



Hampden Master Plan

Our Town Our Future | 2025



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Introduction

The master plan and town bylaws are integral components of Hampden's approach to growth and development. This master plan outlines the long-term vision for the town's physical, economic, and social development, providing a roadmap for future land use, infrastructure, and community goals. This strategic document helps shape the town's future by identifying key priorities and guiding principles.

Town bylaws are the legal regulations that govern day-to-day activities within the town. These laws set specific standards and other requirements for land use, building codes, zoning, environmental protections, and other aspects of community life. The bylaws ensure that development occurs in a way that aligns with the town's values, protects public health, safety, and general welfare, and maintains the quality of life for residents.

The connection between the Master Plan and town bylaws lies in how the master plan informs and shapes the creation or modification of town bylaws. The master plan provides the broader vision and direction, while the town bylaws are the tools to implement that vision. By aligning the master plan and bylaws, the town ensures that its development is thoughtful and legally sound, with bylaws supporting the strategic goals outlined in the master plan. Together, they create a framework that balances growth, sustainability, and the community's needs.

Hampden town officials are responsible for applying the master plan objectives and bylaws to ensure that community resources, including the aquifer, ridge line, and hillside vistas, and the neighborhoods' quality of life are protected in the planning process.

What is a Master Plan?

Per Chapter 41 Section 81D of the General Laws of Massachusetts a master plan serves as "a statement, through text, maps, illustrations or other forms of communication, that is designed to provide a basis for decision making regarding the long-term physical development of the municipality."

A master plan is a living, dynamic document that chronicles where a community has been, where it currently is, and where it wants to be. Master plans address a community's built environment, including buildings and infrastructure, as well as the social, environmental, and economic values associated with them. This planning process includes a baseline conditions assessment of the municipality's assets and resources considering changing trends, a shared community vision, and goals and actions supporting the achievement of this vision.

While a master plan typically covers a timeframe of approximately 10 to 15 years, short- to mid-term evaluations help keep the document relevant to a community's changing needs. Master plans are also integrated with and intended to support other municipal plans and initiatives (e.g., open space and recreation plan, housing production plan, etc.). While a master plan is neither a regulatory document (e.g., zoning ordinance, subdivision regulation, budget plan, capital improvement plan) nor a capital expenditure plan, it guides the development of these implementation tools.

This Master Plan addresses the following elements as they relate to the Town of Hampden and its regional context:

- ◆ Land Use
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Economic Development
- ◆ Historic and Cultural Resources
- ◆ Public Facilities and Services
- ◆ Open Space and Recreation
- ◆ Resiliency and Climate
- ◆ Transportation and Mobility



Planning Process

The Master Planning process was conducted over a period of approximately one year. The process is summarized as follows.

Baseline Conditions Assessment

The baseline conditions assessment involved a review of past and recent planning documentation (See Appendix A), data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Esri, and CoStar, and input received from stakeholders and the community at large. This assessment and a wide breadth of public engagement informed the identification of Hampden's issues and opportunities for each Master Plan element.

Community Visioning

Based on input collected during the public engagement process, the Team developed a shared community vision represented as a Vision Statement. The Vision Statement reflects the Town's values and assets that make it unique. It sets the stage for the Master Plan, providing direction for the community's decision- and policy-making organizations over the 10-year planning horizon.

Goals and Actions

Existing initiatives, best practices, and issues and opportunities identified by local stakeholders and the community informed the development of strategic goals and actions (e.g., policies, programs, initiatives, projects) for each Master Plan element. High-level goals support the achievement of the community's shared vision, each supported by targeted recommendations for future action.

Planning for Implementation

Implementation details accompany each recommended action, outlined in the plan's implementation matrix. This matrix defines the lead implementation entity, type of action, and timeframe for each action.

Master Plan Steering Committee

The master planning process was led by the Master Plan Steering Committee (the Committee). Working with the planning consultant (VHB), the Committee provided invaluable guidance and oversight throughout the planning process.

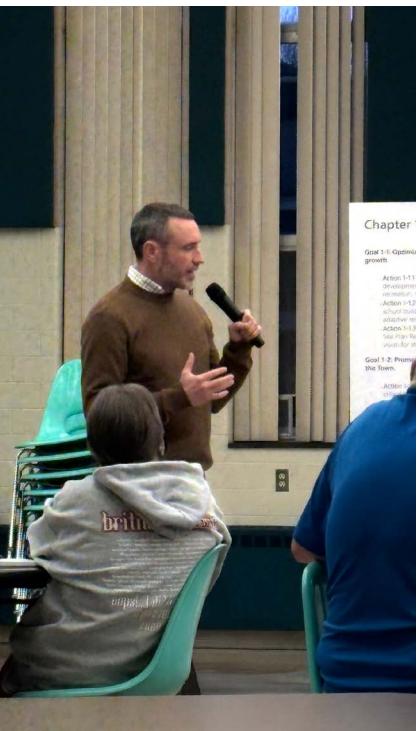
Membership of the MPCC is representative of Town departments, boards, committees, as well as the public.

A special thanks goes out to members of the Master Plan Steering Committee, as well as the community at-large that assisted the Committee in fulfilling its role and responsibilities.

Public Engagement

The Town conducted a wide breadth of public engagement throughout the Master Planning process. These engagement opportunities allowed the Town to disseminate information regarding the planning process and solicit information regarding issues and opportunities in the Hampden community. The planning process included the following engagements.

- ◆ The formation, ongoing participation, and extended outreach of the Master Plan Steering Committee.
- ◆ The Committee conducted broad outreach promoting engagement opportunities throughout the master planning process, including community groups and the public. The Committee also conducted outreach internally, communicating with municipal departments and stakeholders as needed to solicit input, spread awareness regarding master planning activities, and gain buy-in.
- ◆ An open community tour and targeted stakeholder interviews provided the consultants (VHB) with an early, comprehensive overview of the Town's assets and resources.



School Building and the Town House building, to explore opportunities for adaptive reuse and serving community needs.

Action 5-3 Amend bylaws to transition appropriate uses from Special Permit to Site Plan Review, reducing unnecessary steps and aligning zoning with Hampden's vision for sustainable development.

Goal 1.2: Promote sustainable and contextual development in targeted areas of the Town.

Action 1-2-1: Create a mixed-use overlay district in the Town Center and other critical business centers (e.g., Main Street/Yorkes Road) to promote a walkable downtown district encouraging small-scale, community-friendly uses in mixed-use developments.

Action 1-2-2: Develop design guidelines for new development to ensure it complements the Town's rural character, regulating building size, style, and materials to maintain the character of the Town.

Action 1-2-3: Evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of a battery storage bylaw for solar feeds to enhance energy reliability.

Goal 1.3: Streamline zoning and permitting procedures.

Action 1-3-1: Simplify permitting procedures by:

- Update review criteria and implementing online permitting.
- Develop a permitting "101" guide to provide information to residents, developers, and municipal staff on permitting requirements and procedures.

Action 1-3-2: Amend zoning regulations to provide property owners and developers



- ◆ The Committee and consultant team tabled at one pre-planned Town event, including Hampden's Fall Fest. This event provided an opportunity for community members to learn about the master planning process and provide ongoing feedback regarding issues and opportunities in Hampden.
- ◆ The Committee and consultant team administered a community survey from June 20, 2024, to August 14, 2024, utilizing Survey123 and physical survey forms. This anonymous survey covered a wide variety of topics across the master plan elements, soliciting information regarding participants' perception of the current conditions of the Town, and desired conditions for the future. The survey received 262 responses, serving as one of several data sources in the baseline conditions assessment (See Appendix B).
- ◆ The Committee and consultant team hosted two public forums at strategic points throughout the master planning process, including presentations on the progress and findings of planning activities, followed by an interactive workshop inviting attendees to ask questions and provide feedback.

Vision Statement

While bordered by larger neighbors, Hampden prides itself on being a vibrant and resilient small town, offering an exceptional quality of life to its residents, visitors, and businesses. Over the next 10 years, Hampden is committed to the following:

- ♦ **Balanced Growth and Preservation**

Hampden will balance growth and preservation, promote environmental protection, historic preservation, and enhance resources for future generations. The Town's unique landscape contributes to a tapestry of healthy natural systems, including open fields, wetlands, waterways, ponds, and forested mountains.

- ♦ **Enhanced Open Spaces**

Hampden's open spaces and recreational facilities will be enhanced for the use and enjoyment of residents and visitors while preserving critical habitats and natural resources. Agriculture will be encouraged and remain essential to the Town's rural charm.

- ♦ **Support for Small Businesses**

The Town will be a supportive place for new businesses, particularly small businesses, and start-ups, that resonate with its unique character. Hampden will balance economic opportunities with environmental preservation.

- ♦ **Inclusive Housing Opportunities**

Hampden is committed to creating homes that welcome everyone, from seniors and individuals with mobility challenges to young first-time buyers, fostering a diverse and inclusive community.

- ♦ **Effective Emergency Services**

Hampden's emergency services will be sufficiently staffed and funded, maintaining safety and security for residents across the Town and embodying trust and reliability.

- ♦ **Climate Resilience**

Hampden will proactively address weather related municipal vulnerability through sustainable practices, resilience planning, and community education, ensuring the Town's long-term viability in the face of environmental challenges.

- ♦ **Support Education System**

Hampden is dedicated to enhancing its education system, providing robust support for schools and educational programs that empower learners of all ages and backgrounds to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

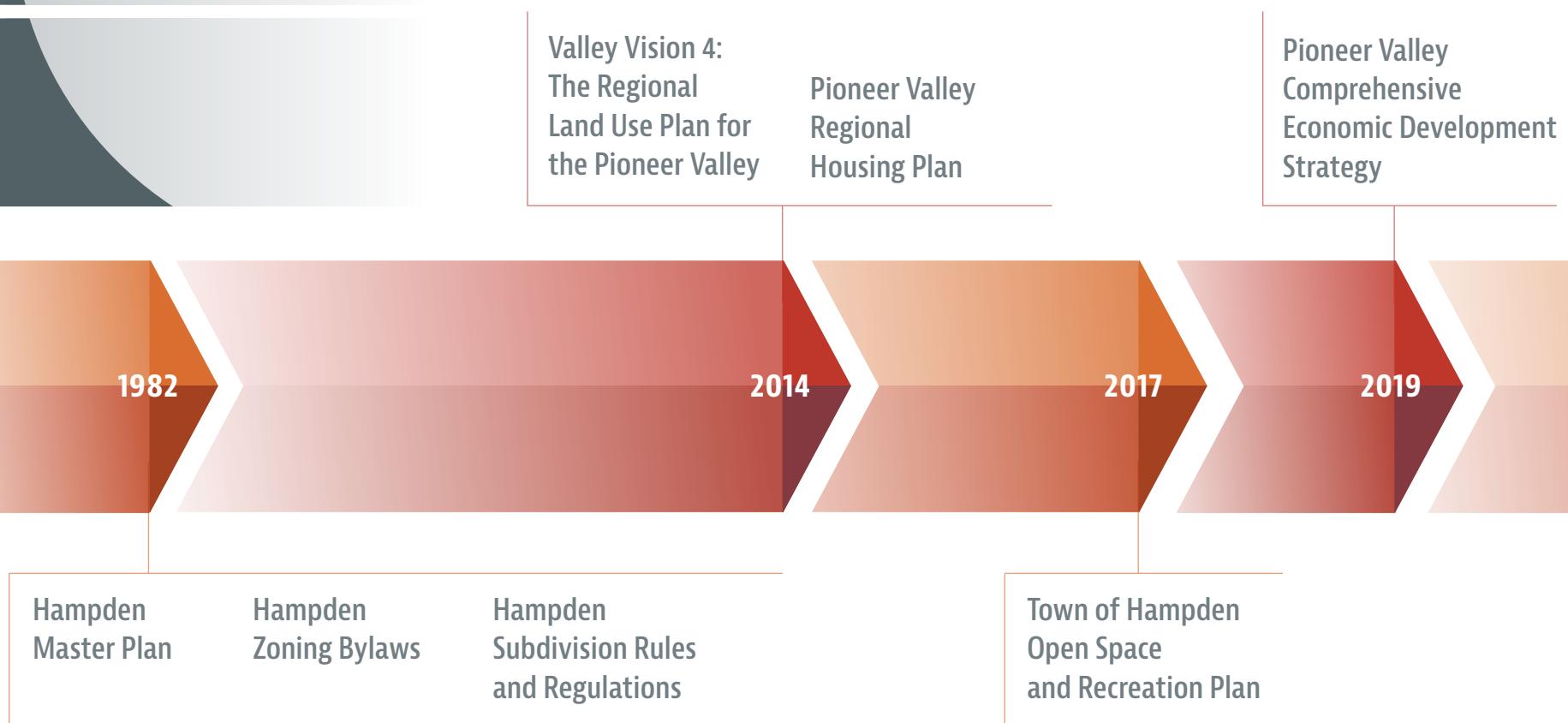
- ♦ **Community Engagement**

Hampden will embrace every stage of life, addressing a range of needs to support families, seniors and youths' health and wellness. The Town will invite residents of all ages to connect, learn, and celebrate its rich heritage through enlightening cultural and civic programs, vibrant events, and meaningful volunteer opportunities that strengthen community bonds.

- ♦ **Innovative Planning**

Hampden will strive for excellence in community planning, embracing innovative approaches, supporting environmentally responsible business, and engaging the economies and technologies of the future in New England.

Planning History

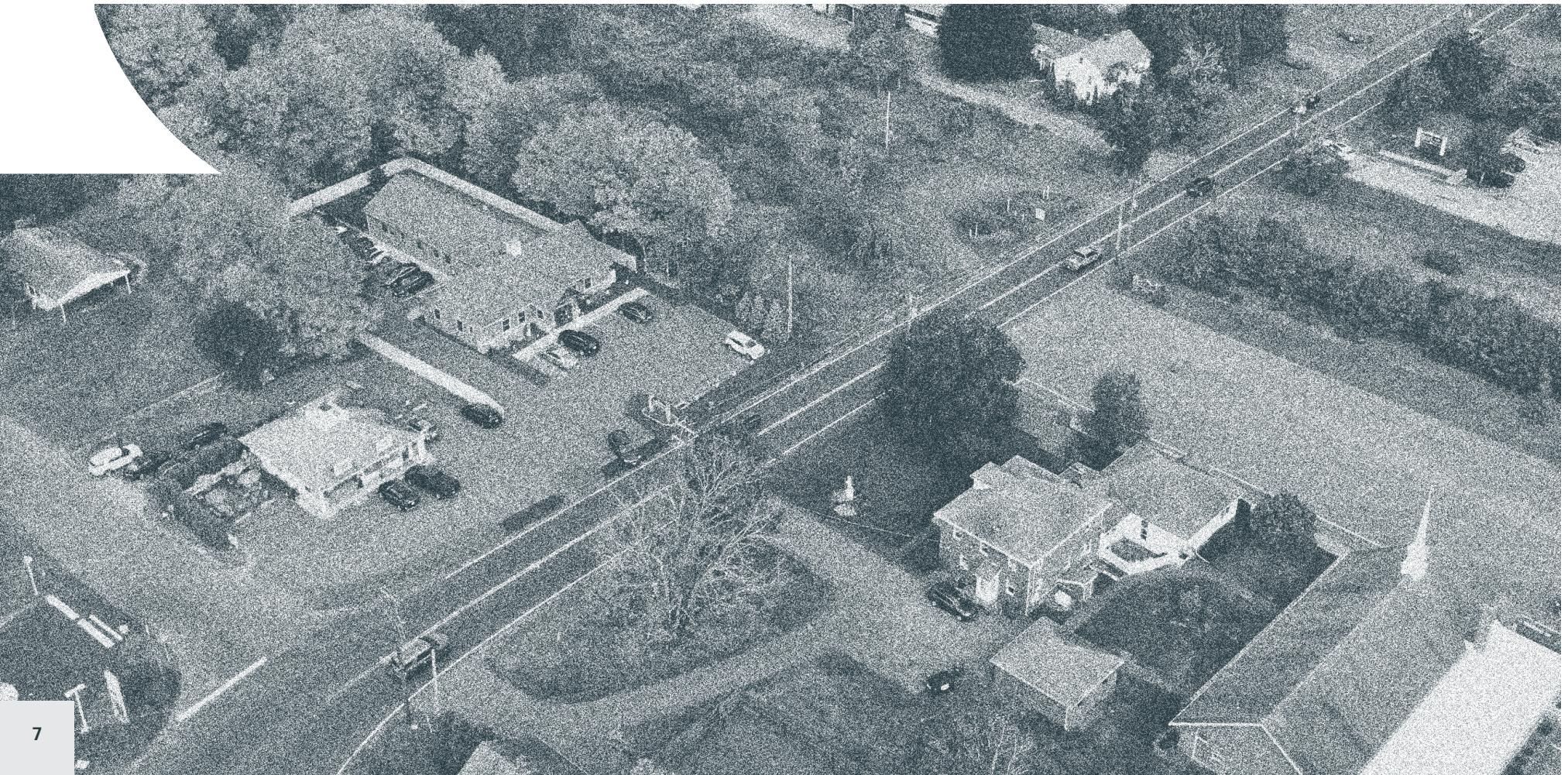




1

Land Use

Land Use, assesses Hampden's current regulations and development patterns and outlines goals and actions for the community's future. This chapter draws on data from MassGIS, Hampden's Assessors Office, and Hampden's Zoning Bylaws and Subdivision Regulations to provide a comprehensive assessment of land use in Hampden.



Baseline Conditions

Hampden is a scenic bedroom community characterized by its steep mountainous terrain and extensive wetlands, including 438 acres of land managed by the Massachusetts Audubon Society. While the town's rugged topography presents challenges for new development, it is also a critical factor in its appeal to residents and visitors. Today, Hampden is home to approximately 4,996 residents.



Town of Hampden (Photo Credit: VHB)



Source: MassGIS

Figure 1.1
Town of Hampden
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

In Western Massachusetts, within the Pioneer Valley region surrounding the Connecticut River, Hampden borders Wilbraham to the north, Monson to the east, Somers and Stafford, Connecticut to the south, and East Longmeadow to the west. Most residents rely on personal vehicles for transportation, as the town is not connected to regional public transit systems. As of 2022, approximately 97 percent of residents aged 16 and older had access to at least one vehicle. **Chapter 8, Transportation and Mobility**, further discusses transportation options and challenges.

Figure 1.2 highlights Hampden's topography, showing the mountainous terrain and steep slopes that characterize the eastern portion of Hampden. Pine Mountain, standing at 1,070

feet, Minnechaug Mountain at 990 feet, and the initial ridges of the Wilbraham Mountains, including the 934-foot Mount Vision, dominate the landscape. The valleys of East Brook and the Scantic River cut through this rugged terrain, with Hampden's Town Center located in one such valley along the Scantic River. Moving westward from the Town Center toward East Longmeadow, slopes gradually become gentler, making the terrain more suitable for habitation, resulting in most of Hampden's development in areas of lower elevation in the west. These areas also present barriers to growth—most notably, wetlands and floodplains.

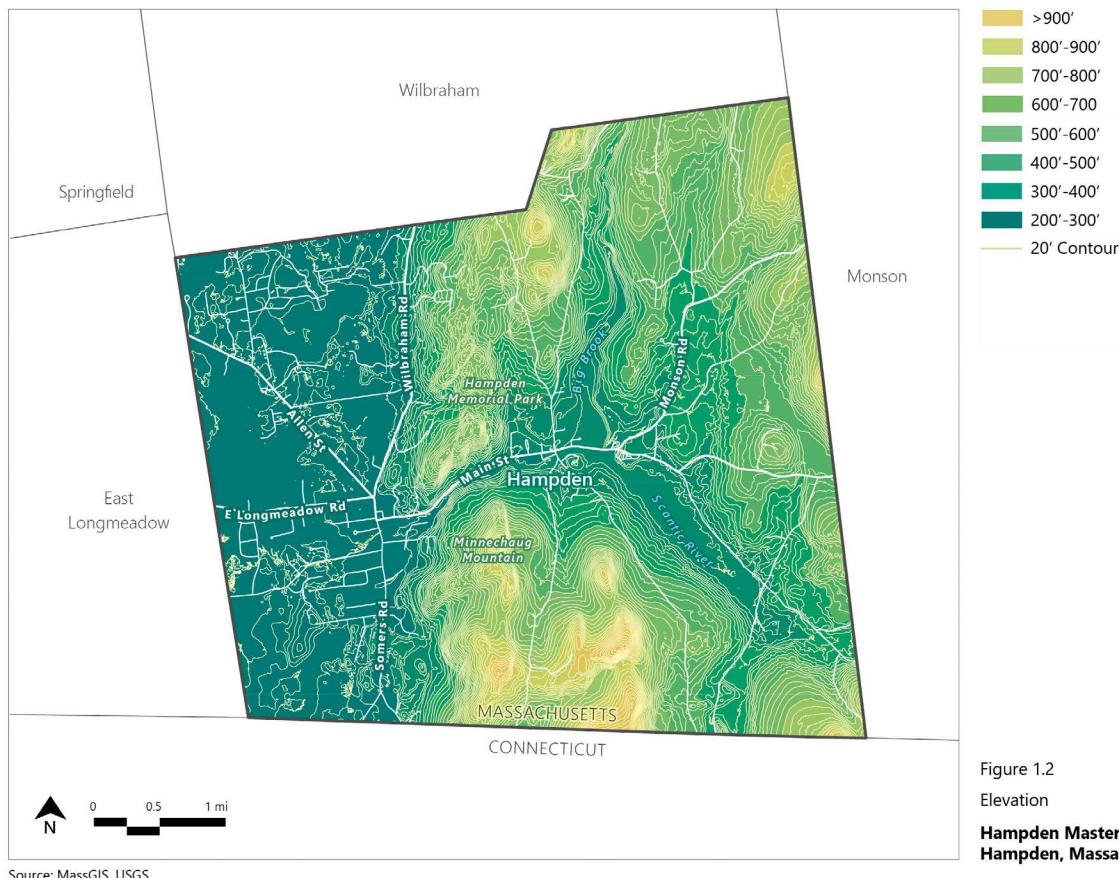


Figure 1.2
Elevation
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

Land Use Composition

Hampden's land use is predominantly low-density residential, with a single outlier of multifamily apartments located west of the Town Center on Main Street. Commercial activity is concentrated along Somers Road from Main Street to the intersections of Allen Street, Wilbraham Road, and East Longmeadow Road and at the business park on Commercial Drive.

Hampden remains largely a low-density residential community, primarily due to large lot area and frontage requirements in the town's single-family zoning districts. Hampden's western border has the highest residential density and includes pockets of more intensive land uses, such as business and industrial activities.

Hampden has age-restricted developments that allow clustered housing with duplexes, such as the Tall Pines Road condominiums, which were built in 2007 and are restricted to ages 55 and older. The White Birch Garden Apartments, however, remain the only multifamily housing option available for residents of all ages. These apartments were built in 1970 and are located on Main Street west of Town Center. There is potential for the Town to explore introducing additional affordable housing options using cluster design techniques with incentives for smaller units. Current bylaws can permit smaller lot sizes with certain conditions, which could offer a solution to allow for additional housing type options.

Data from MassGIS and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission classifies Hampden's land uses and land cover according to the 2005 Land Use Code classification system. **Table 1.1** illustrates that land use patterns in Hampden have remained relatively stable from 2005 to 2022. The most notable change is a 21-acre increase in urban open/public land, which MassGIS defines as parks, cemeteries, public and institutional greenspace (i.e., church or school property), and vacant undeveloped land. Notably, industrial land use has increased by 17 acres between 2005 and 2022 due to the construction of solar farms in Hampden.

Table 1.1: Hampden Land Use Change (2005–2022)

Land Use Classification*	2005 Acreage	2022 Acreage	Acreage Change	Percent Change
Residential	1,633	1,633	+0	0%
Commercial	65	65	+0	0%
Industrial	158	175	+17 Acres	11%
Urban Open/Public	157	178	+21 Acres	13%
Outdoor Recreational	153	153	+0	0%
Agricultural Land	814	814	+0	0%
Undeveloped Land	9,558	9,558	+0	0%

Source: MassGIS, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

*In the 2005 Land Use Codes classification, Agricultural Land consists of cropland, pasture, orchard, and nursery. Residential areas include multifamily, medium density, low density, and very low density residential. Industrial zones encompass mining, powerline/utility, junkyard, and industrial. Undeveloped land features forest, non-forested wetland, forested wetland, and brushland/successional areas. Outdoor recreational areas include participation recreation and golf courses. Urban open/public spaces incorporate cemeteries, waste disposal, urban public/institutional areas, and open land.

Approximately 76 percent of Hampden's land remains undeveloped. The town's steep topography continues to limit new development, particularly in upland areas where development would be costly. Community concerns about the potential impacts of development on the municipal water supply and protected species further complicate the potential for development.

As a designated right-to-farm community, Hampden has seen increasing interest in small-scale farming operations supported by the Planning Board. One notable success is Ferrindino Maple, a sugaring facility that has expanded to supply grocery stores throughout the region. Additionally, Hampden is home to two large farms, D+R Farm and Temple Farm. D+R Farm offers a variety of fresh, homegrown goods through its farm store in Hampden and at local farmers' markets, while Temple Farm serves as a horse boarding facility. Local farm stands tend to operate without controversy in Hampden, reflecting the community's strong support for agricultural activities.

The Town's Planning Board has acknowledged that numerous residents operate home-based businesses requiring appropriate permits. The Zoning Bylaw defines home occupations as "occupations conducted in a dwelling unit." Professional office or customary home occupation uses are permitted by Site Plan Review or Special Permit, subject to criteria ensuring that the business does not negatively affect neighboring residents. Additional standards exist for home occupations in accessory

dwellings. Given the prevalence of home-based businesses, there is potential for shared workspace developments in Hampden's Business and Commercial zoning districts.

Special Permits from setback requirements are common requests for constructing accessory structures on residential lots. Solutions such as changing approval processes for permitting accessory buildings to administrative Site Plan Review could save residents and town staff from executing unnecessarily long Special Permitting process.

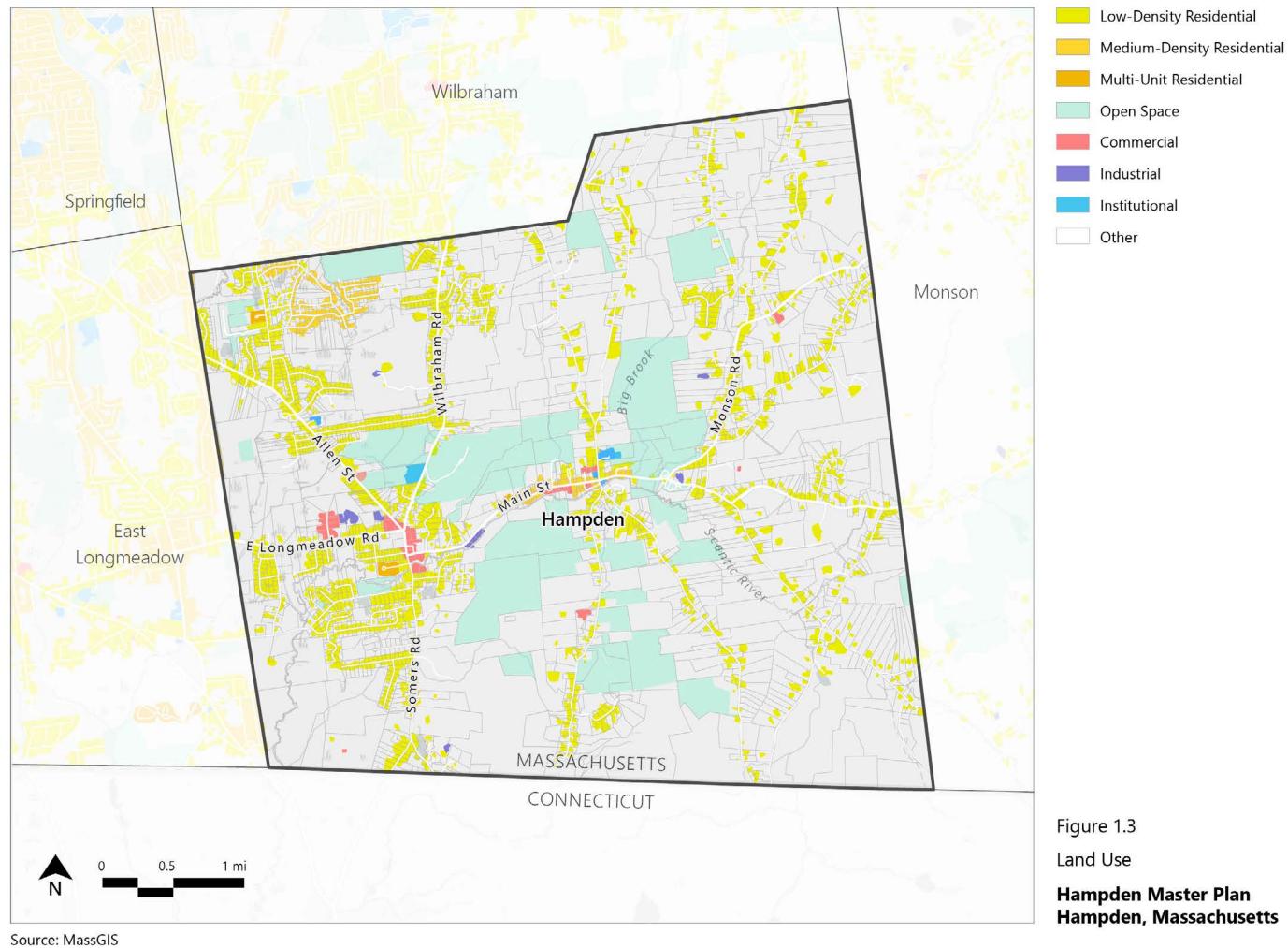


Figure 1.3
Land Use
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

Development Patterns

When asked about their favorite aspects of Hampden, residents frequently highlight the area's natural beauty. There is often strong local opposition to new development, mainly due to concerns that it could negatively impact the town's character. The top land use concern among 2024 Master Plan public survey respondents was the loss of natural lands to new development and the preservation of water resources. Development in Hampden has been slow compared to neighboring municipalities over the past twenty years.

While there is opposition among residents to developing high-density housing, it is vital to address the need for more diverse housing options. This sentiment is often shared by homeowners looking to downsize while staying in Hampden and parents seeking attainable housing options for their children as they enter the housing market. For more information on this topic, please refer to **Chapter 2, Housing**.

Current land use patterns in Hampden reflect recently developed solar farms. Hampden is home to 90 acres of solar facilities containing 22MW and 296 homes with solar installations. 2024 Master Plan Public Survey results indicate many residents feel the Town has already gone above and beyond in contributing to a sustainable future and should now focus future development in other areas. **Figure 7.2 in Chapter 7, Resiliency and Climate**, depicts existing solar energy systems.

Recent and Pipeline Development Projects

Analyzing recent development and pipeline projects is crucial for understanding Hampden's growth trends, assessing infrastructure needs, and ensuring that future development aligns with the community's long-term goals and environmental sustainability. Over the past ten years, the following were the only two new developments within the town.

123 Allen Street

The Bethlehem Church, constructed in 2015, is a 20,000-square-foot religious facility with 200 parking spaces on a 31-acre lot in the Residential 4 (R4) zoning district.

128 Wilbraham Road

The 36,000-square-foot GreatHorse golf clubhouse, constructed in 2015, is on a 232-acre lot in the Golf Recreational (GR) zoning district and includes 200 parking spaces.

Limited significant development in over a decade indicates controlled growth, which is typical of a smaller town aiming to maintain rural character while accommodating community needs. However, while Bethlehem Church and the GreatHorse Clubhouse provide some services and recreation opportunities for residents, future strategic development could benefit a range of resident needs. It should be noted that GreatHorse is a members-only facility.



Photo Credit: VHB

Vacant Lands and Development Potential

Evaluating vacant and underused properties helps to identify areas suitable for residential, commercial, or industrial development while also highlighting spaces the Town should preserve for open space, recreation, or environmental protection to ensure future growth is balanced, sustainable, and in line with the community's vision for its future.

Greenhouse Banquet Facility

This facility, located at 2 Somers Road at the southwest corner of the intersection of Somers Road and E. Longmeadow Road, was previously a banquet hall. It is for sale and offers an opportunity for redevelopment and new business in the heart of Hampden. The property is in the Business zoning district.

Old Cumberland Farms Site

This 22,290-square-foot property, located at 500 Main Street across from Memorial Park, has been remediated and is currently up for sale. If the Town purchased it with easements, it could potentially provide recreational access to the river. This property is in the Business zoning district.

16 Somers Road

The 3.47-acre 16 Somers Road property is in the Business zoning district, directly south of the Greenhouse Banquet Facility at 2 Somers Road. This former Hampden Nurseries property presents a prime development opportunity in the heart of Hampden. The site includes a two-family residence and a garage with five drive-in bays. Its strategic location on the west side of Somers Road, just south of East Longmeadow Road, offers excellent visibility, with daily traffic passing the site, making it an ideal site for new business development.

Additional sites for potential development in Hampden include the Hampden Free Library, the Thornton W. Burgess School, and the properties on Commercial Drive, Hampden's only business park and only area in the Commercial zoning district.

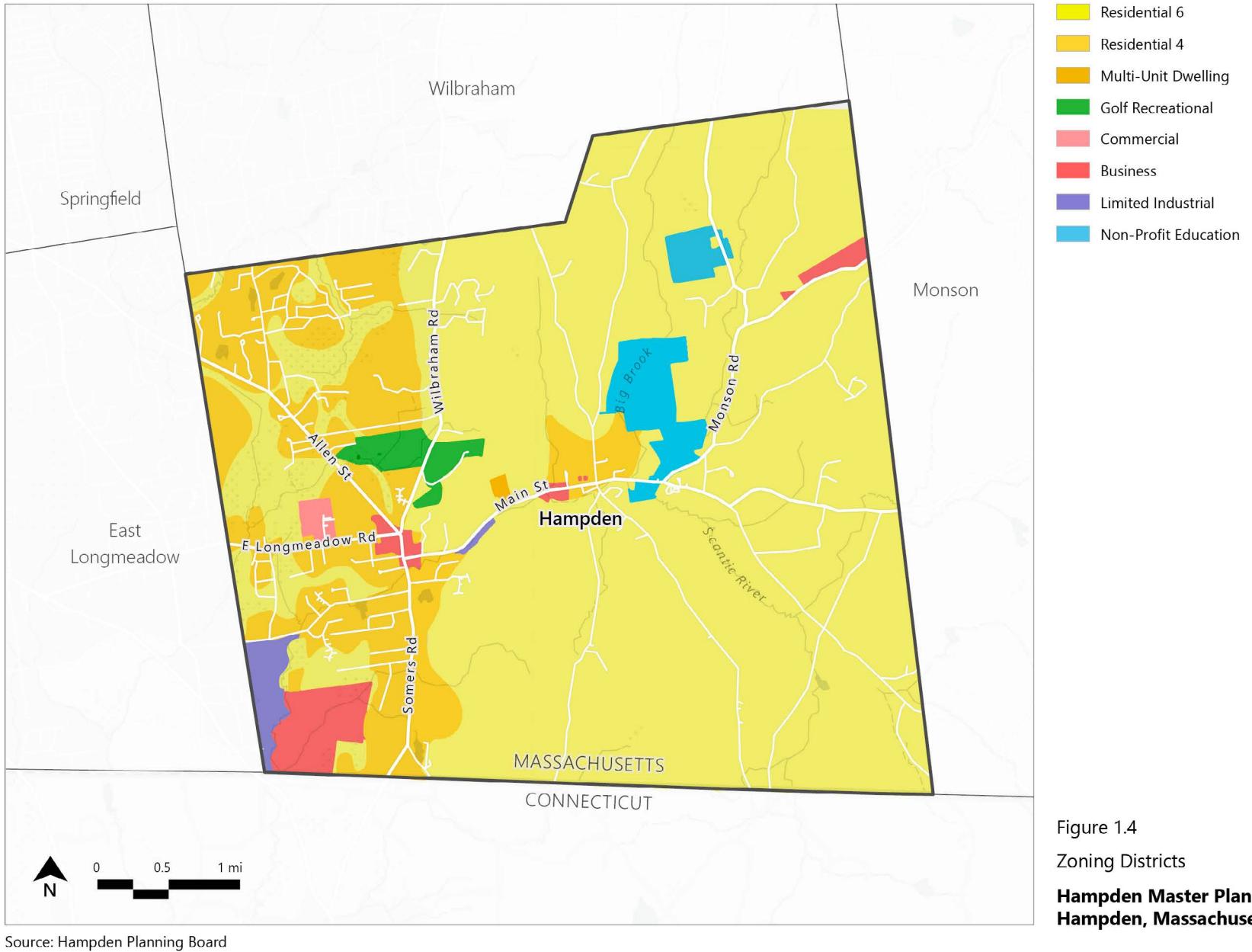
Redeveloping abandoned and vacant sites can help revitalize the local economy by attracting businesses and increasing property values. It also preserves the Hampden's character by repurposing existing structures and enhancing the area's visual appeal.

Redevelopment projects can meet community needs by providing new facilities and improving public amenities without the need for extensive new infrastructure.

Zoning and Long-Term Development Patterns

Hampden's Zoning Bylaws serve as the framework for local development. Since their initial adoption, these bylaws have been revised multiple times to ensure compliance with the provisions of M.G.L. c. 40A. These bylaws define the town's principal, specific, and supplementary zoning districts and describes their uses and dimensional requirements.

Figure 1.4 illustrates the boundaries of Hampden's zoning districts. Clusters of business, commercial, and industrial uses are primarily located in the western part of the town. The Residential District 6 (R-6) district encompasses most of the land area in Hampden. However, the Residential District 4 (R-4) on the western side of the town contains the largest concentration of homes. R-6 and R-4 zoning districts permit single-family homes without special approvals, with R-6 being more restrictive due to its location in environmentally sensitive areas. Both districts mandate larger lots with a minimum of 170 feet of frontage.



Section 6.1 of Hampden's Zoning Bylaws includes six base zoning districts, including residential and non-residential, non-special districts.

- ◆ **Residential Districts**

Hampden's residential districts consist of the R-6, R-4, and multifamily dwelling districts.

- ◆ Most of Hampden's land is zoned **Residential-6 (R6)** (light yellow), which has a minimum lot area of 60,000 square feet with 200 feet of road frontage. R-6 most notably allows detached single-family homes, passive recreation uses, certain town buildings, elder care, and childcare facilities, most agricultural uses, some accessory buildings, and small-scale solar energy systems by right.
- ◆ The second largest residential district is **Residential 4 (R-4)** (dark yellow), concentrated on the western side of the town and centered around the Town Center and Main Street. The R-4 district has a minimum lot area of 40,000 square feet and 170 feet of continuous road frontage and allows the same low-density residential uses as the R-6 district.
- ◆ The **Multifamily Dwelling District** (orange) is located on Main Street, west of the Town Center. Its minimum lot area is 100,000 square feet, and the road frontage is 220 feet. This district most notably allows for multifamily housing, senior housing, elder care and childcare facilities, and limited accessory commercial services by right.

- ◆ **Commercial and Industrial Districts**

Hampden's other districts, not including special districts, include the Business, Commercial, and Industrial districts.

- ◆ The **Business District** (red) is located on Somers Road from Main Street to Allen Street, with a smaller district located along the southern side of Main Street west of the Town Center. This district provides for retail, restaurant, and consumer goods and service uses allowed by a Special Permit with Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board.
- ◆ The **Commercial District** (pink) is located around the aptly named Commercial Drive and most notably allows for consumer and non-consumer goods and services uses, including childcare centers, motorized vehicle sales and repair, self-storage, printing and publishing, and certain retail establishments allowed by Special Permit with Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board.
- ◆ There are three areas in the **Limited Industrial District** (purple) with the largest geographic area located south of Mill Road and west of the Scantic River (a solar farm), and a second area located along the Scantic River (properties here include Hampden Auto Body, the VFW, and Bill's Auto Repair). This district is intended for use by research laboratories, office buildings, and light industries, which are compatible with a low-density, rural residential community allowed by Special Permit with Site Plan Approval from the Planning Board.

Special Permits and Overlay Districts

In addition to the base zoning districts, Hampden has four overlay districts. These include the Floodplain and Wetland District, Water Supply Protection District, Golf Recreational District, and Non-Profit Educational and Recreational District. Additionally, the Hampden Zoning Bylaw allows for Planned Unit Residential Development and Flexible Residential Open Space Development as flexible and creative residential design mechanisms.

The **Floodplain and Wetland District** restricts development in areas prone to seasonal or periodic flooding to safeguard the health and safety of residents. It aims to protect and maintain water tables and recharge areas to ensure the availability of current and future water supplies. Additionally, it seeks to preserve natural water flow patterns and provide adequate floodwater storage to prevent flood hazards and protect people and property. The district includes all special flood hazard areas within the Town of Hampden on the Hampden County Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to administer the National Flood Insurance Program.

The **Water Supply Protection District** intends to promote, protect, and preserve the surface and groundwater resources of the Town of Hampden and the region from any use of land or buildings that may reduce the quality and quantity of its water resources. The district includes all lands within the Town of Hampden, lying within the Interim Wellhead Protection Area for town water supply wells, and all lands lying within the primary recharge areas of groundwater aquifers, which now or may in the future provide water supply for residents. This district includes the majority of the town's area west of Wilbraham and Somers Road, which falls within an aquifer recharge area.

The **Golf Recreational District** occupies the land surrounding the Great Horse Country Club on Wilbraham Road in the heart of Hampden.

The **Non-Profit Educational and Recreational District** is intended to permit the study of natural history, including examining and preserving plant and wildlife species, and for related non-profit recreational activities. Most of this district is in the northeastern part of town between Glendale and North Roads surrounding Big Brook. This district includes seven parcels operated by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, encompassing 348.22 acres in Hampden, and is home to the Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and multiple trails.

