

Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan

Lancaster Planning Board

This framework is to inform the Thursday 2/29/24 public forum
The full draft plan will be completed after public feedback from the
forum and survey



North Nashua River at Cook Conservation Area

The ***Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan*** adopted by the Lancaster Planning Board, in accordance with M.G.L. C. 41, § 81D: June 12, 2024.

The plan was coordinated by Plan Sustain, Inc., whose mission is to assist communities to advance planning, sustainability, resilience, placemaking and livable communities, equity, and economic development.

Thanks are due to:

- Dozens of community members and other stakeholders participated in the planning process at stakeholder and focus group meetings, public engagement forums, and interviews.
- Planning Board, Select Board, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historic Commission, Affordable Housing Trust, and other town boards and commissions
- Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
- Brian Keating, Lancaster Planning Director and Kate Hodges, Lancaster Town Administrator

Acknowledgement

Lancaster was built upon the unceded homelands of the ***Nashawogg*** (also known as ***Nashaway***) band of the ***Nipmuc tribe***, part of the ***Algonquian nation*** and other indigenous and first Americans who inhabited this landscape since time immemorial. Lancaster has benefited from their extensive contributions, assistance, and traditional land stewardship. We commit to acknowledging and learning from its rich intertwined history.

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The Town We Love and Want – Lancaster Community Vision

We are united in wanting to maintain and strengthen the qualities that make Lancaster the town we love and want. We cherish our people, education, heritage, village centers, farmland, woods and open space, beautiful rivers and ponds, and rural and historic character. We are, however, far more than simply a rural or suburban town. We also want more business and local job opportunities and new development in harmony with our historical patterns.

We want to preserve Lancaster as a diverse community of people, sustainable over the long term; with equity and access for all. We want affordable opportunities for our young people to have the opportunity to own or rent, as they wish, their own homes and apartments to be able to continue living in the town in which they grew up, and we want the opportunity for all our residents to stay in town even as their space needs evolve.

We want to protect the Town Green and its ring of historic buildings – the jewel and centerpiece of our community. At the same time, we look forward to having an enhanced ability to walk among both businesses and public facilities that serve our needs within an integrated town center and a nearby commercial village center where we can encounter and mingle with our neighbors.

We want a town government that continues to prioritize services to meet all our residents' needs, at the same time as it continues mindful monitoring of municipal expenditures and seeking appropriate expansions of our commercial and industrial tax base. We cherish our children and our youth, their enthusiasm, and their energy, and are committed to meeting their needs for activities, gathering places, and the ability to travel safely. We respect and value our elders. We are dedicated to ensuring that they can live in their own community as long as they want with comfortable gathering places. We will ensure that all of our residents, whatever their backgrounds and economic conditions, have the opportunity to be fully engaged in town governance and civic life.

We see a future where visitors come to Lancaster to admire its beautiful, historic buildings, traditional New England green, to canoe and kayak on the lovely Nashua River; and to pick apples and buy fresh produce from local farms.

We look forward to our working residents been able to work from home and in or near Lancaster without needing to drive long distances to far away jobs on congested roads. We see a time when the traffic through our town begins to decrease due to our efforts to coordinate land use, new development, and improve public transportation. We see the day when residents can bicycle and walk through large areas of town on trails connecting to neighboring communities and the larger region, safe from traffic.

Even as Lancaster grows, we want the quality of life here to remain high owing to our good schools, institutions, redevelopment opportunities, and ability to preserve our small-town atmosphere and history. We recognize the value and increasing fragility of our natural resources – our water, rivers, woods, fields, and wildlife habitat – and we understand their critical importance to both the local and regional ecosystems and to our quality of life as residents of our town and also members of that ecosystem. We have come to understand how our human behavior directly affects that ecosystem – for better or for worse – and we are committed to being good ecological citizens.

Lancaster in 2035 will evolve, but it must be recognizable as our Lancaster – our historic village character intact, open space, woodlands, rivers, and rural character preserved - a place for all people.

Executive Summary

The *Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan* provides a long-term vision with a shorter-term strategic focus.

The Town We Want and Love – Lancaster Community Vision, above, provides Lancaster’s shared vision and community values.

Land use goals include strengthening town focal points at the Town Green, Center, and a South Lancaster Main Street village by the railroad bridge, the successful redevelopment of the DCAMM and Atlantic Union College properties, simplifying and strengthening zoning to address this plan and the new MBTA Communities requirements, and expand opportunities for commercial and industrial development while addressing conflicts in North Lancaster.

Housing goals include protecting the physical pattern of existing neighborhoods while allowing more flexibility to encourage smaller homes and changing community needs, expanding deed-restricted affordable housing to reach a minimum of 10% of Lancaster housing, and expanding attainable housing so that our children, our new residents, and our seniors aging in place can afford housing.

Economic development goals include expanding the commercial and industrial tax base through economic gardening and paying attention to the needs of local established and emerging businesses (economic gardening), implementing zoning changes, undertaking infrastructure improvements, and creating stronger focal points at the Town Green, Atlantic Union College/Center, North Lancaster, and the South Lancaster/Main Street village at the railroad bridge.

Natural and cultural resource goals include reducing the risk of natural and climate change-induced hazards, celebrating natural and human-built landscapes and environments, improving the presence of the Nashua River and other rivers in everyday life, monitoring the Devens South Post environmental cleanup, and addressing problems with invasive species in Lancaster.

Open space and recreation goals include implementing the current Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and drafting a new 2025-2032 OSRP, preserving and managing Lancaster’s most ecologically valuable areas, natural systems, and farmland, and managing trails, parks, recreation, and open space to serve residents.

Sustainability and resilience goals include mitigating Lancaster’s carbon and greenhouse gas footprint with a goal of the community being carbon neutral by 2050 and town buildings carbon neutral by 2040, improving Lancaster’s ability to be resilient and thrive even with chronic and acute stress from climate change and other challenges, and ensuring that all residents have an opportunity to fully participate in governance and decision making.

Services and facilities goals include ensuring that Lancaster town public buildings and facilities are carbon neutral by 2040, maintaining and updating town public buildings and facilities to ensure that they meet current needs and are resilient to adverse climate change impacts, facilitating the rehabilitation of the former Town Hall to put it back into productive use, evaluating the full life-cycle costs of all capital investments to lower life cycle costs, and improving the Town Green, municipal building civic campus, and the infrastructure needed to serve comprehensive plan goals.

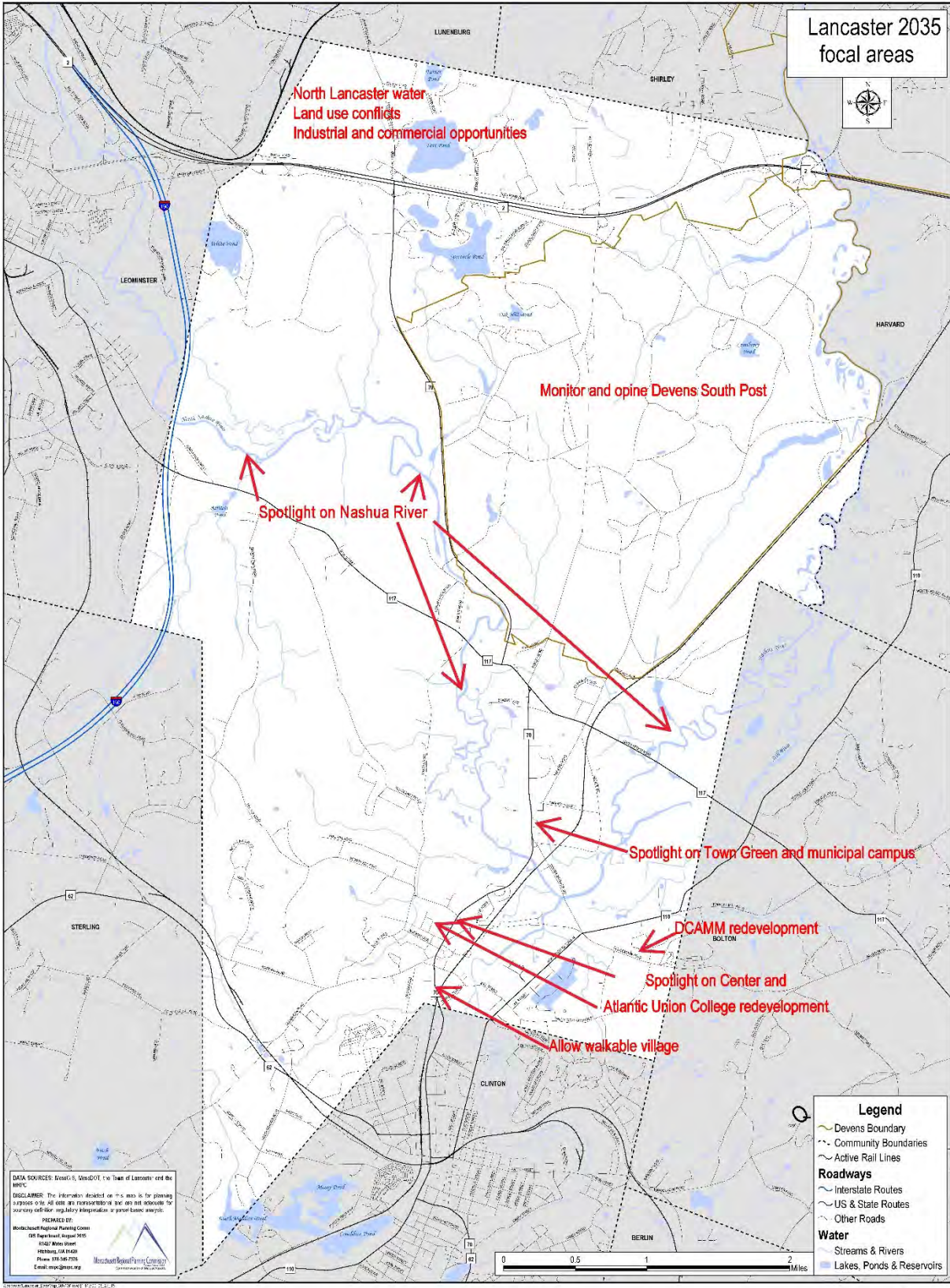
Circulation and mobility goals include ensuring the safety of all modes of transportation on all non-limited access roads, prioritizing projects on safety and addition of currently underserved modes, being an active

player in regional planning of transportation improvements, improving bicycle and pedestrian facilities to allow access throughout town, and setting priorities for pedestrian-scale villages and nodes.

Implementation and action plan goals include mapping out short- and medium-term actions, ensuring that the vision and goals help guide longer-term actions over the next two decades, ensuring that staff and committee time is programed to implement consensus actions, improving accountability, and strengthening local and regional partnerships and collaborations.

The Lancaster 2035 focus area map, below, identifies focus areas with the unique opportunities:

- **North Lancaster** - Develop municipal water, reduce potential land use conflicts between commercial/industrial and residential areas, and expand commercial and industrial opportunities.
- **Devens South Post** – Federal cleanup of the release of hazardous materials and potentially, at some point far in the future, preserving uncontaminated areas as protected opens space.
- **North Nashua River and Nashua River (mainstem)** – Further protect, celebrate, and recreate Lancaster’s most visible and most important historical water feature.
- **Town Green and municipal campus** – Protect and improve the Town Green, keep the municipal campus vibrant and resilient, and get the former Town Hall into productive use.
- **Center and Atlantic Union College** – Support the redevelopment of the former Atlantic Union College, encourage additional commercial and residential activity in the town center, and improve the center as a focal point.
- **South Lancaster/Main Street commercial village** – Allow and encourage the long-term transformation of the auto-oriented strip just north of Clinton and the railroad bridge into a pedestrian friendly area with additional commercial and residential activities.
- **DCAMM Surplus Property Facility** – Facilitate the redevelopment of the facility with housing, commercial, conservation, and recreational opportunities.



Community and Board Engagement

Lancaster 2035 engaged community and board members in a number of ways:

- Kickoff meeting with Planning Director and Planning Board chair (10/27/23)
- Project web site (www.Lancaster2035.org) comments received (10/28/23 to 5/15/24)
- Weekly coordination meeting with the Planning Director throughout the planning process
- Planning Board kickoff meeting (11/28/23)
- Planning, Police, Building community tour (12/5/23)
- Public forum (kickoff) at Mary Rowlandson Elementary School (Saturday 12/2/23)
- Planning Board working session (2/12/24)
- Invite all town boards to review and comment on the plan (2/19/24)
- Public forum (draft plan outline) at Mary Rowlandson Elementary School (Thursday 2/29/24)
- Community survey (on web and paper) (opens 2/29, closes 3/23/24)
- Planning Board working session (4/8 or 4/22)
- Public forum and public hearing (review final draft plan) (4 or 5/___/24)
- Planning Board working session (5/___/24)
- Planning Board adopt final Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan (5 or 6/___/24)
- Select Board endorse final Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan (6 or 7/___/24)

Invitations for public forums and the public hearing were sent out to the 2,800 people on the Thayer Memorial Library and town mailing lists, 70 people who signed up for the www.Lancaster2035.org mailing list, and people who attended a previous public forum. They were also posted on social media sites and at sites throughout Lancaster.

The comments and summaries from the public forums, the high school student focus group, the community survey, and the www.Lancaster2035.org project website are included in the exhibit at the end of this plan.



Background

Lancaster was built upon the unceded homelands of *Nashawogg*, or *Nashaway*, a band of the *Nipmuc tribe* of the *Algonquian nation*, and other Indigenous and Native Americans who inhabited this landscape since time immemorial. The Town of Lancaster acknowledges that Lancaster has benefited from their extensive contributions, assistance, and traditional land stewardship. We commit to acknowledging and learning from its rich intertwined history.

