

Town of Holliston

Economic Development Vision & Service Model Plan

Prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
for the Town of Holliston

February 2023

Acknowledgements

The Town of Holliston Economic Development Vision & Service Model Plan was developed in collaboration with the Town of Holliston and its Economic Development Committee, with critical contributions from community members and regional economic development partners. The project was supported by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council thanks all who contributed to this effort and appreciates having had the opportunity to work with Holliston's town staff, volunteers, and community.

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1. Introduction & Purpose

Purpose

This Economic Development Vision and Service Model Plan provides analysis and recommendations that address economic development challenges and opportunities, local administrative capacity, and potential approaches to sustainable, effective economic development in the Town of Holliston's commercial, industrial, and mixed-use areas. To do so, first, it summarizes the findings from: initial project activities, including a review of existing Town plans, studies, and data; an economic development community workshop; and an assessment of the current local service model, centered on the Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC) and select partners. Next, it provides recommendations for an economic development service model in Holliston, outlining strategies for advancing targeted economic development under current or expanded local capacity, based on the project findings.

Partners

This project has been facilitated by Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) staff in collaboration with the Town of Holliston and the EDC. The Town of Holliston has been represented in this project by Travis Ahern, Town Administrator, and the current EDC members are John Drohan (Chair), Christine Carosella (Vice-Chair), Viktoria Sadlovska Anshu, Glenn Brown, Chinmaya Gogineni, Pat Hafford, and David Thorn. MAPC is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston. It aims to promote smart growth and regional collaboration, with efforts to engage the public in responsible stewardship of the region's future guided by a regional plan, MetroCommon 2050.¹ Beyond this core team, this project has also relied on important contributions from other Town entities, regional economic development partners, and Holliston community members.

- More information about the EDC can be accessed here: <https://hollistonedc.com>.
- More information about MAPC can be accessed here: <https://www.mapc.org>.
- More information about MetroCommon 2050 can be accessed here: <https://metrocommon.mapc.org>.

Timeline

This project began in August 2022 and will conclude in February 2023. Project tasks and supporting activities have been sequenced as follows:

August 2022 - December 2022: Task 1: Existing Conditions, Areas Suitable for Economic Development, and Economic Development Committee Assessment. Supporting activities included: a kick-off meeting with Town and EDC partners; the review of existing plans, conditions, and regulations; a community workshop; interviews and focus groups supporting an assessment of the EDC and the region's other economic development stakeholders; and compilation and presentation of key findings.

December 2022 - January 2023: Task 2: Defining Economic Development Vision and Service Model. Supporting activities included preparation of an economic development service model for the Town of Holliston, including opportunity for municipal feedback, and the compilation of a set of preliminary recommendations related to a local economic development vision, staffing options, and strategies.

February 2023: Task 3: Final Recommendations. Supporting activities included finalizing recommendations for the Town of Holliston Economic Development Vision and Service Model Plan and a final presentation to Town staff, the EDC, and members of the public.

Target Areas

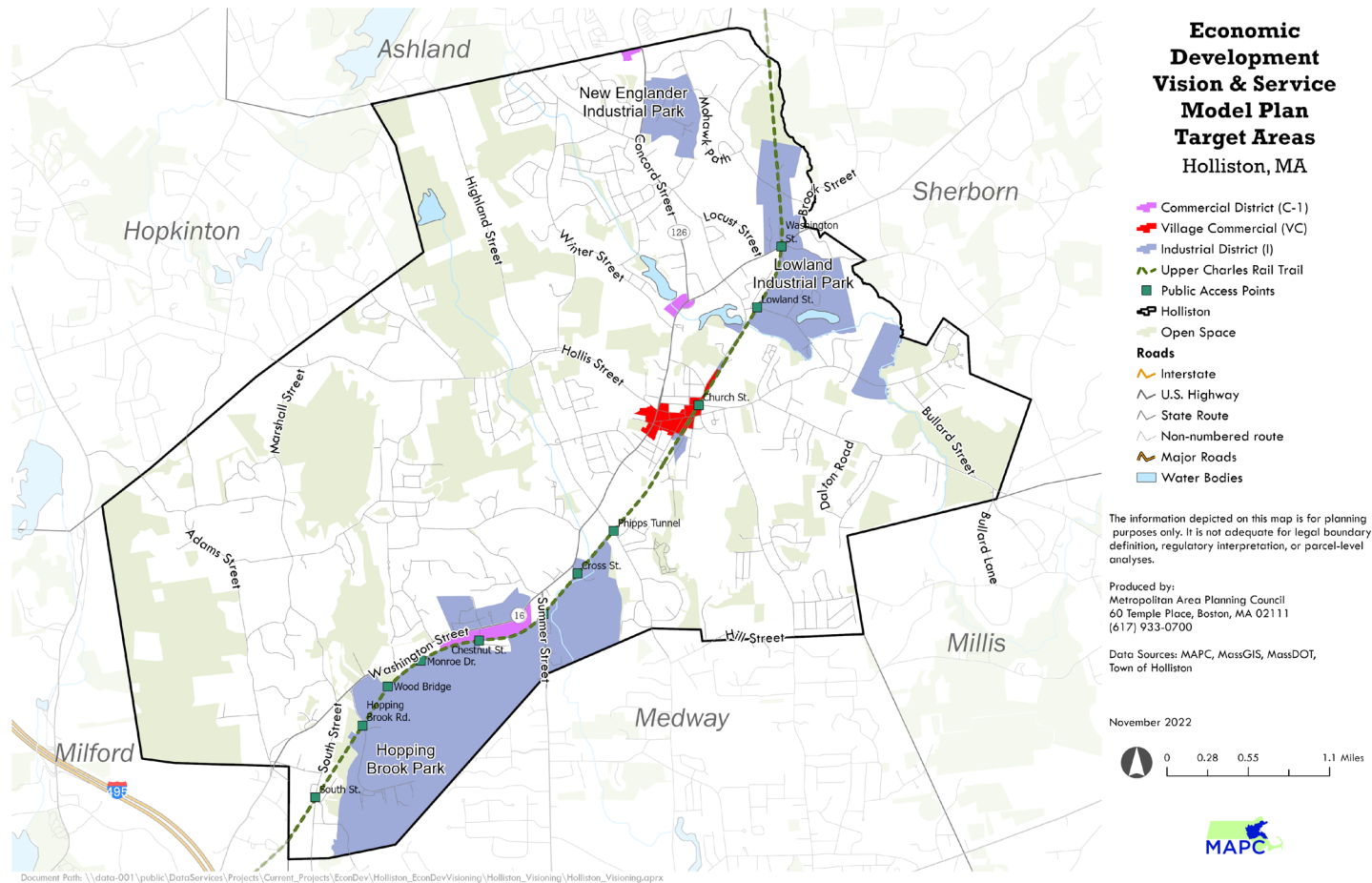
This project centers on four types of target areas, which have been identified in collaboration with Town partners as opportunities for increased economic activity (Figure 1.1). These categories are based, in part, on Holliston's current zoning bylaw and its 2011 and 2017 zoning maps.²

They include:

1. *Village Center Commercial District*, centered on the convergence of Washington Street, Central Street, and Green Street/Exchange Street and inclusive of Blair Square;
2. *Commercial Districts*, including the town's smaller commercial plazas or standalone facilities at Concord Street and the Ashland border, the intersection of Washington Street and Concord Street, and along Washington Street near the Upper Charles Rail Trail to the south;

3. *Industrial Districts*, including Hopping Brook Park, New Englander Industrial Park, and Lowland Industrial Park; and
4. *The Upper Charles Rail Trail*, in acknowledgement of the trail's existing and potential role as a recreation destination and conduit to nearby commercial amenities.

Figure 1.1 Map of Target Areas



Map of Holliston Economic Development Vision & Service Model Plan target areas. Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2022.

Executive Summary

Service Model Overview

The proposed economic development service model is structured in two phases:

Phase 1: Current Local Capacity (Year 1) assumes current capacity levels and, as a result, reflects a more limited portfolio of economic development activities reflective of core community themes. In this phase, the EDC, with support from the town administrator, advance activities in the focus areas of small business support, building collaboration and community relationships, and targeted industrial park support.

Key short-term outcomes of Phase 1 include:

- Strengthened community and collaboration among Holliston small business owners
- Strengthened relationships between EDC and Holliston small business owners, with business owners more likely to contact EDC members with questions or comments
- A fuller understanding of Holliston small business needs and priorities among EDC members
- An engaged pool of Holliston community members who volunteer on economic development efforts
- Greater collaboration, coordination, or consensus across Town entities on day-to-day economic development matters
- Plan and materials for a transparent, coordinated, and swift response process for industrial park tenant inquiries

Accomplishing these outcomes will set the stage for the economic development staff hired in Phase 2 to hit the ground running; they will enable targeted economic development efforts to be responsive to small business and community needs, buoyed by engaged community members, and advanced in collaboration with other Town entities.

Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity (Year 2 - 3) assumes expanded local capacity in the form of new economic development staff or support services and, as a result, incorporates a broader range of priority economic development activities reflective of core community themes. In this phase, an economic development staff member, in collaboration with the EDC and other Town partners, advances activities in the focus areas of small business support, building collaboration and community relationships, targeted industrial park support, and targeted downtown promotion.

Key short-term outcomes of Phase 2 include:

- Strengthened relationships between small business owners and Town staff
- Strengthened connection between Town staff and regional organizations
- Greater access to resources among Holliston businesses (grants and technical assistance)³
- Greater awareness of local business clusters, trends, and opportunities among Town staff
- A fuller understanding of Town services and processes among small business owners
- An established process for tailoring Town services or strategies to small business needs and market
- Greater collaboration, coordination, or consensus across Town entities on day-to-day economic development matters
- Greater empowerment of community members who expand and apply their economic development knowledge and skills to economic development efforts
- Quicker, more consistent responses to industrial park tenant inquiries
- An established foundation for engaging in more long-term, cross-cutting planning efforts

Staffing for this second phase could take several different forms; MAPC recommends pursuing regionalization opportunities, where one full-time staff member would be employed and working in multiple municipalities focused on economic development. An alternative staffing model would be one part-time municipal position focused on economic development. After year three, the Town should evaluate its selected staffing model's effectiveness and make appropriate adjustments.

Pursuing these strategies over a three-year period will position the Town and EDC to tackle bolder economic development initiatives, including those related to underlying infrastructure needs and opportunities.

Select economic indicators of the long-term outcomes of the proposed activities may include:

- Increased tenant inquiries for target areas
- Increased business establishment or relocation
- Increased retention or growth of small businesses
- Increased visitation and sales in downtown area
- Increased commercial tax revenue

Why should Holliston invest in economic development?

Needs:

Holliston's existing conditions include several economic development strengths, as well as the following needs or gaps that indicate the town is not performing at its full economic development potential:

Untapped entrepreneurial capacity

Comments reflected a lack of visibility, community, and/or tangible supports for local artists and entrepreneurs, as well as continued challenges related to the impacts of COVID-19.

Inadequate process for responding to industrial park inquiries

Descriptions of recent efforts to respond to inquiries from potential industrial park tenants indicated a lack of coordination, clarity, and timeliness, leading to concerns about both missed opportunities and perceptions of a poor business climate.

Lack of community mobilization

The range of diagnoses for local economic development challenges and opportunities signaled room for greater alignment behind a shared focus or vision; comments also suggested missed opportunities to convert passion for related issues to action, with community members unsure of how to plug into local efforts.

Underutilized properties in the downtown area

Comments noted opportunities to improve the physical environment of Holliston's downtown, including through activation of highly visible vacant or underleveraged properties.

Limited business mix

Comments indicated an unmet demand for a range of experience-based commercial amenities, including restaurants, cafes, small entertainment venues, and youth-oriented amenities.

Insufficient infrastructure

Comments signaled inadequate infrastructure conducive to economic growth, particularly downtown, including insufficient sewer infrastructure and limited bike and pedestrian infrastructure.

Actions:

In response, an economic development staff member could pursue the following areas of activity:

- Small business support
- Building collaboration and community relationships
- Targeted industrial park support
- Targeted downtown promotion

These areas of activity are described in greater detail throughout the Holliston Economic Development Vision & Service Model Plan final report.

Impacts:

Broadly, these types of actions can ultimately contribute to several kinds of economic development impacts, including the following, based on summaries by the International Economic Development Council (IEDC): business creation, retention, and growth; job creation, economic growth, and innovation; diversification of local business mix; access to a range of local amenities and services; investment in community assets and improved quality of life; expansion and diversification of tax base (and reduction in residential tax rates); creation of vibrant downtowns and neighborhoods attractive to community members and visitors; and strengthening of civic engagement and sense of place.⁴

2. Existing Conditions

Holliston Community Profile

The following community profile touches on Holliston's location and physical characteristics, demographic and economic indicators, and community priorities as revealed through a community workshop, surveys, and focus groups and interviews (see Qualitative Data Sources section below). This quantitative and qualitative information lays a foundation for a subsequent discussion of an economic development framework for the Town of Holliston and, moving forward, it can be leveraged by the Town and EDC in decision-making processes and economic development service provision.

The Town of Holliston is located approximately 24 miles west of Boston, in Middlesex County, the MetroWest region, and MAPC's MetroWest Regional Collaborative Sub-Region.⁵ The Town spans 19.04 square miles at the convergence of Routes 16 and 126, bordered by Medway, Millis, Ashland, Hopkinton, and Milford. Holliston's proximity to I-495 connects the community to the broader region and situates the Town in an accessible, strategic position in the regional economy.

MAPC has categorized Holliston as a Maturing New England Town, a community typology characterized by a mixed-use town center surrounded by low-density outlying areas.⁶ In Holliston, the Village Center Commercial District, or downtown, comprises this town center. Its key physical characteristics include a concentration of commercial entities fronting key transportation thoroughfares or nodes, including Washington Street, Central Street, and Blair Square (Figure 2.1). It features on-street parking options, select bike and pedestrian infrastructure, and receives the most traffic at the beginning and end of the school day and when activated for special events or programming.⁷ Holliston also includes several smaller commercial plazas, including strips of retail or restaurant amenities centered on vehicular traffic thoroughfares. Around these commercial amenities, residential neighborhoods and agricultural land comprise wide swaths of the community's land area and contribute to the "picturesque" community feel cited by some community members.⁸ Lastly, Holliston's industrial parks, including Hopping Brook Park, New Englander Industrial Park, and Lowland Industrial Park, reflect the physical characteristics of commercial subdivisions or legacy industrial corridors and are accessible at select points via the Upper Charles Rail Trail.⁹ Throughout the town, there are select outlier parcels, including a three-tenant commercial facility at 89 Cross Street that is the largest in Holliston.¹⁰

Figure 2.1 Village Center Commercial District Physical Characteristics.



Commercial establishments on Washington Street in the Village Center Commercial District. Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2022.

Demographic Indicators

Population – In 2020, Holliston had an estimated population of 14,792.¹¹ It had a total of 5,452 households, with an average household size of 2.7 residents.¹² Select population estimates anticipate the town's population decreasing to approximately 11,500 by 2040, amounting to a projected 15.1% decrease between 2010 and 2040.¹³ Over the same time period, Middlesex County's population is projected to increase by 15.5%, Massachusetts' is projected to increase by 12.7%, and four out of the six communities surrounding Holliston are also projected to grow in population.

Age – Holliston's population is older than Middlesex County's or Massachusetts'. In 2020, the town had a median age of 43.7 years, compared to 38.5 years and 39.6 years in the county and state.¹⁴ In terms of distribution across age groups, the greatest share of Holliston residents were aged 40 - 59 years: 4.6% were under 5 years old, 26.7% were 5 - 24 years old, 14.1% were 25 - 39 years old, 32.7% were 40 - 59 years old, 15.6% were 60 - 74 years old, and 6.3% were 75 years and over.¹⁵

Race & Ethnicity – Holliston's population is less racially diverse than Middlesex County's or Massachusetts'. In 2020, the town was 91.8% white, compared to 75.2% in the county and 76.6% in the state.¹⁶ In Holliston, 1.1% of residents were

Black or African American, 0.0% were American Indian and Alaska Native, 5.1% were Asian, 0.0% were Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0.4% were some other race, and 1.6% were two or more races. In terms of ethnicity, Holliston has a comparatively small share of Hispanic or Latino (of any race) residents. In 2020, 3.4% of Holliston residents were Hispanic or Latino (of any race), compared to 8.1% in the county and 12.0% in the state.¹⁷

Income & Education – Holliston's median household income (MHI) is comparatively high. In 2020, the town had an MHI of \$137,589, compared to \$106,202 for the county and \$84,385 for the state.¹⁸ Its poverty rate is comparatively low. In 2020, Holliston's poverty rate was 2.3%, compared to 7.2% for the county and 9.8% for the state.¹⁹ The town also has comparatively high levels of educational attainment; in 2020, 65.7% of residents aged 25 years and older held a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to 57.1% for the county and 44.5% for the state.²⁰

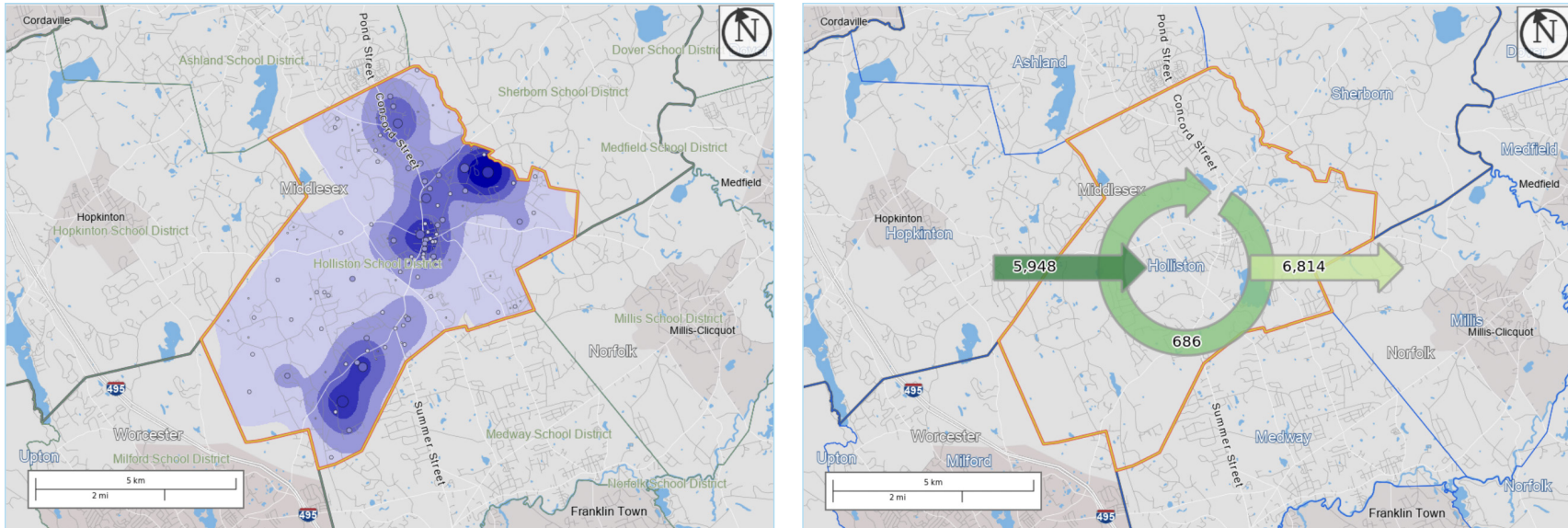
Economic Indicators

Establishments – As of 2021, Holliston contained an estimated 527 establishments.²¹ The sectors with the most establishments were Construction (78); Other Services, Except Public Administration (69); and Health Care and Social Assistance (59).²² The sectors with the largest establishments, as measured by employment, were Construction (19 employees per establishment), Administrative and Waste Services (14), and Wholesale Trade (12).²³ The largest establishments, each with more than 100 employees, are: Wayne Griffin Electric; Rodenhiser Plumbing, Heating, A/C & Electric; Stanley Black & Decker (Lista Plant); Atlantic Beverage Distributors; and Harvard BioScience.²⁴

Employment – As of 2021, Holliston had an average monthly employment of 6,448.²⁵ The sectors with the most workers were Construction (1,483), Wholesale Trade (561), and Administration and Waste Services (536).²⁶ Average weekly wages were \$1,615.²⁷ Employment is largely concentrated in Holliston's downtown area and industrial parks (Figure 2.2).

Inflow/Outflow – There are comparatively few people who both live and work in Holliston (Figure 2.2). In 2019, 89.7% of the 6,634 people employed in Holliston lived elsewhere.²⁸ And, of the 7,500 Holliston residents accounted for in the labor force, 90.9% were employed outside of Holliston, with only 9.1% both living and working in town.²⁹ A closer look at commuting patterns reveals that Holliston residents have comparatively long commute times; in 2020, their mean travel time to work was 38.6 minutes, compared to 31.1 minutes for the county and 30.0 minutes for the state.³⁰ The vast majority of Holliston residents drive to work. In 2020, 82.3% traveled to work in a car, truck, or van, and another 11.9% worked from home.³¹

Figure 2.2 Employment in Holliston.



Concentration of employment in Holliston, 2019 (left). Darker shade indicates greater job density. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map, Counts and Density of All Jobs in Work Selection Area in 2019, accessed September 12, 2022. Employment inflow/outflow in Holliston, 2019 (right). Source: U.S. Census Bureau, On the Map, Inflow/Outflow Counts of All Jobs for Selection Area in 2019, accessed September 12, 2022.

Community Priorities

Conversations with the EDC and Holliston community members, supplemented by community survey results and insights from economic development practitioners in the region, revealed several core themes related to economic development dynamics in Holliston. These themes reference the town's broader economic development ecosystem and approach, specific economic development strategies, and identified geographic areas in which to concentrate economic development activities.

Qualitative Data Sources

Community Workshop – The EDC and MAPC hosted a hybrid community workshop on October 12, 2022, with approximately 45 virtual or in-person registrants (see Appendix A for supporting materials). The workshop included a presentation of the project target areas, demographic and economic indicators, and qualitative data on community members' priorities, as well as small group discussions on local economic development opportunities and challenges and potential and priority EDC actions. The community conversation themes described here emerged, in part, from comments at the workshop.

Survey Results – Envisioning Future Holliston (EFH), formerly the Comprehensive Long-Range Planning Committee, was created by a citizen's petition at Holliston's 2021 Spring Town Meeting to establish a vision as a foundation for a comprehensive long-range plan and to guide local decision-making moving forward.³² This effort has included two public surveys: Survey #1 (November 2021 - January 2022) focused on what matters to Holliston residents; and Survey #2 (June 2022 - August 2022) focused on how Holliston residents want to achieve their identified goals. The community conversation themes described here emerged, in part, from Survey #2 results.

For more information on the EFH process, see Town of Holliston, "Data Highlights for Survey #1: The Comprehensive Long-Range Planning Committee (Envisioning Future Holliston)," March 1, 2022. Link: https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhli706/f/uploads/future_holliston_data_recap_3-1-22.pdf.

Focus Groups & Interviews – MAPC held a focus group with the EDC on November 21, 2022, with a preparatory survey conducted in advance on the EDC's purpose, members roles, and activities (see Appendix B for supporting materials) . The focus group included a comparison between the mission statements of the EDC and volunteer economic development groups in peer communities, as well as a ranking exercise for scenarios describing potential focus areas and resource allocation strategies for the EDC. MAPC conducted a focus group with economic development staff or volunteers from peer communities on December 5, 2022, with participants including representatives from the Town of Ashland, Town of Natick, and Town of Medway (see Appendix B for supporting materials). The focus group centered on a discussion of community economic development service models and volunteer roles and responsibilities, and it has been supplemented by a review of these and other towns' and volunteer groups' websites and municipal budget materials.

MAPC conducted an interview with staff from the 495/MetroWest Partnership as part of a broader effort to understand the economic development organizations and resources in the region (see Appendix B for supporting materials). The interview centered on a discussion of economic development services in the MetroWest region and potential resources for the EDC, and it has been supplemented by a review of regional organizations' websites.

For more information on peer communities' volunteer economic development committees, see Town of Ashland, "Economic Development Department," n.d. Link: <https://www.ashlandmass.com/391/Mission>; Town of Natick, "Economic Development Committee," n.d. Link: <https://www.natickma.gov/484/Economic-Development-Committee>; and Town of Medway, "Economic Development Committee," n.d. Link: <https://www.townofmedway.org/economic-development-committee>.

For more information on the 495/MetroWest Partnership, see 495/MetroWest Partnership, "About the Partnership," n.d. Link: <https://www.495partnership.org/about-us>.

Community Conversation Themes

Key economic development themes in Holliston, further detailed below, span the physical and programmatic components of economic development (Figure 2.3). They include:

Figure 2.3 Community Conversation Themes.



Holliston community conversation themes. Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2023.