Planned Unit Residential Development allows for greater variety and flexibility in the development of housing types for people 55 and older. These applications must be authorized by the Planning Board acting as the Special Permit Granting Authority by special permit with site plan approval.

Flexible Residential Open Space Development (FROSD) is allowed by right in residential zones R-4 and R-6 for subdivision developments consisting of five or more lots. FROSD allows single-family residences to be clustered together adjacent to permanently preserved open space. It promotes creative subdivision design to preserve open spaces, protect natural resources, and maintain the town's rural character while ensuring efficient infrastructure development and encouraging development patterns that blend with the landscape and provide wildlife corridors.

1 Land Use Goals and Actions

1
Land Use

Goal 1-1

Optimize land use and zoning to support community needs and future growth.

Action 1-1.1

Prepare a town-wide land use study to identify lands for residential development, commercial development, and preservation for open space, recreation, or agriculture.

Action 1-1.2

Assess town-owned parcels, such as the vacant Thornton Burgess school building and the Town House building, to explore opportunities for adaptive reuse and serving community needs.

Action 1-1.3

Amend bylaws to transition appropriate uses from Special Permit to Site Plan Review, reducing unnecessary steps and aligning zoning with Hampden's vision for streamlined development.

Goal 1-2

Promote sustainable and contextual development in targeted areas of the Town.

Action 1-2.1

Create a mixed-use overlay district in the Town Center and other critical business centers (e.g., Main Street/Somers Road intersection) to promote a walkable downtown district encouraging small-scale, community-friendly uses in existing commercial areas.

Action 1-2.2

Develop design guidelines for new development to ensure it complements the Town's rural character, regulating building size, style, and materials that reflect the community's historic and aesthetic values.

Action 1-2.3

Evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing a battery storage bylaw for solar fields to enhance energy storage capacity and sustainability.

Goal 1-3

Clarify the zoning and permitting process to foster community-enhancing development.

Action 1-3.1

Simplify permitting procedures by consolidating steps, establishing clear review criteria, and implementing online applications to enhance efficiency and attract investment.

Action 1-3.2

Create a "Zoning 101" guide to provide clear and accessible information to residents, developers, and municipal boards about zoning codes and procedures.

Action 1-3.3

Review zoning regulations to ensure they are consistent and clear for property owners and developers.

2

Housing

Housing, evaluates Hampden's current demographic and housing conditions. It covers aspects including the quality and value of the local housing stock and the unique needs of various population groups within the community. This assessment primarily uses data from the U.S. Census and local planning documents, including the latest Master Plan.



Baseline Conditions Analysis

Demographics

Demographic trends within a community significantly impact local housing demand and inventory needs. Understanding Hampden's demographic profile is crucial for effectively planning the community's residential requirements. The following sections offer an overview of Hampden's population and housing characteristics.

Population

Between 2012 and 2022, the Town of Hampden's population hovered between 5,100 and 4,900. As shown in **Table 2.1**, the community's population increased slightly between 2012 and 2017 but decreased between 2019 and 2022, following trends in Hampden County but not the state. Metropolitan Area Planning Council projections estimate that the town's population will continue to decline to approximately 4,300 by 2050.¹

Table 2.1: Population Estimates and Percent Change (2012-2022)

Year	Estimated Population	Percent Change Compared to Previous Year	Percent Change Compared to 2010
2012	5,132	-	-
2013	5,161	0.6%	0.6%
2014	5,174	0.3%	0.8%
2015	5,179	0.1%	0.9%
2016	5,190	0.2%	1.1%
2017	5,193	0.1%	1.2%
2018	5,191	0.0%	1.1%
2019	5,178	-0.3%	0.9%
2020	5,174	-0.1%	0.8%
2021	4,991	-3.5%	-2.7%
2022	4,966	-0.5%	-3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022).
ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05

A declining population can lead to reduced demand for housing, potentially causing property values to stagnate or decline and making new housing development projects less viable. Limited housing development can erode the tax base, restricting the Town's ability to maintain and improve public infrastructure and services, further diminishing the area's attractiveness to potential new residents. On the other hand, a declining population could also lower property prices, making homeownership more accessible to a broader range of individuals (e.g., first-time homebuyers). These are potential scenarios that the municipal government and residents must consider when determining future housing policy.

Hampden's housing stock is primarily composed of single-family homes. A few multifamily units exist, but large apartment complexes are rare. The town's average residential density is approximately 0.4 units per acre.²

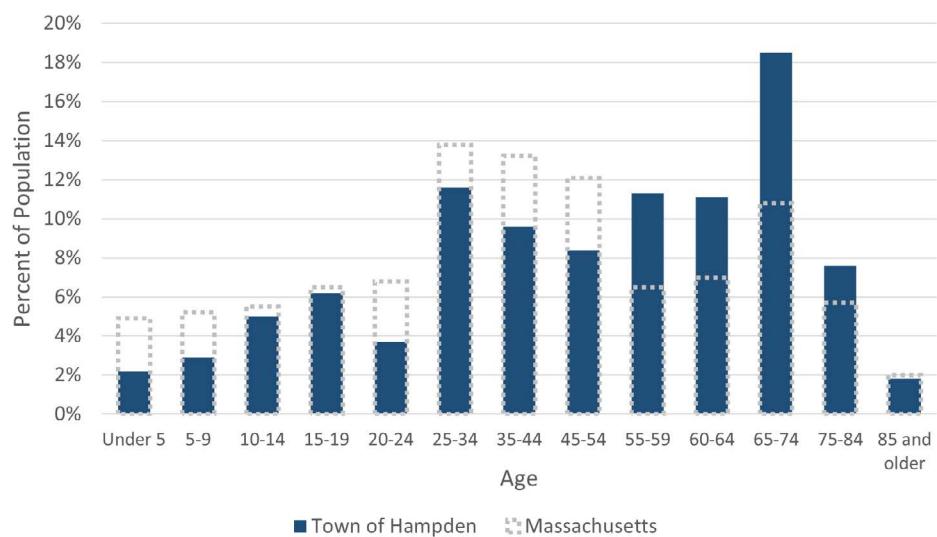
Age

As shown in **Figure 2.1**, Hampden is experiencing an aging population trend, with a higher proportion of the population between 55 and 84 than the state. This demographic shift is occurring at a faster rate than both the County and State and impacts not just housing needs but also employment, public services, and education.

¹ Metropolitan Area Planning Council. (n.d.). Regional Growth Projections. <https://www.mapc.org/learn/projections/#:~:text=Growth%20projections%20describe%20the%20challenges%20facing%20Metro%20Boston.%20To%20help>

² Massachusetts Housing Partnership. (n.d.). Residency. <https://residency.mhp.net/>

Figure 2.1: Population by Age Group in Hampden and Massachusetts (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05

Regarding housing, most households in Hampden have one or more occupants 60 years or older (59 percent), a proportion higher than that of the county (43 percent) and state (42 percent). A consequence of aging household occupants is a need for homes to be modified to accommodate mobility issues. Additionally, older residents may need to downsize or move to assisted living facilities, potentially increasing available housing stock for younger families but also impacting neighborhoods' demographic composition and community dynamics.

The Master Plan Steering Committee and the director of the Hampden Senior Center noted housing affordability as a definite challenge for older adults in Hampden. This challenge is particularly relevant for retired individuals who, living on fixed incomes, may face challenges managing increasing living expenses. There is a need for smaller homes for downsizing, affordable independent older adult housing, older adult living facilities, and continuing care retirement communities.

Disability Status

The reported percentage of the population with a disability in Hampden increased about 15 percent from 551 residents in 2012 to 636 in 2022, a rate comparable to trends in the State (13 percent increase) and County (7 percent increase).

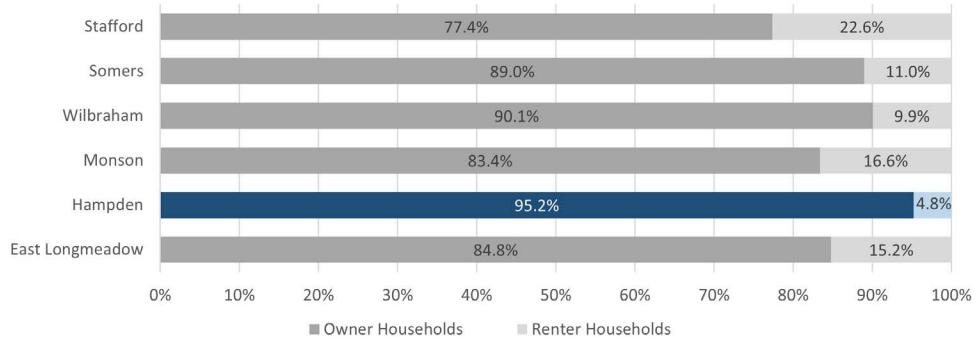
Disabled residents can have unique housing needs regarding the physical accessibility of housing, affordability, and proximity to critical town services and amenities. Hampden Housing Authority is responsible for managing the Chapter 667-1 elderly and handicapped development known as Centennial Commons. These accommodations consist of 56 units of low-income housing with a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Section 8 project-based rental subsidy. Tenants contribute 30 percent of their net income towards rent, adhering to HUD and Federal Housing Administration guidelines. The Housing Authority also collaborates with the Hampden Senior Center and the Greater Springfield Senior Services to support Hampden's older adults and residents with disabilities. Additionally, these groups assist all residents, even those in non-subsidized homes, with fuel assistance, Supplementary Nutrition Assistance Program benefits, personal care attendants, and more.

Households

The average household size in Hampden has declined from 2.7 occupants in 2012 to 2.5 in 2022. In the same timeframe, the average family size in Hampden has decreased from 3 to 2.7 persons.³

Census data indicates that 76 percent of the households in the town are family households.⁴ However, the demographic shift towards an aging population and households without children suggests a need for smaller housing units. **Figure 2.2** illustrates that Hampden's share of renter households (5 percent) is less than that in abutting towns, including Wilbraham (10 percent), Somers (11 percent), and East Longmeadow (15 percent). With less than five percent of the housing stock occupied by renters, Hampden can support a more diverse array of housing solutions that would be more affordable to single-earner households, including older adults living alone, single parents, or young professionals.

Figure 2.2: Owner- vs. Renter-Occupied Households in Hampden and Abutting Towns (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S1101

Hampden's median household income (\$110,320) is higher than that of the County (\$66,619) and State (\$96,505). These variations are less severe when comparing family and non-family households, as shown in **Table 2.2**. The percentage of the population living below the poverty level in Hampden (2 percent) is significantly lower than that in the county (15 percent). However, the Town must still consider the housing and living needs of the estimated 115 residents living below the poverty level, as estimated by the Census at the municipal level, when evaluating local housing policy. This Census estimate encompasses all areas within the Town's boundaries.

Table 2.2: Median Household (HH) Income and Poverty 2022

Geography	Median HH Income	Median Family HH Income	Median Non-Family HH Income	Population Living Under the Poverty Line
Hampden	\$110,320	\$116,489	\$58,266	2.3%
Hampden County	\$66,619	\$85,009	\$37,005	15.8%
Massachusetts	\$96,505	\$122,530	\$56,588	9.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Tables S1903, S1701

The Master Plan Steering Committee and local housing officials reinforced that the Town should consider potential inaccuracies of income data. In a small town like Hampden, a few top earners can heavily skew the median, resulting in a representation of life much different than what is experienced by most residents.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP02

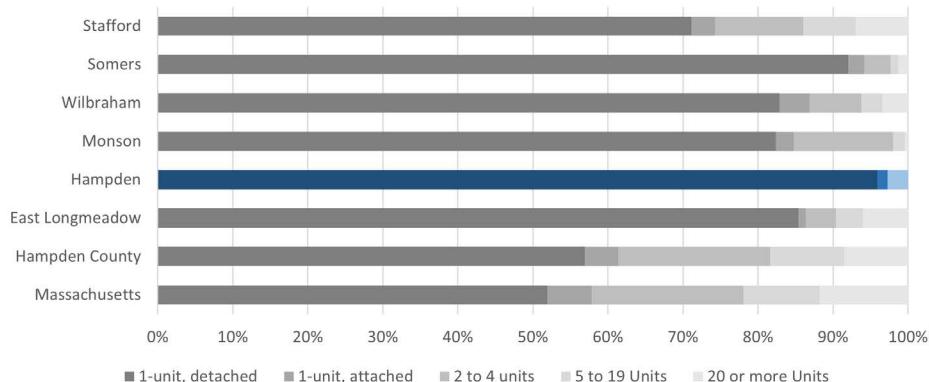
⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S2502

Hampden's Housing Inventory

Housing Typology

As of 2022, there were 2,036 housing units in Hampden, an increase from 1,912 in 2012.⁵ **Figure 2.3** illustrates that Hampden's housing stock is largely homogenous. Ninety-six percent of the town's housing inventory is one-unit detached houses, a larger proportion than the County (56 percent) and the State (51 percent).

Figure 2.3: Housing Stock by Number of Units in Structure (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04

Compared to abutting towns, Hampden has the smallest percentage of multifamily housing. White Birch Apartments provide naturally occurring affordable housing for Hampden residents. For older adults looking for affordable housing, the Centennial Commons operated by the Hampden Housing Authority are an option for those considering downsizing.

In 2022, Hampden's total housing units had a vacancy rate of approximately 3 percent or 65 housing units. This rate is lower than that of the County (7 percent) and the State (11 percent). Hampden's low vacancy rate suggests a strong demand for housing in the community and confirms residents' concerns about an increasingly competitive housing market.

When asked, "How desirable are the following types of housing?" 71 percent of 2024 Master Plan Survey respondents indicated "Freestanding single-family homes" as "Very Important." "Accessory dwelling units" (17 percent) and "Clustered Tiny Homes" (7 percent) were second and third in this ranking.

A varied range of housing options in a town—from detached single-family homes to duplexes and townhouses to apartments—is essential to meeting the needs of the different demographics in Hampden. More housing diversity would alleviate pressure on detached single-family homes, making them more accessible to first-time home buyers and supporting those looking for less expensive housing options.



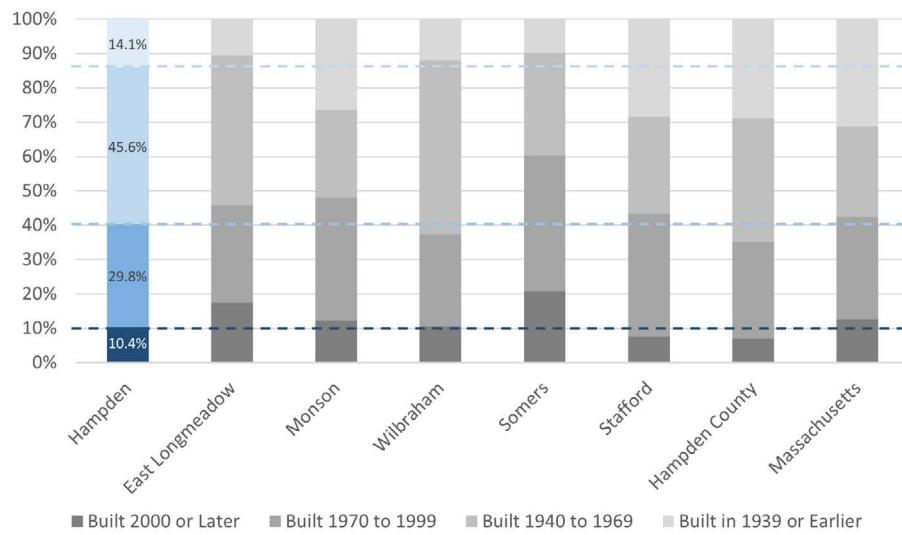
Missing middle housing provides various housing types, such as duplexes, fourplexes, and townhouses. These buildings are comparable in size to single-family homes and integrated with residential neighborhoods, supporting walkability and access to local resources and services. Image Credit: Missing Middle Housing

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table B25001

Housing Age

Compared to Hampden County, the Town of Hampden contains more newer homes than the county. However, 45 percent of Hampden's housing stock was built between 1940 and 1969, and 14 percent was built before 1940, as shown in **Figure 2.4**.

Figure 2.4: Regional Housing Stock—Year of Construction (2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04

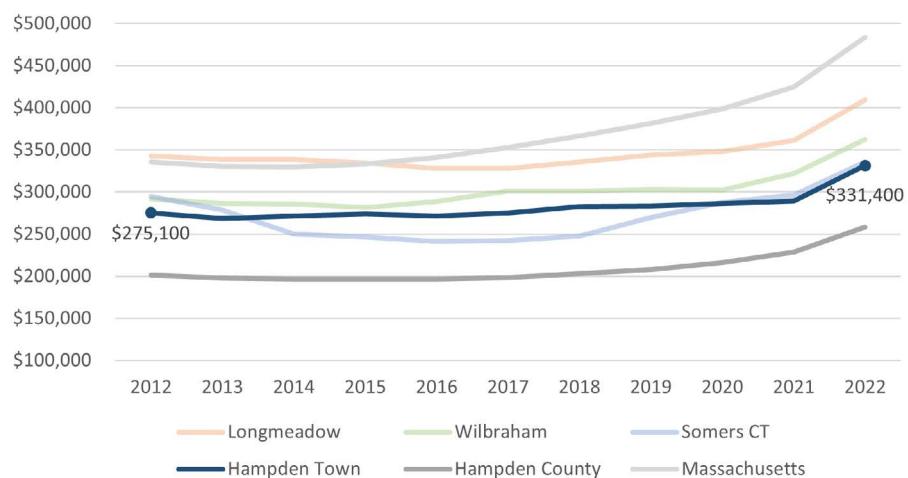
These older homes often exhibit the architectural styles and construction techniques typical of their eras but present challenges to their occupants. For example, older homes might require more maintenance and upgrades to meet modern standards for energy efficiency, safety, and accessibility. Typical issues may include outdated electrical systems, inefficient heating and cooling, plumbing repairs, roof replacements, or accessibility modifications to allow for aging in place.

Older housing stock also means that homebuyers looking to move to Hampden may not have the housing options that would be available in other communities. This has led to a housing market where renovations and remodels may be increasingly frequent for new homeowners. Renovations opportunity for personalization, allowing homeowners to infuse contemporary amenities within older structures.

Housing Values and Costs

In 2022, the estimated median home value in Hampden was \$331,400.⁶ Over the past decade, the median home value in Hampden has consistently been less than that in Longmeadow and Wilbraham, similar to Somers, Connecticut, as shown in **Figure 2.5**. Compared to the County, Hampden has a higher median home value, but it is still lower than that of the state. Overall, median home values have increased approximately 20 percent since 2012, with the most rapid increases occurring after 2020. **Figure 2.6** illustrates that as household values rise, so do household incomes. However, the median household value is increasing slightly faster (3 percent annually, on average) compared to household income (2 percent annually, on average). As with income data, it is essential to note that outliers can impact this data.

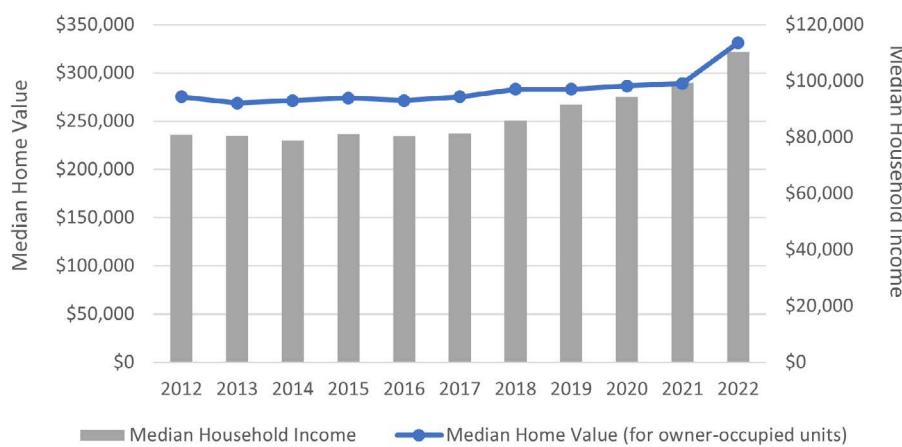
⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S1901

Figure 2.5: Median Home Value (2012-2022)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2012-2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04

Referencing monthly housing costs is essential when studying a local housing market because it provides insights into affordability, economic health, market trends, and overall quality of life. Monthly costs for homeowners with a mortgage have consistently been higher in Hampden than in the County but less than in the State.⁷ The median monthly housing costs for owners with a mortgage in 2022 was \$2,186, compared to \$1,829 for the County and \$2,553 for the State. However, Census data indicates that monthly housing costs for homeowners with a mortgage are increasing slightly, from an average of \$1,820 in 2012 to an average of \$2,143 in 2021, as shown in **Figure 2.7**.

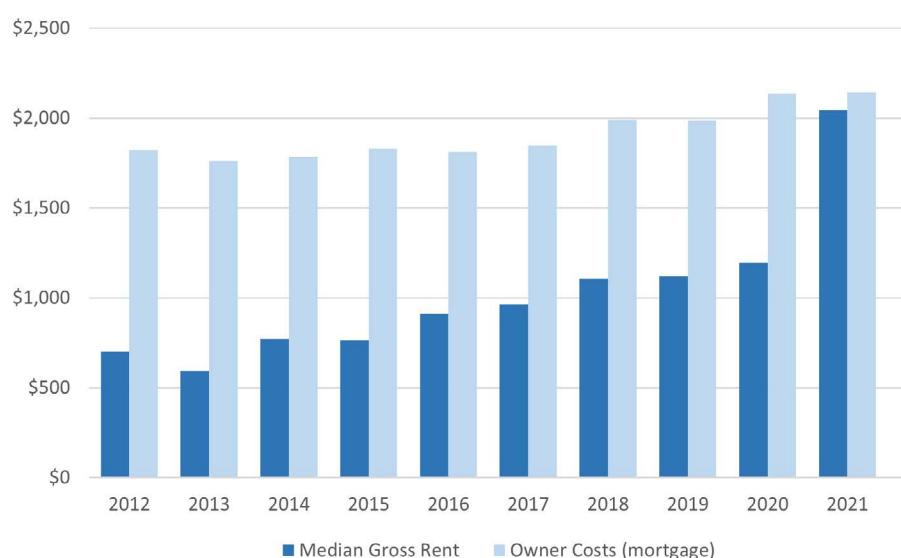
Until recently, gross rent was comparable between Hampden, the County, and the State. However, this changed in 2020, when the median monthly rent increased much faster than the median measured at the county and state levels. In 2021, the median gross rent in Hampden was \$2,045, compared to \$975 in the County and \$1,429 in the State. Median monthly housing costs for renters in Hampden grew by 191 percent from 2012 to 2021, compared to 20 percent for owners with a mortgage.

Figure 2.6: Median Home Value Compared to Median Household Income

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2012-2021). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Tables S2503, DP04

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S2506

Figure 2.7: Hampden Median Monthly Housing Costs (2012-2022)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2012-2021). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04

Cost Burden

HUD defines a household as “cost-burdened” if it spends more than 30 percent of its income on housing costs. HUD defines severely cost-burdened households as those with housing costs exceeding 50 percent of household income.⁸ These definitions frame the following analysis of affordable housing needs in Hampden.

Estimations confirmed by the Housing Authority suggest that there are approximately 66 rental households in Hampden. In 2022, half of Hampden’s rental households were cost-burdened, compared to 31 percent of owners with a mortgage paying for housing costs.⁹ Households that struggle to pay for rent may indicate financial instability and reduced quality of life, as these individuals have less disposable income for other necessities and

savings. The cost burden on residents can also negatively impact the local economy by reducing consumer spending and economic mobility while potentially worsening health outcomes due to financial stress.

Property Taxes

Hampden’s residential property tax rate has steadily declined in recent years, from \$20.15 per \$1,000 of assessed value in 2020 to \$16.87 per \$1,000 in 2023.¹⁰ The current tax rate is comparable to neighboring towns, as indicated in **Table 2.3**. Hampden has the 49th highest residential tax rate in the state and twelfth in the County.¹¹ Though residential and commercial tax rates are the same, the residential levy accounts for more than 85 percent of the town’s total levy (\$13M in 2023) compared to 15 percent contributed by commercial, industrial, and personal property taxes.

Table 2.3: Local Tax Rates (FY2023)

Town	Property Tax Rate
Monson	\$15.86
Hampden	\$16.87
Wilbraham	\$18.70
East Longmeadow	\$19.20
Somers, CT	\$27.56
Stafford, CT	\$35.78

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue; State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management

⁸ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2006). Glossary of Terms. <https://archives.hud.gov/local/nv/goodstories/2006-04-06glos.cfm>

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). Selected Housing Characteristics. American Community Survey, ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04. Retrieved December 17, 2024, from https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP5Y2022.DP04?q=Hampden_town, Massachusettsandt=Housing Units:Occupancy Characteristics.

¹⁰ Massachusetts Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services. (2023) Municipal Financial Dashboard. <https://dlsgateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Dashboard.Cat3PropTaxStat>

¹¹ State of Connecticut, Office of Policy and Management (2024). FISCAL YEAR 2014-2025 MILL RATES. <https://data.ct.gov/Local-Government/Mill-Rates-for-FY-2014-2022/emyx-j53e>

Since Hampden has 1,633 acres of residential land and only 65 acres of commercial, the tax burden falls primarily on residents. Community has expressed interest in exploring infrastructure improvements to attract small businesses and retail stores, which could diversify the tax base and alleviate some of the financial pressure on residents.

Residential Needs

Affordable Housing

The Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) is an official list maintained by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (formerly known as the Department of Housing and Community Development) that tracks all affordable housing units in the state. "Affordable housing units" are affordable to low-income households who earn no more than 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). Housing units are eligible for inclusion in the SHI if they meet specific criteria established under Chapter 40B, the state's Comprehensive Permit Law. Chapter 40B aims to increase the amount of affordable housing in communities where less than 10 percent of the housing stock is considered affordable.

In the 2024 Master Plan Survey, when asked to identify the most significant challenges to improving the quality of life in the community, 67 percent of respondents selected "Affordability" as "Very challenging" or "Somewhat challenging."

As of June 2023, Hampden had 64 units that qualified for the SHI, representing just over three percent of the total housing inventory (for reference, the state's recommendation for municipalities is ten percent). Fifty-six of these units are in Centennial Commons, others are at private locations. There are no new affordable housing projects in the pipeline for development.

Workforce Housing

Hampden lacks a sufficient supply of workforce housing. The Urban Land Institute defines "workforce housing" as housing affordable to households earning between 60 and 120 percent of the AMI. Workforce housing targets middle-income workers, including professionals such as police officers, firefighters, teachers, healthcare workers, and retail clerks. It is beneficial for towns to have municipal employees living in their communities, as this fosters a more significant investment in local governance and community well-being.

Individuals needing workforce housing may not qualify for programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit or Housing Choice Vouchers (Section 8), which primarily address the needs of lower-income families but may not be able to afford market-price housing in the area, leaving them stuck in a middle ground. This challenge may be particularly relevant for first-time homebuyers or young professionals. Supporting regulatory changes to diversify the housing stock could address the needs of households seeking workforce housing.

Senior Housing

As emphasized in the 2014 Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Plan, older adults will continue to grow as a segment of the region's population. The housing needs of this population will be a crucial conversation in many suburban and rural towns as they try to adapt the existing housing stock or construct new units to meet the demands of the population group. Senior housing can take various forms, including nursing homes, assisted living residences, continuing care communities, public housing, and age-restricted or independent living developments (55+ housing, for example). It is also within the Town's best interest to have age-friendly housing in different places to allow individuals to live close to their families, friends, and amenities.

¹² Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities. (2020 October). Housing Production Plan Section II. B of "MG.L. c. 40B Comprehensive Permit /Projects Subsidized Housing Inventory." GUIDELINES. Retrieved September 24, 2024 from <https://www.mass.gov/doc/housing-production-plan-guidelines/download>

The Pioneer Valley has various government and non-profit organizations that support older adults needing housing and related services, including Highland Valley Elder Services¹³ (Florence) and Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. (Springfield).¹⁴

Challenges to Development or Preservation

Environmental features, infrastructure limitations, and the desire to preserve Hampden's rural character impact the community's housing stock. These factors directly impact housing policy and residents' development preferences, providing a lens through which to plan future residential construction or redevelopment.

Infrastructural Limitations

Available infrastructure plays a significant role in Hampden's housing production. Hampden does not have a municipal wastewater system, meaning new development must comply with the state's Title 5 regulations. These regulations dictate the design, installation, and maintenance standards for septic systems, and complying with these standards often requires additional land compared to constructing the same development with a sewer connection.

Environmental Factors

Environmental constraints in Hampden restrict the amount of land available for potential development and can substantially increase the costs associated with new housing projects.

In the western half of town, wetlands pose development constraints and serve as critical habitat for native species. The Scantic River and other streams flowing through the town have buffer zones where development is limited or prohibited to protect watersheds. Many forested, protected open spaces and outdoor areas, such as the Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, also have restrictions for development.

The eastern half of the town has mountainous terrain, as detailed further in **Chapter 1, Land Use**, which makes it challenging to prepare land for construction and increases the cost of new development.

Preserving the Town's Character

Public sentiment can influence policy decisions, approval processes, funding allocations, and long-term planning, shape local housing policy, and impact development opportunities. Effective engagement with residents and responsiveness to their concerns is essential for creating housing policies that meet local needs and foster community support and cohesion.

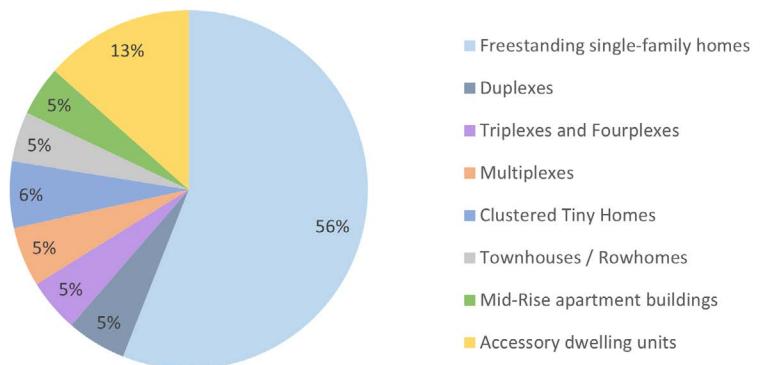
Conversations with stakeholders and responses to the 2024 Master Plan public survey indicate that the preservation of natural landscapes is a top concern for many residents. As a result, local zoning prioritizes the development of single-family homes and duplexes over multifamily apartments.

Residents identified Hampden's natural and scenic areas as the top factor, making it a great place to live, with 74 percent of respondents expressing this sentiment. Additionally, residents who provided written responses highlighted the privacy afforded by large lots, the town's tranquility, and the charm of small-town living as critical aspects of what they love about Hampden.

Regarding the most significant challenges to improving the quality of life in Hampden, 71 voted that affordability was an issue (the top choice), and 50 said that finding the proper housing was an issue. When asked about the most needed type of real estate development in Hampden, the top response (148 responses) was that minimal development was best. **Figure 2.8** illustrates that residents are most interested in single-family detached homes and least interested in multifamily options, driven by the desire to preserve the town's character.

¹³ Highland Valley Elder Services. (2024) Home. <https://highlandvalley.org/>

¹⁴ Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. (2024) Home. <https://www.gsssi.org/>

Figure 2.8: Residents' Preference for Different Housing Styles*

Source: 2024 Master Plan Survey

*This figure represents the number of survey respondents that marked the respective residential typology as "Very Important" when asked "How desirable are the following types of housing?"

Regulatory Constraints

Most of the land in Hampden is used for single-family residential purposes. While one multifamily district permits denser housing development, the zoning bylaws are generally restrictive and limit the potential for increasing the housing supply. Even in areas where multifamily housing would be appropriate, regulatory constraints prevent such developments. **Chapter 1, Land Use**, includes further discussion regarding regulatory constraints.

Opportunities to Bridge the Gap

Despite the challenges persisting in Hampden, there are opportunities to create or preserve housing in the community.

Vacant Sites and Redevelopment Opportunities

A few privately owned vacant or underutilized properties in the Business zoning district, like 16 Somers Road, could support future residential or mixed-use development if rezoned. None of the properties currently owned by the Town appear suitable for housing development. More dense housing typologies of interest to residents include clustered tiny homes or three- to four-unit apartment buildings. Read more about development opportunities in Hampden in **Chapter 1, Land Use**.

Community Engagement

Community engagement helps identify residents' needs, builds public support for housing initiatives, and ensures tailored, localized solutions that align with community values. The 2024 Master Plan Survey scratched the surface of housing preferences, but further public information sessions and data collection could strengthen not only the Town's understanding of housing preferences but also the community's appetite for housing preservation or development. A few engagement strategies the Town may consider include scenario planning workshops, public meetings, or an online survey. The best approach would be to do so as part of a Housing Production Plan, which Hampden currently lacks.

Strategic Partnerships

County and State housing partners support housing education, affordability, redevelopment, and preservation. The following are just a few resources and partnerships for the Town to explore.

- ◆ Planning
 - ◆ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (Springfield)
 - ◆ Massachusetts Housing Partnership (Boston)
 - ◆ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Boston)
- ◆ Funding
 - ◆ Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (Boston)
 - ◆ Massachusetts Housing Partnership (Boston)
- ◆ Development and Preservation
 - ◆ Pioneer Valley Habitat for Humanity (Florence)
 - ◆ Way Finders (Springfield)
 - ◆ Valley Community Development Corporation (Northampton)
- ◆ Policy and Public Education
 - ◆ Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (Boston)
 - ◆ Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (Boston)

2 Housing Goals and Actions

2 Housing

Goal 2-1

Perform targeted planning efforts to support accessible housing development.

Action 2-1.1

Hire a consultant to develop a Housing Production Plan to better understand the current and future housing needs of the population and create a schedule for housing production or maintenance and maintain a degree of control over future Chapter 40B projects.

Action 2-1.2

Review the Zoning Bylaw to ensure zoning requirements prioritize residents' desired development. Example recommendations include the following.

- a. Permit the construction of ADUs on existing residential properties by right
- b. Consider Smart Growth Zoning Overlay (40R) districts and conservation focused zoning to preserve open space areas, ensuring denser development in desired areas with limited sprawl.
- c. Include incentives for cluster development or higher-density development.

Action 2-1.3

Establish a Housing Committee comprising Selectboard, Planning Board, Council on Aging, Board of Assessors, and Building Department members to assess housing conditions, support residents' housing needs, and provide data-driven support for maintaining Hampden's housing stock.

Goal 2-2

Develop a basis of understanding to support long-term housing stability.

Action 2-2.1

Develop and distribute a survey to residents to gather information on housing challenges, maintenance concerns, accessibility needs, and long-term housing preferences to guide local decision-making.

Action 2-2.2

Create a publicly accessible dashboard or annual report that tracks key housing metrics, including housing conditions, occupancy trends, and resident needs, to inform future planning efforts.

Action 2-2.3

Aim to send at least one representative of the Planning Board to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Housing Institute Summit annually to keep up to date with current state and local housing policy and funding opportunities.

Goal 2-3

Tap into state and/or federal developer, homeowner, or rental assistance programs.

Action 2-3.1

Publicize rental assistance, fuel assistance, and/or minor home repair assistance programs, including USDA programs to support existing residents (e.g., 504 Home Repair Program, 515 Mortgage Program, 521 Rental Assistance, and Community Development Block Grant).

Action 2-3.2

Raise awareness among residents about programs available for retrofitting older homes to improve health and energy efficiency.

Action 2-3.3

Promote state and federal programs that provide financial assistance for aging homeowners to modify their homes for accessibility and safety, enabling residents to age in place comfortably and maintain their independence as they grow older.

3

Economic Development

Economic Development, will focus on Hampden's regional and local economic landscape, balancing economic growth with preserving the town's scale and character. Drawing on data from the U.S. Census and Esri, the analysis will provide a comprehensive understanding of the economic factors at play, laying the groundwork for informed decision-making and sustainable growth.



Baseline Conditions Analyses

Regional Context

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission represents 43 cities and towns, including Hampden, and conducts research that provides insights into regional trends affecting local businesses and the workforce. The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy highlights the region's strong healthcare sector and support for small businesses in arts, agriculture, technology, and personal services, with potential rail expansion from Boston enhancing these strengths. However, challenges such as social and economic segregation, deteriorating public infrastructure, uneven school funding, and inadequate public transportation persist.

According to the Massachusetts Higher Education Consortium Workforce Board (MHCWB), the top industries in Hampden County are healthcare and social assistance, educational services, retail trade, transportation and warehousing, and accommodation and food services. Hampden's workforce reflects this trend, with 26 percent of working residents employed in the education and healthcare sectors.¹ The region faces additional challenges, including an aging workforce, stagnant population growth, and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have accelerated the use of digital tools and remote work.

Growth opportunities lie in collaboration between businesses, educational institutions, and workforce development agencies. The MHCWB has invested in Pre-Apprenticeship and Registered Apprenticeship programs. Expanded Chapter 74 programming will also renew the focus on vocational-technical high schools as the preferred venue for continuing education. MHCWB's Strategic Plan emphasizes supporting the emerging workforce (i.e., youth aged 14-24), the transitional workforce (i.e., unemployed or underemployed individuals), and the incumbent workforce (i.e., employed workers needing further education and training).

Local Demographic Trends

Population

Between the end of World War II and 1970, the population of Hampden more than quadrupled in size, from 1,100 residents to approximately 4,600 by 1970, after which population growth slowed. The population continued to grow, albeit more incrementally, until 2018, when the population began to decline.² According to 2022 Census data, Hampden currently has approximately 5,000 people.³ Projections from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council estimate that this number will continue to decrease slowly in the coming decades.

As in many communities statewide, older adults comprise an increasing share of Hampden's population. From 2012 to 2022, the percentage of Hampden's population over 65 increased from 19 to 28 percent, a rate more than twice as fast as that of the County and State.⁴ While Hampden's population of older adults expands, the number of residents within the workforce-age population is decreasing. In 2022, Hampden's estimated civilian labor force was 2,693 (61 percent of the population age 16 and older), down from 3,065 (71 percent of the population 16 years and older) in 2012.

With these considerations in mind, employment opportunities continue to exist in the town and region. The rising demand for senior support services and lifestyle amenities will create opportunities for small businesses and new jobs in Hampden. Small business qualifications are determined by industry and can be measured by the U.S. Small Business Administration's Size Standards Tool.⁵

Educational Attainment

Education trends in Hampden reveal a community that values education and actively works to improve access and outcomes at all levels. As shown in **Table 3.1**, more adults in Hampden have graduated high school (98 percent of adults over 25 years old)

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP03

² U.S. Census Bureau (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05

³ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP05

⁵ U.S. Small Business Administration. (n.d.). Size standards tool. U.S. Small Business Administration.

compared to the County and State (87 percent and 91 percent, respectively). However, fewer adults have acquired a bachelor's degree or higher when compared to the State.

Table 3.1: Educational Attainment

	Town of Hampden % of Adults over 25	Hampden County % of Adults over 25	Massachusetts % of Adults over 25
High school graduate or higher	97.5	86.8	91.4
Bachelor's degree or higher	36.4	28.8	47.8
Graduate or professional degree	16.1	12.1	22.4

Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S1501

Municipal and local school staff have supported enhanced collaboration and programming between the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District and nearby vocational-technical schools like Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School, and Springfield Technical Community College. Joint efforts to tailor programs and outreach to residents can support the emerging workforce.

Income

Considering household income in Hampden's economic development strategy is crucial because higher household incomes stimulate consumer spending, attract skilled workers, and increase tax revenue, thereby supporting a diverse economic base and more significant employment. Although Hampden is relatively high-income, it is essential to support affordable households, including measures for housing affordability to ensure an inclusive and sustainable local economy.

Apart from Wilbraham, Hampden has a higher median household income (\$110,320) than the abutting towns of Somers, Stafford, East Longmeadow, and Monson. In 2022, Hampden's median household income was almost twice that of Hampden County (\$66,619). Approximately 34 percent of households in Hampden earn at least \$150,000 annually, and 14 percent earn at least \$200,000.⁵

Hampden's poverty rate, at an estimated 2.3 percent of residents living below the poverty line in 2022, is lower than that of the county (18 percent) and state (10 percent).⁶

Employment and Business

Hampden has a high employment rate, with most eligible adults participating in the workforce. Seasonal factors and broader economic conditions influence periodic fluctuations in employment and unemployment rates. One such disruption occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to higher unemployment in the state- and nationwide.

According to the latest employment data, published in July 2024, Hampden's unemployment rate (3.6 percent) is comparable to neighboring towns, including Somers (3 percent), Stafford (3.4 percent), East Longmeadow (3.8 percent), Wilbraham (4 percent), and Monson (4.8 percent).^{7,8} Hampden's unemployment rate is currently lower than that of the County (5.8 percent) and State (4.6 percent).

Key Employment Sectors

Local employment data reveals the local workforce is shifting from transportation, warehousing, information, education, health, arts, finance, real estate, and professional and scientific services to construction, manufacturing, and retail trade. The share of Hampden residents working in these industries grew from 24 percent in 2010 to 37 percent in 2022. Public administration work saw a 56 percent increase, from 5 percent in 2010 to 9 percent in 2022. Over the same period, the percentage of

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S2503

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S1701

⁷ Massachusetts Department of Economic Research. (July 2024). Labor Force, Employment and Unemployment: Massachusetts and Cities and Towns. Retrieved September 20, 2024 from <https://lmi.dua.eol.mass.gov/lmi/LaborForceAndUnemployment/TownComparison>

⁸ Connecticut Department of Labor. (July 2024). Current Labor Force Data for Connecticut Towns (LAUS) - State of Connecticut. Retrieved September 20, 2024 from <https://www1.ctdol.state.ct.us/lmi/LAUS/lmi123.asp>

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP03

Hampden residents working in transportation and warehousing, utilities, finance and insurance, real estate, and rental leasing decreased from 18 percent to 9 percent.⁹

Table 3.2 shows current employment by sector in Hampden. The service industry is the largest (both in number of businesses and employees), followed by construction and retail trade.