English and European settlers arrived in what was then called Nashaway in 1643. They created small agricultural settlements with an initial and then abandoned goal of extracting iron ore. Lancaster was the first European first settlement in what is now Worcester County. Lancaster was incorporated in 1653, initially as Lancaster on the Nashua. By 1675, relations between the European settlers and Nipmuc and other Indigenous people deteriorated to violence, and the Nipmuc lost their land with no formal treaty ever ceding those lands.

Berlin, Bolton, Boylston, West Boylston, Clinton, Harvard, Leominster, and Sterling were all part of the original Lancaster settlement and were carved off into separate municipalities.

Lancaster, MA



Lancaster provides a vibrant civic life and a degree of civic trust, that Lancaster is us not them, that is missing in many communities. Residents enjoy its sense of place, the attractive Center, North Village Historic District, recreation and conservation areas, and Town Green and municipal campus. The Nashua River, extensive open space, attractive rolling hills, farmland, and healthy neighborhoods enhance the natural bucolic feel. The town seal, Lancaster on the Nashua, represents both the town's historical and current connection to the river.

Lancaster is located within the Nashua River watershed, with the two major branches of the river (North Nashua and Nashua mainstem) flowing through or bordering Lancaster. Its soils are primarily of glacial origin, including glacial tills (30%), and glacial outwash alluvial sediments in low lying areas of rivers and Glacial Lake Nashua (a proglacial lake). (OSRP, 2017).

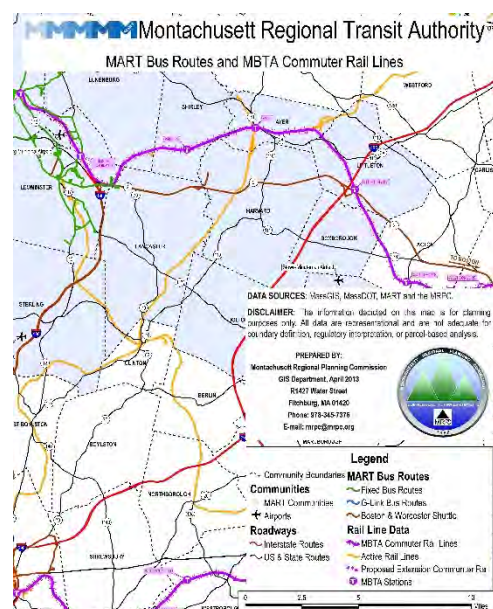


Lancaster is in northern Worcester County and is part of the Montachusett region. The towns of Leominster and Sterling border Lancaster to the west, Lunenburg and Shirley to the north, Bolton to the east, and Clinton to the south. Lancaster has distinct villages and neighborhoods, including current and historic neighborhoods of Ebanville, Deershorn, South Lancaster, Five Corners, Lancaster Center, North Village, and Ponakin Mill.

North Village Historic District, Center Village Historic District, Lancaster Industrial School for Girls, and Shirley Shaker Village are on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). There are no local Lancaster Historic Districts. Hundreds of properties, both listed on the NRHP and not listed, have been inventoried for historic value. Those inventories are available at the [Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System](#).

Interstate I-90 to the west and Highway Route 2 in the north provide excellent access. Lancaster is easily accessible to nearby employment centers, 5 miles to Devens, and 10 miles to the closest place on the Route 128 corridor. Larger cities are slightly farther, Worcester is 15 miles south and Boston is 36 miles east.

Lancaster has only minimal fixed route bus service (Route 8 with a single Lancaster stop at Old Union Turnpike off Route 2) and the Boston shuttle that passes through Route 2 but makes no stops in Lancaster) through the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART). MART recently started an on-demand evening micro-transit program that covers a portion of Lancaster and complements its Council-on-Aging program. There is no rail transit to Boston or Worcester, but the MBTA's Westborough station (Framingham/Worcester Line) and MBTA Shirley, Leominster, Ayer, and Littleton stations (Fitchburg Line) provide some options.



Lancaster, on average, is better educated, higher income, more white, more likely to have been born in the United States, more likely to live in their own home, less likely to live in a subsidized deed-restricted dwelling unit, and more likely to live at lower density than the average for residents of Worcester County and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (Summary Demographics table, below).

The high rate of homeowners who are cost burdened (see table below) is misleading, however, because long term residents who experienced housing inflation often have enough basis or equity in their home to be able to afford to live there even when they could not afford to buy their own home if they were moving to Lancaster today. This creates a “demographic bomb,” where new residents will need higher incomes to own a home in Lancaster and the gap in those who can attain market-rate housing will grow.

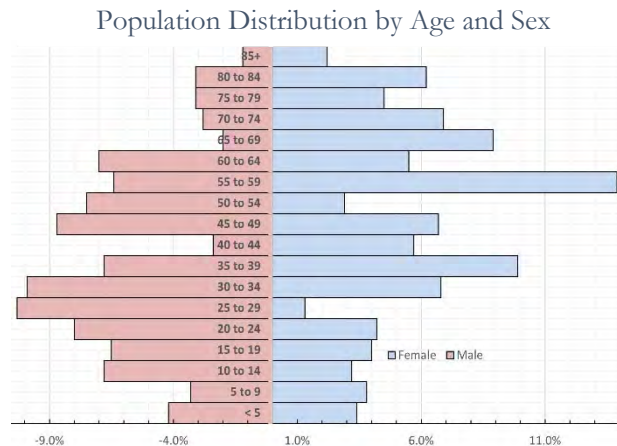
Summary demographics

| | Lancaster | Worcester Co. | Massachusetts |
|--|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| Population (2022) | 8,394 | 862,927 | 6,982,740 |
| White alone (not Latino/Hispanic) | 84.2% | 73.8% | 69.6% |
| Median household size | 2.45 | 2.52 | 2.46 |
| Persons under 18 years of age | 17.7% | 20.3% | 21.7% |
| Persons 65 years and older | 18.1% | 17.2% | 17.3% |
| Owner-occupied dwellings | 82.5% | 65.9% | 62.4% |
| 25+ age with bachelor's degree | 51.1% | 38.4% | 45.9% |
| 25+ age with high school diploma | 93.7% | 91.4% | 91.2% |
| Foreign born | 6.8% | 13.4% | 13.7% |
| Travel time to work | 29.4 minutes | 29.3 minutes | 29.5 minutes |
| Population density (2020) (persons/sq. mile) | 307.3 | 570.7 | 901.2 |
| Median household income | \$111,506 | \$88,524 | \$96,505 |
| Poverty rate | 3.1% | 10.6% | 10.4% |
| Area in square miles (in acres) | 27.47 (17,600) | 1,511 | 3,533,038 |
| Subsidized/Affordable Housing (7/1/23) | 5.04% | | 9.68% |
| Owner-occupied homes that are cost-burdened | 29.7% | | |
| Renter-occupied homes that are cost-burdened | 54.8% | | |

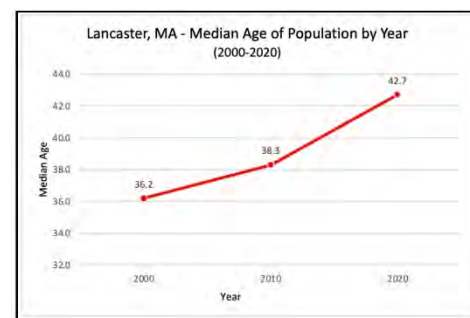
Sources: Population Estimates July 1, 2022 (U.S. Census), Subsidized Housing Inventory (Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities), MRPC from American Community Survey (2017-2021)

Lancaster has an older population (median age of 42.7) with fewer young people than the Commonwealth as a whole (median age of 39.6). The Commonwealth is already older than that of the United States (median age of 38.9).

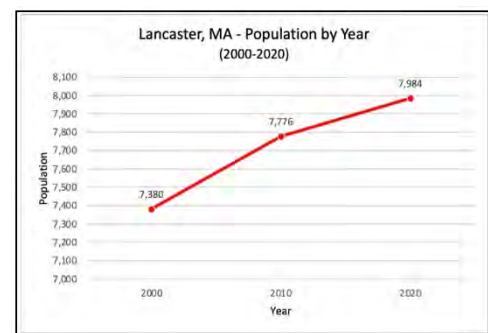
The Population Distribution by Age and Sex chart (“population pyramid”) shows the bulge in older residents, especially older women. This female bulge reflects of Lancaster’s aging population and women’s average longer longevity.



With the aging of the population and changing housing patterns, Lancaster has an increasing number of single older residents. Many of those residents are over-housed in larger homes than they need and more expensive to maintain. The bulge in older residents and the increase in smaller and single-person households has increased Lancaster’s median age (half the population is older than the median and half is younger).



The older bulge will continue to move up as the existing middle-aged residents age. With fewer young children and that aging bulge, Lancaster’s median will continue to increase over the next two decades. This will continue to influence housing demand towards smaller units with greater accessibility.



Lancaster has experienced a slow but steady population growth (0.6% annually) in the 21st century (US Census), because of net in-migration.

Lancaster's has grown modestly over the past 20 years (US Decennial Census and American

With slightly more deaths than births in most years, however, Lancaster is experiencing a slight “*natural decrease*” in its population. Lancaster has experienced, however, a small population growth because in-migration exceeds out-migration by slightly more than the natural decrease in most years (See Births and Deaths table).

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) has projected a small but steady population decrease based on the natural population decrease. New housing and in-migration could lead to a more stable population, but the small population of youth and the aging population will make it highly unlikely that Lancaster will experience significant population growth over the next two decades.

Lancaster Births and Deaths

| Year | Births | Deaths |
|------|--------|--------|
| 2022 | 52 | 84 |
| 2021 | 79 | 61 |
| 2020 | 52 | 71 |
| 2019 | 57 | 63 |
| 2018 | 58 | 47 |
| 2017 | 49 | 61 |
| 2016 | 60 | 69 |

Source: Massachusetts Vital Records

With the aging population and the decline in household and family size, in Lancaster and most communities in Massachusetts, it will take more dwelling units to house the same number of people. MRPC projects

(2023) that Lancaster will grow from 2,619 households in 2020 (US Census) to 3,019 households in 2050, even with their projected small decline in the total town population.

Lancaster has healthy municipal finances with an average debt burden, low pension liability, high median incomes, and a decent tax base (Moody's reports www.moody.com/credit-ratings/Lancaster-Town-of-MA-credit-rating-800020593/). For aging residents on a fixed income and for households earning below the median income, however, Lancaster's cost of living, especially for those needing new housing, can be a significant burden.

| Lancaster Population Projection | |
|--|-------|
| 2020 | 8,441 |
| 2022 | 8,394 |
| 2030 | 8,277 |
| 2040 | 7,922 |
| 2050 | 7,305 |
| Sources: US Census (2020 decennial & 2022 estimate), and MRPC (2023) | |

Lancaster has more industrial and commercial properties than many suburban communities, helping its tax base, but most of Lancaster's tax base is residential, adding to property tax burdens for many households.

The median single-family home property tax bill is slightly higher than that of the Commonwealth and abutting communities to its north, west, and south, but is significantly lower than abutting communities to its east (www.mass.gov/info-details/massachusetts-average-single-family-tax#fy2022). Lancaster has a single tax rate for residential, commercial, and industrial properties, making it desirable for commercial and industrial uses to locate and remain in town, even with a higher-than-average tax rate of \$17.46 (FY24) per \$1,000.

Planning

The *Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan* grew out of Lancaster's last *Master Plan* (2007), a wide range of independent but relevant plans, independent analysis of trends and opportunities, and extensive community and board engagement outlined above.

Comprehensive or master plans (comprehensive plan is the more common term), tend to have a planning horizon of about 20 years, but need to either be kept up to date with revisions every few years, or significant revisions every decade or so. With the previous comprehensive plan now 17 years old, the time has come to reimagine Lancaster's future.

Lancaster Master Plan (Lancaster Planning Board and Herr & James Associates, 2007)

The 2007 Lancaster Master Plan opened with its own "*The Town We Want*" vision statement. That vision statement shares Lancaster's vision and values. It is still mostly relevant today. As a result, our new 2024-2035 vision statement (page 4, above) updates the previous vision with revisions as necessary to address changing conditions and opportunities.

Since 2007, Lancaster has made significant progress towards achieving the 2007 vision and the goals set forth in that plan. For example, a partial list of relatively recent implementation work includes:

- A focus on the **Town Green** and the buildings around it. For example, the Lancaster Community Preservation Act is helping restore the Bulfinch (UU) Church (2023-2024), one of the Town Green's anchors. There was some discussion of formalizing the status of the Town Green as protected open space, and therefore making it grant-eligible, but no action was taken.
- A significant expansion of inclusionary zoning to encourage **affordable and attainable housing** with CPA and other funds used to capitalize the relatively newly (2020) created Affordable Housing Trust.
- Lancaster has modernized its zoning in many other ways, from
- Lancaster has expanded **open space and recreation** opportunities in the last 26 years, summarized in Lancaster Open Space and Recreation Plan (2017-2024).

- Improving environmental preservation and advancing climate readiness by implementing its Stormwater Management Plan and Stormwater Management Rules and Regulations (2007 and 2018) and collaborating with the Army and EPA on the cleanup of the Devens South Post superfund site.
- The creation of the **Tax Fairness** Committee (2023) to explore how to maintain services while exploring fair resident taxation with a strong focus on seniors and others living on fixed incomes.
- Analyzing **business and market conditions in the South Lancaster** commercial district (2021).
- Working with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to improve **roadway safety** at major intersections (e.g., Main Street/Route 70/117).
- Receiving a Commonwealth grant to support creating a **wayfinding program** to build a sense of place and support economic development (2024).
- Collaborate with the Commonwealth to plan for **DCAMM's planned surplus** of their Old Common Road site and prepare the necessary state legislation (2023-2024).
- Improving **public facilities**, such as planning for an eventual Thayer Library rehabilitation (2022-2024).