Downtown Enhancement – Physical Environment

Community members emphasized the potential role of physical improvements to Holliston's Village Center Commercial District, or downtown area, in catalyzing heightened economic activity. Comments noted, for example, the potential for enhanced sewer infrastructure to support new and existing small businesses, including food stores, restaurants, and cafes.³³ Comments also noted the potential to activate underutilized or vacant lots in the downtown area. One suggested site was the gas station at the Green Street intersection, and one suggested strategy was engaging young people in public art projects.³⁴ This topic also resonated within the EDC. One member identified downtown revitalization as a potential opportunity for EDC leadership, with supporting activities including assisting in the coordination of relevant Town boards and staff to usher projects through to completion.³⁵

Downtown Enhancement – Sense of Place

Comments called for creating a clear sense of place in downtown Holliston as a potential mechanism for attracting and retaining customers. Select community members spoke to the downtown area's potential reach as a destination, noting opportunities to increase local visitation and broader tourism-related economic development activities.³⁶ In terms of local visitation, one community member noted the role of centralized wayfinding resources in drawing customers to downtown businesses in less visible locations, relaying that, with the lack of wayfinding, they had initially been unaware of several less prominent businesses.³⁷ Other community members focused on the potential to draw visitors to Holliston from other communities. One commenter suggested capitalizing on tourism opportunities related to Holliston's natural, agricultural, cultural, historic, and food-related assets and complementing points of interest with accessible transportation options.³⁸ Other suggestions focused on creating a leisure or entertainment destination downtown. Commenters emphasized the importance of a unique business mix to cultivate a distinct user experience with a regional appeal, with suggestions including restaurants, cafes, and small entertainment venues.³⁹ Lastly, community comments spoke to the contextual conditions that would facilitate visitation, including pedestrian infrastructure and signage guidelines supporting a cohesive sense of place.⁴⁰

Small Business Attraction & Support

Community members signaled that small business support and attraction should be a key part of local economic development activities. Suggestions for supporting existing small businesses included focusing on COVID-19 recovery. In reflecting on their pandemic experience, one business owner shared that they did not experience support and outreach from the Town during the height of the pandemic and relayed that businesses continue to struggle with COVID-19's economic impacts.⁴¹ Looking ahead, another business owner called for the Town to connect businesses to funding to "grow," "pivot," and "recover" in response to COVID-19.⁴² Suggested activities for small business support also included outreach efforts to understand small business needs, a focus area echoed by community and EDC members alike.⁴³ Community members, for example, called for creating a welcoming

environment for entrepreneurs seeking to start or relocate a business in Holliston and support for businesses in Holliston's smaller commercial areas, in addition to those located downtown.⁴⁴ Additional suggestions included organizing events to showcase local businesses and entrepreneurs, maintaining the physical retail spaces necessary to support small businesses downtown, and cultivating a vibrant, expanded mix of small businesses, including those that respond to local demand and preferences.⁴⁵ EDC members, for their part, envisioned the Committee serving as "a resource for existing businesses to grow and remain in Holliston," connecting "the town to the business community while helping existing businesses to thrive and providing a welcoming platform for new businesses to come into town," and engaging in "more proactive outreach/initiatives to drive action within the business community or engagement between business and residents."⁴⁶

Industrial Park Tenant Attraction & Support

The economic role of Holliston's industrial parks emerged as a focal point for community conversations and was identified in EDC discussions as a pain point for local economic development activities.⁴⁷ Select community members emphasized a tension between potential industrial uses and residential uses, including in relationship to traffic impacts, and called for balanced growth that supports the community.⁴⁸ Other community members prioritized the potential economic benefits of commercial activities, calling for greater openness to both retail and industrial uses in light of their perceived potential to create jobs, attract families, and enhance the local tax base.⁴⁹ An EDC member similarly noted the potential to leverage resources generated by increased industrial park usage for economic development strategies, such as small business support.⁵⁰ Some community members suggested focusing on maximizing the capacity of existing commercial areas, where such uses may already exist, and select EDC members echoed a similar sentiment, noting, "we should aim to optimize the use of existing industrial parks."⁵¹ Other comments centered on the types of businesses to prioritize in Holliston's industrial parks, rather than their number or location; these included calls for businesses in growing industries like clean energy, as well as knowledge-based businesses and IT services, rather than manufacturing.⁵²

Tax Revenue

Community conversations emphasized an economic development aim of expanding the commercial tax base. Some comments framed increased commercial taxes as an opportunity to pursue large-scale public works projects or other desired amenities, with select community members noting the potential role of industrial uses, in particular, in generating increased tax revenue.⁵³ Other community members suggested reducing the residential tax rate, using increased commercial tax revenue as an offset, with some comments characterizing residential property taxes as too high and requesting their reduction be a top priority.⁵⁴

Essential Infrastructure, Amenities & Processes

Several community members emphasized the importance of establishing the foundations for increased economic development in Holliston, and the EDC, broadly, seized on the potential for the Committee to catalyze economic development by focusing on the provision of supportive infrastructure and processes. In terms of physical infrastructure and amenities, community members called for: bike and pedestrian infrastructure; well-maintained community and open spaces, such as a youth center, senior center, or parks/playgrounds; and expanded sewer infrastructure with the potential to support more businesses in the downtown area (see Small Business Attraction & Support section above).⁵⁵ In terms of the systems underpinning economic development in Holliston, the EDC raised questions about how, if at all, the EDC might initiate or plug into broader planning efforts with the potential to contribute to enhanced economic activity, such as large-scale community amenity projects or zoning processes. One member noted that Town boards or committees could improve their collaboration, and addressing zoning or related issues in a proactive way, they reasoned, might create opportunities for advancing a collective vision.⁵⁶ A second EDC member similarly proposed an approach that placed economic development in the context of related development strategies, including long-term plans for land use and housing. A third, echoing the importance of being proactive, envisioned the EDC “advocat[ing] to overcome perceived roadblocks and define the opportunity costs of inaction or ‘no.’”⁵⁷

Intergovernmental, Cross-departmental & Regional Collaboration

Comments from community and EDC members emphasized the potential for more strategic collaboration between Town staff, boards, and committees. Once commenter, for example, called for different groups to establish a holistic, shared vision for Holliston’s future and coordinate their efforts accordingly.⁵⁸ Regarding economic development, in particular, others suggested more active engagement with existing chambers of commerce or the creation of a local chamber of commerce or business association.⁵⁹ EDC members, for their part, acknowledged recent collaborations with other town boards or committees, including Envisioning Future Holliston and the Select Board, as well as the potential to build on these activities moving forward.⁶⁰ Specifically, members commented on how the EDC could situate itself within the broader Town governance ecosystem to advance economic development aims. One suggestion described the EDC serving as the fulcrum between community members, the Town, and regional organizations:

“The biggest value the EDC can provide is through increasing community engagement with econ dev in Holliston: being the community’s voice in actively working with Town administration and other stakeholders (e.g., regional organizations) to develop the best economic and business development policy for Holliston and create accountability for executing the policy/strategic plan.”⁶¹

A second suggestion proposed that the EDC support efforts toward identified aims, beginning with “understand[ing] master plan/vision by other committees and boards to grow and sustain Holliston” and then pivoting to “determine how we [the EDC] can best align development of responsible and properly planned commercial and industrial growth.”⁶² One member’s comments highlighted key questions raised by these suggestions: what are the responsibilities of each Town board or committee, for example, and how do the various entities fit together? A community member, similarly considering the mechanics of intergovernmental collaboration, underscored the potential value of well-defined purviews for different Town entities, including in Town bylaws.⁶³

Transparency, Accessibility & Inclusion

Community members encouraged the Town to increase the transparency, accessibility, and inclusion of its services, with suggestions applicable to local economic development services. This cross-cutting lens focused, in part, on enhancing the Town’s methods for communicating and engaging with residents. Suggestions included: revamping the Town’s website to serve as a consolidated communications channel; scheduling Town meeting strategically to accommodate a wide swath of community members, including parents of young kids; increasing communications around vacant board seats, elections, and other opportunities for civic engagement; offering polls, short videos, and other bite-sized engagement materials; increasing proactive communications related to large projects to foster transparency; and seeking out a range of fresh perspectives to bring into community conversations.⁶⁴ One EDC member noted the value of Town entities engaging in two-way conversations with community members and adopting a collaborative posture, rather than dictating economic development strategy.⁶⁵ This broader lens also included related suggestions for equipping community members to participate in local government and initiatives, with an associated aim of increasing the diversity of Town leadership. Community members suggested creating civic engagement training programs for community members: one pointed to the Town of Natick’s Citizens Leadership Academy as an example of this type of program, and another suggested an inter-generational program reaching high school students, older adults, and other community members.⁶⁶ Speaking to the need and demand for these activities, one community member indicated that, even for community members interested in getting involved, it is difficult to know where to start, and another highlighted the importance of fostering trust, respect, and empowerment among residents to engage in local governance.⁶⁷ Comments also tied the lens of transparency, accessibility, and inclusion to the kinds of projects the Town selects and advances. For example, community members called for amenities for a range of ages, including: bike and pedestrian infrastructure; parks, playgrounds, and open space; and youth, senior, or community centers.⁶⁸ Lastly, in relation to economic development, in particular, community members requested business support and attraction activities to prioritize diversity and innovation, including efforts to attract Minority Business Enterprises (MBEs), Women Business Enterprises (WBEs), and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Business Enterprises (LGBTBEs).⁶⁹

3. Existing Economic Development Service Model

The stakeholders currently engaged in economic development and related activities in Holliston and its MetroWest context include the Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC), Town of Holliston, and several regional partners or organizations. Each of these entities is described below, providing a foundation for a review of the existing service model's strengths and opportunities, and calling attention to opportunities for collaboration.

Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC)

Mission

The Holliston EDC is a volunteer committee guided by the following, overarching mission statement:

"The Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC) works proactively to promote, encourage, and facilitate the development of responsible and properly planned commercial and industrial growth within the community in order to expand and strengthen the local economy and diversify the community's tax base and to give the Town's residents more opportunities to live, work and thrive in an economically forward-looking and financially strong community."⁷⁰

Specific community charges include: "proactively promote and encourage the development, redevelopment, expansion and retention of Holliston's commercial, village commercial and industrial tax base," "support existing businesses and encourage businesses to remain in Holliston, and if feasible, to expand operations," "pursue grants with other departments as appropriate," "market Holliston as a business friendly community," "streamline permitting," and "develop centralized informational sources regarding business opportunities for commercial/industrial real estate options including tax incentives that are revenue positive."⁷¹

Structure

The EDC is composed of seven volunteer members, including a committee chair and vice-chair. Members are charged with a broad range of responsibilities, including outreach to businesses and residents, identifying business support opportunities, and strategic planning and advocacy to advance economic development priorities. They are also

assigned to more specific focus areas, including, as of fall 2022, long range planning, MAPC engagement, downtown development/upgrade, website/business directory, small business liaison, large business/industrial liaison, strategic planning, grant program, and zoning/planning applications.⁷² Members report spending an average of one to 10 hours per week on EDC activities, with their responsibilities tapping knowledge and/or skills across the categories of communications and public outreach, project management, data collection and analysis, funding opportunities, event planning, small business communications and guidance, business technical assistance resources, grant application development, and commercial and industrial real estate.⁷³

Accomplishments & Opportunities

According to its members, in recent years, the EDC's achievements or milestones include building a business directory, removing obstacles facing the local farmers market, and laying groundwork for an actionable downtown revitalization strategy.⁷⁴ In terms of opportunities facing the EDC, members referenced the potential to augment local economic development capacity, institutional knowledge/continuity, and expertise, as well as to define the Committee's role more clearly.

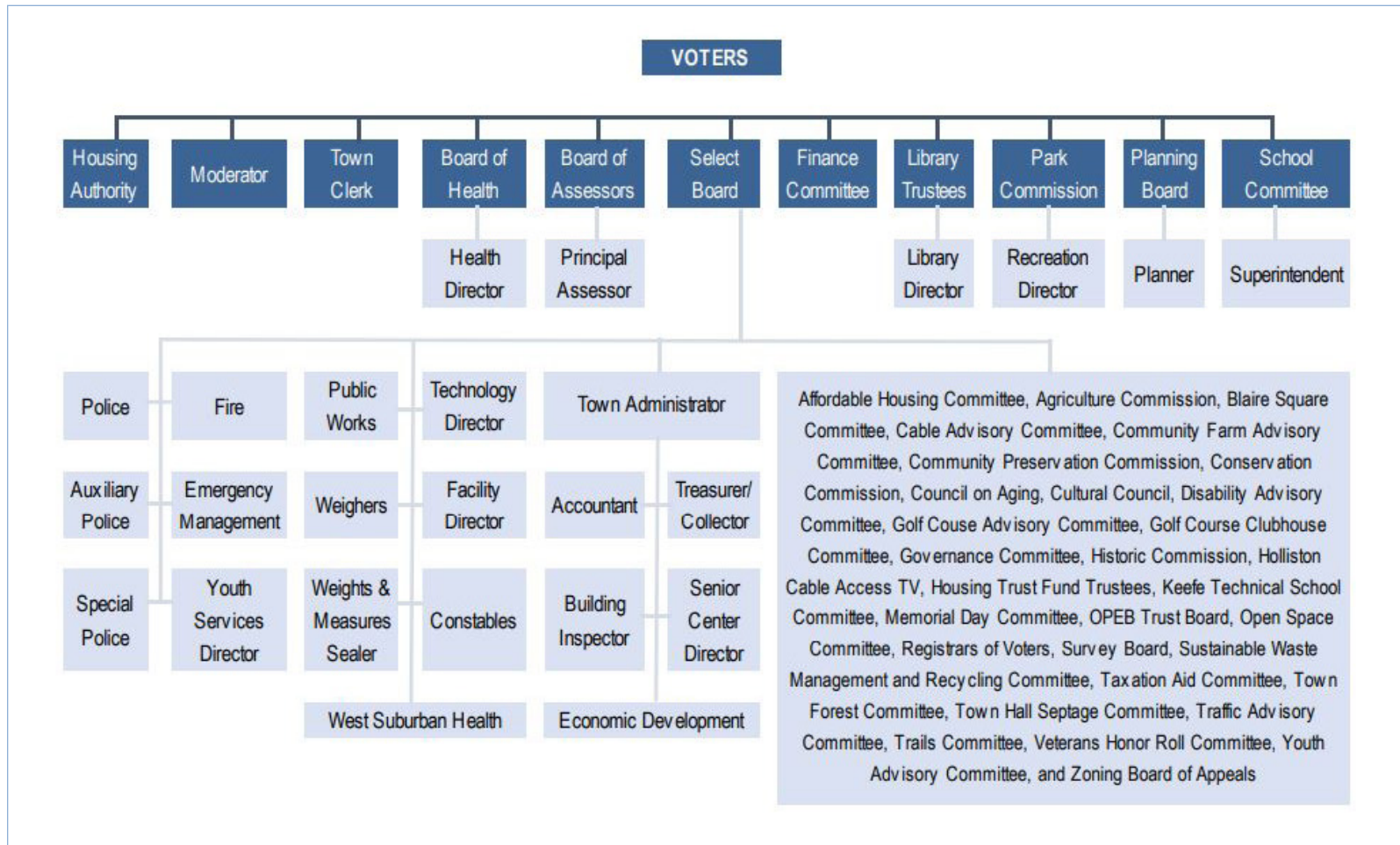
More information about the Holliston EDC can be accessed here: www.townofholliston.us/economic-development-committee and hollistonedc.com.

Town of Holliston

Structure

The Town of Holliston operates under a “select board-town administrator-open town meeting form of government.”⁷⁵ Its three-member Select Board drives policymaking, the town administrator focuses on day-to-day government functions, and town meeting provides a venue for enacting bylaws, approving budgets, and authorizing debt.⁷⁶ The Town's broader governance model includes voters, Town staff, elected officials, appointed officials, and appointed committees, commissions, councils, and boards (Figure 3.1). Together, these comprise a multi-faceted operation with an FY21 operating budget of \$64.3 million and a workforce of approximately 795 employees.⁷⁷

Figure 3.1 Town of Holliston Structure.



Town of Holliston organizational chart. Source: MA Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services (DLS), "Town of Holliston: Financial Management Review," November 2021.

Governance Factors

In March 2020, the Select Board established a Governance Committee to contribute to town-wide governance policies and, as needed, recommend changes to the Town's governance practices; the Governance Committee is charged with defining roles, recommending structural changes as appropriate, and developing an organizational chart and strategic

plan.⁷⁸ This effort builds on past incremental changes to the Town's structure to increase accountability and coordination and, to date, has focused in large part on the potential for the Town's full-time town administrator and financial team to be responsible for the Town's budget planning and development.⁷⁹

More information about the organization of Town of Holliston services can be accessed here: www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhli706/f/uploads/organizational_chart_holliston_final_8-19-20.pdf and <https://www.mass.gov/doc/holliston-financial-management-review-november-2021/download>.

Existing Resources: Recent Town of Holliston & Economic Development Committee (EDC) Materials

In recent years, the Town of Holliston, the EDC, and their partners have compiled several resources that can serve as a foundation for future EDC work. These materials include:

Business Directory: The Town of Holliston provides an online business directory as a resource to community members. Listings are arranged alphabetically and can also be sorted by business category, such as advertising and media, arts and entertainment, and automotive. *More information about the Business Directory can be accessed here: <https://www.townofholliston.us/business-directory/by-alpha/>.*

Bringing Businesses to Holliston: Holliston Cable Access Inc. (HCAT) produced a short video showcasing Holliston's assets to prospective members of the local business community, including those considering starting or relocating a business in Holliston. *More information about the Bringing Businesses to Holliston video can be accessed here: <https://www.townofholliston.us/community-profile>.*

Holliston, Massachusetts: A Business & Community Guide (2018): This guide compiles key information for potential businesses, residents, and visitors interested in Holliston, including details related to business resources, neighborhood characteristics, recreational amenities, education, and healthcare. *More information about A Business & Community Guide can be accessed here: https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhli706/f/file/file/holliston_guide_2018_web.pdf.*

Rapid Recovery Plan: Holliston (2021): Compiled as part of the Commonwealth's Local Rapid Recovery Planning (RRP) program, this plan provides actionable recommendations responsive to economic and COVID-19-related impacts in Holliston. It includes analysis of the local physical environment, business environment, market, and administrative capacity, as well as recommendations related to local administrative capacity, Central Street, sewer capacity, wayfinding, Blair Square, and 9 Green Street. *More information about the Rapid Recovery Plan can be accessed here: https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf706/f/uploads/holliston_-_final_lrrp_report_-_2021.pdf.*

Town of Holliston Permitting Guide (2022): The EDC's permitting guide provides potential new, expanding, or relocating businesses with information about the processes of local boards, commissions, and departments. It walks its readers through the steps of a typical permitting process and compiles the contact information for relevant Town staff. *More information about the Town of Holliston Permitting Guide can be accessed here: https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf706/f/uploads/permitting_guide_2022_0.pdf.*

Viewpoint Community Profile Video (2022): Supported by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, this short-form, documentary-style video highlights key features of the Holliston community. It offers potential residents and businesses a dynamic introduction to the town's key assets, including recreational and open space amenities, key industries, and community strength, events, and volunteerism. *More information about the community profile video can be accessed here: <https://www.townofholliston.us/town-administrator/pages/holliston-community-profile-video>.*

Regional Partners

There are several organizations providing economic development resources and opportunities for collaboration in the MetroWest region. They include:

495/MetroWest Partnership

The 495/MetroWest Partnership joins regional public- and private-sector stakeholders in catalyzing sustainable growth. Its activities include traditional economic development services, such as: maintaining a database of priority development sites; providing point-of-entry services to potential employers, including discussion of tax incentive eligibility; and compiling and distributing small business resource information, including public health, loans and financing, and grant

opportunity resources. The Partnership's efforts also include policy-focused economic development activities, such as coordination, education, and advocacy related to economic development, transportation, housing, and water supply throughout the 36 municipalities in its service area, which includes Holliston. The Partnership's information resources include reports and data based on employer surveys conducted in collaboration with Framingham State University's MetroWest Economic Research Center, an annual Strength in Numbers report compiling key demographic and economic indicators for the MetroWest region, and community profiles of each municipality, including data related to population, housing, occupations, and more. Additionally, Partnership committees provide speakers, events, and opportunities for coordination across the topics of energy and sustainable development, housing, transportation, and water resources. *More information about the 495/MetroWest Partnership can be accessed here: www.495partnership.org/.*

MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC)

The MetroWest Economic Research Center (MERC) at Framingham State University collects, analyzes, and shares economic data on more than 50 Massachusetts municipalities, including those in the MetroWest region. MERC maintains databases on topics relevant to planning and economic development including cost of living, employment, housing, school enrollment, municipal revenue and expenditure, and unemployment and labor force, and it provides annual profiles of the MetroWest region and towns, as well as special reports on more specific demographic or economic trends. *More information about the MERC can be accessed here: merc-fsu.org/.*

MetroWest Visitors Bureau

The MetroWest Visitors Bureau is a non-profit organization focused on marketing the region's cultural, recreational, restaurant, accommodations, educational, and other amenities to MetroWest visitors and residents. These activities support the organization's aims to enhance regional economic activity, foster collaboration, support businesses and employment, and spotlight the region's diverse offerings. *More information about the MetroWest Visitors Bureau can be accessed here: www.metrowestvisitors.org.*

Tri-County Regional Chamber

The Tri-County Regional Chamber is a not-for-profit business advocacy organization representing businesses from Bellingham, Franklin, Holliston, Hopedale, Hopkinton, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millis, and Upton. Governed by a volunteer board of directors, the organization's member benefits include free business consulting, networking groups and events, business sponsorship opportunities, leadership opportunities, business directory listing, educational seminars and workshops, and additional member discounts and resources. Additionally, it facilitates connections to other resources in the region, such as Service Corps of Retired Executives mentoring and counseling services and the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network Central Regional Office at Clark University. *More information about the Tri-County Regional Chamber can be accessed here: www.tricountychamberma.org/.*

MetroWest Chamber of Commerce

Based in Framingham, the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce serves organizations in the Greater MetroWest region, with members including businesses, municipalities, and non-profits. It provides a voice for businesses in the region, networking and outreach resources, and business development assistance and opportunities. The Chamber supports committees spanning the subject areas of: education; diversity, equity, and inclusion; events; large business; non-profits; and public policy and economic development. This last committee engages in activities to attract and retain businesses in the MetroWest region, provide multi-tiered advocacy for business needs, and advance regulatory and legislative action that supports business development. *More information about the MetroWest Chamber of Commerce can be accessed here: www.metrowest.org/.*

MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC)

One of MAPC's eight subregions, the MetroWest Regional Collaborative (MWRC) joins MetroWest stakeholders in the collaborative development of regional solutions to shared policy and planning challenges. It provides a forum for communication and knowledge exchange to municipal officials and community partners from Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Marlborough, Natick, Southborough, Wayland, Wellesley, and Weston, creating a foundation for advocacy for regional priorities and pursuit of projects with regional significance. *More information about the MWRC can be accessed here: www.mapc.org/get-involved/subregions/mwrc/.*

Opportunity for Collaboration: 495/MetroWest Planning & Economic Development Working Group

In December 2022, the 495/MetroWest Partnership launched the 495/MetroWest Planning & Economic Development Working Group to convene the region's planning and economic development municipal staff in addressing shared issues. Each partner municipality may send two participants to working group sessions, which will include a standing agenda item for open discussion. 495/MetroWest economic development partners may use this working group as a springboard for further collaboration, including through comparing economic development priorities and strategies with peer communities.

More information about the 495/MetroWest Partnership can be accessed here: <https://www.495partnership.org>.

4. Organizational Framework Resources

Resources relevant to the development of an economic development service framework include examples of approaches from other MetroWest communities, which relate best practices and models in comparable contexts, and literature on non-profit organizations, including self-assessment materials suitable for small, volunteer-based and -led organizations like the EDC.