Table 3.2: Employment by Sector: Number of Businesses and Employees

	Businesses		Employees	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Services	51	31.7	397	40.5
Construction	31	19.3	96	9.8
Retail Trade	26	16.1	217	22.1
Agriculture and Mining	12	7.5	57	5.8
Government	12	7.5	92	9.4
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate	11	6.8	35	3.6
Utility	5	3.1	33	3.4
Wholesale Trade	5	3.1	29	3.0
Manufacturing	3	1.9	10	1.0
Unclassified Establishments	3	1.9	3	.3
Transportation	2	1.2	12	1.2
Communication	0	0.0	0	0.0
Totals	161	100.0	981	100.0

Source: Esri. (2024). Business Summary: Hampden town, MA. Retrieved September 2024.

Local Businesses

Hampden has approximately 161 businesses, according to data from Data Axle and Esri¹⁰. GreatHorse, Green Meadows Elementary School, and Rediker Software are the three largest employers.

Home occupation businesses operate in Hampden, although an exact number is not readily available. **Table 3.3** outlines other top employers by employee count.

Table 3.3: Top Employment Centers in Hampden

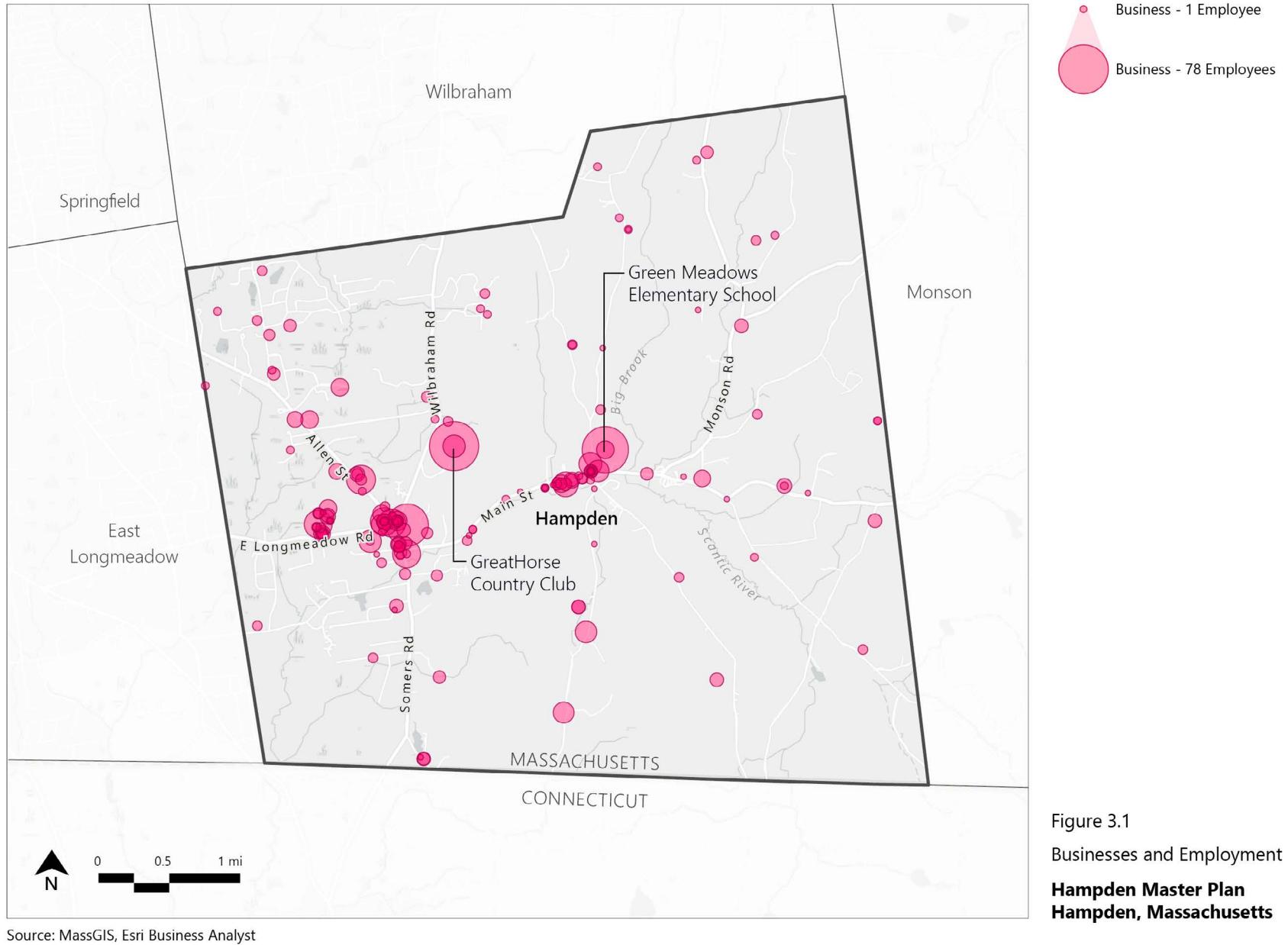
Employer	Number of Employees	Sector Description
GreatHorse	94	Public Golf Course
Green Meadows Elementary School	69	Elementary and Secondary Schools
Rediker Software	57	Computer Programming Services
Hampden Police Department	27	Police Protection
Village Food Mart IGA	25	Grocery Stores
Dunkin'	25	Retail Bakeries
La Cucina Di Hampden House	25	Eating Places
Stained Glass Resources Inc.	25	Paint, glass, Wallpaper Stores

Source: Esri. (2024). Business Summary: Hampden town, MA. Retrieved September 2024.

As depicted in **Figure 3.1**, most businesses in Hampden are small, employing less than 10 people apiece. Community members have expressed interest in growing the town's community of unplugged businesses (e.g., farmers markets) and small businesses.



¹⁰ Esri. (2024). Business Summary: Hampden town, MA. Retrieved September 2024. Village Food Mart (Photo Credit: VHB)



Regarding where Hampden fits into the regional economy, stakeholders described the town as a "cut-through" town rather than a "destination." Residents of neighboring communities come to Hampden primarily for its restaurants, GreatHorse Country Club, or to visit Memorial Park. Few other locations were noted as key tourist attractions.

Representatives interviewed as part of the public outreach for this plan noted that Hampden's primary economic development opportunities include improving the marketing of existing recreational opportunities, expanding hiking trails and open space, and revitalizing Main Street. Additionally, the Town and regional economic stakeholders should prioritize attracting suitable businesses, such as a pharmacy or an outdoor equipment store.

In addition to supporting smaller businesses, the community should continue exploring avenues for attracting larger employers that support start-up hubs or artist spaces that align with its values. New businesses would relieve pressure on residential taxpayers and generate local capital for local infrastructure and amenities investments. Further, the Town should collaborate with any businesses looking to come to Hampden to ensure new development and programming are mindful of residents wants and needs as well as market capacity.

Community events, such as the Memorial Day parade in May, and the Fall Fest in October, also spark economic activity. These events provide great exposure for both local and regional businesses.

Commuting

In 2021, the number of people who commuted out of Hampden for employment was greater than the combined number of people who commuted to Hampden for work and people who both lived and worked in Hampden.¹¹ Among the employed residents of Hampden, 95 percent commuted to work via car, truck, or van in 2022, and eight percent of those commuters carpooled. Five percent of residents worked from home. The mean travel time to work for residents was 27 minutes, and 12 percent worked outside of Massachusetts.¹²

Hampden needs to maintain safe and appealing roadways as a predominantly vehicle-dependent community. To maximize community resources and benefit the greatest number of residents, Hampden should invest in multimodal infrastructure that supports non-vehicular travel options, such as sidewalks for shorter trips and bicycle lanes for both short—and long-distance travel. Additionally, the Town could work with the regional transit provider, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, to discuss the feasibility of a bus stop in Hampden.

Read more about multi-modality and public transit in **Chapter 8, Transportation and Mobility**.

Commercial Tax Base

Hampden benefits from a stable and uniform tax rate across commercial, industrial, and residential properties, a strategic location near Springfield, and strong community engagement, enhancing its commercial tax base. Despite having a modest commercial tax base (\$16.87 per \$1,000 of assessed value, as of 2023), with small businesses and local service providers contributing 15 percent of the total tax levy (\$13 million in 2023),

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Economic Studies, LEHD. (2024). OnTheMap. <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

¹² U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table S0801

the local economy faces challenges like fluctuating tax bills due to rising property values and a smaller population that may constrain business growth.

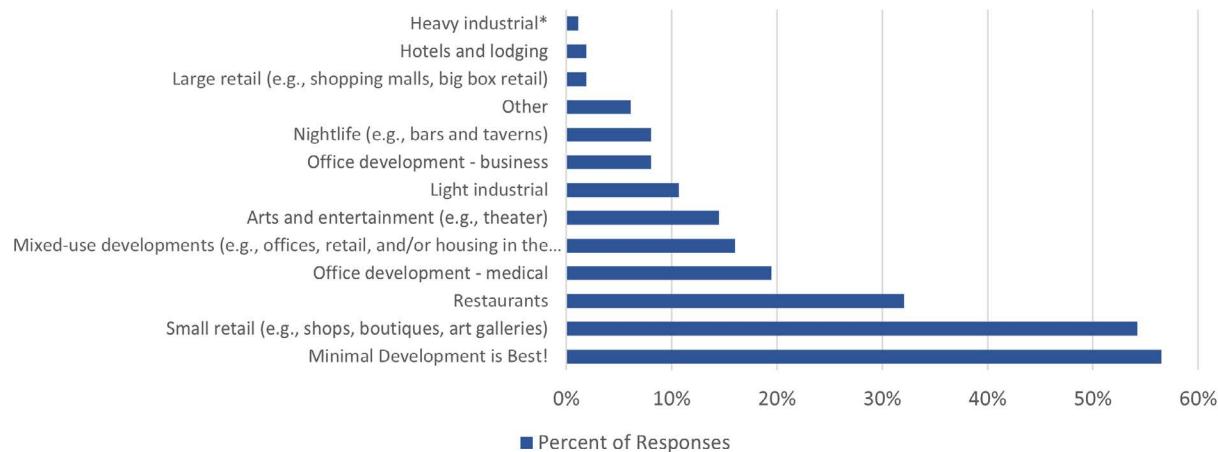
National Grid is the largest commercial taxpayer in Hampden, followed by GreatHorse. The service sector, including educational facilities, healthcare institutions, entertainment venues, and personal services, is a substantial part of the commercial landscape.

Hampden could improve its positioning as a business-friendly community by expanding necessary infrastructure (specifically water and sewer) and encouraging the redevelopment of vacant or underutilized properties.

Development Opportunities

Hampden's residents wish to preserve the existing balance of residential and economic development, prioritizing development that directly addresses residents' needs. As illustrated in **Figure 3.2**, the 2024 Master Plan public survey respondents identified limited development and small retail as the type of real estate development needed in Hampden.

Figure 3.2: Desired Development Types in Hampden



Source: 2024 Master Plan Survey

However, deliberate and mindful development or revitalization of underutilized properties could benefit Hampden by providing commercial revenue, supplying residents with additional goods or services, and bringing jobs to the town. Several specific sites in Hampden offer opportunities to enhance the town's economic vitality, each with distinct characteristics and potential uses. Some locations are ideal for residential development, while others are better for commercial purposes. Similarly, some sites are largely vacant and ready for new construction, while others are already developed but hold potential for redevelopment that better fits surrounding land uses.

Opportunity sites for business development include the vacant Cumberland Farms site, 16 Somers Road, and 2 Somers Road, all in the Business zoning district. Read more about other redevelopment opportunities in Chapter 1, Land Use.

Economic Development Roundtable

On August 21, 2024, as part of the development of this Master Plan, project planners facilitated an economic roundtable discussion that included participation from the East of the River Five Town Chamber of Commerce (ERC5), Right Coast Creative, Waste Services, Affordable Waste Solutions, Monson Savings Bank, and a couple of Hampden residents. Key considerations emerging from that conversation included a desire for the Town to:

- ◆ Enhance visibility of Hampden as a destination rather than a pass-through area
- ◆ Invest in marketing and developing additional recreational amenities like hiking and biking trails to boost eco-tourism
- ◆ Encourage additional small businesses to come to Hampden to draw in visitors and support the local economy
- ◆ Attract more families that could refresh the town's workforce and stabilize school enrollment
- ◆ Investigate new housing typologies like clustered tiny homes and smaller apartment buildings that fit with the architectural style of Hampden
- ◆ Strengthen local and regional economic ties by leveraging partnerships with organizations and institutions like ERC5 and Monson Savings Bank

- ◆ Redevelop or revitalize vacant sites including Cumberland Farms gas station, 16 Somers Road, 2 Somers Road, the Thornton Burgess School, and potentially the Public Library if the existing Library moves spaces
- ◆ Address missing business elements like co-working and incubator spaces, a pharmacy, and a store for outdoor recreation gear
- ◆ Continue to invest in, support, and promote community events that provide revenue for local business, including Fall Fest and the Memorial Day parade.
- ◆ Support future development by exploring the feasibility of sewer services (e.g., extending current services from Springfield into the town) and increased water supplies (e.g., sourcing from the Quabbin Reservoir)

The Town should endeavor to improve business visibility, provide supportive services for commercial properties, and revitalize vacant and underutilized properties with uses that fulfill residents' needs.

3 Economic Development Goals and Actions

Goal 3-1

Revitalize the Town's primary economic hubs and corridors, including Main Street.

Action 3-1.1

Encourage mixed-use development that could support small-scale businesses, artist spaces, restaurants, and more. Consider implementing a Tax Increment Financing district or Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay.

Action 3-1.2

Develop a guide regarding starting and conducting business in Hampden to attract emerging businesses, including navigation of permitting and licensing processes.

Action 3-1.3

Create a strategic plan for Main Street and other existing business corridors. Pursue grants to support Main Street Revitalization efforts.

Goal 3-2

Facilitate workforce development and employment opportunities.

Action 3-2.1

Adopt a bylaw to regulate vacant commercial properties that create a monetary disincentive for owning such properties without the legitimate pursuit of sale or lease.

Action 3-2.2

Strengthen the partnership with ERC5 to understand the region's business appetite and best practices for business development.

Action 3-2.3

Conduct a market study to determine the viability of creating a coworking or business incubator space on vacant or underutilized property.

Goal 3-3

Promote civic engagement, pride, and sense of identity by creating a Town brand.

Action 3-3.1

Promote civic engagement and educational partnerships by creating town internship opportunities and collaborations between schools, including the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District and nearby vocational-technical schools.

Action 3-3.2

Create an "Explore Hampden" webpage, defining Hampden's unique assets and economic activities (e.g., historical landmarks, open spaces, recreational amenities, educational institutions, local businesses and events, etc.), and promote these through multiple channels.

Action 3-3.3

Allocate Community Preservation Act funds for projects enhancing public spaces and town aesthetics, including landscaping, pocket parks, public art, and gathering spaces, targeting areas lacking public parks, and expanding Town-owned open spaces.

Historic and Cultural Resources, assesses Hampden's historic resources, cultural opportunities, and critical steps and identifies relevant stakeholders, state and regional partners, and programs. Opportunities include strengthening the Historic Commission's role, the Town's inventory of historic properties, and expanding and strengthening the presence of Hampden's historic and cultural organizations

4 Historic and Cultural Resources



Baseline Conditions Analyses

Hampden's Historic and Cultural Resources

Massachusetts Historical Commission Records and Inventory

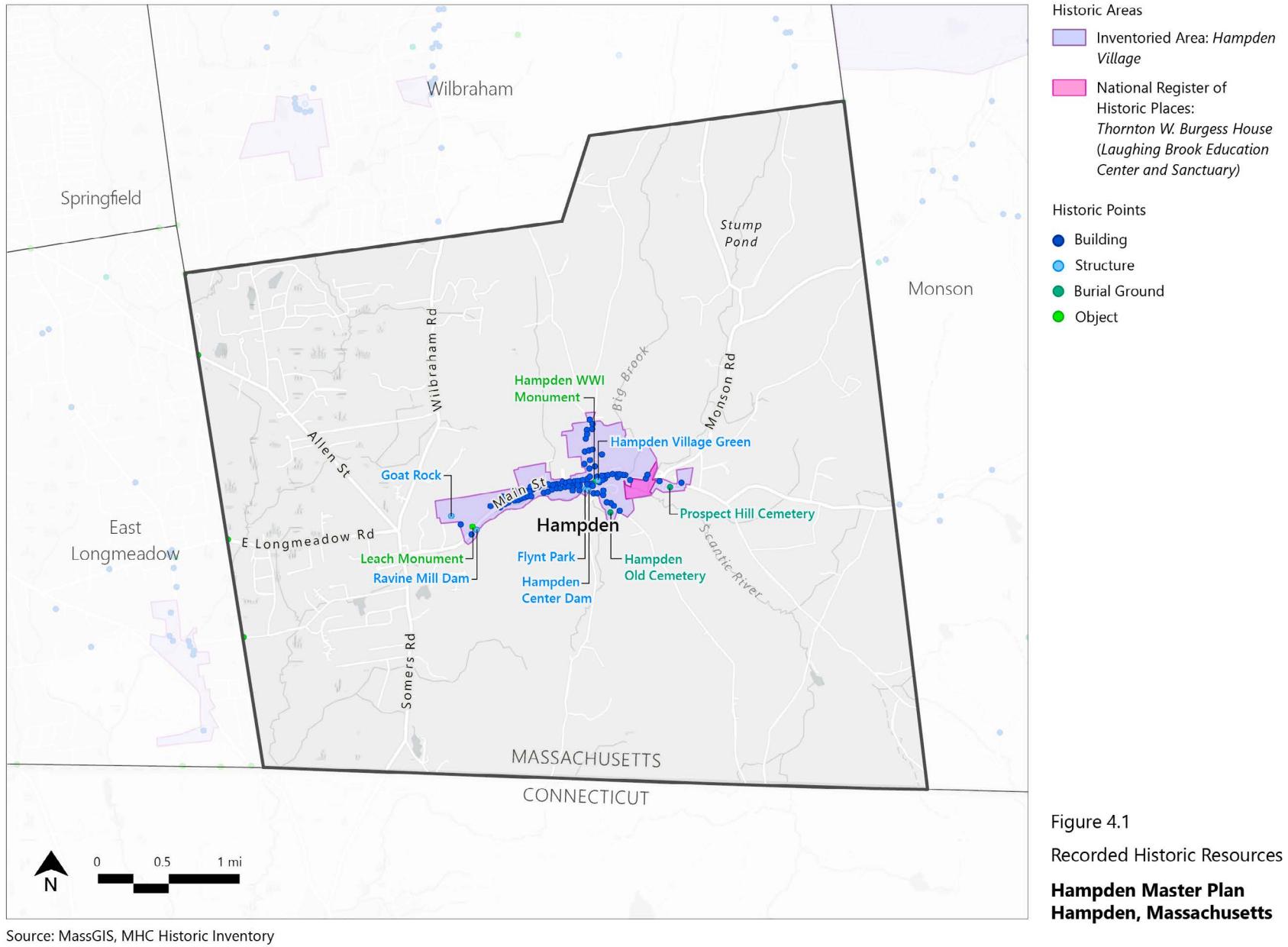
The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) maintains a database of inventory forms for historic resources called the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). Public entities or private citizens may submit these forms. Though these inventoried properties are of note, only a few are officially designated by listing them in National or State Registers of Historic Places, which is a long-term process.

MACRIS includes 116 inventoried properties in Hampden, all within the Hampden Village (HMP.B) area, which covers the central portion of town along Main Street, lower Scantic, Chapin and North Roads. The properties inventoried within the Hampden Village area encompass a range of architectural styles and building types and are associated with many of Hampden's historical trends. Some of the varied historic properties inventoried within this area include the following.

- ◆ Academy Hall (HMP.67)
- ◆ Hampden Federated Community Church (HMP.62)
- ◆ West-Thresher House, 685 Main Street (HMP.78)
- ◆ Tillotson-Thresher House, 650 Main Street (HMP.71)
- ◆ Old Cemetery (HMP.800)
- ◆ Hampden Town House (HMP. 70)

A notable section of properties within the Hampden Village area is the "Scripter Houses" along Main Street in the western portion of the area. Named for their association with the manufacturer Eleazer Scripter (1805-1890), the row of Gothic Revival-style houses is one of Hampden's most prominent architectural features.

One property within the Hampden Village area, the Thornton W. Burgess House, its 3 outbuildings (T.W. Burgess original studio, H. Cady studio, and the barn) and 18 surrounding acres is listed on the National Register of Historic Places., The Thornton W. Burgess House (HMP.2) and the Thornton W. Burgess Summer Studio (HMP.3), are also listed on the National Register as part of the Laughing Brook Education Center and Sanctuary (HMP.A) District. The House and Studio are known for their tie to renowned conservationist and children's author Thornton W. Burgess (1874-1956). Today, the property is part of the 369-acre Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, owned and operated by the Massachusetts Audubon Society.



Hampden's Historical and Cultural Entities and Events

Hampden Historic Commission (M.G.L. Chapter 40 s. 8D)

The Hampden Historical Commission (HHC) is mandated to promote the "preservation of the tangible evidence of the architectural history of Hampden and communicating that knowledge to the public." In recent years, a lack of voluntary commissioners has hampered the HHC; despite this challenge, the HHC has completed important initiatives, including the following.

- ◆ Using both public (CPA) and private funds, initiated the award winning "Adopt a Plot" program to restore Old Cemetery with widespread community participation in cleaning and resetting gravestones
- ◆ Produced six exhibits on the towns cemeteries in conjunction with the Hampden Library
- ◆ Researched and produced 5 papers on the towns cemeteries including Veterans, Black History, Children and Young People.
- ◆ Obtained Town Meeting approval, by a near unanimous vote, to allocate CPA funds to research the Hampden Village area for submittal as a National Register District
- ◆ Investigated the history of Hampdens enslaved and free African American residents; and,
- ◆ Studied the creation of a National Register District encompassing part of the Hampden Village area.

While reference is made in Hampden's Town Bylaws and Zoning Bylaws to the protection of historic resources and coordination with the HHC on private development projects and municipal activities, there are currently no documented bylaws specific to the HHC.

Hampden Community Preservation Act Committee

In 2001, Hampden was one of the first towns to adopt the CPA in 2001, placing a 1 percent surcharge on property taxes to fund recreational, community open space, historic preservation, and affordable housing projects. Since its formation, Hampden's CPAC has approved nearly 50 such projects. In addition to the preservation-related projects discussed above, recently funded initiatives include the following.

- ◆ \$2,560 to repair and restore 20 pieces of original oak furniture in the Public Library.
- ◆ \$9,250 to clean and restore the World War I memorial statue located on the Village Green.
- ◆ \$4,350 to support the preservation and digitization of vital town records.
- ◆ \$3,000 to support the preservation and digitization of the Public Library's local history collection.

Hampden Cultural Council

As the local council representative of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Hampden Cultural Council administers and distributes grants for various projects. The Massachusetts Cultural Council and Town appropriation provides funding for the grant program.

Events and organizations funded by the HCC include the following.

- ◆ Hampden Senior Center
- ◆ Hampden Public Library
- ◆ Concerts by local artists and musical groups including the Bad News Jazz and Blues Orchestra and the Old Post Road Orchestra

Hampden Historical Society

Hampden Historical Society is a volunteer-led non-profit that preserves the town's historical artifacts and documents. Its donated artifacts include diaries, photographs, paintings, maps, furniture, and other memorabilia, reminding us of the people who lived and worked in the buildings, streetscapes, and landscapes we see today. In addition to its materials collections, the organization operates a public museum in Academy Hall. It hosts community events, including talks by local authors, lectures on historical events and industries, and engaging the community's youth in local history.

Hampden Free Public Library

The 1932 Town House on Main Street across from the Village Green houses the popular Hampden Free Public Library. A local history collection includes municipal records, local history books, and memorabilia. The Library's staff offers a robust and varied set of public programs, including but not limited to the following.

- ◆ Pathways for Parents, providing support to expecting and new parents;
- ◆ Adult and youth book clubs;
- ◆ Youth story and play times; and
- ◆ Yoga and meditation classes.



Hampden Free Public Library (Photo Credit: VHB)

Hampden Garden Club

Organized in 1932, the nearly 100-year-old Hampden Garden Club is a volunteer-led group that supports the beautifying of Hampden's roads and public spaces. The Club's community programming includes an annual plant sale, garden tours, gardening events at spaces throughout the town, and lectures. In recent years, the club has planted over 20,000 daffodils along the town's roads and around public buildings.

State and Regional Partners, Programs, and Resources

In addition to local groups, several state and regional partners have programs and services that can help preserve, promote, and celebrate Hampden's heritage.

Massachusetts Historical Commission

The MHC is a statewide commission chaired by the Secretary of State, established "to identify, evaluate, and protect important historical and archaeological assets of the Commonwealth" (M.G.L. Ch. 9 Sections 26-27D). The name also applies to the State Historic Preservation Office, comprising the State Historic Preservation Officer, State Archaeologist, and professional staff who support the commission. The MHC has three divisions.

- ◆ **Preservation Planning**

Assists and supports local entities with survey and inventory initiatives, National and State Register nominations, and local historic designations.

- ◆ **Grants**

Administers federal grants-in-aid and state matching grants for preservation activities.

- ◆ Survey and Planning Grants

- ◆ Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF)

- ◆ Preservation Restrictions

- ◆ **Technical Services**

Oversees historic review and compliance processes, including Section 106 and State Register Review.

Preservation Massachusetts

Preservation Massachusetts is the statewide preservation advocacy organization in the Commonwealth, promoting local preservation on the state level through lobbying efforts, educational offerings, and services. Of note are the following.

- ◆ **Circuit Rider Program**

These part-time staff members work directly with communities as a resource for preservation projects, development planning, and local issues.

- ◆ **Preservation Action Center**

This webpage gathers years of Preservation Massachusetts experience into one centralized library, covering technical topics, funding questions, project models, and toolkits for local preservation efforts.

- ◆ **Local Commission Resource Library**

In cooperation with the MHC's Director of Local Government Programs, Preservation Massachusetts has recently added a webpage with resources specifically geared to the needs and questions of local historical commissions.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

Among its services, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission has historic preservation planning staff to assist its member communities with resource surveys, preservation plans, and other arts and culture planning initiatives.

Massachusetts Cultural Council

As a state agency, the Massachusetts Cultural Council promotes arts, humanities, and sciences throughout Massachusetts, often through local commission partners such as the Hampden Cultural Council.

In partnership with MassDevelopment, the Massachusetts Cultural Council manages the Cultural Facilities Fund, which provides grants to support the acquisition, design, repair, rehabilitation, renovation, expansion, or construction of nonprofit cultural facilities. Many of these facilities utilize vacant historic buildings as studios, galleries, classrooms, and shop spaces.

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Pioneer Valley History Network

The Pioneer Valley History Network (PVHN) is a non-profit consortium of historical organizations in Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties, with a mission to “promote and provide effective communication and collaboration” among member organizations to strengthen public awareness and support of their collections and programming. PVHN provides centralized access to repositories and helps facilitate collaborative projects researching historical topics relevant and important to the Pioneer Valley.¹

University of Massachusetts Amherst Public History Program

Established in 1986, the University of Massachusetts Amherst Public History Program (UMass Amherst PHP) is one of the oldest public history programs in the country. The Program supports undergraduate and graduate internships with local historical organizations such as the Emily Dickinson Museum, Old Sturbridge Village, and Historic Deerfield on projects including oral history interviews, assisting in the digitization of local historical society collections, and completing historic property documentation.² UMass Amherst PHP also collaborates with local, state, and regional stakeholders on initiatives and public programs. Recent examples include the following.

- ◆ The “Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley” initiative in collaboration with the PVHN documenting the lives of people of color in the region during the 18th and early 19th centuries.³
- ◆ Collaborating with the Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum in Hadley, Massachusetts to expand and reimagine the historical museum’s interpretative programming as well as update the property’s 1973 National Register nomination.⁴

University of Massachusetts Boston Roadmap for Participatory Archiving

UMass Boston’s Roadmap for Participatory Archiving (RoPa) provides guidance and templates for hosting a community event where people bring photos and items important to their families to include in a library or organization’s digital collections.⁵ These gatherings expand our collective memory while creating new connections.

¹ Pioneer Valley History Network. (n.d.). Celebrating Local History in Western Massachusetts. <https://pioneervalleyhistorynetwork.org/>

² University of Massachusetts Amherst. (n.d.). Public History at UMass Amherst. <https://www.umass.edu/history/academics/public>

³ University of Massachusetts Amherst. (n.d.). Documenting the Early History of Black Lives in the Connecticut River Valley. <https://websites.umass.edu/pvhn-blackhistory/>

⁴ University of Massachusetts Amherst. (n.d.). Public History Graduate Students Help Unveil New Voices in Old Rooms. <https://www.umass.edu/history/news/public-history-graduate-students-help-unveil-new-voices-old-rooms>

⁵ University of Massachusetts Boston. (n.d.). The Roadmap for Participatory Archiving. <https://ropab.umb.edu/>

4 Historic and Cultural Resources Goals and Actions

Goal 4-1

Strengthen the role of the Hampden Historical Commission.

Action 4-1.1

Expand resources available to prospective and appointed HCC members to help them carry out their responsibilities and undertake new initiatives. For example, the MHC provides direct advice to local historical commissions and several virtual workshops each year on topics such as grant programs, online research, determining historic significance, and best practices for a proactive, community-supported preservation program..

Action 4-1.2

Draft by-laws utilizing the HCC's planning and design discussions expertise. These may include the following.

- Designation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts;
- Study the creation of by-laws that help prevent demolition, such as a demolition review for select properties or an enactment of a demolition-by neglect by-law.

Action 4-1.3

Engage municipal departments and community stakeholders to increase awareness of how the HCC can help facilitate discussion and provide direction on preservation-related issues.

Goal 4-2

Expand and strengthen the presence of Hampden's historical and cultural organizations.

Action 4-2.1

Collaborating with organizations like the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and UMass Amherst PHP, develop a National Register nomination for the Hampden Village area.

Action 4-2.2

Create an independent website for the Hampden Historical Society to enhance communications regarding information such as museum hours, events, collections information, and overall role in the community.

Action 4-2.3

In collaboration with local stakeholders, including the Hampden Garden Club, Hampden Cemetery Commission, and Hampden Conservation Commission, as well as regional partners such as UMass Amherst PHP, prepare a heritage landscape inventory including Hampden's agricultural, industrial, and scenic sites and viewsheds to inform ongoing planning efforts and educational programming.

Goal 4-3

Expand Hampden's inventory of historic properties.

Action 4-3.1

Pursue further study and possible documentation of historic areas outside of Hampden Village such as post-war housing tracts, agricultural, industrial, and recreational sites.

Action 4-3.2

Engage local universities and/or high school students to update the Hampden Public Library's website with information on the library's local history collections. Explore funding opportunities available through the Hampden Cultural Council to support this effort.

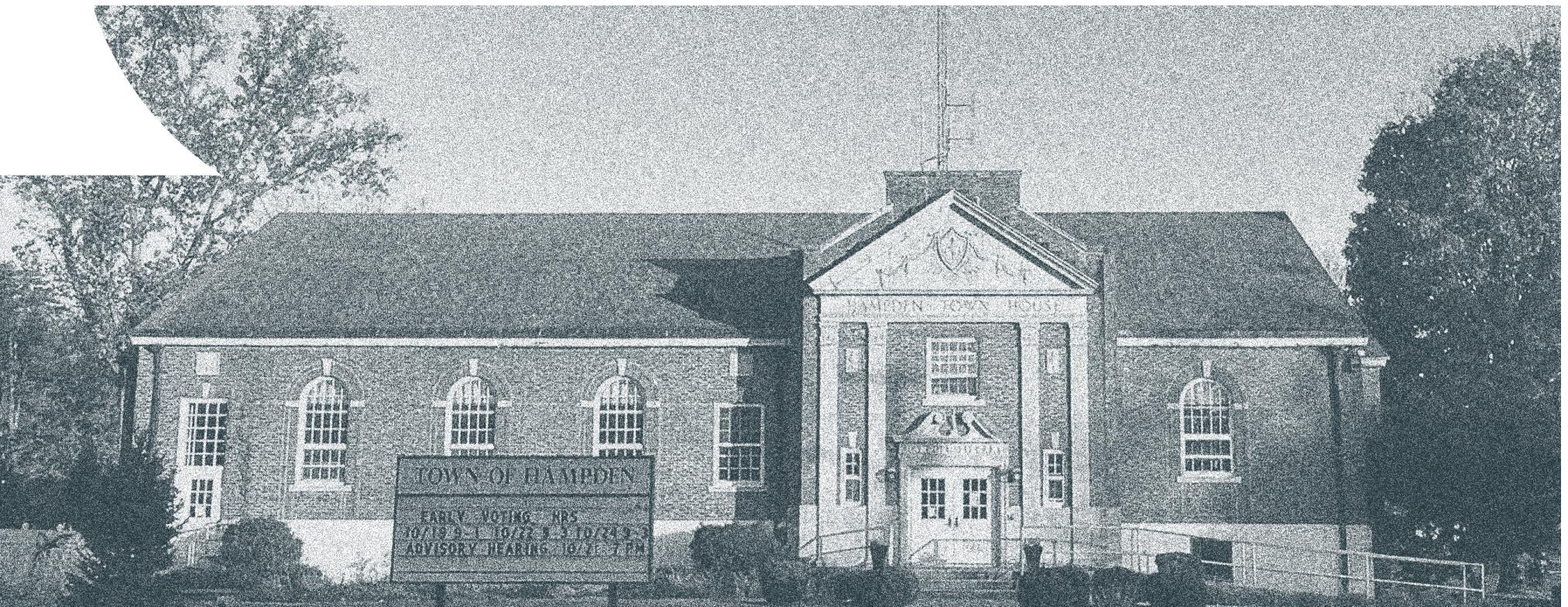
Action 4-3.3

Collaborate with appropriate state cultural organizations and area universities to establish maintenance, care, and accessioning guidelines, draft finding aids, and other documentation for the Hampden Historical Society's collections as necessary and explore using RoPa to host community events.

5

Public Facilities and Services

Public Facilities and Services, offers a comprehensive overview of the departments and institutions involved in administering public services, evaluates the condition of public assets, and presents actionable recommendations to enhance public services in the Town.



Baseline Conditions Analyses

Table 5.1 outlines Hampden's departments and institutions and the services provided. **Table 5.2** outlines existing municipal buildings and facilities. The following sections discuss these departments and institutions which provide crucial services to residents, businesses, and visitors.

Table 5.1: Municipal Services in Hampden

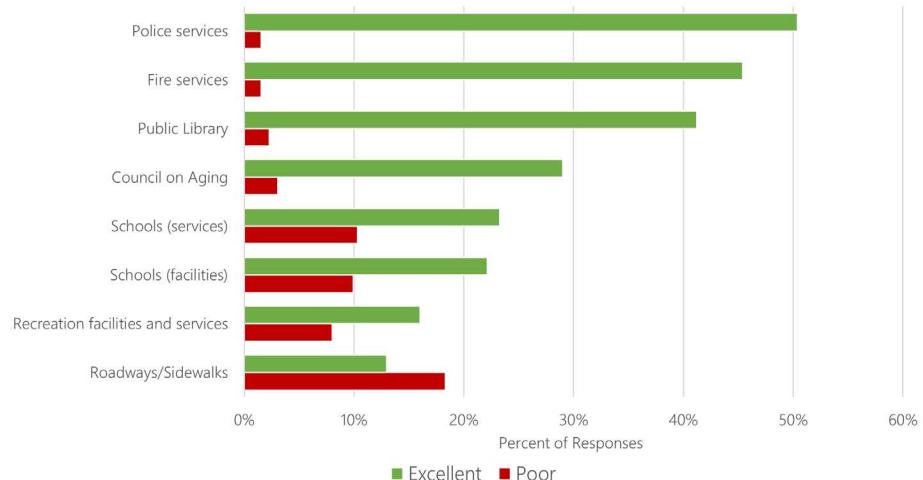
Service	Departments and/or Institutions
Administration	Select Board, Board of Registrars, Administrator, Town Clerk, Moderator, Treasurer, Tax Collector, Public Records Officer
Education	Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District
Environmental Services	Conservation Commission
Housing	Housing Authority
Public Safety	Police Department, Fire Department, Board of Health, Regional Dispatch, Action Ambulance
Public Works and Infrastructure	Highway Department, Building Department, Water District Commission, Fiber Optic Committee
Recreation and Culture	Parks and Recreation Commission, Hampden Free Public Library, Hampden Historical Commission
Veteran and Senior Services	Council on Aging/Senior Center, Veterans' Services
Utility Providers	Third-Party Providers

Table 5.2: Inventory of Municipal Buildings and Facilities

Name	Address	Responsible Board/Department	Parcel Size (Acres)
Town House/Hampden Free Public Library	625 Main Street	Select Board	1.0
Senior Center	104 Allen Street	Council on Aging	14.6
Academy Hall	616 Main Street	Historical Commission	0.2
Highway Garage	589 Main Street	Highway Department	1.8
Transfer Station and Recycling Center	Cross Road	Board of Health	45.9
Fire Department	19 North Road	Fire Department	1.0
Police Department	100 Allen Street	Police Department	14.6
Green Meadows Elementary School	38 North Road	Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District	25.7
Thornton W. Burgess School	85 Wilbraham Road	Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District	23.0

Ranked Performance of Town Facilities and Services

The 2024 Master Plan Public Survey responses provide valuable insight into the community's priorities and concerns for the Town's public facilities and services. As highlighted in **Figure 5.1**, Hampden residents are most satisfied with police, fire, and library services and least confident with roadways/sidewalks. Regarding the category of Roadways/Sidewalks, while the town's lack of sidewalks is a concern that may skew satisfaction levels, residents often express satisfaction with the Highway Department's work on roadways.

Figure 5.1: Public Ranking of Town Facilities and Services

Source: 2024 Master Plan Survey

The following sections examine the standing of Hampden's public facilities and services, informed by departmental reports and stakeholder interviews.

Administration

Hampden's administrative boards and staff include the Select Board, Town Administrator, Town Clerk, and more. Offices for these departments are in the Hampden Town House building.

"The existing Town House has long passed its effective life for new technology, community engagement and as a viable working environment for town employees."

Response to the Hampden Public Survey

The Select Board consists of three board members who serve staggered three-year terms. The Board's formal, legal responsibilities are to prepare the annual Town Meeting warrant, make appointments to town boards and offices, employ administrative staff, sign warrants to pay municipal bills, and grant licenses and permits.

The Town Administrator oversees the daily operations of Hampden's municipal government, with responsibilities including budget tracking, personnel management, project management, public communication, and policy enforcement.



Hampden Town House (Photo Credit: VHB)

According to the 2022 Annual Town Report, the Town secured grants to support fiber deployment in municipal buildings and begin to install fiber in residential and commercial areas. The residential and commercial fiber is a work in progress. Additionally, the Town secured a grant to install a document management system for Town offices.

Respondents to the 2024 Master Plan Public Survey indicate Residents stay updated on Town news and government updates via the Town's social media accounts, the municipal website, and newsletters/newspapers (Wilbraham Times, The Reminder, and the Council on Aging's Scantic Scribe). One suggestion for outreach strategies includes creating a Listserv for town announcements and updating the Town website.

The Town Clerk is responsible for maintaining official municipal records, overseeing local elections, issuing licenses and permits, documenting town meetings, and ensuring compliance with municipal laws and regulations. One significant change to the functioning of the Town government is the adoption of virtual or hybrid meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. Residents can now attend meetings and make payments online.

The Town website provides further information regarding municipal offices and boards.

Education

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District

The HWRSD serves the communities of Hampden and Wilbraham, providing educational services to approximately 2,900 students from preschool through high school. In Hampden, HWRSD operates Green Meadows Elementary, serving pre-K through grade 5. The HWRSD is governed by an elected school committee consisting of five members from Wilbraham and two from Hampden.

Recent achievements and forthcoming initiatives include the following.

- ◆ Implementing new core English Language Arts and Mathematics programs in elementary grades
- ◆ Publishing a new Strategic Plan in 2022

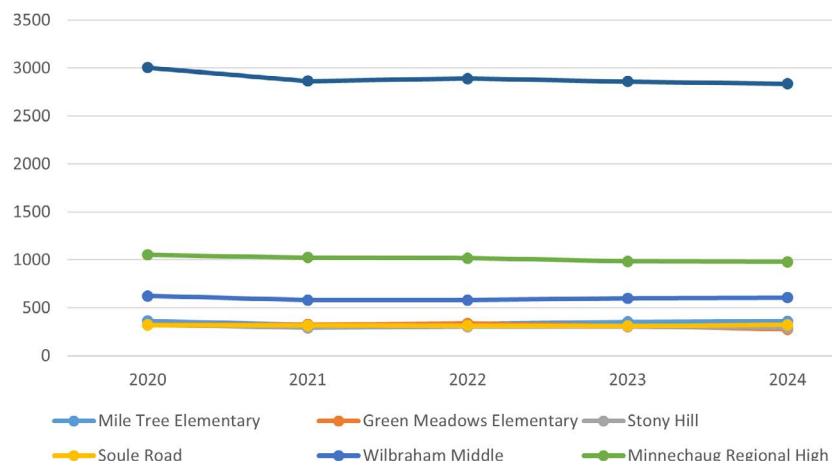
As of December 2024, HWRSD is in the process of ending a special education program at the Thornton W. Burgess Middle School (also called Hampden Middle School) and returning the property to the Town of Hampden. The land transfer is expected to occur in June 2025.

Ideas emerging from the 2024 Master Plan Public Survey for Hampden Middle School include repurposing the building as a town community center, town offices, or a satellite location for senior center events.

