Improving safety on all public roads is one of the principal aims of transportation planning in the CMMPO region. The safety information presented below will provide a brief overview of MassDOT Equivalent Property Damage Only (EPDO) and Crash Cluster data, as well as reviewing the most up-to-date crash data available from MassDOT’s 2017 Top Crash Locations Report.

The EPDO method is defined in the AASHTO Highway Safety Manual as a method that develops a combined frequency and severity score per crash site. The weighting factors used help calculate Property Damage Only crash costs, such as ambulance, police, and fire service, property damage, and insurance. Other indirect costs are also included, such as the value society places on the suffering associated with a crash or loss of life.

The Crash Cluster method merges adjacent crash locations into clusters through a georeferenced analysis. To generate a crash cluster, MassDOT uses a ten-year period of motorist crashes and a three-year period of auto-crash data. The resulting crash clusters that are identified are then scored and ranked using the same EPDO method.

MassDOT combines the EPDO and crash clusters methods to create the Top High Crash Locations listing. This listing is for crashes located at intersections during a three-year period. The listing also includes weighted highest frequency pedestrian-motor vehicle and bicycle-motor vehicle locations for a ten-year period. In MassDOT’s most recent Top High Crash Locations data from 2017, there were no Boylston locations identified as a “Top High Crash Location.” Map T6 shows the most current data on auto crash locations in the Town of Boylston for the 2017-2019 period.

Map T6: Boylston Crash Locations (2017-2019)

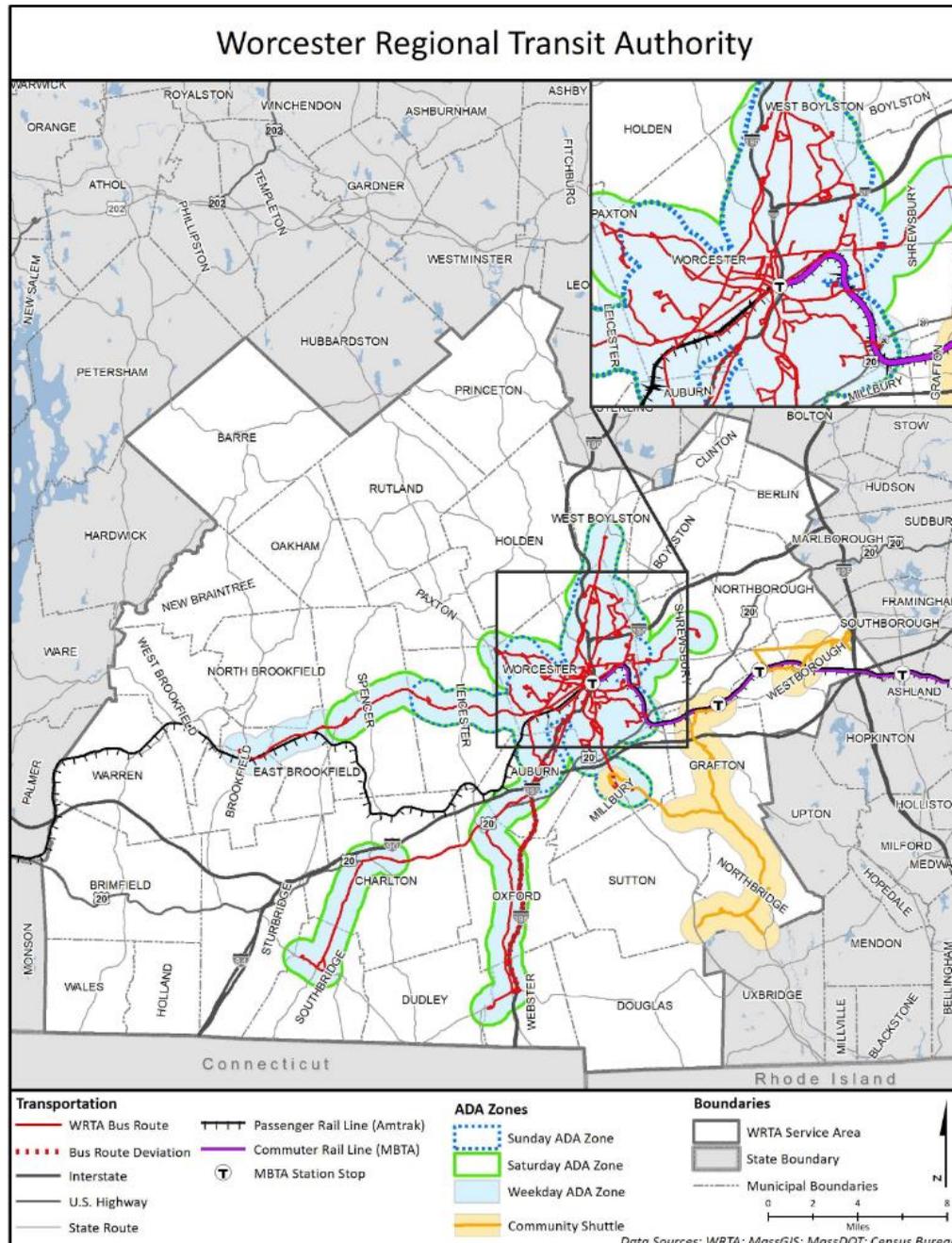


Source: CMRPC, 2022

Public Transportation

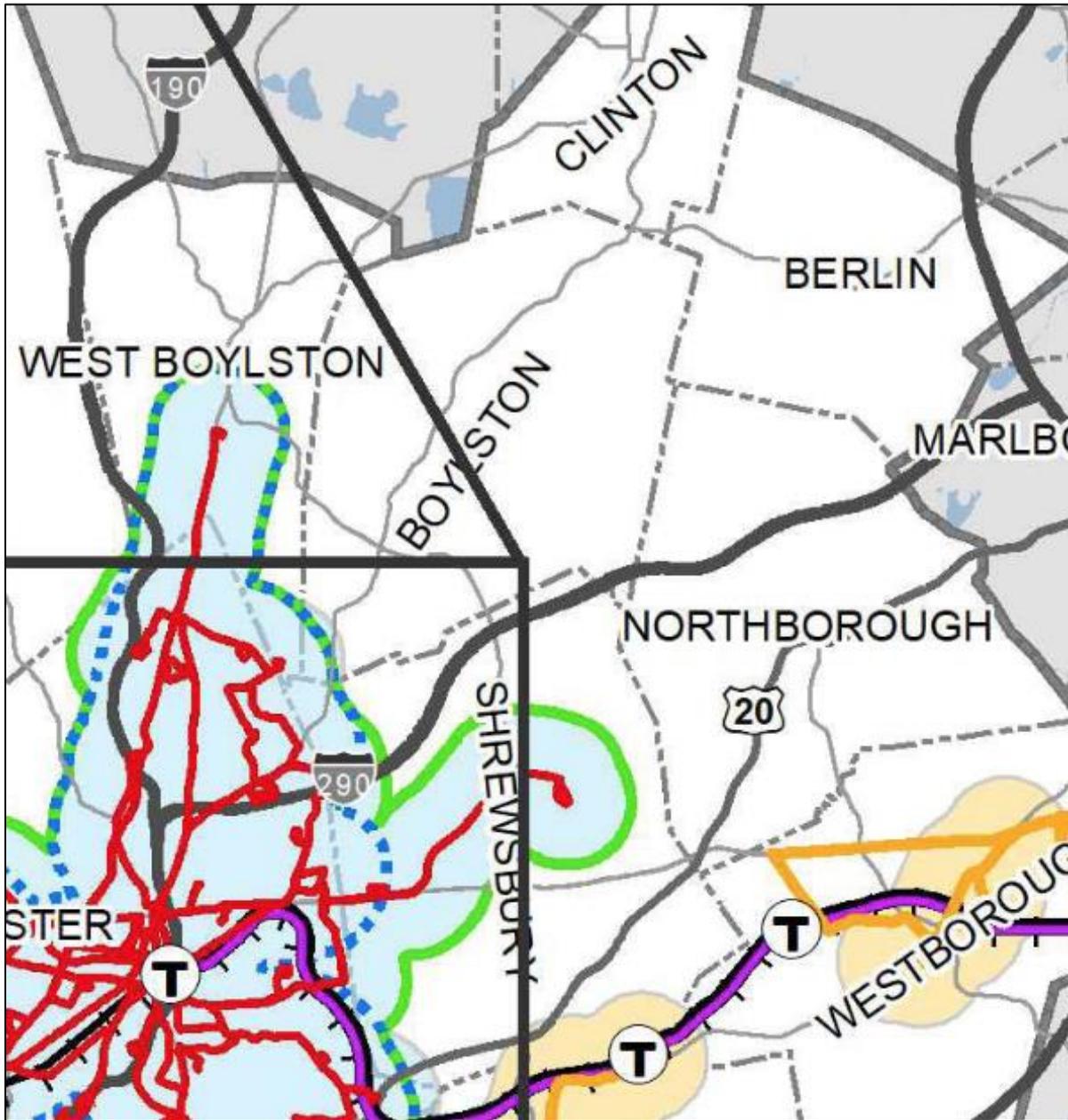
There is currently no WRTA fixed route service or MBTA commuter rail service within the town of Boylston. However, there are nearby WRTA routes in the neighboring towns of West Boylston and Shrewsbury, which can be viewed in Maps T7 and T8. Additionally, Boylston is within 20 miles of several MBTA commuter rail stops on two MBTA lines. Along the Framingham/Worcester line, the Westborough stop is 10.4 miles away, the Worcester stop is 11.8 miles away, and the Grafton stop is 12.2 miles away. These three stops can be viewed in Map T7. Along the Fitchburg commuter rail line, the Leominster stop is 10.5 miles away, the Shirley stop is 14.1 miles away, and the Littleton/495 stop is 17.9 miles away. The Town offers a van service through the Boylston Council on Aging (COA). Service is offered within a 15-mile radius of Boylston from 8:00am-2:00pm Monday through Thursday and 48 hours' notice is required to schedule a ride.

Map T7: WRTA Service Map



Source: WRTA, Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020, January 2021

Map T8: WRTA Service Map – Boylston and Surrounding Towns



Source: WRTA, Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020, January 2021

Issues, Opportunities, and Strategies

The following section examines issues and opportunities that were identified through the review and analysis that occurs throughout the Master Plan process. This includes priorities and data identified in previous planning efforts, current trends and conditions, and the feedback received from the Boylston community throughout the Master Plan outreach efforts.

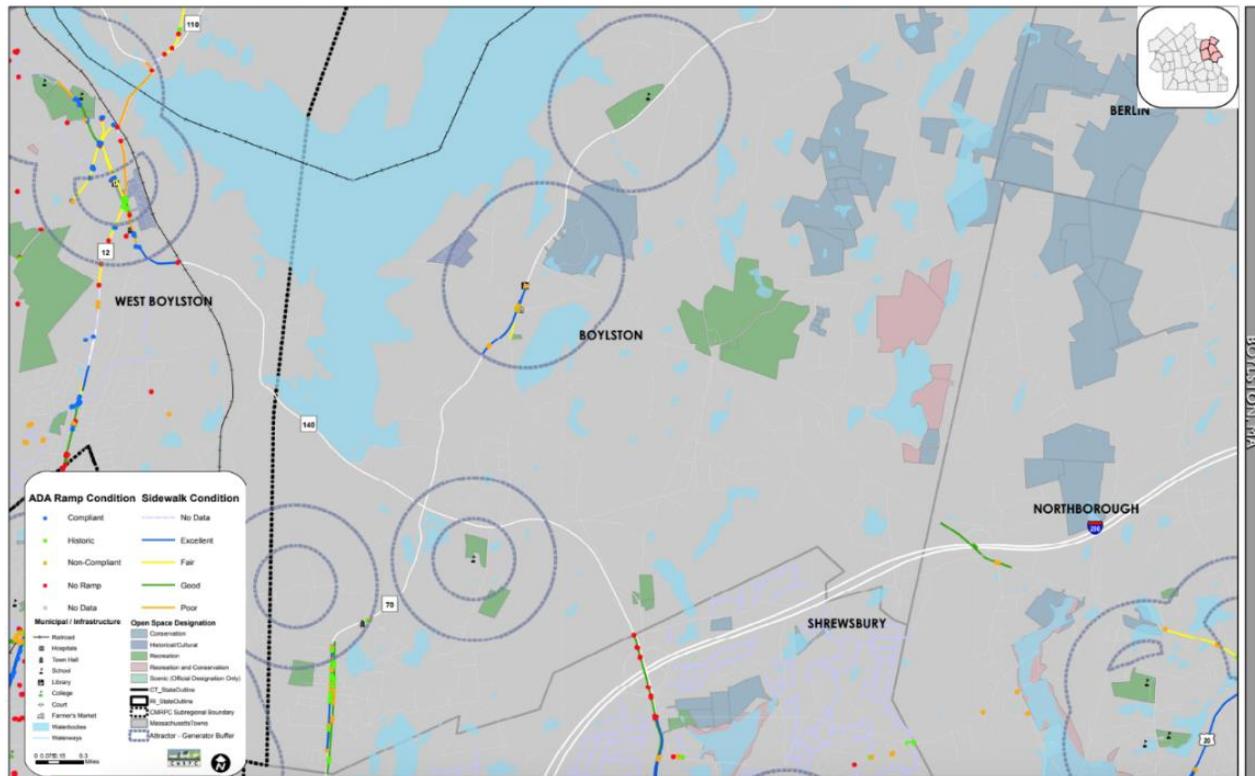
Pedestrian Infrastructure

Community feedback and the observation of current conditions both show that the Town of Boylston has opportunities to improve and expand pedestrian infrastructure. In the Community Vision Master Plan Survey, 67% of survey respondents indicated that they would like to see improved sidewalks and crosswalks, while 71% of survey responses said that sidewalk conditions need to be improved. In order to better understand how pedestrian infrastructure, such as sidewalks, can be improved, the Town needs to understand the current conditions of such infrastructure. The town will want to update its survey data periodically. The most recent survey was conducted in 2020. Such updates² allow the Town to accurately assess locations that demonstrate the greatest need for improvements. The most recent sidewalk survey demonstrates that there are very few miles of sidewalks in the town, highlighting both the need and the opportunity to expand Boylston's sidewalk network.

There are several benefits to improving and expanding the sidewalk network. Importantly, pedestrian access would benefit from improved safety. There would likely be increased pedestrian traffic to local Boylston businesses and other frequented locations in the town, which may provide access to any Boylston residents that do not have reliable or consistent access to an automobile. Often, locating funding for sidewalk improvements can be challenging for municipalities. However, adopting a Complete Streets Policy and a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan would enable Boylston to access corresponding MassDOT Complete Streets Funding. Additionally, improving and expanding pedestrian infrastructure can help ensure that it is accessible to all of Boylston's residents. The Town should evaluate the need to conduct an ADA ramp survey program in order to ensure compliance, as well as determine any funding needs for accessible ramp and sidewalk infrastructure improvements that are needed. An ADA Ramp Condition Sidewalk map from the CMMPO 2018 Regional Pedestrian Plan can be viewed in Map T9.

²

Map T9: Boylston ADA Ramp Sidewalk Conditions



Source: CMMPO, CMMPO Regional Pedestrian Plan, 2018

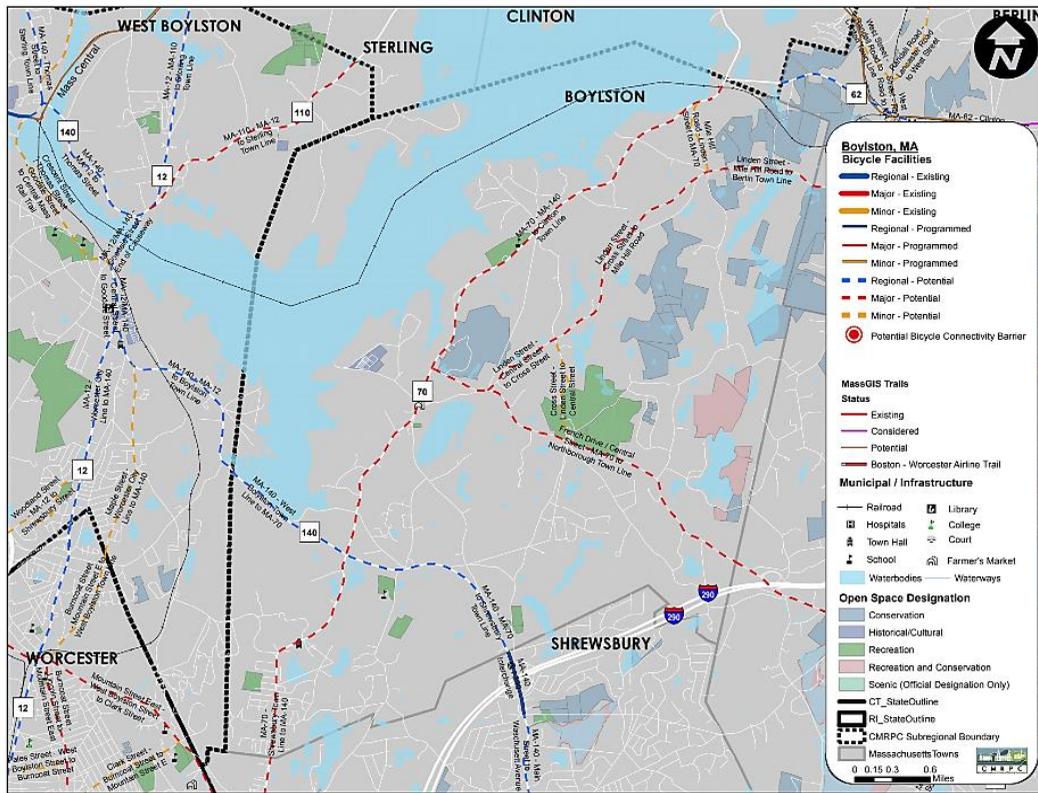
Bicycle Infrastructure

The Town of Boylston has opportunities to improve and expand its bicycle infrastructure. Out of survey responses to the Community Vision Survey, 36% stated that they wanted to see dedicated bicycle lanes. Furthermore, there were no specific locations or routes in town that the majority of survey respondents stated feeling safe biking in. These surveyed locations included Residential Areas, Town Center, Linden Street, Along Route 140, Along Route 70, Central Street, and Cross Street. Additionally, a majority (59%) of survey respondents felt that additional bike infrastructure was important or very important in Boylston.

Current visual observations show that Boylston has a very limited formal bicycle network. As previously stated, the 2018 CMMPO Regional Bicycle Plan identified zero miles of existing or programmed bicycle facilities, indicating the extreme lack of established bicycle infrastructure in the town. However, the plan did identify 18 miles of potential bicycle facilities. Map T10 below from the CMMPO 2018 Regional Bicycle Plan identifies existing, programmed, and potential bicycle facilities in Boylston. Despite the lack of bicycle infrastructure in the town, many bicyclists ride around the Wachusett Reservoir through the multiple towns that border the reservoir. In Boylston, bicyclists ride on Main Street/Route 70 and West Boylston Street/Route 140 as part of the reservoir loop route. Bicyclist parking is located in the empty lot at the intersection of Route 70 and Route 140.

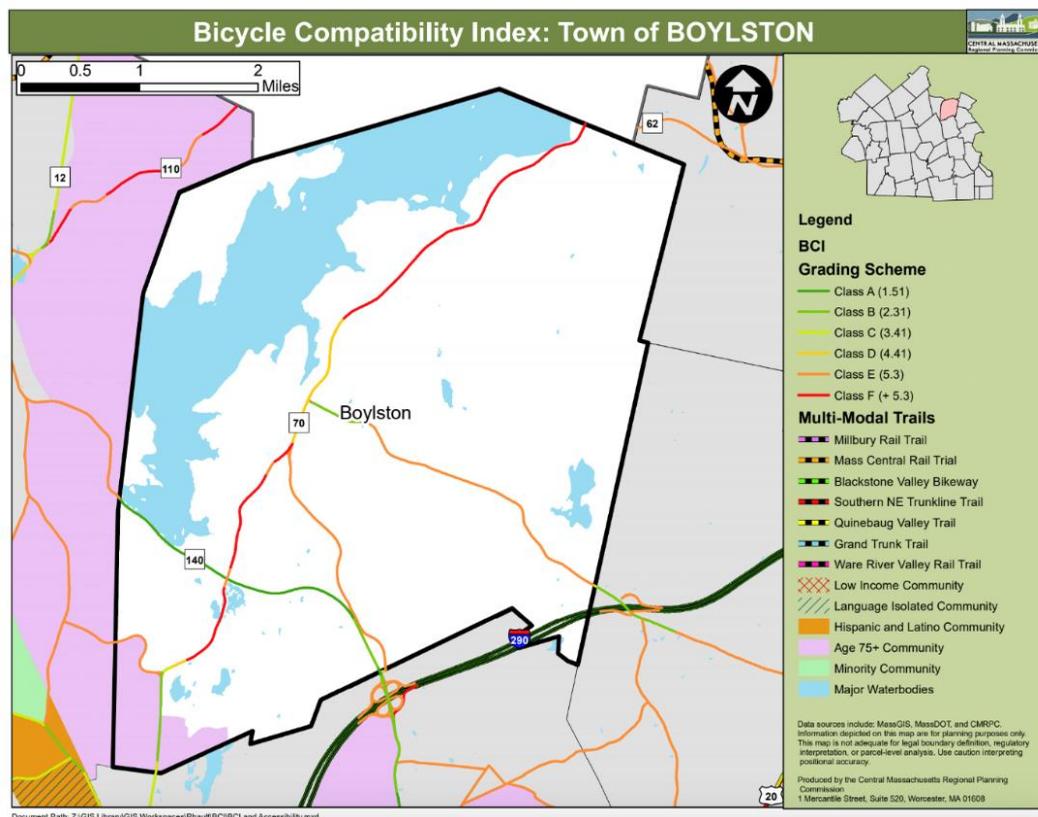
As suggested by the Regional Bicycle Plan, creating and adopting local Complete Streets policies and prioritization plans can be critical to expanding and improving the safety and accessibility of Boylston's bicycle infrastructure. The Town has opportunities to work with MassDOT to determine how quickly arterial and collector streets with excess shoulder width can be converted into Complete Streets.

Map T10: Existing, Programmed, and Potential Bicycle Infrastructure in Boylston



Source: CMMPO, CMMPO Regional Bicycle Plan 2018

Map T11: Boylston Bicycle Compatibility Index



Source: CMRPC, CMMPO Regional Bicycle Compatibility Index, 2021

Table T6: Boylston Bicycle Compatibility Index, Road Segments Breakdown

Name of Road Segment	Town	Seg. Miles	Grade	Problems Identified/Notes	Action Proposed	Expected Outcome
Central St (Cross St to Redwood Cir)	Boylston	0.50	E	22-24 ft ROW, narrow/no shoulder	Consider road widening to support future bicycle facilities	Bicycle accommodations on a major east/west arterial in the town, one of the only east/west arterials that would serve a large portion of the community
Central St (French Dr to Cross St)		0.85	E	26-30 ft ROW, narrow shoulder widths	Expand portions of the roadway that do not meet at least 30 ft. A 30 ft road width may accommodate 10 ft traffic lanes and 5 ft bike lanes. Additional width may be needed as a buffer between facilities	
Central St (Longley Hill Dr to Northborough TL)		0.50	E	24-26 ft ROW, narrow/no shoulder		
Central St (Redwood Cir to Longley Hill Dr)		0.75	E			
French Dr (Main St to Central St)		0.45	B	38-40 ft ROW, 6 ft shoulder	Narrow bike lanes to 10 ft to accommodate 6 ft buffered bike lanes with 3 ft buffers	Link between Main St and Central St
Paul X Tivnan Dr (W Boylston St to Main St)		0.65	E	26-28 ft ROW, narrow shoulder width	Expand portions of the roadway that do not meet at least 30 ft. A 30 ft road width may accommodate 10 ft traffic lanes and 5 ft bike lanes. Additional width may be needed as a buffer between facilities	Connection to West Boylston, bicycle accommodations on a scenic route
MA-140 W Boylston St (West Boylston TL to West Temple St)		0.55	A	46-50 ft ROW, 10 ft shoulders	Redefine shoulder as buffered bicycle lanes with 5 ft bicycle lanes and 3 ft striped buffers	Provide bicycle accommodations linking between Shrewsbury St, W Boylston St, and Main St
MA-140 W Boylston St (West Temple St to Main St)		0.55	A	44-46 ft ROW, 8-10 ft shoulder		
MA-70 Main St (Brookside Ave to W Boylston St)		0.80	B	32-38 ft road width, 4-6 ft shoulder	Expand all shoulders to a 5 ft minimum and use paint to define the shoulder as separated bicycle lanes (requires a Narrow). Where road width is narrower than 30 ft, diet lanes to 10 ft to incorporate 5 ft marked shoulders.	Connection to Clinton
MA-70 Main St (Cross St to Clinton TL)		2.00	F	28-32 ft ROW, narrow to 5 ft shoulder		Bicycle accommodations on a major north/south arterial
MA-70 Main St (Diamond Hill Ave to School St)		0.60	F	32-34 ft ROW, 3-6 ft shoulder		
MA-70 Main St (French Dr to Main St Cir)		0.75	D	28-30 ft ROW, narrow shoulder		Bicycle accommodations for school along this segment and a continuation of future bicycle accommodations along Main St
MA-70 Main St (Main St Cir to Cross St)		0.70	F	28-32 ROW, narrow to 4 ft shoulder	Within the limits of the school zone, shoulder should be expanded to bicycle lanes to accommodate a safe route to the school for students and faculty	
MA-70 Main St (Melrose St to Brookside Ave)		0.55	B/C/D			Bicycle accommodations on a major north/south arterial
MA-70 Main St (School St to French Dr)		0.40	D	32-36 ft road width, 4-6 ft shoulder	Narrow lanes to 10 ft to accommodate 5 ft shoulder that can be designated as bicycle lanes, consider using remaining portions of the shoulder (where present) to implement a painted or structured shoulder to separate modes of traffic.	Connection between School St and French Dr (two major arterials)
MA-70 Main St (Shrewsbury TL to Melrose St)		0.50	B	34-44 ft ROW, 4-10 ft shoulder, speed limit 40 mph	This should also include portions outside of the school zone	Connection to Shrewsbury and provides bicycle accommodations on a major north/south arterial
MA-70 Main St (W Boylston St to Diamond Hill Ave)		0.75	F	34-52 ft ROW, 4-6 ft shoulder, speed limit 40 mph. At the Paul X Tivnan/Main St intersection, SB shoulder is 20 ft wide		Connection to other major arterials in the town, bicycle accommodations on a major north/south arterial
School St (Main St to Sewall St)		0.55	E			Lower volume/speed roadway connection between Main St and Shrewsbury St
School St (E Temple St to Shrewsbury TL)		0.85	E	22-26 ft ROW, narrow/no shoulder	Consider road widening to support future bicycle facilities	
School St (Sewall St to E Temple St)		0.80	E			

Source: CMRPC, CMMPO Regional Bicycle Compatibility Index, 2021

Complete Streets Funding Program

The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program is a planning approach that encourages communities to broaden how they think about transportation and proactively plan for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and cars. This funding program presents itself as an opportunity for the Town of Boylston to help make the town’s street network safer and more accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers alike. MassDOT created the Complete Streets Funding Program in 2016, which provides technical grant assistance and project funding for communities to make local roadway improvements. In order to assess Complete Streets funding, Boylston would first need to adopt a Complete Streets policy (Tier 1). Then, the town would need to complete a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (Tier 2). The completion of this plan gives the town access to project construction funding (Tier 3).