Peer Municipal Service Models

Municipal Service Model Comparison

There are a range of economic development service models represented in the MetroWest region. A subset of peer communities was curated, in part, based on their size, proximity, and economic development dynamics, with the aim of including communities comparable to Holliston's.⁸⁰ Select variables still differ across communities, including the immediacy of highway access, sewer infrastructure capacity, and volume of vacant industrial and/or commercial land.⁸¹ These comparisons of select municipal financial indicators and corresponding economic development models suggest potential considerations in determining the scale and elements of an economic development framework in Holliston (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

Figure 4.1 Municipal Indicators.

| | Ashland | Foxborough | Holliston | Hudson | Medway | Southborough |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| General ⁸² | | | | | | |
| County | Middlesex | Norfolk | Middlesex | Middlesex | Norfolk | Worcester |
| Population | 18,646 | 18,431 | 14,891 | 20,032 | 13,105 | 10,380 |
| Form of Government | Open Town Meeting | Open Town Meeting | Open Town Meeting | Open Town Meeting | Open Town Meeting | Open Town Meeting |
| FY22 Single Family Tax Bill | \$8,277 | \$7,458 | \$9,089 | \$6,968 | \$8,078 | \$11,234 |

| | Ashland | Foxborough | Holliston | Hudson | Medway | Southborough |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| FY22 Assessed Values by Class⁸³ | | | | | | |
| Assessed Value Residential | \$3.02 Billion | \$2.85 Billion | \$2.62 Billion | \$2.83 Billion | \$2.04 Billion | \$2.32 Billion |
| Assessed Value Open Space | \$171,200 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 | \$0 |
| Assessed Value Commercial | \$175,564,446 | \$566,535,392 | \$90,820,835 | \$199,324,271 | \$89,248,829 | \$253,170,312 |
| Assessed Value Industrial | \$49,839,780 | \$73,277,800 | \$243,287,130 | \$181,204,200 | \$303,749,096 | \$187,183,900 |
| Assessed Value Pers Prop | \$92,805,280 | \$135,774,130 | \$84,847,890 | \$79,526,670 | \$224,761,720 | \$98,622,200 |
| Total Assessed Value | \$3.34 Billion | \$3.62 Billion | \$3.04 Billion | \$3.29 Billion | \$2.66 Billion | \$2.86 Billion |
| FY22 Revenues by Source⁸⁴ | | | | | | |
| Tax Levy | \$53,019,660 | \$55,962,449 | \$52,827,444 | \$59,464,138 | \$45,032,488 | \$46,487,997 |
| State Aid | \$10,270,359 | \$11,345,873 | \$11,476,771 | \$16,133,593 | \$12,440,208 | \$4,496,864 |
| Local Receipts | \$4,389,000 | \$9,782,000 | \$3,501,332 | \$14,203,863 ⁸⁵ | \$3,244,100 | \$3,732,525 |
| Enterprise & CPA Funds | \$13,902,617 | \$10,398,407 | \$6,585,554 | \$1,621,456 | \$9,628,808 | \$4,238,173 |
| Other Revenue | \$3,440,777 | \$5,408,320 | \$5,980,838 | \$5,239,467 | \$8,972,277 | \$2,349,444 |
| Total Budget | \$71,119,796 | \$82,498,642 | \$73,786,385 | \$95,041,061 | \$69,689,073 | \$57,066,830 |
| Tax Levy as Percent of Budget | 74.55% | 67.83% | 71.60% | 62.57% | 64.62% | 81.46% |

| | Ashland | Foxborough | Holliston | Hudson | Medway | Southborough |
|---|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| FY21 Spending by Function⁸⁶ | | | | | | |
| General Government | \$3,285,638 | \$3,285,928 | \$2,260,844 | \$2,331,796 | \$3,052,791 | \$3,344,777 |
| Police | \$3,340,402 | \$4,878,346 | \$3,041,665 | \$3,596,627 | \$3,259,362 | \$2,398,507 |
| Fire | \$2,303,665 | \$4,324,605 | \$821,542 | \$3,688,770 | \$2,002,808 | \$2,286,920 |
| Other Public Safety | \$199,680 | \$774,278 | \$587,971 | \$184,321 | \$371,706 | \$190,768 |
| Education | \$35,984,210 | \$37,891,525 | \$35,247,357 | \$42,399,219 | \$29,098,234 | \$29,478,030 |
| Public Works | \$2,103,815 | \$2,631,660 | \$3,506,393 | \$7,568,181 | \$2,298,100 | \$2,582,920 |
| Human Services | \$659,666 | \$1,121,735 | \$683,802 | \$662,647 | \$428,521 | \$740,309 |
| Culture and Recreation | \$457,662 | \$1,189,802 | \$725,490 | \$1,004,511 | \$983,092 | \$675,552 |
| Fixed Costs | \$10,243,343 | \$12,941,372 | \$8,496,725 | \$7,307,581 | \$9,589,229 | \$8,471,297 |
| Inter-government | \$420,793 | \$2,587,084 | \$713,480 | \$4,520,290 | \$897,284 | \$176,334 |
| Other Expenses | \$0 | \$725,632 | \$3,249 | \$0 | \$3,072,393 | \$279,973 |
| Debt Service | \$3,811,296 | \$3,688,743 | \$3,010,553 | \$6,699,176 | \$3,884,864 | \$3,384,553 |

Holliston and peer community municipal indicators. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2021 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05. MA Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services, Community Comparison Report.

Figure 4.2 Municipal Economic Development Service Models.

| | Ashland ⁸⁷ | Foxborough ⁸⁸ | Holliston ⁸⁹ | Hudson ⁹⁰ | Medway ⁹¹ | Southborough ⁹² |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| FY23 Budget Indicators | | | | | | |
| Total Revenue | \$72,581,587 | \$84,984,525 | \$71,920,031 | \$97,129,422 | \$63,976,591 | \$63,619,223 |
| Total Expenses | \$72,581,587 | \$79,835,712 | \$72,574,859 | \$97,129,422 | \$63,976,591 | \$59,362,566 |
| FY23 Economic Development or Related Department & Committee Indicators | | | | | | |
| Department Title | Economic Development Department | Land Use & Economic Development | - | Planning & Community Development | Community & Economic Development | Economic Development |
| Department Staff - FTE | 2 | 8.2643 | - | 3 | ~4.5 ⁹³ | ~.5 ⁹⁴ |
| Department Budget - Personnel | \$161,523.48 | \$719,802 | \$0.00 | \$264,085.00 | \$352,361 | \$28,238 |
| Department Budget - Operations ⁹⁵ | \$112,500.00 ⁹⁶ | \$75,104 | \$14,000 | \$19,700.00 | \$19,266 | \$14,700 |
| Department Budget - Total | \$274,023.48 | \$794,906 | \$14,000 | \$283,785.00 | \$371,627 | \$42,938 |
| Committee Title | Economic Development Advisory Group | Economic Development Committee | Economic Development Committee | Economic Development Commission | Economic Development Committee | Economic Development Committee |
| Committee Size - Members | 5 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 7 |

Holliston and peer community municipal economic development service models. Sources: municipal budget documents, department websites, and committee websites (see footnotes).

Municipal Service Model Snapshots

Ashland

Town Staff

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Department Name | Economic Development |
| Department Budget | \$274,023.48 ⁹⁷ |
| Personnel | \$161,523.48 – Economic Development Director; Communications Coordinator; Longevity and Fringe (2 FTE) ⁹⁸ |
| Operations | \$112,500.00 – Business grant program, advertising, office supplies, etc. ⁹⁹ |
| Mission | “The mission of the Economic Development department is to encourage, promote, and support growth and development within the town. For Ashland, this means a focus on retaining and attracting businesses that will expand and strengthen the business community while preserving the character and charm of Ashland.” ¹⁰⁰ |
| Recent Accomplishments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Served as lead for Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development/U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Microenterprise grant (\$4.95 million for 23 communities) Supports Business Incentive Grant Program (\$230,808.18 distributed to date) Welcomed 5 new business to town during the pandemic Served as lead for Massachusetts Office of Business Development Pilot Program Grant (\$250,000, with Natick and Framingham) Created communications protocol and guidelines during the pandemic Supported annual events, including pivoting to virtual and adding a new event to encourage community engagement Collaborated with Ashland Social Services and Town Manager to create 3R Program, Resident, Restaurant Relief Program¹⁰¹ |

Volunteer Group

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Group Name | Economic Development Advisory Group |
| Mission/Focus | “The Economic Development Advisory Group serves in an advisory capacity to provide recommendations that adhere to the town’s overall strategic plan. The group will help be the voice to educate residents on the importance of economic development. It will work proactively to encourage existing businesses to continue doing business in Ashland as well as work to attract new businesses via marketing strategies and outreach. The group will look for ways to stimulate overall economic activity within town.” ¹⁰² In practice, this group focuses on reviewing applications for the Town’s Business Incentive Grant Program. |
| Size (Members) | 5 ¹⁰³ |

Foxborough

Town Staff

| | |
|--|--|
| Department Name | Land Use & Economic Development (Planning) |
| Department Budget | \$794,906 ¹⁰⁴ |
| Personnel | \$719,802 – Land Use Director (\$118,119), Land Use Administrator (\$38,494), Staff Planner (\$48,866, 25 hours per week), Conservation Agent (\$74,850), Secretary (\$20,079), Building Commissioner (\$115,817), Local Inspectors (\$107,191), Electrical Inspector (\$63,542), Plumbing Inspector (\$63,542), Gas Inspectors (\$1,500), Sealer of Weights/Measures (\$4,000), Department Administrator (\$58,572), Overtime, Longevity, Stipends (8.2643 FTE) ¹⁰⁵ |
| Operations | \$75,104 – Office equipment maintenance, municipal committee expenses, training and development, architects and engineers, postage, advertising, printing, office supplies, dues and memberships, etc. ¹⁰⁶ |
| Mission | “To ensure an orderly and sustainable future for the Town, the Planning Board and its staff: Regulate the subdivision of land within Foxborough; Create and update the Town's Master Plan; Review amendments to the Zoning Bylaws and make recommendations to Town Meeting; Review applications for Site Plan Review and certain Special Permits, and Review applications for work on designated Scenic Roads...Serve as first stop for future businesses and economic development inquiries” ¹⁰⁷ |
| Recent Accomplishments (Planning) ¹⁰⁸ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awarded grants including from Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Local Rapid Recovery Planning program (\$60,000), MassDevelopment Real Estate Services Technical Assistance (\$55,000, two phases), Mass Gaming Commission – Regional Destination Marketing Plan (\$27,200 and \$33,820), Shared Streets (\$22,000) Supported Foxborough Housing Authority's Walnut St. senior affordable housing project Supported a “Conversation on Housing” to engage residents Collaborated with procurement department on RFP/RFQ for Walnut St. project and engineering review services Advanced creation of a “thriving Uptown” through pedestrian and traffic improvements and supporting the Foxborough Common Business Collaborative and businesses¹⁰⁹ |

Volunteer Group

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Group Name | Economic Development Committee |
| Mission/Focus | “Foxborough's Economic Development Committee's mission is to develop and implement a strategic business attraction, retention and marketing program for the Town, implement the Master Plan's economic development strategy and enhance the business climate in town. In partnership with the local Chamber of Commerce, and state and regional agencies, the Committee will promote the town as a prime location for new and expanding businesses.” ¹¹⁰ |
| Size (Members) | 9 ¹¹¹ |

Hudson

Town Staff

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Department Name | Planning & Community Development |
| Department Budget | \$283,785 ¹¹² |
| Personnel | \$264,085 - Community Development Director (\$112,476), Community Development Assistant Direct/Cons Agent (\$85,943), Assistant Planner (\$64,116), Longevity (\$1,550) (3 FTE) ¹¹³ |
| Operations | \$19,700 - Technical assistance (\$500), advertising (\$1,500), office supplies (\$2,000), dues and subscriptions (\$4,200), conference/travel/training (\$4,000), telephone/communications (\$7,500) ¹¹⁴ |
| Overview | “The Planning and Community Development Department provides a full suite of professional and administrative services related to land-use planning and development permitting, wetlands permitting, economic development, transportation, affordable housing, open space and environmental planning, natural resource protection, and grant writing and administration. The Boards staffed directly by this Department include: Planning Board; Zoning Board of Appeals; Conservation Commission; Internal Traffic Committee; Affordable Housing Trust; Economic Development Commission; Disabilities Commission; and Historical Commission. Furthermore, this Department serves on the Board of Directors of the MetroWest Transit Authority and the 495 Partnership.” ¹¹⁵ |
| Key Responsibilities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Provide professional oversight and management of the development review (site plan review and special permits) and wetland permitting processes: • “Manage the analysis of zoning and land-use plans as well as the development and implementation of Capital projects sponsored by the Department” • “Prepare and administer grant program funding applications for a wide-range of planning, economic development, and infrastructure initiatives”¹¹⁶ |

Volunteer Group

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Group Name | Economic Development Commission |
| Mission/Focus | “The Economic Development Commission (EDC) strives to foster a strong economic environment that supports businesses while nurturing commercial growth and new investment in the Town of Hudson. By working closely with businesses, developers and town government, the EDC works to retain, grow and attract new businesses and promote job creation in the community.” ¹¹⁷ |
| Size (Members) | 9 ¹¹⁸ |

Medway

Town Staff

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Department Name | Community & Economic Development |
| Department Budget | \$371,627 ¹¹⁹ |
| Personnel | \$352,361 - Director, Community and Economic Development; Planning & Economic Development Coordinator; Administrative Assistant, Community and Economic Development; Conservation Agent; Community Housing Coordinator ¹²⁰ |
| Operations | \$19,266 ¹²¹ |
| Mission | "The Community & Economic Development Department works to promote economic growth; preserve and enhance neighborhoods and the environment; and improve the quality of life for all residents of Medway." ¹²² |
| Key Responsibilities | "The Department oversees the implementation and coordination of community and economic development plans, programs and services. The Department will help to coordinate efforts with other Town Departments, local and regional organizations, and state and federal agencies in focusing attention on these goals. Provides administrative and technical support to the Medway Redevelopment Authority, the Planning and Economic Development Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission, the Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust, the Economic Development Committee, the Open Space Committee and others. The Department also works with businesses to locate, expand and strengthen the community through investment and by creating and retaining jobs." ¹²³ |

Volunteer Group

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Group Name | Economic Development Committee (also has Planning & Economic Development Board) ¹²⁴ |
| Mission/Focus | "The Medway Economic Development Committee (EDC) works proactively to promote, encourage, and facilitate the development of responsible and properly planned business and industrial growth within the community in order to expand and strengthen the local economy and diversify the community's tax base." The Committee's long-term goals include: "Grow Medway's Commercial tax base from the current 24% in 2019 to 35% in 2029; Work to eliminate bottlenecks in the permitting process and become known as a business friendly community; Engage the community in the discussion by enhancing the EDC website and communicating directly with other town committees; [and] Identify funding sources that can be applied to the community's economic development." ¹²⁶ |
| Size (Members) | 6 ¹²⁷ |

Southborough

Town Staff

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Department Name | - |
| Department Budget | \$42,938 ¹²⁸ |
| Personnel | \$28,238 – Economic Development Coordinator (19.5 hours per week) ¹²⁹ |
| Operations | \$14,700 – Printing services, other contracted services, other office supplies, in-state travel, and dues and memberships (MetroWest Tourism, 495/MetroWest Partnership, Corridor 4/495 Regional Chamber of Commerce, Heritage Day, WBJ) ¹³⁰ |
| Overview | “This position supports and coordinates the efforts of the Economic Development Committee (EDC) to ensure effective communication and collaboration between Town officials and businesses located in Southborough,” with related focus areas including EDC meetings, grants administration, marketing and website development, and knowledge of state and local government. ¹³¹ |
| Major Responsibilities | - |

Volunteer Group

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Group Name | Economic Development Committee |
| Mission/Focus | “The mission of the Southborough Economic Development Committee (EDC) is to assist in stabilizing residential taxes through the growth of the Town’s commercial and industrial tax base while preserving the character and charm of Southborough. The EDC was established to expand and strengthen the local economy, promote job creation, and enhance the Town’s quality of life through prosperous, balanced and sustainable economic development. The role of the EDC is to investigate current economic conditions, assist the Town with the creation and execution of appropriate economic development initiatives and marketing opportunities, coordinate activities to enhance or expand economic development, and engage in related activities as necessary to further EDC’s mission and purpose.” ¹³² |
| Size (Members) | 7 ¹³³ |

Municipal Service Model Comparison: Takeaways

Economic Development Personnel

All five peer communities have economic development personnel, while Holliston has none. Staffing levels for the relevant departments range from a part-time economic development position in Southborough to 8.2643 full-time equivalent (FTE) in Foxborough's Land Use & Economic Development Department.¹³⁴ Personnel budget funding levels for the relevant departments range from \$28,238 in Southborough to \$719,802 in Foxborough.

Economic Development or Relevant Department Structure

Across peer communities, relevant departments vary in the specifics of their structure and functions. Ashland's Economic Development Department, for example, is distinct from the Town's planning, inspections, and conservation services. Hudson, on the other hand, reflects a more centralized structure: municipal economic development staff are part of a Planning & Community Development Department whose comprehensive planning services include "land-use planning and development permitting, wetlands permitting, economic development, transportation, affordable housing, open space and environmental planning, natural resource protection, and grant writing and administration."¹³⁵

Economic Development Volunteer Committee Mission

All five peer communities and Holliston have a volunteer committee focused on economic development. Common committee focus areas include: small business support, development, and/or attraction; promotion and outreach efforts; commercial and industrial tax base development; and engaging with community members, business owners, developers, related agencies or organizations, and/or Town staff.

Economic Development Volunteer Committee Support

Across peer communities, volunteer economic development committees are supported by municipal economic development staff. In Hudson, Medway, and Southborough this committee support is cited as an element of staff's mission or core functions.¹³⁶

Peer Community Focus Group: Takeaways

In the peer community focus group, economic development practitioners highlighted key strengths of their local service model. These include:

Focused Aims

Economic development staff and volunteers from peer communities emphasized the importance of a clear, concise mandate to staff and volunteer success. In the Town of Ashland, for example, a five-member volunteer Economic Development Advisory Group focuses primarily on the Town's Business Incentive Grant Program, which provides financial assistance to new or expanding businesses.¹³⁷ The volunteer group is supported by Town staff, who provide group members with each month's batch of applications to the Business Incentive Grant Program. After review, members meet to vote on whether to approve or deny each application. In reflecting on this clear, defined mandate, one Economic Development Advisory Group member noted that the group's focus allows members to work toward their identified aim and maintain a tenable time commitment, which, in turn, may assist in member recruitment and retention.¹³⁸

Community Engagement & Relationship Building

Peer community economic development practitioners highlighted volunteers' efficacy in communications, engagement, and relationship-building efforts with community members. In Natick, for example, the volunteer Economic Development Committeesupports community development-related events, for example, by drawing in community members, including business owners.¹³⁹ Members of this or other volunteer groups use their embeddedness to provide a two-way conduit between the Town and community members. In one direction, the members have their finger on the pulse of multiple community perspectives and serve as a way for staff to hear where economic development stressors or needs exist, and, in the other direction, members can help Town staff conduct outreach to community members about economic development initiatives or programs.¹⁴⁰

Volunteer/Staff Partnership

Economic development practitioners framed the presence of dedicated economic development staff as essential to achieving both volunteer group-specific aims and broader community economic objectives. They signaled that the presence of municipal economic development staff allows for greater time and professional expertise to be dedicated to economic development activities. One volunteer from Ashland reflected that, without the support of Town staff, volunteers would likely burn out and the committee would lose valuable members.¹⁴¹ Town staff from Natick, for their part, noted the importance of, first, volunteers feeling that their time is being used effectively; second, volunteers being

supported by strong staff guidance providing direction to their work; and, third, volunteers feeling a sense of accomplishment, including for retention purposes.¹⁴² Additionally, practitioners emphasized the benefits of having concentrated economic development, planning, and related services – namely, the coordination of necessary resources and expertise to advance complex or interdisciplinary initiatives. In Natick, for example, the Town’s comparatively centralized departmental structure allows practitioners to coordinate resources in support of economic development initiatives.¹⁴³

Self-Assessment Models

As an all-volunteer working committee, the EDC’s concerns and experiences have much in common with those experienced by volunteer-based nonprofit groups. The literature, blogs, and thought pieces that researchers and nonprofit leaders have produced on the best practices for small, volunteer-based and -led organizations, where volunteers play both governance or decision-making roles and hands-on and communications roles, shed light on potential approaches to volunteer-centric economic development in Holliston. In a piece titled Volunteer management | The complete guide for nonprofits, the Mobilize team describes the key elements for effectively working with volunteers, stating that best practices include placing volunteers in the right roles.¹⁴⁴ Additionally, in a blog article titled Smart Growth: How to Expand Your Nonprofit’s Program While Resisting Temptations, Catherine Aselford cautions leaders to guard against the temptations of taking on new partnerships, expanding services, and acting on opportunities outside of the nonprofit’s current activities. She describes how adding new programs can come with hidden and visible costs, as well as the pitfalls that occur with failure to address opportunity costs.¹⁴⁵

Self-Assessment: Resources for Small and/or Volunteer Organizations

Moving forward, the Town and EDC can draw on self-assessment literature and related resources, particularly at key inflection points or major decision-making opportunities. Resources include:

- Team Mobilize, “Volunteer management | The complete guide for nonprofits,” January 26, 2022. Link: <https://join.mobilize.us/blog/volunteer-management>.
- Jan Masaoka, “Boards of All Volunteer Organizations,” Blue Avocado, July 15, 2008. Link: <https://blueavocado.org/board-of-directors/boards-of-all-volunteer-organizations/>.
- Catherine Aselford, “Smart Growth: How to Expand Your Nonprofit’s Programs While Resisting Temptations,” Blue Avocado, August 8, 2022. Link: <https://blueavocado.org/leadership-and-management/smart-growth-how-to-expand-your-nonprofits-programs-while-resisting-temptations/>.

5. Existing Conditions Takeaways

Key Takeaways

Core themes of this existing conditions review relate both to a potential economic development vision for the Town of Holliston (what economic development aims should be pursued), as well as to a potential service model (how those aims should be pursued and by whom).

Economic Development Vision Themes

Economic Development Priorities

Holliston community and EDC members voiced a range of economic development priorities, including: calls for the physical enhancement of Holliston's downtown; positioning of downtown as a destination through strategic placemaking and related activities; small business attraction and support; industrial park tenant attraction and support; commercial tax base expansion; improvements to the foundational infrastructure, amenities, and processes that set the conditions for economic development; increased collaboration among Town staff, boards, and committees, as well as regional partners; and heightened transparency, accessibility, and inclusion in economic and community development processes. Community comments emphasized, in particular, support for small businesses in Holliston, with particular attention to the cultivation of a vibrant mix of businesses downtown. EDC members, for their part, raised the possibility of focusing their efforts on the foundational conditions of economic development, including attending to physical infrastructure and amenities, collaborating with other Town entities on planning processes, and, overall, engaging in proactive, strategic economic development. This range of opportunity and appetite for economic development in Holliston stands to both buoy economic development efforts moving forward and demand strategic prioritization of activities in accordance with local capacity.

Economic Development Service Model Themes

Volunteer-Driven Economic Development Foundation

The existing economic development service model in Holliston reflects the community's vibrant culture of volunteerism, with the volunteer EDC standing to play a key role in the provision of economic development locally, including in collaboration with Town staff and other boards or committees. Holliston's service model also falls within the broader MetroWest

economic development ecosystem, home to a range of organizations and stakeholders specializing in economic development sub-topics or comprehensive practice. This pool of economic development resources and partners may offer opportunities to supplement or support economic development services in Holliston, as well as present avenues for collaborative economic development efforts among regional entities.

Opportunities for Collaboration & Engagement

Comments from the community workshop, interviews, and focus groups highlighted opportunities for greater collaboration and engagement. This includes outward-facing collaboration, with regional economic development partners or other MetroWest communities, and inward-facing collaboration, first, among Town staff, boards, and committees and, second, between these Town entities and community members. In terms of intra-governmental collaboration, EDC members signaled an interest in a more defined, coordinated process for Town staff and volunteers to respond to inquiries from potential commercial or industrial tenants or to shepherd large-scale projects from the conceptual phase to completion. In terms of engaging with the Holliston community, comments submitted via survey or voiced at the community workshop called for efforts to understand local business needs and priorities, conduct informative outreach to community members around key issues or projects, and engage a broader cross-section of community members in economic development efforts. The Town's comparatively low share of people both living and working in Holliston, for example, suggests an opportunity to engage people employed in Holliston, in addition to people living in Holliston, as these populations are largely distinct. As to who might be suited to advance these types of activities, peer community economic development practitioners suggested that volunteer economic development stakeholders are strategically positioned to take on communications, engagement, and relationship-building efforts with community members, including business owners.

Capacity Constraints

The Town of Holliston currently has no economic development staff, unlike all other communities included in the peer municipal service model comparison; this renders Holliston's capacity for economic development comparatively limited. The current local service model centers the EDC – in conjunction with the town administrator – in economic development services and demands the Committee's volunteer members prioritize select activities in accordance with their capacity. This volunteer-centric structure constrains both the time and expertise applied to economic development locally; EDC members have signaled that local efforts could benefit from professional expertise and technical skills, in addition to the time a dedicated, paid practitioner could apply toward advancing economic development activities in Holliston. Peer municipal service models indicate that municipal staff support can be structured in varying forms, ranging from a part-time staff member to multiple personnel, as well as be situated in a range of departmental contexts, including

departments dedicated to economic development and those incorporating a broader range of planning subject areas.

Opportunity for Strategic Focus

The Holliston community has both a range of economic development priorities and a comparatively small capacity supporting economic development locally; taken together, these two factors demand the EDC and Town find bite-sized, actionable items to advance, rather than trying to tackle all economic development topics simultaneously. This strategic focus may be particularly key in the near future, as the EDC continues to carve out its role, and under the current model for economic development services, without any additional capacity added. The importance of this focus is reinforced by the literature on best practices for small, volunteer-based and -led organizations, which caution against temptations to tack on new partnerships, services, and opportunities beyond existing activities.

6. Recommendations

Approach Summary

Strategy Identification:

What economic development activities should be pursued in Holliston?

Data Sources

The process for identifying the strategies included in the following recommendations relied on both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data sources included a community workshop, focus groups and interviews, and Envisioning Future Holliston (EFH) survey results (see Qualitative Data Sources section above). Quantitative data included demographic indicators, economic indicators, and municipal budget indicators from peer communities (see Holliston Community Profile and Municipal Service Model Comparison sections above). Additionally, this process drew on information from relevant planning documents, including the Town's zoning bylaw.

Analysis

The process for identifying the strategies in the following recommendations included a matrix exercise, in which strategies related to core economic development themes that emerged from community conversations were measured against evaluative criteria (see Appendix C). In this matrix exercise, MAPC considered core economic development themes from community conversations, including: small business support; industrial park support; collaboration and capacity-building; infrastructure, zoning, and permitting; and downtown enhancement/sense of place, and supporting strategies. These core themes were also employed in a scenario exercise completed during the EDC focus group. To evaluate these strategies, MAPC employed criteria falling into two categories: content area-related criteria, used to identify strategies in alignment Holliston's economic development challenges, opportunities, and priorities, and capacity & positioning-related criteria, used to identify strategies feasible under the current service model (and, by extension, strategies requiring additional capacity). Strategies that met the most criteria were prioritized for inclusion in the following recommendations.