Current and forthcoming challenges include declining enrollment (see **Figure 5.2**) expansion of educational services, amendment of the regional agreement, and rising costs. HWRSD continues to work with affiliates like Career-Tech to expand access to various educational opportunities, including vocational and technical courses. The Town of Hampden hopes to work with HWRSD to improve offerings within the district and attract and retain local students, employing the following strategies.

- ◆ Enhancing technological integration
- ◆ Expanding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math programs
- ◆ Forging partnerships with local organizations and businesses for real-world learning experiences

Figure 5.2: Hampshire-Wilbraham Regional School District Enrollment (2020-2024)



Source: Massachusetts Department of Education. School and District Profiles (2020-2024)

Additionally, HWRSD's Strategic Plan: 2022-2027 and conversations with stakeholders indicate that HWRSD is still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and is working to modernize its curriculum and physical spaces accordingly. This modernization includes instituting an organized technology replacement cycle, specifically to replace Chromebooks for the 1:1 student computer program, at a \$75,000 annual cost to the high school. Safety equipment, like fire panels and structural elements, such as the doors and windows of Wilbraham Middle School and the roof and flooring of Green Meadows Elementary, also need to be upgraded or replaced within the next five years.

Environmental Services

Conservation Commission

The duty of Hampden's Conservation Commission, housed within Hampden Town House, is to protect the community's natural resources, primarily through the administration of the Town's Wetland Protection Bylaws and the Massachusetts Wetland Protection and River Protection Acts. Other functions include issuing permits, managing Town-owned conservation lands, educating the public on preservation, encouraging passive recreation in open spaces, and advising municipal officials and boards on conservation issues related to their areas of responsibility. As of 2024, there are seven members of the Conservation Commission.

Read about Hampden's goals for conservation in **Chapter 6, Open Space and Recreation**.

Housing

Hampden Housing Authority

The Hampden Housing Authority is located at 26 Springmeadow Lane. As of the writing of this report, five members make up the Housing Authority Board: three are elected, and the Governor appoints one and the Select Board appoints a tenant representative. Core responsibilities of local housing authorities include overseeing and managing public housing units, administering rental assistance programs (including Section 8), and developing new affordable housing units. The only affordable housing managed by the Housing Authority is Centennial Commons, which has income-based rent restricted to individuals 60 years or older or individuals living with a disability.

Read about Hampden's goals for housing in **Chapter 2, Housing**.

Public Safety

Hampden Police Department

In the 42 years since Hampden's last Master Plan (1982), the Town's Police Department has changed to adapt to the Town's needs. In 1982, the Department had 15 members: nine full-time officers (five patrol officers, two dispatchers, one sergeant, and the Chief) and six part-time officers (four patrol officers and two dispatchers). As of December 2024, the Department has 19 members: 11 full-time officers (six patrol officers, one detective, three sergeants, and the Chief), six part-time patrol officers, a clerk, and a custodian. The Department serves as Hampden's Emergency Operations Center and facilitates the Town's emergency management and response activities.

The Department's fleet consists of six cruisers in good condition (mileages between 34,000 and 66,000) and one cruiser that needs to be replaced soon (close to 120,000 miles).

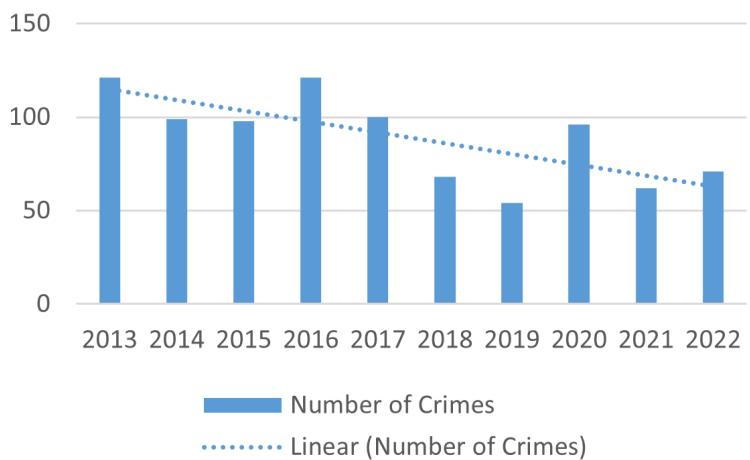


Hampden Police Cruiser (Photo Credit: Town of Hampden)

The Department's most significant change was the transition from the Town House station to a new state-of-the-art facility at 100 Allen Street, completed in 2016 and the regionalization of emergency dispatch services in July 2021.

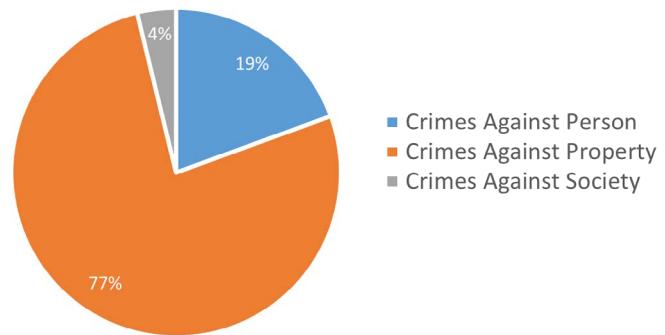
Concerning crime statistics, there were 71 incidents in Hampden in 2022, representing a crime rate of approximately 14 incidents per 1,000 residents. This rate is lower than that of the State at 33 incidents per 1,000 residents. **Figure 5.3** illustrates total crimes in Hampden between 2013 and 2022, along with a linear trend line depicting a decline over time. **Figure 5.4** illustrates the breakdown of arrests by type in 2022.

Figure 5.3: Trend in Total Crimes (2013-2022)



Source: Massachusetts Crime Statistics, Beyond 2020 (2023)

Figure 5.4: Arrests by Type (2013-2022)



Source: Massachusetts Crime Statistics, Beyond 2020 (2023)

Recent achievements and forthcoming initiatives include the installation of fiber optic cable, Marcus Communications' completion of the Hampden Police/Fire Digital Radio project, the use of Blackboard Connect (the Department's emergency management communication system), and ongoing engagement in the Blue Envelope Program (a state and local police program that supports interactions with people with autism).

Current and forthcoming challenges for the Department include maintaining sufficient staff numbers, upgrading technology (namely laptops and digital systems that have some dead zones), and addressing capital needs (interior and exterior building repairs and backup generators) as the Department building reaches its ten-year mark. The Department could benefit from a dedicated grant writer who can pursue funding related to emergency management.

Hampden Fire Department

The Fire Department is located at 19 North Road. In 2017, the Town voted to fund three full-time firefighters (working shifts 8 am–4 pm Monday-Friday), including the Fire Chief. Before 2017, the Department was comprised solely of volunteer firefighters. The Department also has 36 on-call firefighters and one part-time administrative assistant. All staff are trained Emergency Medical Technicians.

The Department's fleet includes a 2002 engine, a 2012 engine, a 2004 mini-pumper, a 1991 tanker truck, a 1953 brush truck, a 2004 UTV, a 2022 rescue vehicle, a 2017 command vehicle, and a 1996 ambulance (non-operational). The Select Board contract with Action Ambulance Service, Inc., to provide advanced life support medical transport services in Town. Action Ambulance is overseen by the Ambulance Committee.

In 2022, the Fire Department responded to 538 calls, 340 (63 percent) of which requested rescue or emergency rescue services, and 24 (4 percent) requested fire suppression services.

Recent achievements and ongoing initiatives for the Fire Department include acquiring a forestry truck to replace the 1953 brush truck, installing a radio system and fiber optic internet services, and purchasing several pieces of equipment. These improvements and purchases were possible with funding from the American Rescue Plan Act, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency.

Current and forthcoming challenges include upgrading the building and replacing several gear pieces, such as breathing apparatuses and air compressors. Additionally, as there are no active hydrants in town (only four dry hydrants), the Department could benefit from another tanker to haul water to all fire calls. In the longer term, the Department will require an expansion to the current facility or a new station to accommodate the growth necessary to serve the town effectively.



The Fire Department hired its first full-time personnel in 2017, but the current building does not provide adequate space for training and equipment storage. (Photo credit: VHB)

Board of Health

In November 2021, Hampden's Board of Health joined the Towns of Wilbraham, Longmeadow, and Monson to form the Eastern Hampden Shared Public Health Services Group (EHSPHS). Led by a Health Director, Health Inspector, Public Health Nurse, and Health Coordinator, EHSPHS provides services such as health education, environmental monitoring, disease prevention, and code enforcement. The work of this group, which was vital in protecting the residents of Hampden during the COVID-19 pandemic, continues to ensure the residents' safety and well-being.

In the 2022 Annual Town Report, the Board of Health reported that approximately 650 households used the Transfer Station. The Recycling Center and Transfer Station are open simultaneously to make drop-offs convenient for residents.

Public Works and Infrastructure

Highway Department

Hampden's Highway Department, with four staff, maintains approximately 55 miles of local roadway. They accomplish this by upkeeping roadway infrastructure, including snow and ice removal, pothole repairs, brush and tree removal, restriping, and street sweeping. The Highway Department also maintains the town's stormwater collection system, consisting of more than 700 catch basins. The Highway Department has twelve vehicles and uses a rotating fleet replacement schedule to ensure all vehicles function correctly.



Future considerations for the Highway Department include upgrading the building's infrastructure (Photo Credit: VHB)

Recent achievements and forthcoming initiatives for the Highway Department include completing the new garage (located at 589 Main Street) in late 2022. The space provides the department with necessary vehicle and equipment storage space.

"They never, ever let us down, every storm, every problem, every crisis or anything that happens. Mark and his guys are there in a split second." Hampden Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings (2021), Howard Stein Hudson

Current and forthcoming challenges for the Highway Department include inadequate office space and lack of road or bridge work funding. Strategies to improve Department functionality include hiring a grant writer and an administrative assistant to secure additional public funding and streamline administrative procedures; upgrading necessary office infrastructure, such as lighting and plumbing; and preparing to shift towards zero-emission vehicles, per Massachusetts' Advanced Clean Truck (ACT) rule.¹

Read about Hampden's goals for transportation in **Chapter 8, Transportation and Mobility**.

Building Department

The Hampden Building Department, located at the Hampden Town House, issues permits for and inspects the construction of residential and commercial properties. The Department comprises a Building Commissioner, an Electrical Inspector, a Plumbing Inspector, and an Administrative Assistant. In 2022, the Department issued 243 building permits and conducted 283 inspections (144 for electrical and 139 for plumbing/gas).

Water District Commission

The Town's Scantic Valley Water District (SVWD) operates two wells that serve nine residences near the Massachusetts Audubon Society's Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and the transfer station. Most locations in Hampden rely on private septic and wells. Currently, SVWD is exploring replacing a pumping station, hooking up houses within the existing water district, and expanding the water district to include addresses monitored for PFAS. Residents prioritize the availability and cleanliness of water supplies. Municipal water and sewer lines are desirable over existing septic systems.

Regarding "What is Hampden missing?", multiple respondents to the 2024 Master Plan Public Survey noted a desire for water and sewer services for the Town, both to improve residential service and support future small-scale commercial development.

Fiber Optic Commission

At the time of this Plan, the Town of Hampden has established a Fiber Optic Commission to explore and promote the buildout of a municipal fiber optic network. Experts recognize fiber as the gold standard of internet infrastructure, and a municipally operated network would provide competition with existing providers like Charter Communications (Spectrum), the primary cable provider in Hampden.

Recreation and Culture

Hampden Free Public Library

The Hampden Free Public Library is located within the Hampden Town House building at 625 Main Street. It is open five days a week: Monday through Wednesday, 10 am-5 pm, Thursday, 1 pm-8 pm, and Saturday, 10 am-2 pm.



Hampden Free Public Library (Photo Credit: VHB)

¹ The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) adopted the Advanced Clean Trucks (ACT) regulation, requiring an increasing percentage of zero-emission vehicle (ZEV) truck sales beginning with model year 2025 to reduce transportation emissions and accelerate the transition to medium- and heavy-duty ZEVs.

Supported by the Library Trustees, Friends of the Hampden Free Public Library, the Hampden Cultural Council, residents, and the State of Massachusetts, the Library provides access to physical resources, including books, DVDs, audiobooks, and museum passes, as well as services like reading programs, yoga, financial workshops, concerts, and more. Many of the Library's programs are made possible by time and donations from Hampden residents.

Recent achievements and forthcoming initiatives include developing the Sheila R. Flynn Teen Center in 2022. The young adult area, made possible through local donations, features two desktops equipped with coding software and Adobe Creative Cloud, an iPad Pro, three gaming chairs, a Nintendo Switch, and a 75-inch TV. Additionally, the Library enhanced its hybrid programming during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing patrons with new digital tools including Libby, a mobile app that allows users to access library eBooks by connecting to their library account using their library card number.

Current and forthcoming challenges include funding and promoting programs and services. The Library Director indicates that the library finances all programs through grants, the Friends,



The Sheila R. Flynn Teen Center is a popular spot for youth at the Hampden Free Public Library. (Photo credit: VHB)

and community donations. The continuation of these funding streams is vital for the Library's success. Advertising the Library's services to families is also a priority, especially with middle and high school students attending schools outside of the Town.

Parks and Recreation Commission

The Parks and Recreation Commission operates from the Hampden Town House and comprises five members (chair, vice-chair, and three commissioners). Its mission is to maintain, manage, and improve all town parks and recreational facilities and to provide residents with ample opportunities for sports and play.

The results of the 2024 Master Plan Public Survey indicate that the top five priorities for recreational facilities are trails, indoor recreation facilities, community wellness/exercise facilities, tennis and pickleball courts, and small neighborhood parks.

Recent achievements and ongoing initiatives include hiring a Parks and Recreation Director and Recreation Coordinator to continue to organize programs including basketball, baseball, soccer, Memorial Park Summer Program, and others for kids and adults at Green Meadows and Thornton W. Burgess Gymnasium and Fields. Since the Director was hired, the Parks and Recreation Department has offered many new activities and programs for the town. Another major achievement since has been the launch of a Hampden Parks and Recreation-specific website which has allowed the department to accept online registrations and payments. Parks and Recreation has also increased communication with residents via social media and email list servs to publicize upcoming programs.

Current and forthcoming challenges include centralizing indoor facilities and services, maintenance costs, staff capacity, and developing new park spaces. Interviews with the Parks and Recreation Commission identified a need in the community to centralize offerings by creating a recreation facility that could house sports courts, event spaces, and classrooms. Maintenance

and staffing also continue to be a challenge. The Splash Pad needs more parking and frequent backflushing, which triggers complaints from the community. The Commission would like a staff member to oversee operations, but they often don't have the capacity. There is also insufficient park space available for development for residents on the western side of the Town because of the wellheads at Thornton W. Burgess School.

Read about Hampden's goals for recreation in **Chapter 6, Open Space and Recreation**.



The playground, fields, and splash pad at Memorial Park continues to attract Hampden residents and visitors from neighboring towns.
(Photo credit: VHB)

Hampden Historical Commission

Hampden Historical Commission, established in 1999, is located in the Hampden Town House and is responsible for identifying, and promoting the town's historic properties and places. In recent years, the Historical Commission has worked to identify veteran graves in cemeteries and established an "Adopt a Plot" program to combine public and private funds and include community participation

Read about Hampden's goals for historic preservation in **Chapter 4, Historic and Cultural Resources**.

Veteran and Senior Services

Council on Aging/Senior Center

The Council on Aging/Senior Center, located at 104 Allen Street, is a core facility and service provider for older adults in Hampden. Seven staff members (four full-time, three part-time) work at the Senior Center with the help of approximately seventy-five volunteers, and ten members form the Board of Directors. The Friends of Hampden Senior Citizens support the Senior Center's fundraising and event-organizing efforts.

According to the 2022 Annual Town Report, 1,724 people utilized the Senior Center in 2022 for fitness and recreation programs, outreach services, food assistance, vaccination clinics, Medicare insurance counseling (e.g., Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Everyone Program), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program application, and more. The Senior Center is credited for bringing people together for various social activities such as a pen pal program and the Monday-Friday lunch program. The Council also publishes a monthly newsletter: the Scantic Scribe.²

Current and forthcoming challenges include the exploration of building expansion options. When the current Senior Center building, constructed in 2000, was deemed inadequate for the needs of Hampden's older adults, the Select Board established the Senior Center Building Committee. In Fall 2023, Hampden Town Meeting approved funding for architectural plans for the expansion and renovation of the building. The Senior Center Building Committee website provides plan updates. Most recently, Town Meeting denied forward movement on the project due to concerns about costs to residents.

² Town of Hampden. Scantic Scribe. <https://www.hampdenma.gov/council-aging/pages/scantic-scribe-newsletter>



Hampden's Senior Center is a popular location for events and social programming. (Photo credit: VHB)

Veterans' Services

The Eastern Hampden County Veterans' Service District supports Hampden's Veterans and serves the towns of East Longmeadow, Hampden, and Wales. The Veterans' Service Officer (VSO), available at the Hampden Town House auditorium on Wednesdays between 9 am and 4 pm, provides various services to veterans in the community, including benefits enrollment, advocacy and representation, and crisis intervention. Once a month, the VSO hosts a Veterans coffee hour at the Senior Center.

Current and forthcoming challenges include the lack of a dedicated space for meetings with the VSO. The only space available at the Town House for VSO meetings is the auditorium, which provides little privacy.

Utility Providers

Hampden relies on third-party providers for electric, gas, and water services. The following section briefly describes these providers and the status of their services in the Town.

Electric: National Grid (Massachusetts Electric)

National Grid is the primary electric provider in Hampden. They provide electricity, grid maintenance, and customer service to residents, institutions, and businesses.

Gas: Eversource

Eversource is the primary gas provider in Hampden. It provides natural gas distribution, pipeline maintenance, and customer service to residents, institutions, and businesses.

Telecommunications: Verizon, Charter (Spectrum)

Hampden residents rely on Verizon and Charter (Spectrum) for internet services. However, the Town is working to build a municipally owned and operated internet service by creating a municipal light plant. As of February 2024, the Town negotiated with Verizon and National Grid to gain access and make space on telephone poles to install fiber optic cable.

Regional Services

In addition to local organizations and departments, Hampden benefits from various regional agencies and nonprofits that offer support across different sectors, such as health and human services, housing, education, and community development. The following are some key organizations that support the community of Hampden.

Regional Agencies

Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC)

Formerly known as the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities offers affordable housing and community development support. It administers programs like the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit and funds housing projects.

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission offers planning and development services to the towns in the region. They focus on transportation, environmental planning, economic development, and community planning.

Nonprofit Organizations

Behavioral Health Network, Inc.

Behavioral Health Network, Inc., is a regional provider of comprehensive behavioral health services for adults, children, and families.

Community Action Pioneer Valley

Community Action Pioneer Valley's programs focus on economic empowerment, education, and housing stability for low-income individuals and families.

Gándara Center

The Gándara Center delivers bilingual behavioral health, substance use, and preventative services across 100 locations in Massachusetts.

Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc.

Greater Springfield Senior Services, Inc. provides support, resources, and services to enhance the quality of life for seniors and individuals with disabilities in the Greater Springfield area.

Springfield Partners for Community Action

The Partners offer community services, including financial counseling, weatherization programs, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs.

Valley Opportunity Council

The Valley Opportunity Council offers over 30 community programs to municipalities throughout Hampden County, including housing assistance, early childhood and adult education programs, fuel assistance, and food security services.

Way Finders

Way Finders focuses on affordable housing solutions and provides housing counseling, homelessness prevention, rental assistance, and community development services.

Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness

The Network collaborates with local agencies and organizations to prevent and end homelessness through advocacy, coordination, and direct support services.

Educational Institutions

Springfield College

Springfield College offers several health and wellness initiatives, youth education programs, volunteer programs, and community-based research opportunities.

Western New England University

Western New England University engages in community outreach and partnerships that benefit local towns, including educational programs and public service initiatives.

Westfield State University

Westfield State University collaborates with local government entities, non-governmental organizations, and community organizations on food drives, fundraising, environmental clean-ups, and health services.

Springfield Technical Community College

STCC hosts the Springfield Adult Learning Center (SALC), a program providing free classes for adults to earn a High School Equivalency Certificate (HSE); learn basic computer skills; learn English; or enroll as a student at STCC after completing an HSE.³

³ Springfield Technical Community College. (n.d.). Springfield Adult Learning Center. <https://www.stcc.edu/wdc/salc/>

5 Public Facilities and Services Goals and Actions

Goal 5-1

Ensure stable financial resources for modernizing public facilities.

Action 5-1.1

Hire a Town Planner to prioritize upgrades and collaborate with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to access regional expertise and funding opportunities.

Action 5-1.2

Hire a dedicated grant writer or hire a grant writer with neighboring towns to pursue state and federal grants, forge public-private partnerships, and track expenditures.

Action 5-1.3

Establish a reserve fund for large capital projects, such as repairs, upgrades, and replacements for the Town House, Police Station, and Fire Station.

Goal 5-2

Adapt public services to meet the community's evolving needs.

Action 5-2.1

Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing public facilities to identify urgent, mid-, and long-term maintenance/modernization needs and create a phased modernization plan to address these needs.

Action 5-2.2

Establish a designated area for the Veteran Service Officer to conduct confidential meetings with residents.

Action 5-2.3

Develop a Broadband and Technology Plan that includes a townwide fiber optic deployment schedule and priorities for maintaining municipal digital infrastructure and tools. Collaborate with partners such as the Alliance for Digital Equity, TechFoundry, and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.

Goal 5-3

Update town government roles and revamp community outreach practices.

Action 5-3.1

Enhance governance efficiency by increasing the Selectboard to five members and consolidating the elected Treasurer and Tax Collector positions into one appointed role.

Action 5-3.2

Amend Hampden's General Bylaws to include definitions and role descriptions for the Selectboard and the Town Administrator, as the Government Study Committee recommends.

Action 5-3.3

Integrate technology into Town Meeting processes, including a hybrid meeting format to expand attendance options and electronic handheld voting to improve voting documentation.

Open Space and Recreation evaluates Hampden's current open space and recreational resources. It examines the quantity, quality, and accessibility of parks, trails, and natural areas, as well as the community's recreational needs and priorities. This chapter relies heavily on the Town's 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

6 Open Space and Recreation



Baseline Conditions Analyses

The Town of Hampden, comprising approximately 20 square miles, is primarily rural and residential. Roughly 20 percent of land uses are concentrated around the Town Center, with the remaining 80 percent comprising vacant, forested, agricultural lands and

water bodies. Topography is a significant factor in shaping the Town's development patterns, with a relatively flat western portion and steeper mountainous terrain extending east, depicted in **Figure 1.2 in Chapter 1, Land Use**. As shown in **Figure 6.1**, Hampden has a substantial amount of protected and unprotected open space distributed townwide.

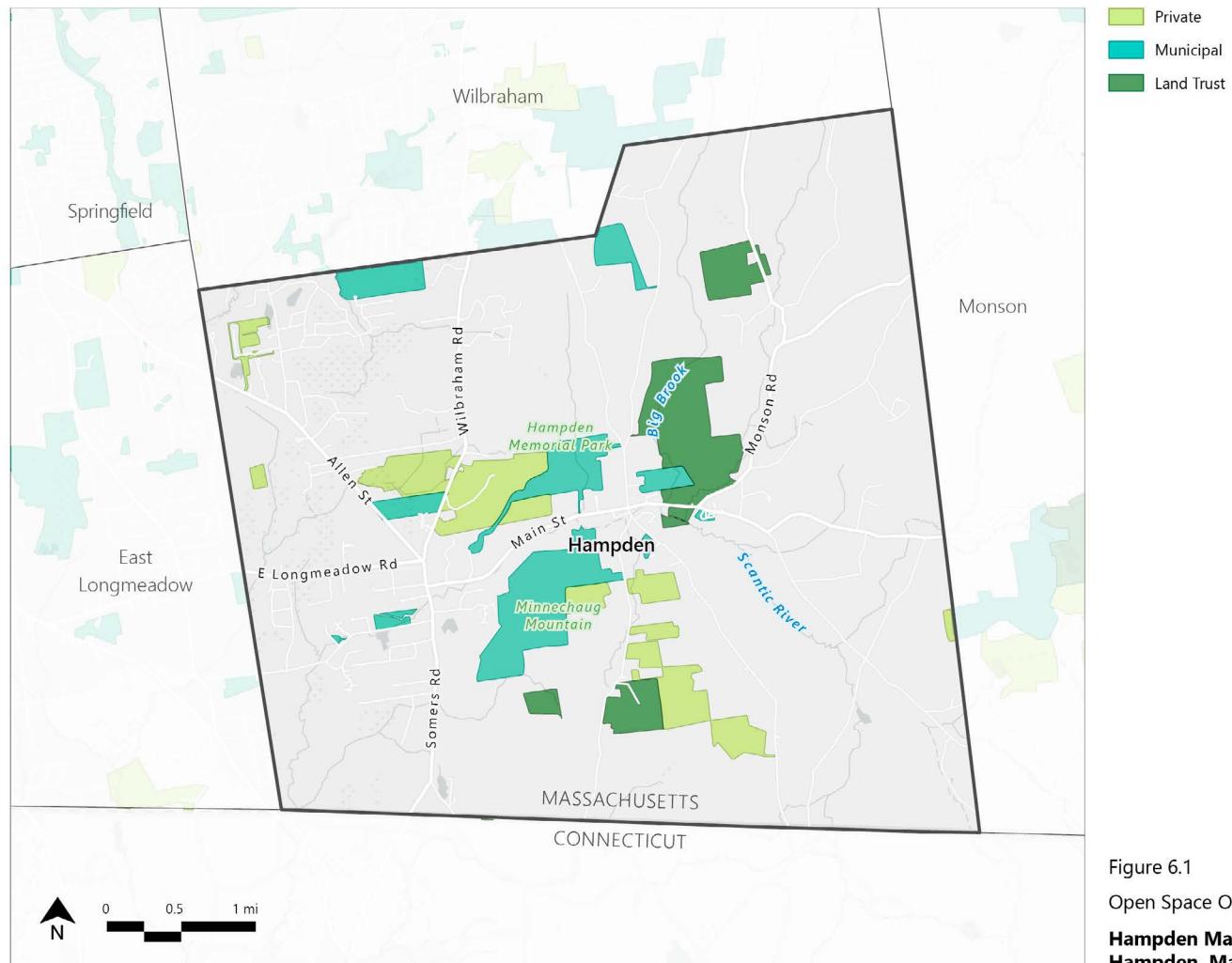


Figure 6.1
Open Space Ownership
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

Open Space

Hampden has various open spaces, approximately 400 acres of which are permanently protected, including parks, water bodies, conservation areas, and other spaces. **Table 6.1** outlines the Town's open spaces by ownership, size, protection status, and existing amenities. See

*Lands are not under any formal protection or conservation easement
 **Limited levels of protection include land protected by legal mechanisms other than temporary or permanent protections, and is sometimes protected through functional or traditional use
 ***Chapter lands are under temporary protection. Chapter 61 lands are dedicated to forestry and are enrolled for a term of ten years; Chapter 61A lands are dedicated to agriculture and are enrolled for a term of five years; Chapter 61B lands are dedicated to recreation and are enrolled for a term of five years.
 Source: Hampden Open Space and Recreation Plan, 2017

Table 6.1: Conservation and Open Spaces

Owner	Acres	Protection Status	Amenities
TOWN OF HAMPDEN			
Minnechaug Mountain	273	Permanently protected w CR and/or Ar.97	Parking lot, trails
Vacant	103	Unrestricted*	
Memorial Park	42	Permanently protected	Baseball fields, trails, benches, spray park, pavilion, playscape
Mount Vision	39	Permanently protected with CR/ Ar. 97	
Thornton Burgess School	38	Limited protection**	Basketball courts, baseball fields, soccer fields, events, walking trails, boardwalk
Goat Rock Conservation Area	36	Permanently protected by CR and Ar. 97	Trails, viewpoints
Mill Pond	29.6	Permanently protected	Street parking, benches, waterfront access
West Brook Conservation Area I and II	22	Permanently protected by CR and Ar. 97	Trails
Green Meadows School	16	Limited protection	Baseball fields, playgrounds, community garden, parking area
Prospect Hill Cemetery	7	Limited protection	
Old Cemetery	5	Limited protection	
Town Common	0.4	Limited protection	Monument
Gerrish Park	0.1	Permanently protected	Picnic tables, grills
Jonathon's Mill	0.1	Limited protection	Picnic space, waterfront access
TOWN OF WILBRAHAM			
Sessions Drive/ Mill Conservation Area	0. 82	Permanently protected by Ar. 97	Trails
MASS AUDUBON			
Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary	369	Permanently protected with some parcels protected CR or Ar. 97	Trails, viewing platforms, historic sites, parking
PRIVATE			
Chapter Lands (61, 61A, 61B)	3,100	Temporarily protected***	
Private Properties with conservation restrictions	902	Permanently protected w CR	542 ac under CRs

The Town owns approximately 630 acres of land townwide, including municipal structures. Of these 630 acres, approximately 90 acres are developed as parks and school yards.

The following are some of Hampden's prominent open spaces and recreational areas.

Cemeteries

The Town's Cemetery Commission is responsible for the upkeep and management of the Town's two municipal cemeteries, Old Cemetery and Prospect Hill Cemetery.

Gerrish Park

Gerrish Park is an eighth-acre open space adjacent to Main Street that provides picnic tables and grilling spaces.

Goat Rock

Goat Rock is a natural schist and quartz formation located on the southern terminus of the Wilbraham Mountain Range. It is accessible from the east by a hiking trail with a gradual ascent and from the west by a gradual trail or near vertical climb. A parcel of land, called West Brook I, adjacent to Memorial Park was also purchased and deeded to the Town, which provides access to a ridgeline trail to Goat Rock. Goat Rock is a popular spot for outings, gatherings, and camping and is part of a well-used hiking trail system.

Hampden Memorial Park

Hampden Memorial Park, comprising 42 acres adjacent to Main Street, includes baseball fields, trails, seating areas, a pavilion, and an accessible Spray Park. The park is an access point for the Goat Rock and West Brook I and II Conservation Areas.

Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary

Mass Audubon owns over 424 acres of open space, woodlands, and wetlands off Hampden's Main Street, across from Prospect Hill Cemetery. The property contains four miles of trails and wildlife viewing platforms and hosts occasional environmental education programming (e.g., nature walks). Laughing Brook's historical significance as the site of Thornton Burgess's home is an important aspect of the Sanctuary, which contains the original four buildings of Burgess's property. The Sanctuary provides habitat for various species, including birds, amphibians, and mammals. Public water system wells providing clean drinking water for the Scantic Valley Water District are located on the Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary.

Mill Pond

Mill Pond comprises approximately 29 acres off Mill Road, including wetlands and surface waters. The property has benches and supports activities, including skating in the winter and wildlife observation. Hampden's Conservation Commission has recently had the property surveyed and plans to install signage to identify vernal pools and protect against dumping. The Town is looking into establishing a Mill Pond Restoration Committee to manage the environmental health of the property.

Minnechaug Mountain

Minnechaug Mountain, under the management of the Minnechaug Land Trust in cooperation with the Conservation Commission, is a popular site for outdoor activities in the Town, including hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and wildlife observation. Minnechaug is accessible via a parking lot on South Road and through the VFW on Main Street, and it provides approximately three miles of marked trails. The local Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and many volunteers actively participate in trail work projects throughout the site.

Schools

While not protected lands, Thornton Burgess and Green Meadows schools, comprising approximately 40 acres, provide critical recreational facilities for the Town's youth. Thornton Burgess has sports courts and fields and an accessible trail and boardwalk connecting to the Senior Center. Green Meadows provides baseball fields and playgrounds, and a site is allocated for a community garden.

Town Green

Hampden's Town Green includes approximately half an acre of green space at Main Street and Chapin Road intersection. It is also the site of the Town's World War I monument. The Green has no paved pathways but has a curb cut for wheelchair access.

West Brook Conservation Area

This property of 40 acres, acquired in two parts, abuts the Town's Memorial Park, which borders the northern West Brook. The West Brook Conservation Areas I and II provides a trail system beginning at the park and critical habitat areas supporting a range of wildlife. It's managed by the Minnechaug Land Trust with the Conservation Commission.

Land Protection

Fifty-eight percent of Hampden Master Plan public survey respondents selected "loss of natural lands to new development" as Hampden's top land use concern. There is potential for the Town to enhance its land protection and conservation efforts through communication with private landowners locally and balancing new growth with preservation.

Land Protection Mechanisms

Article 97: Article 97 lands are subject to protection under article 97 of the State Constitution. Land held by a municipality or a Conservation Commission can be set aside for permanent conservation purposes through purchase and deed designation and/or by a Conservation Restriction. The legal process is quite specific.

Acquisition: The interested party purchases the property rights and title to protect the land. **The property can be put under a Conservation Restriction for more permanent protection, if desired.**

Conservation restriction (also known as a conservation easement): A voluntary agreement between a landowner/Town, the State (EEA and DCS) and a conservation organization. Landowner retains ownership, but development is restricted and permitted activities are set via the contract. The contract is monitored by the qualified organization that "holds" the restriction.

Chapter 61 offers property tax breaks for landowners willing to make plans to maintain their land as open space under specific uses: forestry, agriculture, recreation or as natural areas. Chapter 61 is for forested lands, Chapter 61A is for agricultural lands, and Chapter 61B is for open space or recreation lands. Although MGL Chapter 61 programs are not permanent conservation or protection programs, and do not require public inclusion. Nonetheless, they are highly important as Open Space and can help keep large parcels undeveloped, maintain the affordability of Open Space in a community, and thus protect air and water quality, provide storm water management, wildlife habitat, and a livable landscape.

Hampden has identified brownfield sites classified under MGL Chapter 21 present throughout the Town, with the largest concentrations on Main Street, Somers Road, and Glendale Road. Remediating sites with desirable locations could ready new sites for development potential, alleviating pressure on other open space areas. For example, the previously contaminated Cumberland Farms site across from Memorial Park has been remediated and is now for sale. Acquiring this property could provide the Town with essential access to the Scantic River and nearby bike trails, addressing the community's need for recreational access to the water. The Town can pursue additional site rehabilitation through the Massachusetts Development Financing Authority or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Brownfield Program.

Chapter Lands

The State's Chapter 61 program is a voluntary program designed to provide preferential tax treatment for private properties based on their timber resources and agricultural or recreational value rather than their development value. As noted in **Table 6.1**, Hampden has approximately 3,100 total acres in the Chapter 61 program—702 acres are under the Chapter 61 program (Forestry), 1,463 acres are under the Chapter 61A program (Agriculture/Forest Management Plan), and 935 acres are under the Chapter 61B program (Open Space and Recreation). These lands are not fully protected, although the Town does have first right of refusal for their purchase, managed through the Select Board. All of these lands can be completely withdrawn from the program at any moment, with only a simple tax readjustment.

Further preservation of Hampden's agricultural and forested lands is needed. The Town should educate local landowners regarding this program, encourage enrollment, and keep land in the program if it is already enrolled.

Agricultural Lands

Today, approximately eight percent of the Town's land is agricultural, most supporting crop growth. This land plays an active role in providing locally grown food to the Town and the region, contributing to the Town's rural character.

Stakeholder and public engagement have indicated a need for further preservation of the Town's farmland and support for local growers. Approximately half of the soils present in Hampden are considered prime agricultural soils with fertile, stone-free qualities. However, most are no longer used for farming and have either been developed or are close to development. Several subdivisions exist on what was once farmland (e.g., Scantic Meadows, solar arrays). The town currently has only one farm in the State's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program.¹ One potential strategy to further preserve the Town's farmland is to encourage enrollment in the State's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program.² The APR Program is a voluntary

program offering a non-development alternative to farmland owners for their agricultural land, protecting this land for future agricultural use.

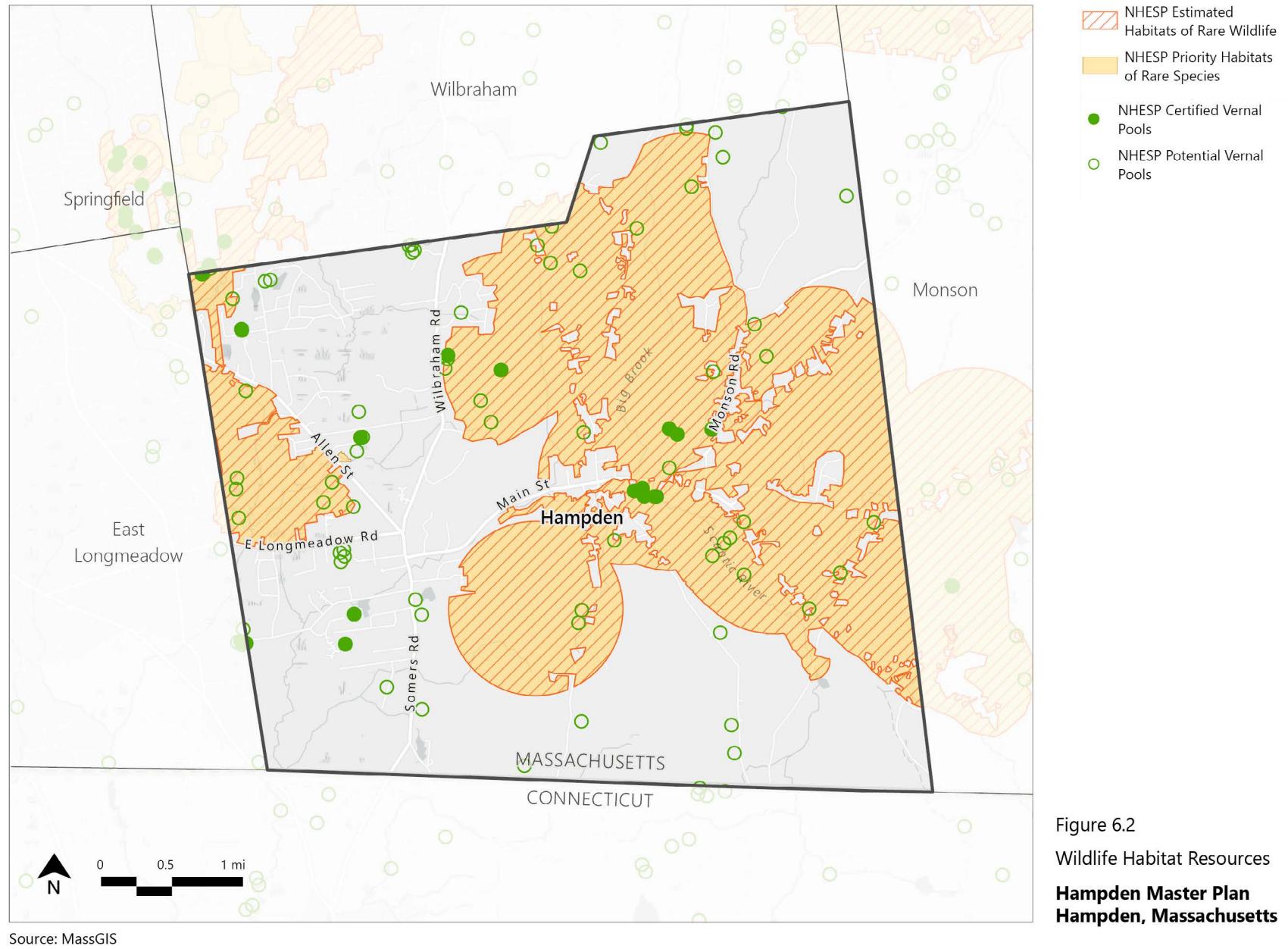
Woodlands

Approximately 64 percent of Hampden's land is forested, most heavily in the Minnechaug and Wilbraham Mountain complex and in the upland area of the eastern section of the Town. The Town should develop a Forest Management Plan, including strategies that mitigate wildlife risk and maximize habitat benefits. The Forest Legacy Program provides Federal funds to protect forest lands through CRs. Two large, forested parcels have been approved, along with others, for protection under a regional project called the Emerald Forest Borderlands, facilitated by the Opacum Land Trust. One parcel of about 172 acres would be privately held, one of about 115 acres by the Trust, for public use. This project is currently on hold.

The Town also has a range of public shade trees, which the Town's Tree Warden manages. These trees, located within and along the boundary of the public way, may only be trimmed, cut, or removed by the Town. Proper management and occasional removal of public shade trees can minimize the number of fallen limbs, which can fuel wildfires. The Town doesn't have an active tree replacement program for removed aged or damaged shade trees in parks and along roads, though the Hampden Garden Club and others have made some efforts.

¹ Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. (n.d.). Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. <https://www.mass.gov/agricultural-preservation-restriction-apr-program>

² Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. (n.d.). Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program. <https://www.mass.gov/agricultural-preservation-restriction-apr-program>



Priority Protection Areas

Hampden is home to diverse vegetation and wildlife that thrive in the Town's many natural habitats. Hampden's rich habitat areas are critical not only for the Town but for the State, home to several Massachusetts Endangered Species Act-listed species, including the Eastern Wormsnake, Eastern Spadefoot, Blue-Spotted Salamander, Eastern Box Turtle, Wood Turtle, Climbing Fern, and Bristly Buttercup. The Town has several Core Habitat and Critical Landscape areas as defined by the State's BioMap tool, including vernal pools, aquatic core habitats, and priority protection areas (see **Figure 6.2**).

While the Town has many critical habitat areas, greater capacity is needed to implement and enforce adequate protections through their Conservation Commission, in concert with the Department of Fish and Wildlife—Natural Heritage Program, for which they serve as a liaison. The Town can leverage local and State protections but needs a Land Trust to protect habitat and conservation lands at the regional level. Locally, wildlife is observed and studied through programming offered at the Laughing Brook Education Center. Conservation and awareness efforts should be directed towards priority habitat areas and Massachusetts Endangered Species Act-listed species to support local and State biodiversity.