Other Lancaster plans also informed this comprehensive plan:

Community Resilience Program: Community Resilience Building (BETA, 2020)

The plan identifies Lancaster's climate change resilience priorities. These priorities are eligible for competitive Commonwealth Municipal Vulnerability grants. The plan can be revised anytime as priorities and MVP grant opportunities present themselves. At some point, Lancaster will want to apply for a MVP 2.0 Planning grant to fund an update of this plan with deeper engagement from traditionally underrepresented populations, receive \$50,000 in seed funding for immediate implementation, and retain eligibility for future MVP grants.

The plan identified the top hazards, all aggravated by climate change, as inland flooding, severe winter storms, invasive species, and other severe weather events. This information, and the hazards identified in the plan, were used for the Hazard Mitigation Plan summarized below.

The highest priorities in the Community Compliance plan (with no order within the list) are:

- Culverts: Upsize culverts on Rt 117 and Rt 110; Repair Sterling Rd. culvert; Culvert cleaning program.
- Major Roads (Rt 117 and Rt 70): Raise Rt 117; drainage improvements on South Main; Evaluate drainage town-wide; update zoning and stormwater bylaws; install permanent signage advising of flooding.
- Culverts throughout town undersized and in bad shape: Conduct town-wide culvert mapping and assessment; Pursue grants and funding for culvert upgrades; Conduct preventative maintenance; Beaver Plan.
- Shelter Facility/Long-term Emergency Shelter: Study to find location for shelter; communicate with neighboring towns for short-term shelter available options; generator for senior center; Feasibility study to explore regional and local shelter opportunities and plans.
- Schools: Assess whether schools (middle and elementary) can be used as emergency shelters.
- Low-Income Population: Targeted study to alleviate flooding impacts; translation services; increase outreach.
- Municipal Buildings: Evaluate needs for upgrades and additional generators, Ensure buildings can function as winter and summer shelters.
- Elderly Population: Provide transportation; targeted study to alleviate flooding; provide targeted info on evacuation.
- Town Communications: Backup generator for town hall; increase communication prior & during hazard events; upgrade highway radio.

- Excavation Plan: Create emergency management committee; post signage on roads; post route on town website; broadcast route on local cable; maintain and upgrade as needed.
- Housing Authority (Elderly and Low-Income): Ensure reliable power source is available.

Medium priority projects in the plan, again with no order within this list, are:

- Bridges: Replace the bridge on Rt 117 at Bolton Line; Evaluate the condition of bridges townwide.
- Pump Stations (sewer): Evaluation of pump stations with options to fortify against flooding.
- Highway Department: Feasibility study to relocate; Develop options for reuse of highway facility.
- Wells: and water protection: Relocate salt shed out of floodplain; maintain use restrictions; Update well bylaw; Purchase generators; Study to evaluate adequacy of water system for future development.
- Water Storage Tanks: Assess runoff from the tank site; upgrade back-up generators.
- Rt 117 Bridge over Nashua and Culvert: Design Bridge to accommodate drainage for current and future storm forecast and traffic loads; Conduct Annual Inspection.
- Railroad Crossings: Improve communications and understanding of protocols with rail companies.
- Code Red: Maintain and upgrade as needed; Provide information to residents on availability.
- Nashua and Still Rivers: Update zoning for building in flood plains; Purchase land along river for flood storage; Study to determine location to potentially reduce flooding through river improvement.
- Wetlands: Maintain, review and update wetlands bylaw as necessary; Investigate mosquito control options.
- Town Forest: Update forest management plan; Include invasive species in the scope of plan updates

Low priority projects identified are:

- Regional Emergency Communications Center: Consistent evaluation of center to ensure needs are met; Review Devens MVP for areas of collaboration.
- River Terrace: Ensure reliable power source is available.
- Agricultural Properties: Assess ability to deal with vulnerabilities on these properties (i.e., hydrant availability); Management Plan for Invasive Species.
- Town Forest and Open Space: Maintain open space; Review open space plan and update as needed; Secure funding to purchase additional open space; Annual brush cleaning programs; Evaluate condition of trees and susceptibility to invasive species; develop program to combat invasive species.
- Brooks and Ponds: Evaluate the health of ponds and brooks; develop weed maintenance program for White's Pond.
- Conservation Area adjacent to Rt 70: Evaluate erosion potential; Identify additional land to expand.
- Open Space: Strategic application of the open space plan in the acquisition of priority parcels; Coordinate with U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game to protect critical habitat areas

Learning Along the Great Road, Strategic Plan / 2022-2027 (Nashoba Regional School District, 2022)

The plan identifies the school district's mission as "Together, we inspire and challenge all learners to realize their unique potential to become active contributors to their community." This overall mission could become part of Lancaster's comprehensive plan, but some of the school's strategic plan initiatives that go beyond the schools' doors are especially relevant to ***Lancaster 2035***.

- Grow civic engagement and volunteerism
- Increase authentic learning opportunities, including community partnerships and internships
- Conduct an audit for equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging

- Improve and sustain physical environments that promote healthy and vibrant learning conditions in all buildings.

Montachusett Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy- 2019-2024 (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 2019)

The CEDS established a regional economic development strategy, focusing on populations with the greatest financial challenges and the largest economic development engines. As a result, none of the identified CEDS projects are in Lancaster, making it far less likely to obtain assistance from the U.S. Economic Development Administration. Key findings of the plan include:

- The region is aging faster than the Commonwealth with most communities even older than Lancaster.
- While manufacturing in the region has declined, it remains critical to the regional economy.
- Education attainment is increasing, especially for young women, but remains lower than the Commonwealth.

Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan- 2024, Journey to 2050 (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission/Metropolitan Planning Organization, 2023)

The RTP represents the Montachusett region’s consensus transportation plan. Items funded out of the region’s allocation of federal and state transportation funding and listed on the region’s annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be consistent with the RTP. The plan sets a vision of “...*a multimodal and inclusionary transportation system that is safe, secure, efficient and affordable to all individuals while supporting and encouraging environmentally- sustainable economic development, growth, and revitalization...*” It establishes seven goals to achieve that vision.

- Goal 1 – Improve and Maintain Safety and Security
- Goal 2 – Reduce Congestion and Improve Mobility
- Goal 3 – Promote and Seek Equitable Transportation for All
- Goal 4 – Improve System Preservation and Maintenance of All Modes
- Goal 5 – Improve Economic Vitality
- Goal 6 – Improve and Promote Healthy Modes and Transportation Options
- Goal 7 – Reduce Green House Gas and Promote Environmental Practices and Sustainability

The plan provides a wealth of background transportation data, crash data, and traffic counts. It notes that while Lancaster has received construction funding twice through the Commonwealth’s Complete Street Program, it has never participated in or received Safe Routes to School funding. The report includes a brief list of projects in various levels of planning:

- Improved freight access from Route 2, Exit 103 on Route 70 to the P.J. Keating mining and asphalt plant.
- Freight study with Ayer, Lunenburg, and Shirley, including access to Capital Commerce Center and Unified Global Packaging.
- Examining Route 2 as a congested corridor.
- Route 117 access to Interstate-190 at the Lancaster/Leominster town line and more generally Route 117, building off of a detailed Route 117 corridor profile completed a decade ago.

Open Space and Recreation Plan (2017-2024), (OSRP Committee and Conservation Commission)

The current OSRP expires in November 2024. Although it is near the end of its shelf life and Lancaster will soon be starting on an update, the plan provides an excellent inventory, background information, vision, goals, objectives, and actions. The Open Space and Recreation and the Natural and Cultural Resources elements of this plan build on and draw heavily from the OSRP.

The OSRP vision is to protect Lancaster's natural resources - its water supply, agricultural lands, and contiguous blocks of forestland so that residents and visitors may enjoy their benefits, improve Lancaster's recreational opportunities and facilities for the benefit of all age groups to access and enjoy, and retain Lancaster's natural beauty, rural nature and historic character while integrating development.

The goals are to protect the town's public water supply, conserve and protect agricultural lands and farming viability, protect contiguous blocks of forest land, enrich recreational resources, improve connectivity to foster a sense of community, improve townwide communications, preserve and enhance our open space and animal and plant habitat, develop resources to support the goals of the OSRP, integrate growth and development to preserve Lancaster's rural feel, scenic vistas, historic character, and natural landscape.

South Lancaster Commercial District: Analysis of Business and Market Conditions to inform Rezoning and Economic Development Policy (FinePoint Associates with Lancaster Community Planning and Development Department, 2021)

The plan examined South Lancaster, the Town Center with the former Atlantic Union College campus and the small Main Street (Rte. 70) commercial node just north of the railroad bridge near the Clinton town line. The plan identifies opportunities and challenges:

- It is the only area of town with full water and sewer and is already a significant economic engine.
- The commercial node functions as an auto-oriented strip and not a walkable village
- There is ample available real estate
- Clinton helps provide both a critical mass and direct competition to new activity
- The redevelopment of Atlantic Union College into a new educational campus or some other use is key to area potential.
- The location away from highways limits but does not eliminate potential
- There are significant rezoning opportunities that can make both sites more likely to succeed.
- There is significant leakage of money out of Lancaster that can potentially be reduced with South Lancaster redevelopment.

Thayer Memorial Library: Strategic Plan FY2024-2029 (Thayer Memorial Library, 2023)

The plan defines the library's strategy, noting that Lancaster has a more extensive library, including a Museum and Special collections with more holdings than comparable communities; It is able, however, to invest 25% less money in its library, per capita, than those communities. Aspects of the strategic plan that are especially relevant to **Lancaster 2035** are providing equitable services, removing barriers to participation, and fostering a strong connection with Lancaster's present and past.

Town of Lancaster Economic Development Plan (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 2015)

Although the demographic data in the plan is somewhat dated, the plan provides a useful and still relevant background, especially for the economic development section of this plan. The plan's recommendations are:

- Establish a local Economic Development Committee [created July 13, 2022].

- Prepare a market study to identify potential business.
- Review the adequacy of zoning and identify new areas for economic development.
- Work to redevelop any Brownfields properties (e.g., the completed Lancaster Landfill Solar Farm).
- Enhance communication with businesses (survey and/or informal personal visits).
- Aggressively seek funding for road/infrastructure improvements.
- Explore regionalization of services and consolidation.
- Consider ways to guide development to enhance community character and promote smart growth and connectivity.

Town of Lancaster Hazard Mitigation Plan (Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 2022)

The Hazard Mitigation Plan was written to FEMA and MEMA standards, making Lancaster eligible for FEMA and MEMA hazard mitigation funding once the plan is finalized (as of November 7, 2023, the plan was awaiting final revisions before FEMA could approve and the Select Board could formally adopt the plan). This funding can be critical to funding plan recommendations. The plan documents the natural landscape and climate and identifies the natural hazards, many of which are worsening with climate change.

The plan reports, based on the MassGIS analysis (2015), that Lancaster is 25% forest, agriculture, open land, and water; 27% residential; 28% recreation and institutional lands (which includes the South Post); 13% commercial, industrial, mixed-use, and other; and 7% rights-of-way (road and railroad)

The most significant hazards for Lancaster are:

- Flooding
- Severe winter storm hazards
- Other severe weather hazards, especially tropical storms and hurricanes, strong winds, prolonged rain, and sudden snow melt
- Drought and extreme temperatures
- Infectious disease and pandemics
- Invasive species hazards

Earthquakes, wildfires, and other risks are less likely.

The plan, citing the MVP plan summarized above, identifies inland flooding, severe winter storms, other severe weather including drought, and invasive species as the hazards that will most likely become more severe with climate change.

Town of Lancaster Housing Production Plan: 2020-2024 (Lancaster resident volunteers and Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, 2019). EOHLC approval expires 3/10/2024.

The Housing Production Plan combines a complete needs assessment with a strategy for creating additional affordable housing units in Lancaster, aiming at permitting and developing new affordable housing units of 0.5% of total housing units annually until the town reaches the state goal of 10% of its housing stock being affordable. That will give the town safe harbor to reject or condition 40B/Comprehensive Permit projects when those projects do not align with town goals.

Lancaster is currently updating the plan. The Needs Assessment remains relevant although it needs updating to reflect more recent subtle demographic changes (e.g., 2020 decennial census, 2022 American Community Survey, Lancaster housing production and permitting data, HUD affordable housing income limits).

The housing goal from the housing production plan and 2007 master plan is “***To preserve Lancaster as a diverse community of people, sustainable over the long-term with equity and access for all.***”

The housing objective in both plans is “To produce nearly 200 new affordable units in the next 10 years:

- 50-60 units in multi-family structures
- 40-50 rental units as a minimum
- 20-30 units suitable for one-person households
- 45-55 units for persons aged 65+
- 20 or more units for persons with disabilities

Implementation measures include building institutions, refining regulation, and continuing affordability and fair access. Lancaster has made progress in many of these areas, from creating the Affordable Housing Trust, adopting the Community Preservation Act, adding inclusionary housing requirements and ADU and 40R smart growth option to the zoning, and raising the profile of the town housing conversation.

