PLYMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Charting our future together

DRAFT FOR REVIEW 3/19/2026

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thank you to everyone who participated in this community planning process by sharing your opinions and ideas at a meeting, by completing a survey, or by visiting the website.

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01 INTRODUCTION

01 | INTRODUCTION

Plymouth, Massachusetts is a historic community with a beloved coastal identity. The Town's last Master Plan was adopted twenty years ago in 2006. Since then, the community has experienced significant changes. In addition to experiencing population growth and demographic shifts, Plymouth has seen substantial development as well.

In the early 2000s, Colony Place in West Plymouth was just beginning to take shape; today, Colony Place has become a major regional shopping destination. Around the same time, The Pinehills master planned community in central Plymouth was also in its early stages of development, followed by the Redbrook master planned community in southern Plymouth, which broke ground around 2010. Over the past 15-20 years, these two areas have added roughly 4,500 new housing units while preserving thousands of acres of open space. The 2019 closure of the Pilgrim Power Station led to a loss of local jobs and tax revenue while creating uncertainty about the future of its 1,600 mostly undeveloped acres.

Both opportunities and challenges have come with this period of growth and change. Plymouth's popularity as a desirable place to live has contributed to rising housing costs and growing affordability concerns for many residents. The rapid growth in southern and central Plymouth has strained the Town's limited road network and altered its rural character.

At the same time, changes in the local, regional, and national economic ecosystem are shifting the needs and growth potential of different industry sectors which have implications for Plymouth's economic base and long-term fiscal health. In response to these ongoing changes, the community has expressed the need for a unified vision and plan to manage change, balance growth, and guide future decision-making.

This new Comprehensive Plan builds upon previous planning efforts and incorporates extensive community feedback to create a comprehensive framework for Plymouth's next decade. While the Comprehensive Plan sets a ten-year planning horizon, it emphasizes near-term priorities with opportunities to revisit after five years to ensure the plan's recommended actions remain responsive to changing conditions and community needs. The Comprehensive Plan balances diverse and competing interests, provides a clear basis for future land use and development decisions, and charts a path toward achieving the community's shared vision for Plymouth's future.

Recreational use along the waterfront

01 | INTRODUCTION

What is a Comprehensive Plan?
A Comprehensive Plan, also called a Comprehensive Plan, provides a basis for decision-making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality. 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. The Planning Board adopts the comprehensive plan by a majority vote. The plan may be added to or changed from time to time.

About This Plan
Plymouth's Comprehensive Plan, "Charting Our Future Together," includes a broad range of topics which are covered in its chapters. However, these topics are interrelated and cannot be considered in isolation. As one example, open space and recreation should be considered alongside housing, economic development, and the Town's fiscal condition. Likewise, housing or economic development should be considered alongside transportation, natural and cultural resources, and regional markets and trends. In any particular issue or question, one topic or another may take precedence over another. The plan's overall vision and broad goals can be helpful to balance these considerations.

The Comprehensive Plan does not replace or supersede the Town's more specific plans such as the Housing Production Plan, Priority Plymouth Climate Action and Adaptation Plan, or others. The Comprehensive Plan is Plymouth's highest-level policy document and illustrates the connections between issues. In many cases, the Comprehensive Plan simply endorses the continued implementation of recently completed plans. It may also recommend that older plans be updated or that new plans be undertaken to explore an issue in more detail and develop more extensive or specific recommendations.

Plymouth Rock Memorial

How to Use This Plan

While the Comprehensive Plan can be read straight through as a cohesive document, in practice it is more likely that users will consult a specific chapter or part of the plan at one time. The Executive Summary and Vision and Goals sections are particularly useful the first time someone uses this plan. They should also be reviewed periodically to keep in mind the bigger picture within which specific topics fit.

» The **Executive Summary** provides a concise overview of key themes, major issues and recommendations, and the process used to create the plan. It can be used as a stand-alone summary of the Comprehensive Plan for those who want to learn more about its contents.

» **Plymouth At A Glance** highlights key information and trends about Plymouth that influence its present condition and future potential. Population and household characteristics are the primary focus of this chapter. Important information about other topics is found in the respective chapters.

» **Community Engagement** describes how residents and other stakeholders helped shape this plan through their input and feedback. A series of in-person events and online activities provided many opportunities for people to participate how and when it was convenient for them.

» **Vision and Goals** sets forth the community-informed vision for the future of Plymouth and the goals which support that vision. It also describes three plan themes, derived from community input, which weave through all the topics in this plan: community affordability; sustainability and resiliency; and health, wellbeing, and walkability.

» **Strategies** for specific topics are contained in the next seven chapters. These strategies are the core of the Comprehensive Plan and provide guidance for department workplans and decision-making. Each chapter shares the same organization:

- Overview of the topic within the local context;
- Strategies to be pursued over the next five to ten years to make progress towards the goal;
- How the topic relates to other plan elements, as well as to the three overarching themes;
- Brief summary of key existing conditions and trends for those who are interested;
- Additional information is included at the end of some chapters.

» **Implementation** is the final chapter and provides a 'user-guide' for Town departments, boards, and committees who will carry out many of the plan's recommendations. A matrix assigns each of the plan's strategies to a specific Town department or other leader. It recommends a general timeframe for implementation while acknowledging that unforeseen opportunities or challenges may lead to strategies being started sooner or postponed until later. This matrix is intended to be a tracking tool over the lifespan of this plan to help understand what has been accomplished and what remains to be done.

02

AT A GLANCE

AT A GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS I POPULATION

POPULATION

- Located in southeastern Massachusetts between Boston and Cape Cod, **Plymouth is the largest municipality by land area in the Commonwealth**. It has the second largest population in Plymouth County but is less densely populated than many other communities (about 600 people per square mile).

- The region has undergone significant population growth over the past 50 years which has led to demographic changes, particularly in Plymouth and many of its neighboring coastal communities.

- **Plymouth's population increased by 8.4% over the last decade** and 18% over the last twenty years. The most recent available data suggests Plymouth's population has grown by 9.2% between 2020 and 2024.

- Population projection data from the UMass Donahue Institute suggests that Plymouth's population growth rate may start tapering and could begin a gradual decline following 2030. This trend is consistent with projections for the county and several nearby communities including Marshfield, Pembroke, Carver, and Sandwich.
  - It is important to note that modeled projections like these do not predict the future but rather serve as points of reference. Like all forecasts, these projections make assumptions about how past or recent trends will continue into the future. These trends include population fertility rates, mortality rates, and migration-by-age. Projections do not consider other variables like local housing and job markets, quality of life, cost of living, and the many other factors that influence population change.

- Population growth has not been distributed evenly across Plymouth. The highest rates of population growth between 2000 and 2020 occurred in Census tracts containing two Master Planned Developments, The Pinehills and Redbrook, located in the central and southern parts of town. West Plymouth also experienced a high rate of growth due to several large new housing developments. Other areas, including Downtown Plymouth, saw relatively modest rates of change.

AT A GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS I AGE COMPOSITION

AGE COMPOSITION

- The median age of Plymouth residents is 44.5 years, compared to just under 40 years in Massachusetts.

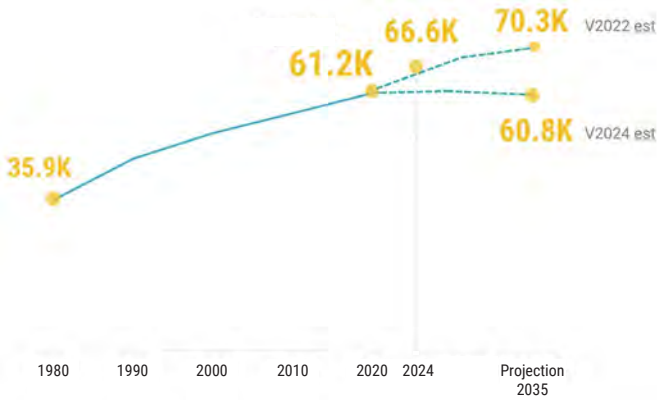
- The population composition is increasingly becoming older. **The share of the population aged 65 years and above has more than doubled since 2000.** This age cohort is projected to continue growing, with the potential to make up one-third of Plymouth's population by 2040. Seniors aged 80 years and over are forecasted to double between 2020 and 2030.

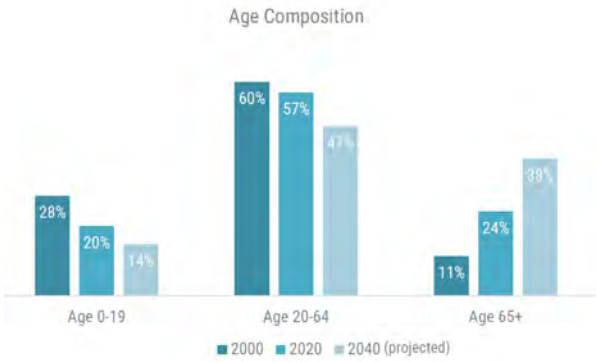
- The share of working-age adults (aged 20-64 years) has been decreasing over the last decade and could decline to less than half of Plymouth's total population by 2040 if recent trends continue. Similarly, the share of the population 19 years and younger is also decreasing. This age group makes up 20% of Plymouth's population today and is projected to decline to 14% by 2040.

- As of 2020, the area around Manomet and Cedarville have the highest percentage of young people under the age of 19, while North and West Plymouth generally have the least. The population aged 20 to 64 years old is distributed more evenly, with a slightly lower proportion in parts of Manomet and The Pinehills. This region, in contrast, has the highest percentage of people over 65 years old.

AT A GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS I POPULATION AND AGE

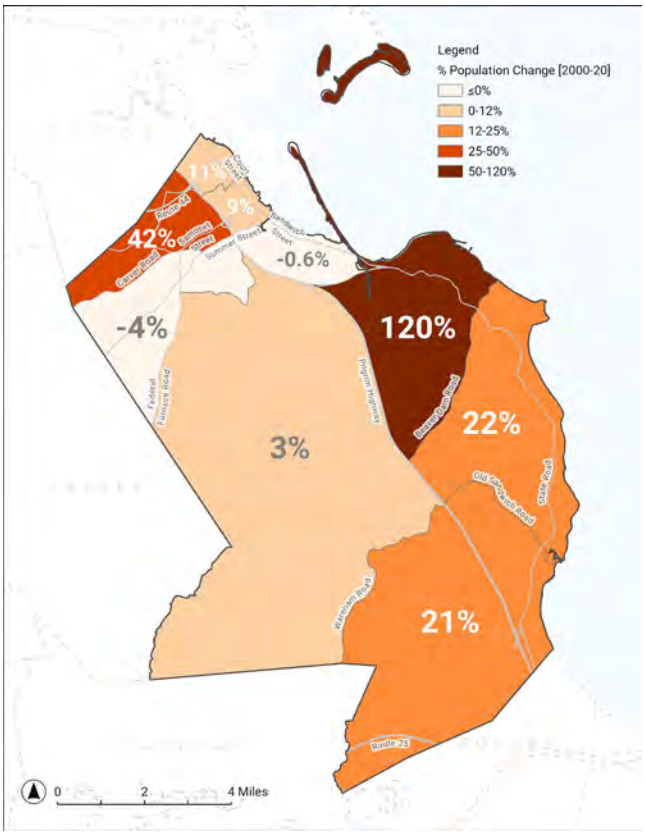
Population Trend





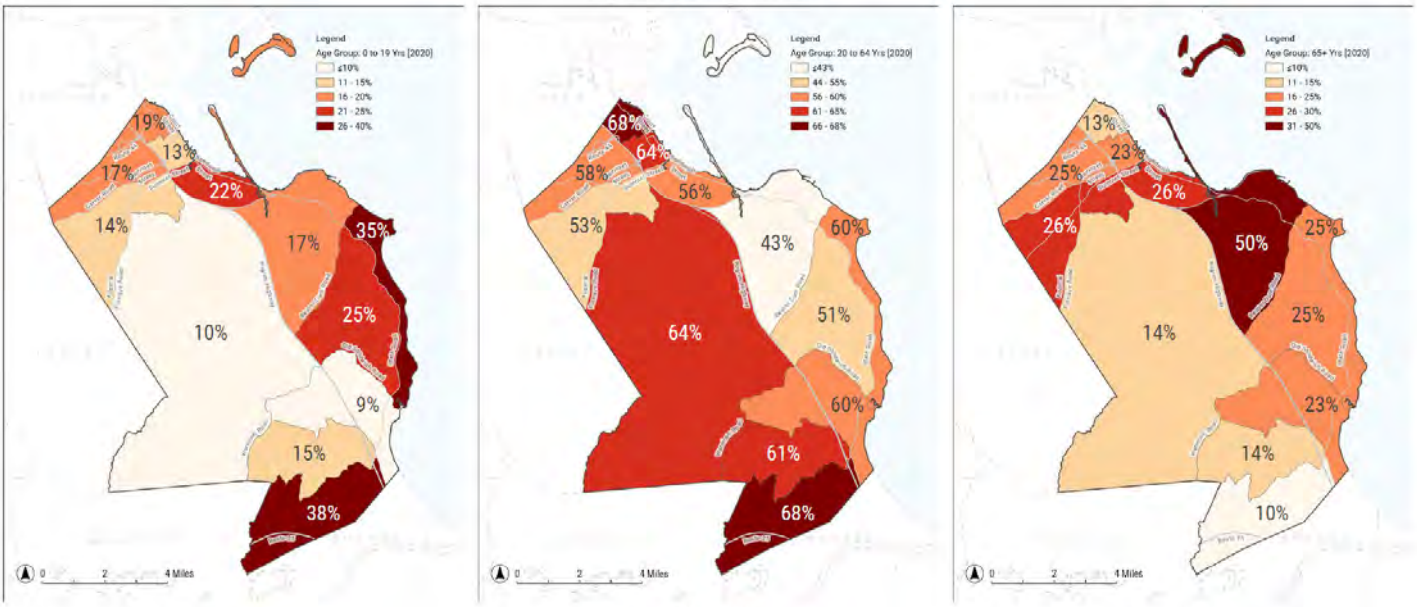
Source: Sources: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census data, UMass Donahue Institute Population Estimates v2024, U.S. Census Bureau Population Estimates Program 2024, Esri 2040 projections

Percentage Population Change by Census Tract, 2000-2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 and 2020 Data [MASSGIS]

Age composition in 2020



Ages 0 – 19 years

Ages 20 – 64 years

Ages 65+ years

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

AT A GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS I HOUSEHOLDS

HOUSEHOLDS

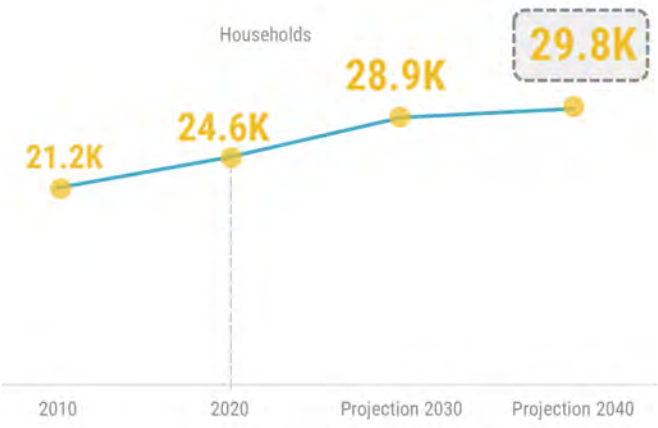
- The number of households in Plymouth has grown as the population has increased, but the average household size is decreasing. Plymouth's average household size of 2.4 people per household is lower than both Plymouth County (2.6) and Massachusetts (2.5). This represents a 10% decrease in average household size over the past two decades. Factors for this change include fewer families, smaller family size, more older adults living without children, and more single-person households.

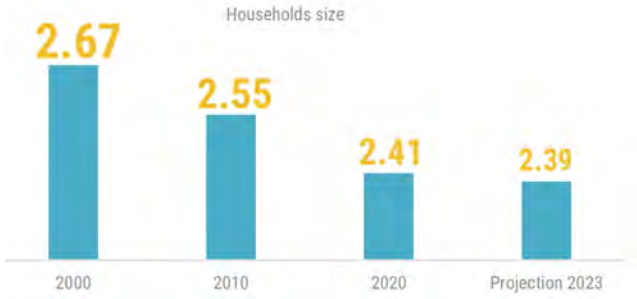
- Although the total number of households has been increasing, they have fewer children on average and include more people living alone. **About 25% of households include children under the age of 18**, but this share has declined by 11% since 2010.

- **About one-quarter (26%) of households are one-person households**, with half of these residents being 65 years of age or older.

- Median household income increased by 32% in recent years, from $80,900 to $107,000. Median household income is highest in parts of southern and western Plymouth and lowest in North Plymouth and Plymouth Center.

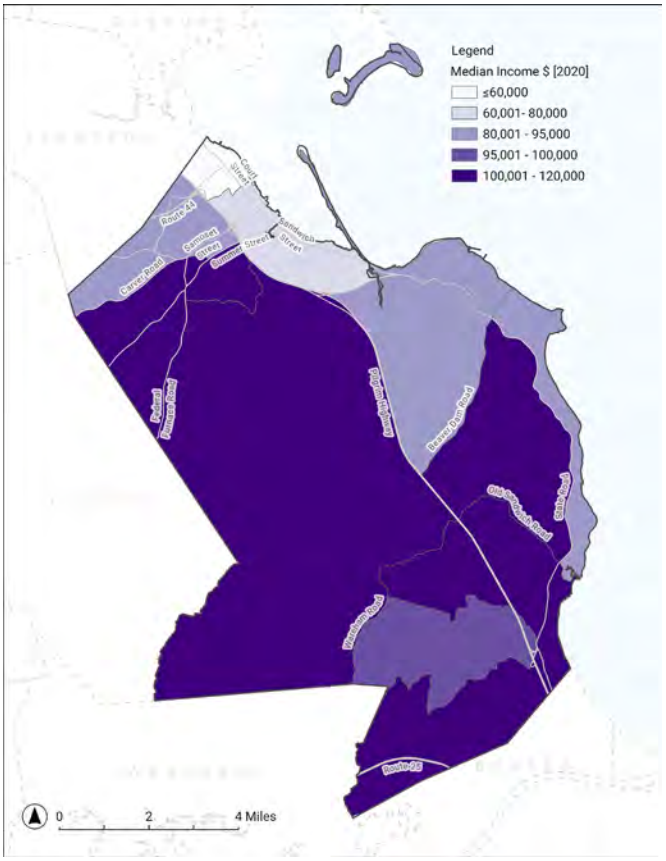
AT A GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS I HOUSEHOLDS





Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census data, UMass Donahue Institute Population Estimates v2024

Median Household Income by Census Tract (2020)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau Decennial Census data, Esri

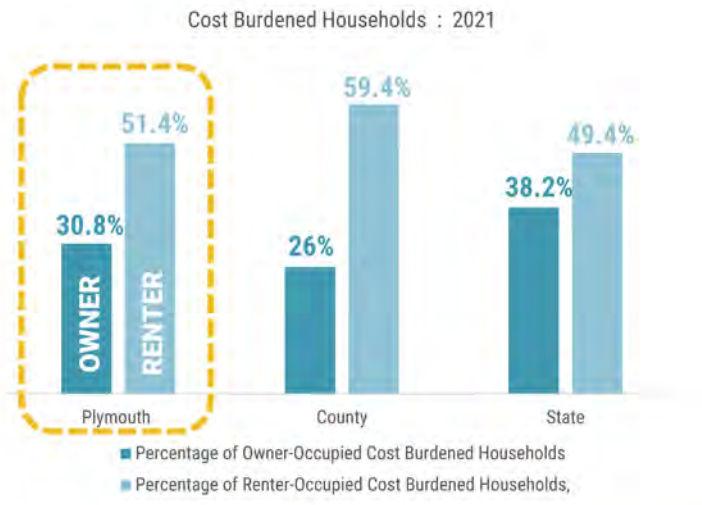
68% Family Households

25% Households with children <18 years

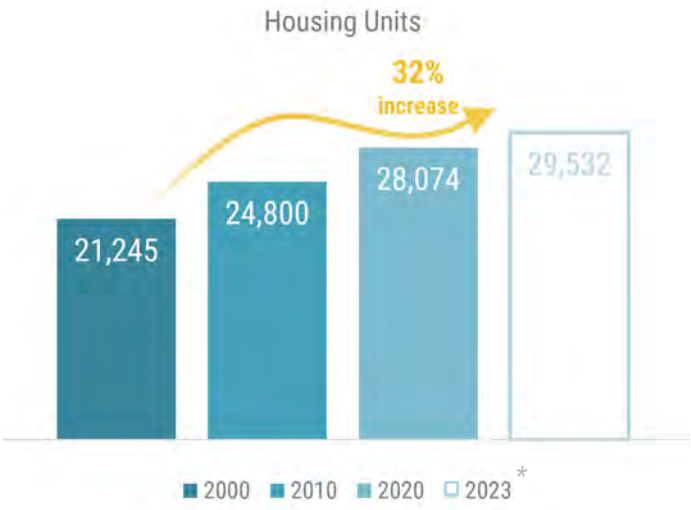
38% Householders older than 65 years

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. U.S. Census Bureau 2020 Decennial Census data. 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

AT A GLANCE HIGHLIGHTS I HOUSING



Cost-burdened households are those paying more than 30% of household income on housing costs.

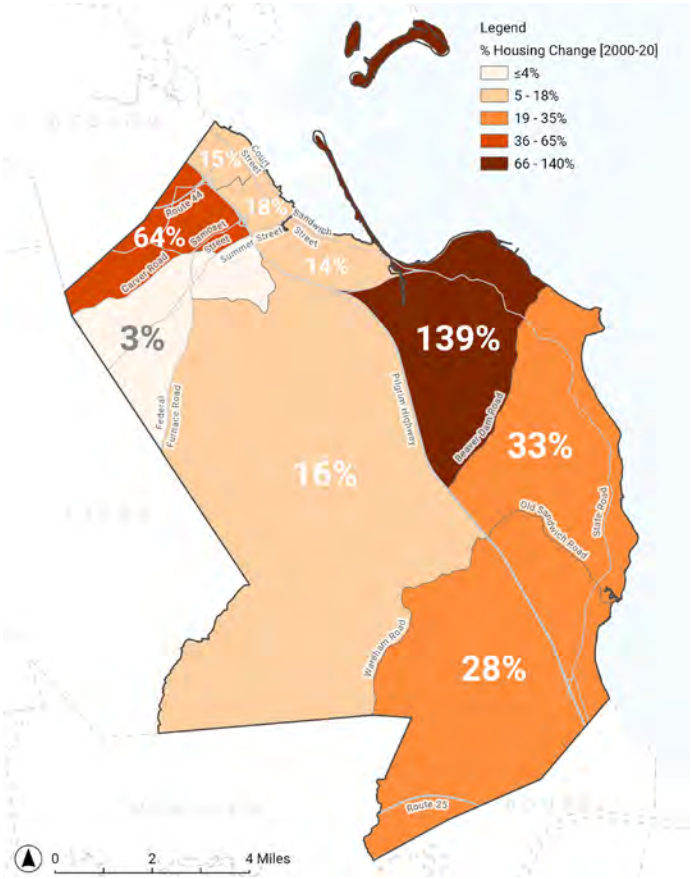


*Source: US Census 2000, 2010, 2020; * ESRI estimate 2023*

Plymouth Affordable Housing Inventory / Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

STATUS	TOTAL UNITS	SHI INVENTORY TOTAL	% OF HOUSING STOCK
Existing affordable housing units	2,226	2,226	8.67%
Existing affordable units on SHI (As of 07/02/2025)	1,734		
Pending affordable units on SHI (As of 08/2025)	192		
Kanso PENDING--- Permitted only	300		
Affordable units under construction	68	2,294	8.92%
Potential future affordable units (proposed)	88	2,382	9.27%
Affordable units needed to meet 10% affordable threshold	187	2,569	10%

Source: Town of Plymouth Subsidized Housing Inventory (2025); MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities CH40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (2025).
Note: Calculations are based on 25,689 total year-round housing units as recorded by 2020 Decennial Census data.



The geographic distribution of new housing units since 2000 varies across Plymouth, with the highest percent change in the Census tracts containing the Pinehills and West Plymouth.

03 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

03| COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OVERVIEW

Community engagement was a core part of the Comprehensive Planning process, and directly informed the development of the Plan each step of the way. Through public meetings and workshops, focus groups, listening sessions, surveys, and online engagement, residents shared their priorities, concerns, and aspirations for the future of Plymouth. The collected feedback highlighted both what people value about the Town and where they see opportunities for improvement.

The first phase of the planning process focused on analyzing Plymouth's existing conditions and developing a community-driven vision to guide the Plan. The visioning process provided the foundation for the more specific goals, recommendations, and actions developed during the second phase. A Town-appointed Master Plan Committee (MPC) supported the process by assisting the project team with public outreach and providing oversight throughout plan's development.

Additional input from community members throughout the plan development and drafting phases informed the plan's topic specific content and helped refine and prioritize its goals and recommendations. More information about this Plan's public engagement process is available in the Appendix.

Draft Strategies Workshop, May 2025

03| COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Master Plan Committee:

The Town assembled a Master Plan Committee (MPC), made up of representatives appointed by the Select Board, Planning Board, School Committee, Economic Development, and the Committee of Precinct Chairs to bring a variety of perspectives and provide oversight throughout the Comprehensive Plan development process. The MPC met periodically throughout the span of the planning process. Each meeting was open to public comment in-person and online via Zoom.

Public Meetings & Workshops:

A variety of public meetings were hosted to collect as much feedback from residents as possible. They included one visioning workshop, three topic workshops focusing on specific aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, one strategy prioritization workshop, and one draft plan open house.

Surveys:

In addition to collecting public input at in-person and virtual events, the project team invited residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to participate in online surveys during key milestones of the planning process. A survey was conducted following each of the public workshops. Each survey mirrored the questions asked at the in-person workshops to allow those who were unable to attend the workshops to provide feedback, and allow for a greater response rate across more demographics.

Listening Sessions:

The Master Plan Committee and project team hosted a series of seven listening sessions across Plymouth to hear from residents about community priorities and gather other feedback to inform the planning process.

Pop-up events:

Pop-up events were designed as informal ways for the project team to raise awareness about the Comprehensive Planning process, speak with residents, and collect feedback. Pop-ups were hosted at the 2024 Waterfront Festival and the Plymouth Center for Active Living in September 2024. Staff handed out surveys, comment cards, and business cards with links to the project website. Mapping and Imagine Plymouth 2035 headline exercises were also conducted by those who stopped by the pop-ups.

Project website:

An interactive project website was used to provide more information about the Comprehensive Plan process and share updates along the way. The site included an interactive map to collect ongoing feedback from the community, hosted the five surveys conducted throughout the process, and posted all materials from the public workshops.

CAL Pop-Up, September 2024

ENGAGEMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Extensive in-person and virtual outreach was conducted to gather as much feedback from community members, municipal staff, and other stakeholders as possible. This effort builds on previous engagement processes carried out in support of other recent Town planning initiatives, ensuring continuity and incorporating lessons learned from earlier efforts.

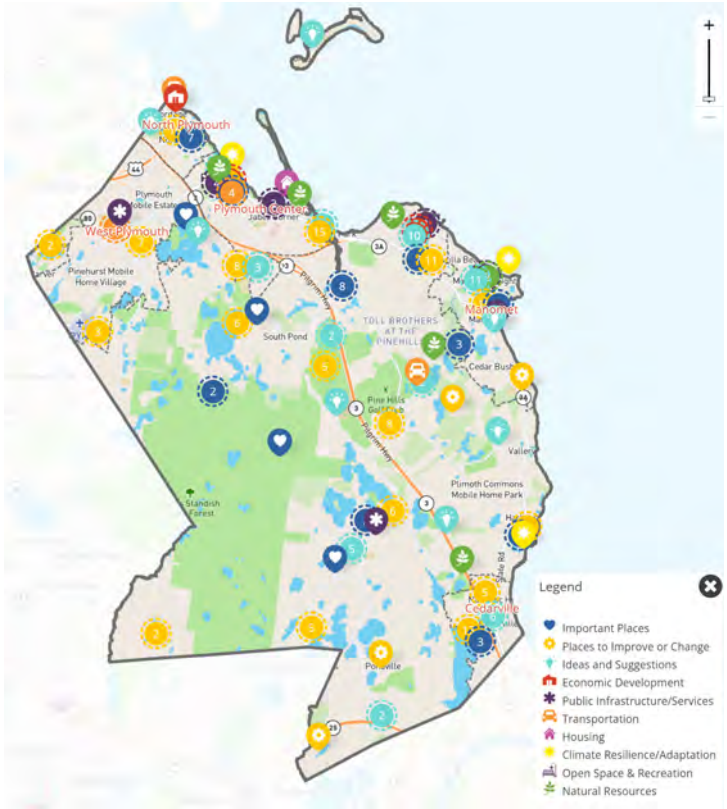
- **2,000 unique interactions overall**
- **2 public workshops**
- **3 topic-specific workshops**
- **1 draft plan open house**
- **2 pop-up events**
- **7 listening sessions**
- **5 public surveys**
- **15 interviews with 30 staff across more than 20 Town departments**
- **1 interactive map**
- **1 project website**

Waterfront Festival Pop Up Event, August 2024

Kickoff Meeting, June 2024

Interactive Map:

- Almost 400 comments from over 150 participants.
- Over 5,400 up/down votes on comments (82% up votes).
- The interactive map initially offered three categories which respondents could choose from:
  - 48% of comments were categorized as "Places to improve or change"
  - 27% were categorized as"Ideas or suggestions"
  - 14% were categorized as"Important places"
- During the topic workshop phase, seven topic-specific categories were added. These categories accounted for 10% of all comments.
- Forty percent of comments were made outside the established village centers. Thirty percent of comments were made within Plymouth Center. Manomet had the second highest share among village centers at 11%.



WHAT WE HEARD

Plymouth residents love Plymouth. Overall, residents value the diverse natural and open spaces, scenic coastal and rural setting, unique history, overall community character, and the five distinct Village Centers.

At the same time, residents identified several areas in need of improvement/change. The rapid rate of new development in recent decades has raised significant community concerns about the Town's capacity to support additional growth and the need to preserve open space. Rising housing costs, limited housing options, and the need to improve overall community affordability are other pressing issues highlighted across conversations with community members. Infrastructure needs are also top of mind, particularly the need for roadway improvements to better manage traffic, increase safety, and strengthen connectivity for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles. Increasing access to existing waterfront areas, both at beaches and in downtown, fostering greater commercial development, and strengthening protections for the Town's natural resources, especially the aquifer and surface water resources, were also frequently cited as top issues.

