

Town of Hamilton Master Plan 2024



Contents

| | |
|---|------------|
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | III |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| 1.0 PLAN SUMMARY..... | 3 |
| 1.1 OVERVIEW..... | 3 |
| 1.2 VISION..... | 4 |
| 1.3 GOALS..... | 5 |
| 2.0 KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES..... | 8 |
| 2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY..... | 9 |
| 2.1.1 Natural Resources/Open Space and Recreation/Cultural and Historic Resources | 9 |
| 2.2 SOCIAL WELL-BEING..... | 10 |
| 2.2.1 Community Facilities and Services | 10 |
| 2.2.2 Housing..... | 11 |
| 2.2.3 Proactive Planning for Housing..... | 12 |
| 2.2.4 Preparedness, Sustainability and Resiliency | 13 |
| 2.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT | 14 |
| 2.3.1 Commercial Development | 14 |
| 3.0 INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT..... | 15 |
| 3.1 PROTECT..... | 16 |
| 3.1.1 Natural Resources Areas | 16 |
| 3.1.2 Open Space and Recreation..... | 27 |
| 3.1.3 Cultural and Historic Resources..... | 37 |
| 3.2 PROVIDE..... | 42 |
| 3.2.1 Community Facilities and Services | 42 |
| 3.2.2 Transportation | 51 |
| 3.3 GROW..... | 60 |
| 3.3.1 Economic Development..... | 60 |
| 3.3.2 Housing and Residential Development | 72 |
| 3.3.3 Land Use | 82 |
| 4.0 LOOKING AHEAD..... | 91 |
| 4.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN | 91 |
| 4.2 IMPLEMENTATION CHARTS..... | 93 |
| 4.2.1 Protect | 94 |
| 4.2.2 Provide..... | 97 |
| 4.2.3 Grow | 99 |
| 4.3 NEXT STEPS | 102 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 104 |
| APPENDICES..... | I |
| APPENDIX A | II |
| Public Meeting #1 Summary | ii |
| APPENDIX B | III |
| Public Meeting #2 Summary | iii |
| APPENDIX C..... | IV |
| Public Meeting #3 Summary | iv |

Acknowledgements

Hamilton Planning Board

Marnie Crouch (Chair)
Emil Dahlquist (Clerk)
Beth Herr
Rick Mitchell
Patrick Norton
Jonathan Poore
William Wheaton
Matthew Hamel (Associate)

Master Plan Steering Committee

Bill Wilson (Chair)
Rosemary Kennedy (Vice-Chair)
Ted Acworth
Dana Allara
Marnie Crouch
Jack Lawrence

Thanks to former committee members:

Caroline Beaulieu
Emil Dahlquist
Kristen Kassner
Gregory Keller
Rick Mitchell
Kristen Pieper

Town Staff

Patrick Reffett, Director of Planning &
Inspectional Services
Joseph J. Domelowicz Jr., Town Manager

Barrett Planning Group Consultant Team:

Judi Barrett, Owner & Managing Director
Sarah Maren, AICP, Senior Planner
Jill Slankas, AICP, Principal Planner
Carly Venditti, Community Planner (former)

RKG Associates, Inc.

Eric Halvorsen, AICP

Based partly on work completed by Weston & Sampson, Inc.

Introduction

An introduction to a Master Plan would be incomplete if it did not set forth what a Master Plan is and why it is important. Master Plans are required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (M.G.L. Ch. 41, §81D). The law requires municipalities to create and approve Master Plans in order “to provide a basis for decision making regarding long-term physical development of the municipality.” The term Master Plan, while frequently used, is commonly misunderstood. Specifically, a community’s Master Plan provides guidance for public policy and informs decision making in a variety of areas, including land use (and concomitant zoning), transportation, natural resource areas, cultural and historic resources, open space and recreation, housing, economic development, and community facilities and services. The Hamilton Master Plan identifies and analyzes each of these components, identifies key issues confronting the Town and proposes reasonable solutions to address those issues in both the short and long term.

The 2024 Hamilton Master Plan reflects significant input from volunteers and public involvement to produce a broad-based community planning achievement. The initiative began in 2020 when the citizens of Hamilton recognized that the 2005 Master Plan was outdated and voted to provide funding to produce an updated Master Plan. With voter approved funding, the Town, in 2021, engaged the consultant firm of Weston & Sampson. Additionally, the Select Board appointed an eight member Master Plan Steering Committee to assist the Director of Planning & Inspectional Services to initiate the process of producing a new Master Plan.

The Select Board charged the Committee with assisting the professional consultants in formulating a vision for Hamilton to guide current and future boards, committees and Town departments in their decision making. Further, the Select Board charged the Committee with articulating that vision for the Town for the next 25 years. The Select Board determined that it was critical to the usefulness of the Master Plan to involve the public in the planning process. Accordingly, the Steering Committee and the consultants conducted several public engagement sessions.

The Master Plan Steering Committee had its first formal meeting on May 20, 2021. To inform the process of developing the Master Plan, members formulated a framework to understand the citizens’ relationship with the community and its resources. They adopted the framework to identify and understand what citizens wished the Town to “Protect;” what they wished the Town to “Provide;” and what citizens wished the Town to “Preserve.” That community-centric approach continued throughout the Committee’s work.

The Committee worked with the original consultants but eventually recognized that a change of direction was needed. In the summer of 2022, the Town engaged Barrett Planning Group, LLC, to streamline the planning effort. The principal of Barrett Planning Group, Judi Barrett, was instrumental in the preparation of the 2005 Master Plan and had in depth knowledge of Hamilton’s history, character, and capacity to execute a Master Plan. The Select Board determined that the Committee would benefit from a “reset” with Select Board member Bill Wilson becoming the Committee Chair. The reconstituted group continued to meet and worked diligently with Barrett Planning Group to complete the Master Plan for submission to the Planning Board, which is charged with its approval, in the spring of 2024.

While all sections of the Master Plan contain important information about Hamilton, an “Implementation” section identifies and prioritizes what efforts and community investments

Hamilton should adopt to serve its best interests, while simultaneously specifying the Town officers or Boards and Commissions in the best position to spearhead action items

Hamilton is a proud community with an enviable rural character and unmatched natural resources and recreation opportunities. Hamilton, like all communities, faces fiscal, environmental, and other challenges. The Master Plan is intended as a reference to assist the Town in addressing and meeting those challenges.

Many Hamilton residents have contributed to the effort to produce the 2024 Master Plan. The Committee members deserving of thanks include:

Bill Wilson, Master Plan Steering Committee, Chair

Rosemary Kennedy, Vice Chair

Dana Allara, HWRSD School Committee Representative

Marnie Crouch, Planning Board Representative

Jack Lawrence, At Large (Former Chair)

Ted Acworth, At Large

Kristin Kassner, (Former Vice Chair)

Caroline Beaulieu, (Former Select Board Representative)

Kristen Pieper, (Former At Large Member)

David Wanger, (Former Finance Committee Representative)

Emil Dahlquist, (Former At Large Member)

Rick Mitchell, (Former Planning Board Representative)

Regards,

Patrick Reffett

Director of Planning & Inspectional Services

1.0 Plan Summary

1.1 OVERVIEW

This document is Hamilton's 2024 Master Plan intended to establish a common vision for the future of the community and to recommend goals and action steps that will help attain that vision. While its key purpose and function is to address the physical development of the community, it also may address issues related to economic and social development.

The goals and recommendations of this Plan reflect a consensus of what is considered desirable for the Town of Hamilton and its residents in the future following a lengthy process of community engagement. The Plan is not a regulation or a mandate, but it is an important advisory document. It is intended to guide the community towards positive outcomes and to provide a framework for consistent decision-making regarding conservation and development activities.

Implementation of the goals and action steps set forth in this Plan will only occur with the diligent efforts of the community, Town officials and members of its boards and committees. The Plan will only be effective if it is understood and supported by the people of Hamilton and implemented by the Town's boards and commissions.

This Plan provides a framework within which to make informed decisions that will allow Hamilton to continue to be attractive, functional and economically healthy; and an increasingly desirable place to live, work, attend school, play, visit, shop, and invest in the development of the community. The goal is to build a community that remains healthy and prosperous over the long term, benefiting the local economy as well as the residents of the place where we live. This Plan is the Town's statement of what we want our future to be and how we propose to achieve and manage it. The Plan has four main sections as noted in Figure 1.1:

Figure 1.1: Plan Organization

| 1.0 PLAN SUMMARY | |
|---|---|
| Overview Vision Goals | Gathering information through public visioning workshops and surveys, identifying and organizing public goals. |
| 2.0 KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES | |
| Conservation Quality Economic Development Social Well-Being | Documenting key issues through public and Town boards, committees, and staff engagement. |
| 3.0 INVENTORY AND ASSESSMENT | |
| Protect... | Strategies to protect the things that Hamilton residents have indicated are important to them. |
| Provide... | Strategies related to improving services and facilities that will help make Hamilton a better community in the future. |
| Grow... | Strategies to guide growth or change in ways that will help make Hamilton more livable in the future. |
| 4.0 LOOKING AHEAD | |
| Implementation Plan Implementation Charts Next Steps | Compare and contrast the Key Issues and Opportunities with the Inventory and Assessment elements to create a set of Goals and Action Steps for 2024 Master Plan implementation. |

1.2 VISION

OVERVIEW

For centuries people have left their mark, small and large, on this place we call Hamilton. Our community is what it is today partly because of its physical location and natural environment, and partly because of the choices made, or not made, with both intended and unintended results. All have combined to create this unique and attractive place. In evaluating possible directions for the next decades, we must ask ourselves several questions:

What will Hamilton be in twenty, thirty, or fifty years?

Will we secure our identity and build places we care about?

Answers to these questions begin with a vision, then a plan, and finally actions to secure our chosen direction. The way we develop affects the quality of our lives and the vitality of our community. We seek an environment designed around the expressed needs of individuals, conducive to the formation of community and preservation of the Town's landscape. A **Vision** is the beginning, and a **Plan** is the process to secure our chosen destiny – **a community by choice**.

VISION STATEMENT

The Town of Hamilton is a community that:

Protects...

...and preserves our valuable local history, including rich agricultural and equestrian traditions.

...the natural landscapes that give Hamilton its unique beauty and small-town visual character, as well as sensitive environmental resources.

... the ability of households of all types to call Hamilton home.

Provides...

...safe and adequate utilities, roads, and accessible public spaces for its residents.

...high-quality and up-to-date public schools and municipal facilities.

...robust public recreation programs and facilities, especially on public open space.

Grows...

...our downtown into a vibrant destination for business, culture, recreation, housing, and transit, with easy access between points of interest.

...our local business community and housing stock while proactively planning for well-designed and environmentally sensitive development.

Looking Ahead...

...by establishing Goals, Action Steps, Responsibilities, Partners, and Priorities to manage the Town's future.

...by creating a dynamic document that periodically reviews the Master Plan contents to anticipate a Future Land Use Plan and the best means to update the Goals and Actions going forward.

1.3 GOALS

INTRODUCTION: PURPOSE OF PLANNING GOALS

The public process of producing this Master Plan revealed that the **goals** are bookended by a respect for the past and a concern for the future. Goals reflecting a respect for the past embody recognition of what makes Hamilton the extraordinary place that it is in view of its scenic vistas, historic buildings, and open space. The “sense of place” that stems from that recognition can serve to guide decision makers as the Town evolves over time through the creation of new landscapes, neighborhoods, and other forms of development. The concern for the future, as many participants observed, must be predicated upon environmentally sensitive development emphasizing sustainability and resiliency.

Hamilton’s original Master Plan was the work of a renowned landscape architect, Charles W. Eliot II. In preparing the 2004 Master Plan, the drafters observed that Charles Eliot had a vision for Hamilton, although that term was not used by planners in the 1960s. That vision reflected “the abundance and timeless beauty of Hamilton’s open land, the prevalence of horse farms, the enclave of historic buildings around Hamilton Center, and the delicate pattern of streams and wetlands that run parallel to so many of Hamilton’s old roadways.” That vision reflects what may be described as a “sense of place” – those qualities that are unique to Hamilton – qualities that the community values even in the absence of knowledge of that terminology.

A “sense of place” is what draws many residents to Hamilton. People make a conscious choice to live here because of its small-town character and sense of community. The concept of “place” is abstract, and defining it is elusive; however, you know it when you see it. Place is found in the organizational patterns of the physical landscape, natural or built, i.e., hilltops, signature buildings, winding secondary roads, or in historical land uses, such as farms and mills.

These patterns extend beyond the visual. It is more than just the way the town “looks.” Place is also manifested in the interaction between humans and habitat. The organizational pattern of a farmstead or horse farm, for example, includes the familiar house, barns, paddocks and fields. But it also includes the experience of a farm—the sounds (livestock and tractors), the smells (manure and freshly mown hay), and the history associated with the site (perhaps owned by the same family for generations or renowned for its organic produce).

Hamilton’s history shows us patterns. The first settlers found fertile land and promptly began clearing land for agriculture. Marginal land (floodplains and wetlands) remained undeveloped. The major transportation and communication routes connecting Hamilton with its neighbors followed the original Native American trail systems along what is now Bay Road. Development along this route supported commercial and residential activities in the town center. These were surrounded by open farmland and concentrated residential development. Place, then, has its roots in the visual, the experiential, and the historical/cultural.

The purpose of the Master Plan is to recognize what makes Hamilton special and deserving of protection and preservation as Hamilton evolves and creates new spaces and confronts a changing environment.

Towns now recognize that “aesthetic” aspects of development are significant to the quality of the community and to the lives of its residents. Some areas do have appearance protections, for example, historic districts; but what of the other areas described above with a concentration of unique resources that are vulnerable to change such as a rural neighborhood or scenic roadway vista? These areas have aspects that are less tangible or quantifiable and require a more

comprehensive view revolving around objective design principles and appearance standards.

Planning efforts should recognize that certain qualities of history, culture and community are interconnected, timeless, and meaningful. They give communities a “sense of place.” Our built environment and the protection of our unique natural, visual, and historical/cultural resources are the physical foundation of planning.

Planning begins with a physical **vision** followed by a detailed implementation plan and concludes with regulations to secure our chosen direction. The intermediate step - implementation plan - in that process requires a formulation of goals, the purpose of which is to give depth and meaning to that vision while honoring a sense of place in a sustainable and resilient environment. What follows are statements of goals pertinent to issues and opportunities that Hamilton, as a community, must address. While the goals may be organized by topic, it is critical to the planning process to recognize that those topics and the goals framed to address them are interrelated and must be understood in a holistic way. One way of recognizing the interrelatedness of the goals is to honor Hamilton’s small-town character – its sense of place.

Hamilton’s residents make a conscious choice to live here, drawn to the Town by its sense of community and that “small-town character” – a frequent theme that emerged from public engagement. Maintaining and enhancing character is an over-arching principle that informs the goals and strives to answer these questions:

How do we ensure that development works in visual and functional concert with surrounding neighborhoods?

How would different types of development impact neighborhoods differently?

Can we define our community in ways that are understandable to its residents, instructive to those engaged in the process of development, and useful to Town decision makers who plan?

Although for convenience, we concentrate on topics, such as land use, housing, and economic development, it is important to imagine a future that would preserve valued community resources, meet community needs, and direct new growth to resolve problem conditions. Accordingly, the goals set forth below must be evaluated, not just in the context of an inventory of our valued resources and an identification of emerging patterns of landscapes with similar physical or cultural characteristics that provide Hamilton with its sense of place, but through assessment of the vulnerability of the resources to change and establishment of guidelines to mitigate that vulnerability.

Sustainability and resiliency are critical to adapting to a changing climate and their consideration must permeate all decisions made to formulate and then implement the goals in the Master Plan. “Sustainability” in its simplest description refers to the philosophy of encouraging activities that allow present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs while “resiliency” in the context of this Master Plan refers to the community’s ability to adapt to new circumstances and recover from sudden and/or adverse changes.

Figure 1.2: Chart of Planning Goals

| Protect... | Provide... | Grow... |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Natural Resources Goals Protect Hamilton's natural resources, biodiversity, and sensitive areas from environmental threats by empowering the Town to pursue and fund preservation efforts, enforce environmental regulations, and work toward its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040.</p> <p>Open Space and Recreation Goals Protect existing green spaces, scenic vistas, trails, and recreation sites, improve local recreation programs, and make Town-owned outdoor recreation areas available and accessible for the entire community.</p> <p>Cultural and Historic Resources Goals Protect Hamilton's historic structures and sites, especially in the Hamilton Historic District, by celebrating and preserving local history, agricultural and equestrian traditions.</p> | <p>Community Facilities and Services Goals Provide high-quality public facilities and schools by engaging in preventative maintenance and renovations, improve Hamilton's capacity to provide community services, including through increased regionalization, and provide excellent public utilities to meet long-term community needs.</p> <p>Transportation Goals Provide safe, high-quality, and sustainable transit in Hamilton by maintaining the Town's existing transportation infrastructure while creating convenient non-automobile connections between points of interest.</p> | <p>Economic Development Goals Develop the Town's existing business community by providing resources to make downtown Hamilton more welcoming, more aesthetic, and more accessible, while investigating commercial growth in other appropriate areas.</p> <p>Housing Goals Create a regulatory framework to develop diverse housing types in a creative and environmentally conscious manner and grow the Town's stock of affordable housing for a range of ages and household sizes.</p> <p>Land Use Adopt land use regulations that promote responsible commercial and residential development and redevelopment, while protecting the Town's open spaces, natural landscapes, and built environment.</p> |
| Looking Ahead... | | |
| <p>Implementation A Plan to implement recommendations for Goals, Action Steps and Responsibilities.</p> | <p>Implementation Charts An Implementation Chart with delineated Goals, Action Steps and Responsibilities.</p> | <p>Next Steps An Implementation Committee to address strategies to follow through on the Implementation Program.</p> |

2.0 Key Issues and Opportunities

OVERVIEW

The 2024 Master Plan is the Town's best opportunity to articulate the way its residents want to manage our community. The way we build will affect our viability and vitality as a community. Our choices will affect the underpinnings of our vision and, therefore, the nature and location of future development. All are interdependent and connected at their root by our concept of community.

This section summarizes Key Issues and Opportunities that were identified as part of the Master Plan update. These Key Issues were identified through:

- Input from community meetings devoted to hearing from Hamilton residents
- Responses to surveys
- Working sessions of the Master Plan Steering Committee

The best way to set priorities in a Master Plan is to isolate Key Issues into easily understood and actionable categories. It is equally critical to remember that an embedded assumption in any Master Plan is that the community is working at creating a unified vision so that goals are mutually supportive, and actions are not in opposition to one another. The result of this approach is that the Town is seen as one tapestry containing many unique, interdependent patterns, yet remains cohesive rather than as a series of separate unrelated goals and actions.

In the list of Key Issues and Opportunities below, as well as in the Implementation Plan, there is an effort made to mention some of the interconnections between the various goals. The interconnections referenced are by no means comprehensive or exhaustive. The challenge in every effort to put the Master Plan into action is to never lose sight of the interrelated nature of all the seemingly disparate categories of goals.

The purpose of this Master Plan is not to present a solution to the challenges implicated by the Key Issues confronting the Town or to dictate how opportunities will be addressed, but to provide a framework for how those challenges and opportunities may be evaluated, their interrelatedness recognized, and their solutions proposed.

Figure 2.1: Sustainability Model Diagram illustrates how towns can be managed by balancing the interaction of these **spheres**:¹

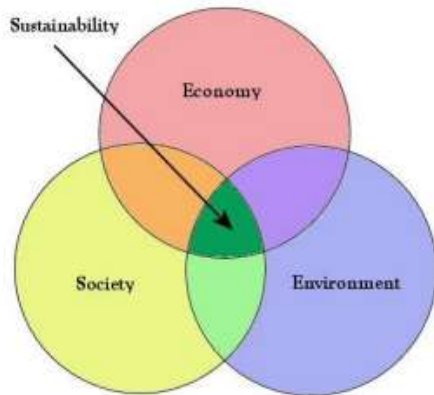


Figure 2.1: Sustainability Model Diagram

- **Economic opportunities**, e.g., improve fiscal benefits to community, balance jobs and housing, encourage economic opportunities that attract pedestrian activity.
- **Environmental quality**, e.g., ensure open space access in compactly built areas and preserve in edge areas, protect unique natural features, and mature tree growth, provide for scenic vistas.
- **Social well-being**, e.g., create links to natural areas and recreational activities, provide places for community interaction, create a sense of place and security.

The Key Issues and Opportunities fall naturally within these **spheres** - Conservation Quality, Economic Development, and Social Well-Being. These spheres underscore the Vision set forth in Section 1.2 of this Master Plan in terms of what the Town seeks to Protect, Grow, and Provide. While it is convenient to place each the Key Issue in a silo, it is critical to understand that the issues confronting the Town require an understanding of the interrelatedness of protecting of Hamilton's resources, natural, cultural, and historic, expanding its economic development and housing diversity while simultaneously providing necessary facilities and infrastructure. All these components will affect how Hamilton will decide to use its land and whether it will embrace and promote conservation while at the same time confronting environmental impacts of its decisions as the climate is changing.

2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

2.1.1 Natural Resources/Open Space and Recreation/Cultural and Historic Resources

Hamilton residents are proud of their culturally and historically important public spaces such as Patton Park and the Patton Homestead. Many participants in the planning process cited the promotion and improvement of these community resources as a high priority for the Town. The Patton Park Master Plan, published in 2023, involved a community planning process to develop a vision for the park and a plan for physical improvements to make it more accessible and usable. The proposed improvements are split into three phases to give the Town more flexibility in responding to funding opportunities.

With respect to Patton Park, a Key Issue for the Town is how to integrate Patton Park more fully into a cohesive plan for the Town Center and to enable it to serve as a reflection of the Town's character and sense of place. Hamilton should look more broadly at the relationship between

¹ 1987 Brundtland Report, World Commission on Environment and Development sponsored by the United Nations.

Patton Park and the surrounding areas. The opportunity is to tie this important public space more integrally into the greater downtown.

With respect to the Patton Homestead, a Key Issue for the Town is to obtain funding to make the historic building compliant with the Americans with Disability Act (ADA) and to expand its use and that of its beautiful grounds by all Town residents.

Patton Park and the Patton Homestead are examples of two areas with a “sense of place.” Both relate directly to specific activities and environmental conditions resulting from the interaction between natural and social systems.

A Key Issue and Opportunity for the Town is to identify all its Character Places so that when decisions are made these places can be recognized and protected. The task is fourfold:

- Inventory our valued resources which can be culled from the Inventory and Assessment Section.
- Identify landscapes with physical or cultural characteristics that typify the sense of place.
- Assess the vulnerability of the resources identified to change within each Character Place.
- Establish guidelines to mitigate that vulnerability. This procedure achieves two important design objectives: it creates a unity of variety and a way to measure success.

2.2 SOCIAL WELL-BEING

2.2.1 Community Facilities and Services

Drinking Water

A Key Issue and an extremely critical one facing Hamilton is availability of safe and reliable drinking water. Hamilton draws its water supply from four groundwater wells, but in recent years the Town has struggled to provide enough water to meet peak demand during the summer. Persistent water quality issues in the Idlewood wellfield will continue to lead to regular well shutdowns, ensuring that the Town will frequently be unable to operate its water systems at full capacity.² In 2022, a report evaluated the current water supply, projected future demand for the towns in the lower Ipswich River watershed, and tested the feasibility of several regional water-sharing solutions. The report predicted that by 2035, Hamilton will be unable to supply enough water to meet peak demand and recommended that the Town supplement local well water by integrating into larger regional systems. The Key Issue of safe and reliable drinking water supply may be addressed through a potential connection to the Salem and Beverly Water Supply Board’s system, or to the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), which serves the Greater Boston area. Town Staff are working with the Ipswich River Watershed Association, other municipalities in the watershed, and state legislators to develop regional water-sharing

² Dewberry Engineers Inc. “Regional Evaluation to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich River Watershed.” Prepared for the Town of Hamilton, June 2022.

solutions, but Hamilton should also remain vigilant in protecting its own water resources including Gravelly Pond and Round Pond which are part of the North Coastal Watershed.

Maintenance of Town Buildings

Many Town employees interviewed for this plan described public facilities that need maintenance, and the cost of that maintenance poses a Key Issue and a major challenge for the Town. Town Hall renovations are perhaps the most pressing public facilities need in Hamilton, although other structures like the Public Safety Building and many of the public-school buildings also require repairs and improvements. The Town has secured some funding for Town Hall renovations, notably a \$4 million grant from the Community Preservation Committee, but voters rejected a ballot measure that would have fully funded the project. Town officials are working to implement new, scaled-back renovation plans based on existing funding sources.³ A challenge will be to address the wishes of many participants in the planning process who emphasized energy-efficient design and green energy infrastructure like on-site photovoltaic energy generators for inclusion in any renovations to public buildings. The Town should ensure that plans for regular preventative maintenance are in place.

Regionalization

Hamilton has a uniquely close relationship with neighboring Wenham, sharing many resources including a public library, staff such as the Recreation Department, and a public school system. By pooling resources, the two relatively small towns can provide more services than either could on their own. Hamilton also cooperates with other neighboring communities. For example, it shares a human resources director with Rockport and Manchester-by-the-Sea. As the Town seeks to address the Key Issues described in this plan, residents and officials should seek opportunities to collaborate with other communities that also have a stake in regional issues to lessen the cost and administrative burdens of solutions.

2.2.2 Housing

Hamilton residents consistently reference affordable housing as a Key Issue that the Town must address. Affordability must be understood in two contexts, namely a reduction in the cost of market rate housing, potentially through increased density; and the provision of affordable housing in the context of Chapter 40B, as all Massachusetts communities have an obligation to provide at least 10 percent of their housing stock as affordable, income-restricted housing units. According to Census 2020, Hamilton has 2,783 year-round housing units, and only 114 of those units (about 4 percent) are included on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI). As of 2023, Hamilton would need to add 166 affordable units to the inventory to reach that 10 percent threshold.

Affordable Housing

With respect to Chapter 40B, Hamilton must continue to address its obligation under state law, but by producing at least 14 units of eligible housing in one calendar year and maintaining a current Housing Production Plan (HPP), it can achieve “safe harbor” status allowing more local control over comprehensive permit applications. Hamilton’s current HPP is set to expire in

³ *Annual Town Report 2022*, Town of Hamilton, 2022.

2024, and the Town intends to update its plan. Addressing the Key Issue of providing affordable housing as required by Chapter 40B, while simultaneously promoting housing projects that reflect a respect for the environment and Smart Growth principles, is a major challenge for the Town.

MBTA Communities Act

Hamilton can collaboratively build a community vision of what an ideal Town Center district would look like in the future. Once this vision is established, studied and understood, the goal of the MBTA Communities Act (G.L. c. 40, §3A) may be creatively evaluated to ascertain whether overlap exists between the Town vision and MBTA Communities Act's goal. The Act has garnered considerable controversy in several towns affected by the law, and the Supreme Judicial Court will be addressing several issues in the fall of 2024 which will affect how Hamilton responds to the Act. Issues include whether and to what extent municipalities are obligated to comply with the requirements of G. L. c. 40A, §3A (a) and (c), and the related "Compliance Guidelines for Multi-family Zoning Districts Under Section 3A of the Zoning Act," issued by what is now the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities; whether G. L. c. 40A, § 3A (b), provides the sole remedy for noncompliance; and whether and to what extent the Attorney General's office is authorized and has standing to enforce compliance with § 3A.

2.2.3 Proactive Planning for Housing

As noted above, a Key Issue for many Hamilton residents is the need to provide not only affordable housing, but a more diverse selection of housing types to better satisfy a wider range of households, including younger families and seniors. To address the demand for a wider variety of housing types and rental units because single-family homes are the default residential use in all areas of Hamilton, a Key Issue for the Town is an examination of its existing zoning. A form-based code is under consideration for the Town Center and the citizens may be called upon to consider the MBTA Communities Act, but review of existing bylaws may be warranted to enable young families to move to Hamilton and seniors to remain in Hamilton.

There are some opportunities to pursue different development routes like cluster developments, sometimes referred to as conservation subdivisions, or reuse of estate properties that the Town might pursue through zoning bylaw amendments. Alternatives to traditional single-family subdivision development like the Estate Overlay District and Open Space and Farmland Preservation Development (OSFPD) bylaw have never been used because they fail to offer attractive incentives to developers.⁴ The public expressed interest in encouraging conversion of existing structures to multifamily or congregate living units. Accordingly, existing zoning bylaws should be examined to ascertain if amendments could address an opportunity to produce these types of living units. (see Appendix B).

There are other potential opportunities for additional housing in Hamilton. In 2022, the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District began working with the Massachusetts School Building Authority (MBSA) to evaluate the potential replacement of the Cutler Elementary School. While major decisions about the direction of the project rest with voters who must approve requisite borrowing, School District officials have voted for the consolidation of the Cutler and Winthrop schools on the Cutler site. If that decision were to be adopted and requisite

⁴ Hamilton Department Heads Meeting, interview by Sarah Maren, December 19, 2023.

funding approved by Hamilton voters, the Winthrop School site might be available for development during the lifespan of this plan. The site is adjacent to downtown Hamilton and could be an appropriate location for residential and commercial development with easy access to downtown amenities and Patton Park. The site is also within a half-mile radius of the Hamilton-Wenham MBTA station and could be part of an MBTA Communities Act-compliant zoning district, depending upon the outcome of pending litigation and the vote of Hamilton residents as noted above.

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) also provides an opportunity for additional housing. In May 2022, GCTS announced plans to relocate its Hamilton operations and sell most, or all, of the 102 acres the Seminary owns in Hamilton. GCTS subsequently changed its plans and announced it intends to remain on most of the campus. It now intends to sell only the apartments and those might represent an opportunity for the Town to meet its obligations under Chapter 40B.

2.2.4 Preparedness, Sustainability and Resiliency

Many members of the public were interested in more planning for green infrastructure and making more funds available for local households and businesses to adopt climate resilience strategies. The Town's recent Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) planning work engaged residents in identifying Hamilton's most significant climate vulnerabilities: flooding, drought, and severe storms.⁵ Social and infrastructure vulnerabilities identified in the MVP process relate to other Key Issues discussed in this section, such as the need to secure an adequate drinking water supply and stable housing for vulnerable members of the community.

Other Key Issues relate to sustainability and resiliency. As noted in Section 1.3 "sustainability" in its simplest description refers to the philosophy of encouraging activities that allow present generations to meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, and "resiliency" refers to the community's ability to adapt to new circumstances and recover from sudden and/or adverse changes.

According to its Charter, the purpose of the Hamilton Environmental Impact Committee (HEIC) is to codify the Town of Hamilton's commitment to reducing our overall environmental impact and supporting work towards our net zero carbon energy goal as outlined in the Hamilton-Wenham Climate Action Team Resolution.

The primary responsibilities of the HEIC are to:

- Assess the environmental impact of climate change to understand how Hamilton can be more resilient to the coming change.
- Develop and coordinate a strategic plan that accomplishes our net zero carbon energy goal by 2024.
- Prioritize and recommend specific short-term action items based on the results of our Municipal Vulnerability Study; and

⁵ *Town of Hamilton Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings*, prepared by MAPC, October 2019.

- Serve as a liaison and representative for the interests and goals of the Town of Hamilton as it pertains to environmental initiatives relative to our regional and shared services.

Accordingly, the HEIC has an important role to play in assessing this Key Issue.

2.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

2.3.1 Commercial Development

Throughout the Master Plan process, many Hamilton residents expressed a desire for more commercial development in Town to provide valuable services locally and to bolster the Town's commercial tax base. When redevelopment opportunities are discussed, residents often cite mixed commercial and residential development as part of their vision for commercial growth. While commercial growth in the Town Center and elsewhere may be a priority for residents, a Key Issue relating to that growth concerns is whether the Town can provide the public utilities necessary to attract and sustain a larger commercial base. Less than 1 percent of Hamilton's land area is zoned for commercial uses and a lack of public sewer and a strained public water supply pose challenges that may discourage businesses from moving to Hamilton even if regulatory barriers are removed. Nevertheless, owing to Smart Growth principles and the input from many residents, the Hamilton Town Center is a top priority for both commercial and residential development, as it is a transit hub with a commuter rail station, and a center for local culture and recreation where residents gather. Strengthening downtown to function as a true regional destination is a Key Issue that will require improved pedestrian connections to facilitate a natural flow of people between points of interest and clear wayfinding to encourage visitors to explore more of the area. The Town has engaged a consultant to draft a form-based code for the Town Center and that endeavor is likely to result in a zoning change that voters may consider and approve at a Town meeting as an innovative and compelling way to strengthen the Town Center.

3.0 Inventory and Assessment

OVERVIEW

Massachusetts General Law stipulates that each municipality must include the following **elements** at a minimum in its Master Plan as noted here:

*“Such plan shall be a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. The comprehensive plan shall be internally consistent in its policies, forecasts and standards, and shall include the following **elements**:*

- (1) Goals and policies statement....*
- (2) Land use plan element....*
- (3) Housing element....*
- (4) Economic development element....*
- (5) Natural and cultural resources element....*
- (6) Open space and recreation element....*
- (7) Services and facilities element....*
- (8) Circulation element....*
- (9) Implementation program element...”⁶*

ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

Consistent with the Vision Statement the Master Plan **elements** are organized into three broad categories:

PROTECT....

PROVIDE....

GROW....

With a fourth for preparing a strategy for guiding future actions:

LOOKING AHEAD....

⁶ Mass G.L., Part I, Title VII, Chapter 41, Section 81D

3.1 PROTECT

3.1.1 Natural Resources Areas

OVERVIEW



*Wetlands on the Patton
Homestead property.*

Hamilton enjoys a variety of beautiful and important natural resources including high-quality agricultural lands, forests, lakes, rivers, wetlands and freshwater aquifers that support regional water resources and habitat. Hamilton's natural resources play a defining role in the Town's development patterns and character. In both direct and indirect ways, the Town's natural resources support the local and regional economy, community health, natural hazard mitigation, and local agriculture, while also providing scenic and recreational opportunities. However, Hamilton's natural resources are at risk from improperly managed development and human activity. For all these reasons, natural resource management is a critical component

of this Master Plan and plays an important role in planning for Hamilton's future.

EXISTING RESOURCES⁷

Geography

Hamilton's geography is relatively gentle, sloping land covered by fields, forests, residential development, and a historic district, all under 200 feet above sea level. The eastern portion of the Town has relatively flat areas (0-5% slopes).⁸ Almost 40 percent (39.9%) of the Town's low-lying areas consist of wetlands with deep marshes, shallow marsh meadows, open water, shrub and wooded swamp areas.⁹ Higher portions of the landscape are boulders, clay, and bedrock that are slow to drain, making them problematic for septic systems. In total, over 50 percent of the Town's land is covered by wetlands and steep slopes.¹⁰ These are some natural constraints on development.

Floodplains

There are approximately 2,353 acres of land within the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain, and 111.7 acres of land within the 500-year floodplain within the Town of Hamilton, together comprising 26 percent of the Town's land area¹¹ (See Map 3.1.1 FEMA National Flood Hazards). Localized flooding has occurred throughout the watershed and was identified as a key concern in the 2019 Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.¹² These areas

⁷ Unless otherwise noted, inventory content in Section 3.1 is based on the Town of Hamilton Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2008.

⁸ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: Elevation Contours (1:5000), June 2003.

⁹ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: MassDEP Wetlands (2005), updated December 2017.

¹⁰ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: MassDEP Wetlands (2005), updated December 2017; MassGIS Data: Elevation Contours (1:5000), June 2003.

¹¹ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer, July 2017.

¹² Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Town of Hamilton Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, 2019, 23-24.

are:

- Woodbury Street culvert/ beaver-induced flooding; stormwater runoff from nearby lots backs up onto Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary land.
- Beaver dam at New England Biolabs; backs up Miles River and adds to siltation and vegetation
- Winthrop Street Bridge
- Bradford Road/ Sharon Road
- Flooding at Bay Road and Patton Park, Horseshoe, and Tally Ho Drives

Other known flooding sites include:

- Parallel to Tally Ho Drive and Locust Street
- Bay Road across from High School
- Harrigan's Field Neighborhood
- Miles River Road
- Lake Shore Drive / Chebacco Lake
- Chebacco Road (hillside erosion)
- Flooding at Essex Street - needs to be tied to Appaloosa Street drainage

Additionally, the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning process identified beaver management programs and the Miles River Vegetation Management study as important strategies to control flooding.¹³ Better management of forests and preservation/acquisition of open space to protect and buffer against the effects of flooding were also strategies identified to help mitigate the effects of climate change.¹⁴

Special Flood Hazard Areas (SFHAs) are designated on the Hamilton's Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) for the administration of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as Zones A and AE, which indicate the 100-year regulatory floodplain (Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2019). The MassGIS FEMA National Flood Hazard layer is a compilation of effective Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) databases. This layer has 2,353 acres of land that has been designated as Zones A and AE. These areas include:¹⁵

- Ipswich River
- Miles River
- Idlewild Brook
- Black Brook
- Pleasant Pond
- Cutler Pond
- Chebacco Lake
- Gravelly Pond
- Beck Pond

¹³ Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Town of Hamilton Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings, October 24, 2019.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: FEMA National Flood Hazard Layer, July 2017.

- Round Pond

These are locations where the NFIP's floodplain management regulations must be enforced because they are within the land area covered by the floodwaters of the base or 100-year flood.

Wetlands and Vernal Pools

Forty percent of the Town consists of low-lying wetlands with deep marshes, shallow marsh meadows, open water, and shrub and wooded swamp areas. Hamilton has several very scenic wetland areas, including Wenham Swamp, Miles River, Black Brook, and on the fringe of Chebacco Lake. Wetlands constitute an integral part of the natural environment, and more specifically, the hydrologic system. In addition to diversifying the landscape, wetlands often play a significant role in the storage of water, flood control, and the maintenance of water quality. Wetlands are one of the most effective natural carbon sinks, as they absorb and store large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, making them a crucial tool in mitigating the effects of climate change while also serving as habitat for a variety of wildlife species. Additionally, wetlands may serve as groundwater recharge or discharge areas. Map 4.3.2 (MassDEP Wetlands) shows wetland areas throughout Hamilton.

The existence of wetlands depends on the relative stability of a variety of natural influences, including groundwater elevation, soil type, topography and surface waters. The alteration of one or more of these factors may result in profound changes in both the structure and function of wetland communities. For example, the lowering of the water table or the diversion of surface water away from a wetland may result in conditions suitable for upland vegetation, and thus the eventual loss of the wetland.

Vernal pools, also known as ephemeral pools, are unique, ecologically significant seasonal pools of water that provide habitat for distinctive plants and animals. They are a specific type of wetland usually devoid of fish, and thus allow the safe development of natal amphibian and insect species unable to withstand competition or predation by fish. According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Office, Hamilton currently has 13 certified vernal pools which are located on private land.