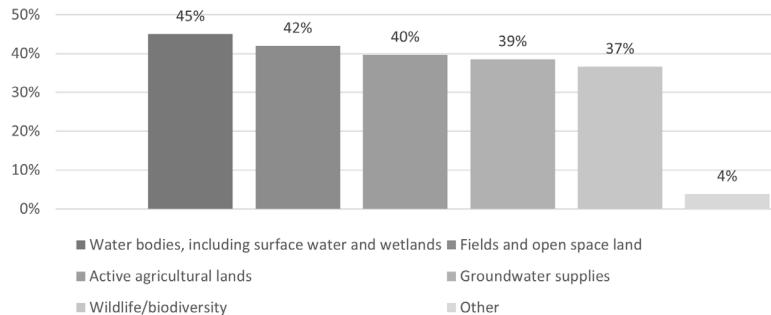
Public Perception of Open Space Resources

Results of the 2024 Master Plan public survey reflect residents' pride and appreciation for the Town's natural environment, wildlife habitats, forests, and rural character.

75 percent of 2024 Master Plan Public Survey respondents selected "Natural and Scenic Areas" as their top reason for what makes Hampden a great place to live.

Input via the Master Plan public engagement process highlighted the importance of preserving the Town's rural and natural beauty and balancing this character with future development considerations.

Figure 6.3: What are Hampden's most pressing natural resource protection needs?



Source: 2024 Master Plan Survey

Past funding allocations reflect the Town's commitment to open space preservation and recreation. The Town formally adopted the Community Preservation Act in April 2001. To date, voters have allocated \$213,500 for recreation and \$180,980 for open space. These funds have primarily supported accessibility improvements to recreational facilities, maintenance of Hampden's Memorial Spray Park, playscapes, and pavilions, and the purchase and enhancement of conservation areas. However, investment in active recreation facilities, such as courts and other structured sports amenities, has been limited. Expanding funding for these facilities remains a priority for future CPA funding requests.

Water Resources

Protection of water resources is vital in Hampden, as a Town that values the health of its environmental assets and relies on private wells for its municipal water supply. The Town is currently facing water quality challenges, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) contamination from the capped landfill, which is driving the costly expansion of the public water supply. In addition, many of the Town's waterways remain unassessed. Monitoring and protecting water resources is critical to ensure a safe and sustainable water supply, preserve visual and recreational amenities, and protect wildlife habitats.

Surface Waters

Within the Connecticut River Watershed the Scantic River, the Town's only significant river and water body, runs through the center of town. Other minor water bodies include a handful of mill ponds and several brooks.

Public and stakeholder engagement highlighted a need to expand public access to the Town's water bodies. This issue was also identified as one of the most important issues facing residents during the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan planning process. While the Scantic offers swimming, canoeing, tubing, wildlife

viewing, and fishing opportunities, access points to the river are limited by development. There is a desire for swimming sites and launch points for small watercraft.

Protection of water bodies and floodplains is critical in maintaining these resources for habitat purposes, flood mitigation, and public enjoyment. Many of the Town's waterways currently remain unassessed regarding water quality. However, the Town should address non-point source pollution of the Scantic River and manage development in the eastern portion of the Town, which can cause harmful runoff. The Town should utilize green infrastructure solutions, which have the potential to enhance stormwater management and Town aesthetics (e.g., greenbelt along Town waterways).

Groundwater

Groundwater is an essential resource in Hampden, as residents rely almost exclusively on private well systems, many of which draw water from aquifers. Protecting groundwater quality and recharge is critical to ensuring a reliable drinking water supply for residents without access to a municipal system. One potential threat to groundwater quality is the Town's lack of a sewer system, as residents utilize individual on-site septic systems. While the Town has not identified significant water quality problems related to septic system failures or other pollutants, it has implemented controls to protect against future issues.

In addition to septic systems, the Town faces challenges from its unlined landfill at Cross Road, which closed in 1994 and was capped in 2002. The landfill has contributed to contamination concerns, particularly due to PFAS found in various household products. The Town has experienced pollution in wells in the immediate area surrounding the landfill, and addressing PFAS contamination in groundwater is an ongoing concern.

To protect groundwater resources, the Town has implemented the Water Supply Protection (WSP) Overlay zoning district, which sets standards, rules, and permitting procedures for development and land uses in critical groundwater recharge areas. **Chapter 1, Land Use**, provides additional information about the Town's Zoning Bylaw and the WSP Overlay District. Further controls could include limiting the number of septic systems in sensitive areas, regulating the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and road salt, and encouraging the maximization of permeable surfaces in new developments to promote groundwater absorption.

Wetlands

In Hampden, 9,558 acres (76 percent) of Hampden's land is classified as undeveloped, featuring forest, non-forested wetland, forested wetland, and brushland/successional areas (see Chapter 1 Land Use, Table 1.1). According to the Town's 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan, wetlands alone cover approximately 117 acres (.94 percent) of Hampden's total land area. Many places where the water table is at or near the land surface experience a range of seasonally wet, marsh, or flooded conditions. These areas are critical for providing wildlife habitat, mitigating flooding, and filtering runoff before it enters surface water bodies.

The Town's primary mechanisms for wetlands protection are the State's Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) (MGL Ch. 131, Sec 40), and the local Hampden Wetlands Bylaws, primarily through the Conservation Commission. Wetlands protection requirements present challenges for increasing the Town's overall open space and new development.

Recreation

Hampden's recreational assets support residents' health, wellness, and quality of life and attract visitors from the surrounding region. As outlined in **Table 6.2**, Recreational opportunities in Hampden include public facilities managed by the Parks and Recreation Commission, which offer opportunities for passive (e.g., walking, nature viewing) and active (e.g., sports) recreation. Other Town properties support recreation opportunities, such as walking and hiking the Town's trails (e.g., Goat Rock, Minnechaug Mountain, Mount Vision), wildlife viewing at local preserves (e.g., Mill Pond, West Brook Conservation Area), and enjoying local parks (e.g., Gerrish Park). Recreational opportunities are also available through privately owned facilities including Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the intense use of Hampden's outdoor recreational spaces and the significant need for ongoing maintenance and exploration of new public greenspaces.

Table 6.2: Hampden Parks and Recreation Facilities

Facility	Recreational Use/Activity	Address
Green Meadows School	Gymnasium, fields	38 North Rd
Memorial Park	Baseball field, softball field, basketball court, Spray Park large/small pavilions	495 Main St
Splash pad	495 Main St	
Thornton Burgess School	Auditorium, gymnasium	85 Wilbraham Rd

Source: Hampden Parks and Recreation³

³ Hampden Parks and Recreation. (n.d.). Facilities. <https://hampdenma.myrec.com/info/facilities/default.aspx>

Hampden's Parks and Recreation Commission offers year-round programming and manages the Town's parks and recreational facilities. The Commission has historically offered summer programming and sports for Town youth, including soccer, basketball, and baseball. Recently the Commission is adding new programming to include options for younger age groups (e.g., puppet shows) and sport and non-sport options for adults (e.g., pickleball). Hiring a Director has allowed the Commission to expand its programming and outreach. The Commission has a considerable social media following, which has allowed for broader outreach and participation. However, staff capacity is still a constraint for the Commission, with two full-time employees, limiting the extent of programming the Commission can develop and facilitate.

Stakeholder input indicates that the Town needs more park facilities for youth. While the Town's population density is higher in the western portion, the Town's two existing playgrounds are in the eastern portion. The lack of recreational facilities in the Town's western portion is partly due to wellhead constraints at Thornton Burgess School, which prevents the expansion of existing green space. The age of the Town's wooden playground limits the Commission's ability to order parts for repairs. Memorial Park is Hampden's primary park for Town functions and is well-maintained. It is also Hampden's most popular park, both for residents and visitors, partly due to its Spray Park. The Memorial Park Spray Park is very popular, and like many of Hampden's recreational facilities, it is shared with residents of neighboring municipalities. However, the Spray Park lacks a full-time lifeguard, is 17 years old, and requires frequent maintenance, causing frequent closures and complaints. The Spray Park's popularity can also cause crowding of 100+ visitors, particularly on hot days, and a shortage of parking, requiring field space for overflow parking. Additionally, Memorial Park is closed for six weeks during the summer for the Summer Program, leading to residents' concern about the public park being unavailable. New playground facilities

are needed, particularly in the western portion of the Town, and enhancements to existing facilities are necessary to accommodate growing demand.

Access to Public Recreation Opportunities

Community input from the Master Planning process and the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan indicate a need for improved access to recreation and open space in all areas of the Town for residents of all ages, interests, and abilities. Implementing small neighborhood parks and playgrounds can help expand access to these facilities townwide. Upgrades to facilities townwide using frameworks like Universal Design can improve accessibility for seniors and individuals with mobility and sensory limitations. Improvements may include:

- Installation of paved or gravel multi-use trails and improved ingress and egress to existing parks.
- Installation of braille signage, tactile pathways, and audio-based navigation systems for those with visual impairments.
- Providing accessible restrooms, picnic areas, and seating.
- Designing playgrounds that cater to children with different abilities, with adaptive swings and sensory play elements.
- Installing sidewalks in areas of Town where access for older adults or mobility-impaired residents is critical.

Further information regarding accessible infrastructure and mobility is included in **Chapter 8, Transportation and Mobility**.

Trails

Hampden has over 400 acres of conservation land, all of which have trails. Hampden's trails are a draw for Town residents and visitors, providing opportunities for hiking, running, photography, dog-walking, biking, wildlife viewing, and more. **Table 6.3** outlines Hampden's major hiking trails.

Table 6.3: Hampden Hiking Trails

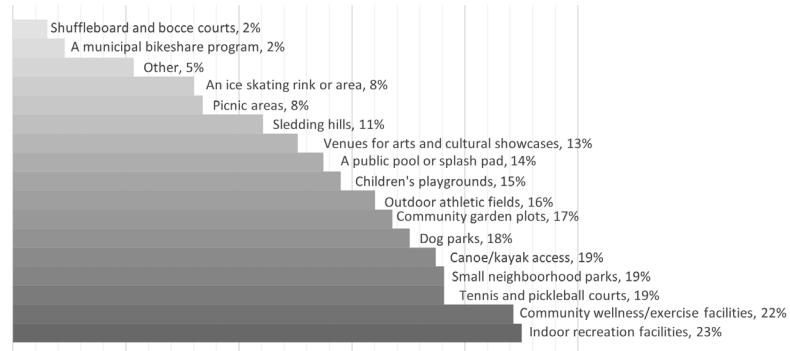
Trail Name	Trailhead Parking	Location
Algonquin Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
Billy Goat Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
Bob's Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
East Brook Trail/Burgess Trail Wildlife Sanctuary	Yes	Laughing Brook
Goat Rock Ridge Trail	Yes	Goat Rock Conservation Area
Kathy's Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
Loop Trail	No	Mount Vision
Mort and Helen Bates Trail Wildlife Sanctuary	Yes	Laughing Brook
Mount Vision Trail (in process)	Yes	Mount Vision
Neff Loop Wildlife Sanctuary	Yes	Laughing Brook
North Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
Old Coach Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
Tom's Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain
Wood Trail Conservation Area	Yes	Minnechaug Mountain

While Hampden's trails are well-managed by Minnechaug Land Trust and many local volunteers, input from stakeholder engagement indicates some lack adequate parking and clear trailheads. Expanded knowledge among residents regarding the Town's trail networks could increase utilization. The Town should strive to improve trailhead sites by collaborating with local non-profits, including the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and Minnechaug Land Trust.

Public Perception of Recreational

Input from Hampden residents has identified gaps in recreational opportunities, outlined in **Figure 6.4**, including indoor recreational facilities, tennis and pickleball courts, community wellness/exercise facilities, and small neighborhood parks. The Town is already pursuing some of these ideas through the Parks and Recreation Commission. The main barriers to expanding the Town's recreational facilities are challenges with available land, water supply restrictions, and funding.

Figure 6.4: Which recreation assets do you think the Town needs the most?



Source: 2024 Master Plan Survey

Open Space and Recreation Partners

Several groups within Hampden and the surrounding region focus on and stake in preserving and protecting open space and providing recreational opportunities, including the following.

Parks and Recreation Commission: Hampden's Parks and Recreation Commission oversees and manages some of the Town's public open spaces and recreational facilities. The Commission also develops and implements youth sports, adult programming, and summer programs. Chapter 5, Public Facilities and Services, provides further information on the Parks and Recreation Commission.

Conservation Commission: The Conservation Commission is an appointed board of approximately six volunteer residents who promote stewardship of local conservation lands and implement the Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) regulations, Riverfront Act, and Hampden Wetlands By-Laws. They serve as liaisons for endangered species protection (MESA) through Mass. Fish and Wildlife- Natural Heritage Program (NHESP), 401 water quality programs, the Army Corps of Engineers Land under Water regulations, and other Environmental agencies. The Conservation Commission is partially responsible for seven Town-owned conserved properties: part of Mill Pond, Memorial Park, Minnechaug Mountain, Goat Rock, and West Brook Conservation Areas I and II, Mount Vision, and several small parcels included Endangered Species Mitigation Offset parcels and the Scantic-Chapin Conservation Area owned by Audubon. Chapter 5, Public Facilities and Services, provides further information on the Conservation Commission.

Hampden Garden Club: Hampden Garden Club holds open monthly meetings, focusing on advancing horticulture as a source of civic beatification in the Town.⁴ Officially organized in 1932, the Garden Club is currently in its 92nd year of operation. It hosts local activities, including local plantings, replacements of street

trees, invasive removal, garden tours, and more. The Garden Club has planted upwards of 911 daffodil bulbs (as a 9/11 Memorial) on the front slope of Old Cemetery and holds annual fall plantings of daffodils (currently totaling more than 20,000), and trees.

Minnechaug Land Trust: A land trust or land conservancy is a nonprofit organization that works to conserve land through acquisition or easements. The Minnechaug Land Trust works on behalf of the towns of Hampden and Wilbraham to "balance growth and development by means of permanent protection of critical areas of open space."⁵ It holds the CRs and stewards Minnechaug Mountain, Goat Rock, West Brook I and II, Mount Vision Conservation Areas, as well as McDonald's Farm, The Rice Nature Preserve, and several others in Wilbraham.

Massachusetts Audubon Society: The Massachusetts Audubon Society is a nonprofit nature-based conservation organization in New England that focuses on several challenges, including biodiversity loss, inequitable access to nature, and climate change.⁶ The Massachusetts Audubon Society owns and manages the Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary and the extended properties including Scantic-Chapin Conservation Area, located in Hampden.

The Town should grow its network of partnerships to support local enhancements in open space and recreational resources. Potential partnerships identified through stakeholder engagement include Hampden's Recreation Association, GreatHorse, and Minnechaug Regional High School.

⁴ Hampden Garden Club. (n.d.). The Hampden Garden Club. <https://www.hampdengardenclub.org/home>

⁵ Minnechaug Land Trust. (n.d.). Minnechaug Land Trust. <https://minnechauglandtrust.org/>

⁶ Mass Audubon. (n.d.). Mass Audubon. <https://www.massaudubon.org/>

6 Open Space and Recreation Goals and Actions

Goal 6-1

Enhance Hampden's Parks and Recreation Department's programs, facilities, and outreach.

Action 6-1.1

Update the Town's 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Action 6-1.2

Explore grant funding opportunities for capital improvements.

Action 6-1.3

Conduct a public survey to assess community recreation needs, using the results to expand and enhance the department's capacity, tailor existing programs, and explore new offerings.

Goal 6-2

Enhance community engagement with open spaces and recreational resources.

Action 6-2.1

Conduct an ADA accessibility assessment of all Town facilities. Consider upgrades to existing facilities using a Universal Design framework.

Action 6-2.2

Identify areas to implement swimming and boat launches along the Scantic River.

Action 6-2.3

Address public demand for the Memorial Park Spray Park by increasing the hours of operation on days when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees, adding shaded structures, and implementing a resident pass program charging non-residents for access.

Goal 6-3

Collaborate with local partners like the Minnechaug Land Trust to support land conservation.

Action 6-3.1

Pursue a new access easement or agreement to connect Minnechaug Mountain to the newly acquired 20-acre parcel of open space to the southeast.

Action 6-3.2

Develop a Forest Management Plan that encourages environmental stewardship and includes enforcement mechanisms for trail preservation.

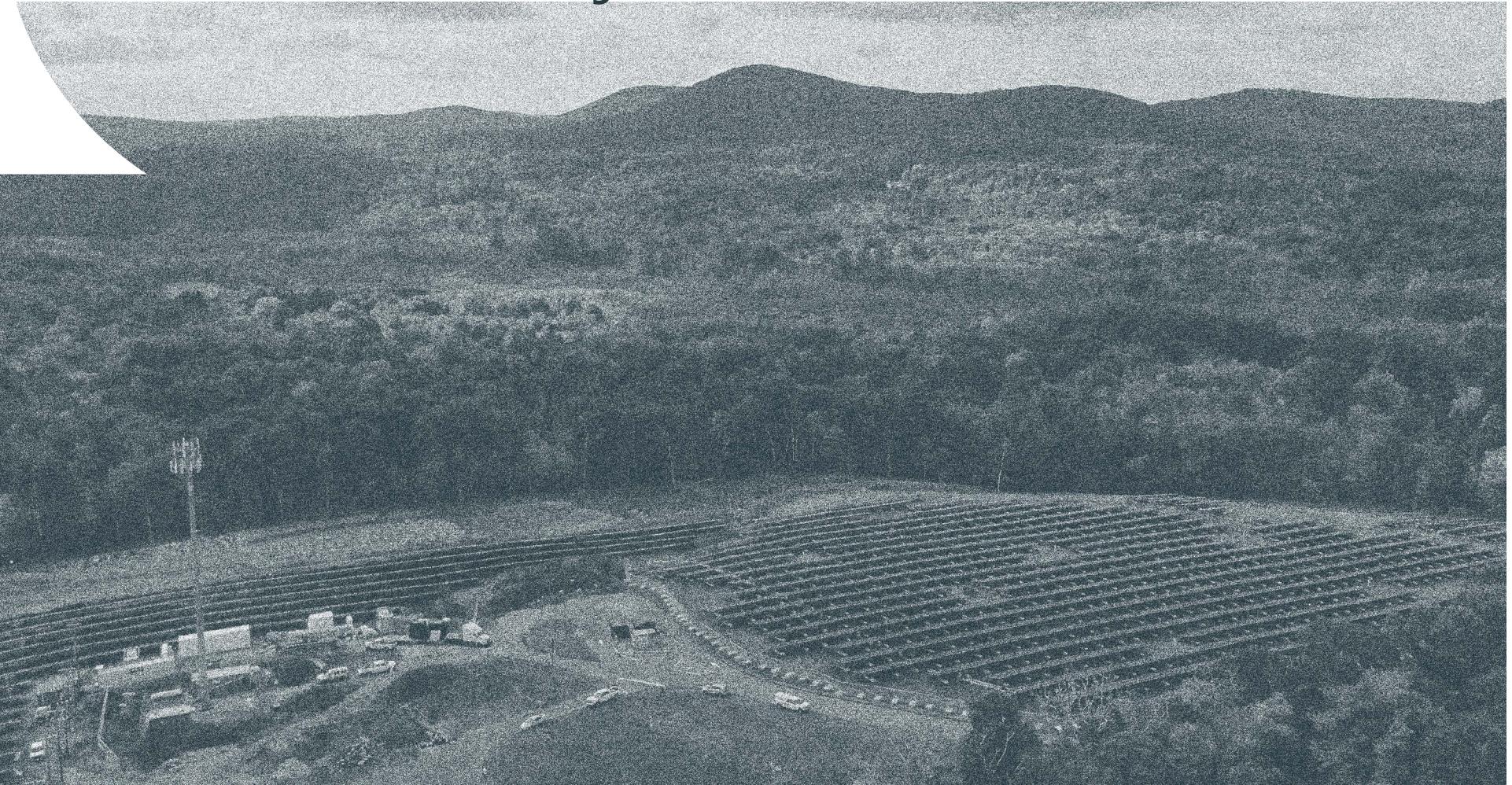
Action 6-3.3

Promote and facilitate enrollment in the State's Agriculture Preservation Restriction program to protect and enhance Hampden's agricultural lands by offering resources, workshops, and personalized assistance to landowners.

7

Resiliency and Climate

Resiliency and Climate, characterizes Hampden's natural hazards and related resilience measures, programs, and initiatives. This assessment primarily draws on data from state and local climate and resilience studies, and local planning documents, including the Town's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.



Baseline Conditions Analyses

Scientific consensus holds that the Earth's climate is warming, resulting in significant, long-term impacts on our ecosystems and our communities. Hampden is within Massachusetts' Greater Connecticut River Valley climate change assessment region and will face impacts similar to those of municipalities across the region.¹ General projections for the Connecticut River Valley include hotter summers, warmer winters, extended periods of drought, and higher-intensity storm events. These projections will likely cause public and environmental health challenges, including ecosystem degradation, increased flooding, decreases in agricultural productivity, and health systems pressure during extreme weather events and power outages. These impacts will challenge the resilience of several municipal systems addressed in this Plan, including public health, infrastructure, emergency management, and open space management.

Climate change impacts will increase the demand for state and municipal services and funding to address these challenges. The Town currently faces limitations in funding to adapt to these impacts, including efforts to protect residents, businesses, infrastructure, and the environment. External funding sources will be essential in achieving the goals outlined in this Plan. Potential funding sources include the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grants, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's Municipal Small Bridge Program, the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration's Culvert Replacement Grants, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants, and others. Notably, the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan and MVP Planning Grant Report prepared by Howard Stein Hudson provide crucial data and recommendations that effectively position the Town to apply for targeted funding opportunities.² These reports outline specific flood risk areas and highlight critical infrastructure needs, supporting the Town's eligibility for targeted funding aimed at climate

adaptation and flood mitigation. **Chapter 9, Implementation**, provides additional details on resilience strategies and funding opportunities.

The Town has already taken steps to address local climate change impacts, adapting approaches to infrastructure maintenance and emergency management to meet the demands of increased heat, storm intensity, and changing seasonal conditions. Hampden's Community Resilience Building workshop findings will be a critical guide for the Town to prioritize future adaptation and resilience improvements and allocate funding, identifying the Town's top hazards and vulnerable areas. Each of the Town's sectors can benefit from resiliency improvements. **Appendix A, Planning Context**, provides further information regarding the findings of the Town's Community Resilience Building workshops.

Climate Change in Hampden

As **Table 7.1** shows, climate change will impact various sectors in the Greater Connecticut River Valley Region.⁴ Increasing intensity and frequency of storm events, including heavy precipitation, are anticipated to cause community and environmental health impacts and damage infrastructure and drainage systems. Disruptions to local and regional food chains are expected, with decreases in agricultural productivity, more frequent power outages, and shifting distribution of pests.

¹ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (2022). Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment. [Executive Summary]. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2022-massachusetts-climate-change-assessment-december-2022-volume-i-executive-summary/download>

² Howard Stein Hudson. (2021). Town of Hampden Summary of Findings Community Resilience Building Workshop.

³ Town of Hampden and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. (2015). Town of Hampden Hazard Mitigation Plan. <https://www.pvpc.org/sites/default/files/HampdenHMP2016.pdf>

⁴ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (2022). Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment. [Volume II—Regional Reports]. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2022-massachusetts-climate-change-assessment-december-2022-volume-iii-regional-reports/download#page=23>

**Table 7.1: Greater Connecticut River Valley Region—
Most Urgent Impacts by Sector**

Sector	Impact
Human Sector	Reduction in food safety and security due to protection and supply chain issues, as well as spoilage during power outages
	Health effects of extreme storms and power outages, including from injuries, food safety, and medical device failure
Infrastructure Sector	Damage to inland buildings from heavy rainfall and overwhelmed drainage systems
	Damage to electric transmission and utility distribution infrastructure associated with heat stress and extreme events
Natural Environment Sector	Shifting distribution of native and invasive species as changing climate conditions favor certain species
	Freshwater ecosystem degradation due to warming waters, drought, and increased runoff
	Forest health degradation from warming temperatures, changing precipitation, extreme storms, and increasing pest occurrence
Governance Sector	Increase in costs of responding to climate migration, including planning for abrupt changes in local populations
	Reduction in state and municipal revenues, including a reduced property tax base due to inland flood risk
Economy Sector	Decrease in agricultural productivity as crop yields are impacted by precipitation patterns, extreme weather, pests, and other climate factors
	Reduction in the availability of affordably priced housing from direct damage (e.g., flooding) and the scarcity caused by increased demand

¹Source: Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Adapted from Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment (2022)

Hampden's predominant natural hazards include flooding, extreme storm events (e.g., heavy precipitation, wind, tornados), extreme heat, drought, and wildfires. Due to climate change, these natural hazards are anticipated to worsen in frequency and severity, contributing to various cross-sector impacts, as reflected in **Table 7.1**. Community Resilience Building workshop participants identified Main Street, adjacent to the Laughing Brook Wildlife Sanctuary, as a flood-vulnerable area due to the confluence of the Scantic River, Big Brook, and East Brook. Flood vulnerability extends throughout the Town, concentrated in the floodplains of the Town's waterbodies, as detailed in the following section, Flooding and Infrastructure. Flooding, exacerbated by extreme storm events with heavy precipitation, increases pressure on the Town's stormwater infrastructure systems and poses safety issues for residents and Hampden's Highway Department.

Extreme heat events, another significant hazard in Hampden, can be moderated by ensuring the public receives warnings and education to prepare and adjust their activities to minimize health risks. The Town should consider these risks when scheduling outdoor municipal maintenance and projects exposing Highway Department and Open Space staff to extreme heat. Excessive heat and drought conditions can also heighten the risk of wildfire events. Open space management, including the occasional removal of public shade trees and clearing forest floor decay, can minimize the amount of fallen limbs and debris fueling wildfires.

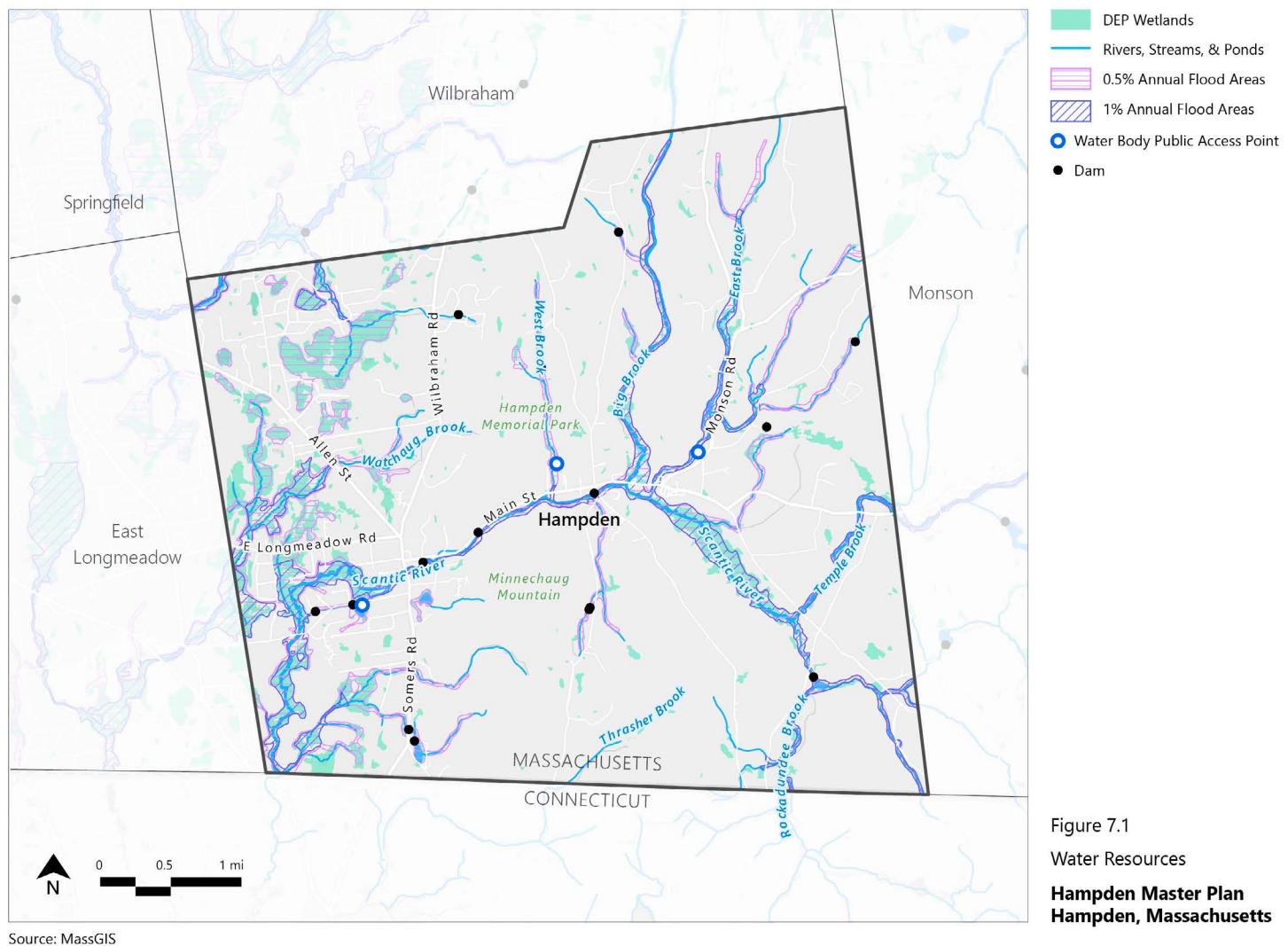
Flooding and Infrastructure

Flooding has been a prominent hazard in Hampden over past decades, with significant floods in 1938, 1955, and 2005. Flood-vulnerable areas are concentrated in floodplains surrounding the Town's waterways and wetlands, as shown in **Figure 7.1**. Howard Stein Hudson's MVP Planning Grant Report notes the growing risks associated with climate change, particularly stormwater flooding, which threatens to overwhelm existing, built infrastructure.⁵

⁵ Howard Stein Hudson. (2021). Town of Hampden Summary of Findings Community Resilience Building Workshop.

Flood threats have been growing with the increasing frequency of severe storm events, which deliver large volumes of precipitation in short periods, overwhelming stormwater infrastructure, obstructing emergency response and evacuation routes, and restricting access to schools and senior housing. The Hampden Highway Department has reported a rise in calls from residents experiencing road and property flooding for the first time, highlighting the unpredictability and intensification of flood risks.

According to FEMA, a 100-year flood is one percent likely to occur in any given year. The MVP Planning Grant Report underscores the Town's vulnerabilities to such events, particularly along Main Street near Big Brook and East Brook, where frequent flooding threatens emergency response routes and nearby homes. The report also highlights the challenges of undersized culverts, aging stormwater infrastructure, and debris-blocked waterways, which exacerbate flooding.



The Town has noted dam failures and existing stormwater infrastructure failures to meet increased energy and precipitation capacity demands during storm events, exacerbating flooding conditions. The dam across from the Town House failed several years ago and should be considered for fire safety, as it held water for fire department purposes. The Town's existing culverts, bridges, and dams can accommodate historic precipitation and runoff patterns. As precipitation events increase in frequency and intensity, it will be critical for the Town to identify vulnerabilities in its infrastructure systems and prioritize resiliency improvements to protect public safety.

Public Health

Emergency Management

Anticipating and preparing for hazards is critical in adapting to climate change impacts. Hampden's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP), developed in partnership with FEMA and MEMA, outlines emergency processes and designated shelters for flooding, extreme weather (cold and heat events), hazardous materials incidents, power outages, and natural disasters. To enhance public preparedness, the Town should actively share this document with residents as a key educational resource. In emergency scenarios, the Town's emergency team—including the Highway Department, Police Department, Fire Department, and Health Department—is well-equipped to respond. Additionally, a member of the Select Board serves as the Town's Emergency Director. Emergency shelters are located at the Town's schools, senior center, and police station.

Vector-Borne Disease

Seasonal changes in temperatures can increase the threat of vector-borne illnesses associated with increased tick and mosquito populations (e.g., Lyme Disease, Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE)), posing risks to the health of residents, visitors, municipal staff, and outdoor crews. Neighboring towns have had an increased frequency of EEE outbreaks in recent years. Mitigation efforts

could include expanded public outreach regarding protection measures and ensuring municipal staff are aware of potential threats and protective measures. Mosquito control districts are special-purpose districts authorized to protect public health and mitigate the spread of disease by controlling and exterminating both nuisance and disease-carrying mosquito populations.

Excessive Heat

Warmer temperatures, greater humidity, and more frequent periods of excessive heat due to climate change are connected to reduced agricultural productivity, impaired human health, increased droughts, and species range shifts. Future Massachusetts summers are projected to be warmer and will start to feel like summers in other states in the Southeastern U.S.⁶ These shifts will require adaptation to protect the health of residents, visitors, and municipal staff.

Changes in baseline temperature regimes can also alter the length and intensity of seasons, including longer and hotter summers. With this shift, the Town can anticipate changing recreation patterns, including greater demand for resources such as the Memorial Park Spray Park, open spaces, public shade trees, and other green and blue spaces to mitigate extreme heat. These spaces will be critical for community adaptation to shifting temperatures, as will their equitable distribution throughout the Town, ensuring all residents have access. Extended and more intense summers can also contribute to drought conditions, threatening the Town's groundwater yield and drinking water supply and leading to water shortages. Drought conditions can also heighten wildfire risk, as occurred in the Summer of 2020 and Autumn of 2024, from fallen trees and forest floor decay. Reliable fire suppression systems will be necessary to protect human and environmental health, anticipating more intense and extended fire seasons.

⁶ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (2022). Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment. [Volume II]. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/2022-massachusetts-climate-change-assessment-december-2022-volume-ii-statewide-report/download>

Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Energy

Hampden has been innovative in reducing its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and energy consumption. The Town is considering opportunities to transition the municipal fleet to electric (EV) or hybrid vehicles. The Town was also recently awarded an EV Incentive Program grant from MassDEP to install two level 3 EV charging stations at the Senior Center.

Conducting a GHG Emissions Inventory can be valuable in better understanding the sources of municipal and community energy consumption and identifying opportunities for reducing emissions and associated costs. The Town can proactively reduce its

municipal energy consumption through retrofits to town-owned buildings and infrastructure. There are potential savings with street lighting by converting to LED technology and window and lighting retrofits to make buildings more energy efficient. The Town should conduct future facility construction and expansion according to the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards and be net-zero or net-positive regarding energy use.

Solar Energy Generation

Hampden currently has eight solar energy systems, as shown in **Figure 7.2**.

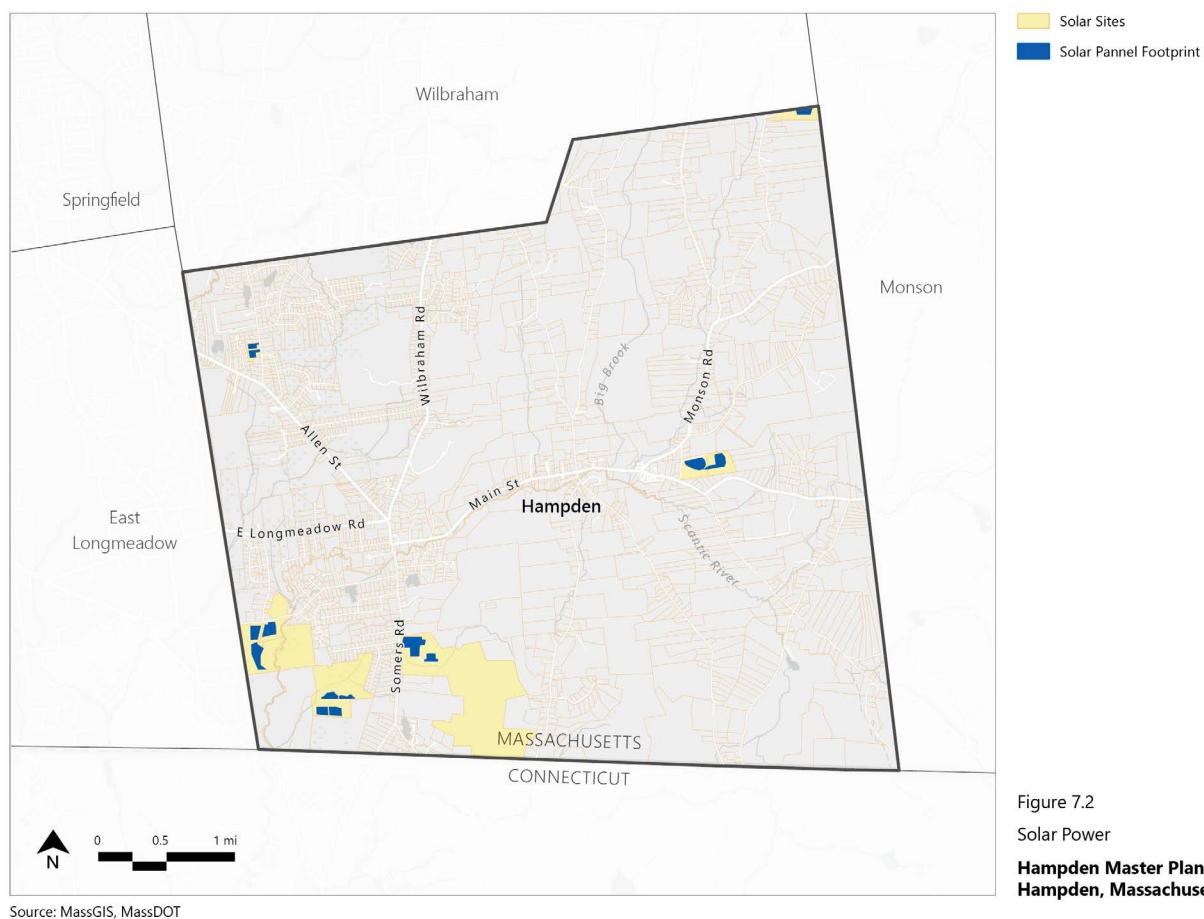


Figure 7.2
Solar Power
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

The solar energy systems mapped in **Figure 7.2** are ground-mounted and sited in large fields, including several former agricultural fields. These facilities cover approximately 90 acres and generate 22 MW of energy; however, none of the energy produced is used to power municipal facilities, nor are any town buildings connected to these systems. In response to the development of large-scale solar farms, the Town's Solar Bylaw Review Committee developed a strengthened version of the original Solar Bylaw, which was adopted at a Special Town Meeting in 2019. The bylaw governs the design standards, installation, regulation, and removal of solar farms in the Town, as well as environmental standards.



Ground-Mounted Solar Facility (Photo Credit: VHB)

In addition to expansive ground-mounted solar energy systems, the Town could consider smaller systems to create renewable energy for municipal facilities. Clusters of municipal facilities, such as the Town House, Highway Department, Schools, and Senior Center, which are in proximity, provide a campus setting that may be suitable for roof-mounted solar energy systems. The Town should also pursue Green Communities designation through the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, held by all surrounding communities, including East Longmeadow, Wilbraham, and Monson.⁷ The Green Communities Designation and Grant Program provides a roadmap and financial and technical support to municipalities that pledge to cut municipal energy use by 20 percent over five years. In addition to accessing funding and resources for renewable energy adoption, becoming a designated Green Community offers Hampden an opportunity to increase community outreach and education regarding energy and climate change-related issues.

Waste Management and Recycling

Hampden currently has a dual-stream recycling system and sends recyclable materials to the Springfield Material Recycling Facility. Hampden takes innovative and proactive approaches to public education regarding recycling and sustainability, including programming and events. The Town holds an annual cleanup day, inviting residents to assist with collecting trash that is brought to the local Transfer Station and Recycling Station. It also holds Earth Day events, including a cleanup of local parks.

⁷ Commonwealth of Massachusetts. (n.d.). Green Communities Designation and Grant Program. <https://www.mass.gov/green-communities-designation-grant-program>

7 Resiliency and Climate Goals and Actions

Goal 7-1	Goal 7-2	Goal 7-3
<p>Improve infrastructure and community resilience to natural hazards.</p> <p>Action 7-1.1 Conduct a dam vulnerability assessment to identify weaknesses in active dams and determine the financial feasibility of repairing inactive dams, focusing on dams with the potential to supply water for fire suppression purposes.</p> <p>Action 7-1.2 Develop an urban greening strategy to strengthen the resilience of public infrastructure, improve air quality, mitigate heat islands, and enhance stormwater absorption in priority areas of the town.</p> <p>Action 7-1.3 Perform climate vulnerability assessments for existing public assets and mandate these assessments for all new private developments.</p>	<p>Improve emergency management systems and processes.</p> <p>Action 7-2.1 Hire a full-time Emergency Management Director outside the police department to lead emergency preparedness and response initiatives.</p> <p>Action 7-2.2 Recruit a specialist to pursue and manage emergency management grants.</p> <p>Action 7-2.3 Reference and share Hampden's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to educate residents about emergency resources and processes.</p>	<p>Reduce municipal emissions and increase the Town's reliance on renewables.</p> <p>Action 7-3.1 Hire a consultant to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory to identify critical areas for emissions reduction.</p> <p>Action 7-3.2 Apply for Green Communities designation to access funding and support for sustainability projects.</p> <p>Action 7-3.3 Explore and implement energy efficiency retrofits for town lighting and facilities, including opportunities for installing roof-mounted solar panels to supply municipal energy.</p>

8

Transportation and Mobility

Transportation and Mobility evaluates Hampden's existing transportation infrastructure and mobility conditions. It examines factors such as road network functionality, traffic patterns, pedestrian accessibility, and transit services. This assessment primarily utilizes data from state and regional transportation agencies, and local planning documents.



Baseline Conditions Analyses

Roadway Networks

Figure 8.1 depicts the Town's roadway networks. There are approximately 55 miles of roads in Hampden. Approximately one mile of the roadways is private and has not been accepted by the Town; the Town owns the rest. Hampden is one of only a few municipalities in Massachusetts wherein there are no State controlled roadways.