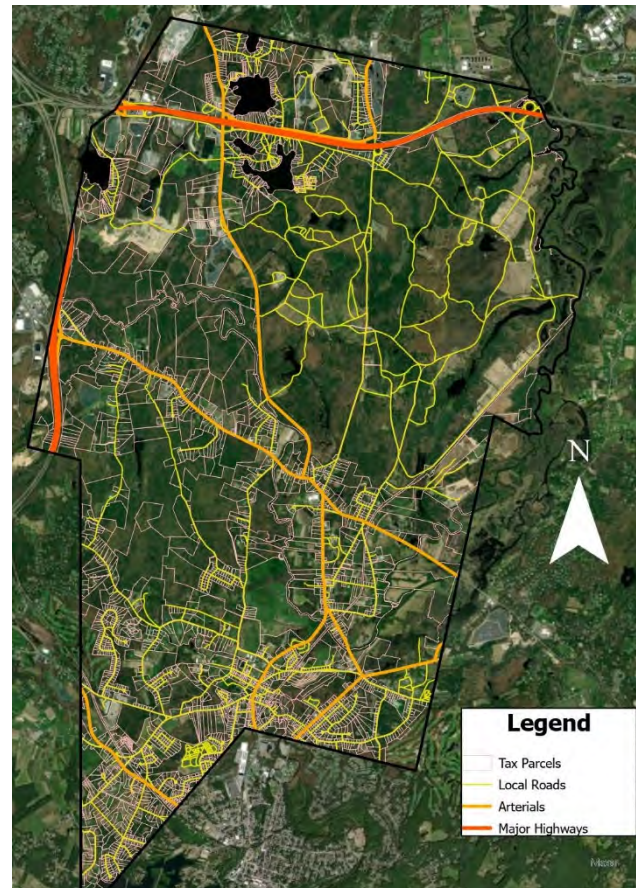
Land Use

Goals

- Simplify zoning regulations and strengthen site plan standards.
- Implement MBTA Communities zoning requirements.
- Expand commercial and industrial opportunities while addressing use conflicts between industrial and residential land uses in North Lancaster.
- Strengthen focal points at the Town Green, South Lancaster Center, and a walkable Main Street village by the railroad bridge.
- Add compliance with Lancaster 2035 vision and goals to zoning special permit criteria and, to the extent applicable, site plan review criteria.
- Ensure the successful redevelopment of the DCAMM and Atlantic Union College surplus properties.

Lancaster is classified as an MBTA Community under MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3A "MBTA Communities Zoning Law." As such, it is required to have a zoning district where multi-family housing is allowed as-of-right with no discretionary approvals required. Requiring Site Plan Approval, which regulates not whether a project occurs but how it is laid out, is allowed.

Lancaster's current zoning does not allow multifamily housing by right except for as part of a MGL 40R Smart Growth mixed-use overlay ("Multifamily dwelling other than a living facility for seniors" requires special permits or is not allowed, depending on the zoning district. South Lancaster and the Center provide the most desirable redevelopment opportunities with their availability of municipal water and sanitary sewers.



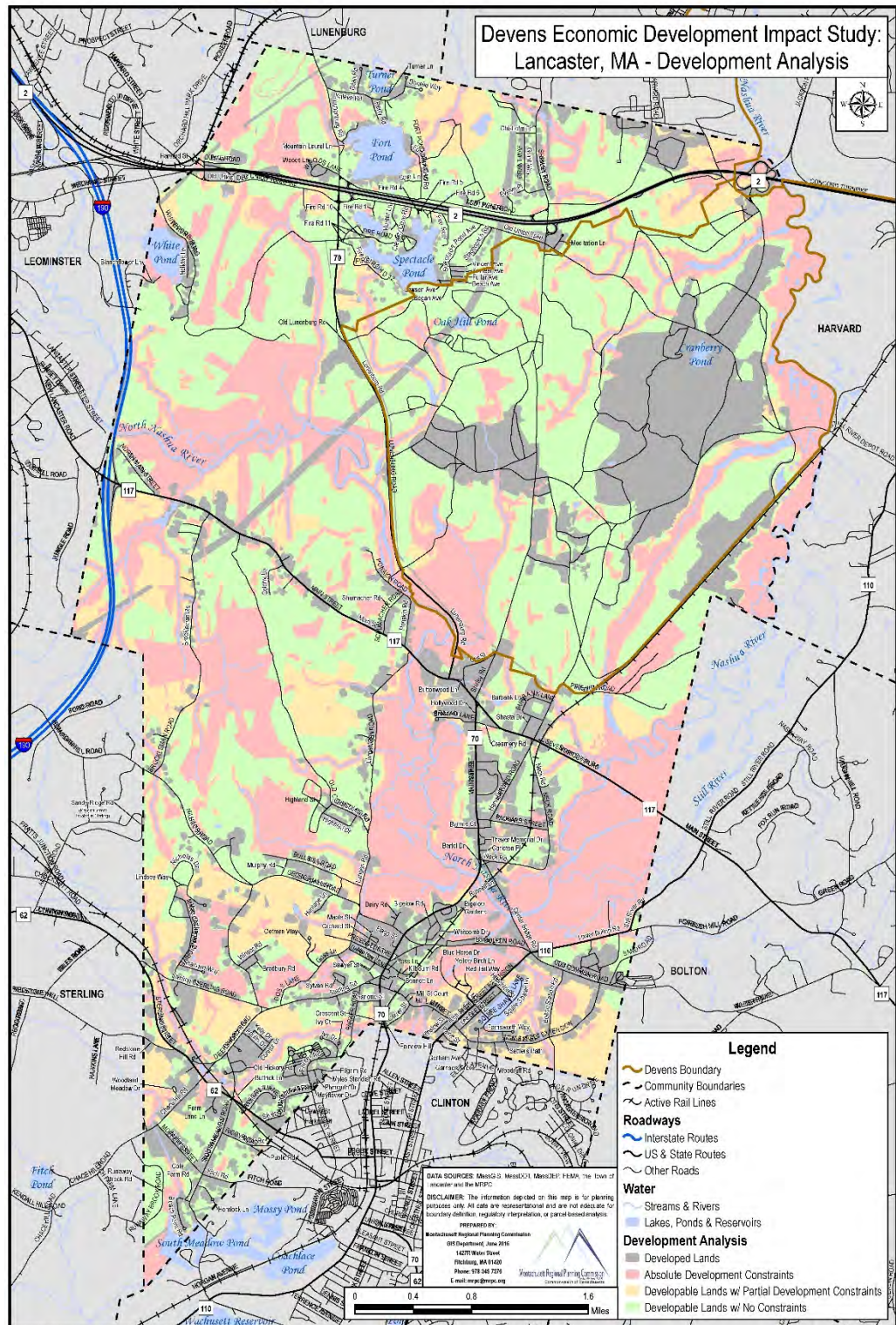
Much of Lancaster retains its rural and small-town feel, even while 25% of the town, Fort Devens South Post, is off limits

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission's 2016 Development Analysis identifies, in general terms, the development potential of land in Lancaster. Lancaster is currently working with MRPC to update this plan and an accompanying build out potential map.

A large portion of the theoretically developable land is within Deven's South Post, which is not going to be available for development for at least a decade, if ever.

Some of the land shown as developable may conflict with farmland preservation and open space goals. Lancaster should adjust its zoning

and land preservation efforts to downzone and purchase land or development rights on farmland and land with the highest agriculture values and sensitive environmental receptors.



Housing

Goals

- **Protect the general physical pattern of existing neighborhoods.**
- **Increase flexibility to encourage smaller homes and changing community needs.**
- **Expand deed-restricted affordable housing to reach a minimum of 10% of Lancaster housing.**
- **Expand attainable housing for our children, new residents, and seniors aging in place.**
- **Explore limited development projects to protect open space or serve other municipal needs while providing affordable housing.**

Lancaster is committed to increasing the amount of deed-restricted affordable housing, typically defined as affordable to those earning no more than 80% Area Median Income (AMI). The Income Limits chart below shows these limits for common household sizes.

Income Limits by Household Size (Federal FY2023)

| Eastern Worcester Co. HUD Metro Area | Unit mix with Federal LIHTC | FY23 Income Limits by Household Size | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Low-income (80% AMI) | Maximum 80% of units | \$66,300 | \$75,750 | \$85,200 | \$94,600 |
| 60% of AMI | Minimum of 40% or | \$58,260 | \$66,600 | \$74,940 | \$83,220 |
| Very low-income (50% AMI) | Minimum of 20% | \$48,550 | \$55,500 | \$62,450 | \$69,350 |

For small projects, such as Habitat for Humanity, there are often a variety of funding sources. For large projects, the Federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) is the most common funding source, with its affordability requirements and a minimum of 30 years of guaranteed affordability.

Lancaster is also committed to attainable or market-rate affordable housing, typically affordable those earning between 80% and 100% or 120% of AMI. Lancaster has focused on 120% of AMI for their attainable housing target. The Community Preservation Act allows CPA funds to be used for projects supporting housing up to 100% of AMI, so some communities use this as their funding target while focusing on 120% through regulatory incentives.

Housing is considered affordable or attainable when the owner or renter does not need to exceed 30% of their income on housing. People paying more than 30% of their income are considered housing cost burdened. In an area such as Lancaster, where most people rely on private cars for transportation, the metric often used is that residents are cost-burdened if they need to spend more than 45% of their income on housing (30%) plus transportation (15%).

Lancaster has made progress towards this goal with inclusionary housing zoning, accessory dwelling unit zoning, and supporting affordable housing projects. Currently 5.04% of Lancaster dwelling units are considered affordable housing, based on the Commonwealth's methodology (Chapter 40B Subsidized Housing Inventory, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, June 29, 2023). This is half of the state goal of 10% affordable housing and the statewide average of 9.68% affordable housing. Communities below the 10% threshold have less flexibility in responding to affordable housing projects requesting zoning and other regulatory waivers and receive fewer points for some Commonwealth competitive grants.

Lancaster has also made some progress towards attainable, workforce, or community housing (there are several different terms for housing at the lower end of the market without deed restrictions). Lancaster has made some progress with accessory dwelling units, but the large size of many Lancaster homes, coupled with the declining household size especially for seniors, has limited this success.

Recent Lancaster affordable and attainable housing measures include adopting or approving:

- Housing Production Plan and Needs Assessment (2019).
- Affordable Housing Trust (2020).
- Inclusionary housing zoning (2021)
- Community Preservation Act (2021)
- Smart growth overlay (40R) mixed-use and mixed-income zoning (2022)
- Accessory apartment by-right zoning (2023)
- Housing Production Plan updates consultant contract (2024)
- Identifying affordable housing as the goal for redevelopment projects (e.g., DCAMM property)

Lancaster's current Housing Production Plan (2020-2024) expired on March 10, 2024, but many of the recommendations and much of the demographic data is still relevant. Lancaster has already kicked off the consultant-coordinated process, working closely with the Lancaster Affordable Housing Trust, to complete a plan update by the end of 2024.

Economic Development

Goals

- Expand the commercial and industrial tax base through attention to the needs of local established and emerging businesses (economic gardening) and new businesses.
- Create stronger focal points at the Town Green, South Lancaster Center, North Lancaster, and the Main Street village at the railroad bridge
- Improve infrastructure (e.g., roads and North Lancaster water supply) to serve economic development needs.
- Implementing zoning changes to ease business location.

There are slightly more jobs in Lancaster than there are Lancaster dwelling units (3,128:2,736) for 1.14 jobs to housing ratio. Likewise, approximately there are half as many jobs in Lancaster as there are Lancaster workers (3,128:7,000 or 0.5). For a small town without a huge tax base, this is healthy. Trying to increase the local jobs and shorten potential commutes, however, remains part of the Town's economic development aspirations.

Lancaster's narrow tax base, aggravated by the large amount of property tax exempt properties, creates financial pressures on municipal government and property tax payers. Residents, business owners, and municipal officials often identify the narrow tax base as the primary economic challenge. The limited number of jobs in Lancaster is not nearly as important to those stakeholders. As a result, investments that increase the tax base without a significant increase in required municipal services (i.e., commercial and industrial development even if warehouses with limited employment) are the highest economic development priorities.

The Overview

Economic Indicators

table compares

Lancaster to

Worcester and

Massachusetts.

The more detailed

indexes, below,

provide more

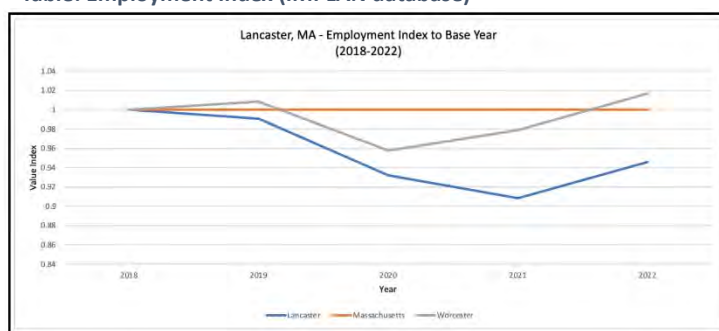
interpretation of what this means. The index shows to what extent variations in employment, output, value added, and value added per employee are the result of regional trends, and to what extent they are unique to Lancaster.

As compared to Massachusetts and even Worcester, Lancaster's employment index has fluctuated more, especially during COVID (see *Employment Index* chart). This is partially simply due to the noise that exists in a small community, where a small change in raw numbers is a large percentage of the workforce, and mostly due to the unique challenges of the COVID recession and recovery.