As noted on the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) website, Massachusetts is somewhat unique in its efforts to protect vernal pools. In 1988, the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act was amended to include wildlife habitat as a reason to protect wetlands, and in recognition of the value of vernal pools to wildlife, they were defined and included in regulations. Hamilton's local Conservation Bylaw outlines some unique protections for vernal pools and other wetlands resource areas in Town.

Geology and Soils

The areas of Town with low, flat to rolling terrain are marked by eskers or ice contact deposits that drain slowly, and flat sandy outwash areas, characterized by pitch pine and oaks. The portion of the Town with higher slopes (15-17% slopes) contain boulders, clay, and till or bedrock of all sizes that are slow to drain.¹⁶ These higher sites include:

- Brown's Hill, southeastern portion of the Town
- Blueberry and Moon Hill at Bradley Palmer State Park, northwest portion of the Town

¹⁶ Town of Hamilton. Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2008; MassGIS Data: USGS 1:24,000 Surficial Geology, August 2015.

- Willow Hill and Sagamore Hill at the Sagamore Hill Conservation Area, northeastern portion of the Town
- Scilly Hill, southern area of Town
- Vineyard Hill to the west, in between Bradley Palmer State Park and the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary
- Chebacco Woods Conservation Area, southeastern portion of the Town

The bedrock is made up of 450 million years old igneous rock high in potassium and sodium and is visible in a few places but overlaid by glacial deposits in most areas. The glacial outwash sediments are Hamilton's best agricultural land. These soils are also favorable for building residences and septic systems.

Habitat

The forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes in the Town provide habitat for a variety of regionally significant and rare fauna and flora, while also supporting community health via the provision of clean water and providing scenic and recreational opportunities. These undeveloped areas comprise 6,513.6 acres (68%) of Hamilton's land.¹⁷

Hamilton contains significant connected blocks of undeveloped forest identified by BioMap2 as Critical Natural Landscape and Forest Core. BioMap2 is a report on biodiversity conservation that includes local biodiversity information to assist in specific conservation efforts at the town or regional level. Critical Natural Landscape areas identify larger landscape areas that are better able to support ecological processes, disturbances, and wide-ranging species. Hamilton has approximately 2,800 acres of Critical Natural Landscape area.¹⁸ Much of the forest area in Town is intact and connected, thus these areas are uniquely able to support key species (both plants and animals). It is important to keep the value of this connectivity in mind as Hamilton considers which areas in Town to develop.

A variety of wildlife species are supported by lands within Hamilton. Audubon-identified important bird areas (IBAs) make up more than half of the Town, at 5,900 acres. These IBAs support 10 conservation priority bird species for the region, whose breeding is threatened by fragmentation of habitat from development. The IBAs include Appleton Farm and the Eastern Essex County Interior Forest complex.¹⁹ The Ipswich River, Chebacco Lake, and various riparian areas provide important habitat for the blue-spotted salamander, rare plants, and spawning habitat for alewife and cold-water fisheries.²⁰

The wetlands, rivers, and marshes in the Town provide habitat for regionally significant or rare birds, fish, reptiles/amphibians, and flora.²¹ The freshwater marshes, swamps, and floodplain forests that border the Ipswich River support several important bird species. Wood ducks use wetland plants in the area for food and nest cavities to raise their young, and rare state-listed

¹⁷ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: Land Use (2005), updated June, 2009.

¹⁸ MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. BioMap2: Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing World, n.d., and Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, BioMap2, 2012.

¹⁹ Mass Audubon. Massachusetts Important Bird Areas (IBA), n.d.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.; Nor'East Chapter Trout Unlimited, n.d.

birds such as the Pied-Billed Grebe and Least Bittern may nest in beaver-enhanced wetlands.²²

In 2015, Trout Unlimited with support from the Marine Fisheries, undertook the task of improving fish passage in the Ipswich River by revitalizing an antiquated concrete fish ladder that had fallen into disrepair.²³ The success of this effort included an improved passage for American eel and herring.²⁴

As large woodlands continue to be cut up for a wide variety of human uses, many interior-breeding species are showing significant population declines.²⁵ Mass Audubon lists the Blue-Spotted Salamander, the Ringed Bog Haunter, the Arrowhead Spike Tail, and sixty-seven species of butterflies as endangered/species of concern. The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Office lists species that are scarce in Massachusetts and considered to be endangered, threatened, or of special concern.²⁶

Climate change is expected to adversely affect biodiversity in Hamilton. Winters will be warmer with less snow cover to protect soil and tree roots. High-intensity rain and wind events will exacerbate soil erosion, especially on steep slopes, disturbed land, and agricultural fields that may be without a winter cover crop. Invasive species will be more widespread, with new species arriving. Wildlife groups including higher-altitude birds, salamanders, cold-adapted fish, and freshwater mussels will be particularly affected by changing temperatures, precipitation, and stream levels. The arrival of migrating birds may be out of synchronicity with the time of leaf-out and insect infestations. Southern species will benefit from warming and may gradually displace native northern species in the forest, but protecting diverse habitats and managing land well can help mitigate these potential effects. Through planning decisions, the Town can mitigate future effects of climate change and better adapt to the changes that are currently underway.²⁷

Surface Water Resources

Hamilton is bordered by the Ipswich River to the northwest, Chebacco Lake to the east, and includes several small ponds and numerous tributaries (See Map 3.1.3 Surface Water). Hamilton's water sources provide several recreational uses such as swimming, fishing, and boating but occasionally experience low flows and water quality impairments.²⁸ The Ipswich River was named among America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2021, especially because of threats of low flows caused by extended droughts and nonpoint source pollution.²⁹ The Ipswich River is one of the largest paddling destinations in Massachusetts and is a Mass Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary, part of the Eastern Essex County Interior Forest Important Bird Area.³⁰ Pumping and changes to inflows have led to low flows and even dry conditions in some sections, which can dry up critical habitat for fish, raise water temperatures, lower dissolved oxygen

²² Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.

²³ Nor'East Chapter Trout Unlimited, n.d.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.

²⁶ MassGIS. *MassGIS Data: NHESP Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife*, August, 2021.

²⁷ Resilient MA. *Featured Initiatives*, n.d.; MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. *BioMap2: Conserving Biodiversity in a Changing World*, n.d.

²⁸ Ipswich River Watershed Association. *River Conditions*, n.d.

²⁹ *Ipswich River named among America's Most Endangered Rivers*, n.d.

³⁰ Ipswich River Watershed Association. *River Conditions*, n.d.; Mass Audubon. *Bird Checklist Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary*, n.d.

levels, and impede paddling.³¹

The Miles River is also impaired from nonpoint pollution sources and low flows.³² All impairments and outfalls discharging to primary waterbodies are summarized in Table 3.1.1, below. The Miles River requires a total maximum daily load (TMDL) according to the U.S. Clean Water Act. A TMDL is a regulatory term describing a plan for restoring impaired waters that identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant that a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

| Table 3.1.1 Receiving Waters and Impairments | |
|--|--|
| Water Body | Impairment |
| Miles River (MA92-03) | Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Bioassessments, Fecal Coliform |
| Chebacco Lake (MA93014) | None |
| Black Brook (MA92-19) | None |
| Beck Pond (MA93003) | None |
| <i>Source: Town of Hamilton's 2019 Stormwater Management Plan.</i> | |

Groundwater and Aquifer Recharge Areas

Hamilton draws its drinking water from groundwater resources that are hydrologically connected with the Ipswich and Miles Rivers and their tributaries. Because the drinking water aquifer lacks hydrogeologic barriers and most of the Town's soils are highly permeable, it has a high vulnerability to contamination. Severe and extended droughts are also creating increased risk to water supplies. Map 3.1.4 Aquifers & Aquifer Protection illustrates the aquifer areas in Hamilton as well as the aquifer protection zones and interim wellhead protection areas.

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The Hamilton Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting the Town of Hamilton's wetlands resources. It does this by working with residents to comply with the state Conservation Commission Act (*G.L. c. 40, § 8C*), state Wetlands Protection Act (*G.L. c.131, § 40*), and the Town of Hamilton non-zoning Conservation Bylaw (Town of Hamilton Bylaws Chapter XVII), which contains additional requirements deemed necessary by residents to protect our local wetland values. The Hamilton Conservation Bylaw was last updated in 2023, by a vote at the Annual Town Meeting.

The Commission reviews activities proposed within 100 feet of any wetland, marsh, swamp or bank that borders any waterway or waterbody, land under those waters, or lands that flood; and activities within 200 ft from larger watercourses. This review process is utilized to contribute to the following interests: protect public, private, and groundwater supply, control floods, prevent storm damage, prevent pollution, and protect fisheries, shellfish, and wildlife habitat.

The Commission consists of up to seven volunteers each serving a 3-year renewable term and is supported by one part-time Conservation Agent. It serves as a resource for residents on wetlands issues, including through consultations with the agent, site visits, educational events, and informational resources. There are twice monthly public meetings and hearings.

³¹ Ipswich River Watershed Association. *River Conditions*, n.d.

³² MassDEP. *MassDEP Online Map Viewer*, 2014.

A Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP)³³ includes Best Management Practices (BMPs) and public education measures to be implemented to improve and manage stormwater in the Town of Hamilton. Stormwater runoff is generated from rain events and snowmelt that flow over land and impervious surfaces like pavement or rooftops. The stormwater runoff picks up pollutants like trash, chemicals, nutrients and oils that can harm our lakes, rivers, streams and coastal waters. Stormwater runoff carrying accidental spills from hard surfaces like streets, parking lots and driveways can threaten drinking water stored in surface reservoirs. Additionally, nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus which are found in animal wastes, fertilizers, and faulty septic systems are a significant source of pollution to nearby waterbodies.³⁴

Concluded in 2022, the overall purpose for the Water Management Act (WMA) Grant to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich River Watershed is to conduct a regional evaluation of alternative sources to improve water supply resiliency within the lower Ipswich River Watershed for the Town of Hamilton and its neighboring communities of Topsfield, Ipswich, Essex, Rowley, and Wenham.³⁵

In 2019, the Town used a grant from the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program to conduct a Community Resilience Building workshop in which residents were invited to:

- *Define top local natural and climate-related hazards of concern;*
- *Identify existing and future strengthen and vulnerabilities;*
- *Develop prioritized actions for the community;*
- *Identify immediate opportunities to collaboratively advance actions to increase resilience.*³⁶

³³ Town of Hamilton. Stormwater Management Plan MS4 General Permit Compliance, June 2020.

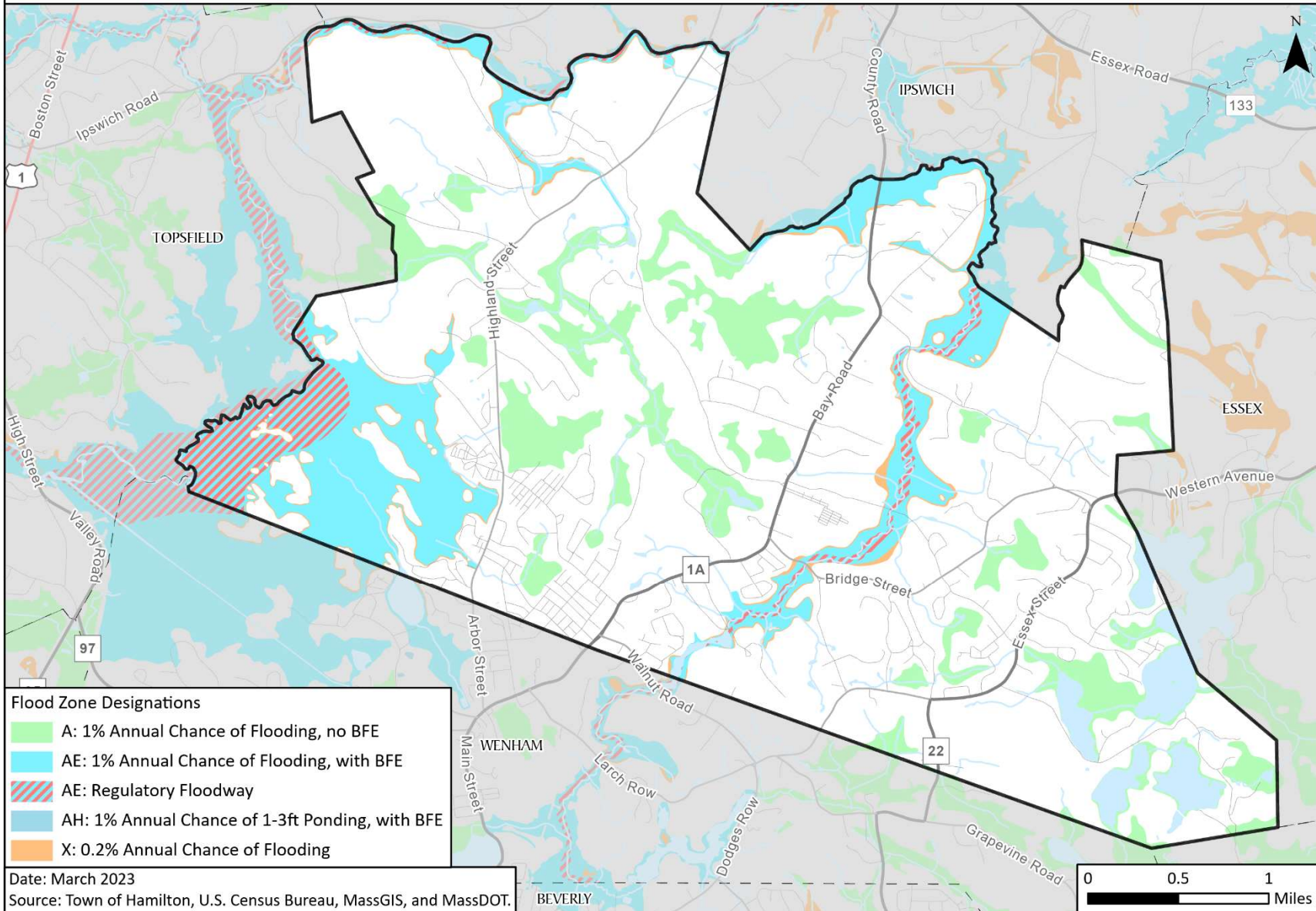
³⁴ Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation, DCR Stormwater Management, What is Stormwater Runoff and Why Does it Matter?, Accessed April 2023.

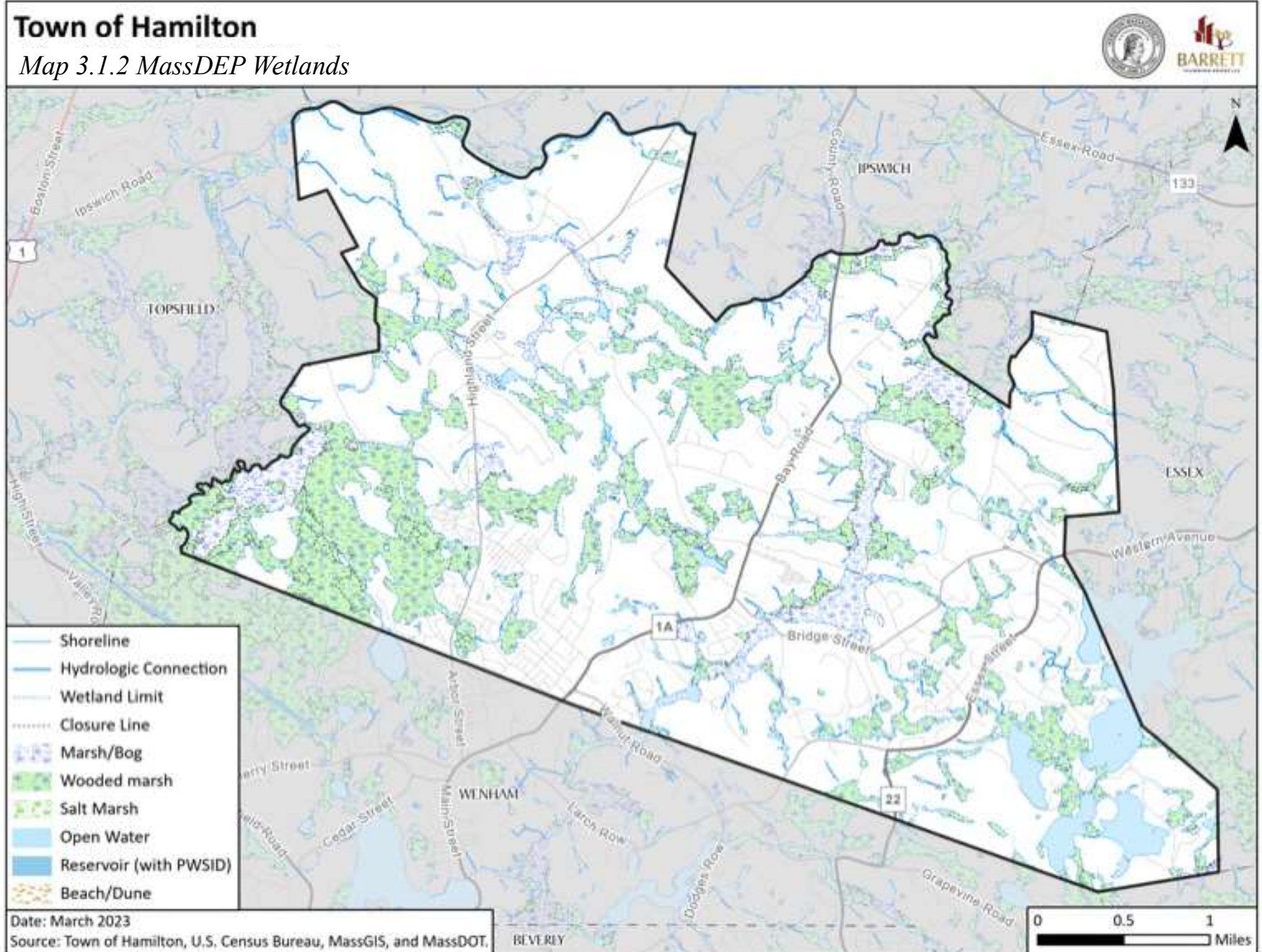
³⁵ Town of Hamilton. *Water Management Act (WMA) Grant to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich River Watershed*, 2022. By Dewberry Engineers, Inc., Ipswich River Watershed Association, Town of Hamilton Department of Public Works.

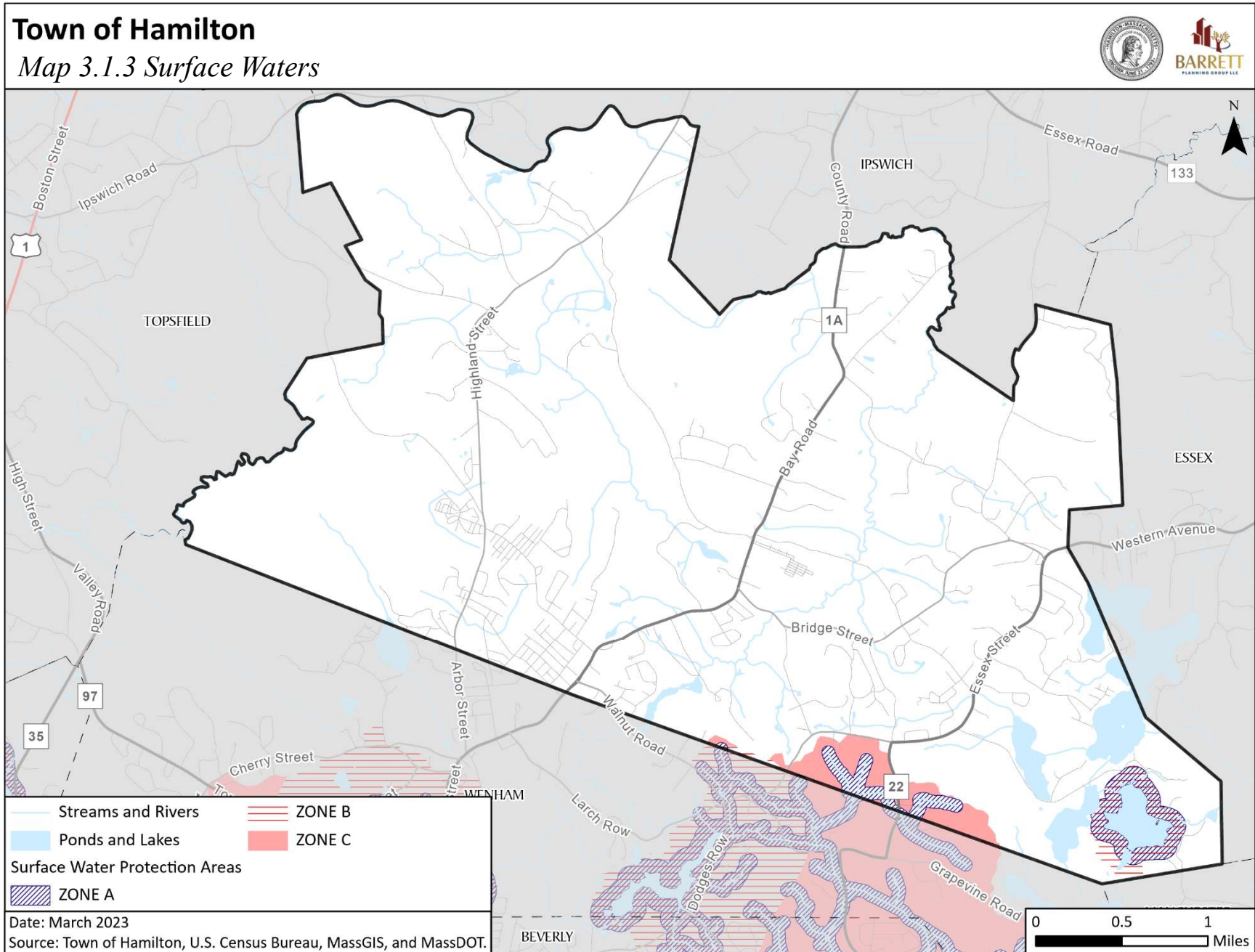
³⁶ Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Town of Hamilton Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of

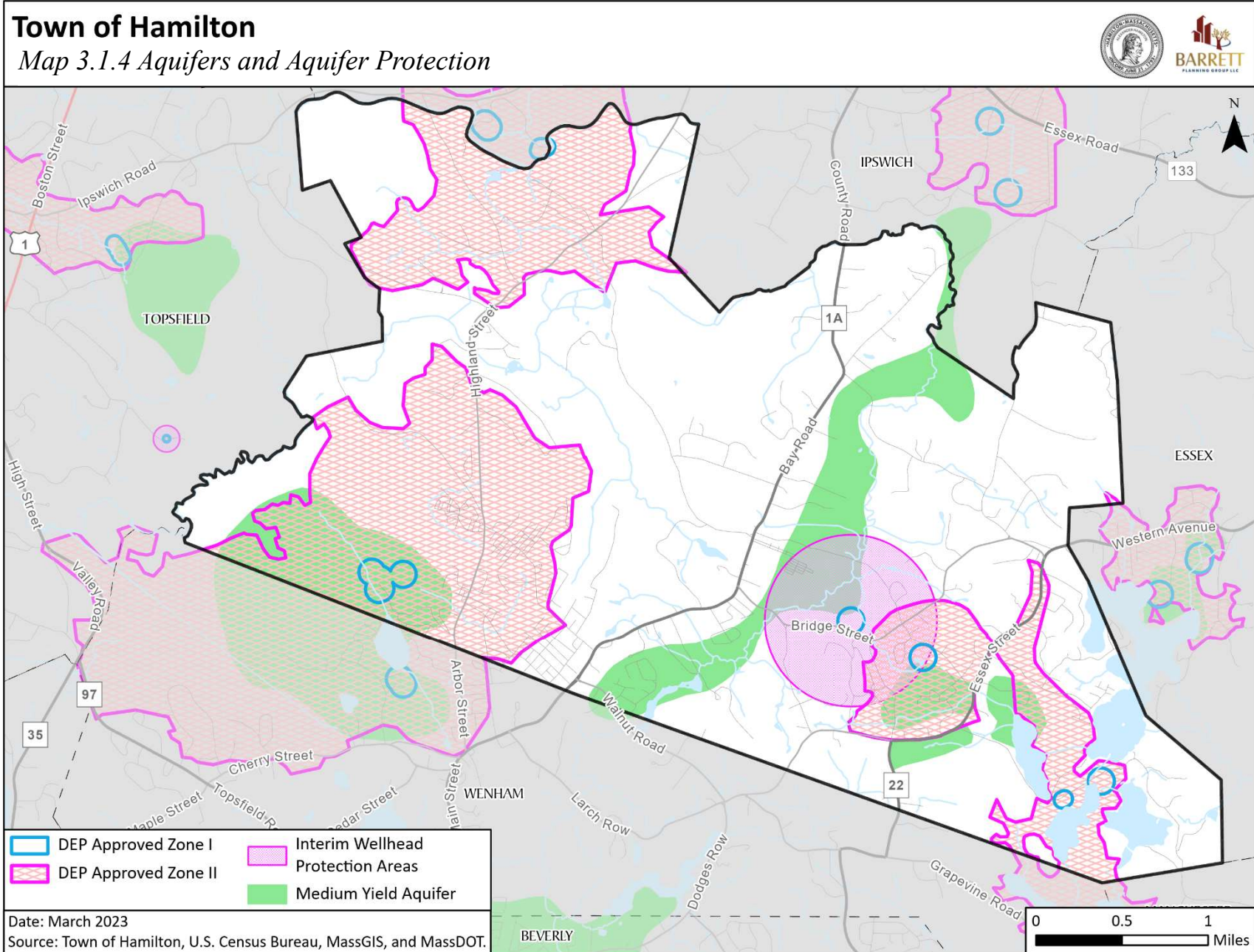
Town of Hamilton

Map 3.1.1 FEMA National Flood Hazards



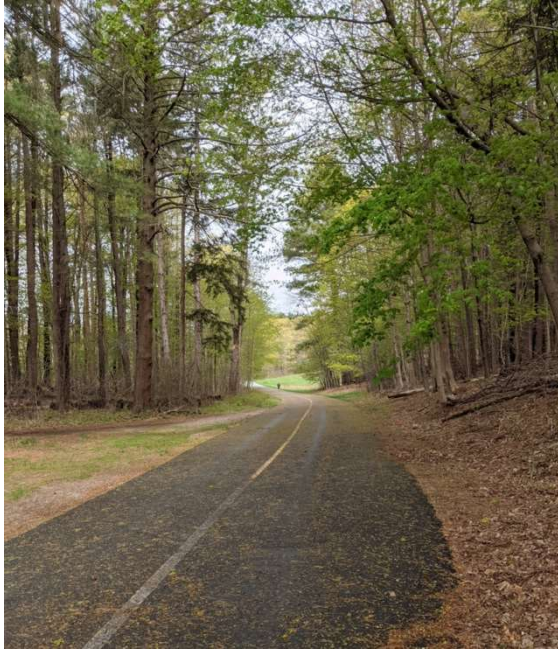






3.1.2 Open Space and Recreation

OVERVIEW



A view from Bradley Palmer State Park.

Hamilton hosts a range of open space and recreation areas, all of which contribute to its unique atmosphere and rural character. As a residential suburb to Boston and other urbanized areas, Hamilton offers the charm of a small New England town, largely due to its ample outdoor space. At the same time, Hamilton remains accessible to nearby cities, which makes it desirable for commuters. This section studies Hamilton's open space and recreation resources to help plan for future change that doesn't sacrifice the Town's identity.

EXISTING CONDITIONS³⁷

"Open Space" typically refers to conservation land, forested land, agricultural land, neighborhood parks, active recreation areas, passive recreation areas, as well as vacant or undeveloped lands. Open spaces vary by ownership, environmental protections, and primary use. Most open space is

protected to some degree, but not all. Several levels of protection are applied to open space lands, as discussed in the Land Use Chapter. These levels are broken down into the categories: in perpetuity, limited, Chapter 61, or none:

- *In perpetuity* refers to lands that are legally and permanently protected and are recorded as such in a deed or other binding document. Land falls into this category through a few different means. First, land can be considered protected in perpetuity if it is owned by a Town's conservation commission or water department. Other methods of conservation include conservation restrictions, ownership by a state conservation agency or non-profit land trust, or if the Town received federal or state assistance for the purchase or improvement of the property.
- *Limited* is another category of open space protection. In many cases, limited protections differ from those listed above in that any changes to the protection status must be approved by a majority vote by the municipality. Limited protection can also apply to open space areas that are protected by functional or traditional use types. For example, some school district lands are only temporarily protected while public education is a primary use. Some water district lands are only temporarily protected while water resource protection is their primary use.
- *Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B* refer to tax incentive programs that aim to protect forest, agricultural, and recreation land, respectively. Property owners can opt in or out of

³⁷ Unless otherwise noted, content in Section 4.5 is based on the Town of Hamilton Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2008.

these tax credits, thus making the open space susceptible to changes in legal protections down the line.

- Finally, a *non-protected* status generally refers to land that is privately owned and can be sold without restriction for another use.
- *Recreation* refers to outdoor areas with activities meant for relaxation, exercise, or enjoyment. This category is most often divided into “active” and “passive” recreation.
- *Active recreation* refers to high intensity activities that require the use of a specialized facility. This includes athletic fields, playgrounds, and swimming pools.
- *Passive recreation* refers to lower intensity programs that don’t necessitate formalized facilities. This sub-section includes activities like hiking, biking, running, walking, nature observation, and horseback riding.

Compiling information about Hamilton’s existing open space and recreation assets helps identify areas for growth, conservation, protection, and management.

Hamilton has a total area of 9,536 acres, 4,065 of which (42.6 percent) is open space.³⁸ The large overall proportion of open space is one of the Town’s core characteristics and has long been a part of its rural identity. Several of the large open space properties also serve as regional resources. These properties include an extensive network of trails, recreation areas, and conservation areas. The largest open space properties by ownership include a portion of Mass Audubon’s Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary and the Bradley Palmer State Park, which serve regional populations and towns and include portions of the Bay Circuit trail system. The Town also shares conservation land purchased in Chebacco Woods with Manchester-by-the-Sea.

Open Space Inventory

This section primarily focuses on inventorying Hamilton’s existing open space assets through the lens of protected versus unprotected land. This filter is crucial in understanding which open space areas are potentially at risk of development and those that could be expanded or connected with other existing resources. Map 3.1.5 Open Space by Level of Protection, shows open space by level of protection and Map 3.1.6 Open Space by Ownership shows open space by ownership.

- The non-profit Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA) is one of the largest open space landowners in Hamilton and manages several conservation properties.³⁹ Other enterprises that hold legal interest in land with conservation restrictions in Hamilton include the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR) Division of State Parks and Recreation, the Town of Hamilton, and the Massachusetts Audubon Society (also called Mass Audubon). Below is a brief description of landowners with properties totaling five percent or more.
- Founded in 1896, the Mass Audubon is New England’s largest nature-based conservation organization. This nonprofit group focuses on the conservation and restoration of land, advocates for environmental policies, offers educational programs, and offers opportunities to explore the outdoors.

³⁸ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space, August 2022.

³⁹ Greenbelt Essex County’s Land Trust, n.d.

- Division of State Parks and Recreation (DCR) is run by the state government with the aim of managing and overseeing natural, cultural, and recreational resources across Massachusetts. Funding for the maintenance of most DCR properties comes from either the state, public-private partnerships, or modest parking fees.
- Trustees of Reservations was founded by renowned architect and urban planner Charles Eliot to act as a steward of ecologically and culturally significant landscapes. The Trustees manage over 100 properties across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that annually attract around 2 million visitors. This group is classified as a non-profit land conservation and historic preservation organization.
- Essex County Trail Association (ECTA) is a non-profit group that works to protect and preserve trails across the towns of Essex, Hamilton, Ipswich, Topsfield, Wenham, and West Newbury. ECTA collects membership fees but also relies upon a variety of partnerships with public and private landowners, land trusts, and local conservation commissions for access to land and funding.
- Myopia Hunt Club is a privately owned foxhunting and country club in Hamilton. The Club dates to the 19th century and has hosted several U.S. Opens. Originally established as a “summer community,” the 328-acre Myopia Hunt Club property is used for foxhunting, golfing, polo, and other activities. This private club attracts members from Hamilton and other nearby areas.
- Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea is a municipality which abuts Hamilton. Two of Manchester-by-the-Sea’s largest conservation properties, Chebacco Woods and Gravelly Pond, extend across the Hamilton border, making that Town a de facto top landholder in Hamilton.
- Town of Hamilton - Among the largest open space owners in Hamilton, the Town itself ranks low on the list, as most of its holdings are recreational fields or small parks. The Town tends to partner with land trust organizations for the oversight of its larger natural resources or those shared with nearby towns.

About a quarter of Hamilton’s open space (1,236 acres) is protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution. All land acquired by Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) agencies (either in fee simple or by Conservation Restriction) is protected under Article 97 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution. EEA has a “no net loss” policy regarding the disposition of any Article 97 protected open space. Land that is protected under Article 97 requires a two-thirds vote of the Legislature regarding the disposition of any protected open space.⁴⁰

Recently, Hamilton has worked not just to preserve its existing open space, but to protect and acquire additional parcels. These include a gift of 27 acres of restricted open space with Riverwalk Reservation and a canoe launch at the Patton Homestead, the Community Preservation Act (CPA)-funded acquisition of 170 acres at Sagamore Hill (Hamilton holds the Conservation Restriction and the Essex County Greenbelt Association owns the land), and a Land Acquisition Policy that established a uniform method for obtaining assets.⁴¹ Table 3.1.6

⁴⁰ Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

⁴¹ Town of Hamilton, 2020; Town of Hamilton, 2019.

Open Space by Ownership, lists landholders totaling five percent or more of Hamilton's open space.

| Table 3.1.2 Major Open Space Landowners | | | |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Landowner | Owner Type | Total (%) of Open Space | Major Properties |
| Mass Audubon | Land Trust | 15% | Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary |
| DCR – Division of State Parks and Recreation | State | 12% | Bradley Palmer State Park |
| Trustees of Reservations | Land Trust | 11.4% | Appleton Farms, Pine and Hemlock Knoll Reservation |
| Essex County Greenbelt Association | Land Trust | 11% | Donovan Reservation, General George S Patton Reservation, McCarthy Reservation, Osgood Reservation, Pingree Swamp Reservation, Pingree Woodlands Reservation, Willowdale Mill |
| Myopia Hunt Club | Private | 8.6% | Myopia Hunt Club |
| Town Of Manchester-by-the-Sea | Municipal | 7.1% | Chebacco Woods Conservation Area, Gravelly Pond Watershed |
| Town of Hamilton | Municipal | 5% | Chebacco Lake Town Landing and Beach, Cutler Elementary School, Winthrop School, Donovan Fields and Woods, Hamilton Cemetery, Hamilton Water Supply Land, Patton Park, Patton Wells, Pinetree Drive Well Area, School Street Well, Town Well |
| <i>Source: MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021.</i> | | | |

Table 3.1.3 identifies the five largest open space parcels in Hamilton.

| Table 3.1.3 Large Open Space Properties | | | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Name | Landowner | Public / Private | Protection Level | Area in Hamilton (Acres) | Total (%) of Open Space |
| Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary | Massachusetts Audubon Society | Public | Protected in perpetuity | 616.31 | 15.2% |
| Bradley Palmer State Park | DCR – Division of State Parks and Recreation | Public | Protected in perpetuity | 488.3 | 12.0% |
| Appleton Farms | Trustees of Reservations | Public | Protected in perpetuity | 460.13 | 11.3% |
| Myopia Hunt Club | Myopia Hunt Club | Private | Protected in perpetuity | 350.41 | 8.6% |
| Gravelly Pond Reservation | Town of Manchester-by-the-Sea | Public | Protected in perpetuity | 173.44 | 4.3% |
| <i>Source: MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021.</i> | | | | | |

Ipswich Wildlife Sanctuary spans 2,000 acres across Hamilton, Wenham, and Topsfield, with over 600 acres of the property falling within Hamilton's borders. This property offers 12 miles of trails that take visitors through a range of habitats and hilly topography. The Sanctuary is managed to support bird species by protecting breeding sites, nesting places, and Spring courtship display areas.

Bradley Palmer State Park is owned and operated by DCR, Massachusetts' Parks and Recreation department. The park is split between Hamilton and the neighboring Town of Topsfield and contains over 700 acres. Appleton Farms includes over 900 acres across Ipswich and Hamilton and is one of the oldest continuously operating farms in the country. The portion of Appleton Farms that sits within Hamilton includes Appleton Farms Grass Rides, which offers over five miles of trails that are used for walking and horseback riding.

Chebacco Woods area was acquired after a major fundraising and outreach effort, involving multiple state agencies and non-profits, before the towns of Hamilton and Manchester-by-the-Sea jointly purchased approximately 115 acres of what is now protected open space. This park offers a range of recreational activities, such as hiking, biking, jogging, horseback riding, kayaking, canoeing, and fishing.

Tables 3.1.4 Open Space Protection by Protection Level and 3.1.5 Total Open Space Protection by Protection Type, detail the levels of open space protection in Hamilton.

| Table 3.1.4 Open Space Protection by Protection Level | | |
|---|-------|---------------------|
| Protection Level | Acres | % of Protected Land |
| In Perpetuity | 3,881 | 95% |
| Limited (not by time) | 76 | 2% |
| None | 108 | 3% |
| Total Protected Land | 4,065 | |
| Source: MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021. | | |

Recreation Facility Inventory

An inventory of recreation facilities will help the Town determine if there are gaps in the kinds of amenities it provides as well as identify the types of physical spaces, programs, maintenance regimens, or budgetary issues that could be improved. Typical types of recreational facilities common in Hamilton include playgrounds, sports fields, neighborhood parks, ponds and lakes.

| Table 3.1.5 Total Open Space Protection by Protection Type | | |
|--|-------|---------------------------|
| Protection Type | Acres | % of Total Town Land Area |
| Protected Land | 4,065 | 45% |
| Privately Owned, Chapter 61/61A/61B Land | 340 | 4% |
| Source: MassGIS Data: Protected and Recreational Open Space, 2022. | | |

Playgrounds and Minor Parks

Minor parks tend to serve the immediately adjacent community or some specialized purpose. Minor parks often have playgrounds, which are defined as active recreation areas for children between the ages of 5 to 15. Playgrounds sometimes have a "tot lot" component for children from 1 to 5. Playgrounds are sometimes, but not always associated with school buildings.

Playfields and Major Parks

Playfields are typically outfitted with facilities for active sports, such as basketball, soccer, baseball, or tennis. Playfields serve a wide range of ages, from children who use little league fields to senior citizens who use tennis courts to play pickleball. Major parks often complement

playfields, providing options for passive recreation, such as walking, hiking, or simply enjoying nature. Major parks can also offer active recreation activities, like swimming, fishing, or boating. Major parks are less tied to specific neighborhoods and tend to serve a larger constituency.

