PLYMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Charting our future together

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Charting Our Future Together: Plymouth's Comprehensive Plan is the Town's roadmap to help manage change, make decisions, and direct efforts for the next ten years. Developed through extensive community engagement, the plan responds to significant changes since the last update in 2006—including population growth, demographic shifts, new housing and commercial development, and evolving economic and environmental challenges—and looks forward to the opportunities and challenges of the next ten years. The plan's vision is to enhance Plymouth's quality of life for all generations as a welcoming, sustainable community with treasured natural resources, a vibrant local economy, diverse and attainable housing options, safe transportation options, and responsible governance.

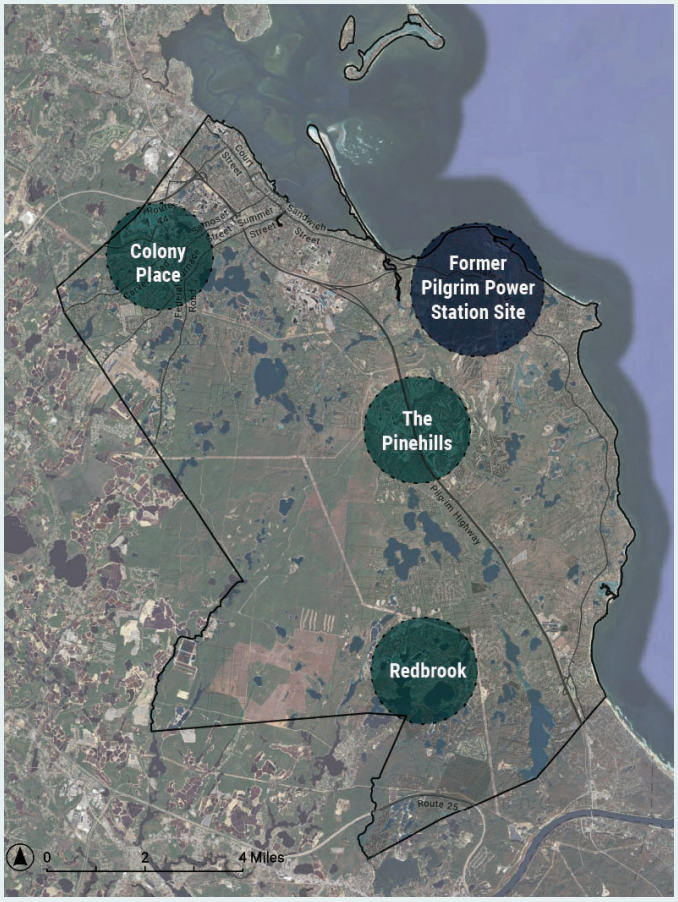
PLYMOUTH TODAY

Plymouth's last master plan was adopted twenty years ago. Much has changed since then:

15,000 more residents | **7,000 more housing units** | Between 2000 and 2020

Substantial development including Colony Place, The Pinehills, and Redbrook.

Closure of Pilgrim Power Station led to a loss of local jobs and municipal property tax revenue.



Planning Context

Plymouth is a historic community with a beloved coastal identity. It is the largest municipality by land area in Massachusetts and has experienced rapid growth, especially in master planned communities like Pinehills and Redbrook. It is a desirable place to live for a variety of reasons including its diverse natural resources, historic character, and proximity to Boston and Cape Cod. This growth has brought new opportunities but also challenges, such as rising housing costs, infrastructure strain, and concerns about preserving natural resources and the town's character. The closure of the Pilgrim Power Station and shifting economic trends have further impacted the Town's fiscal health and future development potential. The sole source aquifer beneath Plymouth provides water for the region, and its ongoing protection is critical for long-term water security as well as environmental and community resilience.