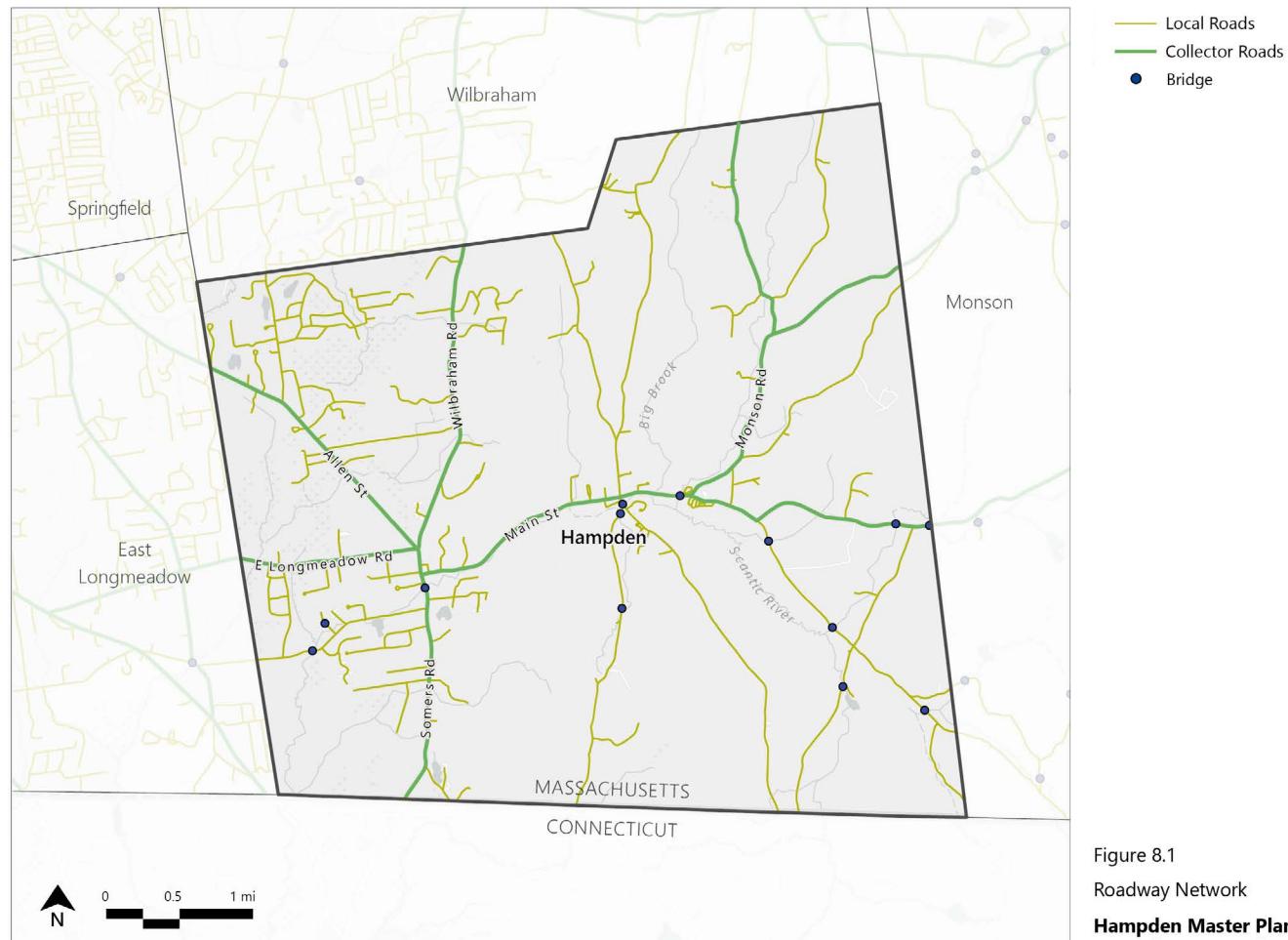


Figure 8.1
Roadway Network
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

As shown in **Table 8.1**, roadways classified as local comprise most of Hampden's roadways. The primary roads, classified as "rural major collectors" in the national roadway system, are Allen Street, Wilbraham Road, East Longmeadow Road, Main Street, the Glendale/North Monson road corridor, and the Cross/South Monson Corridor. Rural minor collectors include Somers Road and Glendale Road (north of North Monson Road).

Table 8.1: Roadway Classification and Mileage

Functional Classification	Centerline Miles
Rural Major Collector	11.57
Rural Minor Collector	4.03
Local	39.45
Total	55.05

Source: MassDOT Road Inventory (2021)

The eastern two-thirds of the Town are mountainous and rural. Many of the roadways in this section of Town reflect that rural character, often following the hilly contours and being relatively narrow with small or no shoulders.

The western third of the Town is more level and suburban in development and density. The roads tend to be flatter, straighter, and wider. In keeping with the rural character of the Town, all roads are only two lanes; none have turn lanes, none have signalized intersections, few have accommodations for pedestrians, and none have accommodations for bicycles.

An ongoing study specifically focuses on enhancing operations and safety at the intersection of Wilbraham Road, Allen Street, East Longmeadow Road, and Somers Road. This intersection, which handles the most traffic in Town, is wide, poorly aligned, and experiences more vehicle crashes than any other location in the Town. The 1982 Master Plan identified these issues and recommended improvements, but none have been made.

Bridges

Figure 8.1 depicts the locations of the 12 road bridges in Hampden. The State owns all. The average age of the bridges is 65, slightly less than the statewide average of 71.

Most of Hampden's bridges are in good or fair condition. Three have a poor rating due to structural deficiencies, though none are classified as structurally deficient. One of these, the Rock-A-Dundee Bridge over the Scantic River, has a completed replacement design and is targeted for state funding as part of the 2026 Transportation Improvement Plan. A new bridge on Main Street is also being designed and proposed to address increasing flooding events caused by changing storm patterns. These events have accelerated erosion along the roadway, riverbank, and private properties while also threatening the ecological health of the Scantic River and its surroundings. This design project, which has been fully funded through state grants, includes new culverts, bridge reinforcement, and the implementation of Green Infrastructure Solutions. These measures, such as permeable surfaces, stormwater harvesting, and enhanced landscaping, will help manage stormwater more effectively, reduce flooding, and mitigate runoff into the ecologically sensitive Scantic River.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Networks

As with the roadway network, the pedestrian and bicycle networks reflect the Town's rural character. Only about one of the 55 miles of roads has sidewalks, and none have bicycle lanes or multi-use paths.

Figure 8.2 shows that almost all the sidewalks are along Main Street. The sidewalk along the north side of Main Street extends from the Town House to Memorial Park. The sidewalk on the south side of Main Street extends another 1,800 feet to the west. The sidewalks along Main Street are typically paved asphalt about four feet wide. Most of the sidewalk along the south side

is several feet separated from the roadway, but most of the sidewalk on the north side is directly adjacent. Large driveways break up a considerable section of the sidewalk along the south side of Main Street across several business parcels. Some driveways are more than 60 feet wide, and several parcels have multiple driveways.



Figure 8.2
Sidewalks
Hampden Master Plan
Hampden, Massachusetts

There are only a handful of marked crosswalks in Hampden—three near the Town House, two near the middle school and the country club, one on Main Street at Memorial Park, and one on Somers Road near Centennial Commons. The marked crosswalks at Memorial Park and the food mart have Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon pedestrian warning systems.

Transit Networks

On-Demand Transit Service

Hampden is a member of the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority. There are no fixed transit routes serving Hampden or its adjacent communities. Dial-A-Ride ("Senior Van") serves those 60 years or older. It is a shared-ride, reservation-based service that prioritizes medical trips. The service is available weekdays and Saturdays between 8:00 am and 9:00 pm. On weekdays from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm, the Senior Van service in Hampden operated as the Tri-Town Trolley. The Tri-Town Trolley services East Longmeadow, Hampden, and Longmeadow and provides trips to those towns as well as Ludlow, Springfield, and West Springfield. The Tri-Town Trolley requires a 72-hour advanced booking.

Rideshare Services

Transportation Network Companies (TNCs) like Uber and Lyft offer additional transportation options in and around Hampden. Despite its rural location, the State's 2023 Rideshare Data Report showed 3,100 TNC trips beginning or ending in Hampden. Of those, 135 were trips within Hampden. Approximately 55 percent were to/from Springfield. The average trip length was 10 miles.

8 Transportation and Mobility Goals and Actions

Goal 8-1	Goal 8-2	Goal 8-3
<p>Enhance safety along all roadways.</p>	<p>Provide more transportation options for those with limited car access.</p>	<p>Expand the Town's sidewalk and crosswalk network effectively and appropriately.</p>
<p>Action 8-1.1</p> <p>Realign the intersection of Main Street and Glendale Road to eliminate the acute angle and visibility obstructions.</p> <p>Action 8-1.2</p> <p>Reduce visibility obstructions at intersections through increased resources for routine vegetation management and developing regulations prohibiting corner obstructions from signs, fences, and shrubbery.</p> <p>Action 8-1.3</p> <p>Establish guidelines and design criteria for multi-use paths along higher volume and higher-speed roads.</p>	<p>Action 8-2.1</p> <p>Seek to develop an accessible, multi-modal trail network connecting townwide to destinations and points of interest.</p> <p>Action 8-2.2</p> <p>Explore options with Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and community partners to provide a real-time, on-demand micro-transit service in Hampden. An on-demand/micro-transit service is a flexible, shared transportation system that uses smaller vehicles and allows users to request rides within a defined area, often via a mobile app.</p> <p>Action 8-2.3</p> <p>Work with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to update traffic counts on major roadways to help prioritize transportation projects.</p>	<p>Action 8-3.1</p> <p>Expand sidewalks along Main Street to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles better.</p> <p>Action 8-3.2</p> <p>Focus on sidewalk improvements in Business Districts along Main Street, Allen Street, and Somers Road.</p> <p>Action 8-3.3</p> <p>Assess all Town sidewalks and crosswalks for ADA accessibility and lighting/visibility.</p>

Implementation

This chapter serves as the Implementation Element of the Hampden Master Plan. The following framework provides a roadmap for actualizing the recommended actions identified throughout the planning process. These actions were developed based on issues and opportunities identified across the Master Plan elements, informed by existing planning initiatives and goals set by the Town, baseline conditions analyses, case examples from similar towns and cities across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and consideration of best practices identified by the planning consultants.

Implementing the goals and actions presented in this Master Plan supports the achievement of the shared Vision Statement, informed by engagement with municipal staff, community members, and local and regional stakeholders throughout the Plan's planning horizon—approximately 10 years.

As included in the following matrix, the implementation plan for the recommended actions addresses the following:

- ◆ **Champion** identifies the municipal entity that holds primary responsibility for implementing a recommended action.
- ◆ **Type of Action** categorizes each recommended action by its primary focus or method of implementation, as one of the following: Zoning Change, Staff Roles, Programs, Capital Investment and Funding Strategy, Procedural Change, Targeted Planning Efforts, Partnerships, Regulatory Change, or Public Engagement.

- ◆ **Timeframe** the schedule of implementation, defined as either "short-term" (2025-2026), "medium-term" (2027-2030), or "long-term" (2031-2035).

Upon formal adoption of this Master Plan by the Planning Board, it is recommended that the Town develop an implementation program. It will be important to track and regularly report the status of recommended actions for accountability and transparency purposes and to identify adjustments to the matrix that may be required over time to ensure successful implementation. Implementation champions should identify and collaborate with relevant internal and external stakeholders to the recommended actions to support successful implementation.

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 1-1: Optimize land use and zoning to support community needs and future growth.					
1 (Land Use)	1-1.1	Prepare a town-wide land use study to identify lands for residential development, commercial development, and preservation for open space, recreation, or agriculture.	Planning Board	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	1-1.2	Assess town-owned parcels, such as the vacant Thorton Burgess school building and the Town House building, to explore opportunities for adaptive reuse and serving community needs..	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	1-1.3	Amend bylaws to transition appropriate uses from Special Permit to Site Plan Review, reducing unnecessary steps and aligning zoning with Hampden's vision for streamlined development.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term
	Goal 1-2: Promote sustainable and contextual development in targeted areas of the Town.				
	1-2.1	Create a mixed-use overlay district in the Town Center and other critical business centers (e.g., Main Street/Somers Road intersection) to promote a walkable downtown district encouraging small-scale, community-friendly uses in existing commercial areas.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term
	1-2.2	Develop design guidelines for new development to ensure it complements the Town's rural character, regulating building size, style, and materials that reflect the community's historic and aesthetic values.	Planning Board	Regulatory Change	Medium-Term
	1-2.3	Evaluate the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing a battery storage bylaw for solar fields to enhance energy storage capacity and sustainability.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term
	Goal 1-3: Clarify the zoning and permitting process to foster community-enhancing development.				
	1-3.1	Simplify permitting procedures by consolidating steps, establishing clear review criteria, and implementing online applications to enhance efficiency and attract investment.	Planning Board	Regulatory Change	Short-Term
	1-3.2	Create a "Zoning 101" guide to provide clear and accessible information to residents, developers, and municipal boards about zoning codes and procedures.	Planning Board	Public Engagement	Short-Term
	1-3.3	Review zoning regulations to ensure they are consistent and clear for property owners and developers.	Planning Board	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 2-1: Perform targeted planning efforts to support accessible housing development.					
2 (Housing)	2-1.1	Hire a consultant to develop a Housing Production Plan to better understand the current and future housing needs of the population and create a schedule for housing production or maintenance and maintain a degree of control over future Chapter 40B projects.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
		Review the Zoning Bylaw to ensure zoning requirements prioritize residents' desired development. Example recommendations include the following. - Permit the construction of ADUs on existing residential properties by right. - Consider Smart Growth Zoning Overlay (40R) districts and conservation focused zoning to preserve open space areas, ensuring denser development in desired areas with limited sprawl.			
	2-1.2	- Include incentives for cluster development or higher-density development.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term
	2-1.3	Establish a Housing Committee comprising Selectboard, Planning Board, Council on Aging, Board of Assessors, and Building Department members to assess housing conditions, support residents' housing needs, and provide data-driven support for maintaining Hampden's housing stock.	Selectboard	Staff Roles	Short-Term
	Goal 2-2: Develop a basis of understanding to support long-term housing stability.				
	2-2.1	Develop and distribute a survey to residents to gather information on housing challenges, maintenance concerns, accessibility needs, and long-term housing preferences to guide local decision-making.	Selectboard	Public Engagement	Short-Term
	2-2.2	Create a publicly accessible dashboard or annual report that tracks key housing metrics, including housing conditions, occupancy trends, and resident needs, to inform future planning efforts.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	2-2.3	Aim to send at least one representative of the Planning Board to the Massachusetts Housing Partnership Housing Institute Summit annually to keep up to date with current state and local housing policy and funding opportunities.	Planning Board	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term
	Goal 2-3: Tap into state and/or federal developer, homeowner, or rental assistance programs.				
	2-3.1	Publicize rental assistance, fuel assistance, and/or minor home repair assistance programs, including USDA programs to support existing residents (e.g., 504 Home Repair Program, 515 Mortgage Program, 521 Rental Assistance, and Community Development Block Grant).	Council on Aging	Public Engagement	Medium-Term
	2-3.2	Raise awareness among residents about programs available for retrofitting older homes to improve health and energy efficiency.	Selectboard	Public Engagement	Medium-Term
	2-3.3	Promote state and federal programs that provide financial assistance for aging homeowners to modify their homes for accessibility and safety, enabling residents to age in place comfortably and maintain their independence as they grow older.	Council on Aging	Public Engagement	Medium-Term

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 3-1: Revitalize the Town's primary economic hubs and corridors, including Main Street.					
3 (Economic Development)	3-1.1	Encourage mixed-use development that could support small-scale businesses, artist spaces, restaurants, and more. Consider implementing a Tax Increment Financing district or Chapter 40R Smart Growth Zoning Overlay.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term
	3-1.2	Develop a guide regarding starting and conducting business in Hampden to attract emerging businesses, including navigation of permitting and licensing processes.	Town Administrator	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term
	3-1.3	Create a strategic plan for Main Street and other existing business corridors. Pursue grants to support Main Street Revitalization efforts.	Town Administrator	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term
Goal 3-2: Facilitate workforce development and employment opportunities.					
3-2.1	Adopt a bylaw to regulate vacant commercial properties that create a monetary disincentive for owning such properties without the legitimate pursuit of sale or lease.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term	
3-2.2	Strengthen the partnership with ERC5 to understand the region's business appetite and best practices for business development.	Selectboard	Partnerships	Medium-Term	
3-2.3	Conduct a market study to determine the viability of creating a coworking or business incubator space on vacant or underutilized property.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term	
Goal 3-3: Promote civic engagement, pride, and sense of identity by creating a Town brand.					
3-3.1	Promote civic engagement and educational partnerships by creating town internship opportunities and collaborations between schools, including the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District and nearby vocational-technical schools.	Town Administrator	Partnerships	Short-Term	
3-3.2	Create an "Explore Hampden" webpage, defining Hampden's unique assets and economic activities (e.g., historical landmarks, open spaces, recreational amenities, educational institutions, local businesses and events, etc.), and promote these through multiple channels.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term	
3-3.3	Allocate Community Preservation Act funds for projects enhancing public spaces and town aesthetics, including landscaping, pocket parks, public art, and gathering spaces, targeting areas lacking public parks, and expanding Town-owned open spaces.	Community Preservation Committee	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Short-Term	

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 4-1: Strengthen the role of the Hampden Historical Commission.					
	4-1.1	<i>Expand resources available to prospective and appointed HCC members to help them carry out their responsibilities and undertake new initiatives. For example, the MHC provides direct advice to local historical commissions and several virtual workshops each year on topics such as grant programs, online research, determining historic significance, and best practices for a proactive, community-supported preservation program.</i>	Hampden Cultural Council	Staff Roles	Medium-Term
	4-1.2	<i>Draft by-laws utilizing the HCC's planning and design discussions expertise. These may include the following.</i> - Designation of Neighborhood Conservation Districts; - Study the creation of by-laws that help prevent demolition, such as a demolition review for select properties or an enactment of a demolition-by-neglect by-law.	Planning Board	Zoning Change	Short-Term
	4-1.3	<i>Engage municipal departments and community stakeholders to increase awareness of how the HCC can help facilitate discussion and provide direction on preservation-related issues.</i>	Hampden Historical Commission	Public Engagement	Short-Term
Goal 4-2: Expand and strengthen the presence of Hampden's historical and cultural organizations.					
4 (Historic & Cultural Resources)	4-2.1	<i>Collaborating with organizations like the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and UMass Amherst PHP, develop a National Register nomination for the Hampden Village area.</i>	Hampden Historical Commission	Partnerships	Medium-Term
	4-2.2	<i>Create an independent website for the Hampden Historical Society to enhance communications regarding information such as museum hours, events, collections information, and overall role in the community.</i>	Hampden Historical Society	Public Engagement	Medium-Term
	4-2.3	<i>In collaboration with local stakeholders, including the Hampden Garden Club, Hampden Cemetery Commission, and Hampden Conservation Commission, as well as regional partners such as UMass Amherst PHP, prepare a heritage landscape inventory including Hampden's agricultural, industrial, and scenic sites and viewsheds to inform ongoing planning efforts and educational programming.</i>	Hampden Historical Commission	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
Goal 4-3: Expand Hampden's inventory of historic properties.					
	4-3.1	<i>Pursue further study and possible documentation of historic areas outside of Hampden Village such as post-war housing tracts, agricultural, industrial, and recreational sites.</i>	Hampden Historical Commission	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term
	4-3.2	<i>Engage local universities and/or high school students to update the Hampden Public Library's website with information on the library's local history collections. Explore funding opportunities available through the Hampden Cultural Council to support this effort.</i>	Hampden Public Library	Public Engagement	Medium-Term
	4-3.3	<i>Collaborate with appropriate state cultural organizations and area universities to establish maintenance, care, and accessioning guidelines, draft finding aids, and other documentation for the Hampden Historical Society's collections as necessary and explore using RoPa to host community events.</i>	Hampden Historical Society	Partnerships	Long-Term

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 5-1: Ensure stable financial resources for modernizing public facilities.					
5 (Public Facilities & Services)	5-1.1	Hire a town planner to prioritize upgrades and collaborate with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to access regional expertise and funding opportunities	Selectboard	Staff Roles	Short-Term
	5-1.2	Hire a dedicated grant writer or hire a grant writer with neighboring towns to pursue state and federal grants, forge public-private partnerships, and track expenditures.	Town Administrator	Staff Roles	Medium-Term
	5-1.3	Establish a reserve fund for large capital projects, such as repairs, upgrades, and replacements for the Town House, Police Station, and Fire Station.	Capital Planning Committee	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Short-Term
Goal 5-2: Adapt public services to meet the community's evolving needs.					
5-2.1	Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing public facilities to identify urgent, mid-, and long-term maintenance/modernization needs and create a phased modernization plan to address these needs.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term	
5-2.2	Establish a designated area for the Veterans Service Officer to conduct confidential meetings with residents.	Town Administrator	Staff Roles	Medium-Term	
5-2.3	Develop a Broadband and Technology Plan that includes a townwide fiber optic deployment schedule and priorities for maintaining municipal digital infrastructure and tools. Collaborate with partners such as the Alliance for Digital Equity, TechFoundry, and the Massachusetts Broadband Institute.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term	
Goal 5-3: Update town government roles and revamp community outreach practices.					
5-3.1	Enhance governance efficiency by increasing the Selectboard to five members and consolidating the elected Treasurer and Tax Collector positions into one appointed role.	Selectboard	Staff Roles	Long-Term	
5-3.2	Amend Hampden's General Bylaws to include definitions and role descriptions for the Selectboard and the Town Administrator, as the Government Study Committee recommends.	Selectboard	Regulatory Change	Short-Term	
5-3.3	Integrate technology into Town Meeting processes, including a hybrid meeting format to expand attendance options and electronic handheld voting to improve voting documentation.	Selectboard	Procedural Change	Short-Term	

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 6-1: Enhance Hampden's Parks and Recreation Department's programs, facilities, and outreach.					
6 (Open Space & Recreation)	6-1.1	<i>Update the Town's 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan.</i>	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	6-1.2	<i>Explore grant funding opportunities for capital improvements.</i>	Parks & Recreation	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Short-Term
	6-1.3	<i>Conduct a public survey to assess community recreation needs, using the results to expand and enhance the department's capacity, tailor existing programs, and explore new offerings.</i>	Parks & Recreation	Public Engagement	Short-Term
Goal 6-2: Enhance community engagement with open spaces and recreational resources.					
6-2.1	<i>Conduct an ADA accessibility assessment of all Town facilities. Consider upgrades to existing facilities using a Universal Design framework.</i>	Commission on Disabilities	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Short-Term	
6-2.2	<i>Identify areas to implement swimming and boat launches along the Scantic River.</i>	Parks & Recreation	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Short-Term	
6-2.3	<i>Address public demand for the Memorial Park Spray Park by increasing the hours of operation on days when the temperature exceeds 90 degrees, adding shaded structures, and implementing a resident pass program charging non-residents for access.</i>	Parks & Recreation	Programs	Short-Term	
Goal 6-3: Collaborate with local partners like the Minnechaug Land Trust to support land conservation.					
6-3.1	<i>Pursue a new access easement or agreement to connect Minnechaug Mountain to the newly acquired 20-acre parcel of open space to the southeast.</i>	Conservation Commission	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term	
6-3.2	<i>Develop a Forest Management Plan that encourages environmental stewardship and includes enforcement mechanisms for trail preservation</i>	Conservation Commission	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term	
6-3.3	<i>Promote and facilitate enrollment in the State's Agriculture Preservation Restriction program to protect and enhance Hampden's agricultural lands by offering resources, workshops, and personalized assistance to landowners.</i>	Conservation Commission	Programs	Short-Term	

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 7-1: Improve infrastructure and community resilience to natural hazards.					
7 (Resiliency & Climate)	7-1.1	Conduct a dam vulnerability assessment to identify weaknesses in active dams and determine the financial feasibility of repairing inactive dams, focusing on dams with the potential to supply water for fire suppression purposes.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	7-1.2	Develop an urban greening strategy to strengthen the resilience of public infrastructure, improve air quality, mitigate heat islands, and enhance stormwater absorption in priority areas of the town.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	7-1.3	Perform climate vulnerability assessments for existing public assets and mandate these assessments for all new private developments.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Short-Term
	Goal 7-2: Improve emergency management systems and processes.				
	7-2.1	Hire a full-time Emergency Management Director outside the police department to lead emergency preparedness and response initiatives.	Selectboard	Staff Roles	Medium-Term
	7-2.2	Recruit a specialist to pursue and manage emergency management grants.	Selectboard	Staff Roles	Short-Term
	7-2.3	Reference and share Hampden's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to educate residents about emergency resources and processes.	Selectboard	Public Engagement	Short-Term
	Goal 7-3: Reduce municipal emissions and increase the Town's reliance on renewables.				
	7-3.1	Hire a consultant to conduct a greenhouse gas emissions inventory to identify critical areas for emissions reduction.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term
	7-3.2	Apply for Green Communities designation to access funding and support for sustainability projects.	Selectboard	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Short-Term
	7-3.3	Explore and implement energy efficiency retrofits for town lighting and facilities, including opportunities for installing roof-mounted solar panels to supply municipal energy.	Town Administrator	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term

Chapter	Strategy #	Action	Champion	Type of Action	Timeframe
Goal 8-1: Enhance safety along all roadways.					
8 (Transportation & Mobility)	8-2.3	Realign the intersection of Main Street and Glendale Road to eliminate the acute angle and visibility obstructions.	Highway Department	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Long-Term
	8-2.2	Reduce visibility obstructions at intersections through increased resources for routine vegetation management and developing regulations prohibiting corner obstructions from signs, fences, and shrubbery.	Highway Department	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Medium-Term
	8-3.1	Establish guidelines and design criteria for multi-use paths along higher volume and higher-speed roads.	Highway Department	Regulatory Change	Medium-Term
	Goal 8-2: Provide more transportation options for those with limited car access.				
	8-2.1	Seek to develop an accessible, multi-modal trail network connecting townwide to destinations and points of interest.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Long-Term
	8-2.2	Explore options with Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and community partners to provide a real-time, on-demand micro-transit service in Hampden. An on-demand/micro-transit service is a flexible, shared transportation system that uses smaller vehicles and allows users to request rides within a defined area, often via a mobile app.	Selectboard	Partnerships	Short-Term
	8-2.3	Work with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to update traffic counts on major roadways to help prioritize transportation projects.	Highway Department	Partnerships	Short-Term
	Goal 8-3: Expand the Town's sidewalk and crosswalk network effectively and appropriately.				
	8-3.1	Expand sidewalks along Main Street to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles better.	Selectboard	Capital Investment & Funding Strategy	Long-Term
	8-3.2	Focus on sidewalk improvements in Business Districts along Main Street, Allen Street, and Somers Road.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Long-Term
	8-3.3	Assess all Town sidewalks and crosswalks for ADA accessibility and lighting/visibility.	Selectboard	Targeted Planning Efforts	Medium-Term



A Bridge to the Future

This Master Plan is presented to the residents of Hampden as a living document, designed not only to address immediate health, safety, and economic challenges, but also to guide us toward a future where property values rise and the quality of life improves. While it focuses on pressing issues, the Plan is also an invitation to think about the long-term future of our Town. It reflects community feedback and aspirations, offering a foundation for conversation, collaboration, and action.

This Plan is a call to inspire participation in Town affairs and to encourage innovative, "out-of-the-box" thinking. It sets us on a path to achieve bold yet achievable goals. How can we, as a community, leverage our collective spirit and the power of current and emerging technologies to meet the needs and desires voiced by residents of all ages? Through the surveys and open forums, several core goals have emerged as priorities:

- ◆ Clean Water
- ◆ Clean Air
- ◆ Open Space
- ◆ Energy Independence
- ◆ A sophisticated technological infrastructure
- ◆ A world-class education system

This Master Plan is just the first step. Hampden's greatest asset is its residents—an accomplished, educated, talented, and creative community. Achieving these goals will require a shared commitment, with residents contributing time, talent, expertise, and creativity. Together, we can make Hampden a model for quality of life and innovation among towns.

The Master Plan Committee urges everyone to get involved. This is your community, your future.

Stretch Goals

These Stretch Goals set an ambitious vision for Hampden's future, pushing beyond conventional planning to inspire transformative progress, increase property values, and improve quality of life. These goals challenge the town to think boldly, embrace innovation, and pursue opportunities that enhance long-term resilience, sustainability, and quality of life. While aspirational, they serve as a guiding framework for strategic decision-making, positioning Hampden for a dynamic and thriving future.

1 Energy Independence

Every Town resident receives Free energy.

- a. Every energy economic development plan includes energy allocation to Town residents.
- b. Extracting energy from piezoelectric roads, micro hydro power, water wheel generators, geothermal, commercial and residential wind, sun, heat pumps, sophisticated battery storage, solar roads, thermoelectric asphalt, wind kites and drones and biogas from organic waste.
- c. Make the Town walkable and bikeable.

2. Clean Water

Every Town resident is guaranteed Clean Water.

- a. Recognize all Town water, including rivers and streams, as a "Person" with full legal protection, as a livable entity.
- b. Every Town property owner becomes Clean Water Certified.
- c. Enforce up stream Town's, State and Federal Clean Water regulations. Execute up stream shared Clean Water protection policies.

3. Pure Air

Every Town resident breathes the purest air.

- a. Recognize forests and trees as a "Person" with full legal protection, as a livable entity.
- b. Guarantee that all carbon dioxide and impurities in the Town's air are offset by forests, trees and vegetation.
- c. Eliminate carbon and impurities exhausted into the air.

4. Embrace Technology

Every Town and Business activity optimized for efficiency.

- a. Streamline Town operations as a profitable entity
- b. Build the most sophisticated technology infrastructure
- c. Leverage Artificial Intelligence

5. Education

Every kid learns the decision-making impacts on the seventh generation.

- a. Ensuring the long-term success and continuity of the Town's key initiatives
- b. Create learning gaming systems to enhance quality-of-life
- c. Focus on Ethics and Civics

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Appendix

A Planning History



Appendix A: Planning History

Appendix A provides a comprehensive overview of key planning documents that have shaped and continue to influence the development of the Town of Hampden. These documents address various topics, including land use, housing, economic development, environmental sustainability, and emergency management, offering local insights and documenting municipal goals. **Appendix A** documents past and ongoing efforts that have informed this master planning process and helped guide Hampden toward a resilient, sustainable, and thriving future. The following sections summarize pertinent studies, plans, and reports contributing to the town's long-term vision.

- ▶ Hampden Master Plan (1982)
- ▶ Hampden Zoning Bylaws
- ▶ Hampden Subdivision Rules & Regulations
- ▶ Valley Vision 4: The Regional Land Use Plan for the Pioneer Valley (2014)
- ▶ Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Plan (2014)
- ▶ The Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress. Building on Success: Economic Strategies for the Region (2015)
- ▶ Town of Hampden Open Space and Recreation Plan (2017)
- ▶ Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2019)
- ▶ MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (MHCWB) Strategic Plan (2020)
- ▶ Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings (2021)
- ▶ Hampden Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) (2022)
- ▶ Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District Strategic Plan: 2022-2027 (2022)
- ▶ Annual Town Reports (2022, 2023)

Hampden Master Plan (1982)

The Town of Hampden's 1982 Master Plan laid the foundation for many current planning goals and policies, offering in-depth research on land use, infrastructure, housing, and economic development. Key findings from the Plan highlighted the limitations of Hampden's vacant land, including soil quality, topography, and fiscal constraints. The Plan's land use goals centered around preserving Hampden's small-town character, conserving natural resources, and maintaining mountain views while recognizing challenges like the limited availability of suitable land and the need to manage growth.

The 1982 Master Plan also addressed housing initiatives and development, including establishing the Hampden Housing Authority in 1974. Key constraints for housing development identified included the reliance on private wells and septic systems, which raised concerns about groundwater contamination and potential environmental impacts

from future growth in the eastern part of town. The Plan proposed the creation of an Upland Zoning District to manage these concerns.

The Plan addresses economic development, with recommendations to concentrate businesses along Main Street and within the Business District. The Plan acknowledged the importance of zoning bylaws, environmental constraints, and service demand in shaping future business growth, as well as several constraints, including limited developable land due to mountainous topography, a lack of public water or waste treatment facilities, and the town's isolated location. Despite these challenges, the town's goals included preserving natural resources, enhancing recreation and conservation facilities, and managing development to maintain its environmental qualities.

The Plan also included goals for preserving Hampden's cultural and historic resources, focusing on maintaining the Town Center's historic quality. Action items included encouraging the rehabilitation of historic buildings and pursuing National Register listings, which led to the successful listing of the Thornton W. Burgess House in 1983.

Traffic circulation issues identified in the 1982 Plan remain relevant today. The Main Street and Glendale Road intersection is still considered hazardous, and the junction of Wilbraham Road, Allen Street, East Longmeadow Road, and Somers Road experiences high traffic volume and poor alignment. Recommendations for improving these intersections included adding traffic controls and realigning roadways to improve safety.

Hampden Zoning Bylaws

Hampden's Zoning Bylaws serve several purposes, including protecting public health and safety, preventing overcrowding and undue concentration of population, conserving natural resources, and preventing environmental pollution. The Bylaws ensure the appropriate use of land throughout the town, regulate lot size and frontage, and provide guidelines for new construction and alterations to existing buildings.

The most recent update to the Zoning Bylaws was adopted in 2019, incorporating changes from amendments related to Solar Energy Systems in October 2019 and the addition of Section 6.12, which addresses Registered Marijuana Establishments, in April 2014.

The Goals and Actions identified throughout this Master Plan include recommended updates to the Zoning Bylaws, many of which are implementable within the first year of plan adoption.

Hampden Subdivision Rules and Regulations

The Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land in Hampden, most recently amended in 2015, are required under the Subdivision Control Law (Sections 81-K to 81-GG inclusive, Chapter 41, Mass. G. L.). These regulations protect Hampden residents' health, safety, and welfare by shaping the development of multi-lot subdivisions. The Hampden Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals uphold the regulations, ensuring subdivisions provide adequate, safe access to all lots, reduce congestion, minimize traffic hazards, and ensure emergency access. Additionally, these rules and regulations require compliance with

local Zoning Bylaws, coordination of the layout of roads with existing public ways, and adequate infrastructure such as water, sewer, and drainage systems.

Valley Vision 4: The Regional Land Use Plan for the Pioneer Valley (2014)

Housing assessment, policymaking, and planning occur at the local, regional, state, and federal levels, involving multiple stakeholders in residential development. In Hampden, key local housing stakeholders include the Hampden Housing Authority, Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and Zoning Board of Appeals. These entities work with neighboring communities and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to evaluate housing in Hampden.

Valley Vision 4, developed by the PVPC, is a regional land use plan to guide sustainable growth in Hampden and Hampshire counties. This plan encourages compact, mixed-use development in urban, town, and village centers while protecting open spaces, farmland, and natural resources. It seeks to reduce sprawl, enhance urban areas, lower vehicle miles traveled, and increase affordable housing options. First introduced in 1997 and updated in 2013, Valley Vision 4 also addresses land use equity and environmental justice, providing a comprehensive framework for regional development.

The plan outlines several key land-use and zoning strategies, including promoting mixed-use village centers, developing incentives for cluster development, and improving housing opportunities and neighborhood quality. It also emphasizes the importance of preserving farmlands, redeveloping brownfields, establishing greenbelts and blueways, and creating an interconnected network for pedestrians and cyclists. Furthermore, Valley Vision 4 advocates for sustainable design, climate action, and overhauling outdated zoning regulations, with particular attention to helping small towns like Hampden manage unique growth challenges.

Valley Vision 4 informed the development of the 2025 Hampden Master Plan, providing a regional framework to guide and align Hampden's goals for sustainable growth, housing, and community development. Addressing pertinent issues such as affordable housing, land preservation, and infrastructure improvements, the strategies in Valley Vision 4 support Hampden's efforts to foster balanced development and a resilient community. Integrating these regional goals into the Master Plan coordinates Hampden's development with broader regional priorities.

Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Plan (2014)

The PVPC's 2014 Pioneer Valley Regional Housing Plan addresses regional housing challenges, providing strategies for increasing affordable housing, promoting sustainable policies, and fostering regional collaboration. The plan outlines strategies to accommodate diverse housing needs, improve housing quality, and ensure equitable access to housing opportunities. For Hampden, several key issues identified in the plan are particularly relevant.

One concern highlighted in the plan is Hampden's low homeowner vacancy rate, which is below the healthy 2 percent threshold, the accepted "healthy" vacancy rate supporting home turnover and neighborhood stabilization. Low vacancy rates can restrict housing supply, driving housing prices upwards. In 2022, Hampden's vacancy rate was estimated at 3 percent, trending downward from a peak of nearly 6 percent in 2018.¹ Hampden's housing market is strong, but housing is becoming less affordable, according to interviews with stakeholders and the public conducted during the 2025 master planning process.

The plan also points to restrictive zoning in Hampden, listing Hampden as one of thirteen regional municipalities with "the most exclusive zoning," defined by PVPC as zoning that disincentivizes two-family and multifamily housing. However, Hampden has begun to address this issue with recent zoning changes, such as the 2023 approval of in-law apartments, to increase housing options.²

Additionally, the plan notes Hampden's limited housing planning and production capacity at the time of publishing in 2014, relying primarily on the local Housing Authority and the Community Preservation Act (CPA) to support housing initiatives. In contrast, other communities had dedicated Housing Committees, Planning Departments, and Housing Trusts to analyze and preserve local housing. While progress has been made, Hampden's housing planning capacity remains a key focus for future growth and development.

The Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress. Building on Success: Economic Strategies for the Region (2015)

The 2015 Pioneer Valley Plan for Progress outlines an economic strategy for the region through 2025, drawing on public and stakeholder input to address emerging trends and challenges. At the time, the key challenges facing the Pioneer Valley included retaining and expanding its skilled workforce, addressing critical infrastructure deficiencies, and providing support for small and mid-sized businesses.

The plan also identified several growth opportunities. These included improving infrastructure connections, enhancing north-south and east-west rail corridors, and expanding broadband access. Since then, significant progress has been made, including ongoing investigations by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) into the feasibility of an east-west commuter rail line, with proposed stations in nearby Palmer and Springfield. Additionally, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute has funded digital equity studies, though Hampden has focused on installing fiber optic infrastructure to improve internet access and compete with cable providers.

Another key opportunity highlighted in the plan was the potential for the Pioneer Valley to become a regional leader in clean energy production. The region has seen a rise in solar farms, and Hampden has adopted zoning regulations to support these initiatives. Hampden's solar installations have provided clean energy and new revenue streams. Lastly, the plan emphasized leveraging assets in the New England Knowledge Corridor, which includes the Greater Springfield, Hartford, and New Haven regions. Collaboration among

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2018, 2022). ACS 5-Year Estimates Data Profiles, Table DP04

² Town of Hampden. (2023 May). *Changes made to the Zoning Bylaws of the Town of Hampden Massachusetts*. Retrieved September 20, 2024 from https://www.hampdenma.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif656/f/news/zoning_bylaw_change_posted_june_18_2024.pdf

regional agencies and higher education institutions, such as Springfield Technical Community College's Hampden Prep Program, provides valuable workforce development opportunities for residents.

Town of Hampden Open Space and Recreation Plan (2017)

The 2017 Hampden Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) builds on previous planning efforts, such as the 1982 Master Plan and annual town reports, to address land use, cultural resources, and recreational development in the town. A central focus of the OSRP is preserving Hampden's historic resources and maintaining its rural character, which aligns with earlier plans that emphasized the historic quality of the Town Center.

Key goals from the 2017 OSRP include maintaining the historic appearance of the Town Center and expanding open space and recreational amenities accessible to all residents, with particular attention to improving handicapped accessibility in public spaces. The plan also outlines specific action items, such as overseeing Community Preservation projects to support affordable housing, historic preservation, and open space protection. Notable achievements include the 2018 renovation of the Town House's basement, which improved accessibility and expanded public amenities, partly funded by a \$75,000 grant from the Community Preservation Act Committee.

Regarding environmental preservation, the OSRP set several broader goals for Hampden, including managing development to protect the town's rural character, safeguarding water resources, preserving agricultural and forested lands, and enhancing connectivity between open spaces and neighborhoods. These goals help guide Hampden's ongoing commitment to balancing environmental conservation with community development, preserving the town's natural and cultural heritage for future generations. This plan is a critical resource informing the 2025 master planning process, particularly in **Chapter 6, Open Space & Recreation**.

Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2019)

The 2019 Pioneer Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), developed by the PVPC, outlines a regional approach to fostering economic growth and resilience across Hampden, Hampshire, and Franklin counties. Regional priorities include strengthening key sectors such as healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and education while promoting workforce development, innovation, and infrastructure enhancements. It emphasizes regional collaboration and sustainable practices to ensure long-term economic vitality for the region's communities.

The CEDS proposes several recommendations for municipalities to promote local economic development, including fostering communication with emergency response staff, regional chambers of commerce, and state agencies regarding disaster recovery issues. It also suggests establishing a comprehensive database of local businesses, potentially integrated with the process of granting permits and licenses, to improve business support and planning. Additionally, municipalities are encouraged to provide disaster preparedness information to businesses, ensuring that critical contacts and procedures are readily

available. These actions will help strengthen the local economy and improve resilience in facing unforeseen challenges.

MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (MHHCWB) Strategic Plan (2020)

The 2020 Strategic Plan for the MassHire Hampden County Workforce Board (MHHCWB) outlines goals for fostering job growth and aligning workforce development with regional economic needs. The plan, which covers fiscal years 2021-2023, utilizes labor market data to identify key economic strengths, employment trends, and challenges facing the Hampden County region.

Key workforce development needs identified include better aligning regional skills with industry demands, particularly in high-priority sectors such as advanced manufacturing, healthcare, education, financial services, and tourism. The plan identifies several opportunities to address these needs, including expanding apprenticeship programs, creating career pathways from high school to higher education, and enhancing adult training programs at vocational-technical schools. These strategies aim to equip the workforce with the skills needed to meet the region's evolving job market demands.