Table: Overview Economic Indicators (IMPLAN database)

| Geography | Year | Employment | Employment Index to Base Year | Output | Output Index to Base Year | Value Added | Value Added Index to Base Year | Output Per Employee | Value Added Per Employee |
|---------------|------|------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Lancaster | 2018 | 3,307 | 1.00 | \$ 514,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 326,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 155,427.88 | \$ 98,578.77 |
| Lancaster | 2019 | 3,276 | 0.99 | \$ 526,000,000 | 1.02 | \$ 331,000,000 | 1.02 | \$ 160,561.66 | \$ 101,037.85 |
| Lancaster | 2020 | 3,082 | 0.93 | \$ 511,000,000 | 0.99 | \$ 321,000,000 | 0.98 | \$ 165,801.43 | \$ 104,153.15 |
| Lancaster | 2021 | 3,004 | 0.91 | \$ 530,000,000 | 1.03 | \$ 326,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 176,431.42 | \$ 108,521.97 |
| Lancaster | 2022 | 3,128 | 0.95 | \$ 600,000,000 | 1.17 | \$ 364,000,000 | 1.12 | \$ 191,815.86 | \$ 116,368.29 |
| Worcester | 2018 | 471,000 | 1.00 | \$ 84,000,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 46,000,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 178,343.95 | \$ 97,664.54 |
| Worcester | 2019 | 475,000 | 1.01 | \$ 87,000,000,000 | 1.04 | \$ 49,000,000,000 | 1.07 | \$ 183,157.89 | \$ 103,157.89 |
| Worcester | 2020 | 451,000 | 0.96 | \$ 84,000,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 48,000,000,000 | 1.04 | \$ 186,252.77 | \$ 106,430.16 |
| Worcester | 2021 | 461,000 | 0.98 | \$ 93,000,000,000 | 1.11 | \$ 53,000,000,000 | 1.15 | \$ 201,735.36 | \$ 114,967.46 |
| Worcester | 2022 | 479,000 | 1.02 | \$ 103,000,000,000 | 1.23 | \$ 59,000,000,000 | 1.28 | \$ 215,031.32 | \$ 123,173.28 |
| Massachusetts | 2018 | 5,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 931,000,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 582,000,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 186,200.00 | \$ 116,400.00 |
| Massachusetts | 2019 | 5,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 972,000,000,000 | 1.04 | \$ 609,000,000,000 | 1.05 | \$ 194,400.00 | \$ 121,800.00 |
| Massachusetts | 2020 | 5,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 944,000,000,000 | 1.01 | \$ 601,000,000,000 | 1.03 | \$ 188,800.00 | \$ 120,200.00 |
| Massachusetts | 2021 | 5,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 1,000,000,000,000 | 1.07 | \$ 660,000,000,000 | 1.13 | \$ 200,000.00 | \$ 132,000.00 |
| Massachusetts | 2022 | 5,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 1,000,000,000,000 | 1.07 | \$ 714,000,000,000 | 1.23 | \$ 200,000.00 | \$ 142,800.00 |

Table: Employment Index (IMPLAN database)



Lancaster economic output and value-added indexes fluctuations mostly mirror Massachusetts and Worcester's output variations, but Lancaster is losing a small amount of ground in comparison. (See *Economic Output* and *Value-Added Indexes* charts).

Table: Value-Added Index (IMPLAN database)

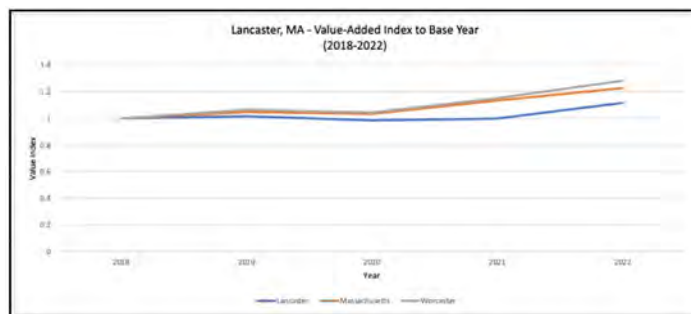
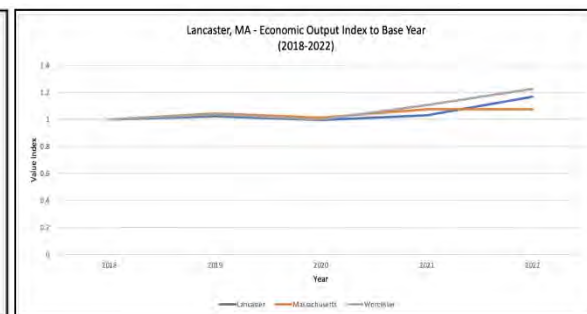
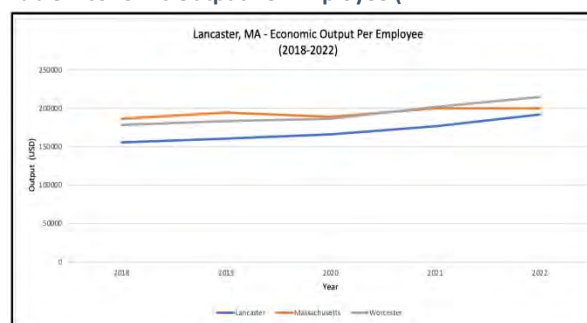


Table: Economic Output Index (IMPLAN database)



Economic output per employee, or worker productivity, is slightly lower per Lancaster employee than its comparison communities. That may be partially due to older economy businesses (e.g., farming, earth extraction, warehousing) and locational issues (e.g., restaurants in lower traffic areas), but it can sometimes mean that businesses are slightly less competitive.

Table: Economic Output Per Employee (IMPLAN)



Lancaster Economic Overview

| Lancaster | 2021 | 2022 |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| GDP | \$326,192,854 | \$363,926,228 |
| Number of Industries | 159 | 163 |
| Total Employment | 3,004 | 3,128 |
| Population | 8,144 | 8,417 |
| Households | 2,810 | 2,924 |
| English only spoken at home | 85% | 85% |
| Occupied housing | 97% | NA |
| Race/Ethnicity: White alone | 81% | NA |
| Race/Ethnicity: Hispanic | 9% | NA |
| Race/Ethnicity: Other | 5% | NA |
| Race/Ethnicity: Black alone | 5% | NA |
| Education attainment (25+) high school diploma-masters | 90% | NA |

Source: IMPLAN economic database (accessed 1/2/2024)

The Economic Development Committee, created on July 13, 2022, to replace the former ad hoc committee, is currently inactive. That committee, if reactivated, could spearhead business calling and other policy actions.

While focusing on regulatory and infrastructure changes to attract new businesses, it is critical to grow existing and emerging businesses. The best first step is to create a business calling program to identify needs for both those businesses and, indirectly, for new business location in Lancaster.

Tax increment Financing (TIF) is an important tool to incentivize new affordable housing and commercial and industrial projects while still ensuring that town property tax collections increases from those projects. In TIF, a small portion of the new increment of property tax that comes from a new project is abated. Lancaster has explored Urban Center Housing Tax Increment Financing (UCH-TIF) for affordable housing. It does not, however, have a clear Town Meeting approved TIF policy that can be put on its website, potentially with pre-approval from Town Meeting authorizing the Select Board to grant TIFs. Such an approach would send a clear message to commercial and industrial investors and encourage new projects.

Likewise, District Improvement Financing (DIF), is a tool where some portion of the increment of increased property tax that comes from new development goes to infrastructure to support that development. This tool can help fund critical infrastructure investments while still increasing municipal revenues, such as water, sewer, and sidewalk improvements. Again, getting Town Meeting approval of a DIF policy that can go on Lancaster's website would send a message to developers.

Lancaster has a robust regulatory system with available commercial and industrial real estate and Smart Growth Overlay (40R) zoning. The regulatory system, however, can be challenging to navigate and the site plan approval language is not always clear. Regulatory reform that maintains or strengthens land use and environmental protection can provide more certainty and clarity for investors, improve the Town's tax base, and provide more certainty to abutting neighbors concerned about development.

Natural and Cultural Resources

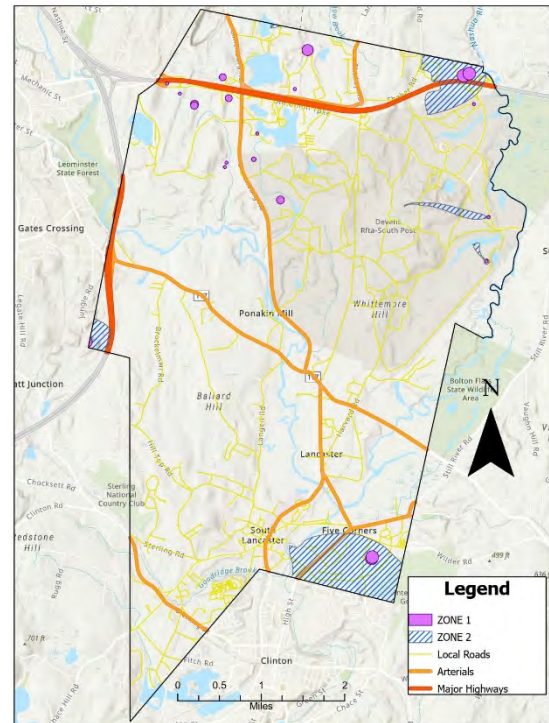
Goals

- Improve the presence of the Nashua River and other rivers in everyday life.
- Monitor and opine on the Devens South Post environmental cleanup and any disposition plan, if any, for South Post's minimally contaminated sections.
- Address problems with invasive species in Lancaster.
- Celebrate natural and human-built landscapes and environments.
- Reduce the risk of natural and climate change induced hazards.

Lancaster has the blessing of a large amount of open space, both permanently protected and currently maintained as open space. Water resources help define the unique character of Lancaster, and all of them have very high ecological value:

1. The entire town is in the Nashua River watershed.
2. The Nashua River (mainstem) and North Branch Nashua River in many ways define Lancaster. Bow Brook, Goodridge Brook, Ponakin Brook, Slaterock Brook and one of its tributaries, Spectacle Brook, Still River, and Wekepeke Brook have been designated by the state as cold-water fish resources. Other brooks, including McGovern Brook, Ropers Brook, White Pond Brook, and other smaller streams add to Lancaster's rich flowing water resources.
3. Rich wetlands complexes, including Bolton Flats Wildlife Management Area, Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge as part of Lancaster's eastern boundary.
4. Extensive floodplains overlap with some of the wetlands.
5. Numerous lakes and ponds include six Massachusetts "Great Ponds" over ten acres and with public access, Fort Pond, Little Spectacle Pond, South Meadow Pond West, Spectacle Pond, Turner Pond, and Whites Pond. Other significant ponds include Cranberry Pond, Oak Hill Pond, Shirley Road Pond, and Slate Rock Pond and human-built impoundments at Goodridge Brook.
6. The groundwater for public and private water supplies provide most of the potable drinking water for Lancaster residents and businesses.

The designation of the **Central Nashua River Valley** (including Nashua River mainstem and the North Branch Nashua Rivers) as a state approved Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), highlights statewide ecological and historical significance of these resources. The MassWildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) has further mapped some areas in Lancaster as Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife and as Priority Habitats of Rare Species.



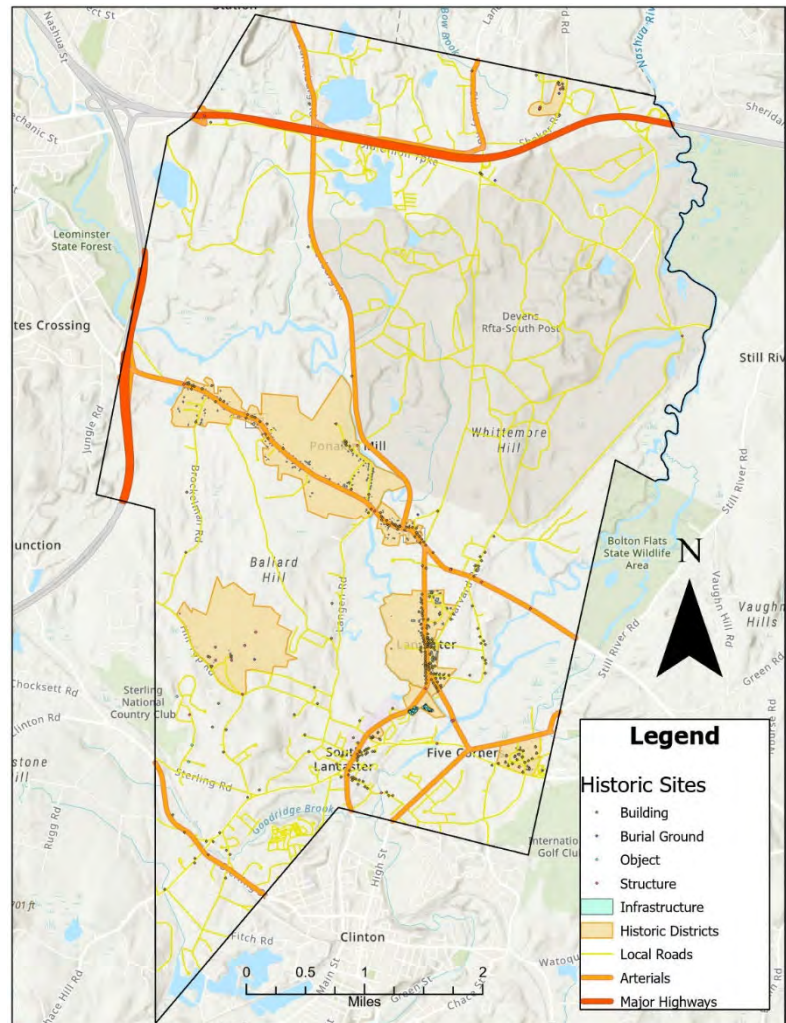
Lancaster public water supply comes from well fields in the southeast corner of town, but numerous high yield wells serve South Post and private and non-town water supplies

The Hazard Mitigation Plan, described above, is currently in draft form. The hazard mitigation actions identified in the final adopted plan, as may be amended, are referred to by reference as part of this comprehensive plan.

The Lancaster Historical Commission and others have already developed an extensive inventory of historic properties, landscapes, and structures, and the Commission is expanding its inventory information.

