

Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan

Lancaster Planning Board

May 8, 2024 (draft)



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:

- The participation of a couple of hundred residents and stakeholders in focus groups, public forums, interviews, the survey, and the formal public hearing.
- 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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1. 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.

2. 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 (Figure 2-1), 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.
- **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.
- **Lancaster 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.

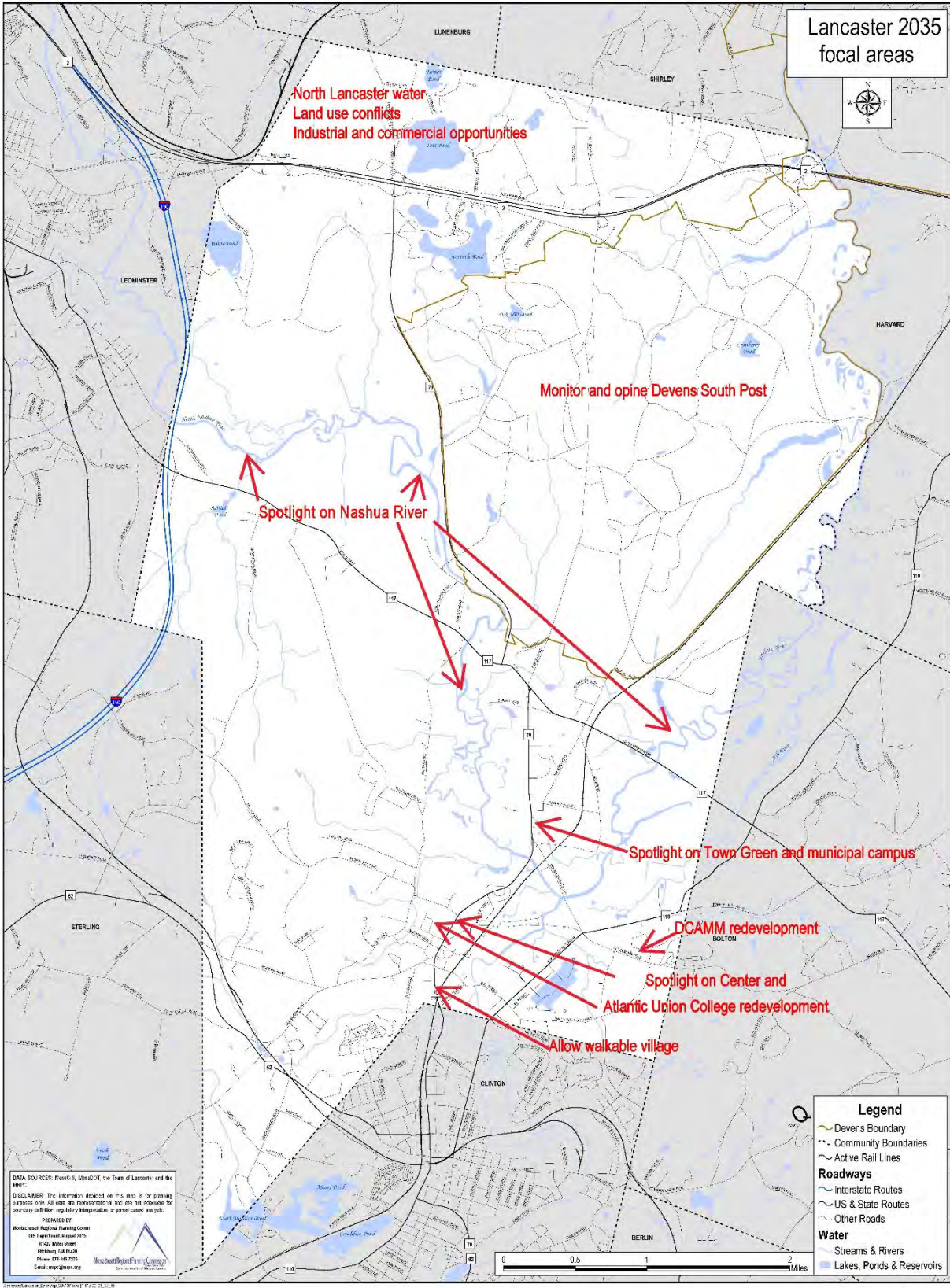


Figure 2-1. Lancaster 2035 Focus Areas

3. 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) (Figure 3-1. Community Engagement-Kickoff Forum)
- 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 4/12/24)
- Planning Board working session (4/22/24)
- Public forum and public hearing (review final draft plan) (6/4/24)
- Planning Board working session (6/10/24)
- Planning Board adopts final Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan (6/24/24)
- Select Board endorses final Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan (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, 110 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 three public forums, the high school student focus group, the community survey, and the www.Lancaster2035.org project website are included in this plan's final chapter.

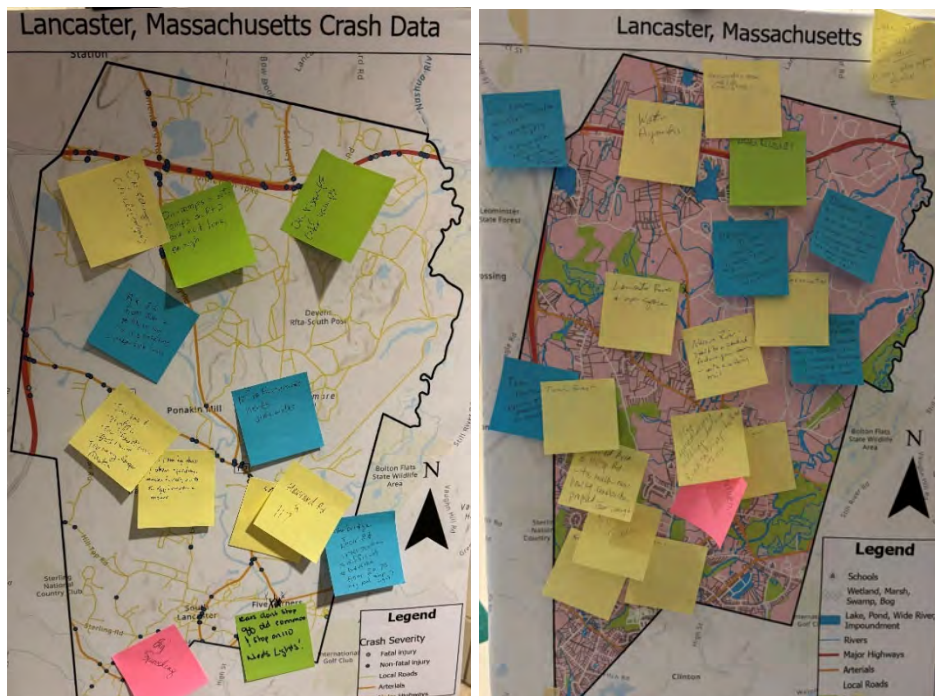


Figure 3-1. Community Engagement- kickoff forum

4. 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. (Figure 4-1. Locus.)



Lancaster, MA

Figure 4-1. Locus

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 (Figure 4-2. Town Seal).



Figure 4-2. Town seal

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. (See Figure 4-3. Regional Transit.)

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).

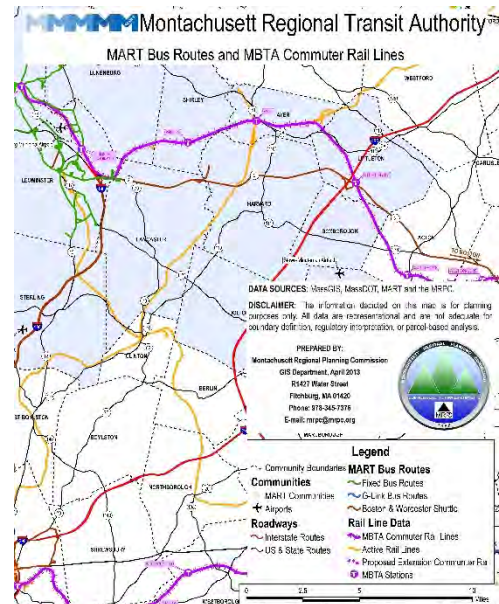


Figure 4-3. Regional Transit

The high rate of homeowners who are cost burdened (see Table 4-1. Summary Demographics, 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.

Table 4-1. 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).

Figure 4-4. Population Distribution by Age and Sex (“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.

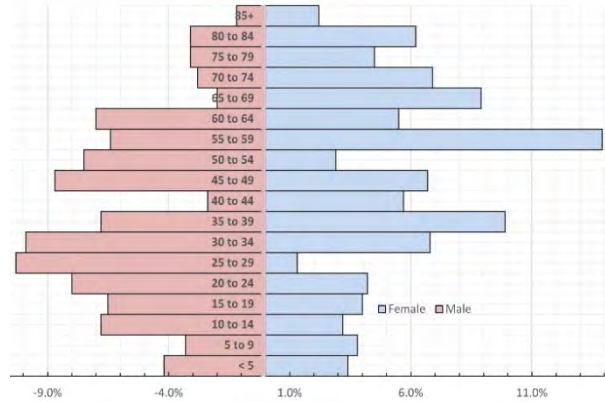


Figure 4-4. Population Distribution by Age and Sex (American Community Survey)

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. (See Figure 4-5. Population by Year and Median Age by Year.)

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 Table 4-2. Lancaster Births and Deaths).

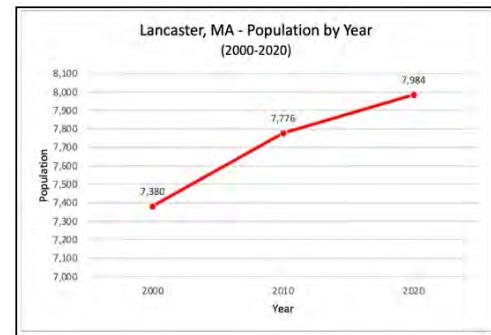
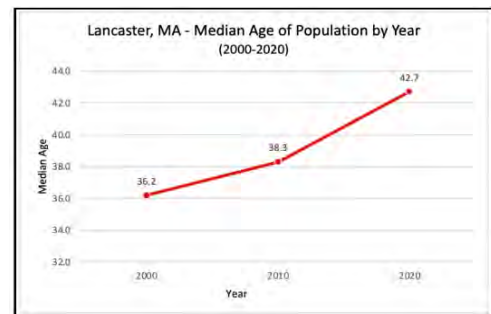


Figure 4-5. Population by Year and Median Age by Year. Lancaster’s has grown modestly over the past 20 years (US Decennial Census and American Community Survey).

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) has projected a small but steady population decrease based on the natural population decrease (Table 4-3. Population Projection). 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.

Table 4-2. 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.

Table 4-3. Population Projection

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

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 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 or 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 expired on 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 with the assistance of an outside consultant. They expect the new plan to be complete in late 2024 or early 2025. 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.

5. Land Use

Goals

- Simplify zoning regulations and strengthen site plan and subdivision 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, Lancaster Center, and a walkable Main Street village by the railroad bridge.
- Add compliance with Lancaster 2035 vision and goals to zoning.
- Ensure the successful redevelopment of the DCAMM and Atlantic Union College surplus properties.

Lancaster retains its feeling as a rural and small town, even with extensive suburban development and, especially along Route 2, industrial development. (See Figure 5-1. Lancaster Land Use.)

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.

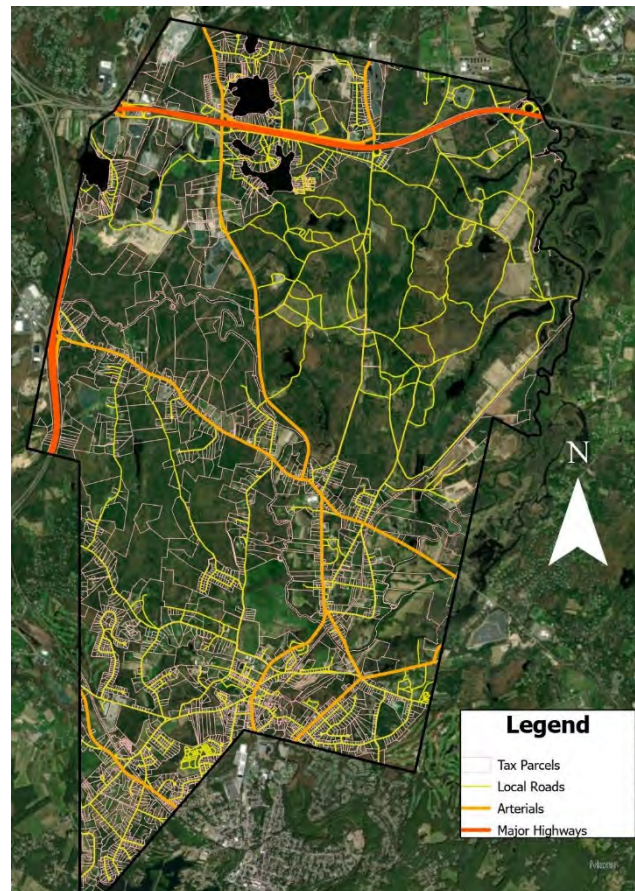


Figure 5-1. Lancaster Land Use.

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 (Figure 5-2).

A large portion of the theoretically developable land is within Deven's South Post, but it is unlikely that this will be available during the life of this plan, 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.

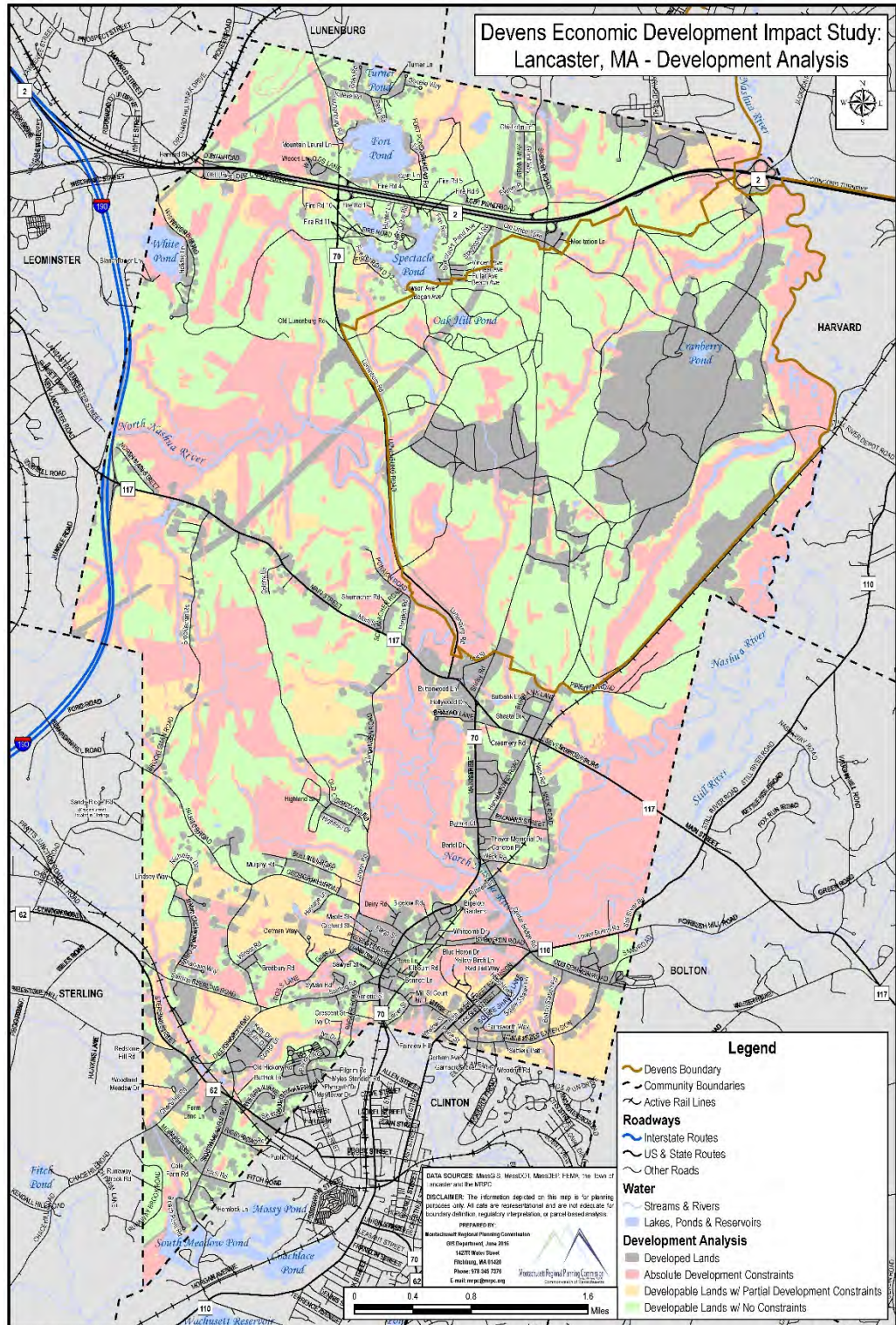


Figure 5-2. Development Buildout Analysis (MRPC, Devens Impact Study, 2016)

Simplify zoning regulations and strengthen site plan and subdivision standards

Lancaster has strong zoning that directs development in the area and the patterns it desires. Zoning often reflects, however, that the bylaws are the result of a series of amendments adopted by Town Meeting. They do not read as a unified development code with clear easy to read language. The zoning would benefit from a plain English revision, clarifying and simplifying language without changing the intent.