Phase 2 Staffing Model Identification:

Who should advance the recommended economic development strategies in Holliston?

Analysis

To identify staffing models suited to Holliston, MAPC measured several staffing options against key factors. Staffing models for economic development at the local level elsewhere include: 1) one full-time municipal position, multiple focus areas (economic development and other related topics), 2) one full-time municipal position, focused on economic development, 3) one part-time municipal position, focused on economic development, 4) one full-time position across multiple municipalities, focused on economic development, and 5) consultant-based economic development services. The factors considered included: 1) Potential to capitalize on opportunities for collaboration and community relationship-building: an effective approach to expanding local capacity, paired with the EDC advancing highly focused efforts, would contribute to greater collaboration and engagement, including among Town entities, community members, and regional partners. 2) Potential to support existing economic development efforts: an effective approach to expanding local capacity would support the EDC's activities and leverage existing economic development entities or assets, including regional resources, community groups, or Town staff, boards, and committees. 3) Potential feasibility in the context of the broader resource environment: an effective approach to expanding local capacity would align with existing or available municipal resources, acknowledge current labor market dynamics, and contribute to growing local economic development resources, whether social, financial, or programmatic.

Findings

All potential models listed above stand to address identified capacity constraints. The ongoing staff support inherent to models that include municipal or shared staff (as opposed to consultant services) would be best suited to capitalizing on opportunities for collaboration and engagement (Factor 1). As these models stand to better facilitate relationship-building, they could result in collaborative relationships with other Town staff, boards, and committees that underpin proactive, coordinated community development processes, as well as better support for building dialogues among community members, including business owners, and engaging a broader swath of the community in economic development efforts. The shared staff model, with one position spanning multiple municipalities, would also strengthen collaborative relationships across communities in the surrounding region. The municipal or shared staff options also lend themselves to capitalizing on existing economic development efforts (Factor 2), with standing staff support for local economic development offering the possibility of cohesive support to the EDC and the development of a robust understanding of available economic development resources. The routine bread-and-butter economic development activities needed in Holliston call for ongoing staff support, rather than discrete consultant services. In terms of feasibility (Factor 3), the options of a part-time municipal staff position

and a full-time position across multiple municipalities recognize the limits to local resources for economic development efforts, centering on part-time commitments to economic development in Holliston. The multi-community shared staff member model may be more attractive to potential applicants, with the efforts in each partner municipality combining to equal a full-time position.

Vision

What is a vision statement?

A vision statement paints a concise, aspirational image of a community's future. It should be consistent with the community's existing conditions and priorities and communicate to residents, businesses, and other community members what they may anticipate moving forward. A vision statement's potential uses include informing future decision-making efforts, serving as a catalyst for more granular planning efforts, and, when included in Town website content or outreach materials, providing a brief encapsulation of a community's traits and priorities.

Holliston Vision Statement

Downtown

The Town of Holliston has a vibrant downtown area, home to a variety of local businesses that reflect the community's agricultural, artistic, and entrepreneurial assets. Downtown businesses attract and serve a diverse, inter-generational group of local and regional visitors and engage in collaboration with each other, Town staff or volunteers, and other community members. These features of the local economy are supported by small business support, collaboration- and community relationship-building, and downtown promotion activities. Progress towards this component contributes to an engaged base of resident and community stakeholders and establishes the Town as a welcoming and supportive place for small business owners.

Industrial Parks

Holliston's industrial parks are effectively leveraged and contribute to local employment, commercial tax revenue, and community. Industrial park employers and workers engage in the broader community, including through participating in tenant inquiry response processes, frequenting local businesses, and engaging in community activities. These features of the local economy are supported by collaboration- and community relationship-building activities and a defined response process for potential tenant inquiries. Progress towards this vision component minimizes churn in Holliston's industrial park and

streamlines the process for identifying and installing desired tenant types.

Commercial Districts

Holliston's commercial plazas and standalone facilities provide both convenient small-scale goods and services and experience-based services to community members and visitors alike. These areas are connected to the rest of Holliston via safe, convenient mobility options, and their business owners access local small business resources, services, and peer networks. These features of the local economy are supported by small business support and collaboration- and community relationship-building activities. Progress towards this vision component positions these districts to increase visitation and dwell time at commercial amenities.

Achieving progress toward these vision components over the course of the next three years will prepare the Town and EDC to take on bigger, multi-year initiatives, including addressing underlying infrastructure needs and opportunities, such as those related to sewer infrastructure and mobility amenities.

Service Model Overview

The following service model provides a structure for advancing economic development in Holliston over the course of the next three years. After this time frame, local stakeholders should evaluate the service model and make appropriate adjustments.

Service Model Recommendation (3 Years)

Holliston should pursue a two-phased economic development service model:

Phase 1: Current Local Capacity (Year 1) assumes current capacity levels and, as a result, reflects a more limited portfolio of economic development activities reflective of core community themes. In this phase, the EDC, with support from the town administrator, advance activities in the focus areas of small business support, building collaboration and community relationships, and targeted industrial park support. Key short-term outcomes of this phase include: strengthened community and collaboration among Holliston small business owners; strengthened relationships between EDC and Holliston small business owners, with business owners more likely to contact EDC members with questions or comments; a fuller understanding of Holliston small business needs and priorities among EDC members; an engaged pool of Holliston community members who volunteer on economic development efforts; greater collaboration, coordination, or consensus across Town entities on day-to-day economic development matters; and a plan and materials for a transparent, coordinated, and swift response process

for industrial park tenant inquiries. These outcomes will prepare the economic development staff hired in Phase 2 to hit the ground running; they will enable targeted economic development efforts to be responsive to small business and community needs, buoyed by engaged community members, and advanced in collaboration with other Town entities.

Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity (Year 2-3) assumes expanded local capacity in the form of new economic development staff or support services and, as a result, incorporates a broader range of priority economic development activities reflective of core community themes. In this phase, an economic development staff member, in collaboration with the EDC and other Town partners, advances activities in the focus areas of small business support, building collaboration and community relationships, targeted industrial park support, and targeted downtown promotion. Key short-term outcomes of this phase include: strengthened relationships between small business owners and Town staff; strengthened connection between Town staff and regional organizations; greater access to resources among Holliston businesses (grants and technical assistance); greater awareness of local business clusters, trends, and opportunities among Town staff; a fuller understanding of Town services and processes among small business owners; an established process for tailoring Town services or strategies to small business needs and market; greater collaboration, coordination, or consensus across Town entities on day-to-day economic development matters; greater empowerment of community members who expand and apply their economic development knowledge and skills to economic development efforts; quicker, more consistent responses to industrial park tenant inquiries; and an established foundation for engaging in more long-term, cross-cutting planning efforts. Pursuing these strategies over a three-year period will position the Town and EDC to tackle bolder economic development initiatives, including those related to underlying infrastructure needs and opportunities.

Phase 2 Staffing Model Recommendation (Years 2-3)

For Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity, Holliston should consider pursuing one full-time position employed and working in multiple municipalities, focused on economic development. This position could be structured in a hybrid work format: select tasks may be suited to remote work (e.g., data analysis), while others will require weekly or bi-weekly in-person work (e.g., community engagement). Recent job postings for comparable positions in the MetroWest region and Massachusetts indicate that a full-time salary for such a position might range from approximately \$50,000 to \$64,500. An alternative staffing model would be one part-time municipal position, focused on economic development. At this salary level, a .5 FTE role might entail a \$25,000-\$32,250 salary expenditure for the Town.

Service Model Details

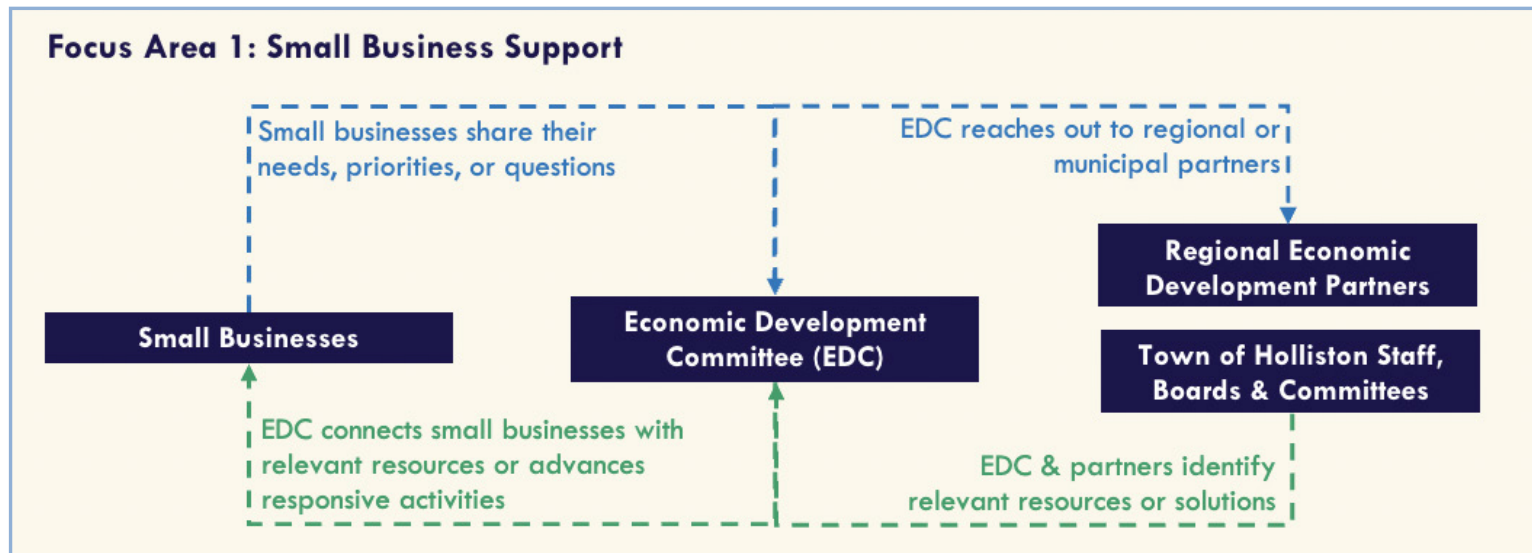
Figure 5.1. Summary of Service Model Strategies for Next 3 Years.

| Economic Development Strategy | Phase 1: Current Local Capacity | Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity |
|---|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Small Business Support | | |
| Monitoring & promoting small business technical assistance & grant opportunities (including those related to COVID-19 recovery) | | X |
| Serving as a liaison between small business owners & Town staff, boards & committees | | X |
| Maintaining up-to-date business inventory & monitoring key indicators | | X |
| Assessing local market demand & crafting a responsive business development strategy | | X |
| Conducting routine surveys or conversations on small business experiences & needs | X | |
| Building Collaboration & Community Relationships | | |
| Engaging in long-range & related planning processes | | X |
| Identifying projects/strategies in collaboration with a wide cross-section of the community | | X |
| Connecting community members to civic volunteer & training opportunities | X | X |
| Developing coordinated, equitable methods for communicating & engaging with community members | X | X |
| Targeted Industrial Park Support | | |
| Facilitating response to potential tenant inquiry, including public outreach | | X |
| Coordinating with Town staff & boards to define response process to potential tenant inquiry | X | |
| Targeted Downtown Promotion | | |
| Marketing & promotion of downtown area to local & regional visitors | | X |

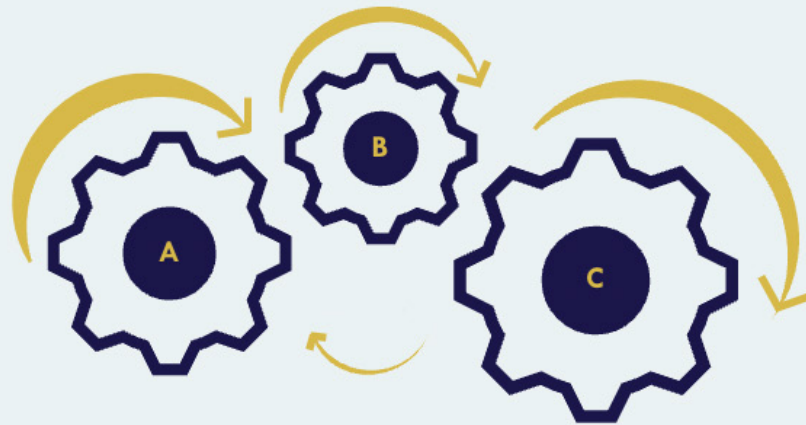
Phase 1: Current Local Capacity

In the Current Local Capacity phase, the Town of Holliston has not engaged any new economic development staff or consultants. Economic development services remain driven by the EDC, with support from the town administrator. This phase is characterized by a more limited capacity for economic development activities at the local level and, as a result, by a narrower focus on select strategies. It is slated for year one of this three-year service model plan.

Figure 5.2. Phase 1 Service Model Structure.



Focus Area 2: Building Collaboration & Community Relationships



- A** EDC advances coordinated, equitable methods for communicating & engaging with community members
 - B** EDC connects community members to civic volunteer & training opportunities
 - C** EDC & expanded pool of engaged community members engage in proactive economic development
- These elements support a positive, iterative cycle of growth.

Focus Area 3: Targeted Industrial Park Support



Service model diagram for Phase 1: Current Local Capacity. Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2023

Focus Area 1: Small Business Support

EDC members support existing and emerging small businesses in Holliston by developing a stronger understanding of business needs and priorities. This information stands to contribute to tailoring future small business support services, connecting businesses with relevant resources, and sharing key themes with Town staff.

Strategy 1: Conducting routine surveys or conversations on small business experiences & needs

A subset of EDC members focuses on learning about small business needs and priorities through surveys of small business owners, roundtable discussions with small business owners, or a combination of these two methods.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, Town staff and services knowledge, data collection and analysis skills, business technical assistance resources knowledge and activation skills, event planning skills
- Potential Existing Resources: Business Directory (see Existing Resources section above), regional economic development partners (see Regional Partners section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Number of roundtable discussions per year, number of attendees at roundtable discussions, number of total EDC touch points with small business owners, extent of positive feedback on Town services from business owners (via survey or otherwise)
- Potential Resource Level: **146

Focus Area 2: Building Collaboration & Community Relationships

EDC members support community engagement in economic development efforts by connecting community members to training resources and volunteer positions and engaging in clear, consistent communications with community members about ongoing projects, key issues, or opportunities for public participation.

Strategy 1: Connecting community members to civic volunteer & training opportunities

A subset of EDC members focuses on connecting community members to civic volunteer and training opportunities related to discrete small business and economic development tasks with quick turnarounds and clear outputs. Potential communications methods include the EDC website, the town administrator newsletter, or other communications methods (see Strategy 2 below). Potential supporting activities could include monitoring regional and state organizations' communications for training opportunities and sharing them with Holliston community members, monitoring Town

committees and boards for volunteer opportunities and sharing them with Holliston community members, and listing a point-person for inquiries about involvement on the EDC website.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, regional economic development resources knowledge, Town staff and services knowledge
- Potential Existing Resources: town administrator newsletter, Town website, EDC website, Town social media
- Potential Process Metrics: Number of newsletters or blurbs in town administrator newsletter, number of inquiries from community members, number of community members participating in training opportunities, number of community members connected to volunteer opportunities
- Potential Resource Level: *

Strategy 2: Developing coordinated, equitable methods for communicating & engaging with community members

A subset of EDC members works in collaboration with Town staff (such as the town administrator or the assistant town administrator) to develop and implement a communications strategy that meets a broad swath of community members where they are. Supporting activities could include community event attendance, regular newsletters, or a designated section of the town administrator newsletter, as well as more responsive communications about core issues or ongoing projects to both share key information and engage with questions from community members.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, Town staff and services knowledge, event planning skills
- Potential Existing Resources: town administrator newsletter, Town website, EDC website, Town social media, Celebrate Holliston, other community events
- Potential Process Metrics, to be tailored in accordance with communications strategy methods: Number of newsletters or blurbs in town administrator newsletter, number of social media posts, number of events attended
- Potential Resource Level: **

Focus Area 3: Targeted Industrial Park Support

EDC members collaborate with relevant Town entities to develop a coordinated response to industrial park tenant inquiries, including understanding a proposal's alignment with community aims, identifying potential municipal actions or levers, and engaging in related public outreach efforts.

Strategy 1: Coordinating with Town staff & boards to define response process to potential tenant inquiry

A subset of EDC members works with the town administrator, town planner, and Planning Board to develop a

transparent, coordinated, and swift response to industrial park tenant inquiries. Potential supporting activities could include: developing a scorecard for proposals, to be completed by EDC members or other key partners, with criteria reflective of community development aims; compiling a guide or flow chart for the proposal response process to ensure a common understanding among Town entities and potential project sponsors; and developing an outreach plan for communicating key aspects of a proposal to community members and understanding community member perspectives on potential proposals.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, funding/incentive opportunities knowledge, project management skills, commercial and industrial real estate knowledge and monitoring skills, Town staff and services knowledge
- Potential Existing Resources: Precedent scorecards and scorecard guidance, community input (see Community Conversation Themes section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Completion of proposal scorecard, completion of process flow chart, number of proposal fact sheets or related communications shared with community members
- Potential Resource Level: ***

Tool for Collaborative Economic Development: Proposal Scorecard

To facilitate a collaborative response process, the EDC and its Town partners should develop a scorecard for evaluating industrial tenant proposals in Holliston. A scorecard would not supplant any aspects of the permitting or review process; it would serve as a tool for EDC members to evaluate a proposal's alignment with identified community development aims.

In compiling the scorecard, the EDC and its partners should consider factors including:

Authors & Audience:

The scorecard should be developed in collaboration with Town partners and may be useful to a range of stakeholders; its primary users, however, would be EDC members.

Proposal Criteria:

The scorecard should include a range of questions reflective of local priorities. Potential question subject areas include:

- Alignment with zoning & land use regulations
- Compatibility with abutting or nearby land uses
- Consistency with local planning efforts
- Consistency with identified community vision
- Alignment with priority development sites/areas
- Requirement of new or expanded water service infrastructure
- Requirement of new or expanded sewer infrastructure
- Connectivity to existing transportation infrastructure
- Proximity to existing commercial amenities
- Contribution to a diverse business mix
- Number of jobs created
- Impact to commercial tax base
- Energy efficiency/sustainability
- Impacts to built environment/district appearance

Potential Scoring System:

For each criterion, the scorecard should include a scale of responses with associated point scores. For example, the City of Marlborough's "Multifamily Development Review Criteria & Design Guidelines" includes the question, "Is the proposed development consistent, inconsistent or in conflict with a recent local planning effort?" and the corresponding response options of Consistent (10 points), Inconsistent (-10 points), In conflict with (-30 points), No recent planning in area (0 points).¹⁴⁷

Potential Scorecard Benefits:

The scorecard stands to contribute several benefits, including support to:

- Identify proposals consistent with local community development objectives

- Communicate the Town's standards & priorities to potential project sponsors
- Position the EDC & Town for quick, consistent responses to tenant inquiry
- Facilitate a collaborative, coordinated & aligned response across Town entities
- Support communication of proposal information, EDC's position, & responses to community questions
- Support positive working relationships among public & private sector stakeholders

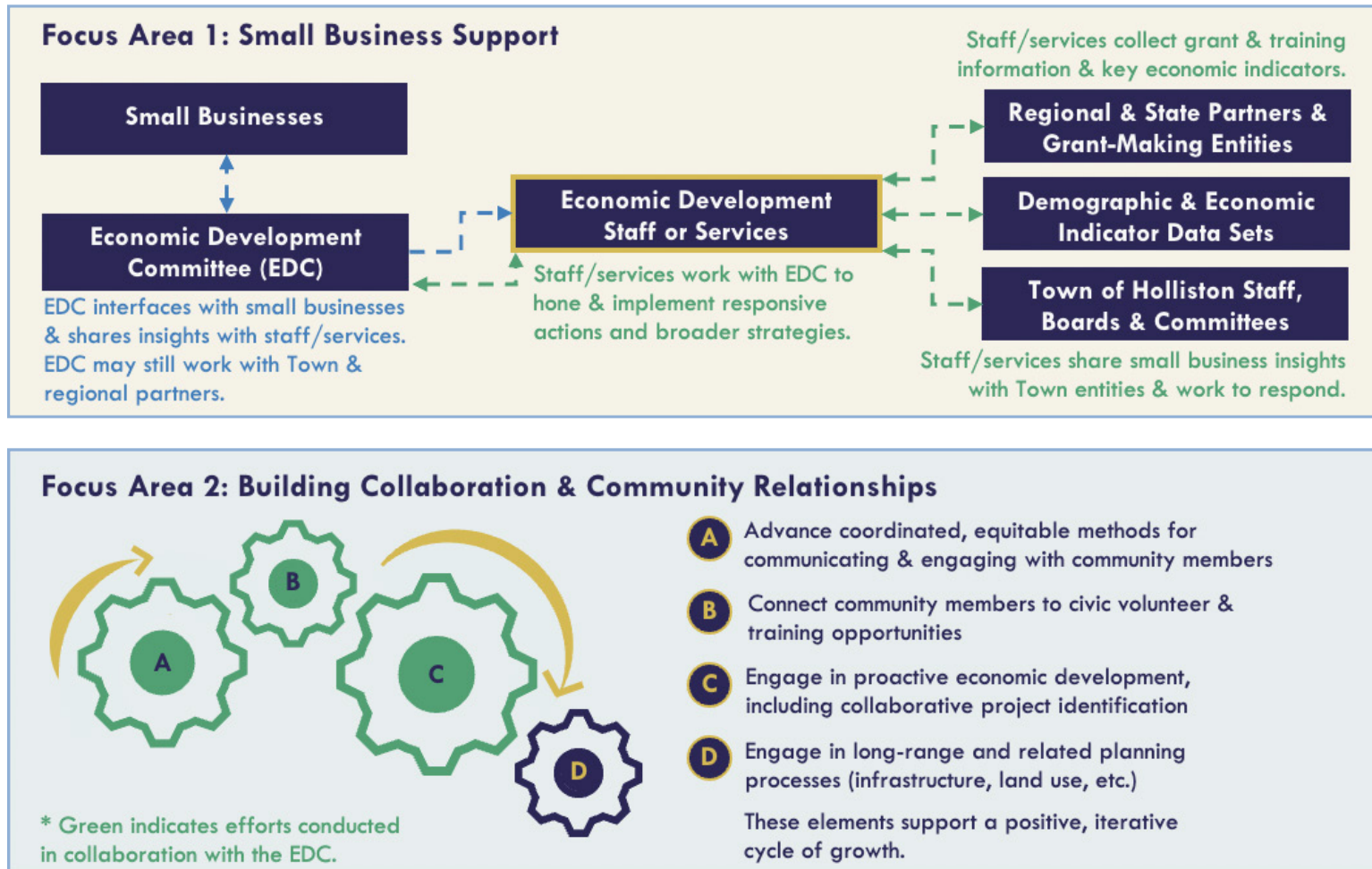
Scorecard Examples & Resources:

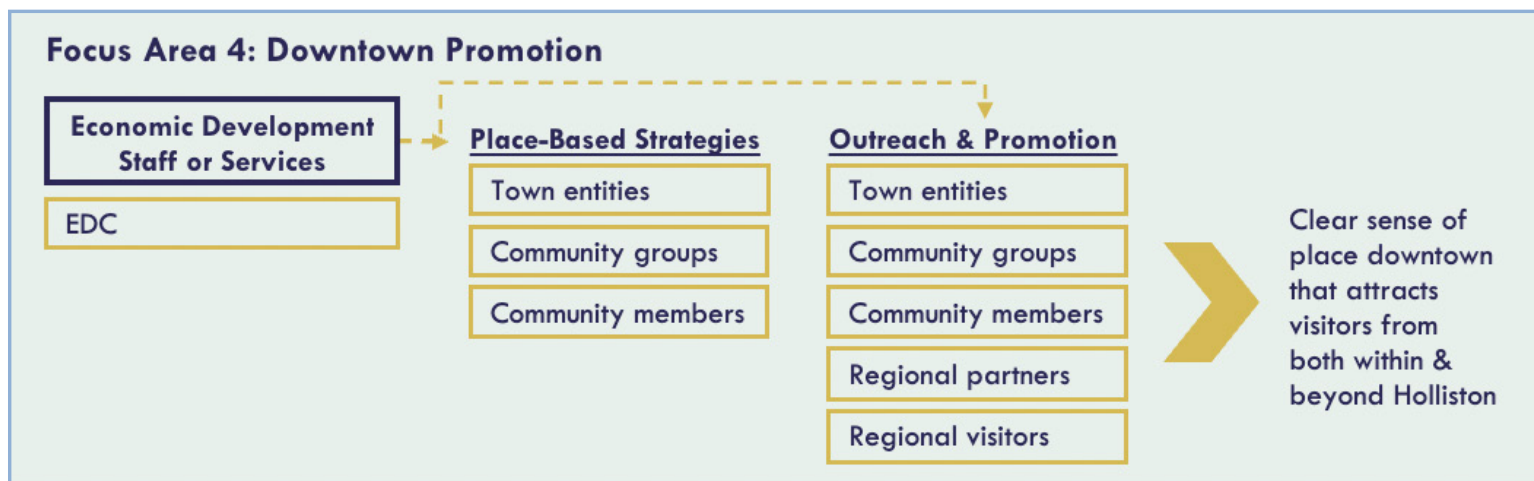
- Urban Institute, "Capital for Communities Scorecard," 2022. Link: <https://www.urban.org/C4CScorecard>.
- City of Marlborough, "Multifamily Development Review Criteria and Design Guidelines," 2018. Link: <https://marlboroughedc.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Marlborough-Multi-Family-Design-Guidelines-Final-2018.pdf>.
- West Side Community Organization, "Equitable Development Scorecard," 2020. Link: <https://www.stpaul.gov/sites/default/files/Media%20Root/Planning%20%26%20Economic%20Development/Equitable%20Development%20Scorecard%20-%20PC%2001-24-20.pdf>.
- Smart Growth America, "Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit" (Project Scorecard & Incentive Matrix), 2015. Link: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/smart-growth-implementation-toolkit/#:~:text=The%20Smart%20Growth%20Implementation%20Toolkit,smarter%20growth%20and%20sustainable%20development.>

Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity

In the Expanded Local Capacity phase, the Town of Holliston has engaged professional economic development staff or services. The EDC continues to advance their targeted activities; the newly engaged staff or services support these activities and also advance an additional portfolio of economic development services. This scenario is characterized by greater capacity for local economic development activities and, as a result, by a slightly expanded collection of strategies. It is slated to span years two and three of this three-year service model plan.