The Commission and the Thayer Memorial Library have focused on honoring and celebrating those resources.

The existing National Register of Historic Places historic districts provide some measure of protection for historic resources that could be threatened by actions requiring state or federal permit approvals or funding, but they do not have any effect on most local action. Lancaster could consider in the future creating a local historic district, which would regulate projects not requiring state and federal permits or funding, for its most prized historic districts and properties.



Open Space and Recreation

Goals

- Implement the *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)* and draft a new 2025-2032 OSRP.
- Preserve Lancaster's most ecologically valuable areas and farmland
- Manage Lancaster's protected conservation land to preserve natural systems.
- Preserve and manage trails, parks, recreation, and conservation open space to serve residents.

The Lancaster *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*, as may be amended from time to time, is incorporated here by reference. It fulfills most of the Open Space and Recreation element of this comprehensive plan.

OSRP Goal 1 and Objectives: Protect the town's public water supply

1. Expand town water supply by partnering with surrounding towns, particularly in North Lancaster.
2. Educate the public and developers about nonpoint source pollution and low-impact development.
3. Control invasive vegetation in our conservation areas.
4. Encourage wetlands and waterways buffers and connect to other wetlands or upland habitat.
5. Practice water conservation and water quality management.

OSRP Goal 2 and Objectives: Conserve and protect our agricultural lands and farming viability.

1. Preserve lands that support agricultural uses.
2. Partner with the Agricultural Commission and to educate residents on the value of farming.

OSRP Goal 3 and Objectives: Protect contiguous blocks of forestland.

1. Permanently protect forestland that abuts existing conserved forestland.
2. Develop and implement a certified forest management plan.
3. Work with neighboring towns to link adjacent blocks of forestland.

OSRP Goal 4 and Objectives: Enrich our recreational resources.

1. Create a central recreation area near the Town Green, connecting the Community Center, the baseball and soccer fields, and the tennis courts with a new walking trail.
2. Expand recreational offerings accessible for all ages and for persons with disabilities.
3. Improve access and signage to existing paths and trails.
4. Construct additional trails, bike paths and sidewalks.
5. Seek long-term, sustainable financing for the management of facilities and volunteer stewardship.
6. Create a mitigation mechanism where developers provide facilities or cash to support recreation goals.
7. Use the Complete Streets program to improve existing sidewalks and create new bike lanes.

OSRP Goal 5 and Objectives: Improve the connectivity of people and places to foster a sense of community.

1. Improve the accessibility and ease of use of Lancaster's open space and recreational opportunities to benefit persons with disabilities.
2. Connect existing trails and bikeways to each other and improve neighborhood access to public open space.
3. Provide a pedestrian connection from northern to southern Lancaster.
4. Encourage sidewalks and trails in new developments.

OSRP Goal 6 and Objectives. Improve townwide communications.

1. Empower the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee to coordinate the goals and actions of the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.
2. Improve the internal communications on availability of tax-title properties.

OSRP Goal 7 and Objectives. Protect and enrich our open space and animal and plant habitat.

1. Preserve and protect priority sites for biodiversity.
2. Connect large blocks of contiguous habitat with wildlife corridors.
3. Encourage use of and respect for public lands.
4. Developing a stewardship program as well as a management plan for all town open space.

OSRP Goal 8 and Objectives. Develop sustainable human and financial resources to support the goals of the OSRP. *[Partially achieved with the adoption of the Community Preservation Act.]*

1. Develop the sources of funding to support the Open Space and Recreation Plan.
2. Communicate with Town committees and offices to leverage their work and share resources and effort.

OSRP Goal 9 and Objectives. Integrate growth and development to preserve Lancaster's rural feel, scenic vistas, historic character, and natural landscape.

1. Deliver on the State's sustainable principles of Smart Growth and Smart Energy by creating policies, zoning and programs that will assist Lancaster to grow and flourish while keeping its natural and historic landscape intact.
2. Foster collaboration between those boards, commissions, and departments that review development proposals, especially in those areas designated for economic development.
3. Consult with the Planning Board on possible re-zoning plans to incorporate more open space and conservation area into existing zoning districts.

Action agenda to build onto and complement the existing OSRP.

- **Preserve Lancaster's most ecologically valuable areas.**

See Open Space and Recreation Plan - Action Plan map below for top priorities for land preservation. These include expanding water resources in North Lancaster, protecting NHESP priorities for bio diversity in several locations, preserving the Nashua River Greenway, and protecting forest land that abuts existing considered forest in several locations.

Build partnerships with other land preservation agencies (e.g., US Fish and Wildlife, MassWildlife, Mass Parks and Recreation, Lancaster Land Trust, The Trustees of Reservations) to preserve land.

Update the OSRP to remain eligible for state LAND and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grants.

- **Manage Lancaster's protected conservation land to preserve natural systems.**

The OSRP prioritizes invasive removal, improved trail signage and accessibility, new resources, and volunteer stewardship.

- **Preserve and manage Lancaster trails, parks, recreation, and conservation open space to serve residents.**

The OSRP action plan map, below, prioritizes improved beach access at Spectacle Pond, a recreation area near the Town Green, a trail from North to South Lancaster, and sidewalks on Main Street to improve connectivity.

Advance conversation about honoring the Town Green as permanently protected open space, sending a clear message that it will never be used for parking and making the green eligible for federal Land and Water Conservation Funds.

Accessibility options, in accordance with ADA and AAB standards, for all recreation and some conservation opportunities, can potentially be funded with CPA, Massachusetts Office of Disabilities, and EOHLC CDBG Small Cities funding.

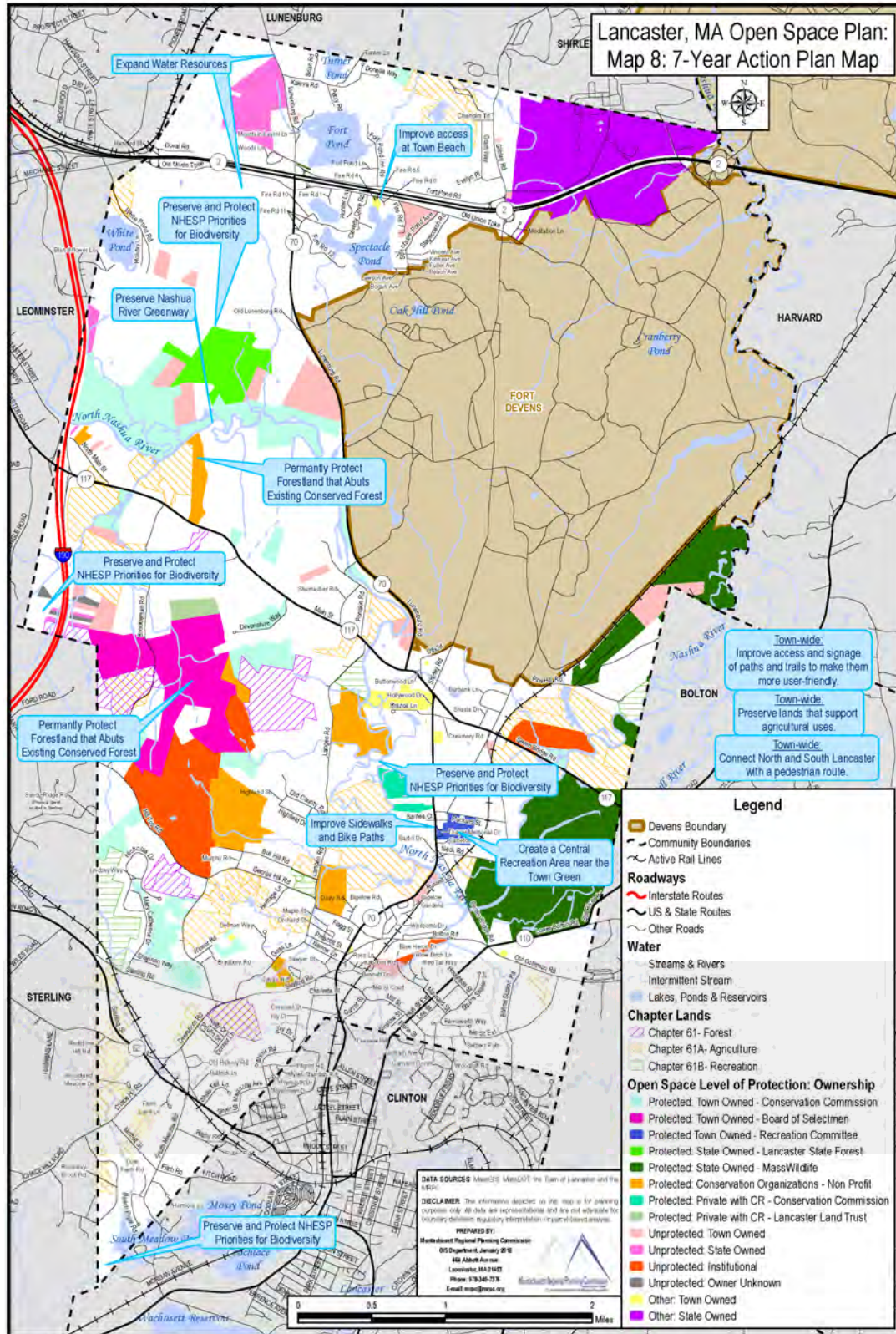
Enhancing canoe and kayak launching sites, and providing accessible fishing opportunities, would serve diverse users (e.g., at the closed Ponakin Bridge/Lunenburg Road, Main Street Bridge/Lancaster Center, Center Bridge/Nashua River confluence, Rte. 117 Bridge/Bolton Flats. Access road into limited parking; put in on the west side of the river, Fort Pond State Boat Launch/Fort Pond Road, and just over the town line at Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge/Still River Depot Road, Harvard.



- **Preserve Lancaster farmland**

The OSRP prioritizes preserving land that support agricultural use. The most common way is to work with the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture Resources and land conservation organizations to jointly acquire Agriculture Preservation Restrictions.

The recommendation of the Lancaster Open Space and Recreation Plan are incorporated into the ***Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan*** by reference.



Open Space and Recreation Plan – Action Plan

Sustainability and Resilience

Goals

- Mitigate Lancaster's carbon and greenhouse gas footprint with a goal of the community being carbon neutral by 2050 and town buildings being carbon neutral by 2040.
- Improve Lancaster's ability to be resilient and thrive even with chronic and acute stress from climate change and other challenges.
- Focus on equity, including ensuring that all diverse residents have an opportunity to fully participate in governance and decision making.
- Develop green infrastructure standards for zoning, subdivision regulations, and town stormwater, park, and street tree operations
- Analyze climate change impacts in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)

Sustainability is often defined as ensuring the long-term stability of the environment, economy, and social equity with the right balance to ensure that all people thrive without damaging their resources. This includes a focus on both climate change mitigation, reducing our greenhouse gas and carbon footprint, and climate resilience, ensuring that we can thrive even with the chronic and acute stress from climate change.



Resilience, however, is far more than simply about climate change. It is also about any natural hazard, rapid dislocations in the economy or social system, and reinforcing the social compact that supports civil society.

A part of this focus on **equity** is looking at governance and civic life, to ensure that all members of the community feel that they are empowered to participate in Lancaster's governance. Lower voter participation rates for local elections (e.g., 1,346 votes cast on 6/29/20 and 1,194 votes cast on 5/22/22) than for national elections (e.g., 4,277 votes cast on 11/3/2020, a presidential election, and 3,133 votes cast on 11/8/22). In other states and jurisdictions, some communities have changed local elections to match national elections, although that might require special legislation.

Likewise, many communities have undertaken extensive outreach to attract members of the community who are statistically underrepresented on town committees (e.g., renters, residents in affordable housing, and youth), including paying stipends to reduce the barriers to participation from those who have to hire childcare, arrange for transportation, or take time off from work in order to participate in local governance.

The focus on a **resilient environment** is typically focused on both making public and private buildings and infrastructure more resilient to climate change. For example, 3.32% of Lancaster’s roads (4.98 miles out of 150.22 miles) are in a floodplain and are subject to flooding. *Journey to 2050, Lancaster, MA, Vulnerable Infrastructure* (Regional Transportation Plan, MRPC, 2023-) highlights some of the most vulnerable infrastructure. Numerous other culverts that are potential points for localized flooding and road damage are not shown on that map.

Climate mitigation reducing the carbon and greenhouse gas footprints of public buildings, including encouraging and requiring municipal projects to be net zero energy and adopting the Specialized Stretch Energy Code to move closer to net zero. It also includes reducing the carbon footprint of transportation by encouraging electric vehicles through the use of EV chargers and zoning requirements and providing more alternatives to single-occupancy automobile use, including walking, bicycling, micro-mobility, and transit.