This plan informs the regional context within which Hampden's can align its long-term economic goals. By addressing critical issues such as skill gaps and the need for targeted training programs, the plan offers valuable insights for ensuring that the town's residents are well-equipped to meet the demands of the evolving job market. Incorporating workforce strategies into the Master Plan will help Hampden cultivate a skilled, competitive workforce and foster economic growth.

Community Resilience Building Workshop Summary of Findings (2021)

In 2021, Hampden engaged in proactive climate resilience planning through the Community Resilience Building (CRB) Workshop, part of the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program. In collaboration with Howard Stein Hudson (HSH), Mary Louise Monahan, and Mass Audubon, the workshop brought together residents and municipal staff to assess climate-related threats, identify infrastructure vulnerabilities, and explore opportunities for enhancing environmental management and emergency preparedness. These findings informed the development of the 2025 Master Plan, particularly regarding Chapter 7, Resiliency & Climate.

The workshop identified several priority actions to improve community resilience, including assessing the Main Street Bridge for potential rehabilitation or replacement, evaluating bridges and culverts for vulnerabilities, reviewing dam function, and expanding solar energy initiatives. The plan also highlighted the need for increased education on vector-borne diseases, monitoring issues related to private wells and Title V regulations, and developing a forest management plan. Strengthening communication between emergency management teams and local schools was also a key focus, along with using the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System to enhance resilience.

Discussions through the CRB workshop highlighted several climate challenges pertinent to Hampden, including increased stormwater flows that overwhelm infrastructure and growing wildfire risks from drought and natural decay. Discussions also highlighted opportunities to improve resilience, including the use of renewable energy solutions like solar power, leveraging dams for fire suppression and flood management, and utilizing nature-based solutions to enhance the town's natural resources. These findings provide a critical foundation for Hampden's approach to climate change and resilience, and the town's participation in the MVP Grant Program makes it eligible for funding to support these initiatives.

Hampden Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) (2022)

Hampden's 2022 Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) sets forth a structured approach for a unified emergency management system across the community, ensuring coordinated responses to crises and synchronized support for pre-planned events. This plan describes the duties and responsibilities of local departments, agencies, governmental bodies, volunteers, and community partners involved in emergency response efforts. It also specifies the processes for activating resources from regional, state, federal, private sector, and other sources to effectively manage disasters and emergencies in the community.

The CEMP identifies several key risks to which Hampden is susceptible, including natural hazards such as riverine flooding, snowstorms, and wildland fires, as well as technological hazards like hazardous materials spills. Transportation hazards are also a concern, particularly along roads that serve as routes for transporting hazardous materials, including Main Street and East Longmeadow Road. The CEMP also addresses human-made hazards, such as cyber-attacks and chemical or biological threats. By anticipating these risks and outlining a coordinated response, the CEMP plays a crucial role in strengthening Hampden's preparedness for a variety of emergencies, providing important guidance for the 2025 Master Plan's approach to public safety and resilience. In particular, this resource informed priorities and analysis of **Chapters 5, Public Facilities & Services**, and **7, Resiliency & Climate**.

Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District Strategic Plan: 2022-2027 (2022)

The Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District (HWRSD) updated its strategic plan for the 2022-2027 period, building on input from parents, students, faculty, staff, and the broader community. The HWRSD Strategic Plan informed the issues and opportunities identified through the 2025 master planning process, as well as recommendations, ensuring alignment with the District's priorities. The plan establishes several key goals focused on enhancing the quality of education and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Primary objectives include implementing a vertically aligned curriculum delivered through high-quality instruction and ensuring that educational practices are consistent across grade levels. The plan also emphasizes supporting students' social-emotional and physical health as critical factors in their academic success, with a focus on promoting diversity, equity, and

inclusion. Additionally, the District aims to provide a multi-tiered system of academic and social-emotional support for all students, offer ongoing professional development for staff, and strengthen collaborative relationships with families. Clear and consistent communication with stakeholders is another goal, as is building inclusive leadership roles that support a diverse and valued school community.

Annual Town Reports (2022, 2023)

Hampden's Annual Town Reports provide a detailed account of recent achievements, ongoing projects, and challenges that influence current and future planning efforts. Accomplishments outlined in the 2022 and 2023 reports include significant infrastructure improvements, such as installing fiber optic telecommunications funded by a \$250,000 state Broadband Grant and expanding internet access to residents and businesses. The Town also made strides in digital advancements by transitioning paper documents to digital formats across town offices, improving operational efficiency. Regarding public works, the Town implemented road maintenance projects on key roads like Andrew Circle, Main Street, and Stony Hill Road, funded through the Highway Department's Chapter 90 State-aid allocation.

Public safety and services saw improvements with the completion of the Hampden Police/Fire Digital Radio project, new public health services introduced by the Board of Health during the pandemic, and the opening of the Sheila R. Flynn Teen Center at the Hampden Free Public Library. The Town also pursued sustainability initiatives, including completing the Transfer Station Solar Facility and securing \$271,000 in grants for a Level 3 electric vehicle charging station at the Senior Center.

However, the Town continues to face several challenges, including the need for infrastructure upgrades at aging facilities like the Town House, Fire Station, and Senior Center. Efforts are underway to explore expansion and renovation options for the Senior Center. The slow recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly within local schools, and a decline in volunteerism, which has left some Town Boards and Committees under-resourced, also present ongoing difficulties. Despite these challenges, the Town has made significant progress in maintaining and improving its infrastructure, ensuring the safety and functionality of essential services. These accomplishments and challenges provide important context for the 2025 Master Plan, helping guide recommendations and priorities regarding infrastructure, public services, and community development.

Appendix

B Community Survey Results



Town of Hampden

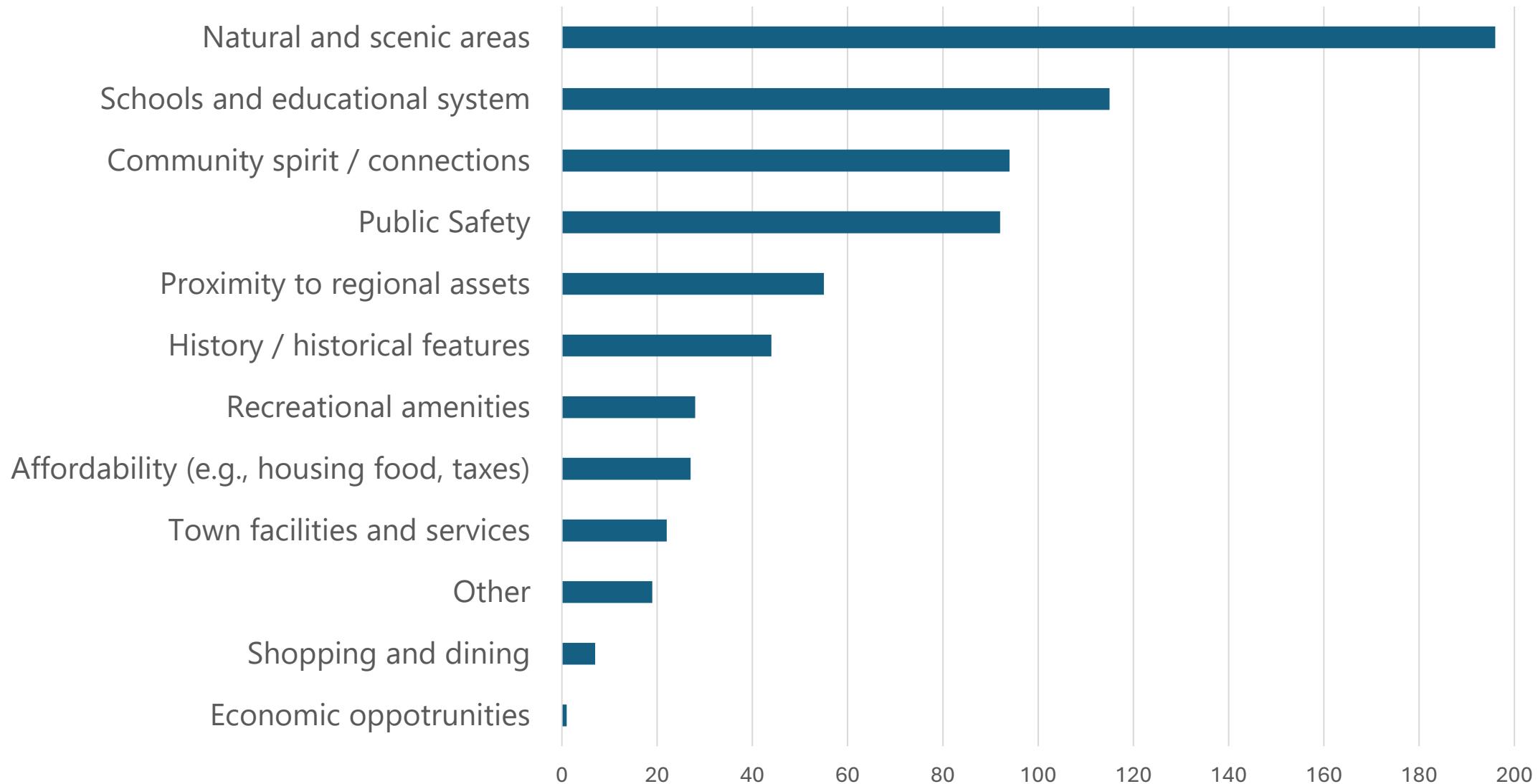
MASTER PLAN

Community Survey

262 total responses

“What makes Hampden a great place to live?”

***Respondents were allowed three choices



“What makes Hampden a great place to live?”

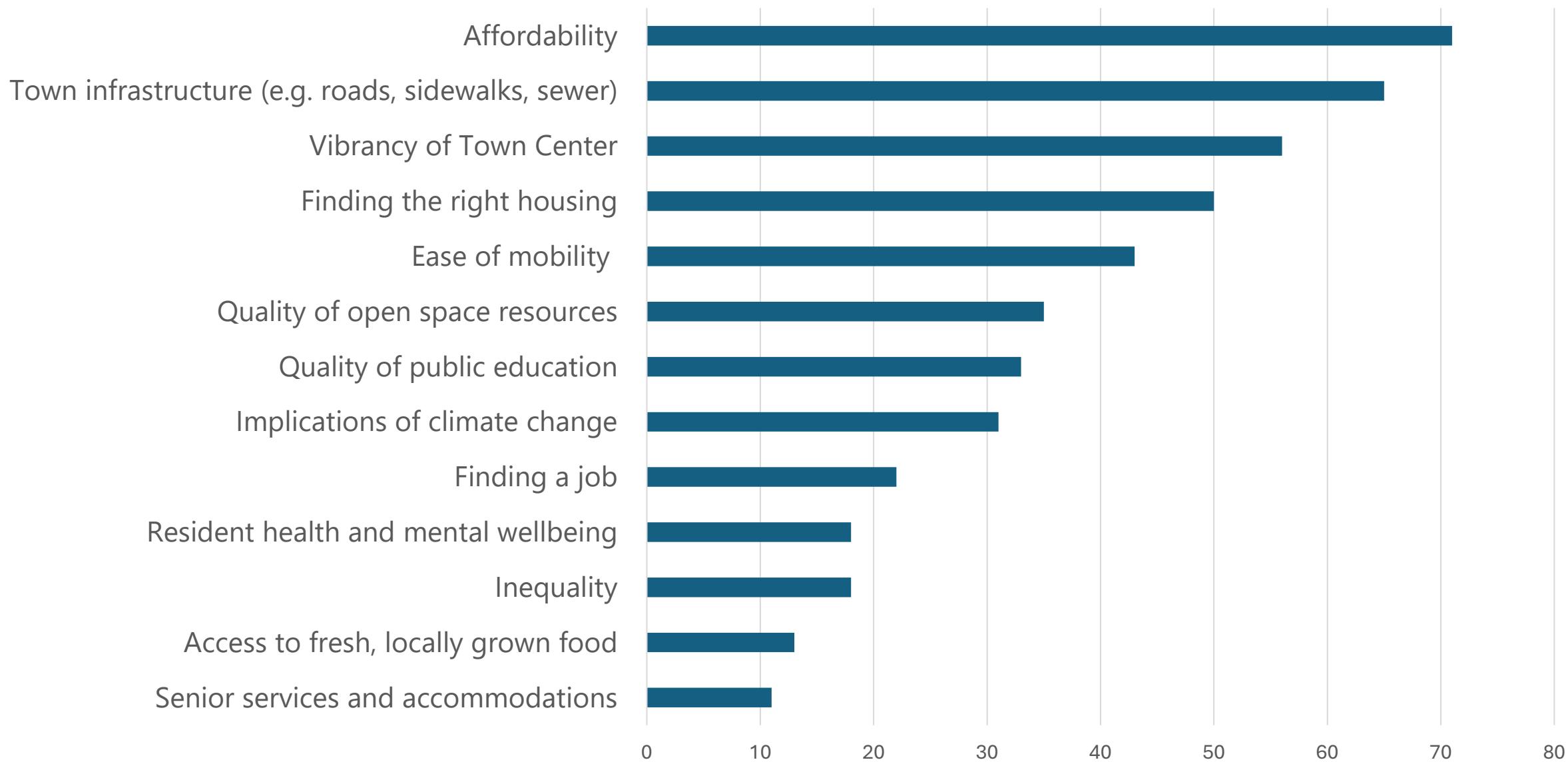
The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected “Other”:

- Privacy
- Wildlife habitats surrounding waterways
- Small town living
- Quite
- Lower taxes than surrounding towns
- Plenty of woods
- Big lots for houses
- Ability to be directly involved in Town Life (Town mtg, Schools, Boards, Activities)

“What are the biggest challenges to improving quality of life in Hampden?”

***Respondents selected between four choices for each item: very challenging, somewhat challenging, not challenging, and n/a

***The chart below shows number of “very challenging” choices



"Below are some common land use issues/concerns. Please circle your top three concerns for Hampden"

*****Respondents selected their top three concerns.**



"Below are some common land use issues/concerns. Please circle your top three concerns for Hampden"

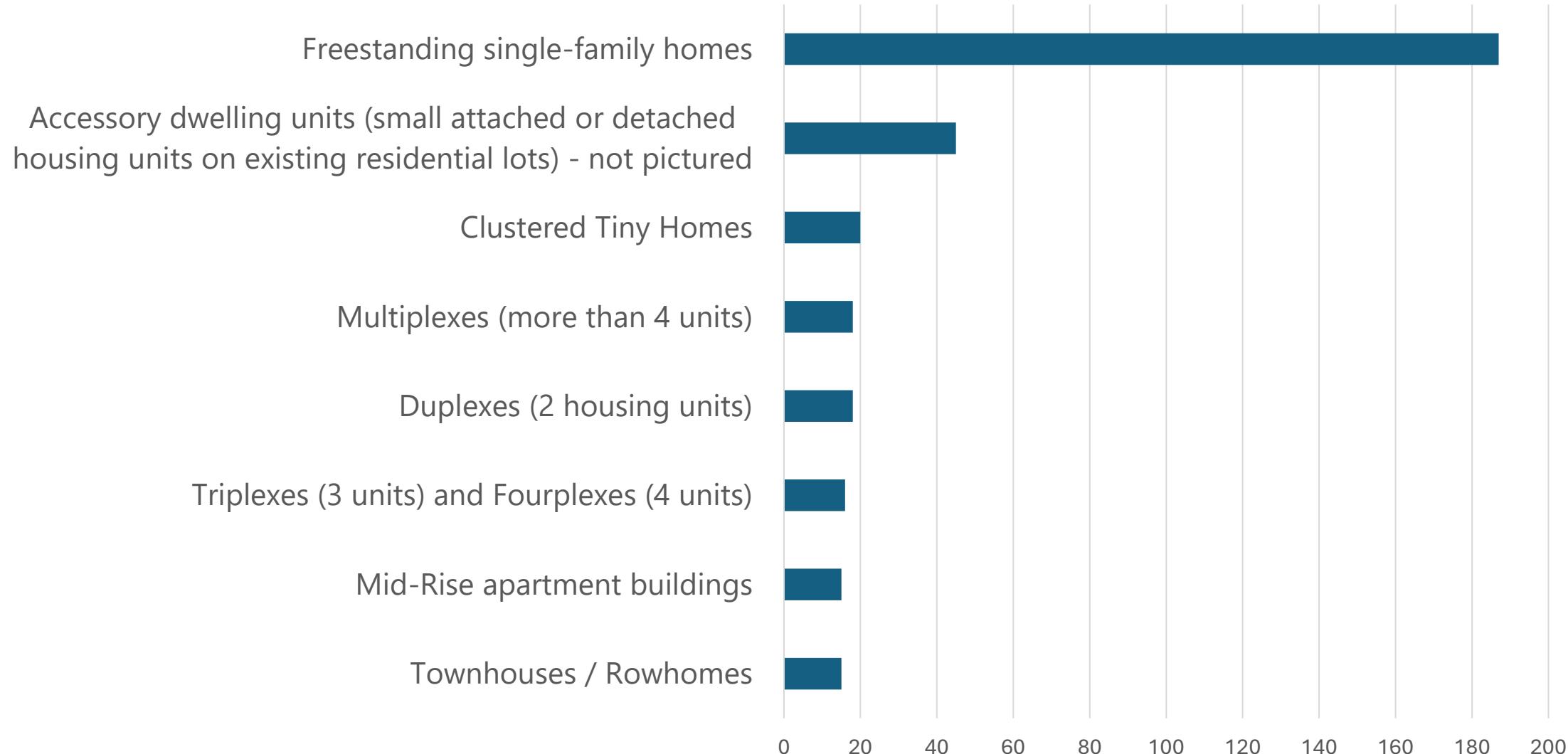
The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected "Other":

- **Lack of safe walking and biking areas (bike lanes and sidewalks)**
- **Solar panels**
- Monopolies in town
- Not enough recreational spaces
- Afraid of businesses sprawling beyond Main St and Allen/Somers
- Low-income housing development
- Loud music near Greathorse
- Derelict properties
- Too many storage facilities
- Setbacks are too restrictive for residential properties
- Limited activities for younger residents
- Excess industrial/power development at expense of risk to natural resources/protected areas
- Unsafe town owned buildings (older properties)
- Intersection at E. Longmeadow and Allen is dangerous
- Lack of land for affordable housing options
- Outdated business fronts bringing Main Street down
- Lack of opportunities for working adults to participate in Town Meeting
- Quality Internet

“How desirable are the following types of housing?”

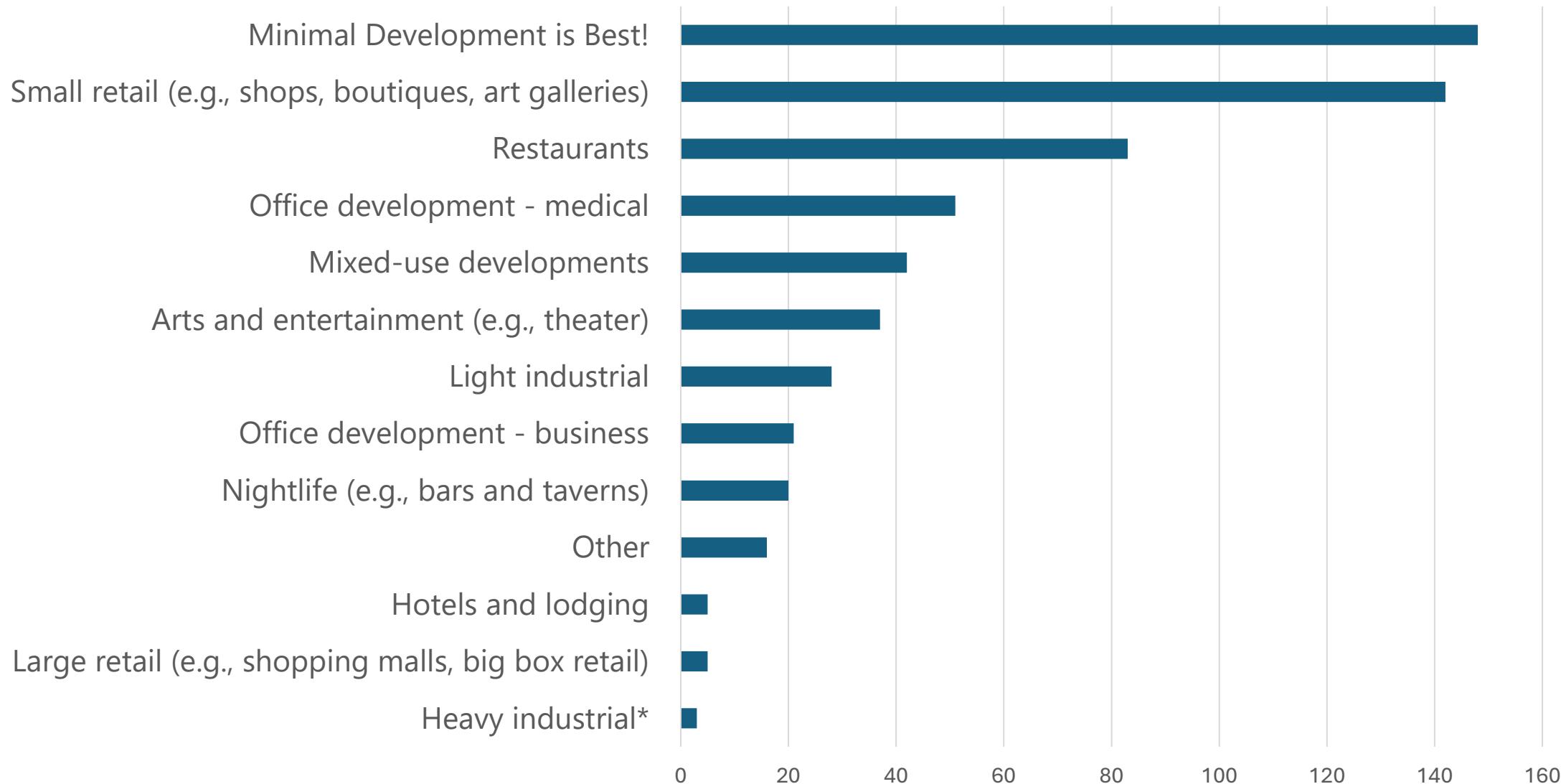
***Respondents selected between four choices for each item: *very important, important, somewhat important, and not important*.

***The chart below shows number of “very important” choices



“What type of real estate development do you feel is most needed in Hampden?”

****Respondents selected their top three concerns.*



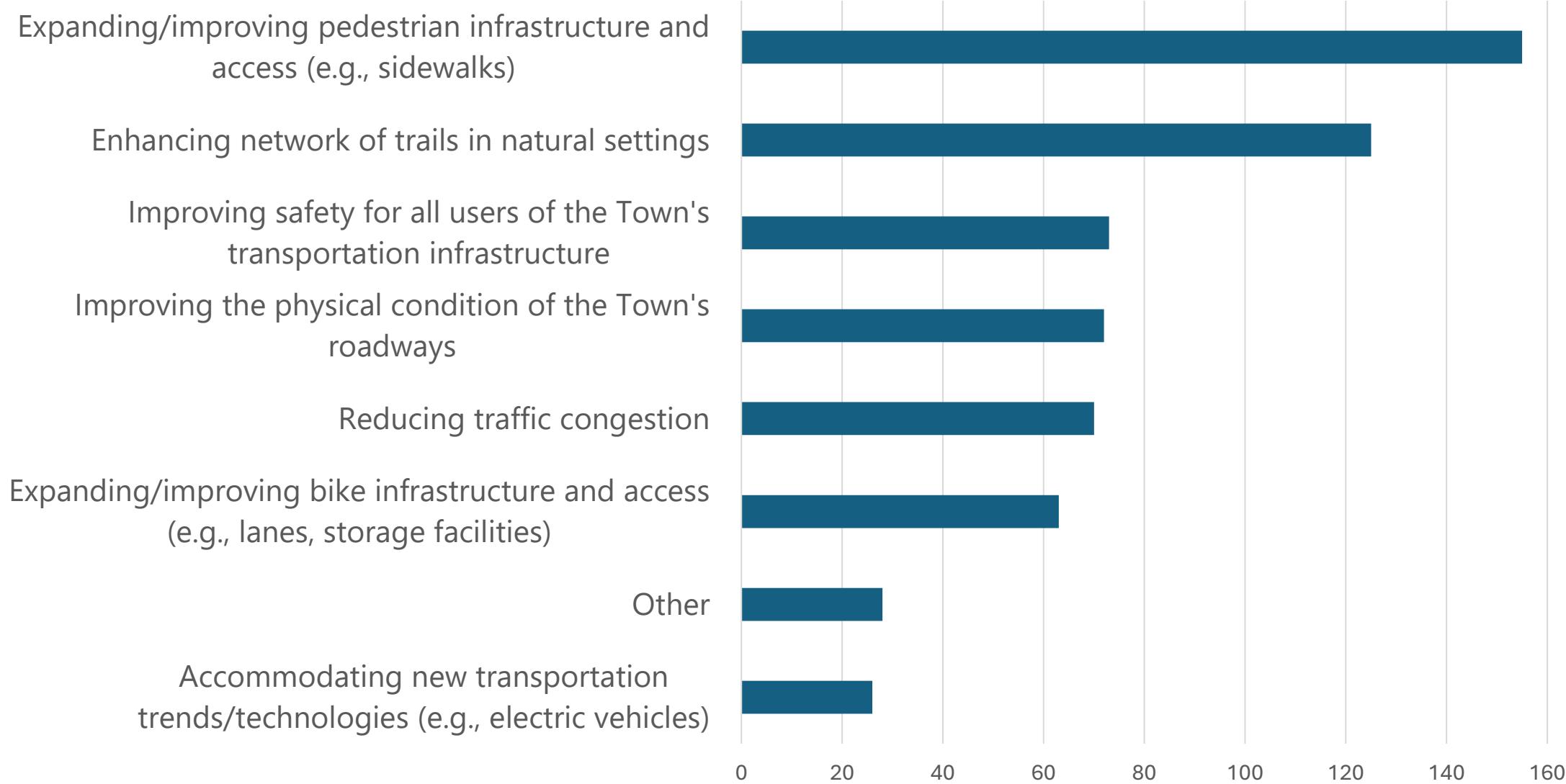
"What type of real estate development do you feel is most needed in Hampden?"

The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected "Other":

- **Pharmacy**
- **Senior Housing**
- Possibly a dispensary to increase revenue for the town, jobs for locals, and an opportunity for a local business owner.
- Allow large two/three car garages to be built.
- Don't want government to decide
- Affordable housing
- More restaurants with greater variety
- Hampden is indeed a true bit of Americana, an oasis in a driven world. Preservation of this oasis should be priority so as not to permanently lose its history and appeal!

“What are the most pressing transportation needs?”

****Respondents selected their top three concerns.*



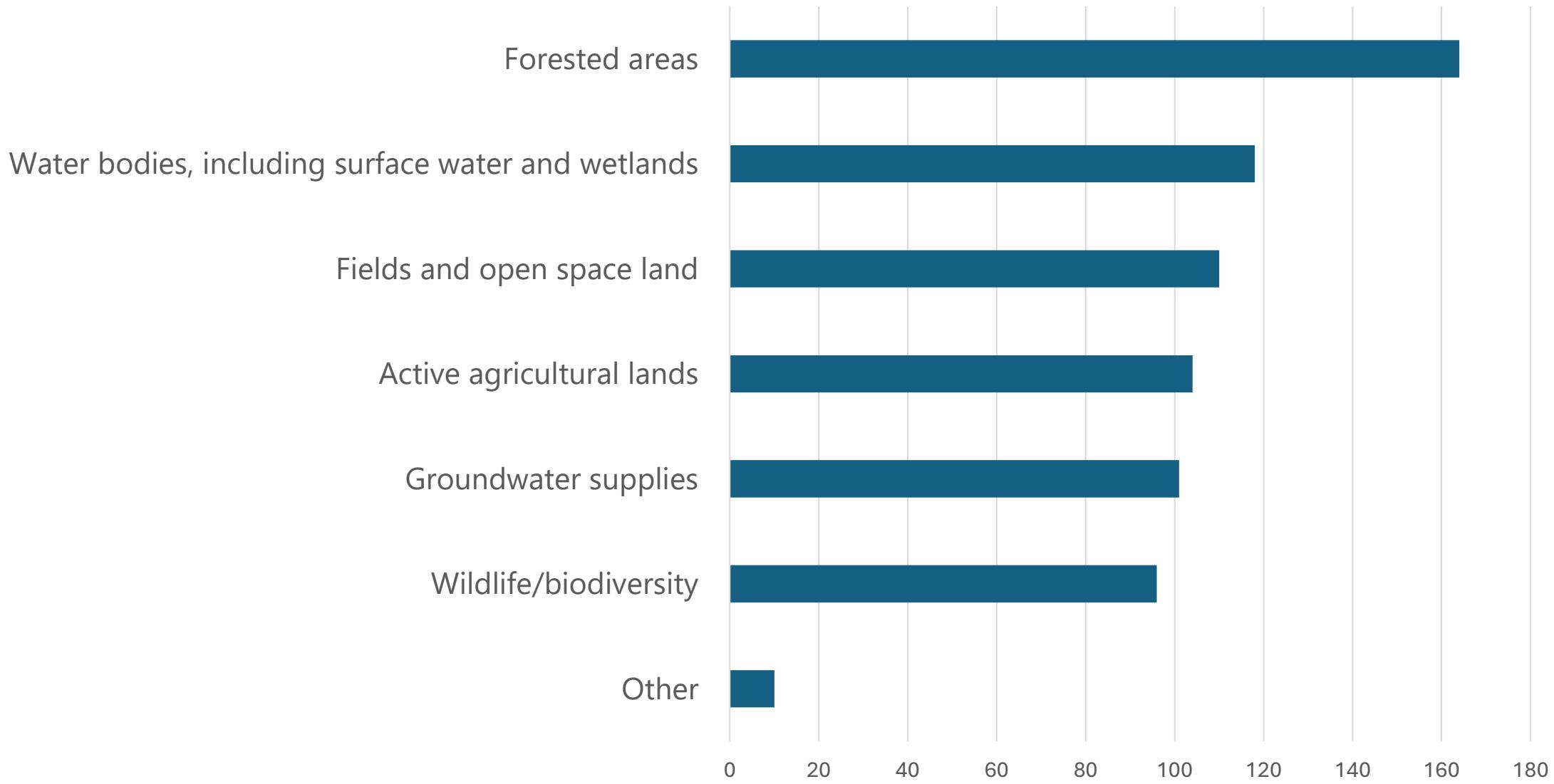
"What are the most pressing transportation needs?"

The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected "Other":

- **Improve safety (four way stop sign, light, or rotary) at Main/Somers, Wilbraham Rd/Allen St**
- Protect wildlife from being killed in the roads
- Reduce 18 wheeler/heavy equipment traffic on roads that were not built to support the increased volume.
- Seek grants to ticket **unsafe drivers** (it is well known police do not have capacity currently)
 - Speeding is unacceptable. Especially on Glendale, South Monson, and Wilbraham Rd. It is no longer safe to walk on these streets and speed limits are ignored. Maybe use of recordable speed limit signs to see which area needs the most attention.
- Protecting conservation areas
- Gas station on Main st
- Access for people who do not have cars and need to get to medical appointment, etc.
- There needs to be a 4 way stop intersection at the end of Main Street by the village food mart and the bagel nook.
- Slowing down traffic

“What are the most pressing natural resource protection needs?”

****Respondents selected their top three concerns.*



“What are the most pressing natural resource protection needs?”

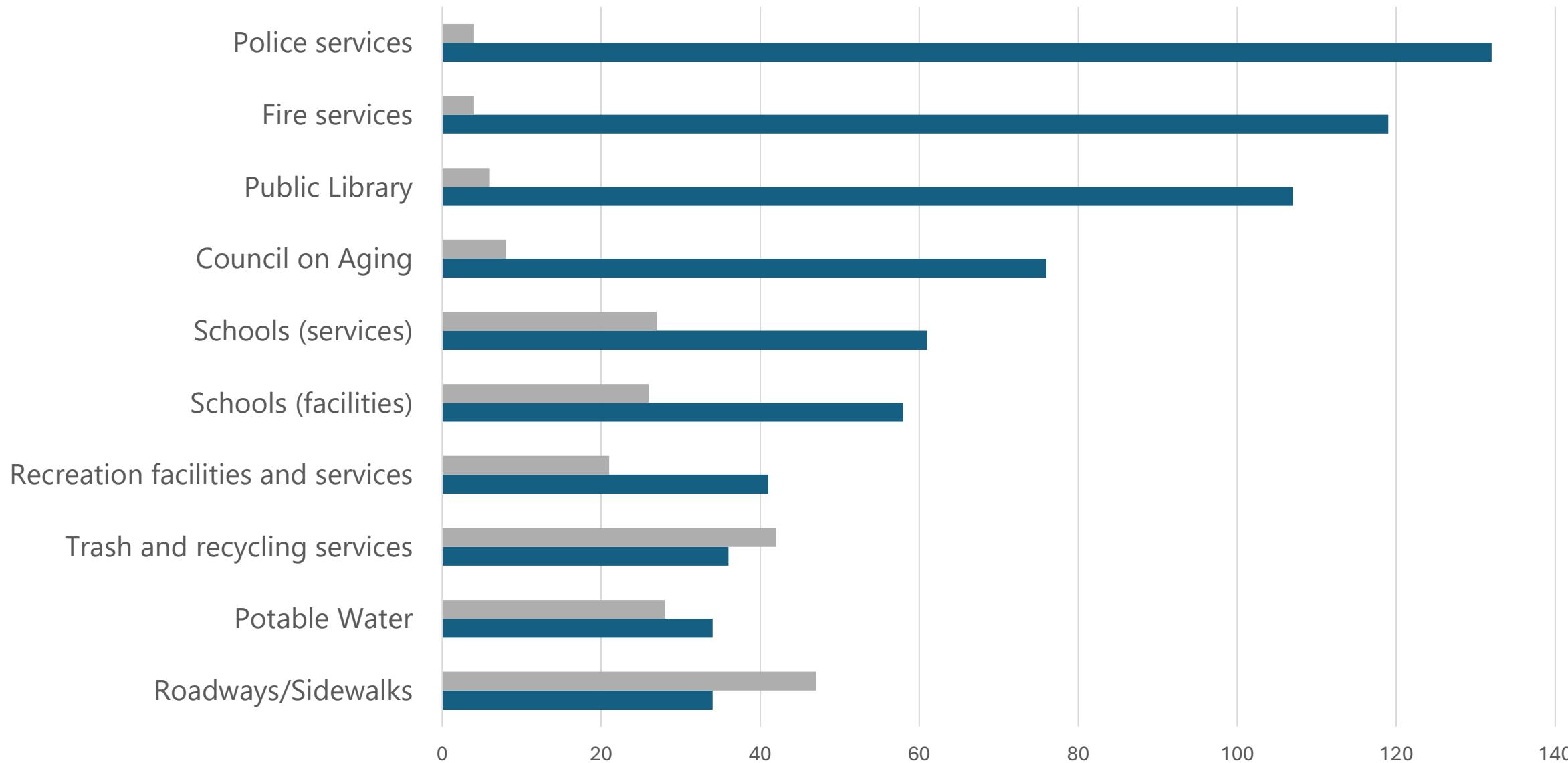
The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected “Other”:

- **Stop the construction of solar farms**
- Leave land surrounding waterways (such as the Scantic River) left alone for wildlife habitat
- Forested/fields and open space land; would rather have town control open space than Great Horse
- Forest management is needed to prevent fires
- Put in public water for all. No partial water district for millions invest in the whole town water/ then we don't have to worry about contamination of our wells
- Control of invasive species on sides of roads and public land. (Japanese knotweed and bittersweet in particular)
- Water bodies, including surface water and wetlands
- Wildlife/biodiversity.
- Conservation lands left untouched by humans so wildlife habitat are not disturbed

"Hampden? Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition, as applicable."