Figure 5.3. Phase 2 Service Model Structure.





Service model diagram for Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity. Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), 2023.

Focus Area 1: Small Business Support

Economic development staff support existing and emerging small businesses in Holliston by: developing an in-depth understanding of the local business mix and related indicators; connecting small business owners to funding, Town services, and other resources; and working toward a proactive business development strategy. Strategies 1 and 2 focus on servicing businesses in Holliston, including through responding to standalone inquiries, and Strategies 3 and 4 operate at a larger scale, focusing on community-wide indicators, economic analyses, and business development strategies.

Strategy 1: Monitoring & promoting small business technical assistance & grant opportunities (including those related to COVID-19 recovery)

Economic development staff connect Holliston's small business owners to technical assistance and funding opportunities, including resources related to addressing the economic impacts of COVID-19. Supporting activities could include: monitoring relevant regional, state, and federal entities' or organizations' offerings; identifying opportunities to implement economic development activities relevant to business owners' priorities;¹⁴⁸ periodically communicating round-ups of compiled resources to business owners, business groups, artists, and/or other stakeholders; and responding to inquiries about identifying potential technical assistance or funding opportunities.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, funding/incentive opportunities knowledge, business technical assistance resources knowledge and activation skills
- Potential Existing Resources: Regional organizations' newsletters, regional organizations' websites (see Regional Partners section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Number of resource round-ups shared with small business owners, number of small business resource inquiries addressed, number of technical assistance resources accessed by businesses, number of grant applications from Town or businesses, dollar amount of resources secured by Town or businesses, number of small and local business-oriented activities implemented
- Potential Resource Level: **

Strategy 2: Serving as a liaison between small business owners & Town staff, boards & committees

Economic development staff serve as a conduit between Holliston's small businesses and the Town's staff, boards, and committees. Supporting activities could include assisting small businesses in navigating Town services and processes, and communicating comments, concerns, or questions from small business owners to relevant Town entities or staff members. This effort stands to build off the EDC's small business survey or roundtable conversation efforts by communicating key

takeaways to other Town entities or staff.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, business technical assistance resources knowledge and activation skills, Town staff and services knowledge
- Potential Existing Resources: Business Directory; Holliston, Massachusetts: A Business & Community Guide; Town of Holliston Permitting Guide (see Existing Resources section above); non-EDC board and committee public meetings
- Potential Process Metrics: Number of small businesses serviced; number of non-EDC board or committee meetings attended to share small business comments, concerns, or questions
- Potential Resource Level: **

Strategy 3: Maintaining up-to-date business inventory & monitoring key indicators

Economic development staff maintain an inventory of Holliston businesses and monitor key economic indicators, including number of businesses, vacant properties, and jobs. Supporting activities could include compiling/updating a spreadsheet or report of key indicators on a regular basis and updating a local business inventory in accordance with closures and openings. These resources can be shared with other Town entities or staff, as well as the public.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, data collection and analysis skills, commercial and industrial real estate knowledge and monitoring skills
- Potential Existing Resources: Business Directory (see Existing Resources section above), state and federal data sources (see Holliston Community Profile section above); regional organizations' compiled demographic and economic data (see Regional Partners section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Number of updates to key indicators spreadsheet, number of updates to business inventory, use of indicators in tailoring business support services, responsiveness of business development strategies to local business mix changes and gaps
- Potential Resource Level: **

Strategy 4: Assessing local market demand & crafting a responsive business development strategy

Economic development staff conduct a market study to understand local market trends and segments for potential growth.¹⁴⁹ Analysis should consider geographic target areas, such as Holliston's downtown, and provide findings to inform future business development strategies.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Data collection and analysis skills, communications and public outreach skills, project management skills

- Potential Existing Resources: Precedent market studies or analyses, demographic and economic indicators (see Holliston Community Profile section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Completion of market study, completion of business development strategy, number of business development strategies implemented
- Potential Resource Level: ****

Focus Area 2: Building Collaboration & Community Relationships

Economic development staff support community engagement in economic development efforts, collaborating with the EDC to connect community members to training opportunities, volunteer positions, engagement opportunities, and project information. Economic development staff also pursue collaboration with other Town entities, including in relationship to cross-cutting planning and implementation initiatives, and engage community members in project identification and implementation processes.

Strategy 1: Connecting community members to civic volunteer & training opportunities¹⁵⁰

Economic development staff support and build on the EDC's efforts to connect community members to civic volunteer and training opportunities. Supporting activities could include expanding and coordinating communications methods and/or assuming the tasks of monitoring for training and volunteer opportunities.

Strategy 2: Developing coordinated, equitable methods for communicating & engaging with community members¹⁵¹

Economic development staff support and build on the EDC's efforts to develop and implement a communications strategy. Together, Economic development staff and EDC members explore more innovative methods of reaching community members that strengthen a proactive economic development approach.

Outreach Resource: Zoning Fact Sheet

The Town and EDC's efforts to build out a dialogue with Holliston community members, including business owners, will require both gathering information from the community and providing information to the community. The activity of providing information may include distilling complex topics, such as large-scale infrastructure projects or Tax Increment Financing and other incentive tools, into succinct, accessible language or communications tools. The following two-page zoning outreach resource both provides a summary of key aspects of Holliston's zoning bylaw, which may prove useful to EDC members on its own and also serve as an example of the kind of communications tool the EDC might develop to support community engagement and relationship-building efforts.

Fast Facts: Non-Residential Zoning in Holliston

MAPC | December 2022

Adoption: Holliston's zoning bylaw was adopted June 3, 1953, as a "protective by-law" with amendments through May 9, 2022, which were approved by the Attorney General's Office on September 2, 2022. This section summarizes the current components of the zoning bylaw.

Purpose: A town's zoning bylaw is a comprehensive and practical municipal instrument to help shape and direct growth and change. All properties in Holliston are subject to the zoning bylaw's requirements, which establish the parameters of property use, development, and construction.

The stated purpose of Holliston's zoning bylaw is to "promote the general health, safety, convenience, morals, and welfare of the inhabitants of Holliston under the provisions of General Laws, Chapter 40A (the Zoning Act)."

Why do communities have zoning?

Guide where land uses go

Regulate how sites are developed

Protect natural & rural resources

What does zoning dictate?

- Density, form
- Parking, signs
- Treatment of "grandfathered" uses and structures
- Open space residential design
- Earth removal
- Resource protection (floodplains, water)
- Process! (how to get permits and approvals)



To promote health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of Holliston

- provide for the provisions of the Zoning Act
- encourage housing for residents of all income levels
- secure safety from fire, flood and other dangers



To encourage the most appropriate use of the land

- conserve the value of land and buildings
- regulate land uses that have an impact on the Town's natural, fiscal and physical capacities



To preserve the cultural, historical and agricultural heritage of the community

- protect water quality and supply

Purpose of Holliston's Zoning Bylaw

Amended May 2012 – ATM, Art. 32. Previously amended March 1978 – STM, Art. 1

Administration & Enforcement: Zoning and permitting processes are administered by Permit Granting and Special Permit Granting authorities in Holliston and enforced by the Inspector of Buildings.

Depending on the type of approval, these authorities include the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Inspector, Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Water Commissioners, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Board of Selectmen and Highway Superintendent (See graphic for key definitions).

Board of Appeals

The Board of Appeals is a three-member board, supported by two additional associate members appointed by the Selectmen, that hears and decides on applications for special permits, variances, appeals, and comprehensive permits.

Site Plan Review

Holliston has adopted a site plan review process, which requires review of structures and uses that may have significant impacts on traffic, municipal, and public services and utilities, environmental quality, and community values in the Town.

Special Permits

The Zoning Bylaw provides several special permit options for certain types of commercial and residential development in specified districts. These special permits are granted by Special Permit Granting Authority.

Building or Use Permit

Upon the decision rendered by the Permit Granting Authority or Special Permit Granting Authority, the Inspector of Buildings issues a permit following which construction can commence.

Zoning Districts: The Town has established 8 underlying zoning districts. There are 5 residential districts and 3 non-residential districts.

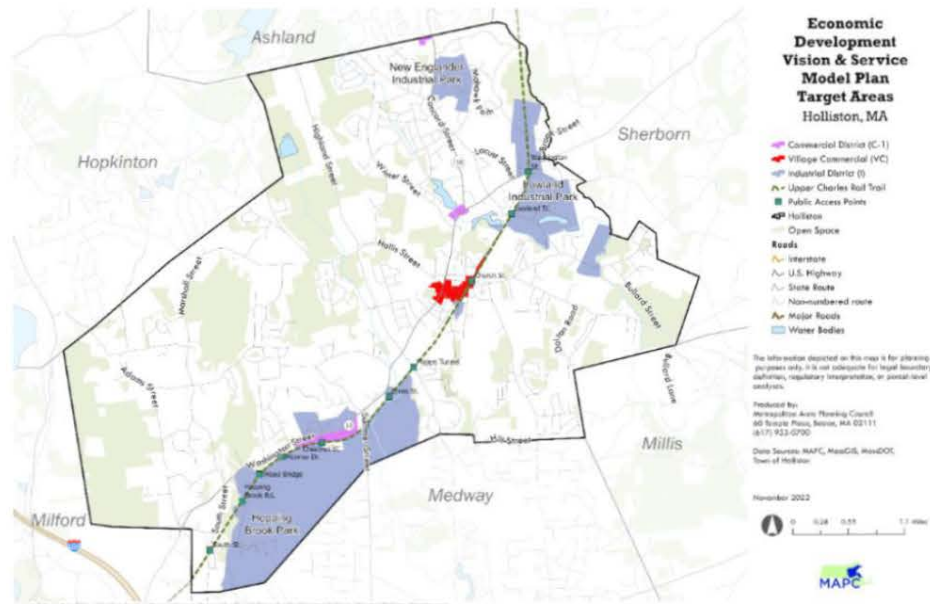
Residential Zoning Districts:

- Apartment District (APT)
- Agricultural-Residential District A (AR-1)
- Agricultural-Residential District B (AR-2)
- Residential District (R-1)
- Village Residential (VR)

Non-Residential Zoning Districts:

- Village Center Commercial District (VC)
- Commercial District (C-1)
- Industrial District (I)

Target Areas: This study focuses on Holliston's non-residential districts.



Village Center Commercial District (VC)

The centrally located VC district, marked by historic village character, was established to provide convenient business and professional services for Holliston residents and visitors. This district promotes a compact, pedestrian-oriented environment with a focus on development and maintenance of small businesses while ensuring new construction acknowledges historical design features to preserve the district character.

The district encourages a higher density of small-scale businesses, as well as municipal, institutional, residential, and mixed-use developments. The VC district allows mixed-use development where apartment and multifamily dwellings are allowed by Special Permit if located above first floor commercial use of a building.

- **Minimum lot size 5,000 s.f.**
- **Maximum height of 3 stories or 40 ft.**
- **Floor Area Ratio of 1 with maximum 50% building coverage.**

VC District



Commercial District (C-1)

C-1 district regulations, designed for low-density development, accommodate small establishments that service nearby neighborhoods. With larger minimum lot requirements and similar height requirements to the VC district, C-1 districts feature smaller commercial areas with retail strips and restaurants. These districts also service the surrounding residential neighborhoods and agricultural land, providing a distinct community feel.

The C-1 district use regulations allow for smaller scale commercial such as retail sales, professional services and offices, restaurants including drive-ins by right, and some institutional and agricultural uses by special permits. This district type does not allow mixed-use or residential uses.

- **Minimum lot size 15,000 s.f.**
- **Maximum height of 3 stories or 40 ft.**
- **Floor Area Ratio of 0.50 with maximum 50% building coverage.**

C-1 District



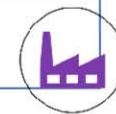
Industrial District (I)

The I district type establishes requirements for various industrial uses such as manufacturing, storage, processing, fabrication, and assembly of goods that do not involve the manufacturing, discharge, or disposal of hazardous or toxic materials. This district type contains Holliston's industrial parks, including Hopping Brook Park, New Englander Industrial Park, and Lowland Industrial Parks.

The district allows for industrial use lots with floor area <15,000 square feet by right along with commercial uses such as medical marijuana dispensary, mixed office and warehouse facility, select institutional uses, commercial greenhouses, and business and professional offices by right. Special permits can be obtained for other industrial uses such as warehouses, larger manufacturing or assembly uses, craft marijuana cultivators or cooperatives, testing labs, and commercial uses such as retail sales, hotels, and commercial parking.

- **Minimum lot size 20,000 s.f.**
- **Maximum height of 3 stories or 40 ft.**
- **Floor Area Ratio of 0.50 with maximum 40% building coverage.**

I District



Outreach Resources: Creative Community Engagement Tools

The Town and EDC's efforts to develop coordinated, equitable communications and engagement methods may include a range of activities. To identify the appropriate activities, local economic development stakeholders should engage in a process reflective of the tenets outlined in MAPC's Community Engagement Strategy Book. The strategy book notes that identifying the appropriate activities will rely on defining each engagement's purpose and lists sample purposes including *informing* the community, *collecting information* from the community, and *empowering* the community. Each engagement's purpose will inform its tools and techniques, a suite of which are listed in the associated Community Engagement Recipe Book alongside the aims they are suited to advance.

Resources:

- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), "Community Engagement: Recipe Book," August 2017. Link: <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RECIPEBOOKFINAL8.16.17FINAL.pdf>.
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), "Community Engagement: Strategy Chart," August 2018. Link: https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/CE-Strategy-Chart_1.3.18.pdf.
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- Rosa Gonzalez & Facilitating Power, "The Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership," 2019. Link: <https://movementstrategy.org/resources/the-spectrum-of-community-engagement-to-ownership/>.

Strategy 3: Engaging in long-range & related planning processes

Economic development staff contribute to cross-cutting planning initiatives, including participation in efforts related to water or wastewater infrastructure, transportation, housing, or long-range land use planning with economic development implications.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, Town staff and services knowledge, data collection and analysis skills
- Potential Existing Resources: Recent municipal planning studies and reports, including the Rapid Recovery Program Plan, Envisioning Future Holliston survey results, and Wastewater Treatment Plant Modernization and Downtown Sewer Connectivity Analysis

- Potential Process Metrics: Number of other Town departments, boards, or committees' planning initiatives supported; number of infrastructure and public realm implementation processes supported
- Potential Resource Level: ***

Strategy 4: Identifying projects/strategies in collaboration with a wide cross-section of the community

Economic development staff collaborate with Town entities to identify projects or strategies responsive to community members' priorities. Supporting activities could include conducting roundtable community forums on key issues or opportunities, conducting community engagement processes specific to key issues or opportunities, holding one-off conversations with Town counterparts or colleagues to identify opportunities for collaboration, or monitoring regional, state, or federal grant opportunities for overlap with community priorities.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, Town staff and services knowledge, data collection and analysis skills, funding/incentive opportunities knowledge, regional economic development resources knowledge
- Potential Existing Resources: Town administrator newsletter, Town website, EDC website, Town social media, Celebrate Holliston, other community events, recent municipal planning studies and reports (see Existing Resources section above)
- Potential Process Metrics, to be tailored in accordance with engagement methods: Number of community members engaged, representativeness of community members engaged, number of projects identified, number of identified projects advanced or implemented
- Potential Resource Level: ***

Focus Area 3: Targeted Industrial Park Support

Economic development staff support coordination of the Town's response to potential industrial park tenant inquiries.

Strategy 1: Facilitating response to potential tenant inquiry, including public outreach*

Economic development staff activate the EDC's defined response process to potential tenant inquiries. Supporting activities could include applying the EDC's proposal scorecard to identify the proposal's alignment with community priorities, communicating results to other Town entities, strategizing around potential municipal actions or levers, and facilitating a public outreach process that communicates the proposal's key aspects and responds to community members' questions.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, funding/incentive opportunities knowledge, project management skills, commercial and industrial real estate knowledge and monitoring skills, Town staff and services knowledge
- Potential Existing Resources: Precedent scorecards or scorecard development guidance (see Tool for Collaborative Economic Development section above); Community input (see Community Conversation Themes section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Number of scorecards completed, number of communications with community members, number of total proposals fielded, number of proposals converted into park occupants
- Potential Resource Level: ****

Focus Area 4: Targeted Downtown Promotion

Economic development staff support efforts to create a clear sense of place in downtown Holliston that attracts local and regional visitors.

Strategy 1: Marketing & promotion of downtown area to local & regional visitors

Economic development staff promote Holliston's downtown via a range of physical and programmatic efforts, with potential activities including could a collaborative branding initiative, implementing wayfinding amenities, and marketing the downtown area through existing regional or local channels.

- Potential Skills or Knowledge Deployed: Communications and public outreach skills, project management skills, regional economic development resources knowledge
- Potential Existing Resources: Precedents from Main Streets and downtown organizations in peer communities, guidance from Main Streets and downtown organizations, regional promotion vehicles or organizations (see Regional Partners section above)
- Potential Process Metrics: Completion of branding initiative, number of regional or local channels accessed
- Potential Resource Level: ****

Downtown Promotion: Peer Community Example

Over the past decade, the Town of Hudson has supported the marked revitalization of its downtown business district.¹⁵² In collaboration with the local Business Improvement District (BID), the Town has advanced a suite of strategies that transformed the downtown area from a cluster of “nightlife and scattered retail options” to a vibrant core of small retail and food and beverage businesses surrounded by larger service businesses and institutions.¹⁵³

These strategies have included marketing, promotion, and other activities that played a key part in the downtown’s renaissance:

- Providing cultural and holiday programming, such as the Hudson Arts Fest, an event organized by Cultural Arts Committee of the Hudson BID, as well as a holiday stroll, 5k race, and regular live music.¹⁵⁴
- Marketing the downtown area, including via the BID’s website showcasing directories of local businesses grouped by the type of experience they provide, such as, “taste,” “shop,” “party,” “chill,” and “services.”¹⁵⁵
- Improving downtown wayfinding, including implementation of a wayfinding plan supported by an MA Office of Travel and Tourism Recovery Grant and provision of a Downtown Hudson Parking Legend.¹⁵⁶
- Advancing streetscape beautification, with examples including historic and decorative lighting, flowers, benches, trash receptacles, and sidewalk cleaning.¹⁵⁷
- Enabling outdoor dining, with the provision of outdoor dining options emerging as a “major strength” of the downtown district.¹⁵⁸
- Updating zoning regulations to embrace density downtown, with municipal staff recommending other communities consider factors like upper-story residential units above commercial uses, a range of housing type options, and design guidelines.¹⁵⁹

“As the assistant director of planning and community development, I can say that Hudson’s downtown has undergone a renaissance in recent years, becoming a very popular destination, and the ARRT [Assabet River Rail Trail] is part of that renaissance...I frequently walk on the path at lunchtime and there are always cyclists, walkers and runners out enjoying the opportunity to get some exercise or walk their dogs near the downtown, but away from the traffic.”

- Pam Helinek

Source: Maureen Sullivan, “Assabet River Rail Trail keeps pace with growing communities,” January 14, 2023, Community Advocate. Link: <https://www.communityadvocate.com/2023/01/14/assabet-river-rail-trail-keeps-pace-with-growing-communities/>.

- Investing in infrastructure, including the Assabet River Rail Trail, a multi-user trail envisioned to connect Acton, Hudson, Marlborough, Maynard, and Stow, advanced with support from the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization and Massachusetts Highway Department.¹⁶⁰
- Investing in infrastructure enhancements, including on Hudson's South Street with MassWorks funding, via activities related to landscaping, lighting, and traffic calming.¹⁶¹
- Addressing key infrastructure, including reconstructing Hudson's rotary to recapture public realm, implement people-centric design, incorporate pedestrian infrastructure, and leverage transportation amenities in placemaking efforts.¹⁶²

Today, Hudson's downtown, including its food and beverage attractions, draws both local and regional visitors. A June 2021 survey suggested that many community members had visited Downtown Hudson more frequently in the three previous years: 55% of respondents reported an uptick in downtown visitation, with responses citing the area's vibrancy and retail and dining options as draws.¹⁶³

7. Conclusion

Over the next three years, Holliston should pursue the following economic development service model:

Phase 1: Current Local Capacity (Year 1) assumes current capacity levels and, as a result, reflects a more limited portfolio of economic development activities reflective of core community themes. In this phase, the EDC, with support from the town administrator, advance activities in the focus areas of small business support, building collaboration and community relationships, and targeted industrial park support.

Phase 2: Expanded Local Capacity (Year 2-3) assumes expanded local capacity in the form of new economic development staff or support services and, as a result, incorporates a broader range of priority economic development activities reflective of core community themes. In this phase, an economic development staff member, in collaboration with the EDC and other Town partners, advances activities in the focus areas of small business support, building collaboration and community relationships, targeted industrial park support, and targeted downtown promotion.

Pursuing these strategies over a three-year period will position the Town and EDC to tackle bolder economic development initiatives, including those related to underlying infrastructure needs and opportunities. Select economic indicators of the long-term outcomes of these economic development efforts may include: increased tenant inquiries for target areas, increased business establishment or relocation, increased retention or growth of small businesses, increased visitation and sales in downtown area, and increased commercial tax revenue.

Endnotes

1. Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), “About Us,” n.d. Link: <https://www.mapc.org/aboutus/>.
2. Town of Holliston, “Zoning Map,” 2011. Link: https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf706/f/file/file/zoning_map_2011.pdf.
- Town of Holliston, “Holliston Zoning Map Amendments,” 2017. Link: https://www.townofholliston.us/sites/g/files/vyhlf706/f/file/file/holliston_zoning_all_20170517.pdf.
3. Here, small business technical assistance relates to programs or services that support business owners in implementing or improving key business functions. Sample services include counseling or workshops on topics like business plan development, marketing and sales, technology and e-commerce, business succession planning, and woman-owned, minority-owned or veteran-owned business certification. In the recommended service model, the EDC would connect Holliston businesses to entities delivering these types of services, rather than provide these services itself.
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5. Holliston Economic Development Committee, “Why Holliston,” n.d. Link: <https://hollistonedc.com/why-holliston/>.
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), “Subregions,” n.d. Link: <https://www.mapc.org/get-involved/subregions/>.
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9. Holliston Economic Development Committee, “Commercial Real Estate,” n.d. Link: <https://hollistonedc.com/commercial-real-estate/>.
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11. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.
12. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1101.
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14. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.
15. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0101.
16. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.
17. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP05.
18. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1901.
19. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1701.
20. U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S1501.
21. MA Department of Economic Research (DER), Employment and Wages (ES-202), Annual Averages, 2021. Link: <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/lmi/employmentandwages>.
22. MA Department of Economic Research (DER), Employment and Wages (ES-202), Annual Averages, 2021. Link: <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/lmi/employmentandwages>.

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80. Comparisons have been compiled from municipal budget documents and websites; where possible, they have been

confirmed with municipal staff, who should be consulted for confirmation or provision of up-to-date information.

81. Town of Holliston, personal communication, January 24, 2023.

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93. This includes 4 full-time positions and one part-time position. Town of Medway, personal communication, February 14, 2023.

94. The job posting for this position references 19.5 hours per week. Salary.Com, Town of Southborough Economic Development Coordinator posting, 2022. Link: <https://www.salary.com/job/town-of-southborough/economic-development-coordinator/j202206092220456016791>.

95. This may include fees related to membership and dues, office supplies, professional development and training, events, contracted services, and advertising services.

96. This includes \$80,000.00 for Ashland’s Business Incentive Program, \$14,000.00 for advertising services, and \$8,500.00 for the Corner Spot, “a shared, sustainable community gathering place and incubator for pop up businesses.” Town of Ashland, “FY2023 Operating and Capital Budget,” 2022. Link: <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/9817/FY23-Budget-Document>. The Corner Spot, “Corner Spot FAQs,” n.d. Link: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b4f4bd7e17ba334e91c8d00/t/62856db73b32601b79134ec1/1652911543445/2022-CornerSpotFAQ.pdf>.