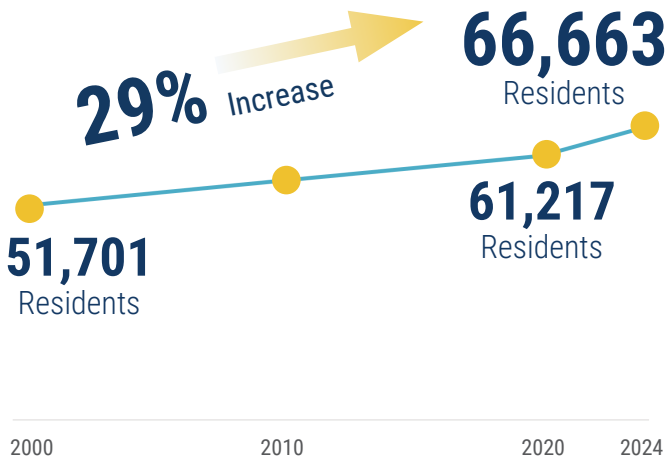
Downtown Plymouth retail

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

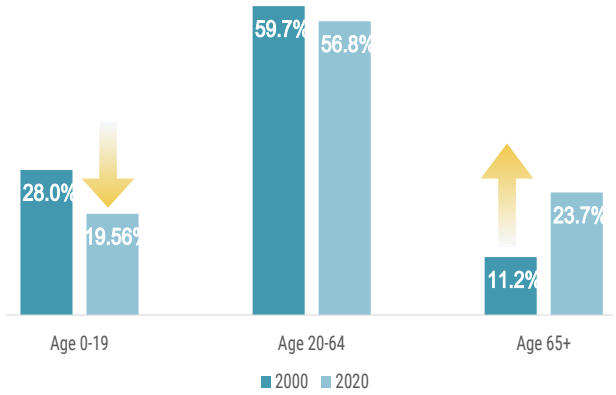
PLYMOUTH AT A GLANCE

Our People and Households

Plymouth's population has grown steadily since 2000



The share of the population age 65+ more than doubled since 2000



» The population aged 65 and older could increase to more than one-third by 2040, while that of working age adults [20-64 years] could decline to less than half of the total population.
(UMass Donahue Institute Population Projections Vintage 2024)

Average household size has decreased

Size

2.41 | 2020

2.67 | 2000

68% Family Households

25% Households with children <18

38% Householders older than 65

Household types

25%
One person households

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLYMOUTH AT A GLANCE

Our Housing and Economics

Plymouth's housing stock and median household income has been growing

28,074 | 2020

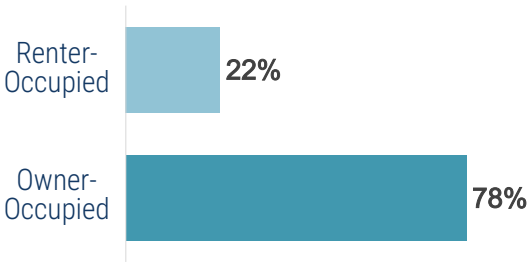
21,250 | 2000

$107,000 | 2022

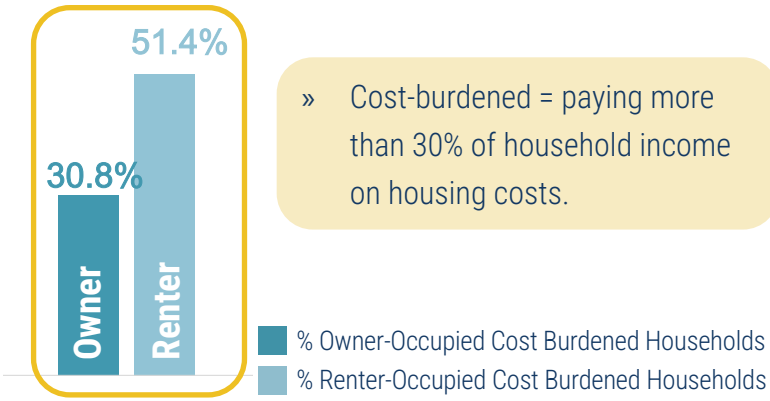
$80,900 | 2016

Most homes are single family and owner-occupied

71%
Single-Family Detached



Half of renters and one-third of homeowners are cost-burdened



» Cost-burdened = paying more than 30% of household income on housing costs.