Recent additions to the open space and recreation inventory include the 52-acre Donovan Fields and Woods, which features nature trails and a multipurpose athletic field.⁴² Hamilton's recreation facilities also include a swimming pool at Patton Park.⁴³ Friends of the Patton Park Playground and the Town of Hamilton have been an important resource in updating Patton Park's playground equipment, landscaping, and public athletic facilities.⁴⁴ Other recreational facilities include a cross country ski run at Appleton Farms and various athletic fields at Cutler Elementary School, Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School, Donovan Field, Fairhaven Field, and the neighboring Buker Elementary School and Pingree Park, both in Wenham.⁴⁵

Additionally, the Hamilton-Wenham Joint Recreation Department is in the process of developing recreational facilities needs assessment, and a master plan independent from this report. The Town has begun to implement recommendations from the Recreation Master Plan, including working with the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District on the redevelopment of the football field and track at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School.⁴⁶ Table 3.1.6, Recreation Facilities Inventory, lists the existing recreational facilities in Hamilton.

| Name | Landowner | Public / Private | Passive / Active | Use Type |
|---|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--|
| Chebacco Town Landing and Beach | Hamilton | Public | Both | Swimming areas, boat launches, trails, ice fishing |
| Cutler Elementary School | Hamilton | Public | Active | Sports fields |
| Hamilton-Wenham Recreation Center | Hamilton | Public | Active | Recreation field, playground |
| Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School | Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District | Public | Active | Sports fields |
| Patton Park | Hamilton | Public | Both | Sports fields, playground, pond, open lawn |
| Pingree Park* | Hamilton + Wenham | Public | Active | Sports fields, playgrounds |
| Donovan Field | Hamilton | Public | Active | Sports fields |
| Fairhaven Field | Hamilton + Wenham | Public | Active | Sports fields |
| Buker Elementary School* | Wenham | Public | Active | Sports fields |
| *Facility is in a neighboring town but highly utilized by Hamilton. Source: MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space 2021 | | | | |

⁴² Town of Hamilton, 2020.

⁴³ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2019.

⁴⁴ Town of Hamilton, 2020.

⁴⁵ North Shore Nordic Association, n.d.; UDisc, n.d.

⁴⁶ Town of Hamilton, 2020.

RECENT TRENDS

Hamilton's last Recreation Master Plan was completed in 2012. A new assessment will confirm whether the current active recreation offerings meet residents' needs, whether the current facilities are receiving appropriate maintenance, evaluate sustainable funding sources, and discern whether the Town's recreation facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

One step towards realizing Hamilton's open space and recreation goals is drafting an up-to-date Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). OSRPs bring opportunities for funding, which can help municipalities realize new visions for their residents. This document can help forge expanded partnerships with Land Trusts and municipalities, help identify specific methods of water resource protection, and examine possibilities for connecting tracts of open space and conservation land. A new OSRP for Hamilton received conditional approval in 2020 but needs to be completed.

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Structure and Staffing

The Hamilton-Wenham Joint Recreation Department serves the neighboring towns of Hamilton and Wenham. This joint department is the result of the two towns working cooperatively to consolidate their efforts and to manage their natural and human resources more effectively. This cooperation between the two towns extends to the Department's organization. The Department is led by the Joint Recreation Board, which is permanently staffed with three residents from the Town of Hamilton and three from the Town of Wenham. This board meets monthly to discuss various recreation initiatives. In addition to the Joint Recreation Board, the Recreation Department has two office staff members: a Recreation Director and a Recreation Assistant.

Facilities

The Hamilton-Wenham Joint Recreation Department maintains several types of recreation facilities, ranging from farms to parks to athletic fields. These facilities include Patton Park (basketball courts, pavilion, tennis courts, small and large baseball fields), Pingree Park, and Fairhaven Field by the Hamilton-Wenham Public Library. The Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District maintains the athletic fields at the elementary, middle, and high schools.

From 2022 to 2023, Hamilton's Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments conducted an extensive public planning process for a Patton Park Master Plan with the goal to engage park users and residents in the process of identifying overarching and long-term improvement goals for Patton Park.⁴⁷

Programs

The Recreation Department offers a wide range of programs for different ages and interest groups. For younger children, programs are both seasonal and year-round. These programs include preschool soccer programs, nerf gun battles, flag football, obstacle courses, tennis lessons, soccer clinics, field hockey clinics, softball and baseball clinics, arts and crafts, youth karate at the Recreation Center, swimming lessons, golf clinics, and more. Other programs are more attuned to the interests of adolescents; teenagers can sign up for chess club, science programs, lifeguard positions, youth running club, and a range of sports teams and games.

⁴⁷ Town of Hamilton *Patton Park Master Plan Report*, March 2023. Prepared by CBA Landscape Architects, LLC.

Teens can also sign up for more specialized programs, like archery courses at Patton Homestead and summer cooking workshops.

The department also provides a diverse array of adult programs. Adults can sign up to play pickleball at the Patton Park tennis courts, grab a walking pass to enjoy the track at Gordon College, join a sports team, take a dip at the Veterans Memorial Pool, or reserve sports fields for team use.

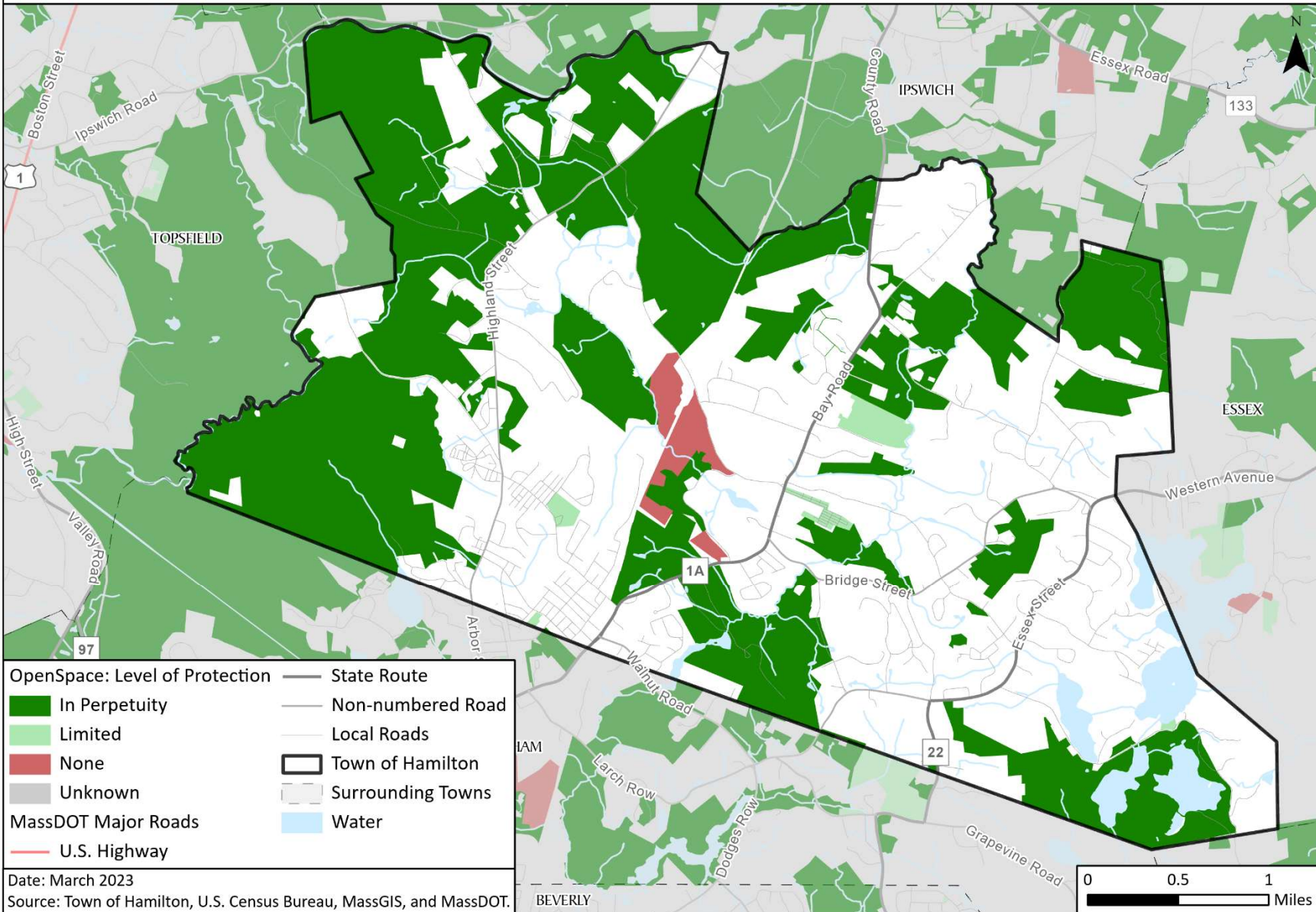
Community Preservation Committee - Community Preservation Act

The Town Meeting voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) in 2005, creating a 2 percent surcharge on real estate taxes to fund historic preservation, open space, and affordable housing related projects. Hamilton's Community Preservation Committee presents recommendations to the Town Meeting on how to allocate funds. Over \$12 million in CPA grants have been awarded to Hamilton since 2005. Table 3.1.7 lists the Community Preservation Act Projects pertaining to Open Space and Recreation that have been approved by the Town of Hamilton from since 2019.

| Table 3.1.7 Partial List of Past Approved Open Space & Recreation CPC Projects To Date 2024 | | | | |
|---|--|---|-------------|--------------------|
| Project | Applicant | Description | Cost | Fiscal Year |
| Donovan Fields Acquisition | Town of Hamilton | To fund the purchase of Donavan Fields | \$733,000 | 2019 |
| Sagamore Conservation Project | Essex County Greenbelt Association | To fund the preservation of 170 acres of land in Hamilton. | \$1,750,000 | 2019 |
| Removal of Invasive Species in Weaver Pond | Hamilton Conservation Commission | To fund the removal of invasive species in Weaver Pond and Patton Park. | \$17,000 | 2019 |
| Basketball Court in Patton Park | Hamilton Recreation Board | To fund the rehabilitation/replacement of the two basketball courts. | \$10,000 | 2019 |
| Tennis Courts in Patton Park | Hamilton Wenham Recreation Board | To fund the repair and restoration of the Patton Park tennis courts. | \$32,000 | 2022 |
| Hamilton - Wenham Athletic Fields Improvement | Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District | To fund a portion of the costs of the athletic facilities project, however no CPC funds can be used for the purchase or installation of any artificial turf, as set forth in the application approved by the CPC. | \$800,000 | 2024* |
| Construction of the Pool at Patton Park | Town of Hamilton | To fund the creation of a swimming pool, bath house, operations building and deck at Patton Park. | \$1,328,000 | 2015 |
| <p>* Anticipated projects ** Located in Wenham Source: Town of Hamilton, Community Preservation Committee, CPC, Funded Projects. https://www.hamiltonma.gov/government/community-preservation-committee/cpc-projects/</p> | | | | |

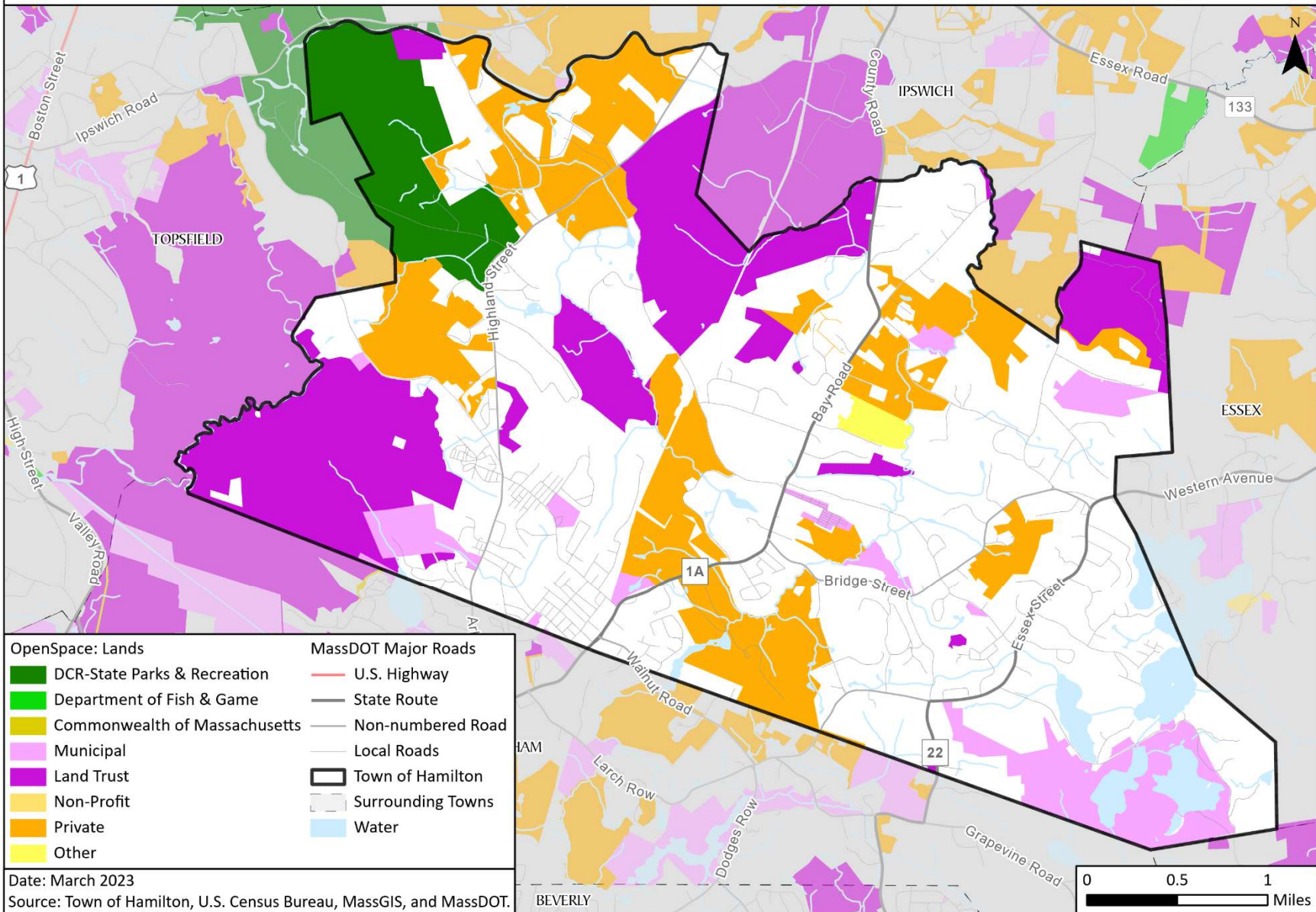
Town of Hamilton

Map 3.1.5 Open Space by Level of Protection



Town of Hamilton

Map 3.1.6 Open Space by Ownership



3.1.3 Cultural and Historic Resources

OVERVIEW



Center Cemetery at 623 Bay Road and First Congregational Church in the Hamilton Historic District.

Cultural Resources are the places and institutions that contribute to a community's unique identity. Hamilton's unique landscapes, architecture, and historic sites contribute to its small-town feel and civic pride.

EXISTING RESOURCES

Hamilton has three historic parks: Bradley Palmer State Park, Cutler Park and Patton Park. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) manages Bradley Palmer and the Bradley Palmer Mansion. Cutler Park on Bay Road honors Dr. Manasseh Cutler, the pastor who advocated for Hamilton's secession from Ipswich. The park was built on the former Wigglesworth Cemetery, though the graves and headstones were moved to the cemetery at 623 Bay Road. Patton Park memorializes General George S. Patton, Sr., one of Hamilton's most distinguished citizens. A Sherman tank and acknowledgment markers from the citizens of Avranches and LeHavre, France stand in the park today.

Appleton Farms in northeast Hamilton is generally characterized as open space and farmland, but its historic buildings, stone walls and trees are part of a larger historic cultural landscape of the Town and region. The Trustees of Reservations and Past Designs prepared a detailed inventory and a master plan for the seventeenth-century property in 2002. Other important historic resources include cemeteries, the Masconomet burial ground, scenic roads, bridges and heritage trees. See the Transportation section for more details about Hamilton's scenic roads.

The historic Patton Homestead, gifted by the Patton family, is a community asset where the Hamilton community and beyond can enrich their lives through cultural events, seasonal festivals, military and veteran focused programming, recreational use, private rentals, and other activities. Patton Homestead Inc. is an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization which signed an agreement with the Town of Hamilton in August 2018 to help advise the Town relative to the Homestead and to fundraise for the property's capital and programming needs.

Hamilton-Wenham Public Library first opened to the public on December 17, 2001. After years of planning, the two towns had successfully created the first regional library in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Located on the site of the old Hamilton High School (later the Hamilton Junior High School), the library's boundaries touch the town lines of both Hamilton and Wenham. This remarkable collaboration is a continuation of a partnership that began in May 1959 with the regionalization of the public school systems and the construction of the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School. The wisdom that strength is gained by combining resources has

ensured the stability and excellence of the public educational and cultural institutions of Hamilton and Wenham for present and future generations. To ensure a vibrant future, the library recently completed a long-range plan of service.⁴⁸

The Community House (TCH) is a community center founded in 1921 by the Mandell family in memory of their son and seven other local men who died in World War I.⁴⁹ TCH remains a thriving non-profit, 501(c)(3) charitable organization dedicated to promoting the arts, enrichment and civic unity. In 2019, TCH launched The Kids Community (TKC), a new childcare program, with an initial enrollment of 98 children. In 2020, TCH redesigned its flagship programs to unite the community during the COVID-19 pandemic. TKC provides safe childcare that matches the quickly evolving needs of families in the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District. Stage 284, an in-house theater company, creates new content and shares it widely through digital channels. TCH continues to offer special events that bring the community together.

Wenham Museum's mission is to celebrate childhood, interpret history, and explore culture for the enrichment of all generations in the greater North Shore community and beyond. The Museum engages multigenerational members and visitors in examining the promise of the American experiment and provides thought-provoking learning experiences that connect the past, present, and future, in a welcoming and inclusive environment. Although not located within the borders of Hamilton, this Museum provides cultural activities for the residents of the Town and acts as a repository for documents, records, and artifacts.

Hamilton Historical Society's purpose is to preserve the history of the Town of Hamilton. In 2020 they were presented with a challenge and an opportunity to create an account of Hamilton during the Pandemic. The challenge was how to chronicle this in the best way. The board met in the chilly barn at the Patton Homestead, masked and socially distanced. They had three major goals: first, to record this historic time, second, to keep up communication with their members and third, to plan. Members decided to create a pictorial journal of how Hamilton carried on during this difficult time.

Hamilton-Wenham Cultural Council's purpose is to distribute state funds for community-based arts, humanities, and interpretive science projects and activities to benefit the residents of Hamilton and Wenham. Grant decisions are subject to final approval by the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC).

Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Inventory

Hamilton has 275 inventoried historic resources including buildings (238), burial grounds (1), structures (34), and objects (2).⁵⁰ The objects include the General George S. Patton Sherman Tank and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. The burial ground is the Hamilton Cemetery. The structures are also important to the historic character of the Town and include roads, gates, steps, parks, ponds, stone walls, tilled fields, railroad crossings, and recreation areas. Map 4.4.1 Historic and Cultural Resources shows the MHC Inventoried Historic Resources throughout the Town.

Hamilton has one designated Local Historic District (LHD) which is located along Bay Road. Because the local historic district is a relatively small area, it does not protect many of the

⁴⁸ Hamilton-Wenham Public Library Long-Range Plan of Service 2020-2024, March 15, 2019.

⁴⁹ The Community House, "The History of the Community House," <https://communityhouse.org/history/>.

⁵⁰ MassGIS. MassGIS Data: MHC Historic Inventory, February 2023.

Town's historic structures. Several properties are listed individually on the National Register, including Hamilton Town Hall, the Pingree School, the Austin Brown House, the Emeline Patch House, the Brown House, and the Woodberry Quarrels House. The historic vestiges that accompany these buildings, such as outbuildings, stone walls and tilled fields, are also important.

TRENDS

Hamilton is rich in history and cultural resources. Through Community Preservation Act (CPA) funded projects, the Historic District Bylaw (Chapter XXXI of the Town's bylaws), and the work of the Hamilton Historic District Commission/Historical Commission, the historic and cultural treasures that are abundant in Town can continue to be enjoyed by residents and visitors. Table 3.1.8 lists the Community Preservation Act (CPA) funded historic projects completed to date since 2010. The citizens of Hamilton voted to adopt the Community Preservation Act (CPA) on May 12, 2005. This program creates a 2% surcharge on real estate taxes for all residences and businesses, with exemptions for the first \$100,000 of residential property value and property owned and occupied by any person who qualifies for low-income housing or low- or moderate-income senior housing. This surcharge is then augmented by a state fund.

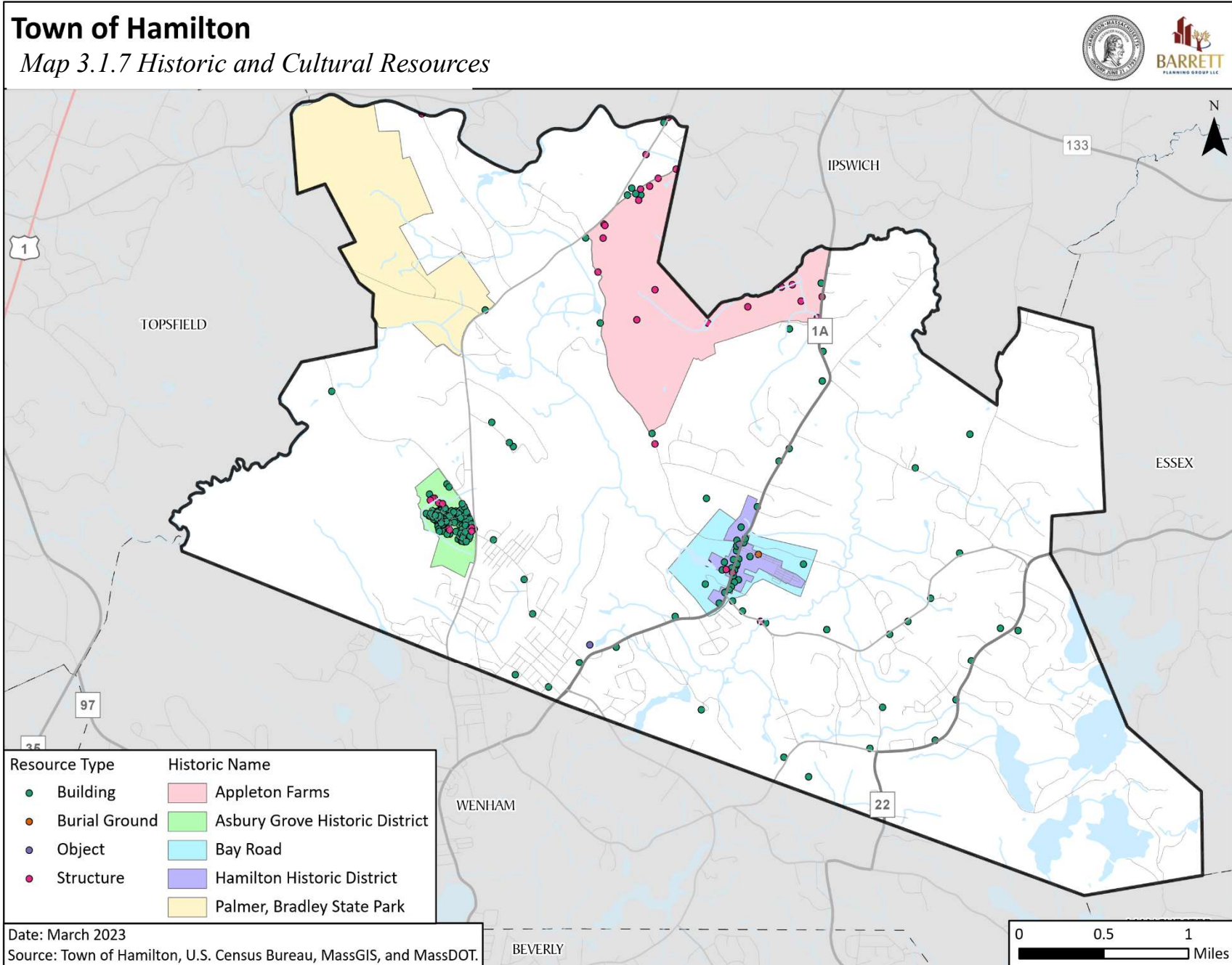
| Table 3.1.8 Historic Community Preservation Act (CPA) Projects Completed Since 2010 | |
|--|---|
| Project Name | Project Description |
| Old Library Window Renovation | Funds the renovation of the windows at the old library |
| American Legion Building Renovation | Renovation of the American Legion Building; one of Hamilton's original school houses. |
| Old Library Restoration | Restoration and renovation of Hamilton's Old Library |
| Hamilton Senior Center Ceiling Repairs | Renovation of the ceiling and railings at the Hamilton Senior Center |
| Patton Homestead Acquisition | Legal and closing costs |
| HW Community House Exterior Renovations | Exterior renovations to the Community House, particular focus on the cupola. |
| Hamilton Senior Center Kitchen | To fund the capital improvements necessary for the renovation of the kitchen. |
| Liberty Road Markers at Patton Park | To repair the historic Liberty Road Markers at Patton Park. |
| Town Hall Rear Steps | To replace the rear steps at Hamilton's historic Town Hall |
| Renovation of Bathrooms at Senior Center | To renovate the bathrooms and their ADA accessibility at the Hamilton Senior Center |
| Senior Center Balustrade | Restoration of the balustrade at the Old Library (Senior Center). |
| Town Hall Restoration/Renovation Project | To fund the restoration/renovation of the Town Hall |
| Community House Heating System | Grant to the historic Community House for the replacement of the heating system as part of the greater preservation and rehabilitation project. |
| First Congregational Church of Hamilton - Clock Tower and Belfry | Restoration of Clock Tower and Belfry of First Congregational Church |
| <i>Source: Mass GIS. Mass GIS Data: CPA Projects, 4/18/2022</i> | |

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

The Historic District Commission/Historical Commission makes decisions with regard to approval of external changes made to properties within the Historic District, including, but not limited to, building additions, demolitions, all signs visible from a public way, and any other modifications.

Hamilton Historic District Bylaw and Demolition Delay Bylaw (Town of Hamilton Bylaws, Chapter XXXI) purpose and intent is preserving and protecting significant historic buildings within the Town of Hamilton and encouraging owners of such buildings to seek out alternatives to preserve, rehabilitate, or restore such buildings rather than to demolish them or alter them in a detrimental way. Such buildings constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, economic, agricultural, political, or social history of the Town. Further, through the bylaw, residents of the Town are alerted to impending demolition or alteration of significant buildings. By preserving and protecting significant buildings, streetscapes, landscapes and neighborhoods, this bylaw promotes public welfare by making the Town a more attractive and desirable community.

On September 22, 2020, the HHDC adopted the Hamilton Historic District Handbook. The Handbook was created as a tool for members and staff of the Commission, property owners within the district, and applicants before the Commission. The handbook contains information on the history of the Hamilton Historic District, the design review process and the design review guidelines used by the Commission when considering an application.



3.2 PROVIDE

3.2.1 Community Facilities and Services

OVERVIEW



Hamilton-Wenham Public Library.

Planning for public services and facilities directly affects the ability of the residents to live in a safe and healthy environment. Public safety services, schools, and a functioning municipal government are vital components of a thriving community. When facilities planning and maintenance are handled poorly, Town services will suffer, and new development will stress the community's ability to serve new residents or businesses.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

General Government

Hamilton Town Hall is located at 577 Bay Road in Hamilton. Built in 1898, Town Hall is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and houses most municipal departments (see Table 3.2.1).

| Table 3.2.1: Departments Based in Hamilton Town Hall | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Assessor's Department | Treasurer/Collector's Office |
| Building Department | Town Clerk |
| Cemetery Department | Town Manager/Select Board |
| Department of Public Works | Planning and Inspections |
| Energy Commission | Weights and Measures |
| Finance Department | |
| <i>Does not include volunteer boards and committees.</i> | |
| <i>Source: hamiltonma.gov</i> | |

Table 3.2.2 shows the two sites where the remaining Town departments are housed.

| Table 3.2.2: Departments Based in Other Municipal Buildings | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| 299 Bay Road | 16 Union Street |
| Board of Health | Hamilton-Wenham Public Library |
| Council on Aging | Recreation Department |
| Emergency Communications Center | |
| Fire Department | |
| Human Resources | |
| Police Department | |
| <i>Does not include volunteer boards and committees.</i> | |
| <i>Source: hamiltonma.gov</i> | |

Hamilton, like most Massachusetts towns, has a Town Meeting form of government where voters act directly as the main legislative body. An annual Town Meeting is held the first Saturday of every April where residents vote on matters such as the annual budget, bylaws, and citizen petitions. Hamilton's Select Board is a five-member elected board that is the Town's main executive and policymaking body. The Select Board appoints a Town Manager who oversees the Town's day-to-day operations including appointing department heads and preparing annual budgets.

The Town Clerk is responsible for managing local elections, certifying official documents, handling certain licenses (like dog licenses), and recording various official documents required by state law. The Assessors Department values real estate and personal property to determine local property taxes. The Assessors Database is a publicly available record of assessments for every property in Hamilton. The Finance Department tracks the Town's revenues and expenditures, processes payroll, and fulfills state reporting requirements.⁵¹

Hamilton's government is unique in the extent to which departments and services are shared with its neighbor Wenham. The towns share a single regional school district, a recreation department, the state's only regional public library, a building inspector, and other staff positions. Hamilton has explored regionalization with other neighbors as well; for example, the Town's Human Resources Director is shared with Rockport and Manchester-by-the-Sea.⁵²

Public Safety

Police Department

The Hamilton Police Department consists of the Chief of Police, a Captain, a Lieutenant, three Sergeants, eight patrolmen, and an administrative assistant.⁵³ In the police station there is a Chief's office, a reception station desk, an armory, an evidence room, an officer locker room, a briefing room, an office for three sergeants, and an office for the patrolmen.⁵⁴

Hamilton Police Department is responsible for continuously promoting a safe environment through a police-citizen partnership. In 2020, the Police department responded to 21,433 calls for service.

Table 3.2.3 provides an overview of call classifications and the number of incidents over the last five years.

| Table 3.2.3: Hamilton Police Department Incident Response (2018-2022) | | | | | |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Classification | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Motor Vehicle Citations Warnings | 359 | 373 | 269 | 189 | 486 |
| Motor Vehicle Citations Civil | 61 | 117 | 52 | 37 | 35 |
| Motor Vehicle Citations Criminal Complaints | 104 | 69 | 88 | 71 | 122 |
| Motor Vehicle Citation Arrests | 45 | 20 | 13 | 11 | 11 |
| Operating Under the Influence | 6 | 6 | 2 | 2 | 5 |

⁵¹ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

⁵² MichelleLee Maloney (Director of Human Resources, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Judi Barrett, February, 2023.

⁵³ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed April 2023.

⁵⁴ Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, 2018

| Table 3.2.3: Hamilton Police Department Incident Response (2018-2022) | | | | | |
|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Classification | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Motor Vehicle Verbal | 739 | 574 | 550 | 687 | 1,209 |
| Parking Tickets | 42 | 34 | 8 | 13 | 7 |
| Motor Vehicle Accidents Total | 112 | 90 | 69 | 87 | 83 |
| Motor Vehicle Accidents Investigated | 93 | 77 | 57 | 78 | 71 |
| Crimes Against Persons | 10 | 7 | 15 | 19 | 14 |
| Crimes Against Property | 76 | 86 | 120 | 81 | 56 |
| Crimes Against Society | 44 | 33 | 34 | 24 | 37 |
| Municipal Citations | 5 | 5 | 1 | 14 | 17 |
| Animal Calls | 549 | 588 | 300 | 495 | 451 |
| Medical Calls | 377 | 428 | 372 | 459 | 449 |
| Alarms | 399 | 351 | 225 | 299 | 159 |
| Pistol Permits/FID Cards. | 115 | 135 | 147 | 90 | 84 |
| Total Arrests | 94 | 72 | 66 | 75 | 81 |
| Traffic Stops | 1,051 | 994 | 720 | 912 | 1,448 |
| Total Calls for Service | 21,397 | 20,847 | 17,071 | 19,128 | 21,433 |
| <i>Source: Hamilton Police Department, 2023</i> | | | | | |

Fire Department

The mission of the Hamilton Fire Department is to prevent and minimize the loss of life and property of citizens and fire service personnel, to mitigate the consequences of natural and man-made disasters, to provide non-emergency support services, and to safeguard the environment and economic base of the community.⁵⁵

The Fire Department has twenty-four firefighters (not counting the Fire Chief) that serve the residents of Hamilton twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.⁵⁶ In 2020, the Fire department responded to 1,474 calls for service, a number that has been increasing significantly since around 2017 (see Figure 3.2.1). Common calls were for house fire suppression, emergency medical services, and hazardous materials response. The department's fleet consists of eight vehicles that are routinely checked in house by a fire mechanic.⁵⁷

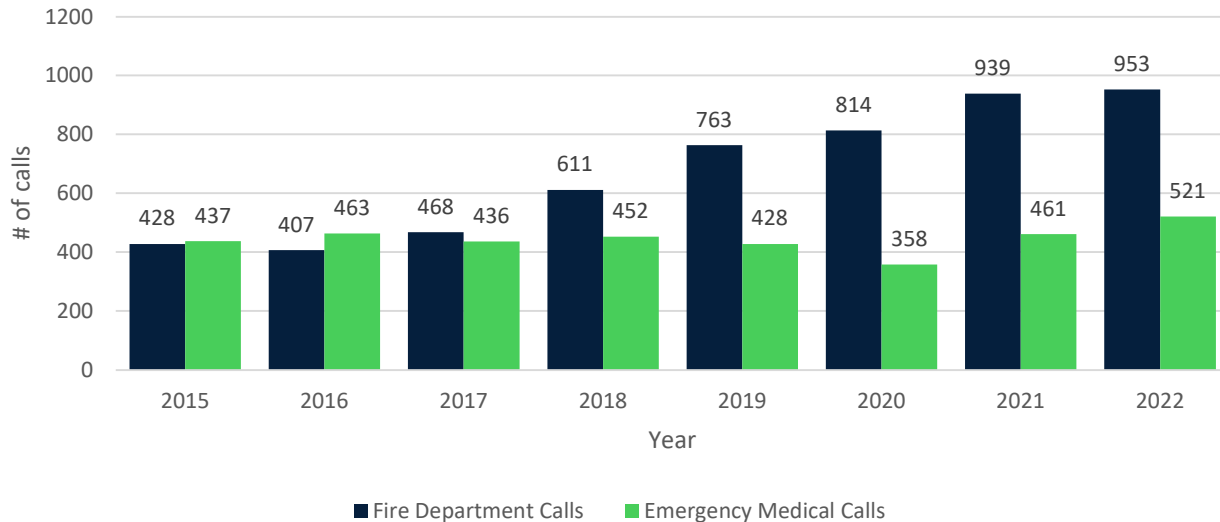
⁵⁵ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

⁵⁶ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

⁵⁷ Town of Hamilton, Annual Town Report, 2020.

Figure 3.2.1: Hamilton Fire Department & Emergency Medical Calls

Source: Hamilton Fire Department



The Fire Department coordinates outreach programs with school aged children and seniors as well as fire and lockdown drills at all the public schools, Pingree School, and the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. Additionally, the inspection department conducts a variety of fire inspections. The Fire Department is responsible for issuing burn permits for residents and farms to allow burns with Fire Chief approval during favorable weather conditions. Hamilton uses CodeRED as a mass notification system to disseminate emergency alerts and information to residents via phone, text messages, social media, and email for individuals that sign up for the alerts. General notifications can communicate non-life safety matters such as planned road closures.⁵⁸

Emergency Services

Hamilton's Emergency Management Director is the Fire Chief. The Hamilton Communications Center provides comprehensive emergency management and assistance. Hamilton's primary ambulance provider since 2013 is Beauport Ambulance Service, a Gloucester-based company that operates locally out of the Hamilton Emergency Center.⁵⁹

EDUCATION

Hamilton and Wenham partner to form the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District (HWRSD), which includes three elementary schools, a middle school, and a high school (listed in Table 3.2.4). The HWRSD also operates a regional preschool program at the Winthrop School. The school district is the owner of the record for the middle and high schools, while the district leases the Cutler and Winthrop schools from the Town of Hamilton and the Buker School from

⁵⁸ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

⁵⁹ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

the Town of Wenham. Each town contributes a portion of the district's budget proportional to a three-year average of student enrollment. Hamilton typically provides about two-thirds of the budget.⁶⁰

Table 3.2.4 shows that the annual student enrollment for Hamilton-Wenham schools has fallen over the last five years. In the HWRSD's 2022 "State of Our School Facilities" report, the authors identify three factors leading to the decrease in enrollment:

1. Families can afford to send children to private schools.
2. Hamilton-Wenham's learning environments are "very outdated."
3. The district lacks high-quality sports and recreation facilities.⁶¹

Additionally, the resident students at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary have historically sent their children to Hamilton-Wenham public schools, but their numbers have declined significantly. The 2022 facilities report also notes that due to their age, school buildings were not properly designed to fully accommodate students with disabilities.

| Table 3.2.4: HWRSD Enrollment by School (2018-2022) | | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| School | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
| Buker Elementary School | 257 | 245 | 257 | 223 | 250 |
| Cutler Elementary School | 289 | 285 | 278 | 256 | 253 |
| Winthrop Elementary School | 291 | 281 | 332 | 294 | 310 |
| Miles River Middle School | 393 | 395 | 418 | 393 | 379 |
| Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School | 560 | 563 | 551 | 524 | 492 |
| Total | 1,790 | 1,769 | 1,836 | 1,690 | 1,684 |
| <i>Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education</i> | | | | | |

In 2011, a Comprehensive Facilities Assessment was completed to develop a long-range improvement plan for the school district. The school buildings in the district range from 50 to 60 years old except for the Miles River Middle School, which was built in 1999. The district's last major expansion was at the Cutler School in 1992.⁶² The older schools have accessibility issues, and several equipment and building components, technology, windows, and roofs are due for upgrades and replacement.

A 2008 Space Needs and Demographic Study identified concerns about school facilities, noting a lack of available educational space and undersized facilities in all school buildings. Specific undersized facilities include classrooms, art and music rooms, field spaces, and the Middle School cafeteria.

⁶⁰ Correspondence with Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee Chair Dana Allara, March 27, 2023.

