



Hampden Master Plan

Our Town Our Future | 2025

Executive Summary





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 1-13: 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.

1-12: Promote sustainable and contextual development in targeted areas of

1.1.2: Promote sustainable and contextual development in targeted areas of Town.

- **Action 1-2.1:** Create a mixed-use overlay district in the Town Center and other urban 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, replicating 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 a battery storage bylaw for solar fields to enhance renewable energy sustainability.

Goal 1-3: Streamline zoning and permitting processes for development.

- Action 1-3-1: Simplify permitting procedures by clear review criteria, and implementing online and attract investment.
 - Action 1-3-2: Create a “Zoning 101” guide to information to residents, developers, and procedures.
 - Action 1-3-3: Review zoning regulation 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.

Chapter Summaries

1	Land Use Goals and Actions	6
2	Housing Goals and Actions	8
3	Economic Development Goals and Actions	10
4	Historic and Cultural Resources Goals and Actions	12
5	Public Facilities and Services Goals and Actions	14
6	Open Space and Recreation Goals and Actions	16
7	Resiliency and Climate Goals and Actions	18
8	Transportation and Mobility Goals and Actions	20



1 Land Use

The Town of Hampden is a small residential community located in Western Massachusetts. Development within the town has been limited, partially due to infrastructure constraints, topography, and the absence of a municipal water or sewer system. Hampden has a quiet rural/suburban character, with most working residents commuting to jobs outside town limits. Hampden's charms include its natural resources and recreational opportunities, which draw visitors from neighboring areas.

Key land use types in Hampden include low-density residential, undeveloped land, a few scattered business districts, including:

- An area on Somers Road from Main Street to Allen Street (shopping plaza hosting The Black Sheep and La Cucina; Hampden Veterinary Clinic; and several convenience and grocery stores including Village Food Mart and Convenience Plus)

- Commercial Drive off East Longmeadow Road (DJ's Automotive, Crossfit Lunacy, and The Storage Wizard)
- A smaller district located along the southern side of Main Street, west of Town Center (Casa Bella Italian Kitchen and Bar, Country Auto, Grog Shoppe are a few)

With a population of just under five thousand, Hampden is home to people who live here because they love its small-town character. Over the past decade, population change has remained relatively stable, exhibiting a gradual decline. Similarly, Hampden's overall land use mix has slowly changed over time.

To channel future growth in the right direction, the Town has various levers that it can pull, including the many articles within its Zoning Bylaws, Subdivision Regulations, and environmental protection laws. These are critical tools for addressing evolving needs related to housing, retail, office, industrial, and open space uses.

1 Land Use Goals and Actions

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

As of 2022, there were 2,036 units of housing in Hampden, 96 percent of which were detached single-family homes. Hampden's rural charm continues to attract people to the town. However, the limited stock of smaller houses, accessory dwelling units (ADUs), and apartments limit housing affordability and restrict the turnover of homes as residents' needs evolve. Environmental, regulatory, and infrastructural challenges contribute to the limited housing stock and homogenous typology, resulting in a competitive and expensive housing market. These factors contribute to an unaffordable housing landscape for many, including older adults, first-time homebuyers, and low-income households.

Hampden's demographic landscape presents challenges and opportunities for housing policies and planning initiatives. Over the past decade, the town has experienced fluctuations in population, culminating in a projected decline that could see numbers drop to around 4,300 by 2050. This downward trend, coupled with an aging population—where nearly 60 percent of households contain individuals aged 60 and older—highlights the need for housing solutions that are adaptable and accessible. The lack of housing diversity, primarily characterized by single-family homes, limits opportunities for renters and those seeking affordable options, exacerbated by rising median housing costs that have left many residents cost burdened.

2 Housing Goals and Actions

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.

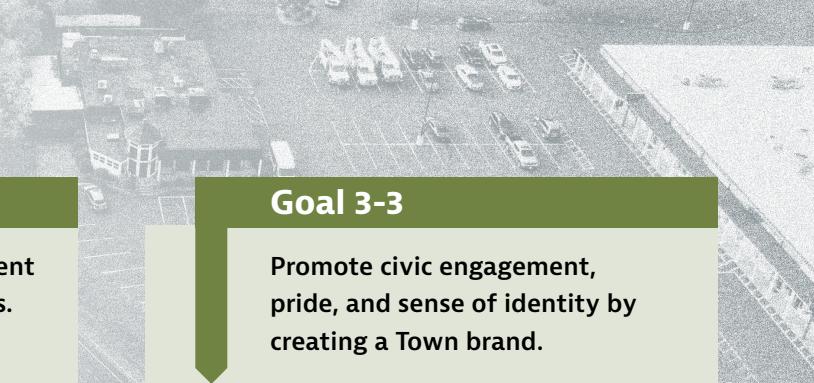


3 Economic Development

Hampden deeply values its small business community which comprises approximately 160 businesses and employs nearly one thousand residents. However, workforce challenges, aging infrastructure, and inadequate public transportation hinder economic growth. Demographic trends indicate that Hampden is a community in transition, characterized by an increasing older adult population and a corresponding decline in the workforce-age demographic. This shift presents challenges in maintaining a balanced labor market while creating opportunities for targeted economic initiatives.