Businesses and jobs have increased but workforce availability and infrastructure limit potential growth

25%
Increase in number of businesses since 2012

10%
Increase in number of jobs since 2012

33%
Growth in local wages since 2012 [more than inflation]

» Healthcare and social services, retail, and hospitality are top industries based on number of jobs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLYMOUTH TOMORROW

The next ten years will look different:

- Plymouth is beginning to approach build-out. About 8,200 acres were developed between 1999 and 2024, 85% of which became residential. Today, about 5,700 acres remain that are potentially developable (less than 10% of Plymouth's land area). This increases the importance of smart growth in areas with the infrastructure to support it.
- The rate of population growth is expected to slow over the next decade (per UMass demographic projections). The share of residents aged 65 years and older could increase to more than one-third by 2040. These variables may influence the local workforce, demands on public services, housing needs, and more. Regional market factors, quality of life, and cost of living will also have an influence on future population change.
- Development of the Pinehills and Redbrook, which together accounted for 35-45% of all new growth in fiscal years 2022-2026, will be completed within the next five years. This will reduce annual growth in property tax revenues and, in turn, impact the Town's budget.

Plymouth Waterfront

Future Growth Considerations

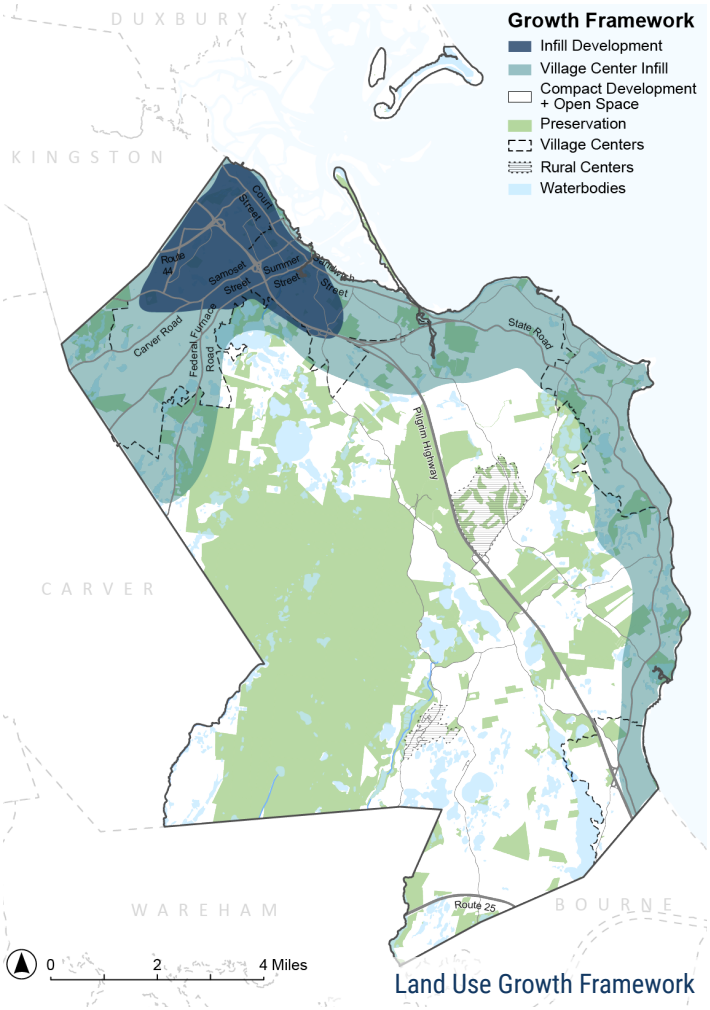
"Charting Our Future Together" recognizes that Plymouth has inherent characteristics that influence what change is possible over the next ten years.

Physically, the northern and southern areas of Plymouth have very different contexts which influence where and how growth should occur.

Northern Plymouth has a well-connected local roadway network with multiple travel options and better access to regional highways. Public water service is generally available, and public sewer is also available in some areas. For these reasons, it is generally more developed than other parts of town.