⁶¹ Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District, "State of Our School Facilities," 2022

⁶² Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District, "State of Our School Facilities," 2022

PUBLIC WORKS

Hamilton's Department of Public Works (DPW) is a multipurpose agency that oversees the Water Department, Highway Division, Building Maintenance, Waste Disposal, and Cemetery Department. The Department consists of Director of Public Works, an Assistant Director of Public Works, an Administrative Assistant for the Water Department, and an Administrative Assistant for the DPW. DPW is responsible for maintaining and improving the condition of streets, maintaining and operating all Town-controlled traffic signs and pavement markings, providing safe and clean drinking water, and effectively planning and implementing delivery of capital projects.⁶³

Trash and Recycling

Hamilton was the first community in Massachusetts to implement a Town-wide composting program, with compostable material taken to Brick Ends Farm located at 464 Highland Street. Regular trash streams are taken to North Andover and burned. The Town has a single stream recycling method, also known as "No Sort" recycling which gives residents the convenience to commingle recyclables.⁶⁴

According to the Department of Environmental Protection, the trash disposal tonnage for the Town of Hamilton was 1,460.9 tons in 2020 (see Table 3.2.5). The separate trash tonnage from the Town's schools was 60 tons. The Town also provides curbside pickup for bagged leaves three times a year while Brick Ends Farm accepts disposal of branches, brush, grass, clipping, and leaves.

Table 3.2.5: Hamilton Waste and Recycling (2021)

| Waste Type | Yearly Tonnage |
|--|-----------------|
| Single Stream | 1,042.10 |
| Scrap Metal | 19.68 |
| Textiles/Used Clothing | 50.69 |
| Food Waste | 332.17 |
| E-Waste | 7.29 |
| Total | 1,451.93 |
| <i>Source: MA Department of Environmental Protection</i> | |

Hamilton owns and operates five pump stations at the Idlewood Wellfield in the eastern part of Town and one on School Street (currently closed to address issues with PFAS contamination). Water is treated in a plant located at 79 Pine Street. The Town provided public water service to 2,563 connections and distributed 205 million gallons of water in 2021. DPW reported only 81 residential properties that depended on private wells rather than municipal water.⁶⁵

Supply sources, locations of proposed wells, and sources with a defined DEP approved wellhead protection area (Zone IIs) are further detailed in the Natural Resources chapter and shown on Map No. 3.1.4 Aquifers & Aquifer Protection. According to the 2022 Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, the key issues identified for the water supply sources serving the Town are:

- Inappropriate activities in Zone I.

⁶³ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

⁶⁴ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.

⁶⁵ Hamilton Water Department, "Public Water System Annual Statistical Report", June 22, 2021

- Residential land use.
- Manure storage or spreading.
- stormwater catch basins within Zone II.⁶⁶

The Town lacks public sewer infrastructure and all lots are served by onsite wastewater treatment systems. The Gordon–Conwell Theological Seminary has a private sewer system and wastewater treatment plant, with its own onsite plant and pump stations.

Energy Commission/Energy Manager

Hamilton received designation as one of the first Green Communities by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) in 2010. The Town applied for and was ultimately awarded a grant through DOER to hire a part-time Energy Manager in 2014. The position is shared with the Town of Wenham, another Green Community.

The Energy Manager is responsible for continually measuring and monitoring comprehensive energy use at all municipal facilities. This data allows the Energy Manager to measure the performance of previously completed energy efficiency projects and identify opportunities for future projects. Finally, the Energy Manager serves as a primary contact point for state agencies on energy grant programs and other energy initiatives. For example, the Energy Manager recently used a grant to install public electric vehicle charging stations at Town Hall and Patton Park.⁶⁷

HUMAN SERVICES

Council on Aging

The Senior Center is located at 299 Bay Road and administered by a volunteer Board and professional manager. The Hamilton Council on Aging (COA) creates a friendly and safe community for seniors by providing social services, transportation, education, health, recreation and leisure-time activities, and resources that support their well-being and independence. As of 2023 the COA is working to rebrand the Senior Center as the Center for Active Living.

The COA plays a vital role as a centralized access point for providing information and programs to Hamilton’s seniors. The COA provides a wide range of services and programs including:

- Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) Hamilton Transportation Service
- Monthly Congregate Lunch Menu
- Nutrition Program
- Outreach/SHINE (Serving the Health Information Needs of Elders)
- Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Abatement⁶⁸

The CATA service provides transportation for medical appointments, or daily shopping, banking, and other needs. Outreach services host a certified SHINE counselor and a monthly Low Vision Group for Hamilton residents over the age of 60. The SHINE Program provides free

⁶⁶ Town of Hamilton, Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, 2022

⁶⁷ Victoria Masone (Energy Manager, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Sarah Maren, March 2023.

⁶⁸ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023

health insurance information and counseling to all Massachusetts residents on Medicare and their caregivers.

Board of Health

The Board of Health (BOH) consists of a part-time Health Director, Administrative Assistant, Health Inspector, Animal Inspector, Septic Inspector, and a Public Health Nurse. The BOH is overseen by a three-member board appointed by the Select Board for three-year terms. The BOH conducts health clinics, addresses concerns of public nuisance, air quality, noise control, animal and pest control, food protection, housing complaints, Massachusetts Title 5 septic system inspections, and communicable disease reporting.⁶⁹

The COVID 19 pandemic forced Hamilton to adapt to unprecedented public health challenges. The BOH regularly advised local agencies like the Hamilton Select Board, the Hamilton-Wenham Community House, the Hamilton-Wenham Library, the COA, DPW, and the Fire and Police Departments on the best practices for safely operating during the pandemic.

CULTURE AND RECREATION

Public Library

Hamilton and Wenham have a joint public library which opened to the public in 2001 and is the first and only regional library in Massachusetts. The facility is located at 14 Union Street by the Wenham border, although the Town of Wenham is responsible for administering the library. There are eight full-time and eight part-time staff members, and a six-member Board of Trustees responsible for the custody and management of the library and its services. The library provides several programs, events, and services including museum passes, meeting rooms, art workshops, science Fridays, reading challenges, book clubs, virtual stories, and songs.⁷⁰

Recreation Department

The Hamilton-Wenham Joint Recreation Department manages both Towns' sports fields, recreation facilities, and seasonal recreation programs. Key outdoor recreation facilities include the fields at Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School and Patton Park, which hosts a playground, tennis courts, and a public pool, and hosts annual summer programs for children. At time of writing, the Town is engaged in a Patton Park Master Plan process to “engage park users and residents in the process of identifying overarching and long-term improvement goals.”⁷¹ While there is no dedicated Parks Department, the Department of Public Works and Recreation Department are responsible for maintaining public parks.⁷²

Patton Homestead

Hamilton received the Patton Homestead as a gift from the Patton family, and now operates the site as a historic and recreational asset for the public. The twenty-four acre property is located on the Town's western border by a tributary of the Ipswich River. The director of the Patton Homestead is a municipal employee who works with the Recreation Department to develop

⁶⁹ Town of Hamilton, Annual Town Report, 2020

⁷⁰ Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, <https://hwlibrary.org>. Accessed March 2023

⁷¹ Town of Hamilton Department of Parks & Recreation and Department of Public Works, “Hamilton Patton Park Master Plan Report” March 2023.

⁷² Sean Timmons (Recreation Director, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Tyler Maren, March 2023.

community-oriented cultural programming and outdoor activities for the property. The Town's goals for the Homestead are to increase public awareness and utilization of the property.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND FUNDING

Property taxes accounted for about 90 percent of Hamilton's total revenue in fiscal year 2023.⁷³ About 96 percent of this tax revenue was from residential property taxes.⁷⁴ The Town relies on a Capital Committee to work with department heads and local committees to identify and understand capital needs. The Committee works with the Town Manager to produce an annual budget proposal that is then brought to Town Meeting for a vote. The Committee also produces an annual five-year capital plan that forecasts the most pressing needs the Town will have to budget for.

Table 3.2.6 shows Hamilton's total municipal expenditures by year since 2019. The Town's annual budget remained consistently around \$30 million during this period, and the majority of funds were consistently spent on education. Annual debt service has decreased by about \$300,000 since 2019.⁷⁵

| Table 3.2.6: Hamilton Municipal Expenditures by Year (2019-2022) | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|----------|
| | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | |
| | \$ | % | \$ | % | \$ | % | \$ | % |
| General Gov. | 1,878,187 | 6.4% | 1,836,890 | 6.0% | 1,932,613 | 6.0% | 2,038,622 | 6.1% |
| Public Safety | 2,918,568 | 9.9% | 3,012,606 | 9.9% | 3,072,490 | 9.6% | 3,376,465 | 10.0% |
| Education | 18,582,829 | 62.9% | 19,145,148 | 62.7% | 20,727,030 | 64.6% | 21,787,353 | 64.7% |
| Public Works | 1,737,534 | 5.9% | 1,899,834 | 6.2% | 1,914,872 | 6.0% | 1,944,134 | 5.8% |
| Human Services | 292,386 | 1.0% | 309,801 | 1.0% | 225,102 | 0.7% | 253,558 | 0.8% |
| Culture & Recreation | 235,013 | 0.8% | 222,317 | 0.7% | 219,387 | 0.7% | 255,817 | 0.8% |
| Fixed Costs | 1,891,424 | 6.4% | 2,001,704 | 6.6% | 2,090,031 | 6.5% | 2,164,825 | 6.4% |
| Intergovernmental Assessments | 1,034,371 | 3.5% | 1,128,489 | 3.7% | 1,172,112 | 3.7% | 1,114,707 | 3.3% |
| Other Spending | 60,321 | 0.2% | 75,462 | 0.2% | 91,596 | 0.3% | 97,791 | 0.3% |
| Debt Service | 933,607 | 3.2% | 912,753 | 3.0% | 652,628 | 2.0% | 638,675 | 1.9% |
| Total Expenditures | 29,564,240 | 100.0% | 30,545,004 | 100.0% | 32,097,861 | 100.0% | 33,671,947 | 100.0% |
| Source: Division of Local Services, MA Department of Revenue | | | | | | | | |

⁷³ Municipal Databank, MA Division of Local Services, 2023

⁷⁴ MA EOLWD LMI

⁷⁵ Municipal Databank, MA Division of Local Services, 2023

Major Capital Improvement Needs

Hamilton's 2004 Master Plan noted the need for renovations to Town Hall, and this need persists nearly twenty years later. Currently there are plans for major upgrades to Town Hall, including restoring exterior deterioration, adding a fire suppression system, updating the septic system, increasing parking, and improving accessibility. Voters did not approve a ballot measure for the loan needed for the initial project budget in 2022, so the Town is planning a more limited and less costly partial renovation.⁷⁶

The Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee is in the process of working with the state to evaluate the feasibility of building a new elementary school, a process that Town stakeholders expect could include the consolidation of existing elementary schools during the life of this plan.⁷⁷ While the decision depends on the Massachusetts School Building Authority, the School Committee has stated that one potential outcome would be to combine the Cutler and Winthrop schools in a new or renovated building at the Cutler site.

3.2.2 Transportation

OVERVIEW



A Commuter Rail train passing through downtown Hamilton.

The transportation infrastructure in Hamilton facilitates circulation throughout the Town. It supports the connectivity of local goods and services to larger markets, including the commute of Hamilton residents to Boston as a regional job center. Hamilton, a small community with a population of approximately 7,561 residents, depends on passenger vehicles and trucks to transport both people and goods. Transportation infrastructure decisions are closely tied with the land use, economic development, and housing opportunities discussed in this plan.

This section will discuss the current transportation network available in Hamilton, including highway and roadway infrastructure, bridges, mass

transit, biking, and pedestrian facilities. Planning for transportation allows a community to align long-term goals with other aspects of town planning, such as land use, economic development, and housing. Adequate transportation and infrastructure maintenance can mean quality of life for residents and accessibility within the Town and region.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Roadways

The local road network's scale, location, and functionality contribute to Hamilton's existing and future rural-suburban development patterns. Hamilton has a total of 52 miles of roadway, each classified by the Federal Highway Administration as numbered interstates, arterials, collectors, or local roads, although the Town has no roads that are classified as interstates. Table 3.2.7 shows federal road classifications and corresponding roadway lengths. Functional road classifications are designations for planning purposes dependent on the type of service provided to motor vehicles and design standards. The level of mobility offered by each classification varies.

| Table 3.2.7: Functional Classification of Hamilton Roadways | | |
|---|-------|---------------------|
| Classification | Miles | Percent of Roadways |
| Principal arterial (Route 1A) | 3.5 | 6.7% |
| Other arterials & collectors | 12.2 | 23.4% |
| Local roads | 36.4 | 69.9% |
| Total | 52.1 | 100% |
| <i>Source: MassDOT Road Inventory 2021</i> | | |

For example, interstate highways and arterials provide the highest level of mobility with high-speed traffic potentially between 55 and 75 miles per hour. In comparison, collector roads operate at lower speeds, between 35 and 55 miles per hour, and grant access to greater land areas. Hamilton has two principal highways: State Route 1A, which is under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and known locally as Bay Road, and State Route 22 (Essex Street/Woodbury Street), which is a State road owned and maintained by the Town. Local roads account for most of Hamilton roadways and provide access to residential areas, commercial districts, and nearby open space at low speeds, between 20 and 45 miles per hour. As of 2016, there were thirty private roads in Hamilton, all with three or fewer homes except for Woodland Mead.⁷⁸ Most of these private streets are not built to a standard that would allow them to become public streets. These standards include appropriate width, materials, right of way, pedestrian facilities, drainage, and other essential elements. Private roads may become public based on a strong majority vote among abutters and an assumption of costs for all improvements.⁷⁹

Scenic Roads

Many of Hamilton's roads are identified as scenic roadways for their contribution to the Town's historic character. State Route 1A, also known as Bay Road, historically acts as a major throughway running north-south between Boston and northern New England since colonial

| Table 3.2.8: Hamilton Scenic Roads | |
|--|-------------------|
| Asbury Street | Miles River Road |
| Bridge Street | Moulton Street |
| Chebacco Road | Sagamore Street |
| Cutler Road | Walnut Street |
| Gardner Street | Waldingfield Road |
| Goodhue Street | Winthrop Street |
| Highland Street | |
| <i>Source: Hamilton Reconnaissance Report (2005)</i> | |

⁷⁶ Joseph Domelowicz (Town Manager, Town of Hamilton, MA), interview by Judi Barrett, February, 2023.

⁷⁷ Neil Zolot, "Massachusetts School Building Authority gives Hamilton initial nod for Cutler School project," wickedlocal.com, April 6, 2022.

⁷⁸ US Federal Highway Administration. "Road Function Classifications." FHWA Safety. November 2000.

⁷⁹ Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen. "Town of Hamilton Policy: Converting Private Streets into Public Ways."

times. Highland Street also facilitates north-south traffic through the western portion of Town at lower speeds. Other scenic throughways in more rural areas display prominent open spaces and scenic vistas. Roads designated as scenic under the Scenic Roads Act, G.L. c. 40, Section 15C, include Asbury, Bridge, Gardner, Goodhue, Highland, Moulton, Sagamore, and Winthrop Streets, and Chebacco, Cutler, Miles River, Waldingfield and Walnut Roads (Table 3.2.8).⁸⁰

Capital Improvements & Transportation System Maintenance

Hamilton residents believe most transportation infrastructure is well maintained and meets their current circulation needs. The Department of Public Works (DPW) facilitates regular road maintenance, including plowing and treating roads during winter storms and regular improvements throughout the year like filling potholes and repaving projects. When speaking to Hamilton residents there was some confusion regarding road maintenance requests on Bay Road, and concerns about road debris and vegetation overgrowth impeding the path of cyclists and pedestrians. Capital improvements from Fiscal Year 2019 to 2023 focused on road infrastructure maintenance and paving, National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) improvements, and new pedestrian connections.⁸¹ Table 3.2.9 summarizes improvements funded over the past five years. A well-planned approach to transportation infrastructure repairs, redesign, and updates is important for the future health of the Town's circulation system.

| Table 3.2.9: Hamilton Capital Improvements: Highways | | | | | | |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| | FY 2019 | FY 2020 | FY 2021 | FY 2022 | FY 2023 | Total |
| Essex Street Pathway Phase I & II | | \$300,000 | \$250,000 | \$300,000 | | \$850,000 |
| Road & Sidewalk Repair Program | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$190,000 | \$950,000 |
| NPDES Phase II Compliance | \$60,000 | \$70,000 | \$80,000 | \$50,000 | | \$260,000 |
| Chebacco Road Paving | | \$1,000,000 | | | | \$1,000,000 |
| Total | \$250,000 | 1,560,000 | \$520,000 | \$540,000 | \$190,000 | \$3,060,000 |
| Source: Town of Hamilton Finance Department. <i>Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2023</i> | | | | | | |

Overall Traffic Patterns

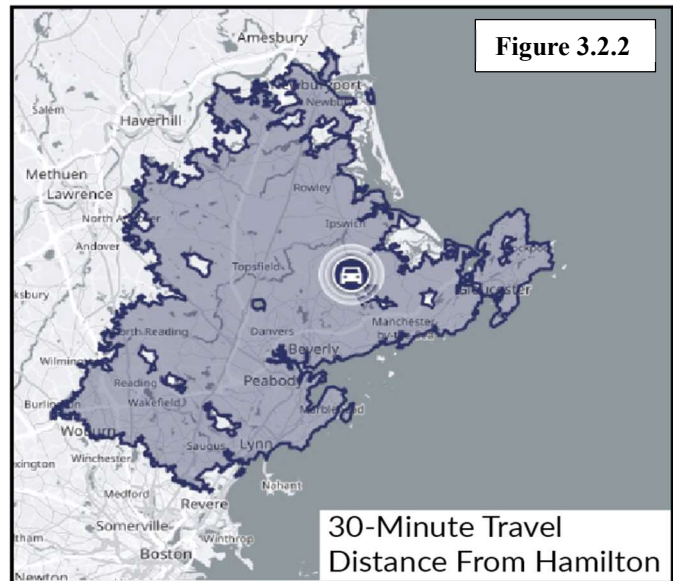
As a small rural-suburban community, Hamilton does not have a sizable employment base and many residents commute to out-of-town places for jobs and goods and services. Traffic congestion associated with many non-local trips is a concern for community members at peak hours, when caretakers are venturing to and from schools and work. Several roads collect and move traffic from local neighborhoods to State Routes 1A and 22. Highland Street and Asbury Street form a triangle that provides important links to U.S. Route 1 and Route 97 in Topsfield.

Adopted February 2019.

⁸⁰ Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Essex National Heritage Commission. "Hamilton Reconnaissance Report." May 2005

⁸¹ Town of Hamilton Finance Department. *Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2023*. August 2018.

Highland Street, which becomes Arbor Street in Wenham, carries a considerable amount of peak period traffic. In community interviews, many Hamilton residents reported that school pick up and drop off caused standstill traffic on Bay Road near the Hamilton-Wenham Regional High School. Car dependence in Hamilton is efficient for users since density is low and there are few stops apart from stop signs and a signalized crosswalk on Bay Road. Current infrastructure and traffic patterns may be convenient, but it also affects residents' lives with more vehicle miles traveled, paved roadways, and greenhouse gas emissions.



An important component of understanding and planning for a community's transportation network is having a baseline of information on the network's users and the locations they may access in a certain timeframe. Hamilton residents can reach many towns in the area in under thirty minutes, including Beverly, Danvers, Gloucester, Ipswich, Lynn, Marblehead, Newbury, Newburyport, Peabody, Reading, Rockport, Rowley, Salem, Saugus, Stoneham, Topsfield, and Wakefield.⁸² Figure 3.2.2 shows the distance Hamilton residents may each within 30 minutes in single-occupancy vehicles.

Many individual commuters, 74.6 percent, rely on private vehicles to travel to and from their employment, while 8.9 percent use public transportation. Hamilton's public transportation infrastructure is limited to the Newburyport/Rockport commuter rail line used to access Boston through North Station and dial-a-ride bus transit for older adults and people with disabilities. Resident preferences for single-occupancy cars to commute may be attributed to the scattered employment centers they travel to, existing transportation infrastructure, few opportunities to carpool, and an inconvenient train schedule. Two-thirds of Hamilton residents commute to nearby job centers. Table 3.2.10 shows the full breakdown of commuter modes, with an additional 9.9 percent of residents working from home.⁸³ Trends are expected to change in the coming years as more individuals are presented with the opportunity of flexible arrangements.

Table 3.2.10: Commute to Work Data in Hamilton

| Primary Transportation Mode | Percentage of Labor Force |
|--|---------------------------|
| Car, truck, or van | 74.6% |
| Public transportation | 8.9% |
| Walking | 5.3% |
| Taxicab, motorcycle, bicycle, or other means | 1.2% |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2015-2019)</i> | |

⁸² TravelTime. "Map Demo."

⁸³ US Census Bureau. American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2015-2019.

Hamilton commuters experience a range of travel times. More than half of workers in 2019 over the age of sixteen, 54 percent, traveled less than thirty minutes one way to their place of employment. By contrast, a large cohort, 27.5 percent of residents, traveled sixty minutes or more to offices or employment centers like Boston. The northernmost area of Boston is nearly thirty miles, forty-two minutes by car without traffic, or 50 minutes by train. While some residents use public transportation to access North Station, many would still prefer to drive due to the challenges of traveling between North Station, the Financial District, and other areas of Boston.

| Table 3.2.11: Commuting Time for Hamilton Residents | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Commuting Times | Percentage of Population |
| Less than 10 minutes | 11.4% |
| 10 to 14 minutes | 8.2% |
| 15 to 19 minutes | 16.9% |
| 20 to 24 minutes | 14.1% |
| 25 to 29 minutes | 3.6% |
| 30 to 34 minutes | 7.9% |
| 35 to 44 minutes | 3.9% |
| 45 to 59 minutes | 6.4% |
| 60 or more minutes | 27.5% |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates (2015-2019)</i> | |

Public Transit

The Newburyport/Rockport MBTA commuter rail line runs through the center of the downtown area and serves as a stop for both Hamilton and Wenham. The rail line allows for a commute south into Boston or a commute north to Newburyport. The Town is not currently served by a public bus service. The Cape Ann Transportation Authority (CATA) provides reservation-based van services for medical appointments, shopping, banking, and other services to the elderly population.

During the community engagement process, many residents described the Commuter Rail as a strength and an integral feature of Hamilton's connection to Boston. Still, while some residents identified the train as their personal mode of choice when commuting to work, data only shows 8.9 percent of residents relying on it for their daily commutes. Riders may also travel between communities like North Beverly, Beverly, Salem, Swampscott, and Chelsea, or as far north as Newburyport, and municipalities to the South through North Station in Boston.

As of 2023, commuter rail fares to and from Boston are \$9.75 for one-way trips, \$19.50 for round trips, or \$311 for a monthly rail zone 5 pass.⁸⁴ Depending on peak or off-peak travel times, trips in and out of Hamilton from North Station in Boston may take 43 to 52 minutes, according to schedules posted by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority.⁸⁵ During off-peak trip times, the Hamilton stop becomes a flag stop, meaning riders must be visible and waiting on the platform for the train to stop. Weekend and personal trips are less convenient for Hamilton residents looking to explore Boston using the train as their mode in and out of Boston because inbound and outbound trains arrive at two-hour intervals. The last trip out of North Station departs at 11 pm on weekdays, often before events at major civic centers conclude. Weekend service is limited to nine trips between Hamilton and North Station. Commuter rail service on the weekend ends even earlier, with the last trip on Saturday and Sunday departing at 9:27 pm.

⁸⁴ "Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail Timetable." Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

While convenient for commuters working close to North Station, the rail service could be enhanced to support broader desires to spend more time in Boston and reach the city quicker.

Parking

Recent infrastructure updates highlighted in the Town Manager's reports include new electric vehicle parking infrastructure at Town Hall and Patton Park.⁸⁶ Parking lots in Hamilton are concentrated in the downtown area and the edge of Patton Park to accommodate patrons visiting small shops and restaurants, and residents using Town recreational facilities. The Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing provides nearly 200 parking spaces adjacent to the Hamilton-Wenham Commuter Rail line, accommodating shoppers and commuter pickups. Additional parking in the area includes on-street parking on the one-way throughway, Railroad Avenue, and smaller, private parking lots for small businesses along these downtown corridors. Commuters and others traveling to Boston for the day may pay to park at the Hamilton-Wenham parking lot for four dollars during the week, two dollars on weekends, or seventy dollars for a monthly parking pass. This small downtown area caters to individuals arriving in cars rather than providing greater connectivity through pedestrian and bicycle connections.

Bridges

Hamilton has four major bridges with varying travel volumes. As of 2017, these bridges had a cumulative annual average daily traffic (AADT) of 10,850 vehicle trips.⁸⁷ Annual average daily traffic is calculated by adding the total vehicle volume of a highway for a year divided by 365 days. This performance metric is used to plan bridge maintenance due to the implication of traffic load and construction methods. Table 3.2.12 provides more information on bridges in the Town, including the date constructed and their current condition.

| Table 3.2.12: Hamilton Bridge Location and Condition | | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Bridge Location | AADT (2017) | Date Constructed | Structure | Condition |
| Moulton Street over water Miles River | 5,000 | 2000 | Prestressed concrete | Good |
| Cutler Road over RR MBTA | 1,100 | 2004 | Prestressed concrete | Fair |
| Highland Street over Water Ipswich River | 4,100 | 2009 repaired-older | Masonry | Fair |
| Winthrop Street over Water Ipswich River | 650 | 1845 | Wood or Timber | Poor |
| Source: National Bridge Inventory (2019 edition) | | | | |

Bridge conditions are determined by the National Bridge Inventory (NBI) ratings for deck, superstructure, substructure or culverts. If the rating is greater than or equal to 7, the bridge is classified as Good; if it is less than or equal to 4, the classification is Poor. Bridges rated 5 or 6

⁸⁶ Town of Hamilton. "Town Manager Report." February 27, 2023

⁸⁷ City-Data. "National Bridge Inventory (NBI) Statistics.

are classified as Fair.⁸⁸ Three bridges in Town are in fair condition or worse, poor condition. Recent initiatives such as the Sagamore Street Culvert repair demonstrate the Town of Hamilton is monitoring the condition of roadway infrastructure and facilitating necessary maintenance.⁸⁹ In August 2023 the Winthrop Street bridge was closed due to its poor condition, and MassDOT has stated that it plans to replace the bridge in 2025.⁹⁰

Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

The Town has limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure as a part of the existing road network. Sidewalks and bicycle lanes were not priorities in the development of Hamilton's infrastructure. According to the Census Bureau, less than 10 percent of residents walk or bike to work, likely due to both the lack of opportunity and the condition of local infrastructure. The Town adopted a Complete Streets policy in January 2019, discussed below, to promote an environment that provides safe, convenient, and accessible routes for all users of local roadways, trails, and transit systems, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, buses, and emergency vehicles.⁹¹

In focus group interviews, Hamilton residents and Town officials say there is a need for low-stress infrastructure that serves residents without vehicles and school-age children. A new traffic law passed by the State Legislature, H.5103, also aims to protect vulnerable road users including cyclists, pedestrians, and individuals on horseback by mandating motorists give four feet of safe passing distance. Connections through existing open space parcels could lower travel times, ease congestion during peak periods like school pick up and drop off, and protect vulnerable road users.

Complete Streets

In 2019, the Town initiated a Complete Streets policy aiming to provide safe, convenient, and accessible infrastructure for all users across local roadways, trails, and transit systems. Adopting a Complete Streets policy and prioritization plan allows communities to apply for technical assistance and construction funding from MassDOT, to be applied to eligible projects identified in the prioritization plan. Priorities highlighted in the local policy include incremental improvements of existing infrastructure, integrated transportation facilities in new development, and evaluating all proposed projects in the context of neighborhood characteristics. Hamilton outlined the creation of a Complete Street Advisory Committee and the submission of a prioritization plan to the Massachusetts Department of Transportation as critical steps in the Complete Street policy implementation, although the advisory committee is not active as of 2024. Projects at the top of the prioritization plan ranking focus on intersection reconstruction to enhance pedestrian safety, ADA compliance, and increase visibility through lights or signage. The top-ranked projects and details are included in Table 3.2.13.

⁸⁸ Bridge Reports. "Map by Condition." National Bridge Inventory Data.

⁸⁹ Town of Hamilton. "Town Manager Report." February 27, 2023

⁹⁰ Town of Hamilton. "Winthrop Street Bridge Temporary Closure." August 8, 2023.

⁹¹ Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen. "Complete Streets Policy." Adopted January 2019.

Table 3.2.13: Hamilton Complete Streets Funding Project Prioritization Plan

| Rank | Project Name | Project Description |
|---|--|--|
| 1 | Highland Street / Asbury Street / Pleasant Avenue (Asbury Grove) Intersection Reconstruction | Tighten and define the Pleasant Avenue radii to provide better vehicle sightlines. Stripe new crosswalks with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps across Asbury Street and Highland Street at the existing pedestrian crossing locations. Reconstruct existing sidewalks to provide a consistent 5-foot width and ADA-compliant cross-slope. Install pedestrian flashing beacons (such as RRFBs) at the Highland Street crossing. |
| 2 | Highland Street / Asbury Street Intersection Reconstruction | Realign the Asbury Street approach at the intersection to provide a standard T-intersection to improve vehicle sightlines and reduce crossing distances. Extend the existing sidewalk approximately 400 feet along the west side of Highland Street north from Pleasant Avenue to Asbury Street. Construct a new crosswalk with ADA-compliant ramps across Asbury Street. Restripe pavement markings as necessary (e.g., centerline, STOP- bars, etc.). |
| 3 | Essex Street (Route 22) / Woodbury Street Intersection Reconstruction | Realign the Woodbury Street northbound approach by tightening both corners and removing the channelizing medians to create a standard T-intersection to clarify traffic patterns and reduce pedestrian crossing distances. Construct curb bump-outs at the Woodbury Street southbound approach. Stripe crosswalks with ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps across the westbound and southbound approaches. Construct new sidewalk areas at crosswalk ends. Relocate the Stop-Bars and STOP signs to the relocated approaches. Restripe pavement markings (centerlines, shoulder, etc.) as necessary. Consider warrants for installing a flashing beacon at the intersection for an additional safety feature. |
| 4 | Bridge Street / Woodbury Street Intersection Reconstruction | Tighten the radii on the southwest corner of the intersection to reduce crossing width. Restripe/ relocate existing crosswalk and construct ADA- compliant wheelchair ramps. Extend the existing sidewalk to the new curb location. Restripe / relocate the existing STOP- bars on the Woodbury Street approach. Reconstruct approximately 600 feet of existing sidewalk to the east of the intersection to provide a consistent width and ADA cross-section. Restripe the existing pedestrian crossing across Bridge Street at Ockenga Lane and construct ADA-compliant wheelchair ramps. Install pedestrian flashing beacons (such as RRFBs) at the Bridge Street pedestrian crossing at Ockenga Lane. |
| <i>Source: Tier 2 Prioritization Plan Final Hamilton Revised (Mass DOT)</i> | | |

Trails

Hamilton residents have access to a variety of beautiful and well-used local and regional nature trails for hiking, biking, mountain biking, horseback riding, fishing, snowshoeing, and skiing. This includes a variety of trails branded as the Discover Hamilton Trail network managed by the Essex County Trail Association. Figure 3.2.3 shows the network of trails, open space, and trailhead parking for potential users. Currently, many users must drive to these trail systems and park their cars to enjoy the open space. Additional infrastructure could connect individuals

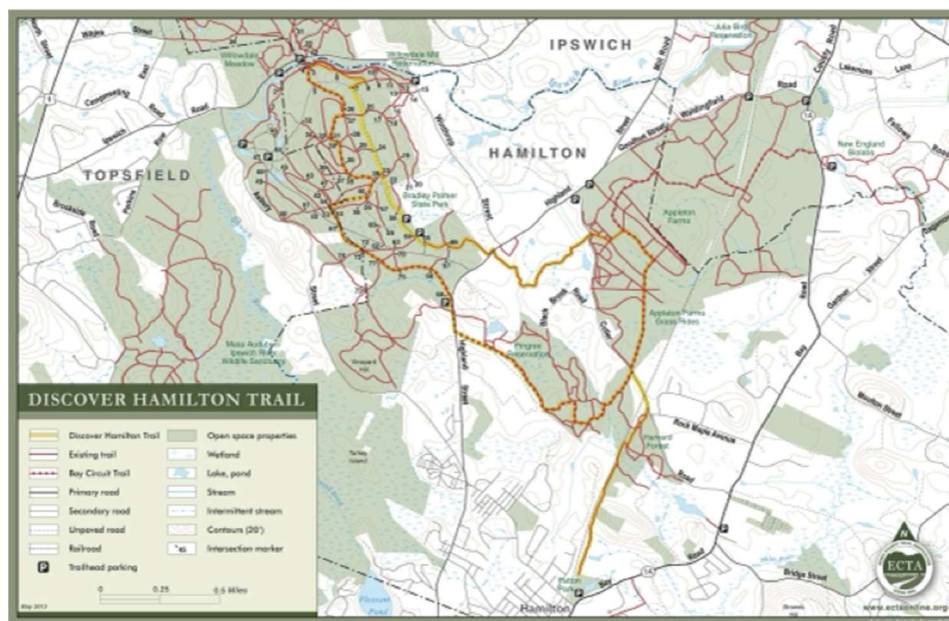
to downtown shopping or students to the local schools from their neighborhoods through extended trails. Residents expressed a desire for better connectivity between bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and these trails. A list of trails and paths can be found in the Open Space and Recreation chapter.

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Transportation projects, policies, and updates are facilitated by a variety of Hamilton committees, departments, designees, and volunteers. The Department of Public Works (DPW) executes a range of public services from maintaining and improving road conditions to the upkeep of traffic signs and pavement markings and trench permitting. Regular updates are available monthly through the Town Manager's report which includes projects underway or permits pertaining to the transportation system and more.

The DPW is responsible for physical improvements to infrastructure, prioritization and planning. Committees like the Planning Board facilitate the Road Acceptance Procedure that allows residents to propose private streets become public upon the completion of necessary improvements financed by abutters. Hamilton's departments and committees work together to facilitate the smooth operation of the transportation system, through initiatives such as road maintenance, traffic management, and the implementation of pedestrian and cyclist-friendly infrastructure.

Figure 3.2.3 Discover Hamilton Trails



3.3 GROW

3.3.1 Economic Development

OVERVIEW



Sign for the Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing.

Economic development is often thought to refer to physical development of commercial and industrial space in a community, but true economic development supports the improvement of the Town and the lives of people residing there through both physical change and policy. Specific economic conditions in a municipality are largely driven by sources of household income; the commercial and industrial base a community can attract, retain, and support; and the uses a community chooses to allow or encourage on its land through zoning. There are many factors that businesses and organizations take into consideration when choosing where to locate, including availability of space, local amenities, access to a skilled workforce, tax rates, and quality and capacity of existing and planned infrastructure.

Local governments in Massachusetts depend heavily on property taxes for their operating revenue and thus consider the structure of their tax base critical to long-term fiscal sustainability. This influences which land use the Town emphasizes and where development is supported. Compared to residential uses, most commercial and industrial uses tend to generate lower levels of service demand from a municipality while yielding more tax revenue, so the balance of commercial, industrial, and residential uses in a town or district is important to maintaining adequate services to support residents and businesses alike.

In Hamilton, these elements of economic development are important considerations as much of the Town's land is comprised of residential uses and open spaces with fewer opportunities to support jobs and businesses. These land use decisions have left the Town with a heavy reliance on residential property taxes as its main form of local revenue, while also giving residents few options to obtain goods and services. This chapter provides an overview of Hamilton's current economic conditions with a review of the local labor force, employment trends, commuting patterns, and non-residential land uses.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Labor Force

The labor force in Hamilton is composed of residents aged 16 and over who are either currently employed or actively looking for work. In 2021, the labor force was estimated to be 4,302 people.

By mid-2021, the labor force had essentially returned to its pre-pandemic level, which also hovered around 4,300.⁹²

The labor force participation rate of 73 percent – an important measure of how engaged an overall population is in economic activity – suggests that Hamilton’s working-age population is highly engaged relative to Essex County’s or Massachusetts’ population, both of which are around 65 percent (see Table 3.3.1). While 6 percentage points may seem like a small amount, Massachusetts’ participation rate has not been as high as Hamilton’s current rate at any point since at least 1980, and even minor changes in percentages have important implications for household incomes, household spending, and the flexibility of the labor market at a municipal scale.⁹³

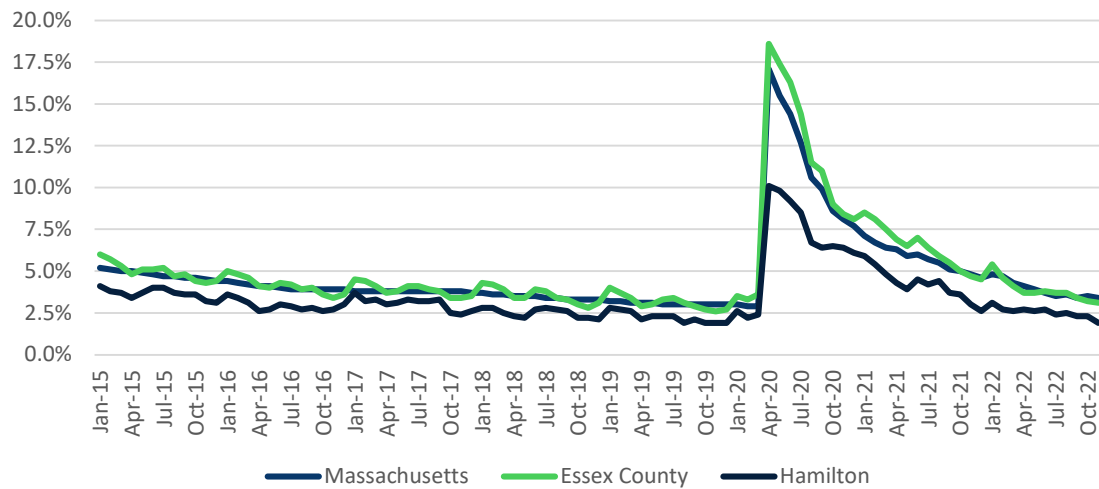
| Table 3.3.1: Comparison of 2021 Labor Force Participation & Unemployment Rates | | |
|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Labor Force Participation | Annualized Unemployment Rate |
| Hamilton | 72.6% | 4.2% |
| Essex County | 63.8% | 6.4% |
| Massachusetts | 65.5% | 5.8% |
| <i>Sources: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021), MA EOLWD LMI</i> | | |

However, unemployment figures indicate that those who are part of the labor force in Hamilton are faring better relative to workers across the state. Since 2015, Hamilton has consistently outperformed Massachusetts in this metric, with sometimes dramatically lower unemployment rates (see Figure 3.3.1). Furthermore, after a significant jump at the outset of the pandemic, unemployment rates in Hamilton returned to low levels, suggesting that the jobs held by Hamilton residents may not have been as heavily impacted by the pandemic as other places in Essex County and Massachusetts.⁹⁴

⁹² Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development (MA EOLWD), Labor Market Information (LMI), 2023.