At the same time, site plan approval standards would benefit from a clear revision, strengthening the protection of abutters, improving internal and external circulation standards, incorporating more modern environmental performance standards (e.g., light, noise, emissions, vegetated buffer, green infrastructure) into the site plan or a zoning wide performance standards section. This would benefit neighbors, who want to be protected from adverse impacts, and benefit property owners and developers who want clear understandable standards even when those standards are strict. Clearer standards will also reduce appeal litigation risks, from developer appeals, which the Town needs to defend, and from abutter appeals, where the Town usually just appears and leaves it to permit holders to defend their permits.

Subdivision regulations would benefit from improved clarity and modernization of regulatory, construction, and performance guarantee requirements in the subdivision regulations. Because this only requires Planning Board approval after a public hearing, it can be a much faster process than zoning, which requires Town Meeting approval.

Subdivision regulations and zoning should protect against developer defaults. For example:

*The applicant shall guarantee the required improvements in the subdivision regulations and on the plan with a performance guarantee in accordance with MGL c. 41, § 81U **prior** to the Planning Board endorsing the subdivision definitive plan by posting a covenant not to sell lots or a financial guarantee, as detailed below.*

***Financial performance guarantee** (surety bonds, deposit of money, three-party lender agreement, or letters of credit) to the Town in an amount determined by the Planning Board to be sufficient to cover the cost of all or any part of the required improvements, street acceptance and as built plans, and legal, engineering, and project manager time at state prevailing wage rates and state procurement requirements, plus a 20% contingency/inflation factor. At least two lots shall also be included in a covenant not to sell until all work is completed. All financial performance guarantees must be drafted so the only requirement that must be met for the Planning Board to draw on the funds is to notify the financial institution (grantor) that: "We have incurred liability by reason of the failure of the developer/ owner, within 90 days of the expiration of this guarantee or the time limit in the permit to complete the construction the project in accordance with the definitive subdivision plans, submittals, approval, the subdivision regulations. The amount drawn, which may be more than required to complete the project, will be held in a segregated bank account until the work can be bid, completed, and paid for, including the completion of street acceptance plans, as-built plans, and any covenants or other legal documents. Any excess over those costs will be returned to the grantor."*

Planning Board approval is required for the language and form of such guarantee, considering the credit rating and location of the financial institution, the manner of execution, and an agreement that the financial institution agrees that any litigation stemming out of the guarantee will take place in Massachusetts and citing all of the terms shown above. Any guarantee must have no expiration date (e.g., surety bonds) or be valid for at least two years (e.g., letter of credit).

***Covenant not to sell lots**, instead of a financial performance guarantee, executed and duly executed and recorded concurrent with recording the subdivision approval by the owner of record, running with the land, that no lot in the subdivision shall be sold and no building erected thereon until such ways, services and, whenever applicable, temporary turnarounds are constructed and installed, and until record plans, street acceptance plans, and other required work are accepted by the Planning Board in accordance with the subdivision regulations so as to adequately serve the lots. Such covenant shall be on a separate document referred to on the plan and delivered to the Planning Board. Upon approval of the covenant by the Planning Board, the applicant*

shall note the Planning Board's action on the definitive plan and the applicant shall record the covenant, endorsed definitive plan and other appropriate documents at the Registry of Deeds or Land Court, as appropriate.

Implement MBTA Communities zoning requirements

Lancaster has already begun planning for the required multifamily by-right requirements that apply to MBTA and MBTA abutting communities. This is an opportunity to comply with those standards and to use the requirements to drive development in the area that have the potential to serve town goals- development near Route 2 within easier access of commuter rail service, development in mixed use areas in Lancaster Center and the Main Street, South Lancaster future village north of the railroad bridge, and multifamily housing within walking distance of the Town Green/Municipal Campus, Lancaster Center, and the Main Street-South Lancaster village.

Such zoning can be part of a Smart Growth Overlay (40R) zoning district, which would further advance town affordable housing objectives and allow the town to benefit from that 40R incentive and density payments.

Expand commercial and industrial opportunities while addressing use conflicts between industrial and residential land uses in North Lancaster.

The most passionate debate during the development of the *Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan*, most clearly articulated in the survey but to a lesser extent heard at the public forums, is about land use in North Lancaster.

Lancaster, with a huge proportion of the town in tax-exempt properties and a limited tax base, has been trying to broaden its tax base with industrial, gravel extraction and processing, and warehousing along Route 2, the area with the properties most suited for those uses. These uses, however, create conflicts between residential uses in North Lancaster, high car and truck traffic, unattractive industrial uses and dust, heavy water withdrawals, and potential groundwater contamination.

The uses along Route 2 are critical to the tax base and the local economy. At the same time, these concerns are all legitimate and should be addressed. It is critical to help advance the public debate and civility to minimize the friction, bad feelings, and damage to Lancaster's social system.

These land use conflicts can be minimized through the regulatory clarity improvements suggested above ("Simplify zoning regulations and strengthen site plan and subdivision standards") and by the following policies and actions:

- Improve the zoning environmental performance standards, regulating everything from noise levels, light levels, and other emissions, meeting current state of the art standards practiced in many other communities.
- Improve earth removal regulations, in zoning or general bylaws, to provide greater protection against noise, dust, and other impacts.
- Require greater green buffers, planted with trees and, if necessary, sight impervious fences and sight and sound impervious earthen mounds.
- Provide clear benefits to the residents of North Lancaster from the industrial uses, primarily in the form of exploring opportunities for municipal water, funded by users, in North Lancaster.
- Rebuild community dialogue and trust by emphasizing the need to find common ground and address the need to protect residents and the environment while expanding the tax base.

Strengthen focal points at the Town Green, Lancaster Center, and a walkable South Lancaster Main Street village by the railroad bridge

These focal areas provide the opportunity to create a stronger sense of place and quality of life, both for local residents and to attract footloose businesses for whom quality of life issues are critical.

- **The Town Green and municipal campus**, including the Bulfinch First Church of Christ, the Thayer Memorial Library, Town Offices, the former Town Hall, the Lancaster Community Center, the former and empty school attached to the Community Center is arguably Lancaster’s single most identifying area or node.
 - The Town Green and municipal campus would benefit from an overall landscape architecture master plan, ranging from addressing the debate about the appropriateness of the Town Green gazebo to pedestrian and traffic flow to wayfinding.
 - The former Town Hall is wasted resource that should be back into productive use, whether it is a new town community use, a use operated by a community group, or redeveloped for private use. The *Lancaster 2035* survey identified this as one of the largest areas of agreement (see also Facilities and Services element).
 - The former school, on land dedicated by Thayer for open space and recreation, is already part of an extensive public discussion and study. Whatever the final conclusions, whenever resources are available this site is an important anchor for the municipal campus.



- **Lancaster Center, including the Atlantic Union College (AUC) campus**, is Lancaster’s largest redevelopment potential and the best opportunity to shape Lancaster positively for years to come. Given that AUC is moving slowly on their plans and its future is uncertain, many people in the Lancaster 2035 survey argued to do nothing since the project is not in town hands. There are clear actions that the Town can take immediately, however. Waiting for a development proposal without some of the building blocks in place to accommodate development is never a good policy:
 - Address any unsafe intersections for vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic, to improve the center’s functioning.
 - Rezone the campus and the larger Center area for mixed-use, presumably a Smart Growth Overlay 40R district. It has the potential to increase Lancaster’s tax base with the greatest density of offices, education, and mixed-income housing in Lancaster. The current zoning, however, makes that difficult if there was ever a developer interested in this approach.
 - Adopt a clear Tax Increment Improvement and/or District Increment Improvement policy, a property tax policy that would encourage property tax collections to rise while dedicating some small percentage of new taxes to infrastructure or private investment to make redevelopment possible.
 - Identify wayfinding improvements and improve the sense of place for the Center.



- **Walkable South Lancaster Main Street village by the railroad bridge** is an uninspiring strip development area, with gas and convenience commercial, offices, a diner, and no sense of identity, not even a shared name. It has the potential, however, to become a walkable desirable mixed-use area that can increase tax base, retain retail spending that is leaking out of Lancaster to other areas, and provide needed affordable and attainable housing. No Town action is going to make this happen anytime soon, but there are several steps that Lancaster can take to allow this to happen when market conditions are ripe for this kind of work. Like Lancaster Center, the Town should be leading and not waiting to respond to specific proposals.
 - Currently Lancaster’s zoning would not even allow the creation of a walkable village or walkable uses. Change zoning to dramatically reduce or eliminate minimum lot size, frontage, and setbacks.
 - Require parking for new uses be on the sides or rear of buildings, not in front of buildings.
 - Add clearer landscaping, internal sidewalk and pedestrian circulation, and green infrastructure requirements.
 - Create a community charrette to collaborate with community members and property owners to explore what the area could become.
 - Seek infrastructure funding to address necessary improvements to enable a walkable center, including improved sidewalks, tree belts, green infrastructure, and narrower curb cuts.



- **Address sanitary sewer capacity.** This capacity is a limit to growth. Rather than allow any project to use up any surplus capacity:
 - Reserve sewer capacity for these three focal areas, for business and commercial growth, for mixed use, and as discussed in the housing element, for projects that include at least 25% affordable housing.
 - As discussed elsewhere in this plan, apply for MassWorks and other infrastructure funds to reduce stormwater infiltration and inflow (I&I) into sanitary sewers, invest in water saving devices to further reduce flow, and identify and remove capacity bottlenecks (e.g., pumping stations), freeing up capacity for new growth.

Add compliance with Lancaster 2035 vision and goals to zoning.

A plan is only as strong as its implementation, and zoning is one of the major ways that Town policy is translated to action. In addition to zoning changes discussed throughout this Comprehensive Plan, addressing the criteria is any discretionary action ensures that the community’s vision and goals are discussed when major projects are considered.

- Add compliance with Lancaster 2035 vision, goals, and policies as one of the criteria to be considered for a zoning special permit application. Special permits are partially discretionary permits, but only to the

extent that zoning has clear criteria that the special permit granting authority can apply. This would only effect major projects which require special permits, but it would allow greater discussion and action when considering those projects (e.g., the objective of accommodating both an expanded industrial and business tax base in North Lancaster while better protecting residential areas.)

- Site Plan Approval is not discretionary, and an applicant has the right to a site plan approval when they comply with the criteria. The criteria that are specific and measurable in the comprehensive plan, however, can be added to site plan approval (e.g., ensuring save pedestrian movement on and off site).

Ensure the successful redevelopment of the DCAMM and Atlantic Union College surplus properties

The former Massachusetts Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) at Old Common Road and the Atlantic Union College (AUC) property in Lancaster Center provide the greatest opportunities for redevelopment, redevelopment that can added needed housing, mixed-use, increased tax base, community identity, without the land use conflicts that are so apparent in North Lancaster.

The DCAMM property, 220 Old Common Road, is further along, with a clear state plan and a willing town partner. Town actions are already underway, with a mix of town ownership and retained state ownership.

- Continuing to build a Lancaster dialogue and consensus is a critical step.
- Regulatory changes (Smart Growth Overlay or other zoning changes) is advancing
- Applying for grants for work is already in conversation



Atlantic Union College property has languished without clear progress, but there has been a lot of assessment. The discussion under the three focal points above is relevant to AUC. The most critical steps are:

- Adopting appropriate zoning, presumable Smart Growth Overlay (40R) with mixed-use, not simply mixed-income, part of any approach.
- Regularly communicate with the Seven Day Adventist community that owns the AUC and build collaboration with them. This could include joint planning, applying for Commonwealth Underutilized Property funding and other joint projects.



6. Housing

Goals

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

Housing in Lancaster, as in most of the Commonwealth, has been increasing at a rate far exceeding overall inflation (Consumer Price Inflation). For example, in 1994, the median priced single-family home in Lancaster was assessed at \$129,739. Twenty years later, reflecting actual sales prices, the median priced single-family home was assessed at \$488,767. If that same median priced home, however, had increased in value only based on overall inflation, it would only be worth \$273,692. Great news for homeowners who stay in their homes that their net worth has increased so much, but horrible news for anyone entering the housing market and for renters.

Table 6-1. Single Family Home Mean Assessed Values

| | Assessed Value Actual | IF housing increased with overall inflation |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| FY1994 | \$129,739 | \$129,739 |
| FY2004 | \$223,321 | \$164,348 |
| FY2014 | \$280,826 | \$207,579 |
| FY2024 | \$488,767 | \$273,692 |
| Source: MA Dept. of Revenue | | |

Because housing inflation has been so much higher than overall inflation, residents moving into Lancasters or renters who want to purchase a home must have substantially higher incomes than in the past, making Lancaster increasingly unaffordable to wage earners earning median incomes and below. This includes many of Lancaster’ children, new residents, and elderly who need to purchase.

With an aging population, far more elderly single-person households and decreasing family size, many of the housing units as far larger than needed for today’s families and households. This creates a need for additional attainable units, market rate housing affordable to meet the current market demand.

At the same time, 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). Table 6.1 Income Limits by Housing Size shows these limits for common household sizes.

Table 6-2. 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). (See Table 6-2. Subsidized Housing Inventory for Lancaster.)

Lancaster joined a regional consortium that is jointly hiring assistance in tracking affordable housing and the status of affordability agreements.

Table 6-3. Subsidized Housing Inventory for Lancaster (EOHLC)

| 2020 Census Year-Round Housing Units | Units in developments containing SHI units | Subsidized Housing Units (SHI) | % affordable (EOHLC methodology) |
|--------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 2,736 | 224 | 138 | 5.04% |

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) – currently being updated
- 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 engaged CommunityScale

and Levine Planning Strategies to coordinate an update planning process, working closely with the Lancaster Affordable Housing Trust. The plan is on target to be completed by early 2025.

Protect the general physical pattern of existing neighborhoods

Lancaster consists of medium density neighborhoods South Lancaster, suburban development scattered around town, and rural neighborhoods near farms and forests. Residents by and large report being happy with their development patterns and are sometimes fearful of large projects changing their neighborhoods, while identifying the need for changes that allow smaller homes and changing demographics.

- As discussed in the land use element, update the subdivision regulations to provide more protection to the town, purchasers, and abutters to ensure that the standards the Town has imposed are followed.
- Generally, Lancaster has strong and modern subdivision regulation standards. Consider, however, amending subdivision regulations to ensure that new development does not create a tipping point to suburban development that changes the pattern of Lancaster. This could include, for example, curb extensions at new street intersections to slow the speed of traffic across crosswalks and through intersections and expanding green infrastructure requirements.
- While zoning changes are necessary to meet the needs for small homes and more affordable housing, (see “Increase flexibility, below) the best opportunities for denser housing is in Lancaster Center, the South Lancaster Main Street village just north of the railroad tracks, and in well thought out cluster and housing projects in other areas.

Increase flexibility to encourage smaller homes and changing community needs, including attainable housing for our children, new residents, and seniors aging in place

As discussed above, the biggest challenge for residents entering the Lancaster housing market is that housing has and continues to increase significantly faster than overall inflation and wage growth, making marking rate housing affordable to fewer and fewer residents. This is the “missing middle” between subsidized affordable housing and the housing that is available to high wage earners, almost always those above the median income if not significantly above.

In the *Lancaster 2035* survey (see Exhibit A), the highest overall community priority, just a very small amount higher than respecting physical patterns of existing neighborhoods, was to allow more flexibility for smaller homes and changing housing demands. Although there is no requirement for large homes in Lancaster’s zoning, and regulating or restricting the interior area of a single-family home is not permitted in Massachusetts, Lancaster’s zoning, in its minimum lot size, creates a strong incentive for larger homes. If a builder or investor can build a small home or a large home on the same lot, their return is greater if they build a larger home. Lancaster’s zoning allows accessory dwelling units and, in some circumstances, two family homes and multifamily homes, but it is still not enough to meet the demand.