Road Safety

There are a few roads in Boylston that residents have identified as unsafe. Throughout the Community Vision Master Plan Survey, community feedback identified Linden Street, Route 70, Central Street, School Street, Cross Street, and Route 140 as specific areas that residents felt were dangerous or needed safety improvements. To complement community feedback and make evidence-based decisions, collaborative work among MassDOT, Boylston Highway Department, and Boylston Police Department should be done to conduct an in-depth crash analysis for major crash-locations and clusters throughout the town. This effort will help identify the locations that require the most attention and prioritize safety improvements when necessary. Such an analysis can include areas of pedestrian-motor vehicle and bicyclist-motor vehicle crashes, which can further help improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists in the town. Some specific examples of measures that can be taken to improve safety in the identified areas are improved and/or signage, reconfiguring traffic lanes where/when feasible and necessary, and a variety of traffic calming actions (increasing sidewalk widths, narrowing vehicle lanes, additional landscaping, speed bumps and curb extensions, etc.).

Evaluations of safety improvements for vehicle and multi-modal transportation for Boylston Elementary and Tahanto Regional High Schools are highly encouraged. This process can include becoming a Massachusetts Safe Routes to School Program partner. When schools become a partner in the program, MassDOT conducts assessments of relevant infrastructure then participating schools become eligible to apply for capital improvement projects. The Safe Routes to School Program works to promote safe biking and walking for elementary and middle-school students, which aligns with Boylston's goals for improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The program is sponsored by MassDOT, with funds from the Federal Highway Administration. Schools that have partnered with the program for at least six months may become eligible for additional infrastructure grant funding.

Route 140

Route 140 serves as the main transportation artery in Boylston and as a commercial corridor. Safety and congestion along Route 140 have been identified as areas of concern through feedback from the community. An updated or more Boylston-focused visioning and long-range planning process should be considered for this significant corridor. Such a planning process can build off the Town's Local Rapid Recovery Plan and the 2018 Route 140 Corridor Plan conducted for the towns of Boylston, Shrewsbury, and West Boylston. Additionally, several measures can be considered for improving the safety and traffic flow on Route 140, such as undertaking updated traffic counts and/or pursuing a traffic monitoring and data collection program. These measures can help determine whether criteria for signals are being met at certain intersections, such as at the intersection of Route 140 and South Sewall Street.



*Photo: Old School Street and Route 140 Intersection
Photo Credit: CMRPC*

Given that Route 140 is a primary commercial corridor for the town, concentrated efforts should ensure that the area's businesses are accessible to pedestrians and those traveling by bike. Sidewalks and bicycle lanes should be included in any Route 140 construction. The Local Rapid Recovery Plan focused on Boylston's Route 140 corridor and details several relevant measures and projects.

Mitigating Negative Impacts and Proactive Approaches to Emerging Trends & Technology

Boylston residents rely heavily on single-occupant commuting options as opposed to transit and ridesharing. Most (99%) survey respondents stated that they drive to reach their destinations in Boylston. Only one of 379 survey respondents indicated that they often walk to their destination. Given this overwhelming reliance on automobiles, the Town should consider collaborating with the WRTA and CMRPC to study potential transit options or identify marketing opportunities where transit is already available in the nearby towns of West Boylston, Shrewsbury, and the city of Worcester. Additionally, a community survey can be conducted to understand current commuting behaviors and preferences, such as the current carpooling that takes place or any desire for additional carpooling. The Town can also explore the feasibility of building a commuter lot near entry points to I-290 or I-495 to encourage ride-sharing.

Central Massachusetts has experienced a recent influx of distribution centers and logistics businesses. Boylston is included in this trend. Steps should be taken to ensure that existing and incoming businesses (especially, but not limited to distribution/logistics businesses) are limiting emissions, limiting noise pollution, implementing appropriate truck routes, and generally limiting their negative impacts on the town's transportation system and environment. Such steps could include commercial development standards and use of host agreements.

Given the anticipated increase in the future use of electrical vehicles, the Town can assess the capacity of its electrical infrastructure to meet the need for electrical vehicles in the future. A survey can be conducted to understand the current use of electrical vehicles by Boylston residents, as well as anticipated future use. In addition to promoting environmentally friendly transportation practices among its residents, the Town should adopt such practices for municipally-owned vehicles and infrastructure. Steps can be taken to green the municipal vehicle fleet where appropriate and feasible, such as replacement vehicles being more fuel-efficient and enacting non-idling policies.

Summary of Goals and Strategies

1. Goal: Maintain and improve the condition of Boylston's existing transportation network.
 - a. Objective: Continue to invest in maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges.
 - i. Action Item: Proactively seek federal and state aid funding and other sources of transportation funding for improvements on eligible roadways.
 - ii. Action Item: Work with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission to develop a list of transportation projects to be placed on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). At a minimum, this list should include corridor intersection upgrades, safety improvements and intersection re-alignment, especially at the South Sewall Street and Route 140 intersection.
 - iii. Action Item: Develop a town-wide mechanism for the creation of an off-site infrastructure fund paid for through fees for curb cuts and new developments that would be used to mitigate private development related impacts. This fund would be primarily used to assist in funding off-site improvements at Town-owned intersections, roadways, and corridors.
 - b. Objective: Review and implement existing plans for infrastructure improvements for North and South Sewall Street.
 - i. Action Item: Have a consulting engineer review existing designs, appropriate funding, and put the project out to bid.
 - ii. Action Item: Upon completion of the apartments, conduct updated traffic counts to evaluate if warrants are met for signalization. Embed as a condition in future Comprehensive Permit decisions.
 - c. Objective: Continue to invest in maintenance, improvement, and construction of sidewalks, crosswalks, and signals.
 - i. Action Item: Join the MassDOT Complete Streets program. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and complete subsequent Complete Streets Prioritization Plans.
 - ii. Action Item: Evaluate the need to conduct a sidewalks, crosswalks, and signals survey program to identify areas of needed improvement and funding needs.
 - d. Objective: Ensure that sidewalks, crosswalks, and signals are accessible to all of Boylston's residents.
 - i. Action Item: Evaluate the need to conduct a sidewalk and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramp survey program to help determine sidewalk/ramp maintenance funding needs.
 - e. Objective: Establish a long-term decision-making framework for transportation investments.
 - i. Action Item: Implement a comprehensive Transportation Asset Management System.
2. Goal: Increase the safety of Boylston's roads for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.
 - a. Objective: Relieve congestion, reduce speeding, and improve travel efficiency on Route 140, Route 70, Central Street, School Street, Cross Street, Linden Street, and other heavily trafficked areas.
 - i. Action item: Maintain/improve all signalized traffic control, signage, and pavement markings.
 - ii. Action item: Selectively trim any overgrown vegetation that is hindering sight lines to vehicles, signs, or traffic signals.
 - iii. Action item: Maintain good pavement surfaces.
 - iv. Action item: Maintain bridges, culverts, and other roadside drainage structures and facilities.
 - v. Action Item: Utilize traffic calming measures (e.g., narrowing travel lanes, increasing sidewalk widths, adding on-street parking, adding landscaping, speed bumps, curb extensions, roadway

- curves, and other measures). Measures can be piloted through use of jersey barriers, painted curb extensions, planters, and other removable/ low-cost installations.
- vi. Action Item: Increase the number and prominence of speed limit signs as appropriate.
- b. Objective: Identify crash clusters and problematic areas for opportunities to improve motor vehicle, pedestrian, and bicyclist safety.
- i. Action item: Incorporate additional signage for safety purposes, such as specific yellow diamond warning signs.
 - ii. Action Item: Assess and implement as warranted the use of reflectorized pavement markings and/or reflectors embedded in road pavement.
 - iii. Action Item: Assess opportunities for “Road Diets” (the narrowing of roadways with high traveling speeds to encourage slower driving).
 - iv. Action Item: Utilize traffic calming measures (e.g., narrowing travel lanes, increasing sidewalk widths, adding on-street parking, adding landscaping, speed bumps, curb extensions, roadway curves, and other measures). Measures can be piloted through use of jersey barriers, painted curb extensions, planters, and other removable/ low-cost installations.
 - v. Action item: Reconfigure travel lanes at intersections where appropriate and feasible.
 - vi. Action item: Enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety where needed.
 - vii. Action Item: Improve public awareness of the rules of the road for all transportation modes through public education efforts and improved signage.
 - viii. Action Item: Increase local police traffic monitoring and citation issuance to dissuade infractions by those cited as well as those witnessing the citation issuance.
- c. Objective: Address capacity issues on Route 140.
- i. Action Item: Undertake a visioning and long-range planning process for Route 140.
 - ii. Action Item: Ensure that bike lanes and sidewalks are included in any Route 140 construction.
- d. Objective: Improve the safety of intersections and road entry points to enhance placemaking efforts.
- i. Action Item: Review plans and opportunities to promote improvements at the intersection of Route 140 and North and South Sewall Streets in conjunction with other recent anticipated developments in the area and the Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan.
 - ii. Action Item: Ensure that newly installed and replaced signs are retroreflective, especially those located at intersections.
 - iii. Action Item: Identify opportunities to reduce entry and exit points to the commercial plaza in the NB district through access management.
 - iv. Action Item: Review Site Plan criteria to ensure that access management of proposed curb cuts is fully addressed and considered.
- e. Objective: Improve the flow of traffic on Route 140.
- i. Action Item: Pursue updated Route 140 traffic counts to determine whether they meet the warrant criteria for signals, especially the intersection of South Sewall Street.
 - ii. Action Item: Repurpose the connection from School Street to Shrewsbury Street into a pocket park or other type of usable space off-limits to vehicles.
 - iii. Action Item: Maintain the annual pavement-marking program for upgrading the lane, edge line and centerlines marking along the corridor and intersections.
 - iv. Action Item: Use reflectorized pavement markings for better visibility, especially during inclement weather and other reduced-visibility conditions.
 - v. Action Item: Undertake a traffic monitoring program that consists of traffic data collection at study area intersections and include all vehicles (including trucks), bicycles and pedestrians to determine if prior traffic projections have been realized and further interventions are needed.
 - vi. Action Item: Install and stripe an exclusive left-turn lane on Route 140 northbound at the South Sewall Street intersection.
- f. Objective: Facilitate safe use of crosswalks, especially at pedestrian vehicle crash clusters and in areas frequented by children.
- i. Action Item: Ensure that on-street parking spaces do not block the line of sight from crosswalks or for turning vehicles, especially proximate to crosswalks.

Transportation

- ii. Action Item: Review signage at crosswalks and consider solar-powered pedestrian-activated alert flashers (not rectangular rapid flashing beacons).
 - iii. Action Item: Install textured pavement treatments in crosswalks to better identify and differentiate pedestrian crosswalks from the travel way.
 - iv. Action Item: Assess the need for additional crosswalks. Where determined necessary, explore the utility of permanent or temporary raised crosswalks and/or inverse cuts that create a slight change in elevation of the travel way to reduce excessive speeds.
 - v. Action Item: Construct curb extensions (“bump outs”) or pavement markings at crosswalk locations major roadways. (In some cases, flower planters are used that can be removed for snow plowing.) These extensions shorten the distance of the crosswalk for pedestrians and narrow the travel lanes, which tend to reduce vehicular speeds.
 - g. Objective: Improve the safety for vehicle and multi-modal transportation for students of Boylston Elementary School and Tahanto Regional High School.
 - i. Action Item: Initiate a program to make the South Sewall Street corridor, south of Route 140 and at the existing elementary school a more pedestrian friendly corridor.
 - ii. Action Item: Become a Safe Routes to School partner and develop and distribute Safe Routes to School materials to the school district.
 - h. Objective: Make Boylston’s transportation network more resilient.
 - i. Action Item: Identify areas in the transportation network that are prone to natural weather events, such as flooding, icing, solar glare, or extreme heat, and develop strategies to mitigate such effects.
3. Goal: Mitigate negative impacts resulting from use of the transportation system.
- a. Objective: Ensure the incoming businesses are “good neighbors.”
 - i. Action Item: Explore the use of host agreements and/ or commercial development performance standards to address appropriate truck routes, limiting emissions, the use of resources, and noise pollution.
 - b. Objective: Encourage widespread use of environmentally friendly transportation practices.
 - i. Action Item: Install no-idling signs in areas where vehicles frequently idle, such as schools, convenience stations, and municipal facilities.
 - ii. Action Item: Install electric vehicle charging stations at public buildings and any future commuter ride-sharing lots.
 - c. Objective: Promote and assist commuters engaging in carpooling/ridesharing.
 - i. Action Item: Conduct a survey to evaluate the current carpooling/ridesharing that takes place, as well as additional desire for carpooling/ridesharing.
 - ii. Action Item: Evaluate the feasibility of building space for commuter ride-sharing lot near prominent highway entry points, such as near Route 140’s entry points to I-290. Explore any partnerships with businesses or organizations that would be willing to collaborate on such efforts.
 - d. Objective: Work towards greening the municipal vehicle fleet and vehicle practices.
 - i. Action Item: Adopt a fuel-efficient vehicle policy for Town-owned vehicles so that replacement vehicles are more energy efficient.
 - ii. Action Item: Adopt an anti-idling vehicle policy for Town-owned vehicles.
 - iii. Action Item: Explore the use of IdleRight and similar technologies for installation in police cruisers and other vehicles that must idle in the course of duty.
 - iv. Action item: assess and upgrade electrical infrastructure to meet growing need of electric vehicles
 - v. Action Item: Pursue Green Communities designation.
4. Goal: Provide transportation alternatives to car travel.
- a. Objective: Identify and explore alternative mobility options for Boylston residents.
 - i. Action Item: Explore alternatives to car travel such as ride share, paratransit, and carpool.

Transportation

- ii. Action Item: Consider options for transit for specific populations such as seniors or residents with medical needs that are unable to access essential services.
- 5. Goal: Improve the town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow more pedestrians and bicycle access to businesses.
 - a. Objective: Identify and close sidewalks gaps in pedestrian access to businesses and amenities.
 - i. Action Item: Identify arterial and collector streets with excess shoulder to determine how excess space could be better utilized.
 - ii. Action Item: Review and, where needed, revise zoning in appropriate areas to require sidewalks, bike path connectors, bike parking and bike amenities in new developments.
 - b. Objective: Safely and efficiently connect the town's neighborhoods and residential areas with businesses and other destinations and amenities.
 - i. Action Item: Create off-road trails in the area west of Route 140 and connect to businesses and other amenities.
 - ii. Action Item: Explore establishing a bike path from Route 140 along North Sewall Street using paint and removable vertical flex posts. If desired (and allowed by MassDOT) the bike path can extend to Route 70 and connect back to the Route 140 shared-used lane to form a full multi-modal loop.
 - iii. Action Item: Facilitate improved connectivity between housing near the I-290 interchange and businesses on eastern segment of Route 140.
 - iv. Action Item: Prioritize maintenance of sidewalks near public facilities serving populations who do not drive. Ensure that sidewalks near the library, senior services, schools, and daycares are clear of bushes, trees, and other hazards that could require pedestrians and those with mobility devices or double strollers to walk in roads.
 - c. Objective: Review the recommendations from the 2018 Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) Regional Bicycle Plan and adopt the plan.
 - v. Action Item: Ensure that municipal staff are aware of the recommendations set forth in the Regional Bicycle Plan.
 - vi. Action Item: Include bicycle network planning into the Town's planning process, particularly land use development and transportation plans.
- 6. Goal: Take a proactive approach to emerging transportation technologies, trends, and issues.
 - a. Objective: Stay apprised of transportation trends and plan accordingly.
 - i. Action Item: Work with state and regional organizations to approach emergent issues in a collective manner.
 - ii. Action Item: Consider and assess the impact of distribution facilities from a regional or subregional perspective.
 - iii. Action Item: Evaluate possible funding sources needed to accommodate anticipated increase in demand on the electrical grid as a result of home and vehicle electrification.
 - iv. Action Item: Work with businesses and other organizations to identify areas of potential collaboration for developing and funding electric vehicle infrastructure.
 - v. Action Item: Anticipate changes in parking requirements resulting from autonomous vehicles. Evaluate the potential infrastructure needed to accommodate such changes.
 - vi. Action Item: Monitor trends in drone usage for delivery and other services.
- 7. Goal: Better connect the town's roads, streets, and sidewalks to be consistent with the town's small-town and environmental character.
 - a. Objective: Improve and expand upon existing recreational trail systems in Boylston, namely by the reservoir.
 - i. Action Item: Connect off-road trails in Boylston with each other where feasible.
 - b. Objective: Through public input, identify areas of roadways particularly in need of aesthetic improvements.
 - i. Action Item: Determine methods, funding, and timeline for visual improvements, such as planting trees or shrubs, plant pots, or other landscaping improvements.

- ii. Action Item: Focus visual improvement efforts on “gateway” intersections or entry points.
- iii. Action Item: Explore the adoption of a Scenic Roads bylaw.
- c. Objective: Collaborate with neighboring municipalities to connect off-road pedestrian and/or bicycle trails where feasible.
 - i. Action Item: Explore the possibility of connecting existing trail(s) or creating new trail(s) to connect with the MWRA Wachusett Aqueduct trail in Northborough, the Mass Central Rail Trail in Clinton, Berlin, and West Boylston, or the Mount Pisgah mountain biking facilities in Berlin.
- d. Objective: Reduce the impact of roads and traffic on stormwater infrastructure.
 - i. Action Item: Include bioswales, street trees and tree box filters, permeable pavement, and other green infrastructure in roadway improvements to reduce the burden on the stormwater infrastructure.



*Photo: Pine Ridge Farm.
Photo credit: CMRPC*

Land Use

Introduction

The Land Use element of a master plan is essentially a blueprint for development. This chapter synthesizes and builds upon the preceding master plan elements to provide a roadmap for achieving a development vision. Through methods of outreach including committee meetings, interviews, and two community surveys, it became clear to the project team that Boylston’s priorities lay in guiding town growth in a manner that preserves both its rural character and historic areas such as the Town Common. Over half of survey respondents believe that planning for the future should be environmentally conscious and fiscally sound.

Land use and zoning play a crucial role in facilitating these changes by removing existing obstacles and providing new incentives. Land use patterns influence the issues and opportunities identified in other chapters including a limited amount of small retail and restaurants (Economic Development); improving roads, bridges, and bicycle infrastructure (Transportation); the need for affordable housing including multi-family development (Population and Housing); and expansion of social and recreational opportunities including building a new playground in the Morningdale neighborhood in the southwest part of Boylston (Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources).

This chapter will summarize prior land use planning, analyze current land use patterns, review existing zoning, identify issues and opportunities and their relation to land use, and provide recommendations towards achieving the Master Plan land use goals.

Summary of Goals

This chapter offers strategies for preservation and sustainable development with emphasis on five specific goals:

Goal 1: Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging land use issues.

Goal 2: Encourage development that is in harmony with the community’s small-town character and heritage.

Goal 3: Concentrate new development around existing infrastructure to preserve natural resources and limit service provision costs.

Goal 4: Preserve and protect the Town's natural landscapes and resources, open spaces, and history in a manner that is fiscally sound.

Goal 5: Utilize the Town's large land holdings for their highest and best purpose consistent with the Town's vision.

Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

The Town of Boylston has pursued a consistent vision of development for several decades. This vision seeks increased goods, services, and employment opportunities, and an improved tax base without compromising the existing character of the community. This vision has been expressed since at least 2000 with the Comprehensive Plan (2000) as well as the Community Development Plan (2005) and remains relevant today.

Massachusetts Historical Commission Reconnaissance Survey Town Report (1983)

The Massachusetts Historical Commission produced Reconnaissance Survey Town Reports for each municipality in the Commonwealth between 1979 and 1987. The reports present the historical development of each municipality including information on the topography, the political boundaries, includes a historical properties inventory and threats to these historical resources. The report breaks down the Town's history by period including the Plantation Period (1620-1675), the Colonial Period (1675-1775), the Federal Period (1775-1830), Early Industrial Period (1830-1870), Late Industrial Period (1870-1915), and the Early Modern Period (1915-1940). The report considers the transportation routes, population, settlement patterns, economic base, and architecture for each period.

As gleaned from this report, Boylston began primarily as an agricultural settlement. As the town grew, manufacturing establishments arose. These mills were located on the French and Sewall Brook in the Village of Sawyer's Mills. The Late Industrial Period brought the demolition of Sawyer's Mills village in 1899 for the construction of the Wachusett Reservoir. With the loss of manufacturing, the population declined by more than 50%. More specific information about Boylston's history can be found in the Economic Development chapter.

Boylston Comprehensive Plan (2000)

The Town of Boylston saw a surge in residential building after World War II (1950s to 1960s) with servicemen returning from war seeking homes. There was limited commercial and industrial growth in the 1970s but with improved transportation routes, residents began commuting to the Greater Boston area. The town population had nearly doubled to over 4,000 since 1960. At the time that the 2000 Boylston Comprehensive Plan was prepared, commercial development was limited due to the lack of public sewerage.

Some of the key goals that were developed in the 2000 Comprehensive Plan include developing design standards for commercial areas, preparation of design guidelines for the Route 140 Corridor and expanding the Industrial Zone. The plan also called for expanding the Commercial Zone to provide for neighborhood convenience shopping opportunities and a floating Village Retail Zone by Special Permit. The plan called for providing more diverse types of housing that would allow young adults and senior citizens to remain in the community, as well as improvements to public facilities, utilities, and the transportation system. The Economic Development chapter explores more of the goals that resulted from the 2000 Comprehensive Plan.

Community Development Plan (2004, Revised 2005)

The 2005 Community Development Plan re-affirmed the priorities identified in the Comprehensive Plan including encouraging additional commercial growth in the Village Business District and along Route 140. The plan called for a review of the zoning bylaws to identify any barriers to commercial or industrial development followed by amending the zoning bylaws to encourage economic growth. Another way to encourage economic growth is to streamline the permitting process.

Affordable Housing & Planned Production Plan (2005)

The 2005 Affordable Housing and Planned Production Plan aimed to identify the housing needs in Boylston and to establish a plan for achieving the housing goals. With most of the housing in Boylston being single-family homes, there were few options for rental housing. The challenges identified included zoning that restricted parcels to single- or two-family residences with minimum lot sizes of 15,000 square feet (General Residential District) to 40,000 square feet (Rural Residential District). At the time the plan was developed, the town lacked public water and sewer facilities limiting other housing options.

Opportunities included consideration of developing affordable housing on town-owned land, adoption of inclusionary zoning, offering density bonuses and considering housing for special needs populations. Other considerations that were identified included developing zoning mechanisms such as a Senior Residential Overlay District (adopted in 2016), Open Space Residential Design Bylaw, adopting the Community Preservation Act and allowing Accessory Dwelling Units.

Boylston 2010 Route 140 Corridor Study (2010)

The Route 140 Corridor Study aimed to identify opportunities to increase jobs and to create a stronger tax base. Several recommendations were formulated including establishing a Neighborhood Business District, changing the Industrial District to the Flexible Business Development District, establishing a Shrewsbury Street Business District, and establishing a Mixed-Use Industrial District. These recommendations were enacted and are in force today. Recommendations were made to adjust the use regulations and dimensional controls, modifying the parking requirements, and updating the Zoning Bylaw definitions. The capacity of the water supply and distribution system needed to be verified to determine if improvements were needed to support growth. Additional information from this study is included in the Economic Development chapter.

Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan (2012)

The Central Thirteen Prioritization Plan (2012) identified key regional opportunities for development and preservation. The regional-level planning process established community-based priorities and strategies in the 13-town study area then integrated those priorities into regional development and preservation strategies. For Boylston, three development opportunities, twelve preservation opportunities, and two significant infrastructure investments are highlighted in the plan. When considering zoning amendments or project opportunities, these parcels should be highly prioritized if they have not yet been either developed or preserved in perpetuity. Table LU1 shows the list of priority areas in Boylston and Map 1 shows the locations of these areas.

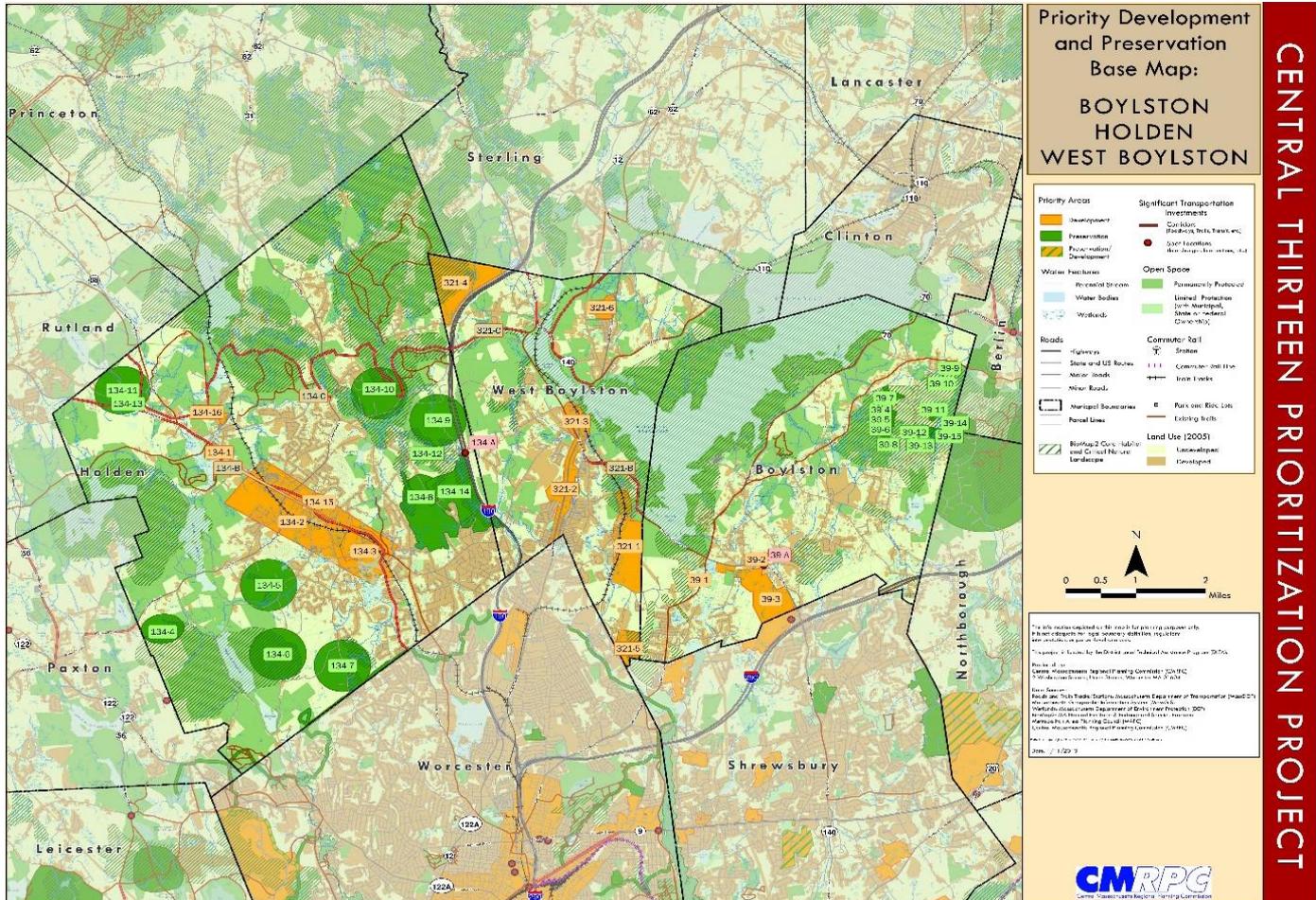
Table LU1: Locally Identified Priority Areas with Region IDs: Boylston

ID	Title and Type of Priority
	Priority Development Areas
39-1	315 Main Street – 43D
39-2	141 Shrewsbury Street – 43D
39-3	Flexible Business Development zone
	Priority Preservation Areas
39-4	Town owned land off Linden Street – 6.5 acres
39-5	Town owned land off Linden Street – 8 acres
39-6	Town owned land off Linden Street – 2.6 acres
39-7	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 111 acres
39-8	Town owned land off Linden Street – 15 acres
39-9	Town owned land off Linden Street – 8 acres
39-10	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 8 acres
39-11	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 13 acres

Land Use

39-12	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 19.5 acres
39-13	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 4.4 acres
39-14	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 22.2 acres
39-15	Town owned land off Mile Hill Road – 10 acres
Significant Infrastructure Investments	
39-A	Re-alignment of 140 and East Temple Street
39-B	Provide sewer connection to PDAs

Map LU1: Priority Development and Preservation Base Map: Boylston, Holden, West Boylston



Source: CMRPC, 2012

Senior Residential Development Bylaw (2016)

The Senior Residential Development (SRD) Bylaw established a floating overlay district that is allowed in other residential zoning districts by Special Permit provided that minimum standards are met. Chiefly, a minimum of ten acres with at least 150 feet of lot frontage is required; however, the Planning Board may reduce the minimum frontage requirement if site conditions warrant it, and the proposed development meets the purposes of Section 5.03 of the Zoning Bylaws. Additional requirements pertain to building types, density, age restrictions, common land, maintenance, and design.