⁹³ Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development (MA EOLWD), Labor Market Information (LMI); US Census Bureau 2021 5-year American Community Survey (ACS)

⁹⁴ MA EOLWD, LMI, 2023.

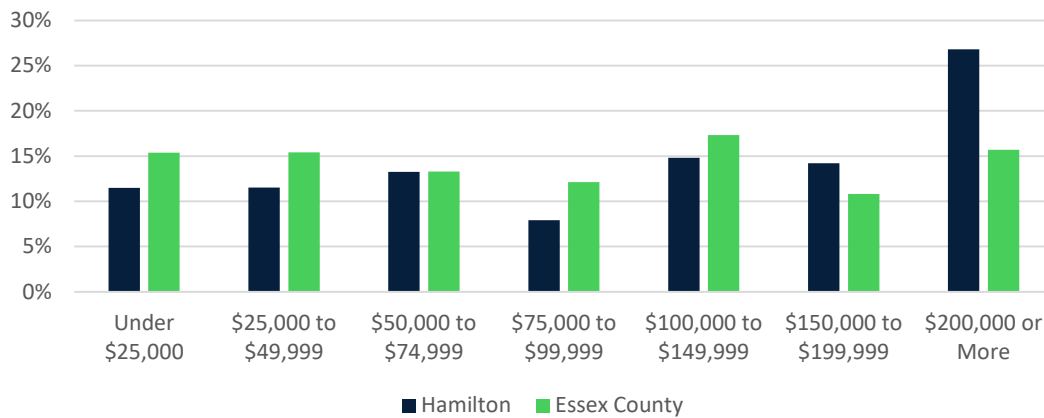
Figure 3.3.1: Unemployment Rates*Source: MA EOLWD*

This may be due to the high educational attainment of Hamilton's population, as the Town has a relatively high percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree or higher. Nearly 69 percent of Hamilton's residents have at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 41 and 45 percent of the county and state populations, respectively.⁹⁵ Workers with that level of education have been repeatedly shown to experience lower levels of unemployment and were likely impacted in a different way during the pandemic compared to lower-skilled workers. These differences are explored further in this chapter.

With an estimated median household income of \$116,699 in 2021, Hamilton households are well above the county median of \$93,533. However, the distribution of incomes in Town is strongly divergent, as shown in Figure 3.3.2. Thirty-six percent of households earn under \$75,000 and 27 percent earn over \$200,000. An additional 14 percent earn between \$150,000 and \$199,999. This distribution indicates a bifurcation of incomes, and an examination of the changes in income distribution since 2010 suggests that the middle class in Hamilton is shrinking, as are the numbers of lower-income households earning less than \$50,000 a year. These proportions are shrinking faster than those in the county.⁹⁶ Given the Town's older resident population, a percentage of households with lower median incomes could be seniors on a fixed income. Householders aged 65 years or older in fact have a median household income of about \$60,500, roughly half of the Town average. However, that does not likely account for all households in that income category.

⁹⁵ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021).

⁹⁶ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021).

Figure 3.3.2: Household Income Distribution*Source: ACS (2021)*

Major regional employment centers are the dominant destinations for workers living in Hamilton. Many Hamilton residents are commuting to Boston and Beverly, which welcome 682 and 370 workers from Hamilton, respectively. Hamilton itself is the third most common destination; 209 Hamilton residents both live and work in Town. More than 1,700 of Hamilton's working residents have commute destinations on the North Shore (see Figure 3.3.3).⁹⁷

Figure 3.3.3**Home Areas for Workers in Hamilton**

| Home Area | Count of Workers | Share |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------|
| Hamilton | 209 | 16.2% |
| Beverly | 156 | 12.1% |
| Ipswich | 83 | 6.4% |
| Wenham | 61 | 4.7% |
| Gloucester | 60 | 4.7% |
| Danvers | 56 | 4.3% |
| Salem | 45 | 3.5% |
| Peabody | 42 | 3.3% |
| Manchester-by-the-Sea | 30 | 2.3% |
| Haverhill | 24 | 1.9% |

Work Destinations for Hamilton Residents

| Work Destination Area | Count of Workers | Share |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------|
| Boston | 682 | 19.6% |
| Beverly | 370 | 10.6% |
| Hamilton | 209 | 6.0% |
| Ipswich | 135 | 3.9% |
| Danvers | 115 | 3.3% |
| Peabody | 102 | 2.9% |
| Wenham | 102 | 2.9% |
| Salem | 101 | 2.9% |
| Cambridge | 95 | 2.7% |
| Burlington | 63 | 1.8% |

Source: US Census LEHD, OnTheMap, 2019

There is a large disparity between the number of resident workers and the number of jobs in Hamilton. According to the Census OnTheMap tool, Hamilton has a net outflow of 2,192 workers. This means there are 2,192 more working residents leaving Hamilton every day than there are employees commuting into or staying in Hamilton for jobs. This statistic is not surprising as Hamilton has fewer jobs that match well with the industry sectors Hamilton residents are employed in. Jobs in Hamilton tend to be concentrated in government, healthcare,

⁹⁷ US Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators/OnTheMap, 2019.

education, and retail while Hamilton residents tend to work in sectors like professional and technical services, finance and insurance, and management of companies. The heavy outflow of workers from Hamilton every day means fewer people remain in the Town to support daytime activity for commercial businesses, retail establishments, and restaurants.⁹⁸

The rest of this section discusses employment data from the Census Bureau and other federal sources. The federal government uses the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) to report economic data, but these industry categories can be unintuitive to the public. Table 3.3.2 is a guide to the types of businesses described by each NAICS category.

| Table 3.3.2: Guide to NAICS Categories | |
|--|---|
| NAICS Category | Description from US Census Bureau |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | <i>"Growing crops, raising animals, harvesting timber, and harvesting fish and other animals"</i> |
| Construction | <i>"Construction of buildings or engineering projects (e.g., highways and utility systems)"</i> |
| Manufacturing | <i>"Mechanical, physical, or chemical transformation of materials into new products, and assembling of component parts"</i> |
| Wholesale trade | <i>"Selling [of] merchandise to other businesses; normally operate[d] from a warehouse or office"</i> |
| Retail trade | <i>"Sell[ing] merchandise in small quantities to the general public [in] fixed point-of-sale locations."</i> |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | <i>"Providing transportation of passengers and cargo, warehousing and storage for goods, [and] scenic and sightseeing transportation."</i> |
| Information | <i>"Producing and distributing information and cultural products [e.g. video production]; providing the means to transmit or distribute these products [e.g. telecommunications]; processing data [e.g. libraries, archival services]."</i> |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing | <i>"Engaged in financial transactions; renting, leasing, or otherwise allowing the use of... assets [e.g. residential properties or commercial machinery]."</i> |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | <i>"Specializing in professional or technical tasks for others, [e.g. architecture, engineering, advertising, or research & development];"</i> <i>"Routine support activities for the day-to-day operations of other organizations [e.g. clerical, security, or waste disposal services]."</i> |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance | <i>"Providing instruction and training" at all educational levels from elementary school to professional development; medical care, social work.</i> |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services | <i>Live performances, museums, recreation activities such as amusement parks or bowling alleys; hotels/motels; restaurants & catering.</i> |
| Other services, except public administration | <i>Industries not covered above, including repairs (e.g. automobile, electronics, furniture) and personal services (e.g. hair, nails, etc.).</i> |
| Public administration | <i>Working for "federal, state, and local government agencies."</i> |
| <i>Source: census.gov, "Economic Census: NAICS Codes & Understanding Industry Classification Systems" accessed March 2024.</i> | |

⁹⁸ US Census Bureau, Quarterly Workforce Indicators/OnTheMap (2019)

The industry sectors Hamilton residents are employed in closely reflect the Greater Boston economy, with significant numbers in Education Services and Health Care & Social Assistance, as well as Professional, Scientific, and Management; and Administrative Services (see Table 3.3.3). The number of residents working in Retail Trade has decreased particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, a trend reflected in many local communities. Between 2016 and 2021, resident employment essentially remained unchanged (the estimated change was well within the statistical margin of error). As a share of the overall number of resident workers, Finance & Insurance and Real Estate & Rental & Leasing decreased the most over that period, while Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative Services increased the most.

| Table 3.3.3: Hamilton Resident Worker Industries | | |
|--|------------------------------|--|
| Industry | # of Resident Workers | Percent of Total Resident Workers |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | 28 | 0.7% |
| Construction | 281 | 7.4% |
| Manufacturing | 237 | 6.2% |
| Wholesale trade | 56 | 1.5% |
| Retail trade | 361 | 9.5% |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | 55 | 1.4% |
| Information | 99 | 2.6% |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing | 259 | 6.8% |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | 882 | 23.1% |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance | 1,105 | 28.9% |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services | 264 | 6.9% |
| Other services, except public administration | 123 | 3.2% |
| Public administration | 67 | 1.8% |
| Source: <i>American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i> | | |

Hamilton's resident workers are in relatively high-paying industries, especially Finance & Insurance and Professional Services, which do not host large numbers of jobs in Hamilton. Education Services and Health Care & Social Assistance are the largest sector for resident workers, though the wages for jobs in those industries are, on average, below the Town-wide average. However, both of those industries are limited in Hamilton and do not reflect the regional economy. Jobs in those industries in Hamilton are anchored by relatively low-paying subsectors (Elementary & Secondary Schools and Child Day Care Services), whereas across the county and state those industries have significantly higher prevalence of higher-paying subsectors such as General Medical & Surgical Hospitals and Colleges & Universities & Professional Schools.

EMPLOYMENT BASE

The employment base in Hamilton includes all wage and salary jobs reported by public and private sector employers, as well as those who are self-employed. In 2022, there were a total of 2,183 jobs located in Hamilton, listed by industry in Table 3.3.4. Those working in the Government sector comprised the largest share with 593 employees; this number does include those working for the school districts.⁹⁹ Other notable industry sectors in Hamilton include Health Care & Social Assistance; and Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services, which employ 358 and 219, respectively. Overall, employment has grown since 2012, increasing 4 percent or 85 jobs.¹⁰⁰

The biggest absolute decreases were in Health Care & Social Assistance (a decrease of 67, or 16 percent) and Finance & Insurance (down 51 jobs, or 31 percent). In percentage terms, Wholesale Trade grew the most with an increase of 436 percent, or 55 jobs, while Construction and Administration & Support both saw notable growth at 59 jobs (153 percent) and 84 jobs (197 percent), respectively. Essex County's employment grew at a slightly slower rate overall, increasing by 3.6 percent since 2012. Across the county, Health Care & Social Assistance, Construction, Transportation & Warehousing, and Administration & Support were the industries with the largest absolute increases in employment over the last decade.¹⁰¹ The impending downsizing of the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary campus may decrease employment in Town in the short term.

| Description | 2022 Jobs | 2012 - 2022 % Change | Avg. Earnings Per Job | 2022 LQ (Essex County) |
|--|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Government | 593 | 5.1% | \$98,906 | 2.33 |
| Health Care & Social Assistance | 358 | -15.8% | \$46,175 | 0.89 |
| Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services | 219 | -3.6% | \$92,324 | 1.52 |
| Retail Trade | 180 | -7.7% | \$40,499 | 0.81 |
| Other Services (except Public Administration) | 170 | -12.2% | \$29,485 | 1.44 |
| Admin. & Support & Waste Mgmt. & Remediation Services | 127 | 196.8% | \$59,628 | 0.99 |
| Educational Services | 118 | 18.2% | \$57,964 | 1.67 |
| Finance & Insurance | 117 | -30.6% | \$267,551 | 1.96 |
| Construction | 97 | 153.2% | \$87,785 | 0.76 |
| Accommodation & Food Services | 85 | -6.0% | \$39,093 | 0.54 |
| All Others | 118 | 36.3% | | 0.23 |
| All Industries | 2,183 | 4.0% | \$79,702 | |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021), Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4</i> | | | | |

⁹⁹ This category includes employees of any government, not just the Town of Hamilton.

¹⁰⁰ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

¹⁰¹ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

Hamilton residents are underrepresented in many of the local industries with the highest employee workers in Town. In fact, an analysis of jobs per resident (see Table 3.3.5) shows that, in almost every single industry, there are far more resident workers than jobs in Hamilton. Table provides greater detail on this analysis.¹⁰²

| Table 3.3.5: Employment by Industry and Prevalence of Resident Employee Workers | | | |
|--|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Description of Sectors | # of Jobs | % of Total Employees | Jobs/Workers Ratio |
| Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining | 0 | 0.0% | 0.00 |
| Construction | 97 | 4.4% | 0.34 |
| Manufacturing | 5 | 0.2% | 0.02 |
| Wholesale trade | 67 | 3.1% | 1.20 |
| Retail trade | 180 | 8.3% | 0.50 |
| Transportation and warehousing, and utilities | 5 | 0.2% | 0.09 |
| Information | 0 | 0.0% | 0.00 |
| Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing | 117 | 5.4% | 0.45 |
| Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services | 346 | 15.8% | 0.39 |
| Educational services, and health care and social assistance | 476 | 21.8% | 0.43 |
| Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services | 124 | 5.7% | 0.47 |
| Other services, except public administration | 170 | 7.8% | 1.38 |
| Public administration | 593 | 27.2% | 8.85 |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021), Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4</i> | | | |

Occupations, i.e., job roles within industries, that are most common in Hamilton are closely aligned with the dominant industries. Educational Instruction & Library, Office & Administrative Support, Personal Care & Service, and Management are the roles with the largest numbers of jobs; however, all but Management have decreased since 2012. Construction & Extraction jobs – which, based on industry statistics, are likely almost entirely in the Construction industry – have grown the most, with an increase of 38 jobs since 2012.¹⁰³

Location Quotients

Location quotients compare employment by industry in two or more geographic areas. The location quotient is a ratio of the percentage of an industry's employment in one geography to that of a larger comparison geography. If the ratio falls between 0.80 and 1.20, then the proportion of jobs is very similar in both geographies. If the ratio is less than 0.80, then the identified industry sector is thought to be under-represented in the local economy. Conversely, a ratio greater than 1.20 can show a specialty within the local economy as compared to the larger

¹⁰² 2021 5-year ACS; Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

¹⁰³ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4

geography. The location quotient can be useful in pointing out opportunities for certain industry sectors to gain a larger share of the employment base or to indicate when a community may be heavily reliant on one or two industry sectors. In some cases, a high location quotient may indicate a specialty area in the local economy. Figure 3.3.4 shows location quotients for Hamilton's major industries compared to Essex County.

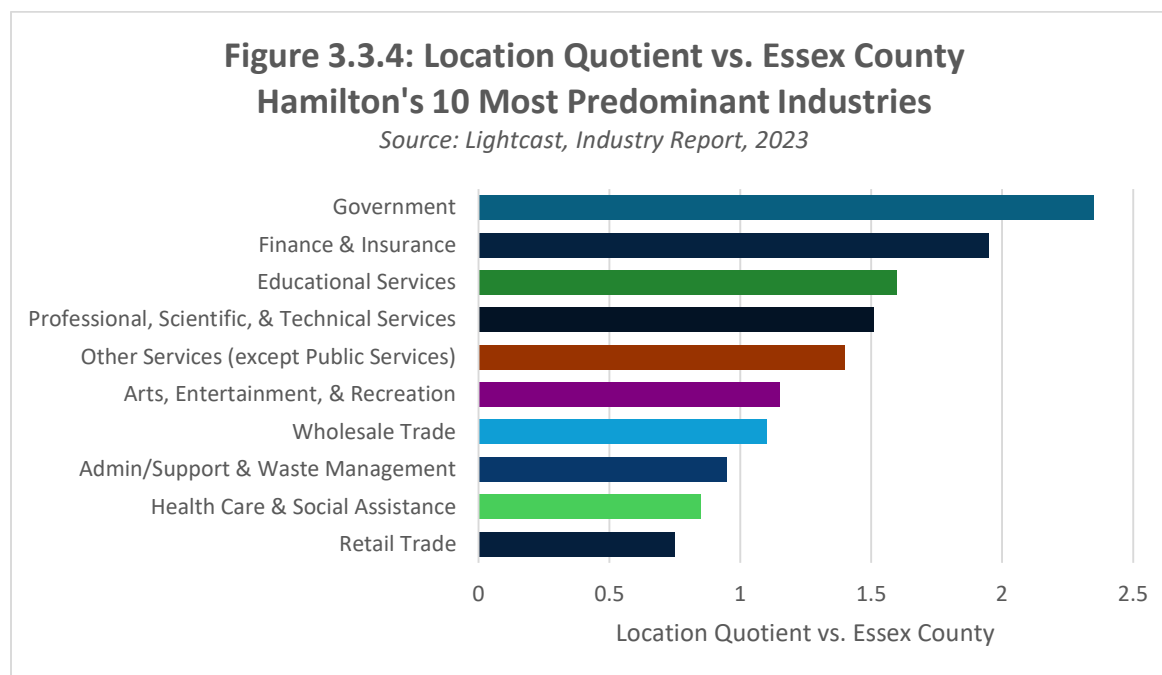


Figure 3.3.4 shows that Hamilton has a particularly high concentration of Government,¹⁰⁴ Finance & Insurance, Educational Services, and Professional, Scientific & Technical jobs compared to Essex County. The Town has more than 2.3 times as many Government jobs than would be expected based on employment across the county. However, the very small number of total jobs in Hamilton means that even small industries – with very limited employment – can appear to be dramatically overrepresented. Minor fluctuations in jobs numbers thus change the LQ for any given industry substantially; for instance, a decrease of just 60 jobs in the Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services sector drops the LQ from 1.52 to 1.11 – from quite overrepresented to well within normal range compared to the county. This effect is even more pronounced for industries with lower employment, such as Finance & Insurance and Educational Services.¹⁰⁵

Employers

Large employers and clusters of businesses by type in a municipality can be an indicator of local economic strengths, highlighting common industries and the potential for growing businesses. Hamilton's largest employer is the Town itself (see Table 3.3.6). With several hundred employees (at least 350), the Town accounts for nearly 20% of all employee jobs within its boundaries. Other notable employers include Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary (GCTS) and Crosby's Marketplace. Because the largest employers represent government, non-profit education, and a

¹⁰⁴This includes employees working for any government, not necessarily the Town of Hamilton.

¹⁰⁵ Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022.4; RKG Associates

regional grocer, and other significant employers are in similar low- or even no-growth industries, it is likely that Hamilton may not be able to count on the expansion of these organizations to drive meaningful local employment growth.¹⁰⁶ In 2023, GCTS announced plans to downsize its Hamilton operations, although the full impact of this decision on local employment remains to be seen.

Table 3.3.6: Largest Employers in Hamilton (2023)

| Company name | Address | Number of employees |
|---|--------------|---------------------|
| Town of Hamilton* | Bay Rd | ~500 |
| Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary | Essex St | 100-249 |
| Crosby's Marketplace | Walnut Rd | 50-99 |
| Myopia Hunt Club | Bay Rd | 20-49 |
| USPS | Railroad Ave | 20-49 |
| Weathervane Tavern | Railroad Ave | 20-49 |
| *Includes employees of all Town departments including the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Source: MA EOLWD, LMI | | |

Property Taxes

There are important financial implications businesses and even individuals evaluate when making choices about where to locate. In Hamilton, the residential property tax levy makes up 96 percent of the tax base, while commercial, industrial, and personal property together account for 4 percent. Hamilton has a single tax rate across uses, and that rate has decreased by 4.8 percent since 2013; this represents one of the smallest decreases among the surrounding communities (see Table 3.3.7).¹⁰⁷

Local property taxes almost always represent the single largest source of revenue for a municipality in Massachusetts, and thus a town's ability to fund services is highly dependent on its tax base. Hamilton's dependence on residential use means that residents, rather than businesses, carry nearly all of the tax burden, and any increase in operating and capital costs will likely directly add to residents' cost of living. Furthermore, overreliance on a single type of land use can leave the Town vulnerable to changes in property values for one specific type of use; should the housing market shrink or collapse as it did during prior economic disruptions, the Town could experience significant decreases in tax revenue. Hamilton also has a significant amount of land that generates little to no tax revenue -- about 37 percent of the Town's area is protected conservation land or owned by a public or nonprofit entity.

¹⁰⁶ MA EOLWD LMI

¹⁰⁷ Massachusetts Department of Revenue (MA DOR), Division of Local Services (DLS), Municipal Databank (2023); RKG Associates

Table 3.3.7: Comparison of Local Property Taxes, Hamilton & Surroundings

| Town | 2023 Property Tax Rates | | % Change FY13-FY23 | | Avg. SF Home Value (FY2023) | Avg. SF Property Tax Bill (FY2023) | Single Family Tax Bill as % of Value |
|---|-------------------------|--------|--------------------|--------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Res. | C/I/P* | Res. | C/I/P* | | | |
| Wenham | 17.35 | 17.35 | -6.1% | -6.1% | \$847,660 | \$14,707 | 1.74% |
| Hamilton | 16.34 | 16.34 | -4.8% | -4.8% | \$713,728 | \$11,662 | 1.63% |
| Topsfield | 15.20 | 15.20 | -4.7% | -4.7% | \$766,934 | \$11,657 | 1.52% |
| Essex | 13.88 | 13.88 | -8.4% | -8.4% | \$768,516 | \$10,667 | 1.39% |
| Ipswich | 12.23 | 12.23 | -8.0% | -8.0% | \$704,834 | \$8,620 | 1.22% |
| Danvers | 11.75 | 19.98 | -19.2% | -1.2% | \$605,754 | \$7,118 | 1.18% |
| Beverly | 11.26 | 22.07 | -17.4% | -11.2% | \$683,198 | \$7,693 | 1.13% |
| Manchester-by the Sea | 10.43 | 10.43 | -0.8% | -0.8% | \$1,400,141 | \$14,603 | 1.04% |
| *Refers to commercial, industrial, and personal property taxes i.e. non-residential taxes | | | | | | | |
| Source: MA DOR, DLS, Municipal Databank, 2023 | | | | | | | |

Commercial Areas

As described in the Land Use section, there are very few places in Hamilton with existing commercial and industrial activity. Almost all commercial and industrial uses are focused on Route 1A, and particularly around the MBTA Commuter Rail station in downtown Hamilton. There are no business or industrial parks located within Hamilton, and the closest such areas are clustered close to Route 128 and downtown Beverly.

The Shoppes at Hamilton Crossing, a shopping center at the intersection of Bay Road/Route 1A and Walnut Road, together with businesses along Bay Road and Railroad Avenue, represent most of the retail space in Hamilton. Tenants in the center include restaurants, a fitness studio, a pharmacy, and a small supermarket and specialty foods store. Some small commercial office spaces are also located in the shopping center, above the retail storefronts.

Commercial & Industrial Real Estate Market Indicators

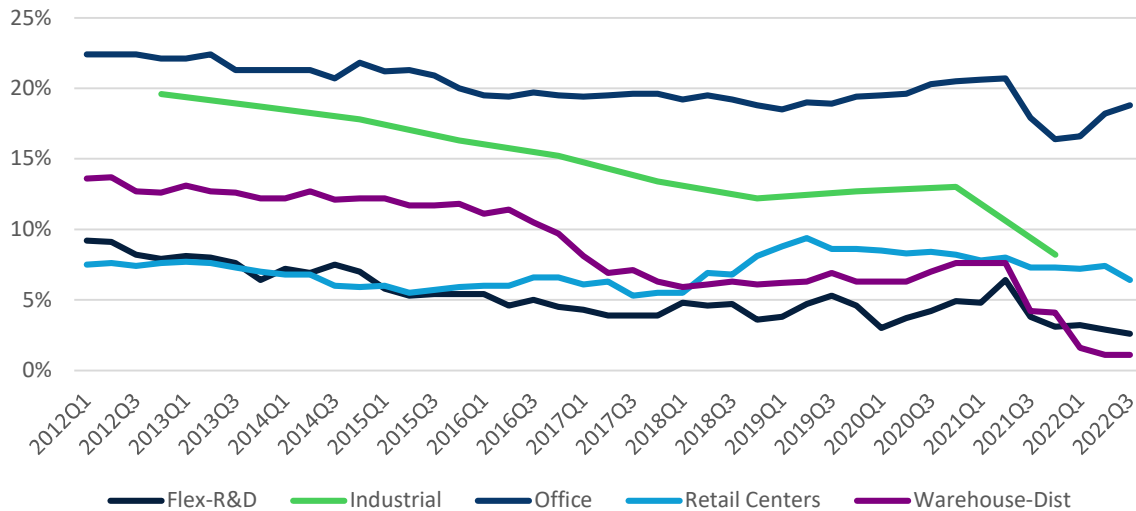
As part of the Greater Boston real estate market, Hamilton faces one of the most competitive markets for commercial and industrial space in the country. Even with the impacts of COVID-19 creating uncertainty in some sectors, the demands for space are healthy. Though Hamilton has a highly educated population, the lack of public sewer infrastructure, its distance from regional highway connections, and the overall limited number of commercial and industrial properties means that there are very few properties on the market. While Hamilton does not allow heavy industrial uses, some types of industrial activities such as light manufacturing are permitted. For the same reasons, competing directly with neighboring municipalities with better regional transportation access, utilities, and more flexible land use regulations will be challenging.

As of the third quarter of 2022, vacancy rates were decreasing or stable for all property types within Hamilton's respective submarket areas, except for Office (see Figure 3.3.5). Office and Retail vacancy rates both increased at the outset of the pandemic, a common trend nationwide, although these effects are diminishing with time. The lowest regional vacancy rates are in Flex-R&D and Warehouse-Distribution properties, and the Industrial market has seen significant decreases over the past decade. This echoes broader trends in the Greater Boston real estate market where R&D space has recently been in high demand, and as the growth of online retail

necessitates additional distribution facilities for many retailers, as well as the continued conversion of traditional industrial space to other uses.¹⁰⁸

Figure 3.3.5: Submarket Vacancy Rates by Property Type

Source: Moody's Analytics REIS, 2023



Asking rents have been increasing consistently over the past decade, even as vacancies have been more volatile. Office and Retail space command the highest prices in Hamilton's submarket areas; the pandemic had affected rents for both, with slight decreases beginning in 2020, but Office rents have since grown while Retail rents have decreased slightly.¹⁰⁹

LOCAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Hamilton Development Corporation

The Town's main economic development entity is the Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC), which was formed in 2013 via enabling legislation as a direct result of a goal in the Town's 2004 Master Plan. The HDC's charge is to promote economic development in downtown Hamilton, defined as the area within the Business zoning district and other commercial overlay districts (see Map 3.3.3 Zoning Districts). It has the power to own and operate property and utilize public and private funds to support existing businesses, attract new ones, and redevelop underutilized sites.

Beginning in 2016, the HDC became involved in a mixed-use redevelopment project at 59-63 Willow Street. Through several iterations, the HDC facilitated the development of 18 housing units, half of which are affordable, and 2,400 new square feet of commercial space. Ongoing efforts include improving downtown wayfinding, assisting the Town in applying for state grants, and developing green space.

¹⁰⁸ Moody's Analytics REIS, 2023.

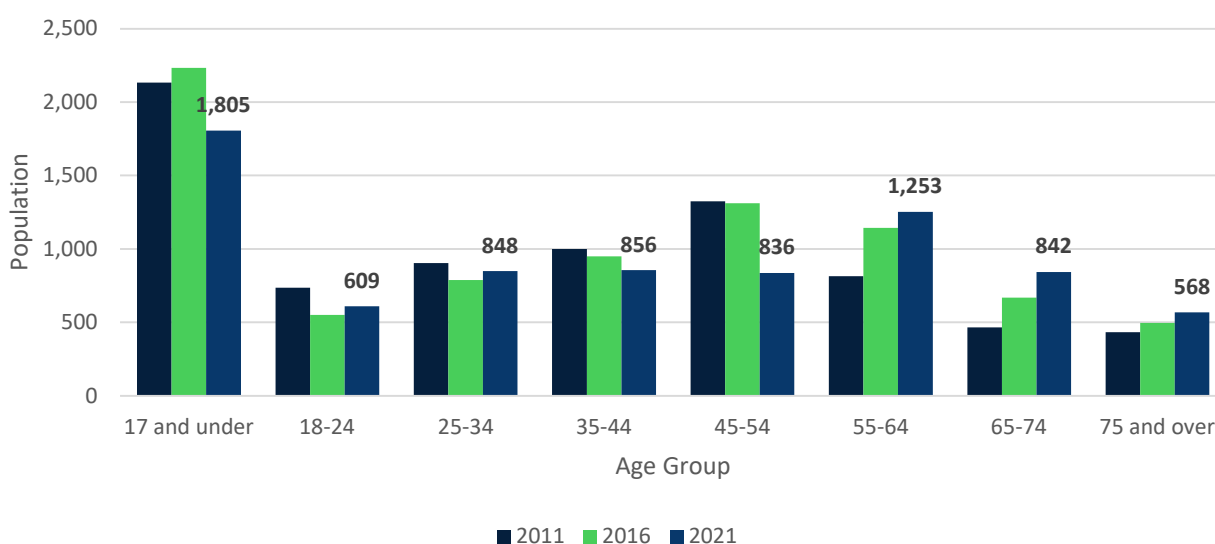
¹⁰⁹ Moody's Analytics REIS, 2023.

Between 2010 and 2020, the number of households in Hamilton remained steady, decreasing by only 17 (less than 1 percent) while the average household size increased to 2.9. Hamilton has a larger average household size than any neighboring community, Essex County, or the state of Massachusetts.¹¹⁰ This likely reflects the prevalence of families with children.

Given its high-quality amenities, strong school system, proximity to employment opportunities in Boston, and other lifestyle benefits, Hamilton is an attractive location for families with children. This is a likely reason for Hamilton's large average household size. Children under the age of 18 make up 24 percent of Hamilton's population, compared to 21 percent in Essex County and 20 percent in the state. The older adult population (65 or older) make up 19 percent of Hamilton and Essex County residents, compared to 17 percent statewide.¹¹¹ Figure 3.3.6 shows Hamilton's estimated age distribution at three points between 2011 and 2021, showing that the share of the population 55 years of age or older has increased while the number of children has decreased

Figure 3.3.6: Hamilton Age Distribution (2011-2021)

(Source: American Community Survey)



Three-quarters of Hamilton households are married-couple families, and another 7 percent are families led by an unmarried householder.¹¹² Table 3.3.9 shows that the Town is heavily weighted toward families compared to state and county averages.

| Table 3.3.9: Households by Type | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------|-------|--------------|-------|---------------|-------|
| | Hamilton | | Essex County | | Massachusetts | |
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Married-Couple Family | 1,924 | 75.0% | 148,964 | 48.4% | 1,268,605 | 46.7% |
| Male householder family | 40 | 1.6% | 15,190 | 4.9% | 120,511 | 4.4% |

¹¹⁰ US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010-2020

¹¹¹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

¹¹² American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

Table 3.3.9: Households by Type

| | Hamilton | | Essex County | | Massachusetts | |
|---|----------|--------|--------------|--------|---------------|--------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Female householder family | 141 | 5.5% | 41,320 | 13.4% | 322,576 | 11.9% |
| Nonfamily households | 462 | 18.0% | 102,485 | 33.3% | 1,002,756 | 36.9% |
| Total | 2,567 | 100.0% | 307,959 | 100.0% | 2,714,448 | 100.0% |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i> | | | | | | |

Hamilton's median household income was about \$116,699 in 2021, which is 31 percent higher than the state's median income of \$89,684, but comparable to other nearby towns (see Table 3.3.10). Hamilton's households are not monoliths, however. Over half (about 55 percent) have incomes greater than \$100,000, but an estimated 295 of Hamilton's households (about 11.5 percent) have income less than \$25,000.¹¹³ Household income alone does not tell the full story because it does not account for a household's expenses.

Table 3.3.10: Median Household Income (MHI)

| Area | MHI |
|---|-----------|
| Topsfield | \$155,208 |
| Wenham | \$154,375 |
| Hamilton | \$116,699 |
| Essex | \$116,027 |
| Ipswich | \$111,701 |
| Massachusetts | \$89,026 |
| Essex County | \$86,684 |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i> | |

Housing Stock

Hamilton's housing supply includes 2,764 units, 84 percent of which are single-family detached units (see Table 3.3.11). That is a high number considering the variety of ages, household sizes, and incomes in Hamilton. Three percent of units are in buildings that have two units within the structure, and only 11.1 percent of housing units are in buildings that have three or more units in the structure (most being in buildings with 20 or more units).¹¹⁴ The structures with 20 or more units are likely a combination of Housing Authority and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary apartments.

Table 3.3.11: Residential Units by Number of Units in Structure

| | Hamilton | | Essex County | | Massachusetts | |
|---|----------|--------|--------------|--------|---------------|--------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 1 unit detached | 2,308 | 83.5% | 164,423 | 50.6% | 1,541,923 | 51.7% |
| 1 unit attached | 63 | 2.3% | 22,790 | 7.0% | 167,536 | 5.6% |
| 2 units | 86 | 3.1% | 32,114 | 9.9% | 285,680 | 9.6% |
| 3 or 4 units | 40 | 1.4% | 38,591 | 11.9% | 319,557 | 10.7% |
| 5-9 units | 84 | 3.0% | 17,929 | 5.5% | 172,089 | 5.8% |
| 10 or more units | 183 | 6.6% | 47,497 | 14.6% | 468,693 | 15.7% |
| Other | 0 | 0.0% | 1,884 | 0.6% | 24,156 | 0.8% |
| Total Housing Units | 2,764 | 100.0% | 325,228 | 100.0% | 2,979,634 | 100.0% |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i> | | | | | | |

¹¹³ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

¹¹⁴ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

While Hamilton's housing stock is largely composed of single-family homes, there is a range of sizes, architectural styles, and development patterns within the single-family inventory. From historic estates to the cottages of Asbury Grove and from downtown Hamilton neighborhoods to suburban-style cul-de-sacs, the Town's architectural character has changed throughout its history. Most of Hamilton's housing stock was built more than sixty years ago, with more than a quarter built in or before 1939 (see Table 3.3.12). This means that about two thirds of Hamilton's housing stock is more than 50 years old, while only an estimated 184 housing units have been produced since 2000, or 6.7 percent of the total housing stock.¹¹⁵ See Map 3.3.1 Residential Structures by Year Built shows the geographic distribution of these older units, many of which are in downtown Hamilton. Newer housing units tend to be located in subdivisions built on former agricultural or forest land.

| Table 3.3.12: Housing Units by Year Built | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|
| | Hamilton | | Essex County | | Massachusetts | |
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 1939 or earlier | 766 | 27.7% | 115,466 | 35.5% | 938,618 | 31.5% |
| 1940-1949 | 131 | 4.7% | 15,026 | 4.6% | 159,144 | 5.3% |
| 1950-1959 | 689 | 24.9% | 35,031 | 10.8% | 334,668 | 11.2% |
| 1960-1969 | 345 | 12.5% | 33,502 | 10.3% | 302,393 | 10.1% |
| 1970-1979 | 281 | 10.2% | 31,644 | 9.7% | 337,727 | 11.3% |
| 1980-1989 | 229 | 8.3% | 36,503 | 11.2% | 321,161 | 10.8% |
| 1990-1999 | 139 | 5.0% | 24,360 | 7.5% | 231,602 | 7.8% |
| 2000-2009 | 97 | 3.5% | 21,674 | 6.7% | 211,087 | 7.1% |
| 2010 or later | 87 | 3.1% | 12,022 | 3.7% | 143,234 | 4.8% |
| Total Housing Units | 2,764 | 100.0% | 325,228 | 100.0% | 2,979,634 | 100.0% |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i> | | | | | | |

Eighty-two percent of Hamilton residents own their home, while 18 percent are renters, compared to 64 percent homeowners and 36 percent renters in all of Essex County (see Table 3.3.13). Hamilton's residential vacancy rate is slightly higher than average for Essex County, but over 90 percent of units are occupied. The estimated share of renter-occupied housing declined from about 24 percent (about 609 units) to 18 percent (about 465 units) of total occupied housing units between 2010 and 2021, a 20 percent decline.¹¹⁶

| Table 3.3.13: Tenure and Occupancy by Household | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|------|---------------------|------|----------------------|------|
| | Hamilton | | Essex County | | Massachusetts | |
| | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Occupied Units: | | | | | | |
| <i>Owner Occupied</i> | 2,102 | 82% | 195,868 | 64% | 1,694,407 | 62% |
| <i>Renter Occupied</i> | 465 | 18% | 112,091 | 36% | 1,020,041 | 38% |
| <i>Total Households</i> | 2,567 | 100% | 307,959 | 100% | 2,714,448 | 100% |
| Vacant Units: | 197 | 7% | 17,269 | 5% | 265,186 | 9% |
| Total Units: | 2,764 | 100% | 325,228 | 100% | 2,979,634 | 100% |
| <i>Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)</i> | | | | | | |

¹¹⁵ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021); Town of Hamilton, Assessors Database, 2023

¹¹⁶ This may be due to a decline in the use of Gordon Conwell owned apartments, margins of error in the American Community Survey, or a combination of both.