Central and southern Plymouth rely on a more limited roadway network so most people have to use the same roads to get around. None of these areas have public sewer, and only coastal areas have public water. These areas have significantly more protected open spaces and undeveloped land.

Public water and sewer allow for greater development intensities which typically generate more property tax revenue for the Town. Reliance on private septic systems limits development intensity and can degrade water quality as systems age. A lack of public water and sewer precludes certain commercial and industrial uses.



Land Use Growth Framework

Harborwalk Apartments in Cordage Park

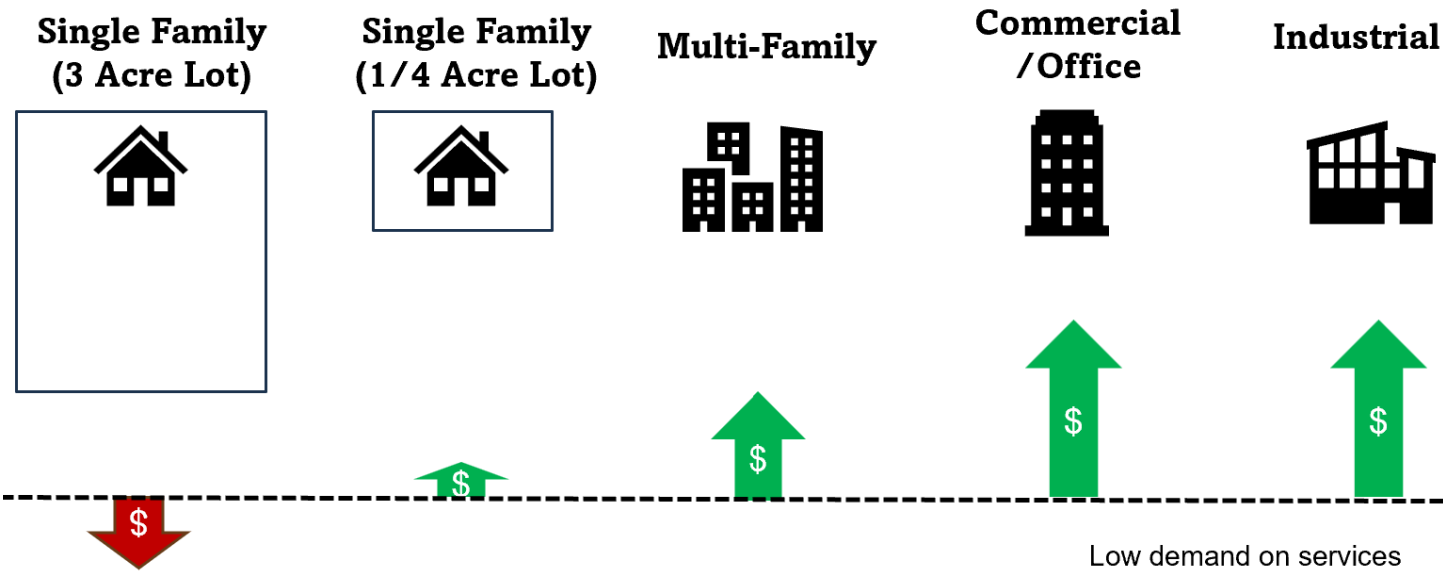
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Future Growth Considerations (Continued)

Future growth will happen in both areas, but encouraging more infill development opportunities in areas with public utilities is important to help slow the rate of new development on natural sites. Infill development, also called redevelopment, is when aging buildings and sites are reused for a new purpose. These opportunities can add jobs, housing, and amenities in areas with existing infrastructure and help take development pressure off natural areas in rural parts of town.

Financially, managing costs and growing the property tax base are important for the financial future of the Town. The Town's ability to take on new initiatives or expand services is limited by its revenue and budget. Currently, rising costs are outpacing Town revenue growth from property taxes. Overall community affordability is decreasing and putting pressure on residents, especially fixed-income households.
Like a household or business managing its budget and setting priorities, the Town can do many things but it cannot do everything. Setting priorities with long-term fiscal health in mind is important to ensure today's decisions are financially sustainable. The majority of the Town's General Fund budget is supported by property taxes. Residential taxes account for about 85% of property taxes collected. With the near-term completion of major growth drivers, Plymouth will need to support new growth opportunities to maintain investment in infrastructure and services.