The purpose of the SRD is to provide options for an aging population, housing that reduces dependence on municipal and educational services, and is designed with consideration for the history and character of the community as well as

adjacent uses. Development in this district is afforded flexibility in development standards to achieve an overall better design that meets the purposes of the district.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2019)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan developed strategies for promoting Boylston's open space and small-town charm. Garnering community support by involving local businesses, organizations and schools will promote community pride and aid in beautifying the town. Some of the key strategies included protecting and providing access to priority parcels; creating a funding strategy for open space acquisition and management; collaborating with other communities from a regional perspective to increase open space; exploring funding sources to enhance recreational facilities; promoting redevelopment and working with developers to maximize the preservation of open space areas.

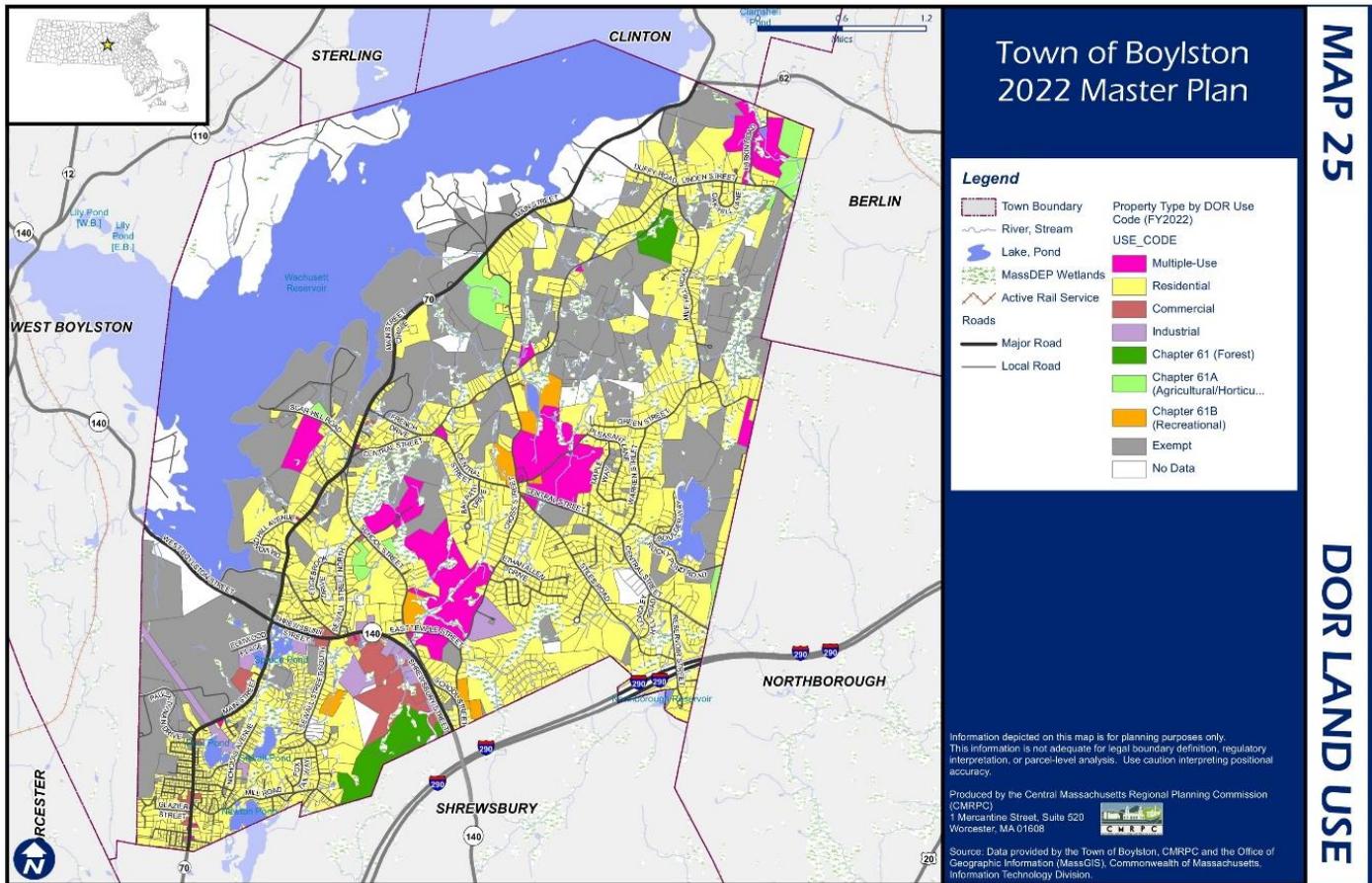
Housing Production Plan (2021)

The Boylston Housing Production Plan (HPP) was completed by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in conjunction with the Master Plan and was approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in July 2021. As of 2021, Boylston's subsidized housing inventory (SHI) consisted of 30 units, or 1.7% of its total housing stock. To meet the M.G.L. Chapter 40B SHI target of 10%, the town needs to have 176 total subsidized units. The 2021 HPP provides a projection for meeting this goal by 2040 by increasing its affordable housing stock by 0.5% per year, or by producing 9 units per year. Strategies outlined in the HPP include reviving the Boylston Affordable Housing Committee to guide initiatives and implement strategies from the plan; conduct ongoing community outreach and education on housing issues and activities; consider hiring a dedicated Affordable Housing Coordinator; actively seek out and apply for funding and technical assistance to implement the plan; and maintain an active Board of Trustees for the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund. Additional strategies for capacity building, zoning and policy changes, and housing development strategies are detailed in the HPP which also serves as a basis for the Population and Housing Chapter of this Master Plan. Please refer to the Population and Housing chapter for more detailed information.

Existing Conditions

Boylston is a residential community on the border of an urban core. The Town has a history of village centers and agriculture. The village of Sawyer's Mills was demolished in 1899 to make way for construction of the Wachusett Reservoir. Much of the Town's manufacturing uses and agricultural land were also lost for the reservoir. Today it is largely a commuter town where workers in urban centers like Worcester and Boston can enjoy a bucolic family-friendly lifestyle. Residents want to preserve this beautiful rural character while ensuring the Town provides an appropriate selection of goods, services, and jobs. The following sections will discuss the historical patterns of land use that inform Boylston's current conditions and the ways in which Boylston can provide for the desired forms of future development.

Map LU2: DOR Land Use



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Land Use Distribution

Historically, Boylston’s land uses sprouted in village centers while the periphery was dominated by agricultural uses. With the general reduction in small-scale agricultural production in the mid-1900s, Boylston evolved into a bedroom-community. Much of the residential expansion has occurred in formerly open or agricultural lands.

Boylston today has inherited useful corridors and villages from historic development patterns. The primary transportation routes of Main Street (Route 70), Shrewsbury Street (Route 140), along with Central Street, Cross Street, and School Street convey local traffic flow and serve the primary areas of commerce while connecting the various neighborhoods and the historic Town Common.

Land Use Patterns

Table LU2 summarizes land use patterns in Boylston based on Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) Division of Local Services land use code categories. These are standardized codes for use in local property assessments and thus provide an excellent resource for trend analysis. As the table indicates, aside from exempt property, Boylston’s developed land patterns are dominated by residential uses. These make up nearly 32% of the lot acreage in Boylston. Nearly 56% of the land area falls into the tax-exempt category. Commercial and industrial uses which, in general, pay the same tax rate as other taxable uses, tend to consume fewer resources. Commercial and industrial uses comprise only about three percent of the total land area.

Table LU2: Land Use Patterns

DOR Land Use Category by Assessor Lot Acreage		
DOR Land Use Category	Lot Acreage*	Percent of Total Land Area
(0) Multiple-Use	301.31	2.31%
(1) Residential	4,099.78	31.41%
(3) Commercial	288.66	2.21%
(4) Industrial	170.96	1.31%
(6) Chapter Land Forest Property	163.70	1.25%
(7) Chapter Land Agricultural/ Horticultural	205.70	1.58%
(8) Chapter Land Recreational	139.51	1.07%
(9) Exempt Property	7,275.28	55.74%
ROW**	401.77	3.08%
Private ROW**	6.05	0.05%
Total	13,052.72	100.00%
*Lot acreage based on FY22 Assessor records Lot Size field.		
**Right-of-Way acreage based on GIS calculated number and NOT from Town Assessor database.		

Source: Town of Boylston Assessor Office; CMRPC; MassGIS

Hybrid data produced by MassGIS for Land Cover/Land Use in 2016 has the advantage of describing multiple land uses or covers within a single parcel – information that is especially useful for a Town like Boylston where the average residential lot is large, not all of which will be built out. The MassGIS data provides land area and percentages using 21 categories (as shown in Table LU3).

Boylston is dominated by non-developed land uses, which significantly contribute to the community’s bucolic character. Over 9,695 acres or three-quarters of Boylston’s land cover can be classified as non-developed (Aquatic Bed, Cultivated, Deciduous Forest, Developed Open Space, Evergreen Forest, Forested Wetland, Grassland, Non-forested Wetland, Pasture/Hay, Scrub/Shrub, Unconsolidated Shore and Water). The largest developed land use category is single-family residential at 181.41 acres (1.44 % total land area). Multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-uses account for the least amount of land cover acres in Boylston. Map LU2 shows the distribution of different land uses and coverage across Town. The following sections will discuss the history of these land use and land cover patterns, the issues and opportunities that result, and provide recommendations that will help Boylston achieve the vision for its future as expressed by the community.

Table LU3: Land Cover and Land Use in Boylston

2016 Land Cover/Land Use Hybrid Acreages in Boylston		
Land Cover/Land Use	GIS Acres	Percent of Total Area
Aquatic Bed	38.57	0.31%
Bare Land	57.28	0.45%
Commercial	23.90	0.19%
Cultivated	53.57	0.42%
Deciduous Forest	4,678.80	37.02%
Developed Open Space	856.40	6.78%
Evergreen Forest	2,286.53	18.09%

Land Use

Forested Wetland	1,125.35	8.90%
Grassland	212.84	1.68%
Industrial	17.26	0.14%
Mixed Use - Primarily Commercial	8.64	0.07%
Mixed Use - Primarily Residential	1.88	0.01%
Non-forested Wetland	194.92	1.54%
Other Impervious	79.18	0.63%
Pasture/Hay	106.29	0.84%
Residential - Multi-Family	22.44	0.18%
Residential - Single Family	181.41	1.44%
Right-of-way	227.03	1.80%
Scrub/Shrub	84.08	0.67%
Unconsolidated Shore	0.41	0.00%
Water	2,383.19	18.85%
Total	12,639.97	100.00%

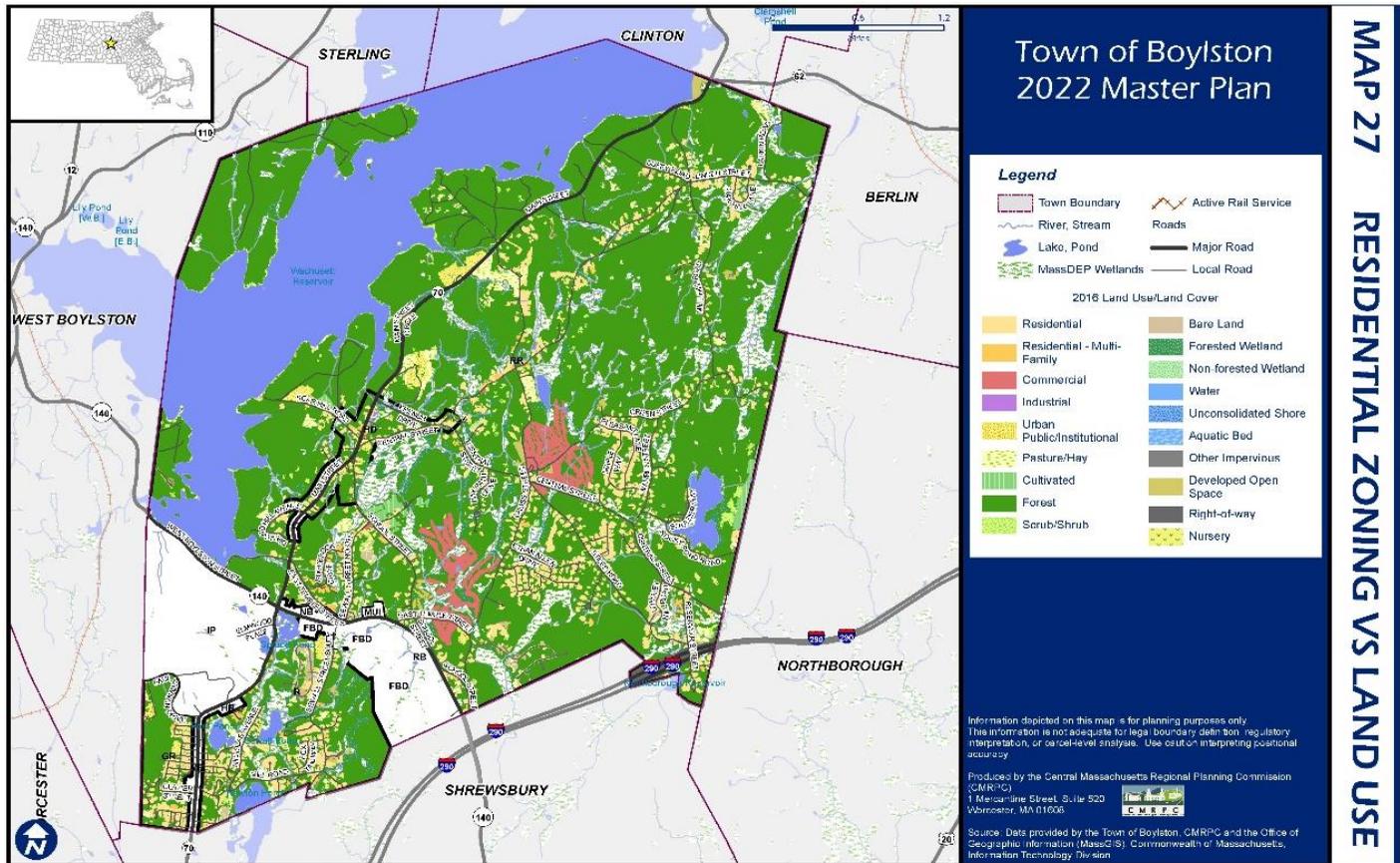
Source: MassGIS 2016

Residential

Boylston's population increased steadily from 1930 until 1980 then slowed until 1990 before experiencing additional growth that continues today. The population in Boylston is projected to continue growing. Most of the land in Boylston is zoned for large lot residential use. Like many other communities with large lot zoning, development in Boylston has spread outward from the town center with low-density housing that requires extra miles of roadways and is automobile dependent. Such a trend is unsustainable as it requires higher costs to maintain roads and the amount of land available for development is limited. Development is further limited by the reservoir and other protected lands. This trend is intensified by local regulations which have long favored single-family housing. Single-family units tend to be the most expensive and utilize the most land resources with most of the land zoned for large-lot (40,000 square feet) residential use. The larger lot size is required in areas that do not have a public water supply as they need to accommodate both a well and septic system. With advances in modern septic design standards, the Town may want to consider re-evaluating lot size.

Boylston should re-evaluate the large-lot, low-density zoning approach. As of 2019, single-family units (both attached and detached units) account for 83.3 % of housing units. Looking forward, the Town can prioritize higher densities in targeted locations to help mitigate the potential impacts of expected future growth. Multifamily housing growth has been inconsistent over the past several years. Data from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (SOCDS Building Permits Database, 2020) indicate that six multifamily structures were permitted in 2006, and two were permitted in 2011. No other multifamily structures have been built in Boylston since 2006. However, many two-family homes have been built and are allowed by right. Survey results show there is a need for affordable housing in Boylston including multifamily housing. Denser development typically follows sewer lines which is one of Boylston's primary development constraints, but careful planning for multiple styles of clustered development can provide for this need while aiding in the preservation of open space. Given the relative weight of residential land use in Boylston, residential growth management will likely be the key to preserving the much-loved town character for future generations.

Map LU3: Residential Zoning Vs. Land Use



Source: CMRPC, 2022

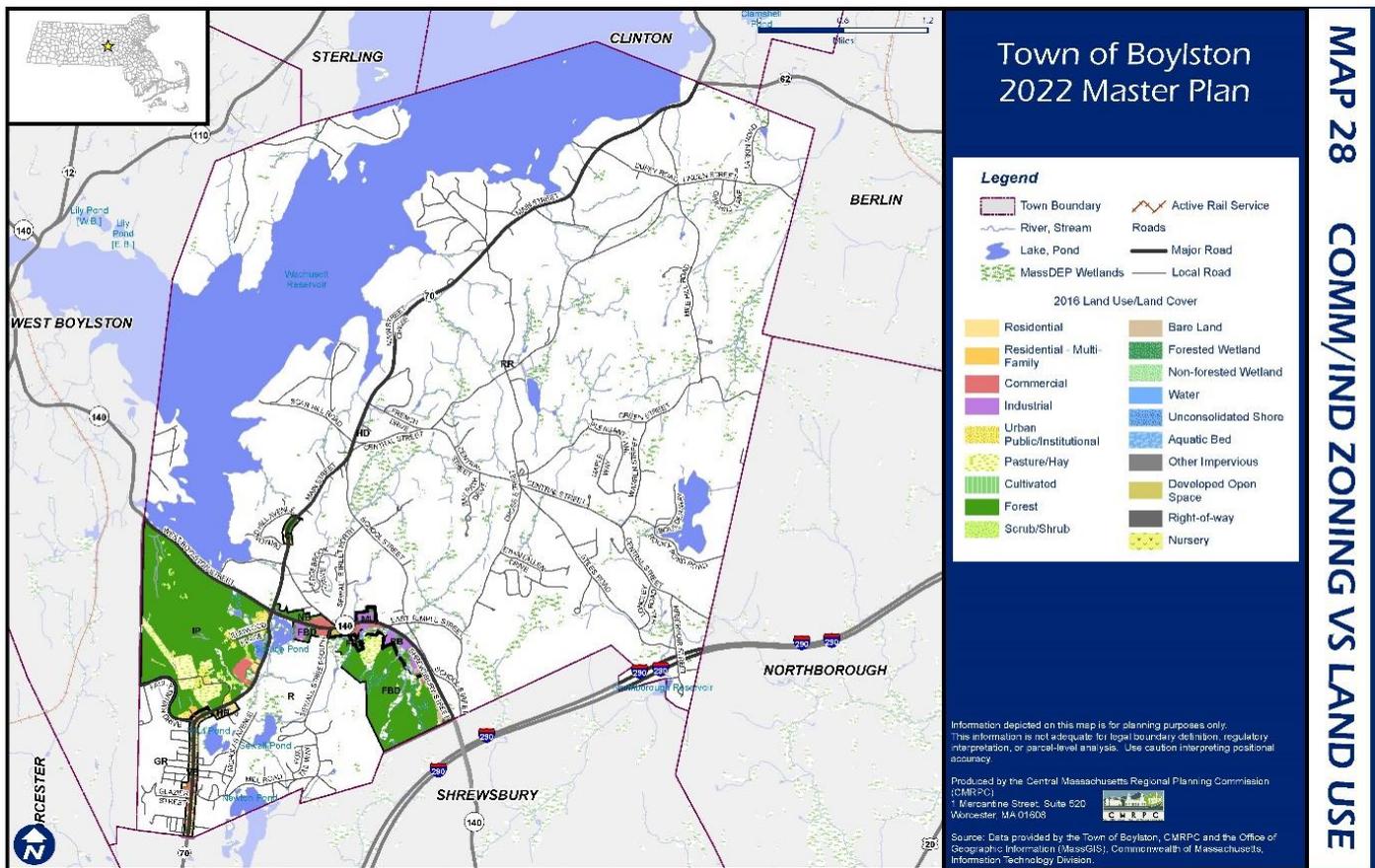
Commercial/Industrial

Commercial land comprises 2.21% of the Town’s total land use inventory and contributed approximately 9.98% to town revenues in 2021. Industrial land uses comprise 1.31% of land use and 1.88% of town revenue in 2021. Commercial and Industrial uses are the focus of municipal growth strategies as discussed in the Economic Development chapter. The Town may not need to expand the Commercial and Industrial districts to promote economic development but rather amend zoning regulations in the existing zones or explore increased mixed-use provisions in some areas. Industry is clustered primarily along Route 140 with commercial development also along Route 70.

The Town will be well-served by exploring infill, redevelopment, and reuse opportunities along Route 70 and Route 140, although there are limitations due to public drinking water wells and private septic systems. Survey results indicated support (52% in favor) for targeted sewer infrastructure along major commercial corridors. Mobility can also be improved by expanding additional clusters of commercial properties in other areas of Town, such as a node near the intersection of Route 70 and Route 140, so residents are not required to drive to Worcester or other locations to obtain necessary goods and services. By concentrating new development around existing and potential infrastructure, service provision costs will be limited, and natural resources preserved. Within these clusters, the Town should improve the streetscape and sidewalks to allow and promote more pedestrian and bicycle access to businesses where possible. Providing accessible areas that are at a neighborhood scale is a proactive approach to economic development that supports existing businesses and encourages new ones. Another key factor in the success of mixed-use nodes is the visual aesthetics of the area.

Of vital importance in achieving the desired uses is the need to conduct a comprehensive review of the Zoning Bylaws to ensure that zoning is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and other strategic plans. In looking at the frontage along Route 140, the western segment includes commercial uses while the eastern segment is mainly industrial uses with a few commercial uses such as a coffee shop and a restaurant. While there is an area of Mixed-Use Industrial in the western segment of Route 140, portions of this segment appear suitable for mixed-use development that includes first-floor commercial uses and upper-story residential uses. Zoning that supports a mix of uses with the addition of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure could emerge as a vibrant area that encourages business patronage and additional business development. In recent times, more people are working from home, thus the zoning bylaws should also be amended to support work-from-home, home offices and to address specifics of home occupations with respect to the appropriate type and scale.

Map LU4: Commercial/Industrial Zoning vs. Land Use



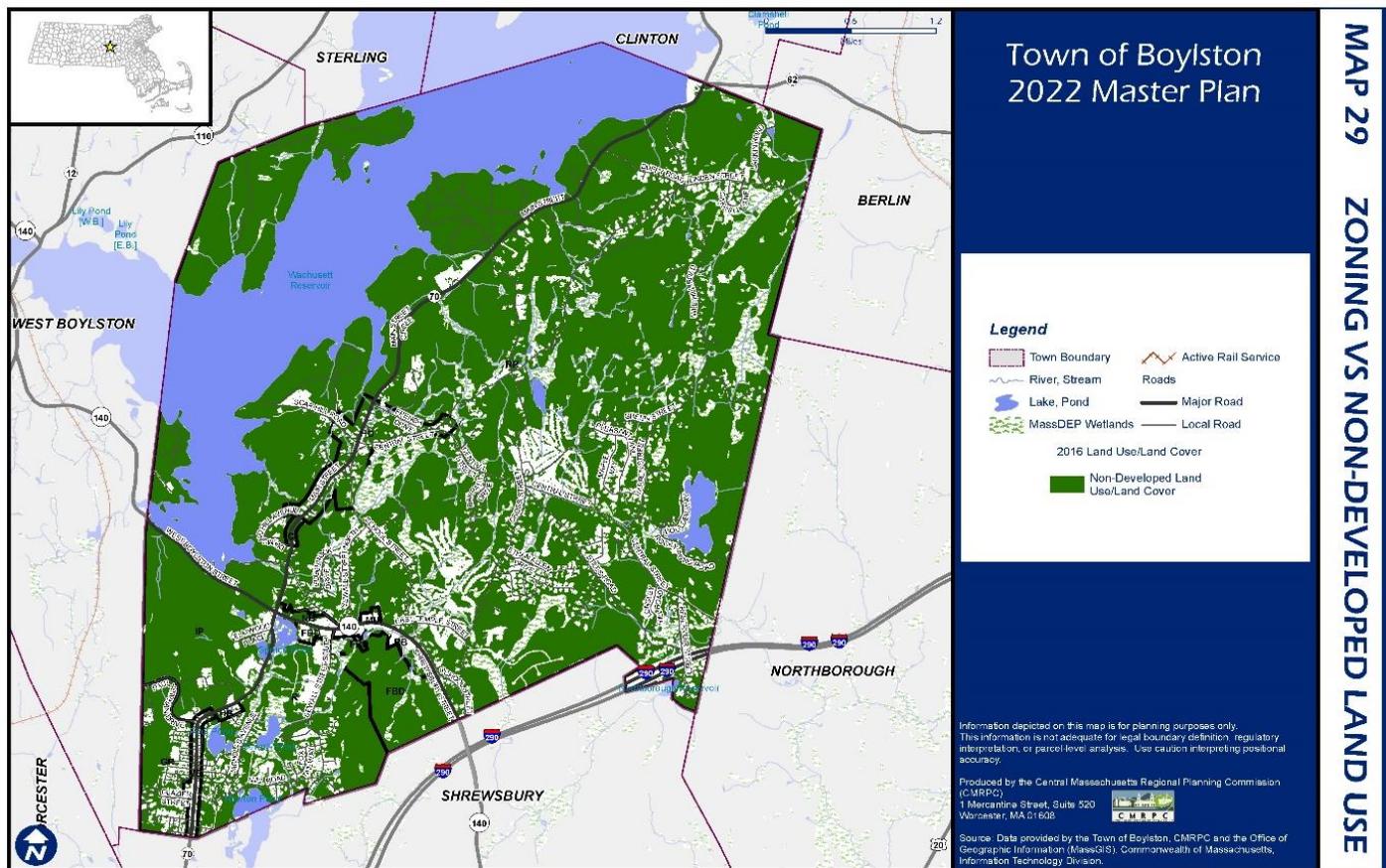
Source: CMRPC, 2022

Non-Developed Land

There are several distinct types of land use and land cover which can, when successfully linked, create a resilient environmental network. Open space and recreation lands, non-built areas of large residential plots, surface water, and agricultural and forestry lands can interact to maintain the ecological integrity of Boylston’s natural resources, environmental services, and idyllic character. These lands account for over 95.6% of Boylston’s total land cover. The extent of non-developed land cover in town results from policies employed by the Town, State, and broader region. Boylston already employs a Stormwater Control Bylaw, and a Right-to-Farm Bylaw. These have a significant impact on the relative proportions of land uses.