HOUSING TRENDS

Housing Market

Purchasing a home in Hamilton has become more expensive over time. According to data published by The Warren Group, the median single-family sale price decreased during the 2008 financial crisis and then began to rise around 2013, peaking at nearly \$800,000 in 2021 (see Figure 3.3.7). Median sale price increased by over 90 percent between 2013 and 2022, while median household income only grew by 11 percent over the same period.¹¹⁷

Figure 3.3.7: Hamilton Median Home Sales Price

Source: Banker & Tradesman 2023

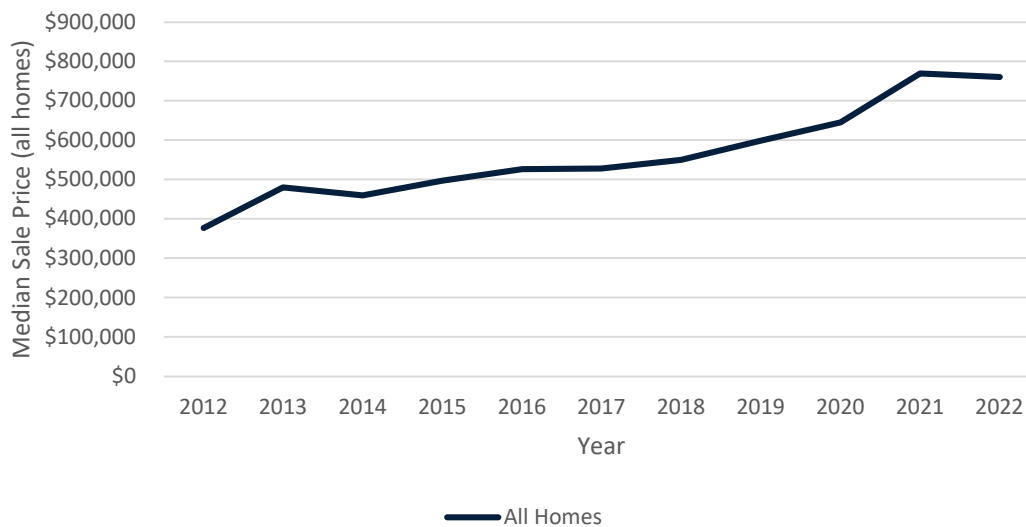


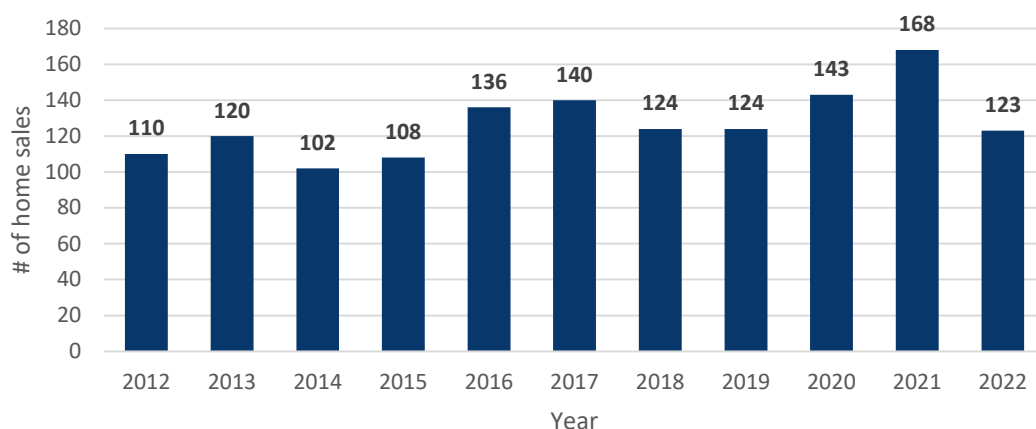
Figure 3.3.8 shows the last decade of annual home sales statistics in Hamilton. The volume of home sales peaked at 168 transactions in 2021 (the same year that the median sales price peaked) after slowly trending upwards throughout the decade. Condominiums make up a small percentage of home sales in Hamilton (a ten-year average of 5.5 percent), but at least a handful tend to enter the market every year.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2009-2013); (2017-2021)

¹¹⁸ The Warren Group, Banker & Tradesman, Town Stats 2023

Figure 3.3.8: Hamilton Total Home Sales (All Housing Types)

Source: Banker & Tradesman 2023



Some new housing has been built in Hamilton in recent years, as reported by the Hamilton Building Department in Table 3.3.14. The Town has permitted 67 new residential units since 2018 and issued 12 demolition permits, resulting in a net gain of 45 units. The busiest year for new construction during this period was 2022, with permits issued for eleven new single-family homes and a Habitat for Humanity development of five duplexes.¹¹⁹

| | Single-Family Units | Duplex Units | 3-4 Units | Demolition * | Net new units |
|-------|---------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|---------------|
| 2018 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| 2019 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 2 | 17 |
| 2020 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 6 |
| 2021 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| 2022 | 11 | 10 | 0 | 3 | 18 |
| Total | 33 | 18 | 6 | 12 | 45 |

**Does not count demolition and reconstruction under a single permit.*
Source: Hamilton Building Department

Affordable Housing

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines “low or moderate income” as households with incomes equal to or less than 80 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), adjusted for household size. Hamilton is a part of the Boston metropolitan area, so the 2022 HUD monthly rent limits in Table 3.3.15 apply. The bottom half of Table 3.3.15 shows the annual income thresholds used by HUD to determine eligibility for affordable housing programs. For example, an affordable one-bedroom apartment at 80 percent of AMI might be targeted towards a two-family household with an annual income of \$89,500 or less.

¹¹⁹ Hamilton Building Department, 2023

| Unit Size | 30% AMI | 50% AMI | 80% AMI |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Monthly Housing Rent Limits by Unit Size | | | |
| Studio | \$736 | \$1,227 | \$1,957 |
| 1-bedroom | \$788 | \$1,315 | \$2,097 |
| 2-bedroom | \$946 | \$1,577 | \$2,517 |
| 3-bedroom | \$1,093 | \$1,823 | \$2,908 |
| 4-bedroom | \$1,220 | \$2,033 | \$3,243 |
| 5-bedroom | \$1,346 | \$2,243 | \$3,579 |
| Annual Income Limits by Household Size | | | |
| 1-person household | \$29,450 | \$49,100 | \$78,300 |
| 2-person household | \$33,650 | \$56,100 | \$89,500 |
| 3-person household | \$37,850 | \$63,100 | \$100,700 |
| 4-person household | \$42,050 | \$70,100 | \$111,850 |
| <i>Source: MassHousing (2022)</i> | | | |

A common indicator used to measure housing affordability is housing cost burden. HUD considers households to be “housing cost-burdened” when their housing costs exceed 30 percent of their monthly gross income. Severe housing cost-burden is defined as paying more than 50 percent of gross household income for housing. For homeowners, “housing costs” include the monthly cost of a mortgage payment, property taxes, and insurance. For renters, it only includes monthly rent and basic utilities (heat, electricity, hot water and cooking fuel). Table 3.3.16 shows that over one-third of households in Hamilton have income below the 80 percent AMI threshold, although not all are housing cost burdened.

| | Cost burden 30-50% | | Cost burden over 50% | | Not Cost Burdened | | Total | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------|----------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-------|--------|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Less than 30% AMI | 80 | 16.3% | 290 | 59.2% | 120 | 24.5% | 490 | 100.0% |
| 31-50% AMI | 85 | 41.5% | 40 | 19.5% | 80 | 39.0% | 205 | 100.0% |
| 51-80% AMI | 105 | 36.2% | 50 | 17.2% | 135 | 46.6% | 290 | 100.0% |
| 81-100% AMI | 45 | 18.0% | 20 | 8.0% | 185 | 74.0% | 250 | 100.0% |
| Greater than 100% AMI | 155 | 10.5% | 10 | 0.7% | 1,315 | 88.9% | 1,480 | 100.0% |
| | | | | | | | | |
| Owner Households | 359 | 16.3% | 280 | 12.7% | 1,561 | 71.0% | 2,200 | 100.0% |
| Renter Households | 110 | 21.2% | 130 | 25.0% | 280 | 53.8% | 520 | 100.0% |
| | | | | | | | | |
| All Households | 470 | 17.3% | 410 | 15.1% | 1,840 | 67.6% | 2,720 | 100.0% |

Source: HUD CHAS Data (2019)

Of the 985 low or moderate-income households reported by HUD in 2019 (see Table 3.3.16), 650 (about two-thirds) are cost-burdened, including 380 households that are severely cost-burdened (spending over half their monthly income on housing costs).¹²⁰

The estimated median rent for Hamilton in 2021 was \$1,356, including utilities.¹²¹ While this is comparable to most neighboring towns, and the state, the median income for renters in Hamilton was \$34,063 (ACS 2021). For that median household, \$1,356 would be nearly half of all monthly income.

Chapter 40B, the state's regional planning law, requires that every municipality in Massachusetts provide at least 10 percent of its total year-round housing stock as affordable for low-and-moderate-income households. Table 3.3.17 is Hamilton's official count of Chapter 40B-eligible units, called the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI).

| Table 3.3.17: Hamilton Subsidized Housing Inventory | | | | |
|---|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Project Name | SHI Units | Tenure | Comprehensive Permit?* | Subsidizing Agency |
| Housing Authority Properties | 40 | Rental | No | DHCD |
| Housing Authority Properties | 12 | Rental | No | DHCD |
| Housing Authority Properties | 8 | Rental | No | DHCD |
| Housing Authority Properties | 3 | Rental | No | DHCD |
| DDS Group Homes | 0 | Rental | No | DDS |
| Union Square | 4 | Rental | No | DHCD |
| DMH Group Homes | 7 | Rental | No | DMH |
| Carriage House Junction | 6 | Ownership | Yes | MassHousing |
| Firehouse Place | 4 | Rental | Yes | MassHousing, DHCD |
| Asbury Street | 2 | Ownership | Yes | DHCD |
| 434-438 Asbury Street | 10 | Ownership | Yes | DHCD |
| 59-63 Willow Street | 18 | Rental | No | MassHousing, DHCD |
| Total SHI Units | 114 | 4.1% of 2,783 total year-round units | | |
| * Comprehensive Permits are an expedited permitting process that developers of affordable housing may take advantage of in MA communities with less than 10 percent affordable housing, commonly referred to as “Chapter 40B” projects. | | | | |
| Source: MA Department of Housing and Community Development | | | | |

The 114 units on Hamilton's SHI represent less than half of the 278 minimum required under Chapter 40B. More than half of these units are public housing located downtown, owned and operated by the Hamilton Housing Authority. Other private developers of affordable housing include Habitat for Humanity (434-438 Asbury Street) and Harborlight Homes (Firehouse Place). All 114 affordable units in Hamilton are deed-restricted in perpetuity, meaning their affordability restrictions will never expire.¹²² In March 2023, Hamilton's Zoning Board of Appeals granted a

¹²⁰ HUD Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data, 2019.

¹²¹ American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

¹²² MA Department of Housing and Community Development, Hamilton Subsidized Housing Inventory, January 2023

comprehensive permit to Harborlight Homes to construct 45 units of affordable housing on Asbury Street planned to be completed in 2026.¹²³

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Zoning Regulations

Single-family dwellings are the only residential development allowed without benefit of a special permit in most of Hamilton. In the business district, projects with two or more units on the second floor or above may be pursued by right if it is part of a mixed residential-commercial project.¹²⁴ More diverse housing types like townhouses, duplexes, and apartments can be included as part of *Open Space and Farmland Preservation Development or Senior Housing Development* (see Section 3.3.1 “Land Use” for a more detailed description of these and other residential land use regulations). One accessory apartment of up to 900 square feet of gross floor area is allowed per single-family lot, if the lot conforms with current zoning regulations.

Hamilton’s Inclusionary Housing bylaw requires all developments of ten or more dwelling units to set aside at least one of those units as affordable housing as defined under Chapter 40B. For every additional seven units beyond the first ten, one more affordable unit is required. The bylaw provides an option for a payment in lieu of units based on Hamilton’s area median income. In the last five years, no market-rate projects that would trigger inclusionary requirements have been permitted.

Administration and Funding

Established in 2005, the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust Fund (HAHT) is charged with using public funds to acquire property for affordable housing and to facilitate the development of affordable housing.¹²⁵ The Hamilton Housing Authority is the other major local affordable housing entity, administering 60 units of public housing including housing for disabled and elderly residents.

The Community Preservation Act (a fund based on a 2 percent real estate surcharge on real estate tax) is a major source of funding for local housing efforts. Over the last five years, Hamilton’s Community Preservation Committee has allocated \$330,000 to support the production and maintenance of affordable housing including regular grants to the HAHT. The CPC has also helped the Hamilton Housing Authority fund repairs and maintenance to its properties.¹²⁶

The Hamilton Development Corporation (HDC) is a public nonprofit dedicated to facilitating beneficial economic growth in underutilized areas of the downtown Business District and other commercial overlay districts. The HDC has recognized the role that housing plays in furthering economic development and successfully created 18 units in a mixed-income rental development on Willow Street with funding from the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust.¹²⁷

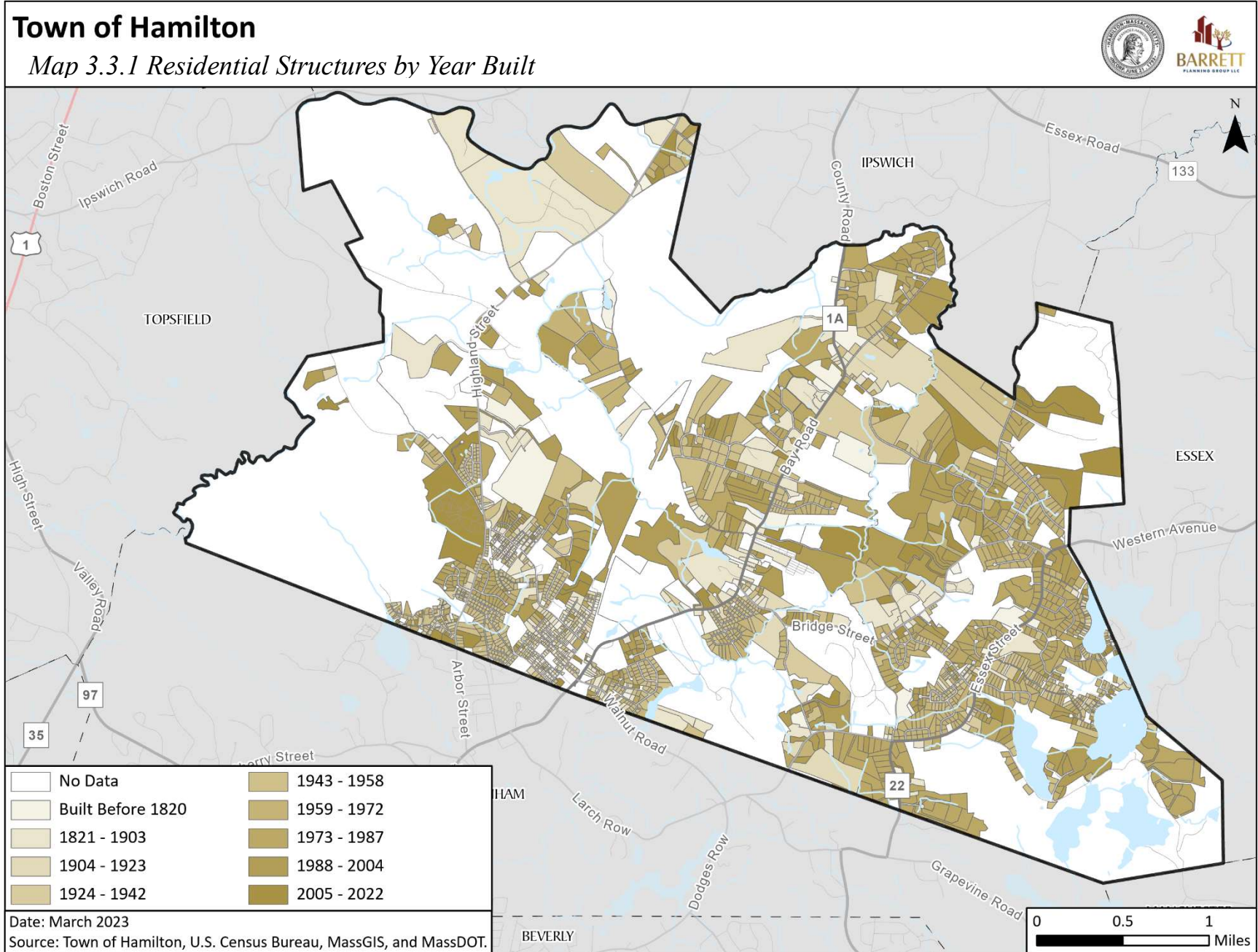
¹²³ Harborlight Homes, “Homes Under Development,” <https://harborlighthomes.org/what-we-do/homes-under-development/>.

¹²⁴ Town of Hamilton, Zoning Bylaw, as amended August 11, 2021

¹²⁵ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023

¹²⁶ Town of Hamilton Community Preservation Committee, 2022 Community Preservation Report

¹²⁷ Hamilton Development Corporation, “2021 Annual Report.”



3.3.3 Land Use

OVERVIEW



A landscape view of Appleton Farms.

Since many of Hamilton’s policy decisions effect how land is used, Land Use is the umbrella under which all preceding sections of the Master Plan reside, whether it is Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation, Cultural and Historic Resources, Community Facilities and Services, Transportation, Housing, Economic Development, or any of the other elements. How a community addresses its priority issues will usually define the land use component of its plan.

As the centerpiece of master planning, Land Use asks the question: “where?” A thoughtful assessment of past and present

land use can help to identify areas most appropriate or inappropriate for development and options for aligning local land use policies with what the community wants for its future. The purpose of a master plan’s land use element is to guide local decisions about what to save and what to build, for it takes both to make a community.

Hamilton’s landscape and land use patterns - marked by expansive open space, rolling hills, large estate properties, and a small but vibrant downtown – reflect the community’s unique equestrian and agricultural history and draw residents who cherish the Town’s calm rural lifestyle and natural beauty. Still, local land use policies also affect who has access to the community and the amenities available to residents. Hamilton will continue to grow and change with new development and reuse of existing public or institutional properties, just as it has grown and changed throughout its history. When thoughtfully planned, growth does not have to be at odds with protecting the Town’s priority landscapes. What follows in this section is an assessment of where residential, commercial, and institutional development has occurred in Hamilton, where open space preservation efforts have been concentrated, and how current land use regulations shape what is possible for the future.

LAND USE PATTERNS

Residential Development

Nearly half of Hamilton’s land is associated at least in part with some residential use, although many parcels contain significant amounts of protected conservation land in addition to homes.¹²⁸ Table 3.3.18 classifies Hamilton’s land area by primary use, based on tax parcel data from the Town Assessor’s Database (see Map 3.3.18 for a visual representation of the same data). Lots with single-family homes are the largest category, totaling nearly 3,000 acres.

¹²⁸ Hamilton Assessors Department, Assessors Database, 2023.

| Table 3.3.18: Land Use by Area (2023 Tax Parcel Data) | | | | | |
|--|---------|-----------------|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Land Use Category | Acres | % of total area | Land Use Category | Acres | % of total area |
| Single-Family Residential* | 2,991.3 | 33.8% | Outdoor Recreation | 328.4 | 3.7% |
| Conservation | 2,545.9 | 28.8% | Commercial with Open Space** | 86.7 | 1.0% |
| Residential with Open Space** | 1,300.6 | 14.7% | Residential - 2 or more units | 37.7 | 0.4% |
| Vacant Land | 830.2 | 9.4% | Commercial | 27.3 | 0.3% |
| Public Land - Developed | 343.5 | 3.9% | Utilities | 20.4 | 0.2% |
| Private Education & Other Nonprofit | 336.7 | 3.8% | Total*** | 8,848.7 | 100.0% |
| <p>* Includes parcels with multiple single-family dwellings and parcels accessory to single-family residential use.</p> <p>**Includes parcels with a primary residential or commercial use with a significant amount of open space or agriculture on the same parcel.</p> <p>***Tax parcel data does not include areas like roads and major water bodies, so this number is smaller than Hamilton's total land area.</p> <p>Source: Hamilton Assessors Database (2023)</p> | | | | | |

Historic farmhouses and estates exist throughout Hamilton, but most modern residential development is concentrated in the south and east (see Map 3.3.1 “Residential Structures by Year Built”). The southern part of Hamilton has smaller lots and denser development patterns than elsewhere in Town. Downtown Hamilton has many homes built before World War II as well as affordable rental apartments for elderly and disabled residents operated by the Hamilton Housing Authority.

Toward the Town's eastern border with Essex, single-family neighborhoods are concentrated along Route 22, although such neighborhoods are scattered throughout Hamilton. Much of the Town's suburban development took place in the 1950s and 1960s as former farms and forested lands were subdivided into single-family lots. Other notable types of residential development include the cottage community in Asbury Grove, a historic Methodist meeting camp, and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary's on-campus dormitories and apartments for students, although as of 2023 the seminary plans to sell its student housing.

Open Space

Hamilton is famous for its open space. When asked for input on this plan, Hamilton residents almost universally cited Hamilton's abundant open space as one of its most significant assets. About 44 percent of Hamilton's land area is made up of parcels with some level of open space protection. One-quarter of the Town's total land area is held by private or public entities for preservation in perpetuity, including Bradley Palmer State Park (Department of Conservation and Recreation), the Ipswich River Wildlife Sanctuary (Mass. Audubon), Appleton Farms (Trustees of Reservations), the Chebacco Woods area (owned by the Town), and many others.¹²⁹

Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B are state tax incentive programs that provides property owners with property tax relief in exchange for protecting forest, agricultural, and recreation land. Some

¹²⁹ See Section 4.3 “Natural Resource Areas” for a more detailed analysis.

properties remain as protected “Chapter land” for many years, but landowners are always free to opt out and sell or develop their land, so it is not considered permanently protected. The Town does, however, have the right of first refusal to purchase Chapter land if an owner decides to sell. Four percent of Hamilton’s land area, about 340 acres, is currently enrolled in the Chapter 61 program. Some of these parcels may be candidates for permanent preservation in the future.

Finally, the 1,400+/- acres classified as either “Residential with Open Space” or “Commercial with Open Space” in Table 3.3.18 are mostly made up of parcels with some amount of developed land and some other portion of the property protected in perpetuity by a conservation restriction. This type of permanent deed restriction ensures that hundreds of privately owned acres in Hamilton will not be developed.

Institutional Uses

Besides conservation organizations, Hamilton hosts several major private institutions that collectively own hundreds of acres of land. Pingree School, a private day school for grades 9 through 12, owns 88 acres of land off Highland Street in northwestern Hamilton. Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary operates on a 102-acre hilltop site in eastern Hamilton, although in May of 2022 the school announced that it would scale back operations and potentially sell a portion of its property. The Myopia Hunt Club, located near the Town’s southern border with Wenham, famous for its foxhunting and equestrian traditions as well as its country club, owns 328 acres largely devoted to a golf course, polo field, and hunting grounds. Myopia Schooling Field is an 85-acre parcel adjacent to both Myopia and Patton Park held by a private trust and is open to the public with limited restrictions governing loose dogs and bike riding.¹³⁰

The Town of Hamilton owns about 800 acres of land, most of which is vacant or held for conservation purposes.¹³¹ Municipal properties include the Cutler and Winthrop elementary schools, Hamilton-Wenham Public Library, the historic Patton Homestead, Town Hall, Public Service Building, and Patton Park, a public recreation area near downtown Hamilton.

The Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee is in the process of working with the state to evaluate the feasibility of either renovating the Cutler School or building a new elementary school, a process that Town stakeholders expect could include the consolidation of existing elementary schools during the life of this plan.¹³² If this turns out to be the case, it could mean the Winthrop School site near downtown Hamilton could be made available for redevelopment.

Commercial Development

Commercial uses are almost entirely limited to downtown Hamilton and take up less than two percent of Hamilton’s land, even when counting the “Commercial & Conservation” category that includes significant open space. The downtown commercial area has local restaurants and retail spaces, gas stations, and Hamilton’s commuter rail station. The Shoppes at Hamilton Plaza is a shopping center with a grocery store (Crosby’s Marketplace), national franchises and corporations like Dunkin’ and CVS, and some local businesses like the BoSoma School of Dance.

There are a few scattered businesses outside of downtown Hamilton, such as the Institution for Savings office on Route 1A, Five Sons Pizza on Asbury Street, and U.S. Gas at the corner of

¹³⁰ Hamilton Assessors Department, Assessors Database, 2023.

¹³¹ Hamilton Assessors Department, Assessors Database, 2023.

¹³² Neil Zolot, “Massachusetts School Building Authority gives Hamilton initial nod for Cutler School project,” wickedlocal.com, April 6, 2022.

Highland and Asbury Streets. Hamilton also benefits from multiple commercial organic farm operations, including Meadowbrook Farm which operates a seasonal farmstand.

Vacant and Developable Land

Only about 9 percent of the land (830 acres) in Hamilton is vacant without any permanent conservation protections. Only 180 acres of the Town's vacant land are considered potentially developable under current zoning regulations, although some of the over 300 acres of vacant land owned by the Town may be considered developable in the future.¹³³ Developable land is scattered across Hamilton and is not concentrated in any particular area (see Map 3.3.2 Land Use by Parcel).

LOCAL CAPACITY, POLICIES, AND REGULATIONS

Zoning Districts

Hamilton's Zoning Bylaw is the primary tool for regulating land use. Zoning districts control the types of uses allowed to operate in different areas of the Town and regulate the size and shape of new buildings. The Town has four use districts: three residential districts and one commercial district. As shown in Table 3.3.19, 99.7 percent of Hamilton's land is zoned primarily for residential use, although all residential districts also allow agricultural activities and other uses that are exempt from local control under the state Zoning Act.

The use regulations for Hamilton's three residential districts are essentially identical. The districts differ mainly in the allowed density of development (see Table 3.3.20 for dimensional regulations). The R-1A district provides for the smallest minimum lot size and least intensive setback requirements, and it encompasses areas with established neighborhoods around downtown Hamilton and Chebacco Lake (see Map 3.3.3 Zoning Districts). The RA district requires large lots and is intended to promote a mix of single-family residences and agriculture. The R-1B district is the "in-between" point between the requirements of R-1A and RA. Besides the requirements in Table 3.3.20, the maximum building height in every district is 35 feet, and front yards must measure 25 feet from the street line or 50 feet from the street center line, whichever is greater.¹³⁴

Table 3.3.19: Zoning Districts by Area

| District | Acres | % of Total Area |
|--|----------------|------------------------|
| Residential RA | 4,227.5 | 44.2% |
| Residential R-1B | 3,130.1 | 32.7% |
| Residential R-1A | 2,186.7 | 22.8% |
| Business (B) | 26.2 | 0.3% |
| Total* | 9,570.5 | 100% |
| <i>*Includes rights-of-way & bodies of water not captured in Table 4.1.1</i> | | |
| <i>Source: Town of Hamilton Assessors Department</i> | | |

¹³³ Hamilton Assessors Database, 2023.

¹³⁴ Town of Hamilton, Zoning Bylaw, as amended August 11, 2021.

| Table 3.3.20: Zoning Districts - Selected Dimensional Regulations | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Zoning District | Minimum Lot Size (s.f.)* | Minimum Contiguous Land (s.f.)** | Minimum Frontage (feet) | Max. Lot Coverage |
| Business Zone (B) | 20,000 | N/A | 125 | 75% |
| Residential R-1A | 20,000 | 10,000 | 125 | 25% |
| Residential R-1B | 40,000 | 20,000 | 175 | 25% |
| Residential RA | 80,000 | 40,000 | 175 | 25% |
| <i>*Only applies to dwelling units. Other uses are determined during Site Plan Review.</i> <i>** For a lot to be considered buildable, it must have this amount of contiguous land that does not have severe soil limitations that impact construction or wetlands.</i> <i>Source: Town of Hamilton Zoning Bylaw</i> | | | | |

Single-family homes are allowed by right (that is, without requiring a discretionary permit from the Planning Board or Zoning Board of Appeals) in residential districts and most commercial uses are prohibited. Some uses like kennels and wind energy facilities are allowed through a special permit from the Board of Appeals. A single-family dwelling in existence before 1954 can be converted into a two-family dwelling, also via a special permit from the Board of Appeals.

The Business District (B) allows a much more expansive set of uses by right, including retail stores, office space, and restaurants. The district also allows mixed-use projects with both commercial and residential components. These projects are the only way to develop two or more units in Hamilton without a special permit. Despite allowing a wide range of commercial and residential uses not permitted elsewhere, the Business District is small and completely built out, limiting opportunities for development.

Overlay Districts

In addition to the underlying use districts described above, the Town has five overlay districts. An overlay is a district that “floats” on top of and modifies what is allowed in the underlying zoning. Hamilton has two overlays designed to regulate environmentally sensitive areas and three to encourage desired development in specific, key areas.

The *Groundwater Protection Overlay District* is comprised of aquifer protection areas including DEP Zone IIs and Interim Wellhead Protection Areas. (see Map 3.1.4 Aquifers and Aquifer Protection). The purpose of the district is to protect existing and potential sources of drinking water supplies and recharge areas. Minimum lot size within the Groundwater Protection Overlay is always 80,000 square feet, and a special permit is required for any use that renders 2,500 square feet or 15 percent of a lot impervious. Uses associated with increased water contamination risk, like landfills or the storage of hazardous materials, are prohibited.

The *Floodplain Overlay District* is intended to mitigate flood damage and pollution in the 100-year flood zone (see Map 3.1.1 “FEMA National Flood Hazards”). Uses allowed in the underlying zoning district are subject to flood protection standards

The purpose of the *Estate Overlay District* (EOD) is to preserve the buildings and land of large estate properties while still allowing for desirable commercial and residential development. It permits a mix of commercial and residential development (including multifamily) in existing estate houses on lots of 10 acres or more, with the potential to expand the structure with new construction if the site meets additional dimensional requirements. EOD regulations apply in all residential districts, and all projects must include publicly accessible open space.

The *Willow Street Overlay District (WSOD)* is a small area of the Business District between Willow Street and the MBTA commuter rail tracks that includes auto service businesses. The goal of the district is to promote redevelopment to drive economic development in downtown Hamilton and improve the area's aesthetics, vibrancy and quality of life. The WSOD includes a design review and special permitting process that involves public hearings with the opportunity for input from Hamilton's land use boards and abutters.

The *Commercial Overlay District (COD)* is in the extreme southeast corner of Hamilton where the underlying zoning is RA. The district's purpose is to support economic development while mitigating negative impacts to surrounding properties. Commercial uses such as light manufacturing, life sciences, and offices are allowed by special permit from the Planning Board.¹³⁵

Other Zoning Regulations

Parking. Hamilton's zoning requires one off-street parking space per dwelling unit and per 300 square feet of gross commercial floor area. Many rural and suburban towns require two parking spaces per unit, which often serves to create more impervious, paved areas than may be necessary.

Home Occupations. Home occupation regulations allow residents to run businesses from their homes, provided they do not have a detrimental impact on neighbors. Hamilton's zoning limits outside employees, outdoor signage, noise, and exterior storage to preserve the character of residential neighborhoods while allowing residents flexibility in the use of their homes.

Open Space and Farmland Preservation Development (OSFPD). OSFPD is an alternative form of residential development that is meant to allow more flexibility and creativity in site design to preserve as much open and natural space on a property as possible. Fifty percent of the site's land area must be set aside as permanently protected common open space, and developers must follow a design process that prioritizes the preservation of unique and valuable natural features. Through the special permit process, the Planning Board may allow a 20 percent increase in units over what would be permitted in a conventional subdivision of the same size, with the ability to earn an even greater density bonus (up to 50 percent) by contributing to townwide priorities by providing extra open space, public access to open space, or senior housing. OSFPD may be proposed on any lot, and diverse housing types including townhouses and multifamily condos may be allowed.

Senior Housing. Senior Housing developments allow greater density and more flexible site design for age-restricted residential developments. Senior Housing may be proposed anywhere in Town for households with at least one member 55 years of age or older where all residents are 18 or older. Allowable density varies by zoning district and can be increased to four units per acre through density bonuses earned through incentives like creating extra open space, affordable housing, or a mix of smaller units. The bylaw includes a hard cap of 100 total units that may be constructed under the Senior Housing bylaw.

Accessory Apartments. Accessory apartments are small, secondary units added to a lot with an existing single-family dwelling. Hamilton allows one accessory apartment per lot in all residential districts (as long as a lot conforms to zoning regulations) to help produce moderately priced housing units and allow older homeowners more flexibility to remain in

¹³⁵ Town of Hamilton, Zoning Bylaw, as amended August 11, 2021.

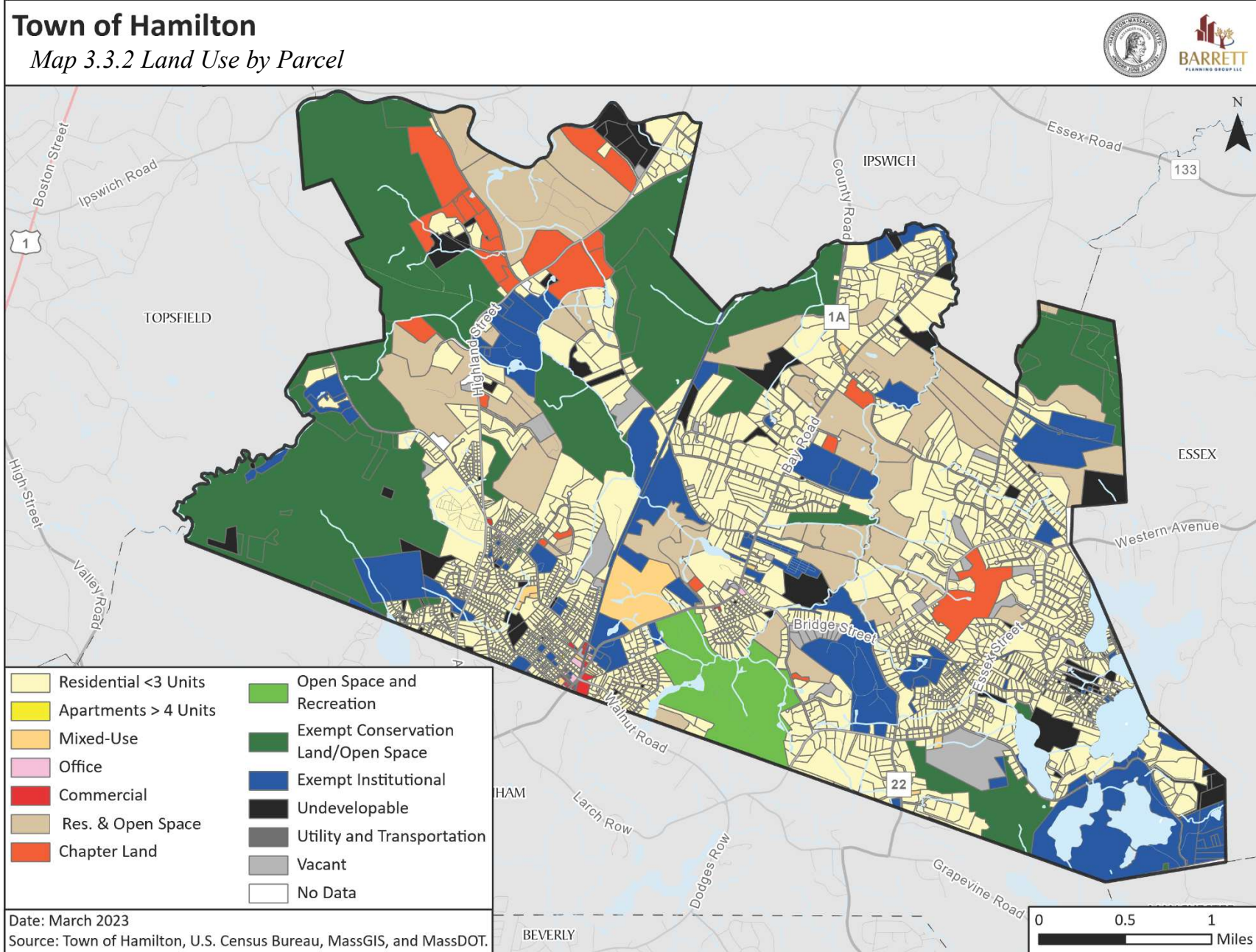
their homes. Apartments may be located in the existing structure or in a separate building, but are limited to two bedrooms, one bathroom, and 900 square feet of gross floor area.

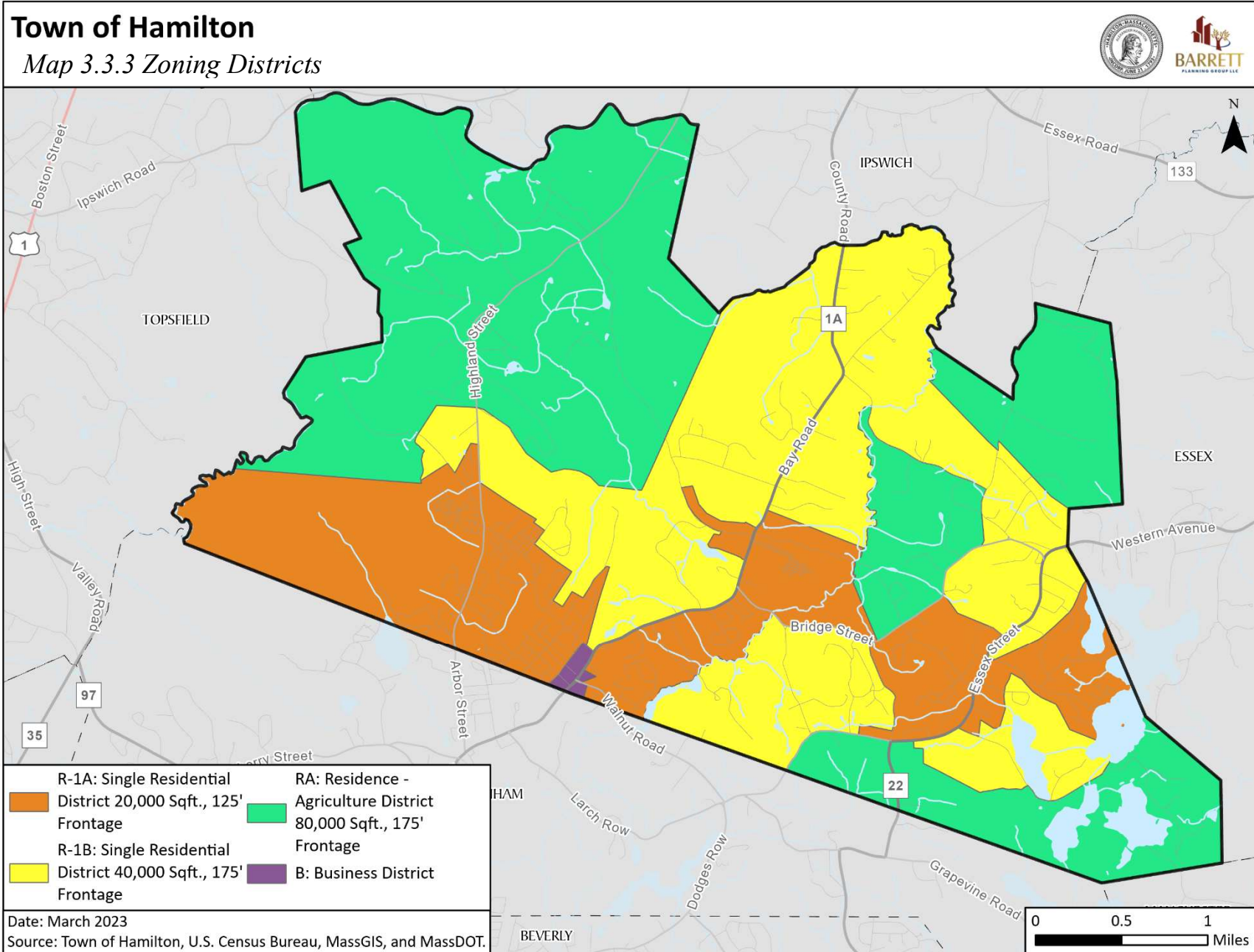
Site Plan Review. Site Plan Review (SPR) is a regulatory tool that allows the Planning Board to review as-of-right development proposals and impose reasonable conditions to reduce impacts on surrounding properties. SPR can address issues of site design, traffic circulation, infrastructure, and the appearance and character of the site. Hamilton requires SPR for any new or expanding business, office, manufacturing, institutional, or multifamily use, as well as the alteration or extension of nonconforming uses in residential zones. An alternative Abbreviated Site Plan Review is available for alterations to existing buildings constituting less than 10 percent of existing floor area or 10 percent of assessed building value.