- Consider a change from a minimum area per unit approach, which requires large expensive homes to provide a developer with a reasonable return, to a floor area ratio approach, which specifies the amount of home that can be built per lot area, allowing smaller lots for smaller homes. To comply with state law, the default would probably remain zoning based on minimum lot size, with an option for a smaller lot for an owner who records a restriction on the size of their home.
- Consider amending zoning to allow a two-family home by-right, with no special permit and no requirement that the home was previously a two-family home, on any area which is currently a single-family home district or lot. Lancaster could add site plan approval and performance standards to ensure no adverse impacts from this change, such as limiting the number of cars that can be parked in front of a two-family home or adopting design or form-based standards for two family homes.

- In the R district, allow Multifamily dwelling units with site plan approval only, no special permit, with specific criteria for when they will be allowed, to remove the cost and uncertainties of requiring a special permit.

Expand deed-restricted affordable housing to reach a minimum of 10% of Lancaster housing

Lancaster is already committed to increasing deed restricted affordable housing to those earning less than 80% of area median income. Zoning inclusionary housing provisions, Smart Growth Overlay district (40R) and the willingness to support affordable housing at the DCAM property on Old Common Road and to make public investments all help advance this goal.

Other actions discussed earlier in this plan include:

- A proposed Smart Growth Overlay at Lancaster Center, including but not limited to the Atlantic Union College property.
- A proposed Smart Growth Overlay at the DCAMM property, Old Common Road.
- A proposed Smart Growth Overlay at the South Lancaster Main Street village just north of the railroad bridge.
- Reserving sewer capacity, especially new capacity made available by reducing inflow, infiltration, and water use, for both the target growth areas and for deed restricted affordable housing (projects with at least 25% affordable housing).

In addition, Lancaster could:

- Adopt a Town Meeting policy authorizing Tax Increment Financing for 30 years of affordable housing, a program where the town waives a portion of the new taxes that would result from development in return both for affordable housing and the tax increases that will occur with that development.

Explore limited development projects to protect open space or serve other municipal needs while providing affordable housing

Although there are limited opportunities, some municipalities and land trusts approach tax title, surplus land, and open space and other land acquisition projects as an opportunity to serve multiple municipal needs, including affordable housing. For example, Lancaster could:

- Conduct an annual review of tax title properties and consider acquisition of properties that could be used for any public purpose, especially affordable housing and/or open space. Potentially, Lancaster could acquire a deed in-lieu of tax title foreclosure or CPA or other town-funded purchases knowing that part of the money comes back immediately to Lancaster in the form of paying off back taxes.
- Formalize a process of reviewing any chapter land (Chapter 61 Forest Land, Chapter 61A Farmland, and Chapter 61B Recreation) where Lancaster is given a right of first refusal for land exiting the Chapter program, for both affordable housing and conservation, and developing non-profit partners with whom Lancaster could partner for such programs.
- Review any surplus or underutilized town-owned parcels and consider their feasibility for affordable housing.
- For any town open space, recreation, or purchase for any town use, consider whether a portion of the property is appropriate for affordable housing.

7. 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, Lancaster Center, the Main Street village at the railroad bridge, and the DCAMM property on Old Common Road
- Improve infrastructure 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 has a narrow tax base, with 87.09% of all properties taxes coming from residential properties. Many other suburban and rural communities have the same challenges of a small amount of the tax base from commercial and industrial properties. In Lancaster, however, this already heavy reliance on residential tax payers is aggravated by the large amount of property tax exempt properties, creates financial pressures on municipal government and property taxpayers. 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. As with any use, of course mitigating adverse impacts from development, including off-site traffic and on-site layout, is part of good development.

Economic Indicators (Table 7-1)

compares Lancaster to Worcester and Massachusetts.

The more detailed charts of indexes provide more interpretation of what this means. The index shows to

what extend 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 Figure 7-1. *Employment Index*). This is partially simply due to the noise that exists in a small community,

| Geography | Year | Employment | Employment Index | | Output Index | | Value Added | Value Added Index | Output Per Employee | Value Added Per Employee |
|---------------|------|------------|------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| | | | to Base Year | Output | to Base Year | Output | | | | |
| Lancaster | 2018 | 3,307 | 1.00 | \$ 514,000,000 | 1.00 | \$ 326,000,000 | 1.00 | 1.00 | \$ 155,427.88 | \$ 98,578.77 |
| Lancaster | 2019 | 3,276 | 0.99 | \$ 526,000,000 | 1.02 | \$ 331,000,000 | 1.02 | 1.02 | \$ 160,561.66 | \$ 101,037.85 |
| Lancaster | 2020 | 3,082 | 0.93 | \$ 511,000,000 | 0.99 | \$ 321,000,000 | 0.98 | 0.98 | \$ 165,801.43 | \$ 104,153.15 |
| Lancaster | 2021 | 3,004 | 0.91 | \$ 530,000,000 | 1.03 | \$ 326,000,000 | 1.00 | 1.00 | \$ 176,431.42 | \$ 108,521.97 |
| Lancaster | 2022 | 3,128 | 0.95 | \$ 600,000,000 | 1.17 | \$ 364,000,000 | 1.12 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 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 | 1.23 | \$ 200,000.00 | \$ 142,800.00 |

Table 7-1. Overview of Economic Indicators (IMPLAN database)

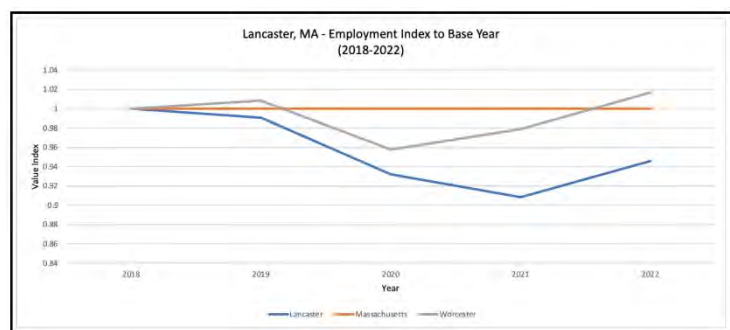


Figure 7-1 Lancaster Employment Index to Base Year

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.

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 *Figures 7-2 and 7-3. Economic Output and Value-Added Indexes.*)

Figure 7-2. Value-Added Index (IMPLAN database)

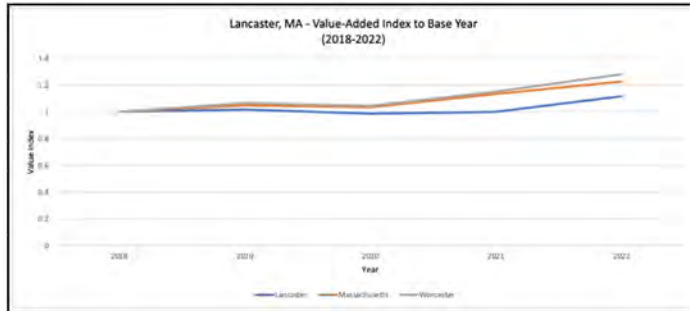
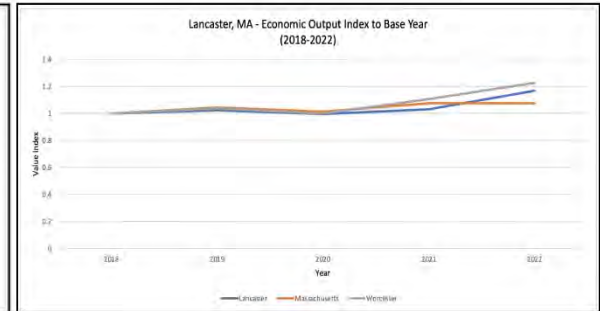
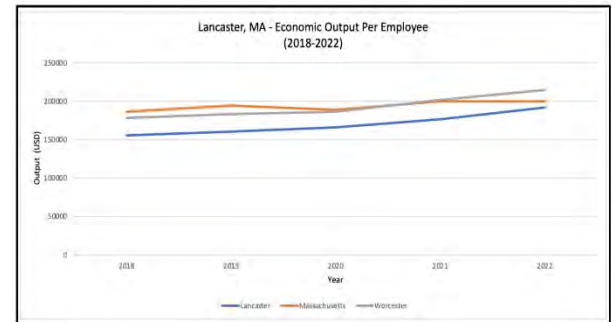


Figure 7-3. Economic Output Index (IMPLAN database)



Economic output per employee, or worker productivity, is slightly lower per Lancaster employee than its comparison communities (Figure 7-4). 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.

Figure 7-4. Economic Output Per Employee



Lancaster Economic Overview (Table 7-2) provides a snapshot of Lancaster’s economy.

Table 7-2. Lancaster Economic Overview (source: IMPLAN economic database)

| 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 (age 25+) high school diploma or above | 90% | NA |

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.

North Lancaster and Business and Industrial Tax Base

As discussed earlier, the most passionate debate in the *Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan* was the conflict between the critical need for an expanded industrial and commercial tax base and the adverse impacts on residents of North Lancaster. The Land Use element discussed land use solutions.

In most subject areas, the survey results were significantly the same regardless of where survey respondents live (see Exhibit A-Community Engagement). For responses to economic development priorities, however, and for comments expressing concern about how Lancaster is growing, residents of North Lancaster had different priorities and concerns. Those residents ranked the need for an expanded industrial and commercial tax base lower than residents of other areas of town, probably because they are the ones who live with the adverse consequences of the industrial, warehouse, and extraction businesses that are fueling new growth.

Interestingly, there is greater consensus on encouraging local businesses to grow. While it cannot be an either-or decision, growing local businesses, the majority of which have virtually no negative impacts, can provide a great opportunity to grow the tax base with less adverse impacts than high traffic and high impact land uses.

The recommendations below attempt to address both the need for tax base growth, including that from local businesses that are ready to grow and from new businesses, and serve all residents everywhere in Lancaster.

As a cross-cutting strategy, never compromise on substantive protections from adverse impacts from businesses. Business want clear rules, but building in certainty, expanding the tax base should not be a race to the bottom or prevent strict environmental performance standards.

Expand the commercial and industrial tax base through attention to the needs of local established and emerging businesses (economic gardening) and new businesses

- Adopt a business calling program with high level town officials (town administrator, town planner, or members of the town's economic development committee) ensuring that every business in town gets visited and interviewed at least once every three years to identify their needs, desires, and opportunities and explore what the town can do to help them.
- Invite Town Meeting to adopt a Tax Increment Financing and District Improvement Financing policy that will send a message to businesses that Lancaster is open for business, for those businesses that do not have adverse impacts. Knowing what the town can do to help them upfront, instead of waiting for uncertain outcomes later, is the best way to attract desirable businesses.
- Appoint a single point of contact (Town Administrator or Town Planning Director) who will be there for any business inquiry from permit applications, permit process, and any town assistance to simplify the work for desirable businesses that want to grow.
- Improve the information that businesses need to locate, grow, and thrive on the Town website.
- Focus on the quality of life that so many footloose businesses, businesses that can locate anywhere, value in their business location decisions.

Create stronger focal points at the Town Green, Lancaster Center, North Lancaster, the Main Street/South Lancaster village at the railroad bridge, and the DCAMM property

- Improve the attractiveness of the Town Green, Lancaster Center, the South Lancaster Main Street strip immediately north of the railroad bridge, and the DCAMM Old Common Road property to attract offices and commercial businesses who are attracted by Lancaster's high quality of life, especially businesses that are currently in Lancaster and might be expanding.

Improve infrastructure to serve economic development needs

Critical economic development infrastructure investments include:

- Improving sanitary sewer capacity for the Main Street South Lancaster village just south of the railroad tracks, the Town Green/Municipal campus, and Lancaster Center, primarily through investments in infiltration and inflow (I&I) reductions, water saving devices, and any limiting factor to sewer flow (e.g., any pipe tuberculous or point constriction).
- Research feasibility for providing municipal or other public water services in North Lancaster, including the feasibility of obtaining water from a neighboring community or accessing existing private and military high-yield wells in North Lancaster.
- Expand infrastructure capacity to serve businesses in those target areas, including reducing inflow and infiltration into sanitary sewers and encouraging water saving devices for sanitary sewer users all to increase capacity of those sewers to serve new uses.

Implementing zoning changes to ease business location

Lancaster has generally has a well thought out zoning, especially as it relates to commercial and industrial uses. Some of the standards, however, are not as clear as they could be, creating uncertainty both of businesses trying to grow and for neighborhoods concerned about the impacts.

There are four rules of zoning and the regulatory system that could guide Lancaster regulatory revisions, especially to Zoning Special Permit approvals and to and Environmental Controls, Design guidelines (Section

220-35), Disturbance controls and lighting (Section 220-36 et seq.), and Erosion and stormwater control (Section 220-37.2).

1. The “right path,” the **route that best aligns with town goals, should be the easy regulatory path.** That is often, but not always true (especially as it relates to housing).
2. **Uncertainty** should be avoided because it **is the enemy of sound investments**, increases legal exposure, and makes both investors and nearby abutters nervous. The site plan, special permit, and environmental performance standards could all be clearer.
3. A **robust resilience focus**, including green infrastructure, with clear rules and minimum interpretation, does not add significant cost. It can add to Lancaster’s cachet or prestige and improve quality of life.
4. Finally, all regulatory requirements **need articulate rationale** so that they can easily be explained to applicants, to the public, and, if ever necessary, to the courts.

In addition, Zoning Signs, Sign content (Section 220-27(E)), should be reviewed in light of *Reed v. Town of Gilbert*, where the U.S. Supreme Court severely limited the ability of communities to regulate sign content outside of traffic safety signs (135 S.Ct. 2218, 2015).

8. Natural and Cultural Resources

Goals

- **Improve the presence of the Nashua River and other rivers in everyday life.**
- **Monitor and encourage the Devens South Post environmental cleanup.**
- **Address problems with invasive species in Lancaster.**
- **Celebrate human-built landscapes and environments.**
- **Celebrate and protect natural landscapes and environments, including water supplies.**
- **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.
7. Lancaster is part of one of the largest Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (Figure 8-1) in the Commonwealth, the Central Nashua River Valley.

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.

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.

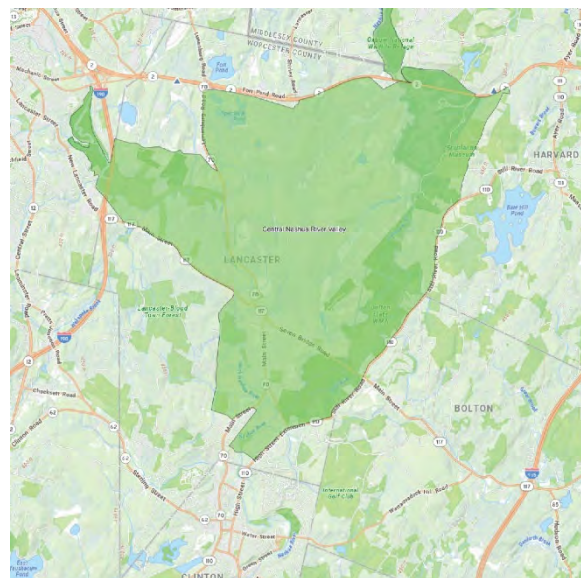


Figure 8-1. Areas of Critical Environmental Concern

Improve the presence of the Nashua River and other rivers in everyday life

Lancaster residents love the Nashua River, want it cleaner, more visible, and with more public access. The community's highest priority across in the *Lancaster 2035* survey question across all survey questions was to "Celebrate and protect natural landscapes, environments, and the Nashua River. Action policies include:

- Prioritize land preservation efforts for land along the banks of the Nashua River.
- Improve access to the North Branch Nashua River at the Cook Conservation Area, improving the quality of the trail, at the Pellecchia Conservation Land and Canoe Launch, improving the boat launch and fishing access and making them accessible.
- Increase the number of river access points.
- Improve wayfinding to river access points.
- Cleanup the river of debris, especially after the spring freshet.
- Address more significant sources of river contamination, working with local health and conservation and state environmental officials, as opportunities present themselves.



Monitor and encourage the Devens South Post environmental cleanup.

Given on-going military and police uses, contamination, and inertia, it is unlikely that any significant portion of the Devon's South Post is going to be surplused and made available to the Town of Lancaster within the 20-year planning horizon of this plan, if ever.

The Department of Defense does, however, already manage the property for wildlife and natural systems and it contributes to the Nashua River watershed.