It is crucial to identify effective strategies to increase tax revenue for essential amenities while preserving the qualities residents cherish most about Hampden. By revitalizing underutilized properties and supporting the growth of small businesses, Hampden can cultivate a more resilient and inclusive economy that meets the needs of its residents and attracts new development opportunities.

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.



4 Historic and Cultural Resources

Historic and cultural resources are more than just tangible links to a town's heritage. They can serve as an economic catalyst, provide opportunities for building reuse, promote placemaking, inspire curiosity about how the Town has developed over the years, and perhaps most importantly, help inform where and how the Town will continue to grow into the future. Maintaining a balance between preserving these resources while encouraging necessary growth and development is an essential challenge in Hampden.

Historic resources are more than just buildings—a town's historic built environment consists of the landscapes, streetscapes, and features that help give Hampden its distinct personality. However, they don't just help us remember the past; the town can adapt historic resources to serve contemporary uses. Cultural assets help link residents to the past and one another. In turn, these shared assets create the unique environment that distinguishes one community from another.

The Hampden Historical Society (HHS) is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history of the town while the Hampden Historical Commission (HHC) is a government entity tasked with preserving and protecting historical resources within Hampden.

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

Hampden's public facilities and services ensure that residents and visitors stay safe, active, educated, and well-informed. Key departments offering essential services such as emergency response, infrastructure maintenance, education, and recreation continue serving the local community and visitors.

The 2024 Master Plan Public Survey highlights significant issues and opportunities within Hampden's public facilities and services. While residents express satisfaction with vital services such as the police and fire departments, they also voice concerns regarding aging infrastructure. The survey responses illuminate various opportunities for enhancement and engagement across Hampden's administrative structure. The Select Board, Town Administrator, and other municipal departments play critical roles in addressing these concerns while navigating the challenges of modern governance. Residents have highlighted critical opportunities, such as improving

municipal outreach systems and online resources to keep the community informed. Such initiatives strengthen communication, foster greater public participation, and engage residents' voices in decision-making.

The educational landscape presents challenges and growth opportunities, particularly for the Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District (HWRSD). With declining enrollment and rising operational costs, HWRSD is tasked with modernizing its curriculum and facilities to better serve its students. This chapter explores how addressing these issues, including enhancing educational systems, administrative processes, and public services, can ultimately shape a resilient and forward-thinking community.

5 Public Facilities and Services Goals and Actions

Goal 5-1	Goal 5-2	Goal 5-3
<p>Ensure stable financial resources for modernizing public facilities.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Adapt public services to meet the community's evolving needs.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Action 5-2.2 Establish a designated area for the Veteran Service Officer to conduct confidential meetings with residents.</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Update town government roles and revamp community outreach practices.</p> <p>Action 5-3.1 Enhance governance efficiency by increasing the Board of Selectmen to five members and consolidating the elected Treasurer and Tax Collector positions into one appointed role.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>



6 Open Space and Recreation

Hampden boasts nearly 5,000 acres of Protected Land: A Beacon of Conservation.

Nestled in the picturesque Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts and blessed with some of the richest soil on Earth, Hampden is a shining example of a community dedicated to preserving its natural heritage. With 440 acres of open spaces including public parks, 368 acres stewarded by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and nearly 4,000 acres of privately protected land, Hampden offers an extraordinary bounty of open space for its size and its 5,000 residents. Remarkably, over 76 percent of the town remains undeveloped, with 64 percent cloaked in lush forests. Adding to its allure, Hampden boasts more than 30 miles of scenic hiking trails, inviting outdoor enthusiasts to immerse themselves in its natural beauty.

According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), the average community provides 11 acres of open space per 1,000 residents. Hampden's combined public and protected lands far exceed this standard—offering an astounding 16 to 20 times the national average. This exceptional commitment to conservation not only ensures abundant recreational opportunities but also safeguards the town's ecological richness and scenic charm.

Hampden is more than just a town; it is a sanctuary where residents and visitors alike can connect with the outdoors. 75 percent of the respondents to the 2024 Master Plan Public Survey selected "Natural and Scenic Areas" as their top reason for what makes Hampden a great place to live. The Town's dedication to preserving open space serves as an inspiring model for communities everywhere, proving that even small towns can lead the way in balancing growth with sustainability. In Hampden, the harmony between people and nature is not just a goal—it's a way of life.