Local Historic District

Hamilton has one Local Historic District, called simply the Hamilton Historic District, centered on Bay Road (Route 1A). It includes sites like the Hamilton Cemetery, the Town Hall, and the First Congregational Church of Hamilton. Exterior alterations, new construction, and demolition in the district are subject to approval by the Hamilton Historic District Commission, which is charged with protecting the area's historic resources and character.¹³⁶

¹³⁶ Town of Hamilton, <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed March 2023.





4.0 Looking Ahead

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

OVERVIEW

The Planning Board has the primary responsibility for promoting the implementation of all the Plan's actions. Because many of the Plan goals and actions address issues related to the use of property, the Planning Board will need to implement many of the actions of the Plan through amendments to the Zoning Bylaws and/or Zoning Map, application reviews, and other means. Other actions may require cooperation with and action by other local boards and committees such as the Select Board, Conservation Commission, and similar committees.

If the Plan is to be realized, however, it must serve as a guide to all residents, businesses, developers, applicants, owners, agencies, and individuals interested in the orderly conservation and development of Hamilton.

IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

Upon the successful adoption of a new Master Plan, the creation of an **Implementation Committee** comprised of Town officials and representatives from boards and committees to oversee the implementation of goals and to modify those goals as the Master Plan ages to reflect new realities and public sentiment is a necessity. The Implementation Committee would be charged with meeting regularly (one to four times per year depending on capacity) throughout the Plan's lifespan to guide implementation efforts. Several existing boards and committees struggle to find and retain members, so it may not be feasible to introduce a new one. Hamilton, however, has many dedicated volunteers who might be able to assist. The existing bodies best suited to take responsibility for Master Plan implementation are the Planning Board, who voted to adopt the Plan, and the Select Board, as the Town's primary policy-making body. The Town should incorporate a standing Master Plan Implementation item into the Select Board's agenda, as well as at regular Town Staff meetings.

At a minimum, important goals should include:

- Creation of an Implementation Committee comprised of Town officials and representatives from boards and committees to oversee the implementation of goals and to modify those goals as the Master Plan ages to reflect new realities and public sentiment.
- Foster communication and cooperation among boards and committees to promote consistency with respect to overlapping responsibilities.
- Hire a full-time Town Planner to support the Director of Planning & Inspectional Services.
- Create a part-time staff position to apply for and administer grants to increase the Town's ability to fund local projects.

MAINTAINING THE PLAN

A Master Plan should be a dynamic document that is used, reevaluated, and amended periodically. When a Plan is considered strictly a reference document rather than a working document, its effectiveness in guiding the community can diminish over time. Hamilton should consider keeping this Plan current and not waiting to update it every ten years or so.

The simplest way to maintain the Plan might be to review major sections of the Plan every year by:

1. Holding a public meeting to review the Plan actions in each element for feedback from the community,
2. Holding a workshop session to discuss new Plan strategies and suggest alternative language,
3. Revising Plan sections including any changes to the Future Land Use section, as appropriate, and
4. Re-adopting the Plan periodically rather than wait for the next general Master Plan update.

4.2 IMPLEMENTATION CHARTS

OVERVIEW

This Implementation section presents a series of actions designed to guide the Town towards meeting goals and addressing key issues identified in this Master Plan. Actions may relate to multiple Master Plan Goals, but for ease of use are associated with one primary goal. Where actions are dependent on or related to other actions, a reference to those relevant actions is listed under Other Element(s).

Implementation of a Plan typically occurs over three main stages:

- Short-term (1-3 years) because they are critical to the implementation of the Plan.
- Medium-term (3-6 years) because they may require additional coordination with or implementation by others or involve the commitment of significant financial resources.
- Long-term – Ongoing (7-10 years) because the urgency is less critical than the others.

PLAN ORGANIZATION

Key to Lists of Leadership Parties:

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|---|
| BoH | Board of Health | HDC | Hamilton Development Corporation |
| CPC | Community Preservation Committee | HWRSC | Hamilton-Wenham Regional School Committee |
| ConCom | Conservation Commission | HistDC | Historic District Commission |
| CoA | Council on Aging | IT | Information & Technology Dept. |
| DPW | Department of Public Works | PB | Planning Board |
| EMS | Emergency Management Services | PD | Planning Department |
| EC | Energy Commission | RD | Recreation Department |
| EIC | Environmental Impact Committee | TM | Town Manager |
| HAHT | Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust | SB | Select Board |
| | | ZBA | Zoning Board of Appeals |

Key to Element Abbreviations:

| | |
|------------|-----------------------------------|
| CFS | Community Facilities and Services |
| CHR | Cultural and Historic Resources |
| ED | Economic Development |
| H | Housing |
| LU | Land Use |
| NR | Natural Resources |
| OSR | Open Space and Recreation |
| T | Transportation |

Key to Priority Rankings:

| |
|--------------------------------|
| Short-term (1-3 years) |
| Medium-term (3-6 years) |
| Long-term (7-10 years) Ongoing |

4.2.1 Protect

1. Natural Resources Goal: Protect Hamilton's green spaces, natural resources, and sensitive areas from environmental threats by empowering the Town to pursue and fund preservation efforts, enforce environmental regulations, and work toward its goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2040.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|--|---------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| 1A | Work with volunteers to create an up to date and user-friendly database for environmentally friendly practices and promote it to residents, including promoting the benefits of opting into programs like Community Choice Aggregation and Mass Save. | ConCom | EIC | NR | Low | Short-term | Volunteer hours & coordination |
| 1B | Provide resources to hire a full-time Conservation Agent to increase the Town's capacity to administer its Conservation Bylaw and to coordinate community outreach and education. | TM | ConCom | CFS, NR | Low | Short-term | Funding |
| 1C | Amend the zoning bylaw to require developers to install and maintain shade trees where projects abut public walkways, including providing a long-term maintenance plan. | PB | DPW | CHR, LU, NR, OSR | Medium | Medium-term | Staff capacity for monitoring |
| 1D | Amend the zoning bylaw to encourage environmentally responsible development by potentially offering incentives (such as density bonuses or expedited permitting) to incorporate green infrastructure and low impact development principles in new development and retrofitting of existing structures. | PB, EIC | | CHR, ED, H, LU, OSR, T | Medium | Medium-term | Consultant / staff capacity |

2. Cultural and Historic Resources Goal: Protect Hamilton’s historic structures and sites, especially in the Hamilton Historic District, and involve the community in celebrating and preserving local history and agricultural and equestrian traditions.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|---|--------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------|---|
| 2A | Finance, initiate and complete a Comprehensive Cultural Resources Inventory using a Survey & Planning grant from the Mass. Historical Commission. | HistDC | TM | CHR | Medium | Short-term | Grant writing and staff / consultant capacity |
| 2B | Create a grant program for the maintenance and restoration of privately owned historic structures, based on the priorities identified in the Comprehensive Cultural Resources Inventory, potentially using CPA funds (see Action 2A). | HistDC | CPC | CHR | Medium | Medium-term | Funding |
| 2C | Recruit volunteers to revive the Agriculture and Equestrian Committee for an initial trial period, with a clear mission to promote awareness of Hamilton’s traditions. Use the existing resources and networks of groups like the Open Space Committee and Historic District Committee to build a base of volunteers. | HistDC | SB, TM | CFS, CHR | Low | Medium-term | Volunteer capacity |

3. Open Space and Recreation Goal: Protect existing green spaces, scenic vistas, trails, and recreation sites, improve local recreation programs, and make Town-owned outdoor recreation areas available and accessible for the entire community.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|---|--------|---------|----------------------|---------------------|-------------|---|
| 3A | Negotiate with the Tennessee Gas Pipeline Company to allow publicly accessible trail walking trails along their pipeline easements. Identify high-priority areas along the pipeline right of way that would help create connections between existing trails and points of interest. | RD | TM | ED, LU, OSR, T | Low | Short-term | |
| 3B | Reconstitute the dormant Open Space Committee to update and implement the recommendations in the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan. | SB | | CFS, CHR, LU, OSR, T | Low | Short-term | Volunteer capacity, staff support |
| 3C | Work with the Essex County Trail Association to update and maintain its Town-wide map of trail access and connections, including educational materials on responsible trail use and accurate information on the legal status of trail easements, and make this information easily accessible online. | ConCom | IT | CHR, LU, OSR, T | Medium | Medium-term | Volunteer capacity, funding for production of materials |
| 3D | Commit Town resources to pursuing the recommendations identified in the Patton Park Master Plan, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create universally accessible pathways • Install shade trees and additional seating • Drainage improvements • Improved signage | RD | DPW | CFS, CHR, LU, OSR, T | High | Ongoing | Funding |

4.2.2 Provide

4. Community Facilities and Services Goal: Provide high-quality public facilities and schools by engaging in preventative maintenance and renovations, improve Hamilton's capacity to provide community services, including through increased regionalization, and provide excellent public utilities that can meet the long-term needs of the community.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|---|----------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---|
| 4A | Create and maintain a comprehensive preventative maintenance plan for Town and school buildings. | TM, DPW | | | Medium | Short-term; ongoing | |
| 4B | Work with neighboring communities, regional stakeholders, and legislators to secure adequate long-term water supplies, including exploring the ability to connect to Salem and Beverly's water infrastructure or the MWRA, and improving the Town's water storage capacity. | TM, SB | DPW | ED, NR | High | Long-term | High staff capacity, grant writing for funding consultants and significant infrastructure costs |
| 4C | Work with the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District Committee to incorporate preventative maintenance funds for all public buildings into regular budget discussions; educate the community about the long-term benefits of these expenditures. | TM, HWSC | | | Medium | Ongoing | |
| 4D | Continue to evaluate the feasibility of providing limited wastewater treatment services to businesses in downtown Hamilton, exploring new technologies and methods as they become available. | SB, DPW | HDC | ED, H | High | Long-term ongoing | Funding for studies |

5. Transportation Goal: Ensure safe, high-quality, and sustainable transit in Hamilton by maintaining the Town's existing transportation infrastructure while creating convenient non-automobile connections between points of interest.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|---|----------|---------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 5A | Identify high-priority areas for the construction of bike paths and sidewalks and pursue Complete Streets funding from the state for high-priority projects. Prioritize creating connections between existing businesses, housing developments, and schools. | PD | DPW | CFS, ED, OSR, T | Medium | Short-term; ongoing | Grant writing capacity |
| 5B | Identify vulnerable populations (seniors, low-income citizens, those without landlines, immigrants, people who don't speak English) who may not be getting full access to local transportation options and provide information and assistance in accessing resources. | CoA, EMS | BoH | CFS, T | Medium | Short-term | |
| 5C | Create a publicly accessible, regularly updated map of safe bike and pedestrian routes across Hamilton, routing users away from known dangerous areas. | RD | IT | CFS, ED, OSR, T | Medium | Medium-term | Volunteer time, web mapping resources |
| 5D | For high priority areas where bike lanes are not feasible, such as narrow scenic roads, install alternatives like road signs and road stencils in conjunction with traffic calming measures. | DPW, PD | | CFS, OSR, T | Medium | Medium-term; ongoing | Grant writing capacity |
| 5E | Continue to invest in publicly accessible infrastructure for electric vehicles through the Energy Commission and Energy Manager. | EC | | CFS, NR, T | Low | Ongoing | Grant writing capacity |

4.2.3 Grow

6. Land Use Goal: Adopt land use regulations that promote responsible commercial and residential development while protecting the Town's open spaces, natural landscapes, and built environment by prioritizing redevelopment.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|--|--------|---------|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| 6A | Engage in a community-wide planning process to envision the future of the Town Center. Explore ways to unify the downtown, create walkability, encourage economic development, provide a greater variety of housing opportunities and preserve the character of the existing Town Center. Generate a form-based code for the Town Center to create a specific, tangible, and predictable template for realizing this long-term vision. | PB, PD | HDC | CFS, CHR, ED, H, LU, NR, OSR, T | High | Ongoing | Consultant / Staff Capacity |
| 6B | In the event the Winthrop School is closed, either in the next few years or well into the future, explore how the site can be integrated with the Hamilton Town Center. | PB, PD | HDC | CFS, CHR, ED, H, NR, OSR, T | Medium | Short-term | Consultant / Staff Capacity |
| 6C | Adopt zoning to facilitate the reuse and redevelopment of portions of the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary site, maximizing opportunities to produce affordable housing. | PB | PD | CHR, ED, H, NR, OSR | Medium | Short-term | Consultant and staff capacity |
| 6D | Assess requirements of the MBTA Communities Act considering anticipated rulings by the Supreme Judicial Court paired with public engagement and education on potential impacts of the law, particularly as to how it may affect the Hamilton Town Center. | PB | PD | CHR, ED, H, T | High | Short-term | |
| 6E | Improve the effectiveness of the Open Space and Farmland Preservation Development (OSFPD) bylaw and the Estate Overlay District provisions by exploring density and development by right options. | PB | PD | ED, H, LU, OSR | Medium | Medium-term | Staff / consultant capacity |

7. Housing Goal: Provide a regulatory framework to develop diverse housing types in a creative and environmentally conscious manner and grow the Town's stock of affordable housing appropriate for a range of ages and household sizes, including affordable senior housing.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|--|----------|---------|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--|
| 7A | Adopt multifamily housing and accessory dwelling units design guidelines to ensure new development across Hamilton is in line with local aesthetic character. | PB | | CHR, ED, H, LU, NR, OSR, T | Medium | Short-term | Staff / consultant capacity |
| 7B | Improve the effectiveness of the Estate Overlay District to encourage the preservation and adaptive reuse of estate homes to provide housing options in these existing buildings including apartments, condos, and congregate or other shared housing options. | PB | | CHR, ED, H, LU, OSR | Low | Short-term | Staff / consultant capacity |
| 7C | Hire a consultant to update the Town's 2019 Housing Production Plan before it expires in 2024, developing strategies to meet the Town's affordable housing requirements under Chapter 40B. | TM | HAHT | H, LU | Low | Short-term | Staff / consultant capacity, grant writing support |
| 7D | Evaluate the effectiveness of existing accessory dwelling unit (ADU) regulations and consider loosening restrictions on smaller ADUs and allowing larger ones by special permit. | PB, ZBA | | CHR, ED, H, LU | Medium | Medium-term | Staff / consultant capacity |
| 7E | Work with the Hamilton Affordable Housing Trust and Hamilton Development Corporation on site selection for affordable housing projects. Continue to regularly evaluate public | HAHT, PB | HDC | CHR, ED, H, LU, NR, OSR, T | Medium | Ongoing | Currently ZBA jurisdiction, tend to allow where reasonable |

8. Economic Development Goal: Support the Town’s existing business community by making downtown Hamilton more welcoming, more aesthetic, and more accessible, while encouraging commercial growth in appropriate locations across Town by providing resources and support for local businesses.

| # | ACTION | LEADER | PARTNER | RELATED ELEMENT(S) | LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY | TIMEFRAME | RESOURCES NEEDED |
|----|--|--------|---------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 8A | Work with the Hamilton Development Corporation to implement its Downtown Hamilton Streetscape Improvements plans. | HDC | | CHR, ED, LU, OSR, T | Medium | Short-term | |
| 8B | Adopt more flexible zoning regulations to encourage mixed-use development. Consider form-based zoning and use of performance standards, both of which regulate the design and impact of projects while allowing for more creativity in development. (See also, Action 6A). | PB, PD | HDC | CHR, ED, H, LU, OSR, T | High | Short-term | Board and staff capacity |
| 8C | Work with the Hamilton Development Corporation to improve signage and wayfinding in the commercial district. | PB | HDC | ED, T | Low | Medium-term | |
| 8D | Identify areas along major roads that might be appropriate for neighborhood-scale commercial uses and develop zoning to facilitate this development in a way that does not negatively impact nearby residences. | PB | | CHR, ED, LU, T | Medium | Medium-term | Funding, staff capacity |

4.3 NEXT STEPS

OVERVIEW

Healthy and prosperous communities do not just happen. The quality and nature of a community are best guided by informed and intentional choices. It is critical, then, that we understand the dynamics of community, the process of making choices, and the steps necessary to get the intended results.

Every community is a web of “a thousand invisible cords,” a living system of interconnected and interdependent relationships. The forces that combine to create a successful community are the *economy*, the *relationship between the natural and built environment*, and the *equity of opportunity*.

Economy is the management and use of resources to meet the community’s needs. It includes the efficient, prudent, and appropriate management of development, infrastructure, and transportation. The *relationship between the natural and built environment* focuses on preservation of our heritage and character, and of the natural resources necessary to support us. *Equity of opportunity* gives all residents the chance to participate in the activities, benefits and decision-making of the community. These three forces are inseparable and require a whole-system approach to planning. Such a comprehensive approach is the best way to ensure a future that includes quality of life and sustainability.

Tension between growth and quality of life causes the most conflicts, yet there is a difference between growth as a measure of increased economic activity in the short run, versus sustainable development that improves lives from one generation to the next. Getting “bigger” is not the same as getting “better.” The goal is to build an environment that remains healthy and prosperous over the long term.

Because we cannot create new land or return to a simpler time, our planning decisions take on an added importance. Our shrinking resources require smarter choices by our decision-makers. We look for a higher standard of performance from our regulations and from our developers. Patterns of growth over the past 20 years have sometimes stressed the limits of human well-being. We have produced environments that frustrate rather than enhance our everyday life, whether due to automobile traffic, pollution, the proliferation of placeless construction, or the isolation of gated enclaves.

Do we want to grow into a collection of sub-divisions and strip shopping centers, or do we want to be a real town with real neighborhoods and a vibrant, walkable town center? The only thing that stands between these two visions is whether our citizens understand the differences and choose the healthier option.

Just as the decisions of our predecessors shaped the Hamilton of today, our actions will shape the Hamilton of tomorrow. Preparing for that future requires that we understand the connection between how we develop, the vitality of our community, and the quality of our lives. We must make choices that honor the authentic needs of residents, foster a sense of community, and preserve the landscape.

These questions were asked before in Section **1.2 Vision Overview** and bear repeating:

What will Hamilton be in twenty, thirty, or fifty years?

Will we secure our identity and build places we care about?

A Master Plan is Hamilton's best opportunity to articulate the way we want to manage our future. This is the document that makes the connection between our vision for Hamilton, and the nature and location of our future development.

Bibliography

Bridge Reports. "Map by Condition." National Bridge Inventory Data. 2022.

City-Data. "National Bridge Inventory (NBI) Statistics.

Community Development Corporation, Hamilton. "2021 Annual Report."

Community House, The. "The History of the Community House." <https://communityhouse.org/history/>. Accessed February 2024.

Department of Conservation and Recreation, Massachusetts, Essex National Heritage Commission. "Hamilton Reconnaissance Report." May 2005.

Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts. 2023. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/environmental-data-and-information#recycling-and-waste->.

Department of Housing and Community Development, Massachusetts. Hamilton Subsidized Housing Inventory, January 2023.

Department of Revenue, Massachusetts, Division of Local Services. Municipal Databank. 2023.

Dewberry Engineers Inc. "Regional Evaluation to Improve Water Supply Resiliency within the Lower Ipswich River Watershed." Prepared for the Town of Hamilton, June 2022.

Executive Office of Labor & Workforce Development, Massachusetts. Labor Market Information (LMI). 2023.

Federal Highway Administration, US. "Road Function Classifications." FHWA Safety. November 2000.

Finance Department, Town of Hamilton. Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2023. August 2018.

MassGIS. MassGIS Data. <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-layers>. Accessed 2023.

Hamilton Development Corporation. "2022 Annual Report."

Hamilton-Wenham Public Library. 2018. <https://hwlibrary.org>.

Hamilton-Wenham Public Library. Long-Range Plan of Service 2020-2024. March 15, 2019.

Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District. "State of Our School Facilities." 2022.

Harborlight Homes. "Homes Under Development." Accessed 2023. <https://harborlighthomes.org/what-we-do/homes-under-development/>.

Ipswich River Watershed Association. River Conditions. <https://www.ipswichriver.org>. 2023.

Lightcast Industry Report, datarun 2022. <https://lightcast.io>. 2023.

Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority. "Newburyport/Rockport Commuter Rail Timetable." 2023.

Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation. DCR Stormwater Management, "What is Stormwater Runoff and Why Does it Matter?" Accessed April 2023.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council. Town of Hamilton Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, 2019.

Moody's Analytics REIS. 2023.

Nor'East Chapter Trout Unlimited, <https://www.tunoreast.org>. Accessed 2023.

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Resilient Mass. "Featured Initiatives". Accessed 2022.

Town of Hamilton. Annual Drinking Water Quality Report, 2022.

Town of Hamilton. Annual Town Report, 2020.

Town of Hamilton. Town Website. <https://www.hamiltonma.gov>. Accessed 2024.

Town of Hamilton. "Winthrop Street Bridge Temporary Closure." August 8, 2023.

Town of Hamilton Assessors Department, Assessors Database. 2023.

Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen. "Complete Streets Policy." Adopted January 2019.

Town of Hamilton Board of Selectmen. "Town of Hamilton Policy: Converting Private Streets into Public Ways." Adopted February 2019.

Town of Hamilton Finance Department. Capital Improvement Plan 2019-2023. August 2018.

Town of Hamilton Patton Park Master Plan Report. Prepared by CBA Landscape Architects, LLC. March 2023.

Town of Hamilton Water Department. "Public Water System Annual Statistical Report". June 22, 2021.

Town of Hamilton Zoning Bylaw, as amended August 11, 2021.

US Census Bureau, US. American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2017-2021.

US Census Bureau. U.S. Decennial Census, 2020.

US Census Bureau, US. Quarterly Workforce Indicators/OnTheMap. 2019.

US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy Data, 2019. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html>.

US Federal Highway Administration. "Road Function Classifications." FHWA Safety. November 2000.

North Shore Nordic Association, <https://www.nsnordic.org>. Accessed 2022.

TravelTime. "Map Demo," <https://app.traveltime.com>. Accessed 2023.

Warren Group, The. Banker & Tradesman, Town Stats 2023.

Zolot, Neil. "Massachusetts School Building Authority gives Hamilton initial nod for Cutler School project." Wickedlocal.com. April 6, 2022.

Appendices

Appendix A: Public Meeting #1 Summary

Appendix B: Public Meeting #2 Summary

Appendix C: Public Meeting #3 Summary

Appendix A

PUBLIC MEETING #1 SUMMARY



HAMILTON MASTER PLAN COMMUNITY WORKSHOP

PROTECT, PROVIDE, GROW

March 1, 2023

SECTION A – MEETING SUMMARY

As part of the Phase II Vision Process for the town-wide Master Plan, twenty-two Hamilton residents gathered in the Hamilton-Wenham Middle School Multi-purpose room on February 4th, 2023 for a community workshop led by Hamilton Master Plan Steering Committee members and Barrett Planning Group consultants. When attendees signed in, they also placed a dot sticker on a large map to show which areas and neighborhoods were represented (see Section B). They were then directed towards information boards with takeaways from the first community-wide forum.

The initial Master Plan community meeting held in November 2021 focused on what resources residents want the Master Plan process to guide the Town of Hamilton to provide, protect, and grow. Posters showed key findings from this event and included word clouds for participants to reflect on and provide additional written input. Attendees' ideas included:

- The desire to provide regional water security;
- Protect open space and equestrian access, and;
- Grow economic diversity and space for artists.

After light refreshments and the opportunity to provide feedback on the results from the first meeting, the consulting team gave an introductory presentation explaining the Master Plan process. Next, residents formed five small groups to take part in two activities. The first activity focused on group members introducing themselves and answering short icebreaker questions. The main exercise, "A Tour of Hamilton," asked attendees to imagine that a close friend or relative was visiting for the weekend and to design a full-day tour to show them around. The activity was designed to get participants talking about the places in Hamilton that they value, and why, as a way to identify community priorities. Participants were asked to discuss:

- Where are the key stops?
- What route would you take? Anything to see along the way?
- What would you tell them at each stop?
- Do you agree or disagree with your group members' stops?
- Are there any locations in town where you would not stop?
- How will you get around?
- Where will guests eat?
- What will you tell them about the stops along the way?

Steering Committee members facilitated this thirty-minute activity by guiding group members through a brainstorming session and discussion to develop their itineraries. Facilitators took notes and marked up table maps to show their group's proposed route. Enjoying open space and landscapes central to Hamilton's heritage was among the most reported pastimes. For example, every group would stop at the Patton Homestead with others also visiting Patton Park, Appleton, and the Chebacco Woods (see Section B and Table 1 for detailed results).

Conversations went beyond the valued places in Hamilton to why group members valued them. Since their tours were limited to Hamilton's boundaries, residents also reflected on the destinations in neighboring communities and if they wanted a similar institution, restaurant, or landscape in Hamilton. Many highlighted their proximity to waterfront open space in Manchester-by-the-Sea as a location they could not include in their tour, something they could not acquire in their landlocked community. Others desired other restaurants and coffee shops in a more walkable downtown like those in abutting communities.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- There was immense pride in community institutions and buildings like Town Hall, Christ Church, the Community House, the Patton homestead, and the Pingree School.
- Hamilton residents identified downtown as an area for improvement with more coffee shops, restaurants, and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure.
- The most common answers included exploring the outdoors through the Chebacco Woods, Pingree Woods, Harvard Forest, Appleton Farms, Vineyard Hill, Donovan Reservation, Sagamore Hills Conservation Area, and Green Belt Trails.
- The Discover Hamilton Trail network was essential to many groups as many used them as an opportunity to take dogs for a walk or explore nature.
- While it was challenging to imagine warm-weather events due to temperatures below zero degrees on the day of the meeting, some groups highlighted the Polo fields and Myopia Hunt Club events as tour destinations.
- Sagamore Hills Conservation Area, was a popular location to watch the sunrise and sunset.
- One group identified the library as a location to stop for children in their group to complete research projects. At the same time, others also identified the Hamilton-Wenham Regional School District and Public Library as benefits of living in Hamilton.
- Signage for the Patton Estate could be better for residents and visitors without a tour guide.
- Recreational facilities offer activities throughout the year for various people ranging from ice skating in the winter, fields for organized youth sports, tennis and pickleball courts, the Patton Park pool, and the Patton Park tank doubling as a playscape.
- Participants supported local businesses by going to restaurants downtown like Post, 15 Walnut, and Weathervane throughout the day for different courses ranging from lunch to drinks, appetizers, and dinner.
- One group highlighted Asbury Grove as an area with a longstanding history and traditions, while others wanted to avoid showing their guests that area, and some left it out of their notes entirely.

- Participants mentioned there are several gas stations downtown that they would do their best to avoid stopping during the tour by buying gas before their guests arrive. These commercial interests occupy space downtown and are considered by many to be an eyesore.

Comment Cards

Upon completing the day's activities and events, participants could provide further comments anonymously through a comment card on the back of their agendas. Responses on these cards included a range of perspectives and excitement to continue forward with the Master Plan visioning process. Topics throughout these comments included:

- Affordable Housing Downtown
- Net-zero Energy Use Standards
- Economic "safety-net" programs for seniors and people with fixed-incomes
- Financial investments to protect open space
- The Equestrian heritage of Hamilton

SECTION B – MAPS AND NOTES

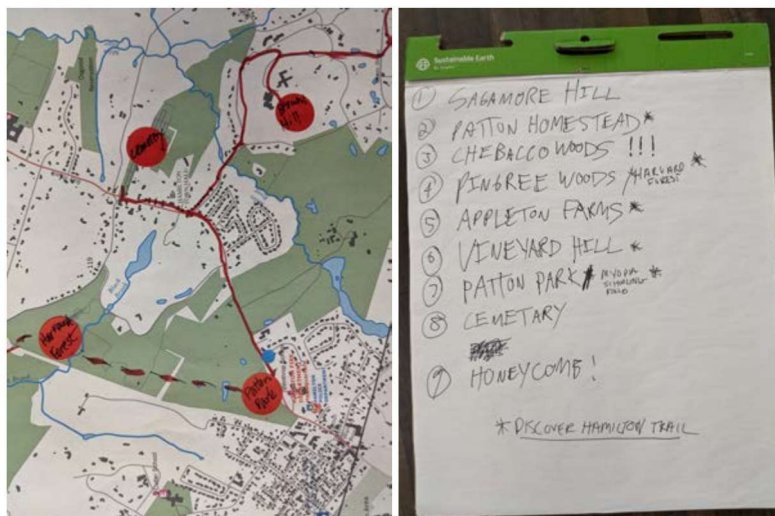
HAMILTON MEETING SUMMARY, FEBRUARY 4, 2023

| Table 1: Small Group Activity “A Tour of Hamilton” - Tour Stops | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| Group 1 | Group 2 | Group 3 | Group 4 | Group 5 |
| Sagamore Hill | 133 Essex | Town Hall | Honeycomb | Start w. Coffee @ Group member's house. |
| Patton Homestead | Chebacco Woods | Old Post Office | Patton Park – (Fields & Playground, Tennis Courts, Patton Park Pool) | Walk dogs at Appleton. |
| Chebacco Woods | Patton Park - (Weaver Pond, Basketball, Lilly's Hill, Baseball, Pool) | Polo Fields & Myopia Hunt | Appleton Farms – (Biking, Hiking, Family activities) | Drive by Church & Town Hall |
| Pingree Woods/Harvard Forest* | Sagamore Hill | Chebacco Lake | Lunch @ Weathervane | Patton Park – Ice Skate or Climb the Tank |
| Appleton Farms | Walnut Road | Patton Park/Schooling Fields | Asbury Grove | Lunch @ 15 Walnut |
| Vineyard Hill | Appleton Farms (Grass Rides) | Patton Homestead | Patton Estate Vineyard/Green Belt Trails | Drinks @ the Weathervane |
| Patton Park/Myopia Schooling Field | Harvard Woods | Restaurants Downtown – Weathervane/15 Walnut/Post/Honeycomb | | Wander & explore the river @ the Patton Homestead |
| Cemetery | Cemetery | Sunrise @ Donovan Reservation/Sagamore Hills CA | | Research Reports & Pickleball |
| Honeycomb | Town Hall Bradley Palmer Patton Homestead Chebacco Pond & Lake | Shopping Community House | | Dinner @ the Post |
| *Discover Hamilton Trails | Farm Stands | | | Day 2 – Drive by some destinations including a native American burial site on the way to the airport. |

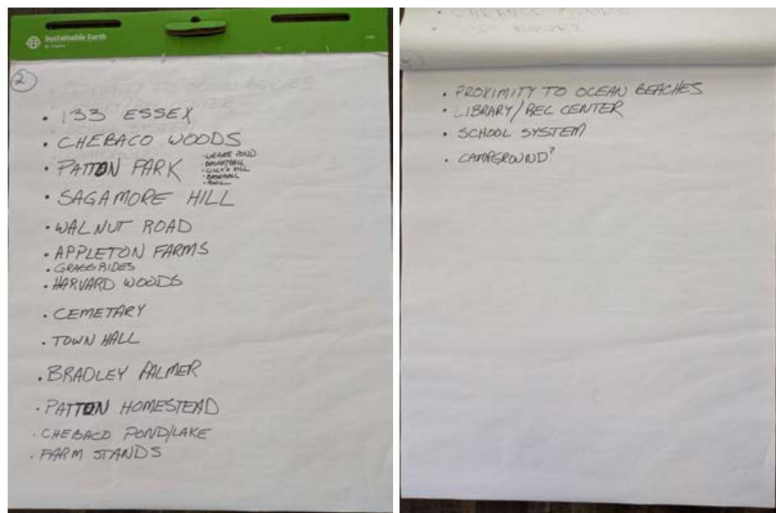
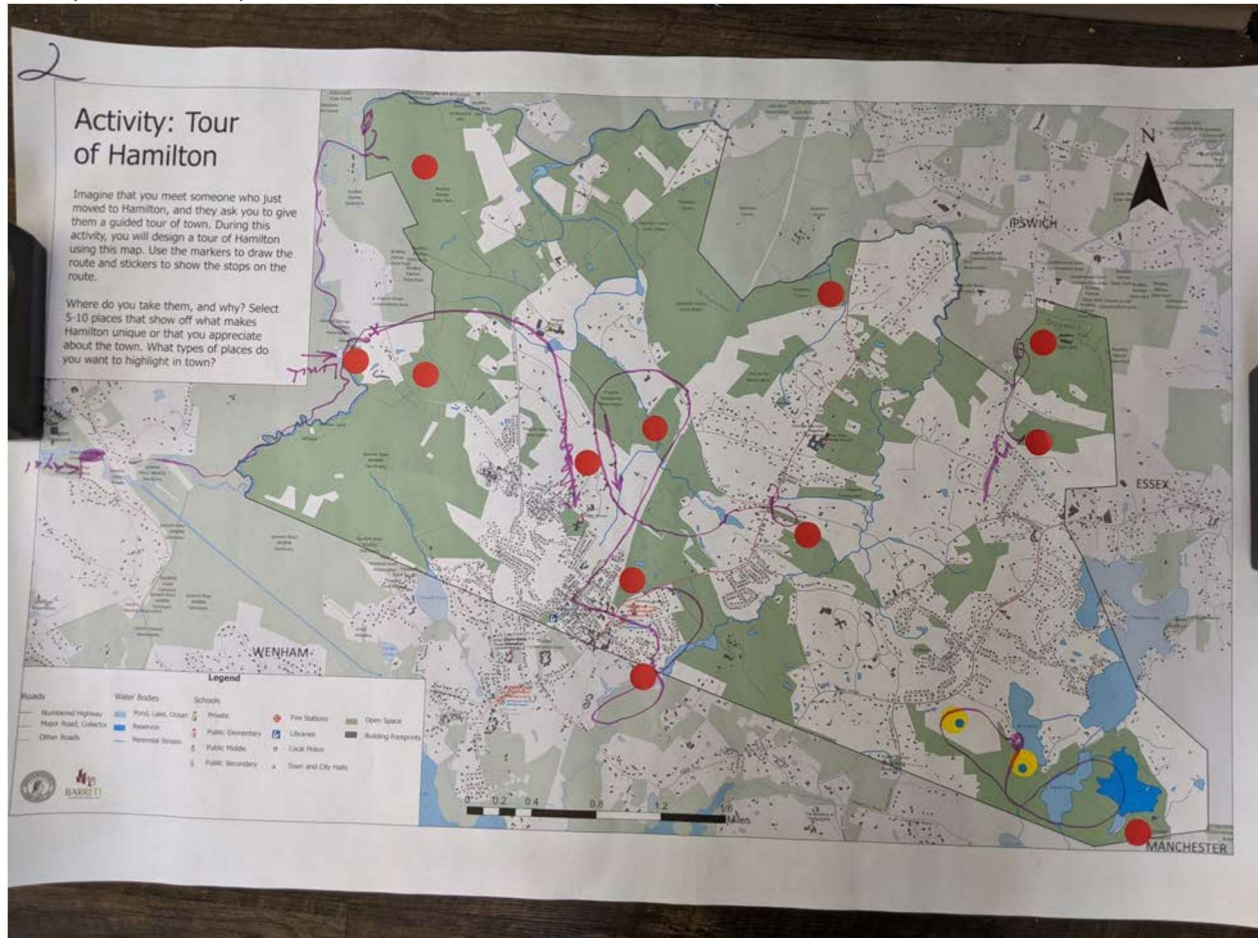
Check-In Map