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99. This includes \$80,000.00 for Ashland's Business Incentive Program, \$14,000.00 for advertising services, and \$8,500.00 for the Corner Spot, "a shared, sustainable community gathering place and incubator for pop up businesses." Town of Ashland, "FY2023 Operating and Capital Budget," 2022. Link: <https://www.ashlandmass.com/DocumentCenter/View/9817/FY23-Budget-Document>. The Corner Spot, "Corner Spot FAQs," n.d. Link: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b4f4bd7e17ba334e91c8d00/t/62856db73b32601b79134ec1/1652911543445/2022-CornerSpotFAQ.pdf>

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108. Since the compilation of the last municipal budget, additional achievements have included 1) receipt of several grants, totaling \$4,334,960 in funding received (Mass Gaming Commission Phase 5 (\$136,000) of Regional Destination

Marketing Plan; MassWorks Grant (\$4,000,000) for Walnut Street signal and sewer project; and Community Compact for IT (\$198,960) to improve/expand online permitting for all land use departments, plus fire and administration); 2) receipt of additional funding allocations, totaling an additional \$650,000 in funding (\$100,000 ARPA (Walnut Street); \$500,000 House Bill 5374 (Walnut Street); and \$50,000 Mass FY 2023 Final Budget (Central St Parking Lot); 3) continued collaboration with the Foxborough Housing Authority on selecting a developer for Walnut St. senior housing project; 4) continued work to support 'Uptown' Foxborough (support for the Foxborough Common Business Collaborative and businesses, improved wayfinding amenities, increased programming, etc.), 5) continued improvement of outdoor dining policy, 6) classification as Silver level Mass Bio community, 7) launch of outreach and promotion materials (tourism website (www.visitfpw.com), professional videos and photography, billboard advertising), 8) work on response to Multi-Family Zoning Requirement for MBTA Communities, 9) support for Asset Review Committee (disposal/sale process for auditorium and school), 10) support for Planning Board (27 permit applications and 18 meetings plus site visits), and 11) support for Zoning Board (12 meetings plus site visit). Town of Foxborough, personal communication, February 13, 2023.

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118. Town of Hudson, “Economic Development Commission,” n.d. Link: <https://www.townofhudson.org/economic-development-commission>.

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124. More information about the Planning & Economic Development Board is available here: Town of Medway, “Planning & Economic Development Board,” n.d. Link: <https://www.townofmedway.org/planning-economic-development-board>. Town of Medway, “2021 Annual Report: Medway Planning and Economic Development Board,” n.d., p. 1. Link: https://www.townofmedway.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf8006/f/uploads/pedb_2021_annual_town_report_-_3-21-2022_final_-_web.pdf.

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135. Town of Hudson, “FY2023 Operating Budget,” December 2021, p. 86-91. Link: https://www.townofhudson.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf3281/f/news/fy2023_budget_documents.pdf.

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149. Potentially with additional support or services.

150. Strategy pursued in collaboration with EDC.

151. Strategy pursued in collaboration with EDC.

152. MA Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Rapid Recovery Plan: Downtown Hudson, 2021. Link: https://www.townofhudson.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf3281/f/uploads/hudson_lrrp_10082021_final.pdf.

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160. Town of Hudson, “Downtown Hudson Renaissance” presentation slides, presented to the MAPC Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) sub-region on March 1, 2022. Link: <https://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/MAPC-MAGIC.pptx.pdf>. Town of Hudson, “Assabet River Rail Trail,” n.d. Link: <https://www.townofhudson.org/assabet-river-rail-trail>.

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Appendices

A. Community Workshop Materials

A.1 Community Workshop Outreach Materials

Flyer:



What is your vision for economic development in Holliston?

Join us for a conversation about local commercial, industrial & mixed-use areas!

October 12 at 7-8:30 pm

Hybrid Community Workshop
Upper Town Hall
or via Zoom



Register here for in-person or remote attendance:
mapc.ma/HollistonWorkshop

Or scan QR code to register

Hosted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Town of Holliston's Economic Development Committee (EDC)

Social Media Graphic:



What is your vision for economic development in Holliston?

Join us for a conversation about local commercial, industrial & mixed-use areas!

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Hybrid Community Workshop
Upper Town Hall or via Zoom

Register here for in-person or remote attendance:
mapc.ma/HollistonWorkshop



Hosted by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in partnership with the Town of Holliston's Economic Development Committee (EDC)

A.2 Community Workshop Slides



Holliston Economic Development Vision & Service Model Plan: Community Workshop

October 12, 2022, 7:00 to 8:30 pm
Upper Town Hall or via Zoom



Agenda

- **Welcome & Introductions**
- **Community Profile Video**
- **Existing Conditions**
 - Target area descriptions
 - Demographic indicators
 - Economic indicators
 - Envisioning Future Holliston survey results
- **Small Group Discussion Assignment/Break**
- **Small Group Discussions**
- **Conclusion & Next Steps**

Agenda

★ Welcome & Introductions

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- **Existing Conditions**
 - Target area descriptions
 - Demographic indicators
 - Economic indicators
 - Envisioning Future Holliston survey results
- **Small Group Discussion Assignment/Break**
- **Small Group Discussions**
- **Conclusion & Next Steps**

Project Team & Partners



**Metropolitan
Area Planning
Council (MAPC)**



**Town of
Holliston**



**Economic
Development
Committee (EDC)**

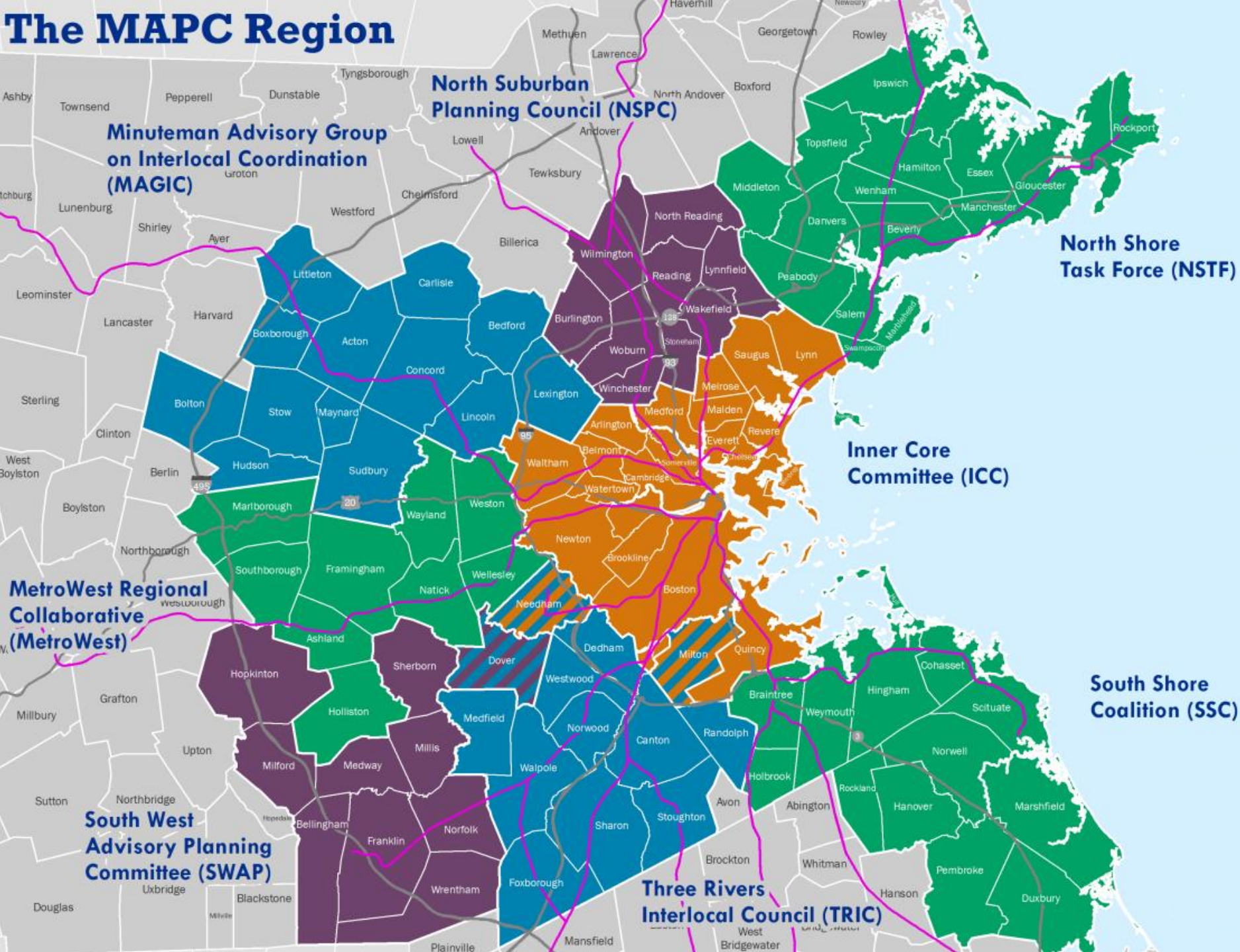


**Economic
Development
Entities/Partners**



**Holliston
Community**

The MAPC Region



About Us:

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is the regional planning agency serving the people who live and work in the 101 cities and towns of Metro Boston. Our mission is to promote smart growth & regional collaboration.

Agenda

- **Welcome & Introductions**
- ★ **Community Profile Video**
- **Existing Conditions**
 - Target area descriptions
 - Demographic indicators
 - Economic indicators
 - Envisioning Future Holliston survey results
- **Small Group Discussion Assignment/Break**
- **Small Group Discussions**
- **Conclusion & Next Steps**

Community Profile Video



Town of Holliston, 2022.

[Click here to access.](#)



Feedback

1) Were there specific parts that resonated with how you view Holliston?

2) Are there economic development themes you feel should be more strongly emphasized?

Examples include the types of jobs in Holliston, current or desired businesses, and community members' contributions to the town's economic vitality.

Please share your comments in the chat.

Additional questions or comments may be directed to abliss@mapc.org. Thank you!

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Opportunities for Increased Economic Activity

1



**Commercial
Districts**

2



**Village Central
Commercial
District**

3



**Industrial
Districts**

4



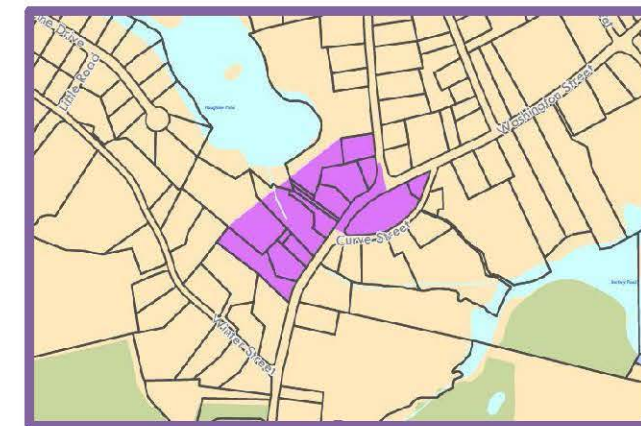
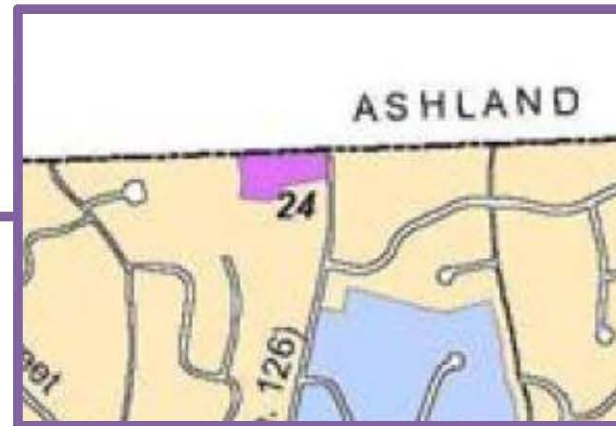
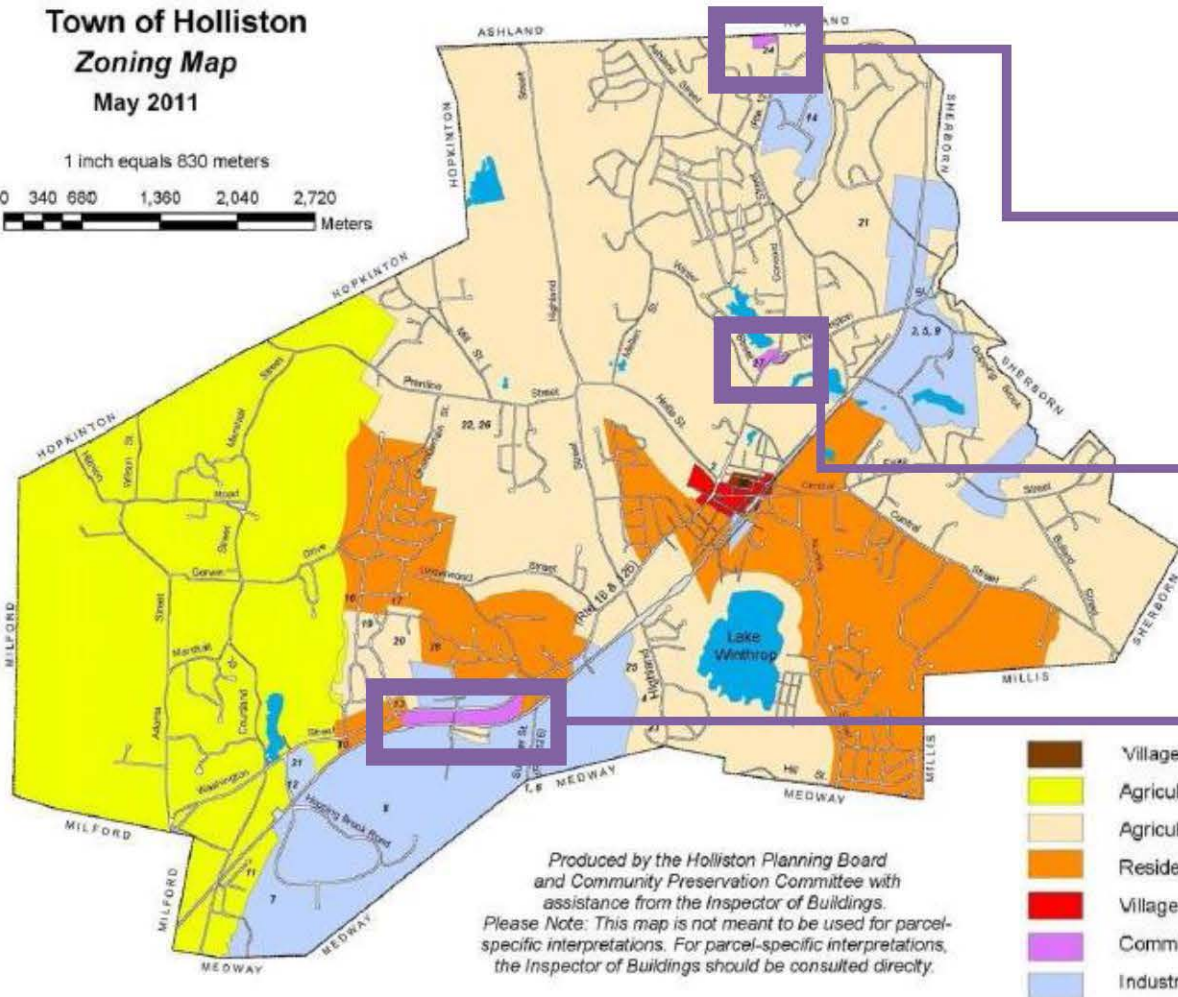
**Upper Charles
Rail Trail**

Commercial Districts (C-1)

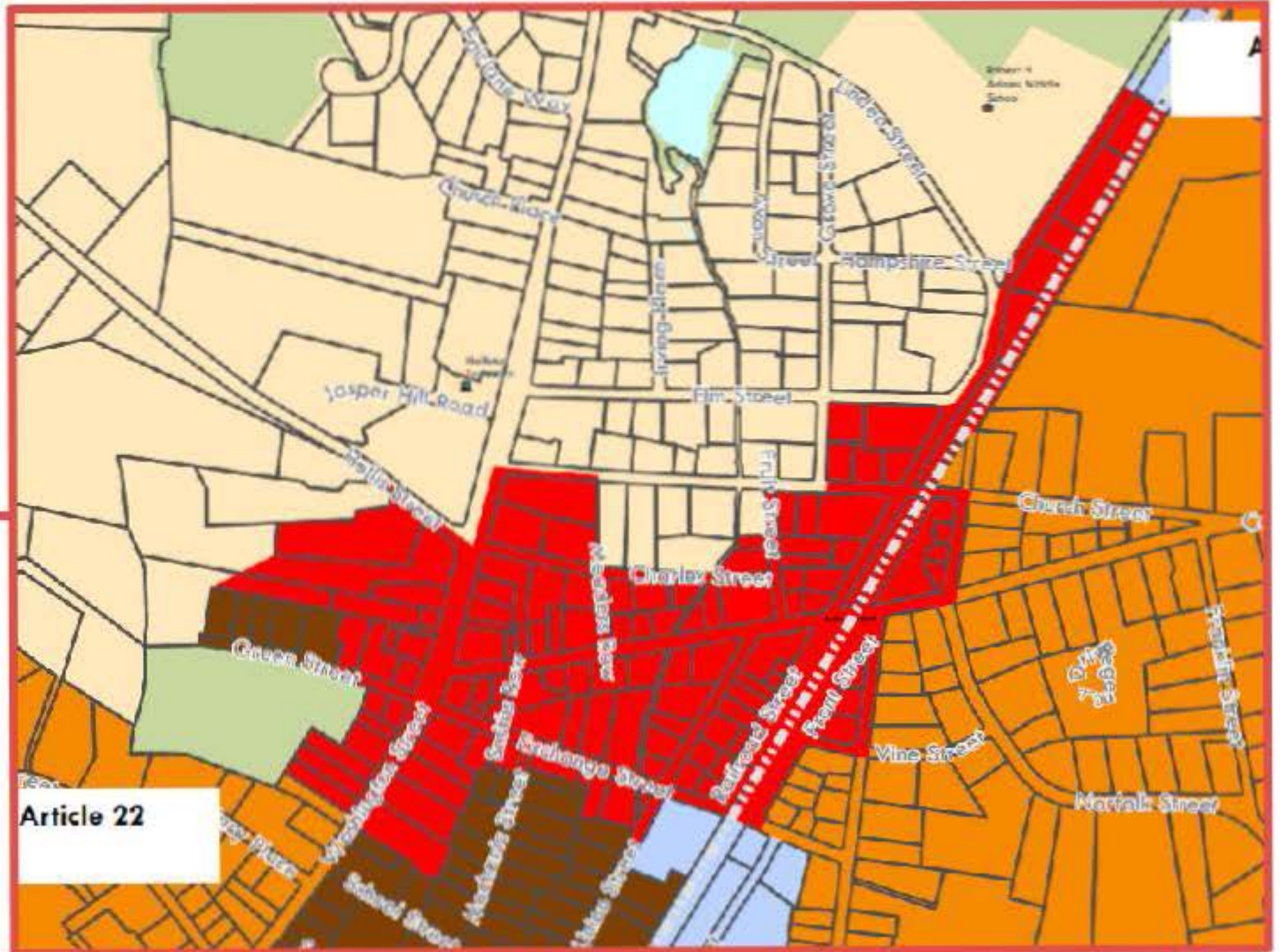
**Town of Holliston
Zoning Map
May 2011**

1 inch equals 830 meters

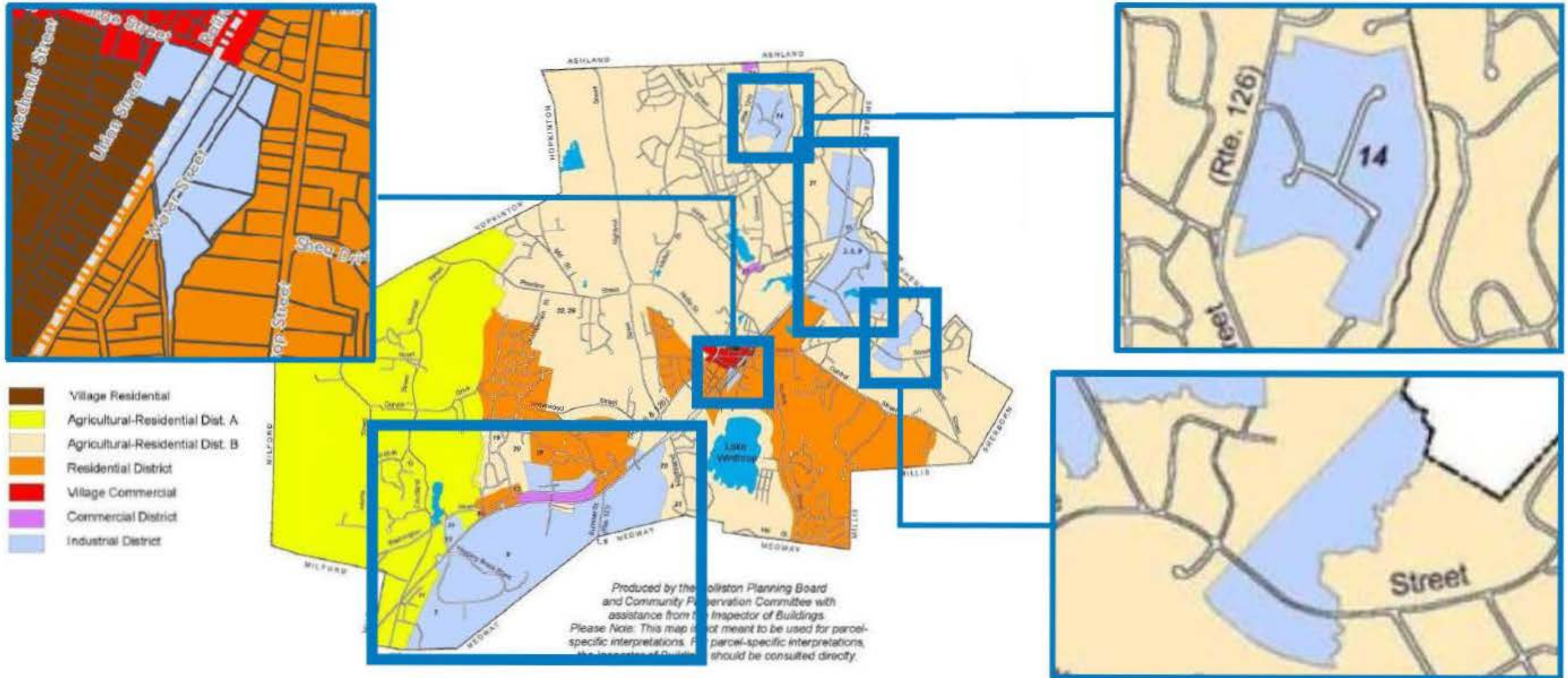
0 340 680 1,360 2,040 2,720
Meters



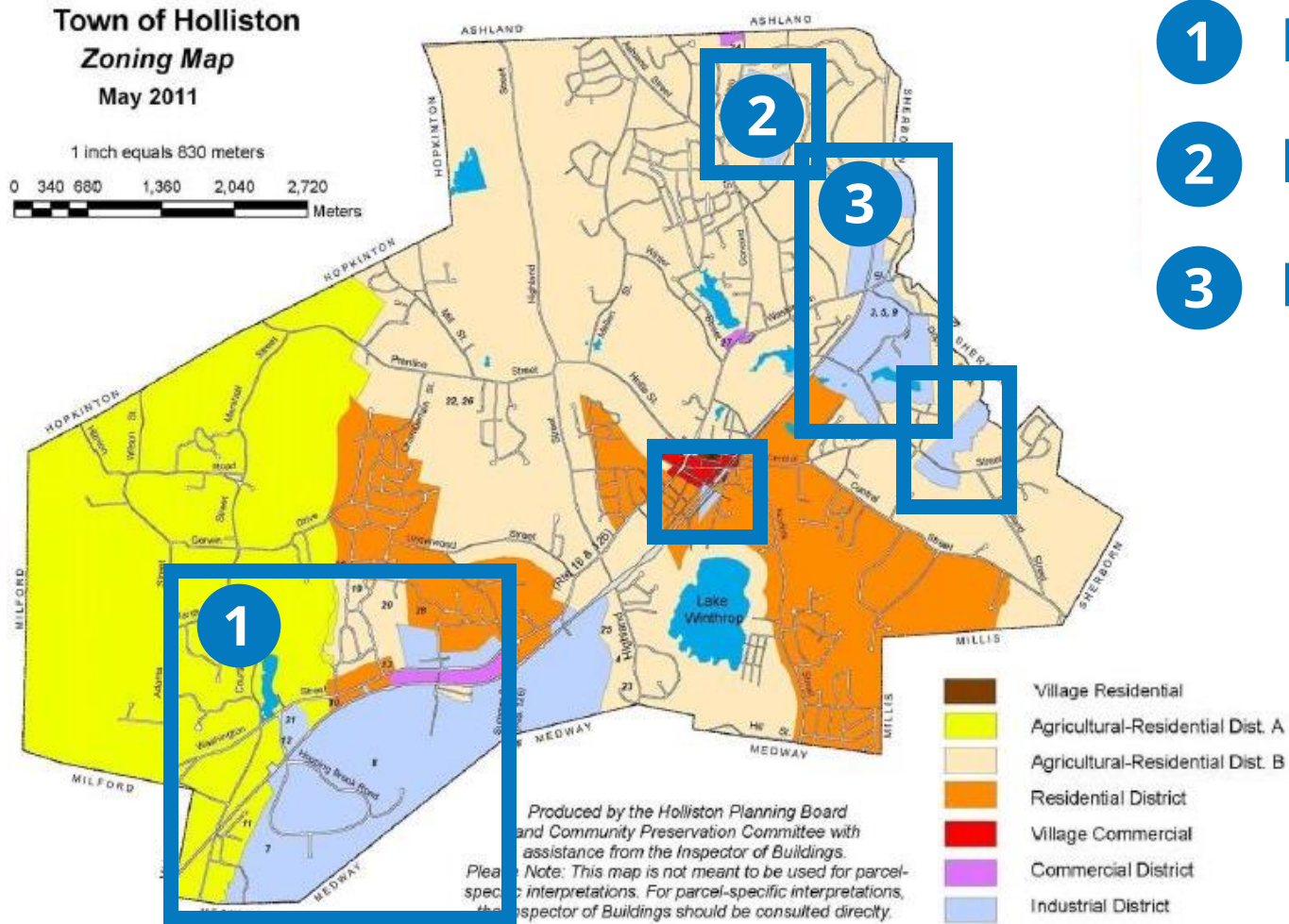
Village Central Commercial District (VC)