It is important, however, that Lancaster continue to monitor the environmental cleanup and follow the planning process to remain at the table. Since the site will never be cleaned up to pristine conditions it is likely to have US EPA Institutional Controls/Massachusetts Activities and Use Limitations, in which the site is cleaned up to a safe level consistent with use restrictions.

The fewer restrictions the better for future uses decades in the future (e.g., restrictions on child care centers are appropriate but permanent restrictions on public access are not).



Address problems with invasive species in Lancaster

Like everywhere in the Commonwealth, even as more land is being preserved there is more damage to natural ecosystems from non-native invasive plants and animals. Very few invasives will ever be eliminated, but with volunteers and attention many of the invasives can be held in check. Conservation volunteers can be especially helpful, but with proper training (e.g., Japanese Knotweed can spread from vegetative reproduction,

sprouting from root and stem fragments, so sloppy cuttings and leaving the materials on the ground can aid its expansion).

Celebrate human-built landscapes and environments

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.

Potential actions include:

- Lancaster could consider creating a local historic district, which would regulate projects not requiring state and federal permits or funding, for its most prized historic districts and landmark buildings.
- Expand interpretation (signs and website presence) of special Native American and historic landscapes and buildings in Lancaster.

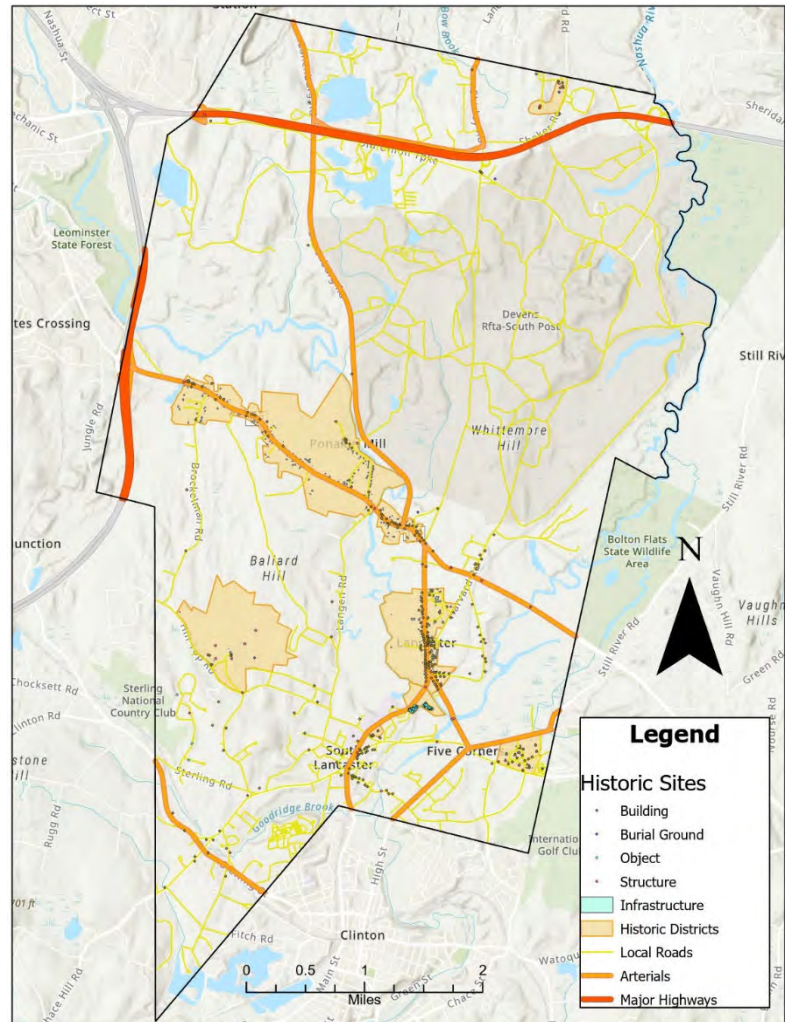


Figure 8-1. Historic Sites (MassGIS)

Celebrate and protect natural landscapes and environments including water supplies

As discussed in the Nashua River discussion, residents are proud of Lancaster’s rich and diverse natural landscapes. They provide a unifying feature to Lancaster and are present in almost every corner of Lancaster.

Potential actions include:

- Expand interpretation (signs and website presence) of natural landscapes, geological features, and unique environments.

- Collaborate with partners (see the Open Space and Recreation element) to preserve the most valuable natural landscapes and environments for future generations.
- Lancaster’s municipal water supply wells, Zone 1 (wellhead protection area), and Zone 2 (the cone of influence around wells where groundwater drops as water is pumped, potentially drawing in contaminants) are in the southeast corner of Lancaster. Currently no water treatment plant is required, but it could be in the future with a growing emphasis on virtually eliminating PFAS contamination. Strict water supply protection is needed in this area and monitoring of any threatening land uses.
- In addition to Lancaster’s municipal supply wells, there are other high yield wells in Lancaster, ranging from a well on Devens South Post to private wells in North Lancaster. All of these wells should be protected. There is a potential that some of them could help serve some future North Lancaster municipal water supply.

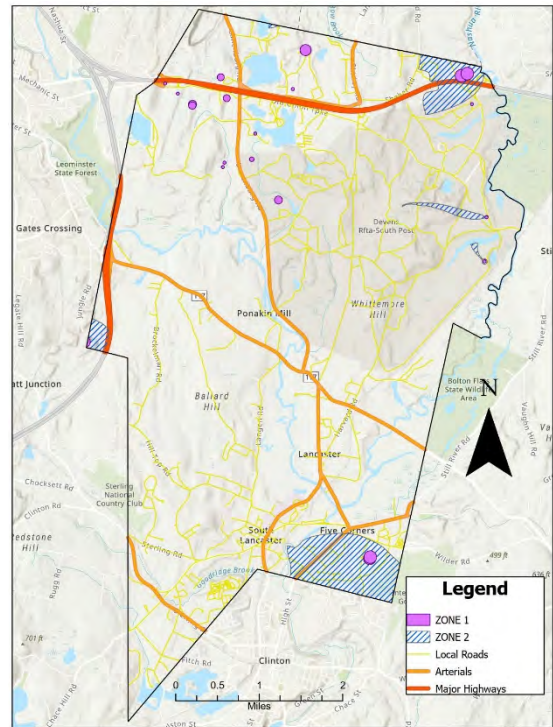


Figure 8-2. Wellhead Protection Areas. Lancaster’s public water supply comes from well fields in the southeast corner of town, but numerous high yield wells serve South Post and private and non-town water supplies.

Reduce the risk of natural and climate change induced hazards

Lancaster has already adopted a FEMA-compliant *Hazard Mitigation Plan* and a state MVP program funded *Community Resilience Program: Community Resilience Building* plan, both discussed in the background element of this plan. They are incorporated into the *Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan* by reference.

9. 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.

Lancaster has a clear open space and recreation program, outlined in its Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). Rather than replace that plan, the *Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan* incorporates it by reference. The actions below supplement the current OSRP and provide items that should be considered for the 2025 update.

Implement the *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)* and draft a new 2025-2032 OSRP

The current OSRP expires in 2024 and should be revised in 2024-2025 to remain relevant and useful. Most of its vision, inventory, and recommendations are relevant, but a new plan is needed to update the OSRP and ensure it remains relevant.

With the plan’s expiration, Lancaster is no longer eligible for state open space and recreation grants, the LAND grant for open space purchases, the PARC grant if Lancaster ever took over private recreation facilities and developed a regional park, and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, which is administered by the state, which funds open space and recreation purchases and improvements. Even without a new OSRP, Lancaster remains eligible for MassTrails and MVP grants, both of which can fund certain land preservation and improvements. The Community Preservation Act, including its state grant money, does not require a plan, but the plan can help inform these priorities.

Preserve Lancaster’s most ecologically valuable areas and farmland

Lancaster and its federal, state, and nonprofit partners do an exemplary job of preserving valuable parcels of land through conservation ownership and regulatory actions. There are opportunities to better integrate ecological preservation into local regulatory programs and CPA and state grant investments.

Farmland in particular is sometimes at risk in Lancaster. There are no agriculture preservation restrictions (APRs) in Lancaster. APRs are a state and federally funded program, usually with a small municipal contribution, which allows farmland to remain in productive private ownership while removing the development rights to the land and ensuring that the farmland will remain protected and productive forever.

Manage Lancaster’s protected conservation land to preserve natural systems

Volunteers primarily manage conservation areas, with most of the focus on limited trail maintenance. The next OSRP should include more detailed habitat assessments and a habitat management plan.

Preserve and manage trails, parks, recreation, and conservation open space to serve residents

Open space and recreation resources abound in Lancaster. A clearer maintenance plan and maintenance resources could serve residents of Lancaster.

The Lancaster *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*, as may be amended from time to time. 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.

- Preserve lands that support agricultural uses.
- 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.



Figure 9-1. Cook Conservation Area at the Nashua River

- **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. (See *Figure 9-2. Open Space and Recreation Plan- Action Plan.*)

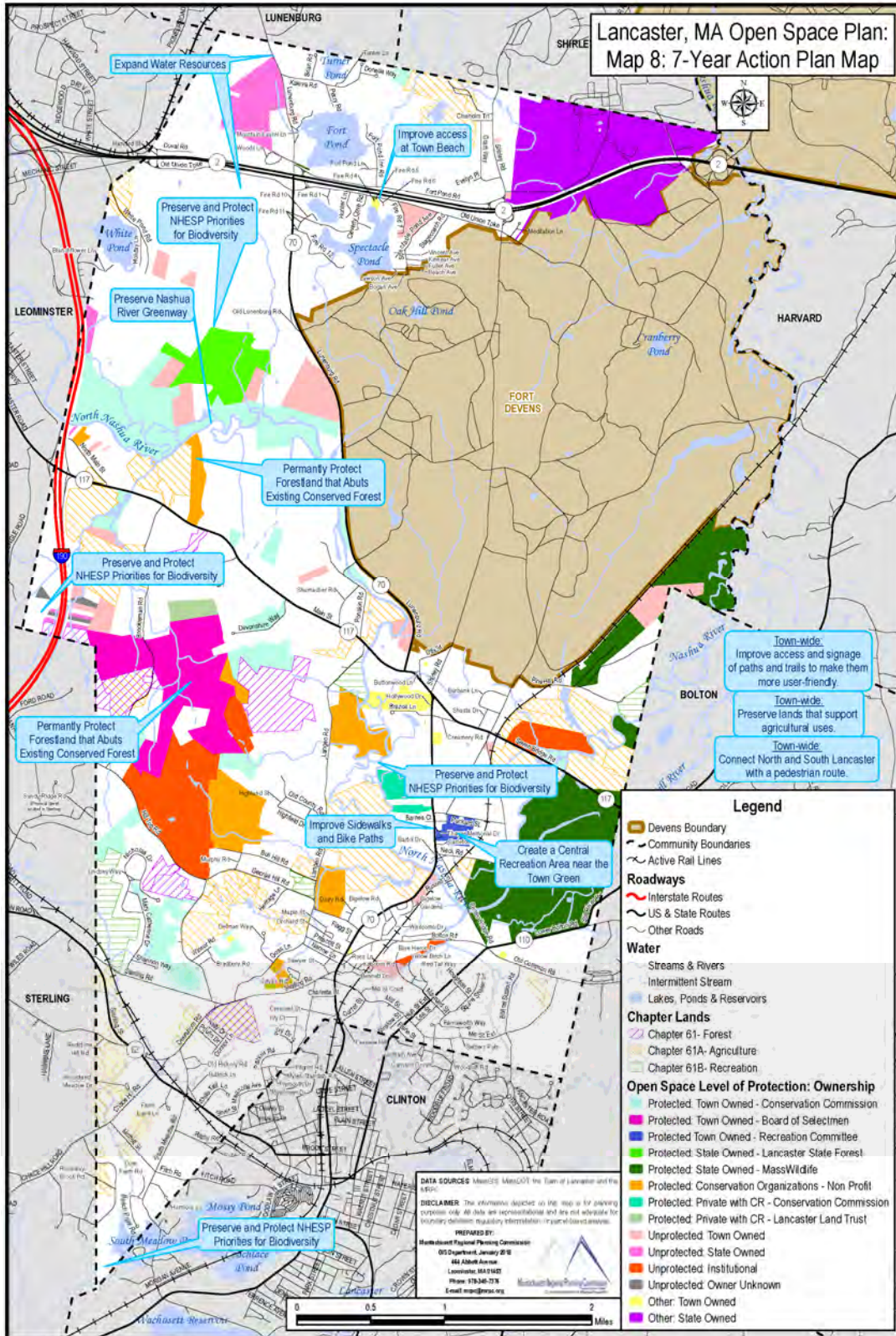


Figure 9-2. Open Space and Recreation Plan – Action Plan

10. Sustainability and Resilience

Goals

- **Mitigate Lancaster’s carbon and greenhouse gas footprint with 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 (Figure 10-1. Sustainability). 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.



Figure 10-1. Sustainability. A harmonious balance of environment, economy, and equity.

Sustainability and Resilience is a Priority for Lancaster’s Youth

Youth respondents (those under 18 and those between age 25 to 34, with no survey respondents 18-24) set sustainability, resilience, and addressing climate change as a very high priority, far higher than Lancaster residents overall. Unfortunately, youth voices were underrepresented in the survey, but assuming that the respondents do represent the community, this is a critical priority for them.

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. *Figure 10-2. 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.

Mitigate Lancaster’s carbon and greenhouse gas footprint, with the community being carbon neutral by 2050 and town buildings being carbon neutral by 2040

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has a goal of having net zero emission (carbon neutrality) by 2050. Lancaster having the same goal will allow Lancaster to access state resources to help it meet the goal (Green Communities, Climate Leader Communities, and Municipal Vulnerability Program, among others) when such programs serve Town needs.

Lancaster setting a goal of carbon neutrality for its own buildings by 2040 gives it a target to share with its architects, building managers, and building performance partners. Increasing building performance will lower the operating costs of buildings and increase building comfort. Pacing improvements to match the life cycles of windows, mechanical systems, and similar will allow Lancaster to achieve this goal and lower long-term costs. As discussed in the Facilities and Services element of this plan, any building investment should do a full Life Cycle Assessment, so that investments pencil out or pay for themselves, but acknowledging the long payback periods of public buildings.

Improve Lancaster’s ability to be resilient and thrive even with chronic and acute stress from climate change and other challenges

Climate change can be very scary for young residents, who are going to live through a rapidly changing climate in a way that older residents are never going to experience. Longer periods of excessive heat, more intense rain and wind storms, flooding, new insect vector-borne disease, and more climate driven migration will impact them. Fortunately, with the long-time scales (e.g., carbon neutral town buildings by 2040), Lancaster can thrive, not merely survive climate change by incorporating a resilience perspective and voice into every major town policy.

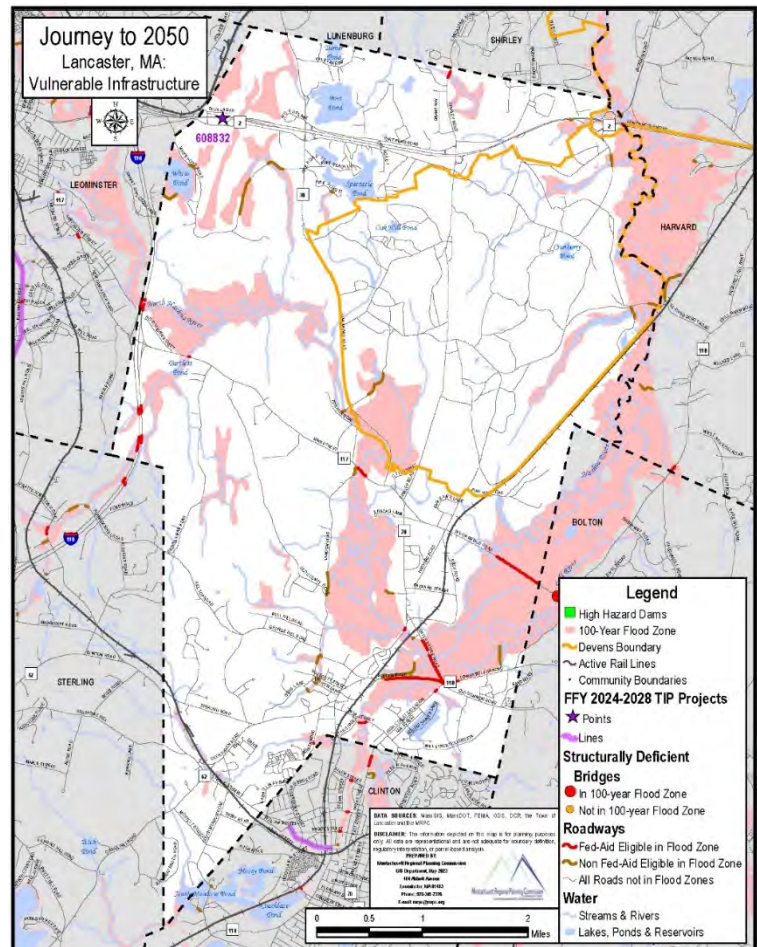


Figure 10-2 Vulnerable Infrastructure (Hazard Mitigation Plan)

Focus on equity, including ensuring that all diverse residents have an opportunity to fully participate in governance and decision making

Lancaster could benefit from some more inclusive opportunities for residents to be involved in government.