IMAGINE PLYMOUTH IN 2040

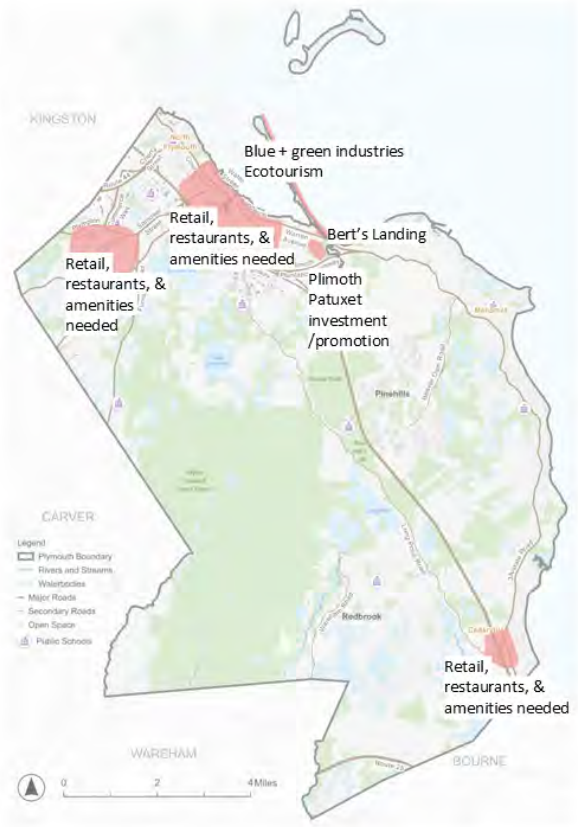
One question asked respondents to write a headline describing what they would like to see in Plymouth in 2040. Commons themes included: a thriving downtown; small town feel; affordable housing; uplifting Plymouth's existing assets; concern about overdevelopment and its impact on Plymouth's natural environment, biodiversity, and overall character.

Specific headline examples include:

- **"A sustainable, stable, thriving healthy, town for both residents and tourists!"**
- **"Breathing Life into Plymouth: Comprehensive Plan Unveils Path to a More Vibrant Community"**
- **"Plymouth named most livable community in Massachusetts"**
- **"Plymouth, Top 10 Towns to Raise Your Kids!"**
- **"Plymouth identified as leader in balancing housing and preservation"**

MAPPING TOP COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

Early in the planning process, community members participated in a mapping exercise to identify Plymouth's key challenges and opportunities. Responses were gathered during the first public meeting and the visioning survey. The diagrams shown below illustrate a subset of those results by Comprehensive Plan element topic.



Economic Development

Most Mentioned Topics and Areas

- Greater variety of retail, restaurants, entertainment etc.
  - Plymouth Center/downtown
  - West Plymouth
  - Cedarville Village Center
- Potential for blue and green industries
- Potential for greater ecotourism
- Redevelopment of Bert's Landing
- Greater investment and promotion in Plimoth Patuxet

Transportation

Most Mentioned Topics and Areas

- Traffic congestion and parking issues in North Plymouth and Plymouth Center
- Traffic and high-speed travel in Manomet
- Traffic congestion issues in Cedarville Village Center
- Need for improved infrastructure in South Plymouth
  - Roads
  - Public transportation options
- MBTA train station

TOPIC SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

Overall, **community affordability, wellbeing, and better integration of sustainability and resilience across Town decisions were continuously mentioned throughout the community engagement process** and in relation to the plan's various topic areas. To emphasize the importance of these overarching themes to the community, the MPC felt it was important to capture them as an additional element to the plan's vision and goals. Additional details are provided in the Community Visioning section.

LAND USE

- A more diversified land use mix that includes greater commercial, light industrial, and mixed-use opportunities
- Balanced approach to development that takes into consideration infrastructure capacity and open space preservation
- Focus development in already developed areas; protect and expand open and recreational areas

HOUSING

- A wider range of housing types –multifamily, townhomes, cluster housing, smaller single family, accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
- Housing affordability for all

MOBILITY

- Greater walkability and multimodal connectivity between destinations
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Safer roads for all users
- Increased public transit options

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Job growth
- Expansion of Plymouth's waterfront and related industries
- A diversified and active economy that benefits residents and year-round tourism
- Prioritize growth in already developed areas and development that includes a mix of uses
- Preferred industries: tech, healthcare, higher education, green & blue economy, hospitality, light industrial/ manufacturing, and small businesses
- Diversification of the local tax base –increase capacity for uses that will bring high paying jobs

TOPIC SPECIFIC FEEDBACK

TOWN INFRASTRUCTURE, FACILITIES & SERVICES

- Growth that is paced with the necessary supporting infrastructure and services –water/sewer, public safety, traffic management
- Upgrades to roadway infrastructure to improve conditions for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists
- Increased transparency and coordination between Town, community organizations, and residents
- The need to plan for and proactively mitigate impacts that come with growth

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE RESILIENCE

- Preserved and protected natural environments and open spaces that continue to support public access to nature and a variety of recreation opportunities
- Aquifer protection and improved water quality
- Consideration for climate change, resilience, and adaptation strategies throughout government decision-making and policies
- Prioritizing sustainable and resilient development that incorporates climate adaptation strategies and preserves open space

OPEN SPACE, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

- Recreational resources with well-maintained amenities that facilitate access and safety for all users
- Prioritize open space preservation
- Increase public access to waterfront areas (ponds and ocean)
- Preservation and enhancement of historical assets and greater support for arts and culture

OTHER RECENT PUBLIC COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The Plymouth Comprehensive Plan additionally draws on the public feedback and top priorities identified in other recent planning processes to ensure the Plan builds upon and reinforces these efforts.

THE PILGRIM 1600 ACRE AREA PLAN (2025):

- Conservation is a priority. Conservation of large portions of the Holtec site is a top community priority and seen as paramount for retaining its scenic value and advancing broader community goals for recreational, environmental health, and growth management.
- New development should be fiscally positive. Community members want growth that results in an outcome that is fiscally positive. This means they would like to see new development, especially housing, that is capable of covering its own infrastructure costs and that produces tax revenue and conservation set-asides for the benefit of the larger Town.
- Housing development should be in keeping with local character. While community members agreed with housing development for its potential to lead to conservation set-asides, they indicated a preference for moderately-scaled yet compact development typologies like cottage clusters.

HOUSING PRODUCTION PLAN (2024)

- Plymouth's current housing environment does not support the needs of key groups: young people looking to stay or return to Plymouth, essential service providers seeking to live in town, and older residents looking for options that will allow them to age in place. The lack of affordable options for these groups was cited as a key need.
- Providing housing that promotes local job growth was also identified as a core need.

PRIORITY PLYMOUTH CLIMATE ADAPTATION AND ACTION PLAN (2024)

- Broad support for reducing Plymouth's greenhouse gas emissions and increasing community preparedness for the impacts of climate change.

OTHER RECENT PUBLIC COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN (2024)

- Controlling development, acquiring and maintaining more open space, and protecting the water supply were identified as core priorities. Increasing recreational options for all ages and seeing Plymouth become more walkable and bikeable were also mentioned as important community objectives.
- Top improvement recommendations to existing recreation and open spaces included beach upgrades, pond and park renovations, more non-motorized infrastructure, and more dog parks.
- Maintaining open space to protect water quality, natural environments and wildlife habitats; provide flood control and storm protection; and advance climate resilience was rated as “extremely important” by the community.
- Significant themes from public input reflected a desire to improve accessibility, facilities, and services in Plymouth’s open spaces, while also looking for ways to boost tourism and support local agriculture.
- A strong emphasis on safety, convenience, sustainability, and balancing the need for recreation with the preservation of sensitive ecosystems and wildlife corridors were also cited as important considerations.

SENIOR NEEDS STUDY (2023)

- Property taxes and other municipal expenses were cited as major concerns for residents’ ability to remain in Plymouth. Broader increases in the cost of living (e.g., such as utilities, food, and transportation) were also mentioned as contributing factors.
- Concerns about transportation were also highlighted, including the ability to continue driving later in life and the availability of and safety of infrastructure for alternative modes of travel. Most transportation-related concerns focused on being able to reach essential destinations such as healthcare services, shopping, and social or community activities.

04 COMMUNITY VISION

04| COMMUNITY VISION

OVERVIEW

The feedback collected during the visioning phase of the Comprehensive Plan engagement process informed the development of a "community vision" for Plymouth's Comprehensive Plan. The resulting vision statement, which was created in collaboration with the Master Plan Committee, is an aspirational description of what Plymouth would like to become over the next ten to twenty years. This statement, along with the Comprehensive Plan's contents, provides broad guidance and direction so that Town planning and budgeting efforts align with the community's desired outcomes.

Eight goals support the community vision and describe more specific outcomes to help ensure decisions align with the vision and address key community priorities. These goals have specific strategies for accomplishing them which are discussed through the various topic-specific chapters of this Comprehensive Plan.

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."

Visioning Workshop, June 2024

GOALS

PLYMOUTH'S STRATEGIC GOALS focus on fostering a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community. The Town aims to diversify housing options to meet the needs of all generations, protect its natural resources and biodiversity, and preserve its rich historical and cultural heritage. Economic development is a priority, with efforts to support existing businesses and expand into sectors like healthcare and the blue economy. Enhancing transportation connectivity, maintaining infrastructure and public services, and ensuring long-term fiscal health are also key objectives. Additionally, Plymouth is committed to integrating sustainability and climate resilience into all planning efforts, while keeping the Comprehensive Plan adaptable to guide future decisions.

- **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.

OVERARCHING PLAN THEMES

Three overarching themes were heard frequently in public feedback and Master Plan Committee discussions. While not framed as standalone goals in and of themselves, these themes are woven through the plan's goals and strategies to reflect their importance to the Plymouth community and to highlight the interconnectedness of the plan's focus areas.

The rising cost of housing was talked about by many during the planning process. The **community affordability** theme looks more broadly to include transportation options, jobs, services, and other features of daily living.

Sustainability and resiliency were often discussed in an environmental context. While protecting our environment and adapting to climate change are critically important, this theme also considers economic sustainability and resilience, social resilience, and other factors.

Wellbeing and health were also top of mind, especially in the context of Plymouth's aging population. Physical activity and social connections are important for everyone though. This theme also considers the health of the natural environment and its connection to human wellbeing.

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.

05 ECONOMY

OVERVIEW

Plymouth's economy has two roles. Businesses provide local jobs and services for residents. Commercial and industrial land also generates property tax revenue which supports the Town's General Fund. Both are discussed in this chapter.

Plymouth's economic identity is historically rooted in its coastal setting that sustains a working harbor, a fishing industry, and a maritime character. Today, it has broadened to include healthcare, tourism, and the emerging blue economy. Plymouth's task over the next decade is to grow a diverse, resilient economy that activates its heritage, develops its blue economy potential, welcomes visitors from around the world, and ensures that the prosperity generated here is shared broadly across the community.

The number of jobs in Plymouth increased by 40% since the early 2000's, but many continue to be in service-based industries like retail, dining, and hospitality.

However, healthcare and social services is another significant component of local jobs and the blue economy is an up-and-coming force in Plymouth's economic ecosystem. These sectors present growth opportunities for more commercial and industrial tax base as well as higher-wage jobs.

Despite the increase in jobs, economic growth has not kept pace with residential development since the last Master Plan twenty years ago. This, combined with the closure of the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station in 2019, has led to a decline in the commercial and industrial portion of the property tax base. Much of Plymouth's new growth has been in the residential sector recently,

The **blue economy** includes marine-related industries like aquaculture, marine technology, climate resilience, renewable energy, artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and others.

A former retail space converted to healthcare services

OVERVIEW

driven by two large master planned communities that are primarily housing. As both approach completion in the late 2020's, it will become increasingly important for economic development to grow the commercial and light industrial sectors. Without new sources of growth, the Town faces the prospect of an increasingly residential tax base.

Plymouth has a limited amount of land zoned for commercial and industrial uses. Industrial uses are primarily limited to the two business parks where public water and sewer service are key features. There is more land zoned for commercial use but in recent years, several large sites have been converted to residential use through the 40B process.

This presents a risk to the Town's non-residential tax base. Preserving commercial and industrial zoned land for those uses and increasing its value is important for the Town's fiscal condition.

The tourism and retail sectors account for a significant portion of jobs. Plymouth's historic downtown waterfront, Plimoth Patuxet Museum, Pilgrim Hall Museum, and Myles Standish State Forest are among the town's many attractions. Based on recent data, the tourism sector lags the Commonwealth and nearby communities while the retail sector remains below 2018 levels. There is growth occurring in other industries, but the different types of employment spaces required are currently limited or nonexistent within Plymouth.

The agriculture and fisheries sectors are integral to Plymouth's history and continue to evolve. The local cranberry industry has shrank and the catch value of commercial fisheries has declined. Given Plymouth's limited waterfront access points, developing a comprehensive strategy for its harbor is essential for balancing competing demands for waterfront use, sustaining the harbor's role as a key driver of the local economy, strengthening climate resilience, and supporting recreational use.

Downtown Plymouth retail

ECONOMY STRATEGIES

GOAL: CONTINUE TO 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.

The strategies for Plymouth's economy have several key aspects. One is maintain and increase high-value commercial and industrial development as a key component of the Town's tax base. Another is to protect Plymouth Harbor as a location that serves many uses including economic, recreation, habitat, climate adaptation, and transportation. A third is to support and grow the tourism industry as an important component of the Town's economic base, but to not over-rely on it by ensuring that emerging sectors continue growing to support a diverse job and tax base.

KEY ISSUES:

- Plymouth needs sustained growth in higher-paying economic sectors to increase jobs and local revenue.
- Tourism is an important component of the local economy but is also cyclical and tends to have lower-paying jobs.
- Plymouth needs to maintain and grow the non-residential share of the property tax base, which is challenging due to limited land and utility availability, Plymouth's geographic location in the region, and workforce characteristics.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- Support for more businesses and jobs in the blue economy, tourism, and technology industries.
- The economy goal was ranked among the top three goals at the strategies workshop.
- People are concerned about the Town's fiscal condition in the future. There are competing interests both to expand services and infrastructure (which costs money) and to reduce the perceived residential tax burden.

ECONOMY STRATEGIES

E-1: Develop tools such as acquisition, zoning mechanisms, or other strategies to preserve existing but underutilized industrially zoned land for future industrial use.

a. Identify strategic parcels that have the scale and infrastructure to support potential tech employment opportunities.
b. Continue collaboration with public, private, and non-profit economic development and tourism organizations to proactively recruit/retain businesses and market available spaces.

E-2. Amend zoning bylaw to increase viability of a range of light industrial uses as well as research and development uses not involving hazardous materials.

a. Evaluate building height standards and permitted use tables to reflect modern building design and industrial business needs.
    - Building height: excluding rooftop equipment from building height measurement, requiring screening of rooftop equipment from ground level (considering resiliency initiatives such as rooftop back-up power or air handling systems).
    - Permitted uses: allowing hybrid businesses (e.g., retail showroom and manufacturing combined in the same building).
    - Consider light industrial in mixed use development to support artisanal businesses such as arts and crafts manufacturing, wineries, distilleries, etc.
b. Consider opportunities for shared parking, shared truck staging, and shared "area" stormwater management facilities for more efficient use of land.

E-3: Update the 2017 Harbor Plan to reflect changes in the ocean-based "blue economy" (e.g., commercial fishing, lobstering, tourism, boating, marine biotech) and resilience needs.

a. Consider inclusion of shellfish restoration and aquaculture development.
b. Incorporate considerations for climate resilience.

E-4: Support upgrading visitor-related facilities such as public infrastructure, expanded meeting space, and overnight options that are not short-term rentals, with the aim of increasing visitor spending levels and reducing the seasonality of visitors in Plymouth.

E-5. Support Plymouth's food sector economy including agriculture, seafood, food products and restaurants to serve as a growth opportunity for jobs and tax base and maintain its contributions to the character of the community .

a. Increase awareness of local agriculture right-to-farm bylaw to encourage small-scale local food production.
b. Explore the creation of local food system infrastructure such as food hub for distribution and/or commercial kitchen to support a variety of food-based companies.
c. Promote Plymouth as an attractive destination for food-based businesses.

ECONOMY STRATEGIES

E-6: Continue supporting workforce development efforts for residents and introduce emerging industries such as blue-tech to existing workforce development programs.

a. Work with Plymouth Public Schools, community colleges, and other local institutions to create curriculums and job training that support marine technology and other local industries.

E-7: Evaluate potential for flexible multi-tenant industrial building(s) to attract blue economy and other small tech manufacturers and businesses.

E-8. Support the development of coworking space that provides flexible lease terms and some shared facilities.

a. Include potential for small-scale maker space for prototype development.

E-9. Enhance connections to the waterfront as an opportunity to build upon experience and event marketing Downtown.

a. Integrate as part of Harbor Plan.
b. Explore opportunities based on recent precedents consistent with Chapter 91 regulations (Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act).

E-10. Continue to support investments and activities in culture, arts, and the environment that make Plymouth a destination community for talent and business investment. Integrate as part of Harbor Plan.

a. Update zoning to include artist/maker space as a permitted use in commercial, mixed-use, and select residential zoning districts.
b. Refer to MAPC's "Arts and Planning Toolkit" to identify relevant strategies and guide progress.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Economic development must be balanced with housing. Industry growth and job mix can influence the housing market by increasing demand and purchasing power. Many employers prefer having a variety of housing options and a range of price points nearby to help retain and recruit the necessary workforce. As noted in the housing chapter, many retail, hospitality, and home healthcare employees who work in Plymouth cannot afford to live there, contributing to staffing shortages and commuter traffic.
- Economic development influences the Town's ability to fund services and its overall fiscal condition by diversifying the property tax base. If it is not properly planned for, certain types of uses can create pressure on existing infrastructure such as water, sewer, roadways, or electrical and require new investment that competes with other funding needs. Seeking a balance is critical.
- Economic development is enhanced by a high-quality community setting that offers a multitude of recreational amenities, cultural offerings, public facilities, and services that are attractive to talent, which is key for a competitive, innovation driven economy. Plan elements on housing, arts and culture, natural resource protections all contribute to making Plymouth a destination for economic investment.

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:
Maintaining and growing the share of commercial and industrial property tax revenue is critical to helping mitigate residential property tax pressures. Increasing the number of well-paying jobs in Plymouth will help residents who work locally. Another key aspect of affordability is having adequate types of commercial and industrial spaces available at price points that are competitive within the regional market.

Sustainability and Resilience:
Economic resilience is the ability to withstand market cycles, recover quickly from downturns, and adapt to emerging growth opportunities. Plymouth can bolster its economic resilience by continuing to diversify its local economic sectors and supporting growth sectors like the blue economy. Local jobs can also contribute to environmental sustainability, both in the type of work done (like renewables) and by providing more employment options for residents which can reduce commuting emissions. Strategically locating key industries needed for recovery from natural disasters can further support economic resilience.

Health, Walkability, and Wellbeing:
Healthcare is one of the largest economic sectors in Plymouth. Residents benefit from having a variety of healthcare professionals nearby, from pediatrics to elder care and a range of specialists. Supporting this sector is important both for community health and wellbeing and for the local economy. Village centers can support walkability by offering a range of businesses catering to the daily and weekly needs of nearby residents - dining; personal services; arts, culture, and entertainment; and others.

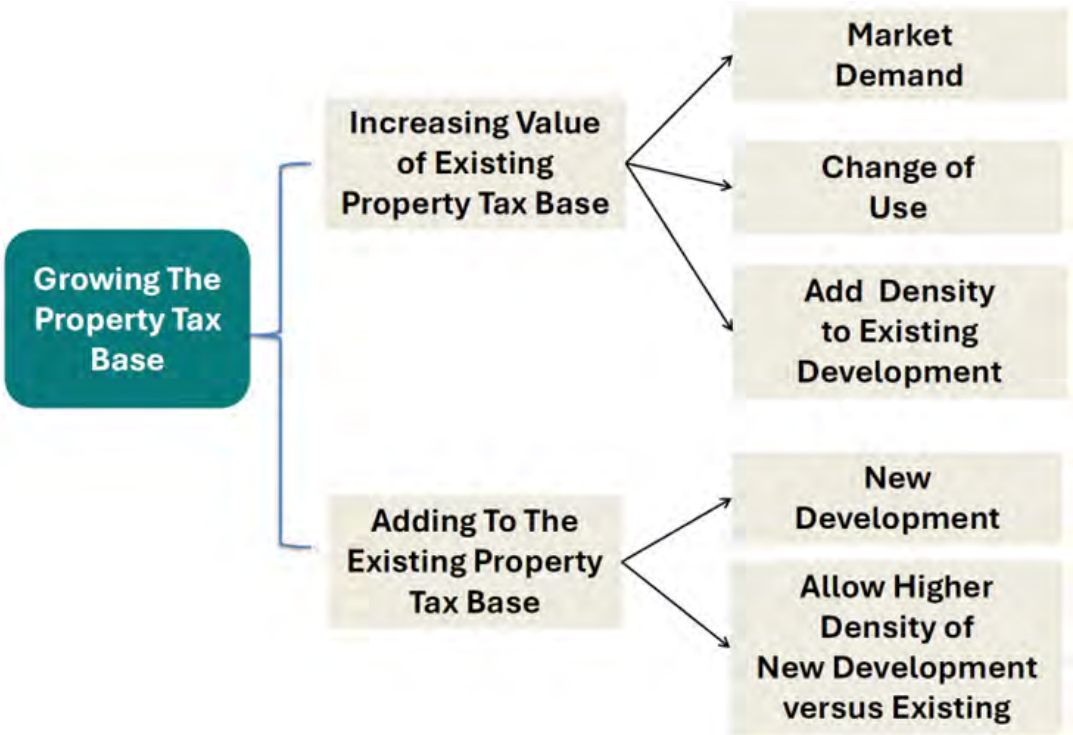
GROWING THE PROPERTY TAX BASE

Plymouth's property tax base contributes a significant amount of revenue to the Town's General Fund. Growing this base increases the funding available for staffing, public services, maintenance, and new facilities. One way to generate more revenue is to simply increase tax rates. This approach is burdensome on low-income and fixed-income residents and can be politically challenging. It is also limited by Proposition 2 ½ in Massachusetts.

A second approach is to increase the value of the existing property tax base. Strong market demand increases value but can also create affordability challenges as Plymouth is experiencing. Housing demand has been high while demand for commercial and industrial space has been lower. Changing a site from a lower value use to a higher value use, such as a different user in the same space or redevelopment of the site, is another way to increase value.

A third approach is to add to the property tax base. New development adds to the existing property tax base. This effect is amplified if new development is permitted at higher densities than existing. Another way to do this is adding density to existing development, such as allowing part of a large underused parking lot to be developed.

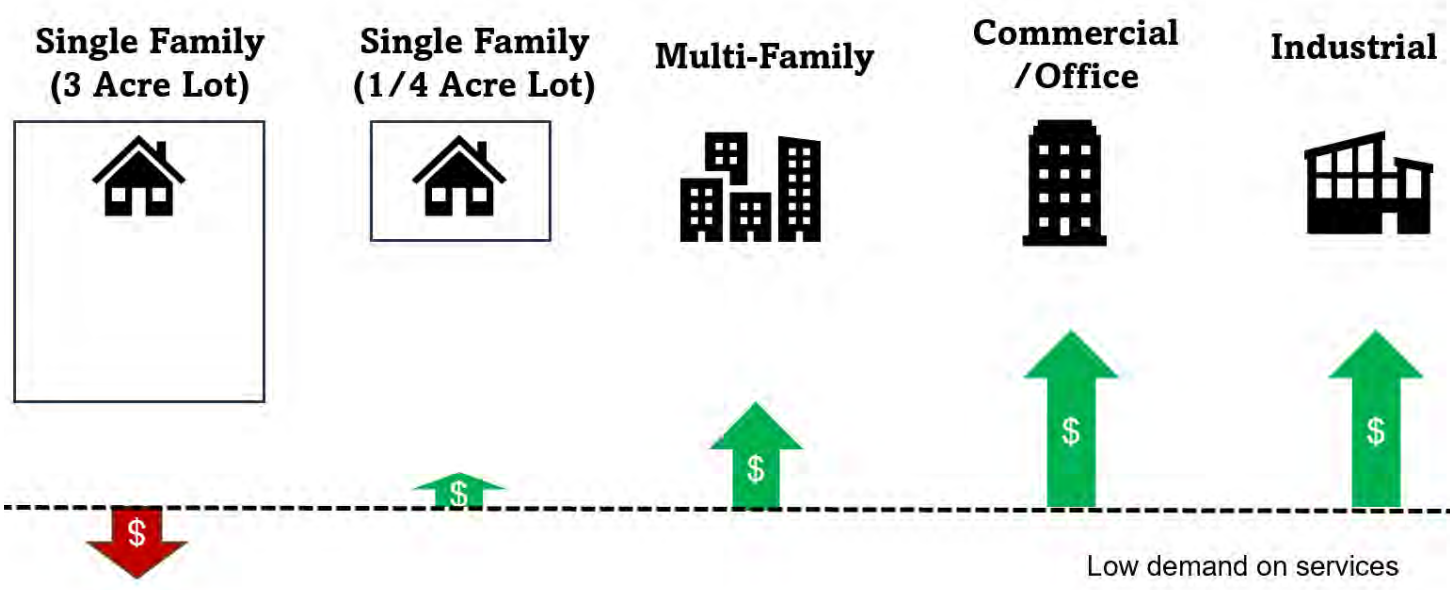
In Plymouth, most of the potentially developable land is zoned for large-lot single-family housing by-right. There is very little undeveloped commercial or industrial land remaining. Land use, housing, and economic development strategies that support fiscally positive redevelopment and new development will be important for growing the Town's tax base to meet the needs and interests of residents.



Two approaches to increase the property tax base and generate more revenue for the Town

FISCAL IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT

It is critical to note that not all types of new development have the same fiscal impact on the Town's General Fund. Large-lot, low-density single-family housing typically generates more in service costs—particularly for schools, roads, and public safety—than it contributes in property tax revenue, often resulting in a net negative fiscal impact. In contrast, smaller-lot single-family homes are generally less fiscally burdensome, and multi-family housing developments tend to have a net positive fiscal impact. Commercial and industrial development provide the greatest fiscal benefit, as they contribute significantly to the tax base while placing relatively low demands on municipal services like schools and public safety. Encouraging a balanced mix of development types—with a focus on fiscally positive land uses—will be essential to supporting General Fund sustainability over time.



General Fiscal Impacts from Development

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Plymouth hosts approximately **27,000 jobs** in more than **2,000 establishments**. Another **2,800 people are self-employed** across a variety of industries and do not show up in payroll numbers. The number of jobs in Plymouth is up 10% from a decade ago, but still slightly lower than the pre-pandemic peak.

Healthcare / social services are the dominant industry in Plymouth providing **22% of local jobs**. The hospitality (restaurants & lodging) and retail sectors combined represent 28% of total employment.

Total payroll in Plymouth is approximately **$1.5 billion**. Wages have climbed by more than $14,000 over the past decade, which is faster than inflation ($44,000 in 2012 is roughly $56,000 in 2022).

Most Plymouth residents (74%) commute out of town for work, meaning most jobs in Plymouth are filled by non-residents. This is primarily because of the difference between resident industries versus industries located in Plymouth .

Establishments have grown at more than 2.5 times the rate of employment. Establishment growth creates demand for space. The industry mix suggests, if present trends continue, the need for the following space types may occur:

- Need for "industrial yard" type space to support contractors
- Small office space options to support professional services and finance and insurance industry growth
- Medical office space
- Restaurant space
- Growth industries will also drive local space needs. For example, marine technology where water access and fabrication space may be needed, or the food industry where a range of support space such as cold storage, commercial kitchens, and preparation / distribution may be needed.

Source:
NP analysis of MASS LMI QCEW data; self-employment based on ACS 22 5 year data
NP analysis of MASS LMI QCEW data
NP calculations blending MASSLMI and 2021 OntheMap data

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

RETAIL

- **Retail sales between 2018 and 2022** are estimated to have **shrunk by $11 million** (before adjusting for inflation which would make the decline even larger). Merchandise sales declined while food and beverage retail sales increased, illustrating consumer shifts from goods toward experiences. The number of retail establishments in Plymouth has also declined since 2012. A flat to declining retail market has important implications on demand for retail space as well as market values of those properties, potentially creating opportunities for redevelopment.

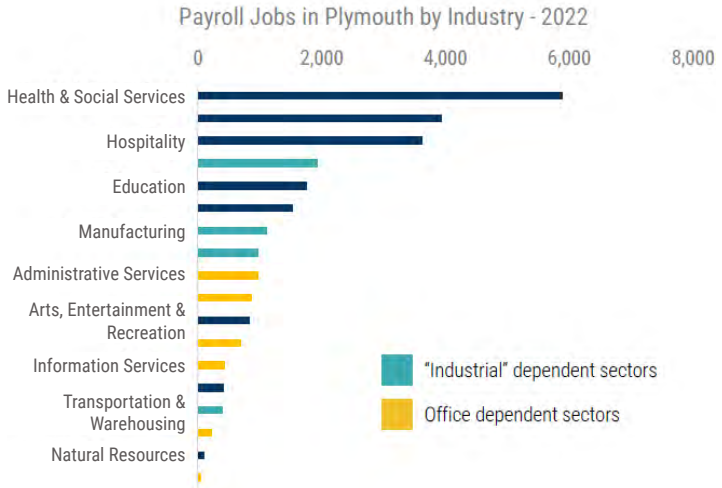
TOURISM

- Tourism in Plymouth County in 2022 totaled **$711 million in expenditures** for a 12% increase over 2017. This rate of growth was slower than the state overall and slower than adjacent areas such as Bristol County and Cape Cod.
- However, actual tourism expenditures shank by **$23 million** when accounting for inflation.
- Despite slower revenue growth than other regions, the local tourism industry added the most jobs. However, **wages are below regional area median income**.

AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

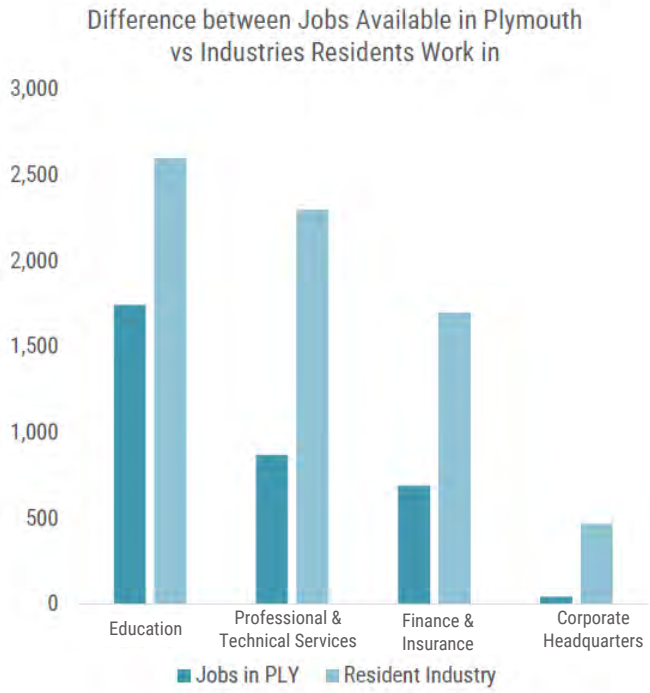
- The **cranberry industry in Plymouth uses about 1,000 acres.** This is **fifth largest** in the state and 7% of the total statewide acreage, generating an estimated **$6.8 million of crop value**.
- Plymouth's active commercial fisheries waterfront remains an important part of the community.
  - » **Home-ported vessels** have increased from **206 in 2018 to 242 in 2023** (includes any vessel containing a commercial fisheries license)
  - » In **2023, 181 vessels** landed approximately **$5 million** in catch value. This is down from **2018** when more than **200 vessels** landed **$6 million** in catch value in Plymouth.