The type of future growth is important since not all growth is equal from a fiscal perspective. Some types tend to be a net positive for the Town (generates more revenue/value than costs) while others tend to be a net negative (generates more costs than revenue/value). The Town and its residents will have to make tough decisions that balance competing interests and keep long-term financial health in mind.



General Fiscal Impacts from Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLYMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

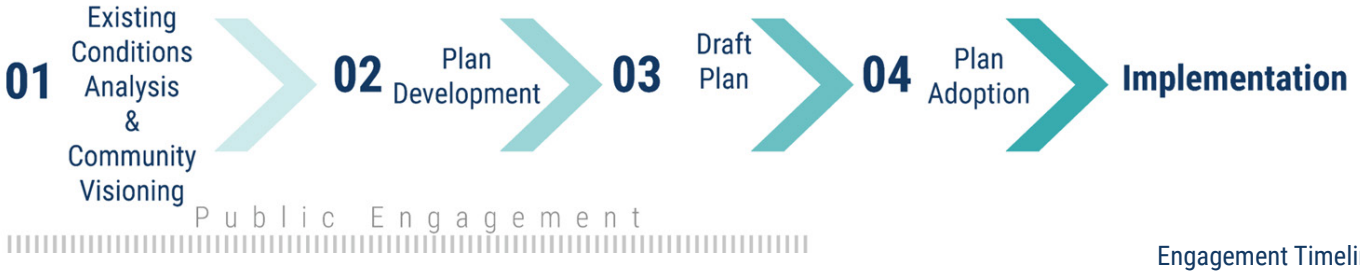
A Comprehensive Plan, also called a Master Plan, provides a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of a community. Massachusetts General Law (Chapter 41, Section 81D) establishes the topics which must be addressed: land use, housing, economic development, natural and cultural resources, open space and recreation, services and facilities, and circulation. The plan must also contain goals and policies for the future growth and development of the community, as well as an implementation program.

Plymouth Rock Memorial

Community Engagement

Community input was central to the planning process. Residents, business owners, and stakeholders participated in public meetings, workshops, surveys, listening sessions, and pop-up events between June 2024 and January 2026. Feedback emphasized the importance of affordability, sustainability, walkability, and preserving Plymouth's unique natural resources. The Town-appointed Master Plan Committee, which represented diverse local interests, provided oversight throughout the process, shaped the plan's priorities based on public feedback, and helped promote public engagement opportunities.

The engagement process occurred in three phases. The initial visioning phase explored community aspirations and identified key challenges and opportunities. This feedback was used to inform the development of a shared vision for Plymouth's future and a set of corresponding goals. The second phase focused on exploring topics in more detail and identifying priorities. This feedback helped shape recommendations and implementation timelines. The final phase presented the draft plan document for public review prior to the formal Planning Board review. This feedback refined details of the plan document to better reflect local context.



Engagement Timeline

Waterfront Festival Pop Up Event, August 2024

Kickoff Meeting, June 2024

Engagement by the numbers

2,000
Unique interactions overall

12
Community Workshops & Listening Sessions

5
Public Surveys

6,900
Unique visitors to the project website

Draft Strategies Workshop, May 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Vision and Goals

The Comprehensive Plan's vision and goals establish a clear vision for what the community would like to achieve over the next ten years. The vision is an aspirational statement that captures the core shared values identified by the community and articulates what success for Plymouth will look like in the future. The accompanying goals identify eight desired outcomes the Comprehensive Plan seeks to achieve across the core topic areas.

VISION STATEMENT

"Plymouth is a historic coastal community that will enhance its quality of life for all generations as a welcoming, resilient, and affordable community with treasured natural resources, historically distinctive cultural heritage, a vibrant local economy, access to a wide range of housing options, safe and convenient transportation, high-quality education, and responsible governance."