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).

- Consider, as other states and jurisdictions have done, changing local elections to match national elections, a slow process since that might require special legislation, but a process that is likely to triple voter participation in local elections overnight.
- Obtain an MVP 2.0 Planning Grant to update the MVP resilience plan to meet the state's new standards. Use the MVP funding to expand outreach 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.
- Expand the town email list to improve the ability to reach out to community members with newsletters and information on ways to stay involved in governance. Inviting residents on the Library's extensive email list to sign up for town email and using other outreach can help build real time communications.

Develop green infrastructure standards for zoning, subdivision regulations, and town stormwater, park, and street tree operations

Lancaster regulatory programs and tree maintenance programs can benefit from more focus on green infrastructure, especially green infrastructure that is low maintenance and can lower town life cycle costs.

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. (Table 10-1. 1 Lancaster Capital Improvements Plan sample climate impact assessment approach.)

Table 10-1 Lancaster Capital Improvements Plan sample climate impact assessment approach

| | |
|--|--|
| <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> | |
| | |

11. 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 Capital Improvement Plan investments using a cost benefit analysis 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 feasibility of infrastructure improvements to serve land use, housing, and economic development priorities.**

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 (current 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.

There is currently no Town water treatment plant (other than the addition chlorination and other chemicals). If one is needed in the future, especially with new Environmental Protection Agency PFAS standards, there may be an opportunity on town of Lancaster property near the well fields.

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. There may be opportunities to increase capacity by reducing unnecessary water flows. Specifically, reducing inflow and infiltration of stormwater and groundwater into sanitary sewers and installing more water saving devices to reduce sewage flows can free up capacity for new growth, especially economic growth, mixed use, and affordable and attainable housing.

- **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.

Ensure that public buildings and facilities are carbon neutral by 2040.

As discussed in the Sustainability and Resilience element, every investment that is needed in building and building performance should be designed to advance this goal, subject to a Life Cycle Assessment to see if these investments are saving the community resources in the long term.

Maintaining and updating town public buildings and facilities to meet current needs and build resilience to adverse climate change impacts and natural hazards.

Rebuilding after a crisis is far more expensive and riskier than anticipating hazards and needs. It does require, however, that all maintenance and management efforts consider the future needs before any investment.

Rehabilitate the former Town Hall to put it back into productive use.

As discussed in the Land Use element, there appears to be a broad consensus that the former Town Hall is ready for a new life. Any municipal use of the building would require a substantial investment, presumably including CPA investments. If there is no municipal need, the building could be privately operated, either sold for a price that reflects the investment needed, with Lancaster holding a historic preservation restriction to ensure that the building is maintained and preserved, or leased, with the lease cost paying back rehabilitation costs.

Evaluate all Capital Improvement Plan investments using a cost benefit analysis to identify full life cycle costs and climate change impacts.

All proposed Capital Improvements Plan (CIP) projects should be evaluated in part, using a cost benefit analysis (CBA) and a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). The evaluation should include all upfront costs, on-going

Cost Benefit Analysis success

For MassDOT and many of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) that prioritize how limited transportation funds get spent, one of the common metrics is the cost per vehicle mile traveled, along with crash rates and many other metrics.

When cost per vehicle mile traveled was a primary determinant, major intersection improvements were often designed with traffic signals instead of roundabouts because they are typically less expensive. As MassDOT got experience with roundabouts, and their lower crash rates and long-term benefits, they started doing Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for some intersections that met the warrant for traffic signals. When the full Life Cycle Assessments (LCA) were done, the value of lower maintenance and decades of expected lower crash rates, was brought into the picture, roundabouts often became the more cost- effective choice.

maintenance costs, benefits, and operational savings, including resilience and climate benefits. 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 always 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.

Cost Benefit Analysis Approach (as part of Life Cycle Analysis)

| Costs | Net Present Value | Benefits | Net Present Value |
|--|---|---|---|
| Direct: staff, consultant, capital, interest... | Sum of all costs calculated to the current year (NPV) | Direct: return on investment | Sum of all costs calculated to the current year (NPV) |
| Indirect: staff time, impacts on bond rating... | | Indirect: resident satisfaction, reputational... | |
| Operating: maintenance, energy, consumables... | | Avoided costs: energy costs... | |
| Opportunity: trade-offs, risk premium... | | | |

Improve the Town Green, municipal building civic campus, and the infrastructure needed to serve comprehensive plan goals.

As discussed in the Land Use element, Lancaster would benefit from a comprehensive municipal campus plan, considering the landscape architecture and streetscape, the former now abandoned school, the former Town Hall campus.

Such an effort should examine whether a campus-side ground source for thermal loads (space heating and cooling and water heating), although very expensive upfront, would save money over the full life cycle of such a system. Wells can last in excess of a century and such a system would release far more energy (from heating and cooling captured from the ground) than the energy required for water and air pumps.

Explore feasibility of infrastructure improvements to serve land use, housing, and economic development priorities.

Public infrastructure (e.g., roads, sidewalks, shared use paths, sanitary sewers, stormwater systems, and municipal water) and private infrastructure (e.g., telecommunications, electricity, natural gas, cable, and fiber optics) are major determinants to growth. Priorities for expansion should include traditional measures, such as technical considerations, cost, and payback periods, and to match town priorities for where and what kind of development is desired. Economic development, affordable housing, and focal points at the South Lancaster Main Street Village, Lancaster Cener, and Town Green/Municipal Campus.

- Seek design and implementation funds (e.g., MassWorks and Housing Choice) to reduce stormwater infiltration and inflow (I&I) into sanitary sewers
- Invest in water saving devices provided to sanitary sewer users (e.g., using grant funds or sanitary sewer user fees) to reduce sanitary sewer flow, saving rate payers money and opening up capacity for other uses.
- Seek feasibility study funds to explore opportunities for municipal water for North Lancaster, especially properties with PFAS contamination or dirty water. Funds for feasibility and eventual implementation could include MassWorks (if affordable housing and/or economic development would result), District Improvement Financing (if property taxes are likely to increase as a result of the investment, or Betterment or Special Assessment Districts surcharges (if beneficiaries agreed in a vote to fund this mechanism).

12. 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.

Ensure the safety of all modes of travel

The recent MassDOT Route 17/Main Street project significantly reduced crash rates in that corridor.

After that work, 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

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. The Route 2 problems are often associated with short highway ramps and geometric limitations.

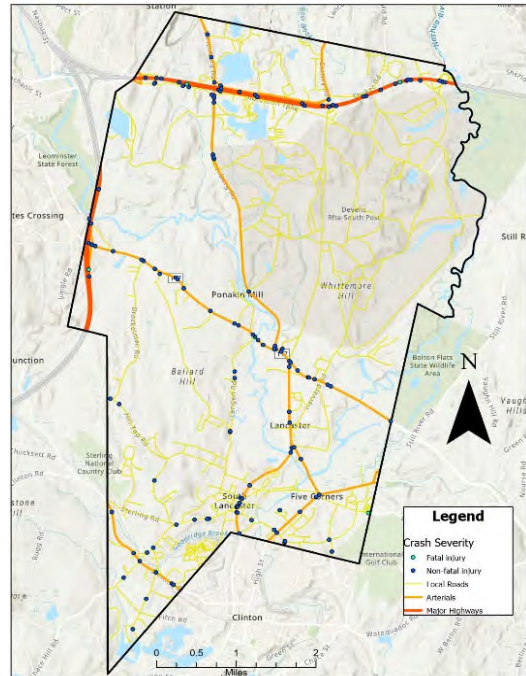


Table 12-1. Crash Locations (MassDOT)

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

Lancaster has problematic intersections with **geometric challenges** that create or exasperate high crash risks. These include:

- Limit line-of-sight
- Non-right angle intersection angles make visibility difficult, especially for trucks and those with more limited neck mobility
- Large diameter curb or corner radius with wide roadway entrances that allow for higher speed movements onto roads with limited visibility of other cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.



Figure 12-2. Geometric challenges, such as the Harvard Rd. flyway southbound from Seven Bridge Rd./Rte. 117, increase crash risks

Some of these are high crash intersections. Some, because of lower traffic volume, are not high crash intersections but still post significant risks. This list does not include areas that are completely within MassDOT jurisdiction where the town is typically far less involved in the design (i.e., Route 2 and I-190 and their ramps)

- George Hill Road/Main Street (high crash intersection)
- Still River/110 and Center Bridge Road, a/k/a Five Corners (high crash intersection)
- Harvard Road flyway southbound at Seven Bridge Road/Route 117
- Two intersections of George Hill Road and Langen Road
- Neck Road at Center Bridge Road
- Center Bridge Road and Main Street
- Sterling Rd., Goss Lane, and Deershorn Road

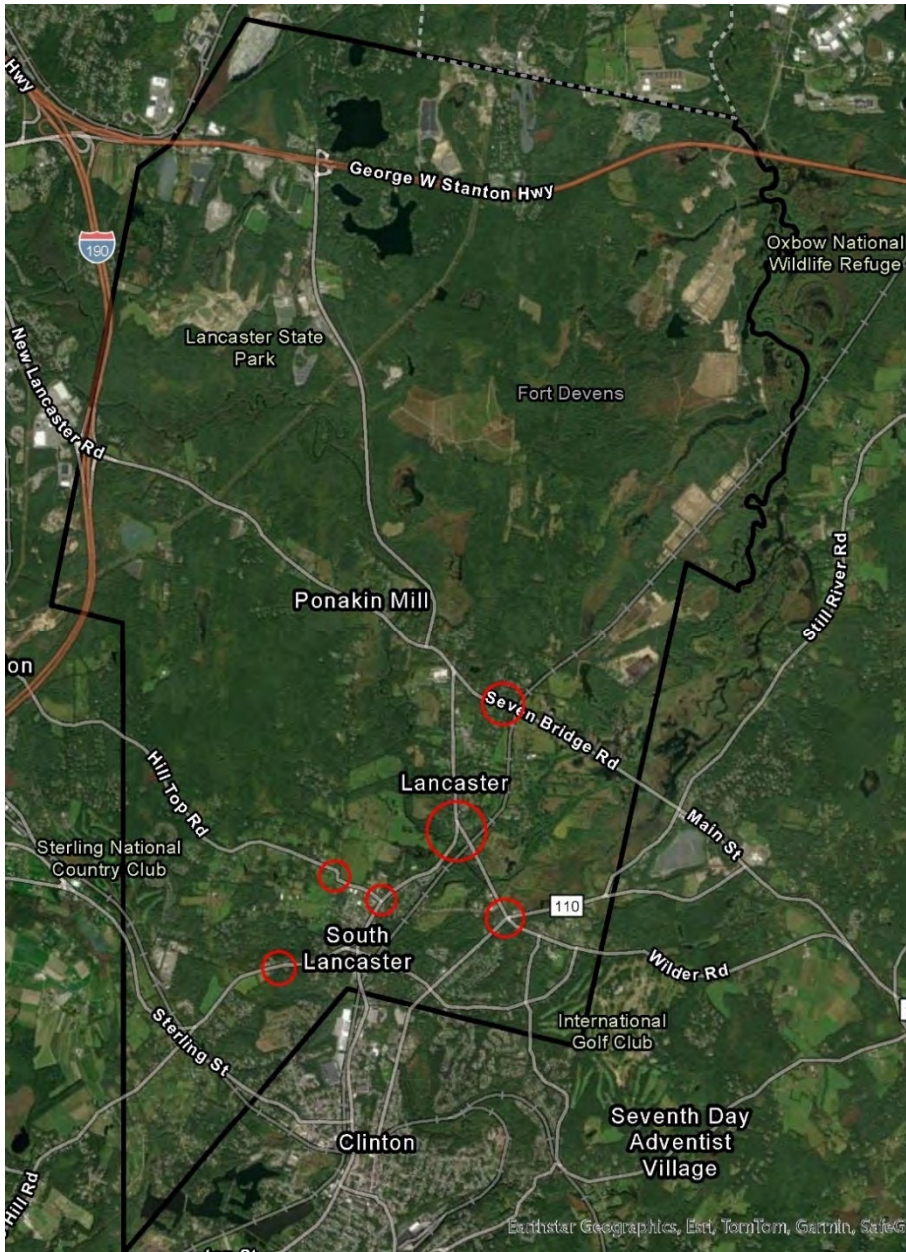


Figure 12-3. Intersections with Geometric Challenges

Several of these intersections can be addressed with very low-cost solutions, either to test approaches or as permanent installations. For example, the flyway from Seven Bridge Road/Route 117 south bound to Harvard Road poses some safety concerns, allowing higher speed movement and a non-right angle at Harvard Road that limits driver visibility, especially for trucks and older drivers with more limited head movement. While this is not a high crash intersection, the solution is very simple, and could be evaluated simply with Jersey Barriers.

Most crashes, including bicycle and pedestrian crashes, off limited access roads and major arterials where lane departures are a major risk factor, happen at intersections. Narrowing the intersections slows the speed of traffic and reduces crash rates, while allowing sufficient width and curb radius to allow most vehicles to remain in their lanes at slow speeds.

Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities on all surface roads

In addition to other high crash intersections, road segments, and geometric problems, much of Lancaster is **not friendly for bicycles or pedestrians**. In the community survey of Lancaster 2035 priorities, this was one of the most commonly community identified priorities.

Main Street south of Lunenburg Road has sidewalks, mostly in decent shape, although they could benefit from better crosswalk advance warnings.

Bicycle accommodations on Main Street and pedestrian accommodations in other areas are far more limited.

Figure 12-4. *Traffic Counts* shows 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.

The design concepts (Figure 12-5) provide options to improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities, reduce crashes, and calm traffic.

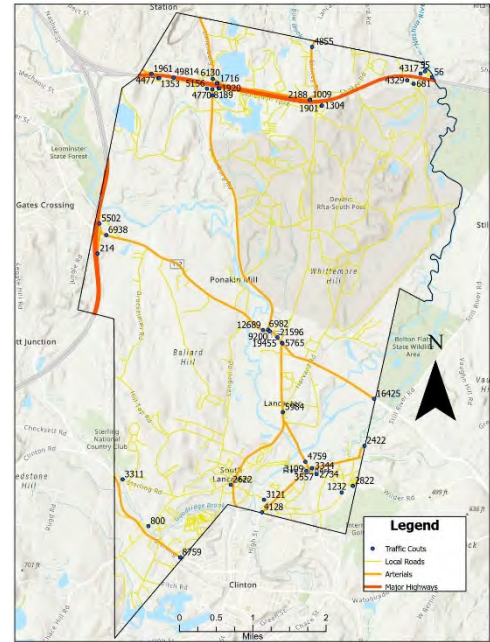
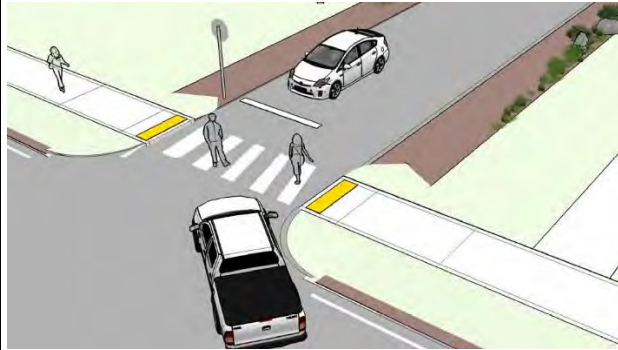
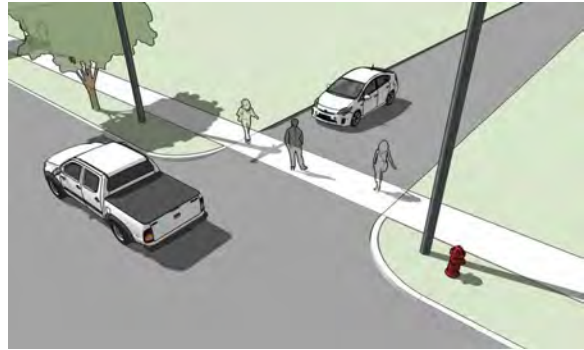


Figure 12-4. *Traffic Counts (2022-2023 MassDOT)*

Figure 12.5 Urban, Rural, and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual (excerpts)



On local streets without large truck volume, reduce the street entrance to 20' and the corner radius to 10-15'



Driveways should rise up to sidewalk using the same material as the sidewalk for driveway crosswalks. The sidewalk should not drop down to the driveway.