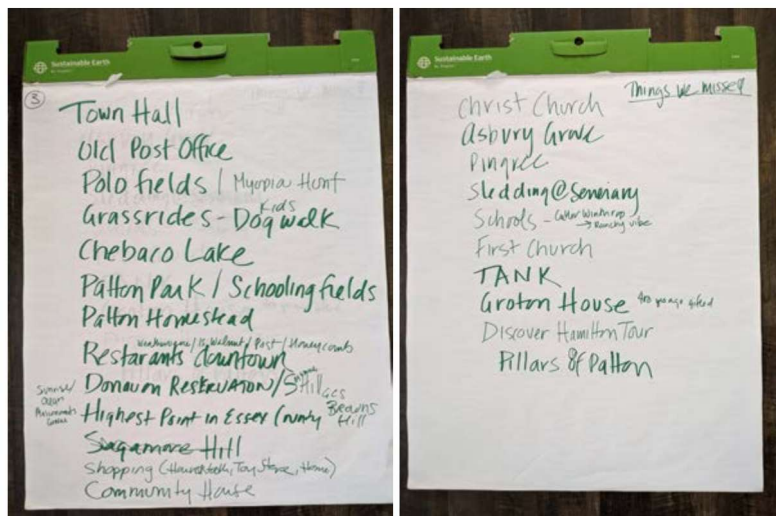
Group 1: Tour Map



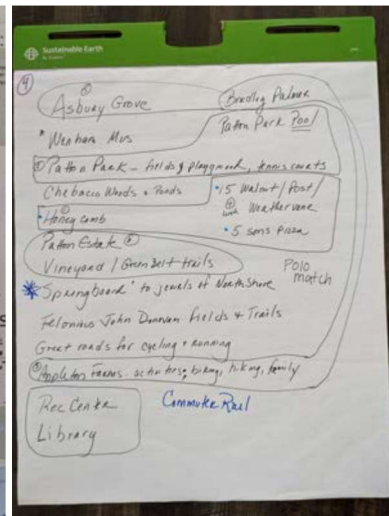
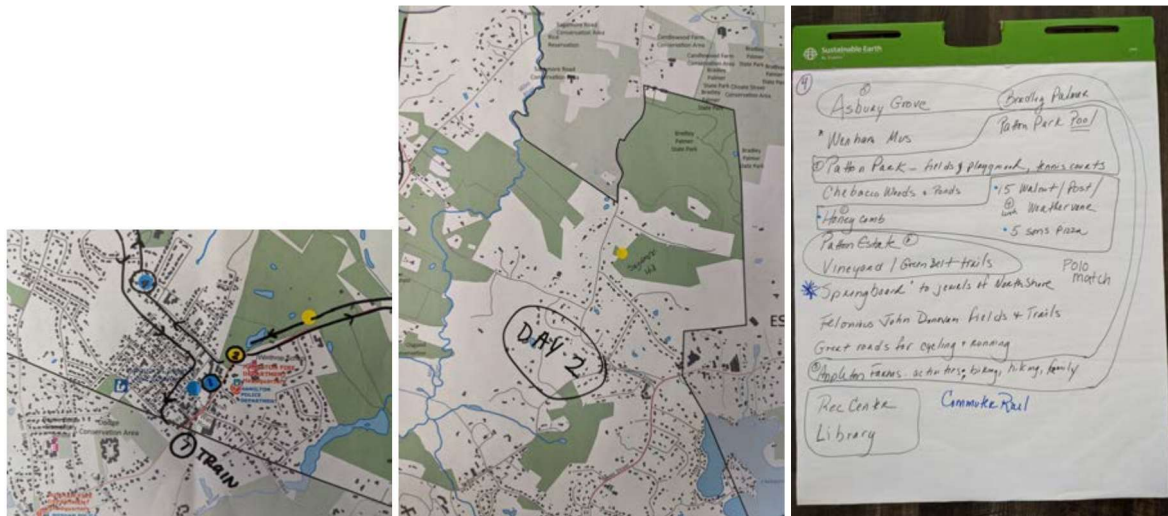
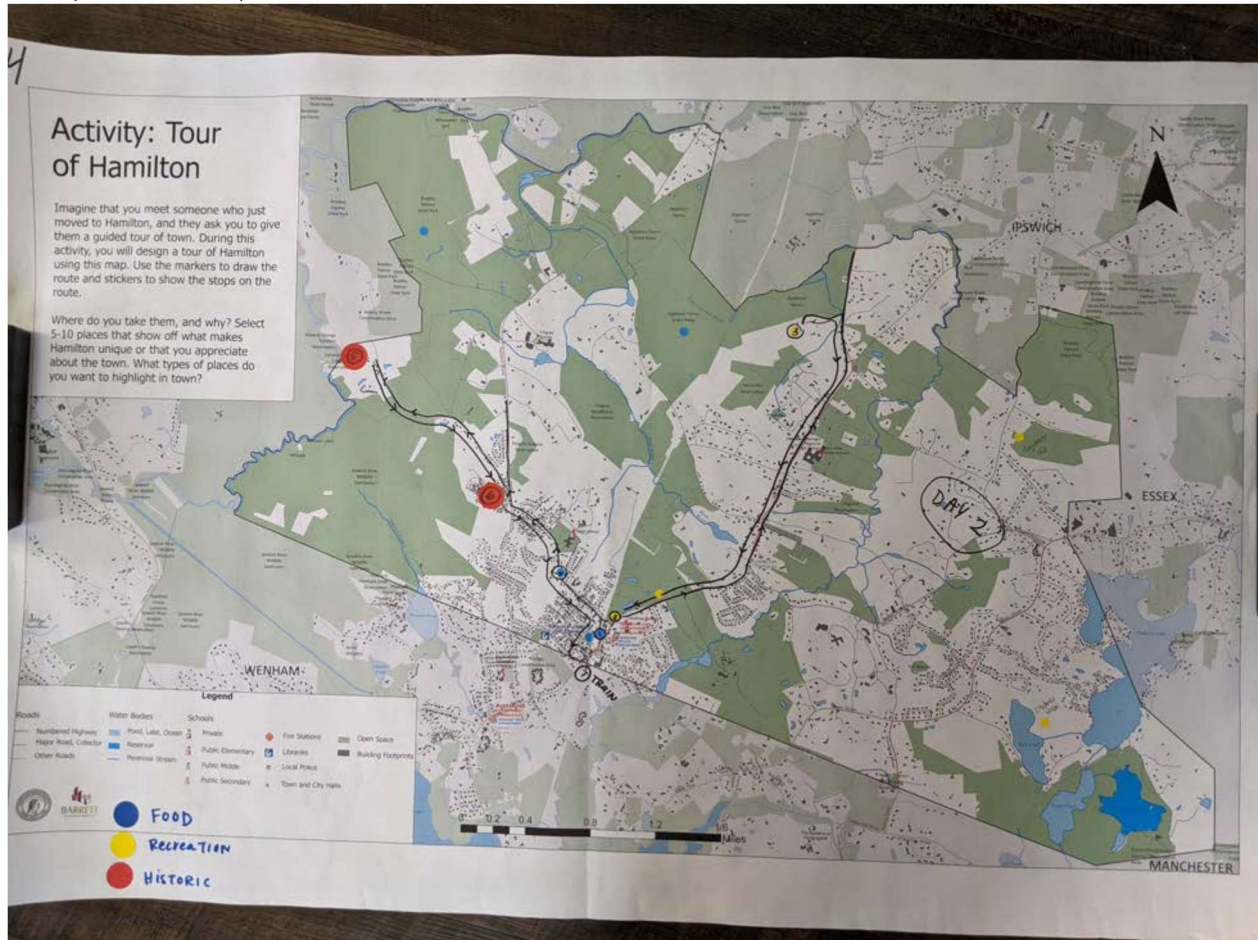
Group 2: Tour Map



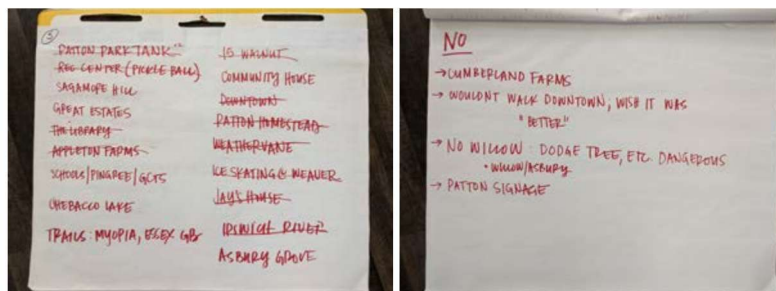
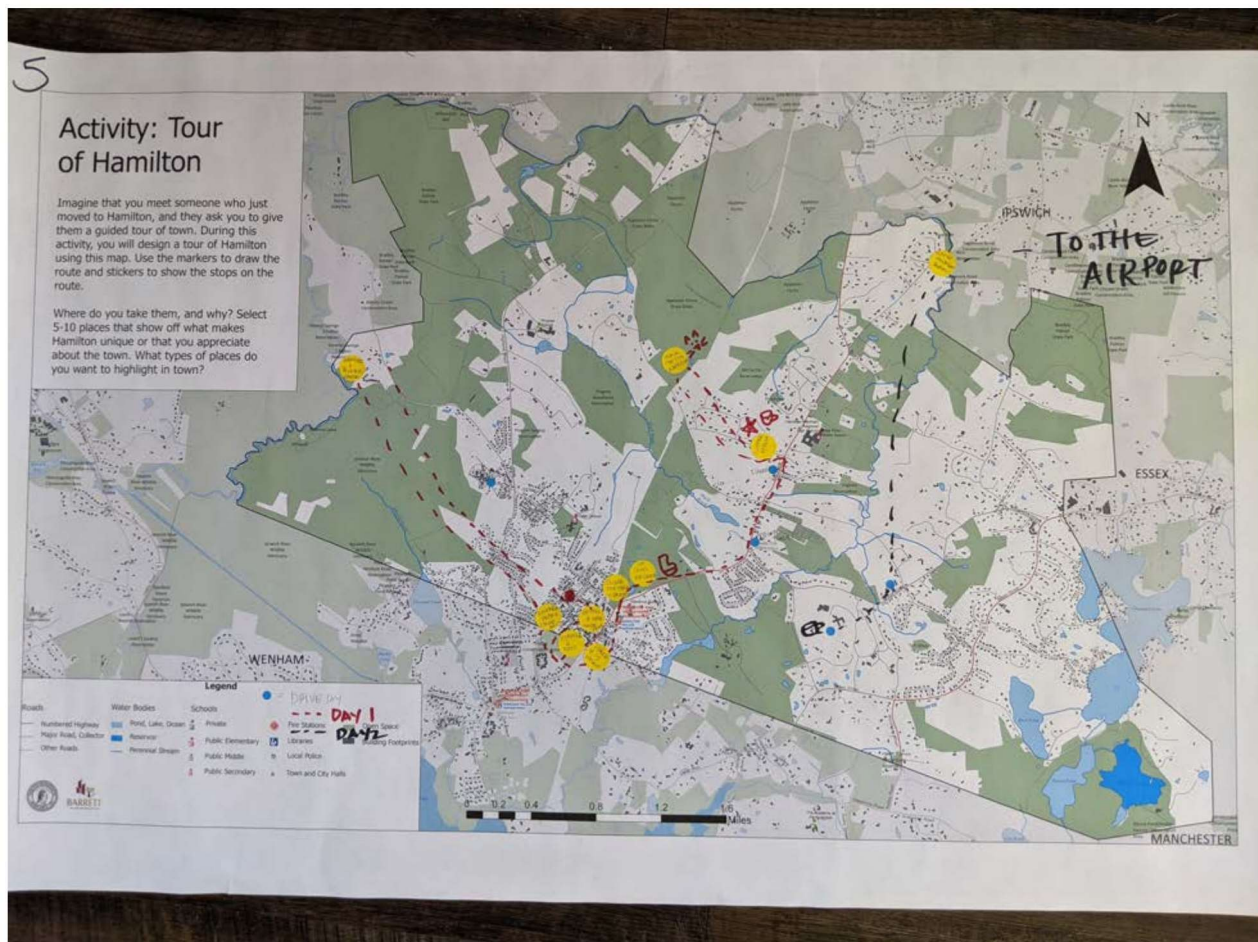
Group 3: Tour Map



Group 4: Tour Map



Group 5: Tour Map



Appendix B

PUBLIC MEETING #2 SUMMARY



Hamilton Master Plan Phase 2 Second Community Meeting

June 1, 2023

Hamilton's Phase 2 Master Plan process offered residents the opportunity to join a virtual community meeting on May 17, 2023. Forty-eight people registered for the session, not counting the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) members, Town staff, and consultants from Barrett Planning Group. The consulting team designed and ran the meeting while committee members participated and helped guide the discussion.

The meeting had two main components: a presentation to update the public on the master plan process, and small-group discussions about Hamilton's key planning issues. In the first half of the evening, the consultants explained the purpose and format of a master plan and described the planning work that had already been done for Hamilton's 2023 Master Plan. This included a presentation of some key findings from the Inventory and Assessment for all eight of the plan's elements. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions in the Zoom chat, which were answered either in the chat or during a Q & A period.

Next, participants were divided into two facilitated breakout rooms. The discussion group activity was designed to have residents brainstorm ideas for the Key Issues chapter, which would then inform goals and policy recommendations. Participants were asked to reflect on two or three master plan topic areas at a time, divided as follows:

- Natural Resources, Historic Resources, Open Space & Recreation
- Housing, Economic Development
- Transportation, Services & Facilities

Land Use issues were not given their own heading, because most Land Use issues also fall under one or more other elements. For each topic group, participants were given three prompts to get them thinking along the lines of the "Protect-Grow-Provide" framework developed by the Hamilton MPSC:

- What existing assets does Hamilton need to preserve or protect?
- What is missing that the Town needs to provide?
- Where are the opportunities for growth in this area?

Conversations flowed naturally beyond these basic questions as participants responded to each other's points and fleshed out their ideas. Facilitators presented the prompts and took live notes using a "digital whiteboard" service called Miro. The notes (attached here as Appendices A and B) show the participants' most pressing concerns and comments sorted into a "Protect-Grow-Provide" matrix that shows where ideas intersect with multiple aspects of the framework. The Key Takeaways section below highlights areas

where there was broad agreement among participants and others that were subjects of debate and discussion.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Natural Resources, Historic Resources, Open Space & Recreation

- Participants were concerned about protecting Hamilton's open space and natural resources. They saw open space (including equestrian infrastructure) as one of the Town's defining features and recognized the need to plan for the impacts of climate change and development.
- Some noted that Hamilton's open space is an asset that benefits the entire region, and wondered if there was a way to capture some value from visitors coming to hike, ride, or play, and engage in more regional planning efforts to protect these resources.
- A common theme was the need to take better advantage of the open space and recreation assets the Town already has. For example, participants wanted to see both Patton Park and the Patton Homestead utilized more and increase residents' awareness of these resources.
- The loss of trees was a significant concern. Participants wanted the Town to be more active in protecting existing trees and making sure that lost trees are replaced.

Housing, Economic Development

- Residents recognize that the flip side of Hamilton's abundant open space and lack of large-scale development is a limited tax base where homeowners provide the bulk of tax revenue. As one participant stated, "the financial stability of [the] Town is threatened by lack of growth."
- Increasing the amount of commercial development was discussed as a key way to lower the residential tax burden, but the type of development was important. One participant wanted to see more "mom and pop shops" downtown, and another stated that "we do not need another gas station convenience store."
- Participants wished to see a greater variety of housing options in Town, especially to help young families and older adults secure housing. While this idea received broad support in the breakout groups, participants also felt that the Town should thoughtfully plan for new development to minimize negative impacts on the community.

One well-received idea was to encourage the addition of housing units through the redevelopment of existing structures. A large single-family home could be retrofitted to contain several smaller units.

- Many agreed that new housing should be located near the downtown Commuter Rail station, although this is also the most commonly cited area for economic development. There was strong agreement that development of all kinds should be located in areas of Hamilton that have already been disturbed and away from natural landscapes.

One group discussed how providing infrastructure like wastewater treatment would allow for the more intensive use of already-developed properties in places like Downtown.

Transportation, Services & Facilities

- Participants wanted to see bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improved and expanded to make these forms of transportation more viable, for convenience, public health, and environmental reasons. Current infrastructure is more conducive to recreation than practical travel.
- New residential development and renovations to municipal properties should incorporate green design elements and use renewable energy as much as possible. Sustainability should be a part of projects like Town Hall renovations or the construction of a new school, including infrastructure for electric vehicles where applicable.
- Both groups identified the need to secure a sustainable source of clean drinking water as a pressing issue, but some were concerned about the potentially high costs associated with tapping into a new water supply.

General Takeaways

There was broad agreement on what Hamilton's assets are:

- Abundant open space;
- Outdoor recreation opportunities;
- A well-regarded school system;
- Access to the Commuter Rail.

Participants also largely agreed on the biggest issues facing Hamilton:

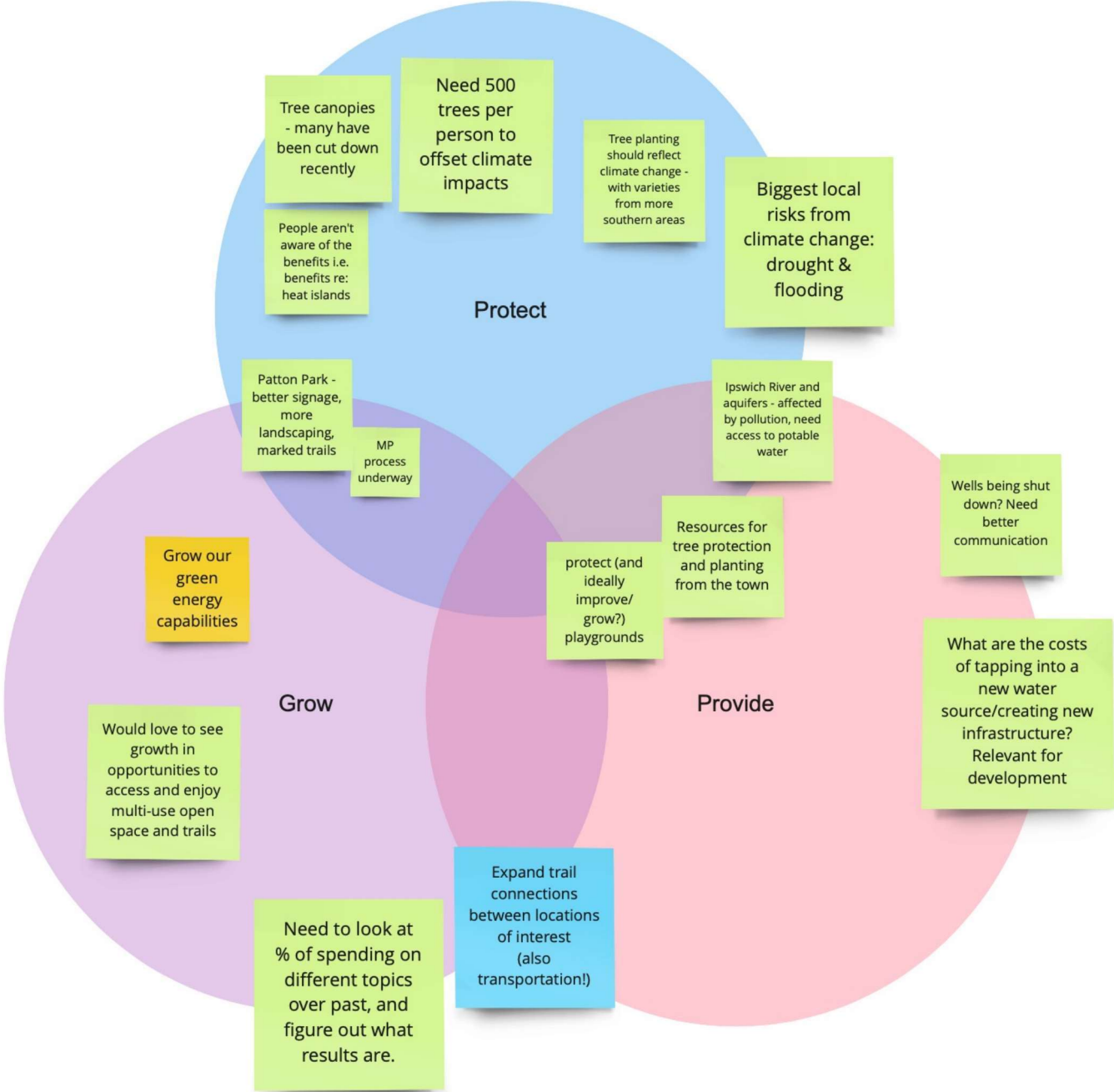
- High taxes and a lack of growth in tax revenue;
- The impacts of climate change;
- The need to embrace and green infrastructure;
- Lack of diversity and affordability in housing options;
- Inadequacy of the current water supply.

Breakout group discussions made it clear that Hamilton residents love their town for what it is and want to preserve what makes it special, but also realize that it will need to grow and evolve to meet future challenges. There is some inherent tension between these ideas, but many of the potential solutions brought up by participants were largely aimed at finding ways to carefully plan for and guide change in a way that is compatible with existing community character.

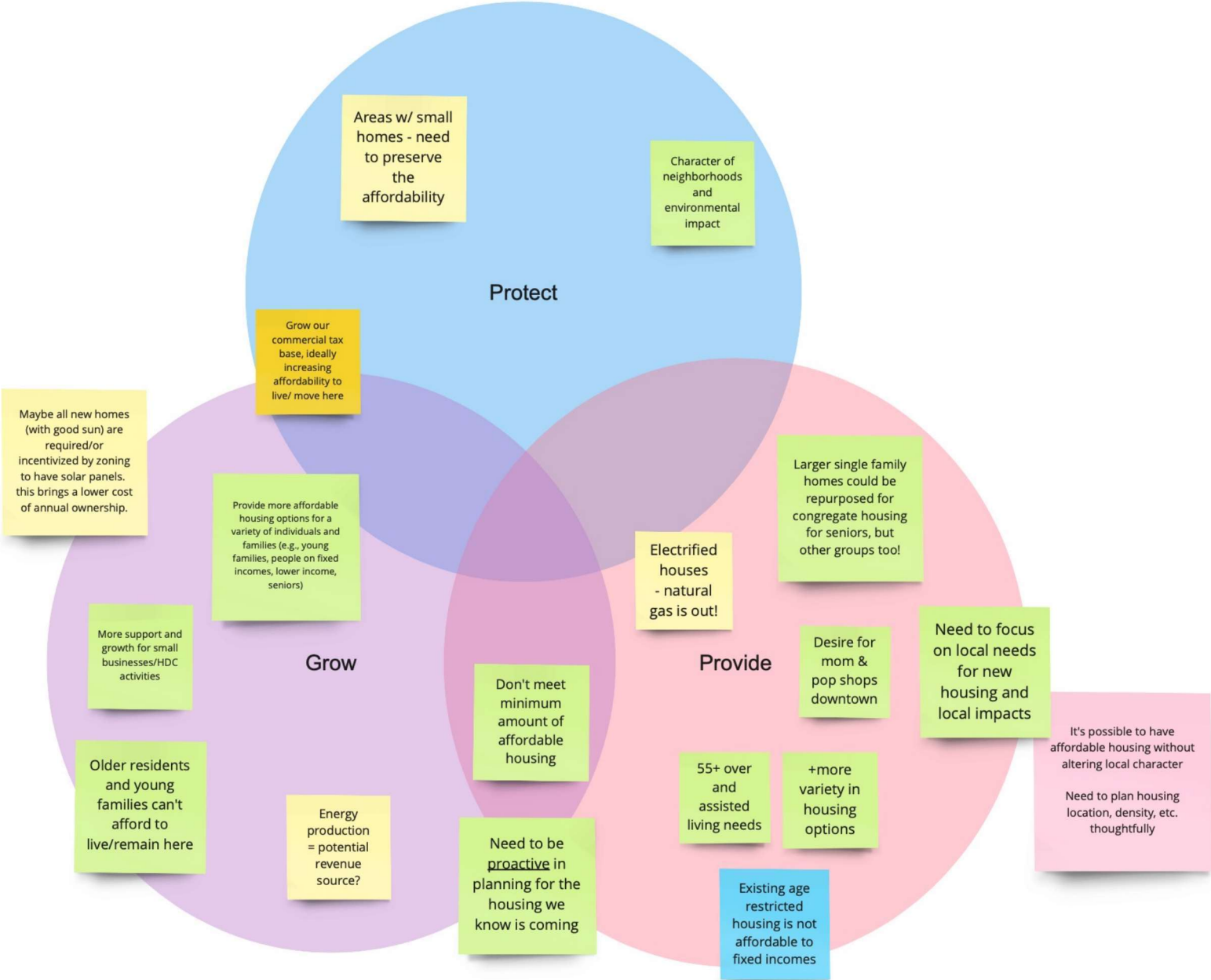
APPENDIX A

BREAKOUT GROUP NOTES – GROUP 1

Natural Resources
Historic Resources
Open Space & Recreation

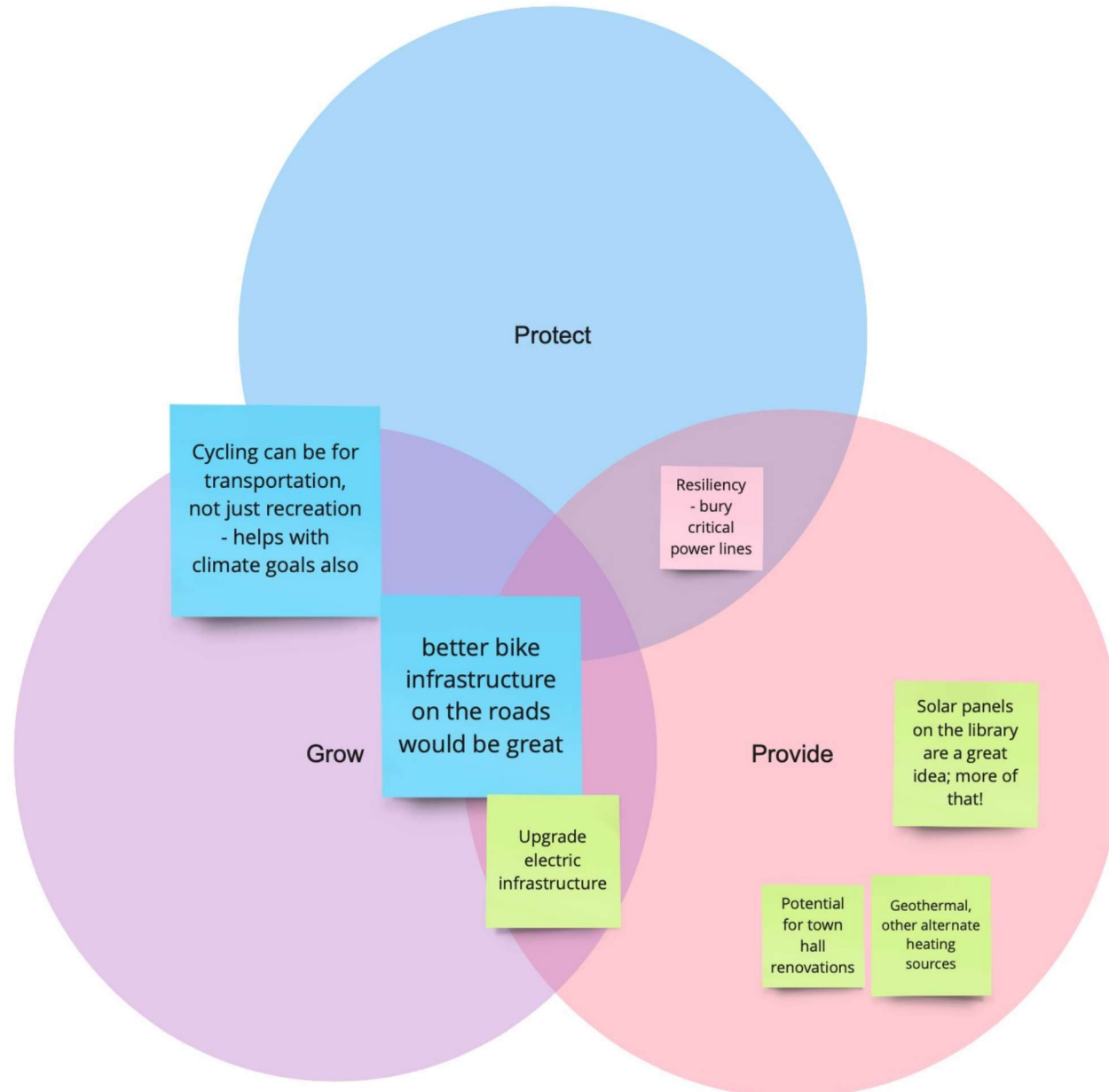


Housing Economic Development



Transportation Services & Facilities

Hamilton Master Plan
5/17/23 Community Meeting



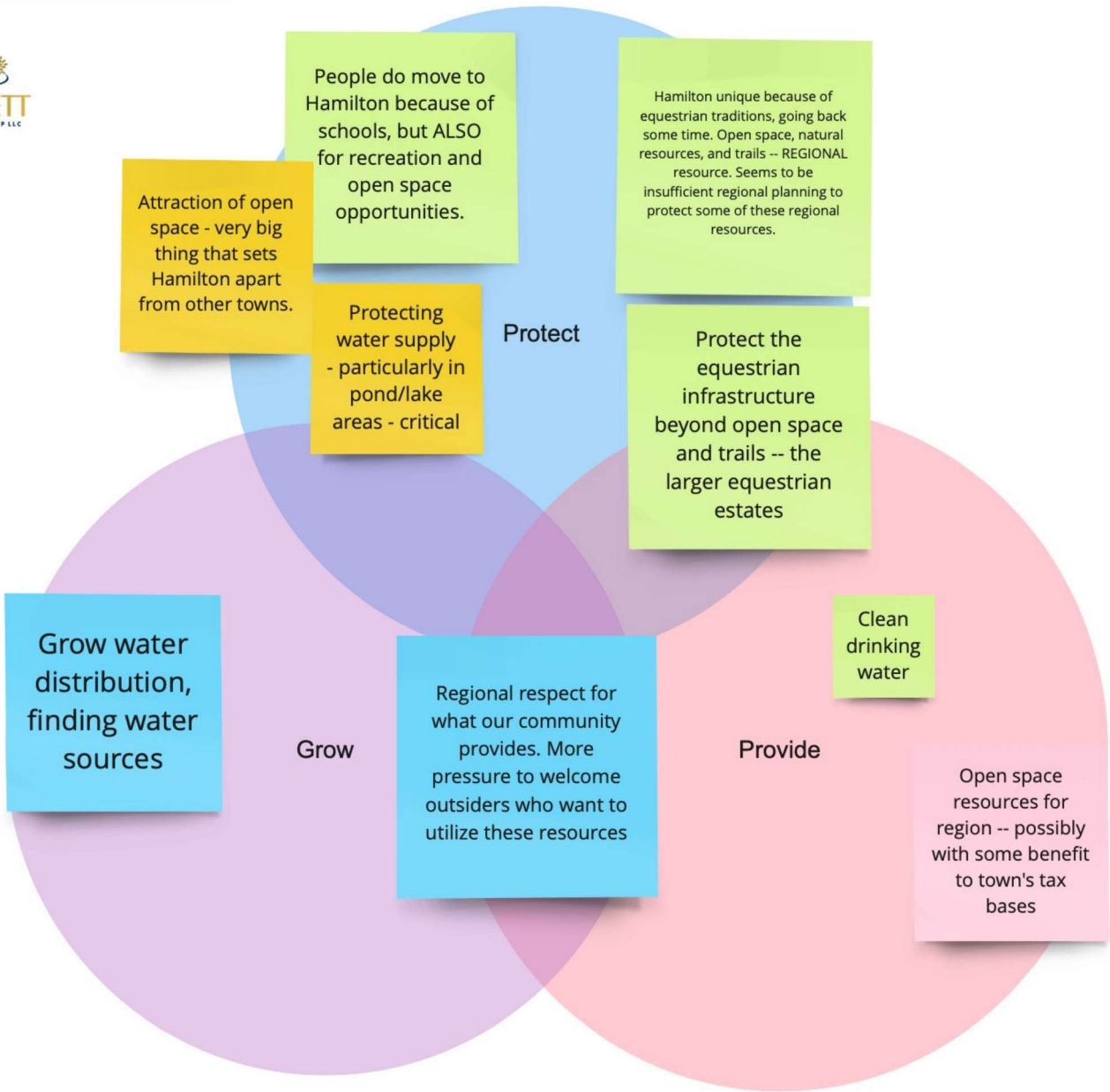
APPENDIX B

BREAKOUT GROUP NOTES – GROUP 2

Natural Resources

Historic Resources

Open Space & Recreation



Other notes:

Much more costly with so much open space -- is there a way to offset some of that with ancillary accessory uses and improve commercial tax base

Economic Development

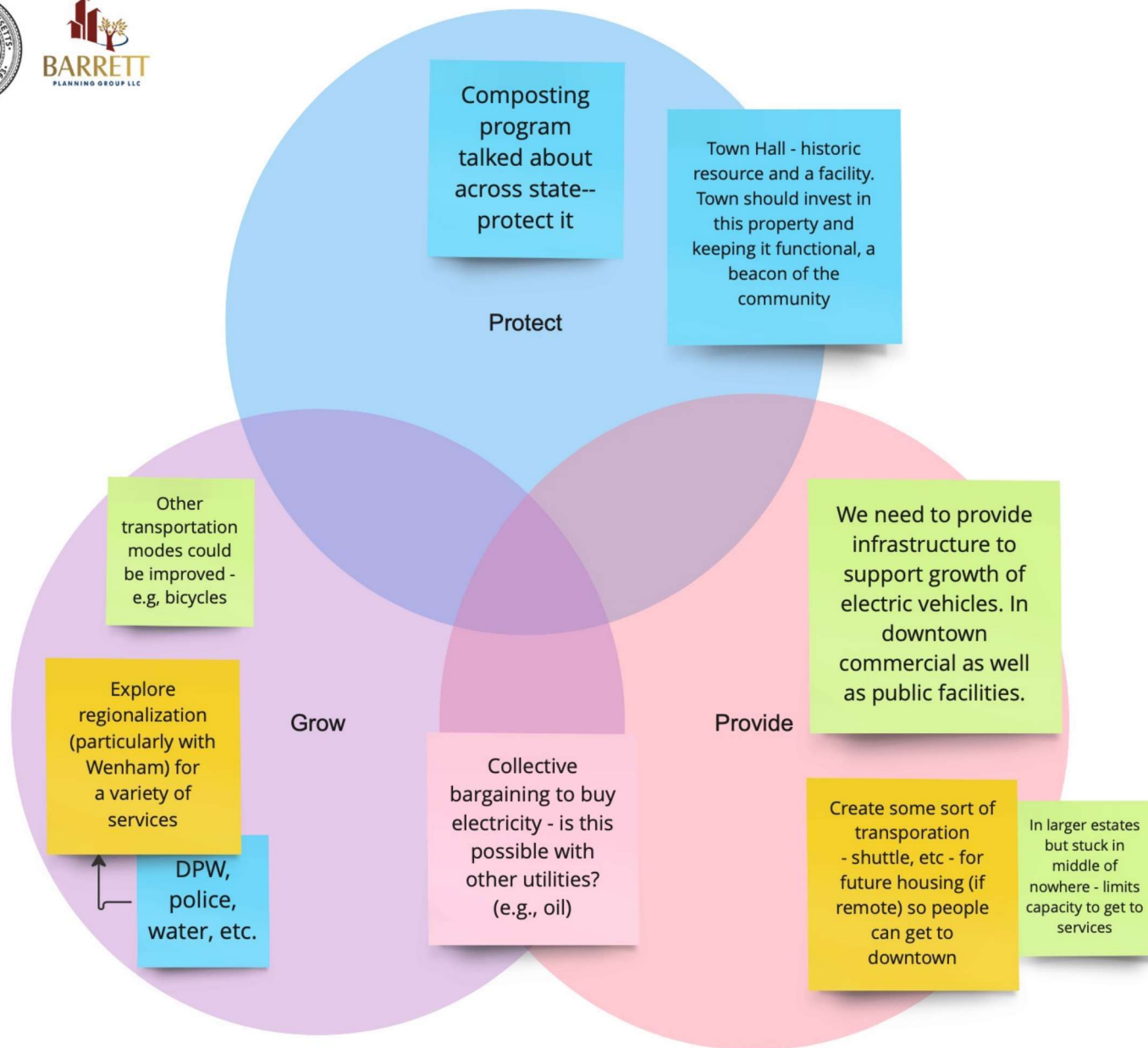
Housing



Other notes:



Transportation Services & Facilities



Other notes:

Climate change and energy efficiency -- in general across the board looking at this as facilities decisions are made

Becomes an attractor to many people interested in moving to Hamilton

Keep working with schools looking ahead at facilities consolidation. Not making any more land, so let's look at existing properties where possible.

Appendix C

PUBLIC MEETING #3 SUMMARY



Hamilton Master Plan Phase 3: Implementation

Community Meeting #3

December 5, 2023

Phase 3 of Hamilton's Master Plan process offered residents the opportunity to attend an in-person community meeting on October 28, 2023, at Hamilton-Wenham Middle School. There were 15 members of the public in attendance, not including the Master Plan Steering Committee (MPSC) members, Town staff, and consultants from Barrett Planning Group (BPG). The consulting team designed and ran the meeting, facilitated the discussions, with support from MPSC members.

The meeting had two main components: (1) a presentation of the key findings, vision statements, and goals of the Master Plan, and (2) facilitating a large group discussion on actions participants wished to see the Town take to achieve the Master Plan's goals. The consultant team created seven poster boards, each representing a Master Plan element, and included the corresponding goal for that element. BPG then presented each poster one at a time and led a group brainstorming session to generate potential action items for each element. The seven elements were:

- Natural Resources
- Land Use
- Open Space and Recreation
- Housing
- Economic Development
- Transportation
- Cultural & Historical Resources (The group did not get to the topic of Cultural & Historical Resources due to time constraints)

The consultants presented each goal and then actively took notes while participants discussed potential recommendations for each goal. The main findings from this discussion are summarized below.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Natural Resources:

- Participants expressed a desire for the implementation of solar panels in schools and newer developments, as well as the integration of more green infrastructure in general. Currently, the newer school building incorporates solar and geothermal power.
- One participant suggested Community Choice Aggregation, which is MA legislation allowing local governments to procure power on behalf of their residents, businesses, and municipal accounts from an alternative supplier while still receiving transmission and distribution service from their existing utility provider.

- Another suggestion was Mass Save, aimed at preserving heat and insulating infrastructure through program incentives. Particularly emphasized was the need for reduced gas usage in public buildings, as gas is the primary energy source for most Hamilton buildings.
- Additionally, there was a call for more educational programs to utilize town government for disseminating information for resource sustainability, such as native lawns and lighting. Public outreach was highlighted as an important aspect of resource conservation and protection efforts.

Land Use:

- Redevelop large estates to allow for denser development or other uses besides single-family homes.
- Parents of young children in attendance expressed opposition to the merging of schools with surrounding towns, fearing the loss of small-town communities. The potential merging of Winthrop School is particularly concerning.
- Areas connected to surrounding towns are identified as particularly vulnerable to change and potential land loss to other municipalities.
- Some participants proposed the addition of land use regulations to promote development, with some mentioning that tax incentives could aid this. These regulations would need to align with Hamilton's goals and priorities. Attendees also expressed concern about making the planning process and local regulations understandable to the public, so they can better understand the local planning process and codes used.

Open Space and Recreation:

- One attendee described Hamilton as a through-way town and suggested that improving and utilizing Town parcels for recreation would make Hamilton more attractive to visitors.
- Implementing bike paths was proposed to redirect cyclists away from dangerous roads.
- Attendees expressed a desire to create and improve connections within the current network of trails. For instance, there was a suggestion for an 'Explore Hamilton' trail showcasing everything the Town offers.
- Additionally, better organization and delineation of trail uses were recommended. A current issue with trails is that most are located on private property, and the landowners are hesitant about increased foot traffic around their property.
- Suggestions were made to utilize apps or the Town's website to provide better and more accessible maps and promote activities like kayaking.

Housing

- Concerns were raised about 40B regulations due to the number of units required for compliance. Higher density is a concern for most residents, especially regarding its potential impact on downtown, which is the main area Hamilton focuses on for this project. A participant commented on the possibility of shared housing between towns.

- Another housing issue raised is affordable senior housing, with potential opportunities for co-housing among the senior population.
- There were differing opinions on housing options, with some open to more diversity while others were content with the current number of single-family homes in Hamilton. However, if Hamilton moved forward with higher-density housing, septic improvements would be needed.

Economic Development:

- Participants raised the idea of spreading business areas around Hamilton, instead of prioritizing businesses downtown, which would also involve rezoning some areas. With the current septic system issues, it would be difficult to expand and grow the downtown area.
- Someone raised the potential option to change zoning for economic development at the Gordon Conwell Site.

Transportation:

- The main traffic issue in Town is currently in the downtown area. Participants advocated for capital investment to improve safety and navigation in downtown.
- Residents expressed a desire to better understand traffic flows to figure out solutions for transportation issues. A study of Route 1A was deemed beneficial, with attendees identifying Walnut/Bay and the corner at Community House as the problem areas.

Overall takeaways:

- Prioritizing downtown economic development.
- Providing trail information online, including apps with open space and recreation information.
- Noting a recent increase in green and sustainable developments.
- Suggesting an annual check-in for updates on what has been accomplished in the Master Plan process.
- Recognizing the need to include different age groups and demographics in decision-making.
- Addressing 40B implementation and compliance with MBTA community guidelines.
- Highlighting traffic safety concerns in Downtown Route 1A.
- Acknowledging septic system issues for future economic and housing development.
- Expressing concerns about merging schools with other towns and the potential loss of small-town community.