The 2016 MassGIS Land Use/Land Cover data identifies 53.57 acres of cultivated land and 106.29 acres of pasture/hay. Agricultural lands total nearly 161 acres or 1.26% of the town's area. These uses are supported by Boylston's Right-to-Farm Bylaw and Chapter 61A regulations. Table LU2 and Map 2 show 6,965 acres of forest in Boylston (55% of the town's total area). MassGIS identifies 1,125 acres of forested wetlands in Boylston (8.9% of the total area), 195 acres of non-forested wetlands (1.54% of the total area), 38.6 acres of aquatic beds (0.31 acres total area), and 2,383 acres of water (18.9% of the total area). Boylston has eight areas identified by the State's BioMap2 Project as "core habitats" for conserving biodiversity for future generations, consisting of 3,367 acres in town, of which protected core habitat consists of 2,824 acres, or 83.9% of total core habitat.¹ Such lands can be protected, in part, with conservation restrictions (CR). Currently, there are 5,930 acres (as of 2021) of permanently protected open space and recreation lands in town amounting to the 46.9% of the land area. Some of these protected properties include the Brissette property (46.6 acres), the Golas Farm (111 acres), and the Boylston Tax Title Parcels (95 acres).² Chapter 61B tax exemptions can be used to support private recreation land preservation. These non-developed lands are crucial for providing ecosystem services that make everyday life possible, but increasingly also help buffer the effects of climate change (Map LU6).

Map LU6: Zoning vs. Non-Developed Land Use



Source: CMRPC, 2022

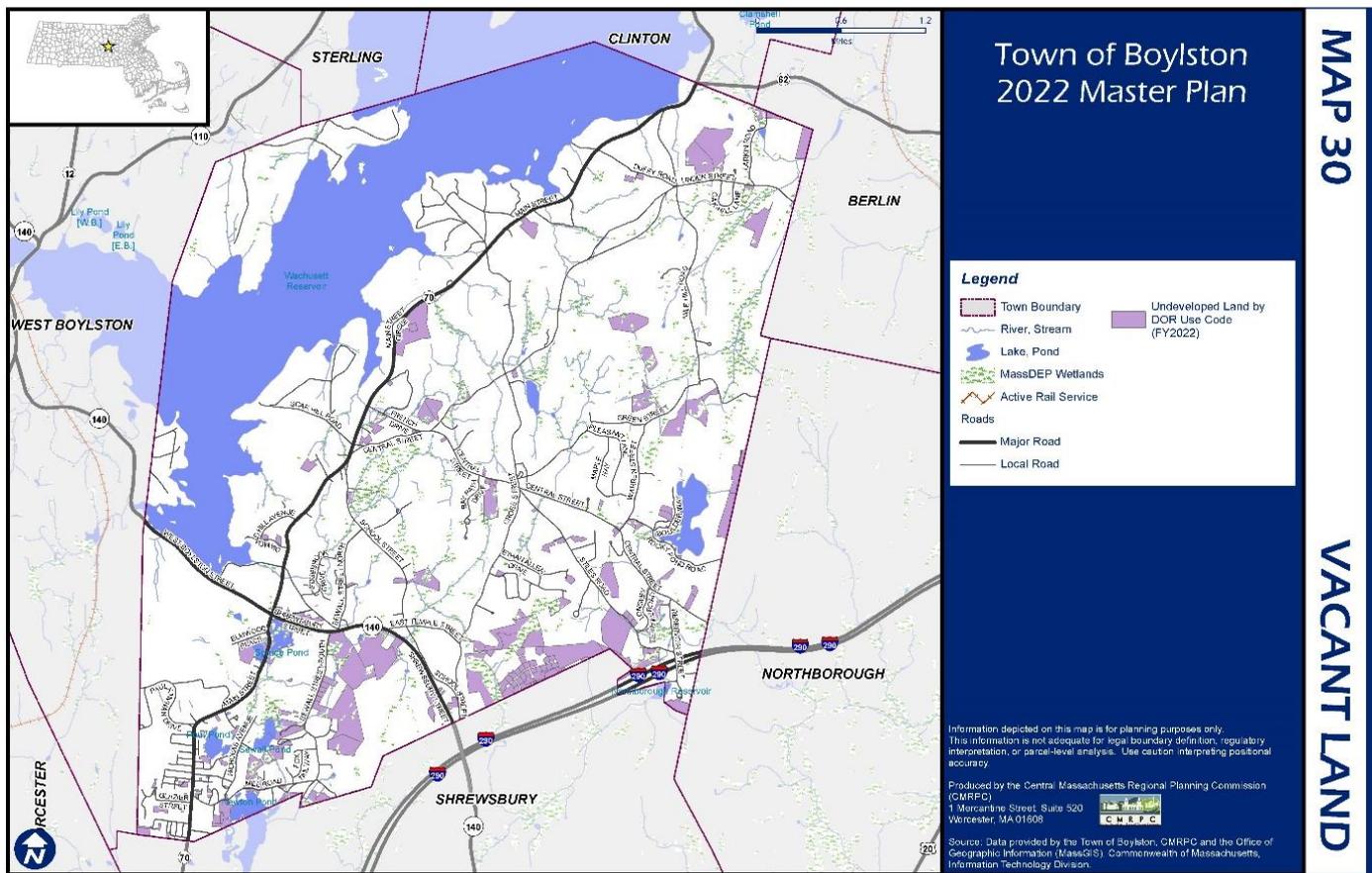
¹ http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap/pdf/town_core/Boylston.pdf

² <https://www.svtweb.org/land-protection/tri-town-project/tri-town-initiative-conserved-properties>

Vacant Land

Vacant lands represent an opportunity for the Town to revive underutilized areas. They are distinct from open space or preservation lands as they fall within a given zoning district but remain unused. Some of this land may be appropriate for redevelopment, while other areas may be best suited for conservation. The Town should focus on developing and preserving quality parcels; however, vacant lands may represent additional smaller-scale opportunities. If left unmaintained, vacant land can contribute to poor aesthetics. A clear picture of ownership rights will be helpful when planning future uses of these lands.

Map LU7: Vacant Land



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Zoning

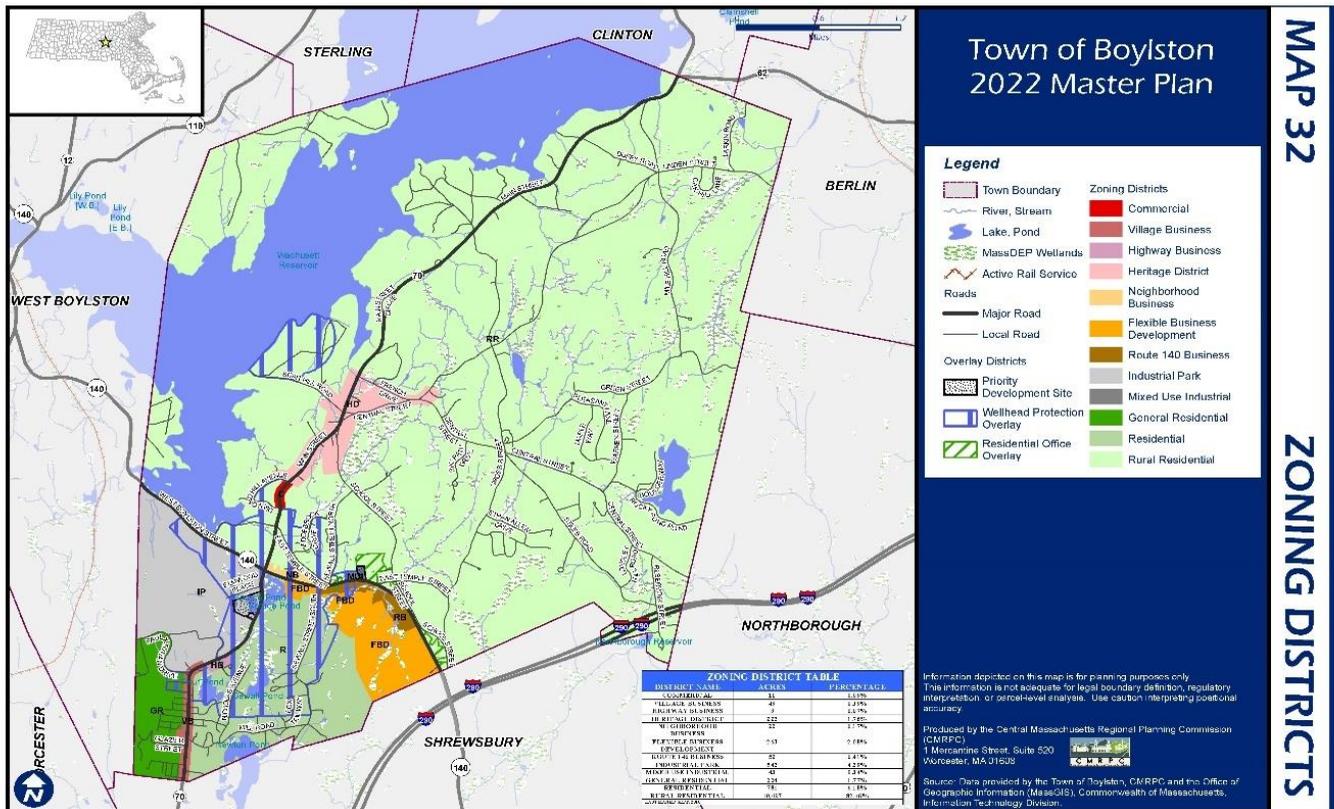
Boylston is divided into 12 zoning districts, categorized broadly into Residential, Business/Commercial/Industrial, Heritage, and two Overlay Districts. Most of the Town is zoned Rural Residential which creates large parcel neighborhoods. The remaining zoning districts amount to a minority of the land in Town largely clustered in the southern portion of Town. The existing zoning regulations are discussed in depth below along with potential and current opportunities for change. Table LU4 shows the acreage for each zoning district. Map LU8 depicts the zoning districts.

Table LU4: Boylston Zoning Districts and Land Area

Zoning District	Short Name	Acreage
Rural Residential	RR	10,461.43
Residential	R	781.31
General Residential	GR	223.73
Village Business	VB	49.44
Highway Business	HB	9.15
Commercial	C	11.02
Heritage	HD	221.56
Industrial Park	IP	542.07
Flexible Business Development	FBD	263.50
Mixed Use Industrial	MUI	7.99
Neighborhood Business	NB	21.96
Route 140 Business	RB	52.40
Total		12,645.56

Source: Town of Boylston Assessor Office; CMRPC; MassGIS

Map LU8: Zoning Districts



Source: CMRPC, 2022

Residential Zoning Districts

The town has three exclusively residential zoning districts for which locations are noted in the Zoning Map (Map LU8).

- **The Rural Residential District** comprises 10,462 acres and is intended to preserve and protect areas near the Wachusett Reservoir watershed, the rural character of the Town, to promote agricultural uses, and to provide for low-density, single-family residential uses with a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet.
- **The Residential District** comprises 781 acres and provides for medium-density residential uses in areas that are served by the municipal water supply with a minimum lot area of 30,000 square feet.
- **The General Residential District** comprises 224 acres and allows a mix of residential uses at a higher density than that which is permitted in the Rural Residential or Residential Districts with a minimum lot area of 15,000 square feet.

Residential-only districts comprise the largest zoning districts in terms of land area. Table LU4 summarizes each residential-only district by percentage of total zoned land (distinct from real land use). The largest residential district (RR) is also the most restrictive of all the residential-only districts and has the greatest capacity for residential expansion. The Town should evaluate the traditional zoning districts and consider more sustainable development patterns that preserve more open space and have less impact on the environment by encouraging development that provides for less erosion and allows for more infiltration of rainwater. Well-designed development can greatly improve quality of life.

Non-Residential Zoning Districts

The Town of Boylston has eight commercial and industrial zoning Districts (Map LU8), a Floodplain District, Heritage District, and two overlay districts. Additionally, Priority Development Areas (PDAs) have been identified as areas to target for innovative development opportunities. Submittals for development on these sites are to be processed with expedited permitting as outlined in MGL Chapter 43D.

- **Village Business:** The Village Business (VB) District comprises 49 acres and is located along Main Street (Route 70) in the southwest area of Boylston. The purpose of the Village Business District is to provide for small-scale retail and personal service uses for the convenience of those residing in the neighboring area. Examples of these include retail, personal services, greenhouse or nursery, gasoline stations, funeral homes, religious, educational, or non-profit educational uses, as well as public utility buildings or structures. The district also allows single-family residential use with a minimum lot area of 15,000 square feet and two-family with 20,000 square feet. Currently, the VB district is primarily developed as residential. This district should be re-evaluated and updated when the Zoning Bylaws are updated.
- **Highway Business:** The Highway Business District is a small district of just nine acres located along Main Street northeast of the Village Business District. The purpose of the Highway Business District is to provide for commercial uses that require adequate highway access as these uses tend to generate significant traffic and would not be compatible near less intense uses. Uses permitted include commercial greenhouse, gasoline station, motor vehicle repair, automobile dealerships, building trades including supply yards, restaurants, shopping centers and package stores.
- **Commercial:** The Commercial District is a small district comprising 11 acres located along Main Street south of the Heritage District. The purpose of the Commercial District is to provide for goods and services for residents that are easily accessible and where parking is provided. This district allows for a mix of commercial and light industrial uses including agriculture, retail, personal services, professional offices, medical offices, banks, gas stations, religious and educational institutions, childcare, and small-scale solar facilities among other uses. Single-family and two-family residences are also permitted uses. Still other uses are allowed by Special Permit including accessory apartments, shopping center, restaurants, public utility buildings, and medium- and large-scale ground-mounted solar energy system among other uses. When uses in this district are adjacent to

residential uses, a buffer zone is required. When the Route 140 Business District was amended, it modified the boundaries of the Commercial District leaving little land area in the district that is primarily residential. The Commercial District should be re-evaluated and updated when the Zoning Bylaws are updated.

- **Heritage:** The Heritage District comprises 222 acres surrounding the Town Common along upper Main Street. This area represents the Historic District of Boylston, and regulations for this area are intended to protect the historic character and prevent encroachment by uses that would detract from the visual character while also providing a transition between this district and other nearby districts. Any use other than single-family residential that is allowed, as shown in the Schedule of Use Regulations and abuts the Boylston Water District, requires a Special Permit in this district from the Planning Board. Single-family residential use requires a minimum lot area of 25,000 square feet, and two-family residential use requires 30,000 square feet.
- **Industrial and Office Park:** The Industrial and Office Park District comprises 542 acres located in the west central portion of Boylston and bounded by Route 70 and Route 140. The eastern portion of the district is also within the Wellhead Protection Overlay District. Furthermore, a portion of the area south of Elmwood Place and along the west side of Main Street (Route 70) is designated as a Priority Development Area (PDA). This district is intended to provide space for executive offices, research and development facilities and light manufacturing, as well as training in management, sales, and manufacturing. Allowed uses include agriculture, professional offices, medical offices, warehouses, storage facilities, commercial recreation, golf courses, building trade supply, renewable or alternative energy manufacturing, religious or educational facilities, childcare centers, municipal uses, and small-scale solar energy systems. Approval of a Special Permit is required for uses such as commercial greenhouses, corporate conference centers, hotels, public utility buildings, wireless communication facilities, hospitals, medical marijuana dispensaries, and medium- to large-scale solar energy systems.
- **Floodplain District:** The Flood Plain District is considered an overlay district that corresponds to flood hazard areas as designated on the Boylston Flood Insurance Rate Maps and the Flood Boundary and Floodway Maps. Some uses are permitted provided that certain requirements are met including those within the Massachusetts State Building Code regarding special flood hazard areas. These requirements are elaborated on in Section 6.02 of the Zoning Bylaws. The purpose of the Flood Plain District is to protect the public, health, safety, and general welfare, to protect human life and property from the hazards of periodic flooding, to preserve the natural flood control characteristics, and flood storage capacity of the Flood Plain, and to preserve and maintain the groundwater table and water recharge areas within the Flood Plain (Zoning Bylaws, Section 3.01.11).
- **Flexible Business Development District:** The Flexible Business Development District comprises 263 acres and is located along Route 140 in the southern area of Boylston. The purpose of the district is to provide for commercial and light industrial uses that will not produce noise, fumes, smoke, or other impacts such as those from heavy industrial uses. Allowed uses include agriculture, professional offices, banks, medical offices, commercial recreation, research and development, renewable energy manufacturing, recreational vehicle and camper sales, medical marijuana dispensaries, and small-scale solar energy systems. A Special Permit is required for retail on separate lot, business services, wholesale warehouse, shopping centers, gas stations, restaurants, conference centers, public utility structures, municipal uses, hospitals, country clubs, warehouses accessory to industrial use, and medium-scale solar energy systems.
- **Mixed-Use Industrial District:** The Mixed-Use Industrial District comprises 43 acres and is located along Route 140, east of Sewall Street. The west side of the area is located within the Wellhead Protection Overlay District, and the east side of the area is within the Residential Office Overlay District and is also a Priority Development Area (PDA). The purpose of the district is to provide for a mix of light industrial and office uses on lots requiring a minimum of 40,000 square feet in lot area. Allowed uses include agriculture, business services, medical offices, commercial recreation, research and development, light manufacturing, renewable energy manufacturing, religious and educational use, childcare centers, any municipal use and small-scale solar energy systems. In this district, a Special Permit is required for accessory apartments, commercial greenhouses, professional business office, banks, take-out food service and medium-scale ground-mounted solar systems. A

portion of this district is currently developed as multifamily. When uses in this district are adjacent to residential uses, a buffer zone is required.

- **Neighborhood Business District:** The Neighborhood Business District comprises 22 acres and is located along the north side of Shrewsbury Street (Route 140) from Main Street to East Temple Street. This district is also located within the Wellhead Protection District. The purpose of the district is to provide for small-scale businesses and residential premises in mixed-use buildings on parcels with a minimum lot area of 30,000 square feet. Allowed uses include agriculture, retail and service businesses, professional offices, medical offices, restaurants, religious and educational institutions, childcare centers, and municipal uses. A Special Permit is required for residential units that are above the ground floor of a building with commercial uses, accessory apartments, shopping centers, public utilities and small- to medium-scale solar energy systems.
- **Route 140 Business District:** The Route 140 Business District is located along the south side of Route 140 in the south-central area of Boylston. The purpose of this district is to provide for larger commercial and light industrial uses at a larger scale than neighborhood-oriented businesses. This district is also intended to encourage mixed-use developments that are attractive, serve as gathering places, provide local employment and enhance the tax base while protecting the surrounding neighborhoods from land use conflicts. The minimum lot size for this district is 40,000 square feet. Allowed uses include agriculture, commercial greenhouse, retail, personal services, business services, professional offices, medical offices, banks, restaurants, research and development, religious and educational uses, hospitals, municipal uses, and small-scale solar energy systems. A Special Permit is required for residential units that are above the ground floor of a building with commercial uses, warehouses, shopping centers, commercial recreation, gas stations, package stores, building trades supply, automobile dealerships, light manufacturing, renewable or alternative energy manufacturing facility, recreational vehicle sales, public utility buildings and medium- to large-scale solar energy systems.

Overlay Districts

There are two distinct overlay districts in Boylston including the Residential Office Overlay District (RO) and the Wellhead Protection Overlay District. In addition to these, the Senior Residential Development district is a floating overlay, and the Floodplain District corresponds to those areas identified as floodplain on the Flood Insurance Rate Maps. The RO is located to the east of Route 140 in the south-central area of Boylston and primarily overlays the Rural Residential District but also overlays a portion of the Mixed-Use Industrial District. The purpose of the RO is to allow small-scale professional offices in residential districts that are no longer ideal for residential use given the location along heavily traveled roadways.

The Wellhead Protection Overlay District covers a much larger area of Boylston that ranges from the south end of Wachusett Reservoir and extends south and eastward across the areas of Spruce Pond, Pout Pond, Sewall Brook, Sewall Pond, and Hall Pond. A smaller area of the overlay is located along the east shore of Wachusett Reservoir to the north of Scar Hill Road. The purpose of the Wellhead Protection District is to promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the community by ensuring an adequate quantity of good quality drinking water is available for the residents of the Town of Boylston. Limited land use controls are used within the recharge areas to the Boylston and Morningdale Water District Wells to accomplish this purpose.

Parking Requirements

Current parking requirements in the Town of Boylston adhere to the standard minimum of two parking spaces per dwelling unit and one additional parking space for an accessory apartment. The parking required for other uses varies as shown in Table LU5. The Planning Board may grant a Special Permit for shared parking when a reciprocal agreement is recorded as a perpetual easement to guarantee joint use of the parking area based on the types of uses involved, the hours of operation and the number of spaces required for each use. Also considered is the degree to which an applicant promotes alternative modes of transportation including transit, pedestrian, or bicycle facilities. New developments are

required to include sidewalks and pedestrian paths to connect parking lots to buildings on a site. Bicycle parking facilities are also required at a ratio of one space for every 15 required vehicle parking spaces.

New parking lots with five or more parking spaces, or an expansion of an existing parking area that increases the number of spaces by five or more spaces, are required to provide parking lot landscaping. The standards for landscaping include a minimum landscaped area of five percent of the total area of the parking lot, a mix of shade and ornamental trees at an average of 2.5 trees for every 10 parking spaces, and trees that are at least three inches in trunk diameter at time of planting. When it is not practical to plant trees, the Planning Board may authorize alternative landscaping. This helps improve the aesthetics of parking lots but can also be designed to address stormwater runoff and other ecological concerns. As the Town targets more dense, resilient, and mobility-inclusive development, it would be well-served to re-evaluate parking regulations.

Table LU5: Boylston Off-Street Parking Requirements

Off-Street Parking Requirements	
Type of Use	Amount of Parking Required
Professional or Business Office	1 space/ 300 sf gross floor area 1 space/400 sf for offices above the ground floor
Hotels, Motels & Lodging Accommodations	1 space/each room accommodation
Eating & Drinking Establishments	1 space/4 seats, and 1 space/every 2 linear feet of counter serving standing customers
Retail Establishments	1 space/300 sf gross floor area
Warehouse or Distribution Facility	1 space/1,000 sf gross floor area
General Industrial Use	2 spaces/1,000 sf 3 spaces/1,000 sf for associated office use
Medical Office	1 space/250 sf gross floor area for single tenant building 1 space/200 sf gross floor area with two or more tenants
Research and Development	3 spaces/1,000 sf gross floor area minimum 4 spaces/1,000 sf gross floor area maximum
Child Care Center	1 space/6 children of design capacity
Upper Story Dwelling in a Commercial Building	1 space/1-bedroom unit 1 space/2-bedroom unit or larger
Other Use Requiring Off-Street Parking Space	In accordance with anticipated needs as determined by Planning Board

Source: *Town of Boylston Zoning Bylaws*

Subdivision Regulations

The Town’s subdivision regulations greatly influence how land in Boylston is developed given the predominance of residential land uses. These subdivision regulations are intended to guide the approval process of a subdivision plan, and include general design standards, required improvements for an approved subdivision, and general administration.

While the existing Subdivision Regulations recommend that those subdividing land “explore all methods and means to implement low impact development (LID) and maintain as much natural topography, drainage, and vegetation as possible,” it cannot be stressed enough that LID methods should be more strongly encouraged.³ One area to explore is reducing roadway widths to reduce the impervious cover. Yet another approach that can greatly serve to maintain the natural topography, drainage and vegetation is to require the conservation of open space such as with clustered development.

³ Boylston Subdivision Regulations, Section 6.1.1 https://www.boylston-ma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlf4171/f/uploads/sub_division_rules_regs_forms_a-k.pdf

Also, as discussed in more detail in the Growth Management section below, flag lots should be permitted as of right provided that certain lot requirements are met regarding lot area and that separation requirements are met for wells and septic systems on adjacent properties. Flag lots are lots that have considerable lot area but limited road frontage. These lots open to a wider lot area, typically behind other properties. Currently, the Zoning Bylaw allows “reduced-frontage” lots by Special Permit, yet the Bylaws are not clear on the criteria used to evaluate reduced-frontage lots. All these methods should be addressed with an update of the Subdivision Regulations; however, corresponding amendments will need to be made in the Zoning Bylaws as well so that these documents are in conformance with each other. Also, permit tracking software should be considered to aid in ensuring that those involved with the different processes of planning, zoning, subdivision, and permitting are all informed of the status of each phase of a project. Overall, the Subdivision Regulations should be enhanced and streamlined to address the topics above, to be less formidable and more user-friendly.

Additional Bylaws

Boylston has adopted additional bylaws affecting land use, some of which are discussed in prior chapters. A brief list is included here for reference:

- Signs
- Wireless Communication
- Solar Energy Facilities
- Growth Management (expired and not in effect but not formally removed from Bylaw)
- Registered Marijuana Dispensaries
- Inclusionary Zoning

Development Constraints

While the proximity to I-290 and an available interchange continues to make this area attractive for development, other conditions constrain development. As detailed previously, development constraints include the lack of sewer service and limited public water wells. Additionally, Boylston has large areas covered with glacial till. These till-based soils drain slowly and are often unsuitable for septic systems and water supplies. Other challenging constraints in Boylston include current zoning, wetlands, rock outcroppings, and steep slopes. More detailed information about constraints is available in the Open Space, Recreation, & Natural Resources chapter.

Issues and Opportunities

Extensive public outreach during the Master Planning update process highlighted the dynamic balance between guiding town growth while preserving its rural character and the historic Town Common. Both residents and the Town are actively discussing Boylston’s future trajectory. Members of the public consistently envisioned forms of community-appropriate development that expanded amenities without sacrificing the Town’s character. Several themes emerged from outreach efforts.

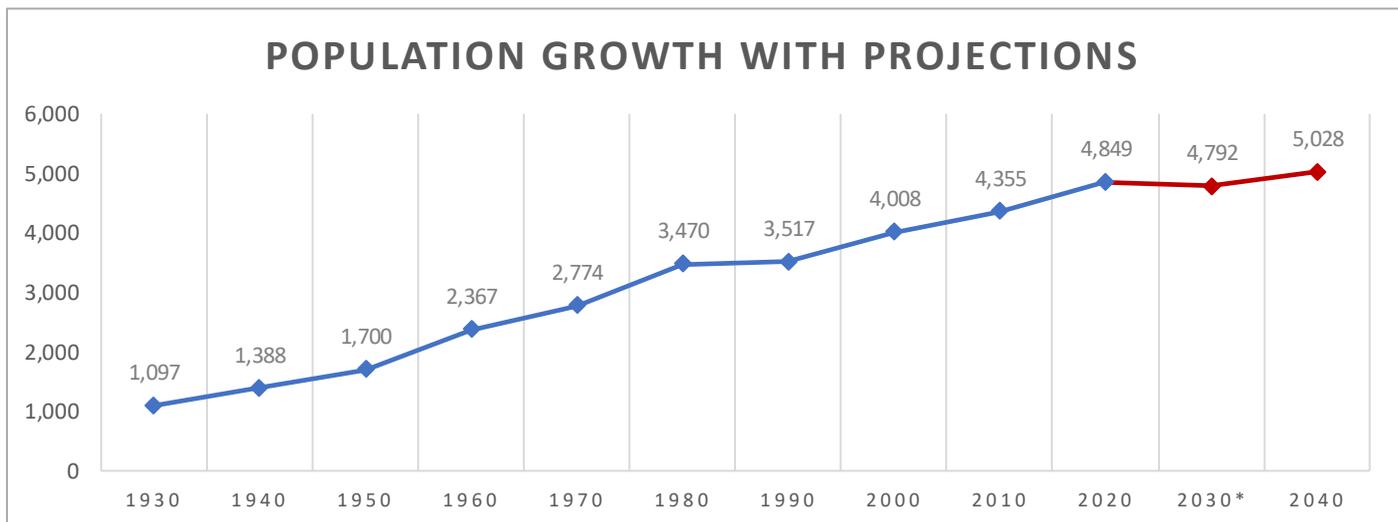
- Value in growth that is environmentally conscious and fiscally sound
- Need for affordable housing including multifamily
- Creating walkable mixed-use nodes
- Desire for more small retail and restaurants
- Expanding social and recreational options including playgrounds
- Building bicycle infrastructure
- Need to improve roads and bridges, and desire to expand sidewalks

Land Use Projections

Population Changes and Projections

Boylston’s evolving land use policy will be driven largely by the population changes projected over the lifespan of this plan. However, the recent release of the 2020 U.S. Census shows that the actual population of Boylston in 2020 has exceeded the population projections for 2030 (Table 6). This implies that in recent years, the town’s population has been growing at a faster rate than it was previously. Generally, estimates are fairly conservative as they assume a relatively stable rate of growth. Any major real-world fluctuation in these factors could have significant impact on the accuracy of these estimates. Population increases will require expanded housing options (either single- or multi-family), expanded municipal services, more business and service options, and greater school system capacity. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected jobs, housing, and the economy in general which may have skewed the actual versus projected population. The expected population increase can have dramatically different impacts on the nature of the town based on the type of housing and commercial development the Town’s zoning is designed to encourage. Because Boylston is a bedroom community, housing development will be the linchpin of the land use discussion. The Town should strive to proactively adopt zoning changes that provide opportunities for a diversity of housing types to be built for people of all ages.