****Respondents selected between five choices for each item: excellent, good, fair, poor, or N/A*

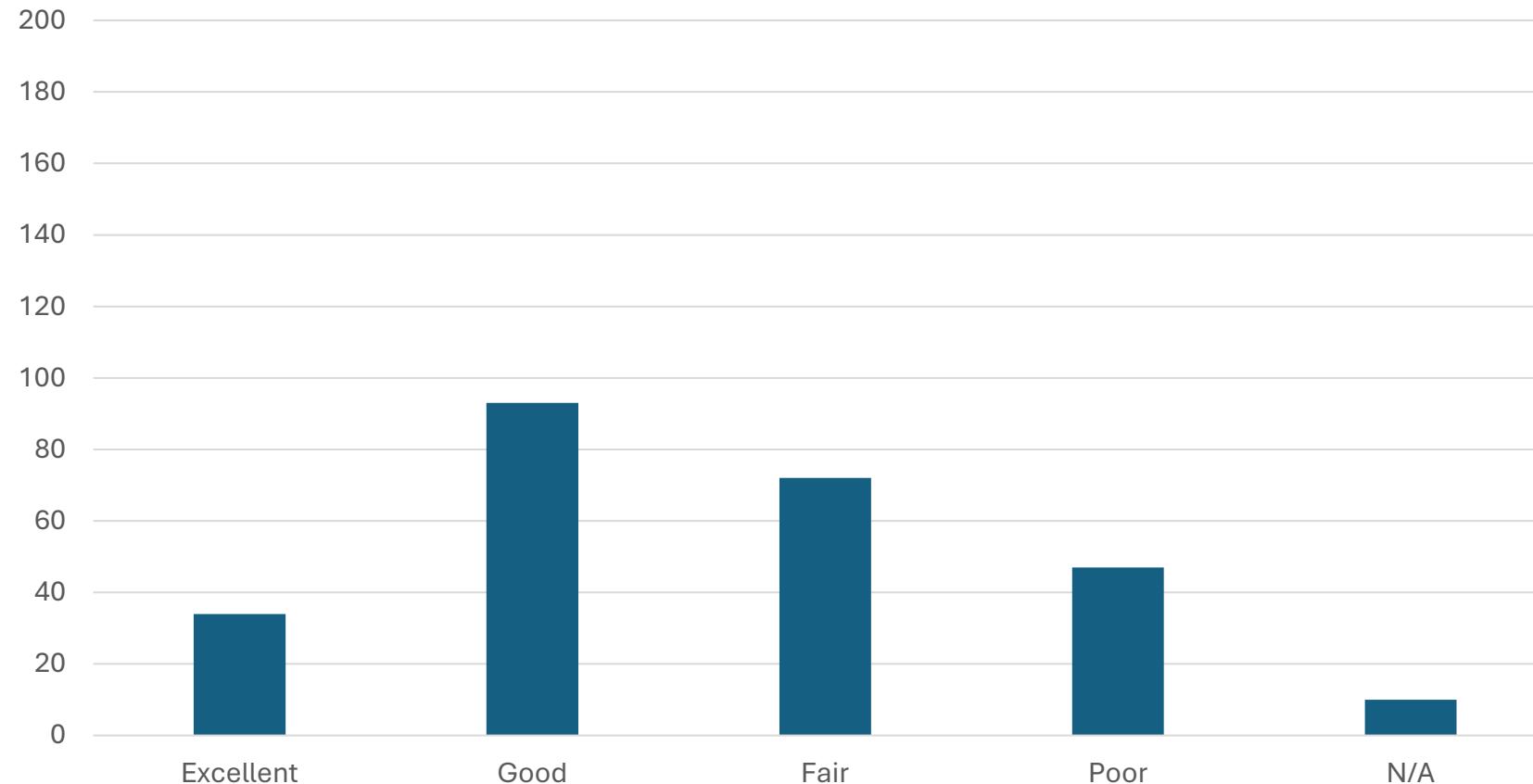
****The chart below shows number of "excellent" and "poor" responses*



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

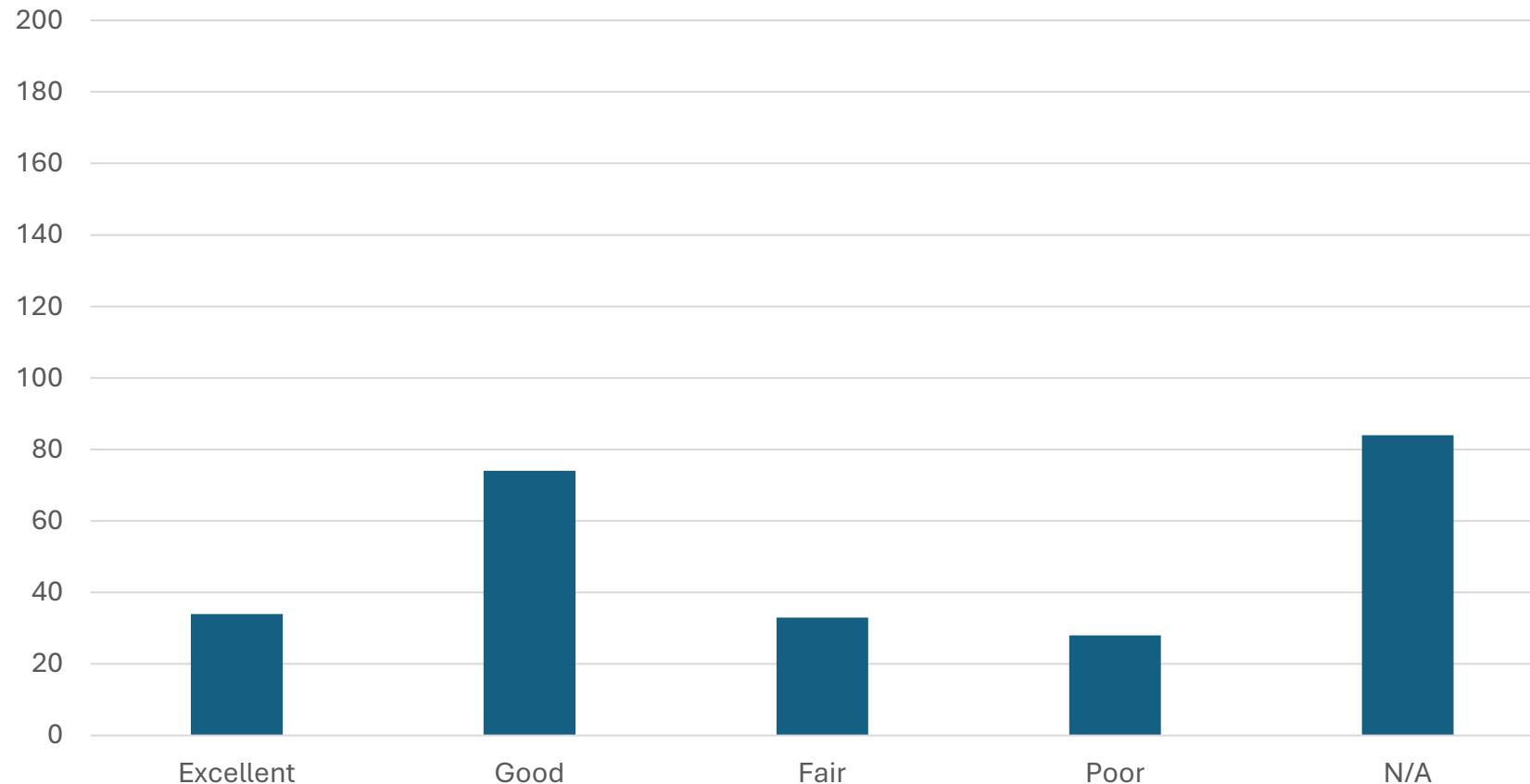
ROADWAYS / SIDEWALKS



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

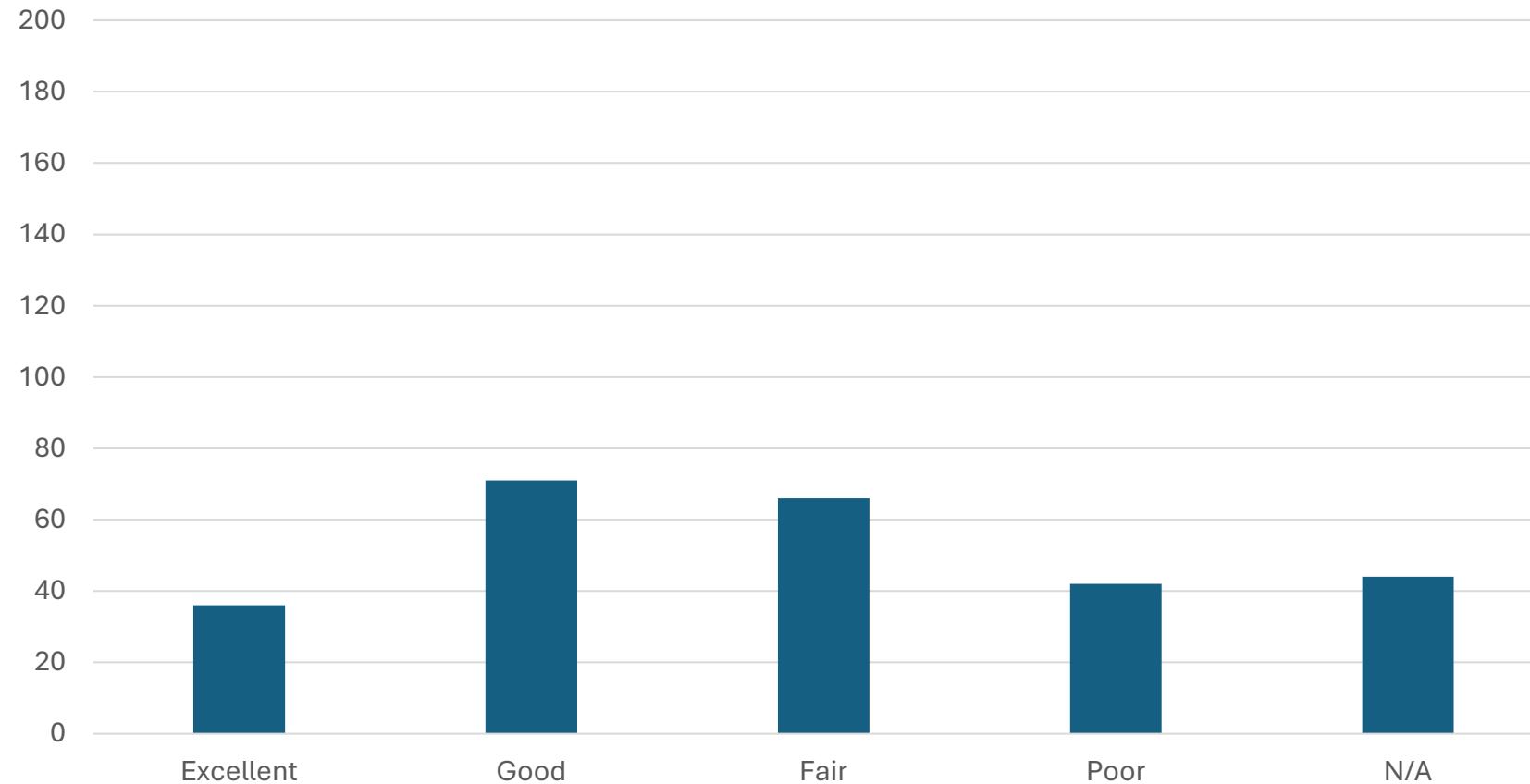
POTABLE WATER



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

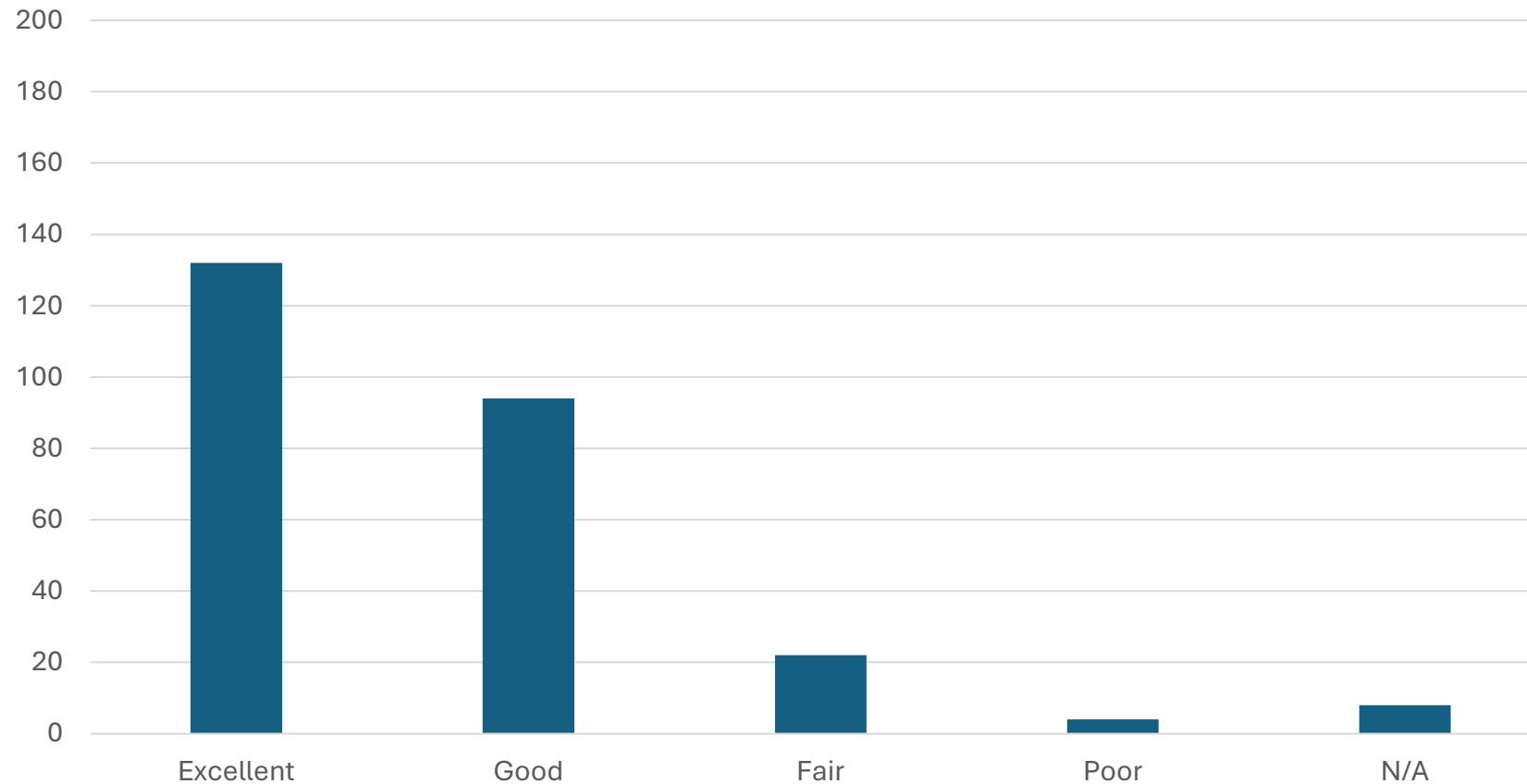
TRASH AND RECYCLING CENTERS



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

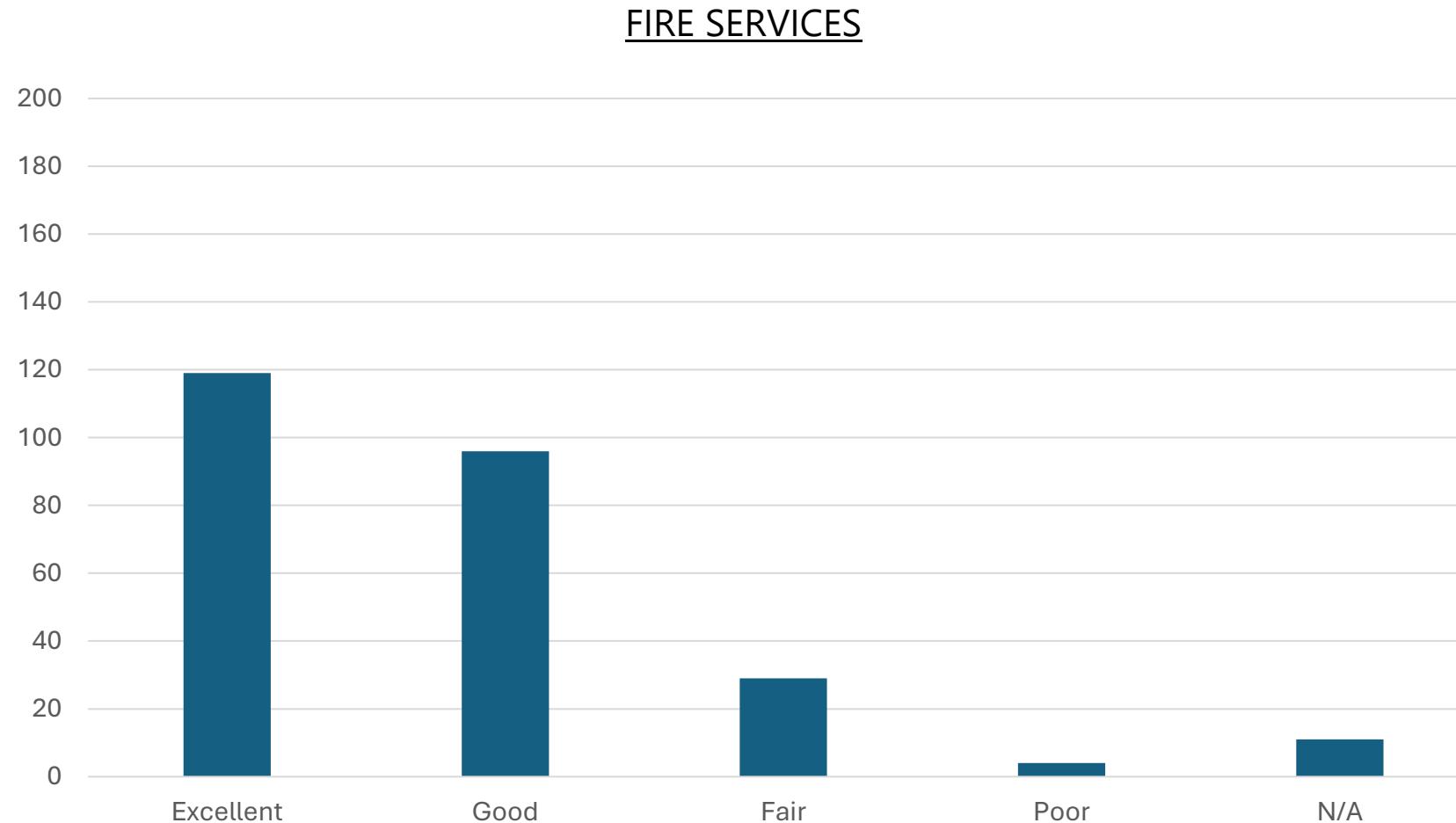
****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

POLICE SERVICES



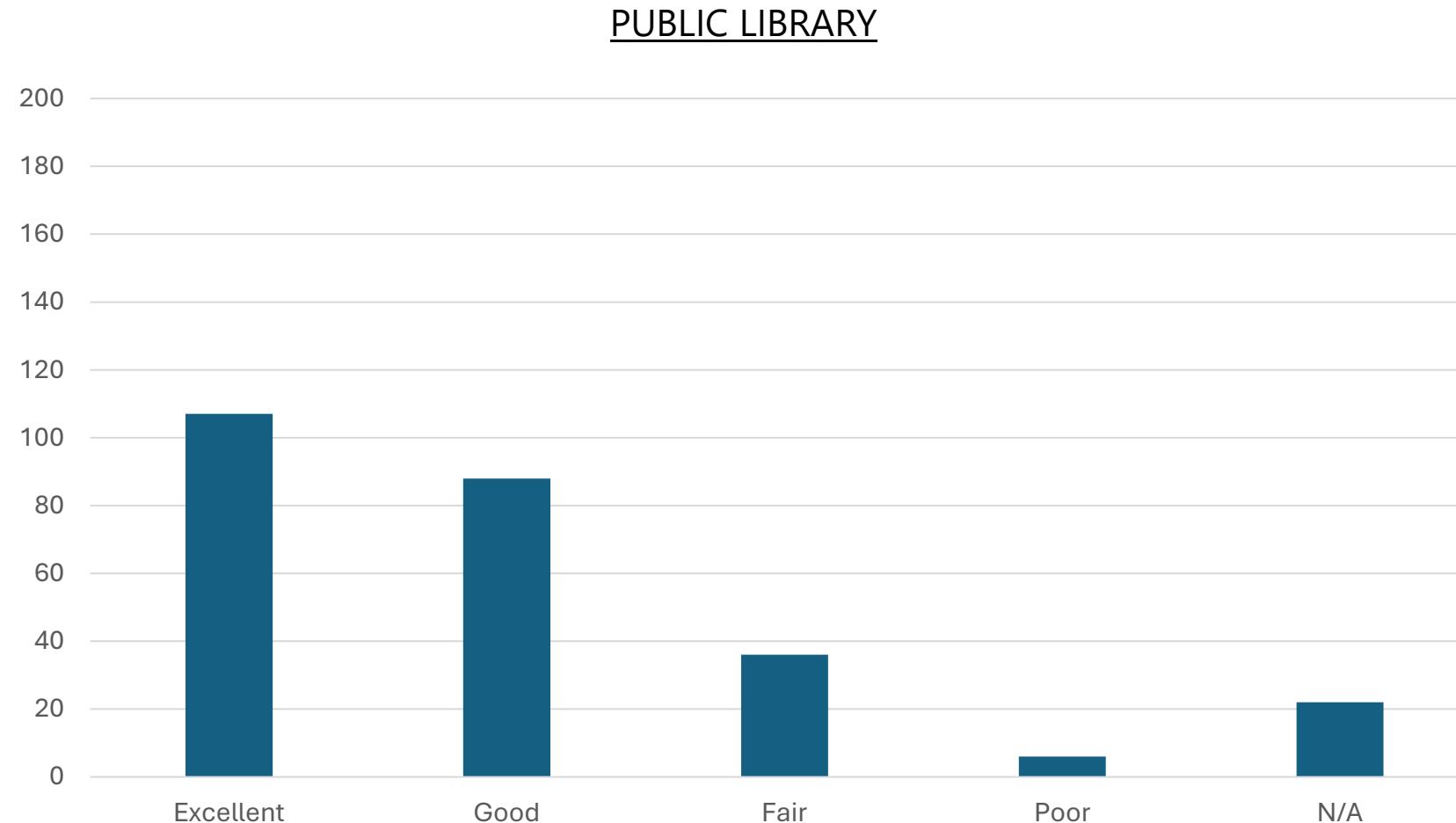
"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

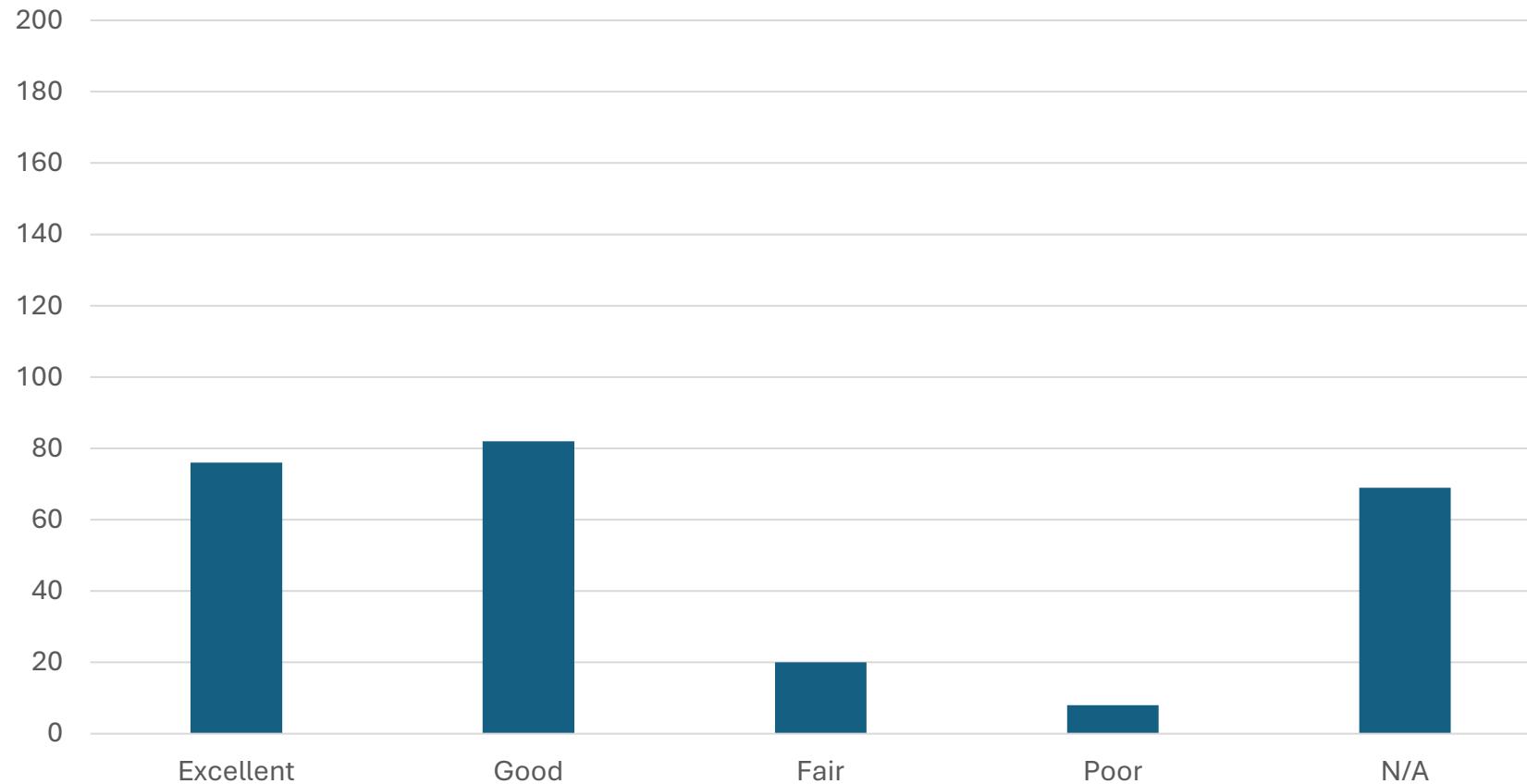
****Respondents ranked each facility / service*



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

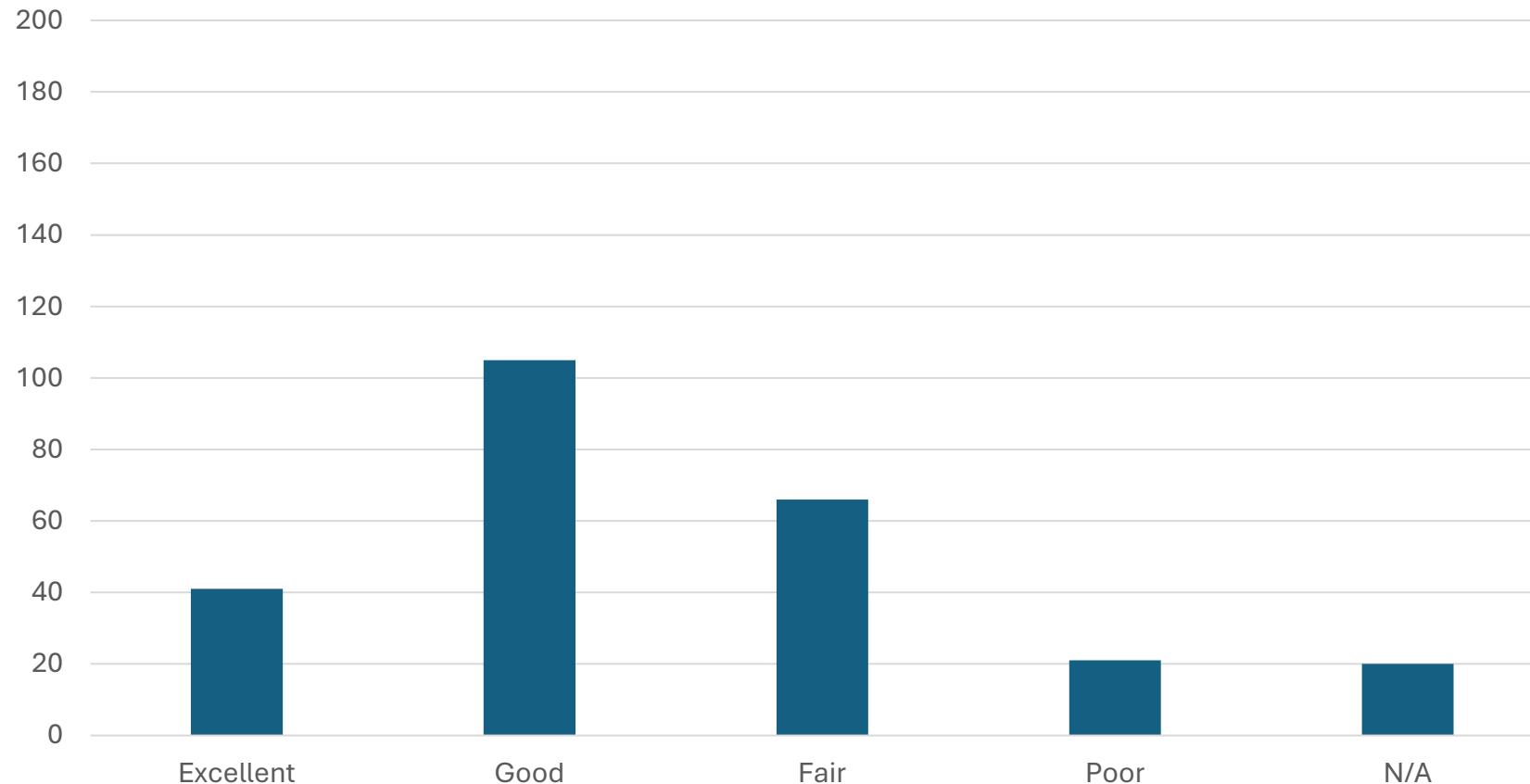
COUNCIL ON AGING



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

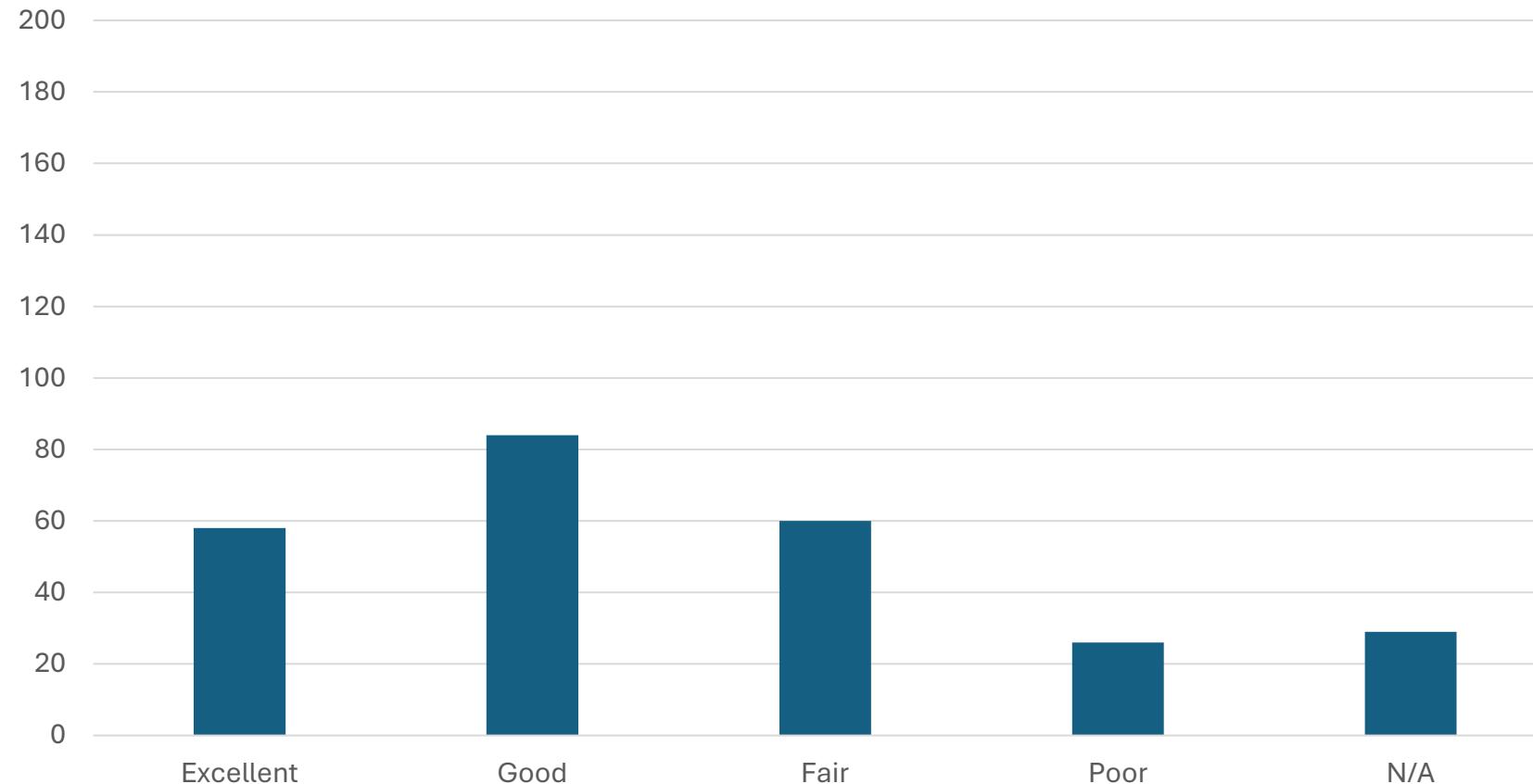
REC FACILITIES AND SERVICES



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

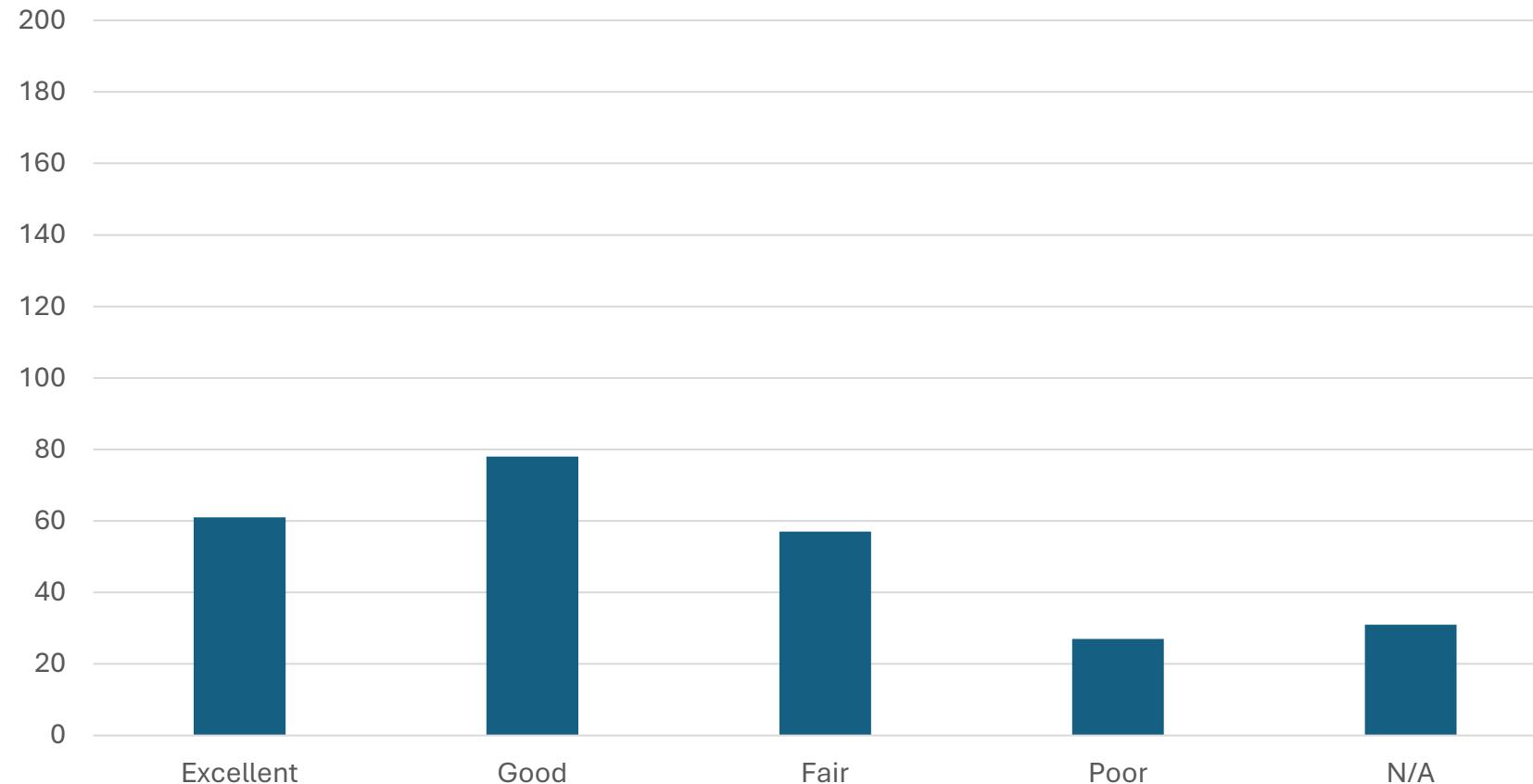
SCHOOLS (FACILITIES)



"Please rank each of the following Town facilities or services in terms of their performance / condition"

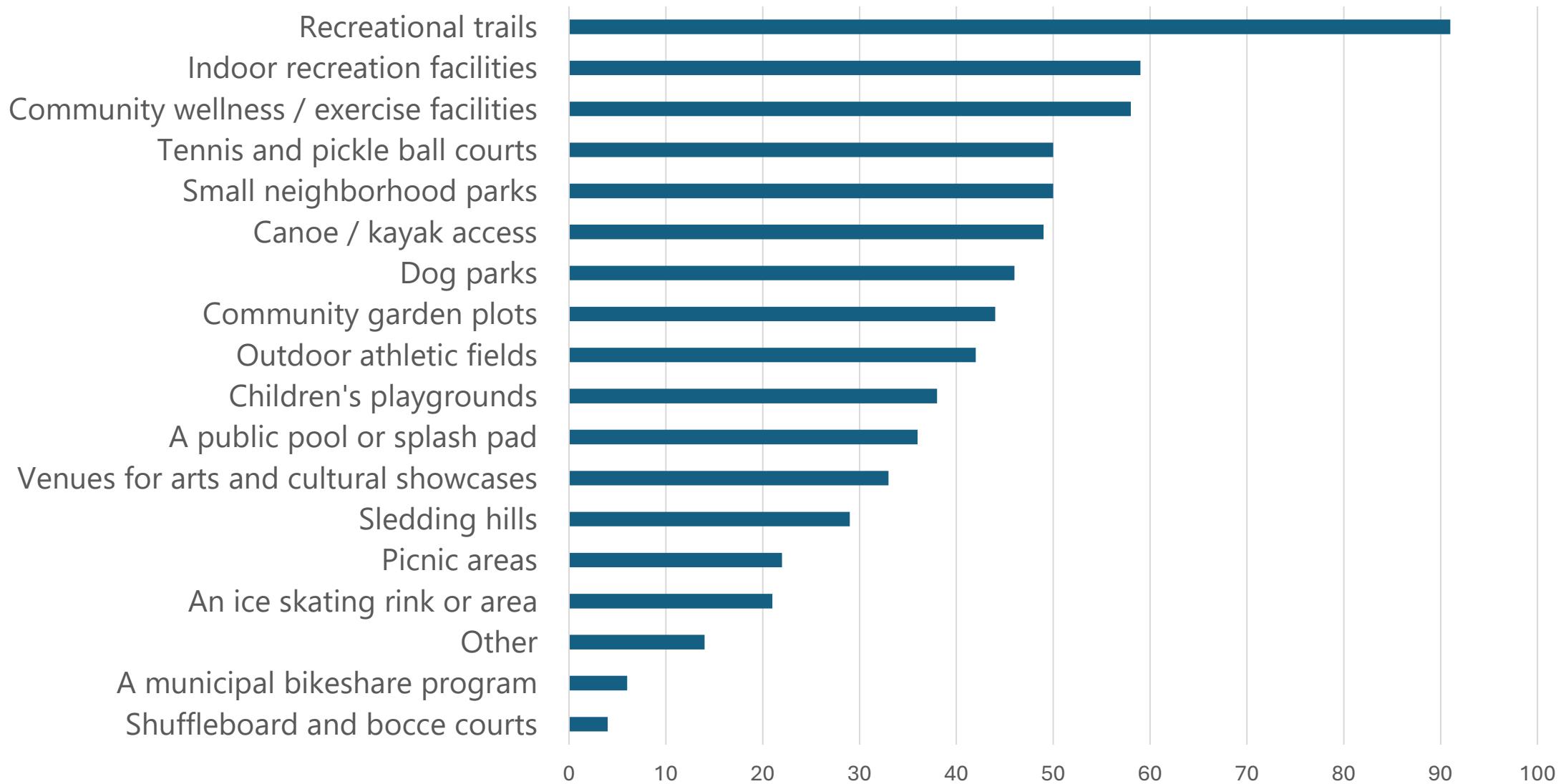
****Respondents ranked each facility / service*

SCHOOL (SERVICES)



“Which recreation assets do you think the Town needs the most?”

****Respondents selected their top three concerns.*



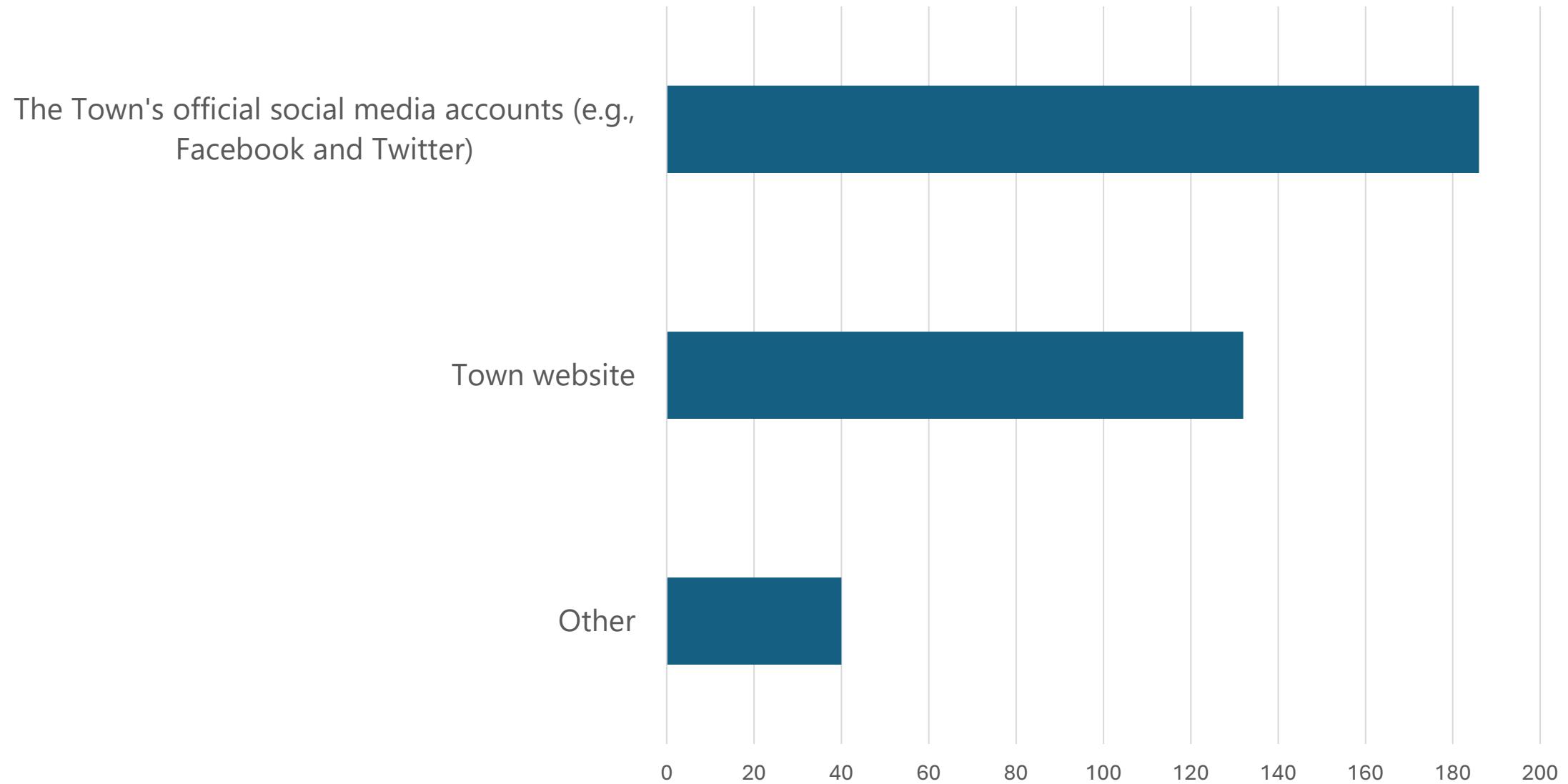
"Which recreation assets do you think the Town needs the most?"

The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected "Other":

- Maximize use of existing resources and improve communication of what is available. Availability to things like pickleball/tennis should be funded by those who wish to use such resources
- Repurpose Thornton Burgess, make it a town community center / expansion of the senior center for events, classes, and gathering space for all
- A general community center
- Public fishing access to rivers
- Join kids sports with Wilbraham
- Swimming, wading, and visiting (seating) access to Scantic River

“How do you regularly follow Town government?”

****Respondents selected up to three choices each.*



"How do you regularly follow Town government?"

The following themes emerged among the responses for respondents to selected "Other":

- Hampden Times
- Youtube Channel
- Hampden community forums on Facebook.
- Public meetings
- Senior Center Scribe
- Physical postings at town hall
- Mailings
- Social Media (Facebook)
- The Reminder
- Wilbraham times
- Word-of-mouth
- The Library

“What are we missing?”

The following themes emerged among the responses from this question:

- Mosquito Control?
- More internet service provider options!
- Audio equipment upgrades for Town Meeting, addressing ways public meetings can be more efficient and accessible
- Renovations or replacing the Fire Station
- Water/Sewer for the entire town
- PFAS
- Listserv for Town Announcements?
- Middle School Issues
- Interest in Ambulance services provided by Hampden Fire Department
- Opportunity to become an artist's community
- Need for more basic services like auto repair, daycare, medical, reliable Uber, **fiber**.
- Still hand counting ballots – area of improvement
- invest in the utility structure here so that cable and electric do not have the ability to price gouge us

“What are we missing?”

The following themes emerged among the responses from this question:

- Splash pad should not be exclusive to day camp
- Explore municipal water and sewer that possibly makes Hampden a desirable relocation area for small industry and retail. We must be proactive about looking for commercial revenue streams to offset taxes.
- Interested in the Rec Dept/Library offering activities for students directly after school
- More police coverage
- Updates to the Town Website
- Zoning Enforcement could be improved
- Updating the Zoning Bylaws and making them easier to understand
- Increased operating hours for Town Hall (open on Fridays?)
- Population decline and aging population – what do we do?
- Nuisance / blight bylaw
- **No more solar**
- **Desire for Hampden to stay the same, don't want to be like surrounding towns**
- **Keep taxes low and limit unnecessary spending**