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS



14% of residents (~4,500) **work from home** compared to only 4% (~1,100) in 2012

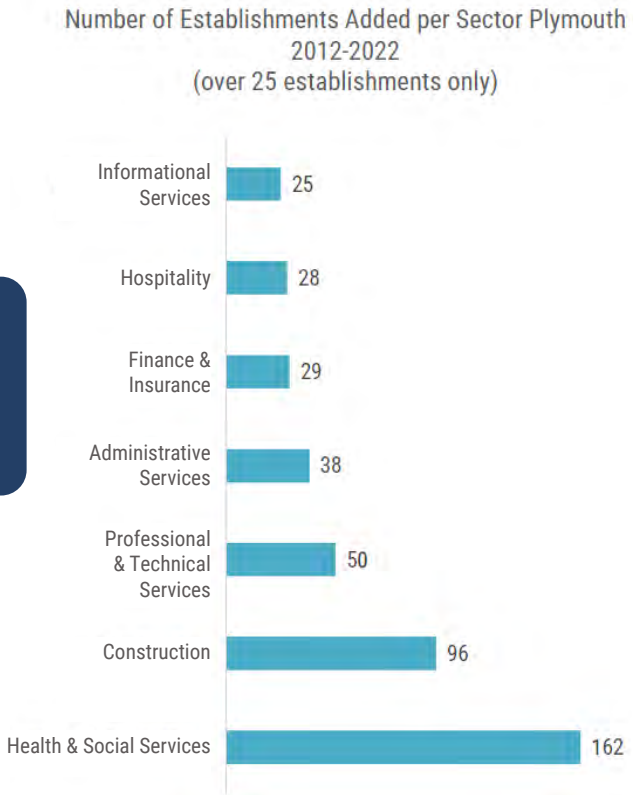
Source: NP analysis of MASS LMI QCEW data; self-employment based on ACS , COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CED) 2020-25



Source: Based on 2021 OntheMap data

This **outbound commuting is driven by a different industry mix and job availability** for residents versus what exists in Plymouth

Source: Based on 2021 OntheMap data



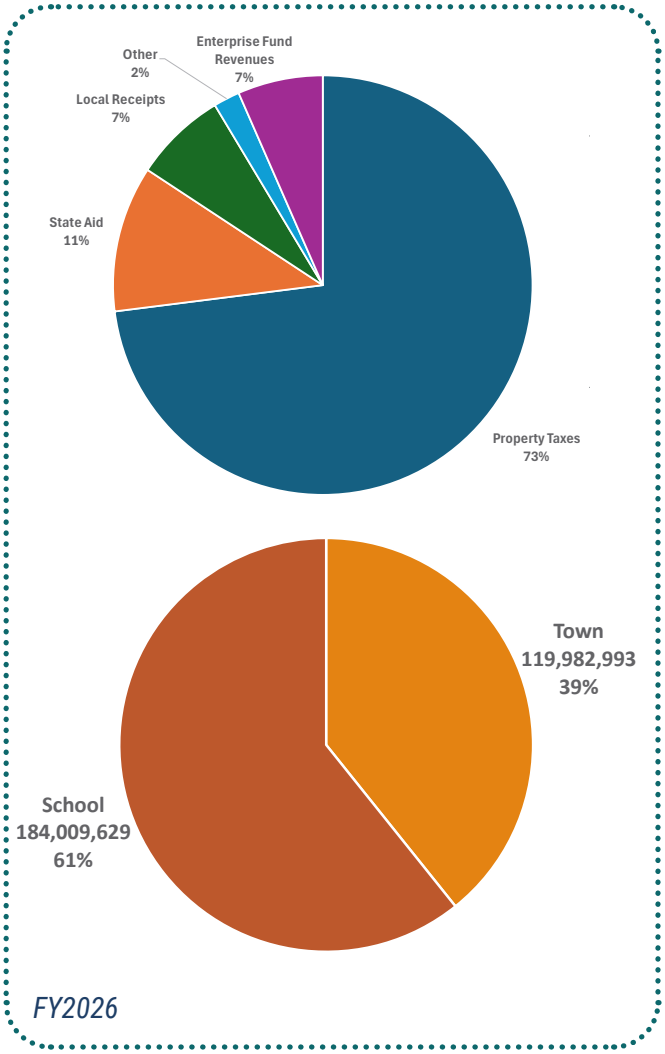
Source: Based on 2021 OntheMap data

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

PLYMOUTH'S FISCAL CONDITION

Approximately 75% of the Town's revenue to support the General Fund comes from real estate property taxes on residential, commercial, and industrial land.

» New development in the Pinehills and Redbrook accounted for **35-45% of the Town's total New Growth** each year over the past five years. Both planned communities will be completed within this Comprehensive Plan's ten-year horizon.



About 60% of the Town's expenditures support public education.

» Recent cost drivers include increasing public education needs and health insurance premiums.

About two-thirds of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) is for repair and maintenance of existing facilities.

» Projects on the current five-year CIP include replacement of two fire stations, expansion or replacement of police headquarters, a potential new fire station, a community recreation center with a senior wellness component, and a new Cold Springs elementary school.

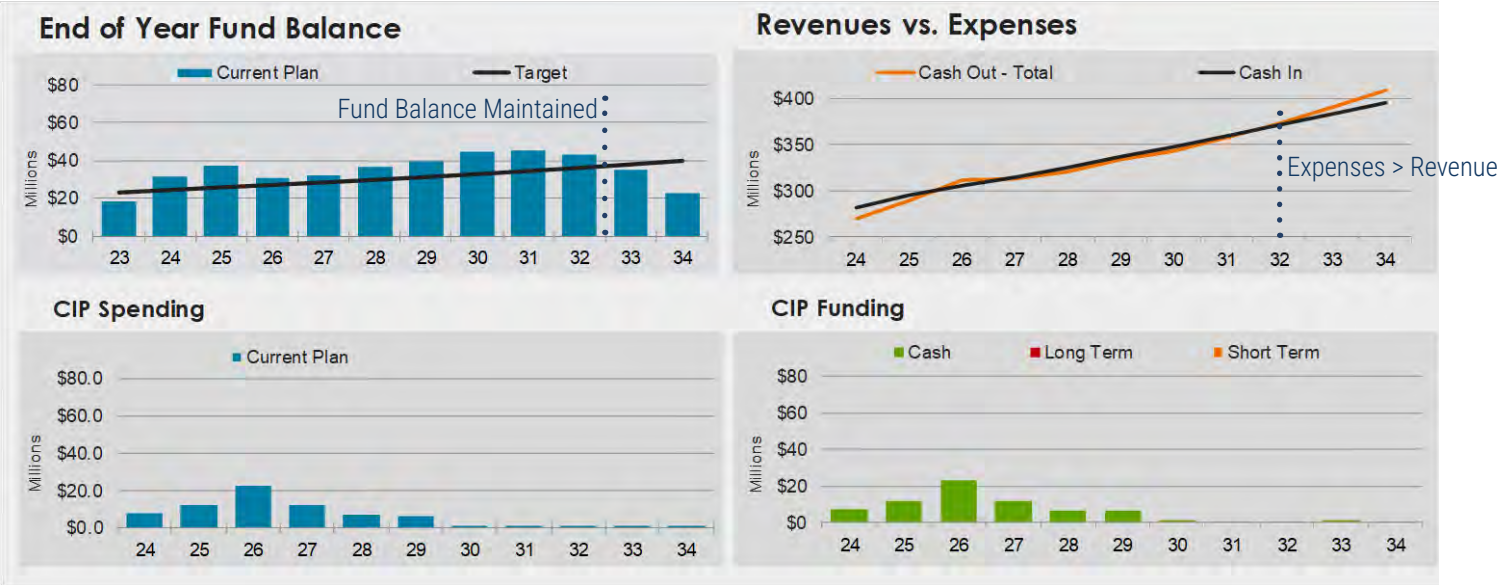
GENERAL FUND SCENARIOS

The Comprehensive Plan consultant team used its proprietary Financial Analysis and Management System (FAMS) model to develop a 10-year forecast of the Town's General Fund, incorporating detailed assumptions on revenue, expenditures, and capital investment. The model allowed the team to evaluate the Town's projected fiscal capacity under current conditions and test several scenarios to understand the impact of varying levels of tax base growth and different capital investment levels. This scenario-based approach provided insights into the long-term trade-offs between new development, infrastructure spending, tax policy, and service levels, with the goal of helping the Town make informed decisions that balance growth with fiscal sustainability.

Baseline Scenario:

The baseline analysis scenario presented in the figure shows the Town can manage to fund about 25% of the capital improvement plan when the Town's new development contributes 1.0% in additional property tax base growth. This is a somewhat conservative estimate compared to recent years when growth has been higher than historical averages. As major growth drivers like Pinehills and Redbrook near completion in the coming years, this may approximate the new normal.

	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032	FY 2033	FY 2034
Tax Rate	12.8700	12.6995	12.5163	12.3358	12.1579	11.9825	11.8097	11.6394	11.4715	11.3060	11.1430
CIP Execution %	100.0%	75.0%	40.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%	5.0%



FAMS Dashboard Baseline Scenario

GENERAL FUND SCENARIOS

Lower Growth

This scenario illustrates what could happen if the Town were to somehow discourage new growth and development, or if market demand decreased significantly. A scenario where the Town experiences 0.5% less annual new development no longer allows the Town to fund 25% of the capital plan while maintaining its required fund balance. The impact of 0.5% less taxable value growth from new development decreases the Town's projected annual revenues and limits the Town's ability to fund capital projects. Figure 2 shows the FAMS dashboard reflecting the lower growth scenario. The chart titled "End of Year Fund balance" represents the Town's projected General Fund reserve balance. In this scenario, it is projected to fall below the required target in FY 2029.

	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032	FY 2033	FY 2034
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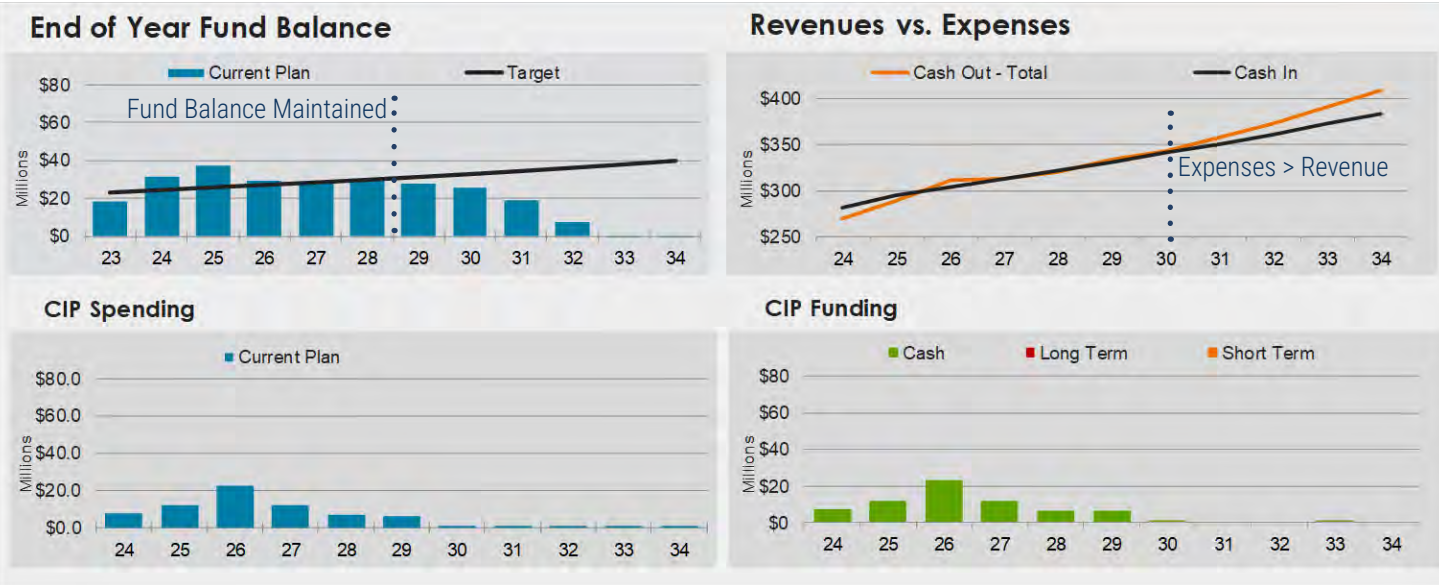


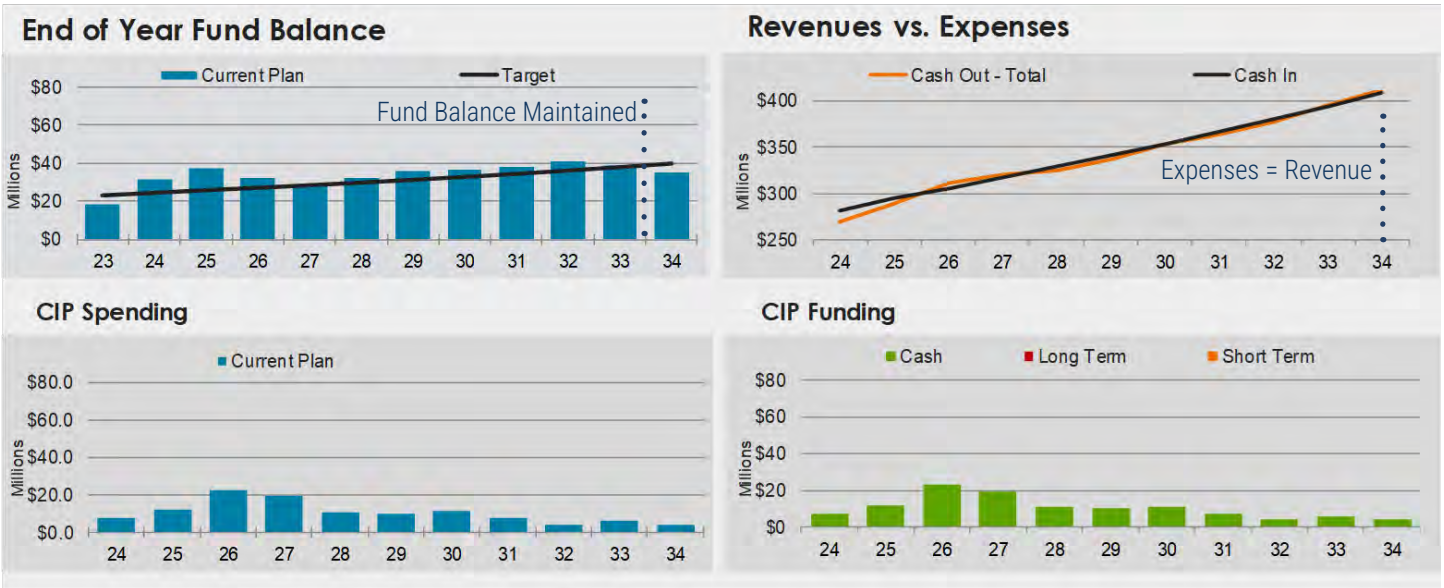
FAMS Dashboard Lower Growth Scenario

GENERAL FUND SCENARIOS

Higher Growth

This scenario illustrates what could happen if the Town sees even more new growth and development than the baseline. A scenario where the Town experiences 0.5% more annual new development allows the Town to fund approximately 40% of the capital plan and maintain the required fund balance throughout the projection period. The impact of 0.5% additional taxable value growth from new development increases the Town's projected annual revenues and enhances the Town's ability to fund capital projects. Figure 3 below shows the FAMS dashboard reflecting the higher growth scenario.

	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030	FY 2031	FY 2032	FY 2033	FY 2034
Tax Rate	12.8700	12.6995	12.5163	12.3358	12.1579	11.9825	11.8097	11.6394	11.4715	11.3060	11.1430
CIP Execution %	100.0%	75.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	40.0%	25.0%	25.0%	25.0%



FAMS Dashboard Higher Growth Scenario

ECONOMIC CASE STUDIES

Fostering Light Manufacturing to Bolster the Tax Base

The Urban Manufacturing Alliance provides a useful toolkit for Massachusetts communities looking to revitalize light manufacturing activity. While the community contexts are different from Plymouth, the discussions around zoning and potential use cases, redevelopment approaches, and governance models are applicable. It identifies four themes:

- Using land use tools for a vibrant light manufacturing economy: allowable uses in industrial zones, zoning protections, limiting real estate speculation, artisan zoning
- Leveraging broader planning processes to promote light manufacturing: for example, continued planning for the 1,600 Acres area in Plymouth
- Repositioning vacant buildings for modern manufacturing: right-sizing vacant space, considering makerspaces as catalysts
- Increasing regional coordination: supply chains, capacity building

Some of Plymouth's commercial- and industrial-zoned land is also attractive for multifamily redevelopment. Plymouth should explore a scattered-site land acquisition model to preserve industrial- and commercial-zoned parcels that have significant value as employment-centric sites given their size and/or location. Gaining site control of strategic parcels would be similar to models used by a number of Massachusetts communities such as redevelopment authorities or economic and industrial development corporations.

Source: An Urban Revival: How Land Use Tools and Real Estate Strategies are Fueling the Resurgence of Light Manufacturing in Greater Boston (2018)

Plymouth County Food System Action Planning

The Old Colony Planning Council launched a county-wide food system planning process in 2025. This process will conduct a county-wide food system assessment, identify opportunities to improve local food production and processing, and develop an action plan to guide implementation. Plymouth should participate in this process and apply its strategies to bolster the local food production and processing ecosystem as an important part of the local economy.

Source: Old Colony Planning Council

06

HOUSING

OVERVIEW

Housing is a cornerstone of community affordability and well-being. It is also a fundamental component of Plymouth's identity and future. The town is an attractive place to live, featuring a diverse mix of coastal, rural, suburban, and wooded neighborhoods, with homes ranging from charming historic properties to modern new builds in thoughtfully designed master planned communities. In recent years, Plymouth has experienced a significant increase in housing development, reflecting both regional demand and the town's appeal.

The 2004 Master Plan promoted smart growth, emphasizing compact development, preservation of open space, and the efficient use of existing infrastructure. While these intentions have guided the Town's growth, much of the new housing built over the past two decades has occurred in areas zoned for commercial and industrial uses or in more rural areas farther from daily amenities. Most rural development has taken place in two master planned communities that also preserve significant portions of the land. Their location has nonetheless contributed to habitat fragmentation, increased vehicle dependence, and rising costs for public safety, facilities, and services. The conversion of industrial and commercial land to residential reduces the Town's ability to generate non-residential tax revenue and employment opportunities for Plymouth residents.

In addition, housing costs have become a growing concern. Like many communities in the region, Plymouth faces challenges in providing a range of housing options that are attainable for residents of all income levels. Addressing housing affordability is complex and constrained by factors beyond local control, including market forces, state and federal policies, and broader economic trends. However, Plymouth can play a meaningful role by using its land use policies and zoning regulations to guide the types and suitable locations for new housing development.

Harborwalk Apartments in Cordage Park

HOUSING STRATEGIES

GOAL: DEVELOP A VARIETY OF HOUSING TYPES THAT BETTER MEET THE DIVERSE AND CHANGING NEEDS OF OUR MULTI-GENERATIONAL COMMUNITY.

Plymouth will continue to see housing growth for the foreseeable future due to regional market demand and its attractive qualities as a place to live. Strategies in this section encourage compact, efficient development patterns—especially in areas already served by infrastructure such as road networks, water, and sewer. In these locations, prioritizing multifamily housing and mixed-use development can help meet demand while minimizing environmental impacts and preserving open space in other parts of town. In less developed areas without public sewer (and without public water outside village centers), housing growth should be more limited. Where it happens, it should focus on conserving land and habitat by concentrating development within a smaller part of the site. This approach creates walkable neighborhoods within otherwise rural and natural settings. It also requires more advanced, shared systems for managing wastewater which help protect groundwater more than traditional individual septic systems. Wherever it occurs, new housing should respond to local needs like prospective first-time homebuyers, families, seniors aging in place, people looking for low-maintenance rental options, and others. By focusing growth in strategic areas, Plymouth can support community affordability and foster vibrant, walkable neighborhoods.

KEY ISSUES:

- Plymouth needs more attainable housing options at a variety of price points.
- Plymouth also needs a greater variety of housing types to meet changing needs throughout life stages.
- The housing market is strongly influenced by external factors including the regional market, construction costs, and interest rates. The Town's influence is primarily through land use and zoning regulations and development review.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- Affordability was top of mind for many community members. Recent increases in housing costs have impacted residents.
- Some people want to see more housing, especially more affordable options. Others are concerned about the pace of recent housing growth and its impacts.
- The housing goal was ranked among the top three goals at the strategies workshop.

HOUSING STRATEGIES

H-1: Promote and prioritize infill development, adaptive reuse, and the redevelopment of existing buildings, Town-owned properties, and underutilized or vacant commercial properties for mixed-income housing.

a. Direct future infill and mixed-use development toward Downtown and other Village Service Areas to encourage the critical mass necessary to create a complete and vibrant neighborhood.
b. Continue to evaluate Town-owned land for housing suitability.
c. Study opportunities for the re-use of existing buildings, previously developed land, or Town-owned sites for new community housing.

H-2: Support seniors' ability to age in place.

a. Increase multi-generational housing options and progressive senior housing facilities.
b. Promote use of available tax breaks.
c. Continue support for housing maintenance and repair programs for seniors who wish to remain in their homes and other households in need.

H-3: Continue to promote compact development patterns that group housing areas on smaller portions of a site to protect remaining land as common space.

H-4: Implement compact dwelling zoning regulation to encourage smaller 'starter home' construction at lower price points.

H-5: Preserve and expand the existing affordable housing stock to facilitate a diversity of prices, building types, lot sizes, and continued progress towards state-mandated subsidized housing goals.

H-6: Explore public-private partnership opportunities to spur housing development that addresses local needs.

H-7: Review existing zoning tools and make changes as needed to facilitate housing development.

d. Review and improve Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) regulations to encourage greater use. TDR helps preserve land in undeveloped areas by transferring allowable housing potential to areas with water and/or sewer service.
e. Evaluate effectiveness of the Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) bylaw and consider changes as needed to support its ongoing success. The IZ bylaw requires new housing projects with more than six units to provide affordable units equal to at least 10% of the total.

HOUSING STRATEGIES

H-4 Reference: MGL Chapter 40Y Starter Home Zoning

A "starter home" is a smaller single-family home suitable for first-time home buyers, downsizing, smaller households, and people needing a more affordable single-family housing option. Massachusetts defines them as a single-family residence not exceeding 1,850 square feet.

Chapter 40Y allows towns and cities to create starter home zoning district(s). These must allow starter homes by-right at a density of at least four units per acre, and at least half of the starter homes must have 3 or more bedrooms. For starter home developments with more than 12 units, at least 10% must be affordable for households earning less than 110% of the Area Median Income.

H-5 Reference: MGL Chapter 40B

Among other matters, Chapter 40B addresses proposals for low and moderate income housing in communities, providing for a streamlined approval process for eligible projects with the goal that all cities and towns have adequate opportunities for working households and older adults. Chapter 40B allows a developer to submit a comprehensive permit application for an eligible project which:

- includes either at least 25% of units reserved for households earning 80% or less of the area median income (AMI), or 20% of units for households earning 50% or less AMI
- receives housing subsidies to support affordable housing construction.

The project may override certain local zoning requirements. Unless a municipality has more than 10% of its housing stock listed on the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI), it has limited options to deny the permit.

Plymouth falls below the 10% threshold but is making progress. Until then, exploring "friendly 40B" opportunities with developers is one proactive way to provide housing in forms that address community interests. In a friendly 40B, formally known as the Local Initiative Program (LIP), local officials and the developer discuss a proposed project prior to a comprehensive permit application and negotiate aspects like the number and type of units, exterior design features, open space, or other features.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- The location of housing influences transportation patterns and greenhouse gas emissions. Housing in northern Plymouth, which generally has a more connected roadway network, a greater variety of shopping and amenities, and more jobs, means residents can walk or drive shorter distances. Housing in southern Plymouth, which generally has fewer roads, jobs, and amenities, means residents need to drive more often, on the same roads, and longer distances to reach everyday destinations like employment, shopping, and parks.
- The location and form of housing development can influence natural resources. Infill housing, or new housing built in already developed areas with supporting infrastructure, can add to the housing stock without impacting undeveloped land elsewhere. In less developed areas, the Zoning Bylaw has several options that encourage development patterns which conserve land by reducing minimum lot sizes and grouping housing together on a portion of the site.
- Housing is an important consideration for economic development as well. Many employers prefer having a variety of housing options and price points nearby, both so their workers have a better chance of finding housing nearby and so the local labor pool is more likely to include a range of skill levels. Many retail, hospitality, and home healthcare employees who work in Plymouth cannot afford to live here, contributing to staffing shortages and commuter traffic.
- Housing growth influences the Town's infrastructure, services, and fiscal condition. Residents in the southern part of Plymouth have seen how increased housing has strained the limited road network there. Housing built farther from existing public safety facilities increases response times for fire and police.

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:

The cost of housing is perhaps the most tangible, pressing aspect of overall community affordability for most people. However, it is difficult for any one municipality to make housing more affordable as regional housing demand continues to drive prices up and construction costs keep rising. The Town can help reduce uncertainty in the approval process through streamlining permitting, which saves time and reduces the cost to produce new housing. Encouraging new homes near existing services and infrastructure can help reduce household transportation expenses. The Town should explore options to create affordable housing at prices below the affordability threshold established by the State*.

Sustainability and Resilience:

Aspects of home construction and renovation like heat pumps, water-efficient fixtures, LED lighting, native landscaping, renewable materials, and solar panels can enhance environmental sustainability, but can also increase construction costs. As temperatures become more extreme, energy use and costs increase, further impacting cost of living.

Health, Walkability, and Wellbeing:

Housing in neighborhoods with sidewalks close to parks, shopping, dining, and other amenities better support an active lifestyle than neighborhoods without sidewalks far from places people might walk. Residents who struggle to pay the rent or mortgage may suffer from related stress. Single-person households without strong social networks may feel isolated and be more likely to experience loneliness. As people age, single-floor housing options and housing with accessibility modifications become increasingly important.

**The State defines housing as affordable for households earning 60–80% of the area median income (AMI), based on HUD estimates for each metropolitan area.*

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Approximately **70%** of housing units in Plymouth are **single-family detached**. About 5% are in buildings with 20 or more units.

About **80%** of housing units are owner-occupied. Nearly **31%** of homeowners and about **51% of renters** in Plymouth are considered **cost-burdened**, meaning they pay more than 30% of household income on housing costs.

Approximately **2,400** of the 3,300 vacant housing units in Plymouth are classified as **seasonal/occasional use** (70% of all vacant units).

Plymouth's Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) stands at **8.67%** of the 2020 year-round housing units, short of the Commonwealth's 10% threshold. However, the Town qualified for a two-year Safe Harbor status in August 2025 by exceeding a housing production goal set in its recent Housing Production Plan.

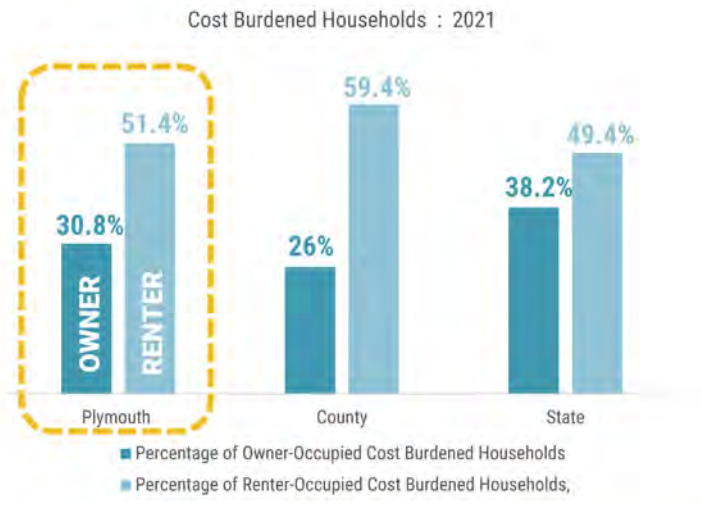
Data spanning 2014-2023 indicates that almost 75% of building permit units were single-family over the past decade. **Multi-family units** comprised about **28%** of all building permit units.

Plymouth added about **6,800 new housing units** between 2000 and 2020, a **32%** increase. Of these, approximately **40% were in the Pinehills**.

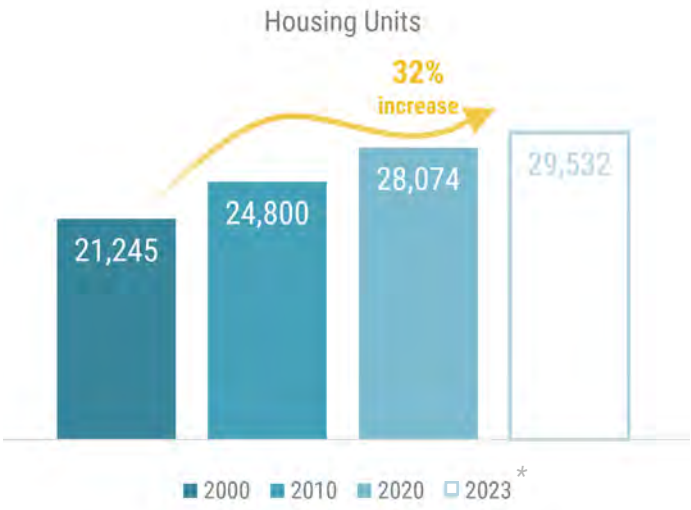
Recent related planning efforts

- Housing Production Plan (2023)
- Multifamily Overlay District (new zoning overlay, adopted 2024)
- Housing Choice Community designation (2020)

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS



Cost-burdened households are those paying more than 30% of household income on housing costs.

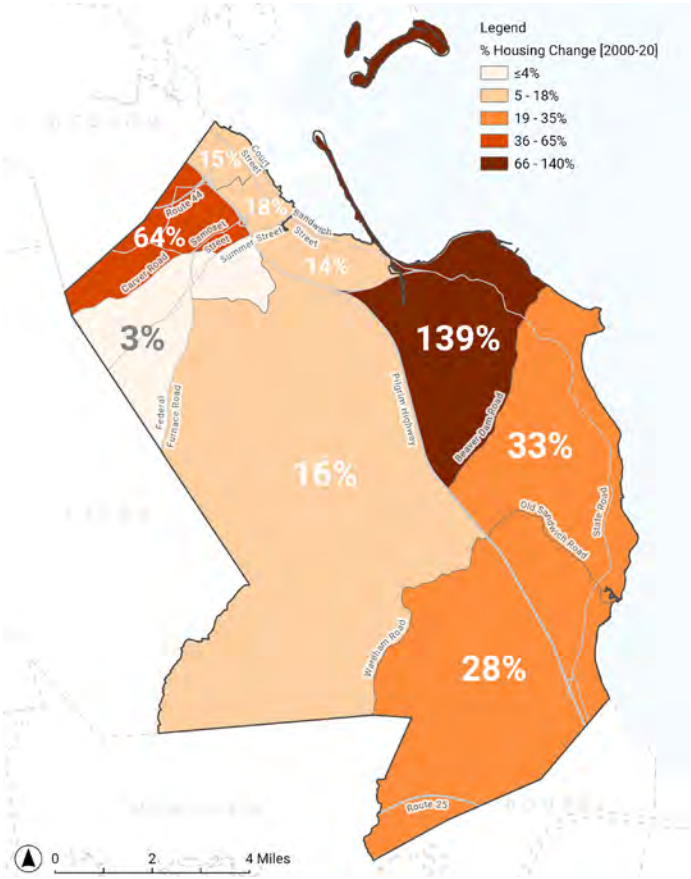


*Source: US Census 2000, 2010, 2020; * ESRI estimate 2023*

Plymouth Affordable Housing Inventory / Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI)

STATUS	TOTAL UNITS	SHI INVENTORY TOTAL	% OF HOUSING STOCK
Existing affordable housing units	2,226	2,226	8.67%
Existing affordable units on SHI (As of 07/02/2025)	1,734		
Pending affordable units on SHI (As of 08/2025)	192		
Kanso PENDING--- Permitted only	300		
Affordable units under construction	68	2,294	8.92%
Potential future affordable units (proposed)	88	2,382	9.27%
Affordable units needed to meet 10% affordable threshold	187	2,569	10%

Source: Town of Plymouth Subsidized Housing Inventory (2025); MA Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities CH40B Subsidized Housing Inventory (2025).
Note: Calculations are based on 25,689 total year-round housing units as recorded by 2020 Decennial Census data.