Figure 1: Population Growth with Projections, 1930-2040



*The 2020 Census has already surpassed the 2030 population estimates.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1930-2020; CMRPC Population Estimates 2030-2040

Compared to surrounding communities, the household growth rate in Boylston ranks second highest at 12.6% from 2000 to 2019, with Berlin having the highest growth rate at 26.0%. Worcester County had a growth rate of 8.4% in this span of time and the State of Massachusetts increased households by 6.6%.

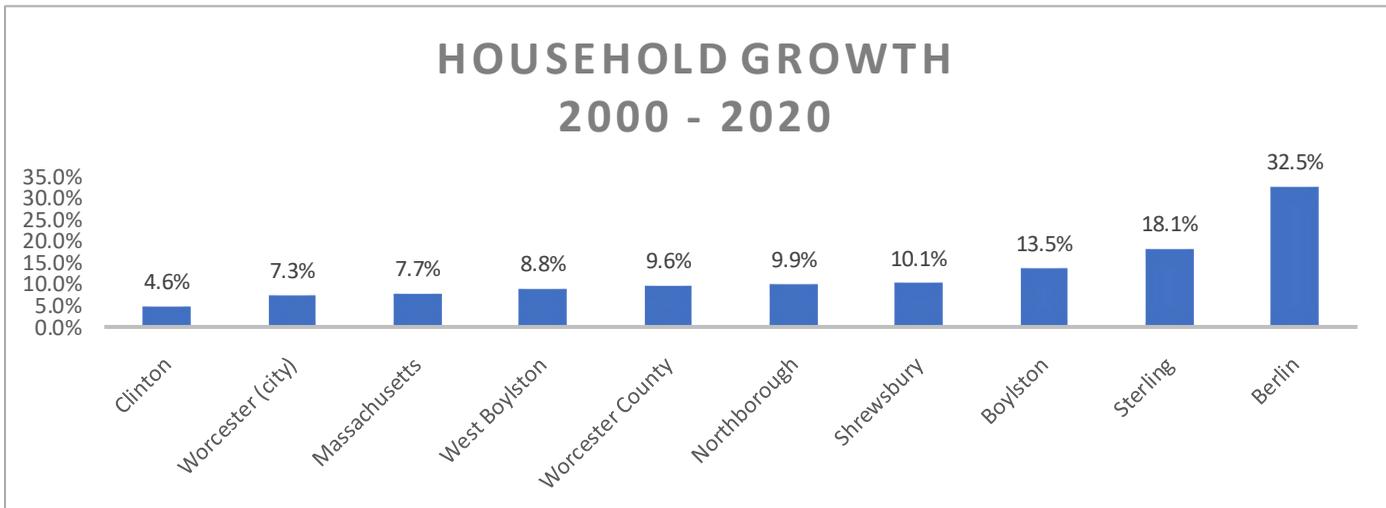
Table LU7: Historical Population Change

Population Change, 1930-2020						
Year	Boylston		Worcester County		Massachusetts	
	Population	Percent change from previous decade	Population	Percent change from previous decade	Population	Percent change from previous decade
1930	1,097	--	491,242	--	4,249,614	--
1940	1,388	26.5%	504,470	2.7%	4,316,721	1.6%
1950	1,700	22.5%	546,401	8.3%	4,690,514	8.7%
1960	2,367	39.2%	583,228	6.7%	5,148,578	9.8%
1970	2,774	17.2%	637,969	9.4%	5,689,170	10.5%
1980	3,470	25.1%	646,352	1.3%	5,737,037	0.8%
1990	3,517	1.4%	709,705	9.8%	6,016,425	4.9%
2000	4,008	14.0%	750,963	5.8%	6,349,097	5.5%
2010	4,355	8.7%	798,552	6.3%	6,547,629	3.1%
2020	4,849	11.3%	862,111	8.0%	7,029,917	7.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2022

The Census and American Community Survey (ACS) provide information on household growth. By considering the population growth and household growth, we can get a sense of what the housing needs will be in Boylston. Figure LU2 shows that the household growth rate in Boylston from 2000 to 2019 (ACS Estimate) compared with neighboring communities, Worcester County, and the State of Massachusetts. The rate of 12.6% shows that the household growth rate in Boylston is higher than most surrounding communities, the county, and the state. Only Berlin has a higher household growth rate at 26%. More discussion on population and housing projections and growth rates can be found in the Population and Housing chapter.

Figure LU2: Household Growth Rate from 2000-2020



Source: Census Bureau 2000; American Community Survey Estimates 2016-2020

Commercial and Industrial Development Potential

With such a large area of the town identified as conservation land, state-owned land or covered in water, the areas in which commercial and industrial opportunities can expand to are primarily confined to the core area of the town. The limitations on infrastructure further limit opportunities for commercial and industrial development. The most likely opportunities will include infill, redevelopment, and reuse opportunities, as well as new mixed-use development. Factors that can aid in enhancing the approval process for new businesses include streamlining the permitting process and combined permitting. By coordinating permitting reviews between Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, and the Board of Selectmen, the timeline for processing can be reduced allowing businesses to open sooner. The Town may also want to consider shared staff or services with other nearby communities as part-time staffing is a barrier to coordination of services between departments.

Emerging Issues in Land Use

Land use issues are evolving faster than ever. Towns are operating at the intersection of changing environmental and policy pressures. The Town of Boylston cannot predict every emerging land use issue, but the Town can commit to acting in a proactive and responsive fashion to best serve the community. A variety of land use considerations have emerged as clear questions the Town must contend with moving into the future. With so many emerging issues in land use planning, it will be vital to enhance public awareness of traditional and emerging issues. The Town should ensure there is adequate funding in the Planning Board budget to include resources for technical and ongoing education. And affordable option for this is with land use training classes through the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC). Residents have a stake in how the community will grow, and it is important to include the needs and desires of them in any decision making on planning-related issues. The Town should develop strategies on how best to solicit interest on these issues from the public.

Climate Change

Towns today must cope with rapid changes in environmental trends in addition to societal and demographic changes. Towns can no longer rely on the former climatic status quo but must actively plan for changes in rainfall quantity, storm severity, water supplies, droughts, invasive species, and other climate effects. These will affect the services residents require and the Town's ability to provide them. Boylston must prepare itself to be responsive to emergency situations (Fire, EMT, Police) but can also offset climate change impacts by proactively planning for the Town to fit new environmental conditions. This includes promoting "Smart Growth" which increases density and mobility options to reduce carbon impact, as well as designing infrastructure and services for resilience. The more proactive planning Boylston successfully completes, the less reactive recovery the Town will face. The Town should consider implementing a local wetland bylaw to sustain and preserve natural barriers to mitigate flooding. The Town should also increase limitations on development within the 100-year flood zones.

Growth Management

A major subject of this Master Plan has been the Town's desire to strike a balance between development and preservation. Residents desire improvements in local amenities, and the quality of life in Town continues to attract new residents but this very growth in population can impact the character of Boylston that attracted residents in the first place. Boylston should encourage sustainable development and constructing new buildings in a sustainable manner. Boylston is projected to continue growing, but the community can shape that growth in appropriate directions through the active use of land planning tools such as Open Space Residential Design, Cluster Development, Low-Impact Development, and Stormwater Bylaws. Boylston must re-evaluate the former large-lot, low-density zoning approach which has largely failed to reduce growth rates and instead encourage clusters of denser, well-designed development that is climatically resilient and enjoyable to live in.

Survey respondents expressed a desire to maintain Boylston's small-town character and heritage. One way to guide development that maintains character is by developing design guidelines or standards that are consistent and complement the existing and desired character of the town and its neighborhoods. Another way is to preserve and maintain the historic Town Common and the character of the surrounding village/historic district. Leap frog development that requires infrastructure to be extended is costly and unsustainable. It also results in a sprawl-type development that detracts from a community's distinctiveness and cohesiveness. The Town should concentrate new development around existing infrastructure to preserve natural resources and limit the service provision costs.

The Town should consider innovative zoning that encourages development of Priority Development Areas (PDAs) in a way that meets the needs of the community. By developing zoning that allows for nodes that include a mix of uses, these dense pockets can include businesses, residences and provide gathering places to enhance a sense of community and promote quality of life. While most of the area along Route 140 and Route 70 would remain as it is currently developed with business and industrial uses, innovative zoning should be sought for the PDA and areas that include a residential overlay. The Morningdale neighborhood already exists as a denser, walkable area. The Town should evaluate the feasibility and potential for mixed-use development in that neighborhood.

The general bylaws, policies, and regulations should be reviewed to ensure that they reflect active municipal plans. The current Zoning Bylaw includes traditional requirements for lot size, frontage and setbacks as well as limiting the use of a property to a single use. To allow for mixed-use and reducing other zoning requirements, the Town should review the zoning regulations for areas of proposed mixed-use nodes to allow for these uses and to promote areas with walkable small-town character. The Town should evaluate, enhance, and streamline the Subdivision Regulations to promote more sustainable development. Utilizing Low-Impact Development (LID) techniques can aid in establishing a more environmentally friendly way of development that reduces stormwater runoff and allows rainwater to naturally percolate and recharge the groundwater aquifer. The Subdivision Regulations should be revised to incorporate LID standards. One way to minimize stormwater runoff is to reduce the impervious surface area. In some instances, it may be feasible to consider shared parking as well as off-site parking, particular in commercial nodes. Some properties include a lot of acreage but limited road frontage. Rather than requiring a subdivision process for one single-family home, allowing flag lots with a reduced lot frontage requirement would allow these property owners to utilize the rear portion of their property.

The current Zoning Bylaw includes one process for Site Plan review whether a project is a small development or a larger commercial or industrial development. The Town should consider a tiered approach that differentiates between low-scale, low-intensity uses and more complex uses. Reviewing the Site Plan review criteria for other communities may provide insight into creative ways to approach this. The Town should consider ways to streamline the Site Plan review process. The Town of Boylston is in a favorable position to direct growth given the Town's large land holdings. The Town should evaluate the highest and best purpose for these properties in light of the Town's vision. The Town should pursue development of a master plan for the Hillside property. Aside from the Hillside property, the Town should identify any vacant or underutilized properties that are available for development, redevelopment, or preservation. Lastly, the Town should seek to begin a dialogue and coordinate with the State on the State-owned land regarding the use and/or disposition of the land.

Combined Permitting

To help facilitate development proposals through the permitting process with minimal delay, the Town should provide a clear path and efficient permitting process to enable desirable development types and attract new businesses to Boylston. One way that the Town can approach this is by expanding opportunities for consolidated or combined permitting. Currently, the Zoning Bylaw provides for the Planning Board to consolidate its site plan and special permit procedures when the Planning Board serves as the Special Permit Granting Authority for a proposed development (Section 10.03.07). The Town should explore additional ways in which the permitting process can be combined to provide a more unified process.

Affordable Housing

The housing affordability crisis is deepening across the state. People are being pushed out of urban centers into growing suburban commuter zones. Escalating land prices, combined with the current large-lot requirements encourage developers to build larger more expensive houses to recoup their expenses. The majority of employed residents of Boylston commute outside of town for work. Rising housing prices in Worcester and Central Massachusetts are likely to affect where people choose to live. Boylston should aim to provide housing options achievable for workers employed at all wage levels in town, be it at minimum wage or higher.

Aging Population

Many Boylston residents are seeking to age in place. Boylston will need to continue planning for Healthy Aging to adequately serve its aging population; affordability; inclusive mobility options; elderly and emergency response services; multi-generational community spaces. Appropriate zoning can help facilitate Healthy Aging while simultaneously improving the quality of life for other generations of residents.

Green Energy

Many residents in Boylston expressed a desire to be part of the recent expansion of green energy generation in Massachusetts. Survey respondents support clean energy including rooftop solar and commercial solar energy production. The Town will need to develop the necessary regulatory infrastructure to facilitate green energy in a manner appropriate to the vision of the town. A proactive approach to achieving this is to complete an assessment of available or suitable land that would help direct these new developments. Another step to realize these goals is to identify desirable zoning options for clean energy that meets the requirements of the Massachusetts Green Communities program.

Short Term Rentals and Shared Use

Airbnb and other new platforms for small-scale shared use (such as Uber and Lyft) require a new approach by towns because they inhabit a legally ambiguous area under most current regulations, especially zoning. These platforms can provide flexible amenities in town to address existing concerns such as the lack of lodging options or lack of transit options, but the town would be well served by resolving zoning and other legal ambiguities.

Natural Landscapes and Resources, Open Space, and History

Boylston's natural landscapes and resources, open spaces, and history should be preserved and protected in a manner that is fiscally sound. The first step in achieving this is to identify and prioritize the areas that need to be protected from development. This may include sensitive habitat that should be conserved or significant historical structures or properties to be preserved. Boylston has natural beauty of native New England mixed forest that could be lost due to development pressures. The Town should seek protective measures to maintain these natural features. Additionally, a Scenic Roads Bylaw should be considered to preserve the scenic, historic and aesthetic along Boylston's roadways.

Sign Bylaw

It is a good practice to routinely review the Sign Bylaw and to consider any new or updated laws pertaining to signs. In 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in a case regarding a sign ordinance that was found to treat signs differently based on their content, thus, regulating speech that is protected under the First Amendment (*Reed et al v. Town of Gilbert et al*), the U.S. Supreme Court, 135 S.Ct. 2218).⁴ Since this ruling, many communities across the country have been updating

⁴ U.S. Supreme Court, June 18, 2015, https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/13-502_90lb.pdf

their sign code to ensure that it does not in any way impinge on free speech. The Town of Boylston should review their Sign Bylaw and update as needed. Another area of the Sign Bylaw that the Town should clarify is what criteria the Town uses to review sign design. Without a clear description of what is required, there is a concern that review of a sign design may be subjective.

An additional topic of concern with signs in recent years is the size, brightness, and animation of electronic message centers (also known as reader board signs or LED signs). CMRPC staff recommends that the Town consider whether this type of sign will be permitted and, if so, a definition should be drafted for this type of sign and the criteria used to regulate them established. If the Town does not support this type of sign, the sign bylaw should be amended to prohibit them.

The Town should revisit the prohibition of signs over the public right-of-way in certain locations. Currently, Section 10.01.04.8.b prohibits perpendicular signs from projecting into, on or over a public sidewalk, street, or way. With the desire to create a walkable village center, wall signs may not be visible for pedestrians who are walking close to building facades. In this type of situation, projecting signs over the sidewalk can be appropriate if they meet the building code vertical clearance requirement of eight (8') feet. Design guidelines for a walkable village center may establish criteria for projecting signs including the size and material for a consistent design as well as the location and how they are hung from the façade and the type of illumination.

Warehouse and Distribution Centers

Many Central Massachusetts communities are experiencing an increase of warehouse and distribution centers. Boylston currently has a FedEx facility off Route 140, with two additional ones under construction. The E-commerce industry has been growing in recent years but, with the current pandemic, more people are shopping online than what was seen before the pandemic. While each community must determine the best course of action for dealing with land use issues such as proximity of these uses to residential uses and increased truck traffic, it will also be beneficial to assess the challenges and potential resolution for the challenges at a regional level. Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission is examining the prospect of researching and identifying best practices for siting of these facilities and minimizing any potential land use or traffic impacts at the regional level.

Route 140 Corridor, East of Route 70

The core area of town represents the commercial heart of Boylston. As the town seeks to cluster future development, it can leverage the existing core area to create more public and green spaces, improve mobility, provide access to services, facilitate commercial development, and construct diverse housing types for all ages. To preserve the small-town character of the area, the town should focus on creating walkable nodes that allow for a mix of uses and provide a gathering place for activity. The Zoning Bylaw, including Use Table, will need to be updated to allow for this. Buildings should be allowed to be closer together and closer to the street to encourage walking. The Town may want to consider developing pockets of parking around the perimeter of the node with reduced parking requirements for individual properties as public parking areas would be available in addition to street parking. The existing bylaw states that required off-street parking must be on the same lot as the building. This requirement should be removed within these nodes. Consider seeking funding for streetscape improvements that will enhance the area, provide for safe walking and bicycling, and provide attractive landscaping. Finally, design guidelines should be developed to ensure that the small-town character is preserved and to educate the public about this vision. Several strategies to encourage development of the Route 140 corridor as an appealing commercial node are identified in the Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan (2022).

Summary of Goals and Strategies

The Master Plan recommends the following action items based on the goals and objectives crafted with careful consideration of the public outreach results, analysis of current conditions, and progress achieved since the 2000 Comprehensive Plan and the 2005 Community Development Plan. The action items accompanying the objectives will also be reflected in the Implementation Matrix (Chapter 8).

1. Goal: Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging land use issues.
 - a. Objective: Encourage sustainable development and sustainable buildings.
 - i. Action Item: Explore benefits and utility of Open Space Residential Design and Cluster Development.
 - ii. Action Item: Adopt a Low-Impact Development bylaw.
 - iii. Action Item: As town realizes its development goals, evaluate the need for shared, off-site parking areas to serve commercial nodes.
 - iv. Action Item: Pass the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code in support/ as a part of the town's Green Communities designation process
 - b. Objective: Facilitate desired development patterns through alternative and creative zoning options.
 - i. Action Item: Implement a local wetland bylaw to sustain and preserve natural barriers to mitigate flooding.
 - ii. Action Item: Increase limitations on development within the 100-year flood zones.
 - iii. Action Item: Identify desirable zoning options for clean energy that meet the requirements of the Massachusetts Green Communities program.
 - c. Objective: Provide a clear and efficient permitting process to enable desirable development types and attract new businesses to Boylston.
 - i. Action Item: Consider expanding opportunities for consolidated or combined permitting beyond that which is already permitted in 10.03.07 Subsection 3 of the Zoning Bylaw.
 - ii. Action Item: Consider implementing an online permitting system to include planning, conservation, etc.
 - d. Objective: Review Sign Bylaw and update as needed.
 - i. Action Item: Ensure that Sign Bylaw meets the First Amendment requirements for protecting various forms of speech.
 - ii. Action Item: Update the Sign Bylaw to include definitions and regulations for electronic message centers.
 - iii. Action Item: Update the Sign Bylaw to expand the criteria for signs to be allowed by right, minimizing the need for Sign Special Permits.
 - iv. Action Item: Consider amending the Sign Bylaw to allow projecting signs above the right-of-way in walkable village center settings provided that they meet the vertical clearance required by building code.
 - e. Objective: Enhance public awareness of planning and land use.
 - i. Action Item: Ensure that the Planning Board budget includes resources for technical, ongoing education.
 - ii. Action Item: Encourage Board members to participate in the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) and other state and regional training programs.
 - iii. Action Item: Develop strategies for soliciting interest of the public in planning-related issues.
2. Goal: Encourage development that is in harmony with the community's small-town character and heritage.
 - a. Objective: Shape the aesthetics of future development.
 - i. Action Item: Develop design guidelines or standards that are consistent and complement the existing and desired character of the town and its neighborhoods.

- j. Objective: Preserve and maintain the historic Town Common and the character of the surrounding village/ historic district.
 - i. Action Item: Seek funding to develop preservation design guidelines or standards that promote the use of appropriate design and materials for the district.
- 3. Goal: Concentrate new development around existing infrastructure to preserve natural resources and limit service provision costs.
 - a. Objective: Consider innovative zoning that encourages development of Priority Development Areas (PDAs) in a manner that meets the needs of the community.
 - i. Action Item: Use zoning and other measures to encourage a mix of uses along Route 140 and Route 70 to create vibrant areas supporting a variety of business types, patrons, and residences.
 - ii. Action Item: Long term, assess Morningdale neighborhood for mixed-use development potential. As the area is considered as a secondary area for commercial development, ensure its character, facades, and the impact of increased traffic are accounted for.
 - b. Objective: Review general bylaws, policies, and regulations to ensure they reflect active municipal plans.
 - i. Action Item: Review zoning regulations affecting Route 70 for consistency with goals and objectives of this Master Plan and other municipal plans.
 - c. Objective: Enhance and streamline Subdivision Regulations.
 - i. Action Item: Incorporate Low-Impact Development (LID) standards into subdivision regulations.
 - ii. Action Item: Consider allowing flag lots, which would allow property owners with large area parcels (i.e., greater than 3 acres) but limited frontage to forego unnecessary subdivision requirements.
 - d. Objective: Streamline the Site Plan review process.
 - i. Action Item: Consider a tiered approach that differentiates between low-scale, low-intensity uses and more complex uses.
 - ii. Action Item: Review the Site Plan review criteria of other communities.
- 4. Goal: Preserve and protect the Town's natural landscapes and resources, open spaces, and history in a manner that is fiscally sound.
 - a. Objective: Identify priority preservation and conservation areas most in need of protection from development.
 - i. Action Item: Research data in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and seek guidance from the MA DCR to generate a prioritized list of these areas.
 - j. Objective: Pursue protective measures to maintain the Town's natural beauty of native New England mixed forest and stone walls.
 - i. Action Item: Explore adoption of a Scenic Roads Bylaw to preserve the scenic, historic, and aesthetic characteristics of the public right-of-way.
- 5. Goal: Utilize the Town's large land holdings for their highest and best purpose consistent with the Town's vision.
 - a. Objective: Create a master plan for the Hillside property
 - b. Objective: Identify vacant or underutilized buildings or parcels that are appropriate for development, redevelopment, or preservation.
 - c. Objective: Coordinate with the State on the use and/or disposition of State-owned land.

Implementation

Because the Master Plan serves as a blueprint and contains a “menu” of various options, creating an implementation plan and strategy is critical to ensuring the plan will not “sit on a shelf.”

Fundamental to putting a Master Plan into action is a Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC). This working group should consist of a diverse set of members. There are a wide range of options for the composition of the Implementation Committee. The following example is one of many options provided the availability of key staff people and/or interested residents to carry forward the entire plan:

- Select Board Member
- Town Administrator, Assistant Town Administrator
- Town Staff such as Town Planner
- Conservation, Recreation, Historical Commission Member(s)
- Planning Board Member
- Capital Planning Committee Member
- Finance Committee Member

The Committee should be a manageable size in order to secure quorum. It should meet regularly and be connected to decision making bodies such as the Select Board and/or the Finance Committee. The Committee should consider establishing a series of initial goals over the first one to two years of implementation. Subsequently, they will benefit from further evaluating priority actions and designating responsible parties and funding sources. One approach could be to identify, in consultation with other Town officials and boards, at least one goal/action item in the plan to be pursued by each of the relevant existing Boards and Committees in Town. This program would allow for multiple actions to be explored simultaneously by existing bodies, especially where staff time is limited.

After a period, the Select Board should gauge the effectiveness of the Master Plan and identify or fund resources for next steps. Other important aspects that should be considered by an Implementation Committee include:

- **Representation:** The Select Board, Capital Planning Committee, Planning Board and other boards and committees will need to work together with Town staff and residents to use this Master Plan as a guidance and policy document.
- **Accountability:** A mechanism for reporting on progress should be established and regular benchmarks should be set. The goal(s) of this may be to track actions, identify funding sources, and/or identify barriers to implementation. If actions can be coordinated and grouped, the effectiveness and ability of the Plan to be useful is increased. A report on progress should be provided to the Select Board, at the Annual Town Meeting, and/or within the Town Report.

- Education: It will be important for Town Meeting members to be aware of the Master Plan so they can understand that many future actions and funding requests may be generated out of its goals and actions.
- Adaptability: It is important to note that planning is a dynamic process and priorities can shift over time. The Town’s capacity to implement the Plan may be altered due to changes in the Town’s financial status, economy, or other factors. Therefore, the Plan’s implementation matrix is not intended to be “set in stone.” The Plan offers background and guidance but requires interpretation, investigation, and subsequent action.

Implementation Matrix

The Implementation Matrix summarizes the specific action items for each “goal” and “objective” found at the end of each chapter. The action items list a priority, a timeframe to completion, a responsible party/parties, and resources such as funding sources, technical assistance, and stakeholders. Table IMP1 defines abbreviations used in the implementation matrix. The matrix is organized by Master Plan chapter.