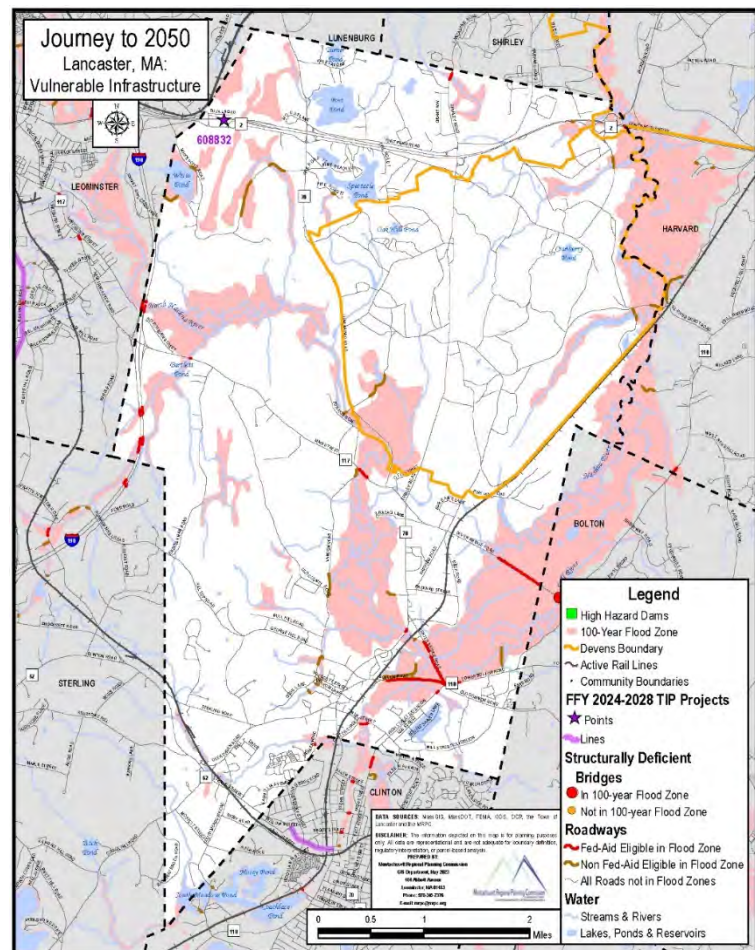
As of May 2023 (MRPC), Lancaster had four public electric vehicle charging stations:

- Ron Bouchard’s Nissan, 490 Old Union Turnpike
- National Grid Lancaster, Thayer Memorial Drive
- Perkins Manor, Perkins Drive
- Perkins Hermann Building, Pinfeather Lane

Lancaster uses Hampshire Power for its Community Choice Power Supply Program, the default supplier for electric power supply generation for ratepayers who do not opt out. Hampshire Power aims to provide ratepayers with the same or better rates as the default rate charged by National Grid for customers using them for power supply. The cutting edge of community choice is to set a higher priority at encouraging new local renewable energy (“additive” to existing renewable energy supply), which often requires that a small mix of contracts be for longer term power supply agreements.

Analyze climate change impacts in the Capital Improvements Plan (CIP)

Addressing climate change involves both climate resilience and mitigation actions. A few of these actions may be solely for climate change purposes, but generally these investments serve other purposes as well. Replacing a culvert at the end of its useful life, in an era of climate change, also involves resizing the culvert for increased stormwater flow. Improving building performance to reduce fuel costs and increase comfort also includes reducing reliance on fossil fuels.



The best way to ensure that all CIP investments, major durable goods and services investments, are analyzed to consider climate resilience and mitigation. The table below, for example, could be used in the CIP.

Lancaster Capital Improvements Plan – sample climate impact assessment for each investment

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Department and project</i> | |
| <i>Does capital investment expand services or maintain the current level of services? How?</i> | |
| <i>Does investment reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and how? (E.g., decrease energy)</i> | |
| <i>What alternatives would further reduce GHG emissions? Are those viable?</i> | |
| <i>List any policy, study, action, or other documentation that explains why and how GHG will decrease.</i> | |
| <i>Specify the GHG emission reduction pathway from Lancaster 2035</i> | |
| <i>Does capital investment increase resilience and how? (E.g., can accommodate larger storms)</i> | |
| <i>What alternatives would further increase resilience? Are those viable</i> | |
| <i>List any policy, study, action, or other documentation that explains why and how resilience will increase</i> | |
| <i>Specify resilience pathway from Lancaster 2035.</i> | |
| <i>Include a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) documenting upfront costs and operational savings. Would a longer projected life (the full life of an improvement, not the period of bonding for that improvement) justify greater GHG or resilience investments?</i> | |

Public Services and Facilities

Goals

- **Ensure that public buildings and facilities are carbon neutral by 2040.**
- **Maintaining and updating town public buildings and facilities to meet current needs and build resilience to adverse climate change impacts.**
- **Rehabilitate the former Town Hall to put it back into productive use.**
- **Evaluate all CIP investments to identify full life cycle costs and climate change impacts**
- **Improve the Town Green, municipal building civic campus, and the infrastructure needed to serve comprehensive plan goals.**
- **Explore options for a potential future North Lancaster municipal water system.**

Town Buildings and Related Capital Facilities

Lancaster's public buildings and related facilities are generally in excellent condition. For Comprehensive planning purposes, there are a few opportunities to consider in future Capital Improvements Planning.

- **Town Hall (former), 687-695 Main Street (Town Green/Civic Campus)**

The former Town Hall has been vacant since town offices moved to the Prescott Building. It was built in 1908 (designed by Alexander W. Longfellow, Jr. and Luman D. Willcutt and Sons) in a Classical Revival and Colonial Revival style.

- **Prescott Building (town hall), 701 Main Street (Town Green/Civic Campus)**

The Prescott Building (designed by Herbert Dudley Hale, Park and Kendall) was built in 1904 in a Classical Renaissance Revival style. It was used as a school until 2001. In 2011, the Spencer Preservation Group conducted a feasibility analysis of adapting the building to new uses. They prepared the design to rehabilitate the building and convert it to town offices, overseeing the 2017-2018 rehabilitation.

- **Thayer Memorial Library, 717 Main Street (Town Green/Civic Campus)**

The Thayer Memorial Library, formerly Lancaster Town Library, (designed by Galliher, Baier and Best; C.H. Harris, and Charles A. Wulff) has a Classical Revival Style. It was built in 1868, expanded in 1888 and then doubled in size in 1999. The library is one of the anchors of Lancaster's civic campus.

- **Town Green, Main Street (Town Green/Civic Campus)**

Town Green is the heart of Lancaster's civic campus. It is permanently protected as open space (Article 97, Massachusetts Public Lands Preservation Act, and, as part of the Nathan Thayer Memorial Park rehabilitation project, by Article 6(f) of the federal Land and Water Conservation Act). It contains a World War I memorial (circa 1919).

Note: Other open space park, recreation, and conservation holdings are not integrated into the civic campus and are inventoried separately in the Lancaster Open Space and Recreation Plan.

- **Community Center and Senior Center, 39 Harvard Road (rear of Civic Campus)**

The Community Center serves as Lancaster's Senior Citizens' Center and welcomes residents of all ages.

- **Memorial School, 39 Harvard Road (rear of Civic Campus)**

The former school, built in 1957 is vacant except for the separate wing used for the Community Center. The Memorial School Re-Use Committee has been charged with exploring options, but Town Counsel has determined that deed restrictions limit its use to open space (Ivria Fried, MiyaresHarrington, 2023) under both

the terms of the original donation and Article 97 of the Amendments to the state constitution without both court and legislative relief, as well as the newer Public Lands Preservation Act (passed 2023).

- **DPW Office and Water Department, 392 Mill Street Extension**

The facilities (c. 1983) are in adequate condition.

- **DPW Cemetery and Tree Division, Eastwood Cemetery Building, 330 Old Common Road**

The building is in adequate condition (c. 1983).

- **DPW Highway Department, DPW Facilities, Barn, Salt Storage, 432-435 Center Bridge Road**

The Highway department (c. 1964 and c. 1970) is in adequate condition.

DPW facilities are located within the 100-year floodplain (the area with >1% chance of flooding in any given year based on historical rainfall and streamflow patterns). The facilities are wet floodproofed for the historical floods the facilities have received (approximately 6" of water). This includes electric outlets, heating facilities, and plumbing fixtures, and the elevation of salt storage all located above historical flood elevations (DPW, personal communication). Floods disturb daily operations, including some critical services, but do not threaten the integrity of the buildings or prevent rapid reuse when floodwaters recede.

With climate change and the likelihood of more frequent flooding and potentially higher elevation, Lancaster should assess the risks, beyond the work already completed in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and additional mitigation measures are advisable.

- **Police Department, 1053 Main Street (Fire/Police campus)**

Opened in 2001, the Police department is a modern building in good condition.

- **Fire Department and EMS (Headquarters), Center Station, 1055 Main Street (Fire/Police campus)**

The Fire Department's headquarters and Station 1 is in adequate condition and functional.

- **Fire Department, South Station (Station #2), 283 South Main Street (South Lancaster)**

The Victorian and eclectic South Lancaster Engine House was built in 1888 (designed by C.H. Harris, H.F. Josmer, and C.A. Woodruff). From the outside, it retains much of its historic integrity.

Other Town Public Work Capital Facilities

Lancaster's public works facilities are generally well maintained. For Comprehensive planning purposes, there are a few opportunities to consider in future Capital Improvements Planning.

- **Public water system (wells, storage tanks, chlorination facility, and water distribution)**

There is no public water north of Route 117 (i.e., North Lancaster) and users rely on private wells. For the most part, water is available in wells. North Lancaster residents often report that their water is discolored and stains while clothing and other surfaces. North Lancaster voices have urged the creation of a public water supply serving North Lancaster (with water from new wells or purchased from neighboring communities). There are some moderately high-yield wells in North Lancaster, but none of town owned.

From Route 117 south, most of Lancaster's denser development is served by public water from two town-owned wells on Bolton Station Road. (Route 117 south on Main Street, South Main and South Lancaster, Center Bridge Road, Old Common Road). Lancaster has begun the process of planning for a third town well.

The system is operated as an enterprise fund, so that all costs including staff costs are covered by user fees, not general tax revenue. PFAS levels are extremely low (less than 20% of the maximum contaminant level).

Water is treated with Chlorine (as a disinfectant). No other filtration or treatment is required.

Many of the water transmission and distribution pipes in Lancaster are very old and nearing, or exceeding, the end of their useful life. Some of the pipes suffer from Tuberculation, where ferrous oxide (iron) is deposited on the inside of the pipes, reducing the volume of water that they can carry and increasing friction that must be overcome by pumps to deliver water.

- **Town-owned streets, bridges, storm sewers, and culverts (MassDOT manages highways)**

Undersized and at-risk culverts are one of the largest natural hazard and climate-change induced hazards. Some of the culverts are nearing the end of their useful life and several are at risk of failure with increased storm events and stream flows. None of the culverts most at risk meet the habitat requirements to be eligible for the current Division of Ecological Restoration's Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program (DPW Director, personal communication).

Lancaster can pursue FEMA and MVP grants for culvert replacement.

- **Old Settlers' Burial Ground, North Burial Field, North Village Cemetery, Eastwood Cemetery, Old Common Cemetery, and Middle Cemetery**

The six town-owned cemeteries all have rich historical features, managed by the DPW's cemetery division with historical interpretation help from the Historical Commission. The Historical Commission is currently working on nominations to the National Register of Historic Places (NHRP) for Old Common, North Burial Field, North Village Cemetery and Eastwood Cemetery.

- **Emergency and town operations telecommunications**

Independent (Non-Town) Capital Facilities

There are several public and quasi-public facilities of interest to and funded by Lancaster residents, but not part of Town government.

- **Sanitary sewerage collection and pump stations (South Lancaster to Clinton)**

The sanitary system (including collection pipes, six sewer pump stations) is managed by the Lancaster Sewer Commission, independent of the Town. DPW involvement is limited to logistical coordination. The sewer commission contracts for any needed repairs and maintenance (currently using Weston & Sampson as their engineering and project management). Sewage disposal is at the MWRA wastewater treatment plant in Clinton. The service area is most of the medium developed areas south of Route 117.

- **Luther Burbank Middle and Mary Rowlandson Elementary Schools ,103 Hollywood Drive**

The Nashoba Regional School District manages these schools, as well as schools in other regional communities. It is independent of the Town, with funding through a regional funding formula. with regional facilities in several communities.

The schools are located within the 500-year floodplain (the area with >0.2% chance of flooding in any year). With climate change, school district planning should continue to examine the need for flood mitigation measures.

- **Bigelow Gardens (70 dwelling units), 449 Main Street**

The Lancaster Public Housing Authority, which is independent of the town, manages the property. Most board members are elected as part of local elections. There are 70 one-bedroom affordable apartments reserved for residents above age 60 and those with disabilities of any age.

Capital Improvement Program

A Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) should be performed on all proposed municipal capital improvement to evaluate all upfront costs and operational savings from resilience investments. For example, while better building performance for new and rehabilitated municipal facilities adds upfront cost, over the life time of the facilities, the costs may be lower.

Capital facilities should also be evaluated for their climate change impacts. Often, this evaluation grows out of a LCA for carbon and greenhouse gas accounting over the lifetime of a project.

Circulation and Mobility

Goals

- Ensure the safety of all modes of travel.
- Be more active in regional transportation planning.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities on all surface roads.
- Prioritize projects based on safety and addition of currently underserved modes.
- Prioritize pedestrian-scale villages and nodes.

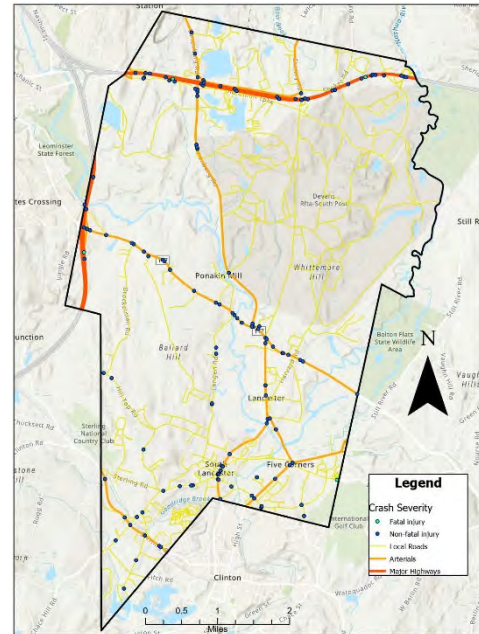
Lancaster has fewer crashes than many communities, but it also has very limited pedestrian and bicycle accommodations on many of its major roads, isolating those without access to cars, including many young, older, lower income, and persons with disabilities. This, in turn, encourages people traveling even relatively short distances to drive when walking might otherwise be desirable, or to avoid taking a trip.