The geographic distribution of new housing units since 2000 varies across Plymouth, with the highest percent change in the Census tracts containing the Pinehills and West Plymouth.

07 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

07| ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

OVERVIEW

Plymouth's character is shaped in large part by its diversity of natural resources. It has 36 miles of coastline and more than 365 inland ponds including 36 coastal plain ponds, which support some of the rarest freshwater plant communities in the Northeast. Plymouth's forested land includes one of the two largest remaining pine barrens in the world, the Massachusetts Coastal Pine Barrens. This habitat supports over 200 state-listed rare, threatened, and endangered species, including species found nowhere else in the Commonwealth. Less visible but of critical importance is the Plymouth-Carver Aquifer beneath the Town, the second largest sole-source aquifer in Massachusetts. These distinguishing features and Plymouth's large geographic size reinforce the Town's identity as both a coastal community and a wooded inland community. The variety of natural resources is also an attractive amenity for many residents and visitors.

Throughout the northeastern United States, changing climate conditions are shifting temperatures and precipitation patterns which is resulting in more intense storms, heat waves, prolonged droughts, and coastal and inland flooding. At the same time, sea levels are also rising and projected to impact coastal communities more significantly over the next several decades and beyond. Worsening local impacts in Plymouth have highlighted a growing need to improve the resilience and sustainability of the Town's built and natural environment. Given that climate hazards will continue to impact local infrastructure, economic development, property, health, safety, and the well-being of residents, climate resilience and sustainability are cross-cutting themes that play a large role in the future of municipal planning and development.

In 2020, Plymouth completed the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) process to identify top climate-related hazards and opportunities for adaptation. Community members identified sea-level rise and precipitation as some of the most pressing climate risks impacting Plymouth. Top vulnerabilities included the loss of open space and natural resources, critical facilities, and homes due to inland and coastal flooding. Plymouth's aquifer and ponds also face vulnerabilities to increasing temperatures and sea level rise and may experience declines in water table elevation and increased salinity in coastal ponds. As a result, Plymouth developed Priority Plymouth: Climate Action and Adaptation Plan in 2024 to identify actions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Strategies in this section reflect many of the priorities of this plan, such as ensuring "essential community infrastructure is resilient to climate impacts" and that "Plymouth's natural coastal and wetland resources and associated economic and recreational activity are resilient to climate change". They focus on coordinating and advancing the Town's various land preservation plans and initiatives to protect, preserve, and restore Plymouth's natural environment.

Walkway out to rock breaker along Plymouth waterfront

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE STRATEGIES

Plymouth's environment and climate strategies reflect a coordinated effort to protect the Town's natural assets while addressing the increasing impacts of sea level rise, flooding, heat, and severe weather. Natural resource strategies focus on water quality and conservation, forest management, and land preservation. Water supply and water quality are important concerns for residents. Plymouth's protected open spaces are beloved by many and an important part of the local character and ecosystem. The Town continues to acquire and/or protect open space through the Community Preservation Act, Open Space developments, and partnerships with non-profit land conservation groups. The desire to preserve open space should be integrated with other needs such as affordable housing, tax base growth, and job creation.

Consistent with priorities identified in the Priority Plymouth Climate Action and Adaptation Plan and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness process, this section focuses on measures that strengthen the resilience of critical infrastructure, reduce energy use and emissions, and preserve coastal and inland ecosystems that provide natural protection and ecological value as well as contribute to Plymouth's character. Strategies emphasize updating plans and regulations, expanding renewable energy, maintaining tree canopy and green space, protecting ground and surface water resources, enhancing emergency preparedness, and advancing long-term shoreline planning through regional and local scales, including consideration of community-led relocation in the most vulnerable coastal areas.

KEY ISSUES:

- Plymouth relies on a sole source aquifer for both water supply and the health of its hydrologically-connected surface-water features (e.g. ponds), so preserving groundwater occurrence and quality is an environmental priority.
- Nutrient loading from fertilizers and aging septic systems compromises pond and groundwater quality.
- Much of Plymouth's coast is less vulnerable to sea level rise and flooding compared to other coastal communities, but storm-driven erosion is a concern.
- Conversion of summer residences to year-round housing has contributed to degrading pond water quality.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- Visioning survey responses demonstrate that Plymouth's natural open spaces, biodiversity, and proximity to the beach/coast and to wooded areas/ponds are prized by residents.
- Plymouth's sole source aquifer and water quality, ponds, and open spaces were frequently mentioned on the interactive map. In addition, water conservation was frequently cited as an important priority.
- The natural resources goal was ranked among the top three goals at the strategies workshop.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE STRATEGIES

GOAL: PRESERVE AND PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES WHILE SUPPORTING OUR BIODIVERSITY AND ESSENTIAL AQUIFER.

NR-1: Increase public education and outreach to raise awareness of water conservation practices and the potential water quality impacts of activities near ponds, wetlands, and other critical water resources.

a. Proactively engage homeowners and homebuyers near water bodies to inform them about septic system maintenance, fertilizer use, the importance of vegetated buffers, and prohibited structures or uses near water bodies.

NR-2: Explore opportunities to enhance/expand the Town's stormwater management plan to increase protection and improvement of ground and surface water quality. Considerations could include:

a. Expansion of water quality monitoring with a concurrent action of establishing seasonal monitoring of swimmable ponds.
b. Require green stormwater infrastructure on public and private properties and in new development.
c. Develop steps for remediation and management of impaired waters informed by water quality data.
d. Integrate recommendations from the Association to Preserve Cape Cod's 2023 Water Health Report and Action Plan as well as EPA's resources for effective management of sole source aquifer designation and possible funding sources.

NR-3: Update Town water conservation plan.

a. Align with Plymouth's existing Water Balance Program requirements, as applicable.
b. Set a consistent schedule to review progress and update the plan throughout implementation.

NR-4: Evaluate existing bylaws and policies pertaining to wetlands, stormwater management, aquifer protection, and septic systems to identify opportunities to strengthen.

a. Integrate water resource management strategies (including strategies related to municipal water supply and treated wastewater disposal) that minimize impacts to the aquifer and hydrologically-connected features such as ponds, wetlands and streams.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE STRATEGIES

NR-5: Explore feasibility of participating in the MassDEP Community Septic System Management Program to support development of local inspection and septic management plans that will help protect groundwater quality.

NR-6: Develop a forest management plan in partnership with the Commonwealth as well as private and non-profit entities to maintain healthy forests and mitigate fire risks. Include a community wildfire protection plan to address fire risk, especially in the pine barrens.

NR-7: Develop a coordinated land preservation strategy that integrates strategies from multiple Town plans to protect, preserve, and expand natural resources and open space.

a. Identify open spaces with high natural value such as forest land and areas that protect groundwater, buffer surface and coastal water resources, and support significant habitat and wildlife. Consider acquisition potential for those areas with the highest natural value (based on OSC ranking sheet) and greatest risk for development.
b. Identify parcels for marsh migration or freshwater (cranberry bog) restoration, particularly along tidal rivers.
c. Promote Town's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program and consider amendments to make it more attractive for land owners.

NR-8: Develop and implement a Town-wide invasive species management plan.

NR-9: Pursue partnerships and grant opportunities to conserve, restore, and protect ecologically sensitive areas and areas prone to flooding.

NR-10: Actively participate in and expand regional cooperation related to shared water resources.

a. Pursue implementation of local aspects of the Regional Water Plan completed by the Old Colony Planning Council.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE STRATEGIES

GOAL: 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.

SR-1: Reduce municipal energy use and greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency retrofits and electrification of municipal buildings and vehicle fleet.

SR-2: Expand the generation and use of renewable energy townwide (solar, geothermal, wind).

SR-3: Enhance the resilience of Town infrastructure to mitigate the negative impacts of climate hazards through implementation of actions identified in the Priority Plymouth Climate Action Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan.

a. Develop an inventory of critical Town assets and infrastructure.
b. Conduct a coastal vulnerability assessment of critical assets and infrastructure and identify specific actions to reduce risk and improve resilience.
c. Update Flood Management Plan to address coastal and stormwater flooding.
d. Conduct a Zoning Bylaws and Land Use Regulations review to incorporate language that improves resilience at the building level such as increased freeboard requirements* for redevelopment that incorporate depths and extent of sea level rise in 2050 (4.6 feet), projections for increased precipitation, and increased wetland buffer zones beyond current FEMA requirements.
e. Develop an education and awareness campaign that includes the Town's natural hazards vulnerabilities for residents, businesses, tourists, and harbor/shorefront users.
f. Ensure that all sewer pump stations are adequately protected against flooding and consider improvements that include green infrastructure.
g. Continue to identify and develop priority resilience projects and maintain funding mechanism by completing MVP 2.0 certification process.

SR-4: Maintain and expand Plymouth's tree canopy and promote sustainable and resilient landscaping practices throughout the community.

SR-5: Partner with neighboring communities on shared climate resilience strategies.

a. Explore a regional beach and dune nourishment/sediment resource planning effort that considers the benefits of maintaining barrier beach systems like Plymouth Long Beach and Duxbury Beach.

* "Freeboard requirements" refers to the safety margin added above the Base Flood Elevation to reduce flood risk.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE STRATEGIES

SR-6: Conduct an updated coastal engineering assessment of existing, Town-owned coastal infrastructure and engineering structures (seawalls, revetments, etc.) in high-risk areas to evaluate conditions and identify maintenance and/or redesign/retrofit needs.

a. Revisit and build on the 2007 CZM-Funded South Shore coastal Infrastructure Inventory and Assessment Demonstration Project.
b. Consider the range of nature-based, living shorelines, green, grey, and hybrid approaches. Reference the Climate Action Plan.

SR-7: Expand the reach and capacity of emergency preparedness communications and services, paying special attention to vulnerable populations.

SR-8: Conduct Town-wide low-lying roadways assessment to identify roadway sections vulnerable to coastal and/or stormwater flooding.

a. Develop adaptation strategies for highest-priority sections of roadway.
b. Consider implications of vulnerable stormwater infrastructure when evaluating coastal risk to roadways.

SR-9: Ensure long-term planning for the resilience of Plymouth's shoreline.

a. Fund and develop a regional beach management plan for the resilience of Plymouth Long Beach, White Horse Beach, and other public beaches and coastlines.
b. Consider consolidating all Town beach nourishment sites into one permit application to better respond to coastal storm impacts as they occur and take advantage of affordable sources of nourishment sand as they become available. Consider incorporating beneficial reuse of dredged material into the permit.

SR-10: Consider a Town approach toward community-led relocation (relocation of vulnerable infrastructure and buildings, habitat restoration, and regulation) in areas at high risk of coastal erosion and flooding.

a. Consider a neighborhood-scale, phased, and long-term planning approach.
b. Explore potential for coastal buybacks, climate migration, and phased retreat over time.
    - Key areas of focus: Taylor Avenue, Saquish, Plymouth Long Beach, White Horse Beach, Manomet.

SR-11: Expand public beach access to selected ponds and ocean areas consistent with appropriate natural resource conservation measures.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Environment and climate are important aspects for Plymouth's economic development. Municipal efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (i.e., reducing energy use, improving energy efficiency, leveraging renewable energy) can help mitigate the effects that climate-related disasters have on the economy. Additionally, improving the resilience of Plymouth's built and natural infrastructure will ensure its ability to sustain and adapt under changing conditions, leading to greater long-term economic stability and a reduction in post-disaster-related costs. Fostering a resilient blue economy involves ensuring that coastal resources remain intact and healthy to support Plymouth's many commercial fishing and shellfishing operations.
- The future design, development, and placement of housing and other land uses impact the natural environment and overall climate resilience. Strategies that encourage smart growth, efficient and compact development patterns, and green space all strengthen social resilience and reduce the impact of climate hazards. Incorporating low-emissions and energy efficiency standards into new home and building construction can also enhance the environmental sustainability and climate resilience of Plymouth's built environment.
- Protecting and enhancing natural and open space resources in Plymouth is a critical strategy for building resilience, reducing climate-related hazards to communities, and promoting the sustainability of these ecosystems into the future. For example, protecting land for future marshes to migrate in response to sea-level rise is a long-term adaptation strategy that will build resilient communities and ecosystems.
- Resilience and sustainability play a role in Plymouth's fiscal sustainability and quality of Town facilities and services. Capital projects that improve the efficiency of municipal facilities, improve water, sewer, and

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:

Investing in climate resilience and the environment is a long-term affordability strategy for Plymouth. Proactive measures such as strengthening infrastructure, enhancing natural flood barriers, and improving energy infrastructure are far less costly than rebuilding vulnerable assets after a disaster occurs. Reactive responses to flooding, heat, or infrastructure failures may result in increases in insurance premiums, utility bills, and taxes. Plymouth can take proactive measures to protect vulnerable infrastructure, municipal assets, and neighborhoods, reducing the financial burden of responding to and recovering from climate impacts.

Sustainability and Resilience:

Protecting forests, natural hydrologic features, and other natural areas strengthen natural defenses, while coordinated shoreline planning, low-lying roadway assessments and improvements, and emergency preparedness ensure that residents, businesses, and ecosystems can recover quickly if a disturbance occurs. Plymouth can lower its climate impact by reducing emissions, diversifying the energy grid, and increasing the resilience of Town infrastructure.

Health, Walkability, and Wellbeing:

Environment and climate strategies, including protecting open space, expanding tree canopy, and managing coastal and stormwater flooding, directly support healthier, more walkable communities and play a role in improved public health and well-being. Investments in resilient infrastructure and transportation can make it safer to walk, bike, and access essential services at any time but especially during and after extreme weather events. By protecting natural landscapes and reducing climate-related hazards, Plymouth can create neighborhoods that are more resilient, healthy, and active for residents year-round.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

stormwater infrastructure, improve water quality, and reduce flooding impacts are cost-effective ways to increase resilience to climate-related threats. Funds spent today to increase resilience can help reduce funds needed in the future to recover from impacts. More efficient Town facilities reduce operational costs and can increase Town capacity to offer high quality public spaces and services on an ongoing basis.

- A sustainable and resilient transportation network will support Plymouth in accomplishing its multimodal transportation aspirations. Automobiles are among the largest contributors to Plymouth's greenhouse gas emissions. Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT), improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, creating walkable neighborhoods near services and amenities, increasing electric vehicle (EV) adoption and expanding the charging network, and advocating for enhanced transit service can all help to stabilize or reduce these emissions.
- Sustainability and resilience play a role in preserving Plymouth's historic and cultural resources. Many of these important assets are located along the coast or near waterways, leaving them especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Their age often means they lack adequate structural protection. By implementing resilience strategies to protect these areas or increase the adaptive capacity of these sites, Plymouth can ensure the long-term preservation of its unique heritage and history.
- Management strategies for groundwater supply can affect hydrologic conditions and water quality in ponds, wetlands, and streams. For example, groundwater pumping used for wells can reduce groundwater inflow into water resources, increasing the concentration of contaminants.

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

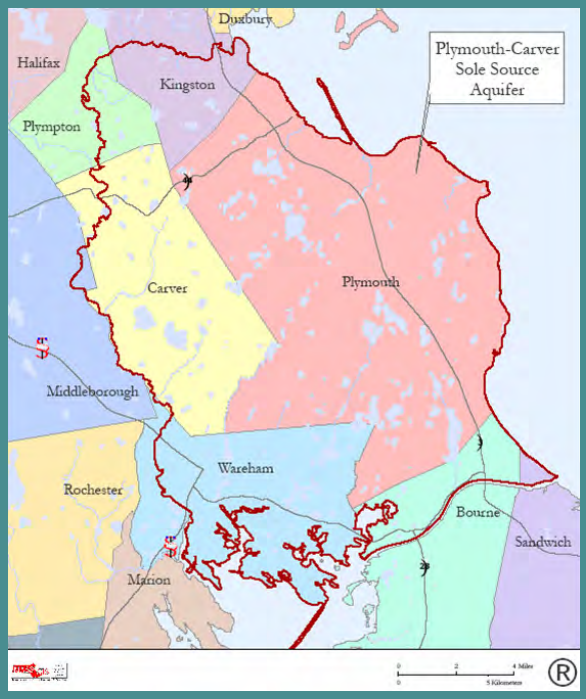
NATURAL RESOURCES

- Plymouth has **36 miles of coastline**, the majority of which is inaccessible to the public. Plymouth contains **more than 365 inland ponds**, including 36 globally rare coastal plain ponds. Plymouth's forested land includes **one of the two largest remaining pine barrens in the world.**

- Plymouth has about **8,000 acres of wetlands**, **16% (1,308)** of which are a part of **cranberry bogs.** The **profitability of cranberry cultivation has declined**, however, leading some growers to sell off their land or transition to other uses.

- A significant portion of Plymouth's forest land is comprised of pine barrens, a rare natural community characterized by sandy soils, fire-dependency, and specialized plant and animal species. **Myles Standish State Forest** makes up roughly **10,000** of these **acres** and is a critical resource to preserve.

- **Chapter 61 Forest Land in Plymouth has decreased by 59%** since 1999. Approximately 2,000 acres remain in the Chapter 61 program which gives preferential tax treatment to landowners who preserve their land. **Chapter 61A Agricultural/Horticultural Land in Plymouth has decreased by 86%** since 1999. Approximately 1,000 acres remain in the Chapter 61A program which gives preferential tax treatment to landowners who preserve their land.



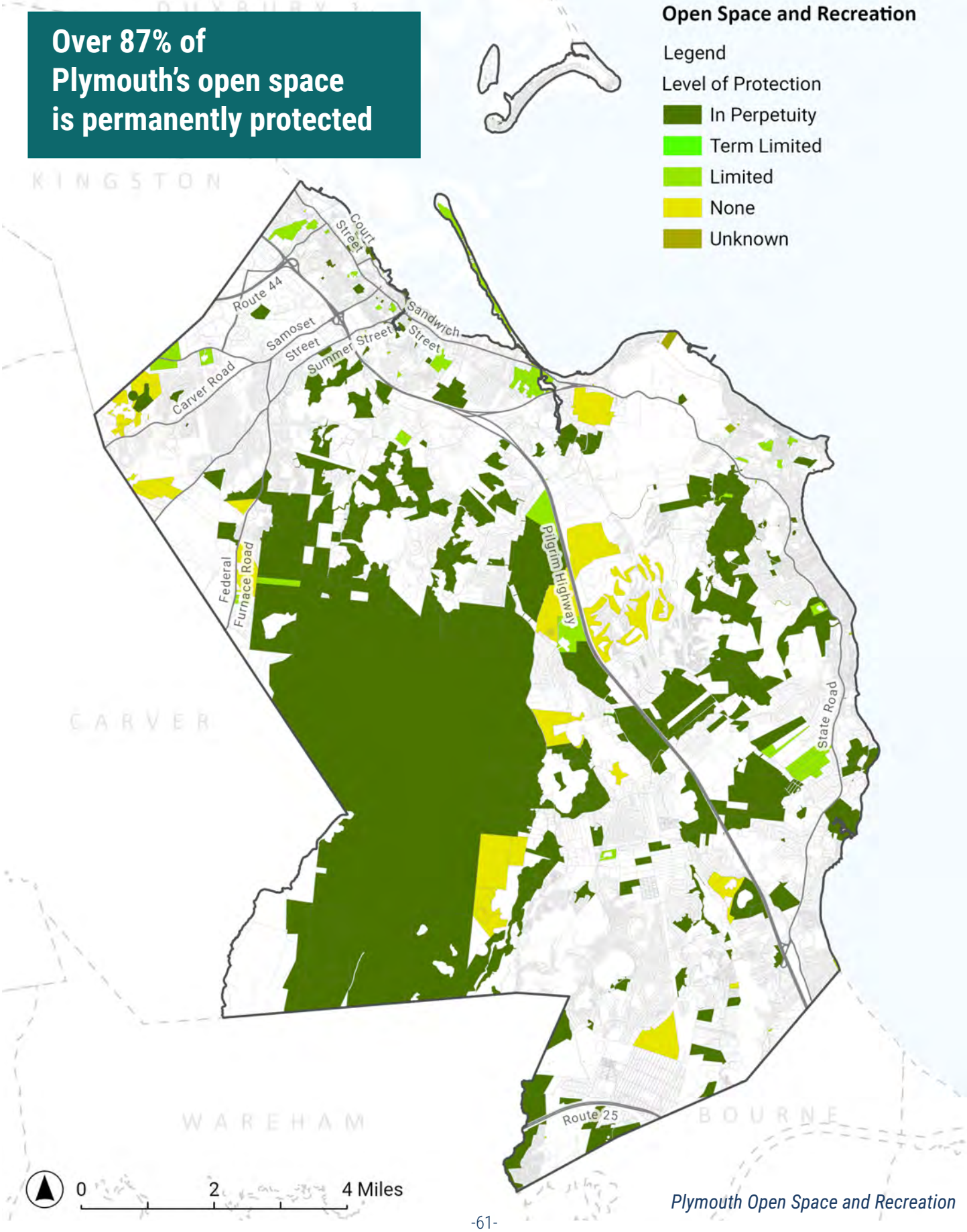
Source: MassGIS

Plymouth relies on **an extensive aquifer that is the sole source for drinking water** and supports hydrologic conditions in most ponds.

The **Plymouth-Carver Aquifer covers 199 square miles** and is the principal source of water for Plymouth and six other communities. The aquifer's general extents are outlined in red in the map at left.

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Over 87% of Plymouth's open space is permanently protected



Plymouth Open Space and Recreation

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY AND NATURAL HAZARDS

- Plymouth has **less vulnerability to sea level rise compared to many nearby coastal communities.** Coastal bluffs protect many inland areas, especially in southern Plymouth, although those are susceptible to erosion from stronger storms.

- It is **projected that there will be a 24% increase in heavy rainfall days** per year by 2050 (Climate Explorer, NEMAC, 2024). This could damage critical facilities, infrastructure, homes and businesses, cause power outages, down trees, etc.

- Plymouth is **projected** to see many **fewer days colder than 32 degrees and slightly more days hotter than 90 degrees in the future**. This will influence plant and animal habitats, energy usage, public health, and more.

  - » Warmer winters and hotter summers could cause an increase in vector borne disease risk (e.g. diseases transmitted by ticks, mosquitoes, sand fleas, midges, etc.), require a higher need for energy and strain on electric grids, and increase the occurrence of heat-related illnesses.
  - » There was an average of 69 emergency department visits from heat stress from 2016 to 2020 (MA Environmental Public Health Tracking, Executive Office of Health and Human Services, 2024).

- **26% of the land area in Plymouth is susceptible to flooding** during a 100-year rainfall event (this excludes wetlands) and **9% of buildings** in Plymouth (1,561 buildings) are **vulnerable to the 100-year flood** (Climate Risk Assessment, Woodwell Climate Research Center, 2023). **81% of critical facilities are in a flood zone** (Climate-Ready Healthy Plymouth, Town of Plymouth, 2020).

- **White Horse Beach's private wastewater facilities are most vulnerable to sea level rise** because of its low-lying area and structures located in a High Risk Flood Zone.

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

ENERGY USE

- **The buildings and transportation sectors contributed 93% of Plymouth's greenhouse gas emissions** in 2021. Energy used to heat, cool, and power buildings (47%) and vehicle emissions (46%) were the primary drivers.
- There has been **a 66% increase in solar array installations** in Plymouth, with more than 1,200 in place as of 2021. (Production Tracking System (PTS) Solar Photovoltaic Report, MassCEC, 2022).
- **39% of Plymouth's greenhouse gas emissions came from gas powered passenger vehicles** (Massachusetts Vehicle Census, MassDOT, 2023).

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Climate Trends in Plymouth

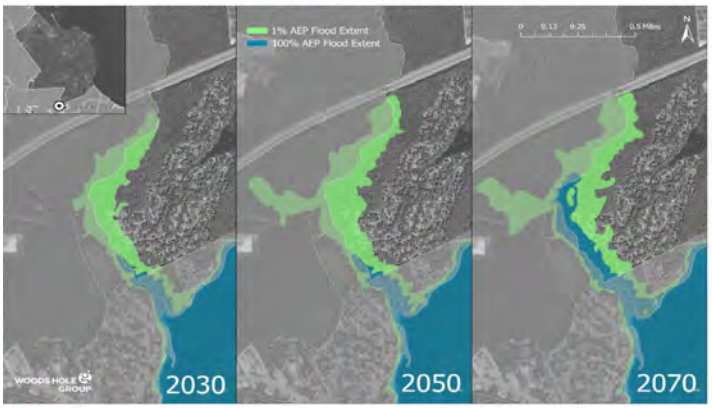
	2030	2050	2070
Days <32F	**-28** (-14 to -35) 106	**-40** (-28 to -51) 106	**-51** (-40 to -64) 106
Days >90F	**+4** (1 to 6) 1	**+9** (4 to 16) 1	**+16** (9 to 33) 1
Total Annual Precipitation	**+5.9%** (-5.9 to 18.3) 42.8	**+7.7%** (-5.5 to 21.1) 42.8	**+9.5%** (-5.6 to 24.8) 42.8
99th %-ile rainfall	**+6.2%** (2.7 to 8.2) 1.1	**+9.5%** (6.2 to 12.5) 1.1	**+12.5%** (9.5 to 17) 1.1

Source: Priority Plymouth, ResilientMass Climate Change Projections Dashboard

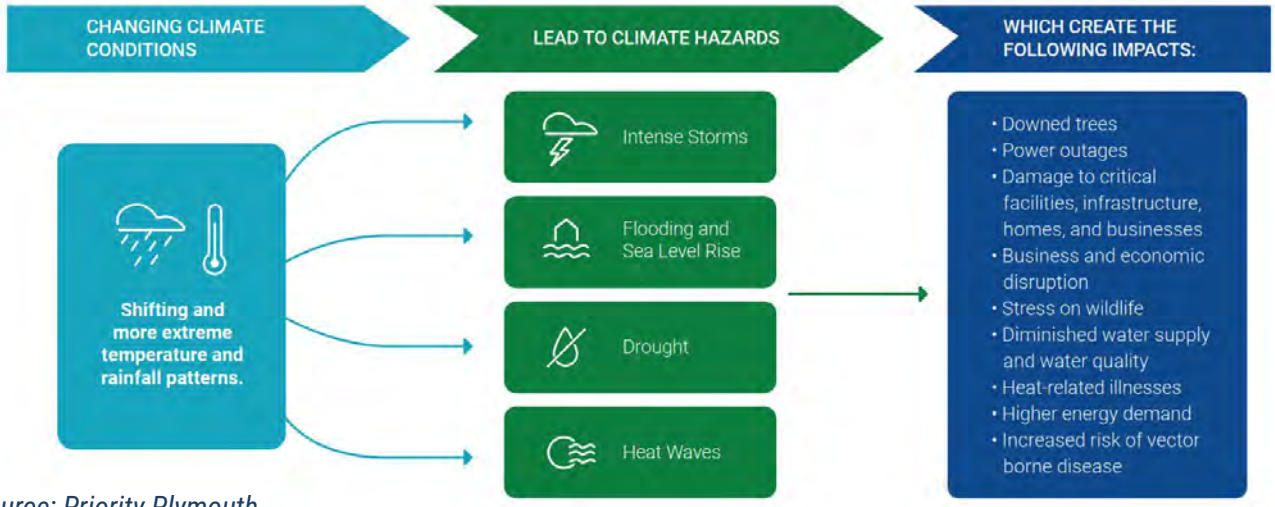
Flood Projections for Ship's Pond, Surfside Beach, and Ellisville areas of Plymouth

Source: Woods Hole Group

Flood Projections for Red Brook Road area of Plymouth



1% AEP Flood Extent – A 1 in 100 chance of a flood like this being equaled or exceeded
100% AEP Flood Extent – A high chance of a flood like this being equaled or exceeded



Source: Priority Plymouth

LEARNING FROM CAPE COD: THREE CASE STUDIES

Plymouth shares geologic history with neighboring Cape Cod. Similar to the Plymouth-Carver Aquifer beneath Plymouth, the Cape's drinking water supply is provided exclusively by the Cape Cod Aquifer which is designated a Sole Source Aquifer under the Safe Drinking Water Act administered by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Aquifer & Drinking Water Protection

The Cape Cod Aquifer is recharged solely by precipitation. The sandy soil of the Cape makes the aquifer susceptible to contamination from development and land uses within the watershed. The Cape Cod Commission and Barnstable County have developed resources to help residents learn more about the aquifer, become familiar with emerging issues, and get involved. Information on residential water testing, lake and pond water quality, waste disposal, wastewater research, county programs, and the work of local NGO's is shared on the Cape Code Groundwater website.

Facing similar challenges, the seven towns which depend on the Plymouth-Carver Aquifer as their principal source of water established the Plymouth-Carver Aquifer Advisory Committee (PCAAC) and developed the Plymouth Carver Aquifer Action Plan (2007) focused on preserving the watershed. In 2025, the Old Colony Planning Council completed the Regional Water Plan which recommends sustainable water supply strategies with actions at the local, regional, and state level.

Regional Water Quality & Wastewater Planning

Recognizing the importance of regional water quality, the Association to Preserve Cape Cod (APCC) convened a summit of land trusts, water quality organizations, and non-profit groups to discuss regional wastewater management. Key findings were that nutrients and wastewater threaten the quality of the groundwater, ponds, and coastal estuaries; there is evidence of nutrient enrichment from human activities and wastewater; and nutrient enrichment is contributing to the decline of water quality. Plymouth faces similar issues.

To reduce household impacts on water quality, towns in Barnstable County have encouraged and incentivized residents to install alternative septic systems that reduce nitrogen inputs and preserve water quality. The Massachusetts Alternative Septic System Technology Center provides product testing, research, and education for residents to better understand available options. To complement these efforts, towns across the Cape are also expanding existing or building new wastewater treatment facilities and extending sewer infrastructure to help manage nitrogen loading and improve water quality. These improvements are costly and require careful planning, outreach, and coordination.

Fresh Water Quality Monitoring Program

Like Plymouth, Cape Cod has many freshwater ponds that are an important part of its character and natural systems. The APCC coordinated with many partners to establish a county-wide cyanobacteria monitoring program for Cape Cod freshwater ponds. Cyanobacteria or blue-green algae grow rapidly in freshwater ponds that are exposed to excessive levels of nutrients from sources including lawn fertilizers, wildlife and pet waste, septic systems, and stormwater runoff. Exposure to cyanobacteria can be harmful to people and pets, resulting in skin and eye irritation, gastrointestinal distress, and respiratory irritation. The goals of the APCC monitoring program are to raise awareness of health and ecological risk posed by cyanobacteria, inform proper responses to cyanobacteria blooms, and motivate action to address the causes of cyanobacteria blooms by improving water quality. APCC and citizen scientist volunteers collect data bi-weekly, which is shared with local officials and the public to help inform management decisions, issue alerts if water quality drops below established thresholds, and allow residents to make informed decisions when recreating at freshwater ponds.