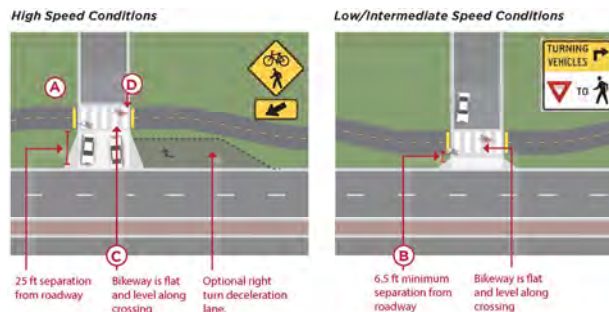
Use raised crosswalks for pedestrian or aspirational pedestrian areas (e.g., Town Green municipal campus, Lancaster Center, and Main St., South Lancaster by the bridge).



When there is no room for bicycle lanes, advisory bike lanes are more effective than sharrows at messaging that bicycles are present.



At higher cost, but appropriate as sidewalks are being added or replaced, are shared bicycle and pedestrian side paths.



Shared bicycle and pedestrian side paths require advance warning for driveways and especially street crossings

Source: Alta Planning + Design, 2017

Be more active in regional transportation planning

Lancaster needs to remain active at the regional and statewide level to lobby for regional transportation projects. For example:

- The CSX rail line that runs through Lancaster is feasible for future commuter rail service, although this is a very slow process requiring large state and federal capital and operating commitments. Lancaster should be part of any regional conversation and, if it ever moves forward, assist in station location and planning.
- Lancaster has no commuter rail stations and less than ideal connections to commuter rail in other communities. Lancaster can help the region explore whether a transit shuttle from commercial and population centers and a park and ride lot to commuter rail is viable.
- The Metropolitan Planning Organizations, staffed by the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, sets the priorities annually for how federal and state transportation dollars will be spend in the region. Lancaster should be part of that regional priority setting.

Prioritize projects based on safety and addition of currently underserved modes

Safety should be paramount in prioritizing projects. Simply looking at crash rates and the potential for crash reduction, however, leaves out the users who currently do not use a roadway (often pedestrians and bicycles) because of actual risk, perceived risk, or an undesirable experience. Those opportunities need to be calculated into priorities.

Prioritize pedestrian-scale villages and nodes

Although Massachusetts policy is that pedestrians and bicyclists should be accommodated on all surface (non-limited access) roads, the reality is that the desire lines for where pedestrians want to travel are primarily within villages, dense areas, and areas within approximately 0.4 miles before they switch to other modes. As a result, investments in pedestrian-scale villages or places where that is an opportunity should be prioritized.

Those desire lines are most likely to go beyond that 0.4 mile target when they are connecting two strong nodes. This includes the Town Green to Lancaster Center, Lancaster Center to the Main Street commercial area just north of the railroad bridge, and the DCAMM property to Lancaster Center. The first two connections already have sidewalks, while the third does not. A minority of people, but still significant, will walk 1 to 1.2 miles if there are strong nodes at each point and the walk is attractive.

With most Lancaster transportation by single-occupancy vehicles (SOV), parking is a critical aspect for pedestrian-scale villages and nodes. Currently, each business creates their own parking. Lancaster can collaborate with master developers at the DCAMM property and at Atlantic Union College, and other developers for other projects, to encourage shared use parking opportunities that are sufficient to meet parking demand, but ideally shared so that uses with different peak periods can share parking.

13. Implementation and Action Plan

Goals

- **Prioritize short- and medium-term actions and identify responsible staff and committees.**
- **Ensure that the vision and goals help guide longer-term actions over the next two decades.**
- **Link Capital Improvement Plan to Lancaster 2035 life cycle analysis, and climate change analysis.**

| Partial Action List | Coordinator | Timeline | Funding |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| Implementation and Action Plan | | | |
| Accountability: Track Lancaster 2035 and other plan recommendations and implementation actions in the Annual Town Report. Make Lancaster 2035 plan widely available. | Planning Director; Town Administrator | Annually, permanently | Staff time |
| Funding and Planning: Apply for MVP 2.0 planning assistance to update MVP plan for grant eligibility, to receive seed funding for the first small project, and for an increased equity focus. | Planning Director | Short-term | Staff time |
| Strengthen local and regional partnerships (e.g., MRPC, Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts to Fitchburg State) for plan implementation support. | Planning Director; Town Administrator | Annually, permanently | Staff time |
| Create annual workplan of Lancaster 2035 actions | Planning Director | Annually, permanently | Staff time |
| Land Use | | | |
| Update site plan review zoning to reduce industrial/residential conflicts. | Planning Director | Short-term | Staff time, MRPC, and/or a consultant with EEA or MVP funding. |
| Update site plan and environmental performance standards noise, lighting, emissions, vegetated buffers, and green infrastructure to reduce impacts on abutters and provide more predictability. | Planning Director | Short-term | |
| Update subdivision regulations to improve the clarity of regulatory, construction, and performance guarantee requirements. | Planning Director | Short-term | |
| Update zoning for MBTA multifamily housing by right requirements. | Planning Director | Short-term | |
| Add compliance with Lancaster 2035 to special permit and site plan approval criteria | Planning Director | Short-term | |
| Amend zoning to remove obstacles to a pedestrian-scale village on Main Street by the railroad bridge | Planning Director | Short-term | |
| Consider zoning incentives to redevelopment of key focal areas such as 40R Smart Growth Incentives, Mixed Use zoning. | Planning Director | Short- to medium-term | |
| Reserve sewer capacity from I&I work for focal area development | Sewer Commission | Medium-term | Funding for I&I |
| On-going <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the success of the DCAMM redevelopment • Focus on the success of the AUC redevelopment • Expand focus on Lancaster Center beyond AUC • Focus on encouraging Main Street by the railroad bridge to move towards a walkable village | Planning Director; Town Administrator | Medium to long-term | Staff time, consultants, master developer requirements. |

| Partial Action List | Coordinator | Timeline | Funding |
|--|--|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Housing | | | |
| Revise regulatory incentives and requirements to make affordable and attainable housing standards clearer. | Planning Director; Housing Trust | Short-term | Staff time, consultant |
| Expand zoning flexibility to allow smaller homes , such as providing an option for smaller lots with small homes or homes size based on Floor Area Ratio | Planning Director; Housing Trust | Medium-Term | Staff time, consultant |
| Explore limited development projects with housing and open space | Planning Director; Housing Trust; Conservation | Medium- to long-term | CPA, staff, consultant, land trusts |
| Create 40R Smart Growth Districts in all walkable village areas | Planning Director | Medium-term | CPA, staff time, consultants |
| Reserve sewer capacity from I&I work for affordable housing (see also Land Use, above) | Sewer Commission | Medium-term | I&I work |
| Adopt Tax Increment Financing policy for affordable housing | Finance Director | Medium-term | Staff time |
| On-going <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on affordable and attainable housing in every project review from review of tax title properties to examination of all regulatory processes | Planning Director; Housing Trust | On-going | |
| Economic Development | | | |
| Improve neighborhood buffers and protection around major projects | Planning Director | Medium-term | Staff time or consultant |
| Improve environmental performance standards to protect abutters | Planning Director | Short- to medium-term | |
| Revitalize Economic Development Committee with first task to undertake a business calling program | Select Board | Short- to medium-term | Committee time |
| Laser focus on three key focal points (DCAMM, Lancaster Center, Main Street village) from ED perspective and easing business expansion | Planning Director, ED committee | Medium-term | Staff or consultant time |
| Adopt Tax Increment Financing policy to attract business and publish policy | Finance Director; Town Administrator | Medium-term | Staff time |
| Appoint single point of contact to steer new businesses through permitting, infrastructure, and TIF process | Town Administrator | Medium-term | Staff time |
| Improve ED web landing page to guide businesses with the information they need for expansion | Town IT director | Medium-term | Staff time |
| Align zoning for more predictable zoning process (“four rules of regulatory systems” in this plan) | Planning Director | Medium-term | Staff or consultant |
| Natural and Cultural Resources | | | |
| Cemetery and grave restoration at all six town-owned cemeteries | DPW; Historical Commission | Medium to long-term | CPA; Mass Historic |
| Implement wayfinding from state wayfinding grant program | Planning Director; DPW director | Short- to medium-term | CPA, state grants |
| Improve Nashua River access to and awareness | Conservation | Medium-term | CPA |

| Partial Action List | Coordinator | Timeline | Funding |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Create invasive removal program with volunteers | Conservation | Medium-term | CPA, volunteers |
| On-going: Implement Hazard Mitigation Plan Implement MVP Resilience Plans Apply for and implement MVP 2.0 planning program | Planning Director; DPW Director | Medium-term | MVP, MVP 2.0, FEMA, Water Enterprise |
| Open Space and Recreation | | | |
| Draft new Open Space and Recreation Plan (2025) | Planning Director | Short- to medium-term | Staff, CPA, town funds, consultant |
| On-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Open Space and Recreation Plan • Protect most ecologically valuable land • Protect farmland • Manage conservation land to protect natural systems • Manage open space to serve residents | As detailed in OSRP | Medium- to long-term | Staff, CPA, L&WCF, LAND, MassTrails, MOD, town funds |
| Sustainability and Resilience | | | |
| Explore moving local elections to even numbered years in November (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 |
| On-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use climate change as a lens to review all regulatory and policy actions | All department heads | On-going | Staff time, resources for other projects |
| Services and Facilities | | | |
| Replace culverts , prioritizing those in poor condition, undersized, and in habitat rich environments that might be eligible for the state’s culvert replacement program. | 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. | DPW Director | Annual plan | Water enterprise funds (user fees) |
| Implement sanitary sewer I&I and water saving device programs | DPW Director; Sewer Commissioners | Medium-term | Water and sewer enterprise funds, grants |
| On-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess all town buildings for energy conservation and GHG reduction improvements that can pencil out in a life cycle analysis over the life of the building • Explore reuse of Memorial School • Explore reuse of former Town Hall | Town Administrator; | Medium- to long-term | CPA, bonding, state grants, Green Communities |

| Partial Action List | Coordinator | Timeline | Funding |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore feasibility of infrastructure projects to encourage village centers, economic development • Implement facilities recommendations in Hazard Mitigation Plan | | | |
| Link Capital Improvement Plan to Lancaster 2035 in evaluating CIP requests. Use life cycle assessments and climate assessments as part of those evaluations. | Finance Director; Town Administrator | Annually, permanently | Staff time |
| Circulation and Mobility | | | |
| Be more active in regional transportation planning | Planning Director; DPW Director | Short-term & on-going | Staff time |
| On-going: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sidewalk and bicycle improvements • Prioritizing pedestrian-scale villages • Improve high crash roadways with MassDOT • Fix bad geometric roads with low cost (paint, barriers) | DPW Director | Medium- to long-term | Chapter 90, MassDOT work, Complete Streets, Shared Streets |

Exhibit A – Public Engagement Findings

Lancaster received extensive comments and suggestions during the public engagement process. Table E-1 lists the public engagement forums. Below the table is a summary of all public comments. **Bold represents the most repeated comments.**

Table E-1. Summary of Public Engagement

| | |
|---|--|
| Kickoff Community Forum (12/03/23) | 37 Lancaster resident participants |
| Nashoba High School student forum (02/29/24) | 24 Lancaster student participants |
| Second Community Forum (02/29/24) | 28 Lancaster resident participants |
| On-line and Paper Survey (3/02/24 to 04/12/24) | 278 respondents |
| Final Community Forum/Public Hearing (06/04/24) | ___ Lancaster resident participants |
| Comments posted at Lancaster2035.org or submitted by email (12/03/23 to 06/04/24) | 35 public comments received |
| Planning Board (numerous public meetings) | Elected Planning Board members input and approving authority |
| Select Board (liaison to the Planning Board) | Elected Select Board offering input and plan endorsement |

KICKOFF COMMUNITY FORUM (12/02/23, N=37)

Residents provided their ideas and recommendations in a number of subject areas:

Special places of the heart

- **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

- 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

- **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 (includes areas of active ordnance and a superfund hazardous waste cleanup site)
- **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

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 to

- 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
- Ensure that the Department of Defense remediates Devens South Post ordnance and hazardous materials releases

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

NASHOBA HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT FORUM (02/29/24, N=24)

Lancaster’s first public forum had only minimal participation by Lancaster’s youth. Two back-to-back student forums provided the next generation of residents and leaders the opportunity to share comments, concerns, questions, and ideas about the future of their community. The student forum at Nashoba High School, traveling to where students are instead of asking them to come to a public meeting, allowed greater student participation on their ideas and responses on issues that inform the comprehensive plan. Students shared their perception of strengths, opportunities, and aspirations on community engagement, transportation, commercial economy, and job economy and career opportunities:

Community Engagement

- Events - Memorial Day parade, Horseshed Fair, Lancaster Fairgrounds (Bolton Fair in Lancaster), Halloween trunk-or-treat, free skate events at the town ice rink, volunteer events through the Boy Scouts organization.
- School Involvement - DECA project on Horseshed Fairgrounds, Political Awareness and International Clubs involvement; celebrating regional diversity, hosting international festivals.
- Opportunities - Farmers markets, food truck events, youth voting in local elections, movie theater showings.

Students stated that there were a few events in-town available for Lancaster’s youth, including parades, fairs, holidays events such as the Halloween trunk-or-treat, and free skating at the town ice rink. Students were actively involved in school-led activities and groups such as Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA), and the political awareness and international clubs to celebrate diversity in the region. A select number of students shared opportunities for the town to expand community involvement, suggesting that the town could develop a seasonal farmers market and/or food truck events, as made available in neighboring communities such as Leominster. In addition, students and select members of the planning board discussed potentially reusing vacant space and materials from a now defunct theater in a neighboring community to host movie showings. Overall, NRHS students seemed involved and engaged with community and school-led activities but felt that the town could expand and diversify community events.

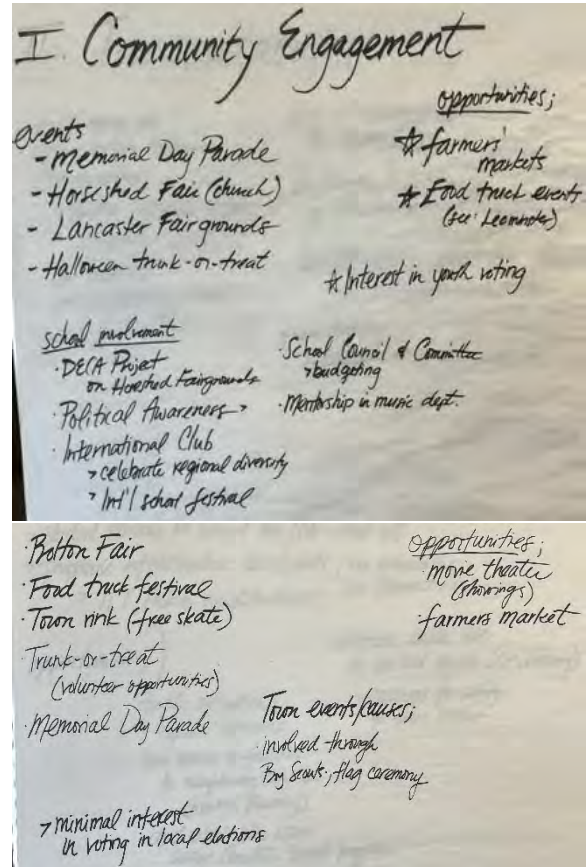


Figure E-1. Student Forums- Community Engagement

Transportation

- Deficiencies - Differences in accessibility between communities, auto reliance, interconnectivity issues, lack of central place to travel to, lack of infrastructure to support electric transportation options, limited capacity for public transit, lack of physical infrastructure such as sidewalks to promote walking and biking (Route 117, Mary Rowlandson Elementary School surrounding residential neighborhood)
- Opportunities - Expand physical access to Leominster, traffic mitigation, bus services to facilities in neighboring communities, dedicated bike lanes under Complete Streets program

The student transportation discussion included safety, transportation preferences, opportunities for expanded travel options, and suggestions for improvement. Numerous students shared deficiencies with the town's transportation options and accessibility. Namely, students found that there is a lack of interconnection between neighborhoods in town, a reliance on automobiles for everyday travel, a lack of physical infrastructure such as sidewalks to promote walking and biking, and a general avoidance of any modes of transport other than automobiles from a safety standpoint. In regard to opportunities, students wanted expanded physical access to nearby towns to access resources and facilities not available in Lancaster, speed mitigation for vehicles on main routes, and dedicated bicycle lanes to expand multimodal access.