GOALS

E **Support the current business base and increase the number of living wage jobs** while advancing Plymouth's long-term fiscal sustainability with sound municipal financial practices.

H **Develop a variety of housing types** that better meet the diverse and changing needs of our multi generational community.

NR **Preserve and protect our natural resources** while supporting our biodiversity and essential aquifer.

SR **Integrate sustainability, community, and coastal resilience** into all aspects of Town planning and decision-making, while working to mitigate the impacts of climate change whenever possible.

M **Improve connectivity** for all modes of transportation so that residents, workers, and visitors alike can safely and efficiently access all parts of Plymouth and the region.

HCC **Maintain the historic and cultural character of Plymouth** by promoting the rich tapestry of our heritage which include nationally-significant historic assets, settlements, forests, coastline, ponds, and other built and natural assets.

PFS **Maintain and improve Town services and infrastructure** including local roadways, public facilities and schools, parks and recreation, education, and utilities.

I **Maintain the Comprehensive Plan as a living document** that guides Town actions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PLAN THEMES

Three overarching themes consistently emerged through public feedback and Master Plan Committee discussions and are woven through the plan's strategies.

Advancing Community Affordability

Community affordability is foundational to quality of life, economic resilience, and sound municipal finance. An affordable community allows all residents to live with stability, dignity, and opportunity. Housing, jobs, services, healthcare, and transportation options are accessible and can be attained without being financially draining. Through the Comprehensive Plan, Plymouth commits to policies and investments that support progress towards greater community affordability to ensure the Town remains inclusive, diverse, and livable across generations.

Integrating Sustainability and Resilience

Sustainability and resilience are incorporated into all areas of the Comprehensive Plan to support Plymouth in preparing for the future while addressing present-day needs. Prioritizing sustainability and resilience means environmental stewardship as well as economic adaptability and social connectedness. By proactively planning for climate change, economic shifts, and other challenges, Plymouth can better position itself to withstand and recover from disruptions for greater long-term security and resilience.

Addressing Public Health, Walkability, and Wellbeing

Physical, mental, and social health are important components of quality of life. As population characteristics change, the Town needs to adapt and respond to changing needs. This includes supporting access to quality healthcare services that also generate local jobs. It includes maintaining healthy natural environments and public spaces that encourage physical activity, foster social connections, and provide amenities for all ages. Prioritizing wellbeing across the community is essential for Plymouth's continued vitality.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The plan provides actionable strategies across core topics:

- **Economy:** Preserve commercial and industrial land to attract new businesses, support emerging economic sectors (including healthcare and the blue economy), and diversify the tax base.
- **Housing:** Promote infill and mixed-use development, support aging in place, expand affordable housing, and encourage compact development patterns.
- **Environment and Climate:** Protect water resources, forests, and open space; expand climate adaptation and resilience measures; and promote renewable energy.
- **Mobility:** Invest in targeted intersection improvements and traffic calming, expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure within suitable areas, and advocate for improved transit service.
- **History, Culture, and Community:** Promote historic resources as community assets, support arts and culture, and enhance age- and dementia-friendly initiatives.
- **Public Facilities and Services:** Maintain and upgrade infrastructure, expand recreational programming for all ages, and improve universal accessibility.
- **Land Use:** Focus growth in strategic areas that utilize existing infrastructure, balance development with open space preservation, and modernize zoning to support community goals.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

The implementation matrix assigns responsibility for each strategy to Town departments and partners, with recommended timeframe and tracking tools. The plan emphasizes flexibility, allowing for mid-course adjustments as conditions change. Progress will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued alignment with community needs.

YOUR ROLE

"Charting Our Future Together" is a living document, designed to guide decision-making and investment for a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive future. Success depends on ongoing collaboration among Town leaders, residents, and other stakeholders. Whether you are a lifelong resident or new to Plymouth, your ideas and involvement matter. By working together, we can make decisions with the Town's long-term fiscal health in mind. Using this plan, Plymouth will balance growth with preservation, foster economic opportunity, and maintain the qualities that make it a special place to live, work, and visit.