Your Local Electric Shuttle
CIRCUIT
Rides sponsored by:
CIRCUIT
ridecircuit.com
AÑEJO
Speedwell TAVERN
SYNERGY

08 MOBILITY

OVERVIEW

Transportation plays a fundamental role in shaping everyday life in Plymouth. How residents and visitors travel in town has wide-ranging impacts on the health, safety, welfare, and sustainability of the community. As the largest town by area in the Commonwealth, it is no surprise that a large percentage of trips in Plymouth are made by automobile. However, a compact historic center, smaller village service areas, miles of recreational trails, an all-electric on-demand shared shuttle service downtown (Circuit), daily GATRA bus service, and close proximity to the MBTA Commuter Rail lay the foundation for a more multimodal future. With an aging population and commitment to sustainability, the ability to travel safely and decrease dependency on private automobiles will be key in the years to come.

Plymouth's limited roadway network concentrates vehicle traffic on certain roadways, so managing speeds on these routes as well as potential 'cut-through' alternatives will be important to keep the community safe and maintain its character into the future. Although filling an important regional and local transportation role, Route 3 also creates a barrier for east-west connections. There are only ten points at which a Town road crosses over or under the 15-mile highway section. These limited connection points, combined with the Town's dispersed road network, particularly in southern Plymouth, makes travel routes less direct. Now is the time for Plymouth to enhance how it manages its streets to facilitate an environment reflective of its character and aspirations.

Safety is a top priority for residents and local officials. Crash data reveals that the majority of crashes in recent years happened at a handful of intersections in northern Plymouth. The clustered nature of crashes in Plymouth provides an opportunity for meaningful mitigation. While certain risks are embedded in any mode of transportation, future serious crashes can be avoided through a combination of policy decisions and strategic roadway design at these key locations.

Strategies in this section aim to make it more appealing and comfortable for Plymouth residents to walk, bike, and use public transportation to travel in a safe and efficient manner. Conducting street safety audits and developing a traffic calming program could significantly improve safety along Plymouth's streets. Expanding and connecting existing multi-use paths to low-stress neighborhood corridors could help encourage Plymouth residents of all ages to become more comfortable opting to walk or bike to reach their destinations. Furthermore, future coordination with surrounding communities and transportation authorities can help provide more frequent, reliable, and useful public transportation services in and around Plymouth.

Roadway connection from Colony Place to Commerce Street in West Plymouth

MOBILITY STRATEGIES

GOAL: 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.

Plymouth will continue to improve transportation by prioritizing multimodal, equitable, and low-emission investments. Progress along State-owned roadways will require coordination with MassDOT who would be responsible for changes. Transit service improvements are the responsibility of GATRA or MBTA, though the Town can advocate for enhancements to better serve residents.

Key strategies include implementing traffic demand management (TDM) techniques, upgrading east-west roadways with traffic calming measures, and developing a town-wide parking management plan to enhance walkability and optimize existing parking. Safety improvements are emphasized through a traffic calming toolkit for residential areas, a sight line audit at high-crash intersections, and expanded pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in village centers and commercial and community service areas. Enhanced wayfinding and trail connectivity will support recreational use of Plymouth's extensive network of off-road trails. Plymouth's role in transit is primarily advocacy with GATRA and the MBTA and supporting access to bus stops. Coordination with GATRA aims to improve transit access, frequency, and amenities, while advocating for stronger regional connections to Boston via MBTA services and potential park-and-ride expansions.

KEY ISSUES:

- Plymouth is a very large town which makes local trips longer and driving an essential need for most daily trips.
- Pedestrian and bicycle connections are more feasible within smaller areas rather than long-distance connections.
- State-owned roads and transit service are outside the Town's direct control. Potential improvements require cooperation with MassDOT, MBTA, and other organizations.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- A theme among meeting participants and survey respondents was to improve connectivity in Plymouth, whether within certain neighborhoods or between nearby trail networks.
- Many interactive map comments suggested improvements to specific intersections or roads for better visibility, pedestrian access, and traffic safety.
- Pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure was another frequent interactive map comment. Respondents support adding sidewalks and bicycle facilities to specific road segments.

MOBILITY STRATEGIES

M-1: Implement recommendations in local and regional transportation plans to prioritize multimodal, equitable, and low-emission transportation investments.

M-2: Implement traffic demand management (TDM) techniques and infrastructure upgrades to help mitigate congestion along key routes.

a. Continue to monitor potential local impacts of MassDOT's Cape Cod Bridges program and advocate for mitigation measures during construction.

M-3: Improve existing east-west roadways to accommodate all modes of transportation.

a. Include through-traffic calming measures.
b. Evaluate feasibility of new or expanded pedestrian and bicycle facilities along segments connecting neighborhoods and destinations. Prioritize improvements on segments where demand is greatest.
c. On rural roads, consider how new pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities may affect the existing visual character.

Note: See Implementation matrix for specific roads

M-4: Develop a comprehensive parking management plan to increase use of existing parking, reduce commercial parking minimums, and enhance walkability.

a. Consider altering parking fee structures so that on-street parking spots close to retail are more expensive compared to off-street facilities, making off-street facilities more desirable.
b. Consider establishing a Parking Benefit District to receive these funds and reinvest them in key locations.
c. Direct visitors to off-street parking facilities to encourage a "park and walk" approach.
d. Enforce restrictions on parking on sidewalks.

M-5: Create a traffic calming toolkit/program for implementing in residential neighborhoods and near schools and parks, to enhance safety for all, especially those walking and biking.

a. Target areas where sidewalks may not be practical, but people still want to walk.
b. Consider implementation along Atlantic Avenue, Hedge Road, Lothrop Street, Ocean View Avenue, Robbins Road, Sever Street, South Cherry Street, and Union Street, among others.

M-6. Conduct a town-wide sight line and visibility audit at priority intersections to identify and address obstructions.

a. Priority intersections should be those with high crash densities.
b. Conduct a public education campaign regarding the importance of trimming residential vegetation and keeping sidewalks clear.

Note: See Implementation chapter for priority intersections.

MOBILITY STRATEGIES

M-7. Increase pedestrian and bicycle access and facilities in Village Centers, downtown, and tourist areas to encourage more walking and biking, reduce vehicle dependency, improve safety, and help alleviate traffic congestion from short local trips.

a. Analyze, identify, and sign/paint low traffic stress routes that should be prioritized/advertised as part of Plymouth's bicycle network.
b. Expand existing pathways and trails (Grace Trail, Seaside Trail).
c. Implement bicycle and pedestrian recommendations from Plymouth Center & North Plymouth Circulation Study that are the highest priority, such as those that close gaps in the network.
d. Use traffic calming to improve walkability in high-speed, low-traffic locations without sidewalks, particularly at intersections. Refer to MassDOT's Safe Speeds toolkit for specific techniques.

M-8. Expand paths and trails in rural areas to offer greater pedestrian and bicycle access.

M-9. Improve connections and wayfinding between trails, Village Centers, and neighborhoods.

a. Promote the trail systems online, in print, and through signage.

M-10. Coordinate with the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) to advocate for improved local service, such as:

a. Increasing frequency on routes serving priority locations such as job centers, healthcare locations, and grocery stores.
b. Increasing the time span of service during the day to cover commuting hours.
c. Increasing coverage to areas such as Cedarville and South Plymouth.
d. Adding amenities to high ridership stops such as lighting, trash cans, and real-time arrival information.
e. Adding new routes to nearby communities where Plymouth residents work, such as: Hyannis, Barnstable, Hingham, Southfield, Kingston and Carver.
f. Promoting GATRA Go Coastline, with a particular emphasis on groups such as seniors.

M-11. Advocate to strengthen transit connections to Boston and the greater region:

a. Work with GATRA to increase direct service from Plymouth to the Kingston MBTA station, including routes and times to Kingston station that align with MBTA service.
b. Study travel patterns to determine the need and feasibility of expanding park-and-ride options with shuttle links to Kingston MBTA. Sample locations may include areas with commercial density such as Downtown Plymouth, South Plymouth and the Industrial Park.
c. Consider the implications of potentially reopening the Plymouth MBTA station [on MBTA Communities classification] and coordinate with MBTA, as needed, to demonstrate public support.

MOBILITY STRATEGIES

M-4 Reference: Parking Benefit District
A Parking Benefit District (PBD) is a designated area where parking meter revenue is reinvested locally to support transportation and public space improvements, rather than going into the general fund. This helps enhance parking management, economic development, and neighborhood revitalization. MAPC provides guidance to help communities establish and manage PBDs effectively.
More info: See Appendix.

M-5 Reference: Traffic calming toolkit and program
MassDOT Safe Speeds- Roadway Treatment Technical Toolkit : This speed management toolkit supports a safe system approach by offering proven roadway design strategies—like deflection treatments, road diets, and speed signage—that help reduce crash severity and encourage safer driving. It includes case studies from Massachusetts and guides municipalities in setting context-sensitive target speeds, implementing protective features, and collaborating with MassDOT and the public to improve roadway safety with available funding and technical support.

Traffic Calming Programs: Salem's Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program aims to reduce vehicle speeds on residential streets through low-cost, semi-permanent measures that may become permanent if effective. Initiated by residents or city departments, these projects involve collaboration with officials and complement larger infrastructure efforts. Similarly, Northampton's program uses simple tools like speed humps, guided by traffic data and a formal request process, but excludes major road redesigns.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Improving multimodal transportation throughout Plymouth is complicated by existing land use patterns. Development intensity and mix of uses in northern Plymouth is significantly higher, with a settlement pattern influenced by a pre-automobile street network. This leads to a greater concentration and variety of shops, restaurants, and other amenities, which in turn encourages residents to walk or bike more often. The housing stock found in southern Plymouth outside the village centers is generally newer and built within a road network that encourages driving. Improvements such as traffic calming, incorporating traffic demand management (TDM) in new development, wayfinding, and increased transit service can help people in these areas have more transportation options. Future housing patterns should consider how to encourage sustainable transportation choices.
- Transportation is tied with buildings as the largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Plymouth (46% of 2021 community GHG emissions). Any measure that lessens automobile congestion or encourages individuals to drive less will reduce Plymouth's greenhouse gas emissions.

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:
Owning, maintaining, and insuring a private vehicle is one of the largest expenditure of typical households. Expanding walking, biking, and public transportation options can reduce this financial burden by lowering fuel costs and vehicle wear. Reducing automobile use is also beneficial for municipal finances. The Town of Plymouth allocates hundreds of thousands of dollars each year for road maintenance. Much of this maintenance is required due to the wear and tear automobiles inflict on road surfaces. Other modes of transportation are far less damaging to roadway conditions, thus lessening the need for costly maintenance allocations in the Town's budget.

Sustainability and Resilience:
Walking/rolling, biking, and public transportation are far more environmentally friendly options of transportation than private automobiles, as they produce less greenhouse gas emissions. Encouraging these modes of transportation is fundamental to making Plymouth a more sustainable community. These modes of transportation are also innately social. Walking/rolling and biking allows residents to pause and greet neighbors and friends, while public transportation facilitates environments where individuals from different geographies and economic backgrounds share the same space. Furthermore, infrastructure that supports these modes, such as wider, accessible sidewalks, and transportation hubs bolster the public realm. Resilient communities are rooted in social connectivity, and the socially-enabling aspects of multimodal transportation advance Plymouth's goals of becoming a more resilient town.

Health, Walkability, and Wellbeing:
Non-automobile modes of transportation offer health benefits to the Plymouth community. These modes, particularly walking/rolling and biking, directly increase physical activity. Other strategies discussed in this chapter involve traffic calming and safety. Reconfiguring dangerous intersections and lowering speeds along high-crash corridors help avoid traffic injuries and fatalities and improve the wellbeing of Plymouth residents and visitors.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Increased transportation options support economic development, particularly by helping employees have an affordable commute. Using the bus, walking, or biking to work avoids the costs associated with using a private car. Creating an appropriately managed parking system ensures that employees have an affordable option. Beyond this, a well-managed parking system ensures that key spaces are available for customers while employees and other longer term users have options that make sense for them.
- Increasing transportation options allows for the development of more affordable housing options where people can live car free or "car light" and avoid costs associated with gas and maintenance. Further, someone walking or riding a bus takes up significantly less space on the street than a person driving a personal car. More trips made by compact, sustainable modes will reduce the demand for new parking.
- Ensuring safe, comfortable transportation supports the demographics of Plymouth. People of all ages and abilities should be able to safely drive, walk/roll, and bike to key destinations throughout the community. By planning and designing connections for the most vulnerable, Plymouth can have a network that supports all users.
- Expanding safe and multimodal transportation options improves access to open space and recreation resources, Town facilities and services, other amenities for residents and visitors. By creating stronger connections and making it easier to walk, bike, or take transit, these destinations become more accessible, especially for user groups like seniors, children, and single automobile households where car access is limited.

Plymouth Seaside Grace Trail

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

Among trips that originate within Plymouth, the average length is **26.5 minutes** and span a distance of **10.7 miles**. Approximately **88.3%** of these trips were done via automobile.

Between 2018-2022, there were a total of **1,415 crashes** in and around downtown Plymouth. In this area, there are **five intersections which have seen 97 high injury crashes.** This indicates a need for investment in street redesigns that encourage safer travel.

Plymouth has few east-west road connections, especially in southern Plymouth, which concentrates traffic on certain roads and makes some routes less direct. As a result, trips tend to be longer which contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

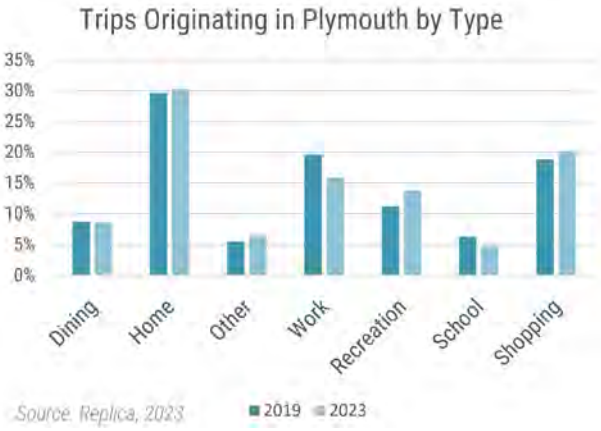
Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) runs daily buses, serving largely the northern part of Plymouth. Approximately **2,000 individuals ride** these **buses** every day. However, this service is limited, as buses run at 60-minute headways and end by 6:00pm. Improvements in transit service would likely increase ridership, helping Plymouth meet many of its goals.

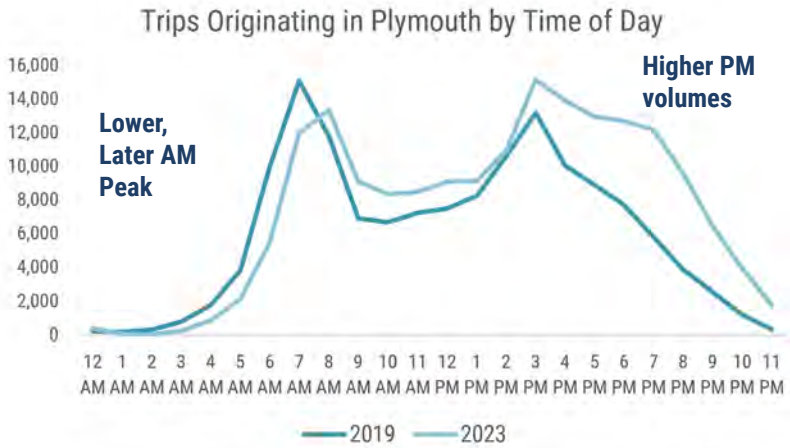
Recent related planning efforts

» Plymouth Center & North Plymouth Circulation Study (2025)

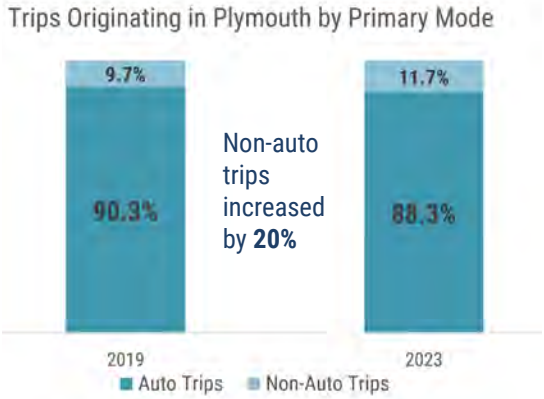
Plymouth has **many hiking and multi-use trails** but connections between them are limited. There are few on-street bike facilities. The Town has the opportunity to invest in its bike network and build on these resources.

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

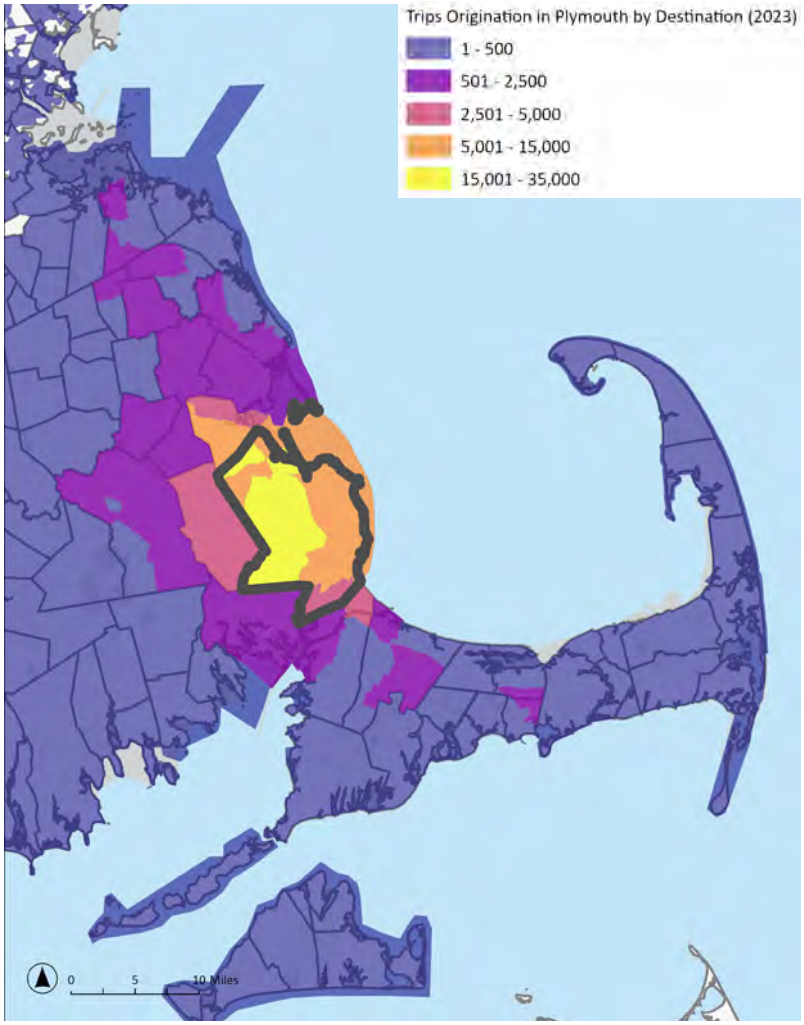




This data draws from Replica, which uses various data sources, such as anonymized location data from smartphones and census data and uses them to estimate trips in a given area.

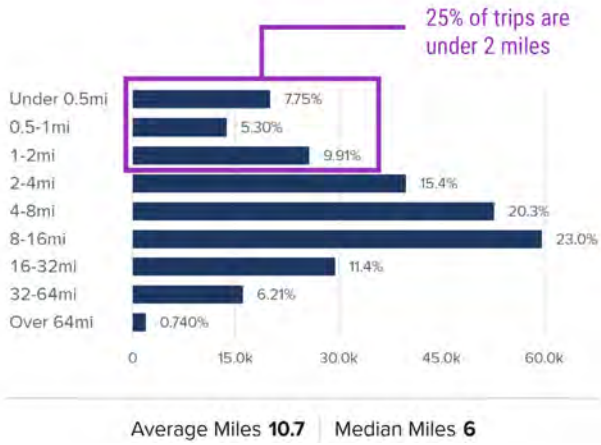


Source: Replica, 2023.



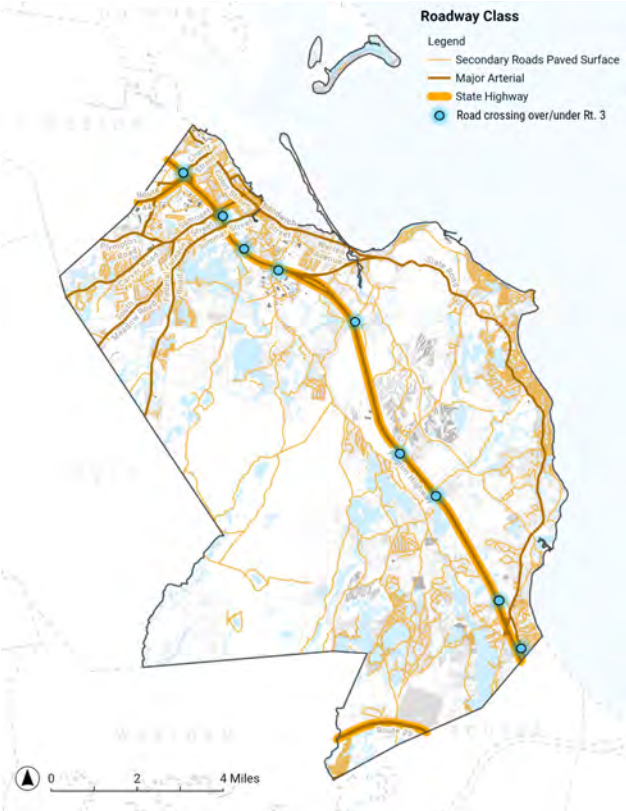
88.3%
of all trips are by car

6%
of all housing units have no vehicle available

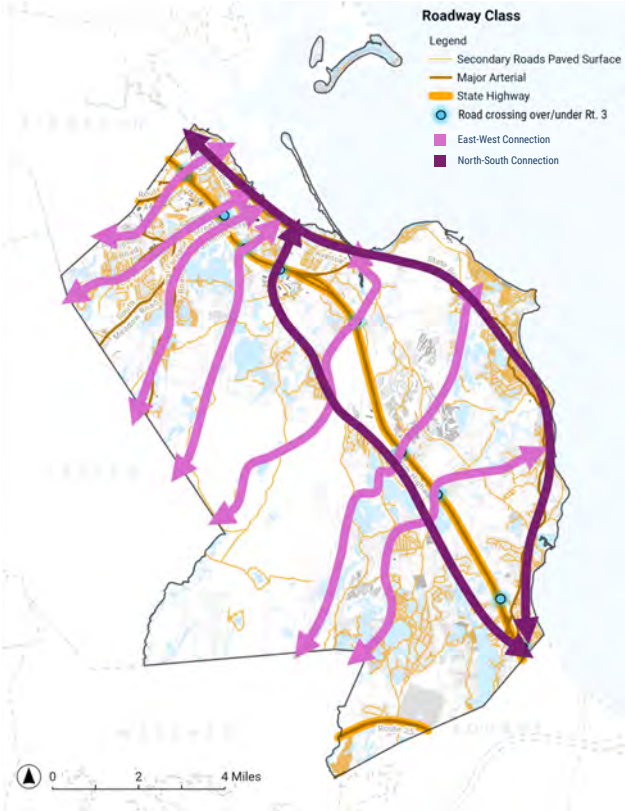


**Note: This analysis represent trips taken during Fall 2023 (Sept 1- Nov 30). Summer data on trip patterns is currently not available.*

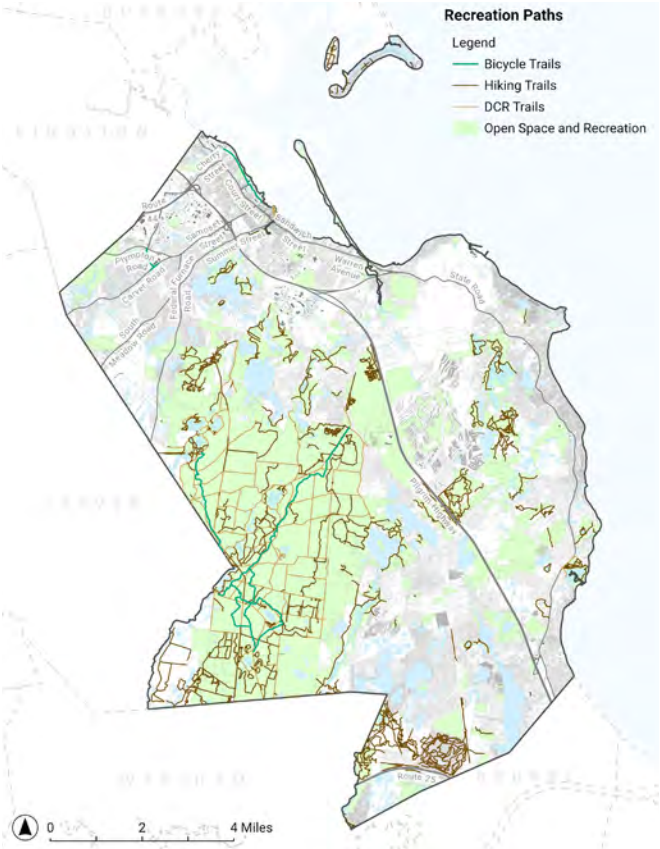
KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS



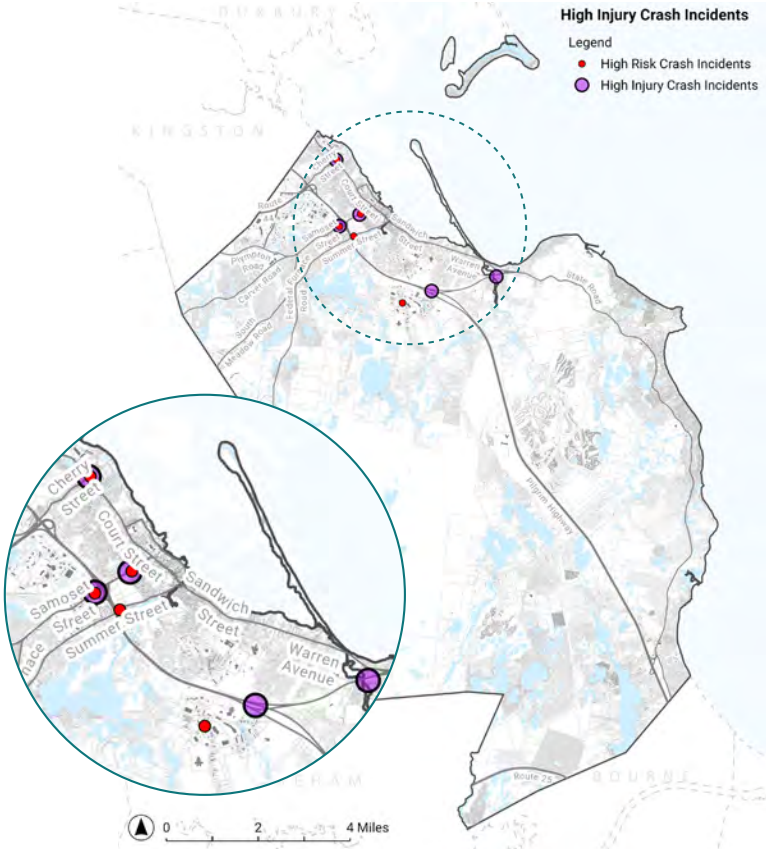
Major Roadways and Route 3 Crossings



Limited Continuous Connections



Trails and Bike Routes



High Injury Crash Incidents

09 HISTORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

09| HISTORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

OVERVIEW

Both long-time and new residents as well as visitors are drawn to Plymouth for its high quality of life which is shaped by a combination of factors. These factors include a real sense of community and a strong connection to its rich history and cultural identity. Historic and cultural resources enrich community life, support economic vitality, and connect residents to the past and to each other. Wellbeing is a sometimes overlooked component of community life but plays an important role as well. Active lifestyles, social connections, and a range of resources for residents through all life stages support wellbeing and contribute to community life.

Preservation of Plymouth's unique history remains a core community identity and value. Plymouth's historic venues are internationally known. Efforts to tell Plymouth's story have often been fragmented across various groups or under-funded however. In addition, funding for maintenance and operations for many of Plymouth historic and cultural resources remains a challenge.

The previous Master Plan prioritized enhancing quality of life by strengthening the Village Centers as places for community activity and culture and by promoting Plymouth's historical assets. Plymouth can continue to support its sense of community by leveraging its existing physical and social infrastructure. This includes resources like the Center for Active Living (CAL), youth programming, and cultural events. Plymouth's recent designation as an Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community by the AARP recognizes the Town's particular efforts to support its aging population. Many of the planned improvements will also benefit a much wider range of residents, from children and families to working professionals. Building inter-generational connections helps foster a sense of community, improve wellbeing, and enhance quality of life for all residents.

Strategies in this section focus on coordinating existing efforts and leveraging partnerships to strengthen and optimize Plymouth's capacity to maintain historic and cultural resources, continue providing quality programming, and support wellbeing for residents across their lifetimes.

Old Burial Ground

HISTORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

GOAL: 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.

Plymouth places great importance on its historic resources that are both local and national assets. Being able to maintain publicly-owned historic buildings and adapt them for continued use is an important goal, and one that requires funding and expertise. The preservation and maintenance of non-profit or privately owned historic assets like the Plimoth Patuxet Museums and others is also critical. Cultural resources are an important part of Plymouth's character. There is a growing recognition that these resources are broader and more diverse than traditionally recognized. Finding new ways to appreciate these resources will further enrich the community. Supporting residents through all stages of life is critical to maintaining community wellbeing and a sense of connection to others. Improvements addressing age- and dementia-friendly goals will often have co-benefits such as improved accessibility, more inclusive public spaces, or more programming for others throughout the community.

KEY ISSUES:

- Plymouth's history spans from indigenous peoples through colonial times to its industrial heritage related to the cordage company and mills. It attracts a high number of visitors every year and is an important component of local character and the economy.
- Community needs related to housing, transportation, healthcare, and social connections have changed as demographics have shifted.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- Visioning survey responses demonstrate that Plymouth's historic and community character are very important to many people.
- Preserving and enhancing cultural and gathering spaces was a theme among participants.

HISTORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY STRATEGIES

HCC-1. Leverage the recently-created Historical Commission to better preserve, promote, and develop the Town's historic assets. Consider:

a. Creating a historic preservation plan to document and analyze preservation issues and develop an action plan to guide future progress.
b. Exploring potential historic district expansion.
c. Identifying historic landscapes and scenic views for preservation.
d. Expanding the communication strategy around the promotion of resources and events.

HCC-2. Develop an arts and culture plan to improve and promote existing assets and identify new opportunities.

a. Reference the MAPC Arts and Planning Toolkit.
b. Engage Plymouth's arts, culture, and Plymouth's creative community as partners in the planning process.

HCC-3. Partner with local businesses and organizations to promote, enhance, and expand community events, experiences, and opportunities that celebrate public art, local history, and cultural resources.

HCC-4. Integrate a broad range of placemaking considerations into public spaces and Village Centers.

Examples include:

a. Age-friendly design features such as seating, shade, convenient parking, and access to public restrooms.
b. Local history and culture references.
c. Public art elements.
d. Easily understandable signage and wayfinding.

HCC-5. Support indigenous culture and history in Plymouth.

HCC-6. Implement age- and dementia-friendly recommendations to benefit all residents. Examples include:

a. Create a "hub" in each Village Center - a physical place serving as a shared resource for community members and organization to promote events, host programs, and expand the reach of the CAL and other service providers.
b. Conduct walk audits in high pedestrian activity areas.
c. Develop multi-generational programming to connect youth and seniors.
d. Review recreation program offerings for teens and young adults, and explore new options to better meet their interests.
e. Create a citizen's civic academy to educate residents about local government and encourage broader participation in boards and committees.