Industrial Districts (I)

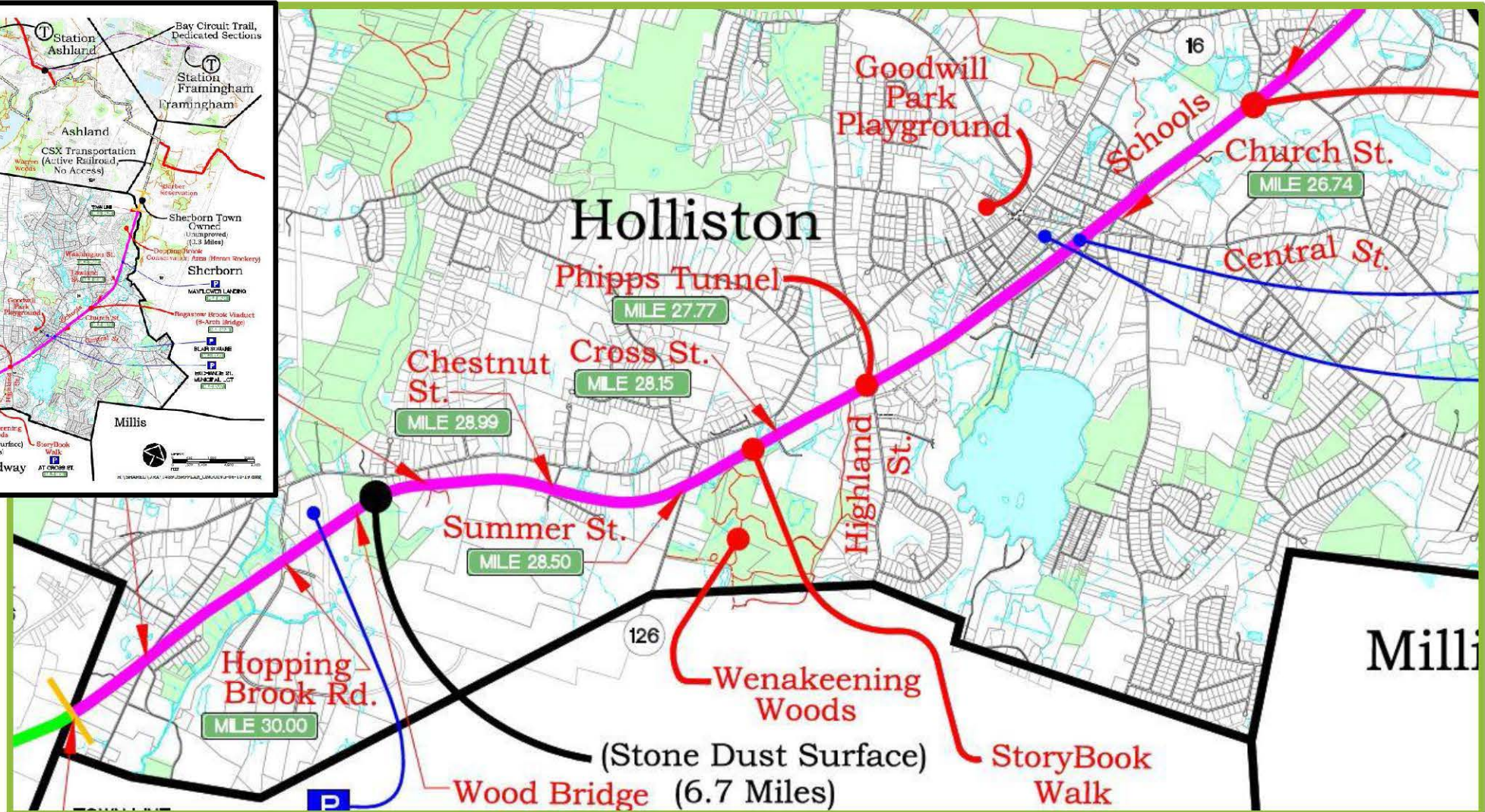
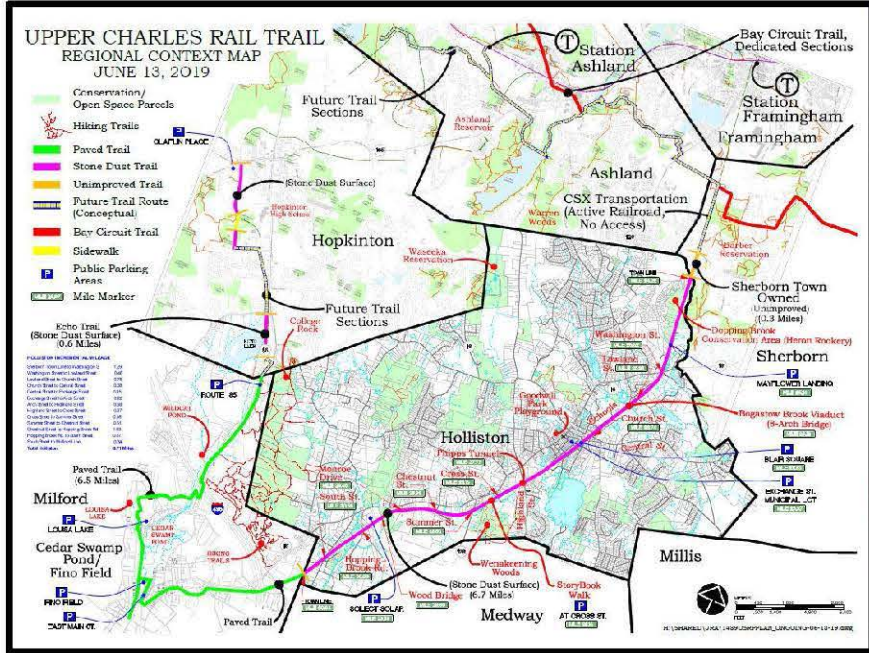


Industrial Districts (I)



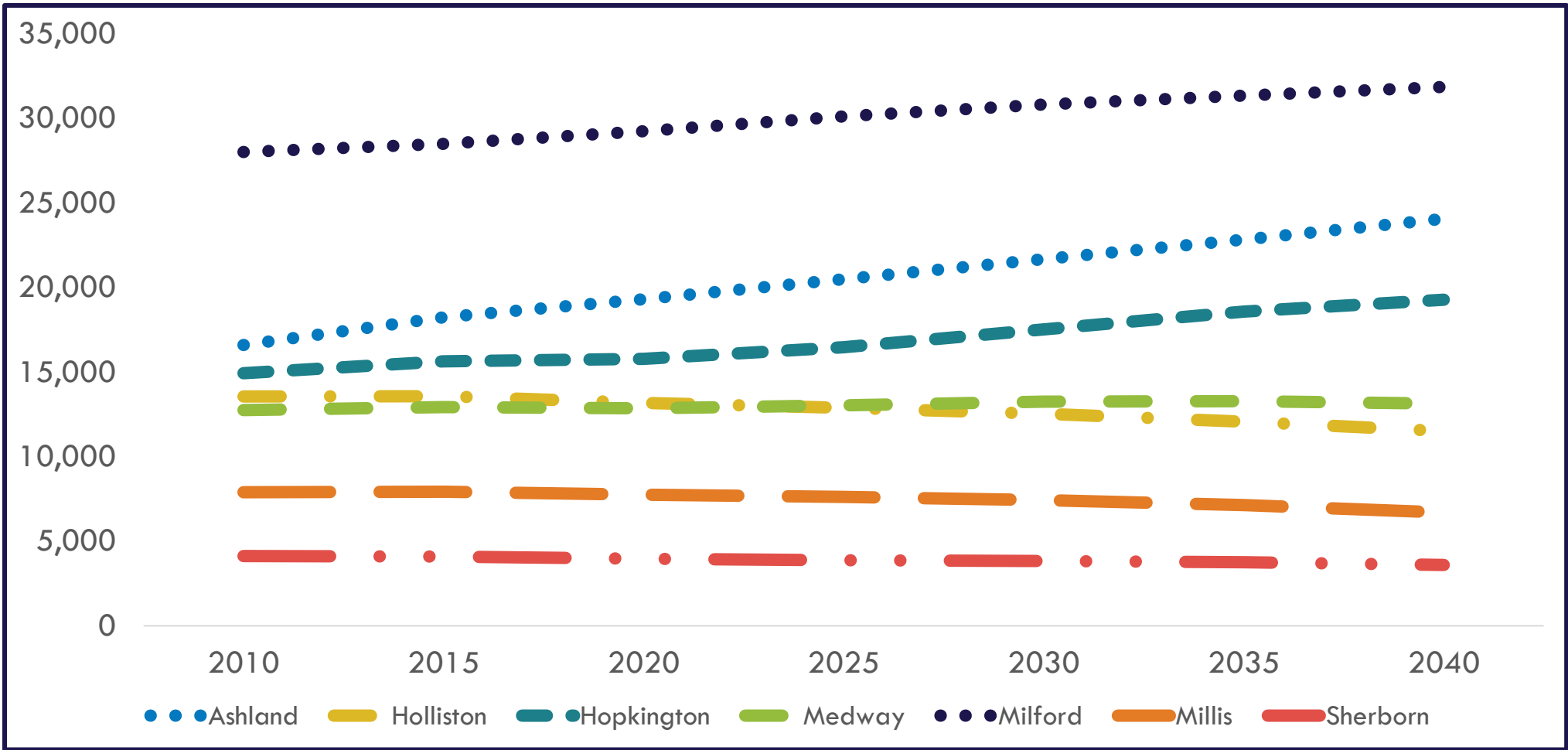
- 1 Hopping Brook Park
- 2 New Englander Industrial Park
- 3 Lowland Industrial Park

Upper Charles Rail Trail



Holliston Demographics: Population

Projected Population Change (2010-2040)



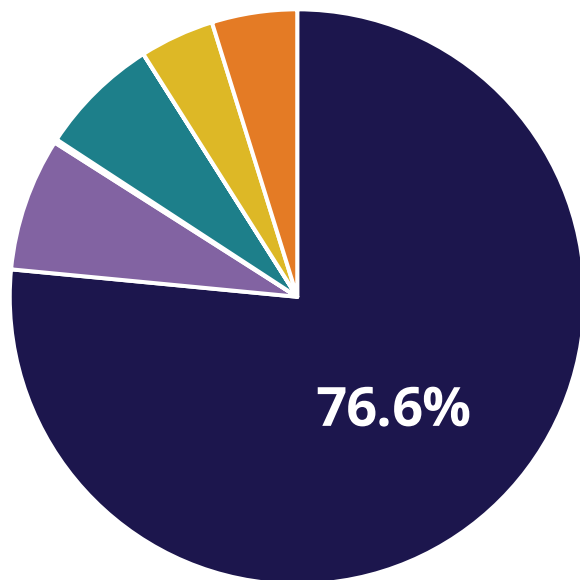
14,792
Total Population

5,452
Households

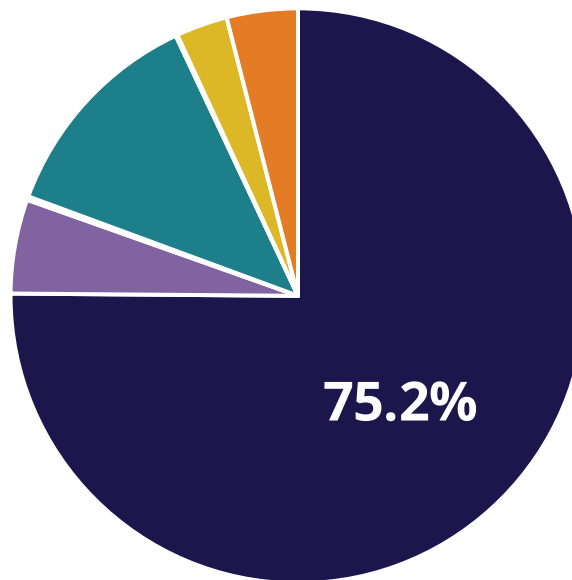
2.7
Average
Household Size

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP05, S1101. UMass Donahue Institute, Population Estimates Program.

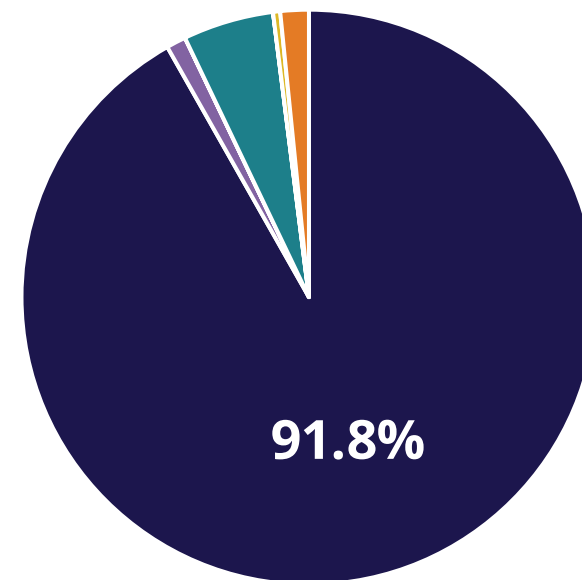
Holliston Demographics: Race



Massachusetts



Middlesex County



Holliston

■ White
■ Asian
■ Two or more races

■ Black or African American
■ Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander

■ American Indian and Alaska Native
■ Some other race

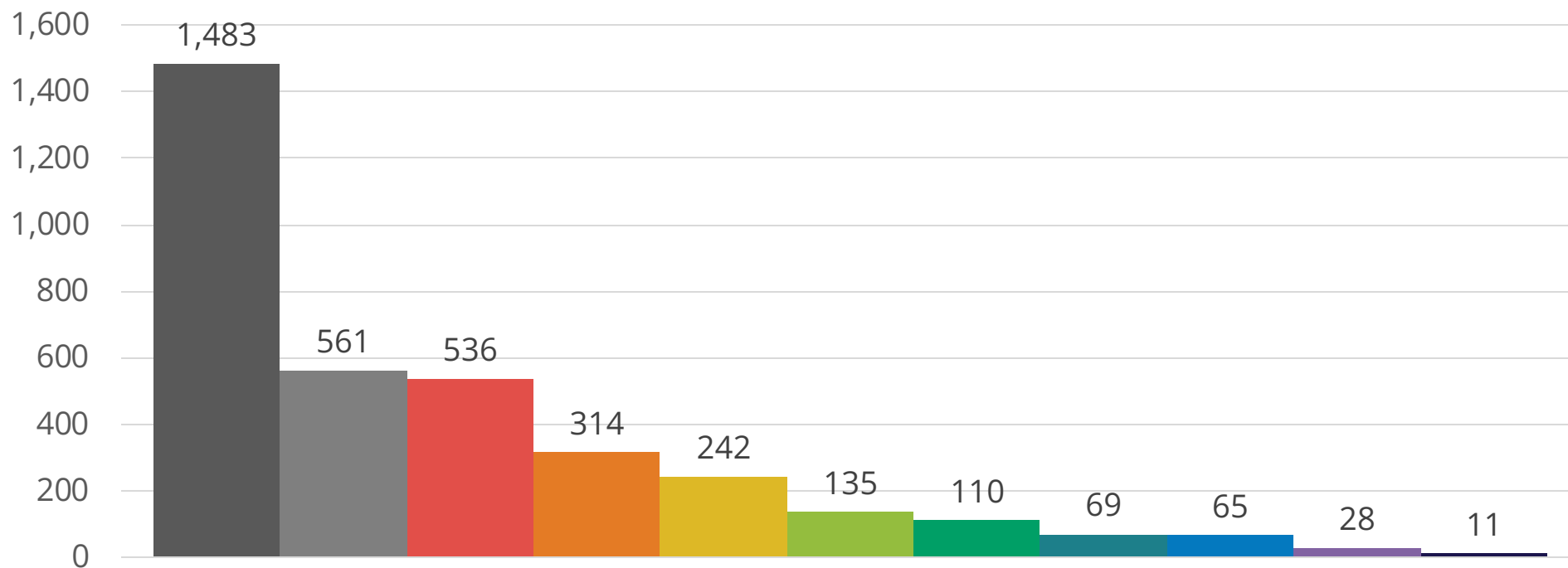
Holliston Demographics: State & County Comparisons

| | Median Age | Median Household Income | Poverty Rate | Bachelor's or Higher |
|------------------|------------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Holliston | 43.7 years | \$137,589 | 2.3% | 65.7% |
| Middlesex County | 38.5 years | \$106,202 | 7.2% | 57.1% |
| Massachusetts | 39.4 years | \$84,385 | 9.8% | 44.5% |

Holliston unemployment rate (August 2022): 2.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables DP05, S1901, S1701, S1501. MA Dept. of Economic Research, Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment: Massachusetts Cities and Towns, July 2022. Educational attainment rate for population 25 years and over.

Holliston Economy: Employment



- Construction
- Administrative and Waste Services
- Other Services, Except Public Administration
- Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- Finance and Insurance
- Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- Wholesale Trade
- Health Care and Social Assistance
- Accommodation and Food Services
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- Information

527

Establishments
(2021 Annual)

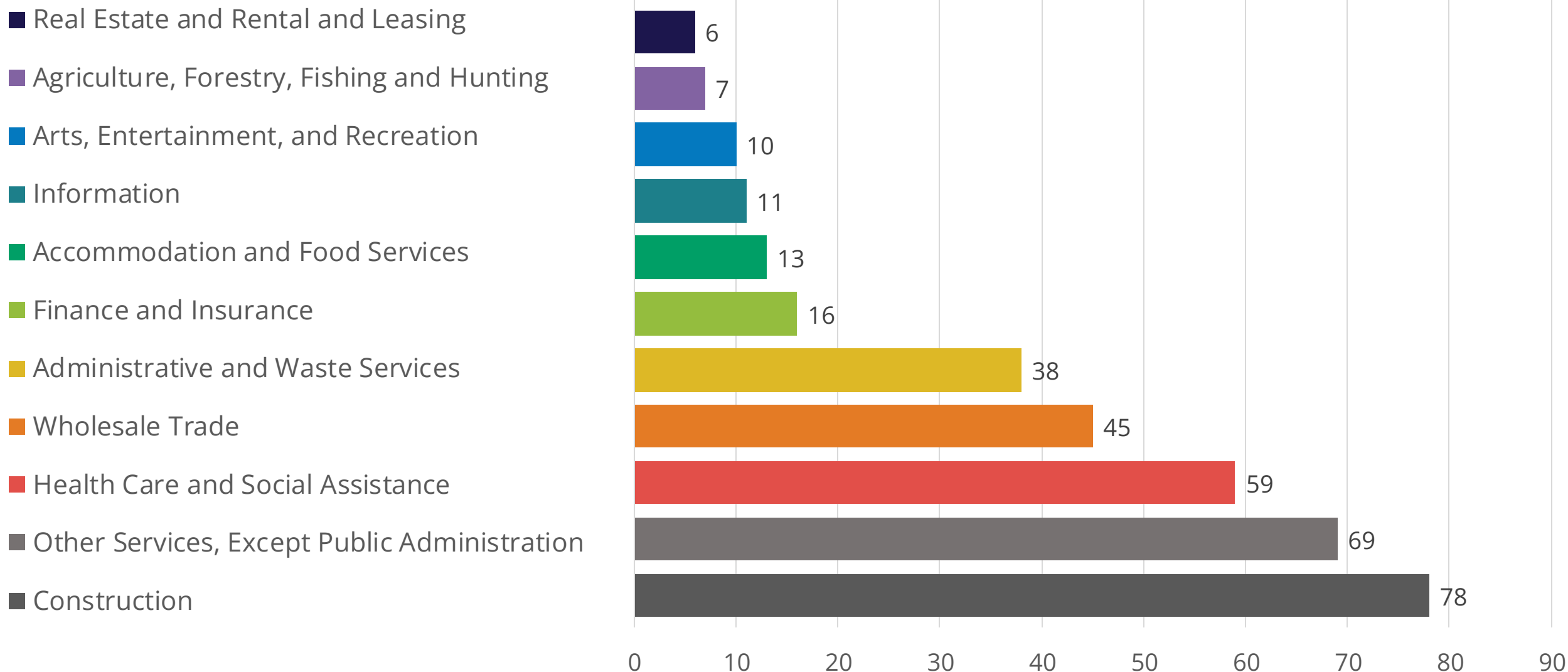
6,448

Average Monthly
Employment
(2021 Annual)

\$1,615

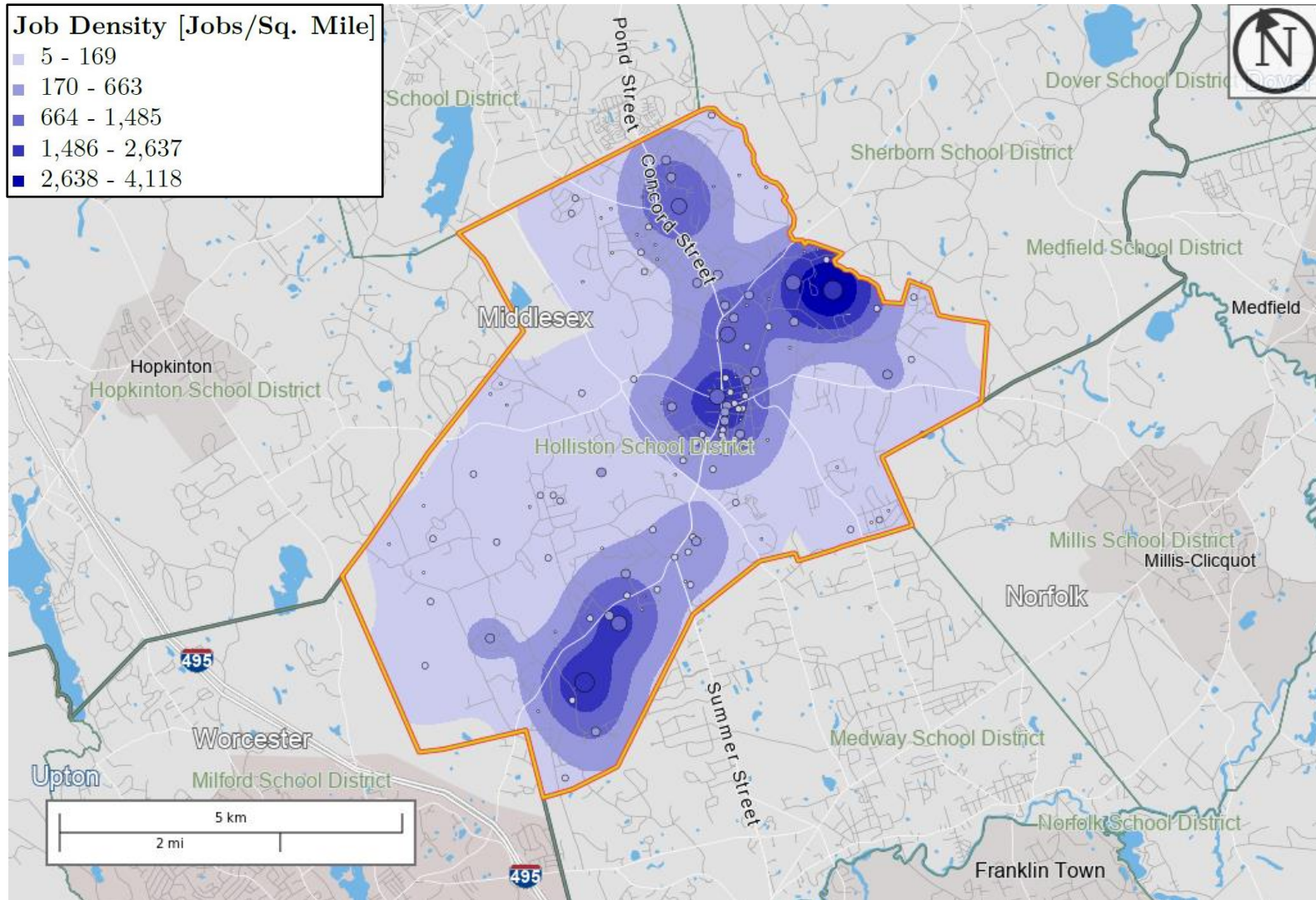
Average
Weekly Wages
(2021 Annual)

Holliston Economy: Sectors by Establishments



Source: MA Department of Economic Research, Employment and Wages (ES-202), 2021 annual data.