Commercial Economy

- Strengths - Local diners (Michael's Bridge Diner, Sandy's), Lancaster Gardens, Kimball Farm, Trolley Stop (pizzeria), FC Stars Complex (training field), Cook Conservation
- Deficiencies - Lack of entertainment and personal services, vacant indoor roller rink
- Opportunities - Commercial gyms for team/student use and sports training, small business development, specifically coffee shops, centralized grocery store

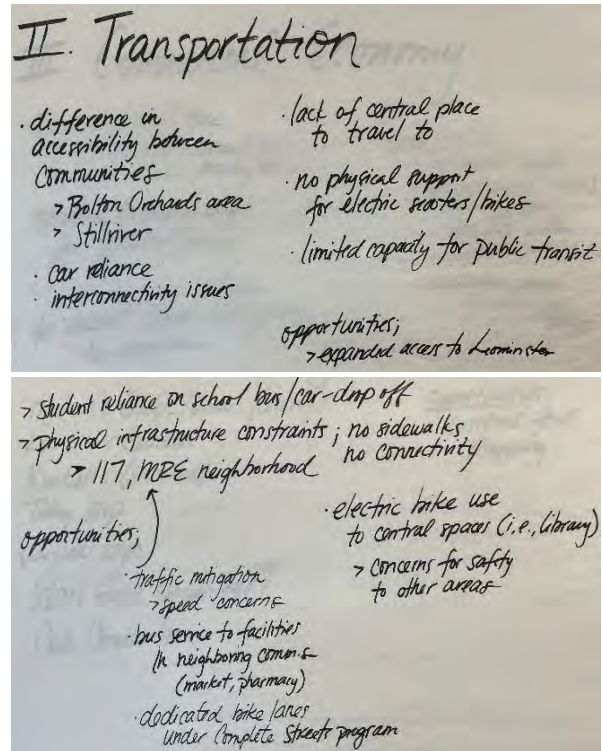


Figure E-2. Student Forums-Transportation

Student discussion of Lancaster’s commercial economy was prompted with questions, and associated examples, such as:

- Are there any businesses in-town that you frequent?
- Are there any specific types of businesses that you would potentially like to see?
- What kinds of services are available in Lancaster?
- Do you utilize these services?

NRHS students shared a plethora of restaurants, specialty shops, athletic facilities, and agricultural resources that students visit and utilize such as Michael’s Bridge Diner and Sandy’s, Trolley Stop pizza, Kimball’s Farm and Lancaster Gardens. Students felt that the town lacked personal service businesses and entertainment spaces, specifically mentioning the now defunct Roll-On America as a source of entertainment. In regard to opportunities for commercial economy, students felt that a local coffee shop and/or centralized grocery store would benefit the youth community and their families.

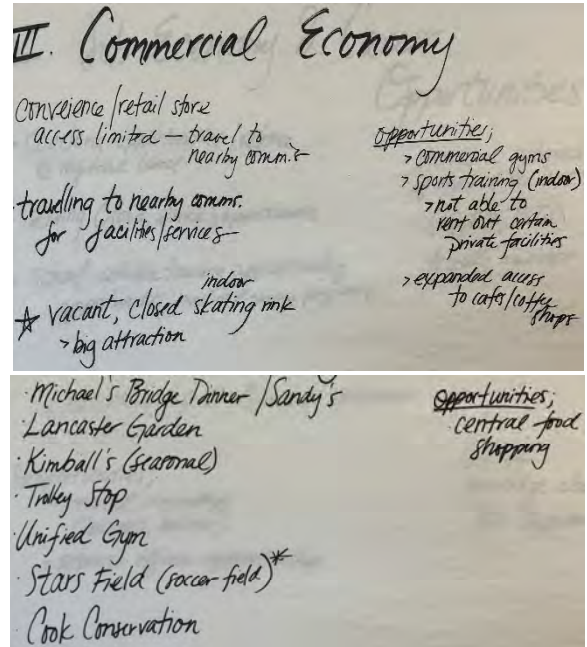


Figure E-3. Student Forums-Commercial Economy

Job Economy & Career Opportunities

- Volunteering - Lancaster Youth Baseball & Softball (coaching/refereeing)
- Part-time job opportunities - Restaurant service
- In-school development - Athletic training apprenticeship
- Opportunities - Business/biotech career internships. Resource officer apprenticeships, Medical training programs
- Gaps in resources - Lack of knowledge about opportunities available through the town’s recreation department

Students focused on the job economy from the perspective of their opportunities within Lancaster for career development, part-time job opportunities, and volunteer activities. They shared a few local volunteer and part-time job opportunities (coaching, refereeing, service industry), as well as apprenticeship opportunities provided by the school.

There was interest in the potential development of career internships and apprenticeships in the business, biotech, medical, and law enforcement fields. To note, I inquired if students were aware of the opportunities provided by Lancaster’s Recreation Department, such as Youth Business Programs and summer events, which the students were unaware of. In response, a few students suggested that town departments share information related to resources on social media platforms for increased access and interaction.

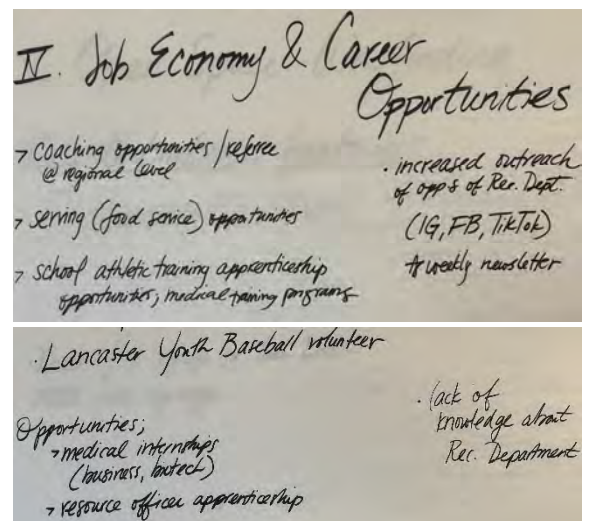


Figure E-4. Student Forums- Jobs and Careers

Discussion

Overall, students completed a thorough analysis of all subject prompts. They were engaged with the process, interested in developing a community planning document, and excited to share their own ideas, thoughts, concerns, and questions about their community. Compelling comments included exploring the opportunities for food truck events and/or seasonal, local farmers markets; expanding bus routes and service to nearby towns; execute low-cost speed motion main travel corridors; evaluating the potential for small businesses such as coffee shops in-town; expanding career development opportunities through the high school; and expanding engagement of town departments through social media.

SECOND COMMUNITY FORUM (02/29/2024, N=28)

The second forum opened with a review of data on Lancaster population, housing, and economic trends, draft vision, goals, objectives, and policies. Lancaster residents shared their ideas, responses, and recommendations to expand on the goals already in the draft plan:

Land Use

- Intervene to prevent polluted water in North Nashua River from traveling through Lancaster.
- Amend zoning to allow expanded business development and enable parking availability.
- Encourage farm-based entertainment in zoning.
- Redevelop the Lancaster Memorial Elementary School (understanding the limits from the conditions of the donation the Thayer property to the Town.
- Address traffic concerns and improve permit enforcement systems for the warehouses and large traffic generators coming to North Lancaster (comment made in the informal period after the forum ended).

Housing

- Include senior housing opportunities (formal, age-restricted senior communities) at the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) property.
- Promote cluster development patterns.

Economic Development

- Alleviate tax burden for senior residents.

Natural & Cultural Resources

- Mitigate the spread of invasive species (e.g., Japanese knotweed).

Open Space and Recreation

- Improve physical accessibility in conservation areas.
- Improve limited river access (e.g., currently at Cook Conservation, New England Forestry Foundation).
- Improve signage to conservation and recreation areas.
- Improve town maintenance of sites following inclement weather/storms.

Sustainability and Resilience

- Create/reorganize a town Energy and Sustainability Committee.
- Re-examine and act on previous solar study.
- Review existing Community Choice Aggregation agreement to mitigate climate change.
- Make minor textual change to goal (“Diverse residents do fully participate in governance”).

- Adopt development mandates that include energy efficiency regulations and stretch code (MA Stretch Code - locally mandated)

Services and Facilities

- Redevelop Lancaster Town Hall for public or private use, perhaps an adaptive reuse as a movie theater.

Mobility and Circulation

- Install modified speed bumps (Routes 70 & 117 past stop light intersections)
- Take measures to lower speeds near the post office (771 Main St.)

Discussion

Lancaster residents provided feedback and specific recommendations on the draft goals for Lancaster 2035 planning document. Of the eight categories discussed, residents were most interested in discussing land use, open space, and sustainability and resilience. Meeting attendees shared numerous suggestions on each topic, either expanding on proposed goals or providing additional ideas to be incorporated into each plan element. Additional ideas not included in the initial draft plan related to land use included: town intervention of polluted water in the North Nashua River; revamping the former Town Hall as a movie theater with equipment and resources from a neighboring town (Clinton, MA); agritainment zoning allowances; and redevelopment of a local, defunct elementary school. Other suggestions included: expanded physical accessibility and increased signage in conservation areas; post-storm site maintenance of conservation areas; to re-examine an existing solar study and to develop mandates and regulations that include energy efficiency and stretch code guidelines.

Lancaster 2035 community survey (03/02/24 to 04/12/24, N=276)

As part of the community engagement process, Lancaster distributed a survey widely asking residents to opine on priorities discussed in the draft plan and at the second public forum. The survey asked for rank order of a number of priorities and also included open ended (fill in the blank) opportunities for people to add additional thoughts.

The survey link to completing the survey on-line (URL and QR code) was distributed at the second public forum, emailed to the Lancaster 2035 email list, linked on the Lancaster2035.org project website, linked on the Town of Lancaster’s website homepage (ci.lancaster.ma.us), and shown on a poster and handouts made available in the Town Office. In addition, paper surveys were available for those who preferred that format.

The tables and figures below show the survey responses. Generally, the responses to all of the questions were fairly consistent regardless of where a resident lives in Lancaster and, to a lesser extent, the age of the resident.

There was, however, a significant difference on priorities for economic development and where a resident lives within Lancaster. Because of this, for the economic development analysis, the table includes both townwide responses and a cross-tabulation of responses based on survey respondents’ homes.

Table E-3. Land Use Priorities

| Land Use Goal | Mean Priority (1-5) |
|--|------------------------|
| Support Atlantic Union College redevelopment. Encourage new Center commercial and residential uses | 2.2 (highest priority) |
| Protect and improve the Town Green and municipal campus | 2.67 |
| Prioritize the redevelopment of the DCAMM campus for mixed used and open space | 2.69 |
| Allow a walkable village to grow on Main Street just north of Clinton and the railroad bridge | 3.06 |

Figure E-6. Land Use Priorities

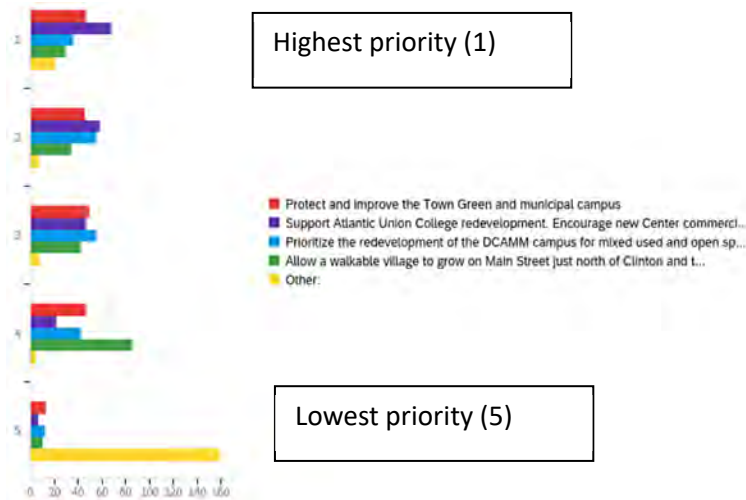


Table E-4. Housing Priorities

| Housing Goal | Mean Priority (1-5) |
|---|-------------------------|
| Allow more flexibility for smaller homes and changing housing demands | 2.27 (highest priority) |
| Respect the physical patterns of existing neighborhoods | 2.33 |
| Expand housing that is attainable for our children, seniors who want to age in place, and new residents | 2.41 |
| Expand deed-restricted affordable housing | 3.41 |

Figure E-7. Housing Priorities.

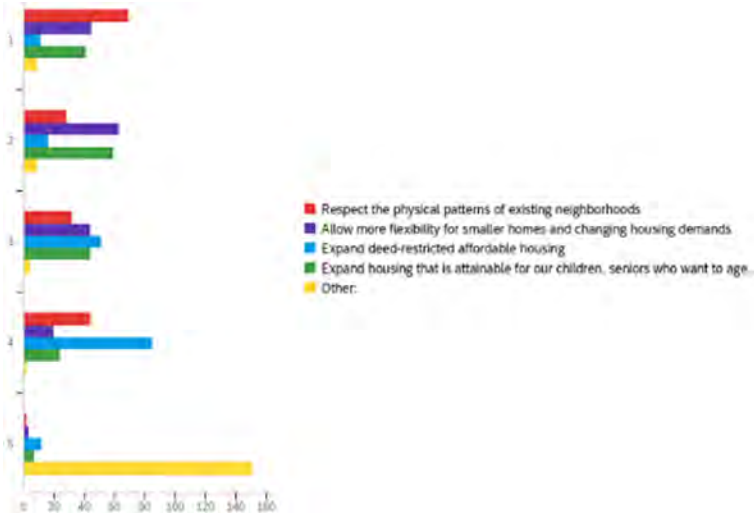


Table E-5. Economic Development Priorities (townwide and by respondents' residence)

| Economic Development Goal | Mean Priority - 1 is highest to 5 is lowest | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------|--------------|--------|-------------|--------------|
| | Townwide | N. Lancaster | S. Lancaster | Center | George Hill | South Meadow |
| Expand the commercial and industrial tax base | 2.43 | 3.2 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| Support existing growing local businesses | 2.51 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.4 |
| Invest in roads, sewer, and water to help businesses and residential properties | 3.26 | 2.8 | 3.5 | 3.5 | 3.7 | 2.4 |
| Improve focal points in the Center and at Main Street. South Lancaster, just north of railroad bridge | 3.55 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 3.3 | 3.3 | 4.0 |
| Make zoning more predictable for businesses and building in protection for abutting residential properties | 3.60 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 2.4 |

Figure E-8. Economic Development Priorities



Table E-6. Natural and Cultural Resources Priorities

| Natural and Cultural Resources Goal | Mean Priority (1-5) |
|---|-------------------------|
| Celebrate and protect natural landscapes, environments, and the Nashua Rivers | 1.61 (highest priority) |
| Celebrate and preserve historical buildings, and landscapes | 2.44 |
| Monitor the Devens South Post environmental cleanup | 3.12 |
| Address invasive species | 3.20 |

Figure E-9. Natural and Cultural Resources Priorities

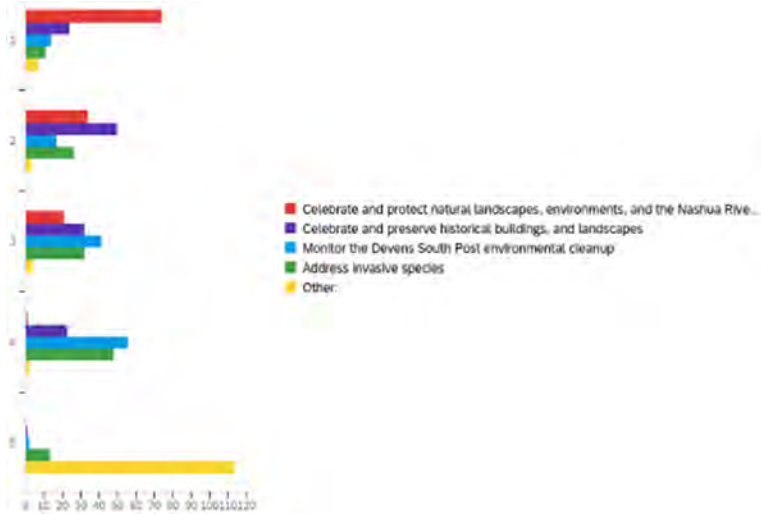


Table E-7. Open Space and Recreation Priorities

| Open Space and Recreation Goal | Mean Priority (1-5) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Draft new 2025-2032 Open Space and Recreation Plan (current plan expires soon) | 2.51 (highest priority) |
| Preserve more of Lancaster's most ecologically valuable areas | 2.72 |
| Manage trails, parks, recreation, and conservation areas to serve residents | 2.96 |
| Preserve more of Lancaster's farmland | 3.45 |
| Manage Town conservation land to preserve natural systems | 3.50 |