HCC-7. Implement recommendations from the inaugural Plymouth Community Health Assessment & Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA-CHIP) to address health needs of residents.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Historic and cultural resources support economic development. They are an important component of the tourism economy by attracting visitors who eat, shop, and stay at local businesses. These resources are a distinctive part of Plymouth. Cultural venues in particular are attractions for residents and visitors alike.
- Maintaining historic buildings and places is important for sustainability. Being able to adaptively reuse historic structures and integrate modern features like energy efficiency and accessibility help these resources continue to play a role in community life. It also preserves their construction materials and keeps demolition waste out of landfills.
- Community wellbeing supports social resilience. The physical and mental health of residents, a network of strong and weak social ties to neighbors and other community members, and access to resources throughout a lifetime help residents feel connected to each other and their community. This social resilience is especially important during certain life phases like raising young children and for seniors living alone. It is also important during disruptive events caused by extreme weather.

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:

Maintaining and improving a community's historic and cultural assets requires balancing residents' desire for more amenities with the realities of a limited municipal budget. Historic preservation can be costly due to specialized skills or materials needed for repairs, which can be an impediment for both public and private owners. Many cultural programs and events are offered for free which supports affordability, but still cost money to produce. Leveraging partnerships and grant funding can provide additional support that can help manage costs

Sustainability and Resilience:

Historic structures that are maintained and adapted for modern uses are a sustainable continued use of irreplaceable local assets. A vibrant local culture, diverse programming and events, and residents that feel supported through all life stages contribute to social connections and social resilience.

Health, Walkability, and Wellbeing:

Inclusive public spaces and programming that bring people together support a healthier community. This becomes especially important among aging populations and young families. Both can benefit from amenities that promote active lifestyles, intergenerational connection, and social cohesion

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The share of the **population aged 65 years and older, about 24% in 2020**, has more than doubled since 2000.

Thirty-one historic preservation projects have been funded through Plymouth's Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. These projects, totaling over $22 million, include historic resources such as the 1820 Court House, Pilgrim Hall, Simes House, and 1898 National Memorial Meeting House.

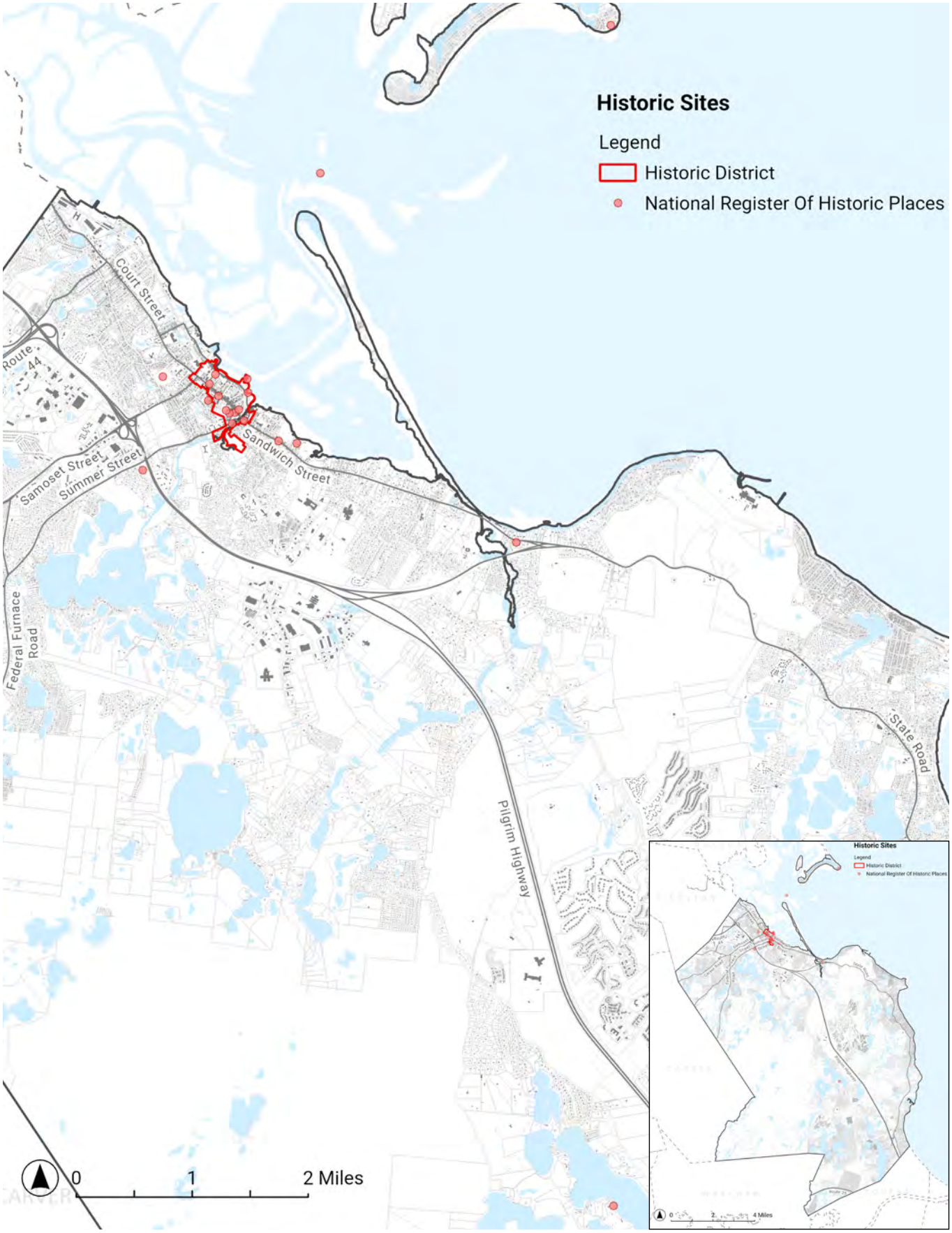
Plymouth's Historic District includes 286 properties across downtown and the harbor area. **Twenty-four sites are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.**

Plymouth's **Center for Active Living (CAL)**, part of the Town's Health and Human Services, provides programs and services for residents aged 60 and older, supporting the town's commitment to being an **Age- and Dementia-Friendly Community.**

Recent related planning efforts

» 2023 Age- and Dementia-Friendly Plymouth: A Community Needs Assessment

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS



Plymouth Historic Sites

10 PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

10| PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

OVERVIEW

Public facilities include Town-owned buildings, parks, locals roadways, and water and sewer infrastructure that serve the community. Services include public education, police and fire, recreation programs, solid waste disposal, health and human services, and others which contribute to quality of life. Well-maintained parks and infrastructure, high-quality schools, responsive public safety services, and resources like the Center for Active Living (CAL) and youth recreational programming are important to residents.

The ongoing maintenance of these facilities is critical to keep them in good working order. Adequate staffing and funding are needed to maintain the range of Town-owned buildings (some of which are historic), local roadways, aging underground pipes, and parks and playgrounds. As Plymouth's population has increased, demand for facilities and services has grown faster than the available resources needed to sustain them. These issues coupled with rising construction and operational costs have contributed to an increasingly unbalanced fiscal environment. Plymouth's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) highlights a widening gap between necessary and desired capital investments and the available funds to make it all happen.

The Town's General Fund is the primary source funding core services such as education, public safety, and public works. The General Fund, largely driven by property taxes, is discussed in the Economy chapter. Four separate Enterprise Funds with revenue generated from user fees support specific facilities or services including water, sewer, solid waste, and the airport.

Strategies in this section focus on coordinating existing efforts and leveraging partnerships to strengthen and optimize Plymouth's capacity to continue providing quality infrastructure, services, and programming for residents across Plymouth. Content relates to the following required Comprehensive Plan topics: public facilities, services, parks and recreation.

Town-Owned Little Red Schoolhouse

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES STRATEGIES

GOAL: MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE TOWN SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE INCLUDING LOCAL ROADWAYS, PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SCHOOLS, PARKS AND RECREATION, EDUCATION, AND UTILITIES.

The funding to maintain existing facilities and to build new facilities comes from the General Fund, Enterprise Funds for specific uses, debt the Town takes on through bonding, and grants or loans from state or federal sources. Since the General Fund is largely driven by property taxes, the land use and economic development strategies elsewhere in this plan are critical to help increase the size of the tax base through new development and increasing the value of existing space. Even with these strategies, the realities of rising costs mean the Town will continue to face hard decisions about how to allocate limited resources. Fostering collaboration across Town departments, identifying creative cost-sharing and cost-saving strategies, and pursuing available grant opportunities can help.

KEY ISSUES:

- Use of parks, recreation programs, and social services has increased, especially in the last few years.
- Maintaining existing facilities is a challenge given limited funding and staff capacity.
- Most of Plymouth's land area does not have public water or sewer and relies on private wells and septics. This limits the type and intensity of uses that are feasible in unserved areas. It also carries long-term implications for water conservation and the quality of the municipal water supply, as well as surface and groundwater resources.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- Participants expressed a perception that recent housing growth has outpaced infrastructure and public service investment.
- Adequate provisions for infrastructure, public services, and Town staff capacity are needed so that the impacts of recent and future growth are accommodated.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES STRATEGIES

PFS-1. Implement recommendations of the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan when completed.

a. Develop and implement a proactive preventative maintenance schedule for municipal facilities and infrastructure.

PFS-2. Implement recommendations of the Water System Master Plan when completed.

a. Develop and implement a proactive preventative maintenance schedule for municipal facilities and infrastructure.

PFS-3. Implement priority recommendations from the police and fire strategic analyses.

PFS-4. Identify suitable property(ies) in South Plymouth for new public safety facilities to improve police and fire coverage in high-growth areas.

PFS-5. Establish composting facility at the DPW yard to divert food waste from landfill.

PFS-6. Continue improving universal accessibility in public and recreational facilities based on the 2019 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.

PFS-7. Expand recreational programming offerings to promote multigenerational community health.

PFS-8. Evaluate opportunities for new recreation amenities and public facilities within each Village Service Area. Special focus should be given to West Plymouth, Manomet, and Cedarville, as well as to Long Beach.

PFS-9. Implement targeted safety improvements at high-crash intersections, including roadway redesigns to reduce conflict points and improve sight lines and signal timing adjustments.

a. State Road at Plimoth Patuxet Highway
b. Doten Road and State Road Cherry Street and Standish Avenue
c. Chestnut Street at Standish Avenue
d. Myles Standish Plaza at Samoset Street
e. Holman Road at Long Pond Road
f. Summer Street at Westerly Road

PFS-10. Improve pedestrian safety at schools, parks, busy GATRA stops, and in downtown and Village Center areas by shortening pedestrian crossing distances, raising crosswalks, and slowing vehicle turning speeds.

PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES STRATEGIES

PFS-11. Install high-visibility pedestrian warning signs and advance yield markings for drivers at key crosswalks throughout Plymouth, particularly at unsignalized crossings and trail intersections.

a. Allerton Street at National Monument
b. Alden Street north of Allerton Street
c. Carver Street north of North Street
d. Pleasant Street east of Franklin Street
e. Spooner Street south of Forest Avenue
f. Spooner Street north of Park Road

PFS-12. Review potential impact that future growth will have on Town staffing needs and plan accordingly. Evaluate Town staff capacity and their role supporting volunteer committees.

PFS-13. Conduct return-on-investment analysis on major capital projects not tied to essential services as part of the prioritization process.

a. Refine the criteria used for the review of capital projects to be included in CIP to ensure return is based on project's ability to catalyze private investment, make efficient use of existing infrastructure, and generate new net revenues.
b. Develop methodology for estimating and including return on investment in the criteria.

PFS-14. Review opportunities to increase dedicated funding for maintenance of public infrastructure like water, sewer, and solid waste.

PFS-15. Assess feasibility of creating a new stormwater enterprise fund to establish a dedicated funding source for stormwater and drainage projects.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Public infrastructure is essential to economic development. Some businesses have high water and/or wastewater needs that can only be met with public systems rather than private ones. Other businesses rely on well-maintained local roads with highway access to facilitate shipping and delivery. Many businesses benefit from being in a community with attractive parks, quality schools, and an array of public services to support employees and their families.
- The availability of public water and sewer infrastructure has a direct impact on housing density and the cost of construction. In areas with both water and sewer service, new housing can connect to the available infrastructure. In areas without either, new housing must provide private wells and private septic or wastewater treatment facilities. These facilities require either larger amounts of land to provide adequate buffers from other private systems, or the added expense of installing shared private water systems and wastewater treatment facilities to serve a neighborhood.
- The location and design of roadway infrastructure influences transportation patterns and greenhouse gas emissions. In northern Plymouth, a more connected road network serves a wider range of amenities and employers, enabling residents to take shorter trips and offering greater potential for biking, walking, or using transit. In contrast, southern Plymouth has a more limited road network and fewer nearby jobs and services, requiring residents to drive longer distances—often along the same routes—to reach daily destinations such as workplaces, shops, and parks.
- The location of parks and recreational resources support natural resource preservation and climate resilience. Many of Plymouth's parks provide green space and native plantings, helping to absorb stormwater, clean the air, mitigate local heat island impacts, provide natural habitat, and reduce maintenance. Parks and recreational uses can include measures to protect, restore, and sustain the natural environment and its associated natural resources. These areas also present valuable opportunities to integrate climate resilience measures to reduce risk and enhance Plymouth's adaptive capacity against natural hazards such as coastal and inland flooding and extreme heat.

Nelson Park

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:

The provision of services and the stability of a Town's municipal budget have a direct influence on overall community affordability. Maintaining and upgrading infrastructure such as roads, Town-owned facilities, and public water and wastewater systems requires steady, long-term investment, especially as the population grows. Schools and other municipal services represent substantial costs, particularly in a geographically large community like Plymouth where transportation costs and time are significant. Increasing the amount of revenue brought in and managing expenditures going out, all while addressing essential community needs, is an ongoing challenge. In Plymouth's case, expenditures have been increasing faster than revenues. Many expenses are outside the Town's control like health insurance premiums for staff, public education needs, and construction costs. Practicing sound municipal finance by aligning expenditures with available revenues, efficiently managing the cost of services, and diversifying and growing the local tax base beyond residential property taxes can strengthen the Town's fiscal position and make it better prepared to respond to increasing and shifting community needs.

Sustainability and Resilience:

Efficient and high-quality public facilities and services foster long-term community resilience. Elements like native plantings and green infrastructure in parks and along roadways can improve sustainability in the natural environment. For buildings, energy-efficiency improvements and renewable energy sources can improve sustainability in the built environment. Parks, buildings, and infrastructure facilities can be made more resilient to climate impacts and severe weather. These interconnected efforts support more resilient and adaptable communities over time.

Health, Walkability and Wellbeing:

Public infrastructure and services that support residents throughout their lifetime make for a healthier community. Parks and recreational programs, senior services at the CAL, veterans services, the library, and schools all play an important role in wellbeing. These are especially important in Plymouth with its aging population and young families. All residents benefit from amenities that promote active lifestyles, intergenerational connection, and social cohesion.

Plymouth South High School

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The Town of Plymouth owns and maintains **32 buildings** ranging from historic structures to recently constructed or renovated buildings.

About 60% of the population has public water service sourced from 13 wells.

The wastewater system has about **14,000 residential customers** in Plymouth Center and North Plymouth.

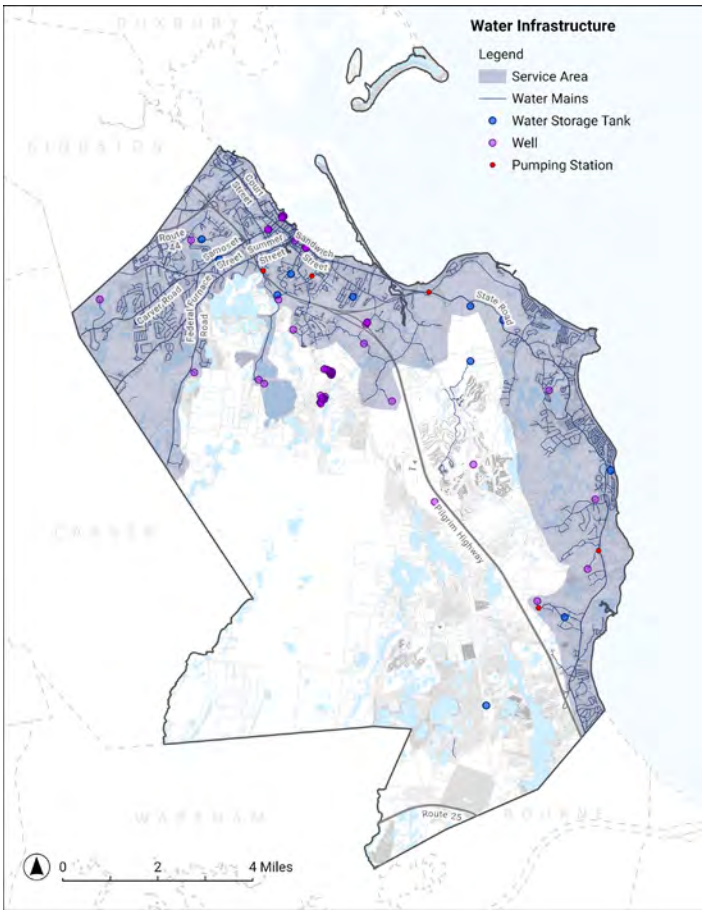
The Plymouth Public School District has seen an overall decline in enrollment over the past decade. However, some schools are at capacity, especially in the southern part of Plymouth.

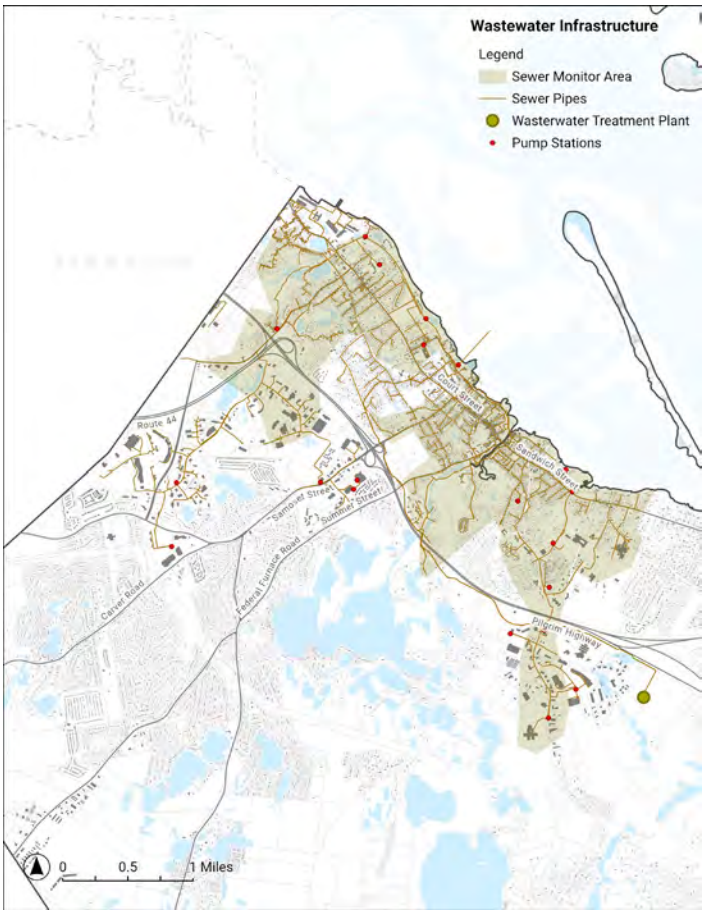
Aging septic systems on private residential properties are a critical issue, especially those that have not been well-maintained. **They degrade water quality by leaching nitrogen, phosphorus, and other effluents into the groundwater supply and ponds.** Newer systems with advanced capabilities to reduce these effluents are available, but can be costly for residents. Title 5 compliant systems do not reduce nutrient load to the aquifer.

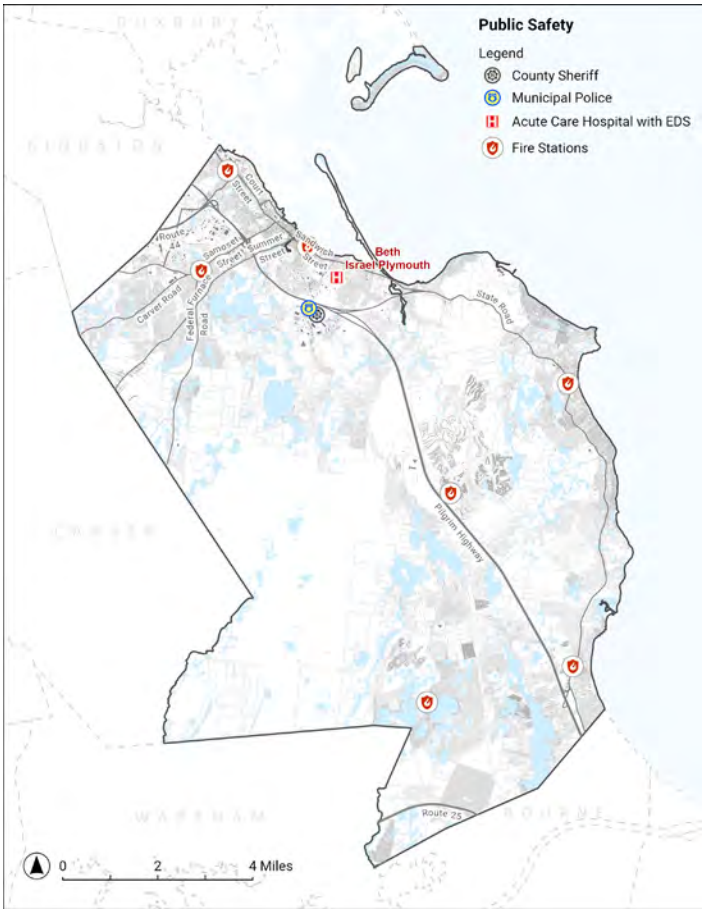
Recent related planning efforts

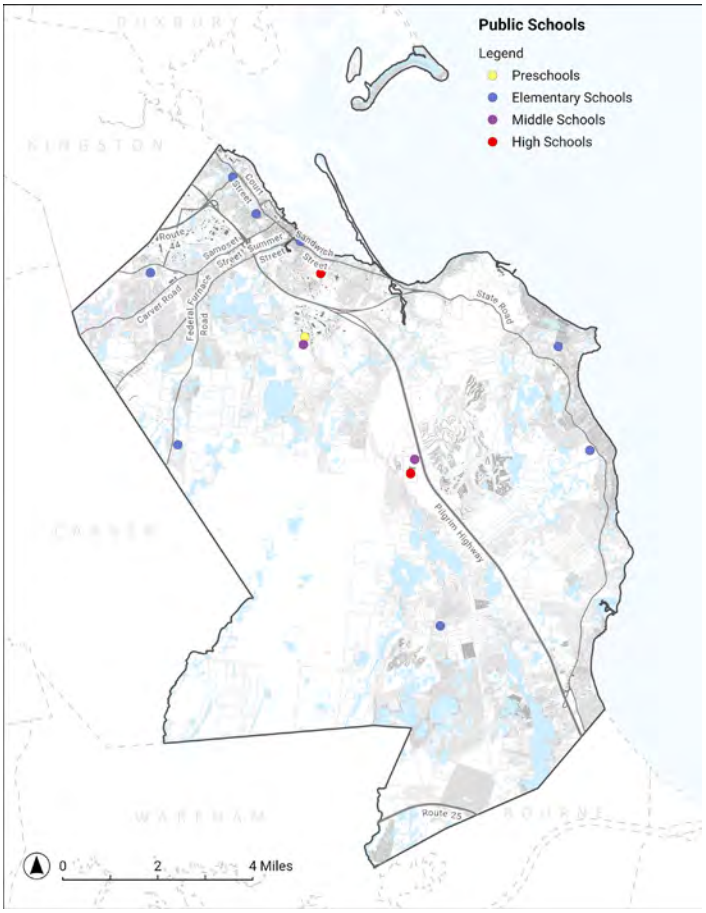
- Plymouth Public Schools Strategic Plan 2024 - 2027
- 2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan
- 2023 Plymouth Police Operations and Data Analysis Report
- 2023 Plymouth Fire Department and EMS Analysis
- 2022 Year 4 Annual Report: MS4 General Permit
- 2019 Water Supply Master Plan
- 2019 Facility Condition Assessment

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS









11 LAND USE

11 | LAND USE

OVERVIEW

Land use refers to how people utilize land in a given place. It encompasses a wide range of activities including economic, residential, institutional, natural open space, recreational, and agricultural uses. Land use decisions directly impact the built form and character of a community through the level of development intensity, uses, and parking permitted through land use regulations like the Zoning Bylaw.

Plymouth's mix of land uses include natural rural landscapes and more developed Village Service Areas that contribute to its appeal as a place to live. While Plymouth has a high proportion of protected open space, significant larger-scale development over the years has brought change to certain areas, bringing more residential and commercial development in response to increased market demand.

Plymouth's 2004 Master Plan promoted smart growth principles. The Cordage Park 40R Smart Growth Overlay District in North Plymouth is an example of these principles. It was adopted in 2006 and has spurred adaptive reuse and new construction. Other examples include the Pinehills and Redbrook master planned communities located in rural areas. They have preserved significant amounts of land while adding housing and some retail within a compact area. However, continuing development patterns have strained the roadway network there and have contributed to concerns about sprawl, traffic, and further growth potential.

The importance of open space for aquifer protection, natural habitat, and rural character is a priority for many. In fact, open space is the largest component of Plymouth's land use mix. Residential is the second largest component, while commercial and industrial uses account for less than 5% of the land area. This mix has implications for the Town's General Fund budget which is driven by property tax revenue. Encouraging new growth is an important strategy to help manage the Town's fiscal condition, especially infill development of all types, commercial, and industrial. The way forward requires balancing competing priorities for land use to maintain and enhance Plymouth's character and fiscal stability into the future.

Land use actions are implemented primarily through the Town's zoning bylaw and related regulations. They influence all topics in this Comprehensive Plan and have direct bearing on Plymouth's growth and development potential, which is critical for the Town's tax base. The framework outlined in this section strikes a balance between accommodating new development and preserving valued natural and built environments. By focusing growth in strategic areas and increasing value within already developed areas, Plymouth can manage future growth in alignment with community values and municipal capacity to achieve greater community affordability, more vibrant neighborhoods, and a sustainable balance between land uses.

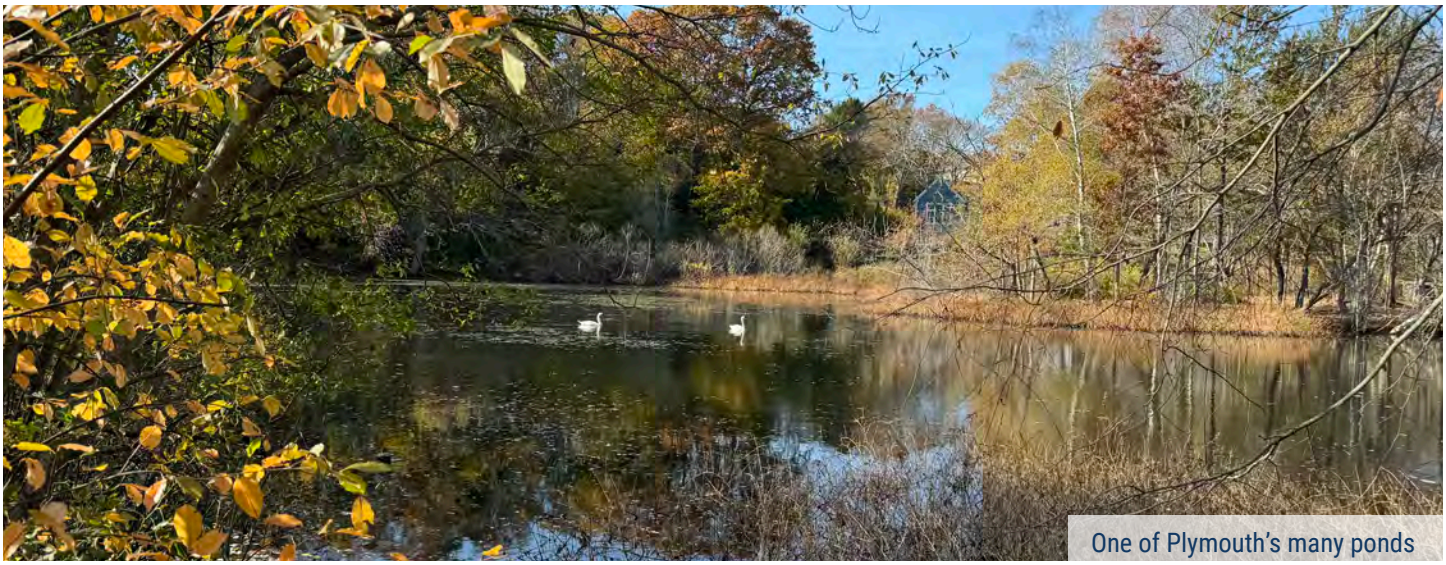
Harborwalk Apartments at Cordage Park

PLANNING FOR ALL OF PLYMOUTH

Since the 1980 Village Centers plan, Plymouth has focused most of its planning efforts on five designated Village Service Areas: Plymouth Center, North Plymouth, Manomet, Cedarville, and West Plymouth. Each has its own Steering Committee which assists in implementing the village center master plan and advocating for local needs. This approach has tended to minimize the broader perspective of how each area fits into the overall town and conversely, how the needs of the town apply to a specific area.

These areas also do not include large parts of Plymouth. In the past twenty years, significant growth has occurred outside these village centers. Two master planned communities, the Pinehills and Redbrook, have accounted for 35-45% of the Town's total New Growth property value each year over the past five years (FY 2022-2026). Both are nearing completion while at the same time, other conversions from recreational or agricultural lands are possible as private landowners contemplate their future.

This points to a need to broaden the focus of planning to include all parts of Plymouth, not just the Village Centers. One potential approach is to form Regional Advisory Committees that together encompass all of Plymouth, not just the traditional village centers. It would include land that is currently undeveloped recreation, agriculture, or open space as well as existing built-up areas. These undeveloped areas are largely excluded from the current Village Centers but their future—whether a continuation of their current use or compact new development—should be considered within the context of all of Plymouth, not just the immediate area. The Town's overall needs should be incorporated into this regional planning so that each area has a more clearly articulated vision for housing, jobs, open spaces, mobility, and natural resource protection that fits within a broader framework.



One of Plymouth's many ponds

LAND USE GROWTH FRAMEWORK

Much of Plymouth will see minimal change in the next ten years. Some areas are more susceptible to change due to existing land use characteristics, market pressures, location, age, or other factors. The land use growth framework illustrates the intensity of development that different parts of Plymouth can support based on the availability of public infrastructure, environmental conditions, and development patterns.

Infill Development (public water and sewer)

These areas are largely developed already and support medium and higher density redevelopment where public utilities exist. The higher densities generate higher values for the Town and can reduce development pressure in rural areas.

Village Center Infill (public water only)

These areas where only public water service exist support medium to low density development in established village centers and emerging rural centers.

Compact Development + Open Space in Harmony (no public water or sewer)

These areas that lack public water or sewer service support both natural areas and compact development where it occurs. New development should organize housing and any retail/commercial uses within a small footprint on the site and leave the balance in its natural state. Advanced wastewater systems should be used to protect water quality.