6 Open Space and Recreation Goals and Actions

Goal 6-1	Goal 6-2	Goal 6-3
<p>Enhance Hampden's Parks and Recreation Department's programs, facilities, and outreach.</p>	<p>Enhance community engagement with open spaces and recreational resources.</p>	<p>Collaborate with local partners like the Minnechaug Land Trust to support land conservation.</p>
<p>Action 6-1.1</p> <p>Update the Town's 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan.</p> <p>Action 6-1.2</p> <p>Explore grant funding opportunities for capital improvements.</p> <p>Action 6-1.3</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Action 6-2.1</p> <p>Conduct an ADA accessibility assessment of all Town facilities. Consider upgrades to existing facilities using a Universal Design framework.</p> <p>Action 6-2.2</p> <p>Identify areas to implement swimming and boat launches along the Scantic River.</p> <p>Action 6-2.3</p> <p>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.</p>	<p>Action 6-3.1</p> <p>Pursue a new access easement or agreement to connect Minnechaug Mountain to the newly acquired 20-acre parcel of open space to the southeast.</p> <p>Action 6-3.2</p> <p>Develop a Forest Management Plan that encourages environmental stewardship and includes enforcement mechanisms for trail preservation.</p> <p>Action 6-3.3</p> <p>Promote and facilitate enrollment in the State's APR program to protect and enhance Hampden's agricultural lands by offering resources, workshops, and personalized assistance to landowners.</p>



7 Resiliency and Climate

The Town of Hampden has been beset in recent years by an increase in impacts related to climate change, such as increased flooding, heat stress, extreme weather events, changes in agricultural productivity, and more. Climate change is anticipated to continue to present new and increasingly harsh challenges, affecting residents, municipal staff, and Town visitors. The intersections between these topics and others within the Master Plan, most notably **Chapter 5, Public Facilities and Services**, and **Chapter 6, Open Space and Recreation**, present an opportunity to encourage systems thinking and integrated planning approaches.

Communities across the Commonwealth face a pressing array of resilience challenges with significant implications for ecosystems and public health. Hampden, situated within Massachusetts' Greater Connecticut River Valley, is projected to experience hotter summers, extended droughts, and increasingly severe storm events, contributing to increased

flooding, agricultural decline, and heightened public health risks. These changes threaten the Town's facilities, infrastructure, and emergency management systems, highlighting the urgent need for comprehensive strategies that enhance community resilience against evolving hazards.

Despite these challenges, Hampden has begun implementing forward-thinking measures to address these issues. Efforts to transition to renewable energy, improve stormwater management, and educate residents about public health risks represent significant steps toward resilience. The Town can capitalize on existing opportunities to further its sustainability goals and embrace best practices for climate adaptation. These efforts will help protect the Town's natural resources, create a more robust built environment, and foster an informed community resilient to new challenges.

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>Improve emergency management systems and processes.</p>	<p>Reduce municipal emissions and increase the Town's reliance on renewables.</p>
<p>Action 7-1.1</p> <p>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 7-2.1</p> <p>Hire a full-time Emergency Management Director outside the police department to lead emergency preparedness and response initiatives.</p>	<p>Action 7-3.1</p> <p>Hire a consultant to conduct a GHG emissions inventory to identify critical areas for emissions reduction.</p>
<p>Action 7-1.2</p> <p>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 7-2.2</p> <p>Recruit a specialist to pursue and manage emergency management grants.</p>	<p>Action 7-3.2</p> <p>Apply for Green Communities designation to access funding and support for sustainability projects.</p>
<p>Action 7-1.3</p> <p>Perform climate vulnerability assessments for existing public assets and mandate these assessments for all new private developments.</p>	<p>Action 7-2.3</p> <p>Reference and share Hampden's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan to educate residents about emergency resources and processes.</p>	<p>Action 7-3.3</p> <p>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

Hampden's small population and limited mix of land uses make it a very automobile-dependent town. There are few sidewalks, no formal bicycle accommodations, and the only transit service is a senior transportation van. Hampden has no stop lights or all-way stop-controlled intersections, and most roads border natural forest. The Town's roadways reflect its small-town, rural character.

This general character will likely stay mostly the same over the coming years. Nevertheless, Hampden will greatly benefit from strategic investment in infrastructural upgrades and improvements to make local transportation and mobility more comfortable, efficient, and safe. The Town is currently studying options for improving operations and safety for motorists and pedestrians at the Town's busiest intersections. Respondents of the 2024 Master Plan Public Survey cited enhancing and expanding the pedestrian network as an opportunity to provide a safer walking experience.

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 8-2.1</p> <p>Seek to develop an accessible, multi-modal trail network connecting townwide to destinations and points of interest.</p>	<p>Action 8-3.1</p> <p>Expand sidewalks along Main Street to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles better.</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 8-2.2</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 8-3.2</p> <p>Focus on sidewalk improvements in Business Districts along Main Street, Allen Street, and Somers Road.</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 8-2.3</p> <p>Work with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to update traffic counts on major roadways to help prioritize transportation projects.</p>	<p>Action 8-3.3</p> <p>Assess all Town sidewalks and crosswalks for ADA accessibility and lighting/visibility.</p>