Lancaster has three High Crash Intersections, out of 106 in the MRPC region. Lower Bolton Road (SR 110) at Bolton Road is also one of the state's 200 highest crash intersections. From 2017 to 2019 it had 28 crashes, including one with a fatality or serious injury and ten others with minor or possible injuries.

In addition, Lancaster has 11 of the highest at-risk road segments, out of 160 in the MRPC region.

These include:

- Center Bridge Road
- High Street Extension
- Lower Bolton Road
- Main Street

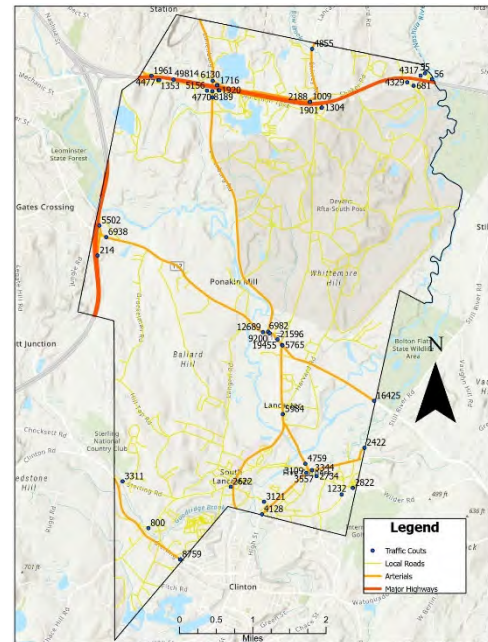


High Crash Locations (MassDOT)

The *High Crash Locations* map shows vehicle crashes and injuries (Mass DOT Impact 2020-present, 2023). Compared to many communities, outside of Route 2 and the Route 2 ramps, Lancaster has relatively few high crash locations.

What the *High Crash Locations* map does not show, however, are the areas where pedestrians and bicyclists avoid because of a perception of danger.

The *Traffic Counts* map show permanent and short term traffic counting stations in Lancaster. Except for along Route 2, none of these counts are anywhere close to roadway or intersection capacity. Most crashes, danger areas, and congestion are problems with intersection alignments and geometry, a lack of advance warnings, limited visual line-of-sight, and poor or non-existing bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.



Traffic Counts (2022-2023 MassDOT)

Implementation and Action Plan

Goals

- Prioritize short- and medium-term actions.
- Identify responsible parties for each action and building into their performance expectations
- Ensure that staff and committee time is programed to implement consensus actions.
- Ensure that the vision and goals help guide longer-term actions over the next two decades.
- Strengthen local and regional partnerships and collaborations (e.g., Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts to Fitchburg State)
- Link Capital Improvement Plan to Lancaster 2040, life cycle analysis, and climate change analysis.
- Prioritize short- and medium-term actions.

Identify responsible parties for each action and building into their performance expectations

Ensure that staff and committee time is programed to implement consensus actions.

Ensure that the vision and goals help guide longer-term actions over the next two decades.

Strengthen local and regional partnerships and collaborations (e.g., Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts to Fitchburg State)

Link Capital Improvement Plan to Lancaster 2040 and life cycle analysis.

| Action (SAMPLE ACTIONS—Table to be built out after public forum and survey) | Lead | Timeline | Funding |
|--|----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Implementation and Action Plan | | | |
| Accountability: Track Lancaster 2035 and other plan recommendations and implementation actions in the Annual Town Report. | Planning Director | Annually, permanently | Staff time |
| Funding and Planning: Apply for MVP 2.0 planning assistance to update MVP plan for grant eligibility and receive seed funding for the first small project | Planning Director | Short-term | Staff time |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Land Use | | | |
| Update site plan review zoning to reduce industrial/residential conflicts. | Planning Director | Short-term | Staff time and/or EEA or MVP for consultant |
| | | | |
| Housing | | | |
| Revise regulatory incentives and requirements to make affordable and attainable housing standards clearer. | Planning Director | Short-term | Staff time, EEA planning or CPA for consultant |
| | | | |
| Economic Development | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Natural and Cultural Resources | | | |
| Cemetery and grave restoration at all six town-owned cemeteries, building on Historical Commission work to get cemeteries listed on the National Register and assess damaged grave stones at the Middle Cemetery. | DPW; Historical Commission | Medium to long term | CPA; Mass Historic |
| | | | |
| Open Space and Recreation | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| Sustainability and Resilience | | | |
| Explore moving local elections to national election dates in November to increase voter participation (would probably require a legislative petition) | Selectboard; Govt. Study Ad-Hoc | Medium term | Time only |
| Work to evolve Lancaster Community Choice to create some longer-term power purchases to encourage additions in carbon-neutral electricity supplies. | Hampshire Power contract manager | Long term | Time only |
| Add climate change analysis to each Capital Improvement Plan request and include in the final CIP. | Finance Director | Short-term | Staff time, perhaps assistance from MRPC |
| Services and Facilities | | | |

| | | | |
|--|-----------------|---|--|
| <p>Replace culverts, prioritizing those culverts in bad physical condition, those that are undersized for expected storm events, and those along habitat rich environments that might be eligible for the state’s culvert replacement program. DPW’s top priority replacement culverts, all identified in the Hazard Mitigation Plan, in priority order, are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sterling Rd. Culvert Replacement (42’ 26.4960’ N, 71’ 42.959’ W, 190’ East of Railroad tracks). Full Replacement/Upgrade of 6’ galvanized pipe with rotted bottom piece of pipe restricting flow. 2. Deershorn Rd. Culvert Replacement (42’ 25.9650’ N, 71’ 42.6430’ W, 77’ West of Railroad Tracks). Full Replacement/Upgrade 6’ galvanized pipe with rotted bottom and restricting flow. 3. Chace Hill Rd. Culvert Replacement (42’ 25.5840’ N, 71’ 43.0330’ W, 156’ West of Moffett St.). Full Replacement/Upgrade of Stone Culvert | DPW Director | Annual plan, replacement within next decade | DER Culvert Replacement; FEMA HMG; MVP |
| Expand water line repair and replacement program for water lines at the end of their useful life or suffering from excessive Tuberculation. | | | Water enterprise funds (user fees) |
| | | | • |
| Circulation and Mobility | | | |
| | | | • |
| | | | • |

Exhibit – Public Engagement Findings

Lancaster received extensive comments and suggestions during the public engagement process. Below is a summary of those comments. **Bold represents the most repeated comments.**

Special places of the heart (kickoff forum)

- **Nashua River** (“it’s in the town logo and it should be the focus”) winding through Lancaster, with adjacent greenspace and farms
- **Town Green and municipal civic center campus**, including old Town Hall, municipal offices, Thayer Memorial Library, and Unitarian Universalist Church of Lancaster (needs improvement for more uses)
- **Town Center** and historic buildings
- Former Atlantic Union College campus at Town Center
- DCAMM surplus property (220 Old Common Road)
- **Goodrick Brook** (off Sterling Street and other areas of South Lancaster)
- **Wetlands complex and Intervale at Bolton Flats** (Rte. 117) and the view from Rte. 117
- **Cook Conservation Area**, Lancaster State Forest, and trails along the river (Lunenburg Road/Rte. 70) (needs easier access and trail information)
- Spectacle Pond Town beach with swimming and boat launch (Old Union Turnpike)
- Town woods north of Nashua River (needs improved access)
- Lancaster Town Forest (Brockelman Road)
- Dexter Drumlin, Trustees of Reservations (George Hill Road)
- Shirley Shaker Village cemetery and portions in Lancaster (off of Rte. 2)
- Turner Pond Conservation Area (and Turner Pond trail in Lunenburg)
- **Fort Pond with its boat ramp, water resources and outdoor recreation**
- Bow Brook just south of Lunenburg town line (cold water fishery and habitat), upriver from Fort Pond
- Wildlife and quiet spaces in North Lancaster
- Kimballs Ice Cream/Kimball Farm
- Gore, Harper’s, George Hill, and Kalon farms

Transportation and circulation areas of concern (kickoff forum)

- Five Corners (High Street Ext./Rte. 110, Still River Road/Rte. 110, Old Common Road, Center Bridge Road)- cars don’t stop
- **Harvard Road, Neck Road at Seven Bridge Road/Route 117**
- Neck Road at Seven Bridge Road/Rte. 117
- Seven Bridge Road/Rte. 117 needs sidewalks to serve The Fairgrounds at Lancaster/Bolton Fair
- **Lunenburg Road/Rte. 70**
 - At Fort Pond Road with traffic backed up from Route 2
 - At traffic circle with Old Turnpike Road
 - Multiple crashes along route, including some not shown on MassDOT crash data
 - Road is speedway (needs bicycle lanes)
- **Route 2/George W. Stanton Highway on and off ramps (too short)**
- **Main Street/Rte. 117 (west of Rte.70)**
 - Too fast, too many trucks
 - Intersection at Langen hazardous
- Speeding: Route 117, South Lancaster, other locations

Critical environmental resources and issues (kickoff forum)

- **North Lancaster water aquifers, water resources, and clean water**
 - North Lancaster water can turn clothes brown, especially when pipes are flushed
 - **North Lancaster water resources protection district (to protect water for residential uses)**
 - Need new water supply area away from existing wells
- Devons South Post (potential future surplus away from active ordnance and superfund site to Oxbow National Wildlife Refuge and potentially Lancaster)
- **Lancaster rivers, conservation and open space areas, wildlife, walking trails**
 - **Nashua River as central feature for Lancaster**
 - Walking trails
 - Canoe and kayak launches
 - Cook Conservation Area
 - Bolton Fairgrounds at Nashua River as a buffer area
 - **Town Forest- parking, trails, promotion**
 - Dexter Drumlin
 - Goodrich Brook
- Central Nashua River Valley Area of Critical Environmental Concern (includes Nashua and N. Nashua Rivers)
- Invasive species risks (especially need to eradicate Japanese Knotweed)
- Hilltop Road (too much new housing and timber clear cuts)

What I love most about Lancaster is (kickoff forum)

Tight knit community

Extensive open space and the Nashua River

A rich and long history represented in the place

A strong sense of place

Town green and municipal civic center

Town center

The rich government, non-profit, and worship-based institutions

Mixed tax base

Excellent schools

The biggest opportunities to accomplish in the next 20 years are (kickoff forum)

- Improve the Town Green
- Redevelop the former Town Hall on the Town Green
- Redevelop the Atlantic Union Campus
- Improve the sense of place for Lancaster town center
- Provide more commercial activity on the Main Street just north of the railroad bridge
- Improve access to open space and the Nashua River
- Better celebrate what the town has to offer
- Redevelop the Dept. Capital Asset Management and Maintenance property at 220 Old Common Road
- Expand town tax base, especially the industrial areas in the north (along Route 2) and northwest (along Route 70)
- Celebrate the Nashua River and expand conservation generally
- Remediate Devons South Post and explore potential conservation role

Lancaster needs to

- Broaden its tax base
- Expand economic development opportunities
- Reduce industrial/residential conflicts in North Lancaster
- Improve the sense of place/placemaking and wayfinding
- Celebrate town history
- Improve the Lancaster Town Green and the activity in the Green and abutting municipal civic center campus
- Improve Lancaster Town Center, including Atlantic Union College redevelopment and other activities
- Create a commercial Lancaster village center on Main Street immediately north of the railroad bridge
- Preserve more open space and have the Army and EPA renovate Devens South Post
- Create more deed-restricted affordable housing
- Provide more flexibility for housing that meets changing demographic needs, especially for smaller units and to allow people to age in place, and is attainable for more Lancaster residents

Comments posted at www.Lancaster2035.org

- I am a huge proponent of anything environmentally related. We need environmental champions, working groups on school waste reduction and other environmental needs.
- We need more businesses to bring in more tax revenue instead of taxing all of the smaller income families, old and young, straight out of town.
- Hydro rake White's Pond to keep it clean and healthy, before all underwater channels are blocked by muck and debris flows into the Nashua River.
- As a Massachusetts "Green Community," the town should be applying for Green Communities grants.
- All residents should be treated with respect and kindness and all neighborhoods, residents and their properties should be equally valued and have equal respect. Equality, fairness, respect, and inclusion should be at the forefront.
- Conduct more cleanups and plantings: trash along the railroad tracks, work with garden club to beautify the Town Green, work to get more trees planted, and expand townwide yard sales.
- Infrastructure needs: complete sidewalk renewals, repair bridge by Rt 70 boat ramp for bicycle and walking only, use installed electronic signs to give more info more often continue, make sure all lead water pipes are gone
- Senior Center needs horseshoes and bocci, automatic doors, a generator and air conditioning, covered parking for COA van, to develop a R U OK wellness calling program for elderly and disabled residents, and increase meals on wheels.
- Develop DCAMM including smaller housing such as Bigelow Gardens and over 55 housing
- Appoint and use economic development committee
- Fix old town hall and put it into use.
- Reform Energy committee
- Redevelop Atlantic Union College and adopt Smart Growth/40R zoning for the site.
- Improve trail marking at Cook Conservation Area and the Town Forest
- Conduct water supply planning and explore new water supplies
- Lancaster 2035 plan is urgently needed to guide upcoming development, especially North Lancaster, AUC, and DCCAM.
- Address the large percentage of property tax exempt properties.
- Explore ways to create equitable housing in town

Exploring the strategic plan outline (second public forum)

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Public hearing on draft Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan (final public forum)

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Public hearing on draft Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan (final public forum)

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Lancaster 2035 community survey

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