What is "infill development"?

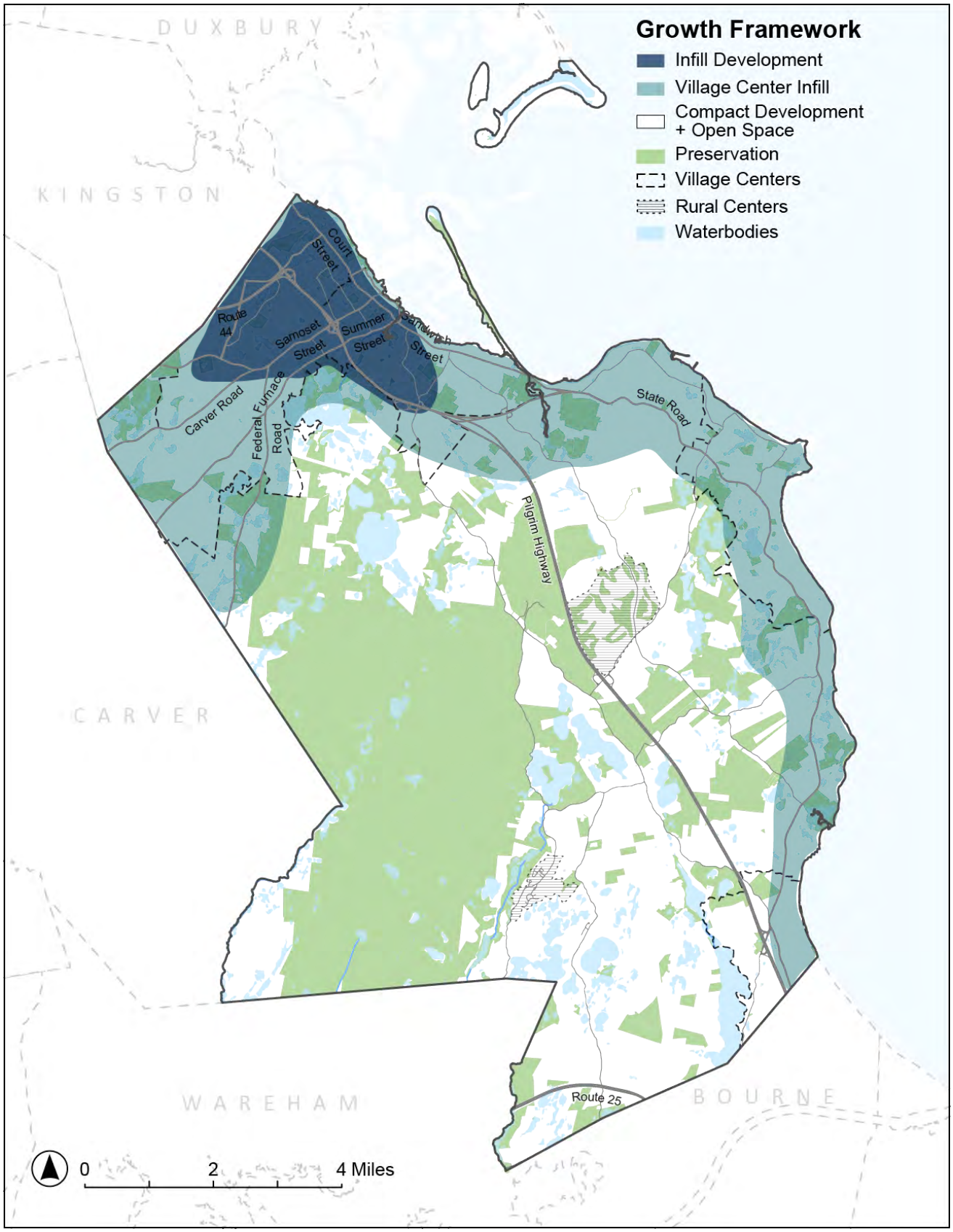
Infill development is a term to describe the redevelopment of underused or vacant properties within otherwise developed areas. It is an opportunity to replace lower value aging and/or vacant buildings with:

- Local jobs in growing industries.
- Housing types that meet changing needs.
- Arts/culture/entertainment attractions.
- Public spaces to meet neighbors, host events, etc.

Infill development also:

- Accommodates new housing/jobs in already built areas instead of on undeveloped land.
- Increases property value of the parcel, which increases tax revenue for the Town budget.
- Makes use of existing infrastructure (public water, sewer, roads).

LAND USE GROWTH FRAMEWORK



FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK

The future land use framework illustrates key land use recommendations. Future planning and zoning modifications should reference this framework.

Strengthen Downtown and the Waterfront

Plymouth's historic core is a central part of its identity, a significant driver of economic value, and an amenity for residents. Change here should support local businesses, expand services and amenities for residents and visitors, and foster a lively, walkable environment. Enhancing public open spaces, improving connections to the waterfront, and implementing traffic-calming measures will further increase accessibility to downtown and its appeal as an experience destination. These efforts should be prioritized alongside preserving the downtown's historic form and assets. Proximity to Plymouth Harbor, one of Plymouth's few access points to the water, presents opportunities to create spaces for blue economy businesses. Future land use priorities: Active ground-floor uses with office or residential space above, artisan studios, co-working spaces, and businesses organizations that promote arts, culture, and entertainment. New housing should include a range of smaller units, ADUs, and multifamily options to support a range of living needs and price points.

Enhance Village Centers and Intensify Commercial and Mixed-Use Areas

In established village centers and emerging rural centers, development should promote a pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environment with connections to nearby neighborhoods, recreation areas, schools, and other public amenities. Underutilized, vacant, and aging properties present opportunities for redevelopment. Maintaining and expanding the share of commercial uses should be prioritized to retain jobs and tax base. New mixed-use and multifamily development can create walkable areas where residents can access restaurants, shops, services, and jobs without always needing to drive. Infill development should promote active commercial ground floors, community services, artisan spaces, co-working spaces, professional and business services. Future land use priorities: Active ground-floor uses with office or residential space above, artisan studios, co-working spaces, community services, and professional and business services. New housing should include a range of smaller units and multifamily options to support a range of living needs.

Enhance and Intensify Light Industrial Areas

Preservation and enhancement of Plymouth's limited industrial areas is critical to drive economic growth by increasing opportunities for existing and new businesses. Expanded development at these locations should support new businesses in professional and business services, light manufacturing, food and beverage production along with accessory retail and commercial uses. Future land use priorities: light manufacturing, marine tech, research and development, lab space, food and beverage production, professional and business services, artisan/maker space.

FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK

Grow the Healthcare Sector

Plymouth's healthcare sector has strong potential for growth driven by increasing demand from the region's aging population. Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital attracts significant patient traffic. Plans to expand the hospital's medical facilities in the coming years are expected to strengthen Plymouth's role as a regional healthcare hub. Additionally, medical offices and other healthcare providers near Resnik Road and along Long Pond Road demonstrate the potential for further expansion of medical services and employment. Future growth in these areas could include medical offices, lab space, outpatient facilities, elder care centers, and other professional healthcare services.

Grow the Blue Economy Sector

Growth should support opportunities for blue economy businesses at strategic locations along or near Plymouth's waterfront. North Plymouth, Downtown Plymouth, and the former Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station waterfront are locations for new development that can accommodate marine technology, aquaculture, and other ocean-related research and development. These efforts should complement existing commercial fishing, boating, and tourism activities that already contribute to Plymouth Harbor's economy.

Redevelop the Holtec Site

The 1,600-acre Holtec site (the former Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station) is privately owned but represents a significant opportunity for reuse once decommissioning activities are complete. Future development should consider recommendations from the recently completed Pilgrim 1,600 Acre Area Plan. That document recommends portions of the site for fiscally-positive industrial and housing use along with preserving unbuildable natural areas for recreation and conservation. Future land use priorities: energy, light industrial, recreation, housing, conservation.

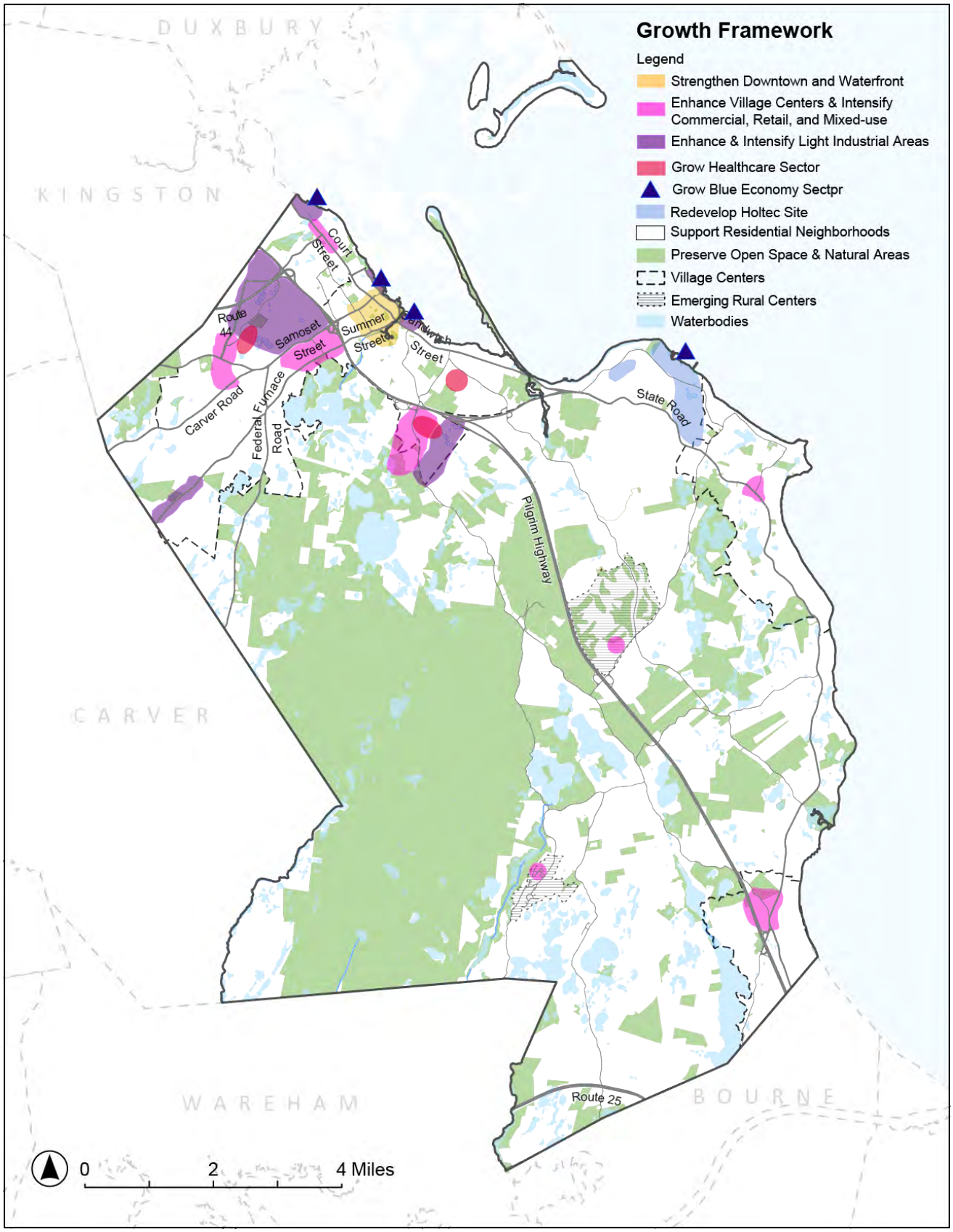
Support Residential Neighborhoods

Established neighborhoods may see little change or incremental improvements. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) may be added to provide more affordable housing options and support for aging in place. Undeveloped land in rural areas that becomes new neighborhoods should provide a variety of housing types within a compact area rather than sprawling on large individual lots. The undeveloped portions of these new neighborhoods should be reserved as natural areas for shared use or habitat protection. To protect water quality, advanced wastewater systems that provide treatment for the whole neighborhood should be employed rather than traditional individual septic systems.

Preserve Open Space and Natural Areas

Plymouth's formally preserved open space and natural areas will continue to be protected and restored to maintain Plymouth's coastal rural character, provide diverse recreational opportunities, and safeguard its aquifer and water supply. Efforts should focus on enhancing these resources to strengthen community-wide resilience. Opportunities to expand these areas and increase access and ecotourism experiences could be considered as appropriate.

FUTURE LAND USE FRAMEWORK



LAND USE STRATEGIES

Most of Plymouth will stay relatively the same over next ten years, but some areas are inherently more susceptible to change. The redevelopment of already built sites in otherwise developed areas is an important growth strategy for Plymouth. New growth in these locations is growth that does not happen on undeveloped rural land. It replaces aging or vacant buildings with newly constructed space for jobs, housing, and other uses that serve residents and contribute to the Town's tax base.

While infill development is encouraged, private interest in building on undeveloped land will continue due to housing demand and other factors. However, it is important to note that there is less potentially developable land remaining in Plymouth today than what has been developed over the past twenty years since the last Master Plan. About 8.5% of Plymouth's land area is potentially developable with only 0.5% including commercial or industrial zoned land. Much of this potentially developable land is in rural areas and likely to remain undeveloped over the next ten years. When private land owners do decide to develop, the uses included and form it takes will influence the housing, services, and jobs available to residents; its environmental impact; and the fiscal impact to the Town.

This chapter focuses on future land use and zoning considerations to help Plymouth achieve its goals for all of the Comprehensive Plan's topics. Many land use-related strategies are also found in other chapters.

KEY ISSUES:

- Mixed opinions about future growth will need to be evaluated within the overall framework of fiscal sustainability and other comprehensive plan topics.
- Redevelopment and adaptive reuse of previously built sites, especially in areas with public utilities, should be a focus for future growth. Protecting suitable sites for industrial-type and commercial uses in these areas is also important.
- Preservation of open space in less developed areas is important for the town's character, natural resource protection, and native habitat. Where new growth does occur, it should focus on compact development patterns that keep large portions of the site undeveloped.
- The future of the Holtec site is uncertain but important for a variety of reasons – land use decisions about conservation, economic development, and housing; infrastructure needs; and fiscal implications for the Town.
- Protection of groundwater resources should be integrated into future development planning to support the long-term health of the aquifer (water supply) and connected hydrologic features.

WHAT WE HEARD:

- Some people expressed concern that continued growth will impact Plymouth's rural character, harm natural resources and water quality, or strain infrastructure. Others expressed support for more development and business growth to address needs.
- Downtown was frequently mentioned in the visioning survey as a place people love.

LU-1: Create a user-friendly "Guide to Permitting" that clearly outlines the permitting process, required approvals, and permit costs for all departments.

LU-2: Consider designating a Zoning Administrator to address simple zoning-related requests.

a. Discuss with Zoning Board of Appeals as one way to reduce case load and streamline approval of certain items.
b. Examples of Zoning Administrator authority may include reduction in the number of required parking spaces, minor height variances, and other technical project details.

LU-3: Review uses that require site plan review and/or are permitted by Special Permit to identify some that may be transitioned to by-right uses.

a. Identify uses that may become permitted by-right in certain districts and/or restrict site plan review to elements visible from public rights-of-way.

LU-4: Review project review and approval processes to identify ways to reduce timeline and provide more predictability for applicants.

a. Consider limiting comments to regulatory requirements; additional staff or committee requests may be provided as non-binding advisory opinions.
b. Consider removing Village Center Steering Committee review requirement for projects proposed in the two industrial parks to facilitate light industrial and commercial development in those areas.
c. Consider removing Planning Board's informal review of all Zoning Board of Appeals applications, at least for small projects below a certain threshold.

LU-5. Review use table and dimensional requirements in Zoning Bylaw to identify modernization needs.

a. Add and update use definitions as needed, especially industrial uses (e.g., blue economy and food processing) and hybrid uses (e.g., brewpub, small-scale artisan manufacturing/assembly with retail storefront).

LU-6. Consider creation of Regional Advisory Committees in place of Village Steering Committees so that all parts of Plymouth are planned for.

LAND USE-RELATED STRATEGIES FROM OTHER CHAPTERS (abbreviated):
H-1: Promote and prioritize infill development, adaptive reuse, and redevelopment.

H-3. Continue to promote compact development patterns.

H-4. Implement compact dwelling zoning regulations.

H-7. Review existing zoning tools and make changes as needed to facilitate housing development.

ED-2. Amend zoning bylaw to increase viability of a range of light industrial uses as well as research and development.

E-3: Evaluate existing bylaws and policies pertaining to wetlands, stormwater management, aquifer protection, and septic systems.

E-6: Develop a coordinated land preservation strategy that integrates strategies from multiple Town plans to protect, preserve, and expand natural resources and open space.

C-9: Ensure long-term planning for the resilience of Plymouth's shoreline.

PFS-8. Evaluate opportunities for new recreation amenities and public facilities within each Village Service Area.

RELATION TO OTHER PLAN ELEMENTS

- Land use and development patterns influence natural resources and open space. Focusing on redevelopment and infill development in already developed areas reduces pressure on undeveloped land elsewhere. The Town's zoning bylaw includes several provisions for conserving land in less developed areas to support natural resource protection and preserve open space while allowing a certain level of development.
- Land use influences transportation and mobility. Patterns of land use shape how people travel, and transportation infrastructure influences how land is used. Compact, mixed-use development supports walking, biking, and transit by placing destinations closer together, while low-density, single-use areas require residents to rely on cars. Northern parts of Plymouth support more opportunities for walking, biking, and transit use due to the variety of land uses and the networks of streets. More rural areas in southern Plymouth are much more car dependent due to fewer roadways and large single use areas. In addition, land use affects the viability of public transit. Higher density and more clustered development create the conditions necessary for more frequent and efficient transit service.
- Land use patterns and zoning regulations impact housing opportunities. Municipal zoning guides the location, type, and scale of housing that can be built. Much of Plymouth is zoned for rural residential or large-lot residential uses, which primarily support low-density, single-family homes. While this has helped maintain Plymouth's character, it has also restricted the development of a wider range of housing types. Smaller homes and multifamily housing are generally limited to North Plymouth, West Plymouth, Downtown, and areas within Village Service Areas. As Plymouth continues to attract new residents and its population ages, demand for more compact and accessible housing options is growing. However, when supply fails to keep pace with demand, housing prices rise, making it increasingly difficult for residents to find affordable housing options that meet their lifestyle needs.
- Land use and zoning influence economic development as well. The existing land use mix in combination with where and what type of commercial uses are allowed impacts the feasibility and desirability of a place for different industries to locate. It also affects the composition of the local workforce through the variety of housing options and price points that are available. Overall, well-balanced and planned development make for more walkable and mixed-use areas which can better attract residents, tourists, and businesses, boosting local economies. Conversely, poorly coordinated or fragmented land use can do the opposite, leading to underutilized land or declining areas.
- Land use decisions influence Plymouth's infrastructure, services, and fiscal condition. Low-density and sprawling development patterns increase the need for extensive infrastructure networks and make it more expensive to deliver public services. In contrast, compact, well-coordinated development can reduce infrastructure costs and support more efficient provision of services. Land use additionally affects the balance of municipal revenues and expenditures. Commercial and industrial development typically generate greater fiscal returns while low-density residential development can cost more to serve than it contributes in taxes. In Plymouth, commercial and industrial uses occupy only a small portion of the total land area which limit their potential as a greater revenue source. Meanwhile, significant residential growth has occurred in more rural areas, placing additional strain on roadways, schools, and public safety services in those areas. Over time, these land use patterns have challenged the Town's ability to maintain infrastructure, provide high-quality services, and sustain long-term fiscal stability.

RELATION TO PLAN THEMES:

Community Affordability:

Land use and zoning regulations impact community affordability on several levels ranging from the availability and suitability of the local housing supply to the feasibility of multi-modal transportation options. What is allowed to be developed influences job opportunities and the degree to which a community can grow or maintain its non-residential tax base. Additionally, the capacity to provide public services and maintain a stable fiscal position is closely tied to past land use decisions and the form and location of development. These patterns not only shape current service delivery costs but also affect how future growth can be accommodated in a financially sustainable way. Low-density and sprawling development, for example, is more expensive to serve with infrastructure and public services than more compact forms.

Sustainability and Resilience:

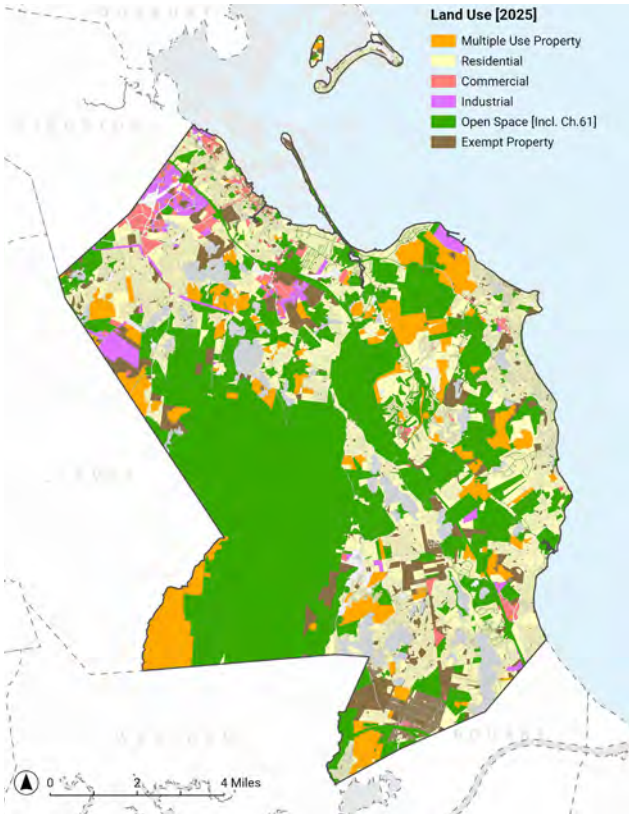
Land use shapes how communities use resources, adapt to environmental challenges, and plan for the future. More compact and mixed-use land use patterns support more efficient use of resources, reduce environmental impacts, and support the conservation of open spaces and natural habitats. Zoning and other land use regulations can guide development away from high risk or ecologically sensitive areas like floodplains, shorelines, wetlands, and forests. They can also facilitate more sustainable design choices and the integration of green infrastructure and other nature based infrastructure into new development to improve resilience of the built environment.

Health, Walkability and Wellbeing:

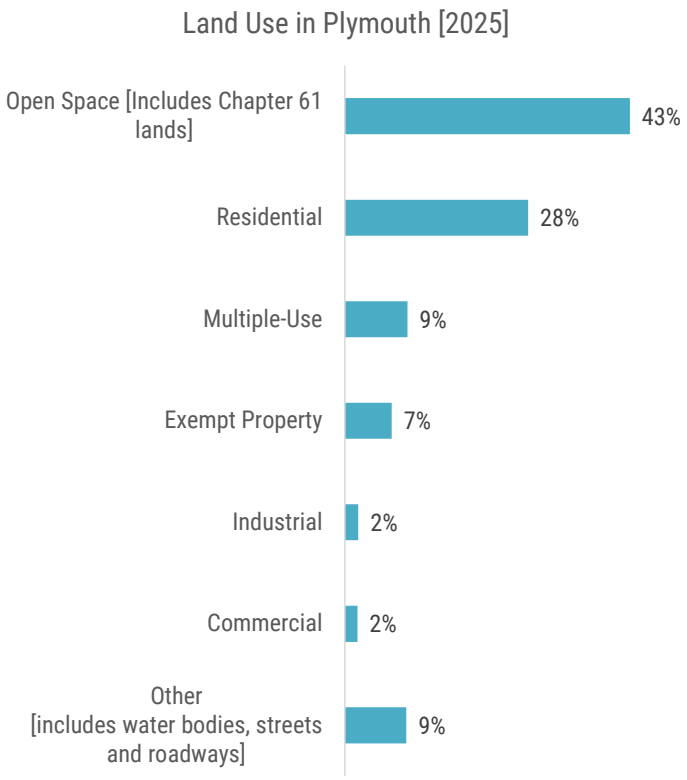
The type and form of land uses influence key factors that support community health and wellbeing. Zoning can support the development of more walkable neighborhoods that foster active lifestyles and social connections. It can allow for uses and services that support community health and that can respond to the evolving needs of an aging population, families, and everyone in between.

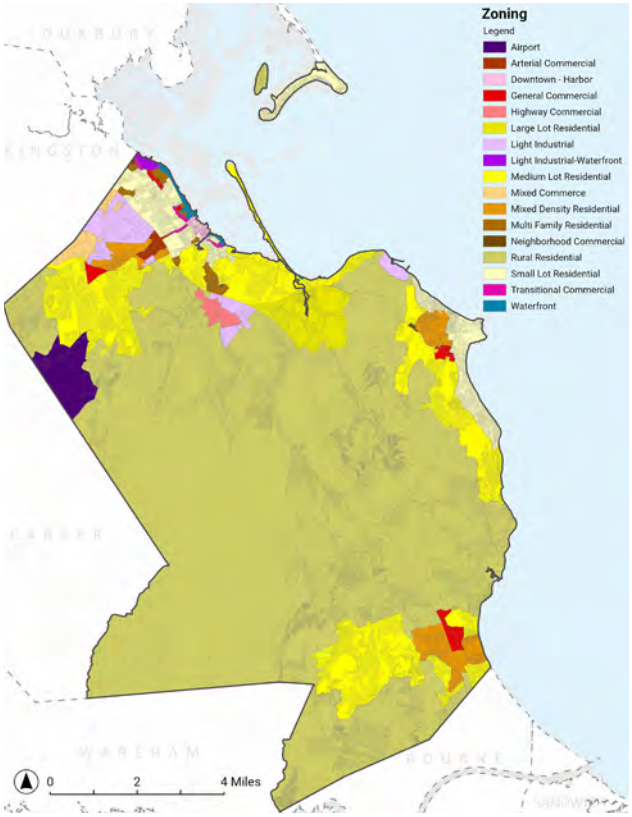
Main Street in Downtown Plymouth

KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS



Land Use 2025



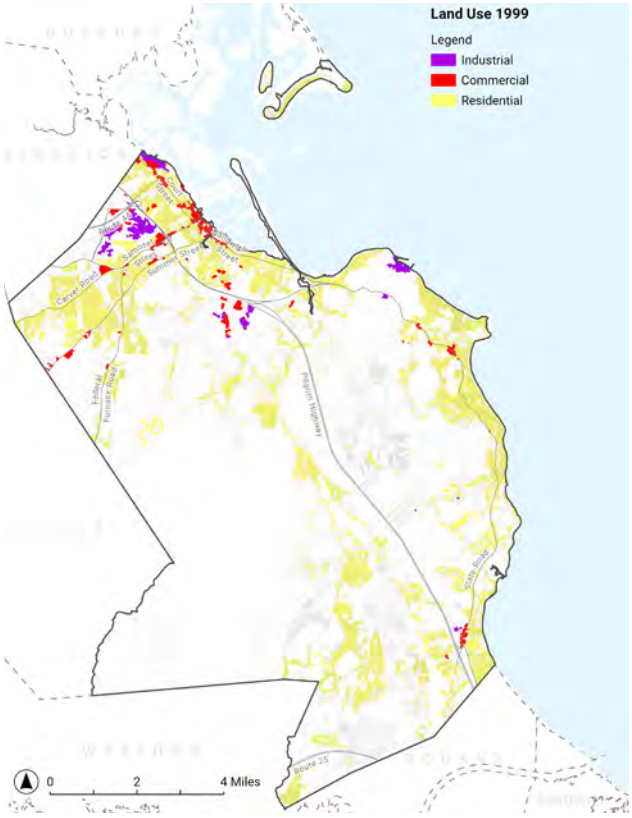


Plymouth Zoning

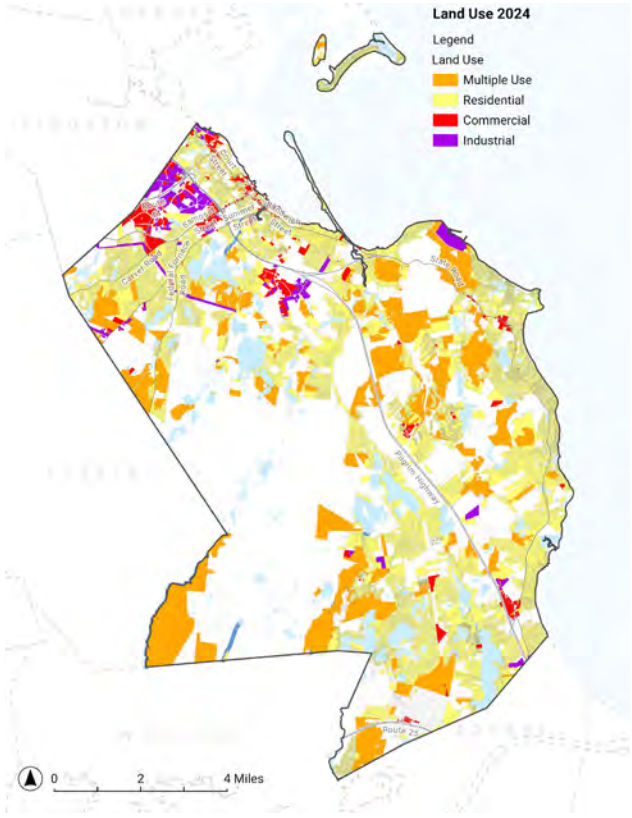
ZONING	ACRE	%
Rural Residential*	47,259	71.9%
Medium Lot Residential	9,050	13.8%
Small Lot Residential	2,655	4.0%
Mixed Density Residential	1,403	2.1%
Large Lot Residential	1,375	2.1%
Light Industrial	1,249	1.9%
Airport	994	1.5%
General Commercial	366	0.6%
Mixed Commerce	338	0.5%
Multi Family Residential	285	0.4%
Highway Commercial	251	0.4%
Arterial Commercial	130	0.2%
Waterfront	122	0.2%
Downtown - Harbor	86	0.1%
Transitional Commercial	76	0.1%
Light Industrial - Waterfront	70	0.1%
Neighborhood Commercial	21	0.0%
Total	65,730	100%

** 23% of Rural Residential Zone is the Myles Standish State Forest*

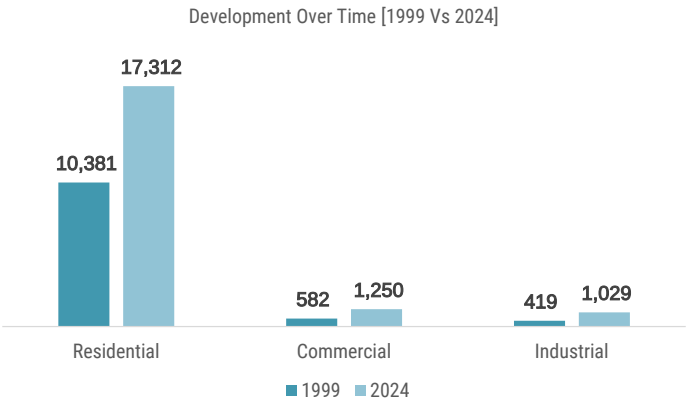
KEY EXISTING CONDITIONS AND TRENDS



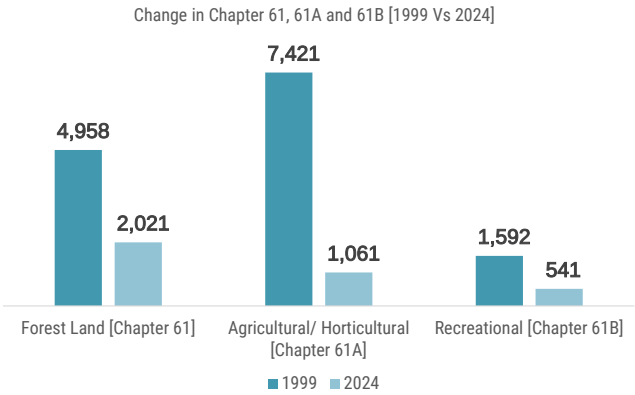
Land Use 1999



Land Use 2024



Increase in Development Area (acres), 1999-2024



Decrease in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B Land Area (acres)

	Residential			Commercial			Industrial		
	Parcel Count	Area [Acres]	%	Parcel Count	Area [Acres]	%	Parcel Count	Area [Acres]	%
Developable Land	677	1,326	2.0%	140	213	0.3%	44	167	0.3%
Potentially Developable Land	229	285	0.4%	23	43	0.1%	34	67	0.1%
Undevelopable Land	2,613	1,677	2.5%	38	43	0.1%	76	49	0.1%

* Note: The area percentage is calculated with reference to total area (65,775 acres) of Plymouth from MassGIS dataset having a variance of 3%.
Source: GIS data set from Town

Plymouth Vacant Land by Zoning Type

Developable or potentially developable vacant land was identified by property type classification code as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Revenue using GIS parcel data from the Town of Plymouth. Classification codes for residential, commercial, and industrial developable or potentially developable land were included in the parcel analysis.