Table IMP1. Implementation Matrix Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Agency or Resource
AARP	American Association of Retired Persons
AB	Advisory Board
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
Ag Com	Boylston Agricultural Commission
AHPC	Boylston Affordable Housing Partnership Committee
ARPA	American Rescue Plan Act
BD	Boylston Building Development
BMLD	Boylston Municipal Light Department
BOH	Boylston Board of Health
BOS	Boylston Board of Selectmen
BD	Building Department
CMHSC	Central Massachusetts Homeland Security Council
CMMPO	Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization
CMRPC	Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
CMRSWC	Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition
COA	Boylston Council on Aging
Con Com	Boylston Conservation Commission/Department
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CPTC	Citizen Planner Training Collaborative
CRHSAC	Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council

CUC	Boylston Cultural Council
DCR	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
DCS	Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services
DEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
DER	Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration
DHCD	Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
DLS	Massachusetts Division of Local Services
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance
DOER	Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
DOT	MassDOT/Massachusetts Department of Transportation
DPW	Boylston Department of Public Works
EDC	Boylston Economic Development Committee
EDE	Economic Development Entity (such as Chamber of Commerce)
EOEEA	Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
EOHED	Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
FD	Boylston Fire Department
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Fin Com	Boylston Finance Committee
GWLT	Greater Worcester Land Trust
HA	Boylston Housing Authority
HC	Boylston Historical Commission
HDC	Boylston Historic District Commission
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
MLD	Boylston Municipal Light Department
HWD	Boylston Highway Department
IT	Boylston Information Technology Department
LIB	Gale Free Library
LIG	Local Interest Group
LPA	Local Planning Assistance
MassCEC	Massachusetts Clean Energy Center
MDAR	Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources
MDI	Massachusetts Downtown Initiative
MEMA	Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency
MHC	Massachusetts Historical Commission
MHP	Massachusetts Housing Partnership
MMA	Massachusetts Municipal Association

Implementation

MMWEC	Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company
MOBD	Massachusetts Office of Business Development
MOD	Massachusetts Office of Disability
MPIC	Master Plan Implementation Committee
MSMSC	Massachusetts Statewide Municipal Stormwater Coalition
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program
NEBGTH	New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OSRPC	Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee
PARC	Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities
PB	Boylston Planning Board
PD	Boylston Police Department
Pres Mass	Preservation Massachusetts
PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation
Rec Com	Boylston Recreation Committee
Rec Dept	Boylston Recreation Department
SC	Boylston Senior Center
TA	Town Administrator
TP	Town Planner and Office of Planning and Development
USACE	United States Army Corps of Engineers
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VHB	Vanesse Hangen Brustlin Inc. (Consulting Firm)
WBDC	Worcester Business Development Corporation
WPI	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
WCC	Wachusett Chamber of Commerce
BBRSD	Berlin-Boylston Regional School District
WRTA	Worcester Regional Transit Authority
WSD	Boylston Water and Sewer Division
ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals
ZSC	Zoning Study Committee

Implementation

		Priority	Time to Completion From Start	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources
Transportation						
Goal 1:						
Objective A	Continue to invest in maintenance and improvement of roads and bridges.					
A.1	Proactively seek federal and state aid funding and other sources of transportation funding for improvements on eligible roadways.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway;	CMMPO via CMRPC
A.2	Work with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission to develop a list of transportation projects to be placed on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). At a minimum, this list should include corridor intersection upgrades, safety improvements and intersection re-alignment, especially at the South Sewall Street and Route 140 intersection.	High	5 years	Very Low	CMRPC; BOS; TP; Highway Department	CMMPO via CMRPC
A.3	Develop a Town-wide mechanism for the creation of an off-site infrastructure fund paid for through fees for curb cuts and new developments that would be used to mitigate private development related impacts. This fund would be primarily used to assist in funding off-site improvements at Town owned intersections, roadways and corridors.	Medium	6-12 months	Depends	BOS; Building Department	CMRPC
Objective B	Review and implement existing plans for infrastructure improvements for					
B.1	Have consulting engineer review existing designs; appropriate funding and put the project out to bid.	High	12-24 months	Low	Highway Department; BOS; TP	Town meeting
B.2	If and when apartments are completed, conduct updated traffic counts to evaluate if warrants are met for signalization. Embed as a condition in future Comprehensive Permit decisions.	High	12 months	Very Low to Low	ZBA; Highway Department	CMRPC for traffic counts.
Objective C	Continue to invest in maintenance, improvement, and construction of					
C.1	Join the MassDOT Complete Streets program. Adopt a Complete Streets Policy and complete subsequent Complete Streets Prioritization Plans.	Medium/high	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway Department	CMMPO, CMRPC, DOT
C.2	Evaluate the need to conduct a sidewalks, crosswalks, and signals survey program to identify areas of needed improvement and funding needs.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway Department; Police	CMMPO, CMRPC
Objective D	Ensure that sidewalks, crosswalks, and signals are accessible to all of					
D.1	Evaluate the need to conduct a sidewalk and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramp survey program to help determine sidewalk/ramp maintenance funding needs.	High	3-12 months	Evaluation: Very Low Implementation: Varies by opportunity	BOS; Highway Department; ADA Committee	CMMPO, CMRPC, MOD ADA Project Grants
Objective E	Establish a long-term decision-making framework for transportation					
E.1	Implement a comprehensive Transportation Asset Management System	Medium	6-12 months	Vey Low to Low	BOS, Highway Department	CMMPO, CMRPC
Goal 2:						
Objective A	Relieve congestion, reduce speeding, and improve travel efficiency on					
A.1	Maintain/improve all signalized traffic control, signage, and pavement markings.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway Department	DOT
A.2	Selectively trim any overgrown vegetation that is hindering sight lines to vehicles, signs, or traffic signals.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	Highway; Tree Warden	Town Staff; DCR Bureau of Forestry; USDA Forest Service
A.3	Maintain good pavement surfaces.	Medium	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department	DOT (Chpt. 90);
A.4	Maintain bridges, culverts, and other roadside drainage structures and facilities.	High	6-12 months	Med	Highway Department	DOT (Chpt. 90); DER Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program; MVP Action Grants;
A.4	Utilize traffic calming measures (e.g., narrowing travel lanes, increasing sidewalk widths, adding on-street parking, adding landscaping, speed bumps, curb extensions, roadway curves, and other measures). Measures can be piloted through use of jersey barriers, painted curb extensions, planters, and other removable/ low-cost installations.	High	6-12 months	High	Highway Department; TP	Shared Streets and Spaces grants; MDI
A.5	Increase the number and prominence of speed limit signs as appropriate.	Low	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department; Police	Town Meeting
Objective B	Identify crash clusters and problematic areas for opportunities to improve					
B.1	Incorporate additional signage for safety purposes, such as specific yellow diamond warning signs.	Medium	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department; Police	DOT, Complete Streets
B.2	Assess and implement as warranted the use of reflectorized pavement markings and/or reflectors embedded in road pavement.	Low	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department; Police	DOT, Complete Streets
B.3	Assess opportunities for "Road Diets" (the narrowing of roadways with high traveling speeds to encourage slower driving).	Medium	6-12 months	High	Highway Department; TP	DOT

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B.4	Utilize traffic calming measures (e.g., narrowing travel lanes, increasing sidewalk widths, adding on-street parking, adding landscaping, speed bumps, curb extensions, roadway curves, and other measures. Measures can be piloted through use of jersey barriers, painted curb extensions, planters, and other removable/ low-cost installations.	High	6-12 months	High	Highway Department; TP	DOT, Complete Streets
B.5	Reconfigure travel lanes at intersections where appropriate and feasible.	High	12 months	Medium	Highway Department	DOT
B.6	Enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety where needed.	Medium	6-12 months	Medium	Highway Department; Police	DOT; Complete Streets; America Walks grant program; Safe Routes to Schools program
B.7	Improve public awareness of the rules of the road for all transportation modes through public education efforts and improved signage.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	Highway Department; Police	DOT (Chpt. 90)
B.8	Increase local police traffic monitoring and citation issuance to dissuade infractions by those cited as well as those witnessing the citation issuance.	Low	Ongoing	Low to Medium	Police	Town Staff
Objective C	Address capacity issues on Route 140.					
C.1	Undertake a visioning and long-range planning process for Route 140.	High	12 months	Low	BOS; TP; Highway Department	CMMPO, CMRPC
C.2	Ensure that bike lanes and sidewalks are included in any Route 140 construction.	High	N/A	Medium	Highway Department	DOT, Complete Streets
Objective D	Improve the safety of intersections and road entry points to enhance placemaking efforts.					
D.1	Review plans and opportunities to promote improvements at the intersection of Route 140 and North and South Sewall Streets in conjunction with other recent anticipated developments in the area and the Boylston Rapid Recovery Plan	High	3-12 months	Low	TP; BOS; Highway Department	EOHED, DOT, Complete Streets
D.2	Ensure that newly installed and replaced signs are retroreflective, especially those located at intersections.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	Highway Department	DOT, Complete Streets
D.3	Identify opportunities to reduce entry and exit points to the commercial plaza in the NB district through access management.	Medium	3-12 months	Low	Highway Department; TP; BOS	EOHED, DOT, Complete Streets
D.4	Review Site Plan criteria to ensure that access management of proposed curb cuts is fully addressed and considered.	High	6-12 months	Low	TP; PB	DOT
Objective E	Improve the flow of traffic on Route 140.					
E.1	Pursue updated Route 140 traffic counts to determine whether they meet the warrant criteria for signals, especially the intersection of South Sewall Street	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway Department	CMMPO, CMRPC, DOT
E.2	Repurpose the connection from School Street to Shrewsbury Street into a pocket park or other type of usable space off-limits to vehicles.	Medium	6-12 months	Low	BOS; Highway Department	EOHED, DOT, Complete Streets, DCS/EEA Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program
E.3	Maintain the annual pavement-marking program for upgrading the lane, edge line and centerlines marking along the corridor and intersections	Medium	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department	CMMPO, CMRPC, DOT
E.4	Use reflectorized pavement markings for better visibility, especially during inclement weather and other reduced-visibility conditions.	Medium	3-12 months	Low	Highway Department	DOT
E.5	Undertake a traffic monitoring program that consists of traffic data collection at study area intersections and include all vehicles (including trucks), bicycles and pedestrians to determine if prior traffic projections have been realized and further interventions are needed.	Medium	6-12 months	Low	BOS; Highway Department	CMMPO, CMRPC, DOT
E.6	Install and stripe an exclusive left-turn lane on Route 140 northbound at the South Sewall Street intersection.	High	12 months	Medium	Highway Department	DOT; Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
Objective F	Facilitate safe use of crosswalks, especially at pedestrian vehicle crash clusters and in areas frequented by children.					
F.1	Ensure that on-street parking spaces do not block the line of sight from crosswalks or for turning vehicles, especially proximate to crosswalks	Low	3-12 months	Low	Highway Department; Police	DOT
F.2	Review signage at crosswalks and consider solar-powered pedestrian-activated alert flashers (not rectangular rapid flashing beacons).	Medium	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department; Police	DOT, Complete Streets
F.3	Install textured pavement treatments in crosswalks to better identify and differentiate pedestrian crosswalks from the travel way.	Medium	12-18 months	Low to Medium	Highway Department	Town staff
F.4	Assess the need for additional crosswalks. Where determined necessary, explore the utility of permanent or temporary raised crosswalks and/or inverse cuts that create a slight change in elevation of the travel way to reduce excessive speeds.	Medium	6-12 months	Low	Highway Department; BOS	DOT, Complete Streets
F.5	Construct curb extensions ("bump outs") or pavement markings at crosswalk locations on wider sections of roadway. (In some cases, flower planters are used that can be removed for snow plowing.) These extensions shorten the distance of the crosswalk for pedestrians and narrow the travel lanes, which tend to reduce vehicular speeds	Medium	6-12 months	Medium	Highway Department	DOT, Complete Streets
Objective G	Improve the safety for vehicle and multi-modal transportation for students of Boylston Elementary School and Tahanto Regional High School.					
G.1	Initiate a program to make the South Sewall Street corridor, south of Route 140 and at the existing elementary school a more pedestrian friendly corridor.	Medium	6-12 months	Medium	BOS; Highway Department; TP	DOT, Complete Streets
G.2	Become a Safe Routes to School partner and develop and distribute Safe Routes to School materials to the school district	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway; TP; Boylston Public Schools	CMRPC, Safe Routes to School program

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Objective H Make Boylston's transportation network more resilient.						
H.1	Identify areas in the transportation network that are prone to natural weather events, such as flooding, icing, solar glare, or extreme heat, and develop strategies to mitigate such effects.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway Department; TP	CMMPO; CMRPC; MVP Action Grant
Goal 3: Mitigate negative impacts resulting from the transportation system.						
Objective A Ensure the incoming businesses are "good neighbors."						
A.1	Explore the use of host agreements and/ or commercial development performance standards to address appropriate truck routes, limiting emissions, the use of resources, and noise pollution	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; PB	CMRPC, Mass Planners Listserv, MMA
Objective B Encourage widespread use of environmentally friendly transportation practices.						
B.1	Install no-idling signs in areas where vehicles frequently idle, such as schools, convenience stations, and municipal facilities.	Low	3-6 months	Very Low	DPW; Schools; businesses	DOER Green Communities Program
B.2	Install electric vehicle charging stations at public buildings and any future commuter ride-sharing lots.	Low/Medium	6-12 months	Very Low to Low	TM; BOS; DPW; BMLD	DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
Objective C Promote and assist commuters engaging in carpooling/ridesharing.						
C.1	Conduct a survey to evaluate the current carpooling/ridesharing that takes place, as well as additional desire for carpooling/ridesharing.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	Highway; BOS	CMRPC
C.2	Evaluate the feasibility of building space for commuter ride-sharing lot near prominent highway entry points, such as near Route 140's entry points to I-290. Explore any partnerships with businesses or organizations that would be willing to collaborate on such efforts	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	Highway; BOS	CMRPC
Objective D Work towards greening the municipal vehicle fleet and vehicle practices.						
D.1	Adopt a fuel-efficient vehicle policy for town-owned vehicles so that replacement vehicles are more energy efficient.	Medium	3-12 months	Low	BOS; all relevant town departments	DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
D.2	Adopt an anti-idling vehicle policy for town-owned vehicles	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; all relevant town departments	DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
D.3	Explore the use of IdleRight and similar technologies for installation in police cruisers and other vehicles that must idle in the course of duty	Medium	3-12 months	Low	Police; BOS	DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
D.4	Assess and upgrade electrical infrastructure to meet growing need of electric vehicles	Medium	6-12 months	Medium	BOS; BMLD	DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
D.5	Pursue Green Communities designation	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	CMRPC; DOER Green Communities Regional Coordinators
Goal 4: Provide transportation alternatives to car travel.						
Objective A Identify and explore alternative mobility options for Boylston residents.						
A.1	Explore alternatives to car travel such as ride share, paratransit, and carpool.	Medium	6-12 months	Low	BOS, COA	CMMPO, CMRPC, DOT, WRTA, Council on Aging
A.2	Consider options for transit for specific populations such as seniors or residents with medical needs that are unable to access essential services.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway, BOS	CMRPC
Goal 5: Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow more pedestrians and bicycle access to businesses.						
Objective A Identify and close sidewalks gaps in pedestrian access to businesses and amenities.						
A.1	Identify arterial and collector streets with excess shoulder to determine how excess space could be better utilized.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway, BOS	CMRPC, DOT
A.2	Review and, where needed, revise zoning in appropriate areas to require sidewalks, bike path connectors, bike parking and bike amenities in new developments.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	PB, TP	CMRPC, Complete Streets
Objective B Safely and efficiently connect the Town's neighborhoods and residential areas with businesses and other destinations and amenities.						
B.1	Create off-road trails in the area west of Route 140 and connect to businesses and other amenities.	Medium	12 months	Medium	Highway, BOS, TP	DOT, Complete Streets, Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
B.2	Explore establishing a bike path from Route 140 along North Sewall Street using paint and removable vertical flex posts. If desired (and allowed by MassDOT) the bike path can extend to Route 70 and connect back to the Route 140 shared-used lane to form a full multi-modal loop.	Medium	12 months	Medium	BOS, Highway, TP	DOT, Complete Streets, Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program
B.3	Facilitate improved connectivity between housing near the I-290 interchange and businesses on eastern segment of Route 140.	High	6-12 months	Medium	BOS, Highway, TP	DOT, Complete Streets
B.4	Prioritize maintenance of sidewalks near public facilities serving populations who do not drive. Ensure that sidewalks near the Library, senior services, schools, and daycares are clear of bushes, trees, and other hazards that could require pedestrians and those with mobility devices or double strollers to walk in roads.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	Hwy	Complete Streets; Safe Routes to School; AARP grants
Objective C Review the recommendations from the 2018 Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) Regional Bicycle Plan and adopt the plan.						
C.1	Ensure that municipal staff are aware of the recommendations set forth in the Regional Bicycle Plan.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS, PB, TP	Town Staff, CMRPC
C.2	Include bicycle network planning into the Town's planning process, particularly land use development and transportation plans.	Medium	12-18 months	Very Low	PB, TP, BOS, Highway	Town Staff

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Goal 6: Take a proactive approach to emerging transportation technologies, trends, and issues.						
Objective A Stay apprised of transportation trends and plan accordingly.						
A.1	Work with state and regional organizations to approach emergent issues in a collective manner.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS, TA, TP, PB	CMRPC, WCC
A.2	Consider and assess the impact of distribution facilities from a regional or subregional perspective.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS, TA, TP, PB	CMRPC, DOT
A.3	Evaluate possible funding sources needed to accommodate anticipated increase in demand on the electrical grid as a result of home and vehicle electrification	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	BOS, TP, MLD	CMRPC; DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
A.4	Work with businesses and other organizations to identify areas of potential collaboration for developing and funding electric vehicle infrastructure	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	BOS, TP, MLD	CMRPC; DOER Green Communities Program; DEP MassEVIP/Workplace charging programs
A.5	Anticipate changes in parking requirements resulting from autonomous vehicles. Evaluate the potential infrastructure needed to accommodate such changes	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	PB, TP, MLD	CMRPC, DOT
A.6	Monitor trends in drone usage for delivery and other services	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS, TA, TP, PB	CMRPC
Goal 7: Better connect the Town's roads, streets, and sidewalks to be consistent with the Town's small-town and environmental character.						
Objective A Improve and expand upon existing recreational trail systems in Boylston, namely by the reservoir.						
A.1	Connect off-road trails in Boylston with each other where feasible	Medium	6-24 months	Low	BOS; Con Com; PB; TP; DCR; Parks and Recreation	Town Meeting, MassTrails Grant, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
Objective B Through public input, identify areas of roadways particularly in need of aesthetic improvements.						
B.1	Determine methods, funding, and timeline for visual improvements, such as planting trees or shrubs, plant planters, or other landscaping improvements.	Medium	6-12 months	High	BOS; Highway Department; Parks and Recreation	MDI
B.2	Focus visual improvement efforts on "gateway" intersections or entry points.	High	6-12 months	High	BOS; Highway Department	CMRPC, DOT, EOHEE, Complete Streets, MDI
B.3	Explore the adoption of a Scenic Roads bylaw	High	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
Objective C Collaborate with neighboring municipalities to connect off-road pedestrian and/or bicycle trails where feasible.						
C.1	Explore the possibility of connecting existing trail(s) or creating new trail(s) to connect with the MWRA Wachusett Aqueduct trail in Northborough, the Mass Central Rail Trail in Clinton, Berlin, and West Boylston, or the Mount Pisgah mountain biking facilities in Berlin.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Con Com; PB; TP; DCR; Parks and Recreation	Mass Audubon; DCR; CMRPC; MassDOT; MassTrails Grant, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
Objective D Reduce the impact of roads and traffic on stormwater infrastructure.						
D.1	Include bioswales, street trees and tree box filters, permeable pavement, and other green infrastructure in roadway improvements to reduce the burden on the stormwater infrastructure.	Medium	Ongoing	Med	BOS; Highway Department; Con Com	DOT, EOEEA, DEP, CMRPC
		Priority	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources
Land Use						
Goal 1: Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging land use issues.						
Objective A Encourage sustainable development and sustainable buildings.						
A.1	Explore benefits and utility of Open Space Residential Design and Cluster Development.	High	12-18 months	Very Low	PB; TP; Con Com; DPW	CMRPC; Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance; EOEEA Planning Assistance Grant for bylaw development assistance
A.2	Adopt a Low-Impact Development bylaw.	High	6-12 months	very low	PB, TP, ConCom, CMRPC	CMRPC
A.3	As town realizes its development goals, evaluate the need for shared, off-site parking areas to serve commercial nodes.	Low	Long term	Evaluation: Very low; Implementation: Varies by opportunity	BOS; EDC; PB	DOT Shared Streets & Spaces Funding Program
A.4	Pass the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code in support/ as a part of the town's Green Communities designation process.	High	8-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Building Inspector	Department of Energy Resources, Green Communities Division
Objective B Facilitate desired development patterns through alternative and creative zoning options.						
B.1	Implement a local wetland bylaw to sustain and preserve natural barriers to mitigate flooding.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP; Con Com	CMRPC; EOEEA
B.2	Increase limitations on development within the 100-year flood zones.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP; Highway Department	N/A
B.3	Identify desirable zoning options for clean energy that meet the requirements of the Massachusetts Green Communities program.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC

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Objective C Provide a clear and efficient permitting process to enables desirable development types and attract new businesses to Boylston.						
C.1	Consider expanding opportunities for consolidated or combined permitting beyond that which is already permitted in 10.03.07 Subsection 3 of the Zoning Bylaw	Low	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; ZBA; Con Com; TP	CMRPC
C.2	Consider expanding online permitting system to include planning, conservation, etc.	Low	6-12 months	Very Low to Low	TA; BOS	Community Compact IT Grants
Objective D Review Sign Bylaw and update as needed.						
D.1	Ensure that Sign Bylaw meets the First Amendment requirements for protecting various forms of speech.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
D.2	Update the Sign Bylaw to include definitions and regulations for electronic message centers.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
D.3	Update the Sign Bylaw to expand the criteria for signs to be allowed by right, minimizing the need for sign Special Permits.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
D.4	Consider amending the Sign Bylaw to allow projecting signs above the right-of-way in walkable village center settings provided that they meet the vertical clearance required by building code.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
Objective E Enhance public awareness of planning and land use.						
E.1	Ensure that the Planning Board budget includes resources for technical, ongoing education.	High	Long term	Very Low	Fin Com; BOS	Town budget; Staff and volunteer time
E.2	Encourage Board members to participate in the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) and other state and regional training programs.	High	Long term	Very Low	BOS; PB	CPTC
E.3	Develop strategies for soliciting interest of the public in planning-related issues.	Low	Long term	Very Low	PB; TP	CPTC
Goal 2: Encourage development that is in harmony with the community's small-town character and heritage.						
Objective A Shape the aesthetics of future development.						
A.1	Develop design guidelines or standards that are consistent and complement the existing and desired character of the town and its neighborhoods.	Low	6-12 months	Very Low	PB, TP	CMRPC, EOEEA, Community One Stop
Objective B Preserve and maintain the historic Town Common and the character of the surrounding village/ historic district.						
B.1	Seek funding to develop preservation design guidelines or standards that promote the use of appropriate design and materials for the district.	Low	6-12 months	Very Low	PB, TP	CMRPC, EOEEA, Community One Stop, MHC
Goal 3: Concentrate new development around existing infrastructure to preserve natural resources and limit service provision costs.						
Objective A Consider innovative zoning that encourages development of Priority Development Areas (PDAs) in a manner that meets the needs of the community.						
A.1	Use zoning and other measures to encourage a mix of uses along Route 140 and Route 70 to create vibrant areas supporting a variety of business types, patrons, and residences.	Medium	Long term	Very Low to Low	TP; PB; EDC	Community One Stop, Planning Assistance; Rural & Small Town Dev. Fund
A.2	Long term, assess Morningdale neighborhood for mixed-use development potential. As the area is considered as a secondary area for commercial development, ensure its character, facades, and the impact of increased traffic are accounted for.	Low/Medium	Long term	Very Low	PB; TP; EDC	Community One Stop, Planning Assistance; Rural & Small Town Dev. Fund
Objective B Review general bylaws, policies, and regulations to ensure they reflect active municipal plans.						
B.1	Review zoning regulations affecting Route 70 for consistency with goals and objectives of this Master Plan and other municipal plans	Medium	6-18 months	Very Low	TP; PB	CMRPC
Objective C Enhance and streamline Subdivision Regulations.						
C.1	Incorporate Low-Impact Development (LID) standards into subdivision regulations.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	TP; PB	CMRPC
C.2	Consider allowing flag lots, which would allow property owners with large area parcels (i.e. greater than 3 acres) but limited frontage to forego unnecessary subdivision requirements.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	TP; PB	CMRPC
Objective D Streamline the Site Plan review process.						
D.1	Consider a tiered approach that differentiates between low-scale, low-intensity uses and more complex uses.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	TP; PB	CMRPC
D.2	Review the Site Plan review criteria of other communities.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	Con Com; TP; PB	Town staff and volunteers
Goal 4: Preserve and protect the Town's natural landscapes and resources, open spaces, and history in a manner that is fiscally sound.						
Objective A Identify priority preservation and conservation areas most in need of protection from development.						
A.1	Research data in the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and seek guidance from the MA DCR to generate a prioritized list of these areas.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	OS Advisory Com; Con Com; TP; PB	Town staff and volunteers, Land Grant Program
Objective B Pursue protective measures to maintain the Town's natural beauty of native New England mixed forest and stone walls.						
B.1	Explore adoption of a Scenic Roads Bylaw to preserve the scenic, historic, and aesthetic characteristics of the public right-of-way	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	TP; PB;	CMRPC
Goal 5: Utilize the Town's large land holdings for their highest and best purpose consistent with the Town's vision.						
A.1	Create a master plan for the Hillside property	Medium/High	8-16 months	Low/ Med	BOS, TP, PB,	National Park Service Outdoor Recreational Grant program; CPA; Mass Cultural Council; USDA Community Facilities Grant Program; ARPA; Architectural Heritage Foundation; Town Meeting
A.2	Identify vacant or underutilized buildings or parcels that are appropriate for development, redevelopment, or preservation.	Medium/High	8-16 months	Low/ Med	BOS, TP, PB,	Town staff, MassDevelopment
A.3	Coordinate with the State on the use and/or disposition of State-owned land	Medium/High	8-16 months	Low/ Med	BOS, TP, TA, PB, Con Com	Massachusetts Land Bank, DLS, EEA, MassDevelopment

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		Priority	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources
Population and Housing						
Goal 1: Build municipal capacity and advocacy efforts to support affordable housing production.						
Objective A	Conduct ongoing community outreach and education on housing issues and activities					
A.1	Schedule an annual meeting/forum on housing open to the public	Medium	Annual	Very Low	BOS; PB; TA; TP	Staff and volunteer time
Objective B	Coordinate municipal efforts to manage housing growth, initiatives, and funding opportunities					
B.1	Consider hiring a dedicated Affordable Housing Coordinator	Low	3-12 months	Low	BOS; TA	CPA; Allocation of Town funds; CMRPC
B.2	Provide opportunities for community leaders to revive the Boylston Affordable Housing Committee to guide affordable housing initiatives in town	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA	Staff and volunteer time
B.3	Maintain an active Board of Trustees for the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund	High	3-12 months	Very Low	AHT; BOS	Staff and volunteer time; MHP
Objective C	Actively seek out and apply for funding and technical assistance to implement the HPP Action Plan					
C.1	Promote adoption of Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a source of funding to support housing planning.	High	6-18 months	Very Low	BOS; HDC; Con Com	Community Preservation Coalition; MHP
C.2	Maintain designation as a Housing Choice Community	Medium	Every 5 years	Very Low	TP; PB	Staff and volunteer time; DHCD
Goal 2: Take a proactive approach to traditional and emerging issues in housing.						
Objective A	Stay actively informed on market trends and new opportunities to support managed growth in housing					
A.1	Encourage community leaders to participate in informational meetings and forums hosted by organizations such as CMRPC, Mass Housing Partnership (MHP), Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), or Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC).	High	Annual	Very Low	BOS; PB; TP; TA	CMRPC; MHP; CHAPA; CPTC
Objective B	Collaborate on regional housing solutions with neighboring communities.					
B.1	Collaborate on regional housing forums, dialogues, and studies hosted by CMRPC and other regional organizations.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; PB; TP; TA	CMRPC; MHP; CHAPA; CPTC
Goal 3: Ensure new housing development design and location prioritizes preservation of open space, utilizes Smart Growth principles, and preserves town character.						
Objective A	Expand housing options by prioritizing denser, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented housing development.					
A.1	Prepare design guidelines or standards for new multi-family housing developments to encourage developers to create new housing that is consistent with and compliments the community's character.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; BOS; TP	CMRPC; EOEEA PAG and Community One Stop; Local examples
Objective B	Reduce regulatory constraints in zoning bylaws, policies, and regulations that may be impeding the development of affordable housing.					
B.1	Modify the Town's Inclusionary Zoning Bylaw to mandate residential developments set aside a minimum of 15% of total number of dwelling units as affordable housing for very-low, low-, or moderate-income residents	Medium	6-18 months	Very Low	PB; BOS; TP	Staff and volunteer time; CMRPC
B.2	Consider modifying the existing Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) bylaw to allow for more flexibility and offer greater opportunities for development	Low	6-18 months	Very Low	TP; PB	Staff and volunteer time; CMRPC
Objective C	Encourage the development of smaller lot residential zoning in appropriate locations					
C.1	Reevaluate residential lot sizes to determine potential for reducing minimum area requirements	Medium	6-18 months	Low	PB; BOS; TP; Assessor	Staff and volunteer time; Engineering consultant
C.2	Explore adoption of a Cottage Housing Bylaw	Medium	6-18 months	Very Low	PB; BOS; TP	CMRPC; MHP; DHCD; Local examples
Goal 4: Encourage greater diversity, inclusivity, and distribution of housing types to meet the needs of families and individuals of all income levels, abilities, and ages, particularly seniors and young						
Objective A	Allow for easier development of multi-family dwellings in additional locations.					
A.1	Explore adoption of a Workforce Housing Special Tax Assessment (WH-STA) Area in which developers can be offered a property tax incentive to build housing affordable to low-to-middle-income residents	Low	6-18 months	Very Low	PB; BOS; TP; Assessor	CMRPC or other planning consultant; DHCD
Objective B	Build the supply of rental and ownership housing in the Town of Boylston that is available to and affordable to low- and moderate-income households.					
B.1	Continue to work with, solicit interest from, and partner with "friendly 40B" developers and other private developers interested in building affordable housing.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; PB; TP	MassDevelopment; MassHousing
B.2	Develop an action plan to help seniors and families who are getting priced out of the local housing and rental market stay in the community. Explore additional methods to help those on fixed or lower incomes afford increasing property tax valuations (i.e., more volunteer opportunities in exchange for property tax waivers) and ways to create smaller, more cost-effective and affordable houses.	High	Ongoing	Very Low/ Low	BOS; TA; COA	MassHousing; DHCD; CMRPC; MHP; CHAPA
Goal 5: Strive to meet the affordable housing thresholds established by M.G.L. Chapter 40B.						
Objective A	Pursue affordable housing production strategies laid out in the Housing Production Plan.					
A.1	Commit to producing at least the minimum number of affordable units per year sufficient to meet DHCD "Safe Harbor" requirements.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	TP; PB; ADA Committee	N/A
A.2	Advocate for a higher inclusion of accessible units in proposed affordable housing developments	High	Ongoing	Very Low	TP; PB; ADA Committee	Staff and volunteer time
A.3	Create an inventory of Town-owned land suitable for new housing development.	Medium	2-4 months	Very Low	TP; PB; ADA Committee	Staff and volunteer time
A.4	Host roundtable discussions in which developers are invited to speak with municipal boards, committees, staff, and residents about potential housing developments and associated challenges or concerns.	Medium	Annual	Very Low	PB; BOS; TA; TP; ZBA	Staff and volunteer time; Housing developers