Figure E-10. Open Space and Recreation Priorities

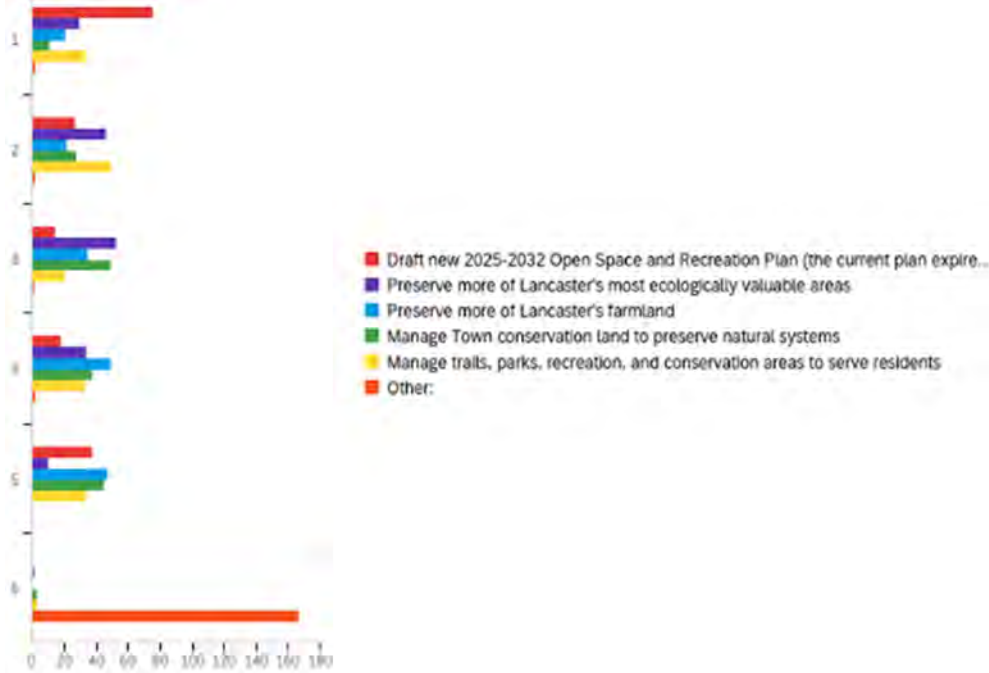


Table E-8. Sustainability and Resilience Priorities

| Sustainability and Resilience Goal | Mean Priority (1-5) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Examine zoning and regulations with a sustainability and resilience lens | 1.97 (highest priority) |
| Expand efforts so all residents have full opportunities to fully participate in governance and decision making | 2.09 |
| Implement resilience so Lancaster can thrive, not just survive, climate change | 2.79 |
| Plan to make the Town of Lancaster carbon neutral by 2050 | 3.50 |

Figure E-11. Sustainability and Resilience Priorities

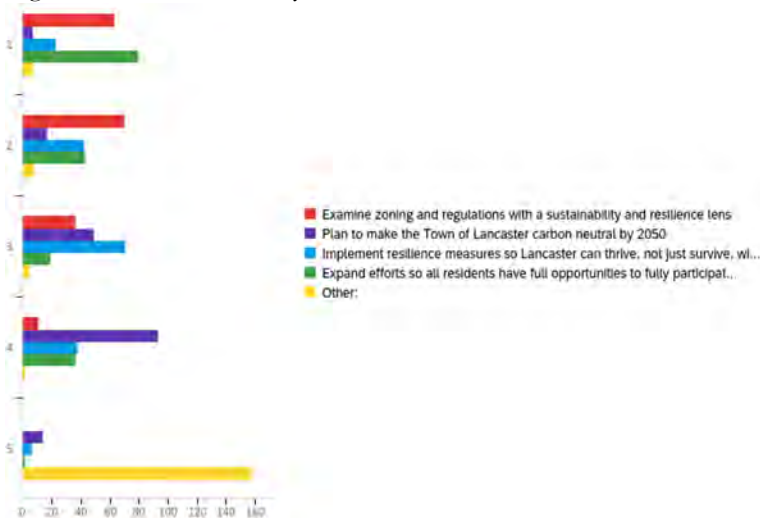


Table E-9. Service and Facilities Priorities

| Services and Facilities Goal | Mean Priority (1-5) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Facilitate the rehabilitation of Town Hall to put it back into active public or private use | 1.84 (highest priority) |
| Do full life cycle assessment of all capital investments to identify when improved performance reduces operating costs | 2.18 |
| Analyze all capital investments for effect on climate change resilience and mitigation | 3.15 |
| Plan to make Town-owned buildings carbon neutral by 2040 | 3.21 |

Figure E-12. Service and Facilities Priorities

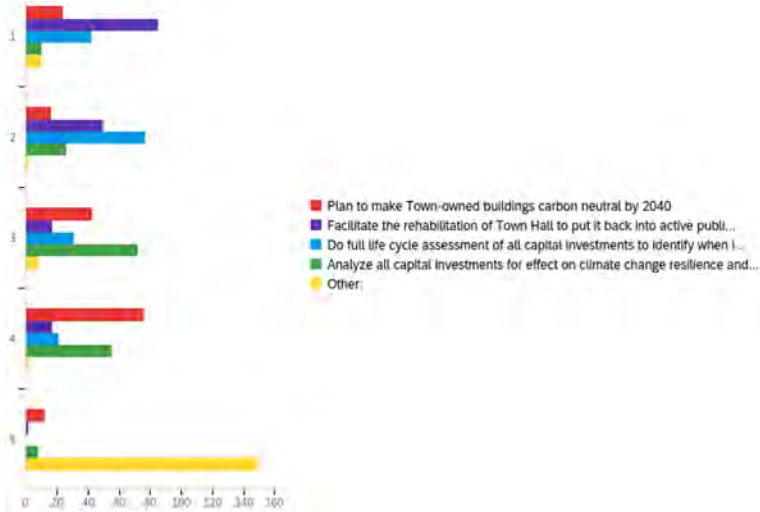


Table E-10. Circulation and Mobility Priorities

| Circulation and Mobility Goal | Mean Priority (1 to 5) |
|--|-------------------------|
| Improve walkability of villages and centers | 2.38 (highest priority) |
| Prioritize the safety of ALL modes of travel (auto, truck bicycle, walking, transit) | 2.39 |
| Prioritize walking and bicycling throughout Town | 2.52 |
| Be more active in regional transportation planning | 3.06 |

Figure E-13. Circulation and Mobility Priorities

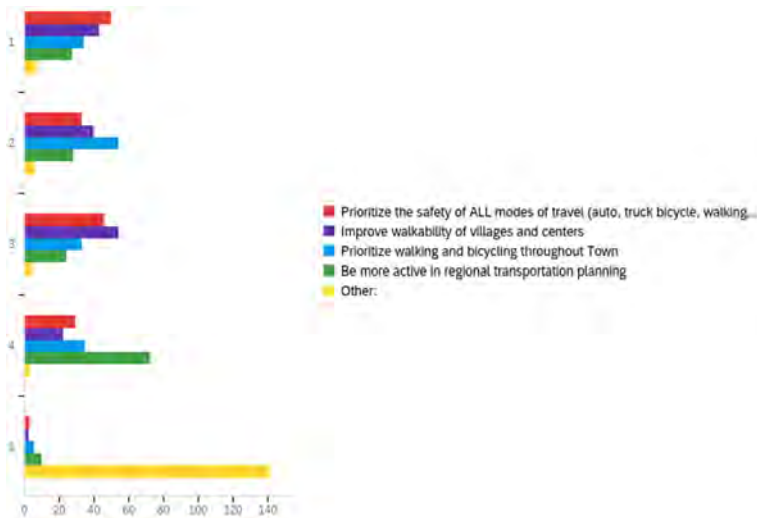


Table E-11 Youth Survey Responses in Comparison to Other Ages* (1=Highest Priority)

| Goal | Priority Action | Total | <18 | 18-24 | 25-35 | 35-44 | 45-54 | 55-64 | 65+ |
|-------------------------|---|-------|------------|---------------------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| Land Use | Protect/improve Town Green & municipal campus | 2.7 | 4.0 | No survey respondents age 18-24 | 2.3 | 2.8 | 3.0 | 2.3 | 2.9 |
| | Support Atlantic Union College redevelopment. Encourage new Center commercial & residential | 2.2 | 2.0 | | 2.0 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 2.3 | 2.3 |
| | Prioritize redevelopment DCAMM Old Common Rd campus for mixed used & open space | 2.7 | 5.0 | | 3.7 | 3.0 | 2.5 | 2.8 | 2.4 |
| | Allow walkable village on Main Street just north of Clinton | 3.0 | 3.0 | | 2.0 | 2.7 | 2.8 | 3.1 | 3.2 |
| Housing | Respect physical patterns of existing neighborhoods | 2.3 | 4.0 | | 1.0 | 2.4 | 2.6 | 2.2 | 2.3 |
| | Allow more flexibility for smaller homes and changing housing demands | 2.3 | 2.0 | | 3.0 | 2.3 | 2.0 | 2.4 | 2.3 |
| | Expand deed-restricted affordable housing | 3.4 | 5.0 | | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.4 | 3.3 |
| | Expand housing that is attainable for our children, seniors aging in place, and new residents | 2.4 | 3.0 | | 3.0 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.5 |
| Economic Development | Expand the commercial and industrial tax base | 2.5 | 4.0 | | 3.7 | 2.5 | 2.1 | 2.5 | 2.6 |
| | Support existing growing local businesses | 2.5 | 1.0 | | 1.7 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.6 | 2.4 |
| | Improve focal points in the Center and at Main Street. South Lancaster, just north of railroad bridge | 3.5 | 2.0 | | 1.3 | 3.4 | 3.7 | 3.7 | 3.4 |
| | Make zoning more predictable for businesses and protection for abutting residential properties | 3.6 | 5.0 | | 4.3 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.4 |
| | Invest in roads, sewer, and water to help businesses and residential properties | 3.2 | 3.0 | | 4.0 | 3.0 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 3.4 |
| Natural/Cultural | Celebrate and protect natural landscapes, environments, and the Nashua Rivers | 1.6 | 2.0 | | 1.0 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 1.4 | 1.4 |
| | Facilitate the rehabilitation of Town Hall to put it into active public or private use | 2.4 | 1.0 | | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.4 |
| | Monitor Devens South Post environmental cleanup | 3.1 | 3.0 | | 4.0 | 2.9 | 3.2 | 3.3 | 3.0 |
| | Address invasive species | 3.2 | 4.0 | | 2.5 | 3.1 | 2.8 | 3.2 | 3.4 |
| Open Space & Recreation | Draft new 2025-2032 Open Space and Recreation Plan | 2.5 | 1.0 | | 2.7 | 2.3 | 2.8 | 2.5 | 2.6 |
| | Preserve more of the most ecologically valuable areas | 2.7 | 3.0 | | 1.3 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.6 |
| | Preserve more of Lancaster's farmland | 3.5 | 4.0 | 3.7 | 3.9 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.1 | |
| | Manage conservation land to preserve natural systems | 3.5 | 5.0 | 4.4 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.4 | |
| | Manage trails, parks, recreation, and conservation areas to serve residents | 2.9 | 2.0 | 4.0 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 3.3 | |
| Sustainability | Examine zoning and regulations with a sustainability and resilience lens | 2.0 | 1.0 | 1.5 | 2.1 | 2.0 | 1.8 | 2.0 | |
| | Plan to make Lancaster carbon neutral by 2050 | 3.5 | 2.0 | 2.0 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 3.6 | 3.5 | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|--|-----|------------|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Services & Facilities | Implement resilience measures so Lancaster can thrive, not just survive, with climate change | 2.8 | 4.0 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.3 | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| | Expand efforts so all residents have full opportunities to fully participate in governance and decision making | 2.1 | 3.0 | 4.0 | 2.1 | 2.7 | 2.1 | 1.8 |
| | Make Town-owned buildings carbon neutral by 2040 | 3.2 | 1.0 | 2.0 | 3.4 | 3.5 | 3.0 | 3.1 |
| | Facilitate the rehabilitation of Town Hall to put it into active public or private use | 1.8 | 2.0 | 1.5 | 1.9 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.8 |
| | Do life cycle assessment of capital investments to identify when improved performance reduces operating costs | 2.2 | 4.0 | 3.5 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 2.2 |
| | Analyze capital investments for effect on climate change resilience and mitigation | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.0 | 3.1 | 3.0 | 3.4 | 3.0 |
| Mobility | Prioritize the safety of ALL modes of travel auto, truck bicycle, walking, transit | 2.4 | 4.0 | 3.7 | 2.5 | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.5 |
| | Improve walkability of villages and centers | 2.3 | 2.0 | 1.0 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.2 | 2.5 |
| | Prioritize walking and bicycling throughout Town | 2.5 | 2.0 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 2.4 | 2.7 | 2.4 |
| | Be more active in regional transportation planning | 3.1 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 3.2 | 2.3 | 3.1 | 2.8 |
| *Note very small sample sizes of young residents. Bold shows very high youth priorities compared to overall town. | | | | | | | | |

Figure E-14. Home of Survey Respondents

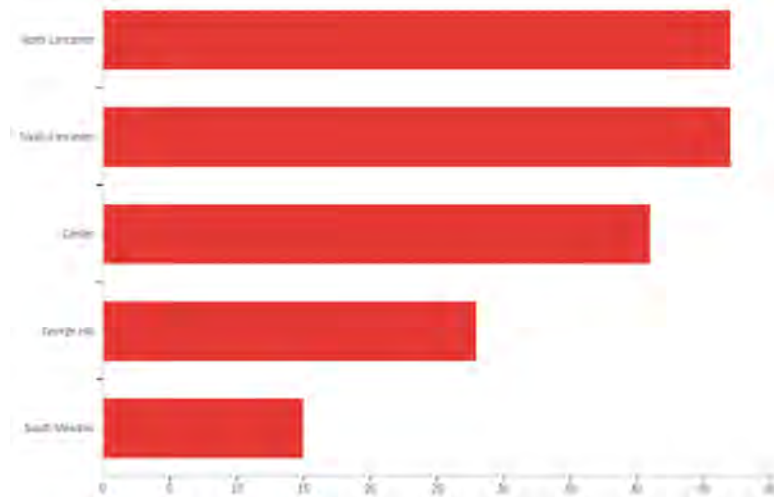
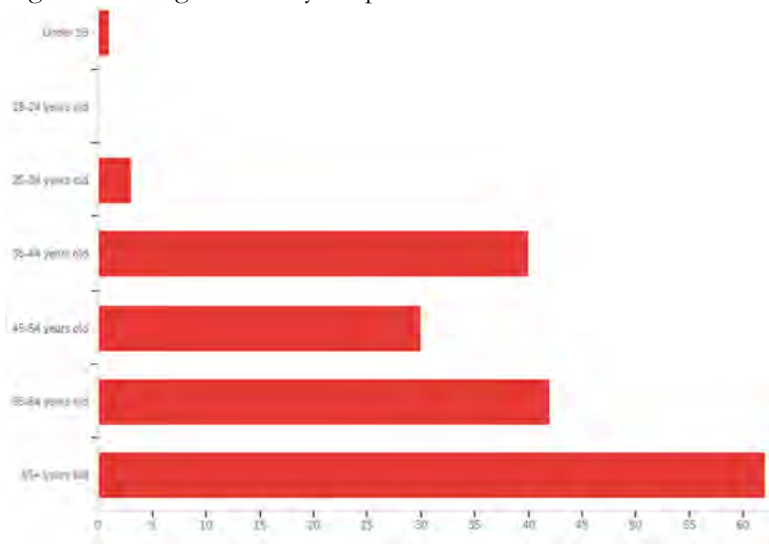


Figure E-15. Age of Survey Respondents



Final Public Forum and Public Hearing on Lancaster 2035 Comprehensive Plan
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