12 IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

GOAL: MAINTAIN THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AS A LIVING DOCUMENT THAT GUIDES TOWN ACTIONS.

Plan implementation is an iterative and adaptive process. A key goal of the implementation process is to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan remains a living document—regularly updated and refined to reflect changing conditions and public feedback. Another goal is to evaluate plan implementation progress and communicate findings to the community. This will keep residents engaged, promote successes, and demonstrate how the comprehensive plan is influencing Town decisions.

I-1. Create an interdepartmental working group that meets quarterly to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan across Town departments and committees.

a. Include consideration of resiliency and sustainability initiatives that involve multiple departments.
b. Use meetings to inform annual budgeting and department work plans.

I-2. Create a Comprehensive Plan implementation committee with representation from key geographic and topic areas to monitor ongoing implementation of the plan's goals and strategies.

a. Assess progress based on performance metrics.
b. Communicate progress with the public to highlight successes.

I-3. Develop and maintain a multi-year budgetary plan that forecasts future revenue and expenses. Use that plan to identify proactive strategies that address anticipated issues or opportunities.

I-4. Conduct an interim review process of the Comprehensive Plan after five years.

I-5. Update the Plymouth Comprehensive Plan every ten years.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

The following implementation matrix organizes the Comprehensive Plan's strategies by goal. Related goals are noted to demonstrate the interconnectedness of many strategies and to identify areas where opportunities for collaboration may exist. The matrix assigns responsibility for each strategy to Town departments and partners with a recommended timeframe from implementation. The plan emphasizes flexibility, allowing for mid-course adjustments as conditions change. Progress will be reviewed periodically to ensure continued alignment with community needs.

The matrix serves as a tool for Town Departments to initiate work and track progress toward implementing the Comprehensive Plan's recommendations. Some of the plan's goals and strategies may come with a level of cost that this report does not address. Identifying associated costs will be an important next step in the implementation process.

ORGANIZATION

The matrix is organized across the following categories:

A. Goals

A-1 Strategies

RELATED GOALS – identifies other goals that are also supported by each policy

LEAD – identifies the lead entity (or entities) responsible for carrying out the policy or action, typically a Town department.

PARTNER(S) – identifies any other Town departments, boards, commissions, or other entities that assist the lead entity in carrying out the policy.

WHEN – identifies the general timeframe to begin implementation. "Ongoing" are regular, sustained efforts that should continue over the life of the plan. "Near-term" denotes 1-3 years, "mid-term" denotes 4-6 years, and "long-term" more than 7 years. Timelines may shift based on funding availability, staff capacity, or other impacts.

ABBREVIATIONS

CAL - Center for Active Living
DEE - Department of Energy & Environment
DPD - Department of Planning & Development
DPW - Department of Public Works
GATRA - Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority
MBTA - Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority
PREDF - Plymouth Regional Economic Development Foundation

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | ECONOMY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
E. Continue to 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.				
E-1. Develop tools such as acquisition, zoning mechanisms, or other strategies to preserve existing but underutilized industrially zoned land for future industrial use. a. Identify strategic parcels that have the scale and infrastructure to support potential tech employment opportunities. b. Continue collaboration with public, private, and non-profit economic development and tourism organizations to proactively recruit/ retain businesses and market available spaces.		DPD	PREDF, Planning Board	Mid-term
E-2. Amend zoning bylaw to increase viability of a range of light industrial uses as well as research and development uses not involving hazardous materials. a. Evaluate building height standards and permitted use tables to reflect modern building design and industrial business needs. • Building height: excluding rooftop equipment from building height measurement, requiring screening of rooftop equipment from ground level (considering resiliency initiatives such as rooftop back-up power or hair handling systems). • Permitted uses: allowing hybrid businesses (e.g. retail showroom and manufacturing combined in the same building). • Consider light industrial in mixed-use development to support artisanal businesses such as arts and crafts manufacturing, wineries, distilleries, etc. b. Consider opportunities for shared parking, shared truck staging, and shared "area" stormwater management facilities for more efficient use of land.		DPD	Planning Board, Department of Public Works	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | ECONOMY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
E-3. Update the 2017 Harbor Plan to reflect changes in the ocean-based "blue economy" (e.g., commercial fishing, lobstering, tourism, boating, marine biotech) and resilience needs. a. Consider inclusion of shellfish restoration and aquaculture development. b. Incorporate considerations for climate resilience.	Environment & Climate	Harbormaster, Harbor Committee	DPD, Plymouth Growth and Development Corporation, Energy & Environment	Near-term
E-4. Support upgrading visitor-related facilities such as public infrastructure, expanded meeting space, and overnight options that are not short-term rentals, with the aim of increasing visitor spending levels and reducing seasonality of visitors in Plymouth.		DPD	Economic Development & Tourism	Mid-term
E-5. Support Plymouth's food sector economy including agriculture, seafood, food products, and restaurants to serve as a growth opportunity for jobs and tax base and maintain its contributions to the character of the community. a. Increase awareness of local agriculture right-to-farm bylaw to encourage small-scale local food production. b. Explore creation of local food system infrastructure such as food hub for distribution and/or commercial kitchen to support a variety of food-based companies. c. Promote Plymouth as an attractive destination for food-based businesses.		DPD	Economic Development & Tourism, Agricultural Commission, Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce, PREDF, Harbormaster	Mid-term
E-6. Continue supporting workforce development efforts for residents and introduce emerging industries such as blue-tech to existing workforce development programs. a. Work with Plymouth Public Schools, community colleges, and other local institutions to create curriculums and job training that support marine technology and other local industries.		DPD	Economic Development & Tourism, Plymouth Public Schools, Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce, Public Library	Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | ECONOMY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
E-7. Evaluate potential for a flexible multi-tenant industrial building(s) to attract blue economy and other small tech manufacturers and businesses.		DPD	Economic Development & Tourism, PREDF	Mid-term
E-8. Support the development of co-working space that provides flexible lease terms and some shared facilities. a. Include potential for small-scale maker space for prototype development.		DPD	Economic Development & Tourism, Plymouth Foundation Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce	Near-term
E.9. Enhance connections to the waterfront as an opportunity to build upon experience and event marketing Downtown. a. Integrate as part of Harbor Plan. b. Explore opportunities based on recent precedents consistent with Chapter 91 regulations (Massachusetts Public Waterfront Act).		DPD	Economic Development & Tourism, Energy & Environment, Harbormaster, Harbor Committee	Mid-term
E-10. Continue to support the investments and activities in culture, arts, and the environment that make Plymouth a destination community for talent and business investment. a. Update zoning to include artist/maker space as a permitted use in commercial, mixed-use, and select residential zoning districts. b. Refer to MAPC's "Arts and Planning Toolkit" to identify relevant strategies and guide progress.	History, Culture, & Community, Land Use	DPD	Economic Development & Tourism, Cultural Council, PREDF	Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | HOUSING

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	TIMELINE
H. Develop a variety of housing types that better meet the diverse and changing needs of our multi-generational community.				
H-1. Promote and prioritize infill development, adaptive reuse, and the redevelopment of existing buildings, Town-owned properties, and underutilized or vacant commercial properties for mixed-income housing. a. Direct future infill and mixed-use development toward Downtown and other Village Service Areas to encourage the critical mass necessary to create a complete and vibrant neighborhood. b. Continue to evaluate Town-owned land for housing suitability. c. Study opportunities for the re-use of existing buildings, previously developed land, or Town-owned sites for new community housing.	Economy Public Facilities & Services	DPD	Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals	Ongoing
H-2. Support seniors' ability to age in place. a. Increase multi-generational housing options and progressive senior housing facilities. b. Promote use of available tax breaks. c. Continue support for housing maintenance and repair programs for seniors who wish to remain in their homes and other households in need.	History, Culture, & Community	DPD	Health & Human Services, Disabilities Committee, Senior Task Force Committee	Near-term
H-3. Continue to promote compact development patterns that group housing areas on smaller portions of a site to protect remaining land as common space.	Environment & Climate	DPD	Planning Board	Ongoing
H-4. Implement compact dwelling zoning regulation to encourage smaller 'starter home' construction at lower price points.		DPD	Planning Board	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | HOUSING

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	TIMELINE
H-5. Preserve and expand the existing affordable housing stock to facilitate a diversity of prices, building types, lot sizes, and continued progress towards state-mandated subsidized housing goals.		DPD	Plymouth Housing Authority, Affordable Housing Trust, Plymouth Redevelopment Authority, Community Preservation Committee	Ongoing
H-6. Explore public-private partnership opportunities to spur housing development that addresses local needs.		DPD	Plymouth Housing Authority, Town Manager	Mid-term
H-7. Review existing zoning tools and make changes as needed to facilitate housing development. a. Review and improve Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) regulations to encourage greater use. TDR helps preserve land in undeveloped areas by transferring allowable housing potential to areas with water and/or sewer service. b. Evaluate effectiveness of the Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) bylaw and consider changes as needed to support its ongoing success. The IZ bylaw requires new housing projects with more than six units to provide affordable units equal to at least 10% of the total.		DPD	Planning Board	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
NR. Preserve and protect our natural resources while supporting our biodiversity and essential aquifer.				
NR-1. Increase public education and outreach to raise awareness of water conservation practices and the potential water quality impacts of activities near ponds, wetlands, and other critical water resources. a. Proactively engage homeowners and homebuyers near water bodies to inform them about septic system maintenance, fertilizer use, the importance of vegetated buffers, and prohibited structures or uses near water bodies.		Energy & Environment	Health and Human Services; DPD; Communications, Conservation Commission, Public Library	Ongoing
NR-2. Explore opportunities to enhance/expand the Town's stormwater management plan to increase protection and improvement of ground and surface water quality. Considerations could include: a. Expansion of water quality monitoring with a concurrent action of establishing seasonal monitoring of swimmable ponds. b. Require green stormwater infrastructure on public and private properties and in new development. c. Develop steps for remediation and management of impaired waters informed by water quality data. d. Integrate recommendations from the Association to Preserve Cape Cod's 2023 Water Health Report and Action Plan as well as EPA's resources for effective management of sole source aquifer designation and possible funding sources.	Public Facilities & Services	Energy & Environment	Public Works	Mid-term
NR-3. Update Town water conservation plan. a. Set a consistent schedule to review progress and update the plan throughout implementation.	Environment & Climate, Public Facilities & Services	Public Works	Energy & Environment, Conservation Commission	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
NR-4. Evaluate existing bylaws and policies pertaining to wetlands, stormwater management, aquifer protection, and septic systems to identify opportunities to strengthen.		DPD	Public Health Division, Energy & Environment, Public Works, Planning Board	Mid-term
NR-5. Explore feasibility of participating in the MassDEP Community Septic System Management Program to support development of local inspection and septic management plans that will help protect groundwater quality.		Public Works	Public Health Division, Town Manager	Mid-term
NR-6. Develop a forest management plan in partnership with the Commonwealth as well as private and non-profit entities to maintain healthy forests and mitigate fire risks. Include a community wildfire protection plan to address fire risk, especially in the pine barrens.		Energy & Environment	Open Space Committee, Fire Department	Mid-term
NR-7. Develop a coordinated land preservation strategy that integrates strategies from multiple Town plans to protect, preserve, and expand natural resources and open space. a. Identify open spaces with high natural value such as forest land and areas that protect groundwater, buffer surface and coastal water resources, and support significant habitat and wildlife. Consider acquisition potential for those areas with the highest natural value (based on OSC ranking sheet) and greatest risk for development. b. Identify parcels for marsh migration or freshwater (cranberry bog) restoration, particularly along tidal rivers. c. Promote Town's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program and consider amendments to make it more attractive for land owners.		Energy & Environment	DPD, Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee	Mid-term
NR-8. Develop and implement a Town-wide invasive species management plan.		Energy & Environment	Open Space Committee, Mass Audubon	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
NR-9. Pursue partnerships and grant opportunities to conserve, restore, and protect ecologically sensitive areas and areas prone to flooding.		Energy & Environment	Public Works, Community Preservation Committee	Ongoing
NR-10. Actively participate in and expand regional cooperation related to shared water resources. a. Pursue implementation of local aspects of the Regional Water Plan completed by the Old Colony Planning Council.	Public Services & Facilities	Energy & Environment	Public Works, Town Manager	Mid-term

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
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.				
SR-1. Reduce municipal energy use and greenhouse gas emissions through energy efficiency retrofits and electrification of municipal buildings and vehicle fleet.	Public Facilities & Services	Energy & Environment	Public Works, Climate Action Net Zero Committee	Ongoing
SR-2. Expand the generation and use of renewable energy townwide (solar, geothermal, wind).	Public Services & Facilities	Energy & Environment	Climate Action Net Zero Committee	Long-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
SR-3. Enhance the resilience of Town infrastructure to mitigate the negative impacts of climate hazards through implementation of actions identified in the ***Priority Plymouth Climate Action Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan.*** a. Develop an inventory of critical Town assets and infrastructure. b. Conduct a coastal vulnerability assessment of critical assets and infrastructure and identify specific actions to reduce risk and improve resilience . c. Update Flood Management Plan to address coastal and stormwater flooding. d. Conduct a Zoning Bylaws and Land Use Regulations review to incorporate language that improves resilience at the building level such as increased freeboard requirements for redevelopment that incorporate depths and extent of sea level rise in 2050 (4.6 feet), projections for increased precipitation, and increased wetland buffer zones beyond current FEMA requirements. e. Develop an education and awareness campaign that includes the Town's natural hazards vulnerabilities for residents, businesses, tourists, and harbor/shorefront users. f. Ensure that all sewer pump stations are adequately protected against flooding and consider improvements that include green infrastructure. g. Continue to identify and develop priority resilience projects and maintain funding mechanisms by completing MVP 2.0 certification process.	Public Facilities & Services	Energy & Environment	Public Works, Harbormaster, DPD	Ongoing
SR-4. Maintain and expand Plymouth's tree canopy and promote sustainable and resilient landscaping practices throughout the community.		Public Works -Parks & Forestry Division	Energy & Environment, Open Space Committee, DPD	Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
SR-5. Partner with neighboring communities on shared climate resilience strategies. a. Explore a regional beach and dune nourishment/sediment resource planning effort that considers the benefits of maintaining barrier beach systems like Plymouth Long Beach and Duxbury Beach.		Energy & Environment	Public Works, Old Colony Planning Council	Near-term
SR-6. Conduct an updated coastal engineering assessment of existing, Town-owned coastal infrastructure and engineering structures (seawalls, revetments, etc.) in high-risk areas to evaluate conditions and identify maintenance and/or redesign/retrofit needs. a. Revisit and build on the 2007 CZM-Funded South Shore coastal Infrastructure Inventory and Assessment Demonstration Project. b. Consider the range of nature-based, living shorelines, green, grey, and hybrid approaches. Reference the Climate Action Plan.	Public Facilities & Services	Energy & Environment	Public Works	Mid-term
SR-7. Expand the reach and capacity of emergency preparedness communications and services, paying special attention to vulnerable populations.	History, Culture, & Community	Town Communications	Police, Fire, Plymouth Public Schools, CAL, Public Library	Near-term
SR-8. Conduct Town-wide low-lying roadways assessment to identify roadway sections vulnerable to coastal and/or stormwater flooding. a. Develop adaptation strategies for highest-priority sections of roadway. b. Consider implications of vulnerable stormwater infrastructure when evaluating coastal risk to roadways.	Public Facilities & Services	Public Works – Highway Division	Energy & Environment, Police Department	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
SR-9. Ensure long-term planning for the resilience of Plymouth's shoreline. a. Fund and develop a regional beach management plan for the resilience of Plymouth Long Beach, White Horse Beach, and other public beaches and coastlines. b. Consider consolidating all Town beach nourishment sites into one permit application to better respond to coastal storm impacts as they occur and take advantage of affordable sources of nourishment sand as they become available. Consider incorporating beneficial reuse of dredged material into the permit.		Energy & Environment	Public Works, Natural Resources & Coastal Beaches Committee	Near-term
SR-10. Consider a Town approach toward community-led relocation (relocation of vulnerable infrastructure and buildings, habitat restoration, and regulation) in areas at high risk of coastal erosion and flooding. a. Consider a neighborhood-scale, phased, and long-term planning approach b. Explore potential for coastal buybacks, climate migration, and phased retreat over time. • Key areas of focus: Taylor Avenue, Saquish, Plymouth Long Beach, White Horse Beach, Manomet.		Energy & Environment	DPD	Long-term
SR-11. Expand public beach access to selected ponds and ocean areas consistent with appropriate natural resource conservation measures.		Energy & Environment	Natural Resources & Coastal Beaches Committee	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | MOBILITY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
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.				
M-1. Implement recommendations in local and regional transportation plans to prioritize multimodal, equitable, and low-emission transportation investments.		Public Works – Highway Division	DPD, Energy & Environment	Ongoing
M-2. Implement traffic demand management (TDM) techniques and infrastructure upgrades to help mitigate congestion along key routes. a. Continue to monitor potential local impacts of MassDOT's Cape Cod Bridges program and advocate for mitigation measures during construction.		Public Works – Highway Division	DPD	Near-term
M-3. Improve existing east-west roadways to accommodate all modes of transportation. a. Include through-traffic calming measures. b. Evaluate feasibility of new or expanded pedestrian and bicycle facilities along segments connecting neighborhoods and destinations. Prioritize improvements on segments where demand is greatest. c. On rural roads, consider how new pedestrian and/or bicycle facilities may affect the existing visual character.		Public Works – Engineering Division	DPD, Roads Advisory Committee	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | MOBILITY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
M-4. Develop a comprehensive parking management plan to increase use of existing parking, reduce commercial parking minimums, and enhance walkability. a. Consider altering parking fee structure so that on-street parking spots close to retail are more expensive compared to off-street facilities, making off-street facilities more desirable. b. Consider establishing a Parking Benefit District to receive these funds and reinvest them in key locations. c. Direct visitors to off-street parking facilities to encourage a "park and walk" approach. d. Enforce restrictions on parking on sidewalks.		DPD	Plymouth Growth & Development Corporation	Mid-term
M-5. Create a traffic calming toolkit/program for implementing in residential neighborhoods and near schools and parks, to enhance safety for all, especially those walking and biking. a. Target areas where sidewalks may not be practical, but people still want to walk. b. Consider implementation along Atlantic Avenue, Hedge Road, Lothrop Street, Ocean View Avenue, Robbins Road, Sever Street, South Cherry Street, and Union Street, among others.		Public Works – Engineering Division	DPD, Public Works – Highway Division	Near-term
M-6. Conduct a town-wide sight line and visibility audit at priority intersections to identify and address obstructions. a. Priority intersections should be those with high crash densities. See PFS-9 for specific intersections. b. Conduct a public education campaign regarding the importance of trimming residential vegetation and keeping sidewalks clear.		Public Works – Highway Division	Police, Town Communications	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | MOBILITY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
M-7. Increase pedestrian and bicycle access and facilities in Village Centers, downtown, and tourist areas to encourage more walking and biking, reduce vehicle dependency, improve safety, and help alleviate traffic congestion from short local trips. a. Analyze, identify, and sign/paint low traffic stress routes that should be prioritized/ advertised as part of Plymouth's bicycle network. b. Expand existing pathways and trails (Grace Trail, Seaside Trail). c. Implement bicycle and pedestrian recommendations from ***Plymouth Center & North Plymouth Circulation Study*** that are the highest priority, such as those that close gaps in the network. d. Use traffic calming to improve walkability in high-speed, low-traffic locations without sidewalks, particularly at intersections. Refer to MassDOT's Safe Speeds toolkit for specific techniques.		Public Works – Engineering Division	Public Works – Highway Division, DPD, Energy & Environment	Mid-term
M-8. Expand paths and trails in rural areas to offer greater pedestrian and bicycle access.		DPD	Open Space Committee, Energy & Environment,	Long-term
M-9. Improve connections and wayfinding between trails, Village Centers, and neighborhoods. a. Promote the trail systems online, in print, and through signage.		DPD	Energy & Environment. Public Works – Highway Division	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | MOBILITY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
M-10. Coordinate with the Greater Attleboro Taunton Regional Transit Authority (GATRA) to advocate for improved local service, such as: a. Increasing frequency on routes serving priority locations such as job centers, healthcare locations, and grocery stores. b. Increasing the time span of service during the day to cover commuting hours. c. Increasing coverage to areas such as Cedarville and South Plymouth. d. Adding amenities to high ridership stops such as lighting, trash cans, and real-time arrival information. e. Adding new routes to nearby communities where Plymouth residents work, such as: Hyannis, Barnstable, Hingham, Southfield, Kingston and Carver. f. Promoting GATRA Go Coastline, with a particular emphasis on groups such as seniors.		DPD	GATRA, CAL, Department of Public Works	Mid-term
M-11. Advocate to strengthen transit connections to Boston and the greater region: a. Work with GATRA to increase direct service from Plymouth to the Kingston MBTA station, including routes and times to Kingston station that align with MBTA service. b. Study travel patterns to determine need and feasibility of expanding park-and-ride options with shuttle links to Kingston MBTA. Sample locations may include areas with commercial density such as Downtown Plymouth, South Plymouth and the Industrial Park. c. Consider the implications of potentially reopening the Plymouth MBTA station [on MBTA Communities classification] and coordinate with MBTA, as needed, to demonstrate public support.		DPD	GATRA, MBTA, Select Board	Long-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I HISTORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
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.				
HCC-1. Leverage the recently-created Historical Commission to better preserve, promote, and develop the Town's historic assets. Consider: a. Creating a historic preservation plan to document and analyze preservation issues and develop an action plan to guide future progress. b. Exploring potential historic district expansion c. Identifying historic landscapes and scenic views for preservation. d. Expanding the communication strategy around the promotion of resources and events.		Historic Resources Office	Historical Commission, Community Preservation Committee	Near-term
HCC-2. Develop an arts and culture plan to improve and promote existing assets and identify new opportunities. a. Reference the MAPC Arts and Planning Toolkit. b. Engage Plymouth's arts, culture, and Plymouth's creative community as partners in the planning process.	Economy, Land Use	DPD	Cultural Council	Mid-term
HCC-3. Partner with local businesses and organizations to promote, enhance, and expand community events, experiences, and opportunities that celebrate public art, local history, and cultural resources.	Economy	Economic Development & Tourism	Cultural Council, See Plymouth, Public Library	Near-term
HCC-4. Integrate a broad range of placemaking considerations into public spaces and Village Centers. Examples include: a. Age-friendly design features such as seating, shade, convenient parking, and access to public restrooms. b. Local history and culture references. c. Public art elements. d. Easily understandable signage and wayfinding.		DPD	Health & Human Services	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I HISTORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
HCC-5. Support indigenous culture and history in Plymouth.		Historic Resources Office	Public Library	Ongoing
HCC-6. Implement age-and dementia-friendly recommendations to benefit all residents. Examples include: a. Create a "hub" in each Village Center – a physical place serving as a shared resource for community members and organizations to promote events, host programs, and expand the reach of the CAL and other service providers. b. Conduct walk audits in high pedestrian activity areas. c. Develop multi-generational programming to connect youth and seniors. d. Review recreation program offerings for teens and young adults, and explore new options to better meet their interests. e. Create a citizen's civic academy to educate residents about local government and encourage broader participation in boards and committees.		Health & Human Services	DPD, CAL, Senior Task Force Committee, Recreation, Public Schools, Public Library	Ongoing/Long-term
HCC-7. Implement recommendations from the inaugural Plymouth Community Health Assessment & Community Health Improvement Plan (CHA-CHIP) to address health needs of residents.		Health & Human Services		Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX | PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
PFS. Maintain and improve Town services and infrastructure including local roadways, public facilities and schools, parks and recreation, education, and utilities.				
PFS-1. Implement recommendations of the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan when completed. a. Develop and implement a proactive preventative maintenance schedule for municipal facilities and infrastructure.	Environment & Climate	Public Works-Sewer Division	Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan Committee	Near-term
PFS-2. Implement recommendations of the Water System Master Plan when completed. a. Develop and implement a proactive preventative maintenance schedule for municipal facilities and infrastructure.	Environment & Climate	Public Works – Water Division		Near-term
PFS-3. Implement priority recommendations from the police and fire strategic analyses.		Police, Fire	Town Manager	Ongoing
PFS-4. Identify suitable property(ies) in South Plymouth for new public safety facilities to improve police and fire coverage in high-growth areas.		Community Development	Police, Fire	Mid-term
PFS-5. Establish composting facility at the DPW yard to divert food waste from landfill.	Environment & Climate	Public Works-Solid Waste & Recycling Division		Mid-term
PFS-6. Continue improving universal accessibility in public and recreational facilities based on the 2019 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan.		Public Works – Facilities Maintenance Division	Recreation, Disabilities Commission	Ongoing
PFS-7. Expand recreational programming offerings to promote multigenerational community health.	History, Culture, & Community	Recreation	CAL, Public Schools, Public Library	Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
PFS-8. Evaluate opportunities for new recreation amenities and public facilities within each Village Service Area. Special focus should be given to West Plymouth, Manomet, and Cedarville.		Recreation	DPD, CAL	Long-term
PFS-9. Implement targeted safety improvements at high-crash intersections, including roadway redesigns to reduce conflict points and improve sight lines and signal timing adjustments. a. State Road at Plimoth Patuxet Highway b. Doten Road and State Road Cherry Street and Standish Avenue c. Chestnut Street at Standish Avenue d. Myles Standish Plaza at Samoset Street e. Holman Road at Long Pond Road f. Summer Street at Westerly Road	Mobility	Public Works – Highway Division		Mid-term
PFS-10. Improve pedestrian safety at schools, parks, busy GATRA stops, and in downtown and Village Center areas by shortening pedestrian crossing distances, raising crosswalks, and slowing vehicle turning speeds.	Mobility	Public Works – Highway Division	Police	Near-term
PFS-11. Install high-visibility pedestrian warning signs and advance yield markings for drivers at key crosswalks throughout Plymouth, particularly at unsignalized crossings and trail intersections. a. Allerton Street at National Monument b. Alden Street north of Allerton Street c. Carver Street north of North Street d. Pleasant Street east of Franklin Street e. Spooner Street south of Forest Avenue f. Spooner Street north of Park Road	Mobility	Public Works – Highway Division	Police	Near-term
PFS-12. Review potential impact that future growth will have on Town staffing needs and plan accordingly. Evaluate Town staff capacity and their role in supporting volunteer committees.	Economy, Land Use	Town Manager	All Departments	Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I PUBLIC FACILITIES AND SERVICES

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
PFS-13. Conduct return-on-investment analysis on major capital projects not tied to essential services as part of the prioritization process. a. Refine the criteria used for the review of capital projects to be included in CIP to ensure return is based on project's ability to catalyze private investment, make efficient use of existing infrastructure, and generate new net revenues. b. Develop methodology for estimating and including return on investment in the criteria.	Economy	Finance	Capital Improvements Committee	Ongoing
PFS-14. Review opportunities to increase dedicated funding for maintenance of public infrastructure like water, sewer, and solid waste.	Environment & Climate	Finance	Public Works	Mid-term
PFS-15. Assess feasibility of creating a new stormwater enterprise fund to establish a dedicated funding source for stormwater and drainage projects.	Environment & Climate	Finance	Public Works	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I LAND USE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
LU-1: Create a user-friendly "Guide to Permitting" that clearly outlines the permitting process, required approvals, and permit costs for all departments.		DPD	Public Works	Near-term
LU-2: Consider designating a Zoning Administrator to address simple zoning-related requests. a. Discuss with Zoning Board of Appeals as one way to reduce case load and streamline approval of certain items. b. Examples of Zoning Administrator authority may include reduction in the number of required parking spaces, minor height variances, and other technical project details.		Town Manager	Zoning Board of Appeals, Inspectional Services	Mid-term
LU-3: Review uses that require site plan review and/or are permitted by Special Permit to identify some that may be transitioned to by-right uses. a. Identify uses that may become permitted by-right in certain districts and/or restrict site plan review to elements visible from public rights-of-way.		DPD	Planning Board	Mid-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I LAND USE

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOAL(S)	LEAD	PARTNER(S)	WHEN
LU-4: Review project review and approval processes to identify ways to reduce timeline and provide more predictability for applicants. a. Consider limiting comments to regulatory requirements; additional staff or committee requests may be provided as non-binding advisory opinions. b. Consider removing Village Center Steering Committee review requirement for projects proposed in the two industrial parks to facilitate light industrial and commercial development in those areas. c. Consider removing Planning Board's informal review of all Zoning Board of Appeals applications, at least for small projects below a certain threshold.		DPD	Planning Board	Near-term
LU-5. Review use table and dimensional requirements in Zoning Bylaw to identify modernization needs. a. Add and update use definitions as needed, especially industrial uses (e.g., blue economy and food processing) and hybrid uses (e.g., brewpub, small-scale artisan manufacturing/assembly with retail storefront).		DPD	Planning Board, Inspectional Services	Mid-term
LU-6. Consider creation of Regional Advisory Committees in place of Village Steering Committees so that all parts of Plymouth are planned for.		DPD	Select Board	Near-term

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX I IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL/STRATEGY	RELATED GOALS	LEAD	PARTNERS	WHEN
I. Maintain the Comprehensive Plan as a living document that guides Town actions .				
I-1. Create an interdepartmental working group that meets quarterly to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan across Town departments and committees. a. Include consideration of resiliency and sustainability initiatives that involve multiple departments. b. Use meetings to inform annual budgeting and department work plans.		Town Manager	All Departments	Near-term
I-2. Create a Comprehensive Plan implementation committee with representation from key geographic and topic areas to monitor ongoing implementation of the plan's goals and strategies. a. Assess progress based on performance metrics. b. Communicate progress with the public to highlight successes.		Town Manager	Master Plan Committee, All Departments	Near-term
I-3. Develop and maintain a multi-year budgetary plan that forecasts future revenue and expenses. Use that plan to identify proactive strategies that address anticipated issues or opportunities.	Public Facilities & Services	Town Manager	Finance Department, Select Board	Near-term
I-4. Conduct an interim review process of the Comprehensive Plan after five years.		DPD	Master Plan Committee, All Departments	Mid-term
I-5. Update Plymouth Comprehensive Plan every ten years.		DPD	Master Plan Committee	Long-term