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A.5	Pursue appropriate zoning and policy changes to encourage more affordable housing development.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; BOS; TA; TP; ZBA	CMRPC, MHP
A.6	Explore the creation of a buy-down program whereby the Town uses funds to buy-down market rate homes, deed restrict them as affordable in perpetuity, and sell them to income-qualified, first-time homebuyers at below-market prices.	Medium	6-18 months	Low	AHT; BOS	MHP; CPA; Local examples
A.7	Create a down-payment/closing cost assistance program whereby the Town provides grants to income-eligible, first-time homebuyers willing to purchase affordable units listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory	Low	6-18 months	Low	Affordable Housing Trust Fund	MHP; CPA; AHTF; Local examples
A.8	Investigate a partnership with local rental property owners, offering incentives in exchange for deed restricting certain units as affordable	Medium	6-18 months	Low	AHT; BOS	MHP; DHCD; CHAPA; MassHousing
		Priority	Time to Completion		Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties
						Resources
Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources						
Goal 1: Be proactive about continuing to enhance and preserve Boylston's town character and feel as a small New England town.						
Objective A Promote and build awareness of Boylston's open space and small-town charm as a way of inspiring community pride.						
A.1	Post information about all trails and outdoor opportunities on the Town website.	Low	3-6 Months	Very Low	Parks and Recreation Commission	Mass Audubon;
A.2	Explore business and economic development opportunities related to Boylston's natural resources	High	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; EDC; TP	EDC
A.3	Partner with New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill and Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary on strategies to protect and preserve open space	Low	3-6 Months	Very Low	Open Space Advisory Committee; TP; BOS	New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary
Objective B Promote coordination among the various Town boards, committees, and commissions responsible for open space and recreational facilities.						
B.1	Create a permanent standing Open Space Advisory Committee	Medium	3-6 months	Very Low	BOS	Staff and volunteer time
B.2	Track progress on the goals of the Open Space and Recreation Plan and report annually to Town boards and committees	High	12-36 months	Very Low	Open Space Advisory Committee	Volunteer Time
B.3	Ensure all municipal staff commissions, committees, and boards understand their role in the implementation of the goals in this Master Plan and the OSRP	High	12 Months	Very Low	BOS; PB; TP	Staff and volunteer time
Objective C Actively involve local businesses, organizations, and schools in beautifying Boylston through cleanup days and streetscape improvements.						
C.1	Support the semi-annual "Keep Boylston Beautiful" initiative	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Parks and Recreation	Staff and volunteer time
Goal 2: Preserve and protect Boylston's open spaces, including water bodies, woodlands, farms, and parks.						
Objective A Develop criteria for open space acquisition						
A.1	Identify and create a priority list for land acquisition and preservation consisting of properties most important to protect for their wildlife and habitat resources	High	3-6 months	Very Low	Con Com; TP; OSAC	Staff and volunteer time
Objective B Protect and provide access to priority parcels through the purchase of land, acceptance of donated land, or implementation of conservation restrictions.						
B.1	Inform landowners about land preservation and conservation opportunities (i.e. Conservation Restriction Review Program).	Low	3-6 months	Very Low	Con Com; PB; BOS; TP	Staff and volunteer time
B.2	Permanently conserve land at the former Camp Harrington.	High	3-12 months	Medium	BOS; Parks and Recreation Commission; TP	PARC and LAND Grant Programs
Objective C Permanently protect appropriate and desired Town-owned property from future development.						
C.1	Work to protect open space at Hillside	High	Ongoing	Low	Con Com; BOS	Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund; PARC and LAND Grant Programs
C.2	Assess the need for and utility of a municipal land trust	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	Staff and volunteer time; Local land trusts
C.3	Identify town-owned property that could be preserved in service income-generating active or passive recreation (e.g., a small camp or community hall/arts center/park suitable for rentals).	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; Assessor; OSRPC	Town staff or volunteers
Objective D Further educate property owners of the Chapter 61 Program to conserve lands and encourage them to participate						
D.1	Post educational materials about the Chapter 61 Program on the Town website and promote these materials on social media platforms	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	Con Com; TA	Staff and volunteer time
Objective E Create a funding strategy for open space acquisition and management.						
E.1	Research and apply for available State and Federal funding tools as a way to acquire new open space	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	PARC and LAND Grant Programs; MassTrails; Conservation Partnership Grant Program
E.2	Update and revise the Open Space and Recreation Plan to reflect the town's changing needs and remain qualified for State program funding for the acquisition and protection of open space and recreational facilities.	Low	36-48 months	Very Low	Con Com; BOS	CMRPC; Staff and volunteer time

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Objective F Continue to collaborate with other communities from a regional perspective on opportunities for increased open space connection and wildlife preservation						
F.1	Work with regional land trusts, neighboring towns, and other agencies to prioritize remaining desirable properties for watershed protection, habitat preservation, and trail networks.	High	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; Con Com	Sudbury Valley Trustees; New England Forestry Foundation; Greater Worcester Land Trust; New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill; Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary; Local Conservation Commissions
Goal 3: Maintain, add, and enhance recreational facilities and programs as needed.						
Objective A Determine the needs for additional recreational facilities						
A.1	Create an organizational chart and communication plan to clarify ownership of recreational lands, costs of use, and responsibility for maintenance.	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Parks and Recreation Commission; OSRPC; Highway Department	Town Staff
A.2	Periodically assess and evaluate recreational needs, resources, and conditions of existing fields and facilities.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; Parks and Recreation Commission; OSRPC; Highway Department	Town Staff
A.3	On the Town website, add the addresses and access information for recreational areas and facilities so they can be easily located.	Low	1 month	Very Low	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town Staff
Objective B Develop a plan for improving and updating existing indoor and outdoor facilities.						
B.1	Relocate the Parks & Recreation Commission Office to a more accessible location for community members	Low	2-5 years	Low	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town meeting=
B.2	Complete construction of Center Court Playground.	Low/Medium	12-36 months	Low	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town Meeting, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
B.3	Rebuild Morningdale Manor Playing Fields.	Low/Medium	12-36 months	Major Capital Item	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town Meeting, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
B.4	Rebuild the Morningdale Manor Playground. Assess siting alternatives to make the playground less isolated, and include a path accessible by strollers.	Low/Medium	8-12 months	Low/Med	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town Meeting, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
B.5	Improve Hillside Gym bathrooms, including accessibility compliance with ADA regulations.	Low/Medium	12-36 months	Major Capital Item	Building Inspector; Highway Department; Parks and Recreation Commission	MOD
B.6	Improve the accessibility and safety of Hillside Playground by installing a stroller and ADA-friendly path from the parking lot to the playground / field, and add railings on the stairs. Add tree shade to prevent surface materials from getting too hot so the playground is usable during summer months.	Low/Medium	8-12 months	Low/Medium	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town Meeting, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
	Improve safety and access at Center Playground by installing a stroller path and fencing in or moving the toddlers play equipment further from the road.	Low/Medium	8-12 months	Low/Medium	Parks and Recreation Commission	Town Meeting, Land and Water Conservation Fund, CPA
Objective C Establish sustainable funding sources, partnerships, and volunteer networks to make ongoing improvements.						
C.1	Explore adoption of the Community Preservation Act for financing historic preservation, open space, and recreation projects.	Medium	6 months	Very Low	BOS, TA	Community Preservation Coalition
C.2	Explore prospective funding sources including State/Federal grants, partnerships with non-profit organizations, and other opportunities as they arise	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	Town staff and volunteers	CMRPC, WCC
C.3	Recruit volunteer groups to help with the maintenance, upgrade, and clean-up of facilities (such as the Boy Scouts, etc.). Create and regularly update a list of maintenance and improvement projects that could be undertaken by volunteer groups	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	Parks and Recreation Commission	Boy/Girl scouts, Students
Objective D Enhance access to existing facilities and promote such areas in specific neighborhoods						
D.1	In accordance with the ADA Access Self-Evaluation in the OSRP, take steps to make Town-owned recreation areas and facilities more accessible to all patrons	Low	12-36 months	High	Parks and Recreation Commission; Highway Department	MOD; ADA Project Grants
Objective E Explore the possibility of linking existing natural resources, open space, and recreation facilities with a contiguous network of greenways and foot trail corridors.						
E.1	Identify rights-of-way and public easements that can be linked to existing trail systems	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	Parks and Recreation Commission; Highway Department; BOS; TP	Open Space and Recreation Plan

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E.2	Seek funding and technical assistance through the DCR's Greenways & Trails Program	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	Parks and Recreation Commission; Highway Department; BOS; TP	Mass Audubon; DCR
Objective F Provide cultural and recreation opportunities and support for seniors						
F.1	Regularly review Council on Aging (COA) services such as van operations and programming to ensure service levels are in-line with changing demographics	High	Ongoing	Very Low	COA; BOS; TA; Mass Audubon; DCR; TM	Town staff and committees
F.2	Explore opportunities to coordinate with nearby towns that also have COA services or senior centers	Medium	12-24 months	Very Low	COA; BOS; TA	Nearby communities; CMRPC Regional Services
F.3	Create a senior taskforce and host an annual meeting	Medium	12-18 months	Very Low	BOS; COA	Town Staff and Volunteers
Goal 4: Regulate and guide development to be consistent with town character, and to protect open space and natural resources.						
Objective A Boards and commissions should meet on a regular basis to discuss preservation activities and development proposals.						
A.1	Host a task force meeting annually with all boards and commissions to review status of OSRP action items.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	TP; Con Com; OSRPC	Town staff and committees
Objective B Ensure that development regulations create development that has the least impact on the environment						
B.1	Consider bylaws to promote dark night skies and a healthy level of noise.	Medium	12-24 months	Very Low	PB; TP	MassPlanners Listserv
Objective C Work with developers to maximize the preservation of open space areas and protection of environmentally sensitive areas						
C.1	Investigate creating incentives for developers to create recreation areas, open land, and wildlife corridors	High	12-24 months	Very Low	PB; TP	MassPlanners Listserv
C.2	Explore zoning changes such as Open Space Residential Design, Cluster Development, and other bylaws to require conservation of open space with new subdivisions	High	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC; Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance; MassPlanners Listserv
Objective D Promote both redevelopment and reuse of existing properties that are being underutilized to help minimize the amount of new construction						
D.1	Create an inventory of potential properties for future development	High	6-12 months	Very Low	Con Com; TP; OSRPC	Town staff and committees
Goal 5: Protect natural resource areas from environmental degradation, disturbances, and over-development.						
Objective A Utilize zoning, regulatory, and legislative resources to enhance natural resource conservation efforts						
A.1	Pursue adoption of conservation-related bylaws and policies, particularly zoning incentives for preserving open space and natural resources.	High	12-24 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC; Con Com; Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance
A.2	Explore establishing a No Disturb Zone around wetland resource areas to a defined distance	Low/Medium	18-24 months	Low	Con Com; BOS	DCS/EEA Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) Grant Program; DCS/EEA Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant Program; DCS/EEA Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program
Objective B Collaborate with local, regional, and state conservation organizations on natural resource management						
B.1	Foster partnerships with local land trusts and non-profit organizations to identify and acquire important unprotected natural resource areas for permanent protection	Low/Medium	2-5 years	Very Low	Con Com; BOS; PB; TP; Town Meeting	Sudbury Valley Trustees; GWLT; Summer Star; NEBGTH; PARC Program; local foundations;
B.2	Pursue increased dialogue and collaboration with Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation in support of town access to DCR property	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	DCR
Objective C Address the quality of all Boylston water resources						
C.1	Provide adequate protection for all Boylston ponds.	High	Ongoing	Medium	Con Com	DER; DCR
C.2	Develop a written Lake Phosphorous Control Plan and fully implement all control measures	High	18-24 months	Very Low to Low	Con Com; BOS	DER; DCR
C.3	Reduce the threshold by which a project would be reviewed locally and obtain a stormwater management permit.	Medium	12-18 months	Very Low	Con Com; BOS	DER; DCR
C.4	Identify changes to roadway width, parking, and other requirements in zoning and subdivision bylaws that reduce impervious cover.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
C.5	Develop a rain barrel program	Low	6-12 months	Very Low	Con Com; BOS	DEP; The Great American Rail Barrel Company
C.6	Develop a stormwater utility or enterprise fund and incentivize private sites to take their own actions through a credit system	Low	18-36 months	Low	Con Com; BOS	Statewide Stormwater Coalition; MS4 Municipal Assistance Grants
C.7	Implement an organic waste and leaf litter collection program. Gather and	Low	18-24 months	Low	Highway; BOS	DEP
Goal 6: Improve public awareness of Boylston's natural resources.						
Objective A Inform the public about the importance of natural resource protection.						
A.1	Utilize town resources such as newsletters, utility bill inserts, and digital platforms such as the town website and social media to educate the public about the benefits of natural resource protection and available programs such as Chapter 61.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	Con Comm; TA	Staff and volunteer time
Objective B Expand opportunities for community service and involvement in natural resource conservation						
B.1	Develop a landscape and maintenance plan for town property.	Low	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway Department	Town Staff
Objective C Increase accessibility to the town's forests, water bodies, and open spaces.						
C.1	Communicate the community benefits of trail easements to landowners.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Con Com; PB	Greater Worcester Land Trust, New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, Sudbury Valley Trustees, NEMBA, AMC, Audubon, Summer Star Wildlife Sanctuary

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Goal 7: Improve natural resource management strategies to make Boylston more resilient.						
Objective A Encourage development and management practices that minimize destructive impacts on valuable natural resources.						
A.1	Incorporate guidance for the implementation of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in appropriate by-laws and regulations	High	3-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC
Objective B Implement goals, objectives, and action items listed in the Open Space and Recreation Plan						
B.1	Establish and maintain an active Open Space Advisory Committee tasked with overseeing implementation of the OSRP	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA	Town volunteers
Objective C Evaluate and anticipate the impact of climate change on natural resources and water bodies, and pursue appropriate mitigation policies and plans						
C.1	Pursue certification as a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) community to develop an action-oriented resiliency plan and qualify for grant funding.	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway Department; TA; TP	CMRPC
		Priority	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High- 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources
Cultural and Historic Resources						
Goal 1: Preserve and maintain Town-owned historic assets.						
Objective A Continue to evaluate, prioritize, and fund maintenance and preservation of historic assets using timely and proactive measures						
A.1	Continue routine maintenance activities and funding for Town-owned historic properties	High	Ongoing	Low to Medium	BOS; TA	Pres Mass; MHC; CPA
A.2	Create a plan and fund restoration of the Old Burial Ground	High	6-12 months	Low to Medium	BOS; TA; TM	Pres Mass; MHC; CPA
A.3	Create a plan and fund restoration of the slate roof on Sawyer Memorial Library	High	24-36 months	Medium to High	BOS; TA; TM	Pres Mass; MHC; CPA
A.4	Create a Master Plan for the Hillside property.	Medium	6-12 months	Low to Medium	BOS; TA; TP; PB	One Stop, EEA
Objective B Encourage fluid communication and collaboration among local preservation groups						
B.1	Continue to integrate and encourage participation of private and public preservation organizations	High	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC; TA; TP	Town staff, committees, and organizations
Goal 2: Encourage preservation of privately-owned historic assets.						
Objective A Educate property owners on the benefits of Preservation Restrictions (PR) while encouraging them to pursue this protective measure						
A.1	Develop literature outlining the parameters of Preservation Restrictions and the environmental benefits of conserving resources with preservation of existing structures; then utilize the town website and social media platforms to share the information.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC	Town Staff; Pres Mass; MHC
Goal 3: Utilize protective regulatory and planning tools in key areas of town to enhance the community's rich heritage.						
Objective A Ensure protection of historically significant structures						
A.1	Explore adoption of a Demolition Delay Ordinance or Bylaw to protect historic and architecturally significant buildings from demolition.	Low	12-18 months	Very Low	BOS; HDC; HC; PB	Pres Mass
A.2	Educate the public about the benefits of Local Historic Districts and continue to identify any historic buildings or areas that could be designated	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC	Pres Mass; MHC
A.3	Educate Town leaders on the significance of historic preservation and ways to address preservation issues.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC	Pres Mass; MHC
Goal 4: Ensure there are adequate cultural opportunities for Boylston residents and visitors.						
Objective A Enhance public access to historic resources and information						
A.1	Continue to maintain and update a publicly accessible, comprehensive inventory of the town's historic resources including the historic artifacts, properties, structures, districts, burial grounds, and any other notable features of Boylston's history	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC	Pres Mass; MHC
A.2	Continue to maintain the digitized historical records relevant to Boylston and continue providing online access to them	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC	Pres Mass; MHC
A.3	Continue to encourage community research in order to fill in gaps of Boylston's history, such as identifying unknown people in photographs.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	HDC; HC	Town volunteers
Objective B Expand community outreach initiatives related to the town's cultural and historical resources.						
B.1	Continue to sponsor activities such as guided community tours, self-guided walking tours, history days, farmer's markets, concerts, community theater, etc. in order to attract visitors and build appreciation for local history and culture	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low to Low	HDC; HC	Pres Mass; MHC; Mass Cultural Council
B.2	Incorporate a "How to Get Involved" section into the Boylston Town website that details volunteer opportunities and contact information	Low	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TC	Town Staff
Objective C Promote the community's local identity and foster a sense of place.						
C.1	Utilize new wayfinding signage, enhanced gateway features, and other beautification or place-making projects.	Low	24-36 months	Low to Medium	Highway Department; TP	Community One Stop
C.2	Boost the Town's presence on social media networks to communicate local news, events, and updates to residents	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; TA	Town staff and volunteers

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		Priority	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k+	Responsible Parties	Resources
Town Facilities and Services						
Goal 1: Maintain high-quality municipal facilities, services, and staffing consistent with the needs of the Town's population across different demographics.						
Objective A	Ensure that facilities are well-maintained and functioning optimally.					
A.1	Complete an ADA/504 Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan	Medium	6-36 Months	Very Low	ADA Committee	MOD, Community Compact, DOT
A.2	Renew Capital Improvement Plan and Capital Improvement Planning Committee.	Medium	6-36 Months	Very Low	BOS; Finance Committee	Town Meeting Appropriation
A.3	Complete a Master Plan for the Hillside area.	Medium	12-36 Months	Low to Medium	TA	CMRPC, DLTA
A.4	Pursue Green Communities designation to access funding for energy efficiency projects at municipal and school buildings	High	8-12 months	Very Low	BOS; Schools; Various town depts.	CMRPC Green Energy Technical Assistance program; Department of Energy Resources, Green Communities division
Objective B	Provide desirable new services and facilities.					
B.1	Take steps to advance construction of a new Public Safety Building to house the Police and Fire Departments	High	12-36 Months	Major Capital Item	TA; BD	HMGF, PDM Grant Programs
B.2	Consider a new building for the Municipal Light Department or improve storage facility to house larger equipment that exceeds current space capacity	High	12-36 Months	Major Capital Item	MLD	Light Dep Funds
B.3	Identify new spaces to hold senior programming, with an eye to position seniors near other activities in town. Look towards collaborating with other facilities to maximize resources	Medium	6-24 months	Low	COA; Parks and Recreation Commission; Library	State formula grant money, Town meeting appropriations, state/local grants
B.4	Continue to explore opportunities for shared (inter-municipal) services and staff, including police and fire services	Medium	18-24 months	Very Low to Medium	Dept. Heads; BOS	CMRPC
B.5	Ensure that online permitting is comprehensive and functioning optimally	High	6-12 months	Very Low	BD	Building Dep. Budget, State funding
B.6	Establish a remote or hybrid meeting space for public meetings	High	3-12 months	Very Low	Facilities Maintenance Department; WBAC	CMRPC
B.7	Research and explore opportunities to increase internet access and a competitive cable television contract	Medium	12-18 months	Very Low	Boylston Cable Advisory Committee; BOS	State funding, MBI planning process via CMRPC
Goal 2: Maintain fiscal sustainability.						
Objective A	Maintain long-term funding mechanisms to provide for future public facility needs					
A.1	As a component of capital planning, develop a long-term maintenance program to provide resources for maintenance and repairs.	High	Ongoing	Varies	TA, SB, CP, FinCom	Town Meeting
A.2	Expand the use of the Capital Improvement Program to incorporate Hazard Mitigation in the program planning	Low	6-12 months	Very Low	Relevant Town Departments; Fin Com; MLD; Tree Warden; Water Dep	Town staff and volunteers
Objective B	Continue professionalizing town government to match the town demands more day-to-day services and proactive strategies					
B.1	Address structural understaffing so that town employees can meet the expectations of residents and have sustainable workloads.	High	Ongoing	Med/High	BOS; TA; FinCom	Town Meeting
B.2	Continue applying for grants to upgrade municipal technology.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	TA	Community Compact IT grant program; Municipal Fiber Grant Program; MA Office of Municipal and School Technology
B.3	Continue to bring town hall services online.	Low	6-12 months	Very Low/ Low	TA	Community Compact IT grant program; MA Office of Municipal and School Technology
B.4	Create and maintain inventory of the technological items (computers, radios, work cell phones) that are in most need for replacement across town services.	Low	6-8 months	Very Low	TA	Town staff support
B.5	Expand online permitting to incorporate all municipal applications and permitting processes.	Medium	12-18 months	Very Low	TA	Community Compact IT grant program; MA Office of Municipal and School Technology
B.6	Explore permit tracking software to support staff procedural and enforcement duties.	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low/ Low	TA	Community Compact IT grant program; MA Office of Municipal and School Technology
B.7	Create a communications plan that establishes standards, strategies, and accountability for interdepartmental and town to resident communications.	High	4-6 months	Very Low	TA, Dpt. Heads	N/A
B.8	Explore creation of a communications coordinator position or technological alternatives to a coordinator, such as communications software.	High	6-12 months	Very Low/ Low	TA	MMA, MassPlanners Listserv

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B.9	Identify creative and equitable ways to educate residents about issues, resources and opportunities for service on municipal boards, committees and commissions.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	TA, SB, Dept. Heads, Boards and Committees	Cable access, local media
B.10	Consider establishing student liaison positions on committees.	High	3-6 months	Very Low	TA, SB, Dept. Heads, Boards and Committees	School Department
B.11	Create a mechanism for residents to provide feedback on municipal services and issues (e.g., an email address/phone line, a box at town hall, or a periodic community meeting where residents can voice issues).	Medium/High	3-6 months	Very Low	TA, SB	Town staff support
Objective C	Continue optimizing fiscal procedures within the town, broaden the tax base and proactively seek funding sources.					
C.1	Continue to support and cultivate new business development.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	SB, TA, DIC, Permitting Staff	Chamber, MA Small Business Development Center at Clark University, Small Business Administration loans
C.2	Continue to engage with business types that provide local sales tax or hosting revenue.	Medium/High	Ongoing	Very Low	SB, TA	Chamber
C.3	Continue to pursue department enterprise revenue.	Medium/High	Ongoing	Very Low	SB, TA, HWY, Various Departments	Other communities as examples
C.4	Explore more cost-effective health insurance benefits for employees and retirees.	Medium/High	6-12 months	Very Low	TA, SB, TACCNT	MMA
C.5	Continue to reduce the percentage of property taxes that go uncollected.	Medium/High	Ongoing	Very Low	TA, SB, TACCNT	N/A
Objective D	Control balance between school and non-school expenses through communication and cooperative actions.					
D.1	Regularly review the long-term planning guides in the school departments budget book and support the critical needs through capital planning.	High	Ongoing	Varies	TA, SB, CP, FinCom	N/A
Goal 3: Provide recreational and cultural opportunities that enhance the quality of life in Boylston.						
Objective A	Provide robust cultural opportunities and supports for seniors					
A.1	Regularly review COA services such as van operations and programming to ensure service levels are in line with changing demographics	Medium	Ongoing	Low to Medium	Fin Com; BOS; COA	TMA
A.2	Expand program offerings for seniors as the aging population grows.	High	Ongoing	Low to Medium	COA; BOS	AARP grants; MA Healthy Aging Collaborative grants; MA Councils on Aging Grants
A.3	Pursue creation of a dedicated senior center.	High	24-36 months	Major Capital Item	BOS; COA; TA	ARPA; AARP grants; MA Healthy Aging Collaborative grants; MA Councils on Aging Grants
Objective B	Continue working to preserve land for fields and other recreational and open space use					
B.1	Apply for LAND, PARC, and MassTrails grants to fund priority Open Space and Natural Resources projects included in this plan.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	ConCom, ParkCom	PARC Grant, LAND Grant, MassTrails Grant, CPA, CMRPC DLTA or LPA for technical assistance.
Goal 4: Improve the sustainability and resilience of Town operations.						
Objective A	Make Town operations more resilient to natural and other hazards					
A.1	Implement the recommendations of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan and update the Plan on a 5-year cycle.	High	Ongoing	In progress	BOS; TA	FEMA, MEMA
A.2	Work to score in the Community Rating System (CRS) under the Nation Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) to enable its residents to obtain lower flood insurance rates.	Medium	12-36 months	Very Low	BOS; Relevant Town Departments	FEMA
A.3	Educate residents about the National Flood Insurance Program	Low	6-12 months	Low	TA; TP	FEMA
Objective B	Work to improve the energy efficiency of municipal and school facilities					
B.1	Pursue Green Communities designation to access grant funding for energy efficiency	High	8-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	DOER; CMRPC
Goal 5: Deliver infrastructure that meets existing and future Town needs.						
Objective A	Ensure an adequate water supply for existing and future needs					
A.1	Increase capacity of the existing water supply and distribution system to support additional development, including development along Route 140	High	12-36 months	Major Capital Item	BOS; BWD	USDA; MassWorks (infrastructure study); State Revolving Loan Fund
A.2	In Zone I, regularly, and when feasible, eliminate any non-water supply activities	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; BWD; TP; Con Com	DEP, DER, DCR
A.3	Continue informing residents on ways they can help protect drinking water sources, such as practicing good septic system maintenance, limiting the use of pesticides and fertilizers, and preventing cross-connection/ backflow	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; BWD; BOH	https://www.mass.gov/info-details/water-resources-grants-financial-assistance#drinking-water-supply-protection-grant-program
A.4	Work with emergency response teams to ensure that they are aware of the stormwater drainage in the Boylston Water District's Zone II.	Medium	3-6 months	Very Low	BOS; BWD; FD; PD	DEP, DER, DCR
A.5	Cooperate with emergency teams in response to spills or accidents within the Water District.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; BWD; FD; PD	DEP, DER, DCR
A.6	Partner with local businesses to ensure the proper storage, handling, and disposal of hazardous materials. Residents can help protect our drinking water.	High	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; BWD; FD; PD	DEP, DER