Holliston Economy: Concentration of Employment

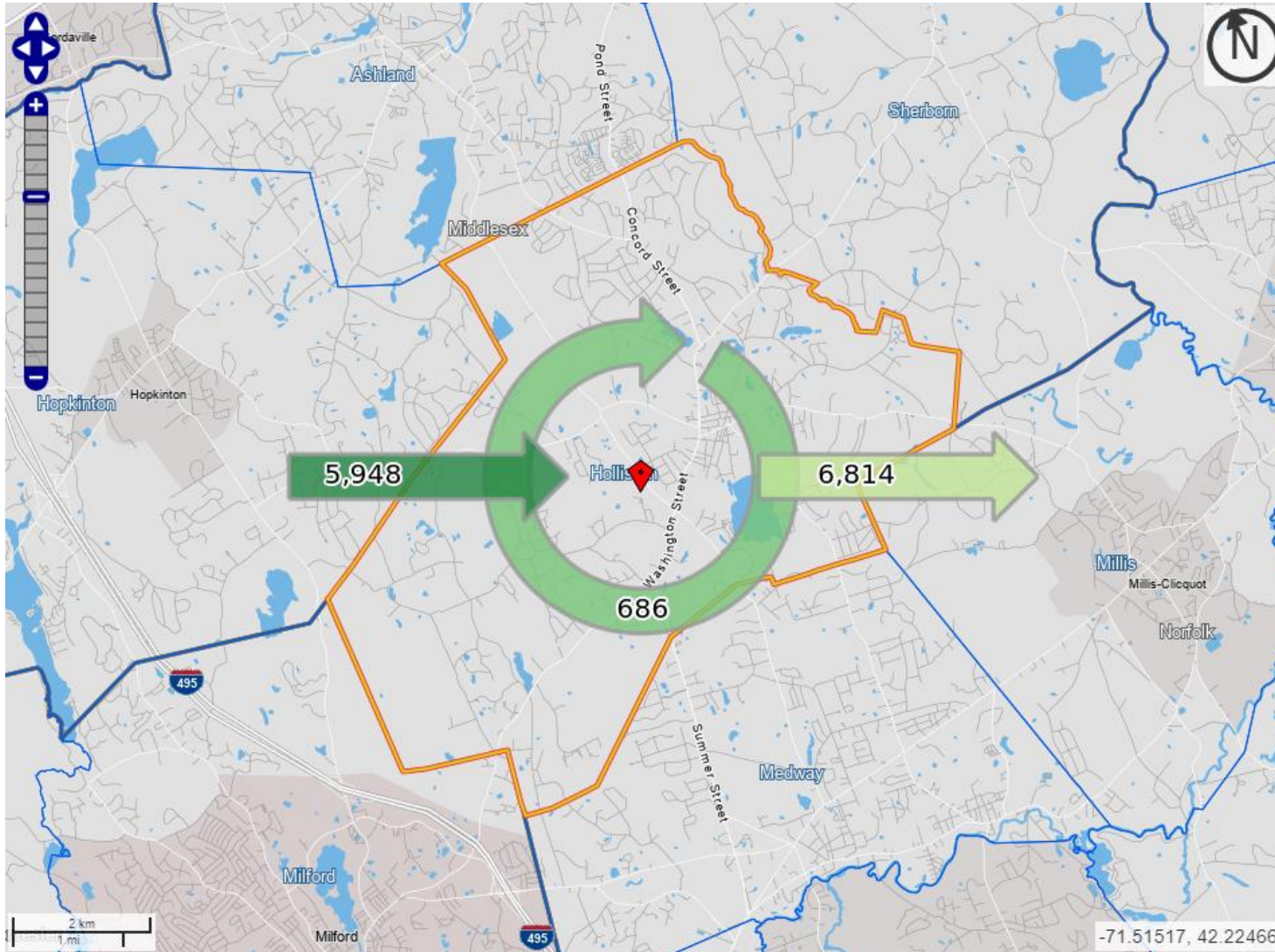


Largest Employers

100-249 Employees

- CONMED Corp / October Hill Rd
- Entegris Inc / High Rock Rd
- Fred Miller Elementary School / Woodland St
- Harvard Bioscience Inc / October Hill Rd
- Holliston Fire Dept / Central St
- Holliston High School / Hollis St
- Lista International Corp / Lowland St
- Placentino Elementary School / Woodland St
- Robert Adams Middle School / Woodland St

Holliston Economy: Inflow/Outflow Analysis



Employed in Holliston:

6,634 / 100.0%

Employed in Holliston but Living Outside: 5,948 / 89.7%

Employed and Living in Holliston: 686 / 10.3%

Living in Holliston:

7,500 / 100.0%

Living in Holliston but Employed Outside: 6,814 / 90.9%

Living and Employed in Holliston: 686 / 9.1%

Holliston Economy: Resident Commuting Patterns

Means of Transportation to Work (16 years and over)

| | |
|---|--------------|
| Car, truck, or van | 82.3% |
| Public transportation (excluding taxicab) | 4.0% |
| Walked | 0.6% |
| Bicycle | 0.2% |
| Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means | 1.0% |
| Worked from home | 11.9% |

Mean travel time to work: **38.6 minutes***

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table S0801. *Workers 16 years and over who did not work from home.

Envisioning Future Holliston (EFH) Survey #2

Envisioning Future Holliston

- Created 5/2021 as Comprehensive Long-Range Planning Committee

Survey #1: 11/2021-1/2022

- WHAT matters to residents about the town
- 400 responses

Survey #2: 6/2022-8/2022

- HOW residents want to reach identified goals
- 1,105 responses (> 7% of population)

EFH Survey #2: Categories & Average Rankings

- Environment (4.38)
- Town Services (4.25)
- Schools & Education (4.17)
- Public Recreation (4.15)
- Connectivity & Mobility (3.98)
- Library (3.98)
- Community Character & Design (3.98)
- Age Friendly (3.93)
- Climate Resiliency & Sustainability (3.92)
- **Economy (3.94)**
- Housing (3.40)



**More information
available via:**

FutureHolliston.com

Economic Development Priorities: Overall

-  **Promote support for existing small businesses.**
-  **Proactively attract new, small businesses that will diversify or expand local goods and services offered.**
-  **Enhance enforcement mechanisms to address commercial property neglect, blight, nuisance, noise, and/or pollution.**

Economic Development Priorities: Race & Ethnicity

Asian

1. Proactively attract new, small businesses that will diversify or expand local goods and services offered.

2. Proactively attract new, sustainable corporations to expand goods, services and job opportunities.

2. Enhance enforcement mechanisms to address commercial property neglect, blight, nuisance, noise, and/or pollution.

Hispanic

1. Enhance enforcement mechanisms to address commercial property neglect, blight, nuisance, noise, and/or pollution.

2. Ensure town industrial parks are at or near full capacity with tenants.

2. Promote support for existing small businesses.

Two or More

1. Proactively attract new, sustainable corporations to expand goods, services and job opportunities.

1. Proactively attract new, small businesses that will diversify or expand local goods and services offered.

2. Expand the commercial tax base to benefit municipal services, schools and affordability.

Other

1. Promote support for existing small businesses.

2. Ensure agricultural space is actively used for its intended agricultural purpose.

2. Expand town sewer to downtown (Washington/Central) to diversify business, wellness and municipal offerings.

Economic Development Priorities: Race & Ethnicity

Asian

1. Proactively attract new, small businesses that will diversify or expand local goods and services offered.

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Hispanic

1. Enhance enforcement mechanisms to address commercial property neglect, blight, nuisance, noise, and/or pollution.

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Two or More

1. Proactively attract new, sustainable corporations to expand goods, services and job opportunities.

1. Proactively attract new, small businesses that will diversify or expand local goods and services offered.

2. Expand the commercial tax base to benefit municipal services, schools and affordability.

Other

1. Promote support for existing small businesses.

2. Ensure agricultural space is actively used for its intended agricultural purpose.

2. Expand town sewer to downtown (Washington/Central) to diversify business, wellness and municipal offerings.

Open-Ended Responses: Key Questions

- 1 What other economic goals do you recommend?
- 2 What other town service goals do you recommend?
- 3 Given potential financial constraints, what areas of improvement would you like the town to prioritize in the next 3 years?

What other economic goals do you recommend?

Business Development Activities

- > “[W]hy cant [we] revitalize a space downtown or in one of our empty industrial parks to create something like Boston Public Market?...”
- > “I’d love to see a small fund to help small businesses improve their ‘curb appeal’ to get customers in from the street such as window boxes, signage etc.”
- > “Someone in town hall to reach out to small business. Never during the height of the pandemic (or at any other time) did I hear from anyone alerting me to grants or wondering how I was doing...”
- > “I would add, incentivize small businesses owned by people from underrepresented groups (women owned, immigrant-owned, black-owned, queer owned).”
- > “Support the businesses we have instead of trying to bring more in. Many are struggling and we don’t want lots of boarded up storefronts downtown.”

What other town service goals do you recommend?

Transparency, Accessibility & Communication

- > “Really appreciate communication from town like Town Administrator's newsletter, Senior Center, Library Director. Enjoy being kept aware of upcoming events, etc. Wish other groups could find a way to advertise upcoming events on town's website. We are one community and I miss so many events because I'm not aware they are happening.”
- > “Get younger demographics more engaged.”
- > “[P]romote town-wide and neighborhood-level communication and transparency, to build more cohesion in town and create alignment around the future vision and key priorities.”
- > “The other issue that needs to be addressed is creating a more diverse body of leaders in town governance....Holliston needs to devise strategies for connecting with and hearing more from underrepresented populations within the community.”

What areas of improvement would you like the town to prioritize in the next 3 years?

Downtown Enhancement

- > “Sewer downtown, impose design standards to ensure subsequent business expansion protects the look and small town feel of downtown...”
- > “Clear guidelines for business development to bring in new types of business (maybe a couple more restaurants). Consider what needs to/should be downtown vs. outside of the downtown area (fewer auto and auto repair shops, and not another downtown gas station)...”
- > “Downtown revitalization. The greatest complaint I hear from others in my circle is that there is such limited opportunity to spend our money in Holliston.”

What areas of improvement would you like the town to prioritize in the next 3 years?

Business Type/Size & Community Character

- > “Expand sewer system to allow for more businesses/food shops downtown to economically support the town...”
- > “More restaurants/interesting small businesses, schools, more community/social activities to meet people.”
- > “...[T]ightening commercial codes to preserve small town feel (restriction of certain business and office parks, supporting small business, enforcing small town aesthetics on those businesses).”
- > “Increase the business tax revenue. Bring in industry in the industrial parks that were designed to handle them...”



Questions?

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 - **Conclusion & Next Steps**

Small Group Discussion Aims

- **Identify potential **priority action areas** for EDC & Town**
 - Understand what is exciting or interesting about the Town's economic activities
- **Identify potential **process improvements & priority actions** for economic development services**
 - Understand opportunities for increased economic vitality
 - Understand concerns or challenges related to capitalizing on those opportunities

EDC = Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC)

Small Group Assignment & Ground Rules

- **Be fully present**
- **Use “I” statements**
- **Take space, make space**
- **Use accessible language**
- **Listen for understanding**
- **Expand your comfort zone**
- **Remember to use the chat!**

Chatham House Rules

**Outside this group,
share the story but
keep it anonymous!**

After a brief break, please join your small group. Thank you!

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|| Small Group Discussion: Introductions

Introductions

- **Name**
- **Relationship to Holliston**
 - Resident, business owner, employee, etc.

Small Group Discussion Prompts: Part 1

Priority Action Areas

- **What do you view as opportunities for economic development in Holliston?**
- **What are the challenges to capitalizing on those opportunities?**

Follow-up comment or question? Email abliss@mapc.org!

Small Group Discussion Prompts: Part 2

Process Improvements & Priority Actions

- What actions can the EDC take to capitalize on the opportunities we have discussed?
- What actions can the EDC take to address the challenges we have discussed?
- Of these actions, which would you like to see prioritized?

Follow-up comment or question? Email abliss@mapc.org!

Agenda

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Conclusion & Next Steps

Upcoming Project Milestones

- Organizational support analysis (October-December)
- Existing conditions report (December)
- Final recommendations (February)

Follow-up comment or question? Email abliss@mapc.org!

A.3 Community Workshop Notes

Holliston Economic Development Community Workshop October 12, 2022 | Small Group Discussion Takeaways

Small Group Core Themes

- Downtown enhancement – Enhancing the built environment
 - Sewer infrastructure (both support and questions)
 - Address challenges including parking, blight, sewer, “dead zones”
- Downtown enhancement – Enhancing the user experience/establish a sense of place
 - Destinations/offerings for rail trail users
 - Connect rail trail beyond community (East Cost Byway)
 - Awareness/marketing of rail trail
 - Funnel commercial activity to designated areas
- Small business support and attraction
 - COVID-19 recovery (funding to “grow, pivot, recover”)
 - Mix of small business types
 - Identification of business needs/communication
 - Constraints of building stock on potential small businesses
 - Both downtown and in other areas
 - Events (for small businesses, artists; Natick Nights)
 - Events leveraging/connecting local arts community to downtown
 - Tourism (agricultural and nature-based assets)
- Industrial parks
 - Traffic impacts
 - Potential for growing industries (clean energy)
 - Tension with small town feel
 - Funnel development to designated areas
 - Potential to expand tax base
- Diversity and inclusion
 - Town boards (Natick Citizen’s Academy)

- o Among both residents and business owners
 - o Housing stock, industrial uses, schools' relationship to demographics
 - o Awareness of Holliston among potential residents, including families
 - o Amenities for a range of ages (bike and pedestrian infrastructure, parks, senior or community center (Yarmouth, MA), sports and aquatic facilities)
- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure
 - o Walkability/bike-ability of downtown (Concord, Wellesley)
 - o Use of open space for recreation
 - o Importance to teens, families
 - o Mitigation strategy for traffic impacts

Information Gaps

- Sewer infrastructure status and potential impacts
- Bike and pedestrian infrastructure connection to economic development, potential
- Small business needs and opportunities ('Hidden Entrepreneurs')
- Industrial parks tenant mix, impacts, potential

B. Focus Group & Interview Materials

B.1 Economic Development Committee (EDC) Focus Group Slides

Holliston Economic Development Vision & Service Model Plan: Economic Development Committee (EDC) Focus Group

November 21, 2022



Agenda

- Welcome
- EDC Purpose
- EDC Focus
- Questions & Next Steps

Provided Materials:

Focus group agenda • Focus group slides

Agenda

★ Welcome

- EDC Purpose
- EDC Focus
- Questions & Next Steps



Aims

1. Review the EDC's current mission
2. Evaluate potential scenarios for the EDC's focus moving forward

Agenda

- Welcome

- ★ EDC Purpose

- EDC Focus

- Questions & Next Steps

|| Community Example: Ashland, MA

The Economic Development Advisory Group serves in an advisory capacity to provide recommendations that adhere to the town's overall strategic plan. The group will help be the voice to educate residents on the importance of economic development. It will work proactively to encourage existing businesses to continue doing business in Ashland as well as work to attract new businesses via marketing strategies and outreach. The group will look for ways to stimulate overall economic activity within town.

|| Community Example: Auburn, MA (1/2)

The mission of the Economic Development Committee is to make recommendations to the Town Manager on strategies for stimulating economic development in Auburn. This includes developing recommendations for strategies to attract new business, to encourage business expansion, and to retain existing businesses with a goal of: Increasing Auburn's commercial and industrial base; Redeveloping underutilized and vacant properties; Creating jobs; Creating an environment conducive to business development.

Community Example: Auburn, MA (2/2)

Specific objectives include assisting to:

- Develop inventory of vacant/underutilized properties
- Identify available programs, services and resources in the region for business development
- Create collateral materials for use in business development activities
- Develop strategies to address issues and concerns identified by local businesses including input from the Business Roundtable

Community Example: Concord, MA (1/2)

Purpose & goals of the Economic Vitality Committee:

- Define Economic Vitality as it applies to the four Concord retail districts
- Research and suggest ways to connect tourists to the business districts
- Explore and make recommendations about the role of transportation in accomplishing goals
- Explore and recommend revenue sources such as public-private partnerships, grants, etc.

Community Example: Concord, MA (2/2)

Purpose & goals of the Economic Vitality Committee:

- Make recommendations as to how the Town can support the business districts with existing resources
- Explore ways to benefit from regional efforts to achieve similar goals
- Balance the vitality of businesses and tourism with our collective ongoing stewardship of town historic and cultural resources

|| Holliston EDC Mission Statement

The Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC) works proactively to promote, encourage, and facilitate the development of responsible and properly planned commercial and industrial growth within the community in order to expand and strengthen the local economy and diversify the community's tax base and to give the Town's residents more opportunities to live, work and thrive in an economically forward-looking and financially strong community.



EDC Purpose

How does the Holliston EDC's mission compare to the missions of other committees/groups?

|| Holliston EDC Purpose

In your words...

- “Expand and strengthen of our local economy as well as diversify the community’s tax base. Be a resource for existing businesses to grow and remain in Holliston, an advocate to overcome perceived roadblocks and define the opportunity costs of inaction or ‘no.’”
- “To connect the town to the business community while helping existing businesses to thrive and providing a welcoming platform for new businesses to come into town.”



EDC
Purpose

Do your descriptions of the EDC's purpose align with its mission statement?

If not, where do they differ?

Agenda

- Welcome
- EDC Purpose
- ★ EDC Focus
- Questions & Next Steps

Holliston EDC Focus

How would you rank the following scenarios for potential focus areas for the EDC moving forward?



A



B



C



A

Scenario A:

EDC devotes **75%** of its resources toward small business support and **25%** of its resources toward industrial park support.



A

Sample small business support activities:

- Maintaining up-to-date business inventory & monitoring key indicators (businesses, jobs, vacancies)*
- Co-organizing street fairs, farmers markets, or other events featuring local businesses*
- Conducting routine surveys or conversations on small business experiences & needs
- Monitoring & promoting small business technical assistance & grant opportunities
- Serving as a liaison between small business owners & Town staff & boards

* With specific focus on Village Center Commercial District focus area



A

Sample industrial park support activities:

- Monitoring industrial park occupancy, business mix & additional real estate trends
- Promoting industrial parks with marketing materials based on key indicators



B

Scenario B:

EDC devotes **50%** of its resources toward industrial park support, **25%** of its resources toward Village Center small business support, and **25%** of its resources toward capacity building and collaboration.



B

Sample industrial park support activities:

- Monitoring industrial park occupancy, business mix & other real estate trends
- Promoting industrial parks with marketing materials based on key indicators
- Conducting roundtables with tenants & property owners & meet-and-greets with new tenants
- Serving as liaison between industrial park tenants & property owners & Town staff & boards
- Coordinating with Town staff & boards to define response process to potential tenant inquiry
- Facilitating response to potential tenant inquiry, including public outreach



B

Sample small business support activities:

- Conducting roundtable conversations with Village Center small business owners
- Serving as a liaison between Village Center small business owners & Town staff & boards

Sample collaboration & capacity-building activities:

- Participating in regional chamber of commerce & other organization events & programming
- Brokering collaborative projects or programming with other municipalities, state partners, etc.
- Connecting community members to civic volunteer & training opportunities



C

Scenario C:

EDC devotes **70%** of its resources toward infrastructure, zoning, and permitting initiatives, **15%** of its resources toward small business support, and **15%** of its resources toward industrial park support.



C

Sample infrastructure, zoning & permitting initiatives:

- Identifying & applying to funding opportunities for infrastructure projects, including planning, design & implementation activities*
 - Studying & addressing economic impacts
- Reviewing & updating Town zoning bylaws for enhanced economic activity
- Updating & revising business permitting processes

* With specific focus on Village Center Commercial District focus area



C

Sample small business support activities:

- Conducting roundtable conversations with small business owners
- Serving as a liaison between small business owners & Town staff & boards

Sample industrial park support activities:

- Conducting roundtables with tenants & property owners & meet-and-greets with new tenants
- Serving as liaison between industrial park tenants & property owners & Town staff & boards



EDC
Focus

How would you rank the
described scenarios?



Scenario A



Scenario B



Scenario C



EDC
Focus

Are there any scenarios you would eliminate? Why?



EDC Focus

How would you modify and/or mix the described scenarios?

Are there opportunities to sequence scenarios/scenario elements based on the urgency of specific community needs?

Agenda

- Welcome
- EDC Purpose
- EDC Focus
- ★ Questions & Next Steps



Questions?

Thank you!

MAPC's existing conditions
presentation will take place on
Thursday, December 15 at 7:00 pm

Abigail Bliss (abliss@mapc.org) • Angela Brown (Abrown@mapc.org)

B.2 Peer Communities Focus Group Agenda

Town of Holliston/MAPC

Community Focus Group Agenda

Monday, December 5, 2022 – 5:30 PM

Location: Remote

1. Welcome
 - a. Introductions
 - b. Project context
 - c. Discussion aims
2. Discussion of economic development service models
 1. What are the current economic development focus areas in your community?
 2. How are economic development services provided in your community?
 3. What is your volunteer economic development group's purpose or mission?
 4. How does your volunteer economic development group collaborate with other boards or municipal staff? How does it collaborate with community groups or members?
3. Discussion of economic development volunteer roles & responsibilities
 1. What are the responsibilities for a member of your community's volunteer economic development group?
 2. What technical skills or tools are necessary for these responsibilities?
 3. How much time do volunteers devote per week, on average?
4. Discussion of economic development service model strengths & challenges
 1. What do you view as your community's recent economic development accomplishments or milestones? What role did the volunteer group play in these accomplishments, if any?
 2. What do you view as the volunteer group's own recent accomplishments or milestones? What factors contributed to these successes?
 3. What challenges has your community or economic development volunteer group encountered in advancing its economic development goals?
5. Questions

B.3 Regional Partner Interview Agenda

Town of Holliston/MAPC

Regional Partner Interview Agenda

Monday, December 5, 2022 – 1:00 PM

Location: Remote via Teams

1. Welcome
 - a. Project and community context
2. Discussion of regional organization
 - a. Regional organization's mission & structure
 - b. Regional organization's economic development services
 - i. Data, capacity building, technical assistance resources, business support services, assistance in accessing economic development resources or programs
 - c. Regional organization's collaboration with municipalities
 - i. Communication or collaborations with Town of Holliston and/or Holliston Economic Development Committee (EDC), if applicable
3. Discussion of potential resources for the EDC
 - a. Regional organization's potential resources
 - b. Opportunities for collaboration
 - c. Additional regional trends & resources
4. Questions & thank you

C. Recommendations Matrix

C.1 Matrix Strategies

Small Business Support:

1. Maintaining up-to-date business inventory & monitoring key indicators (businesses, jobs, vacancies)*
2. Co-organizing street fairs, farmers markets, or other events featuring local businesses*
3. Conducting routine surveys or conversations on small business experiences & needs
4. Monitoring & promoting small business technical assistance & grant opportunities (including COVID-19 recovery)
5. Serving as a liaison between small business owners & Town staff & boards
6. Assessing local market demand and crafting a responsive business development strategy

Industrial Park Support:

1. Monitoring industrial park occupancy, business mix & additional real estate trends
2. Promoting industrial parks with marketing materials based on key indicators
3. Conducting roundtables with tenants & property owners & meet-and-greets with new tenants
4. Serving as liaison between industrial park tenants & property owners & Town staff & boards
5. Coordinating with Town staff & boards to define response process to potential tenant inquiry
6. Facilitating response to potential tenant inquiry, including public outreach

Collaboration & Capacity-building:

1. Participating in regional chamber of commerce & other organization events & programming
2. Brokering collaborative projects or programming with other municipalities, state partners, etc.
3. Connecting community members to civic volunteer & training opportunities
4. Engaging in long-range and related planning processes, including those related to land use and housing
5. Developing coordinated, equitable methods for communicating and engaging with community members
6. Identifying projects/strategies in collaboration with a wide cross-section of the community

Infrastructure, Zoning & Permitting:

1. Identifying & applying to funding opportunities for infrastructure projects, including planning, design & implementation activities*
2. Studying & addressing economic impacts infrastructure projects
3. Reviewing & updating Town zoning bylaws for enhanced economic activity
4. Reviewing & updating business permitting processes

Downtown Enhancement - Sense of Place:

1. Placemaking & arts-based activation programming
2. Marketing and promotion of downtown area to local and regional visitors
3. Downtown branding and wayfinding activities

* Indicates focus on downtown area

C.2 Matrix Criteria

Content Area-Related Criteria:

1. Received strong community interest (whether in a topic or geography).
2. Responds to external factors, such as regional trends or macro-level opportunities.
3. Responds to local factors, such as demographic shifts, consumer preferences, or infrastructure projects.
4. Contributes to the diversification and/or expansion of Holliston's economic base.
5. Supports downtown district management, improvement, or investment aims.
6. Includes activities responsive to the needs of a range of Holliston communities/populations.

Capacity & Positioning-Related Criteria:

1. Is achievable, actionable, and sustainable at current capacity levels.
2. Yields short-term results or progress.
3. Completion boosts EDC's credibility with EDC members, Town government, and community.
4. Is advanced via frequent, bite-sized actions that engage EDC members.
5. Requires EDC members to routinely engage with community members.
6. Fosters the civic engagement and empowerment of a diverse group of stakeholders.
7. Builds local economic development capacity (individual and collective), positioning the EDC to pursue larger opportunities.
8. Strengthens shared understanding/consensus on key community development initiatives and topics among EDC members and community.
9. Supports development of a cohesive, long-term economic development approach.