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Objective B Maintain safe and adequate roadway infrastructure.						
B.1	Continue to conduct road repairs repaving and annual paving as funds allow	Medium	Annually	High	Highway Department; BOS	DOT (Chpt. 90)
B.2	Explore erosion control alternatives.	Low	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway Department; Con Com	Town Staff
B.3	Explore new funding opportunities to support ongoing road maintenance needs.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	Highway Department; BOS	Town Staff; CMRPC
B.4	Maintain tree trimming program across the town to protect utility wires.	Medium	Ongoing	Low to Medium	Highway Department; MLD	Town Budget
B.5	Maintain vegetative debris program, trimming brush and growth away from roads and clearing growth impact flow away from infrastructure.	Medium	Ongoing	Low	Highway; MLD; BWD	Town Budget
B.6	Continue properly cleaning and maintaining all stormwater structures and basins	Medium	Ongoing	Medium	Highway Department	DER Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program; MVP Action Grants
Objective C Implement emergency preparedness, coordination, and response strategies.						
C.1	Continue to participate in National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) (or other) training offered by the State and/or FEMA that addresses flood hazard planning and management	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS	MEMA; FEMA
C.2	Keep Evacuation Plan up to date.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; FD; PD	Town staff
C.3	Maintain fire access roads in isolated areas	Medium	Ongoing	Low	FD	Town Staff
C.4	Continue regional training and drills for emergency response in case of disaster.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	FD; PD	CMHSC
C.5	Maintain certification of officials in the Unified Incident Command program	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; TA; FD; PD	CMHSC; MEMA
C.6	Maintain shelter and emergency resources, ensuring accurate and up to date inventory is maintained and rotation of expiring resources replaced	Medium/High	Ongoing	Low	BOS; TA; FD; PD	CMHSC; MEMA
Objective D Ensure adequate sewer capacity for existing and future needs.						
D.1	As demand, technology, and funding sources evolve, regularly assess feasibility of wastewater disposal options	Medium	Ongoing	Low	BOS	Town Boards and Committees
D.2	Continue to assess the need for sewerage system for the town in critical areas to correct adverse environmental conditions, protect water supply resources, and encourage economic development.	High	Ongoing	Low	BOS; WSD	Town Boards and Committees
D.3	Explore opportunities for private sewer that could be shared by multiple businesses in the commercial areas	High	6-12 months	Medium	BOS; TA; TP	Businesses
Objective E Expand stormwater management practices						
E.1	Hire a part or full-time Conservation / Stormwater Agent to meet the additional needs presented by mandated federal and state stormwater regulations.	Medium/High	Ongoing	Low	BOS; TA; Con Com; Stormwater Committee	Other nearby communities; Community Compact Efficiency and Regionalization grant for shared services; CMRPC Regional Services for technical assistance
E.2	Continue informing residents about programs for residents on storm drain clearance and other best practices.	Medium	Ongoing	Very low	Highway Department; Stormwater Committee	DEP
E.3	Develop a prioritized inventory of problem culverts for use in seeking external financial support.	High	3-6 months	Low to Medium	Highway Department	DER Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program; MVP Action Grants
Objective F Ensure adequate electrical distribution capacity for existing and future needs.						
F.1	Continue efforts to lower carbon emitting generation in energy portfolio.	Medium	Ongoing	Medium	BOS; BMLD; WSD	EPA; DOER
F.2	Continue to provide residential Home Energy Loss Prevention Services (HELPS) to its customers.	Medium	Ongoing	Low	BD	EPA; DOER
F.3	Explore opportunities for municipal solar on town-owned land	Medium/High	6-12 months	Major Capital Item	BOS; BMLD	DOER
F.4	Explore opportunities for resident solar including how to streamline and/or eliminate unnecessary constraints.	Medium	6-12 months	Medium	BMLD	DOER
Objective G Maintain quality school facilities and services consistent with the school systems changing needs						
G.1	Continue to track, model, and monitor enrollment trends	Medium	Ongoing	Low to Medium	BBRSD	MA School Building Authority; BBRSD
G.2	Plan for increased enrollment at BES and BMS, potentially peaking in 2027.	High	Ongoing	Major Capital Item	BBRSD	BBRSD
G.3	Create a school facilities and services plan that addresses potential changes in class sizes, need for more classroom spaces, adequacy of common spaces (e.g., cafeteria, nurses office), and student scheduling	Medium/High	6-12 months	Low to Medium	BBRSD	MA School Building Authority

Implementation

		Priority	Time to Completion	Magnitude of cost: Very Low- 0-50k Low- 50-100k Med- 100-250k High: 250k- 500k Major capital item: 500k and up	Responsible Parties	Resources
Economic Development						
Goal 1: Expand capacity to support and facilitate business development.						
Objective A	Establish a committee of local business owners that is tasked with providing guidance, support, and advocacy for the town's economic development initiatives					
A.1	Develop an action plan for future economic development committee that encourages collaboration with the Planning Board through joint strategic planning workshops, joint deliverables, and a structured approach to future collaboration and interaction	High	12-18 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	Community One Stop for Growth, Community Compact, CMRPC
Objective B	Ensure the local permitting process is a straightforward and fluid process					
B.1	Update and unify all physical permits	Medium	12-36 Months	Low	TP; BD, PB	Town staff
B.2	Explore opportunities to combine permitting to expedite workflow, reduce the time needed to process and consider applications, reduce the number of required hearings, and decrease the impact in materials and cost to the developer and the town of making and considering multiple applications.	Medium	6-24 months	Very Low	TP; PB; ZBA; Con Com	Community One Stop for Growth, Community Compact, CMRPC
B.3	Implement better permit tracking and clarity in zoning enforcement	High	6-12 months	Very Low	BD; TP, PB	Town staff
B.4	Research and assess the utility of various permit tracking software for enhancing issuance and enforcement of permits	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BD; TP; Con Com,	Town staff
B.5	Ensure that permit application forms are appropriately thorough	High	3-6 months	Very Low	BD; TP, PB	Town staff
B.6	Identify strategies to enhance communication between town departments involved in the development process	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	TP; TA,	Town staff
B.7	Create a Permitting Guidebook to clarify the permitting process for developers and prospective business-owners	Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	TP; BD; PB; Con Com	Community One Stop for Growth, CMRPC via DLTA
B.8	Designate a single point of contact to shepherd developers and prospective business owners through the permitting process	High	3-6 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP, PB	Town staff
Objective C	Coordinate and mobilize the local business community to enhance the relationship between the Town and business-owners.					
C.1	Convene frequent meetings with the local business community to discuss challenges and desired resources	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; EDC	WCC
C.2	Foster development of a local business or merchants association; alternatively, appoint business owners to Business Roundtable that meets regularly and includes municipal leadership	High	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; EDC	WCC
C.3	Create a business outreach strategy that formalizes outreach pipelines between the Economic Development Committee and businesses (e.g., a regular EDC event that invites business owners to participate, regular communications such as a newsletter, or guest speakers from businesses at EDC meetings).	Medium	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; EDC	WCC
C.4	Explore subregional and multi-town opportunities for collaborative marketing and economic development.	Low	3-12 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	WCC
Objective D	Enhance municipal resources to strengthen economic development in town					
D.1	Formalize allowable uses for windfall tax revenue and work with the Finance committee to define prudent use and establish a mechanism for resident input.	Low	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	Town staff
D.2	Pilot a part-time Economic Development Coordinator position using grant funds.	Medium	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	Community Compact Efficiency and Regionalization grant; CMRPC for Technical Assistance
D.3	Complete an Economic Development Strategic Plan to guide the efforts of the future EDC and municipal staff.	High	12-24 months	Low	BOS; TA; TP	Community One Stop for Growth; Community Compact; CMRPC
D.4	Collaborate with regional entities and other local towns to leverage economies of scale and tap into external resources	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	CMRPC Regional Services
Goal 2: Take a proactive and responsive approach to economic development that supports existing businesses and encourages new ones.						
Objective A	Support new and existing home-based occupations.					
A.1	Ensure that local zoning bylaws enable home-based occupations of appropriate type and scale.	High	6-18 months	Very Low	PB; TP; BOS	Town Staff; CMRPC via LPA
A.2	Ensure that zoning is supportive of work-from-home and home offices.	High	6-18 months	Very Low	PB; TP; BOS	Town Staff
A.3	Create an inventory of home-based businesses to help establish connectivity and network	High	3-6 months	Very Low	TA; TP; Town Clerk	Town Staff
A.4	Promote vacant commercial spaces to home-based occupations that may be in search of a new workspace	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	TP	Town Staff
A.5	Encourage development of new small office space with business resources (e.g., co-working spaces) to provide commercial space for existing home occupations.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	PB; TP; BOS	Developers
Objective B	Improve the ease of doing business in Boylston					
B.1	Implement standing Round Table Review/ Pre-Development Conference, providing potential developers and business-owners informal opportunities to meet with all permitting staff at any point in the development process.	High	12-18 months	Very Low	TP; TA	Town Staff
B.2	Create a Vacancy Registry process to facilitate constructive dialogue between commercial property owners with vacant properties and town staff.	Low	12-18 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	CMRPC via LPA or DLTA

Implementation

Goal 3: Pursue an economic development strategy that evaluates the cumulative impacts of individual projects.						
A.1	Monitor issues surrounding the implementation of 5G.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	PB; TP; TA	CMRPC; MMA
A.2	Assess the impact of warehouses and distribution facilities from a regional perspective.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	PB; BOS; TP; TA	Developer impact assessment fees
Goal 4: Ensure business development that maintains Boylston's small-town character.						
Objective A Allow for a mix of new land uses that are appropriate to both the needs of the community and the scale of surrounding neighborhoods						
C.1	Conduct a comprehensive zoning diagnostic to ensure zoning is consistent with the goals of the Master Plan and other strategic plans	High	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	EOEEA Planning Assistance Grants; Community Compact; Staff and volunteer time; Planning consultant
B.1	Review zoning for ways to make it more development friendly and consistent with the economic development priorities highlighted by residents throughout the master planning process. Revise to encourage desirable development types and patterns.	Medium to High	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	EOEEA Planning Assistance Grants; Community Compact; Staff and volunteer time; Planning consultant
	Employ Smart Growth design principles in commercial areas	Medium to High	Ongoing	Varies	PB; TP; Hwy	EOEEA Planning Assistance Grants; Community Compact; Staff and volunteer time; Planning consultant
C.2	Review the Commercial (C) and Village Business (VB) Districts for utility; as appropriate, rezone remaining C and VB parcels to residential	Medium	6-24 months	Very Low	PB; TP	Staff and volunteer time; Planning consultant
C.3	Review Site Plan Review Criteria to ensure it is sufficiently robust to protect the town from undesirable development; identify uses for which Special Permit can be replaced with Site Plan Review	High	6-24 months	Very Low	PB; TP	Staff and volunteer time; Planning consultant; CMRPC via DLTA
C.4	Review frontage setbacks for business properties to facilitate a vibrant, walkable town center or commercial area.	Medium	6-24 months	Very Low	PB; TP	Staff and volunteer time; Planning consultant; CMRPC via LPA
Goal 5: Improve the visual aesthetics of businesses along Route 140 to better reflect the small-town and natural/agricultural character that residents desire.						
Objective A Define the Route 140 corridor as a distinct and unified location.						
A.1	Implement the pedestrian and placemaking recommendations identified in the Town of Boylston Local Rapid Recovery Plan	High	24-36 months	Major Capital Item	TP; Highway Department; BOS; TA	Community One Stop for Growth; CPA; Mass Cultural Council; MassDevelopment; Town budget allocation
Objective B Facilitate connectivity between Morningdale neighborhood and nearby areas of Boylston.						
B.1	Develop and install new wayfinding signage that showcase the Route 140 corridor's businesses, landmarks, parking, and other features	Medium	12-24 months	Medium	TP; Highway Department; BOS; TA	Community One Stop for Growth; CPA; Mass Cultural Council; MassDevelopment; Town budget allocation
B.2	Partner with local organizations to undertake placemaking upgrades such as benches, sidewalks, bike paths, signage, planters, or lighting.	Medium	12-36 months	Low to Medium	TP; Highway Department; BOS; TA	Community One Stop for Growth; CPA; Mass Cultural Council; MassDevelopment; Town budget allocation
B.3	Conduct a traffic/parking study for Route 140	Low	12-18 months	Medium	BOS; TA	Community One Stop for Growth; CMRPC for Technical Assistance
B.4	Create and fund a façade improvement program for Route 140	Medium	12-24 months	Low to Medium	BOS; TA; TP	Community One Stop for Growth; CPA; Mass Cultural Council; MassDevelopment; Town budget allocation
Goal 6: Grow and diversify the tax base to promote a fiscally-sound future.						
Objective A Promote existing Boylston businesses.						
A.1	Create awareness among municipal staff and other town leaders about the economic goals established in this Master Plan to ensure a common vision and coordinated approach	High	6 months	Very Low	TA; TP; BOS; PB	MPIC
A.2	Leverage new and existing communication and outreach methods to promote local businesses (e.g., at the beginning of each Board of Selectmen or Planning Board meeting, provide 3-5 minutes for a business-owner to highlight their business).	High	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	Boards and Committees; Town Staff; Cable Access
A.3	Partner with neighboring communities to create a local shopping and dining guide to stimulate visitation to target areas and increase economic activity for local businesses.	Medium	12-18 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; EDC	WCC
A.4	Establish programs that incentive visitors to patronize multiple businesses in a trip (e.g., a business passport with associated raffle drawings, gift cards to local businesses as giveaways, or creating a rewards program for shoppers)	Low	12-18 months	Very Low	Various businesses	EDC
Objective B Attract and retain small, consumer-oriented, and local businesses for Boylston residents and visitors to enjoy						
B.1	Encourage outdoor dining by supporting the necessary permitting and working with businesses to create outdoor dining options	High	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; BOS; TP; BOH	MA RRP Outdoor Dining and Retail Toolkit: https://www.mass.gov/doc/outdoor-dining-retail-toolkit/download
B.2	Create Business Attraction Brochure or marketing materials geared toward either developers or retail/restaurant businesses. This could help recruit additional businesses to the Route 140.	Medium	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP	Community One Stop for Growth
Objective C Attract new commercial and industrial development to help stabilize residential tax burden						
C.1	Utilize tax incentives to incentive commercial and light industrial business development	Low	Ongoing	High	BOS; TA; TP	Town Meeting

Implementation

C.2	Review zoning bylaws to ensure that desirable non-residential uses are clearly defined and not unnecessarily restrictive.	High	6-12 months	Very Low	TP; PB	Staff and volunteer time; CMRPC
Goal 7: Improve local utilization of Boylston's natural spaces.						
Objective A Explore strategies that leverage Boylston's natural resources into additional economic activity.						
A.1	Enhance access to the Reservoir by improving direct and indirect connections between major thoroughfares and the access points to roads and trails near the Reservoir.	Low	1-3 years	Low/Med	BOS; TA; PB; Con Com, OSRPC,	National Park Service Outdoor Recreational Grant program; MassTrails Grant; Land and Water Conservation Fund; CPA; PARC and LAND grants; DCR
A.2	Support the Tri-Town Landscape Protection Project's efforts to create a network of connected natural landscapes (habitats, working landscapes, and recreation areas) and link this network to the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	PB, BOS, ConCom	Sudbury Valley Trustees, DCR
A.3	Promote smaller passive recreation areas alongside the Town's prominent outdoor assets to brand Boylston as an outdoor destination.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS, EDC	WCC
A.4	Promote natural resources alongside traditional businesses to appeal to visitors from multiple angles and create multiple reasons to visit town.	Low	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS, EDC	WCC
A.5	Consider working with the school department or Boy Scouts to have youth create a self-guided Instagram tour that combine several types of natural and business sites. Offer discounts to people who complete the tour and meet its eligibility (posting) requirements.	Low	4-8 months	Very Low	BOS, EDC, Con Com, OSRPC, Schools	Students, Boy Scouts, town staff and committee members
A.6	At trail heads, parks, and other outdoor facilities, post materials that include a suggested donation for maintenance and improvements, along with easy payment options facilitated by a QR code visitors can scan to make their preferred form of type of electronic payment donation.	Low	3-6 months	Very Low	Con Com, OSRPC, BOS,	Students, Boy Scouts, town staff and committee members
Goal 8: Encourage small, consumer-oriented, and boutique businesses for Boylston residents and visitors to enjoy.						
A.1	Provide and facilitate access to incentives and opportunities for small-scale businesses and other desirable enterprises	Low/Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS, TA,	Chamber, MA Small Business Development Center at Clark University, Small Business Administration loans; MOBD; MassDevelopment
A.2	Engage the Commonwealth and State Representatives about direct support to small businesses.	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	TA	CMRPC; MOBD
A.3	Review zoning and permitting requirements for food trucks.	Low/Medium	3-6 months	Very Low	BOH	CMRPC via LPA or DLTA; MassPlanners Listserv.
A.4	Encourage food truck operations by providing potential food truck owners with a comprehensive toolkit that outlines all permitting requirements to streamline application process.	Low/Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	BOH	CMRPC via LPA or DLTA; MassPlanners Listserv.
A.5	Provide a single application that condenses all required permitting and licensing documentation to meet outdoor dining needs. Include a checklist of each necessary requirement, a list of any separate permits that may need to be obtained, any additional design guidelines, instructions concerning alcohol sales and services, and a list of key dates and timeline for the review and approval process. The single application should also be differentiated by seating type, location, and/or space ownership.	Low/Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC via LPA or DLTA; MassPlanners Listserv.
A.6	Adopt a pop-up retail ordinance that allows and streamlines temporary uses in order to fill vacant spaces.	Low/Medium	6-12 months	Very Low	PB; TP	CMRPC via LPA or DLTA; MassPlanners Listserv.
Goal 9: Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to support businesses.						
Objective A Improve the Town's streetscape and sidewalks to allow and promote more pedestrian and bicycle access to businesses.						
A.1	Implement a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan	High	12-24 months	Low	BOS; TA; TP; Highway	MassDOT; CMRPC
A.2	Connect the Town's neighborhoods with its business districts.	Medium	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; Highway Department	Complete Streets; America Walks Grant Program; AARP grant
A.3	Create bicycle infrastructure (bike lanes on key streets and bike racks in strategic locations) to encourage cycling.	Low	6-36 months	Very Low to High	BOS; Highway Department	Complete Streets; Shared Streets and Spaces Program
A.4	Identify strategies to manage the traffic through the community on Routes 140 and 70.	High	12-24 months	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; Highway Department; PD	Massworks or Community One Stop parking/ traffic study
A.5	Explore state and national infrastructure funding to resolve traffic flow and road conditions	Medium	Ongoing	Very Low	BOS; TA; TP; Highway Department	Massworks; ARPA; State Revolving Loan Fund

Acronyms & Abbreviations

Abbrev.	Agency or Resource
401 Program	Massachusetts Water Quality Certification regulations
40B	A type of state affordable housing development
501(c)(3)	A US Internal Revenue Code designation of a nonprofit, charitable, and/or tax exempt organization
504	The focus of the ADA Self-evaluation, Section 504 and Transition Plan is to identify barriers that may be discriminatory for persons with disabilities and identify methods and projected schedules for barrier removal
AAC	Applicant Advisory Committee
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ACRE	Agricultural Climate Resiliency & Efficiencies (ACRE) program
ACS	American Community Survey
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ADU	Accessory Dwelling Unit
AFFH	Affirmatively furthering fair housing
AHC	Boylston Affordable Housing Committee
AHT/AHTF	Boylston Affordable Housing Trust Fund
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
Airbnb	Air Bed and Breakfast
ALB	Asian Longhorned Beetle
ALS	Advanced Life Support
AMI	Area Median Income
AMR	Asset Management Report
APHIS	Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
APR	Agricultural Preservation Restriction
ATV	All-terrain vehicle
BBRSD	Berlin/Boylston Regional School District
BCI	Bicycle Compatibility Index
BD	Boylston Building Department
BES	Boylston Elementary School
BIMS	MassDOT Bridge Inspection Management System
BioMap	BioMap2's predecessor, the first conservation plan for Massachusetts to present a map of the areas needed to protect the state's breadth of biological diversity

Acronyms & Abbreviations

BioMap2	A framework for protection and stewardship of lands and waters that are most important for conserving biological diversity in Massachusetts from MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program
BMP	Best Management Practice
BMS	Bridge Management System
BOH	Boylston Board of Health
BOS	Boylston Board of Selectmen
BPL	Boylston Public Library
BPLF	Boylston Public Library Foundation, Inc.
BRIC	Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities
BWD	Boylston Water District
C	Commercial Zoning District in Boylston
CHAPA	Citizens' Housing and Planning Association
Chapter 25A	M.G.L. relating to the Division of Energy Resources
Chapter 30B	M.G.L. relating to the Uniform Procurement Act
Chapter 40	M.G.L. relating to powers and duties of cities and towns
Chapter 40A	M.G.L. relating to zoning
Chapter 40B	M.G.L. relating to regional planning
Chapter 40C	M.G.L. relating to historic districts
Chapter 43D	M.G.L. relating to expedited permitting
Chapter 44	M.G.L. relating to municipal finance
Chapter 44B	M.G.L. relating to community preservation
Chapter 61	M.G.L. relating to classification and taxation of forest lands and forest products
Chapter 61A	M.G.L. relating to assessment and taxation of agricultural and horticultural land
Chapter 61B	M.G.L. relating to classification and taxation of recreational land
Chapter 90	M.G.L. relating to motor vehicles and aircraft
Chapter 131	M.G.L. relating to inland fisheries and game and other natural resources
Chapter 161B	M.G.L. relating to transportation facilities, highway systems, and urban development plans
Chapter 184	M.G.L. relating to general provisions relative to real property
CMAQ	Congestion, Mitigation, and Air Quality Improvement Program
CMHA	Central Massachusetts Housing Alliance
CMMPO	Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization
CMP	Congestion Management Process
CMR	Code of Massachusetts Regulations

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CMRPC	Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission
CMRSWC	Central Massachusetts Regional Stormwater Coalition
COA	Boylston Council on Aging
Con Comm	Boylston Conservation Commission/Department
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
CPA	Community Preservation Act
CPR	Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation
CPTC	Citizen Planner Training Collaborative
CR	Conservation Restriction
CRS	Community Rating System
CSA	Comprehensive Service Analysis
DC	Direct Current
DCR	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
DCS	Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services
DDS	Department of Developmental Services
DEP / MassDEP	Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
DER	Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration
DHCD	Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
DIF	District Improvement Financing
DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance
DOER	Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources
DOT / MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
DPW	Boylston Department of Public Works
DWSP	Division of Water Supply Protection
E-Commerce	Internet Commerce
EDC	Boylston Economic Development Committee
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EMT	Emergency Medical Technicians
EOEEA	Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
EOHED	Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPDO	Equivalent Property Damage Only
ESRI	Environmental Systems Research Institute

Acronyms & Abbreviations

ESWA	Elder Services of Worcester Area
FBD	Flexible Business Development Zoning District in Boylston
FD	Boylston Fire Department
FedEx	Federal Express, a delivery service
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
Fin Com	Boylston Finance Committee
FiOS	Fiber Optic Service
Friendly 40B	State subsidy program process through the Local Initiative Program (LIP); a means of creating new affordable units
FY	Fiscal Year
GASB	Government Accounting Standard Board
GC	Green Community
GI	Green Infrastructure
GIS	Geographic Information Systems/Science
GR	General Residential Zoning District in Boylston
GWLT	Greater Worcester Land Trust
HAZMAT	Hazardous Materials
HB	Highway Business Zoning District in Boylston
HBB	Home-based Business
HC	Boylston Historical Commission
HCVP	Housing Choice Voucher Program
HD/H	Heritage Zoning District in Boylston
HDC	Boylston Historic District Commission
HELPS	Home Energy Loss Prevention Services
Highway	Boylston Highway Department
HIV	Human immunodeficiency virus
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
HPP	Boylston Housing Production Plan
HRP	Hillside Restoration Project/Partnership
HUD	Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development
HVAC	Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning
I-290	Interstate 290
I-495	Interstate 495
IP	Industrial Park Zoning District in Boylston
IRS	Internal Revenue Service

Acronyms & Abbreviations

IT	Boylston Information Technology Department
KWH	Kilowatt Hours
LAND	Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity
LAU	Local Action Unit
LCC	Local Cultural Council
LED	Light-Emitting Diode
LHDSC	Local Historic District Study Committee
LID	Low-impact Development
LIP	DHCD Local Initiative Program
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
LU	Land Use
MACRIS	Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
MassEVIP	Massachusetts Electric Vehicle Incentive Program
MassGIS	Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information
MassHousing	Massachusetts Housing
MassTrails	Massachusetts Trails
MassWildlife	Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
MassWorks	EOHED MassWorks Infrastructure Program
MBTA	Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
MCRT	Massachusetts Central Rail Trail
MDC	Metropolitan District Commission
M.G.L.	Massachusetts General Laws
MHC	Massachusetts Historical Commission
MHI	Median Household Income
MHP	Massachusetts Housing Partnership
MLD/BMLD	Boylston Municipal Light Department
MLP	Boylston Municipal Light Plant / Municipal Light Plants in general
MMWEC	Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Company
MOD	Massachusetts Office of Disability
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPSC	Master Plan Steering Committee
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System
MSA	Metropolitan Statistical Area
MUI	Mixed Use Industrial Zoning District in Boylston

Acronyms & Abbreviations

MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program
MWRA	Massachusetts Water Resources Authority
NAACC	North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative
NB	Neighborhood Business Zoning District in Boylston
NEBGTH	New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill
NEFF	New England Forestry Foundation
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NHESP	Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
NPS	Non-point source
NRCS	U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service
OSAC	Boylston Open Space Advisory Committee
OSR	Open Space and Recreation
OSRP	Open Space and Recreation Plan
PAG	Planning Assistance Grant
PARC Program	Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant Program
PB	Boylston Planning Board
P.C.	Professional Corporation
PD	Boylston Police Department
PDA	Priority Development Area
PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation
PILOT	Payments in Lieu of Taxes Program
PMS	Pavement Management System
PPA	Priority Preservation Area
PR	Preservation Restriction
Pres Mass	Preservation Massachusetts
PTI	Priority Transportation Improvement
R	Residential Zoning District in Boylston
RB	Route 140 Business Zoning District in Boylston
RFP	Request for Proposals
RHS	USDA Rural Housing Service
RIF	MassDOT Road Inventory File
RO	Residential Office Overlay Zoning District in Boylston
ROW	Right-of-Way

Acronyms & Abbreviations

RR	Rural Residential Zoning District in Boylston
Sf / sq. ft.	Square feet
SHI	Subsidized Housing Inventory
SOCDS	HUD State of the Cities Data Systems
SPGA	Special Permit Granting Authority
SRD	Senior Residential Development
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
SVT	Sudbury Valley Trustees
SWMP	Stormwater Management Plan
TA	Technical Assistance
TIF	Tax Increment Financing
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
Title 5	Regulations governing the construction and maintenance of septic systems and the transport of septic-system waste in Massachusetts
Title VIII	The Fair Housing Act
TM	Town Manager
TMA	Transportation Management Association
TND	Traditional Neighborhood Design
TP	Town Planner and Office of Planning and Development
TTLP	Tri-Town Landscape Protection Project
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
VB	Village Business Zoning District in Boylston
WBAC	Boylston Access Channel
WH-STA	Workforce Housing Special Tax Assessment
WPI	Worcester Polytechnic Institute
WPA/WsPA	Watershed Protection Act
WPR	Watershed Protection Restriction
WRTA	Worcester Regional Transit Authority
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Organization
ZBA	Zoning Board of Appeals



Town of Boylston, Massachusetts
221 Main Street, Boylston, MA 01505
www.boylston-ma.gov